When Walls Remember: **Public Space Democracy and Commemorative Muralism at NOVA FCSH University Campus in Lisbon, Portugal, 2008-2023**

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Abstract

This thesis critically examines commemorative muralism and its potential role in the democratization of public space. Contemporary manifestations of muralism in Portugal can be considered to have originated from the 1974 Revolution that overthrew the Portuguese Estado Novo dictatorship (1933-1974). During the revolutionary period that followed (1974-1975), a wave of anti-fascist and revolutionary murals emerged, reshaping the visuality of urban spaces and reflecting a democratic reassertion of freedom of expression. Since this democratic transition, political and cultural shifts have introduced diverse forms of urban interventions into Lisbon's public spaces, including graffiti, political posters, monuments and commemorative murals. As a result, Lisbon's public spaces make for particularly compelling sites to explore the potential for pluralistic and agonistic democracy as embodied in physical space and artistic interventions. By examining the long-term transformation of a single public space (Lisbon's NOVA FCSH university campus between 2008 and 2023), this thesis argues that commemorative muralism can contribute to public space democracy in four distinct ways. First, its capacity to operate as a counter-monument while simultaneously exceeding the boundaries of the concept. Second, its rootedness in the traditions of graffiti and street art. Third, the different possibilities afforded by the use of paint and colour. And fourth, its ambivalent position between permanence and ephemerality. In this way, this research aims to contribute to the flourishing scholarship on public art and democracy, especially in contexts with important traditions of muralism, street art and graffiti.

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List of Abbreviations

AD - Aliança Democrática [Democratic Alliance]

BE - Bloco de Esquerda [Left Bloc]

CDS-PP – Centro Democrático e Social – Partido Popular [Democratic and Social Centre – People's Party]

GAU - Galeria de Arte Urbana [Urban Art Gallery]

NOVA FCSH - Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanidades [NOVA University Lisbon, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities]

PCP - Partido Comunista Português [Portuguese Communist Party]

PCPT/MRPP - Partido Comunista dos Trabalhadores Portugueses/ Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado [Portuguese Workers' Communist Party/Re-Organized Movement of the Party of the Proletariat]

PIDE – Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado [International and State Defense Police]

PREC - Processo Revolucionário Em Curso [Ongoing Revolutionary Process]

PS - Partido Socialista [Socialist Party]

PSD - Partido Social Democrático [Social Democratic Party]

Introduction

> The built environment is built because it's been allowed to be built. It's been allowed to be built because it stands for and reflects an institution or a dominant culture. The budget for architecture is a hundred times the budget for public art because a building provides jobs and products and services that augment the finances of the city. Public art comes in through the back door like a second class citizen. Instead of bemoaning this, public art can use the marginal position to its advantage: public art can present itself as the voice of the marginal cultures, as the minority report, as the opposition party. Public art exists to thicken the plot.[1]

Drawing from this assertion, this thesis investigates the function of the commemorative mural as a form of public art and its potential in 'thickening the plot' and democratising public spaces. Although Portugal – and Lisbon in particular – has a longstanding tradition of public and mural art, contemporary forms of muralism can be traced back to the 1974 Revolution, which brought an end to the Estado Novo dictatorship (1926-1974). During the dictatorship, social life and public spaces were tightly controlled and closely monitored, shaped by the tendencies of authoritarian rule. However, in the post-1974 revolutionary period (1974-1975), a surge of anti-fascist and revolutionary murals transformed the visual landscape of urban spaces, reflecting political aspirations and collective reimaginations of a newly democratic society.

Since the establishment of this democratic framework, political and cultural shifts have introduced diverse forms of public art and urban interventions into Lisbon's public spaces. This includes but is not limited to, illicit expressions such as American-influenced graffiti, political slogans, posters, and stencils, as well as officially commissioned commemorative murals and monuments. As a result, Lisbon's public spaces make for particularly compelling sites to explore the potential for pluralistic and agonistic democracy as embodied in physical space and artistic interventions.

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[1] Vito Acconci, "Public space in a private time," *Critical Inquiry* 16, no. 4 (1990): 918.

The term 'public art' is used in this thesis to refer to any intervention in public space beyond the functional build/architectural environment. This encompasses both sanctioned and unsanctioned interventions, including – but not limited to – advertisements, any form of paint or decorative elements applied to architectural structures, as well as posters, stickers, graffiti, street art and murals.

A Broader View on Commemorative Muralism

Academic scholarship on contemporary commemorative muralism has predominantly concentrated on the contexts of Poland, Northern Ireland, and Central and South America. These works often focus on analysing the iconographies present in the murals and the ways in which they relate to collective memory. For instance, studies on Colombia have viewed murals as symbolic reparations for past violence, while in El Salvador, they have been studied as efforts to forge collective identity amid contested histories.[2] In Poland, research has shown that commemorative murals often support a state sponsored view of history, whilst in Ireland scholars mostly centre on the interplay between memory, community identity, and politics.[3]

In Portugal, Margarida Rendeiro appears to be the only scholar to date who has directly addressed this topic, arguing that Lisbon's murals commemorating the 1974 Revolution primarily convey non-subversive, white, and male-centred narratives.[4] More broadly, both Rendeiro and international scholars tend to adopt similar methodological approaches, often

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[2] See, for example, Bill Rolston and Sofi Ospina, "Picturing peace: Murals and memory in Colombia," *Race & Class* 58, no. 3 (2017): 42; Rachel Heidenry, "The murals of El Salvador: Reconstruction, historical memory and whitewashing," *Public Art Dialogue* 4, no. 1 (2014): 122.

[3] See, for example, Ilija Upalevski, "Murals make (Our) history: paintings on the wall as media of cultural memory. Interpreting the current state of Warsaw's commemorative murals," *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej* 13, no. 4 (2017): 130; Bill Rolston, "'Trying to reach the future through the past': Murals and memory in Northern Ireland," *Crime, Media, Culture* 6, no. 3 (2010): 303-4.

[4] See, for example, Margarida Rendeiro, "Streets of Revolution: Analyzing Representations of the Carnation Revolution in Street Art," in *Challenging Memories and Rebuilding Identities*, ed. Margarida Rendeiro and Federica Lupati (Routledge, 2019), 101-2; Margarida Rendeiro, "Masculinities on the Wall: An Approach to Mural Representations of the Carnation Revolution in Lisbon," *Humanities Bulletin* 1 no.1 (2018): 179.

focusing on large mural collections produced within a condensed timeframe. Scholars such as Rendeiro and Ilija Upalevski also frequently observe that murals typically fail to fulfil their 'subversive potential' as public art, though they do not necessarily articulate precisely what this potential involves. [5] Although commemorative muralism has garnered some scholarly attention then, several themes, topics, and arguments remain underexplored and warrant further academic investigation.

Research Gap and Methodology

To address the gaps in existing scholarship, this thesis adopts a methodological approach distinct from those used in prior studies. While previous research analyses large mural collections at particular points in time, this study examines the long-term evolution of a single commemorative mural within its broader public art landscape. In doing so, this thesis intends to uncover the said 'potential' of commemorative muralism as a subversive artform by critically examining – among other factors – its cultural origins, logistical conditions, content and materiality. This thesis also examines the commemorative mural in relation to other elements in public space, rather than treating it as isolated from its surroundings. To this end, this study draws on broader public art scholarship that has yet to specifically address muralism. This notably includes Chantal Mouffe's *Art and Democracy: Art as an Agonistic Intervention in Public Space (2007)* and Fred Evans' *Public Art and the Fragility of Democracy: An Essay in Political Aesthetics (2019)*. The primary aim of this research therefore lies in developing a deeper understanding of commemorative muralism and its potential role in fostering public space democracy.

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[5]See Ilija Upalevski, "Murals make (Our) history," 118; Margarida Rendeiro, "We Are Not Your Negroes: Analyzing Mural Representations of Blackness in Lisbon Metropolitan Area," In *Twenty-First Century Arab and African Diasporas in Spain, Portugal and Latin America* (Routledge, 2022), 113.

The case study selected to apply this methodology is the NOVA FCSH campus (NOVA University of Lisbon - Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities) in central Lisbon, whose environment offers a particularly fertile setting for this research. Drawing predominantly on the Google Maps Street View archive, this thesis examines the transformations of the campus public space within the given time frame of 2008 to 2023. This timeframe allows for an analysis of the mural's long-term trajectory within a broader context, framed by two distinct periods marked by significantly different socio-political conditions: 2008–2014 and 2014–2023.

Thesis Statement and Outline

This thesis ultimately finds that commemorative muralism can contribute to public space democracy in four distinct ways. First, its capacity to function as a counter-monument while simultaneously challenging and extending the conceptual boundaries of that category. Second, its firm grounding in the traditions of graffiti and street art. Third, the wide range of expressions made possible by the use of paint and color And fourth, its ambivalent position at the intersection of permanence and ephemerality.

To support this argument, the thesis comprises three interrelated chapters that investigate commemorative murals in relation to a specific public space and its artistic traditions. The first chapter gives an overview of the historical context of muralism in Portugal and establishes the significance of the NOVA FCSH campus as a public space in Lisbon. It also defines public space democracy and political aesthetics, developing the theoretical framework that informs the analysis in the following chapters.

Building on this framework, the second chapter situates the 2008–2014 period by exploring the connections between anti-austerity and student protests. It then examines the various forms of public art shaping the NOVA FCSH campus, including unrestricted graffiti,

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zero-tolerance policies, and institutional muralism. This chapter contextualizes the commemorative mural within the broader history and culture of public art at FCSH.

The final chapter examines socio-political shifts from 2014 to 2023, focusing on global protests, decolonization, and student discourse. It analyses the evolving materiality and iconography of the commemorative mural and other agonistic interventions. While Chapter II addresses the mural's origins, this chapter explores its development over time and highlights the democratic potential of commemorative murals in contexts with established mural, graffiti, and street art traditions.

Chapter I: Historical Context and Theoretical Framework

I.1 Political Muralism, Graffiti and the GAU

Portuguese Political Muralism and Other Public Art Interventions

The period following the 1974 Revolution that overthrew the forty-eight-year Estado Novo dictatorship in Portugal can be considered the catalyst to an eruption of new democratic practices in urban, social and political spaces. The Revolution was primarily a military-led initiative, sparked by a section of the army's opposition to the regime's colonial war (1961-1974).[6] Nonetheless, when the Revolution took place on the 25th of April, civilians flocked to the streets in support of these troops, suggesting the widespread backing of this new era in Portugal's history. After the initial victory, Portugal entered the so-called PREC (Ongoing Revolutionary Process 1974-1975), a turbulent period marked by struggles over competing visions for the country's future. The PREC is sometimes described as a period of 'political chaos', characterized by intense conflict over the political and economic model Portugal should adopt in the aftermath of the Revolution — particularly between communist and social democratic visions. [7]

It is important to note that the PREC succeeded the Estado Novo (1926-1974), which had been a regime defined by authoritarian practices such as political repression and censorship. Central to this system was the PIDE, a repressive political police force that exerted control over public life and restricted political discourse. Their repressive strategies involved not only the explicit control of information, but also fostered a climate of fear, in which the threat of PIDE persecution contributed to widespread self-censorship.[8]

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[6] Miguel Cardina, "Introduction," in *The Portuguese Colonial War and the African Liberation Struggles* (Routledge, 2023), 1.
[7] Britta Baumgarten, "The children of the Carnation Revolution? Connections between Portugal's anti-austerity movement and the revolutionary period 1974/1975," *Social Movement Studies 16* (2016): 4-5 .
[8] Manuel Gama, "Da censura à autocensura no Estado Novo," *CEHUM*, 2009, 1.

As a result, the newfound freedom of speech that followed the Revolution quickly gained great importance and popularity in public life.[9] Amid the various forms of deliberation, conflict, and violence that characterized the PREC, urban spaces also became sites of significant public art production. This included both institutional political murals – particularly from far-left parties such as the MRPP/PCPT[10] – and more spontaneous, popular, and anonymous interventions.[11] While party murals were typically larger in scale, collaborative in nature, and more aesthetically developed, anonymous interventions often employed posters, stickers, and stencils, favouring text over imagery.[12] In this way, the period is often regarded as an era when walls became the primary medium for political communication in urban spaces, with many of these practices persisting today, albeit in subdued and transformed ways.

American-Inspired Graffiti

One of the factors that transformed Lisbon's public art traditions was the arrival of culturally different forms of graffiti around the late 1980s. Following the defeat of the far left by a centre-right coalition on November 25, 1975, and the subsequent end of the PREC[13], a degree of political stability was restored in Portugal. This also led to a decline in the widespread Portuguese tradition of political muralism.

Although the practice never completely faded out, subsequent decades witnessed the emergence of diverse street art forms, notably American-inspired graffiti. This type of graffiti

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[9] Cláudia Madeira, Cristina Pratas Cruzeiro and Ricardo Campos, "25th April always, fascism never again," *Political Graffiti in Critical Times: The Aesthetics of Street Politics* 28 (2021): 252.

[10] Partido Comunista dos Trabalhadores Portugueses/Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado (Portuguese Workers' Communist Party/Re-Organized Movement of the Party of the Proletariat). This is a communist party in Portugal with Marxist-Leninist and Maoist roots which played an important role in the PREC.

[11] Cláudia Madeira et al. "25th April always", 270.

[12] Ibid., 262

[13] The military actions/counter-revolution of November 25, 1975 led by a coalition of right wing and moderate parties led to the downfall of radical leftist movements, signalling a decisive shift in the political landscape, and the transition to a more stable, western style of democracy. See, for, example, Raquel da Silva and Ana Sofia Ferreira, "The post-dictatorship memory politics in Portugal which erased political violence from the collective memory," *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 53, no. 1 (2019): 36.

originated in New York and Philadelphia in the 1970s and was most commonly exercised by African American and Latinx communities as an "anarchic aesthetic of communication and rebellion against political disenfranchisement and social invisibility".[14] In other words, it was a practice employed by marginalized artists and individuals to achieve social visibility within public spaces from which they were frequently excluded. This tradition eventually spread to Europe and Portugal, where it was also initially practiced on the peripheries by marginalised communities before gradually extending into more central districts.[15] Although distinct from the political muralism of the 1970s then, this graffiti tradition can be regarded as the catalyst for a new democratic practice and aesthetic in Lisbon's urban spaces.

The GAU

The American-influenced graffiti style was eventually visible through much of Lisbon's urban landscape. Considering the disagreements it caused on an aesthetic level, the city's municipality strove to find a solution to the growing discomfort caused by the practice. In 2008, it enacted legislation prohibiting spontaneous public art interventions in urban spaces and initiated operations to "clean up" areas marked by graffiti. It also created the GAU (Galeria de Arte Urbana/Urban Art Gallery), a municipality branch that would incentivise the creation of commissioned public artworks (often large murals) in specific authorised places. Through such 'middle-ground' policies, the GAU aimed to mediate the tensions between proponents and opponents of graffiti.[16]

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[14] Jessica N. Pabon "Ways of being seen: Gender and the writing on the wall." In *Routledge handbook of graffiti and street art*, (Routledge, 2016), 78.

[15] Ricardo Campos, "Graffiti writer as superhero," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no. 2 (2013): 157.

[16] Alexandre Grondeau and Florence Pondaven, "Le street art, outil de valorisation territoriale et touristique: l'exemple de la Galeria de Arte Urbana de Lisbonne," *EchoGéo* 44 (2018): 7-8.

These policies, especially the GAU's commissioned murals, have often been positively received as means to address inequality, boost tourism, and revitalize urban spaces.[17] However, they have also sparked controversies, including accusations of gentrification that overlook the cultural realities of affected communities and a lack of engagement with actual graffiti practitioners.[18] Moreover, despite the recent crackdowns on illegal graffiti and muralism, spontaneous interventions continue to regularly emerge in Lisbon's urban spaces. These spaces therefore perpetually harbour different forms of public art, that produce complex tensions and paradoxes that merit deeper scholarly investigation.

I.2 NOVA FCSH: History, Visibility and Public Space

To investigate these public art tensions, this thesis centres on a specific case study in which these dynamics are particularly concentrated – the exterior public space of the NOVA University of Lisbon, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (NOVA FCSH) campus located on Avenida de Berna in central Lisbon. This section will give an overview of the university's historical origins, its location and visibility, as well as its significance as a public space in Lisbon.

Historical Origins of NOVA FCSH

NOVA University Lisbon, which houses the NOVA FCSH faculty, traces its origins to the 1972 university reform initiated by the then Minister of Culture, Veiga Simão. Simão was inspired by 1960s Anglo-Saxon university reforms that had broadened access to higher

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[17] Ricardo Campos and Leda Barbio, "Public strategies for the promotion of urban art: The Lisbon metropolitan area case," *City & Community* 20, no. 2 (2021): 135.

[18] Otávio Ribeiro Raposo. "Street Art Commodification and (An) aesthetic Policies on the Outskirts of Lisbon," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 52, no. 2 (2023): 187.

education beyond a selected elite.[19] During this time, many new universities opened worldwide, and an increasingly diverse student population began enrolling in higher education.[20] Following suit, Portugal also established new universities to accommodate growing student numbers and promote innovative, interdisciplinary educational approaches that differed from the traditional university model.

Despite the continued rule of the Estado Novo regime at this time, political shifts under Marcello Caetano (1968-1974), who succeeded Salazar after his incapacitation, enabled such progressive changes.[21] These shifts allowed existing resistance members within the Ministry of Education to push for the modernization and democratization of higher education.[22] Moreover, Portuguese universities were generally considered important centres of resistance, with widespread student protests against the regime taking place in both 1962 and 1969.[23] In this way, both the student protests and the university reforms can be regarded as some of the first visible materialisations of revolutionary change prior to 1974.

NOVA University emerged from these changes as a public university dedicated to innovative research and teaching, and ultimately hosted nine different faculties.[24] In 1977, the NOVA FCSH faculty was officially established, selecting Avenida de Berna as its campus for its central location and proximity to key cultural institutions.[25] The faculty is often referred to as a melting pot of different political opinions, although maintaining a strong far left tendency.[26]

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[19] Catarina Alves Costa, "Como Nasce Uma Universidade 1973-1977," Filmed 2023, Vimeo video, 32:28. https://vimeo.com/873115099

[20] Susan Wright and Annika Rabo, "Introduction: Anthropologies of university reform," *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* 18, no. 1 (2010): 1.

[21] Luís Reis Torgal, "A Universidade em Portugal em Período de Transição para a Democracia e para o Neoliberalismo," *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación* 2, no. 2 (2015): 156.

[22] Catarina Alves Costa, "Como Nasce Uma Universidade 1973-1977".

[23] Luís Reis Torgal, "A Universidade em Portugal", 156.

[24] Catarina Alves Costa, "Como Nasce Uma Universidade 1973-1977"; Luís Reis Torgal, "A Universidade em Portugal", 157.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

Today, NOVA is increasingly influenced by neoliberal trends, marked by rising student fees and a gradual decline in the socio-economic diversity that characterized its founding.[27] However, like many universities globally, it remains a centre of resistance to broader international issues and continues to host significant social protests challenging the status quo. For example, The FCSH student body organised large solidarity protests supporting Palestine following the Israeli attacks on Palestine after the events of October 7, 2023. In this way, NOVA FCSH can be understood as having emerged from the unique context that was revolutionary Portugal, whilst also aligning with general international trends in higher education over the last few decades. Such characteristics are significant, as public spaces associated with universities often reflect these complex tendencies.

The High Visibility of FCSH and FCSH as a Public Space

In 1977, NOVA FCSH therefore established its campus on Avenida de Berna, where it has since continued to expand and develop its diverse activities. Avenida de Berna is a central location in Lisbon close to important cultural institutions such as the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Culturgest and the National Library. It is also one of the most expensive areas in Lisbon. At the time of writing in April 2025, the cheapest two-bedroom flat in this area is estimated at 1200 euro in a country with a minimum wage of 870 euro.

