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Urban Transformation and Social Movements:
A Case Study of Lisbon's Martim Moniz Square

Supervisor: Prof. Alessio Surian

Candidate: Sofia Garuti

Registr. number: 2096920

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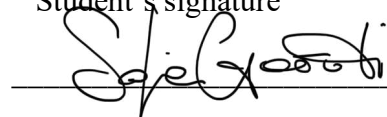
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INDEX

Abstract	7
Extended Summary	9
 Chapter 1: Introduction, Research Questions and Objectives	
1.1 Introduction	11
1.2 Research Questions and Objectives	13
 Chapter 2: The Production of Urban Public Space	
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Theoretical Foundations	16
2.2.1 Michel Foucault's Heterotopias	16
2.2.2 Henri Lefebvre's Production of Space	18
2.2.3 David Harvey's Right to the City	20
2.2.4 Castells' Network Society	21
2.3 Historical Evolution of Urban Public Spaces	22
2.3.1 Ancient and Medieval Public Spaces	23
2.3.2 Modern Era Developments: The Industrial Revolution	23
2.3.3 Urban Planning Movements	24
2.3.4 Globalisation and the Global City	26
2.4 Principles and Practices in the Creation of Public Spaces	28
2.4.1 Design Principles	28
2.4.2 Participatory Planning and Community Engagement	30
2.5 Challenges and Opportunities in Creating Urban Public Spaces	32
2.5.1 Gentrification and Displacement	32
2.5.2 Reappropriation of Space	35
 Chapter 3: Urban Social Movements	
3.1 Introduction	39
3.2 Theories of Social Movements	40
3.2.1 Definitions	40
3.2.2 Theoretical Framework	42
3.3 Brief Historical Review of Urban Social Movements	45
3.4 Types and Strategies of Contemporary Urban Social Movements	47
3.4.1 Types of Urban Social Movements	47
3.4.2 Strategies and Tactics	50
3.4.3 Impact and Outcomes of Urban Movements	52
3.5 Challenges and Future Directions	54
3.5.1 Internal challenges	54
3.5.2 External challenges	55
3.5.3 Future directions	56
 Chapter 4: Methodology	
4.1 Research Approach	59

4.3 Data Collection	61
4.4 Delimitations, Limitations and Assumptions	62
Chapter 5: Historical and Contemporary Dynamics of Urban Transformation in Lisbon, Portugal	
5.1 Introduction	65
5.2 Historical Background	66
5.2.1 Before the Earthquake	66
5.2.2 After the Earthquake	68
5.2.3 The Dictatorship Period	70
5.2.4 Post-Revolutionary Period	71
5.3 Contemporary Urban Challenges	72
5.3.1 The Financial Crisis of 2008	72
5.3.2 Urban Policies and Regeneration Efforts	74
5.3.3 Urban Participatory Planning Approaches	78
5.4 Grassroots Movements and Social Activism in Portugal	81
5.4.1 Historical Context of Social Movements	81
5.4.2 Waves of Anti-Austerity and Housing Activism before Covid-19	84
5.4.3 A New Generation of Activism	85
Chapter 6: The Case of Martim Moniz Square: Participatory Urban Governance	
6.1 Introduction to the Case Study	89
6.2 Martim Moniz and Mouraria: Evolution and Urban Change	91
6.2.1 Short Historical Background of Mouraria Neighbourhood	91
6.2.2 The Creation of Martim Moniz Square	93
6.2.3 Socio-Cultural Dynamics and Public Perception	95
6.3 Community Protests and Activism: path to the 2018 Contestations	97
6.3.1 Urban Revitalisation Initiatives	97
6.3.2 The <i>Mercado de Fusão</i> and the Rebranding of Martim Moniz	98
6.3.3 The New Plan for Martim Moniz	102
6.3.4 The Protests of 2019: Chronology of Events	104
6.4 Analysis of the Movement of Martim Moniz	107
6.4.1 Castell's framework (from <i>the Urban Question</i>)	109
6.4.2 Seixas & Mota framework	114
6.5 Analysis of the Participatory Process	117
6.5.1 The Participatory Process	118
6.5.2 Challenges and Limitations of the Participatory Process	121
6.5.3 Analysis of the Involvement of Stakeholders	122
6.6 Urban Governance, Cultural Complexity, and the Green Future: A Qualitative Research	124
6.7 Implications for Future Urban Development: A Garden for Martim Moniz	126
Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations	129
Bibliography and Other Sources	133
Annex: Questionnaire Structure and Objectives	147

Abstract

This thesis aims to explore the transformation of urban public spaces, taking as a case study the Martim Moniz Square in Lisbon, Portugal. Due to its location in the culturally diverse and historically significant neighbourhood of Mouraria, the square is a place that lends itself to examining more general urban phenomena such as gentrification, urban regeneration, and participatory processes.

Lisbon's unique historical and socio-economic environment, shaped over time by critical events such as the 1755 earthquake, the authoritarian government of the Estado Novo and the 2008 financial crisis, provides the framework for this research. Especially in popular neighbourhoods like Mouraria, these events, together with the more recent pressures of globalisation and neoliberal policies, have drastically altered the social and cultural landscape. Martim Moniz Square has become the embodiment of economic and social conflicts, particularly in the wake of the 2018 restructuring plans that gave rise to large-scale popular movements and demonstrations.

The objective of this study is to critically examine community involvement in planning processes, highlighting the potentials and problems associated with participatory governance in the urban context. The study thus aims to analyse how social interactions, power relations and cultural practices have contributed to the formation and re-appropriation of urban environments, drawing on key theories such as Michel Foucault's "Heterotopias", David Harvey's "Right to the City" and Henri Lefebvre's "Production of Space". The research adds to the broader conversation on urban struggles and environmentally and socially equitable spatial planning, emphasising, through the case of Martim Moniz, the need for inclusive and context-sensitive methods for urban development that truly empowers residents.

Extended Summary

L'obiettivo della ricerca è analizzare la prospettiva della comunità locale e il suo grado di coinvolgimento nel processo di riqualificazione di piazza Martim Moniz, a Lisbona, in uno spazio verde. La piazza si trova ai margini del quartiere storico di Mouraria, uno dei più popolosi ed etnicamente diversi di Lisbona. Ha una storia complessa di interventi di rivitalizzazione urbana che si è evoluta attraverso varie fasi, a partire dall'attuazione della politica igienico-sanitaria negli anni '40, quando una parte del quartiere di Mouraria fu demolita per far posto a Martim Moniz (Gomes, 2020), diventando uno dei quartieri più malfamati della città a causa dell'alta concentrazione di immigrati e la presenza visibile di traffico di droga e prostituzione (Tulumello, 2016).

Piazza Martim Moniz è diventata l'incarnazione di conflitti economici e sociali in seguito al piano di riqualificazione annunciato nel 2018, che prevedeva la privatizzazione di parte della piazza. La notizia, al tempo, ha scatenato dissensi e manifestazioni popolari su larga scala. Le proteste contro il nuovo piano, dovute in particolare al timore che il progetto privilegiasse gli interessi commerciali e turistici rispetto alle esigenze e alle tradizioni della comunità esistente, sono state una chiara espressione delle preoccupazioni della comunità di essere emarginata o trascurata di fronte a un'ampia riqualificazione. A partire dal 2019, diversi movimenti, come "Jardim Martim Moniz", sono entrati in gioco, ravvivando l'interesse e l'impegno della comunità di Mouraria, che ospita un mix eterogeneo di persone e gruppi di diversa estrazione economica, sociale e culturale, nel processo di riappropriazione dello spazio pubblico (Tulumello, 2016). La pressione della popolazione locale ha portato ad una petizione alla Camera municipale, nell'aprile 2019, a firma di 1600 persone, che ha costretto il Comune a ritirarsi dal piano e a concentrarsi su progetti più inclusivi: nel 2020 il Comune ha annunciato un processo partecipativo per la ridefinizione della piazza, che consisteva in focus group, sondaggi, sessioni di lavoro con le associazioni locali e il coinvolgimento delle scuole dell'infanzia e primarie. Nel 2022 è stato indetto un nuovo concorso internazionale per il progetto architettonico della piazza, i cui vincitori sono stati annunciati nel novembre 2023.

L'evoluzione di Piazza Martim Moniz si intreccia con la sua rappresentazione, plasmando ed essendo plasmata da essa. Il caso studio offre la possibilità non solo di analizzare da vicino la nascita e l'evoluzione di un movimento sociale urbano, ma anche valutarne gli obiettivi e il ruolo nella creazione e appropriazione dello spazio. Inoltre, dà l'opportunità di esaminare criticamente il coinvolgimento della comunità nei processi di pianificazione, evidenziando le potenzialità e i problemi associati ai processi partecipativi nel contesto urbano.

Chapter 1: Introduction, Research Questions and Objectives

1.1 Introduction

Cities have historically played an important role in generating and maintaining economic and demographic expansion, but they are also the main arena for political and economic struggles related to urbanization processes (Harvey, 2012; Purcell, 2005). Understanding the changing dynamics of modern cities requires an understanding of urban public spaces and their transformation. Indeed, the way urban public spaces have evolved over time reflects the broader social, political, and economic changes that have shaped cities. Since these places are meant for political participation, social interaction, and cultural expression, urban life heavily depends on their layout, management, and accessibility. The current thesis examines these processes through the events that occurred in Martim Moniz Square, located in Lisbon, Portugal's, a place that has emerged as a key discussion point for gentrification, urban renewal, and participatory governance. In order to critically analyse how these forces affect the experiences and results of urban life, the research places the case study within larger theoretical frameworks and historical developments of the creation of urban public spaces and urban social movements.

The research's theoretical foundations stem from influential publications on the creation of urban space, and the impact of social movements in shaping the urban landscape. According to Henri Lefebvre's "Production of Space" theory, social interactions, power dynamics, and cultural practices all contribute to the production of space, which should not be considered just a physical entity. Lefebvre's theories have proven to be instrumental in analysing the construction, contestation, and evolution of public spaces over time. Furthering this analysis, David Harvey's concept of the "Right to the City" emphasises the political dimensions of urban spaces, advocating for equal participation from all city dwellers in the planning and governance of their city. Michel Foucault's notion of "Heterotopias" (1986) and Manuel Castells' theory of the "Network Society" (1996) further enrich this theoretical framework by highlighting the multiplicity of meanings associated with urban spaces, and the role of communication networks in shaping contemporary cities. These theoretical perspectives offer the analytical instruments required to comprehend the dynamics of power involved in the creation and use of urban spaces, and the social movements that emerge within them and because of them. Urban social movements, first defined by Manuel Castells in 1978, are collective efforts to re-establish urban areas for the community, challenging capitalist exploitation. They have become a crucial component of democratic and sustainable urban development, as cities become capital production hubs and growth engines. Urban activism has, in some cases, replaced traditional

governance structures, and act as a mean to create a sense of identity and belonging for urban dwellers (Domaradzka, 2018).

These theoretical considerations are especially relevant in the context of Portugal, because of Lisbon's distinct historical and modern dynamics. From the destruction of the 1755 earthquake to the authoritarian Estado Novo regime and the 1974 democratic revolution, Lisbon's urban landscape has undergone numerous significant changes. Moreover, Portugal was severely affected by the 2008 financial crisis and the austerity measures that followed. More recently, globalisation, tourism, and neoliberal urban policies have all contributed to major changes in the city. These trends, which are common to large cities globally, have resulted in gentrification and social displacement, especially in formerly marginalised areas like Mouraria, which is home to Martim Moniz Square (Seixas & Albet, 2012). This resulted in a rise in social inequality and housing crises. However, these changes did not come without protests. Public areas throughout the city have turned into battlegrounds, as local communities fight against gentrification's tendency to destabilise neighbourhoods and turn them into commodities.

As a microcosm representative of broader urban dynamics, Martim Moniz Square can be a remarkable case study. Located in the historic Mouraria neighbourhood, the square represents Lisbon's multicultural identity, as it is home to both long-term Portuguese residents and a heterogeneous immigrant population. The square has also been the subject of numerous urban renewal projects over the decades, many of them motivated more by political and economic necessity than by the needs and desires of local residents. Residents' discontent over the years grew to a breaking point in 2018 due to the revelation of a new plan to redevelop the square through a private market, triggering large-scale demonstrations and grassroots movements to reclaim the space for the community.

Urban activism and participatory processes are central elements of this work. The purpose of this research is first to investigate how community involvement has influenced urban planning outcomes, especially in a situation (and in a city) where economic forces continue to be the main drivers of the transformation of the urban landscape, and where different social and cultural groups coexist with different, even competing, visions of the use of public space. The case of Martim Moniz Square also highlights the importance of bottom-up approaches to urban governance, and provides an example of how urban activism can challenge and reshape traditional narratives of urban development (Seixas, Mota, 2021). At the same time, the study seeks to critically assess the obstacles and difficulties associated with participatory processes,

especially with regard to ensuring that all voices, particularly those of marginalised groups, are recognised and considered during the decision-making process.

The aim of this research is to deepen the discussion on how public spaces in cities can promote social cohesion and democratic engagement. The study employs a dual analytical approach to the case study: first, it seeks to provide empirical evidence on the potential of urban activism to generate new opportunities for political discourse; second, it aims to offer insights into how participatory governance can be improved in urban context in order to make it more inclusive and effective. The study takes a critical stance, raising concerns about how much local communities are actually empowered by current participatory practices, and arguing in favour of more context-sensitive methods that consider the unique wants and struggles faced by a diverse urban population.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

The scope of this research is to understand the perspective of the local community and the degree of its involvement in the historical, yet ongoing, process of redesigning Martim Moniz square. Socially and ecologically just spatial planning has gathered increasing attention in the literature, largely due to climate-related processes and the displacement of lower social classes in urban areas. These dynamics are evident in the history and transformations of Martim Moniz, a public square located at the foot of the historic, and nowadays touristy, Mouraria neighbourhood, in Lisbon. This study aims to explore the relationship between participatory governance and urban activism in the context of producing urban space, and to investigate the tactics and effects of social movements in challenging urban development, as well as the difficulties and constraints of participatory processes in embracing different viewpoints. The knowledge gathered from this research is meant to add to the current discussions in urban studies by providing a case-based perspective that emphasises the importance of community dimension in shaping the future of urban areas.

This thesis is driven by two primary research questions, each focusing on a critical aspect of urban governance and social dynamics, and for which two separate literature review chapters are reserved (Chapters 3 and 2, respectively). The underlying objective is to address crucial components of urban governance and social dynamics.

The first research question concerns how social movements and urban activism can influence the creation and development of urban public spaces, especially in the presence of socio-political

tension and cultural diversity. This enquiry stems from the need to better understand the many ways in which grassroots movements challenge and reshape dense urban environments charged with competing interests. With its long history of community activism and grassroots organizations, Lisbon's Martim Moniz square offers a compelling case study for examining how these movements can oppose prevailing urban planning paradigms and promote more inclusive and equitable spaces.

The second question is related to the degree to which participatory urban governance can proficiently incorporate a range of community perspectives into decision-making processes, specifically concerning urban rehabilitation initiatives. This research centres on the participatory mechanisms employed in the revitalisation of Martim Moniz square, and it examines whether these practices are indeed capable of democratising urban space, or whether they merely justify already established development programmes. The objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of participatory governance processes in ensuring that the community's various cultural and social groups have a significant impact on urban planning decisions.

Chapter 2: The Creation of Urban Public Space

2.1 Introduction

“All places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive” is how the Charter of Public Space defines public spaces. Four categories of public places are further distinguished: streets, open public spaces, public facilities, and markets. Streets and other public areas serve a variety of purposes, from transportation to social interaction, business dealings, and cultural expression among a broad range of individuals. Particularly, squares and urban parks are open areas formed when structures are built around a central spot. Their principal features consist of the significant ratio of architectural components and the way in which the buildings interact with the surrounding space. Squares are significant places as they not only allow for vital urban activities such as transport, but can also foster a sense of community among inhabitants, as stated by Jacobs in her seminal work *“The Death and Life of Great American Cities”* (1961).

The public space of a city determines its identity. Streets and open areas shape the perception of the urban environment, from squares and boulevards to neighbourhood gardens and children’s playgrounds. The city itself is supported by the interconnected matrix of roadways and public areas, which serves as the backbone of the city. A wide range of activities take place in public spaces, including commerce, transportation of people and commodities, the provision of infrastructure, the ceremonial celebrations of multicultural cities, and the lives of impoverished urban population. The realisation of human rights, the emancipation of women, and the provision of opportunities for young people are also made possible by the use of public space as a common good and, at the same time, as a “relational incubator” (Nicholls, 2008), which enables complex interpersonal connections that generate a range of beneficial resources.

The primary objective of this chapter is to comprehensively explore the multidimensional characteristics of urban public spaces, understanding their theoretical foundations, historical progression, fundamental design principles, and contemporary challenges and opportunities. The chapter aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how urban public spaces are conceptualised, developed, and used, with a focus on their function in promoting inclusivity, sustainability, and community engagement. Section 2.2 delves into the theoretical foundations of urban studies, examining influential concepts such as Michel Foucault’s heterotopias, Henri Lefebvre’s production of space, David Harvey’s right to the city, and Manuel Castells’ network society. Section 2.3 traces the historical evolution of urban public spaces, from ancient and mediaeval times through the modern era and into the contemporary period, highlighting key

urban planning movements and the impact of globalisation. Section 2.4 examines the principles and practices of urban public space creation, focusing on design principles and participatory planning methods. Finally, section 2.5 addresses the challenges and opportunities in the creation of urban public spaces, in particular the issues of gentrification and displacement, and the reappropriation of space by communities. This structured approach is necessary to ensure a comprehensive examination of urban public spaces, providing a solid framework for understanding their complexity and potential.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations

Urban areas are more than just physical places; they have social, political, and cultural significance, which is shaped by human interaction and vice-versa. Social theories of space suggest how space is created, contested, and experienced within society, offering a framework for understanding these complex dynamics. This section explores the main theoretical contributions of well-known academics who have had a significant impact on the study of urban space, such as Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, and Manuel Castells.

Urban and geography studies both rest on the conceptual distinction between “space” and “place”. In general, the term “space” refers to an undefined, abstract area that has no specific connotation. It is understood as a blank canvas awaiting human interpretation and intervention. It can become, for example, a geometric concept, defined by dimensions and coordinates. When space is engaged with, and given meaning by human actions and experiences, it is described as a “practiced place”, suggesting that space can become place under certain circumstances (De Certeau, 1984). On the other hand, “place” refers to a location that has acquired significance as a result of social interactions, human activities, and feelings. Yi-Fu Tuan, a renowned human geographer, defines place as a “centre of felt value” where space is transformed into place as it takes on meaning and definition (Tuan, 1977). A place reflects the distinct histories, memories, and identities of the people who interact with it, and evokes a sense of attachment and belonging. The lived experiences of people and communities produce this metamorphosis, which makes place an essential aspect of social life and human existence.

2.2.1 Michel Foucault’s Heterotopias

Heterotopias, from the Greek έτερο- “other, different” and -τόπος “place”, are a concept coined by Michel Foucault to propose an effective framework for comprehending the diversity

and complexity of spaces found in urban settings. He introduced the notion of heterotopias in his essay “Of Other Spaces” (1986), defining them as real places with distinctive characteristics that derive from something other than their material essence, or its sole architectural idea (Grbin, 2015). These places reflect and question the norms, values, and power structures of the society that creates them. They are both physically and symbolically represented. Heterotopias and utopias are contrasting concepts, the formers are inspired by the latter; utopias are idealised, non-physical imaginary spaces. Instead, heterotopias are real places that represent alternative or parallel realities within the prevailing spatial hierarchy, and they are often intended as places for introspection or resistance.

Foucault highlights the various forms and functions of heterotopias by outlining certain principles that define them. Heterotopias are present in every culture and society, although their characteristics are not universal. For example, they can be places where people are isolated because of their deviance, such as boarding schools, military barracks, and psychiatric hospitals. They are also places with old history or tradition, but they could have had different functions over time, for example like cemeteries. Heterotopias also possess the capacity to juxtapose multiple spaces and meanings, that are incompatible with the standard spatial order, in a single real place. For instance, a garden can incorporate aspects from different eras and civilizations, symbolically combining disparate settings into one cohesive area (Foucault, 1986).

Additionally, heterotopias serve a dual purpose, as they have the capacity to reflect and challenge prevailing social norms. According to Foucault, some heterotopias, such as libraries and museums, are devoted to the accumulation of time and the preservation of artifacts and memories that serve as symbols of a society’s past and present, so they relate to the concept of *heterocronias* (from χρόνος, “time”). On the other hand, some heterotopias, such as circus or festivals, momentarily overturn the established social order, allowing the expression of normally repressed behaviours and the suspension of norms. By highlighting the arbitrary nature of the prevailing social and spatial practices, this inversion creates a space where alternative possibilities and social critiques can emerge. Moreover, heterotopias are frequently spaces of compensation or deception. They may produce an illusion that reveals the reality of other spaces as false or empty, or they may provide an improved or perfected version of the real world to compensate for any perceived deficiencies in the original. Cinemas are good examples of this function (Foucault, 1986). The idealised, purified presentation of historical or cultural themes, for instance, might be found in a theme park; this stands in clear contrast to the intricacies and flaws of real life. This dual ability to deceive and recover lost ground underlines the importance of heterotopias in questioning and redefining social norms and spatial practices. Last but not

least, heterotopias have a system for opening and closing, making them both permeable and isolated.

Foucault's heterotopias offer a rich conceptual framework for examining urban areas and their varied functions in modern society. Squares, in particular, fall within the concept of heterotopia proposed by Foucault for more than one of the aforementioned characteristics. By recognising the multifaceted nature of urban environments as reflective and subversive, represented both physically and symbolically, isolated, and permeable at the same time, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the processes involved in their construction, experience, and contestation. To develop more dynamic and inclusive urban environments that serve a variety of demographics and promote social justice, is essential to understand the concept of heterotopias in order to understand the complexity of urban space. Discussions on spatial justice, the right to the city, and the intricate relationships between power, space, and society still resonate with Foucault's insights on heterotopias (Foucault, 1986).

2.2.2 Henri Lefebvre's Production of Space

The discrepancies in how space is perceived are further explained by Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, which introduces the triad of *perceived*, *conceived*, and *lived* space (Lefebvre, 1991). This triadic model illustrates how human behaviour, cultural meanings, and power structures influence space, which is simultaneously physical, political, and social. Lefebvre's framework emphasises the idea that space is actively produced and reproduced through social interactions and institutions. The physical and material dimensions of space, experienced through routine activities and perceptions, are referred to as "perceived space", or spatial practice. These are the behaviours and routines that constitute the regular use of space. Street plans, building architecture, and the layout of urban infrastructure are some examples of perceived spatial components that influence how people move through, and interact with, the city. In contrast, "conceived space" refers to the spatial representations created by technocrats, architects, and planners. It is an abstract space that is governed, designed, and subjected to mapping, blueprints, and urban plans. Power and control are expressed in perceived space, where people in positions of authority impose their ideas and worldviews on how cities are spatially arranged. According to Lefebvre, this space often places efficiency and functionality ahead of social and cultural factors, reflecting the values and interests of prevailing groups. Finally, the third and most abstract dimension of Lefebvre's triad is "lived space", also known as representational space. It is the realm of meaning, symbolism, and creativity, where people

produce their own spaces infused with their individual and collective experiences. Individual identity and sense of place are shaped by social and cultural practices that emerge in lived space. People's memories, feelings, and stories connected to places influence the perception of space. With its ability to capture the lived reality and everyday existence of urban dwellers, Lefebvre contends that lived space is the most colourful and dynamic component of spatial production. By resisting, reinterpreting, and altering the dominant representations imposed by conceived space, people use lived space to assert their right to create their own meanings and uses of space. Lefebvre's theory of space production highlights how crucial it is to consider the social aspect of space and the power dynamics that influence how it is produced, and can be used to gain a deeper understanding of urban dynamics and planning techniques.

Lefebvre is also renowned for the introduction of the concept (and slogan) *Right to the City*, initially expressed in his 1968 book "Le Droit à la Ville". The idea, which can also be interpreted as the extension of his reflection on the importance of lived space, emphasises the importance of inclusion, accessibility, and democracy in urban environments. In his book, after a dissertation on the process leading to the emergence of the modern city concept, Lefebvre argued that urban space should be produced and managed by the inhabitants who live there, rather than being driven by market forces such as commodification and capitalism (Lefebvre, 1968). The city, for Lefebvre, is not only to be understood as a settlement in which people live in close proximity, but is also the expression, or the image of society, imprinted on the ground.

In Lefebvre's historical analysis, urban spaces emerged, and continue to be, as centres of social and political activity, where not only wealth, but also knowledge (*connaissances*), methods and works (i.e. art and monuments) were gathered. Cities were first and foremost commercial centres, attracting both the nobles who decorated them with their wealth and the common people who worked and traded within them (Lefebvre, 1991). With the advent of industrialisation, the dynamics of urban space's production changed significantly. Banking and commercial capital played a key role in facilitating the rise of a new entrepreneurial class and the increased mobility of wealth. The movement of capital created vast networks of exchange, changing the economic foundations of cities. Lefebvre argued that industrialisation radically transformed the way space and social processes interacted, embedding capitalist interests in the structure of cities (Lefebvre, 2003). The consequences of the transformation of wealth from immobile to mobile capital is a remarkable example of how economic changes have influenced the creation and structure of urban areas.

2.2.3 David Harvey's Right to the City

The “Right to the City”, as theorised by David Harvey, provides a crucial foundation for understanding urban social justice and the dynamics of urbanisation. Harvey builds on Lefebvre’s original idea in his seminal essay “The Right to the City” (2008), arguing that the right to the city is not just a right of “access”, but also a right to transform the city in order to transform oneself. This view gives a strong emphasis on the ability of city dwellers, as a collective, to change urban environments and social dynamics. According to Harvey, everyone living in an urban area has a “common right” to the city, especially those who are disadvantaged by the capitalist urbanisation processes.

Harvey challenges the neoliberal paradigm of urban planning, which puts money before people and turns cities into commodities. In his view, cities are increasingly becoming places of capital accumulation, where services and public areas are commercialised and privatised, and where social inequalities are exacerbated. Harvey argues that the poor are marginalised and displaced as a result of this “neoliberal urbanism”, and that democratic control over urban environments is undermined. The right to the city is thus a call for a more democratic decision-making processes in the practices that shape urban life, as well as a more equitable distribution of urban resources. Harvey’s central argument is that urbanisation is a class process that is intrinsically linked to the dynamics of capitalism. He draws attention to the ways in which capitalist interests influence the creation of urban space, resulting in spatial arrangements that both reflect and encourage social hierarchies. The processes of gentrification often result in the displacement of working-class neighbourhoods to make way for more affluent residents, benefiting real estate developers and investors. To ensure that the needs and rights of the most vulnerable urban populations are prioritised, Harvey advocates for a radical restructuring of urban governance and planning (Harvey, 2012).

Harvey’s idea of the right to the city also emphasises the importance of social movements and group efforts in the reclaiming of urban areas. In his works, he cites a number of international grassroots movements that have arisen to oppose evictions and promote more equitable and welcoming urban environments. These movements, such as the Rights to Housing or the Occupy movement, are examples of the struggle for urban justice and the reappropriation of urban space for the common good. They inspire a vision of urbanisation motivated by democratic ideals and the pursuit of social equity and justice, rather than market forces (Harvey, 2008).

2.2.4 Castells' Network Society

Manuel Castells' theory of the *Network Society* is another valuable framework for analysing contemporary urban transformations and the changing dynamics of spatiality in the digital age. Central to Castells' theory is the distinction between “space of *places*” and “space of *flows*”. Traditional physical settings where social and economic activities take place are defined as space of places. The space of flows, on the other hand, is defined by the flow of people, capital, and information through international networks, made possible by progresses in information and communication technologies (ICTs). This shift from the former to the latter implies a complete reorganisation of social and spatial relations, with resource flow and connectivity taking precedence over physical proximity (Castells, 2000). According to Castells, networks are the essential building blocks of organisation in the information era. The centralised, hierarchical logic of the industrial age contrasts sharply with the network logic, which emphasises interconnectedness, flexibility, and decentralisation. Because networks are dynamic and flexible, they enable quick sharing of information between nodes, and equally quick reactions to opportunities and changes in the environment. The concept of space of flows encompasses three levels: the physical infrastructure of networks, the spatial organisation in which economic and social activities are arranged, and the cultural and symbolic meanings associated with these flows. The global transportation and communication networks that enable immediate connectivity are part of the *physical layer*. The decentralised and flexible nature of social and economic activities that can operate seamlessly across these networks is referred to as the *organisational layer*. The cultural and cognitive maps that people and organisations use to navigate and understand these intricate networks are part of the *symbolic layer*. When combined, these layers produce a spatial logic that gives connectivity and mobility priority over fixed places (Castells, 1996).

Castells' theories highlight the emergence of “networked cities”, or “global cities” in the context of contemporary cities, where political, cultural, and economic activities have become increasingly intertwined with global networks. These cities influence regions well beyond their borders, functioning as nodes in the global network. Urban centres are now primarily defined by their strategic positions within global networks rather than just by their physical characteristics, as seen by the rise of global cities like New York, London, and Tokyo. As cities strive to increase their global competitiveness, this networked connectivity reshapes urban hierarchies and influences local development patterns (Castells, 2010). The space of flows also modifies the character of urban public spaces: digital public spaces, where social interactions and civic engagement take place online, have become a complement to traditional

public spaces, such as parks and squares. Historically, urban public areas have functioned as forums for political participation, cultural expression, and social interaction. These roles, however, have multiplied and expanded enormously in digital spaces since the advent of the Network Society. Virtual forums, social media, and online platforms enable new kinds of community building and public discourses that are not limited by geography. For instance, digital public spaces have been used by movements like the Arab Spring and the global climate strikes to mobilise and organise participants on an unprecedented level. Although these digital spaces are more inclusive and have a wider reach, they also present difficulties, such as the digital divide that keeps out people who lack digital literacy or dependable internet access (Graham & Marvin, 2001).

