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Spatial (Dis)continuities: project and narratives

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Abstract

The project, developed by PER – Programa Especial de Realojamento (Special Program of Relocation), was created to resolve situations of housing deficit of some families that live in “islands” – “Ilhas do Porto” (Porto islands) – determining residential mobility, from the consolidated city to the news urban territories. In a changing environment where physical and socio-cultural relations are affected, we approach the design process through a few narratives that develop in around the open space, particularly the intermediate space notion, in a context of spatial (dis)continuities.

Keywords: contemporary territory; urban voids; open space; neighborhood; apartment building; intermediate space; sociability; vicinage.

In Porto, since the nineteenth century, the deficit housing situations involved mostly the “islands”, known as “old problem of the city”, whose construction intensified throughout the twentieth century, extending to neighboring cities. It was then necessary to design an apartment buildings group to relocate families from the Matosinhos “islands”.

In the “island”, where dilute the borders between the housing interior and the exterior collective corridor, the intermediate spaces increase the sociability and the community experiences are protagonists.

The grant process required thus to reflect about the space, linking it to sense of community that has achieved successive generations of residents, throughout several years (Fernandes, 2004, p.17). Then, we remember that *habitus* update time, as Pierre Bourdieu, becomes longer when socials groups have low income. To think the project, recognizing the community

to relocate, implied to consider the dwell in collective, involving the family mobility now, from the city consolidated to new urban territories, where the open space will persist as a factor of development and often impressed with an ambiguous character. Ambiguous, by the "vagueness, uncertainly, doubt / indecision (from lat. *Ambiguitas, ātis*)" as *Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa Contemporânea*, because the open spaces were changing its meaning, with a participation, not always clear, in the structure of development of urban areas. "In a multifaceted reality, the architecture can create spaces more plural because, precisely, they are indeterminate. The old notion of identity becomes more ambiguous..." as *Diccionario Metápolis de la Arquitectura Avanzada*.

In its stay, the notion of open space is associated with a notion of urbanity, as a value to protect. In the time, the same question will subsist: how to consider today this open space? Undone the naiveté or demiurgic postures, will have to accept the challenges from territory that we have, taking of this the project premises.

With the possibility to 'rearrange' a parcel of territory, we remember Portas: "deal the topic of the space that is not built is sign of the times" (Portas, 1986, n.p.). In an urban (dis)continuity environment, the 'open space' becomes reference, with the possibility to think a new order, involving the participation of the spaces 'between-two'. Here we have as reference the spatial and an architectonic device that allows the spatial inter-relation, and inter-relate is "to establish some relation or link between two or more elements, in a way that one affects the other.

Has itself the term 'transit', which can be synonymous "act of walking and changing of place or becomes flux" (Delgado, 2004, p.35). The design of the urban structures is linked to dislocation, and the contemporary territory transformation is linked to the mobility forms, associated with the new spatial practices of the dwell – (from lat. *Habitāre*): "live in a certain place or region, to be resident; Habitat (from lat. *Habitat*, 3rd singular present tense person. From *Habitāre*): a set of conditions related with the place where you dwell or live, or with the dwelling ", according to the previous source".

The open space participates in a system where the channel is "principle of urban dynamics, that materialize among parts of city" (Ratouis, Marriére and Dieudonne, 1997, p.143). There is talk about urban space, movement and flows, including here the person and the his relationship with the 'street', where "the worlds overlap and confuse, allowing go from one universe to other one" (Garcias, Tretell and Treutell, 1997, p.97). These are spaces and uses, and duplicity of behavior – pause and mobility – which has motivated the reflection about the space e how can, or cannot, influence the behaviors of those who dwell, "since the anchoring spatial until the drift of the *flanéur*" (Clavel, 2002, p.78). In this way, how to increase the relation system that develops between the open space and the built, materialized in an apartment building group?

Here we consider then the unit of block, according to the possibility of favor a collective identity and the intensity of experiences of a community, inscribing in two moments, "the local community, sociological unit strongly structured, and the set of communities, simple place of the "dwell of the other" (Clavel, 2002, p.74). The possibility of constituting an environment where the habitation and the surrounding, closer or farther away, will can integrate of articulated way a system of connections. We remember as Portas refers the "role of the block" (Portas, 1986, n.p.) in the new urban composition – the plan of the masses and the isolated – or even green, referring the public garden, the private street and the respective separation, which is now essentially solved in quantity terms. In this context, and despite the need to define typologies of dwelling, we focus more intensely in the open space theme and, in particular, the intermediate space notion.

