

PUBLIC SPACE IN CULTURE-LED HISTORIC CENTRE TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS: PORTO CASE STUDY

Lígia Paz ¹

CR Polis – Barcelona University, PhD Student and Investigator.

Abstract

In recent years, the urban competitiveness model has boosted the insight of historic centres as a value-added asset, where the symbolic features related to culture and heritage could be exploited accordingly to the global market aims. This historic centres' perception epitomizes the general European policy course to knowledge and innovation, where the creative and cultural sectors play a significant role. In this article, we discuss the impact of such competitiveness-oriented policies in public space. Through the uses of culture, tourism and heritage, we focus on the case study of the current urban revitalization project affecting Porto's most significant heritage areas: its central area and historic centre, classified by UNESCO since 1996 as a World Heritage site.

Keywords: Urban Competitiveness, Public Space, Urban Regeneration, UNESCO Historic Centre, Porto.

Resumo

O modelo de competitividade urbana impulsionou, em anos recentes, a percepção dos centros históricos das cidades enquanto uma mais-valia diferenciadora, onde os aspectos simbólicos relacionados com a cultura e o património poderiam ser explorados de uma forma conivente com os interesses do mercado global. Esta intervenção sobre os centros históricos reflecte uma orientação generalizada das políticas europeias para o conhecimento e a inovação, onde se inclui o sector cultural e criativo. Neste artigo, discutiremos o impacto sobre o espaço público destas políticas orientadas para a competitividade. Através da utilização da cultura, do turismo e do património, analisamos o caso de estudo do actual projecto de revitalização urbana sobre a Baixa e o Centro Histórico do Porto, classificado pela UNESCO como Património da Humanidade desde 1996.

Palavras-chave: Competitividade urbana, Espaço público, Regeneração urbana, Centro histórico da UNESCO, Porto.

¹ A previous version of this article, under the title Heritage, Tourism and Culture in Urban Space Consumption was presented at the International Symposium "The Street Belongs to All of Us". Instituto Superior Técnico de Lisboa/MUDE, February 17th 2011.

Introduction

The changes occurring in the last three decades of the 20th Century, especially the ones related to industrial organization and economic restructuring, accelerated transformations in the conception of urban space. The identification of a new category's production – the “consumption of space” (Lefebvre, 1974) - arisen as the result of the entrepreneurs' progressive spread into urban governance (Harvey, 1990) which was used as a strategy to overcome the crisis inflicting the western world cities. This consumption paradigm, by going beyond the previous conception of urban space as one limited to the production of goods, thus becomes part of an urban production model oriented to market competitiveness, and prone to the attraction of key elements to its survival and prosperity, such as investment capital and qualified labour. Consequently, all factors related to the cities corporate image and to the adoption of urban marketing strategies become essential to revert their economic decline and to increment competitiveness – which, as Muñoz (2008) notes, happens in a production and consumption scenario verified on a global scale.

One of the key elements for cities to gain a competitive advantage lies in their differentiation. Such occurs, namely, by the exploration of their symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1979), where we can identify the determining role of elements related to culture and heritage (Choay, 1999). The physical interventions on space, where the disciplines of design – namely, through its “star system” -, collaborate in the construction of the product-City (Brandão, 2006) lead us to the identification of branding and aesthetics as essentials for the differentiation of urban space consumption, underlining the crucial role of marketing to the reinvention of such cities (Ward, 1998).

Thereby, we can identify a context where public space is understood as largely overcoming its functional role; is coupled to consumption; and where such consumption is largely structured not only by economics, but also by symbolic factors fundamentally represented by culture (and where heritage and tourism result as a symbiosis of culture with economy). Such is the conceptualization where we develop this article: by identifying how culture, mostly by tourism and heritage, is related to the production of public space, and to discuss the effects of such practice by the analysis of the local revitalization plans of Porto's central area and historic centre, launched in 2005.

Competitiveness and urban space

Schumpeter (1942) identified the relationship between innovation and competitiveness; in his analysis of the economic system, he defended the idea that the system survival rests in the need of a continuous dynamism, reachable by the constant innovation of products, infrastructures, markets and industrial organization models. Such need of constant innovation is identified by the author as resulting in a “creative destruction”, by which unstoppable internal mutations occurs, leading to the successive creation and obliteration of productive sectors in favour of competitiveness.

After the seventies, this economic model based on competitiveness and innovation was largely adopted by the western local governments; it was understood as a way of dealing with economic activity breaks, high unemployment and social contestation, and, in some cases, with municipal bankruptcy. The troubled financial situation of many public institutions opened the path to the introduction of several changes, such as in the management and financing of urban projects, namely through the implementation of public-private partnerships².

This city's strategic orientation to the attraction of globalized capital resulted in the development of new urban projects, from which we can highlight the "waterfronts" (Remesar, 2005). These projects, mostly developed since the seventies in cities such as Baltimore, Barcelona, Lisbon or Shanghai resulted in the deep transformation of port areas which were largely defined by their industrial past (Costa, 2007); and where this new projects establish an innovative relationship between the city and its water area, allowing a "vision" of the cities where the new ethos of urban competitiveness is accepted as an imperative bet for their economical survival. In this context, we observe the proliferation of activities related to leisure and consumption, but also to land uses such as construction, speculation and generalized urbanization. In this scenario, the design of public spaces arises as essential to the competitiveness among cities, leading to the consideration of the disciplines integrating the design of urban spaces as a key to the definition of the postmodern space (Harvey, 1990; Remesar, 2005; Muñoz, 2008).

