

# Socio-spatial negotiations in Lisbon: Reflections of working-aged lifestyle migrants on place and privilege

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## Abstract

In the context of inequalities inherent in regimes of mobility and the rapid transformation of Lisbon by increased tourism and transnational mobility, this paper seeks to foreground under-the-radar narratives of young working-aged middle-class migrants on their socio-spatial positioning in the city. Situated at the nexus of youth mobilities and lifestyle migration, our objective is to examine the stratifications and diversities present within lifestyle migration to the city by focusing on migration motivations and migrants' own reflections on their place-making strategies and privilege in the city. Based on 10 narrative interviews and participant observation in transnational hangouts, our results reveal how the creation of "alternative" lifestyles is hinged on both mobility practices and local moorings as young movers reinvent themselves professionally in the place of arrival. Our results show that they negotiate their place and social position through (i) balancing place-consumption practices between what is construed as the transnational and the local and (ii) by situating themselves outside of the subjective residential geography of privileged migrants. This is part of a moral code to appease their political conscience and justify their presence in a city that has been rapidly transformed by tourism and other transient populations.

## KEYWORDS

mobility regimes, place-consumption, privilege, residential choice, urban change, urban lifestyle migration

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Much of the existing literature on European youth mobilities focuses on migration to more advanced economies as part of a strategy of income or career advancement (King, Lulle, et al., 2018; Lulle et al., 2021). Indeed, particular attention has been paid to youth migration from Mediterranean countries (Montanari & Staniscia, 2017; Rodan & Huijsmans, 2021). However, some young working migrants use mobility to Southern Europe (King, 2019; Seers et al.,

1979) to opt out of the pressures embedded in mainstream ideas of progression and success. In this paper, we look at the counter flow of young transnationals moving to Lisbon in search of a more meaningful style of life (Benson & Osbaldiston, 2014) shaped by place-related imaginaries and 'processes of becoming' (Worth, 2009). Lisbon is an important place for theorising about privilege, mobility and place-making given its position in global migration regimes (Shamir, 2005). It is the former metropolitan capital of a global empire and a destination for Luso-African migrants, Brazilians and South

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Asian labour migrants. Yet, its position as a semi-periphery in the EU context results in high levels of emigration with one in five Portuguese living abroad (Góis & Marques, 2009). Indeed, according to Eurostat, in 2021, the Portuguese GDP per capita represented 74% of the EU average.<sup>1</sup> Differences in income level within Europe result in core-periphery hierarchies and, as King (2019) puts it, 'migration is perhaps the most important of the flows linking peripheral to core countries in an asymmetric relation of power [...]' (p. 269). It is in this context, that the political will developed to attract more affluent migrants as a way to boost the economy in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, contributing to a shift in the European mobility regime and a boom in lifestyle and investment migration to the city (Amante & Rodrigues, 2021; Montezuma & McGarrigle, 2019).

Over the same period, Troika's austerity interventions to recover from the economic and political crisis boosted the attractiveness of the city for tourists and real estate investors (Barata-Salgueiro et al., 2017; Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019). It is now widely known that Lisbon is a popular tourist destination, according to Pordata the number of passengers received by Lisbon airport more than doubled between 2010 and 2019 reaching over 31 million.<sup>2</sup> In parallel, the short-term rental market grew rapidly playing a key role in the restructuring of the housing market in the city centre (Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2021; Mendes, 2018). According to Statistics Portugal, house prices almost doubled in the city between 2016 and 2020. Simultaneously, new amenities and services, such as coworking spaces, yoga studios, eco-brand and vintage clothing stores, specialty coffee shops, bruncheries and cocktail bars, already common in the commercial landscape of other cosmopolitan cities, modernised the traditional offer to cater for transient populations and city dwellers. Jung and Buhr (2021, p. 130) demonstrate the role that such places perform in making the city attractive and facilitating, 'the production or the maintenance of different mobile practices and lifestyles'. As such, over the past 10 years, leisure led restructuring and place branding strategies have not only attracted global capital but also cosmopolitan urbanity seekers to Lisbon. Due to practices of arbitrage and mobility away from core northern European financial capitals, which have become too expensive to house increasingly casualized labour forces in producer services, Lisbon has become a popular destination for young entrepreneurs and nomads working in digital creative industries (Jung & Buhr, 2021; Mancinelli, 2020; Tulumello & Allegretti, 2021). It is in the context of urban transformation dynamics and the wider structural context of inequalities inherent in global regimes of mobility that the relative privilege of our younger working aged interlocutors is situated.

