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COMMUNICATION, GENTRIFICATION, AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION:
COMMUNITY RESPONSES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

Gentrification is an urban process characterised by the renewal of neighbourhoods and the arrival of more affluent residents. While it can lead to improvements in infrastructure and public safety, it often displaces long-standing, lower-income populations due to rising living costs, thereby transforming the social fabric and local services of the area. Using a case study of the Lavapiés neighbourhood in Madrid, this article examines how residents use social media to coordinate and resist this phenomenon. It establishes the current context of gentrification in the area, explores the role of political actors past and present, and analyses the actions taken by neighbourhood groups on social media. The article concludes that, although local social movements are limited in scope, their primary focus is on opposing tourist accommodation and investment funds.

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, new socio-spatial reconfigurations in large cities have profoundly transformed urban spaces, affecting access to housing and displacing the most vulnerable populations to peripheral areas (López-Gay et al., 2021). This phenomenon has favoured more privileged socio-economic strata and led to the territorial separation of social groups, increasing segregation, and socio-economic polarisation (Hochstenbach and Musterd, 2021). These urban transformations typically occur in areas that have undergone significant revaluation, particularly in exclusive central districts, driven by the concentration of new productive and innovative activities (Bailey and Milton, 2018).

In Spain, the consequences of this reorganisation differ from those observed in other countries undergoing similar processes, due in part to the longstanding promotion of home ownership, which is a policy that has been supported by both left- and right-wing governments over several decades. This model, financed through mortgages and often refinanced at a very low cost, contributed to the 2007 financial crisis (Nasarre-Aznar, 2020). As a result, access to housing has become a critical issue, generating intense political and social debate (Módenes, 2023).

The social and economic consequences of this situation, as well as potential solutions to ensure safe and affordable housing for all, have been explored from various perspectives, including constitutional considerations, emergency housing strategies, and the specific challenges faced by certain groups (Nogueria, 2020). However, such solutions have rarely been proposed or implemented by public administrations. In response to governmental inaction, neighbourhood mobilisation and the creation of local associations have grown significantly, often incorporating technological innovations in communication, transmission of information, and organisational methods (Jost et al., 2018).

In recent years, housing has emerged as one of the most pressing issues affecting society. It has sparked political and social debate concerning the consequences of urban modernisation and whether the transformations taking place in various city centres should involve the participation of residents.

One of the most commonly used terms in recent years in discussions of urban transformation has been *gentrification*. Introduced into urban studies by Ruth Glass (1964, cited in López Morales, 2009), *gentrification* refers to the process by which working-class or lower-income neighbourhoods undergo significant transformation due to the influx of middle- and upper-class residents, often resulting in the displacement of long-term inhabitants (Benach and Albet i Mas, 2018).

This form of urban segregation emerged during a period in which Western societies were increasingly committed to egalitarian power structures and the democratisation of culture. This shift was accompanied by the rise of activist movements defending minority rights, while capitalist systems simultaneously prioritised economic growth. As a result, more powerful social groups, characterised by higher levels of cultural and economic capital, gradually came to dominate urban spaces (Iglesias Vicinay, 2020).

Over the decades, gentrification has evolved and diversified. While originally concentrated in specific urban areas, it now extends to a wide variety of urban and rural spaces, including historic neighbourhoods and disused industrial zones. Benach and Albet i Mas(2018) argue that it is no longer a purely local process but a global phenomenon, reflecting the broader tensions of capitalism and neoliberal urban policy.

The implications of this process now permeate multiple aspects of urban life, including access to housing, increasing property values, the spatial distribution of social classes, and the cultural and economic reconfiguration of cities (López Morales, 2009). Gentrification is therefore not only a matter of residential change or urban renewal, it has also become a wider strategy tied to the economic and spatial restructuring of cities under neoliberalism. Smith (2002) characterises gentrification as a form of urban colonialism, whereby privileged classes progressively occupy the spaces of more vulnerable social groups.

1.1. Gentrification in Spain

In Spain, gentrification has followed a particular pattern due to the characteristics of the country's social, economic, and political context. As an example of late industrialisation, Spain avoided the creation of suburbs as refuges for elites, so the social trajectory of its urban centres throughout the 20th century does not reflect a process of social and economic devaluation comparable to that of other regions (López-Gay et al., 2021). However, since the 1960s, certain sectors of historic centres in Spain have undergone a period of deterioration, partly caused by Franco's rent legislation, which discouraged investment in housing maintenance (Naredo, 2010). Despite this, most urban centres did not experience complete abandonment by the ruling classes. In fact, these spaces continued to be attractive due to their proximity to employment and their architectural heritage (Leal, 2004).

In the last decades of the 20th century, a renewed phase of urban recovery began, particularly after the Boyer Decree of 1985. This regulation facilitated the revaluation of properties and the expulsion of tenants through disinvestment. This phenomenon, which mainly impacted stigmatised sectors, allowed new groups, such as young people with alternative lifestyles or immigrants, to begin occupying these areas (Sorando & Ardura, 2018).

In the 21st century, cities such as Madrid (Ardura Urquiaga et al., 2021; Knirsch & Gago García, 2021), Barcelona (López Villanueva & Crespi Vallbona, 2021; López-Gay et al., 2022), and Seville (Parralejo & Díaz Parra, 2021; Vestri, 2020) have experienced significant transformations in their urban fabric, particularly in historic and central neighbourhoods. This has not only altered the demographics and social structure of these areas but has also increased pressure on real estate markets and caused the displacement of original residents.

