# Lisbon-Sintra Touristic Axis - Urban Subversion and Renewal Opportunities

## Cátia Mestre Tomé

Lisbon Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, CIAUD - Polo Universitário da Ajuda, 1349-055 Lisboa, Portugal
e-mail: catiamestetome@gmail.com

## Carlos Henriques Ferreira

Lisbon Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, CIAUD - Polo Universitário da Ajuda, 1349-055 Lisboa, Portugal
e-mail: cferr@fa.utl.pt

## Abstract

*Tourism, as a social phenomenon, provides an economic and political dimension, based on mobility and consumption in the context of social-cultural and urban planning that encompass contemporary cities.*

*In the passage of mid-nineteenth century to the Fordist capitalism, the technological development in the transport and mobility has allowed a significant change in the existing tourism model, replacing earlier forms of tourism organization by increasing democratization of access to this specific practice of leisure.*

*The tourist axis Lisbon-Sintra is a paradigmatic case of this phenomenon. Contextualized by the consolidation process of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, through the expansion of the town center to the periphery, along the old routes, has particular relevance for their specificity and adaptability before successive impacts of territorial changes.*

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Sintra, Lisbon, Urban Renewal.

## Lisbon-Sintra Touristic Axis

The consolidation of the Sintra landscape reveals a constant human occupation, which formed a territory with particular characteristics and a unique historical and cultural identity, favoring the tourist exploration.

The sixteenth century was a period of growing and decision-making center of the established power, but it's during the second half of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, that the romantic spirit of foreign travelers, artists and the Portuguese aristocracy discover the magic of Sintra.

The Lisbon-Sintra distinguishes itself by its cultural heritage and as a legacy of the romantic journey of the aristocracy Villegiature as evidence by the various farms and palaces. Constituting an evasion route from Lisbon, took an eminently tourist character that favors its role as a structuring axis of metropolitan expansion, densification and consolidation.

In the nineteenth century, in 1887, opened a railway connecting Lisbon to Sintra. This accessibility contributed to the arrival of tourists and urban expansion. At the end of this century, the Sintra tourist

character, recognizing as summer residence of aristocrats and millionaires who invest in the construction of new architectural styles (**Figure 1**) geared for leisure and resting e.g. Regaleira Farm.



**Figure 1** – Sintra old postcard

The development of accessibility, enhanced by progress on public transport and the subsequent evolution of the private car, promoted mobility and tourism democratization throughout the twentieth century, rising tourism demand to a mass tourism for all social classes.

The development of social mobility, supported by private car and the gradual rise of the tertiary sector, boosted successive and various forms of urban aggregation. The new focus of urban growth were setting up, connecting and fragmenting due to the dynamic accessibility and the diffuse form as urbanization was processed along this axis, contributing to the transformation of identity relations.

Simultaneously, the urban sprawl finds expression and the risk of an uncontrolled urban anarchy is partly protected by the De Groer Plan (1951) (**Figure 2**), that contributed to the preservation of Sintra, being established Areas of Protected Landscape of Sintra-Cascais. However, this plan has mainly focused on the potential of tourism and cultural history rooted in the village of Sintra, palaces and noble houses - architectural heritage - distant from the new residential settlements.



**Figure 2** –Urbanization Plan of Sintra, Etienne de Groer, 1951

Included in the tourist triangle Lisbon-Sintra-Cascais, Sintra municipality has an area of about 317Km$^2$, and 363 740 inhabitants (INE, Censos 2001), assuming as a tourist destination, largely determined by the Cultural Tourism matrix promoted in the region of Lisbon.

This tourist destination, early identified, promoted a landscape that combines architectural heritage, natural heritage and cultural activities, centred in the old Sintra village, in contrast with the new urban developments, that allowed speculation instead of an integrated plan.

## The Regional and local Planning

In the 30's of twentieth century new urban policies supported in legislation of 1934, 1944 and 1946, that framed the development of general urban plans, enlarged it's domain to "urban centers or areas of tourist interest, recreation, climate, therapeutic, spiritual, historical ... "(Gonçalves, 1989, p. 245).

