The role of integrated intervention experiences for social-spatial cohesion and integration

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ABSTRACT

The issue of housing, especially the concept of social housing estates, carries a negative connotation regarding systems of social segregation and spatial inequalities. To counter this tendency of social housing prejudice and stigma, it is necessary to reflect on the role of 'integrated interventions' that promote urban regeneration in fragmented socio-economic and territorial domains.

This reflection will be based on the study of two concrete situations – the Bela Vista housing estate in Setúbal and the Vale da Amoreira housing estate in Moita, Portugal – for being established as places where experiences of mass interventions have been implemented, which constitute examples of good practice for urban regeneration, as well as being places of continued study that contributed to the formulation of the starting questions.

Given the dynamics of social and territorial transformation that aim to recover the relationship between housing and habitat morphologies, and social forms, the following starting questions were raised in these housing estates: (i) what are the current challenges of these neighbourhoods and what are the interventions needed to resolve or mitigate them? and (ii) what are the opportunities for transformation and what lessons can be extrapolated and included in current housing policies?

To provide an answer, this essay focuses on the experiences of integrated interventions, as well as on the opportunities for transformation and the role of social housing. The aim is to discuss social housing neighbourhoods' processes of cohesion and integration, based on the axis of spatial organisation and social networks, necessary to progressively achieve the full realisation of the right to adequate housing.

Keywords: Mass housing; Housing policies; Integrated intervention experiences; Housing models; Socio-spatial cohesion and integration

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1.   Introduction

Social housing neighbourhoods are mostly considered critical and crisis areas in cities and connoted around this stigma. This connotation arises mainly from the incipient investment in public provision housing programmes and the weak development of an integrated and diversified public housing policy (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n. º 56/2018).

Housing policies have always been the weak link in the social and urban policy (Pinto & Guerra, 2019; Serra, 2002). Public disinvestment in this essential asset in favour of investment in public supportive housing has provided a picture of poverty and crime in social housing estates. In place of this characterisation, the portrait to be retained of these neighbourhoods is the reflection of social and spatial stigma, which strengthens the concentration of vulnerability and discrimination of the resident populations.

To overcome the established preconceptions and stigma of social housing, as well as the well-known structural housing shortages, it is indispensable to implement generalised and diversified social housing policies and models, which reflect the integrating character of the social actors, as well as institute dynamics of socio-spatial transformation.

A reflection is established both as a challenge and as an opportunity, based on the axes of spatial organisation and social networks in social housing neighbourhoods and on experiences of integrated intervention.

This reflection, faced with times of profound change in the management and financing instruments of urban and housing policies, must include the respective models of governance and socio-spatial integration, as well as the role of social housing itself.

In the framework of this rethinking, the following starting questions were established: (i) what are the current challenges of these neighbourhoods and what are the interventions needed to resolve or mitigate them? and (ii) what are the opportunities for transformation and what lessons can be extrapolated and included in current housing policies?

To provide an answer, this essay focuses on the experiences of integrated interventions, as well as on the opportunities for transformation and the role of social housing. The aim is to discuss social housing neighbourhoods' processes of cohesion and integration, based on the axis of spatial organisation and social networks, necessary to progressively achieve the full realisation of the right to adequate housing.

This paper is structured in three parts: The first part is an introductory note and briefly presents the aspects related to the housing problematic, the starting questions, the objectives, and the structuring of the paper, including the case studies and the methodology.

The second part exposes the challenges, experiences and opportunities existing in the social housing neighbourhoods selected as case studies: (i) describes the socio-spatial fragmentation and the aspects associated with ((in)equality and social and territorial (in)justice in residential areas, (ii) notes the experiences of social and territorial intervention by public and civil society innovation agents, both at the level of building rehabilitation and regeneration of public space and at the level of social cohesion, and (iii) highlights the opportunities for transformation for these and other critical territories, underlining the connection of experiences such as the programme 'From Housing to Habitat' (*Da Habitação ao Habitat*, in Portuguese) (2018), in the framework of the New Generation of Housing Policies (*Nova Geração de Políticas da Habitação*, in Portuguese) (NGPH) (2018).

The third part, in the context of the NGPH, analyses the role of integrated intervention experiences for socio-spatial cohesion and integration and the role of social housing and its dimensions in the current framework.

Methodologically, it is proposed to observe and describe concrete case-studies concerning: (i) spatial fragmentation and inequalities, resulting from the enclave and the discontinuity with the city structure, and (ii) social fragmentation and segregation, a consequence of marginalisation processes of the residents.

This observation was carried out in loco (fieldwork carried out between 2019-2020) and complemented with municipal reports that socio-spatially characterise these neighbourhoods. Finally, it is intended to note the experiences of social and territorial intervention, by public and civil society innovation agents.

Therefore, it demonstrates the challenges, experiences, and concrete opportunities, as well as the lessons which can be extrapolated to other contexts. This will allow a wider reflection on the cohesion and integration of social housing neighbourhoods and the role of social housing in progressively achieving the full realisation of the right to adequate housing.

2. Challenges, experiences and opportunities for intervention

2.1 *Social housing: urbanisation processes and the dynamics of housing and habitat transformation*

The framework of social housing neighbourhoods needs context in terms of the processes of urbanisation and metropolisation of urbanised areas. It is also important to clarify the impacts that these dynamics of urban transformation had on the social-spatial construction of social housing neighbourhoods and their surrounding habitat.

The processes of urbanisation and metropolisation of the non-urbanised areas, during the 20th century, were mostly motivated by migratory flows, related to labour markets and decolonisation (Brandão & Remesar, 2000). The strong pressures of the phenomenon of migration in the 1960s and 1970s, exerted an influence on the transformations of the rural and peripheral landscapes of the metropolises.

The urban spatial structure of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) has suffered from a late and intense development, and in the face of this growth and 'disorderly' urban expansion the response for housing the families coming from this exodus was insufficient (Pinto & Guerra, 2019).

As a result, severe housing shortages have been established in the area, and in order to meet these housing needs, the urban fabric has densified, with the use of informal housing areas (shanty towns and areas of illegal origin - *bairros de barracas e de génese illegal*, in Portuguese) (Pinto & Guerra, 2019 e Salgueiro, 1977; 1997).

The urbanisation of the peripheral areas of the metropolis has been the target of economic interest by construction and real estate groups, and the number of dwellings has increased, but has not suppressed the needs of the most vulnerable householders (Pinto & Guerra, 2019).

In addition to the disorderly and unplanned way in which rural and peripheral areas were being urbanised, these also did not correspond to the lifestyles of the populations moving to the big cities. The change of habitat from the countryside to the city entails, in itself, a specific way of life that simultaneously generates a multiplication of networks of relationships and a limitation to new neighbourhood networks (Rémy & Voyé, 1992). These ways of life and collective living do not correspond directly to housing and habitat morphologies, which were built without planning and strategic housing policies, in the urgency to mitigate housing needs and satisfy land and real estate interests of housing as a financial asset.

In opposition to these urbanisation processes with public support and private intervention, there were some peripheral urbanisation processes with exclusive public intervention. These were planned by the Central Administration and local technicians, with intervention from the Housing Promotion Fund (*Fundo de Fomento da Habitação*, in Portuguese) (FFH) and housing policy guidelines linked to urban development plans (*Planos de Fomento*, in Portuguese).

In the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, two cases stand out, which start from the premise of the development of peripheral housing areas of public provision for migrant populations, with dynamics of implementation of governance and housing models, which tried to promote relationships between the morphologies of housing and habitat and of collective life. These two concrete situations are the Bela Vista housing estate, in Setúbal, and the Vale da Amoreira housing estate, in Moita, Portugal. These housing estates are established as places where experiences of mass interventions have been implemented, which constitute examples of good practice for urban regeneration.

The selection criteria for these two housing estates depended on their social and territorial specifications, and on the continued study of them, which contributed to the formulation of the starting questions. The spatial criteria looked at the peripheral relationship of the housing estate with the traditional centre of the respective city and the existence of spatial enclaves that create discontinuity with the city structure. The social criteria, we looked for the social function of welcoming migrant populations, mostly from the working class coming from the migratory flows of the industrial revolution in Portugal and immigrants after the independence of the Portuguese colonies in Africa.

In this context, fragmentation with the urban fabric of the surrounding city and social segregation, resulting from the process of marginalization of the neighbourhood's residents, have been identified in these housing estates.

2.1.1 Bela Vista, Setúbal

The demographic growth of the 1960s/70s in the city of Setúbal, motivated by migratory flows of rural populations seeking work in industry, especially in the shipbuilding industries (Faria, 1981), had a profound impact on the development of the city as well as on housing conditions (CMS, 2009). The housing shortages became more severe, and the response came in the 1970s, through "strategies of direct housing promotion by the Central Administration, by the Local Ambulatory Support Service programme (*Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local*, in Portuguese) (SAAL) and by the construction and affordable housing cooperatives" (CMS, 2009: 5).

To regulate the much-needed expansion of the city in the face of this demographic growth, the Setúbal Integrated Plan (*Plano Integrado de Setúbal*, in Portuguese) (PIS) was established as the instrument of order to address housing exclusion. The PIS was initiated in 1973, coordinated by the architect José Charters Monteiro (1944), who sought to design a "civic architecture, 'useful, with beauty'" (Franco, 2009). This plan was supported by the Central Administration and a group of local technicians. Its implementation took place in the following decades under the democratic regime (after 1974).

Despite the architectural quality of the neighbourhoods, the urbanistic quality of the public and semi-public spaces (third spaces) of the community has not been successful (Nogueira,

2007). The morphologies of the habitat are not suited to the ways of life and collective living since they did not take into account the forms of living of the resident population.

Bela Vista housing estate consists of a total of 5 neighbourhoods (Bela Vista - Yellow neighbourhood, Alameda das Palmeiras - Pink neighbourhood, Forte da Bela Vista - Blue neighbourhood, Manteigadas and Quinta de Santo António) and an estimated resident population of 6700 people (Census 2011). It is located on the eastern boundary between the city of Setúbal and its industrial and rural areas and is bordered to the north and west by residential neighbourhoods, to the south by the railway and the port, and to the east by urban and rural vacant land.

Fig. 1 – Housing developments that constitute Bela Vista housing estate, Setúbal
Source: Author

2.1.2 *Vale da Amoreira, Moita*

Similarly, to Bela Vista housing estate, the demographic growth of the 1970s and the migratory flows were also responsible for the need to extend the town of Alhos Vedros.

The construction of Vale da Amoreira housing estate began on the initiative of the FFH in order to rehouse families living in slums (Marques, 2013) and continued over time with a long urbanisation process, with broad and diverse housing models and morphologies.

Another event that influenced the growth and transformation of Vale da Amoreira was the independence of the Portuguese colonies. This housing estate welcomed a significant part of the "*retornados*" and is today the most populated residential area in the municipality of Moita, maintaining a diversified social and cultural identity (GAT, 2006).

The first buildings implemented in the neighbourhood are a reuse of an existing typology, designed by the architect Justino de Morais (1928-2011), to minimise housing production costs (Vilaça & Ferreira, 2018). Another intervention for the construction of public housing stock was

carried out by the Special Rehousing Programme (*Programa Especial de Realojamento*, in Portuguese) (PER), which financed the construction of low-income housing in the Portuguese metropolitan peripheries, with the aim of eradicating areas of illegal housing.

The inadequate action of urban and housing planning and policies to respond to the severe housing shortages has resulted in an accumulation of neighbourhood buildings within the neighbourhood with housing of poor urban quality. Vale da Amoreira is characterised as a housing estate that, disqualified in social and urbanistic terms (GAT, 2006), has not succeeded in reconciling ways of life and housing and habitat morphologies, generating the opposite of its purpose of providing better living conditions for the population.

Vale da Amoreira housing estate consists of at least 7 neighbourhoods with different housing typologies and densities and an estimated resident population of 12 360 inhabitants (Census 2011). It is located on the western edge between the border with the municipality of Barreiro and areas of urban voids and protected areas, bordered to the north by residential neighbourhoods, to the west by the A39 highway, to the south by urban voids and to the east by urban voids, proposed urban greens and areas whose occupation has been refused.

Fig. 2 – Housing developments that constitute Vale da Amoreira housing estate, Moita
Source: Author

2.2 Challenges in the territory: social segregation and spatial inequalities

In the context of social housing estates, there are several current challenges affecting both the resident populations and their habitat. From socio-economic to spatial issues, transversal to these areas under study, spatial discontinuity and inequalities stands out, accompanied by persistent social segregation, which place socio-spatial fragmentation as one of the fundamental challenges.

Socio-economic (un)equality and (in)justice in access to housing and adequate habitat is simultaneously seen as the cause and the obstacle to the development of new models of social

progress (Harvey, 2006). Socio-spatial fragmentation constitutes a factor of inequality in society and exerts influence on access to essential goods, including housing (Seixas & Antunes, 2019). This results from a set of events, e.g., housing policies aimed at mitigating the serious housing shortages, which only produce a "housing supply concentrated in specific urban areas - the so-called social housing estates" (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n. º 56/2018: 1881), and a housing system not targeted at widespread access to safe and adequate housing.

Socio-spatial fragmentation should be understood as "a spatial organisation characterised by the existence of distinct spatial enclaves which are not contiguous with the surrounding socio-spatial structure" (Salgueiro, 1998: 225) and which are not defined by their size, but rather by the relationship they establish with the surrounding fabric and the adjacent areas. Social segregation is generated by phenomena of gentrification, residential ethnicization and social production in fragmented space (Salgueiro, 1998; Mendes, 2020).

In this context of cohesion and integration of social housing estates, the experiences of socio-territorial intervention are measures implemented with successful results when they promote the dimension of socio-economic and spatial integration (Henriques, 2009).

Such fragmentation tends to fall upon social housing estates and its resident populations, conceiving critical residential areas. Consequently, these housing estates constitute a pressing challenge for the promotion of new dynamics of socio-spatial cohesion and integration.

2.2.1 The enclaves and the discontinuity with the city structure

Spatial fragmentation in these housing estates is common to them and visible both in their internal urban fabric because they are neighbourhoods within the neighbourhood, and in their relationship with the surrounding fabric, due to their characteristics of planned but non-integrated extension.

In the case of Bela Vista, the constraints under which it was planned are one of the reasons for this event. With the growth of the city during the 1940s, as a result of migratory flows related to work (Faria, 1981 and Ferreira & Santos, 2019), its extension to the east was foreseen when the General Urbanization Plan of the city of Setúbal (*Plano Geral de Urbanização da cidade de Setúbal*, in Portuguese) was elaborated (1944, 1955 and 1962).

This plan was carried out under the guidance of the architect João Aguiar (?), on the recommendation of the Ministry of Public Works (Macedo and Pinho, 2015) and lasted until the 1960s with a series of revisions. This extension only came to materialise in the 1970s, during the democratic transition, with the PIS.

It was with the PIS that the largest process of expansion of the city towards the east started, with the aim of establishing strategic equipment and services for the city and mitigating the housing shortages related to population growth (Faria, 1981). As an extension of the city without

precedent, nor common ground, the experimentation of new models of housing and habitat was a relevant event for this understanding (Franco, 2009).

It is clear that this innovation in the neighbourhood's morphologies and housing and habitat typologies, with the aim of creating a functional, high-density architecture, caused a break with the surrounding fabric, which followed the logic of low density as was characteristic of the Estado Novo neighbourhoods[2] (Ferreira & Santos, 2019).

Although the housing estate is now partially inserted into the city's fabric, spatial fragmentation remains a trend that local stakeholders are working to reverse. The programme 'Urban Regeneration of Bela Vista and its Surroundings' (*Regeneração Urbana da Bela Vista e Zona Envolvente*, in Portuguese) (RUBE) (2009), gave rise to a panoply of interventions, which are the continued testimony of this will reverse the trend towards fragmentation.
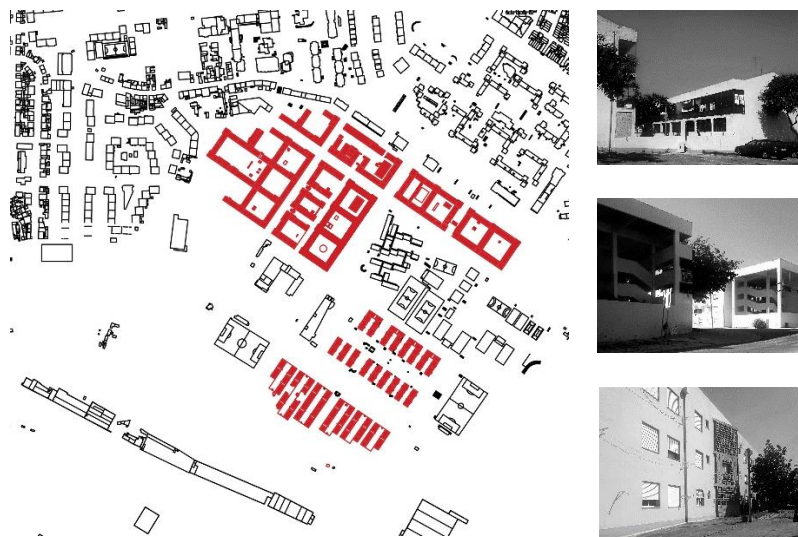

