

## MEASURING GENTRIFICATION IN THE RUSSAFA NEIGHBORHOOD

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### ABSTRACT

Gentrification is a global phenomenon, affecting a large number of cities. It involves the displacement of neighbourhood resident by new residents of a higher socioeconomic status. This article aims to highlight the characteristics of the phenomenon in the Russafa neighbourhood, in the city of Valencia. The paper focuses on two aspects: changes in the socioeconomic characteristics of the resident population and physical changes in the housing stock. The data were collected from the Population and Housing Census, the Municipal Register of Inhabitants and other statistical information compiled by the Valencia City Council. The neighbourhood's socioeconomic status is approximated through three variables: educational level, vehicle fleet and income, based on the analysis of housing prices. The results obtained show physical and social transformations typical of gentrification phenomena. On the one hand, from the physical point of view, the data indicates that an important real estate activity of renovation, rehabilitation and construction of new housing is carried out. On the other hand, the results indicate that at the end of the analysed period, the socioeconomic level of the population has increased considerably. Thus, the paper supports previous approaches in the literature on the effects of gentrification.

### KEYWORDS

Gentrification; housing markets; Russafa; València.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Gentrification processes have aroused great interest in the literature. The phenomenon has been analysed in many cities around the world. However, empirical studies on the subject are not so abundant. The Russafa neighbourhood, in the city of Valencia, shows the characteristics of gentrification phenomena. It presents an important dynamism, forming a space that concentrates cultural and leisure activities in the city, in addition to having an important tourist attraction. As occurs in gentrification processes, there has been a change in the characteristics of the resident population and in economic and commercial activity. The aim of this paper is to analyse the magnitude of the changes produced in the neighbourhood and to contrast these changes with those described in the literature.

The paper begins with a brief review of the literature on the phenomenon of gentrification and the studies carried out in different cities in Spain. Data from the Housing Population Census, the Municipal Register of Inhabitants, and other information provided by the Valencia City Council, such as the Census of Economic Activities and the Municipal Vehicle Tax, are used to carry out the analyses. Gentrification

implies a change in the resident population in the neighbourhood. The initial residents with a lower income level are expelled and a population with higher income levels now occupy these spaces. Although there is no information on income by neighbourhood, the socioeconomic level of the population has been approximated based on three variables, education level, number of vehicles and housing pricing, as an asset of urban income. The analyses carried out show the social transformations typical of gentrified neighbourhoods with an increase in the socioeconomic level of the population.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term gentrification, first used by the sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964, describes an urban phenomenon characterized by the displacement of the original inhabitants of a neighbourhood or urban area by population groups with higher income levels. Despite the simplicity of this idea, the characterization of the phenomenon is complex due to the wide variety of urban processes. In the 1980s and 1990s, those interested in these spaces were the new professional classes, the yuppies; already entered the 21st century, globalization, the knowledge society and transformations in the organization of production, causes new classes or groups to feel attracted to these spaces as places of production, residence and consumption, (Florida 2005, Del Romero and Lara 2015). In addition, the transformations in consumption patterns derived from globalization make various spaces in the city especially attractive as places of leisure, culture and tourism, activities that stimulate the gentrification process. From a physical point of view, the process involves the renovation and/or rehabilitation of the housing stock that initially shows a high level of deterioration. The explanatory causes of the emergence of gentrification processes have been approached from two main currents: on the demand side and on the supply side.

In the demand approach, gentrification is a consequence of sociocultural changes. The phenomenon is a consequence of new residential preferences resulting from sociocultural changes. The origins of gentrification are linked to new tastes and cultural orientations of the new social classes arising from structural transformations in the economy leading to changes in the socioeconomic residents' profile (Law 1980, 1986, 1996 and Hammet 1984). In this period, there is a trend contrary to that of previous decades, with a significant part of the middle classes preferring to live in inner city instead of seeking peripheral locations far from the centre. For this approach, social changes are the trigger that initiates the gentrification process, Law (1980). The demand approach has been criticised for considering the emergence of new social classes and lifestyles as the sole explanatory cause of the phenomenon, pointing out that there is no extensive empirical evidence to support this premise.

