

Strategies for the Urban Restoration of the Monumental Zone of Belém - Lisboa

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1. CONCEPTS/BASIC OBJECTIVES

1.1 It is essential to formally define the framing in which the actions should be undertaken, aiming at:

- administrative legitimacy
- advantages and benefits that can be obtained

1.2 It is essential to establish a good relationship with all the Municipal Services, aiming at:

- in the first place to correct integration in the city's General Town Planning, an essential condition from a methodological viewpoint
- avoiding jurisdiction conflicts (and sabotage...)
- achieving as much as possible an effective cooperation

1.3 In view of 1.1 and 1.2 and the existing legal framing, we think the most adequate form is:

The Plan for Safeguard and Enhancement (Heritage Law 13/85) which:

- considers that the Built Heritage Safeguard constitutes a State obligation, who has at its disposal the instruments for the purpose (classification of buildings or sites, preventive measures/administrative services).
- considers the execution of Safeguard Plans to be of interest for each specific zone (possible financial benefits?) (intrinsically they are Plans in Detail their specific goal being to regulate the *development* of special zones, safeguarding the built heritage they contain.)
- the idea of *development* is here particularly important, as a counterbalance to the denomination of *safeguard* (and even rehabilitation...) It is essential that plan implementation be constantly affirmed as a positive action instead of a paralysing repository of merely measures and having thus a negative image.

Note: in Portugal the first initiative within this frame belongs to IPPC¹ - the Plan for the Safeguard of the Monumental Zone of Belem. It is in progress. Results? According to the law 13/85, town councils of any other institutions, either central or local, may take the initiative to have these plans done, but they must be approved by IPPC.

Examples which are potentially interesting to study:

- The plans, in great detail were recently approved in Paris for the "Marais" district and the Seine's Left Bank (Department for Heritage, the equivalent in France to IPPC.)
- They aroused public interest and attracted financial means.
- The Plan is important as open action (discussion, diculigation, promotion.)

2. PROGRAM/BASIC ASPECTS OF THE PLAN

In a synthesis we consider that the program must be established on *five points*:

- knowledge
- planning
- financing
- training
- information

2.1 Knowledge

Any program entails an appropriate study and a preliminary research constituting an essential process for the interventions information. Experience shows that all efforts in this area become a profitable investment. Errors or neglect in the field of archaeology, economic values, or cultural traditions may jeopardize the whole plan's credibility. On the other side, from a well-structured analysis and an accurate diagnosis result easily defensible propositions.

2.2 Planning

- It should be coordinated at several levels, "conquering" the maximum cooperation:
 - Official/public sector
IPPC, LNEC² Belem District Councils, DGOT³ and mainly the various CML⁴ departments.
 - Associations (owners, tenants, commercial, industrial, heritage protection, cooperatives, etc.)
AAP⁵, OE⁶, AECOPS⁷.
- To bear in mind the concept of "integrated preservation" (Council of Europe, 1975), not considering only the historical Belem Zone, but suggesting solutions related to

the town planning as a whole (“conquering” the DSU⁸...)

- To consider as fundamental the idea of *intervention* and *development* assessing the capacity of Belem for absorbing new situations and for renewal.

Consequently we think that experiences that have been developed in other countries should be analyzed/studied and we submit as examples in the field of performance/management:

(Public Sphere) - The PACT-ARIM⁹ association in France

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Union Regional, PACT-ARIM Bretagne
22 rue Poullain-Duparc
35000 Rennes, FRANCE

Directeur Regional -

M. Jean-Claude Ebel

(We think there are cooperation protocols already established with Spain)

(Private Sphere)- Amsterdam Town Centre Restoration Company

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In recent experiences of the City of Barcelona to revitalize its historical zones should also be considered.

(Public Company-Joint Company) The French have a large experience in the field of public or joint companies comprising the Ministry of Public Works, Town Councils, banks initiative Trade Union economic associations, etc.) specifically created for certain ventures in this field.

- It is necessary to dispose of significant resources and to create simplified proceedings of access to the programs.
- The current view point is that last funds financing is restricted to a limited range or actions, so the investments, profitability implies the definition of a suitable strategy.

Note - The application of resources for the promotion of inexpensive housing (NH¹⁰.)

2.4 Training

This kind of program management proposed appropriate training and perceptiveness on the part of the responsible persons (usually local councilors). Our lack of experience in this field advises the study of foreign initiatives with similar characteristics, aiming at, however, establishing a “mosud perandi” that suits our technical, economic and social reality, it is rare to contain success by the immediate/direct transposition of alien models.

