

The Airbnb effect

architecture and urban
consequences of a new
way of trading homes



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Abstract

This Master thesis explores the socio-spatial impact of the short-term rental platform Airbnb in a central neighbourhood of Madrid. The rapid rise of Airbnb has expanded the use of residential apartments as transient hotel rooms, by activating an intense debate in Madrid and in other cities about the possible benefits and drawbacks of such new phenomenon. Opinions are diverse, some argue that the platform can be a catalyst for cities economy, while critics see it as a threat to housing affordability and local community. Although a large number of researches have been conducted in order to better understand the phenomenon from an economic or sociological point of view, regarding the urban and architectural impact, the field of study is still weak and open to new contributions.

From a cognitive perspective, the first part combines an accurate study of the Airbnb keys to success with the discussion of the key topics debated within the existing scientific literature, revealing that Airbnb can shift the balance within the economic, social and urban sphere without any physical action. By doing so, Airbnb actually enters the debate on tourism gentrification. In this context the thesis aims to investigate the Airbnb Effect through a multiscale analysis of Madrid, going from the urban to the domestic scale. Through a quantitative analysis of the Airbnb data of Madrid, a number of key findings are outlined in order to allow a rather complete description of the phenomenon. Based on the results obtained, the analysis scale is restricted to the Lavapiés neighbourhood. After a historical study of the neighbourhood's urban fabric, as well as an approximation to its complex multicultural legacy, the socio-spatial consequences of the presence of Airbnb will emerge. The impact is also measured at the building scale and further to that of the apartment. To do this, a traditional collective housing typology called Corrala has been

chosen, while for what concerns the domestic scale, a series of representative case studies have been selected. The data findings show that Madrid has seen a strong increase in Airbnb listings in 2018, with a greater concentration in the inner city and especially in Lavapiés, where the largest number of listings are located. Multi-listing owners play a key role in Madrid's Airbnb market by controlling almost half of the supply, despite being a small minority. This is easily identifiable even in the greater distribution of entire apartments compared to private rooms. Lastly, the potential profitability of an Airbnb apartment, depending on its surface, can also be up to three times greater than that obtained from the traditional rent. These results reflect the protests of the inhabitants of Lavapiés against real estate speculation, outlining a context in which conflict is mixed with the new patterns of tourist consumption of space dictated by Airbnb. In addition, the impact of Airbnb at the building scale generates a further socio-spatial contrast. However, the apartments objects of the study show that on one hand, the sharing of the home persists, changing the way of inhabiting; on the other hand, in most cases, the home is specialized for tourism. In conclusion, a vision of contemporary inhabiting, adaptable to Airbnb and to the segmentation of contemporary life practices is proposed.

0.1 Introduction

This thesis proposes to study the urban and architectural impact of the short-term rental Airbnb platform, observing the socio-spatial consequences in a multi-scale way, starting from a specific case study. The choice was oriented towards the neighbourhood of Embajadores (Lavapiés), located in the southern part of Madrid inner-city, a historic and multicultural area that today continues to have a dubious reputation in the common imagery.

Already since the XVI Century with the *Grand Tour*, the trip has generated a certain network of services, although still minority given the social class of the "tourists", ranging from hospitality facilities up to mobility systems (Buzard, 2002). With the passing of the decades, socio-historical changes, and technological improvements in the field of mobility, tourist practices have become even more widespread. The growing demand for leisure time was not only related to the wealthiest social classes, but it became gradually widespread among the middle and working class now eager for experiences and escapes from monotony. The direct consequence of this, is the birth of a proper tourism industry, which nowadays proves to be one of the most flourishing economic activities in the world. What we are witnessing today, however, compared to the mass tourism of past times, is a greater concentration of tourism within cities, actually delineating a new trend, namely the *Urban Tourism* (Maitland, 2010). Some authors also argue that this new trend is a sign of the "post-Fordist" era, in which a city makeover is being implemented in many urban contexts; cities are now places of services, entertainment, and consumption, in which tourism can actually reshape the urban landscape (Judd and Fainstein, 1999). Airbnb is therefore a platform that positions itself right within the urban tourism scenario, becoming part of the world tourism industry by generating unprecedented profits. All this without hav-

ing changed the physical space directly, but rather transforming the house into a consumer good.

The selected case study fits within a broader specific context, the Spanish one, which since the global crisis of 2008 has used tourism as one of the towing sectors of the national economy. Spain is in fact the second most visited country in the world according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). As a result, the city of Madrid puts the tourist offer at the center of its growth strategy.

As some have already stated, however, the city in general has not been planned for tourism (Ibidem, 1999), so the increase in tourist flows can seriously challenge infrastructure, public transport and all those services designed primarily for inhabitants. As we will see in this thesis, Airbnb plays a fundamental role. By concentrating most of the short-term accommodation in the inner city, it puts the existing context at risk, provoking a significant economic and socio-spatial impact, witnessed by social conflicts, changes in the real estate market, as well as the specialization of the home in tourist apartment.

So far, the research, mostly of Anglo-Saxon origin, has analyzed the impact of Airbnb within a wider discourse on tourism gentrification, paying close attention to the demographic and economic changes of this phenomenon and clearly focusing on already consolidated global contexts. Other authors such as Guttentag have deepened the study of Airbnb from the perspective of tourism studies, trying to highlight the reasons for the success and the resulting impacts on the traditional tourist accommodation sector, as well as on destinations (Guttentag, 2013). From a Southern Europe point of view, and more precisely Spanish, the studies of Cocola-Gant result to be significant. The author focuses more on the socio-spatial consequences of urban tourism, which also includes Airbnb, by investigating how residents experience changes in neighbourhood life (Cocola-Gant, 2018).

This thesis tries to extend the research field, studying the phenomenon from a mainly spatial perspective, which is still lacking in the research field on the topic. The approach proposes to describe and analyze the phenomenon from a multi-scale perspective: city, neighbourhood, building, apartment, device. The method of analysis is structured primarily through the construction of a historical and theoretical framework useful for the exact interpretation of the phenomenon, and then through an in-depth analysis of quantitative data and fieldwork. Lastly, to study Airbnb at the building, apartment and device scale, the method of “redrawing” has been applied, conceived as a descriptive activity of analysis but also as synthesis of results.

· Thesis aim and objectives

The general aim of the thesis is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the so-called *Airbnb Effect*, especially by examining the architecture and urban consequences of this phenomenon. So the main research question can be the following: What is the socio-spatial impact of Airbnb on a city? And more specifically on a residential area? To answer this question, the case of Madrid has been selected, and particularly the neighbourhood of Embajadores (Lavapiés), which is located in the inner-city. Starting from this, the phenomenon can be analyzed according to a series of different points of view and approaches, dividing the main research question into different research objectives. The methodological approach used provides a first important approximation to the phenomenon, through the construction of a theoretical framework based on the existing scientific literature and the representative case studies. This framework embraces the basic features of Airbnb's success, as well as its impact on the city.

One of the objectives is therefore to understand how Airbnb can shift the balance of an existing urban ecosystem. Based on what is generally claimed by the scientific liter-

ature, which interprets the impact of Airbnb in a tourism gentrification perspective by looking primarily at demographic changes, research has not paid attention to spatial modifications. As a result, in addition to a general analysis of the quantitative data of Airbnb in Madrid, to examine this objective, I decided to focus more on the relations between Airbnb and the space, both urban and domestic. Therefore, the following questions are: What is the most widespread type of Airbnb apartment? Are there types of Airbnb apartments that are more profitable than others? Is there a relation between square meters and Airbnb profitability?

Furthermore, the research on gentrification has always paid much attention to the issues concerning the existing housing stock, often exploring the urban and architectural rehabilitation processes of neighborhoods or individual buildings, as well as policies related to housing affordability. As a result, Airbnb has been blamed on several occasions to have a negative impact on residential neighborhoods, making access to the house difficult for long-term residents (Cocola-Gant, 2018). The case study of Lavapiés proves to be representative in order to try to answer some socio-spatial questions such as: What is the influence of the scarce surface of the neighborhood's housing stock in the wider phenomenon of tourism gentrification? Is Airbnb able to exploit this scarce surface in its favor? Is Airbnb able to adapt to a collective housing typology?

Given the impact of Airbnb on the urban space and the general importance of the phenomenon, what is still weak is a relevant consideration on the object that characterizes Airbnb, namely home. The literature concerning the domestic space is definitely boundless and has treated the home in all its forms, but the Airbnb home has been overlooked by research. In fact, it has been argued several times that the

contemporary home can now be conceived as a financial tool from which to generate profit, but what is missing is to precisely understand how the space of the Airbnb home is effectively exploited in order to generate a marginal or complete capitalization. So I want to try to outline, first of all, if exist actions to optimize, fragment or densify the domestic space in Airbnb homes, and then be able to understand what are the recurring spatial devices and how they are employed by users. The questions that arise in this case are the following: is a specialization of the home in tourist apartment under way? Is Airbnb inhabiting or lodging? How is space shared in Airbnb apartments? How is space exploited? What are the most used devices? Is Airbnb generating a homologation in the aesthetics of the domestic space?

Lastly, given the findings obtained in the research, I would like to try to imagine an architectural response that can be in all respects adaptable to the segmentation of contemporary life practices, which include Airbnb, trying to avoid the specialization of the home in a short-term rental apartment.

• Structure of the thesis

The thesis is organized as follows. The first chapter offers a historical review of the main tourism practices through the centuries, starting from the classic age to date. This chapter is an introduction, albeit a general one, to the vast theme of tourism, interpreting the evolution of the tourism practices as closely related to historical events and technological advancements of mankind. The aim of this section is above all to interpret tourism through the evolution of its architecture, namely hospitality facilities. The result is a parallel story that highlights how the transformations of architecture and the rise of new typologies are closely linked to changes in tourist practices, in addition to changes in people's lifestyles.

The second chapter offers a theoretical framework of Airbnb, trying to accurately scan all the aspects that brought the platform to success. This chapter is fundamental to construct a conceptual framework for the following discussions around the topic. First, this part of the thesis has the objective of introduce the main features of the Airbnb platform in a clear and complete way. Particular attention is paid to the key factors that have led Airbnb to success, by analyzing the business model, the new tourism trends, the attitude of its users, as well as a look at future moves of the platform. Second, the chapter discusses the impact of Airbnb on cities, namely the *Airbnb Effect*. This part analyzes in depth the economic and socio-spatial consequences of the platform on the urban ecosystem of some of the main global cities affected by this phenomenon, placing Airbnb in the tourism gentrification debate. Lastly, an overview of the measures adopted in different contexts in order to contain the negative consequences of the phenomenon is proposed.

The third chapter explores the context within the thesis is located, namely Madrid. Starting from this chapter the thesis proposes a multi-scalar analysis of the Airbnb effect, moving from the urban to the domestic scale. First step is to analyze Airbnb quantitative data in order to understand the importance of the phenomenon in the Madrid context, and consequently present findings and discussion. Always using the data, the scale is then reduced to the neighbourhood of Embajadores. At this point a qualitative analysis of the phenomenon is carried out, first by retracing the history and the urban transformations of the neighborhood, and second by exploring the consequences generated by Airbnb on the urban ecosystem. The last step is an approximation to the building scale in which, after the selection of a traditional residential typology called *Corrala*, the socio-spatial impact of Airbnb is deeply explored.

The fourth chapter examines the impact of Airbnb at the

domestic scale, by proposing an approximation that goes from the apartment to the space devices. The chapter is organized through the spatial descriptive analysis of fifteen case studies located in the Lavapiés area. Through a careful redrawing of entire apartments and private rooms, in addition to the elaboration of an analytical method, it is possible to make clear the dynamics that concur in the Airbnb domestic space. The objective of this part of the thesis is to identify a series of recurring actions in space, in addition to the understanding of the spatial relations between rooms, and the choices of some hosts to use particular arrangements and devices.

The fifth chapter is that of synthesis. First of all, by developing a project proposal that tries to respond, in an adaptable way, to a wider contemporary housing demand, characterized by a strong segmentation of housing practices, in which Airbnb is actually included. After that, the chapter presents the overall conclusions of the thesis, following the previously set objectives and highlighting the empirical and theoretical contributions, as well as limitations and possible ideas for future research. ♦

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Chapter 1

Tourism & Hospitality

The chapter aims to draw a comprehensive account of tourism practices over the centuries, starting from the Classic Age to date.

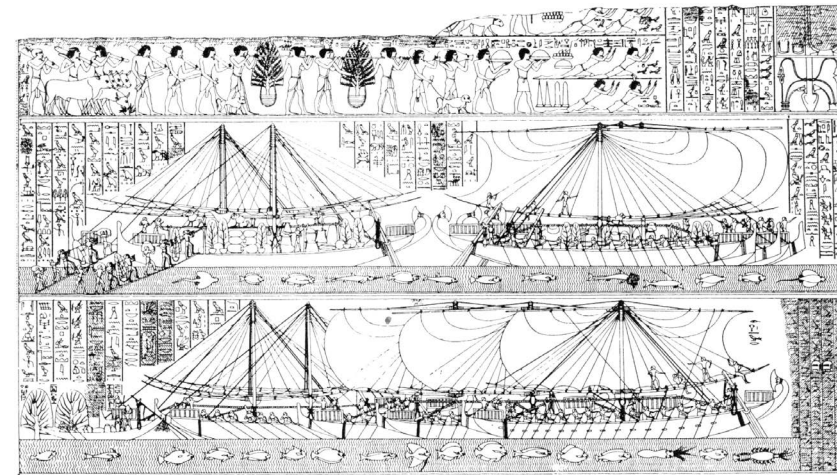
By interpreting the evolution of these practices as the result of new ways of living, it can be concluded that tourism is increasingly being tied to historical events and the technological advancements of mankind.

A parallel story will be developed to highlight the close correlation between tourism practices and its related hospitality facilities. It will be seen that the architecture of hospitality is closely linked to changes in tourist practices, in addition to changes in people's lifestyles.

1.1 From the Classic Age until the XIX Century

The earliest forms of travel for recreational reasons can be easily found first in Ancient Egypt and later in the classical world.

It dates back to 1490 B.C. the first journey wanted by the queen Hatshepsut to discover new lands and to acquire goods and products from the visited places. The expedition, described by the bas-relief found on the queen's grave, was made up of five vessels and two hundred men departed from Egypt to the land of Punt. It is also true that the privileged group of the population experienced journeys for pleasure, amusement and relaxation.



Hatshepsut's expedition to Punt
(XV Century B.C.)

A few centuries later, the Greeks kept travelling for recreational reasons too. The main occasions which pushed them to travel were linked to religion. Sure enough one of the main journeys was the pilgrimage to the Oracle of Delphi or the Olympic Games.

Soon, the hospitality issue fulfilled a relevant role in Greek society, using the word “Xenia” to summarise the proper relation between host and guest, based on respect and gratitude.

Hence, at the same rate as the birth of the first forms of tourism, the necessity to provide proper hospitality to travellers was crucial, so the direct architectural result has been the tourist accommodation.

Often built close to temple and sanctuaries, the first documented instances of lodging are dated to ancient Greece. One of them is the Leonidaion of Olympia, dated IV B.C. Devoted to the athletes, the building was surrounded by an Ionic colonnade made of 138 columns and an open courtyard on which the athlete’s rooms overlook.

Another example of ancient tourist accommodation is the one established nearby Asclepius temple in the city of Epidaurus. In this case, the multi-storey building has been designed only to accommodate devotees which needed to stay long for cures and rituals. The interior layout seemed to be functional effective because the rooms were individuals and independents, truly designed for accommodation reasons.

It is clear that this kind of accommodation has been designed for privileged groups of society, in order to have a comfortable experience. Hence, on the other side, the places enjoyed by the common people were simple houses, of which often in the ancient sources, dirt, poverty and low-end customers are remembered, without mentioning the similarity to brothels.¹

Even in the Roman world, tourism experienced a growth

similar to the one of the Greeks. The constant development of road networks, not only facilitated the transport of goods and soldiers but also private travel. With regards to tourist lodging during that time, the Patrician class started to build luxurious suburban villas located in maritime or rural locations, especially along the Gulf of Naples, where a relevant number of holiday locations arose.

Instead, more widely, all sort of lodgings were located along the busiest roads, quite far from the city centre and often close to the city gates. *Hospitium*, *deversorium*, *caupona* or *stabulum* are the Latin words used to designate them. These places basically used to offer hospitality and various facilities for travellers, such as food, gambling and entertainment.

Regarding architectural design, the Roman lodging could not have been so much different from the common Roman rental house where rooms were located on the upper floors while the dining room was on the ground floor. For this reason, it is possible to notice that travellers accommodation at that time could not be regarded as a codified architectural typology, such as the temple or the theatre.²

² Ibidem

During the Middle Ages, travelling spreads ever further for almost all, such as merchants, journeymen, pilgrims, soldiers, robbers, but especially that part of well-educated society like students and intellectuals. The latter, in particular, started to conceive travelling not only as something linked to leisure, but they considered it as an educational component. The students experienced long journeys through Europe to get to the most important universities of that time in Paris, Oxford or Bologna. From this moment, it can be said that for some, travelling becomes an experience aimed at the rediscovery of themselves and the world, in order to achieve self-realization. A similar dynamic was experienced by journeymen, which often were forced by their guilds to travel during three to four years all around

¹ Enciclopedia Treccani, definizione e storia di Albergo (1929)

Europe in the interest of improving their craftsmen techniques in the workshops of great masters (Opaschowski, 1996).

During the early Middle Ages, the lack of security in the countryside and along the main roads caused a large decrease in private lodging. Consequently, the hospitality was provided by ecclesiastical institutions, which host pilgrims and travellers into the so-called in Latin *Xenodochium*. This was a room in a monastery used for the reception and entertainment of strangers, while in urban areas, space was strictly connected to cathedrals and churches, providing the same facilities.

During the Late Middle Ages, instead, the private lodging appear again all around Europe. These places, called in Latin *hosteria* or *hospitia*, contained a room, usually the most spacious of the house, on the ground floor next to the kitchen. They host all types of people, even if when knights and princes arrived, the reception foresaw a special treat and a private room.

It was in this period when the modern hotelier figure seems to emerge, especially thanks to the birth of specific guilds. In France, at the beginning of the XV Century, the law required that lodgings keep a register. English law also introduced rules for inns at that time. It was right at this time that a significant number of tourist accommodations started to flourish all around Europe, like in Venice where one of the most famous ones was called *Leon Bianco* and was managed by Germans. Other examples of documented tourist accommodations can be found in Rome, Paris and Bologna.³

³ Ibidem

Between the XVI and the XVIII Century, travelling undergoes an important evolution that in a way precedes modern tourism. It is precisely during these two centuries that the so-called *Grand Tour* stems. We are dealing with

a travel, rapidly became a custom, undertaken mainly by upper-class young men whose original goal was to improve their education, mark the end of the childhood and hone their grace in aristocrat contexts. The tour can be seen as a proper rite of passage. In order to understand the importance of this kind of social ritual, this experience was not only a leisure pastime but as defined by James Buzard, an “ideological exercise” to prepare the young noble to perform leadership once back home. The firsts who experienced this journey were the young British nobles (Buzard, 2002).



Planning the Grand Tour - painted by Emil Brack (XIX)

For sure, the main objectives of this experience were the transcultural desire, the will to know the classical antiquities, the Renaissance, and lastly the possibility of being in contact with the European high society. The journey was also a chance to be present at the creation of artistic or musical works performed by the leading artists and composers of that time.

The Grand Tourists usually might spend several years abroad, broadening their horizons and learn about economics, politics, history and languages.

The typical itinerary was always planned in great detail and the noblemen were always accompanied by a tutor called *bear-leader*, which helped the traveller during the tour. In addition, the wealthiest used to recruit valets, coachmen and a cook.

After the departure from England, the young nobles arrived in Paris, a necessary step in order to learn dance, fencing and to connect with the Parisian high society.

After Paris, usually, the journey continued towards the cities of Switzerland and then come to Italy, the highlight of the trip. In Italy they usually appreciated the decadent allure of Venice, to later move to Florence, where they could stop and admire the Renaissance art and architecture, or the Roman sculpture stored in the Uffizi Gallery.

The next stop-over was Rome, where the travellers could study the Roman architecture and appreciate the antiquities. And afterwards, they were heading South to Naples, where enjoy the sense of sublime of the coastal landscape. Furthermore, it is important to point out that the Grand Tour, thanks to its rising success, also included a long series of rituals and pilgrimage that had nothing to do with religion. Among them, the pilgrimage to the grave of the Roman poet Virgilio, or the climb to the Vesuvius, both conceived as a must-do (Ascari, 2015). In addition, from the middle of the XVIII Century, many of the tourists visited the recently discovered Pompeii and Herculaneum ruins.

The tour of Italy is mostly concluded in Sicily, where to enjoy the landscape and the multiculturalism of the island. After Italy, somebody proceeded towards Greece or Turkey, while the rest were headed up north to visit Germany and Flanders, and then come back home in England.

The end of the Grand Tour, for the young nobles, constituted a unique moment, in which group together a long series of objects, such as books, artefacts or scientific equipment obtained during the journey. Additionally, the travellers undertook to write books, travel guides and to make drawings, in order to tell the unique experiences of that long journey. According to many scholars, the Grand Tour brought a great dose of culture in England, ranging from literature to art. Regarding art, certain styles of painting became very popular, like the so-called *Vedutismo Veneziano* or the Piranesi engravings.

It is precisely during these centuries that travel literature is being strengthened. Among the most significant literary works, there is Goethe's *Italian Journey*, a report of the Grand Tour experienced by the writer and started in 1786, in which he writes about Italy, analysing the main aspects of the country, such as cultural, economic, political, in addition to the artistic and landscape ones. Also the theatre is often influenced by the Grand Tour in this period. An example can be Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, in which the figure of the young noble traveller is satirized. The play highlights the attitude of the British aristocrats abroad, joking about their clothing style, the incongruous behaviour, the attempt to speak a foreign language, and the will of showing off their transcultural experience. Although this journey was especially popular among the British nobility, from the middle of XVI century it became famous among young Germans, French and Dutch too.



Treasures of Modern Rome - painted by Giovanni Paolo Panini (1757)

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Goethe in the Roman Campagna - painted by J.H.W. Tischbein (1787)

At this stage, the aim is to figure out how the hospitality system was organized during the centuries of the Grand Tour. This helps to determine if the accommodation typologies have evolved according to the new necessities of this new way of travelling.

As already mentioned, before the XVI Century, the more widespread inns were often located along roads and trails, offering board and lodging. These infrastructures often had a butcher or a farrier workshop at the floor plan, so the multifunctional character of the inns constituted a strong reference point not only for travellers.

From the XVI Century, with the increasing popularity of the Grand Tour, no radical change is observed in the accommodation typology, but the so-called *coaching inn* arose. The specificity of these inns is that they were a specialized infrastructure for coach travellers, in fact, they had stables where looking after the horses and in the case of tiredness, the horses were replaced for fresher ones (Susini, 2018).

One of the most interesting things during this period is that the hospitality infrastructures started to create a significant network of collaboration in order to offer an efficient service. Maps and guides containing indications and localizations of the inns were produced to help the travellers in their journey. On the wave of the well-established popularity of the Grand Tour, in many countries at the end of the XVIII Century, road networks are upgraded and consequently, there is a call for the building of new coaching inns. The existent ones were mostly private houses, barns or stables with one or two story, adapted to host travellers. In addition, in most cases there was not a social division of the spaces, privacy was absent and the aspect of the place was humble. Instead, the new coaching inns had, first of all, a specific social distinction of spaces, a series of private rooms and a higher comfort in general.

A relevant example can be the Boscolungo coaching inn, built around 1780 in Tuscany and organized in a more effi-

cient way with a better disposition of function and services. It was composed by two separate buildings, one dedicated to the coaching services, such as stables, a tack room and rooms for the coachmen, while the other building was the proper inn, dedicated to the travellers. The organization of the space favours privacy in the rooms and social exchange in the lounge areas, an innovative building for that period (Ibidem, 2018).



The Coeur Volant Coaching Inn at Louveciennes - painted by Adolphe Roehn

As argued by Pevsner, it is from the late XVI and the early XVII that gradually begins to emerge a proper hotel typology. Quoting the author, “*What is the difference between a hotel and an inn? The hotel is nearly always larger than the inn, especially in its public spaces. The hotel has a number of public rooms, not just a tap room and some table to eat at*” (Pevsner, 1976, 169). In addition to noting the rising level of interest about common areas, Pevsner argues that the hotel develops out of the inn. There are many examples demonstrating this argument, in fact, both in Germany and France, many inns were upgraded to welcome the guests in halls and common areas, while others were even rebuilt in order to increase capacity. Furthermore, the addition of an assembly room or a ballroom to an existent inn constituted the reaching of the hotel status.

It is during the XVIII Century that the hotel starts to spread, especially thanks to the tourist guides of that period, in which the hotels of the main cities were reported with the addition of reviews about amenities and services. At this stage, hotels become proper social institutions and among the most famous ones, there is the Dessin’s hotel in Calais, described as one of the most extensive in Europe, equipped with fountains, gardens, squares and alleys, in addition to a theatre and a shop. These places become not only a way station where to sleep and eat, but a social gathering location of cultural exchanges (Ibidem, 1976).

With the advent of the Second Industrial Revolution, which led to the development of large-scale rail transport in the middle of XIX Century, the Grand Tour became a standard itinerary, often undertaken not only by the European nobility but also by South and North American aristocrats. In 1812 in Scotland, steam navigation arises and together with rail transport, it increases mobility by lowering travel costs. For the entire XIX Century, the upper classes kept travelling in the footsteps of the Grand Tour, even if a change in

the taste, in the needs and in the interests of travellers can already be identified.

It is a fact that in this period, mainly due to the rise of the middle class, travelling start to become a common practice, albeit in day trips in the countryside. It is also true that the middle class who travel consist of well-educated manufacturing and trading professionals, forming part of the corporate society.

But one of the most interesting facts happened around the middle XIX Century when a young British cabinet-maker called Thomas Cook lays the foundations for the commercialised mass tourism. From 1885, this knowledgeable entrepreneur offered guided trips, first in England and then abroad. Cook, inspired by laudable socio-political reasons, wanted to drive workers outside of the cities through Sunday excursions in the countryside. He also created the concept of all-inclusive holidays to foreign destinations and the most interesting fact is that the journeys led to a mixed clientele, from people of some social prominence to representatives of the middle and lower classes. Hence, the initiative of Thomas Cook can be considered as a relevant innovation into the rising mass tourism.⁴

⁴ www.thomascook.com

Thanks to him, at that time across Europe, travel agencies which become specialized institutions in the organization of holidays flourished. Furthermore, during these years, travellers start to attend certain popular destinations such as the Swiss and Italian Alps, the bathing and thermal sites of Brighton and Bath, or even the French coastal resorts of Côte d'Azur. Thus, it appears that travelling, also among the upper classes begins to lose that educational value once glorified, and assumes a leisure attitude. Additionally, considering that the middle class wants to imitate the upper-class travel status, the will on the part of the upper class is to look for exclusive travel destinations where come back together without having to deal with the bourgeoisie.

So, the new upper-class tourist trend relies on social occasions, receptions, balls, horse racings, adventures, and gambling.



Brochure of Thomas Cook & Son Company Tours

At this stage, given the importance of social gatherings, the hotel definitively becomes the ultimate meeting place, and in conformity with new trends, this typology starts to be optimized and upgraded. A relevant example was the Badischer-hof in Baden Baden, built in 1807-09 in a former monastery, it is described as a hotel complete of any type of amenities, halls of all sizes, ballroom, library, reading rooms, parlours, bathing establishment, stables, and coach-house. Hotels like that were disseminated across Europe and often constituted a precise social status, while the middle class kept going into traditional tourist accommodations arranged inside private houses, which were not substantially different from the inns above listed.

However, it is in the United States where the hotels earn the best reputation. Here, hotels are distinguished by extension and comfort, some even had a private bathroom in the bedroom. The Tremont House in Boston and the Astor House in New York constitute the most significant cases, which made American hotels popular across the globe. In Europe, also the most famous Grand Hotels did not mention comforts such as private bathrooms or the presence of suites, which were driving points of the American hotels (Ibidem, 1976).

Hotels in the United States were not the only popular for their comforts, but rather they had a strong influence on the socio-spatial sphere of the big cities. The first spatial impact of the so-called Palace Hotels was about the building scale, pretty impressive in the growing urban context of cities like New York. But one of the most interesting properties of the hotel was the social nature of this building type. They had big halls for public use which worked as community centres for the city. For instance, the famous Waldorf-Astoria, built in 1893 in New York had the so-called *Peacock Alley*, which more than a hall it was a long corridor where the New York society would gather. Furthermore, the Waldorf-Astoria was the first hotel to reach 1000 rooms,

many of whom were suites rented semi-permanently to prominent businessmen of that period.



The hotel Waldorf-Astoria, New York

The hotel now becomes a codified typology, which expresses on one side the transformation of certain social roles and on the other side the technological innovation, such as the one concerning running water installations or the elevator technology. As already outlined above in the case of the Waldorf-Astoria, hotels in the US not only welcome travellers but also permanent residents who generated a curious phenomenon of mixing the hotel function with the residential one. As stated by Pevsner, wealthy families choose to live in hotels because “*the luxury of a hotel could not easily be matched in private houses*” (Pevsner, 1976, 184). The phenomenon in question leads the hotel to be an extra residential typology, defined as Apartment Hotels. Even if, in principle, this kind of hotel was the privilege of the upper class, then this habit gradually spreads through the middle class too. As matter of fact, in 1871 was built the Height House, the first building in which there were a communal kitchen and a laundry room in the basement. The permanent guests could choose if eating in the mess hall or receive the room service. Moreover, there was a freight elevator that served all the apartments. This new typology started to be popular because enabled guests to minimize the maintenance costs of the residence. After the Height House, there was a strong diffusion of apartment hotels across the US, some of the apartments were kitchenless while others offered also various apartment layouts to deal with the guest needs. Among the most interesting examples of interior flexibility and innovation, there were the Ansonia and the San Remo Hotel. The building of apartment hotels went on until the first decade of the XX Century, also due to the Tenements law⁵ that favoured the establishment of that typology (Puigjaner, 2016; Pevsner, 1976). ♦

⁵ The New York State Tenement House Act of 1901 was a law that ban the construction of dark, poorly ventilated tenement buildings in the state of New York.



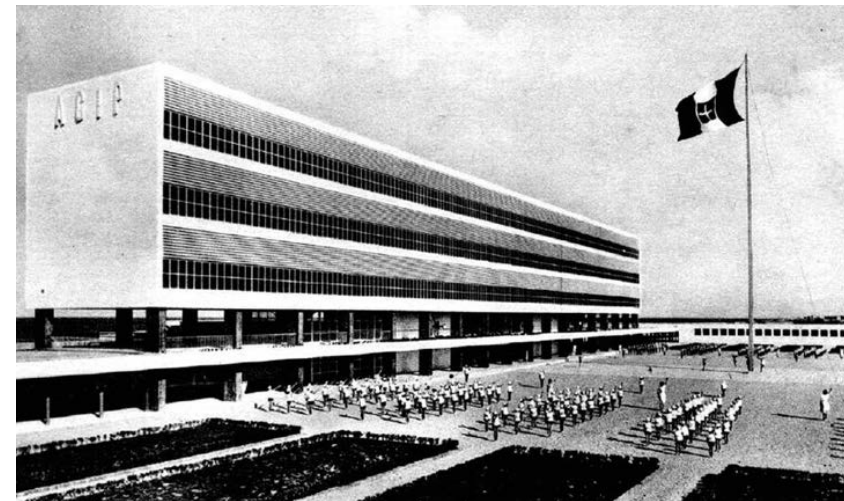
Peacock Alley at Waldorf-Astoria
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Apartment hotel in Hartford, Connecticut

1.2 From the XX Century until nowadays

Since the XX Century, tourism development is undoubtedly marked by the two world wars that caused a temporary stagnation, but nevertheless, it can be said that mass tourism became more and more widespread. This is due to the easier mobility and in a great amount to the regulation of holidays as part of legal agreements on employment contracts. Although in the industrialized countries, before the WWI only state employees could benefit from vacations, right after, those rights were extended to the entire middle class. While the working class had to wait until before the WWII to obtain paid vacations. It is in the 1930s and '40s that low and middle class experienced mainly summer retreats, which consists of going on vacation for a weekend or more days in mountains or coastal destination with the family. In this period the totalitarian regimes, especially the German and Italian ones, promoted tourism for propaganda purposes, organizing trips for family and children. In Italy, one example of children's holiday bears the name of *Colonia*, a summer camp located in maritime or mountain areas characterized by a proper architecture that host all the children. This kind of accommodation, compared with the context, had a significant building scale and was often isolated from the residential areas. It turned into a ground of freedom for the architectural design of those years, marked by the popular Italian rationalism. Moreover, a large number of buildings were realized, always uneven between each other, without a standard composition. Every building had a different socio-educational and political indoctrination approach, in addition to a variable strategy of inclusion.

After the WWII, the so-called *Colonie marittime* started to be unused or transformed in hotels, especially during the post-war reconstruction, many of these buildings were rebuilt with a recreational approach rather than the educa-

tional one used during the Fascism. Thanks to the property speculation that grew in profusion during the 60s, the architectural design was very poor apart from some exceptions designed by Paolo Portoghesi and Giancarlo De Carlo, which took in consideration the formal and sociological aspects of the design (Balducci, 2005).



Colonia Sandro Mussolini - AGIP in Cesenatico, Italy

But the real boost to mass tourism can be indicated in the post-war period. The enormous economic growth, the technological progress and a general prosperity helped in the creation of new destinations and travel styles. The increase in automobile production, especially in the US, brought to a mass ownership of cars and consequently a rising spread of road trips, which as will be seen below, emphasized the birth of the motel typology. Furthermore, the introduction of jet travel accelerated the growth in both domestic and international travel. Lastly, the implementation of shorter working hours led to more free time and a new consideration about tourism.

The XX Century brought new hotel modifications both in style and functionality, historicism began to disappear at the beginning of the Century, in exchange for the application of the Modern Movement criterion. Hotels now tend to be functional as perfect machines. During the 50s, the first hotel chains, such as Hilton, started to emerge with iconic buildings which shall be repeated across the world with the same style, the same features and comfort. As suggested by Pevsner, the most significant examples are the Hilton in Istanbul and the SAS Royal Hotel in Copenhagen (Pevsner, 1976).

Seaside tourism, which had already developed since the end of the XIX Century for health purposes, emerged again during the 50s in a much more invasive way. As consequence, the Mediterranean coasts of Italy and Spain were inundated by hotels. A key case is Benidorm in Spain, a city entirely dominated by the paradigm of mass tourism and leisure. The city only had around 3000 inhabitants during the 50s, and its economy was just relying on tuna fishing. A few years later, in 1956, the local government decided to approve a General Urban Plan which included a massive building programme in order to welcome a relevant tourism flow. From that moment Benidorm has become a

city inhabited by a transient population of tourists, mainly British. In addition, it is now the town with more high rise building per capita in the world. From this point on, the large tourism flow of British and other Europeans during the summer would cement the legacy of Benidorm and Spain's tourist boom (Berry, 2013). Concerning the urban sphere, Benidorm is marked by the prominent position of high rise hotels along the coastline, representing the towing symbols of the local and even national economy. What emerges from the case of Benidorm is not just the power of tourism in the transformation of a city but also the standardized criteria of building hotels. As stated by the sociologist Obrador Pons *"The coastal hotel is paradigmatic of the landscape of late capitalism, a smooth, nomadic, frictionless site that responds to the principles of movement and commodification"* (Obrador Pons, 2009, 93).

The architecture of these buildings is all conceived with the same formula which provides for the proximity to the beach, the swimming pool at the centre, a vivacious vegetation and a 1960s modernist style. It is interesting to notice how the coastal hotel lays down relations not only with the economy but even with culture, identity and sociality. This typology is the setting of mundane experiences aimed at having fun together, going through a lifestyle or an emotion, without relying on a communal project. So, the paradigmatic setting of the holiday experience in the coastal hotel is the swimming pool, where tourists spend most of the day sunbathing, chatting and sitting on the edge of the pool. Very often the swimming pool is a clear place of conviviality where entertainment activities are organized to consolidate those social dynamics. Furthermore, the coastal hotel and especially the pool become the symbol of the family vacation, where kids play and parents relax, transforming this place the holiday's soul. But, from a sociological point of view, the coastal hotel can be seen as a place with plenty of rules of behaviour and etiquettes which can

outline the dynamics of hostility between guests (Ibidem, 2009). At last, all the features that arise from the coastal hotel and especially from the primary meeting place namely the pool, not only highlight the specific social behaviour of the tourists. What clearly emerges is the specific tourism trend which has developed in a long period of time between 1960 and 2000, the so-called *all-inclusive* holiday. This specific model consists of a package offered by travel agencies and tour operators, which includes lodging and board eliminating extra charges like drinks or other services of entertainment. The usual location of the all-inclusive holiday was exactly the coastal hotel or the holiday resort. So by this way, tourists could experience a complete vacation taking advantage of the hotel amenities and at the same time enjoy all the tourist-oriented services of the city, such as discotheques, bars, shops, and beach rental places. As we will see further on, nowadays this kind of model is being killed off by the introduction of the Internet.

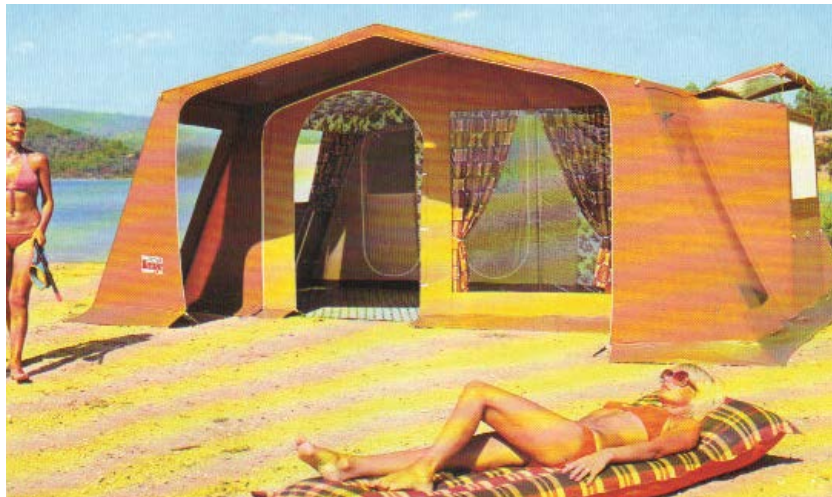
Experiences such as the Benidorm one, probably not of the same power, also occurred on other Mediterranean seafronts like the Italian one. The mass tourism of those years could be defined “settled”, so as consequence, the Italian holiday sites of the 60s have to avoid disorientation. The Italian coastal city reiterates the urban grid of the newly built middle-class neighbourhood (Di Robilant, 2012).

Remaining in the 50s, coastal hotels were only a part of the rising tourism accommodation industry. In fact, in Europe, as well as in the US new types of accommodation appeared. One of the most widespread was the camping, a cheap and informal way to go on holiday, often enjoyed in both mountain and coastal areas.



Benidorm seafront
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Hotel Sol Pelicanos in Benidorm

The camping arrangements foresaw specific equipped areas where pitching the tents or parking the caravan, spending most of the summer months at low prices. During the 1970s the market of tents and caravans saw a successful development, accompanied by a great awareness in the design of those objects. In particular, tents provided a great comfort and the presence of almost all the rooms of a real house. In the catalogues of that period, there were tents which had a living room easily convertible into a porch, independent bedrooms, and also a space dedicated to the kitchen. On the other hand, many tourists used to choose caravans or auto caravans which offered more comfortable interiors at a higher price. In closing, this tourism trend gave more chance to working class families to enjoy their holidays.



Holiday tent

Another widespread type of tourist accommodation, pretty similar to the camping, was the so-called *holiday camp*. This accommodation was partly an evolution of the camping and to some extent a predecessor of the holiday resort. First examples already arose during the 1930s, but their golden age was during the 1960s and 70s, especially in England. The architecture of many of the camps originated from the former military camps used during the war and consisted of rows of chalets or individual units. Of course, thanks to the growing popularity, the camps became bigger and provided modernist two stories chalets with a large number of amenities such as swimming pools, cinema, bingo, ballrooms and in one case also a monorail. In this places, tourists spent all their vacation inside the camp, enjoying the entertainment activities all together and feeling part of the organizing business.



Butlin's Skegness holiday camp

One of the most interesting typologies of tourist accommodation which has arisen since the post-WWII in the United States is the motor hotel, commonly named Motel. This specific type of hotel is the direct architecture consequence of the family road trips that characterized the socio-economic context of the post war. According to the writer Susan Session Rugh, the period between the end of the war and the 60s has been the golden age of American mobility, especially due to the large increase in the ownership and usage of automobiles, the general prosperity, and the highways improvement. Travel by car becomes a must for American families, and the family car turns into a symbol, *“the family car was a home on wheels, an extension of the domestic space, and thus represented a sense of security for the travelling family on the road”* (Rugh, 2008, 19). Due to the significant length of the road trips, families spent most of the time inside the family car, often a station wagon. During these years, family trips were mainly typified by infinite highways which brought families to what Rugh defines as *“civic pilgrimage”*. It was a tour that could be defined *“patriotic”*, which touches the most significant monuments of the country and the landscape beauties (Ibidem, 2008). Therefore, thanks to the rising popularity of this trips, roadside businesses flourished providing eating and lodging facilities. The motels, always indicated by a neon light, became strong icons, legendary symbols, forming part of the American landscape and often portrayed in art, cinema and literature. This typology is an evolution of the so-called cabin court, enough widespread as roadside lodging during the 1930s. The motel can be seen as an ever-changing accommodation, its form and function are always been the reflection of the social and cultural changes of the United States (Jakle et al. 2002). The motel, contrary to the traditional hotel, was not located downtown but on the road and it was not a multistory building with public spaces like lobbies, dining rooms or ballrooms. It usually was a single-sto-

ry building without any formal space, it had bedrooms with a private bathroom and a parking lot just next door (Jakle et al. 2002; Pevsner 1976). Hence, as stated by Rugh, the motel was only overnight sleep accommodation for tourists after a long car trip, marked by its low cost. Citing the author, *“Families were attracted by motels because they were less expensive than hotels, and motels allowed them to park near their rooms without going through a lobby and paying tips to a bellman”* (Rugh, 2008, 36). It is clear that due to the size of the US, this typology has experienced a long series of different local interpretations regarding its style, form and function. Furthermore, the legacy of these places has been through a season of a bad reputation, mainly due to the warning of immorality and criminality fostered by the lack of security (Jakle et al. 2002).

During the 1960s the motel evolved a lot, increasingly trying to look like hotels. Many of these structures began chains and provided more comfort facilities such as swimming pools, radios, televisions, air-conditioning and laundry. The motel was becoming much more than just an overnight lodging and in 1952 Kemmons Wilson, a successful entrepreneur, established his standardized motel chain called Holiday Inn, mixing the amenities of the traditional hotel with the motel form that included the legendary family car. The idea of Wilson reach a great popularity and in 1966 there were 568 Holiday Inns across the US, proposing more comfort and security (Henderson, 2009).

Although since the 1980s the motel's reputation became again unpleasant in the pop culture, it is worth noting that motels had a disruptive success during the 1960s. This specific typology represented a clear example of how a certain way of travelling could strongly influence the architectural form and function of a tourist accommodation and additionally could condition the American landscape.



As explained so far, it is clear that any historical transformation in society has produced an impact on the way people travel, so just like the so-called *mobility era* has made it possible for people to move around in a faster and cheaper way, also nowadays thanks to the advances in transportation and communication, tourism is living a new interesting development. Currently, modern aircraft, trains and other modes of transport enable people to move quicker and cheaper with a view to a global mobility. On the other hand, advances in communication enable people to travel in a much easier way than before, without any barrier. For example, today with a credit card everybody can access money all over the world. It has become absolutely easy to reserve a hotel through a smartphone or translate a foreign language. Especially due to the strong competition into the tourism industry and the promotion of certain tourism destinations to reinforce the economy, the market offers a long list of cheap opportunity to travel. So, nowadays travelling is no longer a privilege for the wealthy segment of society, but an affordable practice for a lot of people.



Goldenrod Motel in Huntsville, Alabama
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Holiday Inn in Orange, California

Since the 1990s, tourism gradually assumes a greater complexity and academic research proliferate. Tourism began to be grouped in several fields, often geographical or cultural demarcated, making this phenomenon of worldwide interest. Tourism now is above all a significant economic engine for a large part of countries across the world. Although so far, tourism has been mostly settled in certain scenarios, such as maritime or mountain areas and sometimes in big cities, now one of the most interesting phenomena is the so-called *Urban tourism*. As argued by Ashworth and Page, Urban tourism is a complex phenomenon that lack of a simple definition (Ashworth and Page, 2011). However, it is certain that this new tourist trend is a complex system that has the city as the major place of interest, able to provide multiple tourist activities. Following the thesis of

Ashworth and Page, Urban tourism cannot be considered like another adjectival tourism, while the city is a cluster bringing together all those adjectival tourisms such as the cultural, the historic, the gastronomic, or the shopping one (Ibidem, 2011). Tourists are attracted to cities for many reasons that don't have to deal entirely with tourism itself. It is clear that due to the growing importance that cities have undertaken in recent years, people travel to cities not only as tourists but for other reasons too. Hence, some scholars say that the identification of urban tourist is difficult somehow. Anyway, cities have a given fascination, driven by a series of features, usually subjective, linked to their diversity and density, just like their culture, built form, and people. Tourist activities in the city are not always justified, because it is about "sightseeing" or "wandering around", discovering the ordinary. In addition, some argue that making a clear distinction between urban tourists and residents could be difficult to achieve, mainly because tourists do not engage in admittedly tourist activities, but they behave like residents and conversely (Ibidem, 2011). Among the features identifying city tourism, many researches claim that tourists are more selective, using only a certain part of the city. They are also very rapid, spending a shorter time in cities compared to traditional summer holidays. This fact could be linked to many reasons, including the rise of low-cost flights which provide low-cost tickets for short stays. Thanks to the large variety of events and activities available into the city, tourists tend to return in the same city generating a certain atmosphere, like London or Paris. At last, the legacy of cities is often in danger because of the tourist taste, in fact quoting Ashworth and Page "*The consumption of urban tourism experiences is a fashion activity and, like all consumption of culture, part of contemporary lifestyles. Urban tourism thus becomes a lifestyle accessory as particular cities are 'in' or 'passe'*" (Ashworth and Page, 2011, 9). In conclusion, Urban tourism is for sure the rising tour-

ist trend of the last decades, but it is not always possible to label a city as "tourist", because a city is a multifunctional system where all the activities experienced by tourists are already lived by residents.

As previously stated, in the rise of urban tourism converge a wide range of factors often linked to globalization and especially mobility. Transportation technology undoubtedly has played a relevant role in the development of tourism in general, but what really had a strong impact on the tourism industry has been the Internet. From mid-1990, business, in general, have been affected by the arrival of the Internet, helping consumers to get a major access to information and consequently a wide range to choose. Of course, in tourism, the thing just got a whole lot easier for consumers, which can buy airline tickets or reserve a hotel via the web, skipping the traditional intermediaries such as travel agencies. The result is that on one hand people are much more capable of organize a journey individually, and on the other hand new intermediaries are going to appear in the tourism market (Standing et al., 2014).

The possibility, by the consumer, to skip those steps in the organization of any trip brought to an extreme simplicity and above all has exposed new hospitality trends, which are based on alternative economic models and on the implementation of the web in the process of interaction between tourists and intermediaries. As previously seen, in history, tourist hospitality has always been classist somehow, offering several facilities depending on the social class or the purchasing power. In contemporary tourism, globalization has allowed many more people to travel in a more economic way, bringing out a long series of tourist accommodations that offer low prices with a standard service. Hence, in opposition to big international hotel chains or to mid and low-end hotels, bed and breakfast, guest houses, hostels, and tourist apartments come into being. The main differences encountered in B&B or guest hous-

es compared to traditional hotel typologies mainly have to do with dimensions, property management, and facilities. B&B and guest houses must be, in accordance with the law, family-run businesses, with a limited number of rooms, and lastly, they must offer breakfast only. These accommodations, which nowadays are a fundamental part of the hospitality market, deviate from all those typical features of the hotel. Public spaces or restaurant facilities, characteristic of the hotels, are now less important. A widespread trend nowadays is that a large number of tourists, especially in the most popular destinations, prefer to interpret the hospitality as a simple overnight lodging, undertaking the other functions like eating, outside of the accommodation. Therefore, in recent years, we are witnessing a paradigm shift in tourism, driven by saving and speed.

Other successful tourist accommodations are the hostels, often used by young in relation to their low buying power. Reference is made to accommodations which offer a single bed in dormitories of different size for slashing prices. Toilet facilities are almost always shared, while in this case, spaces dedicated to social gathering are emphasized and appreciated by young users. As matter of fact, this typology is targeted at young travellers like backpackers by applying age limits.

An additional experience that is linked to the reduction of the personal space is the so-called *capsule hotel*. This curious typology has taken hold almost exclusively in Asia, in fact, the first one appeared in Osaka in 1979, from the design of the Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa. The main concept characterising the capsule hotel has to do with the previous minimum dwelling experiments of the architect. As its name suggests, the hotel provides for a series of coffin-like capsules of minimum dimensions stacked on one another, where the users can sleep. The minimum personal space is the only offered, in addition to small amenities like inbuilt television or radio, and a kit for personal care.

Also in this case, such typology develops from a necessity of the Japanese culture, under which workers who lost the last train to go back home, used capsule hotels instead of paying a terrible price for a taxi ride homeward, often a satellite town. Another reason for their rising may lie in the fact that many unemployed people rent each month a capsule at reasonable prices, due to the inability to rent a house.



Ginza Bay Capsule Hotel - Tokyo

Of course, capsule hotels are used by common tourists too, both for the low price and the curious experience. Although anyone could believe that this type of hotel seems absurd, actually, included in the price users can enjoy public facilities such as bathhouse, TV room, and massage room. Again, like in the hostel, we witness to a further reduction of the private space in exchange for a low price, whilst leaving some public facilities that characterise the spatial awareness of the hotel (Arkaraprasertkul, 2015).