Fig. 3 – Housing estate of PIS Setúbal, Bela Vista
Source: Author

The success of the interventions from the perspective of the social/inclusive dimension and the physical qualification achieved, is demonstrated in the 'Strategic Development Programme: Setúbal 2026' (*Programa Estratégico de Desenvolvimento: Setúbal 2026*, in Portuguese) (PEDS, 2016) (2016). In the production of this programme a workshop with the population, political stakeholders and associations was conducted to discuss and address the issue of the urban and territorial development. "The issues related to inclusion were addressed, social cohesion, culture, urban regeneration and revitalisation, within the framework of a municipality integrated in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area." (PEDS, 2016: 46).

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[2] Presidente Carmona neighbourhood (1948) Casas Económicas da Nossa Senhora da Conceição neighbourhood (1949).

Paradigm shifts are also attributed, in this document, to the role of planning and urban upgrading, which has taken actions to draw up plans and studies at various scales and to 'mobilise a set of instrumental funding measures and programmes' (CMS, 2016: 42).

In the case of Vale da Amoreira housing estate, spatial fragmentation is not so evident in the current urban network, as adjacent areas have been influenced by the urbanisation process of Vale da Amoreira and have densified, forming a conurbation. However, it is visible the polarisation of housing morphologies that denote discontinuities within the fabric of the housing estate itself.

Vale da Amoreira housing estate is formed by clusters of neighbourhoods which, due to a lack of planning and the fact that they were built at different times, are not related to each other. The interstitial spaces between neighbourhoods are assigned to public space and most of the time are discontinuous and unqualified spaces.

The fragmentation as well as the poor urbanistic quality is highlighted in the diagnosis of the 'Operation Vale da Amoreira' (*Operação Vale da Amoreira*, in Portuguese) (2006). The weaknesses and challenges that fall within the scope of the public space are essentially highlighted, as the centre of the issue and as a reflection of the inequalities and injustices felt. The problems related to housing and habitat have been identified in the spatial dimension as the cause of the fragmentation felt, e.g. the deterioration and degradation of the interior and exterior of the housing estate, the lack of public spaces for socialising and community facilities and disorderly planning, combined with a poor response to housing needs, which lead to the densification of shantytowns (GAT, 2006).

Fig. 4 – Housing estate Vale da Amoreira, Moita
Source: Author

These are spatial problems are persistent, as denoted by the history of plans for the urban regeneration of the site. Vale da Amoreira housing estate has as antecedents to the 'Moita Municipal Urban Rehabilitation Programme - 2025: Vale da Amoreira Urban Rehabilitation Area'

(*Programa Municipal de Reabilitação Urbana da Moita – 2025: Área de Reabilitação Urbana do Vale da Amoreira*, in Portuguese) (2019), the Vale da Amoreira Urban Recovery and Requalification Programme ' (*Programa de Recuperação e Requalificação Urbanística do Vale da Amoreira*, in Portuguese) (1995/2002), the Vale da Amoreira Revitalisation Operation (*Operação de Revitalização do Vale da Amoreira*, in Portuguese) (1996/2002) and the Critical Neighbourhoods Initiative - Urban Qualification and Reintegration Operations' (*Iniciativa Bairros Críticos – Operações de Qualificação e Reinserção Urbana'*, in Portuguese) (2007).

These social and financial support programmes demonstrate a continued process of urban regeneration and revitalisation, in order to improve the living conditions of the population and aspects related to the built environment, public space and social and economic dynamics (ARU-VA, 2019). However, there is a diverse literature that is critical of the success of these interventions.

