

Resourceful Cities

Berlin (Germany), 29-31 August 2013

Artistic intervention in public sphere, conflict and urban informality: an international comparative approach to informal dynamics in cultural districts

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Paper presented at the International RC21 Conference 2013

Session 9: Urban (in)formality: tensions, conflicts and breakups in the struggle to belong

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Abstract:

Artistic intervention in cultural districts can be an outstanding viewpoint to understand the multiple layers of uses and segregations that bring vitality in everyday life to the complex organisms that cities are. Urban informality contexts can be fundamental for the expression of this diversity and to liminality strategies, particularly interesting in the case of artistic intervention, as artistic creativity is often about transgression, differentiation, and, therefore, conflict.

Small initiatives that develop in an informal and ephemeral way by artists who choose the city as stage for their work, exploring boundaries between public and private spaces, are particular interesting, evidencing the usual use conflicts verified on creative milieus but being also important to keep these places as vernacular as possible and to avoid gentrification processes.

In this perspective, this paper aims to discuss this relation between urban design, public space appropriation and the informal artistic dynamics verified on these creative milieus, from an international comparative perspective. Drawing on a photographic approach to urban morphology, everyday life and symbolic public space appropriation on those areas, five cultural quarters are studied: Bairro Alto / Cais do Sodré area (Lisbon); Gracia (Barcelona); Vila Madalena (São Paulo); Kreuzberg SO36 (Berlin) and Brick Lane (London).

Keywords: Creative milieus; Conflict; Informality; Cultural quarters; Public spaces; Informal artistic intervention; Photography

1. Introduction

Cultural quarters have been widely studied in recent years as they embody broader structural transformations associated with urban change, but also as they are privileged arenas for tension and conflict, manifested both in spatial terms and in people's lived experiences. The wide variety of gentrified residential city enclaves, ghettos, gay villages, ethnic quarters, red light districts and creative quarters can be seen as a commonplace feature of contemporary urban landscape, which often brings vitality and vibrancy for many ancient or abandoned areas of cities, but also as an arena for frequent conflicts between residents and users, gentrifiers and traditional residents, new activities and traditional activities, night users and day users, and so on (Costa, 2008; Costa et al, 2010). Public space is often the privileged sphere for these tensions and conflicts, with the expression of multiple power relations at the levels of the physical space, the experiences it provides and the symbolic field. In parallel, these are also frequently liminal spaces, marked by transgression and social and individual expression of the self.

Artistic intervention is in this context a particularly interesting way of looking at these neighbourhoods and to understand the multiple layers of uses and segregations that bring vitality in everyday life to these parts of the complex organisms that cities are. Urban informality contexts can be fundamental for the expression of this diversity and to liminality strategies, particularly interesting in the case of artistic intervention, as artistic creativity is often about transgression, differentiation, and, therefore, conflict.

In contemporary cultural and social panorama, this reflection leads us to be interested in small initiatives that develop in an informal and ephemeral way by artists who choose the city as stage for their work. Artists whose interventions explore the boundaries between public and private spaces, suggesting a public sphere actuation; this micro scale of actuation brings the usual use conflicts verified on creative milieus but can also be important to keep these places as vernacular as possible and to avoid gentrification processes.

In this perspective, this paper aims to discuss this relation between urban design, public space appropriation and the informal artistic dynamics verified on these creative milieus, from an international comparative perspective. Based on a photographic approach (centered on the recollection and critical interpretation of visual information) to urban morphology, everyday life and symbolic public space

appropriation on those areas, five cultural quarters are studied: Bairro Alto / Cais do Sodré area (Lisbon); La Gracia (Barcelona); Vila Madalena (São Paulo); Kreuzberg SO36 (Berlin) and Brick Lane (London).

They represent very diverse situations regarding their historical, cultural and economic backgrounds as well as in what concerns to the spatial conditions that support the vitality and sustainability of a “creative milieu”. The relation between the use conflicts verified in these areas, the artist interventions that occur in their public spheres, and the sustainability of these areas as “vital” and “creative” centers is discussed in a comparative perspective. Drawing on literature review and on the recollection and critical interpretation of visual information on these areas, we aim to provide better understanding on the relation between artistic intervention in public sphere, conflict and urban informality, in order to assist a new planning agenda for dealing with urban creative dynamics and cultural quarters.

After this introduction, next section will offer the main framework for the analysis pursued, relating the creative milieus development with conflict and with their morphological, symbolic and informality conditions. In section 3, a brief overview of main relevant issues on artistic Intervention in the public sphere is made, which is complemented, on section 4, by a set of exemplifications of their impact through a set of urban interventions developed by the authors. Section 5 offers the comparative approach on the 5 case studies, providing a short description of their main features and their urban insertion, and a photographic outlook on the relation between conflict, public sphere appropriation and potential for artistic intervention in each of the cases. Finally, a concluding note provides some perspectives towards policy orientations for dealing with urban creative dynamics and cultural quarters.

2. Cultural quarters and the “creative milieu”: conflict and informal dynamics as drivers for artistic vitality

In recent years multiple territories have stood out as ‘creative milieus’ as they offer a specific atmosphere or certain conditions required to embed and develop sustainable creative processes in cultural activities (see Camagni et al. 2004; Cooke and Lazzeretti 2007; Costa 2007; Costa et al, 2011; or in a wider perspective, O’Connor and Wynne 1996; Scott 2000). This label usually congregates very diverse situations,

which are generally based on specific governance mechanisms that play a key part in most of those success cases. Our study in this paper refers to a specific kind of these “creative milieus”, the “cultural districts” or “cultural quarters” (cf. Costa et al, 2008).

These cultural quarters, in their diversity, have been broadly studied as they embody wider structural transformations associated with urban change (Bell and Jayne, 2004; Cooke and Lazzeretti, 2008; Porter and Shaw, 2009). It is not our aim to describe or discuss here their huge diversity, concerning both their origins and their main characteristics (more central or peripheral, more or less gentrified, more inclusive or segmented, more diverse or coherent, etc. – see Bell and Jayne, 2004 on this). In effect, the diversity and complexity of these territorial systems is often recognized as the ground to their resilience, and to the capacity to develop specific governance mechanisms and symbolic attributes which enable their long term vitality.

Acknowledging the importance of “classic” factors (such as dimension, density and diversity of social practices – many times translated in expressions such as agglomeration, scale, interaction, networking, tolerance or other) to this, but also the crucial role of the symbolic sphere potentiated in cultural activities (cf. Costa et al, 2011), our aim in this paper is just to discuss how the characteristics and the informal dynamics verified in these places contribute to their vitality, through artistic intervention, relating those to their specific morphological and spatial conditions.

