

THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF LAGOS



Map of Lagos from 1621

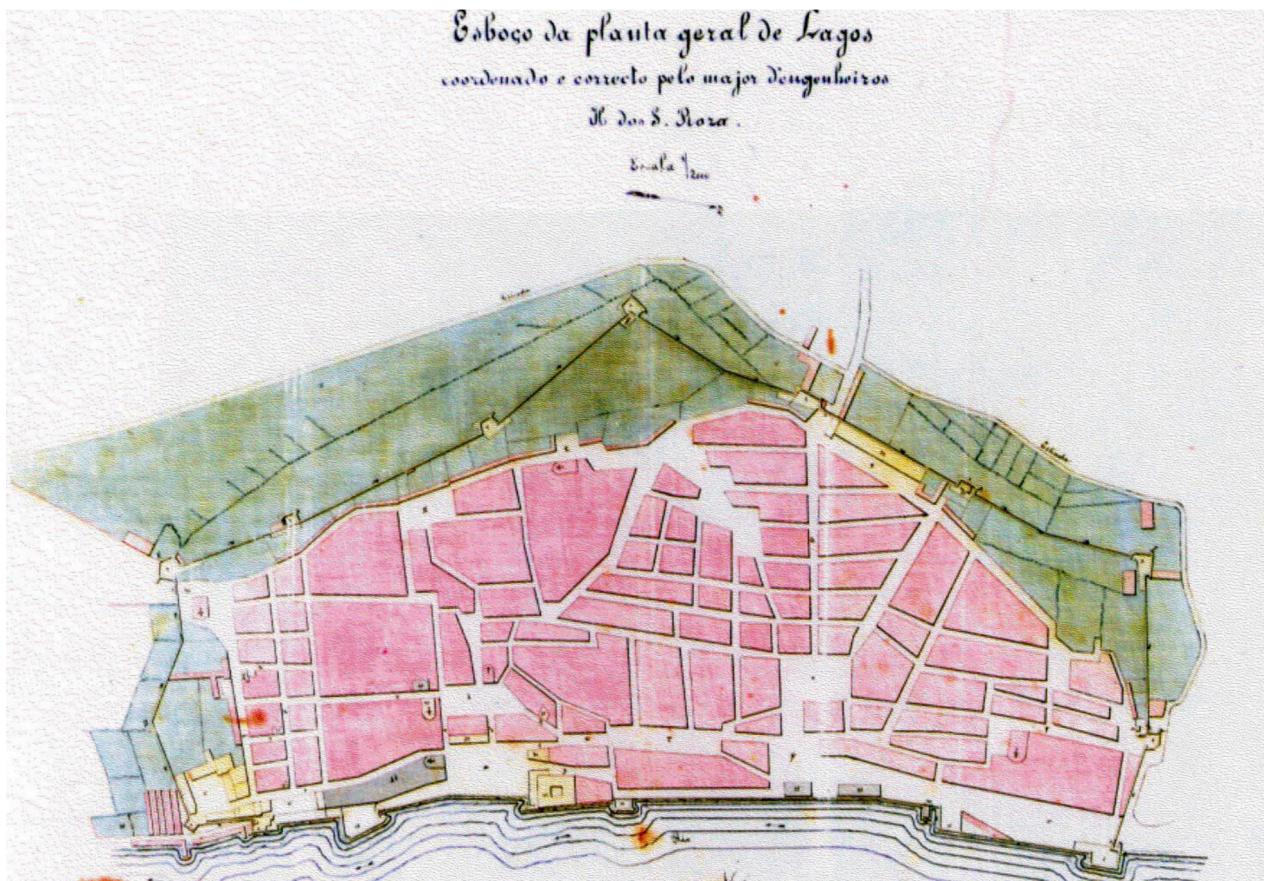
Lagos is a city whose development bears deep traces of the many peoples who have crossed the area, with the Romans leaving the most visible legacy. Their presence is evident, among other things, in the bridge over the Bensafrim River, which was recently named D. Maria I. This bridge was part of the old Roman coastal road from Castro Marim to Sagres. However, the current street pattern has its origins mainly in the Middle Ages, with the city wall and the Castle of the Governors at its core. This historic centre is still the oldest part of the city.

During the period of Portuguese overseas expansion, Lagos developed into an important maritime and commercial centre. The population grew outside the city walls, especially along the river, which increased the need for better defences. King D. João III therefore ordered the construction of a city wall enclosing the entire city in the mid-15th century — unique for the Algarve. For centuries, this wall marked the boundary of urban growth.

The port brought considerable prosperity to Lagos and made the city important for the maritime defence of the region. The military presence was strong, with fortifications such as the forts of Pinhão, Meia-Praia and Bandeira. Lagos was also a religious and administrative centre, as the governors of the Algarve resided there.

The great earthquake of 1755 marked a turning point. This disaster, followed by a tsunami, destroyed a large part of the city. Churches, city walls and houses collapsed and almost the entire population was left homeless. Soldiers and clergy left the city; many residents fled to the Ermida de S. Amaro, where an improvised village sprang up. Two years later, reconstruction of churches began, followed by military buildings and fortifications. This process was slow due to a lack of skilled workers, so that twelve years after the disaster, repairs were still ongoing. Clearing rubble and rebuilding houses was even slower: even twenty years later, there was still a lot of rubble in the streets.

Homeowners were often responsible for repairs themselves, depending on their resources.

