

# **Regionalism, modernism and vernacular tradition in the architecture of Algarve, Portugal, 1925-1965**

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**Volume I**

I, Ricardo Manuel Costa Agarez, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

## Abstract

This thesis looks at the contribution of real and constructed local traditions to modern building practices and discourses in a specific region, focusing on the case of Algarve, southern Portugal, between 1925 and 1965.

By shifting the main research focus from the centre to the region, and by placing a strong emphasis on fieldwork and previously overlooked sources (the archives of provincial bodies, municipalities and architects), the thesis scrutinises canonical accounts of the interaction of regionalism with modernism. It examines how architectural 'regionalism', often discussed at a central level through the work of acknowledged metropolitan architects, was interpreted by local practices in everyday building activity. Was there a real local concern with vernacular traditions, or was this essentially a construct of educated metropolitan circles, both at the time and retrospectively? Circuits and agents of influence and dissemination are traced, the careers of locally relevant designers come to light, and a more comprehensive view of architectural production is offered.

Departing from conventional narratives that present pre-war regionalism in Portugal as a stereotype-driven, one-way central construct, the creation of a regional built identity for Algarve emerges here as the result of combined local, regional and central agencies, mediated both through concrete building practice and discourses outside architecture. Post-war regionalism appears as more than a sophisticated re-appropriation of vernacular features by cultured architects to overcome the shortcomings of both modernist orthodoxy and official stylistic conservatism: the thesis shows how Algarve's traditional features allowed modernism to be pragmatically restyled as locally sensitive *and* keep its fundamentals unquestioned; and the architects' authority to be reasserted where non-architects dominated. Tradition became the key to architecture's future. Regionalism, a consistent undercurrent of twentieth-century architecture, resurfaced and was morphed by modernism, with mutual benefit. In Algarve, vernacular tradition and regional agency appear as not mere footnotes in the narrative of modernism, but as part of its main text.

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

**ACVR/CCR:** Arquivo Carlos Ventura Ramos / Carlos Chambers Ramos fonds

**ACVR/OR:** Arquivo Carlos Ventura Ramos / Orlando Ribeiro fonds

**ADF/AHMF:** Arquivo Distrital de Faro / Arquivo Histórico Municipal de Faro fonds

**AHMOP:** Arquivo Histórico do Ministério das Obras Públicas

**AIPF:** Arquivo Inácio Peres Fernandes

**AJO:** Arquivo Jorge de Oliveira

**AMFC:** Arquivo Manuel Ferreira Chaves

**AMGC:** Arquivo Manuel Gomes da Costa

**AML:** Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa

**ANTT/AOS:** Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo / Arquivo Oliveira Salazar fonds

**ANTT/EPJS:** Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo / Empresa Pública Jornal O Século fonds

**ANTT/MI:** Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo / Ministério do Interior fonds

**ANTT/SNI:** Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo / Secretariado Nacional de Informação fonds

**BNP:** Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal

**CAP:** Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine

**CCDRAlg:** Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Algarve

**CGD/AH:** Caixa Geral de Depósitos / Arquivo Histórico

**CMF/AHMF:** Câmara Municipal de Faro / Arquivo Histórico Municipal de Faro

**CMF/SAO:** Câmara Municipal de Faro / Serviço de Arquivo de Obras

**CMF/SSOP:** Câmara Municipal de Faro / Secretaria da Secção de Obras Particulares

**CMF/MM:** Câmara Municipal de Faro / Museu Municipal

**CMO/SOPM:** Câmara Municipal de Olhão / Secção de Obras Particulares e Municipais

**CMO/AHM:** Câmara Municipal de Olhão / Arquivo Histórico Municipal

**CMO/AHM-GICPSA:** Câmara Municipal de Olhão / Arquivo Histórico Municipal – Grémio dos Industriais de Conservas de Peixe do Sotavento do Algarve fonds

**CMP/DTPU:** Câmara Municipal de Portimão / Departamento Técnico de Planeamento e Urbanização

**CMT/AMT:** Câmara Municipal de Tavira / Arquivo Municipal de Tavira

**CMVRS/AM:** Câmara Municipal de Vila Real de Santo António / Arquivo Municipal

**CPCP:** Consórcio Português de Conservas de Peixe

**CTT/SGRF:** Correios de Portugal, Serviço de Gestão de Recursos Físicos archive

- DGEMN:** Direcção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais
- DGPA/B:** Direcção-Geral das Pescas e Aquicultura / Biblioteca
- DGSU:** Direcção-Geral dos Serviços de Urbanização
- FCG/BA:** Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian / Biblioteca de Arte
- FCG/BA-RL:** Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian / Biblioteca de Arte – Raul Lino fonds
- FCG/BA-LCSM:** Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian / Biblioteca de Arte – Cristino da Silva fonds
- FPC/CTT:** Fundação Portuguesa das Comunicações / Correios, Telégrafos e Telefones archive
- GAT:** Gabinete de Apoio Técnico
- IGFPSS/DPI:** Instituto de Gestão Financeira e Patrimonial da Segurança Social / Departamento do Património Imobiliário archive
- IHRU/DGEMN:** Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana / Direcção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais archive
- IHRU/DRH:** Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana / Departamento de Recursos Humanos archive (Almada)
- IHRU/APML:** Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana / Arquivo Pessoal Manuel Laginha fonds
- IHRU/CCR:** Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana / Arquivo Pessoal Carlos Chambers Ramos fonds
- INTP:** Instituto Nacional do Trabalho e Previdência
- IPCP:** Instituto Português de Conservas de Peixe
- IPM:** Instituto Português de Museus
- MEC/SG/AF:** Ministério da Educação e Ciência / Secretaria Geral / Arquivo Fotográfico
- MM/ISN:** Ministério da Marinha / Instituto de Socorros a Náufragos.
- MOP:** Ministério das Obras Públicas
- OA:** Ordem dos Arquitectos
- PCM/AOS:** Presidência do Conselho de Ministros / Arquivo Oliveira Salazar
- RA:** Ricardo Agarez
- SNA:** Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos
- UA/A-DUF:** Universidade do Algarve / Arquivo – Direcção de Urbanização de Faro fonds
- VRSA:** Vila Real de Santo António
- 
- FOiA:** French Original in Appendix
- GOiA:** German Original in Appendix
- IOiA:** Italian Original in Appendix
- POiA:** Portuguese Original in Appendix



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## Introduction

### “To turn the witchcraft against the wizard”

"There are many ways to bring water to one's mill. Arguments can be found to demonstrate that tradition has less weight than it seems. But to accept it, and to derive from it a means of defence for modern architecture, is to fight the opponent in the opponent's own field; it is *to turn the witchcraft against the wizard*, which is much more useful than creating one's own witchcrafts."

Victor Palla, 1949<sup>1</sup>

In 1949, Portuguese architect Victor Palla sought to illustrate the role of tradition in the fortune of post-war modern architecture using a popular epigram. Sixty years on, this enigmatic formulation was a starting point for my thesis. How, I asked, did tradition become wizardry for modern architecture? What or whose tradition, exactly? To be turned against whom?

This dissertation set out to study how local traditions were understood in modern-day building practices in a specific region. It uses the example of Algarve, southern Portugal, between the 1920s and the 1960s to investigate how the presence of contemporary architectural discourse was negotiated with the real or perceived customs of a particular locality. Throughout that period, concerns with the use of local and regional building traditions re-emerged frequently, sometimes in unexpected turns, as Palla's words epitomise. By the mid century, worldwide, modern architecture's mill still turned but there was general awareness of its need to somehow channel previously neglected streams, among which were building's own traditions; this was in the architects' discourse of the time, and later became part of architectural history's canon. It was my initial purpose to examine how, in the decades that preceded this renewed interest, the seemingly parallel currents I provisionally named *modernist* and *regionalist* modulated. Two often-contrasted themes and their relationship could, I hoped, be framed more comprehensively through a fine-grained enquiry. In particular, I aimed to observe how such modulation took place in a regional context – to borrow the local standpoint for my analysis. Accounts of regionalist architecture and its variants are largely the result of metropolitan initiatives, based on metropolitan sources; moreover, and despite the apparent paradox, constructs of regional identity are generally seen in Portugal as central, imposed on peripheral subjects with little contribution from these. My project asked what, if anything, could

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<sup>1</sup> Victor Palla, "Lugar da Tradição," *Arquitetura* 21, no. 28 (1949): 5. My italics. POiA (see Vol. II, Appendix 1, Citation 1).

the region itself, its agents, documents and developments, bring to a discussion of regionalism in building practice?

I will argue that Algarve offered a good case for such a study; yet the questions that initially motivated this research could be applied equally well to other temporal and geographic circumstances. Irrespective of contexts, the argument entails the use of existing and widely employed keywords, such as *regionalism*, *modernism* and *vernacular*. Throughout the development of the project, those broad, challenging terms acquired specificity and new questions branched off the primary set.

### Keywords

“The study of local conditions, in a *pure and elevated regionalism*, where routine and academism do not dominate and imagination is free to reshuffle the dice – placing the architect in the position of the untiring researcher – can lead to surprisingly simple, effective, and even elegant results.”

Manuel Laginha, 1948<sup>2</sup>

**Regionalism**, reinterpreted and reformulated, was key in the Algarvian architect Manuel Laginha’s modern architecture of the late 1940s. The quote above, characteristic of his rationale, implied two forms of regionalism: *academic* and *pure*, the latter as a reaction to the former and both conveyed as variations in building style. Yet regionalism has been given a different sense in contemporary architectural discourse, the *ism* referring to its potential as local agency condenser, charged with attributes that far exceed matters of style. To write about regionalism in peripheral Portuguese regions, in the mid century, raised therefore compelling questions: how *regionalist* was that building practice, how much agency and intention was there and by whom was it exerted? How much of it stemmed from engrained local tradition – that is, how *regional* was such practice, determined by pragmatism more than by strategy, well before it could be called *regionalist*?

Theoretical constructs of architectural culture such as critical regionalism have built on the binary oppositions between a “critically resistant architecture” and “free-standing aesthetic objects,”<sup>3</sup> between literal and non-literal (or de-familiarised) interpretations of regional traditional features,<sup>4</sup> extracting from such distinctions moral lessons deemed useful for contemporary design practices. Regionalism can be good if resistant (critical), but it is reproachable if simply replicating features identified with local tradition – and even dangerous as an instrument of nationalism.<sup>5</sup> A regional stance critical of both “the placeless homogeneity of much mainstream modernism and the

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<sup>2</sup> [Manuel Laginha], “2. Prédio em Loulé,” *Arquitetura*, no. 26 (1948): 14. My italics. POiA (Citation 2).

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Frampton, “Critical Regionalism Revisited,” in *Vernacular Modernism*, ed. Maiken Umbach and Bernd-Rüdiger Hüppauf (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 194.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Liane Lefaivre, “A Forgotten Episode in the Suppression of Regionalism” (*Globalisation or Regionalism?* Symposium, The Bartlett School of Architecture, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, *Critical Regionalism* (Munich: Prestel, 2003).

superficial historicism of so much postmodern work”<sup>6</sup>: it is in the frame of this double critique, and in its early 1980s context, that such concepts of regionalism must be read. They cannot, I believe, be applied retrospectively without the risk of leaving out the nuances of sixty-year-old works devised with rather different concerns in very specific circumstances. To add to the problems raised by contemporary concepts of regionalism, there were cases (such as the Portuguese) where mid-century practices used regional and traditional elements to criticise and resist not modernism or postmodernism but what they saw as conservative and retrograde. In fact, as Palla’s and Laginha’s words implied, those could be means of reinvigorating modern architecture, not of superseding it.

Furthermore, such theoretical constructs are moulded on the works of the foremost names of a given context, and on its main centres. What happens when the object of research is displaced from the centre to the periphery, and from the outstanding works to everyday building? This seems a necessary move to further our understanding of the role of regionalism at regional and local scales. What is produced and experienced as high architecture does not necessarily have a direct or immediate impact on local practices; rather, it undergoes prolonged interaction and filtering, potentially resulting in gaps between *regionalist* strategies of central extraction and their *regional*, concrete manipulation in the everyday. My work deals, to a large extent, with the often-overlooked everyday production that fills our built environment and constitutes the irrefutable expanded field of architecture’s past; without it, regionalism in building cannot be discussed. This would, therefore, be an opportunity to suspend prevailing conceptual frames and well-known works and authors, and seek a more minute account, closer to the essentials of everyday building in a peripheral setting. Political, social, cultural and economic circumstances would have to be brought into relation with building activity, and observed at regional and local scales. The outcome of such an exercise could be a wider understanding of a complex subject and add to “the ‘many voices’ of a multilateral and multifaceted modernity”<sup>7</sup> that have captured architectural history’s attention in recent times.

“If the *modern* expression [of the design] seems appropriate (...), it represents not an attempt to reach a questionable *modernism*, but the anticipation of a well-balanced building that (...) will have architectural value and considerable scale.”

Jorge de Oliveira, 1954<sup>8</sup>

**Modernism** is another keyword of this project. In the above-quoted rationale of the Algarve-based architect Jorge de Oliveira, *modernism* was a passing fashion and *modern* was commendable as an expression, assimilating meanings well beyond architectural style. Modernism is a wide trope in architectural history: it applies, in both Portuguese and English, to practices ranging from Art Deco-inspired designs to the interwar dissemination of Modern Movement models and

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<sup>6</sup> Keith Eggner, "Placing Resistance," *Journal of Architectural Education* 55, no. 4 (2002), 228.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino, "North *versus* South: Introduction," in *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean*, ed. Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino (London: Routledge, 2010), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Project statement 1954.10.14 (Faro-CMF/SAO-426/1954). My italics. POiA (Citation 3).

their post-war, mature counterparts. Modern architecture, in turn, comes ring-fenced in the difficult definition of *architecture* and its boundaries: for a project focused on building practices both by architects and non-architects, such category could prove inadequate. In this light, modernism as *in the modern manner*, progressive and keeping-up-with-the-times, and not confined by professional distinctions, seemed a more flexible and encompassing term, and was preferred here.

How did *modernist* architecture and building practices develop in the first half of the century in Algarve? How did the national and international currents of the period manifest themselves in that peripheral setting, and by whose initiative? What were, if any, the local, regional and national forms of reaction to such currents? What non-modernist expressions were there, and how did they look to tradition for support? (Was this the same tradition Palla saw as a possible “wizardry” for modern architecture?) How was *modern* used, manipulated and resisted throughout the period? By paying attention both to modernist and non-modernist practices, it was my intention to avoid the moral bias that prevailed in Portuguese architectural culture until recently.

In Portugal, the trauma of forty years of Estado Novo dictatorship (1933-1974) impacted on post-revolutionary cultural production, and the restricted circle of architectural thought and education was no exception. After 1974, the history of architects and buildings became partly an account of resistance and collaboration, of guilt and redemption. The period was generally divided by authors into three main episodes: an early stage of experimentation with modernist forms (until the mid 1930s), an interlude of conservative, backward practice with nationalist purposes, and the late-modernist episode in the 1950s and 1960s, in which a politically engaged new generation of architects was said to have overcome official resistance and caught-up with post-war international trends. From the 1980s on, the debate was centred on whether or not the 1940s conservative interlude had seen coherent state policies and individuals creating a Estado Novo architectural style; and the extent to which architects had been manipulated, or had wilfully collaborated, in this endeavour<sup>9</sup> (for many early modernists went on to experiment with the lexicon of traditionalism and historicism, apparently betraying their modern inheritance). Although some authors did point to the variety of influences and determining factors over such an extended period,<sup>10</sup> many chose to focus on the state’s power to impose retrograde formulas.<sup>11</sup> To accentuate the sense of a strong and decisive 1950s architectural turning point, most late-twentieth-century accounts appropriated a post-war narrative that emphasised the struggle of modernist architects to overcome conservative constraints; this narrative was titled, in 1950, the ‘Battle of Modern Architecture’.<sup>12</sup> Non-modernist

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<sup>9</sup> E.g. Nuno Portas, "A Evolução da Arquitectura Moderna em Portugal," in Bruno Zevi, *História da Arquitectura Moderna* (Lisboa: Arcádia, [1978]).

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Pedro Vieira de Almeida, "Arquitectura e Poder," in Ana Tostões, Annette Becker, and Wilfried Wang (org.), *Arquitectura do Século XX. Portugal* (Munich: Prestel, [1998]).

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Nuno Teotónio Pereira and José Manuel Fernandes, col., "A Arquitectura do Estado Novo de 1926 a 1959," in *O Estado Novo das Origens ao Fim da Antarcia 1926-1959* (Lisboa: Fragmentos, 1987), and Nuno Teotónio Pereira, "O Combate Pela Arquitectura Moderna em Portugal," *Atlântida*, no. 1 (1999).

<sup>12</sup> [Manuel Laginha], "Moradia no Algarve," *Arquitectura*, no. 35 (1950).

practices remained the preserve of specialised studies,<sup>13</sup> and largely unpopular in contemporary architectural culture. Holding on to the romantic idea of a resistant post-war modernism, contemporary authors also dismissed its subsequent popularisation as industrial-scale degeneration; they remained hesitant to admit that the prolific work produced in the late 1950s and 1960s was evidence of the adoption of modernism by the fascist establishment – that there was modernist Estado Novo architecture. State-imposed conservatism and romanticised modernism are deep-set conceptions that my project seeks to question.

"What shall we do? Show them we never had a national style, and that we merely adopted what came from abroad? Sacrilege! Tell them that *the only truly Portuguese architecture in this land is the folk one*, born straight out of the needs and possibilities of the people? And that the one architecture that modernism is closer to is precisely the folk one?"

Anon., 1953<sup>14</sup>

**Vernacular** is the third widely used term to require particularisation here. Its association with *architecture* is recent, dating from the 1950s, when the appropriation of traditional buildings by architects to legitimise functionalist principles became commonplace.<sup>15</sup> In Portuguese language, it did not gain currency until later: as in the quote above, post-war modernists increasingly discussed the qualities of *folk* architecture (my preferred translation for Portuguese *popular*), while before then authors, designers and other sources most commonly referred to such artefacts as *regional*. This variation notwithstanding, the concern with what is now termed *vernacular* was consistent throughout the last century, and my study examines the nuances that anticipated the mid-century levelling of its usage. The worldwide “discovery” of vernacular features by architects has been under architectural history’s scrutiny; yet it seemed likely that all agents of the built environment had been negotiating with traditional methods and forms, in their everyday activity, long before that. The suspicion that this would be particularly clear in peripheral locations determined the choice of context for my case study. Critical of the use of *vernacular* to encompass very diverse artefacts, this text proposes the broader category of *building traditions*.

My project did not intend to discuss the features of Algarve’s vernacular buildings (which have been recently studied in detail,<sup>16</sup> and consistently throughout the last century). It turned to the ways in which such features were manipulated in formal building practice, and how certain types constructed with the Algarve traditional elements – often formulated into *regional* types – originated, were disseminated, consolidated and dismantled. Specifically, my investigation focused on the use

<sup>13</sup> E.g. José Manuel Fernandes, *Português Suave* (Lisboa: IPPAR, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> "Moradia. Maurício de Vasconcelos," *A Arquitectura Portuguesa...* 46, no. 3-4 (1953). My italics. POiA (Citation 4).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Robert Brown and Daniel Maudlin, "Concepts of Vernacular Architecture," in *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory*, ed. C. Greig Crysler, Stephen Cairns and Hilde Heynen (London: SAGE, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> E.g. José Manuel Fernandes, *A Casa Popular do Algarve* ([Faro]: CCDRALg, 2008), and João Vieira Caldas, "Verdade e Ficção Acerca da Casa Rural Vernácula do Baixo Algarve," in *Cidade e Mundos Rurais* (Tavira: CMT, 2010).

of traditional features in both modernist and non-modernist designs: were these selective, or systematic, appropriations? What (if anything) did they highlight and ignore? What were the boundaries of the so-called vernacular – where was the line between formal and informal practices? Finally, do those reputedly spontaneous buildings, upon which visions of regional tradition were constructed, have a history that can be documented?

My interest in the boundaries between formal and informal building practices partly explains the inclusion here of works by architects and non-architects. Furthermore, this was a consequence of the displacement of the research subject to a peripheral setting: in a remote region of Portugal in the twentieth century, the larger part of the formally created built environment would not have been designed by architects. Lastly, previous experience suggested that non-architect designers play an essential part in the dissemination of models and currents, often facilitating the renewal of everyday customs.<sup>17</sup> There was, thus, a clear intention to accept this condition and explore it. Who were these non-architect designers? What was their architectural culture, and how did it contribute to the developments under scrutiny? Frequently in this text, the reader will find that *building practice* has been preferred over *architecture* to describe a wide range of activities included in the production of a peripheral built environment.

### **1925-1965, Algarve**

The initial time frame for this project, the middle decades of the twentieth century, was expanded during the course of the research. Although the bulk of cases presented date from the 1940s and 1950s, stepping back to the early decades of 1900 proved essential to trace the development of issues that were questioned and revised in mid-century years. The dates chosen to title this work are meaningful but above all symbolic: 1925 saw the first publication of a work by an important metropolitan architect in Algarve (Carlos Ramos and his Bairro Operário in Olhão), and 1965 was the “airport year”. The opening of an international airport in Faro was the hinge of a dramatic change in Algarve’s built environment, when the process of transformation of an agrarian society into a tourism-driven one was accelerated. Matters of regional building identity were then increasingly taken over by large-scale leisure and commercial architecture, altering the entire framework of production and reception. Such a change was piecemeal: it started in the late-1950s, and this threshold stage is discussed in my work. Yet it was the project’s stated intention to leave out the last third of the century – a time when a radically different Algarve emerged, where regional identity was commoditised to a previously unknown scale. In what regards international architectural culture, in turn, the mid-1960s were also markers of change, and essential questions regarding modernism, vernacular, materiality, technology and history, shifted significantly.

The first six decades of the century were crucial in shaping the relation between regionalism and nationalism in Portugal, a relationship whose traits form the background to this project.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Ricardo Agarez, *O Moderno Revisitado* (Lisboa: CML, 2009).



Especially after the institution of a republic (1910), Portuguese nationalism was intricately related to regionalism. These were not conflicting concepts: a province was then seen as a small-scale fatherland, and regionalism was an indispensable preliminary for true patriotism, instrumental in the process of fabricating national traditions.<sup>18</sup> Ethnography participated in the exploration of Portuguese regional folk culture, assembling a “gallery of typical portraits” all of which represented, in their own way, the essence of nationality.<sup>19</sup> Nationhood building through ethnography, and ontological equivalence of the regional and the national, were transported from republican Portugal on to the fascist period. For Estado Novo, regional diversity was devoid of conflict potential and understood as “chromatic variation within the same.”<sup>20</sup> Even the signs of strong cultural distinction – represented by the Muslim inheritance in southern Portugal – were not disguised but highlighted in such *unity in diversity*. From the 1950s on, anthropologists systematised diversity, grounding national identity in Portugal’s “pluralist ethnogenealogy.”<sup>21</sup> In short, national and regional identities were not seen as incompatible, either in democratic or dictatorial times, but as fundamentally complementing each other. In this frame, regional identity was not merely desirable: it was essential.

I believe Algarve played a special part in this construct of national diversity, and that was one reason to choose the region for this investigation. In the last century, it still combined the perceived mystery and allure of an exotic land, a former Moorish kingdom on European soil, with the evidences of a well-defined cultural region, distant and isolated until very late. As such, it was ideal material for the kaleidoscopic construct of modern-age Portugal. In the reputedly superficial regional types that made up 1930s national-regionalism, Algarve was perhaps the easiest to outline. Its Mediterranean-like features within an Atlantic country were subject to apparently straightforward stereotype during the conservative years, allegedly prescribed by central authorities (Lisbon) and received with passivity by locals. These were, however, preconceived notions instilled by general historical accounts, the same that appropriated the above-mentioned heroic narrative of post-war modernism overcoming conservative resistance. A close-up observation of events at the local and regional scales could show the degree and direction of control exerted by central, regional and local authorities, in a way that a central-minded research could not.

A second explanation for choosing Algarve lay in what seemed to be this region’s unique characteristic: its being simultaneously seductive for the stereotype creators of the conservative years *and* for the modernist-minded designers who, before and after that interval, seemed equally eager to associate their contemporary proposals with regional idiosyncrasies. When preparing the project I found persistent references to the proximity between Algarve’s pared-down, elemental-solid buildings, entirely whitewashed, and modernism’s formal palette. Moreover, the effect of similar Mediterranean *vernaculars* (the Balearics, Capri and the Greek islands) on other European

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Rui Ramos, “A Segunda Fundação (1890-1926),” in *História de Portugal*, ed. José Mattoso (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> João Leal, *Etnografias Portuguesas, 1870-1970* (Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 2000), 57

<sup>20</sup> Joaquim Pais de Brito, *Onde Mora o Franklin?* (Lisboa: Museu Nacional de Etnologia, 1995), 11.

