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Tlf. +351 225 071 300 | Fax. +351 225 508 269
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Urban regeneration in Castelo Branco's civic centre, a challenge to the city's transformation

Alexandra Paisana Belo

DINAMIA'CET – Centro de Estudos sobre a Mudança Socioeconómica e o Território, ISCTE-IUL
apbello@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Castelo Branco was the target of a POLIS operation, concerning its centre's requalification. After its conclusion, the City Hall continued to engage in urban revitalization, intending to improve competitiveness. The latest instruments face urban regeneration as a whole, identifying and connecting new centralities.

Besides, the requalified equipments and public spaces need to be well used. Its programming presents itself a strategy challenge. The latest cultural and heritage investments aim to enhance the city's touristic potential, creating a brand image and alternatively stimulating the economy.

This paper will analyse the impact of urban regeneration in Castelo Branco's public space, comparing it to its previous context and pointing out trends. To that end, different theories, planning instruments and programs related to this theme will be studied. Considering a critical approach, the advantages and disadvantages of the urban strategy that was led and still is in process, will also be taken into consideration.

KEYWORDS

Urban Regeneration; City Centre; Public Space; Political Challenge; Castelo Branco.

1. THE CITY AS A POLITICAL CHALLENGE: CITY POLICIES, URBAN REQUALIFICATION AND IDENTITY

An important part of territorial policies is nowadays either urban or focused on cities, due to the gradual and intense urbanization of populations. In fact, the borders between regional development and territorial planning have increasingly become less clear (Ferrão, 2011).

Moreover, the reflection of city policies implies, on one hand, listing the main challenges and problems that cities face, and on the other, to have a retrospective view on the evolution of urban policies in Portugal, due to the confusion generally made between policy and planning or policy and policy's instruments (Salgueiro et al., 2015).

Troughout the planning of strategies for action, city policies intend to promote new forms of governance. They can be articulated according to several strategic processes, among which urban planning, that defines a conceptual framework of urban organization and use. In this context, we can say that a city policy must respond to the specific problems of a certain urban area and simultaneously define the guidelines of both the city interventions and the urban system's structure, articulating the development strategy intended for the country or region.

This is evident in the text "*Política de Cidades – Polis XXI*", that recognizes that the knowledge and innovation-based development models presuppose a solid urban base and demand that cities have a high qualification of their functions. They must also have a strong capacity of promoting population settlement and attracting innovative activities and creative people (MAOTDR, 2007).

City policies can contribute to the creation of self-sustainable models, so as to help cities help themselves to an integrated valorization, increasing governance forms based on action strategies articulated in accordance with strategic processes, including *urban requalification*.

According to DGOTDU (Direcção Geral de Ordenamento do Território e Desenvolvimento Urbano), this concept consists in:

"[...] the operation of urban renovation, restructuring or rehabilitation, in which environmental valorization and the improvement of the urban fabric's functional performance are decisive aspects of the intervention." (*Requalifying also means to*) "...create factors that favour identity, livability, attractiveness and competitiveness fo cities or specific urban areas" (DGOTDU, 2008, p.67).

Indeed, planning actions directed towards requalification propose new feasible perspectives, regarding both the physical and symbolic elements of cities, those which can set off a sense of belonging and establish a relationship with a certain place's past and identity (Silva and Carvalho, 2012).

According to Silva and Carvalho, *urban regeneration* is also a planned process whose main intentions are the promotion of urban competitiveness and the protection and valorization of natural and human resources considered crucial for the perception and construction of an urban image, that might contribute to strenghten both individual and collective identities. In this context, heritage assumes itself as a decisive strategic component in urban requalification (Silva and Carvalho, 2012).

In the case of medium-sized cities, such as the case study this paper intends to analyse, identity and the sense of belonging to a certain region or place remain fundamental factors of identification, distinguishing them from larger urban areas. Oberti (2000, p.98) refers that they are still "strongly rooted in a circumscribed and closely defined territory and so depend chiefly on local and regional networks."

This does not exclude the fact that they might be linked to networks, groups, interests or markets at national or European level. However, their "territory-based societal coherence", that is, a structure of idiosyncratic history and tradition, political and economic actors, institutions and urban fabric, assumes itself as a crucial differentiation element (Oberti, 2000). This means that *identity*, whether existing or fabricated to form a particular brand image, will always play a relevant role on the development and requalification of medium-sized cities.

