Hosting Futures
Dispossession and Hospitality in Contemporary Portugal
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Abstract.　In Mediterranean Europe there has been a notable increase in evictions and foreclosures in the past few years. During these processes, families are 'locked out' of their pasts – incorporated into walls, objects, relationships, but also a wider world built on the possibility of anticipating and imagining futures. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in an informal neighborhood on the outskirts of Lisbon, I demonstrate that hospitality is capable, on the one hand, of re-connecting home and hope, and, on the other, of providing a convincing basis of regional comparison. My intention is to show that hospitality can be investigated as a «weapon of the weak».

Keywords:　Hospitality; Dispossession; Future; Resistance; Portugal.

1. Introduction: Reversing the Plight

During the first week of December 2013, I started fieldwork in the *Bairro* of Santa Filomena. In the first decade of the 2000s, this informal neighborhood on the outskirts of Lisbon that had been completely demolished as part of a Government Rehousing Programme[1] [Pozzi 2017a, 2020] was refuge to more than 2,500 people. When I reached the *Bairro*, there were few people resisting, extensive ruins, and little hope.

At the beginning of the 1960s, occupation of the land situated near the railway line connecting Lisbon to the city of Sintra gave rise to the *Bairro*. The squatters were primarily Portuguese families migrating from rural areas in the south of the country. Following the Portuguese colonies' wars of

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[1] Decree-Law 63/1993, known as *Programa Especial de Realojamento* (PER). PER was formulated to regulate the massive housing emergency, defined by the program as a 'huge social plague' [Cachado 2013]. In the case of Santa Filomena, the program involved demolishing the entire neighborhood and rehousing some of its residents in public housing.

independence that ended between 1973 and 1975 and the intense sub-urbanization process [Nunes 2013], the *Bairro* – like many other marginal places in the Portuguese landscape [Tulumello *et al.* 2018] – became a destination and refuge for *retornados* and migrants from West Africa [Góis 2006; Grassi 2006; Batalha, Carling 2008; Pardue 2013].

When I first arrived in the *Bairro*, introduced by some members of a local social movement called *Colectivo Habita* that was struggling against demolitions together with the community, I immediately started searching for a room to rent in the area. As an inexperienced young ethnographer, my intention was to energetically follow Malinowski's first rule: live with the natives! Some activists suggested I pitch a tent in the middle of the neighborhood (but this seemed a bit 'too' Malinowskian to me); others, more realistically, suggested I ask around the *Bairro* for someone to put me up: the local community was particularly «hospitable», they told me, «you won't have any problems finding a place, since you came here from Italy to tell their story». The few inhabitants still living in their precarious houses were indeed genuinely helpful and generous despite my potential to be a rather 'problematic' and 'annoying' guest [Fava 2017]. But the real problem was another: there were no more rooms or couches, beds or cots available. Every family or person in the *Bairro* (who still had an intact house) was hosting someone who had lost his or her home.

«How was that possible?» I asked myself. Was it such a close-knit community? Were there family ties that obliged people to host parents and relatives? What "cultural norm" fueled these practices? And if such a norm existed, was it Portuguese, Cape Verdean, Angolan or what?

I abandoned such questions over the course of the research, focusing on one side on the general failure of resistance against rehousing in the *Bairro* [Pozzi 2017b] and, on the other, on the history of the neighborhood and the people who used to live there [Pozzi 2017a, 2020]. In doing so, I focused on the past and present of the situation I observed, and hospitality was not one of the main topics of the research.

Elsewhere, I have analyzed the politics of hospitality for evicted families in Italy as a top-down process that reflects an ambiguous and complex set of public policies, social practices, cultural representations, and symbolic aspects aimed at producing a hierarchical taxonomy of forms of citizenship [Pozzi 2019]. In this paper, my intention is to demonstrate that hospitality can be also investigated from the bottom-up and considered a «weapon of the weak» [Scott 1985].

In his influential book *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance*, James Scott focuses on social change, politics, and class conflict in agrarian societies. His thesis is that, to understand class relationships and logics of domination, we should focus not on 'historic' and 'official' events such

as organized rebellions or collective action, but rather on more subtle forms of «everyday resistance». Powerless communities, often well aware of their exploitation according to Scott, use ordinary weapons such as sabotage, feigned ignorance, foot-dragging, gossip, and dissimulation to resist persistent servitude. These practices can be considered hidden forms of cultural resistance, strategically employed to unhinge class hegemony.

