

People make the neighborhood

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Abstract

Neighborhoods are still collective spatial representations, difficult to define, complex, with undefined scales, invisible borders and whose diversity increases in proportion to the social and spatial scenarios identified as Neighborhood. On the one hand, there is no simple and universal definition of Neighborhood, one that portrays all the intertwining of relations that exist between a community and its space. On the other hand, there is more than one explanation for the fact that some places are easily recognized as Neighborhoods while others, though the word 'neighborhood' is included in their name, would hardly ever become and reflect a spatial social identity. However, there is an element that, though always present in all neighborhood typologies, may make a difference and that is social capital. People, with their social and cultural features, their actions and their different motivations to participate in their neighborhood lives, may "make a neighborhood" where none existed as well as strengthen and foster others that have existed as such. Campo de Ourique and Telheiras are two examples chosen here to show the importance of social capital in neighborhoods.

Keywords: social capital, neighborhood feeling, means effect



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'People make the neighborhood': Social capitals in the Neighborhood contexto

Still the Neighborhood

In his book *O Urbanismo Depois da Crise* (L'Urbanisme D'Après Crise), Alain Bourdin (2011) proposes the phrase "container-words" to refer to concepts that, regardless of language, are rather fluid and difficult to define. According to Bourdin, these "container-words" have the advantage of allowing different people to produce their own interpretation, which makes communication easier among all by means of successive adjustments.

Using Bourdin's phrase, the word Neighborhood may be considered a "container-word" because it is a difficult concept to define though it has been used throughout the history of Lisbon up to today. The concept of Neighborhood is fluid because it derives from the ability to generate an understanding regarding the reasoning of a reality that is spatial as well as social, cultural, historical, architectural and symbolic. Thus, and as this reasoning is composed of objective and subjective factors, fluidity remains and the concept gains analytical depth and scientific richness through its different dimensions.

Besides being this vague and fluid concept that differentiates a territory within the city, the Neighborhood is also a representation built and rebuilt by both the residents and their daily experiences and by the anonymous outside observer. A collective representation that is equally shared as social memory and provides the neighborhood a false illusion of space frozen in time. In terms of social memory, Connerton (1999) states that the images of the past are generally convergent and legitimate present social order. Hence, social memory provides meaning to the collective whole, giving each individual the references needed to socially interact, to know the group and recognize him or herself in it, a part of that knowledge/recognition being the result of negotiations with the outside.

The outside elements - visitors, users, tourists, consumers - are equally important for the understanding of the neighborhood and its consequent social and spatial representation because they "lend" it identity and contribute to its perception (**Barreira, 2007**). A perception that tends to be based on a frozen-in-time idea and on a non-existing social leveling.

Neighborhoods should be seen within their historical and town planning context - although adapting to new times - as well as spaces inhabited by increasing diversity both in terms of social groups and of nationalities though this diversity does not put at risk the identity of each neighborhood. These neighborhood identities may be built and lived in different ways and even manipulated from the inside and the outside. "Neighborhood society" (Costa, 2008) derives from these different specificities, built and recognized through a series of historical, cultural and social facts that give each neighborhood its uniqueness in the context of the city.

According to Lefebvre (1970), a neighborhood is the biggest of the small and the smallest of the big social groups. It may also be viewed as a subordinate relative social unit as it is needed to understand social reality though it does not define it; residents' space and time takes shape and meaning at neighborhood level.

If, on the one hand, it is through the neighborhood that residents experience their spatial and social reality, on the other hand, the neighborhood still remains first and foremost a residential space. The neighborhood feeds of its residents and the relations among them and with the space they share. Thus, the neighborhood is a space of intermediate sociability, of transition between the private residential life and the global and anonymous space of the city, an area of affective investment of inter-knowledge and of social control (Remy e Voyé, 1997). These factors may become more relevant depending of the mobility of residents between the space they inhabit and other spaces in their daily life, the need to keep that mobility, as well as the degree of satisfaction regarding shops and services in the neighborhood.

In this context, we can say that a neighborhood is composed of determining and determined factors, all of which defined by the people who inhabit and experience them. People that have different nationalities, social backgrounds, education, jobs, interests, lifestyles, daily paces and sociability practices. All these elements combined lead to our rather "simple" conclusion that neighborhoods are different not only because of space but due to their social, cultural and identity capital.

Why are neighborhoods still important?

