

AMORIM NEWS

YEAR 39 / NUMBER 2

Cork harvesting - returning cycle after cycle

Every year, between mid-May and mid-August, men and women go through the cork oak forests looking for all the cork oak trees with the markings that indicate they are once again ready for their bark to be removed. In nine year cycles, which is the period necessary for the complete regeneration of the *Quercus suber*. Each of the cork harvester's movements confirms the expertise, dexterity and skill necessary for this rigorous ancestral process, solely reserved for those who have in-depth knowledge of the practice, technique and expertise that make it possible to perform this specialist work without ever harming the tree. In a ritual that is constantly evolving. There is only one certainty: of returning cycle after cycle.



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Cork oak forests have been harvested for centuries - using practices, routines and norms that have remained almost unchanged over time.

Many people continue to be involved in cork harvesting, stacking, piling, loading and unloading activities. The most significant changes occurred at the end of the 20th century, due to gradual mechanisation of several processes, primarily associated with the transport of cork. In the wake of specific social, cultural and economic contexts, the number of specialist workers responsible for these tasks is declining over time.

The most distinguished stage of this process is the cork stripping, or “tiradia”, to use the popular language of the cork harvesters. This operation has a major influence on the tree’s vitality, resistance and balance. Every year, between mid-May and mid-August, men and women go through the cork oak forests looking for all the cork oak trees with the markings that indicate they are once again ready for their bark to be removed. In nine-year cycles, which is the period necessary for the complete regeneration of the *Quercus suber*. Each of the cork harvester’s movements confirms the expertise, dexterity and skill necessary for this rigorous ancestral process, solely reserved for those who have in-depth knowledge of the practice, technique and expertise that make it possible to perform this specialist work without ever harming the tree, using millimeter precision that avoids touching the bark. It a ritual that is constantly evolving.

Over recent years, Corticeira Amorim has invested in the development of a cork harvesting machine that replaces the traditional axe with mechanical equipment that facilitates the harvester’s work. After the market launch of a first prototype, this ultra-millimeter precision equipment has been perfected, optimised and tested. It incorporates humidity sensors capable of detecting in advance the moment when the blade is about to touch the inner bark and avoid such contact.

In 2021, this equipment was used to extract 250,000 arrobas of cork (an arroba weighs around 15 kg). Recent upgrades result from its use in several harvesting campaigns. We aim to continue to fine-tune this harvesting equipment, achieving a genuine revolution in this operation. The goal is to extend the use of this mechanism, that has been patented and over the next two to three years expand its use from the current figure of 10% to around 60-70% of all cork extracted using this new technology.

The main idea behind this technological advance is to complement «the human art of cork extraction». The latter will continue to play a critical role in the most sensitive areas of the cork oak tree. The new equipment will enable greater efficiency in the harvesting operation and greater access to the noble profession of cork harvester, since specific training facilitates full handling of the machine, guaranteeing safety during the harvesting process – for the cork oak tree and for the operator.

Step by step, task by task, Corticeira Amorim is assuming its mission as the leader of the cork sector. We will continue to develop our mission of developing innovations in all steps of the value chain, fostering global sharing of good practices, innovation systems, research and forestry development.

Always with the aim of ensuring a sustainable future for the cork sector.

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Google Store with cork furniture distinguished in the NYCxDESIGN Awards



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Google's first physical store in the world, whose furniture is made entirely of Portuguese cork, won the top prize in the Environmental Impact category of the NYCxDESIGN Awards 2022. Developed by Reddymade - the New York City based architecture and interior design practice - the cork furniture was designed, conceived and produced by American designer, Daniel Michalik. The technological giant chose cork supplied by Corticeira Amorim for its new commercial space, based on factors such as its beauty, character and sustainability. The store thereby combines nature, innovation, history, industry and culture.

One of Google's core goals was to attain LEED Platinum status, the highest possible certification within the "Leadership in Energy and Sustainable Design" green-building rating system. Cork was the natural option, as one of the planet's most sustainable materials, that offers unique characteristics in terms of CO₂ retention and inexhaustible potential for circular practices. Cork is also light, versatile, resilient, soft to the touch and is visually appealing. In addition to these valuable attributes, Daniel Michalik says that cork offered "a blank sheet, on which customers can project their ideas, concepts and

experiences of the material, interacting in a single space." Michalik, who is also a professor at the Parsons School of Design, explains that in addition to its sustainability credentials, cork is a healthy raw material: from the perspective of the natural health system, fair wages for work and the health of those who use cork-based objects. The items of furniture created exclusively for the Google Store in New York include sofas, armchairs, bookshelves, chairs, counters, bar stools and coffee tables. The collection also includes objects for a children's space, such as beds, desks and nightstands. These large-scale functional solutions combine Portuguese cork with American white oak.

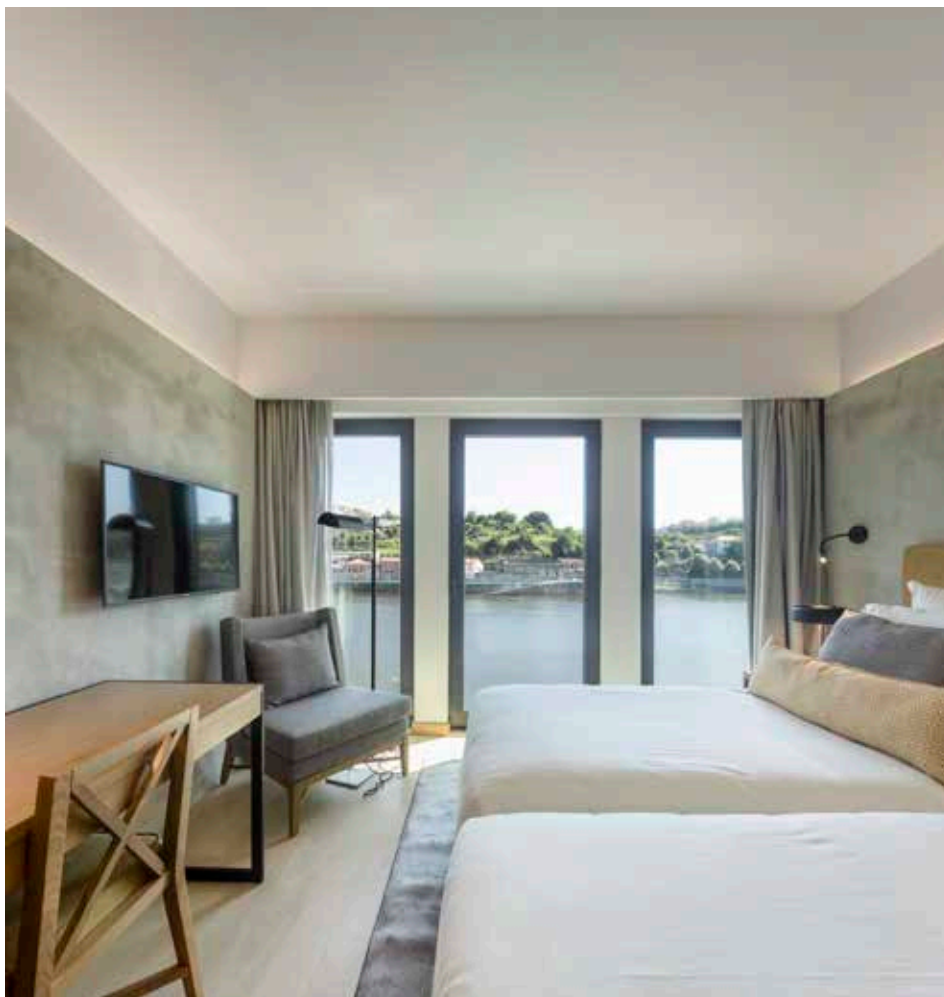
Cork is one of the materials of choice for the “Green Building” concept

