



TASTING THE LANDSCAPE

53rd IFLA
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APRIL • 20th 21st 22nd •
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Urban Public Policies: towards the Improvement of Landscape Ecological System

The Case-Study of the City of Évora, Portugal

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The *Charter of European Planning Barcelona 2013* (ECTP-CEU, 2013) presents a *Vision for the future of European cities and regions*, highlighting the sustainability of cities and the preservation of urban ecosystems, integrating the *man-made environment with the natural ecosystems* and contributing to the *well-being and quality of life of their inhabitants and other stakeholders*. Thus, urban public policies are crucial to the improvement of the landscape ecological system, achievable by a city planning and design that harmonize man-made and natural environments.

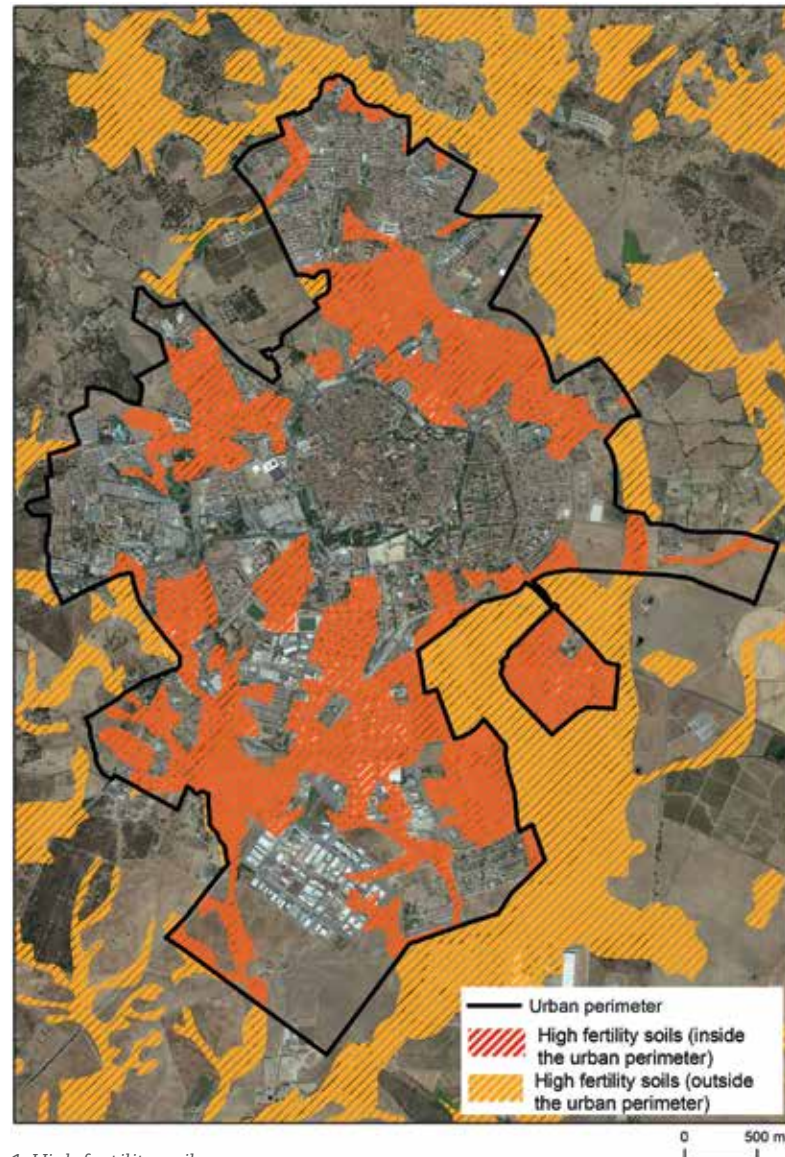
In Portugal, land use and urban planning is based on a territorial system organized in four levels: national, regional, inter-municipal and local. At the local level, the Municipal Master Plan (PDM) provides the territorial local development strategy for the whole municipality, taking into account the guidelines of the upper levels but also their own options of strategic development. Land use regime and its programming is defined. PDM establishes the municipal spatial structure, the classification of the soil (*classes of spaces*), as well as their occupation parameters. It also defines the qualification of soils as rural or urban land – also meaning the definition of the urban perimeter –, having yet to be spatially delimited the Municipal Ecological Structure (MES). Until 2014 (when the *Land Use and Urban Planning* law was reformed), the delimitation of urban perimeter includes the consolidated urban areas but also areas for future urban expansion. Whenever there is no other type of soils available, rural soils or even those who have been classified as National Agriculture Reserve (RAN) are converted in urban soils, with the possibility of urbanization. For this urban perimeter, a more detailed plan is mandatory (PU), to qualify and differentiate urban soils for different purposes, including soils allocated to an Urban Ecological Structure (UES), articulated with the municipal one, essential for the urban system equilibrium. This urban ecological structure defines areas, values and systems fundamental for the protection and environmental improvement of urban areas.

The 2014 new law brings several changes. Amongst others, doesn't allow anymore reserving land to urbanize, in Municipal Master Plans. Moreover, it is now possible to revert land classified for urban purposes in those plans into rustic soils (when it is not yet built). This means a great opportunity to create new planning and design dynamics, by the conversion of several areas predicted to urbanize (but not yet built) and include them in the urban ecological structure, essentially to enhance the landscape ecological system.

An example for the city of Évora is given, centred in the high fertility soils (RAN). Some areas expected for expansion inside the urban perimeter were not built until now, due to an oversized predicted urban areas. For the delimitation of those new urban areas, soils affected to RAN were converted in urban soils, some of them already destroyed by edification.

Also an UES was designed inside the urban perimeter articulated with the proposed MES. That urban ecological structure is mainly composed by a poor network of channels spaces, without real ecological significance, mostly framing areas to road axis, some protections areas of watercourses and occasionally recreation open spaces.

As stated before, the new urban planning law create the opportunity to innovative planning and design strategies, in our perspective with possibility to converting several areas in rustic soils as originally or including them in the UES. This means an invert strategy in the traditional urban planning process, once it uses the ecological values as an urbanization tool. In accordance, our proposal is to include the non-built areas with high fertility soils in the urban ecological structure, bringing the agriculture functions to the urban areas. This opportunity will also allow increasing the options to a better definition of a Municipal Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change, particularly those related with soil and water conservation. A more consistent network is designed, enlightening the conservation and improvement of Nature, while contributing to the well-being and quality of life. A multi-functional structure, linked with the production, protection and recreation functions. An idea related with sustainability, which is ethical, aesthetic, ecological and cultural.



1. High fertility soils