

Urban Art and Cultural Travel

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Abstract

The present critical essay puts forward the notion of a reflective engagement with the nexus between urban art and cultural travel, drawing chiefly upon the theoretical insights of tourism studies. Through a combination of theoretical and empirical arguments, the current paper explores the historical and theoretical contexts of the art and tourism scenes, thereby revealing the development and rise of urban art and cultural tourism. This discourse gave rise to academic reflection, thereby exposing the contentious and divergent positions held between fields of study and practices that proved challenging to resolve. The following discussion aims to provide an empirical representation of the theoretical discussion of this type of association. In order to this end, an overview of successful projects in Portugal and Germany will be provided. It is demonstrated that public and private organisations became cognisant of the potency of this art form, leading to the commencement of initiatives that fostered its development. This underscores the significance of both urban art and cultural travel for the sustenance of culture. It is argued that this approach contributes to the safeguarding of both tangible and intangible heritage aspects of communities.

Keywords

urban art; cultural travel; art tourism; Portugal; Germany

1. Introduction

Globalisation has crossed borders. Cities have become more similar. There is thus a repetition of a capitalist aesthetic in large urban centres, whether through advertising or architecture. It was against this system of reproduction that urban art arose, as a denunciation of the current capitalist configuration. Despite this origin, today's public art contributes to one of the protagonists of the capitalist world: tourism. In 2022, international tourism revenues reached US\$ 1 trillion, recovering the sector that suffered from the lockdown imposed by the pandemic (UNWTO, 2023).

Urban art has become a travel attraction, because when it is applied to a particular place, with a peculiar visual language, it arouses the interest of visitors as well as government and private organisations. Public and private companies contact visual artists to create works

that are contextualised with the local culture, enhancing identity and favouring the flow of tourists. It is this trend that this critical essay deals with, presenting the artistic expressions produced for the urban public space as an attraction in the cultural travel segment today.

Starting with a bibliographical survey, it explores the evolution and association of cultural travel and urban art, revealing the contributions between the areas through historical data, as well as theoretical data, such as the creation of new disciplines, pointing to current knowledge needs. In the opening chapters, it presents the foundations, the history of cultural travel in contemporary times and the discipline of art tourism. It also points out aspects of the history of urban art in the Western world, the process of including urban art in the field of Art History and the relationship between urban

art and the local community. It then reflects on artistic manifestations in cities, with a brief presentation of the following projects: Wool - Covilhã Urban Art Festival (Portugal), Urban Art Biennial (Germany) and On the Other Side (Portugal). The article ends with final considerations on the importance of public art for cultural travel and the relationship of artistic events to the economic development of the community, mediated by more authentic, vibrant, and socially responsible cultural tourism.

2. Cultural Travel in Contemporary Times

This material has considered the time frame of contemporaneity, which began in the 20th century, as this was when travelling became tourism and established itself as an economic sector. History indicates that it was after the implementation of workers' rights to holidays and leisure that cultural travel condensed into the format of cultural tourism. This happened when Europe was restructuring from the aftermath of the Second World War and travelling became a way of contributing to Europe's economic revival. In the 1960s and 1970s, the period of peace and prosperity provided the right backdrop for economic development, which led to an increase in travel motivated by cultural heritage. Then, in the 1980s, the movement of international tourists to the main cultural attractions grew dramatically, leading to the creation of a niche market for elites, known as 'cultural tourism'. At the end of the 20th century, the old cultural journeys of the ancients, such as the humanist journeys or the Grand Tour, were transformed into cultural tourism - a segment recognised by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). It didn't take long for cultural tourism to enter the estimations and academic research (Richards, 2008).

In the 1980s and 1990s, cultural tourism continued to develop, being seen as a way of contributing to the valorisation of heritage, stimulating the economy, and preserving culture. From the first half of the 1990s onwards, the broadening of the concept of culture helped lead to a new configuration of travel, for a larger and less restrictive market, including other sections of society.

