

Neighborhoods in contemporary Lisbon

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To cite this article: RAMALHETE, Filipa; GATO, Maria Assunção – Bairros na Lisboa contemporânea. **Estudo Prévio** 4. Lisboa: CEAAT/UAL - Centro de Estudos de Arquitetura, Cidade e Território da Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa, 2014, p. 44-51. ISSN: 2182-4339 [Available at: www.estudoprévio.net].

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Introduction

Lisbon is said to be a city of neighborhoods and we believe that statement does not encompass the variety and complexity of the city, nor that there is agreement on the concept of neighborhood. The neighborhood is a rather fluid concept, as well as a collective (spatial, social, cultural and symbolic) representation, and remains a means of spatial organization in which human relations are crucial to establish differences among urban territories. On the one hand, there are those anonymous, unclaimed territories which function as passageways and connections. On the other, there are the lived-in and identifying spaces where the individual and collective, present and past blend.

Though neighborhoods cannot be viewed in isolation regarding the city's urban historical context, they should not be considered timeless, though there are places in all cities in which history accounts for typicality, where past is still present. In the case of Lisbon, the "typical" neighborhoods are indeed relevant for the perception of Neighborhood as collective representation and its ideological and popular conception. Noteworthy is also the fact that this collective representation changes with time, as it is not bound to historical heritage.

This accounts both for the diversity of social and spatial contexts considered Neighborhoods as well as the greater or lesser closeness to their reference narratives. In the historical neighborhoods, for example, there is intense search for narratives on the neighborhood as confirmation of a Lisbon feel, whereas in council neighborhoods, the opposite occurs as a consequence of the negative and discriminating connotation of the

term "social neighborhood", especially by those who do not live in the area and in regards to the inhabitant of the social neighborhood.

Some key ideas are nevertheless visible which allow to encompass the social and spatial differences within the concept of Neighborhood. These include:

- Socially localized representations, usually homogeneous and linked to daily life. Neighborhoods are places where life, activity, routine, meetings, neighbors, solidarity and social control are present.
- Territories which may not have a political and administrative dimension but correspond to a somewhat consensual spatial representation. Neighborhoods evidence proximity and are recognized and negotiated between the inside and the outside. These become individual and collective maps and include objective and subjective elements.
- They are units of observation and analysis in which spatial, living and identity elements cross and give the neighborhood its own feel as integrating, comfortable, secure but also controlling features.

These key ideas do not fully describe the concept. However, they include part of the essence that accounts for continuous focus on urban neighborhoods and their current potential meaning.

This selection of papers focuses on the Neighborhood in contemporary Lisbon and presents data and conclusions drawn within the project *Bairros em Lisboa (Neighborhoods in Lisbon)*¹. This project aimed to contribute to the existing theory on this matter and provide new perspectives on urban reality which could even become the bases for future management policies. The main objectives were to further the knowledge on the city of Lisbon, understand the current relation between urban structures and social life, as well as contribute to the city planning in a pluralistic and inclusive way, able to meet the needs of contemporary society.

In operational terms, the project was held between 2010 and 2013 and was divided into three different stages. The first stage aimed at collecting historical, urban and typological data on the neighborhoods and the state of the art on the origin and development of the concept of neighborhood, at national and international levels. The second stage was essentially field work, aimed at studying the data collected so as to select six case studies which would be representative of the identified types of neighborhoods. This was carried out through collecting architectural data on the case studies (including photography and cartography), interviews to key actors and through a survey to residents and non-residents in the selected neighborhoods. Finally, the third stage aimed at processing the collected data and disseminating results.

When the six case studies were selected, we opted to exclude those neighborhoods commonly referred to as "typical" and the social housing neighborhoods, commonly called "social neighborhoods". In regard to the former, the reasons for exclusion lay in the fact that some "typical" neighborhoods have already been studied and documented and that, because our study focused on new meanings and challenges for



neighborhoods in contemporary Lisbon, the exclusion of neighborhoods still immersed in the past seemed obvious. In regard to the latter, we considered that many of the so-called "social" neighborhoods are designated as such by the council but that does not correspond to any spatial, social, identity or symbolic representation which usually underlies the concept of neighborhood.