The answer to the question "why are neighborhoods still important?" is as complex as the number of specific analyzable situations and the plethora of analyzers' perspectives. From a political point of view, "Carta Estratégica de Lisboa" (the Lisbon Strategic Charter), designed for 2012 onwards as guidelines for municipal strategy and policy, advocates the neighborhood as a relevant urban scale. In this strategic document, Lisbon as a city of neighborhoods ('Lisboa Cidade de Bairros') is not only one of the main elements to consider in the revision of the Municipal Main Urban Plan as well as a structuring space and time unit and human and local identities are again given attention to.

From an economic point of view, there is evident interest in real estate in terms of urban regeneration and in building differentiated real estate products in areas that are older but also closer to the city center - sometimes also rundown - of Lisbon. This fact has visible consequences in terms of economic promotion of these areas as well as in the social and symbolic value of these places, many of which viewed as and considered neighborhoods. This enhancement has led to new groups of residents coming to the

neighborhoods; these are younger, more qualified residents, some of whom from higher social and economic backgrounds than the original population. Besides differentiated real estate products, these new residents are affected by the 'means effect'¹ (Costa, 2009) and by new dynamics of social closeness related to neighborhood life.

From a social and cultural point of view, linked to the economic point of view, many Lisbon neighborhoods evidence remarkable changes in terms of residents, their experiences and their space. Some of these changes occur through a simpler form of *gentrification* (Smith, 2002; Lees, 2003; Authier and Bidou-Zachaniasen, 2008), or more complex and socially and culturally diversified *occupation modes* (Bourdin, 2008). According to Bourdin, the *occupation mode* is not a consequence of residents from higher social and economic backgrounds than the original population moving in (as in the process of *gentrification*) but rather the construction of a lifestyle the involves several actors and actors within an urban space being part or identifying more or less powerful groups. In fact, the neighborhood is not only especially favorable for exchange of information, ideas, values and the spreading of innovation and creativity, but is also revived as "anthropological place" (Augé, 1994), idealized as a "good place to live" in the impersonal and anonymous city.

Neighborhoods have identity and integrating functions in terms of their idealization as "anthropological places" but they can also have an active role within the different organizations the manage and intervene in urban territories. As especial places for investment by the resident community (Remy e Voyé, 1997), neighborhoods are also excellent intervention scenarios, namely, by means of the attention they can provide to specific issues and needs, by defining intervention priorities and the visibility given to local activities and projects. Thus, many innovative and other cultural activities are carried out a local level; many a times these local initiatives have an impact beyond the neighborhood and spread throughout the city (Moulaert et al. 2010).

However, one of the relevant elements for the success of these local initiatives is the social and cultural heterogeneity of the stakeholders, whether those the assist in the communication between different institutions and social agents as well as those that promote the participation of all. Especially in economically difficult moments as we are living today, a series of networks and local initiatives may gain importance in the context of neighborhoods and what they represent in terms of social capital. More specifically, in terms of the quantity and quality of social networks and relations in the neighborhood which not only provide a feeling of belonging, identity, trust and security as well as ease and enhance the actions of their actors. Though I do not aim to thoroughly discuss the theory on the highly heuristic sociological concept that is social capital, this is an important concept to understand the matter in hand - Lisbon neighborhoods.

Social capital potential at neighborhood scale

Social capital usually refers to positive effects of sociability. Social capital thus refers to the advantages that individuals may have from their involvement and participation in social groups, evidencing the power of social relations in terms of influence and ability to solve social issues (Portes, 2000). Though it is said that one of the original sources of this concept is Bourdieu (1980, 1986), several scholars have studied social capital, whether as a tool to mobilize social resources and motivations or as a source of multiple effects and consequences, both individual and collective (Loury, 1977, 1981; Coleman,

1988, 1990; Putnam, 1993, 2000; Portes, 2000 among others). Within the scope of effects and consequences, there is also room for less positive effects².

At neighborhood level, social control may lead to a less positive effect of social capital as this usually implies restrictions on individual freedom. The downward leveling of certain groups by others outside the neighborhood also have less positive effects. This occurs rather often, especially in poorer neighborhoods. Yet, and considering both the positive and the negative effects, we must admit that the existence of social networks and exchange at several levels within a specific place represents a resource from which many advantages may derive both for individuals and for the space they live in.

Putnam (1993, 2000) considers social capital a spatialized civic activity, therefore adding a new dimension to the concept; social capital is here linked to management and governance ability of territories of variable sizes by means of the activity, motivation, participation and solidarity of the residing communities. In this new framework, not only is social capital viewed as a collective feature or resource of communities in a territory but also their ability to mobilize and do things can be made evident through more efficient and productive governance.

