



INSTITUTO SUPERIOR TÉCNICO
Universidade Técnica de Lisboa

URBAN PLAN: North Ameixoeira
Social integration through urban design

Clarissa de Lemos Viana Boavida Bortolon

Extended Abstract

May 2012

INDEX

00 INTRODUCTION	5
02 PROJECT AREA ANALYSIS	7
03 URBAN PROPOSAL	8
04 CONCLUSION	9
05 LITERATURE	11

00 | INTRODUCTION

The present project report comes under the Final Project Class, built in the 5th and final year of the Masters in Architecture from Instituto Superior Técnico, developed along the academic year 2010/2011. It consists in the presentation and justification of the urban project exercise developed over that academic year. The urban project was divided into 2 study areas from now on referenced as Project Area 1 (PA1) and Project Area 2 (PA2). For the first area the project was developed with the aim of arriving to a solution at the level of a Strategic Plan, followed by a deepening of smaller area (PA2), inserted in that territory, in order to develop a Detailed Plan. The latter presents itself as the object of this report and focuses on the rehabilitation of the North area of Ameixoeira's civil parish, located at the North Crown of Lisbon city.

PA1 refers to part of the North Crown of Lisbon city and includes Portela Airport and its nearby surroundings, including parishes of Lisbon, Odivelas and Loures. It is an area characterized by complicated situations related to political uncertainties (border zone between counties); issues of complex terrain (plains, slopes, ridges and valleys); artificial barriers (delimited by means of high speed). It is also stricken by problems of social nature very common in contemporary cities associated with, among other issues, the densification and overcrowding experienced in recent decades.

PA2 is a peripheral area characterized by strong (and recent) rural memories and a highly fragmented urban fabric that suffers from segregation in relation to the consolidated city. By presenting plenty of building space and proximity to the city centre, this area was the target of illegal private expansion and public operations for relocation and cost controlled buildings, dictating an environment of social disadvantage, disqualification of open spaces and low economic development.

The overall aim of this report is to deepen the way key decisions at the urban plan level can improve or aggravate the phenomenon of social segregation of population living in cities, in general, and in relocation situations, in particular.

The report is divided into 3 main areas: **Theoretical Background** - which presents an overview of the process of urban development and social housing policies in Portugal with special emphasis on the Special Relocation Program (PER) and its repercussions; **Project Area Analysis** - where the area is described for a better understanding of the territory both at physical and social level by analysing the following topics: background, physical analysis, social and demographic studies, mobility, built structure and related projects; and **Urban Proposal** - which refers to the urban project developed and is divided into three sections relating to three different working ranges which include the main strategies developed for PA1, the implementation of these strategies for PA2 and a closer development of the hinge zone between north and south of Ameixoeira's parish.

01 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Cities have always been characterized as cultural, economic, political and social “centres”. The constant transformation and reorganization of the urban fabric contributes to an increasing complexity of these subjects.

The main issue nowadays relates to “making city” for people. These questions refer to the sustainable development and improved quality of life. It isn't just building houses; it is how these houses are done. CABRITA (2008) brings us a concept of “Livable City” by stating how an uninhabitable city is like: *“empty houses, lack of small shops and proximity, disabled facilities and community services; abandoned public space, disorienting and uncomfortable public space; distrust of city management, and so on ...”* (p. 01).

Most studies (LYNCH, 1960 | JACOBS, 1961 | COELHO 2009, 2010) dictate that a “good city” is a lively, multi-functional city. The areas of residence, work and leisure intersect and overlap, producing urban flows at neighbourhood, parish and city levels. The “good city” has high-rise and low-rise buildings, has large and small voids, green and white, has activities, has image. It is a safe city, clean and well treated. It is a city accessible at all levels. It allows one to walk, cycle or drive. The “good city” has no end, is continuous; it is organic.

One of the main problems regarding urban sprawl is the over-occupation of peripheries. A big vehicle for this phenomenon is the government through social housing policies which tend to be implemented in these areas. These policies rise as an answer to the growing population living in precarious conditions throughout the cities.

Amongst all the social housing policies, the Special Program of Relocation is one of the most important, being responsible for the construction of about 31 000 dwellings. This program begins in 1993 and goes more or less until 2005 and aims to *“provide conditions for municipalities to eradicate the existing shacks and, consequently, relocate the occupants to controlled costs dwellings”* (www.portaldahabitacao.pt). Due to many different factors, the solutions adopted by this program weren't always the best ones. As main problems some authors point out the concentrated and necessarily segregated neighbourhoods initially with no prediction of any facilities, dense construction, low quality buildings, population with low levels of income and education and already great social problems, no public spaces (GUERRA, 1994 | FERREIRA, 1994). PA2 was the target of one of the Special Relocation Program's interventions with 1011 relocation dwellings.

Nowadays the thought behind relocation has changed drastically as the concept of “right to the city” (GUERRA, 1994) emerges. There is a need of rehabilitation regarding the existing segregated neighbourhoods and diluting new relocation dwellings in existing urban fabric, running against concentration. A good example is the rehabilitation of the “La Mina” neighbourhood in Barcelona, where the urban fabric was revised, facilities were built and the public space refurbished.

02 | PROJECT AREA ANALYSIS

As referenced, Ameixoeira's parish is located on the North of Lisbon. There are several references to occupations in the parish until the XVI century, but it is known that the parish of Ameixoeira arises in the year 1536, outside Lisbon. Until its inclusion in Lisbon (1885), it was characterized by the presence of agricultural and food production that fuelled the city.

Presumably, as Ameixoeira becomes part of Lisbon, the production areas of the parish are transformed and replaced by shacks and AUGI (urban areas of illegal genesis). This phenomenon reveals the overall lack of concern for the area, allowing these precarious neighbourhoods to rise. Later on (around 1990's) this area is the target for social housing and other low cost dwellings reserved to families with low income and most of the shacks are demolished.

Regarding the physical aspects, the area presents steep slopes and rugged terrain and a great percentage of non-consolidated area (more than 50% of the area). This amount of green and non-consolidated area makes the PA2 an important part of the green structure of the city.

About the inhabitants, the parish presents a greater percentage of young population than the Lisbon Council but also a lower value of qualified population. The population is also characterized by its low-income and social distress.

The area presents a big urban structure problem. PA1 is surrounded by high speed roads guarantying a good access to the area but also enclosing and segregating it from the surrounding city. Within PA2, serious problems of urban structure arise. It is notorious the lack of continuity in the road system, isolating the neighbourhoods and impairing the circulation of transports and people. Much due to this aspect, the public transportation is almost inexistent in the area, which considering the kind of inhabitants is a very serious issue.

The area's main issues are a response to the lack of urban planning which results in a mix between many sorts of urban fabric without order or reason. On top of this disruption most of the area is dedicated to only one use: housing. There is a total lack of business and leisure areas which, in turn, results in the lack of urban flow felt here. As a consequence the small trade doesn't develop and the area falls into a vicious circle of deterioration.

03 | URBAN PROPOSAL

As referenced before, the chapter is divided in 3 sections - Strategic Plan (PA1), Detail Plan (PA2) and the development of a special aspect of the proposal (Ameixoeira's Centre).

At the level of the strategic plan, the concept surrounds the theme "CIRCULATION" which is developed as a mix of three webs - Green Spaces, Street Development and Landmarks. The main aspect of the proposal is the creation of an urban axis that connects the small existing centres throughout the territory following the concept described as to creating a good street fabric and introducing gardens, parks and squares as well as facilities in order to structure the area.

Deepening the concept, at the Detail Plan level, this axis is developed as one of 3 access systems created in PA2 - "Urban Axis", "Peripheral System" and "Pedestrian System".

The urban axis works as a backbone for the area. It is developed as a slow circulation street where the small business, squares and facilities are concentrated. The peripheral system surrounds the area and allows a quicker crossing. The pedestrian system, as the name indicates, is dedicated to pedestrians. Due to the condition of the terrain in the area it is very important to allow people to move through shortcuts so places are brought closer.

