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Thinking about ‘transcultural capital’ and ‘transnational artistic practices’ of migrant Portuguese visual artists

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Abstract

This article is inspired by the idea of a transnational art world focused on migrants and the visual arts and it delivers a preliminary theoretical discussion. The article discusses the notion of ‘transcultural capital’ as a perspective within the study of contemporary migrations of artist. It also looks at the concept of ‘cultural scenes’ as places of significant cultural and artistic activities and amenities. Linked to these are ‘transnational artistic practices’ and the production of translocal geographies drawn by an overlap of the migratory destinations of artists and networks of places of creation, production and artistic dissemination which enhance different art markets. This article discusses the ways in which these different theories can contribute to our understanding of the mobility of cultural professionals and, in particular, of the emigration of Portuguese visual artists.

Keywords: *Transcultural capital; translocal geographies; transnational artistic practices; cultural scenes; visual artists.*

Introduction

In this article, I have focused understanding the role of art in the transformation of cities (André et al., 2016). Art, artists and other cultural actors play an important role in the development of socially-creative spaces, thus encouraging the production of ‘new urbanities’ by inspiring and launching socially-innovative initiatives (André et al., 2017). Building on this, I focus on the emigration of Portuguese visual artists and raise important issues regarding the mobility of artists, transnationalism and artistic practices in the context of migration. The main question of is: how can emigration of visual artists challenge current understandings of migration? Then we ask why do visual artists move so frequently and what are they looking for in this mobility? What are the reasons behind their decision to migrate? What is the configuration of the geographical routes

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of this migration? What is the significance of their transcultural capital within the various periods and stages of the migratory process?

This article presents a number of key concepts and theoretical ideas concerning a transnational art world formed of transmigrant artists. These artists use different forms of Bourdieu's capitals in the processes, paths and effects of their migrations between cities and cultural scenes. I begin by tracing the various connections between art and cultural geographies of migration which forms the basis of my research. Namely, this concerns the connections between the 'art world' (Becker, 1982), the 'new mobilities paradigm' and the 'mobility turn' (Cresswell, 2006; Hannam et al., 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006). The notion of 'transcultural capital' is presented as a perspective within the study of contemporary migrations. In relation to artists, it is understood as a combination of, and mutual interdependence between, three different forms of capital – social, cultural and economic – which represent a whole series of interlinking features in the lives of migrants (Meinhof & Triandafyllidou, 2006; Meinhof, 2009). I also bring to the discussion the notion of 'cultural scenes'. These scenes are part of the fabric of the most important cultural and artistic cities (which some refer to as 'creative cities'). They are also crucial in the production of translocal geographies formed by the crossover between migratory destinations and the dense networks of creation, production and artistic dissemination which help to form different artistic markets. Before the final reflection on these theoretical ideas, I introduce the notion of 'transnational artistic practices'. These practices complement the transnational activities mentioned by Alejandro Portes et al. (1999) which reflect the ability of art and artists to travel through artistic networks and (re)produce transnational and translocal geographies.

A mobile visual art world

Today the importance of mobility is undeniable. Understanding it goes some way towards understanding the contemporary world. Mobility captures the idea that the world is in motion, not just in terms of people but also cultures, objects, capital, business, services, diseases, images, information and ideas – all of which circulate around the globe. Included within the concept of mobility are various forms of displacement – with different distances and temporalities – which involve people moving between different places. This is a notion that encompasses both the movement of people at an international level, as well as more local journeys through public spaces and daily journeys linked to everyday life (Hannam et al., 2006; Blunt, 2007; Sheller, 2011).



Although mobility is historically significant – including within the cultural sphere as Kim (2014) suggests by referring to the example of Renaissance artists – and therefore is not unique to modern times (Faist, 2013), the world now experiences the most varied, dynamic and complex set of movements which challenge previous conceptions of the scale and importance of mobility (Sheller, 2011). It is in this context of complexity – and in recognition of how important different mobilities are for distinct social groups and contexts – that a new theoretical approach was born within the social sciences. In this approach mobility, which can be viewed as a complex set of movements, imaginaries and experiences, ceases to be solely an object of study and becomes an analytical lens. Authors such as John Urry, Mimi Sheller, Kevin Hannam and Tim Cresswell introduced the notion of the ‘mobility turn’ which within the social sciences has embraced the task of detailing the trajectories of people through cities and urban spaces, including those of migrants.