In the final analysis, to better understand contemporary tourism dynamic, the recent phenomenon of collaborative consumption, most commonly named sharing economy, should be considered. This alternative economic model is having a strong impact on tourism along with the concerning hospitality. The sharing economy, mainly arose as a consequence of the 2008 economic crisis, puts at the centre the opportunity to make money from unused good or services, from small objects or skills until cars or homes.⁶ It is the latter good, the home, that is renegotiated in relation to tourist hospitality. Right in 2008, in fact, Airbnb stems in San Francisco. Airbnb, just like other similar subsequent web platforms, makes it possible to rent out a room or an entire home at a low price. In doing so, people who have an unused space can earn extra money by renting it, while guests can save money for their trip. One of the main features of the sharing economy approach is precisely this, allow both sides to benefit from the service. Airbnb has experienced an exponential growth in recent years, generating many discussions around it. Furthermore, the success of the platform has occurred especially thanks to the so-called *web 2.0*, which allowed the interaction among the users, but also thanks to the experience-based tourism rhetoric, and the promotion of the collaborative ethos of the service.

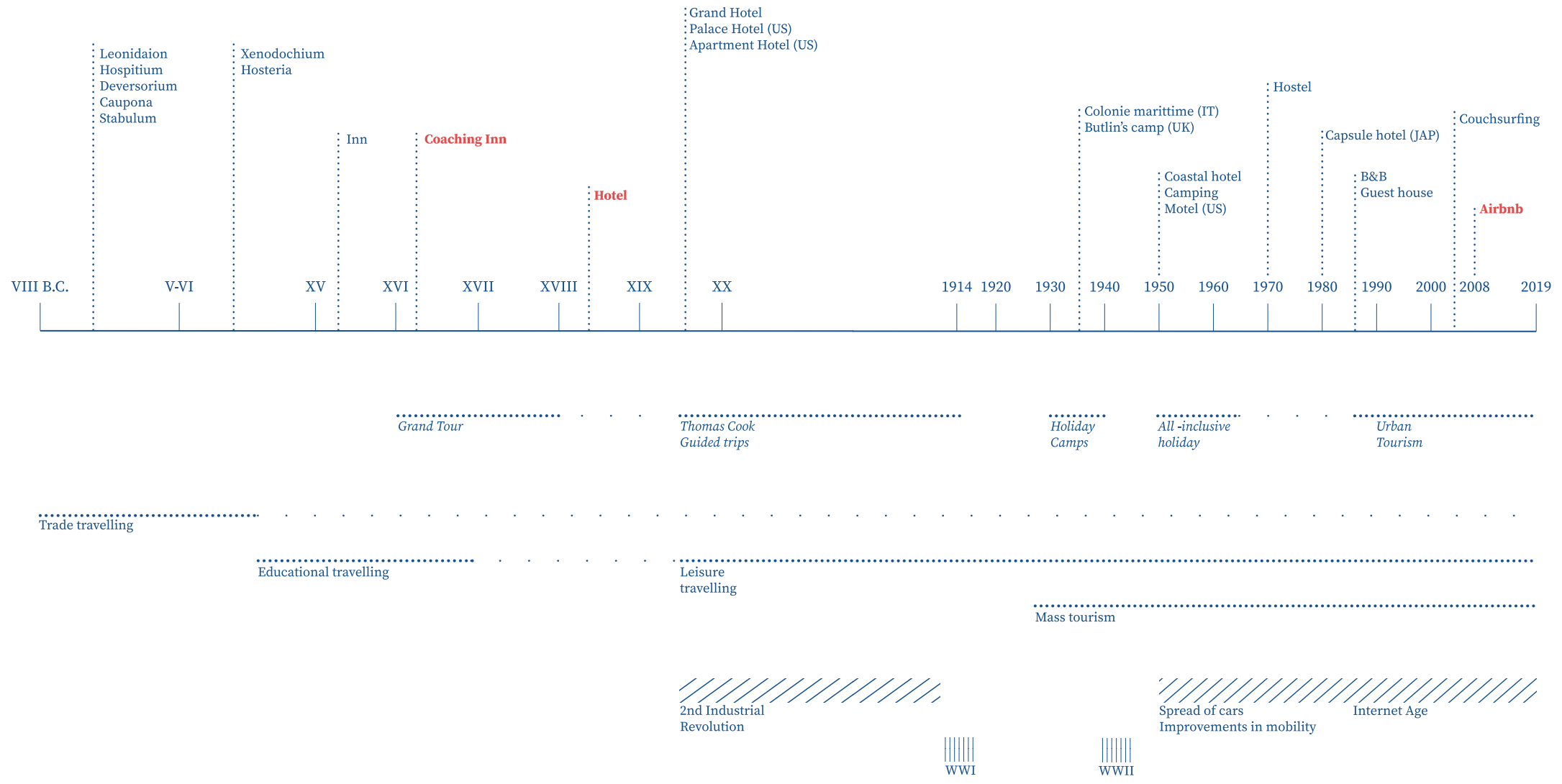
In conclusion, nowadays Airbnb represents one of the first

choices in the field of tourism hospitality. It is right this platform which will be deeply analyzed in the next chapters, mainly focusing on the architecture and urban issues.



⁶ A more in-depth look at this phenomenon will be found in subparagraph 2.2.1

Timeline



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Chapter 2

Airbnb

The chapter aims to introduce the short-term rental platform Airbnb in a clear and complete way. The relevant success of the platform will be studied, deepening all the key factors that led to this result. The resulting considerations will refer to the business model, the new tourism trends, the attitude of its users, with a look at future moves of the platform.

At the same time the impact of the platform on cities, the so-called *Airbnb Effect*, will be analyzed in depth. So, the economic, social and spatial consequences of the platform on the urban ecosystem will be identified. Lastly, the measures to contain the phenomenon adopted in different cities worldwide will be examined.

2.1 Airbnb overview

The story of how the platform Airbnb came to be, rises from a necessity. As Leigh Gallagher said in his book, in October 2007, two unemployed Art School grads lived in a three-room apartment in San Francisco. Needing to make rent, they decided on a lark to rent out some air mattresses during a big design conference that came to town and overcrowded the city's hotels.

Joe Gebbia and Brian Chesky, the creators of the platform, redefined the idea for weeks and finally create a very simple website called *AirBed & Breakfast*. The final product included three airbeds in the apartment for eight dollars apiece and in addition a series of amenities, such as a design library, motivational posters and, a 3D printing.

"It's like Craigslist and Couchsurfing.com, but classier", proclaimed one endorsement (Gallagher, 2017, 14).

With the last sentence, the two designers redefined their new accommodation concept, in fact, the idea was not so different from common rental ads on Craigslist, neither far from the "like a local" accommodation provided by Couchsurfing. The peculiarity was in the mutual gain between host and guest, the first by earning some extra money, while the second by saving it. As one of the first three guests claimed *"I was trying to hack and go to the conference, and they were trying to hack and make rent. It was, like, a perfect match"* (Ibidem, 2017, 15).

This moment would mark the start of Airbnb, a giant with a \$30 billion private market valuation, one hundred forty million guests and more than three millions listing inventory (Ibidem, 2017).

Currently, the platform lists over 5 million homes worldwide and has assisted over 300 million guest arrivals since 2008 (Airbnb 2018).

But the power of the company can be measured also by the number of room available on the platform. As a matter

of fact, just in 2014, the number of rooms increased from 300.000 in February, to 1 million in December. Airbnb offers more rooms than many of the largest hotel groups in the world (Hilton, InterContinental and Marriott) which each maintain just under 700.000 rooms.¹ In short, Airbnb is the hotel with the highest number of rooms without having placed a brick.

¹ Zainab Mudallal, "Airbnb will soon be booking more rooms than the world's largest hotel chains." *Quartz*, 2015.

The platform provides three different kinds of accommodation, the entire apartment, the private room, and the shared room. The owners can list their property for free, having access to an online calendar where to set the availability of the place. In addition, they are able to promote in the best way their space, uploading photos, rules, guidelines, prices, and amenities. The prospective guest can easily sign up, look for a suitable accommodation, according to the number of guests, range price and dates. Once the suitable listing is found, the guest can request a reservation or book immediately. When the host confirms, the guest can pay by credit card and be ready for the journey. Airbnb charges 3% of the payment from the host and 6 to 12% from the traveller. When the journey ends, both guests and hosts can decide to leave a review, which of course have a relevant role in the legacy of the users.

Despite the presence of many similar short-term rentals platforms like Roomorama, Wimdu or HomeAway, Airbnb remains the dominant actor in the world scene.

The rise of private short-term rentals, provided by a platform like Airbnb, allowed millions of people to monetize their apartment, opening the door to travellers looking for a cheap alternative to traditional tourist accommodation. The power of this phenomenon, in recent years, opened numerous fields of research, covering the economy, tourism studies, geography, and urbanism.

Airbnb makes us wonder where are the keys to this disrup-

tive success. In the following paragraph, based on recent researches, I will go in depth in discussing the reasons of the success of Airbnb, analysing the cultural model in which the platform has grown up and the economic model of collaborative consumption they adopted. ♦

2.2 The keys to success

A disruptive innovation. This is the definition given by the scholar Daniel Guttentag to define the rise and the success of Airbnb (Guttentag, 2013). The so-called *Disruptive Innovation Theory* was first proposed by Clayton Christensen and as he outlines, "*the theory describes a process by which a product or service takes root initially in simple applications at the bottom of a market and then relentlessly moves up market, eventually displacing established competitors.*"²

According to Guttentag, this description perfectly fits the case of Airbnb, which gain success thanks to two factors, "*the company's innovative internet-based business model and its unique appeal to tourists*" (Guttentag, 2013, 2).

The writer Leigh Gallagher is on the same page of Guttentag, indeed he writes that the success of Airbnb seems to be found in two main reasons. The first is economic because as previously stated, Airbnb offers a way for everyday people to make money off of their homes and a much more affordable way to travel for the guests. While the second main reason is due to a different and authentic experience of travel. Something greater than low prices and an abundance of available inventory (Gallagher, 2017).

Even though it would seem obvious, the Internet-based marketplace has been essential for the success of Airbnb. As seen in the first chapter, the concept at the basis of Airbnb is nothing new, in fact, people have always asked someone for a place to stay. The difference is in bringing that concept within the reach of millions of users, not only through the web but especially by developing the web 2.0

² "Key concepts"
<http://www.claytonchristensen.com/key-concepts/>

technology. This is the next stage of the first internet and it provides the interaction between users. It is exactly the case of Airbnb that on its platform enables the easy interaction between hosts and guests, a feature that is missing from the traditional accommodation sector (Guttentag, 2013).

In the final analysis, the disruptive success of Airbnb could be seen through three lenses, the first related to the economic context in which the platform emerged, the second regards the social and cultural context of growing, while the last is about the web 2.0.

Based on academic researches and studies, in the next paragraphs, the two issues will be deeply explained to obtain a clear vision of the phenomenon. In addition, will be further examined why people choose Airbnb and the future of the platform will be envisioned. ♦



Airbnb advertisement

2.2.1 Airbnb in the collaborative economy

The most accredited sources include Airbnb into the economic model of what has been defined as “collaborative consumption”, “sharing economy” or “peer to peer economy” (Guttentag, 2013; Botsman and Rogers, 2010).

To have a general idea of what we are talking about, according to the Oxford Online Dictionary, the so-called “sharing economy” can be defined as “*an economic system in which assets or services are shared between private individuals, either free or for a fee, typically by means of the Internet.*”³

A more deep investigation of this new economic model was brought forward by the authors Botsman and Rogers in the book *What's mine it's yours: the rise of collaborative consumption* (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). In the book, they first explain the reasons why this new economic model has taken hold in recent years. The authors detect three main human habits, results of capitalism, which generate the wish of changing certain approaches about our daily life. The first one is the so-called “throwaway living” that as part of consumerism, forces the customer to throw away a product and then coming back for more, creating endless profit for manufacturers. The second habit is the self-storage of stuff, which generate an accumulation of unused goods. At last, the third one is the hyper-consumerism, which engendered a society of individual consumers where the common mantra is “what’s mine is mine”. But the authors outline a recent transformation of the approach to consumption.

They identify two main factors at the heart of this phenomenon, which is shifting some of the pre-established values of consumerism. The first is a growing common conscience regard what we buy and what we don’t buy. The second is the fact that people are starting to experience that materialism impoverishes relationships. As stated by the authors “*this realization is causing a desire to re-create stronger communities again. We are experiencing a tipping point from the*

³ Oxford Online Dictionary

pursuit of ‘what’s in it for me’ toward the mindset of ‘what’s in it for us’. But more than that, we are beginning to see that self-interest and collective good depend on each other” (Botsman and Rogers, 2010, 46).

But the change of the paradigm reported by the authors has been influenced by a clear economic and environmental crisis too. It is from this point that we can talk about “collaborative consumption”, defined by them as “*a new promising economic and social mechanism that starts to balance individual needs with those of our communities and planet”* (Ibidem, 2010, 60).

After the foundation of Etsy, one of the first platform that can be included under the umbrella of the collaborative consumption, there has been a strong increment of collaborative experiences of living and consume. These experiences include shared goods like cars or homes (Uber, BlaBlaCar and Airbnb) and shared labours or skills (TaskRabbit and Skillshare). In all the cases this phenomenon generates social connections as well as an economic return, both based on the exchange of goods or skills.

Although the universe of companies which based their vision on sharing is huge, the ones that effectively leave a bigger footprint in the global market are two, Airbnb and Uber. Classified as disruptive innovation, they rapidly became relevant, generating a major impact on the existing markets of travels and mobility.

Focusing the attention on Airbnb, it is very interesting to notice how the approach provided by the company could not be considered properly “new”. In fact, as Brian Chesky affirmed when he told his grandfather about the idea of Airbnb “*It seemed totally normal to him. My parents had a different reaction. I could not figure out why at first”* (Ibidem, 2010, 9).

Of course, his grandfather would pass the nights in farms or houses when travelling, while his parents can be consid-

ered as the hotel generation. So as argued by Botsman and Rogers “*Airbnb is not very different from that experience. It is an old idea, being replicated and made relevant again through peer-to-peer networks and new technologies”* (Ibidem, 2010, 9). It is, therefore, necessary to look at new technologies to understand better the wide success of the company. Actually, thanks to the great mobile and web usability provided by Airbnb the access to sharing with strangers is broader. Quoting Botsman and Rogers, “*online exchanges mimic the close ties once formed through face-to-face exchanges in villages, but on a much larger and unconfined scale. In other words, technology is reinventing old forms of trust”* (Ibidem, 2010, 9). Trust between strangers has been underlined by Botsman and Rogers as one of the four cores of collaborative consumption, while the other three are the critical mass, the idling capacity and the belief in the commons. Every principle is not more important than the others and the presence of just one of them generate that the system will work. In the case of Airbnb, just like in other similar companies, the creation of a transparent community can be seen as an important goal, directly generated by the users. In fact, Airbnb acts as curator and ambassador, quoting Botsman and Rogers “*the role of this new intermediary is therefore to create the right tools and environment for familiarity and trust to be built, a middle ground where commerce and community meet”* (Ibidem, 2010, 80).

The most significant tool provided by the platform is definitely the use of reviews, which become a way to write positive or negative references about the stay, the host or the guest. This kind of tool facilitates the decision of choosing a place instead of another one. But, as explained by Asher Fergusson after an empirical research about the safety of Airbnb, “*People who leave a stay early or cancel before check-in were not allowed to write reviews. That means none of the people who have a bad experience with Airbnb in the past nine years (since Airbnb started) was able to write a review.”*⁴

⁴ Asher Fergusson, “Is Airbnb Safe? We Analyzed 1021 Horror Stories to Find Out (2017).”

Such considerations open up a wide discussion about the safety of Airbnb that will be further addressed in *subparagraph 2.3.2*.

The disruptive rise of Airbnb into the global market of tourism accommodation emphasises the growth of the so-called critical mass, “*a sociological term used to describe the existence of enough momentum in a system to make it become self-sustaining*” (Ibidem, 2010, 68).

The critical mass is the number of listings necessary to persuade enough people to switch from traditional accommodation to Airbnb. According to Botsman and Rogers, the critical mass point depends on many factors, needs and user expectation but for sure, considering that Airbnb is offering more rooms than many of the largest hotel groups all around the world, the step might be short.

The principle that clearly represents the success of a platform like Airbnb can be considered the so-called idling capacity, namely the unused potential of an object when it is not in use. Of course, this principle can be related not just to physical objects but also to less tangible ones like skills, time or space.

The unused potential of available rooms, apartments or dusty attics has become absolutely useful to generate an economic return to the hosts and a convenience to the guests of Airbnb.

The last principle expressed by Botsman and Rogers is what they define belief in commons, a term that comes from the theory studied by the Nobel Prize Elinor Ostrom about the long-term sustainability of the commons, namely a shared resource. She found the solution into the possibility of the people to self-organize themselves, generating communities and taking care of common resources. On the same line, Botsman and Rogers think that thanks to the Internet, it is possible to create a significant culture of online socializing that encourage people to share. Quoting them, “*through our digital experiences, we are recognizing that by*

providing value to the community, we enable our own social value to expand in return” (Ibidem, 2010, 78).

This is exactly what happens when people use Airbnb, the more they participate in the platform, the more they create value for other people, making the system better and broadening the network. Moreover, the value that is generated from the participation can lead to a more sustainable impact on the environment, economy, and society. As a matter of fact, according to Zvolska, shared accommodation solutions are significantly less resource intensive than the traditional accommodation sector, creating positive impacts in terms of the environmental dimension of the triple bottom line. Additionally, she argued that sharing economy platforms can create new economic opportunities as people can capitalise on the underused potential of goods. Thanks to this, users can decrease the levels of consumption because, as underused goods are being shared, the production of new ones is being minimized (Zvolska, 2015). ♦

2.2.2 Airbnb in the New Urban Tourism

“*We imagine a world where you can belong anywhere*” is probably one of the most famous advertisements which perfectly define the “idealistic” vision of Airbnb about a journey. With that sentence, they push users into a growing desire for a unique travel experience, where they can decide to stay in a neighbourhood that is different than the traditional tourist zones. An advantage to living a local experience and to travel “off the beaten track”.

This specific touristic trend, which is looking for authenticity, has been treated by many scholars during the last two decades and has been called, especially for the city, *New Urban Tourism* (Füller & Michel, 2014). As Maitland suggests in his paper, city tourism is shifting from a reliance on tangible resources like museums and monuments to intangible resources like lifestyle, image and creativity. The new emerging approach consists of “being” rather than “doing”. Being like a local and being attracted by the everyday life of places become the key of a new tourism based on experience and authenticity.

In relation to the new tourism trend, a relevant field research developed by Stors and Kagermeier investigates why do people sleep in the bed of a stranger, focusing the attention on the use of Airbnb in the city of Berlin. In order to explore the research question, the authors gave questionnaires to a number of hosts and guests. As expected, two main factors have taken on relevance. First, the economic dimension linked to the sharing economy, and second, the visitor’s expectations related to specific experiences at the destination.

Having direct contact to the local population, gaining insider information from the host about bars, restaurants or the neighbourhood in general, and experiencing the destination from the locals perspective represented a relevant point as the money factor (Stors and Kagermeier, 2015).

Hence, the interaction between hosts and guests become a relevant part of the Airbnb visitor experience. In particular, according to the interviews conducted by the authors, guests consider very important that the host provides information about the city and he gives personal advice about the place, mentioning his favourite and recommended places.

Of course, the search by the new tourist, of a local experience it is not related just to the domestic scale and the relation between hosts and guests inside the house. But the new urban tourism can be clearly seen on a urban scale too.

As reference, Maitland provides the example of two non-tourist neighbourhoods in the city of London, in which after a qualitative research he can distil three themes about everyday life and creative tourism experience. The first is referred to the sense of place, where street patterns and buildings of varied age can result distinctive and appealing. So the observation of daily life seems to be interesting in itself, it doesn’t feel artificial. The second is regarded to the absence of iconic buildings or strong historical and cultural narratives, in fact, the authenticity lies in the heterogeneity of the place.

The third aspect, instead, is the notion of “the real London”, something that is not completely real, because the real one can be found in the inner areas and suburbs of the town. The author thinks that this kind of London is an idealised city where new tourism constructs an appealing experience (Maitland 2010).

The marketing strategies developed by Airbnb during the last years improved even better the new tourism trend presented by Maitland. For instance, in 2012, Airbnb launched a new feature on the website called “neighbourhood”. We are dealing with a series of “insider” guidebooks defined

Of course, some of the tours on the platform could show irregularity with the law, such as the case of a spray painting workshop in Paris, where people technically spray painting buildings. This kind of tours outlines the discussion about the lawfulness of Airbnb in some specific contexts. With regard to this, as stated by Ruth Reader *“an element of risk can play an important role in attracting customers. Avny’s street art workshop, for example, offers travellers a chance to play the vandal, giving her Airbnb activity a sheen of authenticity. Such unusual tours also open up the opportunity for other unique experiences”*.⁵

⁵ Ruth Reader, “Airbnb wants to turn every day of your life into a vacation.” *Fast Company*, 2018.

The constant research by some segment of new tourists, of off the grid locations can lead to developing extreme and dangerous experiences like Brazilian favelas, Calcutta slums, Chernobyl tour and so on, which probably represents the more radical stage of the new urban tourism. A kind of voyeurism where as argued by Freire Medeiros *“certain sites are rhetorically reinvented in their aesthetic, educational and leisure predicates and turned into tourist attractions”* (Freire Medeiros, 2007, 5).

Still, in relation with the main elements of the so-called New Urban Tourism, such as experience, local life and authenticity, there is another key element that can be considered relevant in the success of Airbnb, the so-called *Millennials* or *Generation Y*.

Gallagher argues *“these elements are particularly powerful for millennials, who have exhibited a growing dissatisfaction with big brands and a greater sense of adventure, and who grew up so accustomed to digital-only interactions that venturing into the home of someone they’d connected with online wasn’t much of a stretch”* (Gallagher 2017, 3).

According to the demographer David Foot, the Millennials are a cohort born between 1980 and 1995 (Foot and Stoffman, 1998). As a result, the environment in which Millennials grew up during their formation years impacts their

values, attitudes, and behaviours. Although the number of researches about this generation results enough wide, it has been difficult to find a concise definition of them. So, to resume the main characteristics of this generation, has been consulted the paper called *Millennials: Who are they, how are they different, and why should we care?* written by Ng and McGinnis Johnson.

The authors sustain that Millennials give more importance to work values than the previous generation like *Gen Xers* and *Baby Boomers*, additionally having higher career expectation. Furthermore, thanks to the rising level of education, they result ambitious about their life goals and assertive in getting what they want. They are considered the most ethnoculturally diverse generation, showing a higher acceptance of diversity and minority. Lastly, they seem to be more keen to prefer urban environments than the rural ones (Ng and McGinnis Johnson, 2015).

To highlight the relevance of Millennials in the Airbnb market, in 2016, Airbnb realized a report which outlines the main factors that lead this generation to use Airbnb rather than traditional accommodation. The study has been conducted through online interviews (approx. 1000) in the US, the UK and China (Airbnb report, 2016).

The survey findings show that Millennials consider traveling as a very important part of their lives and a relevant side of their identity. Especially in China, respondents would set aside money for travelling instead of buying a car, a house or paying off debts. The resulting trend opens the door to the fracture between Millennials and the powerful idea of ownership that defines the previous generation. The importance of usage above ownership is becoming extremely relevant now. As stated by Botsman and Rogers *“As our online ‘brands’ define ‘who we are’ and ‘what we like’, actual ownership becomes less important than demonstrating use or use by association”* (Botsman and Rogers, 2013, 83).

Furthermore, in relation to the travel experience, they say that they are looking for something new when they travel, more adventurous, local and personal. Over 80% of them seek unique travel experiences and say that the best way to learn about a place is to live as the locals do.

The final findings show that roughly 60% of all guests who have ever booked on Airbnb are millennials. In addition, *“the vast majority of millennials say that it is important their accommodations are available in a variety of locations and areas, and offer opportunities to experience the local culture. The vast majority also say it’s important to them that their accommodations make them feel like a part of the local community, and offer opportunities to meet people from the area”* (Airbnb report, 2016, 9).

A more deep and notable research about the millennials intentions to book on Airbnb is the one conducted by Amaro, Andreu and Huang. The study reveals that between the most relevant determinants of intention to book on Airbnb there is the subjective norm. In fact, as millennials seem to be susceptible to social influences, Airbnb developed marketing strategies that enhance e-won and recommendation to friends. For instance, Airbnb offers 70 euros in travel credit for each friend recommended, then both receive 35 euros. By this way, the company can easily gain users.

The last determinant that emerges from the research is the fact that the presence of unique accommodations on the platform can be considered as a driver to attract more and more visitors, something that is absent in the traditional tourism market (Amaro, Andreu, Huang, 2018).

As stated by Gallagher, *“Airbnb had become a thing. You could rent someone’s home for a night, but people had also started to upload quirkier space: a treehouse, a houseboat, a castle, a teepee”* (Gallagher, 2010, 6).

As part of the authentic travel experience provided by the company, Airbnb recently launched a competition to win

an overnight stay on the Chinese Great Wall in a custom designed house inside one of the towers, but the Yanqing District cultural commission said Airbnb’s promotion was not in line with the conservation plans for the wall, which is a UNESCO world heritage site. The competition held by Airbnb could sound like a provocation, but it hides a crescent interest into the Chinese market. ♦



Airbnb listing on top of the Great Wall of China

2.2.3 The Airbnb user

Once the economic and cultural reasons behind the rapid growth of Airbnb have been detailed, now can be interesting to outline the main features of Airbnb guests and hosts. To do this, two research studies based on qualitative analysis will be used as reference, the first is a PhD thesis conducted by Daniel Guttentag, called *Why tourists choose Airbnb: A motivation-based segmentation study underpinned by innovation concepts*, while the second is the extract of a speech held by the sociologist Javier Gil in the conference *Jornada de periodismo de datos y datos abiertos 2018*, in Madrid. Both studies trying to outline and briefly define different typologies of Airbnb guests and hosts.

To go deeper into the definition of a series of different guest's typologies, Guttentag sets out the primary motivations that are behind the intention to book an Airbnb accommodation. The framework is thus defined by six motivations that are significantly considered before choosing a listing. The first factor is the price. The author affirms that the low cost of Airbnb should be considered as the strongest motivation that drives people to book on Airbnb rather than hotel accommodation. Location convenience is the second motivation analysed. The possibility to stay in residential neighbourhoods outside the tourist routes become a side benefit, also due to the presence of practical services like supermarkets, shops and restaurants. The third motivation is about home benefits. In this case, the author talks about the possibility to use household amenities and have much more space, something that is absent in a common hotel room. Considered as a weaker reason of choice, *local authenticity* can be viewed as the will to live a "backstage" experience, something authentic and unique. This trend has been previously examined in *subparagraph 2.2.2*.

The intention to discover and experience for the first time Airbnb is a further motivation of choice. Has been defined

by the author as *novelty* and is used by novelty-seeking people from the perspective of accommodation rather than destination.

According to the author, the majority of respondents choose Airbnb due to its philosophy or because the money spent goes to the local people. This motivation has been defined *sharing economy ethos*.

The last motivation outlined is the *interaction* and it is about the intention to establish interactions with the local hosts, trying to obtain tips and recommendation about the place. Due to the great number of people choosing entire apartments, this motivation can be considered not so strong.

As an initial result, the motivation's study highlights that Airbnb users are primarily keen to use the service because of its practical advantages (low cost, location convenience, home benefits), whereas the experiential features result to be secondary (local Authenticity and novelty) (Guttentag, 2016).

After the preliminary analysis of the motivations, Guttentag outlines five segments of Airbnb users. The segments are the following: *Money savers*, *Homeseekers*, *Collaborative consumers*, *Pragmatic novelty seekers*, *Interactive novelty seekers*. According to the study, no single segment dominate the Airbnb guest population.

The Money savers choose Airbnb mainly for its low cost and use the service as a substitute for hotels and hostels. In addition, they tend to be young.

The Homeseekers use Airbnb mostly to benefit from household amenities and large space. They tend to be older, staying in Airbnb with family and use it for long trips. Additionally, they use to book an entire apartment.

The Collaborative consumers use Airbnb in order to promote sharing economy ethos, interaction with locals and unique experiences. They tend to be older or to be backpackers. Additionally, they use to stay in shared accommodation such as private rooms or shared ones.

The Pragmatic novelty seekers choose Airbnb because of the novelty of the service, its uniqueness and its peculiarity. They tend to be young, going accompanied and use it for short stays. Moreover, they use to stay into entire apartments.

The Interactive novelty seekers, instead use Airbnb in order to establish interactions with the hosts. They tend to be backpackers, going accompanied and use it for the shortest stays. Furthermore, they use to stay in shared accommodation (Guttentag, 2016). ♦



Airbnb host welcomes a guest

From the host's perspective, it is possible to outline and describe four segments. According to the sociologist Javier Gil, hosts can be grouped in *Occasional host*, *Constant host*, *Professional host*, *Investor host*. The first two have been included in a peer-to-peer economic model, while the last two into a professional economic model.

The Occasional host use to rent in an occasional way one or two rooms of his apartment. He tends to rent his place especially during national holidays or major events. The management of the place is usually improvised and unprofessional. The aim of the host is to make extra money without professionally managing his place.

The Constant host use to have one or two available apartments on Airbnb. The management of the apartments is well organized, often by relying on a co-host and cleaning and maintaining staff. The aim of the host is to obtain a constant economic flow, setting up his apartments as tourist accommodation.

The Professional host is considered as an evolution of the Constant host, in fact in addition to managing his apartments, he manages apartments for third parties. Usually, this kind of host has between 3 and 20 apartments. Of course, in this case, the management is professional and the main aim is to increase profits.

The Investor host is the last type and he usually provides more than 20 apartments, in some cases he can get to 200. Due to the great number of listings offered, often the apartments are managed by professional businesses of tourist accommodation. Additionally, international investments funds are hiding behind this type of host (Gil, 2018).

From the results of the researches above mentioned is enough clear to understand how the philosophy of Airbnb is going to become in such ways weaker. Starting from the guests, the common trend foresees motivations of choice that are marked by the convenience, such as low cost, location and home benefits that are completely absent in the

traditional accommodation market. In addition, the preference to rent entire apartments highlights, even more, the little regard for the sharing economy ethos.

To remain on the sharing economy side is clear how specific types of hosts (Professional host, Investor host) pull away from a collaborative economic model by promoting traditional forms of it. These issues will be further examined in *chapter 2.3*. ♦

2.2.4 Envision the future of Airbnb

Just like other companies that base their business model on collaborative consumption, Airbnb is trying to expand the range on new attractive markets too. The case of Uber, the world famous company of car ride sharing, well illustrates this trend. Founded in 2009, the company only allowed users with a black luxury car, but since 2013 with the launch of UberX any car could be used, generating a tremendous impact on city mobility, receiving a great criticism from taxi drivers, uber contractors and city governments. In spite of being declared illegal in many cities, Uber continued to invest in new services able to conquer new market segments. In the case of Uber Freight and Uber Eats, the first is dedicated to matching freight shippers with truckers and has the goal of taking advantage of available capacity to reduce deadhead miles, while the second one is a peer-to-peer food delivery service available in more than 600 cities worldwide (Uber, 2018).

Also Amazon, the largest internet retailer in the world, steered part of investment on taking over new market segments by launching peer-to-peer services not there before. Amazon Flex is the app that pays part-time contractors to deliver Amazon packages, while Homeservice Amazon works exactly as the known TaskRabbit, providing the possibility to choose any kind of professional with the right task to meet the needs of mounting or install products just purchased.

So, the strategy to expand the company into the Chinese market is not the only bet for Airbnb in the next future. The company is focusing its growth strategy on a broader impact on the tourism market, as the founder and CEO Brian Chesky affirms in a recent article *“I want to make sure—and we’re certainly on that path—that we are not just a home sharing company. That we can take big bets and be an end-to-end travel company”*.⁶

⁶ Ruth Reader, “Airbnb wants to turn every day of your life into a vacation.” *Fast Company*, 2018.

As a matter of fact, when Airbnb announced “Trips” in 2016 they also envisioned the addition of “flights and services” in the near future, eventually through partnerships with existing companies like Skyscanner, Kayak or Hopper, leaders of the flight ticket sales market. Although the idea promoted by Airbnb could appear disruptive, a series of doubt regarding the success of it is arising, especially in relation to the strategy Airbnb wants to join. As told by Sean O’Neill in his article, there are two likely paths *“One is the online travel agency model. Airbnb might be the merchant handling the sale of flights by buying an online travel agency. It could also establish an affiliate relationship with an online travel agency. Airbnb might also aggregate flight results that refer customers elsewhere for booking, perhaps by partnering with a price-comparison search company like Skyscanner or Google Flights under a system presented as Airbnb flights powered by a partner”*.⁷

⁷ Sean O’Neill, “Airbnb Mulled Integrating Skyscanner for Flights and Buying Hopper.” *Skift*, 2018.

Without regard to the path the company wants to follow, opinions are divided because of the high risk due to the entry in the flight ticket market, considered as much more complex than the accommodation one.

To return on the accommodation, the original field of Airbnb, they are trying to expand the customer base by offering a new service called Airbnb Plus. Launched in 2018, the novelty of the service consists of proposing a range of entire homes and private rooms that are guaranteed to one-hundred quality criteria and come with specific amenities. The idea is to offer accommodation to anyone who wants more comforts during the stay. Airbnb Plus is now active in the main cities of the world like Los Angeles, Shanghai, New York, Milan and so on, with more than two thousand homes listed.

To reach the “plus” badge, every host can apply to be included in the list after a specific quality control provided by the company. Of course, more comforts mean higher

nightly prices, a thing that launch Airbnb towards the high-end segment of the accommodation market.



Airbnb Plus

In addition to Airbnb Plus, in the next future, the company will introduce Beyond, a new brand that comes from the acquisition of Luxury-Retreats. The relatively new concept will offer sumptuous villas and homes with luxurious amenities and services, such as full-time concierge, private butlers and personal chefs. It could sound like a “new” idea, but the luxury accommodation listing has already been pioneered by many home-sharing companies like VRBO, Onefinestay or HomeAway. Hence, Beyond can be considered as an additional search provider for luxurious accommodation.

The wish to cover differentiated segments of the accommodation market is becoming a clear strategy. The high-end and luxury customer base is not the only bet, sure enough, Airbnb has implemented another interesting service called *Collections*. When a user is planning to find an apartment or a room in a specific place, he can filter the results through an accommodation designed for families or for work. The first typology must provide essential amenities plus kitchen, a minimum 4,8-star rating and an adaptability to babies. The second one instead, must offer essential amenities plus self-check-in, working area, iron, coat hanger and flexible terms of cancellation. The attention of Airbnb on the business world is clearly expressed also thanks to the great amount of “experiences” designed for business travellers. The company, in fact, provide meeting-appropriate homes where companies can organize events, meetings and generate team-building practices.

The vision of Airbnb about the next future seems to be increasingly aimed at widening the provision of services to potential segments of tourism that still don't enjoy Airbnb. As Chesky stated in a company presentation on February 2018, *“Airbnb is for everyone. We will provide the right home for the right type of trip. Our hosts have been leading the way*

and in the process redefine what it means to be home” (Chesky, 2018).

The new service Airbnb Plus will lead to attracting new users that are looking for a more comfortable and verified accommodation with the guarantee of success. The launch of Collections, with a series of tailored services designed for a specific type of traveller, will lead to satisfying a large part of the market. Families that are looking for baby oriented amenities and comforts may now benefit from a specific category on the website. The same is true for business travellers who need specific work oriented services. Additionally, future Collections will offer tailored accommodations and experiences designed for honeymoons, weddings, group getaways, dinner parties, social stays and unique journeys. At last, the future launch of Beyond will represent the entry of Airbnb in the luxury niche market.

But according to scholars like Bjorn Hanson, the future vision of Airbnb is more complex than how it appears. He affirms that Airbnb is establishing a new customer perspective that is *“I'll decide what I want to do before I decide where I want to stay. That's reversing the old model, which is, I'll decide where I want to stay, and then I'll plan my activities around a base”*.⁸ ♦

⁸ Ruth Reader, “Airbnb wants to turn every day of your life into a vacation.” *Fast Company*, 2018.

2.3 The impact of Airbnb on cities

Before to examine the impact of Airbnb on cities, it would be important to introduce the impact of tourism on cities. The amount of researches and books regarding this field is boundless, so for this reason in the first part of the paragraph will be provided a general explanation of the phenomenon. Subsequently, a deeper investigation regarding the impact of Airbnb will be carried out.

As explained in the first chapter, mass tourism involves not only people but generate a series of side services that define and organize a proper industry. As a direct consequence, the tourism industry originates externalities such as occupation, infrastructures and services that are the core of the system. The rise of this kind of industry during the years originated a strong impact on cities and local communities, producing an urban environment adapted for tourists, something that previously was not designed to receive them. As well explained by Judd and Fainstein in the book *The tourist city*, “Cities are sold just like any other consumer product. Each city tries to project itself as a uniquely wonderful place to visit, where an unceasing flow of events constantly unfolds. If an infrastructure that will attract and nurture the needs of tourists does not already exist, it must be constructed. Since this cannot be left to chance, governments are inevitably involved in coordinating, subsidizing, and financing the transformation of the urban environment” (Judd and Fainstein, 1999, 4)

This statement clearly explains the importance that tourism assumes for cities, on the economic side as on the urban one, and additionally outlines that the transformation of the urban environment to accommodate tourism is a fixed feature of the political economy of cities.

From this point is possible to draw up that the most significant actors in touristic cities are the tourists with the

concerning industry, the local community and the local government. The close connection between these three groups is the only one able to balance the impact of tourism on cities.

Due to the large flows of tourist in cities that are not prepared to receive a big amount of them, the impact on local communities can easily upset balances, creating a contrast. For this reason, the role of local governments is extremely relevant, coordinating the flows and regulating the tourism industry.

The economic impact of tourism can be seen as the most evident one, because when tourists visit cities they spend money, revitalizing specific areas of the city, generating jobs and increasing the value of properties. Undoubtedly, the consequences of the phenomenon usually are linked to negative effects that affect the social and the urban sphere of cities.

“The banner hung from a third-floor balcony, unfurling itself almost all the way down to the cobbles of the square. Barcelona no està en venda, it read, in large hand-painted letters: the city is not for sale.”

This little extract from the article written by Gaby Hinsliff and titled *Airbnb and the so-called sharing economy is hollowing out our cities*, shows in a very easy and clear way the conflict that arose around Airbnb during the last years. The platform, as part of the tourism industry, has generated a great amount of discussions in relation to its economic, social and urban impact on cities. Further researches have been conducted in order to better understand the phenomenon although the field of study is still weak and open to new contributions.

As explained before, tourism has a strong impact on cities, bringing with it a list of externalities that shake the balance of the urban environment, generally composed by the local

community and the public space. In the following subparagraphs, the possible benefits and drawbacks of Airbnb will be confronted at different levels, mainly economic, social and spatial. Although the following spheres are provided split, in practice, they are strictly interlinked. ♦

2.3.1 The economic impact

Considering “belong anywhere” as one of the key concepts that led Airbnb to success, the sense of community and shared experiences is tangible and well advertised. To support this idea, every year the company draws up several economic impact studies concerning different cities around the world. Citing the data from their Economic Impact Reports, in San Francisco, where the first report has been conducted in 2012, Airbnb generates approximately \$56 million in local spending of which \$12 million went directly to local hosts, besides supporting 460 jobs. Furthermore, 56% of hosts use the income generated through Airbnb to help pay their mortgage or rent.

Turning to the European context, in the city of Barcelona Airbnb generates approximately \$175 million in economic activity in the city, supporting more than 4000 jobs. In addition, 53% of hosts say that Airbnb income helped them to stay in their homes (Airbnb, 2015).

The reports highlight a positive economic impact of Airbnb on local communities, especially regarding the jobs generated from the touristic flows in areas of the city that are often unusual. The benefits also concern the money spent by the guests in such neighbourhoods, which can be easily revitalized by this new economy. Lastly, the extra income earned by hosts is considered as a relevant benefit by the company because it supports families or individuals to keep on paying their rents or mortgages by avoiding them to move out. Basically a way to survive from the crisis.

In the academic literature, the research about the econom-

ic effects of Airbnb is not very extensive but the studies show that in some specific cases Airbnb can bring benefits to the local communities, in other ones instead, the real impact of the phenomenon can be considered in some ways far from the optimistic view expressed by the company in the reports.

Taking into account the issue of making cities richer expressed by Airbnb, many scholars affirm that the arrival of more tourist due to the Airbnb lower accommodation cost is generating more jobs in the tourism industry. Of course, this kind of result comes from site-specific studies that cannot be easily adapted to every context (Fang, Ye, Law, 2016).

Whilst on one side, the presence of Airbnb is providing a rise in the job market of many cities, on the other one during the last years an acute competition came out from the hotel industry. As matter of fact, the hotel industry earns money in the majority when rooms are scarce and people are forced to pay higher, especially in central areas of the city or during big events. It is right in this fringe that Airbnb has shifted the balance, providing lower costs and inflating the offer. As a direct consequence, the hotel revenues started to going down, generating a loud conflict in many cities of the world, especially in the US and Europe. As reported in the article on Forbes, titled *The Airbnb Effect: Cheaper Rooms For Travelers, Less Revenue For Hotels* by Dina Gerdeman, the degree of impact of this situation can be clearly identified in cities with limited hotel capacity during peak demand days. “*On those days, hotel room prices were affected relatively more than occupancy rates, meaning that a hotel in one of these cities might still be fully booked during a peak period, but the competition from Airbnb may have forced the hotel to lower its rates for those rooms*”.⁹

The problem detected in the article is related to the fixed investment costs of hotels, because the traditional accommodation buildings cannot easily increase enough capaci-

⁹ Dina Gerdeman, “The Airbnb effect: cheaper rooms for travelers, less revenue for hotels.” *Forbes*, 2018.

ty to satisfy peaks. They cannot build new rooms or build new hotels because the marginal cost would be huge, while adding a bed in an existent apartment rented on Airbnb is extremely easier, without any friction and in a very short time. So as stated by Farronato in the article *“If you have too much capacity, you will have a lot of empty rooms most of the time. And if you have too little capacity, you won’t be able to satisfy the demand, and Airbnb hosts will come in and drive prices down when demand is high”*.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibidem, 2018.

Going deeper into this issue, would be correct to consider that Airbnb cannot easily compete with every hotel typology, in fact, according to the research conducted by Zervas, Byers and Proserpio, lower-end hotels and hotels not catering to business travellers are the most vulnerable regard the competition with Airbnb. This kind of hotels are the only comparables to the services provided by Airbnb, and consequently the ones that can be seriously affected. Considering that the users of Airbnb are travellers on a budget and that business travellers are less price sensitive, the negative impact of Airbnb increases when the price of hotels step down. Of course, as stated by the authors, the research has few limitations especially due to the site-specific characteristics of the study (Zervas et al., 2016).

The negative impact of Airbnb has been taken seriously by hotel associations, mainly in the US, launching a campaign against short-term rentals platforms. The results obtained by the hotel sector have been a series of regulations approved by local governments, trying to control the phenomenon. A further explanation about the different types of regulation of Airbnb will be provided in *subparagraph 2.3.3*.

Excluding for a while the regulation promoted by local governments, which are of course an effective way to decrease the effects of Airbnb on hotel revenues, it is also interesting to consider the strategy developed by Marriott, one of the

world biggest hotel chain, to increase revenues and better compete with short-term rentals, becoming more appealing to the Airbnb user segment. The hotel chain, which realized that next generation guests want something unique, local and also a bit imperfect, decided to build small changes into key locations, scrambling a bottom-up process. As declared by Wolfgang Lindlbauer, chief discipline leader of Marriott, in the article *Inside Marriott’s Attempt To Win Over Millennials*, *“We wanted to try something from the bottom up, asking entrepreneurially minded individuals who had worked in our hotels or who were part of the local community to come up with new ways to do things”*.¹¹ During the experimental phase, the goal was to think about a new concept of hotels that can be linked to local food experiences, something that can be enjoyed by users such as by locals. One result has been the opening of an unused Marriott rooftop in London where installing a pop-up bar and dinner joint called RoofNic. Instead, at Marriott Budapest, the local community has been called to propose a new creative use for a big unused room facing the Danube river. So, the strategies pursued to compete with Airbnb are becoming wide-ranging and diverse, but above all, it is important for the hotel industry to find creative and appealing solutions.

Airbnb can be considered as a ready-made solution, where users can rent a house, an apartment or a yurt that already exist somewhere in the world, or add a sofa bed to increase the capacity. This is strongly in contrast with hotels, which cannot easily increase their existent capacity or architectural volume, especially due to regulation and local zoning requirements. The attempt pursued by the hotel industry to compete with Airbnb has been not only linked to asking for local governments regulations but also to think about the new strategy of adaptation to the new trend of short-term rentals.

To follow the economic impact of short-term rentals on cities, Airbnb can generate a concentration of externali-

¹¹ Elizabeth Segrán, *“Inside Marriott’s attempt to win over millennials.”* *Fast Company*, 2015.

ties that can modify the urban sphere, consequently, if the externalities are negative the value of properties could decrease, if however the externalities result to be positive the value could increase. Regarding this issue, a notable study is the one conducted by Sheppard and Udell, in which the scholars analyze the impact of Airbnb on housing prices in NYC. From the research emerges that *“in New York City, the impacts appear to be that an increase in localized Airbnb availability is associated with an increase in property values. In our hedonic model estimates, a doubling of Airbnb listings is associated with increases of 6% to 11% in house values. Using a difference-indifference approach produces an even larger estimated impact, suggesting that properties that are subject to the Airbnb treatment increase in value by about 31%”* (Sheppard and Udell, 2016, 39).

As positive as it may be, the increase of property value may be beneficial to homeowners, while for residents is often negative because they can not afford to pay the rent and consequently they can be driven out. Lastly, the fluctuation of property value can be seen as a relevant indicator of processes of gentrification that can affect specific areas of the city, shifting the balance within the social and urban sphere. In the next section, a specific analysis of the social and the spatial impact of Airbnb will be carried out. ♦

2.3.2 The socio-spatial impact

As introduced in the previous paragraphs, the flows of tourism in cities can easily generate a large variety of effects. With regard to the short-term rentals, besides the undeniable economic impact, in the latest years, they are definitely generating a series of consequences that are dealing with the socio-spatial sphere. Proof of this is the long series of demonstrations took place in the streets of the most popular tourist destinations to criticize unregulated tourism and specifically Airbnb.

As far as demonstrations have been mainly peaceful, in certain delicate situation, the protests have been able to reignite social conflicts also in a violent way, like in the case of Barcelona.¹²

Instead, in a more serene way, several times in Venice, marches have been organized through the city against rising rents and cruise ships that put at risk the fragile environment of the city.¹³ In addition to social demonstrations, in many cases, neighbourhood organizations are born to fight against unregulated tourism. There is who decided to occupy empty houses to cope with rising rents, like Occupy Venice¹⁴ and who fight to avoid evictions in cities like Barcelona and Madrid.

Therefore, it may be concluded that overcrowding tourism and in particular the rise of short-term rental platforms like Airbnb, could have generated a long series of effects that do not totally benefit the local community.

So, whereas the events, it is questionable, what and whom the local communities are crusading against? The answer is undoubtedly complex and in this subparagraph, the main conflict-generating issues will be analyzed.

At the basis of the socio-spatial conflicts came out from the invasive presence of Airbnb in the most popular tourist destinations and in a particular within inner-city neighbourhoods, two main issues can be addressed. The first can

¹² Stephen Burgen, “Barcelona anti-tourism activists vandalise bikes and bus.” *The Guardian*, 2017.

¹³ Will Coldwell, “First Venice and Barcelona: now anti-tourism marches spread across Europe.” *The Guardian*, 2017.

¹⁴ Giorgio Ghiglione, “Occupy Venice: We are the alternative to the death of the city.” *The Guardian*, 2018.

be of an economic nature, namely the rising rents which can bring to displacement and eviction, while the second is about the modification of the quality of life in certain neighbourhoods, mainly residential.

These two issues can be framed in a more wide process of gentrification or to be more specific what is termed tourism gentrification. According to some scholars, displacement, quality life problems and rising rents can be all linked to the tourism overcrowding in cities.

The word gentrification has now entered into the collective imagination of many urban residents, especially the ones who live in American cities without excluding European ones. In fact, as outlined by the sociologist Daniel Sorando, when the first books about gentrification were published in Spain, journalists started to ask what that phenomenon was. Then, two years later the question was how to fight it (Sorando, 2017).

The term gentrification was first coined in 1964 by Ruth Glass, a pioneer of urban sociology, describing it as, some new and distinct processes of urban change that were beginning to affect inner London – literally gentrification means the replacement of an existing population by a gentry.

On the evidence of the cases, Glass identified gentrification as a complex urban process that included the rehabilitation of old housing stock, transformation from renting to owning, property price increases, and the displacement of working-class residents by the incoming middle classes. Moreover, these complex processes are closely related to the particular contexts of the neighbourhoods and cities in which they are situated (Lees, Slater et al., 2013).

At this stage it is important to clarify that Airbnb cannot be mentioned as the only promoter of the gentrification process, as gentrification is often a long-term process maybe started since few decades. Sure enough, as argued by the scholar Cocola-Gant, tourism can be responsible for the re-

cent gentrification wave occurred in the Gothic neighbourhood in Barcelona, but the phenomenon started from late 1980 when there has been a substitution of elderly residents and manual labourers in return for younger and more educated residents. What is relevant to notice in the research is the updated analysis of the demographic modifications in the neighbourhood, in which there is a higher loss of elderly residents and families with children. In addition, this happens in a neighbourhood that registers a clear tourism overcrowding, thereby generating a hostile place for local residents. It is in such situation that another type of gentrification may be recognised, the tourism one.

If the classic form of gentrification is marked by a substitution of working-class residents in return for middle-class ones, now the residents, whatever they may be, are being replaced by a fluctuating population, mainly short-term visitors and transnational gentrifiers who are mobile and temporary. (Cocola-Gant, 2018)

This is the case where certain inner-central neighbourhoods become so much saturated to be then considered as tourist theme parks or actual tourist dormitories, like in Venice where as mentioned before, the situation is getting out of control. In fact, for a local resident, daily life is in danger of becoming stressful and uncomfortable, besides the fact that the city is facing a rapid depopulation which can take it to be inhabited only by temporary tourists.¹⁵

In addition to this, it should also be remembered that tourism gentrification can rapidly bring to the gradual substitution not only of fixed residents but also of local commercial activities. The production of places of tourist consumption and chains can easily take over all those craft workshops and family-run businesses.