This growth instigated study and research, and the first publications on cultural tourism began to appear, as did the typification of the activity as heritage, gastronomic or film tourism (Lobo, 2023).

However, this growth has been marked by problems. The overcrowding of World Heritage Sites, the difficulty of conservation and the emergence of new tourist desires for experience, have ensured the need to create other focuses of attention, aimed at sorting out current and future problems. The UNWTO's new definition of cultural tourism meets this new demand when it extends beyond classical Western sites and monuments to a set of material, intellectual and emotional characteristics that are unique to a society. It encompasses the arts, architecture, historical heritage, cuisine, literature, music, creative industries and every living culture with its values, beliefs, and traditions (Richards, 2018; Lobo, 2023).

From the point of view of heritage, the arrival of cultural tourism meant a form of valorisation and preservation guaranteed by its new status as a tourist product. Not only art and heritage institutions, but organisations in the tourism sector have come to join forces in a delicate sector (César, Diógenes & Paula, 2017). At a time when institutions of non-tourist origin found in tourism effective ways of making the protection and promotion of their cultural heritage viable. They have also discovered that tourism favours the education of the local population.

Nowadays, cultural travel not only strengthens the local economy, but by promoting community empowerment for the development of recreational activities, it fosters residents' self-respect, values and identity. In this way, it contributes to safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage aspects of communities on a regional scale (Rowan, 2013).

3. Art Tourism

In tourism studies, art appears as a product for cultural tourism. This view is unhelpful and reductionist. It is necessary to recognise 'art tourism', which has its ori-

gins in the art environment, in addition to territories and the tourism business. This particularity calls for unique data collection methods and a specific study, not least because art and tourism are part of the same system and depend on each other for viability and development (Franklin, 2019).

Art tourism refers to any activity carried out when travelling to see art. These activities range from travellers who are induced exclusively to visit a work of art, to those who try to fit visits to an exhibition into their itineraries, for example. It should be recognised that the motivation to visit, experience and get to know art comes from the world of art, not tourism. The motivation for art tourism comes from artists, art critics, museums and galleries. It has been carried out since the Classical period, by people in search of self-knowledge accessible through an encounter with artistic representation and expression (Franklin, 2019).

The main motivation for cultural tourism is 'to learn about or experience first-hand the cultural specificity of the destination, or a way to explore and learn about other cultures. However, this does not apply to visitors to art museums. Research would be more effective if it considered the particularity of this type of visitor in a complex universe such as art (Stylianou-Lambert, 2011). Visitors to a modern art museum are not only cultural tourists, but other types of visitors with motivations focused on other objectives are also found museum professionals, art lovers and explorers - these types of visitors have different (but not mutually exclusive) searches or motivations from cultural tourists. The art tourist may have a professional outlook with which the visit experience is oriented towards knowledge, a desire for stimulating aesthetic experiences through artistic artefacts and a search for self-oriented experiences of exploration and personal improvement (Franklin, 2019).

Today, the relevance of 'art tourism' has emerged as a response to changes: the urban and regional regeneration brought about by the construction of art museums, the increase in urban festivals and biennials. In addition, the influence of art on contemporary life combined with the general hope that tourism and cultural flourishing

will indicate ways of promoting employment, income, identity, and morale. In other words, art tourism would reinfuse the vitality of urban, regional, and national life into the forgotten industrial and business fabrics (Gro-dach, 2008). Thinking that the immobility of art favors art tourism, the visualization of a work is possible due to its immobility, on a wall, in a studio, in a museum or in a gallery, thus allowing the mobile being to visit: the tourist. However, art can be moved to other places for themed exhibitions. Despite these indications, there are few studies on the relationship between tourism, art, museums, and galleries.

On the one hand, museums don't recognize tourism as a serious study, and on the other, tourism ignores museum experiences. This results in a lack of knowledge that still has no answers. How do tourists shape art audiences? How do tourists relate to art and exhibition platforms? Can the tourism experience integrate experiences with local museums? What do tourists buy in art experiences? It's worth remembering that artists' studios are increasingly common tourist destinations, as tourists go to studios to find the most reliable art, as well as to meet the artist (Franklin, 2019).