My thesis is that hospitality is also used by marginalized communities as a weapon of resistance. As Zezinha[2], a Cape Verdean inhabitant of the *Bairro* who was evicted during my research once told me: «I wouldn't have been able to survive [the loss of my house] without my neighbors. They gave me a *cama* [bed], they gave me *cachupa* [a typical dish from Cape Verde]… The *Câmara* [Municipality] didn't help me, but Eloisa, Zeca, and Maria Luísa did».

As Herzfeld has underlined, «hospitality provides the poor, the dependent, and the politically disadvantaged with unique opportunities for symbolizing the reversal of their plight» [Herzfeld 1992, 171]. This «reversal of their plight» can be symbolized and enacted not only through space, but also – and probably mainly – through time. The loss of home can bring about the disruption of the family group, social declassing, stigmatization, the interruption of life planning, a loss of affect, and so on. All of these consequences of forced dispossession interfere with the capacity to imagine possible futures, forcibly imprisoning people in a nostalgic past or precarious present [Fisher 2013]. In this paper, I sustain that – in certain situations – hospitality has the power to re-orient life trajectories and re-activate people's perceptions of an actually existing future.

In the following pages, I first offer some insights into the housing question in Portugal and how it is connected to the capacity to 'create' futures. Secondly, I briefly summarize the state of the art about the relationship between anthropology, hospitality, and the Mediterranean (with a focus on Southern Europe), concentrating on the possibility of exploring hospitality as a bottom-up process. Subsequently, I present the structural uncertainty and insecurity that characterized the *Bairro* of Santa Filomena at the time of my arrival. Finally, I show how hospitality worked as a form of neighborhood-based resistance against housing vulnerability, promoting a new, community-oriented approach to the future.

2. The Housing Question and Orientation to the Future: Postcards from Portugal

In contemporary Portugal, the «housing question» [Engels 1872] is an object of public debate that seems to reflect the tensions and contradictions

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[2] The names of the interlocutors reported in this essay are fictional.

characterizing the country since the explosion of the crisis in 2008. As Allegra and Tulumello have demonstrated [2019, iii], the debate revolves around two different poles: on one side, journalists such as Jones [2017] or Alderman [2018] hold that Portugal has managed to reconcile economic growth with social well-being and revamped public policies in the last few years; on the other, scholars such as Teles [2018] and Allegra and Tulumello believe that, despite the indisputable economic growth, the structural and new inequalities produced by the crisis continue to operate.

According to the two Italian scholars, «The present state of housing in Portugal is characterized by an accumulation of new crises over historical and structural problems», such as «the failures of public housing policies, the deep inequalities of access […] and the differences in housing security […]» [Allegra, Tulumello 2019, iii][3]. The last dossier edited by the *Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana* confirmed this analysis, revealing that 187 municipalities still suffer from housing privations, over 14,000 buildings and 31,000 houses lack adequate living conditions, and more than 25,000 families require rehousing [IHRU 2018]. In view of these findings, the analysis put forward by Jones and Alderman risks appearing naïve: a risk that I do not intend to take.

Reflecting on housing in contemporary Portugal means concentrating on the historical factors that have contributed to its specificity. As Pinto and Guerra wrote, its specificity stems first of all from «[…] a late but intense urbanization process […] combined with an insufficient supply of housing […]» [Pinto, Guerra 2019, 1]. Secondly, from «a late and fragile development of a welfare state, in counter cycle, in the context of a general questioning of its sustainability» [*Ibid*]. And finally, from «public policy options within this embryonic welfare state [that] were predominantly oriented towards sectors other than housing, namely health, social security and education» [*Ibid*]. These factors contributed to generating some peculiar characteristics in the Portuguese housing system. For example, Portugal has historically attributed a great deal of social, political and economic significance to house ownership in the private market, with various political strategies promoting this form of property and investment, especially through tax benefits, subsidized credit and fiscal incentives [Pinto 2017]. Moreover, like other Southern European states, Portugal has a limited stock of public housing [Allen *et al.* 2004]: its public holdings are less than 5% of the total properties for rent, in line with Italy, Greece and Spain but contrasting with a European average of 25% [Indovina 2005]. The supply of public housing has been progressively decreasing in recent decades even as the demand for it increases exponentially, due mainly to the 2008 economic crisis. It is no longer only the historically weaker classes – such as, in this case study, immigrants from former

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[3] Translated by the author.

Portuguese colonies and their descendants [Taviani 2019] – who are affected by the problem of housing shortages, therefore; this issue has now extended to average-income families as well [Pinto, Guerra 2013].