According to Cocola-Gant, an interpretation key of this situation lies in the excessive density of short-term rentals, often financed by international vulture funds. So, to better understand the process, the scholar shows four main phas-

¹⁵ Angela Giuffrida, "Imagine living with this crap': tempers in Venice boil over in tourist high season." *The Guardian*, 2017.

es. The first concerns a driven real estate investment. Immediately after there is the arrival of wealthier consumers like tourists or transnational gentrifiers. The third phase is displacement, while the last is the housing rehabilitation and commercial change (Ibidem, 2018).

As mentioned, displacement represents one of the phases of the tourism gentrification and can be seen as one of the most direct consequences of this process. Displacement is a phenomenon hard to prove, except empirically through demographics bearing out the loss of population. Peter Marcuse identifies displacement as a consequence of physical and economic changes in a certain neighbourhood, which often occur simultaneously (Marcuse, 1984).

In the specific case of tourism, displacement could become the result of a change in the quality of life of local residents in a certain inner-city neighbourhood that is overcrowded by tourists. It is also true that usually, the displacement does not take place in every case, especially because households prefer to remain in the neighbourhood due to a strong emotional attachment, also coming to terms with the worst quality of life.

Instead, the displacement that occurs when tenants are actually forced to move out is most easily quantifiable and demonstrable. Indeed, as argued by Cocola-Gant, thanks to the quick rise of short-term rentals, local leasehold residents are suddenly affected by the increase of rents and consequently, they are forced to move out, in a consensual way or through evictions. This kind of situation is increasingly evidenced by cases of objection and resistance against evictions in the inner-city neighbourhoods of cities like Madrid, Barcelona or Venice.

In these cases, it is almost always clear that the achievement of the property is to obtain a higher profitability from short-term rentals like Airbnb, also more than double compared to traditional rent. Quoting Cocola-Gant, “*In the case of holiday rentals, landlords and investors convert entire*

properties into tourist accommodation and in the process, residents are forced to move out” (Ibidem, 2018, 200).

To better understand this phenomenon, it is crucial to consider the so-called *rent gap theory* drawn up by the geographer Neil Smith in 1987 to explain the economic process of gentrification. “Rent gap” is a gap between the rent a property currently earns and the rent that property can earn if put to its best use. Smith argued that when the rent gap is wide enough, developers and landlords would see the potential profit to be had in reinvesting in inner-city properties and redeveloping them for new inhabitants. Such redevelopment effectively closes the rent gap and leads to higher rent, mortgage and lease rates (Smith, 1987). ♦



Demonstration against short-term rentals in Barcelona, Spain (2017)

The rising number of short-term rentals in the inner-city neighbourhoods, in addition to being one of the driving forces of tourism gentrification, it also establishes another relevant consequence which concerns housing affordability. Bearing in mind a city like Venice, which has a unique urban form, a low massing and a limited housing stock, it makes one wonder, what happens when a good part of the housing stock is used through Airbnb? The answer, in this case, is simple, the chances to find a long-term apartment get complicated. In a vulnerable scenario like the Venice one, it becomes almost impossible to provide a good housing affordability, especially due to obvious landscape and architecture restriction which limit the building of new housing blocks, much less to increase the reception capacity of the island. The real fear that is growing up in Venice is to turn the city into a theme park for tourists. Furthermore, the problem of housing affordability is clearly deepest in delicate places like Venice or generally in islands, where the land surface is limited and the landscape restrictions are so hard.

A good illustration is what is going on in the Balearic Islands, where especially in Ibiza, the media reported that workers such as teachers or doctors have renounced the workplace offered on the island because they could not find a long-term apartment where to stay. While other tenants, during the summer season, are forced to leave the apartment because it is rented on Airbnb by the property. So, one of the provisional solutions proposed by the local government is to make them sleep within public facilities like municipal gymnasiums.¹⁶

The case of the Islands is definitely one of the most extreme, but it must be said that also in most tourist cities it is difficult to rent for a long term in the inner-city areas.

Lastly, a further consequence of the rising number of short-term rentals has to do with the quality of life of local resi-

dents. As already described above, tourism can generate a long series of positive and negative externalities. What is certain is that many urban areas, especially the ones with a residential function, are not always planned for the reception of significant tourist flows which can easily produce negative effects and conflicts. It is also true that tourism cannot be considered as the only factor which affects a neighbourhood quality of life. It must not be forgotten that often the quality of life is marked by factors such as nightlife, where certain areas become the hangout of many young people socializing in front of bars and clubs. In this case, they can generate problems linked to the decay of public spaces or noise during the night.

Therefore, regarding tourism, main problems can be the noise, the increasing tourism congestion, the lack of public space, the loss of family-run commercial activities and the loss of a sense of community in the neighbourhood. In fact, small family-run businesses represent a vital part of the neighbourhood community and they are often forced to close down to make room for big commercial chains or tourist-targeted shops.

In the field of gentrification, many research studies about this phenomenon have been released in order to understand the rise of new businesses in a certain neighbourhood where gentrification is underway. The results reveal that often, besides the opening of new businesses there is also a significant increase in the price of goods, meeting the higher purchasing power of tourists. Again, one of the most representative case studies in relation to this issue is the city of Venice. In a research study which examines the transformation of the commercial demand in the city in the space of around 30 years, it turns out that there was a considerable growth of tourist-target commercial activities. *“In particular, the prominence of the total number of grocery stores versus tourist stores present in 2007 has almost reversed compared to 1976”* (Zanini et al. 2008, 17).

¹⁶ Ricardo Colmenero, “Profesores sin casa en Ibiza duermen en gimnasios.” *El Mundo*, 2016.

Furthermore, the study reveals that the opening of new businesses, undoubtedly brought to an increase in employment, in addition to the revelation of new areas in the city. This can be evaluated with a positive attitude, but the cyclic issue of the depopulation, the impoverishment of the quality of life or the city's economy determined by tourism dominate over the positive issues. This specific situation it is not just about Venice, indeed all over the world many inner-city neighbourhoods rapidly turned into shopping centres for tourists, by putting in a corner those local businesses that could make unique certain neighbourhoods. From this, it can also come to a consideration on the rhetoric of Airbnb, which insisting on living a Like-a-local experience, in a place where of "local" there is little left. ♦



Messages against tourists in Oviedo, Spain

2.3.3 Regulating Airbnb

The picture that comes out from the previous considerations about the impact of Airbnb reveals the fragility of cities when a new phenomenon shows up, altering the socio-spatial and the economic sphere. Due to the need to balance the interests of visitors and local residents, in recent years, many cities all over the world decide to take measures to regulate short-term rentals and especially Airbnb. It is true that the positive or negative impact of Airbnb on cities can depend on many factors like the size of the city, the presence of a strong tourism industry or not, the number and the localization of the Airbnb listings, so, for this reason, every local government has developed different approaches to regulation.

Before to focus on the regulation approaches, it would be appropriate to introduce the legislative limbo in which the sharing economy companies are located.

As explained in the previous paragraphs, the sharing economy comes out as a consequence of the 2008 world economic crisis, giving the possibility to people to earn extra money from unused goods or skills. This new economy immediately helped a multitude of people but at the same time, it changed the labour market. Sceptics like Trebor Scholz argues that this is not about sharing at all, it is an on-demand service economy (Scholz, 2016). The criticism made by Scholz it has to do mainly with the worker's rights, in fact as he sustains in the study, being a worker for a major company like Uber or TaskRabbit make you a contractor instead of an employee, removing the traditional worker's rights. As he stated "*in the process, workers are losing minimum wage, overtime, and protections through employment anti-discrimination laws. Employers also don't have to contribute to Medicare, unemployment insurance, workers comp, or social security payments of their workers*" (Ibidem, 2016, 5).

In addition to this, one of the strongest criticism made

against sharing economy major companies regards the “nullification of the Federal Law”. To better explain this occurrence, in 2015 the mayor of New York decided to limit the number of Uber cars during peak hours to avoid extreme congestion. Immediately, Uber protested against the mayor with the support of celebrities and wealthy users achieving the cancellation of the measure. As explained in the article *Uber and the lawlessness of ‘sharing economy’ corporates*, “when companies such as Uber, Airbnb, and Google engage in a nullification effort, it’s a libertarian-inspired attempt to establish their services as popular well before regulators can get around to confronting them. Then, when officials push back, they can appeal to their consumer-following to push regulators to surrender”.¹⁷

¹⁷ Frank Pasquale and Siva Vaidyanathan, “Uber and the lawlessness of ‘sharing economy’ corporates.” *The Guardian*, 2015.

The examples provided before explain how the major sharing economy companies can take advantage of the legislative limbo, using illegality as a method to remain relevant players of the market. Hence, a multitude of cities struggles to develop an effective regulation able to control and manage the sharing economy consequences in the cities. Going back to the case of Airbnb, studies identify basically three main approaches to regulation: full prohibition, laissez-faire and limitation (Guttentag, 2017). The first two approaches are the less used and they consist in, firstly a full prohibition of the short-term rentals platforms in the entire city or in certain districts, while the laissez-faire approach often consists in make a deal with Airbnb in order to receive taxes over the transaction made on the platform. Therefore, the most used approach can be regarded to limitation, an approach composed of four types of restrictions: quantitative restrictions, locational restrictions, density restrictions and qualitative restrictions. The first restrictions refer to the limitation of the number of accommodation, the amount of allowed visitors or days rented, and the number of days that an Airbnb can be rented per year. The

restrictions that have to do with location confine Airbnb to specific parts of the city, while the density restrictions control and limit the number of Airbnb in a certain area of the city.

Lastly, the restrictions that deal with quality relate to the type of accommodation such as the entire apartment versus the private room or force the installation of safety devices and the registration of a specific touristic license (Nieuwland and Van Melik, 2018).

What is important to consider now is the difference of approach outlined in European and American cities. In fact, taking in account the study conducted by Nieuwland and Van Melik is possible to outline that thanks to a qualitative research, the European cities with major audience about the problems due to Airbnb are Barcelona, Berlin, London, Paris and Amsterdam, while the American ones are New York, San Francisco, Santa Monica, Denver, Anaheim and New Orleans.

The used approaches and the types of regulation in the different European and US cities are graphically explained in the map.⁽¹⁾

The differences in the regulatory criteria are heavily dependent on existing policy about short-term rentals and they vary from town to town, with more or less restrictive rules. So, from this point forward, the regulations of three European cities will be studied to understand ongoing shifts and evolutions of the approach.

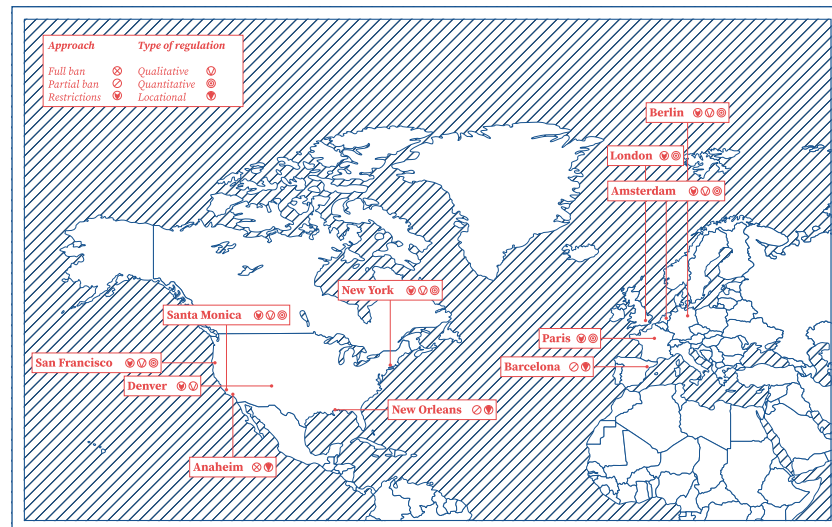
In London, according to a national legislation dated 1973,¹⁸ short-term lets have been prohibited for properties or part of them in the city, for a period which is less than 90 days in a year. Who wanted to let properties for short-term would have to apply a change of use from residential to hotel use (Ferreri and Sanyal, 2018).

Since 2012, with the unstoppable rise of Airbnb in the London market and the empowerment of the rhetoric in favour

¹⁸ Greater London Council Act (1973).

of sharing economy platforms, the government conducted studies to evaluate the possibility of amending the existent regulation. As matter of fact, in 2015, the Deregulation Act enables short-term rentals without change of use, with a maximum occupancy of 90 days in a year. As much as anyone can consider the Deregulation Act¹⁹ as innovative and open to new ways of living, it does not take into account the higher percentage of listings run by the professional users, creating a friction with the responsibility of local councils to regulate the market and preserve the housing supply for long-term residential use (Ibidem, 2018). ♦

¹⁹ Deregulation Act, Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (2015)



(1) Own elaboration

Although the doubts regarding the effectiveness of the regulation in question, the real problem lies in the application. The monitoring difficulties of Airbnb, actually, has to do with the opacity of big sharing economy platforms. For instance, Airbnb has no interest to make public sensitive data, such as the real position of listings or the true occupancy rate throughout the year. So, for local officers, monitoring the regulation parameters like the occupancy rate at maximum 90 days or multi-listings professionals, appear difficult without specific data.

This issue opens up a further debate about the lack of cooperation between Airbnb and the local governments in order to guarantee the enforcement of regulations.

The London case is clarifying to understand a restrictive but not stricter approach, which naturally shows relevant limits of application.

Instead, the same is not true in cities like Berlin or Barcelona, where the regulations carried out by the local governments outline a series of additional parameters able to determine a greater control of the phenomenon in a stricter way.

In Berlin, the regulation about short-term rentals can be considered stricter from other European cities, mainly due to existing German rent laws, definitely stricter. But the Berlin case highlights a peculiar situation that refers to the recent change of regulation, which establishes a more extensive compromise, a sort of back off compared to 2016. During 2016, the government of the city registered a low affordability of housing for long-term rentals, especially in the central areas. Assuming Airbnb as one of the main responsible of that situation, in April 2016, the local government approved a regulation that made illegal all the entire apartments listed in the city. The short-term rental has been permitted only in a few exceptions, for example, the hosts could rent out rooms in their homes unless the rooms

did not cover more than 50% of the property's floor space. A further exception concerns owners that could ask a permit to the local borough in order to rent an entire apartment, on the condition that the reason of the request had been justified. Moreover, if the request had been accepted, the host was supposed to set a price in line with the average rental price in the borough. All those who would not fulfil the regulation they could fall into a fine of 100.000 €.

The regulation in question initially has led to promising results by drastically reducing the number of listings as well as multi-listings professionals.²⁰

It is interesting to note, as mentioned above, that since May 2018 the "Airbnb" ban is over. The new rules establish that hosts can rent the house where they live and at same time rent a second home for a maximum occupancy of 90 days in a year. Of course, every action has to be first submitted to the local borough to obtain a specific 250 € license. Lastly, the fine is now quintupled to 500.000 € and seems that the real fight of the local government is against the professional businesses of short-term rentals.²¹

The Berlin case shows that regulations on Airbnb exhibit a high degree of evolution, which enable local governments to make some adjustment in order to approach complex problems in the best way. On the one hand, by limiting the misuse of the platform by professionals businesses and then by establishing rules for the users. Also in this case, the limits have to be found in the effective control of the phenomenon in addition to the risk of being present at the birth of a short-term rentals black economy.

Quite different is the case of Barcelona, which currently is facing the Airbnb impact in the most effective way. Barcelona is a city that in recent years gained a huge popularity and faced the impact of mass tourism since the beginning. However, the local government has detected the short-term rentals as the main problem that affected the

neighbourhoods of the city centre, generating a proper "tourist ghetto". Here again, the charge is always against those who misuse Airbnb in order to list a large number of apartments, pursuing a professional business.

Trying to solve the problem, since 2016 the local government has established a proper regulation in order to limit the amount of Airbnb listings in the city centre. The regulation requires that every accommodation listed on Airbnb must have a tourist license and in case apply for it. Moreover, the local government declared that the demand for the licence of listings located in a saturated part of the city will be rejected. Of course, those who don't comply with the law are subject of fines, just like Airbnb and HomeAway that in 2016 have been fined by the local government for listing unlicensed apartment on their platforms. The approach is not so different from the one adopted by other cities like Berlin this far, but in 2018 the government of Barcelona has reached a relevant agreement with Airbnb. The agreement foresees that Barcelona officials can access to Airbnb data about the city, thereby achieving the real position of the listings, their licence number and their occupancy rate.²²

San Francisco already obtained the same result, but Barcelona constitutes the first case of effective cooperation between Airbnb and a local government. Undoubtedly it is too early to draw conclusions about the results of the agreement, but the possibility to have access to sensitive data makes possible to monitoring the phenomenon in a better way.

After briefly reviewing the main regulatory approaches in European and US cities, additionally by focusing on the cases of London, Berlin and Barcelona it can be questioned how effective is the Airbnb regulation? And, how it can be improved or optimized?

Before to try to deal with these question, it is correct to make some essential introductory remarks. Every city in

²⁰ Feargus O'Sullivan, "Berlin Bans Most Airbnb-Style Rentals." *CityLab*, 2016.

²¹ Feargus O'Sullivan, "Berlin Ends Its Airbnb Ban, But the New Rules Are No Joke." *CityLab*, 2018.

²² Feargus O'Sullivan, "Barcelona Finds a Way to Control Airbnb Rentals." *CityLab*, 2018.

the world deals with tourism in a different way and the same goes for Airbnb. Indeed there are a number of factors that influence the degree of Airbnb impact on the city, such as the urban form, the existing tourist's saturation, the presence of a strong tourism industry or not, the existing legislative framework and the regulatory approach that can be neoliberal or not. For instance, cities like Barcelona who is already living a tourist saturation will surely guide its regulatory approach towards a reduction of the Airbnb listings in the most affected areas, preserving the housing affordability. While cities in which tourism results to be still underdeveloped they are engaging regulatory actions in order to mitigate negative externalities, protecting the local communities without limiting Airbnb in a strict way. Thus, it can be stated that does not exist a universal regulation which can be applied to all the cities affected by the phenomenon. What is clear is that some relevant limitations exist, especially regarding the monitoring and the enforcement of the regulation. The opacity of the big platforms leads the local governments to not having access to sensitive data useful to monitor and control. As seen earlier, Barcelona is the only European city who achieved an agreement with Airbnb, while in the rest of Europe, government officials figure out curious ways for monitoring the situation. Is the case of Berlin where the local government decided to use sleuths to root out illegal short-term rentals.²³

From this point some scholars discussed more effective methods to face the situation, mainly using “algorithmic regulation” (Miller, 2015). The idea is based on the real-time mining of big data in order to detect the anomalous behaviours of Airbnb listings. So, as much as this could allow local governments to have a more effective approach to the regulation enforcement, the use of big data might hide some snares which are often highlighted by those who

are sceptical about the use of a technocratic approach on governance, going against who think that “*all aspects of a city can be measured and monitored and treated as technical problems which can be addressed through technical solutions*” (Kitchin, 2013, 9).

Although many cities rely increasingly on big data as part of the planning process, many scholars have warned about an overly optimistic trust on data, especially in relation to the use of quantitative ones over the qualitative ones (Shelton, 2016). As it has emerged before, the specificity of some urban settings (e.g. geographical, historical, cultural) has a large influence on the regulatory approach. That is why the use and the analysis of only quantitative data run the risk of leading to a flattening vision of the phenomenon. As argued by Ferreri and Sanyal, Airbnb is already pursuing this approach, “*is a dismissal of geographical specificities through the proposal of a ‘flattening’ vision in which a pilot legislation is scaled up, ‘ideally top-down’ to all cities. Appealing to urban units of governance is discussed as a solution to the territorial fragmentation of taxation and planning legislation*” (Ferreri and Sanyal, 2018, 7).

At last, Airbnb is posing a set of unique challenges to cities and in a more specific way to urban planning and governance. Some important issues are rising from the various approaches about the Airbnb regulation, but probably the main goal of local governments would like to be the priority of public interest over the enrichment of specific segments who misuse the sharing economy (e.g. multi-listings). What emerges from the analysis is the difficulty of the local governments to have access to sensitive data. Two main solutions can be pursued in that sense, the agreement with Airbnb or the enforcement of data gathering methods. In conclusion, it is also true that the influence of sharing economy platforms on the existent legislation is strong, heading for an adaptation of the latter in favour of

²³ Philippe Oltermann, “Berlin and Barcelona use sleuths to root out illegal holiday lets.” *The Guardian*, 2018.

public interest rather than big private profits. In the next paragraph, a series of alternative experiences that try to go in that sense will be analysed. ♦

2.3.4 Alternative to Airbnb

As suggested at the beginning of *subparagraph 2.3.3*, the sharing economy shows up a series of problematic issues that are mostly related to workers rights and compliance with the law. Trebor Scholz in his research highlights the profit of the biggest platforms like Airbnb or Uber which only benefits themselves without contributing directly to the local communities. Scholz sustains that a possible solution to the sharing economy rhetoric can be the so-called *platform cooperativism* (Scholz, 2016).

In order to change the extractive model through which the biggest sharing economy platforms are working, he provides the idea of taking lessons from the history of cooperatives, bringing them to the digital age. In a very simple way, Scholz identifies three basic concepts which define the platform cooperativism. The first is about to crack the rhetoric system of the sharing economy platform that only benefits few, adopting a different ownership model where all the user can participate, produce and having benefits in a democratic way. The second concept it has to do with the idea that platforms can be owned and operated by unions, cities or cooperatives. The last concept indeed is about the reframing of innovation and efficiency with an approach that can benefit all, cloning and reconstructing sharing economy technologies with democratic values in mind (Ibidem, 2016).

A series of platform cooperatives already exist all over the world by proposing an alternative way almost in every field of the market. Just to name some of them, Fairmondo is a digital, cooperative version of eBay where sellers on the platform are also its owner, while platforms like Stocksy offers the opportunity to co-own the website through which they sell their stock photographs.

As regards the short-term rentals market, an alternative to Airbnb is rising. It is called Fairbnb and as the name

suggests, it promises a fairer approach compared to the Airbnb monopoly. The platform was born from the activism of some local communities (Amsterdam, Barcelona, Venice) suffering from a tourist saturation, partly due to Airbnb. Fairbnb doesn't want to be an extractive platform that generates profit from fees on the transaction between the users or by extracting value from their data. Fairbnb wants to be a platform cooperative, which gives back to the users the decision-making power and the control over the effects generated by its digital actions. So, to sum up, there are three main concepts which describe the different approach of Fairbnb compared to Airbnb. Firstly, the platform is managed by a cooperative in which, over the medium term, the same users will be co-owners of the platform. The second concept is about offering a service that is pretty similar to Airbnb and collects the same fees on transactions, holding only half to fund the management of the platform, while the other half is spread to local civic projects. The latter may be based on the needs of tourists and hosts, in order to feed a social economy. Lastly, Fairbnb wants to ensure transparency and freedom of reuse of data, supporting the creation of governances which better regulate short-term rentals, by promoting a tourism in line with the needs of each city. In addition, the policy adopted by Fairbnb is "one spot, one home" through which the host must reside in the city and he can list only one apartment. Once the alternative approach is figured out, it makes one wonder, how Fairbnb can compete with a giant like Airbnb? The answer is not so easy. For sure, according to the words of the founders, the major competitive advantage of the platform will be linked to the ethical components that other platforms don't have, first and foremost the equal distribution of the wealth generated, creating partnerships with local communities and governments.²⁴

The sharing economy generated a strong impact on cit-

ies, which very often have been short on ordinances able to effectively regulate this emergent economy. Nowadays, the sharing economy is a consolidated reality all over the world and the exponential growth of sharing services like Airbnb or Uber are the proof.

Within the global framework, the cities which have made the effort of taking seriously this new economic model are very few. The first and most relevant case worldwide has been the city of Seoul, which in early 2012 created an initiative called Sharing City Seoul, fostering policies able to encourage platforms and services ethically in accordance with the sharing economy.

The local government recognized that for the city of Seoul, to thrive in the 21st century, new models were needed. Even if it was still in a quite early stage, the sharing economy was starting to take off in various countries around the world. Looking for ways to build a resilient economy, stronger social cohesion and a more sustainable and livable city, Seoul Metropolitan Government sees the Sharing City Seoul initiative as a social innovation measures designed to create new economic opportunities, to restore reliable relationships, and to reduce waste of resources with a view to resolving economic, social, and environmental problems in urban areas all together.²⁵

Sharing City Seoul has been based on three steps. The first has been the creation of a series of infrastructures useful to support the initiative, just like Sharehub, a portal that collects news about sharing economy, promotes the sharing related policies of the government, connecting all the actors of the system of sharing enterprise and organizations in South Korea. In addition to this, there has been the development of government ordinances able to create an effective legal framework.

The second step relates to the promotion of sharing services. The initiative has selected to date 74 sharing platforms, all of them Koreans, which work in various fields

²⁵ To deepen the informations about the initiatives, visit www.sharehub.kr

²⁴ Extract from the interview with Damiano Avellino, co-founder of Fairbnb. "Fairbnb, Piattaforme Cooperative vs Piattaforme Estrattive." *Openpolis*, 2018.

like space, mobility, goods, knowledge and talent. Being part of the project means to receive administrative and financial support, in addition to legal advice and promotion. The last step has been an effort to make citizens aware of using the sharing economy's services. To do this, the involved infrastructures organize activities to attract citizens and promote the use of sharing economy platforms in the city (Bernardi, 2018).

One of the objectives of the project is to find local alternatives able to impact on the local economy instead of nurturing Silicon Valley multinational platforms such as Airbnb or Uber. While Uber has been declared illegal because it does not comply with the South Korean law, Airbnb is flourishing also thanks to the government policies, but at the same time, few local alternatives are emerging. Kozaza is one of these, proposing the possibility of experiencing life in a typical Korean House (Hanok). Often the accommodation in the Hanoks provides the opportunity to really taste and experience Korean local life with pottery classes, tea ceremonies and generic courses. On the same wave, there is another platform called BnBHero, which is the exact copy of Airbnb but with the goal of preserving the market from the big actors.²⁶

In conclusion, the experiences told up to now showing some common denominators which have to do with the sharing economy ethic, with cooperativism and with the strengthening of the local economy. Each of them reveals the will of an alternative to the big multinational platforms which bulldoze the city's balance. The general tendency is to prefer local initiative for the city, which can evidence autonomy, self-sufficiency, diversity, and resilience. In addition, what emerges is also a clear difficulty by these alternative initiatives in competing with big multinational platforms, so the surplus can be identified in their attitude voted to people, communities and local environment, us-

ing technology as an efficient tool to satisfy the city's needs. And that is what underlies the importance of distributing control and wealth instead of concentrating it. ♦

²⁶ Monica Bernardi, "Seoul rethinks sharing economy and proposes local solutions." *LabGov*, 2015.

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Chapter 3

Airbnb effect in Madrid

The chapter offers a multiscale analysis of the Airbnb effect in the city of Madrid. Starting from the urban scale (XL), the Airbnb effect is read through a quantitative data analysis, which will respond to precise research questions. Always using the data, the scale will then be reduced to the neighbourhood of Embajadores (L). At this point a qualitative analysis of the phenomenon will be carried out, retracing the history and the urban transformations of the neighborhood. In addition, the consequences generated by Airbnb on the urban ecosystem will be explored. Furthermore, we move on to the identification of a series of recurring housing typologies. One will be selected, the so-called Corrala (M) and the socio-spatial impact of Airbnb will be deeply explored.

3.1 Is Madrid a 'Touristified' city?

Since the global economic crisis of 2008, tourism in Spain represented one of the towing sectors of the national economy, increasingly gaining a greater significance in recent years. As indicators show, in 2017 more than 81 millions of international tourists visited Spain with a rise of 8.6% on the number of tourists compared with the previous year.¹

According to the UNWTO's projections Spain will be the second world's most visited country just behind France.²

As matter of fact, according to FRONTUR, in the first half of 2018, Spain has exceeded 28.5 millions of tourists. The figure, compared with the previous year, already indicates an increase of 6%.³

The massive amount of tourists who travel to Spain every year generate relevant consequences on economy and employment. In fact, according to data from INE of 2017, the contribution of tourism to the national GDP is €137 millions, the 11,7% of the total. In addition, from the same source of data, the contribution of tourism to the employment is of 2,60 millions of jobs, the 12,8% of the total.⁴

The data clearly demonstrate the importance of tourism in the Iberian peninsula, with a clear preference for the southern coastal areas of the country during the summer months, and a general inclination to visit the two large cities, Madrid and Barcelona. Both cities welcome a huge number of tourists that can generate a significant economic impact in terms of GDP each year. In this thesis, the study will focus on the city of Madrid. The figures for Madrid clearly reflect the national trend just illustrated. In particular, in 2017 there was the arrival of 9.9 million tourists, with an average overnight stay of two nights.⁵ This data clearly includes only tourists registered in tourist accommodation facilities, so it is assumed that the figures can be even higher if you considering the presence of Airbnb.

On the basis of these data, it is clear that a city like Madrid

¹ "Estadística de Movimientos Turísticos en Fronteras". FRONTUR, 2017.

² "Tourism highlight". UNWTO, 2017.

³ "Estadística de Movimientos Turísticos en Fronteras". FRONTUR, 2018.

⁴ "Aportación del turismo a la economía española". INE, Madrid, 2017.

⁵ "Statistical data about Tourism in the city of Madrid". INE, Madrid, 2017.

can not avoid considering tourism as one of its priorities for economic growth. The increase in tourist flows, however, can also seriously challenge infrastructure, public transport and all those services designed primarily for inhabitants. It is from this situation that the term "overtourism" began to spread, mainly used to describe the negative impact of tourist flows on some cities. It must be said, however, that this term is rather reductive in order to fully define the complexity of the phenomenon (Koens et al., 2018). The context of Madrid is certainly sensitive to the issue of urban tourism, on the one hand carrying out city branding campaigns aimed at transforming cultural identity into image; on the other, enhancing the efficiency of the public transport network and infrastructures, such as Barajas International Airport, which in 2017 closed with 53.4 million passengers in transit.⁶ There remain, however, a series of difficult issues related to the tourist load on the urban fabric of the city centre and especially on some neighborhoods, in addition to the development of dynamics that refer to the so-called tourism gentrification. So, being able to give an objective judgment about the impact of tourism on Madrid or define Madrid as a touristified city goes beyond the scope of this thesis. For this reason, the focus will be mainly on a phenomenon that as already mentioned above is able to generate an alteration of the socio-spatial and economic dynamics of the city, namely Airbnb. ♦

⁶ "El Aeropuerto Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas cierra 2017 con 53,4 millones de pasajeros, el mejor registro de su historia". AENA, 2017.

3.2 Madrid Airbnb Report

The rapid rise of short-term rental platforms like Airbnb have expanded the use of residential apartments as transient hotel rooms, by activating an intense debate in Madrid and in other communities across the world about the possible consequences of such new phenomenon. As already explained in the previous chapter, opinions regarding Airbnb are mixed, where there are those who sustain that the platform can be a catalyst for cities economy, while critics see it as a threat to housing affordability and local community identity. Is Airbnb making the central area of Madrid less affordable? Which has been the growth of Airbnb in Madrid during the last years? Who are the main players of the Airbnb market in Madrid? Is Airbnb really impacting on certain neighborhood more than others? These are just some of the question of which this work will try to answer. This report offers the exploration of the data on how users utilize the platform in Madrid, one of Airbnb's most significant markets in Spain and worldwide. The choice of Madrid is not random, in fact, the Spanish capital represents the most relevant case across Europe for one reason, which does not relate to the quantity of Airbnb listing in the city, but it has to do with the percentage of Airbnb listings on the total housing stock of the central district.

The results shown in the figure (1) are based upon the comparison between the data of seven European cities which have a population ranged from 500.000 to 5 million inhabitants. In addition, the area considered for the study has been the one indicated by local institutions as the city centre. The findings revealed that in the *Distrito Centro* of Madrid, the percentage of Airbnb listings on the total housing stock is 13%, the highest, followed by Rome and Paris, respectively 11% and 9%. Additionally, considering the surface of the given area, in *Distrito Centro* there are 1778 Airbnb listings per km², more than twice the number of Ciutat Vella in Barcelona.

The report uses quantitative data to inform the ongoing debate about short-term rentals platform like Airbnb in the city of Madrid. The absence of reliable records on the evolution of transactions and Airbnb accommodations make it difficult to the analysis of this kind of platforms. This notwithstanding, using open source data the evolution of the Airbnb phenomenon has been carried out.⁷ The overview analysis has been developed by analyzing Airbnb open data of Madrid from August 29, 2014, until September 11, 2018. While, a more in-depth analysis has been conducted with reference to the most up-to-date data of 2018 (September 11, 2018).

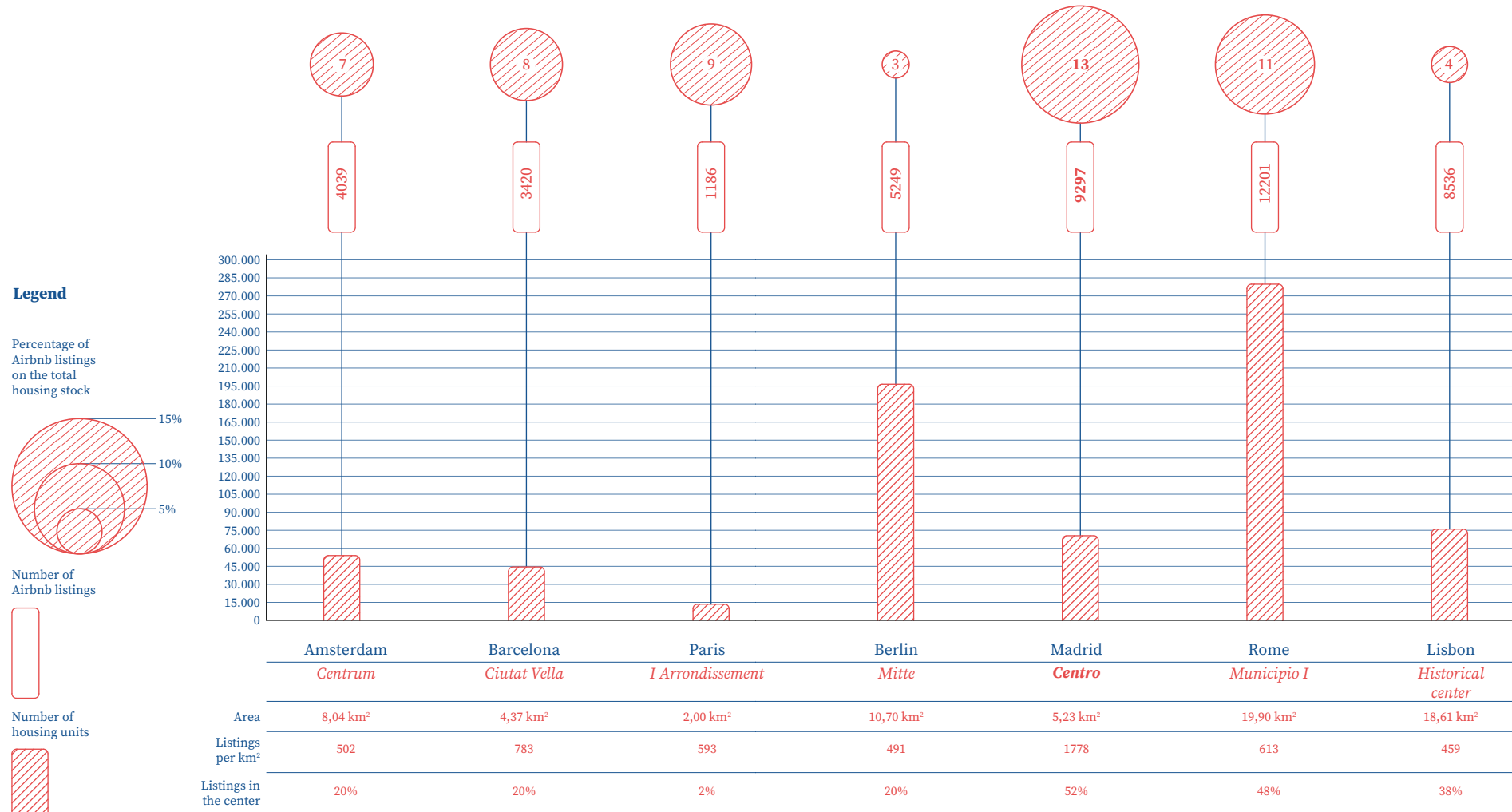
The report forms part of a wider trans-scalar study of the Airbnb phenomenon which will be shown partly in *Chapter 3* and then in *Chapter 4*. Among the key findings of the report, there are the explosive growth experienced by Airbnb in Madrid in the years between 2014 and 2018, and an increased density of listings in the city centre rather than other suburban areas, which by the way experienced a significant growth too. Another relevant finding is about the neighborhood of Embajadores, a gentrifying neighborhood where most of the Airbnb listings are located. Due to the findings achieved, Embajadores will be further analyzed as a significant case study in the city of Madrid. Additional-

ly, the report points out the phenomenon of multi-listings, supporting the argument already stressed by many scholars that Airbnb is no longer a sharing economy platform but is acting in accordance with a traditional economic model.

In conclusion, the report highlights the profitability of Airbnb entire apartments in relation to their surface, proving that smaller apartments tend to be more profitable through Airbnb rather than traditional rent. Considering the issues examined in *paragraph 2.3*, the results obtained from the Madrid Airbnb report represent the starting point to carry out critical considerations about the effects of this platform on the city. ♦

⁷ Open data source: www.insideairbnb.com and www.tomslee.net

• Airbnb and the housing stock



Data source:

- Amsterdam: *Stedelijke ontwikkeling en wonen*, OIS Amsterdam, 2017
- Barcelona: *Censo de Edificios y Vivienda*, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2011
- Paris: *Compareteur de territoire*, Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques, 2015
- Madrid: *Censo de Edificios y Vivienda*, Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2011
- Berlin: *Fortschreibung des Wohngebäudeund Wohnungsbestandes in Berlin*, Statistik Berlin Brandenburg, 2017
- Rome: *Rapporto 2016, I Residenti nella Città Storica di Roma e nel resto del suo territorio*, Comune di Roma, 2016
- Lisbon: *Censos 2011 Resultados Definitivos - Região Lisboa*, Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2011

(1)

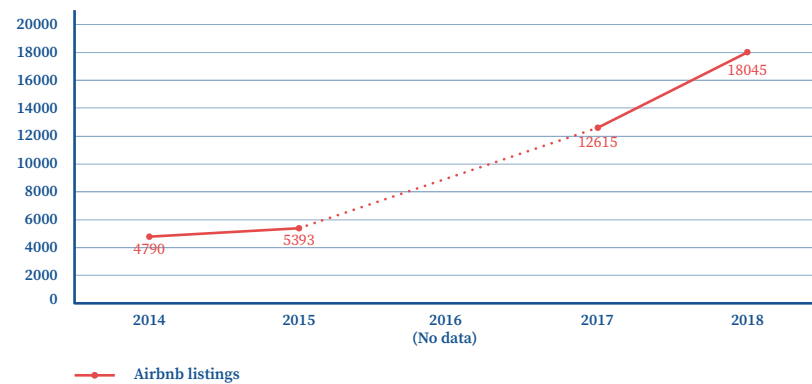
Own elaboration based on statistical data

3.2.1 Airbnb activity in the Metropolitan Area of Madrid

In the last year, Airbnb in the Metropolitan Area of Madrid has registered a considerable growth. The number and the speed of growth of listings is the clearest indicator of the evolution of the short-term rental market that in Madrid shows a continuous growth, also due to the absence of a specific regulation. According to the data, around 18.000 accommodation units are offered for rental in Madrid each day.

In March 2017 there were 12.615 listings, while in September 2018 the number of listings registered raised to 18.045 with a 43% of growth.⁽²⁾ The lack of data about 2016 did not allow a comparison with the previous growth rate, but for sure the rise of listings registered in 2015 compared with the previous year (2014) indicates a lower growth rate, only 13%. The latter percentage demonstrates the increased importance of the Airbnb phenomenon in Madrid nowadays.

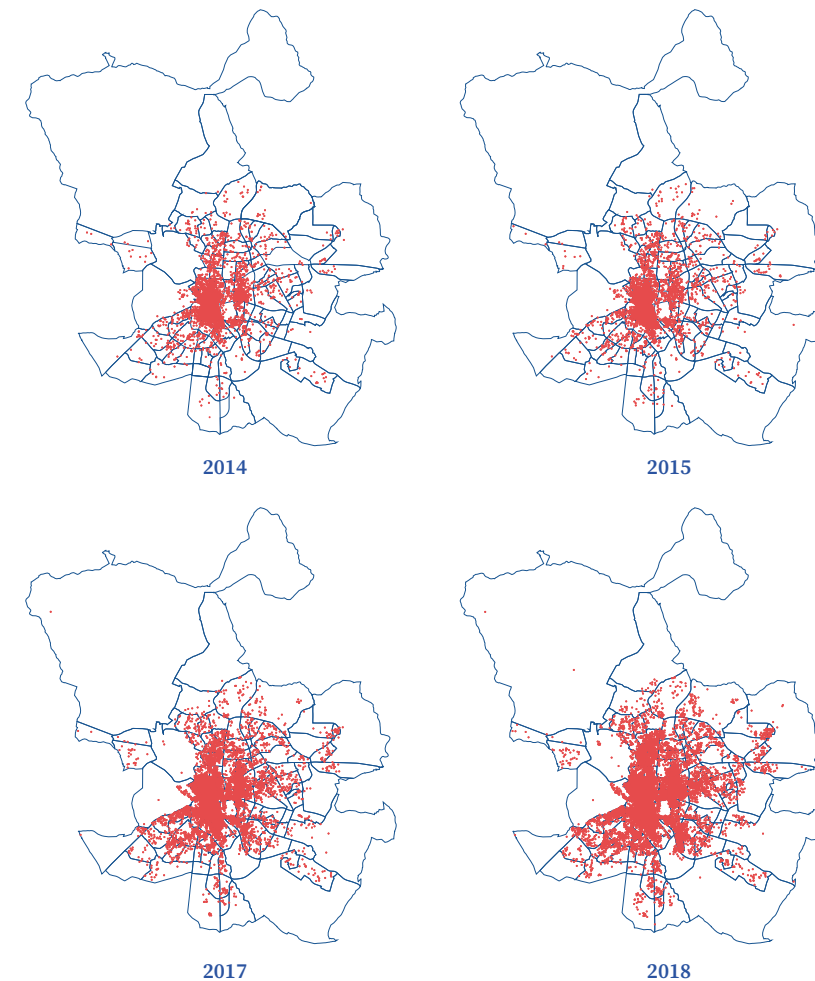
• Airbnb listings growth (2014-2018)



(2) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (2014, 2015, 2017, 2018)

In addition, to have a spatial vision of the phenomenon, a series of four maps is presented.⁽³⁾ The maps show the spatial distribution of the Airbnb listings in the period between 2014 and 2018, without taking into account, due to a lack of data, the year 2016. What emerges, is the clear growth in terms of listings density in Madrid, especially to the north and south of the city.

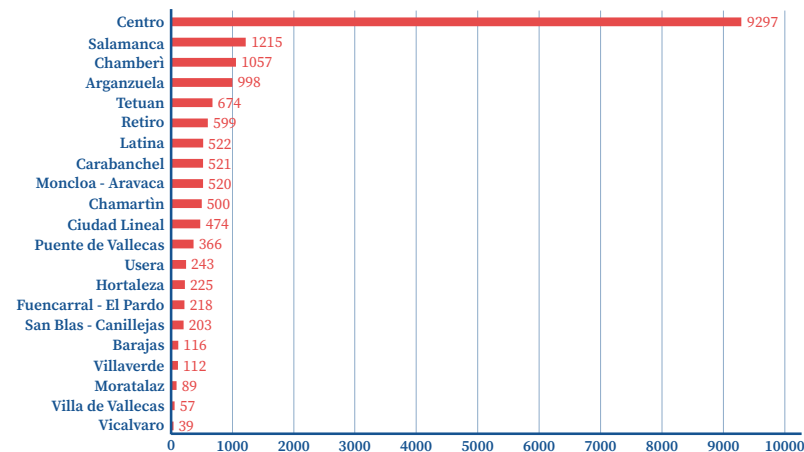
• Airbnb listings density (2014-2018)



(3) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (2014, 2015, 2017, 2018)

After the overall view of the Metropolitan Area of Madrid, it is important to understand in which district the Airbnb listings are more concentrated. The chart (4) shows us the number of listings divided by district. The highest concentration of Airbnb listings turns out to be located in the *Distrito Centro* (9297), followed by the directly adjacent districts. In terms of percentages, the *Distrito Centro* receives the 52% of the Airbnb supply, while all the other districts receives the 48% all together.

• Airbnb listings per district (September 11, 2018)

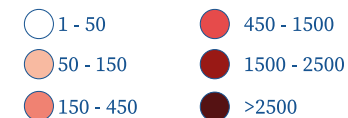
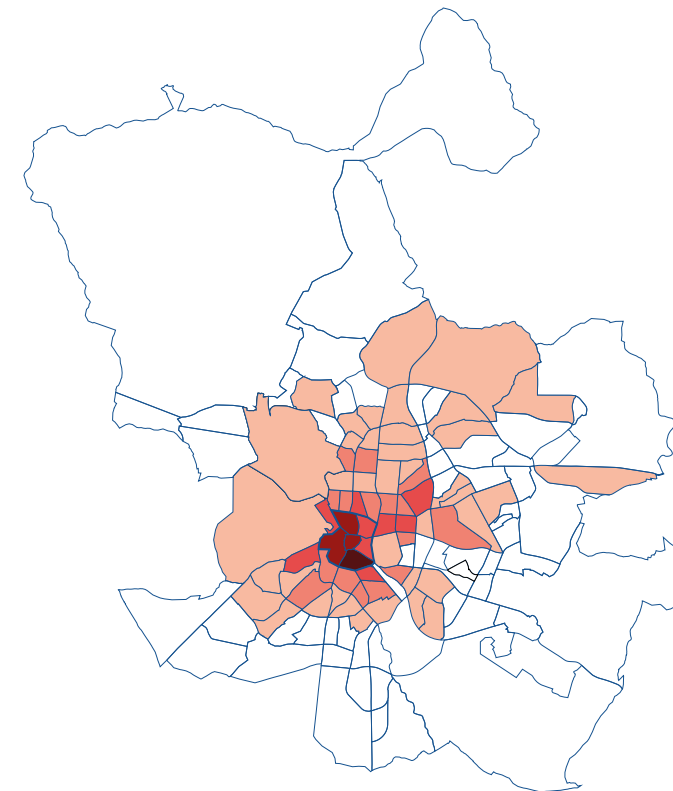


(4) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (September 11, 2018)

Also in this case, to have a spatial vision of how Airbnb listings vary across the different neighborhoods of Madrid, a choropleth map is showed (5). From the visualization emerges that the highest distribution of listings is observed in the six neighborhood included in the *Distrito Centro*.

As consequence, it appears that the *Distrito Centro* is the area to examine in greater depth. From this point forward, the analysis will be focused on the central area of Madrid. Additionally, for the sake of clarity, the analysis conducted does not take into account the activity, and the availability of the listings. These variables will be considered in more specific analysis later.⁸ ♦

• Airbnb listings per neighborhood (September 11, 2018)



(5) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (September 11, 2018)

⁸ The activity of an Airbnb listing refers to all those with at least one review in the last six months, and with an estimated booking nights per year of >90 nights. The availability is set by hosts through a calendar. High availability is equivalent to >90 days per year.

3.2.2 Airbnb activity in the Distrito Centro

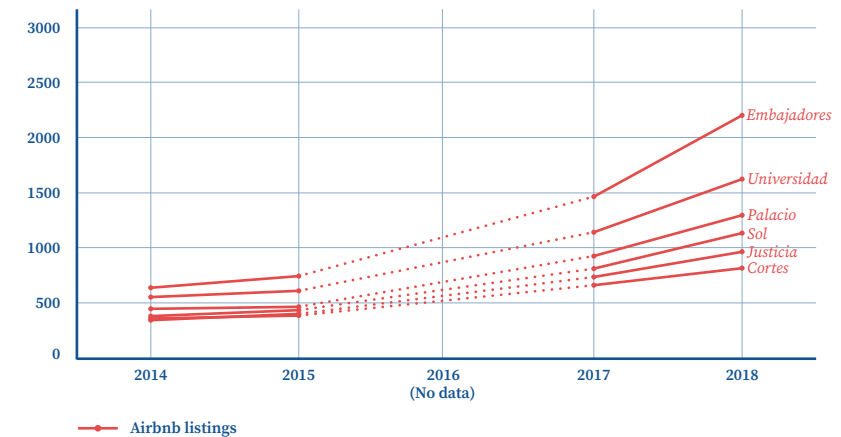
By focusing on the number of Airbnb listings in the *Distrito Centro*, it is possible to estimate the distribution of listings in each one of the six neighbourhoods. As shown in the table (6), the neighbourhood of Embajadores (*Lavapiés*) is the major source of listings, with 28% of the total supply. The neighbourhood of Universidad (*Malasaña*) is the second one in which the highest presence of listings takes place with 21%.

	Sol	Cortes	Justicia	Palacio	Embajadores	Universidad
Listings	1293	909	1067	1487	2632	1909
%	14%	10%	11%	16%	28%	21%

(6) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (September 11, 2018)

Unlike the remainder of the neighbourhoods, Embajadores and Universidad are also the ones where Airbnb listings grew up at a higher incidence. As shown in the chart (7) in fact, between 2017 and 2018 the growth registered in Embajadores has been 54%, while in the neighbourhoods of Universidad 47%.

