3.2. Transforming the city: shaping urban public space through collective street art initiatives.

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Abstract

This paper results from the research for a PhD thesis about the relations between art, urban space and the city, namely through the ephemeral forms of art that are present in the city's public spaces. It is considered here that these relations are never neutral but, instead, very expressive of configurations of power and identity, being street art both a reflex and a critical approach to those configurations and constraints. Street art in Lisbon assumes several different meanings: from the individual initiatives, to collective and even institutional actions, various are the configurations of this artistic practice in the urban public space, and therefore also varied are the implications of each initiative in terms of the social production of space it might represent. In this paper I will specifically approach the street art initiatives in Lisbon of collective and independent nature – that is, that not only involve several different actors (street artists, architects and planners, volunteers, the population, among others), but also reveal different logics of action, such as projects, associations, events or festivals of street art in Lisbon. From the spectacular scale of the interventions in the derelict buildings of Lisbon, to participatory projects for the improvement of public structures, to even the exploration of the role that the practice of street art can have in the quality of life of senior citizens, to these different logics of action correspond different visions of what the city could – or should – be. Also, to these projects correspond very different ways of conceiving the role that street art interventions can assume in that transformation of the public space and the role the population can have in that transformation. Therefore, I aim to explore how a specific set of collective and independent street art actions that took place in Lisbon are very expressive, although each initiative in a different way, of a will from the actors involved of shaping the city and actively engage the population in the transformation of its public spaces – in a process that can be interpreted as expressively and visually claiming the right to the city.

Keywords: public spaces, cities, street art, right to the city, urban sociology.

Introduction

Street art, in its diverse contexts of production, can reveal urban dynamics, in the overlap of the expectations, perceptions and discourses of the different actors that participate in it. Therefore, it can construct public space, in the several contexts that frame its practice. To unravel these mechanisms was the first objective of the PhD sociological research this article results from. In this article, it will be shown how street art, can constitute itself as a form of construction of public space, specifically in its collective contexts of production, and from the observable reality of Lisbon's street art.

From the conceptions of several authors on the urban dynamics of construction of public space (such as Low, 2014; Lefebvre, 2012; Bourdin, 2005), through the artistic expressions it displays (Phillips, 1998; Hayden, 1997), one of the main purposes of this research was to understand how street art can be expressive of the relations of power that configure public space – assuming the hypothesis that this form of art in the public space reveals those same relations of power.

A third objective of this research stems, in part, from Henri Lefebvre's (2012) conception on the right to the city. Therefore, the description of the mechanisms under which street art allows to explain new ways of thinking and constructing public space, as well as to reclaim it – and in what way the diversity of its contexts of production can be influent in different ways – was established as a goal for this research.

Methodologically, a qualitative approach was favored. The techniques that were used include a diverse set of long interviews with several actors involved in the production of street art. In fact, the contact with the artists and the associations, collectives and institutions that promote street art events was a fundamental aspect of the

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collection of quality, in-depth data. Another crucial a crucial component of the methodologies adopted was the ethnographically-inspired field work, with intense collection of a vast set of photographs that depict the street art interventions in Lisbon, the development of a field log, the creation of walking routes within the city in the search for new interventions, and the several moments of observation of street artists creating on the streets.

The act of spontaneously intervening in the walls and structures of a city is for the street artist to reclaim a space of communication and visibility, to mark a presence in the public space, saying that he/she is too part of that space. In the end, and recalling the concept of Lefebvre (2012), this too is a way of the street artists to reclaim their *right to the city*.

However, with the rapid growth and visibility of street art in urban contexts, the individual act of artistic expression is nowadays far from being the only kind of initiative for these interventions. With its new popularity, street art is now being created through collective initiatives, with increasingly diverse purposes, actors, and «visions» concerning what street art can be. These contexts operate under a different logic of conceiving the urban public space, to which correspond several perceptions about what the city should be and what role can street art assume.