Amorim Cork Flooring has provided the flooring for all the rooms of the NEYA Porto Hotel, the first hotel in Portugal to receive a LEED GOLD certification (Leadership in Energy and Sustainable Design for green buildings). The distinction -granted by the non-governmental organisation, the United States

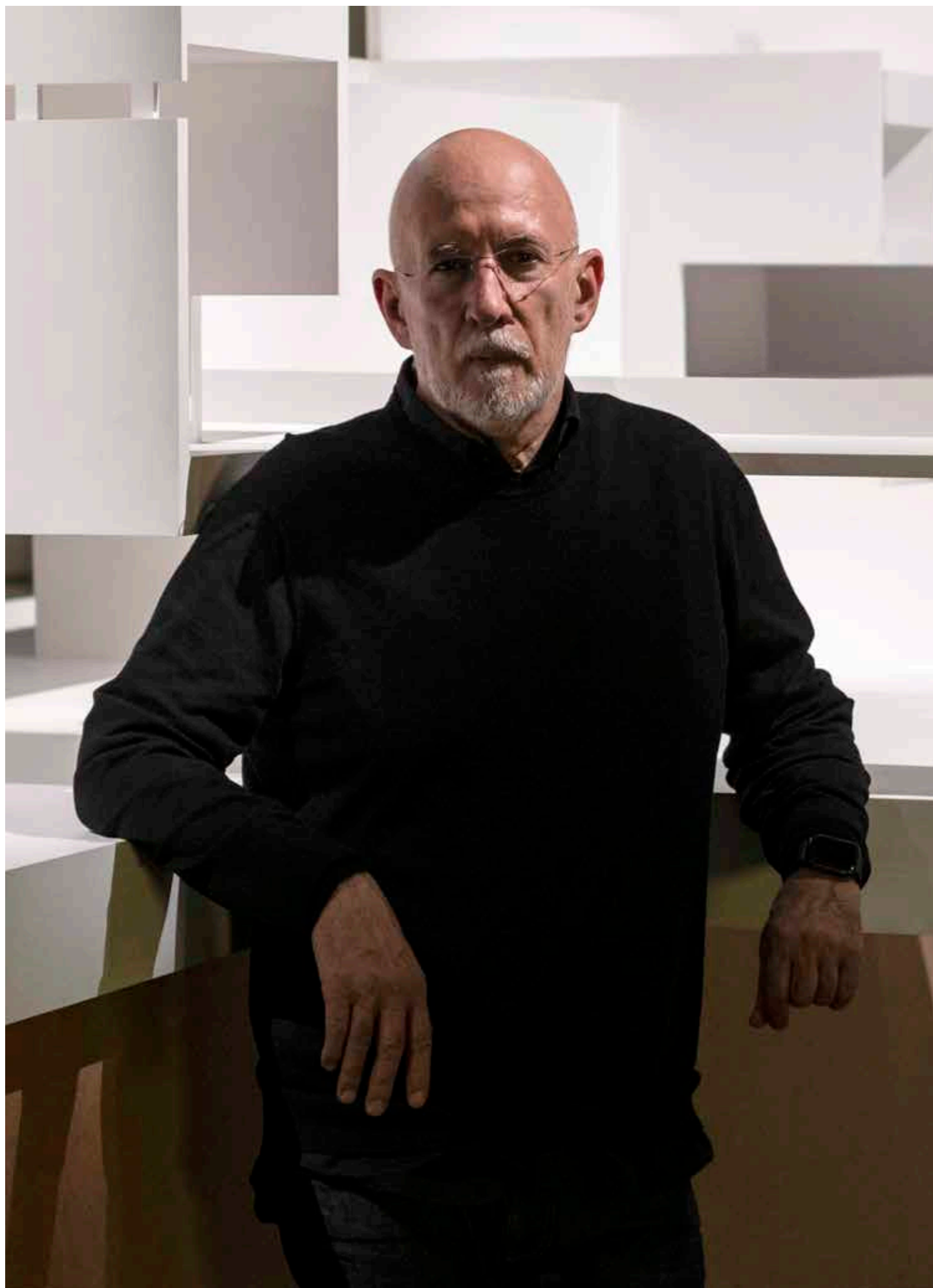
Green Building Council - aims to promote sustainable construction practices, and thereby reinforces the role of cork as a material of choice for the ‘Green Building’ concept. This new paradigm points to the use of energy efficient sustainable solutions derived from circular economy principles.

Equipped with flooring from the Wicanders Wood range, the rooms at the NEYA Porto Hotel benefit from the numerous attributes of cork - a 100% natural, recyclable and renewable raw material. Some of the properties that will support a healthier stay in the hotel include sound insulation, thermal comfort and improved air quality, as well as walking comfort, resistance to impact and high performance. The NEYA Porto Hotel also includes two AMORIM suites - rooms that have Dekwall coverings in addition to the cork floors. A collection of wall coverings with cork visuals, supplied by Amorim Cork Flooring, that provide the perfect atmosphere.

Other aspects of the NEYA Porto Hotel that justify this certification include the hotel's contribution to the fight against climate change, defence of sustainability values and promotion of a Green Planet, in terms of renewable energies (100% of energy derived from renewable sources), carbon offsets (carbon neutral, through reforestation of forest areas) and waste reduction (reusable cotton sacks, consumption of tap water, biodegradable straws, etc.), recycling initiatives, availability of bicycles and several charging stations for electric cars. “The key to a greener planet is you”. The interior design of the NEYA Porto Hotel is the work of the atelier PK arquitectos and the Colectivo ODD.



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“I’m fascinated by cork”

On the occasion of the “Flashback/ Carrilho da Graça” exhibition, on display at the Casa da Arquitetura (Matosinhos) until the end of January 2023, we travelled to Lisbon, to visit the studio of the architect, João Luís Carrilho da Graça – who designed the project for the new Lisbon Cruise Terminal, which presented an unprecedented innovative solution that combines cork with concrete. Inspired by this retrospective exhibition, that reflects on his 40-year career, we had a conversation about the future – of architecture, cork and the world.

In April, an exhibition dedicated to Carrilho da Graça’s career was inaugurated in Matosinhos. This is based on the collection that is deposited there – films, models, drawings, photographs, etc. – external references to his work that foster interactions with it. What does this exhibition, dedicated to your career, which spans more forty years, mean for you?

This exhibition coincided with the move that I made from my studio located on the Calçada Marquês de Abrantes – in a very beautiful post-Pombaline building – to this space. I had to do several works and reorganise and arrange everything that I hadn’t looked at yet. So I organised the material and reflected on what I had done. I usually don’t look at my work in such a way that it can be transformed into exhibitions, etc. I look at my work from a forward-looking perspective, of continuity.