- To try to preserve too much has the result of little safeguarding, with the risk of “blind planning” to avoid the inertia that derives from an overvaluation of anything “ancient” exploited by promoters who jeopardize the credibility viability of the project.
- To assess correctly the social question. If it is important

to give continuity to the social fabric and to avoid a sudden population shift. It is also fundamental to advance “change” in such balanced way as to attract different social groups that may revitalize the residential characteristics of Belem. A “romantic” protection of a lower income population has the perverse effect of attracting the service sector; the social question goes through the “housing” problem (see below). Restoration actions must aim at an effective (and not cosmetic) renewal of a decaying fabric, which must comprise the definition of *priorities*.

- Coordination (and promotion) of public initiatives
 - Preparation, execution and coordination of “Sectional Action Programs.”
 - Planning of programs to improve the quality of life - creation of small parks, tree planting and space arrangements for leisure activities, temporary clean-up of grounds either abandoned or resulting from demolitions (prior to its restoration or reconstruction). Improvement of basic sanitation, lighting, traffic, public security etc.
 - Within the possibilities, acquisition little by little (even expropriation) of land/real estate appropriate for restoration/rehabilitation actions.
 - Preparation of town-planning directives aiming at the promotion of projects attractive for desirable economic activities and rehabilitation of buildings in view of restoring the urban character and look (a special attention to commerce, that frequently provides the character to reserve).
- To function as a catalyst for private initiative, guiding it toward the preservation of the plan’s goals.

Summing up three key ideas for the planning process:

- Integrated preservation/cooperation
- Intervention/development
- Attraction (by coordinating it) of the private initiative

2.3 Financing/Management

- Two vectors:
 - To obtain the resources necessary for the studies development and to implement *pilot initiatives*.
- To attract private initiative.

We consider it an error of principle to think that heritage preservation and safeguard is an exclusive matter of the public power sphere.

2.5 Information

It may constitute the “key” to the program. In a free society nothing is accomplished under constraint, therefore programs that divulge inform and encourage the population’s active participation and are an indispensable basis. Information therefore must be directed according to two vectors:

- Pedagogic action seeking the public’s support/cooperation.

- Promotion of public attention in order to attract investments.

Consequently the universe aimed at by these actions must not be confined to the Belem residents., but should be extended to the entire Lisbon population and even to the whole country (it would be beneficial to establish the idea of "exemplary action" - methodical, steady and rational as a counterpoint to previous experiences, beginning ambitiously and proceeding hesitantly).

So we think the following actions might be effectual:

- Organization of public debates in collaboration with local structures (Local Councils, leisure and sports association, etc.) meant essentially for residents and local population.
- Organizations of technical debates at national level with experts from the various involved areas.
- Seminars, intended for the Plan's team, with the participation of guests presenting similar cases/studies.
- Promotion of talks and conferences in primary and secondary schools by elements of the Plan's team, in a pedagogic perspective of the "city's culture" enhancement.

In terms of media coverage, since the population sectors are susceptible to be reached by the press, are already by their own nature aware that the preference must be given to television.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

A strategy established on the proposed basic concepts, specially in the planning key areas, may consist in investing public funds, preferably in environmental quality improvement, making the buildings restoration attractive for private investment.

In such strategy, two purposes stand out:

- *Improvement in urban space quality* (which determines a continuity in the buildings use)
- *Continuous use of the buildings* (which is the best kind of restoration).

So we point out some topics that should be considered:

3.1 Open spaces

- In town non-built spaces are as important as buildings. Open spaces and town planning are indispensable for it has been established that the fate of old buildings is by and large determined by the quality of the urban environments since it is unnatural for anyone to invest in the restoration of buildings located in decaying zones, where the future presents itself as uncertain.
- It happens however that historical zones normally display an urban structure that offers little margin for "manoeuvre." This situation is impaired by chronic equipment shortage. Nevertheless, the *basis for an urban zone revitalization* is a whole, and not just the buildings, being particularly important to solve traffic and parking problems, sanitation and infrastructures, facilities and green areas, street furniture and lighting, security and

traffic signs, etc. etc.

- Therefore new financing hypotheses must be considered and eventually new credit systems which include the private promoters themselves. The success of open spaces management depends on a close cooperation between the various intervening entities (see 1.2) and a good understanding between the persons responsible for its maintenance, among whom it is necessary to include (though a pedagogic action) the citizens.