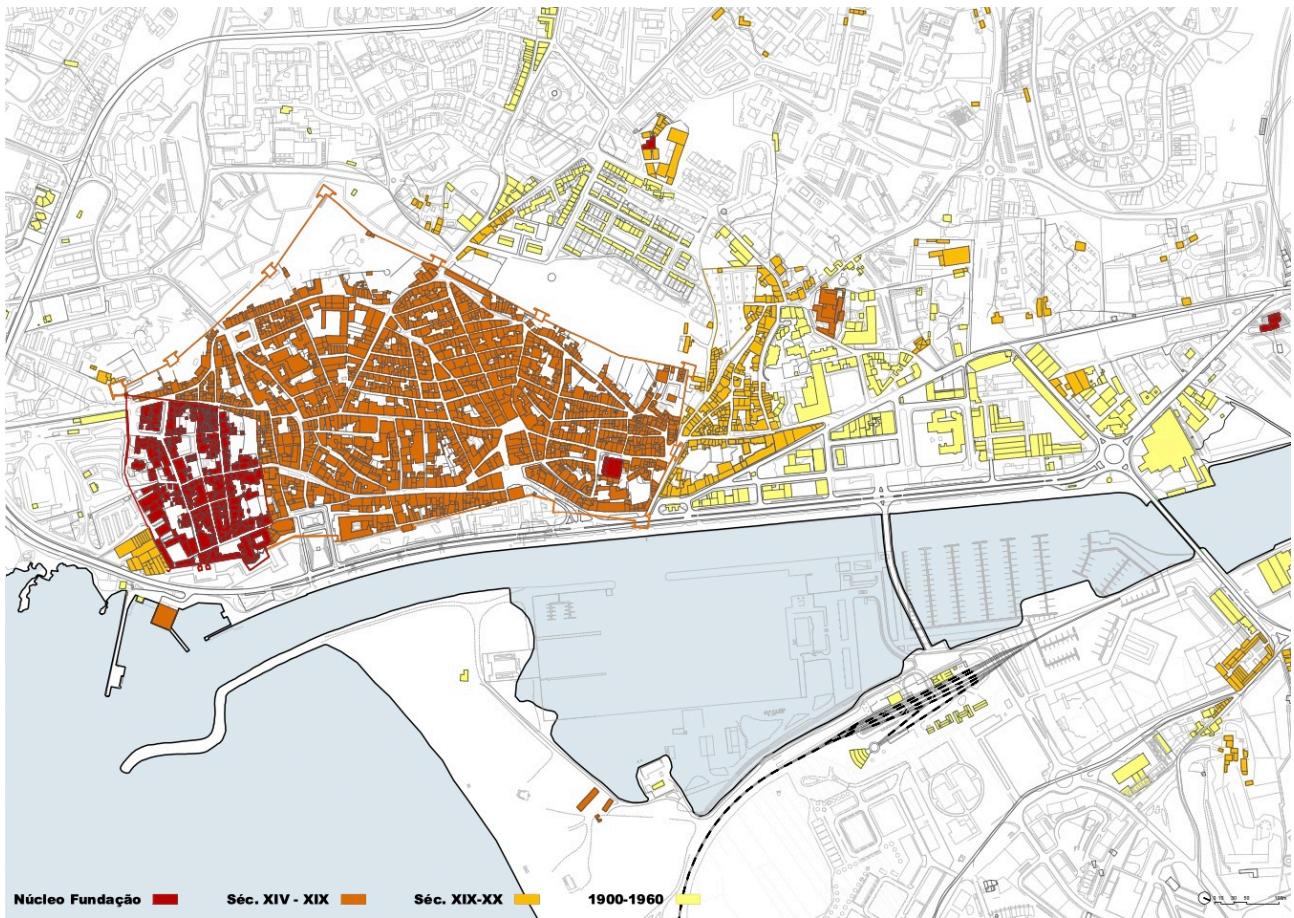


Map of Lagos from 1870/90

It was not until the 19th century that the city grew beyond its old walls once again. New neighbourhoods sprang up around the Porta dos Quartos, towards the chapel of Sto. Amaro, and outside the Porta do Postigo, the neighbourhood of "Aldeia" grew. In the same century, the fish processing industry made its appearance. First there were companies that preserved fish in salt, later the first canning factories appeared. This industry breathed new life into the city.

At the end of the 19th century, there were four major fish canning factories, including Frederico Delory and Polier Frères. In 1889, Aliança Fabril Lacobrigense was also founded, a sign of further industrialisation. From the 20th century onwards, the city improved its port facilities and, with the construction of the railway, Lagos strengthened its role as one of the most important centres for the fish canning industry. Thus, the city continued to adapt and develop, always in close connection with its maritime and industrial function.

THE PORT & THE EXPANSIONS

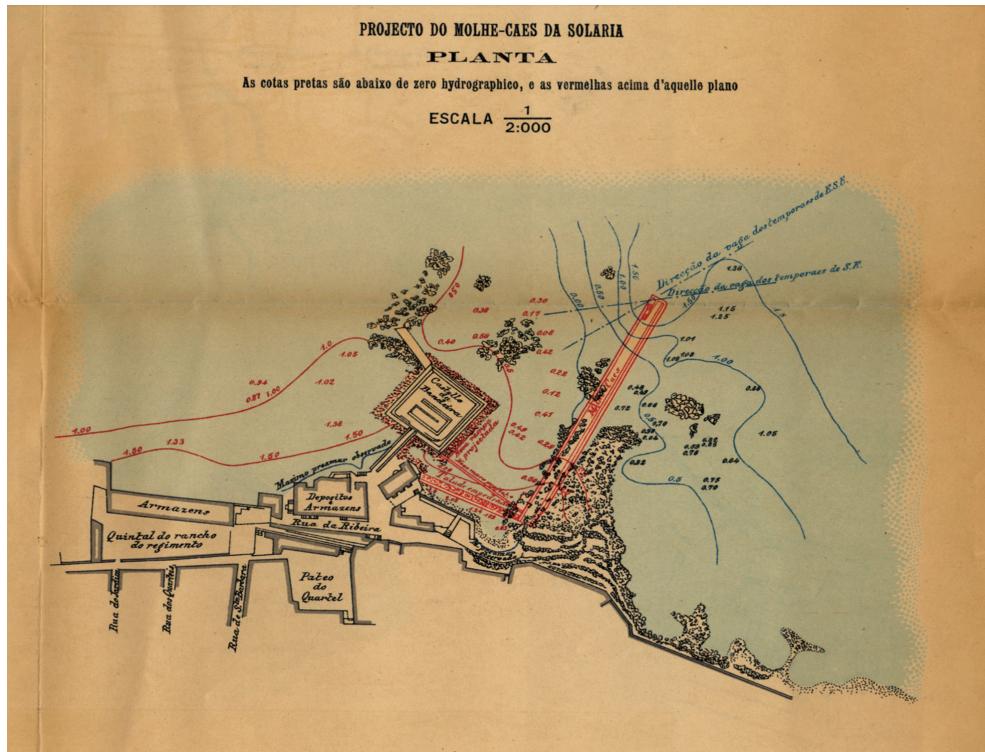


Map showing urban developments in Lagos over time

The Bensafrim River played a crucial role in the development of Lagos. Thanks to this river, small boats could moor anywhere, with the “old quay” or customs quay as the main mooring place for goods. In front of the Porta da Ribeira were the fish market, warehouses and fish processing companies, illustrating the direct link between the city and the sea. The majority of the population depended on maritime activities, but the port experienced problems due to tides and storms, which made mooring risky.

As early as the end of the 19th century, plans were made to modernise the port in order to better meet growing commercial and maritime needs. Ships often had to wait in the bay, unprotected from bad weather, because there were no safe mooring places. Lagos had a small inner harbour at Praça da Constituição, where the customs office was also located, and an outer harbour at Praia da Solaria, but this offered no protection from storms.

Several projects to construct a quay or dock failed due to lack of funds. The plan by engineer João Francisco Ramos, approved in 1896, led to the demolition of the bastion at Porta de Portugal and the construction of a breakwater at the Ponta da Bandeira fort. This was intended to create a safe dock, but construction was halted prematurely, resulting in only part of the pier at the fort being completed in 1903.



The plan by engineer Henrique Gonçalves Moreira for the pier at Praia da Solaria from 1904

In 1904, engineer Henrique Gonçalves Moreira came up with a new plan. He designed a pier at Praia da Solaria that offered protection from the weather and was a better place to embark and disembark. Construction was delayed but was completed in 1908. This new quay was called “Cais dos Ingleses”, presumably because of the frequent visits of English ships to the bay of Lagos.

A plan was also devised to connect the new quay to the city via a beautiful avenue, later named Avenida da Guiné. This allowed travellers to avoid the narrow and dirty access via the old river gate. At the same time, the marshy Rossio de S. João was raised, so that this area no longer served as a market place but provided space for urban expansion. New roads, such as the Estrada Real nº 78 (now the N125), connected Lagos with the eastern Algarve and formed a new border along the Bensafrim.

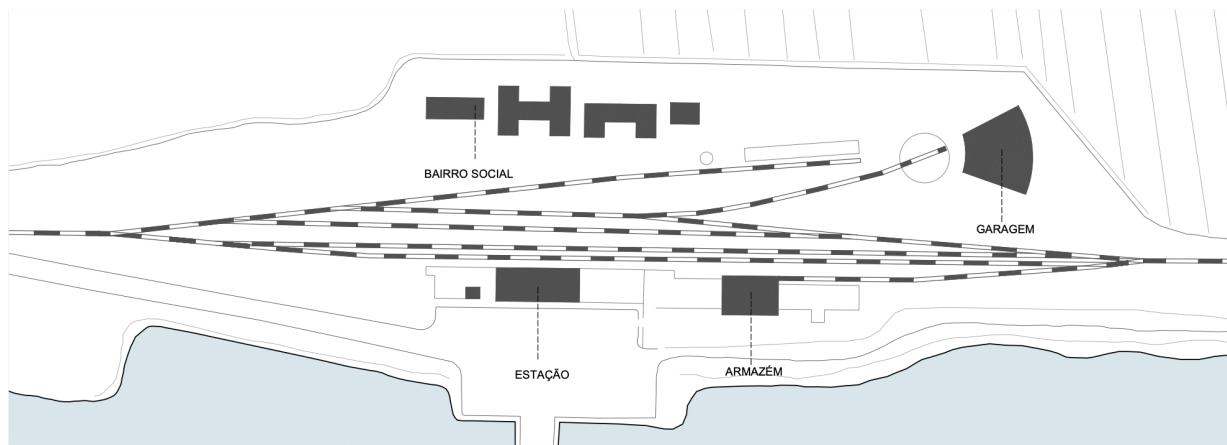
THE RAILWAY LINE

The completion of the railway line across Lagos in 1922 facilitated the transport of raw materials and finished products across Europe and improved domestic trade. Before that time, overland travel was slow and sea transport was the only alternative. However, the late arrival of the train meant that its impact on the growth of Lagos was limited. The section between Parchal (Lagoa) and Lagos was only completed 33 years after the connection to Faro. Portimão had already had a rail connection for nineteen years, which was beneficial for trade on the west coast of the Algarve..



Lagos station in the 1930s

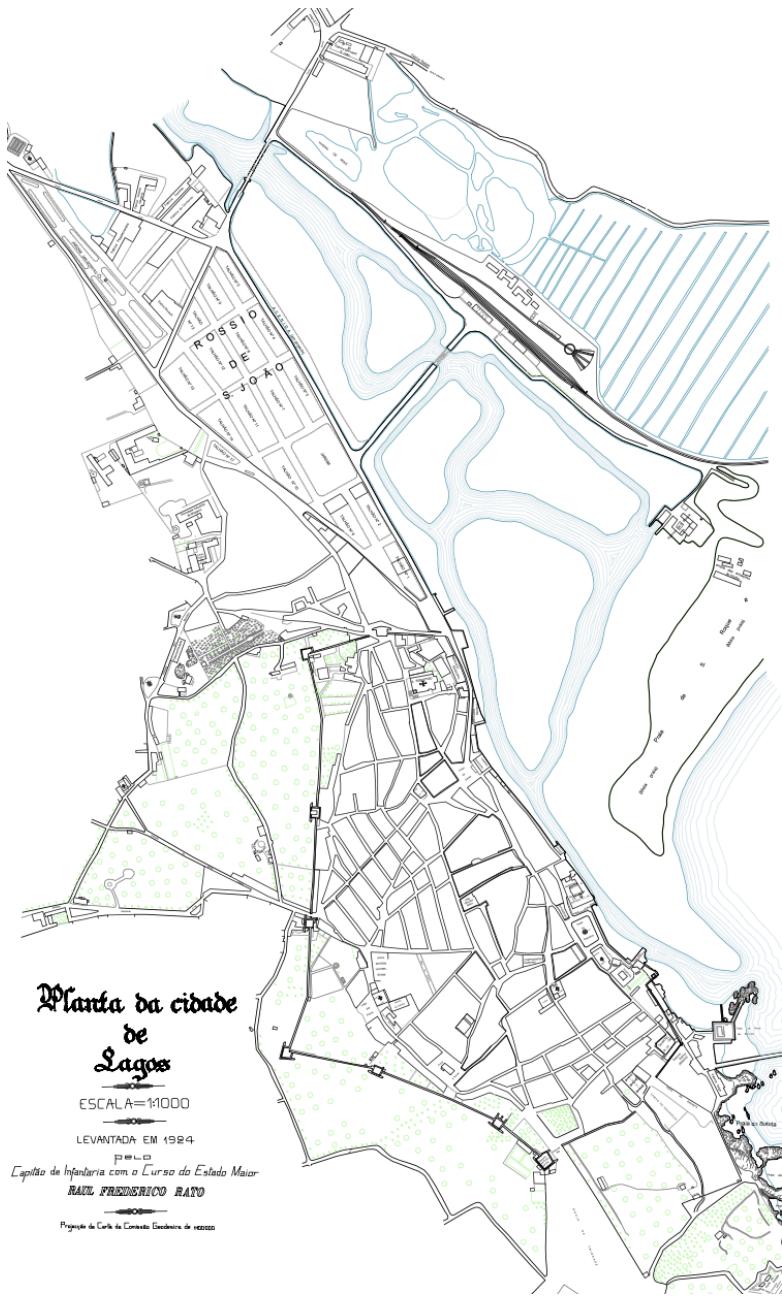
Despite the railway, part of the canned goods exports still went by sea. Most of the raw materials came from the surrounding area: salt from the nearby salt pans and the Bensafrim, olive oil partly from Italy but increasingly from within the country, and other supplies such as wooden crates and nails were produced locally.



Overview of Lagos railway station in 1992

It is impossible to say with certainty whether a faster rail connection would have really changed urban growth. The fact is that the expected industrial development lagged behind, partly due to the slow construction of the line and competition with Portimão. A planned railway line between Sines and Lagos never materialised, although this could have made Lagos the commercial centre of the western Algarve at the expense of Portimão.

THE MAP OF 'CAPITAO RAUL FREDERICO RATO'

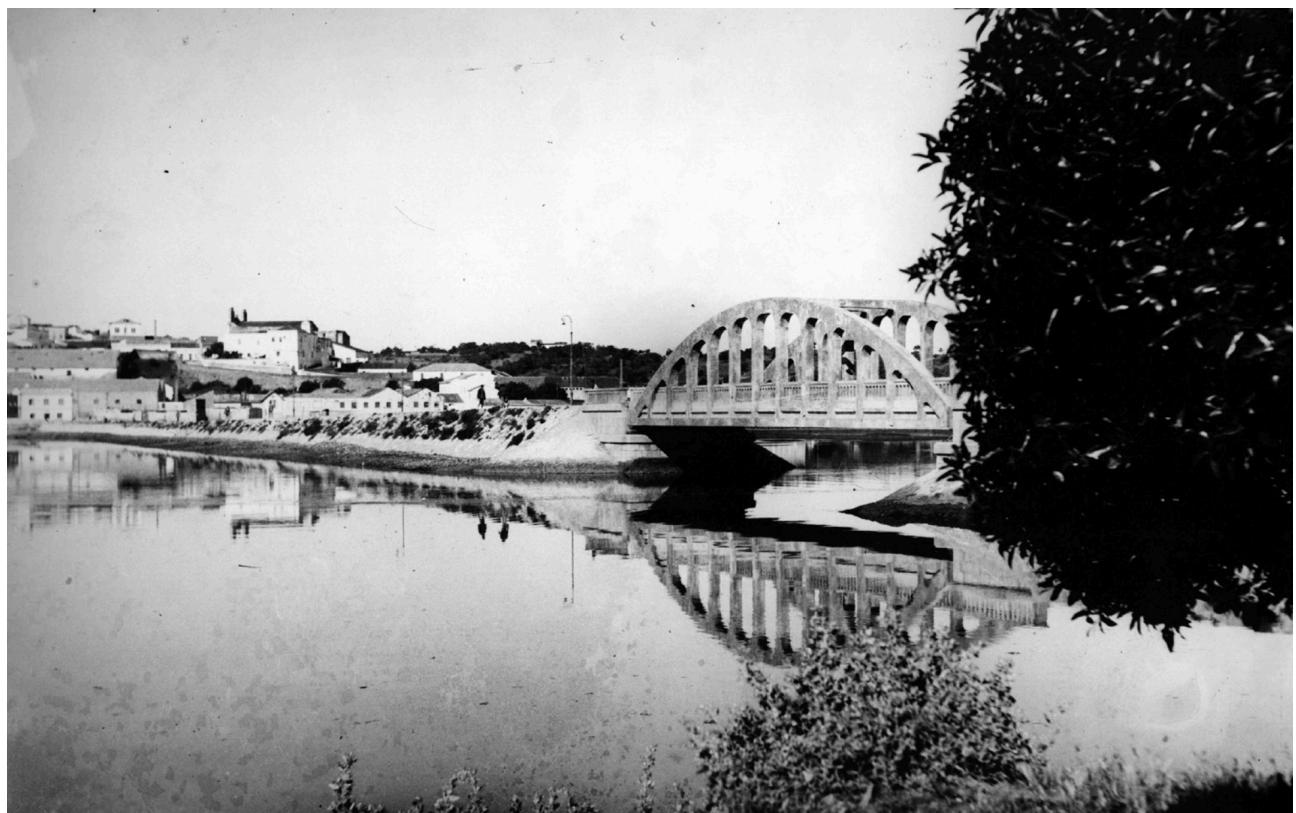


Map of the city of Lagos in 1924, produced by the Portuguese army

This map from 1924, drawn up by the army, provides a detailed picture of the city of Lagos at the beginning of the 20th century. The map shows important infrastructure such as the Solaria pier, the railway line and a new access to the train station, whose bridge was still under construction at the time. This bridge, which connected the river to the sea, was initially built in wood and later replaced by an industrial structure after the contract was awarded in 1926.

