The effectiveness of postindustrial redevelopment towards urban sustainability – the Portuguese experience

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Abstract: The need for greater environmental protection coupled with the appearance of several postindustrial derelict areas and the increasing public awareness to the necessity to reclaim degraded landscapes provide great challenges not only for landscape architects and reclamation professionals but also for planners, natural resource managers and policy makers. Though this problem encompasses numerous categories of manufacturing infrastructure all over the world, this paper will focus only on urban postindustrial sites, where reclamation-redevelopment processes play an important role in city redevelopment throughout the creation of multifunctional sites able to fulfill peoples needs at different levels, while contributing to urban sustainability. Though it is widely recognized that the reclamation of postindustrial landscapes constitutes an important strategy towards city’s development, it is normally acknowledged that redevelopment projects are generally associated to multidimensional objectives based somehow on a twist of sociocultural, economic and environmental issues. This paper aims to exemplify the importance of these projects at the aforementioned levels by presenting a set of 18 redevelopment proposals/projects where it is possible to identify the relevance of each of the sustainability dimensions to urban development. By assessing and identifying the significance and the benefits associated to postindustrial redevelopment, this article shows that postindustrial landscapes should be viewed as a resource and its recovery as an opportunity.

Key-Words: - Urban development, Postindustrial landscapes, Redevelopment process

1 Introduction
The legacy of derelict, idled, obsolete, and often abandoned postindustrial structures and sites we face today in our landscapes is, arguably the result of human current and former uses of land. One way or another, the present situation, enabled by technological innovation and structural economic change, is founded in human (ab)use of this limited and valuable resource, and in his increasing ability to affect large landscapes. “As the world moved from agriculture to industry, a mechanist view of the universe began to supplant the idea of an organic nature. A desire for “progress” and faith in technology implied that the earth was a place to extract resources and its “complementary” idea: that the earth could absorb anything humankind asked of it” [1].

Though, changes in society’s values began in the 1960s enabled a different view, according to which the former production and consumption patterns were no longer acceptable. As these landscapes become economically disadvantaged, environmentally degraded and socially distressed, several planners, designers and urban developers started to react to decline, both by looking for answers to the social and economic problems caused by the growing wastelands [2] and by developing new methods to transform them, considering that the issues facing postindustrial land transformation today are multidimensional, including sociocultural, environmental and economic aspects.

In fact, as it was mentioned before, it is increasingly acknowledged that previously developed land (e.g. postindustrial landscapes) constitute an undervalued asset towards urban redevelopment. As mentioned by Loures [3] this idea is supported by the six key challenges for producing a sustainable built environment presented by the European Council for Construction Research, Development and Innovation [4]: urban sprawl; redeveloping industrial sites; regenerating brownfield sites; sustainable construction; green space, and regenerating distressed neighborhoods.

Somewhow, all these principles may be directly or indirectly connected with postindustrial land transformation processes. However, even if it is
argued by several authors that investing in the redevelopment of existing sites may be preferable to developing new areas [5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12], and that several redevelopment/land transformation programs (as it is the case of PRAUD (Program for the Reclamation of Derelict Urban Areas) and POLIS (Program for Urban Requalification and Environmental Valorization of Cities) in Portugal; SUPER - Sustainable Urban Planning and Economic Redevelopment and CABERNET (Concerted Action on Brownfield and Economic Regeneration Network) in Europe; and CERCLA (Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act), commonly known as Superfund [13] from EPA, and AHP - Affordable Housing Program - Brownfields Initiative in North America) provide decision-making tools that help optimize the profits and costs of redeveloped sites reducing political conflicts, economic barriers and environmental problems, it is still hard to assess such options scientifically, and to demonstrate that one is better than another, at least at design, conception and programmatic levels [3]. Nevertheless, all over the world, several regions and countries have begun to embrace the notion that postindustrial landscapes offer unique opportunities to the creation of multifunctional landscapes, viewing their value to society in a broad sense. Recognizing that more than ecological and environmental reclamation opportunities these sites embodied alternative social, cultural and economic values [14]. In fact, development of creative cultural and recreational amenities and the improvement of the image of the city through landscape transformations is increasingly acknowledge [3, 15].

