

Article

Grounded in the Landscape—Climate Action, Well-Being and Public Space in a Small Town in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area

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Abstract: Retaining their ancestral footprint, rural settlements anchored developments driven by suburbanisation and became small towns embedded in the generic metropolitan landscape in the late 20th century. In subsequent phases, they integrated the functional diversity necessary to maintain a certain autonomy, while always being rooted in a community whose bonds are densified. In the specific case of Queijas, in the municipality of Oeiras (Lisbon metropolitan area), apart from the recent identification of the historical nucleus and the maintenance of public spaces, one can infer from the Oeiras Municipal Master Plan (2022) the need for an integrated approach to urban design and planning, which is linked to the requalification of place and the community. That is how climate action, well-being and public space took priority as the leading factors in the present study.

Keywords: climate action; well-being; public space; urban green space; small town; Lisbon metropolitan area; Queijas



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1. Introduction

This study explored how fundamental the public realm, especially urban green spaces, is in building a tangible small town, even within a metropolitan development, while supporting climate action and fostering well-being. In this case, multi-dimensionality allows for socio-economic plurality, the diversity of urban and residential occupations, functional diversity and the provision of collective services, such as health and education (see Figure 1).

From an architectural–urbanistic background, the view of a metropolitan territory converges into a landscape perception, borrowing regional viewpoints from Olmstead [1], McHarg [2], Forman [3] and Waldheim [4], in line with a landscape urbanism view:

“The discourse and practices of landscape urbanism builds directly upon the canon of regional environmental planning, from the work of Patrick Geddes and Benton MacKaye to Lewis Mumford to Ian McHarg, yet remains distinct from that genealogy through the synthesis of design culture, ecology, and urbanisation” [5].

In parallel, perspectives on the territorial development of the urban space in recent years are part of the background when approaching the metropolitan realm from the same architectural–urbanistic view, as offered by the Barcelona School of Architecture [6–8], extended to Romanistic meridional European countries, such as Portugal [9].

This study analysed how small rural settlements anchor developments driven by suburbanisation. While retaining their ancestral footprint, they become small towns that are inserted in the metropolitan landscape, and, in subsequent phases, they join in the functional diversity necessary to maintain a certain autonomy. Queijas, which is a small town in Oeiras, 1 of the 18 municipalities that form the Lisbon metropolitan area, was the case study for this investigation (see Figure 2).

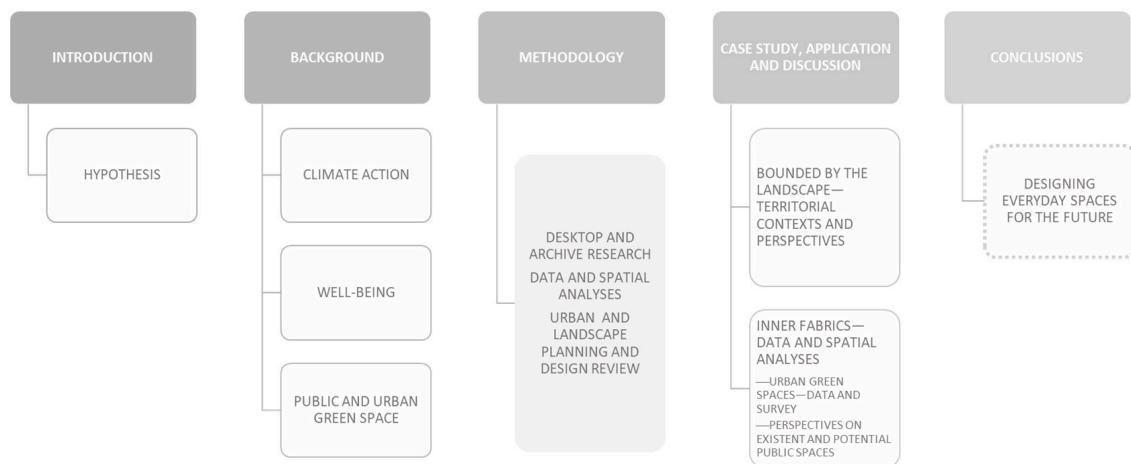


Figure 1. The study diagram. Source: own production.

