Reinventing Landscape in Postindustrial Sites: Three Sites Revised

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Abstract: As the economic value of a landscape diminishes it often becomes derelict and abandoned. This reality coupled with the fact that the cost of redeveloping postindustrial areas generally exceeds the potential value generated by its re-development, has faced landscape architects, urban planners, and other planning professionals with one of the major problems of the contemporary city: How to redevelop those post-industrial landscapes? The analysis of the design strategies that may be used in the reclamation of these landscapes is an essential component of the answer to this question. In recent years, several design strategies have been presented in numerous international design competitions. However, precise methodologies addressing different design strategies and the different benefits of using each one of those in landscape reclamation have not been presented. This paper addresses three different, but complementary design strategies that have been used in the redevelopment of former canning factories in the Arade Valley, Algarve. To exemplify each strategy, three different redevelopment projects will be studied, highlighting their main strengths and how the use of specific approaches has contributed to increase the success of the proposed designs.

Key-words: postindustrial landscape, urban renovation, sustainable landscape reclamation, sustainability, urban rehabilitation.

1 Introduction

In a period when the industrial products of the modernist movement have become obsolete, it is increasingly evident that it is urgent to decide what to do with the infrastructures of the last generation's industrial environment. Abandonment, sale or demolition of such facilities, were and continue to be widespread approaches of dealing with facilities that were designated as outdated and no longer serving their original production functions [15].

However, several projects throughout the world have proven that these sites constitute unrealized resources for initiating urban regeneration and ecological restoration [1, 7, 23]. Often in advantageous locations near city centres, along waterways, and adjacent to residential communities, these Landscapes, supported by existing infrastructure, are environmentally-impaired assets that need to be returned to productive uses, and reintegrated into the surrounding community.

The postindustrial landscape sited on the banks of the Arade River constitutes a very good example of this reality, a legacy of an industrial past that since the economic breakdown of the 1970’s is largely unused. This landscape has often been neglected and become unused or derelict as a result of the lack of public and private initiatives to redevelop it and of the activities that have taken place on it in the past.

The aim of this study is to investigate the benefits that may arise from the redevelopment of the three post-industrial areas located on the margins of the Arade River, and how the specific redevelopment strategies had contributed to increase local distinctiveness and quality.

2 From the industrial breakdown to urban redevelopment

The contemporary city results somehow from a long transition begun at the end of the nineteenth century [27]. During this period almost all representations of the European capitals tried to demonstrate the relevance of the modern culture, emphasising their industrial complexes, commercial ports and railway stations [11].

Throughout this time cities grew in proportion to the scale of their industries, reason why the loss of industry without a comparable shift to new forms of economic activity eroded the tax base and caused a “ballooned public sector” [26].

The end of the twentieth century has brought a break in the industrial sector and the way in which it manifests itself physically and geographically in the world. This process termed ‘deindustrialization’ created severe economic, social and ecological
repercussions [1, 6, 21, 22]. The industrial era left behind a legacy of derelict landscapes. Urban core areas became economically disadvantaged, socially distressed and environmentally degraded through industrial contamination and process decline [17, 24].

This scenario created a momentum for urban redevelopment and since then it became increasingly acknowledged that redevelopment activities building design, landscape design and urban design must be brought together in order to achieve a more integrated, more skilled and more effective design process that fosters sustainability.

In this regard redevelopment activities should integrate five fundamental principles:
1. Protect and conserve quality landscapes, townscapes and natural and historic resources.
2. Develop a clear vision and strategy for an area that includes the bigger picture beyond the industrial derelict site.
3. Involve landscape architects from the outset of a project to work with architects, urban designers, engineers and development specialists.
4. Allow resources for high quality design, implementation and long-term aftercare of new landscapes.
5. Good landscape design enhances biodiversity, creates good places for people, and aids economic development [16].

Additionally the protection of industrial buildings is an important cultural objective and is inherently sustainable in that it encourages the positive re-use of redundant buildings that are part of our industrial and commercial heritage. Conservation can play a very important role in regeneration in raising the quality of the local environment, preserving local distinctiveness, and attracting visitors and new business, and it is very popular with local communities. Even in derelict and degraded industrial areas can be created with a new spirit and can be made worth living by keeping visible the spirit of existing site, by applying design strategies that contribute to economic prosperity, social cohesion and environmental quality.