In 1979, the geographer Neil Smith developed a supply-side theory approach. He considers that the determinant of gentrification processes is the difference or gap between the current value of the property and the potential rent of the land. The deterioration of these spaces causes the interest of investors to diminish even further, which puts downward pressure on the value of the properties and allows the appearance of the gap. For this approach, the key lies in the appearance of an undercapitalized ground rent together with a high growth potential, this gap makes the investment and transformation of the spaces interesting. As the process consolidates, property rents increase and rent differential disappears. The catalyst of the process is capital in search of profitability (Smith 2002). Gentrification is seen as a phenomenon related to the profitability possibilities of new urban spaces. Critics point out that the premise of potential profitability is insufficient to explain the phenomenon (Clark 1992). Moreover, individual actors do not play any significant role in this model. Hammet (1991) proposes an approach to the phenomenon by introducing supply and

demand behaviours. Unlike Smith's theory, it is not oriented to the potential value of the properties, it focuses on the gap between the "investment rental value" (current value of the properties based on their rental income) and the "vacant possession value" (potential value if converted to acquire property) (Hammett 1984). If the rental investment value is less than the vacant possession value, there is a mismatch that constitutes pressure to change the tenancy regime, renovate and sell the property. According to Hammett (1984) gentrification should be considered simultaneously as a physical, economic, social and cultural phenomenon.

A third interpretation of gentrification processes is related to urban renewal actions derived from urban policy. The resurgence of the role of the city in the current economic context, its importance in economic growth, has generated an increase interest of administrations in their cities. Renovation actions make rehabilitated or newly built homes more expensive and therefore more affordable for the higher income levels of the population.

In some cases, capital acts proactively to accelerate the process, in others, properties reach high levels of deterioration and abandonment and become occupied by low-income marginalised populations before gentrification begins. From a systemic approach, gentrification arises whenever a catalyst appears, which would be the income gap. However, the gap can arise for a variety of reasons, either from the demand side, the supply side or both, and it will occur with different intensity, given the different characteristics of the actors involved in the different processes.

Many studies have examined the phenomenon of gentrification in cities and neighbourhoods. Studies initially focused on European and American cities. Later, from the 21st century onwards, they spread to cities in other continents. Duque (2010) provides an extensive review on the subject. In Spain, the works of Vázquez (1996), Janoschka and Sequera, J. (2005), Sequera, J. (2020), Muñoz (2009) and Renaud (2013) in the city of Madrid stand out;

Sargatal (2001), Hernandez (2015) and López Gay (2008, 2016) and Crespi-Vallbona (2018) in Barcelona; Gómez and González (2001) and Vicario and Martínez-Monje (2003) in Bilbao; Diaz (2009, 2015) in Seville and in Granada, Duque, R (2010, 2016). Among the various studies carried out, some focus on commercial gentrification, as is the case of gentrification related to that generated from market renovation, González and Waley (2013). Hernández-Cordero, (2014) and Díaz (2015).

### 3. GENTRIFICATION IN RUSSAFA NEIGHBORHOOD

The origins of Russafa date back to the 9th century when an Umayyad prince, following the custom of the leaders of the time, built his palace, an *almunia*. Centuries later, the construction of the medieval wall determined an intramural space and an extramural periphery in which various municipalities were located, including Russafa, (Cortes 2014). The neighbourhood maintained its hegemony until the 18th century. In the 19th century, with the rise of the bourgeoisie, the need for interventions and transformations in the city gained strength. In 1877 the neighbourhood was integrated into the city of Valencia and in 1907, the Mora's Expansion Project integrated Russafa into the regular layout of the expansion, preserving the most representative buildings of the neighbourhood. During the Second Republic, the neighbourhood experienced a period of cultural splendour and progress. It was consolidated as a popular neighbourhood of workers, peasants and shopkeepers, with important commercial activity centred on small workshops and shops, and an intense social and political life (Torres, 2007 and Del Romero and Lara 2015). From the 1960s onwards, the industrialization process took place, with a phase of urban growth in generally pre-industrialised geographical areas. Spanish cities such as Valencia grew significantly in an uncontrolled stage (Teixidor and Boira 1991). Despite the population growth,

the central spaces lose population in line with the loss of relative quality with respect to the new developments in the periphery. At the end of the 1980s, Russafa was a neighbourhood with an old housing stock and significant equipment deficiencies. A stock of empty cheap housing is generated and, in many cases, deteriorated, in a highly accessible space. The houses will soon be reoccupied by citizens from other countries with low income levels (Table 1).