Nevertheless, most urban development processes in the last decades have led to several problems and questions

that are common to both large and medium-sized urban areas. Near the end of the 20th century, many cities were struggling with problems, both in central and peripheral zones, in parallel with severe financial crisis and job shortage. It was necessary, on one hand, to reorganize the suburbs' territory and contain its growth. In contrast, the valorization and revitalization of central areas (as well as of other derelict zones, such as social housing neighbourhoods or rundown industrial sites) was now also part of the agenda (Salgueiro et al., 2015).

These operations implied a diversified framework of action: in some cases, they combined building refurbishment with infrastructural and public space improvements; in others, functional reactivation was mandatory, both in the sectorial point of view as in that of the actors responsible for the investments. They aimed to respond to the complex challenges that cities and societies were facing at the turn of the century.

The main attempts in doing so focused in human resources and entrepreneurship actions, with urban interventions based on the intended demand, with strong images and marketing campaigns. Meanwhile, the cities' economic bases had changed: the industrial activities had diminished, with an increase on creative activities, knowledge economy, urban tourism, new forms of services and commerce, namely due to the rise of the so-called new economy and of *e-government* (Salgueiro et al., 2015).

In the last years, the new paradigms of change have been more and more directed towards territorial competitiveness. For that end, technically viable city development policies were prepared and implemented, giving privilege to both private and public actors (Silva and Carvalho, 2012).

However, in what concerns city policies, Figueiredo (2010) defends that territorial-based public policies cannot be exclusively conceived in a logics of promotion of competitiveness and development conditions, and should include conditions that guarantee the social cohesion of disadvantaged territories (Figueiredo, 2010).

Concerning a social point of view, the present challenges include dealing with the demographic transformations

(particularly the substantial ageing of the populations), the new migrations and types of mobility (both in the spatial and social levels), with an aspiration to build more inclusive cities, where a greater number of citizens can engage in collective decisions.

Regarding the population as an active agent in the construction and diffusion of a city's heritage and identity, it is also important to instill a sense of responsibility and active citizenship among the communities, so as to potentialize adequate management and fruition of urban environment and public space (Silva and Carvalho, 2012).

In spite of these brief reflections, it is important to understand the changes in the planning models, and how it affected the management of urban areas.

2. SHIFTING PARADIGMS IN URBAN POLICIES AND INSTRUMENTS

[...] any progress towards a genuinely 'new urbanism' movement must be centered on process rather than form, on openness rather than closure and on flexibility rather than order. (Graham and Marvin, 2001, pp.405-415)

Until the publication of Lei de Bases da Política do Ordenamento do Território e do Urbanismo (Law nº 48/98, of 11th August), the legal framework for territorial planning in Portugal was practically inexistant, consisting in the existence of urban planning and a few piecemeal measures. Regarding the urban dimension, the plans accommodated accessibility infrastructures and great facilities, defined in their related sectorial plans, with the purpose of regulating urban expansion, offering a *correct* life space (Salgueiro et al., 2015).

Essentially, a plan was a land use and circulation map, in which to frame the private initiative, the main stakeholder in urban expansion. It can be said that it was an essentially physical plan, of land offer for different uses, and that cities have grown and occupied the suburbs, mainly by means of speculative or illegal operations, in a context of real estate and landholding speculation.

A certain exhaustion of physical planning models, combined with economic restructuring, economy liberalization and the reduction of State responsibilities, generated new urban policies that reflect changes in the actors' roles and a market-oriented attitude. The plans started to pay more attention to promotion and development than to regulation and physical planning. The pressure on competitiveness compels to a growing orientation to the demand of tourists, entrepreneurs, dwellers and consumers, and to an effort on differentiation. Natural and built heritage, as well as culture, are valued as strategic factors of competitiveness [Salgueiro et al., 2015].

In the last decades of the 20th century, in parallel with changes in the mobility of capital and an increase in territorial competition, the broadening of municipal competences and decentralization led to adjustments in the way regional planning and policies were faced.

Physical and economic planning were now connected, leading to more comprehensive and integrated strategic approaches. There were also changes in the actors and the relationships among them, as partnerships and other forms of cooperation between the central administration and regional and local, public or private actors grew, corresponding to a weakening of the State. This trend, both national and international corresponds to the transition of a *land use* model towards a *spatial planning* one [Wegener, 2000].

Decentralization brings about added responsibilities to municipalities. Business management models are being applied, combined with territorial marketing, strategic planning and the construction of positive images, in the context of what Harvey (1989) calls the transition from managerialism to entrepreneurialism. This is the support for the investment in infrastructures, events, big territorial interventions and the production of qualified spaces. In a context of strengthened relationships with both the third and the private sectors, urban management finds its bases in partnerships and consensuses [Salgueiro et al., 2015].