2.2.2 Processes of marginalisation and segregation of residents

The development of housing policies, focused on the production of housing for needy families, has produced social neighbourhoods without integration and diversification (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n. º 56/2018). These actions ended up generating a phenomenon of peripheralization and social homogeneity of the resident population, which aggravated social vulnerabilities, resulting in socio-spatial fragmentation effects.

The processes of implementation of social housing estates were limited to addressing the housing needs of the (re)housed populations, without acting on the situations of socio-economic vulnerability in which they found themselves, leading to the exacerbation of marginalisation and segregation of residents.

Despite the progress in mitigating structural housing shortages, it is important to promote social dynamics of integration, as opposed to the exclusion phenomena established in these neighbourhoods. The promotion of new forms of collective living has profound spatial impacts from the perspective of social cohesion (Guerra, 2003).

The issue of "everyday urbanism" (Guerra, 2003), which simultaneously spatially organises cities and the daily life of resident populations, identifies "communities of residence" as a logic of integrated urban regeneration for these neighbourhoods.

In the case of Bela Vista housing estate, the studies carried out by the 'Social Observatory of Bela Vista' (2007) (*Observatório social da Bela Vista*, in Portuguese) characterised the resident population as needy, with problems of social exclusion, unemployment and low level of schooling (Nogueira, 2007). This study identified social exclusion, associated with the stigma of social neighbourhoods, the degradation of the housing stock and public spaces and the weak social relations of the community of residence (CMS, 2009).

In the case of Vale da Amoreira, both the diagnosis of the 'Operation Vale da Amoreira' and the documents 'Process Notes - Operationalisation of the Action' (*Registos do Processo' - Operacionalização da Acção*, in Portuguese) (2012), characterise social cohesion and integration as a potentiality to mitigate the problems related to social fragmentation, e.g. family breakdown and problematic intergenerational relationships, division of the population by their cultures and communities of origin and youth centred cultures with the possibility of insertion in deviant careers (Sousa, 2012).

2.3   Innovative experiments: Integrated intervention programmes for urban regeneration

Within the innovative experiences that promote or have promoted integrated interventions for urban regeneration, the programmes '*Nosso Bairro, Nossa Cidade*'[3] e '*Iniciativa Bairros Críticos – Operações de Qualificação e Reinserção Urbana*'[4], implemented in Bela Vista and Vale da Amoreira respectively, are models of good practice interventions. They are considered examples for the strengthening of local development processes, the development of partnerships between governmental organisations and institutions (Sousa, 2008) and for encouraging the participation of local communities.

2.3.1 '*Nosso Bairro, Nossa Cidade*'

The report ' Vectors for Intervention, Strategy, Programme Framework and Action Cards' (*Vectores de Intervenção, Estratégica, Quadro Programático e Fichas de Acção*, in Potuguese) (2007), part of *'Agenda 21 da unidade territorial da Bela Vista*', established strategies and principles that would be the bases for the '*Nosso Bairro, Nossa Cidade*' programme.

The '*Nosso Bairro, Nossa Cidade*' programme is an example of an innovative local experience, with a socio-economic and spatial dimension, which promotes citizenship and the participation of communities in local decisions. This programme is considered a good practice by the International Association of Educating Cities (Educating Cities for Good Practices in Citizenship Education through Participation, 2018) and is constituted as "a programme to transform and improve the quality of life of a run-down area of the city through participation in identifying and solving problems and fostering community life" (AICE, 2018: 1). This programme, a municipal initiative, was implemented in 2012 to address the deterioration of the Bela Vista housing estate, as well as the rising social exclusion (AICE, 2018: 4).

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[3] A municipal initiative programme under the RUBE - Regeneração Urbana da Bela Vista e Zona Envolvente Programme, approved by PORLisboa - Lisbon Regional Operational Programme, included in the QREN - National Strategic Reference Framework.

[4] State initiative programme within the competences of the Secretary of State for Spatial Planning and Cities, implemented by the Institute for Housing and Urban Rehabilitation (*Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana,* in Portuguese) (IRHU).

The programme promoted a model of empowerment and active participation of the resident population, to build collective relationships and mobilise participants in responses to the common problems identified in their neighbourhood. The actions taken by the residents' committees and municipal technicians have focused, in addition to the creation of residence communities, on the improvement of living conditions and the creation of cultural, sporting, social and environmental activities. Investment in school and senior facilities (CMS, 2016: 12), as well as in other leisure facilities, are examples of continued urban regeneration, with a focus on strengthening residence community relations, civic engagement and responsibility, and developing a sense of belonging to the territory.