<sup>21</sup> Leal (2000), 59.

modernists and pre-modernists is well known. Such specificity within the Portuguese context seemed worthy of investigation.

Finally, my interest in Algarve was grounded on previous research experience. Having studied the work of the region's first mid-century modernist, Manuel Laginha, based on the architect's archive, I came across an unexpectedly clear and consistent discourse on the need for modern architecture to engage with regional identity, if it was to survive. Laginha's short but intense private practice, which peaked in the 1950s, yielded a series of concrete expressions of his commitment to an alternative modernism, mostly materialised in his homeland and supported by eloquent writings.<sup>22</sup> This awareness prompted me to look for other agents, moments, modes and products of interaction between architecture and regional building practice in Algarve.

By looking at Algarve I intended to study a subject (regionalism) in a context (regional) where it seems particularly relevant and not sufficiently discussed. Despite its specificities, I hoped this project's approach could be replicated in other contexts and illuminate other little-studied areas of architectural history.

## References

The presence of vernacular and regional influence in modern architecture culture, particularly in the Mediterranean context, has been the subject of important work in the last two decades. My project was influenced specifically by the edited volumes of Lejeune and Sabatino,<sup>23</sup> Umbach and Hüppauf,<sup>24</sup> and Goldhagen and Legault,<sup>25</sup> and by individual studies of Sabatino,<sup>26</sup> Heynen,<sup>27</sup> Birksted,<sup>28</sup> and Pavlides.<sup>29</sup> My reading of the vernacular as a concept and word, and of related concepts, owes much to those of Collins,<sup>30</sup> Oliver,<sup>31</sup> Forty,<sup>32</sup> and Brown and Maudlin,<sup>33</sup> as well as to the series of essays gathered by Oliver.<sup>34</sup> On the dissemination of modern architecture and its appropriation by peripheral communities, architects and non-architects in everyday architecture (in a form of reversed "vernacularisation"), the works of Lara on Belo Horizonte,

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ricardo Agarez, "O Centro de Assistência Social Polivalente de Loulé no Arquivo do Arquitecto Manuel Laginha," *Monumentos* 23 (2005).

<sup>23</sup> *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean* (2010).

<sup>24</sup> *Vernacular Modernism* (2005).

<sup>25</sup> *Anxious Modernisms* (Montréal and Cambridge, MA: Canadian Centre for Architecture and MIT Press, 2000).

<sup>26</sup> "Ghosts and Barbarians," *Journal of Design History* 21, no. 4 (2008).

<sup>27</sup> "Anonymous Architecture as Counter-image," *The Journal of Architecture* 13, no. 4 (2008).

<sup>28</sup> *Modernism and the Mediterranean* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> "Four Approaches to Regionalism in Architecture," in *Critical Regionalism*, ed. Spyros Amourgis (Pomona: California State Polytechnic University, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1750-1950* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).

<sup>31</sup> *Shelter and Society*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. ([London]: Barrie and Jenkins, 1976 [1969]).

<sup>32</sup> *Words and Buildings* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> "Concepts of Vernacular Architecture" (2012).

<sup>34</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Vernacular Architecture of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Brazil,<sup>35</sup> and Tavares on Ovar, Portugal,<sup>36</sup> were especially inspiring. Canizaro's useful anthology illustrates regionalism's multiple faces and theories.<sup>37</sup> It includes Colquhoun's "Critique of Regionalism,"<sup>38</sup> a lucid account of how this trope has been consistently present in western practice throughout the last two centuries, and associated, by adhesion or repulsion, with many aspects and routes of such practice. Regionalism and historicism, and eclecticism, and nationalism, and avant-gardes: regionalism as an underground current that consistently emerges and interacts with other tensions of architectural practice and discourse – a reading that influenced my own understanding of the Portuguese case. From the field of regional and national identity negotiations in the European context, I found reference in Moravánszky's sophisticated study of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy,<sup>39</sup> with its careful look at agent networking, inter-regional dissemination and modulating conceptions of regionalism; and in Vigato's detailed account of twentieth-century regional architecture in France.<sup>40</sup> Such works provide a necessary background to the mid-twentieth-century reassessment of regionalism in architectural discourse.

Matters of national identity through architecture and tradition/modernity dualities have weighed on Portuguese culture throughout the century; consequently, Portuguese scholarship visited them frequently, providing a basis for further research.<sup>41</sup> However, such accounts have observed developments mainly from a metropolitan standpoint and provided overall views based on the best-known, and best-loved, works and designers, seldom stopping to sift through local sources and small artefacts; the few exceptions<sup>42</sup> confirm the rule. Modern architecture in Algarve, in turn, has been recently worked on, both within large-span, general surveys<sup>43</sup> and in monographic studies.<sup>44</sup> Yet again such inaugural studies focus on the (relatively few) works and designers that best conform to the standards of metropolitan architectural culture, often extending to these readings the grand narratives and engrained biases of that same culture. Building on existing studies but departing from the established views, further work can investigate the social and cultural circumstances of building practices in Algarve, their background and regional/local influence, the

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<sup>35</sup> *The Rise of Popular Modernist Architecture in Brazil* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> *Francisco Farinbas* ([Porto]: Dafne, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> *Architectural Regionalism* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Originally published as "Osservazioni sul concetto di regionalismo," *Casabella* 56, no. 592 (1992).

<sup>39</sup> *Competing Visions* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> *L' Architecture Régionaliste* (Paris: Editions Norma, 1994).

<sup>41</sup> E.g. José António Bandeirinha, *Quinas Vivas* (Porto: FAUP, 1996), João Paulo Martins, "Portuguesismo: Nacionalismos e Regionalismos na Acção da DGEMN," in *Caminhos do Património (1929-1999)*, ed. Margarida Alçada and Maria Inácia Teles Grilo (Lisboa: DGEMN, 1999), Ana Vaz Milheiro, *A Construção do Brasil* (Porto: FAUP, 2005), and Paula André Pinto, "Arquitectura Moderna e Portuguesa" (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, 2010).

<sup>42</sup> E.g. Tavares (2008), and Ana Tostões and João Vieira Caldas, ed. *João Correia Rebelo* (Angra do Heroísmo: Instituto Açoriano de Cultura, 2002).

<sup>43</sup> José Manuel Fernandes, *Arquitectura no Algarve* (Faro: CCDRALg, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> José Manuel Fernandes, "António Vicente de Castro" exposition (Portimão, 2004), ———. "De Jorge de Oliveira a Gomes da Costa," *Monumentos*, no. 24 (2006), and Gonçalo Vargas, "Manuel Gomes da Costa" exposition (Faro, 2009).

dissemination processes in which they participate and the myriad of agents, designers, institutions and works that defined them.

### **Methods and sources**

The research supporting this project followed two parallel lines: the collection of built evidence through fieldwork, and the archival investigation aimed at gathering primary data on the examples surveyed. These were initially chosen based on observation: the building's external features had to display elements that seemed particular to the region or locality. The sample also had to be representative of diverse geographical and socio-economical contexts, functions, private and public patrons, central and local commissions, small- and large-scale works. Upon verification that a concern with regional or local building identity existed at the time of design and was documented in the archives, the example was finally included in the sample, or otherwise excluded.

This combined process (fieldwork/archival) was determined by three conditions. First, the everyday buildings that line the streets of Algarvian towns and villages cannot generally be found in publications. Second, the objects published in some of the books mentioned above are largely repeated with little empirical evidence. And third, the original exchange of the identity negotiation I was looking to uncover can only be found in the archives. Over the course of the project I have identified and recorded c. 450 buildings and building ensembles across Algarve, and read c. 750 files in the archives of architects, municipal planning offices and regional government bodies. Considering these and the national archives, national and specialized libraries and central government departments in Lisbon, the research was conducted in over thirty different locations. Forty years of planning applications, funding submission files, design and building processes, correspondence, central government and local council minutes and a range of other documents were scrutinised. Since different archives yield different data and require different approaches altogether,<sup>45</sup> it seemed essential to ensure access to a variety of sources. For example: if a design proposal generated a dispute between a government department and a municipality, this could only be fully covered by accessing the records of both sides of the conversation. Furthermore, using local sources extensively was essential in a project structured upon the displacement of the researcher's standpoint to the periphery.

The insistence on primary sources was not merely driven by concerns with quantity but especially with quality. This stems from a strategy of giving (at least) equal importance to the drawn *and* written documents that substantiate building practice. Written project statements supporting planning applications, in particular, were privileged vehicles for Portuguese mid-century designers to convey information other than technical and functional. They often contained elaborate explanations for what was then called the "architectural stance" (*partido arquitectónico*): the set of principles and concerns, not only formal but also ethical and even philosophical, behind a given

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Ricardo Agarez, "'The Gleaners and I.' Architecture in Archives," *Comma. International Journal on Archives* 2009, no. 1 (2009).

design proposal. It will become clear throughout the work how these pieces of writing, produced for bureaucratic purposes and hidden away in seemingly arid planning files, proved a remarkable source, invaluable complements to the drawn and built material.

Drawings, writings and buildings (in photographic records, from both the archives and fieldwork), along with bibliography and other printed sources, formed the bulk of my material. They were completed, whenever possible, by a direct access to the designers and their private archives. Through the designers themselves, their families or host institutions, I studied the estates of three of the foremost architects working in Algarve in the period (Manuel Laginha, Jorge de Oliveira and Manuel Gomes da Costa, whom I also interviewed), as well as of architects who worked in Lisbon on key projects for the region (Raul Lino, Carlos Ramos, Inácio Peres Fernandes, Cristino da Silva, Jorge Chaves). Such sources, however valuable, posed challenges: largely fragmented, often no more than small pieces in the puzzle, they had to be collated with the official building records if the works were to be seen, as was my intention, as more than mere design products. Personal testimonies, in turn, were included with full awareness of the shortcomings associated with oral history as a research tool. In fact, its effects of distortion (personal biases, nostalgia and the influence of collective and retrospective versions of the past<sup>46</sup>) have been not only recognised here but also occasionally used as a starting point for discussion. Prevailing narratives, many perpetuated by oral history, were questioned through archival research, had their subtext explored and their significance revised.

This brings me to the problems presented by the official archives. In most of my research sites, the term *archive* is a euphemism for what would be best described as deposits. Local planning departments, forced to keep all applications as legal evidence, generally treat them as current administration documents, with little or no description and control procedures in place. It is largely impossible, for instance, to find one planning application through the address of the corresponding building; or simply to be assured that a given building did, or did not, undergo such planning procedure to begin with. The same applies to many central and regional government archives, where the study and description of older fonds, often unrelated to the host institution's current tenets, have been neglected. This state of affairs significantly hindered the research campaigns and their schedule. On the other hand, it did entail unusual opportunities: in municipal archives where there were no catalogues available, I was granted direct and unlimited access to entire planning application series, generally stored in chronological order. The series were never complete, with significant gaps in the early decades of the century and other flaws (which I will describe in the text). However, this allowed me to read through forty years of such documents, therefore adding examples to my sample that would have eluded the initial sample collection. A wealth of metadata

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Alistair Thomson, "Memory and Remembering in Oral History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

was hereby made available, namely the prevalence of a given designer or client in a certain moment, and the everyday workings of municipal planning offices.

My research strategy produced rewarding results. The set of questions placed at the start of the project was multiplied and enriched by the material yielded by such an investment in archival sources, prompting new questions and contradicting preconceptions, others' and mine. One of this project's strongest points is that in it, the archives were not merely employed to corroborate pre-conceived ideas but were at the root of much of what is discussed. It resulted in the construction of an open-ended database of Algarve's built environment, a "larder," as it were, of projects, buildings, designers, clients, officials, institutions and other elements to which I could turn to to develop my argument. The purpose of this thesis, however, was not to show the full extent of the "larder" – I have not exhausted its contents by any means – but to draw on it to address previously identified questions while letting the material suggest other enquiries.

### Structure

This work is divided into four large chapters, combined in two parts. **Part I** is dedicated to dissecting the way in which Algarve's built environment was understood in metropolitan spheres, and its building traditions codified. Within it, **Chapter 1** enquires the creation of regional models for architecture outside the discipline. In a region often identified with its built environment, it seemed likely that repeated depictions of certain features would contribute to the creation of stereotypes, which in turn could influence architectural production. Accounts produced in Literature, Ethnography and Human Geography, are examined; their connection with both existing vernacular buildings and contemporary formal architecture is discussed. References to Algarve in pre-mass-tourism examples of Travelogue, and their role in the creation of an *impression* of the built environment, are also analysed.

**Chapter 2** investigates how Algarve regional types were formulated in Portuguese metropolitan architecture and the links between this and other parallel, non-architectural discourses. Built and unbuilt designs conceived in Lisbon by some of the foremost architects of the time are discussed; important themes of early-twentieth century discourse are presented. The part played by the central government in the construction of a regional stereotype is examined through works produced for key propaganda occasions and nationwide infrastructure programmes. Algarve's transition to large-scale tourism is subsequently analysed, in a two-step study that considers the architecture produced in the 1930s for a state-sponsored roadside inn programme (the Pousadas) and, twenty years on, for private developers pioneering leisure structures on the coastline. The chapter concludes with an examination of Algarve's presence in the architect-promoted "Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional" (1955-1961), a national survey of folk buildings.

The "Inquérito" echoed in Portugal the mid-century reassessment elsewhere of vernacular references for modern architecture. It signalled a turning point in Portuguese architecture's understanding of folk customs, which proved instrumental in supporting the discipline's

development from the late 1950s on, and particularly in the 1960s. Today, enquiries into the roots of what became recognised as quintessential in the early, masterly works of Távora, Siza and other acknowledged Portuguese architects – a special focus on tectonics, a sensitive approach to site and context, and vernacular suggestions – start invariably with the “Inquérito” and its influence, or conclude with it. Similarly, most discussions on the relationship between Portuguese modern architecture and vernacular buildings, which do not go beyond the customary central references, revolve around it. However, this survey’s position in my project is different. I discuss it as the final instance of a metropolitan-led building identity construct for Algarve, hence its place at the end of this chapter. This was a clear example of a central project, where Lisbon and Porto architects’ agendas were paramount, and my interest was in how such a project approached Algarve’s specificities, what it used and overlooked, and how this related to previous approaches. Rather than starting with the architects’ survey, and consistent with my intent to privilege the peripheral standpoint and resist perpetuating the dominant, central one, I aimed at understanding the “Inquérito” and its portrait of Algarve within its chronology. This was, I believe, the materialisation of a complex set of concerns and influences; yet it did not exhaust the subject of the presence of vernacular in formal architecture, nor did it tell us much about how such a subject was locally elaborated on. Many architects who did not participate in the survey shared its intentions, as the above-quoted Palla and Laginha suggest, and their understanding deserves as much attention as the much-discussed “Inquérito”. Moreover, its effects on concrete designs were more strongly felt from the mid-1960s on, when it reached widespread dissemination, and that remained beyond the timeframe of this thesis.

**Part II** comprises the case studies selected to investigate the interaction of regionalism and modernism locally, seen through forty years of building activity in two Algarve towns. **Chapter 3** studies the case of Olhão, unique in Algarve for its particular “Cubist” profile and potential as a source for modernist proposals. This was elaborated in a string of state-supported housing schemes, whose influence in the town’s modern image is considered. Olhão provides, furthermore, the opportunity for a reflection on the persistence of vernacular models in formal, non-architect designs, and on its importance as bases for professional architects’ work. Lastly, Faro, the provincial capital, political and administrative centre, is the subject of **Chapter 4**. In it, the starting point is the mid-century narrative of a dispute between the conservative and modernist stances towards tradition – the above-mentioned “Battle of Modern Architecture” – and its appropriation by contemporary history. Sixty-year-old developments and today’s accounts are examined through empirical evidence and concrete examples of projects, buildings, clients and designers. Some of Faro’s streets are walk-in compendiums of mature modernism, yet modernism’s penetration there is still portrayed as heroic. How did this transformation occur? Unfolding over-simplified narratives through detailed accounts opens the ground to new questions: the role of architects and non-architects, the agency and power of builders and patrons, and the relevance of their networking at regional, national and international scales.

Regionalism, modernism and vernacular  
tradition in the architecture of Algarve,  
Portugal, 1925-1965

**Part I – The Centre**



## Chapter 1

# Regional formulae on vernacular material

## Establishing a model for building in Algarve

This chapter investigates the emergence of what I will call a *built identity* construct in Algarve in the first half of the twentieth century. For long a peripheral, isolated part of the country, Algarve came under scrutiny by Portuguese and foreign non-architectural disciplines that tended to focus upon certain features of the built landscape. I will discuss the ways in which such views helped to construct an enduring, implicit paradigm for regional built form, to which architects were forced to relate.

The discussion stands on the identification of a discourse on building form outside the domain of architectural thought and practice, reviewing its interaction with formal and informal design circles. Specifically, I will argue that such a process can be read as an arc, beginning in the perception of existing, mostly vernacular artefacts; filtered by Geography and Ethnography, simplified by Literature and, through it, diffused by Journalism and Propaganda, they become popular references and material for Architecture. Through the combined action of architects and non-architects, the elements of such construct are returned to the context where they originated, stylised to a smaller or larger extent, and closer to the common language and tools of everyday building. They become available to be used in new-built vernacular, while retaining formal characteristics that exclude it from this category – the process therefore not being fully circular. I will focus here on the part of the arc that starts in the existing environment and ends in the dissemination of stereotypes in metropolitan sources; subsequent chapters will develop the other parts.

Such a reading is open to constant revision, as this is in itself a construct whose linearity and stability are not given. With it, I will observe how those different fields understood, filtered and criticised the Algarve context, and selected and highlighted some of its specific features; I expect to pinpoint the elaborations that, having been originated in a perception of reality, became constituent material of that same reality by substitution and juxtaposition. Concerned not with the genealogy of Algarvian vernacular architecture but with its interpretation by modern eyes, I will discuss the origins of this tradition (and some misunderstandings) insofar as they are relevant for my argument.

The two parts of this chapter feed on sources outside the usual set of references for architectural history. Geography and Ethnography texts focus on the physical, economical and

cultural components of the place; contemporary impressions of writers, travellers and journalists report experiences of living in or visiting the region. Foreign references suggest that the regional construct was not confined to Portugal but intersected with the gradual development of international tourism. I will enquire how non-Portuguese accounts participated in the formation of this construct, before the advent of mass-tourism in the post-war period turned foreign visitors into its primary consumers.

### 1. “The smallest kingdom.” Particularities of a territory

Algarve, the southernmost province of Portugal (Vol. II, Appendix 2, **fig. 1**), was at the start of the twentieth century a well-defined regional entity – a historical region with specific geographical features, culture and economy, isolated from the rest of the country and the continent. This small territory (160km per 40km, **fig. 2**) was still seen in 1855 as “the smallest kingdom in Europe,”<sup>1</sup> for it retained a special autonomy: finally dominated by Christians in 1249 after five-hundred years of Muslim rule, it was associated to (but not absorbed by) the kingdom of Portugal, whose rulers became kings of both Portugal and Algarve.<sup>2</sup> It had its own governor general (as Portuguese overseas possessions did) from 1595 to 1808<sup>3</sup> and, on its border with Portugal taxes were levied upon imports and exports until the late eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Tucked between the sea to the west and south, the river Guadiana and Spain to the east, and a mountain range to the north separating it from the Alentejo region, Algarve was hardly connected with Portugal by land till very late. In the mid-nineteenth century, as no passable roads existed between Alentejo and Algarve, communication and trade were mostly by sea and river.<sup>5</sup> A railway from Lisbon was first established in 1889, but completed only in 1906. Modern roads date back to 1932 (the central route from Faro to Beja in Alentejo), 1936 (the western littoral route) and 1947 (the eastern Guadiana route)<sup>6</sup>. While making access easier, the national public infrastructure programme behind these new roads brought about an acute impression of the region’s different character, and pushed architecture to translate such difference, as I will discuss further on.

Twentieth-century authors generally agreed on including Algarve and Alentejo in the Mediterranean world, while considering the rest of the country markedly Atlantic.<sup>7</sup> However, Algarve’s particular climate, vegetation, and land use seemed to exacerbate such condition, making

<sup>1</sup> John Neale, *Handbook for Travellers in Portugal*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: John Murray, 1887 [1855]), 53.

<sup>2</sup> The word Algarve comes from the Arabic *Al-Gharb, the West*, i.e. west of the Andalusian Moorish domains of Andalusia.

<sup>3</sup> Carminda Cavaco, *O Algarve Oriental* (Faro: Gabinete do Planeamento da Região do Algarve, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> Dan Stanislawski, *Portugal's Other Kingdom, the Algarve* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963).

<sup>5</sup> João Baptista da Silva Lopes, *Corografia ou Memória Económica...* (Lisboa: Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1841).

<sup>6</sup> Mariano Feio, *Le Bas Alentejo et l'Algarve* (Lisbonne: Union Géographique Internationale, 1949).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Orlando Ribeiro, *Portugal, o Mediterrâneo e o Atlântico* (Coimbra: Coimbra Editora, 1945), Gaetano Ferro, *L'Algarve* (Genova: Istituto di Geografia, Facoltà di Lettere, 1956) and Stanislawski (1963).

it a region consensually seen as diverse even from Alentejo. Revived by Portuguese settlement in North Africa and “the long-standing contacts between peoples from the ‘Portuguese-Spanish-Moroccan gulf’,”<sup>8</sup> Muslim heritage persisted in lower and middle Algarve (Barrocal) in features such as the irrigated vegetable gardens, the non-watered orchards and the dispersed buildings, erected with local materials (clay and stone) following traditional Moorish techniques. In the early twentieth century, sources insisted, Algarve was isolated but not closed off: compared to other provinces it was well populated and rich from the internal and external trade of fish, fruits and cork.

The apparent fertility of the land (artificially enhanced) and its exotic produce captivated visitors: if Algarve had “little to engage the attention of the antiquary, (...) to the naturalist it is the most interesting of all the provinces of Portugal.”<sup>9</sup> There was a strong sense of unfamiliarity, of a reality misplaced within a well-known territory (Europe), consistently expressed in the parallel with fertile Mediterranean Africa and the contrast to the rough, dry Iberian Peninsula. Even to a Portuguese author, “Both in its towns and villages and in its natural features, Algarve always leaves the impression of being an extra-European country.”<sup>10</sup> In 1963, the American geographer Dan Stanislawski still noted: “In its physical nature and in some of its present ways of life, it is as African as it is European.”<sup>11</sup>

This fascination with groves of orange, carob, almond and fig trees, waterwheels and veiled peasants in colourful carts was extended to the buildings (**figs. 3-13**). “The cottages in this kingdom,” as Neale put it, “are generally much neater and cleaner than in other parts of Portugal, and the manner of building chimneys is quite peculiar and by no means untasteful.” These were the features of building tradition that impressed writers and travellers and provided grounds for analysis and speculation: *neatness*, i.e. not only tidily arranged interiors but also simple, pure, pleasing volumes and shapes; *cleanness*, materialised in the all-encompassing use of whitewash in walls and roofs and ceramic tiles in floors; and a rooted taste for decorative detail, epitomised in what became, later, an identity symbol for the region – the chimney.

### *Literature, Ethnography, Art*

A combined sense of foreignness, essentiality of built forms and elaborate ornament, and the recognition that such idiosyncratic features compensate for the limited monumental heritage, mark most accounts of Algarve. In 1894, naturalist writer and politician **Júlio Lourenço Pinto** (1842-1907) followed Neale in recommending Algarve not for its monuments but for “its picturesque, original features, with which it stands in sheer contrast with the rest of the country.”<sup>12</sup> And he identified the typical Algarvian village with Faro, the capital town where he served as

<sup>8</sup> Cavaco (1976), 14.

<sup>9</sup> Neale, 54.

<sup>10</sup> Júlio Lourenço Pinto, *O Algarve* (Porto: Livraria Portuense, 1894), 17.

<sup>11</sup> Stanislawski (1963), 7.

<sup>12</sup> Pinto, 23.

provincial governor (1892-93).<sup>13</sup> Sprawling low-rise houses, windows furnished with timber-lattice screens (reixas) “which allow seeing without being seen” (fig. 8), more terraced than tiled roofs, everything under a “beaming whiteness, and buzzing over it all a jungle of those small chimneys in Moorish style that are a luxury of Algarve, elegant and graceful as minarets.”

Moorish, minarets, North Africa, Olhão (figs. 14-15). Pinto’s description of this fishing town 20km east of Faro contained all the elements that would make it a magnet for foreign and nationals alike, and provide grounds for scholarly debate: “Olhão’s structure, perhaps more than that of any other Algarvian village, provides the sight of a Moroccan settlement; (...) most houses stick to the ground-floor, as white as they can be found there, uniformly crowned with terraces, twin siblings of the African *azoteas*.”<sup>14</sup> Authors generally noted the town’s exceptionality in the context of Algarve, not taking it as representative of the region as a whole; few, however, refrained from describing it as a fragment of Africa in European soil.

