

HISTORIC CENTRES - PLACES FOR ALL

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ABSTRACT

Considering the increase of tourism in Lisbon, which has been experiencing significant growth, particularly in the past year, territories in the so-called historic part are undergoing major changes to meet this urban reality. Neighbourhoods in the inner city, which in the past were essentially residential areas for people with lower income, have been subjected to an increasingly urban transformation, contributing to an overlap of tourism spaces and everyday worlds. In this sense, this work considers the consequences for the existing socio-spatial dynamics and how negative impacts might be mitigated.

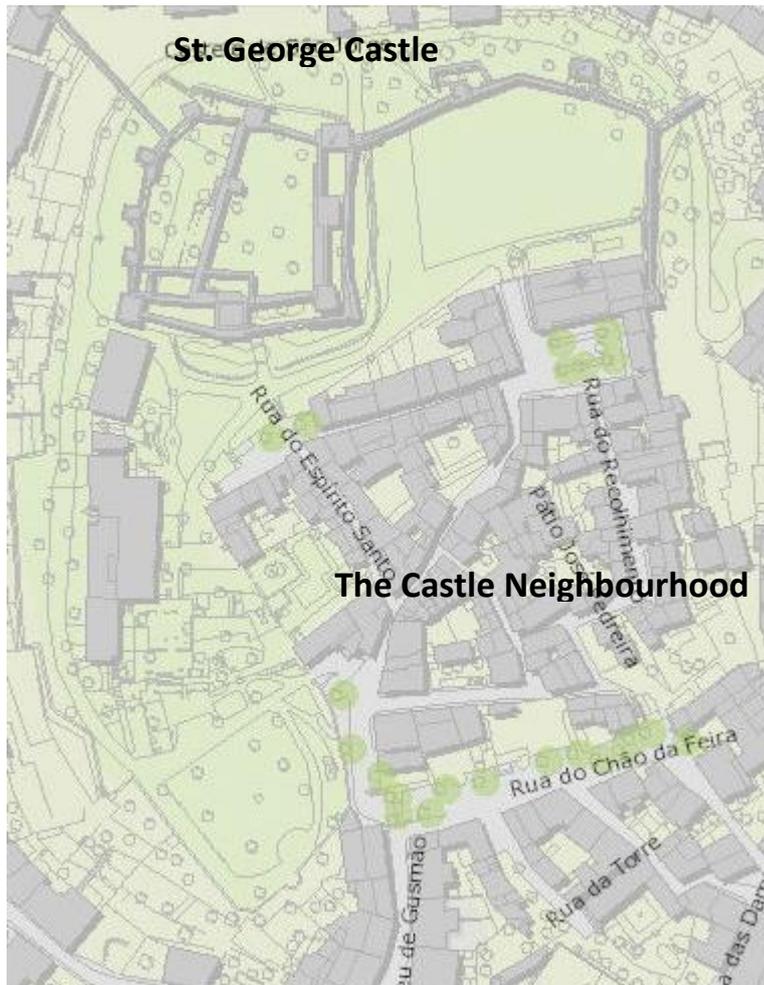
Keywords: tourism, city users, historic centre

INTRODUCTION

Given the growing importance of tourism in Lisbon, territories in the inner city have been subject to major changes in terms of new uses with profound consequences on social reproduction.

This research is based on a case study of the Castle neighbourhood in Lisbon, a small urban area of medieval layout with about 350 inhabitants, surrounded by a citadel and positioned next to one of the most visited national monuments, the Castle of St. George that in 2014 exceeded one million visitors and has numerous events.

¹ Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences – CICS.NOVA – FCSH/UNL, UID/SOC/04647/2013, funded by FCT/MEC through national funding.



Source: Council of Lisbon (<http://lxi.cm-lisboa.pt/lxi/?application=Lxplantas>)

The large number of tourists has caused more harm than good for the inhabitants who feel the invasion of their space. By being involved in a local non-governmental organization² and through participant observation in the different activities, establishing a close relationship with the actors present, including municipal technicians, communities of leaders and associations, residents and merchants, this article presents an analysis of the antagonisms and challenges surrounding this territory in particular and urban planning in general, in order to claim a city for all.