Houses, once a safe investment and resource-accumulating asset (for both immigrants and natives, through different paths), have been transformed into one of the more marked and dramatic victims of a broader process of impoverishment. In most cases, evictions and foreclosures – driven also by resettlement and rehousing projects – are not a consequence of a general process of indigence but a cause of this process that must be assessed structurally, beginning from the life trajectories of those affected [Desmond 2016].

During eviction and foreclosure processes, families are 'locked out' of their pasts – incorporated into walls, objects, domestic and neighborhood relationships, but also a wider world built on the possibility of anticipating and imagining futures starting from home. In fact, individuals' ability to manage the economic possession of a house often represents the cornerstone of an «attitude of hope», a «capacity to aspire» towards the future, as defined by Appadurai [2013]. Once this capacity is annihilated, people find themselves, as Rebecca Bryant and Daniel M. Knight have stated, forcibly «reassessing their expectations, reorienting themselves to the yet-to-come» [2019a, 1].

3. Everywhere, Nowhere, or From Below? Anthropology, Hospitality, and the Mediterranean

As I will show in depth below, in the *Bairro* of Santa Filomena such reorientation towards the «yet-to-come» has been carried out through a specific praxis: hospitality.

Hospitality seems to represent a «natural» gesture in the wide spectrum of acts of sociability [Sarthou-Lajus 2008, 516]. The rituals, practices, representations, morals, and politics of hospitality regulate the foundations of any attempt to build a relationship with the Other. Hospitality represents «the inauguration of every social bond» [Boudou 2012, 276]. Given this foundational character, «one is struck by the fact that», in the history of the discipline, «hospitality is both everywhere and (nearly) nowhere» [Candea, Da Col 2012, S2].

The first anthropologists engaged with hospitality only accidentally, enabling us to imagine the need to develop our understanding of the concept[4]. The development of this concept has been caught up with the work of a Mediterraneanist anthropologist, Julian Pitt-Rivers [1963, 2012]. Analyzing

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[4] Candea and Da Col [2012, p. S2] cited the work of Morgan [2003 (1881)], Boas [1887], and Mauss [1923].

his ethnographic data collected in Andalusia, Pitt-Rivers defined hospitality as a «natural law […] deriving from sociological necessity» [Pitt-Rivers 2012, 515], intended to regulate «the problem of how to deal with strangers» [Ivi, 501].

Given the social value of hospitality as a means of maintaining a community-oriented order in the face of the extra-ordinariness of encounters with the Other [Shryock 2012], Pitt-Rivers characterized the «law of hospitality» as sacred, regulative, and universal. This «sociological necessity», he argued, represents the consequence of the ambiguous value of the stranger [Benveniste 1969, 510], which could constitute a resource as much as a threat [Derrida 2000].

Another Mediterraneanist anthropologist, Michael Herzfeld, also reflected on hospitality, meditating on one hand on the entanglements between the state (as a whole, in its bureaucratic aspects), customs and hospitality [Herzfeld 1992] and, on the other hand, on «the scalar slipperiness» and unpredictable versatility of hospitality [Herzfeld 2012, S210-S211; cfr. Herzfeld 1987]. He demonstrated that the term 'stranger' represents a «shifter» whose meaning depends on the context of attribution and «upon the relation between speaker and audience» [Candea, Da Col 2012, S14]. According to this assumption, hospitality itself becomes a «shifter», a flexible dispositive through which it is possible to produce an «essential homology between several levels of collective identity – village, ethnic group, district, nation». In this sense, «what goes for the family home also goes, at least by metaphorical extension, for the national territory» [Herzfeld 1987, 76]. As Ben-Yehoyada has noted, «as hosts and guests demand, enact, and recount scenes of hospitality, they move along this set of concentric identities» [Ben-Yehoyada 2016, 11].

Hospitality is also «an object of contention, concern, and debate» [*Ibid.*], leading various authors to call for a «political representation» of hospitality. Nevertheless, most of them address it as a top-down political process [Rozakou 2012, Boudou 2017]. My attempt here is to overturn this prevailing interpretative frame and focus on the possibility – in most cases unconsidered – of treating hospitality as a practice that, if carried out from a subordinate position, can be considered a form of resistance or, at least, resilience. As mentioned above, Herzfeld has suggested that «hospitality provides the poor, the dependent, and the politically disadvantaged with unique opportunities for symbolizing the reversal of their plight. It allows them to invert their political dependence in the moral sphere» [Herzfeld 1992, 171]. Hospitality, he argues, imposes an obligation of reciprocity and moral indebtedness that can be considered intimately political. For this reason, «hospitality is a symbolic strategy of very considerable force» [Ivi, 177].

Where does this considerable force come from? According to Herzfeld, it stems precisely from the logic of moral indebtedness that permeates

hospitality. If this logic is limited to individuals, the force of hospitality has little value in the frame of a political fight; if instead this logic relates to a community or a group of interest, the value increases because the symbolic strategy implied by such debt can be incorporated into a wider political struggle, becoming a «weapon of the weak». This potential lies in the fact that, as Touval has stated, «Ideals [and practices] of hospitality offer insight into the scope and depth of human cooperation and sociability» [Touval 2017, 27]. In this sense, mutual aid, cooperation networks, and solidarity become instruments that bolster local communities against the risk of disintegration, as in the case of Santa Filomena.

An attentive reader can hardly help noticing that most of the scholars who have reflected on hospitality are (or were) anthropologists of the Mediterranean. Indeed, hospitality – and the theoretical thinking related to it – are deeply rooted in the Mediterranean cultural landscape. The dialectical relationship appears almost 'natural'; meaning, in a way, stereotyped.

This observation begs the question, can we consider Portugal a Mediterranean country? The answer is not obvious. In fact, as Aceves notes when ironically commenting on Boissevan's essay *Towards a Social Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, «my maps fail to indicate any part of Portugal as bordering on the Mediterranean Sea» [Boissevan *et al.* 1979, 85]. Evidently, it cannot be taken for granted that Portugal is necessarily part of the Mediterranean. Gilmore has underlined that, if we consider the Mediterranean to be composed of those countries that share a «coast» and commercial mutualism, Portugal would be excluded [Gilmore 1982, 177].

Delimiting a 'cultural area' is a classic anthropological problem and I do not presume to solve it here[5]. Nevertheless, regarding the question of considering Portugal a Mediterranean country despite its undeniable Atlantic influences, hospitality can come to the rescue. In fact, Herzfeld has suggested (albeit critically) that the compresence of similar models of hospitality is one of the few elements that supports the possible unity of the Mediterranean [Herzfeld 1987]. In this sense, although hypothetically, the arguments in this article reflect a revisitation – on a reduced scale – of the comparative project of Mediterraneanist anthropology. In this project, hospitality was identified as one of the 'cultural traits' supporting the idea of Mediterranean unity as a valid category of regional comparison. If we follow this line of thinking, Portugal surely shares commonalities with other countries in the Mediterranean (an area considered to include not only the states of Southern Europe, but also Northern Africa and the Middle East). Nevertheless, this essay's scope

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[5] Some important publications representing this debate include Albera, Bromberger and Blok [2001], Albera [2006], Bromberger [2006], Kousis, Selwyn and Clark [2011], and Ben-Yehoyada and Silverstein [2020].

of comparison is much more contained, limiting the context of analytical reference to the Mediterranean part of Europe.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to clarify some analytical and epistemological elements that justify the concrete possibility of using this (problematic) concept of hospitality in anthropology (specifically, in the anthropology of the Mediterranean, albeit in a limited area), and to do so I will follow Herzfeld's indications. First of all, hospitality must be used as a «productive heuristic concept» and not as an «a priori conclusion», especially if we wish to avoid undermining «the goals of comparativism» [Herzfeld 1987, 87]. Secondly, the Mediterranean must be considered «an ethnographic datum for analysis, rather than exclusively as an analytical category» (Ivi, 86). Finally, the anthropological analysis of hospitality «should lead to a more critical inspection of the notion of 'Mediterranean society' itself» [Ivi, 88]. I would add two essential recommendations. On one side, hospitality must never be considered an innate form of sociality, but rather treated as a social, political, and cultural construction [Da Col 2019]. On the other, hospitality becomes effective as a concept if we consider the different temporalities implied. That is, its orientation towards the future is a fundamental characteristic that has rarely been considered despite the act of imagining 'times to come' that inhabits every gesture or politic of hospitality.

4. Structural Uncertainty, Housing Vulnerability, and Dispossession in the Outskirts of Lisbon

The *Bairro* of Santa Filomena was built on a hill not far from the underground station of Amadora, an overcrowded municipality in the outskirts of Lisbon. The main entrance to the *Bairro* was uphill: walking between rows of decaying houses, you had to step carefully to avoid potholes in the road, garbage, and insistent street vendors. The smell of salt cod combined with the aroma of *torresmo* (fried pork). When the concrete ended, an unpaved area began: a signal that the 'legal' town had given way to the 'unauthorized' one. Exactly at that point, a wall survived the planned demolitions. On the wall, a graffiti artist had drawn the face of a young lady with curly, colorful hair and a pair of big, wide-open eyes. Inside her pupils, the artist painted the reflection of the bulldozers that – day after day – had been demolishing the neighborhood since 2012. This picture illustrated exactly the atmosphere of vulnerability, uncertainty, and crisis that the local population was experiencing.

