

**Governance in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area:
between the ambition of reinforcing the international rank and the will for deeper
internal territorial cohesion¹**

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ABSTRACT

Since the eighties governance of metropolitan areas has been based on outstanding urban projects, reinforcing the visibility and the ability of cities to better rank on international urban networks. There has been a strengthening of the strategic territorial planning approach as well as of public-private partnerships. This rational of funds allocation, characteristic of economic expansion times and of globalization, has the pro of projecting the city internationally, while frequently broadens the effects of urban interventions through important urban marketing actions. Nevertheless, there is also an important criticism of the benefits given to financial and real-state international interests against the weakening of community based interventions.

The pace, the extension and the intensity of the current financial crisis will probably question the continuity of these forms of urban intervention, since the scarcity of financial resources will affect public and private investment capacity. As occurred in the past, backgrounds of economic recession push the search for alternative solutions, some of them based on paradigms that even if not yet socially tested, they show already scientific grounds.

The aim of this paper is to grow deeper on the above discussion taking as study case the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. The 98 World Exhibition, anchored on a multifunctional Urban Project, was a central driver for the international projection of Lisbon, as well as for the regeneration of a vast industrial urban area facing decline as for its articulation with the river front. Beyond some criticism made to the project, there is a large consensus regarding its added value for the city, followed particularly by the strengthening of internal territorial cohesion.

Lisbon Metropolitan Area has some other large industrial derelicts. Those have a strategic geographic situation in the south bank of the river and have been object of proposals of regeneration projects, able of pursuing the international projection of Lisbon initiated with EXPO 98. However the new economic, financial and real-state crisis call for a greater concern both on the selection of projects as on the design of the scale of intervention. Will the smaller scale of intervention, the sustainability of projects and the search for greater internal territorial cohesion overcome the persistent ambition for deepening the international ranking of the city?

Key-words: territorial cohesion, urban projects, financial crisis, governance, Lisbon.

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1. Introduction: the problem

In the EU countries governance problems are exacerbated in metropolitan areas, not only through a multiplicity of (public and private) stakeholders as well as by a diversity of interests, fuelled by different objectives, resources, and often conflicting strategies.

National Governments have lost political influence in land management mainly due to a combination of three factors: progressive specialization at the central level on sectoral policies, supported by the demand for greater rationality and efficiency in actions; decentralization of power and loss of responsibilities to local authorities (regional and local); growing importance of the EU guidelines having a territorial impact.

Thus, grounded on the principle of subsidiarity, local authorities dispute prominence and the capacity for action, while forgetting (or not willing to acknowledge) that their territories frequently aren't the most relevant for the design of the best solutions, thereby undermining the effectiveness of their actions.

The fragility of the political power inherent to this power-sharing, which is not anchored in structures of vertical and horizontal coordination, and the governance gaps raised are (well) seized by economic power. Taking advantage of the weakness of public investment and of a territory-hungry for global private investment, the market imposes "its" rules, where the interests of the territories just casually are safeguarded. Globalization increases the turbulence and uncertainty in decision-making processes by means of the permeability of the territories to influences they do not control (unexpected location or relocation of companies) and that may be decisive in their prosperity or decline, for an indefinite period.

In a time dominated by economic and financial logics, the neo-liberal ideas gain influence, defending the free functioning of markets and individual initiative, and questioning the constraints of the public action, restraining the public sector intervention only to the heavy investment in territorial infrastructures, which are essential to the rapid reproduction of capital. However markets and spontaneous social behaviours produce territorial imbalances as the past has widely demonstrated. This reinforces the ideals of those that see in public action the guarantor against the imbalances and the persistent advocacy of social equity.

