Lisbon: a new relationship with the river

“Recovering the river without losing the port”: since its 1st Strategic Plan in 1992, the City of Lisbon has recognised that the Tagus estuary is a world heritage, but at the same time stressed the potential which the port offers for opening up to the world and for economic development. Meanwhile, the Port has said, in particular at the 9th AIVP World Conference held in Lisbon in 2004, that they wanted the port landscape to be naturally perceived as part of the urban landscape. More than 10 years have passed. So it's a good time to talk to Arch. Manuel Salgado, Lisbon’s Councillor for Urban and Strategic Planning, about what has been achieved and the challenges that still remain.

AIVP - Following the 1st Strategic Plan in 1992, the Redevelopment Plan for the estuary shores was going to apply a "pearl necklace" strategy for different sectors of the waterfront area. The second Strategic Plan will confirm this intention of coordinating port and city functions. Integration of the waterfront remains one of the City's main axes and principal objectives, both in its 2012 Master Plan and its Strategic Vision for Lisbon 2012.

The redevelopment works carried out in the Zona Riberinha Oriental, the site of the World Expo in 1998, are probably the best known internationally. They are also a symbol of this will to find a new relationship with the river. Apart from the obvious impact of Expo 98 for Lisbon's international image, what do you think are the functional achievements on the site to date?

Arch. Manuel Salgado, Lisbon’s Councillor for Urban and Strategic Planning – With the construction of landfills and the Port of Lisbon by the end of nineteenth century, the city was deprived of its ancestral contact with the river. Alongside this works, the construction of railways and stations and the installation of industries on the bank of the Tagus, cut the connection between the city and its urban life to the river. The city waterfront saw its depreciation in the city development cycle, forcing the city grown to the north and the contact with the river was limited to some particular areas of the city.

From the end of the 80s, Lisbon has gradually returned its attention to the river, in a new way of understanding the relationship with the Tagus and rethinking Lisbon as a riverside city. Examples are: the design competition for the Riverside Area (1998), promoted by the National Architect Association, at that time a zone of large industrial units partially vacated in accelerated degradation with strong
environmental impacts, the construction of Centro Cultural de Belém (1988-92), Lisbon’s Strategic Plan and Master Plan (1992-94) and also the decision to hold the World Expo - Expo 98 in East Riverside Area.

The combination between the World Expo - Expo 98 - and the implementation of several new major transport infrastructures, including the new bridge over the Tagus, Ponte Vasco da Gama, has given an undeniable importance to this city development project and to the metropolitan area, not only with the creation of a new urban and regional centrality, but also with the construction of a remarkable reference in the future image of the city and as a way of re-urbanization the riverfront.

In 2008, Lisbon Municipality develops the Riverfront General Plan that would guide the public projects in the 19 km Tagus riverfront for the next decade. Alongside this plan, some port and coastal areas are being released and are being converted to enjoyment of Lisbon’s population.

With the approval of the current Master Plan in 2012, Lisbon’s riverfront is not only confined to the marginal strip already under port jurisdiction, but also to the territory that goes from the margin to the crest of the first line of hills that form the amphitheatre open to the Tagus.
Over the last few years, several municipal interventions have been carried out, and they are contributing to the transformation of the Lisbon riverfront. Short-term interventions were completed in Terreiro do Paço and Ribeira das Naus and we are finalizing projects for new interventions in Cais do Sodré / Corpo Santo, for South-by-Southeast Station, and Campo das Cebolas.

In terms of private investment on the riverfront we would like to underline the construction of the Champalimaud Foundation (2011, arch. Charles Correia) and New Coach Museum (2015, arch. Mendes da Rocha), the projects of the EDP Arts Center building (arch. Amanda Levete) and the new headquarters of EDP from the architect Manuel Aires Mateus, being near to completion.
AIVP - A certain number of zones have since been released by the port, and several projects can be quoted as examples of this new relationship with the river that you want to implement. For example the EDP Cultural Centre, work on which started recently at Belem, where a roof-top promenade is planned which will be a balcony overlooking the city and the river. And the cruise ship terminal designed by the architect João Luís Carrilho da Graça will work on the same principle. His design was selected for how well it integrates the cruise terminal with the city. It will be complemented by an urban park and a promenade which will pass through different building levels up to the roof, where it will offer views over the city and the Tagus.

And the point of this is precisely the question of the urban integration of port functions. The same is true of an operation such as the cycle path developed along 11km of waterfront, and the shared bicycle service associated with it since 2013: it is another project designed to relate with the river, but it nevertheless requires solutions for the sectors where port activities are still being carried on.
What strategies have you implemented to ensure the mix between existing urban and port functions? In particular, what solutions have already been applied or programmed for the Alcantara sector where there is a lot of container activity (197,279 TEU in 2014), or Santa Apolonia with cruise ship activity?

Arch. Manuel Salgado – Lisbon is by its nature a port city with a privileged location and with excellent natural conditions, being a vital infrastructure for the country. It has regular services to major ports in Northern Europe and Spain, with a total traffic of 339,931 containers (2014), in Sta. Apolonia and Alcantara terminals and the Multipurpose Terminal.