In this problematic economic context, where cities face an economic decline due to the delocalization of industrial activity, and where they need to enhance some of their features - fundamental for the development of added values much needed to their competitiveness gain -, we can understand the progressive leading character of creativity and culture as an urban economic engine. As noted before, innovations' role in the production of consumption goods spreads to the production of space itself, configuring the symbolic economy as a central force in the representation of cities by the articulation between culture and entrepreneurship (Zukin, 1995). Such symbiosis becomes clear not only in the industrial manufacture sector, but also in the new creative industries; and, finally, deeply integrated in the process of city's image construction, where historic centres play a decisive role. By the means of the intensive use of vernacular elements, of the characteristic symbolism of the manifestations of local identity, results the use of heritage as an element for the construction of a generic city image (Choay, 1999; Muñoz, 2008).

Culture and creative cities

The promotion of such entrepreneurial strategies, characterized by the orientation to competitiveness by the use of innovation has, mostly since the eighties, been associated with culture. In the following decade, it was replaced by the use of the concept of "creativity" in city promotion. This reorientation reflects a broader concept, which now includes not only the so-called cultural industries, but also activities con-

² To more information related to the development of public-private partnerships, its characterization and evolution, see Bovaird, T. (2004). "Public-Private Partnerships: from Contested Concepts to Prevalent Practice". In *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol.70, nº 2, p. 199-225. Londres: SAGE

sidered to be “creative” - such as technology (related to knowledge’s production and diffusion). Nowadays, there seems to be no consensus on the limits of the disciplines forming the “creative industries”. According to Florida (2010), creative cities are defined by a new creative “class”; such individuals are those who imperatively use creativity in their professional activity. In his explanation, this author includes Science, the Health and the Education sector in this broader definition of creative activities.

In general, we can consider that this city model, although having its base defined by the notion of economic growth operationalized through culture and creativity, defends also certain aspects of social, environmental and functional order. Relating them to the western culture liberal and democratic legacy, we can observe the predominance of defence of moral values (such as tolerance, social justice, appeals to citizen participation); and environmental values (by the promotion of green spaces, efficient public transport, a better management of resources); and, finally, of aspects related to the urban working methodology, defending the need to articulate several disciplines – namely, by interdisciplinary (Landry, 2006; Florida, 2009).

Urban regeneration through culture and public space: an open problem

The problematization of how culture relates to urban space, through the analysis of case studies where physical transformations conducted by this factor, have been widely studied. From the observation on several economic and physical scales, and based on the urban transformation of degraded areas (namely, in old industrial areas and historic centres), we can identify a group of common variables, such as:

- Anchoring a significant part of the urban transformation in buildings, either by the construction of new ones for cultural uses, characterized by their iconic architecture (as in Bilbao’s Guggenheim, in the nineties); or by the re-use of relevant heritage buildings, as in the Hospice de la Vieille Charité, in Le Panier neighbourhood (Marseille), in the eighties (Lorente, 2000). Besides the key cultural buildings, the rehabilitation of cultural heritage seems to play a significant role in the representation of an areas’ image and identity (to which disciplines such as architecture and real estate development are highly related).
- The application and development of certain juridical-administrative instruments, intended to revitalize the local commerce, housing, and/or the attraction of enterprises and real estate. Among those, we can highlight the reduction of certain local taxes and the changes over land uses – as in SoHo, New York, in the seventies (Zukin, 1982); and, in the last decade, in the 22@ Barcelona project, operating on the transformation of the old industrial Poblenou neighbourhood.
- The previously stated decisive role of urban design in the implementation of this processes – namely, by public art.

The above-summarized situations represent actuations where we can identify the link of culture to the processes of urban transformation. In Le Panier, by the development of “artistic neighbourhoods”, where the local economy is largely based in the artistic sector - through museums, art galleries, and commerce directly related

to it (namely, cultural tourism). In cases like 22@Barcelona, culture belongs to a wider scope – of the innovation and knowledge economy –, resulting in a broader impact of the actuations, both in territorial and in economical terms.

Transversely, the articulation between the primacy of economical factors, the instrumentalization of symbolic features and a concern majorly focused on the physical aspects of the territory has been noted, originating gentrification processes, as well as a social and cultural homogeneity. Such seems to be unrelated to the transformation processes being identified as initially spontaneous (i.e., resulting from a casual attraction of artistic communities and/or individuals to a given area, commonly due to cheap housing); or planned by public administrations. If observed from a wider territorial scale, the resolution of the physical and economical problems of those specific areas has been followed by a strong real estate speculative pressure, leading to the effortless transference of its social problems to other urban areas (Lorente, 1997)³.

Taking in account the definition of public space as a primal structuring element of the city – not only in its physical and functional, but also social dimensions; and of its relevance as a place for representativeness, identity and citizenship (Borja, 2003; Remesar, 2007), we can therefore claim the need of including such an element in the analysis of urban transformation processes. The general orientation of urban space to consumption identified by Lefebvre (1974) – and thus, of public space – leads us to consider the pertinence of such questions. Namely, when such happens in territories characterized by strong symbolic and identity aspects, as in the case of historic centres; and when those changes present themselves as central to important economic processes, occurring in local, and regional, scales but echoing strategic orientations defined on the national and European scale. Hence, for the present document we focus upon documentation targeting those three territorial levels, which congregate both plans of a general spectrum, bound to strategic orientations; as well as those exploring with finer detail the specificities of the intervention area.

Porto: case study

The European context

The European Council reunion in Lisbon, on March 2000, clearly assumed the intention of fomenting the global scale competitiveness and economic growth of the European territory through the development of an economy based on knowledge. The resulting strategy - Lisbon Strategy -, has been replaced in 2010 by the Europe 2020, which although maintains the main orientation policies of the previous one, adapts to the current economic context by presenting as a main goal the overcome of such crisis, as well as a “sustainable, inclusive and intelligent growth”⁴.

One of the key goals of the Europe 2020 reform package is innovation. Recently consolidated by the European Union through the project Innovation Union, this strategic guideline aims at raising EU’s competitiveness by the promotion of the private sector role, which is seen as a means to put Europe in a top position in the

³ We should highlight that Lorente (2009) doesn’t advocate a direct cause-effect relationship.