From this set of questions, and it linking the answer and the previous program of needs, the objective is defining relations between the space of intimacy and exterior world, questioning the condition of insertion and the urban regeneration possibilities. The `door´ is the device that allows access to place of intimacy and, in principle, the facade or plan where it inserts, defining a border between the interior and exterior, private and public. But this dialectic implies spatial contiguities and `(dis)continuities´ – "the constitutive and diacritical importance of the neighborhoods" (Bell-Riz, 1997, p.51) – that will can polarize and induce mobility and/or sociability practices, implying an approach to the idea of limit – between-two and articulation´s forms – and to its materiality. In the mediation context and through a system of interdependences. According to Gausa:

`The intermediate positions are all over the meeting, across the surface boundary, across the geometric place where they are two different mediums, two different states of the matter, two different places, at least two different functions´ (Gausa, 2001, p.343, our translation).

Parallel to the fluidity concept, we have the effectiveness notion, because the problematic of contemporary `open space´ oscillates constantly among hierarchy, visibility and accessibility themes, in a *continuum* that prevails as space integrating factor. So, we approach concepts of structure, statute, degree of openness, accessibility and appropriation, in order to make approximations to volumetric and their relationship, to surfaces, to fences and to distances between types of built and within the open space.

Paradoxically, located among apartment buildings group, the open spaces have distanced from the inner of block notion but, at the same time, in the apartment buildings group organization "was prevailing the tendency to ignore relations with what is `exterior´ to it (Portas, 1986, n.p.). In a vast transport and flow networks, where distinguishes a new relation system among the buildings, "was weakened the limit of relationship between the interior space and exterior space" (Zandini, 2004, p.205). The `open space´, began to express a new organizational philosophy, with origins in space "of urban tradition, such as the street, the square or the

housing, in its archetype condition, and through which the city searches the balance between the fullness and the emptiness, the public and the private" (Lévy, 2000, p.103).

In the case of an intervention to relocate families from 'islands', we have as reference the 'corridor of distribution', collective open space of domestic space extension that allowed stimulate a sense of community. Based on reading of the basic 'island' morphology, in connection with the observation of experiences in the quotidian, some design options are justified, about the architectural and space devices of collective use. About the 'block' unit concept, that designates a space urban fragment that allows exploring the 'identity' notion, and validating formal options associated to behaviors and practices of group. The "urban social space definition approaches block's territory, from neighborhood space to scale of the quotidian life and scale of the people" (Clavel, 2002, p.16). Thus, we have a definition of architectural and space devices, because "all the space implies a contiguity that implies to beyond itself, contiguity that participates in its own recognition" (Secchi, 1993, pp.5-9).

The project, in a design process of physical forms and architectural and space devices, is justified based in the concept of hybrid. Thus, the sense of passage, in the transition among scales, between public and private, between individual and collective, defines a series of connections, that embraces all the area of intervention.

The physical passage. In a context of flow and continuity, seems to motivate the meeting, even if incidental character, becoming scenario of sociability.

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PowerPoint developed under the theme spatial (dis)continuities - design and narratives focusing on the following project:

Housing Mount Espinho, 1995-2004¹

Location of Mount Espinho, Leca da Palmeira, Matosinhos - Portugal.