The waterfront of the city of Lisbon is not restricted to marginal strip under port jurisdiction, but was expanded by the current Master Plan. The reconfiguration of port infrastructure by functional specialization, the concentration of some activities and transfer of other activities to other regional ports, has released already extensive territories to non-port uses, assuming that in near future, other areas of poor and unskilled port activity may be transformed into new urban uses.

The construction of the new Lisbon Cruise Terminal creates a lot of opportunities to renew and re-functionalization a noble space of Lisbon's riverfront. The terminal will have a positive impact on the city's economy, valuing it and contributing to increased competitiveness. Located near the historical center, the connection of tourists to the city is immediate and it has accelerate the requalification of the whole area from Cais do Sodré to Santa Apolonia, creating pathways assisted by mechanical means to São Jorge Castle's Hill.
At the west side of the city, the Alcântara Urban Plan, started this year in February, which aims to mark a new centrality in Lisbon, providing new areas of urban equipment, trade, services and technology based activities. It is expected a Green Strip between Monsanto and the river to be created, which includes a new urban park linking Alcântara-Terra (land) and Alcântara-Mar (river), culminating in a large public square at the Alcântara Maritime Station.

The strategy of urban interventions at the riverfront has been an engine to increase Lisbon’s competitiveness as a welcoming city for people and investment activities.

**AIVP** – You have just launched an international competition for Parque Ribeirinho Oriente. Compatibility with port activities will be one of the key criteria there also. What use is presently made of the site and what are your expectations?

**Arch. Manuel Salgado** – The public tender for the development of the project "Riverside East Park", which runs until April 20th, will include a riverside area of about 86,000 m² between “Braço de Prata” enterprise and Matinha Detail Plan intervention areas.
It is intended to re-qualify this area that for years has been used for industrial and port use and reconverted it to public use, favouring recreational areas, especially activities related to boating, cycling lanes and pedestrian pathways for young people and adults and the implementation of landscape solutions that connect the river and the city.
River beaches, floating pools, restaurants and cultural solutions are to be considered, prioritizing the implementation measures for energy and water use reduction, the integration of the project in the ecological structure, ensure continuity of cycling paths along the river, create a diverse range of leisure and sports activities, compatible with new uses and the continuity of port activity, articulating and framing the new urban spaces with the river and protecting the rising sea water levels due to climate change.

_AIVP –_ The environmental dimension and consideration of the effects of climate change, particularly the rise in sea-level, are both stressed in this competition. This is a vital dimension for Lisbon and for all the zones along its 19 km of waterfront, and more generally for all the municipalities of the Metropolitan area along the Tagus estuary. Will you try to resist? Or adapt? Port cities the world over are thinking about this issue.

What resilience strategies have you programmed and what measures have already been adopted? Do you envisage a competition on this subject, following the example of New York and its “Rebuild by design” competition, launched after the city was struck by Hurricane Sandy?

_Arch. Manuel Salgado –_ Climate change and the possible impact on sea level rise are concerns that are currently being addressed in terms of strategic planning, especially in the Municipal Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change (in planning) as part of ClimAdapt-Local Program which involves several municipalities and is coordinated by Lisbon’s Science University. However, at the Expo 98 project was decided to heighten the implementation quota due to flood risks, and in the Lisbon’s Master Plan, the area subjected to flood risks was detailed in the Flood Vulnerability Charter.

On the other hand, we have an ongoing Drainage Master Plan at implementation phase, with the construction of water retention basins and discharge pipes improvements. With the intervention of requalification of Terreiro do Paço, one interception and tidal valve chambers system was constructed, as part of the interceptor system for the entire downtown area, which allows the city to control the rainwater flows origin.

The municipality has also been taking measures to minimize the effects of the floods, with a systematic intervention in the maintenance and reconstruction of collectors, and the adoption of porous pavements. Lisbon’s Master Plan has also set a minimum limit to the occupation of back yards by private owners.

_AIVP –_ To conclude, you have made citizen participation an important axis in your urban planning strategy. Can you tell us briefly the main objects of this axis, and talk about the responses and possible propositions that you have received with respect to sites where the question of mixing urban and port functions arises?

_Arch. Manuel Salgado –_ We wanted a closer and participative city. For this, two programs were established, with great success and supported by municipal investment, promoting active participation from citizens: the Participatory Budget and the Bip-Zip program.

The Participatory Budget, with about € 5M in local authority budget, had its first edition in 2008, and has come on a growing number of participation proposals and voting. The population vote on concrete proposals for city, and the most voted are implemented by City Council within a 2 years period. More recently, and to promote a culture of early, active and demanding citizenship, the School Participatory Budgeting was created, designed exclusively for primary pupils (6-10 years).
The other program, Bip-Zip, has a budget of about € 3M, and basically supports city district councils, local associations or non-governmental organizations through the economic means necessary to support project implementation that will change the neighbourhoods or social priority intervention areas.

In addition to these programs it is practice of the Municipality of Lisbon to listen the interested parts and promote public participation whenever an intervention occurs in a specific area of the city. Citizens have the opportunity to make their contribution to the city government.

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