

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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ABSTRACT

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 cities, Lisbon (European Capital of Culture in 1994) and Oporto (European Capital of Culture in 2001). Two ancient cities with important and symbolic cultural meaning, providing a contact of successful and unsuccessful approaches and trying with this comparative analysis, foresee what will happen in ECC Guimarães (2012), always in a way of cultural identity and cultural capital perspective.

Through those examples we pretend to analyse and explain, some planning strategies between the theatre's physical space, 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 analyse how the ECC 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.

INTRODUCTION

The analysis of two Portuguese cities, namely Lisbon (European Capital of Culture in 1994) and Oporto (European Capital of Culture in 2001), will be presented to highlight the interaction between the City and the Architecture in the context of the life scene space, the assertion of oneself identity between the presentation space and representation status. These two cities are of high importance and symbolic cultural meaning in national context.

Through examples, this paper will provide analyse to demonstrate the use of planning strategies between the theatre's physical space. This may be the scenery as a building or the city as a designed place where various dramatic and cultural events happen and actions are executed openly. In this way the urban scenes are the support of their own representative characters, the inhabitants, and also for those who seek opportunities at a cultural level and so are trying to create and promote their own cultural identity. The final objective is to use the collected data to forecast Guimarães 2012.

CULTURAL MECHANISMS IN URBAN TRANSFORMATION

The idea of European capitals of culture originated from Melina Mecouri, a former minister of culture in Greece. Its objective was to enrich the wealth, diversity, and general characteristics of European cultures. By achieving the objective a better shared knowledge between citizens of European Union, promotion of the city, region and country, and finally to densification in the urbanism of the host city and other cities.

In 1985, Athens was the first European Capital of Culture. Since then many other cities of the old continent received, each year, this title, that already was consolidated as a way to value and to preserve the proper culture of each country or region, bringing many benefits for the host city.¹

Developing the potential of the ECC, some studies carried out by independent experts, between 1995 and 2004, confirmed the positive media response to the event. It has improved the image of the chosen cities in the eyes of their inhabitants and helped develop culture and tourism. Now, the EU is motivating forthcoming cultural capitals to do yet more for long-term impact on the cultural development. The new procedure includes a key follow-up phase once the cities have been selected.²

The ECC is a golden opportunity to show off Europe's cultural wealth and diversity, and all the ties which link us together as Europeans. The event is so attractive that Europe's cities compete with each other in a friendly manner for the honor of bearing the title. It will generate considerable cultural and socio-economic benefits, including positive effects on tourism. Its an extremely challenging event, with a large scale, which lasts an entire year.

Cities wishing to become ECC must prepare a cultural program that meets rather specific criteria: it must reflect the European character of the event and involve the participation of the people who live there.³

Assuming that the places where the collective and public cultural activity occurs, have an important and lasting influence - aesthetic, social, economic and symbolic

¹ According to the European Commission, the ECC "is a golden opportunity to show off Europe's cultural richness and diversity, and all the ties which link us together as Europeans. The event is so attractive that Europe's cities vie with each other fiercely for the honor of bearing the title."

² For a number of years, the EU's Culture program has helped finance the event, and will continue to do so in future. From 2012, there will be a new procedure for selecting future European capitals of culture.

³ From 2011, two cities - from two different EU countries - will be ECC.

- on the form and the function of the cities (EVANS, 2001), and that, in a context of serious economic crisis, the effect of the show off architecture, agglutinant, by itself, can have fond of the end (BERGDOLL, 2010), the cities must assume its competitiveness in a support logic.

The European flavor can be seen in the themes chosen and the artists and cultural organisers from different countries cooperating to put on the event. The program must also have a lasting and sustainable impact on the city's long-term cultural, economic and social development.

Cities are stages for the great triumphs and tragedies of humanity - sites for the events and interactions, which define the ages. (STEVENSON, 2003)

In this way the urban scenes, according to Stevenson (2003): the cities and its sites, 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 cultural and creative component is, in this direction, determinative for the economic development of the cities, COOKE and LAZZERIETTI (2007)

Cities are places of contemporary spectacle. The majority of world's population now lives in cities, which are nowadays the most visited places by various reasons. So, the major cities in Europe are dealing with changes in the relationship between its material and symbolic aspects with growing attention on matters of consumption culture and creativity in their spaces, rather than on the production and its spaces. It is important to think about how can a city core form spectacle and promote urban identity with urban experience, with lifestyle and also with tourism emerging as the new pivots of the new service economy⁴.