This conceptual perspective somewhat undermines the original meaning of the concept of social capital, since individual resources obtained through group integration become less important than the collective resources. Yet, and regarding the neighborhoods, the importance of these collective resources is obvious as well as the relevant role they can play in mobilizing bottom-up initiatives than improve the neighborhood the life of its residents.

Meanwhile, noteworthy is the contribution to this new idea of social capital of certain factors in collective resources that help explain the difference between neighborhoods, both in terms of presence and relevance of social capitals as in their actions and results obtained. Among these factors are the level of education of the population, their social and economic level, their history and identity as a community, a - past and/or current - heritage regarding collective mobilization and many others that influence civic participation of populations and their creative abilities.

In this line of thought, and according to (2004), the existence and quality of this type of social capital is a key condition for building strong neighborhoods, i.e., neighborhoods that are:

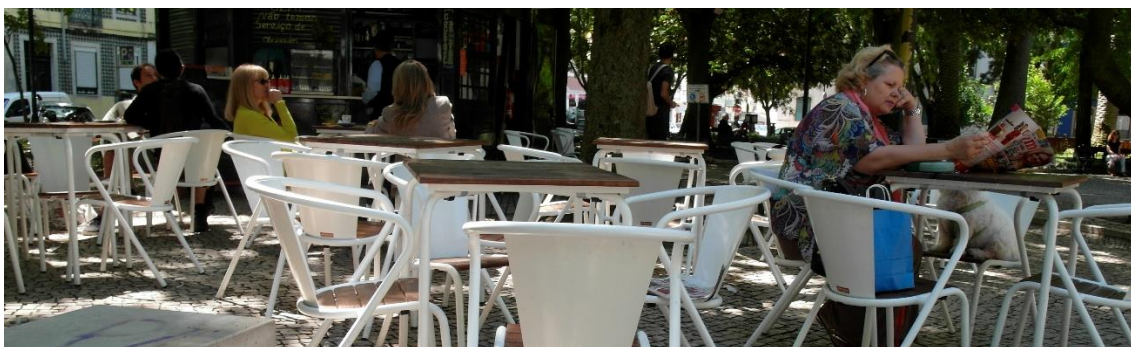
- Inclusive, where there is a strong sense of belonging and an active involvement of the community and respect for differences;
- Vibrant, where their activity on the street, opportunities for community interaction and a strong sense of "local identity";
- Cohesive, where there is a sense of responsibility, reciprocity, trust and ability to manage conflict and find solutions;
- Secure, where there is a subjective feeling of security and objective measures to ensure it;

According to this author, the existence of an active and informed social capital in strong neighborhoods may be as important for local community as the existence of economic capital. At the basis of this idea is the organizing and demanding strength social networks can have but also the privileged insight they have of the place they inhabit, the issues

that affect them the most and their possible solutions. The author, reporting to Canada, describes a renewed knowledge of the importance of neighborhoods, both physically and socially. This importance is even greater for those who spend more time there, whether because they have mobility issues, economic difficulties, going through a stage in life or by choice

In the Brazilian context another proposal is put forth that, recovering the importance of the local context and specifically of the neighborhood, goes further in its understanding of the relevance of social capital in local power. It is the neighborhood development plan, "Plano de desenvolvimento do Bairro: uma metodologia participativa" by FecomercioSP (http://issuu.com/fecomercio/docs/cartilha_plano_bairro-plano-de-dese). This reference document aims to provide local communities with a practical and participatory methodology to design the neighborhood development plan. This Plan includes a set of actions deemed necessary by the local community to improve their living conditions and which can be negotiated with municipal powers and private agents.

Returning now to the national context, and more specifically to Lisbon neighborhoods, the relevance that the "Strategic Charter" may have awarded the neighborhoods does not allow for us to conclude there has been significant change in public action at local level and in a bottom-up logic. In economic terms it is also obvious that investment made at neighborhood level depends more on private agents and their profit objectives. However, and in a bottom-up logic, two examples can be mentioned - among the six studied within the project on Lisbon neighborhoods, "Bairros em Lisboa, 2012" - which, according to Putnam (1993, 2000), demonstrate not only the importance of social capital as a collective resource in mobilizing actions and solutions for local problems but also the organizing and constructive ability that social capital can have in terms of spatial and social representations of a neighborhood. The example are Campo de Ourique and Telheiras; this is a selection, this does not mean that other capitals and social compositions in other neighborhoods are less relevant.