3. COMPETITIVENESS, COOPERATION AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

In the portuguese case, the application of European funds has filled gaps and provided solutions for housing and infrastructure problems. It has also developed the logics competitive funding, that is to say, of competitiveness for the benefit of subsidies and supports, as well as the existence of strategic programs to which specific fund allocations correspond [Salgueiro et al., 2015].

In this context, there are several guidance documents produced in the last two decades by the European union, aiming to influence the implementation of integrative urban development policies. Among them we may find the *Green Book on Urban Environment* (1990), the *New Charter of Athens* (2003), that transmits the Council for European Urbanism's vision on the cities of the 21st century, and the *Territorial Agenda of the European Union* (2007) [Silva and Carvalho, 2012].

Approved in 2007, the Lisbon Treaty added, to the territorial cohesion goals, those of economic and social cohesion, particularly emphasizing the role of cities. Later on, in 2008, the publication of the *Green Book on Territorial Cohesion* – taking advantage of territorial diversity opened a debate process on the meaning of territorial cohesion and its implications on cooperation, coordination and politics [Vale and Queirós, 2015].

Territorial cohesion requires different approaches concerning development actions of any area, in a framework of interterritorial cooperation, as it works through the power of difference [Morphet, 2011]. Yet, in spite of all the European Commission's efforts to clarify this concept, it remains ambiguous, which means it can only be approached through the actions of its proponents [Vale and Queirós, 2015].

The revision of the Territorial Agenda of the European Union, adjusting it to new economic and social climate dynamics, together with the Lisbon Treaty's context, has led the European Union to adopt the Territorial Agenda 2020 in May 2011, defining six key priorities for territorial development: stimulus for integrated urban development, in rural

environments and specific areas; promotion of a balanced and polycentric territorial development; assuring global regional competitiveness based on strong local economies; functional integration of cross-border and international regions; management and interconnection of ecologic, landscape and cultural regional values; improvement of territorial connectivity for companies, communities and individuals (Vale and Queirós, 2015).

The Territorial Agenda's recommendations are broadened to territorial cooperation initiatives, which contribute to the goals of territorial cohesion. The European instruments' support for the share of knowledge, innovation projects and good practices is evident in interregional and network projects such as INTERREG, URBACT or INTERACT.

With limited financial resources, INTERREG has supported more than 200 border projects and has been developed throughout four funding periods. Cross-border cooperation has converted itself in one of the structural funds' main objectives (Mirwaldt et al., 2009). Thus, territorial cooperation has been implemented through this program, which has also added value to political processes, for it stimulates the cooperation between local, regional and national actors at an international level. Therefore, INTERREG has become crucial for the assumption of the inevitable association between territorial cooperation and cohesion (Vale and Queirós, 2015).

In Portugal, public policies associate the valorization of urban and regional development to sectorial integration, access to general interest services and network creation (Santinha and Marques, 2012). The main problems in Portugal are associated to imbalances in the urban system, that consequently produce social and demographic asymmetries, reduced critical mass, lack of institutional cooperation culture and interurban collaboration deficit.

It is in this context that it becomes relevant to reflect on the perspectives of urban competitiveness, development and social cohesion in Portugal, regarding European guidances. The European Community's demands have been decisive for the development and implementation of Portuguese urban policies, that emerged between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, coinciding with the application of the first

Community Support Framework (CSF), between 1989 and 1993. This did not contemplate specific interventions conceived for urban requalification, a situation that changed with the creation of an Operational Program for the Environment and Urban Revitalization, within the scope of the second CSF (1994-1999) (Silva and Carvalho, 2012).

In the 1990s, we can identify several sustainable urban development initiatives, such as PROSIURB, URBAN I and II and Intervenção Operacional de Reabilitação Urbana (Urban Rehabilitation Operational Intervention). In this period, when the first urban policy instruments were structured, several factors of success and positive outcomes gradually became evident, through programs such as EXPO 98, POLIS and POLIS XXI.

4. RECENT MODELS OF URBAN REQUALIFICATION PROGRAMS: EXPO 98, POLIS AND POLIS XXI

With the EXPO 98 program, that modernized and polarized a run-down, marginalised riverfront through an innovative strategy of action, Portuguese planning had now a new paradigm for the implementation of urban initiatives. According to Parque Expo, the company that developed this urban strategy that followed the Universal Exhibition in 1998, the intervention was particularly successful regarding environmental and economic aspects, as well as its acceptance by the civil society, namely due to the creation of new public spaces, which was one of the initial fundamental strategic vectors (Belo and Mingacho, 2014).