In effect, the diversity and density of activities and the urban design and morphological conditions clearly influence these areas’ creative dynamics – as suggested by Hospers (2003), Gehl (2004) or Balula (2010), and verified by Costa e Lopes (2012) in some of these quarters. Urban material conditions, as the way they are appropriated and perceived by people, are naturally a key factor in the vitality and in the long term conditions for the sustainability of these spaces. Besides, the common diversity of rhythms and daily habits of its users, make us aware of their multiple layers of uses and symbolic codification.

As Costa and Lopes refer, in these spaces the symbolical sphere plays an important role and is fundamental to understand both their vitality and their fragmentation (Costa and Lopes, 2012), particularly if they are central nodes in the conviviality and sociability mechanisms that are vital for reputation building and gatekeeping mechanisms on cultural activities (Costa, 2012). People who come to these spaces identify and many times deliberately look for a created image (of the place, of themselves, of their groups, of what they want to be), that is, for the symbolic

meaning of that place. These are particular places for representation, for the assumption of specific lifestyles and ways of life (cf O'Connor and Wynne, 1996) and therefore, the concept of urban theatricality is sharp in these territories. Consequently, along with liminality processes, we can watch a natural segregation of practices and people in the different spaces (or even in the same places, each with several codified layers of representations, differently de-codified by their different audiences and users). Often, this process is based on auto-segregation, but sometimes naturally it involves also conflict between the diverse potential users and power relations that take place within that system or in the framework of its external regulation (Costa and Lopes, 2012).

In effect, the different interests and motivations of the diverse agents in these territorial systems are naturally often contradictory. The main use conflicts among them are one of the critical aspects for the development and long term consistency of these creative milieus. As expressed before (e.g. Costa, 2008, Costa and Lopes, 2012), the conflicts of uses verified in each of these particular spaces (e.g., between users and residents, night users and day users, traditional residents and newcomers, traditional cultural and new activities), are a unceasing dimension of its life (and even one essential dimension to certain kinds of creative activity, by its intrinsic liminal and alternative nature). This conflict manifests in different arenas (real estate market, public space appropriation, symbolic sphere, ...) and is perceived diversely by the users and the multiple art world's agents involved (e.g. the case of graffiti or urban intervention). These conflicts are felt particularly in two fields. On one hand, through gentrification, and the different power relations in appropriation of public and private space; on the other hand in numerous conflicts between the diverse individual or group interests, expressed in externalities (such as congestion of parking or traffic infrastructures, noise, urban cleanliness issues, etc.). However, despite all their problems and consequences, some of these conflicts may have an important role in the sustainability of these systems as creative areas, as they can inhibit or postpone gentrification processes (e.g. most of these externalities are key factors in avoiding conventional gentrification processes in a case like Bairro Alto area, Lisbon, having a key role in the selective – more creative and specific lifestyles oriented – gentrification process verified – Costa and Lopes, 2012, Costa 2013a).

This latent conflict nature in these areas can be creatively explored, being artistic activities themselves intrinsically the expression of innumerable conflicts, and that is

naturally enhanced by the informality and the potential for public sphere appropriation verified in these districts, where the possibility for interventions and artistic appropriations in the public sphere is more flexible. The informality and liminality that mark these territories is vital for its sustainability as part of their daily dynamics and contributing to a strong local identity (Costa and Lopes, 2012). In effect, on a scenery in which the boundaries between public and private sphere constantly blur, and where the ephemeral gains its space, new creative possibilities emerge. Mostly, in a more open, tolerant and un-institutionalized framework, new fields for developing and explore new sorts of creative processes and informal-based dynamics materialize. So we assist all over the world to all sort of processes of this nature, though with diverse patterns: artistic appropriation of public sphere (e.g. graffiti and street art, but also the aperture of private space to public and contamination strategies, through performing or visual arts, for instance), informal appropriation by users (including sociability and reputation building mechanisms and gatekeeping processes), performativity in public space, many times associated to liminality processes or to expression of identities or of the self (e.g, multicultural or gender expression). After all, this is particularly remarkable also because informal and ephemeral appropriation of public spaces in the city can have enough interest in a historical era that embraces time delays caused by economic interests (such as property speculation) or bureaucratic processes (such as licensing procedures) that can often lead to cities' death. These informality-based behaviors are certainly a way to maintain (even if temporarily or ephemerally in some cases) the creative vitality and the liveliness of those spaces.

The "creative milieu" concept, in line with the GREMI approach (Camagni et al, 2004), helps us as a theoretical backbone for analysing this variety of situations. Each one can be seen as a combination of three intertwined layers: a locally embedded production-consumption system, rooted in the territorial characteristics; a governance system, mixing the formal and informal endogenous and exogenous-based regulatory mechanisms in a specific way; and a symbolic system, involving both the external image(s) and the self-representations of the area. This triple perspective is fundamental to understand the specific conditions and ambiances that seem to be determinant to embed sustainable creative processes in these areas, as well as to relate them to urban socioeconomic and morphological dimensions.

Having this broad framework in mind, our specific aim in this text is to understand how informal dynamics can be seen as drivers for artistic vitality, in a diversity of

“creative quarters” situations. Re-thinking city through micro-scale systems of action, instead of just large projects and flagship interventions is essential for planning the city attending to urban creativity and to real creative dynamics. Understanding everyday life and the role of more informal and ephemeral initiatives for cities’ planning is fundamental, requiring (re)focusing our attention to this specific issue and the use of new methodologies.

3. Artistic intervention in the public sphere: from the sacred art fortresses to the work with urban matter

The cities are changing every day, people are connected in a network that is driven by different rhythms and habits; It generates different layers of codifications and uses, not always pacific between all the users. However, it is this diversity and the critical masses associated (dimension, density and heterogeneity arguments) that make the cities being so appellative organisms to a constant change of experiences, ideas, opinions and knowledge. The spaces of the public sphere are the stages where people meet each other and where the artistic interventions have been developed in the different layers of the city.

The places of the public sphere are composed by private and public spaces. In this paper, and following the ideas developed in Costa and Lopes (2012), we propose to look for the public sphere as a “space” that could be “appropriated”, breaking the “traditional” boundaries between both concepts, in an era that many of the happenings that used to be developed in public spaces are being developed in private ones. Throughout the years cities are being transformed, it is a natural process. More than to reference a concrete physical space, it is to assume that any space can become a local belonging to the public sphere, whether it is the room of our house or the old neighborhood grocery store, according to the use that is developed in it for a period of time. A good project to illustrate this situation was developed in Berlin, in summer of 1992, entitled *Berlin 37 Räume* (Berlim 37 Rooms). The exhibition took place during a week in the quarter of Mitte, inviting 31 curators,

international artists - as the musician John Cage¹ - and local artists, to develop site-specific interventions in 37 rooms of unoccupied buildings in the city. The exhibition extrapolated the “traditional” concept of art gallery, transforming the inside areas of the houses, traditionally private spaces, into spaces belonging to the public sphere for everyone who wanted to visit the exhibition. In some of the rooms where the project was developed and led by the curator Klaus Biesenbach² remain today art galleries. In this way, they have entered again in the dynamics of Berlin and contributed to the revitalization of the buildings, as well as of the adjacent areas of the city.

