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**The Eastern waterfront area
of Lisbon: progress, decline
and regeneration.**



This article aims to analyse strategic ways to intervene within urban regeneration, departing from the past, history and pre-existing elements in the Eastern waterfront area of Lisbon. Although waterfronts have been widely explored (both in theoretical and practical fields), there are not many conclusions about specific and strategic urban regeneration and urban policies supported by reality and within the context of scarcity of funds. On one hand, the current strategies and public interventions are held and carried by the Municipality of Lisbon and focus mostly on urban plans (e.g.: *Plano de Urbanização da Zona Ribeirinha Oriental* – PUZRO; *Plano de Pormenor da Matinha*) and on the improvement of accessibilities. On the other hand, private investment is growing on housing renewal and local business. However, there is still lacking a global and integrative strategy that could be able to link the case study area to the city and its metropolitan area. Conceptually, we consider the contemporary city as complex and global systems, and waterfronts as hinge areas. Methodologically, we globally investigate the case study area – located between *Terreiro do Paço* and *Parque das Nações* (Figure 1) – through empirical analysis (field visits), conceptual urban regeneration and current legal frameworks. Finally, we explore ways of intervening in the case study area in order to promote urban regeneration departing from the existences and the past.

Waterfront areas are characterized as complex, diverse sites of cultural and historical interest (Rufinoni, 2014). According to Gracia (1992), urban diversity must be considered with constructing on the already built and it is a complex reality that gathers several alternatives and approaches. Hence, *rebuilding* (i.e.: urban regeneration) depends on:

- levels of intervention;
- patterns of action;
- different attitudes according to different contexts.

The recent / in progress intervention – for instance, in the case study area they have been carried by the Municipality of Lisbon and / or private stakeholders (Figures 2-3) –, lead us to reflect upon the issues involved in the approach of post-industrial and old port waterfronts, as well as the port-city relationships and the importance of dialogue between preservation and urban planning and management (Rufinoni, 2014). Public interventions focus mostly on the requalification of public space and increasing mobility and accessibilities (Figure 2) whereas private intervention is stricter to housing (Figure 3) or local business (such as restaurants, coffee shops / cyber cafes).

According to Rufinoni (2014), ancient port areas are considered as advantaged territories for urban history / past investigations, since the port structures may provide important information about the sequent processes of urban occupation and social appropriation, besides the geographical and / or social and cultural contexts. It is crucial to understand and consider urban cycles of port areas. Its preservation and conservation are present and future challenges, since it is needed

1. Partial aerial view of the considered Eastern waterfront area of Lisbon (Resource: Diagram elaborated over a Google Maps image).



2. View of a bicycle and pedestrian pathway, recently promoted by the Municipality of Lisbon (Xabregas, Lisbon). (Photograph taken by the Author, July 2014).



3. View of a renewed private house (Marvila, Lisbon). (Photograph taken by the Author, July 2014).

to adapt pre-existing structures; to promote interventions within logics of economic resources; to assure the connection of waterfronts as technical and complex port areas with other centres of the city.

Heritage: past, present and future

Analysing the complex evolution of post-industrial areas, from expansion/progress until the decline and regeneration, the matter of heritage is one of the most challenging elements in the territory (Choay, 2011). Since in port and post-industrial areas it is hence notorious, the presence of History, preservation, conservation and/or demolition are present and future challenges to Architects. But what is “Heritage”? In this analysis, Heritage is considered as *primarily material* (Smith, 2012) in order to promote urban regeneration interventions. Along with History and urban past/ evolution – whether constraining or grounding urban regeneration, design projects and architectural practice(s) –, Heritage may promote a coherent basis of analysis and intervention. More than physical constructions of the past, Heritage should be understood as a conceptual set of values, memories, cultural and social meanings that relate to the present and supports the future (Choay, 2011; Smith, 2012). Humanity and Architects in particular face a huge challenge of deciding of what or not to preserve. In the end, Heritage concedes a sense of cultural identity. In fact, isn’t what Architecture tends to do?