These new trends are evident not only in specialized literature [16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26], but also in several international design competitions promoted to transform large scaled postindustrial sites all over the world. Downsview Park, located at a derelict military air base in Toronto and Fresh Kills reclamation project, the world’s largest landfill on Staten Island, New York, are representative of these tendencies and present fully examples of landscape reclamation practices applied to postindustrial sites in North America [18]. In Europe, Parc de la Villete design competition held in 1982 - according to Turner [27] “the twentieth century’s most important park design competition” – created a momentum for the beginning and dissemination of large scale land transformation projects; proving this is the IBA (International Building Exhibition) in which various Architects, Landscape Architects, Urban Planners, and Environmental Engineers got together with numerous other specialists and worked for ten years in the Ruhr Valley – Germany, exploring innovative possibilities, programs, functions and uses for postindustrial landscape transformation projects [28, 29]. Those competitions showed that perceptions concerning what might constitutes land transformation and redevelopment has changed towards environmentally cognizant sensibilities and contributions from a broad array of specialists [30] because more than greening, it is necessary to create condition that enable economic development and attract people to those spaces [3].

2 Methodological approach
Recognizing that any attempt to understand/define “good urban design” must embody the principles of sustainable development, the present research is based on a methodological approach that considers building design, landscape design and urban design as part of the same process, which constitutes the only way to deliver a more integrated, more skilled and more effective analysis of a specific design process [3]. In this regard the developed analysis is based in the verification of the presence of specific aspects in the design strategy used on the analyzed projects, considering the integration of specific criteria, put forward by Loures et al. [31]: protect and conserve quality landscapes, while enhancing natural and historic/heritage resources; develop a clear redevelopment vision and strategy; enable resilience, considering the ability to be long lasting and adaptable to new uses; and show the ability to promote biodiversity, to create good places for people, and to aid economic development.

In this regard, in order to understand and evaluate the complex relationship between postindustrial landscape redevelopment and urban sustainability (considering the three sustainability pillars), a set of redevelopment projects that represented specific examples of multifunctional redevelopment as catalyst for urban regeneration and economic development was selected, and their impact on sociocultural, economic and environmental aspects assessed. For this purpose 18 case studies were selected for analysis, using objective criteria according to a pre-established methodological framework (fig. 1).
These case studies were divided into three groups, considering their significance for urban sustainability at the sociocultural, economic and environmental levels. Besides the aforementioned criteria the ability to protect and enhance industrial heritage was also assessed, since it is considered an important cultural objective of postindustrial redevelopment, which is inherently sustainable, considering it encourages the positive re-use of redundant buildings that are part of our industrial and commercial heritage. In fact, conservation is considered a very important aspect for postindustrial redevelopment, raising local environment quality, preserving local distinctiveness, attracting visitors and new business, and maintaining *genius loci*.

### 3 Case studies – analysis and results

Considering the various sources of data and information regarding the eighteen analyzed case studies (e.g. literature review, interviews with key participants and site users) their impact on urban sustainability pillars was identified – table 1 (some of them had a specific impact on more than one pillar) – and their significance and benefits to urban development at different levels briefly described.

