

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes:
dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

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1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: MAIN RATIONALE AND PROPOSED ANALYTICAL TOOL	4
A) The background.....	4
B) A proposal of a typology of functional “spaces” to disentangle the (underground) music scenes.....	8
3. THE EVOLVING BAIRRO ALTO: A CULTURAL DISTRICT FACING GENTRIFICATION AND MASSIFICATION.....	11
A) Bairro Alto: the conditions for a cultural district	11
B) The evolving Bairro Alto: transformation and challenges.....	12
4. THE (UNDERGROUND) MUSIC SCENES AT BAIRRO ALTO: CONDITIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY?.....	15
A) The underground Music Scene at Bairro Alto	15
B) Analysis of the typology of “spaces” within the art world.....	16
5. CONCLUDING NOTE.....	19
6. REFERENCES.....	20

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Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

ABSTRACT

Focusing the case of Bairro Alto, Lisbon, this paper analyzes the challenges faced by cultural districts at the light of the evolving geographies of underground music scenes. The centrality of reputation building mechanisms and symbolic aspects in the sustainability of these areas' creative ambience is particularly considered.

Drawing upon a conceptual framework that combines spatiality (agglomeration effects) and territoriality (creative milieus) to read art worlds, the paper proposes a typology of "spaces" which structure the alternative music scene. At the light of this typology, the evolution of underground music scenes at Bairro Alto is analyzed, discussing the conditions for its resilience. It is argued that the trends for mainstreaming and gentrification of the area, in parallel with technological and economic re-composition of this industry, challenge the role of this territory in several of the scene's "spaces", though keeping its centrality on "spaces" related with gatekeeping, conviviality and more specialized functions.

KEYWORDS:

Cultural districts, Creative Milieu, Urban Scenes, Underground Music Scenes, Bairro Alto

1. INTRODUCTION¹

Bairro Alto is the main and traditional cultural district in Lisbon, Portugal. Its development and notoriety were, particularly in the 80's of the 20th century, associated with the underground and alternative culture and the DIY scenes, in various creative fields, including music (cf. Costa, 2002, 2007, 2009). This was essential, at the time, for the growth of a territorially rooted productive system based on cultural activities, the development of a creative milieu and the enhancement of its reputation, within diverse art worlds.

Today, several aspects have changed in this scenario. On one hand, Bairro Alto itself has changed. This area has been through a process of progressive gentrification and massification, like many other cultural quarters in many cities (cf. Costa, 2008a, 2013, Costa and Lopes, 2012, 2013). These processes challenge clearly the sustainability of the area as we know it and the capacity to keep the vitality and creative dynamism that it has been demonstrating through times. On the other hand, the music field itself has also evolved, and now the ways of creating, producing, distributing and consuming musical contents, live or recorded, have changed substantially and the impacts of technological and economic re-composition of this industry bring new challenges to its creation, delivery and gatekeeping mechanisms.

Considering this, and focusing on the particular case of "alternative music scenes" in Bairro Alto, this paper aims to analyse the challenges to cultural districts associated to the evolving geographies of underground music scenes. A particular emphasis is put on the study of reputation building mechanisms and symbolic assets in these processes, aiming to understand their role in the sustainability of these areas' creative ambience.

Indeed, despite the already vast existing literature on transformations of cultural districts in general and of the Bairro Alto in particular (including previous research of the author), the relationship between these changes and the process of segmentation and dynamics of contemporary music scenes is quite unexplored. In particular we are interested in contributing to the analysis of the territorial logic of the various scenes and subcultures, and particularly of underground music, as well as the dynamics of affirmation, legitimation and construction of reputation mechanisms in the various related art worlds.

¹ This text is the result of the presentation "Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: the Bairro Alto case" at the KISMIF International Conference "Keep It Simple, Make It Fast: Underground Music Scenes and DIY Cultures", Faculty of Arts, University of Porto (FLUP) / Casa da Música, Porto, Portugal, 8th-11th July 2014, being later included at the proceedings of this conference with this revised title: "Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming". The author acknowledges the comments of the participants at the debate held on this session of the conference, as well as referees' suggestions.

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

Next section is dedicated to a conceptual framing of the discussion held on this paper, including the proposition of a specific analytical instrumental to analyse the underground music scene, in what concerns to the spatial relations of the several functions provided in this art world. Then, in section 3, the specific situation of Bairro Alto is briefly discussed. A frame of this area's evolution and its particular conditions for the development of a cultural district is shortly presented and the main transformation and challenges that the area is facing today are reported. Section 4 provides the specific analysis of the underground music scenes at Bairro Alto, applying the suggested analytical framework, and identifying the different territorial mechanisms to the diverse functions within this art world, while inquiring the conditions for its sustainability in this part of town. Finally, a brief concluding note wraps up this analysis, pointing out some challenges to this relation between music scenes and cultural districts.

2. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: MAIN RATIONALE AND PROPOSED ANALYTICAL TOOL

A) The background

The conceptual framework used in this paper draws upon the work the author has been developing, in recent years, along with the group that has been working at DINÂMIA'CET-IUL on the relation between cultural activities, creative milieus and urban territories, particularly in the study of cultural quarters and urban creative dynamics (cf., e.g. Costa, 2002, 2007, 2007a, 2012, 2013; Costa et al, 2008, 2011; Costa and Lopes, 2012, 2013; Seixas and Costa, 2010; Lopes, 2012). Having this in mind, in this first section of the paper, we just would like to remember a set of ideas which can be assumed as central in the conceptual approach we are following, in order to facilitate the subsequent discussion. Most of them have been explored somewhere else (essentially all the ones presented on this subsection, contrary to the last one, which is presented on next subsection), so we'll just refer briefly to them, pointing out the convenient sources for further reading, in order to centre essentially on the latter, which is a new proposal.