⁴ According to the European Commission website, http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_pt.htm

world scientific investigation, of promoting entrepreneurship innovation through the simplification of its processes (such as the simplification of the process of patent register), and increasing the stimulus to innovation through the establishment of public-private partnerships⁵. In this context, we can highlight the Green Paper recently launched by the EC: Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries. This paper considers that these industries, for their potential of economic growth and provision of jobs, contribute highly to the strategy Europe 2020 – and, as such, for the global competitiveness of the territory. Such a focus in the creative industries is clearly oriented into consumption (p.2), to heritage and, in a less explicit way, to tourism (p.6).

We can identify, both in national and European level documents, the understanding of creativity as a competitive advantage; and the need of inscribe it in the national agendas and regional policies, and to bind it to culture through investment, qualified labour and tourism. It is also in this terms that the EU policies consider culture not only as an instrument to obtain economic but also social benefits, reflected in the terms of social and territorial cohesion, namely as an agent for the regeneration of urban areas, allowing specific structural funding to such activities⁶.

In these lines of actuation we can include, by example, the plans regarding the centres of European cities. Proposing the revitalization of their economic structure, the population gain, and the physical degradation of space and heritage buildings – in several cities, such as in Porto, this happens with the incentive of institutional programs and initiatives on the national level (IGESPAR), European (ERDF), and worldwide, such as the UNESCO Convention for the World Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage. Going against decades of underinvestment in their historic centres and with the help of structural funding, local governments thereby try to develop new ways of gaining competitiveness by culture and innovation.

From regional capital to the specificity of the historic centre

Porto is the second most important Portuguese city, with around 216,000 inhabitants⁷. It is located in the centre of a Metropolitan Area with its name, also the second in the country, which gathers sixteen municipalities. According to this entity, the cultural, heritage and touristic relevance of Porto in this metropolitan scope is central to the development of the existing “Porto brand”, which is seen as being a European level cultural centrality. Porto is also part of the North Region, administrated by The North Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDR-N), and formed by eighty-six municipalities and several social, economic, environmental and scientific organizations representative of the regions institutional structure. This region is the country’s most populous, with about 3,700,000 inhabitants⁸ (i.e. 35,4% of the country; and with the youngest level of Portugal’s continental youth, 38%). The region is largely defined by its high level of industrialization (6th in EU25), based on a traditional sector whose competitiveness depends highly on factors such as low

5 According to the Innovation Union website, from the European Commission - http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?pg=intro

6 In Macroeconomic Study – Development of a Creative Industries’ Cluster in the North Region, p.25.

7 Data from the National Statistical Institute (INE), 2008.

8 Idem.

salaries; by which it is also the country's poorest region⁹¹⁰.

It was regarding this regional scale that, in 2008, the Serralves Foundation developed, with Porto's Metropolitan Committee, Casa da Música and Porto Vivo (Society for Porto's Central Area Urban Rehabilitation) the Macroeconomic Study – Development of a Creative Industries' Cluster in the North Region. This plan – or “vision”, as it calls itself – attributes special relevance to certain identity and distinctive characteristics found in this region, with a relevance found on the international level. Those are, among others, the areas classified by UNESCO as World Heritage (Porto's Historic Centre, Cõa Valley, Douro Wine Region and Guimarães Historic Centre); some pre-existing cultural industries, such as the Contemporary Art Museum of the Serralves Foundation and Casa da Música; and the relevance of several representative areas from the Creative Industries, such as Architecture (by Porto's School of Architecture, among others).

This document defines the Creative Industries as integrating cultural production and distribution, architecture, museology and heritage, design, audiovisual and cinema, fashion, performing arts, multimedia and publishing. It identifies in the North Region a group of consolidating areas in this sector of activities, which led its authors to the conclusion of witnessing a cultural clusterization process in course. One of the presented examples is the Miguel Bombarda Street (Fig.1, 2 e 3), where the biggest number of art galleries of the North Region is located. The exploration of this wider clusterization process will be central to a significant part of the economic, social and physical revitalization not only of Porto's central area, but of the whole Region.



Fig. 1 and 2: The requalification of a segment in Miguel Bombarda Street, in 2009, included its pedestrianisation, new urban furniture and new pavement design by artist Ângelo de Sousa. Note (Fig.3) the fracture between the intervened area with the rest of the street. (Source: author's images, 2010)

⁹ Data from CCDN-R, 2006.

¹⁰ Besides the administrative limits defined by CCDN-R, the region's extension is somewhat vague: the same entity presents it with an influence lets transcending these municipalities, and integrating, to the north, Galicia; and to the south, an area defined as “country's central area”.

The Municipality's plans: the intervention in Porto's central area and historic centre as key to the city's economy Porto's central area has been, in recent years, scenery of several public actuations regarding its urban transformation. We can highlight the European Capital of Culture event, in 2001; the requalification of several public spaces due to the city's light rail system, provided by its company, Metro do Porto; and, since 2004, the actuations of Porto Vivo - Society of Porto's Central Area Urban Rehabilitation -, a public enterprise created to lead the intervention in specific areas of Porto, namely the designed as Priority Intervention Zone (ZIP) where the central area and its historic centre are located.