Furthermore, these collective and structured contexts of production of street art can also constitute different ways of reclaiming the right to the city, although under mechanisms that are different from those of the individual and illegal practice of street art.

These forms of production of street art are the focus of this article. Here will be shown how different ways of reclaiming the right to the city exist in several collective street art projects. After presenting a theoretical background, I will present each of the collective street art projects that will be approached here, explaining the meanings each one assumes on the production of urban public space, and on how each can be considered an attempt at reclaiming the right to the city through street art, by its citizens, artists and other protagonists of the urban experience.

Collective Street Art Initiatives: Stimulating a sense of Community

In the last few years, Lisbon has become a stage for several street art initiatives of collective and legal nature, besides the individual forms of expression that are also very visible in this city's walls.

These initiatives are diverse, as they appear structured under different logics of production, with the corresponding word differentiation. One can easily find street art «projects», «events», «festivals», «galleries» and «workshops» throughout this urban context. It is pertinent to recall the writings of Alain Bourdin (p. 185, 2005), where the author considers, that the emergence of several groups of actors with interest in a specific area is a typical moment of the beginning of a system of action that searches for stability. In this case, this would be the collective organization of legal street art initiatives.

On the other hand, to these different forms of production of street art correspond specific ways of constructing public space – or intending to – by the different actors or involved. Therefore, within the *institutionalized practices* (Ferro, 2011) of street art, several are the entities that establish the programmatic outlay that frames these initiatives. It can be argued that the idea of *strategies of domestication* (Campos, 2010) of street art is not enough to describe what may in fact consists of *strategies of production and construction of public space*. In fact, it is argued here that the different projects that will be presented in the next pages are very distinct examples of street art as a way of getting communities involved in their common public spaces, in what can actually become a way for them to reclaim their *right to the city* (Lefebvre, 2012).

Lefebvre's idea of the right to the city is a prominent concept for this research, and on that account, further theoretical contextualization was found to be relevant here.

This author's concept of *alienation*, "falsified relationship with the world" (Butler, 2012), is used in the Lefebvre's critic of the social relations inherent to urban life. Thereby, his proposal of the *right to the city*, understood as "(...) right to urban life, transformed and renewed" (Lefebvre, p. 119, 2012), presupposes an urban life that is free of the alienation of a capitalist society. In such a society, the *value of exchange* - referring to the consumption of products, the buying and selling of spaces, property, places and signs - overlaps the contrasting notion of *value of use* – referring to urban life and urban time (Lefebvre, 2012) - from which result that the cities within a capitalist society are more subject to an orientation towards money, commerce, exchange and products. Lefebvre's central thesis is that this is a contradiction with the city's nature as a construction, according to which it should be oriented towards its value of use.

The argument in this article is that several of the collective street art projects that have been taking place in Lisbon can be analyzed under Lefebvre's right to the city perspective. Therefore, each of the initiatives presented here constitutes a separate proposal about urban public space, and the role street artists and the communities, entities and institutions, can assume in its social construction.

Each one of these initiatives shows, in a way the spontaneous and illegal street art practice wouldn't, the potential to strengthen the relations with the local communities, stimulating in its inhabitants the feeling of belonging to a community and to be rightfully a part of its destiny, which is contrary to a capitalistic logic under which the urban space is a mere product of real estate speculation.

How they achieve that is variable, depending on the overlapping among the individual path of the artists, their expectations and ways of framing this practice in a set of personal references, and the individuals that organize the collective initiatives, to which are associated specific visions about the role street art should assume as a element of the urban public space.

It is pertinent here to recall the work of Michel Agier, who claims that a certain similarity exists between the artistic creations and the political actions that, both transient, can contribute to connect different individuals, who therefore overcome their condition of anonymous in the city:

> Des créations artistiques ou des actions politiques peuvent de manière éphémère mettre en relation des individus tous différents – et non plus les anonymes de la foule. (Agier, s/p, 2004).

