

Living in Almada

City Circles
Eva Jagerman
2020



Orientation

- Observation

How do people live in Almada?

- Documentary
- Grafitti

Field research

- Observation

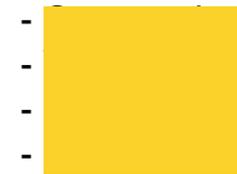
How do people live in Almada?
What kind of housing is there?

- Housing
- Mapping

- Interactive

What is valued home in Almada?
What is the relation between a home and a house?

- Conversations



- Conclusion

Desk research

- The past

What is the cause of abandoned spaces?
What is the influence on housing acces?

- Past and Current
- Signs on abandoned houses
- Empty broken houses

Material and construction
Laws and regulations
Future planning R. do Ginjal
Sources

- Conclusion

Intro

Defining topic

Researching in Almada, I am questioning myself what makes Almada a home? And what is the relation between a home and a house? Looking at Almada there is abundance and at the same time a need for housing. Considering a home is mental ownership and a house physical ownership I am questioning this ownership and the value of physical matter.

Looking at my past, current and possible future housing situations. I am questioning myself about the different opportunities in housing situations these days. I find myself growing up in a wealthy environment where I am privileged to live in a fixed residency.

The feeling of 'what is a home' I understand, is based on personal experiences, for everyone has a different perspective. Looking at the current situation in Almada, I want to focus my research on the opportunities within living in this environment. I want to research not only by looking at constitutions, the policy of regulations but by personal stories, experiences, and values of the inhabitants. Keeping in mind that informal living for some people is a choice and for some people, it is a forced situation

Research questions

What is valued a home in Almada?

What is the relation between a home and a house?
What is the cause of abandoned houses?

Orientation

● Observation

How do people live in Almada?



Documentary

O que vai acontecer aqui?

Left Hand Rotation

Informal
living by
choice or
by force

FOR OUR HOUSES FOR
OUR LIVES WE FIGHT!

we are not nomads by choice!

The human element
is an obstacle

There is a rise in the number of tourists in Portugal. Portuguese people have fewer spaces to live in. Space and urban land are being forced into the processes of financial capitalism. 20 years after the 25th of April there are still self build neighborhoods (shacks), many built by poor Portuguese workers. "There are enough houses but no right for people to housing." - Rita Silva, association HABITA

Documentary - O que vai acontecer aqui? - Left Hand Rotation
what is happening here?

There is a rise in a number of tourists in Portugal. Portuguese people have fewer spaces to live in. The main cities are experiencing a housing crisis. After the capitalist crisis, there was the external intervention by Troika (The European troika is a term used, especially in the media, to refer to the decision group formed by the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Aimed to make the real estate market the backbone of economic recovery. Another factor is the new Urban Rental Law. (also known as the evictions law) Evictions can be carried out through an administrative process without a judicial decision.

Space and urban land are being forced into the processes of financial capitalism. The bank, real estate agents, construction industry, investors use housing as a financial asset. Rich people from over the world can buy a property and renovate the building. Landlords sell houses to investors, a property goes from owner to owner for a higher price. Besides houses are renovated to become luxurious touristic places. Stone Capital is a real estate investment fund, focussing on the promotion of commercial and residential luxury projects. Also, green spaces and public spaces are converted into a luxury condominium. (state of shared sovereignty).

“The city center was characterized for a long time by a low-cost rental market. Rents were thus relatively low when compared to the functioning of markets in other countries.” - Luis Mendes, association Morar Em Lisboa.
This allowed the historical center to remain mixed social cultures, which is healthy for a city. The tourism monofunctional culture is influencing diversity.

One bedroom (called affordable rent) costs. 450 per month. Around 20 percent of Portuguese people are poor and they live with 400 - 500 euro or less a month. The average wage of Portuguese is 700 euro per month. Which makes it difficult to find a suitable house. Portugal has one of the lowest rates of social housing. 2% A lot of social houses are empty, sometimes for years. People who need a place to live start to squat these places.

“Investment is going to produce polarization of greater inequality” - Rita Silva, association HABITA
The snowball effect of poor people becoming more poor and rich people becoming richer. Mothers are taking care of their children, finding it difficult to find a job to pay the rent.

20 years after the 25th of April people are still self build neighborhoods (shacks) many build by poor Portuguese workers, internal migrants who came to the city to work, a long time ago. Later the shacks were occupied by external migrants to work and build things in Portugal, but had no place to live. Investors buy the land and the houses where people live in getting demolished by the Amadora City Council.
People feel discriminated against by racism. An inhabitant says to a police officer “There is a constitution that says, housing is a right for everyone”

Inhabitants go on into the streets to protest. Rita Silva says that the problem is not that there are not enough houses. There are enough houses but no right for people to housing. In 2019 there was a strong citizen opposition. People use media, and social media to spread the word.

The tourist syndrome - An interview with Zygmunt Bauman

Being branded means to be made into an interesting experience. Something unusual, promising, a new experience you did not desire, but now by advertising, you impulsively do desire, this is called a wish. ‘Must-see’ places are growing business. Wish is complementing desire according to Zygmunt. ‘must-see’ places are not enough for the tourist industry, there must be room for expansion. New business must be created. The state-of-art shopping malls are aimed at accidental buyers. Not seeking for objects but sensations, convert to be seduced, waiting for a wish to arrive. An interview with Zygmunt Bauman Zygmunt Bauman is a leading sociologist who explores his work on liquid modernity, consumerism, space, hospitality, and the “full planet”. Identifying ethical nature on social activities, analyzing human conditions. The aim of Adrian Franklin of an interview with Zygmunt is to inspire more reflexive tourist studies.

“ liquid modernity differs from traditional society, which was an inflexible, hierarchical social order and solid modernity which cast aside traditional society in favor of what imagined could be a better egalitarian blueprint for human society. “ - Adrian Franklin

In this interview, Franklin asks Zygmunt for his views on contemporary tourism in relation to his understanding of contemporary society.

Zygmunt Bauman;
Separates tourism as a metaphor for **contemporary living**. A body of specific persons - certain activities. According to Zygmunt tourist studies are about the question of why a large number of people move to specific places at specific times, and more importantly what sort of impact this has on those people and the natives living in those spaces.

Tourist only flows into certain places. Some places are meant not to be seen by outsiders, only known by native people. Characteristics of tourists are being in a place temporary, knowing the place but not belonging to it, and not locked in the local life.

- **The looseness of tourists**, no commitment to the place, no fixed date of staying. An agreement of “we will meet again” may cause conflict when working together in the future.
- **The grazing behavior**, seeking experiences and sensations. “pure relationships” consumption of pleasurable sensations, after the satisfaction you move to another place and relation, hoping it to be just as pure.
- **The frailty of relationships**, we don’t trust relationships to last. Living from one moment to the other. Cutting out the worries of long term consequences.