Additional evidence of the space of flows being more and more integrated into urban environments is provided by the idea of “smart cities”. Smart city projects use ICTs to develop public services, improve urban infrastructure and encourage citizen participation. For example, real-time data gathered from sensors and Internet of Things (IoT) devices can improve emergency response times, optimise traffic flow, and reduce energy consumption. Digital platforms also make it easier for locals to report problems, participate in urban planning, and access public services more quickly. The way that ICTs are integrated into urban planning and governance, such as in smart cities, is an example of how the space of flows can potentially improve urban management and citizen participation. The coexistence of digital and physical spaces offers new possibilities and challenges for engagement and inclusiveness, raising issues with digital divides and access; in addition, issues of equity, surveillance and privacy need to be taken seriously (Castells, 2010).

2.3 Historical Evolution of Urban Public Spaces

Throughout history, urban public spaces have undergone substantial changes reflecting the evolution of social dynamics, values, and needs. These areas have always been crucial to social, political, and economic life, from the *agoras* of ancient Greece and Rome’s forums to the lively medieval squares and marketplaces. As the Industrial Revolution progressed, urban public spaces changed to address problems of public health and overcrowding. This led to the development of parks and boulevards, which provided much-needed green space for rapidly expanding cities. This chapter explores the historical development of urban public spaces, examining their purposes and roles from ancient and medieval societies to the significant transformations they underwent in the modern era. Understanding these historical developments

provides insight into the role that public spaces play in fostering community, encouraging social engagement, and improving the urban standard of living.

2.3.1 Ancient and Medieval Public Spaces

Ancient public places, such as the *agora* for the Greeks and the *forum* in Rome, were essential to the social, political, and economic life of their respective societies. The agora, usually located in the centre of Greek cities, served as a multipurpose venue for a range of events, including political debates, cultural shows, and trade agreements. It served as the centre of civic life, drawing people together to celebrate religious holidays, have assemblies and discussions (Wycherley, 1962). Comparably, the Roman forum was the centre of urban affairs, housing significant government structures in addition to serving as a marketplace and a place for public speeches. It represented the judicial and political functions of the city and was a place where the complexities of Roman civic life emerged (Purcell, 2007).

Squares and markets were important public spaces also in medieval cities, serving as hubs for public events, social interactions, and trade. They were often located close to significant civic or religious structures, which reinforced their function as hubs of public life. In particular, markets were essential for economic activities, as they provided places for residents to purchase daily necessities and for merchants and artisans to sell their products (Mumford, 1961). Squares also functioned as venues for local government, celebrations, and public ceremonies. These areas were built and used to reflect the social structures and bonds that characterised medieval society, often becoming the symbolic representation of civic pride and identity (Kostof, 1991).

2.3.2 Modern Era Developments: The Industrial Revolution

Urban public spaces underwent a significant transformation during the Industrial Revolution as a result of the challenges posed by rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. Living conditions in the cities became harsh due to the sharp rise in urban population and factory-based economies, which resulted in overcrowd and filth issues. Consequently, reformers and urban planners began to push for the construction of public parks and boulevards to improve public health and offer relief from the congested urban environment (Schuyler, 1986). Famous examples are the creation of Central Park by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in New York City, which offered a green haven in the middle of the busy metropolis, and the wide boulevards created by Baron

Haussmann in Paris, which sought to relieve traffic congestion and improve the city's appearance (Jordan, 1995).

The establishment of public parks after the Industrial Revolution was driven by the recognition of the health benefits of open spaces, which provided urban residents with a refuge from the congested streets and contaminated air. These parks, following “*anti-urban ideals that dwelt on the traditional prescription for relief from the evils of the city*” (Cranz, 1982, pp. 3–5), were intended to be places for social interaction and cultural events, in addition to passive recreation. The already mentioned Central Park in New York, and Hyde Park in London became popular locations for social events, concerts, and public gatherings, which promoted civic engagement and a sense of community (Cranz, 1982). The introduction of green spaces into urban environments also marked a dramatic shift in emphasis toward improving public welfare and raising standards of urban living. The purpose of Boulevards and promenades, which were among the urban public spaces created during the Industrial Revolution, was to improve aesthetics, facilitate transport and create public areas for socialising and recreation. This period saw the birth of modern urban planning, which focuses on how public spaces should be integrated into the urban fabric to make cities more liveable.

2.3.3 Urban Planning Movements

Since the mid-19th century, the recognised need for a healthier and more welcoming urban environment has led to the emergence of several movements based on the attempt to balance the demands of the growing urban population with the need for liveable, sustainable, and aesthetically pleasing spaces. These movements, although primarily theoretical, have left visible marks on our cities.

The Garden City Movement, started by Ebenezer Howard in the late 19th century, promoted a harmonious integration of the urban and rural environments, and marked a dramatic change in urban planning. In his work “*Garden Cities of To-Morrow*” (1898), Howard outlined his vision for the development of independent communities surrounded by greenbelts, which would combine the advantages of country and urban living. These garden cities offered plenty of green space, shared amenities, and a more peaceful coexistence with nature in an effort to relieve the congestion and “mediocre” living conditions of industrial cities. Urban planning techniques were greatly impacted by this movement, which also influenced urban design principles worldwide and spurred the creation of new towns (Ward, 2002). However, scholars have since argued that

these planned communities would have created isolation of communities along class, ethnic and racial lines, therefore triggering social segregation (Bodnar, 2015)

Another radical change in urban planning occurred with the emergence of the *modernism* movement in the early 20th century, which placed a strong emphasis on utility, minimalism, and the application of new materials and technologies. The movement embraced a variety of disciplines, from literature to visual arts, music and, of course, design and urban planning. Among the protagonists of this movement were Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier. In order to effectively respond to the needs of contemporary urban living and solve the problems of pollution and over-crowding, Le Corbusier, for example, in his Radiant City project (Le Corbusier, 1935), proposed high-density housing solutions within skyscrapers, surrounded by open green areas. Zoning, functional segregation, and the use of architectural forms that emphasised clean lines and minimal decoration were common features of the Modernist approach, which reflected a belief in development through industrial technology and logical design (Frampton, 2007).

Urban planning worldwide was strongly influenced by the Garden City and the Modernist movements, although their guidelines were sometimes opposed and had mixed results. Though Garden Cities have succeeded in producing aesthetically pleasing living spaces, they have sometimes struggled to maintain economic sustainability and integrate successfully into larger metropolitan networks. Despite its creative concepts, the Modernist method has often produced spaces that were considered impersonal, unresponsive to communal concerns, and unfit for human scale. The lack of social thinking in modernist architecture was criticised for producing functional but often lifeless urban environments (Jacobs, 1961). Nonetheless, the lasting impact of these movements can be seen in contemporary urban planning techniques, which frequently include concepts from both. Inspired by the principles of garden cities, contemporary city planning has begun to understand the need for mixed-use places, sustainable development, and the incorporation of green spaces in the urban environment.

Since the 1970s, in fact, there has been a growing movement of citizens, activists, urbanists, and architects (mostly in the United States) who have been concerned about the loss of social purpose of spaces, and have identified suburban land development and mid-century city planning as the main reasons for the abandonment of public areas. The widespread problems of urban sprawl, underinvestment in central cities, and growing racial and economic segregation that marked urban development in the latter half of the 20th century gave rise, in 1993, to the New Urbanism movement. The “Charter of the New Urbanism”, formulated by the Congress for the

New Urbanism, advocates for the restoration of existing urban centres and the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into walkable communities (CNU, 1996). The movement emphasises the creation of diverse neighbourhoods, fostering social integration and economic vitality by designing communities where residential, commercial, and recreational spaces coexist, emphasising the importance of accessible public spaces and community institutions in order to create a supportive physical framework to effectively address social and economic problems. The movement also advocates for public policies and development practices that support diverse, mixed-use neighbourhoods designed for pedestrians, transit, and cars, with the goal of reducing environmental impact, improving public health, and creating vibrant, interconnected communities. This inclusive approach is thought to help mitigate the negative impacts of urban renewal and promote social equity (Talen, 2013). Additionally, the movement's emphasis on the preservation and enhancement of existing urban centres can prevent the spread of sprawl and protect the cultural and social fabric of neighbourhoods, thus enhancing community's sustainability and resilience. The principles of New Urbanism are often implemented through participatory planning processes, which will be discussed in chapter 2.4, involving a wide range of stakeholders, thus ensuring that urban development reflects the needs and desires of the community.

2.3.4 Globalisation and the Global City

Contemporary urban public spaces have undergone a significant transformation due to the forces of globalisation, becoming more diverse and interconnected than before. As cities transform into global centres, public spaces have changed to reflect and accommodate the diverse cultural, social, and economic interactions that characterise contemporary urban life. The international nature of many public squares, parks, and streets, which often combine a variety of architectural forms, cultural icons, and international social activities, is a clear indicator of this transition. Globalisation has made it easier for people to share ideas and practices, which has led to the development of hybrid spaces that are dynamic environments for intercultural communication and interaction (Sassen, 2001).

The rise of global cities, which serve as hubs for a complex system of cultural and economic exchanges, is one significant way of how globalisation has affected urban public spaces. Cities like New York, London, and Tokyo have transformed into multicultural melting pots where a wide range of people gather to share their cultural customs in public areas that often reflect this multiculturalism, as they must therefore cater to the needs and preferences of a diverse urban

population. Since these areas provide platforms for intercultural dialogue and understanding, it is a common belief among planners that incorporating various cultural elements into public spaces not only enhances the urban experience, but also promote social cohesion and inclusiveness (King, 2004).

Digital technologies have further transformed urban public spaces, introducing new dimensions of connectivity and interaction. The emergence of smart city initiatives, and the use of technology and data to enhance urban experience, have led to notable transformations in the design, management, and consumption of public spaces. Sensors, cameras, and Wi-Fi networks, which enable real-time data collection and monitoring and can contribute to urban planning and management decisions, are now common features of smart cities. Urban planning practices have also become more inclusive thanks to digital public engagement tools, provide platforms for citizens to participate in the creation and administration of public areas. Social media, smartphone apps, and online surveys allow citizens to express their thoughts, report problems and offer suggestions for improving public areas. The principles of Manuel Castells' Network Society theory, which emphasise the importance of networks in modern society, are in line with this participatory approach. According to Castells (1996), digital technologies gave rise to new types of social organisations and interactions in which networks and information flows are vital in determining the character of urban life. Urban economies are becoming increasingly interconnected, as evidenced by the growing number of foreign vendors and international products available in urban markets. Moreover, the economic functions of public spaces have been influenced by globalisation and digital technologies, which have transformed them into centres for international trade and innovation. Public spaces are used as venues by creative and technology start-ups, which often exploit the accessibility and visibility of these spaces to reach a wider audience.

Public spaces are still crucial components of the urban ecosystem, as evidenced by the convergence of local and global economic activities in them (Sassen, 2001). Globalisation and digitalisation of public areas, however, have also brought with several challenges, including the digital gap and the possibility of homogenisation. Public spaces can become generic and disconnected from their cultural contexts due to the proliferation of global brands and uniform designs, which can lead to the loss of local character and distinctiveness. Furthermore, as not all urban dwellers have equal access to digital tools and platforms, the use of digital technologies may increase inequalities. Addressing these problems requires a balanced strategy that protects regional identities and ensures equal access to the benefits of digital innovations (Graham & Marvin, 2001).

2.4 Principles and Practices in the Creation of Public Spaces

2.4.1 Design Principles

Thoughtful design of urban public space is critical to create thriving, diverse and sustainable communities. Essential principles such as inclusiveness, safety, sustainability, and accessibility ensure that public areas meet the diverse needs of metropolitan communities and improve the general well-being of inhabitants.

The first essential component of public space design is *accessibility*, which implies creating environments that are suitable for everyone, regardless of age, ability, or socioeconomic status. This means using general design principles that consider, for example, the needs of people with disabilities: accessible public restrooms, wide pathways, tactile paving, and ramps are all necessary features. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that creating accessible public areas can significantly improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities, promoting their independence and involvement in society (WHO, 2011). Accessibility principles also include the ease of reaching public spaces by public transport and the design of pedestrian areas to ensure that every part of society can access them. Data from the United Nations (2023) on the estimated percentage of urban population within 400 meters walking distance to an open public space shows that there is still a significant disparity at global level in the application of accessibility features (Ritchie et al., 2024).

Share of urban population with convenient access to an open public space, 2020



Share of urban population within 400 meters of walking distance along the street network to an open public space.

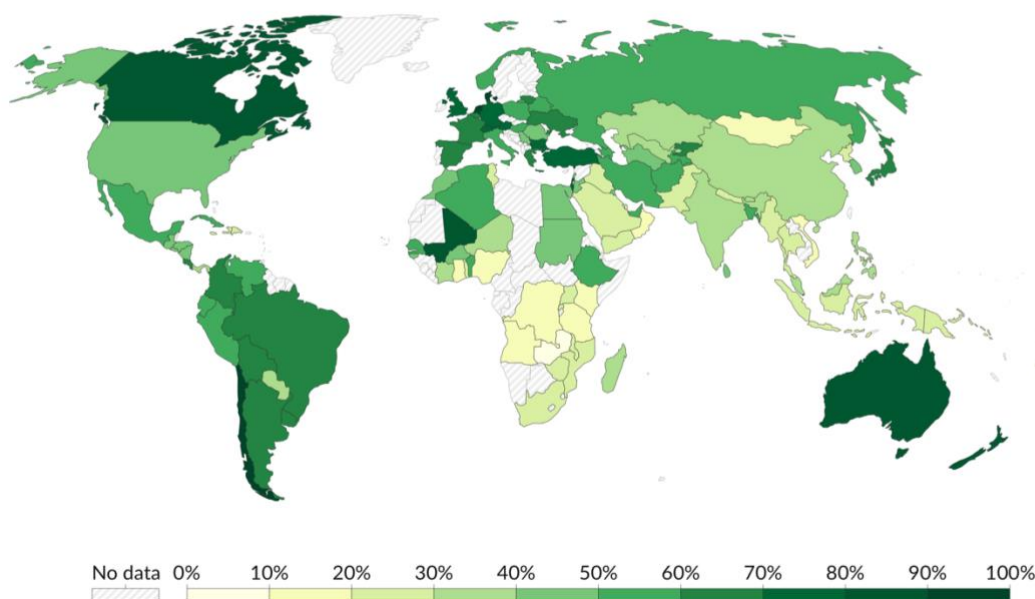


Figure 1_Share of Urban Population with Convenient Access to Open Public Space. Source: United Nations (2023).
OurWorldInData.org/urbanization

Inclusivity can be translated with the expression “public space for all”. Regarding public places, implementing this principle means that people, when in a given space, should feel accepted, included and not subject to discrimination because of their gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, cultural background, socio-economic level, or beliefs (Zhou, 2019). When public spaces are designed with inclusivity in mind, they can serve different demographic groups and promote social cohesion. Cultural, social, and economic diversity must be considered in inclusive design, creating environments that honour and reflect the needs of different groups in the community. Some examples are multilingual signage, culturally appropriate public art, and areas created for a variety of activities that can attract different age groups and cultural backgrounds. Renowned urbanist Jane Jacobs argued that successful public areas are those that promote a variety of uses and interactions, while creating a sense of community and belonging (Jacobs, 1961). Public areas designed to be inclusive can help bridge social gaps and foster a sense of shared responsibility and ownership among residents.

Another primary concern in the design of public areas should be *safety*. Safe public spaces attract and encourage people to use them throughout the day, bringing them alive. Design techniques that improve safety include active surveillance, good lighting, and clear visibility. According to the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), spaces that are well-lit and visible have the potential to discourage criminal activities and increase the sense of safety, for instance (Cozens et al., 2005). Furthermore, the idea of “eyes on the street”, made popular by Jane Jacobs, suggests that regular activities in public spaces may act as a natural surveillance system, greatly enhancing safety. To further improve the safety of these areas, elements like emergency call stations and well-placed public facilities can be added.

Sustainability is another principle that must be taken into consideration while designing and maintaining resilient, ecologically conscious urban communities. Permeable pavements, green roofs, and rain gardens are examples of green infrastructure integrated into sustainable public spaces to manage stormwater and lower the effects of urban heat islands. The use of native plants, for example, reduces the need for chemical inputs and irrigation, while promoting biodiversity. The integration of recycling facilities and renewable energy sources, such as solar-powered lighting, are further features of sustainable practices. Beatley (2011) argues that sustainable public spaces improve the quality of life for urban residents by providing cooler temperatures, cleaner air and visually attractive natural environments for recreation and relaxation.

The principles described above are fundamental to the design and maintenance of urban public spaces. However, putting these design principles into practice requires a participatory planning strategy that involves local communities in the decision-making process. Community participation can help ensure that public spaces are designed with the needs and preferences of users in mind. There are several techniques, which will be briefly analysed in the next section, to create and sustain this involvement. Various stakeholders, such as local government officials, business owners, and citizens, can contribute to the development of public areas that the community values, finds more purpose for, and uses more frequently.

2.4.2 Participatory Planning and Community Engagement

Participatory planning and community involvement are key practices for building public spaces that are both representative of the needs and desires of the people they serve and functional. When locals are involved in the design of public spaces, they are more likely to be successfully used and maintained as they represent local needs and preferences (Arnstein, 1969). The participation of the local community in the planning and design stages can therefore greatly enhance the importance of public spaces and ensure that they are appreciated and well utilised.

It is well established that active participation within the community helps inhabitants feel more involved in the conservation and management of the place. According to Myrvold and Wergeland (2018), participation is essentially an “attitude” in terms of involvement, engagement, teamwork, and inclusivity. According to some scholars, participatory governance processes that support local democratic processes and give citizens more power can lead to stronger institutions, the maintenance of representative democracy, and positive social change (Tahvilzadeh, 2015). Meaningful public participation is deemed necessary to transform social and power relations, to shift the focus of planning away from planners (Fenster, 2014), to promote public interest in planning activities (Santo, 2007) and to promote sustainability and social cohesion (Çahantimur & Öztürk, 2020). Participatory decision-making processes can also be used to lower uncertainty in decisions concerning spatial planning, by promoting the exchange of knowledge and information as well as the sharing of models and software among stakeholders (Mansourian et al., 2011). Moreover, according to OECD (2022) participation processes improve and democratise policymaking by supporting transparency and accountability. Finally, by representing diverse groups, including those who are excluded or marginalised, these processes embody the principle of inclusiveness mentioned in the previous section. The legitimacy of the practice is ensured by the fact that local residents can influence project

outcomes, and actively participate in decision-making processes (OECD, 2022). People who contribute to the co-creation of public spaces are also more likely to care for and take pride in them, thus reducing the likelihood of neglect and vandalism. A sense of ownership can also lead to more ecologically friendly management practices, since involved local communities are frequently more aware of the distinctive social and environmental dynamics of their surroundings. Involved communities are thus more able to handle issues related to the maintenance and long-term sustainability of public spaces (Dempsey et al, 2011). Participatory planning can also improve social cohesion. Community ties and trust between the public and local government can be strengthened when locals perceive that their opinions are valued and heard. Through collaboration, barriers between different community groups can be broken down, fostering social integration and inclusion. According to Manzo and Perkins (2006), social capital can also be increased through participatory processes, which in turn can create networks of trust and cooperation that benefit the entire community.

There are several techniques and resources that can be used to involve communities in the planning and design of public areas. Here is a non-comprehensive list of some of the most popular:

- *Charrettes* (French for “cart” or “chariot”) is one of the most known strategies in urban planning, but it can be implemented in any collaborative process. These in-depth, cooperative design workshops bring together community people, managers, and other stakeholders to generate creative solutions for urban design challenges. This process ensures that the final design represents a variety of viewpoints by facilitating real-time feedback and iterative idea development (Lennertz & Lutzenhiser, 2006).
- *Public consultation* is another essential instrument to involve the community. Locals are requested to give their opinions and provide input on projects that are being examined during town hall meetings, public hearings, or open forums, among other events. Through direct communication between residents and planners, public consultations provide a forum for an open and democratic decision-making process. Effective public consultations can improve the legitimacy and accountability of urban planning initiatives (Innes and Booher 2004).
- *Focus groups* and *workshops* are also useful tools for interacting with specific community groups. While focus groups allow for in-depth examination of specific issues with the targeted demographic, such as youth, seniors, or minority groups, workshops offer an interactive setting where participants can work in small groups to discuss and develop

ideas. According to Reed et al. (2009), these techniques can reveal special needs and insights that would otherwise go unnoticed in more extensive public consultations.

- *Digital platforms* are increasingly being adopted by administrations to help with community engagement, particularly when it comes to smart city projects. More people can participate through online surveys, social media, and engagement platforms that target those who might not be able to make it to in-person meetings. This is deemed to lower some barriers in participation, such as time or distance. In addition to offering useful data, digital tools can assist planners in recognising community trends and preferences. According to a 2010 study, digital participation can improve the efficiency and inclusivity of participatory planning procedures (Evans-Cowley and Hollander, 2010).
- *Participatory Budgeting* (PB) is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend a portion of the public budget. This approach, which is becoming more and more widespread, guarantees that public funds are distributed in accordance with community priorities by incorporating citizens in the financial decision-making process, thus promoting accountability and transparency. PB usually consists of the following steps: gathering ideas, developing proposals, holding votes, and putting them into action. Participatory budgeting has been successfully used from 1989 in Porto Alegre, Brazil and, as a result, public services and infrastructure in lower-class neighbourhoods have significantly improved since (Baiocchi, 2003).
- Incorporating arts and culture into participatory planning has the potential to further improve community involvement. Cultural events, creative workshops, and public art projects can work as tools for gathering feedback, as well as for stimulating public spaces to make them more vibrant and more reflective of the identity of the community. Innovative ideas for public space design can be sparked by creative engagement techniques that can attract a diverse range of participants. For instance, Theatre of the Oppressed, an interactive theatre approach that uses drama and performance to engage the participants, has been successfully employed in New York City with communities facing various social issues. These events promote a deeper comprehension and group problem-solving by encouraging participants to investigate issues like housing instability and police-community relations.

2.5 Challenges and Opportunities in Creating Urban Public Spaces

2.5.1 Gentrification and Displacement

Improving urban public spaces can often bring substantial advantages, such as greater economic activity, better environmental quality, and increased social cohesion. However, unintentional consequences like gentrification and displacement may also result from these improvements. Gentrification is the term used to describe the process by which lower-class families and small businesses are displaced from urban neighbourhoods, as a result of an inflow of wealthier residents. Numerous factors, such as social, cultural, and economic forces, are responsible for this phenomenon. The search for higher property values and rental income by developers and real estate investors, for example, is a significant contributing factor, as they often choose to invest in undervalued or abandoned urban areas, which can lead to higher living expenses and property values, making it more difficult for long-term residents to stay in their homes (Smith, 2002). Cultural factors also play a significant role in gentrification: once low-income neighbourhoods are becoming increasingly attractive to younger, wealthier, and more educated people who want to live in a vibrant urban environment. As a result of their frequent search for places with distinctive cultural identities, historical significance, or attractive architecture, demand and prices are further increased. This cultural shift has also the potential to erode the neighbourhood's identity, the very same one that newcomers were seeking. Locally owned businesses may be replaced by chain stores and pricey amenities intended to entice the newcomers (Zukin, 2010).

Gentrification displaces people from their homes, disrupting long-standing social networks and cultural identities in the process, which particularly affects those dwellers with lower incomes, and the small enterprises that are unable to bear the growing expenses linked to the improved public area. When they are forced to leave their neighbourhoods, long-term residents often lose access to vital services, social networks, and educational opportunities, which exacerbates social and economic inequality (Lees et al., 2008). There are numerous underlying causes of gentrification. An important role, as mentioned, is played by economic and social factors, but gentrification can also be stimulated by government initiatives and incentives, like zoning changes and tax breaks for developers, or urban redevelopment projects. For example, if improvements to infrastructure are carried out, such as introducing more public transportation, higher-income citizens may find previously unattractive neighbourhoods more appealing (Freeman, 2005). Another kind of gentrification is tourist gentrification, where popular tourist destinations see rise in real estate prices and cost of living, thus forcing long-term inhabitants to move to the suburbs. Cities with a strong cultural heritage and historical districts frequently experience this phenomenon. For example, the tourist industry has changed some areas of Barcelona, leading to an increase in rents and the transformation of residential houses into short-

term rentals (García-Herrera et al., 2007). Green gentrification, also called eco-gentrification or greenification, is also gaining interest among scholars. Green gentrification is a phenomenon that occurs when property values increase as a result of environmental improvements in urban areas, such as the creation of parks, greenways, and sustainable infrastructure, leading to the eviction of long-term residents from their homes. Although the goal of these green initiatives is to improve environmental sustainability and quality of life, they often have the unintended consequence of attracting higher-income individuals and increasing housing costs. A well-known example of green gentrification is the creation, in 2009, of the High Line Park in New York City, which was originally an elevated train line. The project changed the surrounding neighbourhoods, raising rents and property values to the point that many long-term residents and small businesses have been forced to leave (Curran & Hamilton, 2012). This type of gentrification emphasises the need for equitable planning strategies that strike a balance between social justice and environmental goals, ensuring that all community members can benefit from green spaces without having to relocate (Gould & Lewis, 2016). The loss of affordable housing and small businesses can also lead to a homogenous urban environment where diversity and local character are sacrificed in favour of more standardised, high-end developments.

There are multiple strategies that can be used to mitigate the negative effects of gentrification. Affordable housing policies are essential. These may include public or subsidised housing development, inclusionary zoning, which requires developers to incorporate a certain number of affordable units in new construction, and rent control measures. In addition, community land trusts (CLTs), which are non-profit organisations that purchase and hold land on behalf of the community, can support the preservation of affordable housing by ensuring that land remains under community control and is used for the benefit of residents (DeFilippis, 2004). Inclusive economic development projects can also help reduce the negative effects of gentrification. Subsidies, low-interest loans, and business development initiatives can help small businesses maintain their competitiveness in a dynamic market. Furthermore, employment and vocational training programmes for local residents can ensure that they take advantage of the new business opportunities offered by neighbourhood revitalisation (Wolf-Powers, 2005).

Balancing the unavoidable demand for urban development with the preservation of existing communities requires an inclusive and comprehensive approach to urban planning. To ensure the needs and concerns of all community members are considered, it is crucial to include them in decision-making processes from the outset. Participatory planning techniques, such as community workshops, and public consultations, can promote genuine involvement and a sense of shared responsibility for outcomes (Arnstein, 1969). By prioritising community voices, planners can

create strategies that improve public areas while reducing displacement. Furthermore, it is crucial to constantly monitor and evaluate the results of changes to public spaces. This may require monitoring business turnover rates, housing affordability, and demographic changes, to spot early indicators of gentrification and displacement. Additionally, new technologies can and should play an important role in making these processes more efficient and inclusive.

2.5.2 Reappropriation of Space

Understanding the concept of “reappropriation of space” requires an understanding of the dynamics of urban public spaces. Urban public spaces become critical sites for political action, as Simmel suggests, in the context of growing urban mass and density (Bodnar, 2015). Hannah Arendt (1970), emphasising the significance of group action within these spaces, refers to the “ability to act in concert” as a form of power. When people come together as a group, they generate a power that can start changes that go beyond what any person, alone, could do. Public spaces have a particular political relevance, as they can be used as a practical setting for the mobilisation of movements and the expression of collective power, as they are tangible and not virtual places, e.g. social networks (Bodnar, 2015).

Public spaces have a dual function: social and political. On the social side, they encourage interactions between different groups, which can develop into a cohesive community. Politically, public spaces enable democratic practices, uniting individuals from all backgrounds and promoting equality and freedom. However, throughout the history of public spaces, conflicts between inclusivity and attempts at homogenisation have resulted from this diversity’s tendency to create tension between the social and political functions. Public spaces, with their bars and kiosks, have changed from being open, welcoming places to more exclusive social clubs where the social function takes precedence over the political one due to years of selection of users, budget cuts, and a lack of political will in keeping open the access to those spaces.

Streets and sidewalks have become the main residual spaces in this changing landscape for unwritten political activity and public expression. Kohn (2004) argues that these spaces are important sites for social and political engagement, because they bring poverty and inequality to light. Urban public spaces still provide a platform for political expression because they thrive on diversity. When proximity and diversity act as stimulants for activity, these spaces have the potential to develop into lively public spaces (Bodnar, 2015). However, as the revival of public life in Hanoi through small-scale commercialisation shows, the commercial and consumerist

transformation of public spaces often undermines their political and social functions (Thomas, 2002).

The privatisation and securitisation of public spaces further complicate their role in urban life. Public-private partnerships have been used to manage public spaces as urban renewal turns into a commercial strategy, striking a balance between private management, public ownership, and public access. This model challenges the ideal of open and inclusive public spaces, via the potential exclusion of non-consumers and marginalised groups, even though it is designed to promote urban regeneration (Samara, 2010). The notion of “the end of public space” and the rise of the “fortress city”, first proposed by Sorkin in 1992, draws attention to how urban areas are becoming progressively more regulated and commercialised, significantly changing their function and accessibility. According to Michael Sorkin (1992), market forces and urban development strategies have led to the commercialisation and privatisation of public spaces, undermining their democratic potential, and turning them into places of consumption rather than civic engagement. The emergence of controlled environments, like gated communities and malls, where access is restricted and behaviour is regulated to uphold a specific social order, is indicative of this trend toward privatisation. This idea is further developed by David Madden (2010), who points out how neo-liberal urban policies and practices contribute to the disappearance of truly public spaces in favour of others that speak of access, expression, inclusion, and creativity, but which actually focus on surveillance, order, and the promotion of corporate capitalism. According to him, the focus on consumerism, security, and surveillance marginalises non-commercial activities and keeps underprivileged groups out, essentially erasing the public character of these spaces. This “end” of public space, or more accurately, this disengagement of public space from democracy, represents a transition from open, participatory places to closed, controlled spaces that put profit ahead of social and democratic purposes. As a result, social movements’ reappropriation of space can be understood as a reaction against these developments, working to reclaim and re-establish urban areas’ public character in opposition to the forces of exclusion and privatisation. Indeed, insurgent urban actions like squatting and guerrilla gardening reclaim public areas for different purposes, undermining the prevailing neoliberal urban system. According to Holston (1999) and Lugosi et al. (2010), these grassroots efforts draw attention to the ongoing competition for the use of urban spaces, and emphasise the need for areas that can support a variety of community-driven activities.

