

# Invented Difference: On Inter- Culturality in Mouraria’s Mercado de Fusão

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**Abstract:** In this article, I study the development of Lisbon’s Mercado de Fusão in the context of what I term “invented difference”—a marketing strategy that capitalizes on a utopist multiculturalism that lacks historicity and continuity—as a means by which to unpack how twenty-first-century multicultural space is produced in Lisbon, a rapidly changing city with a booming tourist economy. Through this lens, I analyze the market’s visual and material landscape, specifically its sculptures and food kiosks, to ask questions regarding the mobilization of multiculturalism in urban redevelopment while taking into consideration the legacy of race relations in Portugal’s neoliberal present. I assert that the *Mercado de Fusão* project speaks to the broader ideological implications of tourist-centric development initiatives in Lisbon.

**Keywords:** Branding; Portugal; *Lusofonia*; tourism; urbanity

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Lisbon’s Tourist Board advertises Eléctrico 28, a trolley that passes by many of Lisbon’s famous landmarks as one of the city’s must-do tourist attractions. For about four euros, passengers can take in the steep hills of Graça, the winding streets of Alfama, the bustling Praça do Comércio, and Chiado, a popular shopping and nightlife district. Tourists line up along the Praça Martim Moniz, the tram’s terminus, located in the Mouraria neighborhood. These travelers pass

through the plaza from either side—strolling northeast from Rossio and the Baixa shopping district, or emerging from the subterranean Martim Moniz metro stop. In July, Lisbon’s hottest month, one finds little refuge from the scorching sun while crossing the plaza from Rua da Palma towards the Rua Senhora da Saúde. Children play, running across astro-turf that has been laid out between kiosks and through the fountains that lie in a cross formation from the south of the square to the metro stop to the north. Tourists and locals dodge each other as they enter the space—some headed towards the Eléctrico 28 stop and others to the shopping centers that line both sides of the street. A few pause in the northern half of the plaza—the Mercado de Fusão—for a coffee or a small bite to eat. Terraces and public benches fill up in the evening and at sunset as families and friends meet for a drink. Some tourists sport bright red sunburns from their days of sightseeing. Many evenings, especially in the summer, there are music events for visitors to enjoy over an *imperial* or espresso. These scenes seem to indicate a lively and well-used public space.

The Mercado de Fusão development has come out of Lisbon’s municipal government’s *AiMouraria* program, established to *requalificar*—renovate and modernize—public spaces in the area. *AiMouraria*’s website boasts that Mouraria is a *corredor intercultural* and frames Martim Moniz’s development within this context. A dedicated portion of the project focuses specifically on the “percurso turístico-cultural” of the neighborhood. Mouraria’s location in the city center and large rent-gap potential—that is, the disparity between the current rental income in the area and the potentially achievable rental income, provide the perfect circumstances for economically driven government intervention under the pretense of social welfare (Smith 463). This exemplifies the plaza’s branding as a multicultural nexus as public policy. The plaza itself consists of “ten multicultural restaurants,” a 300-seat terrace, and a fusion market with shops hailing from other neighborhoods including Bairro Alto and Baixa, and some local businesses (“Martim Moniz com nova vida”). It is thus an apt space to study how public, private, non-profit and community partnerships contribute to re-shaping the physical and social character of this neighborhood with cultural activity at its core.

In this article, I think critically about these interventions in the context of what I term “invented difference”—a marketing strategy that capitalizes on a utopist multiculturalism that lacks historicity and continuity—as a means by

which to unpack how twenty-first-century multicultural space is produced in Lisbon, a rapidly changing city with a booming tourist economy. Through this lens, I analyze the Mercado de Fusão's visual and material landscape—specifically its sculptures and food kiosks—to bring together questions regarding the mobilization of multiculturalism in urban redevelopment while taking into consideration the legacy of race relations in Portugal's neoliberal present. Particularly, though the rhetoric of multiculturalism might appear progressive in practice, in Portugal's unique historical context, it has contributed to conservative ends that maintain socio-economic stratification and racial hierarchies. Multiculturalism as a political ideology is mobilized both to respond to diversity and to control it. As an institution, it is both marketable and helps order identitarian chaos resulting from demographic change. Tourism, particularly the way a space is branded for tourist consumption, is used within this model as an instrument of local and national self-understanding. And, in post-recession Portugal, this industry drives the economy.<sup>1</sup> I thus use the Mercado de Fusão project to engage with the broader ideological implications of tourist-centric development initiatives in Lisbon.

