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## Original Article

# Starting over: A focused vision for the old suburbs of Lisbon

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**Abstract** The phenomenon of suburban decline is a reality across the western world. In Europe, the reaction to this problem has been slow and unfocused and has also had very limited success. Urban research aims to deal with suburbs not just as devalued urban growth models, or available space for future expansion, but as areas for redevelopment, regeneration and re-invention. Today, within the Lisbon suburban areas, many outlying rural areas remain, alongside derelict factories and residential developments. Several areas show decline symptoms such as population decrease, ageing, deindustrialisation and defunctionalisation. Rescuing the older suburban centres may require a certain mourning of the past, but at the same time it incorporates the mechanisms of new social and productive systems. New ways of local genesis begin to emerge, mobilising involvement in and by the community and investing in emblematic and replicable initiatives. The aim of this article is to present the revitalisation strategy in place in Amadora: an innovative, interdisciplinary and prospective intervention in Lisbon's outskirts.

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## Introduction

### On the concept of suburb

The suburbs are a manifestation of the active urban and metropolitan dynamics that are the result of private and public economic and financial processes that influence and are influenced by the behaviour of families and companies. This could be seen as a consensual physical approach to the suburb, but there are other approaches, of a more social nature, such as that proposed by Stahl, 2008: the suburb 'as the natural habitat for the nuclear family and a bucolic retreat for the family from the dirty, immoral, and dangerous city', specifically for the US context, and the suburbs as places 'long regarded as little more than dormitories' (Phelps, 2010), in the European context.

The suburb results from an urban growth process – suburbanisation – that can be founded on different phenomena, which naturally result in very different suburban features.

In some cases, the suburb accommodated the middle classes which perceived the detached house in a low-density area and having a garden and a car as a distinctive safe and quality life-style – something that the urban centre and the canonical city cannot offer. This model had its greatest impact in Anglo-Saxon countries, particularly in the United States (Jackson, 1987; Duany *et al*, 2001; Vicino, 2008). These are monofunctional and monotonous spaces, interrupted here and there by the presence of shopping centres.

A different suburban landscape can be found in continental Europe, where the suburb was initially a solution to the problem of housing many of those who had settled during the post-war period to work and live in the city or metropolis. With varying degrees of regulation in the form of planning instruments and laws, the suburban spaces were filled with industrial, logistic and residential areas, applying a conjugative logic that almost always devalued the everyday life practices (Prior, 2012), as the suburbs did not configure autonomous or

first-choice spaces to live in since they depended on a city that employs, consumes and seduces. Hence, the suburbs are seen as 'an inferior form of city' (Kirby and Modarres, 2010), something that is not the case for other urban forms.

Between the monotony of the suburban landscape and its functional poverty, several factors have contributed to the marginalisation of these territories in academic research for a long time. The keyword is exactly that: marginalisation. Voluntary territorial marginalisation in the United States, involuntary territorial marginalisation in Europe, and academic marginalisation in both regions.

Marginalisation can be perceived in several ways. However, in order to effectively contribute to the concept of suburb – and accepting that marginalisation is one of its main conditions – we have to consider the spatial definition and the human definition of marginalisation. It would seem particularly appropriate to consider the definition according to which the suburb emerges as a social condition, as opposed to the mere distance to a centre (Domingues, 1994). So, it is possible, in these circumstances, to find suburb in the centre and centre in the suburb.

This concern with the importance of the idea of marginalisation might not seem very relevant, but we believe that it can make a difference when it comes to intervening in the suburb with a view to regeneration and revitalisation. Gentrification is ample proof of how these areas, whether they are in the city centre (Bounds and Morris, 2005) or in the first suburbs, (Adhya, 2013) can take on new status and centrality.

Given the typologies that contradict the idea of the monotonous, single and stabilised suburb, it was possible to understand that these spaces are the result of different production/consumption processes that also give rise to different problems. (Audirac *et al*, 2012).

### Suburbs: Cause and effect of urban growth

These dynamics have been noticeable since the Industrial Revolution, but they gained in visibility in the post-WWII period, particularly in Europe, where the urgency and need for reconstruction in many cases followed the principles of the Modern Movement as laid out in the Athens Charter. Accordingly, the urban territories were strongly marked by a multifunctional, dense and patrimonial centre, while the outskirts mainly received large industrial complexes and large residential estates for population

groups with a low or median income, whether there were adequate planning rules or not.

What gave particular importance to these dynamics was the demographic growth of these cities through immigration or as a result of the rural exodus that took place in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, giving rise to a high demand for housing. This led to new investments in road and rail transportation infrastructures, which promote urban deconcentration from a saturated and expensive centre. The resulting urban growth eased the problem of the increase in spatial distance between home and work and, at the same time, justified the creation of large commercial zones and the relocation of industrial companies to the outskirts.