In the study of migrations, the ‘new mobility paradigm’ forms a new conceptualisation of mobility which combines social and spatial theory with theoretical tools of analysis. This has prompted researchers to consider new trends in the spatial mobility of individuals which, in turn, has stimulated the transnational approach to the study of migration (Faist, 2013). In this sense, as Faist wrote, with the adoption of the concept of transnationalism in these studies a model of analysis with a more complex logic has been introduced involving circular migration, remigration, transmigration and transnational practices.

Although much of the recent work on ‘the new mobilities paradigm’ is situated within the social sciences (Hannam et al., 2006, p.5), the cultural geography approach uses the productive intersections of the social sciences, arts and humanities to better understand mobility (Blunt, 2017). These new and complex social, cultural, economic and political geographies which these paradigms refer to did not go unnoticed in Bourdieu's (1993) “artistic field” or Becker's (1982) “art world”. Such artistic references have witnessed great changes in the expansion of their ‘frontiers’ in which mobility is reflected by the growing number of international art events, exchanges of projects between artists from across the world and by the expansion of the arts trade.

Transmigrant artists are one of the many examples of migrants which have different experiences in terms of professional mobility and labour (economic) migration. For various reasons, artists see emigration and circulation as a life option and as an integral part of their professional strategy (Duester, 2013; Barthélémy & Boichot, 2014; Rogers, 2014; Hirvi, 2015). In regards to the specific motives of migration, we can highlight



artists who combine a socio-cultural enthusiasm for travelling which forms an important part of their lives (Heinich, 2005) with their search for new job opportunities, or professional training which enables artists to acquire greater levels of social and cultural capital. We must also consider artists who migrate strictly due to labour-related factors. This is associated with the need to survive in a labour market that is extremely volatile and characterised by a certain degree of precariousness (Menger, 1999; Markusen, 2006; Gill & Pratt, 2008). Mentioning a suggestion of Sirkeci (2009) on his work about different types and degrees of conflicts in transnational mobility, people don't move when they are happy and satisfied. In fact "Migration is initiated by conflict situation where incompatible interests are expressed by the parties involved." (Ibid, p. 11). Therefore, to some extent, artists move when they feel insecure, attacked, at risk and under threat. They also move when they happen to be in environments with no inspiration or environment for artistic exchange. Hence this can indicate dissatisfaction with the place they are based. If that place cannot provide and cater for their artistic needs, they move elsewhere. Nevertheless, my research addresses a possible duality of migration and may help to substantiate what other authors have also tried to show. By this I mean that migration is not always a negative form of movement (as is typically the case with economic migration), but rather a positive movement "undertaken by 'cultural migrants' who use mobility in order to experience new life and cultures, gain new inspiration, make collaborations/projects with new people, and extend their network" (Duester, 2013, p.108).

Indeed, increased mobility and the emergence of new international migration flows have contributed to a redesigning of the social and cultural geography of the art world. For many artists moving, residing and working outside their place of origin is increasingly becoming a part of their lifestyle and an integral part of their work. This nomadic way of life allows artists to share values and stimulates creativity by expanding their target audience and the distribution channels of cultural goods and services far beyond where they were produced and across national borders. As Duester (2013) points out, we are dealing with new geographies which are created through communications, collaborations and short-term movements. The art world engages in fluid mobility which has formed a globally-connected space of transnational and intercultural communication and collaboration. It has also led to interactions between artists, galleries and art institutions from across the world.

As Blunt (2007) highlighted, the cultural geographies of migration represent a broad and diverse field of research. However, different studies



tend to address different concerns. Typically research focuses on issues of mobility, networks and other connections between and within places of origin and settlement. Studies may also look at the ways in which migrant mobilities are shaped and affected by cultural and artistic practices and representations. It is in this context that I believe that the concept of 'transcultural capital' can be an asset to artists.

