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The post-25 April city. A conversation with geographers Margarida Pereira and Gonçalo Antunes

Filipa Ramalhete
framalhete@autonoma.pt
CIEBA – Centro de Investigação e de Estudos em Belas-Artes. CEACT/UAL – Centro de Estudos de Arquitetura, Cidade e Território da Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa. CICS.Nova – Centro Interdisciplinar de Ciências Sociais da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

Margarida Pereira
ma.pereira@fcsh.unl.pt
Geographer, retired university professor at Nova FCSH. Researcher at CICS.Nova – Interdisciplinary Center for Social Sciences at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal.

Gonçalo Antunes
ga@fcsh.unl.pt
Professor at Nova FCSH. Researcher at CICS.Nova – Centro Interdisciplinar de Ciências Sociais da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal.

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Filipa Ramalhete [FR]: We invited two Portuguese geographers from different generations to discuss the city in Portugal over the last 50 years. Margarida Pereira studied Geography at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon between 1971 and 1976. She was a student and collaborator of Orlando Ribeiro. She started her professional career precisely at the moment of transition following the 25 April 1974. Gonçalo Antunes, born in the post-25 April period, studied Geography at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, where he is a professor mainly researching the theme of housing in Portugal. I would like to start by asking you both: what were Portuguese cities like in 1974?

Margarida Pereira [MP]: To talk about the city after the 25 April 1974 we need to understand what we inherited. In the early 1970s urbanisation was extremely uneven. Lisbon, the capital of the country and of the empire, held a hegemonic position as tertiary employment and the main services and national facilities were concentrated there. Porto was some way behind, in second place. The other sixteen district capitals, with modest population sizes and an identical functional profile, played an important role in structuring the national urban system. Their administrative status provided them with a series of public services, collective facilities (high schools, commercial and industrial schools, hospitals, cinemas, museums,...), commerce and more professional services, which also served their rural *hinterland* and smaller cities and towns. But they had serious shortcomings in terms of basic infrastructure, in particular, basic sanitation and municipal waste collection. Each naturally had its own distinctive features. A number of cities in coastal areas stood out on account of their more dynamic socio-economic activity. These included Coimbra (university city), Braga, Aveiro and Leiria (industrial activity). Inland cities, such as Bragança, Vila Real, Guarda and Castelo Branco, mainly relied on services for the population and agricultural activity. Industrial activity was limited and this affected the urban dynamics. With rare exceptions, the other cities that were municipal headquarters, such as Guimarães, Covilhã, or the Tomar/Torres Novas/Abrantes triangle, had lower growth and weaker functional structures.

The cities were compact and self-contained. In addition to the old nuclei, recent extensions of varying dimensions appeared in urban development plans of the 1940s and 1950s. The centre was a meeting place where the population socialised, and where the more specialized services and commerce were concentrated. Limited mobility (journeys were mostly made on foot) determined the organization of the urban space and the location of different uses.

Lisbon and Porto were exceptions to the model described. Since the 1960s, the socio-economic dynamics of these two cities have been spreading to their peripheries, giving rise to agglomerations that would later evolve into metropolitan areas, marking a progressive upward trend in the national urban system. Lisbon has a central/peripheral structure, which is extremely polarised and involves long daily commutes. In Porto, the distribution of employment was more diffuse and dependence on the periphery was more fluid.

Lisbon experienced high levels of industrialization in the late 1950s, which led to significant internal migration to the capital. The suburbs began to grow, underpinned by the radial configuration of road and rail infrastructures. Large facilities were concentrated in the main city centre and housing and industrial activity predominated in the suburbs, where there were few facilities. The exception was the Oeiras-Cascais Axis which had the Costa do Sol Urbanization Plan, the only plan approved before 25 April (in 1948). It was different from the other outskirts of Lisbon, where there were more and more very low quality dormitory suburbs, something that continued up until 1974. When the Salazar Bridge was opened in 1966, the urban growth spread to the south bank of the Tagus. Up until then it had been limited to the river front nuclei served by river transport between the two banks of the river. In 1964, the Master Plan for the Lisbon Region [Plano Diretor da Região de Lisboa] was completed (though never approved). It was issued by the Administration to define the model for planning the region. This plan was under review on 25 April 1974 but the new political context meant it was not implemented. During this period, when there was a large influx of population, the public authorities were unable to

address the housing shortage and the number of shanty towns and informal neighbourhoods grew. We could therefore summarise urban occupation in the Lisbon region as follows: a city with very different functional, social and economic conditions. Most of the specialized functions were concentrated in the capital, while the dormitory towns lacked facilities and had just a few, low-grade public spaces.

What caused the urban growth? In 1965, the Administration acknowledged the public inability to respond to the growing demand for housing by coming up with the concept of urban subdivision. It allowed private developers (land owners) to classify the land as urban and develop the subdivision (which implied urban development and construction) on the plot they owned to build housing. Between 1965 and 1974, the urban subdivisions on the outskirts of Lisbon multiplied. They were of varying dimensions (number of dwellings) and also differed in terms of quality. But they were usually poorly equipped with little public or green space. The housing quality varied according to the suburban axis in which they were located. The configuration of urban space in each subdivision only considered the boundaries of each property, and articulation with the surroundings was limited to road connections. This urban fragmentation led to the growth of urban development to the detriment of city growth.

FR: Was tourism not yet a relevant topic at the time?

Spa tourism was popular until the 1960s (, I'm thinking, for example, of the Termas do Vidago/Pedras Salgadas, Curia, Gerês, Monte Real, Estoril, Monfortinho, Caldas de Monchique), but it was overtaken by the increase in sun and beach tourism. A series of conurbations catered to the domestic demand for beach tourism, namely: Póvoa do Varzim, Vila do Conde, Leça da Palmeira, Espinho, Figueira do Foz, Ericeira, Estoril, Carcavelos, Costa da Caparica, Albufeira, Praia da Rocha. Especially from the late 1960s with the opening of Faro airport in 1965, the Algarve began to experience significant demand from foreign tourists. The Interim Development Plan (1965-1967) supported the development and concentration of tourism, adding the Costa do Sol (already established), the Algarve and Madeira as areas of priority. Between 1964-66, the Urban Plan of the Algarve Region was drawn up to organise the anticipated growth.

FR: And in terms of housing, how did people live in Portugal when we awoke on 25 April 1974?

Gonçalo Antunes [GA]: Broadly speaking, they lived quite badly. In 1974, the year of the 25 April revolution, there was still a lot to be done in the area of social policies, specifically housing policies that would help to address the terrible housing conditions in which a large part of the Portuguese population lived - both in urban and rural areas. In the rural areas, conditions were as bad as or worse than in the urban areas. With regard to housing conditions, data from the 1970 census indicate that only 60% of households had access to electricity and sanitary facilities, 50% to piped water and only 30% had a shower. These numbers indicate that a large sector of the population had very poor housing conditions. In rural areas, entire villages did not have electricity. This was indeed a very harsh reality and quite different from the situation elsewhere in Western Europe.

Looking at the big cities, in the case of Lisbon the so-called *bairros de barracas* [*shanty towns*] were spreading, as well as the "informal neighbourhoods" that appeared on the outskirts of the capital, initially following the rural exodus and later as a result of

immigration. In these places, particularly in the shanty towns, living conditions in the overcrowded slums built by the residents themselves were admittedly difficult, and there was often no electricity, basic sanitation or drinking water. In the 1970s, there were still cholera outbreaks in these places, and led to the death of dozens of people. In fact, there was a major outbreak of cholera in 1974, after the Revolution. Sadly, we can look back and note that this entire population escaped from poverty in the rural areas to become poor in an urban setting. But nevertheless, it seems they felt the change was worth it, which also tells us a lot about the reality of the rural environment.

From a national perspective, the housing problem was not limited to a structural shortage of housing, which was generally severe, as there was also a very severe shortage of housing supply. It is estimated that we had 500,000 fewer homes than families in the 1970s, which means it was impossible for every family to have its own home. Interestingly, the scenario in 1974 is very different from the one nowadays, 50 years on, in which we have a million and a half homes more than families, that is, not only has the situation reversed, but we have now a large housing *surplus*.

But, as I mentioned, access to housing in 1974 was very difficult, There was a scarce supply and what there was had a lot of shortcomings. It is also important to point out that, at the time, most of the population were tenants rather than homeowners. Today we live in a country of mostly homeowners and, it seems to me, sometimes we forget that this is a relatively recent phenomenon. In fact, it is precisely from the 1970s on that this situation began to change, albeit slowly. Some authors, using an expression I like, refer to the transition from a city of tenants to a city of homeowners. But it was more than this, the entire society was transformed by access to ownership. Before 1974, buying a house was something not actually within reach of most of the population, “horizontal property” was a relatively recent development that appeared for the first time in 1955. It was in the 1980s and 1990s that the ideal conditions were created for buying a home, the long awaited dream of most Portuguese families. In the last decades of the twentieth century, it became easier to access home loans, and, for those who still had difficulty, subsidized credit appeared and the prohibitive interest rates fell sharply in the 1990s. Home ownership became more widespread, completely transforming society and cities.

And, by the way, while we’re on the subject of this dichotomy between renting and buying a home, remember that, during the Revolution, the Portuguese rental market operated in a very peculiar way. In the cities of Lisbon and Porto, rents had been frozen since 1948, and it was precisely during the revolutionary period that frozen rents were extended to the whole country.

Also don’t forget binding contracts, which placed stringent conditions on ending rental agreements. This meant that, basically, the tenants remained in the property until they decided to leave. It was almost a denial of the existence of the market itself, so to speak; an excessively protectionist system that led to a lamentable physical and social conditions in Portuguese city centres.

MP: The housing shortage encouraged the “informal or illegal neighbourhoods [bairros clandestinos]”. But there was nothing clandestine about them (they were built in plain sight), but they were neighbourhoods built outside of urban planning legislation. Some were very extensive, such as Brandoa, Casal de Cambra, Vale de Milhaços, Quinta do Conde. They usually sprang up away from urban areas, where the land was cheaper, or

on land with physical conditions that meant they were unsuitable for urban settlement (*for example*, steep slopes). The developer divided the land into plots, and the buyers become co-owners of a share, which could not be registered autonomously. There was property ownership, which was not the case in the shanty towns, but people could not own a specific plot and the construction was illegal. Shanty towns [barracas] were built on public land (for example, in the easement areas of Lisbon airport, by the Águas Livres Aqueduct, and along the railway line to Sintra) where there was minimal state control.

In 1974 there were thousands of shanty towns in the Lisbon Region, although many hundreds disappeared during the great floods of 1967, when more than 700 people died, a catastrophe that was covered up by the Estado Novo. It would take another two decades before the problem was more or less addressed by the Special Resettlement Program. Soon after 1974, housing occupations created a lot of tension in civil society. As a student, I left the university residence where I was living and went to "house sit" an apartment, when the person who lived there had to go away temporarily and did not want to leave the house unoccupied because there was a real risk of someone occupying it. This lasted for a short period (until the end of 1975), but was characteristic of that time.

GA: With regard to housing and the revolutionary environment, in my classes I make a point of showing excerpts from the documentary “As Armas e o Povo”[1], recorded shortly after 25 April, before 1 May. The on-the-spot interviews are very revealing of one of the main aspirations of the poorest population in Lisbon... to live in better and larger homes, have basic sanitation, tap water, not have to sleep in the same room with the rest of the family, siblings, parents. These were the things they talked about. During this period housing was really a burning issue. Sérgio Godinho's song, “Liberdade [Freedom]”, also mentions peace, bread, housing, health and education. Housing was one of the main things wished for, it was also one of their main aspirations.

Sadly, we look back at these aspirations and hopes with some dismay, because we know how little was done in the years that followed. The SAAL (Ambulatory Local Support Service - Serviço Ambulatório de Apoio Local, created in 1974) appeared as quickly as it disappeared. Many people sought to solve their problems by occupying properties. In the decades that followed, most families were obliged to solve their housing situation themselves, without any support from the authorities, always in the face of enormous personal and family obstacles. There were many years without housing policies and no definite strategy. It was only in the 1990s that housing policies appeared, belatedly, based on the most classic models. For example, the Special Resettlement Program of 1993. The Youth Rent Incentive [Incentivo ao Arrendamento por Jovens] the first consistent grant for renting, dates from this period. Almost 20 years after 1974. It took a long time.

FR: Going back to the frozen rents, this also meant that building for rental ceased to be a profitable investment and became a burden.

GA: Yes, of course, because it stopped providing income. In fact, not only did the building stop providing income, but the owners started to become undercapitalized because what they received was not enough to cover the normal expenses of the buildings. The lack of upkeep and maintenance meant a substantial part of the downtown residential property fell into disrepair. Nowadays this situation has largely been addressed by the private sector. Because even though since the 1980s there have been

many redevelopment programs, with various sources of funding, in fact, the owners rarely used them to renovate their buildings. This was something that only happened more recently due to real estate and tourism pressure.

FR: What territorial planning instruments were in force at the time?

MP: In Portugal, the first urban planning legislation appeared in the 1930s (with subsequent revisions in the 1940s and early 1970s). There were urban development plans for urban conglomerations, but the central government never conceded autonomy for urban management to the municipal councils. This always required approval from the Direção Geral dos Serviços de Urbanização (General Directorate of Urbanization Services, DGSU). The mayor was appointed by the central government, and the city council then had a limited role that was circumscribed within the urban area in practical terms. The 1976 Constitution of the Portuguese Republic created the Local Government, and the municipalities now play a very important role in managing the territory. The first law relating to the tasks and powers of local authorities, the 1977 Lei das Atribuições e Competências das Autarquias Locais, determined that municipal councils should have a plan for the entire territory under their jurisdiction. This decree did not have any immediate consequences and the Municipal Master Plan [Plano Diretor Municipal], which was optional, appeared in 1982. Most municipalities do not show any interest in this instrument as they were more focused on solving existing problems: the widespread shortage of facilities, infrastructure, etc. The scarce municipal technical resources also limited any action, and the country did not have enough planning teams to meet the requests.

During the 1980s, the city councils did not have any planning instruments, and would continue to manage the licensing of settlements on a case-by-case basis. These mushroomed on the extended periphery, both in Lisbon and Porto and in the other district capitals, on the initiative of private developers. The informal neighbourhoods also increased, particularly in the Lisbon region. Post-25 April, expansion of these neighbourhoods intensified when thousands of families arrived from the former colonies. This exacerbated the housing shortage and underscored the laxity of the municipal councils, which did nothing to prevent the construction (despite guidance from the Central Administration in this regard). This enabled many families to resolve their housing needs, without considering the consequences of this form of occupation (lack of infrastructure, construction in unsuitable areas, etc.). The informal settlements only began to be controlled in 1984, with the new Regime Jurídico das Operações de Loteamento Urbano [Legal Regime for Urban Settlement Operations]. Therefore, in the 1980s, the city grew mostly without planning, on the initiative of private developers and based on the urban subdivisions. Some municipalities began to draw up planning reports at the municipal level - for example, Setúbal, Moita, Évora, Fundão, Ponte Lima, Mora - , but they represented a minority in the country.

In the early 1990s, there were some significant changes following the drafting of the Municipal Spatial Planning Plans [Planos Municipais de Ordenamento do Território]: the Municipal Master Plan [Plano Diretor Municipal], which became mandatory, the Urbanization Plan [Plano de Urbanização] and the Detailed Plan [Plano de Pormenor]. The requirement for the PDM was a consequence of Portugal's accession to the then European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986. All projects eligible for Community funding had to be registered in existing planning instruments. The Minister of Planning