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THE PROMOTION OF CITIES THROUGH HISTORICAL ASSETS

Cities are characterized by movement and change (Ryan 2001) with transformations in the residents' dynamics regarding different histories, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds, but also more and more by the presence of a non-permanent population, in particular the city users, a swelling population composed of persons moving to a city in order to use different services like shopping, movies, museums, restaurants (Martinotti, 1996) and who are increasingly influencing its logic.

As underlined by the latter, this population has profound effects in some urban contexts, in particular where they, rather than the residents, constitute the majority. The author refers to competition, at least indirect, in the spatial composition of some areas.

This phenomenon of massive numbers of visitors in certain territories, inevitably influences and even commands local development and urban planning. In this context, and considering the increasing growth of tourism in the world, culture, history, and heritage are considered important resources to boost the economic vitality of cities. As Osbali puts it, "For the tourist industry, history has become a product that can be marketed, sold and re-created. Historic settlements and urban areas are seen as assets, readily transformed into products that are sold to consumers seeking an 'experience'. A myth is created of a 'clean' replacement industry, jobs and high financial returns, while the burden of economic investment and the drain on environmental, cultural and social resources are frequently ignored" (2000, p. 2).

With the increasing mobility, decline in air travel prices, namely through the entry of low cost airways, accommodation offers for different market segments, and the numerous internet devices that help people to organize their trips, are having major impacts on the increase of tourism. In a context in which cities try to stand out among international competitors, local governments have been promoting a positive image and branding the urban assets in order to become more attractive. Known architects are invited to build iconic buildings, festivals and mega events are held, monuments, building façades, and public spaces are embellished, waterfronts become

areas for leisure, culture becomes a product that is reinvented and marketed for consumption.

The excessive appropriation of the so-called historic centres for tourism in some cities has raised concerns given the economic, spatial, and cultural impact of visitors living as residents for a limited time span (Hoffman, Fanstein & Judd, 2003, p. 3). As highlighted by Ryan (2001, p. 29) “traditional cities become mere sites in a fluid world, products increasingly themed to attract day-trippers”. Miles and Miles (2004, p. 1) question the extent to which consumption may guarantee a future for cities and citizens or simply take their past. For these authors, “consumption inevitably benefits some consumers, but only at the expense of others” (2004, p. 2). Urry (1995, p. 166) refers to the usurpation of space by visitors so that locals no longer feel it is theirs. In addition, the number of locals living for a longer time in the inner city and who are involved in or who take advantage of tourism activities is low. Another element highlighted by the author is time, considering how the city is organized to meet tourists’ interests.

Logan and Molotoch raise the duality between making a life on a real commodity and the creation and defence of the use of values of a neighbourhood. The authors emphasize that each neighbourhood has its own values based on its historical background, social dynamics, and its relationship with external institutions, enhancing six factors that shape this urban reality: the daily routines related to different needs such as shopping, health, work, and transport; the informal networks that give support; a sense of security related to a familiar environment; identity considering spatial and social demarcation; agglomeration of benefits whereby a large number of similar people stimulate the development of activities and spaces to meet their needs; and finally, group attachment (1987, p. 103-110).

Considering the transformation of a certain environment through tourism, this article will consider how these factors have been affected in an old neighbourhood of the so-called historic part of Lisbon.

Apart from the way the past is presented, one has to consider that in visiting places of heritage, the surroundings meet the tourist's needs, including not only different facilities, such as shops and accommodation, but also traffic and circulation, important issues especially when sites are in less accessible areas. Heritage tends to attract crowds that have a significant impact on the transformations of urban fabric causing excessive vehicle congestion as well as parking problems, a retail trade redirected toward tourism, namely restaurants and souvenir shops, encroachment of public space, rising prices in real estate and trade, and housing being used for short-term rental, including apartments, hotels and hostels. Here, different needs and interests collide with those of people who live in the area. Shops are filled with souvenirs that will appear repeatedly in the various establishments, alluding to cultural issues with specific symbols exploited to exhaustion and often produced in faraway countries for cheap labour reasons.