However, the ineffectiveness of an operational urban planning allows some of the building legislation to play a role of regulation: the enlargement of urban centers and their densification without planning structure approved. This local reality, since the 50's, due to migration to the periphery areas of Lisbon, causes an unprecedented urban outbreak that manifests in the urban settlements center and over the paths of traditional villegiatura places. This urban expansion, along the roads, contributed to the degradation of territory, because it wasn't considered under an appropriate landscape framework (Brito, 2010b).

The 1971 legislation has set different levels of planning – general, partial and detailed plans. Being committed to the municipal councils to draw up general plans, in reality, the housing development continues to be the instrument to "enlarge the urban space," due to the incapacity of local administration to control the urban operations. (Gonçalves, 1989).

In 1977, is given the possibility to the municipal councils to prepare municipal plans, and the council assembly has the competence to decide on its. But only in 1982, was define the framework of municipal director plans (PDM), with few approved under this legislation, they represent a new formal approach to urban planning since the 1930s.

In terms of regional plans, in 1959, is approved the basis of the master plan for urban development in the Lisbon region, approved by the Plan Commission, but not by Central Administration. In 1989, this Plan wasn't yet approved, allowing unbalanced occupation of space and a huge growth in the Lisbon metropolitan area (Lobo, 2005, p. 94).
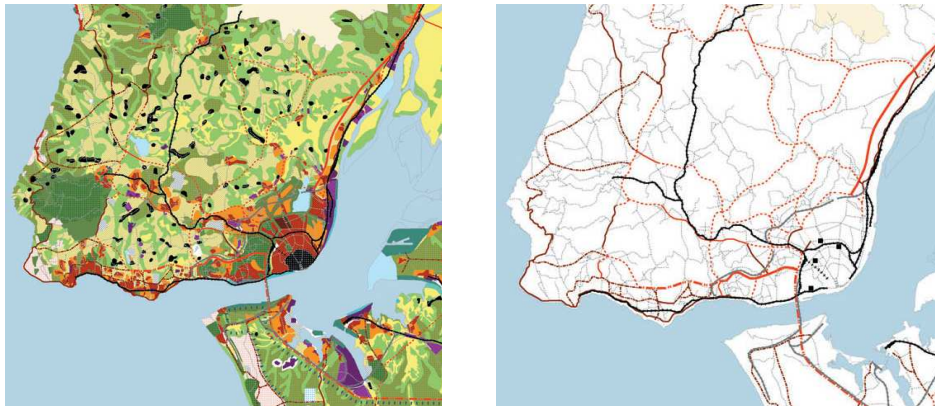
Between 1965 and 90 years, the urban housing development is the tool to *widen the urban space* without the *municipal planning framework*, in other words, urban sprawl constitute a major cause of the disordering of our urban fabric and the lack of quality of life for much of the population of the region.

Accelerated urban growth starting from 60 years showed the need for a regional vision on spatial planning. In this context were launched the bases of regional planning by the Master Plan of Lisbon Region (PDRL) 1964, and the Regional Plan of metropolitan area of Lisbon (PROTAML) 2001.

These years between the two planes correspond to the period of configuration / conformation of the territorial and institutional metropolitan area of Lisbon, a period marked by territorial dynamics that resulted in both residential and industrial expansions scattered on the peripheries of Lisbon, as the decay and degradation of the old cores, with emphasis on the depopulation of the city of Lisbon, but also the

disruption and transformation of rural areas traditionally associated with agricultural activities (Soares, 2003).

The PDRL framed the Lisbon region defining a set of major infrastructure and public facilities that stand out, with new ways to structure a condition far beyond the urban area of Lisbon, which encompassed new radial and circular roads. Are defined in this Plan, the CRIL and the CREL, as well as the highways of Cascais (A5), and South (A2), among others, a network whose achievement it turned out lately (**Figure 3**).