Although PEDS-2026 denotes improvements in the socio-spatial dimension, as a result of the intervention programme, one should not assume so linearly the success and innovation of this programme, since the problems are complex enough to be solved only by resorting to a programme. In this sense, in 2007, the report ' Synthetic Diagnosis' (*Diagnóstico Sintético*, in Portuguese), included in *'Agenda 21 da unidade territorial da Bela Vista'*, recognize the weaknesses at the social and spatial level, particularly in the absence of a community fabric (Silva, 2007).

2.3.2 '*Iniciativa Bairros Críticos – Operações de Qualificação e Reinserção Urbana*'

With similar objectives to the previous programme, the innovative experimentation of the '*Iniciativa Bairros Críticos*' focuses on socio-economic and spatial integration in territories with critical vulnerabilities (Sousa, 2008). As a state and inter-ministry initiative programme, it is intended to be built as a basis for experimentation and pilot projects (Cova da Moura, Lagarteiro and Vale da Amoreira), to improve partnerships and instruments of cooperation and participation between various actors of the central, regional and local administration, governmental and non-governmental organisations and elements of civil society.

The intervention of this programme in Vale da Amoreira housing estate, started in 2007, and had actions in several working groups focused, e.g., on the requalification of housing buildings and public spaces, proximity policing, intervention in the gables, school failure issues, arts, employment and employability entrepreneurship, multi-services and governance. (Sousa, 2012: 149).

In the end, the reports (GAT, 2006 and Sousa, 2012) denote improvements in the Vale da Amoreira housing estates and in the quality and life of the residents, essentially with regard to the construction of residence communities and governance models. These aspects were assimilated as opportunities and lessons drawn from the experimentation of this initiative for future intervention programmes and implementation of local projects. However, as in the previous case, it is necessary to understand the complexity of the problems that still exist in the housing complex and to carry out continuous work to improve these territories, otherwise they will remain subjugated to social segregation and spatial inequality.

2.4   Opportunities for transformation: Lessons for housing policies

The innovative experiments and their integrated intervention programmes for urban regeneration, noted in the previous section, constitute an opportunity for the transformation of urban territories, based on a strategy that aims to establish commitments between local communities and municipal technicians, in order to strengthen collective planning and management.

Although the interventions are or have had limited results and were finite in terms of time, with different progress in the two cases, these experiences and others served as a basis for the construction of the programme 'From Housing to Habitat' (*Da Habitação ao Habitat*, in Portuguese).

This programme, within the NGPH, brings together a set of measures capable of responding to the diversity of problems persistent in social housing neighbourhoods and recognises the central role of housing and prioritises it as a public policy. With clear objectives, this programme aims at the socio-territorial cohesion and integration of social housing neighbourhoods and consequently at improving the living conditions of the resident populations through "integrated, participative and innovative governance solutions at the methodological, conceptual and operational levels" (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 56/2018: 1181).

However, in the Lei de Bases da Habitação n.º 83/2019 (Housing Framework, in English) (2019), in section II, more specifically in article 14 on habitat, its valuation comprised more than what the programme "From Housing to Habitat" comprises. In other words, the understanding of habitat went further than what is explained in the National Housing Programme (*Programa Nacional de Habitação*, in Portuguese) (under development), thus falling far short of what could be expected.

It should be noted that these intervention models are subject to the socio-economic and spatial contexts of the specific locations, so that these community projects must depend on a priori observation and analysis of the social housing neighbourhoods to be intervened in.

3.   The role of integrated intervention experiences and social housing in the context of current housing policies

The experiences of integrated intervention that we have presented are still a narrowed perspective of the wider resolution that is urgently needed to solve the housing problem in Portugal.

"The XXI Constitutional Government has recognised, within the scope of its political priorities, the central role of housing for the improvement of the quality of life of populations, for the revitalisation and competitiveness of cities and for social and territorial cohesion." (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 56/2018, de 7 de maio).