Avenida de Berna is also a major six lane road that witnesses the everyday commute of workers in and out of different Lisbon areas. A 2011 study on the area's design identifies it as one of Lisbon's most dynamic districts, particularly in terms of housing, employment, and retail, and notes its high levels of pedestrian traffic.[28] Despite its predominantly upper-middle-

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[27] See, for example, Luís Reis Torgal, "A Universidade em Portugal", 163; Belmiro Gil Cabrito, Luísa Cerdeira, Ana Nascimento, and Pedro Ribeiro Mucharreira, "O Ensino superior em Portugal: Democratização e a nova governação pública," *Educere et Educare* (2020), 27.

[28] Francisco Manuel Camarinhas Serdoura, and Helena Susete Figueira Freire, "Urban Regeneration challenge: the case of Avenidas Novas district in Lisbon," *Journal of Civil Engineering and Architecture* 5, no. 4 (2011): 356-9.

class demographic then, the area is also frequented by diverse commuting populations from various parts of the city, granting it "great visibility and importance in the whole urban system".[29] In this way Avenida de Berna, can be considered a public space accessed, witnessed and experienced by a particularly high number of different publics.
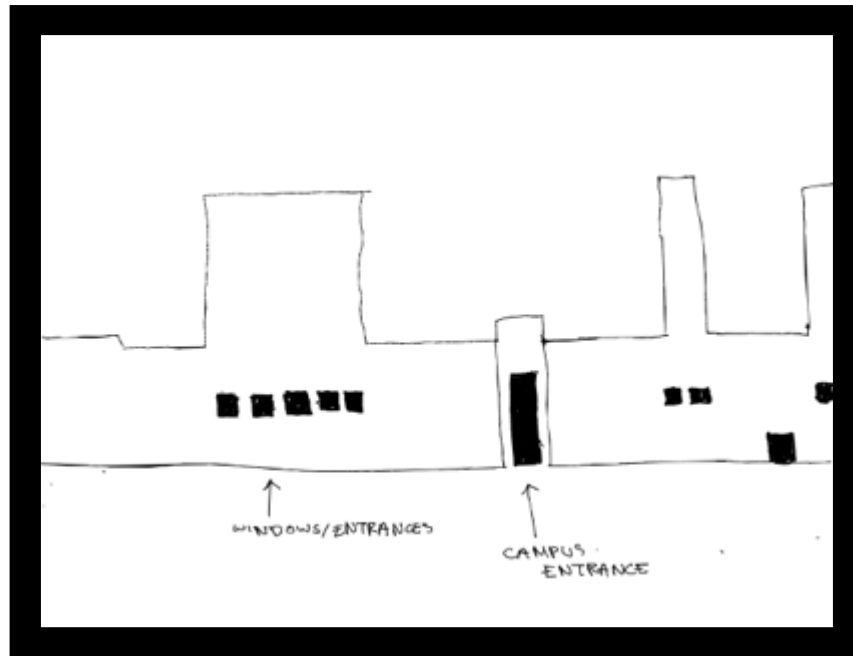
Figure 1: Sketch of FCSH Facade/Av.de Berna. Sketch by Author.

Figure 2: Location of FCSH/Av. de Berna. Collage by Author.

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[29] Ibid., 356-9.

For this thesis, although the entire avenue will be taken into consideration, it is primarily the facade that separates FCSH from Avenida de Berna that will be the point of focus. This wall can be considered as having a centre, defined by a small entrance onto campus, which then extends on both sides towards Rua da Beneficência in the West and Rua Laura Alves in the East (figures 1 and 2). Though featuring some embedded structures, the wall largely lacks obstructions like windows or entrances, making it an appealing canvas for different mural art styles.

As a result, this space is frequently used for graffiti and muralism, primarily by members of the academic community, though also by individuals from outside the university. Due to the location's high visibility, such public art enters the broader public's field of view, gaining significance beyond the confines of the academic setting. Its high visibility and the diversity of publics that frequent the area therefore make it a particularly valuable case study for examining democratic practices in public spaces ('public space democracy').

I.3 Public Space Democracy: Political aesthetics, Democracy and the Public Sphere

The Public Sphere

Building on this, the next section therefore defines 'public space democracy' through a theoretical framework built on the tensions between the public sphere, democracy, and political aesthetics, which underpin the thesis's core argument. The concepts and debates surrounding the modern public sphere can be considered to have emerged with Jürgen Habermas's influential 1962 work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. In this study, Habermas argues that the public sphere was a predominantly bourgeois conception where private individuals would come together to form a 'public'.[30] In this interpretation, public

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[30] Jurgen Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (MIT press, 1991), 27.

deliberation was independent from both state influence and personal circumstances. Authority in the public sphere was thus granted simply through the strength of the 'better' argument.[31]

This Habermasian concept has since been contested by scholars across several disciplines, mostly making note of the exclusionary nature of Habermas's definition. This thesis's conception of the public sphere will therefore align further with Nancy Fraser's critique of Habermas and subsequent reimagination of the public sphere. In her commentary, Fraser delineates four major points that delimitate her new conceptualisation of a post-bourgeois public sphere. First, it is not possible to bracket social differences as Habermas contented, and social differences should be taken into account and brought into the discursive process of public deliberations. Second, multiple public spheres may be more conducive towards democracy than a single public sphere. Third, it may be necessary for private interests/circumstances to be a part of public deliberations. Fourth, a functioning public sphere may benefit from a greater porousness between the state and civil society.[32] In brief, the public sphere in Fraser's paper is defined by far less polarisation between different domains and allows for more space for different elements of the political/public/private sphere to merge and communicate. This thesis will therefore discuss how the tensions between these four different axes are represented and contested in the FCSH public sphere.

Democracy

Considering the strong ties between the concept of the public sphere and democracy, this thesis will also develop a framework that discusses the different types of democracy most suited to artistic deliberation in public space. For example, Habermas and other similarly oriented scholars are strong supporters of deliberative democracy, suggesting that an agreement will

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[31] Ibid., 54

[32] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy 1," In *New Critical Writings in Political Sociology*, (Routledge, 2024), 62-3.

eventually be reached by different affected parties, or the most rational argument will eventually prevail over others.[33] In other words, although such thinkers presuppose conflict as inherent to the public sphere, they understand democracy as an ideal within which that conflict will eventually be resolved.

However, this concept has been contested in several domains, with scholars arguing that it leaves too much space for inequalities within deliberations to be overlooked. For example, Chantal Mouffe suggests a model of democracy which she coins 'agonistic pluralism', which imagines an alternative to the ideal of a consensus between equal voices.[34] According to Mouffe, it is generally impossible to eliminate power structures and relations from the deliberative model, and a fair agreement between equal parties is therefore unattainable. Instead, Mouffe suggests that multiple agonistic, or disagreeing voices should remain in constant conversation and conflict, considering this is the 'natural' foundation of societies in which power can never be truly eliminated.[35] However, particularly important to this thesis is Mouffe's idea that despite the democratic need for constant agonism, it is still necessary for consensus to be achieved in part, and that consensus and conflict can and should always co-exist.[36] In this thesis, I will therefore explore the ways in which these types of democracy resist or align with different types of co-existing public art in public space.

Political Aesthetics

Finally, this thesis will also consider the idea of political aesthetics and the ways that it relates to both the public sphere and democracy. In her 2007 paper, *Art as an Agonistic Intervention*

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[33] See, for example, Jurgen Habermas, *The structural transformation*, 54; Seyla Benhabib, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy," *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton University Press, 1996), 69.

[34] Chantal Mouffe, "Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism?," *Social research* (1999): 745.

[35] Ibid., 754-5.

[36] Ibid., 756.

in Public Space, Mouffe ascertains that art and politics cannot be separated as they are inherently intertwined, or, in her words, "there is an aesthetic dimension in the political and there is a political dimension in art".[37] In this paper, she also expands on what can be considered as 'politically critical art', and how it can contribute to challenging the dominant hegemony.[38] To understand the ways in which art in the FCSH public space can be considered as contributing to wider political discussions, I lay out here the four ways in which Mouffe believes public art might be considered politically critical. First, the work engages to an extent with political reality. Second, the work explores marginalised, othered, oppressed or victimised identities. Third, the work investigates its own method of production and/or dissemination. Fourth, the work imagines utopian alternatives to current social and political realities.[39] In this way, Mouffe lays the foundations for an understanding of how a specific artwork can be considered politically critical and creates a framework around which the different interventions at FCSH might be analysed.

Despite Mouffe's important contribution to this domain, it can be considered that her argument focuses too much on the more explicit 'political' dimension of public art and consequently forgets the 'aesthetic' dimension. As a result, the important and compelling tensions that exist between both elements, as pointed out by Rancière, are somewhat overlooked.[40] According to this idea, the aesthetic attributes constitutive of public art must be understood as forming an inherent part of its more immediate political function. For example, Claire Bishop, who focuses on participatory public art, argues that the valuable aesthetic dimension of such artworks, such as rupture and ambiguity, can often get lost in overtly idealist

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[37] Chantal Mouffe, "Art and democracy: Art as an agonistic intervention in public space," *Open* 14 (2008): 11.
[38] Ibid., 11.
[39] Ibid., 12
[40] Jacques Rancière, "Politics of Aesthetics," in *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, translated by Steven Corcoranpp (Polity Press, 2009), 32.

and didactic political aims.[41] According to these arguments, a conceptual model for public art that values both the political and the aesthetic will be of most use to this thesis, which ultimately deals with the dialogues between drastically different political and aesthetic regimes.

In this regard, I therefore turn towards Fred Evans' paper on the political aesthetics of public art to foreground the model that will inform the analytical direction of this work. In his paper, Evans imagines a model of political aesthetics for public art that would enable the work to be evaluated as an 'act of citizenship', that is, to be defined under what Mouffe calls 'politically critical art'. He lays down the argument as such:

> The aesthetic aura of a public artwork must augment the effectiveness of its political content in order to count as an act of citizenship in a democratic city; that is, the artwork must not be reduced to a striking display – to the oracle of aesthetic spectacle – that precludes or distracts from the political meaning the work might have; nor must the work be reduced to a political philosophy or polemic at the expense of its aesthetic aura.[42]

In this conceptualisation, the public artwork therefore lies at the border between the attributes of the 'aesthetic' and of the overtly 'political'. One is not abandoned in favour of the other and allows for a particularly dynamic space to open for public art to participate in democratic innovation in the public sphere. As such, this thesis will examine how the different forms of art in Avenida de Berna come into dialogue with this definition of public art. Furthermore, the thesis will interrogate how the combination of these three poles - the public sphere, democracy and political aesthetics - create a framework within which we might come closer to an understanding of 'public space democracy' at NOVA FCSH and beyond.

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[41] Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," In *Artificial hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*, (Verso books, 2023), 29-30.
[42] Fred Evans, "Political aesthetics of public art in urban spaces," In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of the City* (Routledge, 2019), 154.

Chapter II: Graffiti, Zero Tolerance and Institutional Muralism at NOVA FCSH 2008-2014

To explore how this theoretical framework applies to the public space of NOVA FCSH, the following chapter examines three distinct public art traditions that once characterised this environment. That is, between 2008 and 2014, NOVA FCSH was affected by a variety of different graffiti management policies that shaped the general appearance of the university campus facade. Between 2008 and June 2009, when the anti-graffiti laws and the GAU were still in their early stages of implementation, the campus experienced widespread and largely unregulated graffiti practices. However, between September 2009 and March 2014, zero tolerance, the erasure of all illegal forms of graffiti was enforced on campus, drastically changing the appearance of the wall. Finally, in April 2014, a large mural was commissioned by the university, which added an aesthetic layer that differed from the unregulated illegal interventions and zero tolerance.

In light of the socio-political climate, this chapter examines the various tensions generated by the political aesthetics of contrasting graffiti policies. It argues that these tensions significantly shape the democratic character of FCSH's public space. The discussion will begin with an overview of the socio-political context, with a special emphasis on the economic crisis, student protests and their impact on the university campus. From there, the focus will shift to the political aesthetics and agonistic results of unrestricted graffiti on campus. This will be followed by an exploration of the oppressive consequences of the implementation of zero tolerance. Finally, the analysis will turn to the commissioning of a large mural on the campus facade which brought a new element of democratic consensus into the FCSH public sphere.

II.1. Anti-Austerity, Student Protests and NOVA FCSH

Anti-Austerity Protests

The time span 2008 to 2014 in Portuguese history, as in many other South European countries, represents a period of great economic, social and political instability. This instability was in large part triggered by the 2008 economic crisis, and the subsequent anti-austerity measures carried out by the Portuguese government, along with the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (commonly referred to as the 'troika') in 2011.[43] These anti-austerity measures led to an unprecedented rate in tax increases and cuts on salaries and social benefits, which ultimately affected a sizeable portion of the population.[44] In the wake of these particularly severe actions, crowds of people took to the streets and formed some of the largest protests since the revolutionary period.[45] Alongside the usual dynamics of street protest that emerged at this time, there was also a re-awakening of political graffiti and muralism, as "slogans, watchwords [and] murals began to crop up all over the city alluding to the current state of affairs".[46] In this way, the street was once again defined as a key site of political action and communication.

Although these protests were at their most prevalent predominantly in the period 2011 to 2014, it is important to note that these same protests arose from mobilisation structures that had been established in the years beforehand (principally 2005 to 2010).[47] Among smaller protests against closures of public services imposed by the government, the time period 2005 to 2010 also saw the steady rise of the EuroMayDay protests in Portugal, with its largest

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[43] Cristina Nunes, "Social Movements and Political Protests in Portugal during and after the Austerity Crisis." In *Portugal Since the 2008 Economic Crisis* (Routledge, 2023), 52.

[44] Ricardo Campos, "The Crisis on the Wall: Political Muralism and Street art in Lisbon," *In Crisis, Austerity, and Transformation: How Disciplinary Neoliberalism Is Changing Portugal,* ed. Isabel David, (Lexington Books, 2018), 119.

[45] Britta Baumgarten, "Geração à Rasca and beyond: Mobilizations in Portugal after 12 March 2011," *Current sociology* 61, no. 4 (2013): 457.

[46] Ricardo Campos, "The Crisis on the Wall", 119

[47] Tiago Carvalho, *Contesting Austerity: Social Movements and the Left in Portugal and Spain (2008-2015)*, (Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 79.

demonstration taking place in May 2009.[48] The EuroMayDay[49] in Portugal arose predominantly in the context of forming networks to protest against precarity, the largest issue facing the country at the time.[50] Often student-led, these protest structures sought to break from the exclusivity of traditional trade unions and foster a collective identity grounded in shared worker precarity. These systems are ultimately considered to have been essential to the future organisations of the larger anti-austerity protests in the 2010s.[51] In this way, the period of 2008 to 2014 can be considered to represent a period in time in which the formation of protest networks and their subsequent implementation was particularly robust and widespread.

Intersections Between Student Protests and Anti-Austerity Protests

The relation between student protests and anti-austerity protests has been studied in various South European contexts in some depth. In these studies, there is an understanding that the protest structures created by students in the preceding decades, against precarity but also against university reforms, set the scene for the anti-austerity climate of the 2010s.[52] In Portugal, throughout the 1990s and 2000s, students mobilised across the country to protest the Bologna Process[53] and the implementation of academic fees. In the 1990s, widespread protests erupted around the country against the first attempt by the right leaning Cavaco Silva

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[48] Tiago Carvalho, *Contesting Austerity,* 82.

[49] The EuroMayDay events, initiated in the mid-2000s, were protests against labour insecurity across Europe, which were organized by independent and grassroot collectives rather than trade unions.

[50] Tiago Carvalho, *Contesting Austerity,* 80.

[51] Ibid., 81.

[52] Lorenzo Zamponi and Joseba Fernández González, "Dissenting youth: how student and youth struggles helped shape anti-austerity mobilisations in Southern Europe," *Social Movement Studies* 16, no.1 (2017): 66.

[53] The Bologna Process aimed to harmonise higher education in Europe and created widespread changes to curriculums. It also harboured a social and economic mission directed at assessing the ways in which universities contributed to societies. Students protested against this as they saw it as at the beginning of the commercialisation of education and feared it would lead to social exclusions. For more information see, André Marinha, "From Effervescence to Decline? The Contemporary Trajectory of Portuguese Student Movements," *SSRN*, October 17, 2023,16.

government (1985-1995)[54] to implement student fees, despite the constitutional law stating the right to free education.[55] Nonetheless, in 1997, the fees were effectively enforced, and in the early 2000s, they suffered a major increase which would lead to further demonstrations.

Moreover, between 2005 and 2014, as the public sectors endured austerity cuts, universities witnessed a further reduction in state funding, whilst student fees continued to increase and reached a historical peak in the academic year 2014/2015. For reference, in a country where the minimum wage at this time averaged around 400 euro[56], the fees increased from 348 euro in 2002 to 1067.85 euro in 2015.[57] The demonstrations triggered by these various events can therefore be considered to have led to a particularly extensive tradition of protests in academic contexts.

However, Andre Marinha argues that despite the significant movements of the 1990s and early 2000s, unlike in other Southern European Countries, the Portuguese student movements were actually unable to use this momentum to play any meaningful part in the subsequent anti-austerity protests.[58] That is, the Portuguese protest culture, in which left wing parties and trade unions are at the forefront of demonstrations pertaining to labour precarity, prevailed over movements guided by more independent organisations. Marinha also speculates that the students' inability to maintain a strong role in these wider protests may be the result of the absence of a unified student movement in Portugal, which ultimately inhibits them from organising on a larger and more sustainable scale.[59]

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[54] During his time as Prime Minister, Cavaco Silva faced widespread social protests as his government, with the support of the Socialist Party, privatised many sectors that had been nationalised during the Revolution. See Tiago Carvalho, *Contesting Austerity,* 72.

[55] André Marinha, "From Effervescence to Decline?", 11, 18.

[56] "Valores da RMMG," Direção-Geral da Administração e do Emprego Publico, accessed March 7, 2025, https://www.dgaep.gov.pt/index.cfm?OBJID=9e569f81-68f4-49c5-bab4-c698b807cd9a.

[57] André Marinha, "From Effervescence to Decline?", 12.

[58] Ibid., 3.

[59] Ibid., 19.

Despite this argument, the first large demonstration against austerity on March 12th 2011, known as *Geração à Rasca*[60], was a movement led and dominated by young people who protested against the precarious work market they would be entering into after their studies. In fact, *Geração à Rasca* is a term that directly references an article on the student protests of the 1990s.[61] In this way, despite the fact that trade unions may have been more directly involved in anti-austerity actions, the young people and students in Portugal can certainly be considered to have participated and contributed in some form to the anti-austerity protest legacy.

Furthermore, although the student movements of the early 2000s were unable to gain wider and sustained societal traction, the traces of their investment in the various issues are certainly visible at the local level. For example, in June 2009, during the early stages of the GAU's zero tolerance policy, the NOVA FCSH walls were heavily covered with graffiti and political murals reflecting contemporary concerns. Such explicit and public engagement at NOVA FCSH therefore showcases the academic community's investment in wider socio-political matters.

II.2 Before the GAU: The Aesthetics of Unrestricted Graffiti

Building on these observations, this section will focus primarily on the political aesthetics of the aforementioned graffiti at FCSH, as seen in June 2009. This is a period in which the walls are particularly fraught with different types of graffiti whose multiple different forms and content create noteworthy discursive and aesthetic tensions. I will argue that the political content and aesthetics of this graffiti creates especially fertile grounds for public space democracy. To better discern the political content of the graffiti, I have categorised these into two separate yet somewhat porous categories, which are *graffiti related to university centred*

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[60] *Geração a Rasca* can be best translated into english as 'The Struggling Generation'.
[61] Britta Baumgarten, "Geração à Rasca and beyond", 466.

concerns and *graffiti related to wider political issues*. Such categorisation allows for a better understanding of the debates and actors present in the FCSH public space and the ways in which they relate to broader political matters. To begin, I will therefore examine the political discourse present in the graffiti, before turning to an analysis of the aesthetic result and its significance for public space democracy.

FCSH Graffiti and University Centred Concerns

Rivalries Between Different Student Groups

Figure 3: NOVA FCSH Facade June 2009. Photo Collage by Author.