The nomination of a city, and not only the major ones, as ECC, could be a determinant contribution for this assertion.

According to the concept of sustainability⁵, it implies a strategical approach to integrating conservation and consistent development which can promote a sustainable use of resources.

A project that strives to be sustainable must be consistent with the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In essence this means that to enable people now and in the future, a satisfactory level of social and economic development and also to achieve culture with a reasonable use of land and architectural resources, housing, social and cultural equipments, new jobs, preserving the existent ecosystems, and always promoting social involvement and a better quality of life.

LISBON

By this way Lisboa 94 Europe Capital of Culture was an excellent example of sustainability.



Figure 1 – Lisbon Panorama

Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lisboa-lisbon-_panorama.jpg

⁴ Stevenson (2003:93.-112)

⁵ According to the programme embodied by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WECD, 1987), the UNCED process and the documents agreed at the Rio Summit included the Agenda 21. We also assume the questions posed by authors such as Meppem and Gill (1998. 134) specially when they claim that "sustainability describes a state that is in a transition continually: the objective of sustainability is not to arrive at a particular point. Planning for sustainability requires explicit accounting of perspective and must be involving of broadly representative stakeholder participation through dialogue" this approach is a "move away from a culturally inappropriate and exclusive epistemology of positive and normative definitions" and became a process that facilitates reflective insight" and "the genuine sharing of ideas".

If success is to be measured in terms of audiences Lisboa 94 should be considered successful, with a cultural and social dynamics only equaled by the major social and economic event that was Expo 98.

The project motto was staging the city (city on stage). The entire city of Lisbon with its magnificent geography (seven hills) and architecture was a stage set in which the cultural actions of the event took place.

This was also an opportunity to promote the commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the April revolution and the consolidation of a democratic European society.

Suddenly, and despite some discomfort caused by some works on the underground network that stretched beyond schedule, the city awoke to unusual cultural activities.

The enormous queues in front of Fine Arts Museum for the opening of two major exhibitions: Bosch's temptations and Eternal Return remain in memory of city residents. There was a great deal of reservation from the media and also a great public expectation, the programmed was diverse and very appealing for Lisbon inhabitants and also from its periphery. There was also some major investments in heritage conservation: The Lisbon Coliseum (Coliseu dos Recreios) was a traditional concert and performance space in Lisbon since the late 19th century and its renovation had a impact on the whole street which is visible still now.

In Lisbon main squares there were public art projects. The city became an open air stage set with a dynamic that went beyond the timed programme.

The public became progressively involved as characters all year and enjoyed the new festive atmosphere that went beyond the Portuguese melancholic cultural identity.

According to the words of one of the members of the board responsible for Lisboa 94 Simoneta Luz Afonso⁶: the event brought new habits in cultural consumption and a new demand from the public, large spaces for culture and improved cultural marketing, new spaces for culture and renovated or transformed ones, a strict collaboration between major cultural operators to promote events that still remain (Great Orchestra Cycles) were major consequences of this designated event. The public became progressively involved.

They were also, other consequences like the integration of security measures in the major national museums and the increased possibility of its engage in exchanges with foreign museums, the creation and identification of new cultural itineraries throughout the city, namely the Seven Hill Project (Sete Colinas) an urban renovation programme that was launched. Further, residential, commercial and various other spaces in the old city were renovated with several kinds of involvement: economic, social and cultural levels.

This was determinate for its sustainability⁷ and was beyond seasonality.

Through the words and the look of the other like HOLTON (1998). "Lisbon 94 organizers outfitted Lisbon in a variety of new costumes through the rhetoric of promotional discourse and the transformation of Lisbon's urban space". It represented an excellent and unique opportunity for promoting and also reorienting, not only the city cultural and self-identity but also Portugal's national identity towards the heart of Europe. Its legacy still remains in 2010. Lisbon is now one of the Capitals of Europe with more charisma and has been recently elected the Best European touristic destination.

