

DESCRIPTION

ALFAMA 2.0

/// RE-storation // RE-vitalisation // RE-structuring ///

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The restoration of the urban space, seen as the concatenation of corners within which actions take place and their integration into dwelling spaces in order to form a spatial continuity, has enabled this project to respond to a current reality demanded by society.

This current reality is rooted in a period of crisis in which the new macro-buildings have been forced to take a step back, making way for the growing relevance and logic of restoring existing spaces – small and large.

Conserving our heritage brings multiple benefits, including the preservation of the life and activity that takes place inside the buildings. In this instance, the analysis of users' everyday activities has resulted in the mixed programme included in the new buildings, encouraging the flow of both interior and exterior traffic, whilst retaining their essence: the walls, the tones of the ceramic tiles, the tall windows and the hustle and bustle of the streets.

In this case, the buildings spread out over an entire quarter, but not just any quarter: Alfama, nestling in the centre of Lisbon, is the birthplace of the *fado* music genre and much of Portugal's rich culture. This leads us to reconsider the importance of conserving our cities, steeped in history yet which are gradually giving in to the inexorable passing of time and which, without the right kind of intervention, could be lost. Hence the overriding need to fully understand what 'restoration' really involves.

Restoration inevitably implies a certain relation with the past; with the numerous pasts layered within the intervention space, yet also with the future: that imagined idea of place we would naturally lean towards. However, more than this, it also requires an immense capacity to work within the present. The constant layering of time, longings, crafts, materials, strategies and people. The project seeks to identify, capture and revitalise the various forms of intelligence deposited within its spaces over time, as part of its desire to restore them.

In this sense, the project aims to address the restoration of a set of buildings located in Lisbon's Historic Quarter. Rather than considering separate strategies, it considers restoration as a series of actions, designed to distinguish as little as possible between public and private, creating public and semi-public spaces that integrate into the buildings. The objective is to 'extend the quarter' inwards, connecting the spaces by means of raised walkways, linking the entire district of Alfama and enabling people to walk through it on a single level. The effect is to enhance the accessibility of a district that was gradually being abandoned, providing a lifeline for its increasingly aging population.

As this is a restoration project, the construction process inevitably becomes a long-term endeavour, and has therefore been divided into three phases: demolition, consolidation and new construction. During this process an idea emerges and gradually takes shape; namely to allow for the layering of periods, crafts, materials, strategies and people that have shaped the space over the centuries and thereby making it visible to all.

Given that the aim is to improve that which already exists, we observed that the current state of the houses is so precarious that they are gradually being abandoned to their fate. We have

therefore come up with a new concept of dwellings that open up to the exterior space through galleries, allowing for cross ventilation and light.

In short, the project represents a positive reaction to the evolutionary path that cities should tread, firing them with a sense of the contemporary, whilst retaining their essence and aesthetics, yet at the same time boosting the life within them and adopting a sensitively sustainable approach to their evolution.