Urban Art touristification: The case of Lisbon

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Abstract

Urban Art is gradually assuming an increasingly significant role in the development of a city's character, something which is often promoted by public institutions. This has been strongly instigated by the rhetoric of creative cities, present in the strategies for the urban development of many cities in recent years. The rising appreciation of this artistic movement and the recognition of the cultural and symbolic role it currently plays are accompanied by a growing offer of tourism services in this field, namely, through dozens of tours operated by multiple entities. The literature has, in fact, been paying some attention to this phenomenon of touristification of Urban Art. In this article, we draw on qualitative empirical material from an ongoing research project on Urban Art in the city of Lisbon. We consider the touristification of Urban Art in Lisbon to be a recent and still ongoing process involving several social actors with specific perspectives, strategies, actions and representations. We have concluded that there is currently a combination of social and economic factors favourable to the development of this process of touristification. This could not have happened without (a) a number of institutional initiatives, (b) local entrepreneurship ventures and (c) the development of a narrative shared by the different agents.

Keywords

cultural tourism, Lisbon, public art, touristification, Urban Art

Introduction

When travelling to different cities around the world, particularly the great metropolises, it becomes immediately clear that Urban Art has been gaining importance as manifestation of popular culture or artistic genius. It seems indisputable that, currently, in cities such as

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Berlin, London, Buenos Aires, Philadelphia or Lisbon, Urban Art is a fundamental part of the city's landscape and identity and that this has been used to promote their image internationally. The increasing appreciation and mediatisation of this art movement is accompanied by the increasing availability of tourism services on offer in this field, namely, through dozens of tours operated by distinct entities. We will argue that the touristification of Urban Art is a recent process involving multiple social actors. This is a relatively new trend in tourism that may be included in the cultural tourism sector, a specific type of tourism that has been growing exponentially and now includes a vast number of activities and products (Du Cros and Mckercher, 2002; Richards, 2018; Robinson and Smith, 2005; Smith, 2003).

In spite of the growing evidence attesting to the role played by Urban Art in manufacturing the image of a city and its projection abroad, which is highly significant when it comes to tourism, this subject has been virtually left unexplored in academia. Reviewing the state-of-the-art in this matter is most revealing since, apart from rare exceptions mostly focussing on muralism (Cozzolino, 2014; Koster and Randall, 2006; McDowell, 2008; Miguel-Molina et al., 2013; Poon, 2016; Santamarina-Campos et al., 2017) and seldom on graffiti and street art (Andron, 2018; Jażdżewska, 2018; Mokras-Grabowska, 2014), this subject is still lacking in-depth scrutiny. We aim to add our voice to this discussion by means of a case study involving a systematic analysis – synchronic and diachronic – which we hope will shed some light not only on the historical evolution of this process but also on the contribution of different actors in this domain.

This article is part of an ongoing research project on the emergence of Urban Art in the city of Lisbon (2017–2021). Among other topics of research, the project focuses on tourism as one of its main dimensions. The purpose of the work package on tourism was to assess if – as we see happening in other cities – it was possible to confirm the occurrence of a process of touristification of Urban Art in the city of Lisbon. Our understanding of the milieu derived from previous projects (Campos, 2013, 2015; Sequeira, 2016) has allowed us to partially answer that question in the affirmative. Having thus concluded, we posed a number of questions to help us frame our research. First, what are the specific factors involved in shaping this process of touristification? Second, what local and international dynamics could explain the emergence of this new tourism product? Finally, what are the social elements with a direct influence on the constitution of Urban Art as a tourism product and what specific role do they play in this process?

We propose an analysis encompassing the touristification of Urban Art taking into consideration a set of agents, both local and translocal, playing an active role in shaping this process. The empirical basis of our work, as well as this article, is derived from data gathered by analysing various documental sources, online and printed (media, travel guides, online platforms of tourism-related services, government entities' documents), and, also, from interviews and ethnographic observation of tours that specialize in this field. As a result of our analysis, we have determined that a narrative is being developed favouring the touristification of Urban Art in Lisbon.

Urban Art as public art and city heritage

What is commonly referred to as Urban Art has its most remote origin in a set of social dynamics and aesthetic expressions, markedly informal, disruptive and ephemeral,

which have been amply documented in specialist literature (Campos, 2013, 2015; Castleman, 1982; Cooper and Chalfant, 1984; Ferrell, 1996; Lewisohn, 2008; Macdonald, 2001; Waclawek, 2011). The more recent literature has been describing a somewhat radical change in this situation, consisting of a growing legitimation, commodification and artification of these urban expressions (Austin, 2010; Bengtsen, 2014; Campos, 2015; Evans, 2016; Kramer, 2010; Schacter, 2014).

The concept of Urban Art is still a source of considerable debate due to a lack of consensus as to what may be placed in this category. Partly, this is due to the frequent confusion and overlap with close terms such as 'Graffiti', 'Street Art' or 'Post-graffiti'. In our view, inasmuch as an 'artistic movement', Urban Art is rather a 'large family'. It is an open, flexible and permeable category, consisting of various expressive formats, involving separate techniques (stencil, paste-up, stickers, spray painting, reverse graffiti etc.), pictorial expressions and urban aesthetic traditions (graffiti, street art, muralism, culture jamming etc.), that are primarily focused on the urban public space.