As a follow-up, a new public policies' period (2000-2006), supported by the European Union, included programs based in the EXPO 98 experience, among which POLIS (legally created through Resolução do Conselho de Ministros, or Council of Ministers Resolution nº 26/2000) is the most representative (Silva and Carvalho, 2012).

Developed by Parque Expo from 2000, POLIS had as its main goals the urban requalification and environmental valorization of several cities nationwide. Following PROSIURB, a pioneer territorial development for medium-sized cities, POLIS emerged as an attempt to take advantage of the financial

opportunities created by the third CSF to enhance and mobilize this kind of cities (Belo and Mingacho, 2014).

Thus, this program also intended to improve the competitiveness and attractiveness of urban poles that play a relevant role on the national urban system. It established partnerships between Municipalities and the Government (Ferreira, 2007), that would serve as a reference for future partnerships between the local authorities and other entities.

A set of guiding principles then generated four intervention components, directed to different types of urban areas, among which component 1 must be highlighted, consisting in carrying out a relatively limited assembly of urban requalification interventions with strong environmental valorization features (Ferreira, 2007).

These interventions were also intended to have an exemplary character and become a model for future operations, with a strengthening of their specificities and role in the national urban system. In an overall perspective, these interventions were carried out around existing elements with heritage or environmental value, so that they could be re-integrated in the urban fabric, thus contributing to the reinforcement of urban identities (Belo and Mingacho, 2014).

Moreover, regarding territorial planning, the strategic vectors encouraged border or interior cities' valorization, so as to enhance their potential to generate new regional acknowledged economic power, attempting to improve populational settlement in these regions (Ministério do Ambiente e Ordenamento do Território, 2000).

Regarding POLIS' management instruments, the urban intervention instruments at several scales stand out: Strategic Plans, Urbanization and Detail Plans. Those which substantiate the institutional model are also relevant, assuming new forms of articulating the cooperation between local and national authorities, through companies with majority public shareholding (Silva and Carvalho, 2012).

These urban interventions were subsequently supported by city policy POLIS XXI, co-financed by the operational

programs of the National Strategic Reference Framework (Quadro de Referência Estratégica Nacional, or QREN), between 2007 and 2013. In 2007, the National Program for Territorial Planning Policies (Programa Nacional da Política de Ordenamento do Território, or PNPOT) was launched simultaneously with POLIS XXI, but it aims to define structuring guidelines to a macro level, for the whole national territory.

Concerning POLIS XXI, its operative policy goals consist roughly in requalifying differentiated urban spaces, strengthening human, institutional, cultural and economic capital, intensifying the integration of cities in their regional surroundings and innovating in solutions for urban qualification (Salgueiro et al., 2015). These goals substantiate in three intervention axis: regional integration, competitiveness and differentiation and urban regeneration.

The latter is directed towards specific intraurban spaces, aiming to increase the coherence and cohesion of urban areas. The second faces cities as competitive hubs of innovation, valuing their role in international markets and networks as well as their differentiated identity, whereas the first is associated with the enhancement of the urban effect as a development factor, considering the relations between a city and its region (Salgueiro et al., 2015).

Urban regeneration assumes a very important role in POLIS XXI. This policy instrument distinguishes itself from its predecessors in the sense that it adopts a more ambitious and integrated view on regeneration: it assumes itself as a strategic process that involves the population, private initiative and other institutional actors. Thus, it aimed to gain great visibility and urban and social significance, especially in impoverished urban areas (Vale and Queirós, 2015).

PRU's, or Partnerships for Urban Regeneration were an urban revitalization instrument in the context of POLIS XXI, whose main targets were the promotion of urban and social development, as well as the stimulus to territorial governance and the improvement of collective facilities and infrastructures. A great part of POLIS XXI's applications were PRU-related, and its actors are unquestionably the municipalities, leading more than two thirds of the projects, followed by cooperatives and associations (Vale and Queirós, 2015).

Studies and intermediate evaluations by ECORYS (ECORYS, 2011) show low community, private sector and central government participation levels, which decisively affects the performance of this urban regeneration instrument.

Moreover, in most of the application cases, material socio-economic goals were defined in a wide and generic way, so that in the requalification of municipal buildings and public spaces could be contemplated (Vale and Queirós, 2015). Indeed, in several cases, such as that of the case study, this program was faced as a continuity and conclusion for the previous one (POLIS). This process is evident in the case study's evolution, which we will then analyse.