Communities in different regions of the world are engaging in space reappropriation practices as a way to reclaim and reuse neglected or underused places in response to urban problems. For instance, the number of community gardens, defined as plots of land managed collectively by

citizen groups for cultivating (Guitart et al., 2012), in the 100 major cities of the United States increased from 16,240 in 2012 to 29,000 in 2018, equal to a 44% growth in only eight years, according to a Trust for Public Land's 2018 survey (TPL, 2018). Through active modification of their surroundings and reappropriation of space, communities can promote social cohesion, cultural expression, and economic resilience. The reappropriation of space is a means of resistance against the pressures of displacement and gentrification, as well as a way to revitalise urban neighbourhoods and serve as a platform for community events that promote cultural diversity and social interactions (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2012). By reclaiming local spaces, communities can create environments that represent their needs and values instead of those imposed by external developers and planners. In contrast to the alienation and displacement caused by gentrification, this grassroots strategy gives locals a sense of empowerment and ownership (Hou, 2010). Actions might include the transformation of dilapidated buildings, vacant lots and neglected public areas into thriving community centres. Initiatives like urban farming, pop-up markets, and cultural events are other examples of how to revitalise abandoned areas while giving locals access to basic services (Lefebvre, 1991). For instance, urban gardens provide fresh fruit as well as a space for social events, educational programs, and cross-cultural interactions.

The phenomenon of social movements, which will be analysed more in depth in the following chapter, plays a critical role in the reappropriation of space. Movements fighting for housing rights, environmental justice and urban equity often lead re-appropriation efforts, for instance by transforming vacant and underused spaces into active community assets. These movements present alternatives to the mainstream narratives about urban development, emphasising inclusivity, sustainability, and community control (Castells, 1983). In this way, they not only resist gentrification, but also contribute to a more equitable and just urban environment.

Chapter 3: Urban Social Movements

3.1 Introduction

For the past decades, social movements have played an important role in shaping the political, social, and economic environments. The city, in particular, due to its density and dynamism, has long been the chosen scene for these movements, as it provides the context for where the interaction between different societal groups and forms of power can occur. These movements, which are rooted in the collective action of citizens, have been working to address and correct a variety of urban injustices, such as access to public services, rights to housing, employment, and environmental justice.

This chapter aims to examine the theoretical frameworks, historical development, impact, types and strategies, and future directions of urban social movements. The objective is to provide an extensive overview of how urban social movements form, function, and impact the socio-political environment of cities. The first section of the chapter looks at both social movement and urban social movements theories, providing definitions and a theoretical foundation to ground the discussion. The study of urban social movements as a distinct subject emerged only in the 1970s, as the recognition of the localised interests and demands of protests started to be acknowledged. The following section, 3.3, deals with the historical setting and follows the development of urban social movements across time. In section 3.4, the chapter presents an analysis and classification of modern urban social movements based on their goals, highlighting various forms and tactics used, and providing examples from around the world. The significance of these movements in influencing urban policies and practices is then analysed through an evaluation of their effects and results. In the final section, the chapter addresses the obstacles, both internal and external, faced by urban social movements, possible future directions, and offers recommendations on how to maintain and grow these essential forms of civic participation. This approach seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of urban social movements, and to offer a structure for understanding their complexity and potential.

3.2 Theories of Social Movements

3.2.1 Definitions

Social movements

A social movement, according to the definition given by the Oxford Dictionary, is “A *large number of people who act together in order to pursue some shared objective, such as environmentalism*”. UNICEF, in its *SBC programmatic approaches*, echoes Diani’s definition (Diani, 2011), emphasising the social aspect of these movements: “[*Social movements are*] *joint efforts by citizens, groups and communities bound by similar goals who organise themselves to act and overcome their condition, tackle social issues together or resist domination*”. Social movements generally aim to achieve political, economic, or social goals, working to strengthen the voices of marginalised communities, and to create change or oppose undesirable change. These objectives frequently aim to large-scale societal transformations and to address systemic problems. Historical movements, like the Women’s Suffrage and Civil Rights Movements, have had a lasting impact on society and have led to important legislative and social changes: for example, the former led to the right to vote for women in the United States, while the Civil Rights Movement produced historic laws, such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. More contemporary movements, such as the global climate strikes and the Black Lives Matter movement, continue to influence public opinion and legislation, proving the persistent relevance and effectiveness of social movements in addressing contemporary issues (Tarrow, 1998). Nowadays, climate change activism, including global climate strikes, seeks to counter global warming and promote environmental sustainability through policy change and increased public awareness (McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 2011).

In contrast to other types of collective behaviour, like spontaneous protests or riots, social movements are distinguished by their long-lasting character (Tilly, 2004) and organisation since they put visible effort in sustaining momentum through planned campaigns and enduring supporter mobilisation. They frequently operate outside of established political institutions, influencing public opinion, legislation, and social norms through a range of activism and advocacy strategies such public campaigns, lobbying, civil disobedience, and protests. For example, the American Civil Rights Movement, which took place in the 1950s and 1960s, regularly used civil disobedience, legal actions, and protests to end institutionalised racial discrimination and segregation. Its success was largely due to this perseverant work, which demonstrated the effectiveness of long-term planned activism (Morris, 1984). Another characteristic shared by social movements is the creation of a collective identity among

participants, which promotes solidarity and a sense of belonging (Polletta & Jasper, 2001) necessary for the movement to last over time. A final common element of social movements is that they often face opposition, as they frequently emerge in antagonism to prevailing power structures or social norms, as a result of perceived injustices or unmet social needs. Conflict can take different forms, ranging from counter-movements that question the legitimacy of the social movement's goals, to governmental repression (Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996), which can, in some cases, become extremely violent. Together, these traits characterise social movements and distinguish them as powerful forces for social change.

Urban social movements

Urban social movements are, for all intents and purposes, social movements which gather the collective efforts of urban residents, activists, and community organisations to address issues specifically related to urban environments. These movements aim to address and improve urban conditions, such as public transport, housing, and environmental justice. They often emerge as a response to urban policies or practices that negatively affect communities, especially underprivileged or marginalised ones (Domaradzka, 2018). Urban social movements fight for equitable access to opportunities and resources in the city, with the aim to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants. Urban social movements act at a local level, focusing on the local environment and the particular challenges it presents, as opposed to social movements, which may focus their energies on national or global issues, or have broader or more widespread geographical regions. These movements often seek to gain some control over the urban environment (Pruijt, 2007), for example by influencing municipal policies and interacting with local government officials, which shapes the strategies and tactics they use. Even if they do not have a direct influence on broader national policies, these localised issues can have a great impact on the communities involved. Finally, they often include actors and stakeholders with a strong connection to the local environment, such as municipal governments, town planners and community organisations (Castells, 1983).

Due to their local scale, urban social movements tend to focus on problems that are specifically related to living in cities. For example, anti-gentrification movements frequently mobilise to oppose the displacement of long-term residents due to urban redevelopment projects and rising housing costs (Smith, 1996). These movements also support the preservation of public spaces, improved public transportation, and affordable housing policies. Another crucial area of attention is environmental justice, where movements oppose urban policies that disproportionately put minority and low-income communities at risk from environmental hazards (Pellow, 2000).

3.2.2 Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Framework

Urban social movements have their origins in a variety of sociological and political science theories, particularly social movement theories, which offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the origin, growth, and significance of these movements.

Resource Mobilisation Theory, which emerged in the 1970s, is a prominent theory that highlights the importance of resources in the establishment and durability of social movements. This theory states that the ability of a social movement to effectively obtain and deploy resources such as capital, labour and organisational infrastructure is an important factor in determining its success (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Urban social movements, for example, often depend on donor funding, the availability of committed volunteers, and the creation of official organisations or networks capable of managing operations and promoting legislative change.

Political Opportunity Theory offers another crucial perspective, examining how the external political environment influence the dynamics of social movements (Tarrow, 1998). The theory suggests that the strategies and success of social movements can be strongly influenced by opportunities offered by the political landscape, such as changes in government policies, divisions between elites or shifts in political alignments (McAdam, 1982). In the context of urban social movements, political opportunities may arise through local government elections, changes in urban politics or coalitions with like-minded political actors. These opportunities may give social movements a chance to move toward their goals, engage in negotiations with authorities, or win over the general public to their causes.

Finally, *Framing Theory* gives another perspective to understanding these movements, by focusing on the interpretative strategies that urban social movements employ to create and disseminate their messages. This theory examines how movements present their stances, objectives, and strategies in a way that appeals to general public and potential supporters (Snow & Benford, 1988). Effective framing is achieved through the strategic use of language, symbols, and stories to draw attention to injustices, offer remedies and inspire group action, and ultimately leads to increased popular support. An urban social movement could, for example, present the gentrification issue as a broader struggle for social justice and community rights, rather than just a housing issue, thus highlighting the more significant effects of urban development policies.

Theories of Urban Social Movements

Manuel Castells was the first to attempt to define the concept of urban social movements, in the aftermath of the civil unrest of May 1968. In “The Urban Question” (1978), Castells examines how urban social movements question the spatial arrangements imposed by capitalist development. He argues that urban social movements, which seek to reclaim urban areas for the community, are essential to the greater fight against capitalist exploitation. He introduces a model of urban system dynamics, which will be covered in Chapter 6.4, in which urban social movements are the only mechanism of structural change. He explained the phenomenon as a collective effort in light of the growing intensity of “urban struggles” and their relevance for citizens and public policy. In his subsequent work “The City and the Grassroots” (1983), Castells focuses on understanding the mechanisms through which social actors create urban meanings and change. The definition of urban social movement as “*a conscious collective practice originating in urban issues, able to produce qualitative changes in the urban system, local culture, and political institutions in contradiction to the dominant social interests institutionalised as such at the societal level*” (Castells 1983: 278) forms the basis for understanding the movements’ unique characteristics. According to Castells, the purpose of this urban mobilisation is to satisfy the community's demand for public services, strengthen the community's cultural production (and thus cultural identity) and promote self-management and autonomy at the local level. However, critics of this approach argue that Castells sets aside the political dimension of this activism (Domaradzka, 2018).

Understanding power imbalance as a source of conflict and protest in urban environments is fundamental. Marxist theories, which emphasise the role of economic structures and class struggle, provide a fundamental framework for understanding social movements. According to the Marxist perspective, social movements arise from the mobilisation of the working class or other oppressed groups against the bourgeoisie, to address the inequalities caused by capitalist exploitation. The emphasis is on the ways in which power relations and economic structures influence social relations and inspire collective action. Marxist theorists, like David Harvey, analyse how issues like housing inequality, gentrification, and urban redevelopment projects relate to larger capitalist interests, and the resistance they elicit in urban environments (Harvey, 2008). According to Harvey, urbanisation under capitalism is responsible for increasing spatial inequalities, and urban social movements should demand a right to the city that includes the possibility to enter, occupy, and create urban space in a way that meets the needs of all citizens, not just the wealthy. This idea has had a significant impact on how urban social movements are framed as struggles for democratic control over urban environments and for

spatial justice (Harvey, 2008). The potential of the right to the city, as Harvey noted, resides in its ability to be adopted by movements as *“both working slogan and political idea, because it focuses on the question of who has control over urbanisation processes and resources”* (Harvey 2008: 40).

The unique dynamic of urban social movements in the 1960s and 1970s is reflected in Castells’ understanding of the phenomenon as a collective commitment, which combines the struggles over collective consumption with community culture and political self-determination (Mayer, 2006). Urban social movements have since experienced a number of changes in tandem with the neoliberal global economic restructuring. These movements have long been viewed only through the lens of local concerns, but that has been changing in the past decades as a result of migration flows and international competition among companies and countries. Thus, the issues that urban movements address are becoming more globally interconnected due to city-driven economic and cultural processes. In light of the ongoing globalising trends, Harvey (2008) and Sassen (2011) have described cities as hubs for class conflicts generated by the claims to the right to the city, and as a point of reference for a better understanding of how power, and the absence of it, create conflicts around urban issues in the current era of globalisation. Urban activism, as noted by Bitusíková (2015), has progressively gained importance in urban governance processes due to the involvement of local activists in urban politics, and their ability to influence decision-making through legal tools and participatory practices. Participation of citizens in governance is increasingly recognised as one of the essential components of democratic and sustainable urban development (Purcell, 2003; Staeheli, 2003)

In the modern world of growing inequality and imbalance of powers (Mayer, 2017), where the most marginalised social actors often have limited access to public resources and even more limited ways to participate in the political discourse, urban movements are essential to promoting solidarity and sense of community. They promote place-oriented, democracy-oriented as well as “quality of life”-oriented forms of social engagement and collective action (Domaradzka, 2018), filling a space that the political establishment has long avoided or only occasionally touched. In the context of contemporary modernity, where cities have transformed into “capital production hubs” and “growth engines” (Vliet, 2002) with the pursuit of profit driving urban development, urban movements are essential to promote cohesion. However, the role of urban-based activism has considerably shifted from the last century, as well as the process that are the backbone of creating the meaning of places. The following are just some of the factors that have fuelled these changes: the emergence of new media, which has made it possible for actors who are

geographically separated from one another to share information and exchange expertise; glocalisation processes, which focus on local environments as an answer to the deteriorating of identity and sense of belonging caused by globalisation (Robertson 1992; Massey 1994); social and environmental degradation, which is threatening everyone's quality of life. The need for a "new community" and "reference group" is also another factor driving many forms of urban mobilisation, including neighbourhood groups' initiatives or local associations' activities. Also, the importance of transforming urban space into a meeting point for building collective life, with the citizen at the centre as main element and protagonist of the city (Domaradzka, 2015). Urban activism has replaced declining traditional support structures as a source of identity and sense of belonging for urban dwellers (Bauman, 2006).

3.3 Brief Historical Review of Urban Social Movements

Urban social movements, although, as mentioned, their definition did not appear in the literature until later, have a rich history, dating back to the mid-20th century, and have been shaped by the unique challenges and opportunities presented by urban environments. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s is one of the most remarkable examples of social movements and has been instrumental in changing urban settings. The Movement's struggle against segregation and racial discrimination originated in the United States, during the Reconstruction period in the late 19th century, when African-Americans faced structural inequalities in housing, education, and employment in urban areas. Significant legislative changes, such as the abovementioned Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, were ratified as a result of public pressure and iconic events like the March on Washington (Massey, 1993). The goals of these laws were to encourage greater social and economic integration and to abolish institutional racism in urban environments.

Trade union movements also have long history in urban contexts, dating back to the industrial revolution. The labour rights movement gained popularity in urban centres like New York, Chicago, and Detroit, as workers came together to demand safer working conditions, better wages, and reasonable working hours. Thanks to strikes and demonstrations organised by trade unions, important labour reforms were introduced, such as the introduction of the eight-hour working day and better labour laws (Zieger, 1995). These movements enabled broader fights for social justice and economic equality, in addition to improving the lives of urban workers.

Movements for environmental justice, too, have become a major contributor to urban activism, especially in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, with an ever-growing following especially in the younger generation. These movements aimed to address how communities in urban areas are disproportionately affected by ecological risks. The environmental justice movement in the United States rose to fame in the 1980s, after drawing attention to the ways in which environmental policies frequently discriminated against low-income and minority communities (Bullard, 2000). Through a variety of strategies, activists succeeded in obtaining laws that reduced pollution, improved public health, and ensured access to clean water and air for all city dwellers.

The 1990s saw an increase in the use of market mechanisms in the public sphere, as cities began to act as catalysts for economic expansion, competing with each other for investment and consumption (Domaradzka, 2018). During this period, local governments began to exploit the successes and slogans of urban initiatives to increase their competitive advantages and portray the image of a “creative city”. Protest and resistance centres and vibrant local communities, for example, started to be presented and advertised as desirable city attractions. The exploitation of the slogans and fervour of urban movements to strengthen the economic potential of cities led to an even greater fragmentation of bottom-up initiatives. This prompted a new wave of urban mobilisation, as four new trends of urban mobilisation and opposition to growth policy emerged simultaneously, in addition to the increasing professionalisation and institutionalisation of local groups (Domaradzka, 2018). First, there were protests against the commercialisation of public areas, the rigidity of law enforcement, and local governments’ marketing tactics in the context of the declining condition of some neighbourhoods and districts. The second trend mainly represented the interests of the unemployed and the urban precariat (Johnson 2011), frequently in conjunction with calls for social and spatial justice in terms of safeguarding the rights of immigrants and workers. The third trend was the internationalisation of activities of anti-globalist movements, which called for a more open access to urban public goods and services as well as the democratisation of international institutions. Finally, the establishment of an international network of organisations and projects advocating for the rights of locals, driven by the themes of spatial justice and local well-being. Mayer notes that while the “city neoliberalisation” has made the urban environment unfriendly to progressive urban movements, it has also given rise to coalitions that unite different branches of urban protest under the common flag of the Right to the City, and has allowed them to express their protests (Mayer, 2009, pp.367). After all, history indicates that as long as urban policy promotes social inequality

and keeps out a sizable portion of the population, the Right to the City slogans will continue to be effective in inspiring grassroots initiatives.

In recent years, a new wave of social movements focused on urban transformation has emerged, motivated by the growing awareness of social and environmental issues and the proliferation of technology in multicultural urban contexts (Seixas, Mota, 2021). In contrast to previous forms of activism, these movements focus primarily on the city, especially at the neighbourhood or street level. This is in response to the state's regulation weakening and the influence of global economic actors, a situation made worse by the financial crisis of 2008 (Mayer, 2009). According to Subirats (2016), these movements are identified by a collective organisation that goes beyond conventional ideological or corporate boundaries, and often thrives in areas with a substantial sociocultural critical mass, professional influence, and public support. Although these new urban movements often begin as reactive demonstrations against government actions, they are increasingly proving their ability to organise and make proposals on important issues such as social inequality, housing affordability and the standard of public space. This shift is indicative of a broader trend toward a more engaged, cooperative, and participatory civic engagement, even though, despite their commitment and the public attention, they are still unable to have a meaningful political impact (Seixas, Mota, 2021). The next sections will explore common themes among social movements and the tactics used to raise awareness, rally supporters, and pressure decision makers and institutions.

3.4 Types and Strategies of Contemporary Urban Social Movements

Urban social movements include a wide variety of initiatives aimed at solving specific issues in urban settings. As stated, these movements play a critical role in promoting systemic changes that will raise the standard of living for urban dwellers, particularly those from poor communities. In order to better illustrate the multifaceted nature of right to the city framework, this chapter explores different typologies of urban social movements, classified according to their primary objective and strategies, using concrete examples to illustrate their goals, and to their tactics and effects. These movements are also an example of how modern activism is changing, as they make use of social media and digital communication to raise awareness and mobilise support.

3.4.1 Types of Urban Social Movements

- ***Housing Rights Movements***

Housing Rights Movements are particularly important at urban scale. The main goal of these movements is to promote tenant rights, affordable housing, and the reduction of homelessness. In the last decades, rent strikes, demonstrations against evictions, and campaigns for stronger tenant protections and affordable housing laws have been organised by activists in several major cities in the United States and Europe. These movements have gathered significant adhesion especially in major cities, due to the rising cost of living and the gentrification of urban areas, which frequently results in the eviction of long-term residents. For example, through persistent advocacy and direct action, the Housing Justice for All coalition in New York has successfully mobilised tenants to secure protections against eviction and reforms to control rents (DeFilippis et al., 2019). An European example is the campaign carried out by housing activists in Berlin, Germany, who have started “Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co.” (*Deutsche Wohnen & Co. enteignen*) with the goal of taking large property holdings from private landlords and giving them to the citizens in order to fight rising rents and lack of housing (Aalbers, 2016). These movements often adopt a variety of strategies, such as lobbying for legislative changes, legal actions, and grassroots mobilisation, highlighting the need for a multifaceted approach to address housing inequalities.

- ***Environmental Rights Movements***

Environmental justice movements address ecological risks and how they disproportionately affect marginalised communities and people, and support sustainable urban development strategies. In general, these movements seek to organise local populations against industrial pollution, and they advocate environmentally friendly infrastructures and fair access to clean water, air, and green areas. In recent years, the need for sustainable urban development has been brought to global attention by environmental movements such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion. These movements promote laws that deal with environmental degradation and climate change, frequently planning large demonstrations in important locations in cities to highlight these issues (Taylor, 2020), as in the case of the action of *Ultima Generazione* activists who, in May 2021, coloured the waters of the Trevi fountain by pouring vegetable charcoal into it to protest against the use of fossil fuels.

- ***Economic and Social Rights Movements***

The goal of movements for economic and social rights, as well as those for housing, is to identify and address inequalities concerning opportunities, resources, and distribution of wealth

in society. These movements advocate for laws and procedures that ensure fair treatment and equal access to financial resources for all, particularly for disadvantaged and marginalised groups, and often intertwine with social and environmental causes. Economic justice movements frequently emerge in response to systemic problems such as unemployment, poverty, and wage inequality, as well as the influence of corporate power on public policy. They aim to establish a fairer and more equitable economic system that benefits the entire community, rather than the wealthy few. An example is Occupy Wall Street, which started in the financial district of New York in 2011. Its purpose was to draw attention and oppose the severe economic disparities and the disproportionate influence of corporate power on political processes. To emphasise the symbolic occupation of places related to economic power and decision-making, participants staged their protests in a public space, Zuccotti Park, which is the heart of New York's financial district (Castells, 2012). Manuel Castells' analysis highlights the distinctive organisational structure of the Occupy movement, which is characterised by decentralisation and networked forms of mobilisation. Due to its structure, the movement was able to quickly organise a sizable number of supporters and adapt to changing circumstances. Demonstrations in urban public spaces, which served both pragmatic and symbolic purposes, provided a visible and easily accessible forum to discuss and debate economic injustices. According to Castells (2012), in the last decade there has been a noticeable shift towards more adaptable and flexible strategies that can successfully harness the power of digital communication to coordinate actions and amplify messages on a global scale. Among the many characteristics that differentiate urban movements, Occupy Wall Street and other economic justice movements stand out for their flexibility and ability to engage a wide range of people.

- ***Civil and Political Rights Movements***

Urban civil and political rights movements often focus on voting rights, police brutality, and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and gender. The goal of the Black Lives Matter movement, which grew out of the release of the police officer who killed an African-American citizen in 2013, is to end systemic racism and violence against black communities. In American cities across the country, this movement has played a significant role in raising the public conversation about racial injustice and police violence to the forefront (Lebron, 2017). These movements usually call for expanded political participation for marginalised groups, protection of civil rights, and increased accountability from law enforcement.

- ***Ownership Rights Movements***

Urban property rights movements promote greater community ownership and shared control of resources and land, and advocate models of collective responsibility and conservation,

challenging conventional property paradigms. These movements, like housing rights movements, often aim to correct inequalities in access to urban space and property. An important example is community land trusts (CLTs), where land is held in trust for the community's benefit, ensuring long-term affordability and avoiding displacement. An example of successful CLT that restored a once-degraded neighbourhood while preserving accessibility and community control is the Dudley Street Neighbourhood Initiative in Boston (Medoff & Sklar, 1994).

- ***Cultural Rights Movements***

The main goal of cultural rights movements is to protect and promote the identities and cultural heritage of urban communities. These movements frequently arise in reaction to the dangers posed by urban redevelopment and gentrification, which undermine established institutions and cultural practices. For example, activists fought to prevent gentrification, which threatened the cultural and historical integrity of the neighbourhood, from invading Chinatown in New York, (Lin, 1998). Cultural rights activists fight to preserve historically significant sites, promote regional artistic happenings, and ensure that the diversity of communities is respected and considered in urban planning.

3.4.2 Strategies and Tactics

Urban social movements use a wide range of approaches and techniques to achieve their goals. These strategies aim to challenge established power structures, gather supporters, get public attention, and influence policies. With examples from different contexts, the following paragraphs illustrate some of the most used tactics employed by urban social movements.

- ***Grassroots Mobilisation***

Engaging with local communities that are directly impacted by urban struggles through grassroots mobilisation is one of the core tactics of urban social movements. The goal is to create a wide base of support through planning local events, door-to-door surveying, and community gatherings. For example, the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (PAH), a movement born in Barcelona, Spain, successfully mobilised thousands of citizens to oppose foreclosures and demand housing rights. By strengthening local communities and inspiring a sense of solidarity, grassroots mobilisation can build a solid foundation for ongoing activism (Martínez, 2019).

- ***Protests and Demonstrations***

Protests and demonstrations are among the most visible tactics used by urban social movements. These public displays of dissent can draw media attention, raise awareness, and put pressure on decision-makers. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, for example, has organised several protests in urban areas across the United States to demand an end to police violence and systemic racism. These demonstrations, often held in significant urban spaces such as city centres and parks, have brought broad attention to issues of racial injustice, and have prompted policy discussions at various levels of government (Taylor, 2016).

- ***Occupations and Sit-ins***

Occupations and sit-ins involve taking over public or private spaces to interfere with everyday activities and raise awareness on particular issues. A famous example from the Arab Spring is the 2011 occupation of Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt. In order to demand political and social reforms, as well as the resignation of the President Hosni Mubarak's, hundreds of thousands of protestors occupied peacefully this important public area for almost 20 days. In addition to providing a physical forum for discussion, debate, and civic engagement, the occupation of Tahrir Square became emblematic of the Egyptian revolution and attracted substantial international and media attention (Tufekci, 2017). These strategies successfully brought attention to the relevant issues, received widespread public support, and forced the government to act, which lastly resulted in the president's resignation.

- ***Use of Social Media and Digital Platforms***

Social media and other digital platforms are essential tools for urban social movements in the digital age, due to the possibility of enabling rapid communication, organisation, and dissemination of information. For instance, millions of people have been mobilised worldwide against sexual harassment and assault by the hashtag #MeToo, demonstrating how digital activism can unite disparate groups and magnify voices (Tufekci, 2017). Additionally, social media campaigns can overcome the limitations of traditional media, reaching a larger audience, and generating support.

- ***Legal and Policy Advocacy***

In an effort to bring about systemic change, urban social movements frequently advocate for laws and policies. This involves advocating for new legislation, contesting current regulations, and pursuing legal action to defend the rights of communities. For example, in 2014, environmental activists in Flint, Michigan, fought for stricter environmental laws and used the legal system to hold polluters accountable, eventually succeeding in drawing national attention

to the city's water crisis, which led to policy changes and legal action against those responsible (Pulido, 2016). Through the promotion of laws and policies, social movements can institutionalise the envisioned changes, ensuring long-term impact.

- ***Coalition Building***

The effectiveness of urban social movements can be increased by forming coalitions with other groups and initiatives, in order to coordinate actions, share expertise, and pool resources by forming alliances. In the United States, one coalition that brings together different groups battling for housing justice, gentrification resistance, and urban democracy is the Right to the City Alliance. By working together, movements can address related problems and set up a cohesive effort against strong opponents (Mayer, 2013).

- ***Creative and Cultural Tactics***

Urban social movements often employ innovative and creative strategies to captivate the public and express their messages. Cultural festivals, street art, and performances may grab people's interest and strengthen the feeling of community. Residents of *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, painted their homes in bright colours as part of the "Favela Painting" project to reclaim and improve their neighbourhoods. Along with improving the actual area, this project debunked unfavourable myths about favelas (McFarlane, 2011). These innovative methods can appeal to a wider audience and make activism more approachable.

- ***Direct Action and Civil Disobedience***

Both direct action and civil disobedience require deliberately breaking the law or other rules in order to draw attention to injustices and call for a response. When alternatives to change are deemed ineffective, these strategies are often resorted to. To demand immediate action on climate change, for example, Extinction Rebellion movement has used direct action strategies like blocking important roads and taking over public areas. The aim of these initiatives is to overturn the status quo and force political actors to confront the problem, in this case the climate crisis (Gardner, 2020). By leveraging public and media interest, direct action can be a powerful way to draw attention to pressing issues and demonstrate the urgency of change.

3.4.3 Impact and Outcomes of Urban Movements

Urban social movements have proven effective in achieving substantial policy reforms that promote inclusive and equitable urban development. As seen in the previous sections, these movements have addressed environmental inequalities, ensured affordable housing policies,

enhanced public transport, and influenced urban planning decisions through tenacious advocacy, grassroots organising, and the strategic use of legal and political instruments. The fight for creating “inclusionary zoning” in cities, which mandates developers to include a certain number of affordable units in new residential projects, is another good example. In New York City, for instance, the provision of inclusive housing has been largely influenced by advocacy groups, like the Association for Neighbourhood and Housing Development, and grassroots activism (ANHD, 2014). By guaranteeing that new construction adds to the supply of affordable housing, these policies seek to prevent the eviction of low-income inhabitants. The Bus Riders Union (BRU) in Los Angeles campaigned for communities of colour and low-income residents to have fair access to public transportation, lastly being able to stop fare increases that would disproportionately affect low-income riders, and secure improvements to bus services through coordinated protests, legal action, and negotiations with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) (Grengs, 2002). Other examples of the achievement of urban activists can be found all over the world, from Canada to Colombia, to the middle east and China.

Beyond policy changes, urban social movements have a significant impact on society and culture, influencing public discourse and community norms. Black Lives Matter (BLM) and other movements, for example, have expanded the conversation on urban policy to include topics like police brutality and racial justice, influencing city plans on public safety and patrolling, and generating a broad public discussion (Rickford, 2016). This shift in conversation has led to the recognition of systemic racism and the need for broad reforms by a wider segment of society.

Even if these movements don’t achieve a tangible effect in influencing social policies, they contribute to raising awareness and changing attitudes in society, which may pave the way for future legislative changes. According to Castells, these movements, besides pushing for legislative changes, not only have the potential to change urban life, but are also capable of fostering a feeling of community and shared identity. In his book “The City and the Grassroots” (1983), Castells argues that urban social movements are essential for creating new urban practices and meanings that subvert prevailing socioeconomic systems. These movements mobilise around urban struggles, and contribute to the development of a common goal and sense of solidarity among participants, which is necessary for sustaining long-term activism and bringing about more significant social change (Castells, 1983). He also emphasises how critical urban social movements are to the empowerment of marginalised groups and their inclusion in the processes of urban development. According to Castells, these movements often arise as a reaction to exclusionary methods of urban development and planning that put the interests of the powerful and wealthy first. Urban social movements contribute to the democratisation of urban

areas and ensure that the needs and concerns of all citizens are considered, therefore promoting more inclusive and equitable policies. This means that these movements, regardless of their outcomes, have a significant social impact, as they empower marginalised communities and encourage greater civic engagement and participation in the decision-making processes that shape urban life (Castells, 1983).