3.2 The existing buildings use/to preserve

It is essential to encourage the permanent use of the buildings since their abandonment is the main cause for decay. Inappropriate use and clandestine or ill-informed interventions are also a factor of destruction. This is a matter of the greatest "dimension" but the easier to approach, although it will be necessary to face a large range of questions:

- Whenever possible, it is desirable to maintain the function for which a building was originally built; frequently however that is not feasible - it is the already "classic" problem of adjusting the new use to the character to safeguard.
- Among the first difficulties, the problem of the quality/facilities standards rises as well for the people have become used to them in new constructions and expect to find them in "renewed" ones (the "housing problem" is not taken into consideration here).
- The question of regulations enforce that at times (and lacking an actual justification) make an economic rehabilitation of old buildings impossible.
- To avoid the evaluation of the "ancient" which leads to disproportionate costs and various subversions.
- To create stimulating mechanisms for instance benefits of the "reserver/beneficiary" kind instead of the principle of punishing the "polluter/payer."
- To create appropriate legal mechanisms that will effectively prevent prevarication (in this domain, often "crime pays"...))
- To promote in the technical economic field, comparative studies and analyses (basis - foreign experiences) that may advise the options. There is collective knowledge in several institutions (IST¹¹, LNEC, etc.)

4. THE PLAN'S METHODOLOGY

We propose a working method structural in three points:

- A - Main objectives
- B - The housing problem
- C - Working programs

A - Objectives

- A1 Rehabilitation of existing constructions which, supposing they deserve to be preserved, must have economic viability and a socially valid use.
- A2 Maintenance within desirable limits for the resident population, that is to say, avoiding sudden changes in

the social order yet promoting the necessary regeneration/revitalization.

A3 To point clearly the modernity of the interventions.

B. Housing

In order to avoid an excessively reducing vision of the decaying housing problem, we propose to approach it from four different angles:

B1 The economic point of view

Presuming the building must have economic viability; we try to compare the present value to the value resulting from modification/improvement or demolition/reconstruction. The aim is to select the best option.

B2 The sanitation point of view

Presuming that bad housing conditions (and "bad" citizens) result from bad sanitary conditions. The goal is to provide "better" citizens by enduring better hygienic and sanitary conditions.

B3 The preservation point of view

Presuming that there are certain qualities in the buildings and their sites that must be preserved. The goal is to protect and to stress those qualities.

B4 The social point of view

Presuming that the social fabric continuity is as important as the urban fabric continuity. The goal is to maintain/create a socially balanced society.

The utilization of these different "viewpoints" may allow a systematic analysis that will facilitate the definition of priorities.

C - Working Programs

In the method we propound, the planning instruments are reduced to the two traditional working programs: analysis and proposition.

- In the analysis, the collected knowledge must be filtered so as to include only facts and controversial evidences and to reject the information with a purely conjectural basis, the present urban system, considering the city as a whole.

- While formulating propositions, the first concern should be to relate them to the actual urban system, considering the city as a whole.

The purpose is that the planning process becomes, contrarily to traditional historical research a process of developing a retro-active analysis. Detecting the modification in the urban fabric from the present condition to the original models, from which there are remains, will allow their preservation.

If we have an objective knowledge of the research zone values historical, cultural, image, land use, population characteristics and economic activities - then we can proceed to a subjective analysis (essential in any creative process) which will determine the intervention criteria; to preserve, to restore, to repair and to rebuild.

Moreover, we consider that this kind of performance tends to increasingly require the population's active participation (the residents and Lisbon's population in general.) Therefore it is necessary to establish the mechanisms that will allow that kind of participation without falling into paralysing situations.

NOTES

- ¹ IPPC (Instituto Potugues do Patrimonio Cultural) - governmental department that oversees cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage)
- ² LNEC (Laboratorio Nacional de Engenharia Civil) - National Laboratory for Civil Engineering
- ³ DGOT (Direccao Goral de Ordenamento do Territorio) - Governmental Department for Territory Planning
- ⁴ CML (Camara Municipal de Lisboa) - Lisbon Town Council
- ⁵ AAP (Associacao dos Arquitectos Portugueses) - Architects Association
- ⁶ OE
- ⁷ AECOPS
- ⁸ DSU (Direccao dos Servicos Urbanisticos) - Town Council Department for Town Planning
- ⁹ PACT - Protection/Amelioration/Conservation/Transformation d'Habitat
ARIM - Association de Restauration Immobiliere
- ¹⁰ INH (Instituto Nacional de Habitacao) - Government Housing Institute
- ¹¹ IST (Instituto Superior Tecnico) - Engineering School