Variation rates		
	70/81	81/91
Russafa	-25,3%	-14,4%
Distrito L'Eixample	-24,0%	-15%
Ciudad de València	13,2%	1,1%

Table 1. Population evolution (1970-1990). Source: Prepared by authors based on INE, Censos de población y vivienda

"From 1981 to 2001, the Russafa neighbourhood lost more than 25% of its inhabitants" (Del Romero and Lara 2015). In 2006, the Urban Vulnerability Observatory included Russafa in the list of Vulnerable Neighbourhoods (Jimenez 2014). In the early 2000s, Russafa was a neighbourhood with a declining population with a large number of empty flats and shops. This demographic trend, however, had begun to change in the 1990s when the first immigrants began to settle, attracted by the centrality, accessibility and the availability of cheap rents (Torres 2007). In the 1990s, Russafa consolidated as one of the city's immigrations neighbourhoods, initiating that multicultural aspect that would characterize it. This characteristic would become an attraction of the neighbourhood, especially for new social groups related to culture, art and the creative industry (Florida 2002). Entering the 21st century, important urbanisation works within the framework of the Riva Plan, Trust Plan; and works in the Central Park that provide a high-quality green urban environment and the possibility of housing social facilities. The intervention creates an urbanization, with large sidewalks and chamfers which enhances the

profitability of restoration activities. Capitals related to the commercial and services sector became interested in the neighbourhood and began to invest in it. Thus began a process of replacement of traditional commerce and local businesses opened by immigrants in the previous two decades. Modern restaurants, galleries and other spaces related to culture increased. The commercial substitution process accelerated, generating an excessive saturation of cafeterias, restaurants and cocktail bars. In 2014, faced with the saturation of the restaurant business, the Valencia City Council decided to apply restrictions on hotel and leisure-related activity.

#### 4. RESULTS. MEASURING GENTRIFICATION

The evolution of the population that we already pointed out in the previous section, comparing the Russafa neighbourhood and the overall population of the city of Valencia, shows that both dynamics are clearly different (Fig. 1). Since the 1970s, the neighbourhood has lost population, as is the case in other central areas of the city that have an old housing stock and a deficient level of facilities and urban quality. At that time, new urban developments of higher residential quality, propitiate the abandonment of these central spaces by the residents. It can be seen how in the 1990s, the population dynamics changed, reaching, reaching a certain stability from that moment onwards. At the end of the 1990s, the departures of previous residents was compensated by the entry of new residents, mostly from other countries and with lower income levels.

Looking at the physical changes in the neighbourhood, data on the age of the dwellings highlights a decrease in the number of old dwellings, especially those between 100 and 120 years old, and an increase in new construction since the beginning of the 21st century (Fig. 2). The reduction in old dwellings has generated new sites for new construction or renovation. The information obtained is consistent with the physical transformations typical of gentrification processes.

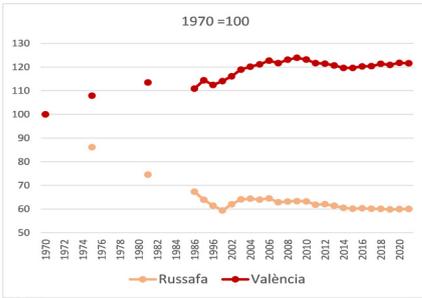


Figure 1. Evolution of the population in Valencia City and Russafa Neighbourhood. Source: Prepared by authors based on Padrón Municipal de Habitantes