The map includes toponymy, rossios such as S. João and Trindade, bastions, city gates and forts such as Forte da Ponta da Bandeira and Forte do Pinhão. Civil and religious buildings are also included: the customs building, town hall, markets, Regimento 33 barracks, the military and civil hospital, Teatro Gil Vicente, Cineteatro Ideal, prison, GNR, slaughterhouse and numerous churches and chapels. Also noteworthy are some

elements “in design”, such as a planned garden at the Ermida de S. João, a new avenue between bridges and the future “Rua dos Combatentes da Grande Guerra”. Furthermore, mills, the aqueduct, old and new quays and pontoons can be seen, as well as a fish farm, football field, cemetery and eleven factories with salt storage facilities.

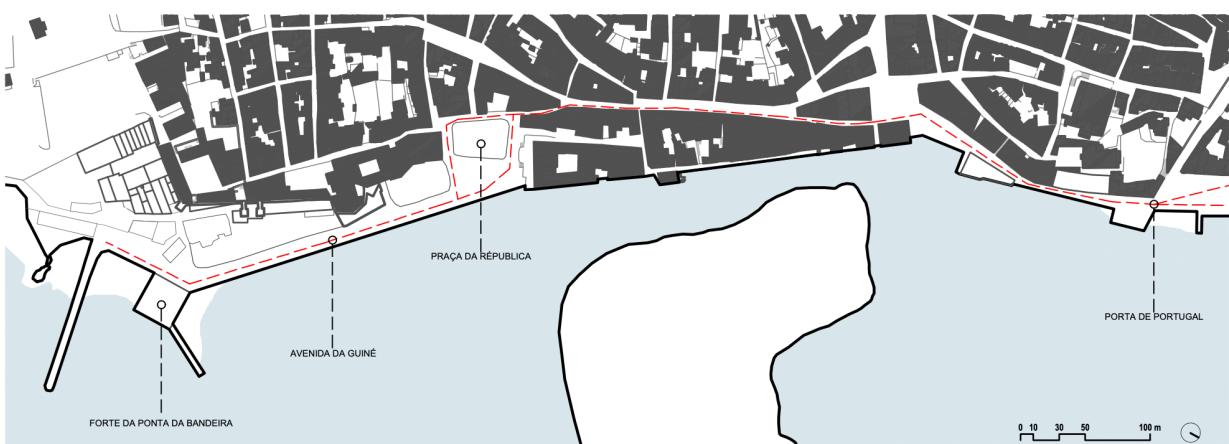
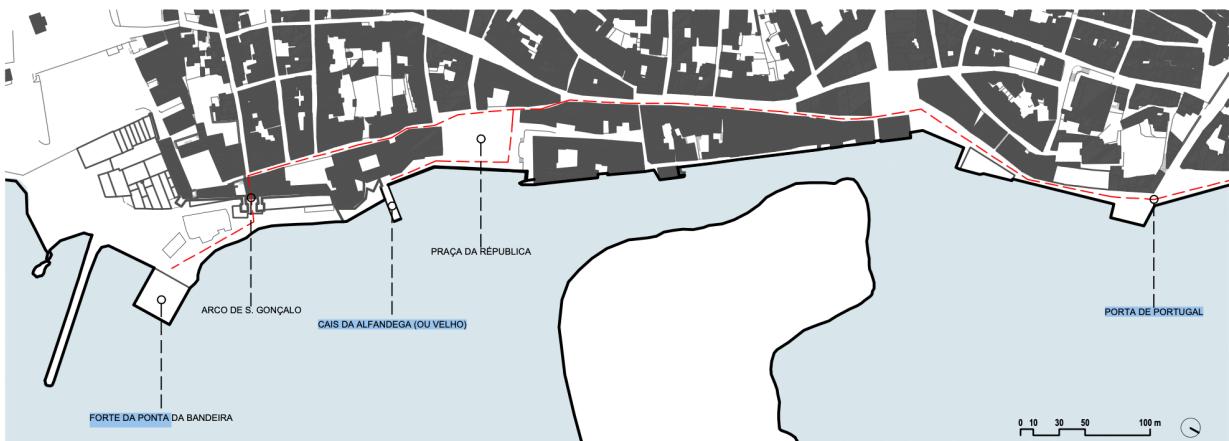


Access to the train station with concrete bridge

The map clearly shows that the logistical connection between the city and the port was crucial, especially for the fishing and canning industries. The Avenida da Guiné, built in 1940, was intended to solve this problem, but this connection had already been proposed in 1904. In 1933, another plan was drawn up to extend the road along the river via Praça da República and the governors' castle to Forte da Bandeira.

Nevertheless, Lagos changed little between 1924 and the mid-1940s. The square remained largely undeveloped and Rossio remained a market place. However, construction of the Casas Para Famílias Pobres neighbourhood did begin. The canning industry shrank dramatically from around thirty to ten factories.

AVENIDA DA GUINÉ



Plans for (above) and after construction (below) of Avenida da Guiné

In 1940, Avenida da Guiné was constructed to create a better connection between the city of Lagos and the river area. This connection had been desired since 1904 due to the congestion on the Solaria quay, where goods and fish were traded for the many canning factories in the city. It was not until 1933 that the plan was taken up again and finally implemented. The new road ran over the old quay and enabled more direct traffic along the river, but it also changed the function of the quay itself: ships would no longer moor there as before.

Despite this intervention, the urban structure of Lagos remained largely unchanged from 1924. The Rossio de S. João, which was planned as an industrial and service zone, remained largely empty and still functioned as a marketplace. Architect José Veloso pointed out that this area was difficult to build on due to the marshy subsoil, which required foundations on wooden piles and drove up construction costs.



Avenida da Guiné in the 1950s

Apart from a few new buildings, such as the power station, a grain warehouse and a post office of the Junta Autónoma das Estradas, the square hardly changed. Only the construction of Avenida da Guiné gave the area a new dynamic by connecting the centre directly to the port.

The canning industry in Lagos declined significantly during the same period. Whereas there were still around thirty factories in operation in 1924, by 1947 there were only ten left. Many companies continued to exist under new names or expanded their operations by taking over others. Algarve Exportador, for example, grew through acquisitions and expansion. Nevertheless, the industry remained concentrated in the same part of the city. In 1951, only nine of the seventeen plots in Rossio de S. João were still built on, three of which had been built on recently. Construction also began on the neighbourhood for poor families, marking a new phase in urban development..

LAGOS UNTIL THE 1950S



Aerial photo of Rossio de S. João from 1947 and excerpt from the map by Capitão Raul Rato. ut 1924

At the end of the first half of the last century, there were no significant changes in the urban structure of Lagos compared to 1924. Contrary to expectations, most of the plots in Rossio remained undeveloped. After almost three decades, with the construction of Avenida da Guiné completed, there were no significant structural changes.

Apart from the buildings shown in the 1947 aerial photograph, the rest of Rossio remained vacant in 1947 and continued to be used as a fairground.

According to architect José Veloso, the Rossio de S. João site, which was previously marshland before it was filled in, was very difficult to build on. The foundations had to be made of wooden piles, which made construction in that area more expensive. This may partly explain why this area remained vacant for so long.

‘The plots were basically intended for industry and/or services, but that area was extremely difficult to build on, precisely because it was a mangrove swamp.’ (José Veloso, 2018)

The construction of Avenida da Guiné, which connected the city's central square with the port, completely changed the dynamics of that part of the city. It also improved traffic flow, although this solution, due to the stagnation of the urban structure, came too late to be relevant as competition with the port of Portimão.