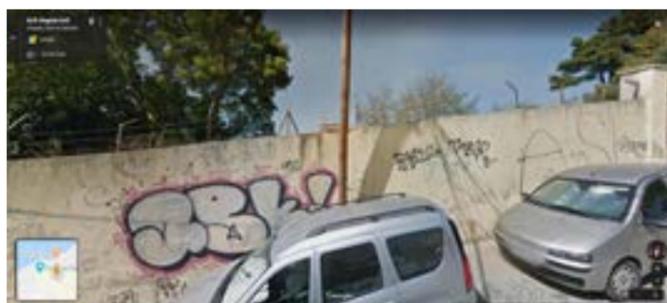
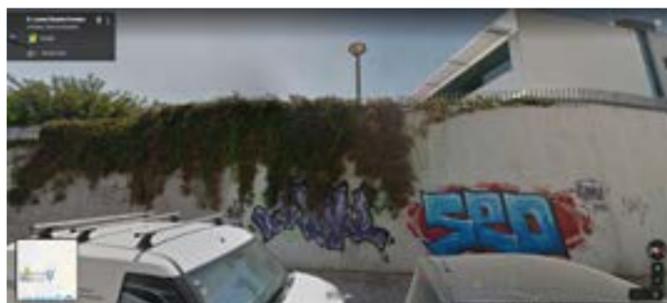
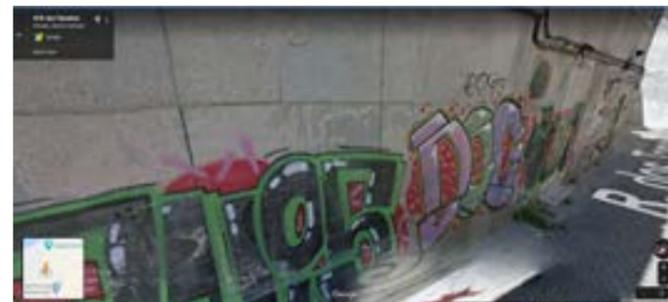
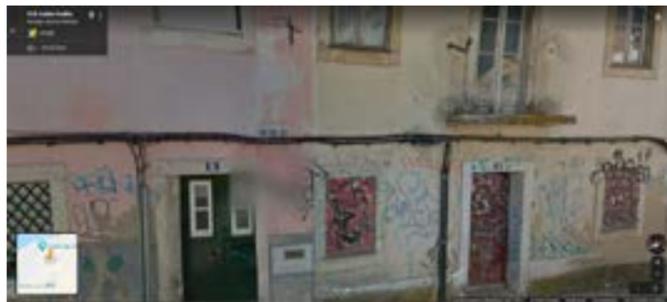
Comparing tourists with vagabonds. (Vagabond is a person who wanders from place to place without a home or job). Vagabonds do not travel by choice as tourists do. Vagabonds probably would like to stay in place rather than to move on. They don’t stay in place as long as they want, but as they are wanted. Relationships keep on breaking or are no longer desired. “ You are still in the same place, but the place is no longer what it was... “
-Zygmunt

Franklin. Tourism metaphor works on consumerism, workplace, politics etc. Consumerism transition from need through desire to wish.
Zygmunt. Difference between desire and wish, desire needs to be cultivated, takes time and effort and wishing does not require this. Looking at airports there is a difference between ;

- Permanent tourists, traveling as a way of life. (Acting to short impulse. Branding makes being alerted and causes seduction. Selecting branded objects offers confidence)
- Occasional tourists, crowds of people going to the same place every year, feeling lost and unsure on airports. (Cult of certain places as a harbor or enjoyable tourist experiences in an annual cycle. People working towards the time and space as a long desire.)

Graffiti

What does graffiti reveal about the identity of a urban space?



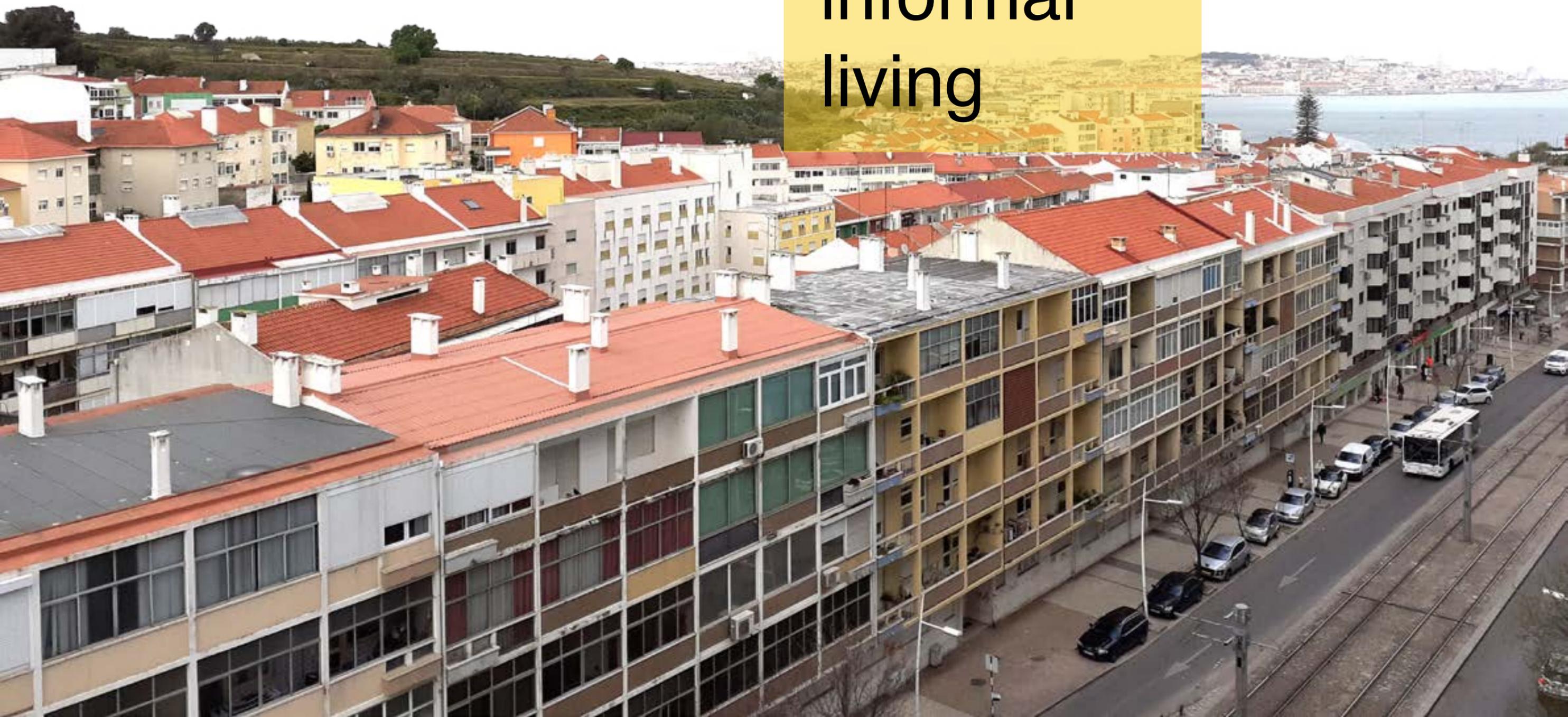
Graffiti
While walking in Almada by google streetview I noticed a lot of graffiti on the exterior walls and doors of houses. I wondered what this says about the identity of a house and about the norm and values of the inhabitants living in this urban environment.

Field research

● Observation

How do people live in Almada?
What kind of housing is there?