The first prominent category of graffiti comprises slogans that specifically address university-related concerns. These slogans are located directly next to the university entrance and often reflect tensions and ideological conflicts among various student groups. This is exemplified by a large anti-praxe slogan signed by M.A.T.A – Movimento Anti-"Tradição Académica" [Anti-"Academic-Tradition" Movement].[62] The slogan is considerably elaborate and reads "A Praxe chegou e eu fui embora!" [The Praxe arrived and I left!], and "e a diversidade foi-se embora, e a liberdade foi-se embora, e a criatividade foi-se embora" [and diversity left, and freedom left, and creativity left] (figure 3).

CEU eTD Collection

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[62] All English translations provided in square brackets are the author's own, unless otherwise specified.

To grasp the significance of this slogan, it is essential to contextualize it within the framework of Praxe history. The Praxe is rooted in a student culture that dates to back to the Middle Ages, when Portuguese universities were exclusive, male-dominated institutions with a highly privileged status.[63] At this time, student culture also included hazing rituals targeted at new students which involved violence and humiliation. By the nineteenth century such rituals were known as 'Praxe' and became a fixture in student organisations with strong hierarchies and homogenised identities. Over time, this tradition underwent certain changes and were even abandoned during various moments of leftist political upheaval in the twentieth century.[64] However, in the democratic framework of the 1970s they re-appeared *en masse* in various universities, re-establishing hazing practices and strict hierarchical codes.[65] Such groups can be seen in most Portuguese universities today and are demarcated by their black uniform dress which separates them from other non-praxe students. Although some view the Praxe as a valuable tradition promoting student socialization, others criticize it for the violent and humiliating rituals that have led to hospitalizations and, in some cases, deaths.

M.A.T.A emerged in the 1990s in response to many of these controversies. M.A.T.A's main principles lie in creating new methods of student integration that focus on organising activities where student's individual identities are celebrated and everyone is regarded as equal.[66] Beyond simply denouncing Praxe violence and humiliation, M.A.T.A therefore also stands against the hierarchies and identity homogenisation by which the Praxe is characterised.

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[63] José Pedro Silva, João Mineiro, Elísio Estanque, João Sebastião and João Teixeira Lopes, "Each person in their place: the 'praxe' as a ritual of integration, stratification and differentiation," *Journal of Youth Studies* 26, no. 1 (2023): 100-1.

[64] Ibid., 101.

[65] According to José Pedro Silva et al, the resurrection of these practices might be due to the democratisation of the university system in the 1970s. Due to the rising number of university graduates from various backgrounds, certain students strive to distinguish themselves by joining elitist groups. For more information see, José Pedro Silva et al, "Each person in their place," 109.

[66] Movimento Anti 'Tradição Academica', "O que é o mata," *Movimento Anti 'Tradição Academica'* (blog), Blogger, February 2007, https://blogdomata.blogspot.com/p/o-que-e-o-mata.html.

As the slogan implies, M.A.T.A contends that such characteristics in fact suppress student creativity, diversity and freedom.

Figure 4: NOVA FCSH Facade June 2009. Photo Collage by Author.

Although these debates have been around for some time, the dominant position of this slogan on the wall, speaks to the prominence of the praxe/anti-praxe debate during this period. In fact, the years leading up to 2009 saw a particular spike in reported Praxe violence, so that the issue was eventually taken up in parliament, where fierce public debate erupted around the legitimacy of such student groups.[67] This showcases how these student rivalries were expanded into the wider political sphere where they eventually gained greater importance and recognition. The high visibility of the slogan on Avenida de Berna therefore also speaks to its increased visibility in the wider/non-academic public sphere. The contested nature of this topic is also illustrated by another smaller slogan where "Praxe" appears in large red letters followed by another word that has been covered on three different occasions with blue, red and black paint (figure 4). Despite the predominance of anti-Praxe sentiment on the campus wall then, certain expressions still articulate resistance to this perspective, reflecting the substantial

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[67] Andreia Sanches, "Praxe, polémica e violência, uma história com séculos," *Publico*, January 25, 2014, https://www.publico.pt/2014/01/25/sociedade/noticia/praxe-polemica-e-violencia-uma-historia-com-seculos-1621112.

support the Praxe still retains. This slogan can therefore be considered to stand as a visual/graffiti representation of the disputes happening both in the university itself and in the more immediate parliamentary and political spheres.

Objections Aimed at the University as an Institution
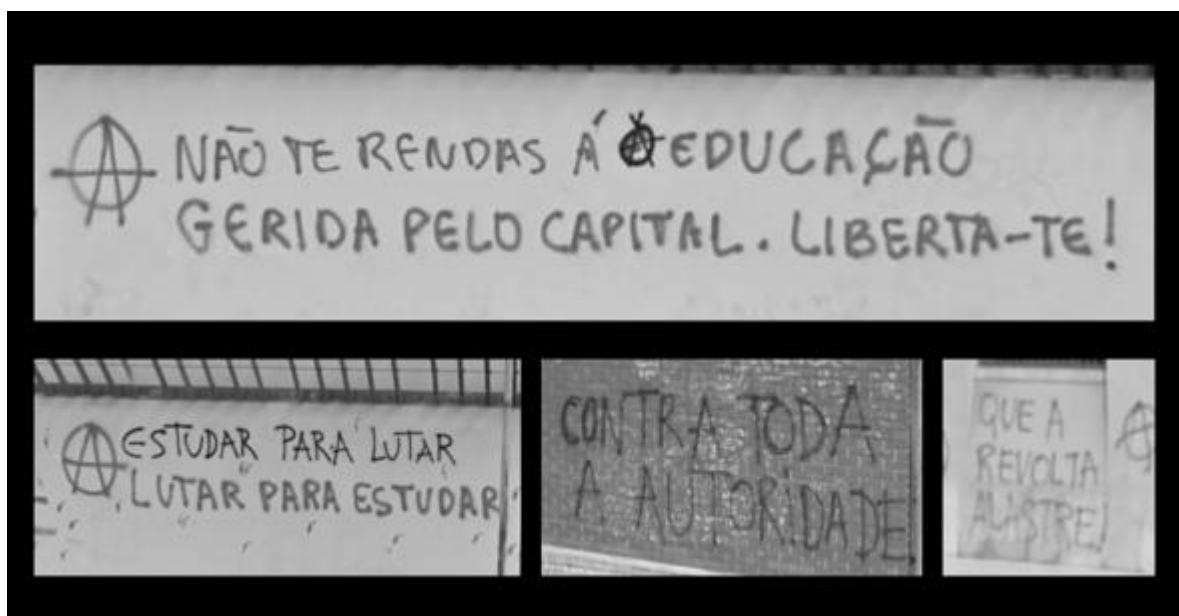
Figure 5: NOVA FCSH Facade June 2009. Photo Collage by Author.

Other than student group rivalries, a large portion of this same part of the wall is dedicated to debating student-institution related issues. That is, slogans appear in which students are explicitly voicing anti-university system sentiments. This is exemplified by quotes such as "não te rendas à educação gerida pelo capital. liberta-te!" [do not give in to education managed by capital. free yourself!], or "estudar para lutar, lutar para estudar" [study to fight, fight to study] (figure 5). These slogans, beyond being anti-establishment, are particularly reflective of the student protests against rising university fees, and suggest a general call to break free from the hold of a university system driven by profit.

These slogans also reflect deeper socio-political critiques, pointing to how capitalism and neoliberalism influence university management. In this instance, it appears that the protest

is not simply against the university, but the university as an institution is actually used as a medium through which to express wider anarchist and anti-authority positions. This is then complemented by the many anarchist symbols and slogans such as 'que a revolta alastre' [may the revolt spread] or 'contra toda autoridade' [against all authority] (figure 5). Although these symbols and slogans are more general and less targeted, they ultimately express the same kind of radical anti-establishment opinions. As Camille Debras notes in her study of a Parisian university campus, slogans with interrelated themes tend to form a unified network of social and political demands that challenge institutionalized oppression.[68] These slogans therefore stand as a strong testament to the porousness between the issues that affect the university and those that affect wider societal structures.

FCSH Graffiti and Broader Political Concerns

Wider National and International Socio-Political Context
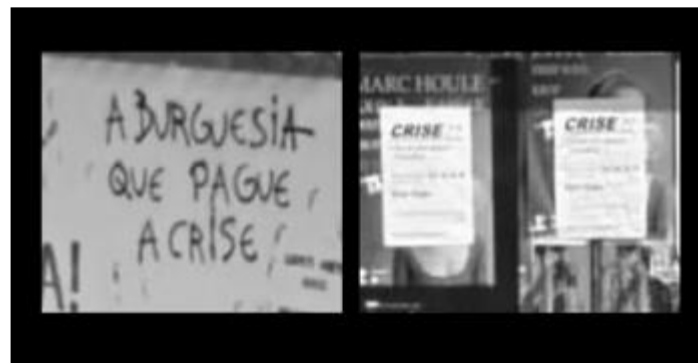
Figure 6: NOVA FCSH Facade June 2009. Photo Collage by Author.

In addition to addressing university-related matters, many slogans also directly point to the wider socio-political context. For example, several interventions directly evoke the precarity and developing economic crisis of 2008/2009. Posters entitled 'CRISE' [CRISIS], as well as

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[68] Camille Debras, "Political graffiti in May 2018 at Nanterre University: A linguistic ethnographic analysis," *Discourse & Society* 30, no. 5 (2019): 460.

the slogan 'que a burguesia pague a crise' [let the bourgeoisie pay for the crisis] are particularly representative of this (figure 6). These interventions, although smaller in both size and number compared to those dedicated to university issues, are particularly illustrative of the growing consciousness around the economic situation facing the country. The use of posters, rather than graffiti, also indicates a more easily reproducible medium that facilitates wider dissemination across the city. This can therefore be considered to point to the integration of the academic public space into the wider space and politics of the city.
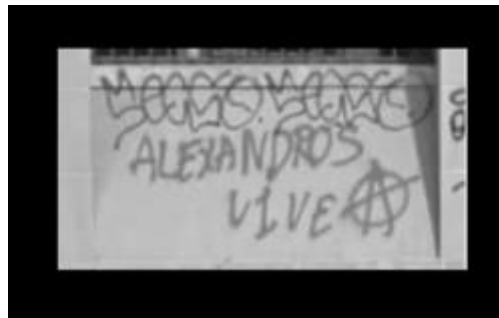
Figure 7: NOVA FCSH Facade June 2009. Photo Collage by Author.

A further intervention underlining this is the slogan "alexandros vive" [alexandros lives], which refers to the death of Alexandros Grigoropoulos, a student who was unjustly shot by police in Athens in 2008 (figure 7). This death led to a series of riots in Greece, which amongst other issues, prompted collective mobilization in response to the escalating economic crisis. [69] These protests were also the catalyst to a surge in political graffiti in Athens mostly calling out the neoliberal practices by which the crisis was increasingly being regulated.[70] It might be considered that it is precisely such international references on university campus walls that can work to anchor student slogans in wider relational frameworks and thus grant them

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[69] Yiannis Zaimakis, "'Welcome to the civilization of fear': on political graffiti heterotopias in Greece in times of crisis," *Visual Communication* 14, no. 4 (2015): 378-9.
[70] Ibid., 379.

greater political power.[71] Considering the slogan refers specifically to a student, this also functions to centre the university as a catalyst for protest and political reform. The interrelation of issues raised both in Portugal and abroad is therefore a particularly constructive way to grant attention to wider issues that both arise from, and transcend the local and university centred context.

Wider Ideological Concepts

Slogans referring to the immediate political context are also complemented by graffiti evoking wider ideological disputes. The campus wall serves not only as a space for addressing urgent concerns, but also as a platform for engaging with broader political ideas. For example, one might consider the multiple American-influenced graffiti appearing on the wall as a part of these concerns. Although the American style of graffiti is not as explicitly political in content as the graffiti slogans, the very practice of this graffiti type still holds great ideological significance. Namely, although these graffiti artists are not necessarily concerned with politics as such, painting illegally emerges as an action that, in and of itself, defies authority and established conventions.[72]

Figure 8: NOVA FCSH Facade June 2009. Photo Collage by Author.

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[71] Camille Debras, "Political graffiti in May 2018 at Nanterre University," 461.

[72] Tony Chackal, "Of materiality and meaning: The illegality condition in Street art," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 74, no. 4 (2016): 360.

The American-style graffiti on the FCSH wall can be identified as what is commonly referred to as 'pieces' or 'throw-ups' – forms of graffiti in which artists render their tag names using bold and stylistically complex designs. In total there are around fourteen different such 'pieces' and 'throw-ups' that take up a particularly large amount of space towards the left-hand periphery of the wall (figure 8). Within the graffiti tradition, such elaborate and highly visible work would be considered a particularly high achievement worthy of great respect, elevating the status of the artist in the community hierarchy.[73]

Stemming from this internal dynamic, the proliferation of this graffiti also emerges as a powerful marker of territory that challenges the property claims of the institution and asserts a marginalised presence on the campus wall. However, in this instance, it is not the content that produces the message, but rather as Marshall McLuhan elaborates in his seminal work *Understanding Media*, it is the medium which is the message.[74] The choice of illegal graffiti as a communicative platform automatically endows the intervention with a subversive stance, regardless of its actual content. In this way, the American tradition of graffiti emerges as an element on the campus wall which, like many of the political slogans, communicates a certain anti-authority and anti-establishment message.

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[73] Ricardo Campos, "Graffiti writer as superhero," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no. 2 (2013): 159.

[74] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964, 7.
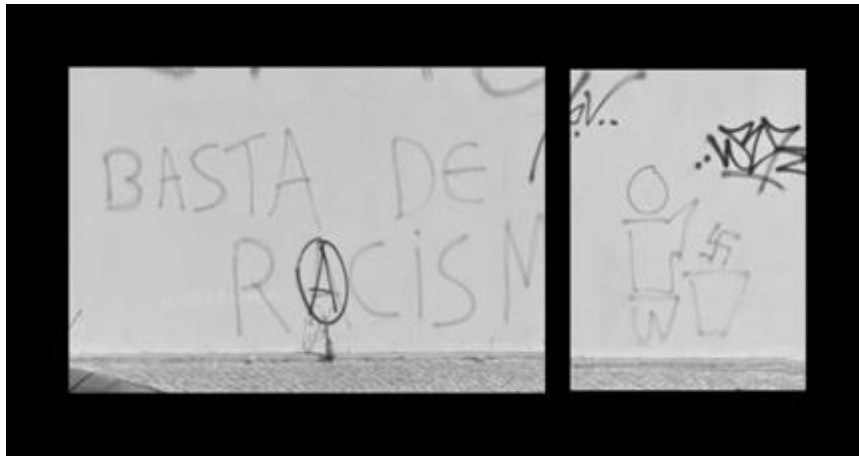
Figure 9: NOVA FCSH Facade June 2009. Photo Collage by Author.

Moreover, these American-style graffiti are also complemented by ideological stances that support marginalised voices more explicitly. Towards the right-hand periphery of the wall, a yellow swastika is being thrown into a bin by a stick figure. Next to this sign, the slogan "basta de racismo" [enough with the racism] is written in large green letters (figure 9). While the American-inspired graffiti inscribed marginalised presence on the wall, such slogans reject voices who antagonise marginalised presence such as the far right or racism. Like a majority of the interventions on the wall then, these slogans express a certain leftist sentiment, whilst also calling for more explicit engagement with existing issues. The ideological, political, and university-related concerns therefore converge within an anti-authoritarian framework, reflecting both the left's dominance in street protests and the significance of these issues at FCSH.

Public Space Democracy: The Political Aesthetics of Unrestricted Graffiti

Graffiti and the Embodied Artist

One of the significant results of such unregulated space is the amplified aesthetic and political impact that can be attributed to the illicit nature of graffiti. As Schacter points out, it is often impossible to view an instance of illegal graffiti without subconsciously envisioning the

criminal act that is graffiti painting as well as its inherent transgressions of social codes.[75] This in turn leads to a sense of admiration for the bravery and audacity required by graffiti painting.[76] At FCSH, this illegal factor is best evidenced by the simple artistic styles, the lopsided and asymmetrical nature of the slogans, and the sometimes mismatched letters and disordered use of space. These kinds of aesthetic results speak to the slogans' nocturnal creation, to the danger of getting caught and the speed required to escape this.

The impact of the graffiti therefore derives not only from the finished product, but also from the viewer's understanding of the danger and illegality involved in the creation itself. As Tony Chackal notes, "such measures reflect a distinctive performative aspect of street art enabled by the illegality condition and emphasize why a work should be appreciated as a process rather than merely a product".[77] According to this interpretation, the transgressive action therefore gives the artwork an additional layer of meaning that goes beyond the immediate visual result. As a result, the political content and critical stance of these subversive works can be regarded as greatly enhanced by the aesthetic result which draws its strength both from the visible results and actions of the embodied artist.

Graffiti and Agonistic Democracy

In terms of public space democracy, these different coexisting forms of graffiti also present a wide range of agonistic voices that activate a particularly vibrant public sphere. Due to the lack of graffiti management, FCSH emerges as a prominent site for various kinds of ideological manifestations, from different graffiti traditions to different objects of interest. In this way, this contributes both to Mouffe's understanding of agonistic democracy, whilst also aligning with

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[75] Rafael Schacter, "An ethnography of iconoclash: An investigation into the production, consumption and destruction of street-art in London," *Journal of material culture* 13, no. 1 (2008): 39.

[76] Ibid., 39.

[77] Tony Chackal, "Of materiality and meaning: The illegality condition in Street art," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 74, no. 4 (2016): 366.

Fraser's understanding of the public sphere as defined by multiple different spheres and counter-publics expressing their individual interests.[78] Moreover, considering the fact that many of these interventions stem from groups and individuals that belong to marginalised counterpublics, the availability of this space and the use of graffiti to express such values are of particular importance. As Iris Marion Young points out,

> Demonstration and protest, the use of emotionally charged language and symbols (...), are sometimes appropriate and effective ways of getting attention for issues of legitimate public concern, but which would otherwise not be likely to get a hearing, either because they threaten powerful interests or because they particularly concern a marginalized or minority group.[79]

In this sense, the ungoverned space of FCSH provides an extensive platform for voices that contest dominant ideologies and social structures – voices which in other contexts may otherwise be ignored or forgotten. This non-management of graffiti is therefore particularly beneficial to public space democracy, in that it both creates space for agonism and champions underrepresented groups.

Graffiti and Consensus

Alongside the visible agonistic elements, the campus wall during this period also reveals a degree of consensus. The visual characteristics typically associated with the 'illegality' of graffiti may be understood as expressions of an inherent aesthetic – one that persists independently of specific temporal or contextual constraints. Features such as the asymmetrical slogans and the rough, single-line lettering can point to implicit aesthetic conventions shared within graffiti communities. As Pierre Bourdieux might contend, this can be interpreted as a

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[78] Chantal Mouffe, "Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism?," *Social research* (1999): 754-5; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy 1," In *New Critical Writings in Political Sociology*, (Routledge, 2024), 62-3.

[79] Iris Marion Young, "Inclusive Political Communication," in *Inclusion and Democracy*, (Oxford, 2002; online edn, Oxford Academic, Nov. 1, 2003), 67.

form of aesthetic resistance to bourgeois conceptions of high art, asserting a distinct visual language that differentiates itself from institutional norms.[80]

In this sense, graffiti's aesthetic dimension extends beyond the mere conditions of its production, challenging Evans's claim that graffiti is purely political at the expense of aesthetic value.[81] While not necessarily complex in formal terms, the aesthetic content contributes meaningfully to its oppositional stance, resisting dominant ideas about legitimate forms of public art.

Consensus also emerges in the uniform leftist orientation of the slogans, despite their references to different ideological positions within the broader left spectrum. The wall thus becomes a space of leftist expression within a societal and governmental context that, at the time, leaned conservative. This illustrates Mouffe's assertion that consensus can coexist with agonism. Moreover, the university's tolerance of these visual interventions on its facade suggests a certain permeability between institutional structures (university) and civil society (student body). In this sense, this period may be seen as particularly conducive to democratic expressions in public space – a condition that, as the following sections will show, will be subject to significant transformation in subsequent years.

