Repositório ISCTE-IUL

4. Living in a (un)Gated Community: Neighbourhood Belonging in Lisbon's *Parque das Nações*

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4.1 Introduction

Parque das Nações is the official name for a new part of the city of Lisbon, inherited from the World Exhibition Expo '98. With three miles of waterfront, this multifunctional urban project, constructed from nothing in barely ten years, used obsolete industrial and port land for waterside urban renewal. The geographical situation, the urban and architectural solutions, the scale and quality of public spaces and the symbolic meaning inherited from Expo '98 are responsible for a scenario of 'quality' and exclusivity, one that is socially directed to upper segments within the middle class.

Identified by its residents as a 'holiday' place, a space within the city that seems like 'countryside' or as a magical sort of place, the *Parque das Nações* can be seen as an example of a new socio-spatiality and a new culture of urban dwelling. However, the quality of the public space and its facilities are also very attractive to the population from the contiguous municipality of Loures, causing in some *Parque das Nações* residents a wish (albeit manifested in private) to privatize the area. Even if this most recent neighbourhood of Lisbon doesn't correspond to a formal gated community, there is socio-spatially protective behaviour from residents and a subdued wish to be physically apart from 'the others' that, together, strengthens the sense of belonging and social selectivity developed *within* the space. The *Parque das Nações* area and its neighbourhood relations can thus be analyzed in terms of processes of belonging, differentiation and segregation which proliferate in contemporary metropolitan space.

This chapter is based on interviews undertaken with 20 households living in *Parque das Nações* in 2009-10. It illustrates how a selective neighbourhood promotes strategies of belonging, leading to a wish of closure of this space. It starts by contextualizing how the

Parque das Nações was developed. Then following a theoretical discussion of social and spatial belonging, the chapter illustrates how the *Parque's* population can develop strategies of internal differentiation and external avoidance. The conclusion highlights how these strategies aim to protect not only the space qualities and the quality of life that the neighbourhood provides, but also the social positioning the space offers to its residents.

4.2 *The Parque das Nações*: a selective neighbourhood

Following examples of other main cities such as Barcelona, London, Boston or Baltimore, after a major international event (Expo '98) Lisbon took advantage of the opportunity for a large urban regeneration project in an old industrial and harbour area, which had always been 'tucked away' and peripheral to the city. As with other interventions that have operated on urban waterfronts in the last decades (Carrière and Demazière, 2010), the regeneration of this waterfront area in Lisbon brought it a new centrality, more metropolitan than urban, multifunctional though largely residential, and greatly increasing its value in economic, social, aesthetic, and symbolic terms.

Lisbon won the Expo '98 with a project heavily inspired both by the exhibition space of Expo '92 in Seville and the urban model of the Olympic Village in Barcelona. One of the main concerns was to ensure the future reuse of buildings constructed for Expo '98 in accordance with programme needs into a metropolitan scale - such as the Oceanarium, the multipurpose pavilion for large-scale events (sports and cultural), the Museum of Knowledge, a large exhibition hall, the Marina, the Casino of Lisbon and the multi-modal station *Gare do Oriente*. The urban project approved for this territory - with 330 hectares extending over five kilometres of waterfront - was developed around a simple design grid with the main avenues parallel to the river. One of the aims was to create multi-functional urban sites with attractive public spaces and some important facilities (e.g. the International Fair of Lisbon's Exhibition, the Oceanarium or the multipurpose pavilion) to avoid the

formation of an isolated territory in relation to surrounding areas. But in fact both the railway line - delimiting this territory to the west - and the wall of buildings constructed along the railway line, work as barriers between the *Parque das Nações* and its surrounding areas.

The urban project in Lisbon is similar to the model implemented in Barcelona, both in planning terms and legal procedures (Nel.lo, 1999; Busquets, 2004). The special planning given to this area and its inclusion in a single jurisdiction assigned to a private company with access to public capital - *Parque Expo S.A.* - were essential conditions for reducing the number of stakeholders in the process, for dispensing of the need for a public inquiry, and also for carrying out the development of a large-scale project in so short a period of time. Thus, it was not only possible to meet the necessary deadlines to carry out Expo '98, but also to re-build a part of the city via bypassing all the usual procedures. In this sense, the project can be said to represent the denial of the 'inclusive city' that marks the speeches of politicians responsible for Lisbon (e.g. the instruments of strategic policies for Lisbon as '*Carta Estratégica de Lisboa 2010/24*' and '*Agenda Estratégica 2013-2015*').

While some positive urban solutions were implemented in Lisbon - such as promenades, parks, well designed and qualified public spaces - it was also impossible to avoid some of the most common weaknesses attached to this model of building the city, namely, the financial interests of the private sector and the discretionary nature of the urban project (Cabral and Rato, 2003). Indeed, in Lisbon, it was assumed from the beginning that only the sale of land and building project to the private sector would enable the achievement of Expo '98 and the necessary infrastructure.

The success achieved in commercializing the site meant it only took ten years to finish the project instead of the 15-20 years originally envisaged. Despite arguments over the quality of the urban planning involved, this area has become emblematic of the sophisticated and

contemporary image that Lisbon wants to present to the world through a large flagship development project (Carrière and Demazière, 2010). The result was a new neighbourhood with a more or less deliberate system of social selection and exclusion (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003; Busquets, 2004) and repeating examples of appropriation of renewed waterfronts by groups with higher economic power (Sieber 1993, 1999; Zukin, 1995).

Officially called the *Parque das Nações*, this most recent neighbourhood of Lisbon is still popularly known as *Expo*, which shows the extent to which its identity is intrinsically associated with memories of the exhibition that was both its origin and its aesthetic inspiration. At the end of Expo '98, the site entrances were removed but the idea of 'entering' and 'leaving' continues to affect people's perception of the area, in that the *Parque* differentiates itself completely from the surrounding urban web, forming a sort of island with its own image and way of life. In fact, the public space within this area is considered to be an exemplar in both scale and quality, contributing towards a process of rehabilitation of public space in Lisbon. This public space also attracts a large number of visitors, especially at the weekends, but to the displeasure of residents. The unilateral and, for the time being, latent conflict between residents - self-classified as upper middle class, in general – and the visitors is particularly directed at those groups from areas that are peripheral to Lisbon but very close to *Parque das Nações*, the more so as these areas are regarded as devalued and occupied by lower social classes.

The latent confrontation generated between the residents 'privatizing' ownership and the regular spatial appropriation carried out by the visitors can be analyzed via Lefebvre's concept of space *appropriation* in the sense of its use and utilization, as opposed to the inseparable concept of *domination*, associated with space possession or consumption. According to Lefebvre (1991), daily life is the realm where these two spaces are expressed and interact with one another, unfolding a constant interplay between contradictory forces

that is healthy in the maintenance of social balance. Nevertheless, in *Parque das Nações*, these contradictory forces also generate some resentment regarding 'others', mainly those coming from the contiguous municipality of Loures, who the residents see as 'appropriating' the right to use 'their' space and conditioning their daily life.

Throughout this scenario, the prestige that the residents attribute to *Parque das Nações*, and consequently to themselves, drives them to develop a subliminal desire for space privatization and avoidance of 'others' who do not match their standards of social distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). This reality makes it possible to analyze this area and its neighbourhood relations - both internal and outward looking- as a specific scenario of differentiation and social selectivity dynamics.

Gated communities can be understood as an extreme way to bring about the social selectivity that, to some extent, seems to be determining the residential choices of the emerging urban middle classes throughout the world (Low, 2004; Raposo, 2008; Seixas, 2008). In a more moderate way, the concept of elective belonging proposed by Savage et al. (2005) also fits in this context to characterize the use of space in strategies to differentiate and maintain social distance. The concept of 'selective belonging' proposed by Watt (2009, 2010) deepens the theme of spatial belonging regarding the analysis of contemporary private housing estates. These are areas that, although not formally closed/gated, can nonetheless be understood as exclusionary enclaves of the middle classes who are in search of social recognition via their neighbourhood of residence.

4.3 The residents: moving to the *Parque das Nações*

Following the influence of Bourdieu (1984) concerning the social space of lifestyle images - and their close links with consumption, taste and aesthetic disposition - various authors have characterized the socially privileged protagonists of these new urban 'models' of life.

Whether they are defined as a class of specialists and intellectuals (Chaney, 1996), as a new petty bourgeoisie (Featherstone, 1991), as cultural intermediaries (Bovone, 1997), as a new middle class (Lury, 1997), or as a new professional bourgeoisie (Seixas, 2008), all these approaches share the idea of being in the presence of a process of social differentiation which, supported by styles of living, tends to classify individuals through what and how they consume. Some of the fundamental aspects of such consumption are the residential spaces chosen by these privileged social groups and the strategies behind their residential choices. These can be seen as pathways of social promotion and models of habitat which lead to heightened socio-spatial segregation and what Atkinson (2006) defines as 'middle-class disaffiliation'.

Based on these theoretical contributions, we may recognize in the *Parque das Nações* not only the capacity to satisfy the necessities of social promotion for an ascendant urban/suburban middle class and the social recognition that 'selective belonging' to a space with these characteristics permits, but also a sense of 'selective avoidance' directed at 'others' understood to be some sort of threat to the area and to the social prestige that characterizes the area. In effect, we are dealing with a very highly valued urban product, whether for its location, or the architecture, or the economic value and marketability of property, or, above all, for the image of innovation and urban quality that is only within reach of a select group of residents.

It is a fact that the huge costs of Expo'98 and the infrastructure it created contributed substantially to the increased expense of living in the *Parque das Nações* and the speculative element in the promotion of its real estate. For this economic picture is important to consider the waterfront factor (even if it is only as scenic value), the qualitative investment in public space, and the monumentality of some buildings. These elements allow us to understand not only the choice of the residents and their sense of place, but also the sense of social identity

that they formulate for themselves, i.e. a self-classification that is shared among the residents.

Most of the 20 family units chose the *Parque das Nações as* their first option of residence. Only seven did not do so since they preferred a central location in the city of Lisbon. However, the balance between housing costs attached to those locations and the comfort, safety and prestige recognized in the *Parque das Nações* has determined the choice of these families for a residential space that, in accordance with their assessment, gives them quality of life. Indeed, the quality of life is not only the main reason given by all interviewees for justifying their residential choice, but also an expectation collectively confirmed.

It is important to briefly describe the residents' social characteristics. The whole group can be seen to fall within the Portuguese 'middle class' in terms of their occupations and also in their possessing significant amounts of both cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984). The great majority are highly educated (from graduate to doctoral level) professionals, predominantly teachers, lecturers and engineers of various kinds. In respect of net family income per month, the figures range from €2,500 (for a single person) up to €6,500 (for a four-person household). In terms of age, the majority belong to what they themselves call 'young married couples, between 35 and 45 years old, with children'. When asked to classify themselves, the interviewees use a common-sense self-representation that considers them to be either 'middle class' or 'upper-middle class', for example.

> The majority of those who live here are graduates with good jobs. In general they
> have good cars, they are upper middle class. (Jorge, 46, architect).

This self-classification depends on each interviewee's perception of their socio-economic situation (based on educational and professional qualifications) and the capability which they have to provide themselves with a relatively comfortable lifestyle that is, very close to the

social models that they themselves regard as being 'middle' or 'upper-middle' class. At the same time, the interviewees also tended to make a distinction between the residents along the waterfront - with a higher income to afford the view, and the luxury elements of their dwellings - and those who live behind them.

4.4 Strategies of internal differentiation

Although the residents cannot be considered as belonging to a class at the top of the social hierarchy, it is clear that they recognise an improvement in their lives and hence subjective social mobility on account of living in *Parque das Nações*. Regarding the location of their previous residence, 11 of the 20 family units already lived in Lisbon (though in less prestigious areas), four lived in Loures, and five came from other, more distant, locations:

> This is our third house and we have come to move up. The first was in Arroja (Loures) and perhaps in Arroja I was middle class. Now I consider myself a little better. (Isa, 41, university lecturer).
> Along the waterfront it is upper class, in general, and I say this based on the price of the houses which are very expensive. (Inês, 43, marketing consultant).

The great majority of respondents refer to *Parque das Nações* as a whole, by defining groups based on age, occupational or social and economic criteria. However, this characterization is mainly the result of each person's perception of the surrounding social environment, and is strongly determined by the web of relations and acquaintances people have developed in the area they live. In their narratives, respondents tend to portray the inhabitants of *Parque das Nações* very much in their own image, producing a shared group consciousness they are able to identify with.