Formal
and
informal
living

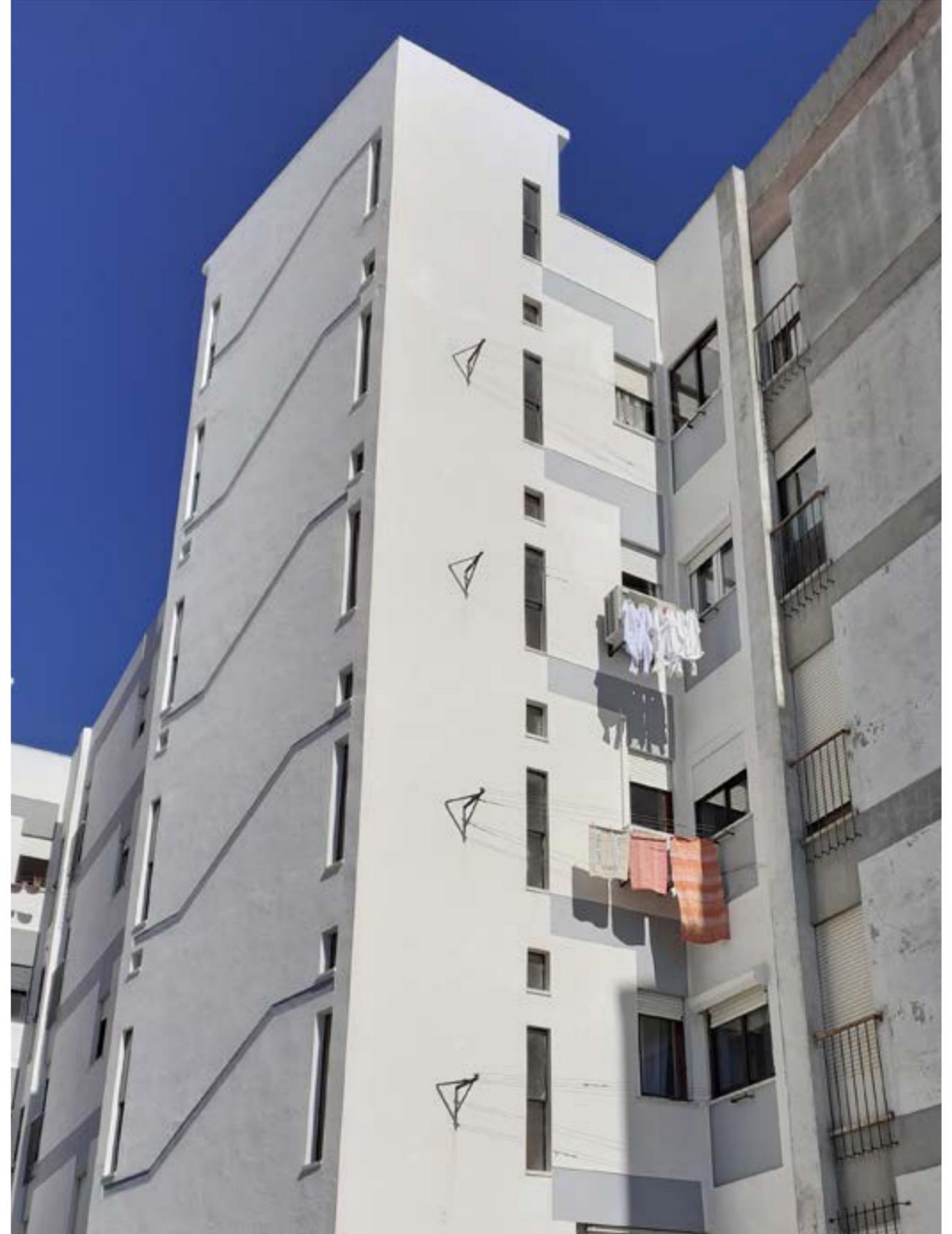


Housing

New houses



Multiapartment



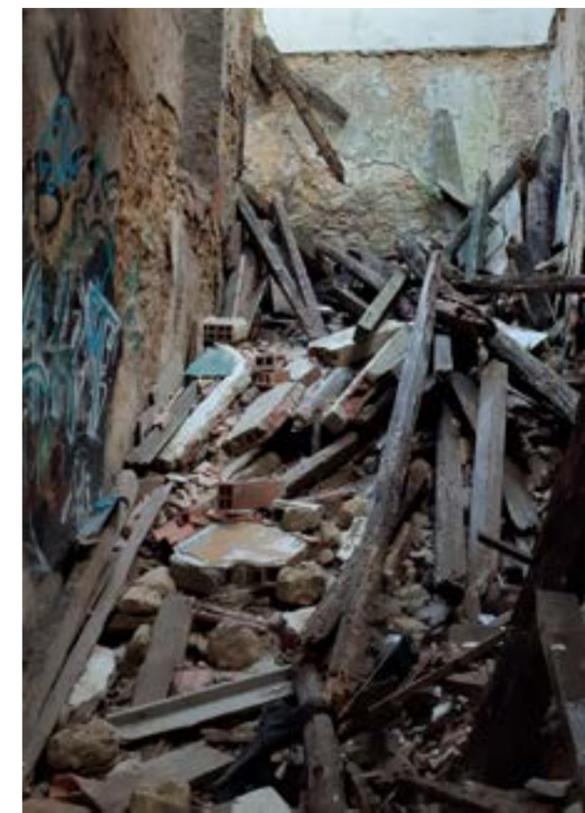
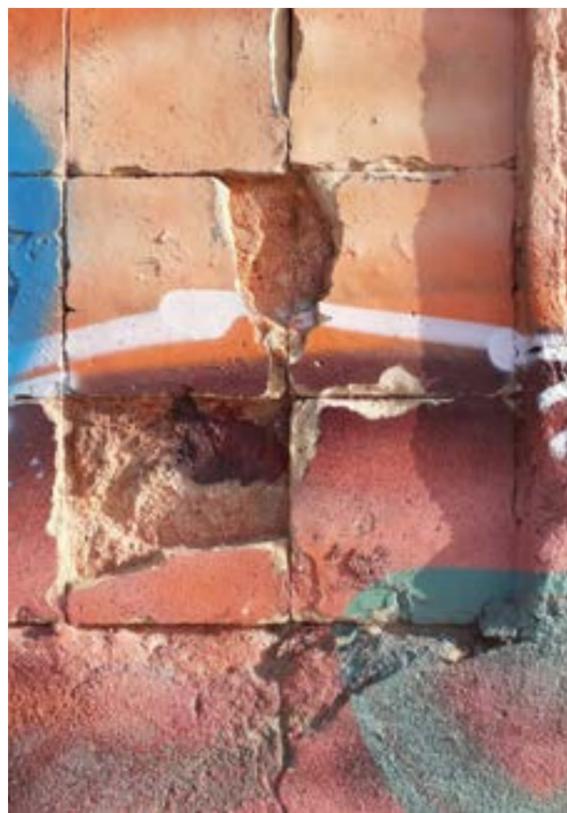
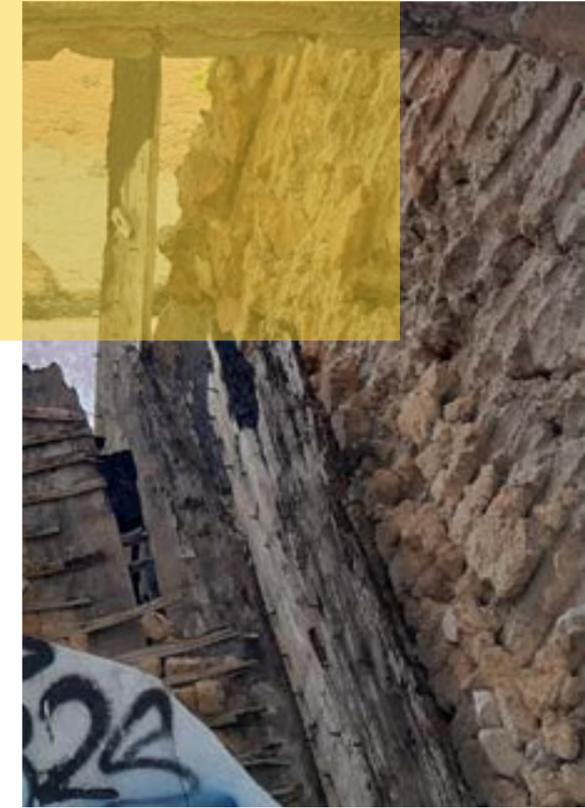
Deprecated houses