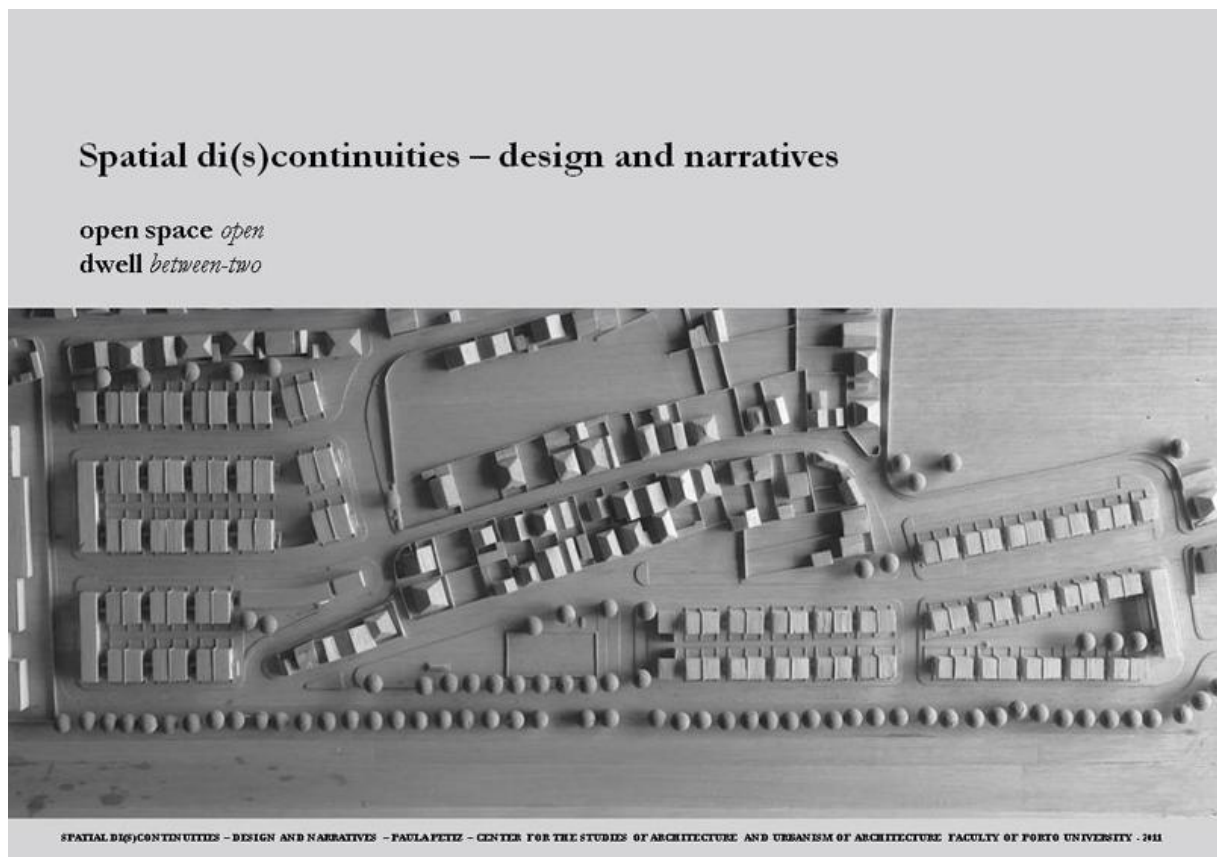
Architectural design and coordination: Paula Petiz.

Contributors: Philip Sources, Joan Almendra, Filipe Silva, Márcio Rodrigues, Ana Maria Coutinho, Margaret Ramos, Pedro Gama, Helder Ramos.

Program: 234 dwellings in tenement buildings and support facilities

Phase 1 of construction: 108 dwellings in tenement buildings and support facilities.

Powerpoint Slides



¹ Work realized under PER - *Programa Especial de Realojamento* (Special Program of Relocation). PER appears in 1993, still in connection with the problems of urban and population growths of the 60's, as the first largely step of housing policies made after SAAL and April 25, 1974 Revolution.



Housing Set Monte Espinho* 1995-2007

Lugar do Monte Espinho
Leça da Palmeira
Matosinhos
Portugal

Coordination and architecture design
Paula Fetez

Collaborator
Filipe Fontes, Joana Almeida, Filipe Silva, Márcio Rodrigues,
Marta Ana Cosentino, Margarida Ramos, Pedro Gama, Hélder Ramos

* Entered into the municipal inventory of the Special Program of Requalification of the Metropolitan Area of Porto