In Madrid and Barcelona, the momentum intensifying gentrification has been mainly due to demographic rejuvenation, the increase in the population born in countries with high human development indices, and residential selectivity (López-Gay et al., 2021). Another relevant factor in Spain is the widespread preference for owning rather than renting a home. Módenes and López-Colás (2014) point out that, unlike other European countries, the rental market in Spain is small and poorly regulated, which exacerbates the displacement dynamics linked to gentrification. Moreover, limited access to public housing and housing insecurity for tenants contribute to the precariousness of society's most vulnerable sectors.

This situation is further aggravated by real estate speculation, facilitated by government policies favouring the entry of international capital into the housing market (Nel-lo, 2018). Since the 1990s, a key factor accelerating gentrification in Spain has been the impact of tourism, which has intensified over the last decade. Urban tourism has contributed to rising house prices and encouraged the proliferation of tourist housing, displacing local residents and altering neighbourhood social dynamics (Cocola-Gant & López-Gay, 2020). This tourism-based gentrification, or *touristification*, has attracted significant criticism, as in many cases the economic benefits derived from tourism have failed to reach the original residents and have instead favoured external actors and investors.

Because of the variety of factors accelerating gentrification in Spain, the consequences are profound and multifaceted. The displacement of original neighbourhood populations generates greater socio-spatial segregation, as former residents are forced to move to more peripheral areas where access to services and economic opportunities is limited and socio-economic inequalities increase (Sorando Ortín and Leal, 2019). Another consequence of gentrification is the rise in real estate prices and the increased cost of living in affected neighbourhoods (Llurdés Coit & Cerdán Heredia, 2018). This process not only affects residents who must move but also transforms the economic structure of neighbourhoods, driving the emergence of new businesses aimed at consumers with greater purchasing power (Sequera, 2020). This phenomenon, often referred to as *commercial gentrification*, leads to the disappearance of traditional businesses and community services, negatively affecting residents who remain in the neighbourhood (Benach & Albet i Mas, 2018).

In addition to economic impacts, gentrification has profound repercussions on the social and cultural cohesion of neighbourhoods. Population replacement generates a change in social dynamics, as new residents often do not participate in pre-existing community networks, weakening social ties and contributing to the loss of local identity (Benach & Albet i Mas, 2018).

1.2. Urban Policy and the Impact of Tourism

The role of governments in urban transformation has a significant influence on gentrification. In Spain, however, the interventionist role aimed at reducing inequality and urban segregation has been displaced, while processes of revaluation and devaluation have accelerated. Prior to the 2008 financial crisis, the real estate market in Spain significantly boosted economic growth, supported by state policies that promoted ownership through tax incentives, thereby reducing the supply of rental and social housing (Coq-Huelva, 2013; Alexandri and Janoschka, 2018). The real estate bubble was characterised by speculation and the excessive granting of subprime mortgages, concentrated in large cities and tourist areas (Armas-Díaz and Sabaté-Bel, 2022). This process of real estate accumulation, which dates back to the creation of a landlord society during Franco's dictatorship, accelerated in the 1990s through large-scale urbanisation and speculation, absorbing over-accumulated capital and generating a bubble that indebted families and overvalued housing (Di Felicitano & Aalbers, 2018). The ensuing recession provoked a crisis that eroded shared urban resources and public services, while austerity measures further intensified its social repercussions.

With the crisis, Spain recorded the highest increase in evictions in Western Europe due to foreclosures (Beswick et al., 2016), making housing one of the main social concerns (García-Lamarca, 2017). The government's neoliberal stance favoured foreign investment in the real estate sector and allowed evictions to benefit financial agents (Gutiérrez and Domènech, 2017). Urban areas with high levels of construction and tourism were the most affected by the crisis following the financial collapse. Neoliberal governance in Spanish urban centres is reflected in the relationship between the rise of new middle classes and public intervention in mixed central spaces. At the beginning of the 21st century, these neighbourhoods presented conditions below the habitability standards demanded by the upper-middle classes, but public investment through programmes such as the Integrated Rehabilitation Areas (ARI) enabled improvements. This investment facilitated the occupation of these sectors by the new middle classes, indirectly displacing the most vulnerable populations (Leal and Sorando, 2013).

Furthermore, as a result of the financial crisis, transnational capital was redirected towards the tourism, hotel, and residential real estate sectors. With the fall in demand for housing for sale, investment strategies shifted towards buy-to-let models, prioritising short-term rentals over traditional tenancies and displacing tenants in favour of tourists (Armas-Díaz et al., 2023b). This trend was seized upon by corporate and institutional investors, who focused on rental platforms such as Airbnb, boosting housing finance and fostering new fronts of gentrification (Cocola-Gant and Gago, 2021). Leisure-based strategies and transnational mobilities, such as long-term tourists and digital nomads, have been key in turning the financial crisis into a source of accumulation (Sigler and Wachsmuth, 2020), connecting international capital with housing demand. These mobilities promote gentrification and displacement (Armas-Díaz et al., 2023a).

2. Objectives

This study focuses on analysing digital activism by neighbourhood associations opposing gentrification in Lavapiés, Madrid. Known for its cultural diversity and history of community resistance, Lavapiés has experienced an accelerated process of gentrification in recent decades. This phenomenon has led to rising housing prices and the displacement of residents, prompting a range of responses from the local community.