In recent years, increasingly cities all over the world have welcomed ephemeral artistic initiatives that choose to leave the conventional exhibition spaces to have the city and other public as “background”. The concept of ephemeral artistic intervention and appropriation are understood, in this paper, as referring to a bunch of activities that happen in “unconventional spaces” of exhibition and production. With this, we do not intend to disregard the quality of initiatives that happen in the “traditional spaces” of exhibition or production. However, these interventions present a fix dynamic, in a concrete physical space and for a specific type of audience, often not adding new dynamics to the city. Thus, it is important to explore the initiatives that for its ephemerality and informality do not occupy the city in a fixed away, whether it is for artistic interests or economic constraints.

Although have always existed art in the public space, the relation between the city, the public and the artists changed in the late fifties of the 20th century, when the artistic vanguards starts to look at the spaces and objects of quotidian as sources of inspiration and as interesting places for new multidisciplinary artistic practices. These ideals brought to the artistic exhibition and production to more informal spaces, approaching the city and its dynamics of artistic practices (Lopes, 2012). That is what we can see in the description of *happening*, one of the new artistic manifestations, developed by Kaprow, the first artist to implement this kind of happenings in 1959. Kaprow defined happening as “an assemblage of events performed or perceived in more than one time and place. Its material environment may be constructed, taken

¹ John Cage was one of the most important artists of the 20th century. He was a pioneer in the way that had introduced sounds of everyday life in his compositions as well as in the production of musical instruments made with objects of the quotidian.

² Klaus Biesenbach is a German curator being actually director of MoMA PS1, in Queens , NY and chief Curator at The Museum of Modern Art, in New York City.

over directly from what is available or altered slightly; just as its activities may be invented or commonplace. A happening unlike a stage play, may occur at supermarket, driving along highway, under a pile of rags, and in a friend's kitchen, either at once or sequentially. If sequentially, time may extend to more than a year. The happening is performed according to plan but without rehearsal, audience, or repetition. Its art but seems closer to life". (Kaprow, cited in Arnason, 1985, pp. 613). Thus, the places of exhibition are not merely to exhibit art and have become places of contemplation. Using ephemeral installations, the artists create modifications in the built space, proposing a different experience to spectator by that time. These changes cause alterations in the devices of work and exhibition: they stop thinking in an object to be exposed in a place and it is the exhibition space that becomes the art object itself.

Being pioneer in the development of these ideas "(...), the Minimal Art rejects the metaphysics of the art and thus changed the role of the observer, which is no longer required, an act of silence contemplation, to reflect on the unchanging significance of the work of art hung or place in front, to pass to reflect on the process of their perception, loading it of meaning" (Marzona, 2004, pp.11), the viewer is not more just an observer, he has an active role in artistic experience. These ideals initially emerged in institutional spaces, with the artist Robert Morris and the *Minimal Art*, but quickly become produced in unconventional spaces, through groups as the *Fluxus*. Several factors have led to these changes in art, however we could refer that one of the aspects that more contributed to these movements was the background that the artists have been acquiring in multidisciplinary artistic experiences that started to be common in these vanguards. As it is referred in the work of Morris, through his experience as dancer and artist performance, "(...) the perception [of a work of art] was connected to the body and not limited to the sense of sight (...)" (Marzona, 2004, pp.23). Through the happenings, performances, installations and *Land Art* interventions, art get in quotidian life and is not more read only by the experts, that frequently go to institutional spaces - as galleries or museums - , to become available for a heterogenic audience without a special artistic sensibility (Traquino, 2010). Art become to be much more exposed and susceptible to different opinions, depending on the way it is observed by the different publics in the different spaces.

Such as what happens in the experiences that takes place in galleries or museums, the "new" artistic interventions will be introduced in the spaces of the public sphere

and try to create a connection between the people who experience them. Kinds of different manifestations of what used to happen with the artwork present in the public space until that moment - that limited itself to present a “finished object” without any experience in which the viewer was an active part in the artistic construction. With this, the public art was confined in an “elitist” form to the “beautify” of the cities and its public spaces, as well as, in many cases, it is a vehicle to send politic or religious messages or to invoke some old happenings or characters (such as what happens with the name of several streets). If on one hand this factor can contribute to the creation of a local identity, so important to any city, on the other hand can also become a powerful ideological weapon, that has been used by numerous absolutist states throughout the history - where the monuments, that represented the majority of the public art until a few decades ago, assume an active political role over several generations, as refer Miles: - “(...)the monument becoming, a device of social control less brutish and costly than armed force” (Miles, 1997, pp.58).

With this, we conclude that the art that takes place in the spaces belonging to the public sphere can be significant to several aspects, between them, the dynamics of relationship that occur in the space. Attenuating the boundaries between work and exhibition space, these initiatives can contribute for a constant change of experiences where the city is the stage of everyday life. Another factor that seems to be important is the ephemerality and informality of these types of actions, leading to a constant (re) discover of the places where people walk daily; contributing to a strong dynamic in the city, in its different layers of codification.

4. Ephemeral urban appropriations on a cultural district: some examples from authors' own experience

The ephemeral artistic intervention | appropriation introduces in the city new spaces of public use, performing different public and private spaces, and becoming to relate them with the public sphere, creating also “new” zones that return to have a utility in the city and contribute to the mix of happenings. By its ephemerality, the majority of these appropriations operate in the spaces without changing or damaging them. This is one of the characteristics of this kind of interventions: it beholds potentiality in the place that is appropriated, transforming its material identity to develop the work.

This can be illustrated by 3 examples of urban interventions conducted by the authors, in Lisbon's main cultural quarter, which aimed to test and to be a source of information to allow us to analyze and develop all these issues in practice.

In September of 2010, we tried to explore this kind of ephemeral intervention promoting a "photographic exhibition" in an old shop that was closed for many years in Bairro Alto, in Lisbon. The exhibition entitled *Espaços Liminares*³⁴ (Liminal Spaces) pretended to explore the limits between the public and private space of an old shop reintroducing that space in the city dynamics and creating a new spot on the public sphere during the period of the appropriation. The shop that was waiting for municipal licensing for property redevelopment was expectant for some years. After we contacted the property owner and explained what we would like to do - a project that don't degrade his property and add value to the space - he accepted to support the artistic intervention. For ten days it was developed in the space, in parallel with a photographic exhibition about public space appropriation, debates, concerts and other artistic demonstrations supported by several artists that used that space as a complement of the "traditional" public space of the quarter. The window of considerable dimensions in the façade allowed the interior to be in constant contact with the exterior contributing to create curiosity in the people who circulated on the street and gradually decided to "invade" that "traditional private" place and participate in the exhibition built with scaffolds and old doors that were stored in the interior of the space. A set made with couches, some chairs and an old TV, simulating a homemade scene, welcomed at first sight the ones who looked inside over the window, deepening the sense of invasion of privacy (cf. images on Figure 1).