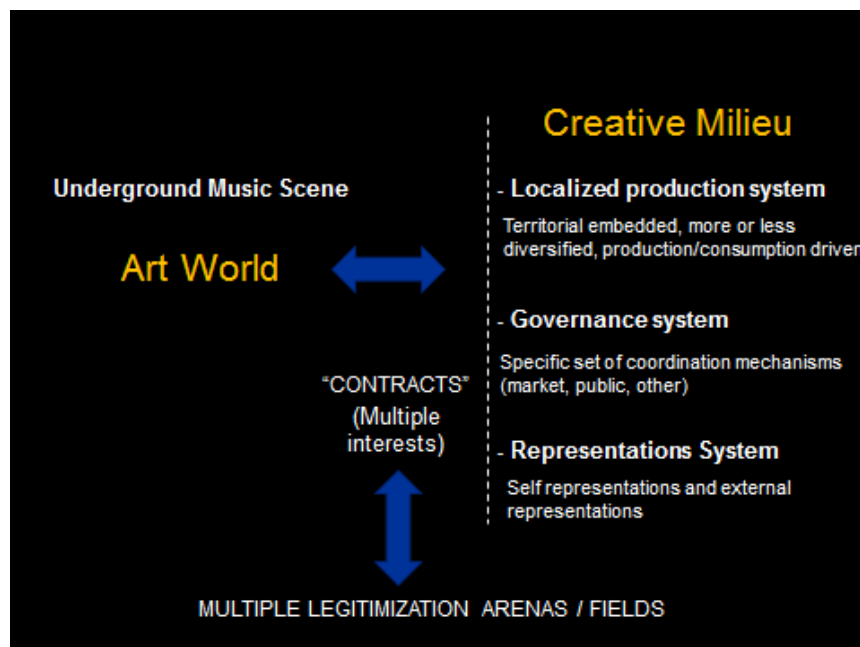
The first idea we would like to point out here is that, when we propose to study the cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes, our analytical framework crosses transversally with a set of four recurrent debates on academic community during last decades, which we would not intend (neither have the time or space) to enter in this article. We just refer to them, assuming, naturally, the extreme importance of each of these conceptual discussions, but not aiming to develop any of those debates in this context: (i) the discussion about whether we should use the terms (and respective approaches) "Underground",

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes:
dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

“Alternative”, “DIY”, or “Indie” ; (ii) the discussion about whether we should use the term “Cultural” or “Creative”; (iii) the discussion about whether we should use the term “District”, “Quarter”, “Neighbourhood”, “Cluster”, or other similar; and (iv) the discussion about whether we should use the term “Scene”, “Art World”, “Milieu”, or “ Atmosphere” (or other). We are perfectly aware of the huge debates and of the relevant (although in some cases not so huge...) differences that are inherent to the use of these terms, but it is not our intention to enter here in this article in each or any of these the debates, as the centre of our discussion is other, to which these differences are not so quite relevant. We just hold that we have an approach (that will turn clearer with what is explained below) which articulates and combines some of these perspectives, within the framework of which, for practical reasons, we will accept that we will be analysing the evolving geographies of “underground” music “scenes”, in the “cultural” “districts”.

The second idea we would like to express here is that the main analytical tool to enter in the art worlds we are studying in this article was the notion of “creative milieu”, as it gives us the territorial dimension, at diverse levels, which is crucial for us to understand the evolving dynamics of the social processes involved. The analysis of the underground music scenes is assumed to be made through a combination of concepts, which are shown and articulated on Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework: Main articulations



Source: author's elaboration.

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

As we've been opportunity to develop before (cf. Costa 2002, 2009, 2012, 2013) we focus on an approach that values the concept of "creative milieu", comprising in it three interdependent analytical layers which enable us to understand the territorial dynamics that are present in these processes. Drawing upon the innovative milieus concept (e.g., Aydalot, 1996; Camagni et al, 2004) these layers refer to: (i) a specific local productive system (be it more production or consumption driven, be it more locally or externally oriented, be it more or less diversified, but naturally territorially embedded in its historic, cultural, social, economic geographical, physical characteristics); (ii) a particular governance system, linked to the coordination mechanisms of the socio-economic relations between those agents (expressing the regulation mechanisms, formal and informal, self or externally oriented, be it market, public action, hierarchies, interdependencies, etc.); and (iii) a representations system, involving the symbolic sphere, both considering the internal and external images that are produced and reproduced about the area. This conceptual tool, articulated with the idea of Art Worlds (Becker, 1982), as represented on Figure 1, allows us to try to disentangle, in this paper, the complexity of the underground music system in this territory, having always in mind the multiplicity of relations which stablish among those actors, that are based on a variety of (informal and formal) relational "contracts" (Caves, 2002), which they stablish amongst themselves (some based on trust, some on empathy, some on reciprocity mechanisms, some on formal or informal rules, stablished by law, market or other form institutional organization), and that are subjected to a multiplicity of layers of legitimization (and reputation building) in a diversity of fields and relational arenas, both symbolic and material (Costa, 2012).

