

Why the municipal matters: lessons from Germany and Portugal for addressing Europe's housing crisis

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Structure

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Introduction

- An adequate supply of affordable housing remains a key policy issue for many municipalities;
- The provision of housing that satisfies certain standards and meets the needs of different social and income groups requires specific housing and land-use policy;
- Active land policy has played a key role in the provision of affordable housing in many countries, including Germany and Portugal.

Comparative focus

- Two middle-sized cities: Tübingen in Germany, and Evora in Portugal
- that have developed active land management strategies and the involvement of resident cooperatives over several decades.

Research objectives

- To produce knowledge about how land policy for affordable housing has been developed in practice;
- To develop a better understanding of local culture and traditions in housing provision;
- To generate new ideas about the ingredients (e.g. policy tools, but also soft elements) that can foster decision and implementation on the ground to promote more sustainable and safer housing.

Our initial hypothesis

- “More ingredients than legal devices” are needed to put in practice an active land policy;
- Goals and strategies of land policy vary:
 - *in their ambition to ensure housing affordability,
 - *in their ability to combine instruments (e.g. housing and planning tools), and to implement public planning and housing goals;
- Besides rules and regulations established in national planning law and funding for affordable housing, other ingredients are needed at the municipal level to foster active land policies for affordable housing.

Urban and housing studies have shown that:

- The outcomes of urbanization are diverse: they are the result of interrelated sets of socioeconomic forces and relations, including of planning policies and their impacts on opportunities for value creation and extraction (Robinson 2022);
- The focus on local level is crucial to understand and explain divergence in policies and outcomes (Alves 2017, 2022); why we don't have Tübingen and Évora everywhere;

A structuralist approach

- Tend to emphasize more the underlying legal/administrative characteristics of national or local systems, and how changes in legal and financial structures can entail changes in the organizational frameworks, and in strategies that come to be
- Chiodelli & Morpurgo (2022) distinguish laws in books (laws in written legal codes) and laws in action (laws as applied by public officials). They also distinguish law compliance and non-compliance.

A culturalist approach

- Institutions are socially and historically constructed by the visions, beliefs, and knowledge of actors. They create major opportunities and constraints for social action.
- Social practices as the result of values, norms and resources. Giddens (1984) emphasize the role of agency observing the knowledge and the power that individuals have in their daily activities to shape outcomes
- However, there is a wide number of structural factors that influence individuals' action, such the level of autonomy and control by municipalities, the involvement of citizens, etc. (Tasan-Kok et al. 2019).

Active land policy

- Land policy means public interventions in the acquisition, allocation and/or distribution of land;
- It uses different policy tools (e.g. strategic land banking, contracts land readjustment, etc.);
- By encouraging or restricting land uses, densities, types of housing etc. it influences what is developed where, when, and by whom;
- Land acquisitions can be part of planned short-term developments in which land is quickly serviced and sold as buildable plots, as well as long-term land banking strategies.

Methodology

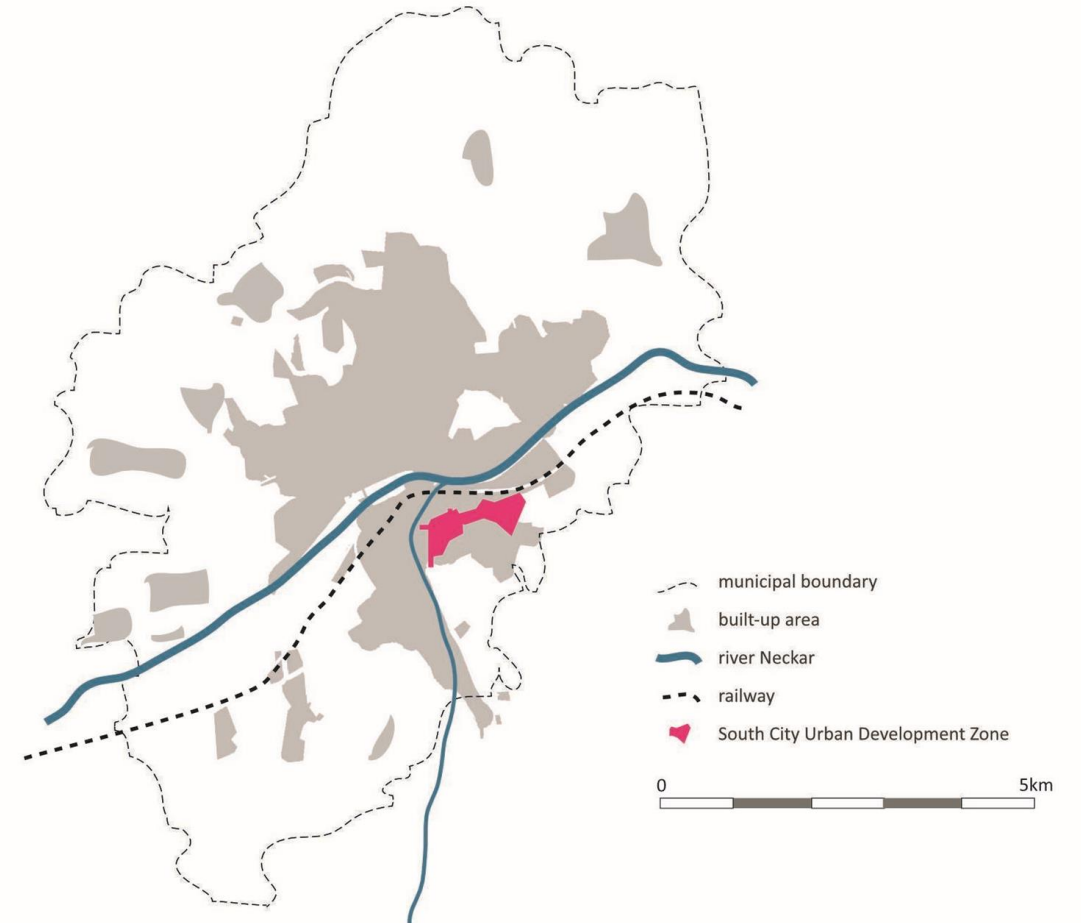
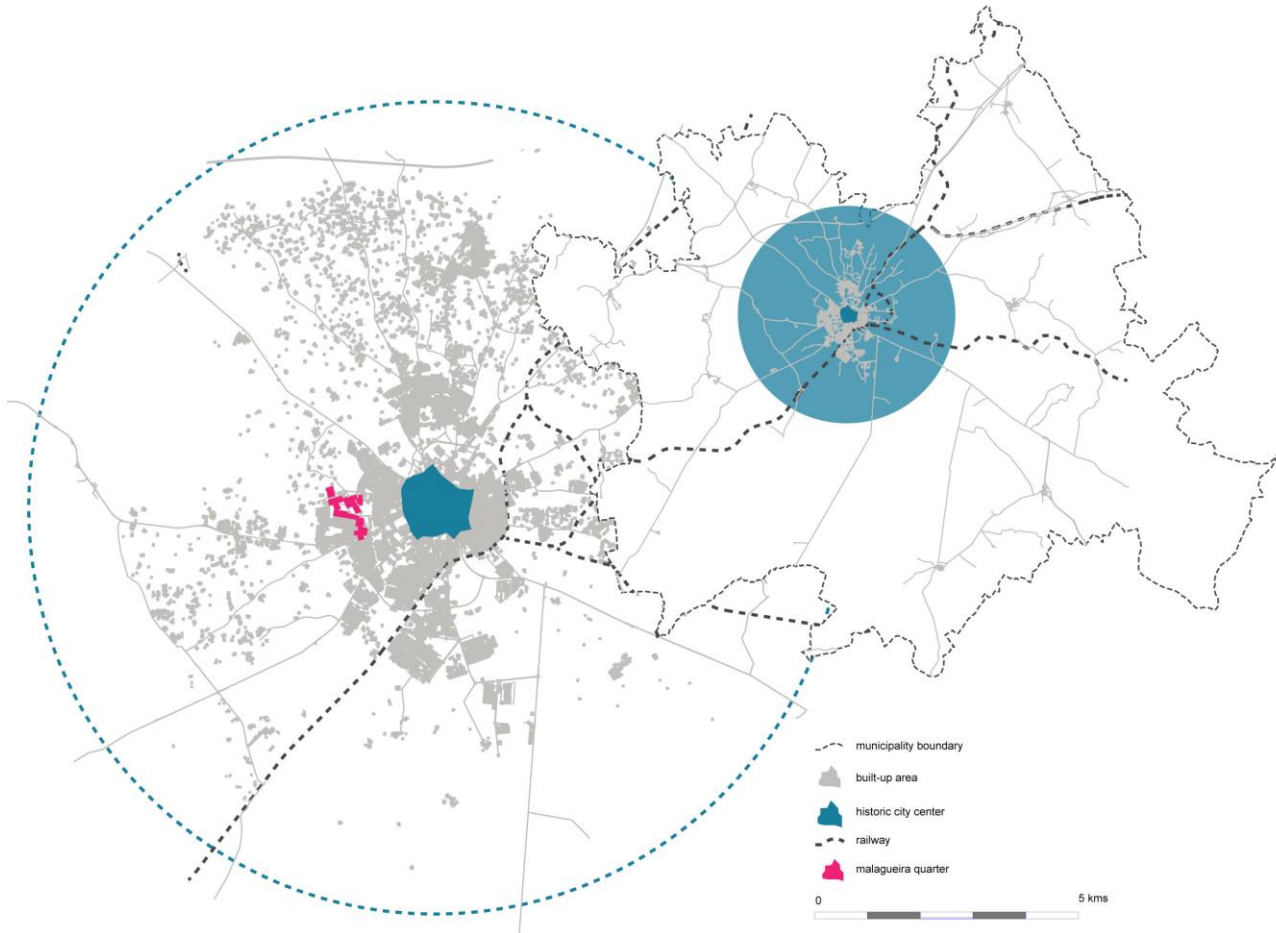
- A mixed methods approach: literature reviews, archival work;
- A case study method to compare two second-tier cities: Évora and Tübingen which belong to countries with different traditions of land-use planning;
- Key aim – to investigate the deep historical roots of process that lead to the provision of social and affordable housing in areas of expansion in the 80s and 90s.

Évora, Portugal

At start of development: Mid-sized town of 50.000
Malagueira Development 1977 – ongoing
27 hectares, 12.000 new inhabitants

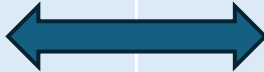
Tübingen, Germany

At start of Development: Mid-sized town of 82.000
Südstadt Development 1991 – ongoing
60 hectares, 6 -7.000 new inhabitants



Tübingen, Germany - „the Tübingen Model“

Municipality of Tübingen as developer	Co-housing groups as owner-builders
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• acquires brownfield sites• develops concept, urban form and development plan• provides social and technical infrastructure, public spaces, manages decontamination and infrastructure development• sets criteria for plot sales• manages overall development and finances it by planning gains/plot sales at fixed prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• key development actors• Apply for and receive plot options for their concepts• have creative freedom within development guidelines• take on shared responsibilities such as shared green courtyards and underground car parks• develop dense mixed-use neighbourhoods
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• criteria for plot sales have been adapted from initial focus on variety and mix of functions to social sustainability and long-term affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• initial model of co-housing as private home-owner's associations is increasingly being adapted to comprise cooperative ownership and rental models



Évora, Portugal - The Malagueira Development

Municipality of Évora as developer	Cooperatives groups as owner-builders
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinates with the central government the Western Expansion Plan, and expropriation of land.• Establish guidelines for Malagueira Detail Plan• Invites the architect Siza Vieira• Sets criteria for plot distribution - surface rights for 70 ys• Assumes the role of executor of infrastructure works.• Defines together with Siza the “Malagueira Construction Regulations”• Takes on management of a portion of the housing units, operating under the framework of social public housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• key development actors in the participatory design process• receive plot options for their needs• have creative freedom within development guidelines• After cooperative loans were repaid, the houses transitioned to individual ownership, leaving them vulnerable to market speculation.

Tübingen, Germany - National context and local situation in 1991

„Moment in History“ – shifting ideologies and beliefs create momentum in planning culture and legal environment

- Shortly after reunification
- Optimistic view of “citizen power” and hopes for economic renewal in the context of massive restructuring
- The newly re-introduced **„Urban development Act“** (Städtebauliche Entwicklungsmaßnahme) gives municipalities the right to develop or re-organise a significant part of the municipal area for the first time or to re-organise it in terms of urban development. → Pre-emptive rights /compulsory purchase and land purchase at a price uninfluenced by projected future developments on the site

Local Situation

- loss of Industries and workplaces through integration in world markets
- municipal budget cuts due to loss of tax revenues
- housing shortage
- area of expansion: former military barracks open for development after French troops leave after re-unification
- isolated, disjointed and un-integrated part of the city housing lower income population

Évora, Portugal - National context and local situation in 1977

“Moment in History” – shifting ideologies and beliefs create momentum in planning culture and legal environment

- Shortly after the Carnation Revolution (april 25th 1974)
- Holds an optimistic perspective on "citizen power," aspiring towards a more decentralized governance model and the enhancement of municipal autonomy.
- State committed to actively addressing housing issues, as highlighted in the "Housing Policy Program.

Local Situation

- Significant migration from rural to urban areas.
- Housing shortage and swift increase in unauthorized constructions and informal housing settlements.
- Area of expansion for residential purposes identified in urbanization plans.
- Rural area adjacent to the historic walled city center, located near the main road connecting to Lisbon.

Tübingen, Germany - local context and „ingredients“

Local organisational capacities – Institutional environment

- The “**Stadtsanierungsamt**” (urban redevelopment agency) had been founded in 1971 and successfully overseen the redevelopment of the medieval city core
 - the “**Südstadtausschuss**” (South City committee), a special municipal council committee, was set up specifically to discuss and decide on all matters relating to the development
- strong capacities in local administration and government through separate, specialist project structure

Role of charismatic individuals - Agency

- **Andreas Feldtkeller**, head of the Stadtsanierungsamt
Despite a low municipal budget due to the economic downturn, Feldtkeller managed to convince the mayors and the local council that the acquisition of the military land was a one-time chance not to be missed. It was his vision to develop a diverse and mixed-use European city by selling small parcels of land to individual developers

Évora, Portugal - local context and “ingredients”

Local organisational capacities – Institutional environment

- The “**GAT**” (gabinete de apoio técnico), founded in 1975, Initiated the enhancement of technical capabilities and autonomy within the municipal administration, by establishing a multidisciplinary technical team capable of developing urban projects.

Role of charismatic individuals - Agency

- **Nuno Portas**, Secretary of State for Housing and Urbanism. responsible for the "Housing Policy Program.", SAAL and GATs
- **Jorge Silva**, public architect, initially engaged in GAT, later elected as a municipal councillor, played a pivotal role in shaping the Western Expansion Plan (PEO) - discarding high-rise constructions, inviting Álvaro Siza.
- **Álvaro Siza** recognized for his role in the SAAL and his sensibility to existing local context. His “evolutionary housing” model enhanced adaptability and context harmony, offering individualized housing solutions.

Tübingen, Germany - local context and „ingredients“

Ideology and Belief – Development Visions

- Drawing inspiration from existing medieval core of the city, “continuation of principles”
 - belief in particular version of the “European City” - complexity and variety arise from a mix of functions and large variety of individual private property developers
 - belief in the integrative powers of a democratic and explicitly urban civic society based on the state as an enabler of investment in private business and private (housing) property.
- enthusiastic embrace of “citizen developers” as soon as first co-housing projects had proven successful

Active Citizens– Co-housing groups / Cooperatives

- Strong capacities for self-organization and advocacy within the local liberal academic milieu
- Local “ecosystem” of architects and project managers taking on group housing projects

(Capacities for) Policy Evolution – towards long-term affordability

- Positive experience of active role and “risk-taking” by local government, administration, and citizens
 - Established working relationships and personal ties between planners, councillors, project managers and groups
 - Trust in citizen-developers and co-housing managers to develop functioning and high-quality housing
- ability to revise belief in individual private housing property towards cooperatively owned rental projects

Évora, Portugal - local context and “ingredients”

Ideology and Belief – Development Visions

- Drawing inspiration from existing historic core of the city, “continuation of principles”
- Belief in the integration of diverse social groups, and populations transitioning from rural to urban settings.
- Belief in state as facilitator of housing solutions by providing access to affordable housing, financing, and/or land
- Enthusiastic embrace of cooperatives

Active Citizens– Co-housing groups / Cooperatives

- SAAL program fostered government-civil society partnerships to enable individuals to actively address their housing needs, enhancing autonomy through municipal and cooperative support.
- SAAL created a paradigm for architects engaging in participatory design, influencing a nationwide shift towards community-involved housing solutions.

(Capacities for) Policy Evolution – towards long-term affordability

- Positive experience of active role and “risk-taking” by local government, administration, and citizens
- Working relationships and personal ties were established between planners, councillors, project managers and groups
- Trust in citizen-developers and cooperatives to develop housing
- Capacity to reassess faith in intricate, participatory, and integrative approaches for the development of public, private and cooperative projects.

Final comments

The rare alignment between:

- Legal tools and funding set by national governments;
- Ambitious local municipalities policies that mobilized resources and progressive goals;
- The vision, talent and thoughtfulness of policy planners and architects who embraced past and powerful realities (e.g. medieval cores, informal additions) while creating meaningful futures;
- The proactivity and energy of citizens that inspired and shaped the processes and outcomes.



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