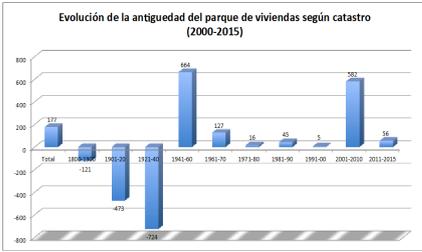


Figure 2. Evolution of the age of the housing stock (2000-2015). Source: Prepared by authors based on Catastro

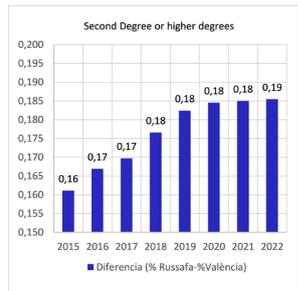
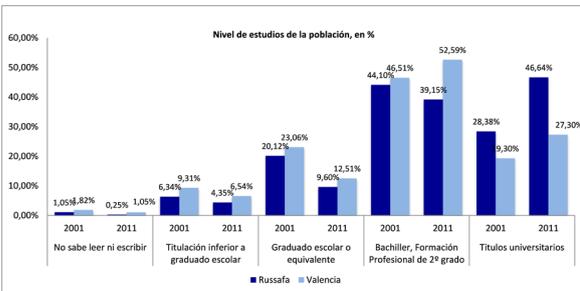


Figure 3. Educational level of the population. Source: Prepared by authors based on Censo de Población y viviendas, 2001 y 2011 y Padrón Municipal de Habitantes.

Gentrification involves a change in the socio-economic structure of the population. Lower income residents are, to some extent, displaced by new residents with a higher socio-economic status. To demonstrate this change, since data on income levels are not available, but an approximation of the socioeconomic status can be made on the basis of educational attainment, the taxable power of the vehicle fleet and the evolution of real estate income, as a function of household prices. The level of education was obtained from the information provided by the last two available Population Censuses, 2001 and 2011. The data indicate that the proportion of the population with a university degree is growing significantly more in Russafa than in the city as a whole (Fig. 3). The variable fleet of vehicles has been chosen under the consideration that a population with a higher taxable vehicle fleet corresponds to a population with a higher level of income and socioeconomic level. The data indicates that the residents of Russafa have a higher proportion of vehicles with high fiscal potential (20CV) than the city as a whole. In addition, this difference grows over time (Fig. 4).

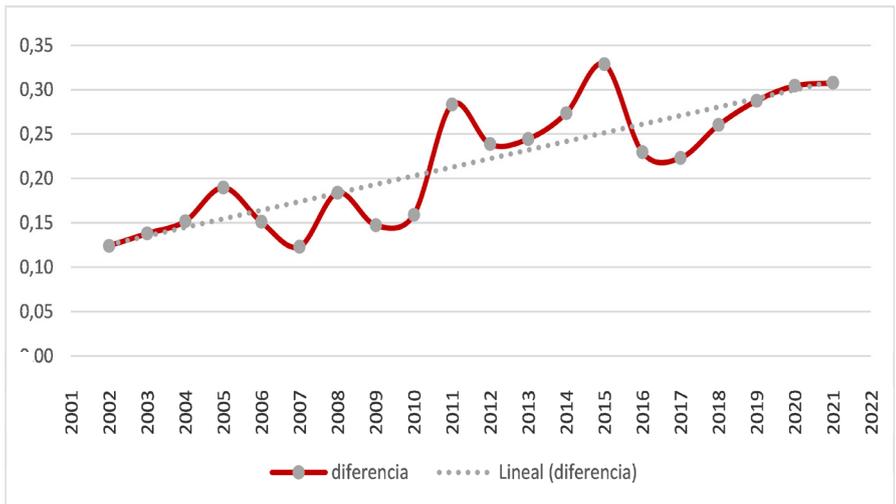


Figure 4. Number of vehicles with more than 20 CV per 100 inhab. Russafa-Valencia difference, Year 2021. Source: Fuente: Prepared by authors based on Impuesto municipal de Vehículos, Ayuntamiento de Valencia. Elaboración propia

