Manuel Salgado interviewed by Ana Tostões

On August 2016, Ana Tostões interviewed the architect Manuel Salgado, councillor of the Municipality of Lisbon since 2007, in order to discuss the main policies undertaken and his ideas on urban planning in its connection to mobility infrastructures, public space and the continuous reconstruction of park and green areas, in Lisbon.

Manuel Salgado was born in 1944, Lisbon, and studied architecture at the Lisbon School of Fine Art (1968). From 1971 to 1982, he was the technical responsible for the architectural office CIPRO and in 1984 he became manager of the architectural office *Risco*. From 2002 to 2008, he was architecture professor, at *Instituto Superior Técnico*.

He has participated in conferences worldwide and widely published, on urban planning, and has designed major urban projects and buildings in Portugal: the *Belém* Cultural Centre (with Vittorio Gregotti), the Lisbon Theatre and Film School, the Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal, the Expo'98 public areas, the FC Porto *Dragão* Stadium, the Lisbon Luz Hospital, etc.

His architectural and public space projects received several awards: the Valmor Award (1980, 1998), the International Award Architecture in Stone (1993), the AICA Award (1998); the portuguese National Design Award (1999) and the Brick in Architecture Award (2003).

Within the Municipality of Lisbon, he took the position of councillor of the Urbanism and Strategic PlanningDepartment in 2007, which accumulates, from 2009 to 2013, with the Municipality Vice-Presidency. Currently, as councillor, heads the Department of Planning, Urbanism, Urban Rehabilitation, Public Space and Construction of the Municipality of Lisbon.

ANA TOSTÕES   There are many cities that were transformed in the 19th century, but Lisbon was fundamentally transformed in the 20th century. Those developments now begin to make sense; both the Pombaline plans for the *hinterland*, and Ressano Garcia's plan, but mainly the master plan of 1938–48, by defining radial roads, road systems and an essential series of facilities. It is an idea of the city from the beginning of the *Estado Novo*, which became established, even without the bridge that was only inaugurated in 1966. It is interesting for us to look at a city whose vocation, until the 20th century, was the riverfront, and that continues to be defined by two very symbolic points: *Belém*, transformed from the 1940s, and still in transformation as a cultural facility; and the successful operation that was Expo 1998, which marked the eastern side as a reconverted industrial city, in conjunction with the *Vasco da Gama* bridge and the North-South rail link, developed in the 21st century. How do you see this city in the metropolitan context, with all its weaknesses and potential?

MANUEL SALGADO   I totally agree that the city grid that we have is the grid from Gröer's plan. It was the great revolution carried out in Lisbon in the 20th century, from the 1940s onwards, not only as the regularization of the entire *Tejo* riverfront — with a substantial port occupancy, given that it was the imperial capital and its relationship with the colonies — but also with the building of the airport and the river airport, with the *Monsanto* Park and its re-forestation as a great area reserved for forest space within the city, with the consolidation of the Planalto, with the whole zone of *Alvalade*, as the pivotal point that the *Instituto Superior Técnico* established between the *Almirante Reis* Avenue development and the northern zone, with the City university itself, *Olivais*, *Chelas* and the *Segunda Circular* Road as a termina-