5. CASE STUDY: CASTELO BRANCO AND POLIS

Situated in a transition territory between the central region of Portugal and Alto Alentejo, the city of Castelo Branco stands out thanks to its strategic national interior potential, due to its geographical proximity to the Spanish border. It is inserted in AUCI (Arco Urbano do Centro Interior), the Central Interior Urban Arch, formed by an assembly of border cities and municipalities (Belo and Mingacho, 2014). This urban form is associated to several highways that constitute the great terrestrial corridors from Portugal to Europe.

In this context, highway A23 takes a relevant role, forming an axis that comprises the cities of Castelo Branco, Fundão, Covilhã and Guarda. In a similar hierarchical level, these cities create a socioeconomic anchor, transforming a vast territory threatened by desertification in a statement of cross-border relationships (Belo and Mingacho, 2014).

The city's historic and civic center has also benefited significantly from the institutional regeneration processes driven by strategic planning programs POLIS and POLIS XXI, between 2000 and 2013. Their measures generated a strengthening of urban centrality, with historic centre and heritage valorization and an improvement of its connection to the renewed civic centre.

Indeed, this city was one of the POLIS targets, and, among the interventions carried out by this program,

the requalification of the Historic and Civic centres, the restructuring of urban traffic and the creation of new public spaces stand out. These were synergetic operations, attempting to modernise and value the city's environmental and historic heritage, enhancing a centrality faded by former urban expansion processes (Belo and Mingacho, 2014).

In effect, after the Portuguese accession to the European Union in 1986, these territories had suffered a process of expansionist euphoria, in accordance with the national and international trends. In the peripheral territories of a peripheral country, there were many things left to be done, from housing and infrastructures to public facilities.

Therefore, this is an optimistic moment, marked by the possibility of accomplishing the modernization aspirations of less-favoured populations, offering these areas a possibility to counteract the litoralization processes, a dominant tendency in Portugal. The operationalization of urban planning was almost inexistent, as it only assumed a relevant active role from the 1990s, boosting, however, the unbridled, unprecedented growth so distinctive of this period (Belo and Mingacho, 2014).

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that this kind of cities had had previous slow growth processes, with a great lack of equipments and infrastructures. Therefore, the expansion assumes itself as a strong development factor, generating a cluster of economic activities linked to urbanization and construction.

This radical urbanity dream was interrupted in the 21st century, first with the accession to the single currency and then with the 2008 financial crisis, that highlighted the utopian character of the previous period. The model's limits were put in jeopardy, mainly due to the economic and demographic stagnation context, a widespread reality in these regions (Belo and Mingacho, 2014).

In this way, the development possibility of an archetypal metropolization process was interrupted, and the urban fabric remained disperse and incomplete, in what concerns its occupation.

For that reason, even though multiple centres were created in several new neighbourhoods, these were fragile centralities, unable to assure an adequate life support for an urban and environmental cohesion. In this context, there was a huge dispersion of micro-equipments that became inadequate and dysfunctional, regarding the scale of the urban area at stake, implying high maintenance costs for local authorities, which meant added costs and difficulties.

Envisioning the strengthening and concentration of the historic centre, as well as an enhancement of urban mobility in a context of poor public transports and infrastructural networks, associated to the former disjointed and deregulated growth processes, a traffic study was elaborated. It would consider the possibility of creating different street levels, as well as parking areas in the city centre. The eventual needs for public transport were also analyzed in all of the intervention area (Ferreira, 2007).

Awareness campaigns and participative actions were also relevant to this requalification operation. They contributed to a positive change in its dwellers' perception as well as their form of attributing symbolic value to public space, culture and heritage, particularly in the city centre.

The creation of cultural facilities was one of POLIS' main strategic vectors. In addition to Cargaleiro Museum, two interpretation centres and CCCC (Castelo Branco's Contemporary Culture Centre), public space requalification was also crucial: squares were renewed, green spaces were rearranged and streets repaved.

Once the works were finished, cultural programming, both institutional and spontaneous, took advantage of the new spaces to hold events that allowed the population to re-value and recognize the city centre. It is important to understand the changes, regarding lifestyles and space occupation, that were strongly influenced by this process. To that end, it will be necessary to have a retrospective insight on this aspect.

6. THE INFLUENCE OF POLIS IN PUBLIC SPACE OCCUPATION

With the previously described process, there were radical changes in public space occupation. Expansion strategies had privileged suburban areas in the 1980s and 1990s, re-locating services, commerce and leisure in new peripheral neighborhoods. The central areas were then transformed in a functional suburb, exclusively dependent on residual administrative activities and devoid of symbolic value. In both the day and the nighttime, poles of attractivity were located in the periphery, which induced a predominance of car circulation.

