

# Ways to gain influence for residents in two gentrifying neighbourhoods: a comparison between Tøyen in Oslo and Lavapiés in Madrid

## Formas de ganar influencia para los residentes en dos barrios en proceso de gentrificación: una comparación entre Tøyen en Oslo y Lavapiés en Madrid

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### *Abstract*

In gentrifying cities, entrepreneurial strategies often conflict with the interests of citizens. Cities deal with this differently. Participatory democracy is one method to avoid conflict through increased responsiveness to citizens. Participatory processes are nevertheless particularly challenging in central neighbourhoods where the problems of gentrification are most acute. The present study explains how these participatory processes play out differently depending on the participatory system, the economic situation and the local capacity for collective action. Towards this goal the article compares two deprived neighbourhoods that face these types of problems in the north and south of Europe, Oslo, Norway and Madrid, Spain.

*Keywords:* Participatory democracy, local democracy, urban regeneration, gentrification, governance networks, activism, social movements, protest mobilisation.

### *Resumen*

En las ciudades en proceso de gentrificación, las estrategias empresariales suelen entrar en conflicto con los intereses de los ciudadanos. Las ciudades se enfrentan a este problema de forma diferente. La democracia participativa es un método para evitar el conflicto que permite una mayor capacidad de respuesta a los ciudadanos. Sin embargo, los procesos participativos son especialmente difíciles en los barrios céntricos, donde los problemas de la gentrificación son más agudos. El presente estudio explica cómo estos procesos participativos se desarrollan de forma diferente según el sistema de participación, la situación económica y la capacidad local de acción colectiva. Con este objetivo, el artículo compara dos barrios desfavorecidos que se enfrentan a este tipo de problemas en el norte y el sur de Europa: Oslo (Noruega) y Madrid (España).

*Palabras clave:* Democracia participativa, democracia local, regeneración urbana, gentrificación, redes de gobernanza, activismo, movimientos sociales, movilización de protesta.

## INTRODUCTION

**T**his article discusses how residents, in a neoliberal era, can influence policies that trigger gentrification<sup>1</sup> and how this plays out in cities with different socioeconomic and participatory systems. With the backdrop of the 2008 crisis, this article sets out to explore how influence attempts from residents, and government reactions to those attempts, evolve over time and consequently influence trust in urban governance. Through the comparison of two gentrifying neighbourhoods in different urban and social contexts, we explain how conflictual processes arise when residents are not allowed to influence decisions that affect their neighbourhood (Innes and Booher, 2006). Our main research questions are: which political mobilization strategies do residents use when frustrated with participatory processes? What are the institutional, economic and social factors that explain residents' reactions to these processes? We hypothesise that residents' different strategies are conditioned by the institutional settings, the social configuration of the place and the wider socio-economic situation.

Research should not limit itself to studies of the global metropolises. On the contrary, there is a need to investigate the diversity and complexity in all kinds of cities (Robinson, 2006). In this article, we adhere to this effort through an in-depth comparison of urban spaces in the North and South of Europe: Tøyen in Oslo and Lavapiés in Madrid. This study allows us to discuss participation under different circumstances (Dodson, 2014). While both cities are capitals, they are located in countries with different participatory systems and urban regeneration strategies. For example, in Lavapiés previous local governments stimulated gentrification through public investments from 1997 to 2011. In Oslo, there have been several Area-Based Initiatives (ABIs) to improve challenged central city areas in the period 1997 to 2007. In 2014 (to 2018) a new ABI was initiated to compensate for the displacement of a major landmark institution from the Tøyen neighbourhood to the developing waterfront. Both neighbourhoods are central districts where immigrants have settled. The areas have a polarised population with marginalised residents coexisting with a new, young, urban social class. In general, the areas are densely populated. Some of the residents live in overcrowded apartments, have a low level of education

<sup>1</sup> In this article we understand gentrification as “a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital” (Clark, 2005: 263).

and low standards of living. In both cases, residents pressure for more influence, albeit through different strategies. This article takes the historical backdrop of these first urban regeneration operations in both territories into account.

We first provide a state-of-the-art on the relationship between urban governance, participation and gentrification. Then we present the methods used and the comparative analysis. Lastly, we discuss the results and conclusions.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Urban governance

Cities compete globally to attract investments using urban regeneration (Florida, 2019). This strategy improves the cityscape, but it also causes rents to increase. Higher rents force lower-income families and residents to the outskirts of cities. In this situation, social conflict often arises (Blanco, 2013). Harvey (1989) first described the shift from a managerial to a more entrepreneurial governance of cities in the 1970s and 1980s. He showed how cities took a more active role to attract businesses. While a neoliberal turn in urban governance can be observed globally, local variants are influenced by the broader settings of state, economy and society. For example, Pierre (2011) theorised that cities could be located on a spectrum of political interests that prioritise attracting private business investment to giving primary concern to social justice and securing residents' interests.

State and municipal governance can institutionalise some of the collaborations with business and lift them outside of the realm of democracy. Some important policies and questions are then discussed and decided elsewhere (Smith, 1996; Mayer, 2006). Public-private partnerships and network governance influencing decisions are not the object of direct democratic control and are not always open for residents to influence through participatory democracy. Lees *et al.* (2016) argue that the public sector, in the free market city, is active in facilitating gentrification through infrastructure investments. Artists and academics are no longer the primary initiators and drivers of gentrification, but rather real estate developers that collaborate with the political level (Smith, 1979; Lees *et al.*, 2018). Thörn (2012) discusses how social movements can be forced out of neighbourhoods by market mechanisms, partly due to their struggles to preserve old working-class areas that end up being gentrified. Nevertheless, the gentrification processes are not the object of our study. Instead, we look at how the

participatory processes play out in gentrifying areas because participation may be more challenging in these areas.