In Lisbon, the *Abertura de Ateliês de Artistas* (AAA) event is organized to promote visits to artists' studios in the city. In the last edition, 150 artists visited for three days, either to meet, sell or chat. The visits are free, and a car is provided by *Castelo d'If* in partnership with private and public companies (<https://www.castelodif.pt>).

Even with the significant number of tourists in the museums, they continue to focus on the resident public, not least because they may be dependent on public funding to operate. Some activists don't accept the possibility of art being exhibited primarily for tourists. But there is a movement towards acceptance when public funds for maintaining museums are replaced by funds generated by tourists. Still in this sense, public travel art is poorly recognized or defined as a category with different capacities, needs and characteristics (Miles, 2013).

4. Historical and Theoretical Context of Urban Art

In art science studies, there is a conceptual dispute between public art and urban art. There is still no consensus on the boundaries or even whether there are disparities between these two concepts. For this reason, it is not appropriate to explore this theoretical dispute in this material, which seeks to learn about the types of artistic interventions in public spaces that favors the cultural tourism segment. In this sense, this essay will point out that there are different levels of what is now understood as street art, such as happening, performance, video mapping, installations in squares or metro stations, graffiti on walls or ruined buildings. It will indicate cases from around the world that have become emblematic in the history of universal art and that have contributed to the study of the creation or development of tourist activities.

There is an inextricable concept of public monuments, urban interventions, institutional spaces, and spaces created for the people. However, the condition of public art is the democratization of artistic production, going beyond the restricted circles of art, to a proximity with society that is of interest to politics, the citizen, and the architect. In this sense, the opinion of the passer-by or spectator must also be considered. When the work of art leaves the museum and takes to the streets, it becomes an active part of a shared space. Contemporary art projects always propose some kind of displacement, either of the body or of the viewer's gaze. So, the discussion about art being public is not about the external exhibition site, but also about how the idea originates and how the work can provoke interaction with the viewer. Thus, the artist uses various artifices to develop this relationship with the viewer, which is not created haphazardly, from the choice of materials to the use of the artist's own body (Dimov, 2007).



Figure 1. Videomapping. Lisbon, Portugal, 2016.

Fonte: <https://anoticia.pt/2016/08/12/historia-de-lisboa-em-video-mapping-no-terreiro-do-paco/>

For many authors and creators, all art is public. It was conceived to encounter the public. However, access to the art of world-renowned artists is limited to a few people who, from an early age, visit museums, galleries, concerts, and theatres - in other words, people from the so-called cultural elite. This cultural divide is related to the price of access to these institutions that safeguard art, as well as 'the environment that is cultivated within these places, in which simpler people or those who are not used to these environments already feel excluded' (Dimov, 2007, p.179). In this sense, art is already a product with a specific consumer market influenced by capitalist logic.

There is still no consensus on definitions and terminology, but the term urban art was chosen because it covers a wider range of artistic manifestations. Since the different names used, which correspond to graffiti, muralism, culture jamming, street art, street art, depend on where the art is being applied, i.e. the material and immaterial heritage that surrounds this work, which can be a wall, a metal box, paper or a stone. In this sense, the terminology urban art covers all these aesthetic manifestations that take place in the city (Campos, 2017). This paper doesn't intend to discuss the illegal nature of some forms of urban art, but it will point out cases that have been legitimized by artistic projects developed legally. Urban art is intertwined with the history of humankind, as the human desire to leave its mark in visible places stretches from the earliest manifestations of rock art in the Paleolithic period of civilization to the present day with video mapping projections (see Figure 1).