and Territorial Administration (Professor Valente de Oliveira) determined that municipalities without a plan would not have access to Community funds or national funds through program contracts. In view of the conditions imposed, there was interest in territorial planning in Portugal and all municipalities wanted to start the respective PDM. Throughout the 1990s, the so-called 1st generation of PDM was approved. It was an important milestone, but had very serious consequences for the design of urban space. Most municipalities did not produce urban development plans or detailed plans. They began to implement urban management based on the MIPs, drafted in scales of 1/10,000 (mainly in the municipalities of the metropolitan areas) and/or 1/25,000. This means that the Planning and Conditioning Plans are not detailed enough to support urban management. The macrozoning of land use, the layout of structuring networks and urban indexes passed responsibility for the structure of the urban form to the initiatives (the time when they occur) and the proposals from the developer(s) based on the site. The difference being that their application was restricted to within the urban perimeters (that is, it was now the public entity that classified the land as urban). There was also a tendency for them to be over-dimensioned in relation to the demographic and economic dynamics. This is an problem that persists to this day. The 2nd generation PDM followed the same modus operandi, regulated by the 1st Basic Law of the Spatial Planning and Urbanism Policy (Lei de Bases da Política de Ordenamento do Território e Urbanismo,1998) and the corresponding Legal Regime of Territorial Management Instruments (Regime Jurídico dos Instrumentos de Gestão, 1999). Only the Legal Regime of Territorial Management Instruments (Regime Jurídico dos Instrumentos de Gestão Territorial, 2015) which succeeded the Law of General Bases of Public Land Policy, Spatial Planning and Urbanism (Lei de Bases Gerais da Política Pública de Solo, de Ordenamento do Território e Urbanismo, 2014), seemed to take this problem into account. It notes that, in the seats of local government and in urban areas with more than 25,000 inhabitants, the land use regime should be defined, preferably, in an urbanization plan.

FR: And in these municipalities, there was also beginning to be more pressure from the local rural exodus.

MP: Yes, especially from the 1980s onwards, there began to be a rural exodus to the headquarters of the municipal district. In fact, something very interesting happens: the local authorities were very concerned about the countryside and there was a major drive to build infrastructure. This was intensified by access to the structural funds prior to joining the European Economic Community. There was concern about bringing piped water, sewage, electricity and street lighting to rural settlements. But, by the time this infrastructure was underway/completed, the rural exodus had intensified. So, in fact, having better living conditions was not enough to encourage people to remain in the countryside, it was also essential to consider activities that generate wealth. However, once we entered the EEC, the Common Agricultural Policy devastated our agriculture (mostly low-productivity), with serious consequences for the rural areas. Many people wanted to move to the "city", which could be the one nearest (the headquarters of local government) or the capital (Lisbon), in search of better opportunities.

FR: We saw that, in many places, people did not move to Lisbon, but they did want to go and live in the city. There was a view of urban life, an idea that there was better housing, greater proximity to what is offered by city and also a degree of reluctance to live in an old building.

MP: Yes, the emptying of the city centres has increased since the 1980s. First, because the notion of better living conditions spreads, the country opens up, people have more information, and prefer a new home in recently built urban areas. The oldest population with fewer resources remained in the centre(s). Often, the children would leave and the parents would stay. That does not mean they did not aspire to better conditions, but they did not have the necessary financial resources as the rents were frozen; if they moved out, they would pay a lot more. Freezing the rents had a detrimental effect on the building stock as it progressively fell into disrepair due to lack of maintenance by the owners (who pleaded lack of profitability).

GA: Our metropolises are relatively recent. Up until the late 1950s, the urban fabric of Lisbon did not even reach its administrative boundaries. The metropolis of today, with almost three million inhabitants, was built between the 1960s and 1990s. In fact, the municipality of Lisbon had a very high population density in 1980 - 800,000 inhabitants - and a densely populated historic centre. But we can also question whether the city actually had capacity for 800,000 inhabitants. We should not forget that these high numbers, which many speak of with evident nostalgia, were also synonymous with overcrowded housing, rented rooms, families living in parts of the house, etc. etc. The centre would eventually have excessive population density for quality of life, this is to say, population loss is not necessarily just a negative phenomenon.

MP: For people with limited resources, sharing a home, shanty towns or informal settlements were the solution. The shanty town was the end of the line, as informal settlements implied that the family had some savings as they owned the plot, albeit illegally, on which the house was built. In the 1990s, the first generation of PDM defined a large scale urban model, which covered the country's urban settlements. In all PDM, the urban perimeters were over-dimensioned, based on the fallacious argument that, if there was more urban land than the demand created by demographic and economic dynamics, the price of land would be cheaper. What were the consequences? These over-dimensioned urban perimeters maintained the inherited urban growth model: private developers wished to develop certain plots in a dispersed manner, creating fragmented urban fabrics and compromising their overall structure. Often in the urban areas, as a result of several subdivisions entered in the land register, there was no continuity of the secondary road network and parts of urban fabric were not connected. This gave rise to complex problems with articulation. The extended urban model persisted throughout the 1990s, and this is how the city grew.

The first Basic Law of the Spatial Planning and Urbanism Policy (Lei de Bases da Política de Ordenamento do Território e de Urbanismo, 1998) warned of these problems, but it was only in 2015 that the second Basic Law got to the heart of the problem by eliminating the concept of urban development areas. The legal framework that gave rise to the 1st generation PDM dates from 1990, and it was only in 2015 that the concept of the urban development area was abolished. This required the municipalities to redefine the urban perimeters within fixed deadlines. The periphery grew in this way and the consolidated city lost population. The first PDMs reduced the consolidated urban space and minimised the guidelines. This resulted in de-population and the functional emptying of many of these areas. There was a series of inadequate public services and the public authorities attempted to improve operating conditions. However, the new buildings tended to be constructed on the periphery, often without any articulation with the surroundings. Two examples illustrate this: The Sintra Court (at the Portela de Sintra) and the Seixal City

Hall. Both facilities immeasurably improved the quality of service provided to the population, but they were built in an "open space", without any regard for the urban environment; with only road connections and no access to public transport. Thus, the administration itself contributed to the fragmentation of the urban fabric on the periphery and the centres were also functionally emptied (in the majority of cases the buildings remained vacant, with no assigned use). This model was replicated again and again. It was well-intentioned, but had repercussions that affected the urban form and urban life.