### **Participation in gentrifying neighbourhoods**

Participatory democracy is increasingly used in local governance as a way to involve residents and avoid conflicts. Gentrifying central neighbourhoods are typically polarised, making participatory democracy more challenging than usual. New and old residents often have different interests depending on whether they own their apartment, whether they are older, have children and other factors. Furthermore, stronger groups can effectively lobby their interests at the expense of other groups.

There is an academic discussion on the democratic dimension of participatory democracy (Moulaert and Cabaret, 2006). One of the major debate topics is whether governance networks are an opportunity for democracy (Stoker, 2004) or a risk (Swyngedouw, 2005). While the former celebrates the promise of urban governance to include marginalised residents through new mechanisms of direct democracy, the latter warns about the lack of representativeness, transparency and accountability of these networks. Several studies on citizen participation in local governance demonstrate that it is challenging to get people to participate. Often, the most powerful stakeholders or “the usual suspects” dominate, and input from participatory processes seldom seems to have a strong and direct impact on political decision-making (Lowndes *et al.*, 2006; Michels and de Graaf, 2010; Hanssen and Falleth, 2014; McKenna, 2011).

Still, with the 2008 crisis new ways of participating are increasing worldwide. New social movements that use less traditional methods play a crucial role in pressuring local governments to reform (Della Porta, 2011). An extensive collection of literature exists on protest mobilisation, and its successes and failures (Bosi *et al.*, 2016). Unresolved conflicts often lead to frustration and lack of trust if participation fails to fulfil its initial promises (Lawless, 2010). Local groups can then opt-out of top-down participation initiatives and initiate bottom-up ones instead (Ferilli *et al.*, 2015). This situation typically occurs when urban regeneration plans trigger gentrification processes. It is important to point out that these urban change processes often affect diverse groups of residents in different and usually conflicting ways (Porter and Shaw, 2009).

There are many theories on how social movements succeed in influencing policy. However, it is widely accepted that grievances must exist at the outset. Other critical factors include changes in power relations, structural

conflicts of interests, and the role of what Jenkins (1983) calls movement entrepreneurs, that are proactive in organising protests. The importance of movement entrepreneurs appears most relevant for social movements among deprived groups and broadly disorganised collectives. There is little agreement on the types of resources involved in social movement success. However, resources such as organising and legal skills and professionals and college students, with discretionary time on their hands, seem to be necessary (Jenkins, 1983; Braathen, 2020).

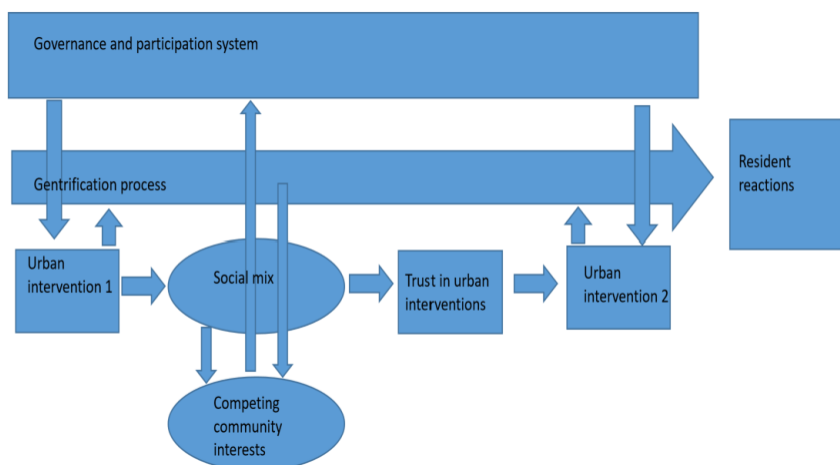
One of the most discussed issues of participatory democracy is whether and to what extent citizens can influence policies. Although increased citizen influence is often a goal with participatory democracy, participation is frequently just symbolic or organised to inform the municipality about resident preferences and opinions. Typically, it does not really open up for influencing the policies causing the gentrification (Ferilli *et al.*, 2015; Lawless, 2010, Chorianopoulos, 2009). There is a growing body of research on how global and local factors impact participatory initiatives in urban regeneration processes (Parès *et al.*, 2014). A few are stories of success (Biddulph, 2011), but most are accounts of failure (Blakeley, 2010). Unresolved conflicts from urban regeneration programmes compromise the cooperation between grassroots and governance networks negatively affecting governance trust (Savini, 2011; Uba and Romanos, 2016).

The “ladder of citizen participation” is a theoretical representation of participation practices involving citizens to different degrees (Arnstein, 1969). This theory states that participation contributes to transferring power from those in power to the powerless. On the one hand, the role of citizens in participatory processes has traditionally been limited to providing information based on which government, and sometimes in cooperation with other actors, can make decisions. Often this frustrates the residents since their participation may be perceived as mere tokenism or manipulation (Blakeley, 2010). Arnstein’s categorisation of participation types is static and does not observe how attempts to influence and government reactions to those attempts evolve.

Factors conditioning the outcome of participatory governance in urban regeneration have been explored through comparative analysis (Geddes, 2005). Two kinds of factors have been identified as particularly important. First, there are institutional settings organizing relationships among stakeholders within the neighbourhood (Savini, 2011; Parès *et al.*, 2012). Second there are local factors such as neighbourhood characteristics, the prevalence of social capital within a community, and the existence of pre-

vious conflicts within the neighbourhood (Parès *et al.*, 2014). Figure 1 illustrates how entrepreneurial governance, leads to urban interventions that trigger gentrification processes which also triggers social mix, conflict and collective protests (Musterd and Andersson, 2005; Blokland *et al.*, 2010).

