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### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the extent to which big bang events are able to contribute to the sustainable development of the host city. In order to pursue the aforementioned aim, the case study of the World EXPO '98 in Lisbon will be employed. In 1998, Lisbon and Portugal received visitors to the World Exhibition from all over the world. The main issues that arise in this case are related not only to the number of visitors, but more importantly, to the social and economic effects of hosting the EXPO. The essential questions that come up at this point can be summarised as follows: How far has the event helped to make Lisbon more attractive? What has the EXPO meant for the image of Lisbon and Portugal? What are the great challenges for the coming years? This paper will attempt to shed some light on how Lisbon and Portugal have made use of the World Exhibition to increase their appeal to residents, companies and visitors.

### **2. The Context**

The 1992 strategic plan served as a guideline for the formulation of the municipal policy. The main objective set out by that plan was for Lisbon to become the Atlantic Capital of Europe. The visionary character of the aforementioned objective made necessary its dissemination into more concrete strategic aims that could support its pursuit. Among those aims, there are four that stand out, namely: the promotion of the city at national and international level, the generation of new economic activities, urban planning and renewal projects, the development of infrastructure that is supportive to economic activities.

A prominent co-coordinating organisation for the strategic development and promotion of Lisbon is AMBELIS. It was founded in 1992 just after the strategic plan was approved. Although its main task is the promotion of the city and its surroundings, it is also supposed to contribute to urban renewal and economic revitalisation. The greatest shareholder of AMBELIS is the municipality of Lisbon. Other shareholders comprise chambers of commerce, education and research institutions, insurance companies, providers of financial services and companies engaged in industrial, construction and service activities. Parque EXPO 98 S.A. that is, the organisation formed with the purpose to accommodate EXPO '98 and consequently to revitalise the designated exhibition area, is not a shareholder but works in a co-operative manner with AMBELIS.

### **3. The EXPO '98**

Lisbon seized the opportunity offered by the hosting of the EXPO '98 to pursue the aim set out by the 1992 strategic plan under better terms. In that sense the staging of the world exhibition served the purpose of making Lisbon the Atlantic Capital of Europe and of improving its image. Nevertheless, EXPO '98 was mainly used as a strategic mechanism for the sustainable

regeneration of the most derelict part of the city. In order to effectuate positive results as regards the aims mentioned above, new institutional arrangements were made. More specifically, Parque EXPO '98, a new organisation with public capital was founded. The company was granted extensive competencies within the designated area of 340 Ha, so that time-costing procedures were overcome. The national government, the two municipalities involved and some regional organisations approved a master plan for the area drawn up by Parque EXPO.

As far as the financial aspects of hosting EXPO '98 and revitalising the respective area are concerned, the main concern was for them to be self-sustained. This meant that the entrance fee paid by visitors had to cover part of the exploitation costs. Nevertheless, the main source of funding was EXPO URBE, the urban revitalisation project. The basic idea behind this concept was that the buildings erected for the purposes of the EXPO would later be sold for other uses, primarily commercial. The land was to be sold to investors and project developers with the assumption that the market would undertake most of the risks involved in the revitalisation process. A consortium of Portuguese banks pre-financed the project.

#### **4. The EXPO grounds**

The revitalised urban area extends across part of the Oriental Zone in East Lisbon. In the early 1990s it was characterised by derelict industrial zones and social housing. The intervention zone of Parque EXPO comprises an area of 340 Ha extending over a five kilometre long strip of land along the river bank of Taag of which 60 Ha were reserved for the world exhibition. The main selection criterion that influenced the choice of that area for the forthcoming regeneration was its dilapidated nature for which there was no match in the entire region. A small abandoned harbour, storage tanks, an obsolete oil refinery, and a waste disposal area were the main features of that area. Moreover, the soil beneath the oil refinery was heavily polluted by the waste produced. Trancoa, a small river joining Taag at that point, was completely polluted by the waste produced by the adjoining industries.

As regards the aims set out by the master plan drawn up for the purposes of the EXPO '98, the need for multifunctionality was stressed. Living, working, shopping and leisure would be combined in one area. More specifically, the master plan for EXPO URBE comprised the construction of a business centre quite near the new train, bus and city railway station, combined with hotels, shops and restaurants.