To illustrate these policies in action, I read visual and spatial tactics that contribute to invented difference—specifically, the installations and restaurants branded as emblematic of cultural fusion that showcase the departure from a coherent ideological narrative in the name of profit. This marketing strategy is a superficial approach to inter-ethnicity that capitalizes on the supposedly progressive rhetoric of multiculturalism without being grounded in concrete currents of migration or existing inequalities. Beatriz Jaguaribe asserts that, as urban branding evolves, “it also manifests itself in new joint ventures between municipal and political authorities together with private investors, architects, urban planners, and advertising agencies” (Jaguaribe 29). The Mercado de Fusão's incoherence, a result of these tendencies, points to how neoliberal economics lead to schizophrenic identitarian narratives while still reflecting racially driven economic subjugation.

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<sup>1</sup> João Cotrim de Figueiredo, the President of Tourism of Portugal, noted that tourism was the sector that most contributed to Portugal's economic recovery (Xinhua). According to figures released by the Bank of Portugal, over 16 million tourists left 10.4 billion euros in revenue in 2014, 12.4 percent more than the previous year (19).

I consider culture as it is employed in this space as lived practice, heritage, and a profitable industry. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's study of cultural heritage and the tourism industry greatly influences my reading of the Mercado de Fusão, particularly how heritage converts locations into tourist destinations. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett defines cultural heritage as a "new mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past" (149). Exhibition is central to the creation of cultural heritage in this space; yet, the Mercado de Fusão departs from museumification in favor of profit-driven enterprise. This is an interactive, lived space that marries the ideological motives of the cultural heritage movement to the economic ends of urban branding.

The urban branding practice, as explained by Jaguaribe, is a deliberate fabrication with the ultimate end-goal of maximizing profits and resources (30). As it evolves, "it also manifests itself in new joint ventures between municipal and political authorities together with private investors, architects, urban planners, and advertising agencies" (Jaguaribe 29). And, as Jaguaribe asserts, the creative impetus behind the branding of cities is "at the service of incremental profit" and often "recycles cultural spaces by domesticating them into picturesque locales" (30).<sup>2</sup> The Mercado de Fusão is a cultural space that has been created for a specific use on a plaza that is being domesticated. Branding is often followed by gentrification because of the ripple effect created when formerly abandoned or dilapidated areas are put to new uses (Salmon 106). This is a "value added" industry, one that co-opts and commodifies spaces, objects, and practices that were public or free. For example, what was once a free space on the public Praça Martim Moniz is converted into a saleable product not by charging admission, but through the option to purchase food, drink, and goods that draw people to visit this space. However, the economic motives behind the branding of Lisbon provide for a disjointed product that remains inaccessible to those without buying power.

In Lisbon's unique context of tourism and migration, its scattered, often incoherent, branding as a multicultural city alludes to a contemporary *assimilado* figure, which rearticulates debunked or contested theories of

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<sup>2</sup> Jaguaribe notes that this is not the only way in which successful branding creates urban scenarios. "Fantasy cities" like Orlando and Las Vegas are "directly encoded and inscribed for specific uses" in contrast with Montmartre and Pelourinho, which are domesticated into picturesque locales (30).

lusotropicalism and *Portugalidade*. The mobilization of invented difference in the plaza showcases a notable pivot from a Lusophone assimilationist ideal to what I deem a “food court” sensibility—based on fabricated diversity rather than fraternal bonds—evidenced by the market’s thematically disjointed food kiosks. These rambling versions of inter-ethnicity reach beyond Portuguese geopolitical colonial relationships. Lisbon’s creative *lusofonia* brand (a marriage of municipal and private enterprise) is an intersection of Lusophone ideologies and neo-colonial networks. Indeed, the Mercado de Fusão is clearly marked by coloniality, yet in its execution fashions a different sense of race relations, ultimately providing a concrete example of what happens to race and racial subjugation in the neoliberal order when ideological projects are market-driven. I begin with a discussion of Lusophone identitarian narratives that contribute to the production of urban space in Lisbon. I then consider the development of the Praça Martim Moniz over the decades, with a particular interest in the way in which Portugal’s tourist economy has contributed to its change. Finally, I look at specific examples from the Mercado de Fusão to delve into the neocolonial problematics of consumer-centric development.

### **A Legacy of Lusophone Hybridity**

State-driven identitarian narratives in Portugal are based on inter-cultural contact that may on the surface appear progressive; however, in practice, they have tended to serve considerably conservative projects. A proper understanding of the various ways in which the Portuguese state has nationalized multiculturalism provides the necessary framework to think about the new geopolitical entanglements at play in contemporary Lisbon.