2.1. General Objective

The aim of this study is to analyse the social movement arising from gentrification in the Lavapiés neighbourhood.

2.2. Specific Objectives

The following specific objectives are derived from this general aim:

- To examine the current context of gentrification in the Lavapiés neighbourhood,
- To assess political involvement in the gentrification processes in Madrid,
- To analyse the types of messages employed by neighbourhood associations on social networks to generate social mobilisation against gentrification.

3. Methodology

To address the research objectives, a case study methodology is employed, focusing on neighbourhood mobilisations against gentrification in Lavapiés. This approach combines several methods, including a systematised literature review, interviews, analysis of secondary sources, and content analysis of social media publications.

A case study is an empirical research method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined (Yin, 2018). It is especially suitable for exploratory research, notably when addressing new or under-researched topics. While gentrification in Lavapiés has been well documented in the scientific literature, allowing this section of the study to adopt a descriptive approach, the analysis of neighbourhood mobilisation in response to this process remains exploratory due to the limited prior research.

Triangulation is achieved through the use of various data types and methods, organised across multiple phases typical of case study research. The study begins with a review of literature on gentrification in Lavapiés. A systematised review (Codina, 2020) provides essential theoretical grounding, aiding the selection and structuring of the case, defining key parameters, and guiding the choice of appropriate methods. This review aims to contextualise the typology of gentrification in Lavapiés and to establish the current state of knowledge regarding the environment in which neighbourhood movements have arisen.

A qualitative methodology is employed in this phase, using a scoping review as a systematic approach to synthesising evidence (Codina et al., 2021). The scoping review identifies the characteristics of the relevant field of knowledge. The SALSA framework (Grant & Booth, 2009), which comprises four phases: Search, Appraisal, Synthesis, and Analysis, is applied to guide the selection and evaluation of the review. The search used the terms “gentrification and Lavapiés”, “gentrification and Embajadores”, and “gentrification and Madrid”, retrieving all scientific articles and book chapters from the Dialnet Plus and Google Scholar databases, as the search was locally focused.

This yielded 22 results relating to gentrification and Lavapiés, including two book chapters, one doctoral thesis, two conference proceedings, and 17 articles. Due to limited access to some articles, the brevity of conference proceedings, and the structure of the thesis, the study uses eleven texts in total: nine scientific articles and two book chapters.

The selection of Lavapiés as a case study is justified by several key factors: ongoing political debate over housing access; increasing tourism and demand for holiday homes; the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on local services and daily life; and migration, which is regarded as a primary societal issue (CIS, 2024), with Lavapiés being a significant receiving area for migrants.

To finalise the case definition, a political perspective is incorporated. To gather information on the perceptions of political groups regarding gentrification in Lavapiés, an in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted. This format was chosen because, following the literature review, the key topics were identified but the interview remained open-ended to allow the interviewee to introduce

new topics (Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2014). The interviewees targeted were those responsible for urban planning within each political group represented in the Madrid City Council. However, among the four political groups, Partido Popular, Más Madrid, PSOE, and Vox, only Antonio Giraldo, head of urban planning for PSOE, agreed to be interviewed. The qualitative data obtained therefore reflect only part of the political spectrum and cannot be generalised, as the sample constitutes 25% of the study population.

Once the case has been established, detailing its most relevant parameters, characteristics, and delimitations (Coller, 2005), data collection proceeds systematically and structurally. A content analysis is performed on the messages transmitted via social networks by accounts representing residents engaged in digital activism.

The initial step in the analysis involved selecting the most appropriate social network for this form of mobilisation. According to Castillero Ostio et al. (2021), Facebook is a key platform for social mobilisation, facilitating organisational activity in offline demonstrations and protests, and serving as a central hub for social demands directed at the political class.

Following this, the sample for analysis was selected. The registry of associations of the Community of Madrid[1], comprising 21,691 records as of 21 August 2024, was consulted. Associations headquartered in Lavapiés with an activity classification of "Owners, neighbours" were selected. This yielded five associations: *Asociación de comerciantes de la calle Argumosa, Plaza de Lavapiés y aledaños, Asociación madrileña de vecinos comerciantes y empresarios Distrito 12, Asociación de jóvenes vecinos de La Corrala Latina-Rastro-Lavapiés, Asociación de vecinos La Corrala Latina-Rastro-Lavapiés,* and *Asociación de vecinos amigos del libro de Lavapiés*.

A review of the Facebook presence of these associations revealed that two had no activity and one lacked a social network account. Consequently, only the *Asociación madrileña de vecinos comerciantes y empresarios Distrito 12*, via its Facebook account *enLavapies*, and the *Asociación de vecinos La Corrala Latina-Rastro-Lavapiés*, via its Facebook account *Asociación de vecinos La Corrala*, were included in the analysis.

Additionally, three general Facebook groups with over a thousand members each were analysed: Lavapiés (7,924 members), Barrio de Lavapiés 2.0 (2,637 members), and No eres de Lavapiés SI (1,300 members). The period analysed spanned from 1 January to 15 September 2024.

The design of the analysis template employed in this research is based on two prior studies (Arroyo-Almaraz et al., 2018; Castillero Ostio et al., 2021), which were instrumental in defining the categories and variables.