The third variable considered was housing prices, as it is a variable that approximates urban income and therefore the socioeconomic status. To this end, the average house prices per square meter in each neighbourhood were analysed at two separate points in time. They have been ordered in ranking from highest to lowest price. Thus, the neighbourhood that occupies the first position is the one with the highest average price per square metre. Of the total of 70 neighbourhoods, Russafa is the second neighbourhood that has climbed more positions 32 positions (Table 2). The data allows us to affirm that in Russafa housing prices have risen above the city average, settling in a neighbourhood occupied by residents who can afford to pay higher prices. The available information also allows us to analyse changes in the economic activity of the neighbourhood based on the activity

license data. Specifically, we analyse the activity licenses per 100 inhabitants for the groups of professionals, commerce and services, and within these the group of shops, restaurants and hotels. Particularly significant is the increase in the number of professionals who have registered their activity in the neighbourhood (Fig. 5). The increase in commercial and services activities, as well as hotels and restaurants, is also very significant. It is known that gentrification is often accompanied by the intensification of activities related to leisure and tourism. As can be seen, for the different activity groups, the percentage of neighbourhood activity licenses per 100 inhabitants is higher than for the city as a whole. In addition, this proportion has grown at a higher rate over the last decade than for the city as a whole.

Precio medio metro cuadrado				Precio medio metro cuadrado			
BARRIOS	Posición 2008	Posición 2022	Cambio de posición 2008-2022	BARRIOS	Posición 2008	Posición 2022	Cambio de posición 2008-2022
<b>1. Ciutat Vella</b>				<b>9. Jesús</b>			
1. la Seu	11	7	4	1. la Raiosa	47	48	-1
2. la Xerea	3	4	-1	2. l'Hort de Senab	56	61	-5
3. el Carme	15	17	-2	3. la Creu Coberta	45	52	-7
4. el Pilar	12	14	-2	4. Sant Marcel·lí	60	64	-4
5. el Mercat	6	12	-6	5. Camí Real	37	62	-25
6. Sant Francesc	2	3	-1	<b>10. Quatre Carreres</b>			
<b>2. l'Eixample</b>				1. Montolivet	22	42	-20
1. Russafa	43	11	32	2. En Corts	34	40	-6
2. el Pla del Remei	1	1	0	3. Malilla	42	32	10
3. Gran Via	5	5	0	4. la Fonteta Sant	62		
<b>3. Extramurs</b>				5. na Rovella	25	65	-40
1. el Botànic	21	20	1	6. la Punta	13	21	-8
2. la Roqueta	20	10	10	7. Ciutat de les Art	8	13	-5
3. la Pètrina	27	29	-2	<b>11. Poblats Marítims</b>			
4. Arrancapins	19	25	-6	1. el Grau	28	38	-10
<b>4. Campanar</b>				2. el Cabanyal	70	31	39
1. Campanar	26	23	3	3. la Malva-rosa	67	37	30
2. les Tendetes	38	54	-16	4. Beteró	50	33	17
3. el Calvari	52	58	-6	5. Natzaret	69	68	1
4. Sant Pau	14	8	6	<b>12. Camins al Grau</b>			
<b>5. la Saïdia</b>				1. Aiora	30	43	-13
1. Marxalenes	46	47	-1	2. Albors	57	35	22
2. Morvedre	31	36	-5	3. la Creu del Grau	36	48	-12
3. Trinitat	24	28	-4	4. Camí Fondo	29	34	-5
4. Tormos	61	59	2	5. Penya-roja	7	2	5
5. Sant Antoni	49	46	3	<b>13. Algirós</b>			
<b>6. el Pla del Real</b>				1. l'Illa Perduda	33	30	3
1. Exposició	4	6	-2	2. Ciutat Jardí	23	24	-1
2. Mestalla	16	15	1	3. l'Amistat	48	39	9
3. Jaume Roig	9	16	-7	4. la Bega Baixa	18	26	-8
4. Ciutat Universitat	10	19	-9	5. la Carrasca	35	9	26
<b>7. l'Olivereta</b>				<b>14. Benimaclet</b>			
1. Nou Moles	54	51	3	1. Benimaclet	41	27	14
2. Soternes	51	53	-2	2. Camí de Vera	58	22	36
3. Tres Forques	66	66	0	<b>15. Rascanya</b>			
4. la Font Santa	63	69	-6	1. Orríols	68	67	1
5. la Llum	39	50	-11	2. Torreïel	64	60	4
<b>8. Patraix</b>				3. Sant Llorenç	17	18	-1
1. Patraix	55	41	14	<b>16. Benicalap</b>			
2. Sant Isidre	53	63	-10	1. Benicalap	40	44	-4
3. Vara de Quart	59	57	2	2. Ciutat Fallera	65	55	10
4. Safranar	44	45	-1				
5. Favara	32	56	-24				