In December 2011, we developed one another project, in the framework of the celebration of *Semana do Bairro Alto* (Bairro Alto Week). The exhibition | intervention, called *Bairros como nós*⁵ (*Neighborhoods like us*), proposed to show to the district users similar dynamics to those that happen in the quarter, without explicating it - using photos of different cities as Barcelona, São Paulo, Istanbul, Paris, Seattle, Florence, Copenhagen, São Francisco, Berlin and London that

³ *Espaços Liminares* was a photographic exhibition realized in ambit of the *Creatcity Research Project* in Bairro Alto, Lisboa in September 2010, and that it was after also exposed in Gràcia, Barcelona, in November of the same year. Its authors, Ana Roldão, Cristina Latoeira, Pedro Costa, Ricardo Lopes e Samuel Dias, exhibited photos that were realized in the scope of a photographic study of three cultural quarters: Bairro Alto, Libon; Gràcia, Barcelona, and Vila Madalena, São Paulo.

⁴ <http://espacosliminares.blogspot.pt/>

⁵ <http://bairroscomonos.blogspot.pt/>

represented similar dynamics between them. It was glued a set of large format photos in 15 façades of the quarter, exploring the limits between public and private space debated in this paper. The photos that composed the exhibition created a route that surprised the users and the audiences that walk along the quarter⁶. The exhibition hadn't a fixed period of permanence, the ephemeral material where the photos were printed, as well as the way that they were fixed in the walls, didn't allow it to remain for a long time. As a consequence, some photos disappeared after some hours, while others kept for a long period. Not losing its ephemeral character, but remaining, such as what happened with a image of a young guy hanging in a window of Brick Lane, London, that keeps in the wall where was placed for more than one year. However, who develops these kinds of interventions in the city understand them as something that is ephemeral and can be vulnerable of intervention of other user, who would be appropriated of the artwork. Whether it is because they will be behold it, making part of the scenario that it is inserted, or intervene directly in the "object". In this kind of intervention, the documentary strand assumes an extremely importance. Besides exploring artistic aspects and the limits between public and private spaces, the exhibition tried also to create one critical sense in audience who had been tempt to think about the quarter and its happenings from a different perspective. One photo of Grácia (which can be consulted on the right wing of figure 2) is a good example – to represent the protests of the residents against the excesses of the nightlife, an use conflict common to all the quarters. This is another important aspect that artistic interventions can have when developed in the public sphere: to create a critical sense between the art and its message (the graffiti and the stencil have been affirmed as one of the most active voices of population against the externalities in the last years) that will be interpreted from a different perspective by the different people. However, whereas that the artistic intervention will not have the same effect on all observers, it should be made and thought for the space it will be inserted, looking for answers for the intended function, whether it is for artistic proposes, or with academic or functional reasons.

⁶ This open air exhibition was complemented by a parallel one, more conventional, on the same theme (by the same authors, at the same time, in a more conventional exhibition center). However, no explicit reference was made in each of these outdoor images to that exhibition, neither to the other photos of this urban intervention, which were disposed in certain walls in order that people passing by would be finding them randomly.

In December 2012, we set up one other artistic intervention in Bairro Alto, entitled *Beyond Visible*⁷. The *happening*, that followed some of the concepts explored in previously interventions (as the relations between private vs public spaces; public vs artwork), intended to introduce in the quarter a “new living room” for one night in an expectant space of Rua da Barroca, although its main concept was to explore the idea of several layers of codifications that composed the creative milieus. Thus, along the night, different people that walked on the street were invited to enter in a “dark space” and built its own exhibition, without segregation of people or practices.

The intervention started with a projection of several photos overlapping in the opposite façade of the intervened building. The projection drew a diffuse image of Bairro Alto which suggested that something different was happening on that space. Closer to the venue, people started to see one door, where it was possible to enter in a “dark space”, and another one, where there were people going out on the rhythm of photographic camera’s flashes.

The intervention suggested an inverted route of exhibition. It started with images of people that had already been photographed projected on the wall of a “waiting room”, where they received “UV lights” that were invited to use in the interior of the *happening*. After people were invited to enter in a “dark space”, they started to discover sentences (the sentences were collected previously through interviews made with people in Bairro Alto in different periods of the day and represented the opinions and image of those citizens about it) that were wrote with “transparent ink” on the interior walls. The variety of sentences wrote, and the technique used, allowed that each visitor discovered different things and interpreted them from different points of view. Along the exhibition, the visitors were surprised by other artistic interventions, as a performing space where two actors⁸ talked with the visitors (one at a time) about Bairro Alto or the “background noise”⁹ constructed with sounds collected in the quarter. At the end, the visitors were surprised by four photographers¹⁰ that had prepared a replica of a professional studio to photograph them and, in this way, they become to make part of the artistic intervention - not just as spectator and a participative element, but also as an object exhibited.

⁷ <http://beyondvisibleba2012.blogspot.pt/>

⁸ Performers: Nuno Antunes and Beatriz Henriques

⁹ Musicians: JPShelaq / Geraldés / João

¹⁰ Photographic intervention: Thiago Feitosa / Carolina Mota / Alexandre Abreu / Mariana Cortes

With this ephemeral artistic intervention, we tested some of the concepts that we have been studying through participant observation and that have allowed us to analyze these informal initiatives from a nearest perspective, such as what we have used with the photographic surveys conducted in several creative quarters.

Naturally, that kind of informal initiatives can't be set up with the same multitude in the different areas of the city, neither in different cities. Diverse places require different creative approaches, and more than that, diverse places enable and enhance differently the conditions for artistic appropriation of their public sphere. Morphological conditions are naturally diverse; symbolic references and their relations with identity mechanism are certainly different; agents motivations, expectancies and strategies are undoubtedly multiple and diverse; and after all, regulation mechanisms and governance mechanisms are dissimilar, and the way informality can be explored will be particular and site specific.

In that sense, next section will present briefly an overview of the 5 cultural quarters we proposed to confront in this paper. A comparative perspective of their public sphere, captured through a photographic approach to each of them, enables us to question and to bring to discussion the characteristics of each of these districts, concerning their morphology, creative dynamics and informality, trying to understand the main features that can contribute to the development and vitality urban artistic intervention in each these cultural quarters



Figure 1: “Espaços liminares” intervention



Figure 2: “Bairros como nós ” intervention



Figure 3: “Beyond Visible” intervention

5. A comparative photographic approach to five creative districts: urban morphology, creative dynamics and informality

As explained before, our main purpose is to discuss the relation between urban design, public space appropriation and the informal dynamics verified on the creative milieus from an international comparative perspective. Five cultural quarters around the world are used to illustrate our discussion in this paper, and will be briefly presented in this section. They represent very diverse situations concerning their historical, cultural and economic backgrounds, and embody quite distinct spatial and morphological conditions. However, we acknowledge all this variety in the support of creative clusters and in the vitality and sustainability of these “creative milieus”.

