

**Multifunctionality as an instrument of
central urban areas valorizations**

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ABSTRACT

Cities central spaces are and have been throughout history, multifunctional. However, how important is the role of multifunctionality in the process of revitalization of central urban areas? In the attempt of answering this question it was defined three specific objectives: to analyze if a stronger functional offer revitalizes the central urban areas; to verify how urban interventions, programs and measures embody the idea of mixed uses; and to investigate on the relevance of multifunctionality in the scope of urban politics. Throughout the chapters on concepts, politics and case studies it was possible to understand the difficulty of generalization, since it is not possible to assure success formulas applicable to all central urban areas encouraging multifunctionality. Resorting to the analyzes of Lisbon's Masterplan as the starting point, and studying comprehensively the functionality of the city of Caldas da Rainha and its centers, though the testimony of several sources, it was possible to conclude that: a bigger and more diversified functional offer helps to revitalize central urban areas; the multifunctional role is well-acknowledged, since it mitigates the problems of central areas, when they exhibit several functional levels; and that centers do not enjoy of financial supports and benefits aimed at multifunctionality of superior levels Land Management Instruments.

Keywords: Multifunctionality; urban centers; functional areas; functions

1. Introduction

Multifunctional spaces are remarkable in a way that they group several goods and services, from different hierarchical levels with wide influential areas. The rarer the function/service, the larger is the influential

area, depending on the city importance in the local and regional urban system. A single functional may even be exclusive of a certain national urban center.

The main objective of this dissertation is contributing for a better understanding of the urban multifunctionality role in the revitalization of cities and particularly central urban areas. Therefore, several specific objectives arise: the first objective seeks to analyze if a better and more diversified functional offer helps to revitalize central urban areas; the second objective tries to discover how the urban interventions, programs and measures incorporate the idea of multifunctionality; the last specific objective is related with the investigation on the relevance of multifunctionality in urban politics.

The methodology will be supported through several resources, namely in the

2. Urban functions: a classic concept in permanent transformation

Trigal (2010) suggests the concept of urban function as a “set of urban collective activities, with a social, interchanging and production nature, of management and transmission, which may hold, in certain occasions, on e or more dominant functions that may be hierarchical with an influential area.” (Trigal, 2010:197).

The multifunctionality is a concept in development. The British literature refers to the importance of regulation, i.e., city planning. “The attempt to regulate urban form usually comes under such terms as compact city policy and the promotion of Multifunctional Land Use (MLU)” (Jenks et al., 1996:309), and it even outlines functions and their compatibility, “The

research and treatment of scientific bibliography, for the discussion of concepts as well as for historic analysis of urban centers. For a better understanding of the studied city (Caldas da Rainha), particularly its center, it was necessary the elaboration of maps in *ArcGis* and spatialization functions through *Sketchup*. To complement the study, it was fundamental to perform a functional survey, in order to understand the center’s mix use, as well as conducting conversations with knowing individuals in the field of the city planning and urbanism and with the Municipality representatives.

concept of multifunctional land use is part and parcel of the literature and debate on urban form and its consequences. It can be defined as the combination of different land use functions in the same area. It recognizes that spatial functions need not always be examined as alternative and mutually competing uses of scarce land, but instead a merging of land use functions at a certain location can lead to economies of synergy, save space, and be environmentally benign” (Rodenburg et al., 2002:1). In here terms like “compact city” and “urban consequences” are debated. These new terms provide a larger complexity to the “urban spaces multifunctionality”, since the add to the necessity of planning, uses and functions compatibility, always considering the adaptability of these measures and keeping in mind that each city is a different case.

Although several definitions presented here, the adopted definition in this dissertation is that multifunctionality is a territorial approach that allows several functions from different hierarchical levels coexist in the same urban center and create cooperative and competitive relations for a sustainable development of the center, and benefiting the users and the region it belongs. This way, the more varied with more functional levels is the center, the vaster it is its multifunctionality.

Monofunctionality is defined in urbanism as having a single dominant function: "The degree of interweaving, then, can be defined as the number of territories divided by the number of functions, in which a territory is an enclosed monofunctional area" (Rodenburg, C. A., Nijkamp, P., 1998:7). The monofunctional area described may entail several consequences: "The decrease of the urban quality of life enabled by monofunctionality and the lack of interection among the several city services (housing, jobs, recreation, school, services, commerce) may be supplemented of negative consequences of functional zoning: social and spatial segregation, lack of intraurban spaces articulation, environmental unbalance, unmeasured expansion of the urban patch, excessive parceling of soil and land invasion, excessive public investment in road and circulation infrastructures in detriment of other investments." (Pereira, 2013:143).

3. Multifunctionality as an urban policy

Central space is a public convivial space, a waypoint of usufruct, which definition given by Direção Geral do Território (DGT), the national entity for territorial planning, is "areas that are meant for performing central functions for the urban agglomerate, with concentration of tertiary and residential functions (DGT, 2013)". Although the institutional definition describes the concept, it is not always easy to define its limits: "The center is not necessarily in the geographical center, and I this not always occupying the historical location where the city was originated from; it is, first of all, the convergence/divergence spot, the road system junction, i tis the place where everyone moves around for activities interaction between those in the center and the ones taking place outside of it." (Sposito, 1991:16)."

For a more clear distinction, the difference between historical center and central urban areas is reffered. The former reflects the historical core of the city from which it was developed, where the inhabitants assign the patrimonial, social and emotional values; the latter refers to the several existing centers inside one big city, i.e., the financial center, the social center and the administrative center which act like centers due to their aggregating capacity of functions of the same type in a single area.

The urban politics have changed through History, wether in name of defence of the city, of Gods' devotion, of commercial trade or simply through architecture. Historical centers where the first to witness these changes since they were the main

points of interest, of conviviality and usufruct by their population.

Residential, commercial, institutional, financial, and environmental functions do not frequently commute in the same space, to an extent that the more essential functions to the city are highlighted in the territory as notable elements (Lynch, 1960). However, these changes arise more rapidly when catastrophes occur (e.g. tsunamis, fires), forcing the reconstruction of the city, “a city is a whole that constructs itself ...” (Chabot, G., 1948:617). This way, the urban centers had to adapt to other functions and other constructions and to a different occupation of the spaces over time, as well as the politics that governed them.

4. An approach to the Portuguese case

The consequences of this urban movement were specially noted in Portugal, with the emptying of the historical centers. However, the depopulation was not continuous (Pereira, 2004). After the steep increase of the population in the 70s, the central cities and their centers continued to lose population, worsening the problems of central areas and, particularly, historical centers (Moreira & Rodrigues, 2008).

In Portugal, The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, in the Article 65º, protects the directives provided by the European Commission in regard of the habitation and urbanism, that, although they do not approach directly the concept of mixed uses, they cover the right to habitation and territorial planning. The

National Program of the Territorial Planning Policy (PNPOT) suggests the use of multifunctionality for the counter of central areas and big cities' outskirts depopulation, “for a better balance in higher level urban functions access” (Ministério do Ambiente, do Ordenamento do Território e do Desenvolvimento Regional, 2006:136).

5. The “centers” in the city of Caldas da Rainha

For the study of multifunctionality in the center of Caldas da Rainha, the historical center was assumed as studied center, generally thought to be the most important and representative of the entire city.

The main objective of this case study is to understand the importance of the functionality of Praça da República, as a square inserted in the historical center, since it presents several functions and a coexistence spot for trade and services rendering, contrarily to the remain of the historical area which, although it holds the thermal hospital, it is currently closed, i.e., this area is not as dynamic as the main square.

