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COMPONENTS OF IDENTITY AND SYMBOLISM

*PUBLIC ART IN PUBLIC SPACE AND EVENTS ON THE HISTORIC
CENTER OF VILA FRANCA DE XIRA*

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of this work - Components of Identity and Symbolism. Public Art in Public Space and Events on the historic center of Vila Franca de Xira - consists of an analysis of various components of the identity of cities, as public space and the ways of its appropriation, art as a symbol that helps to identify the place as well as other elements such as events, characters and identities and institutions surrounding landscape.

The central objective is therefore to understand what constitutes the identity of cities and evaluate its components.

The case chosen to study the list of concepts and components of identity is the city of Vila Franca de Xira, more precisely the historic center, where the main focus points of interest are and where happen the most significant events that build identity.

Increasingly it is necessary that the places have their own identity, as cities grow and develop rapidly and it is necessary that there are striking landmarks, and elements that distinguish them from each other.

The goals set from the central objective were:

- a) Analyze and understand the definition of Identity of the City and what is being done nationally and internationally to create or strengthen the identity of cities;
- b) Study the case of the historic center of Vila Franca de Xira, as an example of the city in which identity is associated with the representation and symbolism of space, events, and public art in a given territorial context;
- c) Realize the extent to which identity is well defined by the elements that compose it and in particular by recent interventions;
- d) Obtain critical conclusions which may serve to support future projects of public space quality.

The first part of the work is theoretical in nature, focusing on a limited number of works and authors, but enough to better understanding of the fundamental concepts that can then be analyzed in the case study, proceeding then to gather information, specific bibliography and historical data to proceed with the analysis and interpretation of the symbolism in this public space.

The second part is devoted to the case study: an analysis of various elements that make up the identity of the city of Vila Franca de Xira, in order to understand the aspects that are most relevant or salient in the physical domain works of public art or other interventions, symbolization or aesthetics of the environments in which they operate, the events which enshrine this iconography, the characters, and other identity elements.

The chosen elements are elements that stand out in the image of the city, and are recognized as an integral part of life in the city. It is intended to study them through documents available in the municipal archives and libraries, and also through empirical analysis of their presence in public space or place names or their translation into other media of communication.

For the development of topic sheets for each element was done fieldwork, photographic record of the elements studied, and this work will be compiled into a set of sheets attached to the main information of each element, such as construction date, author, location, description and integration space.

In conclusion it is intended through the practical result of the case study to see how the future can create identity through public space.

CHAPTER I - CONCEPTS OF IDENTITY

The concept of identity of the city is very broad and difficult to define, but taking into account the various aspects of identity must be considered in trying to establish parameters so that you can improve the ratio of public space to the city and therefore the relationship with its inhabitants.

To understand the importance of the city's identity it's necessary to understand what their role in the city and its inhabitants.

The places have the particularity to be lived by each person differently, creating a memory of a time and accumulation of various experiences and memories applicants, create feelings of belonging and identification. Besides these personal memories but also collectives, there are also memories associated with the history of the place itself is often marked by an event that makes it special and so is the subject of narratives. This memory consists of personal experience with certain space or element that at some point in life became meaningful, and on the other hand also comes from the stories that are told and passed from generation to generation.

The identity of a place is often associated with heritage and this concept includes the idea of "paternal inheritance," or "household goods", but if the city applies the best idea of "cultural

property". Heritage is generally conserved and preserved to tell a story, and moreover the concept of heritage is very broad and covers many types of monuments or places.

These elements serve as salient reference system, which allows part of strategies of the organizations responsible for the development of cities. Cities need to promote themselves to be more appealing to its residents and visitors, and for this have a number of attributes that are attractive and generate positive interest and identification. Each space, whether marked with public art, with architectural elements, or as space for events is a reference point and both cultural spaces as striking that distinguish one city from another, are essential for fostering the perception and orientation in the city .

The identity is also associated with feelings of nostalgia for citizens, when they live a long time in the same place, have an intense relationship with the physical aspect of the city, and not always generate positive reactions when making any changes. That's why sometimes when a street or building disappears its name or meaning is mentioned.

This combination also makes for "habit": when using a space often creates a habit, a sentimental association with the place and its past. Sometimes the place was intended a use when was planned, but due to its characteristics ultimately function otherwise it is better suited to current needs or the value of the place, from another perspective.

CHAPTER II - CASE STUDY: HISTORIC CENTER OF VILA FRANCA XIRA

They were regarded as identity elements of interest all "urban objects" that have a symbolic role in Vila Franca, and organized into different categories:

a) Public Art

For this case study were considered to be public art any element placed in public space that is marked, either by their significance or for their historical value or monumental. The city is dotted with elements that make it unique and consistent with the experience of creating links with citizens everywhere. The Public Art can be an element of restructuring an area that has lost its identity and that needs to reassert itself elsewhere.