A third idea that we would like to point out, drawing also upon previous work (Costa, 2002, 2007; Costa et al, 2011; Costa and Lopes, 2013) is that agglomeration is essential to the development of creative dynamics in the cultural field, what is also a key factor for the development of cultural districts or similar situations, and the enhancement of urban creative milieus. This is due to a diversity of factors, as we had opportunity to defend before. Of, course, on one hand, the main factors that are underneath urban life itself (the classical arguments from urban economics, urban sociology, urban geography) are fundamental, and can be synthesized around three ideas: (i) the notion of density, gathering, relational densification; (ii) the notion of dimension, critical mass, minimum thresholds; and (iii) the notion of heterogeneity and diversity (including openness and tolerance). All these contribute to foster the creative dynamics, via the reduction of distance and transaction cost, the exploration of aggregated scale and variety economies, or the effects of externalities (including some on the symbolic field), which are essential aspects for the structuring and functioning of project-oriented activities such as are the cultural ones (Scott, 2000). This is vital to assure formal and informal exchanges

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

between any art world members (e.g. of products, of tacit knowledge, of information, of technology, of material inputs,...), enhancing reciprocity; but it is also fundamental to provide new possibilities, new markets and new experiences (both at the creation/production/supply side and at the fruition/demand one), fostering the vibrancy of place; and it is also essential to lubricate the collective learning mechanisms, the diffusion and accumulation of cultural capital, and the dissemination of knowledge and innovation; it is also important to the intermediation processes, in the accumulation and management of social and relational capital and in the functioning of legitimisation and reputation building mechanisms, with the huge proximity with mediators and mediation processes; and lastly, it is also fundamental as relevant factor in the enhancement of shared identities, and the construction of common cultural mechanisms (cf. Costa et al, 2011, Costa, 2007a, 2012).

But, besides these more “traditional” arguments related with agglomeration, as we’ve also opportunity to defend elsewhere, the symbolic field (and the related aspects of image and representation), essential in the structuring of cultural processes, play here also a fundamental supplementary role, at least at three distinct levels (or functions) which potentiate the importance of agglomeration to the functioning of cultural activities and creative dynamics: (i) the role of cultural gatekeepers and mediation processes, which are intimately linked to cultural districts as preferred spaces of symbolic affirmation; (ii) the importance of specific places and areas which are crucial nodes of conviviality, fundamental for these gatekeeping processes and reputation building mechanisms, but also for knowledge dissemination, information sharing and identity building; and (iii) the importance of specific material attributes of space (related to urban morphology, cultural and historical content, space for informality, etc.), which make these spaces particularly attractive for creative purposes (cf Costa et al, 2011; Costa, 2007a, 2009, 2012; Costa and Lopes, 2011, 2012, 2013). Therefore, having all these features in mind, cultural and creative districts seem to have territorial competitive advantages in the development of creative processes, and the agglomeration effect they offer potentiate the “urban” characteristics which they have always needed. Furthermore, with the importance of these “symbolic” effects, including the “buzz” and the “hype” around particular spaces, we assist to the exploration of a symbiotic interactive mechanism of symbolic construction, associating the reputation building mechanisms of the artist, the artwork and the place (Costa, 2012)

Finally, a fourth notion we just like to highlight, very briefly, is that these creative milieus are evolving situations, often fragile, that are strongly embedded in specific territorial dynamics and particular governance mechanisms (and this regardless of their potential global connectivity), which are not always fully apprehended and understood in the best way, even by

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

the agents involved. As we had opportunity to observe and analyse in diverse contexts (cf Costa et al, 2008, 2011; Costa, 2007a; 2012; Costa and Lopes, 2012, 2013) the creative milieus situations (including the cultural districts) are contexts where the specificity offered by the place (in its several dimensions) is determinant, from the most traditional competitive factors (material and immaterial resources, agglomeration factors,...) to their positioning in the symbolic arena and the concrete possibilities they provide to each cultural agent in particular (e.g, informality, tolerance towards difference,...). So, aspects such as the opportunity for liminality and performativity strategies, the capacity to deal with informality, and the need to manage the (always present) conflict (both in material and symbolic arenas) are crucial in these areas, which is reflected in the complexities observed in the blurring of public/private spheres or governance mechanisms (Costa e Lopes, 2012, 2013).

B) A proposal of a typology of functional “spaces” to disentangle the (underground) music scenes

Having these retrieved ideas in mind, we would like to discuss how we could use this to analyse the music activities, and particularly the field of underground music scenes.

It is true that the music art worlds are complex and cross extraordinary challenging times, with deep reconfiguration of production and delivery mechanisms, which have certainly spatial impacts (cf, e.g., Power and Scott, 2004; Scott, 2000, 2008; Caves, 2002; Benett and Peterson, 2004, Straw, 2005; or specifically in music industry changes, on a Portuguese perspective, Guerra, 2010, 2011; Abreu, 2010; Neves, 1999). It is also true that the particular field of underground music scenes presents some particularities which have been deeply studied (e.g., Guerra, 2010, 2013; Gomes, 2013), that are extremely important, and have specific reflexes, both in the contemporary reconfiguration process of these industries, and in their spatial relations. Some of these particularities are expressed in several mapping efforts that have been made in order to study the territoriality of cultural activities, including the music related ones (eg, Scott, 2000; Costa 2002, 2007; Costa and Lopes, 2011; Moreira, 2013), which have been pointing out the diversity of spatial and territorial mechanisms within these activities.