In democratic societies the rotation brought by political cycles (at different levels of power) creates the opportunity to swing in favour of one or another ideology. It was against this background of contradictions that the EU has tended to emphasize the competitiveness and the territorial cohesion basis of policies, delivering explicit guidelines in three recent documents: ESDP (1999), Territorial Agenda (2007) and Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion (2008). Competitiveness of the territories turn up in order to ensure the best conditions to attract investment and people, by focusing on specialization and standardization; territorial cohesion emerges with the purpose of ensuring equal opportunities to all the population, regardless of the territory where they live, taking advantage of enhanced territorial capital (local resources) and of the affirmation of identities. The difficulty relies on merging the two concepts, given that the conditions of achievement of each one of them tend to inhibit the conditions of achievement of the other. It is in this environment of territorial conflicts and of reconfigurations on the struggle for power that the concept of governance makes sense,

understood as "(...) a system of devices and modes of action, involving institutions and civil society representatives to design and to put into practice the policies and public decisions "(Ascher, 2001:95). On their turn Davoudi *et al.* (2008:351-352) distinguish the territory as the political and social construction and as the territorial capital to define the concept of governance. As the political and social construction, it results from the collective action of organized interests and territorial institutions, mobilized to find a solution to a collective problem, influenced by the interaction between the actors involved. In this context, governance is the ability of (public and private) stakeholders to get a consensus to set organizational goals and a common vision for the future of their territory and to cooperate in order to achieve them. The interaction of actors and resources can occur at other(s) scale(s), involving the redefinition of the territory concerned and, perhaps, of the solutions. On the approach as territorial capital (a concept similar to that of endogenous capital, when applied to the regional and local level), territorial diversity (structural and intrinsic features to its geographical position) influences the capacity to promote and attract investment. Governance is then understood as the territorial organization arising from the relations that characterize the interaction between actors. This vision, built on the recognition and enrichment of the territorial capital, promotes sustainable territorial cohesion in a multi-scale approach, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity.

It is against this background of enhancing the territorial capital that, since the 80s, the governance of metropolitan areas has focused on urban projects directed to improve their visibility and competitiveness in international urban networks. From the viewpoint of spatial planning, the strategic approach was reinforced (Güell, 2006), and the public-private partnerships have gained prominence (Healey, 1997). This rationale for allocating resources, characteristic of a period of economic expansion, has the advantage of projecting the city to the exterior, often extending the effects of interventions through powerful urban marketing campaigns. Yet, they are also often criticized for favouring their own financial and international real estate interests, to the detriment of action that is directed to solving problems of local communities.

The current crisis, which started in the financial sector but rapidly achieved economic and social repercussions for its overall size and depth, came to shuffle the rules of the "territorial game". The "capital", so arrogant hitherto, quickly deposited in central governments the responsibility for finding solutions to the problems raised. While it is true that the uncertainty about the future is even greater today, there seems to be a consensus on the belief that to overcome the crisis it is necessary to (re)focus the choices and the development policies as well as their instruments. Along with its negative effects, the crisis should be seen as an opportunity to take on new challenges, which require a strategic vision of development based on a limited set of courses of action and on a thorough process of concentration of resources, coordination of interests and selectivity of targets.

In this context, where public investment in major projects and the support to private investment are appointed as the starters for the economic recovery, territorial governance structures have to ensure, on the one hand, that the projects financed will have the leverage expected effects in the short term but, on the other hand, that they will contribute to the sustainability of economic growth in the post-crisis period.

In Portugal, the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) is the largest and richest urban concentration, though has accentuated socio-economic imbalances particularly between

the “Grande Lisboa” (north bank) and the Peninsula of Setúbal (south bank). In this decade large public investments were announced, especially the New Lisbon Airport (NLA), the third bridge crossing the Tagus river (Chelas-Barreiro), the high-speed train and the logistics platform Poceirão, along with other infrastructure of a regional/local dimension, all of them favouring the Peninsula of Setúbal. This concentration of investment is questioned by those who look at it as an increasing gap between the richest region and the rest of the country, but defended by those who consider that the strengthening of Lisbon Metropolitan Area internal cohesion is crucial to reinforce its competitiveness in the international context.

The final decision to locate the NLA on the left bank (originally planned for the north bank) is the one which will cause major implications for regional dynamics, it will induce the setting of multiple activities, directly and indirectly associated with it, and will strengthen the viability of the will of refocusing the LMA around the Tagus estuary, foreseen to the regional level. The Government decision of locating near to the airport only the functions directly under its activity and of installing the other airport associated functions on the urban Riverside South Arch creates the conditions for the regeneration of existing brownfield areas and for the reconfiguration and consolidation of the local urban system.