Because of the very intense and rapid growth, in some cases the Southern European suburb is still characterised by a significant degree of illegality/informality: an occupation outside the existing rules, which in certain periods benefited from negligence or acquiescence on the part of the local and national authorities (Rubió, 1997).

This is an image of the Fordist city that can be dated to between 1920 and 1960 (Audirac *et al*, 2012). However, other very important models of urban growth were also adopted in this period, for example, the Garden City movement in Britain (Morris, 1997).

The 1970s saw the emergence of post-Fordism, in which the financial dimension took on a more protagonist role following a wide-reaching restructuring of the production system. A new suburban wave emerged as a result of the market liquidity and as a good solution for quickly and substantially making a financial return on the capital. The last two decades of the last century and early part of this century still witnessed a wave of urban/metropolitan expansion. However, there were increasing internal contradictions deriving from a fragmentation of suburban spaces marked by very different genres, characteristics and vocations.

### On suburban decline

It is very tempting to see the mutations of the existing urban space and the new urban forms as the results of the life cycles of cities. But this approach would make it seem as if such mutations could not be challenged or shaped, and that there are no global forces that create/generate new production, distribution and consumption systems and thus create urban spaces that can be either attractive or in crisis because of the shortage in

financial and human resources (Martinez-Fernandez *et al*, 2012). In the latter case, there is a constancy of aspects that justify the decline and that can be discussed as a shrinkage identity (Reckien and Martinez-Fernandez, 2011). Indeed, this decline is the result of a combination of negative aspects: ‘a “shrinking city” can be defined as an urban area – a city, part of a city, an entire metropolitan area or a town – that has experienced population loss, economic downturn, employment decline and social problems as symptoms of a structural crisis’ (Audirac *et al*, 2012). This decline was brought about by dynamics generated by international investment and commerce, which influenced the local and regional growth processes (Gereffi *et al*, 2005). Notice how similar it is to this:

Suburban shrinkage, understood as a degenerative urban process stemming from the demise of the Fordist mode of urbanism, is generally manifested in a decline in population, industry and employment. It is also intimately linked to the global restructuring of industrial organisation (Audirac *et al*, 2012).

These causes of decline witnessed in the suburbs are also related to the characteristics of each suburb, which were built through an historical process (Audirac *et al*, 2012). The loss of resident population and the decrease in number and diversity of economic activities can therefore be explained through historical processes of financial and economic adjustment.

In this study we analyse the efforts carried out in Amadora (an old suburban city in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area) with the aim of reversing the social and economic decline of its traditional centre. In particular, the article characterises the knowledge of the management entities, not only in relation to the problems that given rise to decline, but also – and especially – on the role that the medium-term strategy could have in confronting this decline process (Gonçalves, 2006).

The implementation of one of the actions recommended in the strategy for the city is the focus of attention for this article, with particular regard to its conception, implementation and final results. The questions that shaped this investigation were:

- Why was there the belief that a strategic medium-term approach can be more effective than a classical intervention in the context of a framework for suburban regeneration?
- How can we make a multi-scale reading of a local action as far as its contribution to reverting the suburban decline is concerned?

- What lessons can we learn from the process developed to use in a localised intervention that aspires to have metropolitan effects?

## The Territory, the Strategic Plan and the Street Intervention

### Signs of decline in the Lisbon metropolitan area (LMA)

LMA (see Figure 1) is home to a somewhat unique range of most of the problems facing cities today. Its evolution during the twentieth century shows rapid development, thanks to an equally rapid industrialisation process, from a mostly rural periphery around the capital city to a modern metropolitan area showing a range of symptoms of both urban and suburban decline. The biggest population increase was in the 1960s and 1970s, following the industrialisation process.

The stagnation of Lisbon’s rural periphery can, to some extent, be linked to the long Portuguese dictatorship, from 1926 to 1974. One of the main foundations of this nationalist regime, founded in the 1920s, was a staunchly conservative vision that adopted a rural image as the national identity. This idealistic bucolic view, together with a heavily protectionist economy, set the tone for the postponement of a process of industrialisation. It was not until the late 1950s that pressure was exercised to adapt the Portuguese economy to new economic paradigms. This led to a quick process that was guided by political guidelines and funded by large economic groups. Together with the signing of the EFTA treaty, the new needs for industrialisation and economic growth marked an initial and rapid exodus from rural to urban areas during the 1960s.

The cartography of 1965 already shows a radial structure converging into Lisbon and the Tagus Estuary, reinforcing the capital’s current status as a metropolitan centre (Cabral *et al*, 2007). This pre-metropolitan morphology of the Lisbon region was marked already by its main infrastructural elements, such as roads, railways, ports and industrial clusters, all surrounding the Tagus Estuary as the gateway to Europe and the nation’s central hub. Two rings of suburbs (north and south) surrounded this area, and it is quite clear how the earlier suburban settlements were linked to transport routes, such as the 25 de Abril bridge (opened in 1966), the existing railways to Cascais, Sintra and Porto, and the ferry stations of Barreiro and

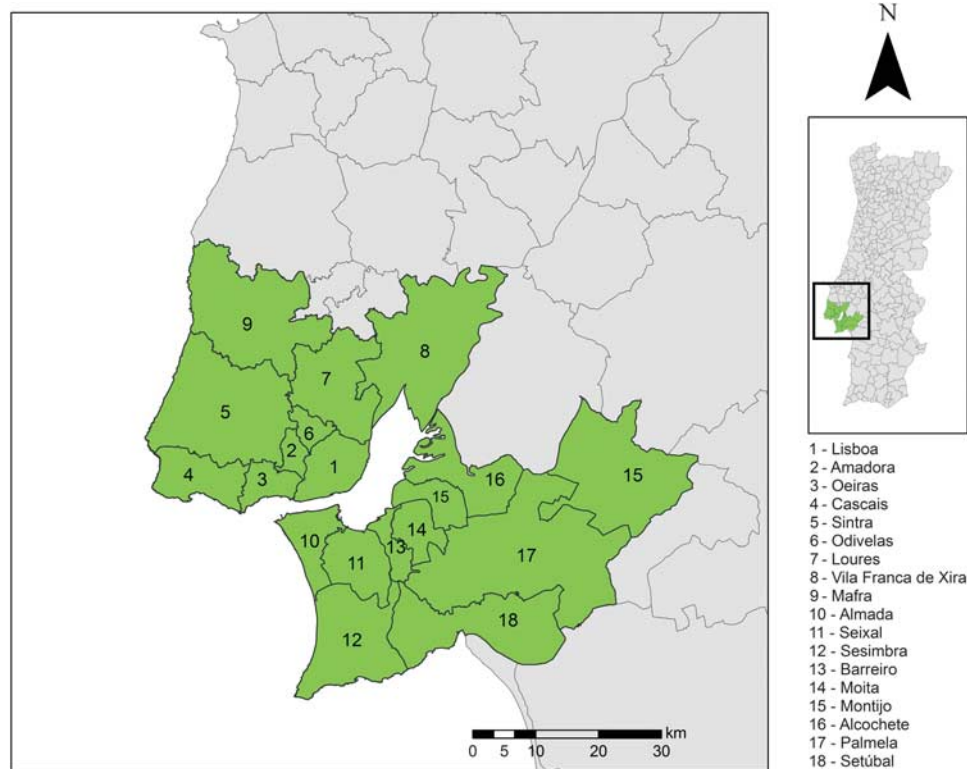


Figure 1: LMA and its municipalities.

Almada on the south bank of the River Tagus. The rapid growth of these early suburbs was also marked by a high percentage of illegal settlements and slum areas. The reasons for this development were the prevailing socio-economic conditions as well as the limited regulation and technical capacities of the local administrations (Salgueiro, 2006).

During the 1970s the population growth continued, particularly after 1975, when the former Portuguese colonies gained independence. The increase in population around Lisbon, much of it through the arrival of former settlers in the African colonies, was not, however, matched by economic growth. The oil crisis of 1973, the political unrest of 1974/1975 and the global recession in the late 70s all contributed to stalling the still young Portuguese industrialisation process. From 1985 onwards new economic conditions led to a change in this outlook; Portugal's membership of the EEC (today the European Union) brought economic stability and low-credit rates and increase in funding for infrastructure led to better accessibility for more distant suburbs. The regeneration or redevelopment of earlier suburbs was neglected in favour of higher profits with new developments. Parallel to this, the rapid deindustrialisation process also made most inner-city areas and the initial suburbs

created during the 1960 industrial boom obsolete, while increasing the sprawl of the peripheral territory (Merlin, 1994).

Both the stalling of the industrialisation process and the preference for new private developments and infrastructural investment helped to define the indistinct identity of Lisbon's original suburbs.. The first association of municipalities in the LMA was only established in 1991. Since then it was worked towards defining the area as a more polycentric region (Cabral *et al*, 2007). Yet it has to deal with a range of problems, such as disputes for the location of large-scale public investments (for example, the new Lisbon airport and high-speed rail) and slow development because of lack of coordination between strategic and politic decisions and their implementation.

