

Public Spaces for a Global New Urban Identity

At metropolitan scale, cities growth leads to the sprouting of new “cities” inside the city, especially due to large urban developments. Urbanization occurs regardless of morphology, solar exposition, hydrology and ecological systems, frequently with no concern or respect regulations and land use management. Urban Planning tries to achieve solutions compatible with human needs and environmental requirements, in order to change this situation inherited from industrial revolution and other sequence developments. Lisbon Metropolitan reality is defined by a recent urban sprawl, where major transport infrastructures, especially freeways and railways, lead the urban development along axis, creating second and third levels of occupation and urbanization stages. Such behaviour change the human-nature balance established in the region for more then a millennium.



Lisbon Metropolitan Area: urban growth in 1965 - 1990

As a consequence, many new urban disperse areas appeared in the last two decades, leading to production of surrounding non functional spaces, from the mutation of existent areas to new expansions, altering the metropolitan landscape dramatically. These residual spaces of functional convenience are transport interfaces and transition areas of major transport networks. Although these spaces promote functional diversity, leading to social interaction and economic dynamics, they are monopolist, absorbing and excluding the possibility of development of urban community identities, creating themselves unbalanced centres called suburbs. The suburbs can be identified by the monofunctionalist characteristics of the urban system, supported in strong flux networks with their functional nodes. At this metropolitan scale there exists a lack of urban identities, detected in equal public spaces to all others, of anonymous culture references, aspiring to urban centres which they hardly will become. The neighbourhood concept, where urban structure is thought, planned and designed at a pedestrian's scale, doesn't always manage to build identity elements, which are, in most of the cases, defined by public transport interfaces, car traffic points and even in the large shopping centres.

This reality does not build urban culture, does not produce knowledge and does not promote social aggregation.

The goal of this paper is to present and discuss the impact of the planning type and process of implementation in the promotion of successful results, through the comparison of the 3 different urban projects recently implemented in Lisbon, bearing in mind a specific understanding of the type of appropriation of spaces

Concept of Public Spaces

The spaces for social activity, the non spaces, the functional spaces, and the crossing spaces

Public space is the one that physically supports social interaction, leisure and gathering. The public space where social activities happen is constitutes the communication platform for citizen's community behaviours. It can be designated as the "*space for social activity*". Using the public spaces' appropriation perspective for analysis, it's possible to introduce other designations to the classical definitions of public space according to use, form and typology.



Centre Georges Pompidou Paris – France (Renzo Piano Project 1971-77)

There also another kind of spaces, not so well defined or designed, emerging from residual characteristics and functional disconnections which lead citizens to avoid their use. These spaces are outside the urban system network, due to absence of urban links. They occupy a residual position in the urban tissue and are designated by some authors as empty spaces. It's common to observe rupture and conflict in urban peripheral areas where such spaces exist. These marginal spaces can be designated as "*non spaces*". The common appearance of such reality, i.e. the existence of a high number of *non spaces* in the suburb, suggests that dispersion is at an entropic harming level of the urban system.

Other perspective is the one that observes the space as a pure functional element. Here the space exists has a link of the urban network system, allowing people, information and products to travel and interact inside the system. These are the "*functional spaces*". Usually a functional space is designed for a specific use, therefore, it is segregated and not optimized within the surrounding spaces of other functions. Theoretically, the more functional the urban system is, the more functional are the urban spaces, until the entropic behaviour acts above the functional needs. In reality, car use is the main absorber of space in a global urban system, increasing the size of the *functional space needed*, in this case, monofunctional space.



Stockholm Central Square of Metro Station Access

However, the reading of the urban system shouldn't be so simple and dual, especially in Portugal, where *the street* has social functions, not only has a urban link, but also as staying and gathering point, similar to some patterns common in the Spanish "*plaza mayor*". The origin historic urban development of Portuguese cities was engaged to a central street, designated as "*rua direita*" which was also the main street and the commercial street. The importance of this street was not determined by its size, nobility or comfort (for pedestrian use), instead, diversity of functions, time and culture determined which would be the main street of urban settlement. This is a linear existence that supports social activity and economic dynamics, leading to civic interaction, raising community identity. According Portuguese cultural reality of public space appropriation, it can be determined, "*a rua*" (the street) as an urban link that determines linear public use, erecting a functional corridor for sociability practice. This argument sets the potentialities of "*crossing spaces*", resuming this view of public spaces according to their kind of appropriation.