However, despite the political and economic relevance of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, there are serious problems in its governance, with adverse effects on its development and planning and, by extension, in its internal territorial cohesion. This condition can threaten the objective outlined above. Thus, based on this challenge of (re)focusing the LMA development around the estuary of the Tagus and of developing Lisbon as a city of two banks, the paper shows that the feasibility of these aims requires a governance solution capable of overcoming the obstacles of the current form of government, hierarchically stratified and fragmented.

The paper is organised into 4 sections: this one, the first, that exposes the problem; the second part presents the strategic vision for the LMA, based on the idea of the city of two banks, and the conditions to implement the concept; the third intends to forward a justification for building a new model of governance; the fourth finishes with some reflections on the future.

2. A Strategic Vision for the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon

2.1. The city of two banks: enhancing territorial capital

Similar to what is illustrated by academic models, the Lisbon Metropolitan Area has been growing since the 60s until the late 80's according to the centre-periphery model, based on a process of suburbanization fuelled by spreading of population and of less qualified activities, in a way highly dependent on heavy public transport axes.

From the eighties on the investment of European structural funds, the expansion of the Portuguese economy, the increase in FDI brought major improvements of public services and facilities on the suburbs and on urban mobility. This dynamic is reinforced in the nineties by a demographic and functional reshaping of the metropolitan area: the city centre loose population and activities that relocate on more peripheral areas (technology parks, office parks and large department stores). It is a "chaotic organization" (Pereira, 2004) of fragmented spaces (social, functional, landscaping),

2.2. The city of two banks: delivering the concept

The process leading to the development of the South Riverside Arch did then achieve some advances (development of autonomous studies on the urban model for the three areas). However, two constraints did not allow foreseeing a final solution: a variety of public bodies with management responsibilities in the area have not been called up for this purpose; the heavy environmental liabilities that kept off any eventual private interests in the operation.

The (unexpected) opportunity came up with the government's decision to locate the New Lisbon Airport on the south bank of the Tagus, which has refocused and enhanced the southern sector of the Metropolitan Area (Peninsula of Setúbal). The decision of locating the airport in an environmentally sensitive area has raised controversy about the development of a city airport in its immediate environment. For that reason a decision was taken: to develop the city airport as a decentralized city, spreading part of it to the South Riverside Arch. Thus, the consolidation of the local urban system, namely through the setting of activities directly related to the airport or depending on it, will not only reinforce the existent urban centres but will also safeguard the agro-forestry and natural values on the surroundings of the NLA.