To illustrate how and why *Bairro* residents found themselves needing to react and resist through hospitality, it is necessary to understand the structural and systemic factors that produced the widespread sense of insecurity and uncertainty. At the time of my fieldwork, the *Bairro* was characterized by

marked spatial, ethnic and socioeconomic segregation among its inhabitants, mainly migrants native to the former Portuguese colonies and Cape Verde in particular. Together with internal migration, many international migrants were drawn to the area between 1950 and 1970 by the development of the transportation infrastructure and industrialization of the metropolitan area [Amadora XXI, 13], especially young men looking for work [Cachado 2013]. These migrants came to make up for the scarcity of manpower caused by the high rates of Portuguese emigration towards other European countries that were undergoing reconstruction after the Second World War [Batalha, Carling 2008]. An activist with the *Colectivo Habita* that I accompanied during my research, once told me with evident pride that «*Amadora é terra de pretos »* ('Amadora is a land of blacks'). Santa Filomena was one of the most significant places in this *terra*.

My fieldwork coincided with the end phase of implementing a governmental rehousing program known as *Programa Especial de Realojamento* (PER). PER had been formulated to regulate the massive housing crisis characterizing Portugal since the 1950s. In the case of Santa Filomena, the program involved demolishing the entire neighborhood and rehousing some of its residents in public housing. The rehousing process excluded many residents on the grounds that they had arrived in the *Bairro* after the 1993 census of beneficiaries. Furthermore, the land on which the neighborhood was located had been acquired in 2007 by a real estate investment fund managed by Portugal's biggest banking group, Millenium BCP [Habita 2014], which added further impetus to the drive to 'reclaim' the area.

In the everyday life of the population, this meant that the majority of the houses in the *Bairro* had been already demolished: about 1/10 of the population was still living in the neighborhood, while the others had been forcibly removed from their homes. The sense of uncertainty mainly manifested in terms of accommodations and the environment. In fact, the last inhabitants of the *Bairro* conduced their lives amongst ruins, asbestos, rats, and garbage. The violent decrease in the local population brought about an increase in illegal activities, such as drug dealing, robbery, theft, dealing in stolen property, and vandalism: as the «eyes upon the streets» [Jacobs 1961] disappeared, criminal activities – mainly conducted by people not living in the *Bairro* – increased substantially. One of the main consequences of this shift was constant patrolling by local and national police, especially at night, a presence that exacerbated perceptions of insecurity among the local population due to the country's history of police violence against black people [Raposo *et al.* 2019].

Again, the local population lived in the constant fear of being suddenly and violently evicted: in the worst scenario, this might happen – as fieldwork experience confirmed – while they were at work, taking their children to

school or having a doctor's appointment. Such evictions not only meant that they would not be able to enter their houses anymore; sometimes, locals would find their homes demolished. This fear was generated by empiric evidence, since episodes of that kind had in fact already occurred, as I myself witnessed. In response, some inhabitants did not leave their houses for months: in defending their houses, they lost their jobs, their families, and even – in some cases – their psychological or physical health. Eurico, a young Angolan who had already lost three houses in his life (one during the Angolan civil war, one due to migration, one as part of a forced removal in the *Bairro*) told me, referring to the constant presence of the bulldozers in the *Bairro*: «*O monstro dorme lá. Nunca vai embora*» ('The monster is sleeping there. He never leaves').

Furthermore, with the implementation of PER, the community that had once been very collaborative and united was *broken*. Beginning with the very first demolition, the execution of this plan disrupted familiar and mutual-aid relationships inside the *Bairro*. These networks had been in force in the neighborhood since building had begun on the settlement and they were integrated into individual or familiar migratory routes [Grassi 2006; Batalha, Carling 2008], enormously improving the efficacy of the process of re-settling. In fact, as reported in depth elsewhere [Pozzi 2017a], the migrants domesticated the rural area through a collaborative effort: houses, streets, sewage pipes, hydraulic and electric systems, even the local church were the result of a decades of community effort. As one of my interlocutors once told me: «*Nós construímos tudo aqui !*» ('We built everything here!'). The loss of homes weakened these community ties and networks, and they needed to be reforged in some way.