Campo de Ourique –Parada Garden . Nuno Pires Soares – All Rights Reserved

Campo de Ourique - when the neighborhood fosters social capital

The neighborhood of Campo de Ourique³ is located in the center of the city, between Prazeres, Estrela and Amoreiras. It is a fine example of programmed town planning intervention in Lisbon. This is mainly a residential neighborhood, rather bourgeois, built as a response to the needs arising from the demographic growth at the end of the 19th century. Though it started being built at that time, only in the 1960s is it fully established;

this territory was only viewed as a neighborhood. The orthogonal shaped territory on the upland projects order and modernity, a contrast to the more popular and older part of the city, hilly and with irregular paths.

In the past years Campo de Ourique has lost inhabitants and has now a rather aging population⁴. However, it has not lost its bourgeois atmosphere and is still one of the most desired places to live in Lisbon. House prices - both in the sales and in the rental markets - are evidence of that and cause some *gentrification* as well as an added social and spatial differentiation.

One of the features of Campo de Ourique is its trade, local shops attract both residents and non-residents. Since the 1970s, local trade has undergone significant changes; from a more traditional to a more sophisticated and differentiated trade, though there is also general trade and Chinese-owned shops. However, the shoe shops, the pastry shops, the textile and the home decoration shops continue to hold a specialization status and attract customers outside the neighborhood. Moreover, Campo de Ourique cultivates a very special type of 'neighborhood feel'⁵, where sophistication and glamour meet new social and spatial dynamics.

In this context, several local initiatives have taken place aimed at neighborhood live, trade and services. These include activities promoted by municipal powers as well as those promoted by local associations and shop owners, social networks or the Internet, thus allowing for the involvement of a wide group of stakeholders from/in Campo de Ourique. One of the first examples of this - on a subsidiarity logic, a bottom-up organization and taking advantage of new technologies for a more global promotion - was an Internet website where residents, shop owners, consumers and other participants could find several initiatives linked to the neighborhood. At the website (<http://campodeouriqueaberto.blogspot.pt/>) Campo de Ourique was presented as 'more than a neighborhood': "There's no place like Campo de Ourique to find everything you need. More than a neighborhood, hundreds of friendly shops and services at your disposal in an open space."

Meanwhile, this website became a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/CampodeOurique?fref=ts>), making its contents more widely visible, allowing for more interaction among those interested as well as 'cyber-acquaintance' and communication among them. Currently this page has 4926 followers and at least 10 open access discussion groups on the topic Campo de Ourique neighborhood⁶. There is exchange of messages and useful information through these cyber-groups, local trade is promoted as well as the promotions and events held by different shops, memories are shared through posting of old photos and many other themes are discussed whose common denominator is the place and the people of Campo de Ourique.

Other initiatives, such as the "shopping guide", "sweets tasting" and other competitions linked to food and drink, extension of opening hours by some shops (including weekends) may also be included in the bottom-up measures. The measures that involve a more or less formal organization of shop owners aim to, besides shop survival, create new consumption dynamics by attracting new publics and outside visitors. Though the business objectives of these measures are clear, they are no less important for the

reinforcement of the 'neighborhood feel' and to the enhancement of a territorial social identity.

Therefore, one of the spots that has drawn attention because of its ability to attract new publics to the neighborhood and create a new inside dynamics is the kiosk 'Quiosque de Campo de Ourique-Hamburgueria da Parada'. Located in the garden of Parada, this kiosk has an open air terrace specialized in burgers and has become both an attraction in terms of food but also as meeting point for several leisure and cultural activities⁷, whose promotion is also made via its Facebook page: (<https://www.facebook.com/QuiosqueDeCampoDeOuriqueHamburgueriaDaParada>).

Noteworthy in Campo de Ourique is also the recent regeneration of the Market building, where fresh produce is sold and where four large kiosks have now 16 small bars where food and drink is sold from morning until the early hours. Coordinating a normal local market activity and entertainment is very close to the "food court" in a shopping center, benefits are expected that not only make all the market shop owners happy but also have some effect on the surrounding space because of the increase of people and the different publics in the area. Besides this, and despite the regeneration and the new uses included in the market not being the result of a bottom-up measure, the creativity and innovation involved in these new uses and the belief in attracting new publics implies social capital from Campo de Ourique and enhances communication among the local community.