With his chapter on domestic architecture in *Notas sobre Portugal* (1909), art historian **João Barreira** (1866-1961) produced the first systematic approach to housing types in Portugal, thus marking the “Casa Portuguesa” debate on the original characteristics of the Portuguese home (see Chapter 2). There was no one single national type of house, Barreira argued, but as many as the many ways Man found shelter in different settings. In Algarve, as in other “limestone regions” of the country, “climate favours joyful motifs, tradition exults in them, and thence the landscape is so picturesquely illustrated with decorative notes.” More than in any other part of the country, it was in Algarve that the Moorish traces could be seen, in building customs derived from farming and fishing traditions. The resulting “spontaneous elements” were to be found but occasionally elsewhere: roof terraces, sharp edges “as in an enormous dice of lime”, delicate chimney tops or the silhouette of a watchtower (mirante) emerging as a “veiled and curious head who looks from afar to the turquoise sea”<sup>15</sup>.

Ornament, Barreira insisted, was the key to specific regional expression: whether in the “folk’s deepest strata” or transformed by erudite interpretation and the “aesthetic inclination of the local architect,” decoration was “the most spontaneous and intimate element of domestic building.”<sup>16</sup> Writing for a non-specialised audience, Barreira omitted plans and stressed “the picturesque factor and the poetic side” of Algarvian houses.

**José Leite de Vasconcelos** (1858-1941), a pioneer of Portuguese anthropology, published the results of his expeditions to the south in 1918<sup>17</sup>, 1926<sup>18</sup> and 1927.<sup>19</sup> In the sixth, posthumous volume of his *Etnografia Portuguesa* collection, a section on dwelling included illustrated notes on the

<sup>13</sup> Cf. list in [http://www.gov-civil-faro.pt/governo\\_civil/historia.asp?c=2](http://www.gov-civil-faro.pt/governo_civil/historia.asp?c=2), accessed 2011.02.18.

<sup>14</sup> Pinto, 122-23.

<sup>15</sup> João Barreira, “A Habitação em Portugal,” in *Notas Sobre Portugal* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1909), 176.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>17</sup> José Leite de Vasconcelos, *Pelo Sul de Portugal* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1918).

<sup>18</sup> ———, “Chaminés Algarvias,” *Alma Nova*, no. 3 (1926).

<sup>19</sup> ———, *De Terra em Terra* ([Lisboa]: Imprensa Nacional, 1927).

Algarvian house dating from as far back as 1894 and comprising primitive dwellings, farmhouses and “popular” (folk) urban houses. Buildings in Albufeira, Faro and Olhão were characterised as ground floor houses with reixas on windows, roof terraces (generally called *açoteias*) and *mirante* with internal or external stair (**figs. 16-18**).

“The *soteias*, or *açoteias*, are a typical element of the Olhão house. One uses them to lie in the sun, sometimes with canopies; one also goes up there to watch the sea. They are used to dry clothes, desiccate figs, [raise poultry,] and grow potted flowers. (...) From the *soteia*, a stair leads to the *mirante*, when there is one (...). An old seaman told me [the roof terraces] came from Morocco. There used to be intense trade between Olhão and Morocco.”<sup>20</sup>

The question of the origin and specificity of Olhão’s *açoteias* was debated from the 1930s through to the 1960s. Vasconcelos introduced the possibility of a clear link between this roofing device and the North African coast<sup>21</sup> – not a mythic bond but a real, and recent, commercial connection. However, he found the device to be not limited to Olhão but used across the province’s Sotavento (leeward, the eastern part), both in the countryside and in urban centres (Estoi, Fuseta, Moncarapacho, Tavira and Vila Real de Santo António). Coldly reporting his findings, Vasconcelos abstained from providing an interpretation for this apparent paradox: if Olhão fishermen brought the *açoteia* from Morocco, why was it so widespread in Algarve?

The other feature Vasconcelos noted as specifically Algarvian was the masonry parapet topping elevations (**figs. 6, 19**) “in such a way that one cannot tell, from the street level, whether the roof is pitched and tiled or a terrace. These parapets are called *platibandas*. Some are extremely ornamental.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, the *platibanda* was more recent, and less specific, than these early accounts suggest, having become common in Portuguese formal and informal architecture throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Faro, it became a legal requisite in 1872, combined with the drainage gutter imposed by the municipality on all pitched-roof buildings.<sup>23</sup> Originally associated with the safety of flat-roof use, the parapet became thus ubiquitous in Algarve’s centres, irrespective of roofing system, in a process that bears interesting parallels with contemporary developments in Brazil; there too, the tiled eaves were generally replaced with *platibandas* in the 1870s, also enforced by law under similar arguments.<sup>24</sup> Supported by tradition and regulations, the *platibanda* came to assume a prominent role in building custom in Algarve, which post-modernist readings have identified with specific socialisation modes: in urban contexts with a significant street

<sup>20</sup> José Leite de Vasconcelos et al., *Etnografia Portuguesa*, vol. VI (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1975), 291-92. POiA (see Vol. II, Appendix 1, Citation 5).

<sup>21</sup> Already in 1927: “Many houses in Olhão have roof terraces, (...) an architectural system of Arab origin.” Vasconcelos (1927), 249.

<sup>22</sup> Vasconcelos et al. (1975), 295.

<sup>23</sup> Alexandre Tojal, “Arquitetura Doméstica em Faro na Segunda Metade do Século XIX,” *Monumentos*, no. 24 (2006): 133-34.

<sup>24</sup> Günter Weimer, *Arquitetura Popular Brasileira* (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2005), 287.

life, the façade represented the house as a whole and the platibanda was deemed essential in characterising such a “face.”<sup>25</sup>

Yet regardless of its purpose or precise origin, the platibanda provoked the same consistent comment in non-architectural accounts: it made volumes look purer, and therefore *modern*, especially when combined with flat rooftops and overall whitewash. In the early 1920s, cultural circles began associating the Olhão townscape with avant-garde painting. Journalist **António Ferro** (1895-1956), writing in a 1922 magazine, called it a “geometric village” with its cut-off roofs, “almost Cubist.”<sup>26</sup> This would become a lasting epithet, used in tourism propaganda and strongly resonant with both local and metropolitan authors; Olhão would be, from then on, the “Cubist town” of Portugal.

Algarvian author **José Dias Sancho** (1898-1929) wrote about “Cubist” Olhão in 1923<sup>27</sup> and 1925, describing how “clusters of white and polished surfaces clash, intersect, overlap, mix-up with whim, as cardboard cubes.”<sup>28</sup> Sancho depicted a futurist scenario that associated the townscape with its bustling activity: “the vague, persistent, monotonous murmur bubbles on from the bright town: in her factories, in her offices, in her banks, Olhão works and thrives.”<sup>29</sup>

When novelist **Aquilino Ribeiro** (1885-1963) wrote the entry *Olhão* for the important *Guia de Portugal* (1927), he followed Ferro and Sancho in the pictorial analogy, suggested by built forms that seemed “projected from Picasso’s canvas”:

“From one building to the next, *açoteias* and façades intertwine, overlap, cover each other, dismember themselves, the laws of perspective and volume annulled by whiteness and mirage. Thousands of cubes in instable, paradoxical, absurd balance, as ashlar of Babel lying in open field.”<sup>30</sup>

Using vernacularisms, Aquilino provided an ironic and at points critical portrait of Olhão’s growth, in the most comprehensively *architectural* (including use, form, history, user) of all the entries in the Algarve section of the guide:

“Hygiene and engineering were never considered there. As soon as the *Olhanense* had money in his pocket, hard-earned in Cadiz, Gibraltar, *Ceca e Meca* [‘everywhere’], he lifted his pole-and-thatch huts and, on the same grounds, with supreme disdain for symmetry, built his home in stone and lime (...) full of a noble Muslim indifference towards toilet flush, sewers, leafy trees, and the eager-for-air, dunce-looking new streets.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Jacinto Palma Dias and João Brissos, *O Algarve Revisitado* (Lisboa: Lisboa 94 - Festa do Livro, 1994), 11-13.

<sup>26</sup> António Ferro, “Olhão, Terra Cubista,” *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 14 January 1922, 43.

<sup>27</sup> José Dias Sancho, “Olhão Cubista,” *Correio Olhanense*, 1 December 1923.

<sup>28</sup> ———, *Deus Pan* (Porto: Renascença Portuguesa, [1925]), 171.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>30</sup> Aquilino Ribeiro, “Olhão”, in Raul Proença, *Guia de Portugal*, vol. 2 (Lisboa: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, 1927), 75-78. POiA (Citation 6).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

By praising these buildings’ “innocent, primitive picturesque, the stuff of aquarelle,” Aquilino deployed what Glassie has called a “responsive aesthetic approach” to vernacular architecture.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in most accounts of the time authors focused on their own aesthetic reaction and rarely on the builders’ aesthetic intention. The perception of built forms as sculpture- or painting-like sets (the first sense of *picturesque*) was a mental construct, an *impression* based on the observer’s structure of value, removed from the object’s creator – an example of the “consumption mode” of responsive approach, the last in Glassie’s scale of detachment between builder and observer. There were references to the “aesthetic” impact of North African villages on Olhão fishermen, which would be partly accountable for the adoption of those as a model, but the overwhelming aesthetic fruition was on the observer’s side. Within the frame of consumption, “responsive thinkers seem tempted to imagine vernacular – ‘primitive’ or ‘folk’ or ‘popular’ or ‘anonymous’ – practice into the pure opposite of a simplified view of professional practice in the late West,” and the builder is usually described as “simpler, less conscious, more natural.”<sup>33</sup> The authors quoted were eminently “consumers” of Olhão’s built features as part of their own aesthetic experience; those features’ simple existence sufficed for them, and did not require explanation.

### *Human Geography*

Exuberant literary fervour descriptions of Olhão coincided with the emergence of foreign scholarly interest in Portuguese geography and ethnography. The relation between Portugal’s geography and political unity through time occupied German geographer **Hermann Lautensach** (1886-1971) from 1927<sup>34</sup> and his work was influential in the scientific study of Portuguese regions and sub-regions until late into the century, the Algarve being no exception.<sup>35</sup>

But it was ethnographer and philologist **Wilhelm Giese** (1895-1990) who provided the first in-depth approach to the buildings of Olhão in 1932,<sup>36</sup> after visiting the country in 1924<sup>37</sup> and Algarve in 1927.<sup>38</sup> Contesting the notion that the Olhão house was a direct result of North African influence on audacious fishermen in the eighteenth century, Giese saw such buildings as earlier descendants from the Moorish dwelling, “a house with the shape of a cube, or almost, with two

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<sup>32</sup> Henry Glassie, "Aesthetic," in *Encyclopedia of the Vernacular Architecture of the World*, ed. Paul Oliver (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Hermann Lautensach, "Geopolitisches von der spanisch-portugiesischen Grenze," *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* V (1928).

<sup>35</sup> Acknowledged, for instance, in Stanislawski (1963), and Cavaco (1976). According to Orlando Ribeiro, “To no other author does Portugal’s Geography owe as much as it does to the prolific German geographer. (...) Some of the general chapters of his *Portugal*, published 40 years ago, have not been superseded.” Orlando Ribeiro, "Hermann Lautensach (1886-1971)," *Finisterra* VI, no. 12 (1971).

<sup>36</sup> Wilhelm Giese, "Sobre a Origem das Velhas Casas Olhanenses," *Portucale* V, no. 28 (1932).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Luís Filipe Lindley Cintra, *Bibliografia de Wilhelm Giese* (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Filológicos, 1956).

<sup>38</sup> Wilhelm Giese, *Conservação e Perda da Cultura Material e Tradicional no Sul de Portugal* (Porto: Junta Distrital do Porto, [1964]).

compartments, a roof terrace and often an observatory tower.” He resisted categorising some features as local: the açoteia could still be found in other places in Algarve (Faro, Alportel) as well as in other points of former Moorish rule in the Mediterranean (Morocco, Algiers, Puglia), inland as well as on the coast, built by peasants and mountaineers as much as by fishermen. To the localism of other views, Giese answered with the outline of a regionalist model.

The suggestion triggered national and local reaction. In 1934, artist **Mariana Machado Santos** (1904-1991) invoked her personal knowledge as *Olhanense* to present the açoteia as a sign of fresh Moorish influence: “The açoteias were made by the Olhanense to watch the sea” and secure fresh air in a dense urban fabric, inspired by recent travelling and trading.<sup>39</sup> Santos presented the açoteia as a modern product of local ingenuity, a skilful appropriation of foreign references, and rejected the similarity to other buildings in Algarve.

Her local view was partly corroborated by the authority of geographer and professor **Amorim Girão** (1895-1960), in 1935. Seeking to avoid “simplistic explanations” to complex anthropo-geographical questions, Girão explained the particularities of Algarvian roof terraces as the combined result of climatic conditions (little rainfall and the need to recycle it), fishing activities (boat-traffic watching and fish processing), and imitation of villages in North Africa.<sup>40</sup> As a pioneer of Human Geography, Girão believed tradition to be explained both by the human adjustment to natural conditions and by inter-civilisation influences.

Wilhelm Giese responded to these arguments immediately, refuting the possibility of a modern influence from North Africa, the authorship of Olhanense seamen, and the climate rationale. Quoting sources that reported roof terraces in Faro and Alportel prior to the existence of Olhão as a permanent settlement, Giese established the açoteia as a province-wide ancient building device; the “linguistic analysis” of the term and of its evolution into modern Portuguese demonstrated its use long before Olhão fishermen erected masonry houses, in the late 1700s. Climatic conditions might have influenced the development of the açoteia in North Africa, but the fact that it was kept both in Algarve and in points where there was no scarcity of rain supported Giese’s main point: “the ethnic element is more important than the climatologic one.”<sup>41</sup> The açoteia survived in three fishing villages (Olhão, Fuseta and Monte Gordo) because fishing-related activities and customs prevailed; in other settlements, it had been destroyed over 800 years. The specificity of Olhão was nevertheless assured: there, the model had evolved from the one-storey to the two- and three-storey buildings, with stairs and watchtowers to rise above the neighbours and accommodate the fishermen families’ need for sea vistas. While acknowledging local ingenuity,

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<sup>39</sup> Mariana Machado Santos, *Olhão: Uma Vila Típica do Litoral Algarvio* (Coimbra: Coimbra Editora, 1934).

<sup>40</sup> Aristides de Amorim Girão, "Ainda Sobre as Açoteias Algarvias," *Biblos XI* (1935).

<sup>41</sup> Wilhelm Giese, *O Problema da Açoteia Algarvia* (Coimbra: Instituto Alemão da Universidade de Coimbra, 1935).



Giese reinstated the açoteia's Moorish genealogy, as a permanent feature of Algarve that branched out from a Mediterranean "ethnic tradition" in building, then also under investigation.<sup>42</sup>

Wilhelm Giese maintained his interest in the Mediterranean cultures and their common elements, for many years.<sup>43</sup> In 1959, having returned to Algarve, he noted the differences that the "natural progress of peoples," improved communications and industrialization had brought since 1927, but also on what was retained:

"The mixture of old and new, of what is dying and what is growing, in keeping with the traditional elements, is remarkable. The ancient house of Berber extraction has been generally kept, in its most primitive form of a cubic house with a single room. The soteia can still be found in Loulé, Faro, Olhão, Fuseta and Tavira. [In Olhão, modern houses] follow traditional buildings, proving the vitality of tradition. North of the railroad there is an expressively modern neighbourhood. [In it,] spacious two-story houses with all the modern amenities have adopted a traditional element. From an outside door of the upper floor (...), a masonry stair with parapet in the same material leads to the soteia, also provided with a masonry parapet. No doubt, the model for this was the stair that, in traditional houses, linked the house's soteia with the soteia of the small watchtower."<sup>44</sup>

Giese's words expressed a balance between modern and traditional that could reassure conservative readers of the possibilities of conciliating two apparently conflicting stances. They can equally be read as part a modernist discourse in which new buildings (Giese is referring here to the Horta da Cavalinha scheme, **fig. 179**) attest to Olhão's special capacity to incorporate modernity with tradition – a discourse that supported building activity in Olhão throughout the first half of the century (see Chapter 3).

These and other sources suggest that the debate on the uniqueness of Olhão's skyline was not confined to metropolitan scholarship, nor did it serve scientific purposes only: it was directly associated with the town's new architecture.

**Francisco Fernandes Lopes** (1884-1969), a doctor and amateur historian, and prominent local figure,<sup>45</sup> reacted in 1945 against the prospect of Olhão becoming unrecognisable by the "stubborn and pretentious incomprehension" of a projected new master plan that would develop it in a "banal, international" manner, disfiguring it.<sup>46</sup> Lopes argued that the unique character of Olhão relied not on the roof terraces but on the use of the açoteia as an extension, an extra compartment

<sup>42</sup> Giese quotes studies of Andalusia by Bernt, Steiger and Niemeier.

<sup>43</sup> E.g. Wilhelm Giese, *Sobre Algumas Relações Entre a Cultura Peninsular e a Magrebina* (Porto: Junta Distrital do Porto, [1964]).

<sup>44</sup> ———, "Bewahrung und Schwund der traditionellen Gegenstandskultur im Süden Portugals," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 84 (1959). Translated into Portuguese in Giese, *Conservação e Perda...*, 8-11. POiA (Citation 7).

<sup>45</sup> Lopes wrote about Olhão, Faro and Algarve subjects from at least 1921 until his death, was the author of the *Olhão* entry in *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira* (1949) and came to be considered a local authority on history, religion and a myriad of other subjects. António Paula Brito, "Francisco Fernandes Lopes" in [http://www.olhao.web.pt/Personalidades/francisco\\_fernandes\\_lopes.htm](http://www.olhao.web.pt/Personalidades/francisco_fernandes_lopes.htm), accessed 2009.05.06.

<sup>46</sup> Francisco Fernandes Lopes, "Olhão, Vila Única. 7-VIII-1945," edited and published online in [http://www.olhao.web.pt/Personalidades/TextosFFL/Olhão\\_Vila\\_unica.htm](http://www.olhao.web.pt/Personalidades/TextosFFL/Olhão_Vila_unica.htm), accessed 2009.05.12. An edited version was published as "Olhão, Terra de Mistério...", *Correio Olhanense*, 18 March 1948, 3, 10.

of the house. Where public space was scarce, the açoteia existed not for the collection of rainwater (containers were never built), but for utilitarian and recreational purposes. This continuous use explained the high parapet and the permanent, covered stair departing from the inside of the house and interrupting the açoteia with a small turret – the pangaio. The tiled roof over the stair was eventually turned into a second stair, leading to the observation platform (mirante) on top of the turret. The subsequent transformation of the turret into a walled compartment had prompted the addition of a second açoteia to cover it, which became a second, higher observation platform (contra-mirante), in a virtually unlimited process of growth. Some buildings had up to four consecutive levels of terraces.

Lopes believed this pyramidal pattern of vertical extension gave Olhão an unparalleled urban character, and its architecture, a “mysterious, genuine, non-erudite” face. More than a regionalism, he defended a localism, a true vernacularism originated in everyday practice, against the threat of “international standardisation”, i.e., of modern architecture and urban planning. Yet Lopes’s localist reading went beyond Olhão and influenced the views of metropolitan scholars, suggesting that the town’s built identity was constructed with contributions from both local *and* central spheres.

1945 also saw the first edition of *Portugal, o Mediterrâneo e o Atlântico*, by **Orlando Ribeiro** (1911-1997).<sup>47</sup> In this seminal work of Human Geography, Ribeiro highlighted the preponderance of Mediterranean influences in the country and of dwellings as symbol and material expression of civilisation differences. To the primitive crudeness of dry-joint stone walls inherited from the pre-roman settlements in the North, South buildings would oppose a more cared-for face and more perfect and complex housing devices, showing influences from superior civilisations (Roman and Arab).<sup>48</sup>

For geographers and anthropologists, “popular” dwelling perfectly embodied different forms of civilization, and it became central to their work well before it did so for architects. Since the early 1900s, French and German geographers drew on the concept of *Kulturlandschaft* (cultural landscapes) to support the need for direct investigation of rural houses, essential “in understanding the physical and economic character of human settlement.”<sup>49</sup>

When Ribeiro’s team organised the XVI International Geography Congress in Lisbon in 1949, tours of Portuguese regions were included as case studies of such landscapes, supported by monographs containing the latest research. Among these, **Mariano Feio**’s (1914-2001) was a detailed portrait of the natural, economical and demographical state of Algarve in the late 1940s. A rural community with strong trading and craft traditions, prone to social and spatial mobility

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<sup>47</sup> Orlando Ribeiro was a central figure in Portuguese Geography of the twentieth century and a reference on Algarve’s culture and geography; his pupils Gaetano Ferro and Carminda Cavaco, among others, became specialised in Algarve subjects under his influence, working in the studies centre he created in 1943 at Lisbon University (Centro de Estudos Geográficos).

<sup>48</sup> Ribeiro (1945), 102.

<sup>49</sup> Ronald G. Knapp, "Geographical," in Oliver, ed. (1997), 43.

(emigration being a constant, distinctive feature), was soberly depicted with scientific rigueur and few guidebook commonplaces.

Traditional farmhouses (**fig. 20**) deserved special attention, as a “very important element of Algarve’s landscape, thanks to their large numbers, their good construction and their pleasant exterior look, all resplendent in white.”<sup>50</sup> For Feio, the farmhouses expressed adaptation to the environment and human needs (“The limestone bedrock provides stone and whitewash; dry climate allowed the Muslim terrace to be kept”<sup>51</sup>) and could be classified into two characteristic types (**fig. 21**): the ancient type of Central Algarve (one large living room in the front, adjoining kitchen and two alcoves in the back, vault-ceilinged, small and windowless); and the modern-type house, “recently” built (central door and two symmetric windows corresponding to a central corridor and four equal compartments, kitchen to the back covered by mono-pitch roof, terrace-and-parapet-roofed front rooms). The modern type was not presented as specifically rural; indeed, subsequent studies recorded its variations as everyday building models in Algarvian villages and towns. Feio also identified an “ornamental concern” in these simple types: the decorative detailing of balustrades, platibandas and chimneys around Loulé evinced a special pride in home building and a drive to neighbour differentiation.

In his concise account of regional features for an international audience, Feio furthered the notes by previous researchers (namely Vasconcelos) on the Algarve house types and provided grounds for ensuing scholarship. Yet on Olhão and its superimposed terraces, the geographer adopted the words of a by-then recognised local specialist: Francisco Fernandes Lopes and his 1945 essay on the pyramidal growth pattern. This shows metropolitan scholars appropriating interpretations based on local knowledge and everyday experience, filtered through the eye of a single native thinker. The locally fomented vision of Olhão as the site of a unique building process was therefore implicitly adopted and transferred to the arena of central debate. Although Feio accepted Giese’s philological argument and agreed that Algarve’s roof terraces were a Muslim legacy, he nevertheless took on Lopes’s claim regarding the originality (and ingenious superiority) of Olhão’s buildings, which, although “inspired by the Arab tradition, underwent a peculiar and original evolution that makes them a singular case, and one of the most interesting.”<sup>52</sup>

The Italian geographer **Gaetano Ferro** (b. 1925) was another scholar of Orlando Ribeiro’s circle to take an interest in the Algarve region as a case study. In his PhD thesis, supervised by Ribeiro and published in 1956 as *L’Algarve: Monografia regionale*, and in subsequent work, Ferro gathered a valuable collection of references on the human settlement, the territory and the network

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<sup>50</sup> Feio (1949), 142.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 107.

of urban centres, their historical processes, the socio-economy and the genesis and evolution of Algarve's landscapes.<sup>53</sup>

Ferro's monograph on Algarve's geography, the first of its kind, claimed the region was a perfect example of a Portuguese particularity: notwithstanding the multiple factors of cohesion and national unity, "regional life" presented "remarkable richness and variety," matching "the diverse environmental conditions to be found in each portion of the territory."<sup>54</sup> Regional variety was a component of national unity that strengthened rather than endangered it. Ferro intended to depict Algarve as the most profoundly different region in the country, and to read this not only through natural conditions but also settlement patterns and economic activities – features that associated Algarve not with contiguous Alentejo but with the Andalusian littoral and, further afield, with Sicily.

Forms of settlement and its basic cell – the house – deserved close attention. Complementing existing sources (Vasconcelos, Feio) with thorough fieldwork, Ferro developed what I consider to be the first extensive survey of traditional dwellings in Algarve, widening the range of types proposed by his predecessors with local and topographic variations. He studied and illustrated the layouts and uses of temporary and permanent huts, peasant farmhouses, fishermen houses and urban buildings, mostly based on first-hand observation (**fig. 22**).