II.3 After the GAU: The Aesthetics of Zero Tolerance

The following section then, analyses the changes in the FCSH public space after the implementation of a new policy, zero tolerance. The zero-tolerance policy was implemented in Lisbon at the same time as the GAU and involved the systematic removal of illegal graffiti in the city. Zero tolerance originated in New York City in the 1990s and is based on 'broken

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[80] David Gartman, "Bourdieu and Adorno: Converging theories of culture and inequality," *Theory and society* 41 (2012): 50.
[81] Fred Evans, "Political aesthetics of public art in urban spaces," In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of the City* (Routledge, 2019), 157.

windows theory', which sees areas rife with graffiti as conducive to higher crime rates and social disorder.[82] This understanding of graffiti has been disproven by several scholars, yet often prevails as the value system behind zero-tolerance policies.[83]

Zero tolerance appears to have been implemented at FCSH between June and September 2009, and mostly continued up to 2014. This section will explore the resulting political aesthetic of zero tolerance on the FCSH public space, arguing that this policy creates a particularly oppressive and undemocratic public space. In order to make this argument, I will examine how zero-tolerance underlines FCSH as a policed and controlled space, explore how such a policy is conducive to the neo-liberal dominance of advertising, and discuss the aesthetic tensions present in the often ineffective removal of graffiti.

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[82] Ana Gariso, "Graffiti, Street Art and Public Space Regulation," *European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes* 6, no. 2 (2023): 64.
[83] Ibid., 64.
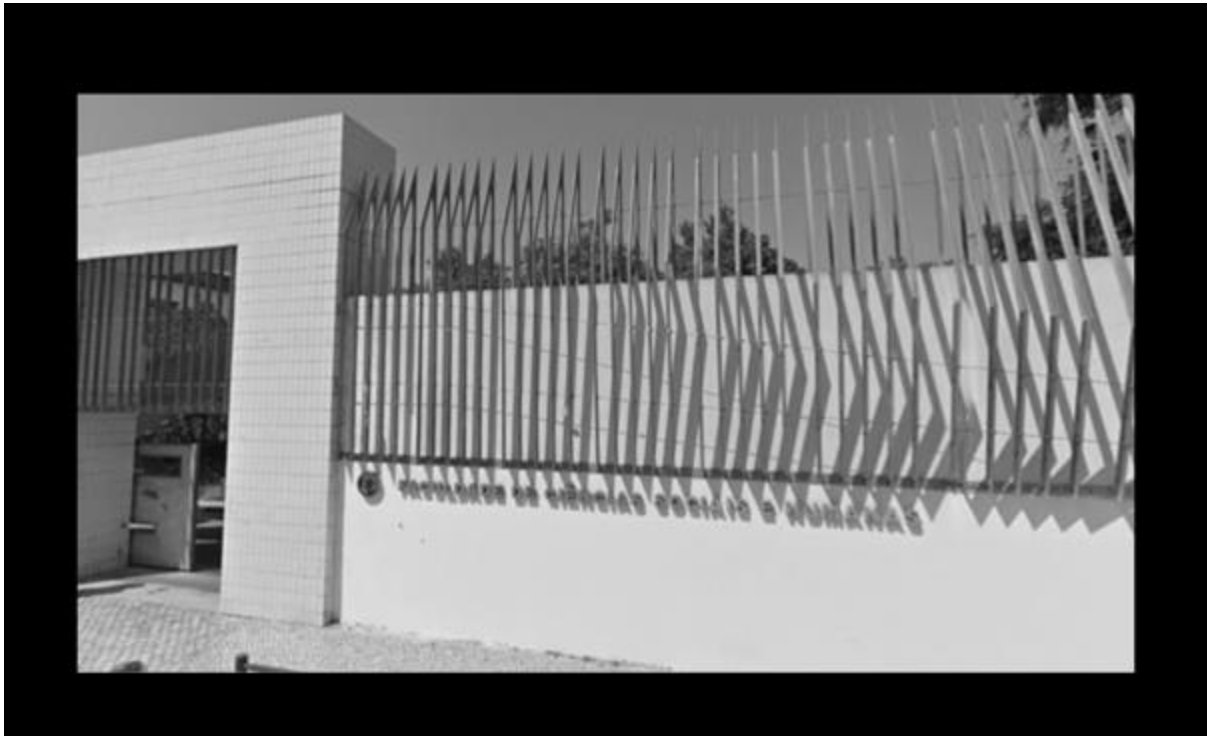
Figure 10: NOVA FCSH Facade/ Av. de Berna September 2009. Photo Collage by Author.

The first aesthetic outcome is the way in which zero tolerance accentuates aspects of the architectural space that are reminiscent of policed and controlled areas. For example, the now monochrome white campus wall is built up with a contemporary metal fence structure with long thick upward facing metal spikes, reminiscent of high security prisons (figure 11).[84] The fence covers a large part of the wall and therefore stands as a physical barrier against further interventions, making a particularly violent prohibitive statement against graffiti.

In fact, this fence might be considered an example of 'hostile architecture', in that it excludes certain 'undesirable' groups from the public space, namely graffiti artists.[85] In other

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[84] In an interview undertaken with Hugo Cardoso, the coordinator of the GAU, he explains that the original idea behind this fence was to represent angel wings intended to evoke a sense of freedom. However, he also acknowledges that the unfortunate result resembles a cage or prison more than anything else.

[85] For more information on hostile architecture, see James Petty, "The London spikes controversy: Homelessness, urban securitisation and the question of 'hostile architecture'," *International journal for crime, justice and social democracy* 5, no. 1 (2016): 68-9.

words, it creates a public space which protects a certain group of individuals from witnessing particular forms of deviant behaviours.[86] Although the fence was not necessarily consciously constructed as a barrier against graffiti, the way it overlaps with the wall leads to this uneasy coincidence. This kind of aesthetic result can be considered to reflect what is sometimes called an 'aesthetics of authority', which homogenizes public spaces and deters social diversity.[87] The prison-like appearance of the fence that was once mitigated by the presence of critical graffiti, now assumes a particularly unfortunate spotlight, and therefore accentuates a certain politics of exclusion.

Figure 11: NOVA FCSH Facade/ Av. de Berna June 2014. Photo Collage by Author.

This fence is also joined by a metal panel at the campus entrance, which reads "PROIBIDO AFIXAR" [POSTING PROHIBITED] (figure 12). The more abstract

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[86] Kevin Scott Jobe, "Foucault and Urban Philosophy," In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of the City*, (Routledge, 2019): 92.
[87] Emma Arnold, "Aesthetics of zero tolerance," *City* 23, no. 2 (2019): 145.

significance of the fence is therefore also complemented by a panel that explicitly voices the authority of the institution's aesthetic choice over others. That is, the university states that it is illegal to adorn the campus wall with anything other than what has been authorised, namely metal fences, authoritative plaques and white paint. The use of metal for the sign and fence is also of particular significance, in that it suggests a more permanent materiality than graffiti paint, and stands as a testament to the greater resources and power of the institution. It might be considered that these uses of materiality are visible reminders of the university's 'sovereign power'[88], and a way of asserting the institution's territory – that is, a space exclusively dictated by the institution's rules and values. In other words, this kind of material place making strategy, and territory delimitation, can be considered an attempt by the institution to claim FCSH as their own, and thus control it accordingly.

Moreover, the multiple use and evolving nature of these practices such as metal barriers, followed by metal plates and the continued re-application of white paint show the necessity for this territory and power to be constantly upheld and reproduced in order that it might remain effective.[89] It is not sufficient to paint the wall white once, instead, as the plaque suggests, the paint must be continuously re-applied and new structures to stop graffiti artists must be continuously thought of and erected. These aesthetic strategies aimed at controlling the aesthetic of FCSH therefore result in presenting an image of the university that is both a sacred space of uncontested authority, but also somewhat fragile in its claims to this authority.

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[88] Sovereign power is a Foucauldian term denoting centralised power emanating from a single institution and its agents. For more information, see Joseph M. Piro, "Foucault and the architecture of surveillance: Creating regimes of power in schools, shrines, and society," *Educational Studies* 44, no. 1 (2008): 37.

[89] Mattias Kärrholm, "The materiality of territorial production: A conceptual discussion of territoriality, materiality, and the everyday life of public space," *Space and culture* 10, no. 4 (2007): 440.

The Neo-Liberal Dominance of Advertising

Beyond the accentuation of hostile architectural aspects of the FCSH public space, zero tolerance also creates a privileged space for advertisements and the enhancement of neo-liberal values. It is notable that from several street view angles, what stands out the most against the newly painted white background, are the large advertisements on specially designed advertising structures. In total, lining the length of the street and opposing pavement, there are seven double sided structures designed for advertisements, that is, fourteen different surfaces in which a consumer product might be promoted. At different points in time these panels have advertised everything from electronics, airlines and cars to alcohol, cheap furniture and fast food. What ultimately remains in the public space then are authorised images that denote money, power and privilege and neatly slip into the "nexus of capital, consumption and patriarchy".[90] As Emma Arnold notes, these advertisements could be considered just as subjectively 'ugly' as graffiti, so that authorising such interventions, whilst banning other more creative or critical ones, is representative of the profit-driven values that are increasingly at the core of institutional decisions.[91] Instead of the widespread deliberative graffiti discussions from June 2009, September of the same year has therefore been reduced to the increasingly banal and biased authority of advertisements and private-public partnerships.

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[90] Tim Cresswell, "Night discourse: Producing/Consuming meaning on the Street," In *Images of the Street*, (Routledge, 2006): 268.

[91] Emma Arnold. "Aesthetics of zero tolerance", 152.

Figure 12: NOVA FCSH Facade/ Av. de Berna September 2009. Photo Collage by Author.

Furthermore, due to zero-tolerance, the specifically student targeted advertisements that are particularly concentrated in this area exist as the predominant representations of student identity. For example, one of the advertisements which is repeated several times in September 2009 is an advertisement titled "Regresso Aulas" [Back to School], which is selling some kind of electronic device for 489 euro (figure 13). The irony in this advertisement can be considered to unfold on multiple levels. First, the advertiser uses a graffiti like font for the 'Regresso Aulas' header, and second, the price of the electronic device is about equivalent to the highly contested university fee.[92] In this way, both in aesthetic and content, this advert is clearly targeted towards students and young people and yet is completely oblivious to the student reality.

As Chackal notes, "that advertising appropriated street art style and form can be particularly obnoxious to street art enthusiasts, because […] a prominent value in street art

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[92] André Marinha, "From Effervescence to Decline?", 12.

culture is opposition to the dominance of commercial advertising in public space".[93] In this way, the appropriation of graffiti styles by the advertisements is not just tone deaf, but also offensive to graffiti culture as a whole. Once again then, zero tolerance can be considered to create an aesthetic result that ultimately privileges consumer identities present in advertising over the creative and political expression present in graffiti.[94] Without the benefit of conflictual voices raised by graffiti contesting student fees and wider capitalist structures, these specific advertisements appear as the only misguided visual statement on student status and desire.

The Remaining Traces of Graffiti

Figure 13: NOVA FCSH Facade/ Av. de Berna June 2014. Photo Collage by Author.

Ultimately, it is also important to note that zero tolerance rarely entirely rids walls of unwanted graffiti interventions, which creates intriguing aesthetic tensions. One of the most enduring examples of this is represented in the outlines of illegal graffiti that remain after an intervention has been ineffectively covered/removed. The most notable example of this at FCSH is in 2014, where the PCTP/MRPP[95] logo and some slogan outlines can still be identified under the white

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[93] Tony Chackal, "Of materiality and meaning," 368.

[94] Emma Arnold, "Aesthetics of zero tolerance", 153.

[95] Partido Comunista dos Trabalhadores Portugueses/Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado (Portuguese Workers' Communist Party/Re-Organized Movement of the Party of the Proletariat). This is a communist party in Portugal with Marxist-Leninist and Maoist roots, which played an important role in the revolutionary period.

paint (figure 14). Although the covered slogan is not entirely decipherable, the word 'educação' [education] can be identified, suggesting a slogan protesting policies to do with education and the university. The PCTP/MRPP were the dominant party creating murals during the PREC, and a section of the Portuguese constitution actually legalises murals painted by such political parties in the present day.[96] However, due to other various contradictory laws criminalising graffiti, this is rarely respected by authorities, who, as exemplified in this scenario, cover these interventions regardless. The continued visibility of these graffiti therefore act as a reminder that resistance to institutional aesthetic choices persist, whilst the white paint shows that such interventions are considered undesirable and 'out of place'.[97] This visual argument between the artist and institution is then another testament to the fragility of practices of institutional place making, and the tactics that continuously emerge to resist such dominant territory making.

Figure 14: NOVA FCSH Facade/ Av. de Berna June 2014. Photo Collage by Author.

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[96] Cristina Pratas Cruzeiro, Ricardo Campos, and Cláudia Madeira. "25 de Abril× 50 anos de escrita na cidade," *Etnográfica. Revista do Centro em Rede de Investigação em Antropologia* especial (2024): 235.
[97] Emma Arnold, "Aesthetics of zero tolerance," 154.

Furthermore, as scholars have noted, zero-tolerance policies rarely deter graffiti entirely and often stimulate new stylistic developments. [98] For example, although certain times between 2009 to 2014 are representative of the pure white aesthetic of zero tolerance, other months are affected by the apparition of small scale interventions. Unlike the elaborate graffiti that was characteristic of June 2009, these interventions are predominantly quick illegible tags (figure 15).[99] Although these graffiti styles might be considered to lack the political weight of previous interventions, aesthetic changes in graffiti styles might be considered a direct response and resistance to the increasingly strict graffiti policies.[100] Quick illegible tags can be seen as a way to resist authorities in that they take up less of the artists' time and resources, but take up similar if not equal resources and time to remove. In this way, zero tolerance has the unintended consequence of making space for graffiti that is ultimately of lesser quality both in immediate political content and aesthetic terms, but still stands as an important intervention in public space. The continued apparition of graffiti during zero tolerance is therefore a testament to the way that even during a period of public space democracy backsliding, resistance to institutional oppression and authority still continues to emerge.

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[98] Ibid., 147.

[99] Some larger interventions were also sometimes created, but a student heavily involved in graffiti at FCSH complained that despite the elaborate interventions they sometimes produced, these were often immediately covered the following day, showcasing the unforgiving nature of zero tolerance at FCSH.

[100] Emma Arnold, "Aesthetics of zero tolerance," 159.

II.4 The First NOVA FCSH Mural

Figure 15: NOVA FCSH Salgueiro Maia Mural (2014). Ephemera – Biblioteca e Arquivo de José Pacheco Pereira.

Following this examination of the largely ineffective zero-tolerance policy at FCSH, the next section will analyze a new institutional approach adopted by the faculty – namely, the commissioning of a large and complex mural. In 2014, moving beyond zero-tolerance, NOVA FCSH – with the authorisation of the GAU – commissioned a large mural on the right-hand side of the campus facade as part of a conference marking the 40th anniversary of the 1974 Revolution. The mural was painted by four relatively well known young male Portuguese street artists, Frederico Draw (DRAW), Miguel Januário (MAISMENOS), Diogo Machado (ADD FUEL) and Gonçalo Mar (MAR).[101] Certain of these artists are well known for their strong leftist affiliations, especially with the communist party.[102]

The mural features a large rendition of Alfredo Cunha's[103] famous photograph of Salgueiro Maia, the army captain who led the coup that toppled the dictatorship. A series of upheld hands in the national flag colours are painted behind him on a black background. Behind

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[101] The names in brackets refer to the artist's tag/street artist names.

[102] For more information, see the individual artists' social media profiles, i.e: @miguel_januario, https://www.instagram.com/miguel_januario/.

[103] Alfredo Cunha (1953-Present) is a Portuguese photographer whose pictures of various moments of the Revolution during the 25th of April 1974 have become iconic images of this period in Portuguese history.

the captain's head, there is a sun shaped halo and two outstretched guns with carnations planted in their barrels. On either side of the mural are also two coats of arms embedded with different elements (figure 16). According to various sources, the mural was intended to represent the outlook of a new generation on the events of the 25th of April 1974.[104] In these next sections, I will argue that the symbolism present in the mural adds a new consensus-driven institutional dimension to the FCSH public space, which strays away from the previous aesthetics of zero tolerance. To make this argument, I will first discuss the content of the mural and its references to the Revolution as well as to the austerity crisis and counter-memory. I will then analyse the resulting political aesthetics and its repercussions for public space democracy.

Memory of the Carnation Revolution and Anti-Austerity

The predominant theme conveyed by the mural is the memory of the Revolution, with particular emphasis on the mid-ranking military officers who led the coup that overthrew the Estado Novo regime. This theme is particularly relevant to the year 2014, in that it marks forty years since the 1974 Revolution, and therefore emerges as part of wider commemorative celebrations. This mural is also part of a series of similar murals around Lisbon that were painted around the same time to commemorate both the Revolution and the tradition of muralism by which it is partly defined.

It is also important to note that the memory of the Revolution in 2014 became strongly associated with anti-austerity protests. Leading up to 2014, the use of popular and highly recognisable songs and slogans associated with the Revolution, such as 'Grândola, Vila

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[104] See, for example, Maria Soares, "'Graffiters' criam mural dedicado à revolução de Abril," *Publico*, April 12, 2014, https://www.publico.pt/2014/04/12/culturaipsilon/noticia/graffiters-criam-mural-dedicado-a-revolucao-de-abril-1632047; Lusa, "25 Abril: muro na Avenida de Berna ganha obra colectiva," *Publico*, April 7, 2014. https://www.publico.pt/2014/04/07/p3/noticia/25-abril-muro-na-avenida-de-berna-ganha-obra-colectiva-1819829

Morena'[105], were used widely in protests throughout the country.[106] The forty-year anniversary commemorations served as a platform for activists to organize anti-austerity protests framed in revolutionary terms, which ultimately attracted substantial public participation.[107]

The use of revolutionary symbols functioned on many levels and was a particularly innovative strategy encoded within the specifics of Portuguese culture and history. That is, the invocation of revolutionary memory allowed predominantly leftist protesters to frame the austerity crisis as a moment necessitating the restoration of revolutionary values, which they viewed as eroded by past and present right-wing governments.[108] In other words, the protesters saw austerity as a state of crisis that represented the loss of the leftist achievements that had been established by the Revolution. This established a direct connection between austerity and the Revolution, which enhanced protest mobilization by drawing on the Revolution's broadly positive perception among the Portuguese public.[109] The connection between the commemoration of the Revolution and anti-austerity protests are therefore of high importance to the analysis of commemorative events and artifacts created during this time.

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[105] The song 'Grândola, Vila Morena' was widely used during the anti-austerity protests in the 2010s, mostly to interrupt speeches made by politicians. This was a forbidden song during the Estado Novo, and was played on the public radio as a secret sign that the Revolution had started in 1974.

[106] Britta Baumgarten, "The children of the Carnation Revolution? Connections between Portugal's anti-austerity movement and the revolutionary period 1974/1975," *Social Movement Studies 16* (2016): 6.

[107] Ibid., 8-9.

[108] Ibid., 8

[109] Ibid., 8

Figure 16: Close Ups on NOVA FCSH Salgueiro Maia Mural (2014). Ephemera – Biblioteca e Arquivo de José Pacheco Pereira.

Beyond its role as commemorative public art then, the FCSH mural also serves as a testament to contemporary anti-austerity values. According to an interview with the artists, the mural is in fact intended to represent the link between the Revolution and the present state of the country.[110] It suggests that, just as 1974 marked a rupture with authoritarianism, the present similarly demands resolution and a path forward. Among other elements, this is symbolized by the coats of arms, which the artists identified as referencing the past and present.[111] The first emblem shows the Portuguese coat of arms inside intercrossed bones and a broken chain and can be considered to represent the break with the old regime in 1974 (figure 17). Conversely, the second emblem shows a heart intercrossed by two drooping gun barrels and a latin banner reading "Aut Viam Inveniam Aut Faciam" [Either we find a way, or we make one] (figure 17). This second slogan can therefore be understood as a call to action for the present population,

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[110] Maria Soares, "Graffiters".
[111] Maria Soares, "Graffiters".

and although written in latin, is also strikingly evocative of the political slogans used in graffiti and protest.