This paper seeks to contribute to the emerging body of literature on the migratory movements of young cosmopolitans to vibrant European cities. While in the specific case of Lisbon work has been done on transnational real estate investors (Amante & Rodrigues, 2021; Ampudia de Haro & Gaspar, 2019; Montezuma & McGarrigle, 2019), international students (Malet Calvo, 2018) and elite transnational gentrifiers (Mendes, 2018), in this paper our aim is to provide an empirical extension through studying working-aged middling

transnationals. We aim to decentre attention from the glossy idea that all lifestyle migrants moving into the city are transnational corporates, elites or investors to foreground under-the-radar experiences. Our objective is to examine the motives that led younger working-aged migrants to Lisbon and how they unfold in actual processes of emplacement and social positioning in the city. In the analysis that follows we will answer the following questions: How do younger working-aged migrants narrate their mobility motivations? How do they perceive their social positioning as new inhabitants of the city and what impact does this have on their place-making and dwelling practices in the city? To so do, we adopted a qualitative methodology and used in-depth interviews and participant observation in the meeting places of young international cosmopolitans in the city.

The paper demonstrates the ways in which young working-aged migrants—often seen as a new class of transnational urban consumers (Malet Calvo, 2018)—produce their lifestyles by using mobility to realize more meaningful work in the tourism and creative sectors. While work proves to be an important motivating factor for coming to Lisbon, we concur with King (2018) and Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay (2020), that these migration projects are best understood through a lifestyle optic. We argue that the production of alternative lifestyles in Lisbon is dependent on both mobility practices and 'mobility capital'. Indeed, our interlocutors holding EU or, in one case US, passports, are on the right side of the 'mobility gap' in a transnational political economy of movement (Shamir, 2005). In this context, access to opportunities for movement, especially in the context of the EU has been conceptualised as 'liquid migration' given its unconstrained nature predicated on 'individualization, intentional unpredictability, legal residential status, labour access and temporariness' (Engbersen, 2018, p. 66). Still, several authors have criticised the fact that the concept seems to pay little attention to processes of settling and homemaking in the area of destination (Bygnes & Erdal, 2017; Franceschelli, 2020; King et al., 2016). Moreover, in the context of the rapidly transforming tourist city and subsequent resistance to processes of social change that have alienated and displaced local residents (Mendes 2016, 2020), less is known about how new groups of incoming transnationals reflect on their place in the city. Indeed, we show that young working-age migrants negotiate their social position and sense of belonging through: (i) specific practices of place consumption and place making in the city that involves a balance between their transnational networks and local anchorage and (ii) electing to belong to what they construe as authentic nontouristic residential neighbourhoods as part of a moral code to justify their presence in a city that has been rapidly transformed by tourism and other transient populations.

The paper is developed in six parts. The first section provides a theoretical reflection of the intersections between lifestyle migration and youth mobilities followed by the methods. The results are presented in three sections. The first explores mobility motivations, paying particular attention to the production of lifestyles. The second and third empirical sections, explore how the participants narrate their social position, place and privilege, first, in relation to place

consumption/making and, second, in relation to residential choice. The data presented here brings to the fore migrants' own reflections on their place in the city associated with the negotiation of new 'alternative' lifestyles, which are juxtaposed with the perceived negative impacts of other floating populations.