I had already organised a previous exhibition, which was dedicated to the city of Lisbon and to my vision of the city. At that time, I didn’t want to organise a retrospective of my work. But this time it was difficult to avoid this option, so I agreed. I chose ten or eleven projects and works, in conversation with the curator, the architect Marta Sequeira. I chose the architect Inês Lopo as the main participant for organisation of the exhibition. This was a very interesting opportunity, which allowed me to reflect on my own career. When the exhibition was assembled, Marta Sequeira and others said that it reflects a series of themes linked to my work seen from another perspective (...) it solely includes ten works but could include so many others. The selection was primarily made to explain a certain approach to architecture.

The exhibition is entitled “Flashback/ Carrilho da Graça”, which implies that it is a retrospective exhibition of your work. However these objects already make it possible to glimpse the future, through the intersection of different views of your work. As an architect, what would you like to achieve that you haven’t done so far, bearing that future in mind?

There is a phrase or idea that is often applied to writers - that they always write the same book. This also occurs for architects to a certain extent. In other words, we always harbour a set of concerns that we are trying to take as far as possible, in terms of different building systems and sites, but what we try to do is always a goal that is repeated over time and creates variations, but which is almost always similar. The goal is to take advantage of the characteristics of the site where we are building, in this fabulous planet. When I say build, it can be a building, an intervention. For example, it can be the Campo das Cebolas. But, if possible, we must reveal the most intense and interesting aspects of the place, based on our intervention. A specific strategy, let’s say.

One of the things that I find most fascinating about architecture is the possibility of building a set of situations in a certain place, that make it more interesting, intense and better. The other aspect is to use construction systems that are more appropriate, in terms of the economy, ecology, or the expressive qualities that they can help us attain. Based on these aspects, and the idea that wherever we are going to build, we will try to find a space that ultimately shelters our life, and makes it more intense, more peaceful. We therefore attempt to attain a set of objectives, on a case-by-case basis.

Let me cite the title of an interview you gave to the Expresso newspaper: “The challenge of architecture is to solve problems and not claim to be art”. What I think you are saying, in a way, was to present a set of truths with which you have to build something that must be harmonious. But if one thing has to override the other, as far as I can understand, art will never be the priority, but rather habitability, shelter.

First and foremost, I’m not an artist. If I wanted to be an artist, I would have chosen this career, and tried to make art, reflect on things through art and propose this to people, with a certain radicality and sense of freedom that is expected from an artist. Something completely different is expected from an architect.

From an architect, we expect reflection, related to the idea of building a shelter for people’s lives. By contrast, art can be the exact opposite. Although it may seem that they are similar things, and architects often say that architecture can be a form of artistic practice, I don’t agree. It could be a way for them to beautify their work, but I don’t think that is necessary.

You were born in Portalegre, where there are strong ties to the world of cork. What is your first memory of cork?

When I think about Portalegre, I don’t recall either the cork oak tree or cork in general. Portalegre is located in a transition zone to the Serra de São Mamede. The city is built in a kind of headland, a platform, that overlooks the plains. The city is born in the plains, that José Régio once called the sea. It establishes a wonderful scenographic relationship with a small hill, called the Serra da Penha. So, I don’t associate Portalegre with cork, but that doesn’t mean that I don’t like this landscape and the reality of the cork oak forest, which is extremely interesting and beautiful. Maybe with a cork stopper? I’m kidding, but I don’t know, I don’t have any specific first memory of cork. It’s a material that fascinates me and I like it a lot, but I don’t have a specific memory.

So when did you understand that you could use this memory in your projects?

I think that this began with experimental design, with several architects and designers, who were thinking about and working with cork, which was extremely important. We didn’t have much prior data about the practical use of cork, only the traditional use of cork in its natural form. There is a certain hiatus between that tradition and the present day, which was resumed through the work of experimental design. I had previously used agglomerated cork for wainscoting-based floors, but it wasn’t something that I loved. But then I started to use and think about cork, which is something quite extraordinary.

When did you become involved with the Lisbon Cruise Terminal?

This was a relatively pragmatic issue. When the Lisbon Port Authority launched the public tender for the Cruise Terminal project, the terminal’s foundations had already been built. There were already a series of points where it was possible to place the pillars. We went from there, it was an 8-metre modulation. When the engineers told us that the foundations and elevations could not be made of concrete because the foundations couldn’t withstand that weight, we decided to test this brand-new mixture. I sometimes work like that. I think the possibility exists, so let’s explore it. We worked with a laboratory in Coimbra, ITECONS, Amorim and Secil and managed to produce a concrete that is much lighter but still retains its structural characteristics. The result was excellent, and I’m waiting for an opportunity to use it again.

This project won the Valmor Prize. What is the importance of such a career recognition for an architect?

It’s always important. I liked winning this VALMOR award, because it’s from the city where I live.

Returning to your partnership with Amorim, ITECONS and Secil, did you already have a well-defined idea of the material that you were going to use?

I already had an idea of what I wanted, but we had to test it to make sure it was viable. However, I think one of the secrets of cork is that a substantial part of this material is introduced in a powder form, which allows the normal reaction of the concrete to take place without being affected by the cork granules.

I’d like to conclude with a question for which you will have many and, at the same time, no answers. Is sustainable architecture possible? In any form?

This is a structural issue. It’s obviously possible, but it’s more like a goal, a path forward... ultimately we think that any form of architecture can be sustainable.

Cork extraction: Nature and technology in harmony

In cork oak forests, a classic example of cooperation between humans and nature, cork has been extracted by wise and experienced hands, using techniques that have been passed down from one generation to the next for millennia.

Introduction of technology in the cork harvesting process has improved the process, while preserving the balance of this unique ecosystem and the value of this ancestral expertise.





As spring with a low level of rainfall makes the cork harvest more difficult. The cork is less humid, which makes it harder to remove it from the tree. The tree “gives” to itself – the cork oak tree is a generous tree, from which everything is taken advantage of, from the acorn to the bark. But in drier years, it takes longer to remove the cork. Cork harvesters – the people who extract cork from the cork oak tree – are well aware of this fact. It takes even more expertise, more attention to detail and even smooth movements to extract the finest cork from each tree without damaging it. It is this combination of firmness and delicacy that makes the cork harvester’s work so special, and therefore so valued. It is one of the world’s highest-paid agricultural jobs: you have to know, do it, and above all, know how to do it. It’s not for everyone.

Feliciano Lopes – Xana – has been harvesting cork for many years. This is his 43rd harvesting campaign. But his broad smile and twinkle in his eyes, express a sense of contentment and curiosity that is more typical of a novice. Feliciano is coordinating the team of harvesters this morning at the Herdade da Pitamariça de Baixo, near to Cortiçadas de Lavre, Alentejo. The forest is extremely dense, very beautiful in this zone. Feliciano moves between the trees, approaching each pair of cork harvesters, whom he calmly observes, to check whether everything is ok, advising caution, and offering tips, especially to less experienced workers. Feliciano works in the Natural world and you can see that he is at home here. You can feel the closeness and familiarity that permeates the estate. Also the humility and respect that the harvesters harbour towards the cork oak tree, which is aptly called the “king of the forest”.

