

# Palpable Cities: leisure in the contemporary urban geographies – a theoritical discussion

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## ABSTRACT

This paper argues the role of cities as scenarios where the economic, social, political, cultural, leisure, educational and also geographical inequality it is increasingly evident. It is intended to reflect about the close relationship of humans with the territory. In addition, we seek to discuss the importance of leisure as a builder of identity (individual and social), of belonging and a key factor in appropriations (through the leisure experiences, the routes and places that each individual has in their city) of the territory by its inhabitants.

## Keywords:

Leisure

Right to the city

Urban geography

Human geography

Neoliberal  
capitalism

## Introduction

This paper seeks to discuss the role of leisure in the contemporary urban geographies, characterized as scenarios where the economic, social, political, cultural, educational and geographical inequality is increasingly evident. The urban space in this neoliberal capitalist model has become a space of dichotomies, estrangement, intolerance and what is worse, a place of segregation and social violence. On the other hand, segregation and urban social violence (re)produce in such a way the prevailing capitalist model. In this model it is difficult to overlap or try to minimize the impact that is produced in the socio-cultural spheres, such as on the city's geography, its division and layout in neighborhoods, their extension, and the relationship between peripheral neighborhoods and the urban center.

In this context, we want to discuss how leisure could be understood as a sort of dialectic and synergetic relationship between humans and the city, characterized by the singularities and particularities of a specific geographic space. In the same way that Campbell (2016) understands that cities are us (citizens) who make them and every city has the potential to be sensitive through art (Campbell, 2015), we believe that leisure, as part of the symbolic dimension of the territory (Haesbaert, 2007), has the capacity to build urban geographies not only as a mere instrument of political-economic domination, but as a set of sensations, emotions, rhythms and energies capable of favoring the articulation of particular and collective narratives within the context of the city. In this sense, we understand leisure as one of the components of the symbolic dimension of the territory (op. cit.) through which the human beings connect affectively with the place in which they live in (Tuan, 2012), building their own cities within the city; in other words, building their own palpable cities.

This article is structured as follows: in the next item, we will define leisure in line with the territory parameter, since it is acknowledged that it should be understood not only considering the time factor. In point 2, we propose an argument about leisure based on theoretical production on the subject, seeking to comprehend this phenomenon as polysemy and complex in the current system of capitalist globalization. In the third item, we deepen the analysis of the leisure concept taking into account the transformations occurred by the advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

and how they transform the relation between human beings and between them and the territory. In the next point, we present the core of the article, which is the understanding that leisure can function as a configurator of the cities that each individual creates, dialectically with the territory in which they live in. Finally, by way of conclusion, we signal different aspects of this type of theoretical-conceptual proposal.

## For a leisure connected to the territory

It is important to start by bringing up the way Paul Claval (2007) understood culture as a crucial element to comprehend the way in which societies organize themselves in space. As we consider leisure "as a human need and as a dimension of culture characterized by the ludic experience of cultural manifestations in a social/time space" (Gomes, 2014: 13), we agree with Fernando Mascarenhas (2001) when he states that leisure should constitute a space for the organization of culture. Therefore, we can conclude that leisure is also a key factor in understanding how societies organize themselves in space. On the other hand, we start from the idea that leisure is linked to the territory, because it is possible to visualize a configuration of the urban space where the affective and the emotional are the main components. By saying territory, we are referring to:

*[...] the space of lived experiences, where the relations between the actors, and of these with the nature, are relations permeated by the feelings and the symbolisms attributed to the places. They are appropriated spaces through practices that guarantee them a certain social/cultural identity (Bologian & Almeida, 2003: 241).*

In this way, it is established that each inhabitant makes a cut of the city determined by their life's experiences and practices of leisure that are promoted by the personal feelings and emotions and, therefore, are individual and non-transferable. Thus, one arrives at an understanding of leisure as affective configurator of the cities, since it is understood that they are a construction of the human being and as such reflect their subjectivity and all that this implies. In addition, leisure, in this group, starts to act as an intimate bond between the inhabitant and the city, which is with the space where the inhabitant feels identified, represented and protected - their palpable city. Hence, it is plausible to see leisure as an integral part of the

symbolic dimension proposed by the New Cultural Geography (Loureiro, 2004), and the symbolic territory introduced by Rogério Haesbaert (1997), and even the concept of topophilia coined by Tuan (2012).