### 1.1 | Perspectives on lifestyle migration and youth mobilities to the city

Lifestyle migration, conceptualised as the mobility of relatively affluent individuals in search for a better quality of life, has been mainly researched in rural and coastal settings among older preretired or retired migrants influenced by cultural imaginings of a good life and the escape from the city (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009a; Benson & Osbaldiston, 2014; Botterill, 2017; Kordel & Pohle, 2018). Since lifestyle migration is not limited to a particular age group neither to specific migration categories, the focus on particular destinations and age groups such as retirement migrants, has led to a blind spot with regard to younger migrants who are attracted by city-inspired imaginaries such as lively and cosmopolitan atmospheres (Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020; Griffiths & Maile, 2014; Hayes & Zaban, 2020; King, Lulle, et al., 2018; Novy, 2018; Zaban, 2017). This contrasts with other depictions of lifestyle migrants at different stages in the lifecycle who code the city as risky in the context of neoliberal urbanism (Persson, 2019; Osbaldiston et al., 2020). More recently, urban manifestations of lifestyle migration have offered interesting insights into shifting labour market conditions such as remote work and the growing importance among the younger generation of individual self-fulfilment in relation to particular inspirational places (Cocola-Gant, 2018; Thompson, 2019). Accordingly, we argue that transformations of work and travel and its accompanying changes of 'orders of worth' (Schlagwein, 2017) are also lengthening individuals' life stages of 'youth'. Global insecurities such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the manifestation of precarious employment under neoliberalization are extending uncertain life circumstances also for supposedly 'privileged' individuals, pushing also middle-aged people to individual changes of lifestyle and relocations to new destinations (Settersten & Ray, 2010). For this reason, in this article, we argue for a more open-ended conceptualization of 'youth' which is not necessarily defined in terms of age, but in terms of flexible and mobile lifestyles and value systems (King, 2018; King et al., 2016). Similarly, within studies on youth mobilities, mobility is recognised as a fundamental aspect in young people's strategies to improve their transition experiences and outcomes (Cairns, 2014). Indeed, youth mobilities cut across mobility regimes and not only include incentives for better economic prospects but also cultural gains, cosmopolitan skills and 'sensation seeking' (Robertson et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2018). Hence, young transnationals' migratory movement can be seen as an exercise in self-discovery (King, 2018, p. 9). It is also 'part of a global restructuring and reimagining of urban life' (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2011; p. 2). As such, migrants' emotional relations and bonds to

particular places offer interesting insights into, not only processes of identity-building and homemaking, but processes of city-making (Benson, 2016; Benson & O'Reilly, 2018; Cheung Judge et al., 2020).

In this context, Moret's (2018) differentiation between mobility practice and mobility capital is a useful conceptual tool for understanding the intersection between mobility experiences and motives and emplacement processes central to the group of young migrants studied in Lisbon. Due to their citizenship, their mobility practices are lightly regulated and most have the security of being able to tap back into sites of citizenship and the resources that this provides as a security net against the risks involved in migration. Fauser (2021, p. 10) contends that 'different sites of citizenship can, through the agency of individuals, mutually enhance migrants' access to resources, and thus privilege'. Yet, as shown in the empirical data presented further on in the paper, identity-building processes are also played out through negotiating local belonging, place-making and groundedness. As Moret puts it, '[...] [mobility] is not only something that people do; it is also a series of experiences and skills that people may accumulate and possibly transform into a type of capital' (2018, p. 99). In the context of the tourist city, one way that this is manifest is through the production of lifestyles based on new more meaningful work in the tourism and creative industries.

The leisure-led regeneration of cities, exemplified through the transformation of the city of Lisbon, is tied up with political and economic interests in attracting transnational migrants and tourists to promote territorial competitiveness. In this context, Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay (2020) shed light on how young transnational migrants are influenced in their migration decision-making process by the place-branding strategies of Barcelona and the representations of the city as a tourist destination. Furthermore, they explain:

'There is a significant relationship between the reception of tourism images and where lifestyle migrants wish to locate. Therefore, the marketing of places for tourism attracts transnational mobile populations and not only visitors which, as a result, means that it makes sense to assume that the growth of urban tourism will be followed by an increased number of young transnational migrants in urban centres' (Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay, 2020, p. 3029).

Hence, place-branding strategies and urban tourism—including the infrastructures that sustain it—also play a crucial role in the process of collective imaginations of urban life. The same authors argue that in Southern European cities tourism and transnational lifestyle migrants spatially coexist as drivers of gentrification. If city-inspired imaginaries inform the migratory habitus of the young, aspirational classes, then vibrant cities 'offer the potential for creativity, self-realisation and a modern bohemianism' (O'Reilly, 2014, p. 224). In this context, 'the knowledgeable migrant' (Lulle et al., 2021, p. 1729; Williams, 2006) 'achieves self-improvement through mobility and, in a more existential vein, experiences international mobility as a project of self-realisation or rite of passage to full adulthood' (King, 2018, p. 7). As the trajectories of lifestyle migrants are, in the words of Benson and O'Reilly 'a part of their reflexive project of the self' (2009b, p. 615), the spatial practice of relocating can be conceptualised as a 'process of becoming' (Salazar, 2014, p. 122) and