The most important period for the dissemination of this practice took place in the 1960s and 1970s with the graffiti movement and hip hop culture in New York City. This was a time when the excluded communities of African and Hispanic immigrants lived apart in ghettos and were discriminated against. So, these young people saw hip hop as a way of promoting creativity through music and values such as peace, unity and love among minorities. Signing their presence in the city on the walls of buildings became a practice and over time the signatures changed to spray drawings and stencils, attracting

artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988) who in 1976 formed the SAMO© artistic expression collective with Al Diaz (Sequeira, 2015; Stahl, 2009).

Similar attitudes continue to this day on other continents with the anonymous Banksy, whose artistic representation is based on the politics of peace and unity through urban art in original works scattered all over the world. The history of art was conceived in the field of an elitist culture restricted to galleries, ateliers, and art salons; street art emerges outside this environment and is therefore closer to popular culture (Sequeira, 2015).

Unlike other forms of art developed in studios, urban art is created on the street, in the presence of spectators, artistic creation becomes an event. The presence of local residents can even interfere in the works being created, as they spontaneously ask the artists about what they are doing and, in these conversations, they can agree or disagree, point out constructive criticism or be against the intervention in their street.



Figure 2. One of the numerous stencils situated along the thoroughfare in which the residence of the renowned fado singer, Amália Rodrigues, was located. Lisbon, Portugal. Source: Author.



Figure 3. Covilhã Art Festival mural. Portugal. Source: <https://observador.pt/2022/05/11/festival-wool-covilha-ar-te-urbana-recebe-cin-ta-vidal-reskate-ruido-e-francis-co/>

The concept of urban art comes from graffiti. According to Campos (2010), graffiti is a derivation of the Italian term *sgraffire*, *sgraffiti* being the name given to the stucco technique used to decorate façades (Stahl, 2009). For Campos (2010) it also comes from Italian, but from the word *graffiare*, which means to scratch, as well as *graffito*. In this sense, the urban art of graffiti stands out as a cultural phenomenon, as it encompasses people who share an identity, whose activity is unpredictable - with their own ways of expressing themselves and their own social behaviour, aimed primarily at demarcating the territory. However, it should be noted that despite being an artistic expression, urban art is considered by many to be an illegal practice (Gomes, 2020).

5. Urban Art Projects

5.1 Wool - Covilhã Urban Art Festival – Portugal

The wool is the one of the products manufactured in the city, but it is also related to the English term walls, which is where the artistic interventions are produced. It is the

first festival of its kind in Portugal and has been taking place in the city of Covilhã since 2011. Organised by the Covilhã siblings Lara Seixo Rodrigues, Pedro Seixo Rodrigues and Elisabet Carceller. The project was their way of promoting the city in the interior of the country with the participation of national and international artists.

The primary goals of this event are to bring artists to the city, thus decentralising regional differences, and to use different techniques to reach the widest possible audience. It also has various educational activities such as workshops that attract locals to take part in the festival. It contributes to the requalification of the façades of urban buildings, making the city of Covilhã recognised for the presence of urban art that reflects the local culture. This is one of the strengths of the proposal, because although the artists don't belong to the locality, they must represent the local culture.

5.2. Urban Art Biennale – Germany

The Urban Art Biennale takes place on the site of the



Figure 4. For the 2022 edition, the artist Roadworth painted graffiti on one of the structures covering the factory. Völklingen, Germany. Photo: Oliver Dietze. Source: <https://www.lessentiel.lu/de/story/vielfaeltig-aktuell-und-politisch-wie-nie-941182017946>

former Völklingen steelworks. The site offers a huge variety of surfaces for artists to work on. Built at the end of the 19th century, it was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is now the Völklinger Hutte World Cultural Heritage Site. This Biennale was a way of bringing urban art artists together in a single space and exhibiting up-to-date artistic proposals. It has been running since 2011 and includes installations, paintings, sculptures, stencil graffiti, augmented reality collages and murals (see Figure 2).

The event brings colour and creativity to the walls of the former steelworks, once the most important in Europe. Covering 10,000 m², the organisers encourage guest artists from a wide variety of backgrounds to create a vision for the space that is up to date with the urban art produced around the world.