Supported in a strong understanding of the importance of public space for community use, it is now possible to point out some reflexive arguments about the criteria of their origin.

The "fast made" spaces and the "acquired" spaces

Primary settlements should have their origin in some search for the harmonious relation between the natural environment and human occupation. The first settlers since antiquity to our days started building and defining spaces seeking for such balance in the available territory. The human occupation started with settling a small group of persons (a man and its family), evolved to the accommodation of a social nucleus and is actually characterized by large agglomeration of persons, forming today's megapolis scenario. For many centuries, it was possible to keep improving life quality, because several growth' ruptures stages were overcome by superior technologic achievements, showing men supremacy. Urban public spaces were transformed, mutated and refined from stages where space and surroundings, achieved excellency levels, and became cultural references for the neighbourhood and at a city scale. These public spaces are "*acquired spaces*", producing urban images that marked generations. The *acquired spaces*, once solidified through time are, presumably, the city life.

On the other end, exist public spaces of recent creation, resulting from a fast urbanization and construction process, developed from the creativity of an architect, landscape architect or designer. With one or more technical specializations, the project coordinator and the technical team develop the public space project according to ideology and style of a certain period. These other public spaces materialize some ephemeral aspiration of modernity, supposedly according to community needs. They also upraise the quality patterns among the rest of the existing public spaces, especially comparing with the crossing path that makes the linkage with the rest of the city. These contemporaneous spaces in most of the cases don't absorb cultural evolution of the community, either due to the lack of urban background or to insensibility on the project act, justifying the designation "*fast made*" spaces.

The challenge is placed to the stoic urban planner, to promote new public spaces in our cities, by keeping the quality and benefits of the *acquired spaces*, imperative in tomorrow urban realities to achieve social outputs. Here, Urban Planning can set a crucial path to public administration, while seeking to fulfil community's aspirations and goals.

Summarized description of the Case Studies

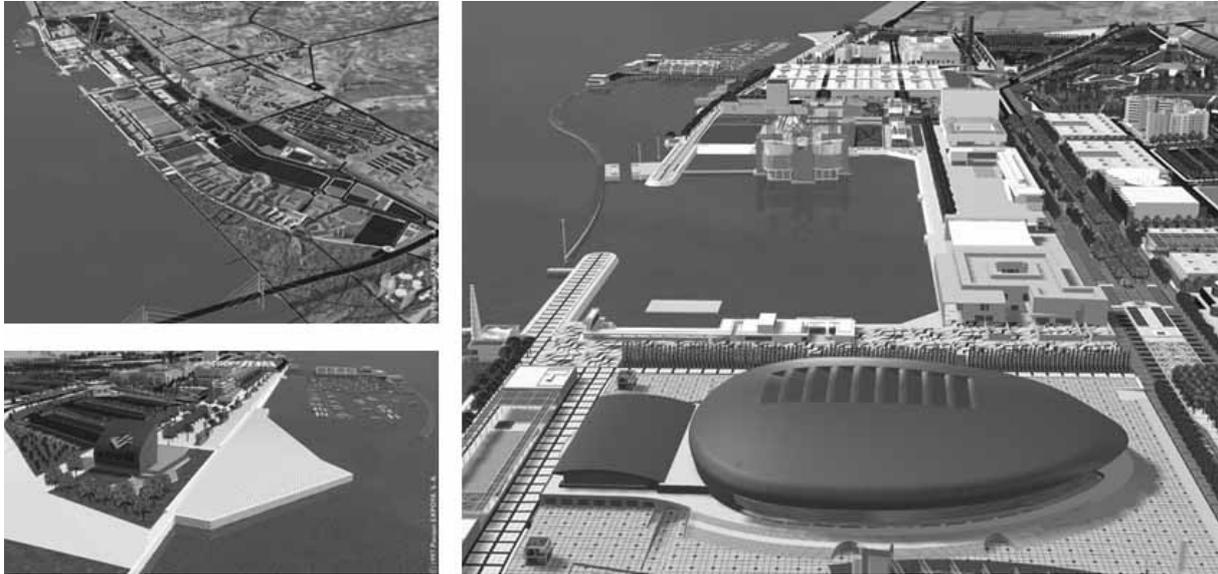
In Lisbon, the urban scale of public spaces is decisive to call up the pedestrian use by the citizens. However, car use and illegal parking, along with several other urban negative impacts of the *functional spaces*, lead Lisbon inhabitants to treasure and worship the remaining *acquired spaces*, due to the absence of others. The improvements in Lisbon citizens's quality of life and economics status observed in the last 20 years origin more demanding expectations towards urban environment and city equipments. New dwellings and private condos appeared as solution from the private sector, while the public administration dedicated their efforts to central renewal, localized rehabilitation (squares, streets and gardens) and new planned areas (*Telheiras*, *Alta do Lumiar* and *Parque das Nações*). The new public spaces are located in areas with favoured economic dynamics, where the diversity of uses, as said, is crucial factor to bring the credibility to the overall investment. The spaces are also surrounded by housing in different typologies, which avoid night non use, and therefore, periodic *non spaces* characteristic. Three distinct situations where chosen to present Lisbon's new public spaces created by this new reality. They are related to specific policy attitudes, with different scales, surroundings, and urban problems. The 3 cases studies are eccentric because they introduce optimize application of private investment in renovation of dysfunctional areas with high potential of emergent qualification.