tion of the city, in a certain way, anticipating what will now become the extension of the city to the North. In my opinion, the thing that was never clearly defined in this whole scheme was the rail network. The pre-existing network was maintained as before, with the Northern line terminating at *Santa Apolónia*, the Cascais line completely consolidated with strong barriers in the relation between the city and the river (as happens even now in the monumental zone of *Bélem*), and the *Sintra* line, which leads to *Rossio* via a tunnel. The ring road had already been designed, but there was always great hesitancy with regard to the location of the central Lisbon station. There was an idea of placing it to the north of *Telheiras* — there were various schemes — but it was always a very unconsolidated idea. On the other hand, from the point of view of the city's and the region's road structure, CRIL and CREL had been defined since the mid 20th century. This grid remained the same until, in the 21st century, we had *Expo 98*, an initiative promoted by the Public Administration through a public company, planned and developed together. Another initiative, resulting from a public-private partnership right at the beginning of the 1980s, was the *Alta de Lisboa*, which was planned in full and whose current design is from 1995/96, arising from the Master Plan of 1994. Then we had an extremely large area between *Benfica* and the *Alta de Lisboa* which had grown anarchically and organically, based on lot subdivisions, without a clearly defined structure, with the exception of the *Telheiras* neighborhood that, nonetheless, had a first section that was well planned by Pedro Vieira de Almeida and later a second part of lesser quality. Having said this, I would say that the municipal area had been exhausted by the end of the 20th century. Today we have occasional interventions, of regeneration of areas that are obsolete and the infilling
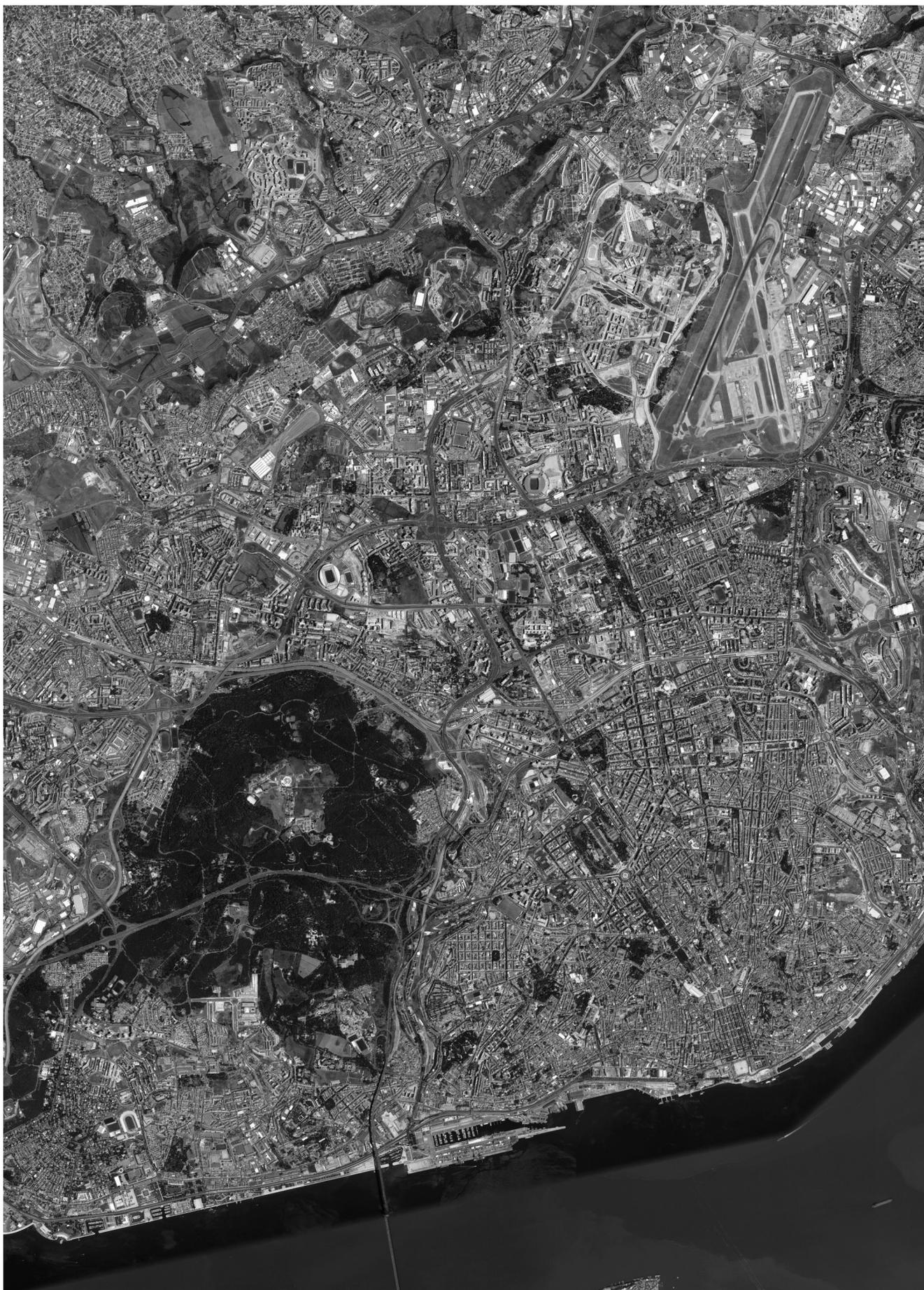
01   Aerial view of Lisbon. © Google Earth, 2006.

of voids. We do not have many more areas left in which to intervene in the city in any other way.

