

Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

The pursuit of a healthy city: *Bouça Housing Complex* by Álvaro Siza (1973-7), a lesson to retain.

- **Format:**

Written paper / Presentation (in-person)

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

Being interested in improving the physical and mental well-being of an urban society means, above all, being concerned about the state of health of the people and their cities. If we believe that health results mainly from the influence of the physical and social environments, which promotes a certain lifestyle, then the role of the city in generating health is extremely relevant. We're aware that a healthy city is much more than a city that has good health care services, with decent houses and safe surroundings. It also has to provide the community with a variety of experiences and resources. There's no doubt that safety and accessibility are vital criteria, but aren't community and identity also relevant? What makes a city healthy? How can we improve that health? What are the available mechanisms from the architectural point of view?

The Bouça Housing Complex was designed by Álvaro Siza (1973-77), promoted by a governmental program (SAAL), to create social housing for poor people in Porto, Portugal. It's a housing solution of duplex apartments, arranged through patios and landscaped spaces, in the center of the city. Although it was made with controlled costs, the architect managed a housing solution that's still a success. What is its secret? Nowadays, it's mostly inhabited by young couples and middle class families living together with the old inhabitants, creating a renovated neighborhood with character and identity, providing mutual support. But how relevant is these people's connection with the city? What is the real meaning of neighborliness, concerning urban health?

In this paper I intent to reflect about the main decisions of this example by Álvaro Siza, to enhance the importance of the relationship between the physical and the social environment, promoting connectedness and neighborliness as parameters that embody a likely solution for an eminent health problem that cities are facing, gauging the role of architecture in our contemporary society.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

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