

Challenging prejudice and stigmatization through public art: the case of Quinta do Mocho Public Art Gallery, Loures

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In 2014, the Bairro i o Mundo festival took place in Quinta do Mocho, a deprived and highly stigmatized neighbourhood in Loures. The most significant feature of that initiative is the Public Art Gallery, a collection of 36 paintings using buildings as canvas. Being promoted by the Loures municipality in conjunction with the Ibisco Theatre Association, this artistic intervention seeks to transform urban prejudice and stigmatization affecting Quinta do Mocho. Since then, the number of paintings has increased and field trips are conducted on a regular basis to what is considered the largest public art gallery in Portugal.

The multiple ways through which public art transforms urban space have been a concern for urban studies as well as social and geography for the last couple of decades. However, the focus has been mostly art works *per se*, art producers or in the role played by promoters, especially in the framework of cultural policies carried out by national or local authorities. Arguably, this constitutes an important shortcoming when it comes to improve our understanding of processes of urban change that are triggered and somehow mediated by cultural and artistic interventions. Hence, without neglecting the fundamental role played by artists and local authorities in the Public Art Gallery development, this research is focused on public art consumers, namely Quinta do Mocho residents.

This approach allows a better understanding of the extent up to which the original goals were achieved or not. Moreover, it helps to assess the role played by public art in the everyday lives of residents, as well as the meanings and values ascribed to the artistic interventions that constitute the Public Art Gallery. Hence, by analysing the case of Quinta do Mocho, it is possible to better grasp the real impacts of public art in urban transformation. After all, the (re)construction of places, namely the struggle against prejudice and stigmatization, necessarily depends on the transformation of the attitudes, values and everyday experiences of residents.

Keywords:

public art, public space, urban development, art consumption, Quinta do Mocho