*Portugalidade* was a propagandistic collective memory fostered and mobilized by the Estado Novo in the early 1930s to articulate insular, conservative ideals as well as the strength of Portugal’s overseas empire, centered on Portugal’s supposed discoveries of both the Americas and the sea route to Asia. Imperial strength was closely related to the struggles between European nations for colonial holdings in Africa that contributed to the First World War. *Portugalidade* put forth a state-centered version of what it meant to be Portuguese. The narrative focused on a glorious national past that culminated in the Estado Novo. Authors and artists made active use of the

country's historical origins to assert Portugal's imperial greatness while emphasizing its rural traditions and hierarchical social structures.

With post-WWII hostility towards fascism in the West and increased pressure from the United Nations to liberate Portugal's colonies, the regime looked to present Portuguese fascism and colonialism as a benevolent enterprise. In 1951, Salazar's government amended the Constitution of 1933 to remove legal traces of the colonial regime, replacing the term "colonies" with "overseas provinces" (Constituição de 1933 Acto Colonial). By rewording the constitution in this way, one could argue that these territories were an integral and inseparable part of Portugal, as much as any region on the Peninsula. It became increasingly common for the regime to refer to Portugal, "do Minho ao Timor," as an indivisible whole.

The Estado Novo subsequently made ample use of the idea of Lusotropicalism, which presented the Portuguese as benevolent colonizers who promoted the cultural miscegenation that imbued Brazil with its supposed unique character. Lusotropicalism has its source in the work of Gilberto Freyre, a Brazilian sociologist. The crux of Freyre's argument, presented in both *Casa-grande e senzala* (1933) and *O mundo que o português criou* (1940), is that Brazil is in essence a Lusotropical society, formed through the harmonious transfer of European culture to the tropics. Portuguese identity and territorial claims came to be legitimated by talk of the supposedly cordial control of Portuguese colonialism and the inextricable connections that purportedly existed between the colonized and their colonizers. The so-called soft power that the Portuguese exercised over their colonies, was believed to translate into "racial mixture, relatively lenient laws around civil rights, and a proclivity toward intercultural understanding and appreciation" (Pardue 154). In this context, the Estado Novo employed Lusotropicalism as a means to justify a continued colonial presence in Africa and Asia.

In the aftermath of the decades-long reign of the Estado Novo (1933-1974), the African colonial wars (1961-1974), and the dissolution of the final remnants of empire, Portugal has worked to reconfigure its self-representation both at home and abroad. As post-colonial migratory patterns make unprecedented impacts on the country's population, specifically in its capital, new terms have been employed to grapple with identitarian struggles. The idea of *Lusofonia* has been important to this effort; however, it can fairly be considered a thinly veiled

rehashing of Lusotropicalism, now filtered through neoliberal economics. The term lays claim to a collective identity of Portuguese-speaking countries as postcolonial migratory networks converge in urban centers like Lisbon.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, *Lusofonia* points to “benign camaraderie” between nations; on the other, however, it embodies a “homogenizing ideology” (McMahon 17). For this reason, many scholars warn that *Lusofonia* is simply a neocolonial iteration of Lusotropicalism (Almeida; McMahon). Accordingly, the term permits a transition from the regime propaganda inherent in Lusotropicalism to a cultural appropriation with neoliberal economic ends.

*Portugalidade*, Lusotropicalism, and *Lusofonia* reflect a continued emphasis on cultural hybridity based on the assertion that racial and ethnic mixing, traceable to Portugal’s colonial empire, is an integral part of the Portuguese national character. Notions of cultural contact and hybridity were adopted in the post-WWII era, under the guise of a Lusotropicalism meant to defend Portuguese colonialism. As scholars have continued to reflect critically on the implications of colonial benevolence and hybridity, the consensus is that these hierarchical discourses often work as ideological justifications for oppression (Almeida 13). Miguel Vale de Almeida, for example, asks how a theory of emancipation might possibly function simultaneously with a theory of colonization (160). Derek Pardue points out that Lusotropicalism can be considered “control through assimilation” (154). Fernando Arenas and Susan Canty Quinlan have noted that scholarly use of the word *Lusophone* can lump together formerly colonizing and colonized nations without differentiating between their power dynamics (xxi). Christina McMahon expands upon the problematics of the potentially homogenizing impact of *Lusofonia*, which “seeks to enfold strikingly diverse nations on four continents—Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa—into a single cultural category with etymological roots in a Western imperialist center” (17). These interventions question terms that focus on hybridity as a seamless joining of cultures. Such identifiers fail to capture the schisms inherent in cultural contact, particularly in Portugal, where