The various expressions of Urban Art have a set of characteristics that are used as identity traits. We would like to highlight four fundamental elements: first, the central role of the street as the privileged space for artistic creation and exhibition; second, the relevance that urban materiality has for the composition and interpretation of the artworks; third, the informal and unpredictable (often illegal) nature of the majority of these expressions and, finally, the ephemeral condition of the artwork.

The ensemble of these characteristics seems to point to a strong resistance against inclusion into a more official and legitimate circuit, subsequently revealing obstacles for a greater acceptance and social legitimation. However, we are witnessing precisely the opposite. Recently, various social agents (curators, art dealers, public officials, journalists etc.) have been recognizing these expressions, which we have described as having an informal and ephemeral nature, as having noteworthy qualities of a cultural or aesthetic nature. This is a fact that entails a move of many such artists into the art market and their admission into the world of official art. For this reason, it becomes important to highlight the hybrid nature of this artistic field, its capacity for artistic intervention and production, oscillating between the realms of the street and the art gallery (Bengtsen, 2014; Dickens, 2010; Lewisohn, 2008; Schacter, 2014; Waclawek, 2011).

Over the past decade, there has been an exponential growth in the dynamics surrounding Urban Art due to a vast set of initiatives that include festivals, projects, events, exhibitions and so on. Some leading art institutions have organized particularly relevant events related to Urban Art, giving it a prominent role in contemporary art. The following exhibitions should be highlighted: 'Spank the Monkey' (2006–2007) at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art Gateshead (UK), 'Street Art' (2008) in the Tate Modern, the Banksy exhibition at the Bristol City Museum (2009), 'Born in the Streets – Graffiti' in the Foundation Cartier (2009–2010) and the 'Art in the Streets' at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (2011). More recent events include 'Street Art – Banksy & Co' in Bologna (2016) or 'Art from the Streets' in Singapore (2018). Also to note is the opening of the biggest indoor museum fully dedicated to street artists, the Urban Nation, in Berlin. At the same time, several artists have attained global prestige, something which has had a strong impact on the mass media, the art world and the art market. So, presently, we see artists such as Banksy, Shepard Fairey, Vihls, Os Gêmeos, Blu, Swoon, C215, Slinkachu, Sam3 and JR among others included within the restricted group of those considered newsworthy.

This recent trend has had a significant impact on the city, both in terms of its territory and landscape, as well as the public policies underpinned by its street art expressions. As mentioned by Evans (2016: 176), 'street art is now an emerging strategy for place-making and branding particular areas, which takes it out of its crimogenic roots'. We may consider, as suggested by Young (2014), that there is a slow patrimonialization of this kind of expression, boosted by a set of actors and associated with other parallel phenomena (graffiti artification, mediatization of certain creators, development of a niche market, professionalization of some agents etc.). For Urban Art to be seen as something that is in the public interest, public authorities have to create conditions for these pictorial manifestations to take on a significant role in regenerating and promoting the urban public space, thereby legitimating them as Public Art. City councils have been very relevant agents throughout this process. This may be explained by the assumption that Urban Art represents added value for the urban public space, for its reconfiguration and valorisation.

As it happens, several authors have made a link between the symbolic reconfiguration of certain street expressions formerly seen as delinquent or out-of-place with the rhetoric of the creative city that has increasingly been adopted by municipal public authorities (Mould, 2015; Schacter, 2014). The 'moral geographies' of the creative city (McAuliffe, 2012) have implied the refashioning of graffiti, street art and associated street practices into practices that can be capitalized through cultural policies based on the concept of the creative city. Hence, we speak of the neutralization of the 'wild' component of these expressions now divested of their threatening, spontaneous and unpredictable traits. At the local level, Urban Art is converted into an asset still holding an 'aura' of irreverence and transgression which gives credence to the idea of the creative city. Consequently, some have referred to the process of 'artwashing' (Schacter, 2014; Sheldon, 2015) as the instrumentalization of these expressions to the benefit of processes of gentrification and city branding.

Urban Art tourism: a new trend?

Different types of tourism agents have been paying increasing attention to this field, and there are clear signs that this is a new and flourishing domain. In 2017, the online platform 'E-Turbo News – Global Travel Industry News' published an editorial under the title 'New travel trend: Exploring cities through graffiti and street art' (E-Turbo News, 2017) emphasizing the role that graffiti and street art have been playing in the urban space, leading public authorities to create conditions where they could be developed in a controlled way so as to improve the city's image and boost tourism. In the same year, the website 'Tourism Review News' also published a similar article focusing on the specific case of the city of Berlin (Morris, 2017). It is not therefore surprising that the leading publishers of travel books and guides have started to pay more attention to the potential interest of Urban Art for urban tourism. It has become quite common to have a section on Urban Art in travel guides, especially in cities where its presence is stronger. So, we see internationally renowned travel guides devoting a special kind of attention to this new reality. In 2013, a Fodor's Travel online article stated,

> The best art isn't always behind velvet ropes. Graffiti, once a punishable act of pavement protest, has become a bona fide art form. It's been the subject of major exhibitions at institutions

like London's Tate Modern and MOCA in Los Angeles, and has turned taggers like Banksy and Shepard Fairey into international superstars. (Saladino, 2013)

The growing interest in this art movement has led Lonely Planet to publish 'Street Art' (Bartlett, 2017), a publication showcasing the main cities where it is possible to visit the Urban Art works spread out across the globe. This phenomenon has also been present in the generalist media and included sections devoted to culture, leisure and travel. Every year, articles are being written proposing rankings and hierarchies of Urban Art around the world. New York, London, Paris, Berlin or São Paulo are among the most frequently mentioned cities.