Abandoned houses



Decay



Mapping



Abandoned, broken houses



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3



4



6



7



8



9



5



10



11



12



13



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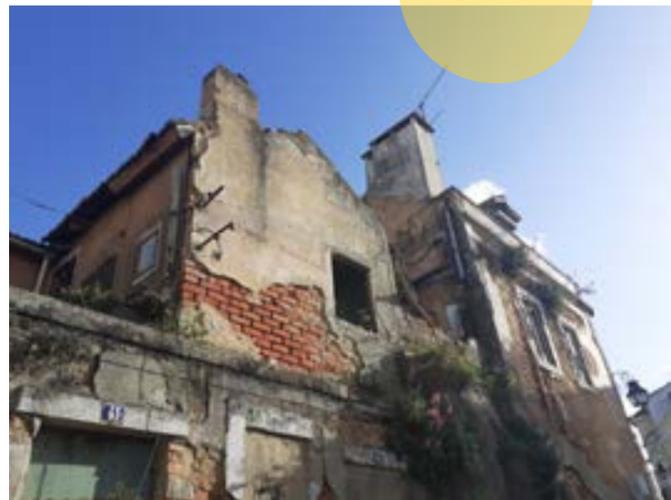


● = google streetview

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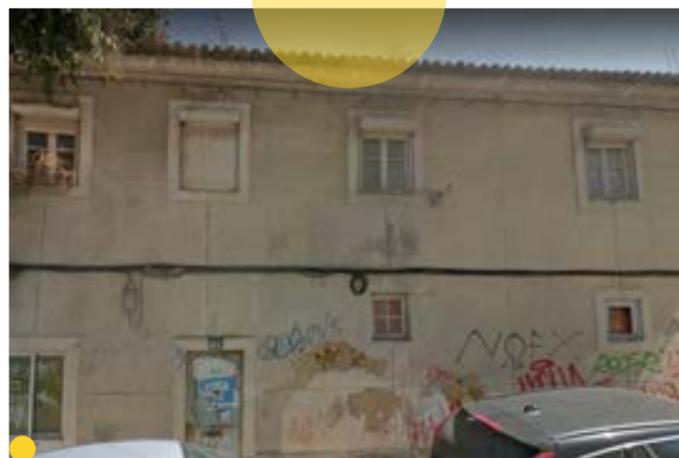
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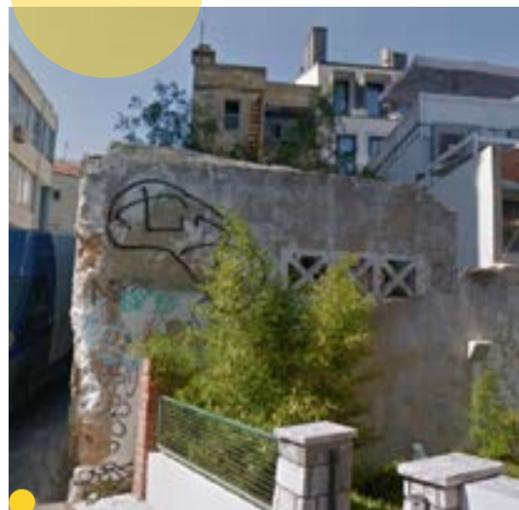
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● Interactive

What is valued a home in Almada?
What is the relation between a home and a house?



Physical
and
mental
ownership

Conversations



Lives in Almada already for a long time. He explained to me that before the revolution on April 25th, 1974 most people did not have a bathroom in their house. His house is a bit of a special occasion. He has five rooms in total of which two are bathrooms.

He shows me some housing examples in the streets around his house. There are a lot of broken houses. He explains to me that most houses are made of sand and very little cement. Which means the houses are not in such good condition. Without renovation, a house will last for 60 to 70 years before it breaks down.

Looking at the windows as an example. Most of them are made from stone. Nowadays they use wood, iron, and aluminum instead because this material is stronger and more durable.

The children inherit the house from their parents if the parents own the house. According to him, there are a lot of old people in the center of Almada.

“Children inherit the house from their parents. But young people move outside of Almada to a better place and the house is left behind.”

Materiality
housing
quallity

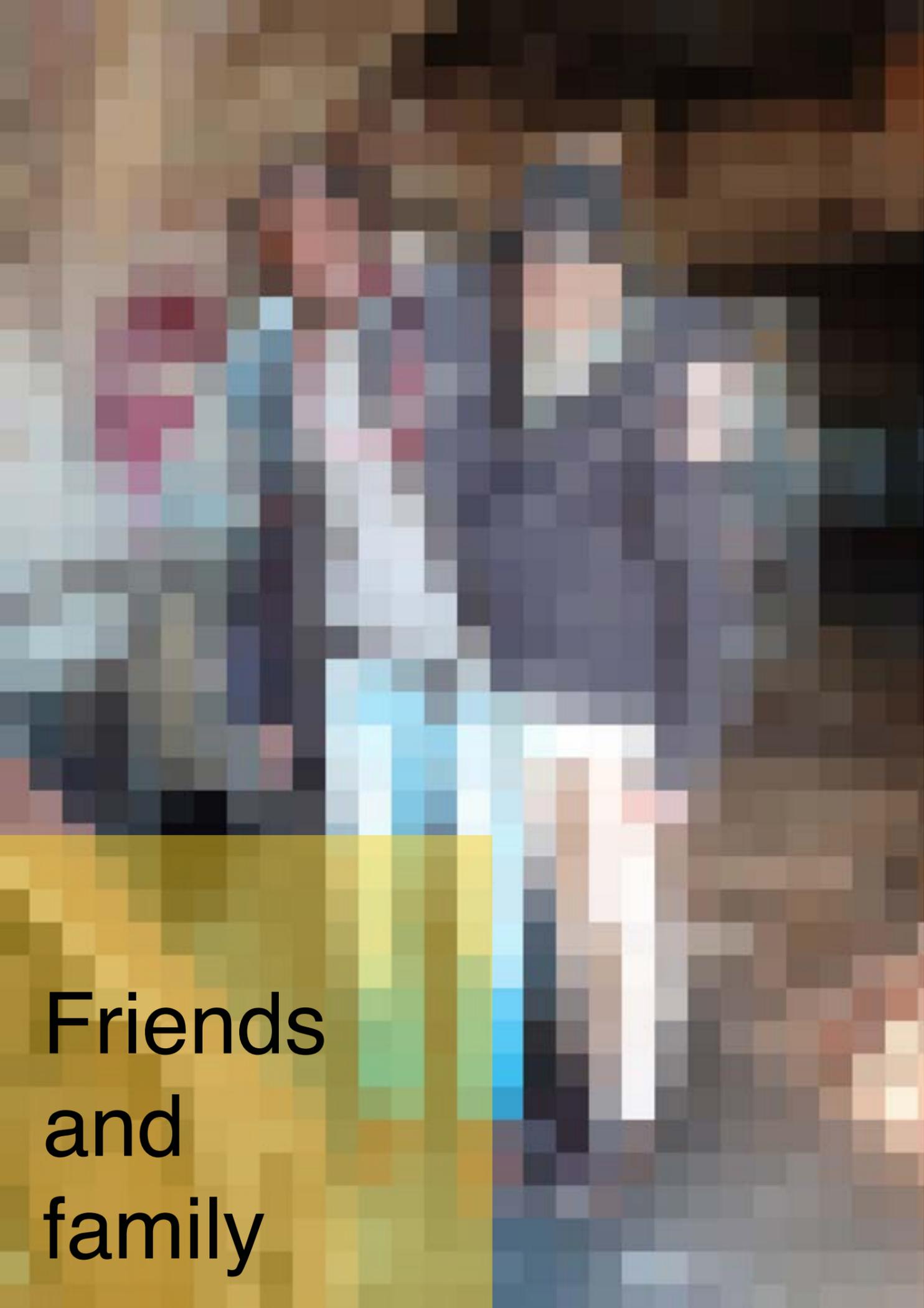


Comes from Almada, in her life she has moved 19 times. From Lisbon to Almada, to Italy and other places. She likes it to stay around Almada because she grew up here and the place feels like her home. Right now she is moving to Almada with the help of her parents. The landlord of her previous flat, where she has lived for 3 years, has changed the rent from 300 to 600 euro which is forcing her to move out and find another place to live.