It is pertinent to reinforce that the present work does not consider territory as the determinant of culture, the identity and the leisure of a given community, nor does it adhere to a deterministic conception of the geography. It is understood that the territory strongly influences the human beings through the feelings that arouse them both consciously and unconsciously, and which has to do, to a greater or lesser extent, with their idiosyncrasy, their ideology, their life trajectory. This belief that the choice for territory is based on the "affective link between person and place" (Tuan, 2012: 19) is the basis upon which this subsection is based. We can point out that the relationship between leisure and territory is characterized by a synergetic and dialectical relationship, of double meaning, in which human beings and territory are constantly influenced, but without a predetermined hierarchy. Therefore, we think that the understanding of leisure that this work pleases is based on the definition proposed by Gomes:

*Leisure represents the need to enjoy, ludically, the countless cultural practices socially constituted in each context. This need can be satisfied in multiple ways, according to the values and interests of the subjects, groups and institutions in each historical, social and cultural context. Hence, leisure needs to be treated as a social, political, cultural and historically situated phenomenon (2011: 16-17).*

Therefore, it can be said that both individual and social identity are constructions that the subject does to recognize himself as unique and, at the same time, as an integral part of a collective (Geertz, 1989). So leisure in its individual and social unfolding (Cuenca, 2009) is part of this dialectic, that being in a particular time/space is crossed by all the questions that contemporary cities have, and in which cognitive capitalism is a constitutive element of these scenarios.

## **Problematization of leisure in the hegemonic cultural context**

This topic proposes a conceptual reflection on leisure based on the theoretical production on the theme, with the intention of understanding this phenomenon so

polysemic, rich and complex, in the present globalized neoliberal capitalist system. In this world context, where social relations are hyper connected and the concentration of capital is increasingly pronounced, urban dynamics in cities and cultural and leisure characteristics tend to be homogeneous. So keeping a concept and trying to fit it into other contexts, times or situations is not wise in the face of such a dynamic and vertiginous scenario as the current one. In addition to running the risk of falling into a theoretical anachronism, concepts must relate to the historical-political momentum in which they are immersed, rather than to extrapolate old conceptions or correspond to other societies and worldviews.

In this sense, we have two groups with different points of view regarding leisure. The first one, considers leisure to belong to Classical Antiquity, whether under the Greek ideal called *scholé* or the Roman, *otium* (De Grazia, 1966; Munné, 1980; Cuenca, 2004), and the second one, establishes as an historical landmark of leisure the Industrial Revolution (Dumazedier, 1976). To keep discussing this, doesn't allow the creation of new approaches to the theme that may be more current and close to our realities. With this we aren't saying that doing studies and surveys analyzing the historical occurrence of leisure, investigating how it happened or was understood by the Romans, Greeks or factory workers, and even make a comparative analysis, isn't important. What we want to point out is that, for example, in both Greek and Roman society, leisure was considered a privilege of a select group, the elite. Thus, it functioned as a clear social division between masters and slaves. In the case of the Industrial Revolution, leisure became a "possibility of control over the body and mind of workers [...], little by little taking the form of merchandise" (Mascarenhas, 2006: 92). It should also be noted that it was in this historical and economic context that Dumazedier carried out his research on leisure in France and, although the Industrial Revolution brought a new form of economic-political organization of cities, many transformations have taken place at various levels: social, technological, cultural, political, economic, urban, geographical, etc. For all this, it is not prudent to think that as some aspects of the Industrial Age still persist, and some are even more accentuated, it is possible to extrapolate concepts, ideas and place them nowadays only by performing contextualization or some adjustments. Here we defend the idea that leisure (and so many other concepts) must be endogenous, that is, it has its origin in the interior. Continuing with the historical contextualization and already situating

## "APPROACHING LEISURE IN A DECONTEXTUALIZED WAY, DATING BACK TO OTHER TIMES AND CONTEXTS, OR EVEN CONSIDERING IT AS SOMETHING OPPOSED TO WORK IS A LITTLE USEFUL IDEA IN A HEURISTIC SENSE"

ourselves in the second half of the twentieth century, it was from the Information Revolution and the advent of ICTs in the 1970s and 1980s that all these changes described in the previous paragraph were intensified, modifying also the notions of time and space (Harvey, 1990; Igarza, 2009; Gomes, 2014). On the other hand, neoliberal capitalism, through these information technologies, produced a compression of these terms: "the wider the geographical scale (which explains the emphasis on globalization) and the shorter the time periods of market contracts, both better" (Harvey, 2014c: 13).