Transcultural capital

The idea of transnational migrants is linked to a set of practices which support certain lifestyles and point to a relationship between the migrant's country of origin and the host country (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). In order to capture and describe some of the everyday practices of migrants Ulrike Hanna Meinhof and Anna Triandafyllidou presented the new notion of transcultural capital in a study focused on the construction of a cross-cultural Europe. According to the authors, transcultural capital is a concept that refers to a mixture of social and cultural capital in the lives of migrant artists which has positive economic consequences. It is based on the work of Bourdieu (1986), namely in the combination and adaptation of three forms of capital: social, cultural and economic capital. Transcultural capital suggests a potential link between these three forms of capital. It identifies the strategic use of knowledge, technical skills and socio-professional networks acquired by migrants through the connections established between their country of origin and cultural background and their new place of residence. This idea is therefore adopted with the intention of looking at the strategic possibilities of creating strong transnational and translocal ties within and between migrant communities, artists and cultural institutions (social capital); and of expanding multiculturalism and the maintenance of the artistic roots of the original cultures which mix with new local and global artistic influences (cultural capital). It is argued that migrant artists can strategically use their transcultural capital to maximise their residency and survival options outside their home country, enhance employment prospects and to build an artistic career, thus promoting economic and professional development (economic capital) (Meinhof & Triandafyllidou, 2006).

Transposing these ideas into my research – and according to several authors that studied the following topics (see Meinhof, 2009) – social capital describes the human resources available to Portuguese visual artists through their social networks. This form of capital can be strategically activated in the existing connections between Portugal and Portuguese diaspora, therefore boosting the beginning of migration and facilitating the



whole process. Furthermore, connections between artists and institutions within Portugal and overseas often boosts the labour market. Local, translocal and transnational networks of support often underpin the ability of artists to work in their specific area of training or in other alternative areas outside the creative and artistic market, thus supporting creative production.

In regards to cultural capital, this concerns the cultural resources available to artists as a result of their family background, socialization, education, professional development and training. Artists are able to combine these cultural resources with those acquired from their geographical mobility and past migrations. The ability to combine artistic styles and cultural influences, share common creative projects and build new creative works is further strengthened through encounters with other artists, by connections with artistic and cultural institutions, as well as with other civil organisations. The use of Portuguese codes and symbols and other examples of Portuguese culture increases the support artists have from their compatriots abroad and can be viewed as an attempt to retain their connections to Portugal. Another interesting point to consider is that many artists can speak at least one other language besides Portuguese. This means that they can switch easily between languages, thus giving them an advantage in social environments and labour market.

In terms of economic capital it is important to mention that it takes two different forms. On the one hand, this form of capital is related to the economic background of artists and the financial support available to them. This leads to either a formal artistic education and professional development, or the beginning of the process of migration. On the other hand, the combination of social and cultural capital can generate economic capital in the sense that artists are able to make a living in the country in which they have moved to. Here the emergence of communities and network-based creative industries (from distinct cultural and artistic activities) – which operate ‘below the surface as alternatives to the international creative and artistic market – prove pivotal to the careers of artists. The internet, online content and cultural organisations working in parallel with major cultural and artistic institutions are crucial to this alternative market. Another economic-related issue concerns labour and the stigma related to the precarious nature of the artistic work which makes the chances of success within this domain somewhat unpredictable (Menger, 1999). There are professionals who are able to work in companies, organisations or as freelancers in their field of training; those that cannot enter the creative and artistic market and therefore survive and support their creative activities by working in menial professions; and



finally, there are those who work in the artistic and creative sector but also make money outside the creative market in order to survive.