The primary effect of the uncertainty that the community was experiencing struck the realm of community imagination: the future seemed to have disappeared, life trajectories seemed to be interrupted, the community was «acclimatize[d] […] to insecurity and hopelessness […]» [Butler 2011, 13].

Colectivo Habita, a local social movement defending the inhabitants' right to housing, took responsibility for reactivating social networks in the *Bairro* in order to resist the demolition process. This attempt to reweave networks was carried out through different strategies and, although in the end it was perceived by the activists as a failure [Pozzi 2017b], it did grant the local population the concrete possibility – denied them in material, symbolic, and relational senses – to re-orient their life-projects.

According to my experience, one of the most successful practices enacted by the activists was to convey the necessity of restoring ties of solidarity in the *Bairro*. How? First of all, by giving hospitality to the people who had already lost their homes.

5. Hospitality as Resistance: Back to the Future in the Bairro of Santa Filomena

As stated above, Pitt-Rivers casts hospitality as a «sociological necessity» that arises in relation to the «problem of how to deal with strangers» [2012, 508-509]. Evicted, rehoused and dispossessed people – 'homeless' (in the strict sense of the term), 'hostile strangers' (in a metaphorical sense) – find themselves in an 'extra-ordinary' situation. More than «unhoused citizenship», as Appadurai [2013, 8] suggests, we should consider this homeless population a non-citizenship group, suspended in a limbo of ambiguous deprivation. In fact, the loss of housing, and thus registered residence, produces a series of bureaucratic interdictions, legal obligations and economic difficulties that inhibit the unhoused from exercising their social and political rights. The same condition that characterizes strangers, and foreigners as well.

Ethnographic experience has demonstrated that many similarities can be identified between the category of foreigner and that of evicted person. For example, both are situated in a specific national territory without residence. In fact, people who have lost their homes may find themselves suddenly without an official residence, meaning that they are in the same position as foreigners in the eyes of the state. In the *Bairro* of Santa Filomena, inhabited mainly by a Cape Verdean community, thus already foreigners in the racialized context of Portugal (although some held Portuguese citizenship), as demolition was carried out people were invited by local institutions to 'return' to their country of origin – a place many had not seen at all in their entire lifetimes – if they had no other housing options. A two-fold condition of stranger – or foreignness affected the displaced community: an original one supplemented by a new status of homelessness. Without residence, they were not able to access the medical system, their children had trouble registering for school, and so on.

Pitt-Rivers sustained that hospitality promotes an «inversion [that] implies a transformation from hostile stranger, *hostis*, into guest, *hospes* (or *hostis*)». Does hospitality act according to the same model if applied to the displaced?

On one side, if enacted or provided by institutions, hospitality seems to confirm the marginal position of evicted people – as "internal" foreigners – in a wider social hierarchy regulated by access to resources and rights [Pozzi 2019]; on the other side, if offered from below, it can be considered a dispositive that carries out the symbolic inversion necessary to re-signify the loss of the home in the direction of a future-oriented approach, that is, «a way of thinking about the indeterminate and open-ended teleologies of everyday life» [Bryant, Knight 2019a, 2].

It follows that when civil society, activists, or social movements organize practices and policies of hospitality towards the evicted and displaced, they

carry out a resilient inversion of existing relations of power – which are consolidated, for example, in welfare or eviction practices – between non-citizens and the state. In this way the evicted or displaced person is no longer a stranger/foreigner (a non-citizen), but rather a guest and, as a guest, he or she might become (or go back to being) a citizen.

The activists of *Colectivo Habita* played an important role in building a resistance movement against governmental demolitions in Santa Filomena. The relationship between the activists and inhabitants was structured differently according to the characteristics of the groups involved. The variables of gender, age, national origin, and inclusion in/exclusion from the resettlement program proved key in determining such differences. For example, on one side the *mulheres* (women) living in the *Bairro* perceived themselves as "guardians" of the homes; on the other, they were considered the householders according to Cape Verdean family structure. Most of these women cooperated with the activists because of the responsibility they felt they held in relation to the housing question. In contrast, the young male residents, highly stigmatized in the local community due to social behavior perceived as inappropriate (unemployment, use of alcohol and sometimes light drugs, lack of formal education), did not cooperate with the activists in most cases because they were attached to the remote possibility, albeit offered by a dramatic event such as resettlement, that they might be able to leave the *Bairro* and start a new life.