We believe that urban regeneration surpasses the conservation/ preservation of cultural and natural Heritage, since it allows to rebuild existing cities, celebrating new territories and interpretations (Nevado, 2015a). However, it is not enough to reuse and regenerate sticking elements to its original form, but to adapt it to contemporary through prospective and strategic guidelines (Nevado, 2015a). Thus, it is crucial to analyze the territory throughout its *active*¹ and *productive*² past (Terán, 2009). Specifically in the case study area, we can identify three main periods of urban evolution:

- XVth century: leisure farms and convents;
- XVIII–XIXth centuries: industrialization;
- XXth century: deindustrialization/ socioeconomic disaffection;

Is the XXIth century the age of urban regeneration of that urban area? It is time to recreate, reuse, recycle and regenerate. Urban regeneration represents the future of contemporary cities, seeking for improving life conditions of populations and environment. As an integrated strategy, process and political instrument, it is inserted in strategic guidelines of international communitarian development, implying, on one hand, a constant updating/ revision of the legal framework of urban planning and management, and, on the other hand, new models of territorial development based on economic competitiveness, globalization, sustainability and social cohesion. The rapid European and Portuguese urban development focus urban regeneration as a priority. In the case

of Lisbon, the expansion and the subsequent industrial dislocation shaped new and external urban centralities that are currently inserted in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, requiring specific technical-political organizations. Due to the peculiar and historical of the European urban culture, the compatibility of new forms, patterns and flows with the needs of populations and local communities demand the action of professional technicians with the appropriated skills and know-how (CEU, 2003). The current legal framework and urban plans highlight urban regeneration as a priority. However, there are still not clear demands for it. Although the new law of urban planning ("Lei n.º 31/2014 - Lei de bases gerais da política pública de solos, de ordenamento do território e de urbanismo", 2014) distinguishes *urban renewal* from *urban regeneration*³, it seems that there is not enough obligations, since the State and Local Government are responsible for those restructuring actions within urban planning and management. Inserted in economic theories and aiming to upgrade and correct urban, social and economic situations, urban regeneration is reflected in strategic policies, instruments, plans and programs (Ferreira, 2007). Although heritage buildings and international directives, it is impossible to preserve everything. It is needed a careful evaluation, aiming economic and strategic purposes and assigning new uses in the existing buildings, contrary the monofuncionalidade, such as the industrial past of the Eastern waterfront area reveals.

Case study area

We highlight the case of the Eastern waterfront area of Lisbon due to its historic and urban evolution – marked by successive and complex urban and infrastructural transformations, since it has crossed several stages of evolution – and by its current situation of urban decline that triggers problems, challenges and opportunities of intervention to the technicians that are involved in urban regeneration processes. In the case study, we are able to find many examples of rural and industrial legacy, that reveal the past of that territory. It is currently a complex, semi-peripheral, fragmented and diverse urban area that, in spite of EXPO'98 event and the subsequent operation of urban regeneration (*Parque das Nações*), it did not receive a global investment in that sense (Nevado, 2015b). It is hence a peculiar case in the city and in the metropolitan area of Lisbon that needs to be articulated with other urban centres, in order to promote competitive strategic nets (Nevado, 2015b).

Considering that the past justifies and supports the intervention in the contemporary city and the current scarcity of funds / in times of crisis, it is now crucial to question ways of regenerate declined areas and buildings (Figures 4-5). We herein highlight the need of municipal safeguarding policies – not only as preservation of buildings and public spaces but as well as maintenance and extension of urban life – in opposition to the speculative pressure that usually relapses over



4. View of Abel Pereira da Fonseca (Marvila / Poço do Bispo, Lisbon), an ancient wine industry set that is currently declined. (Photograph taken by the Author, July 2014).



5. View of José Domingos Barreiros Building (Marvila / Poço do Bispo, Lisbon). (Photograph taken by the Author, July 2014).



6. View of an Artistic Academy in an old industrial warehouse (Rua do Açúcar, Marvila / Poço do Bispo, Lisbon). (Photograph taken by the Author, July 2014).

isolated buildings and obsolete urban areas which play a decisive role in the (re)construction of the urban identity and memory (Figures 4, 5, 8).

The case study area has recently been targeted with new uses, such as artistic and/or co-working spaces (Figure 6) and urban art examples (Figure 7).

We believe that the territory must be social and economic active and productive, renting pre-existing elements and departing from itself. Especially in the current context of public financial unavailability, it urges to globally rethink urban management strategies – highlighting factors as cooperation, connection and public participation, and stimulating the intervention departing from the pre-existences, history and heritage. Cities and especially waterfronts are productive, memory and reconstruction spaces since they comprise important economic uses that are determinant for urban evolution. Although the industrial activity has lost its importance in the Portuguese context since the decade of 1970, following the trends of globalization and importation of Western markets, its legacy constitutes nowadays a crucial testimonial and a unique opportunity to intervene without demolishing/ constructing from scratch. The case study area contains several examples of industrial archaeology and inheritance (Custódio and Folgado, 1999; Matos and Paulo, 1999) with potential of adaptation to new productive structures, within the scope of the knowledge society, creative city (Carta, 2007) and non-pollutant industry. There are many surviving examples of industrial activity in that territory, such as old factories (e.g.: *Fábrica Militar Braço de Prata*; *Fábrica de Gás da Matinha*; *Abel Pereira da Fonseca* – Figure 4; *José Domingos Barreiros* – Figure 5) and industrial dwellings (i.e.: *Pátios* and *Vilas* – Figure 8) that may be recovered in order to regenerate that area.