Figure 1: Participatory processes in central neighbourhoods



Source: own elaboration.

The residents' response will depend on the top boxes, the economic situation, the collective action capacity, whether the governance system is entrepreneurial and whether there is a responsive, participatory system. When the participatory system is non-existent or weak during a challenging economic situation in the city, and when there is a high capacity for local action there is greater risk for protests. The figure has a timeline with urban intervention influencing the social mix of groups of people who have competing community interests to varying degrees. Trust in governance, and urban interventions will change over time as residents see how their interests are safeguarded (Reichborn-Kjennerud *et al.*, 2021).

During gentrification processes, which can vary in their unfolding depending on whether they are government-initiated or primarily triggered by market forces, the social mix of resident groups occurs. Social mixing starts in the beginning of the process, when the first gentrifiers arrive in the neighbourhood- This is followed by an intermediate stage that often ends in segregation if areas are fully gentrified (Lees, Annunziata and Ri-

vas-Alonso, 2018). However, at this early stage, social mixing can have a positive impact on residents with fewer resources, increasing social capital in these areas (Musterd and Andersson, 2005) and facilitating the emergence of movement entrepreneurs (Jenkins, 1983). However, some authors are sceptical to the beneficial effects of this social mixing (Brattbakk and Wessel, 2013; Blokland van Eijk, 2010).

## METHODOLOGY

Case research that can generate causal explanations is well suited for answering “how” and “why” questions and supports a nuanced understanding of observed patterns. Additionally, case methodology and qualitative methods, like interviews and document analysis, allow the researchers to develop new knowledge (Yin, 2015). In both cities, we have used multiple sources of information to understand the economic, institutional and social background and the participatory systems in our two cases. We mainly used qualitative methods (interviews and document analysis) and complemented them with quantitative information about both neighbourhoods from official statistics.

To identify which types of public administrative system we deal with in our case study of Tøyen and show how different participatory measures work within this framework, we used official district council (DC) documents on the ABI. Document analysis was the primary method used in this study. We went through all available documents in the DC of Gamle Oslo’s electronic archive from June 2013 to May 2016. Various documents related to the ABI were collected, analysed and summarised in tables. The most important documents include:

- The DC annual plan and report.
- Programme plans.
- Progress reports.
- Budget documents, committee proceedings and decisions related to the ABI.
- All minutes of and summons to meetings in the DC, standing committees, and advisory committees related to the ABI.
- All DC documents related to the ABI.
- Cases related to the follow-up of the ABI.
- Newspaper articles.

We read all the case documents from the preparatory stage to the final decision to understand resident participation and see what decisions were made in the end. This approach provided us with insight into the different parties' views on participation. Newspaper articles and reports about the ABI served as important sources of background information.

Additionally, eight people were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format to allow for a free-flowing conversation. The participants were selected strategically and can be considered expert informants (Dorussen, Lenz and Blavoukos, 2005). The residents were also considered expert informants as they actively participated and took part in former resident initiatives in the area. The informants were interviewed from May to October 2015.

The informants were:

- One former member of the DC from the time of the ABI launch until 2015.
- Three active members of the DC at the time the ABI was decided. These individuals represented different political parties, both those in power and the opposition. They were all very much involved in the ABI and had sound knowledge of ABI's participatory systems, processes and outcomes.
- Two civil servants working at different levels within the DC and were involved in and knowledgeable about the participatory systems and processes.
- Two residents of the Tøyen area.

In the case of Lavapiés, there are very few official documents available on the ABIs in the area. Consequently, most of the information has been collected through literature reviews in this case. Moreover, we analysed interviews conducted with experts on the longest-lasting ABI (1997-2011) and subsequent interventions in the area. The Lavapiés-related documents used in the present study included:

The Plan for the Improvement of Security and Coexistence within the neighbourhood (Government Delegation in Madrid, 2012).

The memories of the Areas of Integrated Rehabilitation of Madrid prepared by the City of Madrid.

Other sources such as the Statistical Service of the City Hall of Madrid, the National Institute of Statistics (Municipal Register and 2001/2011 Censuses) and the statistics from the "Idealista" (real estate website that reports on housing prices) were also utilised.



Finally, we interviewed nine informants between 2015 and 2017 in Lavapiés. These informants were:

- One academic who has been researching participation processes within ABIs in Madrid.
- One city planner who has worked with different local governments of Madrid.
- One of the founders of “Esto es una Plaza”, a social innovation project.
- Two urban activists in the movement against touristification, “Lavapiés, where are you going?”
- One urban activist of the movement Platform of People Affected by Mortgages (PAH Centro Madrid).
- One representative of Madrid Aloja, an association of individuals, managers and small vacation rental owners of the Community of Madrid.
- One civil servant in the municipal housing company of Madrid during the ABIs in Lavapiés.
- One adviser to the councilman-president of the City Centre District.

Finally, between 2018 and 2019 we conducted additional interviews in Tøyen and Lavapiés to update the information collected. In total, 25 politicians and bureaucrats and nine representatives for residents were interviewed in the Tøyen area. In Lavapiés, 11 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with councillors of the four political groups represented in the City Council (including the councilman-president of the Central District neighbourhood associations, Department of Citizen Participation officials and urbanism and social innovation experts in the neighbourhood).