In relation to this, Gomes (2014: 7) states:

*[...]it is increasingly evident that the understanding of leisure as a sphere opposed to work has not managed to problematize the complexities and dynamics that mark the multiple dimensions of collective life in different spheres and contexts, notably in this twenty-first century. The opposition to work and leisure is increasingly paradoxical, since labor flexibility (and, with it, the precariousness of labor), coupled with the gradual international division of labor (which concentrates factory production in some countries and regions of the world, especially in Asia), and the technological advance, which has expanded spatial/temporal boundaries, have already made clear that the supposed boundaries between the two are increasingly tenuous and diffuse in everyday social life. These are some of the examples that inevitably indicate that some of the categories commonly used to conceptualize leisure need to be revised and questioned.*

In keeping with Gomes's thinking, Igarza, when analyzing the changes that ICTs have had and still have about human relations, work and leisure, adds the following:

*Modern economies work by recognizing that the creative, the mediatic and the idle, on the one hand, and the consequent relativization of the*

*social place granted to work and full employment as a collective strategy, on the other, are not opposed (2009: 34).*

In this way, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of today's society, the dynamics behind global capitalism, the transformations that influence cities and social relations through the advancement of technologies and the media. All of this, to varying degrees, affects both the more subjective, symbolic-affective, and the more objective or formal aspects. In this sense, approaching leisure in a decontextualized way, dating back to other times and contexts, or even considering it as something opposed to work is a little useful idea in a heuristic sense. Moreover, this idea does not contribute to the advance and production of new knowledge in this area and leads to an understanding of leisure that responds to strategies of cultural domination - articulated by the colonialist power and by the colonialist knowledge. The objective of importing and reproducing a certain Eurocentric model, or reducing it, reduces visions of the world in one perspective. As in this study the question of territory is a fundamental aspect, it is prudent to abandon concepts and theories about leisure that do not correspond to the geographic context and historical-political moment that is intended to study. It is thus believed that it will be possible to create a specific framework that will dialogue with the object of this study, with the city of Belo Horizonte and with Brazil in this political-social moment<sup>1</sup>.

### **Leisure and the digital information revolution – the age of cognitive capitalism**

In the present topic, we intend to analyze leisure in the current context, where globalized neoliberal capitalism reigns. As a starting point, one can mention the architect Natacha Rena, who was influenced by Hardt and Negri (2001, 2005, 2016), especially by the latter, and who states that "if the factory formed the field of labor exploitation until the 1970s, the capital-state now

<sup>1</sup> This paper is a result of Agustin Arosteguy Doctoral dissertation titled "Territory and Cultural Experiences: appropriation of leisure at two "Points of Culture" in Belo Horizonte / MG (2018). Supervised by Christianne Luce Gomes.

extracts the surplus value in all space" (Rena, 2015: 22). This space is the urban space that, in the era of cognitive capitalism and increasingly overwhelming neoliberal public policies, make this place a scenario of dispute not only territorial, but also political and symbolic. In this way, cities that once organized themselves from economic models of capital to obtain the greatest exploitation through factories and concrete places are now territories where cognitive capitalism acts with equal intensity without considering any pre-established order and without respecting or obeying no limitation, be it physical, human or spatial/temporal. Every action is plausible as long as you make a profit, and that's all that matters. Beyond space, this form of capitalism and the dizzying advance of technology have profoundly changed the ways of working and the relationship with time. As a result, people have changed their way of relating to space, to work, and also to each other. A central feature of this new neoliberal capitalism, which Hardt and Negri refer to as Empire (2001), is precisely linked to the question of time because "the time of expropriation of post-fordist, imperial, neoliberal capitalism occupies all the time of our lives" (Rena, 2015: 25). In this regard, Rena adds:

*The current capitalist exploitation passes through the capture of desires and, in this sense, a whole symbolic system abducts subjectivity and makes us obedient workers and consumers within a financial capitalist system. We witness the emergence of a new man: the indebted man. (Idem)*

It is clear that debt is what keeps capitalism alive (Harvey, 2014a) and is the engine of it. From the point of view of leisure and culture, the city as a whole also became a company or what Jorge Barbosa (2006: 127) called a "beautiful city, set design against disorder". By this, he means that the cities are controlled by the real estate speculation, gentrification, urban revitalization policies and state control through capital surplus. These are all mechanisms "in the hands of a small political and economic elite able to shape the city more and more according to their particular needs and their deepest desires" (Harvey, 2014b: 63). Leisure and work, for the first time in history, are equated. They happen anywhere in the city without caring about the moment or situation: it can be at work, on the trips and at home (Igarza, 2009). That is, it left behind this dichotomous relationship of subordination that work imposed on leisure; now both occur in parallel times,

in real, simultaneous and ubiquitous spaces and times. These hyper connected urban crowds inhabit cities, experience what Igarza calls bubbles of leisure. In addition, they do it all the time, without establishing any difference between the spaces and times by which they circulate, inhabit and work. In this scheme, leisure is also impacted and transformed, converting and entering the interstices that the imperial neoliberal system allows. In this way, we find ourselves facing a new leisure and a new society: the intermittent leisure of the Interstitial Leisure Society (Igarza, 2009). In this sense, Igarza proposes a leisure connected to the ICTs and what they allow people to do in their times of transition, times of waiting, times of displacement. Therefore, the author understands that leisure completes the lag time, the time period between two related actions. It is possible to see, therefore, that the subject in question is limited to the capacity of consumption of the person, to the possibility that the apparatuses, be cell phones, computers, iPods, notebooks, tablets, allow in the space of the urban city highly connected. Thus, Igarza argues:

*Leisure is consumed in small fruition pills, shortages that can be enjoyed in the micro-spaces left by work activities or in the fragments of idle dedication that the user is awarded during the trips or in his free time at home (2009: 43).*

This definition implies an exclusion, since it considers that leisure can only be enjoyed by highly technological people, with a purchasing power and determined level of life and, therefore, leaves completely that leisure quality that does not depend on capital, rationality, of neoliberalism. Thus, the Argentine author categorically reinforces: "interstitial leisure is an utopia-market come true" (Igarza, 2009: 45). Words like "consume" and "user" have a direct economic meaning and are in close dialogue with Richard Florida's proposed cities, with a more hegemonic view of culture and leisure. In his book 'Who's your city?' (Florida, 2009), the North American urbanist argued that metropolitan areas with a high concentration of high-tech workers, artists, musicians and homosexuals are related to a high level of economic development. Florida supports the theory that the creative class promotes and fosters an open and dynamic personal and professional environment<sup>2</sup>. This environment attracts more creative people as well as business and capital. The author suggests that attracting and retaining high-quality talents instead of

<sup>2</sup> Although Florida created and upheld this theory for 15 long years, in 2017 published a book, in which he assumes that his interpretation was wrong and makes a mea culpa. In 'The New Urban Crisis', Florida reflects on its previous findings to address issues of inequality and segregation, suggesting that the new urban crisis is a fundamental aspect of large, dense, wealthy, educated, and politically liberal metropolitan areas.

focusing solely on infrastructure projects such as sports stadiums, emblematic buildings and shopping centers is a first-rate use of a city's regenerative resources for its prosperity in the long term.

Undoubtedly, all this acceleration provided by ICTs to urban crowds means that in urban space there are no spatial, temporal or functional barriers. On the one hand, it should be noted that, although a growing part of the population has access to ICTs, thus facilitating their communication and circulation throughout the city and thus affirming their geographical belonging, this is not enough for them to be included in digital urban culture (Igarza, 2009) not even within analogical urban culture. On the other hand, this acceleration that produces hyper connections in a big city, getting to know in every minute what is happening almost in real time, causes that the spatial displacement is reduced and even annihilated by the acceleration of the time (Harvey, 1990). In other words, this possibility of knowing what happens anywhere without being physically in it compresses the space so that people do not have or must necessarily move around to know what is happening. This inevitably reduces the amount of social experiences that people can engage in. This compression of space by time is facilitated by the globalized neoliberal capitalist system:

*The process of neoliberalism, however, involved a lot of creative destruction, not only of the old institutional powers and structures (even shaking the traditional forms of State sovereignty), but also of the divisions of work, social relations, promotion of the good-social welfare, combinations of technologies, ways of life and thought, reproductive activities, forms of attachment to the land and habits of the heart (Harvey, 2014c: 13).*

Boaventura de Souza Santos (2002: 239) also shows this acceleration of time when he denounces:

*The most fundamental feature of the Western conception of rationality is the fact that, on the one hand, it is contracting the present and, on the other hand, expanding the future. The contraction of the present, occasioned by a peculiar conception of totality, has transformed the present into a fleeting moment, entrenched between the past and the future. The broader the future, the brighter the expectations confronted with the experiences of the present.*

Thus, the Portuguese sociologist proposes a cosmopolitan rationality that follows the inverse trajectory: to expand the present and to contract the future. That is, to see all the experiences and social events that are happening in space in the present moment. In this way, one will be able to decelerate the present and postpone, as far as possible, the arrival of the future. Moreover, it is precisely in this more accurate perception of the present that we want to analyze leisure and how it articulates with territory and culture. With this we want to draw attention to the leisure proposals that compact with the vision of Boaventura. These proposals are necessary as anchor points and also as forms of resistance, and even more so when we think of Latin American urban metropolis like Belo Horizonte, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, in Brazil, Bogotá and Medellín, in Colombia, and Buenos Aires, in Argentina. Thus, it is important to reflect on the role of leisure and culture in these cities and on the conditions that make it possible for a human being to define, within his field of choice, a city to live in and a neighborhood within it. One does not want to deny or diminish the importance of the economic factor, the possibility of a well-paid job and all that it implies. However, what is aspired to take into account other factors, such as affective, social, historical and sentimental relations with the territory and the rest of the people that inhabit it. Each choice is a particular case and it is not possible to generalize, but what is interesting to point out is that each choice is composed of a tangle of questions, subjective and objective, affective and economic, historical and social, psychological and sociological that end up forming biopolitical subjectivities<sup>3</sup> of the neighborhoods and, by extension, of the cities. As Rena, Berquó and Chagas point out (2014: 73):

*It is this more optimistic perspective on biopolitics that opens space for discussion of the biopolitical power of the crowd, or the biopower of the crowd, for it is believed that in parallel or even within this flexible system of contemporary capitalism it is possible to resist positively by activating processes that escape the logic of the capture of the biopolitical machines of subjectivation.*

Faced with this, it is the hope in biopolitical subjectivities that grants a greater hope in the future within this neoliberal system, which can be summarized as the capacity of the human being to

<sup>3</sup> This concept is understood from the standpoint of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, who define it as the anti-capitalist insurgency of the multitude that uses life and the body as weapons (2004).

organize and resist (real and virtual) in the geographic space of the metropolis. Resisting against neoliberalism means recognizing and accepting the subjectivities of territories and, through them, understanding that these identities are manifold. As a result, a leisure understanding is demanded in close relation with the present time, in consonance with the territory's identity, and preoccupied and occupied in expanding the experiences (individual and social) present and active in the urban space.

## Leisure as an affective configuration of cities

Given the concept of cities presented in the previous section, which favors a more capital-oriented city model, it can be seen that this model has also been supported and promoted by three important programs that, in a certain way, standardize culture according to a hegemonic perspective. These are the European Capital of Culture program (European Union), and the Agenda 21 for Culture (United Cities and Local Governments) and the Creative Cities networks (UNESCO).