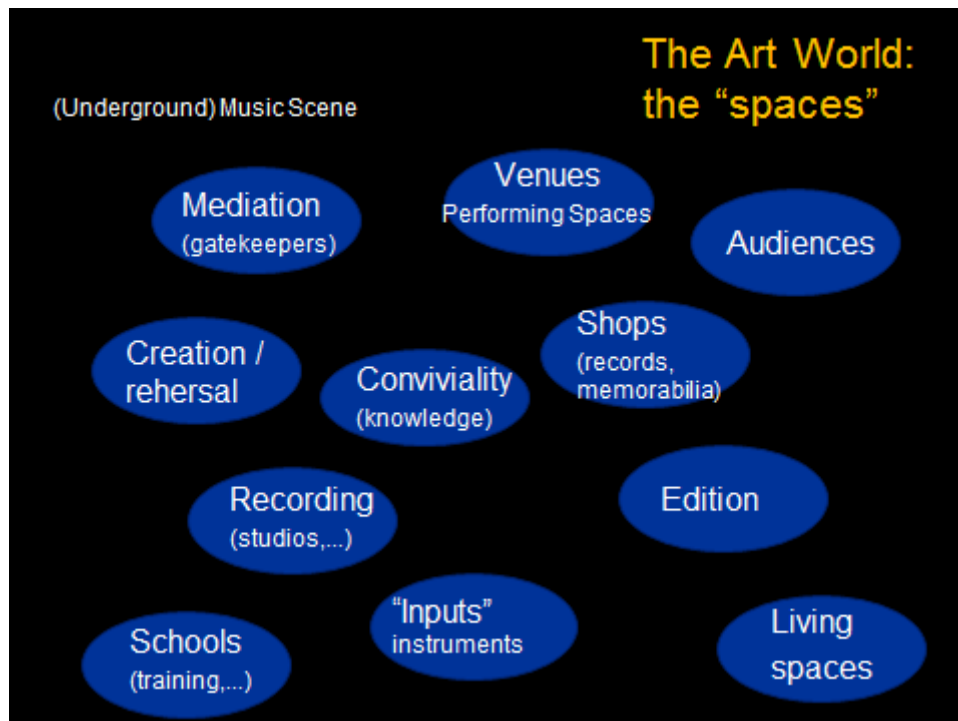
It is our belief that in order to put forward a proposal that allows us to understand better the geographies of underground music scenes (and particularly, their relation with cultural quarters) we need to develop an analytical framework which separates the diverse kinds of main functions developed within these creation-production-intermediation-fruition processes, regarding their spatiality and their territoriality, extracting that way the essence of influence

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes:
dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

each territorial condition exerts in it. That will be the way to disentangle the diversity of (contradictory) spatial trends that characterize contemporary deep-restructuring processes of musical production and music consumption.

Therefore, if we want to enquire the nature of the territorialisation of music activities (be it more underground, or more mainstream), a diversity of segments of these art worlds emerge, each of them raising different spatiality and territoriality issues (cf. Costa 2002, 2007, Costa and Lopes, 2011). For example, the “spaces” for live performance are different from the “spaces” for earing recorded music or from the “spaces” where to buy instruments or to learn how to play... In Figure 2 we propose a typology of these spaces, in order to enable us to disentangle this complexity and to facilitate an empirical analysis. Naturally, this tentative schematic typology, is only indicative, non-exhaustive, and aims at shedding some light to the diversity of spatial components of the processes of musical creation, production, intermediation and fruition (which are themselves in profound and complexes re-configuration processes, in recorded, streaming or live music fields, including the rethinking of all business models and the role of traditional intermediaries and gatekeepers).

Figure 2: Typology of “spaces” for analysing the (underground) music scene - proposal



Source: author's elaboration.

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes:
dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

The typology proposed on Figure 2 includes a set of 11 kinds of “spaces” (each of them representing a specific pattern of territoriality of the social/economic agents involved) of which can be a rough constitution of the (underground) music art world:

1. The spaces of **creation and rehearsal** (individual or collective; formal and informal);
2. The spaces of **live performance** (and live music consumption), in their diversity (from large musical venues, to small gig places, live music bars, or informal performing spaces, etc...);
3. The spaces of **recording** (studios, and so on);
4. The spaces of **edition** (including main traditional publisher functions, as promotion, and some agency, traditionally more central in the cities, as well as the manufacturing of material supports, traditionally in peripheries...);
5. The **trading spaces**, including record shops, traditional spaces of consumption of phonographic products, other generalist selling points (supermarkets, gas stations, etc.), but also other shops, specialized in merchandising, memorabilia, etc. (including here, therefore, more massive (and disperse) patterns of consumption or more specialized (and territorially concentrated) ones);
6. The spaces of **consumption of inputs** necessary to music production (musical instruments stores, specialized services, etc.....);
7. The spaces of **mediation and gatekeeping** (the location of the main circuits where is important to be, to be seen, to be spoken – from general and specialized media to more informal circuits, including agents and promoters communities);
8. The spaces of **conviviality within the art world** (which are important for knowledge dissemination, circulation of information, structuring of labour opportunities, etc. - including nightlife and other);
9. The spaces of **training** (artistic schools, informal training activities, etc...);
10. The spaces of **location of cultural audiences**, which are increasingly autonomous in their consumption/fruition processes, especially on recorded music (being these usually mediated by the spatial distribution of the structure of main segregating variables: age / position in lifecycle; cultural/educational capital, income);

- 11.** The spaces of everyday life, the **daily living spaces of people involved in musical creation** (the places where they live, where they spend their days, where they experience the city).