Figure 17: 1974 Photograph of Salgueiro Maia by Alfredo Cunha and Close Up on NOVA FCSH Salgueiro Maia Mural (2014). Arquivo Casa Comum - Fundação Mário Soares/ Ephemera – Biblioteca e Arquivo de José Pacheco Pereira.

The dialogue between past and present is also noticeable in the exaggerated lines in Salgueiro Maia's face – which are not present in the original photograph – that can be considered to represent the metaphorical disappointment/worry of the iconic figure towards the state of the country today (figure 18)[112]. These different elements, though somewhat subtle, are still unmistakably reflective of the revolutionary values encoded in the anti-austerity protests. In this way, although official and commissioned, this mural stands as a remarkably leftist statement of resistance that indirectly challenges government policies on austerity.

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[112] The artist refers to the portrait as showing that the Portugal of today is 'heavier' than it used to be. Maria Soares, "Graffiters".

Right Wing Commemorative Discourse and the 'Capitães de Abril'

Solidarity with left wing anti-austerity protests is therefore particularly marked in this mural, and is actually further accentuated by symbolic resistance to official right-wing state commemoration narratives. Namely, the use of Salgueiro Maia – who was a part of the 'Capitães de Abril' [April Captains] – as a central figure, is of particular significance. The 'Capitães de Abril' held an important role in the Revolution in that they broke off from the wider Portuguese military in order to become the driving force behind the events of the 25th of April. Since the event, the captains, especially Salgueiro Maia, have become iconic symbols of the Revolution in collective memory, showcased by the multiple photographs, movies and documentaries of which they are the main subject.[113] The use of Salgueiro Maia therefore stands as an iconic and instantly recognisable symbol of the Revolution, that would be identified by a large majority of Portuguese people.

However, the captains also belong to a period in history that is highly contested between the right and left wing. Although the 25th of April is always officially celebrated, the right-wing narratives see the Revolution as a key step toward democracy but also as the start of a dangerous communist push. The usual tendency is therefore to normalise the memory of the event and rid it of its radical nature. In these circles, November 25th, 1975, is seen as the true milestone, marking the end of the communist threat and the beginning of a stable, western-style democracy.

The left, by contrast, sees this stabilization of democracy as a loss that halted the Revolution's transformative ideals, and the 25th of April 1974 therefore continues to be a date of high importance.[114] The 'Capitães de Abril' are then usually associated with the memory

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[113] See, for example, the widely known 1974 photographs by Alfredo Cunha or the popular 2000 docu-drama 'Capitães de Abril' directed by Maria de Medeiros.
[114] Manuel Loff, "Dictatorship and revolution: Socio-political reconstructions of collective memory in post-authoritarian Portugal," *Culture & History Digital Journal* 3, no. 2 (2014): 2, 5, 10.

present in left wing ideals, mostly due to their role on the 25th of April and their increased association with left-wing parties during the PREC.[115]

In the context of these memory battles, in 2014, during the official state commemorations of the Revolution held by the right-leaning government, the captains were invited to the ceremony but prohibited from actively participating. It is understood that it was decided that the captains should not deliver speeches to prevent the possibility of them expressing views contrary to the government's anti-revolutionary stance. [116] In protest, the captains refused to participate and held their own separate ceremony, so that they were entirely absent from the official commemoration.[117] To add insult to injury, the president then failed to mention the captains in his speech, choosing instead to refer to the military as a whole, which ultimately represented a mischaracterisation of this historical event.[118]

Given these circumstances, the monumental and highly visible representation of Salgueiro Maia in the mural can be considered to represent an act of resistance towards these official and exclusionary state narratives. As noted by Margarida Rendeiro, who undertook a comprehensive study of the 2014 commemorative murals, "the fact that there is a mural like this in the city centre shows the extent to which academia can emerge as a locus of resistance to the normalization of the memory of the Revolution".[119] Indeed, in this context, the university's initiative appears to have produced a work of public art with considerable political and critical significance. The mural can therefore be interpreted to stand not only as a protest

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[115] Raquel da Silva and Ana Sofia Ferreira, "The post-dictatorship memory politics in Portugal which erased political violence from the collective memory," *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 53, no. 1 (2019): 39.

[116] Sandi Michele de Oliveira, "Discourses of inclusion and exclusion in the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Portuguese Revolution," *JSSE-Journal of Social Science Education 14,* no.2 (2015): 19.

[117] Ibid., 19.

[118] Ibid., 19.

[119] Margarida Rendeiro, "Streets of Revolution: Analyzing Representations of the Carnation Revolution in Street Art," in *Challenging Memories and Rebuilding Identities*, ed. Margarida Rendeiro and Federica Lupati (Routledge, 2019), 109

intervention against government policies but also against government sponsored memory narratives of the Revolution.

The Political Aesthetics of the 2014 Mural: Between Consensus and Control

The Mural as an 'Act of Citizenship'

The use of these themes in the FCSH mural might therefore be interpreted as an institutional move away from zero-tolerance and towards a more critically informed and democratic use of public space. The engagement with anti-austerity discourse reflects some of the slogans found in the case of June 2009, such as posters entitled 'CRISE' [CRISIS] or slogans like 'Que a Revolta Alastre' [May the Revolt Spread]. Whereas zero-tolerance suppressed these voices, the mural facilitated the transformation and integration of grassroots political ideals within an institutional framework. Accordingly, this project might reflect another way to understand what Nancy Fraser regards as porousness between state and civil society.[120] The mural creates a visual dialogue between the desires of the institution and those of the civilian/student body in order to form a democratic consensus. This consensus then forms part of the ideal for democratic public space as defined by Chantal Mouffe, in which consensus should always, to some extent, coexist alongside agonism.[121]

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[120] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy 1," In *New Critical Writings in Political Sociology*, (Routledge, 2024), 62-3.

[121] Chantal Mouffe, "Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism?," *Social research* (1999): 756.

Figure 18: Close Up on NOVA FCSH Salgueiro Maia Mural (2014). TravelFeed.

Moreover, the mural's critical dimensions and innovative design position it as a form of public art that can be considered a democratic 'act of citizenship'.[122] According to Fred Evans definition of political aesthetics, the FCSH mural challenges the status quo while simultaneously enabling intricate graphic work and complex narrative construction. It challenges authority on multiple levels, both in terms of austerity policies and commemoration narratives. It is also painted by four artists with different techniques leading to results that channel multifaceted ideas rooted in Portuguese history and culture. This is exemplified in the more obvious elements such as the use of Salgueiro Maia, but also in more implicit details. For instance, the traditional and widely recognizable 'azulejo' tile is employed subversively on the outstretched guns (figure 19). Upon closer examination, the tiles depart from traditional patterns, incorporating macabre imagery such as bones, dancing bat–skeleton hybrids, and one-eyed alien or cyclopean figures. This unexpected subversion of Portuguese tradition somewhat

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[122] Fred Evans, "Political aesthetics of public art in urban spaces," In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of the City* (Routledge, 2019), 151.

accentuates a feeling of unease, and an understanding that the mural is not a straightforward commemorative monument. In doing so, it introduces a level of nuance and political complexity, resulting in a public artwork of significant democratic value and impact.

Finally, the central location and high visibility of the mural is also important, in that it has the potential of reaching many people. In fact, according to John Parkinson's seminal study on public space and democracy, one of the central requirements for democracy is that "public claims be made in places that are conducive to being noticed and taken seriously by the rest of the demos".[123] Despite its critical content, the mural remains prominently displayed rather than relegated to the marginal or concealed spaces typically occupied by 'risky' or subversive graffiti in Lisbon. Its size and location are therefore likely to attract greater public attention, positioning it as a significant pillar of democracy in public space.

The Mural and the Absence of Agonistic Expression

Nonetheless, while the mural makes a significant contribution to public space democracy, it represents only one element within a broader context. That is, aside from the area designated for the mural, the remaining sections of the FCSH facade continue to be governed by zero-tolerance policies. The FCSH public space therefore still lacks the agonistic voices necessary to Mouffe's conception of democracy.[124] Moreover, although the mural certainly incorporates some ideas from June 2009, it also excludes many other claims such as anti-racism, anti-praxe and other ideological stances. Consequently, although the mural showcases an exponential step forward in the institutional backing of marginalized voices, it unfortunately does so at the expense of other voices, which continue to be consistently silenced.

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[123] John Parkinson, *Democracy and public space: The physical sites of democratic performance*, (Oxford University Press, 2012), 16.

[124] Chantal Mouffe, "Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism?," *Social research* (1999): 754-5.

In addition to excluding more diverse contemporary political voices, the mural also conveys a memory of the Revolution that is both highly gendered and exclusionary. Although the mural evoked the memory of the 'Capitães de Abril', it left out equally important elements such as women's movements and the decolonial wars that sparked the Revolution. As Rendeiro observes, the majority of the 2014 commemorative murals in Lisbon depict white men and masculinity and therefore fail to actualise the ideals of the Revolution by giving greater visibility to other involved marginalised groups.[125] Moreover, these groups were equally left out of official and state commemoration ceremonies.[126] This shows that the mural is not entirely emancipated from the status quo, continuing to represent the Revolution as a highly white-masculine occurrence, rather than attempting to move more radically away from this conception.

It is also important to address the authority inherent to the scale and legal status of the mural. The mural is of particularly monumental proportions (fifteen metres wide), and required the use of scaffolding and cranes, taking a total of four days to complete.[127] This is a privilege not afforded to anonymous graffiti which tend to be small and simple due to obvious limitations. This monumental rendition of a single perspective – that of the leftist anti-austerity/Revolution connection – might therefore be considered somewhat oppressive. Additionally, the very artistic intricacy that characterises this mural, and that Evans advocates for, might discourage critical graffiti more than the blank canvas offered by zero tolerance. In this way, the mural may be understood as embodying a new form of subordination, a concept Rosalyn Deutsche associates with the imposition of certain modes of commissioned public

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[125] Margarida Rendeiro, "Streets of Revolution: Analyzing Representations of the Carnation Revolution in Street Art," in *Challenging Memories and Rebuilding Identities*, ed. Margarida Rendeiro and Federica Lupati (Routledge, 2019), 101.

[126] See, for example, Miguel Cardina, "Memórias amnésicas? Nação, discurso político e representações do passado colonial," *Configurações. Revista Ciências Sociais 17*, (2016): 38; Sandi Michele de Oliveira, "Discourses", 17.

[127] Lusa, "25 Abril".

art.[128] The large-scale imposition of a singular viewpoint therefore unfortunately also presents some rather negative consequences.

Conclusion of Chapter II

The period from 2008 to 2014 therefore witnessed the gradual transformation of graffiti policies and the resulting aesthetic effects of this on the FCSH public space. These changes were shaped by the broader context of anti-austerity and student protests occurring in the lead-up to and throughout this period. Before strict graffiti removal policies were enforced, the campus thrived as a site of political graffiti, marked by vibrant agonistic expression and leftist democratic and aesthetic consensus. From September 2009, zero-tolerance policies ended open expression on campus, reinforcing institutional authority and neoliberal discourse over public space. Finally, from April 2014, a monumental mural was installed on campus, reflecting both revolutionary memory and contemporary austerity, signalling a renewed institutional stance while continuing to suppress agonistic expression. This chronology of public art at NOVA FCSH clarifies the context in which the institutional mural emerged — situating the mural as an innovative yet somewhat flawed compromise between the earlier period of unrestricted graffiti and the subsequent zero-tolerance policy.

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[128] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Art and public space: Questions of democracy," *Social Text* 33 (1992): 42.

Chapter III: Political Shifts, Public Space Transformations and Commemorative Muralism at NOVA FCSH 2014-2023

Having gone over the different public art eras NOVA FCSH went through from 2008 to 2014, this next chapter will attempt to understand the evolution of the public space in the next decade. Whilst the years 2014 to 2023 were dominated by the lasting presence of the 2014 mural, the year 2023 saw the replacement of the mural with a new version. This new mural both referenced the preceding intervention and underwent some important modifications. Building on the previous discussions, this chapter explores how recent socio-political changes shaped FCSH's public space democracy, highlighting the commemorative mural as a key element in this evolution. The chapter will begin with an overview of the country's socio-political situation, with a special emphasis on the rise of global protest movements, decolonisation and new student protest aims. This will be followed by an analysis of the afterlives of the 2014 mural and its evolving meaning through time. It will then consider the (un)changed iconography of the 2023 mural and highlight its relation to decolonial topics. Finally, the last section will explore the significance of commemorative murals for public space democracy.

III.1 Global Protest Movements, Decolonisation and New Student Discourse

The Rise of New Global Protest Movements

The next ten years in Portuguese history marked a significant shift from the surge of national protests that had happened in the preceding decade. By the year 2015, mass demonstrations against austerity effectively ended, as an agreement terminating the economic measures taken in 2011 was established between the Troika and the Portuguese government.[129] That same year,

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[129] Cristina Nunes, "Social Movements and Political Protests in Portugal during and after the Austerity Crisis." In *Portugal Since the 2008 Economic Crisis* (Routledge, 2023), 52.

the centre-right Social Democratic Party (PSD) was unseated by the Socialist Party (PS), which – unprecedentedly – received support from far left parties (PCP and BE) for the first time in Portuguese history.[130] As these parties were the actors most heavily involved in mobilization initiatives, their support for the leading government party led to a significant decline in street protest activity.[131] However, as various tensions over the state budget grew, the subsequent elections in 2019 and 2022 resulted in the Socialist Party forming a minority government, without renewing its previous alliance with the far left.[132] In recent years, the far left has in fact experienced a significant decline in parliamentary representation, coinciding with the emergence of new populist far-right parties. As a result, the left has increasingly returned to its traditional role in street protests, disrupting the brief period of more consensual political dynamics.[133]

Nonetheless, the gap created by the institutional left wing during these years made space for more autonomous protest groups to emerge with new objectives and demands. Their aims shifted from the more national materialistic ambitions of the austerity crisis, and towards post-materialistic objectives such as climate justice, feminism and anti-racism.[134] These movements were often part of much broader transnational structures partly enabled by the rapid rise of social media activism.[135] Examples of such movements include the surge in global climate activism in 2018 characterized by groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future. It also includes feminist movements against an increase in violence against women during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the solidarity campaigns for *Black Lives Matter* following the death of George Floyd at the hands of police officers in the United States in 2020.[136]

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[130] Ibid., 52.
[131] Ibid., 52.
[132] Ibid., 60, 62.
[133] Ibid., 60, 62.
[134] Ibid., 52.
[135] Ibid., 60.
[136] Ibid., 59-61.

In Portugal, these movements were influenced by international trends, but also by – for example – systemic racism and police violence against Black people[137] that persists at the national level.[138] Accordingly, the period from 2014 to 2023 was characterized by a marked transition from nationally driven protests centred on socio-economic concerns, to broader internationally informed frameworks of protest repertoires.

Decolonising Memory: Public Spaces, Urban Memories and Official Discourse

Systemic Racism, Historical Representation and the 'Discoveries'

Following this surge in anti-racist activism, the issue of decolonization and the connection between countries' colonial histories and current social landscapes began to further enter mainstream discourse. In Portugal, increased research is beginning to tackle the relation between systemic racism and the underrepresentation of Black people and other minorities in national historical discourse.[139] Although Black people have been present in Portugal and contributing to Portuguese society since the sixteenth century, they are still not recognized in dominant historical narratives.[140] The 1970s in particular, saw a surge in immigration of people – from the Portuguese ex-colonies of Cape Verde, Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau – escaping the unstable political situations that followed the countries' independence after 1974. By the 1980s, African people represented 44% of the total number of foreigners in Portugal.[141] However, despite their incontestable links to the country, these communities often face high

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[137] The term 'Black' is not commonly used in the Portuguese context, where the term 'Afro-descendant' is usually preferred. Considering this thesis deals with representations of people who are not necessarily identifiable as Afro-descendant Portuguese, this thesis uses the term 'Black' according to Anglo-Saxon terminology to refer to wider Black communities. The term 'Afro-descendant' is only used when the people being referred can be identified as such.

[138] Cristina Nunes, "Social Movements and Political Protests," 62.

[139] Nelsio Gomes Correia, "A influência do passado histórico colonial no racismo contra os africanos e afrodescendentes em Portugal," *Revista Ibero-Americana de Humanidades, Ciências e Educação* 8, no. 1 (2022): 1321-2.

[140] Ibid., 1326.

[141] Elsa Peralta and Nuno Domingos, "Lisbon: reading the (post-) colonial city from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century," *Urban History* 46, no. 2 (2019): 258.

levels of systemic discrimination that affect their educational, professional and social opportunities.[142] The links between discrimination in historical discourse and in present society has therefore emerged as a particularly salient topic of research.

In recent years, several activists and scholars have therefore called for a revaluation and decolonisation of Portuguese historical memory. This advocacy is predominantly targeted towards the topic of the 'Discoveries', the so-called 'golden age' of the Portuguese empire. This was an era characterised by Portuguese expansion in South America, Africa and Asia in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. As in many other imperial contexts, such expansion eventually led to widespread racial discrimination, colonial violence and chattel slavery, factors that rarely appear in official discourse.[143]

The persistence of the 'Discoveries' myth is largely due to the enduring portrayal of the Portuguese empire as exceptional and benevolent. This perception is grounded in the concept of Lusotropicalism, an ideological framework developed by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre. Lusotropicalism portrays the Portuguese as particularly tolerant towards other cultures and more prone to racial mixing. In the 1950s, under the Estado Novo, it became a tool in popular culture and international discourse to justify the continued colonialist project.[144] The persistent glorification of the Portuguese empire is then legitimized through this ideological framework, which seeks to distinguish it from other, supposedly more oppressive imperial powers. This narrative endures in the present day and is widespread in spaces of urban commemoration[145], which often glorify the pioneering role of Portuguese navigators and ignore the racism and violence suffered by the affected indigenous people.

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[142] Ibid., 259.

[143] Pedro Cardim, "Reassessing the Portuguese Imperial Past," *Journal of Lusophone Studies* 8, no. 1 (2023): 179.

[144] Miguel Cardina and Bruno Sena Martins, "Memorias cruzadas de la guerra colonial portuguesa y las luchas de liberación africanas: del Imperio a los Estados poscoloniales," *Endoxa* 44 (2019): 119.

[145] Urban commemoration here refers to statues, murals, monuments and memorials in public spaces. Although Lusotropicalist narratives are also present in government commemorative discourse, museums and other commemorative spaces, due to the topic of this thesis, I focus mainly on those narratives present in wider public/urban spaces in Lisbon.

Decolonising the Discoveries

Due to the changing global and national political dynamics, several institutions in Portugal have been moving towards problematising these dominant narratives of the past. For example, the Padrão dos Descobrimentos [Monument to the Discoveries][146], the most widely recognised representation of the Portuguese imperial past in Lisbon, now hosts regular adjacent exhibitions that delve into the complexities of colonialism.[147] Other spaces of commemoration have slowly taken similar steps, often working together with anti-racist civic groups such as DJASS - Associação de Afrodescendentes [Association of Afro-descendants] and Associação Cultural e Juvenil Batoto Yetu Portugal [Batoto Yetu Portugal Cultural and Youth Association].[148]

In addition to challenging existing forms of urban commemoration, certain initiatives have also called for the creation of new monuments that would distinctively represent the history of Black communities. One of the few realized projects is the erection of a small bust in Lisbon's Largo de São Domingos, honouring Pai Paulino - Paulino José da Conceição, a 19th-century freedman who defended the rights of enslaved people.[149] The location of the sculpture - a central square in Lisbon - is of particular significance in that it is still the meeting point of many Afro-descendant populations, and used to be the meeting point of the Black catholic brotherhoods in sixteenth century Portugal.[150] Such public art interventions might therefore be considered as particularly significant in that they represent a greater plurality of voices beyond the dominant Lusotropicalist narrative.

