OCCUPYING LISBON: THE PATHS AND PLACES OF POLITICAL DEMONSTRATIONS

ANA ESTEVENS
LEANDRO GABRIEL
ISABEL ANDRÉ

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Main aim

• analyze the routes and places of the recent protests in Lisbon (May, 2011 – June, 2013) and to comprehend how much past spatial patterns survive in the present.

Questions

• Does the symbolic power of urban spaces remain during long periods even if they were significantly transformed in physical terms?
• Or today’s most important contesting spaces are others and/or more dispersed?
• Political demonstrations follow the same routes or open new paths associated to new symbolic meanings?
Methodology

- The analysis is based on documentary sources, between May 2011 and June 2013, in order to mapping the routes and places of the demonstrations (a database with more than 140 entries) in Lisbon.

- Multilayer cartography will be produced to compare the critical contesting spaces of the different historical periods.
The protests
‘Indignados’, ‘Occupy’ and their multiplication

"the movement Occupy is the first major popular reaction that can prevent this situation“

Chomsky, 2013: 30
"THE STREET BECAME GLOBAL"
The financial and economic crisis;

Destruction of the main pillars (health, education, social security, housing and transport) of the welfare state;

Privatization.
"the desire to occupy the public square is clearly related to the meeting, will join force to make a show of strength against a power that is completely deaf to the needs and requests of the majority of citizens"

Toussaint, 2012: 35
The main sites identified are:
• the Assembly of the Republic,
• the official residence of the Prime Minister,
• the Praça Luís de Camões – where is the Ministry of Economy,
• the Town Hall Square,
• the headquarters of the 'Troika' in Portugal,
• the Ministries of Finance and Health, the door of the headquarters of some companies (Portugal trains or administration of Empordef- shipyards de Viana do Castelo, for example)
• Praça D. Pedro IV (Rossio).
A very usual routes are:

- between the Praça do Marquês de Pombal and Praça dos Restauradores and Rossio.
- between the Praça Luís de Camões (where is the Ministry of Economy) and the Assembly of the Republic in São Bento.
“often in the same spaces, as if a certain political determinism delineate urban and, almost always, the territories of possible combat in the capital”

Rosas, 2010: 16

Some notes:
• In this period of crisis, demonstrations have intensified and the street has acquired a very important role.
• The public space is to refocus attention.
• The spaces maintains a strong symbolic rhythms of political mobilization that have persisted throughout the ages.
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Thank you!

Grazie!