

## Neoformations on stony materials of modern building works

C. Alves<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Centro de Investigação Geológica, Ordenamento e Valorização de Recursos, Universidade do Minho, Campus de Gualtar, 4710-057 Braga, Portugal  
email :casaix@dct.uminho.pt

Stony materials applied in the built environment interact with diverse pollutants and can originate neoformations [1,2]. Microscopy studies help to characterize the chemical and textural features of these neoformations hence contributing to the understanding of the decay processes. While, in a strict perspective, implying destructive procedures that require the removal of a sample, microscopy techniques require minute amounts and can study occurrences of neoformations that can be detected at the macroscopic level.

In a study of diverse modern constructions in towns of Northern and Central Portugal were identified diverse neoformation substances in stony materials (products clearly resulting of metals corrosion were not considered in this study). The dominant inorganic coatings and stains in the studied constructions are carbonate-rich whitish ones that can present diverse morphological features. Some of these carbonate-rich coatings have showed textural features defining a kind of urban travertine and the existence of several layers suggesting diverse episodes of solutions circulation and crystals precipitation, indicating the recurrence of the neoformation processes. Phosphates aggregates were also detected in several built surfaces, including indoor areas (Fig. 1a,b). Another relatively common occurrence are efflorescences of more soluble salts, dominated by alkaline sulphates and carbonates (especially sodium sulphate) but were other salts such as alkaline nitrates (Fig. 1c,d) and chlorides and magnesium sulphates have also been occasionally found. In some buildings it was possible to observe black crusts comprising gypsum aggregates. A very rare neoformation are silica-rich stains (Fig. 1e,f) that occur associate with calcium carbonate stains and metal corrosion products. The observed neoformations show a great geochemical and textural diversity in the surfaces of stony materials of modern built works, being evidences of diverse possible pollution sources that can interact under variable environmental conditions. Besides an important role that seems to be attributable to mortars materials, there are also possible contributions from atmospheric pollutions and the presence of alkaline nitrates could be related to organic sources being admitted that they could either represent the persistence of contamination conditions from the past in the soils or the recurrence of the same polluting conditions. Also of particular interest are the textural informations indicating recurrence of neoformation episodes and the chemical associations observed even in some very small samples.

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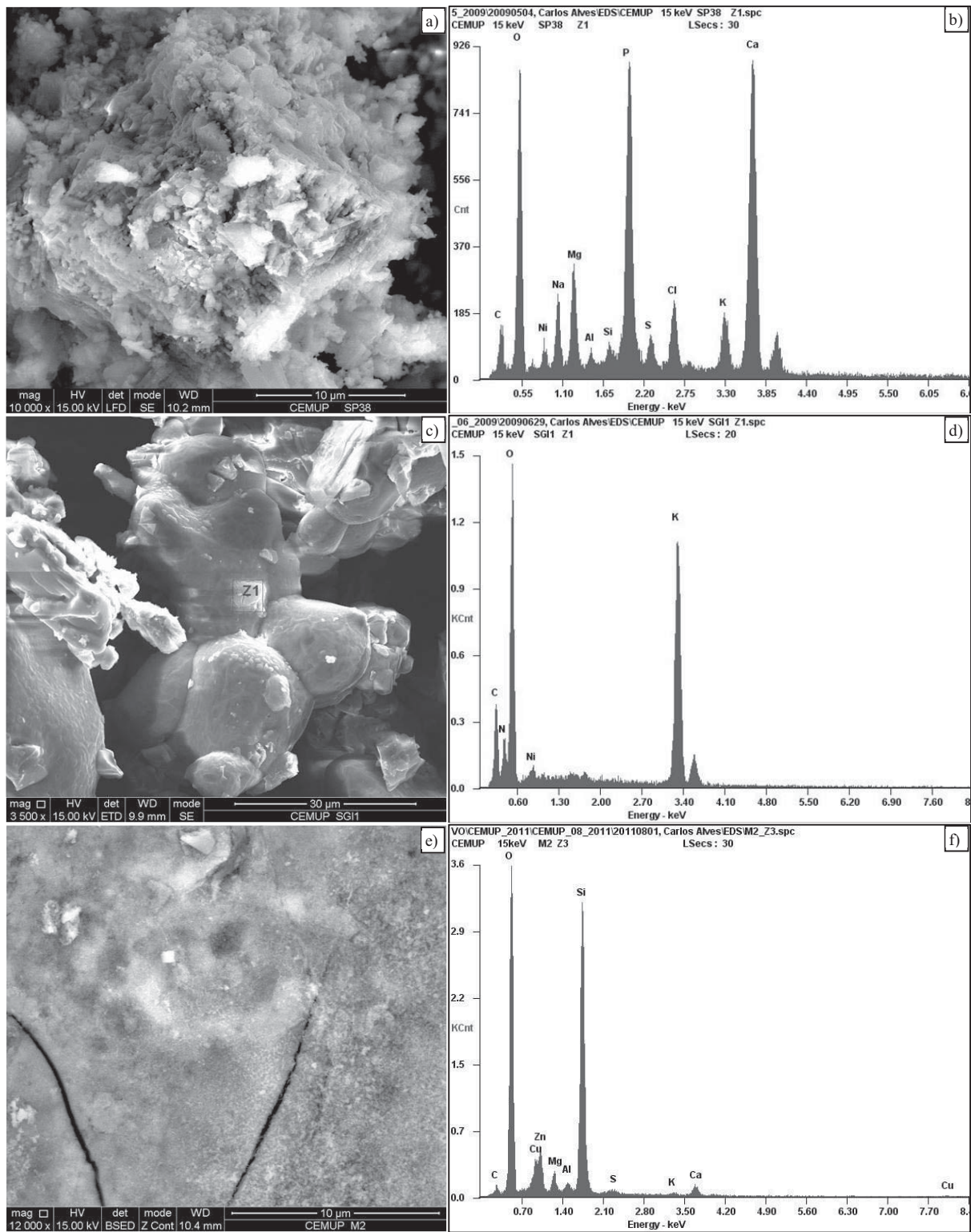


Fig. 1 – Neoformations in modern built works: a), b) phosphate aggregates; c),d) potassium nitrate; e),f) silica-rich stains. Results obtained at CEMUP laboratory (University of Oporto, Portugal).