a 'recasting of identity in terms of flexibility, adaptability and instant transformation' (Elliott & Urry, 2010, p. 7). Hereby, the identity construction of the cosmopolitan young migrant is strongly intertwined with a combination of aspirations (self-fulfilling work in an inspirational, creative and urban atmosphere). Such aspirations are socially produced, giving interesting insights into *who* can 'become' in the city as possibilities of self-realisation and becoming through migration are filtered in practice according to economic inequalities (Zipin et al., 2015, p. 234). Therefore, new youth mobilities toward European cities are shaping traditional views of social belonging, cultural rootedness (Salazar, 2014) and status. It is in the context of new forms of stratification in mobility regimes, that we interrogate how young middle-class, working-aged migrants perceive their privilege and place within the tourist city.

## 1.2 | Methodological approach

The research presented here is a result of ongoing work on privileged mobilities to the city of Lisbon, which has drawn on the perspectives of elite intermediaries and older intra-EU lifestyle migrants benefiting from specific fiscal policies implemented to attract the relatively wealthy. The data presented in this paper derives from extensive participant observation in the transnational places in the city where younger working-aged transnationals tend to hang-out and 10 guideline-based narrative interviews conducted in 2019 and 2020 with lifestyle-oriented migrants in Lisbon. The sample was driven by the theoretical framework; thus, the selection of interlocutors was based on their relative privilege, in terms of class, education and citizenship. While we aimed to focus on younger working-aged migrants, the sample is not exclusively defined by the age of the participants but rather by their chosen lifestyle which could be related to individuals' on-going transitions. In line with King et al., we argue for a 'wider-youth-oriented lifestyle model' (2016, p. 14), which translates supposedly youthful identities and practices into later age groups. As such, the sample focuses on participants within the age range of 20–35, with one interviewee aged 46.

Snowball techniques were employed drawing on pre-existing contacts with different young transnationals in Lisbon and exploratory city walks and connections made during participant observation in popular transnational gathering places. First of all, shorter informal interviews were conducted to select the participants in line with the aforementioned criteria followed by interviews that lasted between 1 and 2 h. The interlocutors have diverse profiles in terms of nationality, including migrants from France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Lithuania and the United States of America. Yet, they share similar educational backgrounds and family situations in that all of them were unmarried and childless—an important hint regarding individualised migration decision-making and behaviours. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and—based on the method of qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2021)—coded in MaxQDA to identify structures of meanings. The data was worked through both inductively and deductively, using existing codes

relating to the underpinning theoretical framework and codes that were generated from the narratives we collected, which allowed us to refine the original framework to reflect the theoretical inferences we made from the data.

## 1.3 | The interplay of place, lifestyle and work

Scholars have pointed out that while lifestyle migration is conceptualised as leisure-led and consumption oriented, migrants also (re-)produce their lifestyle (Benson & Osbaldiston, 2014; Korpela, 2020). The migrants we encountered in Lisbon narrated their mobility motivations in terms of self-discovery, experimentation and individualization. Given their life stage and in line with shifting aspirations in the labour market, this project of the self was often depicted in relation to work as several of our interlocutors sought out more fulfilling livelihoods in the tourism and creative industries in the city. Several spoke of leaving good positions in their area of training as a form of risk taking or escape to pursue more meaningful work or to reinvent their personal values and attitudes towards life (and work). On the one hand, some construed their migratory movement as an 'escape from the rat race' in response to imbalanced work-life constellations—as the following woman who had moved from San Francisco depicts:

*I had a good job, and my life was very typically American. I was working 60 to 70 h per week and spent a lot of money on surviving and bills. I lived in a beautiful place but in the end, I did not have time to enjoy it because there was constant work and life stress. I had to leave the US to experience that another way of living is possible (Interviewee #7, San Francisco).*

On the other hand, the individualisation inherent in ideas of progression led to increasing aspirations of doing something 'meaningful' in waged labour as an identity-affirming project of the self. This is illustrated well through the experience of a 34-year-old Belgian who quit his well-paid job as an engineer to move to Portugal and become a freelancer in the construction of wooden surfboards:

*I had a good position and a comfortable salary, but I was bored of my job and I thought that if I would continue the job, I would probably be stuck in it, continue and do it all my life even if it was not so fulfilling. I wanted to try something else that gives me more contentment. I wanted to do my own project and work with my hands (Interviewee #5).*