According to her gentrification is a big problem everywhere. She feels sad to leave her home because of all the memories and stories she is leaving behind. She likes how her personal belongings are placed in her space. She hopes she can stay a longer time in her new place but she tells me it is hard to find a fixed place. “I have tried to buy a house. But the average wage is 600 euros. And you know a house is more than that.”

“I have tried to buy a house. But you know the average wage is 600 euros. A house is more than that.”

Memories
in living
space



Friends
and
family

conversation

_____ comes originally from Africa and lives now in Lisbon for 6 years. He grew up in Lisbon, has lived in France and Spain and other places, but has now returned to Almada. In Lisbon, he works as a construction worker.

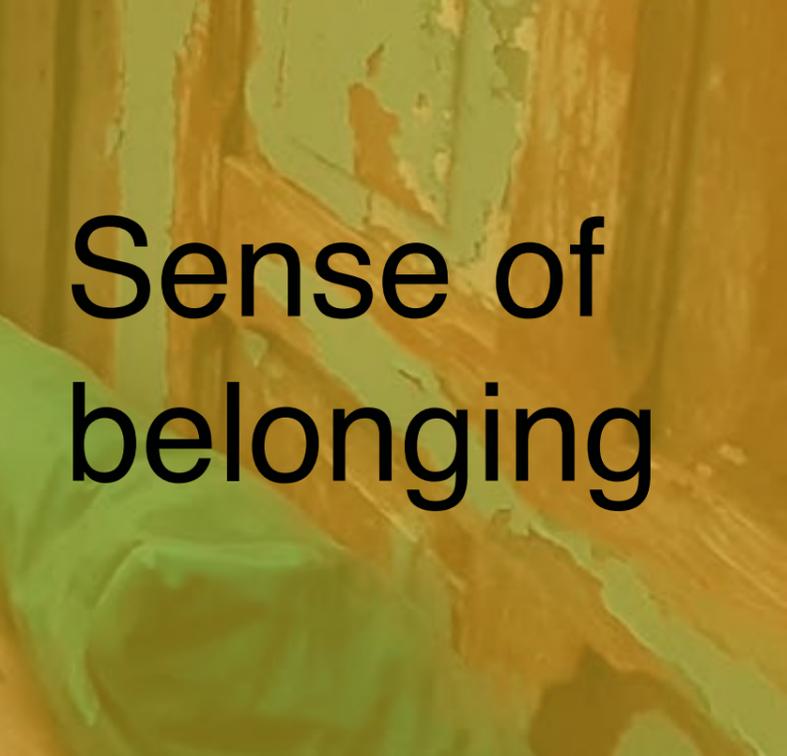
_____ gave me a tour around Almada, past the river and dragged his friend with us. He showed me the construction of a roof in old ruins and explains to me it is good and stable construction. He shows me pictures that hang the restaurant next to the ruins. The pictures show how the buildings used to look like. _____ loves it to be in Portugal because of the beautiful weather. It is always summer. He likes it to be in Almada, walking through the old center to experience the past, how it used to be. He shows me the old ruins and explains to me that same roofs are still quite stable because it is made with a good construction technique.

He likes it to build new houses, but it is important for him to show and keep the past visible. "It is beautiful and we can learn from it." _____ would love to go back to Africa and teach the people there what he learned here. "What do we learn in school? If something happens, we do not know how to build a house."

_____ He is showing me a sleeping place, the little water tap, and his cooking device. To _____ his home are his friends. "My home is my friends, my people around me. I do not need electricity, I need water, I have a roof."

Friend _____ has a bird, _____ gave it to him once as a present.

Learning
from
visible
history



Human needs

Water



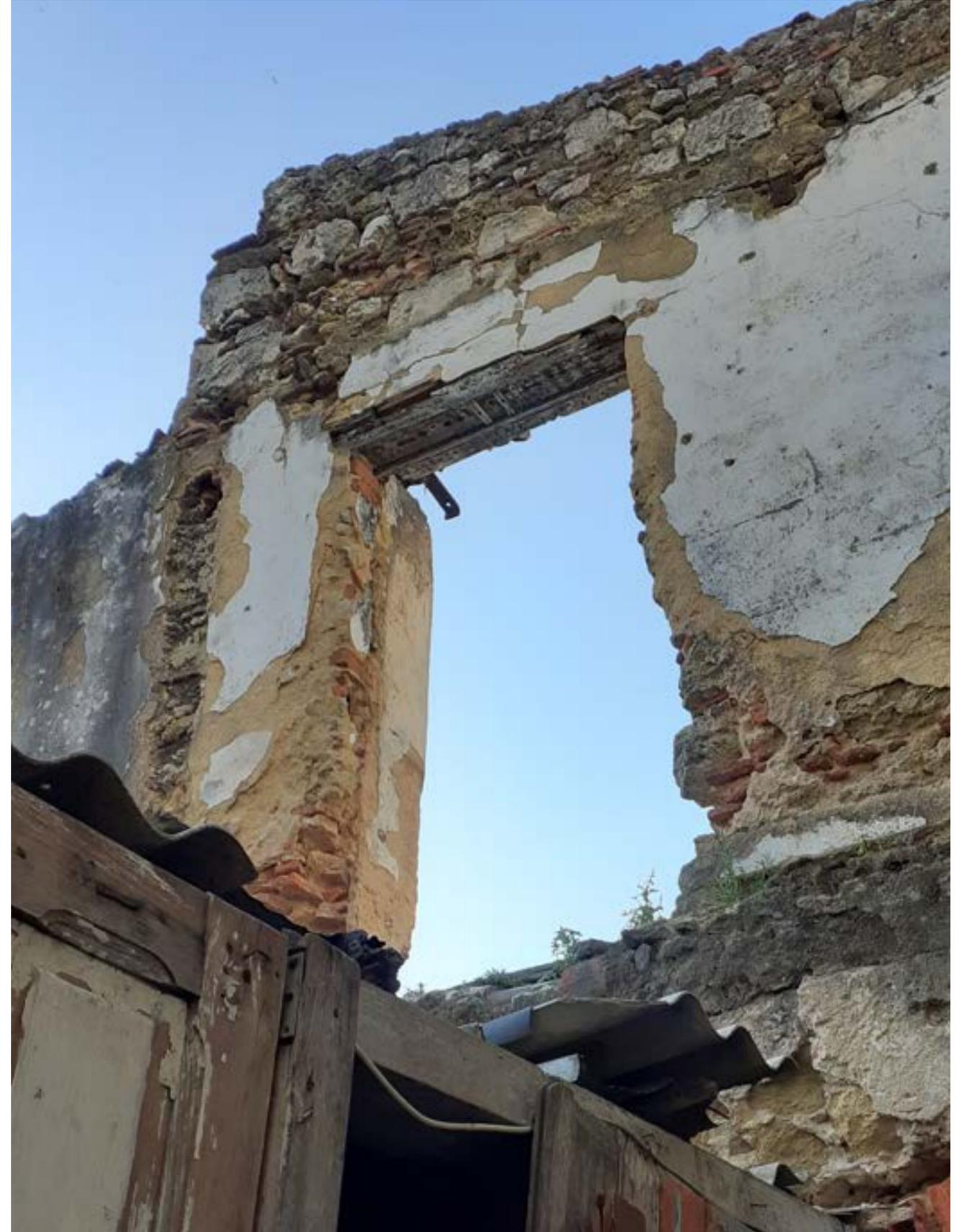
Hygiene



Cooking



View



Personal belonging



Friend

Living
activities

conversation

This conversation is with a friend of [redacted] As he wants to stay anonymous I call him Friend. [redacted] explains to me that his friend and occasionally his brother lives in there. " It is a big space, with seven rooms. " His friend works and the market and sells fruit.