Accordingly, the will to live an urban life in community emerges as an act of resistance to an urban order that too many times seems to promote solitude and the negation of communal life. It is precisely in the promotion and stimulation of this sense of community that street art can have an active role.

From the Municipality to the Community: GAU

In 2008, Lisbon's Municipal Authority created the Urban Art Gallery (GAU – Galeria de Arte Urbana). On a first moment of its existence, the expression of this organism consisted on a set of mdf panels that were installed near the Bairro Alto area, as structures for legal and free graffiti and street art interventions that would constitute an alternative to the vandalism on the historical neighborhood's walls.

GAU's goal was, on its creation, to contribute to the preservation of historical sites through the prevention of acts of vandalism. As the organism evolved, another set of objectives was added to GAU's ambit, namely issues on public space, in what concerns making it more democratic and also to promote recognition of street art among the populations.

While this organism evolved, the activities in its range stemmed from the organization of two street art showcases in the aforementioned panels, in which several street artists created, to other initiatives of broader reach. One of these is the initiative «Recicle the look», where glass recycling structures are painted, by anyone interested in participate, so the initiative is not only open to street artists.

Figure 1 – Interventions in glass recycling structures, «Recicle the Look», GAU.
Source: Ágata Sequeira.

There are several other projects in which GAU participates in partnership with other associations or collectives; one example is «Faces of the Blue Wall», which consisted of various interventions in the sections of the wall that surrounds the psychiatric hospital Júlio de Matos. Project CRONO, the emblematic interventions which will be discussed further on, was also the result of a partnership between GAU and Azáfama Citadina Associação.

The privileged situation of GAU as integrant part of Lisbon's Municipality frequently allows this organism to act as mediating agent for the obtaining of permits for the interventions, and in that sense it is recurrent that other initiatives contact this entity for the elaboration of pieces in a large scale, or that require permits. The activities in which GAU participates are several, from the concession of authorization for the interventions, to the organization of their own interventions, mostly with public calls to the participation of street artists. Other projects within this entity's reach include the publishing of books and a newsletter, as well as an important work of inventory to Lisbon's street art pieces.

From the Municipality to the Community

The actions of GAU, expressed in the collaborations with other entities or in the opening of their own calls for street art projects, imply a vision about street art, in what concerns the role it can assume for the city of Lisbon. This contemplates street art as a "vector of affirmation of the city in the competitive urban network panorama" (Miguel Carrelo, GAU, in interview, 2013), while understanding it as a useful instrument in the requalification of degraded urban spaces.

While the importance of involving the local community in the requalification of urban space is an expressive intention of the initiative «Recycle the Look», as it is the only one that is open to whoever wants to and not only to street artists, the fact that these are transitory and mobile structures hardly will translate in an involvement of the population that supersedes the moment of intervention. By contrast, in projects developed by GAU and that were subject to a call for street artists, namely the one that took place in the neighborhood of Penha de França, there is a clear intention of promoting local rehabilitation, not through the direct participation of the citizens in its creation, but through the valorization of an artistic intervention that follows local narratives as theme.

The choice of the project for that specific area results from the way Lisbon's Municipality conceives the role of street art in urban public space – that is, as a way of strengthening the local dynamics, stimulating the local narratives and therefore the memory of the place.

Figure 2 – Intervention by Leonor Brilha, in Penha de França, Lisbon.
Source: Dina Dourado.

After the completion of the mural «Lagarto da Penha de França», several guided tours took place, for the locals and by the artist that created the intervention, Leonor Brilha. As it provides for contexts for the artists to elaborate and share discourses about their pieces – such as guided visits – initiatives such as this constitute an attempt to enable the emotional connection between the local community and a piece that speaks about its narratives. This

also relates to the way the artist interprets the act of intervening in the public space of a local community through street art, and the meaning he or she attributes to the piece in that specific site and how the artist conceives the role his/her piece has in a particular community.