The idea that I have is that the *Parque das Nações* is socially very homogenous. The houses are all above average price and I imagine that they would be bought by people with higher qualifications. (João, 42, architect).

Generally, young couples, aged between 30 and 40, with two children, at most. I would say it's more upper-middle class, with higher education, licensees or higher degree, middle, and top management executives, or self-employed professionals. They are nice, educated people, who like to travel and are keen on the new technologies. (Inês).

They are young families that have work and have children, in general (…) and live relatively well, they have the income to be able to live here, certainly. (Sílvia, 39, university lecturer).

Even if a perceived commonalty based on shared educational and professional factors is the most striking aspect of social characterization where the entire *Parque das Nações* is considered, we also find that the narratives tend to be limited to the *nearest* neighbours and that the spatial framework is restricted to the family home and goes no further than the nearby block. The narratives tend to focus on distinctive traits, demonstrating that the acknowledged social, educational and economic homogeneity of those living in *Parque das Nações* can break down when it comes to behavioural expectations; disrespect for public space and incorrect waste disposal are the main complaints. There are some residents who do not fit the image associated with people from that space.

One of the things I find most unpleasant is the lack of civility in the people living here, especially considering the economic standing and the academic standard of most of them. In principle, the people who live here have money and a certain intellectual standard and… I feel shocked with their lack of manners (...) Let me stress once again that these are not unprivileged people living in shacks, these are

people with money, who drive expensive cars, almost all of them with a licence degree, good jobs … I see often cars parked on the sidewalk or on the marked crossings, and household waste being dumped in paper and cardboard waste containers. I often see that and it's clearly done by people who live here. (Jorge).

There are people who live here, who cross the street with us and don't even greet us. (Sandra, 38, businesswoman).

Here in this building there are two doctors, two economists, one professor…. doctors, engineers, lawyers, are all common here but, for example, in the matter of garbage, one does not see how it is that the doctors are not aware of the question of separation of garbage. The other day there was almost a fire in the garbage chute and, once more I realized that the inhabitants of the building do not separate the garbage. (Elsa, 47, teacher).

These testimonies demonstrate that for many respondents, the behaviour shown by their neighbours fails to meet the expected cultural standard of individuals with higher education and high-status professional occupations. Therefore, although most of the respondents recognize that the ability and inclination to buy property in *Parque das Nações* is, in itself, a determining factor in the selection of the resident population – generally self-classified as 'middle class' or 'upper-middle class'– and although it seems to legitimate the feeling of being part of the group, it tends to lose some of its relevance in the construction and sharing of a proximity-based identity.

Thus behind all the shared identity, it is also possible to see the existence of various tensions between residents caused by non-fulfilment of some conventions of civility and politeness. These tensions maybe inherent to self-closed communities of supposed equals, independent of the existence of gates or walls (Savage et al., 2005; Seixas, 2008). In effect, although more or less structured socio-cultural legitimization is implicit in the access to these spatially

defined communities, there are also processes of social mobility, processes of transition between different contexts of living, and different styles and attitudes, which are liable to clash with the expectations of neighbours and their views on neighbourliness. Although the existence, and the sharing, of communal spaces makes closer sociability possible between neighbours, it also facilitates a significant strand of social control and leads to the need for constant civic negotiation. Whereas one of the motivations that leads to this type of habitat is the distancing from 'others' and their undesirable style, it is also the case that observation of these same behaviours between 'equals' shows that the form of the habitat, alone, does not determine its culture.

It is possible to claim that the exceptional circumstances involved in the construction of the *Parque das Nações* project - its image of unity, the contrast with its surroundings and the homogenous characteristics of its residents (in social, economic, cultural, and style terms) - allow to perceive a strong link between the residents and the space. But at the same time there's a weak – or even nonexistent - social interaction among residents as neighbours, despite the sense of social identity that they construct internally to distinguish themselves from the outside world. This distinction is amplified by factors deriving from the area's spatial location in relation to the city of Lisbon that we now discuss.

4.5 Belonging to Lisbon or to Loures?

As can be seen in Figure 4.1, the territory defined as *Parque das Nações* is divided by its peripheral situation in the context of the city of Lisbon and by the fact that it is split between the municipalities of Lisbon and Loures. Besides the difference in price of certain public utilities or unequal property tax, this municipal division may be said to strongly affect self-image and spatial perceptions of residents.