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[146] The Padrão dos Descobrimentos is a large monument in the Belem district of Lisbon. It was first built as a temporary structure to honour Portuguese navigators during the Portuguese World Exhibition in 1940. It was later made a permanent monument in the 1960s. Today, it hosts exhibitions in a small space existing bellow the structure.

[147] Pedro Cardim, "Reassessing the Portuguese Imperial Past," 194.

[148] Ibid.,189-90.

[149] Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, "Estátua de Pai Paulino evoca presença africana histórica em Lisboa," *Lisboa Informação*, January 13, 2024, https://informacao.lisboa.pt/noticias/detalhe/estatua-de-pai-paulino-evoca-presenca-africana-historica-em-lisboa.

[150] Elena Taviani, "What Does Black Lisbon Look Like?," *Ardeth* 9 (2021): 83.

Figure 19: Bust of Paulino José da Conceição, Largo de São Domingos. Emmanuel Akwasi Adu-Ampong.

Nonetheless, despite the undeniable progress inherent to many of these initiatives, the scale of such interventions is still often modest. The exhibition adjacent to the Monument to the Discoveries is in a small space beneath the structure, which is not advertised in the surrounding area and is typically only discovered by visitors once they have already entered. The statue of Pai Paulino, also of modest dimensions, is positioned in a less visible area and is easily missed (figure 20). It is also crafted from white stone, which might be interpreted in several ways. In a first instance the white stone replicates the aesthetics of traditional monuments, which suggests the inclusion of Black narratives into the same sphere as mainstream white commemoration. On the other hand, it might also be considered that this aesthetic choice prevents it from being immediately recognized as a representation of Black history, which therefore diminishes the visibility of such representations.

With this interpretation in mind, it is worth noting that larger, more explicit projects such as a monument/museum to enslaved people in a central space in Lisbon have been in the

works for over seven years, and yet have not been materialised due to various bureaucratic issues.[151] These instances of resistance to the growing visibility of such projects might therefore be seen as an institutional rejection of broader socio-political shifts that call for the amplification of marginalized voices in public spaces.

Decolonising the Revolution

While the decolonization of narratives surrounding the Discoveries is gaining broader mainstream acceptance, the historical narratives tied to the Revolution have not been subject to the same level of scrutiny. Although the Revolution is closely tied to the anti-colonial war, this account is often suppressed in favour of more Portuguese centric and heroic narratives. The anti-colonial wars, which commenced in 1961, are frequently regarded as the catalyst for the Revolution because it was the military's disillusionment with the lives and resources lost in the conflict that eventually led them to orchestrate the uprising.[152]

However, the dominant narrative which separates the anti-colonial war from the Revolution remains difficult to deconstruct partly due to the army's dual role as both revolutionaries and key actors in the war.[153] The decolonisation of this memory has increasingly emerged in official commemorative speeches since around 2021, but urban memories, especially in central Lisbon, have not yet followed suit.[154] Consequently, urban memories of the Revolution in the Lisbon Metropolitan area often "tell us a white narrative

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[151] Inês Nadais and Lucinda Canela, "Ribeira das Naus é de novo hipótese para o Memorial às Pessoas Escravizadas," *Publico*, June 26, 2024, https://www.publico.pt/2024/06/26/culturaipsilon/noticia/ribeira-naus-novo-hipotese-memorial-pessoas-escravizadas-2095411

[152] Miguel Cardina, "Introduction," in *The Portuguese Colonial War and the African Liberation Struggles* (Routledge, 2023), 1.

[153] Sofia Lovegrove and Raquel Rodrigues Machaqueiro, "Contesting monuments, challenging narratives: Divergent approaches to dealing with the colonial past and its legacies in Lisbon, Portugal," *Journal of Historical Geography* 83 (2024): 86.

[154] See, for example, Miguel Cardina, "Portugal, colonial aphasia and the public memory of war," In *The Portuguese Colonial War and the African Liberation Struggles*, (Routledge, 2023), 25-6; Margarida Rendeiro, "Streets of Revolution: Analyzing Representations of the Carnation Revolution in Street Art," in *Challenging Memories and Rebuilding Identities*, ed. Margarida Rendeiro and Federica Lupati (Routledge, 2019), 101-2.

about a white democracy" and ignore the significant contribution of African people to the Revolution and the collapse of the Estado Novo.[155] Thus, although initial steps toward the decolonization of urban commemoration have been taken, the process remains ongoing and substantial work is still required.

Evolving Student Discourse

Intersectional Approaches to Protest

The challenges of decolonization are also closely linked to the emergence of new forms of student protest during this time. As in the previous decade, students and young people continued to play a significant role in organizing social protests. After a significant period of student protest decline starting in 2013, these started to grow again in 2019, with autonomous movements such as climate justice being particularly popular with younger crowds.[156] With the rise of social media, student groups partly overcame their earlier limitations by building networks and mobilizing around nationally and globally relevant issues.[157] New inter-university groups emerged, such as Brigada Estudantil [Student Brigade], Greve Climatica Estudantil [Student Climate Strike], and Quarantena Academica [Academic Quarantine] whose main platforms of communication include Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Due to the evolution of multiple co-existing political objectives, André Marinha's research suggests that these student groups have shifted away from prioritizing individual concerns that characterized the austerity period, and have begun adopting an intersectional approach.[158] Alhtough these

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[155] Margarida Rendeiro, "We Are Not Your Negroes: Analyzing Mural Representations of Blackness in Lisbon Metropolitan Area," In *Twenty-First Century Arab and African Diasporas in Spain, Portugal and Latin America* (Routledge, 2022), 114.

[156] See, for example, André Marinha, "Redesigning the Boundaries of Protest: Movement Solidarity and Repertoires of Critique in Portugal." *SSRN*, November 30, 2023, 3; Cristina Nunes, "Social Movements and Political Protests in Portugal," 62.

[157] André Marinha, "Redesigning the Boundaries of Protest," 4.

[158] Ibid., 12.

platforms might appear most concerned with – for example – anti-racism and discrimination, the intersection of "antiracist, antifascist, ecologist, feminist and queer struggles" are at the core of their strategies and values.[159]

Student protests and information platforms are also often at the forefront of new developments in the historico-political and decolonisation arena. For instance, a podcast episode posted in 2021 on the Brigada Estudantil Spotify platform, titled 'O 25 de Abril começou em África' [The 25th of April began in Africa], explicitly engages with the complex and unresolved memory of the colonial dimension of the Revolution.[160] This podcast is significant because it addressed a topic that was still just emerging and had not yet gained widespread consensus. The innovative strategies and approaches of students during this decade are therefore of particular relevance in a world of shifting politics and protest dynamics.

NOVA FCSH, Student Protest and the Far Right

NOVA FCSH itself also became the centre of many of these new historico-political battles. In March 2017, protests organized by the student union prompted the faculty to revoke its decision to host a conference on 'populism and democracy' organised by Nova Portugalidade. The students opposed the conference because Nova Portugalidade, a far-right party characterized by "colonialist, racist, and xenophobic discourses," was involved, raising concerns that the topics discussed would contradict democratic values.[161] Indeed, Portugal is increasingly becoming a base for far-right populist parties, including Nova Portugalidade [New Portugalism] and Chega [Enough].[162] The cancellation of the FCSH event led to general

[159] Ibid., 12-3.

[160] Brigada Estudantil, "O 25 de Abril começou em África," *Peço a Palavra* (podcast), Spotify, April 27, 2021, https://open.spotify.com/episode/3A7i0aPxSMBm2BGwV5m8qx.

[161] André Marinha, "Redesigning the Boundaries of Protest," 10.

[162] In 2019, Chega won its first parliamentary seat and the party has been rising in popularity ever since. At the time of writing in April 2025, Chega currently holds the third largest number of seats in parliament after the Democratic Alliance Party (AD, PSD/CDS-PP) and the Socialist Party (PS).

outrage as it was seen as a silencing of democratic free speech by the overwhelmingly leftist faculty.[163] On the other hand, the faculty claims the conference was cancelled over concerns about potential violence between far-left and far-right groups. These debates and decisions therefore reflect both the influence of left-wing student protests on university policy, as well as a growing polarization in Portuguese politics and society.

III.2 The 2014 NOVA FCSH Mural: Afterlife

Considering these considerable socio-political shifts, the mural painted at FCSH in 2014 still lasted for an exceptionally long time, with a lifespan of almost ten years. During this time, it remained in the campus public space, experiencing the various transformations brought by time and environment. Although it was initially vibrant and well conserved, as it neared the end of its life, it began to fade away and deteriorate. New styles of co-existing and overlapping graffiti also appeared, adding fresh layers of conversation to the shared urban space. This section will therefore discuss the ways in which the 2014 FCSH mural evolved in the shifting socio-political context, and the impacts of this for its significance in the public sphere. To this end, I will first analyse the mural's interactions with other interventions in the years immediately after its inauguration. This will serve to showcase the continued relevance of the subject matter during this period. I will then discuss the co-existing interventions in the years near the end of the mural's lifetime, as well as the aesthetic impacts of the mural's deterioration.

The Mural in Public (Space) Discourse

The Transformation of Public Art Interventions and the Far Left

In the first few months/years of its existence, the 2014 mural can be considered to have remained highly relevant in public (space) discourse. Although anti-austerity themes started to

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[163] Tania Pereirinha, "FCSH cancela conferência de Jaime Nogueira Pinto," *Observador*, March 6, 2017, https://observador.pt/2017/03/06/fcsh-cancela-conferencia-de-jaime-nogueira-pinto/.

disappear after the last mass demonstration in March 2013, the leftist ideals depicted in the mural were still a matter of interest and contention. While zero tolerance remained the dominant policy surrounding the mural, smaller interventions employing new techniques beyond those seen in 2009 began to appear. In June 2014, before the elections planned for the following year, left wing stickers, etchings and small posters began to materialise around the mural. Such techniques differed significantly from the larger graffiti that had previously characterized the FCSH public space. These interventions no longer appeared on the walls of the faculty, but were predominantly posted on urban fixtures such as bus shelters, streetlamps, and dustbins.

As noted in Chapter II, these new techniques diverge from large-scale wall graffiti and can be considered a direct response to zero-tolerance policies. Such techniques also aim to ensure that interventions are not so easily or immediately removed. This might be seen as a testament to the adaptability of protest public art even when autocratic tendencies such as zero tolerance are carried out. These interventions are also further markers of the somewhat oppressive nature of institutional muralism. That is, the dominant and exclusively authorised presence of the mural denies other actors to hold space on the same scale, on the same temporal framework, or even on the same canvas/platform. In terms of public space dynamics then, the mural's emergence appears to have reshaped power dynamics in public space, altering how political opinion is expressed and contested.

Figure 20: NOVA FCSH/Av. de Berna June 2014. Photo Collage by Author.

In terms of political content, most of the spontaneous interventions during this period can be considered leftist interventions that both support the values in the mural, whilst also referencing more concrete political dynamics. This includes both official party propaganda and more illicit interventions by anonymous individuals. Official party propaganda manifests as stickers from the PCTP/MRPP party which appear to be advocating for a specific candidate, as well as various fabric propaganda posters calling on citizens to vote for the communist/green coalition (figure 21). The dominance of official propaganda as the primary form of agonism in public space highlights how institutional interventions have become the main mode of public communication. The larger array of anonymous voices from 2009 have mostly disappeared so that messages are now almost always associated to known actors.

Figure 21: NOVA FCSH/Av. de Berna June 2014. Photo Collage by Author.

One of the only visible anonymous interventions during this time is a small graffiti on a telecommunications pillar next to the campus entrance. It reads "vota, burro és, vota nos xônés CDS, PSD, PS" [Vote, you idiot, vote for the fools of the CDS (Christian democrats), PSD (social democrats), PS(socialists)] and is accompanied by what appears to be a nazi sign next to these party names (figure 22). This intervention does not explicitly position itself as far left but actively insults centre and centre-right parties it disagrees with. It might therefore be considered that both institutional and anonymous voices agree about leftist politics. However, the interventions are targeted towards broader ideas of party politics rather than the more concrete demands of 2009 such as anti-racism and anti-praxe. In this way, the mural and zero-tolerance policy have not only diminished the frequency of agonistic interventions, but also shifted their content away from the more tangible demands for change that once characterized this space.

Figure 22: Swastikas on the NOVA FCSH Mural (2014). @maismenos.

Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that the leftist ideals in the mural were not always unanimously supported by comparably similar values, but were also severely contested. A few days after the inauguration of the mural, the image of Salgueiro Maia was defaced by two large swastikas (figure 23).[164] This happened one day after the 25th of April and the large celebrations that marked the forty-year anniversary of the Revolution, often shunned by far-right parties. Although spontaneous far right symbols were mostly absent during the era of unrestricted graffiti in 2009, FCSH's explicit institutional support for leftist art in public space seems to have inspired backlash from the opposite side of the spectrum.

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[164] maismenos (@maismenos), "Liberdade de Expressão vs Prisão de Ventre." *Instagram*, April 26, 2014, https://www.instagram.com/p/nQzkuTtssP/.

Although this swastika intervention took place prior to the 2015 electoral victory of the socialist/far-left coalition, it may be understood as anticipating the mural's eventual incorporation into official state discourse. That is, with the left assuming the role of the dominant ideological force, the mural transitioned from a site of resistance to one of institutional alignment, while right-wing interventions can be considered to have emerged as somewhat of a counter-public. The mural and accompanying agonistic interventions' meaning therefore changed over time. In this context, the interplay between diverse forms of intervention – both institutional and grassroot – alongside shifting political conditions, underscores the inherently fluid and contested character of public art, democratic expression and the public sphere.

The Mural Fading Away

Public Art Interventions and Global Protest Movements

Figure 23: NOVA FCSH/Av.de Berna August 2018. Photo Collage by Author.

Despite the continued significance of the mural in the first few years of its lifetime, the socio-political shifts soon changed the discourse surrounding the mural. While zero tolerance and smaller interventions mostly dominated, in August 2018, there was a strong revival of larger graffiti practices. This included political slogans and large American style 'pieces' and 'throw ups' appearing on the far-right hand side of the campus facade, whilst the mural continued to

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be present on the left-hand side. Particularly notable amongst these is the appearance of a Palestinian flag, slogans reading #freepalestine and a call to protest on the 24th of May in front of the Israeli embassy (figure 24). These interventions are likely to reference the Israeli murder of Palestinian demonstrators in 2018 as well as the U.S embassy's move to Jerusalem, which sparked solidarity campaigns with Palestine across the world.[165] Such interventions are evocative of the more international direction taken by street protests, an aspect not reflected in the 2009 graffiti or the mural.
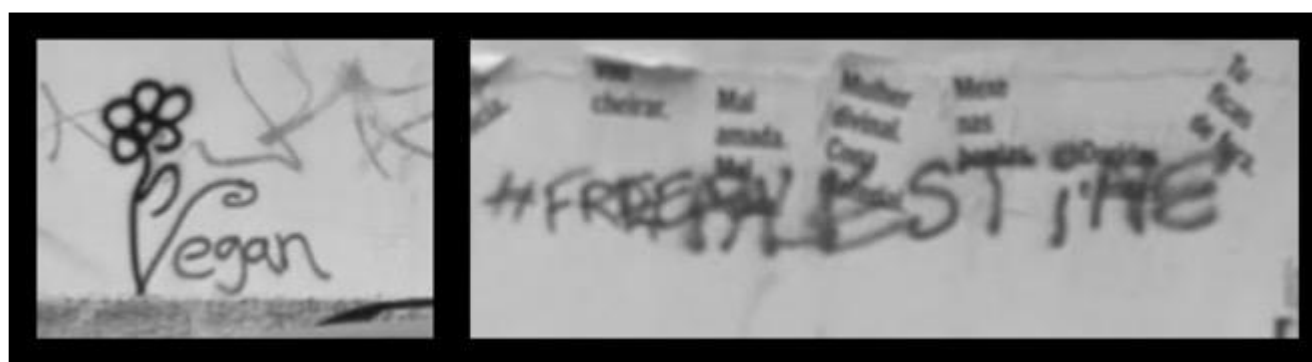

Figure 24: NOVA FCSH/Av.de Berna August 2018. Photo Collage by Author.

Additionally, the graffiti are written in both English and Portuguese, also seen in the environmental graffiti featuring the word 'vegan'(figure 25), which showcases the increased need to translate issues on a global rather than national scale. The inclusion of the hashtag symbol also highlights the widespread use of social media in protest movements (figure 25). These elements are therefore particularly representative of the changing repertoires of protest, and begin to transcend the national and materialistic values held in the 2014 mural and other interventions. It can therefore be considered that the mural is now no longer contested for its hegemonic leftist stance, but actually begins to be contested for its outdated and somewhat

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[165] Oliver Holmes, Hazem Balousha and Peter Beaumont, "Global protests grow after Israeli killing of Palestinian demonstrators," *The Guardian,* May 15, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/15/palestinians-to-bury-58-people-killed-in-us-embassy-protests.

conservative position in light of evolving socio-political dynamics. This shift illustrates how changes in the broader political landscape continuously reshape the meanings and value ascribed to public art, challenging its ability to maintain a stable or enduring consensus over time.

The Material Erosion of the Mural

Figure 25: NOVA FCSH Salgueiro Maia Mural 2014 and 2023. Photo Collage by Author.

Parallel to this development, the passage of time leads to the mural's gradual physical deterioration, as environmental factors slowly cause its natural erosion. Although the first few years are marked by the vibrancy of the colours and the quality of the paint, as the mural approaches the end of its life, certain features fade and colours grow murky (figure 26). Specifically, the colour red, such as the hands representing a section of the flag and the carnations in the gun barrels turn a barely recognisable shade of faded orange. In this way, red

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– also associated with the Communist Party to which some of the artists belong – has faded, coincidentally mirroring the party's gradual decline in influence within both mainstream politics and street-level activism.

Figure 26: Close up on NOVA FCSH Mural (2023). TravelFeed.

Time has also caused the paint on Maia's face to chip away, creating large gaps that show the white concrete behind the mural (figure 27). Such a concentrated corrosion of the material at this spot can symbolically signify the way in which the figure of Maia no longer holds the importance and resistant values that it did in the years leading up to 2014. As the narratives on history move towards decolonisation, the figure of Maia in such a central space suddenly holds a very different meaning that enforces the supremacy of white male figures in historical representation. The deterioration brought about by natural forces and the passage of

time can therefore serve as a metaphor for the erosion of the values associated with a particular historical memory and its urban manifestation.

These new interventions and shifts in the materiality of the urban space can essentially be seen as signalling the gradual breakdown of the consensus established in 2014, highlighting how such agreements must be continually renegotiated in response to emerging agonistic voices that surface over time and call for renewed attention. In fact, studies based on murals tend to focus on the creation of these artifacts and their immediate message, rather than on their evolving meaning over time and the significance of their gradual or instantaneous erasure.[166] Just as the painting of a mural has an impact on the urban space and the creation of socio-political environments, so does its deterioration or disappearance.[167] The significance of addressing this dimension lies in its ability to unveil the constant need to reassess public art interventions in our respective environments, by recognizing that an artwork once seen as progressive and resistant may now hold a hegemonic or conservative position.

On the other hand, the perpetual development of new spontaneous interventions can also function to maintain a level of political discussion in public space, and prevent the mural from emerging as a pillar of truth, eternity or uncontested authority. The changing materiality of the mural and layered agonistic interventions then enable our interactions with the space to become more conscious – especially if they are temporary – as permanent images may eventually lead to a 'return of familiarity and neglect' which stop us from politically evaluating the spaces around us.[168]

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[166] Jonathan McCormick and Neil Jarman, "Death of a Mural," *Journal of Material Culture* 10, no. 1 (2005): 51.
[167] Ibid., 54-5.
[168] Tim Cresswell, "Night discourse: Producing/Consuming meaning on the Street," In *Images of the Street*, (Routledge, 2006): 269.

III.3 The NOVA FCSH Mural: 2023 Re-imagination

Figure 27: NOVA FCSH Mural Re-imagination (2023). Wikipedia.