One of the major consequences of the lack of reversion policies, in response to new lifestyles and demands, was the demographic decrease in Lisbon's earlier suburbs (Salgueiro, 2001). Demographic stagnation in the centre of the LMA reflects the growth of more distant municipalities, which were made more accessible by newly built roads and motorways. The demand for single-family detached houses, supported by easy credit conditions, also contributed to the current situation.

We can find two main critical situations in Lisbon's metropolitan growth. First, the signs of an ageing population, which may soon lead to an overburdened social security system. Second, the continuous population decrease in central municipalities, contrasting with the growth of more distant suburbs, and its weight in terms of infrastructure maintenance (CCDR-LVT, 2009). Other symptoms, such as growing social ghettos, poor planning solutions, the need for urban regeneration, the prevailing illegal settlements or the general degradation of older built areas, are identified and mentioned in several studies and strategic plans. LMA is therefore a showcase for issues in the context of suburban decline. Signs of such decline can be found both in the former periphery towns as well as in the earlier suburbs that were built around industrial areas. Population shrinkage, building degradation and socio-economic problems are present in the older suburbs of Lisbon, just as they are in the *banlieues* of Paris and London's inner-city boroughs.

Both scientific and non-scientific reviews have been debating the decline of city centres in the LMA. The peripheral centres, which have none of the particular feature of historical boroughs, seem to have been left out of the discussion of these issues, despite facing similar decline conditions. Although they are included in many regeneration plans and strategic guidelines, these suburban areas seem to lack the visual, economic and cultural appeal of their older urban counterparts. Many of these places, which were originally rural villages or garden-city suburbs, grew during boom periods in the 1970s and 1980s have been converted into dormitories for Lisbon. These same suburbs, now facing degradation and are included in several political programmes but seldom see effective responses to the identified problems.

A simple analysis of the demographic dynamics the recent evolution (1991–2001 and 2001–2011) in the civil parishes of the LMA allows us to identify those parishes that registered negative variations of more than 5 per cent, which were confirmed by even greater negative change in the most recent decade (2001–2011). In most cases these are the oldest suburban areas (see Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5).

Issues that affect the inner city may therefore being linked to their own problems of classification (Domingues, 1997). These inner-city suburbs have grown around transport links and previous villages, yet share some identity problems that have to do with zoning distribution, lack of neighbourhood links and socio-economic problems (devalued

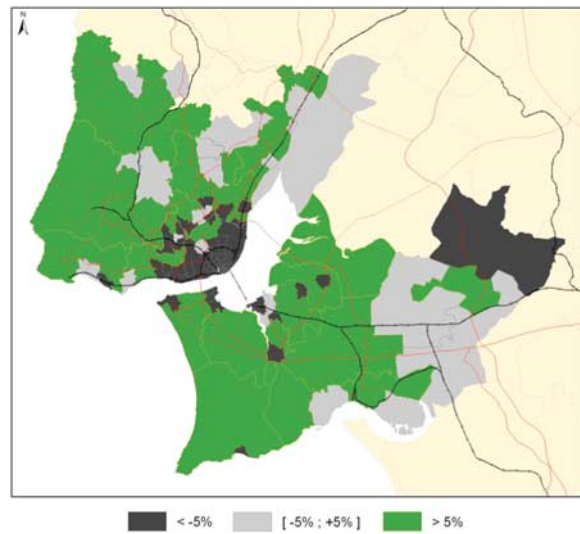


Figure 2: Demographic evolution in LMA, 1991–2001.

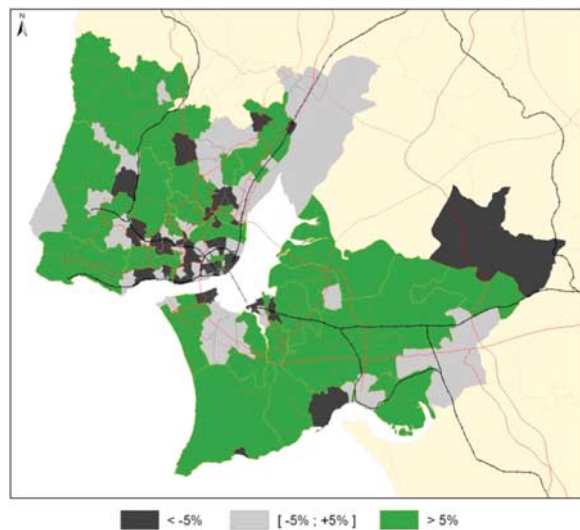


Figure 3: Demographic evolution in LMA, 2001–2011.

housing, middle-class flight, security issues). While they are demographically relevant areas (where they most share the formal status of 'city' alongside Lisbon municipality), a fragile identity and weak community links seem also to be part of their decline and lack of appeal for local and regional stakeholders.