3.5 Challenges and Future Directions

The following sections will discuss a number of internal and external challenges that impact the growth, influence, and sustainability of urban social movements. For urban social movements, achieving systemic change and ensuring long-term mobilisation depend on how these obstacles are actually tackled.

3.5.1 Internal challenges

Urban social movements often face internal challenges related to leadership conflicts, organisational sustainability, and the retention of diversity and inclusiveness within their coalitions. In the early stages of the movement, both top-down and bottom-up organisational structures are possible. When political parties create local organisations, mobilisation occurs from the top-down (Pruijt, 2003). Top-down political group or party involvement, even if it guarantees a faster set-up of activities, is frequently seen as harmful because it can result in a shift toward state-oriented bureaucracy, and because it goes against the general consensus around the movement's self-management. This can thus weaken the foundations of the movement and reduce its effectiveness. Maintaining long-term mobilisation requires transparent decision-making procedures and efficient governance frameworks. However, due to conflicting views within the movement and the need to balance a range of priorities and interests, achieving these goals can be difficult.

Urban social movements frequently follow a life cycle, according to Pruijt (Pruijt, 2003), with institutionalisation and co-optation being viewed as the beginning of the end. Institutionalisation refers to the movement being directed into a steady pattern based on codified rules and laws, whereas co-optation happens when activists begin carrying out tasks at the government's request. These practices can reduce the movement's potential for disruption and erode its initial goals. However, the question of whether institutionalisation is inevitable remains unanswered.

Movements can opt for flexible institutionalisation, which secures victories while preserving the ability to cause disruption. For instance, even after reaching a certain level of institutionalisation, squatter movements may continue to use squatting as a means and end in itself (Pruijt, 2003). On the other hand, more institutionalised movements, such as tenant movements, can still use non-institutional means to accomplish their objectives (Polanska, 2024).

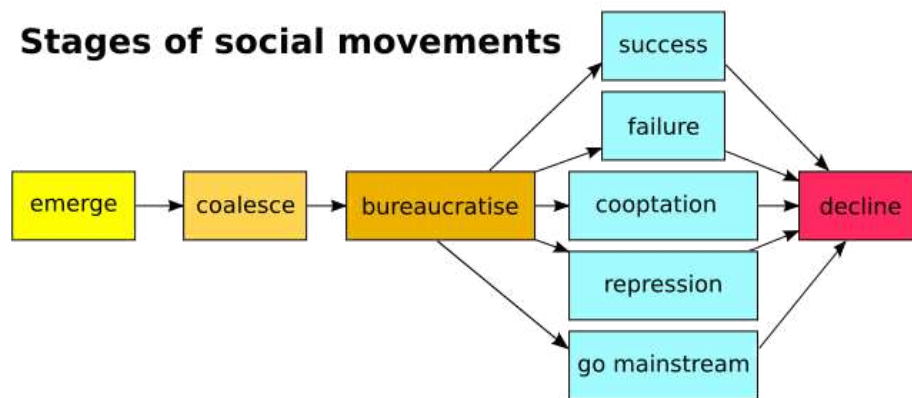


Figure 2_ Stages of Social Movements. Adapted from Blumer (1969), Mauss (1975), and Tilly (1978)

3.5.2 External challenges

Urban social movements encounter significant resistance to social transformation from influential interest groups, political repercussions, and institutional barriers. Movements often have to negotiate within intricate power relationships and legal restrictions, which hinders their ability to bring about systemic changes and just urban development. Legislative elites and real estate developers are two examples of powerful interest groups that usually oppose reforms that threaten their financial interests. This obstruction may take the form of legal challenges, lobbying, or political strategies aimed at undermining the movement's objectives. Political backlash is an issue that requires further examination. According to Castells, urban social movements can be met with repressive measures by governments and political institutions, which can range from restrictive laws and regulations to threats of legal action, and finally to outright violence on demonstrators and activists. Such acts have the potential, and the clear goal, to weaken supporters, discourage members, and lessen the movement's capacity to function (Castells, 1983). Urban social movements face additional challenges in their activities due to institutional barriers, such as restrictive legal frameworks and bureaucracy. These obstacles can affect funding and resource availability, lead to activist disaffection, and limit the movements' ability to carry out effective advocacy.

Another major external challenge facing urban social movements is media representation. The way movements are portrayed in the media has the power to impact public opinion and determine how much support or opposition movements will receive. Media coverage of protests is frequently biased, emphasising unfavourable elements like violence or disruptions rather than the movement's core concerns and objectives. This can lead public opinion and policy makers to consider the movement less legitimate, making it more difficult to achieve its goals. According to Castells, media representation of social movements has two implications: while it can help in spreading the message and mobilising support, it can also expose movements to distortion and manipulation by influential media interests that support established political and economic powers (Castells, 2012). Therefore, the success of urban social movements also depends on handling media relations and finding different platforms through which to spread their message. Despite these barriers, urban social movements continue to create creative strategies to overcome external impediments, often through tactical partnerships, legal proceedings, and persistent public advocacy.

3.5.3 Future Directions

According to Pruijt, in the future urban social movements will need to face these external and internal obstacles, while at the same time adapting to changing political, social, and economic environments. As already mentioned, the adoption of flexible institutionalisation, in which movements secure victories while maintaining their disruptive potential, can be a possible future path. This strategy can help strike a balance between the need for stability and the ability to continue tackling systemic injustices (Pruijt, 2003).

The possibility that the efforts of urban social movements to improve low-income neighbourhoods may unintentionally trigger undesirable outcomes, such as worsening gentrification, is one of the paradoxical challenges they face. This phenomenon can occur when the sought-after improvements in public spaces, housing quality and security, lead to attracting more affluent residents, increasing property values, and living expenses. As a result, the original low-income residents, who were supposed to take advantage from these upgrades, may be forced out of their neighbourhoods due to rising property values. This unanticipated outcome may jeopardise the movement's original objectives of promoting inclusive and equitable urban development. For example, after significant community-led improvements, neighbourhoods like Williamsburg and Harlem in New York City saw an increase in gentrification that resulted in the displacement of long-time residents (Zuk, 2016). In order to address unforeseen circumstances,

urban social movements need to consider proactive measures to protect urban dwellers. Some of these strategies could include forcing local administration into take preventive action against this kind of situation, for example by pushing for more stringent rent control laws and the creation of community land trusts, therefore ensuring that all citizens, especially those from marginalised communities, benefit from urban development.

Developing inclusive and participatory governance structures within movements is another crucial area for future attention, since maintaining inclusivity and diversity can be listed both among the challenges and the virtues of social movements (Tarrow, 2011). It is possible to increase the legitimacy and sustainability of the movement by making sure that a variety of voices are heard and represented during the decision-making process. Furthermore, urban social movements need to keep coming up with fresh approaches to coalition building, public engagement, and pressure on legislators (Ganz, 2009).

Ultimately, urban social movements' ability to continue being flexible, strong, and devoted to their central principles of justice and equity will determine their success in the future. By addressing internal dynamics, overcoming external barriers, and adopting creative approaches, these movements can continue to drive significant social change and contribute to the development of more inclusive and equitable urban environments (Castells, 2012).

Chapter 4: Methodology

The case study chosen for the investigation of the aforementioned sociocultural dynamics, as well as the participatory processes, is Martim Moniz Square, a historically significant public area located in Lisbon's Mouraria neighbourhood, which is known for its rich cultural heritage. The thesis aims to investigate the square's sociocultural dynamics, as well as the participatory processes that went into redesigning the square. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative techniques, as well as the application of different frameworks of analysis by leading scholars in the field, to provide an in-depth understanding of how Lisbon's Martim Moniz square has changed. The study is set in a defined temporal and spatial framework, namely on the years from the start of major urban interventions in the early 2000s to the present, but with a particular focus on the events since the 2018 redevelopment plan. The analysis of the case study is carried out in narrative form and following the chronological order of events.

To establish a theoretical foundation, a qualitative literature review of the urban processes has been conducted in chapter 2 and 3, exploring the literature of the most important authors in the field, in order to gain insights into urban governance and give a theoretical ground to the research. This preliminary step frames the analytical lens and enhances the understanding of the focus to Martim Moniz Square, the chosen case study. Chapter 5 explores the historical and contemporary dynamics of urban transformation in Lisbon, in order to analyse in-depth the territory in which the case study is inscribed. Chapter 6 is devoted to the presentation of the case study itself, so as to define as accurately as possible its spatial, temporal, and cultural dynamics, as well as to the analysis of the data and evaluation and discussion of the results obtained. As stated, the events examined specifically cover the period from the end of 2018 to the present day, but the development of the square is still unfolding.

4.1 Research Approach

The research applies a set of frameworks, as well as a quantitative-qualitative analysis, to answer the research questions with a thorough method. Three different frameworks are employed in a deductive approach: the first two aim at answering the first research question, namely how movements and urban activism affect the creation and development of urban public spaces; the third framework attempts to respond to the second research inquiry that is, to which degree participatory processes can proficiently incorporate a range of community perspectives

into the process of decisions-making, and in particular whether the participatory process concerning the Martim Moniz square succeeded in doing so. In order to gain further direct insights from these processes, additional questionnaire-based fieldwork was carried out.

The first framework used in the enquiry is derived from the works of Manuel Castells, a well renowned scholar in the field of social movements. The structure of the analysis is outlined in his seminal book: “The Urban Question”, published in 1978, specifically in Chapter 14, Research on Urban Social Movements. This document was chosen for its depth in exploring the urban context and its contradictions, the characteristics and claims of social movements, as well as the analysis of their achievements regarding urban and political difficulties. The framework is applied and discussed in Chapter 6.4.1.

The second framework has as its source the studies of João Seixas and José Carlos Mota, respectively Integrated Researcher for Cities and Territorial Development at NOVA University, Lisbon, and Assistant Professor at the Department of Social, Political and Territorial Sciences at the University of Aveiro. The analysis is based on an original classification spectrum proposed by the authors, that categorises social movements according to their goals, structures, and actions. The authors’ approach is explained in detail in Chapter 6.4.2. The comparison between the two different approaches, which is further discussed in Chapter 6.4, was necessary because of the different variables and components analysed by the authors. The first framework focuses more on the external aspects of the urban movement, and its accomplishments. The second, on the other hand, analyses the attributes specific to the movement itself.

Regarding the second research question, the degree of community engagement throughout the participatory project’s phases has been illustrated using the matrix elaborated by Nick Wates in “The Community Planning Handbook”, which is a practical and useful tool for the creation of effective participatory processes. The process involving Martim Moniz was compared to the matrix in order to evaluate its steps more objectively.

Finally, a fieldwork has been conducted in order to engage the local community through semi-structured interviews. This bottom-up approach facilitated the exploration of stakeholder opinions, including those of local vendors and residents, to disclose grassroots perspectives. This research originated from a group project conducted as part of the course “Transformation Tendencies of Cities and Regions”, taken during the semester abroad spent in Lisbon during the academic year of 2023/2024. The study focuses on the effects of public pressure on the municipality of Lisbon, specifically its decision to create a survey and different focus groups for residents to express their opinions on the redefinition of Martim Moniz Square, as well as, more

generally, on the respondents' opinion of the possibilities and barriers posed by participatory processes. The results of this poll, discussed in Chapter 6.6, were subsequently used as the baseline for the project proposal.

4.2 Data Collection

During the fieldwork, 12 semi-structured interviews were submitted to as many volunteers over two days (24 November and 1 December 2023). The interviewees were chosen on the basis of their proximity to the square, with regard to their usual residence or workplace. The questionnaire was initially agreed among the participants in the group work, then presented and discussed with the lecturers. The questionnaire included 15 questions including open, closed and filter questions. Participants were fully informed about the study, including its goals and procedures, and were asked for their permission to record it before any interviews or personal information was collected. To ensure that participants fully understood the purpose of the study and the implications of their participation, this information was presented in either Portuguese or English. Participants were assured that their identity and personal information would be protected, and the results of the research would be shared academically and potentially published. Verbal agreements were utilised to obtain explicit consent.

The data collected through the questionnaire were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis, involving coding and an iterative process of categorization and classification. However, the quantitative approach is mainly related to demographic data. This method allowed for the identification of themes, patterns, and recurring concepts, thus providing a deeper understanding of the effects of the interventions in Martim Moniz Square. Acknowledging the potential limitations of the field approach, such as the lack of diversity and representativeness, these challenges were addressed by taking measures to mitigate bias, including prior discussions on target groups. Despite the efforts, unforeseen challenges (e.g. language difficulties) during the fieldwork may have affected the completeness of the results. The use of textual sources and interviews may have introduced subjective elements, affecting the interpretive nature of the analysis. It is crucial to acknowledge these limitations to ensure a better understanding of the scope and implications of the study. Results relevant to this research are presented in Chapter 6.6

4.3 Delimitations, Limitations and Assumptions

Delimitations

The main focus of this thesis is on the grassroots activism and participatory urban governance related to the redesign of Lisbon's Martim Moniz Square. The boundaries of the geographical area are limited to Martim Moniz Square and the immediate vicinity, especially the Mouraria neighbourhood. This decision was taken to ensure a focused analysis of a particular urban context, allowing an in-depth investigation of the dynamics at work. Furthermore, the temporal frame captures the transformations that occurred from the early 2000s to the present, particularly with regard to the rise of social movements from 2018 to 2020. The study focuses on the perspectives of local's dwellers, including activists, vendors, and residents. This decision was made to put local responses to urban planning decisions and grassroots involvement at the centre of the analysis. Furthermore, in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of community's experiences and perspectives, the analysis relies on observational data, interviews, and textual analysis rather than quantitative approaches.

Limitations

A notable constraint that was addressed in the previous paragraph pertains to the possible absence of representativity in the sample population. Due to its localised area and dependence upon a particular community, the results might not apply to other urban environments or even to other parts of Lisbon. The study's reliance on qualitative methods also introduces limitations of subjectivity due to the researcher's perspective on the interpretation of data and textual sources. Additionally, the fieldwork was limited by time constraints, which made it difficult to interview people in greater detail or interact with a wider range of stakeholders. Another issue was the unpredictable nature of availability of participants, which might have distorted the findings in favour of those who were more willing or available to participate, which may not accurately reflect the range of opinions within the community. The use of historical documents and secondary sources such as newspaper articles, which may not always provide an objective or complete picture of events, is a further limitation. Finally, as Martim Moniz Square and the Mouraria neighbourhood are unique urban environments, the study's focus on a single case may limit its applicability to other contexts.

Assumptions

This thesis starts from the necessary assumption that the community's involvement in the participatory process has a major influence on the urban environment. This premise is based on the idea that local engagement and grassroots activism play a critical role in shaping urban environments, particularly in situations where local government actively seeks out public

opinion. Moreover, the present research assumes that the theoretical frameworks used, such as those related to social movements and participatory urban governance, are appropriate and relevant to the context of Martim Moniz Square. Additionally, the data gathered from interviews and textual analysis are expected to be trustworthy and accurate in representing the participants' genuine opinions. With regard to the questionnaire presented, this is based on the idea that the researcher was able to appropriately record and interpret the opinions of the participants and that they were candid and honest in their answers. The historical and contextual information from secondary sources is assumed to be reliable and to provide a sufficient foundation for comprehending the dynamics that exist in Martim Moniz Square today. Finally, the entire research postulates that the transformation of Martim Moniz square into a green space is a representative case of contemporary urban planning challenges in Lisbon, especially in terms of the balance between social justice and environmental sustainability.

Chapter 5: Historical and Contemporary Dynamics of Urban Transformation in Lisbon, Portugal

5.1 Introduction

Lisbon, the capital city of Portugal and capital of the *Distrito de Lisboa* and the *Area Metropolitana de Lisboa* (AML), extends on the northern bank of the *Rio Tejo* estuary in an area of approximately 100 square kilometres, corresponding to one third of the 2750 square kilometres of the entire AML, with approximately 546,000 inhabitants. The metropolitan area is the most important Portuguese region in sectors such as finance, trade, publishing, art, international trade, education, and tourism, and has a population of almost 2,900 million (2022), roughly 25% of the Portuguese population, even if it occupies around 3% of the national territory. At the administrative level, the Council of Lisbon is subdivided into 18 municipalities and 53 *freguesias*, or sub-municipalities dependent on the central governing body represented by the *Câmara Municipal de Lisboa* (CML).

Lisbon's economy is broad and is supported by industries including trade, tourism, finance, and technology. The port of the city is among the busiest in Europe and is essential to global maritime trade. Because of Portugal's low minimum wage, Lisbon has also grown into a booming tech hub in recent years, drawing both established tech giants and start-ups. Initiatives like the Lisbon Challenge, a well-known start-up accelerator, and the Web Summit, one of the biggest technology conferences in the world, which has been held in Lisbon since 2016, have helped to support this transition and made the capital one of the primary economic and cultural hubs of Southern Europe.

The medieval São Jorge Castle, the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Jerónimos Monastery, and the Belém Tower are just a few examples of the city's rich architectural legacy. Lisbon has a thriving cultural scene with lots of theatres, galleries, and museums. Both locals and visitors are fascinated by the city's traditional Fado music, which has been recognised by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. There have been numerous significant planning moments throughout Lisbon's history (Oliveira & Pinho, 2008), starting with the reconstruction after the earthquake that almost destroyed the entire city in 1755, and in the last decades has experienced substantial urban development, updating its facilities and investing on its attractiveness. Lisbon has also been making investments in environmentally friendly urban planning, implementing initiatives to improve green areas and lower carbon emissions as well as initiatives of participatory planning and budgeting, and has a comprehensive and effective public

transportation. The city can count on many strengths, but it is also facing different challenges, such as urban gentrification, affordable housing, and environmental sustainability.

This chapter will go into greater detail about the different aspects that make up Lisbon today, including its cultural heritage, urban development, economic environment, and the many initiatives taken to guarantee a prosperous and sustainable future for both locals and tourists. Section 5.2 traces the outline of Lisbon's rich history from its founding, highlighting the main past events and turning points that have influenced the city's identity and relevance. The following section, 5.3, discusses Lisbon's current problems, such as affordability of housing, gentrification, and sustainability. These challenges are examined in light of both regional and global urban trends, offering a thorough understanding of the opportunities and constraints that characterise modern-day Lisbon. Section 5.4 emphasises the significant role of grassroots movements and social activism in shaping Lisbon's social and political landscape, highlighting the intersection of economic conditions and political dissent in anti-austerity protests and housing movements, emphasising the importance of participatory urban governance.

5.2 Historical Background

5.2.1 Before the Earthquake

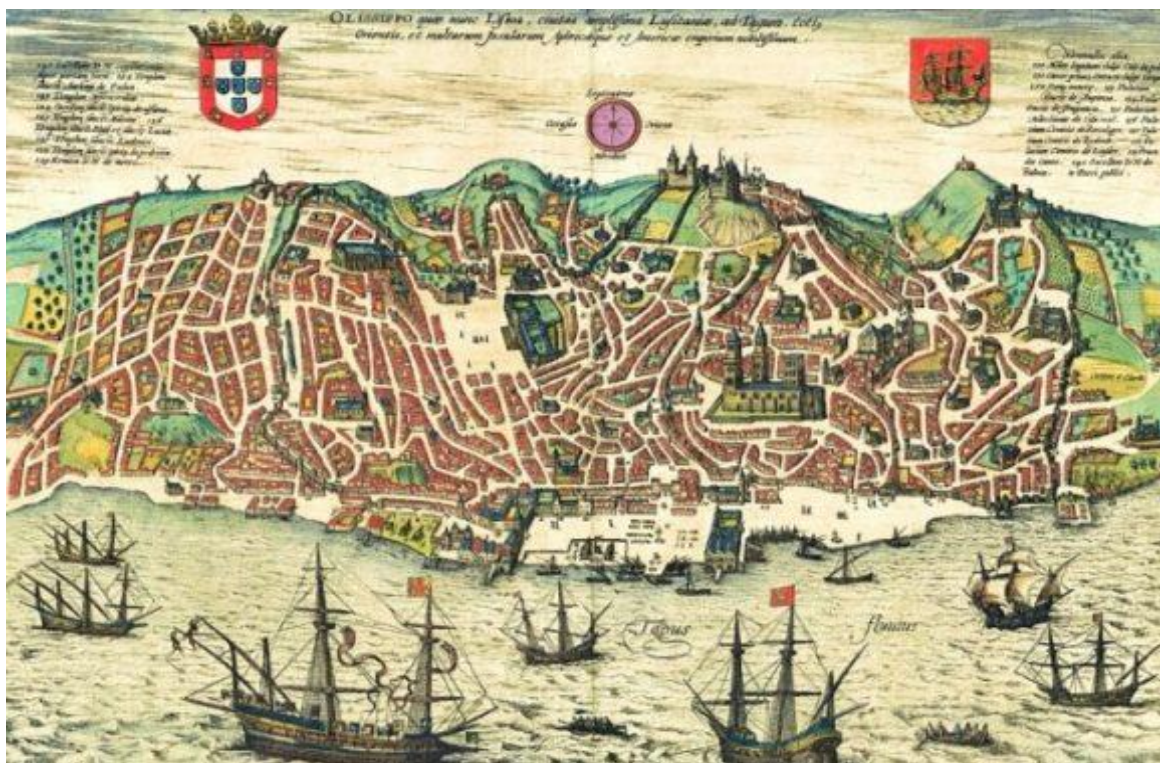


Figure 3_Representation of Lisbon in 1596. From: "Lisboa: Arquitectura e Urbanismo", Livros Horizonte, Lisboa, 2005

The first urban core of the city of Lisbon dates back to Phoenician times, who settled there taking advantage not only of the excellent conditions of defence and proximity to the river, but above all the existence of raw materials necessary for the construction of the city itself. The primitive settlement occupied the hill where today's Castle of St. George (*Castelo de São Jorge*) stands, extending from its summit to the banks of the river *Tejo*. Its expansion continued with the gradual occupation of the other hills that dominated the estuary, and the flat lands on the river's edge. It was the Phoenicians who first baptised the settlement *Alis Ubbo*, meaning "pleasant inlet", from which the present name is derived (França, 2005). In the 2nd century BC, the Romans defeated the Carthaginians and fortified part of today's *Colina do Castelo de São Jorge*. In the 5th century, the city was invaded by barbarian populations, which brought centuries of wars and depredations during which the Roman fortress and the ancient settlement almost completely disappeared.

The Moors succeeded the Christian Visigoths in the 8th century and transformed the city according to their own organisation, making room for their economic, social, and cultural needs. The traces of the citadel, the *Alcazaba* and the Moorish enclosures are still clearly visible in the urban fabric, mostly in its neighbourhood of *Alfama* and *Mouraria*, which retain their primitive morphology. Alfama and Mouraria are the parts of the city of Lisbon that have preserved to this day characteristics that classify them as "Arab" neighbourhoods, with narrow streets, alleys and stairways leading from the castle to the river, typical elements of the *bairros populares*, or popular neighbourhoods, that have been preserved despite later interventions mainly due to post-earthquake reconstruction (1755) and modern urban interventions. This designation, according to Josè Luis Matos, is applicable to those parts of the city that are configured as individual and almost autonomous entities, which develop within themselves a great diversity of solutions and construction systems, endowed with a certain internal autonomy that differs from the logic of rational ordering of urban space (Matos, 1999). At that time, the districts outside the walls already constituted a vast urban area with an estimated population of 150,000 people, and were mainly dedicated to trade and agriculture.

Lisbon was conquered by the king of Portugal only in the middle of the 12th century, and became its capital a hundred years later. Over the next two and a half centuries, the city continued to host different populations and ethnicities. In 1496, the expulsion or forced conversion of all non-Christians in the kingdom was decreed, a decision that resulted in the deportation or assimilation of the Jewish and Muslim minorities that, until then, had remained distinct but integrated components of Lisbon's population. The 15th and 16th centuries were also a period marked by the Great Discoveries, and the trade that followed allowed for the import of

wealth and resources from the Orient and Brazil. As Lisbon entered the 16th century, it underwent a profound transformation to its urban structure, abandoning the medieval fortified castle and moving closer to the river, creating new squares, administrative and commercial buildings. In the mid-1500s, Lisbon, a “great metropolis on a European scale” (Oliveira Marques, 2013) had approximately 80,000 inhabitants and 432 streets. In 1580, however, Portugal lost its independence to Spain, which coincided with a period of decline for the capital.

Lisbon did not regain its independence and dynamism until after 1640, thanks to the stability of the government of Dom Joao V's (1706–1750), along with the discovery of gold and diamond mines in its colonies, and the export of valuable tobacco, sugar, and timber from Brazil. At the start of the 18th century Lisbon was one of the biggest cities in Europe, with an estimated population of about 250,000. Huge number of buildings was constructed and arranged throughout the city, but Lisbon's urban design didn't change from its purely medieval features: winding, steep streets, worn-out *calçada* (traditional Portuguese road paving), an absence of public lighting and street surveillance, resulting in poor safety, unsanitary conditions, and traffic problems.

5.2.2 After the Earthquake

On November 1, 1755, a powerful earthquake coupled with a tidal wave, and a fire that raged over the city for several days, nearly completely destroyed Lisbon. The extent of the damage was enormous: accounts from the time indicate that about 800,000 km² were destroyed, and between 25 and 30 percent of the city's population is thought to have perished.

The Reconstruction of the city under the enlightenment town planning guidelines, typical of this century, was organised by the King's Minister, the *Marques do Pombal*. A clear example of such principles can be found in the rebuilding of the *Baixa*, or lower city, using geometric grids with parallel streets, but also the creation of the *Passeio Publico* (public promenade) in the fashion of major European cities. By the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, Lisbon had grown by about forty percent when compared to the pre-quake era. Lisbon had 237,000 residents in 1801, but by 1842, that number had dropped to 182,000 (França, 2005). Towards the end of the 19th century, the city began to expand inland, while the central area, and especially the working-class neighbourhoods, suffered from neglect and poor hygienic conditions due to a lack of order and organisation in daily and commercial life.

Portugal experienced the industrial revolution later than other European countries, with the first factories appearing in the latter decades of the 1800s. The working class started to settle in the *ilhas* and *patios*, abandoned buildings and convents near to the workplaces. The workshops were mostly erected along the shore east and west of the centre, aligned with the port. The housing conditions in the workers' neighbourhoods, as in many other European cities, were substandard in terms of hygiene and sanitation, which led to several protests demanding more adequate housing (Pereira, 2014). Nevertheless, Lisbon experienced the benefits brought by the industrial revolution, such as rail links, both inside and outside the city, as well as the installation of a new electric tram line, which is still a major tourist attraction today. With the first installations of electricity in 1878, not only did public transport improve, but it was also possible to illuminate houses and streets, improving living conditions and safety. The population of the city nearly doubled from 50 years earlier by 1900, and it doubled again, reaching 783,226 in 1950.



Figure 4_ D. Pedro IV square, Lisbon, 1920

The first decades of the 20th century were marked by the fall of the Monarchy following the assassination of the king, in 1908, and the proclamation of the First Republic of Portugal. However, World War I led to a period of both economic and political crisis that lasted until 1926, when the conservative and anti-democratic right wing gained full power and adopted a fascist-inspired ideology.

5.2.3 The Dictatorship Period

The Portuguese democracy is one of the youngest among the whole European Union. Indeed, Portuguese society has been governed since 1926 by an authoritarian military government, which was followed by a dictatorship called “*Estado Novo*” (New State) led by António de Oliveira Salazar, from 1933 to 1974, strongly inspired by Italian fascism. The regime was characterised by rigid censorship, political repression, and extensive use of propaganda to maintain control over the population. The colonial empire began to collapse in 1960, a dreaded event which in Africa took the form of an armed war that went on for more than a decade. Consequently, the Portuguese colonial war (1961-1974) in Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique further depleted the country’s resources and increased internal instability.

Only after the 1960s the modernisation initiatives supported by a technocratic faction within the regime led to some limited but significant structural changes, including a slight improvement in the conditions of the working class, which was concentrated mainly in the urban areas of Lisbon and Porto. This period coincided also with an increase in foreign investment, which supported the expansion and diversification of the country’s industrial economy. A following pay increase created new opportunities for social mobility and increased the demand for consumer goods. Furthermore, a flood of migration to Portugal’s biggest cities significantly intensified processes of urbanisation: between 1950 and 1970, Lisbon’s population increased from about 802,000 to over 1.2 million people (Lains, 2003).

There was talk of a political “renaissance” following Salazar’s 1969 resignation as head of the Estado Novo in favour of Marcello Caetano, but in reality, tensions and conflicts escalated as a result of the regime’s repression of any opposition, which resulted in a wave of labour activism, student protests, and political mobilisation during election periods. This situation, combined with the deterioration of the military situation in the colonies, the growing discontent of a considerable faction of the army, increasing pressure from abroad and the oil crisis, was further exacerbated by the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in the early 1970s, as a result of which the entire world economy was forced into recession after years of uninterrupted post-war prosperity, wealth that Portugal had never experienced. According to David Harvey, this resulted in a “*troubled period of economic restructuring and social and political readjustment*”, eventually leading to a “*entirely new regime of accumulation*” (1992, p. 145). The global economic crisis further exacerbated existing social tensions, and made the regime’s position increasingly precarious.

A military coup led by the Movement of the Armed Forces (MFA) on April 25, 1974, marked the beginning of a new period in modern Portuguese history. The nineteen months that followed the coup, generally known as the “Portuguese Revolutionary Period” or the “Carnation Revolution” (*Revolução dos Cravos*), were characterised by nearly constant protests, open forums, strikes, the occupation of homes, businesses, and agricultural land, a high voter turnout and widespread popular engagement in the democratisation process. Protests and social mobilisations continued to occur regularly during the years of austerity that preceded Portugal’s entry into the European Economic Community (CEE) in 1986, and movements for social justice, agrarian reform, and labour rights were highly influential during this period, helping to shape the new democratic institutions and policies of the Portuguese state, and laying the foundations for the development of a democratic society (Accornero & Pinto, 2015).