In the place today called Caldas da Rainha, in 1484, from Óbidos, passed the merciful Queen D. Leonor who noticed a group of poor people bathing themselves in hot waters. It was told to her that those miraculous waters eased the pain and healed the wounds (Aires-Barros et al., 2005). Witnessing this feat, the Queen ordered the construction of a support building, to accommodate the disadvantaged, inaugurated three years

later. This building is today the Thermal Hospital.

After an in-depth analysis of the city of Caldas da Rainha, namely its dynamics, it is understood that the historical center is not the best center to characterize the city, being a center with little used functions because the public baths are indefinitely closed and the Parque gardens do not give evidence of movement of people. The largest mass of people is concentrated in Praça da República, located in the historical center, and in the roads adjacent to the Praça 25 de Abril, where all the high hierarchical level institutions are accommodated, i.e., the Municipality, the Court Room and the Church (figure 1).

These high hierarchical functions do not serve only the city of Caldas da Rainha but they also influence the area between

Peniche and Rio Maior: “in fact, it was mainly due to the centrality of the city position of Caldas da Rainha that it started exercising much of the older functions of Óbidos, representing nowadays the main organizing center of the region” (Aires-Barros et al., 2005:18). The roads adjacent to the Praça 25 de Abril are not assimilated in a center nor do they have any restrictions, being only called ‘Consolidated Urban Area’ in the PDM.

The importance of the center is highlighted since the great majority of mostly residential buildings are located in this area (figure 2). So, it makes sense to rethink the delimitation of an evident functional center categorized in the territorial management instruments in order to safeguard this dynamic, polarizing, functional area.



Figure 1 –Consolidated area layout of Caldas da Rainha, in the parish of Nossa Senhora do Pópulo.

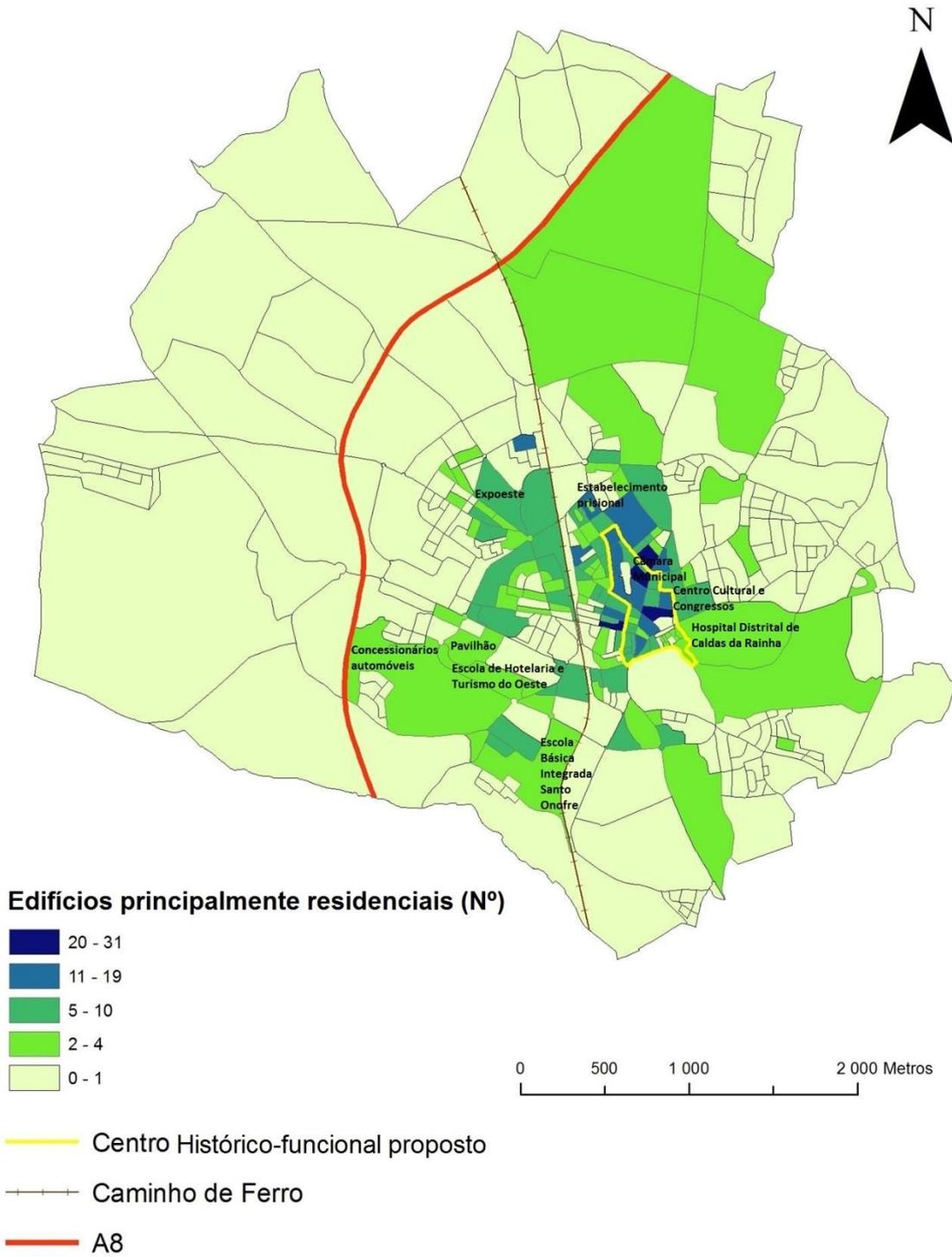


Figure 2 – Mainly residential buildings (Nr) by subsection of the city of Caldas da Rainha. Source: INE. The area inside the yellow line represents the proposed functional-historical center; The railway is represented by the dented gray line. The red line represents the A8 highway.

Praça 25 de Abril accommodates some of the most important administrative functions, the court room, the Nossa Senhora da Conceição church and Municipality as well as the Directorate of Prison Services and Social Rehabilitation and the Professional Job and Training Institute, located in the buildings adjacent to the square (figure 1). These important municipal and regional functions allow the square, improved in 2010, to be an important functional center.

Praça da República, commonly accepted as the Caldas da Rainha center,

operates as an outdoors market, attracting local producers from all over the municipality, to sell their products here. This square was reopened after its renovation in 2014 and it is one responsible drivers of the region development, since it is also visited by neighboring districts, mostly at Saturdays: "Naturally, the market of Praça da República holds a great potential to initiate strategies of economic and cultural development of the city, being one of the differentiators of identity which strengthens the patrimonial feeling of the inhabitants." (Câmara Municipal de Caldas da Rainha, 2012).



Figure 3 - Praça da Republica in 1829



Figure 4 - Praça da Republica nowadays

Source: http://zeventura.blogspot.pt/2008_06_01_archive.html

Through the functional survey conducted in Praça da República, Rua Almirante Cândido dos Reis, Miguel Bombarda e Rua Hemiciclo João Paulo II, which corresponds to the connection between Praça da República and Praça 25 de Abril (figure 5) and exhibits several,

mostly residential, functions. These group of streets were described by Aires-Barros (2005) as the most important axis of the city. So, though the functional survey it was possible to determine that 43 different functions are present, from banks, fashion stores, the parish council, dairies, drugstores, art galleries, language schools and Party Headquarters (figure 6).