However aside from the negative impacts of tourism on urban territories, it should also be considered an opportunity, especially in a context that has to realize that mobility is increasing and tourism is an activity that will stay. In this sense, it is important to be able to plan the city and to find a balance between different objectives: "a delicate balance has to be sought in historic towns between the desires of visitors and the interests of residents; between growth and quality of life; between economic development and environmental costs; between the use of space and the interpretation of space; in the decision-making process between public roles and private interests; between the community and the market. Only tourism planning that directly benefits local interests and the local economy will serve the realistic continuation of heritage" (Orbasli, 2000, p. 3).

LISBON AND TOURISM

Tourism is definitely an expanding sector: in 2012 one billion people travelled around the world and in 2013, international tourism continued to register a 5% growth, representing an additional 52 million international tourists, comprising 1,087

million arrivals. Europe is the most visited region, assuming a global market share of 52% (UNWTO, 2014, p. 11). In global competitiveness terms, tourism is an important sector that cities try to reach. In this context, considering the number of guests, the region of Lisbon exceeded Algarve, the sun and beach destination that has been the central image associated with the country. In 2014, the Lisbon region recorded nearly five million visitors, an increase of 13% compared to the previous year. In a time of financial constraint and unemployment, also among graduates, cultural tourism is seen as an opportunity both for multinational companies opening hotels as well as for smaller entrepreneurs who invest in tourist apartments, self-service laundries, street food stalls, shops, cafes, and also sightseeing tours.

Lisbon is, in the international context, a relatively small capital with only half a million residents and about 2.8 million inhabitants in the metropolitan area. After reaching a peak in the 1970s, the city systematically lost population in the following three decades, decreasing to 262,269 inhabitants (33%), while the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon (excluding the municipality) increased 538,577 (31%). Compared to the sharp decline in the 1980s, the last census registered a slighter loss of 3%.

After decades of urban sprawl, with investment in new housing, new centralities for business areas, the construction of shopping malls in the margins and outskirts of the city, the older part has registered a new dynamism in recent years, with interventions in dilapidated buildings by private investors. In the 2011 Census, the number of vacant houses remained significant (16%), with some inner city parishes exceeding 30%. Also, considering the state of buildings conservation, seven inner city parishes had more than 40% of buildings highly degraded or in need of major repairs however, since the second half of 2010, the number of licensing processes in historic areas (about 1/5 of the city) are almost identical to those in the rest of the city (Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 2010, p. 10).

With Lisbon looking for financial opportunities, cultural tourism is seen as a significant economic opportunity. To make the city more appealing the waterfront is being re-qualified with pedestrian areas, public spaces are regenerated, a new cruise

terminal is being built, traffic is reduced, new spaces for consumption and leisure open. To set the capacity of the new cruise terminal in context, in 2014, 319 cruisers docked in the city port, the highest number of cruisers in the country, accounting for 40% of the national movement (Turismo de Portugal, 2015, p. 19). The western part of downtown was revitalized improving the bleak environment that was associated with the area. Hotels, hostels, and short rental apartments are increasing enormously, especially in the historic part. In the old neighbourhoods of the inner city more and more apartments are used for tourists. This massive increase not only contributes to residential shortages but may also threaten old retail stores, some of which are very emblematic in the city context, as buildings are bought for investment and with the new owner wanting to give new uses to the spaces.

The housing market is effervescing. In a frantic opportunity for investment, 2082 apartments were registered for temporary accommodation (in the 22nd of May 2015), with new legislation in 2014 to make the process easier. The neighbours of the retired resident who lives in the historic area are now tourists who knock on the door to ask for information.