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

The International Financial Crisis, which started in 2007-08, led to several years period of economic stagnation in most parts of Europe. Spain had GDP rates that were negative or close to zero between 2008 and 2014. Norway also felt the impact of the crisis. However, after one year of stagnation, economic growth eventually picked up and continued to increase in the following years. Norway experienced a very mild recession, but by 2010 the GDP bounced back to 2008 levels (Aamo, 2018).

Madrid, on the other hand, faced a long-lasting unemployment period. For example, in 2013, 20.45 per cent of the general population and 51.18 per cent of those under 25 years were unemployed (National Institute of

Statistics, 2019). The economic crisis, coupled with high levels of perceived corruption among the political establishment triggered a loss of confidence in the entire political and institutional system. On 15 May 2011, one week before the municipal and regional elections in Spain, thousands of people gathered in Sol Square in Madrid. Additionally, the so-called “Indignados” occupied the public spaces of Spain’s main cities during the spring of 2011 protesting the political and economic situation and its consequences for people’s lives.

Interestingly, the economic and political crises forged interest alliances between the traditional neighbourhood inhabitants, neighbourhood associations, trade unions and new social movements. These alliances demanded alternative urban plans, based on citizen participation, safeguarding the social needs of inhabitants and protesting ambitious plans for physical urban renewal.

## **CASE DESCRIPTION: LAVAPIÉS AND TØYEN**

### **Lavapiés**

Lavapiés is situated in the southern part of the historic downtown district of Madrid. The area has always been a place where working-class immigrants have settled. At first, these people came from rural areas of Spain and later they arrived from other countries. In the decade preceding the 2008 economic crisis, five million immigrants (mostly from Latin America and Asia) migrated to Spain. Many settled in inner-city areas like Lavapiés because it is close to the city centre and offers cheap rents in old and substandard buildings.

With the bursting of the housing bubble in 2008, the construction industry focused on restoring inner-city buildings. However, after the price collapse, international investment funds bought up the real estate (Sorando and Ardura, 2018), which triggered the conversion of buildings into tourist or upgraded apartments. In 2016, the average price of housing increased annually by 3.6 per cent in Madrid, 5.9 per cent in the City Centre District and 7.3 per cent in Lavapiés (Madrid Statistics, 2020a). Diverse groups severely hit by the economic crisis were evicted from their apartments. These events resulted in residents self-organising inter-class alliance movements for the right to housing.

According to Madrid Statistics (2020b), a third of Lavapiés residents were born abroad (33.9 per cent) compared to 21 per cent for Madrid as a whole. The area has a high population density with 432 inhabitants per

hectare (compared to 53.3 in the rest of Madrid). It also suffers from problems of overcrowding and substandard housing. A substantial proportion of the apartments are considered small (31.8 per cent are less than 45 metres). Additionally, Lavapiés has a young population (25.7 per cent are between 20 and 35 years old compared to 17.9 per cent in the rest of Madrid), and below-average fertility rates (28.7 children per 1,000 fertile women compared to 37.9 in the rest of Madrid). A notable percentage of Lavapiés residents have not completed primary education (15.6 per cent compared to 17.3 per cent in the rest of Madrid). However, the area has most associations of all Madrid, with 217 associations in the Central District alone out of the 2,447 in the whole city.

From 1991-2015, Madrid former conservative local government initiated a series of neoliberal urban policies in Lavapiés as part of a more comprehensive strategy of upgrading the historic downtown district (Morcillo, 2014). In collaboration with the regional and national governments, Lavapiés attained “priority rehabilitation area” status in 1997, and a two-phase physical rehabilitation project was initiated. The first phase took place from 1997-2003 and the second one from 2003-2011. Activities included the rehabilitation of traditional houses (*corralas*), architectural improvement programmes and the public space upgrading. This process of physical upgrading included the renewal or buildings of cultural importance, such as the new branch office of the National Distance Learning University (UNED), the new Hall of the National Institute of Music and Scenic Arts, and the restoration of the old “Casino de la Reina” and its gardens and a bank-owned cultural centre, the “La Casa Encendida”. Even though there has never been a comprehensive plan to upgrade Lavapiés (Pérez Quintana, 2010; Aja *et al.*, 2015), culture has been used to renew the area actively (Sequera, 2014). This heritage renovation (“musealisation”) and beautification of the city centre used tourism and culture to drive the economy while displacing people and ignoring social problems. Sorando and Ardura (2018) have shown how the concentration of ABIs in the historic centres of Spanish cities has led to displacement dynamics of their less well-off neighbours, also in the case of Madrid, as also analysed in detail by García-Pérez (2014). The main mechanism has been the increase in the rents demanded by the numerous rental properties in these neighbourhoods, as well as the conversion of many of these units into tourist accommodation (Ardura, Lorente and Ruiz, 2020).

The social protests against the area’s plans found its political expression in the electoral platform called “Ahora Madrid”. The social protests have

their immediate roots in the lack of alignment of the content of the area's plans with the needs perceived by the residents of the neighbourhood. In addition, this rejection was joined in 2011 by the effects of the deep economic crisis and which had its response in the "indignados" movement with the occupation of public squares in Spain on May 15, 2011 in protest against the economic crisis, the political corruption and the lack of institutional response. This platform was headed by a retired judge (Manuela Carmena) and gathered former neighbourhood association members, political activists and Podemos party members. This electoral platform got a bit less than a third (31.9 per cent) of the total votes in Madrid's 2015 municipal elections but obtained the majority of votes in Lavapiés (55.6 per cent). Consequently, "Ahora Madrid" took over municipal power with the Socialist party's backing in 2015 (Ministry of the Interior, 2020).