Despite of all this, the academia has largely been ignoring this subject. In terms of the scarce number of studies that have been published, the research on muralism is a case in point. The vast majority of studies done on murals tend to conceptualize them as historical legacies with emphasis placed on the political and cultural processes that gave them rise (Skinner and Jolliffe, 2017). Worth mentioning in this respect are political murals such as Orgosolo's in Sardinia, which underwent a process of artification (Cozzolino, 2014), or those in Northern Ireland (McDowell, 2008), which were turned into tourist attractions. The literature has also highlighted the active role played by communities and public authorities in capitalizing on this local resource for the benefit of tourism. The murals in Penang (Malaysia) are good examples of the development of tourism activities coming from the communities, where local authorities play a key role not only in tourism but also in the consolidation of local identities (Poon, 2016) as is the case of the Saskatchewan communities (Canada) who have decided to paint murals to assist the development of tourism (Koster and Randall, 2006). Furthermore, Miguel-Molina et al. (2013) note the Uruguayan case where some communities have chosen to develop a form of creative and sustainable tourism based on the practice of Muralism – even if this choice for development is not necessarily matched by any action in terms of institutional planning. In a nutshell, emphasis has been put on the importance of murals as historical and social assets adding value to cultural tourism. Skinner and Jolliffe (2017: 9), then, speak of 'murals tourism':

> This form of niche tourism specifically consists of visiting locations and destinations with murals. A variety of organized murals tourism products have been developed for consumption, ranging from both guided and self-guided murals tours to murals festivals to murals souvenirs such as postcards, books and t-shirts.

Nevertheless, the number of scientific studies that emerged during the last decade with specific interest on articulating the connection between tourism and the Urban Art movement is residual. Apart from some rare exceptions (Andron, 2018; Jażdżewska, 2018; Mokras-Grabowska, 2014), there is little empirical research with analytical data facilitating an in-depth analysis of this issue, and few studies based on the methodical analysis of the process (about the major social actors involved, their positions, practices and representations) or reflecting on the importance of Urban Art for the development of local tourism.

If we consider Urban Art as a relevant cultural and artistic asset in our assessment of the city's public spaces, we will be able to understand that its tourism potential is

inscribed within the context of what is labelled as urban 'cultural tourism'. Presently, cultural tourism is an essential element of international tourism consumption (Csapó, 2012; Du Cros and Mckercher, 2002; Richards, 2018; Robinson and Smith, 2005; Smith, 2003; Wickens, 2017). This type of tourism encompasses broad notions of culture that go beyond the concept of 'cultural places' to include experiences, creative practices and exposure to local ways of living (Csapó, 2012; Du Cros and Mckercher, 2002; Koster and Randall, 2006; Poon, 2016; Richards, 2011, 2018; Smith, 2003). Richards' (2018) definition of cultural tourism moves in this direction:

> Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. (p. 13)

In the context of cultural tourism, we can invoke two specific subcategories holding a privileged status as domains where activities related to Urban Art might be included. We can speak of art tourism – a sector which includes visits to the theatre, concerts, art galleries, festivals and events – as well as sites linked to literature (Richards, 2018; Smith, 2003). Another dimension of cultural tourism is the 'creative tourism' (Du Cros and Mckercher, 2002; Richards, 2011, 2018; Richards and Marques, 2012; Smith, 2003). This can be understood as an alternative to mass tourism and the 'mass-reproduction' of ways to visit places (Richards, 2011). Creative tourism appears within the scope of an economy of experiences enabling its development to imply increasingly creative – and even ludic – forms of visiting a place to which new practices and new representations of the space itself will be associated (Richards, 2011). Many visitors look for 'alternative public spaces' or 'heterogeneous spaces' (Edensor, 2000) in search of new creative material.

The context of Urban Art seems to be particularly well-suited to these new forms of urban cultural tourism. First, it relates to a certain idea of uniqueness and local authenticity. On the one hand, Urban Art expressions are generally produced by local artists and involve a somewhat specific ensemble of subjects, iconography and techniques. On the other hand, these expressions are an integral component of the landscape, intimately linked to the local setting, the architecture and inextricable from the daily experience of local denizens. Second, these expressions have, but recently, acquired some prominence, which is why they are yet to be largely mediatized and massified in their capacity as tourist experience. For these reasons, they provide activities of a more exceptional nature, around city territories that are less fit for tourism and less well-known, and facilitate interaction with other forms of urban life.

Subsequently, we may consider the existence of various kinds of tourism devoted to Urban Art. Examining the case of the city of Lodz, Mokras-Grabowska (2014) identifies three types of Urban Art 'tourism spaces'. In the first place, the author mentions the 'tourism exploration space' involving the private initiative of tourists actively seeking Urban Art, often travelling with this intention in mind. Here, we should include the international festivals of Urban Art which attract a specific kind of public. Second, 'tourism penetration spaces' denote the connection between Urban Art tourism and mass tourism, where the tourism infrastructures (museums, larger tourist companies etc.) and entities (local and regional tourism authorities, City Councils etc.) organize tours around local Urban Art,

placing it in an 'official' discourse. This is a stage in the process of 'discovery' and 'recognition' of the potential in Urban Art as an asset for tourism and local development. Finally, the 'tourism assimilation space' in Urban Art tourism is that which is created through the interrelationships between artists and organizers of Urban Art projects and tourists themselves. It may include guided tours of artists at work or having artists or the local community acting as tour guides. In this article, we sought to intersect this typology with a new conceptual framework that allowed us to identify the social process through which Urban Art is being manufactured as a tourism product for consumption.

