



The Importance of Cultural Mechanisms in Urban Transformations. From the Scene Construction to the Representation Space - European Capitals of Culture: Two Portuguese Examples

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With this paper we intend to approach the knowledge between the City and the Architecture as a life scene space, the assertion of oneself identity between the presentation space and representation status, throughout two Portuguese case studies Lisbon (European Capital of Culture in 1994) and Guimarães (next European Capital of Culture in 2012), two ancient cities with important and symbolic cultural meaning. Through those examples we pretend to analyze and explain, some planning strategies between the theatre's physical spaces, which could be the scenery as a building, or even the city as a designed place where various dramatic and cultural events happens and actions are executed openly to everybody's eyes.

In this way the urban scenes, namely the cities, are the support of its own representative characters, the inhabitants, and also for those who seek its opportunities at a cultural level and so are trying to create and promote their own cultural identity. The ancient city of Guimarães, north of Portugal, with the patrimony of humanity nomination by the UNESCO Heritage Centre, since 2001, will be our mainly case study, since it will be the 2012 European Capital of Culture. The allocation of this appointment tries to confirm the validity of the cultural policies implemented and all investments in the last two decades - on both material, and symbolic assets and also in various urban equipments which gives a special attractiveness to the city and also a cultural agenda full of contemporaneity.

The city authorities strongly believe that the conditions are in place for an urban revolution even more valuable than all that led UNESCO to recognize its Historical Centre as World Heritage Site.

We seek to analyze how the European capital of Culture designation means an opportunity to improve, in a sustainable way, its inhabitant's quality of life and also to promote its cultural experiences raising their qualification level, as well as their social awareness and citizenship. We also want to emphasize the expected impact of this political decision in sectors such as tourism and in urban redevelopment and its contribution to the growth of cultural diversity.

We pretend to outline the theatrical bonds within the city and explore some structural questions of the landscape representation throughout social and cultural activities that could fulfill the urban life and so, giving a new sense and a new meaning to the city, and not only at the city Centre, as we have observed in Lisbon 94. Based mainly in a diachronic approach and interdisciplinary analysis, we promote a contemporary view of the city as heritage through the necessity to preserve and promote a sustainable development and emphasize its cultural meaning throughout a seasonal event which could be extended in time and place.

KEY WORDS: City; cultural capital; planning; urban regeneration.