### Tøyen

Tøyen has much of the same history as Lavapiés. It is a traditional inner-city, working-class area where housing prices were lower than in other parts of Oslo.<sup>1</sup> It has a large immigrant population, and the buildings have traditionally been substandard. These characteristics have caused concern and led to a series of renewal programmes to upgrade buildings and living conditions.

The well-educated native Norwegian population in the Tøyen area is increasing. For example, in 2008, 58 per cent of the Tøyen inhabitants had college or university education, and in 2014 this value rose to 64 per cent. This increase suggests that new groups were moving into the area compared to the sociodemographic stability of the rest of the city (Brattbakk *et al.*, 2015).

The small area of Tøyen has 840 social housing units. This figure represents 11 per cent of the total number of dwellings and is much greater than the rest of Oslo (three per cent) (Bydel Gamle Oslo, 2015). Housing price rose 73.4 per cent between 2004 and 2013 in the city of Oslo, compared to Tøyen's almost 100 per cent price increase (Bydel Gamle Oslo, 2015; Brattbakk *et al.*, 2015). The community of Tøyen has been considered transient since one in three residents moves in or out of the area every year. Moreover, in 2014, 49 per cent of the registered residents in the Tøyen area were immigrants. The area is populated by many relatively young people without children. While the non-immigrant people in the area is highly educated, the immigrants in the area are less educated. Besides, it is important

<sup>1</sup> Boligpriser | Bydel Gamle Oslo | Bydelsfakta.

to point out that the Tøyen area immigrants are also less educated than Oslo's immigrant population (Brattbakk *et al.*, 2015).

Concerning employment, more than 90 per cent of the Norwegian demographic is employed, while approximately 50 per cent of the immigrant population works (Bydel Gamle Oslo, 2015; Brattbakk *et al.*, 2015). It has been reported that 68 per cent are immigrants in the area under the age of 16, and 25 per cent of the households are dependent on welfare benefits (Brattbakk *et al.*, 2015), although data are not available for the whole city. That is why the DC describes the Tøyen demographic as being highly polarised, with many new immigrants demanding of social services (Bydel Gamle Oslo, 2015; Brattbakk *et al.*, 2015).

From 1997 to 2007, an area-based programme funded Oslo's inner eastern central area (including the District Gamle Oslo and the Tøyen area) with 11.12 million USD yearly. Although attracting new residents was not an explicit objective of programme, but rather to improve the situation for residents in need, particularly minors, and to upgrade the area. Still, new types of residents, such as native Norwegian families with children moved into the area. The programme intended to improve the collaboration and dialogue between residents, local businesses and municipal organisations and discuss the challenges and possibilities in the area. They wanted to strengthen local networks and the local community as a whole (Brattbakk *et al.*, 2017). Other programmes that were initiated in this area include the Old Oslo Regeneration Project<sup>2</sup> (ended in 2000), The River Akerselva Inner East Project<sup>3</sup> (1992-1998) and the City Regeneration Project<sup>4</sup> (started in the 1970s). Additionally, Local Agenda 21 (local community consultation and plans to achieve sustainable development) provided the district with the ability to help residents foster real estate projects. More municipal and state institutions were also actively involved in these initiatives. It is worth mentioning that these previous programmes focused more on physical upgrading than the Tøyen ABI.

As opposed to Lavapiés, where the local government invested in culture, a major flagship institution, the Munch Museum, was moved out of the Tøyen area as part of a political agreement from 2013 - 2018. The political parties from the conservative right, the Christian Democrats, and the Liberal party, together with the Socialist party, agreed to move the museum to the Central Business District downtown. As compensation, the Tøyen district was given substantial funding through a five-year ABI (from 2014

<sup>2</sup> Miljøbyen Gamle Oslo.

<sup>3</sup> Akerselva indre Øst.

<sup>4</sup> Byfornyelsen.

till 2018) to upgrade the area. The plan comprised physical upgrading as well as the improvement of local services (Bydel Gamle Oslo, 2015), that according to some authors could have triggered the major changes in the district (Holgersen, 2020). The plan includes upgrades to the Tøyen square, the metro station and Tøyen water park, closing roads for cars, establishing a science centre, free kindergarten, half-price after-school activities, a new community house, mapping of the humanitarian organisations catering to the needs of at-risk people in the area (considering to move some of them), an open-air scene, and selling off municipal housing and replacing it with student housing.

In Norway, ABIs are grounded in welfare political goals to contribute to a positive development in these selected urban areas<sup>5</sup>; however, social mix theories have underpinned the initiatives. For example, in areas with complex physical, social, housing and local community challenges, it is believed that a better mix of different types of resident categories helps the disadvantaged groups (Brattbakk and Wessel, 2013). Since the late 1970s, several programmes aiming to increase the standard of living in Tøyen have been undertaken.

## **PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES IN THE TWO CITIES**

The questioning of the traditional institutions ended up turning the participatory model of Madrid upside down. Previously, the model was primarily controlled by the mainstream political parties through the direct representation of neighbours designated by political parties themselves (*vocales-vecinos*). Associations were subsidised by the city councils, which were also sometimes linked to the parties. Inhabitants' opinions and demands were previously filtered through the traditional neighbourhood associations (Ruano, 2010). Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that “Ahora Madrid”, a broad citizen alliance led by Podemos, opted for a new participatory model inspired by the deliberative practices of the M15 movement in 2015. Consequently, there was more room for individual participation in face-to-face and virtual spaces (such as the “Decide Madrid” platform). In this new participatory system, it is possible to discuss local issues, present bottom-up urban renewal projects and implement the city's participatory budget. Furthermore, Podemos did very well in the 2015 lo-

<sup>5</sup> The methodology for ABIs in Norway has been developed by Husbanken (Housing bank - state agency for affordable housing). The ABIs are designed to “through physical and social measures contribute to a holistic, lasting and locally based development work in selected areas with challenging living conditions”.

cal elections forming part of a new political majority in several small and large cities in Spain.