**Figure 3**    Extract of the Regional Plan of Lisbon, 1964 and the infrastructure system proposed.

But, if at the level of major infrastructure, the plan is "anticipatory" and innovative, for the urban structure and occupation proposes a growth model based on radial main transport routes, "unknowing" almost for complete the territorial dynamics finer than were transforming the peripheries of Lisbon on "low fire". The PDRL, by ignoring this reality, remained a gap on the peri-urban expansion, which is the basis of a great misconception about the management of metropolitan and rural areas on urban and rural boundaries, misconception that remains until the achievement of the Regional Plan of Territorial Planning (PROT) in the metropolitan area of Lisbon (2001) (Soares, 2003).

In ten years, 1990/1999, radically changed the understanding of the Regional Planning (PROT) figure. From 1999 is attributed to PROT a guiding role of regional development, binding on the Public Administration, and enhancer of its strategic nature rather than the traditional and physical planning.

The PROTAML 1992, defining the structure of occupation and land use at a metropolitan scale reflects a physical planning vision. The relationship with the municipal planning, and in particular with the PDM, is established through the forms and restrictions to land use where there are important inconsistencies and apparent incompatibilities in the conception of the territory. This type of disarticulations contributed to the non approval of PROTAML in 1992 and for the delay of a document integrating the strategies and options for the metropolitan area planning.

In 1998, the bases law of the land-use policy and urban planning sets out three main areas of intervention: the national policy planning, land management instruments and the regime of urbanization and construction. It also provides sectorial plans (tourism).

In 1999, starts the developing of new PROTAML. For the first time, it establishes a coherent sequence of strategic planning that integrates the Strategic Plan of the Lisbon and Tagus Valley, in this way, the guidelines for land use planning can be framed by the options of economic and social development at the country and region level.

So, rather than physical boundaries of land use, the PROTAML establishes principles for structuring and organization of the metropolitan territory where the urban centralities network, the metropolitan and regional connections through the transport infrastructure and the Metropolitan ecological structure, have a decisive role.
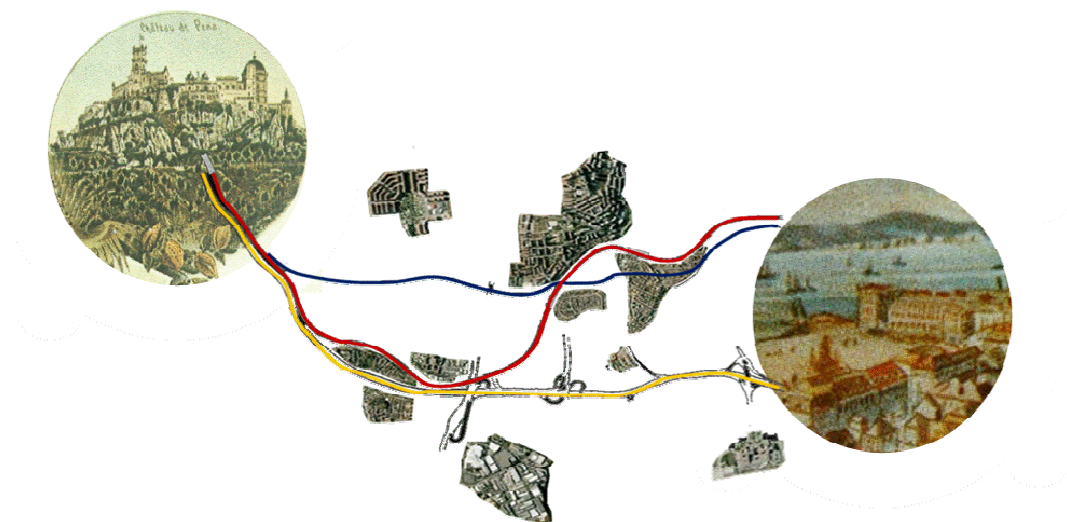
As an example of what happens with the plans of 90 years, the tourism policy intervention in this process is marked by the absence or by the subsequent intervention, not reflecting a strategic vision about the importance of this activity, and the fragilities resulting from a segregated vision of the territory that doesn't include the aspects of patrimonial valuation as a current process of urban expansion.

## The territorial tensions and a distorted dialectic

The territorial tensions were being formed from the convergence of different elements in the same territory, different pressures imposed without ensuring a balanced hierarchy of precedence.

