

Time and urban design - conclusions on a critical reading of Baixa-Chiado transformation process

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The paper presents some of the aspects of the relation between time and urban design.

Discourses on space form and image are the essence of architectural and urban culture commonly reproduced today. But discourses produced around this territory, be them institutional or colloquial, are strongly conditioned by several ways of seeing time. Not only that includes temporal concepts like conservation, revitalization, changing, dynamic or process, what is determinant is how temporal concepts influence the action of urban design and its significance. This is our aim.

The study case is the process of transformation in Baixa-Chiado since 1988s fire, back from Siza Vieira's project until the present current ideas about the area, combined with a process of substitution of the central function for a new metropolitan scale. We'll study the different discourses - institutional, professional, political, opinion makers, public opinion - as well as their part in the process of reconstruction. In this case, we can find that relations (representations) between past, present and future are:

Deeply contradictory: when future construction is at the expense of sacrificing images and elements of the past;

Strongly linked: when future becomes a representation (a form of false continuity) of the past;

When there is a compromise for a value creation, associated to recycling processes upon what a positive future image is built.

With this study case we intend to study what are (or can be) the answers of urban planning and urban design, in the urge of a reconstruction and with a perspective of a uncertain future.

Keywords: time, urban design, transformation, identity