

Is street art institutionalizable?
Challenges to an alternative urban policy in Lisbon

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Is street art institutionalizable? Challenges to an alternative urban policy in Lisbon¹

Abstract:

In recent years Lisbon City Council promoted a new policy towards graffiti and street art, on one hand, fighting and actively controlling these practices in some central neighborhoods, and on the other hand facilitating it and institutionalizing it in specific areas of the city. In spite of all the controversy around it, being a multifaceted and quite inorganic set of public actions conducted by different city-council departments, this policy can be considered an alternative urban development policy. It is essentially a bottom-up kind of approach to urban problems, targeted to local community and, more than that, to a specific non-mainstream segment of urban society, and is directed to establish socio-political (and cultural) regulations in order to limit uneven urban development.

Naturally, this policy had clear consequences in terms of what are the type, forms and quality of public art developed, as well as in the economic, social and cultural value that it creates in the city, specifically in its center. The aim of this paper is to analyze the implications of this action and the challenges they bring to the design of public policies in this field, seeking to understand the changes related with this process of “institutionalization” of graffiti, their immediate socio-economic and cultural impacts in the city, and their implications in terms of the own form of artistic expression, usually free and independent in its genesis.

Keywords: Street art; Graffiti; Urban art; Creativity; Governance; Lisbon; Local Cultural Policy; Urban Cultural Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION: AN “ALTERNATIVE” URBAN POLICY

In recent years Lisbon City Council promoted a new policy towards graffiti and street art, reacting to the new dynamics and the growing visibility of this phenomenon in the walls of the city and in urban daily life. On one hand, this policy included mechanisms for fighting and controlling these practices in some neighborhoods, particularly in the main cultural quarter of the city, Bairro Alto, most pressured by use conflicts and tensions between residents and users. On the other hand it developed strategies and projects in order to facilitate it, support it and institutionalize it in specific dedicated spaces (even within the limits of Bairro Alto, where a new open-air urban art gallery was established by city council) and in other areas of the city.

In spite of all the controversy around it, being a multifaceted and quite inorganic set of public actions conducted by different city-council departments, this policy presents the main characteristics to be considered an “alternative” urban development policy. It is essentially a bottom-up kind of approach to urban problems, targeted to local communities and, more than that, to a specific non-mainstream segment of urban society, and it is directed to establish socio-political (and cultural) regulations in order to limit uneven urban development. It was developed in a quite decentralized way, drawing upon the interaction of some municipal technicians with graffiti community and involving progressively urban artists and local populations. The way was essentially drawn through the establishment of political-administrative and "social" regulations in order to reduce tensions and control use conflicts, outside of market mechanisms, and involving participative processes, centered essentially in the diverse layers of users of the city (residents, daily users, art communities, etc.), which have natural conflicting interests in the city. This approach requires an awareness of the diverse kinds of “rights to the city” expressed in the life of each territory, and the multiplicity of “public interests”, eventually contradictory, that a city council should take care of.

Besides the wide challenging governance issues here implied, naturally, this (somehow apparently paradoxical or incoherent) policy had clear consequences in terms of what are the types, forms and quality of public art developed, as well as in the economic, social and cultural value that it creates in the city, specifically in its center.

This paper aims to analyze the results of this action, in terms of the implications it has in urban life and institutions, and in the respective art world. It seeks to understand the changes associated with this process of “institutionalization” of graffiti, discussing the challenges related to their immediate socio-economic and cultural impacts in the city and the way it defies the own forms of artistic expression, usually free and independent in its genesis. We aim to systematize

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some structural issues that seem to us essential to (re)think alternative public policies in this specific field.

This analysis is framed in a wider research streamline in which the authors are inquiring urban interventions in public space, through the analysis of the geographies and the governance of urban art and street art in Lisbon metropolitan area. This work line draws upon previous work developed by the authors on the creative dynamics in the city and its territorial patterns, analyzing the sustainability of the governance and regulatory mechanisms in which these creative dynamics are based and the relations with the use conflicts verified in most of these situations, particularly in its public spaces (cf. Costa 2007, 2009, 2009a, 2013, Lopes, 2012, Costa and Lopes, 2012, 2013).

In this context, our research interest is here focused in the urban intervention that takes place in those public spaces. The analysis conducted in the framework of this research program is based on a methodological approach which crosses the conduction of semi-structured interviews with diverse stakeholders, involved both in the policy-making field and in the graffiti art worlds (including also academic experts in this field), with an extensive documental analysis of existing information (specialized blogs and literature, photographic databases, media news, and academic work) complemented by personal observation and visual recollection of the art work in the city. In this particular paper our exploratory work is specifically addressing the street art and graffiti context in Lisbon and the action of local authorities (particularly the city council) towards the evolution of the dynamics verified in the city in this field in recent years.

In the next section a general description of municipality's policy is made, concerning both the most controlling and persecutory side of it, and its' facilitator and promoter side, and the main features of this "alternative urban development policy" are framed at the light of this conception. In section 3, the impacts of this policy in various dimensions of urban life (economic value, symbolic reputation, social inclusion and community participation) are discussed, in order to address the challenges they bring to urban development strategies, policy instruments and governance mechanisms. A fourth section deals with the implications on cultural contents and on the artistic expression itself, addressing the challenges to the relation between urban policy and art world structuring mechanisms. A brief concluding note points out some lessons from this experience that can be inferred for thinking more generically public intervention in this field.

2. THE DESIGN OF A NEW LOCAL POLICY TOWARDS GRAFFITI AND STREET/URBAN ART

In this section we briefly present the different programs conducted by the Lisbon city Council related with graffiti and street art in the city, framing their roots at the light of the recent evolution of Portuguese graffiti art world and the social contestation it involved. Our focus is the designing of this “alternative urban policy”, rather than a conceptual or empirical approach to the street/urban art issues and their contemporary dilemmas.

Therefore, it is not within the scope of this article the conceptual discussion around artistic intervention in public space (cf. Lopes, 2012 e Costa e Lopes, 2013) and its different characteristics and origins. Notions such as public art, urban art, street art or graffiti (among other) imply a multiplicity of discussions and subtle conceptual differences that have to be thought at the light of different aspects, such as the forms of public space appropriation; the relation with the property rights management; the commodification and market absorption of the arts; the performativity issues; the artistic intentionality; the artistic backgrounds; the role of informality, the artistic training issues, or even the democracy and right to the city, for example. The main goal of this article is not to discuss these questions, which we have been developing in the scope of a broader research program where this article is inserted (Lopes, 2012; Costa, 2012, 2013, 2013a), and that have been deeply studied by other authors in recent years (e.g., Miles, 1997; Cartiere and Willis, 2008; Klanten and Huber, 2010; Adz, 2010; Irvine, 2012; Dickens, 2008, 2009; Traquino, 2010; Campos et al, 2011; Buser et al, 2013, Gough, 2012; Shove, 2012). Some of them have also been thought at the light of the specific field of graffiti and street art, in Portugal (e.g, Campos, 2007; Ferro, 2011; Monteiro, 2011).

In operative terms, for the analytical purposes of this specific paper, we assume a quite narrow conceptual definition of urban intervention, related with the terms of graffiti and street art, very similar to the one used by Lisbon municipality, which is enough for keeping the discussion on the plan we defined for our aims, more focused on the perspective of the “city” and the “urban intervention” impacts than on an “art” and “artistic intervention” approach.

Naturally, it is also not our intention to map or systematize street art history neither all the contemporary debates around it. Assuming this narrow version of street art, we are essentially drawing upon the “modern” graffiti and street art emerged in Philadelphia and New York in the end of the sixties and rapidly spread throughout Europe and other points of the world. It is characterized by an appropriation of public space by a subculture (Campos, 2007) that found in the city the ideal space for self-affirmation. As widely documented, though

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promptly labeled as vandalism by most of the civil society, and despite the severe combat, in a few weeks, streets and public facilities were invaded by tags and draws produced by writers, without artist background, that have started to use sprays and pens to make their mark in the city (e.g. the classic work of Copper and Chalfant, 1984, for NY case). This appropriation of public space lead to new layer(s) of codification in the urban landscape often associated with the idea of subversion of rules imposed and defy to capitalist society. A considerable academic debate accompanied these realities (cf, e.g. Campos, 2007; Ferro, 2011), in diverse social sciences, often centered on the identity construction processes and on performativity issues, encompassing a social context of increasing aestheticization and stylization of everyday life (cf. O'Connor and Wynne, 1996). This focus on a specific subcultural model of urban inscription, assuming graffiti in terms of urban identity politics, territoriality and transgression, has generated important insights into the nature of particular kinds of urban spaces and social practices, but often neglected the attention to more recent styles of inscribing the city, and to the contaminations between a series of elite and institutional spaces, social relations and mediascapes, associated to more contemporary urban processes and experiences, which can be operationalized through a new 'post-graffiti' approach, privileging an emergent 'post-graffiti' aesthetic practice (Dickens 2008, 2009).

We move between these two approaches, trying to understand street art local urban policy at the light of both those kinds of processes, which implies to debate the (economic, social, cultural) institutionalization, “commodification” and “instrumentalization” of street art and their territorial impacts considering aspects such as all these. This embraces, for instance, the discussion on the relationship between creative practice, activism and urban place-making, assuming the porosity between cultural activism and the practice of graffiti, or the political prospects linked to the cultivation of a globally shared aesthetics of protest and their impact on the construction of meaning in urban spaces (Buser et al., 2014). But it encompasses also the economic institutionalization of street art (cf. Dickens, 2009, 2010; Gough, 2012), crossing the borders of the worlds of contemporary art and of creative industries, and the discussion on the role of cultural intermediaries and economic mechanisms on it (Dickens, 2010,2009) as well as the rise of specific intermediation processes (Dickens, 2008a, 2009), which reflect more broad aspects of the reputation building mechanisms and gatekeeping processes on cultural activities and their impacts in urban structuring (e.g Costa, 2012). This open-wide approach is essential to understand how local authorities can deal with a more complex approach of a creative practice that produces symbolic value, wealth and alternative urban atmosphere.

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Portuguese graffiti and street art scene is quite recent, though. In Portugal graffiti and street art emerged in the late eighties essentially associated with the Hip Hop and Rap culture originated in United States (Campos, 2007). However, it was the proliferation of this new form of expression in middle of nineties, changing the urban landscape of some parts of the city that led to the Lisbon City Council to act, in order to take control of these informal and illegal practices and to promote the cleanliness of these spots, considering the persistent protests by some local actors. These actors idealize the city as a place that should be “clean” and safe from the “drafts” of a marginal social group, that jeopardies private property and abuses public space. The Bairro Alto, in Lisbon (main cultural, creative and bohemian quarter of the city – cf. Costa 2007, 2009 - particularly attractive to cultural and identity expression of the subcultures), was in this condition (Campos, 2009). Its facades and urban facilities were heavily appropriated by stickers, tags and stencils produced by regulars who saw in the quarter associated with bohemia, nightlife, alternative subcultures and liminality an outstanding place for the visibility of their work, a great spot that polarized the most reputed fringes of the metropolitan art world, in the center of the city, and also attracted international “names”, such as *Banksy* or others (for a more detailed approach to the Lisbon graffiti urban scene, cf. Campos, 2007, 2009; Ferro 2011).

It is in this context, marked by huge use conflicts (most noticeable the ones amongst the dwellers; owners of shops and nightlife; and users of the quarter – cf Costa, 2007, 2009, 2013) that the hygiene department of Lisbon City Council started in October 2008 a program targeting the cleaning of the facades of the quarter. The program was centered in its main streets (the most visible and most appropriated ones, essentially in the more vibrant southeast area of Bairro Alto) under the slogan of “changing the image of the quarter”, with the newly president of the City Council, António Costa, declaring that “who paints the city have to understand that crime doesn’t compensate” (António Costa, Mayor of Lisbon, in Público/Agência *Lusa*, 13/10/2008) and promising to strengthen the punishment for vandalism. Combined with anti-graffiti new rules, the policing in the quarter was increased, a study for the installation of surveillance cameras was commissioned, a 30% increase on public lighting was pursued, a new system of cleaning the streets and waste collection was developed, and the schedule of nightlife spots (that according to the dwellers of the quarter were responsible by the untenable milieus) was restricted (cf. Costa, 2007, 2009, 2013, Costa e Lopes, 2012). This policy effectively promoted the cleaning of the facades and also the erasure of some drawings with crucial value in national street art landscape, idea almost unanimously shared by the stakeholders interviewed within this research, including city council departments.