On the one hand, tourism favored the preservation of a low density zone and environmental quality, on the other, the development of mobility and accessibility infrastructure, as well as the ineffectiveness of the planning instruments, allowed the proliferation of dense and uncharacteristic housing zones and scattered polarizations - Rio de Mouro, Cacém, Queluz - near Lisbon, which camouflaged pre-existing asset values, reflecting the massive residential expansion.
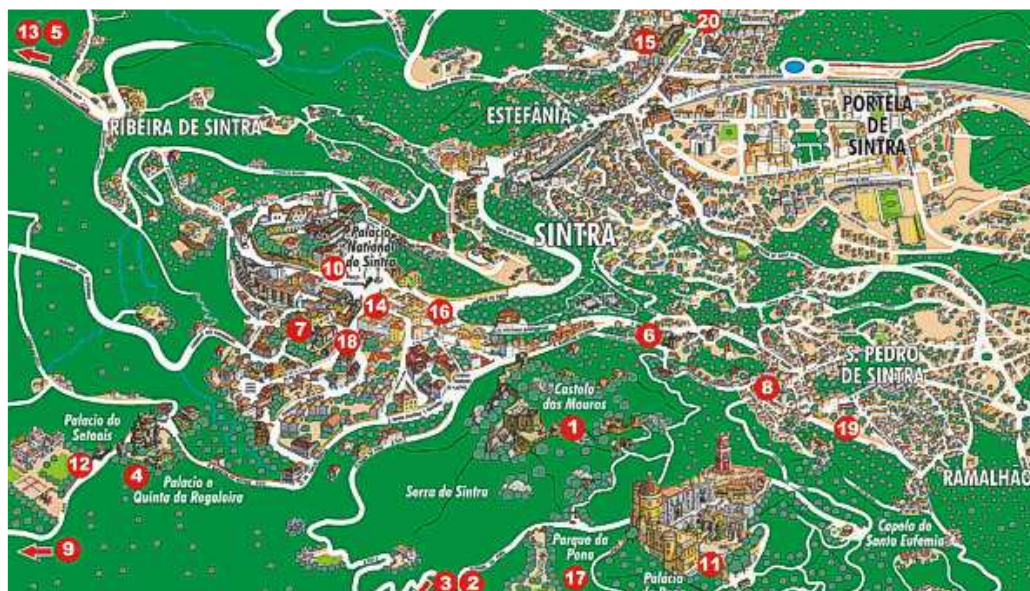
Place of prejudice and integration, this tourist axis, in the strategic-territorial identity, by previously leveraged the heritage and historic contents, Gains complexity with the "urban boom," new forms of real estate pressure and the overlap of undifferentiated That new accessibility infrastructure contributions to tourist Tensions Between the poles of Lisbon and Sintra, and the intermediate areas of emerging urbanization (**Figure 4**).



**Figure 4**  Dialectics between centralities and intermediate urban patterns – continuities and fragmentation In Lisbon-Sintra axis.

The identity of Sintra results from a established dichotomy between the cultural tourism (centered on the village of Sintra) and housing clusters (**Figure 5**). On the other hand, the tourist flux brings new problems that require analysis. As notice, the recent mass tourism - *low cost* - open to new social organized groups are focus on the origin and destination places (Lisbon-Sintra) ignoring the old connection paths and its legacy.



**Figure 5**    Touristic Plan Guide of Sintra.

The romantic legacy, associated to the enjoyment of the path, enchanced by successive estates of recreation, is progressively replaced by distance-time operative relationship centered on the origin and destination. The conquest of space and time gains strength in a parallel process of massive residential urban growth that overlaps the ancient tourist expectations, where the promotion of tourism and residential developments belies the weight of the old summer resorts and aristocratic residences.

In this cultural context, we should analyze the *speculative bubble* and the *subversion* of *values* phenomenon that found expression in this territory, blaming the political and Administration incapacity to regulate the occupation of the territory.