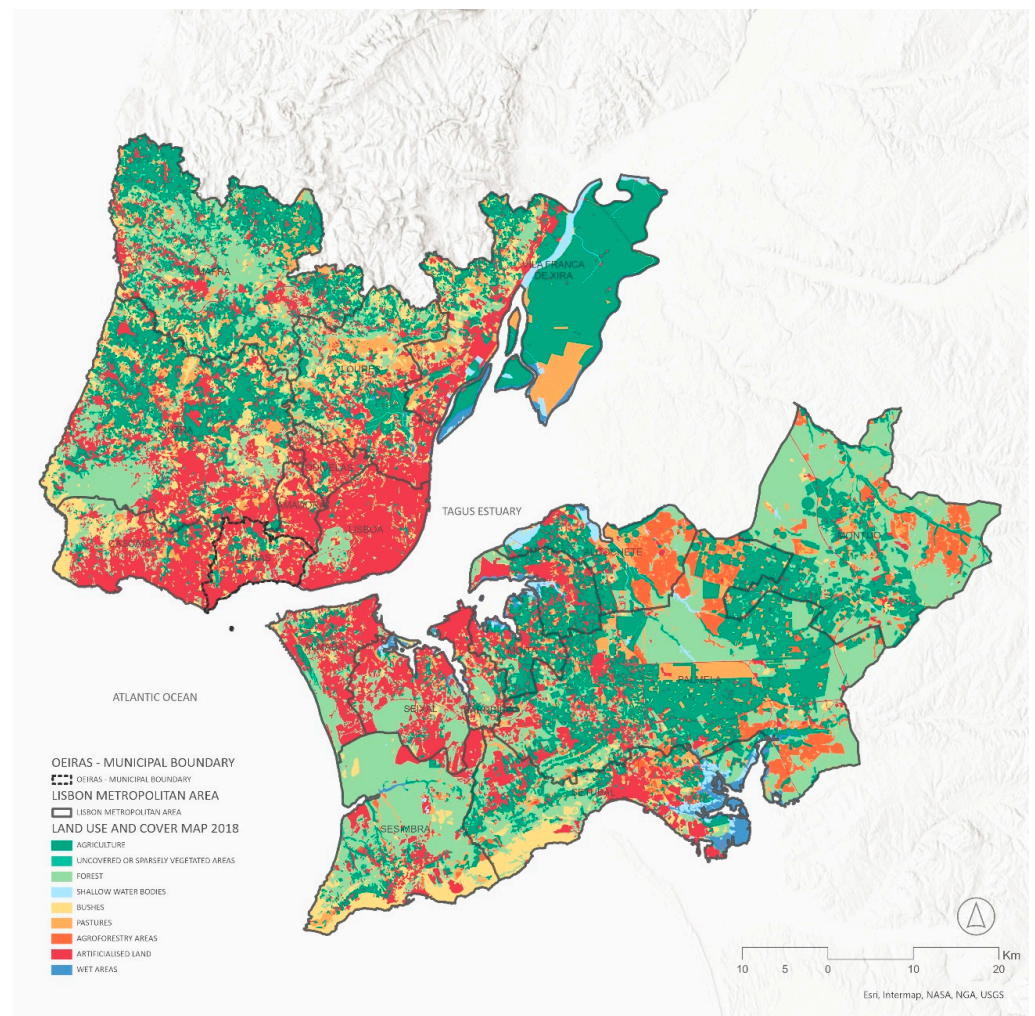


Figure 2. Land-use and land-cover map of the Lisbon metropolitan area, with its 18 municipalities, including Oeiras. Sources: own production based on COS 2018, SMOS/DGT available at <https://smos.dgterritorio.gov.pt/cartografia-de-uso-e-ocupacao-do-solo>, accessed on 22 July 2023, and CAOP2022, (Continente), DGT/Dados Abertos. Open data source with no use limitation available at <https://www.dgterritorio.gov.pt/dados-abertos>, accessed on 22 July 2023. Backmap credits in the map. NB: translated by S.M.

The rest of this paper is as follows: Section 2 provides the theoretical background in terms of climate action, well-being and public space. Section 3 presents the methods and materials used in this study, while Section 4 presents the results and discussion related to the analysis of the Queijas case study in terms of landscape boundaries, inner fabrics, urban green spaces and existent and potential public spaces. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Background: Climate Action, Well-Being and Public Space

The Overstory is a narrative that brings together parallel stories: the nine individual struggles related to the destruction of forests, the collective path to finally acknowledging the current threats of deforestation and the multicultural and political debates that have shaped the US and other countries by extension. Richard Powers' novel eloquently presents an environmental fictional multi-view of our shared world and individual helplessness in the face of the imminent climate catastrophe that humanity has brought upon the Earth and itself [10].

Everyday life is continuously overwhelmed by threats that science has consistently debated and identified; climate action is crucial to well-being, and public space, notably urban green spaces, can contribute to a more sustainable future.

According to preliminary data, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) has issued several warnings about concomitant heatwaves striking the Northern Hemisphere, marking the first week of July 2023 as the hottest week on record.

Heat is a rapidly growing health risk due to burgeoning urbanisation, an increase in high-temperature extremes and demographic changes in countries with ageing populations [11].

So far, the WMO response is still being developed via collaborations with the relevant partners, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and academic, governmental and non-governmental partners, through the Global Heat Health Information Network (GHHIN).

As a result of climate change, all communities need to plan for urban heat resilience, as the number of dangerously hot days is expected to increase, leading to a worsening of the urban heat island effect [12]. The assessment of the impact of heatwaves on public health and well-being dimensions is supported by The Lancet Countdown. Among other indicators, age is a critical factor that causes vulnerability (infants or people over 65) ("2022 Global Report of the Lancet Countdown") [13]. Many countries, notably Portugal, have started climate change assessment, which is an important component of urban planning and design undertaken by public authorities, governance structures and professionals.

According to The Lancet, Portugal shows a "Low average level of urban greenness" (Portugal: average level of urban greenness: low; population-weighted peak NDVI level 2010: 0.28; population-weighted peak NDVI level 2021: 0.33) [13,14], which was evaluated based on climate and landscape characteristics, activities and types of urbanisation.

The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) reports are adamant on the identification of risks and also possible actions to mitigate them:

A.2.7 In urban areas, observed climate change has caused adverse impacts on human health, livelihoods and key infrastructure. Hot extremes have intensified in cities. Urban infrastructure, including transportation, water, sanitation and energy systems, have been compromised by extreme and slow-onset events, with resulting economic losses, disruptions of services and negative impacts to well-being. Observed adverse impacts are concentrated amongst economically and socially marginalised urban residents. (high confidence) {2.1.2} (Summary for Policymakers [15]).

Portugal has implemented policies that target the climate emergency in close connection with urban planning and an integrated approach to the territory since 2020 [16–18].

The National Circular Cities Initiative (InC2) aims to build the capacity of local authorities and communities in the transition to a circular economy [17,18]. It is a programme of

the Portuguese Ministry of Environment and Climate Action, which is managed by the Directorate General for Territory (DGT) and funded by the Environment Fund until the end of 2022 [17].

The InC2 programme has four main themes (urbanism and construction, urban economy for circularity, urban–rural relations and the urban water cycle) and four cross-cutting themes (decarbonisation, public procurement, digital transition and equity and social inclusion) [14,15].

Each of the four main themes gives rise to four networks of circular cities—Capt² (water circularity for and to all), CircularNet (platform to circularity; community, business and the natural environment), R2C2 (circular network for sustainable building) and RURBAN link (circular links between urban and rural areas) [14,15].

Different municipalities participate in each network. The outcome is the publication of 32 Planos Locais de Ação Integrada (PLAI)/Local Integrated Action Plans. Oeiras is a member of the Capt² (water circularity for and to all) [19–21].

The current annual report on monitoring and compliance with the United Nations Agenda 2030 shows that Portugal is above the European Union average, with positive evolution in 101 indicators and 1 unfavourable result among the 28 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [19], where SDG13—climate action is not yet fully accomplished. Nevertheless, there is a positive tendency across the indicators in terms of the share of local governments adopting and implementing local disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies in line with national policies [19].

On the LocalSDG platform, it can be seen that Portuguese municipalities have been increasing their compliance scores in several SDGs and contributing to the Agenda 2030 targets as part of several projects and good practices [20], with some of them addressing and relating to SDG13—climate action and SDG30—good health and well-being, among other SDGs. Oeiras is one of these municipalities.

In this light, public space, notably the urban green space, plays a key role in adapting urban fabrics towards an improved performance regarding climate action and well-being.

Specifically, public space is a multidimensional entity. As an everyday element, it can be understood social-spatially [22] as design and aesthetically [23] and in many other ways related to the meaning of “place” [24]. Public space is where we stage our representation as citizens in the collective sphere. Hence, it is widely discussed in the literature and in practice [25–29].

Furthermore, urban green spaces (UGSs) are pivotal in their positive contribution to climate change mitigation, health improvement and quality of life [30]. They are accessible areas in urban land, whether it be designed or not; public or private space; and partially or completely covered by grass, trees, shrubs or other vegetation [31]. The UGSs hold different forms and can be characterised through various attributes, such as location, size, function, quality, safety and distance from users and target audiences, and are related to the landscape quality and user perceptions [32].

