

IMMIGRANTS IN THE PUBLIC SPACE: UNDERSTANDING URBAN CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

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Abstract

This paper explores the advantages of using visual methodologies to understand the urban cultural landscape, focusing on the use and appropriation of public space by immigrants. It identifies five advantages arising from the use of visual methodologies: (1) the process of collection and registration of information; (2) multiple possibilities of articulation between the visual techniques of observation and analysis and the interpretation techniques for other information collected; (3) enhancing inter/multidisciplinary potential through the working methodologies; (4) improving the capacity to respond to urban social diversity and complexity; (5) the potential for mapping the social practices of immigrants. This paper is based on an exploratory study developed for the *Praça República* in Ericeira, within the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon, that identified specific characteristics of the use and appropriation of urban public space by Brazilian immigrants.

Keywords - cultural landscape, use and appropriation, urban public space, immigrants, visual methodologies

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the dynamics of immigration present challenges to cities. Despite substantial existing knowledge about the scale of immigration within Europe, less is known about their involvement in urban issues. Approaches to this issue are mostly done from the point of view of conflicts, and there is relatively little done in terms of the potential for collaboratively building shared intercultural networks

(Alexander, 2003; Body-Gendrot and Martiniello 2000; Pascual-de-Sans, 2004; CEC, 2003; Rudiger and Spencer: 2003). Therefore, the dynamics associated with immigration when combined with the daily experience of the urban environment which “hosts” social processes for immigrants is still an open field that needs further exploration. Among the most relevant challenges within this context are issues related to urban environmental management, namely ways to integrate immigrants’ socio-urban contributions, specifically in the urban public space. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to consider the contribution of immigrants in the shaping of the urban space, as well as its landscape (Chambers, 1994). Our concern is in investigating knowledge about the relationship between place and reputation, in social and safety management, the urban project and the supply of public services in cultural regeneration (Holland et al, 2007; Maginn, 2004, Allen: 2004; Allen et al: 2001) and in the processes of building the urban cultural landscape. As an overall goal, we focused on a study that allowed contextualization of the elements that contribute to a better description of the main attributes that characterize the human dimensions of public space – needs, rights and meaning (Carr et al, 1995).

Visual knowledge actively informs our understanding of how social structures and processes are inscribed in space. From such understandings, we draw important conclusions about our place in society, where place is defined both literally, in terms of the spaces in which we feel welcome or transgressive, and metaphorically, in terms of our location within social structures and processes.

As we insert ourselves into the space, in what seems to us to be appropriate ways, we “read” the place through the “others” in it. We look at the dispositions of bodies, at the physical objects and the spatially defined relationships among them. On this ground, we simultaneously observe and interpret the actions/activities of others. We assume that we understand the everyday life of these “others” and imagine the socio-physical activities offered to us in this place. In this way, we trail a cloud of being with us as we enter a space and navigate through the stream of happenings within it.

This paper describes, from an exploratory study of the *Praça República* in Ericeira, located within the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon, specific characteristics of the use and appropriation of urban public space for Brazilian immigrants. Moreover, it discusses the advantages of the use of visual methodologies including:

- The process of collection and registration of information;

- Multiple possibilities of articulation between the visual techniques of observation and analysis and the interpretation techniques for the information collected;
- Enhancing inter/multidisciplinary potential through the working methodologies;
- Improving the capacity to respond to urban social diversity and complexity;
- The potential for mapping of the social practices of the immigrants.

This paper argues, using the case study, how these five aspects can contribute to a better understanding of the use and appropriation of space by specific groups and improve the design of socio-urban initiatives that aim to achieve social integration.

2. Methodological aspects of observation

In the context of the social practices of associated with the use and appropriation of daily public space (eg, streets, plazas, pavements/sidewalks) and green/natural areas (eg, coastline/beach, urban park, garden), this study aims to identify the practices with greater physical-corporeal, social and cultural expressivity by individuals of Brazilian origin in their spaces/areas. The synthesis of guidelines for orientation and observation is: the Brazilians' expressions, practices and physical-social and cultural relations with the urban public space and in green areas within the territory of the metropolitan area of Lisbon.