5.2.4 Post-Revolutionary Period

Following the revolutionary period, an attempt was made toward a fast-paced “normalisation”, leading to the creation of a parliamentary democratic regime and the drafting of a constitution that sought to incorporate new forms of participatory democracy, drawing on the Brazilian experience, alongside the institutional framework of representative and parliamentary democracy. Portugal’s entry into the European Economic Community (now the European Union) in 1986 marked a significant milestone, leading to an era of stabilisation for the country. On the economic front, the shift to a neoliberal economy, aimed at positioning Portugal as a global metropolis, has resulted in the financialization of the Portuguese economy by stimulating home ownership and suburbanisation for the middle-classes and, on the other hand, has led to an increase of international investments, particularly in the retail and real estate sectors (Salgueiro, 1994).

The massive suburbanisation that led to the emptying out of major cities has been a trend in the Portuguese real estate market since the 1980s. To understand the extent of the phenomenon, it is enough to consider that between 1991 and 2011 alone, the centre of Lisbon lost more than a third of its population, precisely 33,4% of the population living inside the Historic Centre area, according to the 2011 census (INE, 2007a; 2012a; 2012b; 2016), while the larger metropolitan region added over 300,000 extra citizens (Lestegás, 2019). This trend of demographic contraction, which persisted since the 1980s, was driven not only by suburbanisation and the devalorisation of the inner-city real estate sector, but also to socio-economic polarisation and weaknesses in urban governance (Oliveira and Pinho, 2010).

According to Sousa Santos (2004), the authoritarian form of connection between the state and population has persisted despite the political and societal shift, as evidenced by the lack of space for public discussion and debate outside of the official settings of legislatures, local governments, courts, and parliament. Over the years, successive constitutional revisions have tended to erase the memory of the revolution through the elimination of language that was perceived as a direct representation of the dynamic public movements of the revolutionary era, and their accomplishments. In the nearly four decades since the establishment of democracy, many of the organisational experiences of popular mobilisation from the revolutionary era have faded away and the intense commitment to citizenship has vanished. At the same time, due to the efforts to catch up with other democracies (and markets) of the continent, a new Portuguese consumer culture was surely forming (Santos *et al.*, 2004).

5.3 Contemporary Urban Challenges

5.3.1 The Financial Crisis of 2008

Following the collapse of Wall Street in 2008, several banking institutions fell, and financial market malpractice was made public. As a result, national governments were advised to take two primary actions: first, to support and intervene in banking institutions that were at risk in order to calm the financial markets and prevent public panic; and second, to initiate significant public investment in order to expedite economic recovery. However, international organisations, governments, and mainstream think-tanks began to promote the need for austerity, which is “*a form of voluntary deflation in which the economy adjusts through the reduction of wages, prices, and public spending to restore competitiveness (...) by cutting the state’s budget, debt and deficits*” (Blyth, 2013: p.2), just a few months after the discussion over the necessity of market regulation was concluded (Peck, 2013). The majority of European political and institutional discourses attributed the crisis’ origins to decades of extravagant and unaccountable public spending, coupled with allegedly unsustainable welfare systems (Blyth, 2013). According to Krugman (2012), these perspectives gave rise to the primary justifications in support of the austerity-driven political economy, which was seen as the only means of replenishing national budgets and laying the groundwork for future economic recovery. But rather than lowering national debt, easing the recession, or promoting economic growth, the welfare state’s cuts and the labour market’s fiscal pressures increased inequality and poverty, especially in those countries which were suffering the most from the fiscal crisis (Krugman, 2012).

The beginning of the 2008 financial crisis marked the start of a significant transformation in Portuguese politics and society. In line with the early political responses to the crisis by European institutions, the Portuguese government raised public sector wages, announced an ambitious program rooted in public works that would primarily address transportation infrastructure, and guaranteed public debt to the private banking industry and investment banks (Seixas et al., 2016). However, by 2010 Portugal complied with the expectations of the European central government: public works spending was discontinued, tax revenue significantly decreased, and public spending on automatic stabilisers (such as unemployment benefits) rose. Interest rates on public debt increased along with the country's fiscal deficit during the course of the euro crisis. Moreover, as 2010 progressed austerity measures gained traction, and a series of fiscal adjustment measures were put into place, including tax increases, the freezing of public sector salaries and pensions, and the adoption of new laws that restricted access to social services. The Prime Minister at the time requested extraordinary financial aid in April 2011, after Parliament rejected a new adjustment package. The European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Commission, collectively known as the "Troika", imposed a strict and extensive budgetary and political-administrative protocol on national politics (Seixas et al., 2016), which included further cutting public spending on health and education, as well as a significant decrease of fundings for social policies aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, together with unemployment benefits (Pedroso, 2014).

The economic crisis and the subsequent austerity measures have had a significant impact on the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA). Although the LMA is an area with a high level of skilled workers, having the biggest universities in the nation, the most Research & Development centres, and a sizable number of creative businesses, it is also an aging region with decreasing rates of births. Despite a relatively youthful immigrant population, the proportion of the elderly (65 years old and over) increased from 15.4 to 18.2 percent of the total population over the past ten years. Since 2009, the risk of poverty has been sharply rising, quickly reversing the slightly upward trend that had been seen since the start of the decade as a result of consistent social policies (Seixas et al., 2016). In 2012, 18.7% of Portugal's population was at risk of poverty, even with social transfers, according to EU Statistics from the Income and Living Conditions Survey (2013), compared to 17.9% in 2009. Using a time-anchored rate, it is possible to see that the risk of poverty in the unemployment population increased by almost four points from 2009 to 2012.

	2009	2010	2011	2012 (estimated)
At risk of poverty rate before social transfers (%)	43.4	42.5	45.4	46.9
At risk of poverty rate after social transfers (%)	17.9	18.0	17.9	18.7
Time-anchored at risk of poverty rate (reference income=2009) (%)	17.9	19.6	21.3	24.7
Severe material deprivation (%)	9.0	8.3	8.6	10.9
At risk of poverty population (%)	25.3	24.4	25.3	27.4
Gini coefficient	33.7	34.2	34.5	34.2
Inequality on income distribution (S80/S20)	5.6	5.7	5.8	6.0
Inequality on income distribution (S90/S10)	9.2	9.4	10.0	10.7

Figure 5_Portugal indicators, EU-SILC, 2010-2013. Source: Seixas et al., 2016)

5.3.2 Urban Policies and Regeneration Efforts

In the period following the economic crisis of 2008, the Portuguese citizens, like Greek, Spanish, and, to some extent, Italian, have been subjected to drastic fiscal contraction measures which, besides worsening the economic situation, have severely undermined what the country considered the “conquests” of the 25 April 1974 revolution: the establishment of social rights in terms of labour law, healthcare, housing right and the access to education. The impact of the austerity policies had been particularly detrimental in Portugal, a country already known for its high levels of inequality: in the years following the crisis, the poorest 10% of the population suffered the greatest drop in disposable household income (Carmo et al. 2012). The national government, in addition to the budget cuts, had been implementing fiscal and administrative reforms of territorial powers within the framework of austerity measures. Portugal is still one of Europe’s most politically centralised nations (Seixas et al., 2016): with one of the lowest percentages of subnational (i.e., regional plus local) public expenditure, significantly less than the average of approximately 25% for the EU (Geißler *et al.*, 2019), the regions and municipalities of the country are just localised subsidiaries of the federal government, rather than politically independent bodies (Nanetti, Rato, & Rodrigues, 2004).

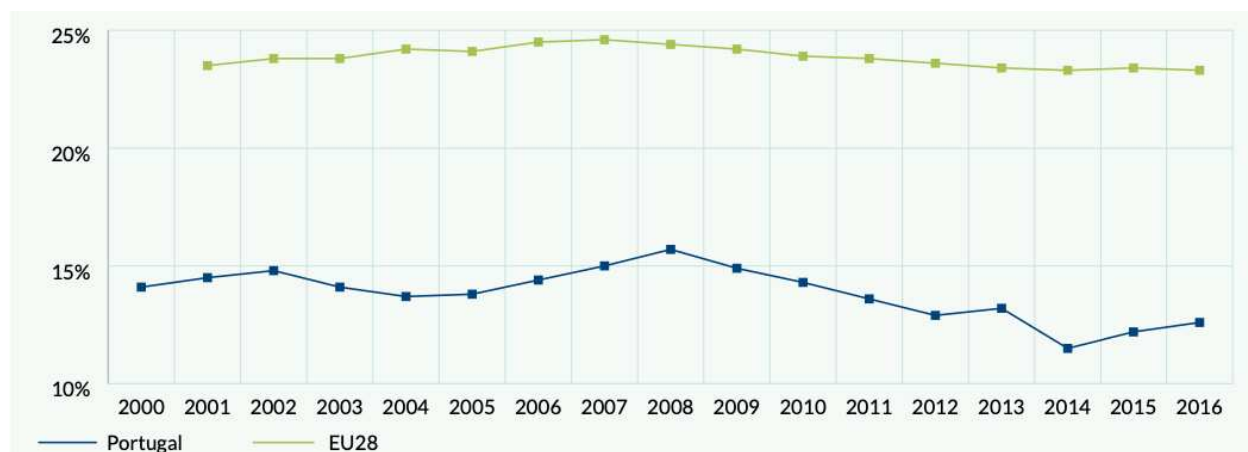


Figure 6_ Local Government Aggregate Expenditures as Share of General Government Expenditures, 2000-2016, from Eurostat Government Finance Statistics, OECD Fiscal Decentralization Database

To address the crisis, Lisbon’s city council also made a consistent effort focused primarily on two policy areas: strategies for economic recovery, and urban regeneration (Seixas et al., 2016). Schemes to support urban economic activity and employment had been introduced, including business incubators, incentives for newly established enterprises, and assistance for retail initiatives. Central to the municipal administration’s efforts was also the strategy of implementing urban policies to attract foreign capital and tourist flows. In fact, even before the financial crisis of 2009, the government granted tax breaks to real estate investment funds investing in urban renovations. This trend was accentuated when the central government included further concessions for non-regular residents (2009) (Mendes, 2013), followed by the introduction of the Golden Visa scheme (2012), which allowed access to the Schengen area for real estate investments, and a series of other measures aimed at attracting wealthy Europeans to Portugal (Tulumello, 2019). Moreover, despite a recession in tourism during the first phase of the crisis (a reduction of 8.9% in the number of overnight stays), thanks to extensive marketing campaigns Lisbon-City became a popular tourist destination worldwide in the years that followed, with an increase of 19.4% in the number of overnight stays for the period 2009-2012.

The measures intended to improve Lisbon’s position in the international urban hierarchy, i.e. to join the “strategic geography of centrality” (Sassen, 1998), and the transnational network of cities that oversees and coordinates the world economy, have certainly brought some positive results. About 20% of the population had some kind of economic benefit from the measures taken, which is an improvement considering the percentage of rich people in the city. Despite these concentrations of wealth, these policies have come at a cost. Lisbon is among the cities

with above-average rates of income inequality and poverty: Portugal's Gini index¹ in 2021 was 33.0%, which indicates that it was more unequal than the EU-27 average of 30.1% (Abreu, 2023). Many more residents suffer from the negative effects of gentrification, displacement, traffic, and pollution that come with preparing the city for its international debut, in addition to the costs incurred by those outside this strategic geography of power (Hamel et al., 2000). The increase in tourism and the aforementioned attraction of international investment, particularly in the real estate sector, have also played, and are still playing, a major role in the distress of residents, as they are driving up property values and rents in the centre of Lisbon, making housing less affordable for locals (Mendes, 2013; Tulumello, 2019).

Following thirty years of population decline, Lisbon-City had and still has a large number of unoccupied dwelling (around 50'000) out of a total of 320 thousand dwellings in the city, which corresponds to 15% of vacant houses (INE, 2021). Since the 1990s, public policy has emphasised the necessity of encouraging building rehabilitation, particularly in specific neighbourhood and areas classified as "critical" (Mendes L., 2010, 1184). This has become the cornerstone of planning policies aimed at attracting investors by offering tax and building incentives, as in the case of the town master plan, known as the "3 Rs plan" (reuse, refurbish, regenerate), which was launched in 2008 and approved in 2012. The plan is focused on urban regeneration, aiming to draw people back to the city and create a "*cosmopolitan city, a compact city where life is vibrant, [where] a multiplicity of uses, activities, an enormous variety of situations [happen]*" (extract from interview, Tulumello, 2016). The three primary principles of regeneration strategy are the Bip/Zip program (*Bairros e Zonas de Intervenção Prioritaria*, Priority Intervention Neighbourhoods and Areas), municipal housing management, and the push for real estate renovation. Eligibility for financial incentives for renovation was, over time, extended to all urbanised areas in the new master plan. A strategic charter of initiatives to encourage private intervention was then approved. The strategy was based on multiple typologies of public intervention to encourage private investment: leasehold property subsidies, public works and investments in public spaces and services, and the municipality's role in accelerating building permission procedures (Tulumello, 2016). In addition to stimulating the requalification of private dwellings, the Lisbon municipality developed a strategic plan for the regeneration and management of council housing, comprising around 30,000 flats, with the ultimate goal of transferring ownership of this stock over the next few decades (Seixas et al., 2016). However, political critics raised concerns that only real estate investors would be able to take advantage of this plan. Regeneration policies in central districts have already accelerated

² The Gini index, also referred to as the Gini coefficient, is a statistical measure used to illustrate the disparities in wealth, income, or consumption within a country or social group.

gentrification trends (Mendes, 2013), as seen in central districts like *Chiado*, *Bairro Alto*, and *Cais do Sodré*, which are expected to continue to increase in popularity due to tourism-friendly policies. Meanwhile, the credit contraction affecting middle-class families and their housing solutions is further shifting real estate renovation towards large investors and the travel and tourism sector (Seixas et al., 2015).

The creation of a rent differential by encouraging capital accumulation in the periphery and disinvestment in the city centre, a phenomenon also enhanced by the rent-control measures that were in existence until 2012 and the subsequent liberalisation of the market, is responsible for generating the circumstances for the latter to invest in the production of real estate capital in the inner city, a process which have been observed in other cities worldwide (Smith, 2012). This process was facilitated by the municipality's introduction of new urban planning bodies such as the "Urban Rehabilitation Societies" (SRU) in 2014, to which the management of building rehabilitation initiatives was delegated, thereby creating favourable conditions for private investors to extract valuable land well below market prices (Mendes, 2013 and 2014). Moreover, due to the strong growth of tourism, many properties have been absorbed by the growing short-term rental market, leading to a further decrease in the housing stock. The stagnation of wages in Lisbon's historic centre after the crisis certainly did not help to keep the sharp rise in housing costs in balance, as Lestegás' empirical study showed (Lestegás, 2019). These findings validate Smith's claim that gentrification is "*a back-to-the-city movement all right, but a back-to-the-city movement by capital rather than people*" (Smith, 1996: 67).

While this legal and economic framework has undeniably succeeded in attracting foreign investment and encouraging the rehabilitation of abandoned properties in the central area, it has also sparked gentrification and an enclave-type exploitation of the housing stock in Lisbon's historic centre. This threatens local households' access to affordable housing in this area and its immediate surroundings. Arguably, this process of urban reorganisation, driven by significant external influences (such as capital investments and foreign people), aligns with what Edward Soja described as the "*post-metropolis (...), a product of intensified globalisation processes through which the global is becoming localised and the local is becoming globalised at the same time*" (Soja, 2000, p. 150). As per Lefebvre's (1974) analysis, (urban) space is a dynamic entity that takes shape around three dimensions: "spatial practices," which refers to the way a society shapes its own space; "representations of space", which is the space of dominance as envisioned and planned by technocrats, scientists, and urbanists; and "representational space", which is experienced through images and symbols. This is the reason why a complex setting like the

urban environment is incompatible with top-down sociospatial engineering, and policymakers must confront and work with local representations and fabrics.

5.3.3 Urban Participatory Planning Approaches

Community engagement techniques are continually evolving, providing increasingly innovative methods to involve local residents in projects and policy-making. These techniques encompass a range of approaches through which stakeholders with diverse interests participate in policy development, and contribute to the planning and implementation of new initiatives (OECD, 2022). As discussed in Chapter 2.4, such participation enhances citizen influence, strengthens local democratic processes, and fosters sustainability and social cohesion. This process involves various levels of participation, including engagement, involvement, collaboration, and inclusion (Medeiros, 2022). Public participation is essential to promote public interest in planning activities, transform social and power dynamics, and reduce uncertainty in spatial planning decisions through the exchange of knowledge and sharing of models.

Nowadays, Portugal has an extensive set of laws that encourage public participation, especially from stakeholders, in the creation and approval of planning documents. Political representatives and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are the main channels of involvement at the sub-national level, as they are highly accountable, able to engage at all levels and have a large voice in the process. The creation of the lowest level planning instruments, on the other hand, is led by citizen groups. However, when the first National Spatial Policy Programme (PNPOT, *Programa Nacional da Política de Ordenamento do Território*) was released in 2007, the general level of citizen participation in territorial governance and spatial planning was relatively low (Medeiros, 2022). Since 2007, the Lisbon centre-left government has provided a stable political environment that has facilitated innovative efforts in terms of participative activities. The concepts of innovation and participation have shaped efforts towards fast-paced reforms and political empowerment of citizens and organisations, and in the last few decades, grassroots self-organisation and participatory processes have grown significantly. Portugal was also the first European country to implement participatory processes and budgeting, thanks to the examples set by Brazil's municipalities (OECD, 2022), and today hosts more than 180 initiatives, which is currently the highest rate internationally based on the ratio of processes to municipalities and parishes (Falanga, 2018). For the past fifteen years, Lisbon's urban governance has placed a strong emphasis on citizen participation. The main impetus for the realisation of the first participatory budget at municipal level was the decreasing trust of

citizens in political institutions (Falanga and Lüchmann, 2020) and the effort, led by local mayors, to counter the extreme centralisation of the state (Allegretti, 2021). Moreover, at a time when austerity has reduced local budgets and staff, local authorities have used participatory processes to improve the relationship between decision-makers and citizens (Falanga, 2018). In this regard, the Lisbon Participatory Agenda has been recognised for promoting innovations in democracy.

The goal of the participatory processes held in Lisbon is to promote a more democratic and inclusive planning process that considers the wants and needs of local communities, while improving accountability and transparency in urban governance. For instance, the Participatory Budgeting (PB) initiative, launched in 2008, enables citizens to both suggest and vote for projects to receive funding from a portion of the municipal budget. This program has received endorsement for successfully involving people from different socio-economic backgrounds in the planning stages (Allegretti & Antunes, 2014). A clear example of the implementation of these practices at local level is the program Bip/Zip, already mentioned in the previous section. Launched in 2011 and still ongoing, the Bip/Zip program aims to encourage neighbourhood partnerships for revitalisation in impoverished areas. The stated goal of the program was *“cultivating partnerships and small-scale interventions for the improvement of local habitats”*. The program, which still operates in one-year cycles, finances micro-actions carried out by partnerships of grassroots organisations through annual competitive tendering processes. The only action the municipality takes to support bottom-up organisation is the monitoring of projects and expenditure. The charter’s discourse is based on ideas like self-organisation, partnerships, entrepreneurship, community building, and capacity building. However, there are certain issues that need to be underlined: the overall objective of revitalising the 67 targeted neighbourhoods has not been significantly impacted by the scarce and dispersed funding allocation, and the competition among neighbourhoods has increased yearly rushes to submit dozens of projects of all kinds. Secondly, despite the success of Bip/Zip and participatory budgeting, social movements are not as involved as they could be (Falanga, 2023). In fact, while the poor conditions in the neighbourhoods where local partnerships are invited to implement community projects may have encouraged the emergence of grassroots organisations, the focus on carrying out a project that has already been given approval might just as easily discouraged movements from getting involved. Generally speaking, the perception of middle-class and white stakeholders controlling formal settings is often the reason for the disconnection between participatory processes and movements (Polletta, 2007). Finally, according to Valesca (2019), full engagement in participatory processes may also have been further hampered by the quantity

and quality of information provided to grassroots groups. For these reasons, the municipality's focus on empowerment could be seen as a means of concealing the political choice to provide risible funds for the revitalisation of disadvantaged areas, as opposed to spending on big events or marketing the city (Tulumello, 2016).

The right of citizens to engage “*in the drawing up of urban planning instruments and any other physical instruments of territorial planning*” is guaranteed in Article 65, paragraph 5, of the Basic Law, which is the Portuguese Constitution. Following this constitutional mandate, public participation was recognised as a legal principle by the Law of the Soil Policy Bases, Spatial Planning and Urban Development (Law No. 31/2014 of 30 May) and the new Legal Regime of Land Management Instruments (Decree-Law No 80/2015 of 14 May). These laws assert that people need access to information in order to exercise their right to citizenship. Article 6,2 of Law No. 31/2014 specifically states that everyone has the right to take part in the elaboration, revision, execution, and evaluation of territorial plans and programs, especially the Municipal Director Plan (Plano Director Municipal, PDM), whether as an individual or as a group. In practice, the requirements are strictly adhered to, with far greater local involvement. Engagement at the sub-national level is carried out mainly by political delegates and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). NGOs, especially, have considerable experience, a high capacity for involvement at all levels and, overall, a great impact on the process. When the first National Spatial Policy Programme (*Programa Nacional da Política de Ordenamento do Território*, PNPOT) was published (2007), the general level of citizen participation in territorial governance and spatial planning was comparatively low on a national scale. This is the reason why, in a recent update of the PNPOT, it was included a survey inviting people to share their thoughts on the strategic guidelines (i.e., DGT, 2018). However, out of the approximately 3000 responses, very few came from regular citizens (Medeiros, 2022). Moreover, although the law requires the involvement of stakeholders and citizens in the planning and development phases of spatial plans, this is still a largely theoretical process. For example, the online platform was deemed the least effective participation mechanism among the ones that were available during the elaboration of the PDM, because it did not provide a follow-up response to the citizenship.

As per ESPON COMPASS (2018), Portuguese spatial planning authorities' territorial governance processes do not currently incorporate co-decisional governance models. Nonetheless, there is an encouraging trend to create more opportunities more opportunities for citizens to participate more broadly in territorial governance and spatial planning processes at all territorial levels (Medeiros, 2022). The municipality, for instance, hold regular meetings with the city councils, in three different forms: private, public, and decentralised public. Moreover, all the

participatory projects and actions are collected and published on the portal “*Lisboa participa*”, managed by the municipality, to ensure greater transparency of the process and the trust of stakeholders. The Lisbon PDM’s development provides proof of the openness and willingness of city officials to put in place a reliable urban participatory planning system. In sum, the emerging policy measures indicate that the Portuguese legal planning system is beginning to recognise the importance of actively involving stakeholders and citizens in the creation and approval of planning documents at all territorial levels (Medeiros, 2022).

5.4 Grassroots Movements and Social Activism in Portugal

Numerous experiences of articulating various kinds of struggles, have resulted from movements, forms of collective action, and the creation of alliances with local governments, state institutions, political parties and more generally actors within the legal and judiciary system. They frequently make use of tools made possible by European integration, such as environmental, consumer, and human rights directives. However, they also draw, if not always directly, on other traditions of grassroots activism and local conflict as well as the memory of the revolution. The emergence of these movements highlights the ongoing problems of urban inequality and the need for inclusive urban governance that prioritises social justice and the well-being of all citizens. The current debates and conflicts surrounding urban development and regeneration highlight the critical role of participatory processes in shaping the futures of cities such as Lisbon.

5.4.1 Historical Context of Social Engagement

In Portugal, the political system, particularly the associative sector, has had a significant impact on civil society during the 48 years of the dictatorial regime (Melo, 2001; Melo, Carmo, 2008). Voluntary associativism, which tends toward democratisation and emancipation, as well as its dedication to socio-cultural programs as an alternative to official ones, suffered mistrust and hostility from the dictatorial state between 1926 and 1974 (Melo, 2001: [325]-374). This has severely restricted and conditioned its development: a 1949 estimate by the Federation of Socio-Cultural Associations of Republican Origin (FPCCR) placed the number of collectives in the nation at about 3,000 in 1940, with an estimated 2 million members by 1948 (Melo, 2001: 337). However, approximately 40% of these associations, around 1200, lacked a valid license and

were considered hostile, and even pursued by the dictatorship, with the notable exception of agricultural cooperatives.

The Portuguese democracy emerged in a context of high levels of mobilisation. The Portuguese Revolution, which lasted for 19 months after the dictatorship was overthrown by a military coup on April 25, 1974, was marked by nearly daily protests, open forums, strikes, and other non-traditional political activity. Along with high voter turnout, this included the occupation of homes, businesses, and agricultural land (Accornero 2013). The number of voluntary associations increased dramatically after the revolution and continued to do so during the years of austerity leading up to Portugal's 1986 admission to the European Economic Community (Accornero, Pinto, 2015). This was attributed to a combination of factors, including social mobilisation and cyclical extreme political activism, as well as the fundamental removal of political and legal barriers to the rights of association, reunion, and expression. During this decade, territorial base organisations experienced a significant boost in energy and vitality. The housing issue, given the severe needs, became one of the movements' top priorities.

At the end of the 20th century, currents of local, community, or socio-cultural development, of social minorities (such as LGBTQ+ groups, immigrants, feminists) and those of a civic or civic-cultural nature began to consolidate, well-represented in the associations for the defence of heritage, consumers, and public service (particularly in health and in the relationship with the citizens). These movements often operated at a micro-local and urban level, from districts and parish councils to cities. Some of these groups formed social movements that proposed new political agendas or "new politics". According to Portugal's National Institute of Statistics (INE) official statistics from 1995, there were approximately 3300 associations in the country, with approximately one million members. Nevertheless, active participants accounted for less than one-third of this value (roughly 300 thousand people). At less than 40% of the total, the feminine presence was still disproportionate (INE, 1998).

Despite the efforts, the process of self-organisation remains unstable. The European Social Survey reports that Portugal has the lowest rate of associations per inhabitant in Europe (only 25.6% in 1999, against a European average of 50%), and the subsequent European Values Study (2017-2020) confirmed the data. It is necessary to take into consideration two explanatory factors that the literature has largely overlooked (Melo, Carmo, 2008): firstly, the political power (parties, municipalities, etc.) has significantly instrumentalised associativism in connection with national construction and revolutionary processes, causing a large number of citizens to retreat from a stronger civic and associative participation; secondly, the agendas of the institutionalised

political power and the mainstream media have taken over public space, sacrificing more civic, cultural, and social programs.

According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, studies of Portugal's recent past have highlighted some general characteristics of the Portuguese system: the lack of a robust, organised civil society, social movements, citizen organisations, and associations; the contrast between a welfare state that is weak and insufficient and one that is strong and based on neighbourhood, family, and affiliation ties, which makes up for the former's shortcomings; the difference between the formal definition of citizens' rights and their actual access to these rights; and the difference between progressive laws and conservative social practices (Santos, 2004). Despite the political regime transition and the establishment of a more sophisticated framework of rights, still one of the most significant achievements of the revolution, the authoritarian state-citizen relationship, has endured to these days. It is noticeable that, outside the official contexts of legislatures, local governments, courts and parliament, there are very few forums for public discussion and debate. Melo and Carmo agree with Santos' analysis of a historical constant of the Portuguese twentieth century: the central state's failure to acknowledge the contribution of the associative movements to the nation's socio-cultural and economic development (Melo, Carmo, 2008). According to some authors (e.g., Durkheim, 1977), the disappearance of the old trading corporations in Portugal in 1834 left a void that was filled, up to a certain extent, by voluntary associations. As per Putnam's (1993, 2000) findings, the ability of a population to form associations is the primary determinant of the high degree of social capital present in regions and countries.

In 2005, Magalhães identified a sense of "democratic disaffection" in Portuguese's citizenship, showing how distant Portuguese citizens were from political institutions and demonstrating that, despite strong support for democracy, there was also a strong sense of disaffection expressed in low levels of conventional and otherwise political engagement and participation (Magalhães 2005: 988). The current voter turnout in Portugal is the lowest among OECD nations, and already below the average for West European democracies (Freire, Magalhães, 2002: 47–50). In the Lisbon local elections of 2021, for example, 49% of voters abstained, demonstrating a concerning lack of interest in getting involved in politics (data from Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 2021).

5.4.2 Waves of Anti-Austerity and Housing Activism before Covid-19

Portugal has recently witnessed the resurgence of popular protests and new urban social movements, which have not only fuelled new collective actions in the struggle for anti-austerity ideology, but have also become firmly embedded in struggles for the right to housing and the city. The deteriorating economic conditions brought on by the imposition of harsh austerity measures in the wake of the sovereign debt crisis served as the first catalyst for this wave of demonstrations. These measures prompted citizens of Southern European nations, including Portugal, to become involved in widespread protests. Initially economic in nature, the contentions soon evolved into broader challenges to political establishments, addressing a wider array of social and political issues.

In Portugal, the period after the crisis of 2008 marked the biggest cycle of protests since the 1974 democratic revolution, with significant mobilisation beginning in 2011 (Sousa Santos, 2011). Data from the European Social Survey (ESS) and the Portuguese police force reveal a dramatic increase in the frequency of demonstrations in Lisbon: from 244 in 2010, to 298 in 2011, and 579 (one per 15 hours) in 2012. This surge in social conflict is evident across all types of contention, with the years between 2010 and 2013 witnessing a multiplicity of protests (Accornero, Pinto, 2015).