3. Methods and Materials

The study is set up as evidence-based and by-design research, looking for outcomes that can contribute to future planned actions. As such, the approach is tailored to the materials and methods available.

From an architectural and design perspective, the approach to urbanism is still rooted in a vision that privileges the exceptional or the much touted “good practices”. This work focuses on a small town in the Lisbon metropolitan area, Oeiras.

The standard and somewhat anodic nature of the case study is limited by the scarce or non-existent scientific literature and specific plans and projects for the place. These are the regular places where most people live.

Hence the need to approach them as part of the “right to the city” [33–35], in line with a generalised national maturity in urban planning, management and design that provides the safety net that prevents most gaps. Therefore, referring to the Portuguese national

policy of open-source official data, including statistics, local governance and planning, was necessary. The municipality and the topic open up several possibilities for research that can be followed up on later.

The methods used in this research were threefold and cross-checked throughout the article sections, as follows.

- Desktop research—(1) literature review, (2) international recommendations and agreements, national policies and legislation and municipal urban planning and management (see Sections 1, 2, 4 and 5).
- Spatial analysis—(3) official statistics (INE/Statistics Portugal), (4) a specific survey of perceptions and narratives, framed and conducted by the authors, partly used in this study; (5) open-source maps and datasets (see Sections 4 and 5).
- Long-term observation and documentation make it possible to fill gaps from an ethnomethodological perspective [6–41]—(6) empirical identification and mapping of “existing and potential public spaces—typologies, continuities and management”; (7) photography and diary/personal notebook (see Sections 1, 2, 4 and 5).

The possibility of presenting a series of future design lines was seen as a natural outcome of research by-design with an architectural and urbanistic background (see Section 5).

4. Case Study, Application and Discussion

The grounds and fabrics, which are the physiographic specificities that drive or constrain urban occupation, must be understood in close correlation with the local cultures, habits and peculiarities that in Portugal are marked by the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, as noted by Orlando Ribeiro in a comprehensive and metaphoric form in 1949 [42]. The landscape types align with the geographical, climate and cultural characteristics of the Meridional Europe metropolitan landscape [8,43]. As part of the Mediterranean Region, Meridional Europe is increasingly becoming one of the worst areas in terms of health heat indicators.

A metropolitan system encompasses characteristics of the urban that are more complex than a basic understanding between the “centre” (there will be several centres with distinct qualities within a metropolitan area) and the “periphery” or “peri-urban”, which do not always translate, in a strict spatial relationship, the nuances of the specific qualities of each place. It is the spatial sense that takes priority, not the social perception of the periphery, and they are often coexistent and misunderstood. Rather than a spatial order of a functional nature, this dialogue is seen as relational, cultural and social [44]. The metropolitan territories [45,46] are *tessera*, i.e., mosaics of different patches [3,5].

Along this line of thought, one can go down in level, or closer in scale, to discover the small towns and villages that interweave and colour the landscapes of the metropolitan realm. Within those territorial pieces, some are places people perceive, and they are recognised as small towns. That is the case of Queijas (see Figure 3).

4.1. Bounded by the Landscape—Territorial Contexts and Perspectives

The current Lisbon metropolitan area (LMA) holds a territorial and mixed cultural identity that is imprinted in the landscape, settlements and people that evolved into places where people live, as this geo-strategic harbour city has become a territorial phenomenon. Roman, Moorish and Catholic groups left cultural imprints that still mould the places and ways of living. The urban, rural and main infrastructures for transportation and water contribute to developing a great trade centre. These layers survive to this day, where places have been shaped and named after distinct inculturations within the various current living communities and recent cosmopolitanism.

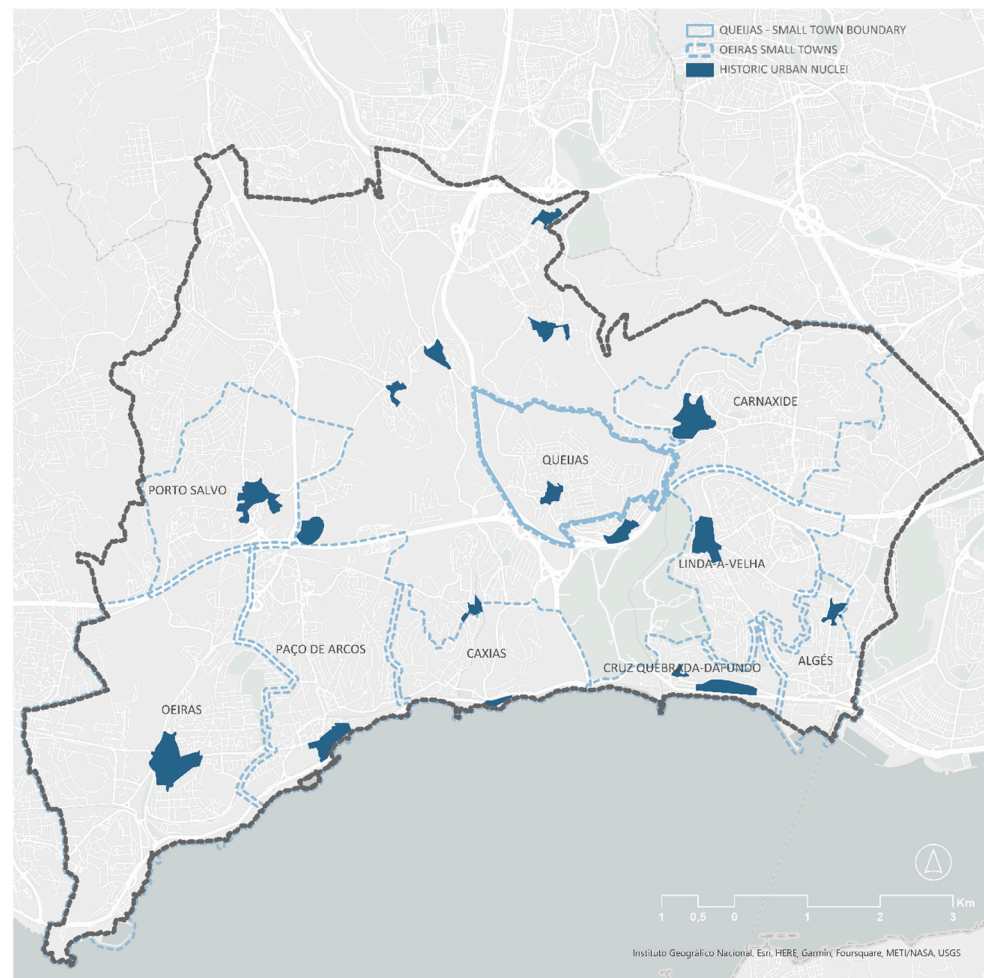


Figure 3. Oeiras municipality—historic urban nuclei, small towns (Vilas) and the selected small town (Queijas). Source: own production based on open-source datasets, accessed on 14 July 2023 [47,48] Backmap credits in the map, open data sources with no use limitation. (Units and Decimals follow the European standards).