Most of the foreign population in Portugal is concentrated in the Lisbon region. Brazilians¹ have a peculiar pattern of distribution assembling in suburban areas more distant from the Lisbon center due to three factors: (1) they are a socio-economically heterogeneous population; (2) they have immigrated more recently than people from the PALOP (African Countries of Portuguese Official Language); (3) they have a marked preference for residence at the littoral areas. Within the Metropolitan Region of Lisbon, the places which were most relevant in terms of Brazilian concentration are, in order of importance, Costa da Caparica, Cascais and Ericeira.

¹ The individuals of Brazilian nationality are the ones that under the regime of authorization of permanence. The numbers show that more than one third of Brazilians with permanence authorization have their residence in the Lisbon Region. Most of the foreigners who were refused entrance to the national territory were of Brazilian nationality (more that three quarters being refused at the airport). In terms of Portuguese nationality by naturalization, this concession is more frequent among foreigners whose nationalities are from the Community of Countries of Portuguese Language / *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa* (CPLP), namely: Cabo Verde, Guiné-Bissau, Brasil, Angola and S. Tomé e Príncipe. It is relevant to call attention to the cases of residence status cessation for foreigners from South America, which happens because they acquire Portuguese nationality according to various available regimes of access (*Relatório Estatístico, Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras*, 2004: 2-3).

Ericeira was selected for this stage of observation and pre-testing of the methodology of work because it is small urban settlement, in population and area, within the Lisbon region but with a relatively autonomous local life.

Fig. 1 - Area of study



Alongside the observation of the relation between space and practices of use/appropriation on the part of the local Brazilian community, it was also important to:

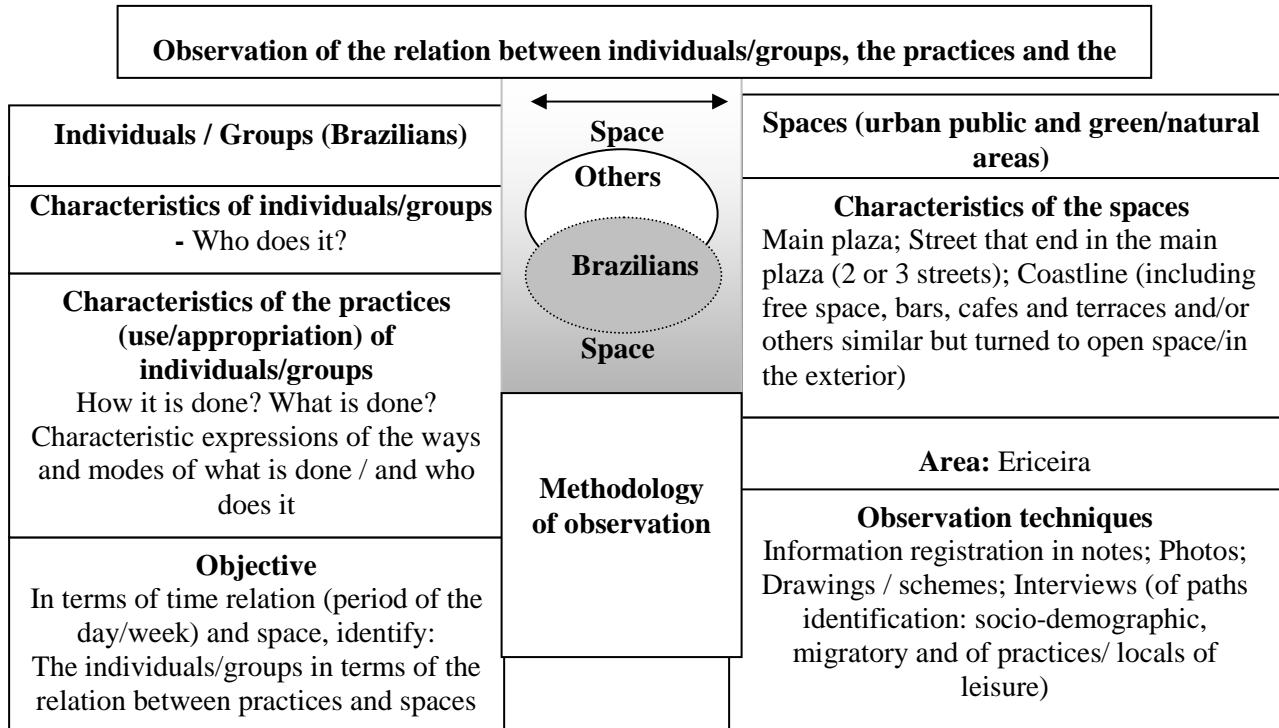
- Identify the names of the spaces for observation and their main characteristics under the social, geographical, physical-architectural and urban point of view;
- Privilege the following types of spaces or locales: 1) main plaza; 2) two/three streets that end in the main plaza/garden; 3) coastal beaches and promenades.

