

HOME-VILLAGES IN PORTUGAL: PERSPECTIVES OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN CONCEPT AND AS A STRATEGY IN PLANNING AND REVITALIZATION OF THE TERRITORY

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ABSTRACT

A residential system of Home-Villages, who it is a factor of the region revitalization process in Portugal, is the theme of this work. Housing for seniors turns out to be a central focus of the architecture, planning and real estate today's actuality (Andreas Huber, 2008).

In our society, the housing concept is critical and represents a large part of the quality of life of each individual. It constantly characterize and marks our culture, our habits, our tradition; it is also paramount the political system itself, in the legislation field, in urban planning and in architecture (Higino, 2010).

World population is ageing, reflecting the advances in medical, scientific and technological knowledge, as well as improvements in hygiene and in sanitary conditions of habitations and territory. And it is relevant include factors like education, culture, political, social and economical order which influences the rates of fertility and life expectancy of populations and their migration flows.

To the demographic challenge, adds also the challenge of promoting the relations of proximity and interaction of the populations with their habitation, as a place of refuge, and with the territory where they live and move. It is necessary to establish a territorial and architectural structure that eliminates physical and psychological barriers between generations minimizing isolation, where the introduction of the time factor in its planning aims to encourage and enhance the social and civic and participation of the population. Therefore, architectural and territorial planning, in future, should give answers to the specific needs of different layers of the population and should also be flexible to different stages of life, in order to promote a proper interaction between the physical space and the specific needs of usage.

Based on the analysis and comparative study, in its macro and micro scales, the Home-Villages of São José de Alcalar, in Portimão, and Monte da Palhagueira, in Faro, is intended to identify and characterize the physical and spatial components of the villages in their residential units, equipments and supporting services, as well as the flows of the resident populations in their territory of action through the analysis of the mobility systems and the relations with the available supporting equipments.

This is done in order to design structural lines of research, from the perspective of architectural design - through the programmatic definition for Home-Villages in their housing system, equipment and services geared to seniors, as well as through the revitalization and requalification of the existing architectural heritage, villages and towns in the interior Portuguese territory, are in a process of depopulation. This is also done from the perspective of planning, where the implementation of these villages can build sustainability. Further more, it could be a strategy development engine for the economic and tourism sector, aimed at seniors.

Key-Words: Home-Villages, Housing, Spatial Equity, Population, Aging, Revitalization.

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01. PREAMBLE

This article is written within the scope of the course of PhD thesis, in Architecture, in the College of Architecture of Universidade Técnica de Lisboa, whose provisory title is: Communities of Assisted Living and the case of Home-Villages in Portugal, under the supervision of Professor Madalena Cunha Matos. This research deals with the problem of aging of the population and how it interacts with habitat and territory. It considers the analysis of case studies of Home-Villages in Portugal, in micro and macro scale, and explores how they can be an enhancer of a sustainable territory. This could be done through the development of an intergenerational architectural structure, which minimizes or eliminates barriers in order to improve the quality of life style for elderly people and ensure their integration in the family and social community of support. Where, apart from qualified offer housing and services, oriented to the needs of the elderly population, a diversified supply of jobs can be developed and that will promote the establishment of young people and with that combating the desertification and the abandonment of the territory, and establish an integrated strategy for economic development and tourism geared to seniors.

02. INTRODUCTION: THE DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

02.1. GLOBAL AGEING

The population is aging. Different studies and authors refer that in the future worldwide demography will be marked by the augmented number of individuals with 65 and more years, due to increased life expectancy and decreasing fertility rates. These phenomenon reflect the developments of medical, scientific and technological knowledge, as well as the improvement of hygiene and sanitary housing and territory, resulting from the urbanization process. It is still relevant to include factors of educational, cultural, political, social and economic order and migration, where the immigration attenuates and emigration accentuates the aging. In this context, the aging population presents itself as a global problem, a reflection of globalization (HARPER, 2009).

Concerns related to the specific needs of housing for seniors, in terms of typologies, design, ergonomics, equipment and systems that support social as well as planning and territory management, run parallel with concerns of demographic, social and economic, issues resulting from an aging population. According to the study of Vázquez-Honoré and Salazar-Martinez (2010), if we take as reference the current pace of aging, in the medium-term social assistance systems, existing economic and housing for the elderly, will not be enough.