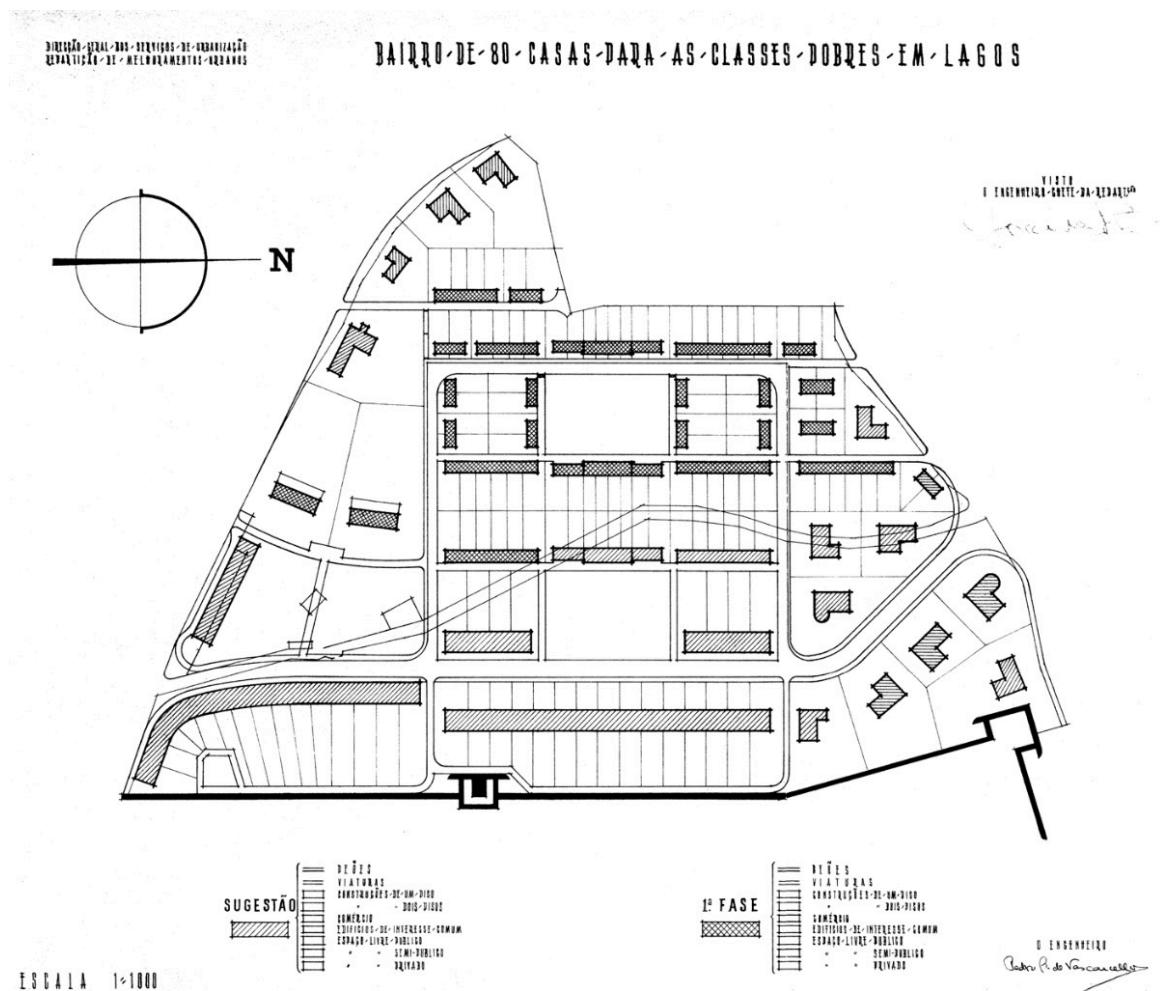


Aerial photos of the “neighbourhood with houses for poor families” under construction in 1947 and 1951

The above photos from 1947 and “51 show the beginning of urban development with social housing through the construction of the 'Neighbourhood with houses for poor families", with the street markings clearly visible to the east of the city wall.

As for the canning industry, only 10 factories were still in operation, a number that differed significantly from the three dozen in 1924/25. The decline was sometimes also due to partial takeovers, such as in the case of Algarve Exportador, which expanded its facilities and took over the space of other companies.

THE DISTRICT WITH HOUSES FOR POOR FAMILIES (1945-1958)



Urban development plan / subdivision Bairro Operário

The so-called “Bairro Operário”, or workers' district, was created on the basis of a 1945 decree that enabled the construction of residential areas for poor families, both on the mainland and on the islands. Officially, the project was called “Bairro de Casas Para Famílias Pobres” (District with houses for poor people). The plan was drawn up in 1945 and its implementation was difficult, taking more than ten years. Construction began in 1946 and the first phase ran until 1950, but financial problems at the municipality brought the work to a standstill from 1948 onwards. It was not until 1953 that work resumed, and in 1958 the neighbourhood was officially inaugurated

The neighbourhood consisted of three types of homes, which were also used in other similar projects. Type A consisted of 16 two-bedroom homes, type B had 56 three-bedroom homes, and type C comprised eight homes spread over two floors with a total of four bedrooms. All homes had direct access to the living room and featured one kitchen and one bathroom. During construction, it was decided to reduce the total number of homes from 80 to 78.



Home types C, B and A

In addition to the houses, the plan also included two school buildings and a canteen. These schools were built closer to the access road than originally planned, but further facilities for the neighbourhood were never realised due to a lack of funds.

The name “Bairro Operário” probably refers to the original target group: working-class families. The location also plays a role in this. The neighbourhood was built on the northern edge of the city, just outside the city walls. It borders the municipal cemetery and the Piedade canning factory to the north, the Aldite factory and the chapel of Santo Amaro to the west, the N125 national road to the south, and farmland and the city wall to the east.

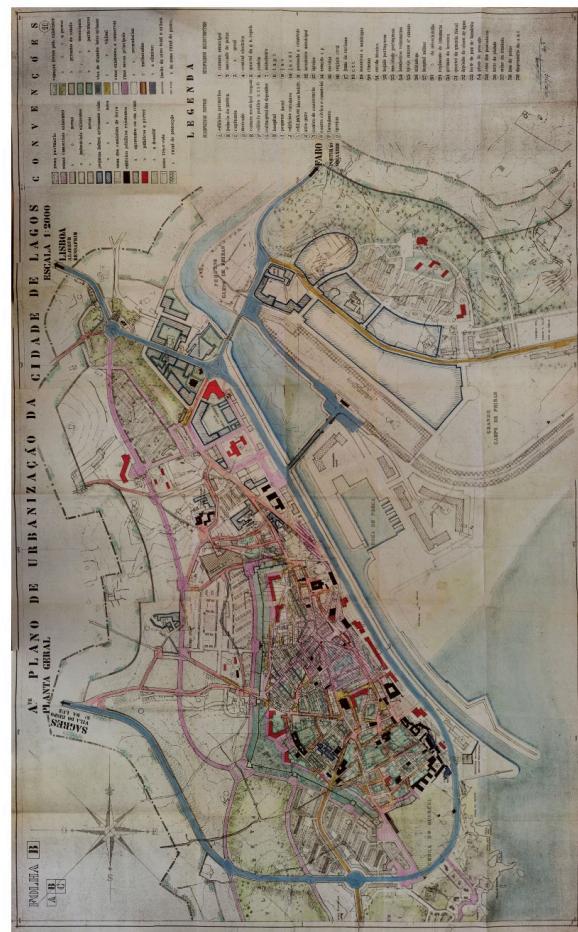
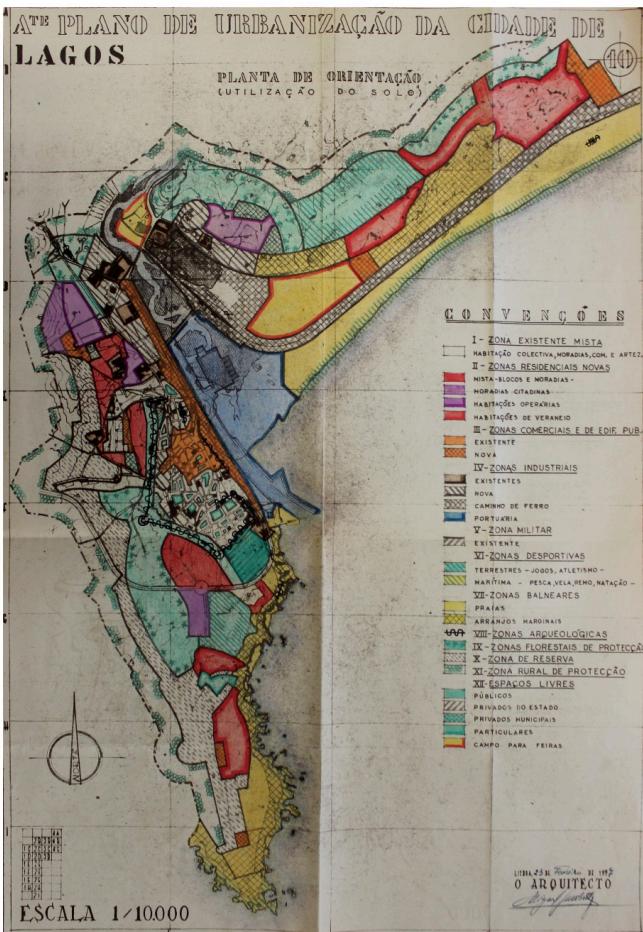
The neighbourhood connected to the existing buildings outside the walls, where Aldeia, a residential area for workers, had already been established. Given that fishermen and workers formed the largest working class, it is likely that factory workers were the first residents. Families who lost their homes due to urban renewal were also given priority when allocating housing in this neighbourhood.