Table 1. Design of the Analysis Template

Variables	Categories
Type of post/entry	News Vindicative Infotainment
Language used (text)	Aggressive Critical/Vindictive Satirical/Ironic Neutral/Indeterminate
Format	Image Video Link to digital media

Type of format	Informative/illustrative Vindicative Satirical Entertainment
Type of communication	Communication for social change Behaviour change communication Communication for advocacy
Main focus of the publication	Local government politician Housing Tenants Tourist flats
Theme	Displacement of businesses Housing crisis Destruction of neighbourhoods Illegal tourist flats Vulture funds Touristification
Action	Shop closures Summary of demonstration/assembly Application of regulatory law Denouncement of tourist flats Promotion Demonstration/Assembly Actions of vulture funds Living conditions

Source(s): Arroyo-Almaraz et al. (2018) and Castillero Ostio et al. (2021). Own elaboration 2024.

4. Results

4.1. Systematic Review

4.1.1 Historical and Social Context

Lavapiés, located in Madrid's Central District, has uncertain origins dating back to the 13th century and was historically home to Jewish and Muslim communities, which contributed to its reputation as a marginal area (Saiz de Lobado García, 2022). Its urban layout and characteristic *corrales* (communal housing blocks) have remained largely unchanged since the 18th century, with approximately 70% of the buildings constructed before 1920 (García Pérez, 2014). Since the 1990s, the influx of foreign immigrants has accentuated its multicultural character, although the neighbourhood has also faced challenges related to overcrowding and precarious housing conditions, a phenomenon referred to as *vertical shantytownism* (García Pérez, 2014; Saiz de Lobado García, 2022).

Administratively, Lavapiés does not exist as an independent entity, as it forms part of the Embajadores neighbourhood within the Central District. Nonetheless, the area has undergone a series of distinctive transformations throughout its history that have shaped the identity now recognised as Lavapiés. While its precise historical origins are unclear, the neighbourhood's current configuration was largely established by the 18th century (Torres Bernier et al., 2018).

Historically, Lavapiés has been a working-class neighbourhood, renowned for its cultural diversity and rich history. According to Torres Bernier et al. (2018), Lavapiés was consolidated as a settlement for the humbler classes during the 18th century, contributing to the heterogeneity of its urban fabric and the small size of its dwellings. This legacy has left a lasting imprint on the social composition of the

neighbourhood, which today is home to a diverse population, including a high percentage of immigrants and a significant proportion of elderly residents. With 24.6% of its population being foreign-born and 19% elderly, Lavapiés reflects Madrid's multicultural character while also highlighting the economic challenges faced by many of its inhabitants (Torres Bernier et al., 2018).

In recent decades, globalisation has transformed Madrid's urban landscape, and Lavapiés is no exception. The city's economic boom throughout the 1990s and 2000s attracted cultural professionals and tourists, intensifying processes of gentrification and tourism within the neighbourhood (Mazorra Rodríguez, 2023). The revaluation of real estate, driven by public investment and urban renewal initiatives, has significantly altered the area's socio-economic dynamics, resulting in a sharp rise in housing prices. This has exacerbated social inequality and led to the displacement of numerous residents, fundamentally changing the neighbourhood's identity and communal networks.

4.1.2. Gentrification in Lavapiés

The processes of gentrification and *touristification* are closely intertwined, though they manifest in distinct ways. Gentrification refers to the transformation of a neighbourhood, typically through the influx of higher-income residents, which often results in the displacement of original inhabitants and cultural homogenisation. In contrast, *touristification* involves the conversion of urban spaces into destinations prioritising economic activities linked to tourism, where the interests of visitors outweigh those of local residents (Saiz de Lobado, 2022).

Saiz de Lobado (2022) reports that in Lavapiés, 37.6% of the samples analysed through Linguistic Cartography (CL) exhibit signs of gentrification and touristification, particularly notable in restaurants (24.20%) and handicraft workshops (6.40%). This phenomenon has been propelled by a surge in tourism alongside public investment in the rehabilitation of urban spaces, resulting in increased living costs and the disappearance of local businesses. The transformation of Lavapiés into a tourist destination has altered consumption patterns, privileging the needs and desires of visitors over those of long-standing residents.

Despite the neighbourhood's multicultural character, gentrification has caused housing prices to rise steadily since 2014, exacerbating socio-economic inequalities (Mazorra Rodríguez, 2023). The escalating cost of living has compelled many residents to leave, thereby diminishing the cultural diversity that has historically defined Lavapiés.

The collective memory of Lavapiés plays a crucial role in resistance to the processes of gentrification and touristification. Community memory is expressed through the cultural, social, and political practices residents have developed to preserve their identity and history. Sánchez Llorca (2023) argues that collective memory is central to urban resistance, as it is not solely defined by transformations imposed by the market and public policies, but manifests in nomadic practices that resist homogenisation.

Social centres in Lavapiés, as spaces for self-organisation and resistance, are vital for maintaining memory and fostering community cohesion amid displacement processes. These organisations have played an essential role in advocating for residents' rights, providing a platform to articulate demands and construct alternatives to the predatory economic models underpinning gentrification and touristification. Resistance to gentrification has materialised through various initiatives, including the creation of local markets and the promotion of cultural events celebrating the neighbourhood's diversity (Botella Ordinas, 2023).