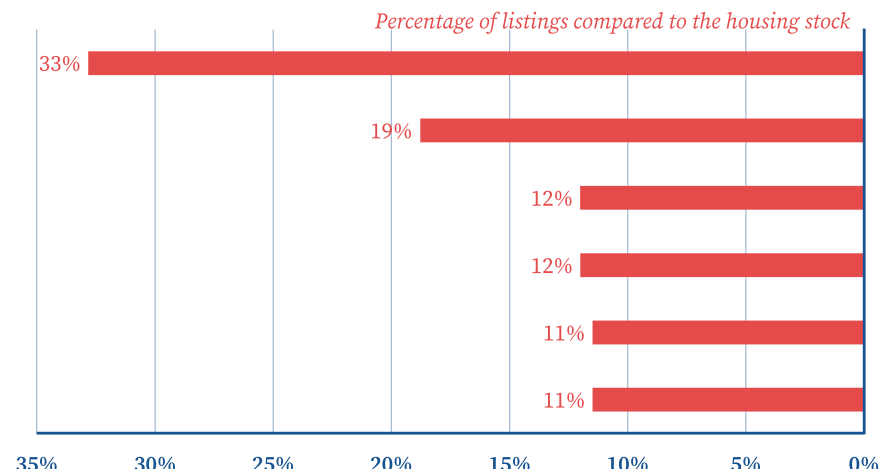
• Airbnb growth in Distrito Centro



(7) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (September 11, 2018)

In order to better understand the ratio between Airbnb listings and existing housing stock, a dedicated chart has been carried out (8).

• Airbnb listings per neighborhood (September 11, 2018)

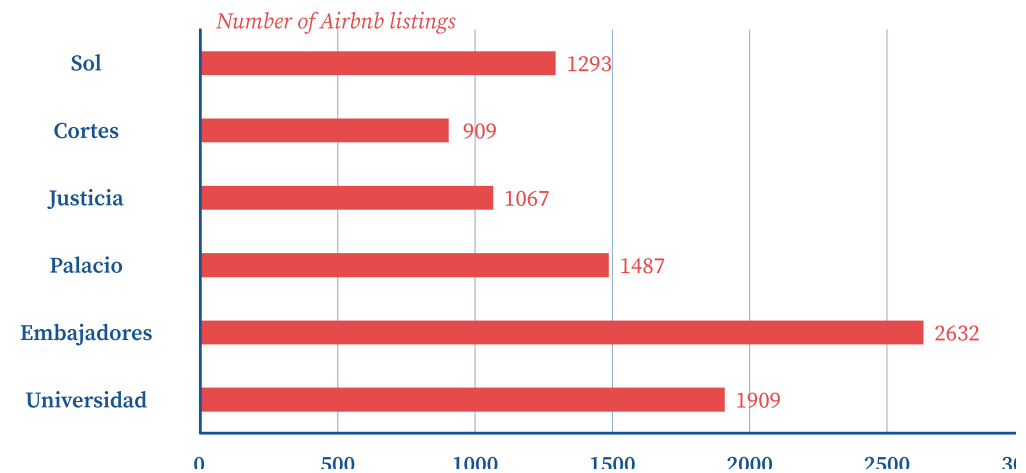


(8) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (September 11, 2018)

Figures demonstrate that in the neighborhoods where the Airbnb supply is higher, the percentage of listings compared with the amount of housing stock is lower. This is the case of Embajadores and Universidad. The trend is reverse in the neighborhood of Sol and Cortes where the percentage depicted in the left bar is significantly higher. The results points out a specific condition of the neighborhood of Sol, where the majority of hotels, offices, commercial and leisure activities are concentrated. As consequence, the traditional housing supply is considerably lower, with only 3.065 housing units.⁹ A possible interpretation of the findings could be that in Sol and, to a lesser extent in Cortes, there is a lack of permanent residents in relation to the other neighborhoods of the district, partly due to the negative demographic evolution and in part to the increase of rental

⁹ "Censo de Edificios y Vivienda". INE, Madrid, 2011.

prices. Sol, together with Cortes, are actually the less populous neighborhoods of the *Distrito Centro*, and in consequence their population density per hectare is 167 and 179 respectively.



In addition to this data, studies about Sol demonstrate a clear displacement of local young population in exchange for a foreign floating population that comes from wealthy countries.¹⁰ Furthermore, according to the words of the representative for Urban Sustainable Development of the Madrid City council, in Sol there are two tourists for each regular resident and in Cortes, more than one tourist for each resident.¹¹ The last factor, subject of study, is the presence of short-term rentals apartments and in particular Airbnb, which occupies the 33% of the existing housing stock. The resulting image of Sol is a neighborhood in which the residential use prevails on the other uses, even though not properly composed of permanent population, since a great percentage is bound to rent or short-rental apartments like Airbnb. Lastly, Sol is marked by a strong presence of the

¹⁰ "Paisaje urbano, necesidades y funcionalidad del sistema de plazas del entorno de Sol de Madrid". Instituto Juan de Herrera, Madrid, 2017.

¹¹ Isabel Lantigua, "En Sol ya hay dos turistas por cada residente durante todo el año", *El Mundo*, 2018.

tertiary sector. Hence, the role of Sol nowadays is that of cosmopolitan neighborhood, in stark contrast with another type of cosmopolitanism, that of Embajadores, where the population is formed mainly by people who come from poor countries of the world. Embajadores is the multi-ethnic neighborhood par excellence, but it is also the neighborhood where the largest number of inhabitants of the center is located. This explains the lower percentage of Airbnb listings per housing units, the 11%, even though there is the highest number of listings in the *Distrito Centro*, 2632. As will be discussed later on, Embajadores represents the detailed study at neighborhood scale of the thesis. In conclusion, a further consideration which supports the chart findings is that, in Sol, unlike Embajadores or Universidad, there is a complete absence of residents association, a sign of the lack of community rather than population. ♦

3.2.3 Airbnb VS Hotels

Due to the observations expressed in the *subparagraph* 2.3.1, the conflict between Airbnb and the hotel industry is a constant in the cities where Airbnb is facing an explosive growth. Madrid is not exempt from this situation. The recent press release often highlights the discontent of the hotel owners in relation to the constant rising of Airbnb, identified as one of the main reasons of the decline in hotel reservations in the city and especially in the *Distrito Centro*, where the most of the hotel supply is located. Among the main criticism there is the uncontrolled growth of the phenomenon, and consequently the lack of a specific regulation provided by the City Council.¹²

Hence, from the hoteliers association there is the will to ban Airbnb from the tourism accommodation market of Madrid.¹³

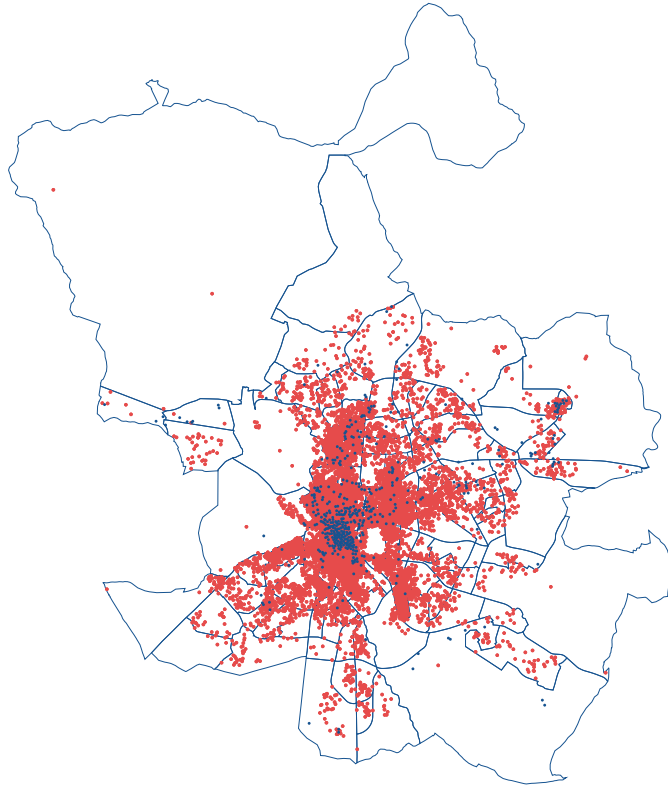
Under this circumstances, a series of maps and charts have been developed to better understand this conflict in the city.

The first map (9) shows the spatial distribution of traditional tourism accommodation in the entire city, compared to the distribution of Airbnb listings. What emerges from the map is the massive distribution of Airbnb listings in the central, northern, and southern areas of the city, against a more concentrated presence of hotels, guest houses and B&B in the central area, with a lower concentration in the northern area. The map expresses well the potential of Airbnb, which not only provides, as will be examined later, a cheaper accommodation option right in the centre but also an accommodation in residential areas outside of the hotel district. This kind of uncontrolled expansion means that Airbnb gets where traditional accommodation cannot get, in neighbourhoods that are glued to the main centre and perfectly linked with it. The neighbourhood of Emba-

¹² África Semprún, "Los hoteleros madrileños piden prohibir Airbnb en el centro histórico", *elEconomista.es*, 2018.

¹³ Asociación Empresarial Hotelera de Madrid (AEHM)

jadores, where there is the highest number of Airbnb listings, is a representative case, enough to be called “the hotel of Madrid”.

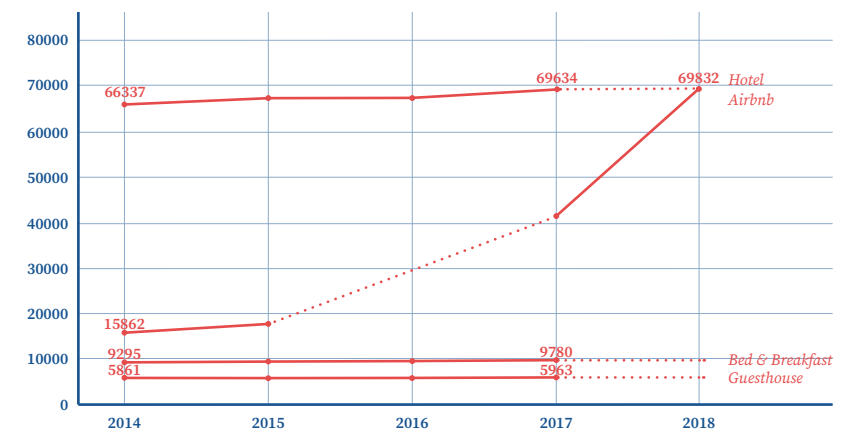


(9) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com and INE (2018)

Further consideration of this phenomenon can be made in relation to the number of beds of traditional tourism accommodation and Airbnb. As shown in the chart (10) the traditional accommodation is grouped by hotels, guest houses and B&B. The figures demonstrate that the number of beds provided by the traditional accommodations is basically constant over the years, while Airbnb beds exhibit a substantial growth that reaches, in 2018, the same number of hotel beds.

These results evidence the potential of Airbnb and the limits of traditional tourist accommodations. It is clear that for hotels is almost impossible to increase the capacity of their facilities by adding beds, mainly because of strict regulations. The same goes for guest houses and B&B, which are subjected to limitations in the number of allowed rooms. Therefore, the potential of Airbnb, as already explained in *subparagraph 2.3.1*, is the legislative limbo that does not restrict its activity. In addition, every Airbnb host has the opportunity to increase the capacity of an apartment or a room, just by adding a bed or a sofa-bed. The use of space in the Airbnb apartments will be discussed in more detail in *Chapter 4*. ♦

• Growth of beds in Airbnb and Traditional accommodation (2018)



(10) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com and INE (2018)

3.2.4 Airbnb revenue in Madrid

Due to the quantitative data analysis conducted so far, it is enough clear that the Airbnb phenomenon has gained a crucial importance in the dynamics of the Capital city of Spain. What is now meaningful to analyze is the revenue generated by Airbnb in the city.

Average price distribution

When considering to estimate the revenue of Airbnb in Madrid, a first stage can be the analysis of listing prices per night, trying to understand which ones are the areas of the city where the price is higher. What emerges from the table (11) is that, according to the data of 2018, the average price for one night in Madrid is 75€. While, a relevant disparity of price, around 20€, can be seen between the average price in the *Distrito Centro* and the rest of Madrid.

	Madrid	Distrito Centro	Rest of Madrid
Price (€)	75	85	65

(11) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (September 11, 2018)

With regards to the six central neighbourhoods, the average price per night appears to be higher in Sol and Cortes, while the lowest is in Embajadores and Universidad. (12)

	Sol	Cortes	Justicia	Palacio	Embajadores	Universidad
Price (€)	92	92	91	89	77	77

(12) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (September 11, 2018)

The figures make once more clear that the latter two neighbourhoods turn out to be the most attractive ones for tourism hospitality, especially due to affordable prices, and their proximity to the central area. In addition, the average price per night of Airbnb rooms or apartments is also much lower than the average price per night of a hotel, which stands around 109€. ¹⁴ Therefore, it is no surprise that visitors rely on Airbnb, especially since apartments and rooms are frequently located in the most central neighbourhoods.

Airbnb multiple listings

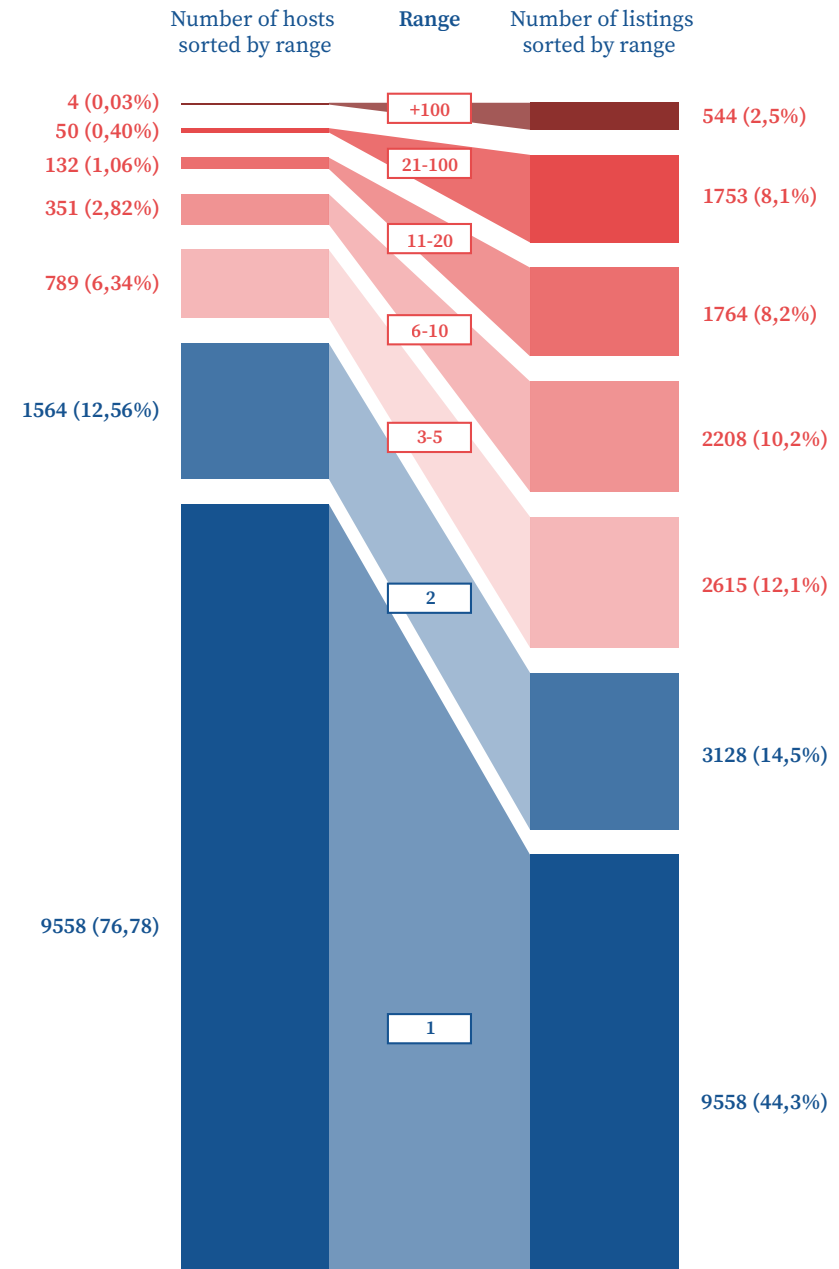
Airbnb allows people to rent out any kind of space, especially rooms or entire apartments, making profits from them. Often, as will be better shown later, the entire apartment is the most widespread option in the Airbnb supply of Madrid. As consequence, hosts who offer more than one room or flat are more likely to do so in order to make a higher profit, leaving behind the platform's original concept of sharing. Besides, taking into account what emerged in the paragraph 2.2.3, Airbnb hosts can be grouped in occasional, constant, professional, and investor hosts, depending on the number of listings offered. With the increase of individual listings, the role of the host assumes a more and more professional attitude aimed at higher profits.

In order to understand the distribution of hosts with multiple listings in the city, two charts have been taken into consideration (13) (14). The first one shows the distribution of the hosts in relation to the number of listings. The most remarkable data is the significant number of hosts who offer between 21 and 100 listings, or more than 100, which in a few cases can be more than 200. This figure demonstrates the clear commercial attitude of some hosts, which are often real estate companies or vulture funds hidden behind fictitious names, working in a traditional economic model. On the same basis, the second chart analyzes the phe-

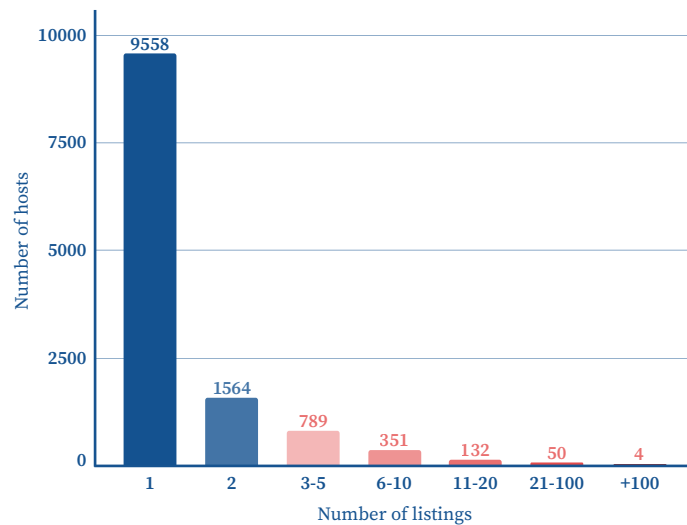
¹⁴ HRS Hotel Price Radar 2017. www.corporate.hrs.com

nomenon in depth, highlighting the economic burden of professional and investor hosts in relation to the total Airbnb supply in the city. In shades of blue, the hosts with 1 or 2 listings (collaborative consumption) control the 60% of Airbnb supply. Instead, in shades of red, the hosts who have from 3 to more than 100 listings (traditional economy) control the 32% of Airbnb supply. Given the fact that the non-professional hosts are the 89% of the total, and the professional ones are the 11%, the total Airbnb revenue turns out to be largely in the hands of few people. A final consideration is that the great number of listings owned by a single person or commercial company have to be entire apartments, instead of private or shared rooms. This implies that entire apartments can be considered more likely to be rented in accordance with a conventional economic form, while private or shared rooms can be more likely to sharing economy ethos, since the host is almost always present at home, co-living with guests. ♦

• Distribution of multi-listing hosts in relation to the range of listings held (2018)



• Distribution of multi-listing hosts (2018)



(13) Taller Turistificación en Madrid - Montera34 (Abril 20, 2018)

(14) Taller Turistificación en Madrid - Montera34 (Abril 20, 2018)

3.2.5 Airbnb listing typology in Madrid

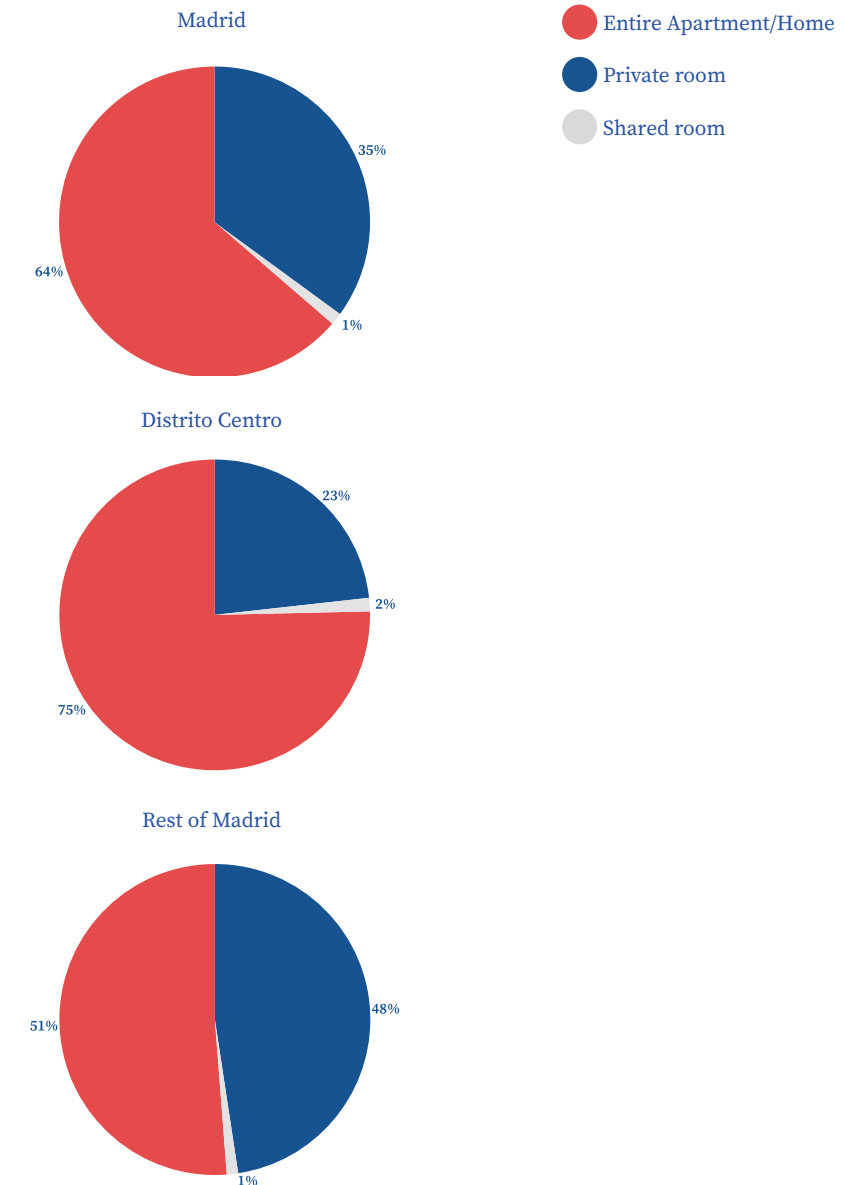
In respect of the framework emerged in the previous paragraph, the distribution of entire apartments can be regarded as a key factor in order to understand how much Airbnb is still dealing with a collaborative consumption pattern. The case of Madrid is particularly striking if we consider the distribution reported as a percentage of entire apartments, private rooms, and shared rooms, first in the entire city of Madrid, then in the *Distrito Centro*, and at last in the rest of Madrid.

The pie charts (15) show that in the entire city of Madrid, the entire apartment typology is the most widespread (64%), followed by the private room (35%). The shared room has instead a distribution considered not relevant (1%). For this reason, will not be taken into account for further discussion. In the *Distrito Centro*, the imbalance of typology distribution is even more emphasized because the entire apartments accounting for 75%, while the private rooms only 23%. A different scenario instead emerges in the rest of Madrid, meaning out of the *Distrito Centro*. The situation here reveals a better balance between entire apartments and private rooms, in fact, the first represents 51%, while the second the 48%.

These figures demonstrate that in the city of Madrid a significant percentage of listings is composed of entire apartments. In addition to this, the *Distrito Centro*, which as previously observed has the highest number of listings, has one-third of the Airbnb supply in the form of entire apartments. Where instead the distribution of listings is lower, such as in the rest of Madrid, the Airbnb supply is composed of entire apartments and private rooms almost in equal shares. The envisaged framework highlights how the *Distrito Centro* appears to be far away from that collaborative consumption pattern, making that area a breeding ground for professional hosts. On the other hand, in the

rest of Madrid, it seems to hold up a certain balance of collaborative origin.

• Airbnb typology (September 11, 2018)



(15) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (September 11, 2018)

In support of these considerations, in the line charts (16), the evolution of the different typologies has been studied between 2014 and 2018. With regard to the entire city of Madrid, it is noticeable that the percentage of entire apartments suffers an increase, from 59% in 2014 to 64% in 2018. In the same range of time, the percentage of private rooms has decreased from 39% to 35%. The same situation, with a greater incidence, shows up in the *Distrito Centro* where the percentage of entire apartments has increased from 71% to 77% between 2014 and 2017, before slightly falling to 75% in 2018. The trend observed between 2017 and 2018 may be due to the announcement by the Madrid City Council to adopt a strict regulation against professionals who operate through Airbnb. Furthermore, just like in the entire city, the percentage of private rooms has decreased from 27% in 2014 to 23% in 2018. Again, in the rest of the city, the trend appears quite different compared to the city centre. What emerges is that in 2014, the percentage of private rooms was considerably higher compared to the entire apartments one, respectively 55% and 44%. Instead in 2018, the percentage of entire apartments has exceeded the one of private rooms, now 51% and 48%.

A possible interpretation of these data could be that during the last years, given the potential gains using Airbnb, there has been a general trend aiming at investing in tourist apartments ready to be placed on the market. Therefore, the clear decrease of private rooms can demonstrate a paradigm shift from Airbnb as a sharing economy service to Airbnb as a means of the conventional economy. ♦

• Growth of Airbnb Typology (2014-2018)



(16) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (September 11, 2018)

3.2.6 The Airbnb entire apartment in Distrito Centro

So far it has been realized that the players of the Airbnb effect in Madrid are two, the *Distrito Centro*, and the entire apartments. For this reason, in order to begin setting up the study on a lower scale, entire apartments will be most closely studied.

On the Airbnb platform, besides the typology, two essential features are always present: the number of bedrooms and the number of beds. The following table (17) illustrates which one is the most widespread apartment layout in the *Distrito Centro*. In a total of 7006 entire apartments, it appears that the most common combination is composed by 1 bedroom and 4 beds (23%). This specific layout makes it possible to take full advantage of the space, often by using a double bed and a sofa-bed. The most common layouts beyond the first are composed of one bedroom and two beds (15%), and two bedrooms and four beds (10%). ♦

Layout	%
1 room/4 beds	23%
1 room/2 beds	15%
2 rooms/4 beds	10%
4 rooms/6 beds	9%

(17) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (September 11, 2018)

3.2.7 The profitability of Airbnb entire apartments

At this point, given the large distribution of apartments with one bedroom and four beds, a specific analysis of the potential profitability of this specific layout has been carried out. This part of the report wants to understand if let an entire apartment on Airbnb could be more profitable than the traditional rent.

As regarding the method of calculating the potential profitability of an entire apartment rent it out through Airbnb, the starting point here is the selection of the sample. Only the apartments with one bedroom and four beds have been selected, 1483 apartments have been identified. Subsequently, a price analysis has been developed, resulting an average price per night of 79€, perfectly in line with the average price in Madrid. However, considering the found standard deviation of 40,59, and given the volume of the cases, it has been decided to restrict the scope of the sample, by identifying a range of prices that could lower the dispersal of data. The cases with a price between 60€ and 100€ have been selected, reducing the sample to 935 apartments. This is still too comprehensive, so two further variables have been added, the activity of the listing, and its frequency of booking. The activity is the variable according to which the apartments who have less than one review in the last six months can be considered as inactive, so out of the sample. The frequency of booking, instead, is the estimated booking nights per year of each listing. In this case, listings with an estimated more than 90 nights per year will be taking into account. The method used to calculate the frequency rate is that of reviews. It is assumed, in fact, that whenever a review is left, this means an overnight stay. Obviously, the certain duration of the stay is unknowable, but every listing requires a minimum stay of one, two, three, or more nights. As result, we know that one review amounts to at least one overnight stay. This will enable us to calcu-

late the minimum profitability. Hence, after considering the two variables, the sample is now reduced at around 300 listings.

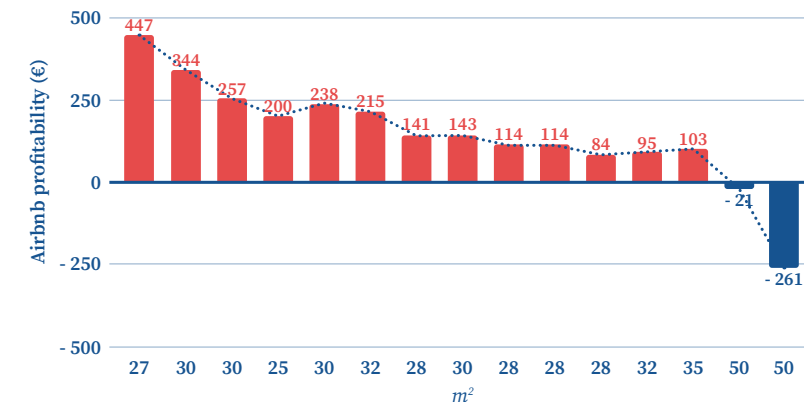
To have a complete vision of the phenomenon in the *Distrito Centro*, the sample has been further split according to the six neighbourhoods of the district. The first fifteen cases with the highest number of reviews have been selected. Taking into account the minimum number of nights, the annual minimal gain has been calculated. Additionally, it should be considered that the duration of the stay is often longer than one night, so the minimum profitability has been calculated assuming a minimum average of nights, equivalent to 2,44. A further consideration is that the price per night is often subject to significant variations depending on some seasons, on the weekends, or on certain events. For this reason, given the difficulty to calculate a specific coefficient of variation, each result is plausible and potential.

The findings highlight a significant situation, where the apartments who have a high frequency of booking nights appear to have a substantial revenue. But the most interesting finding is that the apartments with a smaller surface, when frequently booked, could have a minimum profitability far higher than the other ones with a larger surface. As shown in the chart (18), until 40m² the minimum profitability is positive, while from 50m² forward the minimum profitability turns out to be negative. The results tell us how the maximization of the small domestic space, using specific devices like foldable beds or mezzanines, can generate a very high potential profitability through Airbnb. ♦

• Minimum profitability of 1room/4beds entire apartment in Embajadores (September 11, 2018)

Airbnb ID	Total reviews / Occupation (%)	m ²	Traditional monthly income (€)	Airbnb monthly income (€)	Airbnb profitability (€) / (%)
17645452	103 / 28%	27	505	952	447 / 89%
11550407	185 / 50%	30	561	905	344 / 61%
13639668	120 / 33%	30	561	818	257 / 46%
16344132	64 / 17%	25	468	668	200 / 43%
3737504	222 / 61%	30	561	561	238 / 43%
12733322	102 / 28%	32	598	813	215 / 36%
12502738	117 / 32%	28	524	664	141 / 27%
13304944	99 / 27%	30	561	704	143 / 26%
14579567	68 / 19%	28	524	638	114 / 22%
7973374	130 / 36%	28	524	638	114 / 22%
11101978	94 / 26%	28	524	608	84 / 16%
15728951	68 / 19%	32	598	694	95 / 16%
12306618	104 / 28%	35	655	757	103 / 16%
16919824	87 / 24%	50	935	914	- 21 / - 2%
11014012	122 / 33%	50	935	674	- 261 / - 28%

• Minimum profitability trend (September 11, 2018)

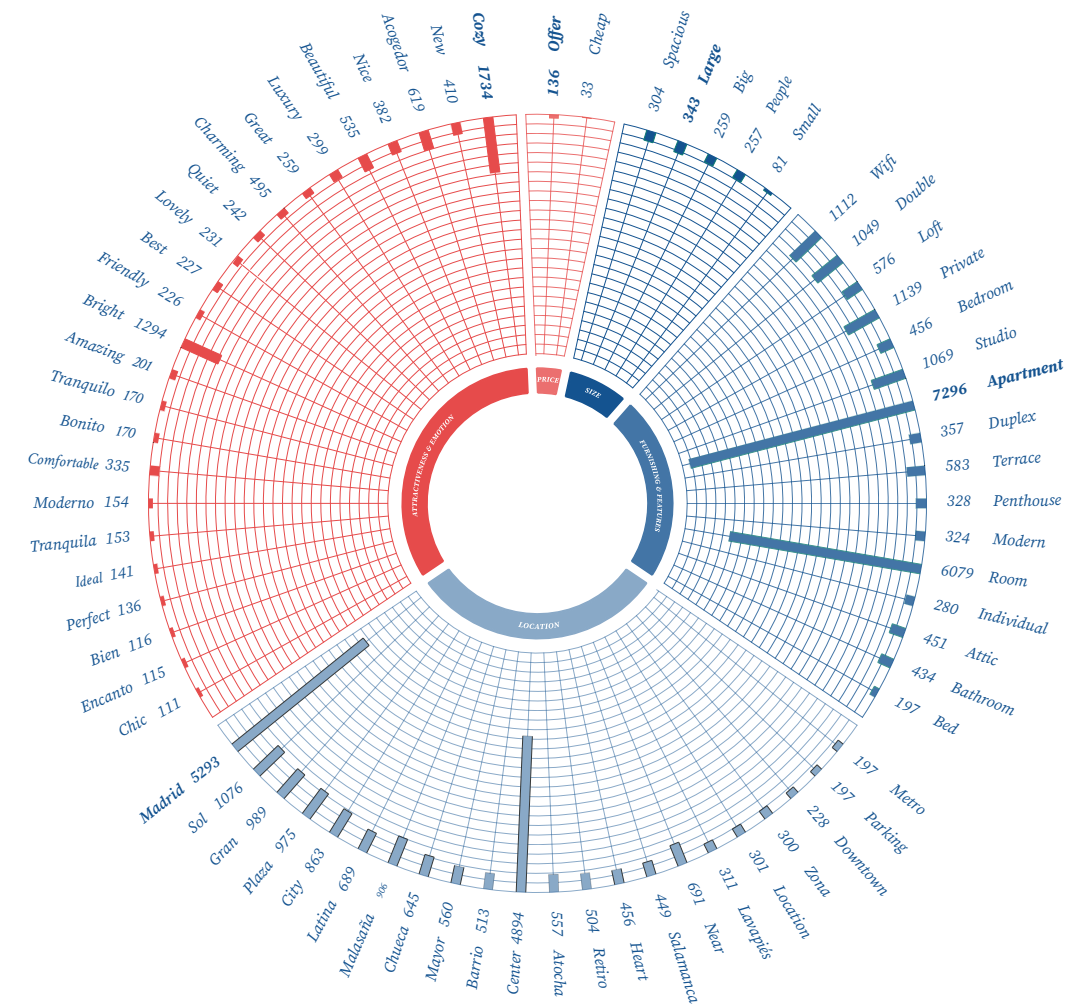


(18) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (September 11, 2018)

3.2.8 The Airbnb words

To stand out in the Madrid Airbnb market, hosts use to market their offers in an appealing way. The listing titles often contain extensive references to location and attractiveness, additionally including extensive descriptions, and professional photos. Of course, the title, together with images, is what strikes users immediately. This section examines which words are the most frequently used in Airbnb listing titles. To have a complete overview of the words, a specific chart has been carried out (19). All titles have been examined with respect to the vocabulary used, so the words have been filtered out and categorized semantically into the following categories: *location*, *attractiveness and emotionality*, *furnishing and features*, *size*, and *price*. Quite surprising is the fact that the most frequently used word is “apartment” which appears in almost 4 in 10 titles. Again, this could be linked to the large number of entire apartments in Madrid, especially in the *Districto Centro*. Words regarding the location category are the second most widespread, in fact, “Madrid” and “Center” appears with a certain frequency in the titles. What comes up so far is that the categories location, and furniture and features turn out to be those containing the higher frequency of words, emphasizing that those are the main features in the selection of a listing. At last, regarding the attractiveness of listings, the most widespread words are “cosy” and “bright”, highlighting the sensation that should bring the interior space to enjoy the stay. In conclusion, the less widespread words are the ones which refer to the size, like “large”, appearing only 343 times. ♦

• Airbnb words diagram (September 11, 2018)



(19) Own elaboration based on data from www.insideairbnb.com (September 11, 2018)

3.2.9 Report's key findings

On the basis of the initial premises, the Airbnb Madrid Report tried to draw conclusions about some specific questions emerged in the city of Madrid. To have a complete and easy overview of the Airbnb effect, the report's key findings are listed in 10 points.

1. *Airbnb growth in Madrid*

The Airbnb growth in Madrid has experienced a strong increase (43%) between 2017 and 2018. With **18.045** listings and around **60.000** beds, Airbnb is by far the most popular online platform for short-term vacation flats among tourists.

2. *Airbnb supply in Madrid*

The Airbnb supply is mainly concentrated in the *Distrito Centro*, where there is the **52%** of the listings, while the other districts together receives the **48%** all together. It is clear that the central neighborhoods of Madrid constitute a relevant scenario for the study of Airbnb.

3. *Airbnb supply in the city center*

Focus the attention on the *Distrito Centro*, the neighborhood where the Airbnb supply increased more between 2017 and 2018 is Embajadores (54%), where the largest number of listings is located. Instead, when the number of listings is crossed with the existent housing stock of each neighborhood, in Sol the ratio percentage is the highest. The results demonstrate that the latter is a neighborhood with a low number of housing stock, also due to its legacy of leisure and commercial function in the inner city. Instead, the lowest ratio percentage is in Embajadores, where the

population density is high, and the urban morphology is dense. So, in conclusion, also in accordance with pre-existing qualitative data, Embajadores is believed to be the most interesting area of study.

4. *Hospitality industry*

The extremely dense distribution of Airbnb listings compared to traditional accommodation facilities in the Madrid area, identifies how Airbnb is able to offer hospitality almost everywhere, especially in areas where the traditional hospitality industry generally thrive.

Furthermore, the exponential growth of Airbnb beds compared with the far more stable growth of the traditional accommodation number of beds, leading to the conclusion that Airbnb is more flexible concerning the increase of capacity. Precisely thanks to the spatial flexibility given by the lack of regulation, to which the hotels are subject.

5. *Airbnb competitive prices*

The data showed an average price per night higher in the city center than the average in the whole city, however, emphasizing a decisive convenience compared to average prices per night of the inner-city traditional accommodation. The conclusion may be that the exponential growth of Airbnb can also be due to the renowned affordability of the services offered.

6. *Multi-listings revenue*

Airbnb revenue is distributed highly unequally among hosts in Madrid. Commercial Airbnb operators, who have multiple entire-home listings or large portfolios of private rooms, are **11%** of hosts, controlling **40%** of the listings in the entire city. On the other hand, hosts with 1 or 2 listings,

which represent **89%** of the operators, control **60%** of the Airbnb supply. In conclusion, it appears that the revenue is concentrated in a few hands, highlighting the presence of a traditional economy on a new medium.

7. Airbnb Typology

The Airbnb typology are able to fully represent the Airbnb driving economic model in the city.

Although the presence of entire apartments turns out to be majority compared to private rooms, with respectively **64%** and **35%**, in the city centre the trend is further emphasized. In fact, entire apartments represent $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Airbnb supply, against only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the private rooms. The situation is different in the rest of the city where the distribution of typologies is balanced. In conclusion, it can be argued that in the city centre there is a trend more linked to the forms of traditional economy, while in the rest of the city the economic model is balanced, following in part the sharing economy ethos.

This point is further emphasized by the evolution of the typologies over the last four years, in which the city of Madrid, and especially the city center, present a decrease in private room, in exchange for an increase of entire apartments.

8. Airbnb entire apartment layout

The most common layout of the entire apartments in Madrid is composed by one room and four beds.

This means that the layout is often characterized by the presence of a double bed and a sofa-bed. It can be argued that, especially in the city centre, the strong presence of flats of reduced surface, promotes this type of layout, in which the sofa bed is often a widespread device.

9. Airbnb entire apartment profitability

The surface is closely related to the minimum profitability of the Airbnb entire apartments. In fact, based on an occupancy rate of at least **25%** of the year, it appears that entire apartments with one room and four beds having a smaller surface area, can have a minimum profitability much higher than those with a larger surface. It thus appears that the Airbnb short-term rental is definitely more profitable especially in relation to a narrow surface of the apartment, compared to traditional rent.

10. Airbnb words

The words that appear more frequently in airbnb ads refer primarily to the type, such as "apartment" or to the position, as in the case of the word "center". Then we can say that the words that refer to the size are very scarce. Finally prevail often the words "cozy" and "bright" referring to the emotional dimension of the house. ♦

3.3 The Airbnb effect in Lavapiés

As it emerged from the *Madrid Airbnb Report*, given the quantitative data about Airbnb, the neighborhood of Embajadores turns out to be the most interesting in order to study the Airbnb effect closer.

The choice to analyze this neighborhood, and especially an area generally named *Lavapiés* it is not only dictated by the evidence of the quantitative data, but also by certain specific conditions characterizing this part of the inner-city. One might wonder why Lavapiés has been recently defined as the “hotel of Madrid”, a neighborhood where there are almost no traditional hotels, but is crawling with Airbnb.¹⁵

The neighborhood presents the highest number of listings, in addition to the highest growth of the Airbnb supply in the last year. Lavapiés, as will be seen in a greater detail further, is commonly perceived as the neighborhood where the popular culture of the city is enclosed.

It is often called “barrio castizo”, which literally means traditional neighborhood, a place where the Madrid identity emerges. In addition to this, the neighborhood is also generally perceived as a fragile and hard place, especially due to its heterogeneous social structure and its immigrant population.

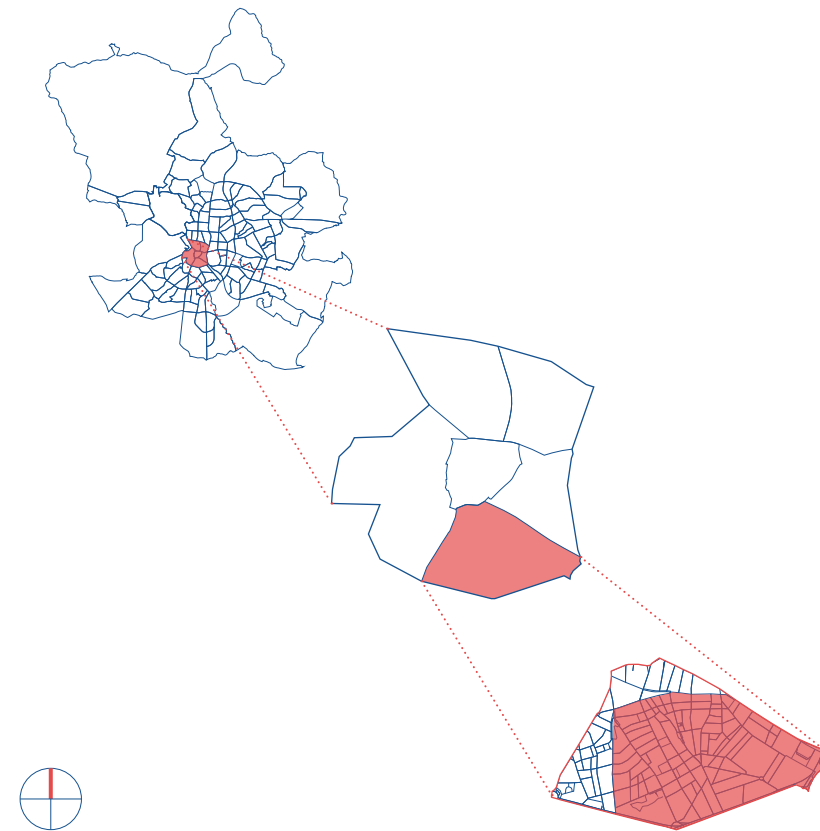
Lavapiés is probably one of the most authentic neighborhoods of the inner-city, it is for this reason that the small scale analysis will be pursued here. Lavapiés is also the beating heart of certain social dynamics, that made it the subject of recent demonstrations against evictions, often conceived as the outcome of short term rentals growth in the neighborhood. In this section, Lavapiés and Airbnb will be analyzed in detail, starting from the neighborhood scale towards the field study of traditional dwelling typology called *Corrala*. ♦

¹⁵ Amaya Larrañeta. “Lavapiés, el hotel de Madrid”, *www.20minutos.es*, 2017.

3.3.1 Lavapiés

Lavapiés is the informal name through which the majority of people in Madrid call a specific area located right south of the central neighborhood Sol. Lavapiés is perceived by the people as a neighborhood in a symbolic and subjective term. At administratively level, this area is officially the neighborhood of Embajadores. To be more precise, the area occupies the southern slope of the hillside upon which the city has been rooted.¹⁶

¹⁶ *Meseta*, is the spanish name of the hillside where the city has been rooted. Actually, from Puerta del Sol, conceived as the main center of the city, Lavapiés is around ten minutes walking.



Map of Distrito Centro, Embajadores, and Lavapiés

Especially due to its topographical features, this part of the city has always been conceived “behind” the rest of the *Distrito Centro* and as consequence it always assumed a role of marginalized area of the city. Historically, this neighborhood has been often called “barrio bajo”,¹⁷ which not only refers to its location but also to its specific situation at the margin of the city.

According to the historians, since the XV Century this area has been described in the archive documents of the City Hall as extramural trading settlements,¹⁸ connected with the *Camino Real de Toledo* and the *Camino de Atocha*. In addition, many claim that there was a slaughterhouse right in what is now the area of the famous *El Rastro* market. This facility took advantage of the relevant slope down the valley in order to evacuate the waste of slaughtered animals.¹⁹

¹⁷ The term can be translated as neighborhood located down the hill, or in a pejorative way as slum.

¹⁸ The usual Spanish name for this kind of settlements is “arrabal”

¹⁹ María Isabel Gea Ortigas. “Diccionario Enciclopédico de Madrid”. Madrid, 2002.



The fountain of Lavapiés - painted by Francisco Pradilla y Ortiz (1872)

Although there are still doubts about it, most of the historians are convinced that until the XV Century Lavapiés has been the Jewish Quarter of the city. Actually, the name of the neighborhood is probably linked to this remark, in fact the name Lavapiés literally means “wash feet”.

To explain this, it is said that under the church of San Cayetano, patron saint of the neighborhood in whose honor the festivals are celebrated, lies a synagogue. Allegedly, Jewish performed rituals in the actual Lavapiés square before to enter the synagogue; in such rituals, among other things, they used to wash their feet.

However, it is during the XXI Century when many authors provided findings to demystify the alleged Jewish past of Lavapiés arguing that the sources of this history start from literary and drama works belonging to the late regionalism result of untruthful legends. The growth of the city during the XVI and XVII Century enabled the construction of boundary walls which marginalized again the space of Lavapiés. From this period forward, the neighborhood kept its traditional activities like handicrafts, in addition to the textile and leather industry. At the end of the XVIII Century, few urban factories were introduced in the neighborhood, accentuating the manufacturing purpose of this area of the city. As consequence of its historical development, during XVIII and XIX Century Lavapiés continued to host immigrants and other marginal populations arrived during the past immigration waves that defined the city of Madrid.

This part of the city began to welcome low income population looking for cheap accommodation in very bad conditions. Especially between the XIX and the middle of XX Century, the neighborhood enjoyed a tremendous process of densification which led to the addition of floors to existing buildings and the filling of interior courtyards (*infra-vivienda*). Therefore, immigration represents a key feature of the development of Lavapiés during the centuries. To be

more precise, according to Carlos Giménez, four key historical periods can be considered relevant for the growth of Lavapiés: the years following the relocation of the capital to Madrid during the XVI Century; the past three decades of the XVIII Century with the installation of factories and workshops into the neighborhood; the period of industrialization and urbanization of the city between the XIX and the XX Century; lastly, the period of immigration involving the rural population towards the capital during the middle of the XX Century (Gimenez, 2006).



San Fernando market in Lavapiés - 1933

Lavapiés moved towards the modern age as a working class neighborhood. As previously stated, during the middle XX Century, this neighborhood was one of the favourite places where rural population moved during the Spanish post-war period. Tiny and cheap houses, in addition to the good position of the neighborhood within the inner-city were the main features that attracted immigrants. During these years, the excess of unskilled workforce coming from the rural areas produced unemployment and crime. The additional overpopulation and disregard led the neighborhood to a fast deterioration.

To fully understand the complete situation of Lavapiés during this period, in 1951, the film director José Antonio Nieves Conde directed a movie called *Surcos*, still recognized today as one of the best movie of the Spanish cinema. Symbol of the Spanish neorealism, *Surcos* tells the story of a peasant family who emigrate to Madrid to leave behind the poverty, the isolation, and the immobility of the rural life. Suddenly they realize that job is little and underpaid, so the only way to thrive is to devote themselves to illegal or unethical activities. *Pepe*, the older brother, is being introduced into the murky environment of the black market, where exactly as his father and his little brother, he is too naive to understand the vicious rules of the city. The women also lack of better luck. The mother, obsessed with money, ends up accepting that the daughter sells her body to a sinister black marketeer. The tragic turn of the events force the head of the family to recover his authority, ending up by get back to the humble but honourable rural life.

Surcos offers a desolate vision of Madrid, and especially the neighborhood of Lavapiés where the film has been shot. The city is an hostile jungle, a treacherous and violent labyrinth where the dream of prosperity turned into a nightmare.

Lavapiés is one of the main protagonist of the movie, in fact a series of urban settings come together with their so-

cial weight, defining the urban picture of the neighborhood during the 1950s. The setting highlights some residential places which assume a strong iconic power, such as the traditional *Corrala*, a dwelling typology composed of negligible apartments with a communal lavatory which harbour more than one family. In the movie, this is the place where the family is welcome by an unscrupulous female relative already adapted in the city.



Lavapiés subway exit in the movie *Surcos* - 1951

Other dwelling typologies appear in the movie, especially the apartment for rent, usually located in a good area of the city, and where the life could be conceived as more “easy” for many reasons, one was the social isolation of the apartment. The low rise dwellings are the last typology appearing in *Surcos*, a compound of buildings located in the suburbs with minimum services and an atmosphere of proximity. Other secondary settings, generally linked to social and economical activities, deserve to be highlighted to understand the real identity of Lavapiés during these years. The café-bar for example was one of the most significant meeting place, mainly for unemployed people and black marketeer which organized their business. The employment office was the place where the basic bureaucracy deals everyday with thousands of unemployed workers looking for any kind of job. The big neighborhood market, symbol of the traditional commerce, is the place where any type of person such as parishioners, cargo-runners and thieves search for their arrangement. The itinerant points of sale are the typical urban representatives of the subsistence economy. Conceived as businesses result of the black market dripping, the sharpest ones live one step away from being arrested, often running away from the police. At last, the music hall was the people’s cathedral where fame and dream can become true (Gómez, 2001).