If Lisboa94 is considered a good example of sustainability, Porto 2001 would be quite the opposite.

PORTO

⁶ *European Capitals of Culture: the road to success from 1985 to 2010*, Luxembourg, European Communities, 2009, p.23.

⁷ On sustainability issues see also David Clark (1996).

⁸ Lisbon is the capital of Portugal since the mid 13th century.



Figure 2 – Oporto Panoram

Source: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/05/Porto3flat-cc-contr-oliv1002.jpg>

As a direct result a vast number of projects spread over the city (the Metro, The House of Music, the Transparent Building, funicular, Cordoaria Garden, Batalha Square, Praça D. João I Square) the inhabitants of Oporto experienced significant disruptions to daily life.

These interventions led the population to view the initiative of Oporto 2001 as nuisance rather than an opportunity or a cultural investment.

This view of the citizens also contributed to the apparent absence of an integrated (cultural) policy, real estate speculation and political conflicts of purely personal nature, finishing in fiscal slippages and failure to meet deadlines.

In the article “creative city debate: Port redux experience”, GRANDE (2008) it equates the debate concerning the creative cities as stages, approaching “moved” the urban one that it converged in the ECC and a set of uncharacteristic points of the consolidated city, as the Bombarda and Bolhão effects.

Illustrative examples include the inauguration of an event, in which the paving was done at the last minute, to be redone few days later. Further problems include, the case of the House of Music delay (projected by Rem Koolhaas). Due to numerous technical problems experienced including a hole filled with water this event only opened in April 15, 2005. Another example of the lack of coordination and integrated management was the building known as Transparent (project by Solá Morales), wrapped in a huge controversy since the beginning and that intended to assemble the natural connection between the Urban City Park (by Sidonio da Costa Pardal) and the Atlantic Ocean. Once again it took 15 million Euros and 6 years to convert the building from Transparent to Opaque (projected by Carlos Prata, opened on June 15, 2007), in order for it to have a specific use.

Despite an important set of decisions that were not achieved during the Oporto 2001, nowadays this city is recovering after the torments of the 2001 event, and assuming its own cultural agenda, considered very attractive not only for locals but also for neighbor Spain. The city has now a new leisure centre, consolidated areas such as Ribeira, and also the Museum of the Serralves Foundation a magnificent work by Álvaro Siza, an important contemporary art gallery. This is a post-happening event.

The cultural source of the cities has been a privileged vehicle for the construction and reconstruction of the same ones, locating them in a global scene. (WARLIKE, 2008) However Oporto ECC, did not leave the cultural, economic and social legacy that was expected, the city is still recovering and using the architecture as support for the sustainable development and urban regeneration, being determinative for attribution of the cultural capital of the city.

GUIMARÃES

The ancient city of Guimarães is known as the first city of Portugal. It is located on the North of the country and its natural and architectural beauty deserved the UNESCO Heritage Centre nomination of World Heritage Site in 2001.

Guimarães city lives and especially fruitful period of its History, marked for the valuation and recognition of its historical and cultural patrimony along with an increasing investment in directed social equipment to the qualification and the development of the City and the citizens. The choice for ECC is a stage of importance in this ambitious process that desires extended sustainability beyond 2012.

The city is part of a peculiar territorial system, with a strong polycentric profile, that concentrates about 1/4 of the country population and 1/3 of the population of the region⁹, and that, as a stage of a process of increasing integration and in cooperation with Galiza in North of Spain tends to configure itself as a Euro-Region.

Inside of this urban-metropolitan region of the northwestern peninsular, more particularly, inside of a crown urban-industrial who involves the area of the Big Oporto, Guimarães has consolidated a co-central position, with the Vila Nova de Famalicão city, as with Braga city. The city of Oporto, with its international airport, is 30 minutes away, Braga 15 minutes, Vigo (Spain) 90 minutes and Santiago de Compostela (Spain) is a 2-hour drive.

This position is basically supported in the industrial, scientific and cultural sources and in a internationalisation dynamics which is trying to reconfigure itself (Guimarães has remained as the main city of the Ave's textile region, with a strong exporting profile), appointed through the consolidation of strategies of insertion in euro nets assumed by diverse institutions in the city and in the region, being to detach the Minho university.