The speed of this process, coupled with the ineffectiveness of planning tools and urban planning, allowed the disqualification of landscapes, where it manifests the transformation of sustainable identity. Matter this way a critical analysis of the changes along this axis and a purposeful strategic approach of urban-touristic interventions and new tourist projects of urban regeneration

**Challenges between a cultural legacy and renewal opportunities**

The challenges of urban sustainability confront conservative positions with the vanguards of a city in change. Is important to understand the strategic role of city review as an integrated process, considering some critical reflections to be included in the plans and projects:

- The consolidation of cultural stereotypes embodied in the old statements, area confronted with new developments of landscape minimizing the amount of urban sprawl, present in contemporary city.

- The effects of urban growth, rather than inhibitors of value, should promote new possibilities of valorization of the territory;

- Time and technical pressures, over new infrastructure aren't reflected in real time due to the commitments of connections (previous and new) and the limited abilities of negotiation;

- The process of city growth and new forms of mobility hasn't been able to integrate a new landscape today. On the one hand, successive overlapping infrastructure accessibility promotes mobility and facilitates communication, fostering new connections. On the other, the confrontation of different scales of action introduces new rates of apprehension of the landscape associated with new challenges and different scales, which impose the need for revision of the traditional urban model;

- The historical Lisbon-Sintra connection, which initially stated from a villegiature concept relation, as been successively transformed into a bipolar dangerous reality, as the overvaluation of main traditional centers reduces the importance of the intermediate territory.

## Conclusions

It's important to assurance a balance between central territories and the intermediate urban fabric, promoting a valorization policy preserving their specificities. On the other hand, the correct evaluation and structuring of the impacts produced by the implementation of infrastructure accessibility can be an essential to overcome the currently identified constraints.

The urban sustainability is supported in large compromises including technical, administrative and political decisions. These compromises should be focus on the possibilities of integration between cultural heritage and new competitive challenges.

It's also recommended the establishment of a specific entity - *Task Force* - in order to develop a comprehensive management synchronized between the Master Plan, Regional Plan and Strategic Plan. This management should seek new approaches overlapped the classic instruments, in order to improve the communication between different actors. The interactions between urban developments and touristic resources can be an important essay.

Recognizing the new opportunities that emerge from this subversion of identity, resulting from changes produced by tourism and urban massification, we value the importance of an evaluation process. In this context we stress the need to develop plans and projects of local and regional levels including: the creation of a tourism plan for urban inter-regional competitiveness; the recovery of a cultural and patrimonial route associated with the urban context of infrastructure accessibility and mobility interfaces; the production and promotion of new reference icons suitable to the different levels of understanding and perception of contemporaneity. In the interactions between urban planning, territory and tourism, is essential to strengthen each of these dimensions, exploring the possibilities of the urban planning legacy, and the touristic competitiveness in the territories under an anthropocentric approach.

## References

Brito, S. (2010a) *Imobiliária do Lazer e Turismo Residencial.* Porto: Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação.

Brito, S. (2010b) *Sustentabilidade, Ordenamento do Território e Ambiente.* Porto: Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação.

Domingues, A. (2006) *Cidade e Democracia: 30 anos de transformação urbana em Portugal.* Lisboa: Argumentum.

Duarte, R. et al. (2007) *O Turismo e a transformação de cidades.* AE Ensaios.

Ferreira, C. (2010) "Itineraries of urban sprawl to the periphery and the consolidation of the Lisbon Metropolis," *Artitextos*, FAUTL, Lisboa.

Fortuna, C.; Ferreira C. (1996) "O Turismo, O Trista e a (Pós)Modernidade", *Seminário – Reflexões Socias sobre o Turismo,* Faro: Universidade do Algarve.

Gonçalves, F. (1989) "Evolução Histórica do Direito do Urbanismo em Portugal (1851-1988)", *O Direito do Urbanismo,* Lisboa: Instituto Nacional de Administração, pp 225-268

Lôbo, M. (1995) *Planos de Urbanização. A Época der Duarte Pacheco.* Porto: DGOTDU, FAUP.

Lobo, M. (2005) *Administração Urbanística – Evolção Legal e Sua Práctica.* Lisboa: Instituto Superior Técnico Press.

Soares, L. (2003) "Ordenamento do e Planeamento do Território no contexto Metropolitano", *Atlas da Área Metropolitana de Lisboa,* Lisboa: Área Metropolitana de Lisboa, pp 247-291