Figure 4.1: Map showing Lisbon, contiguous municipalities and the location of *Parque das Nações*

Based on: Carta Administrativa Oficial de Portugal e Ortofotomapa (Instituto Geográfico Português)

Amongst the various municipalities that border Lisbon, Loures has one of the lowest popular images in the metropolitan area, as much in terms of governance as in terms of the socio-economic characterization of its population (Baptista and Cordeiro, 2002). In reality, Loures is a suburban 'new town' which despite a much-distorted rural identity, tries to define itself within the shadow of the capital city, which is Lisbon. However, besides the somewhat chaotic and low quality of governance attributed to Loures, its un-prestigious image also derives from having several multi-ethnic immigration areas.

Close physical proximity means many families from Loures visit the *Parque das Nações* in their leisure time, to enjoy not only the waterfront but also the commercial and recreational areas. However the residents of *Parque das Nações* show some displeasure in sharing 'their territory' with such visitors whom they identify as being part of a different social reality from their own. Geographic proximity appears to amplify not only the social differentiation

of residents versus visitors, but also the spatial differentiation of *Parque das Nações* versus the Loures municipality.

As is noticeable in Figure 4.2, there is no territorial or architectural marker that allows one to identify the existing municipal border. Indeed, the urban project developed for the North area of *Parque das Nações* was based on design concerns and internal spatial coherence, and remained quite alien to the political and intra-municipal issues. As such, this territorial division becomes only perceptible to residents, through their spatial representations and social identities.

Figure 4.2: The North Area of *Parque das Nações*- building density and the urban park

(Gato 2009)

Figure 4.3: The South Area of *Parque das Nações*- the marina and waterfront promenade

(Gato 2009)

Despite the differences in urban design between North and South areas (as shown in Figures 4.2 and 4.3) - lower building density and more regular blocks that seek to recreate Mediterranean waterfronts in the South - the problem of territorial division doesn't exist for residents living in the South area because they are actually part of the Lisbon municipality. Being a legitimate part of Lisbon - and therefore free from being associated with the Loures municipality - was expressed as a positive factor by those family units based in the Lisbon sector, while among the families living in the Loures sector, Lisbon is also the place the residents identify with and the one they take as a main reference point.

> I didn't transfer my voter's card because I feel much closer to Lisbon than to Loures. Loures means nothing to me. (Rosa, 36, engineer).
>
> I continue to consider that I live in Lisbon, though my municipality of residence would be Loures. (Dora, 44, university lecturer).
>
> We are living here and we belong to Loures. We do not belong to Lisbon. But we consider ourselves Lisboners all the same. (Mateus, 68, retired officer).

As for the justifications, they range from plain territorial logic to matters of identity and symbolic issues with a particular focus on the prestige associated with the capital city and denied to Loures. The prestige of 'being from Lisbon' is repeatedly stressed, and that spatial reference is often mentioned, not only to mark the administrative division of *Parque das Nações,* but also mainly to reinforce the residents' self-classification.

> I certainly wouldn't want to be in the Loures municipality! How dreadful! Loures is a city-suburb and when it comes to prestige …If I live in Expo [*Parque das Nações*], why would I be in the Loures municipality?! *Over my dead body*! I'm in the Lisbon municipality, *obviously*! (Ana, 47, geographer).

The question of being in Lisbon or being in Loures exists and for me - I have to be honest - it makes a bit of difference and has become a question of prestige. (Vasco, 41, businessman).

I am pleased to belong to Lisbon because it is a major municipality. I used to belong to Loures and I consider that they have many difficult areas, and also to belong to the capital and perhaps it would be more the prestige of being from Lisbon rather than Loures because it is different: whether we like it or not. (Isa).

I consider that for some people here, to belong to Loures is something discreditable. There have been comments of the type 'they should be in the Loures zone' to censure certain types of behaviour and, at times to those who are not from Loures, but are from the Lisbon zone. (Beatriz, 57, interior decorator).

Knowing that such administrative division is used to establish a social cleavage in the North area of *Parque das Nações*, and the whole territory being as close as it is to the Loures municipality, it is understandable that it has gained greater significance and sustained the differentiation between *us* and the *others.*

4.6 Strategies of external avoidance

Parque das Nações may be described as an urban area but with the characteristics of a suburban neighbourhood striving to affirm itself as a distinctive 'centre', where the internal ambivalence can only be managed by residents reinforcing the social distance between themselves and nearby neighbourhoods. When faced with an 'invasion' of public space by *others,* that is weekend visitors from elsewhere, a group consciousness emerges based on collective identity (Centlives et al., 1986). This could possibly indicate stronger social interaction among the residents and between residents and the space they live in. However, this group consciousness seems to be focused on keeping their distance, and stressing the

differences between themselves and those 'others' from outside. The shared feeling of invasion arises hand in hand with a kind of resignation which occurs since most respondents try to avoid sharing their public space and having to cope with the 'space invaders' (Puwar, 2004) who visit the *Parque das Nações* especially at the weekend.

> It was not to be hoped that this would be so central a site…. a person feels a bit invaded with the tumult and this makes us turn a little towards privacy and calm at the weekends. Because during the week it's fantastic ….life at the weekend can be calmer and there's the invasion of outsiders. (Rita).
>
> At the weekend, after lunch, if it is a fine day, the place fills up and at that point I try to avoid the general confusion. (Rosa).
>
> At the weekend we don't go walking because we have no need .We have the whole week to enjoy in calm the privileges of having all this here. (Mateus).

The attraction of a large number of visitors, and especially the predominance of visitors coming from the surrounding areas of Loures, serves to homogenize the residents' perception about those visitors. Despite the fact that the visitors to *Parque das Nações* come from a wide range of places, as much local as regional and even from other countries, the residents of *Parque das Nações* share the opinion that the majority are from Loures.

> The visitors must come from Loures, from those huge agglomerations that are very close and have no green spaces. (Gil, 40, commercial technician).
>
> Many of the visitors are from the neighbouring areas: Moscavide, Sacavém, Sta. Iria, Bobadela [Loures parishes]…… basically this is their park. (Rosa).
>
> The great majority of the visitors come from the North, from the *concelho* of Loures. (Beatriz).

From the ways in which respondents differentiate themselves from the visitors who 'invade' their territory, it was clear that the criteria used to describe and classify the 'others' are largely coincidental. When it comes to underlining the differences in social class between visitors and residents in *Parque das Nações*, it is obvious that image is highly valued, especially the way people dress, while certain types of behaviour are deemed as 'more popular', meaning 'lower class' (cf. Skeggs, 2004).

> We can tell that visitors are from lower social groups, sometimes because of their behaviour, sometimes by their appearance (…). I think we can tell who the visitors are by the way they dress. It's not that they don't have taste but, probably, they just can't afford to wear more fashionable clothes, for instance. Then there are chronic behaviour patterns, like speaking very loudly. I would say it's essentially that, because I have never seen anyone beating anyone else around here. (Luís, 31, economist).
>
> The visitors are a bit different from the residents… the residents are perhaps a social level above the visitors. (Isa).
>
> They come in training clothes and talk nonsense, they are common people – they are a different social class, lower, at root it is this. They are people who perhaps have no education. (Gil).

Certainly these descriptions present an oversimplified understanding of the diversified universe of visitors and users of *Parque das Nações,* which is likely to include people who work there, as well as people travelling with tourist groups coming either from other parts of Portugal or from abroad. At the same time, it is interesting to note that the description generally made of the 'others' is the counterpoint of the residents' self-image, as individuals with higher education, coming from middle and upper social classes, well-dressed, discreet and polite.

It was also found that the differentiation mechanism allowing them to distinguish themselves from the 'others' is the area where the latter come from. In other words, the 'others' are, for the most part, the visitors living in the neighbouring municipality of Loures, represented according to two apparently contradictory logics: on the one hand, they are those who 'come from outside' Lisbon (note that the respondents attempt to reinforce their inclusion in the city by excluding the 'others' coming from the suburbs); on the other hand, they are those who come from nearby locations.

As mentioned above, one way to highlight their social identity and promote their differentiation to the outside world is by avoiding sharing the public space with the 'space invaders' (Puwar, 2004). The latter are seen as 'appropriating' the right to use the residents' space and conditioning their daily life by that use and, at the same time, they represent everything the residents of *Parque das Nações* wish not to be.