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But at the same time, on the other hand, the City Council creates the Urban Art Gallery (GAU - Galeria de Arte Urbana) under the responsibility of Department of Cultural Heritage (DPC - Departamento de Património Cultural). Among others responsibilities GAU was in charge of the management of a set of “outdoors” dedicated to street art, in Calçada da Glória, one of the main entrances of the Bairro Alto. This space should be assumed as a place for “the good art that comes there to be created” (António Costa, Mayor of Lisbon, in Público/Agência Lusa, 13/10/2008), assuming the importance of this “new art” in the city and in national art scene.

Over the last five years these policies implemented by city council in Bairro Alto have been developed and have been extended to other parts of the city. On one hand, cleaning measures were promoted, recruiting private companies to clean and protect the facades, developing new campaigns, or distributing “cleaning kits” to local dwellers so that they could actively keep “clean” their properties (city council distributed kits composed by one paint roller, paint roller tray, goggles, gloves, anti-graffiti ink and varnish remover). On the other hand (and that is probably the most interesting and innovative side of the policy), through the actions and initiatives of GAU, a progressive and consistent strategy was developed, supporting several artistic interventions in the city, and settling new forms of dealing with street art in diverse urban realities.

In practice, this twofold (and somehow quite schizophrenic) political strategy, with roots related to different factors and contingencies, combine the reaction to public pressure and the use conflicts felt in some areas of the city, with more diffuse factors and individual motivations. Aspects associated with political leadership issues, results of reflexive academic projects, or personal motivations of the different actors (municipality technicians, artists, gatekeepers) that were involved in this evolution were crucial to the development of the public action. We cannot say though that these actions consubstantiate a clear strategy or policy towards the promotion of urban interventions in public space by the local authorities (which can be an important role to urban revitalization - cf. Lopes, 2012). Instead, they reflect disperse public interventions that have been developed and affirmed in the framework of complex municipal dynamics, giving expression to different policy objectives and instruments, more or less organized in departments’ actions, with distinct origins and often subject to divergent logics. It is not easy to reconcile the various interests involved, both public and private, nor the expression of so distinguished strands and objectives for policy action (and the diverse public interests they represent), such as the promotion of urban intervention in public space vs. the management of interests and expectations of residents and users in relation to the “quality” and “hygiene” of public space, for instance. This is exemplarily expressed in the two quotes of

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Lisbon City Council Mayor, above cited, both made on the same occasion, and by the apparently paradoxical “multiple” municipal strategy. However, this strategy has gained progressively consistency and quickly consolidated, mostly due to the action of the Department of Cultural Heritage and particularly, the affirmation of Urban Art Gallery (GAU).

The GAU, as we’ve seen, arises from an attempt to manage and regulate the street art in Lisbon. As a counterpoint to the erasing program that is being conducted in Bairro Alto those days, the program starts with the allocation of an “institutional” “legal” space for the practice of street art, an open air gallery (which named GAU itself), in the center of the historical city, in one of the main entrances of Bairro Alto. Seven outdoors, similar to those used in advertising, were placed in *Calçada da Glória*, (supported by private and public partners, like *Friday’s Project*, *JCDecaux* and *Portugal Tourism*), and dedicated to graffiti and street art, regulated and managed by GAU. These outdoors continue until now to receive new graffiti work from different writers that enter in the events and competitions promoted by GAU, with open calls twice per year, for that place. In parallel, some meters away, an extension of this reality appears: it’s what can be found in *Largo da Oliveirinha*, a contiguous public space (including the walls of several private properties) also in *Calçada da Glória*, which can be used by writers, more informally, though with GAU’s tacit approval, without a competition or authorization.

The ideas previously explored in *Calçada da Glória* (actual site of the open-air urban art gallery), have been developed and expanded to other parts of the city in the last years, embracing several projects, with diverse focuses, some of them with special visibility in the city (and impact in its external image) as the project *CRONO* or the project *Reciclar o olhar*.

The project *CRONO* (cf. <http://cargocollective.com/Crono/Blog>) is one of the most emblematic and visible within GAU’s action. In this project the City Council structure was partner of the initiative developed by an association (ACA - *Associação Azáfama Cidadina*), involving some central names in the Portuguese graffiti art scene (such as Alexandre Farto, aka Vhils, Portuguese internationally most renowned artist in this field, Angelo Milano, creator of FAME Festival, or Pedro Soares Neves, ex-graffiter and designer). Developed in four moments of the year (corresponding to each season) it brought to public space several artistic appropriations, created by internationally influent names of this art world, with “a compromise with urban art based in the premise that we are all ephemeral, as well as, all our creations” (excerpt from *CRONO* manifest). Central spaces of the city received works of some of the internationally most important artists of street art and graffiti, such as *Gêmeos*, *Blu* or *Sam*, (that appropriated expectant buildings on *Av. Fontes Pereira de Melo*, one of the main streets of Lisbon), invited by city council. The project had a considerable mediatic impact, and won extra

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international visibility when the graffiti of the *Gêmeos* and the *Blu* was considered by the newspaper *The Guardian* one of ten best of the world, placing decisively Lisbon in the street art international routes.

The project *Reciclar o olhar* (“recycling the look”), although developed with a quite different logic and objectives, is also one of the most emblematic of GAU’s initiative. In this project the City Council department “invited” (through open calls) the general public to paint some of the city bottle containers, the “*vidrões*” (bottle dumpsters, for glass recycling). This more “democratic” project initiated with a small portion of the city’s “*vidrões*” (just some dozens), but due to its success quickly hit the several hundred, in successive editions of the initiative. Thus, actually we can find pieces developed by renowned artists, side by side with amateurs, by child groups or even by “seventy years ladies” (as is commonly emphasized by GAU’s executives), all around Lisbon. The painting of five garbage trucks, by national writers, was also part of this project, in an initial period.