GA: And we have yet to deal with some of the past errors. The AUGIs have been regulated since 1995 but many have not yet been legalized. There is clearly a gap, and legislation that was more decisive and flexible should have been created to address the situation of those urban areas. Many of these territories are now consolidated and are no longer the dormitory areas they once were. Now, they have commerce, services, employment, facilities and are integrated into the networks and urban perimeters.

Another issue was the so-called *shanty towns*, which still exist, but are an inherited reality. The SAAL appeared as early as 1974, but had a very chequered and ephemeral existence. In fact, during the revolutionary period, there was a huge gap in housing policies for the most disadvantaged sector, in particular those living in the shanty towns.

The PER only appeared in the 1990s, 20 years after 1974. They represented a very different approach from the SAAL. For example. In the SAAL, the methodology was *bottom-up.* It sought to intervene directly with people, who were organized into associations or cooperatives and were involved in discussions, had a voice and participated in decisions about what the neighbourhood to be built should be like. The PER [Special Re-housing Programme] was nothing like that. It was very classic, *top-down*, everything was decided by the municipal technicians: the neighbourhoods to be built, how they would be built, where they would be built, how the housing would be distributed. All this can and should raise a number of questions, but it is also true that the PER solved that housing problem. In the city of Lisbon, according to surveys by the City Council, there were about 200 shanty towns, the largest of which were well known, such as Bairro Chinês, Bairro do Relógio, Musgueira, Casal Ventoso, Curraleira, Marquês de Abrantes, Quinta da Holandesa…

As might be expected, building so many public housing projects in a single decade resulted in very heterogeneous urban scenarios. We have neighbourhoods that function relatively well, some that we don't even realize are public housing neighbourhoods and these are excellent examples. Others are also excellent examples, but of what should not to do. Moreover, the construction of public buildings to relocate this population was not always accompanied by the development of a suitable *habitat*. This gave rise to problems in the urban fabric of the city that are still in evidence today. Those neighbourhoods in particular, have a number of shortcomings. But it is extremely difficult to discuss the PER in terms of a one-size-fits-all solution, as each neighbourhood had its own history, and each municipality had its own experiences.

Also, with regard to this public housing stock, we need to underline that it was built in the 1990s and is now 30 years old. However, it is not just necessary to build houses, it is essential to create a good *habitat*, with facilities, transport and good public spaces, and also not to abandon buildings but maintain and preserve them. Public housing represents a commitment to the future. This issue alarms me nowadays, when we talk about building

several thousand public dwellings. Before building more housing, it might be better to first look at the state of what is there.

FR: Going back to the rental market, when was it unfrozen?

GA: From the 1980s onwards. First in 1985, but with changes that continued to reflect outdated assumptions, and, later, in 1990 with the Urban Rental Regime (RAU), in a more reformist and structural manner . During this period, the rental market did not function. Who would want to rent out housing in a frozen market? Let's face it, it wasn't the best investment option. The result, which we have already discussed, was the rise of the home-ownership model, which coincided with entry into the European Economic Community. Buying one's own home started to be the solution adopted by a large sector of the population, not least because the monthly rental was usually more than or equal to the mortgage payments. This also matters, especially in a country like ours with low incomes in European terms.

Going back a little, rents began to be unfrozen in the 1980s. But in fact, even today we have many rents that do not reflect market values, and we are in 2024. The first major change was the RAU in 1990, which completely transformed the rental paradigm in Portugal. There are those who say that it has liberalized it, I think it was not exactly liberalization but normalisation. Later, in 2006, the New Urban Rental Regime (NRAU) appeared. But both the RAU and the NRAU never actually amended pre-1990 contracts. This only happened in 2012, when, because of the Troika, there were quite substantial changes to the NRAU. Contracts prior to 1990, usually called "old contracts", entered a transitional period, at the end of which they had to be moved to NRAU, that is, fixed-term contracts, with uncontrolled rents that are updated annually. These changes created a very complicated situation, especially in the city centres, where the population was very old, with low pensions, and therefore not be able to pay market rates. This led to many contracts not being renewed. Although later, when the government changed, we had some changes to the law that eventually mitigated the impact of the 2012 amendments.

In other words, over the last 50 years, we have gone from a protectionist rental market to a market that became liberalized as never before in 2012. Even in the Civil Code of the Constitutional Monarchy renting was not so biased in favour of owners as in 2012. Moreover, as we can see from what happened in the last decade, with the huge rise in housing prices, we realize that some kind of state intervention is needed to try to put an end to the difficulty of accessing housing.

MP: Currently, the situation has got worse once again due to the very sharp increase in the price of housing. Nevertheless, it gives a misleading impression when it is said that families nowadays have more difficulty than at the start of the democracy. When I got married and bought my house, we were both senior technicians, and we used one salary to pay the mortgage on our house. It was difficult, but there were no alternatives as we couldn't find a house in the rental market and so we had to buy. This was the case in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the loans began. The State found a way to give the so-called middle class a means to escape the problem, but by forcing them into a brutal savings regime.