While combining work with a desired lifestyle, these highly educated migrants tend to approach migration as an on-going rite of becoming and a space for self-discovery. The following 28-year-old visual communication artist from Lithuania illustrates how the city represents an urban playground for individual trial and error processes to get to know and even reinvent herself. She says:

*I had this need for continuous stimulation from my urban environment. [...] I wanted to understand how life goes and the relationship with Lisbon for me was sort of a playground for learning how life works. Experimenting but also to better understand myself in different contexts [...] (Interviewee #6).*

Another of our interlocutors spoke of 'trying a new lifestyle' in Lisbon after a series of 'unsatisfying' positions within the tourism sector in her hometown of Hamburg, Germany. In Lisbon, she worked her way up from a job in a Hostel, to running her own platform for visiting German tourists. Unlike digital nomads who are often portrayed as the embodiment of freedom (Mancinelli, 2020), the migrants we encountered had to be anchored to the city as they made their livelihoods in place. Even so, moving to Lisbon represented a space for experimentation and discovery. However, while often narrated as counter-cultural escape from a doldrum or predictable way of life in search of alternatives, in reality, such projects are less risky with the open opportunity to return and work again in a sector aligned with their human capital endowments. Beyond this rather obvious observation, Korpela's (2014) work on Westerners in India provides an interesting critique of mainstream sociological theories of individualization. Drawing on the work of Rose (1996) she writes that 'what may at first look like dropping out—escaping—may in fact mean dropping in because one is internalising the prevalent ethos of free and active individuals, who are actually crucial for the functioning of the current society' (Korpela, 2014, p. 37). In other words, if we accept the individualised project of the self as being constitutive of capitalist development, then rather than breaking free, or questioning the dominant order, lifestyle mobility reproduces it.

Therefore, if our interlocutors relocated rather than questioning their work life balance, lack of job fulfilment or precariousness, it becomes pertinent to ask how privilege, but also precarity under advanced capitalism, is manifest in their mobility experiences. As, for most of our sample, Lisbon is at a lower latitude on the division of labour than their home city, most assumed that they could use strategies of 'geoarbitrage' (Hayes, 2014). However, it is not only changing individual circumstances that might disrupt projects of geographic arbitrage (Koh, 2021), but also dynamic structural conditions. In the case of Lisbon, constraints related with housing supply and affordability meant that, in contradiction with the cosmopolitan vision of their future lives in Lisbon, increasing rental prices disrupted their practices of arbitrage. One interlocutor stated: 'I thought it would be easy to find a flat here. That it would be less expensive than in France but it was a big misperception' (Interviewee #2). To follow their individual projects, a few of the interlocutors had to work various part time jobs to pay rents and realise their preferred lifestyle in Lisbon. Hence, while existing power asymmetries within mobility regimes make lifestyle-led migration to Southern Europe foremost possible, this does not preclude precarity in experiences of emplacement. However, the possibility to be able to connect identity-giving imaginaries of labour, place and self with each other,

was made easier by their high level of education and former well-paid jobs.

#### 1.4 | Place-consumption and socio-spatial positioning: Balancing acts between the transnational and the local

The life-changing projects of the participants are negotiated in socio-spatial practices of belonging and identity-making within the city (Benson, 2014). The narratives of the migrants provide insights into their social locations in the city, which require a balancing act between self-positioning as highly mobile transnationals and the desire to be anchored locally. The tension between the desire for a highly mobile, cosmopolitan lifestyle and the yearning to settle and cultivate a sense of belonging to Lisbon led to the performance of paradoxical socio-spatial practices. Accordingly, on the one hand, the young transnationals are settled in mobility (Morokvasic, 2004) and accustomed to changing locality frequently, as illustrated by the words of one participant: 'I'm a bit like [...] a free electron. Not a ghost because it's a bit negative but kind of something rotating around places' (Interviewee #2). Yet, on the other hand, work is invested in uncovering the essence of the city and settling in place, through learning the language, excavating the authentic and trying to make local Portuguese friends. A trend that Rauhut and Esteves (2021) report for 'ordinary Swedes' in Portugal, as opposed to their very wealthy compatriots.