Man and machine

The machine is applied first and then the cork harvester steps in. On the large estate, a worker tells Feliciano that the machine has already reached the limit, finishing the work in one of the areas that were reserved for that morning. Feliciano tells him to stop and the harvesters will then finish the work. For years, cork was solely extracted by hand, using a single instrument – the axe – applying techniques that have been refined over centuries, and handed down within communities and families. Today, the tradition remains, but is no longer what it used to be. The introduction of technology has improved the process, making it easier for harvesters and reducing the extraction time. This makes it possible to counter the lack of manpower and increase productivity, extracting more arrobas of cork (an arroba weighs around 15 kg) per day. In the traditional harvesting process, the harvesters work in pairs, around the trunk, over the branches of the cork oak tree, making incisions in the bark (without reaching the inner bark, which is sacred and would suffer if cut) with the blade of the axe, and then using the handle to loosen the bark of the tree, as a lever. This tool is gradually being replaced by machines that carry out the first two stages of the process: a mechanised saw makes the cut (vertically and horizontally). Once the cut is made, a pair of scissors is used to open the cork, so that it can be extracted more easily. The engineer João Sobral – one of the cork buyers at Amorim Florestal – explains that the introduction of machines in the harvesting process began about a decade ago, with the use of chainsaws to harvest the cork. Several companies then began to develop prototypes specifically adapted for cork oak trees. “About three years ago we decided to take the matter in hand, in a partnership with Covless, and took responsibility for the project. Today we have internalised the development process of these machines, but we are still in the prototype stage”. The prototypes, like the ones used in this harvesting campaign at the Herdade da Pitamariça de Baixo, are “a small pruning chainsaw, adapted with a customised electronic part, which we developed – a humidity sensor that indicates how deep the saw can advance without damaging the inner bark”, explains João Sobral. “Then we use the scissors, which are adapted vine-pruning shears. While the shears close when used on vines, in the cork oak tree they open up in order to remove two cork planks, one on each side of the incision”.

The introduction of these prototypes made it possible to extract 250,000 arrobas of cork in 2021. As a result of improvements to the machines, it is forecast that between 400,000 and 500,000 arrobas will be extracted in the 2022 harvesting campaign, which will run until the end of August. Notwithstanding Feliciano's mastery of these skills, the lack of manpower for agricultural work is one of the main problems in this field. "The great advantage of introducing these technologies is that the same workers will be able to harvest more cork. Given the current lack of manpower, this allows us to remove all the cork, something that otherwise we wouldn't be able to", concludes João Sobral.

Humility of the Master

Feliciano Lopes was born 61 years ago, in Cortiçadas de Lavre, and has been working as a cork harvester for 43 years, always between May and August. He does other things in the rest of the year, always connected to the land, until a new harvesting cycle begins in the following May. He has always worked like this. Even if the underlying natural cycles are maintained in the wisdom of Nature, things are nonetheless changing. It is increasingly difficult to find young people who want to embrace the profession. "This change, the introduction of technology, is highly beneficial, due to the lack of staff. In the absence of technology, it wouldn't be possible to harvest the cork. People don't want to learn, they want to look for other jobs, they are not interested in jobs on the land". An apprentice – *a novel* (novice), as they are called – who wants to be a harvester begins by learning how to work with the axe, explains Feliciano. Then he goes to work with a master, always in pairs, from one cork oak tree to the next, and he has three years to learn, soaking up all the skills of the master. He has three years to learn how to extract cork. After that there is time to "evolve", as Feliciano explains. It's not written down anywhere, but that's how it is. "I'm 61 years old and still learning", he sums up. "I also teach others, but I don't know everything. I also learn". Feliciano walks between the trees, still learning, always attentive to what is going on around him. A tractor arrives to collect the cork planks, making the pile of planks that will stay in the forest, and then in the factory. Women pass by, gathering the freshly-extracted cork planks into piles, painting each harvested trunk with the year of the harvest. What do you feel after the cork has been removed? "I feel that I'm helping the tree. Cork is harvested every nine years.

When I am extracting cork, I think that the tree is satisfied. And is also thankful. When cleaning the tree from above, I am also pruning it. Everything is grateful to be cleaned." In the summer, the days are longer, but here they start very early, due to the heat. At 7 am in the morning the group of harvesters is already in the forest. They work all morning, then stop for lunch at noon, and then take a break, until 4 pm. When looking at the tree, a harvester can already discern whether the cork will have more or less quality. The "costa" is the dark, outer bark, the "barriga" is the inner bark. When the costa is smooth, in principle the cork will be good. But it's always unpredictable. The bark may be infested by the flathead oak borer (*Coraebus undatus* Fab.), or have another problem. The worst thing a harvester can do to a cork oak tree is to "chop" the tree. That is, the "axe" reaches the inner bark and damages it. Feliciano walks through the trees and shows us several examples, which leave scars on trees. Fortunately, there are few examples.

Open, trace, pull, gather, remove

In a harvesting campaign, all the trees are marked with the same year when they have been harvested, regardless of their size, or whether their shape is linear or twisted, or have more or less cork. The sequence is always the same: open (vertical incision), trace (horizontal incision), pull (detach the cork from the tree), gather and remove to the cart. This means that a tree with a small amount cork requires exactly the same work as a tree with a lot of cork, but will have a lower yield. The workers – this morning they are a group of 35 – do not leave a single tree behind. They work as a choir – in unison overcoming their individual personalities, respecting it. Just like the forest they know so well, where each tree is part of a whole, and each cork oak tree is part of a whole, the cork forest, an agroforestry system where human intervention strengthens nature, and vice versa. And where technology contributes, in its own unique way, maintaining this balance.



“Without industry there can be no forestry production, and without forestry production there can be no industry”

Owned by the Pais de Azevedo family for more than four generations, the Herdade da Sanguinheira de Codes, in the municipality of Abrantes, is an example of good forest management practices, with a major focus on sustainability. In an interview with Amorim News, Joaquim Pais de Azevedo defends a balanced agroforestry management system, which makes it possible to preserve and continue this legacy, with an eye on the future.

The estate has 620 hectares, including two forest areas, crossed by a long irrigated valley, with moorland. In the Herdade da Sanguinheira de Codes, that has been owned by the Pais de Azevedo family for more than four generations, nature, time and human intervention have created an agro-pastoral system where plants, animals and people co-exist in harmony. The estate's manager, the engineer Joaquim Pais de Azevedo, explains that the system's "backbone" is the cork oak forest, which occupies 70% of the estate. Other forestry species - such as eucalyptus and stone pine

trees - coexist with the cork oak tree, and occupy respectively, 15% and 4% of the land. The rest is occupied by agricultural zones (8%) and social areas (3%, including paths and buildings and a small dam, in the extreme north of the estate). The history of the Herdade da Sanguinheira de Codes, which Joaquim Pais de Azevedo and his sister inherited from their father, is present in every piece of land, in every tree planted, in every sheep that grazes, in an extensive and rotational regime, applied in each of the estate's seven fenced plots, promoting regeneration of the cork oak forest.