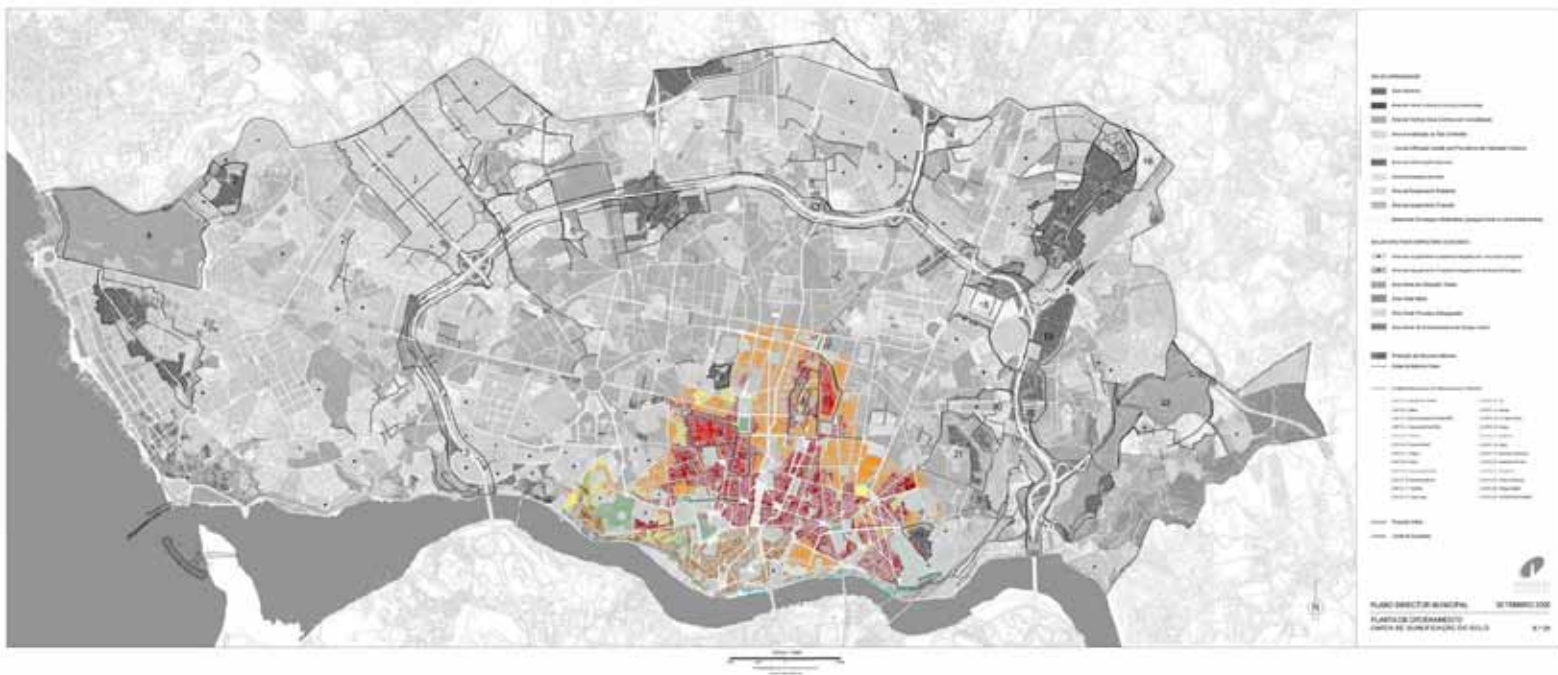


Fig.4. Porto's plan with the Priority Intervention Zone (ZIP) highlighted.
(Source: author's digital work over the Municipality's General Plan. Porto City Hall, 2005)

The Priority Intervention Zone is defined by an area of 500 ha; it is bordered, in the South, by the Douro River; to the North, by the Marquês Square /Constituição Street; to the West, by the Restauração/Carvalhosa Streets and, to East, by Bonfim. It includes Porto's Historic Centre, classified by UNESCO as World Heritage since 1996, as well as its protection area. Within the city, both Porto's central area and historic centre have suffered the highest population losses: between 1940 and 2001, they lost almost 70% of its residents.¹¹

The main problems identified in the last decade by the municipality's government in Porto's central area and historic centre are: the buildings degradation, on the housing and commercial level (with around 14% of abandoned buildings, and 23% of vacant houses¹²); high desertification; the population's aging, low employment

11 Such data also indicates the high levels of housing decentralization and the city's migration of inhabitants. Specifically related to the historical centre, the documents highlight the population's relocation in social neighbourhoods, taken by the state and the local government. These social neighbourhoods are currently 46, and house about 33 thousand inhabitants.

12 According to the Masterplan, p. 67

and low salaries levels; the infrastructural deficit and the low economic dynamic. With this diagnosis in hand, the local government proposes, through the creation of Porto Vivo in 2004, five main strategic lines of action: to attract new inhabitants by the buildings' intervention, to endorse areas' economic and commercial flourishing, to encourage its liveability through leisure, culture and tourism, and to qualify the public domain.

These guidelines are clearly stated as public-private initiatives, which are characterized as a "convenience urbanism" methodology by the city's Masterplan (p.1). The economic and housing sectors are proclaimed as the main guidelines for the revitalization to take place, and it is mainly through the real estate development that those partnerships are visible.



Fig.5, 6, 7: Porto's central area: Liberdade Square, Aliados Avenue and nearby building on sale, in the Dr. Artur M. Basto Street. (Source: author's photos, 2010)

The intervention scope of Porto's central area and historic centre transformation can also be identified in other institutional documents that define the local actuation level policies. As we have previously seen, they are subject to strategies, funding programs and European policies. For the present study, we have selected, on the national level, the National Strategic Plan for Tourism (2007), from the Ministry of Economy, Innovation and Development; on the municipal level, the Municipal Director Plan's Regulation (2005), the Masterplan – Strategic Plan for the Urban and Social Revitalization of Porto's Central Area (2005), the Management Plan of Porto's World Heritage Historic Centre, from 2008 (vol. I, II and III; as well as its executive synthesis, from 2010); and several smaller scale plans, such as the Strategic Document – Intervention Area of Cardosas Quarter (2007), the Strategic Document – Intervention Area of Portugal's Bank Quarter (2009), the Strategic Document – Intervention Area of Viela dos Congregados Quarter (2007), as well as the Strategic Document – Intervention Area of D. João I Quarter (2007).

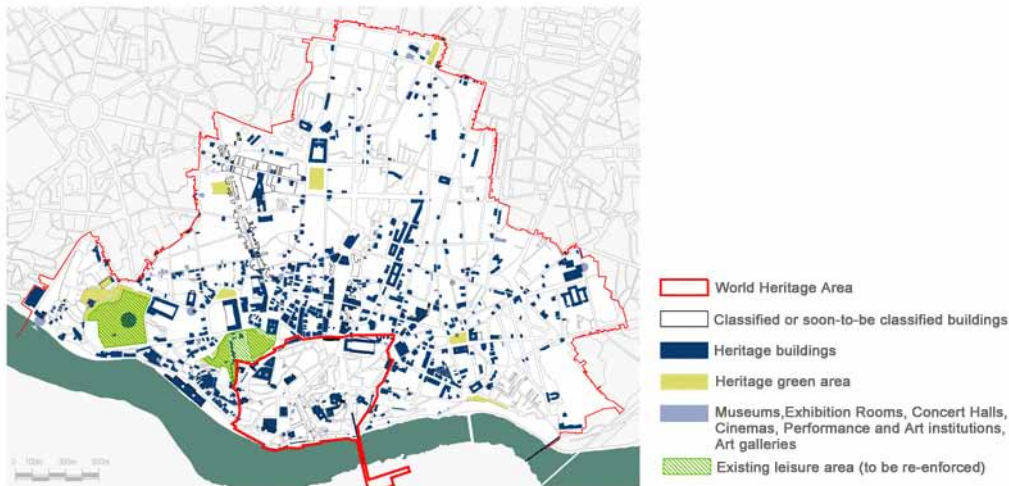


Fig.8: Existing elements essential for the development of the general area of touristic interest, in the Priority Intervention Zone. (Source: Masterplan - Strategic Plan for the Urban and Social Revitalization of Porto's Central Area, 2005)

The place of the street in the plans of Porto's central area and historic centre

According to the 2005 Municipal Director Plan's Regulation (p.5), public space is linked to the public thoroughfare. This document defines public space as

Area of public domain intended for the presence and circulation of people and vehicles, as well as to the city's qualification and organization.

Regarding public space's role in the urban revitalization plans, the Masterplan – Strategic Plan for the Urban and Social Revitalization of Porto's Central Area clearly recognizes its relevancy: Public Space is, along Housing, Economic Development and Mobility, the four main topics of development for the area's revitalization (p.64). Those strategic lines of intervention correspond to a territory that faces high levels of abandoned buildings, degraded housing and commercial areas, a poor local economy (high unemployment, low salaries, high level of retired citizens with low pensions, overall low commercial areas - although with a relevant business activity of government buildings and banks headquarters), and other socio-environmental problems, derived from traffic congestion, pollution, and degraded public spaces. Specifically, regarding the proposals intended to public space, this plan proposes the following intervention levels (p.152):

Playgrounds, leisure and extreme sports networks

Squares' network, dedicated to the regular activity of themed markets and fairs

Leisure tours' network

1. Tree planting and progressive withdraw of street parking
2. Reformulation of representative, and re-attribution of meaning to public spaces
3. Definition of spaces' values and attributes, as a stimulus to neighbourhood interactions; urban furniture and shade structures implementation
4. Inclusion of all the waterfront as a special intervention area

5. Image and urban environment reformulation and environmental pollution reduction
6. Encourage new mobility, commercial and touristic axis
7. Transport and mobility issues
8. Opening of some interior of blocks intended for public space, or for public use with private regulation

In the line of thought that guides the present article - the analysis of the local governments' project for public space, focusing on culture, tourism and heritage -, we should make the following notes:

On the topic of the creation of new pedestrian thoroughfares (11), such as the opening of some interior blocks currently occupied by buildings (often abandoned or in poor conditions), we should emphasize that although the public use is targeted, such isn't settled to be public space. Not only is the "public use with private regulation" formula clear in the overall rule of the city's Masterplan. But also the specific documents concerning some of those quarters (namely, the Cardosas and the Vielas dos Congregados) clearly put the priority and the main aims of such spaces in: the mobility needs (pedestrian crossing), and in the creation of new green spaces - in new, vibrant, visually appealing area, targeting the visual pleasure of the blocks' future residents, and to cover the surface of the underground parking lots to be built. The management of such areas is, in the specific intervention projects of the blocks, said to be preferably private¹³.

Regarding point five and six – related to symbolic value, the attribution of meaning, social bonds and urban furniture definitions -, parsimonious is the information available in the analysed plans. With the exception of a few references to urban furniture, a feature considered indispensable (namely, on the subject of public lighting and of the quality of materials to be used), the other aspects – although presented as structuring the community, and being essential to the representation, and identity, of its public space -, are mainly missing. In the plan where the public space project is better defined - the Management Plan of Porto's World Heritage Historic Centre -, such is said to be critical to the quality of the overall urban project. However, the guidelines it presents are diffuse in the terms of their relation to the social structuring of public space. Its specification is solely given on the technical level (accessibility, materials, signage), and security (the need of "constant surveillance" and of "repression of certain practices"¹⁴). The symbolic qualities, when exposed, are mainly linked to the city's image projection: of its urban qualities, heritage, and economic link to its "cutting-edge" creative sector. The aspects related to the actual experience of space are the ones related to parking, mobility and the green areas. If public spaces appear to be highly linked to mobility, most of their problems' solution relate to the private vehicle use derived from traffic and parking (4, 8, 9, 10), and to pedestrian use. We can identify the often exalted connection of public spaces to leisure (1, 2, 3, 9) and to tourism activities, which cross the overall plans. They also appear greatly related to the mobility factor, where it gains a new dimen-

¹³ We should note that such plans consider the possibility that, in pure statistical terms, the green areas might integrate the city's green structure.