These processes of emplacement qualify the young movers as being easily adaptable and integrative, while at the same time connected to international and cosmopolitan networks. As one interviewee puts it: 'The same kind of people, who have kind of the same ideas and point of views...it makes sense that they gather in the same places [...]' (Interviewee #1). Indeed, most of the interlocutors expressed affiliations with 'glocal city spheres' (Robertson, 2014) in Lisbon, as they perform their international and cosmopolitan lifestyle in transnational gathering places in the city. They frequent the trendy specialty coffee shops and craft beer breweries yet seek out traditional cafes and *tascas* for their lower prices and the local currency that they provide. To balance their spheres of belonging between the local and transnational, most of the young international lifestyle-led migrants we encountered tried to make local connections through their consumption practices and by developing social ties with locals:

*What makes me feel at home in this place is that I have my places where I go frequently, like my small authentic shops that are very close. Over time, I got to know my neighbourhood very well and I do recognize people on the street which I really like. Sometimes we say hello to each other (Interviewee #8).*

Nevertheless, some of the interlocutors found it difficult to establish meaningful local contacts and expressed what one

participant termed as 'guiltiness' when their plans to fit in were less successful.

Most participants emphasised the effort they made to carve out a closer identification with 'local' places than solely with international, stylish places as their expressed imaginaries of a 'good' life might suggest. In some cases, place-consumption strategies were narrated in a way that replicated ideas of loss, place mourning and a sense of injustice for longer-term Portuguese residents, as a German woman in her thirties explains:

*I prefer to go to a Tasca. I feel good to leave my money there and not in such a hipster café. I am here because I want to get to know the culture and not because I want to have the same standards as in Munich. But I think you can change your own consumer behaviour. For me, these places have no relation to Lisbon or Portuguese culture. Even the coffee is called "cappuccino" instead of "meia da leite". And a normal Portuguese person just cannot afford the prices there and so you try to stand out and make yourself more valuable (Interviewee #3).*

These deeper feelings of alienation due the modernization of the commercial landscape in the city persisted in the interlocutors' views toward the growth of short-term rental accommodation in the historic centre. By contrasting their place-making strategies and constructing symbolic boundaries (Lamont et al., 2015) between tourist and non-tourist spaces, a discursive strategy of 'othering' took place which strengthens their sense of belonging. This is extended into moral discourses on the value of tourism as a way of life in light of its negative consequences on the city:

*Rental prices in Lisbon have been exploding through the Airbnb short-term rentals. Everybody can travel now, which is good, but it is also [...] not a real project. It is just like a new form of consumption [...]. (Interviewee #2).*

They reflect on their lifestyles as being grounded and more meaningful than temporary city users, such as tourists or elite transnationals, evoking a justification of their right to be present in the city. In the next section, we illustrate how dwelling practices are part of subsequent self-reflections on their own role in processes of urban transformation.

## 1.5 | Dwelling practices and electing to belong

Drawing on the assertion of Savage et al. (2005, p. 207), the residential practices of our interlocutors are clearly an important 'identifier of who they are'. Instead of dwelling in vibrant, international, upmarket neighbourhoods, which offer a wide range of leisure-related consumption opportunities, the young transnationals rather aim for 'traditional', 'authentic' and 'normal' residential neighbourhoods where they 'elect to belong'

(Savage et al., 2005). As one French interviewee describes in her own words:

*We were really happy when we found a flat that we can afford in the neighbourhood of Penha da França. French people in Lisbon tend to live in more expensive neighbourhoods like in Campo do Ourique or Príncipe Real, but it is too bourgeois for us. I did not move to Portugal to see French people all the time on the streets (Interviewee #2).*

However, the degree of choice that young migrants actually have in the housing market is limited. Indeed, in the narrative above the interviewee expresses relief at finding an affordable place to live in the historic centre outside of the residential neighbourhoods preferred by affluent international migrants. This would suggest that the 'search for authenticity' might well be a rationalization of a lack of resources to carry out a more cosmopolitan lifestyle in the city, shedding light on the relative difficulties that lifestyle migrants may experience abroad. While young transnationals are exercising the same mobility privilege as their compatriots, the way hierarchical categorizations are mapped onto local neighbourhoods shows that privilege in migration cannot be fully understood through class (Fauser, 2020, 2021). While at the beginning of their stay in Lisbon most of the interviewees lived in touristified neighbourhoods in the historic centre of the city, after some time they tended to move short distances to more traditional residential areas. Several others had relocated south of the River Tagus as they were unable to find an apartment that matched their budget, this was also extenuated by the need for a more peaceful, less touristic place to live. Even transnational residents expressed their residential choice using narratives of dispossession and the loss of place due to the presence of floating city users and increasing touristification. As Torkington stated: 'Spatial formulations are [...] used to mark out imagined landscapes. By discursively plotting out tourist and not-tourist spaces, and by constructing one's home-place as being "outside" the tourist space, a greater commitment to belonging to the local place is being made' (2012, p. 87).