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<sup>3</sup> Lisbon became a frequent destination for immigrants. Many settled in the Mouraria due to its low rents and proximity to the city center. In the 1980s, newly arrived Chinese, Pakistani, and Goan immigrants took over shops in Mouraria previously owned by Portugal’s *retornados*—Portuguese citizens who had lived in the African colonies but returned after the colonial wars under dictator Salazar.

there was and continues to be a racially driven hierarchy of power between the former colonizer and colonized peoples. Additionally, continued use of *Lusophone* as the principal framework for linking these groups often enough serves mainly to propagate Eurocentric identitarian models based solely on language that do not encompass the full extent of contemporary migratory currents.

These terms have found new life in the discourse surrounding Portuguese urban space and tourism. Pardue identifies *Lusofonia* as the brand for marketing contemporary Portugal: namely, to be Portuguese involves a unique socio-historical mindset where Creole mixture of so-called European modernity, “Moorish” folklore, and African expressive culture constitute a natural baseline of interaction oriented by the Portuguese language (155). This commodification of commonalities has become intrinsic to recent government incentives in democratic Portugal, as incentives like the *Plano de Intervenção* in Mouraria capitalize on cultural contact under the guise of *lusofonia*. The practice does not necessarily silence the various groups now present in the city’s populace due to Portugal’s colonial past but, instead, appropriates and instrumentalizes their narratives for financial benefit. Although the many micro-narratives at play contribute to an incoherent ideological message, they reveal tendencies with respect to economic subjugation and racial and ethnic difference as Portugal is “old made new again” (National Geographic Society).

### **The Plaza as a Palimpsest**

The Praça Martim Moniz, which houses the Mercado de Fusão, could be considered a “heritage palimpsest” that is, a site that “is landmarked repeatedly, each time for a different reason, and used for different purposes, even at one point in time” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 156). Between 1930 and 1960, the Estado Novo set a precedent for renewal projects as a means by which to enforce the state-order, which contributed to a cleansing discourse regarding the need to intervene in the Mouraria. Much of the neighborhood was razed in this process—the plaza was stripped of its buildings and paved over—producing the vacant lot that would be converted into the Largo Martim Moniz. These changes reflected the authoritarian regime’s aggression towards the working-

class residents of this space and its disregard for protecting historical patrimony. Decades later, in 1997, the need to intervene in Mouraria coincided



Fig. 1: Mercado de Fusão. Personal Photograph, July 2015.

with preparations for Expo '98, the 1998 World's Fair, which celebrated the five-hundred-year anniversary of Vasco de Gama's first voyage to India. The Expo '98 underscored a shift in Portuguese policy that coincided with growing involvement in world markets. It included the rehabilitation of the Largo Martim Moniz through the construction of almost forty kiosks intended to “revitalizar economicamente o local a partir do desenvolvimento de um comércio de retalho especializado em artigos regionais, antiguidades e artesanato” (Menezes 310). This decision incorporated Mouraria into Lisbon's flourishing tourist landscape, thanks in part to crowds drawn to the city by the Expo. Here, the plaza's cultural significance became economically viable due to the relationship between heritage and tourism. When many kiosks were left vacant following the event, the Câmara Municipal made a deal with the Associação Comercial China Town to fill thirty stalls with electronics shops, all of which failed within months. This move showcased the pre-crisis embrace of the neoliberal economic model through relationships forged between the government and foreign private interests. These kiosks would change hands many times over between the 1998 and the end of 2011, when the *AiMouraria* municipal government program incentive zeroed in on Martim Moniz. NCS Produções won the public contract to design the space (though there were no other candidates), and the Mercado de Fusão was formally inaugurated in 2012.

Decades of immigration to Lisbon following the fall of the Estado Novo built a reputation for Mouraria, which had been historically marginalized as a

poor and working-class neighborhood, as a nexus of inter-ethnicity. In 2008, Kátia Catulo and Susana Leitão would write in the *Diário de Notícias* that the Socorro parish, of which Mouraria forms a part, had become home to more foreigners than “Lisbon natives.” According to the Portuguese Immigration and Ethnic Minorities Bureau, over 45 percent of documented immigrants in Portugal currently reside in Lisbon, many of whom come by way of the former colonies or, in a more recent turn, from other post-colonial Asian nations such as Bangladesh. Lisbon actively markets Mouraria as a multi-ethnic enclave of creativity and cultural fusion. On the eve of the Mercado de Fusão’s debut in 2012, NCS director, José Rebelo Pinto, expressed his hopes that the newly renovated Praça Martim Moniz would, “trazer sangue novo à praça [... e] criar uma nova cidade dentro da cidade” (“Martim Moniz com nova vida”).

In some senses, the Mercado recalls Disneyland because of how it is *imagineered*; that is, it is simplified for easy access, and visitors are invited to engage with a strongly Western display of multiculturalism. It is especially reminiscent of the imagineering of Disney’s EPCOT Center, which itself draws from the economically and ideologically inspired World Fairs of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, designed to create a space in which European visitors could familiarize themselves—and thus come to feel comfortable—with colonial difference (Mota Santos 199). Noel Salazar points out, citing Benedict Anderson, that young or postcolonial countries have used national theme parks as a unique way to build their nations: “a heritage-themed national park serves to underline the message that the nation’s foundation are its people, its different customers and cultures, held together by (often invented) common traditions” (94). While the Mercado de Fusão presents multiculturalism as a novelty, it is essentially an old concept repackaged for contemporary consumption.

### **Invented Difference in the Mercado de Fusão**

NCS’s branding of the Mercado de Fusão has its foundation in invented difference. According to Rebelo Pinto, this new rendition of the plaza is meant to “ficar virado para a Mouraria e não de costas para a Mouraria” (Cerejo). Mouraria’s purported multiethnic character becomes a focal point for explaining the unique, progressive nature of this attraction, reiterated in coverage of the market. Invented difference strays from strict nationalist

ideologies in its promotion of market-driven diversity. The arbitrary nature of the market's food kiosks indicates that invented difference is a shallow resolution of deeply engrained socioeconomic and racial stratification in Lisbon related to a legacy of racial and cultural connections between Portugal and other nations. I aim to expose the fragility of such narratives evidenced by incoherent symbolic gestures, like the dependence on iconicity in the Mercado de Fusão's restaurants and sculptures.

Multiple sculptures and installations in the Praça Martim Moniz predate the Mercado de Fusão. These installations, in dialogue with the new additions planned by NCS, contribute to the space's perceived character as a hub of ethnic fusion. At the southernmost tip of the Praça Martim Moniz, there is a long fountain surrounded by grates in the shape of a key, pointing at another line of fountains that resemble helmets. This installation alludes to the *cerca moura*, ancient Lisbon's defensive wall, and the knight Martim Moniz, who is credited with leading an attack during the siege of de Castelo São Jorge. The castle is also central to Mouraria's importance as a tourist destination, since the neighborhood is, in its essence, the gate that visitors pass through on their way to the site. Celebrating the expulsion of Muslims from this neighborhood contradicts the supposed multicultural harmony that the Mercado de Fusão purports. Through this nostalgic depiction of a distant (Christian) past, the plaza simultaneously commemorates two contradictory realities with which the Portuguese are left to grapple: the expulsion of the Muslims (and Jews) from Portugal in 1497 CE, and the present-day diversity of this area, an effect of the country's colonial expansion during that same period.

In 2012, as part of the grand opening of the Mercado de Fusão, NCS installed a large red dragon sculpture at the center of the plaza, weaving around a water feature. The piece, made of spare cell phone and computer parts, commemorates the Chinese Year of the Dragon. However, the piece has no corresponding plaque or caption, and it thus provides no explanation of the significance of its materials.

A visitor to the Mercado de Fusão is also unlikely to know the history of illegal cell phone sales that took place in this plaza. According to ethnographer Marlucci Menezes, there was a thriving black market of cell phones and SIM cards in the northern portion of the Praça Martim Moniz (where the Mercado de Fusão now stands), managed by African, Indian, and Chinese immigrants

known as *gangs dos telemóveis* (311). These contraband operations caused frequent public conflicts, and the *gangs dos telemóveis* eventually entered the public eye as a threat to safety. Indeed, the kiosk owners partially blamed the hostile and aggressive environment fostered by these black-market dealings for the failure of their businesses (Menezes 311). Menezes cites a June 19, 1999 article in *O Público* that highlights the intertwining of race and crime in the plaza:

No passado dia 8 de Maio, um grupo de africanos resolveu, por motivo que ignoramos, não pagar as chamadas que fizeram em telemóveis controlados por asiáticos. O que se seguiu foi algo que há muito esperávamos e temíamos. O conflito que se gerou entre os dois grupos étnicos (entre 50 e 60 indivíduos, no seu todo) estendeu-se por toda a praça, tendo-se verificado a invasão de dois quiosques para deles serem retirados ferros. (311)

To control the situation, the municipal police conducted a police raid—known as *Operação Caril*—that detained 14 people and seized 92 telephones. Menezes adds that, in the aftermath of this raid, “a praça passou, então, a ser controlada



Fig. 2: Dragon Sculpture (Susana).

por um segurança uniformizado e por um sistema de videovigilância da empresa privada Prosegur-Sistema de Segurança Lda., também com um posto de controlo num dos quiosques. Em alguns postes de iluminação pública foram colocadas pequenas placas metálicas avisando, ‘para a sua proteção, este local encontra-se sob vigilância de um circuito fechado de televisão’” (312). This *distorical* representation—that is, revisionist Disney history as it should have happened, the best and nothing but the best (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 175)—works to “program out all the negative, unwanted elements, and program in the positive elements” (Zunjin 222). The production of this space as a celebration of inter-ethnicity therefore depends on the iconicity of its installations, which act as “conduits of intangible realities” (Salazar and Graburn 197).

The fact that NCS rechristened the plaza “Dragon Square” in English, while alluding directly to the Chinese presence, is significant, given that these are the two principal languages of globalization and tourism. One could also consider the dragon sculpture—made from the very mechanisms that foster these connections—representative of the clear role of technology in the globalization of spaces like Mouraria. Noel Salazar adds that a themed attraction like this market, in promoting unity through diversity, “opens up debates about whose reality (past, present and future) is being represented, promoted, narrated, and for whom” (94). These instruments of display in the Mercado de Fusão dictate how visitors are supposed to perceive multi-ethnicity. The decision to highlight one group of immigrants and ignore others points to which immigrants and ethnic minorities are privileged and which are ignored in the promotion of supposedly multicultural spaces. Ultimately, the dragon sculpture is a superficial celebration of globalization and the binding of cultures via technology.

The identification of Praça Martim Moniz with “Dragon Square” is further complicated by the current trend of Chinese real estate speculation in Mouraria, a trend incentivized by Lisbon’s municipal government. In one such case, the Empresa Pública de Urbanização de Lisboa (dissolved in 2014), which had selected NCS to design the Mercado de Fusão, auctioned off apartments surrounding the plaza that had originally been designed for young residents of Lisbon and given out in a raffle for affordable housing a decade prior. Thanks to years of delays and bankruptcies, many of the apartments were left vacant and went to auction, where they were ultimately purchased by Chinese

investors. This practice has been reported by some news outlets as part of the Golden Visa scheme, introduced in 2012 as a response to the financial crisis. According to this agreement, major foreign investors receive benefits like a visa waiver, free travel in Schengen nations, and the opportunity to apply for Portuguese citizenship after six years. Chinese nationals have accounted for about 80 percent of the total golden visas issued, and of the 1.92 billion euros brought in, 1.73 have been in the form of property investment (Pincha).



Fig. 2: “Ressureição do Galo.” Personal photo, April 2017.

In 2013, a year following the inauguration of the dragon sculpture, artist Rui Miragaia’s *Ressureição do Galo* found a place in the northernmost portion of the plaza. The papier-mâché and iron structure greets visitors who emerge from the subterranean metro stop. The installation is a modern take on the Galo de Barcelos, a Portuguese national symbol and object of seemingly inexhaustible kitschy reproductions. The sculpture is thought-provoking as a metonymic representation of “Portuguese-ness,” given that Lisbon’s dependence on tourism has largely converted the experience of Portugal into a commodity for export. In 2016, artist Joana Vasconcelos erected another Galo de Barcelos in a different part of Lisbon. The *Pop galo*, composed of 1700 tiles and 1600 LED lights, was designed to promote Portugal internationally. Its second stop was in Beijing, which coincided with Chinese New Year celebrations, specifically the year of the Rooster.