Our methodological approach to these areas in this work was not the most conventional. In effect, at different degrees, all these areas have been previously object of in-depth analysis in broad research projects (Costa et al, 2010, Costa and Lopes, 2012; Costa, 2008, 2012, 2013a; Lopes, 2012). Our option was to use a combination of more traditional methods (particularly bibliographic survey on all the cases, and use of interviews and other information for the cases where available), with a more unconventional ethnographic-based approach to each quarter, essentially based on image recollection and participant observation. This approach, centred essentially on the observation of urban morphology, everyday life and symbolic public space appropriations, allowed us to study these territories from a nearest perspective, which although more contaminated by subjectivity, seemed essential for us to compare these five cases, trying to reach their effective diversity, naturally embedded in cultural, socio-economic, political and material specificities. If we are studying informal interventions we need to go down to the ground to “see”, to “feel” and to “smell” what is happening, reaching dimensions which are many times discarded by researchers or city planners who work at their ateliers without that specific knowledge of the field. Accepting the fragilities and limitations of this kind of approach, yet we purpose to test with this work this kind of methodological tools in order to get empirical information which allow us to enrich the discussion on the informality mechanisms and their impact in the creative dynamics of these areas.

We intended to shed a light on aspects such as urban morphology and everyday life in each neighbourhood, and to understand their relation with the specific symbolic system, thinking each case in the framework of its’ cultural, socio-economic and

governance particularities, and understanding how informal and formal mechanisms contribute for the development and vitality of the creative dynamics of those areas, in generic terms, and seizing their potential for artistic interventions based on the appropriation of public sphere.

Bairro Alto / Cais do Sodré (Lisboa)

Bairro Alto was the first urban core built outside the city walls of Lisbon (Portugal), dating from the early 16th century, located near to one of the “city doors” at the date. Its design adapts to the topography, adopting an orthogonal grid. The quarter is characterized by its narrow streets composed majority by buildings of Pombalino period, and despite the numerous renovations and additions, keeps essentially its historical and picturesque image. The sidewalks are narrow or inexistent. The traffic is closed inside part of the quarter (in recent decades), giving access exclusively to residents and loadings. So, main car traffic is carried by the peripherals limits of the quarter, being possible to cross it by Rua da Rosa that divides the quarter into two parts with different characteristics, being the Western zone mostly residential, and the Eastern zone characterized by functional diversity, where the majority of functions with social character occur. Public space represents a small area of the quarter, mostly in the streets that cross it, and its peripheral limits (with rare green spaces or urban furniture for permanence). Thus, the streets assume the function of “living room of the quarter” to the regulars who wander and chat there during daytime and for those who flock at the quarter at night, standing or sitting along the streets. Considered marginal, insalubrious, and poor in habitability conditions in the mid-20th century, it led to projects for demolition of the quarter. However this did not occurred, which allowed the deployment in this area of the city of a series of activities that took advantage of the fact that it was a central and relatively low-priced economic zone to develop, such as the case of the printing cluster. Is following this logic that the contemporary creative industries begin to develop in the territory, articulating the axis Chiado – Bairro Alto, and exploring the long-term inter relation and complementarity between the institutional-daily pattern of Chiado (the side “inside” the ancient walls and institutional cultural pole of the city) and the alternative-marginal-nightlife image of the Bairro Alto area (Costa, 2007, 2009). This fruitful relation, exploring the transgressive tradition in terms of sociability and conviviality in Bairro Alto, feed the

area's development as the main cultural area of Lisbon. The artistic universities placed in Bairro Alto as in Chiado increased the critical masses of who lived and attended the activities in this district, and it was in this general context that this part of the city affirmed itself over the years as the cultural and creative place for most cultural activities in the metropolitan area, although in recent years, this centrality has shifted progressively for consumption-oriented and social and conviviality-based activities, also essential for the structuring of the creative activities cluster, though not centered on cultural creation and production (Costa, 2012). Facing gentrification risks and huge use conflicts the area's sustainability is challenged by several sides (Costa et Lopes, 2012; Costa, 2013), but informality, openness and tolerance to diversity and liminality are key-elements in a place which still is associated with a marginal, bohemia and alternative way of life, despite its growing massification and symbolic mainstreaming.

Cais do Sodré area, contiguous to Bairro Alto, has been noticed in most recent years for beginning to share similar dynamics, by the expansion of some of Bairro Alto's creative and conviviality activity southwards. It was an area that until few years ago didn't show the same agglomeration of activities in the creative sector. However, cheap land price, a lot of unoccupied spaces, and strong centrality, quickly attracted creative activities to this area, especially encompassing the symbolic mainstreaming of Bairro Alto area (performing arts, architecture ateliers, art galleries, etc.). As a node of conviviality, Cais do Sodré has also affirmed, or reaffirmed, fast. Being a traditional seaport area, Cais do Sodré has always received essentially "marginal"-labeled users. With less schedule restrictions and better traffic access than Bairro Alto, the area uplifted its image rapidly in last years. Its aura of conviviality and bohemia, where transgressing the rules used to be a constant (until recently it hosted the prostitution and marginality that had previously let Bairro Alto area) was incorporated and re-branded in new more-"mainstream" projects. Old prostitution hotels or strip houses have been transformed in new trendy bars to the new users. This symbolical factor attracts tourists and new users to the area, whose streets are now overcrowded at night. More "alternative" cultural activities cohabited side by side with the "traditional activities" and now they are being quickly gentrified, such as happened before in Bairro Alto.

An important role was developed here by local commerce association and city council, which joined forces to reaffirm Cais do Sodré as an important nightlife spot,

and decided to close to traffic Rua Nova do Carvalho. This decision was extremely important and has been contributing for an easier appropriation of the street by the new users. In addition to traffic closing, several artistic interventions were organized. The most impacting (“rua-cor-de-rosa”) was no more than painting all the new pedestrianized street of pink. The controversy that this idea generated attracted a lot of people to the area, not only traditional users but also new ones. Other artistic interventions have been explored in Cais do Sodré, such as performances in apartments or the installation of the well-known Portuguese plastic artist Joana Vasconcelos in a vacant building of the quarter (later transformed on a luxury hotel). Contrary to Bairro Alto, here we can find the presence of a larger area of public space due to the new areas that were provided by successive embankments. Nevertheless, the streets keep assuming an importance as places where people stay for a longer period. And it is in the streets, like in Bairro Alto, that public sphere is more the focus of artistic intervention. On the walls, assuming the public space as performing set, or working with the private space but opening it to the street and prolonging the street into it, as we can see in most of images of Figure 4, the public sphere is polarized by streets. In Bairro Alto and Cais do Sodré they are the space of conviviality, polarizing the sociability of nightlife (and the essential knowledge change and reputation building mechanisms essential for the functioning of cultural worlds), the main space of informality (differently from other case studies), and the locus where most use conflicts are felt (essentially derived of externalities, like noise, traffic, parking congestion, cleaning systems jamming, etc.). The balances and tensions between the multiple coexistent layers of practices and perceptions that cross these public sphere spots are unequivocally a key-factor that can (and have been) explored by artists within their creative appropriation of these spaces.

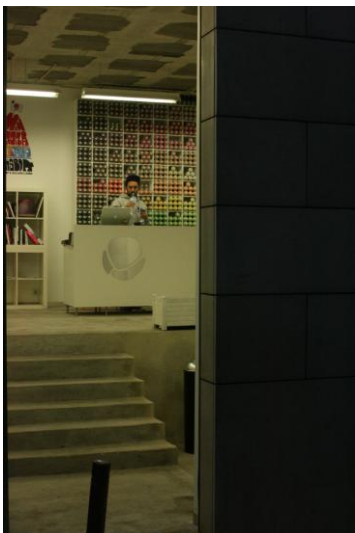


Figure 4: Bairro Alto / Cais do Sodré



Figure 5: Gràcia

Gràcia (Barcelona)

Gràcia was also result of an urban development outside the city of Barcelona (Spain). Distanced approximately 2 km of the walled city it developed as an autonomous “pueblo”, which structural characteristics still remain until today, being that also reflected in a strong sense of local identity in its population. It was incorporated in the city of Barcelona after Cerdà plans, in the XIX century. The narrow streets are usual framed by 4-5 floors buildings. The orthogonal grid is interrupted several times by squares, where people meet, which are the main public spaces of the quarter, equipped with plenty of urban furniture and shaded from the sun by trees. These are the scenario for public convergence of people with a high degree of heterogeneity. Gràcia still characterizes for being an autonomous “small city” within Barcelona. It is perfectly possible to live, to work and to access to cultural events without leaving the quarter. This mix of “needed activities”, but also the ones of “social” and “optional” nature (cf Balula, 2010, pp. 50) confers to the quarter vitality and dynamism throughout the day, being one of the cases which presents a better balance between the three groups. Circulation in the quarter is correctly hierarchized and some streets are closed to traffic, while others just allow circulation of specific vehicles and bicycles. The parking congestion issue is not as accurate as in other cases (e.g. in Bairro Alto and Vila Madalena users can take hours to park their vehicles). Sidewalks are regular and it is usual to find the sidewalk at the road’s plan to solve the problem of the narrow streets; with this solution and the traffic controlled most of the streets are large sidewalks most of the time. The quarter doesn’t have significant topographical variations in spite of presenting a slight pending throughout all territory. In Gràcia the creative activities are further integrated with local dynamics, being one of the case studies which express a better relation between all the activities. Although it is a neighbourhood where crowds flow, mixing the more traditional and the alternative, these seem to live well among the quarter dynamics. Gràcia shows a huge vitality along the day, joining traditional middle class residents, intellectuals, immigrants, Erasmus students and other sorts of gentrifiers, in what can be considered a quite balanced quarter, where local authorities and associative movements have a large preponderance in its governance mechanisms. In spite of all this, creative dynamics in recent years have been turning to a more

institutionalized and less informal pattern losing in some circumstances some spontaneity and quality, into a more entertainment based pattern.

Being essentially a vital residential area, mixing a diversity of populations and creative segments, use conflicts and problems in public space appropriation naturally occur, although less extensively than in Bairro Alto's case. Gentrification is also a challenge, although more controlled here, and the main use conflicts are essential related with externalities, mostly conviviality related, particularly concerning nightlife. Despite a strong public control over public space (e.g., campaign anti-graffiti on Barcelona's walls), informality often wins its space, as can be seen by the multiplication of information (advertisement and other), in the non-regulated public sphere (as the doors jambs, as can be seen on figure 5). Despite some signals of less informality, appropriation of public spaces is undoubtedly very important also in this district, and artistic creation finds its space (like in many other Barcelona's areas) to step out to public sphere.

Vila Madalena (São Paulo)

Vila Madalena, São Paulo, Brazil, starts as a small group of houses in the outskirts of São Paulo. Only in early 20th century, with the construction of the railway line that would connect this small cluster of blue-collar workers' houses to city center, and then definitively in the 70's, with the location of the Arts University of São Paulo into a near neighborhood, this area starts to assume the setting that we can find today. Like São Paulo itself, it is characterized for being in constant mutation. From the beginning it was a quarter composed mostly by single-family housing. Today, it is in quite advanced state of gentrification and many of the single-family building that composed (and symbolized) the quarter has been replaced by buildings with more than ten floors. These urban changes are disfiguring, in physical terms, the "old" artistic quarter. But this one was itself fruit of the post 70's gentrification of the precedent blue-collar workers neighborhood, although then the change was not too much reflected in the buildings characteristics. Fast urban change, associated to economic and demographic expansion, progressively gets new areas of the city. The municipal master plan allows the replacement of the old buildings by others with completely different characteristics (contrary to what happens in Portuguese or

Spanish cases, where regulations don't allow great modifications in the characteristics of existing edification). These kinds of alterations in edification typologies of Vila Madalena are changing the intrinsic characteristics of the district, due to the changes in uses and in population that these restructurings generate. Old buildings are mostly replaced by private condominiums that not only involve lesser levels of public space appropriation but also do not guarantee the same mix of activities that was present in the old structure of the quarter. That have being conducting to a certain loss of vitality, contrary to what seems to happen in other districts, where the strategy has been keeping mixed uses in the buildings and multifunctional areas, regardless of the use conflicts that this can generate.

In Vila Madalena, pedestrians' circulation seems to be one of the most problematic aspects. The quarter is implanted in topography of pronounced slopes; sidewalks configuration, as in most of this city, is built by each landowner, as they want, which reduces mobility. In spite of this, sidewalks are large, and they are appropriated by costumers who come to the zone and other users. Formal and informal appropriation of these spaces is quite usual. Differently to what happens in other cases, the hierarchy of streets is less marked; cars can circulate in all of them, contrary to what happens in most of the other cases, where access is easier or facilitated by foot or by public transport. After all, the car is really an important part of living (or using) this quarter, and its implications (mostly, congestion and traffic issues), are important downsides to the capacity to live and go to this quarter.