The Parque das Nações (EXPO 98)

Parque das Nações is a new neighbourhood, developed from a Masterplan that had the primary concern of restore a vacant and inactive industrial area on the occidental part of the City of Lisbon. This operation meant to allocate the 1998 international exhibition (the last of the 20th Century) devoted to the theme "Oceans, a patrimony with future", which had the representation of 160 countries and over 12 million visitors, while projects were made to subsequently transform that area in a multifunctional urban area, qualified by notorious buildings of the exhibition turned into major equipments, supported by enriched public space. After the Masterplan (*Plano de Urbanização*), five Detail Plans were made to ensure the correct implementation of this motor Project, setting an example of integrated planning. A public company named Parque EXPO was created in 1993 to develop and execute the project.

The existing equipments in Parque das Nações are from municipal, regional and national levels: Lisbon Oceanarium, Atlantic Pavilion (multifunctional building), Portugal Pavilion (governmental building) and International Fair of Lisbon and others totalling 330.000 m². The

target area of such operations occupies 3.40 ha, totalling 2.400.000 m² of construction. The gross built area designed for housing was 1.240.000 m², with 630.000 m² for offices and services and 200.000 m² for commercial areas. Although this impressive number, it is looking to 1.860.000 m² of public space designed for urban public life that we understand the potential benefits for the city and the region.



Expo98 Urban Project 3D Modelling

The plots were sold in a free prices basis, as well as in a cooperative promotion. Buildings were designed and constructed taking advantage of “the cutting edge of technology”¹: telecommunications (fiber optic), central heating and cooling systems, high- and medium-tension electricity lines, solid-waste collection, recycling and waste processing, garbage pneumatically sent from each building to central collection unit site, among others. In *Parque das Nações*, public spaces are a structure element of this new reference, desired to live and visit frequently, claiming to be a Planned City, Humanized, with a new concept of Working. The project introduces an organized hierarchical structure, with no vacant, segregated or marginal places, losing only by the discomfort of pavement blocks. The humanized place, rich in the multiple urban environments, favours pedestrian use (gathering, staying, and playing) allowing appropriation by a large variety of users.



Aerial View of PN Central Area

Public Art Sculpture at PN

Portugal Pavilion in PN

¹ Parque Expo web site <http://www.parqueexpo.pt>

This project was developed based in a public private partnership. New neighbourhoods can be created inside the city of public space excellency levels, allocating such urban point in the metropolitan scale, giving support to city competitive projections in a global scenario and setting an example for future projects. The same reflection advocates still, that the same success that brought SONY, Vodafone and other companies to *Parque das Nações*, could also bring an Innovative and Knowledge Centre, similar to the one in Genoa, Port of Vecchio (Italy), from 1992 Columbus Exposition by Renzo Piano, which would improve their outputs.

Chiado Urban Renewal Project

In 1998, a fire of large proportions occurred in the heart of Lisbon central historic area, between the historical quarter of *Bairro Alto* (XVI century) and the downtown commercial area known as *Baixa Pombalina*. The Urban and Architectural Project for this 3.000 m2 plot was developed by the invited architects Siza Vieira, Joan Busquets, and Souto Moura for the Buildings Interiors.

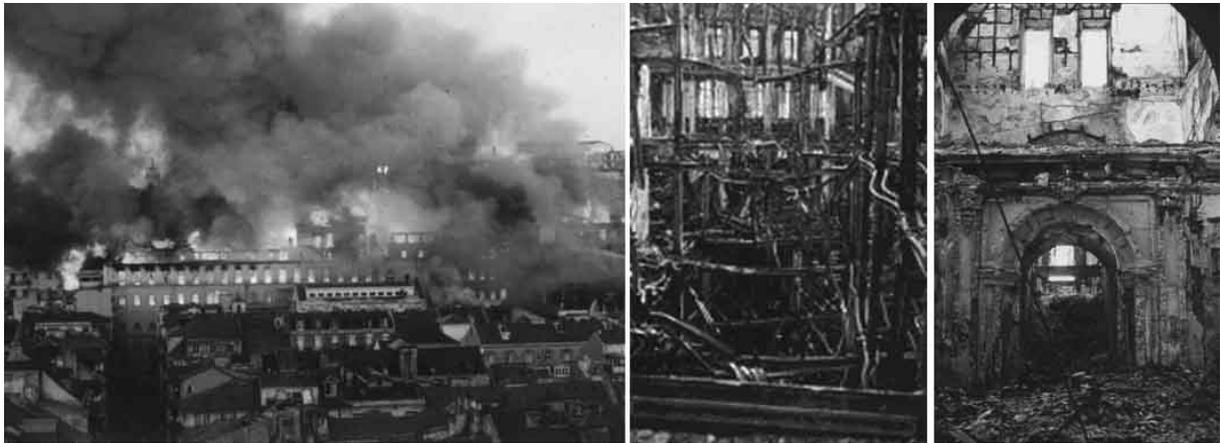


Image of Chiado' fire in 1998

Ruins of the Great Warehouses of Chiado

The "Great Warehouses of *Chiado*" reconstruction started in 1995 from the Project designed by Siza in 1989. This reconstruction was faithful to the several historic intervention layers of the building facade, ensuring an extreme urban coherence.



Drawing from the Chiado Urban Project: View from St. Jorge Castle

A municipal department was created to implement this project, including not only the main building but also some surrounding buildings that later developed interest in rehabilitation. Therefore, this was a project directly promoted, controlled by municipality. Recently, a Protocol Agreement was signed between Lisbon municipality and several companies, institutions and associations to promote the Chiado urban tissue rehabilitation (CML, DGE, PRIME, GGPRIME, UACS, and ARESP). Nowadays, the *Chiado* Warehouses are a 20.400m² centre with several business opportunities, divided in 7 floors, hosting an Hotel in the top floor, restaurants and coffees in the 6th floor, 51 stores in the floors bellow and with lower floors occupied by anchor stores (FNAC, Springfield and Sportzone). The attraction of such centre is also increased by stores in the ground floor of surrounding buildings, most of them also submitted to rehabilitation process.