Naturally, it is not our intention to extend the description to all initiatives sponsored or supported by GAU during these years. These include more socially or inclusion oriented projects and educational work (e.g., in middle class neighborhoods – like Telheiras – or in more deprived communities – e.g. Flamenga); the legalization of other spots for intervention; the organization of regular urban art competitions; the development of organized tours to urban art circuits (e.g. Go art program) and other media oriented activities; the collaboration with other city council departments (eg. in the licensing of urban art activities, or through the collaboration in specific works – e.g., with the organization of an intervention on the walls of a new municipal parking lot); or even the work in the areas of research, dissemination and other documental and publishing work (cf. GAU’s webpage, for more information on their activity: <https://www.facebook.com/galeriadearteurbana>). But it is important to highlight here the mainstreaming and visibility this form of art won in the city. Along the five years of the GAU existence, they developed several projects and contributed to the collection, reflection, study and divulgation of the graffiti and street art in Portugal. Although inspired on similar projects in other cities such as Philadelphia² or Rotterdam³, GAU’s action has an innovative side, which led to recent requests and inquires by cities like Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro in the quest of the implementation of similar projects, as well as, to several awards⁴.

² Mural of Arts, association established in 1984, in order to use the graffiti and street art as a “weapon” against to violence in the city of Philadelphia.

³ Project “Rua festival” developed in Rotterdam in 2009, by Brazilian association Caramundo which took nine Brazilian artists to Rotterdam to paint some facades.

⁴ e.g. *Ignasi de Lecea Award*, attributed by Public Art & Urban Design Observatory of Barcelona.

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Summing up, a project which was at a certain extent developed by the city council as a reactive policy vis-à-vis the controversy of the cleaning of Bairro Alto facades, had generated a space to the creation of institutionalized and legal graffiti and street art, in the vicinity of the area that has been cleaned, which was a starting point for a much bigger project that have been developed through last years, due to the action of the players involved. Naturally, this is not a strategy unanimously acknowledged or recognized by the entire community of writers, as explored in next chapter. Neither is an immediate way of connecting and linking street art with more institutionalized art worlds, via the increased porosity with contemporary art markets, galleries, or even academia. It is a political and technical project which was essentially triggered by the social animosity against the art world, which lead to the reaction of policy makers, in multiple fronts, on one hand coping with these complains, but on the other hand developing a more grassroots oriented work with the art world and the graffiti's community towards the regulation and institutionalization of their activity. All the other debates that we can draw from this, and that will be analyzed in subsequent sections (e.g., the contestation within the street art scene; the commodification and instrumentalization issues; the progressive artistic legitimization by traditional academia and visual arts art worlds; etc.) were in this case essentially posterior to the policy intervention, and not precedent to it. This does not mean that these issues were not emerging or latent in each of these fields, naturally, but just that they were greatly amplified by the institutionalization of the policy. Anyway, at its origins, this represented essentially a bottom-up approach to urban development problems, targeted to non-mainstream segments of the local community, and assuming a normative intervention that envisages, even if implicitly, urban development. So, it configures an alternative development policy, as defined in the previous section. In the next sections, we will discuss and try to understand the consequences and main challenges raised by these interventions to the city and to the art world.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CITY AND ITS INSTITUTIONS: CHALLENGING URBAN STRATEGIES, POLICY INSTRUMENTS AND GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS

The city council actions described in the previous chapter are not neutral to the city or its actors. They have important impacts and consequences on urban realm, in artistic terms, naturally, but also in social, economic, urban or governance fields.

These implications can be observed and assessed in a multitude of aspects such as the quality of life of its residents and of city users; the jobs and economic growth they can generate; the real estate value (with the appreciation and depreciation mechanisms induced by them); the physical conditions of preservation of the buildings; the symbolic affirmation of the city (and the image of some of its neighborhoods); the social inclusion and participation dynamics (enabling or not empowerment and skills enhancement); the expressions of group's identities and citizenship (e.g via promotion of sense of belonging and identity, in local population, but also in the writers and users and in their appropriation of space), or the best-practices achievements dissemination in terms of governance and inter-institutional cooperation (particularly in experiences in the field of coordination and institutional articulation).

Our aim in this section is to discuss the ways these impacts flow on those diverse dimensions of urban life and on city experience (understanding how they promote, for instance, economic value, symbolic reputation, social inclusion and community participation) as well as on the organization of the city and its different territories.

Two main aspects are inherent to our discussion, and can be considered as our departing points for it. One is that this non-neutral action of policy makers is, naturally, also confronted with a diversity of perceptions and interests of its receivers. An urban/local street art policy is naturally confronted with a wide diversity of recipients and of distinct (and often contradictory) public interests. For whom is (or should be) designed and oriented this policy? For the city users? For local residents? For art lovers/consumers? For pass-byers? For tourists? For other city users, more interested on a "clean" city, rather than on street art? For the artist⁵? For the art world? For the owners of the buildings? For the critics, the gatekeepers and the cultural mediators? We have to assume this diverse "local" community (and their multiple and legitimate expectations) as final beneficiaries of a local urban policy concerning urban/street art. In effect, the city, as a place of constant interactions and multiple experiences, will never be a

⁵ And is it an artist? the discussion on the "artistic" intentionality of (most of) the street artists would be also fundamental here...

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transversal space, as what is the basis for identity and common interest for some, is not for others. Moreover, distinctive mechanisms and liminality strategies are fundamental for the affirmation both in the art worlds and in the subcultures and groups where these practices arise. So we are dealing with diverse forms of identity in the city, and changes on the institutional assumptions regarding its image (as the ones induced by this policy) may create a new sense of belonging or local identity to their residents, users and writers, but also opposition and conflict, as interests on opposite sides of the discussion arise. Not all residents and users of the city will accept with satisfaction this type of measures by City Council, and the same will happen within writers' communities or other parts of the art world (contemporary art market, galleries, academy, etc.). The local authorities have to be constantly managing these problems and conflicts (in material and symbolic arenas), as their policy navigates on this razor's edge.