No author before Ferro specifically analysed the urban house, both in inland and coastal centres; he found common features such as the persistence of large storage rooms (for dry fruits and produce) and of a large living area serving as entrance, dining and sitting room, specific to south Portugal and named, only in Algarve, "casa de fora" ("outwards room"). "Casa de fora" and storage room could be found in both rural and urban contexts, signs of a hybrid brief that conflated residential and agricultural needs; this was a regional particularity to which architects and builders responded throughout the first half of the century, before fundamental economic changes occurred (see Chapter 4). Ferro brought such complexities to the fore, in objective accounts that avoided picturesque impressions and aesthetic considerations. Olhão's açoteias, for instance, were concisely described with matter-of-fact words (based again on Fernandes Lopes). His description of an urban type matches many structures found in my case studies (e.g. Chapter 3, **figs. 125, 129, 140**):

"Closer to the coast and on the seaside, where centres are more crowded, the most common type presents a rectangular plan with the shortest side overlooking the street; there we find the 'casa de fora' (with a door and at least a window) and beyond it, one or

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<sup>53</sup> Gaetano Ferro published prolifically about Algarvian themes in the first years of his academic life; later, he focused on comparative studies between Algarve and the Italian regions of Liguria and Sicily. See Gaetano Ferro, "Ricerche di Geografia Urbana nell' Algarve (Portogallo)," *Annali di Ricerche e Studi di Geografia* X, no. 2 (1954), ———, "I centri dell' Algarve Occidentale," *Annali di Ricerche e Studi di Geografia* XI (1955), ———, *Insedimenti e culture in un "Concelbo" dell' Algarve calcareo, attraverso il tempo* (Firenze: Tipografia Coppini, 1958), ———, "Tetti e camini dell' Algarve," *L'Universo* XXXVIII (1958), and ———, "Algarve, Ligúria e Sudoeste Siciliano," *Finisterra* IX (1974).

<sup>54</sup> Ferro (1956), 175.

two bedrooms, and lastly the kitchen (sometimes tiny) which opens to the ‘quintal’ [backyard] enclosed by a wall along the back street.”<sup>55</sup>

Ferro’s scholar monograph had little impact outside academia; yet it was part of the mid-twentieth century trans-disciplinary, trans-national academic interest in Algarve, which both influenced and responded to the internal awareness of its specific character. Such interest included American scholarship: geographer **Dan Stanislawski** (1903-1997) published essays on Portugal<sup>56</sup> and Algarve<sup>57</sup> and a “descriptive geography” that detailed the region’s economic activities and ways of life. “Algarvian distinction,” he noted yet again, “lies partly in its houses; in many ways they differ from those of any other region of the country, or, indeed, the peninsula. (...) It is the combination of these traits [flat roof, stepped-back, upper-storied house, colours, materials, cleanliness] that establishes a special quality that is recognizable as Algarvian.”<sup>58</sup>

Portuguese ethnographers **Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira**’s (1910-1990) and **Fernando Galhano**’s (1904-1995) chapter on architecture for a 1959 folk art series<sup>59</sup> had Algarve house types classified following closely Feio’s 1949 work. Significantly for my argument here, their analysis of “the curious house type of Olhão” reproduced verbatim Fernandes Lopes’s “evolutional” reading of superimposed açoteias, adding nothing new; moreover, to illustrate its visual effect the authors quoted Aquilino’s 1927 literary description of “thousands of cubes in instable balance.” The use of references from both local knowledge and from literature – and from architecture and geography<sup>60</sup> – in an ethnography work demonstrates how permeable the boundaries between different fields were, and how intricate and multifaceted the construction of Algarve’s built identity really was.

Finally, this period’s Portuguese scholarship was marked by Ribeiro’s *Geografia e Civilização* (1961), where the geographer developed his argument on the North-South geographical and cultural divide with a discussion of two characteristic forms of roofing in Algarve: the roof terraces of Olhão and the “treasure-chest” roofs of Tavira were “human artefacts” that evinced how, under similar natural conditions, traces of contacts with different civilisations emerged.<sup>61</sup> The essay,

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 114. IOiA (Citation 8).

<sup>56</sup> Dan Stanislawski, *The Individuality of Portugal* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1959).

<sup>57</sup> ———, “The Livelihood of the Ordinary People of the Portuguese Algarve,” in *Culture in History*, ed. Stanley Diamond (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

<sup>58</sup> Stanislawski (1963), 42-43.

<sup>59</sup> Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira and Fernando Galhano, “Arquitectura,” in *A Arte Popular em Portugal* (Lisboa: Verbo, [1959]). This text was later revised, extended and re-published as Veiga de Oliveira and Galhano, *Arquitectura Tradicional Portuguesa* (Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 1992).

<sup>60</sup> Oliveira acknowledged architect Raul Lino’s interpretation of the essential features of the Portuguese house (see Chapter 2) and cited Ribeiro (1945), among others.

<sup>61</sup> “Açoteias de Olhão e Telhados de Tavira,” in Orlando Ribeiro, *Geografia e Civilização*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1979 [1961]). The “treasure-chest” or “scissors” roofs of Tavira owe both names to the characteristic form of four slopes with symmetrically high pitches; with one roof corresponding to each compartment, the resulted were houses with as many parallel roofs as rooms and a characteristic zigzag profile.

possibly based on fieldwork undertaken in 1955-56,<sup>62</sup> culminated a long-standing interest in Algarve as a regional case study, a “crossroads of influences and natural contrasts” that suited Ribeiro’s argument particularly well.

Algarve was unique in the Portuguese context, “open to Mediterranean influences and thus developed and organised, while the rest of the country remained lost in isolation and barbarian times.” It was diverse: elaborating on his own contribution for a 1955 treatise on Iberian geography,<sup>63</sup> Ribeiro divided Algarve into three “natural” bands contrasted by different human uses and climate conditions (the coast or Lower Algarve, the hilly, limestone Barrocal and the schist mountain range or Serra). Roofing devices, Ribeiro believed, mirrored this variety but could not be explained by geography only:

“None of our provinces shows a range of roof forms as wide as Algarve’s. As everywhere else, the double-pitch roof is predominant (...); but in the west coast and in the *serra*, the mono-pitch roof dominates; Olhão stands out for the ‘Cubist’ profile of its superimposed terraces; Tavira, for its multiple roofs, always four-sloped and steep.”<sup>64</sup>

The açoteia was not the default Algarvian roof but was dovetailed with other devices – and this, admittedly, resulted in a “picturesque variety” of forms. It was a recurring device in rural buildings, not as the overall roof of the house – the fishing villages of Olhão and Fuseta were exceptions – but as one of the constituents of the composite farmhouse, found disseminated in the littoral plains, in the Barrocal and in the Serra. In this assemblage of parts covered in terrace, mono- and double-pitch roofs, the açoteia was a tile-paved terrace surrounded by a low parapet, accessible through a variety of means (internal and external) and mainly used to dry figs and carobs, and only in some places for collecting water.

I suggest that underlying Ribeiro’s insistence on the variety of Algarve’s roofing systems is an attempt to discredit the stereotype of the typical regional house. In Chapter 2, I will discuss how this intention chimed with architectural circles: in fact, *Geografia e Civilização* was published in the same year as *Arquitetura Popular em Portugal*, an architect-driven survey of folk architecture openly devoted to dismantling regional stereotypes, and the fieldwork for both books was carried out simultaneously; in the Algarve section of the architects’ work, all efforts were concentrated in highlighting the diversity of the region’s roofing devices, much in the way Ribeiro did.

Ribeiro seemed determined to close the thirty-year-old debate on the originality and origin of Olhão’s açoteias. Significantly, he reverted to the explanations and guidance of Fernandes

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<sup>62</sup> Accompanied by Gaetano Ferro, cf. Carminda Cavaco, "Gaetano Ferro," *Finisterra* XXXII, no. 64 (1997).

<sup>63</sup> Orlando Ribeiro, *Portugal*, ed. Manuel de Terán, vol. V, *Geografía de España y Portugal* (Barcelona: Montaner y Simón, 1955).

<sup>64</sup> Ribeiro (1979 [1961]), 59. POiA (Chapter 9).

Lopes<sup>65</sup> – a detail that supports my notion that the doctor’s writings had an unsuspected influence in academic fields. Using Lopes’s sources,<sup>66</sup> Ribeiro reconstituted the first settlements in Olhão and the evolution of the town (a cluster of thatched huts replaced by masonry houses) to show it as “the only example of a modern town that contains a quarter with Moorish plan, built where there was never a Muslim village to which it could be affiliated; this shows, on the one hand, the transfer of customs and preferences from the Muslim population to the Christian one and, on the other, the uncommon attachment to certain traditions.”<sup>67</sup> Olhão’s açoteias were, in Ribeiro’s view, a remarkable example of the ability of one civilisation (Christian) to incorporate another’s (Muslim) traditions, and transport them onto new territories and settlements; such theory, of a strong pre-Christian building tradition (still visible in places like Faro), took in Wilhelm Giese’s view, accepting the “Moorish origin of Olhão’s açoteias”:

“Climate did not oppose the introduction of a form of roofing originated in arid regions and propagated by Islamic expansion; the frequent connections of Olhão with Muslim and Mediterranean ports may have helped, through imitation, to keep a building form already existing in local conditions; in narrow streets, lack of space can be accounted for a tendency to expand the house in the vertical (...). In any case, the açoteia, *whose decorative and picturesque value has only been made relevant in modern times*, crowns humble houses.”<sup>68</sup>

This realistic view of such a picturesque townscape is worthy of note, since the actual use of the buildings and of their roofs was seldom brought under scrutiny. On this point, Ribeiro also noted, very significantly:

“The açoteia and the mirante are used for storage, and on them one can find anything that would disturb the tidiness of the humble and small houses; in the new fishermen’s housing scheme, *built with very good taste in the traditional style* (which is a rare thing in this kind of public works...), the houses have gardens and the streets are wide enough, so that the *prohibition to use the açoteias* can be respected without loss; the roof terrace is, thus, a place for much-needed relief, where crammed houses and narrow streets leave no other free space. *Once this style of building is fixed, for a functional reason*, it is only understandable that it would spread to where it is not really necessary – and many houses in the modern and wide streets of Olhão have the same roofing solution.”<sup>69</sup>

In short: Ribeiro acknowledged that the picturesque value of Olhão and its açoteias was a modern construct, but overlooked how such value could have influenced the permanence of the model and/or its adoption in new settlements. He recognised the functional value of roof terraces as a response to pressing needs of space and solace – and yet, at the same time, advocated the elimination of such perfect correspondence between function and form, one of the most attractive

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<sup>65</sup> “I am indebted to Dr. Francisco Fernandes Lopes, profound connoisseur of his hometown, erudite and insatiable spirit, for the opportunity to visit numerous açoteias and to discuss with him the problem of their origin and form”, according to note 23, *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>66</sup> Namely the most important source for pre-nineteenth century history of Algarve, Lopes (1841).

<sup>67</sup> Ribeiro (1979 [1961]), 75-76.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-78. My italics. POiA (Citation 10).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 68 and 71. My italics. POiA (Citation 11).

features of vernacular buildings to modernist eyes, in new buildings. Lastly, he saw as “natural” the process by which a purpose-supported solution (the açoteia) came to be part of a modern building style, to be used in Olhão’s new extensions.

Ribeiro’s positive comment on a new, purely formal version of building traditions is contemporary with Wilhelm Giese’s 1959 notes on the transformation of Olhão over thirty years; while Giese evoked the Horta da Cavalinha scheme, Ribeiro chose to praise the Casas para Pescadores scheme (figs. 188-189). I will return to this point in my case study of Olhão, and simply stress here how metropolitan geographers endorsed the way in which formal architecture had taken traditional building features to produce contemporary objects. Since such features were the same as they had identified, discussed and disseminated for three decades, geographers seemed pleased with the architectural response they had helped trigger. Their apology for Olhão’s new schemes is, I believe, evidence of the links between an extra-architectural building identity construct and its architectural expression.

## 2. “Exotic, beautiful, oddly modernist.” Early travelogues of Algarve

We have seen above how buildings and their features took a large share in the scholarly and literary approach to Algarve’s characteristics; and how such approach resulted in a well-characterised basis of formal references to be employed in architectural work. Travelogues and guidebooks devoted to the region, Portuguese and foreign, seem to have formed another sphere of publications where a building identity for Algarve emerges, and I will now discuss their role in the process.

“If Portugal is little known to travellers, we can say that the kingdom of the Algarves is almost unknown to Portuguese themselves and yet it is perhaps the [country’s] most interesting province (...) and the most curious one can visit.”<sup>70</sup>

As this nineteenth-century French quote indicates, travelling and tourism were incipient in Algarve before the Second World War. Until then, bathing resorts were limited to short stretches of coast acting as summer extensions of near-by towns: Monte Gordo (serving Vila Real de Santo António and Spain), Quarteira (Loulé), Armação de Pera (Silves) and Rocha (Portimão). All accounts coincide in portraying these as very primitive spots, with no permanent infrastructure, where locals used fishermen’s thatched huts as changing cabins and longer-staying vacationers would take fishermen’s houses for rent; the exception being Rocha, where wealthy fish-canning industrialists built chalets in the late 1800s, and the first foreign tourists concentrated in one of the only two “tolerable” hotels in the entire province.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> G. de Saint-Victor, *Portugal: Souvenirs et Impressions de Voyage* (Paris: Librairie Blériot, [1891]), 217. FOiA (Citation 12).

<sup>71</sup> Described by Aubrey Bell in 1912: “It is a low pink-washed building very primitive, but very clean and Portuguese.” *In Portugal* (London and New York: John Lane, 1912), 60.



Lacking connections, infrastructure and facilities, peripheral Algarve missed the turn-of-the-century elite fashion for travelling, and the mass-appeal of the seaside had yet to develop. Yet, from the 1930s on a number of travel guides were published in English, aimed not at the generic visitor to Portugal, for whom Baedeker's<sup>72</sup> or Murray's<sup>73</sup> guides sufficed, but at the adventurous traveller. This self-sufficient tourist, which some called "simple escapist,"<sup>74</sup> was mirrored in the authors, self-styled as explorers in an exotic land, narrating events on a day-to-day pace with a persistent tone of surprise. Simulating the blank book carried by a traveller for the purpose of documenting a journey, the edited travelogue was the appropriate genre to report an experience essentially focused on aesthetic impression. Depictions often failed to differentiate between first- and second-hand observations; generally lacking references, the effect of consecutive experiences of the same place based on previous readings was that of a magnifying lens that tended to augment and crystallise stereotype. With no scientific pretence, these accounts conveyed straightforward versions of what their scholar counterparts took pains to explain.

Places, namely urban centres, concentrated travellers' attention. **Aubrey Bell** depicted Faro in 1912 as

"One of the most delightful towns in Portugal. A long street of faint-blue, green, pink, yellow and whitewashed houses faces a little glassily calm inner harbour of the colour of faintest turquoise, the green plants of a steep bank reflected along its edge, with fishing-boats painted red and blue and green, and larger sailing-boats laden or loading with cork."<sup>75</sup>

Built objects, human subjects, costumes and landscapes were included in a painterly portrait that evoked Impressionist art and the Orientalist curiosity feeding artists and travellers in the previous century. The long-standing habits of "simple country- and fisher-folk," and the natural and architectural setting that framed their lives in "a strip of Northern Africa which has found its way into Portugal,"<sup>76</sup> were ideal subjects for central European travellers, who would occasionally expand their first impressions in works of wider scope.<sup>77</sup>

In preparation for the 1929 Iberian-American exposition in Seville, three publications attempted to promote and support touring in near-by Algarve. The region's first French-language

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<sup>72</sup> Karl Baedeker, *Spain and Portugal: Handbook for Travellers* (Leipzig, London: Baedeker, Dulau, 1898). This guidebook was revised and edited until 1959; from then on, the two countries had separate guides.

<sup>73</sup> Neale (1887 [1855]).

<sup>74</sup> Gordon Cooper, *Your Holiday in Spain and Portugal* (London: A. Redman, 1952). According to Cooper, whose view was openly hostile to the country and to the way visitors were treated, "simple escapists" alone could accept the accommodation provided in most towns and villages in Algarve, "in old-fashioned and rather primitive pensions," 193-194.

<sup>75</sup> Bell (1912), 56-57.

<sup>76</sup> Douglas Goldring, *To Portugal* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1934), 151.

<sup>77</sup> E.g. Aubrey Bell, *Portugal of the Portuguese* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1915), 106. This work presented a complete portrait of the country's economical and political situation in the first Republican years, and analysed the past and future of Portuguese-British relations; as a scholar, Bell did, in fact, become specialised in Portugal and Spain.

guidebook appeared in 1928,<sup>78</sup> followed by a Portuguese monograph published in 1929 by the exposition delegation<sup>79</sup> and written by **Mário Lyster Franco** (1902-1984), a local intellectual, lawyer, journalist, mayor and councillor of Faro; César Pereira dos Santos, British vice-consul in Faro and Tavira, published the first English-language monograph in 1929.<sup>80</sup>

While dos Santos's was a modest endeavour, an assortment of geographic, economic and tourism-related data, Franco's text was part of an official series on the country's provinces, and set the tone for many subsequent portraits of the region: the landscape diversity of the Serra, the Barrocal and the coast, the fishing activities and related industries, the domestic crafts, the catalogue of traditional, potentially marketable manufactures, and the building techniques and traditions. Franco highlighted the chimney tops, where the local mason "expands on his vanity as an architect and builder," and the whitewashing of every surface as a "rich picturesque trait" in the landscape.

Climate, landscape, folk traditions and built frame contributed, in Franco's view, to the increasing commercial value of Algarve, at a time when mild winter climates were prized by North European visitors. His "Itinerary of Algarve" conveyed a biased view of the region's towns, promoting some while deriding other and establishing an enduring menu for the picturesque, sellable Algarve. Vila Real de Santo António, an eighteenth-century creation, was too recent and regular to be interesting, and lacked "the picturesque of ancient houses." Tavira, presented as one of Algarve's most characteristic centres and formerly of great importance, was by then "a sad town... clearly decadent." Yet Olhão, albeit deprived of remarkable monuments, had "something original and modernist" about it, and lengthy quotes from poets and writers (Brandão 1923, Sancho 1925 and Aquilino 1927) stressed its pictorial expressiveness. Modern- and African-looking, it had to be admired from above:

"It is this absence of roof, this immediate transition from the orthogonal geometry of entirely whitewashed walls to the utterly intense blue of the sky, that enhances its Cubist look and gives it a characteristic, imposing Moroccan slant."<sup>81</sup>

A progressive town where novelty was welcome and Algarve's deep-rooted customs prevailed, in the veils and clogs of women or in the timber-lattice screens: this dual characteristic of Olhão was canonised in Franco's monograph and echoed in nearly all subsequent guidebooks, before the town became secondary, and eventually irrelevant, with the outset of mass-tourism in Algarve.

Local enthusiasm (Sancho) and metropolitan literature (Brandão, Aquilino) merged with Franco's own agenda and reached a national audience. The author himself repeated the formula

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<sup>78</sup> Sociedade Propaganda de Portugal, *Algarve* ([Paris]: Dorizy, [1928]).

<sup>79</sup> Mário Lyster Franco, *O Algarve* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1929).

<sup>80</sup> C. Pereira dos Santos, *Monography of Algarve* (Faro: Tipografia União, 1929).

<sup>81</sup> Franco (1929), 34. POiA (Citation 13).

many times (in 1932, 1940<sup>82</sup> and 1944<sup>83</sup>), synthesising his 1929 text, eliminating literary quotes but using the same words and expressions employed by Sancho and Aquilino, for instance, to describe “Cubist” Olhão. By 1944, the adjective “Cubist” suggested by António Ferro in 1922 was a simple and effective slogan. Franco’s discourse and that of his sources became one, inextricable and ready to be replicated again in national and foreign accounts.

Portugal’s propaganda office (Secretariado Nacional de Informação, SNI) published in 1947 the first official guidebook of Algarve by an English author. **Alexander Stuart**’s personal experience of living in the region in 1941 supported the book’s minute practical advice on excursions, accommodation, meals, roads and transportation. For the “intensive” tourists, he envisaged a sociological experience that included all the facets of a region (natural, built, cultural), from a morning spent in a sardine-canning factory to learning how to deal with local domestic staff. In Stuart’s everyday suggestions, the built environment had little place: brief descriptions of towns were based on Portuguese books (Franco, first and foremost) and perpetuated some of their biases and stereotypes. The presence of “Moorish” heritage was unsurprisingly highlighted and illustrated in photographs and so superficially described that in one and the same sentence, Stuart repeated the common-place and yet hinted at the opposing argument:

“Most particular to notice are the Sotavento [Leeward] chimneys, (...) all obviously of Moorish design, domes, towers, and minarets, which is curious, as the usual form of the Arab smoke-outlet is merely a hole in the roof.”<sup>84</sup>

In fact, guidebooks and travelogues of Algarve enshrined existing notions on the region’s townscapes and built characteristics. While Vila Real de Santo António was repeatedly disdained,<sup>85</sup> Olhão’s status as the climax of exoticism, along with its association with modernist forms, was established in multiple ways. **Rose Macaulay**’s words in *Fabled Shore* (1949) were a case in point. Hers was an enchanted tour of the Mediterranean loci of Antiquity, a road trip following the classical poets, of which the Algarve stretch – and Prince Henry the Navigator’s Cape St. Vincent at Sagres – formed the apex. In her superficial account of places and landscapes whose foreignness was emphasised, Olhão was atypically detailed:

“I drove along the coast road, past carob and olive groves and small clean white Moorish villages, to Olhão, more white, more Moorish and more cubically built than any town in Portugal; (...). There are steep outside flights of white steps running up to the roofs; gardens in boxes and birds in cages hang on the dazzling white walls. The streets are deep and narrow; (...). The whole effect of Olhão is exotic, beautiful, oddly modernist, with its square houses and rectangular parallel streets.”<sup>86</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Gomes Barbosa, ed. et al., *Guia Turístico do Algarve* (Lisboa: Revista Internacional, 1940).

<sup>83</sup> Mário Lyster Franco, *Guia Turístico do Algarve* (Lisboa: Revista Internacional, 1944).

<sup>84</sup> Alexander Stuart, *Algarve* (Lisbon: S.N.I. Books, 1947), 40.

<sup>85</sup> For instance in Jan Gordon and Cora Gordon, *Portuguese Somersault* (London: Harrap, 1934), 212.

<sup>86</sup> Rose Macaulay, *Fabled Shore* (London: H. Hamilton, 1949), 184-85. Dame Rose Macaulay (1881-1958) was also the author of *Southey in Portugal* (1945) and *They Went to Portugal* (1946).

English authors extended the Cubist pictorial analogy to associate Olhão with a specifically architectural reference: modernist architecture. This reference was, by then, a part of North European culture, and its use as a metaphor of form and geometry would be as familiar to readers as references to exotic contexts.

Modernism was invoked on sight of Olhão, not only by way of visual association. In the early 1930s, when modernist architecture was gaining ground, **Jan and Cora Gordon** hinted at an alternative parallel between that townscape and the recent trends, not drawn from form (the three-dimensional vibrancy that led others to evoke Cubism and modernism) but from the use of materials in local building tradition:

“All along the road you meet these European Bedouin, and the motor-bus at last brings you to their town of Olhão, which might have plucked from any desert’s edge, and for sheer starkness of architecture could give points to many a modern young architect priding himself on the functional use of materials.”<sup>87</sup>

The appropriate use of materials and the functionalist example in vernacular experience captivated modernist architects, in particular those who “discovered” folk architecture of the Mediterranean (see Chapter 2). Paul Oliver noted how in the 1930s, as new building materials and techniques were being experimented, the “appropriate employment of traditional materials in a way which makes full use of their inherent properties points a moral and a standard to apply to new materials.” A “moral advantage” of vernacular traditions that exploited the material’s capacity and range of applications without “forcing it to behave in a manner inappropriate to its nature.”<sup>88</sup> The modernist tenet of uncompromising structural and material “expression” was seen as mirrored in the way vernacular buildings clearly expressed the construction systems employed. As Oliver also points out, this was a crude generalisation, one of the misapprehensions of the modernist take on building traditions: many vernacular buildings in fact used materials “with little realisation of their properties” and not to the fullest of their potential. The expression of structures, the discipline of function, the division of labour and other perceived “virtues” of vernacular building were far from universal.

The Gordons’ remark in their Algarve travelogue suggests that discussions raised by modernism reached beyond strictly architectural spheres; and that metropolitan travellers projected their sets of references onto what they saw, prompted not only by their own impression but also by existing accounts. The aura that depictions by geographers, ethnographers, journalists, chroniclers, travellers, writers and poets helped to create around the townscape of Olhão had a snowball effect. Each new visitor carried a mixture of his own experience and agenda with previous views of the place, further consolidating the established discourse.

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<sup>87</sup> Gordon and Gordon (1934), 212-13.

<sup>88</sup> Paul Oliver, *Shelter and Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. ([London]: Barrie and Jenkins, 1976 [1969]), 22.

John Gibbons's *Playtime in Portugal* is a good example of this layering process. Gibbons, who was familiar with the country,<sup>89</sup> was invited by local tourism authorities to visit Algarve<sup>90</sup> and confronted his experience with existing literature: Olhão was

“A very famous little city indeed. *It comes in all the books as the ‘Cubist Town’*, but really its architecture will make you think first of Africa and next of New York. (...) Four stories those houses may run to (...) but as you stare up at them from the lanes below they take on an aspect of terrifying skyscrapers. Instead of being mere four-storied houses, they are four houses one on top of another (...) when I myself first saw Olhão I thought of Africa and then of New York and then of Africa again; there are some cliff-dwelling places that I had seen out there. (...) There is no standard of comparison; I do not believe there is any city in the world that is like Olhão.”<sup>91</sup>

Gibbons then reproduced, in colloquial language, the on-going scholarly debate on the origin and originality of Olhão's açoteias:

“They'll tell you that the place developed that extraordinary architecture because of the fishing which makes its living (...). For myself, I do not see it. Faro and Lagos and Portimão also live by their fishing, and they have not got that box-of-bricks architecture. (...) some other explanation would have to be looked for.”<sup>92</sup>

This layman's writing, associating modernism with traditional building forms, reinstated the formal impression thread over the functionalist one: Olhão's modernism was related with the *urban impression* of New York, not with the rational use of available materials. Furthermore, the text demonstrated a direct link between Portuguese writings on the subject and their English counterparts, and showed how easily the “Cubist” pictorial analogy, by then commonplace, was transformed into a “modernist” formal analogy, using a comparison to no less than the townscape of New York – a lasting comparison, resumed by Stanislawski in 1963.<sup>93</sup> Finally, it suggests how closely together scientific, literary and informal discourses on Algarve's built environment were being developed in the 1930s, and how blurred boundaries were between those levels of description. In this light, it seems difficult to attribute any one of these fields with the establishment of an implicit paradigm of architectural form in Algarve. Yet despite the intricate interplay between built facts, intellectual analysis and written fantasy, their combined effect seems clear: existing building traditions were too evident, and too engaging, to be ignored. They imposed their presence on everyone, and demanded consideration at all levels.

Which is not to say that all written discourse on Algarve was unanimous and consistent – and certainly not throughout the whole first half of the century. Authors sometimes found Algarve

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<sup>89</sup> Gibbons had published a travelogue on independent journeying in Portugal, *Afoot in Portugal* (London: George Newnes, 1931).

<sup>90</sup> Cf. "Um Livro em Inglês Sobre o Algarve," *O Algarve*, 7 June 1936.

<sup>91</sup> John Gibbons, *Playtime in Portugal* (London: Methuen, 1936), 138-39. My italics.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 139-40.

<sup>93</sup> “The impression is that of set-back floors, comparable, on a small scale, to those of some modern New York office buildings.” Stanislawski (1963), 114.

“far less African in atmosphere than report and expectation would have it.”<sup>94</sup> Some could also see, along with signs of picturesque and modernism, a sombre side to traditional dwellings: the poverty of living conditions that tainted the purely aesthetic enjoyment of “these remote villages which fascinate the passing visitor but are pleasanter to look on than to live in.”<sup>95</sup>

Initially, this realisation was woven unremarked into the accounts. In his 1929 monograph, Franco noted that nearly 78% of Algarvians were illiterate in 1920.<sup>96</sup> For Gibbons,

“So extremely ignorant and out of date is [the Algarvian farmer-fisher] that if he can keep out of debt to the village shop and maintain himself and his wife and his numerous little brown babies, he knows no better than to be happy. Further more, he looks it.”<sup>97</sup>

This view was perfectly encapsulated in a 1938 issue of *The National Geographic Magazine* dedicated to Portugal,<sup>98</sup> in which the countryside scenes were depicted in soft colours (**fig. 23**); it otherwise echoed the nationalist Estado Novo discourse of a humble but contented rural population, a discourse whose architectural consequences I will discuss further on.

In the 1950s, as the number of travellers increased, contrasting portraits of Algarve emerged. The best example of a post-war social-realism-inspired travelogue was **Frank Huggett’s** narrative of a 1957 tour, set to counter the “romantic” view and show that “poverty and decay are the most prominent features in any Portuguese town.”<sup>99</sup> This “lugubriously-slanted volume,”<sup>100</sup> certainly not intended to promote light-hearted tourism, provided valuable insight into the real living conditions of structures generally described in their external traits. Huggett, affiliated with Italian realism<sup>101</sup> and puzzled by the growing propaganda of Algarve, applied a social-realist filter (with the grained quality of black-and-white photography and film) to the region’s features, and especially to its most enticing elements:

“Inside, [the small houses] are unclean and comfortless. The romantic picture of the happy peasant (...) was an invention (...). Reality is different (...) a bleak uncomfortable world, hot and fly-infested in the summer, and raw and cheerless in the winter, (...). Those fine Moorish chimneys on southern houses are a deception. They are mere decorations or are used to draw out the charcoal and paraffin fumes from the kitchen; but there are no fire-places.”<sup>102</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Rodney Gallop, *Portugal: A Book of Folk-ways* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1936), 13.

<sup>95</sup> Bell (1912), 17.

<sup>96</sup> Franco (1929), 24.

<sup>97</sup> Gibbons (1936), 63.

<sup>98</sup> W. Robert Moore, "Castles and Progress in Portugal," *The National Geographic Magazine* 73, no. 2 (1938).

<sup>99</sup> Frank Huggett, *South of Lisbon* (London: Gollancz, 1960), 64.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. David Wright and Patrick Swift, *Algarve* (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1965).

<sup>101</sup> Huggett clearly found inspiration for narrating his misadventures in Algarve in Carlo Levi, whom he quotes. Rural misery in the Italian *Mezzogiorno*, which Levi depicted in *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (1945), may have seemed comparable to fishermen’s misery in Algarve.

<sup>102</sup> Huggett (1960), 93-94.

Huggett's raw descriptions suggested that Algarve's built identity construct was problematic: it lay on a delicate balance between the will to preserve its traditional character traits, preponderant from the official and intellectual standpoints, and the impulse to modernise such traits (eventually to the point of replacing them) that concerned local interests. This conundrum, discussed in the following chapters using concrete examples, transpired occasionally in contemporary accounts, together with brief mentions to the currents of emigration by which Algarvian workers sought to improve their condition.

Temporary emigration to other parts of Portugal and Spain,<sup>103</sup> or to Mediterranean ports, the result of the economic deprivation that captured social-realist attention, seems to have had important consequences on the region's building features. According to geographers, Olhão would not be the "Cubist town" without modern-day emigration and trade; yet other than the much-discussed North African contacts, traces of long-standing exchanges with the Americas also emerge. The simultaneous adoption of tiled rooftop parapets in Algarve and Brazil, in the 1870s, may have been more than a coincidence, occurring at a time of strong Portuguese emigration to the former colony. One of Olhão's earliest extensions was called Bairro do Novo Mundo (New World neighbourhood, see Chapter 3); there, a 1949 semi-official English guide noted effects of these exchanges:

"[Olhão] is a great fishing town and the men here go (...) to American waters every year, but always return for the three winter months; so many of the houses in Olhão have American comforts and luxuries put in by these roving seamen."<sup>104</sup>

Moore, touring the country for the 1938 *National Geographic* issue, found an Algarvian farmer living in his picture-perfect, whitewashed cottage (**fig. 24**). "I lived in California 13 years," the farmer told Mr. Moore. He added: "I hope to go back."<sup>105</sup> As Huggett hinted, traditional built environment was not necessarily consistent with the image of the contented peasant: he escaped it to make a living abroad, and modernised it upon his return.

In short, Algarve's built identity relied heavily on a combination of another time (the Moorish past) and another place (things brought in by others, things brought in from other places), and currents of emigration may have been a part of the process. Poet David Mourão-Ferreira (1927-1996) identified the need to deal with the past as a feature of Algarvian literature. Similarly, in the construction of an identity in building there was, I believe, nostalgia of otherness, which authors attempted to explain, and builders and architects tried to express. The modernisation of such nostalgia would be an escape valve, necessary to dealing with an inherited condition of economic deprivation, while aiming at a better life; an architectural equivalent to emigration, without leaving the region. As Mourão-Ferreira put it, Algarve

<sup>103</sup> For instance, seasonal emigration for harvest and reaping seasons in Portugal or mining in Spain, cf. Virgílio Passos, "O Camponês e a Casa Algarvia," *Almanaque do Algarve* 1945.

<sup>104</sup> Ann Bridge and Susan Lowndes, *The Selective Traveller in Portugal* (London: Evans Bros., 1949), 128.

<sup>105</sup> Moore (1938), XIII.

“Is not merely a set or a panorama (...): it is a cultural reality, with its myths engraved in the collective subconscious; it is a social reality, with its problems and afflictions. At a closer look, we see that myths and problems are intimately connected: the consistent resourcing of the Muslim substratum, and the episodic adoption of Hellenic models, both denounce the nostalgia of a Golden Age; and they represent, in the psychic level, forms of ‘compensation’ for the century-old drama of economic scarcity for which emigration is, or attempts to be, a solution, on the social plane. Emigrants are, in equal measure, those who leave and many of those who stay: some emigrate in space; others in time. That is the only difference.”<sup>106</sup>

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By investigating the role of non-architectural sources in the establishment of building models for Algarve’s identity, this chapter recognised the persisting notions of exoticism and difference in the depiction of the region, and particularly of its constructions. Literature, Ethnography, Geography and Travelogue conveyed such a difference through detailed portraits of specific building traditions, expressions of popular knowledge, rather than of natural or monumental features. To establish and communicate clearly different building customs was a cornerstone of stereotype creation by metropolitan observers in Algarve.

An even stronger sense of difference emerged before the village of Olhão, dissected in scholarship and repeatedly noted by travellers and locals. More than mere evidence of lasting Moorish influence, Olhão’s uncommon features (the “Cubist,” whitewashed volumes) were associated with architectural modernism, either through formal or ethical analogies, and synthesised into an easily recognisable formula, potentially representative of Algarve as a whole. Geographers were especially interested in Olhão’s buildings and their origins. By outlining a recognisable set of elements in the 1930s and endorsing its subsequent translation into metropolitan architecture, these studies were at both ends of the process: they nurtured an *unwritten model* for Olhão architecture and recognised its effects on new buildings. This process included, and to some extent resulted from, local agency: Olhão’s model was largely influenced by the formulations of Fernandes Lopes, a local intellectual who defined the readings of every metropolitan scholar and traveller.

Scientific, literary and journalistic discourses on Algarve’s built environment developed in close proximity, and boundaries between different levels of analysis were blurred. Descriptions and interpretations of building traditions permeated, sometimes literally, between metropolitan and local accounts, eventually configuring a well-defined set of features for the built identity of Algarve: pared-down surfaces, elemental volumes, all-encompassing whiteness and flat rooftops prevailed, while dissonant elements (colour and a propensity for exuberant surface decoration, for instance) were shunned. The selected set was remarkably close to some of modern architecture’s own formal preferences.

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<sup>106</sup> David Mourão-Ferreira, *O Algarve* (Lisboa: Bertrand, [1962]), 7-13. POiA (Citation 14).



## Chapter 2

### Architects on the Algarvian identity

#### Permanence and change

In the present chapter, I will focus on how metropolitan architects perceived the features of Algarve's building tradition, filtered it through their own agendas, and interpreted it in their work. I will ask how far the image that was being formed in non-architectural fields found echo in architectural practice, and how these effects varied throughout my time frame. This seems to have been a multidirectional process, in which architects' practice contributed to the *unwritten model* of the Algarve building type *at the same time* as it was being influenced, and determined, by non-architects' *abstract idea* of such a type. I will seek to confirm, or refine, such a hypothesis.

While in the subsequent chapters my attention will be on the local standpoint – designers, clients, politicians and bureaucrats involved in local and regional building practice – I will concentrate here on designed and written material originating in Lisbon and Porto offices, government departments and newsrooms. Since my aim is to investigate the creation of a generic construct, I will discuss proposals that were issued from the centre and imply some measure of distance from local circumstances, expecting to capture Algarve's built identity as seen by centrally placed architects – a reading to which the Olhão and Faro case studies will act as local counterparts.

Following a roughly chronological sequence, early elaborations by some of the foremost Portuguese architects of the twentieth century – suggesting a contemporary architecture for *the South* – will be observed in both built and unbuilt proposals and in published writings. Architects' work for central government departments, engaged in countrywide infrastructure programmes in the 1930s and 1940s, illustrates the regional *Algarve* slant given to national types. Algarvian features were consistently explored for entertainment, leisure and tourism purposes: I will analyse how the region was represented in national and international expositions and in the state-run hospitality programme, and how this framework evolved in private hotel commissions of the 1950s and 1960s. Finally, I will discuss the appropriation of vernacular traditions by metropolitan Portuguese architectural culture in the cadre of the national survey of folk architecture (1945-1961), and the particularities of the Algarve section.

## 1. Seen from the city: Algarve and the South in metropolitan drawing boards

### *Raul Lino and the “smallness of Moorish things”*

“Our first impression of the Algarvian landscape is its scale: small and gracious. With no important monuments or high mountains, the prevailing tone of all panoramas is modesty and delicacy (...) I always thought the landscape there had something of the feminine: in its scale, in the small size of natural forms (...) and no less in the shyness of the humble houses. (...) This was the Algarve that I loved.”<sup>1</sup>

When **Raul Lino** (1879-1974) wrote these words for an Algarve-themed German magazine, he was eighty-eight years old. Lino was one of the most influential architects of the twentieth century in Portugal, and one of the few to write as much as he practiced. In the late 1960s, with his national audience diminished, Lino presented his vision of Algarve to foreigners using the same terms he had been employing since the early 1900s to define Portuguese identity as a whole and, more specifically, the South: *smallness, modesty, delicacy, humbleness* – to which he added, for Algarve only, *femininity*.

Lino’s importance lies mainly in his role as the foremost proponent of the Casa Portuguesa campaign, in both words and buildings, between 1900 and the 1940s. Lino himself portrayed the campaign as a “last surge of romanticism” and a “nationalist reaction” against the “Babel” of eclectic, foreign influences in Portuguese architecture.<sup>2</sup> Triggered by an interrogation posed by anthropologist Paula e Oliveira in the 1880s – as to whether or not there was a traditional and characteristic type of Portuguese house –, the Casa Portuguesa quest quickly transferred to the sphere of architecture. What started as a scientific venture to collate surviving evidence of past practices became a matter of re-establishing the lost harmony of the built environment, through a set of standards for future constructions.

This shift from observation to design was largely the work of Lino. In 1902, archaeologist José Pessanha (1865-1939) admitted there existed no evidence of the “essential elements” that would “legitimise the theoretical fixation of a [past] *Portuguese house*” – but he did not doubt “the future existence of a *Portuguese house*” if the movement initiated by Lino was “intensified and generalised.”<sup>3</sup> The architect, Pessanha wrote, had returned from Germany<sup>4</sup> determined to fight the

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<sup>1</sup> Raul Lino, “Weiblich, klein und zierlich,” *Merian. Algarve*, February 1968, 4, 6. GOiA (see Vol. II, Appendix 1, Citation 15).

<sup>2</sup> Raul Lino, “Vicissitudes da Casa Portuguesa nos Últimos Cinquenta Anos,” *Ver e Crer*, December 1945, 35.

<sup>3</sup> José Pessanha, “Casa de Estilização Tradicional Portuguesa. Arquitecto Sr. Raul Lino,” *A Construção Moderna* 3, no. 56 (1902): 19.

<sup>4</sup> Where he studied in the Hannover Technische Hochschule with Albrecht Haupt before returning to Portugal in 1897, cf. Pedro Vieira de Almeida, “Raul Lino, Arquitecto Moderno,” in *Raul Lino* (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1970), 120. Lino’s German education may account for his interest in the

stream of “bastardised *chalets*, pseudo-Norman abbeys, feudal castles, buildings of the most incoherent and absurd eclecticism” he found in Portugal. Lino had travelled his country analysing the traditional house types and suggested their “conscious and systematic evolution” through the combination of what he found “most characteristic, most original, most Portuguese, with the demands of contemporary life (...) in his attempt to nationalise architecture.”<sup>5</sup>

Key to Lino’s approach as an architect was this aim to produce new forms inspired by existing ones, and not archaeological replicas of the “old Portuguese home.”<sup>6</sup> Free inspiration and not copy – the distinction was central in many of Lino’s texts, from the seminal *A Nossa Casa* (1918) to the best-seller *Casas Portuguesas* (1933), for there lay the true value of the architect-artist and what set him apart from the house builder or the client. These works were fierce pleas for the architect’s irreplaceable role in everyday life: for Lino, the “barbarism of constructions” that had swept through Portugal from the mid-1800s and “de-nationalised” architecture was due to owners and builders lacking “artistic education,” influenced by “certain French magazines, very popular in Lisbon.”<sup>7</sup> The architect was the central agent in a return to the *common sense* of everyday construction, to the logic of popular knowledge expressed in vernacular terms – because “one must not address the people in a language it does not understand.”<sup>8</sup> His remit was to supervise the craftsmen’s contribution, essential but in itself not enough for the task.

“Never ask in what style one shall build. It is logical to build in the style of the region. It is natural that local traditions are respected, that tried-and-tested skills are adopted, that surrounding materials are employed.”<sup>9</sup>

Raul Lino’s understanding of regional variation determined his *Casa Portuguesa* construct. While other enquirers questioned the possibility of identifying a set of specifically Portuguese elements in domestic architecture, Lino endeavoured to pinpoint the features of old village buildings that, together, expressed essentially national character: a front porch (*alpendre*) and a generous chimney, glazed-tile panels (*azulejos*), the stone carving in exterior details and the soft curved section of the double tiled-roof eaves.<sup>10</sup> However, with regional diversity underpinning national identity,<sup>11</sup> Lino preferred to explore the possibilities opened by the plural form (*Casas Portuguesas*) than to provide a single Portuguese formula. Regional traits included variations in construction techniques and materials, traditionally and “naturally” used by locals, that could become sources for metropolitan reinterpretation. In his books and articles, Lino offered drawn

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concept of *type*, which he combined with a broader influence from Central European national romanticism movements.

<sup>5</sup> Pessanha: 20.

<sup>6</sup> "Arquitectura Pitoresca," *A Construção Moderna* 2, no. 25 (1901).

<sup>7</sup> Raul Lino, *A Nossa Casa*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. ([Lisboa]: [n. pub.], [1918]), 17.

<sup>8</sup> Raul Lino, *Casas Portuguesas* (Lisboa: Livros Cotovia, 1992 [1933]), 51.

<sup>9</sup> Lino ([1918]), 26-27. POiA (Citation 16).

<sup>10</sup> Raul Lino, *A Casa Portuguesa* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1929), 56-59.

<sup>11</sup> An essential characteristic of Portuguese nationalism, cf. João Leal, *Etnografias Portuguesas, 1870-1970* (Lisboa: Publicações Dom Quixote, 2000).

suggestions, both abstract and taken from concrete cases, of what houses in the different regions of Portugal might look like. Although insisting on how each case was different and claiming he did not wish to provide formulas,<sup>12</sup> these suggestions impacted strongly on construction-related spheres and made the Casa(s) Portuguesa(s) campaign extremely popular in the first decades of the century.

In the hands of architects, engineers and builders, such regional variations eventually became references for an eclectic “*portuguesefication*” of architecture, offering a panoramic view of the Portuguese cultural past to replace that of a foreign-influence past.<sup>13</sup> Lino himself bitterly regretted the misunderstandings that had turned his proposals into yet another “tide of superficial fripperies,”<sup>14</sup> a “slurred simulacrum of regionalist discourse”<sup>15</sup> to feature in the menus of eclecticism. The creation had turned against its creator, and in the process Lino became lastingly associated with superficial, conservative regionalism in Portuguese architectural culture. In the 1930s, when he combined his critique of nineteenth-century styles with a declared opposition to international modernism which he saw as a passing vogue – “Corbusieresque experiments” amounting to little more than “an opportunistic bazaar, already being lifted”<sup>16</sup> – Lino’s conservative reputation was established; a reputation still prevalent today, despite scholarly work that has highlighted the contemporaneity of his architecture and the pioneering quality of his first houses.<sup>17</sup>

The South played an essential part in Raul Lino’s elaboration of Portugal’s building identity. For his essay *A Casa Portuguesa* (1929), the architect drew on his own travelling notes from northern Morocco<sup>18</sup> and southern Portugal to compose a historical observation of domestic architecture, both vernacular and erudite, concluding that its apex had been the late-gothic (Manuelino) and Mudéjar combined style, found in Alentejo since the fifteenth century. The “Mudéjar-Manuelina house of the South,” with its courtyards, galleries, conical and bulb domes, pointed, horseshoe and ogee arches, paired windows, and large-scale chimneys, perfectly represented the penetration of everyday building practice by oriental features. The “characteristic smallness of Moorish things” and specific building techniques, materials, roofing solutions (terraces with external stairs), organic volume assemblages, intricate brickwork panels in parapets, grids and chimney tops – all converged to give this hybrid, picturesque style a “marked national character.”<sup>19</sup> This was, I suggest, a useful, particularly well-defined variation of the Casa Portuguesa abstraction: it could be characterised by iconic elements and its *originality* – an essential axis of building identity – was easier to support, based on a hybrid of formal styles. Lino employed it in his proposal for a Portuguese pavilion in the

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<sup>12</sup> Lino ([1933]), 74-75.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ana Vaz Milheiro, *A Construção do Brasil* (Porto: FAUP, 2005), 176.

<sup>14</sup> Raul Lino, “Ainda as Casas Portuguesas,” *Panorama*, September 1941, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Lino ([1933]), 70.

<sup>16</sup> Lino (1941), 10.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Almeida (1970), Rui Garcia Ramos, “Disponibilidade Moderna na Arquitectura Doméstica de Raul Lino...,” in *Revistas de Arquitectura* (Lisboa: Caleidoscópio, 2011[a]), and ———, “A Perspectiva das Coisas,” *Monumentos*, no. 31 (2011[b]).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Luís Forjaz Trigueiros, “Raul Lino,” *Bandarra*, 28 September 1935, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Lino (1929), 23-25.

1900 Paris world fair,<sup>20</sup> in some of his first house designs in Cascais and Estoril,<sup>21</sup> and in his sketch for a **“Traditional Portuguese Style House”** (Vol. II, Appendix 2, **fig. 25**). The flexible Casa Portuguesa concept could be embodied in any of its derivatives – and was best fulfilled, in the early 1900s, by the “South” house.

Lino did not consistently differentiate between Algarve and Alentejo types, preferring the generic “South” umbrella-term expressed through pared-down walls, Moorish arches and latticed louvres: his 1918 **“House for the South Regions”** (**fig. 26**) was an example of generic “sunshiny style” that suggested “the climate of our Algarve.”<sup>22</sup> In the 1933 *Casas Portuguesas*, the Moorish slant gave way to the pastoral depiction of a **“House in the South”** with elements of the Alentejo vernacular such as the coloured plinth and archivolt, the wooden pergola and the round arch (**fig. 27**).<sup>23</sup> Lino was more specific in the **“House for a Town in Algarve”** (**fig. 28**), in whose description he seemed to share the then-widespread impression of Algarvian traditional features as intrinsically modernist: “By suppressing some of the stonework and by replacing the porch with a reinforced concrete slab, we would end up with a fashionably contemporary house. We would not, however, find it in any way beneficial – technically, economically or sentimentally.”<sup>24</sup> The Algarve example was the closest Lino came, in 1933, to illustrate what he called the “headless modern style, with its walls with no cornices, its columns with no capitals and its crownless porticos.”<sup>25</sup> His point, I believe, was that regional features were structural while modernism was superficial, and flawed.

Raul Lino had a few concrete building commissions in Algarve. His prototype for a **“Portuguese Hotel to be Built in the South,”** commissioned by Sociedade de Propaganda de Portugal, was presented at Algarve’s first regional congress, in 1915, published in 1918<sup>26</sup> (**fig. 29**) and partly realised on the Rocha seafront in the 1930s, according to plans found in Lino’s archive<sup>27</sup> and to local newspapers.<sup>28</sup> The hotel was an opportunity for Lino to explore a novel problem in Portugal – accommodation in medium-large scale for moderate budget travellers. He saw this as an economic *and* architectural problem, appropriate for his Casa Portuguesa quest, since its solutions tended to display clear foreign influences: “We have much to learn from foreign hotels in their

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Raquel Henriques da Silva, “Projecto do Pavilhão de Portugal para a Exposição Universal de Paris,” in *Arquitetura do Século XX. Portugal* (Munich [etc.]: Prestel [etc.], [1998]).

<sup>21</sup> The Monsalvat house, 1901, the first O’Neill house, 1902, the Silva Gomes house, 1902, and the Villa Tanger, 1903, cf. Almeida (1970).

<sup>22</sup> “Casa para as regiões do Sul” in Lino ([1918]), 103-05.

<sup>23</sup> “Casa no Sul” in Lino ([1933]).

<sup>24</sup> “Casa numa cidade do Algarve” in *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Lino ([1933]), 78.

<sup>26</sup> Raul Lino, “Hotel Português...,” *Revista de Turismo*, no. 38 (1918).

<sup>27</sup> ———, “Projecto de Hotel para a Praia da Rocha,” n.d. (Lisbon-FCG/BA-RL186).

<sup>28</sup> In 1933, the conclusion of a “monumental Palace Hotel, designed by the distinguished architect Raul Lino,” was deemed urgent to face growing demand for accommodation in the resort, cf. António J. Magalhães Barros, “Carta da Rocha,” *O Algarve*, 26 February 1933.

internal dispositions,” he wrote, but copying their external features would always result in an “unpleasant, intrusive appearance.”<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, Lino’s so-called “Solar-Hotel” was conceived specifically for Algarve’s coast but was considered appropriate to the entire coastline of south Portugal, with minor construction variations. Indeed, its whitewashed walls and tiled roofs, green lattice louvres, exposed brickwork, galleries and “chronicled” (i.e. lacelike) chimney tops matched the “Moorish” traits of the 1918 “House for the South regions”. Lino proposed to study “solar-hotels” for other tourism destinations in Portugal, and even though his Rocha design was never completed, the idea bore fruits: in 1933, Lino orchestrated the “Model Hotel” media campaign, an initiative whose brief developed the 1915 proposal<sup>30</sup> and, subsequently, inspired state-run hospitality structures.

Lino’s influence in national infrastructure programs, ranging from workers housing to tuberculosis treatment facilities, was also clear in **school design**. He designed the first kindergarten network, built from 1911 on, and regional types for elementary schools in 1917-1918 and 1935-1936. “To build is to educate”<sup>31</sup> was a motto of the architect, whose countrywide school designs were part of an endeavour to inform popular taste “through the exhibition of the appropriate works” by the educated few.<sup>32</sup>

The 1917 programme demanded “solid constructions, of simple but attractive appearance, and adjusted to each region’s climate and character,” to be built using local materials whenever possible.<sup>33</sup> In 1918, responding to a brief that chimed with his own ideas for domestic architecture (published that year), Raul Lino created three “models,” for the north, centre and south of Portugal.<sup>34</sup> One standard layout was given three different external arrangements, with variations not limited to decorative detail: different construction techniques and materials also meant different proportions in spans and openings, for instance, resulting in distinct buildings (**figs. 30-31**). The South type (**fig. 32**) followed Lino’s “Solar-Hotel” guidelines, namely the overall whitewash and the generous round arches enclosing the playground, and added one of the architect’s favourite elements of southern village architecture: the round-section buttresses supporting brickwork arches. The entire building would dispense with stonework (less common in the south) and brickwork lintels, parapets and steps were exposed (**fig. 33**), as Lino stressed, “always without dissimulation.” As deep-set romantic and admirer of the Arts & Crafts principles, Lino believed in the truthfulness of manual labour and traditional craftsmanship, and tried to enforce it in these

<sup>29</sup> Raul Lino, *Memória Justificativa e Descritiva de Um Projecto de Hotel...* ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], [1915]), 7.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ana Alves Pedro Ferreira, “A Importância do Arquitecto Raul Lino...,” in *Comunicações. 9º Congresso do Algarve* (Silves: Raca Club, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> Lino ([1933]), 53, footnote 6.

<sup>32</sup> Lino ([1918]), 12.

<sup>33</sup> Ministério da Instrução Pública, “Decreto n.º 2.947,” in *Diário da República I Série, 11, 20 January 1917* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional de Lisboa, 1917).

<sup>34</sup> Raul Lino, “Escolas Primárias,” 1918 (Lisbon-FCG/BA-RL60).

type-designs. “I am, above all, an enemy of the machine,” he still admitted in 1935, convinced that “this is not the way to social justice.”<sup>35</sup>

However, as far as I could determine, no school was realised using the 1918 South type. In 1935, Lino was commissioned by the state to design another three regional types, now for south Portugal only, based upon which thirty-two buildings were erected, three in Algarve.<sup>36</sup> The final version of the “Algarve type” (1936) included four classroom-number variations, on one and two floors. All types were designed “following the most typical features of building in each region,” as specifically determined by the public works minister,<sup>37</sup> which suggests how strongly the Casa Portuguesa discourse had penetrated official spheres; in fact, it was the acknowledgement of Lino’s “specialisation” in “the study of the Casa Portuguesa” that led to his engagement by the ministry, in 1934.<sup>38</sup>

The “Algarve type” was devised especially “for some parts of this province and of Alentejo where examples of ancient architecture with round-section buttresses remain, *and also* for those where one wishes to obtain an effect more characteristic and particular of these provinces.”<sup>39</sup> Thus while defending a geographical relation between type and context that was irrespective of administrative boundaries, Lino admitted using it concurrently as an instrument of aesthetic effect, undermining the coherence of his first intention.

The aesthetical drive was confirmed in the elevations’ folkloristic tint. The decoration and colour palette defined for the 1936 “Algarve type” (**figs. 34-36**), best illustrated in a painted card (**fig. 35**), configure a playful use of local or regional features. In these designs, as in the two Guerreiro houses Lino designed and built in Tavira between 1932 and 1934<sup>40</sup> (**fig. 37**), elements such as the round-section buttress or the V-shaped parapet grid could either be, or not be, associated with local use: rich in effects of volume, pattern and shadow, and more frequently found in the Alentejo tradition, they were nevertheless deemed appropriate to represent the “South” in any of its parts, as long as they were constructionally compatible. Raul Lino freely combined non-urban, traditional and preferably long-established elements guided mostly by the architect’s “good sense” towards local requirements; his was not a project of scientific rigour.

To some extent, Lino’s reputation as a conservative architect was reinforced when aesthetic concerns outweighed constructional rationale; yet it was due above all to his proximity to the Estado Novo stance, and to the correspondence between his discourse and that of the prime-minister and dictator António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970). Lino often praised the architecture

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<sup>35</sup> Trigueiros (1935), 3.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Filomena Beja et. al., *Muitos Anos de Escolas*, vol. I (Lisboa: Ministério da Educação, 1990), 236. I identified two of these buildings, in São Clemente (Loulé) and Igreja Nova (Aljezur).

<sup>37</sup> Raul Lino, “Edifícios para Escolas Primárias...,” 1936 (Lisbon-FCG/BA-RL352).

<sup>38</sup> (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-PESSOAL-0572/01).

<sup>39</sup> Lino (1936), project statement, 1. My italics.

<sup>40</sup> Raul Lino, “[Casa Unifamiliar], Tavira,” 1932-1933 (Lisbon-FCG/BA-RL321).

of the European fascist regimes, the “noble severity” of Italian works<sup>41</sup> and the expression of “the spiritual forces of the nation” found in German public works – an example, he suggested, for the Estado Novo administration.<sup>42</sup> The discomfort caused by these sympathies in Portuguese architectural culture became apparent in the controversy around the monographic exhibition dedicated to Raul Lino in 1970, which the elite of post-war architects received with indignation<sup>43</sup> and provoked much debate in subsequent years.<sup>44</sup>

My last example of Lino’s works – the **Bairro Operário** in Portimão, a housing scheme designed in 1934 for the canning industry workforce of Algarve’s second fishing centre – was a good instance of the synchronisation of those discourses. The construction of low-income housing was central to Estado Novo’s socio-political control policies (see Chapter 3): “For the benefit of our independent temper and our ordered, cautious simplicity,” Salazar wrote, “we covet the small cottage, independent, inhabited and owned by the family in freehold.”<sup>45</sup> In *Casas Portuguesas*, published in the same year as a new law regulating low-income housing promotion,<sup>46</sup> Lino praised the advantages of single-family, independently-owned housing: “Neither the Americanisation of customs nor the collectivist tendencies of recent organisations have succeeded in quelling Man’s natural and instinctive aspiration for his own, independent family residence. (...) Let us facilitate the fulfilment of that very human dream (...) [of a house] accordant with our features, and addressed to our taste; stronghold of our intimacy, last refuge of the individual against the assault of all the anomalies of collectivism.”<sup>47</sup>

The correspondence between Lino’s thinking and official discourse became clear with the realisation of the first batch of low-income housing schemes, following the 1933 law. The bairros in Portimão, Olhão, Setúbal and Matosinhos were all based on the repetition of minimum, one-floor single-family units, developed by the canning industry consortium for its employees and funded by the state.<sup>48</sup> The Portimão scheme had already been commenced, on canning industrialist Cayetano Feu’s private initiative, and therefore was the series’ first: in 1934 the state bought the land and the unfinished structures from Feu, possibly thanks to the direct intervention of Salazar himself,<sup>49</sup> and

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<sup>41</sup> Lino (1941), 10.

<sup>42</sup> Raul Lino, “Abuso de Expressão,” *Diário de Notícias*, 1 September 1942, 2.

<sup>43</sup> See Ramos (2011a).

<sup>44</sup> See, for instance, “O ‘Arrabalde’ do Céu” in Pedro Vieira de Almeida, José Manuel Fernandes, and Maria Helena Maia, *A Arquitectura Moderna* (Lisboa: Publicações Alfa, 1986), 110.

<sup>45</sup> Cit. in Instituto Nacional do Trabalho e Previdência, [*Album n.º 1*] 1934 - 1940. *Bairros de Casas Económicas* (Porto: [MOPC - DGEMN - ] Secção das Casas Económicas, 1940).

<sup>46</sup> Presidência do Conselho, “Decreto-Lei n.º 23.052,” in *Diário da República I Série*, 217, 23 September 1933 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional de Lisboa, 1933).

<sup>47</sup> Lino ([1933]), 9-10.

<sup>48</sup> By a special agreement with the ministry of public works, cf. Consórcio Português de Conservas de Peixe, report, n.d. [1934] (Lisbon-DGPA/B-CPCS02/01).

<sup>49</sup> On February 2, 1934, Cayetano Feu addressed a thank-you note to Salazar for having privately acknowledged the industrialist’s efforts to build the workers housing scheme in Portimão, and praising Salazar’s rule (Lisbon-ANTT-AOS-PC-10-cx.538-pt.3). On February 27, 1934, the services of the ministry of public works (DGEMN), produced their first report on the possibility of acquisition and completion of the



funded the design and construction of a total of 100 homes whose layouts were adjusted to the general standards of the public works office.<sup>50</sup> They were to be built in *taipa* (a rammed-earth construction technique) for reasons of economy and lack of skilled manpower, following the pragmatic principle of employing “the most common local building processes” whenever possible. Accordingly, the technical services of the ministry insisted upon the use of traditional half-pipe roof tiles of regional custom and not the modern, cheaper, industrial Marseille tiles.

Lino designed three types of expandable minimal dwellings whose compartments were all accessed from the entrance room, the hearth of the home for sitting and dining (**fig. 38**). Separated from the kitchen, this room was a formal counterpart to the traditional Algarvian “*casa de fora*” and could be used also as a bedroom. Lino adapted the elevations to the limited budget while differing from the established standards<sup>51</sup> by drawing on two devices: he added a generous, tile-roofed porch – a feature of the abstract *Casa Portuguesa* ideal – to the unfinished units (**fig. 39**); and decorated the facades of even the humblest types with elaborate render silhouettes around openings (**fig. 40**) – which can be found in parapets, plinths and openings of popular buildings in the south (particularly, once more, in Alentejo).

The inauguration of the scheme, in June 1936, was given political substance and extensive media coverage, an opportunity to stress Salazar’s role as final guarantor for this and all similar public works.<sup>52</sup> For Lino, the Portimão project was possibly the first occasion to put into practice his defence of the single-family unit. It seems appropriate that a rationale built on keywords such as *intimacy*, *individualism* and *human scale*, should be first experimented with in the region that testified to “the smallness of Moorish things,” where humbleness concurred with a marked popular taste for decoration. Combining local, regional and trans-regional (“South”) elements with mythical evocations of a remote past, Lino’s compositions obfuscated their constructional rationality and epitomised a distanced and vague central viewpoint towards Algarve’s built identity.

### *The Andalusian diversion*

Raul Lino’s tendency to look for inspiration in a mythical past when creating his compositions for the “South” was shared by many Lisbon-based architects in the 1920s. In 1924, architect **Carlos Rebelo de Andrade** (1887-1971) described the dilemma designers were faced with in clear terms, when he submitted to the public works office his preliminary proposal for an **industrial and commercial school** in Faro:

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scheme (unfinished due to an industry crisis), following the minister’s urgent request (Lisbon-IHRU/DRH-65-B).

<sup>50</sup> F. Jácome de Castro’s report 1934.02.27 (Lisbon-IHRU/DRH-65-B).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. plans for the Portimão scheme and elevations for the standard south Portugal type in Raul Lino, “Casas económicas. Secção Sul, Rural, Portimão, Lisboa,” 1935 (Lisbon-FCG/BA-RL339).

<sup>52</sup> Mário Lyster Franco, “Uma Obra de Salazar,” *O Algarve*, 14 June 1936.

“The architectural elements with which one could define the regionalist lineaments of Algarve barely exist. There is more tradition than concrete elements, and this tradition tells us to draw inspiration from oriental art, in its Latin-Byzantine-Arab traits. (...) In the final design I intend to develop a modern form that evokes this tradition without the style’s rigidity.”<sup>53</sup>

He further elaborated on Algarve’s “historical tradition” as the last bastion of Moorish rule in Portugal: “historical,” he explained, because “it is more literary than monumental.” The extant heritage was scarce and poor, and the traces that remained in urban construction, “considerably bastardised.” Climate conditions, however, were still similar to those in the North African coast, and “necessarily” determined building activity in both regions. These considerations made it “logical” to seek inspiration in the “Arab elements” that could still be found in the Moorish-ruled part of the Iberian Peninsula: the “Latin-Byzantine monuments of Spain,” of which the architect took his “emotional impression” and not the “purity of their style.”<sup>54</sup>

Rebello de Andrade was the author of several important eclectic designs of the period, namely the Portuguese pavilion in the Brazil Centennial Exposition in 1922-1923,<sup>55</sup> a modern interpretation of baroque monuments that addressed the quest for a Portuguese national style. For Faro, the architect proposed an unashamed replica of characteristic Andalusian features, complete with projecting tiled roofs, horseshoe-arched openings and slit-cut walls (**fig. 41**), similar to none of Portugal’s Moorish remnants. It was a freely created fantasy devised for a place that lacked, in the eyes of a Lisbon architect, any monumental features of its own. The composition recalls the polemical contemporary design by Adães Bermudes (1864-1948) for the **Banco de Portugal** branch in Faro (1916-1926, **fig. 42**), in neo-Mudéjar style, which came to epitomise a reading by Lisbon architects of the south Portugal building identity, but one that was despised by the local elite (see Chapter 4). Other turn-of-the-century neo-Mudéjar proposals built in Algarve include the Faro abattoir (1896-1899), the Loulé market hall (1904-1907) and the Monchique thermal baths, making this a style of choice for public facilities before its eclectic excesses came under scrutiny.

In fact, the school in Faro was never built, the project being heavily criticised by officials as functionally inadequate and outdated.<sup>56</sup> But it sheds light on the choice metropolitan architects faced in the early decades of the century: in a region devoid of monumental heritage, motifs for a regional architecture would be sought either in the Mudéjar-Manuelino style of contiguous Alentejo (as Raul Lino did) or in Spanish territory (as Rebello de Andrade did). The unfamiliarity of the Andalusian source can help explain why many designers dealing with Algarve followed the route suggested by Lino, contributing to the establishment of a generic identity for the “South” that

<sup>53</sup> Project statement 1924.05.31 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DREMS-008/4). POiA (Citation 17).

<sup>54</sup> Project statement 1925.03.11 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DREMS-008/5).

<sup>55</sup> Exposição Internacional do Centenário da Independência do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro. The pavilion was designed by architects Carlos and Guilherme (1891-1969) Rebello de Andrade and Alfredo de Assunção Santos (1890-?).

<sup>56</sup> Conselho Superior de Obras Públicas, assessment 37.907, 1925.04.23 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DREMS-008/5).

could be translated into building both in Alentejo and Algarve. In the case of Algarve, this was a borrowed identity, whose adoption ran counter to the much-advocated regional specificity and prompted occasional tensions.

Later examples of this “generic South” route include 1940s public works commissions for national infrastructure programs. Architect Luís Cristino da Silva’s (1896-1976) unrealised **Caixa Geral de Depósitos** bank branch in Loulé (**fig. 43**), designed in 1941-1944, was unambiguously described as a “regionalist architectural composition, employing both Alentejano and Algarvian elements.”<sup>57</sup> Architect Adelino Nunes’s (1903-1948) **post office** building designs for Albufeira (1942-1946, **fig. 45**), Portimão (finished 1946), Silves (finished 1948) and particularly Loulé (1940-1943,<sup>58</sup> **fig. 44**), and architect Rui Silveira Borges’s (1916-1979) work in the **fishermen’s housing scheme** for Santa Luzia (Tavira, **fig. 46**), designed in 1946 and finished in 1951,<sup>59</sup> also clearly followed Lino’s direction.

In short, both the Andalusian (Latin-Byzantine) and Alentejo (“generic South”) routes to construct Algarve’s built identity were less related to actual precedent than what contemporary literature and scholarship suggested. The proximity of Algarvian vernacular to modernism, hailed in extra-architectural spheres, offered the possibility to develop a response that was more specific to the region, and prompted designers to explore alternative strategies.

### *Cottinelli Telmo and the Algarvian “simple lines”*

Architect **José Angelo Cottinelli Telmo** (1897-1948) pointed to a third route for the interpretation of Algarvian identity when, in 1933, he published a series of three “**Houses for the South**” models, inspired by a vernacular form specific to Algarve: the Olhão house. By describing the watchtowers, superimposed terraces, arched stairs and “cubic masses of construction that give Olhão the look of an Arab settlement, so often noted,”<sup>60</sup> Telmo brought into architectural media the renditions that populated non-architectural publications in the 1920s and 1930s. Furthermore, he expressed clearly the qualities found by modernist architects in local building traditions:

“The houses in Algarve and especially those in Olhão have a unique imprint that must be perpetuated, and more so since their simple lines and well-balanced volumes make for an architectural expression that is not only in our agenda today but, perhaps, also in the all-time agenda of architecture.”<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Luís Cristino da Silva’s project statement 1941.08.06 (Lisbon-FCG/BA-LCSM19).

<sup>58</sup> (Lisbon-FPC/CTT-Cx37-SGCAEdifícios; Lisbon-CTT/SGRF-CTF/CDP/RESLoulé; Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-REE-0015/38).

<sup>59</sup> (Lisbon-IGFPSS/DPI-84-77-vol.1; Faro-UA/A-DUF-217/MU/46).

<sup>60</sup> José Ângelo Cottinelli Telmo, “Casa de 6 Compartimentos para o Sul do País,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 26, no. 6 (1933): 1.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* POiA (Citation 18).

This was not the first time Portuguese architects found Olhão to be a suitable precedent for their modernist proposals, as we shall see in architect Carlos Ramos's rationale for his "Bairro Municipal" scheme, in 1930-1931 (see Chapter 3). But Telmo suggested, inversely, that Olhão's imprint could be used as inspiration for modernist architecture, since the town's informal buildings shared some of the essential values of modernism. Alongside the repeated analogies being drawn between Olhão's townscape, Cubism and modernism in travelogue, modernist architecture was being clearly associated with local tradition by architects. Telmo's pioneering analysis echoed Spanish developments (see ahead) and reverberated in the 1950s reappraisal of folk architecture, when the coincidence between the precepts of popular practice and "the all-time agenda of architecture" gained currency.

It should be noted, however, that the romantic and eclectic substratum that marked Lino's more conservative stance was just as present in Telmo's modernist approach. His take on Olhão architecture was liberal: Telmo excluded "poor-taste adulterations" to his idealised models, such as the platibandas and "other pseudo-urban innovations," and claimed his prerogative to employ "elements which, even though non-existent in Algarvian buildings, stem from the same inspiration source or follow the same trajectory of architectural reverie." Once more, the architect felt free to interpret regional tradition as he saw fit, irrespective of reality or fiction: on top of the self-standing, assembled volumes that replicated Olhão streetscape, "minaret-like chimneys" were exaggerated to fantastic dimensions in the five- and six-bedroom houses (**fig. 47**), and mythical ogee arches decorated the nine-bedroom type (**fig. 48**). For Telmo, Algarve's tradition (de Andrade's "literary tradition") was a starting point that could be pushed according to the architect's "reverie".

Elements of borrowed building traditions (from oriental contexts, in this case) were combined with local features to create a "regionalist expression" that did not clash with nationalist purposes, but rather served to reinforce them: the dissemination of these types would "modernise the look of Algarve's cities and towns, without denationalising the aesthetical expression of houses that, so many centuries later, preserve the taste and comfort of the Arab house." In Telmo's understanding, such combination could "naturally" be realised using reinforced concrete in roof slabs – even though the traditional south Portugal technique of wood joists and terracotta tiles was a "satisfying answer to waterproofing and insulation needs." In short, Telmo seemed to produce a formula that met a variety of requirements: the modernist sensibility to elemental geometry as well as the romantic taste for the exotic and remote (in time and space), the tried-and-tested construction techniques as well as the little-known innovations. The Algarvian features (both real and imagined) admitted such conciliation, and this made the region's building identity uniquely interesting for the modernist and conservative designer alike: both could claim their proposal to be "regionalist." Furthermore, they could expect it to be easily identifiable with a built identity that, through a circular process of cause and effect, was becoming increasingly the determinant of design and construction processes, regardless of their stance (modernist or conservative), origin (local or metropolitan) and author (architect or non-architect).

Soon after the “Houses for the South” series, Telmo had the opportunity to marry his modernist ideals with the demands for tradition in Algarve, in Vila Real de Santo António’s **railway station** (1936-1945, **fig. 49**). Modernism was a “natural reaction against disorder, against the false picturesque,” he explained in 1934, and it had led “to the ‘crate,’ as it is scornfully called (...) but what noble intention lies in waiving all falsity, in search for maximum purity!”<sup>62</sup> In Vila Real, Telmo’s elaborate play of masses, replacing a previous neo-Mudéjar design, took inspiration from Olhão’s popular box-like forms and deconstructed conventional railway station volumes.<sup>63</sup> In this as in other Lisbon-based works, Olhão’s much-cited “Cubism” offered a convenient regionalist reference for a resolutely modernist proposition.

### *Induced modernism: Carlos Ramos’s Algarve*

Among metropolitan designers, architect **Carlos Chambers Ramos** (1897-1969) was one of the most active in Algarve in the 1930s, although his work there remains either little known or enmeshed in misapprehensions – in particular his Olhão projects, which I will discuss in Chapter 3.

In 1930, Ramos was asked to design a **hospital** for São Brás de Alportel. In his first important public commissions in Lisbon, he was specialising in hospital facilities and had visited the latest European examples,<sup>64</sup> appearing as a suitable choice for the Algarvian town’s first hospital. However, the process was long and encumbered by the client’s financial difficulties and the architect’s more central engagements: Ramos’s correspondence with the building committee describes the client’s disappointment with his little dedication, the poor detail in the tender drawings hampering the contract process, and Ramos’s insistence on using a more expensive reinforced concrete structure after he had promised to adopt only stone masonry load-bearing walls, as was local tradition.<sup>65</sup> I could not find the drawings of the project, submitted by Ramos in January 1931; the building was commenced in June 1931,<sup>66</sup> limited to two-thirds of the final plan, and left semi-finished in 1939, when the committee was dissolved.<sup>67</sup> The rare surviving images (**fig. 50**) show a small pavilion with a strictly functionalist composition where Ramos employed elements common to his other works of the period: pared-down walls flush with roof parapets, large

<sup>62</sup> José Ângelo Cottinelli Telmo, “Os Novos Edifícios Públicos,” in *Problemas de Urbanização* (Lisboa: Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1936), 162.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. João Paulo Martins, “O Edifício de Passageiros da Estação Ferroviária de Vila Real de Santo António,” *Monumentos*, no. 30 (2009).

<sup>64</sup> Ramos designed a radiotherapy pavilion for the oncology institute (1927-1933) and other hospital structures in Lisbon. See Rute Figueiredo, “O Instituto Navarro de Paiva,” in *Arquitetura de Serviços Públicos em Portugal* (Lisboa: DGRS, IHRU, 2009), 184-85.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. correspondence between Carlos Ramos and the Comissão de Criação do Hospital de São Brás de Alportel, 1930.04.06 to 1931.03.26 (Lisbon-ACVR/CCR).

<sup>66</sup> Afonso da Cunha Duarte, *São Brás de Alportel*, vol. 1 (São Brás de Alportel: Casa da Cultura António Bentes, 2005), 177.

<sup>67</sup> Comissão de Criação do Hospital de S. Brás de Alportel, *Relatório da Prestação de Contas...* (Faro: Tipografia Cácima, 1942).

openings in clusters alternated with solid planes, lintel-to-ceiling ventilation windows and external terraces covered with concrete canopies.

The architect's modernism had little explicit relation to Alportel's character, that of a rural community where the traditional house was an assemblage of single-pitch roofed volumes (the Central Algarve type of ethnographers) and not the seaside box-like building. Yet the coincidence of reputedly regional tradition (actually concentrated in Olhão and Fuseta) and metropolitan modernist sensibility enabled the "Cubist" formula to become common and valid for the whole Algarve, regardless of local variation. Carlos Ramos's functionalism epitomised the centralised approach characteristic of modernist practice, in which the architect should be "solely responsible for the building"<sup>68</sup>: his projects were conceived in Lisbon and merely realised in Algarve, and the hospital indicates how little local agency affected the outcome, in some cases.

Ramos imposed modernism, both formal and constructional, on Alportel. Yet in his largest 1930s public commission for Algarve, the **customs police outposts**, regional variation was a requirement, not a choice, and the result was what I would call a case of induced modernism.

Appointed by the minister of public works as the architect in charge of all Portuguese customs police (Guarda Fiscal) buildings in 1934,<sup>69</sup> Ramos worked with the programme's special committee to replace over 200 improvised border stations. To control customs duty, tackle smuggling and, in the seaside, allow for a tighter account and levy of fisheries, permanent quarters for groups of five to seventeen men were devised in a wide array of locations, "on steep slopes and smooth plains."<sup>70</sup> A maximally flexible outpost solution was produced in July 1936, with six basic types multipliable to up to fifteen different layouts. The elevations were "particularly subject to flexibility" given "the diversity of particular locations" and the intended "use of the materials available in each region."<sup>71</sup>

The five-men accommodation type (**fig. 51**) featured the essentials of Ramos's proposal. The exterior strictly translated the dictates of an optimised layout, and its composition was distilled into the combination of a pyramidal tiled roof and a twin front porch, enclosed by two round arches; the axis was marked by the decorated chimney, at the rear, and the coat-of-arms and flagpole, at the front. Two of Lino's proposed Portuguese fundamentals – the smoothly protruding eaves and the porch – were chosen by Ramos to dignify this otherwise modest building, a miniature "Casa Portuguesa" that was to dot Portugal's frontiers.

Since the need to control Algarve's maritime border was especially acute, the region was prioritised and in January 1937 the first batch of six projects was approved. The customs outposts in Ancão (Loulé), Cabo de Santa Maria (Faro), Livramento (Tavira, **fig. 52**) and Santa Eulália

<sup>68</sup> Carlos Ramos, "Arquitectura," *Sudoeste*, no. 3 (1935).

<sup>69</sup> (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-PESSOAL-0013/01).

<sup>70</sup> (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-008-0165/07).

<sup>71</sup> (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-008-0165/02).

(Albufeira, **fig. 53**), all of the five-men type, and Fontes Santas (Olhão, **fig. 54**) and Torre de Aires (Tavira), of the nine-men type, were subsequently built, under one single contract.

Ramos's type-project statement made clear that, while the layouts should be kept in all circumstances, the use of local materials and occasional climatic or topographic imperatives could "slightly alter [the building's] external aspect," and either the wood-structured tiled roof or "the reinforced concrete flat roof, with parapet and external stair," could be used. The choice was left to the committee – and for Algarve buildings it chose, unsurprisingly, the terrace roof. As a 1938 newspaper article explained, variations to the type-designs improved their appearance since they made them "perfectly adjusted to local aesthetic features," and answered specific problems by following local tradition (water collection devices in isolated sites).<sup>72</sup> These Algarve variations to the national type-project were obtained by merely substituting the pyramidal roof with a flat roof and a parapet-console coinciding with the type's protruding tiled eaves. All other elements were left unchanged. Apparently a minor variation, Ramos's slender parapet-console – which creates a strong shadow band and a cornice to avoid what Lino called the "headless building" impression – was in fact testimony to the architect's modernist sympathy, a *modernising* adaptation of an inconspicuous, conventional type-design. Seamlessly integrated with the original type-design (suggesting Ramos studied both alternatives simultaneously and created an ambiguous, open-ended proposal<sup>73</sup>), the modernist element was nevertheless induced by regional circumstances.

Algarve's set of outposts is a clear example of how the region's climate conditions and traditional responses – a flat roof as a water-collection device – were combined with modernist preferences to adjust a standardised type. Here, signs of architectural modernism were not imposed but derived from (and, according to the newspaper text, justified by) regional tradition and local imperative. These small edifices, surviving to this day in the Algarvian landscape, appear to epitomise the successful confluence of international trends and traditional local practice.

Such practice was not underrated in the government offices in Lisbon, as the example of another customs outpost, built on the remote Culatra island (off Olhão), suggests. Architect Raul Rodrigues Lima's (1909-1979) initial design of 1945<sup>74</sup> (**fig. 55**), employed the solution consensually regarded as the most effective for drainage and maintenance: the tiled, four-pitch roof, used throughout the country. But the project eventually realised, between 1955 and 1957,<sup>75</sup> returned to the locally preferred flat terrace (**fig. 56**). Once more, the switch from one solution to the other seems to have occurred at some point between the abstraction of a public works office in Lisbon and the concrete, harsh reality of the Algarve coast. That the resulting image should seem more modernist than its initial version is partly incidental, an impression induced by our acquired knowledge. A similar effect occurs with the remarkable building of the coastguard station set on

<sup>72</sup> Cf. "A Construção de Novos Postos da Guarda Fiscal...", [*Diário de Notícias*], 18 December 1938.

<sup>73</sup> Although I could only locate the drawings for the tiled-roof solution, seemingly the only one presented and approved in July 1936.

<sup>74</sup> (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-008-0096/04).

<sup>75</sup> (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DREL-0406/03).

stilts off Fuseta (Olhão), designed by engineer Henrique Travassos Valdez for the Portuguese navy in 1951 (figs. 57-58). Its image evokes 1930s modernism due to the naval analogies then common, but the designer made clear that its “frankly maritime look” was due to its location and to the functions it was to serve<sup>76</sup> – implying that this was not a choice driven by stylistic concerns.

As to Carlos Ramos’s position, and even though he is commonly celebrated as one of the country’s first modernists,<sup>77</sup> some of his less-known works show how he readily used modernism as an interchangeable set of features, dropping it when other values were at stake; many Portuguese designers of his generation did the same. In Algarve, the **border control station** in Vila Real de Santo António (1940-1945, fig. 59)<sup>78</sup> and the radical reconstruction of Tavira’s rare seventeenth-century **town hall** (1948-1960, fig. 60)<sup>79</sup> are among later examples of Ramos’s flexible approach.

### *Algarve goes to Lisbon: the 1940 “Mundo Português” exposition*

National public works programs (schools, housing, customs) were not the sole vehicle for Estado Novo’s discourse on regional identity: ephemeral events, home and abroad, also played an important part. Under the strong leadership of António Ferro,<sup>80</sup> the state propaganda office (Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional, SPN) curated Portugal’s image in a series of international events (Geneva 1935, London 1936, Paris 1937, New York and San Francisco 1939<sup>81</sup>) that culminated in the “Mundo Português” (Portuguese World) exposition in Lisbon, in 1940.<sup>82</sup> (figs. 61-62)

Ferro’s productions abroad were important test beds for perfecting an official, enticing version of folk culture for external diffusion. The success of their “playful, varied and exotic picture” cemented the state’s interest in “monumentalising” such a culture<sup>83</sup> for internal purposes. In 1940, the SPN’s Regional Centre of the Lisbon exposition displayed metropolitan ethnography in the “Vida Popular” (folk life) pavilions<sup>84</sup> and in the “**Aldeias Portuguesas**” ensemble, a set of

<sup>76</sup> Cf. project statement 1951.10 (Lisbon-MM/ISN).

<sup>77</sup> See Bárbara Coutinho, “Carlos Ramos (1897-1969)” (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2001).

<sup>78</sup> (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-008/294-0231/03).

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Ricardo Agarez, “Paços do Concelho de Tavira” in *Inventário do Património Arquitectónico* ([http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP\\_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=25761](http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=25761)) accessed 2011.10.02, and (Faro-UA/A-DUF-419/MU/48).

<sup>80</sup> For this central figure of Salazar’s regime and his role in state propaganda, see Jorge Ramos do Ó, *Os Anos de Ferro* (Lisboa: Estampa, 1999), and Ellen Sapega, *Consensus and Debate in Salazar’s Portugal* (University Park, PA; London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

<sup>81</sup> For details on the expositions, see Margarida Acciaiuoli, *Exposições do Estado Novo. 1934-1940* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1998).

<sup>82</sup> The exposition was the centrepiece of an extensive official programme to celebrate the double centennial of the nation’s birth (1140) and restored independence after 80 years of Spanish rule (1640).

<sup>83</sup> By “monumentalising” folk culture, Ferro’s action would have turned it into a peculiar repository of collective memory, cf. Daniel Seixas de Melo, *Salazarismo e Cultura Popular (1933-1958)* (Lisboa: Universidade de Lisboa, 2001), 230.

<sup>84</sup> Designed by architects Veloso Reis Camelo (1899-1985) and João Simões (1908-1993), see Chapter 4.



plasterboard houses representing the villages of Portugal's thirteen European provinces (**fig. 63**). If the "Mundo Português" exposition marked a new stage in the "folklorisation" of the Portuguese people – the "coordinated definition of regional differentiation, concerted towards national unity"<sup>85</sup> –, the "Aldeias" gave substance to "the unification of regional models under a single, all-encompassing concept of nation."<sup>86</sup> The villages and the country overlapped, the parts represented the whole. Algarve, an essential part of the Portuguese kaleidoscopic identity in the Estado Novo rationale, could not be absent; but what form would its representation assume?

The formula chosen was already clear in the antecedents to the "Mundo Português" exposition. In Paris 1937, the visitor was welcomed into the Portuguese pavilion's hall of honour by pictures depicting nine provinces; the "Algarve" was a fantasised version of Olhão by Francis Smith (1881-1961), with almond trees blossoming among oversized, immaculately white houses on whose terraces women laboured (**fig. 64**). In the "Tourism" room, the impact of this image of Olhão as a surrogate for Algarve was reinforced by Ferro's advertising slogan: "*Qu'au Portugal il y a une ville Cubiste.*"<sup>87</sup> Fifteen years after he himself inaugurated the association between Olhão and Cubist art,<sup>88</sup> Ferro used the by-then commonplace formula to promote the region's scenic qualities in foreign markets. Smith's Algarvian fantasy was reproduced over and over again until the 1970s in Algarve propaganda (**fig. 65**), confirming the way that the region's built identity had been entirely subsumed by the image of Olhão.

In the more modest pavilions erected in the USA, the portrait of contemporary Portugal included, under the "Tourism" banner, a miniaturised rendering of the country: a series of cabinet-size models of picturesque scenes, by Jorge Matos Chaves (1912-1988), presented traditional architecture, monumental and vernacular, scaled-down to toy dimensions.<sup>89</sup> The Algarvian scene, once more, was a composition of Olhão-inspired buildings and other conventional Algarve attributes (almond-tree, decorated rural house, horse-drawn cart, **fig. 66**). By its side, a slogan read: "Algarve the sky of Europe the sea of Africa." However, the catalogue described Olhão as "a curious town of singular aspect, with its square houses surmounted by terraces with small watch-towers; a type of building which is not found elsewhere and, although not actually Moorish, shows evident signs of Moorish influence."<sup>90</sup> This unusually precise explanation, signalling SPN ethnographers' hand, downplayed the usual emphasis on the town's mythical features and made clear that the symbol chosen for the region was not truly representative of it.

The 1940 "Aldeias" ensemble (**fig. 67**) – general plan and buildings by architect **Jorge Segurado** (1898-1990) and Eurico Sales Viana (1891-1973), landscape design by silviculturist Jorge

<sup>85</sup> Jorge Freitas Branco, "Lugares Para o Povo," *Revista Lusitana*, no. 13-14 (1995).

<sup>86</sup> Melo (2001), 230.

<sup>87</sup> "Only in Portugal you can find a Cubist town." Cit. in Acciaiuoli (1998), 60.

<sup>88</sup> António Ferro, "Olhão, Terra Cubista," *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 14 January 1922.

<sup>89</sup> See Jorge Segurado, "Portugal nas Exposições de Nova Iorque e São Francisco," *Revista Oficial do Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos*, no. 11 (1939).

<sup>90</sup> Portuguese Section New York World's Fair et al., *The Official Book of the Portuguese Representation...* (Lisboa: Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional, 1939).

Gomes de Amorim (1900-1943) – would build on previous experience and combine a playful character with serious political symbolism. The ensemble’s intrinsic shortcomings, as a narrow, schematic display of symbolic elements, have been much discussed,<sup>91</sup> yet most accounts fail to note that its creators acknowledged such frailty from the start. In his guide to the regional centre, SPN ethnographer-in-charge Luís Chaves (1888-1975) accepted the “absolute impossibility” of representing every type of house and settlement form (“The whole site of the exposition would not suffice”<sup>92</sup>), and the need to “artificially” elect and cluster some of them “in symbolic villages.” Schematisation was a condition of the project, and the “Aldeias” ensemble was largely a playful amusement for urban audiences of village buildings brought together with a certain self-irony. Compared to it, the architects’ work for the provinces, before and after 1940, had a much more enduring effect in disseminating central constructs on regional motifs.

Furthermore, the regional centre in Lisbon was but one piece of SPN’s ambitious strategy to use the 1940 centennial celebrations as a pretext for a national network of provincial ethnographic museums, in which the popular traditions and activities of each area would be collected, studied and displayed with scientific rigour. Regional ethnographic surveys were to be carried out, based on enquiries outlined by Chaves and sent to each provincial authority in May 1939.<sup>93</sup> Under the “house and costume” section, the surveys addressed the placement, context, composition, roofing form, layout, furnishings and decoration of house-types, to be recorded by local authorities, institutions and any “ethnographers, either acknowledged or amateur, who may be known to exist.”<sup>94</sup> For the SPN ethnographers, this was the opportunity to register and safeguard Portugal’s folk heritage, threatened in the country’s shift from a largely rural to an urban society. The “Aldeias,” devised as the “illumination [as in manuscripts] of the documents exhibited in the regional centre”<sup>95</sup> (i.e. the artefacts in the folk life pavilions), were intended as part of a larger picture.

Within this synthesis of national diversity, director Ferro’s admired cubist house – the Olhão house – once again represented Algarve in Segurado’s plasterboard-on-metal-frame version (**figs. 68-69**). “The buildings’ whitewash vibrates in the luxuriant vegetation, as do the improbable, ever-varied chimneys.”<sup>96</sup> The “Algarve” village was not so much the simulacrum of a village as it was that of a town, one of the most urban-like stretches of the set; yet the best viewpoint of the overlapping volumes and exotic features (with the staircase featuring prominently) was from a

<sup>91</sup> See Melo (2001), and Andreia Galvão, “O Caminho da Modernidade” (Universidade Lusíada, 2003).

<sup>92</sup> Luís Chaves and Horácio Novais, phot., *Roteiro do Centro Regional* (Lisboa: Edições SPN, 1940).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Comissão Executiva dos Centenários, letter to Junta de Província do Algarve 1939.06.16 (Lisbon-PCM/AOS-PT/SGPCM/AOS/CEC-660/08).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Letter as above, 1939.11.11 (Lisbon-PCM/AOS-PT/SGPCM/AOS/CEC-660/08). The previous year, geographer Orlando Ribeiro had published a “Regional Geography Enquire” that used the province of Beira Baixa as a case study for national surveys of the same kind. *Inquérito de Geografia Regional* (Coimbra: Ministério da Educação Nacional, 1938).

<sup>95</sup> “O Centro Regional Realização do S.P.N...,” 9 April 1940.

<sup>96</sup> Chaves and Novais (1940).

specific position outside the exhibit. It was from this one point that all photographs were taken (fig. 70), thus paradoxically subverting the three-dimensional, organic qualities of the specific building tradition of the Algarvian representative, painterly rendering it two-dimensional.

In the 1920s, the architect Segurado may have found in the metaphysical and pictorial qualities of Mediterranean form and in its Portuguese representative (Olhão) “a referent for modernity.”<sup>97</sup> As many other architects, painters and writers of the time, he was seduced by the town’s elemental geometry and modernist-friendly features, portraying them often.<sup>98</sup> I would note, however, how by 1940 Segurado’s accent had shifted from the modernity of Algarve’s vernacular to its potential for picturesque effect: the choice of Olhão now stemmed from its iconic quality, making it suitable for a temporary exhibit, and no longer from its possibilities as a source for inspiration in contemporary architectural practice. Olhão was now an effective picture for temporary display, not material for long-lasting architecture.

Extensive media coverage of the exposition made the 1940 curated Olhão house, in the eyes of the country, the Algarve billboard house. However, it was not to be the only such model, and for other purposes, other versions of a “generic Algarve,” extracted from the region’s building tradition, were pursued from Lisbon. This will be the subject of the following section.

## 2. From inland bucolics to seaside hedonism: the changing brief for tourism and its architecture

“We do not wish for large-scale tourism. Especially since we prefer one thousand times the *foreigner* to the *tourist*. We don’t mind seeing the foreigner by our side, with no binoculars or camera, thrilled before a stretch of sea or a bucolic landscape. [He is] a human being and has, if not ideals, at least unbiased goals and a personal taste. [The tourist] is a fellow of conventional taste [who] will go only where he is taken or he is told to go (...) He may be, internationally, harmless – and even very useful – but he stains the landscape. That is why our landscape dislikes tourists.”<sup>99</sup>

These words, taken from a 1940 official publication that celebrated the variety of Portuguese landscape, illustrate the hesitant position of the ruling regime towards the development of Portugal as an international tourism destination in pre-war times. “We should not want foreigners to visit us *en masse*,” Salazar wrote in 1938<sup>100</sup> when he launched the programme of public works to mark the country’s double centennial. But Portugal did expect some visitors, *foreigners* if not *tourists*, and for them the government set out to build and operate a network of roadside inns, the Pousadas. These were a response to increasing pressure from agents who, inspired by foreign

<sup>97</sup> Galvão (2003), 164-165.

<sup>98</sup> E.g. in Oliva Guerra, “Em Louvor do Algarve,” *Alma Nova*, no. 9 (1926).

<sup>99</sup> Luís Reis Santos et al., *Paisagem e Monumentos de Portugal* (Lisboa: Secção de Propaganda e Recepção da Comissão Nacional dos Centenários, 1940), 11. POiA (Citation 19).

<sup>100</sup> [António de Oliveira Salazar], “Independência de Portugal (Nota Oficiosa da Presidência do Conselho) [Março de 1938],” *Revista dos Centenários* 1939, 6.

experience, saw the economic potential of tourism for Portugal; and to the realisation that hospitality was its “Achilles’ Heel” and had become a “national question.”<sup>101</sup> Directly associated with the improvement of the nationwide road infrastructure, one of the most visible public policies of the time, the Pousadas were also related with the regime’s understanding of the landscapes of Portugal. These were essential constituents of the national identity formula, mirroring in their diversity the richness of the country’s folk traditions, and the Pousadas were mechanisms that would allow travellers, national and foreign, to enjoy them in a measured manner. To unveil the Portuguese landscape while preserving its bucolic character, its integrity and what made it attractive to external views – this was the challenge in the 1930s, when the SPN office was given the remit of tourism and its infrastructure.

The circumstances altered significantly twenty years later, when Portugal was on the threshold of mass-tourism industry and the first steps were taken to make this the foremost export of the country, with the input of private investment and the establishment of permanent connections (by air) with prosperous, welfare-state-strong North-European markets. Bringing a new sense to the word *tourism*, the sun-and-sea holiday formula for the masses was then internationally intensified and perfected, and Algarve played an increasingly important role in this change, especially after 1965, when Faro’s international airport opened. But the challenge remained: how to accommodate growing contingents of visitors without disrupting existing communities? How would hospitality architecture respond to intrinsically contemporary needs while taking advantage of specific local features? From 1965 on, increasing pressure for urbanisation and sweeping development altered the entire frame in which the built environment was created and managed in Algarve. However, the architectural production that was to serve this new industry was set in motion by the end of the 1950s, mainly in Lisbon, resulting in the commission, design and appraisal of the first large-scale structures to be erected on Algarve’s coast in the early 1960s. I will explore a few significant examples of these early projects to illustrate the change in building programmes preceding the period of mass-construction and enquire how regional built identity was used for this purpose, what was included, what was excluded, and why.<sup>102</sup>

### *An architectural viewport over almond-blossom fields: the Algarve Pousada*

In 1940, the SPN official, essayist and broadcaster Carlos Queiroz (1907-1949) presented Portugal’s coastline in terms that may seem surprising today:

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<sup>101</sup> Joaquim Roque da Fonseca and Leitão de Barros, dir., “Hotel Modelo...,” *O Notícias Ilustrado*, 17 September 1933, 22.

<sup>102</sup> A short version of this section was published as Ricardo Agarez, “Local Inspiration for the Leisure of Travellers,” in *Architecture for Leisure in Post-war Europe, 1945-1989*, ed. Janina Gosseye and Hilde Heynen (Leuven: Katholieke Universiteit - ASRO, 2012).

"It might be supposed that the Portuguese, following their Atlantic calling, prefer seaside panoramas over bucolic ones (...). This is not so. Apart from the few beaches that, between July and October, are crowded (...), the finest stretches of coast in the country (many of which are suitable building areas) remain as empty as though they were hideous."<sup>103</sup>

Stemming from the core of the state propaganda,<sup>104</sup> Queiroz's text set out the officially sanctioned understanding of the Portuguese landscape, and detailed how its features were conveyed to travellers crossing the country<sup>105</sup> (figs. 71-73). The shores had a near-mythological quality, and were the unifying trait of a richly varied inland – but not the landscape's first and foremost trait. The sea was masculine (both in the protective ruggedness of the coastline and in the gender of the word *mar*), while the landscape (*paisagem*) was feminine and delicate, and could hardly endure the 'indiscreet, almost insolent' gaze of the tourist. In the landscape's diversity, 'naturalness and lyricism,' lay the main source of interest for visitors, to be handled with caution.

Queiroz composed a comprehensive picture in which characteristic regional landscapes surfaced in every facet of popular culture. These landscapes were impossible to categorise: not uniform or coincident with administrative limits, they fragmented into each individual's homeland, different from his neighbours' – a "national super-parochialism" that explained the variety of Portuguese folklore and, Queiroz suggested, the relatively long survival in Portugal of "the most important accessories of the landscape – dwellings, windmills, carts, fishing and cargo boats, rural art, cottage industries, conditions of labour, habits and customs." Folklore was another instance of the Portuguese landscape's essential formula: "*naturalness in variety*."<sup>106</sup>

*Paisagem e Monumentos...* relayed academic research to a general audience: it was a piece of official propaganda complete with references to scholarly work (Lautensach, Girão and other geographers, and Lino's *A Casa Portuguesa*), employing their findings to depict the variety in Portuguese landscape and its use. It suggested how easily literary text and scientific discourse (geography and ethnography, but also architecture) penetrated populist texts. Landscape was an asset, a key factor for the establishment of tourism in the country, as valuable as Portugal's best monuments and offering a varied experience that included, but was not limited to, the scenic but deserted coastline. Initially reluctant to open up the country to mass tourism, the Estado Novo regime preferred to control travellers' experience of this asset and accommodate the essential needs

<sup>103</sup> Santos et al. (1940), 8-9. POiA (Citation 20).

<sup>104</sup> Queiroz became the editor of SPN's magazine, *Panorama*, created in 1941, as well as the author of the national radio program of tourist propaganda *Conheça a Sua Terra* (Know Your Land). "Queiroz (Carlos)," in *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira* (Lisboa, Rio de Janeiro: Editorial Enciclopédia).

<sup>105</sup> Queiroz's text was later translated into French and English. Carlos Queiroz, *Landscapes of Portugal* (Lisbon: National Secretariate [sic] of Information, [1944]).

<sup>106</sup> Santos et al. (1940), 20. Interestingly, the English translation presented this national "super-parochialism" (a term that it did not employ) as a negative thing: "Folklore too often reflects the barrier which is created by an excessive love of home. This is I think responsible for the backwardness of rural development in Portugal, as compared with that of other countries, particularly as regards dwellings." Queiroz ([1944]), 47. The meaning of the sentence was entirely inverted, and Queiroz's argument for a direct link between a rich landscape and its folklore was eliminated.

of small numbers of them in places where there were few or no structures, while providing the private sector with examples of good practice.