Vila Madalena is in an advanced state of gentrification and will probably disappear as a "creative quarter" in some years, due to the challenges of gentrification and urban transformation. However, contrary to most of the European cases, like in many other cities with dimension and soft planning regulations (e.g. many American cities) this does not mean that the creative dynamics verified here could not change to other parts of the city, starting a new process of appropriation and "gentrification".

For now, living with a fast gentrification process, and dealing in quotidian with many externalities-related conflicts, the area does not cease to be a pole for artistic appropriation of public spaces in this city, widely recognized for its graffiti murals, or for the creative spots (art galleries, ateliers, small performing venues) that opens themselves to the ample streets or to the inside lobby's and patios that prolong the public sphere inside its blocks.

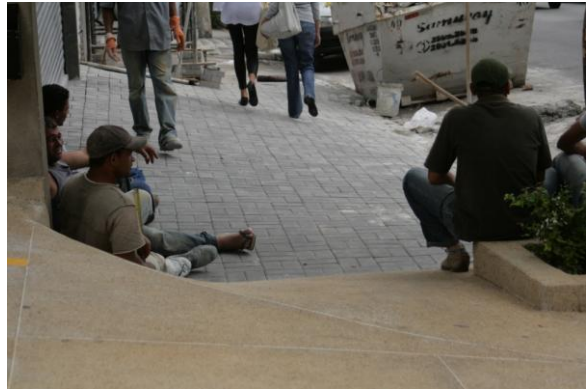


Figure 6: Vila Madalena

Brick Lane (London)

Brick Lane area, in London, England, is an old industrial quarter, now associated essentially to immigrants from Bangladesh and new gentrifiers. In recent years it has affirmed itself as one of the most creative places of the city, where generations, styles and habits coexist side by side. The East End zone at London is for many years characterized by migratory fluxes of people of a large heterogeneity such as Irish, Jews or Bengalis. The zone of Brick Lane, within this area, is an obviously reflex of this knowledge sedimentation which marks this multiethnic part of London. The fluxes of immigration are integrant part of this city's history, contributing to its dynamic and vitality: "Waves of immigrants have passed through, (...). They brought with them trades, skills crafts and talents that have helped underpin London's position as a world city" (Landry, 2000, pp. 111). Although original immigration in Brick Lane was essentially connected to the industry located on the area, nowadays this place affirms, with Shoredich and Hoxton (North limits of East End), as one of the most "creative" of London area, being stage of fluxes of immigrants and other people who come looking for an alternative and informal way of life. From early 90's it started attracting numerous "creative people", from around the world, offering a place where one could easily network with local artists, exchange knowledge, and be inserted in a milieu which could potentiate the artistic life, providing evolution opportunities and mediation mechanisms (like happens in Kreuzberg case, also at worldwide level, at least for some specific art worlds).

However these more "informal, marginal and alternative" milieus that "help" the development of this kind of dynamics and attracted these people aren't new in this part of the city. East End was along the history of London the place for the activities which were not welcome inside the city walls (like in Bairro Alto case), being one of the poorest places in London until nineteen century. So industry, lower classes and marginal life, often connected to criminality and bohemia, dominated this part of the city until the 90's, when creative clusters began to take the place of the abandoned industries. This area have been vastly transformed during last decades, not due to an intentional and carefully planning strategy, but essentially due to its' own dynamics, combining specific governance, socioeconomic and cultural factors, all this regardless a set of key programs that enhanced some dynamics around projects

such as Rich Mix, the Stipafields Market, the Truman Brewery or Whitechapel Gallery/Library's reformulation.

The informality found in this territory allows a series of dynamics that are impossible to find in other parts of the city, where people are not so tolerant and informality is less extended. Brick Lane mobilizes a symbolic capital which attracts artist and creators from around the world to come, intervene and live in this area. At the same time, visitors and consumers are also naturally attracted. This is one of the case studies (parallel with Kreuzberg SO36) where more appropriation by artistic ephemeral activities in the public sphere is verified, being a tolerant zone, where we can be easily surprised by new happenings, differently from other parts of London that don't have this freedom of action. Street art is visible along the streets; works with quality and reputation contribute to fill with colors the traditional brick walls which were the image of the quarter. Many exhibitions take place on the streets, changing the image of the building space and contributing for a constant (re)discover of public space, that appears in this part of London less segmented, segregated and dominated by power relations. Concerts on the streets, cine sessions on roofs of cultural clubs, ethnic food markets, clothes markets and "alternative" products are some of dynamics which contribute for the vitality of the place which seems to be the one less gentrified from our universe of case studies (this quarter maintains largely its original population contrary to what happens in Shoreditch and Hoxton, for instance). In terms of morphology the area is plan and composed by buildings with different heights, drawing a jagged skyline (like in Gràcia). Likewise most of the other case studies, use conflicts are very significant, resulting from the diversity of publics, lifestyles and expectations of who live and come to this place. This level of conflict has been probably contributing to keep this dynamics less institutionalized, and the fact that there are other creative quarters in London certainly also has contributed to retard the gentrification process.



Figure 7: Brick Lane



Figure 8: Kreuzberg SO36

Kreuzberg SO36 (Berlin)

Kreuzberg SO36, located in the West part of Berlin, Germany, near the river Spree, is one of Berlin's cultural centers, in the middle of the now reunified city, evolving from its recent history as one of the poorest quarters in Berlin (in the late 1970s and 80's, during which it was an isolated section of West Berlin), mostly dwelled by subcultures, to one of the most vibrant centers in many art worlds in the European context. Kreuzberg consists of two distinctive parts (SO36 and SW61, referring to the old postal codes for the two areas in West Berlin). Kreuzberg SO 36, home of many immigrants (and second-generation immigrants, most notoriously from Turkish ancestry) and main contemporary nest for creative dynamics, is marked by diversity, multiculturalism and informality, attracting creative people from around the world and achieving a unique symbolic status. At the same time, the district is also characterized by high levels of unemployment and some of the lowest average incomes in Berlin.

Along history, this quarter (as Berlin itself) has staged many morphologic, political, cultural and social alterations, which have been contributed with its ups and downs to the construction of the image of the city. This neighborhood started developing in late XIX century, resulting from the fast industrial expansion after the foundation of German Empire in 1871, which continued until the end of the First World War. Based on expansive housing development, related to industrial growth, quickly it raised from an almost rural territory to the area with highest population density in Berlin. But it was the end of Second World War that changed definitely its image, as large parts of the city were in ruin and Kreuzberg SO36 was not an exception (being one of the industrial areas particularly focused by bombing). It was in this historical context, along with the post-war city division, that the traditional dwellers left the poor zone of Kreuzberg SO36 and moved to newer parts of the city. This social change was essential to start the development of "alternative" dynamics in the quarter. The numerous abandoned spaces, such as residences, old workplaces, shops and industrial zones, were occupied by new dwellers of lower classes that came to live in the quarter. The huge heterogeneity of experiences brought by new inhabitants was essential for the development of the creative dynamics. "The Kreuzberg mix [Rada, 1997] refers not only to an ethnic and social mixture but also to a population with a partly alternative attitude and rebellious character, a strong subcultural influence and

simultaneity of living, small-scale crafts and shops in the same buildings” (Bader, Bialluch, 2009, pp. 94).