GA: The borrowing capacity was very high. I often say exactly that. Today it is difficult, but the housing problem is a persistent one. And it's ongoing, almost chronic, and

constant. It is changing. In the 1990s we had a problem, especially with the shanty towns. There was a frenzy to build, obtain credit and purchase, and this more or less solved the situation for the people who were able to buy – and who gave up a lot to buy that house. But if we look at the 1950s Estado Novo, about 35% of families in the city of Lisbon shared homes. One family lived in one room, another in another room, and they shared the bathroom and kitchen. Not to mention the problems of the 19th century… The problem is chronic.

FR: One thing we also saw was that the trend towards buying a home ended up conditioning people's residential mobility.

MP: It's true that buying a home limits one's mobility. It does not give people a lot of motivation to, for example, change jobs or look for another job, especially one in places where the daily commute is more onerous. Home ownership limits geographical mobility.

But when talking about mobility I remember a structural change that was initiated in this area. In 1986 we entered the European Union and in 1985 the National Road Plan [Plano Rodoviário Nacional] was approved. The previous one, from the 1940s, had not yet been fully implemented. Using structural funds, the new plan would enable construction of the national road network, and today, the country has an excellent network in European Union terms. On the other hand, the municipalities developed the capillary road network. In the metropolitan area of Lisbon, several regional roads provided for in the Master Plan of the Lisbon Region (Plano Diretor da Região de Lisboa, 1964) were built (CRIL, CREL, N-S axis, several radials). However, the 1990s witnessed a substantial rise in the country's motorization rate. Conditions (road network and individual vehicle) were created for the rise in commuting from home to work by car.

There was less investment in public transport in favour of investing in highways and increasing the motorization rate. This meant the public authorities placed the responsibility for mobility on citizens. And so this combination – road network and individual transport – encouraged the extended urban model. Families adhered to the model. The car was a sign of prosperity and ensured greater convenience (door-to-door travel). The limited public transport disadvantaged those with lower incomes in particular. In the Lisbon metropolitan area, railway lines deteriorated significantly, as in the case of the Sintra and Cascais lines. In short, we started out with mobility that conditioned the urban expansion: in the 1960s and 1970s, the suburbs grew along the road and railway lines due to the heavy dependence on public transport. The provincial cities were relatively compact and journeys were made on foot. When the extended urban model was implemented, the car was the main form of transport. With the effects of the crisis and intervention by the Troika, and other factors such as climate change and concepts of sustainability and energy transition, proximity is once again being valued when organizing urban space.

However, when we talk about a society of proximity, I feel that sometimes one is always looking at the city-centre and ignoring the periphery. Rather than the 15-minute city, we could refer to the 30-minute territory. Today we have an extended periphery. The concept of the 15-minute city is, of course, an important one, involving a revaluation of proximity and connectivity, but where can it be applied? The city is talked about in the abstract but there are many realities in the city. In the 1990s, demographic and functional emptying of the city centres also led to the exodus of many businesses. And this is important.

Throughout the 1990s, in addition to the PDMs, which dominated planning, we saw a proliferation of programs associated with community support. The municipalities had specific programs that were developed on an urban scale. For example, in Brandoa, through Proqual (Integrated Program for the Qualification of Suburban Areas of the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon - Programa Integrado de Qualificação das Áreas Suburbanas da Área Metropolitana de Lisboa), facilities were built and there was regeneration of the public space. POLIS XXI was intended to upgrade the public space on the waterfronts. To revitalize the central shopping areas, the PROCOM and URBECOM programs were created to modernize establishments and regenerate public space to keep the centres alive. But these did not always achieve the intended objectives, especially when the exodus of people and urban functions became accentuated. Commerce alone could not survive when new forms of commerce emerged, supported by major highways and road nodes, in places that were easily accessible by motor vehicle. All the municipalities wanted to host a large shopping centre (synonymous with modernity and a more extensive offer)! People begin to favour speed of travel and ease of parking over proximity. They wanted fast journeys, even if it meant travelling further, and free parking – something offered by the large out-of-town shopping centre. This new way of organizing the commercial offer also transformed the urban structure, both in the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto and in other cities. All the capital cities of a district had a shopping centre with a hypermarket, or a hypermarket with a shopping mall. These introduced structural changes in commercial organization which impacted the reconfiguration of the urban space.

Finally, moving to the present day. We had the pandemic, now we have the war, and we have witnessed huge growth in tourism as Portugal has been discovered by people from abroad, initially tourists and then investors. This represented structural change in the city centres. It promoted rehabilitation and urban regeneration, but this no longer implies building a city for people, but rather building cities for the market. Gentrification and touristification are accentuating inequalities in the (re)appropriation of the city, and increasing the group of excluded people. This regeneration mainly affects Lisbon and Porto. In several of the country's cities the centres remain vacant, empty of people and functions, without anyone. But in the big cities we are not building a city for the usual residents. The city is built primarily for the market and for valuation. There is much debate about whether or not Lisbon has too much tourism and its consequences for the city. Of course, there are economic players who argue that tourism can be further increased, while others believe it is already too much and should be controlled. These transformations have already taken place in other cities, such as Madrid, Barcelona, Venice. We are now part of that group. We have been discovered, for better or worse, and we must deal with the situation realistically by seeking to enhance the opportunities created, without allowing the negative consequences to destroy them.