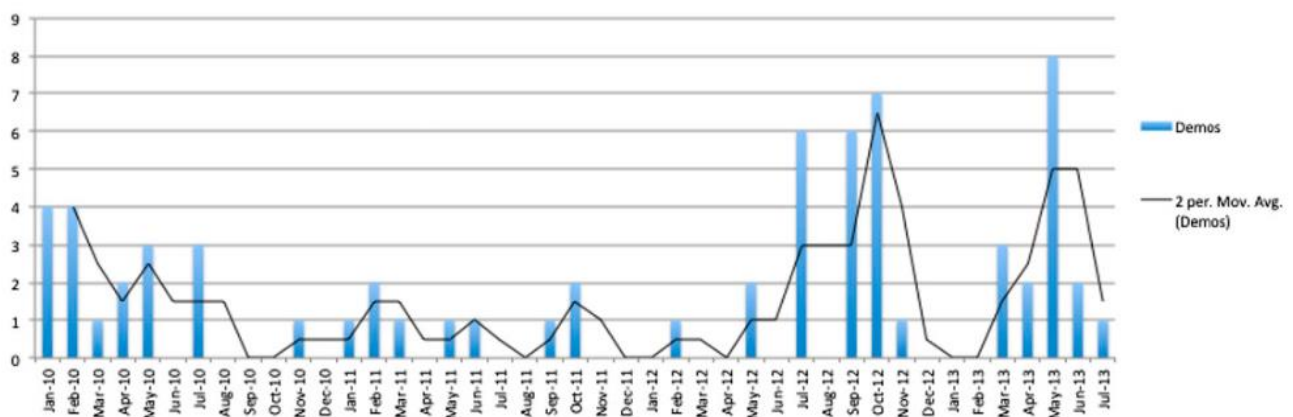


Figure 7_Demonstrations (Demos) in Portugal, from 01/2010 to 07/2013 (3 day/week sample)

Media attention has been drawn to movements like *Geração à Rasca* and *Que se Lixe a Troika*, which deemed themselves to be impartial and even antagonistic towards the mainstream political parties, and were thus seen as the main civil society response to austerity measures, as well as a new form of civic and political engagement. Thanks to the use of social networks and ICTs, they spread rapidly and were able to organise themselves through platforms, even connecting to other cities and countries' movements. Their protests were, from the beginning,

very successful in mobilising large numbers of citizens as well as maintaining high levels of participation in other demonstrations, public assemblies, and other initiatives, which led to some of the biggest turnouts since the Revolution (Accornero, Pinto, 2015). The conflict was powerful, but short-lived, since after 2013 the manifestations and protests started to fade away (Tulumello, Mendes 2024).

The solid foundation of these movements in anti-austerity ideology played a critical role in shaping the landscape of Portuguese activism, highlighting the intersection of economic conditions and political dissent in fuelling sustained social movements. Although housing was not the primary issue in public discourse during that period, as it is today, this protest cycle increased awareness of the potential for grassroots organisation outside of institutional politics, particularly in Lisbon (Tulumello, Mendes 2022). When, as a result of the aforementioned policies of economic efficiency and openness in the second decade of the 21st century, the city began to see the influx of different groups, including tourists, pensioners, international students, start-ups, and digital nomads, as well as speculative capital and institutional investors, Lisbon started to experience the effects of touristification, speculation and residential segregation, which led to a severe urban crisis. This crisis encouraged the consolidation of urban social movements, underpinned by strong anti-gentrification and anti-displacement arguments, and fostered a variety of creative spaces of contestation, from institutional negotiation to street performance, to supporting fragile households through the occupation of vacant public housing, to open conflict in eviction cases (Tulumello, Mendes, 2022). The government, recognising the growing social pressure, had to shift its focus to housing as a top priority. Although the policies put in place to control the housing situation have been shown to be fundamentally incapable of addressing the causes of the financialisation of housing (Mendes 2020; Tulumello 2024), their very implementation is further evidence of how activism has the capacity to influence policy.

5.4.3 A New Generation of Activism

According with the previous analysis, active citizenship, in line with global trends, is being revitalised in Portugal, despite its frequently localised expression and the marginalisation in the mainstream discourse on Portuguese society. The formation of locally based citizen movements against perceived injustices, or violations of people's rights or welfare, became more relevant after the developments of 2010-2013. Housing activism, in particular, has been one of the most important fields of mobilisation, supporting the fight against gentrification and displacement while also promoting the right to affordable housing. In these waves of protest, one aspect that is

frequently emphasised is the role of youth networks, which are distinguished by their international connections, use of ICT as a tool for mobilisation, combination of material, political, and identity-based demands, and in particular the creation of new organisational forms, particularly those that are horizontal, direct, or diffuse modes of representation and decision-making (Accornero, Pinto, 2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic initially put a halt to the momentum of these movements, and isolation caused many of the networks established in previous years to gradually disintegrate (Accornero et al. 2020; Mendes 2020; Tulumello et al. 2023). However, during the early weeks of the 2020 stay-at-home mandate, activist groups successfully lobbied the government to enact a nationwide rent freeze through online campaigns. The end of the pandemic, coupled with an inflation crisis, rising interest rates, and the continued rise of foreign investors using housing as an asset (Santos 2024), led to a deeper infiltration of global finance into urban areas. This, in turn, triggered a new phase of social conflict (Tulumello, Mendes, 2024), revitalising and reshaping the way social movements interacted with politics and the citizen base. As the pandemic subsided, the renewed pressures on the housing market refuelled activism, with movements adapting their strategies to the new socio-economic landscape. The youth networks and other activist groups re-emerged, exploiting both traditional methods of protest and innovative digital platforms to mobilise and organise. This period saw a resurgence of collective action, as activists sought to address the exacerbated housing crisis and broader social inequalities that had been intensified by the pandemic and subsequent economic challenges. The evolving dynamics of these movements reflect a persistent demand for social justice and equitable urban development, underscoring the critical role of active citizenship in shaping policy and societal change (Tulumello, Mendes, 2024).

According to the findings of Tulumello and Mendez (2024), over the past two years a new wave of activism has emerged in Lisbon, even though the urban social movements have generally shrunk in size (Tulumello, Mendes, 2024). This resurgence has been particularly evident in a series of massive mobilisations that took place in 2023 and 2024. Four key organisations, *Vida Justa*, *Casa para Viver*, *Porta a Porta*, and *Referendo pela Habitação*, founded between 2022 and 2023, have played a crucial role in these efforts. Despite having different interests and objectives, as well as different strategies of action, these organisations have not only revitalised the housing activism landscape but have also successfully mobilised citizens through innovative methods of engagement and advocacy. Specifically, *Vida Justa* was founded in mid-2022 in a peripheral neighbourhood of Lisbon to protest against rising living expenses, and specifically targeted financial speculation and police brutality in neighbourhoods

dominated by racialised communities. *Casa para Viver* was born as a platform which unites over a hundred groups, associations, collectives, and small movements around a manifesto that promotes a fundamentally different approach to housing policy with a clear anti-financialization edge. Yet, the tone of the platform's demands has changed over time, becoming an antagonistic and direct attack on the parties involved in financialization of the real estate, banking, and tourism industries. Launched in the beginning of 2023, *Porta a Porta* prioritises community activism. Activists interact with local residents to debate particular issues, and encourage community awareness and mobilisation regarding the detrimental effects of financial practices on housing stability and affordability. The movement is an example of the complex interaction between newer movements and institutional politics, being also strongly influenced by the *Partido Comunista Portuguese* in both its organisational structure and ideological framework. One thing all these organisations have in common is that they all have leveraged online platforms and ICT tools to organise protests, share information, and coordinate efforts across different regions, and even internationally. This has allowed them to maintain high levels of participation and impact despite the challenges posed by the pandemic and subsequent economic crises, and coordinate fruitfully with already existing movements like *Habita e Stop Despejos*. The culmination of these efforts was the push for a referendum on housing rights in mid 2022 and the creation of *Movimento Referendo pela Habitação* (Referendum for Housing Movement). Portuguese activists fled to other cities in Europe in 2023 to meet and exchange tactics with other movements and groups, and the famous case of *Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Enteignen*, cited in chapter 3.4.1, was a direct inspiration for the use of the referendum. This movement, driven by the aforementioned organisations, aimed to address the pressing issues of affordable housing and gentrification through direct democratic engagement. The referendum questions concern: (i) the cancellation of the existing “local housing” (*alojamento local*, the general term used for different types of accommodation provided for vacation rental) registered in a residential property and (ii) the amendment of the Municipal Local Housing Regulations so that vacation rental is no longer allowed in residential properties. The referendum campaign, which has already collected more than the necessary signatures to be submitted to the municipality, which will happen at the end of 2024, has highlighted the importance of citizens' involvement in shaping urban development and ensuring that the needs and rights of residents are prioritised in policymaking.

Situated at the centre of Lisbon's Mouraria neighbourhood, Martim Moniz Square has come to represent the city's changing urban environment and the intricate relationship that exists between participatory governance, community activism, and urban development. The square has become the centre of discussions about gentrification, the privatisation of public spaces, and the role that citizens have in influencing their urban environments, as Lisbon has seen tremendous changes brought about by economic, social, and cultural forces. This chapter explores the case of Martim Moniz Square, looking at how it has developed into a site of conflicting visions of urban life and governance, especially in light of the protests that took place in 2018 and 2019 against the proposed redevelopment plan.

The Martim Moniz case study offers a powerful example of how urban areas can be used as arenas for negotiation and contestation in fast evolving cities like Lisbon. This chapter traces the historical background of the square and the neighbourhood that surrounds it, Mouraria, showing how it went from being a neglected area to the heart of initiatives to revitalise urban areas, and finally to the centre of contention between economic and social interests, or between the political authority and the popular will. This chapter will examine these developments, looking at the pattern of community activism that culminated in the 2018 contestations, the particular events that sparked the demonstrations, and the larger implications for Lisbon's public space management and urban governance. The first section tracks the evolution of Mouraria through history, highlighting the city's multicultural heritage and the creation of Martim Moniz Square as a public area. Section 6.3 examines past redevelopment initiatives and the public perception of the square and its socio-cultural dynamics, setting the stage for the 2018 contestations against the proposed redevelopment plan, which eventually led to community activism and protests. The Martim Moniz movement is further examined in-depth in section 6.4, applying theoretical frameworks by Manuel Castells and Seixas & Mota to comprehend the dynamics of the protest. Section 6.5 evaluates the participatory process involved in the redevelopment of the square, its challenges, and limitations, and provides an analysis of the process according to the matrix elaborated by Wates. Section 6.6 presents the results of the fieldwork conducted between late 2023 and early 2024 on the perceptions of local inhabitants regarding the relationship between urban governance, cultural diversity, and the ongoing transformation of Lisbon's public spaces. Finally, section 6.7 briefly discusses the competition for a new garden in Martim Moniz Square, and the broader implications for future urban development.

6.2 Martim Moniz and Mouraria: Evolution and Urban Change

Martim Moniz is an outstanding public square deeply intertwined with the history and geography of Lisbon. Geographically, it is located in the *Vale da Mouraria*, and records human habitation dating back to 8,000 years. Today the square is positioned on the margin of *Mouraria* neighbourhood, whose name reflects its cosmopolitan and racially charged character, as it is derived from the Arabic term *Mouros*, indicating the Arab communities who have historically inhabited the region. In order to fully understand the significance of the Martim Moniz protests, it is crucial to place the square within the larger historical and urban development of the Mouraria neighbourhood. Mouraria, one of Lisbon's oldest neighbourhoods, and part of the *Santa Maria Maior* parish that encompasses the neighbourhoods of Lisbon's historic centre, has a multifaceted and rich past characterised by waves of migration, cultural diversity, and socioeconomic struggles. The neighbourhood, which has historically been viewed as a marginalised and unsafe area, has a unique multicultural character as it has long been home to a mix of local and immigrant populations.

6.2.1 Short Historical Background of Mouraria Neighbourhood

Since its official creation in 1170, Mouraria has experienced significant physical and social transformations. Initially established as a segregated Muslim community under royal protection, the area was physically marked by the construction of the *Cerca Fernandina* (Ferdinand's wall, the fortification around Lisbon's core) in the 14th century. Over the centuries, the neighbourhood's demographic and social landscape evolved, particularly in the 15th and 16th centuries, with the expulsion of Jews and Muslim. This led to an increase in Christian inhabitants, as well as the occupation of the space by disadvantaged groups. The 17th century saw further population growth, forcing the restructuring of the housing and the expansion of the neighbourhood, alongside the Christianisation and "gentrification" of the area, as evidenced by the construction of religious buildings and noble estates.

In the 18th century, while much of Lisbon was rebuilt after the 1755 earthquake, Mouraria, which escaped significant structural damage, became increasingly overpopulated and unsanitary. These conditions were exacerbated in the 19th century by the influx of migrants drawn to the city by the growing industrial economy. As a result, the neighbourhood faced increased social and urban challenges, accentuating the contrasts between the medieval and Enlightenment-era parts of the city.

In the 20th century, Mouraria became a focal point for political intervention through urban planning efforts aimed at transforming the city (Caldas, 2015). Major “cleansing” and rationalisation projects were initiated, with successive demolitions marking an attempt to implement long-postponed plans. Notably, the demolition of *Palácio do Marquês do Alegrete* in 1946 and *Igreja do Socorro* in 1949, along with the southern portion of the *Mouraria* neighbourhood in the late 1940s, led to the creation of *Praça do Martim Moniz*.



Figure 9_ Martim Moniz, 1947. Author: Eduardo Portugal, from the Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa



Figure 10_Martim Moniz, 1947. Author: Eduardo Portugal, from the Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa

Marluci Menezes, among other authors, situates the development of the square within the framework of the *Estado Novo* and Lisbon City Council, which was led at the time by Duarte Pacheco, as part of their policy of “civilising urbanism” (Rodrigues, 2012; Menezes, 2009). An “hygiene and beautification” strategy was put into place in an effort to improve the city by reviving socio-cultural dynamics and taking over public spaces. This approach was based on a negative perception of the popular areas, which were seen as the epicentres of illicit activity (prostitution, intoxication, fado houses, and other nightclubs, which were associated with “sickness” and “vices”), and it advocated for their demolition in the name of modernity and progress (Rodrigues, 2012; Menezes, 2005). The demolition of part of the neighbourhood and the subsequent creation of an empty space on the edge of the neighbourhood in the mid-20th century, led to a decrease in the population of Mouraria and a decline in some legal and/or illicit economic enterprises, part of which successively moved to Intendente square (Rodrigues, 2012; Menezes, 2009). The opening of this area, however, was marked by a lack of inclusion in a consistent urbanisation plan, earning it the popular nickname “the hole in the city”.

6.2.2 The Creation of Martim Moniz Square

In the years following the demolition of the neighbourhood, the square, which was still considered a *Largo*, a public space of irregular shape, lacking the characteristics of centrality

typical of a *praça*, was the focus of several proposals and interventions; some of them never made it past the planning stage, and those that did were the topic of debates and arguments over their viability and appropriateness (Menezes, 2009). From the 1950, the square was the preferred site for the relocation of commercial operations from the *Praça da Figueira* market, which was until then the main covered market of Lisbon, located in the homonymous square. The transferred shops were housed in prefabricated metal pavilions which, although intended to be a temporary solution, remained in place until 1990. The *Hotel Mundial* was also built in the 1950s amid the empty space left by the demolitions close to the square, further emphasising the social and physical borders between *Baixa Pombalina* and *Mouraria* neighbourhoods. Concurrently, during the 1950s and 60s, the construction of the Lisbon metro system and the demolition of other nearby buildings proceeded. It was also during this time that the *Socorro* metro stop/station, which is currently known as the Martim Moniz stop, was constructed (Rodrigues, 2012).

In 1972, the *Empresa Pública de Urbanização de Lisboa* (EPUL) took over the management of the *Largo* (Rodrigues, 2012). Many designs and recommendations were made throughout time, but it wasn't until 1980 that a portion of the winning project was actually built (Rodrigues, 2012). The square also saw road reconstruction around it, which has served to further emphasise its status as an “isolated space in the city”, along with the construction of two commercial malls, the *Mouraria* and *Martim Moniz* shopping centres, which have housed retail businesses since the 1980s. Since the 1970s, several immigrant groups, mainly from the former Portuguese colonies, began to settle in this area, attracted by the low rental prices and the possibility of carrying out economic activities in vacant commercial spaces (Mapril, 2002). The empty area was only officially designated as a square in 1997, after the construction of a subterranean parking lot beneath it (Menezes, 2012b). This was the culmination of the project started by the Lisbon City Council, which required several modifications to be made, over the years, to the court and its surroundings. The final result was a landscaped area with fountains for social use, decorated with themes ranging from multicultural imagery to the Christian reconquest era (Rodrigues, 2012; Menezes, 2009). According to Menezes, the name selected for the new-born square, *Martim Moniz*, was also part of the ideological and cultural program that materialised in public space, recalling a character from the Christian reconquest of the city, and contributing to the foundation myth of the Mouraria neighbourhood and its numerous meanings.

When the development project of the square came to a conclusion, in 1997, around forty kiosks were also installed, with the intention of revitalising the area by setting up a faux-traditional market where local goods, antiquities, and handicrafts were sold. The overall

urbanisation plan for the area was completed only in the 2010s, including home buildings around the square. The effort to “rebrand” the area proved to be unsuccessful, as all but 10 of the kiosks went bankrupt in less than 5 years, and were ultimately handed to different congregations in the city. During this time, the square went back to being used by a number of marginal groups, such as drug addicts and occasionally illegal immigrants and ethnic minorities (Menezes, 2012a). According to Menezes, the very kiosks installed in 1997-1998 can be blamed for the emergence of illicit activities (Menezes, 2009). Consequently, police operations and video monitoring were prompted by a perceived rise in criminal activity and insecurity (Menezes, 2009). Because of the presence of migrants’ communities, and the persistence of some illicit activities, the representation of Mouraria as unsafe and unclean persisted in spite of the increase of gentrification (Malheiros et al., 2012). The municipal intervention grew even more intense following the 2007 elections, when Mouraria was designated as the trial site for the municipality’s new urban plans, as a result of these representations and the cautious indications of opening up to new user categories.

6.2.3 Socio-Cultural Dynamics and Public Perception

The history of Martim Moniz is intricately intertwined with that of Mouraria and the neighbouring communities. This densely populated area, characterised by relatively old buildings and facilities, has experienced housing problems and a widespread process of population loss over the years. Socio-demographically speaking, it is also characterised by a higher concentration of elderly, lower-qualified and lower-educated individuals (25% of the residents have only the primary education, according to 2011 census), and jobless people. The neighbourhood was also greatly impacted by the decrease of inhabitants that struck Lisbon between 1981 and 2011 (–53%), due to the ageing demographics and gradual displacement brought by slow-development gentrification processes, in common with the more central areas, although this trend has slowed down and even reversed in recent times, according to the results of the last census (Carmo, Esteves, 2017). Common aspects between the neighbourhood and Martim Moniz Square include the waves of immigration that have occurred in the area since the Revolution, at different times and intensities, with people coming from a variety of countries (51, according to 2011 census), including but not limited to: China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, some African countries like Guinea-Bissau or Senegal, Brazil, and others (Rodrigues, 2012; Menezes, 2009; Guterres, 2012). The introduction of other cultures, and consequently of other elements perceived as “different”, such as clothing, artefacts, food, the sounds of different languages and musical genres, religious and cultural traditions, commercial forms and practices,

and distinctive urban architectural and landscape elements (such as places of worship, decorative elements, product advertisements or other “ethnic” spaces), contributed to the socio-cultural changes in the area and gave it a “multicultural/multi-ethnic” character, which became distinctive within the city of Lisbon. (Menezes, 2005).

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, local media consistently characterised the neighbourhood in terms of social exclusion, criminality, and danger. As a result, despite crime figures that were consistent with other city zones, Lisbon people regarded Mouraria as one of the most hazardous neighbourhoods in the area (Esteves, 1997). Martim Moniz was noted for its high number of immigrants, the evident presence of drug trafficking and prostitution, and ongoing violence between various groups (Tulumello, 2016). Enough to say that in the *Correio da Manhã*, Portugal’s best-selling daily newspaper, the urban area around Martim Moniz was mentioned 12 times during 2008, always in a negative way: nine articles report crimes, mainly robberies and drug dealing; two articles refer to the neighbourhood as a place of “drug dealing” in articles about crimes in other parts of the city; one article describes a story of social “degradation”.

Regardless of media perceptions, from the 2000s the once-vacant space left by Mouraria’s partial demolition has also evolved into a hub of community engagement for the neighbourhood, housing a diverse mix of people and groups from various economic, social, and cultural backgrounds (Tulumello, 2016), also thanks to the removal of some of the kiosks installed in the 90s, which allowed for a more informal and “relaxed” appropriation of public space (Menezes, 2009). In those years both Mouraria residents and tourists frequented the square, taking advantage of the rest spots and the remaining food and drink stalls. The complex history of *Praça do Martim Moniz* can be summarised as an ongoing conflict between the organic nature of urban space occupation and dynamization and the administrative planning of political power, between centralised and disciplinary renovations and spontaneous appropriation with its logic and marginalities. In fact, the “trademark” that is still associated with Martim Moniz in the collective perception and its media representation is precisely its multiculturalism, due to the number of migrant groups of various nationalities that frequent and use the square and its surroundings. Marlucci Menezes refers to this as “cultural exoticism”, which is a result of these populations appropriating the environment and “*constructing (and constituting themselves as) a landscape*” (Menezes, 2009).



Figure 11_Cricket in Martim Moniz. From a photo project on daily life in Mouraria, Vitorino Coragem

6.3 Community Protests and Activism: path to the 2018 Protests

6.3.1 Urban Revitalisation Initiatives

Mouraria has been at the centre of the municipality's urban rehabilitation activities especially since 2009, thanks to an EU-funded urban revitalisation initiative: the primary public areas in Mouraria were renovated to facilitate more use by locals and, above all, to draw in tourists and real estate investors (Gomes, 2020). That same year, the neighbourhood was also the scene of the first edition of *Todos* Festival, a Lisbon City Council initiative organised in collaboration with the Academy of Cultural Producers (*Academia de Produtores Culturais*). This contemporary community arts event was created to counter stereotypes by encouraging interaction between "Lisboans" and immigrant populations, as well as to draw newcomers to the area, therefore opposing generalised unfavourable perceptions. Although *Todos* was intended to be a travelling celebration, it ended up remaining in the square for an additional four years as the mayor's showpiece project, the restoration of Mouraria, took place. The mayor's dedication to the project even led, in 2011 (until 2013), to the relocation of the town hall to Largo de Intendente, a five-minute walk from Martim Moniz, as a symbolic gesture expressing this renewed commitment (Tulumello, 2015). When the public space restorations officially began in 2010, an *ad hoc* institution was required to oversee the repair and establish a community development program, as the former organisation, EPUL, was considered insufficient (Gomes, 2019). In 2012 and 2013,

the city's participatory budget provided additional funding for the program for Mouraria's social and community development (PDCM), which was initiated by 40 partner institutions from the public and third sector. Moreover, Mouraria was one of the neighbourhoods that was most targeted by Bip/Zip initiatives (Tulumello, 2016). The proliferation of microfinance instruments targeted at the non-profit organisations allowed the creation of a network of third sector bodies, which are still actively involved in the neighbourhood's rehabilitation process (Gomes, 2017).

6.3.2 The *Mercado de Fusão* and the Rebranding of Martim Moniz

Despite being the largest square on the outskirts of Mouraria, Martim Moniz square was first excluded from the municipal renovation effort that involved the neighbourhood. As a result, the square only experienced a significant renovation from 2012 with the *AiMouraria* initiative of the Lisbon City Council, which was created to *requalificar* (renovate and modernise) public spaces in the city, and culminated with the opening of the Fusion Market (*Mercado de Fusão*).



Figure 12_Martim Moniz square and Mercado de Fusão, 2015. Source: internet

The relatively easy adoption of the Mercado can be attributed to its continuity with management schemes that follow established municipal techniques, rather than taking an unconventional approach to managing public spaces. The first proposal received by the City Council was from NCS – *Número de Ciclos por Segundo*, an entertainment company, which has also worked on other projects around the capital, such as the *Faktory club*, *OutJazz Festival*, and the *Topo* bar on the sixth floor of the Martim Moniz Shopping Centre. The project already had

the backing of the deputy mayor for public spaces, but the approval would have to go through EPUL, which has been in control of the area since the 1980s, and which had already dealt with the construction of the square and the surrounding housing projects. To get enough political influence to persuade EPUL, NCS got in touch with the deputy mayor for International Relations, who is behind the organisation of *Todos*. In an attempt to capitalise on the event, they positioned the Mercado as a gourmet fair, emulating the hugely popular cooking classes that locals of many ethnic origins host. Once more, the “adaptability” of municipal methods is demonstrated by the way that cooking classes led by immigrant families in underprivileged neighbourhoods during an arts festival were transformed into kind of to privately run fusion-food booths. Persuaded, in 2011 EPUL held a global contest for the market that was largely based on the company’s proposal, in which NCS was the only competitor (Gomes, 2019). In May 2012, EPUL, Lisbon City Council, and NCS signed a contract. The offer of the Mercado de Fusão was conceived to fill a perceived deficiency in the city’s offerings by NCS: the lack of a location where both residents and tourists could take advantage of diverse entertainments. The market featured ten existing kiosks (from the 1997 renovation process at Praça do Martim Moniz), revitalised and improved, as well as different removable bars, and it partially privatised space with increased security via video monitoring (Gomes, 2020). This operation had received positive media coverage and, as a result, it had been described as an example of “returning this space to the city”. However, the local community lacked both the physical space and the purchasing power necessary to participate in the economy being created in the square. Even though the project aimed to portray a multicultural image, it does not represent the predominant type of commerce in the area or facilitate participation by local businesses (Rodrigues, 2014).

The lease for the Mercado further demonstrates the absence of a rupture with existing practices within the municipality: in return for a rent payment and, occasionally, installation obligation, the lease covers the concession for kiosks and terrasses as well as their maintenance, much like it does for other city kiosks. The difference between the Mercado and what happened in other areas is that the concession area effectively covered two thirds of the square, limiting, and privatising the space that has long served residents. While some activist blogs questioned the initiative in the context of Mouraria’s rehabilitation, no public discussion resulted from them, and there was no overt opposition to the Mercado’s implementation (Gomes, 2020).

Martim Moniz’s social life had been greatly impacted by the Mercado (Rodrigues, 2014). Although it was successful in drawing tourists and “White Portuguese” users, immigrant communities were still present in the square, especially in its southernmost and outer areas, which were not under NCS management. The partial privatisation of Martim Moniz Square, with

kiosks and terraces clustered in one area, allowed for some diversity in how the space was used, but it didn't completely displace the original community. However, the Market remained disconnected from the local residents, particularly immigrant communities. Festivities and events catering to the square's various national groups, like the end of Ramadan celebrations and the Chinese New Year, were still hosted by NCS, often with support from respective embassies. However, these initiatives often represented the same tokenistic² efforts that underlie the concession of kiosks to entrepreneurs in the first place, or the use of the multiculturalism of the area as an inspiration for the Market, rather than an actual integration of immigrant communities into the dynamics and logics of the management. It also reflects the challenges encountered in integrating immigrants into Mouraria's community development programs (Matos et al., 2014) and in the town's overall rehabilitation.

The Market's capacity to draw new customers and companies to the neighbourhood was correlated with lower opportunities for social interaction among the local dwellers (Gomes, 2020), despite its inability to create profit or prevent a high turnover rate among kiosk leaseholders. Overall, the efforts to rebrand Martim Moniz as a trendy destination and to draw tourists and visitors were, for a while, successful (Gomes, 2020; Pavoni, 2022; Tulumello & Ferro, 2013), pushing activities like prostitution and drug peddling to the square's periphery, while local organisations gradually adapted to the new dynamics. The "new" Martim Moniz became a mash-up of local and external influences, fostering a diversified urban environment in which many social practices and actors coexist. With the addition of buildings and ornamental features that recreated stereotypes and symbols of the cultural mix, which have always been characteristic of its urban fabric, the place thus underwent a process of "beautification" and "heritagisation". This was further reinforced by the placement of music stands, exhibitions, and permanent displays, all of which help to create the impression of a lively and friendly cultural setting.

The restructuring soon sparked renewed external interest in the square, leading to early "gentrifying" dynamics. These dynamics introduced new meanings, concepts, and images associated with the area, drawing on previously external social groups like tourists, Erasmus students, and newcomers (Gomes, 2020). Furthermore, the transformation brought in new guidelines for the management and control of public space. The establishment of bars and booths, as well as the installation of a camera system to watch over the shopping district, had

² *The practice of making only a "token" effort or doing no more than the minimum, e.g. in order to comply with a law*, Collins Dictionaries.

actually influenced the emergence of new socio-spatial practices that quickly displaced the “outdated, stigmatised” forms of space appropriation (Tulumello & Ferro, 2013).

The Mercado serves as an example of contemporary urban upscaling initiatives that target tourists and the urban middle class. The notion of public space is strongly associated with the “privatisation of uses” through consumption and relaxation, which refers to the city's efforts to implement the principles of convivial urbanism³. The Mercado was mostly the result of private negotiations between the municipality and the entrepreneurs, although going through the formal procedures of public tendering (Gomes, 2020). The lack of public involvement in the planning process, which is already limited in Lisbon, prevented any alternatives to its commercial focus (Gomes, 2016). The concession may also account for the lack of clear opposition to the project prior to its execution: there were some opponents of Mouraria’s overall rehabilitation which also included the Mercado (Guterres, 2012), and several scholars and commentators have since published critiques, yet the project was not contested at the time of its presentation. The Mercado represented a key part of Lisbon’s strategy to make the city, and specifically Mouraria’s neighbourhood, more attractive, and it is one of the first (and, so far, the only) examples in the city of privatising a previously public space (Gomes, 2020).

As seen, the square’s evolution and proposed reconstruction have not been completely without controversy, especially with regard to the potential risk of gentrification and exclusion of local residents. Especially gentrification, a common theme in urban redevelopment, has created concerns about rising property values, commercialisation and the potential relocation of long-term residents and businesses (Tulumello & Allegratti, 2021). Residents and local groups voiced their concern that ambitious like the Market initiatives may prioritise commercial or tourism-driven growth above the needs and traditions of the current community. The high prices at the kiosks and the need to buy and consume products in order to use the facilities demonstrate how public space is becoming more and more commercialised, with access to the area being dependent on one’s capacity to pay for it. The commercialisation of public spaces restricts their accessibility and inclusivity, especially for low-income citizens who might not be able to fully engage in the social life of their neighbourhood. According to Henri Lefebvre, the “right to the city” includes the ability to use and shape urban areas in ways that represent the needs and

³ Convivial urbanism is here intended as an ensemble of design and management practices explicitly promoting conviviality, i.e., the interaction among individuals and between individuals and the built environment (Banerjee, 2001; Shaftoe, 2008; Gomes, 2019)

preferences of all urban dwellers, especially those who are disadvantaged by economic forces. It also includes the right to access these spaces.