Surcos is an essential document for the socio-historic memory of post war Spain, but is at the same time a clear picture of the Lavapiés identity during the 1950s. An identity that is still engraved nowadays in the neighborhood.

With the death of the dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, and the subsequent advent of democracy, Lavapiés continued to be considered as a blighted neighborhood. The new generations decided to get out of a deteriorated area where the roads have been taken by drugs and crime. The buildings started to hollow out and the stigma of Lavapiés

started to take shape. During the 1980s when the neighborhood is affected by the scourge of heroin, in everyone's eyes Lavapiés became a place of elderly people and immigrants. It is during these years when the first transnational immigrants started to arrive in the neighborhood.



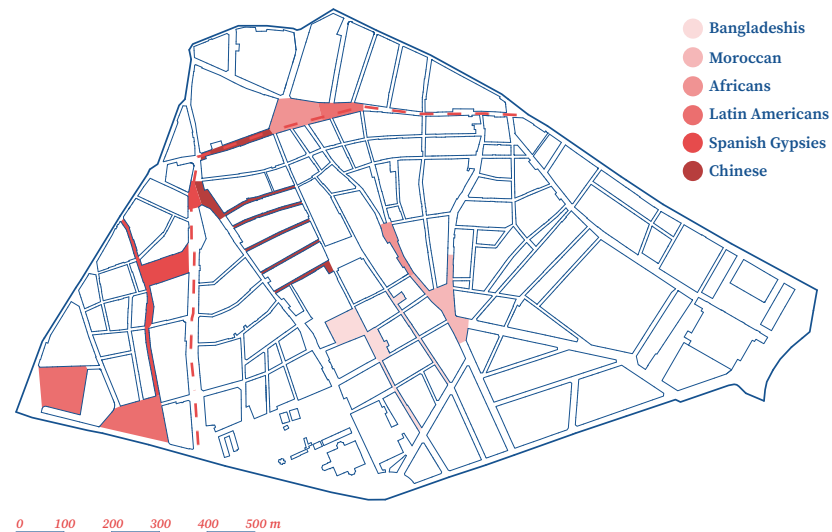
Corrala in Calle Miguel Servet - 1976

The significant immigration flow which characterized Spain during the 1990s had a great impact on Lavapiés, because as sustained by Barañano, until the most recent arrive of transnational immigration, the neighborhood kept a poorly modified structure of population and economy, marked by a strong Madrid identity (Barañano et al. 2006). Therefore, the high number of Africans arrived in the early 1990s were followed by immigrants from South America, Middle East, Southern Asia and China. Of course, the presence of this strong diversity produced a series of changes in the original social structure of Lavapiés. Anyway, the perception of a massive arrival of immigrant population has made the social incorporation between autochthonous and foreigners difficult (Gimenez, 2006). According to the author Isabel Gea, Lavapiés is the neighborhood of Madrid where the highest number of cultures per square meter is concentrated (Gea, 2002).

When looking at the demographics of the last decade, the assertion of Isabel Gea is absolutely true. To obtain a picture, in 2011 the neighborhood had an immigrant population of 33%, characterized by dozens of nationalities. Instead, in the 1991 census the percentage of immigrants was a mere 4,9%. Some nationalities only used the neighborhood as a transient place, while other ones decided to use Lavapiés as settlement, is the case of the Bangladeshi or Senegalese community. Furthermore, it is also clear that the strong presence of the immigrant population in the urban context of the neighborhood generated some patterns of appropriation of the public space that strongly distinguish Lavapiés compared to other areas of the city (Breyman, 2014). Undoubtedly, the easy housing affordability, the centrality of the neighborhood, and above all the presence of cheap commercial premises represented the main reasons that pushed these people to establish themselves in the area.

At the end of the 1990s, the economic and productive frame-

work of Lavapiés was proclaimed as badly deteriorated. It was mainly due to the establishment of ethnic commercial activities that the framework underwent a certain revitalization. Most of them are wholesale businesses, especially concentrated in certain streets on grounds of the owner's nationality. (20)



(20) Own elaboration based on data from
Dirección General de Estadística del Ayuntamiento de Madrid - 2017

The wholesale commerce is directed mainly at the distribution of textile products and footwear, while to a smaller extent towards household and telecommunication products. Additionally, it can be argued that this market is mainly dominated by East Asian population, followed by Bangladeshi/Pakistani, and lastly by Middle Eastern. The retail market, instead, concerns the previous type of goods with the addition of food stores and ethnic restaurants. Many activities are often only directed at immigrant customers too, by providing specific services like money transfer, call centre, or travel agency. In conclusion, the proliferation of the immigrant entrepreneurship has definitely encouraged the neighborhood transformation, attracting new immigrants towards Lavapiés, a place where every ethnic group can identify to it. This situation has also been a relevant factor for the increase of the business premises rental prices (Riesco, 2010).



Ethnic commercial activities in Lavapiés - 2018

As far as immigration in Lavapiés might have been originally considered a problem, actually had a key importance for the revitalization of the neighborhood, which suffered a strong moment of abandonment and depopulation. As matter of fact, according to the data published into the *Plan de Actuación Inmediata* (PAI CENTRO), drawn up between 1980 and 1981, there were 76.537 inhabitants in 1970, dropped to 53.689 in 1980. Today the number is around 45.000. Instead, the neighborhood neglect was possible to detect in the difficult conditions of the housing stock.

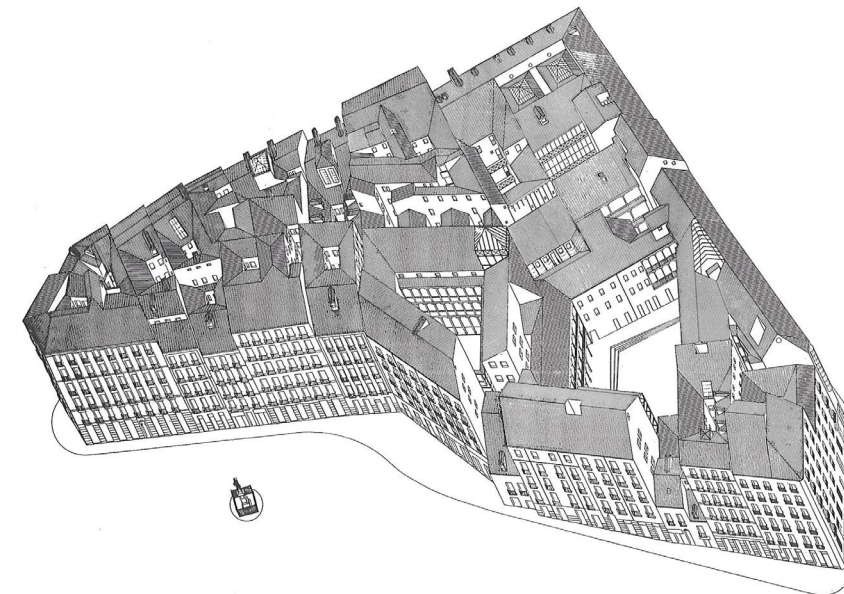
Further, according to the data of PAI CENTRO, it was identified the presence of 14.000 *infraviviendas*²⁰ in the *Distrito Centro*, half of these were located in Embajadores. In 1970, the 25,2% of the apartments had a surface lower than 30 m², the 5,9% did not have running water, while the 33,2% did not have private toilets. These problems are still observable in the data of the 1991 census, in which the apartments without hot water were still the 38,16%, while the ones without private toilet were the 6,8%.

The next decade depicts a moment of complex neighborhood transformation, driven by many factors. Among them, the rehabilitation plans promoted by the city hall, and the arrival of immigrant population that produced a new residential densification. Immigration flows have therefore reconfigured population, commerce and use of space (Barañano et al. 2006).

The physical rehabilitation of the neighborhood have, however, played a crucial role in the revitalization of Lavapiés. The first specific actions of rehabilitation in the neighborhood are already beginning since the 1980s, adopting different approaches. The private approach, in part subsidised by the City Hall, and the public approach, entirely managed by the public body.

One of the first rehabilitation in the neighbourhood, dated 1981, was the so-called *Manzana de Cascorro*, a block of

8500 m². We are dealing with a pilot project, built up following the private financing model, which lays down the guidelines for the next rehabilitation plans in Lavapiés. The block, characterized by a strong density, shows heterogeneous building conditions with a few parts in ruins and others in a good state of conservation. In order to facilitate the success of the project, the housing units that showed a light decay were rehabilitated under the private model, while to those that showed a severe decay, the public model was applied. Moreover, some of the buildings in the block appeared to be protected because of their architectural value, undergoing a milder rehabilitation. On the other hand, all the others underwent a stronger rehabilitation. Among the strengths of the project, there was also the rehabilitation of those public spaces resulting from the demolition of the *infraivienda*.



Manzana de Cascorro rehabilitation project - 1981

²⁰ The building, or part of it, intended for dwelling, which not meeting the minimum habitable requirements is called *infravivienda*. The definition of *infravivienda* contained in *Normas Urbanísticas del Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Madrid 1997*, tells that the one-bedroom housing units must have a minimum surface of 25 m², while the dwellings with more than one area must have a minimum surface of 38 m². The minimum heights must be of 2,20 m for uninhabitable spaces, and 2,50 m for the habitable ones. In addition, if the rooms only ventilate through the courtyard, the latter must have a minimum surface of 20 m². It is clear that the application ad-litteram of this regulation would make *infravivienda* more than half of the dwellings of *Distrito Centro*.

In the same year, the same thing happened to *Las Corralas de Miguel Servet*. In this case, the rehabilitation approach follows the public financing model, but getting an unsatisfactory outcome. The idea of the City Hall was to acquire all the buildings, to later facilitate the purchase by the tenants. The unauthorized tenants were instead evicted. After the rehabilitation, the options could be either the purchase of the housing units, or living free of charge when there were the conditions. The architectural project instead envisaged an increase in the surface of the housing units, the installations of private toilets, and the structural consolidation. However, due to the tensions between tenants and architects, the rehabilitation project did not go well. The continuous increase in construction costs was one of the reasons that led the tenants to oppose the works. In conclusion, the project was stopped and after ten years the rehabilitation was completed. (Pol Mendez et al. 1983)

These two experiences laid the foundations for the subsequent rehabilitation plans promoted by the City Hall. The plans in question have always offered actions on blighted neighbourhoods of the city, in which the grade of habitability was strongly compromised. In the case of Embajadores, in 1997, the signature for the Área de Rehabilitación Integral de Lavapiés was put following the undeniable bad conditions of the neighbourhood. The essential guidelines mainly concerned the degradation of public space, roads and infrastructure; the plan actually solved this problem, also making sure that a continuous process of periodic maintenance and conservation could be developed.

Instead, the rehabilitation of the buildings had to take place through an economic concession of up to 60% for private initiatives, with a specific program for the resolution of the *infravivienda*. Then there was another line that involved support for the neighborhood's social programs, which however had a very low economic subsidy and unclear management (Red Lavapiés, 2003). The plan provided

for a first phase lasting six years (1997-2003), whose objective was the rehabilitation of 4,000 artifacts. The second phase, on the other hand, aimed at rehabilitating another 3,500 buildings in three years, a period that actually lasted until 2012.²¹ Due to the large number of actors involved in this type of process, there were a number of problems that made it difficult for the project to succeed. For example as in the case of the *Corrala de Miguel Servet*, many times the people could not fully cope with the estimated cost of rehabilitation, thus leading to a failure in some cases. Another problem was that the rehabilitation of the *infravivienda* was often not sufficiently convenient for many of the owners. In fact, it was convenient for them to continue to rent the *infravivienda*, thus obtaining greater benefits while maintaining the buildings in poor condition as it was. According to data in fact, in 2008, of the 797 buildings with *infravivienda*, only 166 requested the economic grants for rehabilitation (Perez Quintana, 2010).

This last consideration makes it clear that the problem of the *infravivienda* has not been solved at all. Important implementations were then carried out regarding public space and facilities. Main examples were the redesign of the squares *Lavapiés*, *Cabestreros* and *Agustin Lara*, as well as the Olimpia theater, the library and the UNED center. A strong push was given then to the creation of cultural entities, highlighting in a sense, the creative character of the neighborhood. Also important were the actions on the mobility of the district, which reduced traffic flows and pollution, but partly disadvantages the wholesale trade which, as we have seen, is the majority in Lavapiés (Breyman, 2014).

In general, criticism of the plan were fairly widespread, especially regarding the lack of an integral action, the lack of coordination between the actors involved, and finally the non-participation of the local residents in the process (Red Lavapiés, 2003). Despite the difficult issue of the *infra-*

²¹ The first phase foresaw a so-called *Area de rehabilitación preferente* (ARP), while the second phase foresaw the expansion of the ARP, the so-called *Area de rehabilitación integral* (ARI). At the same time an intervention plan for the historic centre of Madrid (PERCU 2004) was created.

vivienda was strongly criticized by the neighborhood associations as speculative in nature, surely there is no denying the improvement of a good part of the buildings in the neighborhood.

At this stage is crucial to understand, given the strong diversity, how Lavapiés has decided to deal with its marginality. The creation of a great amount of groups and associations has been fundamental to generate a useful network (Red Lavapiés), in order to interact and respond to the urban processes occurring in the neighborhood.²² Groups and associations have demonstrated to be the backbone of the neighborhood, cooperating on several occasions with the city government in order to create action plans for the recovering of the social and territorial balance. The mentioned plans have put forward initiatives addressed to education, combating school absenteeism, or to social services, sport, and culture.²³

²² Among the main neighborhood associations in Lavapiés there are: *Asociación de Vecinos La Corrala*, *Asociación de Inmigrantes Senegaleses de España* (AIESE), *Asociación de Emigrantes Marroquíes en España* (AEME), *Red Solidaria de Economía de Barrio* (RSEB)

²³ Reference is made to *Plan de barrio 2013-2016* and *Plan de acción 2005*.



Graffiti art in Lavapiés - 2018

The cultural diversity, due to the immigration, and the action of the municipality are not the only features that marked the neighborhood revitalization.

Since the 1990s in fact, due to the cheap price of the housing, in addition to a great number of empty and abandoned units, a great number of low-income young people were attracted by Lavapiés. In relation to this, one of the most widespread practice of that period was the squatting.²⁴ The neighborhood, as always proved historically, accepted all sorts of people and became quickly famous and appealing to all those groups of people that between the 80s and 90s were not yet accepted. Reference is made to members of the feminist movement, the LGBT community, the *Okupas*, and lastly left-wing political association.²⁵ In a way, although Lavapiés was considered dangerous and blighted, all in all was becoming popular for certain groups of people.

²⁴ In Spanish, squatters are called *Okupas*.

²⁵ The Spanish political party *Podemos* actually was born in the Lavapiés neighborhood, where there was the first head-quarter.



Children of various ethnic groups in the streets of Lavapiés - 2018

Since the beginning of 2000, it is precisely the legacy of multicultural and authentic neighborhood that pushes certain group of people, like young professionals with an high cultural asset, to settle down in Lavapiés. This choice was not prompted by a necessity, conversely it was a clear quest for an alternative and bohemian lifestyle. The trend just outlined, clearly follows what Richard Florida explains about the search, from a certain creative class, for urban areas in which valuing open, tolerant, and different communities, in addition to enjoy cultural activities that can characterize their everyday life. (Florida, 2008) Therefore, Lavapiés became the neighborhood that suits them best, marked by multiculturalism and a rising cultural legacy.

This kind of situation, mixed with other factors, lays the foundation for the earliest forms of gentrification in the neighborhood.²⁶ Gentrification processes tend to assume recurring structures that can be distinguished because of specific factors closely bound to each neighborhood. Daniel Sorando and Alvaro Ardura highlight five well-defined stages useful to outline in a clear way the gentrification processes occurring in the neighborhoods of many cities. The stages are the following: abandonment, stigma, regeneration, commercialization, and resistance.

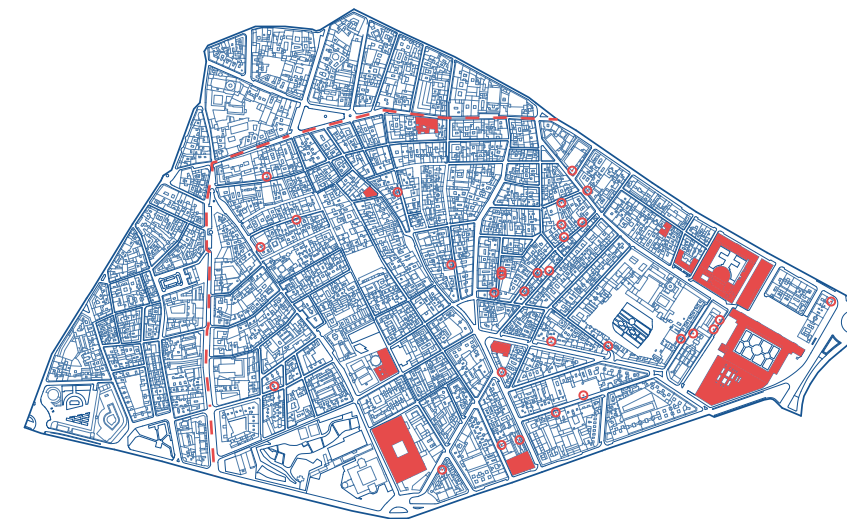
Abandonment begins when a neighbourhood that is usually historical or central has undergone a progressive deterioration dictated by a context of economic scarcity. Gradually the inhabitants move to other neighborhoods that offer more comfort. Immediately after the abandonment comes the stigma, which develops among the inhabitants of adjacent areas, due to the presence of empty houses occupied by marginal groups of low economic power, immigrants, whose presence usually leads to the proliferation of illegal activities such as drugs and prostitution. Once the neighbourhood has bottomed out in the collective imagination, the first forms of urban regeneration promoted by public or private groups appear, bearing the barrio to be attractive

again. It is at this point that begins the stage of commercialization, when the neighbourhood begins to be populated by artists, young people and groups in search of an alternative lifestyle. With the arrival of this new population, the cost of living begins to grow, commercial businesses are more fancy or tourist oriented, making the residents with a lower purchasing power find themselves forced to move to more affordable neighbourhoods.

Lastly, parallel to this phase, social movements of resistance to the phenomenon of gentrification usually develop (Sorando and Ardura, 2016).

Sequera claims that among the main gentrification factors in Lavapiés there are, in addition to the aforementioned urban pioneers of the 80s and 90s, the rehabilitation plans. On the one hand because they tried to imagine Lavapiés as an area dedicated to culture and creativity, in fact, is the neighbourhood with the highest number of cultural institutions in all of Spain. (21)

²⁶ The term “gentrification” was first coined in 1964 by Ruth Glass, a pioneer of urban sociology, describing it as, some new and distinct processes of urban change that were beginning to affect inner London – literally “gentrification” means the replacement of an existing population by a gentry. On the evidence of the cases, Glass identified gentrification as a complex urban process that included the rehabilitation of old housing stock, transformation from renting to owning, property price increases, and the displacement of working-class residents by the incoming middle classes.



0 100 200 300 400 500 m

(21)

On the other hand because the physical rehabilitation, previously mentioned, has helped those owners of entire buildings (31%) to rehabilitate their buildings and generate a proper rent gap²⁷ (Sequera, 2014).

²⁷ The *rent-gap theory* was developed in 1979 by the geographer Neil Smith as an economic explanation for the process of gentrification. It describes the disparity between the current rental income of a property and the potentially achievable rental income. Only from this difference arises the interest of investors, a particular object (to entire neighborhoods) to renovate, resulting in an increase in rents and also the value of the property.

Focusing more on the culture factor it must also be said that in the last thirty years cultural policies have been a central component of urban regeneration strategies, as evidenced by emblematic operations such as the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao or the Centre Pompidou in Paris. (Sorando, Ardura, 2016) Clearly the case of Lavapiés has a smaller resonance compared to the examples mentioned above, but the cultural strategy has been applied in a different form and with similar results. As Garcia states, the rehabilitation policies of the central district of the city of Madrid have not only led to a physical adaptation of the buildings, but have tried to propose a new image of the city, creating a brand that can revive the essence and the identity of certain neighbourhoods (Garcia, 2014).

In fact, in Lavapiés, culture has been interpreted as the essence of the neighbourhood, not through high-value museums, but through the emphasis on counterculture, activism and multiculturalism. In a certain way, the high number of immigrants in the neighbourhood has become an added value to the culture, benefited not so much by the inhabitants with a low cultural capital, but by the creative class now settled in the neighborhood (Sequera, 2014).

Probably one of the symbols of this approach to alternative culture is the social center La Tabacalera,²⁸ a large cultural space where counterculture, art and activism are produced. It is interesting because it is actually a state-owned hybrid, initially illegally occupied by an association and then outsourced to the same by the state for lack of funds. It is now an established reality of artistic experimentation and self-management.

Although the process of gentrification in Lavapiés may seem textbook, actually it can be argued that it is not en-

tirely complete, as has happened in other central neighbourhood such as Malasaña and Chueca.²⁹ It must be underlined that a real displacement did not take place, above all because the migrant population has not diminished at all, on the contrary it is very difficult break away from the well established community network. Following the argument put forward by Daniel Sorando and Alvaro Ardura, it could be argued that Lavapiés, unlike Malasaña or Chueca, is paralyzed between the "regeneration" phase, almost completed and that the "commercialization", started only in part thanks to the arrival of a certain type of population (Soriano and Ardura, 2016).

²⁹ Malasaña and Chueca are already in a final phase of gentrification. The former offers a Bohemien identity, while the latter is considered one of the most important gay neighbourhood in Europe.



Lavapiés (in)gentrificable - 2018

²⁸ www.latabacalera.net

Moreover, it may be added that the high density of the Lavapiés urban fabric, a housing estate consisting of units smaller than the rest of the city, in addition to the strong presence of immigrant population, are inherent characteristics that can somehow slow down and hinder dynamics of gentrification. Clearly, this does not prevent that, sooner or later, more invasive rehabilitation processes will carry out or a change in consumption patterns and trade in the neighbourhood will occur (Garcia, 2014).

However, what takes a very strong value is the resistance of the local residents against the gentrification advancing. As has already been mentioned, in Lavapiés, groups and neighborhood associations have a long history of defending the territory, developing a feeling in which the emotional and material needs produced by the neighborhood are mixed. The commercialization of the neighborhood threatens the feeling of the inhabitants, who are willing to resist claiming the right to the city through the struggle. A struggle that always has the same shared objective: the promotion of inclusive neighbourhoods where the housing stock can be affordable and in good condition. For example, in Spain, associations such as the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) have been created. This was joined by many inhabitants of the central districts of the Spanish cities including lavapiés, in order to defend people at risk of eviction, carrying out sometimes violent action (Sorando and Ardura, 2016). Similar organizations are also the *Sindicato de inquilinos* (Tenants Union), which openly ranks against the problem of expensive rents. According to them, the scarcity of available housing, the accelerated increase of rents, the sale of entire buildings to investment funds, and the use of the house with tourist purposes, would generate an unsustainable situation for the inhabitants of the central districts. In this sense, the data are clear, as analyzed by the real estate portal *www.idealista.com*, the

rent in the city of Madrid in 2018 revealed an interannual growth of 4.3%, with an average price per m² of 19 € in *Distrito Centro*.³⁰ The situation described is further accompanied by legislation designed to protect property before tenants. The reference is to the *Ley de arrendamientos urbanos* of 2013, which aim to increase the flexibility of the real estate market in Madrid, by changing the mandatory duration of leases. It goes from five to three years, and in addition it proposes an extension from three to one year.³¹ "*Lavapiés will not be the new Malasaña*". It is with this phrase that those who resist attempts to drive away the gentrification, giving clear signals through graffiti and demonstrations.

In this section attempts have been made to reveal all those characteristic aspects of the heterogeneous soul of this central neighbourhood, its multiculturalism, its complexity and its continuous transformation. Today's perception of the barrio is basically attributable to what has been supported so far. There are still social problems, the repeated conflicts between immigrants and the police, the phenomenon of the *pisos patera*³² and the *cama caliente*³³ still make of Lavapiés a stigmatized neighbourhood. Even the problem of the drug is still strongly present, especially in the urban fabric, due to the presence of so-called *narco pisos*.³⁴ But among the things that have attracted the most clamor in the last two years, there has been the exponential increase in tourists in the neighbourhood, primarily due to the presence of Airbnb apartments. The latter situation has generated strong protests from the inhabitants, who identify in Airbnb a further factor of gentrification. This last topic will be addressed in detail in the next sections 3.3.4 and 3.3.5 of the paragraph. ♦

³⁰ Evolución del precio de la vivienda en alquiler en 2018. www.idealista.com

³¹ Ley 4/2013, de 4 de junio, de medidas de flexibilización y fomento del mercado del alquiler de viviendas. Boletín Oficial del Estado

³² The so-called *piso patera* is named after a small fishing boat, used by immigrants to reach the Spanish coasts. The similarity is due to the large amount of people packed into a reduced space. Usually the rooms are very small, full of beds or sofa-beds and without windows.

³³ The so-called *cama caliente* is a phenomenon that has to do with the rental of a mattress, a sofa, or a bed only for few hours, enough to rest a while. There are rotating bunks that once released have a new occupant.

³⁴ The so-called *narco piso* is usually an apartment used to sell and use drugs. In most of the cases it is about illegally occupied apartments that belong to investment funds, banking institutions, or private owners.



Lavapiés is not for sale - 2018

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A building in struggle against speculation in Calle Olmo 35 - 2018

3.3.2 A urban analysis

Since the establishment of Madrid as capital in 1561, the urban development of the city was strongly influenced by two factors, which in the long term, have outlined the urban fabric as well as the housing typologies. On the one hand, there was the constant limitation to the expansion of the city, through the construction of walls, and on the other the incessant population growth due to immigration flows. As matter of fact, according to the data of the period, Madrid passed from about 12,000 inhabitants in 1561 to 90,000 in 1597, while its surface even quadrupled (Ortigas, 2000). With the new capital confined within the walls, land prices increased and new houses were no longer built. For this reason the migrant population was forced to settle even outside the walls, promoting the adoption of low-quality dwellings, based on a completely disordered urban fabric. It must also be said that the first walls of the new capital, dating back to 1566 and built at the behest of Felipe II, effectively excluded the neighborhood of Embajadores.

The image of Madrid in the 16th century relegates the current district of Embajadores to "Arrabal", which literally means a settlement outside the walls. It was from the XVII Century, with the construction of a new wall by Felipe IV that the district was effectively included in the city limits, continuing to emphasize its marginal position in the urban arena. The most complete and interesting cartographic transposition of that period is the so-called *Plano de Teixeira*, dated to 1656.³⁵ The map makes it possible to interpret very clearly the urban fabric of the city and especially the neighbourhood of Embajadores. Actually, the latter has a different built environment compared to the most central areas of the city.

It is also noted that the blocks are composed mostly of houses of one, two or at most three levels, all having a relative backyard probably dedicated to agriculture.

³⁵ The complete name of the plan is *Mantua Carpetatorum sive Matritum Urbis Regia* (Madrid Royal City)

One of the interesting aspects is certainly the division of the blocks into rather irregular parcels, which in some cases begin to be occupied by small low houses that gradually make the plot more and more dense. It is precisely this the settlement process that most characterizes the neighbourhood and that will subsequently lead to the creation of representative housing typologies such as the one with access from open galleries, commonly called *Corrala*. Actually, this type of process is clearly visible in the *Plano Parcelario de Madrid* drafted by Carlos Ibañez in 1874.

Over the years, Madrid, and even more Embajadores, continued to attract new population in search of fortune, making sure that the process of densification develops not only horizontally, but above all vertically. Subsequently, the XIX Century offers a further expansion of the city, partly through the tidier planning of neighborhoods outside the margins, called *Ensanche Castro*, and partly according to informal and spontaneous settlement in peripheral areas. Nowadays, Embajadores and the Lavapiés area continue to preserve the aforementioned features, such as the extreme density of the built environment, the traditional housing typologies, and the irregular shapes of the blocks. Hereunder a detailed urban analysis of the Lavapiés area has been pursued.



Embajadores in the *Plano Teixeira* - 1656



Embajadores in the *Plano Parcelario de Madrid* - 1874

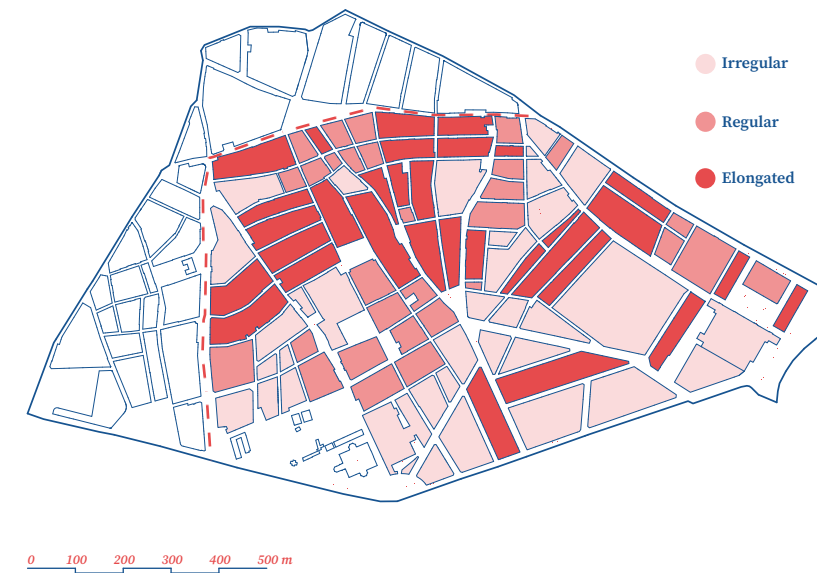
As mentioned until now, density is a fundamental feature of the urban fabric in the inner-city, and the Lavapiés area fully reflects this feature. As can be seen in the Nolli map (22), the area has a very strong density of covered spaces, which leave very little breath to open spaces, such as the building's inner cavities and courtyards. This condition is more visible in the northern part of the area, that is the oldest one, where even public spaces and squares are quite small. The southern part of the area, on the other hand, presents a slightly less dense urban fabric, often characterized by buildings with a considerable massing, as well as by green areas and squares.



(22)

The extreme density of the blocks over the years has generated many problems related to healthiness and living conditions in the neighborhood. One of the most debated issues is certainly that of the so-called "infravivienda", already mentioned earlier.

The urban fabric of Lavapiés is then characterized by heterogeneous blocks having different geometries. In the map (23), three types have been classified according to their geometry: elongated, regular, and irregular.



(23)

Today, compared to the Ibañez plan of 1874, the blocks have not experienced any noteworthy urban transformation, except for a clear construction in the south-east area of the neighborhood between the *Calle Doctor Fourquet* and the *Ronda de Atocha*. As matter of fact, according to data, 48% of residential buildings in the Embajadores neighbourhood were built before 1900, 36% between 1901 and 1960, while only 16% was built between 1961 and 2001.³⁶ Ultimately, the Lavapiés area preserves residential buildings of a certain historical value, located within highly dense blocks.

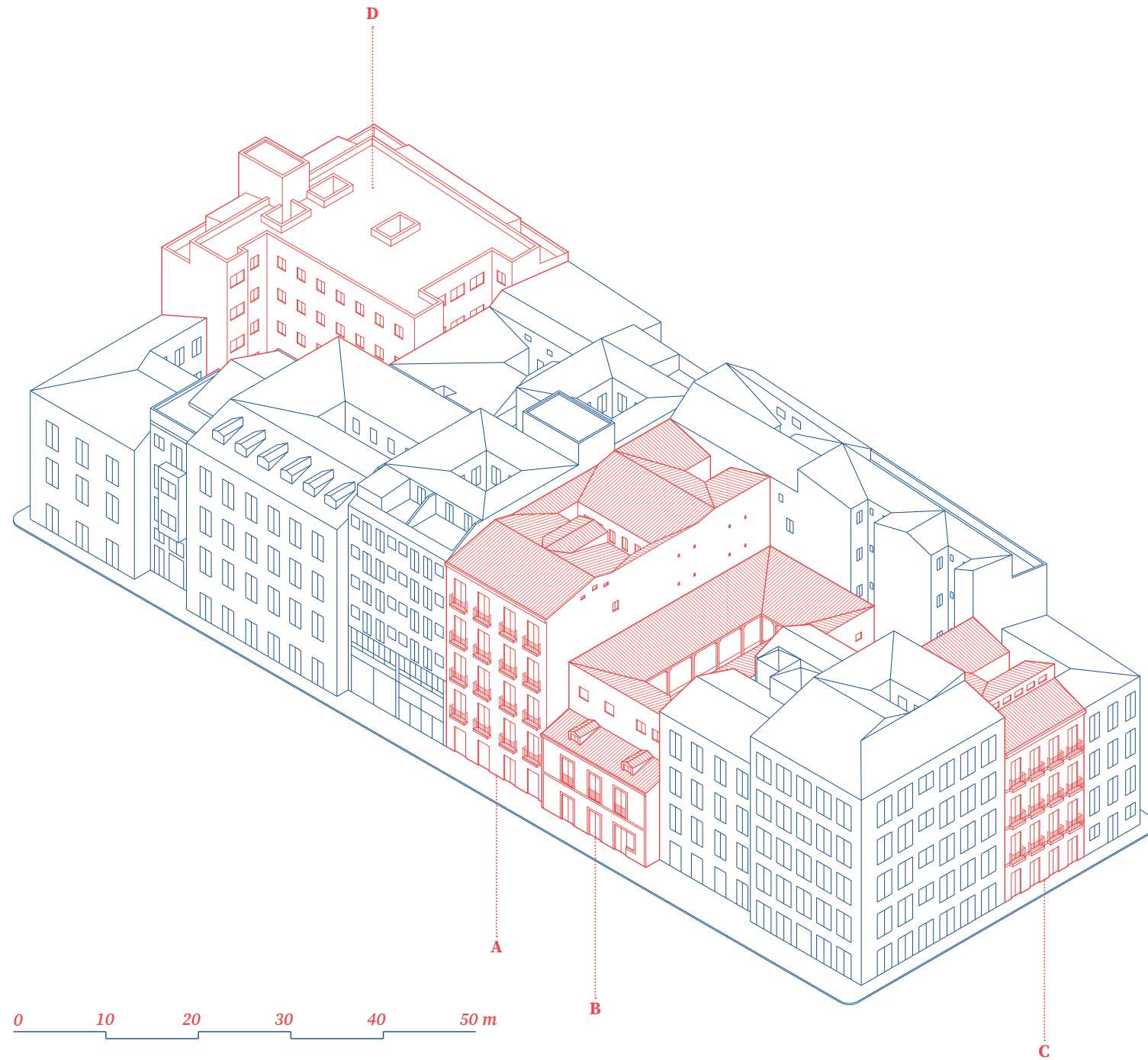
³⁶ "Censo de Edificios".
INE, Madrid, 2001.

From the urban analysis it emerged that in the area of Lavapiés four main housing typologies can be detected. The first two typologies emerged from the densification process already mentioned, while the third and fourth are mainly related to the interior distribution and the period of construction. After selecting a standard block, for the purpose of the analysis, the individual typologies have been classified according to the letters *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*.

The selected block has a rectangular shape, in which the long side measures about 100 m.⁽²⁴⁾ Moreover, in full line with the topography of the entire neighbourhood, on the long side there is a difference in height of about 9 m. A further feature of the blocks in this area is that they present a strong aesthetic unity in the façade, which makes it very difficult to understand the typological characteristics of the building, recognizable only inside.



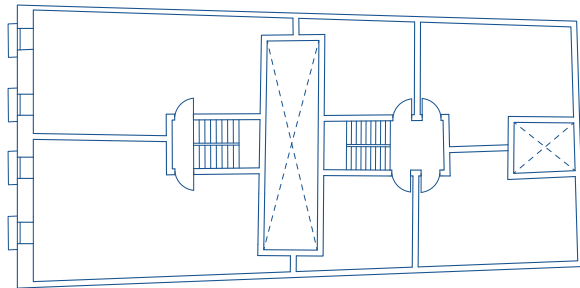
Plaza Augustin Lara - 2018
//
Typical buildings in Lavapiés - 2018



(24)

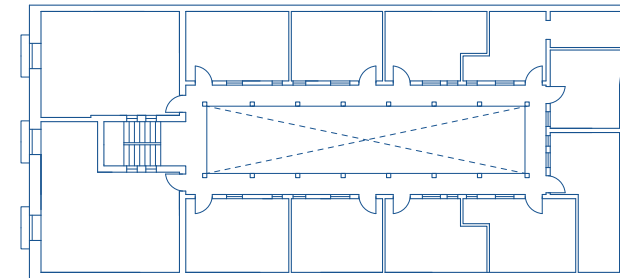
· A

This typology has the addition of an internal body that extends up to the limit of the plot, having a shaft that usually does not exceed 10-12 m². The peculiarity of these buildings lies in the fact that the internal body, with its independent vertical distribution, is added after the construction of the building facing the street. In this way a larger central courtyard is obtained, which is mainly used for the main housing units, while the interior units, often classified as *infraivienda*, can only count on the smallest shaft. At last, the additional staircase is independent, so as to create a clear social division between external and internal units. The year of construction is very often attributable to before 1900 or to the first decades of the XX Century.



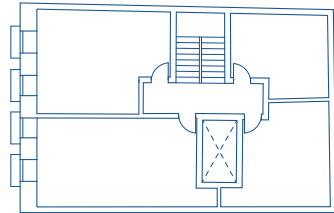
· B

Symbol of Madrid tradition, the so-called *Corrala* is a residential typology very extensive in the neighborhood and characterized by the presence of a shared central courtyard and the gallery. The first of these elements allows lighting and ventilation, while the latter allows access to housing units having a very small surface area. Even under the aesthetic aspect, this typology has a series of recurring elements that make the *Corrala* a consolidated typology. The year of construction is more attributable to before 1900, although there are reports of these buildings already around the XVII century.



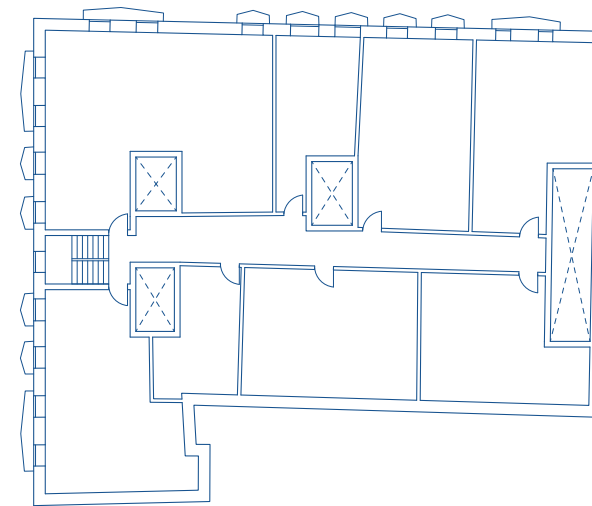
·C·

This category includes most of the residential buildings in the neighborhood. These collective housing is characterized in large part by the absence of large courtyards, and by the presence of a variable number of shafts useful for ventilation. In this case the vertical distribution takes place through a single staircase and an internal corridor. The year of construction of these buildings is mostly attributable to the early decades of 1900.



·D·

This residential typology mainly refers to all those buildings built since the 1950s. In this case it is about buildings with a larger surface than the average, which are often the result of a reconstruction. They may have one or more staircases, larger apartments and a larger number of shafts also useful for lighting as well as ventilation. They usually have facades that are proposed in continuity to the facades of the traditional buildings of the neighborhood.



3.3.3 The Corrala

As outlined in the previous section, among the housing typologies that characterize the Lavapiés urban fabric, the so-called *Corrala*³⁷ symbolize a peculiar typology of the traditional Madrid. But despite this, researches and publications on the subject are unusually scarce. The *Corrala* forms part of the Madrid tradition, so much so that it is very easy to encounter this typology in the famous *zarzuelas*,³⁸ in the costumbrist literature, or in the Spanish neorealist cinema. These are among the only sources using which now it is possible to understand the dynamics and the changes of this peculiar typology.

Furthermore, in 1977 the multi-disciplinary *Equipo 4i* developed a project called *Las Corralas de Madrid*, in which more than 400 buildings have been studied, getting relevant data about the degree of habitability of these dwellings, in addition to sociological data about the population that lived there.

The origin of this typology takes a variety of interpretations. From an architectural point of view, the main historical references concern the traditional Arab courtyard, within which there were the access doors of the houses. The Christian courtyard, which was similar to the ones existing into the Jewish quarters, was another important reference.

Lastly, many authors claim that the architectural configuration of the *Corrala* stems from the so-called corral de comedias of the XVI Century, a public theater set up in the courtyard of the dwellings. However, the *Corrala* is also the immediate consequence of a demographic growth. As a matter of fact, from an historical point of view, after the establishment of Madrid as capital of Spain in 1561, it became clear the lack of balance between the functional predictions that underpinned the idea of city, and the expectations aroused by the announcement of the new capital.

A strong immigration, drawn from all over the country, came to Madrid with the hope of living off the court, which employed at its service just a limited number of immigrants. The rest of them was forced to live as they could, by carrying out spontaneous and unusual kinds of trade. Despite this, the capital became more and more desirable, increasing the number of people living there. In this way, the area located at the south east border of the city was even more occupied by the immigrant population, which might take advantage of fields and workshops where to work. It is here that the residential density continued to grow up during the next centuries.

In 1625, the king Felipe IV built a wall all around the city, to prevent the movement of goods and people, but limiting the growth of the city. This decision led to a further overcrowding in addition to an increase in the price of the plots. Subsequently, due to the industrial revolution, the strong presence of industries in the southern area of Madrid led to an additional immigration flow. In conclusion, the great number of people, coupled with the reduced space of the dwellings led to the conclusive development of the *Corrala*, which as will be discussed further, is the result of a plot densification (Sanz, 1979 ; Otero, 1975).

As can be easily seen in the *Teixeira Plan* of 1656, the first housing units located in the today's Embajadores neighborhood did not have a closed courtyard, but rather a backyard, thus maintaining two facades. A more private one facing the backyard and the other one facing the street. As previously highlighted, with the increasing number of immigrants, the owners started to build in the empty surface of the plots. As the diagrams show, the first additions took place around the backyard, on one side or in both. (25)

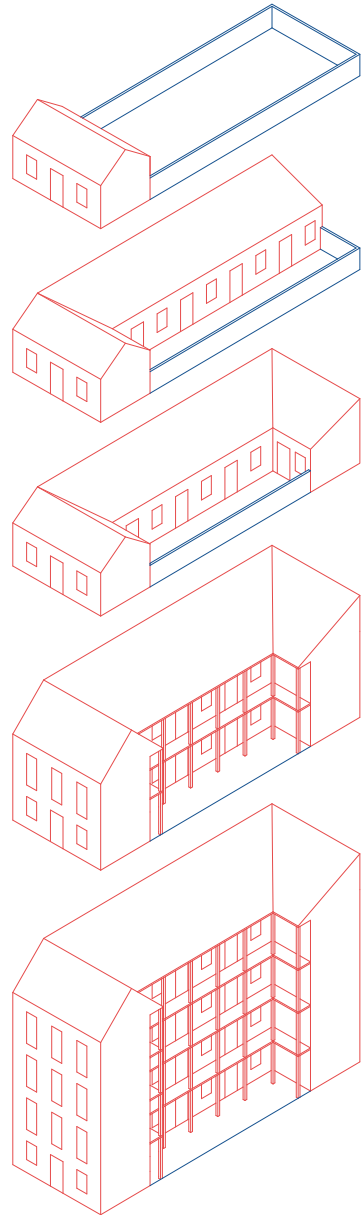
This action converts the backyard in a communal courtyard that provides access to the tiny housing units.

Therefore, the subsequent densification of the plot takes

³⁷ This housing typology is often called in Spanish "casa de corredor" or "patios de vecinos".

³⁸ The *zarzuela* is a Spanish lyric-dramatic genre that alternates between spoken and sung scenes, the latter incorporating operatic and popular song, as well as dance.

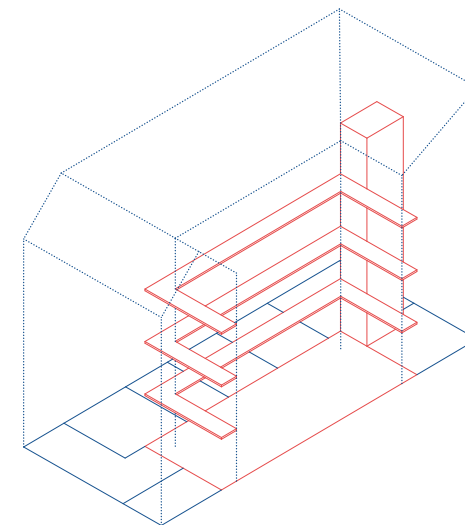
place in height. Through this action the number of floors considerably increases, keeping or in some cases reducing the dimensions of the courtyard. (Santa Cruz, 2012)



(25)

By focusing the attention at the building scale, it is actually impossible to detect a Corrala from the facade. In fact, the strong division between the front face and the interior organization of the building is among the first aspect that call the attention. The interior space is where the recurring and distinctive features of this typology can be identified. Actually, the Corrala exists if there are three elements. The first one is the courtyard, the core space of the building where residents spend most of the time, especially hanging laundry or getting water from the fountain positioned in the center.

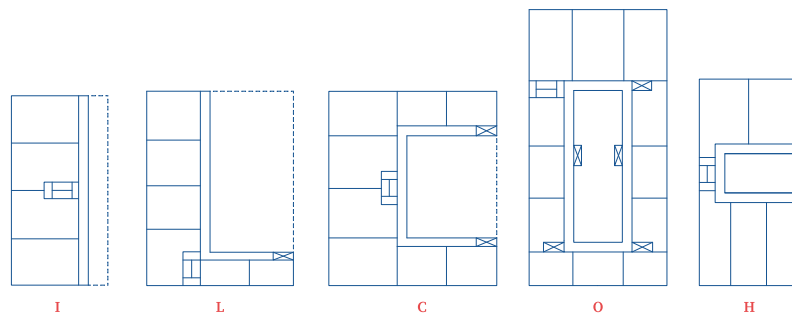
The second fundamental element is the gallery, which provides access to the housing units in addition to being the main source of light for the latter. Lastly, the staircase is the essential vertical axis that borders with the courtyard. It is often of reasonably generous dimension, besides having an iron railing that suggests more aesthetic attention compared to other building's details.



In close connection with the geometry of the plot, this residential typology presents a series of layout arrangements that refer to the location of the courtyard and the gallery. Existing studies have tried to classify five types of different layout, as follows:

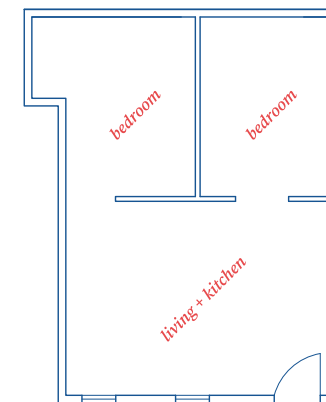
- I** - a single front that houses the gallery along its entire length.
- L** - two perpendicular fronts where the courtyard is closed by an adjacent building.
- C** - three fronts where the courtyard is bordered by an adjacent building.
- O** - four fronts forming a square or rectangular shaped courtyard.
- H** - two parallel fronts that house the gallery, some times communicated by a column of toilets.

In addition to these recurring types there are still a long series of layouts resulting from irregularly shaped plots, which are classified as "others". Besides, it can be affirmed that the most widespread layouts in the historical center of Madrid are "O" and "C", while all the others are present in lower percentages. (Sanz, 1979 ; Santa Cruz, 2012).



Furthermore, the location of the housing units within the plot is fundamental in order to understand the hierarchy. It is well known, in fact, that the units facing the street usually have a larger surface area, in addition to the presence in some cases of private toilets. As previously explained, the portion of the plot facing the street was built first, as well as a more valuable constructive category. Instead, all subsequent additions, resulted from densification, were of lesser architectural value, smaller and dedicated to the lower social classes.

Going down to the domestic scale, the housing units may have three or four rooms and a maximum surface of 22m². Today, however, most of the units are completely rehabilitated and have a private bathroom, but until the 1980s this was not a prerogative.



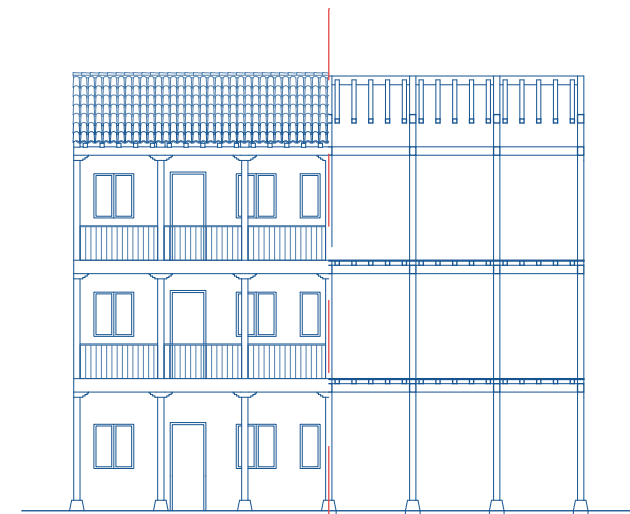
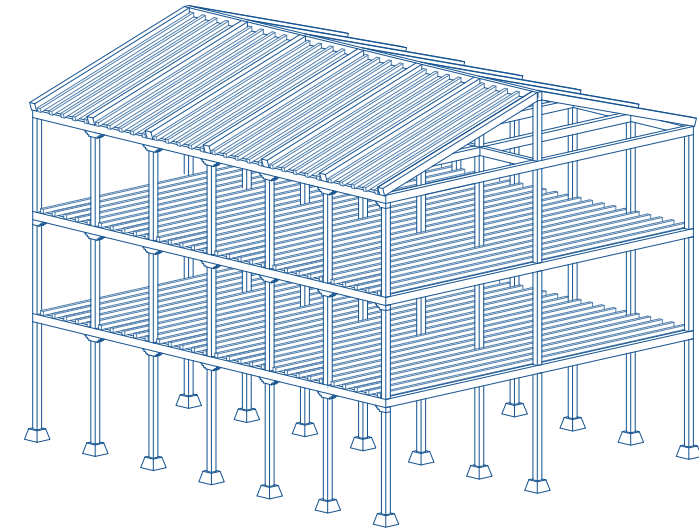
In the past, inside the units there were no doors, but only curtains, while the only form of ventilation were the windows overlooking the gallery. The interiors were extremely simple, reflecting the economic and social level of the tenants. The bedrooms, for obvious reasons, did not have windows and simply had a bed and a wardrobe. The dining room included a small kitchen with a sink and a stove to cook with, while running water did not exist so tenants used to take water from the fountain located in the center of the courtyard.