Another important element for creative and cultural neighborhood dynamics - and consequently, for its social capital - is Casa Fernando Pessoa, a house dedicated to the Portuguese poet and writer. Besides a specialized library, it also hosts cultural events, adding symbolic value to Campo de Ourique and promoting it in a cultural scenario beyond neighborhood borders.



Telheiras . Nuno Pires Soares – All Rights Reserved

Telheiras – when social capital makes the neighborhood

Telheiras remained a small group of houses and farms (dedicated to agriculture and to leisure activities) until very late. Located along Telheiras Road, which linked Lumiar to Carnide, it included a series of buildings around the convent of Telheiras.

In the early 1970s, Lisbon Town Hall decided to directly intervene in the town planning and construction market in the city so as to allow for integrated planning and earn money for the municipality by means of that intervention. The company EPUL – Empresa Pública de Urbanização de Lisboa - is thus founded, which has land belonging to the municipality in which buildings were constructed. Among these is the project of Telheiras,



which stands out because of its dimension and planning quality, whose aim is to balance the model of the Athens Charter and the coordination and cohesion among the built areas.

Among the objectives set for Telheiras Plan⁸, important is to refer the idea of the city as a network, the focus given to the street as a natural structure and a space of social belonging and integration. A differentiation was also proposed in terms of buildings and houses, mainly based on the quality of the finishing. In terms of localization and accessibility to the city we must refer that Telheiras was in the periphery but has gained a more central location due to new roads and the metro (since 2002).

Currently, Telheiras is a middle-class residential area, whose image is of quality in urban life due to a well-structured urban plan. There is a feeling of belonging by its residents who not only promote it as an excellent place in the city to live in as well as participate in the effort to make it a neighborhood.

The quality of the schools (private and public), the shops and the type of population residing in Telheiras are also part of the prestige associated to this place. At the end of the 1980s the idea was put forth that Telheiras was the area in the city where more university graduates lived in and this image still lingers, thus the name "the graduates' neighborhood". In fact, the rather social and cultural homogeneity that is typical of Telheiras has significantly contributed to reiterate the existence of a social capital there whose dynamics are unique, which both promoted the construction of local identity as led that identity to a conscious and intentional neighborhood representation.

Scott (2006), when discussing homogeneity, refers that neither cultural homogeneity nor too much heterogeneity seem to foster high levels of learning and innovation in the creative field. Synergies are best taken advantage of where there is a mix of strong and weak bonds or of interpersonal signs. Considering this, Telheiras represents a successful case as it uses the 'means effect' as a way of fostering interpersonal relations through which it aims to create a 'neighborhood feel' as a sense of belonging and sharing in relation to the neighborhood.

One of the elements that contributed to the affirmation of Telheiras was the association Associação de Residentes de Telheiras (ART) (<http://artelheiras.wordpress.com/>). Initially, the main concern of the Association was to follow-up on the urban plan so as to ensure it was being complied with. This aimed to make sure that Telheiras would be a space with certain urban life quality standards and would meet the expectations in terms of urban design and green spaces. As the plan was concluded, ART shifted its objectives to other activities such as the promotion of activities linked to improving neighborhood quality standards and enhancing social relations based on inter-knowledge networks - face to face or virtual - founded in common interests.

The issues related with quality of life and environmental sustainability may evidence both how the social capital in Telheiras responds to sharing concerns and initiatives as well as how those initiatives contribute to a "neighborhood feel" among the community residing there. An example of this is the creation of a social network for information, training and debate on Movimento de Transição (<http://ecotelheiras.wordpress.com/>). Its origin is an international network⁹ devoted to environmental and sustainability issues, whose main objectives are related to the involvement of populations and local

communities in more resilient, sustainable and environmentally-friendly lifestyles. A means to reach these objectives is raising communities' awareness to daily practical issues so as to change some habits and behavior.

A series of cultural, leisure and sports activities are promoted by ART and Movimento de Transição also promotes others (<http://www.transitionnetwork.org/initiatives/transi-o-telheiras>). Member of the global network Movimento, this group located in Telheiras describes three actions in its website: a community garden, a regular market of organic products and regular conferences on the movements and its activities in Portugal.

Other Action Groups¹⁰ arise linked to this movement with specific objectives aiming the neighborhood. All these activities are shared in a Facebook page entitled "Transição em Telheiras" (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/144888152225444/>), an open group with 228 members whose motto is "Take care of the land, take care of the people, share surplus".

