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# PUBLIC SPACE - REINVENTING A NEW URBAN GRAMMAR

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## ABSTRACT

Over recent decades, cities, especially European cities, are experiencing profound physical, functional, cultural, and social transformations which can be summarized as historic centers coming into conflict with new territorial dynamics of spatial appropriation. In the macro context, such transformations are associated with multiple factors such as migratory flows, the relocation of social interaction from the arena of public space, the effects of a pandemic and the consequences of deindustrialisation. In the study of cities, public space acquires a central role. It allows us to "read" the city, informing planners and other interested social actors of the way actual territorial dynamics have come to be organized over periods of time. As a plural space, public space, brings together multiple experiences and aggregates difference, thus, therefore, in our opinion, it could also function as an effective toolset in the development of inclusive and participatory cities.

Looking into the case of a specific square, São Paulo square situated in the context of Lisbon, Portugal, we intend to clarify the concept of public space, as both object and subject, to analyse its transformations over time and to reflect on the main challenges of the territorial dynamics and the current urban mechanisms and strategies impacting upon that space. We intend to assess the impact of public policies and to better understand how these policies have influenced and conditioned such territorial transformations in both pre- and post-pandemic contexts, highlighting the birth of new social practices and lifestyles. We also aim to contribute to the knowledge of how urban spaces operate upon their occupants positive, and that way foreground how public space, read in this way, can represent an interface through which we might reprogram the cultural identity of an environment i.e. restoring the sense of belonging, building new narratives and spatial identities and promoting better urban connections.

**Keywords:** Public space; city; urban actors; appropriation of space.