The tourism boom and negative effects of overtourism on the housing market, have been widely politicised in the city. Urban social movements have mobilized in cooperation with local residents to stage protests against displacement and for housing affordability. Mendes (2018) argues that the resurgence of protests against the austerity ideology represents the largest protest cycle in Portugal since the democratic revolution in 1974. The confrontation with this protest and resistance in the city led to introspection, and a guilty complex:

*It really interests me, the housing protests, I have a complicated relationship to it as I know I am sort of part of the problem, and I have been for a long time. I was in Mouraria and there were remains of street demonstrations and bunting and posters about the right to housing.*

*One poster said, "I have the right to rest, but with a hostel for foreigners above me what rights do I have...". This really struck me. It is ironic as the impact foreigners have on the city are also affecting me (Interviewee #9).*

*I mean if you are interested in the life here and you take a critical approach to things then you get to know the context. Then you feel a bit guilty just for being here and I asked myself if it's legitimate or not (Interviewee #1).*

Interpretations of their own role in socio-spatial transformations reveal an awareness of their relatively privileged status, which leads to moral considerations over how to mitigate perceived negative impacts on neighbourhoods, such as the production of foreign only enclaves or increasing housing prices. These negative impacts are sketched onto the urban landscape and correlated with the areas of settlement of more affluent migrants. By creating spatial divides anchored in ethical considerations, the young movers position themselves as more politically and socially conscious, exemplified in the following narratives:

*But I also saw this huge international bubble, people who live here because they get their money from outside of Portugal and then they rent an apartment for more than thousand euros in Principe Real and have no idea what the Portuguese minimum wage is [...] it's also one more reason for the problem of increasing renting prices. But I hope that also people come here that are willing to be really part of the Portuguese community, which means that you work here, and you pay your taxes in Portugal (Interviewee #4).*

*The only thing that just happens here, which I find very unfortunate, are the rents. This whole gentrification, if you talk to Portuguese or Lisboetas then that is one aspect, especially if you immigrate here, that you are careful and that you are aware of how your own actions might contribute to it. Of course, you can work here online and earn 3000 Euros and then pay 1000 Euros for a one-room apartment, but is that good? Isn't that destroying the market somehow? (Interviewee #3).*

These deliberations trigger a self-reflexive process about their own agency in place-changing processes. Accordingly, relative wealth and prosperity—even if unconsciously expressed in the narratives by the interviewees—provide power and agency within place-making processes and status building. The ability to draw on extended privileges across different places determines to a large extent how they navigate the process of emplacement, circulation, or potential return. Indeed, income strategies are another aspect of a moral code which legitimises a sense of belonging through opposing certain values and practices. More affluent co-nationals and other lifestyle migrants are criticised for working the nation-state systems and

economic inequalities to their own advantage. Yet, at the same time, the young lifestyle migrants use this mobility privilege as a future option, which consequently gives them a strong sense of security. While their practices may be somewhat different, they are embedded within the same structures that reproduce privilege. Furthermore, it gives them enough social but also economic stability to try different lifestyles and adopt their aspirations in a new environment. As one of the interviewees puts it:

*At the moment, I don't care that much about economic security and health care etc. The other factors predominate so far. But of course, it gives me an indescribable sense of security. So, no matter what, even if I go out of here completely broke, I can go back to Germany and get money from the government until I find a job, which will happen quickly for me. Also, family and friends, where I know they are there, I could also stay with them. So, if you have a stable social network in Germany, it reduces your worries. Then everything is fine (Interviewee #3).*

While the option to onward migrate or return is a constant, capitalising on this is not necessarily straightforward. A few of the participants contemplated new arbitrage practices to lower-cost places to offset higher housing costs:

*My rent is really high so I have decided to leave where I live and move somewhere else, and I thought well I could just go and live somewhere else for the winter, I am really fed up with being cold, my life is in suitcase, why not go and live in Bali or the Philippines for a couple of months and live on a beach, it would be cheaper, then come back in May. It might be an option, but would I then lose touch with my fledging social space that I am making here? That is a concern as all my social relations are fragile because they are new, but they also feel very important (Interviewee #9).*

Yet, as the former quote shows the benefits of future mobility practices are weighed against concerns about the loss of mobility capital—whether related to work or social projects—developed during the process of emplacement in the city. Such internal frictions that accompany mobility decisions again reveal the relationality of mobility and local anchorage.