In spite of its central location in the city, it was isolated during the “Berlin Wall” period, which closed the quarter near to River Spree, not allowing contacts with the East of the city. Even within the West-side of Berlin, the area lost its centrality, enclosed by the Berlin Wall on three sides, and was quite unattractive for real estate investments. Particularly from late 1960s, increasing numbers of immigrants, students and artists, attracted by cheaper land, began moving to Kreuzberg, which became notable for its alternative lifestyle and its squatters. Berlin’s punk rock scene or LGBT life, for instance, had its epicenter here. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the quarter earned a new centrality, founding itself on the heart of the city again, and the streets that used to finish in blind alleys outstanding the wall earn life again. It is in this period that the place affirmed as the “creative quarter” in international circuits, according Florida (2002). The initially cheap rents and high grade of 19th century housing made some parts of the borough more attractive as a residential area for a much wider (and richer) variety of people. Today, Kreuzberg has one of the youngest populations of all European city boroughs.

In terms of morphology the quarter implants in a plan territory and is composed by large sidewalks and streets. Most heights of buildings don’t exceed the large of the streets what contribute for a good relation between edification and people. The mixed-uses of buildings contribute to the diversity of activities along the streets. Public sphere, more than strict public space, reveals its’ real importance here, because most of the year the climatological conditions are not very encouraging on the streets, the principal stage of the interaction in other case studies. Other formal or informal convivial places emerge, in the public sphere, many of them of a transitional or ephemeral nature.

Kreuzberg SO36 clearly exemplifies as ephemeral artistic interventions and creative appropriations can generate and enhance creative dynamics in a zone of a city, contributing to the redevelopment of “expectant spaces” believing this kind of dynamics helps reinventing the cities. Berlin is a laboratory for this kind of experiences, sometimes even promoted by official planning policies. Empty spaces, residential buildings, bunkers, old industrial spaces have been reconverted through the change of uses of these out-of-function spaces and their reintroduction in the everyday life of the quarter, creating new cultural places, leisure spots or residences.

“Like in a surrealism collage, elements of opposite world meet” (Oswalt, 2010, pp. 2), appearing and disappearing with a large velocity, contributing to reconvert innumerable spaces of the quarter. Actually, the huge associative dynamic of its tolerant and heterogeneous population, enhances a quite decentralized cultural offer, which along its multicultural nature, helps to maintain the gentrification of the quarter under control.

6. Concluding note

This paper’s objective was to explore artistic intervention in public sphere, relating it to urban design, public space appropriation and the informal dynamics verified on creative milieus, from an international comparative perspective. Based on an empirical approach to urban morphology, everyday life and symbolic public space appropriation on five different creative districts, it were identified some common features which seem to have an important role to embed and to support artistic vitality and informal public space appropriation in these creative milieus.

Drawing on a conceptual framework which acknowledges conflict and informal dynamics as drivers for artistic vitality, we discussed the evolution of artistic intervention in the public sphere and some particular experiences of ephemeral urban appropriations on cultural districts. An empirical work supported on literature review, visual recollection and participative observation, allowed us to discuss, for each of our case studies, their situation regarding urban morphology, creative dynamics and informality, in order to understand their attractiveness and potential for public sphere centered artistic interventions.

Ephemeral artistic interventions, in contemporary cultural and social panorama, are undoubtedly important, in a moment that is not possible to think in large projects such as happened in the past. Micro-scale projects developed often on an informal and ephemeral way can be fundamental contributions to the dynamics of each territorial system. Urban interventions and artistic appropriations like these, developed often by multidisciplinary groups, create "ephemeral architectures" that interact (physically and at the symbolical level) with more “permanent architectures”, and that can appropriate the city and test innovative solutions, while helping to boost these territories, promoting vitality and well-being, without expending large costs.

Naturally these actions are involved in complex mechanisms, considering their role as creators of symbolic attributes (for the artists, for their interventions, for the places), and the intense network of motivations, interests and use conflicts that are inherent to them. Moreover, many times they can be used and explored (but also instrumentalized) in urban development processes, in an era where bureaucratic processes and personal, corporate or public authorities' interests have different rhythms and ways of working. The Berlin case, with the active public policy towards the use of temporary "intermediate uses", is one example of how this public sphere can be explored by planning authorities, with private benefits for (at least some of) the stakeholders involved (land owners, artists, users, public authorities), at least temporarily (although at the long term some will gain more than others, as always).

Naturally these dynamics are very important to cities and are often used (or at least rhetorically appropriated) in name of its development. However it is of note that such actions - which are by nature "informal" and "alternative" - should work in this way because it is part of their nature to develop in this way and they would have much less interest if they lose the spontaneity and detract from their identity, that is the way how they appropriate of spaces that are not the most common. Thus, the most important thing is to not want to replicate things, but simply let them happen in the natural dynamics of cities. It is fundamental to understand the roots of these dynamics and, more than support or cherish them, simply to leave them space to flourish and to develop. Creativity is not at all a good friend of excesses on institutionalization and on planning, and as our case studies demonstrate, informality, and specific logics of governance, related to the openness and the tolerance towards the artistic appropriation of the public sphere are crucial factors in its development.

This analysis was expected to provide a contribution towards the development of a new planning agenda for dealing with urban creative dynamics and cultural quarters. In effect, the attendance of these ideas when dealing or intervening with territorially-based creative dynamics, seem to be fundamental. And this does not mean that each one of them can be fabricated for each intervention by urban planners, private investors or public authorities, but instead that each territorial system must be understood in all its specificities and in all its diverse potential. Then, these key factors should be valorized and worked with the local actors, seizing specific governance mechanisms, articulating stakeholders' interests, managing their internal use conflicts, and understanding the vital importance of the symbolic system and

place representation, for the diverse users of the quarter and the multiple art worlds. Places open to informality, giving freedom for less formal action and providing space for liminality, avoiding the excesses of institutionalization, seem to be the key for a successful planning activity, as have been demonstrated in these case studies. As an example, many of the small artistic interventions on urban space or initiatives based on appropriation of local public spheres verified promote a vitality and an authentic connection to place and local dynamics which are much more consequent in terms of effectiveness and long term sustainability for local development than more “conventional” or “institutional” “creativity rhetoric”-led initiatives, branding creative quarters, supporting the attraction of creative people or promoting emblematic facilities or flagship events. And after all, they are much more affordable for planning authorities as well.

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