Before 2015, Madrid's participatory system was not responsive to residents' inputs. For example, meetings with resident representatives were only advisory, and the community received little information. One interviewee stated<sup>6</sup>:

Previous local governments have not been interested in participation. In a couple of cases, residents self-organised to make their voices heard. In the case of Lavapiés, new urban movements tried to organise a new community centre, but both the City Council and the regional government refused to allow it.

In 1997, different groups came together in the *Red de Colectivos de Lavapiés* (Network of Lavapiés Collectives) to protest the lack of resident participation in the urban renewal projects of Lavapiés. These stakeholders were the traditional neighbourhood's associations (from the 1970s), various groups of immigrants, the squatter movement, NGOs and cultural and environmental associations. The municipality actively tried to hinder participatory initiatives and attempts to influence city policies. As a result of pressure from the Network of Lavapiés Collectives, some social interventions and participatory initiatives were implemented: "subsidies were finally given to a number of projects put into practice by various associations and NGOs. By means of its grant policies, the *Ayuntamiento* introduced the seed of discord into the Network" (Díaz Orueta, 2007: 189). One of the interviewees<sup>7</sup> stated: "They only used the parts of the plan that they were interested in, especially propositions including opportunities for economic investment".

Thus, suggesting that the local government was primarily interested in business-friendly proposals.

In the second stage of the ABI only the traditional neighbourhood associations participated in the meetings. The ABI was characterised by the lack of coordination in the public administrations, resulting in disconnected interventions. The strategy of Madrid's then conservative local government (1991-2015) was to ignore and hinder social contestation, instead of negotiating with urban movements (Díaz Orueta *et al.*, 2018). The plan did not allow citizen participation, fundamental housing rights were ignored, and residents felt their needs were disregarded (Ruano *et al.*, 2019). This attitude triggered the mobilisation of traditional residents, new social

<sup>6</sup> Academic who has been researching participation processes within ABIs in Madrid.

<sup>7</sup> City planner who has worked with the different local governments of Madrid.



movements, squatters, immigrant associations and anti-globalisation movements that had hardly had any common interest until then. This coalition recalls the dynamics that gave rise to the Network of Lavapiés Collectives two decades before.

In Norway, participation is important both in national and local policies and is mandatory in the plan and building act. The ABI agreement in Tøyen is not mandated by law but explicitly mentions that residents and local interest groups and associations, shall participate in the decision-making process. Norwegian ABIs are usually committed to welfare goals for residents. Local businesses and a broad representation of state and municipal actors are also typically involved. However, in the Tøyen agreement, the state is very involved, essentially only funding earmarked resources. Therefore, it is somewhat unclear what the municipal government's responsibilities are, the programme's goals, whether it should be a programme supporting residents in need of assistance or upgrading the area. In this sense, there is a lack of a shared understanding of the best measures to apply. Furthermore, it is unclear which actors should be involved and what their roles should be (Brattbakk, 2015). As a result, there have been tensions between local politicians, the local administration, and the neighbours regarding citizen participation and prioritisation in the new ABI. For example, one interviewee stated:

We had no influence. We gave them tons of suggestions, but none of them were taken into account. Instead, they just checked that they had organised a participatory meeting. We will never ever let them do this again. We had a petition going with 600 signatures that we need a sports arena. We represent 750 residents.

The City Council clearly states the importance of citizen participation in the Tøyen ABI (Oslo kommune, 2013), but differences in perceptions about the ABI mandate led to conflicts between residents and the local administration. The local administration was unsure about the intentions of the different neighbourhood associations. As one of the local politicians stated:

The administration of the city district saw themselves as spokespersons for residents with drug and psychiatry related problems. They considered the resident representatives to be "hipsters" only preoccupied with their own concerns.

This statement reflects the conflictual understanding of the ABI. The local public administration thought that the funding should be primarily



used to strengthen ongoing operations helping the weakest groups in the area. The action groups' opinion was that it should be used to upgrade the local area (Brattbakk, 2015). As expressed, in the quote below, by one of the residents' representatives:

We lost all the positive institutions such as the Munch Museum. (...) By grouping all the humanitarian organisations together in one small geographical area you are turning a whole district into clients.

The residents did not want more institutions for destitute groups: They expected the ABI to be more comprehensive and meet the resident's needs. As one of their representatives put it:

When the administration uses most of the ABI funding for operations that should be funded through the Municipalities' normal budget, then the ABI will not make a difference. Then it's just business as usual.

We wanted sustainable measures that would prevail over time. We did not want the money to just fund an increase in the number of municipal employees.

At a public meeting, the politicians were criticised for not listening to the residents, not engaging residents, and making up measures that no one wanted. As one resident expressed it:

Why do we have to use our park to construct a science centre? A science centre is ok, but not if it is to compete with a sports arena.

We do not need more initiatives that our children stand outside and look in on.

The local politicians established a reference group to secure resident influence in the different projects within the ABI, but the group did not work as well as expected. A local politician said:

Cases were supposed to be open to feedback from the reference group before a decision was made. But this was not what happened. The cases were closed. Then it was up to the district council to make potential changes. That makes it hard. You relate to the formal structures of the Municipality, but this becomes a problem for participation.

It was demanding to make the administration understand that the reference group had an independent role and was supposed to be our watchdogs.