Table 2. Ranking housing Price per square meter in the City of Valencia Source: Prepared by authors based on real estate portal Idealista.

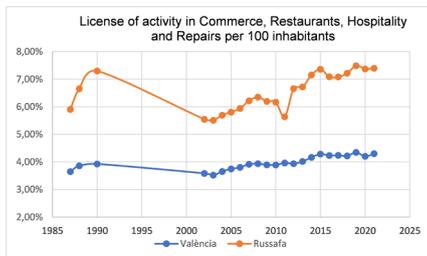
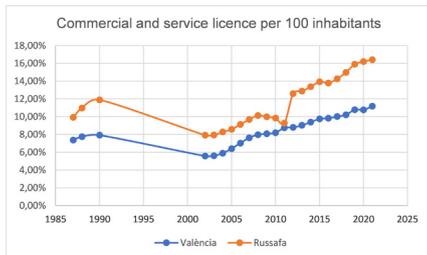
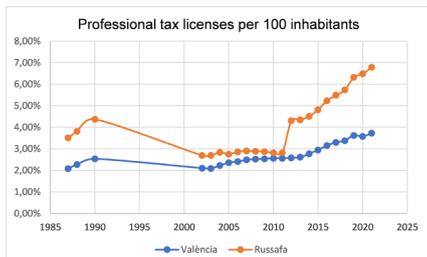


Figure 5. Economic Activities in Russafa Neighborhood.  
Source: Ayuntamiento de Valencia, Prepared by authors based on Censo de Actividades Económicas

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The phenomenon of gentrification is present in many cities around the world and has been the subject of much academic literature. Gentrification implies a renewal of city spaces and a change in the population structure, as the initial population with lower income levels is replaced by a population with higher income levels. Although we do not have data on the

income level of the neighbourhood, studies show that the neighbourhood has undergone both a physical and social transformation.

On the one hand, the physical transformation is substantial, there has been a renewal of the housing stock, improvements in infrastructures and facilities, as well as in the quality of urbanization. These improvements come both from actions by the administration in the case of urbanization and new infrastructures and facilities, and from private investment through the rehabilitation and new construction of housings.

With regard to the characteristics of the population, it is evident that the level of education of the residents of the neighbourhood is above that of the city as a whole and, furthermore, in the period analysed it improves to a greater extent than for the city. The difference widens over time. The second variable used, the number of vehicles with high tax power, more than 20 CV, also grows above the city as a whole. The third variable used to approximate the socioeconomic level is the price of housing as an indicator of urban income. The data shows that housing prices grow significantly. Based on the ranking of housing prices per square meter per neighbourhood, the offer price in the Russafa neighbourhood climbs 32 positions with respect to a total of 70 neighbourhoods, rising from 43rd place in 2002 to 1th place in 2022.

Beyond questions related to the characteristics of the residents, focusing on economic activity, based on the data provided by the City Council by the census of economic activities, the neighbourhood shows a great dynamism with a significant increase in the number of professionals and activities related to commerce and leisure.

We can conclude that the analysis carried out provides relevant evidence endorsing that the physical and social transformations typical of the gentrification processes indicated in the literature are present in the Russafa neighbourhood. Future research will focus on the problems arising from gentrification processes related to tenure regime and access to housing.

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