02.2. AGING IN PORTUGAL

In the beginning of the 21st century, Portugal appears as one of the most aged countries in Europe. For an individual born in 1960 there was an average life expectancy of 60.7 years for men and 66.4 years for women, and for another born in 2010 it rose to 76.14 years for men and 82.05 years for women, which represents an increase of nearly 15 years in six decades. There is also an increase in population aged 75 years or more. While in 1960, the segment of the population, over 65 years, accounted for 34% of the total population and in 2001 it represented 41% and in 2008, it accounted for 46%. Another factor that characterizes the Portuguese

population is that for every five people aged 75 and over at least three are women¹. Between 1991 and 2001, elderly residents increased 26.1% and represented 16.4% of total residents, surpassing the proportion of youth under the age of 15 years, which was 16% (Censos 2001). And the rate of aging in the same period, from 68 to 103 elderly people per 100 young people, is expected to reach 243 in the year 2050².

The Eurostat report published in June 2010, states that rural areas lose their young generations faster than urban areas and indicates that five countries of the twenty-seven EU Member States have a higher percentage of elderly living in rural areas: more than 20% in Portugal, Spain, Italy, France and Greece. The Censos 2011³ shows that interior districts like Portalegre, Bragança and Beja present the lower younger indexes of residential population. It is possible to conclude that Portugal has a significant rate of aging population and that means also the territory is aging. By his numeric expression, the elderly population presents itself as one of the structural bases of contemporary society, where space to inhabit and the interrelations between the territory and the individual gain preponderance.

03. HABITAT SPACE, THE INTER-RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TERRITORY AND OLD USERS IN PORTUGUESE CONTEXT

Housing and territorial conditions have a strong impact on life-style quality of the elderly user, connection between his physical frailty and the space where he lives and moves. The elimination of architectural barriers presents a major factor in the implementation of *Active Aging*⁴. Factors like security, easy access to health services, culture, leisure, and others, are regarded as fundamental to maintaining the autonomy and physical and emotional welfare of the elderly.

The habitat space dedicated to the elderly, which preferentially incorporates intergenerational models, in order of understand building and territory, presents itself as the great challenge of architectural thought and practice, as well as planning and territorial management for the twenty-first century. Until the end of the twentieth century there were, broadly, just two possible forms for the residence of the elderly: the continuity in their own home or institutionalization. From the end of the century new models began to emerge: assisted living (MONTROYA, 2009/11). Those appear, mostly related to large financial groups and are sometimes integrated with private health systems, and in urban environments, affirm by its prime location and differentiation in services. In Portugal, examples are, the assisted living *Domus Vida*, of the José de Mello Group, and Montepio Residence, of the Montepio Group, among others.

¹ Maria João Valente Rosa & Paulo Chistas. Portugal: os Números. Lisboa: Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos, 2010

² Maria José Carrilho. A situação demográfica recente em Portugal. Lisboa: *Revista de Estudos Demográficos*, nº44, 2008

³ http://www.ine.pt/scripts/flex_provisorios/Main.html

⁴ In 2002, the United Nations promoted in Madrid, Spain, the Second World Assembly on Ageing, aiming to define guidelines for policy regarding the elderly population for the twenty-first century and promoted with World Health Organization the concept of *Active Ageing*, broader than the concept of *Healthy Aging*, with a vision that goes beyond health issues and extends to socioeconomic aspects, psychological and environmental. Presented as key concepts: *autonomy, independence, healthy life expectancy, quality of life* and refers to *social participation, health and safety* as determinants for its implementation.

04. HOME-VILLAGES

04.1. THE CONCEPT

Also in the late twentieth century in Portugal, and in order to find structures that could present an alternative to institutionalization of the elderly, appears the Home-Villages concept. They may have been inspired by other similar structures, such as the Cohousing's. This concept emerged in the 60s in Denmark and was subsequently implemented in other countries in Northern Europe and North America it aimed at promoting integration and intergenerational links among resident communities.

Home-Villages present themselves as structures for installation, permanent or temporary, residence and services geared to the needs of aging population, to improve their life-style quality and to provide a context where neighborly relations and support can be stimulated, and have the purpose to providing an independent and dignified aging. At the same time, this kind of structures seek to promote the establishment of young people, through a specialized job offer, for example, in geriatric area, long-term care, home care, among others, and with that stimulate their intergenerational component. These villages could be a concrete answer to real problems, not only directed to the elderly population, but for an entire social and territorial structure, looking in to the desertified interior as a solution and not as a problem (MARTINS, 2009). These structures could also be integrated in a strategic plan of economical and touristic developing, transforming patrimonial, cultural and rural destinations, existing throughout the territory, in Home-Villages that could promote a valorization of architectural, cultural, landscaping, gastronomic patrimony. The vocation for senior tourism in Portugal is presented by authors such as Carminda Cavaco (2009) and Carlos Ferreira (2005, 2006), who consider that it is not just a market niche, but a significant portion of sector, which has a high growth rate.