The participatory system set up for the ABI was considered manipulative in the residents' eyes because it did not grant them real influence. Residents were not, in practice, able to influence decisions on how the ABI funding was to be used locally.

After massive protests, the organisation and participation processes were changed in 2016 to allow more citizen participation and influence (Reichborn-Kjennerud and Ophaug, 2018). At the beginning of the ABI, they had a loosely organised consultative group. However, it evolved into an organised advisory group, the Tøyen council, instead of a reference group that gave residents more influence over the ABI funding.

### **Collective action in the two areas**

Many activist groups and urban movements such as the traditional neighbourhood associations (managing some social programmes), immigrant associations and new urban activists (varying in how willing they are to collaborate with the local government) coexist in Lavapiés. Some of their members collaborated to form the political platform that ruled Madrid's local government from 2015 to 2019. The main concern of these new urban activists in Lavapiés was the right to decent housing. They protested evictions, squatted and occupied public spaces. One of their initiatives was creating a new public space "*Esto es una Plaza*" (This is a Square). In a public meeting, one of its founders explained their conflict of interest with the public administration: "They only wanted us to use this place for a couple of weeks but we decided to stay longer because we felt the neighbourhood needed more places like «Esto es una Plaza»".

Many newcomers to the area are from the middle class with a high cultural capital but low economic capital. They are diversity-seekers belonging to the first wave of gentrifiers attracted to the neighbourhood by its ethnic and cultural diversity (Blockland and van Eijk, 2010). Most of them live in rental apartments, making them both victims of and committed to fighting against "touristification", a process that threatens the neighbourhood. Therefore, these individuals side with the immigrants in protests. One activist explained: "Differences between the ethnic groups and social classes cease to matter because it is very easy to agree on protesting phenomena such as evictions".

This alliance refers to the benefits that gentrification can bring in its early stages, insofar as it increases the protest resources of the neighbourhood, which often comes in the form of movement entrepreneurs (Jenkins, 1983). However, the arrival of gentrification pioneers also contributes to the domestication of the space, which facilitates later waves of the process (Zukin, 2010). The tension between the two dynamics marks the fate of the neighbourhood both in Lavapiés and Tøyen. In Lavapiés the inter-class alliance is prior, as a consequence of the shared status of protesters

as tenants in the private rental market. In contrast, in Tøyen the pioneers are homeowners, while those in weaker positions reside in social housing, which did not initially cater for a cooperation between social groups in the neighbourhood. Eventually, the newcomers sided with the residents already living there to fight the gentrification of the area.

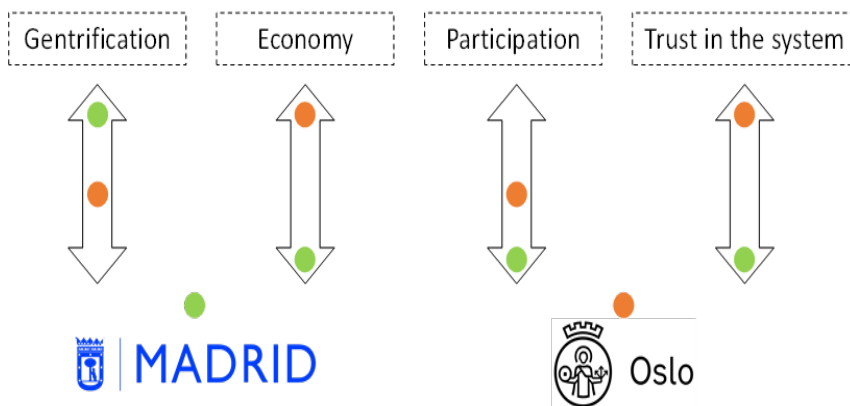
## DISCUSSION

The two cases reported in the present study show how people engage in protests when their space is threatened by stakeholder interests alien to local needs, especially when participatory processes fail to stop them. However, the reaction to these threats depend on economic, institutional and social factors. For example, in Madrid's financial crisis, the economy was pressured, making it more tempting for the local government to opt for an entrepreneurial strategy catering primarily to business. Simultaneously, the residents' frustrations increase with economic struggles, lack of responsiveness (i.e., low on Arnstein's participation ladder) and mistrust in local government.

The comparison of the two neighbourhoods is illustrated in Figure 2. The green dots illustrate Madrid's situation, whereas the orange dots illustrate Oslo's situation. This figure highlights the low trust, advanced gentrification, a challenging economic situation and a weak participatory system in Madrid. The opposite was true for Oslo. Even though the participatory system also did not work well in Oslo, the politicians and administrators were more responsive. In response to these pressures, Madrid residents mobilised and voted out the mainstream political parties leading to radical changes. In Oslo, reactions were less dramatic and led to adjustments in the local participatory system.

The main goal of this article is to understand which political mobilization strategies residents use when frustrated with participatory processes in two gentrifying neighbourhoods. Also, we identify the institutional, economic and social factors that explain these different strategies (Table 1). Our findings confirm that the public administrations and governance systems did not allow for real influence high up on the participation ladder in either case. In Tøyen, formal participatory systems led to the dissatisfaction of the residents. In contrast, residents of Lavapiés were denied real influence and previous unsuccessful attempts to participate attenuated the trust in the local government. In both cases, the residents were frustrated, but they used different protest strategies to gain influence.

Figure 2: Comparison of the two neighbourhoods



Source: own elaboration.

