

SECOND HAND ARCHITECTURE – A PARADIGM FOR USEFUL INDUSTRIAL REMAINS

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Summary

The poetic feelings triggered by abandoned industrial heritage have no useful purpose unless they are assigned a role within the panel of actions that a successful revitalization entails. It is by acknowledging the resources of these physical areas, along with the urban environment in which they are inserted, that we can identify their own potential and levels of reutilization. Either for physical or intangible reasons, the aim is to creatively explore new uses. It is time to do less rather than more.

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1 Merits of a living Past

At the end of a golden era of the building sector, the economy is in deep recession. The galloping process of worldwide depression produced inhospitable terrain as a result of the merciless bombing of speculation that occurred during the last decade.



***Fig. 1** Former industrial complex of Alcântara, Lisbon, in 2002.*



***Fig. 2** Former industrial complex of Alcântara, Lisbon, in 2013.*

These new deserts, which until very recently were desirable, will not be developed in future years – they have become obsolete and financially impracticable. What will be the fate of dozens of hectares of central city land? These voids can do little more than work as optimal land academic case studies. However, industrial remains can still be a key element to create an innovative urban space syntax, especially during the establishment of a new economic and social paradigm. While it provides a framework for various issues and often stands in an antagonistic relation to historical centres, industrial heritage exists alongside these centres when we assess the city's cultural sustainability, thus evoking its central role in the context of the following matters:

- As a living field of study: industrial land is a preferred instrument to observe the urban dialectic of change and permanence – the gap between the “city machine”, planned and tuned for production, and the “city people”, allowing us to get a picture of the whole.
- In the contextualization of images disseminated by projects and urban restructuring policies and how this new environment collides or reconciles with the idea of urban authenticity.
- As strongly conditioning the dynamics of the urban leisure market, where the determination and regulation of alternative touristic flows assumes particular relevance.
- When questioning the future of the roles currently ascribed to the consolidated city, presenting itself as a promising terrain for a valid rotation in the logic of human reoccupation.

As industrial heritage is rarely protected as being of patrimonial value, those responsible for its reintegration are often confronted with a great number of options lying between two extreme positions on the boundaries of the playing field: total demolition of the existing structures, possibly ensuring architecture studios a bigger “return” as this would give them the possibility to develop new projects in sites that are normally unique regarding their setting; or the melancholic strategy (seen as such by less wise readers) of opting for the direct reutilization of the architecture – exploring a past belonging to the city, which is locked within a glass dome and is both technically valid and mysterious.

In Portugal, during the last few years, whether they are purely conservative or more experimental, including additions or not, many projects have been able to establish a dialogue with their predecessors, merging the old and new, bringing together everything that can best potentiate the pre-existing site as well as the attributes and needs of the new building. Three examples of architectural conservation strategies are presented next. They are rooted in a “laissez-faire design”, “freezing approach” or a “new construction with the context“. The selected cases have different meanings and merits of their own and are also distinct regarding the way in which they enter into dialogue with the urban fabric, bringing new and old together, gathering all that best boosts the pre-existing building and the attributes and needs of the new process.

2 Lx Factory, Lisbon/ Former Companhia de Fiação e Tecidos Lisbonense



Fig. 3 Lx Factory, Lisbon.



Fig. 4 Lx Factory, Lisbon.

The former 1849 spinning and textile factory space in the centre of Lisbon is now transformed into a "cluster" of creative businesses - advertising agencies, film production, fashion and audio-visual design and architectural ateliers, studios of artists and musicians, a dance school, restaurants, terraces and a bookstore, intending to complement each other thanks to the multidisciplinary service offering. Entrepreneurs who settle in Lx Factory are a mostly young audience, looking for differences, novelty and freedom, avoiding formatted and monotonous workspaces.

The revitalization of the old factory into a multipurpose complex does not include a concerted and united architectural intervention, but rather a series of actions that multiply and adapt to the needs of that place at that time. These adaptations have been visibly carried out within a contemporary reversible spirit, using "unskilled" materials, as if the very pro-reuse intervention were itself a large installation of "arte povera".

3 Olive oil mill, Loulé/ Former Lagar das Portas do Céu



Fig. 5 Oil Mill, Loulé – before intervention



Fig. 6 Oil Mill, Loulé – after intervention

The space formerly occupied by an olive oil mill was temporarily appropriated to host cultural events during the summer of 2008. The oil mill of Loulé is a characteristic building of the environment of the agro-industrial Algarve in the early twentieth century.

The character of great reversibility is latent in every intervention, not eroding the physical space, but causing its transformation through not only the change of use but mainly exploring the senses. The sense of space is so moved by adopting a new compositional character, but not trampling his unique ability as a storyteller, his potential evocation of memory.

The ephemerality of the intervention was found as one of the main driving lines of the drawing of the work. In the apparent "thoughtlessness" that one could deal with the matter and space, escaping the "required" care as if it were a work of perennial nature, it was possible to maintain and offer the public the special character of the environment of the old mill, understood as a romantic ruin.

The decommissioning of the various movements of the project, with no protagonists or vanities, was the lever to open the mill doors again. The state of ruin in which the building was found had already done the design work. The atmospheric feel of the place

will lead operations, gestures guided by the appreciation of detail and the scenic potential of the marks of decay and the patina of time. Intervention by Aindarquitectura, architects.

4 Cold-Store House, Porto/ Former Frigorífico do Cais do Ouro



*Fig. 7 Cold-store house,
Porto – before intervention*



*Fig. 8 Cold-store house,
Porto – after intervention*

The reuse of this 1939 codfish cold-store house with a housing program reinforces the multifunctional nature of an area of the city of Porto, which has been functioning as a pole for leisure activities. Finding a program that does not disfigure the building, allowing the reading of what he was before the intervention did not appear like an easy task, due to its unique facade composition, blocked to the outside.

Turning a closed box into a housing unit was achieved by respecting the building's language and restructuring all its internal organization. After demolishing the old cold chamber's walls, the starting point was the open space with a strict concrete structural modulation. Also due to the truly exceptional position of the buildings face to the landscape of the Douro valley, it was decided to exploit the coverage that will serve exceptional housing in duplex or triplex system.

The intervention with the greatest impact was undoubtedly the introduction of openings in an originally blind façade. Otherwise, one could hardly turn a cold store into housing. The fenestration comes “simply” in the form of frameless, horizontal slots, black voids in the facade that run strictly on existing decorative fins. Intervention by Carlos Prata, architect.

5 Conclusions

The significant outcome of this statement consists in recommending the reutilization of unused industrial spaces as very attractive second-hand objects. This reuse implies confrontations with changes occurring in space and time.

The architect should tackle the project feeling that in the end all buildings “tell us” how they should be addressed – he has “little else” to do but to capture and assess the series of instructions offered by the building itself, imbued with a level of civilization that finds in the recycling of existing city structures a major release.