Open space *open*



the urbanization forms do not base already themselves solely on the agglomeration and proximity

the mobility has variable forms

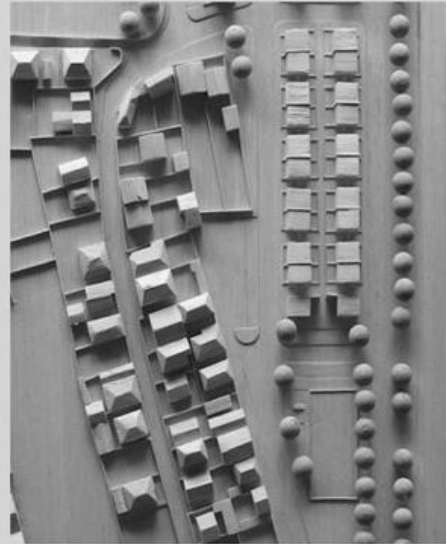
notions as "boundary" and "separation" area associated with a simultaneity of scales

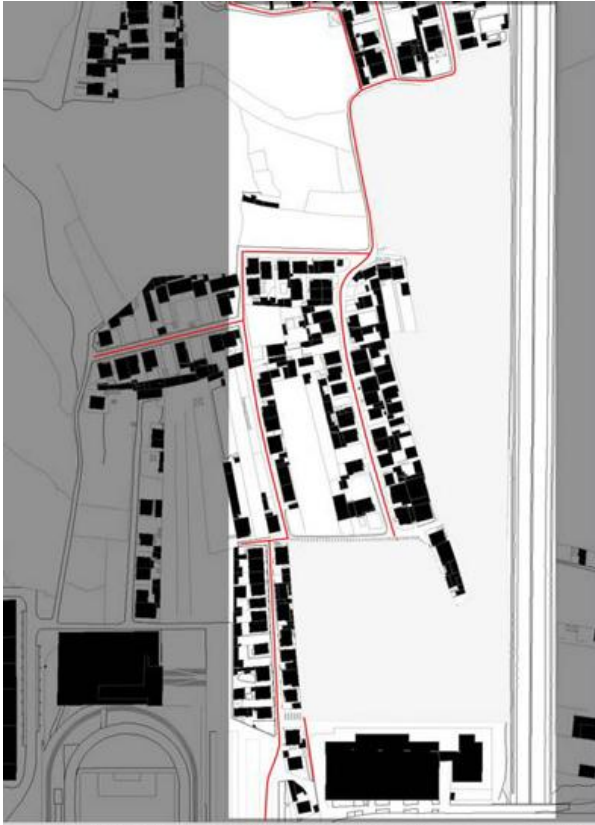


inter-connections in the territory

articulation of urbanized areas

explore new configurations of spaces, variable uses





considering

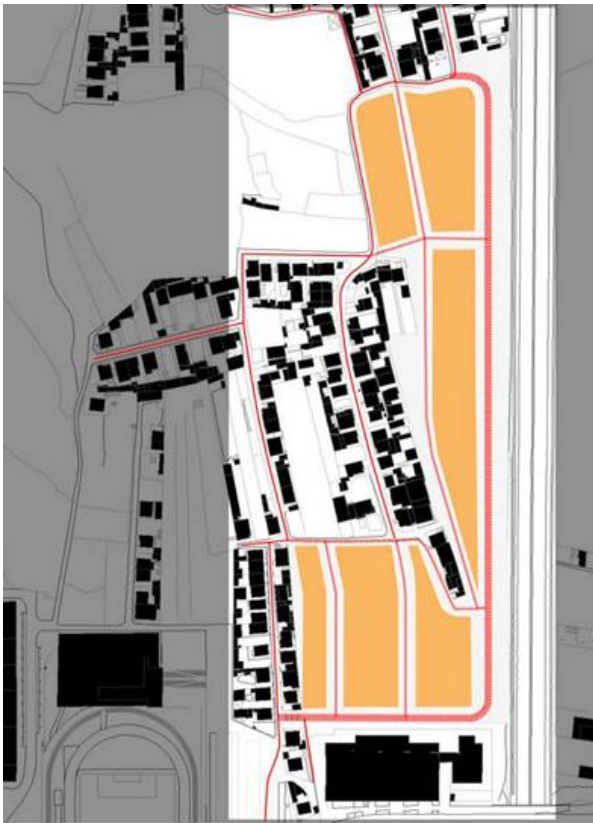
-set of irregular housing built in the last 30 years;