Individuals being studied were interviewed, to deepen knowledge of the subject's socio-demographic profile, socio-migratory and leisure paths:

- ***Socio-demographic profile:*** occupation, place of work and home address, educational level, marital status, with whom the residence is shared (for example, friends, family, persons who also came from Brazil ...).
- ***Socio-migratory profile:*** geographical origins in Brazil, if the subject came alone or with some, reasons for coming to Portugal, why they live in Ericeira and for how long, if he/she likes the area or not and why, occupation in Brazil before coming, how he/she intends to live here, if he/she expects to study or to improve professional skills...
- ***Daily paths:*** how he/she uses non-working hours, how s/he goes to work, work and leisure breaks, where he/she usually goes, with whom, preferred locales, where do Brazilians like to concentrate or to go in the area ...

Combining methods of observation and interviewing allowed further characterization of the subject (Brazilians) and her/his relation with others and the space (see Table 1 and 2).

Fig. 2 - Synthesis of the process of observation



We observed:

- *Who does it ...* - sex and age of the individuals (approximately) and from the interviews collected some information on socio-demographic characteristics (profession, marital status, locale of residence, local of job, level of education, etc.); identification of the size of sets of individuals (if alone, if in group – how many? group of women? group of men? mixed group – men and women; Brazilians or Portuguese or other origins, young and adults and/or elderly? groups of youngsters – men and/or women?);
- *How is it done ...* - types of practices: trajectory or passage; stopped – standing (for example: in a corner, at the entrance of a certain building, at the public ...) or sitting (for example: In a public bench, in the pavements, sitting on the building main entrance, on the terraces and/or coffee shop);
- *What does he/she do ...* - talks; meets; takes care of a child, carries shopping packages (etc.);

- *Body and symbolic expressions ...* - expressions that are relevant in the way of being in or passing through the locale of observation, expressions of style (eg, clothes, fashion, identification of origin, etc.) by counter position with the Portuguese and/or other types of individuals and origins²;
- *When is it done ...* - in relationship to the time of observation: hours or periods of the day – morning, afternoon, night, periods within the week – beginning, middle, end of the week (Friday), weekend (Saturday/Sunday) and holiday.

Table 1 - Guidelines for interview

| |
|---|
| INTERVIEWS (Short interviews to identify the Brazilian immigrants' profiles) |
| <p>Socio-Demographic Profile (who are the Brazilians?)</p> <p>What sex? Age? What is your civil status?</p> <p>What is the locality of origin in Brazil (city/State)?</p> <p>What was the occupation in Brazil? And what is it in Portugal and/or Ericeira?</p> <p>What is the level of education? Are you studying in Portugal? What are you studying?</p> |
| <p>Socio-migratory profile (path: Brazil – Portugal -- Ericeira)</p> <p>How long have you lived in Portugal? And in Ericeira?</p> <p>For what reason did you come to live in Portugal? And in Ericeira?</p> <p>How long do you intend to live in Portugal? And in Ericeira? And when you leave Ericeira and/or Portugal where would you like to go? Would you return to Brazil?</p> <p>Do you live with family members in Ericeira and/or Portugal (Who: Wife? Children - ages? Cousins? Others? How many?) Did they come with you (at the same time or after)? Do you live with acquaintances or friends in Ericeira and/or Portugal? Are your friends Brazilians? Did they come at the same time as you? Are they Portuguese? Or are they from other places? (from where?)</p> |
| <p>Leisure paths (what do you do in your leisure time?)</p> <p>Here in Ericeira, where do you usually spend your leisure time? Do you usually go to the main plaza? To the beach? To a special coffee place?</p> <p>How frequently? Do you usually go alone or with company (acquaintances/Brazilian friends/Portuguese/Others?)? (Which places, here in the Ericeira, do you like to go to? And with whom do you go?) And, especially, on the weekends, what do you usually do? Where do you usually do that in? (Ericeira/Elsewhere?)</p> <p>Do you know of a place in Ericeira where it is usual to find Brazilians? Which place is that? Do you usually go there?</p> <p>With whom do you usually spend your free time: Brazilians? Portuguese? With both? With others?</p> |