Housing policies prior to the NGPH were oriented to respond to households with severe housing needs. Thus, they essentially produced public housing supply concentrated in specific urban areas and particularly developed social housing estates. These interventions did not ensure the integration or increase the value added in the access to housing. The social housing model developed often contributed to worsen the peripheralization and social homogeneity phenomena, resulting in territorial segregation and the worsening of social exclusion dynamics.

The NGPH has reversed the trends of short-term housing policies without basic principles and guidelines, sectoral and disjointed in the scales of intervention and multi-level governance. With a strategy focused on guaranteeing the objective of access to decent housing for all and an adequate habitat, the conquest of the inclusion of socio-economic and environmental dimensions in housing and habitat policies and planning stands out, in which the integrated intervention pilot experiences are very clear. However, it is a policy takes a broader approach to housing, in terms of reaching the largest number of people, it lacks other legislative elements that were only developed a posteriori, e.g. Basic Housing Law (2019) and National Housing Plan (under development).

In order to achieve cohesion and integration of the cities, beyond social housing estates, structural changes to current paradigms are required. It is essential to rethink the role of these experiences and social housing, as well as other more wide-ranging solutions to mitigate the severe housing problem that is increasingly being experienced, particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-) and the war in Ukraine (2022-). In addition to these successive crises, we have the contemporary phenomena of gentrification, land use liberalisation and the commodification of housing (Mendes, 2020), which have extended housing shortages to the urban middle classes and given visibility to the housing problem.

It is in this visibility and widening of the problem that lies both the challenge and the opportunity to promote socio-spatial transformation, to mitigate the stratified fragmentation in social housing estates and to review the role of social housing.

Hence, it is considered important to rethink the way of acting in these social housing territories, promoting greater articulation and cooperation between all the stakeholders involved, in order to optimise the potential of the means and resources allocated to achieve results in terms of overall improvement in the living conditions of residents and the social integration and spatial cohesion of the neighbourhoods.

Previous experiences of intervention in this type of territories – '*Iniciativa Bairros Críticos*' and '*Nosso Bairro, Nossa Cidade*' - have produced tangible outcomes in improving the quality of life of the resident population and in the socio-economic and spatial transformation and integration of social neighbourhoods, as well as in empowering the populations to participate in these changes.

Thus, this intervention mechanisms contribute to the socio-spatial cohesion and integration of social housing estates and to the mitigation of socio-economic and spatial fragmentation and were the basis for the development of the current programme *'Da Habitação ao Habitat'*. Even so, in spite of its positive outcomes, it is necessary to highlight its limitation in terms of results and temporal finitude.

The factor of spatial planning has been left behind in this progress, in which models of rehabilitation and increasing the public housing stock predominate. The current planning of residential areas is based on zoning and land uses and not on the morphological design of habitat and housing, so necessary to meet the objectives of diversity in pockets of housing, which are desired to be dynamic, affordable and as versatile occupation regimes and forms.

Urban and housing planning and policies should include, in their spatial component, more than a mere intervention in the built environment, the design of the habitat and the domestic sphere. This design, based on urban and housing forms, should reconcile the reflection of the relations between the morphology of the space and the daily living practices of the inhabitants and, in this sense, should also accompany the progress of socio-economic and environmental dimensions.

With concluding reflections, we consider that social housing should be reinvented and that it should be seen as public housing and housing for all, which distances itself from the preconceptions of social housing. In this sense, housing policies must be integrated and diversified, and the role of the State must be intervening in the construction of public housing and in the regulation of the market, investment must be directed not only to mitigate the housing needs of the most vulnerable populations, but also to guarantee access to housing for all outside the logic of the market and to promote social and spatial inclusion.

The housing sector, as well as housing itself, must be seen as an essential good rather than a financial asset and modes of territoriality must be redefined to reflect the relationship between housing and habitat morphologies and modes of collective living and life.

Finally, and to respond to the challenge of social and spatial cohesion and integration of social housing estates, the reconciliation between the global housing market and the fight against urban fragmentation and the right to housing must be taken into account. Beyond the ambition of the NGPH, which mobilises a lot of funding and stakeholders, the intervention must be integrated with regard to the various dimensions of action. The implementation of these policies should open, in urban planning, space for the reconquest of the public intervention of architects and urban planners, integrated into multidisciplinary teams, as well as for the recovery of planning on the scale of urban design and the domestic sphere.

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