Street art and inclusiveness: Wool and Lata 65

A recent spot for creative activities in Lisbon is Lx Factory. Where an old factory used to operate, now several businesses and activities take place, such as offices for creative industries, design stores, record stores, art galleries, fashion and jewelry stores, as well as restaurants and bars. Among the red brick walls of the buildings, one can observe the visual profusion of street art pieces that exist throughout this space. This is the result of Wool on Tour, an initiative from the organizers of the Wool Fest in Covilhã, a highly regarded street art festival in Portugal.

There organizers have a considerable experience in developing several street art initiatives throughout the country: Lisbon's Wool on Tour; the elaboration of a mural with the participation of homeless people in Coimbra; Lata 65, the workshop of street art for the elderly; Muraliza, an event of creation of murals in Cascais; participations in the Walk and Talk festival in Açores, as well as international experiences such as the participation of Portuguese street artists in Djerbahood (Tunisia) and Tour Paris 13 (France).

Being our research context the production of street art in Lisbon, it is necessary to keep focus on the two projects that have taken place in this city: Wool on Tour and Lata 65, although not necessarily exclusively and being both highly influenced by all the other projects the organization developed.

Wool on Tour emerged in 2012, when Wool in Covilhã didn't take place for lack of sponsoring. The organizer Lara Seixo Rodrigues, was working in Lx Factory, and, noting the potential of the place for street art, suggested the administration to allow her to develop an event with regular editions, in which street artists could intervene in its outdoor walls. It is important to note the specificity of this space, being simultaneously *public* – because it's free access – and *private* – because it belongs and is managed by a private entity.

The idea to bring street artists to create here appears as a way of creating interplay between the valorization of a space that provides an alternative to real estate and building attention, renewing its uses for the creative industries, and the showcase of street art pieces. Henceforth, Wool on Tour consolidated itself not only as complement to Wool Fest, but also as a way for the organization to keep an activity of production and promotion of street art in the city of Lisbon. The editions of Wool on Tour cover open days, to stimulate contact and communication between public, artists, and the pieces. The walls of Lx Factory have since become a showcase of the work of several artists creating street art– mostly Portuguese but also international.

Figure 3 – Intervention by MAR in Lx Factory, Wool on Tour.
Source: Ágata Sequeira.

Street art for the community

With her experience developing street art events, Lara Seixo Rodrigues notes the potential these initiatives have to speed up local community dynamics, as compared to other types of operations in the urban public space that imply a longer period of intervention – such as profound works of rehabilitation or permanent public art projects. Also highlighted in the interview Lara gave for this research, is the power of transforming the spaces that a street art event can have, and which exceeds the street art pieces. For example, Wool included the creation of a temporary structure as support of the event, a tent where locals and the artists and organizers would meet, talk or share meals; however, this turned out to have more permanent consequences, like the revitalization of the public space that structure was implemented, a small square, as a place for daily social contact for the community.

In the planning of a street art event such as these, the option for some strategies in detriment of others has a definitive influence in allowing emotional connections to be established between the populations and the interventions. In both Wool and Wool on Tour, these options included: the phasing of the interventions, so that they would take place one at a time, allowing the attention of the locals to focus on one intervention and one artist at a time; the development of workshops and talks about the interventions, by the artists, and for stimulating dialogue between them and the population, as well as showing clearly what the artist intended with the pieces; to create a space of temporary support, where artists, organization and locals could interact in a welcoming way. These approaches can be decisive for the success of a project, especially when it interferes with something as sensitive as the social fabric of a community.

Furthermore, showing how the pieces are made and promoting discourses about them stimulates a relation of proximity with art, which can have further effects in the individual mechanisms of reception and fruition, not only towards street art but in art in general. On the other hand, Lara refers, it is possible that this option for showing and talking about the pieces may develop in a feeling of appropriation, in the sense the locals ended up caring about the pieces and wanting them preserved.