Gentrification in Lavapiés has been driven by public investment in rehabilitation, which has benefited property and business owners, while many residents have been displaced and faced deteriorating living conditions (Torres Bernier et al., 2018). This has exacerbated inequality and residential segregation, producing a dual geography in which wealth is centralised and poverty is marginalised. García Pérez's (2014) study highlights how gentrification in Madrid has been influenced by the social and wage structure, allowing cultural sector professionals to lead changes in consumption patterns and urban renewal.

In this context, citizen participation becomes a crucial element in addressing the inequalities generated by gentrification. However, residents' responses to urban interventions have varied, reflecting differing perceptions of the effectiveness of participation channels. According to Reichborn-Kjennerud et al. (2022), the neglect of local needs has fuelled distrust towards authorities, prompting residents to organise and demand changes in urban policy.

The interaction between gentrification and collective memory is complex and multifaceted. While gentrification seeks to reconfigure urban space and its social dynamics, collective memory serves as a bulwark of resistance and a means of reclaiming cultural identity. Collective practices, such as self-organisation in social centres, are fundamental for maintaining memory and strengthening community resilience in the face of gentrification (Sánchez Llorca, 2023). Memory encompasses not only the history of the neighbourhood but also the lived experiences and struggles of its inhabitants, who have continuously engaged with the transformations affecting their environment.

The COVID-19 crisis has intensified these tensions, underscoring social interdependence and the unsustainability of predatory economic models driving gentrification and touristification (Sánchez Llorca, 2023). This context has opened new opportunities to rethink and reconstruct social and territorial ties, highlighting collective memory's importance as a tool for imagining new forms of coexistence and resistance within urban spaces.

Despite the challenges they face, the residents of Lavapiés have shown remarkable resilience in response to gentrification and the pressures of tourism. Community organisation and self-identification as part of a collective have enabled residents to articulate their demands and defend their rights. The growing importance of citizen participation in the fight against gentrification has fostered the creation of spaces for dialogue and collective action, promoting initiatives that seek to preserve the identity and memory of the neighbourhood.

For example, initiatives such as *Territorio Doméstico* focus on the rights of migrant women and precarious workers, promoting solidarity and mutual support within the context of increasing gentrification (Botella Ordinas, 2023). These initiatives underscore the importance of an ethical approach to tourism that prioritises the needs of vulnerable groups. Simultaneously, the critique of consumer dynamics that transform Lavapiés into a tourist destination highlights the necessity to rethink the role of tourism in urban life.

4.2. Principal Findings of the In-Depth Interview

The phenomenon of gentrification in Madrid has become a central process for understanding urban transformation over recent decades. It is characterised by the gradual displacement of the traditional low-income population due to the influx of new residents with greater purchasing power. This dynamic is driven by both economic factors and political decisions that prioritise private investments and the expansion of sectors such as tourism, which intensifies gentrification in the city's central areas.

Historically, Madrid has undergone cycles of decline and renewal in its central neighbourhoods. During the 1970s and 1980s, areas such as Chueca and Malasaña, then in a state of deterioration, began to attract young people with new demands and lifestyles. This shift prompted the rehabilitation of these neighbourhoods, accompanied by a gradual rise in housing prices, which resulted in the displacement of original residents. Today, a similar process is occurring but at an accelerated pace, propelled by the tourism boom and the centralisation of economic, political, and cultural activities in the city centre.

A key factor in understanding gentrification in Madrid is the city's economic structure. Unlike other industrial capitals, Madrid's economy is predominantly based on the service, financial, and tourism sectors. This reliance has exerted considerable pressure on housing prices and public services in the most desirable areas, forcing many long-term residents to relocate to peripheral neighbourhoods such as Usera, Puente de Vallecas, and Tetuán. The absence of effective redistributive policies and insufficient regulation of the expansion of tourist accommodation exacerbate this situation, contributing to the displacement of the original population.

An analysis of the accompanying policy decisions indicates that authorities have generally favoured private investment, facilitating the acquisition and rehabilitation of properties in strategic locations. While in some countries, such as the United Kingdom, urban renewal has been driven by a combination of state and private sector initiatives, Madrid predominantly follows a hybrid model. Here, private ventures are supported by public policies that incentivise specific investments, including the surge in tourist flats. This dynamic has significantly affected the city centre, particularly since the tourism boom of the early 2000s, transforming central neighbourhoods into attractive destinations for visitors and intensifying pressure on housing costs.

Madrid's limited productive base beyond the service sector has heightened its dependence on tourism and finance, to the detriment of industrial and manufacturing activities. This economic structure directly impacts local workers, particularly those in precarious, low-wage sectors such as hospitality and retail, who face neighbourhood transformations that undermine their ability to maintain their standard of living amid rising costs. Urban and economic policies have tended to prioritise the attraction of financial capital and tourism investment rather than diversifying the productive model, thereby increasing the vulnerability of local residents to speculative projects such as hotels and luxury housing developments.

The current cycle of gentrification in Madrid is not unprecedented. Historically, the city's central districts have oscillated between working-class and upper-class occupancy in response to broader economic and urban trends. However, the distinguishing feature of the present cycle is its accelerated pace, driven by globalisation and foreign investment. Changes that previously unfolded over decades are now occurring within a matter of years, resulting in substantial social dislocation.