From a historical perspective, the word Neighborhood has been included in studies on Lisbon since the Middle Ages with reference to an urban area in expansion which contrasted with an area already built. In some cases (as in Bairro Alto - which could be translated as "High Neighborhood") the place is named "neighborhood" ("bairro"). In all the subsequent studies, it is mentioned that, due to the lack of housing within the castle walls have led to inhabitants living outside those walls, sometimes in derelict conditions, in particular after the industrialization period at the end of the 19thc (França, 1997; Henriques da Silva, 1994; Custódio, 1994; Nunes Silva, 1994). This need is hardly ever met by means of high public investment, most of the city's expansion (as Estefânea, Campo de Ourique, Camões) was built by private investors, either people building their own houses using popular architectural models or investors building houses for renting. The situation would only change in the 20thc, when public funding was involved. This occurred in two separate times. The first was during Estado Novo, when public funding was responsible for building several neighborhoods in the city. Examples of this are Alvito, Caselas, Encarnação, Calçada dos Mestres, Alto da Ajuda, Alvalade, Madredeus, among other neighborhoods. The second took place after 1974 and lasted until the 1990s. So as to house inhabitants living in poor conditions and within a plan to eradicate slums, the Lisbon Town Council started a major building operation using public funding (examples of this are the neighborhoods of Boavista, Olaias, Alto do Chapeleiro-Galinheiras, Chelas, among others).

The city today is, therefore, the result of many changes throughout the centuries. Except for the construction after the earthquake of 1755, the neighborhoods built in Estado Novo during the 1940s and the urban renewal of the eastern part of the city for the international exhibition Expo'98, the remaining operations were not fast or continuous. However, the neighborhood feel is rooted in the history of a popular city that expanded with limited resources.

In Atlas de Lisboa (1993), reference to neighborhoods is limited to Bairro Alto and, in regard to middle class, to the neighborhoods of Barata Salgueiro, Camões and Estefânea and later to the neighborhoods built during Estado Novo (Encarnação, Alvalade, Alvito). When renewal in contemporary Lisbon is mentioned, the neighborhood of Alfama is always present. Yet, several council documents refer to Lisbon as a "city of Neighborhoods" (CML 2005 and 2009) and the neighborhood is sought for by individuals and in terms of council strategies in view of its connotation. In this framework, the neighborhood is considered an identity territory that allows for proximity and neighborliness. This is the more valued at a time of instability at global level, of high mobility, of fragmented and socially different territories and of the weak social and spatial roots that are at the core of current urban life.

A brief review of the literature on the Lisbon neighborhoods allows us to realize that most texts were produced in the last three decades; though there are not many studies, the neighborhood has drawn continuous interest mostly of researchers from the social sciences. Two types of approaches on the neighborhood emerge from the literature;

though not mutually exclusive, are nevertheless different: one is essentially analytical and the other essentially operational, linked to urban renewal and to resolving tension or social issues.

From the analytical perspective, relevant studies focus on the history of the city and its urban planning. Examples of this are the studies by Carita, on architectural types in Bairro Alto (1994), by Costa (2002), on the neighborhood of Alvalade, by Heitor (2001) on Chelas and Olivais, by Nunes (2007) also on Olivais. Besides these, there are also sociological and anthropological studies. These focus on two major areas: the "typical" neighborhoods as spaces of very specific and identity urban social practices - such as those by Firmino da Costa (2002, 2008) and Santos Silva (2003) on Alfama, and by Cordeiro on Bica (1997) - as well as territories where ancient social practices mix and create the image of the neighborhood, as evidenced by Menezes in his studies on Madragoa and Mouraria (2002 and 2004). The analytical perspective also focuses on multicultural territories and council or rundown neighborhoods (Cardoso and Perista, 2004; Pinto and Gonçalves, 2000; Pinto, 1994; Guerra, 1994; Coelho, 1994).

The operational perspective, often under the responsibility of the council, is closely linked to the analysis. Studies from this perspective are mostly those aimed at urban renewal and in the scope of which neighborhood evidences higher social and urban identity, which should therefore be renewed, maintained, revived or reinvented. As Castro and Ribeiro state, the neighborhood as object of renewal, "Before being renewed and even if it is not renewed, the neighborhood is socially rebuilt in its symbolic, though eventually conflicting representations. Part of these representations is then the idea of the neighborhood as an urban space in need of renewal." (1989: 85). The concern with the degradation of older and more traditional neighborhoods, together with the idea that urban renewal fosters rejuvenation, increased quality of life and the creation of a tourist product, have led to analyses and data collection (Ribeiro et al, 1991), aimed at more or less successful local interventions by local technical offices - Gabinetes Técnicos Locais (GTL).