The plaza’s dragon and rooster sculptures engage with the dynamic explored in Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s inquiry into Portugal’s status as both

colonizer and colonized. As for the latter, Sousa Santos focuses on Portugal's historic dependence on Britain; however, I propose to focus instead on the country's current ties to Chinese real estate speculators and tourism from a wide range of other countries. Portugal's semi-peripheral condition effectively complicates my critique of the Praça Martim Moniz and its installations. The Portugal that is branded and sold—like Miragaia's rooster—is arguably as sterile as the rest of the supposedly “multicultural” installations in the plaza. One might add to this the fact that Miragaia's rooster has taken quite a beating over the years. On an April 2017 visit to the Mercado de Fusão, I noticed that the Rooster's paper was torn in several areas and discolored, run down due to lack of upkeep, much like the buildings in Mouraria themselves.<sup>4</sup> The dragon sculpture had been removed, although new installations related to Chinese New Year celebrations had taken its place.

Lisbon's Mercado de Fusão is guided by the agents of its creation—that is, the municipal government and private interest groups. Lisbon's municipal government adopts the cultural heritage agenda as an excuse to rehabilitate what it deems problematic parts of the city. Museum displays, performances, and themed space find use within this model to give a second life to the national past. Heritage is not simply limited to adding value to areas that are not economically productive; rather, it also manages to put “free places in the realm of profit” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 150). In these interventions, ideological leanings become exposed as they take on “form, narrative, and place” (Young and Riley 8). Curated multiculturalism works to erase the imbalanced colonial past and neocolonial present.

NCS's website boasts that the Mercado de Fusão, “se desenrola à volta dos 10 quiosques de comida do mundo: podemos encher a alma e aliviar o espírito com a mais tentadoras iguarias daqui e d'além mar. Cores e cheiros que nos fazem viajar desde a China à Argentina, do Japão ao Brasil com paragem obrigatória por África e Bangladesh.” Portugal's long struggle to maintain its overseas empire would explain the connection to Africa, and the large influx of Bangladeshi immigrants to Lisbon clarifies the latter half of the sentence. But why lump the presence of these groups together as a given?

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<sup>4</sup> I would like to give special thanks to the University of Texas at Austin's Department of Spanish and Portuguese and Center for European Studies for providing the funding to facilitate these research trips.

These seemingly inconsequential rhetorical choices are indicative of the silences surrounding invented difference. This approach continues to celebrate ethnic mixing and inter-culturality as Portugal's legacy; however, it ignores the long trajectory of economic and cultural subjugation and the subsequent neocolonial networks of migration that accompany such practices. The fact that visitors can come to the market and try a sterilized sampling of this or that in the way that one would visit a food court highlights the overly simplified and curated nature of ethnic fusion. The disconnect between Mouraria's community and the groups represented by the playfully advertised restaurant kiosks is palpable. On its website, NCS invites visitors to "prova[ar] sabores do Mundo e respira[ar] cultura." A quick scan of restaurants in the plaza points, however, to the gaps between the project's rhetoric and its reality.

NCS's website invites visitors to frequent Dogtails, a self-described original combination of cocktails and hot dogs. The establishment's mission statement states: "Quisemos reinventar os tradicionais Hot Dogs e mostrar o lado caseiro, artesanal, mas também original, de um dos mais famosos 'snacks' do mundo" ("NCS Produção"). This restaurant takes a basic version of tubular meat, packages it beautifully, and sells it as something original, marrying the border-crossing hot dog with another universal pastime—drinking cocktails. Dogtails' Facebook page highlights the addition of a second beer pong table for patrons to enjoy. This game, popularized in the United States, targets a very specific audience—college-aged youth with disposable time and income. One distinct possibility is that the attraction is meant to cater to Erasmus foreign exchange students.

In a turn towards more confusing cultural appropriation, the "El Cartel" kiosk offers a mix of Latin American food. The stand's mission statement, published on the NCS's website, asks visitors to "visitar este espaço e faça parte deste cartel," but it also warns: "tenha cuidado, não venha armado!" This angle capitalizes on stereotypes, specifically the South American link to drug trafficking. The El Cartel menu is a veritable mish-mash of options, including *ceviche* (Peru), a hot dog "completo" (popularized in Chile), nachos (Mexico), and alcoholic drinks ranging from *mojitos* (Cuba), to *micheladas* (Mexico), to *caipirinhas* (Brazil). These options epitomize the practice of taking a little bit of this and a little bit of that from different cultures, throwing them all together and calling it multiculturalism. This kiosk certainly offers a multitude of food

and drink options, but they in no way represent a cohesive vision of the international influence on Mouraria's day-to-day realities, culinary or not.