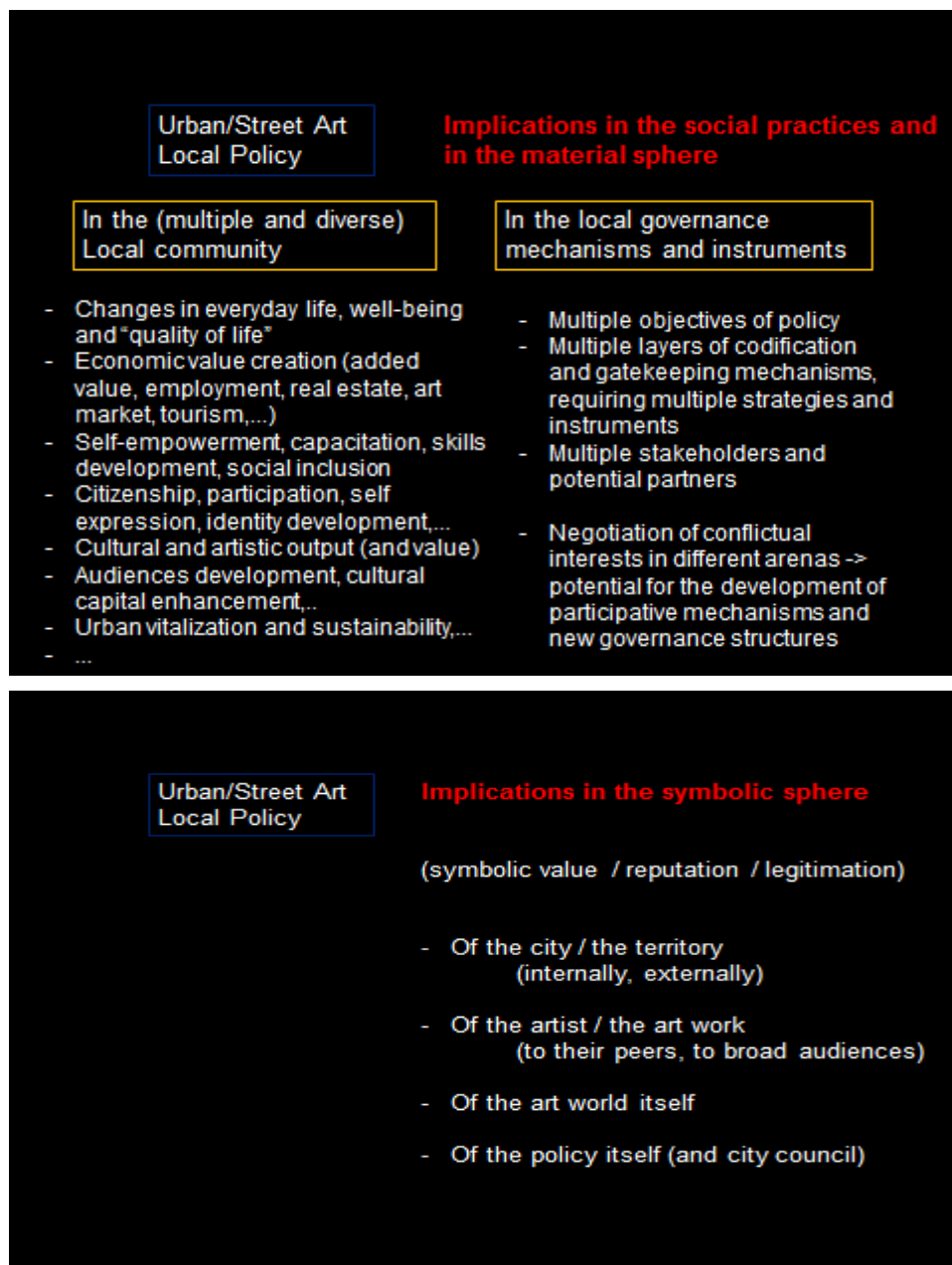
The other aspect relates to the discussion on the institutionalization of street art and all its dilemmas. That is a fundamental question concerning an art expression rooted in public space, un-owned location that belongs to all, the ideal place to the expression of the self, away from the corset of art galleries, where all voices without registration can leave their mark. This brings back the old question about the legitimacy to define the right or wrong, or what is art and what is not, especially within a public space that belongs to all its stakeholders. Even within the world of art galleries that is unreal: there is a predisposition of its visitors for an exchange of experiences caused by a particular work that will lead to a consideration and qualitative opinion about the object observed. But when the audience goes to an art gallery is expectant to see something, and assumes that condition, which does not happen in public space, that is composed of multiple layers of encoded meanings that go unnoticed to the vast majority of passers-by, and even when they are visible, they may or may not be considered art, depending on the readability of the work or message, and on the cultural capital and capabilities of the de-codifier. On the limit, we can even ask ourselves if the author wanted to produce a piece of art or not, questioning his own artistic intentionality, as graffiti has often (essentially) a social or political expression at its genesis (cf. Campos, 2007) and, using famous Andy Warhol's quote "art is what you can get away with".

Moving away from this discussion about the symbolic and artistic value of the elements in public space, our interest is to focus on its impact on urban life and on the organization of the city. In effect, these multiple effects are felt in diverse aspects of urban development such as in the generation of economic value, the construction of symbolic values and reputations, the enhancement of inclusion and participation, the reinforcement of conflict mechanisms (both in material and symbolic arenas) or the commodification of creative and exhibition processes.

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These questions bring an interesting set of key-challenges for the city and for the multiple agents involved, as well as for the (re)definition of urban policies. Figure 1 systematize schematically the main challenges identified and the main controversial aspects that should be reflected by public policies in these areas, which are for us the key-factors that are challenging the success of this specific alternative urban policy and must be subject of special attention and detailed analysis, in each situation, by public policies promoters.

Figure 1: Main implications of local/urban street art policy for the city and its institutions (in social practices, in material sphere, in symbolic sphere)



Source: authors' elaboration.

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A first level of implications in social practices and in the material, sphere relate to the impacts on local community, which should be here acknowledged in its wide multiplicity and diversity. All the diverse dimensions of well-being of their users and of sustainable development processes (economic efficiency, social inclusion, environmental quality, civic participation, and cultural expression) must be considered here.