Nowadays, the rehabilitation has led to a general improvement of the housing units conditions, although the phenomenon of the so-called *mini-piso*³⁹ continues to exist.

The densification which was previously mentioned has clearly led to an extreme use of any available square meter, not surprisingly one of the most commonly used space was the attic, obtained in the resulting space between the roof and top floor and usually consisted of a single room or at most two.

These spaces as well as being dedicated to the last ones, those who could not afford rent in a housing unit facing the gallery, were also dedicated to the doorman who was in charge of the management and maintenance of the entire building. Other times then, the doorman could also live under the staircase.

In conclusion, to complete the architectural analysis of this residential typology, it is important to list the constructive elements that characterize it. The structure was always made of wooden pillars with brick plugging, cheap materials easy to destroy in case of fire. The wooden pillars are always placed on a stone truncated pyramid base, while on top they support wooden pieces commonly called *zapatas*. These elements are always present in the traditional buildings of the historic center of Madrid, but in the case of *Corralas* they are clearly visible and often decorated or painted. (Ibidem)



³⁹ *Mini piso* refers to housing units with surfaces often less than 15m² and without a private bathroom

Up to now, all the architectural features that make the *Corrala* a consolidated residential typology have been listed. Well, this typology is not exclusively representative at an architectural level, but can be considered a very interesting social cross section in the heart of Madrid. In fact, as previously mentioned, the history of the Lavapiés district, where is the largest number of *Corralas*, is strongly characterized by its geographic and social marginality. A key historical framework to better understand the sociological dynamics within the *Corrala*.

The living conditions in this collective housing have been repeatedly described in a complete and detailed manner in 19th Century literature and in Spanish neorealist cinema. In the most important work of the novelist Benito Perez Galdos, entitled *Fortunata and Jacinta: two stories of married women*, the two protagonists enter a *Corrala* thanks to a simple change of atmosphere, from the bright streets of Lavapiés to the dark and blighted inner courtyard. It is precisely here that the meticulous description of the living space begins. A rectangular patio and two rows of galleries, from which the strings used to dry clothes depart.

Galleries were occupied by any kind of object, such as braziers, mats and jugs of water. Walking along the balcony allowed to look inside the units, where small kitchens and stoves occupied the entrance of the houses, from which came voices and shouts of all kinds. In many cases, homes were not only a place to live but also a workplace for shoemakers and tailors. Lastly, the writer describes another *corrala*, directly connected to the first and with an even more miserable courtyard. This was the real underworld, where life becomes a daily struggle for survival in which the threshold domesticity is absent (Jalon, 2016).

Many years later, in the previously mentioned neorealist movie *Surcos*, the director highlights the living conditions in a *Corrala* of the Lavapiés district.

In this case the *Corrala* is an extremely unpleasant space

where women shout from one gallery to another, children are like a mad swarm, while men often fight and argue. However, it must be said that although the living conditions express a strong social disparity in all respects, this typology is often conceived as a friendly and supportive place, in which tenants see the courtyard just like the square of the rural country of origin.



Corrala in Calle Espino 6 - 1975

In the common imaginary, the *Corrala* has become a proper condenser of experiences and life stories, in which privacy is not an option. The lack of privacy and intimacy can be seen as one of the main issues of life in the *Corrala* during XIX and part of XX Century.



Gallery of a Corrala in Calle Espino 6 - 1975

The courtyard and the galleries are actually semi-public spaces, although there are quite singular dynamics of space appropriation. Starting from the courtyard, this is conceived not only as a semi-public place for meeting, passing, and playing, but also as the place where objects and work tools are set aside by tenants. The courtyard is also a space devoted to folkloric performances, when at different times of the year, on the occasion of religious festivals or weddings, music and dance celebration called *verbenas* are organized in this space, adorned for the occasion.

The gallery, however, is the space in which tenants speak, discuss and hang up the clothes. Even here space appropriation dynamics can be identified, since each portion of the walkway on the entry of a house automatically becomes "owned" by the tenant who usually occupies it with objects or embellishes it as he wishes. Moreover, in relation to the aesthetic aspect of this small space, the degree of misery or relative approval of the family could often be classified. Lastly, the interior space of the houses also turns itself into a space that was not totally private. The visual insulation was mainly due to the curtains, while the main door of the house was often left open. So, given the little space and the large amount of people in each house (from three to six), any voice, personal issue or disagreement was heard by all the neighbors (Sanz, 1979 ; Otero, 1975).

Ultimately, the Corrala is certainly the most interesting type of housing in Lavapiés, both for the architectural and the sociological aspect. There are numerous reasons that led to the birth and evolution of this specific typology of collective housing, such as the scarcity of buildable area, the immigration and the lack of regulation concerning habitability conditions. Furthermore, aspects such as solidarity and sharing have strongly characterized the social base of neighbourhood communities, in which the developed

model of coexistence was directly imported from the rural areas of origin. This social model has materialized thanks to the specific architectural composition of the building, such as the presence of one or more shared courtyards on which the housing units face. To conclude, the adoption of the Corrala typology has been the housing solution to an urban fabric composed of blocks with narrow and deep plots, where the horizontal and vertical densification process became fundamental (Santa Cruz, 2012). ♦



Corrala in Calle Meson de Paredes - 1952

3.3.4 Socio-spatial consequences of Airbnb in Lavapiés

To celebrate its 50th anniversary, the magazine Time Out set out to find the fifty coolest areas of the most vibrant cities in the world. In the first place there is Embajadores in Madrid, the world's coolest neighbourhood right now.⁴⁰ The reasons for the choice, once again, are closely linked to the cultural and artistic offer of a neighbourhood marked by a strong multiculturalism. Some say that labeling a neighborhood as 'cool' means increasing the symbolic value of the same, which becomes increasingly attractive to property speculation and visitors, overshadowing the real living conditions of citizens.⁴¹

Although this news may seem pleasant, given the conditions of the neighbourhood exposed above, one wonders if this is not just a label that somehow hides the complexity of Lavapiés.

It is indeed true that in the last year the newspapers publish news concerning real estate speculation (new speculative bubble), tourist apartments (Airbnb), evictions, and gentrification, whether traditional or linked to tourism. According to Albert Arias-Sans, the marketing of a certain area of the city becomes fundamental in order to direct the tourist flows and locate a certain type of consumption. The reasons for which people choose to stay or attend a particular neighbourhood, in fact, are not only fueled by economic convenience, but also by the existence of an offer of leisure, events, images, or brands of the territory that can feed very precise expectations and practices (Arias-Sans, 2018). What happens to Lavapiés is quite in line with the last consideration, as the neighborhood is actually advertised in relation to its authenticity, culture, nightlife and its historical appeal.

Today, the debate on Lavapiés has taken on a certain weight, not only for public opinion but also for the city government, which has actually launched a special plan that

⁴⁰ El País. "Lavapiés se hace con el título de barrio más 'cool' del mundo". *El País*, 2018.

⁴¹ Jesus ruiz Mantilla and Javier Gil. "Luces y sombras en Lavapiés". *El País*, 2018.

will try to counter the Airbnb effect in the inner-city. As already highlighted in *Chapter 2*, Airbnb's impact on cities can generate noteworthy economic, social and spatial consequences. What is happening in the area of Lavapiés does not differ much from what has happened in many neighborhoods of the major European cities, except for the fact that the context of this area turns out to be peculiar.



Tourists in Lavapiés - 2018

As it has been highlighted in the *Madrid Airbnb Report* (Paragraph 3.2), the data relating to Airbnb in the *Distrito Centro*, illustrate a strong presence of Airbnb listings, mostly entire apartments and located in large quantities in the Embajadores neighbourhood. Whilst a certain percentage of dwellings in Lavapiés is used as Airbnb, on the other hand, the widespread presence of so-called "multi-owners" is a real problem for the neighborhood. According to the data, 11% of the multi-owners control 40% of the Airbnb market in the entire city and especially in the center. This suggests that many of them can offer apartments in the Lavapiés area. As already mentioned above, the phenomenon of the multi-owners demonstrates the professionalization of the collaborative consumption, through the application of a traditional economic model on a sharing economy platform. At this point, the question that some authors are asking is: how many houses have been extracted from the traditional rental market and have been converted to Airbnb? (Sequera and Gil, 2018). It is clearly difficult to give an exact answer to this, according to Gil, the potential number of houses subtracted from the traditional rental market is around 6000 (Ibidem, 2018). A significant number, considering that in addition to this, in the neighborhood of Embajadores, as well as in the rest of the district, in recent years the property value has grown brutally and with it also the price of rents. According to the data, in fact, in the city of Madrid the price of rents in the last year grew by 7.9%, and by 39.1% from 2014 to date.⁴²

Given the absence of a rent-control policy by the local government, in the Lavapiés area, there are often eviction actions against the historic inhabitants that can not deal with the sudden increase of rents. One of the most striking cases concerns the building of Calle Argumosa 11, entirely owned by a single family that until last year had collected the rent of all the tenants. For some months, however, a real estate company has bought the building, composed

⁴² Gloria Rodríguez-Pina. "Los madrileños pagan de media 700 euros de alquiler, 110 más que los que tienen hipoteca". *El País*, 2018.

⁴³ Alfonso Congostrina. "Barcelona compra tres fincas para evitar que expulsen a los vecinos". *El País*, 2017.

mostly of tenants with low purchasing power,⁴³ who are now forced to suffer an eviction. The only alternative to staying at home would be to pay a rent of 1700 € instead of the usual 400 €. The immediate response to this has been the resistance of the tenants, supported by neighborhood associations, which were positioned in front of the building door in peaceful opposition to the police avoiding for the fifth time the eviction.



Protests of the tenants of Calle Argumosa 11 - 2018

In the opinion of many, the goal of the new property would be to evict, to rehabilitate and make tourist apartments or homes for people with a higher purchasing power. Among the will of the committees deployed in defense of the tenants of Argumosa 11, there is also that of asking the city council, after having pledged to guarantee the right to housing in the city, to expropriate the building to put it back on the market as a social housing, therefore with controlled rent. The action would be similar to that carried out by the Barcelona city council, which has recently acquired, in an extraordinary form, three buildings that were located in Ciutat Vella, one of the areas of the city characterized by a strong residential demand and an intense speculative pressure.⁴⁴

The presence of multi-owners in the district is then testified by the fact that the neighborhood association *Lavapiés ¿donde vas?* has made public, as an act of opposition, a list of buildings occupied entirely or in part, by tourist apartments advertised through Airbnb. Among the listed companies that ran the apartments, there was Friendly Rentals Madrid, which is part of that very small percentage of owners who own more than 100 apartments in Madrid. And as if that were not enough, it turns out that behind this professional company there is an international hotel chain named Wyndham Worldwide. As argued by Yrigoy, the big hotel chains, in addition to following the trading of tourist services, invest capital in the real estate market. They resort to investment funds in order to reinvigorate the financial situation, in a widespread strategy known as *asset light* (Yrigoy, 2016). This situation testifies the presence in the Airbnb market of investment companies, commonly called in Spanish "fondos buitres", which tend to carry out speculative practices, thanks to the legislative limbo in which Airbnb is located.

The attractiveness of the investment in short-term rentals is then proved by the fact that, as already highlighted in

⁴⁴ Carlota Barcala. "Argumosa, 11: víctimas del «boom» de los pisos turísticos". *ABC*, 2018.

the Madrid Airbnb Report, the minimum profitability of the tourist apartments advertised through Airbnb in Embajadores is double or triple compared to that relating to traditional rents.

The data show that since long time, the neighbourhood has become fertile ground for real estate speculation. Surely it would be wrong to conceive Airbnb as the only responsible for the increase in rents and the real estate speculation processes. In fact, we must not forget that the current conditions are the result of the ten-year policies of rehabilitation and revitalization of the neighbourhood, which have favored real estate market speculation. But what strongly characterizes the Airbnb Effect in Lavapiés is the social impact generated, that is a strong network of antagonism and resistance promoted by neighborhood associations and individual citizens, who have always represented one of the souls of this neighborhood. The role of associations and committees should not be underestimated, as, at least in the specific case of Lavapiés, it can generate alternative trends that can reveal the negative aspects of certain neoliberal policies applied in the neighborhood (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010).

One of the associations which has stood up against the "touristification" of the neighbourhood was *Lavapiés ¿dónde vas?*. Born in 2016, is a common space in which to share concerns and initiatives concerning the neighborhood and in particular the impact of tourist apartments on its.

In the last two years the association has carried out, on the one hand, the drafting of reports about the living conditions in the neighborhood, and on the other, the staging events and demonstrations designed to raise awareness among the inhabitants of the neighborhood about the problems diagnosed. Among the demonstrations, which often take on an ironic character, it is possible to find the so-called *destierro de la vecina*, celebrated during the carnival and which represents the funeral procession of "a

neighbor who goes to live in another district". Or again, the "demonstration for the rights of the tourist", in which some inhabitants dressed as tourists with suitcases clamored that the whole neighborhood would adapt to their needs, and not vice versa. In addition to this, during 2017 a series of concrete proposals were elaborated by the association in order to contain the Airbnb effect.



"Demonstration for the rights of the tourist" - 2018

On the one hand there was a line of action that involved the elaboration of specific containment policies that would then had to be submitted to the municipality, and on the other a more marked line on self-organization in order to make decisions directly within the neighborhood. In this context, one of the strongest actions was the publication of a list of buildings in which several multi-owners advertised tourist apartments. Actually this initiative had a considerable media resonance.



"Demonstration for the rights of the tourist" - 2018

Further action was the proposal of a tourist moratorium of the *Distrito Centro*, published on a platform of citizen participation promoted by the City Hall. This legal act proposes the elaboration of a set of rules for the tourism in the city (PEOT), and a stop in the granting of tourist licenses to new apartments and hotels (Sequera and Gil, 2018).

In conjunction with this, the Madrid city council has also begun to consider the impact of Airbnb on the city, announcing in May 2018 a restrictive measure that will hit more than 90% of the existing listings.⁴⁵

Approved in July 2018, the so-called *Plan Especial de Regulación del Uso de Hospedaje* was created with a view to preserving residential use, slowing down the tendency to transform housing stock into tourist apartments. In addition to this, through this plan, the city council also aims to redistribute tourist hospitality in other areas of the city, in order to unload the city center. This last step has indeed generated doubts, mainly because of the strong proximity to the *Distrito Centro* of some neighbourhoods that could suffer the Airbnb effect in the future. Regarding the measures of the plan, it is extremely restrictive, in fact all the entire apartments or houses that are rented for tourism for more than 90 days a year must request a special tourist license. Furthermore, these apartments must have an independent access by road, otherwise declared illegal. Finally, the moratorium on tourist licenses for one year was also approved and can be extended to two.

Although it seems that both the municipality and the citizens are developing containment policies on the one hand and forms of resistance on the other, we can not fail to state, as some authors do, that the Lavapiés area is experiencing a process of tourist gentrification (Cabrerizo et al., 2017). Among the few scholar who tried to theorize the tourism gentrification there is Gotham, who claims that “*this is a heuristic device to explain the transformation of a middle-class*

⁴⁵ Fatima Caballero. "La mayoría de viviendas turísticas en Madrid serán ilegales con la nueva normativa del Ayuntamiento". *ElDiario.es*, 2018.

neighbourhood into a relatively affluent and exclusive enclave marked by a proliferation of corporate entertainment and tourism venues” (Gotham, 2005, 1102). What is highlighted in this case is the condition of the territory as a consumer good. Another interesting position is that of Albert Arias-Sans, who argues instead that we can start talking about a process of global gentrification. From the point of view of demand in fact, gentrification can no longer be understood as a simple change in the preferences of residents, but responds to the demands of a global consumer, the tourist, who does not live in the city permanently. On the supply side rather, urban transformations and property speculation are driven by the rent gap theory. Furthermore the relationship between urban tourism and tourist gentrification turns out to be also relevant. In fact, the urban tourist is no longer just a passive observer of scenarios, but an individual who tries to participate in the life of the neighborhood, producing the city day by day, together with the residents who already develop their socio-spatial practices (Arias-Sans, 2018).

Furthermore, it can be added that, as Gotham sustains, tourism gentrification brings together the processes of "globalization" and "localization". On the one hand, tourism is a 'global' industry, dominated by the hospitality and tourism services sector, which generate jobs and money. On the other hand, tourism is also a 'local' industry, characterized by grassroots cultural production, tourism commodities and localized consumption of place (Gotham, 2005).

Ultimately, if the traditional gentrification process foresees a potential displacement of the original population in exchange for one with a greater purchasing power, in the case of tourism gentrification the substitution can take place in exchange for temporary and floating people, fleeting consumers who require specific goods and services (Mansilla, 2018).

In the specific case of Lavapiés, as claimed by Cabrerizo

and Sequera, the data on the foreign population in the district express a certain relevance. According to the data, in fact, the percentage of foreigners coming from poor countries has fallen dramatically in a decade, from 29.98% in 2006 to 11.79% in 2016. Similarly, just in 2016 there has been a significant increase in the percentage of foreigners from rich countries like the US, UK and France, demonstrating at least in part a possible replacement (Cabrerizo et al., 2017).

In addition, the already mentioned increase in the selling price of properties per m² is observed, as well as a slight change in the commercial pattern of the neighbourhood. Furthermore, according to some authors it seems that the concentration of cultural and tourist services within a strategic area of the city center can strengthen the construction of a "culture-place", in which to establish the creative class. At this point, even authenticity can become an added value that can add cultural content to a territory (Sequera and Nofre, 2018).

In this case we can speak of a sort of branding of the district in order to attract a certain type of population, even if only temporary, like tourists.

It is therefore clear how tourism, and in particular the tourist apartments, collide with the everyday life of the neighborhood, creating conflict. Quoting Sequera and Nofre, *“mass tourism collides with opposing forms of everyday life space uses, as an intangible force that disposes symbolically and materially, eradicating unwanted presence or social practices”* (Ibidem, 2018, 7).

And it is precisely the space of the neighbourhood and its use that is renegotiated according to new logic. So far there has been talk about what are the social and economic consequences of Airbnb, such as real estate speculation dynamics and citizen discontent, which can be more related to the neighbourhood macro scale.

By restricting the analysis of the phenomenon to the build-

ing scale, however, it is possible to identify a series of practices that summarize the relevance of the spatial impact of Airbnb on the Lavapiés urban fabric. The practices that will be outlined below both have to do with maximizing the profit gained from the available, often minimal, space.

One of these is the growing trend of buying small empty commercial premises located at the street-level, to then transform their use from commercial to residential and insert them into the market.

According to some experts in the field of real estate, this practice is experiencing a certain increase, especially in Madrid city center, since buying a space like this costs about 50% less than a normal house, and once transformed its profitability can become by far positive. It is therefore clear that while this trend could be aimed at young families, or professionals who can use the home as an office, on the other hand it certainly favors the investments directed at short-term rentals.

As a demonstration of this growing trend, according to municipality data, 16 transformations of use have been carried out in Madrid city center in 2014, while 72 have been reported in 2017. Although in relative terms there is not a significant incidence, surely the data show a growing trend. In fact, there are several Airbnb apartments located at street level or in the basements of Lavapiés, which will be studied in depth in *Chapter 4*. Lastly, it should be added that the trend arises from the fact that thanks to a proximity trade that seems to be decreasing, smaller commercial premises are increasingly less frequented than in the past. On the contrary, larger commercial premises are preferred.⁴⁶

The next consideration to make regarding the use of space is related to most of the remaining Airbnb listings in the neighbourhood. But first, an important premise regarding the gentrification process occurring in Lavapiés needs to be done. According to several scholars, and as has been previously written, the gentrification process in the area is

somewhat slowed or better crystallized than other neighbourhoods in the city. This seems to be due to a number of factors, such as the immigration that established a strong social and commercial network in the neighbourhood, and the presence of an antagonistic and resistant counterculture (Sequera and Nofre, 2018). But above all, as Garcia Perez argues, the strong density of the urban fabric, characterized by housing units with significantly lower surfaces than the rest of the city, shows that such a feature can in some way act as a brake to more aggressive urban transformation dynamics. (Garcia Perez, 2014). At this point, especially in relation to the last consideration, Garcia Perez refers to those small housing units (<20 m²), often in poor condition, in some cases classified as *infravivienda*, and occupied mostly by immigrants or people with scarce resources. It is clear that this type of housing units may be unattractive, as not very livable, for groups with greater purchasing power, the so-called *marginal gentrifiers* (Rose, 2014). On the contrary, however, in the eyes of tourists, the size or condition of these units makes no difference. In fact, given the competitive price, the Airbnb user will not have to live in the apartment, rather he will use it for a weekend or so. It is precisely here that the relevance of the spatial impact of Airbnb is assessed.

As shown by the data of the Madrid Airbnb Report in fact, the most widespread layout in the *Distrito Centro* is that of the studio flat composed of 1 room and 4 beds. The data also show that as the area of the apartment decreases, the potential profitability increases compared to that of the traditional rent. This means that the owners of tiny units, often attics or studio flats, prefer to remove the apartment from the traditional rental market to include it in the Airbnb market.

Precisely because the tourist is not a resident. The tourist is passing through, he can adapt to a temporary stay in conditions of reduced habitability, just like the immigrants of

⁴⁶ David F. Ferreiro. "Madrid: cierra un comercio, abre una vivienda". *ElDiario.es*, 2018.

the “pisos patera”, who are forced to live in that way permanently. Once again, Airbnb has shifted the balance without having placed a brick.

One can therefore conclude that in the specific case of Lavapiés, Airbnb represents in all respects an additional gentrification device, not a brake but a possible accelerator.

In conclusion, the situation that emerges in Lavapiés is characterized by the presence of various actors who in a certain way make the case in question specific.

The unique soul of the neighborhood, flooded with authenticity, marginality, activism, multiculturalism and art, mixed with the new patterns of tourist consumption of space dictated by Airbnb, has to face the complex interaction between the "right to the city" and an inclusive co-existence in a neighbourhood in conflict (Sequera and Gil, 2018). ♦

3.3.5 The impact of Airbnb on the Corrala

As has been seen before, the *Corrala* appears to be in some ways the most significant collective housing typology in the context of Madrid, and in particular of Lavapiés. A typology that has survived for nearly five centuries, hosting the stories of entire families. The *Corrala* has become like a theatrical setting in which particular ways of living have been transmitted through its walls.

The main goal of this section is to understand whether the presence of Airbnb apartments within this fragile typology can generate a contrast or a mutual adaptation. To do this it was agreed to read the evolution of the typology in three distinct phases. The first one, dating from the first half of 1900; the second one, relating to the 1980/90; the third, on the other hand, represents the current situation.

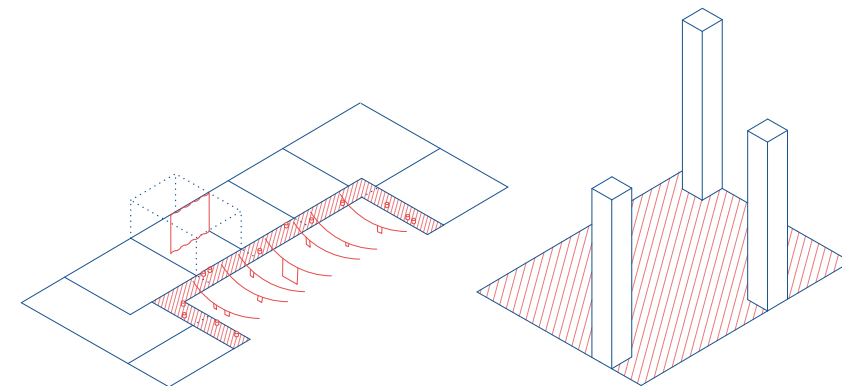
This evolutionary analysis will be structured on the representation in section of a typical *Corrala*, highlighting on one side the physical architectural transformations, and on the other the transformation in the use of both internal (private) and external (semi-public) spaces.

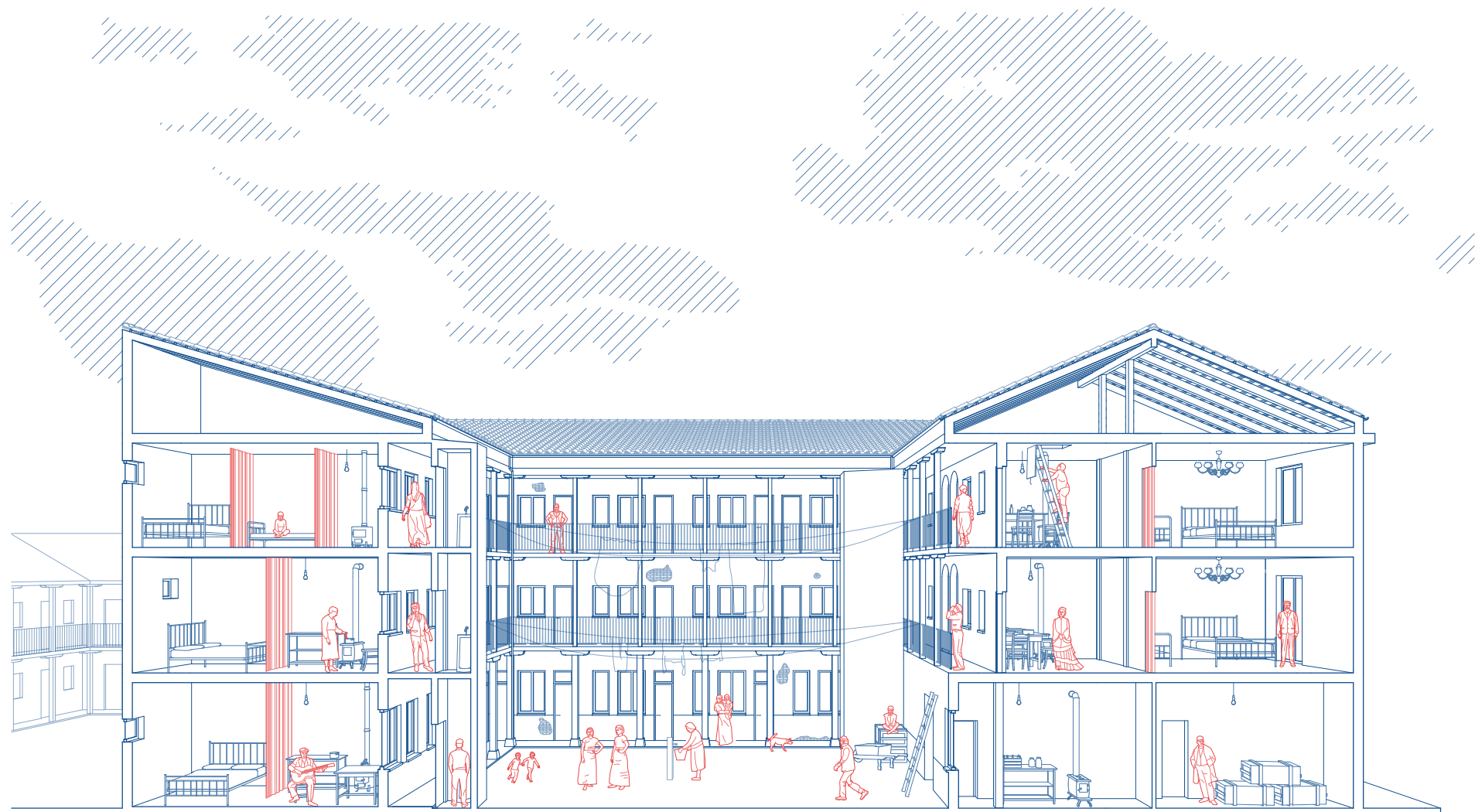
• Phase I (1900-1950)

The first phase, as already described above, is characterized by a strong population density, able to generate complicated living conditions, in addition to a real lack of maintenance of the building itself. Reading the space from inside to outside, the housing units take on very reduced surfaces, characterized by a single space, whose subdivision is often achieved through curtains, the only devices capable of guaranteeing, even if very weakly, a certain degree of privacy. The curtains divide the sleeping area from the living one, usually characterized by a small stove and a table where the whole family eats. In this case it is interesting to note how the part of the unit facing the galley act as semi-public side of the home, especially because doors and windows often remained open to allow ventilation. A slightly different situation occurs in the units facing the street, which envisage larger sizes and a slightly improved subdivision of the interior spaces, consisting of slender partitions, in which the doors are not always present. At last, there are the attics, often occupied or sub-rented to humble people. The small size of the housing units are crucial in order to read the external space, in fact, since many activities can not be carried out inside, the gallery and the courtyard become the most identifying spaces of the way of living of that period. Starting from the gallery, the latter was often occupied in the direction of housing units through the placement of objects or flowers, becoming a sort of private garden, where the privacy thresholds were actually invisible. In addition, the railings are used to tie the ropes on which to hang the clothes.

The gallery, therefore, is a space of relationship, in which the inhabitant passes between public and private, through more or less visible thresholds. Lastly, the gallery also leads to the columns of shared bathrooms, usually one or two per floor. In order to clean these common parts, the work was

assigned in turn to a family. A sign was usually attached to the door of the family that was on duty (100x100 *corralas*). Even the courtyard, as well as the gallery, is a semi-public space in which the most diverse activities were carried out. Primarily at the center of the latter, due to the lack of running water in the housing units, a fountain was always placed to collect water in buckets. The courtyard was also the playground of the many children, gathered in this space rather than in the gallery, a space characterized by private divisions that could have generated conflict. The courtyard was then used to accumulate large objects and work tools of those living in the *Corrala*. But above all, the courtyard was used for the organization of celebrations. Private events that could not be arranged in the scarcity of the domestic space, so they were organized outside, becoming in effect public events. Often these events, such as weddings, took on a greater scope, involving the entire population of *Corrala*, which also endeavored in the decoration of the common areas. Ultimately, the courtyard becomes actually a relational space, often idealized as the square of the rural village from which all the inhabitants came from. What stands out most of the *Corrala* in this phase is the almost total absence of privacy, together with the reduced size of living spaces, always overcrowded with people.





• Phase II (1980-1990)

In the second phase, there is a general transformation of the *Corrala* and its ways of living. The transformation is basically due to two factors, the public and private rehabilitation plans of the buildings, and the new socio-demographic composition of the tenants.

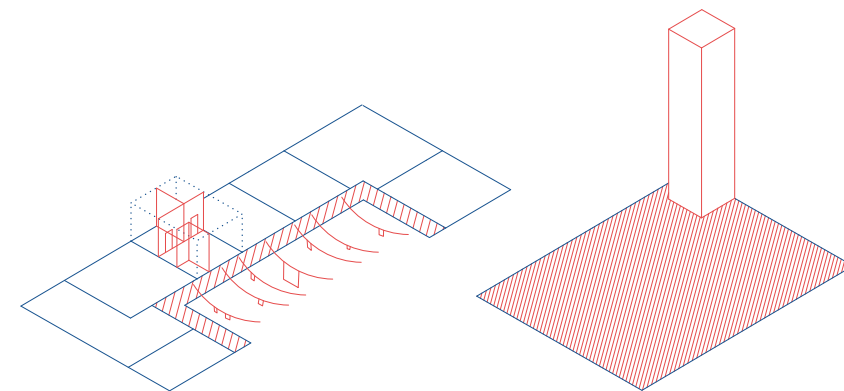
The rehabilitation of most of the *Corralas* in Lavapiés has led to a general improvement of the physical conditions of the buildings, but at the same time the living conditions have only partially improved. One of the main actions was the elimination of the columns of shared bathrooms in the courtyard, in order to install small bathrooms inside the individual housing units, which still remained rather small. In order to cope with the reduced surfaces, the owners of the upper floors often decide to exploit all the space at their disposal, building unauthorized stairs capable of making the attics livable. Some owners then, buying the adjacent apartments improved the square footage of their homes, increasing their value. In general, however, there is no real improvement in the liveability of the housing units, which often present forms of *infraivienda* or overcrowding. At last, when the courtyards were not too small, an elevator has been installed in the courtyard.

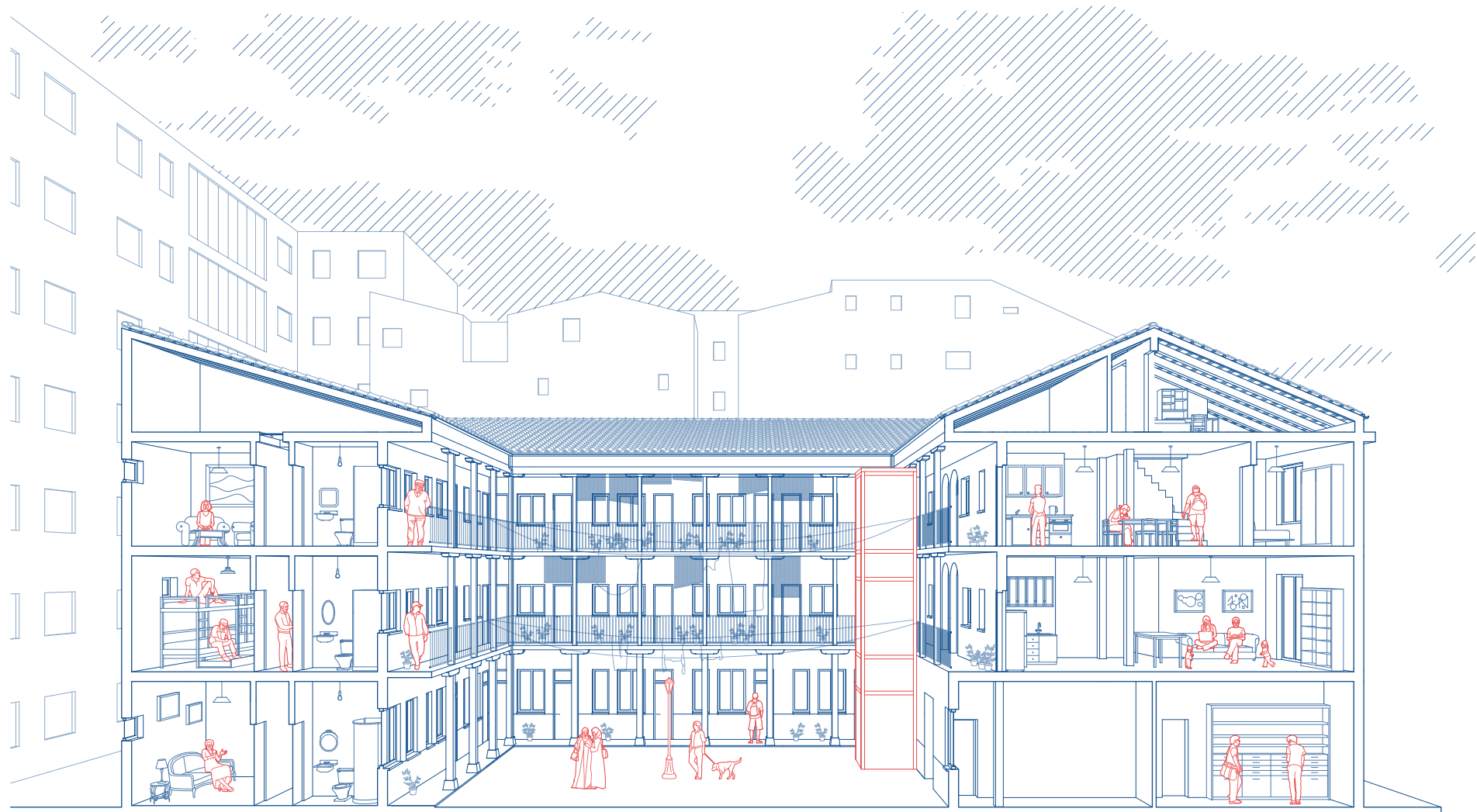
As has already been analyzed, the Lavapiés district in recent years has been the protagonist of a strong wave of migration coming from the poor countries of the world. In addition to this, in the neighborhood may be observed a first phase of gentrification promoted by the so-called *marginal gentrifiers*, mostly freelance professionals, who were looking to buy cheap apartments in *Distrito Centro*. Lavapiés has done their best by providing them with apartments of low real estate value and waiting to be rehabilitated, often located in the *Corralas*, at that moment stigmatized. All this generates a socio-demographic framework divided into: elderly residents belonging to rural immigration, foreign

immigrants, and marginal gentrifiers.

At this point, given the context, it is interesting to note some changes in the socio-spatial patterns of the *Corrala*. In this phase, in fact, the gallery and the courtyard begin to assume different degrees of privacy compared to the past. Starting from the first, on the one hand, those invisible thresholds of privacy generated by the occupation of the space due to the positioning of objects begin to fade, but at the same time it begins to outline a greater degree of privacy due to some unwritten rules of coexistence. These rules, for example, prohibit tenants from having conversations on the balcony in order not to disturb those who live inside the apartments. Likewise, it is absolutely forbidden to shout or speak from one balcony to another as was done in the past. Even the courtyard, a semi-public space, is now hardly used for events involving the entire population of the *Corrala*.

Ultimately, what we are witnessing at this stage is a general improvement of the physical conditions of the building and an increase in the degree of privacy. This latter consideration may be linked mainly to changes in the way of inhabiting the *corrala*, due to the socio-demographic variety within the typology.





• Phase III (2019)

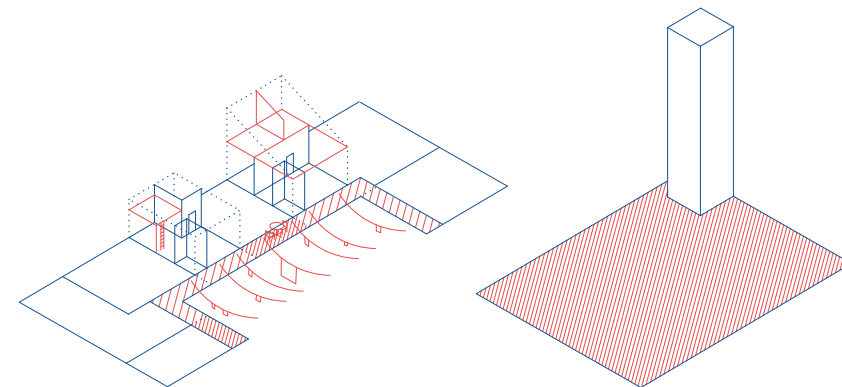
The last phase is that referable to today. The physical conditions of the *Corrala* remain very similar to those of the previous phase, while what changes are again the interior spaces of the housing units and the socio-spatial patterns. It is at this stage that we can precisely outline the impact of Airbnb on the *Corrala*. As it has been shown previously, in Lavapiés, the Airbnb apartments with a reduced surface tends to have a higher profitability, making sure that many owners convert their apartments into short-term rentals. In general, the interiors of many residential units are refurbished in such a way as to make them more attractive to the Airbnb market. Therefore, a general specialization of the home for the tourist function takes place, especially through a process of densification and optimization of space. This process is achieved through the definitive occupation of the attics, which become perfect for positioning a few extra beds. On the ground floor, on the other hand, there is often a lowering of the floor level in order to obtain greater height for the placement of a mezzanine. As a result, the presence of the Airbnb apartments has generated a series of consequences that can re-edit the socio-spatial patterns of this traditional typology. The arrival of a new floating population within an already fragile ecosystem, certainly contributes to a change in the quality of life of the permanent inhabitants. This is mainly due to the often improper use, by tourists, of both private spaces and semi-public spaces that characterize this typology. As evidenced by a recent article, many permanent inhabitants report the daily annoyance caused by the noise of moving furniture in the tourist apartments, the shouting at any time of day, and including the deterioration of the common spaces of the buildings.⁴⁷

As a result, in a typology such as the *Corrala*, characterized largely by common spaces, such problems can be even

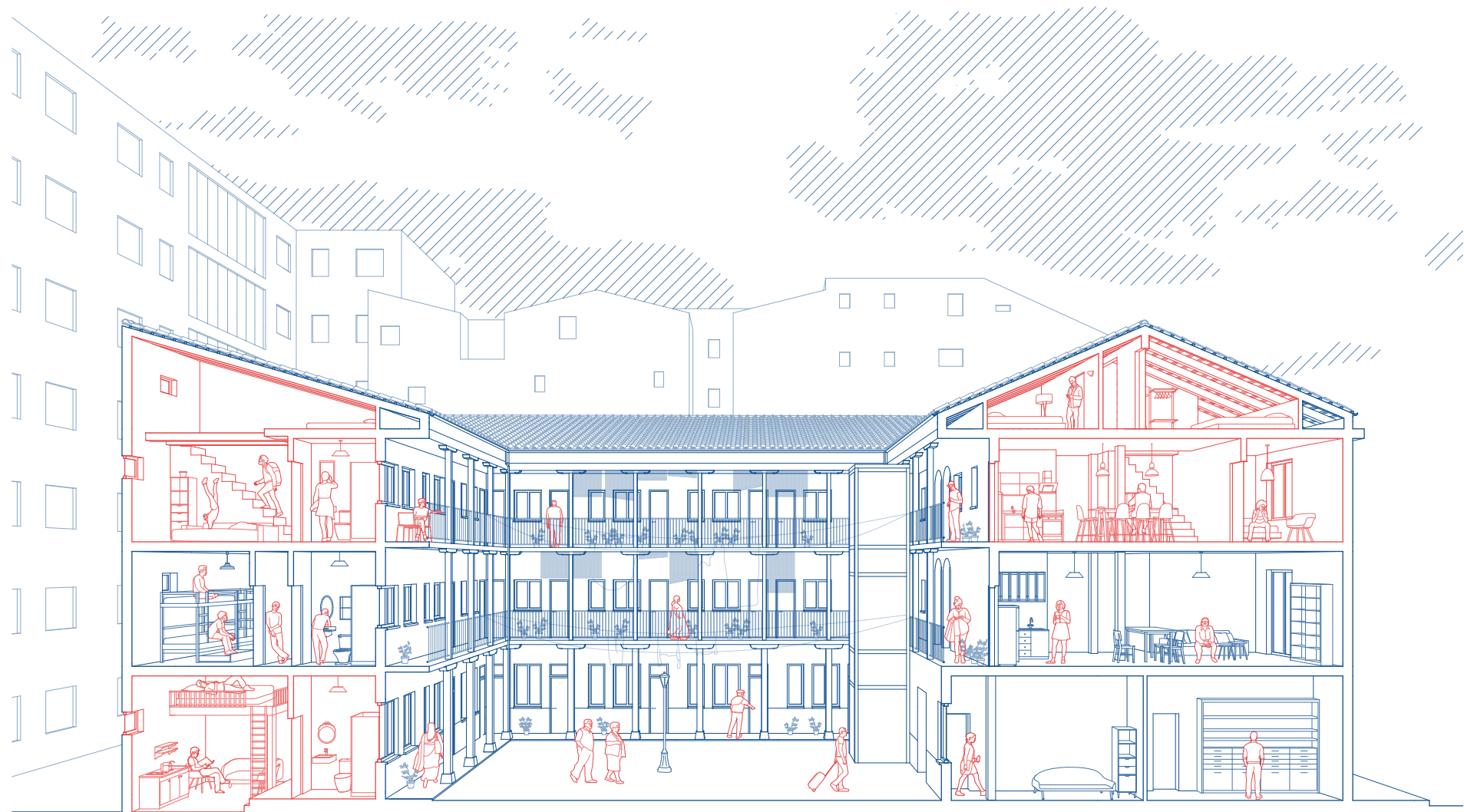
more emphasized.

The gallery is in fact very often occupied by the placement of tables and chairs in which tourists allocate, hindering the passage of the tenants.

Lastly, there are also some problems related to common security, due to the entry and exit of new people every day. Ultimately, in this phase there is a general transformation of the socio-spatial patterns of the *Corrala*, due not only to the physical transformation of some residential units, but also by the behaviour of many Airbnb users.



⁴⁷ Aytor Santos Moya. "Los pisos turísticos vacían el centro: solo 14 vecinos resisten en la plaza de Santa Ana". ABC, 2018.



Among the premises of this section we asked ourselves a question that has to do with the conflict or the reciprocal adaptation between Airbnb and the residential dimension of *Corrala*. From what has been observed so far, it appears that the inclusion of Airbnb on a traditional residential typology does not seem to generate complete integration. Although at the spatial level it is possible to witness a certain adaptation, this is however dictated by often unauthorized actions of densification and redistribution of the space, which can put at risk the constructive integrity of this protected building.

Another factor that stands out is the clear transformation of public/private patterns within the entire building. In fact, there is a fading of the privacy thresholds that had characterized the second phase. This is mainly due to a lack of knowledge of the rules of coexistence by Airbnb guests, who in most cases conceive the short-term rental as a moment of absolute leisure, making absolutely no case for the presence of permanent inhabitants. The latter is another reason that generates a strong hostility on the part of the tenants towards Airbnb.

Also in this case it can therefore be said that Airbnb is able to shift the balance without visible physical actions. ♦

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Chapter 4

The Airbnb apartment reader

The fourth chapter proposes an approximation to the domestic scale (S/XS) that goes from the apartment to the space devices. After the processing of a spatial analysis method, fifteen Airbnb apartments located in Lavapiés will be selected. The spatial descriptive analysis allows to make clear the dynamics that concur within the Airbnb apartments and the related recurring actions in space, understanding the spatial relations between rooms, as well as the choices of some hosts to use particular arrangements and devices.

4.1 Atlas of Airbnb homes

The selection of the case studies took place according to a primary classification based on the Airbnb type, namely private rooms and entire apartments. The shared rooms have been excluded from the selection, since according to the data previously analyzed they occupy only 1% of the listings in Lavapiés.

Every single case study is the result of a redrawing based on the photos from the Airbnb platform, which being protected by copyright can not be reproduced in this thesis. The drawings proposed in this section are therefore structured according to the respect of the proportions, in order to obtain a clear representation capable of giving spatial informations that are beyond the absolute technical precision.

4.1.1 The method of the reader

Establishing guidelines for the reading of Airbnb homes allows to make clear the spatial dynamics that compete in the domestic space. The proposed method does not pretend to be a complete guide for reading this type of space, given both the wide range of apartments announced through Airbnb, and the specificity of the study context.

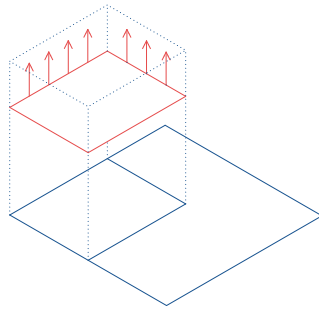
First of all, it is important to illustrate the representation method used for the selected case studies. Two types of representation will be used, the first is an isometric projection, intended to show the actions on the space and the related devices that allow such actions. The second is a floor plan, in which the public/private domain of the space will be highlighted.

Following are the three categories involved in the analysis of the apartments, which are distinguished by actions and relations in space and between spaces.

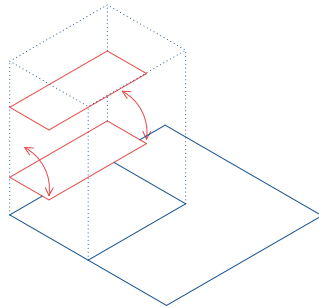
1) Actions in the space

Three actions that can redefine the existing domestic space have been identified.

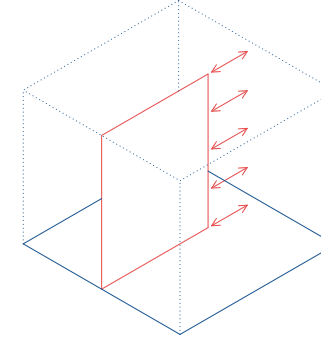
The first is defined *Densification*, and represents the action of making the space more dense, by adding surface without altering the room volume. This action is usually achieved through the use of mezzanines, or small multifunctional blocks.



The second is defined *Optimization*, and represents the action of making the best use of a space without altering the room surface. This action is usually achieved through the use of specific removable and folding furniture elements.



The third is defined *Fragmentation*, and represents the action of dividing the space into parts. This action is usually achieved thanks to the use of curtains or movable walls.



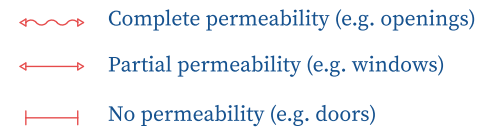
2) Domain of the space

This part of the analysis provides a focus upon the spatial relationships between rooms. The privacy gradient allows us to define the most accessible, social and displayed spaces from those most private, least accessible and unseen. The permeability of threshold explores how architectural elements can provide means of controlling accessibility and visibility into the home.