When POLIS was concluded, several entrepreneurial and cultural facilities were located in the centre, and pedestrian circulation was favoured, once the points of interest were located within a compact range of action. After the improvement of the urban environment's quality, the promotion of tourism (especially in the cultural sector) became an additional goal. In effect, the influx of tourists is increasing, with a significant weight of Spanish groups, putting in evidence the strengthening of cross-border relationships.

The dynamics created in the city's central area have also motivated the emergence of new commercial activities, bringing the centre of the city to its dwellers and reducing car traffic (Constantino and Camões, 2016). This space has a more permanent occupation throughout the whole day, and the community's perception of it is generally positive.

Therefore, we verify that this strategy has significantly altered the inhabitants' lifestyle and their perception of the city. Local authorities have also had an important role in managing the new cultural, social and economic resources through a balanced urban programming. In this context, the present actions regarding governance must be analyzed.

7. GOVERNANCE, PROGRAMMING AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

With regard to governance, there are four categories, according to Hall (2011), based on the forms of government (hierarchical or not) and the actors' relevance (predominantly

private or public]. In the case study, there is a typology of strong public intervention, non-hierarchical, favoring multilevel governance, which corresponds to a *network* model.

With the completion of POLIS, this paradigm was stimulated, and the City Hall subsequently promoted urban programming, with special emphasis on cultural activities. The cultural management supports, for that end, several groups of young creatives and associations. This occurs either by means of ceding public space for events (Constantino and Camões, 2016) or direct funding in exchange for contributions for the institutional cultural agenda.

These associations and groups are also involved in cross-border cultural networks, such as INTERREG or TRIURBIR, that depend on EU programming funds. Other cross-border cooperation programs include entrepreneurial activities in several other sectors, as well as common interests, namely energetic efficiency, environmental protection or heritage (Raposo, 2015).

In this context, the first edition of *Iberencontras* arts festival, in July 2015, held with the support of INTERREG, is a good example of the recent strategies. It dynamized Castelo Branco's urban spaces with installations and works in result of a collaborative between Spanish and Portuguese creatives. This event intends to guarantee the cultural offer's economic sustainability in border cities, committing several cultural agents and promoting cultural tourism in their urban environments (Raposo, 2015).

Thus, we can conclude that the promotion of centrality and competitiveness is nowadays more related to cooperation relationships within urban networks, following the theories of Castells (Muñoz, 2008), than with a specific geographic position or physical proximity.

Nevertheless, place still matters when we consider its symbolic value and public recognition, and the networking process is still at an embryonic state. Indeed, the case study's regeneration, when we consider its immaterial dimensions, has only begun after the conclusion of the physical strategic goals. Even though POLIS XXI's guidelines were already oriented towards innovation, competitiveness and social

cohesion, in practice its financial funding was used to conclude the works envisaged in POLIS.

Yet, in spite of this mismatch, the current strategies and new policy instruments are following its conceptual purposes. As councilor Raposo states,

[...] the previous time [...] was that of infrastructure creation [...] Now, we are continuing what was made giving ends and purposes to the objectives for which the equipments were built (Raposo, 2015, p.4).

The requalified central public spaces and new facilities have offered the adequate urban environment for cultural activities, such as thematic festivals or open-air concerts to occur, among other events. However, we can identify several persistent urban problems.

Physical degradation is evident, not only in central areas, but in other parts of the city. In the centre, it is more noticeable, as derelict and vacant buildings are still a reality, in spite of several municipal efforts to acquire and refurbish them, mainly for social housing. In the city centre, namely nightlife noise related conflicts and gypsy community stigmatization. The convergence, in the same space, of different sociocultural spheres, which used to function in parallel circuits generates a tension that will eventually fade over time, with the development of new coexistence habits.

This will only be confirmed in a medium time range, as the evolution of the urban socioeconomic dimensions has just begun. In the meantime, new strategic directions and goals are being envisioned. Thanks to them we may detect several future tendencies, whether in a local or a more ample context.

8. NEW GUIDELINES: ENVISIONING CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT DECADES

Strategic Plan Castelo Branco 2030 was presented by CEDRU – Centro de Estudos e Desenvolvimento Regional e Urbano [Center of Regional and Urban Development Studies, a technical consultancy in the fields of territory, economy, society and culture] in 2015. Its main goals include social cohesion,

mobility and urban environment, culture and urban rehabilitation, as well as the creation of a solid economic basis.