Regarding the built structure of the area, the proposal focuses in the consolidation and finish of existing meshes. The new buildings suggested are the vehicle for the introduction of new uses in the area (business areas, new facilities, small trade) in order to provide urban flows to the area which, in turn, helps to develop economically and socially.

Although many public spaces are created following the urban axis, a network of facilities and public spaces is also developed in order to fill some gaps at this level. Within this network, the existing facilities (school, cultural centre and public pools) are complemented by new ones (a library, police station, hotel, youth centre, market...), all connected by squares and gardens creating a nice and easy crossing of the area. One of the main investments in the area relates to the creation of a Park in Ameixoeira's Valley, with a 17.500 sqm lake and small facilities linked to this theme.

As to the centre of Ameixoeira, today it is a void. Connections between North and South of the Parish are very ill-treated when existing. This hinge between North and South was chosen as a stage to a deeper development in order to propose a plan that would bring these two sides of the same coin together and take advantage of each other's benefits.

04 | CONCLUSION

The proposal advanced in this document relates to a situation of urban regeneration in this area contributing to the reduction of social problems. To achieve this goal, the main aspects of town planning with special focus on the regeneration of troubled neighbourhoods, were studied. This study was central to understand the main reasons for these problems of integration and potential responses for these problems. Therefore it is possible to take on some guidelines for the development of the urban plan for the area.

Based in some parallel with the success of the intervention in the Barrio La Mina (Barcelona), and despite the big leap between paper and reality, it is possible to conclude that this set of interventions could, in fact, contribute to a greater social integration of the area and a real improvement in the quality of urban life of the inhabitants of this area.

Although urban planning presents an important role in social integration of a population, this cannot be accomplished only by a good plan. Actions are needed at other levels to the actual resolution of these problems.

05 | LITERATURE

BOOKS

JACOBS, Jane – Death and Life of Great American Cities. 3rd Edition, United States: Modern Library Edition, 1961

LYNCH, Kevin – A Imagem da Cidade. Lisboa: Edições 70, 1960

ARTICLES

CABRITA, António - “A Cidade Habitável - Parte I”. Infohabitar: 14 Abril 2008. Disponível em www.infohabitar.blogspot.pt. Consultado em Março, 2012

CABRITA, António - “A Cidade Habitável - Parte II”. Infohabitar: 20 Abril 2008. Disponível em www.infohabitar.blogspot.pt. Consultado em Março, 2012

COELHO, António Baptista - “Cidades amigas, cidades seguras - Parte I”. Infohabitar: 17 Janeiro 2010. Disponível em www.infohabitar.blogspot.pt. Consultado em Março, 2012

COELHO, António Baptista - “Cidades amigas, cidades seguras - Parte II”. Infohabitar: 24 Janeiro 2010. Disponível em www.infohabitar.blogspot.pt. Consultado em Março, 2012

COELHO, António Baptista - “Equipamentos vitalizadores de vizinhanças”. Infohabitar: 16 Novembro 2009. Disponível em www.infohabitar.blogspot.pt. Consultado em Março, 2012

COELHO, António Baptista - “Bairros vivos, cidades vivas: uma reflexão geral”. Infohabitar: 23 Novembro 2009. Disponível em www.infohabitar.blogspot.pt. Consultado em Março, 2012

COELHO, António Baptista - “Sobre uma cidade amiga do peão: espaços pedonais estruturados e estruturadores da cidade”. Infohabitar: 09 Julho 2011. Disponível em www.infohabitar.blogspot.pt. Consultado em Março, 2012

FERREIRA, António Fonseca – “Habitação Social: Lições e Prevenções Para o PER”. Sociedade e Território, nº 20. Porto: Afrontamento, Abril 1994, pp 8-10

GUERRA, Isabel – “As Pessoas não são Coisas que se Ponham em Gavetas”. Sociedade e Território, nº 20. Porto: Afrontamento, Abril 1994, pp 11-16

WEB ADDRESS

PER, disponível em: <http://www.portaldahabitacao.pt/pt/portal/habitacao/programasapoio/per.html>, Consultado em 5 de Maio de 2012