Naturally some of these typological categories are often overlapping and crossing each other in specific situations, but this must be understood just as a proposal of typology in order to disentangle the diversity of social processes behind (underground) music scenes, and specifically the “spaces” and the “territoriality” inherent to each of these specific functions.

Furthermore, not all of them have the same importance, and even, nowadays, some of them are being much affected by wide territorial changes in their existence, with digitalization, online consumption/fruition dynamics, the development of P2P (and other) processes, as well as new gatekeeping mechanisms. Certainly, we will have opportunity to come back to these issues later, on other article, refining further this typology, and including those aspects. But, for now, it is essential to keep it simpler, in order to reach our objective of understanding the evolution of cultural scene in a cultural quarter.

3. THE EVOLVING BAIRO ALTO: A CULTURAL DISTRICT FACING GENTRIFICATION AND MASSIFICATION

A) Bairro Alto: the conditions for a cultural district

Bairro Alto is the main and traditional cultural district in Lisbon, Portugal. We had opportunity to defend elsewhere the importance of these area of the city as creative milieu (Costa, 2002, 2007, 2009), and to analyse its evolution in recent decades (Costa, 2008, 2013, Costa and Lopes, 2012, 2013), assuming and analysing it, in line with the innovative and milieu concepts, at its diverse constitutive layers (as a local production/consumption system; as a governance system; as a collective representations system).

At the old traditional historical centre of the city, with a cultural-transgressive consistent trajectory, from the XVIth century, when it was settled by the expansion to the outside of the city walls, it has affirmed as one of the main cultural/creative centre of the city (marked by liminality and tolerance), in deep articulation with Chiado (main institutional cultural area of the city) and other surrounding areas (cf. Costa, 2002). It has been based on multiplicity of cultural activities, although with a changing and evolving pattern through time. Urban and physical constraints, including specific living conditions, have enabled a selective gentrification process,

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

privileging creative agents. Important self-regulatory mechanisms have been identified in the system, essential to the management of conflicts and externalities, when public intervention has been essentially in the fields of urban regulation and planning.

Several reasons can be pointed out for this success, in four main domains: (i) its central location; (ii) the agglomeration effects (providing the required dimension, density and heterogeneity of social practices, improving openness, and reducing social control); (iii) its evolutionary trajectory (path dependency, seizing the interrelation with Chiado); and (iv) its morphology and urban design, as well as planning regulations (eg., Costa 2007a, 2009, 2012; Costa and Lopes, 2012). These features must be crossed with the importance of aspects such as liminality, informality and conflict (as in cultural quarters in general - cf. Costa and Lopes, 2013), as well as with specific governance mechanisms, notably self-regulation issues (Costa, 2007).

B) The evolving Bairro Alto: transformation and challenges

This area has been under deep change in recent years (Costa, 2008a; 2013; Lopes, 2012), just as other cultural quarters around the world (cf. O'Connor and Wynne, 1996; Bell and Jayne, 2004; Pratt and Hutton, 2013; Costa and Lopes, 2012), which are subject to the same kind of challenges and restructuring forces.

Specifically, this creative district must be seen as an area which has been allowing the permanent renovation and re-invention of the local productive system, with a permanent evolution and re-composition of its core activities, within the cultural sector (from printing cluster, to performing and visual arts, to alternative fields, to fashion and design shops, to nightlife, etc.). It is an area that has congregated through history a multiplicity of activities and territorial functions, namely on cultural domain (but not only...), enabling the development of a diversity of cultural production and consumption activities within the territorial system.

As many other cultural quarters is an arena of strong use conflicts (reflecting the importance of externalities). It is a (dynamic) residential area that has been affected by (selective) gentrification processes (involving residents and cultural/economic activities). On the other hand, most of these conflicts are associated to the important role of conviviality and sociability nodes, in its daily life (particularly nightlife and bohemia). However, the selectivity in these transformation processes (conditioned by specific morphological and urban attributes of space and specific living conditions), has allowed to avoid more radical gentrification dynamics.

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

It should be recognized the importance of the collective representations of the area as creative, which has led in recent years to the symbolic recognition as such, but mainstreaming risks are evident and have been pointed out (cf Costa, 2013). At an area marked by the importance of its own (informal) governance mechanism and endogenous dynamics (including self-regulatory mechanisms, in parallel to market forces and public intervention – Costa, 2002, 2007, 2009), this threatening aspect can't be neglected.