FR: We have a well-established set of spatial planning instruments but we still complain that they are very often ineffective. The town halls are sometimes regarded as heroes, sometimes villains. And we have often relied on programs and strategies rather than instruments, especially in housing issues. Can we manage to bring these together in a more productive way? Or are we going to continue with these contradictions and evolve based on contradiction?

GA: From the point of view of legislation, there is indeed very little room for inventiveness in terms of housing policies. We have had the right to housing enshrined in our Constitution since 1976 and, more recently, the Basic Housing Law. In terms of programs, we've had a bit of everything. What we need, above all, is a political initiative that places budgetary allocations in the existing instruments.

In terms of legislation, we've already foreseen almost everything that can be done in the housing market. What is needed is action. And in order to act, what is frequently lacking are budgetary appropriations. We only need think that, in 2018, the New Generation of Housing Policies [Nova Geração de Políticas de Habitação] appeared, which actually seemed quite promising, interesting and holistic. But most of what was proposed came to nothing. For example, the "First Right" (Support Program to Support Access to Housing - Programa de Apoio ao Acesso à Habitação) was enacted in 2018. It promised to resolve the situation of 26,000 households. The first target date was 2024, the occasion of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of 25 de Abril, and here we are, in 2024, without seeing this goal achieved. The target is now 2026, but we all know that, in practical terms, it will not be possible to build the housing by 2026. We will have therefore to wait for the new date, which will inevitably appear. The history of housing policies has tended to be much like this: promises, postponements and neglect.

And by the way, also regarding the First Law, which is in force, it is very interesting to analyse the source of the funds. Initially they should have come from the State Budget, but at the first opportunity, the investment was allocated to the Recovery and Resilience Plan (PRR), I usually say that the First Right turned into a kind of program based on European funding, as it were. We might even question whether, were it not for the European PRR funds, we would actually be building anything. I fear not, some kind of loophole would have been found.

The lack of housing policies, or at least their poor record, have also led us to this current situation of enormous constraints to accessing housing, which is a fundamental problem nowadays, because, regardless of the fact that previous generations also experienced great difficulties in renting or buying a house, the truth is that access to housing today is really very difficult. In the last ten years we have seen a growing gap between the price of housing and family incomes. This is a problem that above all affects those who have least and younger people who are starting their professional lives, with precarious jobs, low wages, and no savings.

It is a problem that we need to address to ensure the health of the democracy. Otherwise, we will see segregation and spatial fragmentation in cities, with increasingly exclusive territories for the haves, which exclude the have nots. And this is not a good way to run a city. Cities thrive on economic, social, cultural, functional heterogeneity. The way the real estate market has evolved over the last few years has helped to create problems for urban systems as a whole. Buying a home was relatively common for a generation, but for today's youth it is a real privilege. This creates a perception of inequality which is fracturing our society. In this context of unequal access to something fundamental, we should not be surprised if some political movements manage to gain ground among young people and those who, despite going to work every day, cannot find housing. This is also one of the problems with turning a blind eye to these issues, as I said, the health of democracy itself is at stake.

MP: In these past decades, there has been, in urban terms, an overall improvement in the infrastructure, facilities and quality of urban spaces in metropolitan areas and in medium-sized cities. Now, although we are far from having overcome all the problems: many have been reconfigured, others have intensified, others have appeared. Housing and mobility are examples of persistent problems that have been reconfigured, and the risks from climate change are increasing. Public entities tend to adjust policies to new objectives, but they must attempt to bring together the discourse and the practice. We speak more and more of sustainability goals, the inclusive city, but we have more and more problems of social fragmentation in cities. Not in all cities, but these inequalities have increased worldwide. There is no point in pretending we don't see it, nor that it is circumstantial.

Today, part of the housing market is valued based on an international logic for people coming from abroad with high purchasing power and a very different spending power to ours. The real estate market adjusted quickly and opening it up had a detrimental effect as we have a market valuation that bears absolutely no relation to the income of the Portuguese population.

This is also true of the threats caused by climate change - even though we continue to talk of mitigation and adaptation measures. Yet again, while the discourse on implementation is clear and logical, in practice we keep on seeing construction permits for areas at a high risk of flooding, near the coast, etc. The floods recorded in the Lisbon Region in December 2022 caused considerable damage to the health centre in Algés, which was built on the flood plain of a waterline (Algés riverbank). A recent facility that was badly damaged. We need to compare the rhetoric with the practice, there are actions that need to change.

The Urban Areas of Illegal Genesis (AUGI) is another example. Since 1995, the AUGI Law forced the City Councils to incorporate the informal neighbourhoods with potential for conversion into the urban model of the municipality and to implement their conversion. It was a law that is important to highlight. But every situation is different and, almost 30 years after that orientation, many AUGIs have not yet been converted. What has the Assembly of the Republic done? When the deadline is reached, it is extended, and this has been repeated seven times, the last was in 2021. It turns out that, on the basis of the law in force, there is no longer much to be done. On the one hand, It is essential to consider the concessions that can still be made without compromising the security of the population and, otherwise, acknowledge, unequivocally, to the population, that there are AUGI (or parts of them) that cannot be converted. To keep on postponing a situation indefinitely and create false expectations implies giving people false hopes. There are neighbourhoods where families have cases that have been ongoing for 30, 40 years. Their homes will not become converted (poor conditions) even licensed constructions. Often conversion is not possible because part of the neighbourhood (even if small) is in administrative easement areas or because of restrictions on public use (here the emphasis is on areas that are part of the National Ecological Reserve).