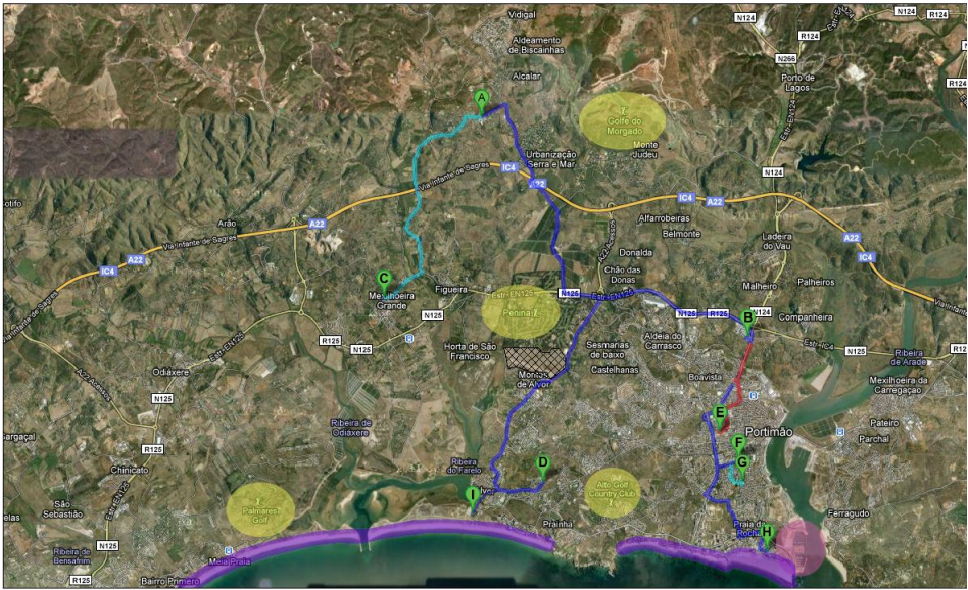
04.2. SÃO JOSÉ DE ALCALAR

In 1989 began the construction of São José de Alcalar village, in Mexilhoeira Grande, Portimão. It was an initiative of Father Domingos Monteiro da Costa, who felt the specific needs of accommodation found in the Home in the parish. This type of housing complex develops within a traditional structure of shared rooms, differentiated by sex, indifferent to the separation of families who should, despite their age and specific needs, stay together and continue to share the same home, although they unable to remain in their own homes.

The São José de Alcalar village was designed by architect Martin Garcias and was developed in a structure of five cores that respond to the functions of housing, supporting services to the village and support to the visitors, arranged in a radial and concentric design. The model proposes an intergenerational experience, enabling improved life-style quality of local residents and integration in the local community and they family's, interconnected with the existing territorial network.

04.2.1. THE MACRO SCALE OF SÃO JOSÉ DE ALCALAR

Based on the cartographic reading of São José de Alcalar village were analyzed the neighborhood relations and the proximity to central support equipments identified in Figure 1.



LEGEND :

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| A. São José de Alcalar Village | |
| B. Portimão Hospital | |
| C. Mexilhoeira Grande Health Centre | |
| D. Alvor Private Hospital | |
| E. Portimão Health Centre | |
| F. Portimão Sports Hall | |
| G. Portimão Municipal Swimming Pool | |
| H. Portimão Municipal Tênis Center | |
| I. Alvor Sports Center | |
| |  Shore - Praias |
| |  Golf Courses |
| |  Portimão Marina - Harbour |
| |  Airfield - Airport |

Figure 1. São José de Alcalar Village – Ortophoto / Aerial view, Spaces and Equipments of influence

It was possible to conclude that São José de Alcalar village is removed from its urban area of influence, so it is always necessary to use the car to access facilities and central services of support – hospitals, health center, leisure and cultural facilities, banks, post offices, among others - which, in a region lacking in public transport, is equivalent to using private transport and firefighters ambulances. The village is served by good roads infrastructures - the highway is neared - as well with land and mobile telecommunications networks.