Touristification is here defined as the social process that gradually converts something of little or no interest in tourism into a resource with tourism potential. This is a social process where different social actors take part, even if their roles are varied and include a range of different goals, depending on their strategies, objectives and interests. Touristification involves multiple dimensions, ranging from the symbolic (symbolic reconfiguration of practices, objects etc.) to the political (legitimation, recognition and protection of practices, objects etc.), crossing over to the economic (creation of a market and economic exploitation of practices, objects etc.). Often, this process is followed by other parallel processes, as in the case of the current subject matter, where we clearly detect the dynamics of artification, patrimonialization, commodification and so on, affecting these urban visual expressions.

Conceptual and methodological note

The current project is based on a qualitative analysis involving multiple strategies of field research (Burgess, 1995), taking advantage of the triangulation of data and sources (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). The research is grounded, first, on an extensive ethnographical approach, with a presence in the field extending over time and including other previous projects, which has brought a deep familiarity with the realities therein explored. Second, this research aims at identifying a number of social actors (artists, local authorities, cultural mediators, travel agents, gallerists etc.) who all play a part in the social construction of this art world (Becker, 1982). This strategy has developed to include specific in-depth semi-structured interviews.

As far as the specific work package involving tourism is concerned, we have adopted a theoretical-conceptual framework developed around research carried out in recent years (Campos, 2013, 2015; Sequeira, 2016; Campos and Sequeira, forthcoming) and a more recent ethnographical approach (2017–2018). From this research, we have been able to identify the key actors in the recent trend of touristification of Urban Art. To begin with, we have the national actors who have had a more direct intervention in the development of this milieu. These are (a) official authorities (both local and national) and (b) local entrepreneurs. Then, we also have the international actors who produce discourses on the subject generating expectations and an appetite for touristic consumption. Such is the case with the international communication sector, involving three dimensions: international generalist media; the tourism advertisement and activity promotion sector (especially the media and travel guides) and, finally, the social media. For each of these elements, we have defined methods for gathering information, having decided to focus mainly on national actors after reaching the conclusion that the data collected on international actors had a more exploratory and illustrative function.

    The adopted methodology was split into two strands, the first one relating to national
actors. As far as local authorities are concerned, both authors have been closely monitor-
ing the activities being developed by the local department responsible for Urban Art
policy, having also had direct involvement in initiatives promoted by this body. Beyond
interviews conducted with officials in charge, analysis was also carried out of different
documents and resources produced by this institution. As for local entrepreneurs, we
have identified the opportunities on offer in the city in 2017 and established contact with
the totality of its agents (12). The business of Urban Art tours in Lisbon is quite recent,
and some of the tours are still rather informal. Many of them are organized by local hos-
tels, local associations, galleries, individual tour guides and so on. We used social media,
local contacts and ethnographic fieldwork to identify the existing offers.[1] We have con-
ducted eight in-depth interviews within this scope, corresponding to 67 percent of the
identified agents. In addition to this, we have also participated in some of the tours on
offer by these entrepreneurs to get a better grasp of existing social dynamics, interaction
with the public and tourist involvement in the tours.

    With regard to international actors and discourses produced by these entities, we
have carried out research on several types of media. In an initial stage, between
November 2017 and April 2018, we made an extensive online search (via Google)
using keywords such as 'street art tourism' and, more specifically, 'street art/Urban art
Lisbon', from which we gathered 128 entries. These were classified into different cat-
egories: news/press articles, specialized platform/media articles, content from official
entities, blogs and sites. Beyond this, we have also carried out research focusing par-
ticularly on the content produced by the travel and tourism sector (travel guides, maga-
zines and online platforms). We made a qualitative content analysis aiming to identify
recurring themes and content used to describe 'urban art' and 'urban art as an object of
touristic interest'. As for social media, we have analysed several travel and tourism
blogs and online platforms about the Portuguese capital city and, especially, those
referring to Urban Art. We have sought to identify the ideas conveyed regarding Urban
Art and how it is described and integrated in a specific narrative about Lisbon. We
have analysed, particularly, the 'Tripadvisor' and 'Get Your Guide' platforms to study
the feedback left by tourists who went on Urban Art tours in the Portuguese capital
city. We chose these two platforms because they are the most effective in terms of
concentrating information about the several Urban Art tours available, making them
very popular among users and, therefore, the most appropriate way of collecting infor-
mation about what's on offer in this specific type of tours. The period under analysis
includes comments that were posted in these online platforms between April 2013 and
January 2018.