#### **5. The Effects**

With regard to the spatial effects that derived from the hosting of the EXPO '98, one could notice that within the intervention zone, there are a number of important local attractions built that act as magnets for visitors. To begin with, the Oceanarium in the centre of the harbour is the greatest aquarium in Europe attracting very many visitors. The Pavilhao Atlantico is a multifunctional stadium accommodating concerts, conventions and sports

events and the Living Science Centre, which opened in July 1999, hosted exhibitions from various European museums and science centres. Furthermore, the “Centro de Exposicoes de Lisboa”, which is the new modern exhibition centre of Lisbon located in the intervention zone and comprising 60,000 sq. m. of exhibition space attracts a large number of visitors. The retail trade in the area is concentrated in and around the shopping centre “Vasco da Gama” comprising 162 shops. It received 8.5 million visitors in the period between April and August 1999 (Parque EXPO 1999). The shopping centre is situated in the former entrance hall of the EXPO, which is connected with the new station, “Gare do Oriente”, by a pedestrian bridge. The modern station is a junction for train, bus and city railway and offers sufficient parking facilities. The city railway links the area with the present Central Business District (located in the inner city) and there is a direct connection with the airport. Other interesting elements include a virtual reality park, a marina, a theatre, thematic gardens and green spaces. Near the station a high quality business zone was planned to become the new Central Business District of Lisbon. EXPO URBE functions also as an important entertainment area with various terraces and a boulevard.

As far as the new infrastructure installed is concerned, the several investments that were made have considerably improved the internal accessibility. More specifically, the city railway system was extended and two new ring roads were laid out that have relieved the inner city of some of the traffic. In addition, the Vasco da Gama bridge made the cities on the other side of the river profit from the improved accessibility. The external accessibility of the city has also been improved through the connections developed with regional, national and international networks.

In relation to the economic effects of staging the EXPO '98 there are many aspects that need to be stressed. First of all, the event itself generated a large number of jobs for employees working in the construction sector, namely architects, engineers, contractors and suppliers in the building trade. Between 1994 and 1996 the event created 18,000 jobs, in 1997 approximately 19,000 and in 1998 between 23,000 and 29,000 (Comissario-geral da EXPO '98, 1999). Second, Parque das Nacoes attracts a considerable amount of visitors because of the new attractions that were described in previous paragraphs. Moreover, the “Estacao do Oriente” that is, the new train, bus and city railway station, is providing revenue because of the increasing amount of passengers. The land sale proceeded in a favourable manner. In August 1999, more than half the total planned building area had already been sold for residential (707,000 sq. m.) and commercial (406,000 sq. m.) purposes. Some of the most important companies that have already taken an office in the area include Portugal Telecom, Sony, Mitsubishi, and Ford. The number of employed in the area was (1999) 5,000 with an estimate of 18,000 by 2008. Respectively, the figures regarding the number of residents were 2,500 (1999) and are expected to be 25,000 by 2008.

As regards tourism, EXPO has promoted Portugal and Lisbon as a tourist destination, and not without success. Part of the 11.6% increase of visitors in 1998 can be directly attributed to the EXPO. Generally, the tourist market of

Portugal has received new boost from the EXPO. As a business destination, Lisbon also seems to benefit from its rise in the ranking of convention cities. EXPO '98 has also contributed to a substantially improved image of Lisbon because of the wide exposure of the city to the international media. Without a great event like the EXPO the rise in status of Lisbon would otherwise be very difficult to attain.

Furthermore, the inspiration of feelings of civic pride was among the most important effects of the EXPO. Before the World Exhibition, people were very sceptical about its effects on their lives and especially the media were mostly wondering what it was all going to cost. A notion of discrimination against other cities took part in the agenda of issues that arose in the light of the forthcoming event, only to be canceled by the widespread feeling of success and self-confidence that was infiltrated to Portuguese people after the event was over.

## **6. Conclusions**

The regeneration of the most derelict industrial area of Lisbon has given the city a new district of international status. EXPO URBE reminds in no way the run down industrial area of the past. Where used to be a refinery, storage tanks, a rubbish pit and a waste disposal area, now there is a new residential and commercial area comprising a new station, a new shopping centre, a multifunctional sports hall, an exhibition centre, several terraces and offices. In its development, much attention has been paid to quality issues as well as to issues related to the livelihood of the revitalised area. The stimulation of mixed functions was a catalyst for ensuring the last aim.

The EXPO has also served as a lever for the integral upgrading of Lisbon's internal and external accessibility through the construction of new transport infrastructure. This was achieved through the construction of the two ring roads, the Vasco da Gama bridge, the extension of the city railway and the building of the new station for trains and buses in the EXPO grounds.

Moreover, Lisbon has benefited from the EXPO by means of large-scale investments in the most dilapidated industrial quarter of the city. The economic structure has considerably improved. The city enjoys an increased popularity as a fairs and convention city, and an increasing number of tourists seem to discover it. The average occupation degree of local hotels has been considerably higher after the EXPO than in the period before. The zone of intervention is developing fast into the second centre of Lisbon providing a range of uses such as residential, leisure, office, retail that ensure the desired livelihood.

Finally, Lisbon has succeeded in gaining international renown. Prior to the hosting of EXPO '98 the city suffered from a lack of image. The worldwide media attention made possible for people to get acquainted with Lisbon and thus made the city more attractive to tourists and businesses. Last but not least, the building of the new centre has evidently resulted in a better image of Lisbon in general.

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