Joaquim Pais de Azevedo has his eyes set on the future, aware that it is up to him, like previous generations, to preserve what they have inherited, and if possible improve it. He counts on help from his 26-year-old son Joaquim Maria, who has been working in Sanguinheira for the past four years. The family's relationship to the cork oak tree and cork, dates back many decades and is expected to continue: "My son already works here, and my grandson is already inspired by the cork oak tree and cork. He has already accompanied us during cork harvesting campaigns on several occasions", he says.



Award for Good Forestry Practices

As a result of this work, the Herdade da Sanguinheira de Codes was distinguished with the Best Forestry Practices Award in 2017, awarded by the Prémio Floresta e Sustentabilidade (Forest and Sustainability Award). The forest producer emphasises the importance of good forest management practices, in particular those with a greater focus on sustainability, and says that what is being done in the Herdade da Sanguinheira is not unique: “We are no exception”, says Joaquim Pais de Azevedo. “We manage the cork oak forest just as other forest producers manage it. Managing the cork oak forest in a professional, efficient manner, that promotes sustainability, involves high costs. But if we don’t manage cork oak forests this also incurs high costs: it may be easier in the short term, but in the medium and long term the forest producer will have less and lower quality cork”, he summarises. Rome was not built in a day, and neither was a healthy, efficient and sustainable cork oak forest. “It’s a long process, that doesn’t happen overnight”, underlines Joaquim Pais de Azevedo. “It’s a question of maintaining the balance – between soil, pasture, brushland, cork oak trees and animals. And all this in symbiosis. Without each production undermining the others.”

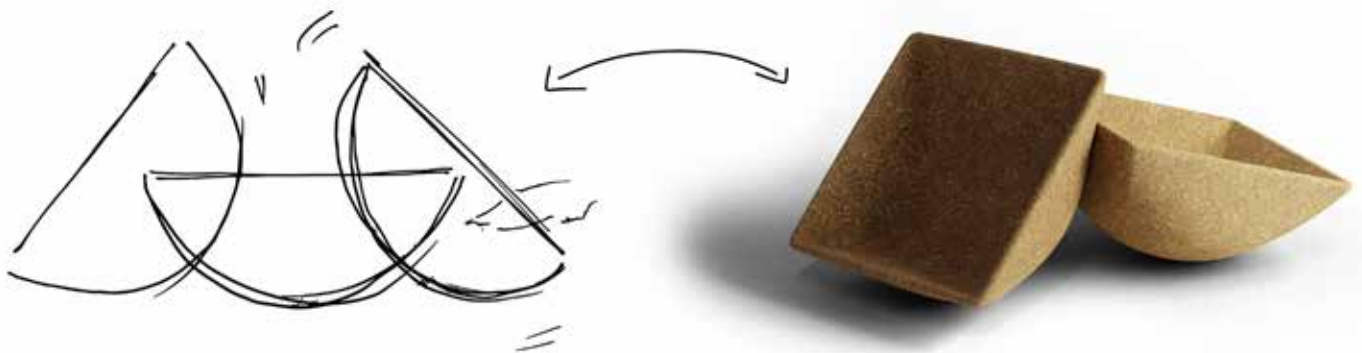
In Joaquim Pais de Azevedo’s opinion, one of the ways to increase the profitability of the cork oak forest is linked to ecosystem services. “Cork oak forests are carbon sinks, they help regulate the water cycle, prevent erosion, and are the basis of unique biodiversity. These are services that we all benefit from”, he says. “These services are a cork oak product that we do not sell and that we should sell”. The key issue, in the forest producer’s opinion, is communication, but there are other important issues. “As producers, we can’t get this message across properly to public opinion in general. It’s the forest producer who defends the forest, who defends the environment, who defends these agro-silvo-pastoral systems. And the forest producer has to generate profits. It’s a common good. But there has to be political will”.

The evolution of the cork harvesting system

To preserve the future of the cork oak forest, this issue will have to be considered, as well as the evolution of the cork harvesting system, in the sense of the introduction or dissemination of technologies that improve the cork stripping process. “Such machines have been developed for years, but now Corticeira Amorim, which has the necessary drive and financial muscle has

invested heavily in R&D for these technologies. I think this is very good, because it is perhaps one of the few companies that can bring this system to fruition”, concludes Joaquim Pais de Azevedo. In terms of R&D, particularly in terms of increasing our knowledge of the cork oak tree and cork, Corticeira Amorim’s Forestry Intervention Project assumes a strategic role: “As a world leader, I believe that Corticeira Amorim also has an obligation to promote scientific studies of this tree, the cork oak tree. There is a great deal of technology related to cork production and processing. As a forestry producer, Amorim is now also committed to promoting research in this sector. This is undoubtedly to be welcomed, as long as such knowledge is shared with all forestry producers. Without industry there can be no forestry production, and without forestry production there can be no industry. This is not a question of poetry: we have to advance arm in arm and walk in the same direction, with the same objective”.

The unique combination of creativity, innovation and design



Created in February 2022, Amorim Cork Composites' ACC Design Studio is a multidisciplinary department, in which cork and design intersect, inspired by innovation and creativity. The studio aims to take cork further, with sustainability at the centre, by discovering new applications and functionalities for cork and develop the full potential of the material - from concept to final production.

Raquel Laranjeira, 29, has worked for Amorim Cork Composites for four years, after having joined the company directly from university. She studied industrial design at the University of Aveiro and then completed her training in Paris and Milan. Like so many young people of her generation, Raquel is passionate about projects which make a difference and therefore it's a dream to work with cork – a 100% natural material that has impeccable sustainability credentials. Her work as a member of the ACC Design Studio team – Amorim Cork Composites' in-house design department – involves precisely this: dreaming. Taking cork further and finding new ways to make this material even more desirable and, yes, more sustainable, considering the entire value chain.

“Here at ACC Design Studio, we increasingly aim to bring new products to the market that are truly sustainable – from its original source, development, production, packaging and transport. It's a huge path” she explains. “We know that cork is a sustainable material, but even more can be achieved. The projects that I like the most are those that give us space to do new things and experiment with new processes. For example, we can now use rice husk – a material that would otherwise be wasted – and mix it with cork to create a new composite”.

Why is it important to look for equally sustainable materials, that can be combined with cork? Because cork, an amazing natural material, is a limited resource. “Cork has many advantages, but it doesn't always have to work alone. For example can we make a mood board entirely from cork? Yes we can, but is that strictly necessary? We can also use rice husk, mixed with cork, and are currently thinking about other alternatives, putting the circular economy to work. Today we have to be aware of those possibilities. Designers have to think about such things”, remarks Raquel Laranjeira.

From design to product

Think, design, prototype, produce. That's what the ACC Design Studio team does – conceiving, designing and implementing new cork-based products and discovering unprecedented features for this material. The studio was officially created in February 2022, to provide a more structured response to the numerous product development and management challenges posed to Amorim Cork Composites.