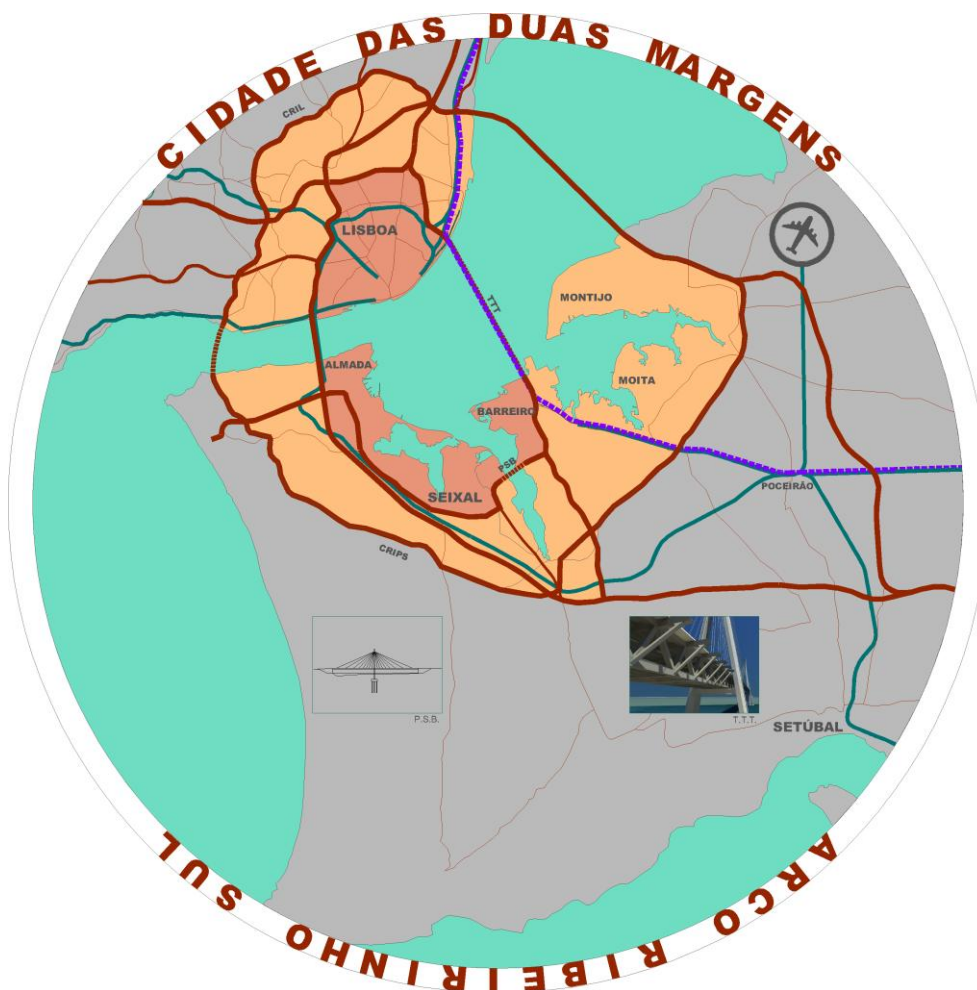


Fig 2. The City of Two Banks
(In the preliminary studies for the Strategic Plan for the South Riverside Arch)

2.2.1. South Riverside Arch: an emerging mega-polis?

Therefore the ambition is to design a "Mega-Polis" at the South Riverside Arch, able to accommodate the future airport city. The territory in question, between Lisbon and the airport, enjoys an exceptional landscape, but has heavy environmental liabilities, since it integrate urban industrial areas in decline and brownfields.

To attain the Mega-polis objective, the Government created in 2008 a working group (involving representatives from seven ministries) for the preparation of a Strategic Plan for the Project of the South Riverside Arch², to be developed as a highly priority and one of national meaning. The Project fits three operations of urban regeneration of industrial areas in decline or already abandoned that were traditionally occupied by shipyards - Lisnave (Margueira); by the National Steel Plant and by an important chemical plant – Quimiparque. The aim is that the proposal model for land use ensures a all-embracing vision for the three interventions by considering the specific characteristics and exploiting potential synergies. These are “weighty” interventions from a financial resources viewpoint and their execution involves a broad time horizon, but the authorities hope to achieve relevant objectives to the metropolitan area, namely:

- environmental improvement, by qualifying around a thousand–hectares, now suffering from heavy environmental liabilities, using EU funds to decontaminate the soil of the old industrial sites and preventing the slaughter of cork trees in the airport surroundings (a protected species in the country);

- urban development, by strengthening and promote cohesion in the south riverside urban system;

- better economic environment , by creating conditions to attract business and R&D activities, given the proximity of the airport facilities, ports and railways.

While the Strategic Plan (2009) has not yet been made public (and it is vital to ensure complementarities between the three interventions), the existing urban studies for each of the areas involved allow us to briefly present the proposed land use models.

² Resolution of the Council of Ministers n° 137/2008, September, 12.