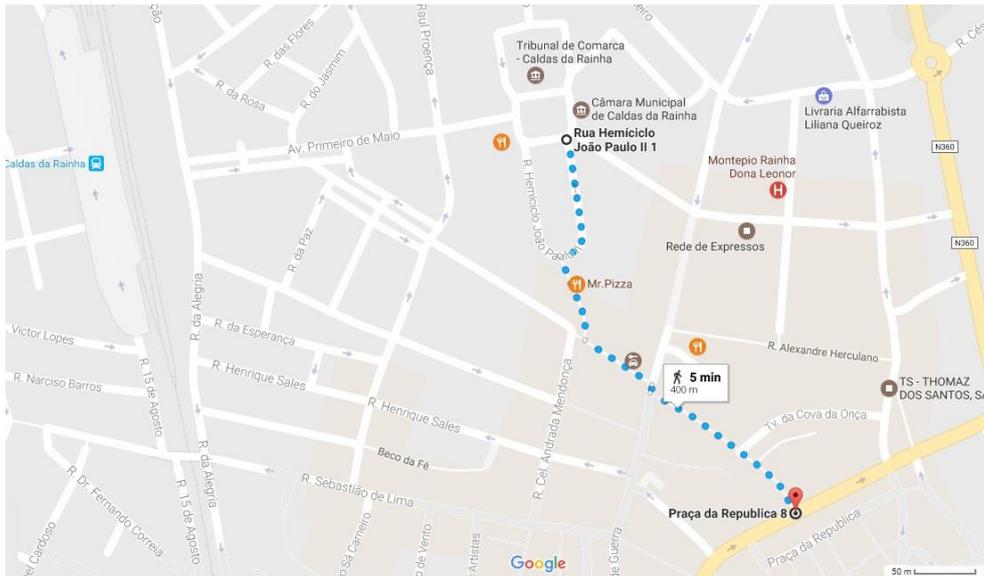


Figure 5 – Functional survey axis



Figure 6 – Functional survey of Praça da República, Rua Almirante Reis, Rua Padre Emílio and Rua Hemiciclo João Paulo II

It is understood that the historical center defined in the PDM covers a large portion of the functional city area (figure 7) but it does not include Praça 25 de Abril

and the multifunctional blocks. So it is suggested the establishment of a functional-historical center, which apart from the historical area, includes also this functional area covering the polarizing

streets (Rua Almirante Cândido dos Reis) and the important services located close to Praça 25 de Abril (Directorate of Prison Services and Social Rehabilitation and the Professional Job and Training Institute) so that all this multifunctional area may be safeguarded in municipal plans, since these stimulate the city as much as the historical center.

Given that this multifunctional area covers the two squares and the area between them, it is possible to state that it exists a dynamic, polarizing, historical-functional center of the city due to the more than forty existing distinct functions reported in the functional survey. This area exhibits also functions from different important hierarchical levels both for the municipality and for the region. Besides, the centers are inhabited which stimulates the livingness of the space, not becoming empty during the nocturnal period.

6. Conclusion

Multifunctionality exists, however, in the most regional and national significant cities' centers, accommodating several functions of several levels of importance. The perception that the multifunctional territories would facilitate the population's everyday life, after the modernist experience, has originated a duality: on one hand a big part of the existing urban expansion of the time was constructed under monofunctional directives; on the other hand, the stands taken would benefit the multifunctionality. The ideal case would be to obtain the advantages of each type of functionality,

i.e., multifunctionality would be implemented in central areas, particularly in historical centers so that they could maintain them dynamic and active; and monofunctionality, however, could be implemented in areas under which multifunctional center have influence, like habitational and industrial areas.

Because municipal plans have been becoming even more liberal regarding the mix of compatible uses, it is especially in local levels that the idea and concept of multifunctionality is embodied.

Multifunctionality mitigates central areas problems when several functional levels are present, especially when inhabited and enjoyed, creating a living, dynamic space, a waypoint for the population and an allegiance feeling. Given as an example Praça da República in Caldas da Rainha, rehabilitated four years ago with improved consumer services, it has a daily market, polarizer of all the municipality, as well as accommodating important functions for usufruct of the population, like habitation, commerce and recreation, allowing people all their functional necessities at satisfactory distances. Although being a successful model to follow, the studied area portrays about twenty emptied residences, demonstrating that despite all efforts being made to maintain the center as active, there still is several challenges to be completed.

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