¹⁴ In Management Plan of Porto's World Heritage Historic Centre, from 2008 (executive synthesis), p.64.

sion: of public space as the element that links leisure, commercial and touristic areas, allowing users and consumers to move from place to place. Such functional attributes intertwine with the symbolic uses of culture by the means of tourism and consumption – by example, with the proposals of networks for leisure tours, for themed markets and fairs, but also in the intention of creating new touristic and commercial axis (2, 3 and 8).

These qualitative issues seem to be mostly defined by the projection and development of a certain image of the city. Such is connected to its culture in the shape of its heritage - where the link to tourism, leisure, and commerce is clear, configuring consumption not only in the terms of material goods, but also of the symbolic aspects of the city and of its public space -, but also to its creative aspects recently developed, such as the ones integrated in the knowledge economy production (i.e., creative industries). On the other hand, if public spaces' overall quality achievement may be considered a naturally diffuse and hazy topic, then it should be subject to the explanation of specific measures, in order to define not only what the concept means, but specially the concrete measures to achieve it.

If we take notice of the content of urban design manuals, such as *From Project to Object: Manual of Good Practices of Urban Furniture in Historic Centres*, those processes are presented in a clear and objective way. We highlight this particular study because it results from a 2003 commission from Porto's City Hall to the Portuguese Design Centre, created in the scope of Atlante - a network of six UNESCO heritage Atlantic cities. In such study, we can confirm Porto's government will to consolidate urban design practices, in the understanding of such discipline as a significant contribution to the maintenance and development of crucial aspects to the historic centres – from which we can highlight identity, diversity, continuity, legibility and sustainability (p.13).

We can recognize in this manual overall guidelines a correspondence with the perceived needs of Porto's plans – both in the recognition of public space relevance to the city and, thus, of public space in historic areas (namely as a factor of its valorisation and identity). However, we identify many items in *From Project to Object: Manual of Good Practices of Urban Furniture in Historic Centres*, with which we share the appreciation of relevance, that do not take part in the municipal plans of our analysis. From those, we emphasize the following:

- While the Central area and Historic Centre plans are integrated in the city strategic plan - even representing an essential guideline in it -, we identify the lack of an urban furniture strategic plan, which efficiently translates a political vision, and an organizational structure, to develop it. Such an aspect leads us to worry about if such inexistence could inhibit the effective management and the overall development of the urban project, such as it is described in the manual with onerous consequences (p.41). To be precise, and in the terms relevant in the present discussion, of the symbolic value of Porto central area and historic centre: the significance of urban furniture, public art, public space and urban landscape design to the identity and symbolic features of space (p.44); and the

value it has to the construction of citizenship (Águas, 2009). The problems resulting from the absence of a city general urban furniture plan are currently verifiable: the high formal diversity of its elements, its disorganized location and the chaotic choice of urban furniture for some of its public spaces - such as most of the furniture pieces implemented in one of the major thoroughfares, Aliados Avenue, designed by two of the most prominent Portuguese architects, the Pulitzers' Siza Vieira and Souto de Moura, in what can be considered as an overall frail urban design project.

- The absence of a survey of all existing public spaces and of a coherent overall project, with detailed information on both street transversal and longitudinal scales. This absence cannot be attributed to a lack of analysis, or of existing information on smaller project scales: in the quarters' intervention areas – such as in the Bank of Portugal plan – we can identify a detailed survey of the existing buildings, both of their exteriors and their interiors as well. Such surveys indicate the main intervention guidelines, highlighting the role of the built heritage in the revitalization projects of Porto's central area and historic centre. Notwithstanding, we miss to identify in any plan an equally detailed survey regarding public space. We can only find in the Masterplan (p.155) a map where it is stated the existence of a survey of some of the city's public spaces (Fig.9); but nowhe-



Fig.9: General public space system: intervention proposal in the Priority Intervention Zone. (Source: Masterplan - Strategic Plan for the Urban and Social Revitalization of Porto's Central area, 2005)

re to be found data that allows the understanding of such surveys contents or extension, or of how this data was taken in account in the development of the public spaces' projects. Considering the relevance of the historical conditions analysis to the project development of the city and its public spaces (Hernández Sánchez, 2009); and the municipality declared vision of public space as one of the main intervention guidelines, we would naturally expect to find such survey work to be a significant part of the city's plans.

- And, finally, in the questions related to identity, the *From Project to Object: Manual of Good Practices of Urban Furniture in Historic Centres* discusses the techniques to be used in order to apprehend such features, both regarding its citizens and its places (p.95). Just as a survey of the physical territory is performed, this survey of pre-existing social aspects – meanings, memories, and uses –, is also crucial to the project development. Although the municipal plans include the population's involvement, such feature is only present in the Management Plan of Porto's World Heritage Historic Centre. In this plan, it is stated the need to develop affective ties between the residents and their neighbourhood. However, the proposal related to such "ties" is limited to a mere communication strategy of pedagogic character. The development of platforms for participation is also mentioned in this plan; but while it shows interest in what is called the "community involvement" in local problems and in the dialogue stimulus among all, it doesn't define the instruments or the measures for such to happen.

Thus, we might conclude that the municipal plans analysed denote a significant deviation of the social bond purposes, of the creation of mechanisms for the revalorization of the local symbolic features (such as urban furniture), of heritage preservation – understood beyond the architectonic buildings (i.e. public art, by example), but also of the immaterial cultural values; and, finally, a predicted negative impact on the overall aesthetic quality of the project. The project deficiencies reveal either incapacity by the responsible technical professionals, or a political detachment from regarding public space as a whole.