Inclusive street art

As for Lata 65, another street art project from the same organization, it consists of a workshop of initiation to the techniques used in graffiti and street art, both with a practical component that contemplates the creation of a tag and the elaboration of works in several techniques, such as stencil or spray painting, and a theoretical part that provides a historical and social context for these practices. The originality of this workshop lies in the fact it is destined to the elderly population. The idea for its creation developed from the experiences the organization had previously had with the elderly population in Covilhã, in the first edition of Wool.

The main aspect to highlight in this initiative is the pedagogical potential and of social action that street art can assume and inspire. The workshop stimulates the sharing between the artists and a group of people that most of the times don't have any familiarity with the practices and meanings that graffiti and street art assume besides what they see in the streets. There are, therefore, two important elements to retain: the intention to demystify the idea that all graffiti and street art are vandalism, and the will to create rich moments of learning, through the sharing of knowledge and through the practice of several street art techniques, with all the benefits that can come from that, in terms of well-being and quality of life for the elderly.

Furthermore, Lata 65 was the starting point for one of Lisbon's street artists: *L, who, in her 60s, and after participating in one of the editions of the workshop, started creating her own stencils and applying them freely all over the city.

From this initiative, we can observe how street art can assume meanings of social inclusion, allowing the elderly to have access to the tools to understand a kind of expressive and artistic language that is so prevalent in the urban public space, making them closer to it and also to be able to intervene in its walls.

Creating street art together: APAURB

Another group of street art initiatives that have been taking place in Lisbon is organized under associations. One of them is APAURB, Associação Portuguesa de Arte Urbana. This association was founded in March 2013, and its current president is Octávio Pinho, who is also a writer himself, under the tag *Slap*.

APAURB appeared to give answer to the need to aggregate street artists and other people interested in these activities, operating as mediating agent between them and the institutions, defending their interests while also participating in the construction of public spaces (Low, 2005) with their own street art projects.

As a result of the many new emergent dynamics around street art in Lisbon, APAURB intends to give answer to the interests of the artists, aggregating them as a collective entity to give them more power of negotiation, or mediating between the artists and other entities that develop street art projects.

Additionally, the association also creates its own projects, with and by their members. Two expressive examples are the paintings in Túnel de Alcântara (an underground pedestrian tunnel) or the national initiative «40 anos, 40 murais», that can be seen in Lisbon also in the Alcântara area.

Creating Together

An important issue to the actions of APAURB is participation, with their initiatives being carried out exclusively through voluntary work by anyone interested, street artists or not. The participation of the people in a collective project has practical results not only in what concerns the betterment of a common public space, but also on the sense of having a connection with the place itself.

This was the case with the project of the Alcântara tunnel, as it involved a large number of voluntaries whose work had the purpose to requalify a degraded and aesthetically unpleasant urban structure of daily use. This included known Lisbon street artists, as well as locals who wanted to participate. Their work resulted in the tunnel becoming not only more interesting visually, as it also had the unexpected effect of stimulating the institutional will to regularly maintain the place, in what concerns its cleaning and illumination.

Figure 4 – Stencil figures made by *L.
Source: Rui Nascimento.

Figure 5: Mural «40 anos, 40 murais», in Alcântara. It can be read «This mural was made with the collaboration of 67 artists and voluntaries, without institutional support. ».
Source: Ágata Sequeira.

Figure 6 – Interventions in the Alcântara tunnel, MAR and RAM, an initiative by APAURB.
Source: Ágata Sequeira.

This project was an example of how direct intervention in the public space can be carried out by street artists and a group of citizens that consider street art has the potential to transform public space. The idea that all citizens can have the ability to intervene artistically in their city underlies the actions of APAURB, particularly in its initiatives.

The experience Octávio Pinho has in creating and organizing street art projects, namely within APAURB, gives him a perspective about the role street art can have in the local communities, which relates to collective and voluntary action as way to directly intervene in the urban public space, especially the structures of common use. This stimulus to the voluntary participation in street art projects allows the people involved to feel the structures as their own, by taking care of them and drawing attention for their maintenance.