Two new lifts became part of the pedestrian route aiming to facilitate access considering the different city levels. Further mechanical equipment will be installed to improve pedestrian access on the hill of the St. George Castle. The concept of the *tuk tuk* was brought to Lisbon and proliferated rapidly, being especially appropriate to move around the seven hills of the city and through the winding streets that are less accessible or with restrictions for cars. In front of certain monuments and squares, they await their customers. New areas of night entertainment emerge, albeit with the protest of residents, who did not expect the pace of transformation and the direction it took, complaining about the noise, the rubbish, and where the city council tries to find a balance.

The city has received attention by the international press with a strong institutional push, both local and national, to promote the city and the country on the global scene. Lisbon became fashionable.

THE CASTLE NEIGHBOURHOOD – ‘THE NEW INVADERS’

This territory on the top of a hill was among the first urbanized settlements of the city. As highlighted by Janeiro, at the beginning of the twelfth century, reference was made, by an Arab geographer, to Lisbon being surrounded by walls and protected by a castle. After the conquest of the city by the first king of Portugal from the moors in the twelfth century, this area maintained its political importance as a military, social, and religious centre (1993). In the fifteenth century, during the period of Portuguese maritime expansion, the royal palace was transferred downtown, by the river, and this part of the city started to lose its importance.

As a result of its remoteness, the castle was not part of urban plans after the great earthquake of 1755 that affected Lisbon heavily. The reconstruction was the result of local initiative that largely kept the existing medieval layout. Poor quality housing contributed to the settlement of population and its scarce resources.

During this period, the castle had several uses, including a welfare institution with a school and workshops, hospitals, prisons, and military barracks. In the nineteenth century, the only entry to the neighbourhood was controlled by the military. In 1910, the castle was classified as a national monument.

Between 1938 and 1940 the monument underwent a major restoration for the Exhibition of the Portuguese World (celebrating the nation's foundation in 1140 and the independence from Spain in 1640), in a scenario intended to create a glorifying element of the nation and a clear aesthetic choice, though definitely not an historical one. From a huddle of buildings, among which it was impossible to realize the existence of a medieval fortification arose a 'real' castle (Santos, 1994, p. 243). In 1947, the programme of celebrations of the eighth centenary of the conquest of Lisbon was also an effort to transform the great celebrations in Lisbon into a tourist event. The commemorative programme included a simulated combat in the illuminated Castle, masses, concerts, exhibitions, sports championships, a cortege that brought together representatives of all the country's municipalities and colonies, as well as a historical procession (Pinheiro, 2011, p. 361-363).

As Janeiro recounts, in 1938 oblivious to major work planned on the monument, the neighbourhood retained the same village atmosphere of poor people with a complicity between both military that were settled in the castle and civilian based on its history and its acquired habits, through the detachment of their daily routines in relation to the modern city, the poor conditions of their habitability, the people's hunger and sharing of the soldiers' food and the St. George gate that both had to pass when coming from town to their common home: the castle. For the remaining residents of Lisbon, this area was not part of any project tour or even part of their city image (Janeiro, 1993, p. 42).

The territory has been marked by its closed morphological character, reflected in the social relationships of the residents. The strong presence of the traditional trade consisting of grocery stores, bakeries and taverns, the processions and, in particular, the traditions linked to the city's festivities, marked a strong sense of belonging in a very fierce spirit of competition regarding the annual parade through one of the main avenues of Lisbon, with group performances alluding to district-related themes. Today, many participants in this area do not necessarily live there but have some attachment to the area, for example through relatives.

Due to small living spaces that in the past were overcrowded, with large families living in no more than one or two rooms, the domestic sphere is extended to the public space, with doors open and clothes-lines exposed. Entrances are decorated with flower pots and birdcages hang outside, as well as decorative elements related to the city's festivities composing scenarios considered picturesque that are quickly captured by a tourist's camera.



Photo: Street in the Castle neighbourhood.