The touristification of Urban Art in the city of Lisbon

The tourism sector in Portugal has been clearly expanding, particularly over the past few
years. By way of illustration, in 2016, internal tourism has reached ground-breaking results
for all the main indicators (overnight stays, revenue, number of guests, employment and
exports). *Turismo de Portugal* (Portuguese National Tourism Authority) has published data
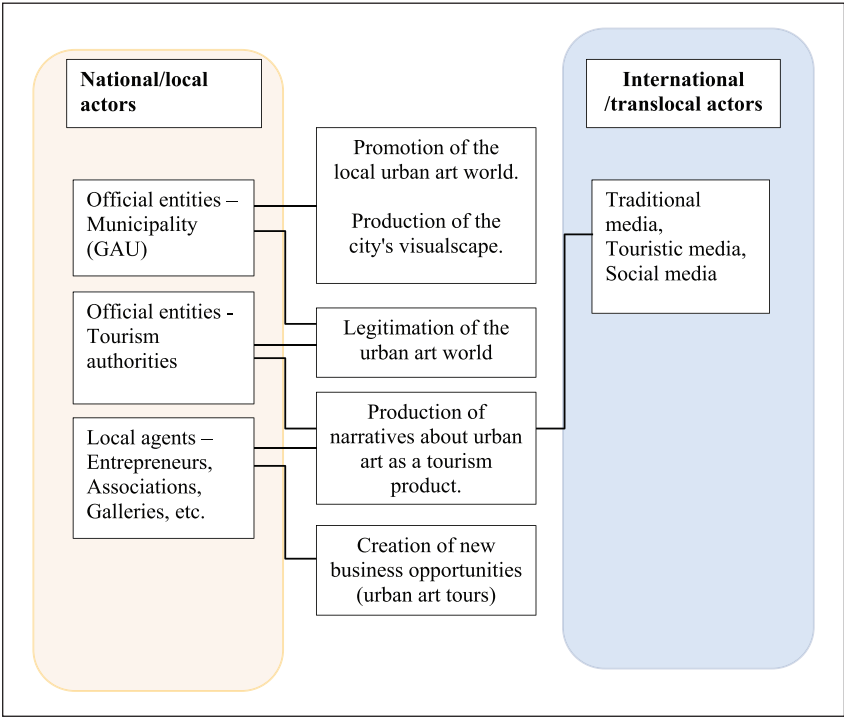showing that the tourism sector is currently considered the greatest economic activity in

Figure 1. Urban Art touristification (actors and processes).

terms of national exports, representing a total of 16.7 percent of all exports (Turismo de Portugal, 2017). In Lisbon, also according to data from the *Observatório de Turismo de Lisboa* (Lisbon's Tourism Observatory), the occupancy rates show a clear upwards trend. In December 2017, these occupancy rates have also increased by 9.9 percent in comparison with the previous year (Turismo de Portugal, 2017).

This situation has clearly benefitted from the fact that Portugal has been given attention by international media and has recently been featuring in those specializing in travel, leisure and tourism. The latter also publicize many of the international awards for tourism that Portugal and its major cities (Lisbon and Porto) have received in the past few years. Lisbon was picked as the 'Best City or Short Break Destination' in the 2016 edition of the Travel Media Awards (Waters, 2016). In 2017, Portugal was elected by the World Travel Awards (WTA; 2017) as the 'World's Leading Destination', when Lisbon also won the award for 'Best City Break Destination', as well as 'Leading Cruise Destination' and 'Leading Cruise Port' (both of which Lisbon has won repeatedly since 2009).

It is in this context precisely that the touristification of Urban Art in Lisbon emerges. As previously mentioned, we have used a conceptual framework to explore this process, taking into consideration the different social actors and their practices, discourses and positions in the field. In this section, we provide a discussion and analysis of this development, of which we provide a synthesis in Figure 1.

Official entities

Presently, the role played by Urban Art in the cities is the result of a set of social dynamics, with the direct participation of various official entities. The example of the city of Lisbon is paradigmatic in this respect, due to the pioneering project that the local authorities have been developing since 2008. For this reason, it is clear that, in this case, the local powers have played a pivotal role in the promotion and expansion of this local artistic community, and particularly in the modification of the urban landscape, with the proliferation of authorized artworks (Grondeau and Pondaven, 2018). As we can see, the phenomenon of touristification was evidently preceded by a political strategy of valuing Urban Art. This means that only with great difficulty would the former have developed without the latter.

In 2008, the Department for Cultural Heritage of CML (Lisbon City Council), intending to fight off the illegal graffiti that was spreading through the city at the time, especially in the historic neighbourhoods, created the GAU – *Galeria de Arte Urbana* (Gallery of Urban Art) which, in its early stages, sought to create a space appropriate for authorized spray painting. This model was premised in the desire to engage with the community of graffiti writers and value their work, thus creating the conditions for it to develop in an authorized way (Câmara, 2014). Generally speaking, this strategy was a form of official legitimation of graffiti and street art as forms of expression with aesthetic and cultural value with a place in contemporary Lisbon. The actions of GAU became increasingly diversified and its role was essential for the strengthening of this artistic world and for the emergence of a new economic sector related to these practices. This political choice had an immediate and lasting impact on the visual landscape of the city, with repercussions that are quite evident in the image that Lisbon has been projecting abroad over the last decade. Among the several initiatives that the GAU has been developing, we ought to mention the following: the public space Gallery in the historic city centre, which organized two yearly exhibitions between 2008 and 2014 (see Figure 2); the support for renowned Urban Art initiatives[2] and, recently, the international Urban Art festival 'Muro' (see Figure 3). This event has had three editions in three different neighbourhoods in the city which have become crucial spots for viewing Urban Art in the capital city and are now included in every tourism route for this area.