Local authorities and the main city entities have collaborated, throughout the years, allowing a transmission of cultural and artistic development.

Underlining the identity and the historical and cultural inheritance, since the first citizens of the northwest band of the peninsula, passing through the fact that had supported the independence of the Portucalense County, in 12th century which confers it the honor to be the representation of the nationality foundation.

The structuralized and systematic tactics in the regeneration and in urban requalification and valorization of the territory by the cultural abilities are the key words of the stratagem plan. This last aspect has deserved a special attention since the middle of 80's of 20th century, until today. The laws of the historical center urban rehabilitation, are working, since then, to defend the preservation of the medieval morphology logic, working to recover and maintain the traditional constructive techniques, predominant connected to "chá"¹⁰ architecture, culminating with the world-wide recognition of this merit with the classification of the historical center as Patrimony of the Humanity attributed for UNESCO, in 2001.



Figure 3 - Guimarães Old Town. Source: Andreia Garcia

The built Guimarães heritage is not restricted to its historical sites. The city has known to establish in its evolution contemporary, a fruitful dialogue in the urban and architectural plans between old and modern. This creative confrontation deserves to be underlined as object of reflection and example to consider and to go deep.

On the other hand, Guimarães has always benefited from a social environment associated with arts and culture, which are more related to values, traditions and ancestral customs, which attribute to its festivities (folklore) (the Gualterianas and the Nicolinas, to state the most important), to gastronomy, traditional arts and crafts (the embroidering, hemp, forged iron, pottery, etc.). This is an important source of the cultural life of the city, wanted in a higher academic and elitist dimension.

The challenges that currently appear to Guimarães, about cultural long run development substance are not independent of this process, as they cannot leave

⁹ NuTS II (3,5 million inhabitants in 2001).

¹⁰ Plain architecture according to George Kubler (1980).

to answer to the challenges of the contemporary society where they affirm the new paradigms of one society characterized by the knowledge, neither leave, the reflection and the intervention in opposition that the national and international agendas have intended to enunciate in cultural substance.

The delineated strategy answers of coherent and articulated form to the implementation of one project that aims an urban, social and economics regeneration of the city, with the objective of increasing the quality of life and the access to the culture of the citizens and to promote the valuation of the territory and the collective patrimony material and incorporeal.

In this way, the European cities of middle and short dimension are the ones who face the biggest challenges in a context of intense global competitiveness for the attraction of investment and talent.

Before these new scenes and challenges, the matter is construct new ways of promoting the city and its symbolic and cultural heritage. Guimarães ECC 2012 can and must consist as model of development for hundreds of European cities of similar dimension, when opting to a process of regeneration supported in a strategy model - Cultural urban Regeneration.

In this model, the culture is seen as a catalyser and an engine of urban, social and economic regeneration.

Guimarães ECC 2012 will create a new concept of geography of quotidian and experiences, reinterpreting and reusing the public space, requalifying it, endowing it with interaction proposals that use creative resources and technology, between the creators and the citizens, either inhabitants or visitants.



Figure 4 - "Padrão do Salado" Oliveira square. Source: Pedro Garcia

The process of urban regeneration foreseen will bind the multiple geographic identities of the city, challenges and opportunities, developing in this way a strong relationship between cultural dynamic and the urban quotidian landscape.

Is possible to recognize in Guimarães a strong sense of historic and cultural identity¹¹, an energy that is important to lead the city, and by doing so, giving it a modern and future sense of meaning. Guimarães propose itself to demonstrate to

¹¹ As we have seen throughout our research, which included several interviews with people from different strata, and in different blogsphere.

the other European cities with similar dimension, in which way a community that saves in its heart a strong cultural memory, can become alive, and emphasize the strengths of its inhabitant's involvement that can assure the local and also the European culture.

In this way, the Guimarães 2012 Program, will be involving all the city: the local agents and the inhabitants in different programs and projects, and will be betting in a urban culture which connects the practice of the urban planning with the public city management, with the yearnings and expectations of each citizen. This is the underline aim of the project.