In this regard in order to create successful and sustainable redevelopment proposals it is important to recognize and interpret the historic and cultural significance of the landscape and to understand how “landscape ecology and design can invent alternative forms of relationships between people, place, and cosmos so that landscape architectural projects become more about invention and programs than the merely corrective measures of restoration” [2].

To specify how different design strategies may be used in the redevelopment of derelict industrial areas there will present three case studies each one related with a different strategy.

3 The postindustrial landscape of the Arade valley - the necessity of a near future intervention.

Though the historic importance of the Arade River may be attested at the local, regional and national context, considering the archaeological tracks that had been found submerged in the river bed and around both riverbanks, it was only in the beginning of the twentieth century that the implantation of a fish canning industrial centre in the banks of the river promoted a considerable development of this landscape. The circumstance of the First World War had a great importance for the development of this industry, once it absorbed all the production. At this time almost two thirds of the population worked on industry [20]. Even so, during the sixties the industrial activity collapsed and numerous industrial structures left abandoned (Figure 1). However, the memory of the place remained as fragments of collective history of an activity that shaped lives along time. A memory that if will not be protected faces the risk of disappearing forever.

![Figure 1 – Former canning industry. Used by permission of Luís Loures, all rights reserved.](image)

The destiny of this whole industrial landscape is still unknown, although during the last decade, some of the interventions that had been accomplished contributed to the disappearance of some buildings with significant meaning. In this way, it is essential to take to practice a group of coordinated actions that allow the recover of this post-industrial landscape.

Unlike explanations that tend to become dominant, the reclamation of the industrial landscape of the river Arade is not just a type of insurance against forgetfulness. It is an instrument of social legitimation [10, 13] and a strategy to reclaim and valorise a post-
industrial site in order to turn it into a multifunctional landscape [4, 14, 25].

This industrial area describes today more than a hundred years of local and regional history, constituting a testimony of an industrial, cultural and social conception and evolution which documents and interprets considerable values for the industrial heritage of Algarve. For this reason the reclamation of this post-industrial landscape, should result essentially from new activities projected to introduce in the space, in order to valorise landscape and protect the industrial heritage.

The iconography and modernity of such a design coupled with the reutilization of a building in response to the scarcity of floor space and the difficulty of towns in spreading outwards was considered an important achievement by local authorities [9]. Nonetheless, local inhabitants considered, not only, that the construction did not match the surrounding landscape but also that an important piece of their collective memory was being erased from the urban palimpsest.

In this regard, even if the architectural quality of the new building is often recognized several local inhabitants considered that the new pavilion does not relate to its surroundings and does not properly enhance and celebrate its history, and that the former building should have been maintained as it was.

However it is clear, that the analysis and recovery of this landscape constitutes an opportunity that tends to be lost in time. Considering the growing urban pressure leading to the disappearance of various industrial infrastructures, some with heritage value and significant relevance at local and national level, little has been done in order to conserve and rehabilitate. Still the projects presented in this paper constitute important developments in the future of this area.

### 3.1 – Pavilhão do Arade - Lagoa, Portugal

The former canning factory was converted into a multifunctional pavilion (figures 2 and 3). The project developed by Miguel Arruda Arquitectos aimed to increase the utilization of the area that has been devoted to dereliction and abandonment for a long period.

The design concept emerged from the ideas put forward by Roberto Venturi about the complexity and contradiction between solid, gaseous and liquid elements [3, 9]. The designer opted to maintain a relation with the industrial history of the building, with the conservation of the old chimney, and by reducing structural changes that would cause big volumetric differences to a minimum.

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### 3.2 – Museu Municipal de Portimão, Portugal

Even if the former canning factory ceased activity around the 1960’s it was only around 1996 that the city’s authorities acquired the property aiming to fulfill the desire of creating the first Portimão’s municipal museum (figures 4 and 5).