The representation and publicization of the “new square” in the city centre, the propensity to characterise it as a *cultural place*, and the uniqueness of its history, which has been described as “violent and marginal” but at the same time experienced by the locals (Tulumello & Ferro, 2013), have all contributed to the heterogeneity of urban dwellers’ perception of the square as a privileged location for their identity claims. As a result, the square became a place of contradictory perceptions. While it had been transformed into a showcase stage, the perfect setting for a multicultural marketplace, the demands of local groups and associations, focusing on concepts such as active citizenship, integration, and freedom of expression, have helped to create and disseminate new and distinct imaginaries of the place.

6.3.3 The New Plan for Martim Moniz

In 2018, after 6 years from the sign of the concession, the district government and residents alike began to voice their complaints about Martim Moniz Square’s state and use, as their dissatisfaction grew. Major concerns included the general degradation of the area as well as problems like soil and sound pollution, and lack of hygiene. The mayor voiced his displeasure in an interview, claiming that the square was in bad condition with inadequate management of public spaces, deteriorating sanitation, and serious safety problems, emphasising that “*the square had gotten so bad that it was seriously affecting the locals’ quality of life*” (O Corvo, 2018a). The mayor’s critical comments reflected the general discontent among the people living in Mouraria and the surrounding neighbourhoods, who often complained about the noise and “bad atmosphere” in the square, particularly in the night.

The deteriorating conditions of the Mercado eventually prompted the city council to consider a new redevelopment project for the square. The *Santa Maria Maior* parish council, which represents the historical centre of Lisbon, suggested to assume the management of Martim Moniz’s public space as a solution to these problems. Its main idea was to turn the square into a sizable playground for kids that would potentially occupy two thirds of the space. Nevertheless, despite its motivation and detailed planning, the Lisbon City Council rejected the proposal. The lack of support for this community-focused redevelopment idea highlighted the difficulties in addressing the various needs and interests related to Martim Moniz’s future. In September 2018, the French joint venture *Moonbrigade*, which included the previous concessioners NCS, presented the “*Martim Moniz Market*” project. The revised plan envisioned a physical barrier to

keep the area closed at night and a large increase in the number of new stands made of stacked containers, occupying more than half of the square, which were to include a variety of businesses, including hairdressers, specialised shops, international restaurants, and galleries. Moonbrigade's representatives also stressed the project's quality and consideration for the environment (O Corvo, 2019a). The joint venture rejected concerns that containers would take over the square, arguing that employing containers as flexible, modular structures rather than permanent concrete installations would preserve the square's distinct character. Moreover, in response to some of the public's concerns, the representatives stated that the new concession would include a children's playground and insisted that the market would continue to support local communities by hosting cultural events. The new joint venture inherited the concession from the previous group, which had a "*complex problem of debts owed to the municipality*" (Publico, 2018a). Rearranging the square's management and layout was thought to be a good method to both deal with these financial issues and raise the quality of the area. Prior to granting the licence, however, the Lisbon Municipal Assembly subjecting the redevelopment project to a public debate.



Figure 13_ Photomontage of what Martim Moniz Market would have looked like (Publico, 2018)

The Lisbon City Council and concessionaire Moonbrigade presented, in a two-hour meeting at the Hotel Mundial, the new commercial project for Martim Moniz Square to the public at the end of November 2018, but it was greeted with a resounding backlash. More than 120 people attended the discussion, and unanimously opposed the project. The proposal drew a lot of

criticism for being out of place in the square, raising worries that it that it would damage the multicultural atmosphere of Martim Moniz and worsen the noise pollution. Remarkably, also the councillor for urban planning and the president of the parish council both voiced their concerns regarding the container-based design. According to sources, there was a noticeable lack of satisfaction from the local community, as many attendees as many participants called for a green and quiet area rather than another commercial enterprise (Publico, 2018b). Some speakers echoed the need for “*empty spaces, green spaces, and silence*”, saying that creating a peaceful environment for locals should take priority over the expansion of Martim Moniz Square’s entertainment offerings.

Following the controversial public presentation of the new commercial project for Martim Moniz square, the *Fórum Cidadania Lx* movement launched a petition asking for the “Cancellation of the Concession of the Square and Proposal for Methodology and Public Tender” (“Petição Martim Moniz”, 2018). The petitioners, in their proposal to the Lisbon City Council, outlined a number of crucial requests: the launch of an international public tender for the square’s redesign, guaranteeing the presence of local citizens in the jury; the immediate cancellation of the current concession and an extensive revision of the square’s rehabilitation program; the start of a public consultation to determine the landscaping parameters, including the design of green areas, pedestrian pathways, and street furniture. The petition collected more than 800 signatures in a few days. In response to the criticism, Moonbrigade made a few minor changes to the original plan: the fence that was supposed to surround the market was removed, green spaces were expanded, and there were more benches and seats available for the public (Publico, 2018c). But the fundamental idea of a commercial zone built around containers still remained, as the developers argued that the design would infuse new life into the square while preserving its human scale. Even with these changes, there was still a lot of scepticism among both local leaders, including several party members, and residents (O Corvo, 2018b). Moreover, different local associations such as *Movimento Morar em Lisboa* (MEL), *Associação Renovar a Mouraria* (ARM) and *Colectivo Habita*, had begun to take part in the controversy, organising debates with experts, such as geographers, urban planners, anthropologists, and architects, and presenting their positions in public. In a statement, ARM asserted that it would not have taken any action in collaboration with commercial project developers, and it was ready to carry out “*joint actions with the community to put pressure on CML [Lisbon City Council] to review the project*” (Diario de Noticias, 2018).

6.3.4 The 2019 Protests: Chronology of Events

The controversy surrounding Martim Moniz Square persisted even after further adaptation of Moonbrigade's project to the popular will, namely the reduction of the market area to 28% of the square (previously 50%), the possibility of crossing even at night, and an increase in the green area and the square's furniture, i.e., chairs and benches. Despite opposition from nearly all political parties, such as the PSD, PCP, and CDS, the mayor persisted in asserting that only the infrastructure project, which included the underground pipes, had been approved and that "*the container project for that square has not yet been licensed*", in contrast to what the opposition had claimed. The mayor further stated that the city council would vote on the license for Martim Moniz square (Publico, 2019a). However, works on the square began in January 2019.

The first act of public protest was organised by the association *Renovar a Mouraria*, which contested not only the project itself, but also "*this whole [administrative] process, which is very opaque, full of contradictions and which seems to be a secret of the gods*" (Sapo, 2019a). The initiative gained a lot of online consents, as well as interest from various media platforms and journals. In a significant public demonstration, protesters formed a human chain around the square, demanding the immediate suspension of works in Praça Martim Moniz. Around 200 people gathered in the square to participate to the manifestation, according to the organisers. A banner reading "Lisbon is not for sale" and "We want a public garden" was displayed, expressing the protesters' desire for the square to remain a public, green space rather than being transformed into a commercial zone. The demonstration ended with participants banging on metal fences surrounding the construction site and displaying messages opposing the privatisation of Lisbon's public space (Sapo, 2019b).



Figure 14_ Human chain around Martim Moniz square. Source: Stop Despejos! collective. 02/02/2019

The event brought attention to the growing tension between community members and the city authorities regarding Martim Moniz's future. Following the public backlash, the mayor agreed to subject the final redevelopment project to a period of public discussion before being approved at a council meeting. However, work on underground infrastructure continued in the square during March, while the developers created an event to promote the market and invited the citizens to visit the construction site in an attempt to "demystify" the idea of containers, highlight the project's possible advantages, and to engage the community (Publico, 2019b). The appearance in the work area of one of the disputed containers was interpreted as a provocation, as work was halted precisely because the community felt that the project was not designed with "everyone" in mind (O Corvo, 2019b).

On March 14, during a citizens' meeting organised by *Grupo Gente Nova*, the *Jardim Martim Moniz* movement was founded. In their manifesto, they publicly urged the conversion of Praça Martim Moniz into a green public area, as opposed to its transformation in a privately owned commercial centre. The statement emphasised the shortage of high-quality green spaces as well as the necessity of addressing social well-being, public health, and the urgent need for accessible public spaces in this densely populated area. They also stressed the need of paying attention to the needs and wishes of the community and argue that Lisbon City Council should not assign commercial entities the task of making decisions about urban planning. They opposed long-term privatisation that would increase already-existing urban and noise pressures and demanded that the square be treated with the dignity it deserves ("Manifesto", 2019). With their presence online and on the street and the use of platforms to voice people's opinions, they managed to gather the interest of a considerable part of the citizenry, as well as the support of artists and experts.

Only few days later, the movement launched the petition *Por um Jardim no Martim Moniz* (For a Garden in Martim Moniz), addressed to the Lisbon Municipal Assembly (AML), and created a local network for gathering signatures, since it was available only on paper, to encourage involvement from any supporter of the cause. The promoters of the movement, consisting of people with no political party affiliations as well as some members of Renovar a Mouraria (ARM) and Grupo Gente Nova associations, pointed out the lack of reasonably sized gardens between Alameda and the riverside area. The petition asked the council to take "*the necessary steps to transform Praça Martim Moniz into a green area in the short term, where it is possible to relax and feel the city, play and sit comfortably, chat, read or have a snack, with shade and suitable furniture (...)*", and to call for "*a public tender, open to all bidders, and based on a participatory diagnosis with broad civic consultation*" ("Petição Por um Jardim",

2019). The petition gathered more than 150 signatures (the minimal number up for debate in the AML) in less than 48 hours, and around 1600 after a month after the launch.

In July 2019, after facing increasing political and civic opposition, and a corresponding media debate, the municipality finally approved the contract's termination and shortly after, the newly appointed deputy for urban planning announced his intention to initiate a participatory process for the square's regeneration plan.

6.4 Analysis of the Movement of Martim Moniz

“Social movements are defined as networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities”. According with this definition of Mario Diani (2011), at the end of 2018 there were already all the elements to assume the emergence of a social movement as part of the ongoing protests over the future of Martim Moniz Square:

- There was indeed a “network of interactions”, as evidenced by the several social groups, community organisations, and local citizens who came together to stand against the Martim Moniz Square redevelopment plan. These exchanges, as outlined in the previous section, were more than just a few isolated or sporadic events; they were part of a larger attempt to mobilise people and shape the political and cultural conversation about what would have happened to the square in the future, working through the rapid exchange of information (with debates, for examples), and a rapid response to external stimuli, as with the petition organised the day after the public presentation of the project. This non-hierarchical organisational structure recalls Castell's definition of the Network Society (Castells, 1996; 2000; 2010)
- A “plurality of individuals, groups and organisations” were involved in the situations, from dwellers to the civic society, NGOs, political actors, and economic stakeholders. This wide array of actors also voiced its opinions through a variety of channels, including public debates, petitions, and media appearances.
- The contention was both political and cultural. Politically, it wanted to influence the Lisbon City Council's decision-making process. Culturally, the movement aimed to preserve the distinctive social fabric of the neighbourhood by opposing the imposition of a commercialised urban space that could marginalise long-standing local traditions.

- A sense of “shared collective identity” emerged when locals and activists came together to support the preservation of the square as a public space representing the diverse nature of the neighbourhood. The process of creating a social identity, however, dates long before the contestation of the redevelopment plan, as it was built through the interaction of individuals and groups who used to attend the space. Nonetheless, the collective actions taken in mobilisation against a specific “enemy” resulted in the empirical manifestation of said shared identity. According to Snow (2015), social movement mobilisations also frequently result from, and are dependent upon, collective identities. Research on collective identities consistently finds that individuals who identify with a social movement cause or collective effort are more likely to participate in a variety of movements (Snow, 2015).

In the following analysis, two different frameworks will be adopted, in order to consider different aspects of the movement that arose to oppose the privatisation of Martim Moniz Square. In the first analysis, the template created by Manuel Castells in “The Urban Question” (1978) will be applied. In his work, the author provides a structured approach to analysing urban social movements by examining the contradictions within urban spaces, the processes of collective consumption, and the role of social mobilisation in influencing the urban and political environment. The second framework derives from the preliminary analysis of new types of social movements developed by academics João Seixas and José Carlos Mota. The analysis is based on a conceptual classification spectrum for understanding the characteristics and actions of urban movements on decisions at the political and administrative levels through the study of intersections, dialogues, and conflicts between the two entities (Seixas, Mota, 2021).

The comparison became necessary because of an obvious contradiction with the happenings of Martim Moniz and an excerpt one of Castells’ writings:

Cities no longer produce successful movements because, in today’s “globalised space of flows”, places no longer serve as a basis for social power. Local movements are inexorably undermined or outmanoeuvred by larger forces of development. Because this “new spatial process, the space of flows, is becoming the dominant (...) manifestation of power and function in our societies” (Castells, 1996: 378), and because such a process is also seen to erode the power of the nation-state, social movements that rely on their relationship to local places and to the state are much less likely to emerge or thrive (ibid: 376–428).

Although this passage is taken from an early work by the author (*The Rise of the Network Society*, 1996), and his framework is still a powerful tool for understanding the structural and systemic dimensions of urban social movements, due to its ability to link urban issues to broader capitalist dynamics and to emphasise the importance of collective consumption and social mobilisation, several scholars have questioned its complexity, its inability to clearly explain how the new global environment affects urban politics, and its limited focus on identity and local context (Mayer, 2006). Moreover, according to several authors, the context of urban social movements has evolved a great deal in recent decades, suggesting, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, the emergence of a new generation of social movements (Mayer, 2009; Seixas, Mota, 2021). Seixas and Mota's framework, although much simplified compared to Castells', is a good exercise for analysing specific characteristics of movements, such as motivations, resources, forms of organisation and networking, cultures and practices, and corresponding results.

6.4.1 Castell's framework (from *The Urban Question*, 1978)

The 2018-2019 protest in Martim Moniz square, Lisbon, against its partial privatisation, provides a rich context for applying Manuel Castells' theoretical framework from *The Urban Question* (1978). The following framework is elaborated from Chapter 14, *Research on Urban Social Movements* (pp. 324-378). This analysis will explore the socio-political dynamics, the contradictions between urban renewal projects and residents' needs, and the forms of social mobilisation that arose in response to the proposed changes.

a. Context and Background

Located in the historic centre of Lisbon, Martim Moniz square is a busy and animated area home to a diverse range of people, including immigrants, small business owners, members of the working class, elderly, and low-income residents. Moreover, since its creation it has been considered a "problematic" space, due to its reputation. In 2018, the Lisbon municipality commissioned a private company to renovate, and modernise, a city market in the square in place of the existing one. The newly presented redevelopment project is immediately met with public backlash, as local communities expressed serious concerns about the partial privatisation of the square for commercial development, due to the risk of gentrification, displacement, and loss of public space.

b. Urban Contradictions in Martim Moniz

- **Public vs. Private Interests.** The first contradiction encountered in the space is the presence of different interests: on the one hand, the municipality's efforts to redevelop

the square are through private investment. The administration then, which should safeguard the public interest of the citizenry, entrusts private partners with the task of managing the public space. Citizens instead focus on preserving Martim Moniz as a communal space, defending their right to collective consumption (use) of the square.

- **Social and Economic Disparities.** Economic disparities and social inequalities are evident both in the comparison between the basically working-class neighbourhood and a Lisbon that fits into the large European capitals. They are also visible in the disparity of use of the *Mercado de Fusão* by the population, for whom the prices of products were too high, and by the tourists who represented the target market.
- **Symbolic and Functional Changes.** The conversion of Martim Moniz from a multiracial, communal space to a commercial area could have signified a dramatic symbolic and practical change that could have affected the community's social and cultural fabric.

c. Claims of the Movement

- **Preservation of Public Space and Collective Consumption.** One of the primary claims of the movement was the rejection of the plan of transforming Martim Moniz Square into a commercial zone dominated by containers, in favour of a public garden. Residents and activists stressed the need for a calm, green area instead of a place with a lot of business activity where people could socialise, unwind, and enjoy nature. This demand was summed up in the slogan “We want a public garden”.
- **Preservation of Martim Moniz's Multicultural Character.** The movement feared that the distinctive multicultural character of the square would be damaged by the proposed redevelopment. The movement aimed to defend the historically vibrant and diverse character of Martim Moniz Square from homogeneous commercial interests and gentrification trends.
- **Transparency in Urban Planning.** The movement called for a new method of urban planning in Lisbon that would put the needs and welfare of locals ahead of private interests. Among other things, this involved the request for an international public tender to redesign the square, based on a participatory diagnosis involving widespread civic consultation.

d. Mobilisation

- **Forms of Mobilisation.**

- **Grassroots Activism:** protests, open forums, and campaigns were arranged by locals, community organisations, and activists to draw attention to the detrimental effects of privatisation. The group Renovar a Mouraria organised the first public demonstration, which involved creating a human chain around the square and calling for an immediate stop to the construction.
- **Petitions and Public Demonstrations:** To show public opposition to the municipality's plans, there were open demonstrations in Martim Moniz Square (the biggest was the human chain) and two different petitions were distributed to gather support against the privatisation. A new movement named *Jardim Martim Moniz* was established in 2019 in response to the appearance of a contentious container in the work area. The aim of the movement was to turn the square into a public garden and not a place of commerce. This movement created and supported the petition "*Por um Jardim no Martim Moniz*", which quickly gathered a considerable amount of support.
- **Collaborations between NGOs and Political Parties:** The movement broadened its support base by gathering the support of a number of local NGOs and political parties, which helped to publicise and promote the social cause. Even though the mayor's office initially pushed through with the project, the rising public pressure and media discussion finally caused the contract to be terminated in July 2019 due to the growing opposition.
- **Role of Social Media:** In line with Castells' emphasis on the networked society, social media platforms were widely used to distribute information, organise participants, and plan actions. The movement's reach was greatly enhanced by online participation, which also increased public support and attracted the attention of various media. Locals were able to voice their concerns and reach a wider audience by using social media platforms, which attracted national and international attention. This network mobilisation was essential to keep the momentum and visibility of the cause high.

e. Structural Power and Institutional Responses

- **Institutional Dynamics**
 - **Municipal Decisions:** in line with general neoliberal urban policies, the Lisbon municipality decided to privatise a portion of Martim Moniz in order to achieve its goals of economic development and urban renewal. Despite criticism from the public, and the rearrangement of the plan in an attempt to calm the protests, the project's first phase was carried out, with construction on the square starting in

January 2019. Persistent community opposition, however, brought attention to the need for democratic control of urban spaces and more open decision-making procedures.

- **Community Resistance:** in response to the determination of the municipality and the private partner to go ahead with the renovation plan, the community mobilised around the need for democratic control over urban spaces and more open decision-making practices. The movement's efforts resulted in a mayor-mandated public discussion period, during which the square's infrastructure was still in construction. Ultimately, the municipality was forced to abandon the plan and start a public process.
- **Negotiations and Outcomes:**
 - **Policy Revisions:** despite negotiations with the municipality, the protest movement, supported by a number of political parties such as PSD, PCP, and CDS, persisted in applying pressure. This led to changes in the privatisation plans that took the needs of the community and more public input into account. Nevertheless, the movement refused to step back, and in July 2019 the municipality finally terminated the contract. The newly appointed deputy mayor then announced plans to start a participatory process for the square's regeneration.
 - **Outcomes:** the movement achieved an important victory when the city council agreed to cancel the deal with the private developer and declared that it would start a public process to renew Martim Moniz Square. However, the broader struggle against the forces of gentrification and commercialisation in Lisbon remains ongoing.

f. Implications

- **Policy Implications.** The demonstration highlighted the necessity of increased community participation in urban planning processes, and the promotion of policies that put the needs of locals ahead of those of businesses. It also stressed the need for greater accountability and transparency in municipal decision-making. The fact that the movement was able to postpone the project and start a dialogue underscores how crucial democratic governance is to the growth of urban areas.
- **Social Implications.** The protest promoted a sense of empowerment and solidarity among local residents, strengthening community bonds and improving civic engagement. The success of the Jardim Martim Moniz petition campaign demonstrates the strength of the community as a whole. Finally, by bringing gentrification and urban

privatisation into the public eye, the movement helped to advance the conversation about urban justice and equity.

After stating the characteristics of the analysis, it is possible to apply them to the following schemes, elaborated by Castells in *The Urban Question*. The first scheme refers to the “urban effect”, while the second to the “political effect”. “Urban effect” refers to the social outcomes and changes generated by the processes and spatial organisation of cities. It describes how social interactions, group behaviours, and the allocation of resources among various social groups are shaped by urban environments, policies, and structures. The term “political effect”, instead, describes how urban social structures and struggles influence more general political institutions and processes. It indicates how urban conflicts and demands become political issues, impact the formulation of public policy, and aid in the reorganisation of societal power structures. The two schemes are interconnected since the political effect effectively depends on the urban effect, because movements revolve around the specific challenges of urban life. These movements’ ability to influence political outcomes depends on how effectively they handle urban issues. Within the framework, a “claim” refers to the particular demands made by urban social movements in response to perceived injustices or failings in the urban environment. Claims are essential to the dynamics of urban social movements because they provide the purposes that the movements aim to accomplish and provide justification for taking collective action.

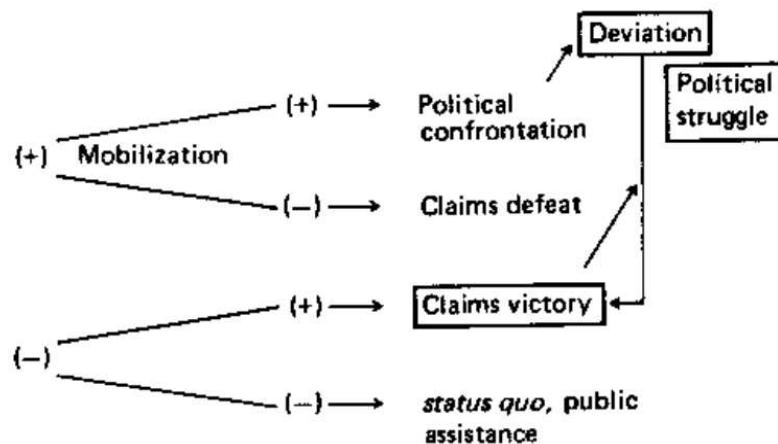


Figure 15_Mechanism of interrelation between urban effect, social issue and level of mobilization.
Castells, *The Urban Question* (1978: 347)

The positive mobilisation in Martim Moniz led to a political confrontation, and to deviation from the initial project (Martim Moniz Market). Therefore, this led to the claims' victory, exposing the success of the social movement in influencing the urban effect.



Figure 16_ Mechanism of interrelation between political effect, urban effect, level of mobilisation and type of organisation.
Castells, *The Urban Question* (1978: 347)

The “winning” of the movement’s claim due to the success of the mobilisation, which resulted in a political confrontation, led to its direct engagement in the political discourse, influencing positively the outcome of the political struggle.

Even if the movement that revolved around Martim Moniz was geographically localised and, at first sight, as closely linked to major shifts in society, its importance lies in the capacity to create a shift of powers between social classes in that specific circumstance. Its further ability to affect social change will depend on whether they seek to link urban struggles, such as the matter of collective consumption of urban space, to more general social issues.

6.4.2 Seixas & Mota Framework

The framework proposed by Seixas and Mota has been presented at the 14th conference of the International Forum on Urbanism (IFoU), in November 2021. The contemporary social movements, as analysed by the authors, emerged in response to global economic changes, the erosion of state regulation, and crises like the 2008 financial collapse. They are characterised by

a focus on the city and its issues as their central object of concern, a change in attention from purely corporate or ideological goals to more practical, city-focused action, a more robust scientific and technical approach to collective action and, as noted also by Castells (2015), an increased use of technology and connectivity to organise and mobilise. Their motivations range from collective well-being, social and environmental consciousness, and a desire to change local public associations. They frequently seek the support of a critical mass of the public, as well as competent professionals, especially in densely populated areas. These trends are also shared by movements that have emerged in Portugal, where urban governance is facing increasing tensions and difficulties as a result of factors such as the centralised governance and a history of socioeconomic crises, especially in areas like public space management and housing.

The authors present a framework for categorising urban social movements into four primary groups according to their goals, structures, and actions:

1. Protest Movements

Protest-type movements usually adopt a hands-on approach to urban issues, whether there are situations of urban inequality or the desire to change the city. They organise themselves to influence the decision-making process through petitions, media-impacting interventions, and, occasionally, legal actions. They search for immediate results, and they mostly exhaust their action with the end of the cause. The relationship with political power is complex and frequently a source of contention (Mota & Santinha, 2016).

2. Reflection Movements

These urban social movements that are primarily focused on a reflection culture are driven by knowledge, identifying, and developing ideas about the future of the city, and organising forums and debates in order to produce opinions before taking positions. They are less prone to quick action and demonstrations, and therefore they attract less attention from the media. However, they seem to have a greater capacity to reconcile opposing viewpoints, though primarily in modest, “controlled” ways (Mota, 2014).

3. Tactical Action Movements

The transformation of cities and public spaces via guerrilla urbanism or tactical urbanism actions is the main driving force behind tactical action movements. They try to achieve change through targeted, affordable, and visible impact initiatives, ideally through participatory processes (Lydon et al., 2015).

4. Civic-Political Innovation Movements

The civic-political innovation movements arise, or evolve in response to the raising of civic, administrative, and political responsibilities, are encouraged by an increasingly demanding society, or by a public administration that require or suggests co-governance actions and/or programs. Their undisclosed goal is to create new models of citizen action and cooperation within public policies, encouraging the design and prototyping of innovative and experimental governance solutions.

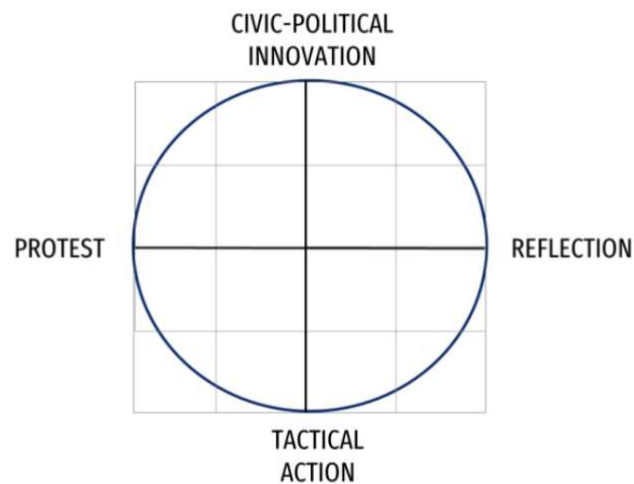


Figure 17_ Diagram for typology spectrum for urban social movements. Seixas & Mota, 2021

The diagram is built in a way that considers the spectrum of actions and characteristics that a movement can show. In the specific case of Martim Moniz, the initial phase of the movement has been defined by protests and manifestations, petitions, and the pursuit of media attention. They also aimed for quick results, especially in stopping the construction site. However, despite the participation of citizens in the actions organised by the movement, it cannot be considered truly tactical urbanism as it lacks the creative component in the modification and reappropriation of the urban environment, which is one of the fundamental aspects of Tactical Action Movements. The second main feature of Martim Moniz's movement is the focus on sharing knowledge about the square, and developing ideas about its future use, precisely by organising forums and debates to produce opinions, involving urban planners, architects, and local communities. It is also possible to see some measure of civic-political innovation in the various debates and elaborations of alternative proposals to the market. The final diagram of the spectrum for Martim Moniz movement, elaborated based on the previous considerations, is the following:

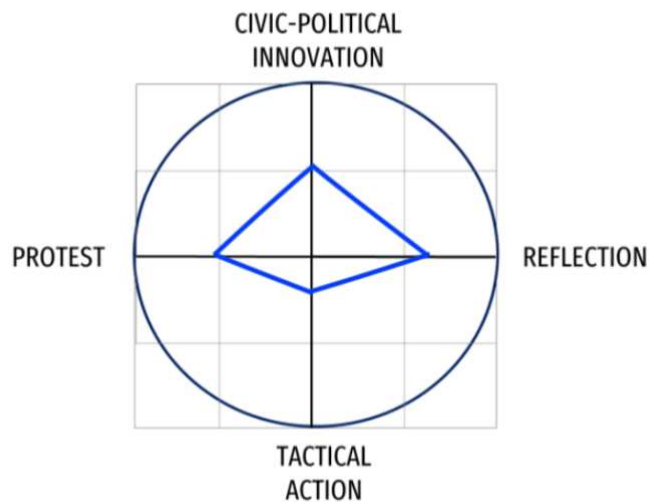


Figure 18_Diagram for Martim Moniz movement. Seixas & Mota, 2021

As can be seen, the authors' framework of analysis, unlike Castells', does not allow for a study of the outcomes of the movement, but it does provide an interesting picture of the structure and methods it used.

6.5 Analysis of the Participatory Process

As stated at the end of chapter 6.3, in July 2019, as soon as it realised the growing social pressure and the loss of credibility with the public and the media, the municipal council declared that the Martim Moniz Market project would be terminated. Shortly after, the newly appointed deputy for urban planning announced the intention to start a participatory process for the regeneration of Martim Moniz square.

The initial goal of this participatory process was to create in-person interactions with citizens by using a range of participatory and deliberative settings (Falanga, 2023b). But at the beginning of 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic's outbreak imposed limitations that posed several challenges to the process itself, and ultimately prompted the creation of digital solutions. Regenerative initiatives worldwide faced challenges in engaging communities due to health measures like lockdowns and social distancing. Moreover, the pandemic exacerbated job insecurity and contagion risks, especially for the residents of Mouraria's neighbourhood, due to overcrowded and inadequate housing conditions. Evidence shows that only a few initiatives have succeeded in overcoming these limitations in recent years, particularly with regard to citizen participation initiatives at the local level (Falanga, 2020). The methodology for the participatory process

concerning Martim Moniz was approved at a council session in November 2019, but especially given the complications due to the pandemic, the process officially started in December 2020.