Hierarchy of the public/private domain



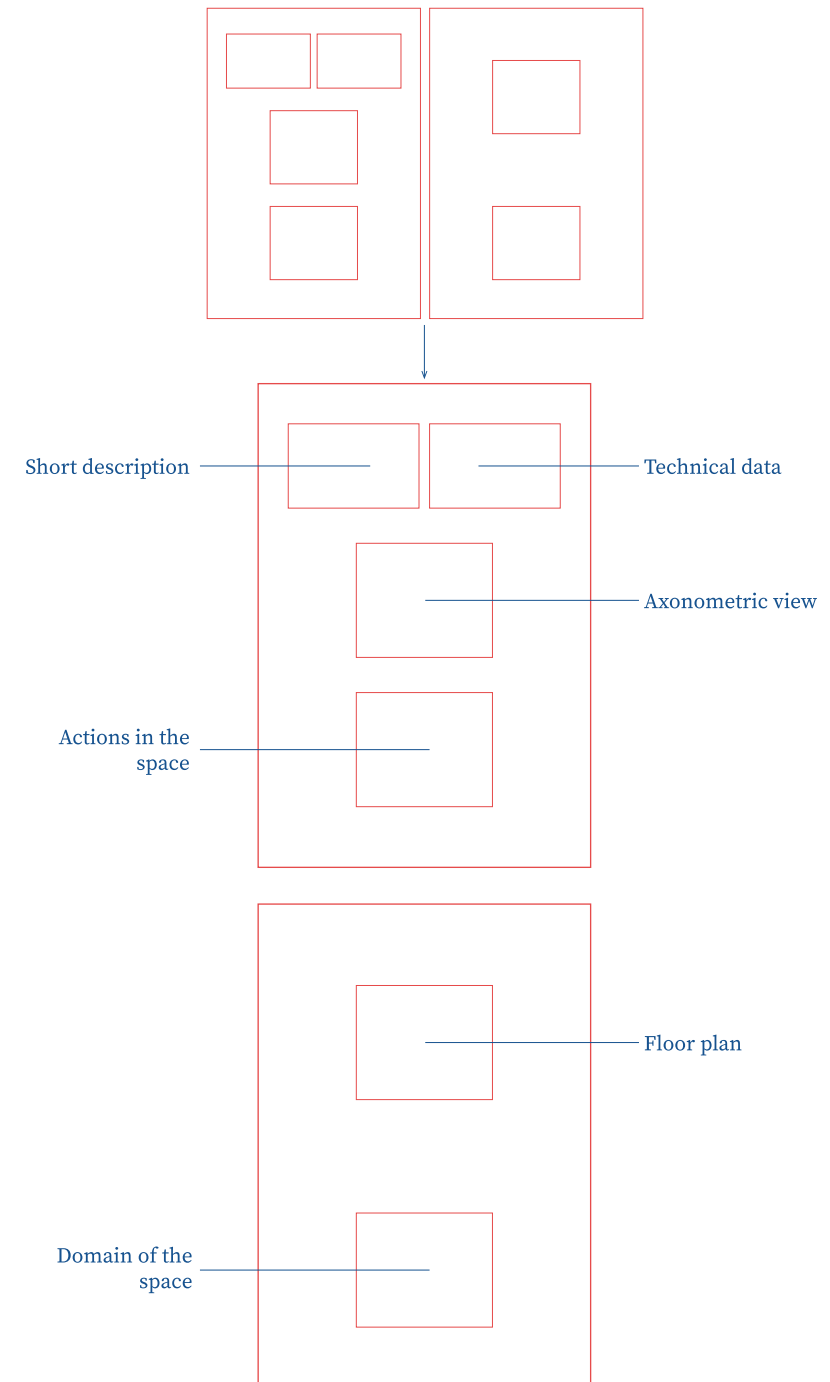
Permeability of threshold



3) Devices of the space

The third category aims to summarize the actions and relations described, through the representation of the key spatial devices in the last page of the chapter.

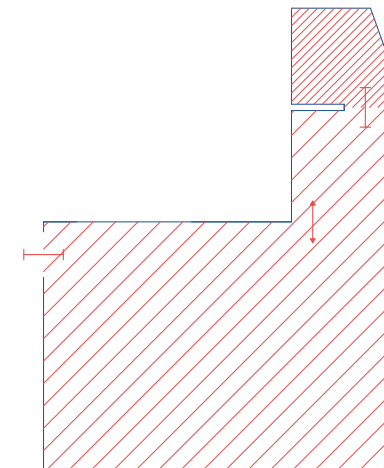
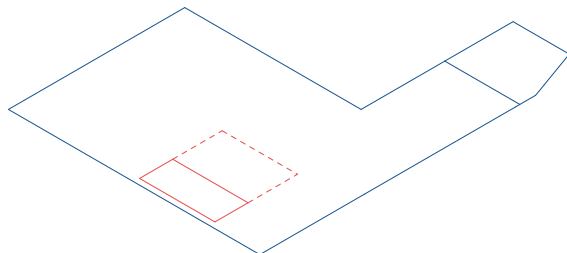
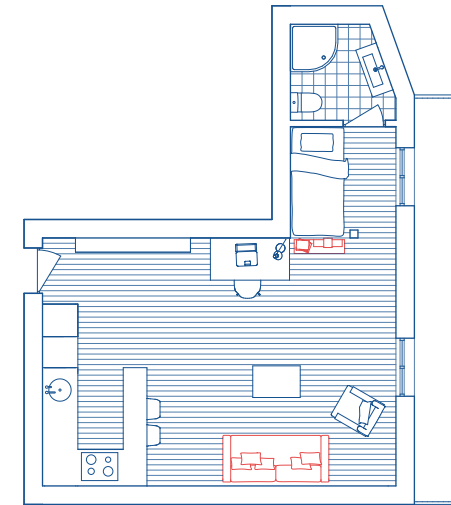
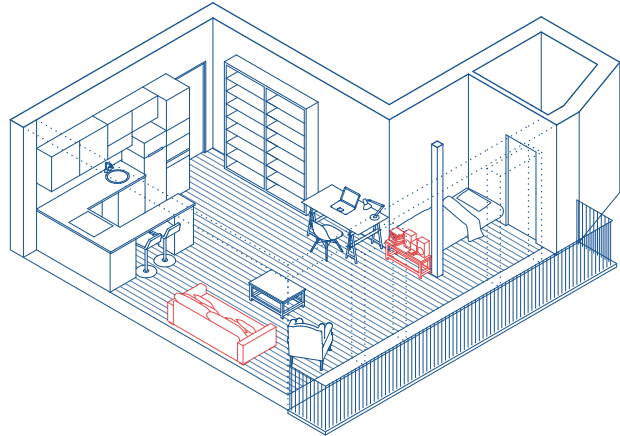
HOW TO READ



1.

The apartment is a studio shared with the host. The space is optimized by the presence of a sofa-bed for guests, while the host sleeps in a single bed next to the bathroom door. The peculiarity lies in the absence of any kind of physical division, which actually implies a low level of privacy for both users.

Building typology: **C**
Airbnb type: **Private room**
Sq_m: **52 m²**
Guests: **2**
Host: **1**



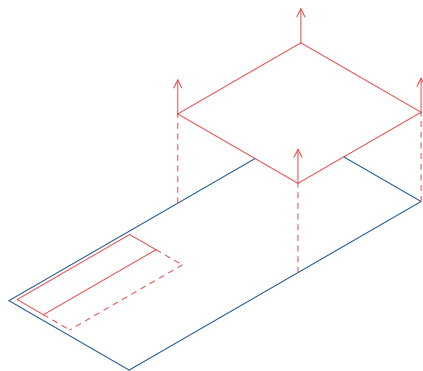
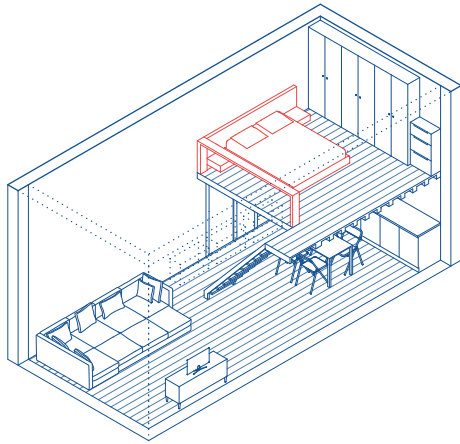
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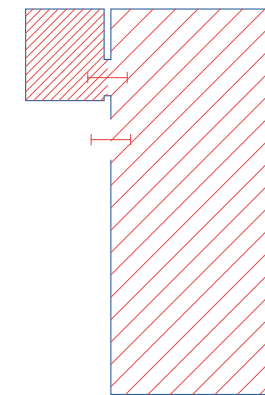
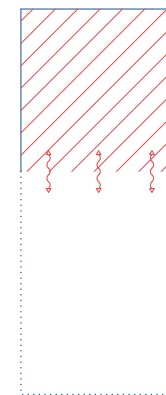
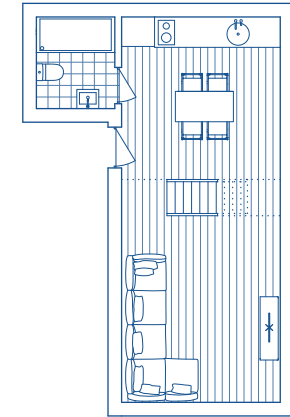
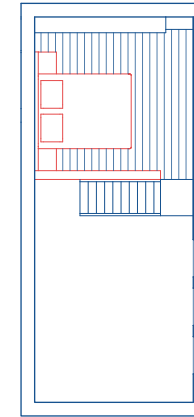
The case is a loft shared with the host. Given the height of the space, in order to increase the apartment surface there is a mezzanine intended to the Airbnb guests, while the host sleeps on the sofa-bed.

The low level of privacy is emphasized by the absence of specific spatial devices able to shield the host area from that of the guests.

Building typology: **C**
Airbnb type: **Private room**
Sqm: **33 + 12 m²**
Guests: **2**
Hosts: **1**



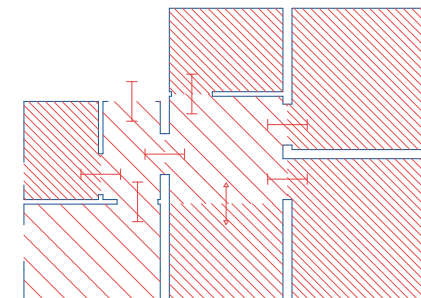
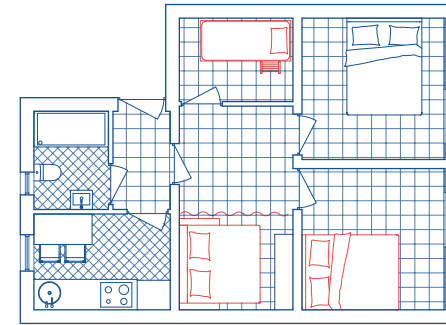
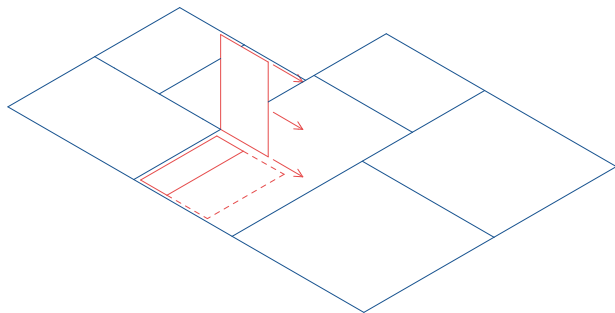
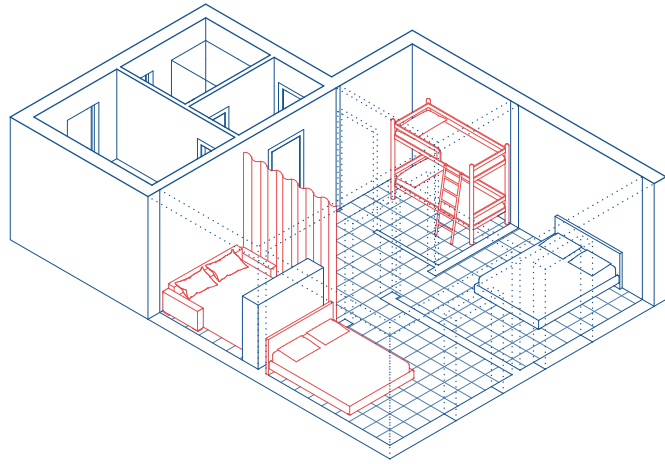
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3.

The case is medium size apartment in which the space is exploited to the maximum in order to accommodate the greatest number of airbnb guests. Particularly interesting is the living room, where a curtain is used if necessary in order to fragment the existing space, transforming a semi-public space into a private one. The space is further optimized thanks to a sofa-bed.

Building typology: **D**
Airbnb type: **Private room**
Sqm: **45 m²**
Guests: **6**
Hosts: **1**

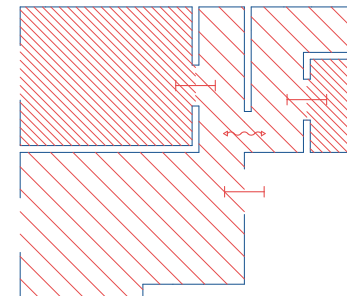
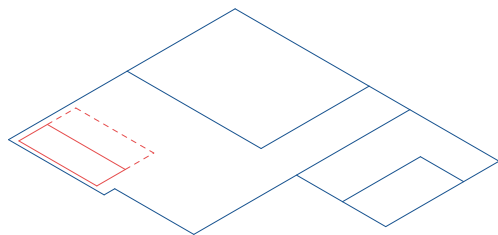
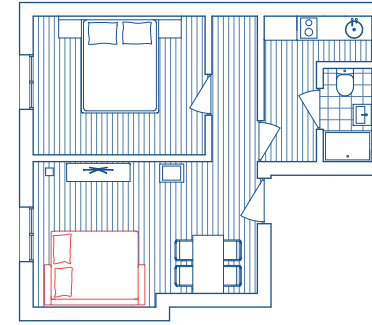
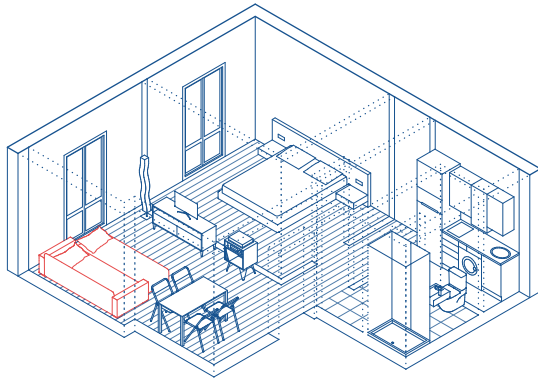


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4.

The case is a small apartment in which the living room is used to host Airbnb guests. The existent space of the living room is optimized thanks to a sofa-bed. The degree of privacy is rather low because the living room is at the entrance of the apartment.

Building typology: **C**
Airbnb type: **Private room**
Sq_m: **35 m²**
Guests: **2**
Hosts: **2**

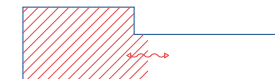
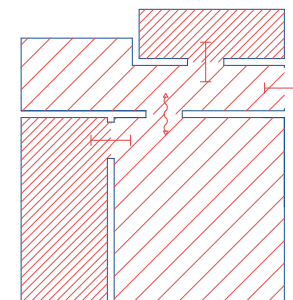
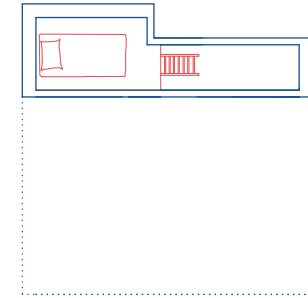
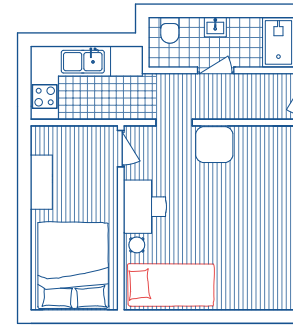
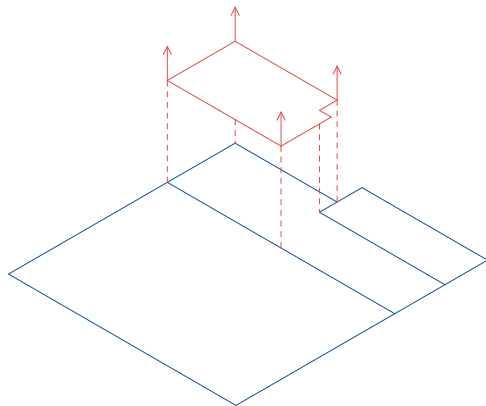
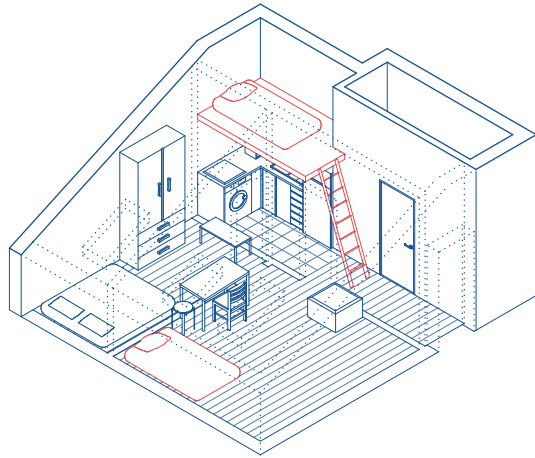


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5.

The apartment is an attic in which the Airbnb guests are hosted on a mezzanine and in the living room respectively. The highest space of the attic, where the kitchen is, is densified and is accessed via a small staircase that impedes the entrance to the kitchen. In this case the degree of privacy remains low because the mezzanine has no visual barriers, as well as the bed placed in the living room.

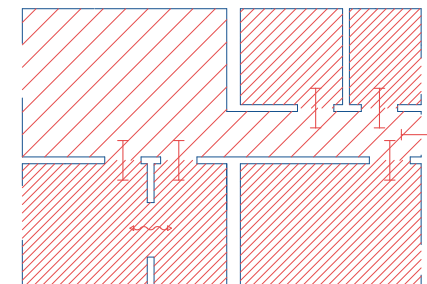
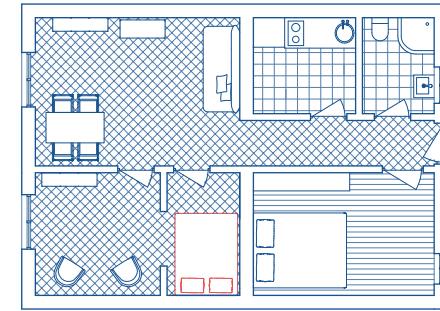
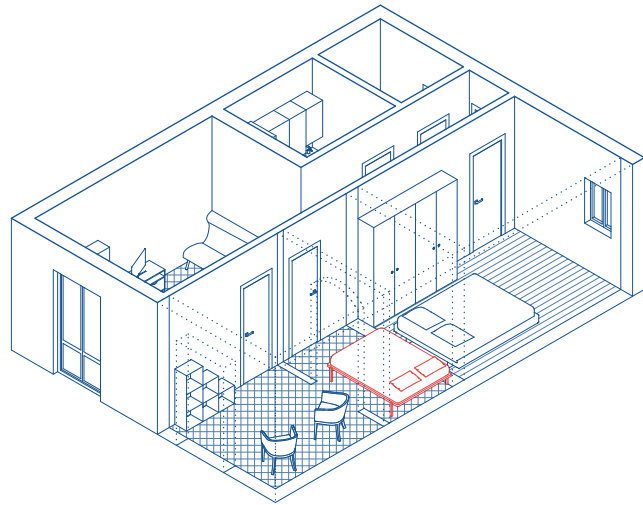
Building typology: **A**
Airbnb type: **Private room**
Sqm: **33 + 4 m²**
Guests: **3**
Hosts: **2**



6.

The case is a medium size apartment in which the Airbnb guests are hosted in a proper room. In this case the degree of privacy is higher as the guest room is almost completely independent, also having a private standing room.

Building typology: **C**
Airbnb type: **Private room**
Sqm: **50 m²**
Guests: **2**
Hosts: **2**

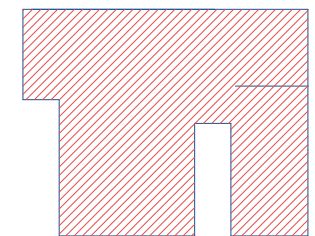
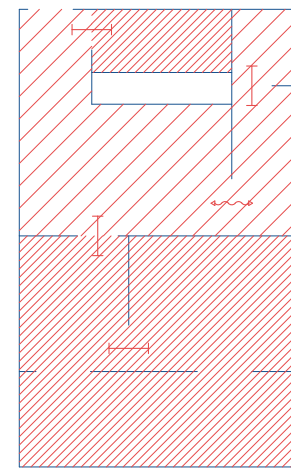
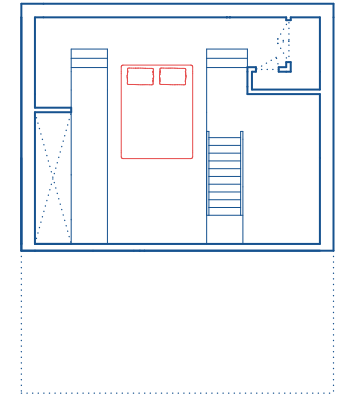
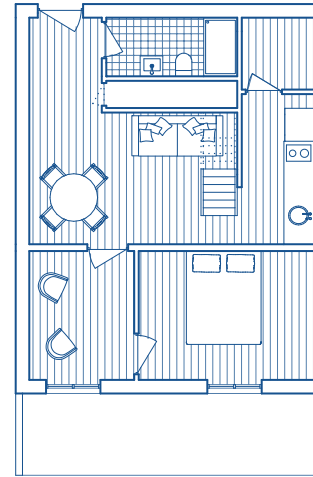
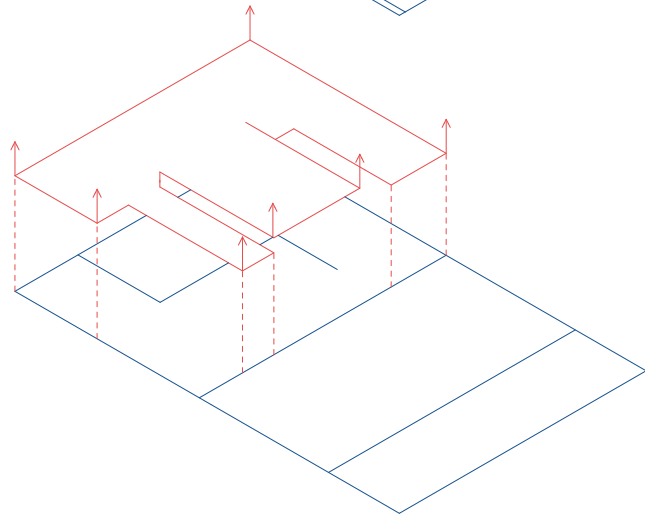
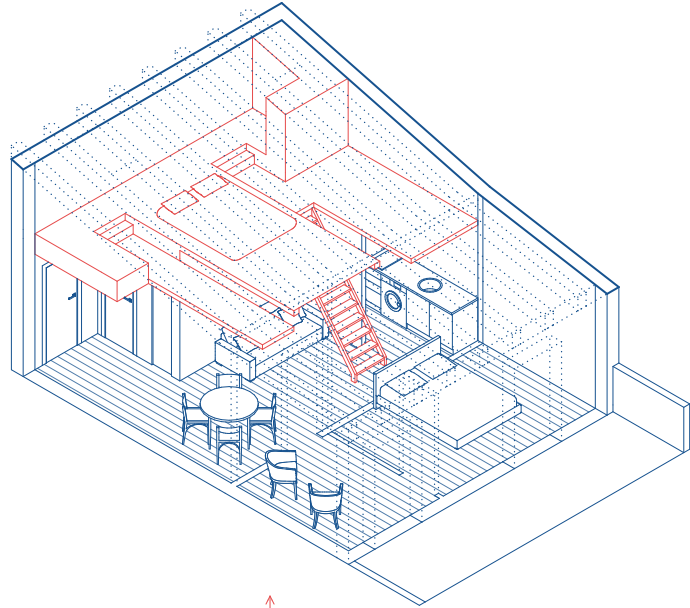


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7.

The case is characterized by the use of a mezzanine in order to densify the space and allow the accommodation of two Airbnb guests. The interesting side of this attic is the well defined independence of the space dedicated to the host compared to that dedicated to the guests. The degree of privacy is very high, as the only shared spaces are kitchen and living room, while the host has at his disposal bedroom, terrace and standing room.

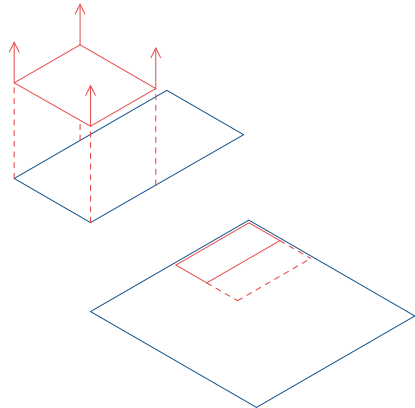
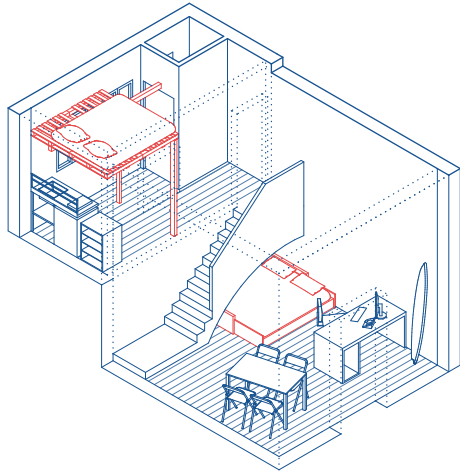
Building typology: **C**
Airbnb type: **Private room**
Sqm: **45 + 10 m²**
Guests: **2**
Hosts: **1**



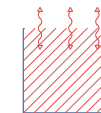
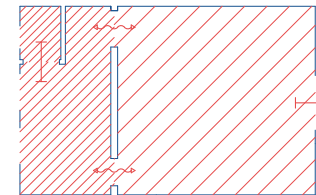
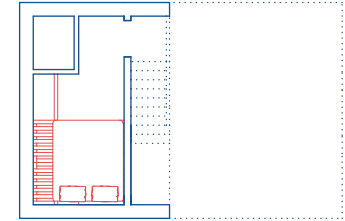
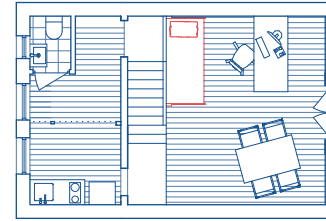
8.

The apartment is located at street level and was originally designed as an office. The space-time adaptability of this apartment is characterized by a sofa-bed and a mezzanine made of pallets, which is located in a more private area. The peculiarity of this space is its use during the weekend as an Airbnb apartment, while the rest of the days is used as an office.

Building typology: **C**
Airbnb type: **Entire apartment**
Sq_m: **26 + 4 m²**
Guests: **4**



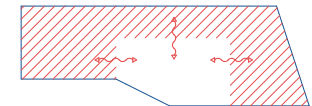
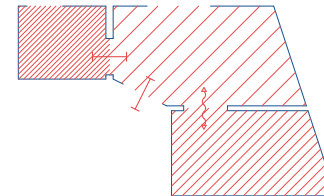
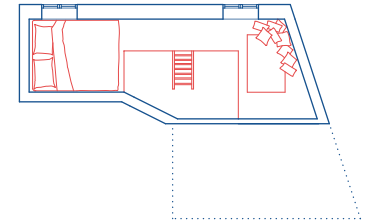
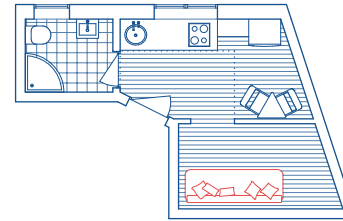
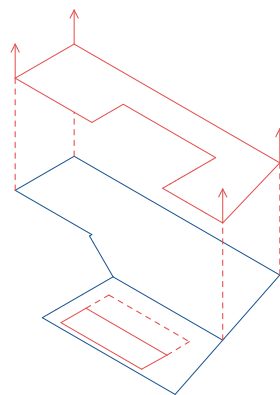
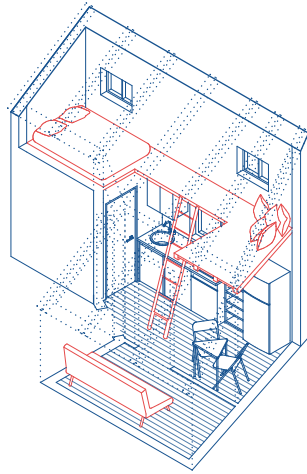
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9.

The apartment is a very small attic in which the space is optimized at maximum. The mezzanine densifies the space, making it usable to host two airbnb guests and potentially even more. Connected to the kitchen, there is another small room with a sofa bed.

Building typology: **C**
Airbnb type: **Entire apartment**
Sqm: **17 + 8 m²**
Guests: **4**

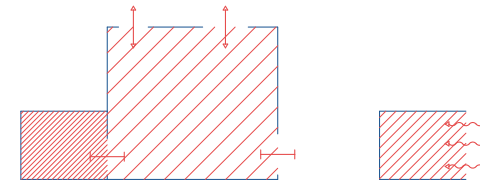
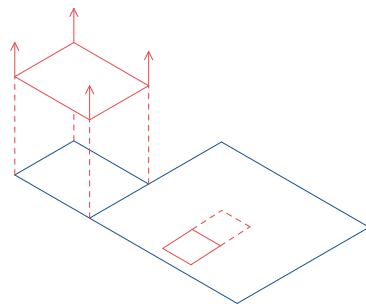
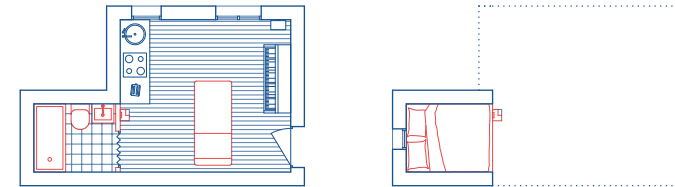
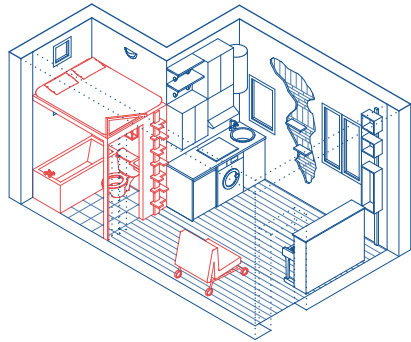


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10.

The case is located in a traditional Corrala and it is characterized by a small surface. Thanks to the use of specific devices, such as a multifunctional block composed of bathroom and bed, the reduced domestic space is densified. The additional presence of a sofa-bed ensures that the apartment can accommodate up to three guests.

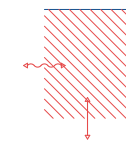
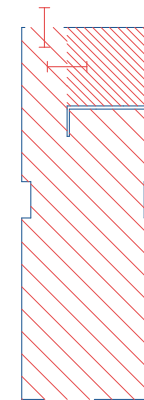
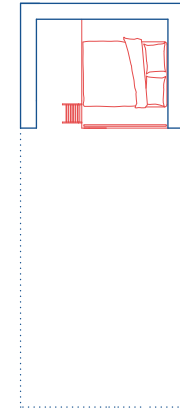
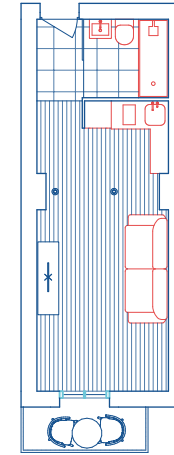
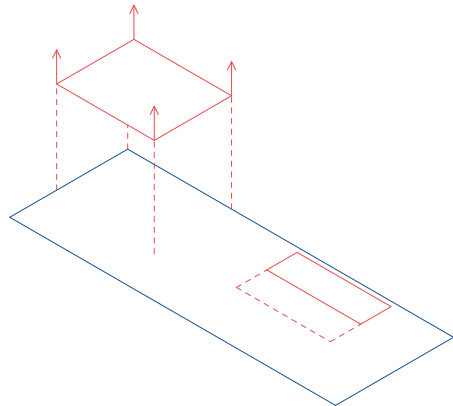
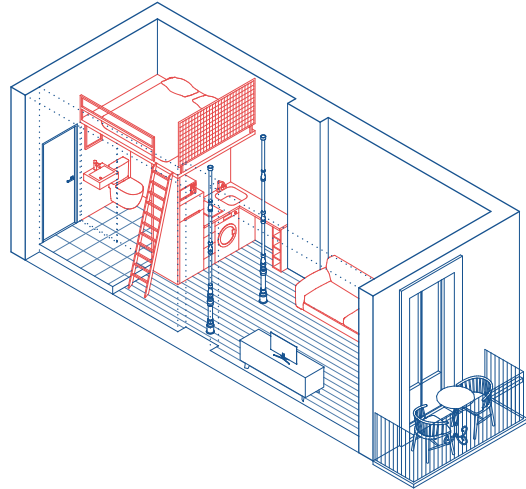
Building typology: **B**
Airbnb type: **Entire apartment**
Sqm: **16 + 3 m²**
Guests: **3**



11.

The housing unit is a studio in which a multifunctional block composed of bathroom, kitchen, and bed densify the existing space. The studio can accommodate up to four guests that can sleep in the double bed or in the so-fa-bed. The multifunctional block provide a visual barrier next to the bed, which is able to shield the guests and thus generate a greater degree of privacy.

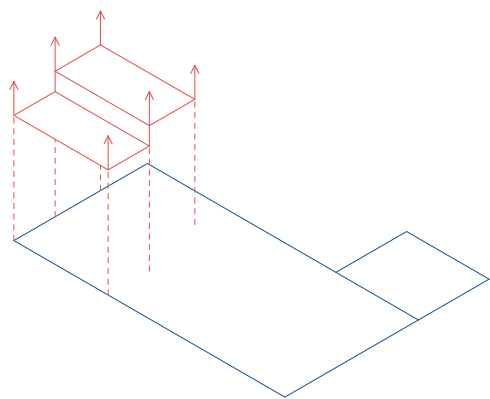
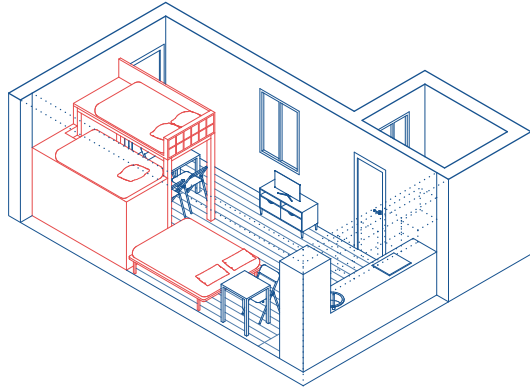
Building typology: C
Airbnb type: Entire apartment
Sqm: 23 + 5 m²
Guests: 4



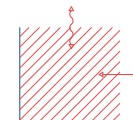
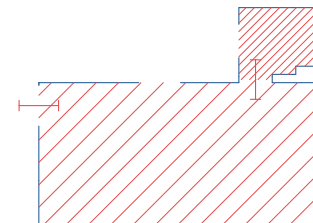
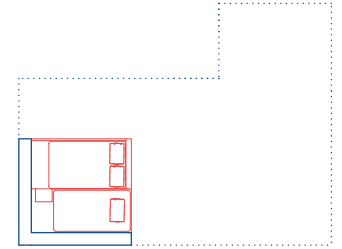
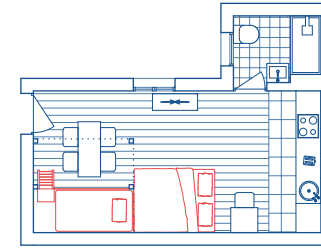
12.

The case is a small apartment in which a mezzanine is used to densify the existing space and accommodate up to five Airbnb guests. In this situation, under the mezzanine there is an additional free space useful for different functions, such as eating, gathering, or storing things.

Building typology: **A**
Airbnb type: **Entire apartment**
Sqm: **22 + 5 m²**
Guests: **5**



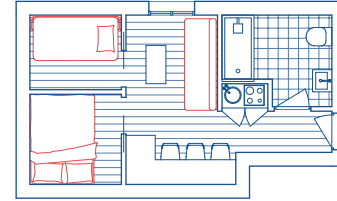
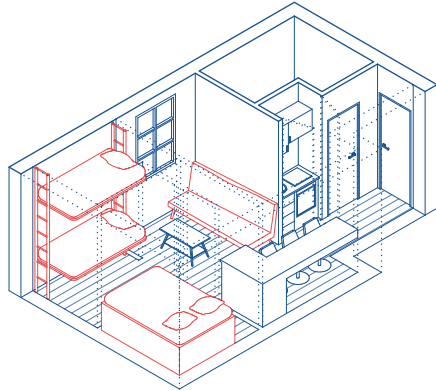
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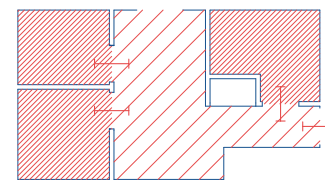
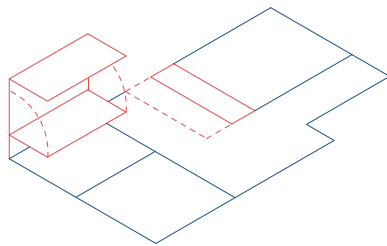
13.

In this small apartment the space result to be extremely exploited thanks to the use of many devices, which optimize the existent space. The most interesting device is the foldable bunk-bed which is stuck in a very small room. In addition to it, a sofa-bed and a double bed are provided.

Building typology: **C**
Airbnb type: **Entire apartment**
Sqm: **22 m²**
Guests: **6**



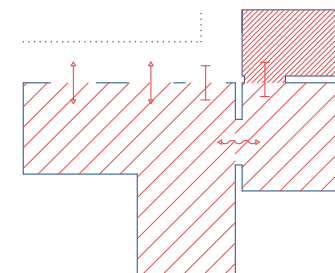
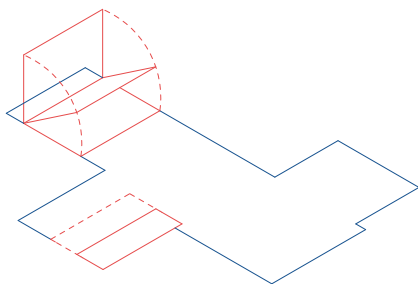
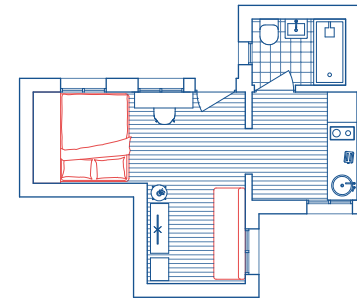
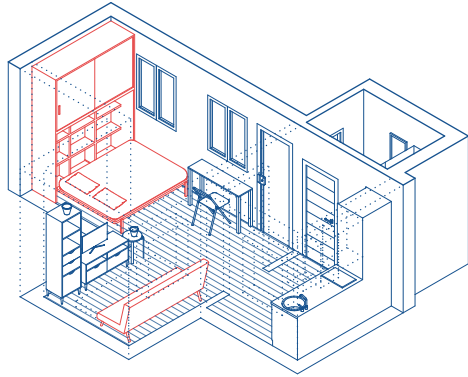
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14.

The case is located in a traditional Corrala and it is characterized by a small surface. Thanks to the use of specific devices, such as foldable furniture, the reduced domestic space is optimized, ensuring that the apartment can accommodate up to four guests.

Building typology: **B**
Airbnb type: **Entire apartment**
Sqm: **23 m²**
Guests: **4**

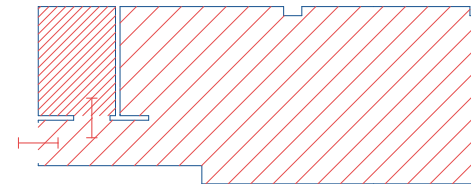
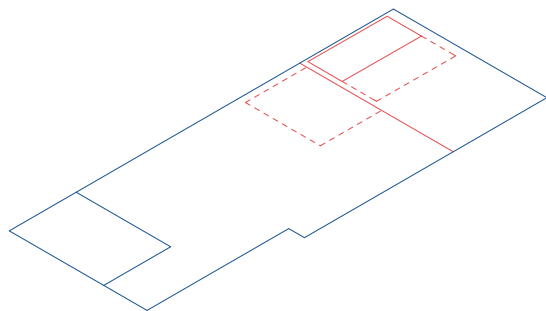
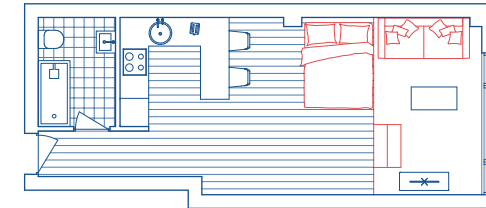
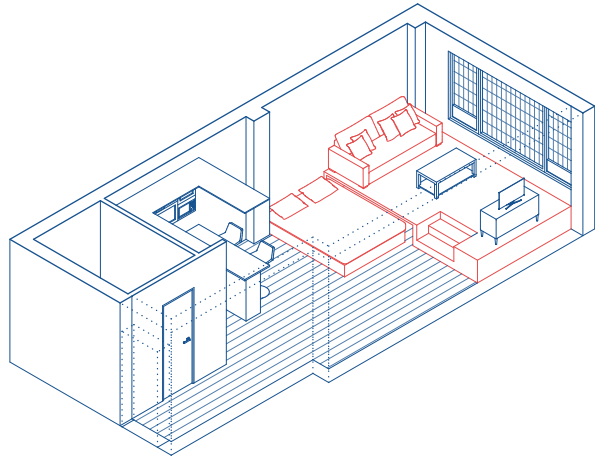


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15.

The case is a studio flat, in which the space is optimized through the use of a platform that contains a pull-out double bed, while above there is a sofa-bed.

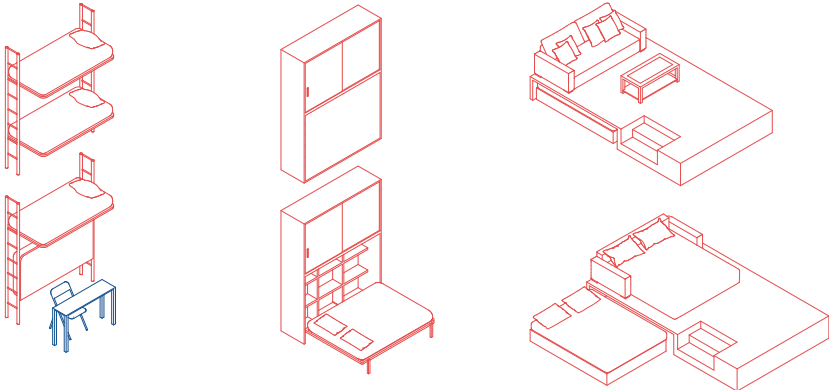
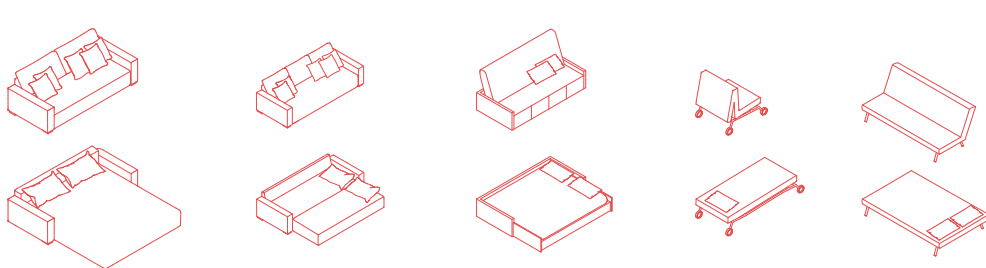
Building typology: **D**
Airbnb type: **Entire apartment**
Sqm: **35 m²**
Guests: **4**



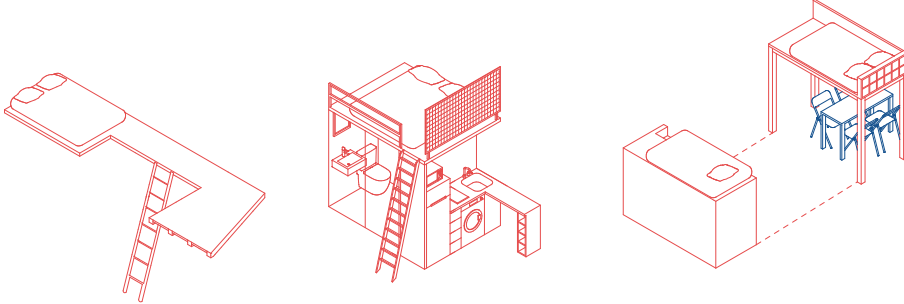
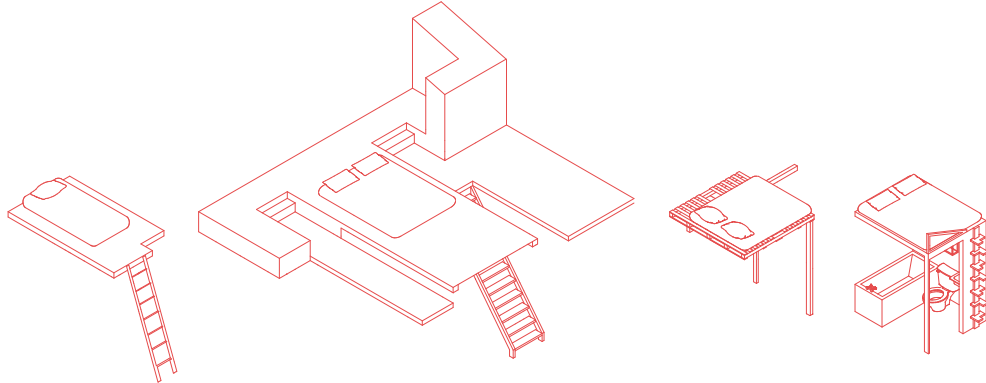
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Spatial devices

• Optimization



• Densification



• Fragmentation



4.2 A new way of trading homes

“The way we live is rapidly changing under pressure from multiple forces - financial, environmental, technological, geopolitical. What we used to call ‘home’ may not even exist anymore, having transmuted into a financial commodity measured in square meters, or sqm” (Space Caviar, 2014).

It is from this assertion that we can start to reflect about the new meaning that today we can give to what we have always called home.

Over the decades, a long series of multidisciplinary reflections, which embrace narrative, human sciences, philosophy and architecture, have been articulated over the semantic gap of the English words *house* and *home*.

Carrying out, within the bounds of this thesis, a complete and exhaustive discourse on the concept of home and its evolution would be a laborious and complex job. That is why we will limit ourselves to an approximation on the theme, to then investigate in depth the apartment living in the age of Airbnb.

The word *house* is generally perceived as a physical construction for people settled in a fixed place. The word *home* instead, although it contains the material characteristics of the construction, however, implies a feeling, an idea, not necessary fixed in one place. In a way it can be said that the first word has more to do with the concept of *shelter*, while the second represents the *identity* of the individual (Briganti and Mezei, 2012). Hence, what is certain is that the boundaries of the home are much wider than those of the house. To try to make the discourse more exhaustive, according to some authors, besides having the function of protecting the individual from the elements of the external world, home is primarily an arena for complex human practices (Smith and Croft, 2006). It is precisely in this last consideration that the fulcrum of the home lies; the home

is a place in which we can recognize complex human dynamics.

Dynamics studied and interpreted by great philosophers like Gaston Bachelard, who argues that the domestic space of the home is more a psychological than a physical condition. In his essay entitled *The poetics of space*, the philosopher addresses the issue of how the physical reality of the home and its objects can communicate with the world of imagination, composed of feelings, memories and all those immaterial entities that characterize the individual (Bachelard, 1957).

Thus, the home materializes the whole series of emotions and sensations that bind us to it through the memory inherent in spaces and objects. As stated by Luca Molinari, *"When we think about the word 'home', there are smiles, regrets, pains, smells, elementary gestures and secrets that are deposited in our mind thanks to the habit that only everyday life can generate"* (Molinari, trad. 2016, 13).

It is exactly the everyday life that makes the home the subject of a long series of domestic rituals that characterize the act of *inhabiting*. This last word, coming from the Latin *habito-as*, means having, however, a having that insists in its frequentative form, an habitual having. So the act of inhabiting, as well as everyday life, is above all a repetition of gestures, actions, scenarios and feelings that makes the inhabiting a ritual. Inhabiting is, in fact, an experience that does not only take place in space, but also in time, because the immobility of objects and spaces is renewed every day with a new nourishment. Ultimately, inhabiting is a changeable and unstable act that as such presupposes a certain degree of transformation due to the changing conditions dictated by historical events (Vitta, 2008).

The way of inhabiting the home is therefore constantly influenced by what happens outside the physical space of the house, whether social or technological changes. For instance, the latest have allowed the domestic space to be

the contact point of individuals with urban, national, and global infrastructure throughout history.

All those physical structures, such as clean water supply, gas, electricity, telephone, television and lastly the internet connection, one after the other have connected the home with the outside world. Thus, domestic rituals are essentially the connection between the inner and the outer world (Space Caviar, 2014). If we think to unpack every single space and object of the home we will realize that many behaviours once related to certain rooms, today have completely changed and will continue to do so in the future. As argued by Joseph Grima, “*the domestic sphere is so much more than the sum of the functions it performs; it is a unique moment where architecture acts as a bridge between intimacy and sociality*” (Space Caviar, 2014, 13-14). The alternation of the words intimacy and sociality in the last statement, establishes a further aspect that has always been at the center of the reflections regarding the home and the inhabiting, namely the polar opposition of the public/private dimension of the domestic space.

According to some authors, the home contains both the individual and the social sphere, defined within specific spatial patterns. The domestic space represents *individuality*, namely the attempt to be unique and distinct; the interior is the synthesis of the individual taste and the aesthetics of the owner. In addition, is also emerging a certain independence with respect to what happens outside. At the same time, however, there are factors that actually connect the individual to society, facilitating his identification with a given community. In this way, the home is composed of *identity* and *communality* spaces. Each room assumes a certain meaning, there are some semi-public, such as the living room, which expresses the identity of the family through objects and decorations, but at the same time is also open to guests. Bedrooms, on the contrary, usually take on the idea of privacy, in which individuals hold their

own identity and uniqueness. Thus, the domestic space can also be interpreted according to the polar opposition openness/closedness, in which the contact with outsiders is regulated by spaces and behaviours (Gauvain and Altman, 1982). This sense of openness and closure towards the outside, together with the idea of public and private, is dictated by the use and production of space, as well as by the actions and behavior of individuals. The exhaustive definition of an idea of privacy is complex to deal with in this thesis. In any case, the architectural elements such as doors and walls provide means of accessibility and visibility into the dwelling, highlighting the importance of thresholds and transition spaces.

Ultimately, as Goffman argues, in analogy with the theater, the home is composed of front and back regions. The former are compared to the stage, where actors represent what they want to convey to the outsiders, that usually is order and identity. The latter, on the other hand, are often unavailable to strangers, or otherwise hidden from guests and often positioned at distance from the front regions (Goffman, 1959).

Hence, home is a dynamic space in which the public and private dimensions coexist, generating interactions and oppositions often dictated by a great variety of environmental and cultural influences that allow the evolution in the way of living. It is true that the idea of home and the relative way of inhabiting it, are nowadays questioned because of the new logic of the present that redraw the boundaries thereof.