Initiatives such as the Tunnel of Alcântara project aim, through the direct and voluntary participation of the people, together with street artists, to improve the conditions of the public spaces for collective use. For this reason, it is perceived as essential not only the sharing between street artists and locals, but also the call for direct participation of the people in the public space of the city they live in.

Visual occupation of expectant places: Crono and EbanoCollective

One of the most recognizable street art projects in Lisbon, through the visual and media impact it had for the city, is project CRONO[2]. This initiative was created by the architect and street artist Pedro Soares Neves, the street artist Alexandre Farto (Vhils) and Angelo Milano (from the FAME festival, in Italy), under the association Azáfama Citadina Associação and in partnership with Lisbon's municipal authority. From project CRONO underlies a particular conception of the city, namely:

> (...) the city as a living organism with its own dynamic, a space that follows its own process of creation, growth and mutation in a spontaneous and natural way, and with the aim of narrowing the connection between the city and urban artists, as well as to value the role of Lisbon within the international public art landscape (...). (Moore, 2011)

This project included several street art interventions all over the city, by Portuguese and international artists. The interventions that took place in derelict buildings stand out, as they intended to signal situations of building abandonment in a public space awaiting requalification. The way Patricia Phillips associates contemporary public art to a process of *occupation* (Phillips, 1998) is a particularly useful notion in this case, since these interventions in derelict buildings may be interpreted as a *visual occupation* of the facades, stimulating the debate on the state of the buildings in Lisbon's public space, as well as on the powers and interests that allow these situations of abandonment to have such prevalence.

Therefore, it can be said that project CRONO, though the large-scale visual street art display of street art on derelict buildings, aimed to contribute for the dialogue between the powers that manage public space, the artists that intervene in it, and the people that inhabit it, through the way its structures are thought, lived, managed and abandoned.

The perspective that underlies CRONO highlights the urban and aesthetical requalification of urban environment through the intervention on the morphology of public space, and therefore proposing new uses of the space and its structures. The interventions in the derelict buildings are expression of this perspective.

Pedro Soares Neves, one of the CRONO organizers, pinpoints the notion of the morphology of urban space as a place of intervention that allows new relations with the city, as a possible way of production of the city. From the perspective of this project, public space appears as a place for spontaneous action from the individuals. It is therefore interesting to note the option of including large scale interventions that, precisely, refer to a specific artistic and expressive urban language, street art, that has this spontaneity of action as its origin. On that account, the intervention in the urban public space – of artistic nature or not – is seen from this perspective as providing representations of the creativity of those who intervene in the public space, in what Pedro Soares Neves associates with performative acts by the citizens, expressive of the relations they (re)create with the urban space.

Another street art collective project that is important to note is the one promoted by EBANOCollective, which brings forth other methodologies, namely the intervention in public space under an ethnographic and artistic

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[2] Photos of the interventions in the derelict buildings of Avenida Fontes Pereira de Melo frequently appear in several sites, as illustration for the street art in Lisbon.

perspective. This collective includes researchers in these areas, such as Lorenzo Bordonaro, Chiara Pussetti, Vítor Barros, Elettra Bordonaro, Sílvia Proença and Catarina Laranjeiro, who define their collaboration with these words:

> EBANOCollective (...) carries through curatorship and site-specific artistic interventions in the public space, resulting from the dialogues between the artistic practice and ethnographic research. Based on this methodology, EBANOCollective develops collaborative public art projects, with the objective of highlighting specific questions of local communities and social and urban problematics in a broader sense.[3]

Several initiatives by EBANOCollective have been taking place in Lisbon, but one in particular includes street art, specifically: *Passeio Literário da Graça*, from 2014. This project included the intervention of several street artists in a set of building facades and walls in the Graça neighborhood, with the common theme the women writers that marked the neighborhood with their presence. These street art actions aimed to make a commentary to the question of the degradation of the buildings in Lisbon, and in this neighborhood in particular, while also taking into consideration the specific cultural aspects that are related with this community.

Figure 7 – Intervention in derelict building, project CRONO, by Sam3.