Public art in Vila Franca de Xira does not appear very sharp, with only a few that want to honor and represent important figures of the municipal culture, and works as the pillory which is a mark of a season. Also highlights the tiles present in several buildings of the city center, and are representative of Art Nouveau in Portugal.

b) Public Space

To analyze the Public Space, were selected only some elements that stand out in the city, from the standpoint of the use (activities) and meanings.

c) Remarkable buildings

Some buildings are important to the city's identity, and were selected for this analysis those who stand out for their role in the identity elements. Weren't included some buildings that may have importance as equipment or as works of architecture but with less significance.

d) Events

The town of Vila Franca is also known for its events, some already ancient tradition and are part of a series of major events, especially for "afición". Another aspect to consider is the diversity with respect to generational groups, there are events for all ages, not just the inhabitants are restrictive, since is wanted to have great support from visitors. And it's not just the "Festa Brava", cuisine also plays a significant role, as well as sport. The city will have over the years better space to host these events.

e) Other Important Elements for City Identity

There are several informal elements that are important, from artistic elements, place's names, and not only physical elements that make a city is unique in some respects. Were selected those which stand out as much as in the collective memory space.

f) Membership Structure and Institutions Identitary

The associations and institutions, both formal and informal city, are important elements in their identity, and in the case of Vila Franca, are essentially related to bullfighting, with work, and with their characters.

g) Toponymy and Characters

There are several figures born in Vila Franca de Xira, who were standing out in their areas, but nationally and artistic and main Alves Redol.

There are also elements that appear frequently represented in the toponymy of the city, as Herdsmen, Bullfighters, Fishwives, elements related to the Tagus river, with the Field and the Local History.

h) Image and Iconography

Vila Franca is extremely linked to Bullfighting, a large part of the traditions are strongly related to the Festa Brava and the municipality makes efforts to continue to enhance these traditions, organizing and publicizing events of various kinds, but always with the intention of boosting the city. Citizens have an important role in this aspect, as it keeps the customs, and are organized also in private groups advocating traditional activities and come together to celebrate and exalt traditions. The bullring "Palha Blanco" is recently used for other types of shows that events not related to bullfighting in order to promote the privileged and their characteristics to the not fans of Festa Brava.

The city's image is also composed of symbols, but these symbols go beyond the crest and logo, even though they identify the local authority, the community and is a result of elements of memory or ethnography of the people.

CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion of the work can be highlighted that the urban morphology has a strong relationship with topographic relationship with the Tagus river, the importance of infrastructure that tighten the city longitudinally (motorway and line the roads and rail), and placement of components's identity, which are not concentrated and are large in number but are consistent in repetition of the same subjects.

Concluded also that the thematic content of Vila Franca identity that is culturally and socially connected to the field, more precisely the marshlands. The field work was an important factor in the development of the city as the population that was fixing to work there. Like the river, for the same reasons, were fishermen from around the country to settle in Vila Franca and benefit from the features of the Tagus river, and the communities that inhabited it. Despite the changing times, fisherman and field worker are professions that still exist and are very important and characteristics in Vila Franca de Xira.

The elements that identify first with Vila Franca de Xira are interrelated: the bullring "Palha Blanco", the Tagus, the Field Workers, the Bridge, and the "Colete Encarnado". These are symbols of the city's identity, territorial and strong relationship allowing Vila Franca differentiate from other localities in the metropolitan area of Lisbon.

It is visible in the city toponymy the constant reference to important elements, which indicates the importance of the public space even with certain elements immaterial. This work could not be done

the detailed analysis of these elements due to lack of time and preparation, but note the relevance that has certain social groups (field workers, bullfighters, fishwives), characters (Alves Redol, José Falcão), or historical dates (December First) in toponymy.

In the case of public art, it is concluded that although there is not a catalog of great diversity and quantity, there is a consistency with the events and everyday life of the city through the themes. For this analysis were also chosen some formal elements not seen that often have as much or more importance due to its characteristics, use or symbolism, both in the collective memory as the personal memories. Also in these informal elements noted the concentration in a particular theme, reinforcing the city's identity.

Thus, comparing the case with the city of Almada with Vila Franca, it's concluded that even with fewer elements of public art, less current, less players in public space and a quieter scale, Vila Franca is in a stronger bond with elements of the imaginary identity, linked to the elements of territory, activities and social groups. Although less translated as strategy, and more artistic languages inherent in the population, the very definite themes play an important role in the city's identity. The normal functions of public art, those in Vila Franca do not have more important elements of attraction or orientation, but those who construct narratives constitute heritage, are part of the collective memory and are strong in symbolism.