In the Peninsula of Lisboa, on the northern embankment of the Tagus Estuary, the Costa do Sol stretches from Lisbon to Cascais, boasting a Mediterranean climate. It has a coastal atmosphere with a seashore that is dotted with 19th- and early 20th-century villas and, more recently, privileged housing and refurbished manors [49–51].

The Costa do Sol (literally the Sun Coast) has always been a privileged recreational area for the crown and aristocracy. It has a beach character along a coast that is punctuated by 19th-century cottages. The proposal of the Costa do Sol Plan by Agache in the 1930s would redesign the seafront, transforming it into a sophisticated panoramic road, completing the modernity that the Cascais line was already introducing, especially in its stations associated with historically relevant places (Caxias and Paço de Arcos) or new tourist spots, such as Estoril. One may say that it was the first metropolitan approach, framed by the modern ideas of the city, that was led mainly by the Garden City movement [49–51].

Anchored in the Monsanto Forest Park in Lisbon [52,53], an urban motorway towards Cascais and the panoramic road and the Cascais Suburban line was built along the seashore and provides a connection network for low-density urban settlements to be attached to railway stations and older urban settlements. This served as the getaway route for sophisticated society, international personalities (especially during and after World War II) and emerging high-class car users.

Developed from a network of rural villages, Oeiras now attracts innovative companies that provide jobs for a middle-class population with a university education. Over time,

new amenities have been added, increasing the urbanity, including the recent development of technology and university campi.

By 1992, the Lisbon–Cascais motorway had stopped at the National Stadium, since the 1960s, which is a green and forested area endowed with sports equipment. Several renowned landscape architects led by Caldeira Cabral made relevant contributions to the territory design of Oeiras, notably at the National Stadium, including Gonalo Ribeiro Telles (SGJA 2013 Winner) [54], who would revolutionise our shared perspective on a more sustainable landscape (see the green corridors in Lisbon in a fully integrated design between the open space system and the urban fabrics that led to the award of Lisbon Green Capital 2020 [55]), as well as lvvaro Dentinho, Viana Barreto (Plans Carnaxide and Queijas, Oeiras [56,57]) and so many others who brought an entirely innovative perspective onto a yet open territory on the verge of “wild” urbanisation, not only in Oeiras but also in Loures and other Lisbon metropolitan area municipalities in 1960–1970. That did, indeed, happen in so many ways [58]. The Nova Oeiras Plan by Edgar Fontes and Ribeiro Telles [48] is being considered as part of the contemporary architectural and urban design conservation [59].

At this crossroad, there were two rural settlements located on the edge of the Jamor alluvial plain and along the road to Oeiras that would become contiguous as time went by: Linda-a-Pastora by the River, known by the Orchards of Oranges, and Queijas, which is at a higher elevation and is linked to cereal crops and windmills [60–62]. The last exit of the Cascais motorway (when travelling from the centre of Lisbon to the National Stadium (Costa do Sol Plan)) from the 1940s until its extension to Cascais in 1992 turned this incipient urban settlement into an appreciated place for living.

In this way, Queijas, an emerging urban settlement, became a desirable place to live. From its likely 18th-century beginnings centred around the natural springs of the Queijas stream, which feeds the baroque cascade of the Caxias Royal Estate and Gardens [63–65], it has developed to a point where even though it is not a suburb with towering buildings, it is still close to employment, health and education facilities. In addition, it is surrounded by topographical and infrastructural barriers, such as the Jamor floodplain and river to the east and south; the central road from Lisbon to Oeiras to the south; and the Military Road on the western side [66,67].

Even though the municipality is modest relative to the general size of municipalities in Portugal, it has five rivers that flow into the Tagus near its transition to the Atlantic Ocean in So Julio da Barra [68]. Queijas is confined by the Jamor on the eastern side and the Barcarena River on its western side. Despite its topography naturally protecting it from floods, the concentrated natural sources of water in the area, particularly in the historic centre and along the Ribeira waterline, pose some risks [38] (see Figure 4).

Despite its proximity to the coast, Queijas’ activities were unrelated to the sea or recreation. Instead, the gentle slopes were marked by golden fields of rye, barley and wheat, with small hills topped by windmills. As the daily commute to the outskirts of Lisbon expanded, rural estates were plot-divided into urban parcels to accommodate mainly individual detached houses. However, the former rural lanes were preserved as passageways through the existing plain houses.

4.2. Inner Fabrics—Data and Spatial Analyses

4.2.1. Urban Green Spaces—Data and Survey

The urban fabric is one of the critical factors affecting the quality of life. In this sense, it should present quality and variety (size, scale), be flexible to the necessary functions (such as housing, services, offices and commerce), be adequate for the local urbanistic context and not forget the historical and cultural characteristics of the place.

Thus, knowing the land use, age and quality of housing in Queijas was essential for correlating census statistics [48,69] and survey results that addressed how people saw this small town [70].



Figure 4. Queijas in terms of its territory, rivers and landmarks—freehand sketch over sources (S.M.): Backmap World Imagery, ArcGIS Map Service, available at https://services.arcgisonline.com/ArcGIS/rest/services/World_Imagery/MapServer, accessed on 21 July 2023. Source credits: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics and the GIS User Community (no use limitations); historic centres (translucent dark blue), available at <https://oeirasinterativa.oeiras.pt/#/ig/home>, accessed on 20 June 2023. Oeiras Interativa, Câmara Municipal de Oeiras, GIT-Gabinete de Informação Territorial, open data source with no use limitation. (Units and Decimals follow the European standards).

The urban outline can influence the health status of populations and their well-being. Several authors contended that the population's health status should be analysed by considering the physical, historical, cultural and social organisation characteristics of the community where the population resides. It is then vital to understand the dynamics of the neighbourhood and community, i.e., in which other activities this population participates, how they see Queijas, why they live in this place and what pleases them the most.

In 1993, Queijas became an independent civil parish. However, the national administrative reorganisation of 2013 gave rise to the Union of Civil Parishes of Carnaxide and Queijas. Notwithstanding, Queijas' autonomy is identifiable by its status as a small town with an official perimeter. That being said, unless subsection data are available, statistical data refer to the civil parish level (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Characterisation of the study area (national (1), municipal (2) and civil parish (3) levels). Source: INE/ Statistics Portugal, Census 2011 and 2021. (Units and Decimals follow the European standards).