There is also a strong programme to publicize these expressions involving the publication of a magazine and, above all, the direct participation of GAU in the publication of the book *Street Art Lisbon* (GAU, 2014, 2016) aimed at the international market and tourists. A website for the dissemination of the project was also created not only where we can find images of the city's most popular works but where are also offered several options of pedestrian routes centred around Urban Art.

The official authorities for tourism have come to realize the potential of these expressions and have been stressing the uniqueness and quality of this artistic movement in Portugal. On the website 'Visit Portugal', which belongs to Turismo de Portugal, there is a page entirely dedicated to Urban Art in the section about Art and Culture. On the website of the institution responsible for promoting tourism in Lisbon (Turismo de Lisboa), in the 'Heritage and Culture – Only in Lisbon' section, we find the following description:

> in almost every building or street you can find worthy representatives of the geometric or figurative art that found its zenith in Portugal. The intermixing of urban art by world famous

Figure 2. GAU's panels (photo by Ágata Sequeira, 2014).

artists, such as Vhils, with Manueline-style ornamental art can only be seen in this sunny corner of Europe. Come and see for yourself. (Turismo de Lisboa, 2018)

We therefore conclude on the existence of a public policy that is clearly aimed at generating the necessary conditions for the development of 'tourism spaces' associated with Urban Art in the city. A 'tourism exploration space which results from an individual discovering of the city' (Mokras-Grabowska, 2014: 29) depends, first, on the multiplication of the existing artworks in the city and, second, on the creation and availability of tools that facilitate the autonomous exploration by the tourist. And not only did GAU indeed promote the creation of mural artworks, but it also published books essentially aimed at the tourism industry (GAU, 2014, 2016). They also made available on their website four maps, with pedestrian routes, highlighting the best examples of Urban Art in Lisbon. But their role was also important in that they acted as mediators between the community and local entrepreneurs thus contributing towards the development of tourist spaces of 'penetration' and 'assimilation'. The spaces of assimilation depend in large measure on the dynamism of local actors, something that became clear through the field-work and interviews we conducted – as the next section will show.

Local agents

The mere existence of a certain tourism product with potential in a specific city is not enough for it to enjoy commercial success. The key to this process is the existence of local agents, a wide range of entrepreneurs with different profiles that can create new business opportunities centring on the tourists who visit the city. Actually, Lisbon experienced the

Figure 3. 'Muro' Festival, First Edition (photo by Ricardo Campos, 2018).

extremely favourable conjunction of the exponential growth of tourism in the city – that we previously discussed – in parallel with an unprecedented investment in Urban Art which resulted in the multiplication of this form of expression in the urban public space. This means that these two trends, taking place simultaneously, created the ideal conditions allowing a set of local entrepreneurs to profit from this new tourism potential.

We are discussing a relatively new phenomenon. These tourism offers first appeared in 2013, unsteadily, whereas we currently count around 10 active tour operators providing Urban Art tours in Lisbon. These entities either develop such itineraries in parallel with others or are exclusively specialized in this area. Either way, we are mostly referring to small scale entities, in some cases consisting of a single person, acting as a tour guide. These are small tourism companies, informal associations, individual tour guides, local accommodation providers, art galleries and so on. The profiles of people behind this are very varied, ranging from the passionate connoisseur of this artistic world to the guides without particular knowledge in this field who have slowly developed their activity in this realm. Furthermore, the offer of tours in terms of price range is also very varied in order to respond to the different profiles of tourists.

The interviews that we conducted have allowed us to draw some conclusions about the objectives and processes of these entrepreneurs, as well as their practices and the

profiles of their clients. The interviewees all agreed on the success of these initiatives and on the growing potential of this field of activity.

> 2014 was a trial year, which meant we had a limited number of participants (. . .) about 50 to 60 people per year. In the following year the number almost tripled. Last year the number more than tripled. (. . .) The artists are increasingly recognized abroad, there is a lot presence in the media, in social networks. ('Real Lisbon Street Art Tour' guide)

This is due to not only the increasing demand for tourism but also the growing interest in Urban Art as it becomes increasingly more common to meet tourists who are acquainted with this field of artistic expression. For this reason, we find here two distinct profiles: on the one hand, the 'interested tourist', uninitiated in this subject – a profile that fits most of the tour clients – and, on the other hand, the 'connoisseur' or 'specialized tourist', a supporter of this form of artistic expression, who previously researches the local environment and reality. Usually, for the former, this is but one activity among others from which they profit during their stay, whereas, for the latter, this is a mandatory experience and at the centre of their visit.

The type of activities that are developed and the structure of the tours themselves make up the two basic types of experience on offer: one that is more rigid and has a fixed itinerary, and another, open and flexible, seeking to respond to the yearnings and particular interests of tourist groups. Lisbon's metropolitan area has a sufficient abundance of these artistic expressions to support the existence of various itineraries and offers, even though there is a somewhat consensual and mandatory route around the more iconic artworks. Among the set of tours that we have discovered, there are walking tours, in the central parts of Lisbon, and tours that require travelling in a van (belonging to the company or rented), especially towards the more suburban neighbourhoods outside the area that is typically associated with tourism.