Thanks to the in-depth work in the *Bairro* organized by *Colectivo Habita*, the majority of the displaced families that had yet to receive an institutional response or solution to their homelessness were hosted by individual or families still living in the neighborhood. In some cases, the evicted were hosted in abandoned houses belonging to the families still resident in the neighborhood or which had already moved out of the *Bairro*; in other cases, they were accommodated directly in the houses where the whole host family was still living. In this second case, hosting was not easy for many residents.

At the time of the research Eurico, a *Bairro* resident and *Colectivo Habita* activist, was living in a house located right at the main entrance to the neighborhood. When his home was destroyed by bulldozers one sunny morning, he did not shout or protest: he stood, motionless, staring at the *monstro* demolishing his refuge, breathing the cement dust, and listening to the thunderous roar of the destruction. At his side, some *polícias* observed the ordinary scene without signs of emotion. After having spent years living homeless on the streets, for Eurico the recently destroyed building represented an opportunity to aspire to significant ontological stability; unfortunately, such stability lasted only a few months. Like many other *Bairro* residents, he worked as a construction worker for a local company: while he retiled walls

in Portuguese *azulejos* ('glazed tiles') for tourist accommodations in Lisbon's city Centre, his own house was being reduced to a heap of rubble.

Immediately after the demolition, while some other residents were digging through the rubble to recover electrical wiring or plumbing pipes to sell in the streets, Eurico asked me to accompany him to some people he knew who lived on the other side of the neighborhood. In the meantime, all his belongings, piled together on the side of the road, were to be guarded by a friend. While we were crossing the *Bairro*, we had to watch where we stepped to avoid the rusted sheets of metal and wooden planks scattered on the ground: «*Parece ter havido guerra aqui*» ['There seems to have been a war here'], Eurico told me. This comment had deep significance for Eurico, as he had escaped Angola during the civil war and his memories of that period were still vibrant. On reaching his acquaintances, Eurico told them that his house had been destroyed. Donha Dulce and her husband had not been aware of the most recent demolition: these occasions were so frequent that they were no longer a novelty in the neighborhood. Immediately afterwards, Donha Dulce proposed that Eurico stay with them for some time, as one of their sons had recently emigrated to France and they had a bed available. Eurico unreservedly accepted the proposal.

After a few weeks, I asked Eurico how the cohabitation was progressing. He told me that Donha Dulce had recently asked him to leave because her son was coming to spend some time at home. Eurico was worried but not sorry, because it was difficult to live together. They had also quarreled badly a few days before because Eurico lost his house keys, and the situation was only resolved thanks to the mediation of *Colectivo Habita*. As Shryock has underlined, «[…] hospitality protocols tell us when we have arrived, how long we can stay, when we should sit or stand, eat or drink, and on what grounds we should entertain Others or keep them away» [Shryock 2019, 11]. It was not entirely possible to respect these codes in the precarious situation involving both hosts and guests; in some cases, such as Eurico's, there was tension and quarrelling. After Donha Dulce had asked Eurico to leave, she told him that, after checking in with a *Habita* activist, she had talked to one of her cousins who had recently abandoned her house in the *Bairro* because she could not handle the stress of waiting for the bulldozers. «*Você pode ficar aí por um tempo, até que chegue a Câmara...*» ['You can stay there for some time, until the Municipality comes…']. Eurico accepted. This further form of hospitality, together with the previous one, contributed to strengthening a future-oriented approach in Eurico's planning: for example, by prolonging the time he stayed in the *Bairro*, Eurico was able to locate another house for rent outside (but near) the neighborhood. This allowed him to participate more actively in the fight against demolitions and resettlements and emerge as a local community leader in dialoguing with the institutions. In this sense, the hope-home relationship was immediately reinforced.

Another ethnographic case may be useful for illustrating how hospitality can act as a weapon of the weak. Facing the impossibility of securing an *alternativa habitacional* (housing alternative) for four residents who had lost their homes on May 6th, 2014, some activists from *Habita*, the four residents, a few more *Bairro* inhabitants and I decided – without any preparations – to stage a protest by occupying the *Igreja Madre* (Main Church) of Amadora, the municipality in which the *Bairro* was situated, on May 10th, 2014. After having built a little camp inside the temple, hung some explanatory billboards outside the building and communicated with a contact person for the priest, we were invited to leave the church, first by the priest's representative and second by the *Polícia de Segurança Pública*.