- predefined ways without continuity and without any statute;



create a network of dialogue among open spaces

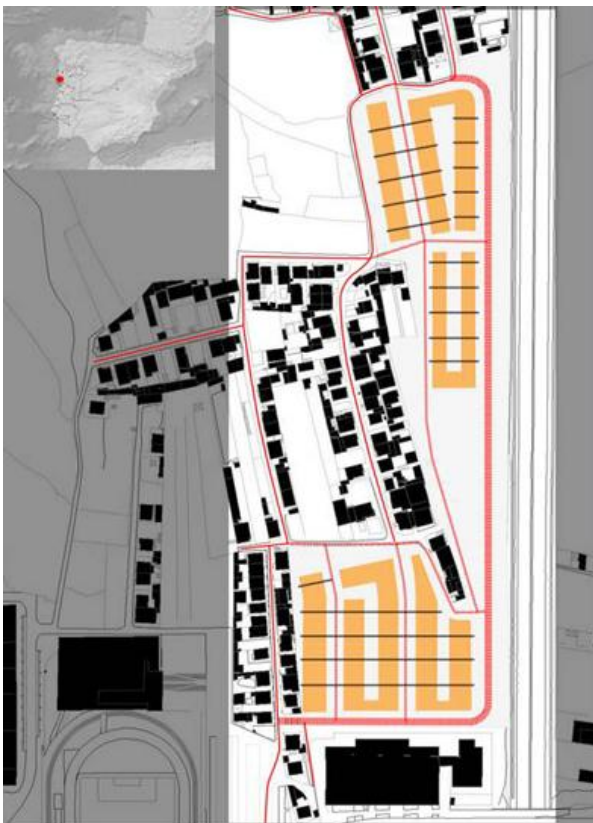
explore new configurations of spaces, of variable uses



re-place in the time and in the space

the habitat and the new urban condition

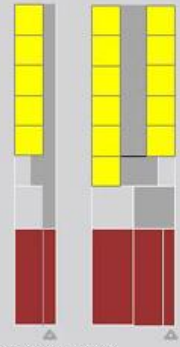
the double problematic territoriality and sociality



The "Island" of Porto

the occupation of the back bourgeois dwelling
the narrow terrain
6 meters wide in general
and the length
that can exceed 100 meters

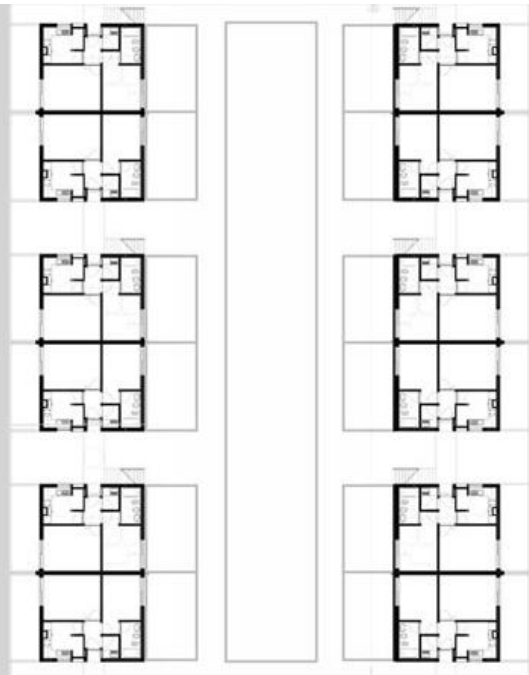
- the door to the street
- single access between exterior and interior
- the corridor of access to the dwellings
- the equipment for collective use in the everyday



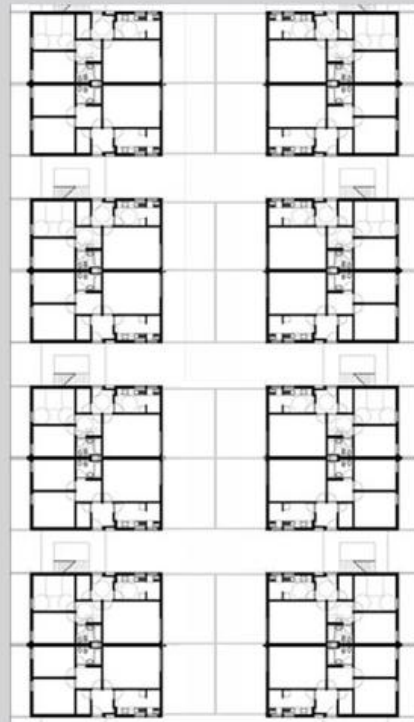
Types of "island" island
Built in a single terrain and "inland"
built in two terrains with central corridor
Scheme according to
TEIXEIRA, M.
As Ilhas do Porto.
In: ILMAS, [s.n].
Porto: Panufónia, 2004

The corridor as interspace





converging with the notion of "intermediate space"
 the "corridor access", that characterizes the "island", becomes a reference



the distance among facades that uses the "passage"

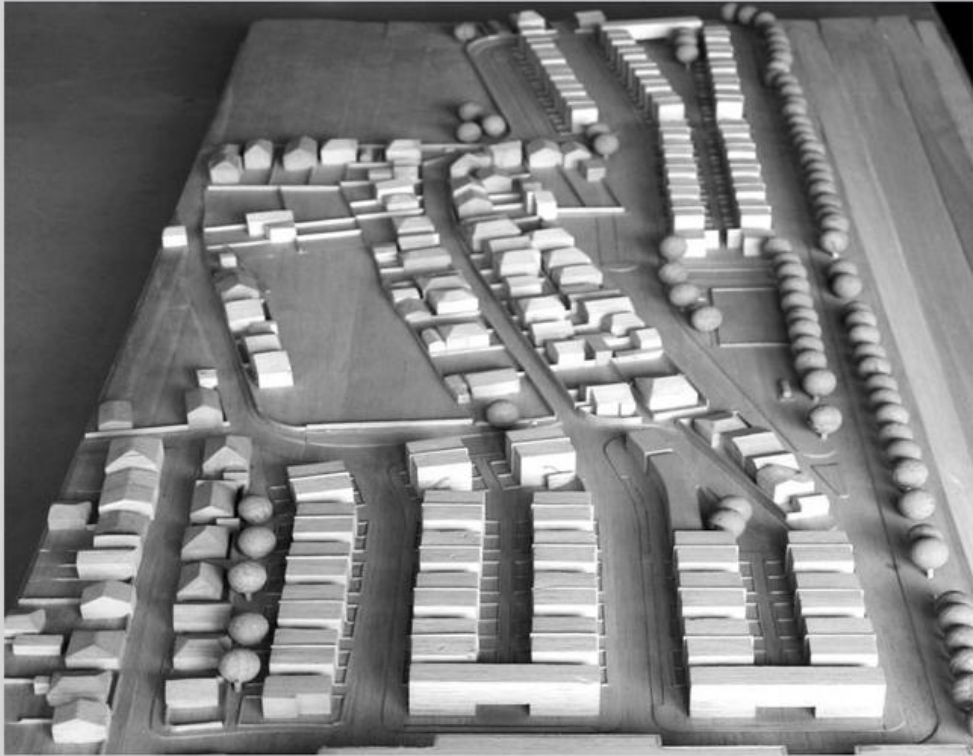


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dwell *between-two*

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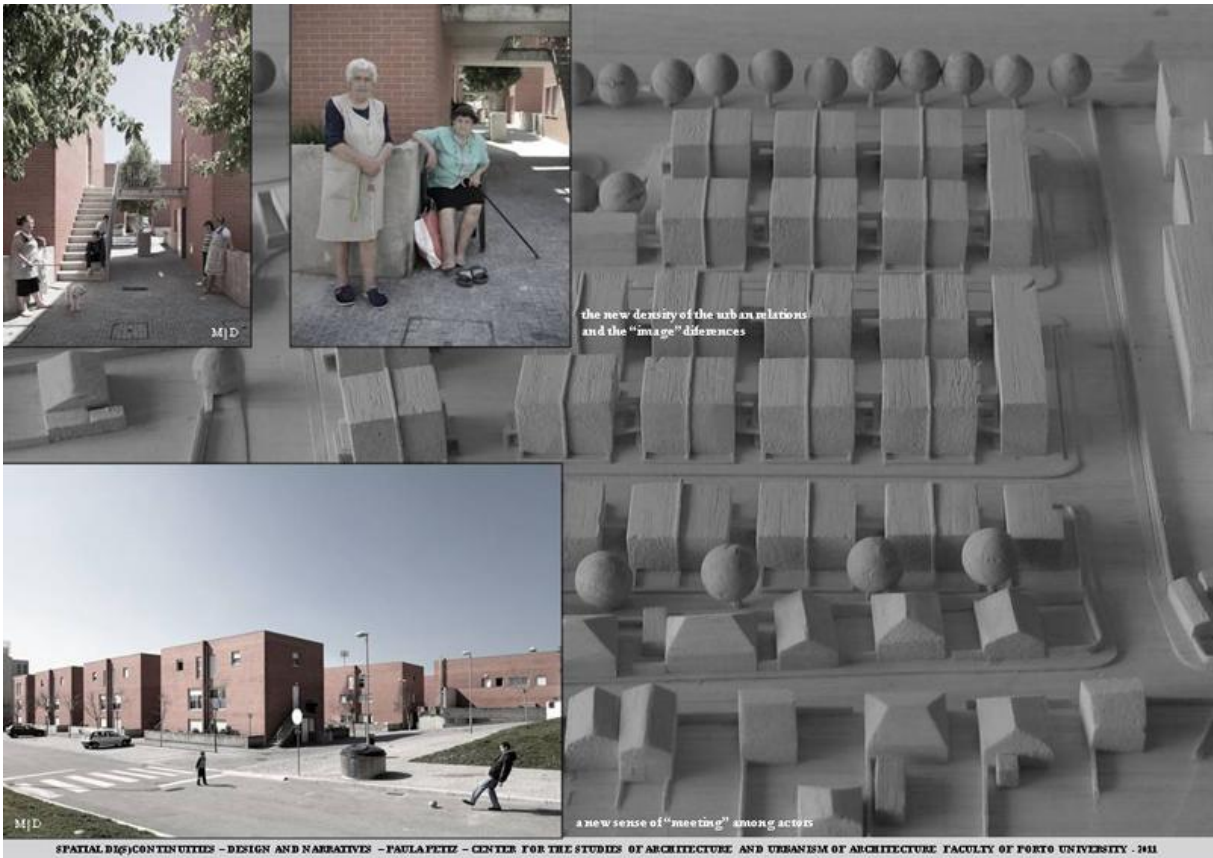