Using different technologies, and always developed by the i.cork factory, an authentic laboratory of innovation, research and development, where all the prototypes of new products and solutions are developed and tested, ACC Design Studio's main objective is to develop new concepts for cork, primarily aimed at the home, office and leisure. But that's not all: ACC Design Studio has also developed more experimental and artistic projects, such as recent collaborations with Ai Weiwei and Pedro Cabrita Reis or the Serpentine Gallery's Summer Pavilion. In commercial or artistic terms, the studio offers a personalised approach, tailored to each project, which starts from in-depth knowledge of cork as an excellent raw material, supported by unique technical expertise, which makes it possible to accompany each step of the project.

Three pillars of action

ACC Design studio has three main objectives, that also serve as the three pillars of its activity, based on market needs, and the challenges associated to a material that has a unique potential, which are quickly transformed into opportunities.

The studio's first objective is to develop new concepts using cork. The studio team develops all-in-one concepts for different brands, proposing exclusive cork products that respond to each client's needs. This pillar of activity includes all cork-based products developed for major retail brands, in particular in the area of beverage packaging, which often lead to “invisible portfolios” because brands choose not to communicate the designer and/or supplier. The second pillar of activity is our comprehensive project support activities, such as the aforementioned collaborations with major international artists, including Ai Weiwei and Pedro Cabrita Reis, and also partnerships with architects and designers in one-off projects. For his major retrospective exhibition in Lisbon, Ai Weiwei created a life-size sculpture of his own body (“Brainless Figure in Cork”), entirely made of cork. Pedro Cabrita Reis chose cork as the raw material for his contemporary interpretation of “The Three Graces” (exhibited in the Tuileries Garden in Paris).

In both cases, the ACC Design Studio team provided support for the project, accompanying and advising its development, both in terms of the choice and behaviour of the material and the production of the sculptures themselves, using ultra high-precision technologies, such as CNC, to “cut” the cork in order to obtain the shapes sought by the artists. “The challenge is often to try out new things, and without market pressure we actually have room for that”, explains Raquel Laranjeira, in relation to these projects. The third, absolutely strategic, pillar of activity is education and influence. “The idea is to influence design and architecture students, in Portugal and abroad, to use cork and experiment with this material”. To this end, the ACC Design Studio’s team conducts various online and in-person workshops and training activities, imparting knowledge and tools for a creative, and even disruptive, approach to cork. It pursues these activities with several academic institutions in Portugal, where cork is a well-known material, and also abroad, such as the summer workshops in Boisbuchet (an international research centre for design and architecture), in France, or a programme, which will start in September, organised in partnership with the prestigious ECAL (one of the ten best schools of art and design in the world), in Switzerland, among many other examples of collaboration.



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Design, innovation and creativity

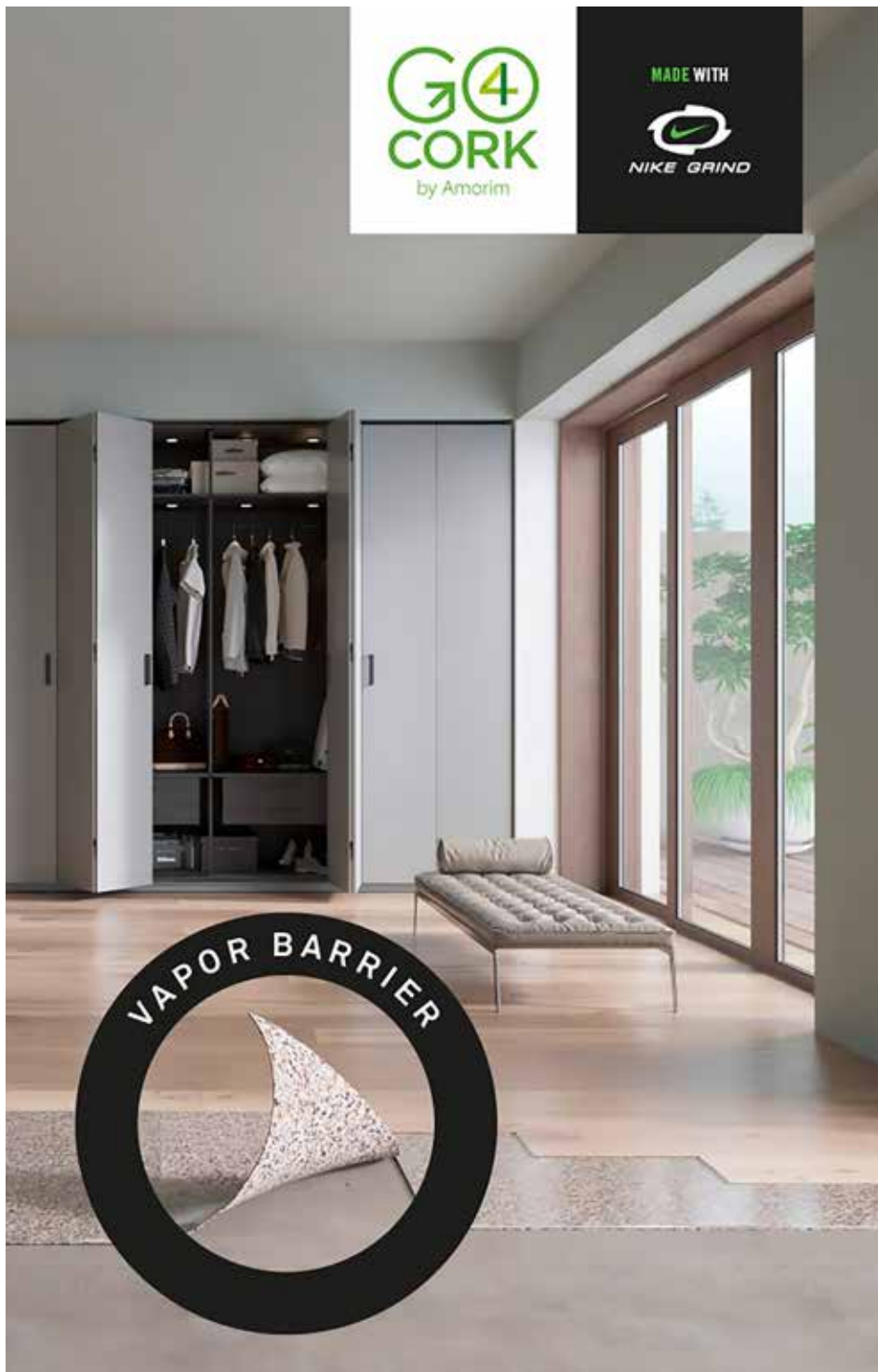
In any project that ACC Design Studio is involved in, there will always be a unique combination of design, innovation and creativity. This occurs when the team works on a project for an external client (e.g. Belvedere), when launching new references in a project of its own (for example, the Alma Gémea cork and ceramics collection) or when collaborating

with an international designer in the development of a line of furniture (e.g. Tom Dixon). Each project takes a new look at cork. Each project poses a question, and offers one, or multiple, answers. Each project represents the possibility of opening up a new path for cork. “We developed the concept from scratch”, explains Raquel Laranjeira.