Most symptoms of this problem lead to secondary problems, as is the case in international examples. Visual and formal degradation of the public space contributes to real estate devaluation. Devalued housing encourages both middle-class flight and their replacement by poorer social groups, thus heightening the original devaluation problem.

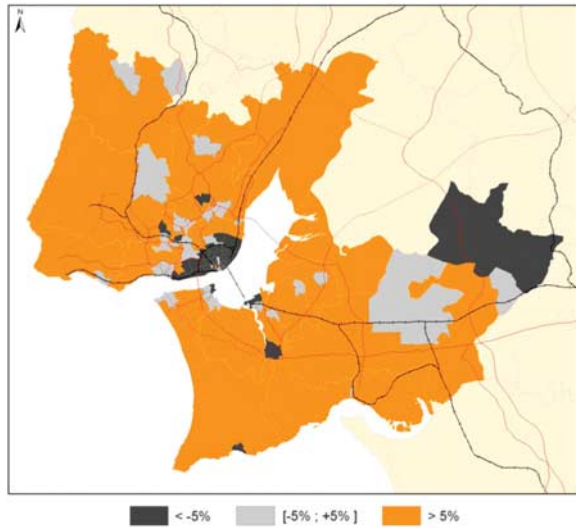


Figure 4: Family units variation in LMA, 1991–2001.

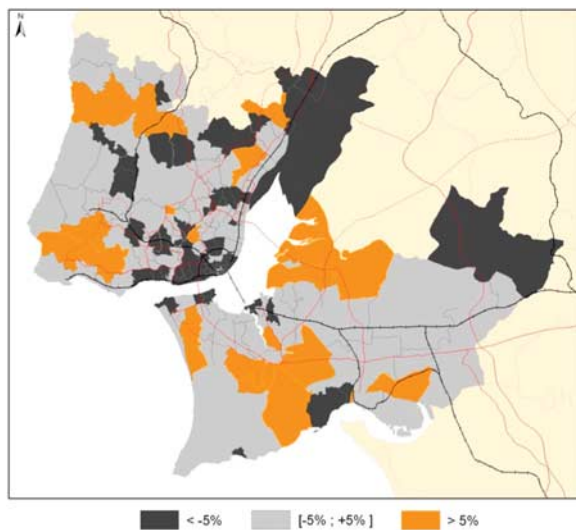


Figure 5: Family units variation in LMA, 2001–2011.

Some authors link this devaluation and population shift to insecurity fears, which seem to be increasingly relevant to society (Baumman, 2008). With the passage of time the cycle seems to deteriorate: devaluation increases middle-class flight and this fuels the growth of further distant suburbs. To add to the social-economic conditions, there's the growing effect of local identity and marketing strategies among similar cities. Yet unsure about their identity (because of the profound changes experienced) and with nothing more than cheaper land prices and geographic proximity to offer by way of attractions, the development of older suburbs seems to be stalled between the private development of new-build

suburbs (individual housing or gated communities close to express road accesses) and the public funding of gentrification programmes in traditional urban centres.

Investment in regeneration both in city-centres and in older suburbs is low. Only 17 per cent of Portuguese construction industry investment goes to regeneration or redevelopment, compared to the European average of 35 per cent (Afonso, 2009). Despite legislative efforts to facilitate and encourage redevelopment processes, when one looks at local figures (INE, 2011) there are few signs of actions being implemented. Where private investment does not see to the needed regeneration, the outward signs of depression tend to grow, and so does the pressure on the public sector to step in. As in other areas with demographic decrease, the size and maintenance costs of the infrastructure remain the same despite there being fewer taxpayers to pay for them.

The importance of economic issues in policy orientation, the development of entrepreneurial types of urban management and a more integrated approach involving the public and private sectors are some examples of how the built environment regeneration process can be transformed (Salgueiro, 2001). Changes in urban management and governance strongly impact the development of high quality real estate projects. Some public intervention processes have since focused, alongside providing strategic guidelines and initiating joint responsibility projects between the public and private sectors, on public participation initiatives and a creative approach to local, regional and metropolitan problems. Public intervention in areas of urban decay has followed a range of different strategies, from strict redevelopment plans to more integrated actions, the diversity of these public programmes is also linked to EU guidelines on spatial development. For their innovative and integrated approach, five intervention programmes are worthy of mention:

#### *I. EU URBAN II programme*

The URBAN II programme was implemented between 2000 and 2006 in three main cities: Lisbon, Amadora and Porto. The aim was to promote and fund local strategies with a focus on the economic viability of degraded urban areas. The selection process was based on six indicators, at least three of which had to be addressed by the development proposal. These indicators denote: long-term unemployment and low economic activity, poverty and social exclusion; the presence of minorities

and immigrants, low education levels and school abandonment, criminality rate, and demographic stagnation or decrease.

### *II. PRU – Urban renewal programme*

Replicating several elements of the URBAN programmes, the PRU was a national programme that was applied in 11 municipalities between 1995 and 2003. Targeting specifically areas of urban degradation, the programme's strategy involved drawing limits to those areas and investing in material and cultural interventions that might help to reverse the degradation process. Reinforcing public-private partnerships and national-local administration, defining goals played a more prominent role than strict guideline briefing.

### *III. PROQUAL – Integrated redevelopment programme for suburban areas of LMA*

On the basis of the LMA, this regeneration programme was implemented between 2001 and 2006. It involved seven municipalities in the suburban ring around Lisbon and pursued the same main goals as the already existing programmes. The main difference in the PROQUAL programme was its integration of gentrification plans in the suburbs, improving their accessibility and infrastructures. A further aim of the programme was to improve local entrepreneurial activity and reduce the environmental costs of commuting.

### *IV. PROVATER – Acções Específicas de Valorização Territorial do Algarve (Programme of specific action for territorial enhancement in the algarve)*

On the basis of formal and technical guidelines similar to those in previous plans, the PROVATER programme was implemented in the Algarve region, the main Portuguese tourist destination. The specific actions were carried out between 2000 and 2006 in both coastal and natural landscapes as well as urban areas. The plan was divided into three main areas: first, major investments in new infrastructure and public social and cultural facilities; second, the redevelopment of old town centres and areas of historical value; and third, regenerating degraded urban areas that were also affected by a deregulated tourist boom since the 1960s.

### *V. POLIS programme*

Launched in 2000 and with some unfinished plans still in execution, the POLIS programme consisted of replicating urban regeneration experiences

(mainly those made for hosting the World's Fair in Lisbon in 1998) in several urban centres in the whole country. Defining an entrepreneurial type structure for each city, the process was to bring together local administration and management teams, applying a strong budget in carefully defined urban plans. Several interventions resulted in an increase in green spaces, a reduction in traffic and new cultural facilities and leisure activity areas. With a greater presence in image awareness terms, POLIS had a strong media impact and an increased focus on branding and city marketing. Nevertheless, the main goals and guidelines mostly followed the definitions of previous plans.

The aforementioned regional and urban regeneration plans all shared more or less similar goals and strategies. The issue of urban (and suburban) decline has been present in public studies and intentions since the mid-1990s. The need for integrated plans, both in terms of the funding process and the proposed goals is also recognised. Nevertheless, there are some gaps in the process. Heavily dependent on EU and public funding, the large-scale investment was not followed by the expected economic boost. While they were all based on strategic guidelines, only the POLIS programme has achieved a significant level of concretisation. There was also, in some areas, an overlapping of both funding and studies. Different programmes acted often in the same urban areas, with few effective results emerging from such interventions (Portas, 2011).

### **Amadora: The challenge of suburban rebirth**

Amadora is a municipality near Lisbon city with good connections to the latter by train and road. For these reasons, and also as a result of rapid demographic growth (from 45 000 to 110 000 individuals), it was the most emblematic Lisbon suburb in 1960s and 1970s. The pressure to which Amadora was subjected had important physical and social consequences. It resulted in the emergence of residential developments but also slums, providing housing for the middle and lower class families that did not have a housing alternative. Some schools, small businesses and social/sports associations appeared, advancing the transformation of Amadora from industrial suburb to suburban city (Nunes, 2013).

Ever since our first analysis of the area we have been of the opinion that Amadora could be an

interesting example of suburban decline and a desire for rebirth (see Figure 6).

Both in the context of an urban morphology analysis and a socio-cultural study, the main issues to be defined in the existing problem had to do with existing facts and the perceived image of Amadora's centre as just another first ring suburb with few attractive features. The negative issues found could be reduced to a few main aspects: a generalised feeling of insecurity, particular in evening/night-time hours; the social segregation in the neighbourhoods (African immigrants from the 1970s and South American/Eastern European from the 1990s); population shrinkage and ageing; the devaluation of residential and economical dynamics; the degradation of empty buildings in both residential and shopping areas (with some shopping centres already shut down) with low-economic value or appeal; the derelict post-industrial areas in a process of neglect; the run-down socio-economic image.

The approach to dealing with these issues resulted in a prospective strategy focusing on three main areas: building and public space conditions,



Figure 6: Amadora and its civil parishes.

socio-economic issues, and local institution dynamics.

With respect to the built and public space, the approach focuses on: the renovation of housing, in order to attract a younger population, creating awareness in the community for the importance of conservation and local identity values, the development of public environmental initiatives aimed at ensuring sustainable lifestyles, identifying vacant urban areas and proposing new uses for them, development of security measures and making public spaces more appealing.

With regard to socio-economic factors, the plan aims to: diversify the shopping offer and support new business, improve living conditions for the elderly population, strengthen public and civic mobilisation actions, promote multicultural events perceived as being of importance to the local identity, support local cultural and recreational activities, and stimulate collective and public space animation.

In terms of institutional actions, the plan aims to: support small and medium-scale cultural projects; promote interdisciplinary actions involving local public, private and community institutions; improve the vertical communication chain with a view to eliminating red tape and speeding up development projects.

This segmented reading of the existing context should not be confused with segmented and isolated solutions. Most of the problems the central Amadora area suffers from are so interlinked that they can be regarded as one single system. Examples of this are shown in the range of questions the plan has to take into consideration. Are ageing and the decreasing population a cause for the degradation of buildings or a consequence of it? Does the insecurity stem from the demographic decrease or is it one of the reasons for that decrease? The 115 empty shops in the city centre alone seem to be the result of low real-estate value and low levels of demand, but are these the only causes? None of these questions has so far been fully understood or explained.

This absence of a clear cause-effect explanation of the problem also makes it hard to choose which measures seem more urgent. This has been the main guideline for the Amadora Viva plan, more emphasis on reflection and proposing recommendations, rather than drafting a list of urban interventions and strict deadlines. The goal was to develop an integrated and open range of suggestions as a local urban strategy.

The discussion of the diagnosis, the evaluation of the available resources, the listing of goals to be



achieved and the division of the plan into its three main areas (building and public space, socio-economic context and local institutions) helped to create the idea of an open plan. Local business associations, schools and cultural and social institutions all made their contribution to creating an identity for central Amadora. The aim was to define ‘a centrality that reflects the social and economic dynamics of Amadora as a city; that adds value to local users, inhabitants, workers and commuters; and that promotes tolerance, technology and talent as an urban identity trademark’ (CMA, 2009).

After the first meetings and proposals, the municipality committed to the main goals of the multi-disciplinary action scheme. In line with other examples, for example, in Biddulph (2012), Sauter and Huettenmoser (2008) and Atash (1994), the initial investment was for the regeneration of Av.

Santos Mattos (see Figures 7 and 8), an old street, and now a busy shopping street, in the core of the traditional centre of Amadora, very close to the railway station, showing clear signs of degradation

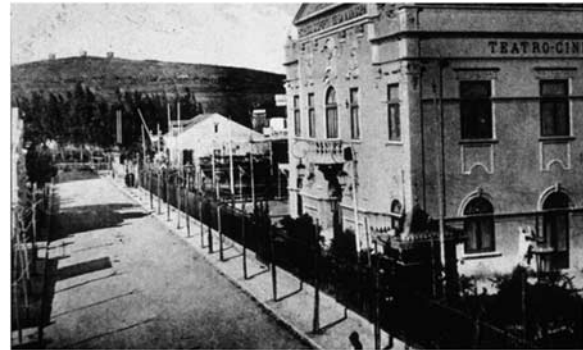


Figure 8: Av. Santos Mattos in 1915.



Figure 7: The area of intervention.

(see Figure 9). Initially it was a partnership between the City Council and the local Traders Association, and in a later phase it also involved building owners and residents associations.

This intervention in a central, emblematic street of the area to be regenerated is the result of orientations and proposals from the Amadora Viva Plan, which included clear proposals for regeneration of the public space and improvement of the image of buildings excessively marked by poor architecture and the negative effects of the passage of time (see Figure 10).

Some of the main reasons for the selection of this action, which included residential buildings, public space and existing shops, was their visual impact and the potential stimulation of a new dynamic of urban change. But also because it has the capacity to contribute to three strategic areas – redevelopment of *buildings and public space*, *socio-economic stimulation*, and *involvement of institutional stakeholders*:

#### *Buildings and public space*

The most visible result was the transformation of the facades of the upper floors where the buildings – built in the 1940s through 1960s – had an uninteresting aspect and had been further negatively affected by illegal/unlicensed additions. The deconstruction of this image was one of the purposes already formulated at the time of the strategic plan created for central Amadora. Hence, the balconies were given a slatted wooden protection and the glass enclosures were decorated with multi-coloured sunshade panels (see Figures 11 to 15).

#### *Socio-economic stimulation*

commercial urban planning was one of the most important focuses of the intervention. Improvements were made to the shop facades at street level, informative store-related signage was added, and an exterior overhang was added to the buildings



**Figure 9:** Av. Santos Mattos in 2010.



**Figure 11:** Av. Santos Mattos. Detail of the new street pavement and commercial gallery.



**Figure 10:** Examples of proposals for new facades of buildings in the Amadora Viva Plan.

above the shops to provide protection from the sun and rain, thus improving the comfort of consumers and passers-by.