Friend is grown up in the house which is [redacted] As a poor family, he lived there with his parents and grandfather. The house belonging to his grandfather. The house many rooms. It used to be two houses which are now connected. Friend wants to make a wall so that it becomes one house again, as the backside of the house is more broken and so a dangerous place to walk.

[redacted] sometimes they come and visit him in Lissabon. His family thinks he lives in Lisbon in the house of his mother.

He moved back to Portugal, Almada where he lived in his youth house, he inherits from his family. By now the place is demolished by people and by the weather. The rain made the wood rotten and created holes in the roof, floors, and walls. People entered the house, took materials, dumped their trash and graffitied the walls. The place has been left abandoned for a long time.

He is now renovating the building step by step. Sometimes he needs more hands, as he cannot do everything alone. He is happy to live this way. He would be more comfortable if the floor would be repaired. It would make his life more difficult to take care of the furniture now, he first wants the construction to be repaired. Afterward, he will think of furniture and maybe do some carpeting.

The rain
made the
wood rotten



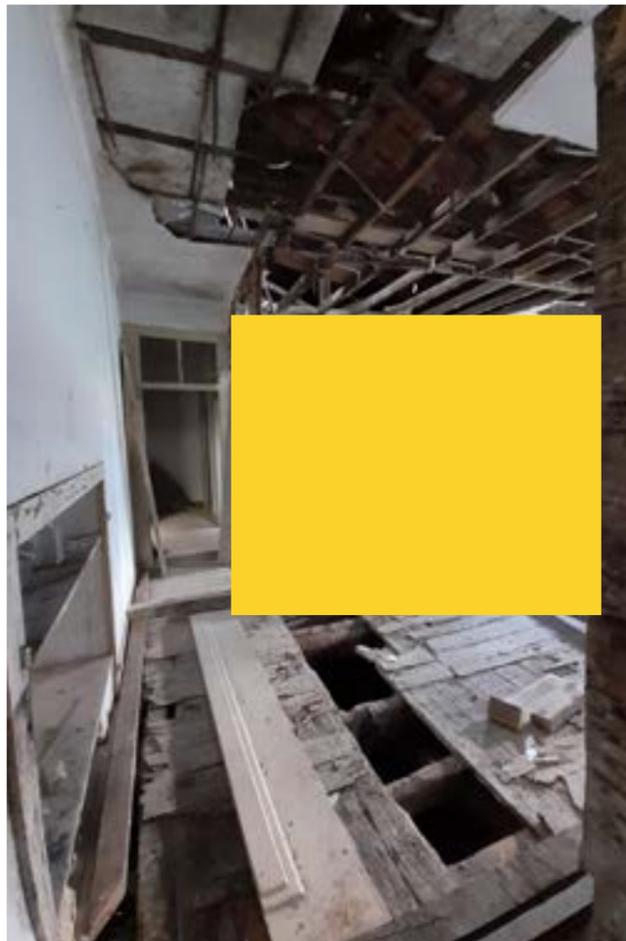
Memories

Human needs

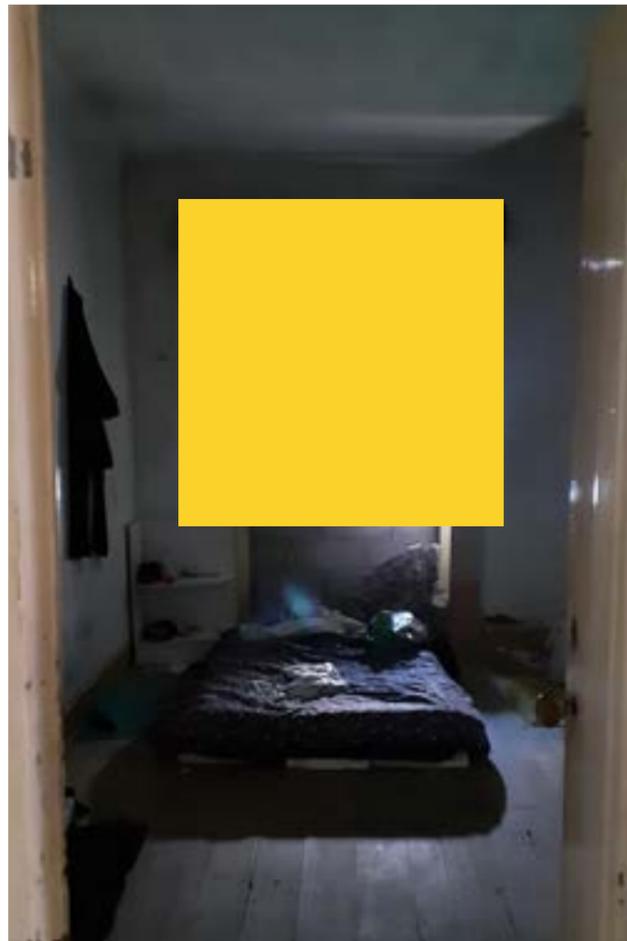
Kitchen



Livingroom



Bedroom



View



Conclusion



Friends and family



Memories



Environment



Human needs

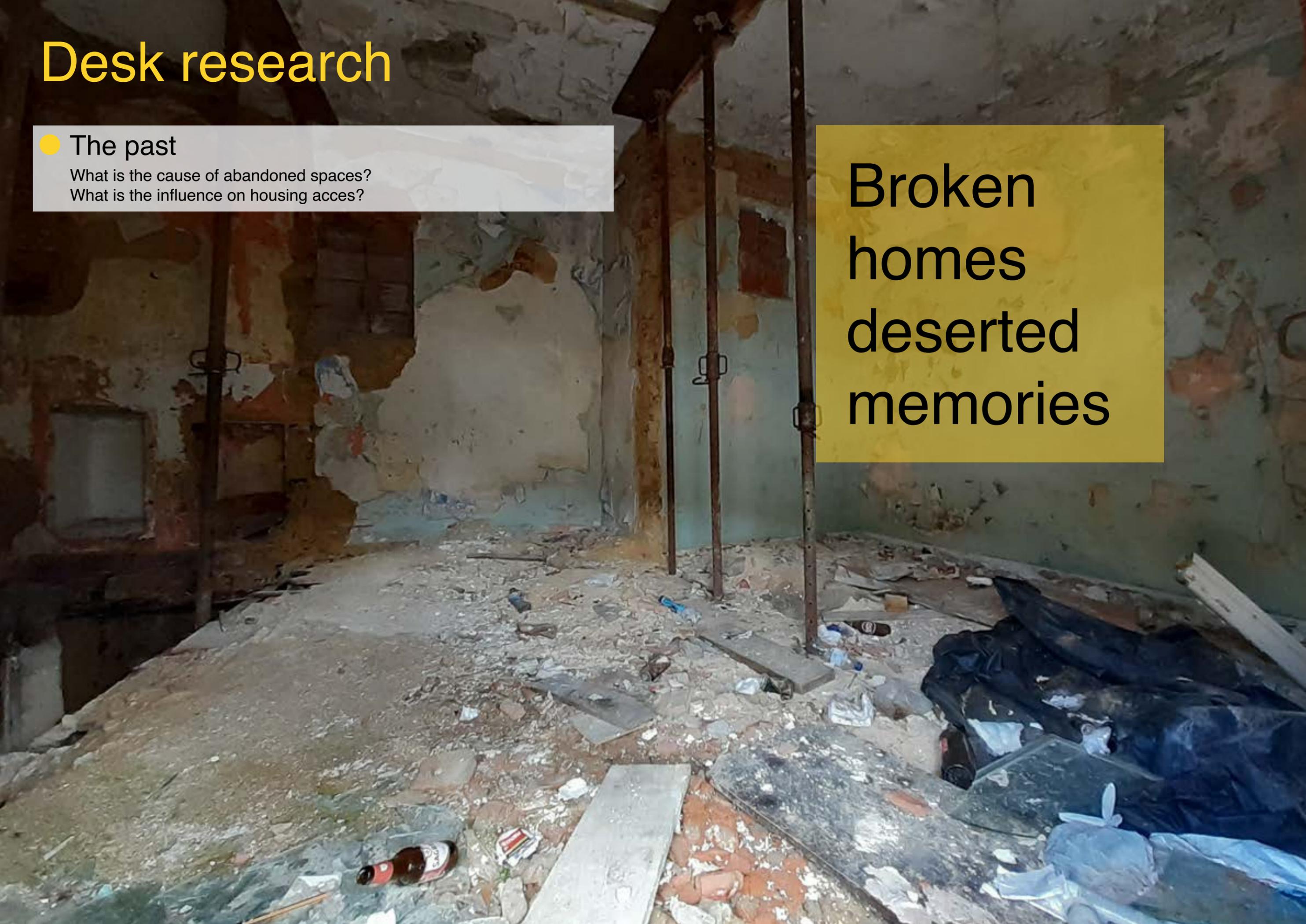
A home is their friends and family. A home is living activities and created memories. A home is having access to perform human needs. Having a shelter, a place to sleep, having food, the opportunity to cook and having a space for personal hygiene. Home is their environment. Their house, personal belongings, the visible past in the old center of Almada, having the best view to Lisbon and the almost always sunny weather.

Desk research

● The past

What is the cause of abandoned spaces?
What is the influence on housing acces?

Broken
homes
deserted
memories

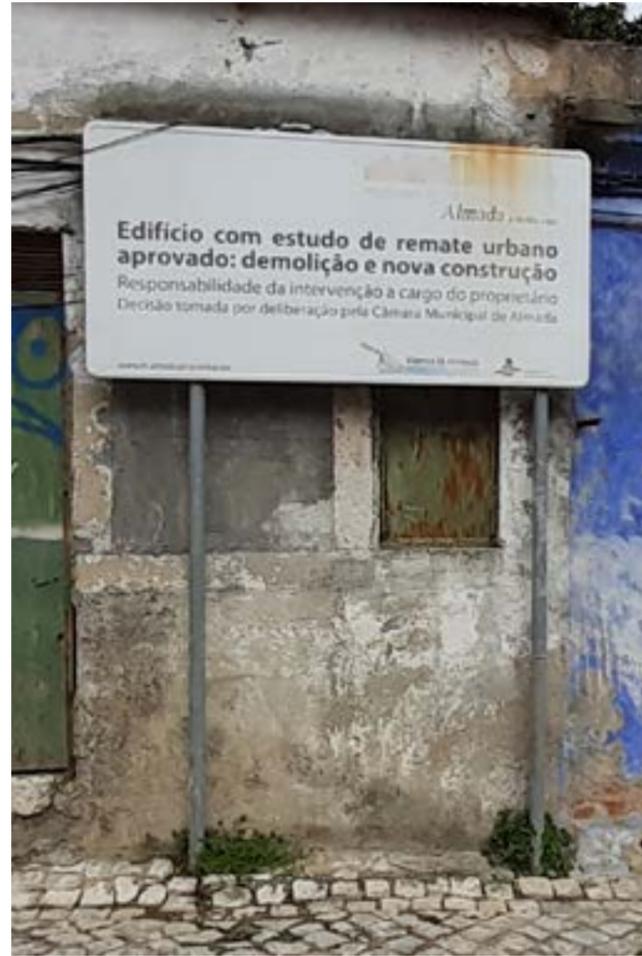


Signs on abandoned houses

IMI = Imposto Municipal sobre Imóveis
(municipal tax on real estate)



Property with aggravated IMI
Conserve your home



PROGRAM Almada minha casa Building with approved urban finish study: Demolition and new construction Responsibility for the intervention by the owner Decision taken by resolution by the Almada City Council Let's renew www.m-almada.pt/aminhacasa (aminmyhouse)



Property with aggravated IMI
Conserve your home



Property with aggravated IMI
Conserve your home

Graffiti: False death to socialism

Empty broken houses

Material and construction

Dating of the houses

Selected representative dwellings buildings of the municipality of Almada according 2016.

Detached house
age 1945 - 1960.
1624 households

Multiapartment building
age 1945 - 1960.
2401 households

Multiapartment building
age 1960 - 1980.
1493 households

Construction materials

Traditional materials and operational solutions most used in construction in Portugal has practically unchanged for years. Materials mostly used in residential buildings:

Structure:

reinforced concrete
masonry walls

Exterior wallcovering:

traditional coats and granolithic concrete

Roof:

Inclined roof covered with ceramic or concrete tiles

Transition period between the masonry buildings and reinforced concrete

'Placa' buildings, characteristic of the urban expansion of Lisbon on the decade between 40 and 60 of the twentieth century. This type of buildings is also called mixed buildings of **reinforced concrete and masonry**. This period began after the end of the period of 'gaioleiro' buildings and it is characterized to be the last type of construction in Lisbon using the masonry as a structural element.

It is believed that these buildings present a considerable seismic **vulnerability**, essential because the introduction of reinforced concrete slabs represents a significant increase of mass (and then of inertia forces) without the increase structural resistance of vertical elements.

The final period of 'gaioleiro' buildings construction is characterized by the complete **abandonment of the wooden structures** on the structural walls, the systemic use of brick masonry walls.

So, the emergence of reinforced concrete and the appearance of laws and regulations mentioned before were crucial in the gradual forgetfulness of traditional building techniques used for centuries. When the Engineers and Architects discovered the **capacities of reinforced concrete** and their significant structural capacity they definitively abandoned the traditional construction techniques and increasingly began to build with reinforced concrete.

Although the use of reinforced concrete in the residential buildings construction arises occasionally in Portugal in the 30s, it is in the next decade that it becomes current in practice.

Problems

The traditional present masonry materials are:

- clay units, large horizontally perforated used on enclosure and internal walls
- clay units, solid or vertically perforated used only in external walls
- Aggregate concrete units used more in external walls

The most popular materials are **the clay units** that represent more than 90% of the units used in walls. Usually the stone walls were covered by a thick porous render, with low modulus of elasticity and made in multiple layers for very skilful workers.

The main problems detected in Portuguese masonries are:

- Reinforced concrete slabs excessively deformable, producing mechanic actions and **cracking of masonry**
- **Connections** between walls and structure (including renders) **not correctly solved**, aggravated for some incorrect tentative to avoid thermal bridges
- Cavity **walls mechanical weak** and incorrectly done considering cavity cleaning, ties, holes, position and fixing of thermal insulation
- Singular points around openings not studied and generally solved in site with too much **improvisation**
- Finishes, renders and tiles choused **without a technical reflection** and applied to fast
- Architectonic solutions that admit ideal situations to the façades and do not examine carefully the incidence of rainfall, the actual conditions of workmanship quality and the need of durability.