Considering the latter, the sectors of commerce, agrifood and tourism are highlighted. The existing cultural assets (namely cultural facilities created with POLIS and architectural heritage) present themselves as a basis for touristic activities, combined with a regular cultural offer, influencing the creation of a stronger identity that can externally promote the city.

Thus, economic and touristic development are intimately connected with culture, regarding the challenge to promote Castelo Branco as a creative and cultural pole, “attracting talent and reinforcing the conditions to the settlement of young professionals in the areas of artistic, cultural and creative production in multiple areas” (CEDRU, 2015, p.74).

In that framework, the cultural goals established in Castelo Branco 2030 include promoting the fixation of creatives with a new cultural clustering facility (*Arts' Factory*); favoring internationalization and patronage; reinforcing programming capacities and cultural management and articulating the existing academic structures and the municipal cultural facilities.

In this context, there is the intention to interweave the existing cultural equipments and heritage with cultural and artistic activities. To that end, *Caminho das Artes*, a cultural urban route will be defined and implemented, in order to link the several culture-related facilities, thus promoting urban regeneration and cultural tourism in the medium to long term.

Concerning public space requalification and urban rehabilitation, their range of action will extend to expansion neighborhoods, with the creation of new centralities and incentives to private housing refurbishment. There will be also an attempt to improve the connections between the city's several functional zones (CEDRU, 2015).

It is then evident that there is a broadening of the notion of centrality: the polarity between centre and periphery has been abandoned and the urban regeneration logics has

been extended to the whole city. The promotion of competitiveness is now being based on the cultural and creative economy, symbiotically combined with urban marketing. The facility management and cultural programming implemented in the sequence of POLIS' conclusion has indeed imposed itself as fundraising and application tool, simultaneously rising municipal visibility.

All this trends and strategic vectors are related with the general tendencies envisioned in a wider context. A brief insight on the national and international orientations for the next decades will allow us to establish analogies and draw final conclusions on these matters.

9. TENDENCIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT DECADES

As seen both in a general context and in the case study, in the last decades, city policies developed in Portugal were centered on urban regeneration actions, in line with Anglo-Saxon *urban renaissance* paradigms (Porter and Shaw, 2009). Public space valorization and the creation of cultural equipments were the main priorities, and exceptional territories were privileged, due to their requalification potential.

Underlying these interventions, there was the idea that the improvements in infrastructures and facilities, combined with beautification strategies would possibly attract private real estate investments and new dwellers and catalyze dynamics in the economic fabric.

However, even though a thorough and systematic analysis is mandatory, a quick empirical on-site appreciation suggests that the strategies followed were insufficient to generate such dynamics, namely in the housing sector. The aggravated economic crisis, which led to difficulties in the access to credit, hindered many investments. Nonetheless, the most disappointing results concern the struggle to problems in urban areas at risk of exclusion, which means much remains to be done regarding social cohesion.

According with Salgueiro et al. (2015), there are two other relevant aspects which deserve a more profound reflexion. One

involves urban partnerships and their fragilities, as a more effective mobilization of public and private actors is necessary, with a multisectorial and multilevel consulting in policy measures, so as to reach an integrative urban development.

The second regards a rethinking of the promoted actions, for they must be more feasible in a framework of strong budgetary restrictions, as we are facing a context of crisis which will probably persist throughout the next years (Salgueiro et al., 2015).

In effect, many interventions and programs were interrupted with the deterioration of the Portuguese economic situation, which compromised the coherence and pertinence of urban regeneration strategies. In effect, the case study is an exception in this sense, for in many cases the PDLIS' ambitious intentions and efforts were hindered by shortage of funds. The new context demand that perhaps new lighter intervention forms (even of immaterial character) are prospectively to be adopted.

In the last years, the crisis provoked an unprecedented rise in unemployment rates, and the regressions in public welfare worsened poverty situations and exclusion risks. Apart from the aggravation of the situation of the poor, the impoverishment of the middle class has expanded the poverty footprint in most cities, accentuating social polarization.

Against this background, it is imperative that this should be a main priority in future city policies, redirecting the previous beautification logics to types of intervention more focused in target groups with severe material deprivation and social exclusion, which also reflects in the degradation of buildings (Salgueiro et al., 2015).

In this context, *urban accessibility* (Ascher, 2012) is a priority for urban development, implying that no economic, social, cultural, material or legal obstacle may deprive citizens from the urban potential. The Lefebvrian "right to the city" is therefore connected to the mobility of people and goods, in an attempt to promote equity. Ascher (2012) also proposes incentives to social diversity with residential mixture, in order to avoid segregation and exclusion, thus promoting an equitable use of public space and collective facilities.