The growing interest in and visibility of Street Art, with its growth potential for tourism, are seen as opportunities, since they allow both to show a 'different' Lisbon and to attract people who are increasingly interested and specifically seeking this kind of tour. The kind of discourse generated by these tourism entrepreneurs typically presents alternatives that go against the grain of the conventional model of mass tourism, that is, standard and inflexible itineraries organized around touristic highlights. In the words of one of the guides,

> This turns into a curiosity as people are confronted with another type of city, not the historical city, the old town, the city with the old ladies hanging their washing at the window. . . ('Get Lost, Go Local' tour guide)

From the fieldwork and interviews conducted, we conclude that the 'tourism penetration space' (Mokras-Grabowska, 2014) is in a period of expansion without having yet reached a mass dimension. The tendency to expand is derived from the consolidation of infrastructures and tourism offers in this field. Likewise, albeit less noticeably, we witnessed that the degree of informality that is still present in Urban Art tours contributes towards interaction with local communities and, in some cases, with the artists themselves. Thus, the 'tourist space of assimilation' (Mokras-Grabowska, 2014) is actualised

by the tour guides who, thanks to a deep familiarity with the artistic environment (graffiti, Urban Art) or the local communities, facilitate the interaction between tourists and artists, or even with local residents, as noted by one of the guides we interviewed:

> I was responsible for a group of twelve tourists. There were two vans. When the friends all got together and painted the Amoreiras. They were all busy painting and I took a group, and in this group there were two collectors who immediately bought stuff. The artists did not have anything with them but immediately agreed . . . to take them to their workshops or to meet them in the hotel they were staying to buy stuff. I always enjoy this aspect as it is also important. (Estrela d'Alva, tour guide)

Urban Art tours serve as a pretext to show a 'different Lisbon' outside of the usual tourism circuits. Mostly, this rhetoric is supported by the specific geography of Urban Art in the metropolitan area of Lisbon, since there are several areas with a great concentration of urban artworks located in suburban and marginalized neighbourhoods of the city. The more relevant are the neighbourhoods of Padre Cruz and Marvila (in Lisbon) and Quinta do Mocho (in Loures), all of them targeted by public projects specific for Urban Art. Although this research is focused on the city of Lisbon, the fact that the guides are opting for tours on the outskirts of town might be motivated by the need to diversify the type of offer due to the current multiplication of tours we are witnessing. The following map (Figure 4) clearly shows the major spots of Urban Art that have converted in the five main focuses of touristic activity: (a) Central Lisbon, (b) Alcântara, (c) Bairro Padre Cruz, (d) Marvila and (e) Quinta do Mocho.

The relevance of the media: from the mainstream media to the social networks

Over the past few years, Lisbon has been having a significant presence in the international media, with a positive image that has been manufactured mostly from the post-crisis period onwards. In 2017, *The Guardian* described Lisbon as 'the new capital of cool' (Moore, 2017). In the same year, the prestigious magazine *Wallpaper* elected it the city of the year in its 'Design Awards 2017', remarking that 'The Portuguese capital is on a cultural and architectural roll' (*Wallpaper*, 2017). More recently, Lisbon was the recipient of the 'Emergent culture city of the year' award (Leading Culture Destinations, 2018). Then, Lisbon has been frequently featured in numerous publications. It is worth mentioning some of the news stories that appeared: *The Huffington Post*, in 2014, included an article with the title 'Exploring Lisbon as a street art tourist' (Rojo and Harrington, 2014), and, more recently, in 2016, the article 'On the streets of arty Lisbon, the city becomes the canvas' (Daniel, 2016) was included in the travel section of *The Washington Post*. Other newspapers, even if they do not specifically focus on this topic, include Urban Art as one of the highlights of the city, deserving to be seen either in organized tours or by independent exploration.[3]

Travel guides to Portugal and, especially, Lisbon have emphasized the proliferation and diversity of Urban Art, including it among the city highlights. In fact, the travel literature on Lisbon in the past decade recurrently presents a narrative where the

Figure 4. Top places with Urban Art in Lisbon and surroundings.

central idea is that of a wealth of contrasts, where the old lives in harmony with the contemporary and cultural avant-gardes. Apart from its rich history, that is filled with heritage and living cultural traditions, Lisbon also has the typical traits of modernity and cosmopolitanism, represented, among other things, by Street Art. As Fodor's Travel (2018) states in their website,

> Lisbon has embraced change without casting aside its much-loved heritage. Colorful murals on every corner make it one of the best cities in Europe to see street art, while white sheets flap from the windows of the tightly packed hillside homes of Moorish Alfama.

Digital media has had important consequences for tourism (Chung and Koo, 2015; Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014), and the social media are a very significant source of information for independent tourists (Xiang et al., 2015). Their users range from restricted networks of friends to the vast amount of people who have access to the Internet. This network also includes online platforms essentially devoted to travels and leisure with several profiles, ranging from small local companies to the lone traveller and all the way up to international platforms such as 'Pinterest', 'Tripadvisor', 'Spotted by locals' or 'Get Your Guide'.

On the online platforms, 'Tripadvisor' and 'Get Your Guide', we have observed that the allusions to Urban Art are varied and specially directed towards an audience consisting of young independent tourists seeking alternative tourism consumption that is either cheap or free. A part of the rhetoric of these platforms is destined for this kind of audience and is proof of how the activities and street experiences in the Portuguese capital city are strongly developed and profuse, especially the ones that relate to graffiti and Urban Art, which are closely associated to alternative and cool practices and to youth lifestyles.

