

## Grand Projects - Urban Legacies of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The thematic dossier included in the journal *CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios* a supplementary publication to the conference proceedings of the International Conference “Grand Projects - Urban Legacies of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century”<sup>1</sup>, which took place at Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon in virtual mode, from 17 to 19 February 2021.

The aim of the conference was to discuss the transformations that have taken place in urban territories over the last two decades by considering the impacts of late 20<sup>th</sup> century policies and conjunctures. The conference was integrated in the research project “Grand Projects – Architectural and Urbanistic Operations after the 1998 Lisbon World Exposition” [PTDC/ARTDAQ/32561/2017], funded by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (*Foundation for Science and Technology*), an ongoing research project since October 2018, developed at DINÂMIA’CET - Centre for Socioeconomic and Territorial Studies, Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon. The research project aims at identifying, characterizing, debating, and reflecting over the urban policies and architectural Works produced in Portugal after the 1998 Lisbon World Exposition (Expo98).

The conference was organized according to an open call for papers, planned into ten track sessions – 1: Mega-events and mega-projects: trends and demands; 2: Starchitecture; 3: Terrain vague redevelopments; 4: Environment Impact Awareness in Urban Developments; 5: Methods and technologies on architectural design and urban planning; 6: Urban policies; 7: Urban competitiveness and social challenges; 8: The role of artists and urban art; 9: The Syndrome of Grand Projects: contamination processes between North-South, West-East, Global-Local and 10: Urban analytics and city design – chaired by research team members and other national and international researchers. Along with eight keynotes speakers, two special sessions with ten participants, one side events – that included a virtual tour and presentation to the Lisbon waterfront buildings and public spaces – and seventy-eight lectures presented by researchers.

Among these papers, a few authors were selected to submit a full paper to the journal *CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios*, to integrate this thematic dossier. The purpose was to highlight some papers submitted to the conference proceedings which offer perspectives, with national and international approaches, complementary to the research conducted in the ongoing project. To achieve this goal, the selection of the eligible articles for publication was carried out by the track chairs and the project researchers. Six articles were selected from the tracks, one article was associated with the side event and three book reviews were commissioned, related to the themes of the Grand Projects.

The paper “Transnational architecture and urbanism: Putting star architects in place”, by researcher Davide Ponzini, focuses on the period between 1990 and 2020, when transnational modes of architectural and urban design increased. The author claims that famous architectural firms have spread to globalizing cities around the world and some of these dynamics promote the ‘Bilbao effect’. Based on the literature and one case study, this paper focuses on the roles that star architects play in the processes of developing spectacular buildings. Therefore, this paper focuses on the roles that star architects play in the processes of developing spectacular buildings, the urban effects these projects produce in the urban development and their self-interested narratives.

Researcher Heini-Emilia Saari wrote about the central points of architecture and urban design that sell the globalized models of urban development in a paper entitled “An Entrepreneurial Countryside? Imagining

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information, please visit the conference website at <https://www.grandprojects2021.com/>.

Competitive Futures in the Architectural Contests”. The author advocated that these models are supported by city strategies to boost local competitiveness and that architecture competitions are often harnessed as a tool for public engagement and design innovation in complex urban projects. Centred on the analysis of recent architectural competition documents in the stagnant and declining regions of Finland, the study explored how peripheral localities have approached architecture and urban design in the pursuit of their urban aspirations. With the aim of contributing to the ongoing debates on urban competitiveness and the role of design by reinserting the periphery into the picture, this paper highlights the surveyed competitions designs and strategies that go beyond hegemonic and local models of urban production.

On the issue of *terrain vague*, researcher Juan González Cos proposed the paper “Space \_\_\_ Between: Remnants of a City as Catalysts for Change. An Art and Architecture exploration”, enquiring about what can be done with the unproductive waste of a given city, and how it may be transformed to create a shared, cohesive and productive urban environment. With these questions in mind, the author argued that *terrain vague* should be seen as site-specific set of tools for critique and creativity. Hence, in order to positively take over any urban void, he addressed the issue of property, social attachment and identity to the place, intertwined with the dynamics of architecture and urbanism. This paper provides a new perspective on the need to embrace the opportunities provided by these urban voids, proposing that art and architecture can act as key elements to connect people and spaces within a sociocultural context and thereby be meaningful agents of change.

