Chapter 4

In Search of a Lost Authenticity: Tourism, Renaturation, and City – The Case of the Tagus Estuary

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ABSTRACT

Through a historical description of the human occupation of Lisbon since the twelfth century BC and its reorganization around the natural presence of the estuary of the river Tagus, this chapter explores concepts like tourism, naturalization, and city. In this sense, the chapter made a critical perspective on the changes occurred in the last years, discussing the contemporary contingency of competitiveness and urban places transformation related to sustainability and tourism pressure in the revaluation of centralities. This can be considered an awareness of the need to reflect on a kind of search for the loss of its authenticity.

PROBLEM FRAMEWORK

The use of natural landscape areas, valued for tourism and leisure purposes, has assumed a growing significance in the planning of the territory. The increase in free time and the predisposition for recreation activities (both promoted by the media and fashion with the incentive of new desires and social promotion) are assumed as factors of great importance for the understanding of the contemporary city policies and territories.

Environmental revaluation has now become one of the main topics of discussion, both regarding its most challenging aspects related to the resolution of public health problems and the resolution of dysfunctions and discomforts associated with noise and pollution. On the other hand, the promotion of the natural potential of the places appears as a purpose of providing better living conditions to the populations. This is how the city paradoxically assumes itself as the place that promotes all these inconveniences and,
at the same time, defines itself as a pole of attraction and leisure. This bipolarity emerges as an engine, in search of better levels of comfort, and to a certain extent, they establish themselves as a strategy of reorganization of the territory.

In this context, environmental issues intertwine with the urban and architectural quality of public spaces, promoting competitiveness and attractiveness between places.

The popularity of themes, related to terms ecology and environment, developed during the 70s and 80s of the twentieth century are now considered as paradigms, almost ethical, for the sustainable development of places. To a certain degree, they sustain themselves as enablers of a strategy of municipal reorganization, integrated into the contemporary status of cities and their relationship with consumption policies, directly associated with both territorial decentralization and regional competitiveness and sustainability.

In the context of developed countries, the review of the industrial model emphasized the problematic around environmental revaluation strategies, directly connected with the reprogramming of new uses and potentialities as reconversion and reintegration actions in the territory. In this way, the global problems related to both the various dimensions of pollution and the overexploitation of natural resources, with the consequent ecological imbalances (climate change, destruction of the ozone layer and biodiversity), are imprinted on the territory, Leading to multiple action policies.

The singularity of the places is assumed as the main aspect of exploration and programming, in which, along with the principles of cultural, historical, patrimonial identity, environmental and natural wealth, they emerge as vectors of growing significance.

Directly associated with this logic, the growing phenomenon of tourism, is assumed as the primary aspect of characterization. Tourism is increasingly recognized as a multi-faceted concept, not only linked to international and national external demand, but also to an idea reinvented at the regional scale, as a strong influence on the populations that inhabit it.

To some extent, the construction of an ecological conscience, aimed at environmental revaluation, take the form of intervention in the places, directly following the premise of creating not only well-being but above all, territorial attractiveness. It seems that this characteristic is assumed as a primary directive, even as pressure, on which the revaluation strategies will have to be considered as fundamental for the promotion of new centralities and their sustainability.

The potentiation of the places in the light of these new (re)valorization strategies (in which the consumption and territorial desire status are assumed as the primary aspects) obviously imply positions that are more pessimistic and, in a way, interact as a counterweight in the consideration of the various Decisions (Louro, 2005).

Somehow, the tourist saturation and the bad examples that have derived from there over the last decades in areas of high landscape and cultural attraction, emerge as references for an awareness of these contemporary actions. The fear of monoculture of the places, their natural and cultural decharacterization, are seen as vectors in the construction of subtler actions, on the existing territories in a more integrated relationship with nature and with a greater respect for local cultures and practices.

**Lisbon and the Origin of the City**

The navigability conditions and safety enshrined in favor Tagus estuary has always been a human presence in the area. The oldest traces of their presence dating from prehistoric times.