The interest in transcultural capital as an approach to the study of the migration of artists is not only related to its ability to organise the different levels of relations within the migratory process (expressed in the different forms of capital), but also its capacity to capture the meaningful long-distance connections which Portuguese visual artists establish between their host countries and Portugal. According to Meinhof & Triandafyllidou (2006), these networks of relations constitute the social capital of these migrant artists which can be activated for their personal, cultural and economic benefit, thus constituting what is understood as 'transcultural capital'. In addition, this research considers the importance of framing these networks of connections territorially. This is because the relationships that migrants have with the territory and place in which they live are crucial factors within the migratory process. In this regard, since some cities stand out due to their social, cultural and economic conditions (Landry & Bianchini, 1995), it is natural for artists to move between places – or cultural scenes, as I advocate – which have specific amenities and conditions that facilitate positive migratory experiences.

Translocal geographies and the focus on 'cultural scenes'

In his work on the dynamics of the migratory processes under globalisation, Stephen Castles (2002, p.1159) referred to the need to redefine a certain transnational consciousness with 'local transnationalism'. Behind this 'local transnationalism' is the idea that migrants "find their primary sense of identity at the level of the city, rather than the nation-state". Based on this idea is the notion of 'translocality' that, according to Greiner & Sakdapolrak (2013), has challenged the rigidity of place within transnational studies in which flows are increasingly hypermobile in the sense that immigrants are no longer as spatially limited, historically unconscious or culturally homogeneous. Despite translocality being a catchword in a number of different disciplines – including geography, history, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology and development studies – it "describes phenomena involving mobility, migration, circulation and spatial interconnectedness not necessarily limited to national boundaries" (Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p.373). As a result, it gives due importance to the place in the transnational flows. Notable scholars of transnationalism have engaged with more localised migration phenomena. Guarnizo & Smith (1998) explain this in their work on 'locations of transnationalism' which



explores the 'local-to-local relations', as well as the work of Smith (2001, 2005) on 'transnational urbanism'.

For Oakes & Schein (2006, p.20) the concept of translocality is linked to the idea that "place is unbounded, dynamic and expressive of multiple scales of material processes means that place constitutes an intersection of local and translocal processes and thus offers a concept that can link different scales together in a meaningful way". In this sense, it is a notion that considers a 'sense of place' to include several places that are linked together or connected to a broad and multiscale set of processes. Given this perspective, the focus on translocal geographies – as Brickell & Datta (2011) calls it – is reflected in works on mobility and other more complex forms of migration beyond the linearity of origin-destination routes, circular or ongoing migration and fragmented journeys. The authors explain how translocality "calls to situatedness during mobility [and transnational migration] however, still retain national boundaries as the predominant focus of local-local connections". This refers to how social relations shape the transnational networks of migrants and their cultural and economic exchanges.

For this reason, it is important to consider the idea of a 'grounded transnationalism' (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Brickell & Datta, 2011; Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013) which is vital to examining the spatial and temporal constructions of the experiences of migrants, as well as how spaces and places play active roles in the dynamics of migration and other forms of mobility. In this context, transcultural capital is essential to the study of the multiscale situatedness of the experiences of migrants. In addition, transcultural capital is combined with Bourdieu's (2002) notion of 'habitus' and the negotiations it produces within society which are generated from the exchange of different types of capital. Habitus is present in everyday life and is nurtured by the social environment and interactions between individuals. In this sense, it is seen as a set of perceptions, appropriations, actions and reactions which are incorporated and experienced by individuals within society. According to Kelly & Lusi (2006), Bourdieu's habitus is the framework of evaluations and expectations which cause individuals to consciously prioritise certain dispositions and practices. "A habitus provides the context in which capitals of various forms (economic, social, and cultural) are valued and given meaning" (ibid, p.833). As a geographer, I share the view of Brickell & Datta (2011) by suggesting that the interest lies more in the spatial applications of this notion of habitus, particularly in the sense that transcultural capital – with its different forms – is adjusted in different ways, spaces, places and scales.



