
From urban amnesia to creative reuse: the paradigm shift in the understanding of obsolete spaces in Lisbon

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Abstract

In much of the traditional literature, abandoned spaces are seen as anomalies in urban evolution and the "solution" to this would be its regeneration, however, the current urban scenario allows us to understand the obsolescence and ruin of spaces as a constant process in the urban landscape and to understand them as such, is necessary to take advantage of aspects of abandonment and to use them as a tool for new city possibilities.

The present research chooses the city of Lisbon as the beginning of study and follows the analysis by other European cities that, faced with the obsolete, have changed their approach and created innovative ways of intervention. In the **Parque das Nações** project there was a tabula rasa in the territory; the **Braço de Prata** complex had new approaches from an interruption of the project due to the bureaucracy and the crisis of the zone of the Euro; and the zone of the **Manutenção Militar**, after Idle and partially abandoned decades, will be reused from new concepts and new approaches, will be the cases of initial studies for the discussion on the process of ruining and the paradigm shift in the understanding of obsolete spaces.

These are spaces of Military and Industrial origin that have become a scenario for intervention projects, undergoing modifications according to the political and economic scenario, in others words, the oil crisis in 1973 generated a system of abandoned or idle industrial spaces, which allowed the elaboration of a series of regeneration projects during the 1980s and 1990s, but the economic crisis of the 2000s interrupted investments and forced cities to seek alternatives to traditional projects.

Contextualizing, the creation of the **Parque das Nações** neighborhood took place in conjunction with the experience of the 1998 Lisbon International Exhibition (EXPO'98), transforming a zone of polluting industries and idle military warehouses into an area of mixed uses focused on the residential and services sectors. It was decided to keep nothing of the existing structure, all factories and warehouses were demolished, only remaining a Cracking tower of an oil refinery that appears as a pseudo-landmark in the urban landscape; A failed attempt to remember an area of full amnesia. This view of the old idle industrial spaces in the urban territory, as something that is disrupting the city and that needs to disappear at

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any cost was very present until the 1990s and Parque das Nações was a fertile scenario for this approach.

The commercial success of this "enterprise" soon spread seeds through the city and one of the projects to emerge based on the "real estate boom" and in the good economic moment Portuguese was the **Jardins do Braço de Prata**; Housing project aimed at the upper class that was developed in the area of Braço de Prata weapons and ammunition factory by the Italian architect Renzo Piano. Like Parque das Nações, this project almost completely eliminated the vestiges of the old factory, leaving only the construction of the old headquarters, which at first would be used as a sales stand and later integrated into the complex. However, the project started in 1998 was discontinued in 2002 and suffered from the constant economic crises. Only in 2010 was the work resumed, albeit at a very slow pace, resulting in a minimal advance towards its completion.

From inertia was born an original approach, already seen in other European cities; With the purpose of making profit and minimizing the damage of the interruption, the factory headquarters building was ceded to a cultural producer who, with a very small budget, created a cultural cluster on the place - the **FBP**, with the accomplishment of events directed to the arts and transforming the old rooms in ateliers and cafeterias. This alternative approach, with minor impact on existing structures, a certain creative freedom and more ephemeral and temporary uses is present in several European cities such as Nantes, Lyon, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Zaragoza, ..., and reverberates mainly in the eastern zone of Lisbon, where dozens of abandoned or idle industrial buildings are located, such as the **FBP – Fábrica Braço de Prata**.

From the **FBP**, the city of Lisbon saw growth and gave legitimacy to this innovative approach. Examples such as the LxFactory in the old installations of the Lisbon Wool and Textile Company, LisbonWorkHub in the old warehouses of the Abel Pereira da Fonseca Society, or the Armazém23 located in the old Matinha docks, consolidated the idea that the temporary and creative reuse of industrial structures is a new possibility of city more appropriate to the current urban scenario.

In this paradigm shift in understanding and taking advantage of the obsolete, the city of Lisbon through its city hall is also positioned to take advantage of this new phenomenon; One of the most recent projects is the Beato Creative Hub that will occupy a large part of the **Manutenção Militar** buildings that have been abandoned or idle for decades. In this set of buildings, founded in 1897, will operate a cluster of creative industries that will take advantage of the existing factory structures in a public-private partnership system.

What is wanted with this research is the understanding of the process of ruining and the possible answers for the increasingly rapid obsolescence in the urban landscape. The Radicalised Obsolescence thesis (Brito-Henriques, 2017) was used to approach the obsolete not as an empty and unnecessary space, but as places of counterpoint to the excess society, which preserves a spontaneous and necessary memory for the city (Solà-Morales, 2002). Based on this understanding, it is possible to establish an evolution in the way of responding to these spaces, adding an original approach in the evolutionary framework of Urban Regeneration (Roberts & Sykes, 2000) to take advantage of the potential of obsolete and create temporary interventions that can test ideas and plan the obsolescence.

Keywords: obsolescence, ruining, urban regeneration, creative reuse, resilience, temporary city