Some priority lines have been defined by the European Commission, regarding *Europe 2020*: smart, inclusive and sustainable cities. The existence of an urban agenda implies the recognition of cities as relevant protagonists in european territorial policies, a fact inevitably associated with globalization. In fact, many european cities are simultaneously located in a worldwide sphere without abandoning their ties to territorial proximity. Therefore, they correspond to what Swyngedouw (2004) designates as 'glocalization'.

At present, the main problems we may identify in european cities are employment, sociospatial fragmentation, lack of urban models and impoverished areas. In this framework, Balducci et al. (2004) identifies, as two crucial goals:

- (a) the support of horizontal and vertical cooperation initiatives, so as to support the political and functional role of cities;
- (b) the recognition of cities as networks of centres of different dimensions.

In fact, this largely concerns the balance of multiscalar power between the State, regions and cities (Balducci et al., 2004).

In the period 2014–2020, european cities will benefit from EU's regional politics, namely:

- Urban areas will be able to have access to different investment priorities that FEDER contemplates. This will enable more opportunities in the areas of sustainable urban mobility, physical, economic and social regeneration of less favoured communities and innovation and investigation capacities;
- An urban development network will guide the application of funds and promote the exchange of experiences in the cities involved in innovative actions;
- URBACT will be more results-oriented, incorporating a reference billboard for sustainable cities and promoting integrative urban development.

Moreover, community regulations will provide an assembly of policy instruments that aim to amplify and consolidate the path of a better partnership between actors and the coordination of measures. In this context, it is important to refer the decision to broaden the experience of community-based local development (Salgueiro et al., 2015).

This kind of guidelines seem to undoubtedly meet the study case's needs. It is also evident that, envisioning a balanced growth, the recent planning policy guidelines seem to meet the challenges of the present and the future, contemplating an integrated intervention philosophy for the city, as well as a multisectorial perspective.

CONCLUDING NOTE

Regarding the new immaterial accomplishments, cross-border cooperation, touristic promotion and the enhancement of urban identity and social capital, with an emphasis on culture and creativity, emerge as key priorities.

However, as Ascher (2009), states, the creative class and its seduction potential will not suffice to generate a territory's attraction abilities. It might be able to generate employment and has an important multiplier effect, especially concerning services. It is relevant, nevertheless, to consider non-relocatable sectors and resources as what effectively is able to generate wealth and catalyze dynamics through time. This includes, for example, a specific agricultural production or other direct productive resources linked to a specific area, that contribute to what Ascher calls "the regional effect", something that has great impact on an open market context, as it offers protection guarantees against competition (Ascher, 2012).

Moreover, *territorial cohesion*, the third pillar of the European cohesion policies is also a future challenge, as it has significant implications on the quality of life in urban territories. For that end, the coordination between sectorial, geographical and time resources is mandatory, as well as it is avoiding the *one-size-fits-all* types of policies (Vale and Queirós, 2015). As Farinós (2008) states, each region must be able to find its position in the European territory and its intrinsic development potential.

In the last years, urban programming has gained prominence in Castelo Branco, particularly concerning the cultural sector, related to the existing facilities provided by POLIS' regeneration processes in the historic and civic centres. A strong economic basis, connected with cross-border cooperation and culture is being launched through the recent planning policies' instruments (namely Castelo Branco 2030), generating new attractivity factors.

However, it is important to relate the completion of POLIS and POLIS XXI with the context of crisis that has been felt since the late 2000s. Regardless of the great optimistic expectations of the late 1990s, when EXPD 98 and POLIS were launched, the late 2000s' crisis context has progressively lowered them. In this way, however successful POLIS might have been in Castelo Branco, due to the management efforts by local authorities and the channelling of POLIS XXI's funds to achieve the first program's goals, concluding all the works in progress, the outcome fell short of the early aspirations, as the economic conjuncture had changed.

Therefore, even though the strategy was successful in a general scope, many buildings remain derelict and vacant. The fight against social exclusion and the creation of employment remain important challenges. Indeed, the socio-economic regeneration of the city is still at an early stage, and its evolution will only be evident in the long term, as it will never solely depend of strategies, programs and policies planned in advance. Even though we are reflecting over a specific local reality, its analysis implies (fore) seeing in a wider context. Consequently, future insights on this reality will include a multiscale and global approach, so the the local strategic positioning can always be correctly contextualized.

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