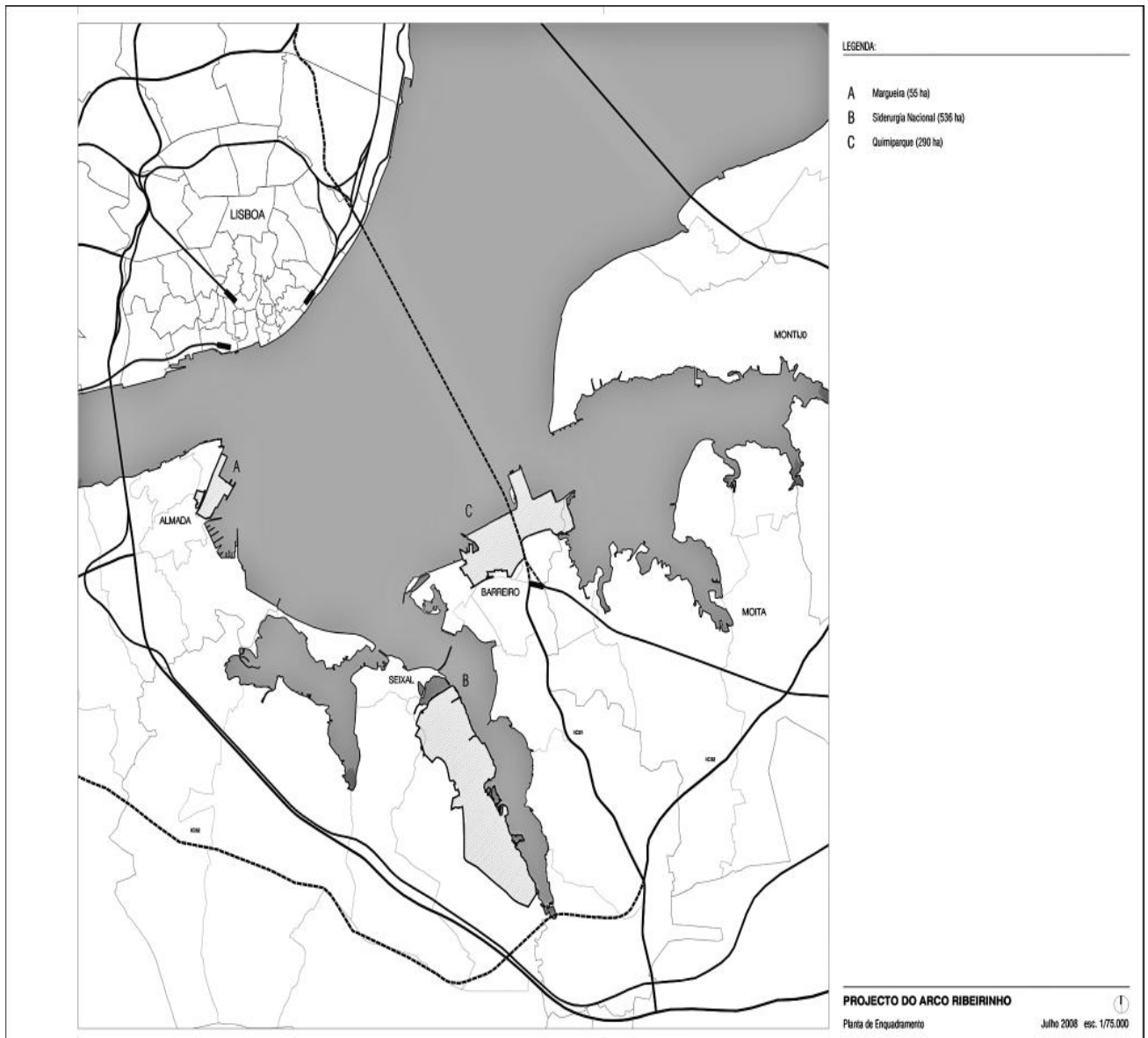


Fig. 3 – The three intervention areas at South Riverside Arch
(In Resolution of the Council of Ministers n° 137/2008, September, 12)

2.2.2. The urban regeneration projects: specificities and complementarities

Margueira - Lisnave (municipality of Almada)

This area covering around 55 ha corresponds to the old shipyards of Lisnave. It is unoccupied and there are no previous engagements for it. The Urban Plan “Almada Nascente”, launched by the City Council, includes Margueira in its the intervention area of 115 ha. It points out as main objectives: to promote density and compactness of the urban environment; to ensure a multifunctional urban development; to strengthen the local identity; to improve cultural values and heritage. The model of city subject to approval promotes the landscape continuity to the water front of the Tagus (hence the name "City of Water") and includes a multi-city project with several structural public services.