The idea of 'spatial capital' emerged in the 2000s and is one of the forms of capital that enables us to think of the habitus as a spatially contingent field of meaning which works through a range of spatial boundaries. This makes it part of both subjectivities and actual physical locations. Various authors have worked on the concept of spatial capital based on their own interpretations of this notion and theoretical orientation: Examples include Edward Soja, Jacques Levy, Ryan Centner, Lars Marcus, Sara Forsberg, Patrick R erat and Loretta Lees, among others. Broadly speaking, it can be said that the main concepts of the term 'spatial capital' are derived from the ideas of social capital and inequality in the territory, therefore making it extremely relevant to migration studies.

In this sense, although the concept has two different focuses – one related to the characteristics of the subject, the group or the community, and another related to the characteristics of the territory and its synergies (Apaolaza & Blanco, 2015) – here the notion of spatial capital results from a combination of elements belonging to the different variants. Consequently, it is proposed that we should respect Bourdieu's notion of a capital inherent to the subject – both cumulative and interchangeable – but simultaneously acknowledging territory as a conditioning of material possibilities. Thus, spatial capital results from the conjunction of subjective and objective dimensions according to which the appropriation of territory (done by a single individual or a group) depends both on the individuals capacity of differential appropriation as well as on the nature of the space. On the one hand it matters the work of Levy (1994) that applied the concept of capital to space in the same way that Bourdieu used it to economic sphere. To Levy space can be compared to rare goods that constitute a form of capital, and therefore a source of inequality. According to the author, spatial capital can be seen as the means by which individuals (spatial actors) manage problems of distance or implement their spatial strategies. In other words, spatial capital can be defined as "all resources accumulated by an actor enabling him or her to benefit, according to their strategy, from using society's spatial dimension' (Levy & Lussault, 2003, p.124). On the other hand it also matters the ideal of spatial capital tangible and external to the individual. In this case, it is the space who 'holds' the spatial capital. The heterogeneities inherent to the territory in matter of spatial configuration, infrastructures, services, accessibility, etc., determine synergies which may be internalized by the individuals. Thus, migrants can have a greater or lesser spatial capital depending on the location, scale and spatial capital of their destinations. Still on the subject of territorial configuration, Edward Soja (2010) understands spatial capital as something closely related to economic capital. In this regard, Soja follows the ideas of Jacobs (1969) and



Lefebvre (1974) who both emphasised the importance of urban life in economic and human development. According Soja (2010), this spatial capital which is linked to urban agglomeration and its positive externalities is firmly connected to hard and soft factors. Such factors are related to particular urban conditions which stimulate and sustain societal change and development. In other words, spatial capital is framed as the advantages or positive aspects of a given city or specific place. In some ways these ideas form the basis of new location theories in regional science and economic geography and give prominent positions to several concepts related to the knowledge economy, including creative cities (Landry & Bianchini, 1995). Regarding these soft factors or marks of distinction that are attached to some places, we can also summon up the Harvey's (2001) idea of collective symbolic capital which makes the likes of Paris, London, New York, Berlin and other global cities stand out from their counterparts. In this sense, under these previous premises, the same offer and territorial configuration may be advantageous for one particular migrant or social group but not for another, while the same subjective competencies may be advantageous in certain territorial contexts and not in others. As a result, the spatial capital of a migrant or a group can vary if their territorial context is modified (through improvements to infrastructure, facilities, services, etc.) as well as their appropriation capacities (such as an increase in income, acquisition of skills, etc.).

Using these ideas as a framework and by considering space as one of the different forms of capital, I try to understand how these multiple locations mentioned above (cities and other places) shape the everyday practices of artists. In particular, I look at how these places affect the migratory process. For the purpose of this article, although the idea of translocal geographies emphasises different spaces, places, scales and connections – such as the city, the street/neighbourhood and the shop/home as Brickell & Datta (2011) refer to in regards to translocal affiliations and Hall (2013) in terms of understanding the transnational city – I pay special attention to the middle scale, which is somehow similar to the neighbourhood level.