Individually, these interventions provide well-being and quality of life to the city and (some of) its users. Naturally, in the perspective of the city council, this implies the management of the diverse interests and of conflicts, face to the different values of “well-being” and “quality of life” of its citizens. This implies discussing the “urban quality” associated to the interventions, and their impact on the different kind of users of the territory. For which of the users are they aimed? And are they succeeding on this? Are they enhancing the quality of life and wellbeing for residents and/or for city users? And which ones have the right to be satisfied? In effect, for many residents "urban quality" will be eventually preferably linked to clean walls and urban hygiene (and urban interventions are often assumed as negative externalities to some locals, while for other are art). Public interest managers have to permanently cope with the will for a sensation of greater quality of life and security for some and with the right for freedom of expression in public space for others. This leads to the discussion on the conflicts of use among residents and users of public space, related with the mechanisms of the appropriation of public sphere: Which public space is convenient to intervene? Which appropriation of it should be enhanced? Which conflicts of uses exist and why are they relevant? This is a fundamental aspect for the structuration of an urban art local policy, and in the Bairro Alto case, it was effectively the polarization of positions which triggered the city council involvement, the formation of GAU, and the “official” allocation of public space for street art.

In parallel, in addition to their more pure direct artistic or aesthetic impacts, these interventions provide economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts to the whole of the city, and opportunities in all these fields that have to be managed. They have an increasing potential for economic value creation, generating added value, employment, and also indirect multiplication effects on real estate, art market or tourism, for instance. Local policy makers should be aware that these interventions (like other artistic interventions in public or private space) are able to raise symbolic value which could be translated into economic value, which is then eventually drained to the owners of the respective real estate (by market or by externalities – e.g. gentrification processes). They have naturally to position themselves in relation to this in their daily decisions. But they can also manage their position regarding the potential for parallel economic exploration of these issues (e.g., coping with the solicitations for private partnerships, or the association to marketing and advertisement campaigns), and their capacity of creating

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value in a multiplicity of businesses and value chains (from tourism, to creative industries or other). Street art policies have also implications in the social sphere, enhancing self-empowerment, personal capacitation, skills development, and more widely, social integration and inclusion. The effective potential for promoting citizenship and civic engagement and enhance participation of local communities (e.g. Telheiras and Flamengo projects of GAU), while decreasing social conflicts, can also be in the scope of the definition of these policies. This brings new questions and challenges also in this field (e.g., which relationship with the local community and mediators/gatekeepers? Which involvement of the municipality as intermediary? Filtering? Selecting? Promoting value and reputation?). Naturally, the management of these issues, as well as the questions related with the enhancement of identities, self-expression, participation and citizenship, cannot be seen as disconnected from all the issues related to cultural and artistic outputs themselves (and their cultural value). By the same token, the impact of these local street art policies on audiences' development and on cultural capital enhancement should not be neglected. City council policy designers need to be aware of the potential to promote cultural/artistic participation and audiences' development (e.g. the case of the bottle banks project by GAU), outside and inside the "art worlds" and have to cope with their role as public authorities in audiences development and in the legitimization of this art field. Finally, even in the dimension of urban vitalization and sustainability, these interventions can have important impacts. Their potential as a source of qualification (and conservation) of abandoned, expectant or disqualified spaces bring also challenges to public authorities: Which formal or informal mechanisms can be used to promote sustainable dynamics in this field? Which relation these processes have with the risks of improving gentrification processes in these areas or in historical and cultural-driven areas (e.g., Bairro Alto case) where urban art is on one hand mobilized to create value, but on the other hand is source of deep territorial conflicts and uneven power relations?

A second level of impacts, still considering the social practices and the material sphere, is felt in the local governance mechanisms and its instruments, including the own policy objectives and tools. We are facing here complex processes of decision, crossing multiple levels of action and a wide diversity of receivers: we should be aware of the multiple objectives of policy; of the multiple layers of codification and gatekeeping mechanisms, requiring a combination of strategies and instruments; and of the multiple stakeholders and potential partners for these policies. To intervene in this field, city council must be aware of the various codification mechanisms of public space and the multiple rationalities and objectives of the agents involved (as well as its different representations about the city and the urban "quality of life"), and must learn how to understand and deal with the multiple layers of codification of the

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city (and to cope with a diversity of motivations, rationales, expectations amongst their citizens). This implies a continuous negotiation of conflictual interests in different arenas, as seen, but also represents a potential for the development of new participative mechanisms and the enhancement of (new) governance structures. These brings the discussion on the potential in terms of new governance practices and institutional articulation, on one hand, inside the municipality and the City Council structure (eg, interdepartmental relations), and on the other hand, between this and the local community (need for dialogue, consultation and coordination with local representatives). Dealing with the potential for new governance practices (both at intra/inter-municipal levels) should be thus a crucial concern on daily activity of these structures.

A third level of impacts can be related to the implications in the symbolic sphere. These are fundamental aspects in the management of the art world, and local policy makers dealing with street art have to be conscious of all implications of their activity in the mechanisms of creation of symbolic value and on reputation building and legitimation processes. This is felt at different levels. One is the symbolic value of the territory or of the city itself (both internally and externally). Local policy makers should be aware and manage the potential for symbolic affirmation of the city and the interest of this strategy regarding their own mission (e.g., concerning GAU activity, the enormous international visibility of Fontes Pereira de Melo Avenue interventions, in the scope of CRONO Project; or the importance of Bairro Alto reputation in international street art routes). Its relation with city branding strategies can be considered, though admitting that tourist attractiveness and symbolic mainstreaming are not (completely) compatible with reputation building mechanisms within the art world. In parallel, the impacts are naturally evident also in the reputation building mechanisms and legitimization processes of the artist and its art work (both to their peers within the specific art world, and to broader audiences), and also of the art world itself. The symbolic affirmation mechanisms within the diverse graffitiers' communities and their visibility in the urban public space (and their geographies) should be analyzed by local policy officers, and action should be thought accordingly. Finally, the symbolic affirmation of the policy itself (and of city council action) is also played in these processes. The development of a local policy towards street art can be (even by its own nature, as a less conventional field for action, or by its grassroots nature) a particularly interesting stage for a political affirmation of city council's government face to the city and to the community. A reflexive approach the potential of this policy and of the promotion/regulation of this specific artistic expression, is thus essential, assessing its political potential, both internally to city council (e.g., GAU department vs other structures) and vis-à-vis community (involving the reputation of the city Executive as a whole).

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ART WORLD: CHALLENGING THE RELATION BETWEEN URBAN POLICY AND ART WORLD STRUCTURING MECHANISMS

The graffiti and street art, as we were describing in the previous chapters, is by nature an artistic expression that is not easily institutionalizable. Then, doubts regarding their attempt of institutionalization by public policies (in this case by Lisbon City Council - CML) naturally emerge. In this section we briefly discuss these effects for this specific art world and their relation with municipal policies. A policy aiming the institutionalization of this artistic practice will not be easy, and will by nature discussable and polemic, having effects that require to be further enquired in detail.