Returning to the philosophical interpretation of the domestic space, Martin Heidegger has linked the home and the inhabiting with the questioning of the sense of being, the true object of his philosophical investigation. In fact, according to Iñaki Ábalos, for the philosopher it is not possible to give an answer to his question without knowing everything that gravitates around the subject, all that

is familiar to him, namely the domestic environment. The home of the subject who wonders about himself is not a neutral frame, but can become the subject itself of the existentialist philosophy. The home can be interpreted as a place in which to be able to fulfill the act of inhabiting and the fullness of being, but at the same time in the home are also reflected the individual's conflicts. Thus, the home is a space of alienation that hides a displacement. Well this feeling of eradication has particularly intensified in modernity. As Ábalos adds, the "existentialist" home is centric, inhabited by a stable family, and with a strong link with the place; a shelter that protects not only from the power of nature, but from the violence of the world, from the harmful superficiality of modern society. The home definitely becomes the place of authenticity (Ábalos, 2000).

With modernity, conceived by Heidegger as the increase in the means of action through the advancement of knowledge and technology, it begins to see a change in domesticity, threatened by the interference of the external world, namely the industrial technologies and the media.

As Sartoretti claims, within two centuries it is apparent the transition from the home as a stable center of gravity to the loss of the latter. If in the 1800s bourgeois home, the split between the public and private individual is extreme, in the 1900s modern home, although the image of the home is always that of union and privacy, the domestic balance begins to be seriously questioned. Instead, the idea of home emerging from the contemporary human sciences and narrative is marked by fragmentation, instability and, ultimately, the loss of a spatial and personal center of gravity (Sartoretti, 2015).

It should be said that already with the arrival of the mass media, and especially television, the domestic space has become much more permeable to the outside world. As Ábalos recalls, paraphrasing Heidegger, the introduction of the world of opinions within the home is a violence against

inhabiting, a real regression from inhabiting to lodging (Ábalos, 2000).

However, the Information era has proposed a communicative model aimed at informing and persuading (Lasswell, 1948), rather than interacting and cooperating. Nowadays, at the base of the change in the idea of a contemporary home there is a social and generational process that pass through economy, politics, technology and culture in a transversal way, connecting constantly distant societies through the network. What the sociologist Manuel Castells has called "Network Society" (Castells, 2004).

In this context the idea of home is no longer linked to the physicality of the places or to the permanence. It is no longer built in opposition to the outside world and the public sphere, but the "elsewhere" is within it, embracing the most distant places. Today, the home embodies the *multi-scalar* and *multi-local* being, just like society (Sartoretti, 2015). A kind of society identified by an idea of flexibility already widely illustrated by Richard Sennett; flexibility, mobility, risk, uncertainty, these are the new categories that mark the life of the contemporary man (Sennett, 1999). Given the rapid development of more pronounced forms of space-time contraction due to the use of technology, the question is, how can the idea of a home be subject to a new interpretation or redefinition?

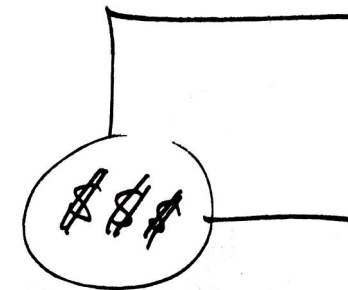
Luca Molinari called it "Invisible Home", an adjective that goes hand in hand with the idea that everything can be collected and protected in a cloud, which is able to erase the distances and makes people feel nomadic and free (Molinari, 2016). It is no coincidence that we are witnessing an atomization of the home outside its boundaries, and consequently a domestication of urban space. As matter of fact, there is a growing tendency to colonize public places, bars and in general spaces that have a wi-fi connection where to work. Just like the domestic space is used as a workstation, reducing the temporal difference between working

hours and those of domestic life. However, what Molinari focuses on most is the fact that the invisible home is above all a place that has lost the idea of privacy following the progressive introduction of a pervasive virtuality in the domestic space; a home that is a fragment of the hyper-global dwelling, in which each individual, thanks to the network connection, can interact with the digital images of other people's domestic space, thus making the home a totally permeable space (Ibidem, 2016).

Today each of us is perfectly able to get into someone else's house by scrolling through the images of rooms and entire apartments on the Airbnb platform, decreeing that privacy and intimacy are going towards the end. The next step is the extreme ease of temporary sharing of others' domestic space; definitely not a new attitude, on the contrary, an old practice implemented and made successful thanks to the network technology. It is in fact curious to note that back in 1977, Christopher Alexander, in the book *A pattern language*, among the over 200 selected patterns, also included one called "rooms to rent". As he writes, "when a family or a workgroup shrinks because one or two people leave, the space which becomes empty should be able to find a use. Otherwise, the people who stay behind will rattle around in a hollow shell which is too big for them. They may even be forced to sell their property and move because they cannot afford the upkeep of so big place. [...] In effect some rooms should be conceived in advance as potential rooms to let if the size of the group would change" (Alexander, 1977, 720). The sentence appears predictive, in fact, exactly like the basic idea from which Airbnb was born, the goal of this pattern is to make at least some part of the building rentable.

At this point, as shown in the previous chapters, given Airbnb's disruptive ability to shift urban and social balance without any physical action, one can begin to wonder where the Airbnb domestic space is positioned in the im-

aginary of the contemporary home. What is the influence of Airbnb on the domestic space? Can we talk about the delineation of an Airbnb architectural typology? Will Airbnb-ready apartments exist in the future? It is from these questions that the decoding of the Airbnb domestic space starts. The Airbnb domestic space is definitely the materialization of the contemporary home conceived by some as "an instrument of profit-making" (Space Caviar, 2014, 21); a place where thanks to the virtuality, the everyday life meets the global economic infrastructures.



Christopher Alexander - A room for rent

The idea of home as a financial tool is not clearly new in the housing scene, in fact the speculative meaning of the housing has always existed. The difference lies in the fact that thanks to technology, and especially internet, today everyone can become a small entrepreneur of himself thanks to Airbnb. Rooms take on value in relation to the profit they can generate. Each square meter today, in some specific contexts such as global cities, represents a possibility of gain that should not be underestimated, and that in some cases is the only way to survive the increase in rent. Thanks to Airbnb, property relations are changed, as Jack Self states "this new form of hosting questions property rela-

tionships, as it seems to slightly empower the tenant over the landlord, the one who uses over the one who owns” (Self, 2014). Also in this sense, a famous passage written by Le Corbusier appears to be somewhat predictive of the future of the house as a tool “A house will no longer be this solidly-built thing which sets out to defy time and decay, and which is an expensive luxury by which wealth can be shown; it will be a tool as the motor car is becoming a tool” (Le Corbusier, 1923, 237). Once again, the perception of fixity, always associated with the idea of home, moves towards a space-time deconstruction defined by the acceleration of contemporary society and the permeability of the home to the outside world. The Airbnb home is therefore a tool able to go beyond the concepts of ownership and belonging that according to Vitta define the act of inhabiting (Vitta, 2008).

This opens up a new scenario that calls into question the idea of inhabiting; does the Airbnb home outline the dynamics of a new way of inhabiting or simply that of lodging?

Surely the experiential tourism rhetoric used by Airbnb into communication campaigns outlines a strong connection with the canonical idea of inhabiting recounted so far. In a particular way, what is emphasized is the romantic idea of being able to belong anywhere in the world, living a unique experience in someone else’s home, where the hosts are ready to place themselves at disposal of the guest. Clearly, Airbnb’s advertising rhetoric is not enough to give an answer to the premises previously expressed. In order to try to give an answer to the research questions, we need to analyze the topic from a multiple point of view, respectively that of the actors, and the spaces. The trajectories of the first, combined with the commodification of the second, allow us to delineate even partially a new way of inhabiting.

Starting from the actors, the attention should be focused on some hosts, particularly those who use Airbnb for mere

economic necessity or for choice of pleasure, making available an unused space of their own home, such as an entire room, or a sofa-bed in the living area. These hosts put the interaction with the guests at the center of their daily lives, thus reshaping the public/private domain of the domestic space. The privacy gradients, often in reduced surface spaces, are modified according to a new temporal scan of the daily life of the host, which in fact modifies its way of inhabiting. As was shown analytically in the *Airbnb Apartment Reader*, we can determine privacy patterns that go from the complete absence of the latter, to situations in which there is a strong spatial independence between hosts and guests, establishing a more effective degree of privacy. As shown in cases 1 and 2, the privacy of both hosts and guests is completely absent. In the first case, the host sleeps right next to the door of the shared bathroom. In the second case, in the same way, the host sleeps in the sofa bed on the lower floor, while the guests in the double bed on the mezzanine. In both cases, the only devices that seem to provide a slight degree of privacy are the low furniture elements that somehow visually protect the bed.

In cases 3, 4 and 5, however, the degree of privacy of the actors increases, leaving a significant margin to the sharing of common areas such as kitchen, living room and bathroom. In the first, for example, the fragmentation of the living room is particularly highlighted by the use of a curtain that temporally defines the use and the degree of privacy of that space. In the second one, in a very classical way, the guests are hosted on a sofa bed in the living room. Lastly, in the third case, the guests are housed in a small-sized mezzanine, the result of an action of space densification, in which again the degree of privacy of the guests remains weak.

It is in cases 6 and 7 that we observe a significant increase in the degree of privacy and greater care for the independence of the spaces dedicated to Airbnb guests. In the first

the guest room includes a small sitting room that can generate greater independence. Instead, in the second one, we note more clearly how the domestic space is organized in two compartments almost completely independent, in which the only shared services are the bathroom and the kitchen; so guests can sleep in the mezzanine, while the host has a separate room accessible from the common living room, also equipped with a small living room and terrace.

The cases listed so far have shown analytically that the space-time alteration of the hosts living models means that new living practices can be generated and consequently a new and diversified act of inhabiting. There is also an intermediate category of hosts, perhaps a little less common in the Madrid scene, those who rent their house temporarily, moving to the home of relatives or friends over the weekend. This category also includes those who have a working space, for example an office, which is traded as a tourist apartment during the weekends; this is the case 8, in which the space is densified and optimized through the use of an improvised mezzanine made of pallets, and a common sofa bed placed in the middle of the desks.

Then there are those hosts defined as "professional" or "investor",¹ which as already explained in the previous chapters move away from the original logic of the Airbnb platform, introducing entire apartments into the short-term rentals market. In this case we are witnessing a proper specialization of the home, in which the marginal value of the fixed capital is not exploited, but rather it is the entire value of the aforesaid capital to be exploited. In the Madrid city centre, this trend is widely demonstrated by the quantitative data, which reveal that 75% of the Airbnb listings are entire apartments, against only 23% of private rooms, in addition to the strong presence of multi-owners. Moreover, it can be added that, in the Lavapiés area, the potential profitability of a reduced surface apartment traded on

Airbnb can be up to three times greater than that obtained from a traditional rent.²

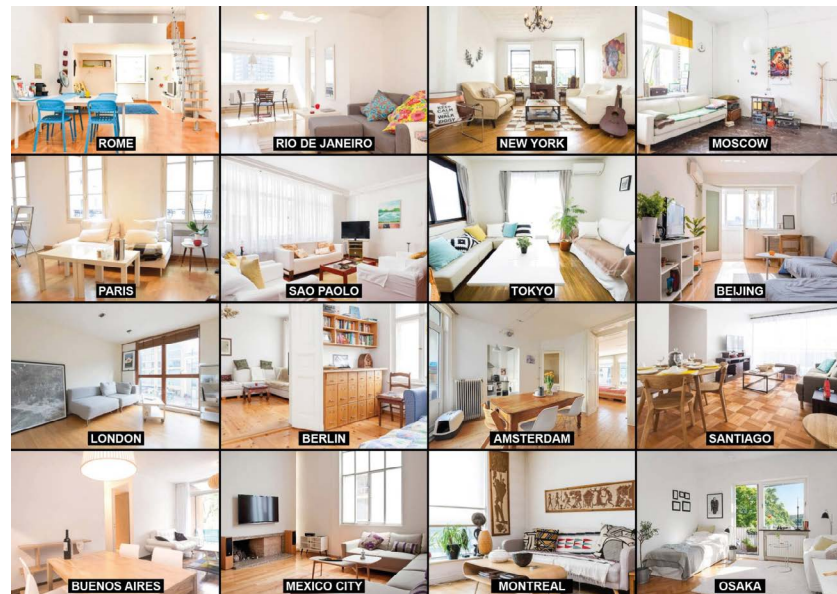
The specialization of the home in a tourist apartment is a trend that is clearly visible both in the data and in the case studies previously analyzed. Therefore, the process of specialization can be read by a series of different points of view, the spatial, the aesthetic, and the interactive. What emerges from the analyzed entire apartments for example, is a recurrence of actions and arrangements able to expand or contract the domestic space. As evidenced by cases 9 and 12, the use of mezzanines is quite widespread, in order to make the space more dense by increasing the surface without modifying the built volume. In cases 10 and 11 then, the use of mezzanines is not only addressed to the increase of the surface, but the lower space is used in order to realize services such as bathroom and kitchenette, generating a proper multifunctional block inside the home, usually a studio. Lastly, a further recurring action is that of the optimization of the existing surface through the use of removable and folding furniture as shown in cases 13, 14 and 15. Therefore, what emerges from the analysis at the domestic scale is primarily the different approach to the use of the home, on the one hand as a financial tool that is however object of a shared living; on the other hand as a specialized financial tool intended for tourist use.

It can be said that in the first case there is a new way of inhabiting in all respects. As the host is forced to modify his space-time habits in relation to the guest, creating above all a more or less marked form of interaction and redefining the privacy patterns of his own home. In the second case, the most widespread one, we can only speak of lodging instead of inhabiting. The entire apartment traded through Airbnb is in fact a place not so different from a hotel room. The space is intentionally densified and optimized to the maximum, in order to accommodate more people, thus generating a greater profit margin.

² See subparagraph 3.2.7 (The profitability of Airbnb entire apartments)

¹ See subparagraph 2.2.3 (The Airbnb user)

The specialization is also visible in the aesthetics of the apartments, which Kyle Chayka defined with the term *Air-space*, which is a space characterized by sameness and homogeneity. The author focuses on the change of paradigm brought by the aesthetics of Airbnb; the apartments are not only presented as an alternative to hotel rooms but rather as real houses in which to live permanently, photographed at high resolution and with bright colors (Chayka, 2016). A new iconography of the apartment now reduced to images able to fix in some way the basic characters, representing a specific lifestyle. An aesthetic that also refers to that concept of "Ikeanization", intended as an invasion of cheap and cheerful objects all having the same unified aesthetic (Hartman, 2007) and clearly recognizable in the seriality of Ikea furnishings present in many of the case studies analyzed.



Airbnb listings from cities around the world - OMA & Bengler

Lastly, what is missing is mainly the interaction between host and guest, which occurs only during check-in and check-out, and sometimes even in that case, given the spread of self check-in with which guests can access the apartment through a smart lock or a numeric keypad.

In conclusion, we can speak only partially of a new way of inhabiting with Airbnb, since in most cases it would be more correct to talk about lodging, understood as the temporary arrangement in someone else's place, unloaded of all those intangible meanings that constitute the act of inhabiting.

In the specific case of Lavapiés then, this tendency is particularly widespread especially since it is often difficult, in the existing small-size dwellings, to obtain independent living spaces useful to allow the sharing between host and guest. Although the trend remains that of the specialization of the home, Airbnb represents, when it follows the original logic of sharing, an additional element to the already wide scenario of segmentation of the contemporary living models. ♦

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Chapter 5

The Adaptable Home

This chapter, the last one, proposes a series of architectural solutions, which are adaptable to the context of the existing buildings of Lavapiés, and above all, adaptable to the space-time dynamics that include Airbnb within a wider segmentation of the contemporary living practices. Based on the analysis carried out in the previous chapters, I will try to give an architectural response, outlining the conclusions and underlining limitations and possible ideas for future research.

5.1 The new contemporary living practices

As has been seen so far, in the specific context of the Madrid inner city, Airbnb takes on a double character. On the one hand, albeit in a minority share, it appears to be a living practice based on the sharing of domestic space; on the other hand, in $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cases, it turns out to be a practice of specialized lodging, assuming in fact the appearance of the more traditional tourist accommodation. The reasons why the distribution of these practices is more oriented towards specialization can be multiple. Surely one of the reasons lies in the tenure system that is closely linked to the speculative approach carried out by the so-called multi-owners who control about 40% of the Airbnb supply in Madrid.

Secondly, it must be said that the high density of the Lavapiés urban fabric consequently implies a large diffusion of studio flats with a low surface, often *infraivienda*, which do not adapt to sharing practices, being instead easily transformed into specialized tourist accommodation. In relation to this, the positive profitability of the entire Airbnb apartments with small surface has been clearly demonstrated in this thesis. Furthermore, the case studies described and analyzed above highlight exactly both the practices of sharing and the most widespread actions in space involved in the specialization of the home.

From this it can be concluded that the negative impact of Airbnb on a residential neighborhood like Lavapiés is mainly attributable, as much of the research supports, to the extreme specialization of the existing housing stock in proper tourist apartments. On the other hand, the impact could be totally different in a situation in which hosts are willing to share their home temporarily, changing their way of living according to variable dynamics, and above all being able to generate a profit from an underused space. This last consideration is connected to the principle according to which Airbnb was born and has been successful, and it

allows us to position Airbnb among the new contemporary living practices. As matter of fact, according to the sociological research of the last decades, contemporary society gives us a rather fragmented picture, in which instability in the various fields generates a strong segmentation of households and living practices.

The diversity of family relationship and the individualism are becoming extremely widespread scenarios. Single, widowed, divorced, married couple, couples without children, older couples, traditional families, large families, stepfamilies, and other types of situations define the possible cohabitation groups that live in houses today. It is clear that these dynamics clash with the physical reality of the existing domestic space that does not modify its surface but its use. For example, in the Spanish context, according to the censuses of the last decades, there has been a decrease in the number of people per household; from 3.28 people per household in 1991, to 2.58 in 2011.¹ At the same time, however, a high surface of the housing stock persists, in fact 86.5% of the houses have between three and six rooms (Lopez Sanchez, 2017).

By further narrowing the field of study to the city of Madrid, it turns out that the predominant housing layout is that of the two-room apartment, and that, according to regulations, the minimum housing surface can be reduced to 25 square meters in the form of studio flat. The last statement justifies the great presence of smaller and smaller domestic spaces, perhaps ready to be specialized in tourist apartments.

At this point, one may wonder, given the contemporary context, what can be the answer of architecture to domestic space. Housing design no longer has to propose and foresee a mere spatial configuration of the living spaces, but has the responsibility of being adaptable to the evolution of the ways of living and the future needs. Today the living space is losing that codified conformation that characterized it

until a few decades ago. Today architecture must propose a domestic space, or parts of it, characterized by indeterminate uses and above all adaptable to extremely variable space-time dynamics. It is from these premises that comes a design vision that can be adaptable both to Airbnb and to other practices of contemporary living. Finally trying to design domestic spaces that are not specialized, and ready for indeterminate uses. ♦

5.2 A proposal

The approach of the STAR strategies + architecture office in the project called *The interior of Metropolis* has been used as a reference for developing a project proposal (STAR strategies + architecture, 2016).

First of all, the various households and practices of contemporary living are outlined, after which we move on to the elaboration of three project proposals implemented on existing apartments having different surfaces and located in Lavapiés. The proposals outline a concept of temporal space adaptability able to cross the segmentation of contemporary living, including Airbnb among the possible practices. ♦

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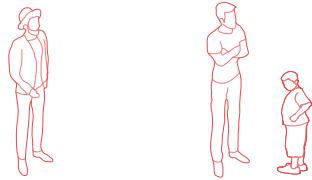
STAR strategies + architecture. "The interior of the Metropolis". *MONU*, no. 24 (2016).

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¹"Censo de Edificios y Vivienda". INE, Madrid, 1991, 2001, 2011.

Households

Single people



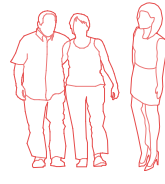
Single person

Divorced parent

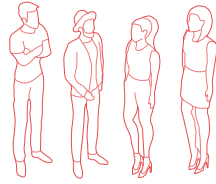
Cohabitations



Parents +
adult child



Senior couple +
student

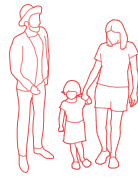


Students

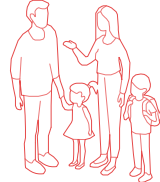
Families



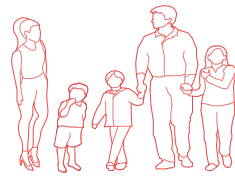
Couple without
children



1 child
family



2 child
family



Stepfamily or
Large family

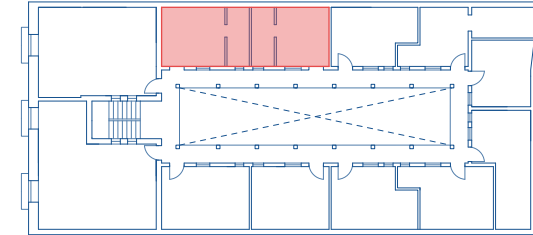
Situations

Airbnb

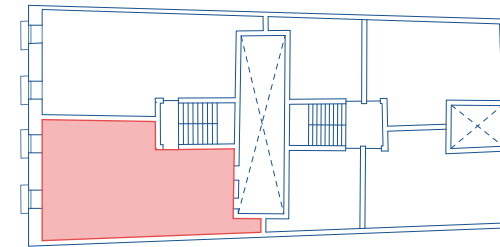


Existing housing units

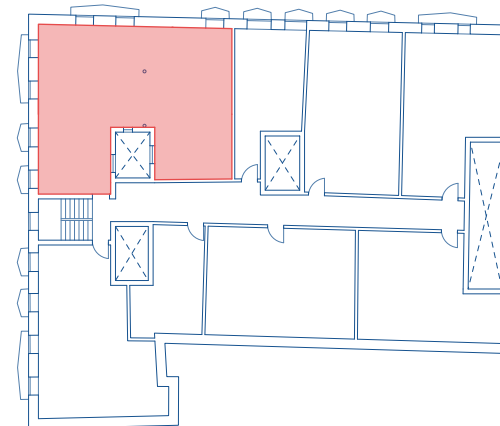
Small-size apartment: 30 m²



Medium-size apartment: 60 m²



Large-size apartment: 80 m²



1

Small-size apartment

30 m²

The first proposal provides a solution that can be adapted to a small-size apartment. In this case, the living room and kitchen spaces are adaptable to different uses over time. Thanks to the use of a mobile wall, in fact, this space can easily be transformed into an extra bedroom.

Great attention is paid to the privacy of guests through the use of a mobile wall composed of foldable panels. The apartment can be ideal for different types of households with different temporal space requirements.

Households and situations



Single person



Divorced parent



Couple without children



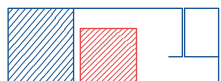
Normal



Normal



Normal



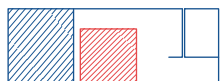
Visiting friends or family



Visiting children



Visiting friends or family



Airbnb



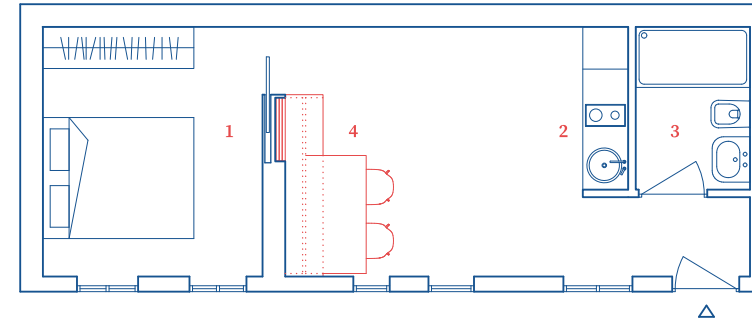
Airbnb



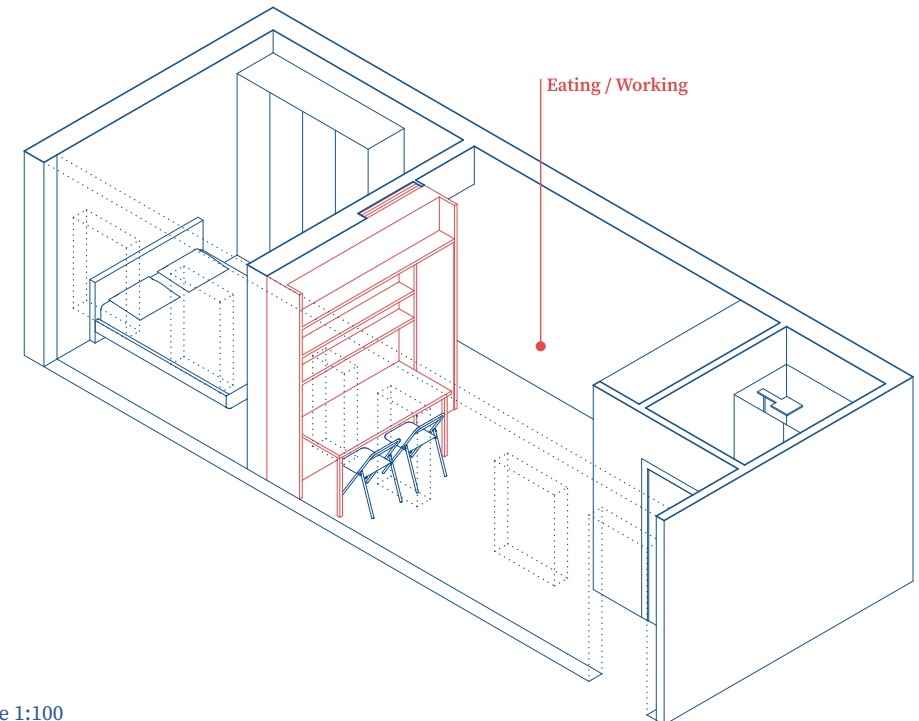
Airbnb



Layout 1

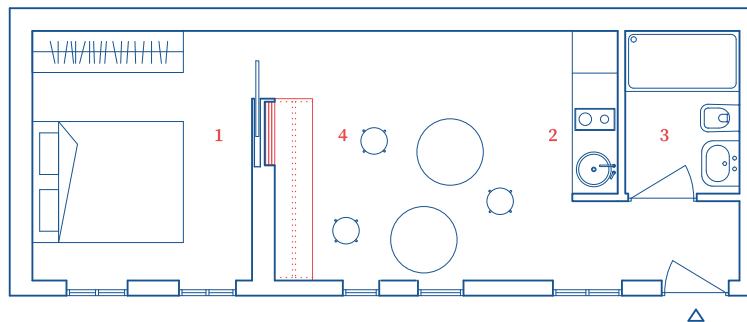


1 Bedroom 2 Kitchen 3 Bathroom 4 Living room



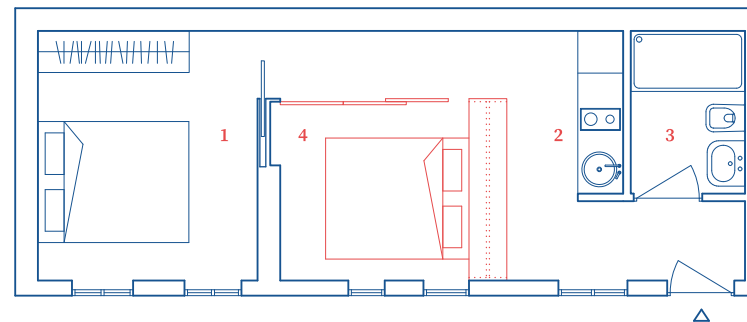
Scale 1:100

Layout 2

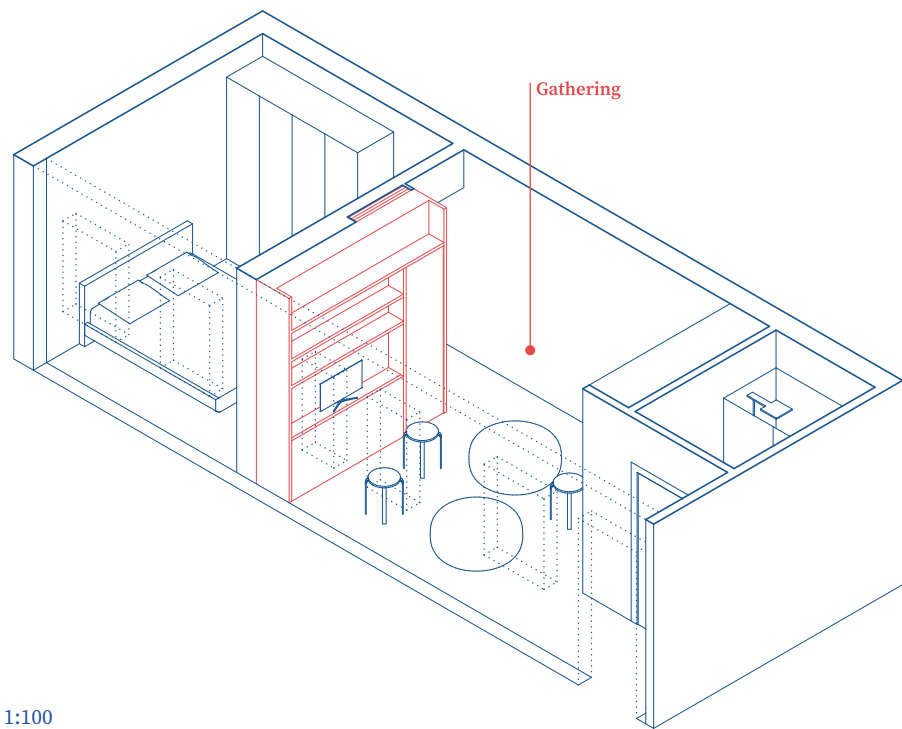


- 1 Bedroom
- 2 Kitchen
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Living room

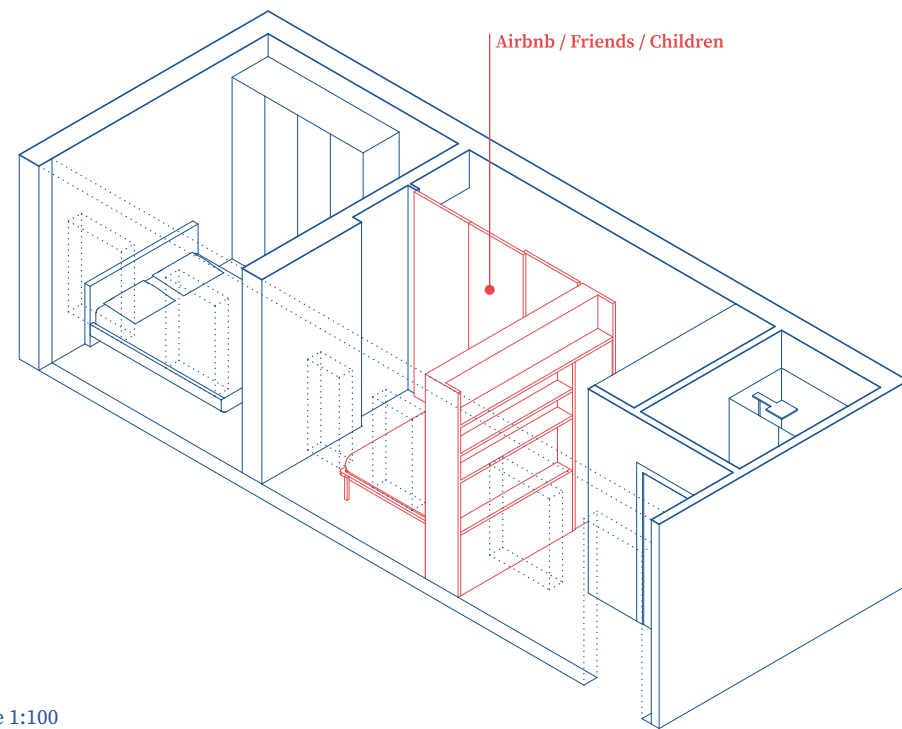
Layout 3



- 1 Bedroom
- 2 Kitchen
- 3 Bathroom
- 4 Extra Bedroom



Scale 1:100



Scale 1:100

2 Medium-size apartment 60 m²

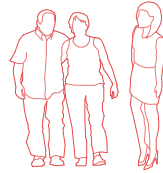
The second proposal provides a solution that can be adapted to a medium-size apartment. In this case, an extra room is designed to be adaptable to different uses over time. The entrance is conceived as a transition space. On one side, the part of the house dedicated to the owners / hosts,

and on the other side an extra room and a bathroom for airbnb guests, family members, or temporary guests. Privacy is emphasized by conceiving a part of the house almost independently of the rest.

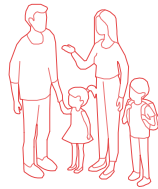
Households and situations



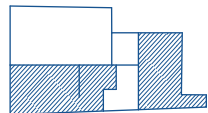
Parents +
adult child



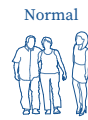
Senior couple +
student



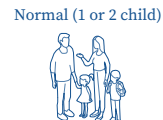
1 or 2 child
family



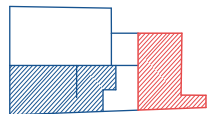
Normal



Normal



Normal (1 or 2 child)



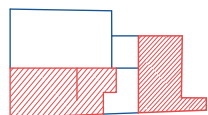
Airbnb (when adult child go away)



Airbnb (during summer)



Airbnb (when children grow up)



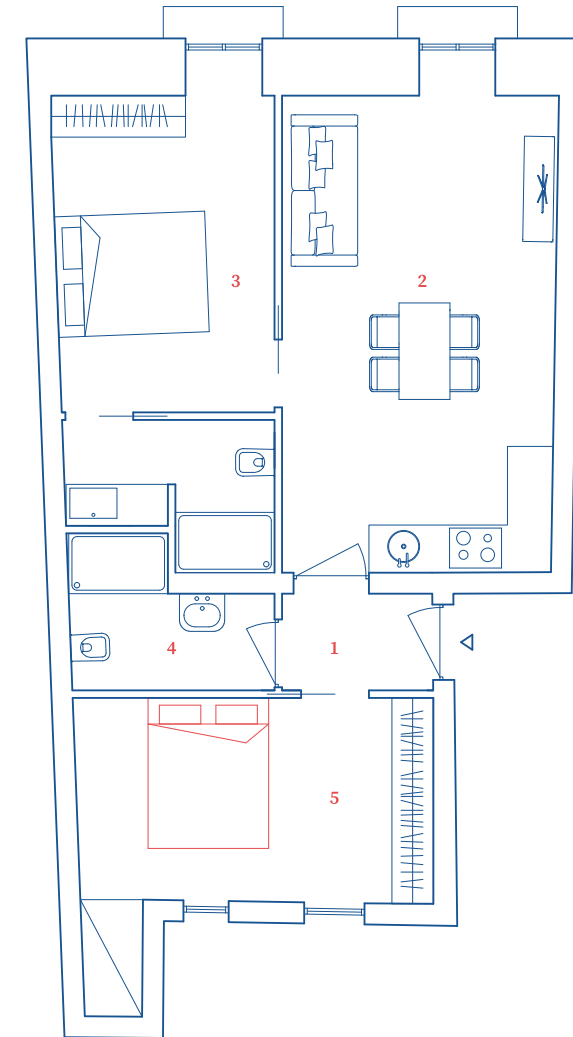
Airbnb



Airbnb



Airbnb



- 1 Entrance
- 2 Living room + Kitchen
- 3 Bedroom with private bathroom
- 4 Bathroom
- 5 Adaptable room

Scale 1:100

3

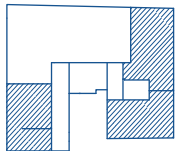
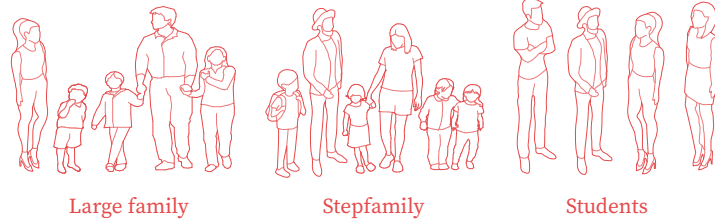
Large-size apartment

80 m²

The third proposal provides a solution that can be adapted to a large-size apartment. Also in this case, an extra room is designed to be adaptable to different uses and households over time. The entrance is a corridor that gives access to the extra room with private bathroom.

the living room you can instead access an area of the house dedicated to the owners / hosts, with a bathroom, a master bedroom and a bedroom. Also in this case the layout allows a high degree of privacy and adaptability to extended households or to practices of cohabitation.

Households and situations



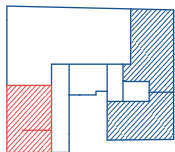
Normal (1 or 2 child)



Normal



Normal



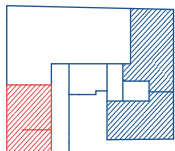
Airbnb



Visiting children



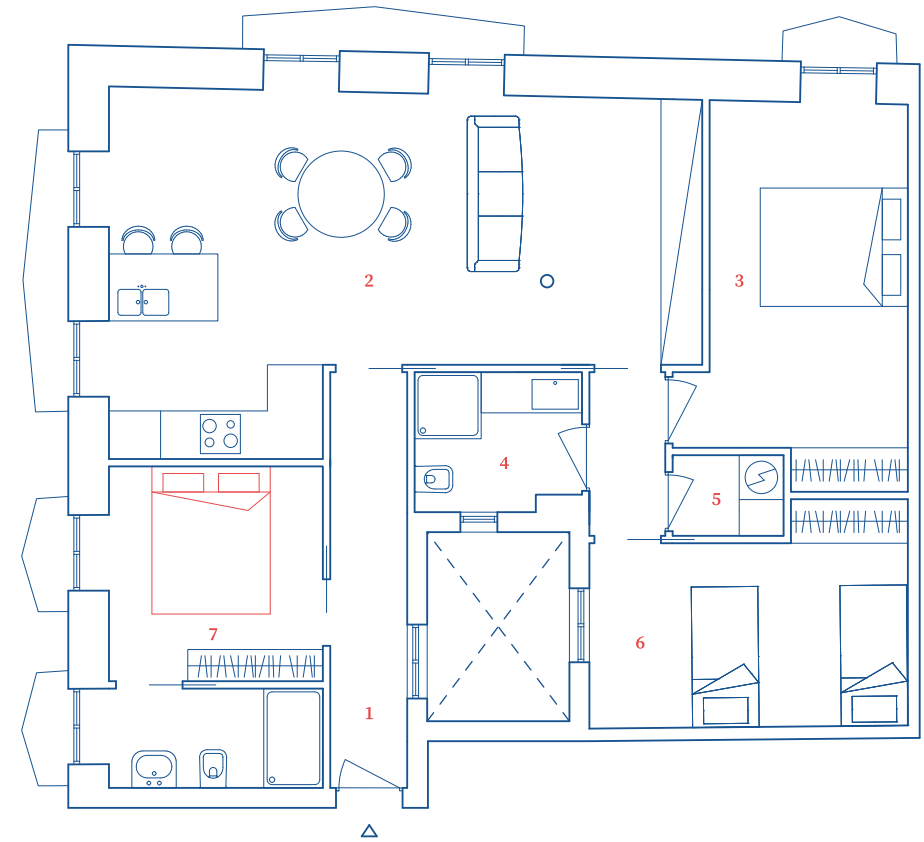
Airbnb (when a student is out)



New child



Airbnb



- 1 Entrance 2 Living room + Kitchen 3 Bedroom 4 Bathroom
- 5 Laundry room 6 Bedroom 7 Adaptable room with private bathroom

Scale 1:100

Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was twofold. First to understand the so-called Airbnb Effect, and second to deeply explore the urban and architecture consequences of this phenomenon, using the case study of Madrid as test bench. One of the main objective of this work has been to contribute to the existing research field in its weaker parts. In this final section of the thesis I would like to highlight my empirical and theoretical contribution to the topic.

Airbnb stems from the 2008 global crisis, structuring its success on the collaborative consumption ethos, which provides a paradigm shift towards a mechanism that balances the individuals needs with those of community. Airbnb allows anyone to take advantage of the unused potential of a space, generating an economic return to hosts, and a cheap way of travelling for guests. The platform has held its success especially in the new trend of urban tourism, pursuing the rhetoric of experiencing a trip in an authentic way, namely like a local. This type of success has been possible also thanks to the potential of Internet 2.0, which develops itself around the concept of interaction, completely absent in other tourist accommodation websites. However, in recent years, Airbnb has also generated a whole series of criticisms which have been deepened in this thesis. The economic and socio-spatial impact of the platform on already well-established tourist cities, has transformed Airbnb from a crisis response platform, to a urban crisis amplifier. What emerges from this thesis is the fact that the platform is moving away from its original vocation, placing itself in the traditional economy, but on a different medium. Although the economic and socio-spatial impacts are treated separately, they actually turn out to be strictly intertwined.

· The conflict as a key to understand the phenomenon

While on the one hand Airbnb, as well as tourism in general, can also positively influence the local economy by increasing tourist spending flows, it is also true that the extreme diffusion of Airbnb apartments in residential areas of the city generically not frequented by tourists can lead to a series of uncertain consequences. First of all, in the specific context of Madrid what emerges quite significantly is a general dissatisfaction expressed by various members of the society; on the one hand the hotelier associations, which look at airbnb as a real threat to the interests of the traditional tourist accommodation, and on the other side the neighborhood associations that looks at Airbnb as a threat to the life quality of permanent residents. The forms of conflict, as already happened in other Southern European contexts, such as Barcelona and Venice, turn out to be an important indicator of discontent in order to understand and explore a phenomenon like the Airbnb Effect. The protests carried out by hoteliers bring out an interesting picture of the competition between Airbnb and the traditional hotel industry, highlighting the limits of the latter. In Madrid, the distribution of traditional hospitality facilities is concentrated in a couple of central neighbourhoods, while the location of Airbnb listings is clearly more dense and widespread all over the city. As a result, the power of Airbnb lies in the ability to reduce prices, which according to the data analyzed are on average much lower than those of hotels, and above all through the inflation of the offer in a dense way. Furthermore, the exponential growth of Airbnb beds compared with the far more stable growth of the traditional accommodation number of beds, leading to the conclusion that Airbnb is more flexible concerning the increase of capacity. In fact, a hotel can not increase its existent capacity or architectural volume, especially due to regulation and local zoning requirements. On the contrary, the addition of one or more beds in an Airbnb apartment

can take place without problems or additional costs. But what seems to have an even more significant value is the conflict that has arisen in the Lavapiés area, which involves a large part of neighborhood associations against the rise in rental prices and the resulting evictions. According to most of the residents, this problematic situation seems to be due mainly to the strong presence of Airbnb listings in the area.

In relation to this, on a purely quantitative basis, my findings shows that first of all, the Distrito Centro presents about half of the total Airbnb city supply. Secondly, the neighbourhood of Embajadores turns out to be the one in which the greatest number of listings of the whole city is concentrated. Lastly, this is also the neighborhood where the Airbnb offer has grown the most in the last year.

These data must be closely integrated with a significant trend observed in the entire city, that of multi-owners. As matter of fact, according to the data analyzed in this thesis, Airbnb revenue result to be distributed highly unequally among hosts. The strong presence of specialized Airbnb operators is evidenced by the fact that 11% of them control about 40% of the city's listings, while hosts with one or two listings represent 89% of the operators, and control 60% of the Airbnb supply. Hence, it may be concluded that the revenue seems to be concentrated in a few hands, often international investment funds disguised as professional operators, who can trade individually up to two hundred entire apartments. In support of what has been said so far, the proven presence of multi-owners is further justified by the data concerning the types of apartment offered on the platform. As matter of fact, the data of the city center show that the Airbnb entire apartments supply represents 75% of the total, with just 25% of the private rooms. The former follow a logic of specialization based on the traditional tourism economy applied to a new medium, while the latter are usually based on collaborative consumption.

Lastly, it is important to underline that since 2014, Madrid has showed a general increase in rental prices, which grew by around 39%. Surely this data comes from a multiplicity of factors that can not be demonstrated in this thesis, but the strong presence of Airbnb in some neighborhoods, and especially the speculative tendency of multi-owners may have influenced this scenario. This last consideration can be supported by the fact that, as shown in this work, the potential profitability of a small size Airbnb apartment can be up to three times higher than that obtained from traditional rent. There is therefore a certain convenience on the part of the owners to transform their apartment into Airbnb, instead of continuing to obtain less revenue from traditional rent. At this point it is important to highlight the relevance of the tenancy regime of the dwellings, which strongly influences these dynamics. Exactly like what is happening in some parts of Lavapiés, in which some owners who own entire buildings can easily turn them into blocks of tourist apartments, thus evicting the tenants. At this point, the role of local governments' tenant protection measures here comes into play, proving to be, in the case of Madrid, rather weak. What I suggest here could be greater attention by local governments to developing measures to better protect tenants, through the application of rent control policies and broader minimum lease terms.

• Airbnb as possible tourism gentrification accelerator

The dynamics highlighted within this thesis become involved by right within a broader discussion labeled as tourism gentrification. In this thesis work I tried to tackle this theme by interpreting it mainly from a spatial point of view. Among the objectives, there was to understand if exists a certain relation between the Lavapiés super-dense housing stock and the ongoing gentrification process. What has emerged is that the gentrification process of the

neighborhood is at a standstill, in which there are some factors able to slow down this process, such as the presence of big community of immigrants, in addition to the very small size of the housing stock. There is also a large literature that demonstrates how the rehabilitation plans of the 80s and 90s have highlighted documented speculative forms, combined with successive branding strategies that have focused on transforming the neighborhood into a creative hub, while maintaining its multiethnic and in some respects blighted soul.

In this thesis I suggest that in the specific case of Lavapiés, Airbnb may be seen as a possible accelerator of tourism gentrification. It is true, in fact, that immigration still represents a real obstacle to gentrification, especially due to the fact that there is a strong community network within the neighborhood that has no desire or need to displace itself. On the other hand, however, it must be said that the power of Airbnb is in its ability to generate profit from very small size domestic spaces, which are usually rented to people with low purchasing power or owned by lonely elderly people. These spaces, given their high potential profitability due to Airbnb, are subtracted from the traditional rental market, generating a low availability to long-term rent. These apartments, often uninhabitable according to regulations, become real gold mines for investors, who can buy them at low prices and then lease temporarily to tourists, thus sanctioning the effectiveness of the rent gap theory. This consideration tends to respond to some of the objectives set forth at the beginning of this thesis, trying to show that Airbnb is able to exploit the scarce surface in its favor, and stating that, at least in the specific case of Lavapiés, square meters can be a significant variable to consider in the study of the gentrification process.

· Airbnb adaptability at medium scale

The Airbnb effect is not only readable at urban and neighbourhood scales, but also on the medium scale of a single building. Based on one of the research questions previously proposed, I may suggest that Airbnb appears to be hardly adaptable to consolidated, and very often fragile, typologies as those of traditional collective housing. Exploring the historical evolution of a Corrala, it emerged that today this typology expresses clear signs of socio-spatial contrast with the Airbnb implant.

From a purely spatial point of view, what is highlighted here is a general specialization of the building and in general a different use of the latter's common spaces with respect to the past. The gallery and the courtyard, for example, show dynamics of space appropriation by tourists, which actually modify the degree of privacy and intimacy of this typology. Furthermore, the housing units can often present a physical modification of the volume in order to allow a densification of the useful surface. This can be done by digging on the ground floor in order to get more height to insert a mezzanine, or by occupying the attic. Then, it must be said that a further growing trend is the change of intended use of the commercial premises in residence. From a sociological point of view, however, one of the most tangible consequences of Airbnb is the general lack of rules of cohabitation with tourists, which, as has been documented, can often have behaviors that strongly disturb permanent residents.

· The Airbnb apartment

The Airbnb effect has also generated an impact on the domestic space. The analytical-descriptive exploration of the case studies has shown that first of all there are, albeit minority, practices of sharing, and in the majority specialized apartments. In the former, there is an actual change in the way in which the hosts inhabiting, while in the latter, it is possible to notice a traditional lodging practice, as well as an aesthetic homogenization. Instead, what emerges from all the cases, both private rooms and entire apartments, is that the space is reconfigured according to recurring actions of densification, optimization or fragmentation. These actions are pursued through the use of specific devices, such as sofa beds, curtains, multifunctional blocks, or mezzanines. Ultimately, I suggest that the in-depth analysis of Airbnb domestic spaces once again shows the general tendency present in Madrid, namely the specialization of the home as a financial tool that generates profit. Moreover, it should be said that the presence, albeit a minority, of hosts who are willing to share their home with guests, places Airbnb within the wide scenario of contemporary living practices. As an answer able to mitigate the Airbnb Effect, I suggest the proposal of an adaptable home, which take advantages from the principles of flexibility in order to propose a solution able to cross the segmentation of contemporary living, including Airbnb among the possible practices.

In conclusion this thesis wants to demonstrate how an online platform, therefore apparently invisible, can be able to shift the economic and socio-spatial balances of a big city without any physical action.

Airbnb in particular results to be able to reshape the urban sphere in a fractal way, from the city to the apartment, generating many uncertain impacts on neighbourhood life. At this point it is important to reinforce the awareness that

territory is also a tourism consumption good, and as such it requires more attention from architects and planners. Architects must design solutions that are undetermined and strongly adaptable to the space-temporal variability of contemporary living practices.

· Limitations and further research

In terms of methodology, this thesis has built a mainly quantitative framework in the analysis of the phenomenon at urban and neighborhood scales; while at the smaller scale of building-apartment-devices the framework has been qualitative. Of course there are few limitations in this work. The former are related to the quantitative data analyzed. For instance, the study did not consider the occupation rate of the listings, nor the exact position of the latter. This is mainly due to the real lack of data, as protected by the same Airbnb platform. Leaving out these variables did not represent an insuperable limit to the research work, but it certainly made it less complete. In order to improve the analysis it might be useful to develop probabilistic indices that can summarize these variables. Moreover, other limitations concern the qualitative aspect of the research. This thesis lacks an ethnographic approach that could actually make the work more complete. The information used to support the thesis comes from the existing research literature, in some cases some informal interviews with the actors, and a fieldwork that has however neglected the aspect of the interviews. Also the analytical-descriptive work on the case studies has the limit of not having included useful interviews to better understand some dynamics, which in any case have been easily deducible. Surely the integration of a more in-depth ethnographic approach can lead to new evidence. In any case, the research field about Airbnb is still very open to new contributions, especially on the architectural side. ♦

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