Although the three models have their particularities in relation to the objective they pursue and, therefore, differ in their purposes in terms of scope and dimension, we can recognize two common characteristics:

- a. Categorization and/or structuring: the three presented models are elaborated from a series of categories and concepts. All cities wishing to receive such distinction or recognition must inexorably fit within such categories. In our opinion, this is oriented towards the homogenization of culture, since it is easier to extrapolate cultural policies between different cities and between different countries. Unfailingly, this favors cultural benchmarking (Arosteguy, 2016).
- b. Rehabilitation and/or visual improvement of the cities: undoubtedly the three programs favor a visual improvement of the cities. This fact encourages tourism and is a great incentive for any city. This movement of openness towards tourism also makes it possible to host large-scale events, such as the Olympics and the World Cup. This implicitly involves the risk of transforming cities into showcases where the best of each one of them must be shown. This fact has repercussions in favor of the urban phenomenon of gentrification, which basically consists of the abandonment of strategic

sectors or neighborhoods of the city and then be bought at ridiculous prices to transform them into residential neighborhoods. In this regard, it should be noted that the concept and impacts of gentrification have expanded and resignified to become the new form of neoliberal urban policy (Smith, 2002). What had happened in Rio de Janeiro after the 2014 World Cup is an example of this.

As Neil Smith warns us, the neoliberal policy of cities is a strong channel for the proliferation of the phenomena mentioned previously: cultural benchmarking and urban gentrification. In this sense, the context of creative cities and the creative economy are optimal scenarios for the deepening of these two phenomena so typical, paraphrasing Bauman, of liquid contemporaneity. In this study we defend that the cities are:

*[...] the space where actions and desires of creation gain strength and form "and in this way" she (the city) seems to expand the political and rebellious potential of art (and of leisure, our addition), strengthening the aspect of freedom of the production (Campbell, 2015: 8).*

It's relevant to understand that cities are a mere invention of the emerging bourgeoisie of the Industrial Revolution. Moreover, they were created to organize economically pre-industrial societies, it is appropriate to think that these urban spaces actually have different configurations that each inhabitant builds, from his subjectivity that is defined by a set of factors, ranging from social, political, economic, philosophical, cultural, and geographical, among many others. Thus, urban sociologist Robert Park (1967: 3, apud Harvey, 2014b: 28) understands that the city is:

*The most coherent and, in general, more successful attempt to remake the world in which he lives, and to do so in accordance with his deepest desires. But if the city is the man-made world, then it follows that it is also the world in which it is condemned to live. Thus, indirectly and without any clear conscience of the nature of his task, in creating the city man re-created himself.*

In this way, each individual will configure their city by the way in which it identifies itself, feels represented, appropriates and experiences it. All this subjective and singular identification that each subject establishes

with its territory, determines or delimits a specific and particular space that at the same time that influences the personality of the person and is influenced in a constant and enriching exchange. So we can think that the inhabitants imprint characteristics in the metropolis and at the same time the metropolis influences them. In this exchange that happens at an affective, sensory and emotional level, space and individual are constantly modified, transformed and influenced. Taking the words of the geographer Jorge Barbosa when he points out that: "The territory keeps the most hidden elements and, at the same time, contributes to externalizing the meanings of a given culture" and under the inspiration of Gomes and Elizalde's (2012) definition of leisure, one can arrive at an understanding that leisure is a human need and a dimension of culture characterized by the affective and emotional experiences and experiences that individuals weave and construct to appropriate, identify and connect with the territory where they live and develop their lives. In this way, people establish a private, intimate and untransferable cut of the city from the spaces through which they circulate and occupy, creating personal ties that transcend everyday life and that reverberate in an "own city" according to the leisure practices that each one performs.

This fact, it is interesting to bring the idea that the city can be conceived as a kind of puzzle, where each inhabitant fits the different pieces according to their social experiences and experiences of leisure. Within the urban context that individuals choose to experience through different cultural expressions, this/these territory/ies, spatial cuts, in a sense, become constitutive traits of the personal identity that each citizen reflects and imprints on it/them. Thus, it can be stated that the geographical spaces where the person circulates, transits and experiences through leisure practices, end up forming part of the personal characteristics, and, therefore, becoming part of it. Thus, every individual is an amalgam that mixes and is constituted in close connection with the territory.

Reinforcing the idea introduced by the New

Cultural Geography, in which territory also reflects on the symbolic aspect of society, it is important to cite Barbosa again (2004: 102) when he comments that "Territory is both a material and symbolic referential for construction/affirmation of cultural identities". Since leisure is the dimension of culture, it is implicit in the symbolic dimension of the territory. Therefore, leisure can be understood as a sort of dialectic and symbiotic relationship between humans and the city, characterized by the singularities and particularities of a specific geographic space. In this sense, leisure could perhaps recover the poetics of the territory and this "territory, then, would not be a mere instrument of political domination and/or public space for the exercise of a (presumed) citizenship, but effectively a space of identification and (re)creation of/with the world, 'nature'" (Idem).