Conversion of the neighbourhood is thus jeopardised. There is a need to rethink the reorganization of the neighbourhood, legalize what can be legalized, and then think of alternative solutions for the housing affected by the constraint in question. Systematic postponement is not the way; but when the lack of any answers is buried in procedures that are not transparent to citizens, the administration loses credibility. In fact there are

areas that cannot be converted for safety reasons. Therefore, no misleading expectations for citizens should be created. It's the worst thing that can happen. One final suggestion regarding intervention: adjust the (sometimes abstract) discourse to the (applicable) practice. In addition to the strategic global vision, which is indispensable when we are organizing an urban space, interventions must examine each particular situation and find effective solutions, rather than repeating arguments that have little basis in reality. Decision makers often take refuge in innovative concepts, but we know that they cannot be applied in many situations. And deceiving citizens (creating misleading expectations) is very harmful, because it compromises their involvement and encourages criticism and uprisings that can have dangerous consequences.

FR: Today, most of the population lives in metropolitan areas and is completely unaware about the rest of the country. Finally, because you both have roots outside Lisbon, I would like to ask you what role does "the land" play today.

MP: When I was at university most of my classmates were Lisboners. When the holidays came, there was great excitement, especially among those who were going "back to the land". In my year there were three classmates from the mountains who were very proud of their origins and were much envied by their Lisbon colleagues, because they did not have land and were going to stay in the city.

Being from a low-density area gave me a greater awareness of the territory. I grew up in a very different world from that of the big city. I went to primary school in the wolfram mines and then in a village. My mother was a primary teacher and I went with her. I experienced the poor living conditions of children my age and the poverty of this rural area. During this period, migration to Europe was still in its early stages and the "remittances from emigrants" (in francs or marks) were non-existent. The village school had students from a nearby village who walked a few kilometres to school every day. In winter, they arrived with a bag placed over their heads like a hood. On days of torrential rain or very low temperatures (several degrees below zero) some of them fainted from the cold when they arrived at the school. These images have never faded from my memory!! Then I went to high school in a small town, which was adequate for the requirements of its inhabitants in the province. I come from a low density territory with a beautiful natural park (Montesinho) and a city, Bragança, with a very interesting urban environment. Being able to make a comparison between metropolitan urbanness and the urbanness of a city in the countryside is rewarding. Knowledge of the rural areas is an undeniable advantage, and one which my training as a geographer has helped me to value even more.

What made me look at this region with new eyes, while I was still at university, was when I started working with Professor Orlando Ribeiro in my second year. He loved Trás-os-Montes and, when he discovered he had a transmontana in his class, invited me to help him with his research. Despite being "frightened" by the proposal (to go and work with the Master), I didn't dare refuse, thankfully! It was a truly enriching experience which made me aware of aspects I had never appreciated. When I went on holiday, there was always a lot of fieldwork to do. Collecting community practices was one of his passions and I devoted myself to this task with a great deal of commitment. I ended up looking at that reality in a completely different way, which was exciting. Conditions in the countryside nowadays are completely different, there are no young people, there are no

children, almost all the primary schools have closed and been converted to other uses. Most of the resident population is elderly - but there are still many reasons to visit this region. The issue of identity, memory, of experiencing a different reality, was and remains very important - for making comparisons, for comparing experiences in a small city, in the provinces, with those of a large metropolis.

GA: On a more personal level, I was born in Lisbon, I am a real Lisboner, but in fact my whole family has roots in Tomar. This is very interesting, because it allowed me to maintain a strong connection between the urban and rural areas, not least because my family always took part in agricultural activities, such as harvesting, olive picking, and many other activities with close or more distant family filled my holidays and weekends when I was young. It was in all its aspects a very enriching experience, but I don't think this connection *to the land* is necessarily any more enriching than other experiences. If my family had been culturally urban, which it wasn't, and had taken me on holidays and weekends to Paris and New York, which they didn't, I think I would also have liked that. Also, I am part of a family that is rooted in the *land*, but which was part of the rural exodus, leaving the fields for the city, in the case of my grandparents sometime in the 1960s. The family was poor at the time, the only reason to justify leaving a small homestead on the outskirts of Tomar for a ground floor flat in Praça do Chile in Lisbon, while always maintaining a strong physical and emotional connection *to the land*. In the 80s and 90s, I lived with my parents in a very small house in Lisbon, where the living room sofa was also my bed until I was 9 or 10 years old. There is a curious urban-rural family trajectory, which, as it happens, I have always thought to some extent defines the last 50 years of our society. A rural exodus that maintains a strong connection to the interior in addition to social mobility.

MP: One thing that bothers me, especially in the summer, is the way television shows tend to present the rural as an idyllic, fantastic, bucolic space. I dislike this approach. We also need to talk about people and activities and the vulnerabilities and imbalances that persist and are getting worse. We cannot speak of territorial cohesion while we practise welfarism instead of development. We know we live in a world that is in the process of urbanization. We will have more and more population in urban areas. All of this is true, but we must not forget that many of the necessary resources for the urban population are outside the urban space. And, therefore, we need to look at the other territory and value its resources for the benefit of its economic and social vitality. When we talk about energy resources, water, food sovereignty, etc., we need to look for these outside the city, even if they are in its immediate vicinity. Food sovereignty and water are absolutely crucial for the future. The idea that all the solutions can be found in the big cities is untrue. This interaction between urban and rural is increasingly important and critical, and decision-makers and citizens need to appreciate this.

[1] Documentary produced by the Union of Film and Television Production Workers (1975). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2vDdG9szrs