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Underlayment with recycled materials from NIKE



Corticeira Amorim has just launched a new product in the North American market using recycled materials. The underlayment Go4cork Blend with Nike Grind, produced by Amorim Cork Composites, aims to have a positive impact on the environment by creating a sustainable solution, based on circular economy principles. In the composition of this product, Amorim Cork Composites used cork composites and EVA foam, derived from recycled scraps from Nike's footwear manufacturing process (Nike Grind). The new solution is based on a formulation that aims to ensure a high performance of the underlayment, due to the unique characteristics that cork confers to this application: durability, comfort, impermeability, thermal, acoustic and anti-vibration insulation. According to a recent analytic study conducted by EY, Go4cork Blend with Nike Grind has a negative carbon balance of $-5.5\text{kg CO}_2\text{eq/m}^2$. This means that the product's associated carbon sequestration promoted by the cork oak forest exceeds the CO_2 emissions from production. Go4cork Blend with Nike Grind is an excellent option for customers looking to achieve a balance between high performance and environmental sustainability. António Rios de Amorim, Corticeira Amorim's Chairman and CEO, highlights the fact that "this product reflects a continuous investment by Corticeira Amorim in the circular economy, that assumes sustainability as a commitment and one of the strategic pillars of the company's activity". He also stresses, "in the future Amorim Cork Composites will continue to do what it does best: add value to cork in a competitive, differentiating and innovative manner".

Employer Branding: the continued commitment to people

In a particularly dynamic labour ecosystem, it is increasingly challenging for companies to attract, capture and retain talent. At Corticeira Amorim - a company marked by family culture and pragmatism, but also by ambition and daring - Employer Branding is now a common practice. The company recently won third place in the Industrial Companies category of Randstad's "Employer Brand Research 2022" ranking.

How is team spirit built and kept alive in a company that has a history that spans more than 150 years, is the leader of its sector, in a work environment in which four generations currently work together (Baby-boomers, X, Millennials and Z)? How will the company's culture evolve in an increasingly competitive context, in which people management is constantly being updated, in order to respond to the challenges of new global paradigms of work? How is the company positioned and differentiated in the market, vis-à-vis other employers and potential new employees? Alexandra Godinho, Corticeira Amorim's Human Resources Director, explains: "Our employer brand has evolved significantly over recent years. Although we are not a mass-market retailer, we have clearly increased our notoriety, both due to the

company's good results and the fact that we have started to communicate with the outside world in a more intentional manner". This perception has been confirmed by the good results obtained by Corticeira Amorim in the "Employer Brand Research" ranking - winning third place in the Industrial Companies category in 2022, and first place in 2021. This is a worldwide survey that Randstad carries out every year, that was carried out in Portugal in January 2022, with a sample of about 5,000 people, between 18 and 60 years old, representative of the Portuguese population. The respondents were asked which companies they consider to have better attributes in certain categories, making it possible to trace a picture of how organisations are perceived, in terms of being more or less desirable.

Feet on the ground and head in the clouds

What is the culture that characterises Corticeira Amorim, and which at least partly contributes to the manner in which the company is positioned and perceived? "If I had to highlight one aspect of our corporate culture, it would be pragmatism. Our top management has publicised the idea: we have to make things happen. That's why we need people who are very focused on achieving things", remarks Alexandra Godinho. "When I say that we must have our feet on the ground and our heads in the clouds, I mean we need pragmatism, and also our characteristic drive and ambition, looking upwards. Head in the clouds, in the sense of dreaming big".





In a company with a history that spans more than 150 years, it is complementarity between different attributes that makes the key difference in the construction of the employer brand. “We feel that there is indeed an evolution in terms of Employer Branding. Corticeira Amorim was previously perceived as primarily a safe, stable and traditional family business. Today the brand stands out for its good results, as a leading Portuguese company internationally, due to its sustainability credentials”, remarks Corticeira Amorim’s Human Resources director. “Today, the new generations value sustainability. Sustainability projects us, it’s a great argument”, she concludes. However, these attributes are not sufficient in their own right. The secret is literally the people: “We are increasingly realising that our reputation and our brand as an employer are linked to people’s concrete experiences. The main source of Employer Branding is the people who work here. It is their concrete experience as employees that determines whether they will recommend us in their network of contacts”, she sums up.

An intergenerational human landscape

At Corticeira Amorim, the recruitment of young people is a clear objective. Therefore, the human resources team strives to recruit young people in a differentiated way, strengthening links and partnerships with higher education institutions and developing internship programmes. To a large extent, our trainee programmes have fuelled the recruitment of Corticeira

Amorim technical staff over recent years and have made a fundamental contribution to the company’s employer brand. However, the company’s commitment to young people does not undermine our appreciation of more experienced generations. The uniqueness of Corticeira Amorim’s human landscape resides in striking this balance: “Right now we have this mix of four different generations in our work context. Our organisational and technological evolution has delivered profound changes. We have managed to evolve, even introduced changes in terms of the human landscape”, summarises Alexandra Godinho. “Today we only recruit new employees who have completed their secondary school education, Year 12, but at the same time we are also retraining the people who have already worked here for much longer”. Technological evolution requires permanent updating. At Corticeira Amorim, the digital transition and the introduction of new technologies and processes across all business units, has conditioned the workforce. “The company’s growth has enabled us to absorb this impact, identify new roles for people and reconvert others, through training that enables them to learn more in certain fields and strengthen their skills”. Updating skills is imperative: “In order to be able to respond to this paradigm shift, we will have to continue our commitment to people, because what they know today is highly likely to become obsolete within a few years. People need to be constantly learning”.

New leadership challenges

New leadership and people management challenges arise in the post-pandemic context. Changes to the social environment and the entry of new generations into the job market has substantially altered the rules of the game. Teleworking is becoming a major trend. People need to strike the right work-life balance, since many people are no longer looking for a job for life and are increasingly available to change. This creates tremendous challenges for companies, especially in terms of the retention of talent. “The places may even be the same”, explains Alexandra Godinho. “But the chairs are always changing. There is a new generation in the job market that is clearly operating under a different paradigm. They collect experiences, they want to experience things now, and don’t want to wait for something in the distant future. It is a generation that probably has a much healthier relationship between work and other areas of their lives. It is a very focused generation, with tremendous productivity when focused and motivated. During the time they are working with us, they are in fact, entirely dedicated to us”.