Although challenging to reverse, the adverse effects of gentrification can be mitigated. Public policy has a critical role to play in regulating the real estate market, controlling the proliferation of tourist accommodation, and promoting a more equitable distribution of investment across the city. Rather than concentrating resources and capital in select neighbourhoods, redistributive measures could prevent the displacement of working-class residents to peripheral areas or beyond. State intervention focused on inclusive urban development would foster social coexistence and reduce the marked inequalities engendered by current trends.

One of the most salient aspects of gentrification in Madrid is the growing disconnect between new residents or tourists and longstanding residents. As neighbourhoods are transformed to attract wealthier populations and visitors, traditional services and shops often disappear, replaced by more expensive businesses. This process reduces original residents' access to affordable goods and services, resulting in a mismatch between local supply and demand. Gentrification thus affects not only housing but also daily life, reshaping consumption patterns and social relations.

In other areas, such as Barcelona, policies have been implemented to curb excessive tourism growth by limiting hotel construction and regulating short-term tourist rentals. However, these measures have sometimes produced unintended consequences, including further increases in real estate prices. Consequently, it is essential to strike a balance between economic development and the protection of local residents' rights. Public intervention must be more proactive to ensure that urban change does not occur too rapidly or abruptly, thereby safeguarding the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

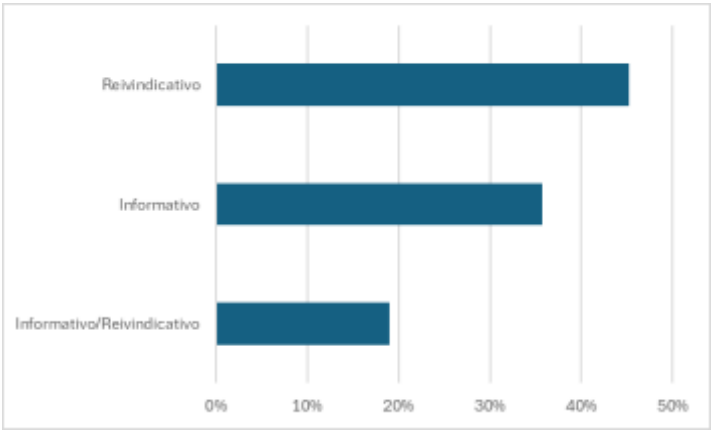
Gentrification in Madrid must be understood within a broader framework of global urban transformation, where economic and social dynamics are in constant flux. Although not unique to Madrid, the city exemplifies how globalisation and foreign investment can rapidly reshape urban centres, generating both economic opportunities and adverse effects for local communities. Public policy faces the challenge of fostering inclusive growth while preserving the identity and social cohesion of historic neighbourhoods.

4.3. Analysis of Facebook Posts

After analysing all the Facebook accounts in the sample, 42 posts addressing gentrification in the Lavapiés neighbourhood were identified. These originated exclusively from the neighbourhood association *La Corrala* and the Facebook group Lavapiés. Of the neighbourhood associations, *La Corrala* published 141 posts during the study period, with 36% addressing gentrification, though only 28 posts were analysed due to duplicates. Notably, the traders' association in Lavapiés, despite posting 289 messages in the same period, did not publish any content related to gentrification. Regarding the Lavapiés Facebook group, 14 posts were analysed, however, these constitute only a small fraction relative to the total number of posts on the group's page.

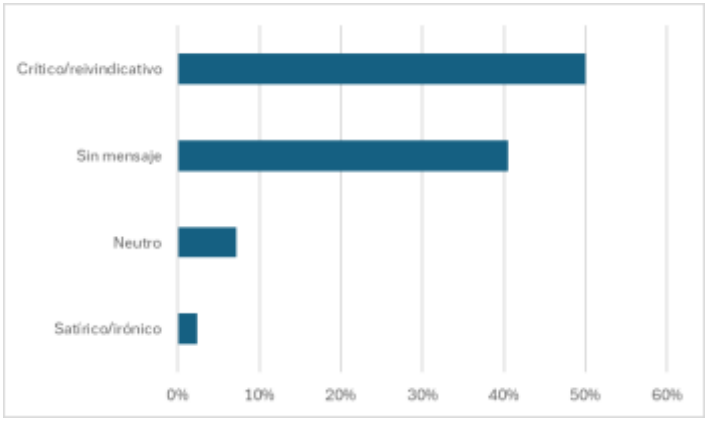
In terms of post type, there was little variation across the analysed publications. As illustrated in Figure 2, many of the informative posts lacked accompanying text and instead linked to journalistic articles, which often contained the critical discourse that the posts themselves did not explicitly express. When textual content was present, it predominantly featured critical language.

Figure 1. Type of post/input



Source(s): Own elaboration 2024.

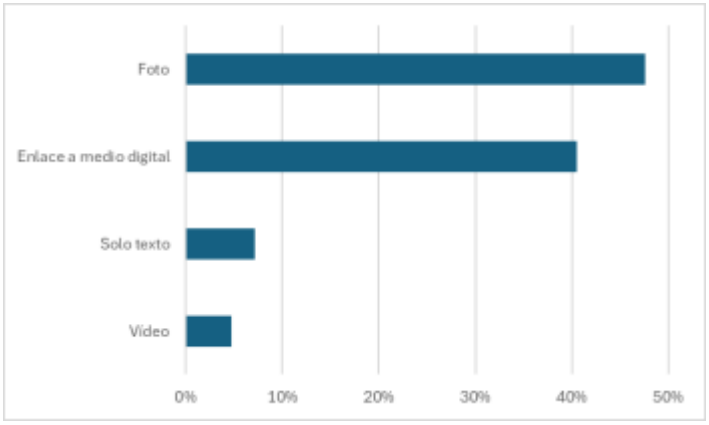
Figure 2. Language used



Source(s): Own elaboration 2024.