We have presented elsewhere a systematization of the main recent trends and challenges to Bairro Alto's productive system (Costa, 2013):

1. Clear increase in land prices, with impacts in terms of social and economic restructuring;
2. Substitution of activities and residents, with impacts in lifestyles and social and cultural practices (e.g., public space appropriation; daily neighbourhood life;...) and possible negative effects in terms of the liminal aptitudes of the area;
3. Shift from "cultural production" to "cultural consumption" (design shops, aesthetic consumptions, nightlife take increasingly place of other cultural activities, such as performing and visual arts), promoting the exit of the effectively "creative" agents;
4. Massification of publics / audiences / users (both in cultural and conviviality activities), inducing an overcharge and congestion of the structures, and the exit (and sometimes self-exclusion) of most alternative and liminal cultural practices;
5. A mainstreaming of the area in symbolic terms (both in external and internal representations), with impacts on social (and economic) re-composition of the area, and impacts on the (self-)exclusion of some creative activities which relocate on its outskirts or other parts of the city;
6. A significant increase in negative externalities (noise, parking, traffic, drugs commerce, ...) and their impacts, that, on one hand, compromise sustainability via decrease in quality of life, but on the other hand, facilitates system reproduction by making it more difficult gentrification processes;
7. A (relative) exit of part of most creative actors, with the expansion and de-location of some "creative" segments to neighbourhood areas (Príncipe Real, Bica, Cais do Sodré, or even Santos, Baixa or Avenida areas, or other parts of the city, depending on the

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

activities), but with the risk of potential loosing of scale and milieu effects in their activity;

8. The semi-maintenance of (some) conviviality nodes (even in some art worlds more affected by de-localization to fringe areas), providing some potential for keeping some of the key-features of the milieu, linked to socialization (knowledge transfer, collective learning, reputation building,...), which are essential to artistic production/consumption (even if creation or consumption occurs somewhere else, out of this territory).

We had also the opportunity to discuss the relation between, use conflicts, gentrification, territorial dynamics and sustainability of the territorial system (Costa, 2012, 2013) and the way it relates with in other cultural quarters around the world (Costa and Lopes, 2012, 2013). Main conflicts between the users relate to two intertwined processes. On one hand, the gentrification process itself, in its various dimensions, expressed in the conflicts for the appropriation (both in material and symbolic arenas) of territory. The impacts of gentrification are evident by the well documented changes in population structure, economic and cultural activities, and the morphology of physical space itself. On the other hand, externalities and other negative effects of agglomeration. Effects on congestion of infrastructures (e.g., traffic and parking; pollution and difficulties with collecting systems), conflict related to graffiti, public art and information profusion; but mostly, conflict related to nightlife and touristic activity, (particularly noise and other negative externalities) have been marking deeply the evolution of the territorial system.

The degree of sustainability of this territorial system may be related to the capacity of managing permanently these conflicts and the different (legitimate) interests that are inherent to them, dealing with gentrification processes, externalities, and informality and providing updated governance mechanisms to face these changing realities (cf. Costa 2007a, 2012, 2013; Costa and Lopes, 2013). It is not our aim to discuss it here, but simply to consider this setup, and to understand that underground music scenes in this district must be certainly affected by all these pressures and structural changes. That is what we will look closely in the next section.

4. THE (UNDERGROUND) MUSIC SCENES AT BAIRRO ALTO: CONDITIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY?

A) The underground Music Scene at Bairro Alto

The underground music scene has traditionally an important role at Bairro Alto, and, concomitantly, this cultural quarter plays an important role at the structuring of underground music art worlds. This is a fact at least since the 80's of last century, with the development of a clear alternative scene, diverse and multidisciplinary, in the area, and keeps some signal, though very different, in the contemporary days of massive publics and touristic crowds which characterize the district.

In fact the underground music scene found a relevant place for itself in this part of town, essentially with the 80's "revolution", with the influx of a new class of intellectuals and bohemians to this part of the city, and the affirmation of the area as central point for the "alternative" and underground cultures in a diversity of art worlds, from performing and visual arts to the new creative industries, and the development of nightlife and of the aestheticization of everyday life, in parallel to the growth of a diversity of subcultures and scenes which found in this open-minded and symbolically enhanced area "the" place for its higher expression. The growth of a diversity of sociability and conviviality poles (clubs, bars and restaurants, formal and informal cultural venues, other gatekeeping "nodes") had here determinant importance, as well as the existence of room for a less restricted expression of the self, acknowledging different lifestyles and alternative aesthetics, and welcoming diversity and liminality, which helped bringing the (several) margins to the centre of the city (Costa 2002, 2007, 2009).

Progressively, the "alternative" "cultural" euphoria of the 80's gave place to the mainstreaming of the area, as explained in previous section, and the exit of part of the production / consumption dynamics in this field was a corollary of this. However, it is important to see that the area somehow kept some centrality (both symbolically and materially) in these underground music scenes, even if with territorial spread to the involving neighbourhoods (e.g. Bica, Cais do Sodré, Príncipe Real, Santos...), on one hand due to increase in land prices, but on the other hand to self-exclusion via distinction mechanisms (Lopes, 2012; Costa, 2012, 2013). At the same time, other areas of the city gain progressively conditions for challenging Bairro Alto's centrality in Lisbon's underground music scene (e.g. Almirante Reis axis and other downtown areas), and can surely benefit from these dynamics, as fashion effect is

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

particularly important in music scenes, and momentary gains of reputation of other areas could be easily explored. However, it has been noticed the importance of path dependency and of agglomeration and governance conditions in refraining this impetus in the particular case of Lisbon (cf Costa and Lopes, 2011; Costa et al, 2015).