THE FIRST URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN – AVENIDA DOS DESCOBRIMENTOS



Urban development plan by architect Jacobetty from 1957

In 1944, a law was passed requiring all municipalities in Portugal to carry out a thorough analysis of their territory with the aim of drawing up a provisional urban development plan for future development. For Lagos, this plan was designed in 1957 by architect Miguel Jacobetty Rosa. A central pillar of this plan was the construction of the Avenida Marginal, a coastal boulevard that was part of the N125 national road. This road would divert traffic around the city, along the river, and connect to the route towards Sagres



Zoning plan / details from the plan for Lagos. Jacobetty, 1957



De wijk Ribeira, vóór het Stedenbouwkundig plan

local economy. However, this sector fell into decline due to the silting up of the harbour and the emergence of Portimão as a competing port city. The plan therefore proposed improving the harbour conditions, including a new inner harbour, a canal with a breakwater and a complex of warehouses.

A striking part of the plan was the redevelopment of the river area, where numerous buildings had been erected directly against the city wall: warehouses, canning factories, a fish market and an ice factory. The plan provided for the demolition of these buildings to

The plan aimed to solve several problems at once. For example, there was a lot of disruption caused by traffic driving through the city and the port area, which caused congestion and made access to the southern beaches difficult. The new boulevard would allow through traffic to avoid the city centre and improve access to important locations. Another important theme in the analysis was fishing, which, together with the canning industry, formed the backbone of the

free up the city wall and reveal the archaeological heritage. This was intended not only to beautify the cityscape, but also to improve the health and living environment of the inhabitants.

The space that was freed up would be landscaped. At the same time, port and industrial functions would be relocated to new zones outside the centre. Fishing activities would be concentrated in a new port area with warehouses and a small harbour near the Forte da Bandeira.

Attention was also paid to housing for workers. The plan emphasised that working-class neighbourhoods should be located close to industry in order to minimise the distance between home and work. Two zones were therefore designated: north of the city, near the existing factories, and across the river, behind the railway line.

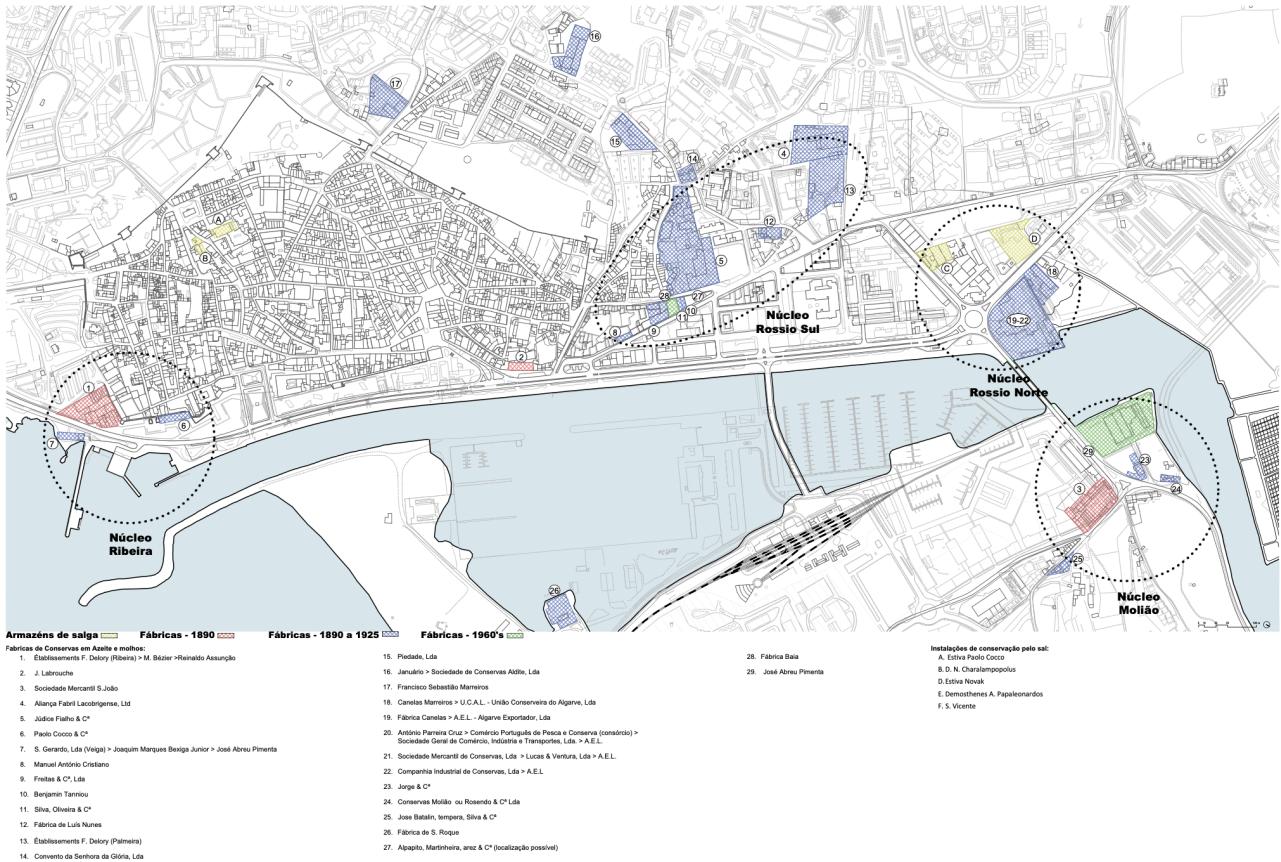


Avenida dos Descobrimentos in 1960

Not all parts of the ambitious plan were actually implemented. However, what was realised had a major impact on the development of the city. The construction of Avenida dos Descobrimentos, which was inaugurated in 1960, was the most important milestone in this regard. To this end, the river area underwent a thorough overhaul: buildings disappeared, activities were relocated, and the port was expanded with a new pier and dredging works in the Ribeira de Bensafrim.

Despite the delay and the fact that the new infrastructure arrived too late for the canning industry to flourish, Lagos took the first step towards becoming a more modern city with a definitive focus on tourism. What was once a busy industrial river zone slowly transformed into an attractive coastal town with improved accessibility, an upgraded historic centre and a new role as a tourist attraction.

INDUSTRIAL CHRONOLOGY



Overview of industrial zones and locations of canning factories and brine warehouses in Lagos.

At the end of the 19th century, a thriving canning industry established itself in Lagos, which would radically change the city until the middle of the 20th century. Initially, fish processing, especially salting fish, still took place within the city walls. This process was often introduced by Italian and Greek entrepreneurs. Soon, the first canneries for canned fish in oil and sauce were established. Due to lack of space and the need for larger and cheaper sites, the factories moved outside the city walls, often close to the river or the sea for easy supply of fish.

Well-known pioneers were Établissements F. Delory and J. Labrouche. Later, factories such as Aliança Fabril Lacobrigense and the factory of Júdice Fialho, one of Portugal's largest industrialists, with its own workers' district, followed.

In the first half of the 20th century, the number of factories grew explosively. The Rossio de S. João district in particular became an industrial hub with dozens of factories close together, such as Paolo Cocco & Cª, S. Gerardo, Freitas & Cª and Delory. Near the port and the fish market, they formed a cluster that drove the city's economy. A smaller industrial centre also developed on the other side of the river, in the Molião district.

Industry stimulated urban expansion outside the city walls, along major roads and railway lines. However, around 1947, decline set in: silting of the harbour, competition and changing markets reduced the number of factories to around ten. Companies such as

Algarve Exportador and Júdice Fialho survived, sometimes through takeovers and modernisation.

With the construction of the Avenida dos Descobrimentos in 1960, the cityscape changed again. Industrial clusters in the river area disappeared, factories were demolished or relocated. For example, Paolo Cocco's factory was demolished, while others, such as José Abreu Pimenta's, made a new start elsewhere.