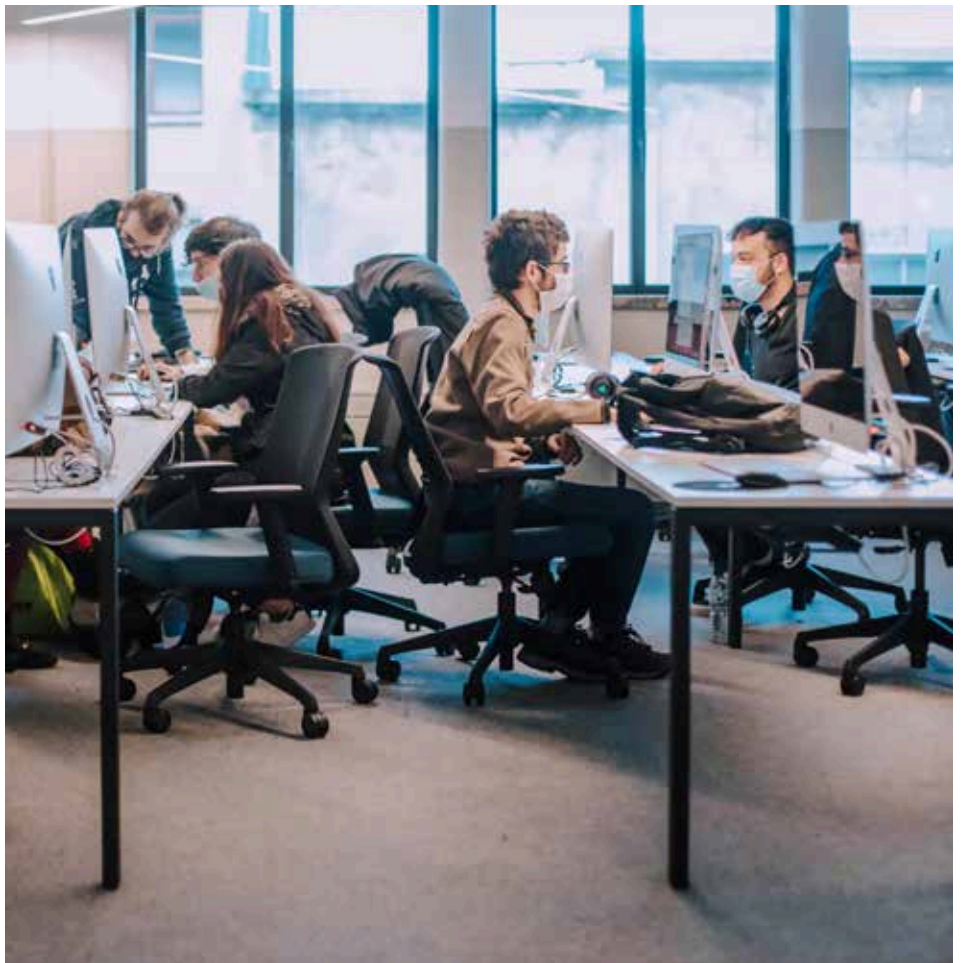
42 Porto, a mission brimming with opportunities

Corticeira Amorim is a corporate partner of 42 - an innovative programming school originally launched in Paris in 2013 that is now about to launch in the city of Porto. Based on a method that promotes learning without the traditional format of classrooms, without teachers and without timetables, 42 Porto will enable people to learn in a practical manner, developing projects between peers, in a model that is similar to a game (gamification). In addition to their technical skills, each student will enhance their communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills - such as creativity, autonomy and resilience. The only requirements for application to the 42 Porto course, whose registrations are open 365 days a year, are to have completed secondary school education - Year 12 - and be 18 years old or over. The programme takes between 12 and 18 months to complete, assuming dedication of around 40 hours per week. Even prior to receiving the course diploma, the students will gain professional experience in the area. After this in-depth knowledge of the job market, students will return to 42 Porto to complement the course in a specialist field of their choice, including areas such as cyber security, web development, data analytics, among many others. 42 Porto's entire programme is 100% free, because tuition fees are paid by the course sponsors. Companies, institutions and organizations such as Corticeira Amorim consider that this project embraces "mission brimming with opportunities", says Alexandra Godinho, Corticeira Amorim's Human Resources director.

"Our goal is to maximise the impacts of 42 Porto, enabling our companies to take

advantage of the many lessons learned over almost 10 years of this successful disruptive pedagogical approach. This concerns the excellent training of students and the interaction that we may be able to develop in terms of internships and projects, or simply encouraging our employees to become involved, whether through conferences, workshops and/or mentoring activities".

Strengthening the employer brand, accessing talent in the field of technology, and the possibility of exploring a network of international contacts associated to 42 schools around the world (these schools currently have more than 15,000 students in 25 countries), is another benefit of our partnership with 42 Porto.



Amorim once again wins a Sustainability Award from World Finance Magazine

Corticeira Amorim has won the top prize in the “Wine products industry” category of the World Finance Magazine Sustainability Awards. Distinguished for the fourth year running, the Portuguese company was recognised for its promotion of cork oak forests, biodiversity and ecosystem services, through investment, support and promotion in Research & Development + Innovation, and implementation of the best principles, models and practices of the circular economy. These premises are the basis for an extensive portfolio of products, solutions and technologies that deliver superior technical performance, always combined with sustainability credentials that are unparalleled in the market.

The jury underlined the company’s commitment to sustainability, aligned with the guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative, membership of the 50 Sustainability & Climate Leaders initiative and FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification of most of its processing units. Other decisive factors underlying the award included energy efficiency, responsible management of supplies and the positive environmental impact of the company’s products. Value was placed on the promotion of training, safety and well-being, as well as the social, personal and professional development of all the company’s employees. The jury also highlighted “Corticeira Amorim’s long-term value proposition,

the issuance of €40 million in green bonds, continuous investment in R&D+i in the amount of €10 million/year, and its sustainability strategy, based on environmental, social and economic pillars”. The jury of the Sustainability Awards of the World Finance magazine praised the negative CO₂ balance of Corticeira Amorim’s cork stoppers, that make a “relevant contribution to decarbonisation of the wine industry”. The entire range of product families of Amorim Cork – Corticeira Amorim’s Cork Stoppers Business Unit – now have an official certification of their negative carbon balance.



The world's finest wines are sealed with cork stoppers

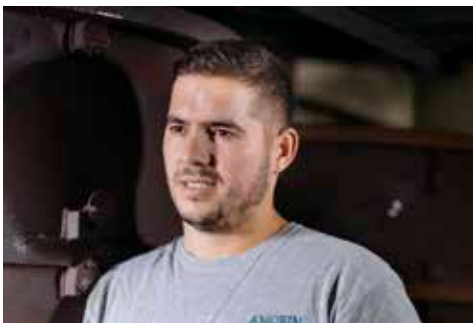
Cork stoppers are the closures used by 91% of the world's finest wines ranked in last year's Wine Spectator's Top 100. This overwhelming preference - which was revealed in a recent study conducted by 100% Cork and APCOR - the Portuguese Cork Association - confirms the trend that has been registered over recent years: the cork stopper is the closure preferred by the vast majority of wine consumers. Moreover, 2021 appears to be the year in which a higher percentage of wines in the Wine Spectator's Top 100 were sealed with cork

stoppers (since 2016, when 100% Cork started monitoring the list). Three more statistics that confirm the cork stopper as the supreme sealing solution: according to a report by the consultancy firm Nielsen, between 2010 and 2020, sales of wines sealed with cork stoppers among the 100 best premium brands grew by 97%, compared to 6% for alternative stoppers; the market share of premium wines sealed with cork stoppers increased from 47% to 67.6% in the same period; and 31 of the 33 American wines included in the Wine

Spectator's 2021 Top 100 list were sealed with cork stoppers (94%). 2021's Top 100 list was topped by Dominicus Estate, Napa Valley 2018, Château Pichon Longueville Lalande, Pauillac 2018 and Heitz, Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Martha's Vineyard 2016. Wine Spectator, a prestigious American magazine that specialises in wines, has been drawing up its annual Top 100 list since 1988. The selection criteria include quality, value, availability and the history behind the wine.



Our People



AMORIM

Sustainable by nature