In this category we may include studies aimed at intervention in rundown neighborhoods, such as Bairro do Relógio (Freitas, 1990), Chelas (Coelho, 2012) and the studies conducted within the strategic plan for Lisbon - Plano Estratégico de Lisboa (1992) - and the strategic charter for Lisbon - Carta Estratégica de Lisboa 2010-2024 (2009). Finally, these two more relevant categories do not encompass new means of expression on the Neighborhood, as well as more recent approaches on this theme, as is the case of the study by Cordeiro and Figueiredo on a blog about the area designated "Alta de Lisboa" (2012). Thus, we realize that the interest in the Neighborhood, though continuous, has shifted in terms of approach, in some periods it was linked to promotion of a certain urban area, opposed - though simultaneous - with the affirmation of Lisbon in the world. We also realize that there are neighborhoods which have drawn more attention, due to the urgency in the intervention or to their specificity or "typicality" in the history of the city or due to their tourist potential. The studies carried out have also been consequence of public policies, which have led different agents (real estate owners and developers, shop owners) to develop social strategies that build, rebuild and reproduce a narrative on the neighborhood, aimed both at its interior and its exterior.

This selection of papers includes 5 texts written by different researchers from the project *Bairros em Lisboa (Neighborhoods in Lisbon)* and, as a whole, they provide a complementary analysis from different perspectives.

The first text, *The several meaning of the word bairro (neighborhood) Collection of notes for the study of the concept of neighborhood* by Margarida Tavares da Conceição presents a rather concise and thorough etymological and conceptual analysis of Neighborhood. The conclusion drawn is that there is no systematic and unanimous definition of the concept. The complexity of the geographical scenarios the concept is applied to does not allow for establishing simple types which would be widely acknowledged and used. Noteworthy is, nevertheless, the importance of the sociological content in the concept being applied to such distinct scenarios.

The density of this sociological content is the basis for Maria Assunção Gato's text, *'People make the neighborhood', the second text presented here. Social capital in the context of the neighborhood*. The importance of social capital, both as a collective resource in mobilizing local actors and as an enhancement of a territorial social identity is made evident in a study on two neighborhoods. In general, emphasis is given to the ability individuals have of creating and changing the spaces they inhabit, as well as how relevant social bonds (the closeness and the feeling of belonging) are in contemporary cities.

The third text, *Types of neighborhood(s) in Lisbon*, Nuno Pires Soares puts forth types of neighborhoods in Lisbon from an historical and urban perspective; the author's point of view, though personal, was as encompassing as possible. In summary, more than a morphological classification of neighborhoods - planned and unplanned -, a chronological sub categorization is used that divides Lisbon neighborhoods according to different historical eras. The six neighborhoods studied were selected considering this classification.

A questionnaire applied to residents and non-residents was a key tool in analyzing the six neighborhoods in Lisbon. In the text *The Neighborhoods according to their residents*, Filipa Ramalheite and Bruno Neves present the results of the questionnaire. The data is processed using a series of scales aimed at framing the neighborhood in the social and demographic context of the city and, simultaneously, evidence their social, demographic, historical and symbolic specificities.

The text by Luís Marques and Sara Machado, *Space Representations of the Neighborhood*, is also based on the results of the questionnaires. The authors discuss the space limits of the neighborhoods resorting to the individual cognitive perceptions of residents and non-residents and to the Geographic Information Systems as a tool used in processing and presenting the data collected. This text resumes the study on space representations applying new methodologies, as well as allows to confirm two assumptions. The first is that, though neighborhoods may not have administrative limits, for example, there are rather consensual limits acknowledged and shared by residents. The second is that there are no fixed or pre-determined limits that justify the idea and the spatial perception of neighborhoods as territorial units though an urban plan and topography-associated urban morphology is relevant.

We must emphasize that the concept of neighborhood is vast and allows for continuous study and analysis. Neighborhoods will always be representative of their inhabitants, of their identities and specificities.

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¹ The project was coordinated by CEACT/UAL – Centro de Estudos de Arquitetura, Cidade e Território of Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa, its partners being e-GEO – Centro de Estudos de Geografia e Planeamento Regional of Universidade Nova de Lisboa and SIPA/IHRU – Sistema de Informação do Património Arquitetónico do Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana.