

On the politics of informal dwelling in western urban contexts: contributions from the city of Porto

This article discusses how informal dwelling can be understood as a political manifestation, in the context of a gentrified western city. The city of Porto provides a case study in which the aesthetics and semantics of informal dwellings confront hegemonic representations and narratives, namely heritage-based discourses.

The argument builds on the conceptual framing of the phenomenon within the thought of Jacques Rancière, and the interpretation of empirical evidence through the analysis of visual documentation of architectural and urban forms. Furthermore, we examine how the inherently transgressive character of these practices is visually manifest in the dissonant and unconform aesthetics of informal dwellings, providing visual expressions of dissensus, materialized in the city's landscape.

Drawing on Rancière's conceptualization of politics, as acts that challenge the distribution of the forms of partaking in society, we argue that practices of informal dwelling and building configure such acts of redistribution, as they appropriate unauthorized territories, literally as well as metaphorically. By uninvitedly taking part in the construction of built environments, they offer often precarious re-configurations not only of what can be done in the common space but also of who gets to do it. They create possibilities for the expression of those who are not entitled to express themselves in such modes and spaces as urbanism and public space.

Finally, we posit the potential of visual and semantic aspects of informal dwelling, to contribute to the formulation of alternative discourses stemming from everyday practices, and to the resignification of the urban landscape. Addressing issues of visibility and acknowledging the scarcity of research regarding informal dwelling in western contexts, we argue for its relevance for contemporary urban problematics and the importance of its study.

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Graduated in Fine Arts by the Fine Arts School of Bordeaux (2005). Master in Contemporary Artistic Creation, by the University of Aveiro (2019). Currently enrolled in the Doctoral Program in Design, at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto, she holds a scholarship by Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia for the development of the research project “Visual and semantic identities of the city of Porto: an ascertainment of the contributions of informal dwelling”, hosted by the Research Institute for Design, Media and Culture (ID+) and by the Center for Studies in Architecture and Urbanism (CEAU). Her research interests concern experiences, perceptions and representations of urban space and their manifestations as visual culture.

Education

- 2019 - **Doctoral Program in Design**
Ongoing Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Porto
- 2018 **Master in Contemporary Artistic Creation**
Departement of Communication and Art – University of Aveiro
- 2005 **Diplôme National Supérieur en Expression Plastique**
École d’Enseignement Supérieur d’Art de Bordeaux

Employment (selected)

- 2020- **Research Scholarship**
Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia
Portugal
- 2009 - 2020 **Photography teacher**
Instituto Multimédia, Porto

Selected publications

- 2021 ***Portas que se fecharam, portas que abrimos***
Ana Miriam Rebelo, Tigers in Zoom Cages. Alvelos, Heitor (ed.). Doctor Tiger Editions. 2021.
ISBN 978-989-53056-1-2. Available at: <https://doctortiger.wordpress.com/>
- 2019 ***Clareira: towards a phenomenological perspective in the representation of architectural space***
Ana Miriam Rebelo, Fátima Pombo, José Carneiro

Sophia Journal, 4. *Visual Spaces of Change: Unveiling the Publicness of Urban Space through Photography and Image*. Pedro Leão Neto, Iñaki Berguera (ed.) Scopio Editions. 2019.

Available at: <https://www.sophiajournal.net/sophia-4>

2018 ***Photography and designed space: a shift in perspective***

Ana Miriam Rebelo, Fátima Pombo,

Back to the Future. The Future in the Past. Conference Proceedings Book.

Oriol Moret (ed.). Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona. 2018. ISBN 978-84-9168-156-4

Available at: <http://www.publicacions.ub.edu/ficha.aspx?cod=08927>

2010 ***Sossego City***

Publicação impressa - *Scopio International Magazine* 1 1/3 *Addendum*, Outubro 2010

Scopio Editions. ISSN: 1647-8266

Selected oral presentations

2021 ***Place Identity And Urban Diversity: A Critical Analysis Of The Narrative And Appropriation Of The "Porto" Brand***

Fifteenth International Conference on Design Principles & Practices

University of Monterrey, Mexico

2019 ***Clareira***

RIBA Research Matters

University of Nottingham - Nottingham

2019 ***Clareira: towards a phenomenological perspective in the representation of architectural space***

Ana Miriam Rebelo, Fátima Pombo, José Carneiro

5th International Conference *On the surface: photography on architecture*

Museu de Arte, Arquitetura e Tecnologia - Lisboa

2018 ***Photography and designed Space: a Shift in Perspective***

Ana Miriam Rebelo, Fátima Pombo

International Conference on Design History and Studies. *Back to the Future.*

Museu do Design - Barcelona

Prizes

2019 ***Photobook Awards*** - Encontros da Imagem

Finalist

2012 ***Paredes-Meias*** - Animation Film

Manobras no Porto 2012 – Best documentar project

For the CVs of remaining authors please consult the links below:

Heitor Alvelos: <https://heitoralvelos.wordpress.com/cv/>

Álvaro Domingues: <https://www.cienciavitae.pt/portal/en/3D17-4970-91F0>