

Neighborhood Relations in a Context of Cultural and Social Diversity - Qualitative Analysis of a Case Study in a Territory in the inner City of Lisbon

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Abstract : This presentation looks, from a sociological perspective, at neighboring practices in the inner city of Lisbon. The capital of Portugal, with half a million inhabitants, inserted in a metropolitan area with almost 2,9 million people, has been in the international spotlight seen as an interesting city to live in and to invest in, especially in the real estate market. This promotion emerged in the context of the financial crisis, where local authorities aimed to make Lisbon a more competitive city, calling for visitors and financial and human capital. Especially in the last decade, Portugal's capital has been experiencing a significant increase in terms of migration from creative and entrepreneurial exiles to economic and political expats. In this context, the territory under analysis, in particular, is a mixed-used area undergoing rapid transformations in recent years marked by the presence of newcomers and non-nationals as well as social and cultural heterogeneity. It is next to one of the main arteries, considered the most multicultural part of the city, and presented in the press as one of the coolest neighborhoods in Europe. In view of these aspects, this research aims to address key-topics in current urban research: anonymity often related to big cities, socio-spatial attachment to the neighborhood, and the effects of diversity in the everyday relations of residents and shopkeepers. This case-study intends to look at particularities in local regimes differently affected by growing mobility. Against a backdrop of unidimensional generalizations and a tendency to refer to central countries and global cities, it aims to discuss national and local specificities. In methodological terms, the project comprises essentially a qualitative approach that consists of direct observation techniques and ethnographic methods as well semi-structured interviews to residents and local stakeholders whose narratives are subject to content analysis. The paper starts with a characterization of the broader context of the city of Lisbon, followed by territorial specificities regarding socio-spatial development, namely the city's and the inner-areas morphology as well as the population's socioeconomic profile. Following the residents and stakeholders' narratives and practices it will assess the perception and behaviors regarding the representation of the area, relationships and experiences, routines, and sociability. Results point to a significant presence of neighborhood relations and different forms of support, in particular, among the different groups - e.g., old long-time residents, middle-class families, global creative class, and communities of economic migrants. Fieldwork reveals low levels of place-attachment although some residents refer, presently, high levels of satisfaction. Engagement with living space, this case-study suggests, reveals the social construction and lived the experience of neighboring by different groups, but also the way different and contrasting visions and desires are articulated to the profound urban, cultural and political changes that permeate the area.

Keywords : diversity, lisbon, neighboring and neighborhood, place-attachment

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