² It can be noted that different ways of being, passing through the spaces and such differences (or not) are in the eyes of the observer.

Social Representations (We - Brazilians - others)

What do you think about yourself as an immigrant living in a foreign country? What do you think about the other Brazilians living in Ericeira and/or Portugal?

What do you think about the Portuguese living in Ericeira? Do you think there are differences between the Portuguese who live here the whole week and the ones that only come here on the weekend? (If yes, what are the differences?)

Do you think there are differences between the Brazilians and the Portuguese? Would you tell us, for example, three aspects that you consider most important in terms of such differences?

What do you think the Portuguese living here (in Ericeira) think about the Brazilians?

Table 2 - Guidelines for observation of the individual / groups

OBSERVATION OF INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

(Search to identify the specific characteristics of the individuals and groups which allow them to be described, how to register physical- cultural differences between the individual and the other individuals (Brazilian and Portuguese/others), groups (of Portuguese and/or Brazilians (of men and women/of youngsters.... others ...))

ELEMENTS OF OBSERVATION

Sex / age (approximately)

Type of dress or outfit

Existence (or not) of physical type characteristics

Talk (speech characteristics /language)

Characteristic corporeal expression

Characteristic corporeal expression? What? How?

Individual within groups (families, friends, acquaintances) (how many, sex, age?)

Types of practices/what do they do: talk, pathway/walk, sitting talking, sitting looking/observing; taking care of a child, taking in the shops ...

What and how to register?

In general terms, the main instruments and techniques for collection and registration of information were³:

- *Photos* of common angles in the different periods of observation / types of individuals and groups.
- *Drawings* diagrams and sketches of the locale observed / practices observed / location of the observed individuals.

³ The process of collection of information (field interviewing and observation), as well as the registration of the information was done with close collaboration of two architectural students of the 5th year: *Miguel Magalhães* (MV) and *João Pedro Marques* (JPM).

- *Field diary* with free notes about impressions, identifying the areas and/or spaces of observation; the periods of observation and the practices and types of individuals observed.
- The *registration* of locales and hours of observation should follow a systematic logic such as: observing the locales always in the same periods and in the same form for all areas and spaces, searching to register always the same type of observation through the same type of resource and method of registration.

This methodology allowed us to make an initial profile of the Brazilians living in Ericeira building up the image they have about themselves and others, their surroundings and their paths. The results are summarized.

3. Some results

Though the targeted territory for the research ended up being Ericeira, during the first stage of the process several exploratory visits were made to three towns in the metropolitan region of Lisbon where more Brazilians live (Costa da Caparica, Cascais and Ericeira). During these visits, we identified the presence of Brazilians in a number of common places: working and socializing in bars and restaurants in central areas of the towns and/or in the vicinity of the local urban public spaces which were reference points (plazas and main streets) and/or the coastline, as well as walking, phoning, shopping, talking in some specific urban places. In the three towns, there are behavior scenarios related to the Brazilians in those places that can be identified as *focal points* (Hunter: 1974) or *settings* (Barker: 1973)⁴. Since immigration and immigrants are a highly dynamic and fluid phenomenon in space and time, those scenarios are variable. This means that, today, a meeting point is the restaurant x, tomorrow it will be the bar y, and so on. In this way, it is important to develop behavior scenarios as a dynamic relation between space and time.

