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Sustainability through Art

Ana Cruz Lopes^{a*}; João Farinha^b; Miguel Amado^c

^aDepartment of Civil Engineering, FCT, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Caparica 2829–516, Portugal

^bDepartment of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, FCT, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Caparica 2829–516, Portugal

^cCERIS - Civil Engineering Research and Innovation for Sustainability, IST Universidade de Lisboa, 1049-001 Lisboa, Portugal

Abstract

One of the most prominent urban problems European cities face, is not only the physical degradation of its historic city centers, but also the degradation of their social, economic and environmental context. Moreover, common rehabilitation methods and strategies are often unsuccessful combatting such problem, and new ways and strategies must be researched, tested, and implemented under a new sustainable development policy.

Creativity and artistic activities can play an important role in the resolution of this problem. For example, the re-occupation of derelict buildings, through creative and innovative activities, can contribute to resolving the primary issue.

While analyzing a comparative case study using three examples: LxFactory in Lisbon, Ateneu Popular 9 Barris in Barcelona, and 59 Rivoli in Paris, it's possible to conclude that their rehabilitation through art and culture, could produce positive side effects leading to social renovation and solid economic activity within itself and its surrounding area, creating new local economies, jobs, new tourists attractions, real estate opportunities and more.

Considering the current standpoint and outlook on rehabilitation, as an action and movement of sustainability, especially at the environmental level, and associating it with the arts and culture movement, will allow it to solve the social and economic problem simultaneously. By introducing new dynamic living spaces in unoccupied and derelict buildings also re-energizes the economic value of the building as well as, most importantly, regenerating the actual city.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +212948300.

E-mail address: acpl@fct.unl.pt

1. Introduction

Sustainability through art, in its various contexts and dimensions, incorporated in the implementation of artistic and cultural activities in the cities (and societies), is expressed on an approach that can be cemented in the intrinsic principles of Sustainable Development and the freedom of creative expression.

Art and culture can play an important role in the search for sustainable societies, though they are still too often neglected [1]. They have been considered secondary in urban development policies and therefore are not considered as their potential promoters. However, the importance of art, as a catalyst of culture and society, is historically indisputable [2]. Man's need to express itself through art and creativity has always followed the city's evolution.

By using art and culture as social development tools, it is possible to overcome various social problems, to promote the animation of public spaces, to enable the creation of value in the form of physical facilities, as well as the quality of the built environment [3].

The rehabilitation of the building stock, promotes the protection and conservation of the cultural heritage, and may be considered as an enhancer factor of sustainability, contributing to the reduction of impacts on the environment [4], as well as an effective strategy for the promotion of Sustainable Development.

Through the analysis of three cases studies, and their comparative study, it is argued that the artistic and cultural activities, installed in derelict or vacant buildings, should be framed within Sustainable Development, particularly for the benefit of the social dimension.

2. Methodology

The methodology was based on a sequence of actions that allowed the measurement of the influence of art on Sustainable Development.

This article uses a comparative study to determine whether rehabilitation through art somehow impacts its urban environment.

Through the comparison of different case studies, it was sought to identify and establish the importance of cultural and artistic activities as developers of the urban fabric. The three case studies chosen had some similarities. All chosen interventions occupied buildings that were either in use or vacant, with the intention of giving them a new use with artistic, cultural or creative activities. Another mandatory feature was the existence of rehabilitation works, after the implementation of the case studies. The cases were all located in consolidated urban areas, in the European Continent.

Following the analysis of the three case studies, it was possible to identify the axes of action, allowing their subsequent evaluation. They were selected through the comparative assessment criteria, which revealed their relevance, reflecting the specificities of each case study. The axes were then associated to the Sustainable Development dimensions, that includes environmental, social and economic factors.

The organization of the paper, and the sequence of actions used in this methodology are represented in the figures presented below (Fig. 1).

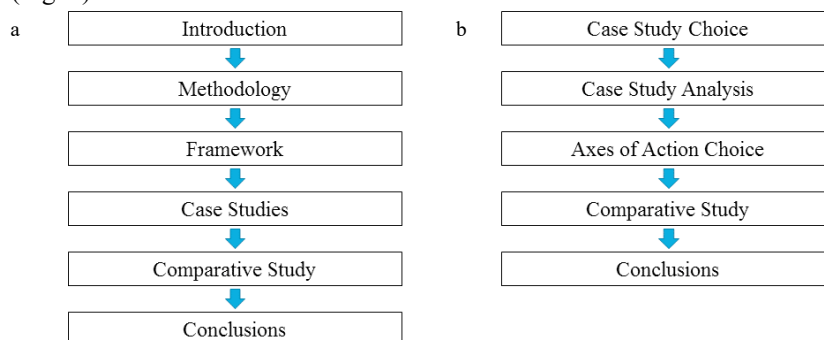


Fig. 1. (a) Paper organization; (b) Methodological Structure.

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