For decades, the canning industry left its mark on the spatial and economic development of Lagos and marked the transition from a medieval town to a modern industrial city by the sea.

LAGOS: FROM THE CAIS DA SOLARIA TO THE NEW AVENIDAS



The canning industry in Lagos was a major driver of urban development, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. After the devastating earthquake of 1755, the emergence of the fish processing industry helped the city recover economically, with the first factories breathing new life into the urban structure. New residential areas sprang up around these factories, such as the 'Aldeia', which lay outside the city walls and was populated by workers and their families.

The rapid growth of the industry did not immediately lead to overpopulation that the city could not cope with; instead, Lagos developed organically, with limited investment in large-scale workers' housing by the government or philanthropy. Until the First World War, Lagos held a prominent position within the Algarve, but gradually lost this role to cities such as Portimão. This was due to infrastructure shortages: for a long time, the city did not have a modern dock, the railway line reached Lagos late, and the port did not meet the requirements of a growing export industry. Attempts to resolve this often stalled, as evidenced by the unfinished dock project

Aerial photo from 1968 of Lagos with the partial implementation of architect Jacobetty's plan.

Despite these obstacles, Lagos experienced a boom in the first quarter of the 20th century, with around thirty factories, mainly concentrated in the Rossio de S. João district and along the river. These areas determined the layout of the industrial zone and stimulated further development outside the city walls. However, growth stagnated after 1925. Apart from the emergence of a small "working-class neighbourhood" in the north, expansion failed to materialise, partly because the focus slowly shifted from industry to tourism.

The urban development plan of the mid-20th century underlined this shift: old industrial clusters, such as the Ribeira district, were demolished to make way for access to the beaches and a more aesthetically pleasing city skyline. Thus, the decline of the canning industry marked the transition of Lagos to a city that sought its future primarily in tourism and heritage preservation.

FARO AIRPORT AND THE BRIDGE NEAR LISBON



Opening of Faro Airport in 1965

With the opening of Faro Airport in 1965, the Algarve was transformed overnight from an isolated corner of the world into an accessible tourist region. Whereas a journey by car or train had previously taken days, direct flights from Lisbon and later Northern Europe suddenly made short holidays feasible.

A year later, the bridge over the Tagus opened in Lisbon. Although it did not have a direct connection to the Algarve, the impact was significant: for the first time, travellers from the north and centre of Portugal could drive south without taking a ferry. Combined with improved roads to the Alentejo, the Algarve became accessible from Lisbon in a single day.

These infrastructure projects fitted in seamlessly with the policy of the “Estado Novo”, which wanted to develop the Algarve into the country's “tourist engine”. From the end of the 1960s, Lagos became a testing ground: new hotels, holiday complexes, marinas and the construction of the Avenida dos Descobrimentos marked the transformation. Apartment buildings were south-west facing, with spacious balconies, and were often intended for temporary use.

In the decades that followed, Lagos became part of a broader coastal urbanisation. The improved accessibility attracted investment, but also led to ribbon development along the EN125 and a shift in growth to the suburbs, away from the historic centre.

THE ERA OF THE SAAL PROJECTS IN LAGOS



SAAL project Bairro 25 de Abril near Meia Praia

Until 1974, Lagos consisted of a compact historic centre near the river mouth, surrounded by agricultural floodplains with small villages and fishing settlements. The rise of tourism in the 1960s and 1970s brought economic growth, but at the same time, the city struggled with a severe housing shortage for workers, fishermen and returning migrants from the colonies. Official housing policy remained top-down and offered little room for resident participation.



After the Carnation Revolution, this changed with the SAAL programme (Serviço Ambulatório de Apoio Local, 1974–1976), in which architect José Veloso played a pioneering role in Lagos. Together with residents' committees, various neighbourhoods were set up, including Bairro 25 de Abril near Meia Praia, with clusters of self-build homes around communal areas, and Bairro 1º de Maio in the city, with compact terraced houses and amenities. Other projects sprang up in Luz, Espiche, Bensafrim and on the northern edge of Lagos.

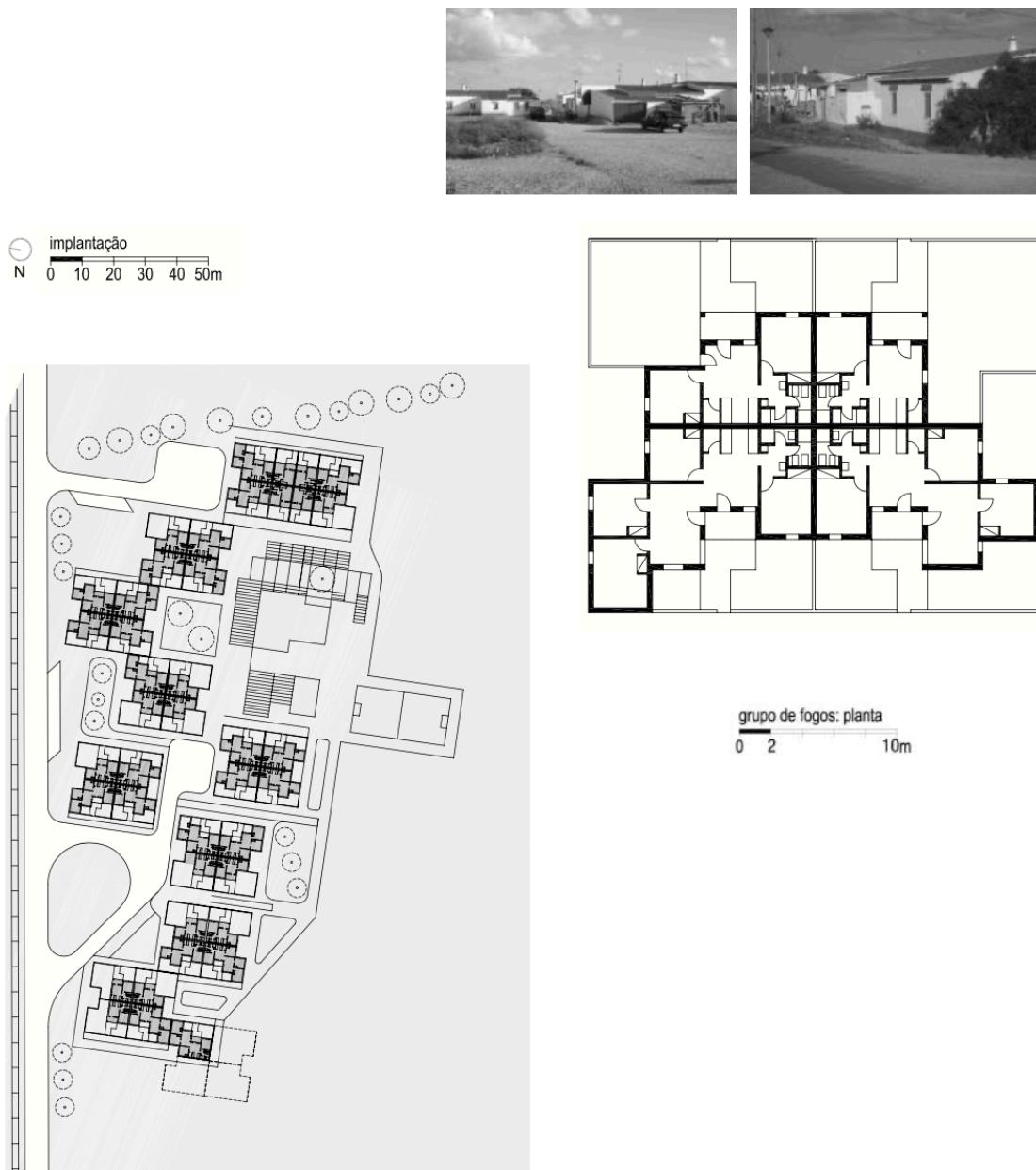
José Veloso (centre) at his appointment as an honorary member of the Portuguese Architects' Association

They shared the same principles: participatory design, human scale with low-rise buildings, flexibility in plot layout, use of local materials and emphasis on collective spaces

In terms of urban planning, these neighbourhoods were an alternative to the tourist resorts that were popping up at the same time. They were often in transition zones between city and countryside and influenced later spatial structures: new infrastructure was built to open up the SAAL neighbourhoods, and commercial and tourist projects later grew along those axes. In Meia Praia, the SAAL clusters even served as a buffer between the beach and large-scale holiday complexes.