## 2 | CONCLUSION

This paper explored the motivations that led lifestyle-oriented working-aged migrants to Lisbon and how this unfurls in practices of place-making and social positioning in the city. Our work was based around two main questions. The first addressed how young working-aged migrants narrate their mobility motivations. Our data supports Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay's previous findings on highly educated young migrants in Barcelona (2020), as our interlocutors

were attracted to Lisbon because of lifestyle choices. However, our results differ somewhat in terms of the importance of work as an attractive pull. This connects with Benson and O'Reilly's (2016) assertion on the timeliness of paying due attention to the intersection of economic and lifestyle factors. Like the former study, we did not uncover anyone who moved to Lisbon due to specific job opportunities. However, our participants were attracted to the city by the possibilities it provided for transforming their professional lives. For these movers, a more meaningful lifestyle was also inevitably connected with shifting career aspirations toward creative and identity-affirming work. The links between tourism and migration prove to be important here, as touristic and cultural activities were part of the production of their new alternative lifestyle since many of them use tourism structures and industries as an income strategy. Still, the interlocutors portrayed feelings of conflict and ambivalence when it comes to the increasing presence of tourists and other transnational investors in the city. On one hand, existing tourism structures seem to be important for their work-related self-realizations, while on the other, tourists became an obstacle in their emplacement processes and positioning as a local.

Their projects did not necessarily represent one of geographical arbitrage as a number of the interviewees left well-paying jobs to drop out of the stress of a demanding or unrewarding career. As such, the specific experiences presented here are not generalizable and might be contrasted with the more elite group of real estate investors or transnational corporates in the city who have very different arbitrage projects and patterns of consumption. Nonetheless, the empirical extension we explored brings out the stratifications and diversities present within lifestyle migration to the city. As such, privilege understood in relation to citizenship and not only to class or wealth, accounts for the precarity experienced by some of the young transnationals, an aspect to be explored further in future research.

This leads to the second question, as the discursive mapping of these stratifications on to urban neighbourhoods was a key aspect in the participants narratives of their place in the city. Sketching out sites of privilege and situating themselves outside this subjective geography becomes a reverse form of symbolic profit (Bourdieu, 1984). The landscape that is plotted out also provides a backdrop to navigating what is seen to be the authentic city and provides a symbolic guide to exercise a specific local currency that placates the sharp political consciousness of the young transnationals in terms of their own role in processes of gentrification. Another possible means of appeasing the ambivalence about their position in the city might be through involvement in urban social movements—there is a sizeable adhesion to these activities by foreign residents of the city. This is another question for future research.

Finally, the last key point connects with Korpela's (2014, 2020) work on individualization and countercultural practices, as the new life-changing projects may be less alternative or in opposition to mainstream values than the young lifestyle-led migrants tend to present them. Opting out of the rat race to reinvent the productive self is in line with a capitalist ethos, which is constituted on the actions of free individuals. Moreover, within the global mobility regime, the lifestyle-work-related

mobilities depicted here are normalized and socially valued (Salazar, 2014). Likewise, despite the discursive strategy of differentiation—justified through residential choice, income strategies and place consumption—from affluent lifestyle migrants in the city, the young working-aged transnationals are benefiting from the same power asymmetries within the global mobility regime.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Author elects to not share data.

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## ENDNOTES

- [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=GDP\\_per\\_capita\\_consumption\\_per\\_capita\\_and\\_price\\_level\\_indices#Relative\\_volumes\\_of\\_GDP\\_per\\_capita](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=GDP_per_capita_consumption_per_capita_and_price_level_indices#Relative_volumes_of_GDP_per_capita)
- <https://www.pordata.pt/portugal/tr%3c3%a1fego+de+passageiros+nos+principais+aerportos+lisboa++porto+e+faro-3248-292100>

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