STREET ART: CONTESTED SPACES AND CONTESTATION THROUGH (PUBLIC) SPACES

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RUcaS – Real Utopias in Socially Creative Spaces - FCT [PTDC/CS-GEO/115603/2009]
• **Main Aim**

The study of the contested city and its imagery; the role of street art in urban public space as platforms of social identity and support of social contestations;

• **Questions**

• What are the *Messages* that bubble in Lisbon urban walls, electrical boxes, light posts and boarded-up buildings in, that emerge as criticisms and protests against the politics associated to the actual economic and social crisis in Portugal?

• What are the *Public Spaces* were they emerge and their relation to the diversity of messages?
• **Context:**

  - Globalization of the network society (Castells, 2000): population mobility, flows of intellectual and material capital;

  - Cities as arenas of struggle and conflict where social forces take over and remake spaces (Carmo, 2012);

  - Actual economic and social crisis in Portugal, and politics such as austerity, shrinking of the welfare state or decline of social rights;

  *Art is an alternative act of speech and an important ingredient of the practice of democracy* (Cruzeiro, 2011)
Street Art: From Public Order Issue to Creative City Strategies

- Transitory phenomenon: movement of images across urban space and gradual decay of surface (Manco, 2004);
- Urban visual ephemera of unsolicited art attached to a surface in public view to create an iconic language (Armstrong, 2005);
- Transgressive act of property crime (Alpaslan, 2012);
- Discourse that challenges an indiscriminate criminalization of street art: the promise of Creative City (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002);
- Driver of urban regeneration and production of urban space (Sharp et al, 2005);
- Creativity in postindustrial economy – rethink artistic practices and new forms of public art (McAuliffe, 2012);
- Universally recognized market (Zukin & Braslow, 2011; Campbell, 2008);
• Street Art Today

• Street art is a response to globalization that resist to be absorbed by accumulation of people, capital, infrastructures and flows of information of the actual speeded urbanization (Irvine, 2012):

• Confrontation with totalizing sense of space produced in modern cities, standing that:

“we are here with this message”

“Graffiti came to stay
Government is on his way out”
Street Art Today

- Transforms places and their sense via artistic representations;
- Reflects new cultural and politic visions;
- Fights against inertia, established order;
- Increases the visibility and facilitates the organization of grassroots movements;
- Raises civic consciousness through very short and incisive message;
- Visible signs of a political struggle;
- Refusal to the conventional modes of representation and expression of protest (formal and institutionalized).
800 street art works
(collected in 2013)
• STREET ART “TYPE”

- Stencil: 50%
- Tags: 40%
- Mural Paintings: 4%
- Graffiti: 4%
- Collages: 2%

- Contestation: 58%
- Appeal: 31%
- Incentive: 11%
• STREET ART “WORDS”

STREET FIGHT PORTUGAL

STRIKE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STREET ART EXAMPLES – Stencil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Stencil Example 1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“revolt you”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Stencil Example 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“fight”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Stencil Example 3]</td>
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<tr>
<td>“civil disobedience”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Stencil Example 4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“oppression”</td>
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<tr>
<td>![Stencil Example 5]</td>
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<tr>
<td>“wake up Portugal”</td>
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<tr>
<td>![Stencil Example 6]</td>
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<tr>
<td>“will you just stand?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>![Stencil Example 7]</td>
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<tr>
<td>“open your eyes”</td>
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<tr>
<td>![Stencil Example 8]</td>
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<tr>
<td>“and when you do not have nothing to eat?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STREET ART EXAMPLES – Tags

“it is the people who lead”

“FMI out of here; precarious they want us, rebels we will be”

“precarious they want us, rebels we will be”
STREET ART EXAMPLES – Mural Paintings

The Portuguese Working Class

“FMI out of Portugal”, “We do not pay!”
STREET ART EXAMPLES – Mural Paintings

Portuguese Government controlled by Angela Merkel
STREET ART EXAMPLES – Graffiti

- Aging, loneliness
- Mental illness
- Street art versus vandalism
- Capitalism is sucking the world
• **STREET ART GEOGRAPHIES**

- Government Buildings
- Former Industrial Area
- University Campus
- Government Buildings
- Historic Squares
- Transport Hub
- Former Industrial Area
- Transport Hub
- University Campus
- Transport Hub
- Former Industrial Area

IGOT – Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning | University of Lisbon
• **Government Buildings & Historic Squares** - places used to political mobilizations that since the twentieth century are taken for political combat and social celebration;

• **University Campus** - possible expansion of political influence to other young individuals and institutional settings, as in during the Portuguese fascist regime;

• **Former industrial areas** - protest thoughts of a neglected working class;

• **Transport Hubs** - vantage points of great accessibility and visibility;
• **Final Remarks**

• Lisbon is no exception to other globalized cities: arenas of conflict;

• Street Art is an importante alternative medium of mass communication; a act of speech of democracy that challenge the neoliberal world;

• Placement is crucial for the artists to be able to communicate politically and artistically to an audience;

• The Public spaces of contemporary Street Art manifestations are linked with the historical ideological regimes.
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