In an increasingly interconnected world some cities have become large urban centres of artistic and creative worldwide action while other peripheral (Shaw, 2014) and rural (Markusen, 2013) cities, neighbourhoods and urban locations (Ley, 2003) have, to some extent, challenged or acted as alternatives to models which emphasise creative cities as the most important centres for retaining artists and cultural professionals. However, among different migratory destinations there are particular contexts which seem to absorb more resources than others and appear culturally desirable. In terms of geography, artists tend to move to places that have a certain



spatial capital, suggesting that the focus should not be given exclusively to the city itself but also to the cultural scenes that are produced, take place and coexist in different cities, regardless of their creativity status. Economists, geographers and sociologists have long said that specific 'creative clusters' facilitate and promote the exchange of ideas and knowledge which makes artistic production possible (Pratt, 2008). Similarly, the notion of the 'cultural scene' is emphasised here as a geographical context that welcomes artists and other cultural professionals and enables them to engage with other actors and agents. However, despite some resemblance to other widely-held concepts of cultural or creative 'district', 'quarter' and 'cluster' (Wen, 2012) the literature underlines the complex transformation of cultural scene concept over recent decades. Blum (2001) discusses cultural scenes dynamics, parameters and borders, and in particular its regularity, extensiveness, duration, theatricality and transgressive character. In general, it can be defined as a "particular constellation of amenities in a place" (Silver, Clark & Graziul, 2011, p.229) or "informal assemblages, 'fields' or 'art worlds' in which performers/creators, facilities and audiences/consumers come together in a shared investment in a particular activity" (O'Connor & Gu, 2016, p.24). Cultural scenes are "clusters of social and cultural activity" which "mobilizes local energies and moves these energies in multiple directions – onwards, to later reiterations of itself; outwards, to more formal sorts of social or entrepreneurial activity; upwards, to the broader coalescing of cultural energies within which collective identities takes shape" (Straw, 2004, p.412). In turn, this stimulates reflection, critical thinking and the debate of ideas, while at the same time develops favourable places for social innovation which is linked to social justice, local needs, capacity building and the strengthening of local actors (André et al., 2017).

In these cultural scenes sedentary and mobile individuals co-exist and they mobilise artistic and cultural resources based on the relations of proximity between them. Cultural scenes are situated communities which function as expressions of locality through their agency, sociality and reproducibility and have both traditional (placed-based) and virtual aspects. They are not just localised receptors for transnational processes but substantive social forms in which local subjects are produced. Cultural scenes could be viewed as places of translocality. Through the networks embedded within them, they facilitate encounters between individuals who share similar beliefs and values, create things collectively, generate authenticity and new forms of cultural expression and production. Furthermore, cultural scenes are creative exchange nodes which also support migration yet maintain links between different localities. As Wen



(2012) summarises, common to such scenes is the element of bottom-up choice, whereby artists, creative professionals and consumers are [mostly] attracted to a particular scene due to 'cultural' rather than 'economic' reasons. This is despite the scene consisting of a lifestyle based on significant cultural consumption (Navarro et al., 2012) and includes everyone involved in the creation, production and artistic dissemination within the art market (Becker, 1995).

In addition, scenes may also be characterised by poor organisational structures and temporality compared to most 'planned' concentrations within cities. There is an abundance of social networks and creative exchanges within cultural scenes and some of them are even indistinguishable from one another because they possess flexible boundaries. The permeability of their borders reflects the duality of place and space-network and proximity and global interaction. This explains why Silver & Clark (2015) suggest that while it is possible to describe a place as a cultural scene, the features of these are not unique to one place because they can also be found in other territories to different extents, meaning that geographically, cultural scenes are somewhat complex. In this regard, Kotarba & LaLone (2014) described the existence of 'local scenes' as 'local communities' which exist within specific neighbourhoods, rather than the city as a whole; 'translocal scenes', referring to numerous local scenes connected through a network of shared values, meanings and identities; and 'virtual scenes', in which places exist on the internet as a network of virtual connections. Consequently, it is argued that these geographically complex cultural scenes determine the paths of emigration and other forms of mobility of artists because they have the energy to attract them. This facilitates the production of translocal geographies as a result of the choice to be in (or at least close to) these dynamic places of multiple scales which include local and translocal processes. In this context, by taking advantage of their transcultural capital (and of course, enhancing it) artists can produce what I call 'transnational artistic practices'.