The designation by the Portuguese Government of Guimarães as one of the ECC for 2012 rewards the collective tradition, whether in terms of our restored urban fabric or in the promotion of cultural calendar that has followed the criteria of diversity that is both steadfast and contemporary for more than 20 years. (The City Hall of Guimarães, 2006)

The new narrative of the city, it's a set of new questions. Guimarães will show itself as a new stage of identity, the same identification of the past but deeply in the senses of the future. Those new spaces will be alternative, spaces for the imagination and new city life scenes.

Guimarães will use the banner of ECC to begin a change of paradigm, from a classic industrial economic model to an economic model based in creativity and knowledge with European significant level.

This process of transformation will have as a main space of intervention an old industrial area located in the centre of the city, too much closed to the classified area as world patrimony where there were indentified some problems of environment order.

With the implementation of the rehabilitation project and urban and functional redesign, this area will suffer a transformation in a knowledge and creative space, creator of economic, social and cultural value.



Figure 5 - Santiago square. Source: Pedro Garcia

Following this direction, it will be the ideal city to become at the same time, of explicit form, in simultaneous away theater of memory and theater of prophecy? (BROADBENT, 1990) Or it will be that if it can become in a pragmatic example of extreme proportion of this representation, as in the case of Venice, an enormous scene to the urban scale? (DAVIS, 2004)

The Guimarães ECC 2012 project will allow to learn with the past, live and celebrate in a intensely way the present, at the same time that makes possible a reflection and a debate about the future for the city and the region, as a

contribute, and in a scale perspective, for the construction of a Europe more participated by its citizens.

In this way, Guimarães 2012 will be materialized through a process that has in regeneration and the urban qualification excellent pillars of sustentation.

This process will include the construction and requalification of infrastructures and the reinforcement of partnership nets, which will involve the creative ones, the community and the economic agents.

It will include, equally, the accomplishment of a prestige program, which will promote the involvement and the participation of the community, creating new memories for Guimarães and Europe. The mission of Guimarães ECC 2012 is in compliance with its territorial frame, it will allow to reach the vision defined for this project and answer to agendas and the considered values.

The singularity of the historical center of Guimarães make of this city a unique place, the one which is recognized as world-wide Patrimony for UNESCO. It is recognized the characteristics of the public space of the potential city for presentation of artistic proposals value that it as scenic space of election and tourist attraction of reference.

The cultural programming associate will compete in offering cultural and creative activities in non conventional spaces: agricultural streets, squares, gardens, churches, environments or commercial spaces, allowing to offer new experiences that last in the memory of the local community and also in the visitors.

This option implies the whitewashing of diverse urban spaces and the recovery of infrastructures and equipment with special prominence for the Leather Quarter. It also implies the development of a proposal of a new relation between the citizens and the proportionate city for the use of new technological platforms in public space.

The urban space will be, therefore, the main stage and place of meeting and offer experiences of Guimarães ECC 2012.

Those cultural cities as scenery of events, where events happen, prolong themselves more than the time of its completion, promoting its sustainability.

According to Meppem and Gill (1998) "success is determined retrospectively, so the emphasis in planning should be on process and collectively considered, context - related progress rather than on achieving remote targets. A key measure of progress is the maintenance of a creative learning framework for planning. Institutional arrangements should be free to evolve in line with community learning". Assuming all these arguments and also the fact that the new role for policy makers is to facilitate learning and seek leverage points with which to direct progress towards integrated economic, ecological and socio cultural approaches for all human activity" we hope that Guimarães 2012 it will be a success such as Lisbon 94.

Until today, there is not known one idea, one word or project by the Minister of the Culture for 2012. There is no doubt about the odd chance for the region and the city. However the true feeling starts at 1st January of 2013. The apposite in ECC 2012 will only be earns if we known how to capitalize for the future values that one such event is able to providing and if it will leave a cultural, economic and social legacy.

We need to learn with the last mistakes, which could bring to the city a wrong feeling of leaving in a huge scale scene, full of tourists, pushing over the inhabitants and losing its cultural and historic identity.

It is known that the budget for Guimarães 2012 is equivalent to the effective cost just of the Music House, for Oporto 2001, and this can determine a lesser engagement to the Government in this project, inclusively the fact of being more peripheral city of the previous ECC.

However, the fact is that 871 years later, Guimarães will become again the Capital!

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