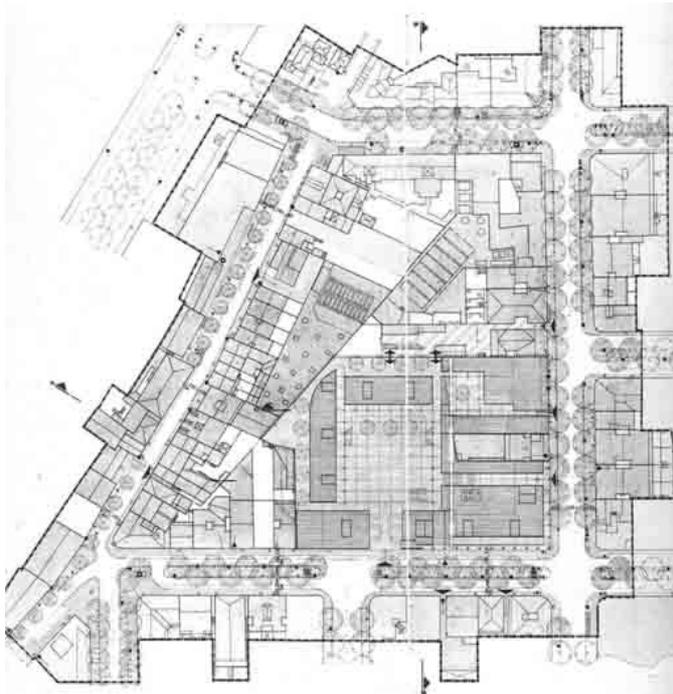


Rua Garrett, Chiado, commercial street of pedestrian use Brasileira coffee place and meeting point

Globally, the project is inserted in a nevralgic point of the urban tissue due to the connectivity between two areas (*Baixa Pombalina* and *Bairro Alto*), which sets the *Chiado* axis as a structural linking element. Supporting such argument, Chiado has several passages, creating permeability for pedestrian use in the urban grid, solidified with a Metro Station with exits directed to both areas. The pedestrian use and car traffic constraint in the main street helps in setting comfort and quality, raising the residential, commercial, cultural and touristic potential. An important detail is the streets inclination, which can be overcome using the metro station escalators as an alternative. After this wound in the heart of Lisbon, a public rehabilitation operation with a detailed urban plan, achieved the reinsertion and reintegration of buildings and public spaces. While the financial investments respond to the public demand, *Chiado* recovered and reinforced its urban function.

Picoas Plaza Quarter

The final case study, *Picoas Plaza Quarter*, was developed for a reduced area. This Urban Intervention is in a Quarter of *Avenidas Novas*, a consolidated central area. This 19th century neighbourhood is the latest occupation for offices due to the CBD axis development, which implies a strong mixture of uses in this area. Since the original architectural design was of large housing units, efficient adapting to other uses like services and commerce were more demanding at several levels. Substituting buildings seemed to be the best option. The major project had a total of 12.600 m² of construction (7.800 m² offices, 4.800 m² for commercial areas, and 10.000 m² for parking in underground floors), along with Equipment occupying 3.000 m². With the Detail Plan made by Prof. Arch. José Lamas, Lisbon municipality managed to follow all private developments and received additional benefits in facilities, namely CIUL, the equipment which became the Lisbon's Urban Information Centre, composed of a library, exhibition space, and conference room.



Detail Plan for Picoas Plaza Quarter



Picoas Plaza Quarter before and after

The success of the interior space occupation was achieved by the concentration of a diversify uses, green spaces and esplanades, gathering commerce, services and cultural equipments, surrounded by housing. In addition, water, like in the traditional *acquired places* is a constantly present element, promoting users appropriation. Although still public, the inside of the quarter is up levelled and thus protected from the street noisy and polluted environment. This is considered by most experts as one of the best examples of urban interventions, with the key factor of being a public administration management, supported through urban planning tools, in this case, a Detail Plan.

Strategic Directional Planning

Today Cities and Urban Agglomeration Challenges lay on opportunity windows, volatile and periodic at the same time, which local institutions have to deal and respond with the existing urban planning and management instruments. Before opening to a scenario of global opportunities, competition between cities is more than a reality, it is an incentive to work in complementary ways, establishing new positions in a network. Here the new public spaces become the nodes of city networks, which establish the network efficiency itself. Adaptations of current planning and management proceedings are needed, and sometimes made. It is not at the neighbourhood scale that the city competes and acts globally, but it is at a neighbourhood vision and intervention that a city could improve life quality and systemic efficiency to over come global and regional challenge.