04.2.2. THE MICRO SCALE OF SÃO JOSÉ DE ALCALAR



Figure 2. São José de Alcalar Village – Site plan

The reading of the micro-scale of São José de Alcalar Home-Village was developed through a survey and interviews performed with the people responsible for the management of village, conducted in May 2011, which considered the parameters of analysis interpreted below.

- **General characteristics**

The village extends over an area of 18.280,00 m², where 71% of the total area is not built; it is used as entrance, green spaces, and outdoor recreational equipment - amphitheater, Geriatric Park, gardens and remaining wasteland. The housing area represents the largest percentage of built area (19%).

- **Characterization of the available services**

There is available medical service, permanent nursing service, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, laundry, coffee shop, supermarket, hairdresser, sports park, kitchen, dining room, where residents can have their meals, if they wish - although all the houses have kitchen; the responsible of the village transmitted us, that the vast majority of the residents prefer to have their meals here. The village also provides other support services to the neighboring community, like a chapel, day-nursery, kindergarden, leisure activities for young people and accommodation for visitors.

- **Characterization of capacity and structure of the houses**

The maximum occupation in the villa is stipulated to 130 residents, in 52 houses, consisting of 26 one bedroom houses, 18 two bedroom houses and 8 three bedroom houses. All bathrooms and kitchens are tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities.

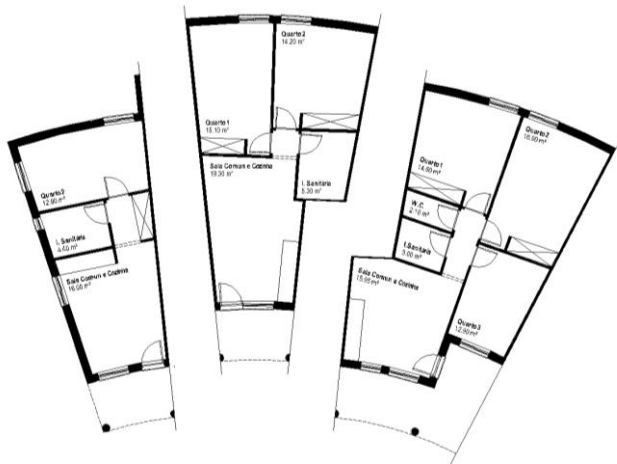


Figure 3. São José de Alcalar Village – Typologies: 1, 2 and 3 bedrooms houses

- **Characterization of the resident population**

At the date of completion of the survey, the occupation in the village was 114 habitants, of which 65 were women - representing 57% of the total population, mostly with 65 or more years (54%) - and 49 men - 43% of the total population, mostly with 65 or more years (39%). Another significant finding to the characterization of resident population, is the fact that 14 houses are occupied by couples (12%) and 8 with people with direct kinship relations (7%). Thus it appears that the majority of houses (81%) are shared by people who do not have any degree of relatedness between themselves. All residents are Portuguese.

04.3. MONTE DA PALHAGUEIRA

Located in Gorjões, in Faro, the construction of Monte da Palhagueira began in 1992 with the Nursing Home. It was an initiative of Mary Cornelius-Reid, who with her family owns the Amesbury Abbey Group, founded in 1972, and has three more units of residence for the elderly in the UK: Amesbury Abbey, in Wiltshire, Winton House e Sutton Manor, in Hampshire.

The village was designed by architect Carlos Gregorio who created the concept from the pre-existence of a country-house in ruins and was inspired in the local architecture, the village of Alte. It was conceived bearing in mind each house as a unique identity. The housing structure is developed in apartments, townhouses and villas with typologies of one, two and three bedrooms, with large gardens areas and no physical limits. Whose construction was development between 1995 and 2005.

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The village offers privacy, independence, security and facilities dedicated to the needs of residents, who must have 55 or more years, who buy the property rights for a value that starts at £140,000, for a one bedroom apartment.

04.3.1. THE MACRO SCALE OF MONTE DA PALHAGUEIRA

Based on the cartographic reading of Monte da Palhagueira village were analyzed the neighborhood relations and the proximity to central support equipments identified in figure 4.