Following this development, the deterioration of the mural eventually led to the dilemma of restoring, erasing or changing it. The upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the Revolution in 2024 triggered a new series of commemorative events around the city, including the commission of a new set of commemorative murals by the GAU. FCSH ultimately chose this same route, and a new mural was commissioned to replace the 2014 one in November 2023. This mural was painted by artists Tamara Alves, Sara Fonseca da Graça (Petra Preta), MOAMI and Mariana Malhão. This time around, all four artists were women and two of them were Afro-descendant women, which is of particular significance. Like the last mural, this mural was a partnership between the GAU and FCSH, however it also received financial support from Castelo de Vide City Council and Santarém City Council, two cities in Portugal with strong links to the figure of Salgueiro Maia.[169]

The mural is significantly different from the 2014 one, whilst also maintaining strong ties and references to its predecessor. The central figure is Salgueiro Maia, but the background

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[169] Salgueiro Maia was born in Castelo De Vide and this heritage is an important part of the city and its tourism industry. Santarem is the city from which the cavalry regiment Maia was a part of departed from to stage the Revolution on the 25th of April. Similarly this heritage contributes to the city's identity and tourism industry.

is now bright orange, green and red. Various figures of Black women and children stand out as well as a series of outlined monochrome white figures holding hands. The mural also sees the return of the carnation symbol and a yellow lace pattern is threaded throughout (figure 28). Similarly to the last mural, sources point to the idea that this mural is intended to represent the past, present and future of the country.[170] This section will outline and analyse the changes in the iconography of the mural in light of the changing socio-political context. At the same time, it will highlight its strong references to the 2014 mural as well as the tensions and paradoxes inherent in mural commissions as collaborative works.

The Mural Re-imagination and Decolonisation
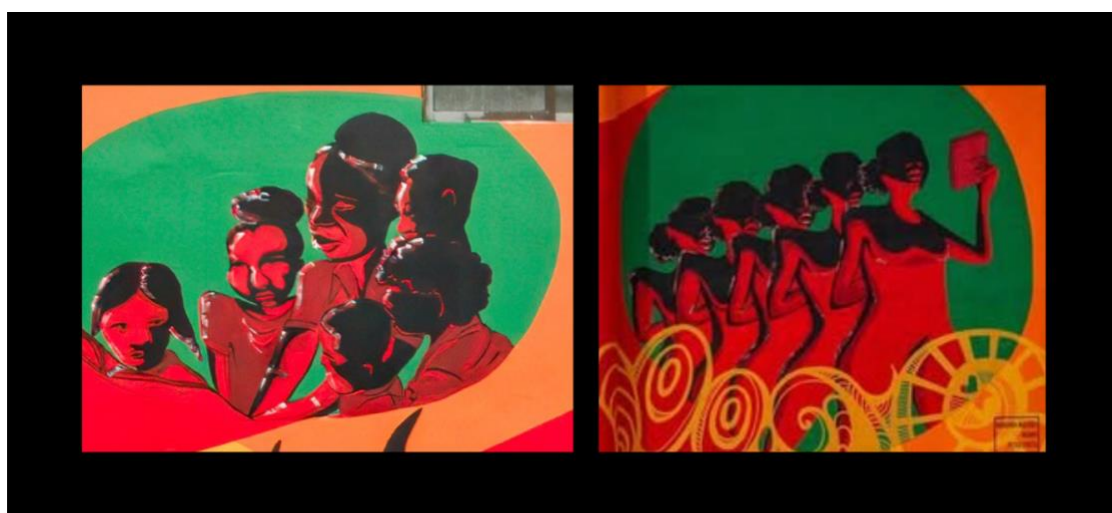
Figure 28: Close ups on NOVA FCSH Mural Re-imagination (2023). Photo Collage by Author.

Perhaps the most notable change from the previous mural is the inclusion of background symbols reflecting the recent socio-political turn toward decolonisation. For example, the presence of Black women in various roles such as family leaders, warriors, and educated individuals particularly stand out (figure 29). This can be considered to reflect strands of anti-

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[170] Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, "Renovação do Mural de Salgueiro Maia Revelada à Comunidade," *Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas*, April 24, 2024, https://www.fcsh.unl.pt/renovacao-do-mural-de-salgueiro-maia-revelada-a-comunidade/.

racism and feminism that aim to challenge and move beyond clichéd representations of both women and Black individuals. As Dacres notes, Black women in the history of art have most often been represented in subordinate positions, often kneeling with gratitude at the feet of white male liberators.[171] Rather than focusing solely on the heroic white man then, the inclusion of diverse roles restores agency to the Black women and highlights their important historical contributions.

Moreover, these narratives and representations are far more explicit than the many symbolisms present in the 2014 mural, such as the carnations in gun barrels, upheld fists and coats of arms. The 2014 symbols were more effective in evoking abstract ideals such as 'liberation', 'resistance' and 'freedom,' whilst the 2023 mural gives rise to tangible narratives that explicitly advocate for the liberation of Black and female voices. Although the carnations remain present in the 2023 rendition, there is an implicit recognition that abstract ideals may no longer suffice in advancing the liberation of concrete realities such as that of women, Black communities, education, families, etc. As a result, this evolution reflects a more straightforward engagement with social realities, making the artwork not just a symbolic representation, but a call for direct action and change.

Significantly, this is the first and only commemorative mural in central Lisbon to explicitly highlight the role of Black women in the Revolution. The mural therefore emerges as a 'space of appearance' which does not immediately contest problematic heritage, but rather inscribes new and more diverse narratives into public space. Arguably, it is through creating such spaces of appearance that alternative memories can develop, and marginalised communities can "claim their belonging not just in the public space, but in the country's past,

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[171] Petrina Dacres, "Monument and meaning," *Small Axe* 8, no. 2 (2004): 149.

present and future".[172] The placement of this mural in central Lisbon – within a predominantly white, upper-middle-class district frequently traversed by Black communities commuting from the city's periphery – therefore holds considerable socio-political implications.

The Mural Re-imagination and Reflections of Student Protest Movements
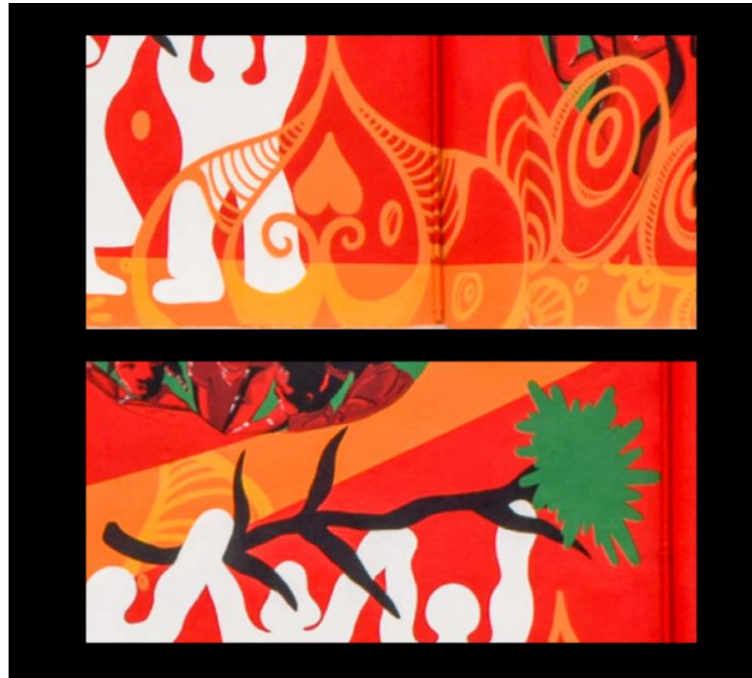
Figure 29: Close ups on NOVA FCSH Mural Re-imagination (2023). Photo Collage by Author.

It is also worth noting the incorporation of background symbols that represent the intersectionality characterizing contemporary student discourse and protest. For instance, the yellow lace pattern drawn in organic shapes, and the carnations that are sometimes painted green and the size of trees are evocative of natural elements (figure 30), and might be seen as reflecting changing attitudes toward the environment and ecology. These elements also embody a soft and feminine energy that was not present in the more masculine and aggressive

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[172] Sofia Lovegrove and Raquel Rodrigues Machaqueiro, "Contesting monuments, challenging narratives: Divergent approaches to dealing with the colonial past and its legacies in Lisbon, Portugal," *Journal of Historical Geography* 83 (2024): 95.

depiction of the first mural. This rendition therefore moves away from associating the idea of Revolution with men and masculinity, and towards encompassing the possibility of femininity as a crucial part in the act of resistance.[173] These multifaceted themes echo the intersectionality present in student discourse that strives to tackle issues of anti-racism, feminism and environmentalism as fundamentally linked.

Figure 30: Close ups on NOVA FCSH Mural Re-imagination (2023). Photo Collage by Author.

The mural also appears to engage critically with the historical memory of the complex and often contradictory relationship between colonial violence and the emancipatory ideals of the 'non-violent' Revolution. The subdued and 'peaceful' portrayal of violence represented by the carnations in the guns of the 2014 mural is reimagined here as a more explicit depiction of actual, lived violence. As one of the artists explains in an interview, the red of the carnations in the 2023 mural can symbolize a wound, while the leaves appear almost like barbed wire,

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[173] Margarida Rendeiro, "Masculinities on the Wall: An Approach to Mural Representations of the Carnation Revolution in Lisbon," *Humanities Bulletin* 1 no.1 (2018): 179.

evoking a sense of repression (figure 31).[174] As a result, the violence is no longer muted by carnations in gun barrels – instead, the carnation itself becomes a symbol of the violence experienced in the colonies. This shift reflects a more tangible, subversive engagement with these symbols than in 2014, offering a broader and more nuanced exploration of war, violence, and liberation. Similarly, this then aligns with student initiatives to broaden understandings of the Revolution and its associated events.

The Mural Re-imagination and The Return of Salgueiro Maia
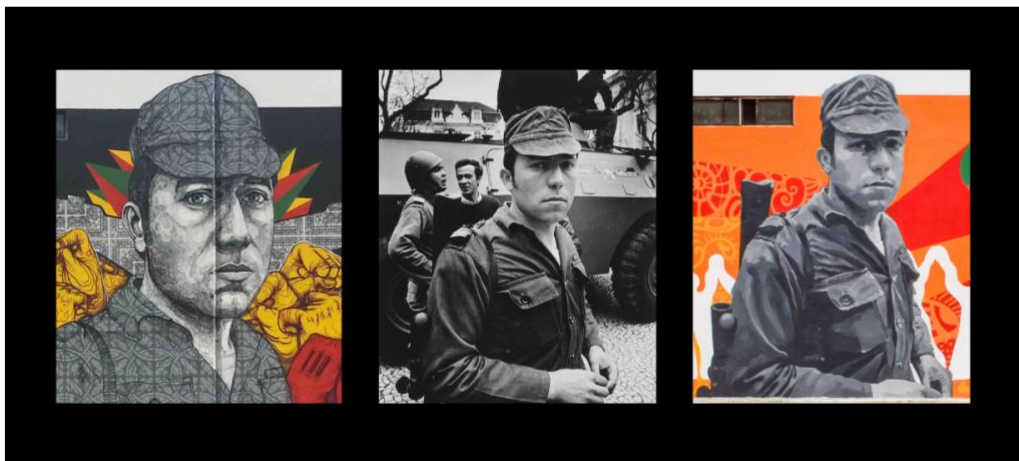
Figure 31: Close up on 2014 Mural (Left)/Alfredo Cunha 1974 Photograph (Centre)/ Close up on 2023 Mural (Right). Photo Collage by Author.

Nonetheless, the foreground of the mural is still characterised by the representation of Alfredo Cunha's 1974 Salgueiro Maia photograph. Although the image is in the same prominent position as in the last iteration, the style has moved from a more stylised representation, to a purely photorealist portrait (figure 32). This decision holds particular significance in that, as Warburton highlights, we typically regard photographs as more objective than paintings.[175]

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[174] Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, "'Paredes Brancas, Povo Mudo' - As Underdogs Sobre O Mural de Salgueiro Maia," *Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas*, December 15, 2023, https://www.fcsh.unl.pt/paredes-brancas-povo-mudo-as-underdogs-sobre-o-mural-de-salgueiro-maia/.

[175] Nigel Warburton, "Photography," In *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson, (Oxford University Press, 2013), 623.

More precisely, a black-and-white photograph can evoke the 'archive effect', in that there is a tendency to perceive reused archival material in contemporary works as carrying an inherent truth and heightened authority.[176] In opposition to the more stylised representations of the Black women and background then, the photograph can be considered to emerge as a pillar of authority on the Revolution narrative. Although the artists affirm that the figure of Salgueiro Maia was not meant to emerge as the most important figure, the resulting aesthetic reality positions him in the most central and influential position.[177] Compared to the 2014 rendition in which Maia emerged as a symbol of resistance to exclusionary state memory narratives – and despite the progressive elements in the background – changing socio-political conditions shift the meaning of Maia's representation towards a more conservative position of the white saviour archetype.

On the other hand, the contrast between photorealism and the more cohesive stylised background marks a stark separation between the decolonial/intersectional narratives and the symbol of Salgueiro Maia. This separation between the old and new narratives demonstrates a clear refusal to integrate both histories into a cohesive whole. This representation therefore succeeds in avoiding Luso-tropicalist tropes, which would imply a harmonious, unified history devoid of conflict and division. As a result, despite the shared context of these histories, the individual stories of each community are respected as somewhat fragmented and distinct.[178]

Additionally, the black and white nature of the photograph is a testament to authority, but also a marker of separation from contemporary discourse, suggesting an element that is somewhat antiquated and outdated. The stylised aesthetics used to portray the women may also reflect the need for new visual strategies to represent Black subjectivity. Namely, it might be

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[176] Jaimie Baron, "The Archive Effect: Archival Footage as an Experience of Reception," *Projections* 6, no. 2 (2012): 113.

[177] Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, "'Paredes Brancas, Povo Mudo'".

[178] Duncan Bell, "Agonistic Democracy and the Politics of Memory," *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical & Democratic Theory* 15, no. 1 (2008): 150.

seen as a response to the colonial photographic archive that typically portrays Black individuals, especially women, in subordinate roles and often without consent.[179] In this instance, the difference in painting styles may therefore emerge as a form of resistance against the colonial medium of photography. The photorealist depiction of Maia as compared to the more stylised background figures therefore functions on multiple nuanced levels.[180]

The Mural Re-imagination as a Contestation Zone

These ambiguous and paradoxical messages can be considered to reflect the tensions and power dynamics that emerge in commissioned public art. Although the mural is painted by four women with progressive viewpoints, the mural is ultimately financed by establishments (Castelo de Vide and Santarém) with an incentive to keep Maia as the main character. Such logistical parameters might therefore be considered the driving force behind such paradoxes. As Dacres points out, "the past, as represented in monuments, is circumscribed by demands other than the artist's personal vision. It must also speak to the public and more often it must serve political and social interests involved in the commission".[181] Accordingly, the resulting artwork is bound to reflect a series of tensions as disagreeing artists and other collaborators seek to inscribe competing histories into public space. The mural therefore emerges as a form of collaborative work that must integrate both logistical pressures and artists' visions, which can create both remarkable and disconcerting results.

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[179] See Petrina Dacres, "Monument and meaning," *Small Axe* 8, no. 2 (2004): 140; Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in two acts," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 2 (2008): 2.

[180] Although this escapes the scope of this section's analysis, it is worth noting that the mural may also be interpreted as conveying a message of unity, particularly through the depiction of white monochrome figures holding hands. In this sense, it gestures toward a future-oriented, utopian vision in which individuals of diverse backgrounds may project their own identities onto the blank canvas of the monochrome figures, symbolizing a future collective harmony. In contrast to this narrative however, images that appear to relate to the past appear significantly more fragmented and complex.

[181] Petrina Dacres, "Monument and meaning," Small Axe 8, no. 2 (2004): 145.

Although the mural is a space of appearance then, it is also very much a space of contestation in which two alternative narratives of the past both clash and co-exist. Lovegrove defines a contestation zones as:

> a concrete or material location from which discussions and divergent perspectives emerging from different points in society converge and are negotiated, challenged and/or simply coexist, often in uncomfortable and confronting ways. These zones are significant for rendering visible and amplifying existing tensions in society.[182]

Beyond standing as a space of appearance the mural is therefore also voicing the disagreements that surround the memory of the Revolution. It reflects the contested nature of memory and embodies the tensions that arise when diverse – and sometimes conflicting – participants collaborate on an artwork. The consensus achieved within this single work of art might therefore be considered an example of what Mouffe understands as 'conflictual consensus'.[183] Whereas the conflict at the end of the first mural's lifespan arose most explicitly from interactions with other agonistic forms of graffiti, the tension in this case is internal, embedded within a single artwork.

III.4 Commemorative Muralism and Public Space Democracy

Having analysed the material and iconographic transformations of the 2014 and 2023 FCSH mural, this final section will discuss the particularities of mural commemorations and their inherent potential in fostering public space democracy. This aims to offer a starting point for considering progressive and democratic approaches to urban commemoration – especially in contexts with established graffiti, street art, and mural practices. Based on the FCSH examples, I will consider how commemorative murals emerge as a powerful tool for public space democracy in four different ways. First, their capacity to operate as a counter-monument while

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[182] Sofia Lovegrove and Raquel Rodrigues Machaqueiro,"Contesting monuments," 87-8.
[183] Chantal Mouffe, "Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism?." *Social research* (1999): 756.

simultaneously exceeding or redefining the boundaries of the concept. Second, their rootedness in the traditions of graffiti and street art. Third, the different possibilities afforded by the use of paint and colour. And fourth, their ambivalent position between permanence and ephemerality.

Commemorative Muralism: Beyond the Counter-Monument

Commemorative murals can emerge as important assets in public space democracy, especially when we consider their potential to function as counter-monuments. Although the concept of counter-monument has not reached widespread consensus, it generally defines a commemorative artifact in urban space that challenges and transcends conventional forms of commemoration. Such counter-monuments began to appear in the post-war period, particularly in Germany, as a critical response to the patriotic and heroic monuments of the nineteenth century, which were originally constructed to promote hegemonic nationalist ideologies.[184] It also served as a means to grapple with the ways in which to represent histories of loss and trauma experienced during this century, particularly the Holocaust.[185] In this context, existing counter-monuments have frequently been characterized as such because they subvert the traditional concept of the monument in terms of form and content, as well as location, meaning and viewing experience.[186] As the name suggests, the counter-monument's purpose is therefore to 'counter', or exist in opposition to something else – often other more mainstream narratives about the past. As a result, the counter-monument can often be considered as a fundamental tool in resisting autocratic tendencies and expanding the diversity of perspectives in public space.

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[184] Thomas Cauvin, "A Public History of Monuments," *Studies on National Movements* 10, no. 1 (2022): 23.
[185] Ibid., 23-4.
[186] Quentin Stevens, Karen A. Franck, and Ruth Fazakerley, "Counter-monuments: the anti-monumental and the dialogic," *The Journal of Architecture* 23, no. 5 (2018): 722.

However, it is also important to note that counter-monuments as democratic tools have been contested by various scholars. Some argue that counter-monuments – especially in the highly studied German context – ultimately reproduce the logic of monumentality by affirming a fixed and unified identity for the commemorated community. They contend that this approach overlooks the contradictions and plurality of memory.[187] Similarly, others have noted that counter-monuments can suppress contestation by fostering an artificial consensus around issues that remain contested.[188] As Stevens, Franck, and Fazakerley observe, ongoing debates persist in part due to the limited range of counter-monument case studies across diverse formats and contexts.[189] Given the limited scholarly attention devoted to commemorative murals, this section seeks to shed light on the mural both as a counter-monument and as something that exceeds or redefines this category. The following sections will delineate this potential by demonstrating how the mural's material conditions and cultural origins can position it beyond the conventional framework of the counter-monument.

