

## **Urban Acupuncture: revitalization of urban voids by small-scale interventions. The BIP / ZIP program, Lisbon**

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The second half of the XX century saw the growth of several European metropolis. This expansion has both developed the surrounding areas of the cities and created new cities from small villages. There has been a fragmentation of the city's functions, the center has lost its housing function and is now made up of offices, services, leisure functions or corporate headquarters, while industries moved to peripheral poles near the principal transportation lines.

One of the first definitions of this kind of spaces, the urban void, was presented by Manuel de Solà-Morales (1995). He proposed a vision on these spaces (which had not necessarily to find empty) covering both urban and rural areas, with well-defined or undefined limits. Urban voids are characterized by a lack of effective integration in the city, they are forgotten spaces that remain outside the urban dynamics, becoming uninhabited areas, unsafe, unproductive and, consequently, strange to the urban system. To Solà-Morales these spaces show their potential as spaces of freedom in a standardized city, regularized and capitalist, by offering a spontaneous and creative appropriation and informal uses that otherwise couldn't find their place in the city. In this context, one of intervention strategies is part of the theory of urban acupuncture, defined by Manuel de Solà-Morales (2008), Jaime Lerner (2007, 2008) or Marco Casagrande (2006, 2009, 2014).

Can the theory of urban acupuncture, using small-scale interventions, be applied to enhance the revitalization of urban voids? One of the issues to be considered is focused in the complementarity that these interventions may have in relation to top-down strategies of city scale. The principles set out in the theory of urban are defined by the speed of the process, the engagement of local stakeholders, the promotion of education of those involved, small-scale interventions, the holistic approach and the challenge of creating places for an intervention strategy to be adopted.

Lisbon is the capital of a metropolitan area that grows more and more, while the city itself becomes empty. It is a city full with expectant spaces, to requalify and regenerate. Examples are: the spaces which are between consolidated urban fabric with history, past and memory; degraded, abandoned and disqualified spaces, sprawling to degradation the urban fabric; spaces that can serve as meeting-points and union-areas for the city's inhabitants, as a social space. In this context, the municipality has implemented the BIP / ZIP program ("Neighborhoods and priority areas for intervention"), in 2010. This program is part of the Housing Local Program (PLH) and is intended to foster local partnerships and small interventions. It is an initiative from the authorities to create opportunities for intervention with the participation of the inhabitants. The reasons underlying it's the creation are rooted in the existence of neglected neighborhoods, with poor living conditions and various spatial and urban vulnerabilities. The program aims to improve these areas by supporting local projects that contribute to rise the quality of life. To achieve this, the municipal administration calls for involvement of the locals, the parish councils, architects, and other professionals to boost local development and urban bottom-up planning, framed in an urban acupuncture strategy.

This article discusses the problem of urban voids as a hypothesis for urban upgrading and revitalization. It develops the ways in which this type of spaces appeared and developed in the city and it seeks to understand their contexts within Lisbon and the implementation of BIP / ZIP program. It analyzes the strategy of urban acupuncture, as a contribution to the reform of the urban environment in which it occurs. Based on a documental analysis, from the several years of the program and

its various projects, we intend to make a diachronic analysis taking into account the changes the program has taken over time, the presented projects, the actors involved, participation and innovation, some obstacles and potential of this program. Since 2011, the program has promoted and operated small local interventions that promoted activities and project development in neighborhoods and priority intervention areas that were able to provide answers to social and urban emergencies, a challenge to the well-being of the incidence of community projects and had repercussions in the city.

The empirical analysis shows that small-scale interventions, with implemented participatory practices and mechanisms, can be an addition to the top-down traditional strategies of city scale, setting up both as a form of response to urban problems and administration but also as the social needs of the inhabitants.