- A. Monte da Palhagueira
- B. Hospitals
- C. Health centers
- D. Rail transport
- E. Maritime transport
- F. Road transport
- G. Commercial areas
- H. Green areas
- I. Universities
-  Coastal range - Beaches
-  Golf camp
-  Marina Recreation / Port Shelter Faro
-  Faro International Airport

Figure 4. Monte da Palhagueira – Ortophoto / Aerial view, Spaces and Equipments of influence

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It was possible to conclude that Monte da Palhagueira is removed from its urban area of influence, where, as in Alcalar, it is always necessary to use private transport to have access to facilities and central services of support. The village is also well served with good access roads, including highway and land and mobile telecommunications networks. The nearest town, Santa Barbara de Nexe, has services like post offices, banks, among others. The proximity to Faro International Airport presents itself as an added value, since the resident population is foreign.

04.3.2. THE MICRO SCALE OF MONTE DA PALHAGUEIRA

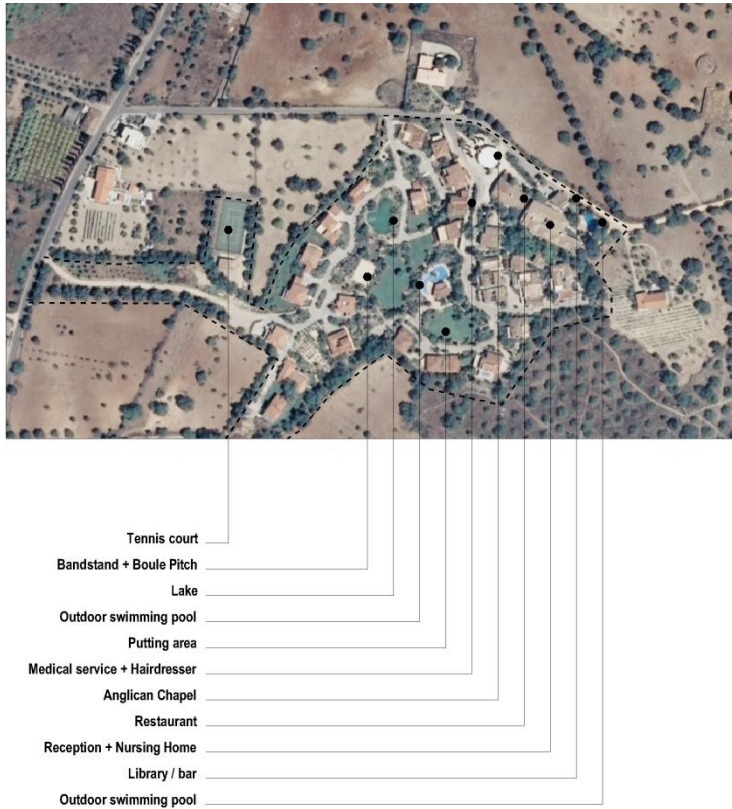


Figure 5. Monte da Palhagueira – Site plan

The reading of the micro-scale of Monte da Palhagueira village was developed through a survey and interviews performed with the people responsible for the management of village, conducted in January 2012, which considered the parameters of analysis, interpreted below.

Cities, nations and regions in planning history

- **General characteristics**

The Monte da Palhagueira occupies a total area of 42.940,00 m², where, like in Alcalar village, most of the percentage corresponds to unbuilt area (83%), and the highest percentage of constructed area is intended for houses (12%).

- **Characterization of the available services**

One of the most important services is the Nursing Home, which is the generating structure of the whole village, with twenty-two rooms (spacious with private bathroom), developed over two floors with stairs and lift. Residents can choose to bring their own furniture or use the one which is available in the institution. There is a permanent nursing and medical service, a dining room on each floor, a kitchen, toilets adapted to special baths for the dependent patients, a living and television room and a outdoor pool. The residents of the village can choose to transfer themselves to the Nursing Home, when or if they consider it more convenient. If they wish, they can also have daily meals in the Nursing Home.

Other services available are: a second outdoor pool (with ramped access to wheelchairs), a games room, a tennis court, a mini-golf course, a small bar with a bookstore and a library, a restaurant, a hairdressing salon, a medical and nursing service and a physiotherapy room, whose service runs from Monday to Friday. There is also an Anglican Chapel, with celebrations on Wednesdays and Sundays, that supports the resident community and the British community in the nearby villages.

- **Characterization of capacity and structure of the houses**

The stipulated maximum occupancy is 99 people, in 33 housing units consisting of 6 one bedroom, 21 two bedrooms and 6 three bedrooms.

The houses have an emergency call system connected to the Nursing Home, housekeeping services (twice weekly), a laundry service, housing and garden maintenance, satellite TV, and in some cases, heated flooring. Eleven houses have garage, nine have carports and one has basement. In the houses with two level floors, one has a lift and in the others, whenever desired, a system with platform lift in the stairs can be installed.