Conclusions

Porto's central area and historic centre area is, as we have seen, designated as a priority in the municipal plans for the revitalization of the economy, as well for the social cohesion of the entire city. However, the impact of such project is perceived as wider, having a significant regional impact. The symbolic features of Porto's central area and historic centre are often exalted; both through the existing heritage and by the new creative industries being developed, they mutually contribute to the construction of a differentiating city image and as a lever for those significant economic and social changes.

Nevertheless, the idea of street, and of public space, presents itself as diffuse in its social role, being mostly restricted to its mobility, commerce and heritage link. Emptied of any symbolic feature, the street appears to be limited to the functional and usability ground from where people circulate, admire and consume the city and

its heritage. Examples such as the Masterplan thematic tours are representative of such: the tours, presented as having a cultural and historic scope, are directly articulated with the shops and commercial areas.

Although we can verify how the plans reference the street as promoting citizenship, such orientation is never defined as a guideline in the revitalization project of Porto's central area and historic centre. In the few direct allusions to such orientation, through the exaltation of the symbolic features of Liberdade Square and Aliados Avenue, the municipality's identification of "civitas" is constrained to its institutional (the City Hall, located at the top of the Avenue), and commercial values. Thus, by the analysis of these plans, we cannot understand how the street and the overall public space are spaces of social representation, diversity, and of an active and participatory citizenship - decisive for the definition of the social, physical and economical city project. This omission is highlighted by how superficial is the public space approach, which comes in sharp contrast to the detailed information related to the existing buildings. Such is clear in the lack of surveys concerning the areas public spaces, the non-existence of documentation related to public space projects, and the lack of a global plan of its composing elements (explicitly, its urban furniture). Even though we can observe in these plans the understanding of heritage, and of the historic centre, as rooted in symbolic features associated to the abstract concept of "community" (as well as to citizenship), we don't have data that allows us to confirm the practical application of such understanding in the evaluated plans.

The scale and characteristics of the project regarding the buildings uses - considered essential to the success of its revitalization process -, anticipates the substantial increase of its inhabitants, by the intention to exclusively attract the upper and upper middle class. This situation will be performed through housing requalification, new luxury hotels, but also by the creative industries sector development, both on industrial and commercial terms. Such measures allow us to expect high social homogenization in the area. On the other hand, the current central area's properties owned by the finance sector, as well as the terms in which such properties and real estate development are presented in the plans (namely, in D. João I and Viela dos Congregados quarters), raises specific concerns; such power can be stated in the creation of spaces intended for public use with private management.

To those factors, we can add the almost complete absence of non-architectonic heritage elements, such as public art. References to art and to its relationship to public space are limited to the consideration of an "Art Faculty influence area", in a Masterplan map (p.147), without further explanation of what is such thing; and the idea of developing street art projects, such as performances and overall related to street animation and commerce. The fruitful contribution that public art can provide in the development of social identity processes (Remesar, 2007) appears to be a despised resource in Porto's plans.

We are aware that part of the difficulties in identifying these elements might be related to how city planning is developed, i.e. the multiplication and flexibility of urban plans. In Porto, we can observe the multi-level articulation of plans: the Masterplan and the Municipal Director Plan, in broader and orientation sense; and in

specific terms, the quarter intervention areas' plans. Such proliferation of plans difficult the investigation's accuracy (along with the often found incoherence among them); but also the flexibility of such planning system seems to forbid a higher project detail, and therefore, its analysis. Verwijnen (2005) previously noted how this division occurs on the European scale, where the big urban plans have become limited to the juridical aspects of land use rules. The author states plans have been divided in two main lines: the ones concerning a "vision" of the city or region; and the strategic plans that transmit such vision. Verwijnen considers that such structure results from the city competition on the global level, which brought the need for the cities to develop new planning instruments defined, among other aspects, by this same flexibility and fragmentation.

Despite the inspired "visions" suggested in our analysed plans, it isn't easy to identify a common orientation concerning the interventions' scope. Such inconsistency is visible in the conceptual haziness of the urban transformation process itself: the same interventions are, throughout the documents, called revitalization, regeneration and urban renewal, without any explanation of why such practice occurs. In particular, at the Cardosas Strategic Document (p.88), the urban rehabilitation project is defined as

(...) a new urban policy seeking the requalification of the existing city (...) enhancing the socio-economic, environmental and functional values in certain urban areas, aiming at substantially raising the local residents life quality, improving the physical conditions of the areas' buildings, their habitability levels and the endowment of facilities, infrastructures, and open spaces for public use.

But the problem is not restricted to this ambiguous use of the specific urban studies' terminology. As previously stated - and as the above excerpt clearly demonstrates -, it encompasses the risky, but normalized, use of both the concepts of "public space" and "public use". Such operation leads us to an inevitable question: are these municipal plans intended to provide a space for users? Or a space for citizens?

Although we can find, in Porto's municipal plans, the affirmation of public space as a crucial element in the transformation process of its central area and historic centre, the detailed analysis of their contents does now allow the understanding of how such public space is anyhow relevant to its citizens and to their citizenship; we can only appreciate its contents related to mobility and to its functional and environmental issues. If we recall the 2005 public space definition presented by the Municipal Director Plan Regulation – "Area of public domain intended for the presence and circulation of people and vehicles, as well as to the city's qualification and organization" -, we cannot find in this Regulation, nor in any of the other studied documents, the constitution of instruments, methodologies, or of any traces which allows us to derive a diagnostic of the public space concept exceeding its utilitarian (infrastructure and mobility) and consumption-led character. Despite such consumption being somewhat under covered by culture - notably through the tourism-heritage axis and knowledge-based, cutting-edge creative production; and thus,

with a significant proliferation of symbolic elements in the overall project design -, the emphasis of this position raises significant questions about social and political processes that go far beyond the specificity not only of Porto's case study, but also of historic centres' regeneration processes.