Laws and regulations

Law protecting poor, Freezing rent

In the early 20th Century, Portuguese government introduced a **law to protect the poor**. This law makes the **raise of rent impossible** and the landlords **cannot evict their tenets** either. This is good for the tenets in the city as they could live in the center extremely cheap. Since the landlords are clearly **not getting enough rent for their investments**, they choose to **not fix or renovate their properties**. These properties are simply left to rot. Hence we often see houses in extremely bad shape still being occupied by tenants who have been living there for a long time.

António Frias Marques, president of the National Property Owners Association “Rents have been frozen – and remain partly frozen – for dozens of years,”. In his opinion, this has prevented homeowners from conducting renovations, as the price of construction has increased over the same period. “When the buildings’ tenants begin to pass away, the property is finally left vacant.

“When a building is empty for one year, the **state benefits**, as it charges triple the IMI, even if no one wants to live in a degraded house and the landlord is unable to rent,”

IMI property taxes

IMI (Imposto Municipal sobre Imóveis – Municipal Property Tax) is a tax on the taxable value of immovable property in Portugal. The taxpayer is the property owner.

Pedro Bingre do Amara, Professor, Politécnico de Coimbra
“In our country, wealth has always been the weakest link in the tax regime. **Very little tax on wealth is charged**, unlike the taxes on consumption and income,”

That is why **homeowners**, especially in Lisbon’s historic neighbourhoods, **often keep homes unoccupied** for several years, waiting for an **increase in prices** to sell them.

The government has reviewed the criteria for properties being considered “vacant”, which may imply an increase in IMI (Municipal Property Tax) by three to six-fold when an abode is located in a “pressure zone” and has remained empty for more than two years.

Applicable rates are the following:

- Rural properties: 0.8%;
- Urban properties: 0.3% to 0.45%;

Financial crisis 2000

Portuguese financial crisis was part of the wider downturn of the Portuguese economy that started in 2001 and possibly ended in 2016. The origins of the recent financial crisis in Portugal were a combination of strong macroeconomic imbalances, unsustainable public finances, and high public and private debt levels

The Financial crises **caused many companies to become bankrupt** and many Portuguese **left their cities** to find jobs in other countries. One of the main reason for people to abandon their houses is because even if they want to sell their houses, they couldn’t. **Not many people had that extra cash** to buy these properties here weren’t many foreign investors willing to invest in a country going bankrupt.

Law unfreezing rent 2012

The urban rental law

The liberalisation of rent controls that took place in 2012

In Portugal, the blame for rising rents and evictions is largely placed on Portugal's 2012 rental law, introduced by the previous centre-right government liberalize old rent contracts property prices increasing at an average of 15% per annum.

Many of the capital's inner city buildings which were vacant for many years, have now found new life as residential buildings, rehabilitated and sold to wealthy international investors.

Golden visa 2012

Golden visa program by the government of Portugal that grants residency in Portugal to people who invest in properties worth at least €500,000 or create 10 jobs in Portugal. this scheme began in 2012. Golden visa means having the ability to apply for permanent residency and citizenship after 5 years without the need to reside in Portugal. In fact, the applicant and their family need only visit for two weeks every two years in order to renew the Portuguese Golden Visa. In Portugal citizenship can be granted without the applicant having resided in the country.

Golden Visa, aiming to increase foreign investment. The Golden Visa is basically permanent residency in Portugal, which can be obtained when foreign investors purchases a property in Portugal. opens up opportunities for local investors to renovate these abandoned buildings to be rented out to tourists as Airbnb or apartments.

Future planning R. do Ginjal

Real Estate Project to Revive Cais do Ginjal in Cacilhas

Houses, shops, gardens, cultural venues, restaurants and hotels

The architectural plan, which will be presented for public discussion at the Almada City Hall, foresees a **complete renovation of the old warehouses**, including a riverside promenade over a kilometre long. The project will include the construction of residential buildings, designed by the architect Samuel Torres, with housing for almost 700 people. The AFA group of Madeira, will be responsible for the development of an area having more than 15 thousand square meters of space.

A former cod liver oil factory will be converted into a hotel and residential buildings will be erected, with housing for 693 people. Samuel Torres de Carvalho is the architect responsible for the project. The city council is also planning a cinema and a theatre, as well as art venues.

the project is **not expected to be completed before 2027**.

The mayor of Almada, Joaquim Judas, believes that the project will increase the area available to the public, increase security, maintain the historical character of the area, which has existed since 1845, and stabilize the cliffside

In numbers the Detail Plan represents:

80 400 sq.m of intervention area

693 new inhabitants

330 residences

98 700 sq.m of construction

44 152 sq.m of new housing

15 029 sq.m of commercial space

10 880 sq.m of hospitality space

24 387 sq.m of parking

4 250 sq.m for infrastructures

Sources

surecityproject.eu

Characterization of 'Placa' Buildings PDF

Portugese masonry building PDF

travelwithwinny.com

auraree.com

allfinancematters.com

madeira-weekly.com

wikipedia.org

equaltimes.org

afaimobiliaria.pt

Conclusion

Houses left behind,
exhausted and unready.
Obsolescence reveals their past
as tangible deserted memories.
Inhabiting abandoned homes,
a choice within this reality.
Behind a broken surface
reveals a shared comfort.
The sense of belonging
For a house, it becomes home.



Giving value to abandoned space and human needs

There is a housing crisis and at the same time a lot of abandoned houses. These empty houses arrived due to the Portuguese laws and regulations from the past. Financial problems in Portugal, laws about renting costs, taxes, and immigrant visas made affordable houses inaccessible for some of the local inhabitants. Houses that are abandoned and taken over by the municipal are to sell and gain profit. Sometimes sold to foreign investors to become a tourist attraction or a personal holiday house. The houses are left abandoned for many years and break down. Houses in Portugal break down quite fast because of the lack of quality of construction materials and communication and guidelines on building constructions. The people I met created value out of an abandoned space by living inside the building they explained to have been grown up. Their goal is to remain what was left behind and repair what is broken to become a new home.



Reflection research Almada

Researching in Almada makes me think of positioning myself in this space. Am I a student, researcher, designer or tourist? As a student I feel like a researcher, acting like a tourist, seeking interesting information, to process this information by thinking in designer solutions. Reflecting on 'the tourism syndrome' wherein tourism is used as a metaphor for contemporary living, we as students, I feel, do the same but maybe for a different purpose.

For two weeks, collectively with people, I have just met, in an unfamiliar building, in a country I have never been to before. Every time I am intrigued by how easily people can adapt to a certain space, included with its social, cultural and environmental conditions if there is no other option at that time.

Researching in this unfamiliar space I feel and I am an outsider. As mentioned in 'The tourist syndrome', there is no fixed date of staying, the 'grazing behavior' wherein we seek for experiences and sensations. I feel like we are here to be in this time and space to create learning experiences that we can exchange in the future.

Comparing this research with the research of the previous year, which was in my home county, I feel I have a more open and unfamiliar perspective on this space and events as a foreign outsider. As I am closely identified to my home country I feel like having assumptions about its systems as I am raised with the cultural rules, norms, and values of this environment. What makes it difficult in this current research is the border in Language, as it is hard to find a verbal connection with the elderly inhabitants of Almada. A positive aspect of this is to be forced to find alternative solutions for communication.

During my research in Almada, I feel lucky to have met a few people, all in different living situations. People who were experiencing difficult times in housing because of tourism gentrification. People who are moving constantly, not always by choice. People who have experienced living in different cultures for some years but always feel like returning to their home country. I find the stories interesting and beautiful, how those people have their own journey and story in why they are where they are now, in Almada.