Data Reference Period	Place of Residence	Total Resident Population	Rate of Change of Resident Population	Population Density	Youth Dependency Ratio	Elderly Dependency Ratio
		N.	(%)	(Inhab./km ²)	N.	N.
2011	Portugal (1)	10,562,178	1.99	114.5	22.53	28.80
	Oeiras (2)	172,120	6.16	3751.3	23.59	29.30
	Queijas (3)	36,288	18.31	4512.5	26.39	30.70
2021	Portugal (1)	10,343,066	−2.07	112.15	20.21	36.79
	Oeiras (2)	171,658	−0.27	3742.27	22.92	38.88
	Carnaxide and Queijas (3)	36,079	−0.58	4095.23	25.76	35.88

Table 2. Population living in Queijas by age group and gender. Source: INE/Portugal Statistics, 2011 and 2021.

Data Reference Period	Age Groups	Number of Residents			Proportion		
		Resident Individuals	Gender		Resident Individuals	Gender	
			Male	Female		Male	Female
2011	0 to 14 years	26,559	13,683	12,876	15%	7.95%	7.48%
	15 to 24 years	16,533	8463	8070	10%	4.92%	4.69%
	25 to 64 years	96,059	44,269	51,790	56%	25.72%	30.09%
	65 and older	32,969	13,722	19,247	19%	7.97%	11.18%
	Total	172,120	80,137	91,983	100%	46.56%	53.44%
2021	0 to 14 years	24,317	12,577	11,740	14%	7.33%	6.84%
	15 to 24 years	17,864	9167	8697	10%	5.34%	5.07%
	25 to 64 years	88,229	40,971	47,258	51%	23.87%	27.53%
	65 and older	41,248	16,866	24,382	24%	9.83%	14.20%
	Total	171,658	79,581	92,077	100%	46.36%	53.64%

In line with national and European demographic trends, and according to the 2021 census, Queijas has an adverse population dynamic, having experienced a decline in population over the last decade and an increase in the ageing of its population (see Tables 1 and 2).

Queijas has a relatively high elderly dependency ratio (EDR), with 35 elderly people per 100 of working age, which has increased over the last decade. The population aged between 25 and 64 inclusive, which was 56% in 2011 and 51% in 2021, represents the main part of the population living in Queijas. The population aged 65 and over has increased (by

5% from 2011 to 2021), while the 0–14 age group has slightly decreased (by 1% from 2011 to 2021). These are the age groups that are most vulnerable to climate change.

The survey [55] provided additional insights into the census data. When asked “what you like the most about Queijas” (Figure 5), the results show that 31.3% of respondents valued the proximity of Queijas to Lisbon; 27.1% considered and valued the accessibility of Queijas to other places, such as choice, work and other needs; 22.9% saw Queijas as a place that provided and valued family ties and friendship; and 12.5% of respondents valued the public spaces, including the urban green space. In addition to other results, the survey allowed us to perceive who were the respondents that valued and used these public spaces. It can be seen that these respondents were those that belonged to the age group between 25 and 44 years old inclusive (8.7%), possessed higher education (13%), lived in single-family houses (13%) and teleworked in Queijas (8.7%) (for the relationship between these and other questions of the survey, see Figure 6).

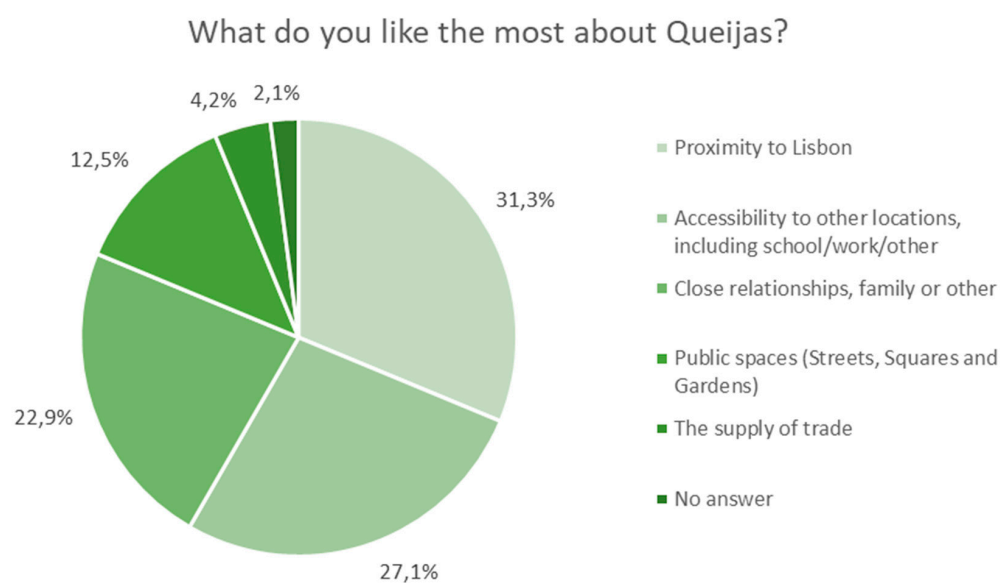


Figure 5. “What do you like the most about Queijas?”. Source: [70]. (Units and Decimals follow the European standards).

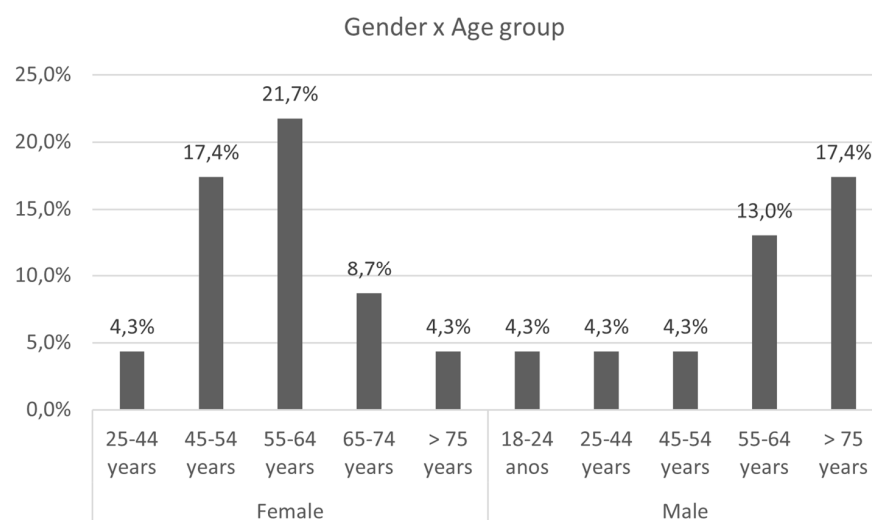


Figure 6. Gender and age groups in Queijas. Source: [70]. (Units and Decimals follow the European standards) Thus, some conclusions can be drawn: (public) green spaces are less valued by the older population, possibly because their buildings have their own leisure spaces, and these people already have their habits and relationships with their own homes, for example, private gardens.

In addition, the use and evaluation of these spaces by age group (between 25 and 44 years old inclusive) suggest that these respondents, in addition to residing, also worked at home, which was associated with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic [71–73].

Alternatively, these spaces are like an extension of the users' homes in terms of play or socialising. The visual, auditory and olfactory sensations that these spaces transmit and the associated social interaction were highly compensatory characteristics for the users' psychic balance.

In 2021, the municipality of Oeiras covered 770 ha of green area, which was equivalent to 43 square metres per inhabitant [74].

Pocket urban green spaces tend to be located in consolidated urban centres, can be connected to local daily life [75–77] and provide both social and physical benefits to communities [78,79]. These pocket spaces provide residents with a physical environment that encourages physical activity and promotes the movement of children and the elderly. This was directly observed in Queijas.

The analysis results suggest that there was a correlation between the proximity of UGSs and their quality (environmental, conservation, safety, maintenance and lighting), which was associated with urban comfort and reduced levels of air and noise pollution, in addition to accessibility [4,80]. For people to visit green spaces daily, these people must have the opportunity to use them, experience them and verify their benefits in these people's lives. This can occur through purposeful and balanced physical design, such as encouraging more active lifestyles to experience this type of structure or even for it to become "normal" within communities. This can also occur through planned interventions in inclusive spaces that offer a diversity of activities that increase the quality and accessibility of space; in engagement with the natural environment; and through the sensitivity, interaction, trust and safety of users across various age groups when using these spaces [81].

The effects of the current climate change may make it more challenging to maintain urban green spaces, while extreme events (such as wildfires, droughts, floods and cold spells) may threaten urban forests [82]. Global warming may speed up tree growth in cities more than in rural areas due to the urban heat island effect [83]. In turn, urban green spaces modify the local climate by significantly reducing carbon dioxide levels and providing a cooling effect in cities, which has a direct impact on the well-being of people [84–86].

4.2.2. Perspectives on Existent and Potential Public Spaces—Typologies, Continuities and Management

There are beautiful parks and gardens in Oeiras, including contemporary ones, such as Parque dos Poetas [87], and unique historic ones, such as the Royal Estate of Caxias [88]. While this study privileged parks and gardens in Queijas, a keen eye for the existent and potential public green spaces is pivotal.

The bivariate between the two age classes that are more vulnerable to climate change (0–14 and over 65), per statistical subsection, from the final results of the 2021 Census [89], superimposed onto the existent gardens and parks [38], allowed us to verify that these people were within walkable range (less than 500 m) of these urban green spaces (see Figure 7). More importantly, other urban spaces already provided green canopies along streets and wider public spaces, which were duly managed and monitored by the municipal authorities (see Figures 8 and 9).

As observed, there were two important nodes of urbanity with population peculiarities, different construction times and public facilities: (1) market—São Miguel Square—Garden Cesário Verde and (2) schools and other facilities—promenade and urban park of Queijas (see Figures 10 and 11).

These two urban nodes also featured, on the one hand, sustained intervention, and on the other, management and maintenance of the public space by the municipality. However, contiguous available plots (possibly private and with approved projects) might contribute to urban rehabilitation by redesigning public space, even if temporarily, whilst fighting against climate change and being conducive to community well-being.

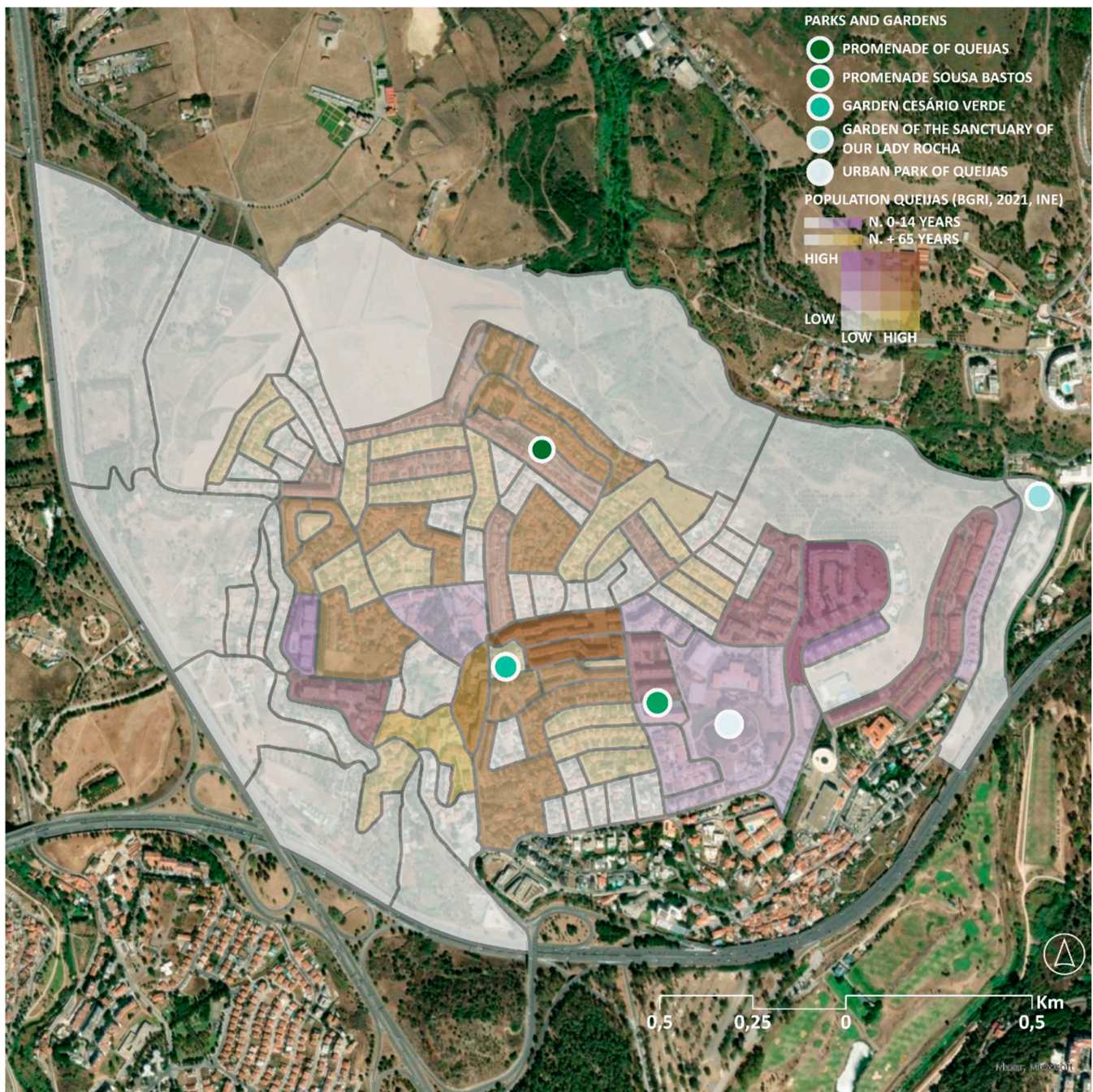


Figure 7. Parks and gardens and population bivariate between the most vulnerable age groups per statistical subsection. Source: own production over open-data parks and gardens, available at <https://oeirasinterativa.oeiras.pt/#/ig/home>, accessed on 20 July 2023. Oeiras Interativa, Câmara Municipal de Oeiras, Gabinete de Informação Territorial (GIT). BGRI 2021, INE/Statistics Portugal, available at <https://geoc2021.ine.pt/?locale=pt-pt>, accessed on 20 July 2023. Backmap World Imagery, ArcGIS Map Service, available at https://services.arcgisonline.com/ArcGIS/rest/services/World_Imagery/MapServer, accessed on 21 July 2023. Open data source with no use limitation NB: translated by S.M. (Units and Decimals follow the European standards).

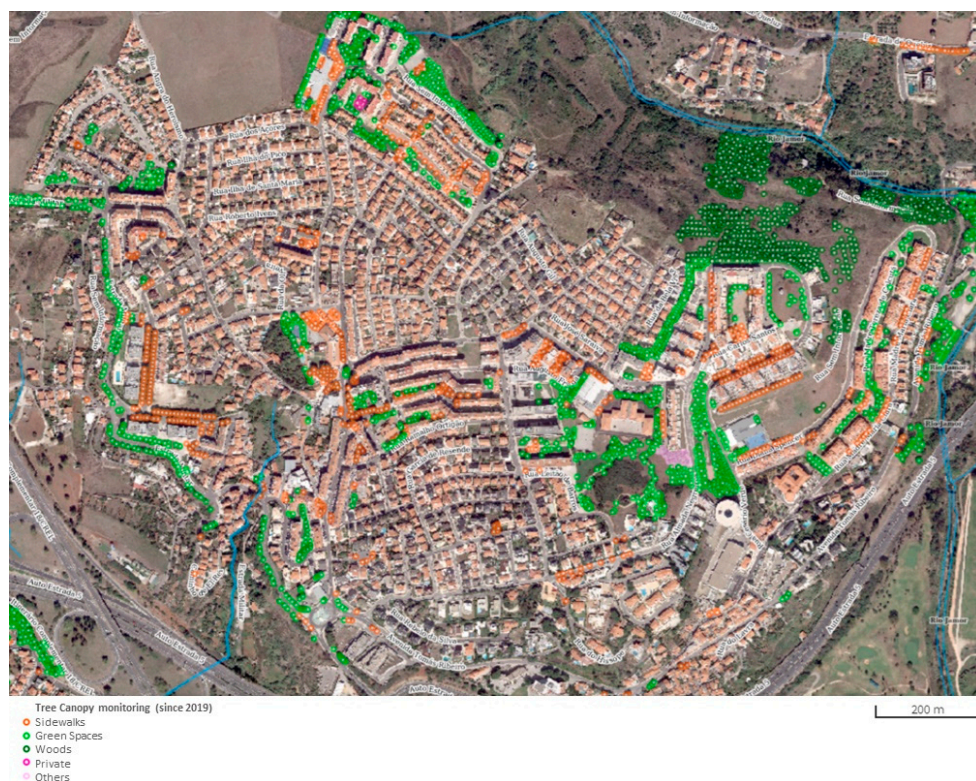


Figure 8. Tree canopy monitoring (continuously updated since August 2019). Source: clipping of the municipal area, available at <https://oeirasinterativa.oeiras.pt/#/ig/home>, accessed on 20 July 2023. Oeiras Interativa, Câmara Municipal de Oeiras, Gabinete de Informação Territorial (GIT). Permission granted by Gabinete de Informação Territorial (GIT). NB: translated by S.M.



Figure 9. Green spaces under municipal management. Source: clipping of the municipal area, available at <https://oeirasinterativa.oeiras.pt/#/ig/home>, accessed on 26 July 2023. Oeiras Interativa, Câmara Municipal de Oeiras, Gabinete de Informação Territorial (GIT). Permission granted by Gabinete de Informação Territorial (GIT). NB: translated by S.M.



Figure 10. Parks and gardens and public facilities heat map (excluding green and recreational). Source: open-data parks and gardens, available at <https://oeirasinterativa.oeiras.pt/#/ig/home>, accessed on 20 July 2023. Oeiras Interativa, Câmara Municipal de Oeiras, Gabinete de Informação Territorial (GIT). Backmap World Imagery, ArcGIS Map Service, available at https://services.arcgisonline.com/ArcGIS/rest/services/World_Imagery/MapServer, accessed on 21 July 2023. Open data sources with no use limitations. NB: translated by S.M. (Units and Decimals follow the European standards).

Observation on site and throughout time and cartography (1996, 2001, 2012, 2016, 2020, orthophotomaps available at <https://oeirasinterativa.oeiras.pt/#/ig/home>, accessed on 20 July 2023) allowed us to notice the upsurge in and diversity of housing blocks with public space (with trees) within the buildings, the increase in green public space (e.g., the Urban Park of Queijas, appears for the first time in the 2016 orthophotomap) and the densification and growth of the tree canopies (see Figures 8 and 9). Parks, gardens and rivers were essential in this assessment (e.g., biospots in Jamor Urban Park and Poetas Park) [16].



Figure 11. Urban rehabilitation, regeneration and heritage [50,69], parks and gardens (Oeiras Interativa) and existent and potential public space continuity (own production for this study). Source: open-source datasets, available at <https://oeirasinterativa.oeiras.pt/#/ig/home>, accessed on 20 July 2023. Oeiras Interativa, Câmara Municipal de Oeiras, Gabinete de Informação Territorial (GIT). Backmap World Imagery, ArcGIS Map Service, available at https://services.arcgisonline.com/ArcGIS/rest/services/World_Imagery/MapServer, accessed on 21 July 2023. Open data sources with no use limitations. NB: translated by S.M. (Units and Decimals follow the European standards).