Figure 12: Av. Santos Mattos. Detail of the north entrance.

To provide incentives for people to stay in the shopping areas – or at least not to pass through them so quickly – the creation of new street café areas contributed to a new image of urban animation, extending use of the streets beyond shopping days and hours.

A survey of residents, consumers and traders after the intervention has shown that: 19 per cent of the traders were of the opinion that the results surpassed their expectations and approximately one half (49 per cent) has carried out or intends to carry out improvement works in their stores; 43 per cent of residents were very pleased with the results, with 14 per cent of these saying responding that they surpassed their expectations and contributed to a change in consumption and use of the



Figure 13: Av. Santos Mattos – detail of before and after intervention.



Figure 14: Av. Santos Mattos – detail of before and after intervention.



**Figure 15:** Av. Santos Mattos. General views of the new sunshades and matching colour scheme.



**Figure 16:** Av. Santos Mattos – Example of the outdoor café areas.

public space, 66 per cent of passers-by liked the results a lot and 89 per cent were of the opinion that the experiment should be replicated in other parts of the city.

The commercial animation means that jobs are created, there are more opportunities for social interaction and the residents' feeling of belonging and self-esteem is restored (see Figure 16).

#### *Institutional stakeholders*

*The plan* involved the City Council, local traders association and the residents in a collaborative approach. The success of intervention, confirmed by the satisfaction levels of the local stakeholders and the improvement in retail performance, should be disseminated and repeated in other areas of the urban centre through the residents and traders and with the support of the City Council. (Figure 17)

As far as the buildings are concerned, the facades were all painted in a matching colour scheme. The illegally closed balconies and exterior elements were covered by uniform sunshade solutions, and wooden panelling was used as a



**Figure 17:** Av. Santos Mattos – Example of a dissemination seminar, 2012.

unifying material across different buildings. The public space benefited from new paving, in cobble stones and a more clearly defined visual differentiation between traffic and pedestrian areas. Traffic signs were reduced to the essential and some parking spaces were replaced by trees and the sidewalks were widened.

With regard to the shops, the main impact was achieved by unifying all visual elements within a single brand image. Advertising, sunshades and parasols were replaced by a unified balcony that transformed part of the street into an open-air shopping gallery. This provided shade and comfort zones for users and shoppers.

All of these interventions were carried out in a few months, avoiding the usual disturbances caused by construction works. Instead of digging streets to replace gas pipes, and digging again 2 years later to replace water pipes, these tasks were done in one single operation. Instead of individual small-scale interventions on the facades, a whole street was refitted at the same time. All this meant quick results with rational use of the available budget.

The aim of this first step, regarded as an experimental intervention to be evaluated with future initiatives in mind, follows the strategic guidelines of dealing with the existing space in close cooperation with its residents and users. Inquiries were made before the intervention and the common visual brand was created with the participation of local users. This participation was made up of several components, as it took place both before the intervention, with residents, traders and representatives being consulted as to the characteristics of the actions to be carried out, and after the intervention, with a view to immediately remedying problems that were identified.

Local media have taken note of this initiative on account of its different scale and location, as opposed to other more conspicuous and larger-scale regeneration plans in the LMA.

## Conclusions

In this article our aim is to highlight the way in which the efforts converged towards effecting a deep change in the image, functionality and comfort that this part of the city can offer, and to show the results of a specific action. One should bear in mind that this intervention in Av. Santos Mattos emerged after identification of a process of decline reflected in a decrease in and ageing of the population, an increase in unoccupied dwellings, a heightening of insecurity, among other signs of the decline in the area.

The problem recognition resulted in the intention of building a strategy to deal with the problem in a way that avoided single disconnected investment decisions. Thus, a strategic plan was developed that

presented a vision for the future of this area and was based on three strategic lines of action each of them broken down into several concrete actions. Those actions were not only described in detail in terms of their content, costs, priorities and the stakeholders involved, but also in terms of the costs of not taking action.

The regeneration of Av. Santos Mattos was one of the structuring actions for the creation of a dynamics aimed at achieving the strategic vision defined in the Amadora Viva Plan. It was meant to provide a global and transversal impact, and it did. However, this impact was amplified because of the way it allowed for involvement of the municipality, traders and residents in the process. The radical change obtained at a low cost can thus be easily replicated in other streets and avenues throughout the city, at the initiative of associations, residents, traders or other stakeholders, promoting a gradual change in the negative image that the city of Amadora projected to the outside.

Thus, the result obtained was as important as the process that led to it. The impact of both the result and the process, although generated locally, extends much further than that, as the project was situated in the metropolitan area. It helps the city to attract new residents, new economic activities and new jobs, through an approach based on offering a second chance to the oldest suburban areas.

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