National Steel Plant (municipality of Seixal)

The grounds occupy 536 ha. The Study of Urban and Landscape Development for the National Steel Plant area (2006), launched by a partnership between the City Council and a management entity for this area, proposes to sub-divide it according to its land use: the northern part is intended for housing (1500 dwellings) and tertiary sectors, also including public services, leisure and recreational boating facilities; the central area will lodge an Industrial Park, providing for the consolidation of heavy industrial activity; the south includes a new business-purpose area (light industry and logistics). These guidelines are to be developed in depth in the ongoing detail plan for the area. The foreseen horizon for execution is 12 years.

Quimiparque (municipality of Barreiro)

It covers 290 ha and has an unfavourable land property status due to the breakdown by various owners. The Urban Plan of Quimiparque, currently under development, defines a land use model that allows a functional separation between the areas of heavy logistics and urban areas, ensuring the landscape integration of the Third Bridge over the Tagus River, the transfer of port infrastructure and of business and the creation of a water front for leisure sailing. The implementation horizon is targeted for 18 years.

In summary, the above described features help us to realize the dimension and complexity of this urban project, to be achieved in a time horizon of two decades. The ambition of installing part of the city airport in the South Riverside Arch requires a joint effort among multiple public entities, with divergent interests in the area, but also the capacity for the mobilization of private stakeholders, from who much of the investment is expected. The process of decontamination of land, a prerequisite for the development of the project, has already begun using funds of the National Strategic Reference Framework for Portugal (NSRF). This is a decisive step but the actual conditions for pursuing the project are far from being guaranteed. In fact, the diversity of stakeholders, with their unique objectives, solutions and calendars, requires the establishment of a body that will assume the leadership of driving the process. Otherwise, the conflict of interest and the "individual" aims may cause the "death" of the project.

3. From government problems... to governance solutions

While the concept of govern refers to institutions that regulate a territorial entity, the concept of governance, used in various institutional contexts, regards cooperation between state and civil society (Kooiman, 1993). The emergence of this concept draws from the recognition that, in an increasingly complex context, only cooperation between stakeholders can help to overcome problems, gradually blurring the boundaries between public and private intervention.

The Lisbon Metropolitan Area suffers from serious problems of “government and of governance” (Ferreira, 2007, 63)³, being the responsibilities on territorial management

³. This statement is particularly significant because it is assumed by the President of the Commission for Coordination and Regional Development of the Lisbon and Tagus Valley Region.

dispersed among the central, regional and local levels, involving many direct and indirect government state departments, the Commission for Coordination and Regional Development – CCDR (regional structure of the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Regional Development), the metropolitan authority and eighteen municipalities with different population, economic and territorial weights. Despite this fragmentation of power, structures of vertical and horizontal coordination function poorly, thus jeopardizing public action. The territorial planning system is complex, bureaucratic and time consuming, thereby aggravating the problems of articulation.

At the central level the capacity of acting in the territory is divided between the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Regional Development and several other ministries which have a specific sector responsibility. In the case of LMA it must also be underlined that the Port of Lisbon (linked to the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communications) has a strong power in their jurisdiction area, which includes the South Riverside Arch.

The CCDR is responsible for preparing the spatial plan for the regional level (PROT AML) but has no real power over its implementation, which depends on a number of central sector investments and on the licensing of change of land use within the jurisdiction of local authorities. The metropolitan authority, created in 1991 as a compulsory association of municipalities, and now in the form of a voluntary association, has demonstrated a lack of capacity to intervene in the regional strategy and to provide inter-municipal coordination efforts (Pereira and Silva, 2001). Its executive body composed by the mayors of the municipalities involved, always argued lack of political legitimacy to intervene in the metropolitan scale. Thus, the metropolitan institution hasn't played an effective role in governance of Lisbon Metropolitan Area.

Given this complex network of power, public intervention in LMA has been dominated by the stronger central logics of sectors, often contradictory or at least lacking synchronization, but imposing their objectives, their solutions and their schedules, and by the municipalities logics generally very ego-centred, with scarce, and sometimes none, coordination where it might be appropriate. This frame of disarticulation between public entities makes it harder to build partnerships (public-public, public-private), unless a major national objective (such as occurred during the Expo 98) can gather the will and the efforts.