In effect, there are implications in terms of the artistic qualities and types of the art works, the artists' careers and their recognition; the individual and collective work practices; or the reputation of the art world itself. It will be important thus to discuss, in this framework, which are the implications of institutionalizing an artistic practice that is by its own nature anti-institutionalization.

The singularity of this "art form" was the possibility of creation away from the legitimacy of artistic worlds. It was characterized to be an art that wasn't looking for be art (in the conventional sense of the term), looking to leave a "message", a "gesture" or an "artistic expression" in the public space, where issues such as the support and connection to the place of creation were assumed as some of the aspects of greatest relevance. When the CML tries to establish sites and supports for creation, as well as a selection of artists that work in certain areas of the city, is clearly confronting and challenging some of the ideologies and "rules" that are in the genesis of this art, and breaking some of the distance that existed between an art accessible to everyone and conventional art, restricted to some. It is a situation that is not easy to manage on the part of GAU and CML: How can we maintain a form of expression that messes with issues such as the concept of ownership, urban cleanliness or messages with "unconventional" content? When the vast majority of people who are confronted with them don't understand them, because they are produced to circulate within a world of codes and signs where the aim is not artistic statement, but a statement within a group of individuals, or just passing a simple message.

It is in this context of contradictions and conflicts of use that matters to analyze and understand the graffiti and street art as a form of art/expression that can assume various forms, and that the city should be capable of assimilating it in its various forms. Legitimized or illegal, they coexist in the public space, communicating in diverse ways, as they have distinct purposes

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and intentions and are targeted at different audiences. This is suggested by some of the greatest names in the world of street art of our times, who both work “for hire” to art galleries and do their “illegal graffiti” which is essential for their reputation building within their (art and not only) worlds⁶.

Debating the public space is to speak of construction, of overlapping layers that are superimposed throughout history. In this sense it does not make sense to think about the city as a “blank canvas” which should be kept immaculately, when it was not for thousands of years. So we must understand the city as a place that is being built by a number of individuals, some with more artistic projection than others, but both contributing to its evolution. With this we can say that the city is an ephemeral local, where what is real today, will not be tomorrow. In this sense, the cleaning measures promoted by CML can be seen as a normal proceeding. However, they accelerate a process of ephemerality that this type of art is already predisposed to. Often the digital support of the play produced (a video, a documental photo) turns more important than the original art piece itself, quickly spreading on blogs and specialized sites, due to the speed with which this type of interventions appear and disappear from the public space.

However, this type of restrictive measures can limit initiatives in the city to a small group of individuals, thus increasing the CML’s and specifically the GAU’s role as cultural mediator. Because no matter how righteous that public procurement can be, in the end, it will be selected the “best” work for exhibition in an outdoor space, as if it is a “normal” piece of art that were to be purchased or brokered by a gallery, in an attempt to create value for a capitalist market. On the contrary, other GAU’s projects, such as “Reciclar o olhar”, opening to broader audiences the possibility of painting glass recycling recipients, being more democratic, in the sense of the concept of “art for all”, due to the high number of bottle banks in the city have been providing a greater dispersion of “artistic” actors. However, this kind of action is not naturally compatible, by their own nature, with the reputation and art value creation mechanisms within the art world.

Having all these issues in mind, it will be interesting on further work to understand more deeply which is the interpretation of the graffiter community in relation to this type of measure, as well as to perceive the related to the territorialisation of graffiti, trying to figure out different areas and intervention modes in the city. It is considerable the difference between different types of graffiti found in different areas of the city, indicating different spatial logics and art world’s geographic structuring mechanisms. Even city council cleaning measures only

⁶ See how such is assumed by “Os Gémeos”, in the evocative documentary of their exhibition at CCB (Belém Cultural Center, Lisbon), in 2010 where they make a clear distinction between what they develop on the streets and what they produce to an art gallery, assuming things diversely, although both valid.

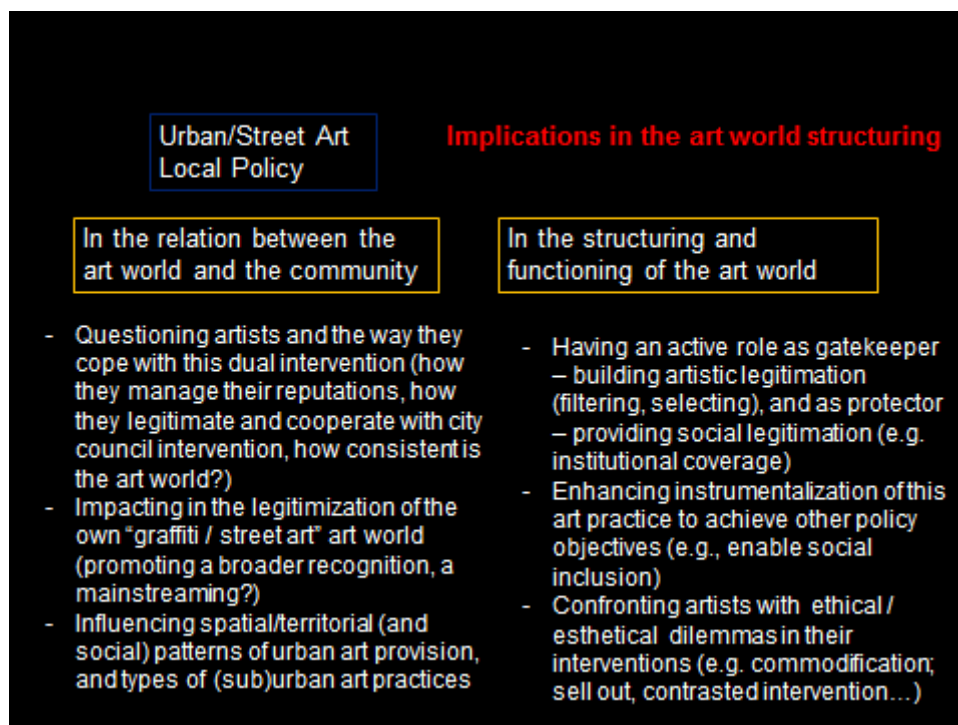
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happened in some specific areas of the city, remaining other completely graffitied, which raises also the issue of this being more a problem of policy mediatisation than anything else.