Actually, the trends for this mainstreaming and gentrification of the area, in parallel with technological and economic re-composition of this industry, challenge the role of this territory in several of the scene's "spaces", but didn't expelled all of its activities and functions, as we can see in more detail, in next subsection.

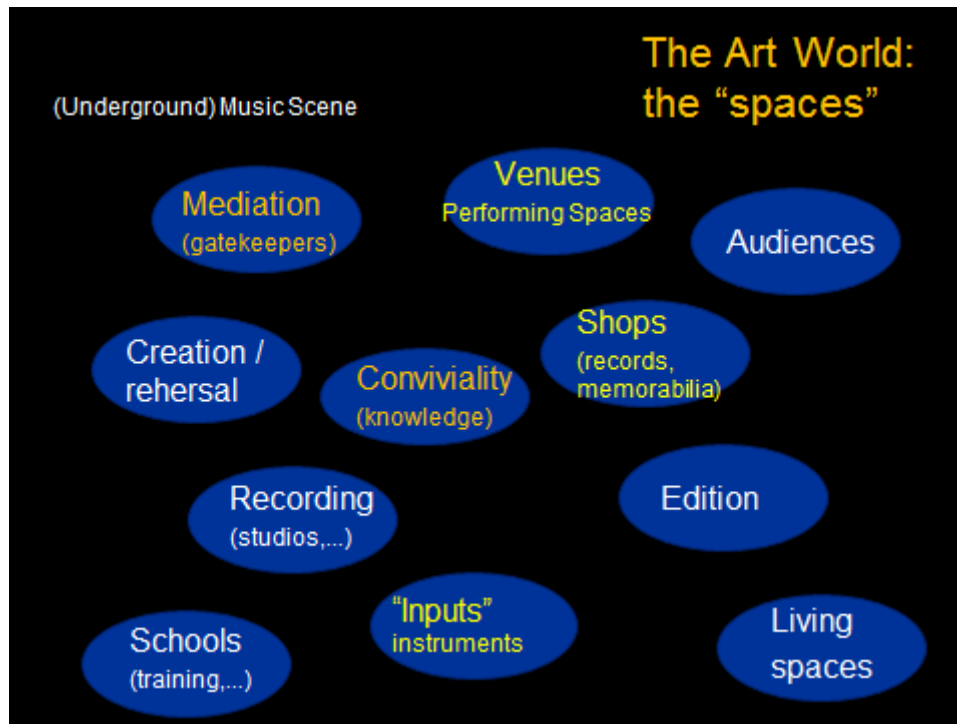
B) Analysis of the typology of "spaces" within the art world

In order to enquire the way these challenges impact the territorialisation of the music activities in the area (and particularly the underground music scene) we return to the typology suggested at section 2 (cf. figure 2), and identify the relevance of the diverse "spaces" of the underground music scene in contemporary Bairro Alto.

This schematization draws upon an empirical work which, though not conducted directly to the specific purposes of this paper, results from the mobilization of knowledge that has been accumulated through several research projects during the 2 last decades in the area (besides author PhD thesis/GREMI6; CREATCITY, GREMI-T/ASLINN, and several smaller ones – cf., e.g., Costa 2002, 2009, 2013, Costa and Lopes 2012, 2013; Seixas and Costa, 2010). This was based on a diversity of methodological procedures, including, direct observation, interviews, and surveys, on the earlier projects, and more recently, (i) desk research, with bibliographical work and analysis of secondary sources; (ii) Participation in panel sessions with stakeholders (and participant observation); (iii) Individual interviews with key stakeholders; collective public debates; (iv) Analysis of policy making instruments and specific stakeholders strategies; (v) Image recollection and content analysis; and (vi) Socio-ethnographic work (with students), facilitating data collection from diversified sources (and formats), and their discussion and analysis, through exhibitions and debates; (vii) exploring participatory artistic-research methodologies, with urban interventions in the area.

The results of our analysis are represented schematically in Figure 3. It should be noticed that it is a first approximate mapping, based on this available information and on this preliminary typology (specifically for the case of alternative /underground activities, for other music scenes the analysis would not be necessarily the same), and additional in-depth studies certainly will be useful to complete and allow further debate on these findings.

Figure 3: Typology of “spaces” for analysing the (underground) music scene –
application to Bairro Alto cultural quarter



Source: author's elaboration.

From the diverse categories of “spaces” of the music scenes previously suggested, in Figure 2, we can identify distinct levels of relation with the cultural district, in this Bairro Alto case (considering in this its' recent expansions for its outskirts). Bearing in mind the spatiality and the territorialisation mechanisms, three main levels of involvement can be identified, which are represented, in figure 3, in different colours.

A first level (represented in white letters) is the one where the effects of the cultural quarter are less visible. These are the segments of the underground music scene which we can assume that have weaker links to the effects of territoriality provided by the creative milieu in the area. These include the spaces of “creation and rehearsal”, the spaces of the traditional “production phase” in the phonographic edition value chain (“Recording” and “Edition”), as well as the spaces linked with daily life of the agents involved (that is the “audiences” location and the “spaces of living” of music scene members). In effect, musical creation can be done everywhere, even more and more these days, depending on a variety of individual preferences (cf. Costa, 2008); recording studios and edition are essentially situated in peripheral areas of the metropolitan; schools are essentially situated near their publics (though important specialized

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

schools still exist in this district); audiences are disseminated all around the metropolitan area, as natural; and even daily “living spaces” of the members of art world are very diverse and not directly related to this area (except for the ones living here or nearby). Anyway, for all these function, the territoriality effects of the quarter are not as important as in other cases.