The paper “Cultural mega-events in heritage-rich cities: Insights from the European Capital of Culture and broader policy perspectives”, by researchers Zachary Jones and Davide Ponzini, approaches the subject of the grand projects associated with the European Capital of Culture initiative. The authors argue that some cities hosting the programme have developed grand urban projects that contribute to urban rebranding and regeneration of smaller scale projects in the city fabric that adapt existing facilities and places or smaller scale interventions. This paper discusses the range of large- to small-scale planning, the (re)generation of cultural facilities and places in historic cities and heritage-rich areas to accommodate cultural mega-events and the effects they have on host cities over time, with the ambition to highlight upcoming challenges for urban policy-making and mega-event planning in Europe.

With emphasis on conceptualization of environmental outlooks ranging from the ‘globe’ to the ‘sphere’ on the territory of the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean, researcher Chen Chu wrote the paper “Weaponized Chagos Archipelago: Strategic urbanization and environment fortress as legal ammunition against human rights”. This author reveals how privileged environmental science and its conservation technologies can lead to the disempowerment of local people and raises awareness about the possibility that environmentalism, when misapplied in practice, may become a means of fortification and exclusion, furthering economic exploitation and political marginalization. This paper proposes a reading of local and layered ecology, through human-land interactions, and discusses the potential of knowledge about plants to resist the hegemony of extra-territorialized powers.

The following paper, “The Beautiful and the good in Lisbon: notes on horticultural parks, spontaneous vegetable gardens and artistic practices” (*O Belo o bom em Lisboa: notas sobre os parques hortícolas, hortas espontâneas e práticas artísticas*, in Portuguese), by researcher Ana Elísia da Costa, offers a perspective about The Lisbon Green Plan conceived in 1997 by Gonçalo Ribeiro Telles in articulation with the green areas in the city, dedicated not only to leisure but also to agricultural production. The author argues that their aesthetic and social standards, of difficult assimilation, impose an unbearable presence of ‘ugly’ and questions whether the imposition of ‘beautiful’ instituted by public institutions in the restructuring of these spaces is justifiable. It also questions whether we are witnessing the aestheticization of life and the spectacularization of public space, to the detriment of what might be ‘good’ from a social perspective. In response to these questions, the article is an essay that reflects on possible aesthetic-ethical judgements underlying vegetable parks and spontaneous vegetable gardens in Lisbon.

The paper entitled “Seven buildings for the Lisbon waterfront” is integrated on the Side Event of the International Conference “Grand Projects - Urban Legacies of the late 20th Century” and presents the Lisbon and Rio Laboratory of the Final Architecture Project 2020/2021 – a work developed by the students of the Integrated Master in

Architecture at Iscte-University Institute of Lisbon – that proposed to investigate examples of Portuguese contemporary grand projects existing on the waterfront, whose particularity was that they are transforming elements of the city (Lisbon). The researcher and author of the paper, Teresa Madeira da Silva, was also the coordinator of the Laboratory alongside advisors Caterina Di Giovanni and Pedro Marques Alves. This paper intends to demonstrate through seven case studies that these buildings go beyond their image and that other factors contribute to the urban attractiveness and positive experience of the places where they are located.

The dossier closes with three book reviews. The first one presents the book *Bak Gordon - Architecture*, by Ricardo Bak Gordon, written by researcher Filipe Mónica; the second one is about the book *Staging the new Berlin: Place marketing and the politics of urban reinvention post-1989*, by Claire Colomb, written by researcher Tânia Lemos; and third and final one reviews *Lisboa em Metamorfose*, by João Seixas, written by researcher Sara Silva Lopes.

With this thematic dossier we intend to provide a panoramic perspective over the articulation of the covered areas of knowledge and an overview of the extent of the theme of grand projects and their urban legacies over the last 20 years.

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Thematic Dossier Guest Editors

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