

Urban space, public realm and rural heritage: a case in the metropolitan area of Lisbon - Vila Franca de Xira

Maria da Graça Moreira¹, José Luís Crespo²

¹⁻²Assistent Professors, GEU, CIAUD, Faculdade de Arquitetura, Universidade de Lisboa

¹gmoreira@fa.ulisboa.pt

²j Crespo@fa.ulisboa.pt

Keywords: Urban space, intangible heritage, Vila Franca de Xira, Red Waistcoat /Colete encarnado

Urban space is the stage of several cultural expressions, permanent or periodic that set practices with most urban or most rural character, according to the dimension of the agglomeration and to the strength that those traditions have as a mark of a certain way of living.

Rural society organizes, traditionally, its festivities with expressions of dexterity similar to the daily activities, with the objective of valorising its members. Some of these activities are presented in the urban centres that polarize them and that, despite being presently completely urbanised, maintain with its rural surroundings strong cultural ties, as part of its population has its roots in the near rural areas, as it is quite frequent in the process of urban development in the last decades.

The researched activities can be considered as Cultural Heritage, as: “every property that, being a witness with value of civilization or of culture, that carry relevant cultural interest, must be object of a special protection e appreciation” and all the “intangible goods that constitute structuring parts of the Portuguese identity and of its collective memory”.

The intangible cultural heritage of rural areas tends to disappear when the territory is urbanized and lifestyles changed, reducing the daily activities that justified them.

The cultural heritage of some rural areas, particularly where cattle ranching is more representative, maintains its visibility in small and medium towns in periodic

events, even when integrated in a metropolitan area, such as the Lisbon one, and probably influences the evolution of urban public spaces.

The happenings that mark the places and promote the identity are the events. It is important for the city there are events of various types and which create reasons of common interest for locals and tourists. Some events are the result of ancient traditions and others like the leisure ones, sports, festivities or cultural are created to promote places.

Periodic festivities of rural character are from two types: religious or secular; the secular ones can be more related to agricultural traditions where markets play an important role, forestry traditions where games with lumber are common or related to grazing and cattle breeding traditions where animal display and the skills related to its control are dominating. Therefore, in the case of a territory surrounding a city, that maintains a relationship with specific and essential meanings, the activities of its population (from rural, industrial fishing or mining culture among others) frame elements connected to the identity considered as “naturals”, despite being possible to consider them in a certain way as “exteriors”.

The city of Vila Franca de Xira is the head of the municipality with the same name. It belongs to Great Lisbon and it is one of the eighteen municipalities that form the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon. It is located in the right bank of the river in the border with a very important agricultural area of the country.

The history of the region and the diverse cultural influence from the rural and fishing areas is reflected in the type of festivities.

In the late twentieth century the urban and commercial feature of the town of Vila Franca de Xira, has become a communications and service center, without losing its roots of simplicity, hosting and maintenance by the Tagus, the Lezírias (a tract of marshy land alongside of the river Tejo) or Bullfighting , power-up testimony to the surrounding rural territory.

Based on a document analysis and the festivities we intend in this paper examines the inner urban area, its evolution and morphology, in the town of Vila Franca de Xira, and his relationship with two festivities The “Festa do Campo, da Lezíria e do Cavalo” (Festivity of the Field, the Leziria and the Horse) and the "Red Waistcoat /

Colete Encarnado" event, traditions that has existed since 1932, party tribute to "campino", held in its central area, this activity is considered as part of the intangible heritage of the region and a land mark.

The studied events can defined the identity of a city through a set of components that allow that, a particular city can be differentiated from others, through elements of the relationship between its symbolism and public space. In this case study we verified that the identity comes first connected to the territory and to its relationship with the activities, traditions and uses of Vila Franca de Xira.

That is why its identity is only enhanced by the strategies used, being considered components of the identity, the events. We verified that this component allows the differentiation of Vila Franca de Xira, being recurrent its relationship with the territory, namely the elements connected to agriculture, bullfights, but as well to local history. The festivities analysed are concentrated during spring - summer between May and July and in October, important times in the rural world.