In these three towns, we conducted short interviews with Brazilians to identify similarities and we found that all the individuals we contacted: (a) were part of the second Brazilian immigration flux and arrived in Portugal after 1999; (b) were employed in semi- or non-qualified jobs; (c) were aiming to improve their financial and material conditions; (d) and want to return to Brazil. The Brazilians in this

⁴ Hunter (1974) defines focal points as social spaces where physical form and social function converge. Barker (1973) defines a setting as a place: a) in space and time, b) where certain characteristic behaviours patterns occur, and c) which contain both human and inorganic components. Wicker *et al.* (1984) considers the following aspects as important: a) the time, duration and limit of the behavioural frame of reference, b) the number of people involved, c) the time of the research, d) the group of people involved and their attributes (eg age, sex, social position), e) whether the influence of the setting is extended to other behavioural frames of reference, and f) the extension of the talks and the thoughts.

group came to Portugal and the metropolitan area of Lisbon because of the presence and/or because of the safety of someone known previously or who was familiar to them and already living in the country.

Fig. 3 - Photos

Photos - of common angles in the different periods of observation / type of individuals and/by observed groups



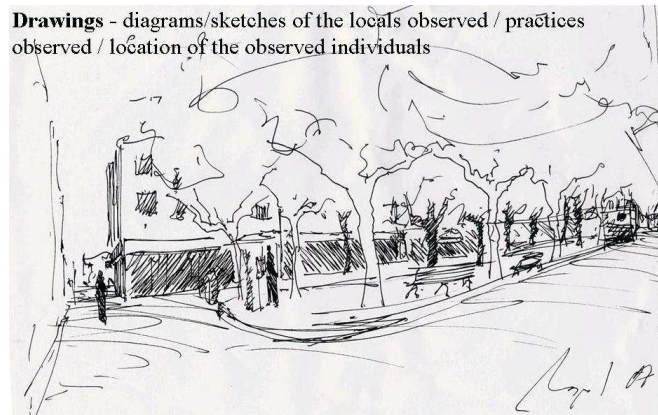
This exploratory research was deeply enriched when we decided to center the investigation in Ericeira. We were concerned to portray how a specific group of immigrants expresses its presence in urban public space, while simultaneously developing brief socio-demographic and socio-migratory profiles of some of these individuals. Little by little, it was possible to define ways of registering certain behavior scenarios.

Here, it is relevant to mention how we identified the Brazilians who, in some way, have an expression in the main plaza of Ericeira: something in the way they talk (the language is Portuguese: the accent is Brazilian), phenotypical characteristics associated with ethnic miscegenation, and wearing more casual outfits. For example, the text below is interesting. It is taken from the field notes of the architectural students who supported us in the observation:

“(…) We already have understood the easiness of identifying these individuals. There was something difficult to describe that allowed us, with ease, to distinguish the Brazilians from the remaining users of the plaza. It is difficult to express this more precisely, what it would be?! ... if some were spotted by their (ethnic) miscegenation or way of dressing (informal clothes, elastic in the women and a cap for the man, comfortable shoes...), others, had only a “not sure what” which differentiated them from the Portuguese, in

general. Sure, it also happened some cases required some confirmation, by, trying to listen to them talking to confirm the accent” (MV / JPM).

Fig. 4 - Drawings



The main plaza of Ericeira provided a central *setting* for the observation. Nevertheless, it was interesting how, in this scenery, the behaviors and practices, the corporeal expressions gained forms that, being flexible, more or less intense in their duration, repeated themselves with some intensity, thus transforming the *setting* into a set of *focal points*. See, once more a short reproduction of the field notes by MV and JPM:

“We were amazed with the dimension of the number of people. It gave us the idea that it was not a community of modest dimension, but a relatively substantial population and in permanent mutation (people that come, people that go ...). (...) It made us understand that most individuals cross the plaza without thinking about staying. However, there are occasional situations that put a group of them together and they stay talking for a relatively short period of time. In the second observation, we were already completely familiar with the place and the subject, and we found out the risk that happens and that we missed in the previous period of observation: the large number of sparrows that live in the tree-tops that shadow the plaza fly about, randomly discharging, dirtying everything and everyone, and pushing the people to the borders and towards the awnings of the commercial activities. It is clear that in an urban space of these characteristics, a plaza; it is common that the circulation concentrates on the sides, next to the buildings, resulting from things to be seen and of the notion of exhibition that the area offers to the user. We got the impression that, although most of the time individuals do not stay in the plaza, the plaza ends up functioning as a place of social representation;

a space to see and be seen, a meeting point, leisure space, looking at the windows (...).”