Transnational artistic practices

According to DiMaggio & Fernández-Kelly (2010) both migration and art have become key elements towards understanding life, culture and creativity. Given the diversity and richness of many artistic productions in migrant communities and their impact on wider culture, the authors highlight how "the arts serve a variety of functions for the migrant men and women who create and consume them: they provide the comfort of familiarity, helping them to interpret personal experience; they



communicate about the old world to the young; and they serve as foci of rituals of solidarity and communion that bring immigrants together” (ibid, p.2). Moreover, the art also enables migrants “to represent themselves to the host country affirming public as well as private identities, for purposes both commercial and political”. Both in historic and recent migrations art has been an instrument for maintaining distinct identities, of combining identities and encouraging integration into the host society. This is because artistic expression plays a significant role in migrant adaptation. Furthermore, art allows for a kind of freedom not found in other forms of communication and enables migrants to transgress boundaries through the use of their imagination.

In line with these ideas, Howard (2011, p.255) explains that “arts are an important component of transnational relations”. Art can strengthen relations between territories because it can reflect the relations between places or societies and can promote a sense of belonging to a transnational community. According to Howard, one example of this is the fact that many artists develop transnational lifestyles while moving between territories where their art is both desirable and appreciated. Although the artwork itself is quite mobile (Duester, 2016) and sometimes artists prefer to stay in places where they feel comfortable, the ease in which regions and countries are crossed today shows that migration and circulation between places provides an opportunity for artists to make contact with environments that favour their lifestyles and which stimulate artistic creation. Crucially, Hirvi (2015) adds that the mobility and transnational practices of contemporary artists seems to defy the idea of a history and world of art based on the idea that cultural and artistic fields are defined by geographical borders. Thus, transnational artistic practices challenge and question the logic of national borders.

The importance of art in transnational relations extends to other symbolic dimensions. These dimensions emotionally link individuals to the different places in which they were embedded. It is a symbolic link translated in terms of specific consumption in the various fields of the cultural and artistic sectors. It combines origin and destination and sometimes other migratory places of its translocal geography. Through these forms of consumption – which can be added to art production and other activities from those who belong to the art world – transnational symbolic universes or sentiment communities are created which connect places, cities, countries of origin and destinations in different ways. Moreover, in this research it is argued that even when this symbolic dimension of creative and artistic practices are spatially situated they operate through networks and flows which link several places together.



Therefore, to a certain extent the existence of transnational artistic practices reflect the ability of art and artists as migrant subjects of travelling through these networks and (re)producing translocal geographies.

Despite being mentioned by some artists and art scholars (notably in personal blogs or museum websites), the term 'transnational artistic practices' lacks clarity regarding its meaning and scope. As a result, this research advances a potential definition of transnational artistic practices. This is done by considering that transnational artistic practices can include the ideas of Abumeis (2013) regarding hybridity, fluidity and sense of belonging to a place that the migrant artist develops and represents in his or her artworks. It also considers a set of experiences more closely associated with transnational practices as Portes et al. (1999) and other transnational scholars have noted, but confined to the art world and the cultural, social and economic dynamics which they generate. Based on the original ideas of Glick Schiller et al. (1992), this means that transnational artistic practices are understood as links which migrant artists maintain with their country of origin while adapting to their new host society. These links can be expressed in works of art through a set of codes and symbols related to the cultural origins of artists and in the attitudes and behaviours of those who are part of the art world. Furthermore, transnational artistic practices also build relationships and interactions with other artists and institutions, while simultaneously enhancing the relationship between the country of origin of the artists and their host country.