Considering the demographics, this small territory, of little more than five hectares, reached its maximum population in 1940 with 2942 inhabitants. In the next decades the area systematically lost population and, in 1991, the area had only 767 residents. Housing conditions were poor and in 1981 only 39.3% of the dwellings had a bathroom, the rest having to resort to the public bath (Janeiro, 1993, p. 47-48). In the 1980s, considering the recognition of old neighbourhoods seen as needy and deserving to be recovered, the interest in preserving vernacular architecture and improving the quality of life of the inhabitants, the implementation of regeneration programmes came finally into practice. This neighbourhood saw its rehabilitation process initiated in 1996. At that time, it was considered an important process towards providing decent conditions for residents. Nevertheless, it had profound consequences in the neighbourhood: it was time consuming and many residents who were relocated temporarily did not return. Between the last two censuses (2001-2011), the territory

lost 40% of the population, decreasing from 587 to 355 residents, predominating small households with one or two members (79%).

Despite the fact that the area underwent a regeneration process, the neighbourhood features, according to census data of 2011, are cause for concern, considering the state of repair of the buildings (26% are very run down and 21% need major repairs, well above the percentages of the municipality of Lisbon, at 5% and 9% respectively). The most recent census also shows a huge number of vacant properties: out of 349 apartments, 136 are vacant. Along with the need for building rehabilitation, the degradation of public space is also identified by the population.

The aging population in the municipality of Lisbon (24% aged over 65 years and 23% aged less than 24 years) is particularly striking in this territory with 29% of the population representing the top of the pyramid; almost double that of the youngsters (15%). In terms of socio-economic vulnerability, the area is marked by a high unemployment rate: while in the municipality of Lisbon, in the 2011 census the percentage was around 12%; in the parish of Castelo 20% of the population was unemployed.

Although the neighbourhood has few children, the presence of a primary school brings great vitality to the area with pupils coming from the surrounding area. The territory is set in a major tourist area in the so-called historic part of the city that encompasses many sites and monuments and the castle in particular, which surpassed 1.2 million visitors in 2014. The large number of tourists has caused more harm than good for the local population who have identified issues such as rubbish, and the substitution of traditional commerce that meets daily needs by souvenir shops, restaurants, and cafes. The latter open and close in accordance with the schedules of the monument. Furthermore, the share of local residents involved in activities for tourism is low.



Photo: Access to the neighbourhood and the monument

Houses are being bought and renovated for tourism. One of the recently acquired buildings contains the last existing grocery store in the neighbourhood whose tenants are being pressured to leave the space. For their daily needs, people have to move out of the territory using irregular and steep paths not particularly accessible for an older population.

The only access to the neighbourhood now has a long line of visitors waiting their turn to buy tickets. The gateway to the neighbourhood is chaotic with taxis, mini buses, *tuk tuks* and numerous tourists with frequent difficulties of mobility and accessibility both for visitors as well as residents, including also problems of pollution. Public transport serving the castle is increasingly overloaded with visitors. Electric *tuk tuks* may enter the neighbourhood and circulate through the narrow streets forcing people to move aside to let them pass, the others, petrol powered, fall sometimes into the temptation of entering when police are not at the entrance. Street vendors selling fruit, supports for selfies and artists vending pictures, paintings or playing music are concentrated at the entrance. Items for sale and advertising from the shops are exposed on the street. Waiters hold the menu and try to attract customers. Beyond this space invasion, the area where pensioners used to sit in conversation with each other is now dominated by tourists waiting their turn to get tickets.

Considering the lack of green spaces in the territory and surroundings, the castle of St. George was used as a place of leisure for the local population and included a playground. Today entrance, that started to be charged for in 2004, continues to be free for the residents of Lisbon, but to pass through the gate people have to get in line and show identification which is most discouraging.

The district has two local associations that have lost dynamism and that once were important aggregators for sports and leisure and provided social support in the past. The advanced age of the promoter of one of them and the lack of availability, for professional reasons, by the leader of the other, contributes to this phenomenon, as does the loss of residents and the aged population.

In 2013, a non-governmental organization (NGO) settled here, founded by two architects aiming to act within the framework of urban regeneration, with cultural and socioeconomic development projects involving local people. An assessment of the local population was conducted in different contexts, from public spaces to meetings, trying to identify problems and needs.