For the *people who come*, the *people who go* and the *people who stay* in the plaza for a certain time, it will be interesting to compare the time of starting the work journey and time of ending the work journey and the schedule of the school children and youngsters, the leisure breaks, with the moments of waiting for something or for someone, and also with daily periods structured by the working week, weekend, period during the day (morning, evening, night), with party moments, etc. Intense observation allowed us to experiment with ways to register the movements and flows of greater or lesser intensity. From this cartography of the behavioral scenarios of the Brazilians, behavioral maps were drawn.

The Brazilian group belongs to the age cohort which is 20-35 years old, with school levels varying between compulsory schooling, high school level and even university level, working in jobs different from those they had in Brazil⁵. Their origins are from any part of Brazil, though the greatest incidence of immigrants is from the Sudest region, and the individuals who were interviewed live had lived from one to five years in Ericeira. Reflecting on their lives as Brazilian immigrants and on their interpretation of the society of reception, they said:

Case 1

“The immigrant should behave as discreetly as possible. A lot of them are noisy; they habitually listen to loud music at home. (This is tolerated in Brazil but not in Portugal.). [Brazilians make] a lot of noise on the street. (...) The [Portuguese] permanent residents [in Ericeira]⁶ are more closed and less used to and tolerant of immigrants, while at the weekends, the people of Lisbon and Algarve are more used to immigrant and more open and tolerant. (...) The Brazilian laughs much more, dresses in a different way: the men with shorts and slippers, women with tight and binding clothes, stretch jeans. (They bring clothes from Brazil that are not found here – trousers, panties,

⁵ Foreigners legally resident in the country are younger than the nationals Africans have an average age of 31,0 years old, followed by the Brazilians with an average age of 31,2 years old. The economically active Brazilian population contains two groups. The initial phase of immigrants was easily integrated in highly qualified jobs, such as dentists, journalists, publicity and marketing specialists. More recent groups of immigrants have included a growing group of semi- and low-qualified workers in civil construction, commerce, hotels and restaurants.

⁶ Ericeira is a tourist place, as well as where the Portuguese have second houses for weekends and holidays.

swimming shorts ...). (...) [The Portuguese] Think that Brazilians are very tumultuous (audacious, with courage to kill) and they find this strange”.⁷

Case 2

“It is a question of honor to live outside. It is not easy, many do not handle homesickness. Some [Brazilians] are *great* (10-20%), others should not have left Brazil; they only get themselves into trouble. (...) The ones that live in Ericeira are more introvert, ill-bred, do not answer your greeting. (...) The Portuguese is more intelligent, even in the way of speaking (...). The Portuguese is more lonely and the Brazilian more happy and social. (...) [The Portuguese] have a bad opinion [of Brazilians], due to the problems that other Brazilians get into: the story generates prejudice.”⁸

Case 3

[The Brazilian] “Aspires to improve the conditions in the reception country, 90% (of the Brazilians) are worth nothing. (...) [The Portuguese residents are] simpletons and [the Portuguese in the weekends are] snobs. The ones from Lisbon [the ones at the weekends] think they are better and more intelligent. (...) The Portuguese are shy, harder workers and the men are more faithful, than the Brazilians. (...) The Portuguese woman is afraid of the competition, in work, but also in their personal life; in everything. The man thinks that the Brazilian woman is easy and can be bought at any price (in contrast to the Portuguese woman).”⁹

Case 4

[The Brazilians have] “All the difficulties of the common immigrant: discrimination. There are all types: more educated and sophisticated ones and more simple ones [referring to the diversity of Brazilians who live in Ericeira]. (...) I know everyone and have a good opinion of the people of Ericeira, among whom I have close friends. . . Yes, here, a small land and simple people; those who come from outside on the weekends have higher cultural levels”. . . The ones living here know how to distinguish different types of Brazilian. If a Brazilian deserves respect, he is respected; if not, not at all. A lot of people depend on the Brazilians; to sell, to rent their houses.”¹⁰

⁷ Women, 32 years old, married, university level education, from Espírito Santo, has lived in Ericeira for 2 years where she has family.

⁸ A man, 38 years old, single, basic education, has lived in Ericeira for 3 years, came alone.

⁹ Woman, 30 years old, university level of education, single, has lived for 2 years in Lisbon and for 3 years in Ericeira, came alone.

¹⁰ Man, 32 years old, high school education, married, has lived for 6 years in Portugal, of which 1 was in *Ericeira*, lives with his family.

Case 5

[The Brazilian wants to] “Take the money to live with their family in Brazil. ... [The Portuguese are] good people. You feel the difference in the way of talking ... The Brazilian has difficulty in knowing who to trust. On the other side, here he has always been well treated and does not see the violence that he saw in Brazil. [However] he feels prejudice, not of all, but of some.”¹¹

These short testimonies give a synopsis of the views of Brazilians about the country they now live in and its people, providing us with information on their social representations of themselves and others.

4. Final considerations

This paper reports the preliminary results of research designed to create a protocol for observing, reading, seeing how collective subjects come into being through visual knowledge. It builds on work by Ferrara (1993), Knowles and Sweetman (2004), Low (2000), Menezes (2004), Sampson and Raudenbush (1999), Tuan (1974), El Guindi (2004). It extends their work by investigating how a Portuguese-Brazilian ethnic identity is formed in relationship to the “others” encountered in a definite space, where the “others” include both long term and weekend/holiday Portuguese residents, two groups who usually define themselves as “other to each other”. It focuses, in particular, on how liminal spaces are controlled to sustain the socio-spatiality of coming into being.

First, it is important to explain that in the initial phase of the present research, we were primarily interested in exploring forms of registering what is observed, rather than focusing the analysis on the content of the performances, the practices or even the discourses. We think that it is useful to develop a methodological perspective in the research which focuses on visual observation techniques in socio-spatial contexts (Knowles and Sweetman: 2004; El Guindi: 2004; Byrne & Doyle: 2004; Latham: 2004; Rose: 2004). Furthermore, it will be interesting to explore the richness of meaning that can be derived from the cartography of practices (as a relation of time and space), because behavior maps can have multiple readings. Their multiplex interpretations can contribute to deepening knowledge of the logics of use and appropriation of space by the immigrants and about the relations between immigrants and society of reception, to look at the multiple combinations of who is and who can be “them”, “us” and the “others”, as well as support the

¹¹ Man, 26 years old, compulsory schooling only, married, has lived for 8 months in Ericeira, with a wife and children in Brazil.

processes of urban governance from the perspective of the socio-territorial management of diversity.

It is also relevant to point out that a better understanding of certain behavior scenarios, daily maps of the practices of use and appropriation (Baker: 1973; Wicker: 1979; Low: 2000; Menezes: 2004; Menezes et al: 2008) of the public space by certain groups of immigrants, should also characterize, even if synthetically, the practice of the non-immigrant Brazilians. In this way, there can be an interesting or curious inversion of the meaning of who is or can be the *other* since, in the view of the research that centers on a certain specific group, Brazilians, the ones who are not part of this group of individuals can be taken as being the *others* (the society of reception or other groups of immigrants who are not the ones selected as target of the research).

It will be useful as well to explore the richness of the meanings of the photographs taken of the behavior scenarios which were observed, as with the intensive description of observed situations, they are an element that can evoke different interpretations by different readers.

Finally, we expect to contribute to innovative theoretical and methodological approaches to urban space, supporting the construction and production with knowledge, which could integrate four inter-relational logics:

- To contribute to a better understanding of the social and urban space through deepening knowledge of the relationship between the organization of space and the organization of society;
- To define theoretical and conceptual, technical and methodological tools to contribute to a better understanding of the social and symbolic processes related to practices of use and appropriation, perception and socio-spatial identification;
- To contribute, simultaneously, to understanding the observed and analyzed phenomena;
- To use further results of the analysis to identify elements this can structure the conception of projects, urban plans and programs, within the processes of urban management.

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