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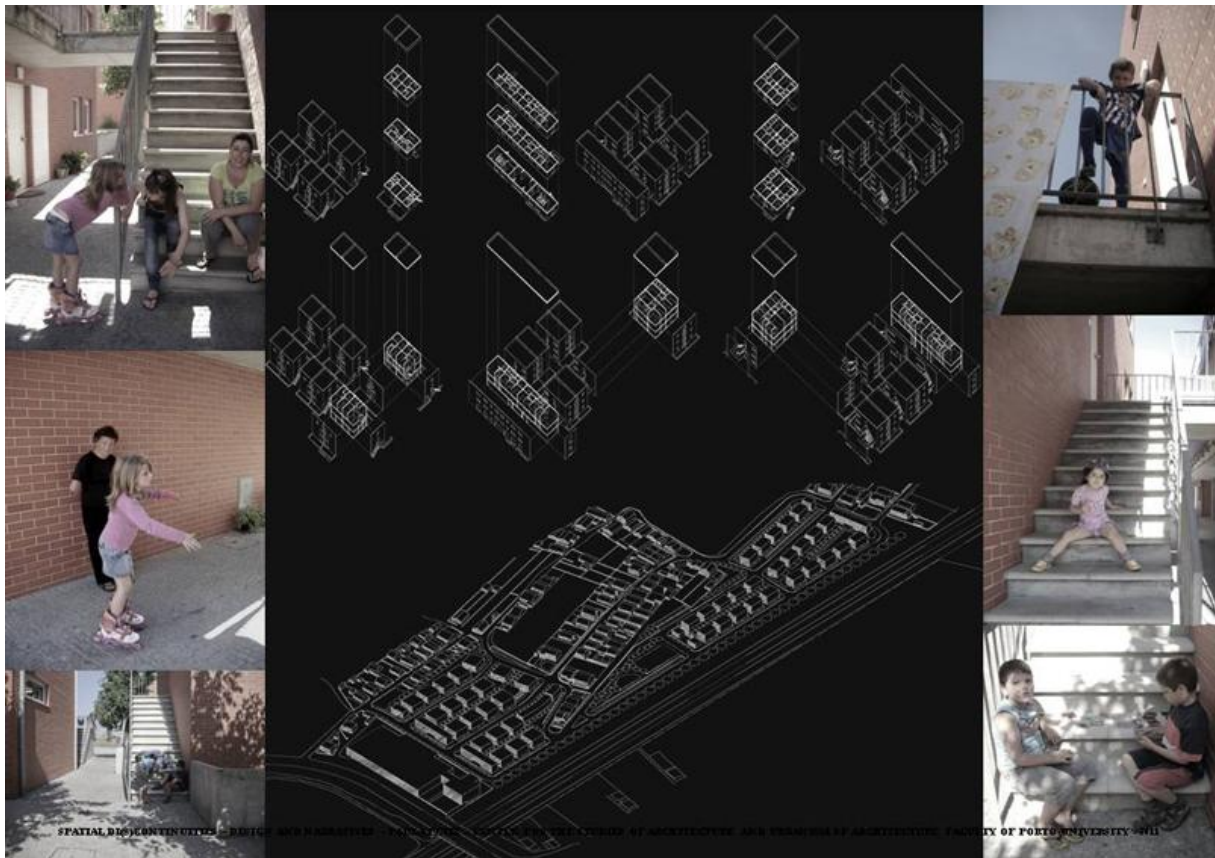
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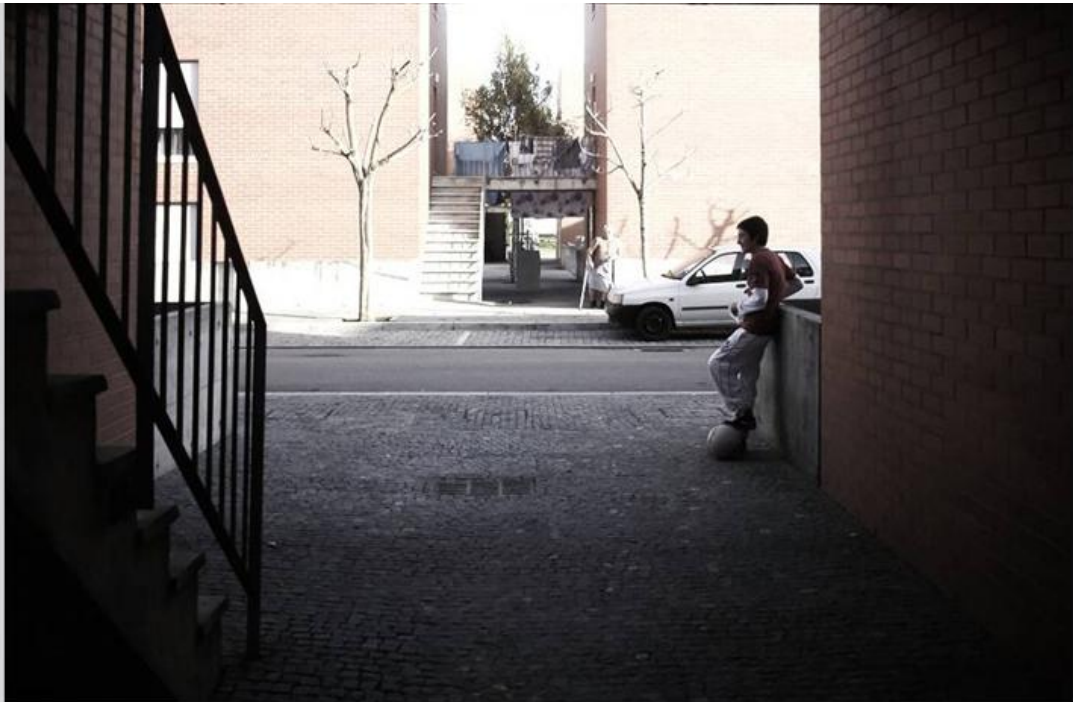
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