Source: Ágata Sequeira.

Figure 8 – Interventions by Violant and EIME, an initiative by EBANOCollective.

Source: Ágata Sequeira and Dina Dourado.

EBANOCollective consider the potential of intervention in degraded facades to be remarkable, as it assumes a direct relation with the community in which they exist, its history and local narratives and their inhabitants. This collective intents to place the public space in its specificity as key element in interventions, as this allows the development of a process that combines the physical and visual interventions with the relational component of the neighborhood's daily life, contributing for the development of new community dynamics. *Passeio Literário da Graça* was therefore assumed as a visually notable way of distinguishing the neighborhood's singularity, through the remembrance of a particular aspect of its cultural history.

Addressing the problem of expectant buildings

Particularly arresting in the morphology of contemporary urban public space is the prevalence of expectant and temporary spaces. In them lies an ambivalence, in-between the possible uses and the past events that determined their current situation, in a *limbo*. Recalling the work of Henri Lefebvre, this ambivalence doesn't imply these spaces are devoid of meaning. Instead, the author suggests they reinforce the power of the state on urban space:

> Empty spaces have a meaning: they announce, loud and clear, the glory and power of the State that carries out their planning and the violence that can be manifest in that. (Lefebvre,p.28, 2012).

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[3] From the collective's website: http://www.ebanocollective.org

It has become a current practice to use these empty spaces as stages for artistic and expressive interventions that aspire to comment their expectant condition. Both the actions of project CRONO and EBANOCollective are examples of these practices, as both suggest a reflection about what urbanism is possible to build in these in-between spaces.

Urban structures in decay often mark a "suspense social history" (Fortuna e Meneguello, 2013). Therefore, it can be said, according to the perspective of Carlos Fortuna and Cristina Meneguello[4], that these structures in ruins are consequence of "(...) a new architectural and trade logic that menaces to continue to devastate the street and the public urban spaces of the cities" (*op. cit.*, p. 255), a process these authors call "urbicide" and which, I'd add, are frequently the object of street art interventions. In fact, with its long-term relation with the derelict structures, street art appears as a convenient expressive resource to convey reflections on the uses of public space.

These reflections are intertwined with the democratic processes of participation and the right to the city. Fortuna and Meneguello consider that to stop the process of decadence of the urban buildings it is important to "make democracy more democratic" (Fortuna e Meneguello, p.255, 2013). In that sense, if art in the public space can have a potential to foster citizen participation, it can be argued that street art can also have an active role in these situations, signaling them, and enabling the development of critical discourses on the uses of public space.

Under this perspective, interventions in the derelict buildings of Lisbon, such as those created by EBANOCollective and project CRONO, may constitute a creative way to reclaim the right to the city by those who live and create in it. These constitute examples of how public art, and street art in particular, can deliver pertinent questions about how public spaces of the cities are managed, and what are the alternatives to the current state of derelict structures.

Conclusion

The observation of the collective street art initiatives that have been taking place in Lisbon, such as the ones exposed in this article, suggest a considerable diversity, not only in the ways in which collective street art initiatives can contribute to the construction of public space, but also to enable expressions of reclaiming the right to the city. In summary, these include: calling for the direct involvement with local communities; offering a perspective of the citizen's spontaneous action as being significant and making a difference; contributing for the requalification of the urban environment as a collective process; stimulating feelings of shared community through the inclusion of the locals in the projects; creating and sharing perspectives about the interventions and how they relate to the place.

The different contexts of collective production of street art correspond to specific logics of action towards public space and the role street art can have in its social construction, being the importance of the involvement with the local communities a factor all of the initiatives have in common, although, as we've seen, in distinct ways.

Therefore, the processes that underlie these initiatives can be interpreted and understood as aspects of the social construction of urban public space, through street art. The local dynamics that each event may contribute to are result of the ways each project is elaborated, with the capacity it has to mobilize people and to stimulate their curiosity and interest about the interventions, by promoting dialogue between the artists, the organizers, and the populations, or through the organization of conferences, guided visits, or workshops.