These two platforms allow access to the comments of the participants, as well as their evaluations. We have observed the comments to be overwhelmingly positive, regardless of which tour they refer to, apparently confirming their success with the public. As for the number of eight tours analysed, it was possible to get access to the hundreds of evaluations (399) and comments left on both platforms. The comments were usually very positive, with average scores per tour varying between four and five points (76% of evaluations in the period analysed). These included comments such as the following:

> I love street art and I had heard that Portugal has some talented writers and artists. I was so impressed by the knowledge of our guide (. . .) She took us to amazing spots that only a local would know about. Her enthusiasm was infectious . . . This is a must for anyone who wants to experience Lisbon from a visual point-of-view . . . in neighbourhoods oozing with charm. (review of Lisbon Street Art Tour; Tripadvisor, 29 January 2016)

> Our guide was very communicative, and sensitive to the spirit of Lisbon. He explained well the history of the city and gave us interpretations of the street art we saw – most of which we would never have found without him. He took us to places that only locals would know exist and showed us restaurants and cafes that most visitors would never find. He even managed to find a street artist at work on a wall. It was a wonderful experience. (review of Street Art Tour – City Guru, Get Your Guide, 30 June 2017)

Conclusion

From our analysis, we have concluded that an ongoing process of touristification is taking place in Lisbon. In this study, we were interested in identifying the different social actors and factors contributing to the expansion of this process. This objective led us to propose an analysis taking into consideration those that we deem to be the key actors of this process of touristification. On the one hand, we have established who the local actors are: local and national public authorities, and the local entrepreneurs. On the other hand, we have established who the international and translocal actors are, namely, in the communication sector.

The touristification of Urban Art in Lisbon is the result of a number of factors which may be described as follows. To begin with, there are internal factors with a direct impact on the development of objective conditions that allow for the emergence and expansion of this niche market. On the one hand, the development by local government, over a decade, of systematic and structured policies of support and legitimation of Urban Art in the city of Lisbon has had a direct impact on the existing landscape and variety of artistic assets (Campos and Sequeira, forthcoming; Grondeau and Pondaven, 2018). This is why we see the structures promoting tourism in Lisbon conceiving Urban Art as one of the city's main assets, following a strategy similar to that employed in other global cities where culture, art and creativity are being promoted to reinforce their external image (Marques and Richards, 2014; Mould, 2015; Schacter, 2014; Zukin, 2000). As pointed out in other contexts (Christensen and Thor, 2017; Miguel-Molina et al., 2013; Mokras-Grabowska, 2014; Ruiz, 2014; Sequeira, 2016; Waclawek, 2016), a concerted Urban Art action planning for the city involving commissioned art and events is also promoting tourism in this particular setting. On the other hand, we find a strong dynamic coming

from a group of local entrepreneurs who have created a range of commercial offers in this domain. The interviews conducted gave us an insight into the success of these initiatives and into the existence of a growing demand from visitors, confirming this is a sector of industry undergoing a process of consolidation. For this reason, we may conclude that the concerted efforts of these local and national players are essential to the creation of Urban Art 'tourism spaces' as identified by Mokras-Grabowska (2014). First, the conditions propitious to the development of 'tourism exploration space' have been created due to the existence of a wealth of diverse and accessible assets in this domain, as well as a number of resources for its exploration (online information and routes, as well as the social media, all furthering these practices). Second, there is a clear growth of 'tourism penetration spaces', with the multiplication of professional opportunities in this field and the appearance of a number of private entrepreneurs functioning as intermediaries and specialists in this type of cultural consumption. Finally, and with a lesser impact, we also have 'tourism associated spaces' linked to specific neighbourhoods or Urban Art projects.

We have seen that more than the presence of objective conditions is needed for the touristification of this sector, with the creation of narratives and discourses involving the symbolic acclaim of certain realities and cultural artefacts also playing a fundamental role. The analysis of official statements issued by GAU, Lisbon City Hall and the entities working for the promotion of tourism clearly reveals their commitment on viewing Urban Art as an asset, promoting the notion of a youthful, genuine, culturally diverse and artistically dynamic city. The same discourse is reproduced in Urban Art tour guides in an attempt to consolidate the role played by this form of art expression in the city. The resulting image of Lisbon that has been gradually emerging is echoed in international media, as mentioned throughout text. Consequently, the city of Lisbon has benefitted not only from an increased growth of tourism but also from the growing status that Urban Art has been achieving in the field of what is known as cultural and creative tourism.

Declaration of conflicting interests

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Notes

1. Lisbon is a small city and the community of urban artists, entrepreneurs and so on is rather small. We believe we were able to identify the majority of existing entrepreneurs. Much of the information collected results precisely from fieldwork engagement with local actors and our interviewees.

2.   The following must be named, because of the impact that they had on the landscape: the 'Crono', '40 anos, 40 murais' (40 years, 40 murals), 'Passeio literário da Graça' (Graça's literary walk), 'Wool on tour' or the various initiatives for mural painting by the Underdogs gallery.
3.   Regarding this case, we have found recent references in the newspapers *The Sun* (Lawrence, 2017), *Express* (Mills, 2017), *The New European* (Porritt, 2017) and *The Guardian* (Moore, 2017).

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