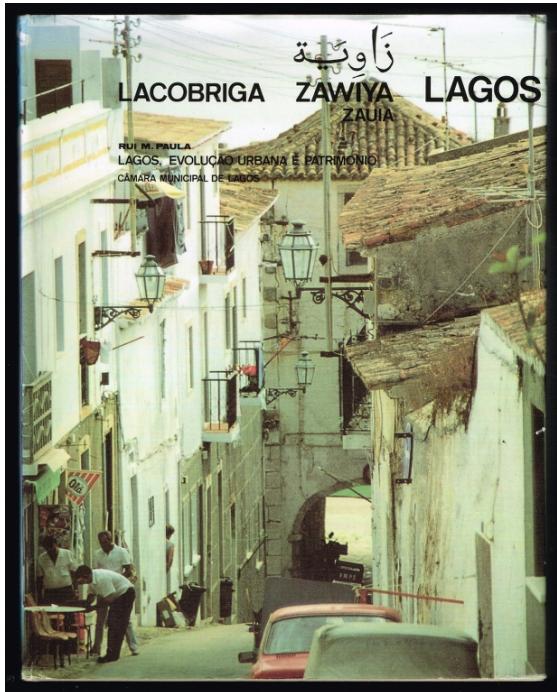
After the SAAL programme ended in 1976, the neighbourhoods were integrated into municipal spatial policy. Many homes have since been expanded or modified, so the original architecture is not always recognisable. Nevertheless, their legacy remains visible: low density, collective squares and a morphology that differs greatly from the tourist developments.

Today, the SAAL projects in Lagos are regarded as social anchor points and reminders of a brief period of radically participatory urban planning. They symbolise the tension between the right to housing and market logic in a coastal city that was coming under increasing pressure from tourism.



SAAL project Meia Praia Duna: Floor plans / Urban planning situation / Photos

RUI MENDES PAULA AND THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF LAGOS



Rui Mendes Paula (1924–1996) was an architect and planner, and from the 1980s onwards a key figure in the development of Lagos. As head of the Gabinete Técnico Local and director of the Gabinete de Planeamento da Região do Algarve, he combined research, heritage conservation and concrete spatial interventions.

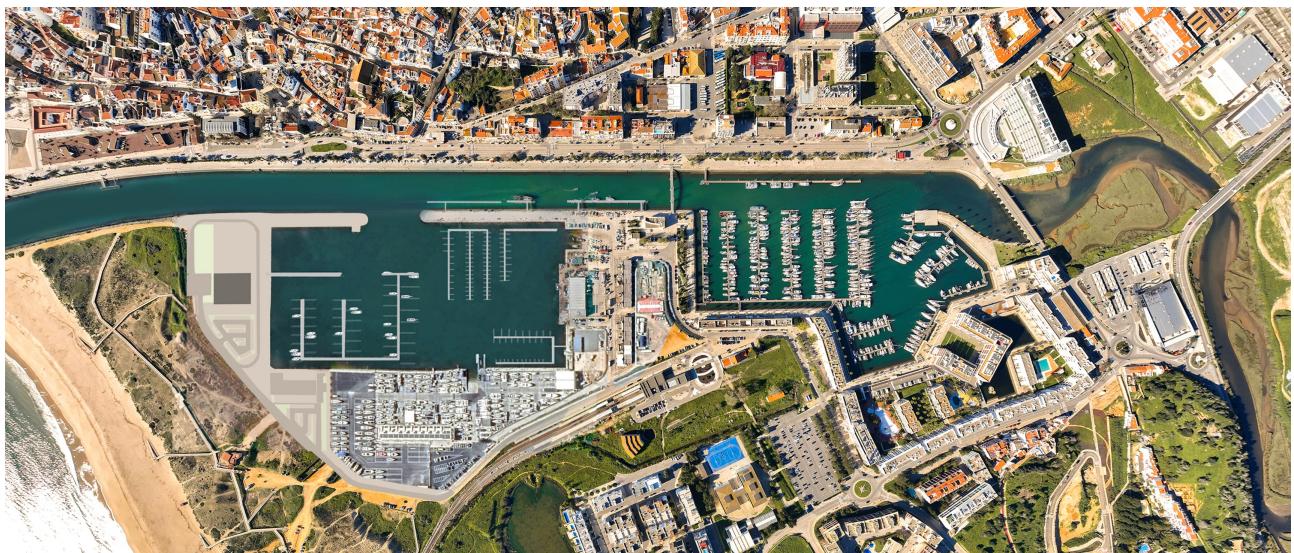
His most important contribution was the publication *Lagos – Evolução Urbana e Património* (1992), a standard work in which he analysed the historical growth of the city and formulated guidelines for conservation and restoration. This book had a lasting influence on municipal policy.

In practice, he shaped the revaluation of the city centre and the coastal promenade (marginal), where he combined the restoration of quays and esplanades with a new design of the public space.

He also worked on the restoration of fountains and fortifications, including the Fonte das Oito Bicas. With the Parque das Freiras (later Parque Dr. Júdice Cabral), he introduced a landscape intervention with park space and an open-air auditorium.

The significance of his work lies in the link between historical analysis and spatial quality: new functions were incorporated without losing the morphology and sightlines of the old city. This set the course for a policy in which heritage and tourist development were not opposed to each other, but could reinforce each other.

THE MARINA OF LAGOS: FROM BYRNE TO BROADWAY MALYAN



The Marina (harbour) of Lagos

Since its construction in 1994, the Marina of Lagos has been the city's most important urban development project of the past thirty years. The original design was by architect Gonçalo Byrne, who realised the main buildings for administration, residential and commercial use. The outdoor spaces and landscaping were the work of João Nunes and Carlos Ribas (Proap). Together, they created an urban waterfront that connected the historic city, the river and the tourist developments on the coast.



The new Hilton hotels in Lagos by the international firm Broadway Malyan

Today, this area is entering a new phase with plans from the international firm Broadway Malyan. They are responsible for the design of two Hilton hotels at the marina: the Lagos Marina Hotel – Curio Collection by Hilton (180 rooms) and the Hilton Garden Inn Lagos (90 rooms). This involves not only hotel architecture, but also urban planning, interior design and landscape design, repositioning the marina as a tourist anchor point.



Development sketch of the Lagos Marina

These developments are framed by the Plano Diretor Municipal (PDM), which since 2015 and in subsequent revisions (2021, 2023) has set the rules for building heights, protected zones and expansion areas. Through detailed plans and revaluations of public space – such as the renovation of the boulevard (Avenida dos Descobrimentos), new esplanades and underground car parks – the marina is becoming increasingly anchored in the urban structure.

The central challenge remains finding a balance: tourist growth versus quality of life, protection of the coast and heritage versus new hotel and marina projects, and the need for climate adaptation and better mobility. The Marina de Lagos is therefore not just a harbour, but a mirror of the broader urban and spatial issues facing Lagos today.

SUMMARY:

The spatial history of Lagos reflects the interaction between the sea, trade and tourism. In ancient times and the Middle Ages, the city grew around the river mouth and the harbour, protected by fortifications that still define its skyline today. In the 15th and 16th centuries, during the Portuguese voyages of discovery, Lagos enjoyed a period of prosperity as a maritime centre. Squares, churches and administrative buildings formed the compact historic centre, which remained largely unchanged for centuries.

The 1755 earthquake caused severe damage, but the city was restored in a sober Baroque style, largely preserving the structure of streets and squares. It was not until the 20th century that Lagos began to expand beyond its walls. The construction of the railway and later the motorways improved connections, while the opening of Faro Airport (1965) and the bridge over the Tagus (1966) triggered mass tourism. New hotels, apartments and holiday complexes radically changed the urban fabric.

After the Carnation Revolution (1974), the SAAL projects introduced an alternative, participatory model for public housing. Since the 1980s, under the leadership of planners such as Rui Mendes Paula, the historic centre has been revalued and connected to the coastal promenade. The construction of the Marina (1994) and recent hotel projects confirm Lagos as a tourist hub, but at the same time raise questions about liveability, heritage protection and sustainability in the 21st century..