### **A sort of closure**

It is possible to establish that to be or not to be a palpable city is not a category, but a subjective construction, an individual projection. In addition, as such, it is not a rigid and tight concept that can be extrapolated to different scenarios, moments and/or situations, without taking into account the singularities of each specific case. They are individual constructions based on experiences, experiences that each individual constructs with the city, in a dialectical and symbiotic way, through perceptions, emotions and senses. In this way, cities are far from being an entity to be deciphered or distant beings with whom we will

never be able to identify or establish a connection. Campbell (2016) puts it like this: the city is us to do it.

A city is more than vertical structures of steel, concrete and glass that form and shape the architecture of our lives. In this current age where neoliberal capitalism imposes on cities a production of space (Lefebvre, 1991) determined by capital and its reproduction, there is a risk of transforming our cities into superficial societies, cities without a soul, without a drive, pushing more and more citizens to lack identification with the city but to see it as a functional

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## "IT IS POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH THAT TO BE OR NOT TO BE A PALPABLE CITY IS NOT A CATEGORY, BUT A SUBJECTIVE CONSTRUCTION, AN INDIVIDUAL PROJECTION. IN ADDITION, AS SUCH, IT IS NOT A RIGID AND TIGHT CONCEPT THAT CAN BE EXTRAPOLATED TO DIFFERENT SCENARIOS, MOMENTS AND/OR SITUATIONS, WITHOUT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE SINGULARITIES OF EACH SPECIFIC CASE"

element of their lives. That is, to consider it only in economic terms, leaving aside the sensations, the rhythms, and the energies that inhabit it and that allow to create the particular and plural narratives within the text of the city. As a consequence, the starting and also the destination point, lies in the idea that every human experience of everyday life is what defines the changing fabric of the city and vice versa. In this sense, feeling the city is a form of symbiotic identification and not a mere one-way and abstract extrapolation.

To paraphrase Foucault when he talked about homosexuality (1981), the palpable city is not a form of desire, but something desirable. We have to strive us to make our cities palpable and not obstinate ourselves in recognizing that they are. For all this, we commune with Garcia Canclini (2012) when he says that combating the increasingly visible tendency of dehumanization and impersonality of cities, growing cultural homogenization, the almost cloned (re)production of 'successful' of hegemonic cultural policies and practices; it is through culture and the daily social and subjective experiences of reporting, circulating and feeling the city. In this way, it is possible to approach and recognize the uniqueness of contemporary societies. In addition, this is the challenge and commitment that contemporary citizens have with their cities.

Perhaps so, after all, approaching the city through the senses is the way to capture what Bauman (2003) defined as emotionally as a community or when Canclini (2012) himself refers to societies without reporting not as lack or absence of them, but rather as the lack of an organizing account of the diversity existing in the world. That is, exempt from a totalizing and hegemonic account. In this way:

*[...] we move from multiculturalism, understood as recognition of differences within each nation, to intercultural conflicts in a global geopolitics where all societies are interdependent (2012: 37)*

In view of this scenario proposed by Canclini, it makes sense to think that it is the inhabitants who

complete the city, not only in the economic sense but in the holistic sense, which includes politics, history, culture, geography, emotions, feelings, and tensions. Inhabitants become proactive inhabitants, inhabitants of this permeable urban identity. Thus, it is possible to think of a symbiotic and interactive relationship in which, through leisure and art, the city and the inhabitants can undertake a dive in order to surface their own multiple identities. In short, it is about the possibility, of the right to change ourselves by changing the city and vice versa.

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# Infection, Participation and Informality in higher arts education: the case of the School of Arts (Porto)

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## ABSTRACT

Higher arts education poses several specific challenges. The specificity of art in the contemporary age demands the development of unique strategies. Following a conceptual framework defined by Infection, Participation and Informality the School of Arts at Universidade Católica Portuguesa adopted since 2018 a strategy comprising a project-based methodology, informal tutoring sessions with artists, a Cultural Programme and an artistic residencies programme. This paper presents the early results of this strategy, and analyses how it could foster the critical artistic practice of the students.

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