The contribution of Porto's central area and historic centre revitalization project might be, on several levels, a good practice example. The challenges presented by many years of heritage building's abandonment, of socio-economical degradation and of environmental problems are complex and large. The impacts of such project, both in its global and smaller intervention area units, and when regarding the street as thoroughfare, mobility, and some aspects regarding its physical organization of space are features that we do not intend to measure, much less deny. But we must highlight that if the construction of the city is to be understood in its whole, regarding both its physical and social dimensions, then citizens should not be reduced to users.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the support of the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT, Portugal), granted through the PhD scholarship SFRH/BD/43225/2008.

References

AGUAS, S (2009). Design de Candeeiros de Iluminação Pública para a Sustentabilidade do Espaço Público [PhD Thesis]. Barcelona: Universidade de Barcelona <<http://hdl.handle.net/10803/1546>>

BORJA, J.; MUXÍ, Z. (2003). El espacio público: ciudad y ciudadanía. Barcelona: Electa

BOURDIEU, P. (1979). La distinction: critique sociale du jugement. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit

BRANDÃO, P. (2006). O Arquitecto e Outras Imperfeições. Ética, identidade e prospectiva da profissão. Lisboa: Livros Horizonte

CÂMARA MUNICIPAL DO PORTO (2005). Regulamento do Plano Director Municipal. S.I.

CHOAY, F. (1999). A Alegoria do Património. Lisboa: Edições 70

COMISSÃO EUROPEIA (2010). Livro Verde: Realizar o potencial das indústrias culturais e criativas. Bruxelas: Comissão Europeia

CONSELHO EUROPEU (2000). Conselho Europeu de Lisboa, 23 e 24 de Março de 2000: Conclusões da Presidência. In http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_pt.htm

COSTA, J. (2007). La Ribera entre proyectos. Formación y Transformación del Territorio Portuario, a Partir Del Caso De Lisboa [PhD Thesis]. Barcelona: Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya. <<http://hdl.handle.net/10803/6960>>

FLORIDA, R. (2009). Les ciutats creatives. Barcelona: Raval Edicions

FLORIDA, R. (2010). La clase creativa: La transformación de la cultura del trabajo y el ocio en el siglo XXI. Barcelona: Paidós

FUNDAÇÃO DE SERRALVES et al. (2008). Estudo Macroeconómico - Desenvolvimento de um cluster de indústrias criativas na região do Norte (relatório final). S.I.

HARVEY, D. (1990). The condition of postmodernity: An enquiry into the origins of cultural change. Oxford: Blackwell

HERNÁNDEZ SÁNCHEZ, A. (2009). Espacio público en el centro histórico de Puebla-México [PhD Thesis]. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona <<http://hdl.handle.net/10803/1547>>

LANDRY, C. (2006). The Art of City Making. London: Earthscan

LEFEBVRE, H. (1974). La production de l'espace. Paris: Anthropos

LORENTE, J.P. (2000). "Art neighbourhoods, ports of vitality". On the W@terfront, nº2, Fev. 2000. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona <<http://www.ub.edu/escult/Water/water02/water02.pdf>>

LORENTE, J.P. (2009). "Qué es y cómo evoluciona un barrio artístico? Modelos internacionales en los procesos de regeneración urbana impulsados por las artes". In FERNÁNDEZ, B.; LORENTE, J.P. (Eds.). Arte en el espacio público: barrios artísticos y revitalización urbana. Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza

MINISTÉRIO DA ECONOMIA, DA INOVAÇÃO E DO DESENVOLVIMENTO (2007). Plano Estratégico Nacional do Turismo. S.I.

MUÑOZ, F. (2008). Urbanización: Paisajes comunes, lugares globales. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili

PORTO VIVO, SRU (2005). Masterplan - Plano Estratégico de Revitalização Urbana e Social da Baixa do Porto. S.I.

PORTO VIVO, SRU (2007). Documento Estratégico – Unidade de Intervenção do Quarteirão das Cardosas, Vol. I (versão Web). S.I.

PORTO VIVO, SRU (2007). Documento Estratégico – Quarteirão Viela dos Congregados, Vol. I. S.I.

PORTO VIVO, SRU (2007). Documento Estratégico – Quarteirão de D. João I.

(Q12067), Vol. I. S.I.

PORTO VIVO, SRU (2009). Documento Estratégico – Unidade de Intervenção do Quarteirão do Banco de Portugal (Q 12080), Vol. I (Web version). S.I.

PORTO VIVO, SRU; CMP (2008). Plano de Gestão - Centro Histórico do Porto Património Mundial, Vol.I, II e III. Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto

PORTO VIVO, SRU; CMP (2010). Plano de Gestão - Centro Histórico do Porto Património Mundial (Síntese Executiva). Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto

REMESAR, A. (2007). “Public space is not dead”. Public Space: The battlefield for Public Art. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona <<http://www.ub.edu/escult/Water/water10/water010.pdf>>

REMESAR, A. (Ed.) (2005). Art for social facilitation: Waterfronts of Art I. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona <<http://www.ub.edu/escult/Water/water02/water02.pdf>>

REMESAR, A.; CPD (Coord.) (2005). Do Projecto ao Objecto: Manual de Boas Práticas de Mobiliário Urbano em Centros Históricos. Lisboa: Centro Português de Design (2ª ed.)

SCHUMPETER, J. (1942). Capitalism, socialism, and democracy (Cap. VII – “The process of creative destruction”). New York: Harper

VERWIJNEN, J. (2005). “Here and Nowhere - The making of Public Space”, in Remesar, A. (ed.). Art for Social Facilitation. Waterfronts of Art I. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona

WARD, S. (1998). Selling places: The marketing and promotion of towns and cities, 1850-2000. New York: E & FN Spon

ZUKIN, S. (1995). The Cultures of Cities. Londres: Blackwell