In a certain way, Lisbon Municipality has set an example with the strategic planning process development and the recent neighbourhood urban policy, "*a cidade dos bairros*" (City of Neighbourhoods). Of course it can't be seen isolated, because it is a part of a global policy, however, to start, it is positive.

Guidelines for New Public Spaces

Lisbon's new public spaces are singular, symbolising urban innovation and formalising marks of urban evolution on the sites where they are set. These new territories of appropriation and collective life emerged in the city as real elements of urban and environmental restoration, giving at the same time a sense to the modernization and internationalisation of Lisbon. The new urban projects reflect a new urban planning attitude by public and private promoting entities, characterised by environmental and social concerns, improving results, thus seeking to give back the city to the citizens. These urban projects are supported by the following strategic vectors:

- materialization of a multi-functional structure, constituting two poles of local centralization with a high environmental and urban quality;
- assumption of the public space as a structuring element of the urban restoration and improvement;
- diversity in the aesthetical and environmentally balanced composition of the public spaces, constituting the unifying element of the urban conception.

The new aesthetical and formal concepts on which the spaces are set are the object of reflection in this article and reflect the flexibility of urban design regarding the rising demands for use and appropriation of public spaces by the citizens, as well as the need of contemporary urban planning to respond to the dynamics of city transformation. That is to say, these spaces contribute to the enhancement of the urban image of the sites, seeking its innovation, transmitting quality and responding to the challenges that are put to the city (sustainable and aesthetical innovation).

Active Planning for Private Developments

From the more classical models of Plan implementation, Interventionist (INT), Business as Usual (BAU) or even their natural evolution, Public Private Partnership (PPP), today's realities need more than the existing legal tools that operate in Portugal. Good examples come from unique specific situations, where urban planners and decision makers have "*time opportunity windows*", meaning, vision, skills and "*savoir faire*" along with private investment support to develop a credible process that leads to success. Today's reality may as well be facing the birth of a new planning process, different from all the traditional ones (physic, zoning, trend, popular or public investment bases), that consist on the upgrade of Public Private Partnership with central increased Public Control.

Let's think and rethink over the methodologies to take public administration as a partner along all the process stages, seeking for credibility to improve profits, sharing responsibilities for both sides, which means gathering benefits to ensure public needs (equipment can be an example). Documents exist to support theoretically this action, as the *Charter of the New Urbanism* (1996), complemented by the *SmartCode 6.5*, or the *New Charter of Athens* (1998/2003), complemented by the *Try this Way CheckList for Sustainable Development*. The translation of such guidelines to daily practice is imperative to transform the legal framework into an *operative platform*.

Public Space that promotes new urban life styles is directly related to the process as well as to the project that preceded its creation.

Final Considerations

Despite the differences, both in planning type (master plan, detail plan and urban project, respectively) and implementation process (public corporation, private initiative and direct municipality initiative), each case' studies presented achieved successful results at different scales. It remains unclear if the success of the discussed intervention models is intrinsically related with the scale of the projects.

Sure is that urban life needs to ensure the vital conditions to support social aggregation in public spaces are gathered to guarantee the creation of potential *acquired spaces*. The Urban System allows spaces to achieve excellency if the relational framework is integrated in functional diversity pattern with symbol requirements, meaning, cultural value is addable, and knowledge produced. At a neighbourhood dimension, it is possible to design a project, creating space where a *transversal scale* could then origin *acquired spaces* in a generation time. This could catapult public spaces as a synergic node at metropolitan scale, upraising the city connectivity and the regional competitive potential. In the City of Lisbon, examples can be found and others could follow in future urban developments. Public administration should continue from strategic planning along with physical planning to materialize city vision, promoting, concerting, aggregating, coordinating, evaluating and monitoring in a systemic approach.

The answer could be a strong public administration, allowing the flexibility imperative for a moving society, a changing cycle's economy, in a globally uncontrolled urban network, where private investments are key factors.

Only strong public interest could bring an equitable society.

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