The design strategy for this former factory was to transform the industrial building into a cultural edifice, maintaining the industrial heritage and establishing the necessary structural stability [8, 12].
The design envisioned by José Cid & Isabel Aires Arquitectos, Lda converted the building into a multifunctional area that serves now multiple uses [12]. Besides the museum function, the space receives several cultural and scientific activities, storing the municipal archives and revealing the city’s historic and social evolution. The relevance of this intervention both locally, regionally and even nationally may be attested by the award the museum received in 2010: the Council of Europe Museum Prize.

Figures 4 and 5 – Representations of the Municipal Museum, formerly used as a canning factory. Used by permission of Luís Loures, all rights reserved.

3.3 – Boca do Rio Resort - Lagoa, Portugal
The project developed by Fernando Raposo converted the former canning factory into a luxurious resort (figures 5 and 7) near the Arade River, in Mexilhoeira da Carregação, an important village in the canning industry within the region. Even if, the industrial heritage was used as a component of the design strategy, most of the old factory was destroyed.

As it is common in this type of redevelopment the chimney was the only element to remain, as if it could represent alone the entire history of the industrial building. This fact was criticized by many, because, even if one can argue that this project was beneficial to the municipality (what is true), those that knew the former site, consider the approach too belligerent, once it changed completely not only the site (applying what may be called a tabua raza strategy), but also its connections with the surroundings.

Still, the building constructed within the hotel property, to serve as a warehouse for the nautical training school, used the same character and architectural style of the former factory [5, 19], attempting to highlight the relevance of the old industrial activity in the development of the existing landscape.

Figures 6 and 7 – Representations of the Boca do Rio Resort, developed on a former canning factory. Used by permission of Luís Loures, all rights reserved.

4 Discussion and Conclusions
The analysis of the presented case studies showed that the redevelopment of derelict industrial areas might promote sustainability, reducing negative environmental impacts, and fomenting economic prosperity, social inclusion, multifunctionality and a better quality of life.

Additionally the analysed case studies showed that it could be useful to set up a common language among interventions developed in along common landscapes, so that the projects represent a general public benefit. This is increasingly relevant because, even if, only a few industrial buildings are of true importance to national and regional heritage, its conservation and reutilization represents an important environmental, economic and socio-cultural
advantage, towards the establishment of true sustainable development.

In this regard though it is recognized that the presented postindustrial redevelopment project contributed to increase not only landscape quality but also life’s quality of local inhabitants, it is arguable that the design solutions developed for this landscape, failed in the application of some best-practice techniques of postindustrial redevelopment, as is the case of:

- introducing public participation in the redevelopment process, ensuring that the community can play a role in shaping the redevelopment proposals;
- ensuring that development responds both to site and context, reinforcing the sense of place and local distinctiveness;
- reusing previously developed sites or unused buildings, ensuring more compact development that enhances accessibility, affordability, and conviviality;
- promoting the continuity of multifunctional spaces associated with industrial buildings and street frontages; and
- ensuring that proposed redevelopment approaches create places that have variety and choice through a mixture of different uses, functions and activities.

However, the analyses of the case studies presented in this article enabled to conclude that even if postindustrial landscapes are commonly experienced negatively, as fragmented and incoherent because it is difficult to conceive a legible whole, the analysed projects constitute representative examples of how postindustrial facilities may enable a sense of spatial enlargement, with high degree of complexity, richness in discontinuities and with diverse ecological and social benefits, contributing to local redevelopment.

Resulting very often from public private partnership (PPP), postindustrial redevelopment projects are generally promoted under the argument that the reutilization of former historic industrial buildings will improve the quality of life not only at local level but also in the surrounding landscapes, while contributing to maintain an important part of people’s collective memory. However, as mentioned by Loures et al. (2006), even if turning an underused site into something new and useful, is generally beneficial, people’s needs and desires need to be taken into consideration in order to assure that the new development may be a resilient and sustainable one.

For this reason, regardless their nature and typology, redevelopment projects should reinforce landscape character taking into consideration the spirit of the place and integrating public participation and the pre-industrial existence in the new landscape, in order to achieve sustainable development.

References