A second level of “spaces” of this art world (with their names signalled at light yellow at figure 3), seem to reflect more the relation of the underground music scene with the cultural quarter. Particularly, three main functions seem to need this proximity: (i) the spaces for performing live music, that is formal (regularly programmed) venues and more informal places for gigs (standing out ZDB, but including several bars and formal and informal venues in the district, and many important underground venues in the outskirts of the district); (ii) the “musical commerce”, mostly the specialized one (with concentration of specialized shops, both record shops - with the concentration of most of them in Lisbon in the area and its outskirts -, but also memorabilia and fandom-culture based materials); and (iii) the commerce of other “inputs” (assuming economic language of production function) for the music value chain, that is instruments, or other specialized equipment and services. We should note that, in any of these functions, it is not just the strict Bairro Alto area that is being convened, but an enlarged surrounding area that has expanded considerably during last two decades, considering accessibilities, real estate price and symbolic issues.

Finally, a third level of “spaces” (represented in orange) can be identified as the ones where this proximity is greater, and where the creative milieu of the cultural quarter effectively seems to remain (and to be effectively) important, combining both Marshallian and Jacobian externalities with symbolic and reputational effects. Not surprisingly (Costa, 2012; Costa and Lopes, 2013), these are essentially linked to the functions more related to the symbolic and the legitimization mechanisms, and to the transmission of tacit knowledge (including symbolic knowledge): (i) on one hand, the conviviality and sociability centres, particularly the ones related to nightlife (even if differentiated by specific subcultures, sub-scenes and art worlds, some of them “distinguishably” self-exiled in the peripheries of the district), still mark their centrality in the diffusion of know-how, dissemination and accumulation of knowledge; (ii) on the other hand, most of the vehicles for reputation building and gatekeeping (partially overlapping the precedent), crucial to underground scenes intermediation functions, still have this area as central in their formal and informal circuits. Even if most of the individual lives of underground music scenes people does not centre in the district (neither their gigs, or the production or consumption of their recorded music), the district and its surroundings is still

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

central in their businesses and in their careers, as the area still centres most of the knowledge production and symbolic creation (essentially informal) circuits.

Having all this in mind, we can affirm that the main challenges for the underground music scene at Bairro Alto still relate to the symbolic mainstreaming of the area, which can affect it by two additional mechanisms: on one hand, by the deepening of gentrification processes, making the area unaffordable for its agents; on the other hand, by the expansion of self-exclusion mechanisms by these scene's actors, via distinction purposes and identity building processes. At the end, we can consider an evolution of this centrality for another area of the city, or to any of the enlarging surrounding areas that have welcomed some of these functions. But this will not be an easy process, as the specific conditions of this district are not easily reproducible on other surrounding areas, be it the essential circumstances for its development (agglomeration, centrality, liminality, ...), be it the conditions for its sustainability (being most of these involving areas more likely to pure gentrification processes). The importance of the maintenance of the presence of central symbolic nodes (such as ZDB or others) in this system is in this process a fundamental issue that in our opinion should not be underestimated.

5. CONCLUDING NOTE

In this article we aimed to explore the challenges faced by cultural districts at the light of the evolving geographies of underground music scenes, through the analysis of Bairro Alto case, and the discussion of the conditions for its resilience.

Drawing upon a conceptual framework that combines spatiality (agglomeration effects) and territoriality (creative milieus), a typology of spaces was presented and applied to the underground music scene in Bairro Alto. Three main kinds of relation to the territory were identified regarding the importance of being in a cultural quarter and benefiting from a creative milieu situation. Despite the weaker links of some functions of these scene to the territoriality effects (including most main aspects in the fields of artistic creation, production and consumption/fruition of musical outputs), actually, there is a certain kind of functions, such as the ones linked to gatekeeping processes, conviviality and knowledge dissemination, for which being in the cultural quarter and benefit from the creative ambience and its image is still important.

Cultural districts and the evolving geographies of underground music scenes: dealing with Bairro Alto's mainstreaming

The evolution of this relation, and the resilience of the district as central in underground music scenes geographies, being challenged, on one hand, by structural transformation in the business models and organization of music provision processes, and on the other hand, by the territorial change of this part of the city (which is facing huge massification, gentrification and touristification trends), seems to be dependent on the permanent management of the tensions and conflicts that cross the underground music scenes, both at symbolic and material arenas.

Finally, this brings also challenges to the policy making arena. In a context where self-regulatory informal mechanisms are extremely important, both in the governance of this territorial system and in the structuring of the underground scene, this is particularly complicated. Several issues can be raised and discussed: In terms of territorial planning, would it make sense, to try to preserve these dynamics in this place? What should (and not...) be done for that? or could or should be thought to enhance them anywhere? Would it be possible to try to reproduce this kind of situation? How could be created the conditions for that? And how could be managed the symbolic sphere, which seems to be crucial on these dynamics? Certainly these vast and polemic issues will give food for thought in future reflections. That was not the aim of this paper. But certainly these debates will help us improving the way to face the challenges the cultural districts are dealing when confronted to the multiple underground music scenes territorial rearrangements we observed in this article.

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