In fact, at that time, the dimension of the challenge - to have an International Exhibition and to implement an urban project in a reduced time-horizon in an adverse environment - impelled the authorities to opt for an innovative governance model in the national context, (implicitly) acknowledging that the structures in place wouldn't be able to ensure an effective response. To this end an entity - Parque EXPO - was created, a private firm with public investment vested with broad powers (from the design of the intervention model, including the licensing of real-state and construction, to implementation) that were taken out from multiple entities where they were dispersed. This solution made possible the implementation of the project on the pre-set timing, although for some it was too subordinated to the interests of real estate. The construction of the Park of Nations, following the EXPO 98, was the most important operation of urban regeneration developed in Lisbon (around 300 ha) in an area suffering from strong constraints (some environmental, some relating to the ownership of land by several public entities lacking coordination) and assured the emergence of a new urban centrality with an international projection.

The success of this experience can be the starting point to reflect on the governance model to be adopted in the South Riverside Arch, an area three times larger than the area of intervention of Expo. The fact that most of the areas to be intervened are public property may facilitate the implementation of the plan, but the Administration shall ensure that the collective interest prevails over purely private logics and the involved authorities must commit themselves with the objectives of consolidation and integration/development of the urban fabric and environmental qualification.

The initiative of the Government (the State shall promote the project of South Riverside Arch, involving various ministries, local authorities and the property owners by RCM n° 137/2008) reveals a concern of coordination among the diversity of entities with interests and responsibilities in the area. However, it is urgent to discuss the governance model able of ensuring the implementation of the project.

The feasibility of such an urban project is based on creative processes, but depends also on a great capacity for negotiation, programming and project management, and therefore there are obvious advantages that it might be concentrated into a single entity. Given the weakness of the metropolitan authority, the process should be led by central government, while involving the other levels of government, in view of their respective areas of competence. Thus, we argue that the solution to be adopted should observe the following guidelines: creating a publicly owned entity responsible for the overall project, which should have the responsibility for defining the strategic vision, the overall coordination of all the interventions and its launching on the market (international and national); three operational entities stemmed from the larger coordinating entity, tackling the particularities of each intervention and dealing with the involvement of three different municipalities.

4. Final Thoughts: certainties and uncertainties for the future

The development of large infrastructure of transport and of logistic mentioned for the South Riverside Arch show a great potential to enhance the international profile of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area and for solving some of the problems of its internal territorial cohesion, in particular attaining a better balance between the Great Lisbon (north bank) and the Peninsula of Setubal (south bank).

The implementation of the mega-polis at South Riverside Arch, in part to host the city of the future airport (a decentralized one) is in line with the guidelines for urban sustainability: it will contribute to the regeneration of a large industrial under-use or abandoned area, it will lead to the (re)development and strengthening of the urban system of the south bank of Tagus river and will solve the too heavy environmental liabilities of a remarkable river front, now vacant.

While the value of the Urban Project seems unquestionable, its viability is not yet fully guaranteed because:

- the uncertainties that (still) hang over the airport construction compromise the implementation of this Urban Project, once it is very engaged to that opportunity;
- to mobilize the huge amount of (financial) resources and of (political and administrative) wills requires an opportunity able to remove constraints and resistances (both passive and active) to its implementation. The airport city can

- become this opportunity if the crisis does not (indefinitely) postpone the New Lisbon Airport;
- the design of the governance solution and the commitment of the involved entities are (still) unknown. Only a strong leadership with clear, well established and timed objectives can overcome the divisions already visible from this starting point. Local authorities are mobilized to recover part of their municipal territories, integrating them in the process of upgrading and strengthening of local identity (river municipalities, yet disengaged of the river front). However they have not the jurisdiction over these territories and have no financial resources to intervene there. The multiple national sectoral authorities will lose some of its current powers – which sometimes translates into doing nothing or into forbidding others from acting – thus rising other kind resistance(at least in a passive way) to this process, already a complex one without it.

Moreover, without this large qualifying intervention the South Riverside Arch will remain disconnected from the hinterland of Península of Setúbal, accentuating the problems of internal cohesion at sub-regional and local levels. The specific interventions on the three mentioned areas will not by themselves be able to counter this trend that has been, for a long time now, heavily marginalizing this part of the metropolitan territory.

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