Table 1: Comparison of explanatory factors and political mobilization strategies in both neighbourhoods

	Lavapiés	Tøyen
Social structure	Heterogeneous: strong cross-class coalition	Heterogeneous: late cross-class coalition
Economic situation	Severe recession	Mild economic downturn
Political trust	Low	High
Urban interventions	Physical renewal based on cultural facilities upgrading	Combination of physical and welfare interventions
Influence of neighbours through the participation system	Weak, based on traditional neighbourhood associations	Weak-medium, perceived as symbolic and inoperative
Political mobilization strategies	Disruptive, based on stakeholder alliances	Consensual and reformist

Source: own elaboration.

In the Oslo case, residents were not united in an interclass alliance the way they were in Madrid. The Norwegian neighbourhood, with a socially mixed population and potential conflicts of interest, the resident’s local action capacity worked less effectively. Before the residents got to know each other and started collaborating, the different groups’ interests were diverging. For example, new residents owning their own homes could ben-

efit from gentrification, whereas the residents living in social houses risked displacement. This situation reduced the new residents' legitimacy with the local district administration that protected residents depending on welfare. In Madrid, the local government was not responsive to the united interclass alliance of Lavapiés that finally mobilised politically and contributed to a new political platform's electoral success.

In Lavapiés, the restrictions on public participation were substantial. The traditional position of Spanish power-holders was to exclude protester's voices in governance (Fishman and Everson, 2016). The ABI initiatives did not include social and local economic policies or measures to support the local community. Nor did the city have goals or policies that involved residents in urban renewal projects. Consequently, governance and participatory systems did not facilitate dialogue with the local residents. Instead, traditional associations (many of them indirectly attached to mainstream political parties) and politically-appointed neighbours presented themselves as the residents' only representatives. On the contrary, the governance and participatory system in Tøyen were more welfare-oriented, but not sufficiently attuned to residents' preferences.

Furthermore, a clear coalition between residents was not as evident in the Tøyen case as in the Lavapiés case. The highly educated Norwegians were mostly homeowners, whereas most of the other residents were tenants. However, this situation was within a stable economic state and trustworthy welfare system. Additionally, a participatory system was in place, stating that residents are to be heard in Tøyen. This type of system is standard procedure in Scandinavian countries (Grønbech-Jensen, 1998); however, the local administration hindered the existing participatory systems from working as planned, at least partly because they had a different understanding of the funding mandate than the protesting residents. As a consequence, the residents felt manipulated. Importantly, even though the institutional, welfare and socioeconomic situation differed between Oslo and Madrid, participatory mechanisms functioned unsatisfactorily in both cases.

## CONCLUSION

We started by asking how participatory processes play out differently in two inner-city areas. We soon realised that contextual variables such as the economic situation and the neighbourhoods' socio-demographic characteristics were powerful explanatory factors for the political mobilisation strategies used by residents. Tøyen and Lavapiés are located in cities belonging

to very different political and social cultures. However, both neighbourhoods are close to the city centres, have high relative rates of immigration and population density, a social heterogeneity typical of gentrification processes, low relative educational levels and substandard housing. We observed that the participatory institutional settings, the social configuration of the neighbourhoods and the wider socio-economic situation had a decisive influence on the population's response to the public authorities' policy. More specifically, we found that a non-existing or poorly working participation system, as well as a severe economic situation combined with high social capital in a neighbourhood favour rupture, rather than reformist, strategies.

In the case of Lavapiés, the driving force in neighbourhood gentrification was boosting the city's tourism policy through physical renovation measures and the upgrading of cultural facilities. In the case of Tøyen, the intervention policies combined physical renewal with social measures targeting the most disadvantaged population, which is consistent with the Norwegian welfare state goals. Despite these differences, in both cases the local population perceived urban regeneration as a threat to their interests because it did not take their opinions into account. In Lavapiés, the large population living in privately rented housing feared displacement. This fear is based on the dynamics of gentrification and touristification of the neighbourhood. In Tøyen, the poorest people live in social housing that the local government planned to sell. These residents feared their displacement from the neighbourhood. The more affluent residents, on the other hand, opposed interventions that were not based on their demands. In the end, both social groups converged in their protest against changes that were not based on local demands. Although both cities had systems for citizen participation, they were perceived as incapable of channelling the citizens' demands and concerns.

In Tøyen, urban renewal was viewed as symbolic and insensitive to local needs. On the other hand, in Madrid, the immigrant population and the new social movements raised their voice against the high housing costs and the neglect of social needs during a harsh economic crisis. This uprising was mostly because the principal actors of the participatory institutions (i.e., the traditional neighbourhood associations) were now incapable of representing the interests of the neighbourhoods. It is likely that the less difficult economic situation in the Nordic country, social measures and trust in political representatives, together with a less well-established neighbourhood coalition, culminated in a milder response to municipal in-

tervention. It also appears as though these factors stimulated adjustments in the participatory system and created citizen advisory bodies.

The reactions of Tøyen residents stand in stark contrast to those of Lavapiés. Spain's political class has been perceived as inefficient, corrupt and directly responsible for unemployment and evictions. In this situation, the residents felt the channels of participation were invalid. Eventually, new social actors acting as dissident groups formed their own coalition and replaced the traditional political parties. This coalition of actors with distinct interests, focused on winning municipal elections, stopping urban interventions and radically modifying the citizen participation model. Better knowledge of residents' strategies helps understand the political effect when democratic initiatives are insufficient or cosmetic. From the perspective of local governments, top-down participatory processes without effective channels of neighbourhood influence tend not to last over time. From the perspective of social movements, this instability favours political mobilisation strategies for the extension of the right to the city. This is especially true in economically and politically tense contexts, as well as in neighbourhoods where cross-class protest strategies are organised.

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