Considering these different aspects, Figure 2 systematizes schematically the central controversial issues that can be identified as fundamental aspects for further analysis and discussion in terms of policy (re)design purposes, related to the impacts within the art world.

These aspects represent the main challenges and controversies to be considered regarding the implications of these policies in the art world. For us, two main types of impacts must be recognized and worked, regarding art world structuring.

Figure 2: Main implications of local/urban street art policy in the art world structuring



Source: authors' elaboration.

On one hand, a set of challenges linked to the relation between the art world and the community. Local policy towards street/urban art must take into account that the intervention of the city council will have impacts on the way artists develop and reflect their activities and on the way their activity is legitimated by their own art world. Issues on how do artists cope with this dual intervention, collaborating on more "institutional initiatives" (be it GAU, be it entrance on market circuits and other galleries) and keeping their more "transgressive" and liminal activity, are central here. Many of them manage constantly the "dual" reputation, participating on institutional events and collaborating with GAU, but at the same time keeping their precedent graffiti activity on illegal walls or trains, for instance, in order to keep their reputation in their original (and social) worlds (and even to assure the security of their new work...),

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and keeping alive their expressive and artistic impulses. The art world itself (and its self-representations) is at cause, and it would be interesting a discussion on the consistency of this art world – or art worlds -, considering the diversity of fields of legitimation within each of these art worlds. In parallel, city council's action has also direct impacts in the legitimization of the own “graffiti / street art” art world, by its gatekeeping effects (promoting a broader recognition of it for larger audiences), and this surely amplify the reputational effects (positive and negative, in their diversity) and their consequences in its organization, structuring, and social, economic and political recognition. This local policy has also territorial impacts, which will influence the spatial patterns of the art world. An increased centrality in the city of an originally peripheral cultural practice (symbolically, socially, but also geographically) implies a discussion on the existence of different spatial/territorial urban art types, that is, an understanding of the territorialization of urban arts, and of the effects of the urban policy on them, monitoring (and mapping) the evolution of the different (sub)urban art worlds.

On the other hand, a set of challenges more directly related to the structuring and the functioning of the art world itself. Voluntarily or not, city council will have always in this process an important role as gatekeeper itself (e.g. filtering, selecting, legitimizing), and should reflect on all its impacts. Municipal services develop a role in the selection of artists and collaborators, and in the reputation building processes, being an active gatekeeper from the moment it organizes events, manage a gallery and intervene directly in the art world, legitimizing some artists in relation to others, and providing institutional coverage that can be important for the development of some specific artistic processes. This brings important challenges to manage, which are not easy to solve, as city council should represents general public interest and not particular interests, and these tensions inevitable will arise. In parallel, all the issues related to instrumentalization (or even domestication) of this artistic practice in order to achieve other policy objectives (e.g. to enable and promote social inclusion, or to promote urban regeneration) have to be considered. Frequently arose in all the discussions on street art policies (but also on creative and cultural policies more in general), this issue has also to be regularly thought and managed consciously by policy makers as its impacts in the structuring of the art world are fundamental. These interventions bring also diverse ethical/esthetical dilemmas to street artists (e.g. commodification; the idea of “selling out”; the intervention on “hostile” sets as a bank building, etc.). The relation between transgression and commodification, and the ethic and aesthetic dilemmas that these issues put to the artist (e.g. for an artist to be intervening in the building of a real estate fund and being creating economic value for it), are also a concern that public policy designers should have in consideration when dealing with it street art local interventions.

5. CONCLUDING NOTE

This paper aimed to raise some issues and controversial points on an alternative urban policy developed in Lisbon around the management of the diverse aspects related to street art and the graffiti art world. Drawing upon the experience of Lisbon City Council's "Urban Art Gallery" (GAU), we aimed to discuss the main challenges for an innovative local policy when confronted with a complex art world and the multiple layers of uses, signs, symbols and power relations that a city is. All these manifest in a multitude of conflicts, territorially expressed, which are naturally embedded on different public and private interests and on distinct perceptions and wills on what a city should be.

The expression of all these layers of conflict in the public realm demands an active urban public policy, in the name of the diverse kinds of public interests (artistic expression, urban quality of life, urban revitalization, social inclusion, participation and civic expression, etc.) which are inherent to many of those aspects. Public authorities, mandated and empowered to defend those mutual (but many times conflicting) public interests have to manage those tensions with particular difficulties, face to the need to correspond to contradictory policy objectives and instruments, but also, increasingly, to the need to move on the shaky ground of the management of uncertain impacts and of acting on usually not well-known and complex domains (like the functioning of "art worlds", mostly less formal ones like the street art one). In this framework, and departing from the specific case study of this local urban policy, it were identified in this text a set of main challenges and controversies to be considered in the discussion on the (re)design of urban policies in this specific field, regarding their implications both for the city and its institutions and for the respective art world.

From this analysis results a conviction about the need to enhance a permanent management of the tensions between the process of institutionalization of graffiti and street art inherent to these policies and the several layers of impacts that this action have on urban life and on the structuring of this art world: impacts in the creative dynamics themselves (and degree of creativity and artistic value); in the artistic reputation building mechanisms; in the urban image (and in the symbolic management of the territories involved); in the economic value creation mechanisms (including real estate valorization and gentrification processes); in the social value enhancement, in the promotion of inclusion, participation and citizenship mechanisms; and in the governance of the use conflicts verified in the city.

Having this in mind, policy strategic guidelines must take into account the need to cross objectives and instruments of different policies and to be self-aware of the system's functioning

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and of the need to understand deeply the multiple implications of policy actions in the urban system and in the art worlds. They must be conscious that to manage these implications requires making choices (between diverse agents, with diverse positions, diverse rationales, diverse motivations, diverse interests), and this requires not only the definition of policy priorities but also a careful previous assessment of their multiple and different impacts. Finally, they must be aware of the need to permanently assess the evolution at the different levels of these implications, developing a continuous monitoring strategy and readjusting the strategy concerning the on-time impacts in the city communities and in the art world verified within this process.

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