6.5.1 The Participatory Process



Figure 19_Graphic of the call for participation, launched by Lisbon's municipality in 2020

The process was created to guarantee that a variety of groups, such as kids, senior citizens, immigrants, store owners, and other historically marginalised communities, would take part. The process effectively involved 1,156 citizens, representing a wide range of age groups, nationalities, and socioeconomic backgrounds, through a combination of online and in-person methods. The participatory process used a variety of techniques to gather the community's opinion, and the data comprised both quantitative and qualitative methods. The mixed approach included:

- A public exhibition was held both online and at the square. It was prepared by both the cultural heritage department and the urban planning department. It displayed the key historical facts related to the square and its current characteristics, as well as current issues related to heating waves in the square and technical implications from the existing underground car park.
- A public consultation, through survey, held from 14th of December 2020 to 15th of January 2021. The survey collected information from just above 1000 people. The questionnaire

was made available on the *Lisboa Participa* website, the municipality's portal of participatory processes, and in-person at Martim Moniz Square. Opportunities for in-person interactions were established in order to connect with residents and employees of the square, as well as nearby organisations that assist the most disadvantaged populations in social work.

- Eleven online focus groups (60-minute discussion sessions) were conducted between January and February 2021, with the goal of obtaining feedback from citizens who typically do not participate in these initiatives (e.g., the international community, the elderly, and young people), to ensure the inclusion of various socio-demographic groups. Seven of these involved local organisations, allowing for the participation of a range of underrepresented groups. Sentences and concepts were mapped out according to themes, and the frequency of each (the total number of times the expression or concept was mentioned) was noted.
- A working session was organised with *Jardim Martim Moniz* movement, to hear from citizens related to the petition delivered to the Municipal Assembly.
- The community's kindergartens and elementary schools were given the challenge by the Junta de Freguesia de Santa Maria Maior to let the kids freely sketch what they envisioned for the square's future.

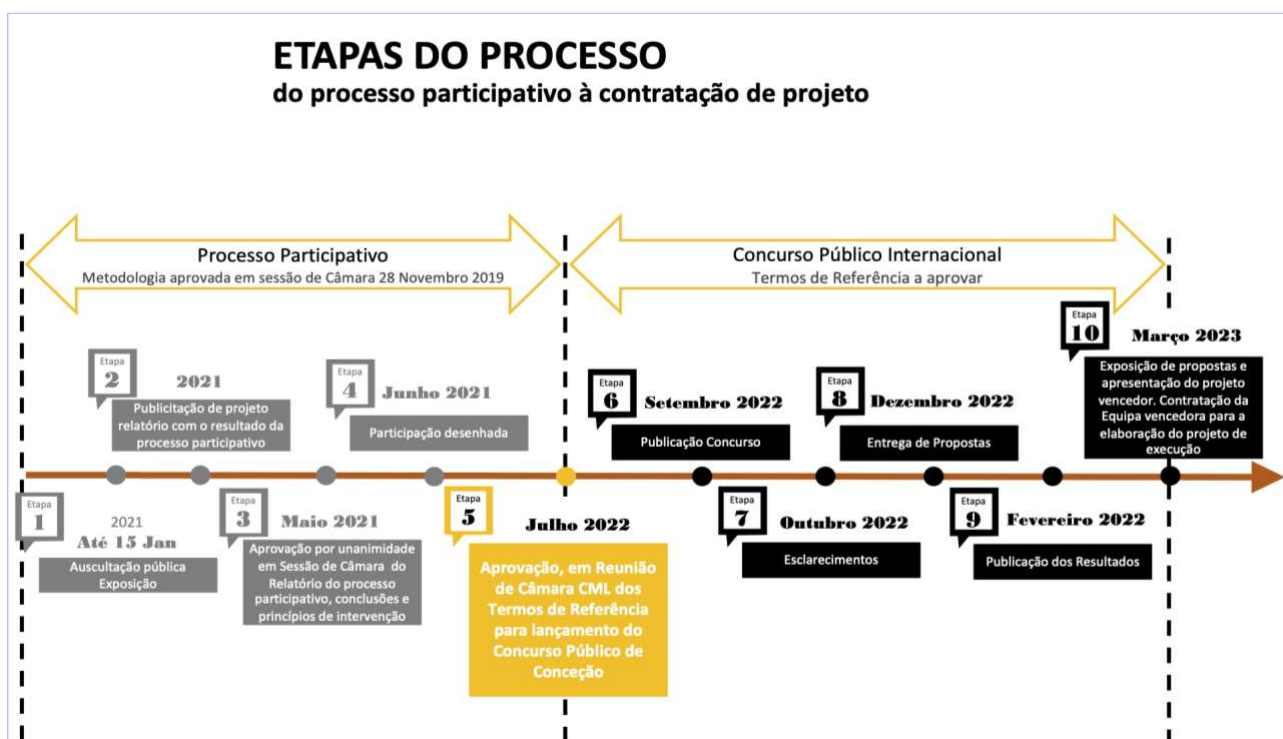


Figure 20_Steps of the public contest held by the municipality for the elaboration of the requalification project

In total, 1156 citizens of various ages, backgrounds, and nationalities participated in the study (1009 in the survey + 74 in focus groups + 73 children with drawings). The survey included representatives from every parish in the city. A diverse group of people participated in the first stage of the participatory process, with 29% coming from migrant communities. The information gathered made it possible to better understand the square's main social and spatial problems. The participatory process revealed that few people chose to spend time in MMS, primarily because it was seen as an unwelcoming “cross-road” in the city. However, participants gave positive ratings to certain aspects, like dining out and shopping in the square. The main requests were to improve air quality, increase green space and cleanliness. It emerged that the multicultural atmosphere of this space was just as valuable as its more technical aspects, such as the preservation of the underground car park. The creation of a garden was one of the proposals most shared by citizens for the revitalisation of the MMS. Other suggestions included more public spaces, opportunities for cultural and multiracial interaction, transportation options, and improvements to cleanliness and safety.

The analysis revealed five categories that group together the most frequent themes: 1) Green redevelopment; 2) Public facilities; 3) Culture and Multiculturality; 4) Mobility; 5) Improvements in living conditions (Lisboaparticipa, n.d.). This result backed the claims of the movement for the green area.

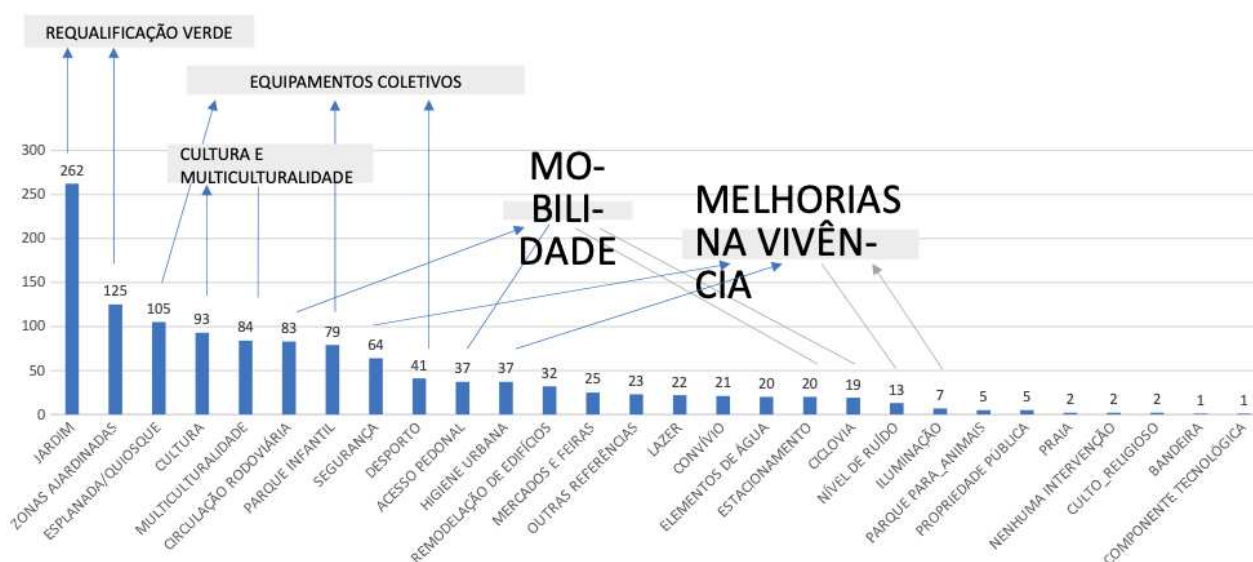


Figure 21_Analysis of the absolute frequencies of the ideas for the requalification of the square. From Lisboaparticipa

After the collection and analysis of the results, the municipality moved to the creation and publication of the international contest, in September 2022.

6.5.2 Challenges and Limitations of the Participatory Process

According to the respondents' demographic profile, about 80% of the surveyed were aged between 18 and 50, and had advanced degrees (a bachelor's or master's degree), while only roughly 11% had lower education. While Portuguese made up 89% of the respondents, 11% were citizens of 21 other countries. Young people (under 17 years old) accounted for less than 1%. The three top priorities identified by the respondents, calculated through a trade-off between perceived importance and satisfaction, resulted to be tree planting, noise reduction, and improved cleanliness.



Figure 22_ Trade-off between perceived importance and satisfaction. Source: Lisboaaparticipa (2021)

The need for a green space in Martim Moniz, demanded for years by residents and the Santa Maria Maior parish council, was thus legitimised by the results of the participatory process. However, the composition of the demographic profile of the respondents compared to that of the inhabitants of the Mouraria district raises doubts as to its actual representativeness. Unfortunately, this problem is inherent in the nature of participatory processes. A study by Huang et al. (2021) analyses which factors influence the involvement of citizens in participation processes. It emphasises perceived behavioural control as an important factor, influencing both intention and behaviour itself. This means that citizens who have the necessary resources and conditions like skills, time, and equipment, show a greater intention to participate. The results indicate that, to increase citizen participation, local governments should create suitable conditions, such as reducing the complexity and duration of participation processes (Huang et al., 2021). The Lisbon City Council made it a priority to be inclusive to ensure that the views of the local population were fairly represented, adapting several criteria for the selection of

participants: participation was open to all Lisbon residents, including those who were working, studying, or simply visiting the city; at the neighbourhood level, a major focus was given on integrating marginalised and immigrant communities. However, despite the effort on the part of both the municipality and the movement, it is unclear what the actual weight of these communities has been in the participatory process.

6.5.3 Analysis of the Involvement of Stakeholders

The program proved to be innovative in more than one aspect. First of all, during the first wave of the COVID19 pandemic, this was the only city-level participatory process carried out in Lisbon, in contrast to the general blockade of citizen participation processes at the local level, obviously not including community-based initiatives supported by the Bip/Zip programme, and the numerous unofficial local initiatives focused on the provision of goods and services at the neighbourhood level. Second, it was one of the very few participatory processes in Europe focused on urban transformation during the first wave of the pandemic. Third, this was Lisbon's first nearly entirely online participatory process, which represents a major advancement for online citizen participation modes of interaction (Falanga, 2023a). The Municipality of Lisbon even submitted the "Participatory Process for the Martim Moniz Square" proposal for consideration for the 2021 International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD) Award for "Best Practice in Citizen Participation", which rewards public policies implemented by local and regional governments.

Although its elements of innovation, like the adaptability to a situation that forced the interruption of most of the in-person activities, and the inclusive nature of deliberative and participatory environments in urban renewal, the level of interconnection between the municipality and the community was not particularly high. The following Matrix, which traces the one developed by Nick Wates in "The Community Planning Handbook", illustrates the appropriate levels of participation at different stages of a project (Wates, 2000: 10). The optimal level of participation is represented in green, while the actual involvement of the community in the case study is represented by the yellow shade. The reason for the "lower than optimal" involvement lies in the centralised approach of the municipality. In fact, as already analysed, the participatory process was only initiated due to community pressure, as the municipality tried to the last to pursue the market project with Moonbrigade partners, certainly also because of the expense of terminating the contract. A second explanation is that the city council preferred one-on-one communication over group and movement mediation. Consequently, the Jardim Martim

Moniz movement, a major player in the events and responsible for the petition, was included as a stakeholder in the public debate but was not officially included in the development and execution of the participatory process.

		Project stages			
		Initiate	Plan	Implement	Maintain
Level of community involvement	Self Help Community control	Community initiates action alone	Community plans alone	Community implements alone	Community maintains alone
	Partnership Shared working and decision-making	Authorities & community jointly initiate action	Authorities & community jointly plan and design	Authorities & community jointly implement	Authorities & community jointly maintain
	Consultation Authorities ask community for opinions	Authorities initiate action after consulting community	Authorities plan after consulting community	Authorities implement with community consultation	Authorities maintain with community consultation
	Information One way flow of information Public relations	Authorities initiate action	Authorities plan and design alone	Authorities implement alone	Authorities maintain alone

Figure 23_Participation matrix for Participatory Process for the Martim Moniz Square, from “The Community Planning Handbook”, personal elaboration

The Jardim Martim Moniz movement did not engage in protests and demonstrations against the city council or the participatory process itself. The city council used its expertise in designing and implementing participatory processes to its advantage, and the movement supported the initiative by disseminating news to its followers and activists on social media, thus helping the process. Public pressure forced the city council to initiate a participatory process, but it was the movement's conciliatory approach that persuaded the public and the municipality to accept the validity of the organisation's claims. They used environmental justice principles to move toward conciliatory goals with the city council and openly requested a participatory process, an issue on which most residents agreed. Then, as soon as the city council recognised the possibility of giving citizens a voice, they successfully influenced public opinion on the possible benefits of a garden there. These elements account for the success of the green space idea in the participatory process, as the movement was able to establish credibility among the public and the city council, which helped it to build a collective claim (Falanga, 2023a). Ultimately, the conciliatory

approach was fruitful not only in getting the city council to start a participatory process, but also in persuading the public of the validity of its claim.

6.6 Urban Governance, Cultural Complexity, and the Green Future: A Qualitative Research

The fieldwork conducted in Martim Moniz in the September-December 2023 aimed at highlighting the relationship between urban governance, cultural diversity, and the ongoing transformation of public spaces within Lisbon. The research explored participatory urban governance, the historical and current situation of Martim Moniz Square, the extent of local participation in planning processes, and the relationship between the needs of the local population and the proposed transformation of the square into a green space, in order to gain a bottom-up understanding of local perspectives. The research team conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews with 12 participants over two days (November 24 and December 1, 2023) within the Martim Moniz Square study area, with a particular emphasis on the open-ended component of these interviews. The approach involved formulating a series of questions to elicit diverse opinions about the area, the project implementation in terms of participatory processes, and the proposed creation of a green space in Martim Moniz Square. Sample questions included inquiries about participants' proximity to the area, awareness of recent changes, and preferences for the proposed green space. The research questionnaire will be annexed.

From the data collected, 84.6% of the respondents were living or working in close proximity to the square, and 61,5% were Portuguese. Other nationalities included Pakistan, India, Ivory Coast and Nepal.

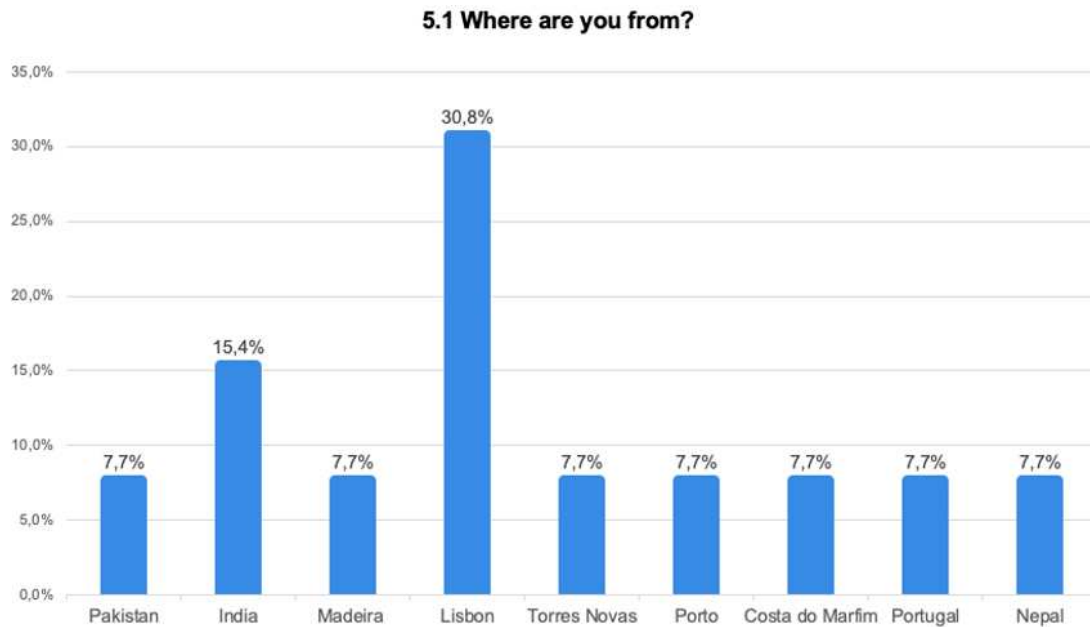


Figure 24_ Nationality of the respondents

Despite the majority of respondents being Portuguese citizens, over half of them (53.8%) were unaware of the recent discussions and changes proposed for the square. This indicated that the local community was not very involved in or aware of the participatory processes involved in the square's requalification. This mismatch between community awareness and local government initiatives might highlight a larger problem with urban governance: the difficulties in effectively involving and communicating with a population that is culturally diverse in decision-making processes. Furthermore, the study shows that even though all the respondents supported the idea of turning Martim Moniz Square into a green area, most of them actually desired to be included into the planning process (73.9%). Nevertheless, according to two Portuguese respondents, a discernible lack of confidence in the local governance structures reduces the desire for participation. This mistrust draws attention to a major obstacle to successful participatory urban governance, in which the community's confidence in the authorities in charge of these processes is just as important as their willingness to participate in public initiatives. The study also showed that the cultural complexity of the area, as it was mentioned as the main barrier for a more involved participation (33%). Some locals expressed concerns about the integration of various cultural groups, emphasising potential conflicts and communication barriers, while others saw the area's multiculturalism as a strength. These concerns were further exacerbated by worries that not all community members, especially those with immigrant backgrounds, would have their needs sufficiently met by the requalification. This points out how important it is to have urban planning that actively seeks to include a variety of voices in the development process while also being mindful of the existing cultural fabric.

Examining the opinions regarding the proposed green space made it clear that if the participatory process is not integrated, the renovation may not be able to fulfil the needs of the community as a whole. While the idea of a green space was attractive to all the respondents, it seems that during the planning stages, the particular concerns and preferences of various cultural groups were not sufficiently considered. This discrepancy serves as an example of the potential negative aspects of top-down approaches to urban governance, where well-meaning initiatives risk failing to consider the complex realities of a multicultural community.

In conclusion, this assessment of Martim Moniz Square highlights the significance of adopting a more transparent and inclusive approach to urban governance, especially in areas with a diverse population. The results, despite the small sampling and the potential lack of diversity and representativity, indicate that the requalification of the square can potentially escalate already-existing tensions and losing the chance to create a space that genuinely reflects the needs and aspirations of all of its users if sincere attempts are not made to engage and foster trust within the community. Urban planners and local government officials are responsible for ensuring that the green future envisioned for Martim Moniz Square is shared by all, bridging the gap between well-intentioned initiatives and the lived experiences of citizens.

6.7 Implications for Future Urban Development: A Garden for Martim Moniz

At the end of 2023, after three years since the start of the participatory process, the municipality announced the winners of the international competition for the square redevelopment project which has been launched in November 2022 (Publico, 2023). A “garden of the world”, as described in the project and applauded by the public, is going to be developed, complemented by a reorganisation of road traffic (*1º lugar no Concurso*, n.d.). The project created by landscape architects Filipa Cardoso de Menezes and Catarina Assis Pacheco aims to “*create an open, barrier-free garden that encourages encounters between all citizens, connects coherently with its surroundings, encourages the movement of pedestrians, contributes to a less noisy and healthier environment, and adapts to the challenges of climate change*” (Lisboa Para Pessoas, 2023). The concept aims to create continuity with the city's ecological network, enhancing ecosystem services, promoting biodiversity, and articulating green areas, built environments and coexistence spaces. Environmental benefits include improved air quality, surface temperature control and noise mitigation. The proposal also seeks to improve accessibility, connectivity and community through complementary uses and activities



Figure 25_Projecto da nova Praça do Martim Moniz, F/C Arquitectura Paisagista

However, there are some doubts about the actual effectiveness of the process in creating the terms for the contest. First, given the involvement of the community only at the initial stage of the project, it is unclear how influential the results of the participatory process were in the creation of the contest entries. Second, as also argued by the “Jardim Martim Moniz” movement in a statement dated Feb. 5, 2024, *“the traditional format of the competition did not allow the teams to develop a truly participatory, interactive and co-constructed project with those who will benefit from it”* (Comunicado do Movimento, 2024). Moreover, there are still questions about whether public green spaces are the best way to address the call to right to the city that social and political actors have asserted (Falasca, 2023a). Green spaces have advantages, but they can also encourage more investment in the nearby real estate and tourism industries, accelerating newly emerging gentrification processes linked to urban development processes. Such risks, which were hardly discussed, raise concerns about possible harm to the local population (García-Lamarca et al., 2022).

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

The research carried out in this thesis aims to closely examine how urban public spaces change and adapt to contemporary challenges, especially with regard to the possible conflict between urban governance and the will of citizens. For this purpose, a case study was chosen that, in its own small way, presents all the elements for an in-depth analysis of spatial dynamics. The case study focused on the events that took place in Martim Moniz Square, a square located in the historic centre of Lisbon, from 2018 to 2022. Indeed, since its recent creation in the mid-1900s, the square has been characterised by a universe of representations that have conditioned, and been conditioned in turn, the use of the square. This has made it a unique space, where a multitude of actors and social practices converge and clash, constantly fighting for the appropriation of space. The main objective of the research was to analyse the perspective of the local community, and its degree of involvement, in the process of redesigning the Martim Moniz square into a green space. Socially and ecologically just spatial planning is receiving increasing attention in the literature, not least due to climate-related processes and the forced displacement of poorer social classes from urban areas.

This thesis is situated within the broader theoretical discourse on urban public spaces, drawing on the key concepts of David Harvey's "Right to the City", Henri Lefebvre's "Production of Space" and Manuel Castells' "Network Society". These theories still provide the necessary tools for understanding the power dynamics at play in the creation and use of urban environments, as well as the motivations behind the emergence of social movements. Public spaces, in particular, play an important role in social interaction, power struggles and cultural production, as highlighted in previous chapters. This research aimed to demonstrate how these theories continue to be relevant for the understanding of urban dynamics such as gentrification, social exclusion, and cultural appropriation, linking them precisely to the events related to the Martim Moniz square.

The key issues were participatory processes and urban activism. The study analysed how community involvement has influenced urban planning developments, particularly in contexts where different cultural groups coexist, and where the urban environment is rapidly changing due to neo-liberal economic drives. The research conducted on the Martim Moniz Square redevelopment plan in Lisbon provided critical insights into the complex interplay between urban activism, social movements, and participatory urban governance. The research was guided by two primary questions: (i) how social movements and urban activism influence the creation

and development of urban public spaces, particularly in contexts of socio-political tension and cultural diversity; and (ii) whether, and to what extent, participatory projects initiated by city administrations can effectively incorporate diverse community perspectives in decision-making, especially in the context of urban regeneration initiatives.

About the first research question, the results of this study reveal that social movements and urban activism have played a key role in influencing and shaping the urban space development process. Through protests, community-led initiatives, and advocacy, these movements have succeeded in drawing attention to the needs and concerns of marginalised groups that are often overlooked in top-down urban development processes. Martim Moniz's historical and ongoing activism has not only influenced the redevelopment policies of the area, but has also played an important role in preserving the cultural and social fabric of Mouraria's neighbourhood through organised and inclusive community action, highlighting the power of collective action in the urban sphere. This echoes Castells' proposition that "*without social movements, no challenge will emerge from civil society capable of shaking the institutions of the state through which norms are enforced, values preached, and property preserved*" (Castells, 1983: 294).

Concerning the second research question, the study found that, although according to the sources reported there was indeed a willingness on behalf of the public administration to implement an inclusive participatory process in the revitalisation of Martim Moniz Square, its effectiveness in democratising the decision-making process was limited. Indeed, despite the municipality's efforts to involve the local community through various public consultation tools, such as questionnaires and focus groups, according to various sources these initiatives failed to fully integrate the different perspectives and needs of all community members. In this case, participatory governance appeared to serve more as a tool to re-legitimise the municipality after the protests, rather than as a means to truly empower local residents. The field research, despite the reported limitations, also indicated that cultural and social diversity within the community posed a significant challenge to the creation of a truly inclusive participatory process, and may have been at least one of the causes of the exclusion of some groups from the process itself. The disconnection between the theory of participatory processes, as well as the willingness shown by governance in using them, and the actual implementation of them, underlines how difficult it is to manage an urban environment, especially in such culturally diverse settings.

The research aims to offer an alternative perspective on the importance of cultural context in relation to the currently available body of literature on urban public spaces and participatory governance. The case study of Martim Moniz shows that although a significant portion of the

currently published literature focuses on the general principles of participatory planning and their implementation, the effectiveness of such initiatives may depend more on their ability to address the unique needs and concerns of the community. This is in line with recent studies that have called for more flexible and context-sensitive approaches to urban governance, especially in cities undergoing rapid social and demographic change (Olszak et al., 2008; Hazenberg, Mulieri 2013)

The research also shows the critical influence of external factors, such as political and economic pressures, on events in Martim Moniz and especially on administrative decisions. Tourism and property interests, which continue to determine the priorities and outcomes of redevelopment projects, can undermine the democratic potential of participatory planning, prioritising market-driven agendas over community needs, in accordance with criticisms of neoliberal urban policies by scholars such as Harvey (2008). Therefore, the case of Martim Moniz is also relevant with regard to the risk of appropriation of large urban projects by economic forces, which can have negative effects on the city's inhabitants. However, the case study shows that civil society, when organised, has substantial weight in determining the outcome of urban policies.

The thesis places great emphasis on the cultural complexity of Martim Moniz square, as an urban public space, as a factor that complicates and enriches the processes of space creation. The population of the Mouraria neighbourhood is heterogeneous, with a mix of immigrants from different cultural backgrounds and with different expectations regarding the use of public spaces. This diversity poses unique challenges and opportunities for governance focused on the development of inclusive public spaces. The study emphasises the need for strategies that actively include these communities in the decision-making process. The findings are also supported by recent academic recommendations for adopting a more integrated approach to urban planning that takes into account the different identities and experiences of urban dwellers (Sandercock, 2003).

In summary, this research concludes that although participatory governance is a valuable tool to democratise urban development, its success depends on the inclusiveness and cultural sensitivity of the actors involved. The case of Martim Moniz Square exemplifies the potential of participatory planning when these elements are properly addressed.

Recommendations for Future Research

In light of the results of this thesis, there are several points that deserve further investigation. First, the specific barriers to the participation of marginalised communities in urban planning processes is a topic that deserves further investigation, given the difficulties encountered by the Lisbon municipality. To analyse common problems and potential solutions, a suggested option is to widen the enquiry to include more case studies. Moreover, the social and cultural effects of neoliberal urban policies on participatory governance is also an area that requires further investigation, especially in the context of urban regeneration initiatives. A future study could once again include comparative studies on different cities to assess how economic pressures influence the outcomes of participatory planning initiatives.

Another promising direction for future research is the development of more culturally sensitive participatory frameworks. This could involve interdisciplinary approaches that draw on knowledge from cultural studies, anthropology, and sociology to better understand the needs and perspectives of different urban communities. Such research could also explore the potential of new technologies and digital platforms to enhance community participation in urban planning, particularly among younger and more digitally connected population.

Finally, further investigation could address the long-term impacts of participatory governance on urban public spaces, particularly in terms of social cohesion and cultural integration. This could be achieved through longitudinal studies that follow the evolution over time of public spaces such as Martim Moniz, for example, to assess how participatory processes have affected and influence the social and cultural dynamics of the area. Such research would provide valuable insights for urban planners and policymakers seeking to create more inclusive and resilient cities in the face of ongoing social and demographic change. The universe of representations that has been built around Martim Moniz can be seen as a work in progress, in which many actors and social practices meet, collide and dialogue to create a place that is “*good to think about, good to practice*” in the heart of Lisbon (Tulumello & Ferro, 2013).

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Annex: Questionnaire Structure and Objectives

Question	Objective
1. First, are you currently living or working close to Martim Moniz Square? yes: continue interview no: not continue interview	Filter question: to know if the interviewees are using the space, to make sure that they are not visitors/tourists Relevant for our interview
2. Have you heard about the changes and recent discussions about the Martim Moniz Square? no: go to question 3 yes: 2.1 What do you know about the debate? 2.2 Do you feel that your interests are represented in the discussion? 2.3 Have you heard about the plan to redesign Martim Moniz Square into a green space?	Assessing if the respondents are aware of the ongoing debate of redesigning the square Giving a short context and show picture of the green place being planned and going directly to question 3 Gathering information on the respondent's knowledge Identifying their level of engagement and representation in the debate regarding to their own perspectives, interests, and concerns Determining if the interviewee is aware of the specific proposal of redesigning the square into a green space

3. Do you like the idea of a green space? I like: 3.1 What is your vision for this place if it would turn into a green space? I don't like: 3.2 What alternative development are you suggesting for Martim Moniz Square?	Understanding respondents' views on the concept of transforming Martim Moniz Square into a green space and the potential impact of their daily life Exploring respondents' vision for the green space Identifying alternative development proposals
3.3 What is your vision for this place if it would turn into a green space? How would it affect your daily life?	Gaining insight from the respondents on the possible influence of the green space on their day-to-day existence
4. Would you like to be included in the planning for Martim Moniz Square? no: go to question 5 yes: 4.1 How would you like to participate? 4.2 What do you think are the barriers (e.g., language, time,)? 4.3 Do you know where to look for the information?	Determining if the interviewees are interested in participating in the planning and decision-making process Going to question 5 Knowing the preferred methods of participations Identifying potential barriers to their participation Understanding their level of knowledge on how to retrieve information on participatory processes
5. Thank you for sharing your opinion so far. In the end we would appreciate getting some general information which we will only use	Collecting demographic data from the interviewees to better understand the diversity of perspectives and opinions

for this research and is kept anonymous. Would you mind sharing a little bit about yourself? • Where are you from? • How old are you? • Where do you live? • Where do you work?	relating to Martim Moniz Square • nationality • age • place of residence • place of work
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