Framework

The Cais do Sodré is a very central area on Lisbon's riverside which blends, in urban terms, 17th century architectural features with major undertakings to expand the port of Lisbon and build the Cascais railway line at the beginning of the 20th century (1). These characteristics naturally determined substantial distinguishing features as a public space, one which performed several uses and functions over time, which often irreversibly tainted the original design but meanwhile granted it a more and more important role in the city's everyday life and working.

Its growing importance was therefore derived from progressively introducing various modes of transport - ferries, the train, trams, buses and the underground railway - so it became the most important metropolitan transport hub, which linked both banks of the Tagus and was a crossroads for several routes through which 100,000 people a day passed (2).

Haphazard changes in the ways and means the space was used, which gradually transformed it into a road transport hub and car park, undermined the initial design's continuity, sullied its image and detracted from its function as a city centre public space and made rehabilitating it infeasible within the framework of revamping Lisbon's riverside, which began in 2009 (2).

Aims

Work was to take place in one of the five project areas defined in the Project to Revamp the Baixa Riverside (including the Ribeira das Naus and the Terreiro do Paço areas, to the east). One of the main aims set out for this area was to redefine the road traffic system and rearrange the working and layout of different types of public transport, which would shape how the whole process developed, in terms of methodology as well as the project. As a complement, pedestrian mobility was acknowledged as a crucial factor in revamping and improving the area.

In terms of the project's methodology, these issues entailed - due to their implications over a broader area, the surrounding transport system and the city as a whole - trying out several possible designs for the road network and mulling them over when opting for a solution, which defined, to an extent, this undertaking's features and made its programming more complex.