AT   But there is still Chelas-Marvila, the last municipally-led development in which it is is not good to live. I discussed the subject in some detail with Gonçalo Byrne, with regard to the plan that he tried to undertake there with Manuel Vicente and Victor Figueiredo, but which proved to be impossible. Only he and Reis Cabrita opted to do city design through a plaza building, but the place ended up having a very dispersed Silva Dias plan that was half Candilis.

MS   I think that even before Silva Dias himself, José Rafael Botelho took the option to free up the valleys, occupying the higher areas by using a tentacle-like structure that in practise, gave that area an extremely low density: it is the zone with the lowest density in Lisbon. On the other hand, the built areas have a significant density. Personally, I thought that the density should be increased, but we kept the option of not building in the valleys. I remember discussing the issue with Joan Busquets, who thought that we should increase the density of the Marvila zone. The *Liberdade* Avenue was a green valley and the whole thing was built on. Today, if the criteria had been the same as was adopted 20 years ago with regard to *Marvila*, the Avenue would have been kept clear like an arm that almost reached downto the river and a public walkway would have been retained. They were choices that were made at a certain time, with advantages and disadvantages.

AT   But returning to the question of the location of the major railway station...

MS   At one time, the zone of *Entrecampos* was identified as the location for the Lisbon central station. I argued for the idea because it was the geometric center of the city, and the point where all the railway lines actually converged. However, major infrastructure projects, although they can greatly change the city, are always complicated because they involve extremely high investment. The idea was abandoned when the idea began to be discussed of establishing a central station in the *Expo* area at the time it was being formed, as it was considered to be the place which provided the best conditions to take a TGV (high speed rail) station. As nowadays, even at an international level, the TGV concept has started to be questioned, I would not rule out the possibility that the central station could still be in *Entrecampos*. It seems to me that today, much more than building major infrastructure, or major and substantial interventions, we need to intervene in what already exists – that is the great challenge that faces us at the moment and which the last few years have shown is possible. The whole rehabilitation intervention that has been undertaken in the center has been driven by a process that has been somewhat facilitated by the decisions taken by the Municipal Authorities (in terms of the urban rehabilitation area, the incentives, the expediting of applications, the fast-tracking of licensing and so forth). But it was also particularly driven by external factors such as the transformation that has occurred in every European city in the last five years with the growth in short-stay tourism prompted by low-cost airlines and accommodation (Airbnb and the whole system of local accommodation). All this has made it much easier to go and spend the weekend in Paris instead of spending the weekend in Porto, and for people in Paris to come to Lisbon instead of Bordeaux and so forth, increasing mobility between cities enormously. This phenomenon, by creating investment, is having the effect of accelerating urban rehabilitation and the occupation of spaces that have been vacant. In this there is a process of transformation that is multifaceted, composed of various factors — some of them contradictory — but which we have begun to follow and monitor, in an effort to correct imbalances. I think that, more and more, this is what will happen in a city like Lisbon, which has used up its land: we don't have space for grand expansion projects, we have areas where we can have projects that can function like levers to regenerate wider areas, such as the cases of the *Manutenção Militar* and the monumental zone of *Belém*, which need substantial improvement interventions. We have to accelerate the strategy of concentrating less on the city center in order to move up to the *planalto* [the higher ground]. For example, what we are trying to do in the central axis is precisely the creation of this very attractive route that currently goes as far as *Elias Garcia*, but is intended to extend through *Campo Grande* up to the *Alta de Lisboa* and will achieve the objectives that came from the plan of 1992.

AT   This extension of the city's center of built heritage and culture into other areas, and therefore into other chronologies, is important for showing that there are also architectural and urban groupings with quality comparable to the old and traditional ones. I am referring, for example, to **Alvalade** and the axis formed by the National Library, by the **Casa da Moeda** and the immense works by Pardal Monteiro. It is not a city of architecture, it is a city in which the urban grouping is so strong that it ends up supplanting the small part.