This idea of 'transnational artistic practices' relates in part to what Hirvi (2015) describes as 'transnational flows of creativity'. Applying her work to my study, it is my intention to comprehend the extent to which Portuguese artists engage in various everyday artistic practices which transgress borders after emigrating from Portugal. This exercise highlights the patterns of social, cultural and economic engagement, as well as the everyday life practices of Portuguese artists living outside Portugal. Thus, artists and artworks travel across national borders, between cities and across cultural scenes which operate as inspirational working contexts. In doing so, they launch new ideas and spark creativity; join artistic residencies; develop collaborative art projects with artists from across the globe; promote or strengthen relationships with Portuguese cultural institutions (including museums, art galleries, artistic schools and creative industries); exhibit and sell their work and enhance their professional reputation and networks. Most importantly, the migration of artists allows them to stay connected to the social networks which constitute both local and global art worlds. In this sense, transnational artistic practices intersect with different forms of capital related to transcultural capital. Therefore,



these artistic practices link to practices, behaviours and activities specific to each of the three spheres (social, cultural and economic), despite maintaining relatively fluid boundaries between them.

Concluding remarks

Migration is today a major feature of the art world. This is due to the relationship between the emerging international mobility flows and the complex dynamics of artistic markets. Some of these markets more mainstream while others operate through more alternative circuits (Robertson, 2005). This explains the proposal to look specifically at the world of the visual arts and, in particular, the emigration of artists. The economic damage inflicted on Portugal by the global financial crisis raises the profile of this topic. For instance, the policy of austerity used by the Portuguese government to respond to the crisis intensified the migration of Portuguese artists. The effects of austerity had a negative impact on job opportunities, caused a fall in personal incomes and, in some cases, led to poorer working conditions.

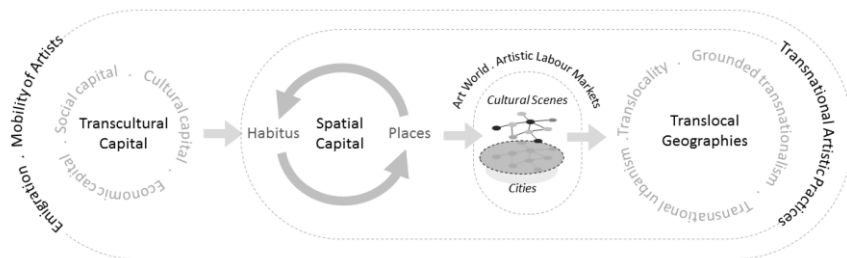


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

The theoretical discussion presented in this article (as shown in the figure 1) reflects a set of concerns important for my doctoral research. One can say that by looking at the transcultural capital of Portuguese visual artists we presuppose the level of cultural, social and economic resources that these individuals possess at the beginning of their migratory journeys. Consequently, I assume that at the time of their departures the different cultural contexts and level of familiarity, the size of their social and professional network of contacts, as well as financial support, leads to different migration experiences. The personal and professional projects of each artist (whose option to emigrate can be delineated well before the end of their artistic training), and the success or failure of their integration into the Portuguese labour market, can force these professionals to leave the country in search of better working conditions and stability, thus enabling them to build a more prosperous professional career. In addition,



this research seeks to understand how the different forms of capital are connected and updated in the migratory journeys of artists as they integrate into the host society (both socially and culturally as well as economically). However, transcultural capital is also implicit in the long-distance relations that these migrants maintain with individuals and cultural institutions, which can in turn be used for personal, cultural and economic gain. What I define as ‘transnational artistic practices’ is in-line with the traditional transnational practices which these transmigrants maintain with their country of origin, while limiting them to the artistic sphere.

In this article, I have depicted a spatial perspective of migrations by referring to cultural scenes as the nodes of a network of local connections. In this sense, cultural scenes and the production of translocal geographies (network of places) acquires a prominent dimension. This, together with cities of recognised merit in the cultural and artistic panorama and their amenities (factors of attraction), open the doors to the idea of translocality and grounded transnationalism. By focusing on the interconnectivity of these places and capturing opportunities for the constitution and reconstitution of positive social relations – exemplified by practices and relationships, activities, communications, networks, feelings and values – I highlight how the sense of artistic identity is at the city-level, the cultural scene and the interstitial spaces (linked to the symbolic places of artistic creation), which are part of the itinerary of emigration.

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