

## INTRODUCTION

“Cities and Memory” is one of the themes of a fiction book, by the Italian writer Italo Calvino, called “Invisible Cities”. In it, Marco Polo, sometimes referred to as the greatest traveller of all times, describes to the Emperor of the Tatars the fifty-five imperial cities he saw but were impossible to be seen by the Emperor.

The sole significance of the theme highlighted something already empirical: the memory of cities exists and furnishes it and its population with a particular identity: cities, although highly dynamic, are also historic objects with memory. Humans, on the other hand, need memory in order to understand the present and to foster an identity: and cities are part of this memory.

Our starting point being the end of the current gaming contracts’ concessions, which will happen very soon, we decided to study the relation between the gaming industry and the profound transformation which has occurred in the city, as differences between the old and the new city are obvious. We have tried to understand, on the one hand, how its de-characterization, its process of *spectacularization* has been possible, and, on the other hand, how the (sub)concessionaires can contribute differently to Macau, the city they managed to re-shape, with their hegemonic presence.

It is important to clarify that our knowledge of Macau goes back thirty years, which allows us to evaluate its amazing change. It was, in several senses, a different time, as we will try to clarify throughout this work.

Its high transformation, indeed, gave us the pretext for the way this work evolved: aside from the study of this particular industry, from its beginning to its current legal framework and the way it affirmed its domination in the territory, we have studied its urban planning, its instruments, legal framework, its practice and its fragilities, in the Portuguese Administration and after the transference of sovereignty to China, in 1999, highly influenced by the liberal ethos of casino concessionaires. Casino operators, as we see, have managed to re-shape the city, by *unmapping* and remapping it, eventually transforming it into a giant theme park. Then, taking into account the end of the concessions, in 2020 and 2022, we anticipate what we think the future will look like, in this field, based in some conclusions from the analysis of official documents, Macau’s