MS   There is something to which few people give due attention, but in the Master Plan the entire city is classified as an historic area. We can't restrict ourselves to the historic center, because it is the entire territory. Areas like *Almirante Reis*, the *Colónias* neighbourhood, the *Azul* neighbourhood, the *Lopes* neighbourhood, the *Alto do Restelo*, the *Olivais*, and even *Marvila* and *Chelas* — with the famous Pink Panther, notwithstanding how it actually comes to be used — have fantastic pieces of public space of great quality that should be valued as the built heritage that they are. In Lisbon, the logic must be that of intervening in the existing city. Siza's lesson with respect to the *Chiado* should now be replicated throughout the city. The great challenge being set is that of the small, practically surgical, intervention, whether at the level of buildings, groupings, or the location of certain facilities that then function as magnets for the urban life around them. This is the great choice.

The other is transport — the paradigm of mobility in the city of Lisbon must be changed. The freezing of rents since the time of the last world war, associated with the demographic polarization in Lisbon, in Porto and the Atlantic coast, led, even before the revolution of 25 April 1974, to a situation in which the poor were left in shanty towns: and worse than the shanty towns were the historic districts. When I was a student, *Alfama* was a pathological case with 2,000 inhabitants per hectare, when it was argued that new developments should have 270 inhabitants per hectare. In contrast, the middle classes left in unauthorized buildings. The first great escape was to the unauthorized buildings which were self-built, the AVOS (jointly owned properties) etc. With the revolution something very interesting happened, in which Nuno Portas, with great insight into housing policy, proposed a series of exemplary policies: the SAAL (Local Ambulatory Support Service). These were fundamentally the renovation of the shanty towns in situ, in collaboration with the inhabitants, the housing cooperatives, with the Municipal Authorities providing the land. The contracts for these housing developments resulting from partnerships between the State and Industry to build housing, with rents that were affordable for the population. Also in 1975–76, financing started to be provided for people to buy their own houses, as this was a slow process, which implied public backing or assistance. From the 1980s on, rents were frozen in the city, and increasingly more remote and cheaper housing was being offered in the outskirts, with a cost-quality relationship that clearly favored leaving Lisbon. Lisbon went from 800,000 inhabitants to 500,000, which is dramatic. We lost a third of the population in 30 years because people moved away. Worse still, despite there having been investment in public transport — the metro and the railways were improved — a formidable road network was also built, that favored the use of personal transport. In Lisbon, for every three cars in circulation, two come from outside, which gives rise to the problem of congestion in every sense – from pollution, energy usage, air quality, noise etc. We have to reverse this situation. In the last 10 years there has been a modal shift from public to private transport and public transport has lost millions of passengers, when the opposite should be occurring, mainly due to the crisis and transport policy. The great changes that have to be made are to increase the number of inhabitants in Lisbon, balancing the home-work relationship within the city itself, to significantly improve the performance of public transport and to begin to develop soft means of transport in articulation with public transport. To alter mobility in Lisbon, we have to make pavements safer and more comfortable, for people to walk, also taking into account the improvement of public health, overcome the difficulty of the city's changes in level through the use of mechanical means that complement the safer and more comfortable walking routes, increase and intensify the cycle network to make the use of bicycles safer and more attractive, and greatly improve public transport, with a new operating logic that is essential.

AT   I have a final question related to this concern with rationalizing and balancing travel, making it more sustainable for the individual and for the city, and given the very specific topography of the city of Lisbon always linked to small green spaces and connected by the metal tracks from the end of the 19th century: will this city of hills still be so resilient?

MS   This is a very important aspect. Among the great challenges — to have more residents, more work, to still maintain the identity of the city, and have more efficient and sustainable mobility — there is another vital challenge, which is to reconstruct Lisbon's landscape. It is still easy to reconstruct this landscape, specifically in the eastern part of the city, releasing valley floors that are poorly occupied, getting rid of plans that propose higher densities, to enable continuous spaces to be created that articulate the whole city. I recall that Michael Bloomberg had a project that was to have a green space 10 minutes from every home in New York. We could easily achieve this in Lisbon, not through an isolated green space, but through a continuous and walkable green space.

AT   Is this Manuel Salgado's big choice as a politician and councilor?

MS   This is my big choice: to make a densely planted public space, as permeable as possible, and stimulate the continuous reconstruction of park and green areas that can be established in this city. For example, it is possible to link *Monsanto* to the *Chelas* valley via the *Segunda Circular* Road. There are various possible interventions that could be made, using the same mid-20th century grid, but with an autonomous character, intensifying the resilience that the city always had, but that must always be permanently strengthened.