In an attempt to acknowledge Chinese immigration to Lisbon, BBTMX and P.A.U.S. claim to be "A Ásia está mesmo Martim Moniz!" These kiosks' menus consist of pan-Asian offerings including "noodles-in-a-box," "dumplings-in-a-bag," and "street food asiática." The use of English in the names and dishes that these restaurants offer—the current lingua franca of tourism—point to neither a Portuguese nor a Chinese target demographic. These stands, like El Cartel, offer the most notorious signifiers of Asian food—dumplings and noodles—without any apparent rhyme or reason aside from the fact that these are familiar options that will appeal to a broad clientele. Only at the end of the BBTMX description is there any mention of China specifically: "Encontre aqui os autênticos sabores da China: onde a saúde e o bem-estar estão em sintonia" ("NCS Produções"). Visitors are even invited to speak Chinese, "fale conosco em chinês" ("NCS Produções").

Invented difference, produced by neoliberal, state-determined parameters of multiculturalism that take form through urban interventions, does not necessarily reflect real inter-ethnic encounters. The Mercado de Fusão taps into and re-values Mouraria's historical reputation as an inter-ethnic landscape in its self-representation and packaging in the service of the heritage industry. Ultimately, the market's restaurant kiosks reflect consumer demand, particularly that of a tourist public. This illustrates what Zillah Einstein refers to as deracialized, corporatist multiculturalism, which "uses difference to sell things" and within which "ethnicity becomes a marketing strategy" (75). Gastronomic pluralism, as Einstein puts it, is a lighthearted but ultimately superficial manner through which to recognize these demographic changes. Tourists who come to the Praça Martim Moniz experience a condensed, revisionary representation of Mouraria's ethnic and cultural plurality. In it, visitors are invited to visit a purportedly new Portugal, "in a single locality in one panoptic sweep" (Bruner 211). But the narrative that the space tells about contemporary Lisbon pays very little attention to its neocolonial implications, and instead showcases the how the city itself is, in a sense, colonized by tourism. Einstein asserts, in a critique of the food-court approach to ethnic plurality, that "there is a difference between gastronomic pluralism and an insurgent pluralism that demands economic, racial, and gender equality and sexual freedom for individual

cultural identities” (75). Celebrating multiculturalism as a fusion of these various identities is also a deracinating act. Through fusion, the threat of the racialized other is mitigated through assimilation. The market’s offerings celebrate and capitalize upon the presentation of ethnic and cultural diversity in an imagineered space designed for consumerism and service-based hospitality, which ultimately excludes the disenfranchised populations that the space is meant to celebrate.

### **Conclusions**

My 2017 visit to the Praça Martim Moniz revealed significant turnover in the food stands that was not reflected on the NCS website. Dogtails had been renamed Love Lisbon, while its offerings and beer pong table stayed the same. The line for the Eléctrico 28 already snaked down the street, and peak tourist season had yet to arrive. The Praça Martim Moniz was busier at its southernmost point, the opposite end from the Mercado de Fusão, where trees provided shade for passersby to take a break in the unseasonably warm heat.

AiMouraria’s catchphrase, “redeveloping the past to build the future,” encapsulates how, through its cultural heritage and branding project, the vestiges of Portuguese imperialism are rearticulated in the promotion of Lisbon as a tourist destination. The plaza, a public square, has been designed as an economically productive space because of the restaurants and shops that people visit. Although the act of visiting the plaza and attending events put on by the Mercado de Fusão is free, the idea is clearly that one might also buy food and drink, or visit the artisanal stands on the weekends. The production of this space is driven by very real immigration forces coupled with the pressing politico-economic interests of Portuguese society, along with a somewhat generalized nostalgia for Mouraria’s past. In the Mercado’s kiosks, the *Lusofonia* trope strays away from a simple linguistic connection, contributing to the scattered identitarian narrative that invented difference spins. The multiculturalism on display is not simply grounded in fraternal connections evidenced by a common language, but is based on iconicity and gastronomic pluralism meant to appeal to visitors.

One could consider the Mercado de Fusão an example of capitalist enterprise—that is, one developed by urban planners, city hall, and private

investors to displace informal economies on the plaza in favor of a more formal, tourist-driven economy. Here multiculturalism becomes a cloth superficially packaged for consumption that promises to wipe clean any social problems, tensions, or inequalities. This circumstance is market-driven; although concealed, the impetus of invented difference is linked directly to an expansive, predatory form of capitalism that colonizes areas of the city while producing its own socioeconomic exclusions imbricated with racial, ethnic, and national postcolonial difference. Neighborhoods like Mouraria continue to take shape as contested terrain.

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