> I stopped doing my weekend walks due to the visitors. (Elsa).
>
> Harming is a term that may be a bit harsh, but sometimes [the visitors] end up breaking into my life, because if I do not ride my bicycle before 1 p.m., I can't go later because it is too crowded. (Ana).
>
> The visitors disturb the peace and quiet. We want to be sitting, resting peacefully, on an esplanade and it is not possible because it is like a fairground. We lose the sensation of being at rest. (Artur, 45, teacher).

4.7 Towards a process of closure?

In *The Fall of Public Man*, Richard Sennett (1992) discusses the decline of public space and a weakening of social life resulting from the new urban culture of industrial capitalism. Sennett also mentions how the progress of capitalism has led to a more personal society,

dominated by individuals with different needs and unable to maintain the spontaneous social relations that had previously characterized the use of public space. The city becomes a mechanism for impersonal social relations, mediated by rules and strategies dominated by vigilance and caution with individuals as actors who give form to new codes of meaning involved in the term 'public' (Sennett, 1992).

Despite the post-industrialization that characterizes contemporary Western capitalist societies, Sennett's core ideas continue to echo in many studies concerned with urban public space and its contemporary transformations (Soja, 1989, 2000; Zukin, 1995; Borja and Muxí, 2003). In the context of the privatization of public spaces as part of urban regeneration and 're-aestheticization', Zukin (1995) points to the symbolic manipulation of a space's image as a factor that is increasingly implicit in marketing, and contributing to social exclusion, despite the rhetoric of cultural inclusion. Borja and Muxí (2003) predict the possibility of the 'death of the city' because of the end of public space due to the (mis)understanding of what makes a city that is implicit in the current economic and social model. A not-dissimilar position is defended by Soja (1989, 2000) who - seeking to characterize the wide range of changes that are occurring at the level of public space - highlights not only the 'Disneyfication' or the aestheticization in accordance with specific reference models, but also the socio-economic segregation implicit in the use of these spaces; the loss of a sense of the 'public' within the different superpositionings of territoriality.

In the latent conflict which is occurring in the public spaces of the *Parque das Nações,* it is possible to recognize Sennett's new 'self-contained' strategies, as well as some of the urban changes described by Zukin, Soja, Borja and Muxí. This is the aestheticization of a new urban centre promoting social segregation, not so much by the privatization of public spaces with gates, walls, or guards, but due to the public perception of loss that results from the social avoidance and from the use of space alternating between residents and visitors.

This reality confirms the increasing tendency for gated communities and exclusionary enclaves denounced by authors from various disciplines related to urban space, who have tried to portray these phenomena and their socio-spatial consequences in contemporary urban landscapes. Setha Low (2004) has sought to show how it is that the discourse of fear and insecurity in the face of the natural heterogeneity of relationships that characterizes life in urban centres, functions more and more to justify the spatial, and above all social, self segregation that the middle and upper middle classes impose upon themselves.

Bearing in mind that the *Parque das Nações* is *not* a physically enclosed space, it is notable that many residents consider themselves to live in one of the most secure areas of Lisbon. Here we do not find – contrary to what Low has shown – a justificatory discourse based on security, but instead a discourse based on protection of self-identity, and thus of perceived standards, through selective avoidance against specific 'others'. Its justification is sustained by the need, and even a responsibility, to preserve the area's exceptional qualities of public space and its associated quality of life.

In this way, it is possible to establish a parallel between this area and the suburban 'oasis' described by Watt (2009, 2010). In both cases, one can recognize the leading role of residential space in social representation and the significance of this in relation to lifestyles and other processes of social differentiation. The question of security emerges as secondary to the question of prestige, of social climbing, and the desire to set boundaries against the spatial proximity of 'undesirables'. In both cases they seek to preserve the 'magic' of areas for exclusive use, not only to legitimate their symbolic responsibility, but also as a way to reinforce the right to appropriate and exclude which is inherent to 'selective belonging'.

This selective belonging is arguably anchored more in an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991) based on the identity relationships between residents and 'their' space, than properly in the effective sharing of neighbourhood connections. A good part of that which confers some sense of collective identity with these spaces is, a 'schizophrenic relationship' (Watt, 2009: 2874) with the 'outside' and the 'others' who represent it. The above issues are clearly illustrated in the following interview excerpts, showing an attitude that might be understood as a collective - though muted – wish to privatize and seclude the *Parque das Nações*.