Besides initiatives related to Movimento de Transição and to ecological-environmental concerns, social networks on Telheiras are also commonly used to promote the cultural events taking place (both in the neighborhood and in its surroundings), as well as other collective activities, such as bicycle rides, picnics, neighborhood parties, meetings thematic workshops, etc. All these activities contribute to consolidating a neighborhood identity in an urban territory which, without a mobilizing and active social capital, without participation of online social networks, without the incentives of the environment, could be an anonymous urban area in Lisbon, with no 'neighborhood feel'.

Conclusion

The Neighborhood remains a vague and fluid concept which, despite not thoroughly defining the vast number of social and spatial realities that can be thus classified, is understandable enough in terms of establishing identities and networks in a territory.

In the last few years, Lisbon seems determined to pay more attention to its neighborhoods. This includes municipal policies, economic and financial interests, as well as promoting again networks and recognizing that participation be local communities may play a role in municipal powers. This is where the social capital in a specific place may make a difference, both through benefits from inclusion and participation of individuals in social groups and through spatialized activities promoted by existing collective resources.

Using two different neighborhoods in Lisbon we aimed to show the relevance people can have in the places they live in and how these places can also pay them back. The old character of Campo de Ourique, together with specific town planning features, awards it a recognizable identity that both promotes rather robust internal cohesion around the 'neighborhood feel' as well as takes on a similar visibility outside it. Though it is not an exclusive condition, this 'neighborhood feel' is nevertheless at the core in terms of local and cultural synergies that are created in real and virtual social networks.

Telheiras is a relatively recent and more periphery urban area, where - together with a carefully designed and monitored town plan - a neighborhood identity was intentionally created. Though not spontaneous, this identity benefited from a series of created and

participating synergies organized on the territory, as well as a very unique commitment of the community towards it. A 'neighborhood feel' can be acknowledged in Telheiras, deriving from the 'means effect' at the confluence of an urban territory in search of an identity with an able and active community.

In comparison to Telheiras, Campo de Ourique did not need to be affirmed as a neighborhood and its more central location helps to attract visitors from outside that enhance its identity. However, the collective resources generated in Campo de Ourique are less solid for residents and do not involve them as much as they could. Telheiras, more closed on itself and having started from scratch, wanted to be affirmed as neighborhood through the existing collective resources, thus evidencing people's ability to create and change the places they live in, as well as the importance that social bonds and sharing a feeling of collective belonging still have on the contemporary city.

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¹ According to Pedro Costa (2009), the neighborhood is a place that favors exchange of information and diffusion of innovation and creativity, thus generating a 'means effect' that is specific and may be seen in a series of features attributed to them.

² Exclusion of non-members of a certain group, the application of rules or excessive demands on group members, restrictions to individual freedom or downward leveling rules are four of the main negative consequences of social capital mentioned by Portes (2000:146).

³ Currently, Campo de Ourique is one of the new *freguesias* (administrative territory divisions) of Lisbon, pursuant to administrative reorganization of the city laid down in Law nº56/2012 of 8 November.

⁴ . In the 2001 Census, the two *freguesias* that are now included in Campo de Ourique (Santo Condestável and Santa Isabel) had 24823 residents, 7033 of whom were over 65, i.e., 28% of the residing population. In 2011 the same *freguesias* had 22132 residents, 6119 over 65, i.e., the same percentage of elderly population in relation to the total number of residents.



⁵ By 'neighborhood feel' we mean the existence of a social construct within a specific urban territory, collectively shared and that has local, negotiated and recognized meaning, both for the inside and the outside. As such, this 'neighborhood feel' must be linked to the set of features and experiences that both promote the neighborhood and differentiate it from the global context of the city.

⁶ Examples of these groups: 'matilha de Campo de Ourique'; 'Campo de Ourique bairro de campeões'; 'Tertúlia de Campo de Ourique'; 'Crescemos em Campo de Ourique'; 'Fãs de Campo de Ourique'; 'Ah, Campo de Ourique' among others.

⁷ Such as theatre, cinema, parties, art workshops, attending football matches and others.

⁸ The authors of the detailed town plan for Telheiras, Plano de Pormenor de Telheiras, are Pedro Vieira de Almeida and Augusto Pita.

⁹ Transition Network (<http://www.transitionnetwork.org/>).

¹⁰ Examples of existing Action Groups: "Telheiras 30" defending slower driving inside the neighborhood; "Horta em Telheiras" defending the already existing community garden; "Telheiras sem plástico" in defense of a less polluting trade.