5.3. Project On the Other Side – Portugal

The lockdown imposed by the pandemic closed the galleries. Urban art remained. Following this line of thought and bypassing the coronavirus and all its variables, the European companies Art Dispersion and JCDecaux promoted the photographic exhibition 'on the other side' during the month of April 2021 through billboards throughout the city of Lisbon. The Moreira Salles Institute took part in this project.

The large panels show selected images by eleven artists from Argentina, Brazil, Mozambique, Spain e Portugal: Alberto Natan, Bruno Veiga, Evandro Teixeira, Eugenio Ampudia, Filipe Branquinho, João Miguel Barros, João Serra, Maria Mergulhão, Rodrigo Bettencourt da Câmara, Teresa Palma Rodrigues (see Figure 3) and Thales Trigo took part in the exhibition.



Figure 5. Corriola (convolvulus). 2021. Teresa Palma Rodrigues. Carlos Pinhão Avenue, Lisbon, Portugal.

Source: <https://dooutroladooutdoor.wixsite.com/2021>

The concept of the project is based on Fernando Pessoa's phrase¹: 'Everything is on the other side' and deals with the notion that everything you want is always 'on the other side'. This is how the idea for the exhibition 'on the other side' came about: from the pavement, from the window of the house or from the car, the viewer receives individualised ways of observing and transcribing reality, through the intimate gaze of artists who break paradigms.

This exhibition of twelve billboards included a proposed tour that could be taken by car or bicycle to view the twelve billboards following the directions on the map at: <https://dooutroladooutdoor.wixsite.com/2021/mapa>. This project favoured the momentary conversion

of passers-by into art lovers, committed solely to contemplating art. This type of art, with unlimited access for spectators, gives rise to other ways of looking. Generally, the artistic images placed on billboards convey artistic discourses, not aimed at convincing, as marketing would do, but at instigating something new in the viewer's gaze (Sayão, 2015).

6. Conclusions

The art created outside the museum or art gallery is an old practice that dates back to the 15th century, when artists were hired to make interventions in public spaces for major events, such as the arrival of a king in the modern era, or to attract the gaze of visitors, as happened with the Eiffel Tower, which was built in the 19th century for the World's Fair and to celebrate the centenary of the French Revolution. In the current panorama, public art/urban art has come to the fore in large urban centres as well as in small towns. This practice is reflected

¹ - Pessoa, F. (1933). "Contemplo o que não vejo". In *Poesias. Fernando Pessoa*. Lisboa: Ática, 1942 (15ª ed. 1995), p.171.

in the relationship between cultural policies and artistic interventions in the city. Contemporaneity values the ephemeral and urban art is configured as an ephemeral art that in time will no longer exist, as the panels or projections will disappear.

As far as academia is concerned, the debate on the inclusion of urban art in the traditional field of art is controversial due to the need for a theory to support the phenomenon of urban art, the anonymity of some urban artists, the vandalism factor, since some work underground and use walls without prior authorisation, and finally the ephemerality, since murals are generally not maintained and disappear over time. In addition, the nomenclature leaves room for various terminologies. So public art is a way of democratising the arts and disseminating contemporary art in a social space.

Urban art comes from the 1960s, when freedom of expression took to the streets through graffiti, which was seen as vandalism. Graffiti is not interested in architecture, in a prepared white wall, it seeks to disrespect buildings, taking over walls, windows, subways, cars, any surface will do. Later, graffiti was replaced by mural art when artists got together and influenced more artistic creations. Aware of this, public and private organisations realised the power of this art and began to support projects that developed this type of art.

Inside galleries, art is limited to a certain audience. On the streets, art reaches a larger and less select audience. As you can see throughout this article, urban art has spread across the globe and there's no denying that it has carved out its own place in the history of contemporary art.

Conflict of Interests and ethics

The authors declare no conflict of interests. The authors also declare full adherence to all journal research ethics policies, namely involving the participation of human subjects anonymity and/ or consent to publish.

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