This type of publication is typically accompanied by an image, often a poster of the event, or a link to a news item. Notably, many posts that link to media outlets do not reinforce the information with additional commentary, nor do they create a transmedia narrative by including even a brief explanatory text in the post itself.

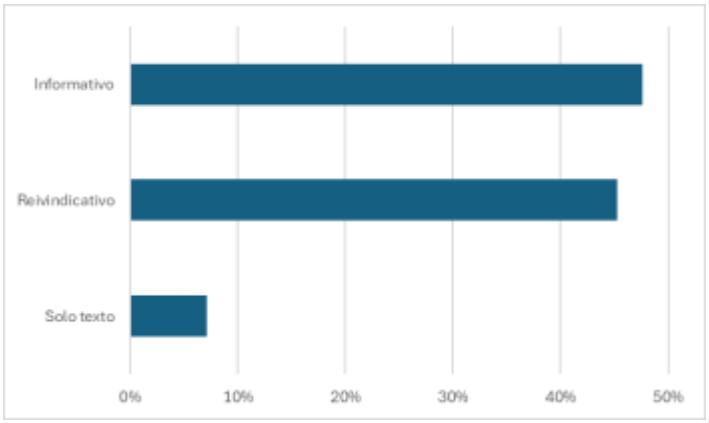
Figure 3. Format



Source(s): Own elaboration 2024.

Regarding the format, in contrast to Figure 1, informative posts predominate. Links are consistently made to news items, with no references to opinion columns or interpretative texts. Moreover, many of the images used in these publications serve as reminders or notices for meetings and demonstrations.

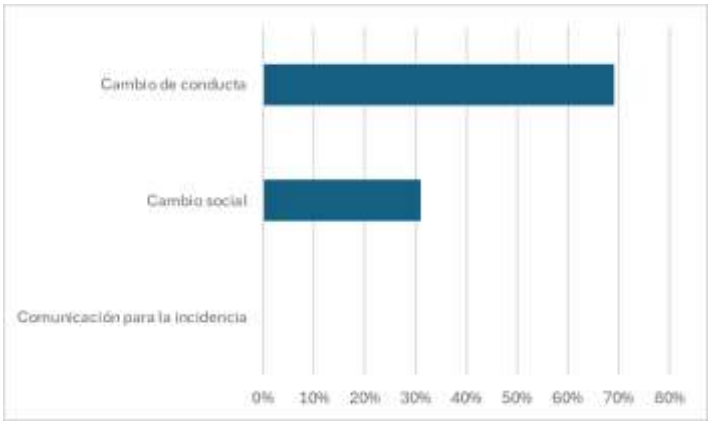
Figure 4. Type of format



Source(s): Own elaboration 2024.

To study communication from the perspective of the third sector, this research adopts the United Nations classification (McCall, 2011, pp. 7–8), which divides communication into two broad categories: fundraising, which is beyond the scope of this study, and communication for development. The latter is further subdivided into communication for behavioural change aimed at raising awareness and influencing attitudes on specific issues; communication for social change, focused on engaging and activating audiences to participate in change; and communication for advocacy, targeted at lobbying and influencing government or institutional actors. The analysis reveals that communication for behavioural change is the most prevalent, with approximately 30% of publications seeking to mobilise the public.

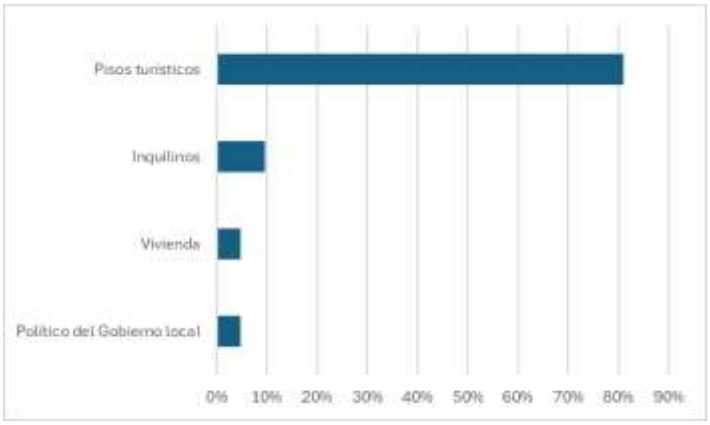
·**Figure 5.** Type of communication



Source(s): Own elaboration 2024.