What matters here is not the outcome of the action, but the political strategy behind the attempt. According to common sense, churches are places of hospitality. The hospitality that a priest, a preacher or a believer can provide to a stranger is morally prescribed by their faith. In the 1990s, some social movements in France occupied several churches – with success – precisely to 'force' those practices of hospitality. *Colectivo Habita* was inspired to do the same, but this time without full success.

Nevertheless, the social impact of the protest action was powerful: various media outlets covered the event, and the priest organized a meeting with the local social services to find a decent solution for the four former inhabitants of the *Bairro* who were temporally hosted in the church. Also, even if in this case it was compelled through an act of occupation, hospitality – «buil[t] upon strategies that have been nurtured for decades by community-based housing activists» [Appadurai 2013, 13] – represented for the evicted a first step forward in reorganizing their lives, taking some time to re-orient their gaze towards the future and claim full citizenship. As suggested by Appadurai, «all such campaigns […] are thus exercises in nurturing […] "the capacity to aspire" – a navigational capacity through which the poor can redefine the terms of trade between recognition and redistribution, and through confrontation and negotiation with political and economic powers show their ability to construct collective hope» [*Ibid*].

6. Conclusion: Hospitality as Weapon of the Weak

In the Mediterranean area of Europe, characterized by a high percentage of house ownerships, there has been a notable increase in evictions and foreclosures since the spread of the economic crisis in 2008. The crisis provoked by the Covid-19 pandemic may well have the same effects [UN Human Rights 2020]. Between 2013 and 2018, 24,667 eviction notices were carried out in Portugal. In 2018, 300 of these were issued every month. This phenomenon characterizes all of the so-called PIGS area (Portugal, Italy,

Greece, Spain), provoking a broad and wide-ranging sense of uncertainty based on wider politics of expulsion [Sassen 2014] and dispossession [Harvey 2004].

Bromberger has argued that we should reflect on the Mediterranean area – specifically Mediterranean Europe, in the case of this article – by referring to it as a «system» [Bromberger 2006, 99]: a system by virtue of a form of coherence generated not by «the many remarkable similarities, but rather [by] the systematic [and complementary] differences» (*Ibid*). Housing precarity and vulnerability, dispossession, and a politics of expulsion are at the same time «remarkable similarities» and «complementary differences» of this system.

Contemporary anthropology would do well to focus on the multiple futures that inhabit and are produced by this system. However, in some cases such as the ones analyzed here, even the possibility of imagining a future is severed by unsustainable living conditions. In the case of Santa Filomena, the temporal line of the future – people's orientation – was interrupted by housing constraints. Local activists and inhabitants thus organized a specific form of resistance against this violence, driven by the politics and practices of hospitality.

The use of this concept – hospitality – requires ethnographic, methodological, and theoretical justification. As outlined in this paper, there are many risks entailed in its use. Nevertheless, hospitality stands as a unique and well-established category that is capable, on one side, of re-connecting home and hope [Appadurai 2013], two spheres that appear ever more widely detached in the «predatory logics» that fuel contemporary neoliberalism [Sassen 2014]. On the other hand, it may «provide a more convincing basis of comparison, while at the same time forcing anthropologists to extend the scope of their comparisons beyond the circum-Mediterranean area» [Herzfeld 1987, 75].

As demonstrated by Agier, «the entire history of hospitality shows that the management – familiar, communitarian, municipal – of its functions has progressively moved away from the society for being delegated to the State and, at the same time, dissolved in the tasks of this last[6]» [Agier 2018, 20]. In the ethnographic case presented here, the «management of its functions» was taken up by the local community, who re-signified the very essence of those practices through a future-oriented approach and gaze. Hospitality became a weapon of resistance against demolition and housing constraints, one with the power to redefine the local population's imagination, symbolizing the possibility of reversing a «plight» in which hegemonic control appeared unbeatable, to blaze a new possible direction for social struggle.

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[6] Translated by the author.

Around the globe, more and more social movements are adopting the strategy of politicizing hospitality to negotiate state power[7], critique unfair public policies, and restore justice: in the *Bairro* of Santa Filomena, between the ruins of demolished houses, a deep political struggle was conducted by making up beds and serving *cachupa* to guests.

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[7] The squatting attempts such as those organized by the Spanish PAH, the Italian SMS or Aldodice26x1 projects, both based in Milan, or anarchist collectives in Athens such as those located in the *Exarcheia* neighborhood are examples of this strategy; it can also take the form of the "illegal" hospitality granted to irregular migrants crossing the border between Italy and France, for example. Another example is the many mutual aid projects organized by local communities that work to unhinge various forms of social exclusion and stigmatization.

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