Commemorative Muralism, Street Art and Graffiti

A key aspect that can distinguish commemorative muralism from other forms of commemoration is its rootedness in the subversive traditions of street art and graffiti. The relationship between muralism and graffiti is notable, as it can add an additional layer of meaning that is often absent in more conventional public art forms. While the integration of graffiti into sanctioned artworks is frequently viewed as the co-optation of a practice originating in marginalized communities, alternative perspectives also exist.[190] For instance, the incorporation of a once subversive medium into mainstream art can signal a broader

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[187] Ibid., 734-5.
[188] Ibid., 735.
[189] Ibid., 735.
[190] Otávio Ribeiro Raposo. "Street Art Commodification and (An) aesthetic Policies on the Outskirts of Lisbon," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 52, no. 2 (2023): 187.

recognition of graffiti as a legitimate art form, while also acknowledging the contributions of street artists. Both the 2014 and 2023 FCSH murals, for example, involved artists who had previously, and in some cases still, engaged in illegal graffiti practices.

This approach, in contrast to traditional monuments, facilitates the involvement of a wider artistic community, extending beyond the boundaries of the conventional fine arts sector. As Cauvin asserts, "decolonizing public understanding of the past also entails challenging the structures used to commemorate, in order to make them more inclusive of diverse practices".[191] In this context, the adoption of a non-traditional medium with a history of subversion and marginalization provides an opportunity to challenge more institutionalized mediums such as sculpture, which may necessitate formal training. Regarding urban commemoration, the choice of medium and the identity of its creators can therefore play a significant role in shaping and reinforcing notions of inclusion and exclusion.[192]

Moreover, the mural can be positioned similarly to graffiti, at street level, allowing visitors to approach it, examine its details, and interact with it. It can be encountered in daily life and be easily accessible, unlike monuments, which are typically both out of reach and usually work as spaces for formal gatherings. Like graffiti, murals might also be open to public contestation, as seen with the 2014 mural and the appearance of Nazi symbols and other graffiti, stickers and posters. This is further exemplified in the case of the 2023 mural, which in recent years has seen various interventions occurring on and around it, linking it to broader public discussions. The incentive to remove these interventions is less immediate than with stone monuments who receive broad media attention if they are ever 'defaced'.

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[191] Thomas Cauvin, "A Public History of Monuments," 34.
[192] Sofia Lovegrove and Raquel Rodrigues Machaqueiro, "Contesting monuments, challenging narratives," 94.
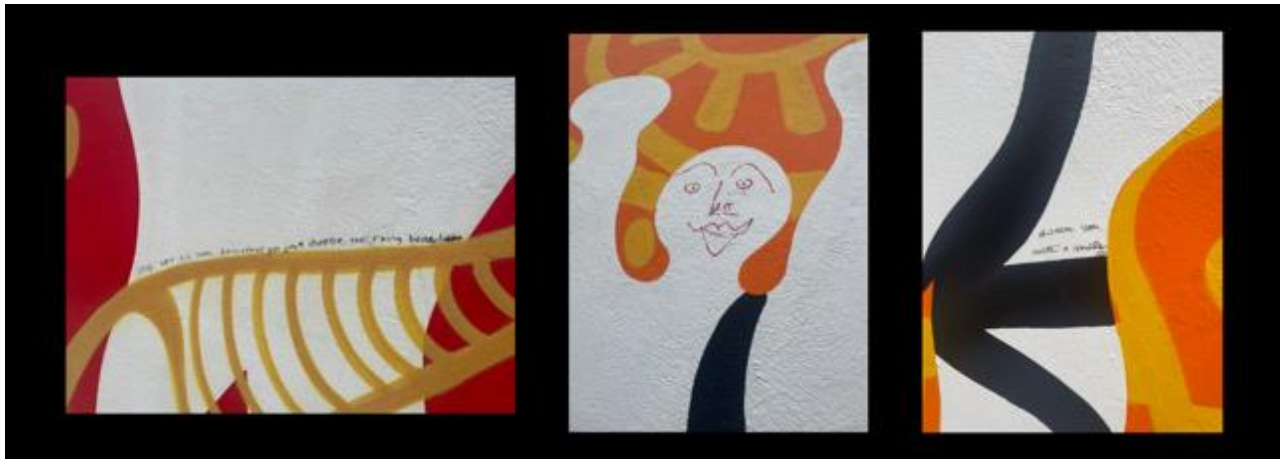
Figure 32: NOVA FCSH/Av.de Berna November 2024. Photo Collage by Author.

As Rachel Heidenry notes in her research on Salvadoran murals, the ephemeral nature of street art as monument creates space for civil discourse, as murals are defaced or painted over, thus complexifying national memory struggles.[193] Accordingly, El Salvadoran historical murals allow for a continuous contestation and reassessment of the portrayal of the past in the search for a collective identity and memory.[194] The understanding of murals as a part of broader street art processes in collective consciousness therefore grants it a status that is particularly fertile for agonistic memory and interventions in public space. This is also something which is supported by the artists of the 2023 mural itself. In an interview undertaken at FCSH, they assert that they expect the mural to be contested, and the main purpose of the mural was always to generate debate and discussion.[195] As the 2023 artist Petra Preta puts it, "É o que é, é a *Street Art*" (It is what it is, its *Street Art*).[196] In fact, when I walked around the mural with the artist MOAMI at the end of 2024, she appeared somewhat intrigued rather than upset by the small graffiti that had appeared on the mural by this time (figure 33). In this way, there is an

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[193] Rachel Heidenry, "The murals of El Salvador: Reconstruction, historical memory and whitewashing," *Public Art Dialogue* 4, no. 1 (2014): 142.

[194] Ibid., 142.

[195] Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, "'Paredes Brancas, Povo Mudo'".

[196] Ibid.

understanding even in the artist's vision, that the commemorative mural is supposed to function in similar agonistic ways to graffiti and street art traditions.

Commemorative Muralism and the Aesthetics of Paint and Colour

Another important element that can single out commemorative muralism is the complexity afforded by the medium of paint and colour. Unlike monuments constructed from solid, monochromatic materials, painted murals provide greater flexibility for representing historical nuance. This is evident in the 2014 FCSH rendition, where the use of paint facilitated the incorporation of subtle symbolic elements – such as the subversion of the *azulejos* – which contributed to a more layered interpretation of the mural's message. Similarly, in the 2023 version, historical complexity was conveyed through the juxtaposition of photorealistic and stylised techniques. The detailed and chromatically rich qualities afforded by paint thus enable a broader expressive range for conveying complex narratives. In this sense, the somewhat endless possibilities of painting techniques allow for a semiotic layering similar to the visual and ideological palimpsest found in the political graffiti of 2009. This agonistic characteristic can be seen as extending into the realm of institutional muralism at FCSH, which gives murals the potential to create additional layers of commemorative meaning and interpretive depth.

Furthermore, many counter-monuments adopt abstract forms as a deliberate challenge to the overtly figurative and didactic narratives characteristic of traditional heroic monuments. Abstraction is frequently employed to open space for multiple – and at times conflicting – interpretations, thereby shifting the viewer's engagement from passive reverence to active critical reflection.[197] However, this abstraction may also appear as compromising the political potency of the counter-monument, and the indirectness of its message may risk undermining

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[197] Quentin Stevens et al, "Counter-monuments," 728.

its critical force.[198] If formal experimentation starts to dominate over clear political communication, the abstract monument could risk becoming what Evans calls the 'oracle of aesthetic spectacle', which would diminish the critical efficacy of any given work of public art.[199] In contrast, the use of paint in both the 2014 and 2023 renditions enabled a productive synthesis of abstraction and figuration. This hybrid approach therefore transcended the binary opposition between abstract and figurative forms, allowing abstraction to convey complexity while retaining figurative elements that could ground the work in a clear and accessible message.

On a different but equally important note, it might be important to consider how the use of paint facilitates the involvement of multiple actors in the creation process, whether this entails collaboration among a small group of artists or broader community participation. The mural's horizontal orientation – both logistically and symbolically – enables and reflects collaborative practices, distinguishing it from the vertically elevated heroic monument situated on a pedestal.[200] This collective mode of production can promote dialogue and the negotiation of both political and aesthetic aims, allowing for a more inclusive and consensual expression of the mural's message. For the 2023 mural, the design was decided upon collectively, considering both the ideas of the artists and various collaborators as well as their exiting technical skills/artistic styles. Each artist was responsible for a specific element - Tamara Alves for Salgueiro Maia, MOAMI for the lace pattern and background colours, Petra preta for the women and Mariana Malhão for the white figures holding hands. As a result, while the mural emerges from a collaborative framework, it also acknowledges and preserves the individuality

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[198] Lydia Goehr, "Art and Politics," In *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, edited by Jerrold Levinson, (Oxford University Press, 2013), 475.
[199] Fred Evans, "Political aesthetics of public art in urban spaces," In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of the City* (Routledge, 2019), 154.
[200] Quentin Stevens et al, "Counter-monuments," 723.

of artistic expression. In this way, the aesthetics of paint and colour provide ample opportunities for the commemorative mural to emerge as a particularly useful tool in public space democracy.

Commemorative Muralism, Ephemerality, and Contemporary Society

Finally, commemorative muralism is characterised by its unique balance between permanence and ephemerality, a dynamic that aligns with the political rhythms of contemporary democratic societies. Unlike smaller graffiti or temporary projection installations, large murals have the potential to endure for years, thereby integrating into the identity of a neighbourhood. As McCormick and Jarman argue in their examination of murals in Northern Ireland, these works remain in place for as long as they maintain relevance and meaning within the community.[201] When this relevance diminishes, murals often face a variety of outcomes, including neglect, defacement, or even removal, replacement, or redesign.[202] In the interview with the 2023 artists, it is acknowledged that the 2014 mural had become embedded in the neighbourhood's cultural heritage. Rather than erasing this legacy, the artists emphasised the importance of introducing a renewed perspective – one that engaged with and referenced a public artwork that had acquired significance within the community over time.[203] Consequently, although the lifespan of the mural might vary, it can often last for a significant number of years, which gives it the necessary time to establish itself, soak up emerging debates and spark continued conversation.

On the other hand, the ephemeral nature of murals stands in stark contrast to the traditional monument's focus on permanence. That is, the mural does not claim to offer an absolute or definitive account of history or meaning. However, by embracing transformation and eventual disappearance – often as a result of deterioration or public interaction – murals

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[201] Jonathan McCormick and Neil Jarman, "Death of a Mural," 69.

[202] Ibid., 69.

[203] Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, "'Paredes Brancas, Povo Mudo'".

may help leave a more profound and lasting mark on collective memory.[204] Murals therefore exist in a state of constant flux, balancing between appearance and disappearance, a characteristic well-suited to the reality of urban environments that are in a continual state of transformation in response to evolving circumstances.[205] This ongoing need for renewal within the urban fabric compels us to rethink and innovate the ways in which we represent the past. In other words, the naturally changing nature of the mural keeps us from becoming complacent about the elements that make up our public spaces. In this context, the mural therefore mirrors Mouffe's idea that consensuses are achievable, but "they should be understood as temporary pauses in an ongoing struggle".[206] The mural as medium and its temporal characteristics therefore prove to be particularly well suited to Mouffe's concept of agonistic democracy.

In part due to these characteristics, the commemorative mural can therefore emerge as an effective and adaptable tool within cultural and urban policy frameworks. As Hartmut Rosa explains, the fast pace of change in democratic societies makes it increasingly difficult to reach lasting agreement, since each shift in social or political conditions changes the context in which such consensus might be possible.[207] In response to this constant change, policymakers often turn to flexible and open-ended legal frameworks that allow governments to adapt more easily to new situations".[208] Considering this, the commemorative mural can be seen as a particularly suitable form of urban expression – one that is both economically practical and socially responsive. Its adaptable nature makes it well-equipped to reflect shifting values and engage diverse communities in conversations about the past.

[204] Quentin Stevens et al, "Counter-monuments," 726.

[205] Elena García-Gayo and Esther Giner-Cordero, "Crossroads: Urban Murals and Their Relationship to Memory, Tourism and the Possibility of Conservation and Restoration," *Cultural and Creative Mural Spaces: Community, Culture and Tourism of Uruguayan Contemporary Muralism and Other International Mural Spaces* (2021): 204.

[206] Chantal Mouffe, "Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism?." *Social research* (1999): 755.

[207] Hartmut Rosa, "The speed of global flows and the pace of democratic politics," *New political science* 27, no. 4 (2005): 451.

[208] William Scheuerman, quoted in Hartmut Rosa, "The Speed of Global Flows," 453.

Conclusion of Chapter III

This chapter transitioned from examining the mural's meaning in relation to other forms of public art at FCSH, to exploring how its meaning has shifted over time. The 2014 mural's message can be considered to have changed in accordance with emerging socio-political shifts, weathering and evolving agonistic interventions. The 2023 reimagination showcased the flexibility of the mural and the changes made possible by the complex and sometimes conflicting nature of collaboration. Such an investigation of the mural enabled a deeper understanding of the democratic potential of the commemorative mural – especially considering its contextual, material, iconographic, and logistical characteristics. Despite its flaws and entanglement in power structures, I ultimately find that the commemorative mural can offer a novel way to engage with such dynamics, especially in national/local contexts with strong graffiti traditions.

Conclusion

Thesis Summary

This thesis has examined the role of commemorative murals in shaping public space democracy. It began by tracing the historical development of muralism in Portugal, highlighting the significance of NOVA FCSH as a site of public expression and introducing the concept of public space democracy. It then analysed the socio-political context from 2008 to 2014, alongside the aesthetic dimensions of unrestricted graffiti, zero-tolerance policies, and institutional muralism, situating the commemorative mural within the site's broader artistic and political history. Finally, the study explored the period from 2014 to 2023, focusing on evolving socio-political dynamics and shifting meanings embedded in the mural over time, ultimately demonstrating its democratic potential. Collectively, the three interconnected chapters therefore facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the commemorative mural's cultural origins, conditions of production, visual content, and materiality.

Through this analysis of the sustained transformation NOVA FCSH, this thesis ultimately posited that the democratic potential of the mural is manifested through at least four distinct factors. First, its capacity to operate as a counter-monument while simultaneously exceeding the boundaries of the concept. Second, its rootedness in the traditions of graffiti and street art. Third, the different possibilities afforded by the use of paint and colour. And fourth, its ambivalent position between permanence and ephemerality. The thesis thus argues that the commemorative mural can emerge as a valuable form of democratic public art in contexts with strong muralism, graffiti and street art traditions.

Significance

Context Specific and Active Public History

From a public history perspective, this thesis investigates innovative forms of urban commemoration rooted in context-specific characteristics that enable sustained critical engagement with history. That is, if public history is understood as a means of engaging the public in critical reflection on the past, urban commemoration can present significant challenges. While monuments are frequently re-evaluated during periods of cultural or political upheaval, in more stable and democratic contexts, they often fade into the background as unremarkable elements of the urban landscape.

This thesis argues that engaging with established democratic urban traditions – regardless of their direct connection to commemoration – can serve as a means of maintaining active commemorative practices. In the case of Lisbon, the pre-existing and co-existing traditions of muralism, graffiti, and street art create a dynamic environment in which the mural remains open to ongoing reassessment and contestation – whether through parallel agonistic interventions or through transformations of the mural itself. Such a framework may therefore be applicable to other areas of the city – or even to international contexts – that share similar traditions of urban expression. However, it should not be regarded as a universal solution, as locations without established graffiti or street art practices are unlikely to experience comparable benefits. This approach to public history is thus inherently context specific.

Academic History and Public History

Moreover, if public history is understood as the translation of academic history into a more accessible format, then a university's active engagement with public history can serve as a model for similar initiatives. Throughout this thesis, I reference Rendeiro's work, which demonstrates that most murals in central Lisbon reflect a conservative and uncritical perspective of the Revolution, with the notable exception of the FCSH mural. This underscores the importance of active academic and university involvement in public history projects to

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ensure that historical nuance is preserved and not overlooked. For example, despite a surge in commemorative murals in Lisbon in the last year, the 2023 mural is still the only mural to explicitly represent the history of Black women and its relationship to the wider Revolution narrative. Studying how history is communicated in universities can therefore serve as a model for broader initiatives, helping academic research connect with wider society.

The University Campus and The City

Finally, this thesis also highlights the significance of the location and visibility of university campuses within broader public spaces. The FCSH campus is one of the most central and visible university campuses in Lisbon. In fact, the location and aesthetics of this campus stand in stark contrast to those of most Western university campuses. That is, many university campuses are often segregated from the rest of urban space and their architecture and exterior aesthetics often stand as pillars of authorities and elitism. This reflection includes examples such as - Coimbra University in Portugal, Ivy League universities in the United States and Russell Group institutions in the United Kingdom, as well as, in the context of the HIPS programme, the Central European University in Vienna and the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. These campuses are spatially enclosed and isolated, whilst also lacking the physical infrastructure conducive to agonistic interventions and the integration of art within public space. The public walls of NOVA FCSH enable university debates – often at the forefront of socio-cultural progress – to move beyond the confines of the ivory tower and become accessible to a broader public audience. This thesis therefore highlights the importance of integrating campuses into everyday urban spaces to challenge academic elitism and make scholarly debates accessible to the wider public.

Unfortunately, it is projected that within the next decade, the FCSH campus will be sold to private investors, with the faculty relocated to the Campolide campus – an area markedly

more isolated and emblematic of the traditional ivory tower model. I argue that such a move risks expelling a particularly strong democratic centre existing in Lisbon city centre. The public space on Avenida de Berna will therefore likely revert to a neoliberal aesthetic – a place stripped of its historical and communal significance. This thesis therefore also serves as a testament to the significance of a public space that may soon be transformed beyond recognition.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this research provides valuable insights, it is not without its limitations. A first limitation is encountered in the lack of student and academic community perspectives on this issue. Engaging with these voices could help uncover greater nuance and debate surrounding the street art policy decisions taken by NOVA. Furthermore, this research could also be complemented by expanding the definition of public space to include the space of social media. A brief look at the murals' presence on different social media platforms reveals that the debate taking place on the walls continues in the comment sections of various posts. This would help reveal a greater variety of voices and perspectives on the historical content of the murals. Another shortcoming worth noting is the highly specific nature of the case study. Comparing the evolution of the FCSH public space with another space in the city or even in a different national context could help add depth to the ideas surrounding the democratic potential of commemorative muralism. A comparative analysis of this nature would provide insight into the distinctive features of university campus public spaces and perhaps also identify areas where the potential of muralism is either underexploited or subject to misuse.

Figure 33: NOVA FCSH/Av. de Berna 2024. Photo collage by Author.

Finally, future studies might expand the time frame to include the years 2023 to 2025 during which the socio-political context was further transformed. In the span of these two years, there were two legislative elections which saw the Democratic Alliance defeat the Socialist Party as well as the rapid rise of the Chega Party. During this period, several impactful political slogans emerged at FCSH, most notably the slogan "Faculdade progressista não paga salário a fascista! Fora Canaveira! Fora T. Moreira de Sá!" [Progressive university does not pay salaries to fascists! Out with Canaveira! Out with T. Moreira de Sá!] in March 2024 (figure 34). This slogan explicitly denounced FCSH professors whose inappropriate behaviour had been inadequately addressed by the university.[209] Following this intervention, and most probably as

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[209] Tiago Soares, "Faculdade progressista não paga salário a fascista: muro da Universidade Nova foi vandalizado, deputado do PSD é um dos visados," *Expresso*, March 12, 2024.

a direct response, the university resorted to painting a series of carnations across almost the entirety of the campus façade (figure 34). As noted in this thesis and in conversation with a muralist active since the 1970s, the carnation has, over time, started to function as a vague and ambiguous emblem. In contrast to the thoughtful intent behind the original mural then, this intervention seems primarily aimed at silencing dissent and agonism using the carnation symbol.

As a result, agonistic interventions are continuously getting smaller in size or being reserved for the spaces inside the campus and away from public space. It appears, therefore, that while the university made notable progress with the commemorative mural, its inability to accept direct contestation of its ideas and decisions has resulted in a degree of regression in its policies. In this way, these recent developments underscore the ongoing need to critically reassess public spaces, public art, and the actors involved in their production.

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