> What I find most unpleasant [in *Parque das Nações*] are the visitors who come from outside, the people who don't live here and come here. All of our acquaintances who live here have the same opinion. When we go out at weekends and start seeing cars coming in and parking, loaded with bikes and tricycles we always say – 'Here come these people!…'.This is something terrible to say and we say it as a kind of joke, but…really, there is some truthfulness to it, because they take away all the tranquillity there is normally here, even when I ride my bike, just like them …This is not ours, but it's like a big gated community. (Artur)
>
> There is a friend of mine who lives in the North area and loves to live there… and he often says that he is negotiating with the Lisbon Town Hall to have a fence built around the entire Parque das Nações with an exclusive entrance for residents, so that no one else can come in. Of course this is all a joke! But it's also a symptom. (Afonso).

4.8 Conclusion

The *Parque das Nações* was conceived as a 'new centre' within the city of Lisbon, but was sited in a peripheral zone and shared with the *municipio* of Loures. Some of the residents chose the *Parque das Nações* as an alternative to other more central and gentrified areas of Lisbon but attribute a centrality and social prestige to their residential area unequalled in

Lisbon. They claim to live in the city, but with a sensation of being permanently in a select hideaway, a 'magic' place that screens them from urban confusion and its social heterogeneity.

This sense of 'magic' value attributed to space can be linked to the concept of 'elective belonging' (Savage et al., 2005, Savage, 2010). According to Savage, the culturally engaged middle classes invest highly in their location, but it is relatively unimportant for them to belong to a socially cohesive neighbourhood: 'What matters most is the sense that they live somewhere appropriate for "someone like me". It is thus allied with a possessive concern over place' (Savage, 2010: 132). At the same time, the analysis offered here also resonates with Watt's (2009, 2010) reformulation of elective belonging via the concept of selective belonging, as 'a spatially selective narrative of belonging that is limited to a given space within a wider area. That space is invested with a positive place image that the wider locality is considered not to share' (Watt, 2010: 154). One can recognize the applicability of these two concepts towards the *Parque das Nações,* an area that is homogeneous in terms of social class and also distinct from its surroundings. In addition, although it is not a gated space, there is a collective protective behaviour and an un-stated wish to be physically shut away from 'others'; from their presence, their behaviour, and their social condition. Notably these 'others' act as threatening 'space invaders' along the lines discussed by Puwar (2004).

In this sense, one can say that the desire for an enclosed space has little to do with the security reasons described by Low (2004), but rather to ensure a certain social status and recognition through the defense of a territory that is seen like an 'oasis' (Watt, 2009) and whose preservation implies the avoidance of 'others' who don't match with their internal standards. In other words, it corresponds to a '(…) "spatialization of class", the way that "shapes on the ground" become loaded with social and cultural significance' (Savage, 2010: 115).

Internally, however, conviviality between residents may be more complex than expected. In fact, the residents share a collective identity which is spatial, social, economic and cultural but, for that very reason, they feel the need to maintain a watchful and critical attitude towards any dissonant behaviour among themselves. In addition to this critical attitude, there is the devaluation of neighbourly relations and also, according to several interviewees, the daily greetings between people who share the same buildings are avoided. In this sense, the spatial narratives leads to confirm the existence of social distinctions within the same neighborhood and thus, to a selective belonging approach that is also very helpful to understand the internal differentiations that mark this urban territory. These are some of the ambivalences that are created in an area that is not a gated community, but which, as an urban concept, has acquired a social status that initiated a process of *self-ghettoization* or of shutting oneself away, whereby one gains a desired way of life, and at the same time the absence of undesirables (Seixas, 2008).

Despite all this, the area remains an example for the observation of new issues facing contemporary neighborhoods, particularly spatialized social inequality, providing both a strategy for social climbing and a laboratory for observing and recording the dynamics of differentiation and urban segregation. These are processes which proliferate in contemporary metropolitan space, contradicting the true essence of the city, its enlargement and opening through the processes of metropolitanization, and undermining the idea of the 'inclusive city' which features so strongly in the public agendas of city governments, namely in Lisbon.