Also relevant for the stimulation of local dynamics through street art is the aspect of collective memory. An artistic intervention that chooses to approach local histories or narratives crosses immaterial culture and a specific material representation, as noted by Dolores Hayden (p.67, 1997). Subsequently, artists that incorporate that sensitivity in their work might be contributing for the stimulation of a sense of local community, through the recreation of a certain local imaginary in their interventions, since "(...) the recollection uncovers itself while a social and political act of construction and reconstruction of meaning." (Andrade, in AAVV, p.16, 2010).

Considering that public space, is inherently a place of meeting, the artistic interventions that approach aspects of the local history and culture enhances the potential of that *place of encounter* becoming also a *place of sharing*. The direct contact between the organizers of these collective street art events, the artists and the locals, is an

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[4] About the process of abandonment of two urban theaters, in Portugal and Brasil.

important moment in the process of attribution of meaning to the actions and attach them with an emotional connection. Malcolm Miles approach that aspect in the following way:

> It is equally significant that such cultural work is carried out by individuals (...) whose contact with their public is direct (...). Human contact interrupts the blander realm of mass culture and advertising. (Miles, in AAVV, p.41, 2010)

That is to say, the human relations that form within these projects between all the intervenients are a key aspect in the construction of public space in urban contexts, since they contrast the idea of the city as a "landscape of power" (Zukin, 1993) and a place for real estate speculation, providing an alternative according to which the citizens have the right to get involved in the fate of their city.

Specifically, in GAU, the way its initiatives connect with community life has to do with the promotion of local rehabilitation through interventions that tackle with local aspects of the communities, and that are subject to a call for street artists that want to participate and have a certain kind of artistic sensitivity for working in a community context.

As for Wool and Wool on Tour, the relation with the local community was stimulated by the way the initiatives were structured, with sequential interventions and workshops involving the artists and the locals, as well as the constitution of a temporary physical structure that ended up having a permanent transforming effect on the urban space. These initiatives, such as Lata 65, aim to stimulate the proximity of the public – on one hand the locals, and on the other, the elderly – to an urban artistic expression, bringing them closer to its languages and signs, allowing them, therefore, to feel closer to their city – and even to intervene in it through street art.

Concerning the initiatives of APAURB, these offer a distinct path of action, as they propose the collective and voluntary work of all the citizens interested in participating. The perspective that underlies this course of action is one of direct involvement of the citizens in their city, actively participating in the betterment of the public spaces of collective use.

On the other hand, project CRONO and the interventions of EBANOCollective, both have the purpose of urban rehabilitation and aesthetical qualification through the intervention in the physical structures of the city – such as derelict and degraded buildings - and the uses of its space. These initiatives aimed to stimulate new relations between the city and its inhabitants, considering public space as place for spontaneous action. In both interventions mentioned, there is a critical discourse about the state of the buildings in the city, particularly its derelict and expectant structures. In the EBANOCollective initiative mentioned in this article, that discourse is punctuated by the theme of the interventions, connected to the specific place, its history and memory, intending therefore to involve the populations in the fate of the structures of their neighborhood. This also constitutes a clear example of how street art can effectively contribute to reclaiming the right to the city.

Given these points, it can be argued that collective street art allow this artistic expression to be interpreted as a manifestation of public art, in the sense of activation of potential of citizen initiative several authors have referred (Hayden, 1997; Phillips, 1998).

The experimental and transient nature of street art can produce effects of interaction and sociability that result in the exchange of ideas, questionings and dialogues. This is, therefore, an artistic form of expression that not only can fulfill the promise of public art to reinforce citizen initiative, but also displays the potential to amplify these effects, namely through the interdisciplinarity that underlies its planning. The several examples of collective street art projects we've seen show its potential to the production of expressive discourses about the urban space, promoting citizen initiative and reclaiming the right of the citizens to get involved in the fate of their city.

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