- **Characterization of the resident population in the houses**

At the time when the survey was developed, 36 people lived in the village, mostly women with 65 or more years (75% of the total population, corresponding to 27 individuals), only one woman was younger. The remaining residents are men also with 65 or more years (22% of the total resident population, which corresponds to 8 individuals). As regards the family structure of the resident population, mostly (61%) share the same house with people just for company, without any family relationship. All residents are foreigners, mostly British, except one who is from Belgium and another one from America.

CONCLUSIONS

During this century the aging of population should mark the way we look at the housing space and its interrelations with the territory and the elderly user. The elderly are becoming more numerous, with more vitality, independence, autonomy and their contribution to contemporary society is now predominant.

Through the demographic challenge we must add the challenge of promoting housing spaces that could create a sustainable territory, establish proximity

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relations and revitalize the territories that are in the process of aging and desertification. Models such as the Home-Villages may arise as a response to these needs and contribute to the economic development of regions where they operate. And also contribute to the development of tourism activity, in regions where they are implemented, through senior tourism.

Home-Villages like São José de Alcalar and Monte da Palhagueira present a structuring base in common: supply of housing and service facilities oriented to the needs of the elderly, and the close relationships they establish with neighbor communities, in particular in supporting medical services, religious celebrations and in the case of Alcalar, with day-nursery, kindergarten and leisure activities for young people. Both villages are inserted in a position of disadvantage in the territory. However, the fact that they are close to the road network and well served by land and mobile telecommunications networks, reduces the risk of isolation of the resident population.

The village of São José de Alcalar has a social character and is integrated in the Portuguese network of Private Institutions of Social Solidarity (IPSS), while Monte da Palhagueira is totally private and dedicated to the foreign population resident in Portugal, particularly in the Algarve region, where some residents are already in the country since the 60's and 70's.

The social and economic characteristics of the resident population could have influenced the development of the urban planning and the architectural design, of each village, in other words:

1. The two structures are intended to residence for senior citizens. However in São José de Alcalar the housing structure is developed in blocks of apartments, while in Monte da Palhagueira each house have a unique architectural design project and all structure are developed based in three different models: apartments, townhouses and villas with generous gardens, some of them with private swimming pool.

2. In both cases, the exterior spaces equivalent to the largest percentage of area of the villages and are intended to gardens, which are well care, and present a diversified offer of leisure and sports activities. However, the equipment for the development of sports and leisure has distinct characteristics between the two villages: São José de Alcalar has a geriatric park (fitted by the Council), an exterior amphitheater and spaces where the residents can cultivate vegetables; while Monte da Palhagueira, has two outdoor swimming pools, a tennis court, a pitch and put camp, a lake and a pagoda.

3. In both cases, the existence of health care service to the resident population is as added value, which in case of Monte Palhagueira is prized by the existence of a Nursing Home, where the residents can be transferred, in case they might need.

4. In both villages there is a different offer of services and facilities, such as: hairdressing, restaurant, bar, mini market, library, among others. However, these are still "closed" to the community outside the villages.

5. The existing churches, in the villages, provide a religious support to the resident population and the neighboring community.

6. It appears that the in São José de Alcalar is more open to the community, through facilities they have to the neighboring community, like: Nursery school, kindergarten and activities of the leisure for young people.

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So, to the conception of a structure to implement a Home-Village is primordial:

1. The development of a quality house system (in the level of indoor and outdoor spaces, as well in the support equipment available, for exemple, in the kitchens and in the bath rooms);
2. A diversified supply and specialized health care services;
3. A different offer of facilities;
4. A different offer of sports and leisure equipment.

Where, the physical and emotional well-being of the resident population, as well as the partial occupation of them available time, is an important factor for the promotion of an *active aging* and a good quality of life.

According to these study we can conclude that this structures should be restructured to promote a numerous and different kind of activities (jobs); which aim of improving quality of life style to the residents, simultaneously promote the permanence of young population, in the village and in the territory around.

Home-Villages could be integrated in tourism activity - in the capturing of national and international tourists – and contribute to a sustainable economic development of the villages and of the region, were they are inserted. And, like this, avoiding the desertification of the inner regions of the national territory.



Figure 6,7 and 8. São José de Alcalar Home-Village



Figure 9,10 and 11. Monte da Palhagueira Home-Village

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