Thus, we consider that the combination of temporalities, subsequent urban overlaps/ layers and the revisit of memory, history and past are the main conceptual assumptions to enhance urban regeneration of that territory and to reconnect it with the city and its metropolitan area. Therefore, and considering that models of spectacular architecture, of only attracting singular, ephemeral events is not enough, in the case study area it urges to:

- Renew obsolete/ deactivated industrial structures, assigning new, mixed uses, instead of the monofunctional past of that area (e.g.: throughout the renewal of old industrial sets such as *Abel Pereira da Fonseca* – Figure 4 – and *José Domingos Barreiros* – Figure 5 –, reusing pre-existing buildings and providing local, municipal or even regional urban equipments like libraries, markets or schools of arts and crafts);
- Recreate and/or reinforce:
 - riverine connections (whether leisure or public transportation waterways) with the Tagus Estuary;
 - terrestrial connections with nearby areas/ important centres – such as *Parque das Nações*, *Santa Apolónia*

and *Terreiro do Paço* –, through the revision and update of public transportation systems (e.g.: recreating the old waterfront tram connection between the Western and Eastern areas – *Belém-Poço do Bispo*);

- Promote low cost housing and stimulate the renting system through urban renewal of old buildings/houses, attracting younger population and/or providing better life conditions to the elder inhabitants (e.g.: *Vilas / Pátios Operários*) (Figure 8);
- Create urban facilities/equipments at municipal and regional scales (e.g.: sports; economic hubs; civic centre);
- Recover and/or reinforce social networks, based on local communities and facilities (e.g.: recreative local societies; local football clubs; *Fado Houses*) and avoiding gentrification.

Conclusions

Considering that life is cyclic, History shows that the future is determined by the past since it offers us lessons for the future (CEU, 2003, p. 9; Nevado, 2015a), singularity and diversity are considered as competitive advantages, connecting territory, population and identity (CEU, 2003, p. 15; Nevado 2015a). Since we inherit cities, we must establish a civic commitment (Smith, 2012), maintaining, correcting and adapting them in order to preserve it to the future generations. We conclude that although urban regeneration projects may promote positive impacts in port and post-industrial areas and its surrounding territories towards a new and dynamic polycentric competitiveness (Carta, 2007, p.27), technical, logistics, port and industrial areas are needed and must coexist within the contemporary city. Therefore, it is not logical for us to defend demolition nor to promote spectacular interventions at a big scale, but to stimulate interventions based on pre-existing elements. Besides it is more economical, it also promotes reusing heritage, by its understanding and interpretation. Urban regeneration depends on political governance and urban policies, inserted in global flows and dynamics, through multi and interdisciplinary teams of research and action.



7. View of an artwork of the renowned Artist Vhils. (Photograph taken by the Author, July 2014).



8. Partial view of an existing Vila Operária (Vila Flamiano) that reveals the peculiar old industry workers' housing. (Photograph taken by the Author, October 2014).

1 → Active past (Terán, 2009), i.e., by its social and economical evolution and current features, suiting it to the present and the available resources, defining, however, future adaptable solutions through the elaboration of adaptation and prevention plans.

2 → Productive past (Nevado, 2015a) i.e., against the actual tendencies of urban decline, taking advantage of the industrial pre-existences in the territory.

3 → According to the 61st Article of the new Portuguese law of urban planning, urban renewal refers to the “[...] integrated territorial intervention that aims to value the physical support of a territory, through works of reconstruction, recovery, beneficiation, renewal and modernization of built stock, infrastructures, support services and natural systems, as well as the correction of environmental passives or landscape appreciation” as urban regeneration is referred as the “[...] way of integrated territorial intervention that combines renewal actions with demolition, new construction and with suited economic, social and cultural revitalization, reinforcing cohesion and territorial potential”. Thus, although urban renewal and urban regeneration may be similar at a first sight and their aims are similar – seeking for better life conditions –, their methodologies are different.

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