This new NGO promoted the creation of an association of residents, shopkeepers, and neighbourhood friends, in order to discuss the issues, trying to narrow the relationships with the responsible entities, and to talk over improvements for the territory. Regular meetings take place and the representatives had already the opportunity to expose problems to the local authorities, claiming aspects like more public transport, an easier form of entrance to the castle, and an entry ban for *tuk tuks*.

A project is being implemented, with one year's financing through an accepted application to a council programme, that aims to improve the conditions of the local population, namely intervening in a vacant and dilapidated building with a garden belonging to the city council that started to be used by the population for different leisure activities, counting on the involvement of the existing organizations. Implicit in the intervention is the idea of promoting sustainable tourism by giving the local population opportunity to benefit. Three young residents who were unemployed

received training and are now starting to do tours through the neighbourhood, describing their personal and family experiences and how the district was in the past. A further main idea is the promotion of a local brand, crafting products using identified skills of some residents and making use of local identities with the support of creatives. A monthly market was implemented that aims not only to ensure economic support for the population but to create some vitality in a square of the inner part of the neighbourhood. Other activities comprise recreational and cultural events to promote a sense of belonging and cohesion including weekly cinema sessions followed by an afternoon tea, feasts, as well as drawing and sewing workshops. Events during the week are particularly important to promote conviviality among retired people who otherwise would be largely confined to their homes. With the educational architecture activities for children at the school it is intended to provide them with a close look at the city where they live. To sensitize society to the territory, particularly researchers, officers, and people from outside, debates have been held.

An exhibition is being set up by the inhabitants about the involvement of the territory in the city parade that takes place every year in June. This required among other tasks, the collection of costumes, photographs, and other artefacts, as well as filmed testimonials.

The involvement of local people in decision-making is a fundamental step with the necessary difficulties in involving the largest possible number of residents and overcoming past quarrels between residents as well as crosstalk and gossip, especially in a relatively close environment. In community development, the financial support for projects, in particular by the local government, has a relatively short time span seen as catalysts to initiate projects of social entrepreneurship, a goal that requires time and perseverance, especially when dealing with major vulnerabilities.

The city council does not intend to impose actions to restrict trade and housing for tourism, so displacements of local population will stay a concern, especially in a context where 70% of the households live in rented dwellings.

In a process of governance, the council of Lisbon has been introducing different tools to call for an increase in participation, including the financing of projects through a territorial programme in areas considered to have major needs; participatory budgeting where citizens are consulted on the definition of investment proposals, with a budget for the most voted projects; decentralized meetings with the local population by the city council and parishes; consultation of local organizations. Nevertheless, processes are also often bogged down by bureaucratic systems in which local government wants to promote local sustainability, to confirm greater involvement of the population in the territory's destiny, but does not always react in an enabling manner by facilitating procedures or advancing decision-making.

In these interventions it is also important to highlight the enormous potential and willingness of many residents to contribute to the promotion of their neighbourhood that often need the encouragement of certain drivers. Finally, it is important to consider that as important as the outcomes is the process by establishing relationships, commitments, a sense of belonging and involving different actors.

FINAL REMARKS

This neighbourhood, physically delimited, has been marked by a specific socio-spatial arrangement with an inter-relational intensity as well as specific cultural practices and modes of interaction related to a local identity. The territory, as well as other so-called 'historic districts' have been experiencing intense socio-cultural changes in their relationship between the global and local, with the entry of new residents, visitors, and new logics of urban landscape appropriation in the inner city that do not necessarily deny the existing socio-cultural practices, but cause a reconfiguration and different allocations of space, leading to an overlap of many different realities.

In the context of international competitiveness, cities are branded, promoting their landscapes and a symbolic identity in order to attract tourists. After a period of

declining neighbourhoods in the inner centre of Lisbon and urban sprawl, considering the effort to stand out in the global market, the city has been reinventing itself and capitalizing on its assets.

An increasing use of trade and residences to meet tourists' interests and needs, over-appropriation of public space by tourists are some of the issues raised.

Through a joint aggregation of locals, pressure may be created to mitigate some problems, create parallel responses to meet their interests, and contribute to disadvantaged groups profiting from these dynamics.

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