Considering the analyzed case studies, it was possible to identify several benefits directly related to postindustrial redevelopment, which represent an important element towards sustainable urban planning, considering its three pillars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Design Team</th>
<th>Former Use</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Sociocultural</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcântara Rio</td>
<td>Fred. Valaissina Arq + PROAP</td>
<td>Soap Factory</td>
<td>Lisbon, Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Área Mineira de Aljustrel</td>
<td>EDM – Emp. de Des. Mineiro</td>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>Aljustrel, Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Auditório Municipal</td>
<td>António Meireles and Vibeiras</td>
<td>Canning Factory</td>
<td>Olhão, Portugal</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boca do Rio Resort</td>
<td>Architect Fernando Raposo</td>
<td>Canning Factory</td>
<td>Lagoa, Portugal</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braga Municipal Stadium</td>
<td>Souto Moura Arq. Lda + Daniel Monteiro</td>
<td>Quarry</td>
<td>Braga, Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casa dos Cubos</td>
<td>Embaixada Arquitetura</td>
<td>Storage Warehouse</td>
<td>Tomar, Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Convento das Bernardas</td>
<td>Souto Moura Arquitectos Lda</td>
<td>Canning Factory</td>
<td>Tavira, Portugal</td>
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<td>Jardim de Santa Luzia</td>
<td>Topiáris</td>
<td>Sugar Factory</td>
<td>Funchal, Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marina Lofts &amp; Apartments - A Fábrica</td>
<td>NLA + Nano Leónidas</td>
<td>Brick Factory</td>
<td>Lagos, Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Museu de Portimão</td>
<td>José Cid &amp; Isabel Aires, Lda</td>
<td>Canning Factory</td>
<td>Portimão, Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parque Tejo-Trancão</td>
<td>PROAP + Hargreaves Associates</td>
<td>Industrial Waterfront</td>
<td>Lisbon, Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parque Oriente</td>
<td>Turei Nunes Arquitectura, Lda</td>
<td>Industrial Block</td>
<td>Lisboa, Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parque Urbano de Santa Iria da Azóia</td>
<td>Biodesign</td>
<td>Landfill</td>
<td>Santa Iria da Azóia, Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pavilhão do Arrade</td>
<td>Miguel Arruda Arquitectos Associados</td>
<td>Canning Factory</td>
<td>Lagoa, Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quimiparque</td>
<td>RISCO + Juan Busquets BAU</td>
<td>Industrial District</td>
<td>Barreiro, Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Requalificação da Zona Industrial do Bom João</td>
<td>Parque Expo</td>
<td>Industrial Waterfront</td>
<td>Faro, Portugal</td>
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<td>Requalificação Urbana da Lisnave</td>
<td>Richard Rogers</td>
<td>Industrial Waterfront</td>
<td>Almada, Portugal</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 - Postindustrial redevelopment benefits to urban sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-cultural</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Environmental and aesthetic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase sense of belonging</td>
<td>Utilize existing infrastructure</td>
<td>Remove contaminants from the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase pride in community</td>
<td>Reduce urban sprawl – reuse</td>
<td>Create and protect wildlife habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in park-land and open space</td>
<td>Reduce infrastructure cost</td>
<td>Increase flora and fauna diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging recreation and connectivity</td>
<td>Encourages inner city investments</td>
<td>Increase human/environment connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect and highlight industrial heritage</td>
<td>Job creation and increased income and investment</td>
<td>Reduce greenfield consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood revitalization</td>
<td>Increase valve of cultural assets</td>
<td>Improved aesthetic quality of urban fabric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis of the presented case studies showed that the redevelopment of postindustrial areas might promote sustainability, reducing negative environmental impacts, and fomenting economic prosperity, social inclusion, multifunctionality and a better quality of life. In fact, even 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.

Additionally the analyzed 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 us 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 redevelopment of postindustrial facilities may enable a sense of spatial enlargement, with high degree of complexity 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 postindustrial landscapes and/or buildings contribute to improve the quality of life not only at local level but also in the surrounding landscapes, while fostering the maintenance an important part of people’s collective memory. However, as mentioned by Loures et al. [31], even if redeveloping an underused site is generally beneficial, people’s needs and desires need to be take into consideration in order to assure that the new development may be a resilient and sustainable one.

In this regard in order to create a successful and sustainable reclamation design 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” [32].

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References:


