

“Phantom” infrastructures and metropolitan development: a reflexion from Lisbon Metropolitan Area

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Some infrastructures, such as seaports, airports or high-speed railway, among others, for its relevance, can generate significant, territorial and others, effects at differentiated scales. These effects begin to be felt even much before their physical implementation. Its simple announcement is enough to shake sectors such as real estate, specialized consulting or the municipal and/or regional policies.

These investments, which structure the territory and even some specific sectors, are in large examples proposed in absentia of existing planning instruments or in preparation. Its public presentation represents something new, activating a set of dynamics in the private and public domains, which ultimately carry the simple announcement of a decision to the plan of concrete reality.

Beyond this automatic effects, is also important to consider the difficulty to politically decide their effective implementation by either the complexity or uncertainty but also for the associated costs. The indecision, delay and, often, the retreat in the decision carries heavy costs, sometimes unrecoverable to people, activities and territories, even if dealing with an infrastructure that never had a real existence.

The inconsistency of the announced decisions can have political origins (change of priorities), techniques (technical decision challenged either in the location plan or the project plan), financial (worsening of the economic and financial context) or coming from civil society (pressure interest groups, media campaigns of protest).

The Lisbon Metropolitan Area is a very interesting area to investigate the existence of such decisions and the respective financial effects, real estate and various instruments that support the planning and urban management. It would be possible to select several instances, whether current or historical. We will, however, look at the latest by treatment facility and adequate and relevant information collection .

The new Lisbon airport (NLA), the high-speed railway or the third crossing over the Tagus river, in Lisbon Metropolitan Area, are magnificent examples of costs that lead to indecision or retreat in the decision.

One of these announced investments is the high-speed rail (HSR). Integrating a load lanes of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), defined as strategic for the revitalization and restructuring of railways in Europe, for boosting investment in the open market, the HSR in Portugal was seen as an infrastructure that assumed an even greater role, breaking the relative isolation of the country rail in Europe and is also able to boost economic growth. In this sense, the AVF, and greater Iberian integration, encouraged Portugal to renew its rail infrastructure and to strengthen close ties with the Spanish economy, by dilating flows and thus increase the proportion of exports to the EU. The line had naturally a strong presence in LMA as well as the respective stations.

Another investment regards the new Lisbon airport that since the 60s of the last century has been proposed. With advances and retreats, involving changes in its configuration and location, in 2010, with the growing country's financing difficulties, the project of the new Lisbon airport was being consecutively postponed. From 2011 and with a new government in office is even suspended. Currently, in 2015, there is still no official government position on the construction of the new airport or in what form.

Considered as structuring projects, their promotion established disruptive dynamics in the real estate market through investments in construction, services and logistics, only mitigated by the provisional rules imposed by the Government.

From the perspective of instruments for territorial management, these decisions are taken on in absentia, forcing successive revisions of plans at national, regional, local and sectorial scale. Furthermore, a number of other documents that are part of what if can designate informal planning – strategic plans, economic development,

tourism development, etc. – they combine the future of the territories with the expected impact of those new investments.

This communication intends to reflect on this problem, since the suspension, reformulation or persistent indecision in the implementation of these major public infrastructures, as a result of the financial crisis, strategic and effective losses for the municipalities and regions concerned. There were also problems for the country, since decision's annulment, as seen in the case of NLA in Ota, involved enormous costs in financial packages designed to compensate the West region of Portugal, for the relocation of an infrastructure that, paradoxically, never existed.