Long-standing good practices related to waste (NB: Queijas was the first place in Portugal to undergo a pilot trial of waste separation, which occurred in the 1990s), water and urban green spaces management with a particular view on introducing autochthonous species and increasing biodiversity while improving inclusivity and well-being reflect on the priorities of the small town of Queijas.

The development of such works targets urban rehabilitation through diversification, density and connection between new activities and public spaces [84–88]. Climate action and well-being are pivotal in the allocation of funding, investment and management. In line with current landscape and environmental protection policies, integrating former rural areas under a protective framework has been realised through re-naturalisation processes,

such as the reintroduction of native flora and the consequent increase in biodiversity (e.g., Queijas Urban Park). Data regarding biodiversity and its monitoring are also available, sometimes in real time, on the Oeiras Interativa platform.

Diversity and the offering of public facilities are evidenced by the Garden Cesário Verde and contiguous public space and the Urban Park of Queijas (see Figures 10–13).



Figure 12. Promenade and urban park of Queijas: public spaces with former rural areas around the boundaries. Maintaining structures, such as the windmills, and offering art and leisure safe places, with a sustainable approach to local species. The high school and housing blocks next to the Noronha Feio High School (named after a local personality), photographs by S. M., 2021/23.



Figure 13. Market—São Miguel Square—Garden Cesário Verde: gathering the local community for a religious festivity with local civil authorities (before and after COVID), September 2022/2023, and a market with a festival on the occasion of a national TV broadcast, December 2023; the main street with a “suburban flavour” (COVID-19 lockdown, March 2020). Photographs by S. Morgado, 2020/23.

5. Conclusions: Designing Everyday Spaces for the Future

A fast search of the current scientific literature confirms the gap between published research in the field of architecture and urbanism, i.e., with a conceptual and design dimension, with regard to an approach to reducing the urban footprint, as the present demands in the face of the climate emergency, with extremes reached by July 2023.

However, this does not mean that this concern and practice does not exist. In fact, it is widely considered and active in technical terms by architects and urban designers and international institutions such as the UIA—International Union of Architects [89], where the Sustainable Development Goals Commission seeks to bridge architectural design and the Agenda 2030 SDG—Sustainable Development Goals, in line with the United Nations and the European Union, among others of similar reputation and political weight, take such concerns into account.

National governments, particularly local governments through municipalities, are fully committed to the imperative of active energy, digital, social and economic transition in the face of the climate emergency. Portugal is an example of this.

Relevant examples address the need to identify and provide cooling centres as a response to the effects of extreme heat, especially in huge cities where the urban heat island effect is more severe. Under the scope of “heat action plans”, positive results in decreased heat-illness-related and mortality rates were confirmed. The City of Chicago offered a public response plan after lethal heat waves in 1995, as well as the Government of France in 2003 [90]. New York City also introduced the “cooling centres” [91].

Paris and Barcelona are at the forefront of the urban design, especially with the reconfiguration of urban axes and plazas by reducing traffic, increasing tree canopies and strengthening a proximity relationship, i.e., a public space turn. The first experiments are now being rescaled to the whole cities, and interventions are conceived, targeting the possibility of replication in other areas. The “parcours et îlots de fraîcheur” in Paris since 2018 [92], “Superillas” or superblocs in Barcelona since 2021 [93–95] and the use of traditional cooling technologies such as the water Qanat of ancient Persia, in the former area of the Sevilla World Exhibition 1992 [96], are a few.

It is noteworthy that Paris and Barcelona, in their different contexts of urban design, converge in the predominant traditional system of streets (in their different characters, including avenues and boulevards, initially with trees and green spaces) and squares. In this case, as in many others, the key is to give space back to pedestrians and soft mobility, dissolving visual boundaries and obstacles to provide a wider view and experience of a space that promotes well-being.

This is not new but has been achieved under significant political and economic pressure. These proposals can and should be seen as fundamental experiments, which, as in previous periods, will bring aesthetic and functional renovation and environmental and social benefits.

In Portugal, national policies and recommendations are in force, notably the most recent Parliament recommendation that the government create green corridors and spaces to improve the quality of life and air in urban centres. [97]. In fact, Oeiras is promoting and creating public space, with a view to climate change (see Section 2).

The key issue lies in the implementation of policies, i.e., their translation from strategies and programmes into a dimensional, infrastructural, inhabited, territorial corpus. The embodiment of policies is the key to bringing key environmental issues to the forefront of the urban realm. In our view, the process must be designed to address qualities that contribute to improving well-being, in particular by supporting an inclusive perspective.

The integration of disciplines usually under different professional aegis, such as landscape architects and urban designers, but also other professionals, must be a step towards urban design innovation.

De Castro Mazarro et al. argue that “At the neighbourhood scale, degrowth scholars suggest that the reduction of the urban footprint could take place through the revitalisation

of underused urban areas, their de-sealing and their renaturation” [98]. However, further work must be done on the design front.

In the specific case of Queijas in the municipality of Oeiras, apart from the master plan for the municipality [87], in which the areas under urban rehabilitation and regeneration are identified, notably the heritage plan that identifies the historic centre [58], one can admit the need for an integrated approach to urban design and planning interlinking the segmented areas of Queijas and the diversity of public facilities.

While addressing the specific needs regarding urban design, e.g., a detailed plan involving the historic core and the urban rehabilitation area (see Figure 11), is not attainable via desktop research, it does not mean that it is not considered or prepared by the municipality. However, if it was in force, it would be publicly available.

In the authors’ view, the care and maintenance of public spaces involve an appropriate approach for sustainable urban rehabilitation from a circularity viewpoint. Saving open land and recycling existing urban fabrics and buildings where possible and increasing the permeability capacity with a view to a diverse community are encouraged [74–77].

The capture of open plots, maintaining the current permeable and vegetation area within the urban fabric, changing and levelling pavements to reduce car velocity, enlarging pedestrians’ sidewalks and extending the municipal cycle network are also encouraged. Different choices of pavement would also help in this endeavour.

An interoperational tool for design management and correlation between the different territorial management instruments [88,99] could be further developed based on undergoing practices such as tree canopy monitoring (each tree has its own file, which is accessible from the platform Oeiras Interativa, see Figure 8 [100]).

An integrated approach to the open space system, ranging from the fundamental ecologic network to pocket spaces, as proposals in the spatial planning in the Municipal Master Plan, could position the municipality on the next level towards its endeavours, which are observable on site and in the official documents available.

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