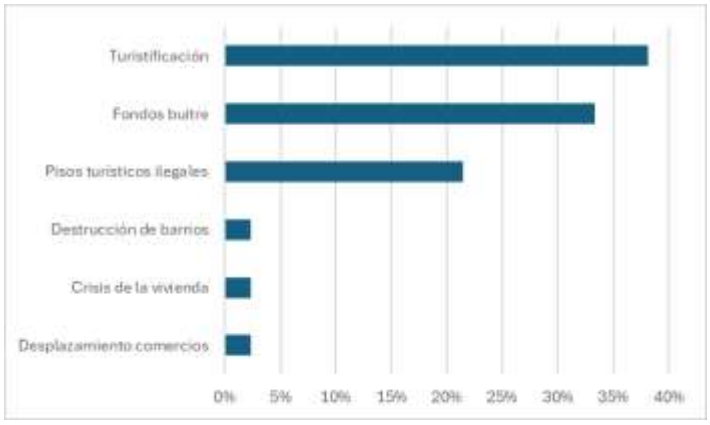
A clear reflection emerging from the analysis of the publications is the central focus of the message. Figure 6 illustrates that residents of the Lavapiés neighbourhood primarily perceive the problem of gentrification to be linked to tourist flats. Notably, there is little mention of rising housing prices or the influx of wealthier residents purchasing properties, which are common characteristics typically associated with gentrification. Nonetheless, concerns related to tourist flats are varied. As shown in Figure 7, the majority of publications address three main issues: touristification, the role of vulture funds as investors in tourist housing, and the prevalence of illegal tourist flats.

Figure 6. Message focus



Source(s): Own elaboration 2024.

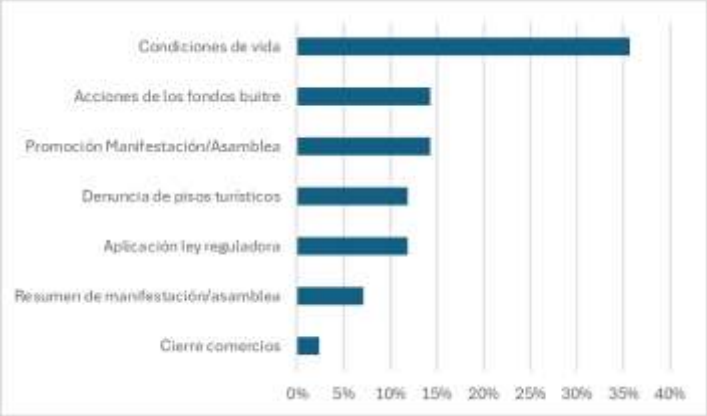
Figure 7. Theme



Source(s): Own elaboration 2024.

Finally, the significance attributed to these publications stems from the direct impact that tourist dwellings have on residents' lives: the challenges of coexisting with numerous tourists, the risk of eviction following the acquisition of entire buildings by vulture funds, and the strategies employed by some landlords to displace tenants.

Figure 8. Action



Source(s): Own elaboration 2024.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Gentrification in Lavapiés is a widely acknowledged phenomenon, confirmed by all scholars who have studied the neighbourhood. The rise in housing prices and the displacement of the most vulnerable residents is a documented reality, for which urban policies and the lack of public investment bear significant responsibility, as noted by García Pérez (2014) and Torres Bernier et al. (2018). Mazorra Rodríguez (2023) identifies the displacement of young people, the elderly, and immigrants. However, with the acquisition of buildings by investment funds and the proliferation of tourist accommodation, displacement is no longer linked to a specific socio-economic profile. The current process of gentrification in Lavapiés cannot be understood independently of the development of tourist accommodation. Both Botella Ordinas (2023) and Mazorra Rodríguez (2023) argue that these phenomena are a consequence of earlier gentrification, which has oriented the neighbourhood more towards visitors than residents. As Mazorra Rodríguez (2023) and Arroyo Alba (2019) observe, the resulting exclusion and segregation have intensified social polarisation, while the profile of property owners is becoming increasingly homogenised, characterised either by affluence or by the dominance of investment funds.

Botella Ordinas (2023) and Saiz de Lobado García (2022) emphasise the importance of community resistance, highlighting the role of neighbourhood collectives and associations in challenging gentrification and touristification. However, the analysis shows that the number of neighbourhood associations actively engaged in social mobilisation is limited. In a similarly critical vein, Mazorra Rodríguez (2023) and Torres Bernier et al. (2018) adopt a pessimistic perspective, arguing that the current levels of mobility in neighbourhoods such as Lavapiés hinder the formation of stable communities capable of organising large-scale mobilisations. Furthermore, the replacement of traditional shops by businesses catering to tourists and new, more affluent residents reduces the likelihood of commercial stakeholders participating in resistance movements. This is evident in the case of the largest traders' association in Lavapiés, which has not made a single reference to gentrification, likely because tourism and the shifting customer base are perceived as economically beneficial. Reichborn-Kjennerud et al. (2022) also highlight the growing distrust of traditional residents towards the authorities, stemming from a perceived lack of governmental efficacy, which is an attitude reflected in the content of the analysed publications.

It remains unclear whether the limited mobilisation of neighbourhood associations against gentrification stems from a loss of faith in public policies or from the already diminished presence of traditional resident communities. What is evident, however, is that the particular characteristics of gentrification in Lavapiés diverge significantly from those observed in other European contexts, though they align more closely with dynamics in other neighbourhoods across Madrid and Spain. The close interrelation between gentrification and touristification has shifted residents' concerns away from the arrival of wealthier inhabitants towards a more pressing focus on tourist housing, both legal and illegal. This shift is driven, firstly, by the tangible impact of increased tourism on residents' daily lives in recent years and, secondly, by the proliferation of investment funds acquiring entire buildings in the neighbourhood, fuelling anxieties over potential mass evictions to convert housing into tourist accommodation.

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