Such was the brief behind the construction of the first eight Pousadas,<sup>107</sup> launched by the ministry of public works in September 1938 and intended to be ready in time for the 1940 Lisbon exposition. The government defined them as

“Houses of regional architecture [integrated with] the tradition and in the architectural context of the regions they represent (...) furnished and decorated with similar regionalist concern, so that those who visit them keep in their retina the sweet images of the ethnography and architecture of this old Portugal’s different regions.”<sup>108</sup>

These were the ‘houses’ created to lodge travellers who might explore the landscapes praised by the propaganda office using the new roads of Estado Novo policies (**figs. 72-73**). Their stated purpose was to ‘represent’ each region’s characteristic architecture and ethnography, and this has led authors to insist on the influence of Raul Lino’s work on Portuguese regional types, channelled through the architect’s 1933 book *Casas Portuguesas* and his role in the “Model Hotel” newspaper campaign, of the same year.<sup>109</sup>

For the “Model Hotel” campaign, Lino orchestrated the programme, design and display of hotel models for eight Portuguese provinces – by eight young architects<sup>110</sup> whose “architectural motifs” would be “sourced from regional tradition” –, an itinerant exhibition devised to be a “far-reaching mobile school” of regional designs, as interpreted by metropolitan architects (**fig. 74**). The Algarve model was designed by trainee architect João Guilherme Faria da Costa (1906-1971): a flat-roofed composition whose size and layout, if not the detailing, loosely followed Lino’s own “Solar-Hotel” prototype of 1915. As a new type of building, determined by modern standards, functional and practical, whose image was nonetheless unmistakably regional and non-standardised, the Pousadas lineage can in fact be found not only in the unbuilt models of 1933 but also in Lino’s 1915 prototype. Yet, while the concept may have matured out of Lino’s work, his actual influence was more limited than this genealogy suggests.

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<sup>107</sup> The eight Pousadas initially planned were located in Marão, Arrábida, Estrela, Vouga, Alportel, Alfeizerão, Elvas and Sines, cf. “Pousadas Turísticas,” [*Diário de Notícias*], 7 June 1939. Of these, seven were commissioned in September 1938: architect Rogério de Azevedo was given the units in the north (Marão, Vouga and Estrela), architect Veloso Reis Camelo those in the centre (Arrábida and Alfeizerão) and architect Miguel Jacobetty the units in the south (Elvas, Alportel and later Sines) (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-011-0002/01). The Arrábida project was never built.

<sup>108</sup> “As Primeiras Pousadas de Turismo Estarão Prontas em Agosto,” [*Diário de Notícias*], 4 May 1940. POiA (Citation 21).

<sup>109</sup> See Susana Lobo, *Pousadas de Portugal* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2007). Lobo identifies the 1920s Spanish “Albergues de Carretera” and Francisco de Lima’s 1936 thesis *Pousadas* as other fundamental references for the Portuguese state’s network of the 1940s.

<sup>110</sup> Architects Manuel Marques (Minho), Adelino Nunes (Douro), Raul Tojal with Francisco Keil do Amaral (Trás-os-Montes), António Lino (Beira Alta), Luís Benavente (Beira Baixa), Camilo Korrodi (Estremadura), Jorge Segurado (Alentejo) and J.G. Faria da Costa (Algarve). José Leitão de Barros, dir., “O Nosso Jornal e o Turismo,” *O Notícias Ilustrado*, 30 July 1933.

The Pousadas were to be placed alongside essential road links, or at panoramic points (**fig. 75**). In the case of the **Algarve Pousada**, the second criterion was most important; the choice fell not on a seaside spot but on a hilltop near São Brás de Alportel, 20km inland, among fields of almond, carob and fig trees (**fig. 76**). When it finally opened in 1944, this setting was presented in cinematic terms: recreating the experience of the motorist who overcomes the 350 curves of the mountain range separating Alentejo from Algarve, Alportel appeared as

“The first whitewashed town our eyes envisage (...). All around, the landscape is more dream-like than real. Hills, cliffs, suspended gardens. In the background, behind a tender rift in the mountains, the infinite sea (...). [Alportel] signals the frontier between well-being and discomfort (...). [the Pousada] resembles an oasis that welcomes [motorists entering Algarve] with open arms. (...) From a round-shaped balcony, the panorama is breathtaking. (...) [Tourist excursions] today offer no more dangers or significant difficulties. There are roads and there are Pousadas.”<sup>111</sup>

The Pousada was to provide a pause in long-distance journeys, be it for a night or for a meal; and its location was to allow for the building to function as a viewport over a large panorama representing the best of the region’s landscape (**figs. 77-78**). The whole of central and eastern Algarve was to be as if funnelled into this sample of rural landscape, to be apprehended from the fixed point of a building that was an observatory, first and foremost. The sea was kept in the distant background, and no reference was made to the possibility of its enjoyment. This was clearly not the main purpose of the Algarve Pousada.

In fact, this preference for the bucolic over the maritime setting was criticised within official bureaucracy by Raul Lino, in his capacity as ministerial architect-planner. In a 1938 report, Lino denounced the rationale behind the Pousadas plan and all but ignored matters of regional characterisation. Criticising the location, size and economic viability of units, this was Lino’s final attempt to influence the programme and to bring it closer to what he had believed, in 1915 and 1933, to be the most suitable answer to the country’s needs. The Algarve Pousada was too far inland for guests to follow the then-recent trend of “sea-bathing even outside of the appropriate season.” Although enjoying a “surprising panorama,” it lacked the “vital conditions” that would make it economically viable: being only “meant to serve pure tourism” (i.e. sightseeing-tour breaks, not long-stay holidaying), it was “too distant from the major centres” to succeed in this purpose.<sup>112</sup> Lino, a conservative thinker, seems to have realised that the future of Algarve’s hospitality industry lay on the coastline, and not inland, lyric as its panoramas might have been. However, the minister disregarded his critique<sup>113</sup> and Lino’s influence was curtailed; the plan proceeded unchanged.

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<sup>111</sup> Armando de Aguiar and Anne Marie Jausse, il, "Digressão Turística à Volta da Pousada de São Brás," *Panorama*, June 1944. POiA (Citation 22).

<sup>112</sup> Assessment 1938.10.22 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-011-0002/01).

<sup>113</sup> Cf. government order 1938.11.08 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-011-0002/01).

What of the architecture chosen to represent the Algarve in this national programme? “Novelty without exoticism” were the words Lino used<sup>114</sup> to praise architect **Miguel Jacobetty**’s (1901-1970) design, of 1939 (**fig. 79**) – an appropriate shorthand for a project that dealt with a concise brief through a limited range of compositional devices, and whose basic purpose was to provide unsophisticated room and board in a building devoted to the contemplation of the surrounding landscape. Four bedrooms (for up to eight guests) took the upper floor of a four-pitch-roofed volume, and a large sitting-dining room for 52 people (two bus-loads), partly curved and glazed, opened onto a pergola-covered veranda (**figs. 80-81**). This, the fulcrum of the building, overlooked “the best horizons” and could be used, in the summer, as an open-air dining area.<sup>115</sup>

A selection of details provided the exterior with the regional slant required for all the Pousadas: the wood-lattice panels sheltering the entrance porch, the pergolas and ceramic grids, the single-pitch-roof volume of the garage, the elaborate chimney tops (**fig. 82**) and the generous roof terraces that afforded panoramic views. Yet the “regional” *raison d’être* of these elements was not mentioned in Jacobetty’s project statement, devoted solely to functional and technical matters.<sup>116</sup>

The composition was, in fact, what I would call *generically Algarvian*: a good example of a Lisbon-based take on the Algarve regional type, displaying elements that vaguely evoked building tradition (the lattice panels, the slanted garage volume) and replicated stereotypical features (the chimney top, the ceramic grid, the pergolas). Its source of inspiration was the rural house of Central Algarve (the sub-region that includes Alportel), which combined parapet-bound terrace roofs with single-pitch tiled roofs in composite volumes entirely whitewashed. Such elements were, however, carefully combined with recognisable modernist and conservative features (the cylindrical surfaces and the round arches, respectively), resulting in a hybridity, which I believe, was the design’s strongest point.

Jacobetty’s work on his other 1938 Pousada, in Elvas, has been seen as an example of how an essentially modernist proposal was presented under a regionalist, conservative surface.<sup>117</sup> Even though Alportel’s semi-cylindrical dining room and flat-topped volumes could be read as modernist forms, I would resist such a reading: this is, I believe, an interpretation based on the same post-postmodernist viewpoint that insists on locating traces of modernism underneath the works of a number of early-twentieth-century Portuguese architects. Uncomfortable with the fact that many first-generation modernists (such as Ramos, above) went on working within the conservative regime-supported lexicon when their commissions so required, present-day authors often look for signs of modernism in 1940s works as a way to redeem their architects from the “sin” of

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<sup>114</sup> Raul Lino’s assessment 1939.01.27 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-REE-0171/02).

<sup>115</sup> Project statement 1939.04.06 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-011-0043/01). The Pousada was furnished with paintings by Carlos Botelho and decorated by Vera Leroy and Anne Marie Jauss.

<sup>116</sup> Jacobetty’s designs in the public works sphere generally displayed functional optimisation under an inconspicuous face: e.g. the National Stadium in Lisbon (1938-1944) and the first low-budget housing blocks in the large-scale scheme of Alvalade, Lisbon (1945-1947).

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Susana Lobo, “É Uma Casa Portuguesa, Com Certeza?,” *Monumentos*, no. 28 (2008).



collaboration.<sup>118</sup> Instead, I would argue that it is precisely the hybridity of buildings such as these Pousadas, and of many others that populate this dissertation, that is one of their most interesting and distinguishing features. They are multilayered objects, whose layers should not be considered individually since they are inextricably combined – and, most importantly, they should not be fitted into a hierarchy of architectural value in which an acceptable modernist core makes up for the flawed conservative surface.

The main building of the Alportel Pousada was completed in December 1940, and all works were finished in August 1942.<sup>119</sup> But the constraints of the war years delayed the start of operations – and so Portugal completed its Pousadas when there were no foreign tourists to occupy them. When it finally opened in April 1944, all the national and local newspapers featured the same SPN-issued text<sup>120</sup> highlighting how the “surprising landscape of almond-blossoms” would be “further enriched with the new Pousada (...) another *Casa Portuguesa*.”<sup>121</sup> According to SPN director Ferro, the Pousadas were devised to resemble not hotels but country homes that guests should feel had always been there; the objects that decorated them, locally crafted, linked the landscape (human and non-human) and the interiors, “simple things that constantly locate [guests] in the region where they are, and do not introduce a discontinuity between the inside and the outside, between the house and the countryside.”<sup>122</sup>

The tourism policy of the Estado Novo in 1940, embodied in the Pousadas network, was communicated in terms that chimed with Salazar’s conservatism and the *Casa Portuguesa* discourse: *modesty, economy, discretion*, and a focus on the moral and aesthetic qualities of the bucolic. This hospitality programme was part of SPN’s drive to “isolate certain folk traditions (...) and declare them symbolic of an idealised vision of national unity and harmony,”<sup>123</sup> and a more lasting opportunity for the office to stabilise the “visual structure” of its “general propaganda plan.”<sup>124</sup> The Pousadas, I would add, were to encapsulate their context, the surrounding landscape (with all its meanings), and ultimately the entire region: they were to be regional condensers, allowing for passing travellers to sample an aestheticised, sublimated version of regional identity.

In Algarve, the formula chosen to convey this was not the same that Jorge Segurado had chosen for his regional condenser in the “Aldeias” exhibit in Lisbon. Segurado’s formula was cubistic, scenographic, plastically elaborate and all drawn from Olhão; Jacobetty’s was tamed, discreet, domestic and familiar – as Lino put it, “without exoticism.” Considering how Algarve’s

<sup>118</sup> Regarding Jacobetty’s work on the Pousadas plan, Lobo insists on how the Elvas project was “led to be Portuguese, *but, at the right moments, knew how to assert itself as structurally modern.*” Ibid.: 152. My italics.

<sup>119</sup> (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-011-0036/04).

<sup>120</sup> The newspapers *Diário de Notícias*, *Diário Popular*, *Diário da Manhã*, *Novidades*, *Voz*, *Jornal de Notícias* and *O Primeiro de Janeiro* all reproduced the same text (Lisbon-ANTT-SNI-736).

<sup>121</sup> “Turismo Nacional,” *Diário de Notícias*, 10 April 1944. My italics.

<sup>122</sup> António Ferro, lecture at SPN headquarters (Lisbon), 27 March 1943, cit. in Lobo (2007), 39. This text was used repeatedly whenever the media wished (or was asked) to advertise the Pousadas, e.g. “As Pousadas do S.N.I.,” *Correio Olhanense*, 16 January 1949.

<sup>123</sup> Sapega (2008), 16.

<sup>124</sup> Lobo (2007), 43.

image was consistently represented by its surrogate Olhão to national and international audiences in the 1930s, it might have been expected that the village would once more be chosen as the inspiration for the region's first Pousada. However, the townscape's essentially urban qualities would not have suited the pastoral requirements of a Pousada; to build a piece of Olhão on top of a hill in Alportel would have been a mistake that officers and architects were unlikely to make, even within a plan driven by political, as much as architectural, aims. This means that both Jacobetty's homely cottage and Segurado's Olhão-like cubes were deemed as appropriate representatives of the region, to be used when convenient. Indeed, Segurado's design for Algarve's second Pousada, in Sagres (1958-1961), turned once more to the "generic South" model of generous tiled roofs and arched galleries, abandoning all references to exotic, urban Olhão.

*"Only just found, not yet lost." Algarve on the edge of mass tourism*

In 1959, the Lisbon-based architects **Jorge Chaves** (1920-1982) and **Frederico Sant'Ana** (1921-1961) were commissioned to design a small, thirty-room hotel for an exceptional location, on the cliffs overlooking the beach at Armação de Pêra (**figs. 83-85**). In a preliminary proposal for the **Hotel do Garbe**, intended to probe the response of official authorities, they wrote:

"We envisaged a building (...) that would not surprise (...) with its size, majesty or exoticism, but rather would have been sensed before it had been seen because it is equal in spirit to other built masses that can be found, everywhere, in Algarve, where Man has spontaneously created an architecture that is organic, that is alive since it burgeoned out of the soil and of the human spirit (...). One only has to comprehend and feel the truth there is in Man's constructions in Algarve, (...) the wisdom that the Algarve 'architect' demonstrates when he establishes a human scale with which to measure his buildings; a character with which to model them, stemming from his logic use of materials and, most importantly, from his concept of dwelling, which he feels in his blood [and] leads him to calve flesh of his own flesh in the same inexorable way that a female cannot but give birth to anything other than her own child, her same, always bettered and more apt to live in her environment."<sup>125</sup>

The project was received in the SNI<sup>126</sup> tourism department such enthusiasm that the developer was encouraged to double the number of rooms.<sup>127</sup> SNI defended the project from issues raised by the maritime and planning agencies, regarding failure to comply with minimum distances from the shore, asking them to accept the location "in view of [its] true touristic relevance (...) and since it can be seen as an isolated, even special, case."<sup>128</sup> The officials praised "the effort to achieve a valid architectural work" and the use of a sectioned solution instead of a single volume, allowing for the creation of interstitial gardens and courtyards in a "lively" composition where all elevations

<sup>125</sup> Project statement 1960.02.05 (Lisbon-AMFC). POiA (Citation 23).

<sup>126</sup> Short for Secretariado Nacional de Informação, Cultura Popular e Turismo, as SPN was called since 1944.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. project statement 1960.02.05 (Lisbon-AMFC).

<sup>128</sup> Secretariado Nacional de Informação, letter 4152/T-3 to DGSU, 1960.05.24 (Lisbon-AMFC).

had been carefully designed, “given that there are no back elevations.”<sup>129</sup> This support eased its approval, in April 1961, by all central and local government bodies, and its classification as of “Utilidade Turística”<sup>130</sup> (touristic utility), a special status that entailed significant tax exemptions.

Chaves and Sant’Ana’s rationale focused on a few essential points: firstly, their respect for the “natural setting, the jaggy and sinuous cliffs,” with a proposal that enhanced its “jaggedness against the blue sky, giving it a more clear and pure profile through the use of built masses rendered in whitewash” (fig. 86). Secondly, a “spatial-dynamic concept” exposed the functions through the play of volumes, and explored the chiaroscuro variations of sequential planes and masses that projected ever-changing shadows (fig. 87). And finally, the building as a “natural,” sensed object, a combination of their own design skills, the requirements imposed by the site and the lessons learned from the Algarve tradition, its geographic and human environment, informal agents and unwritten rules.

The Hotel do Garbe designers shared in the late-1950s renewed attention to vernacular buildings common to architects the world over, and specifically in the Mediterranean. They belonged to a group of Portuguese post-war architects that was following closely the “Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional Portuguesa” (1945-1961), the survey of folk architecture in Portugal, a collective effort to identify modern architecture with vernacular practice in which Chaves was particularly interested.<sup>131</sup> By 1959, Chaves was increasingly integrating the lexicon of post-war international modernism with Portuguese regional materials, techniques and formal solutions, and developing a strong personal vocabulary that combined non-orthogonal geometries (broken lines and contours, non-right angles, tilted planes), typical modernist items (clear structural grid engaged in the spatial experience), non-typical modernist solutions (precise openings on massive walls, framing views of the exterior), and the consistent use of traditional building elements in both conventional and unexpected ways.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Secretariado Nacional de Informação, letter 40.230 to Francisco Santos, 1961.04.17 (Lisbon-AMFC).

<sup>130</sup> Established in 1954 and detailed in 1956, cf. Presidência da República, “Lei n.º 2073,” in *Diário da República I Série*, 286, 23 December 1954 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1954). ———, “Lei n.º 2081,” in *Diário da República I Série*, 113, 4 June 1956 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1956).

<sup>131</sup> Chaves regretted his friend and partner Artur Pires Martins (a member of the Algarve team), had not included him in the survey project, cf. Manuel Ferreira Chaves (the architect’s son), in discussion with the author, September 2010. Martins, Chaves and Palma de Melo designed and built together the Penha de França housing block (Lisbon 1960-1968), the Paiva Chaves house (Lisbon 1963) and the Hotel Globo (Portimão 1968), cf. Manuel Ferreira Chaves, “Jorge Ribeiro Ferreira Chaves. Arquitecto. Curriculum Professional,” 2010 (Lisbon-AMFC).

<sup>132</sup> He experimented this integration, e.g., in the Caixa Geral de Depósitos bank branch project in São Pedro do Sul (Viseu, 1958-1960), in the Estalagem Quatro Estradas inn project (Areias de Pêra, Silves, 1960-1962) and in the Hotel da Baleeira (Sagres, with Frederico Sant’Ana, 1960-1966), cf. Chaves (2010). I have discussed this experimentation in the cadre of private rental housing architecture in Lisbon, in Ricardo Agarez, “De Regra, Renda e Desenho. Arquitectura para a Misericórdia de Lisboa c. 1960,” in *Património Arquitectónico 2* (Lisboa: SCML, 2010).

This was Chaves's first large-scale commission in Algarve,<sup>133</sup> and a good opportunity to realise his version of the region's 'true' traditional features. A three-pronged, three-floor layout formed a sinuous plan that followed the line of the cliffs, with an additional fourth wing, half-buried and landscape-roofed, whose bedrooms sat only five metres above the beach level (**fig. 87**); a sequence of platforms deployed common spaces (lounge, dining and sitting rooms, dining terraces), reaching out to the edge and the seascape (**figs. 83, 88**). In the upper floors, bathrooms were externalised in protruding box-like volumes that created deep, hollowed-out balconies and precisely framed views (**fig. 90**). The concept, somewhat unusual for modern hotel design, had a well-known precedent in André Lurçat's Hotel Nord-Sud in Calvi (Corsica, 1929-1931, **fig. 89**), an early instance of modernist engagement with Mediterranean vernacular<sup>134</sup> – but the effect of the inset terraces was more dramatic in the Algarve hotel. Its similarity to a much-admired “vernacular” housing ensemble in Fuseta (Olhão), recorded and widely illustrated by Chaves's colleagues and friends in the Portuguese folk architecture survey (**figs. 111-113**), is also remarkable, signalling the impact of the survey's results on Lisbon architects even before its publication as a book (1961).

The building, as Chaves later wrote, would respond to Algarve's challenging climate by “opening up, here and there, to enjoy the surrounding panoramas, while at the same time sheltering [guests] against the blinding outside light.” Covered in the same whitewash “that for centuries has covered roofs, terraces, walls, pavements and steps, sometimes smudging the floor,” the new construction would be bound to others “equal in spirit (...) that can be found, everywhere, in Algarve” and eventually “remain alive in a hundred years' time,” as interesting and respect-worthy as other centenary constructions.<sup>135</sup>

In short, with formal metaphors that strengthened a “spiritual” relationship between the 1959 Hotel do Garbe and the age-old, anonymous, spontaneous forms of the Algarvian “architect,” the designers sought to achieve a balance between the building and its immediate context, in which one does not harm the other, and a “natural” long life for the new building, overcoming the limitations of passing architectural trends to participate in the long-span lineage of vernacular architecture. This while pragmatically installing a sixty-room facility equipped with all the modern comfort requirements, on the very edge of the cliffs.

The hotel was finished in 1963 and soon became popular with both architectural and general media. Compliments came from the British Council of Industrial Design's press officer, who stayed and wrote to Chaves praising that “most successful building (...) which so brilliantly combines the indigenous materials of your country with an uncompromising modernity.”<sup>136</sup> The magazine *Arquitectura* commended the Garbe for not affecting the balance and harmony of the landscape, “on the contrary, with an extraordinary strength, it contributes to enhance (...) the

<sup>133</sup> Where the architect had family connections: Maria Chaves Berger, a Faro-based cousin and his client in 1951 for a refurbishment in Rua Filipe Alistão 70 (Faro-CMF/SAO-220/1951).

<sup>134</sup> See Jean-Louis Cohen, *André Lurçat: 1894-1970* (Liège: Mardaga, 1995), 110-20.

<sup>135</sup> Project statement 1960.12.20 (Lisbon-AMFC).

<sup>136</sup> David Wainwright, letter to Jorge Ferreira Chaves, 1963.10.01 (Lisbon-AMFC).

shape and colour of its cliffs.”<sup>137</sup> A 1964 *Life* magazine feature on the region showed the breakfast service on the terrace of the Garbe, “which is known as the Ritz of the Algarve.”<sup>138</sup> And a travel writer for *The Guardian* called it “a personal choice for quieter holidays (...) terraced down to the beach, rooms crisply whitewashed and furnished in Algarve style.”<sup>139</sup> (fig. 91)

Other than the hotel’s architectural and commercial success, however, it was its planning process that is most intriguing, particularly the reasons for the SNI’s consistent support. The encouragement provided by the highest tourism authority in Portugal, occasionally countering the views of other government agencies, suggests that this formula coincided with SNI’s vision for the Algarve hospitality industry. Or, more precisely, that the blend proposed by the Garbe designers was seen as the correct balance between the economic potential of Algarve’s tourism industry and its natural and human characteristics (landscape and vernacular building traditions).

In 1959, as the Garbe was being designed, Portugal’s government seemed hesitant as to the best way to accommodate the growing foreign demand for tourist facilities. Presidency minister Pedro Teotónio Pereira (1902-1972), the SNI’s superior, voiced the administration’s uncertainty when opening the Ritz,<sup>140</sup> the first modern luxury hotel in Lisbon (fig. 92). “It is not longer the time to philosophise on the good and evil of modern tourism,” he conceded. “We are, however, at great risk of ruining much of what nature and the past generations have left us.” A blatantly modernist building such as the Ritz was acceptable only in Lisbon’s modern neighbourhoods, and would be “unforgivable nonsense” in the old town. Similarly,

“In old villages of the inland or the seaside, in Beira as in Algarve, where there is local beauty and character, the artists’ role is not to indiscriminately reproduce small-scale, budget-conscious Ritzes, but to interpret the suggestions of the environment (...). There are plenty of empty spaces where new styles and ideas can be experimented. [Some] traditional townscapes have to be preserved, protected and even improved and completed, if possible. That is what most of our visitors best appreciate and try to get to know. (...) The vast infrastructure *that modern tourism imposes on us* must be sensitive to that spirit of comprehension of the local qualities. Old in old, modern in modern, coherence and good taste in every case.”<sup>141</sup>

The Estado Novo regime of the late 1950s was different from that of twenty years before, and recognition of the economic value of tourism was now inescapable – an “imposition” – for conservative political sectors; these, as the minister’s speech exemplifies, were reluctant to let go of past formulas (easily controllable, small numbers of travellers staying overnight in bucolic panoramas) and to embrace the demands of “modern tourism.” The time had come – as Lino, Ferro and other promoters of public, “model” initiatives in the 1930s had foreseen – for private

<sup>137</sup> Rui Mendes Paula, "Hotel do Garbe," *Arquitectura*, no. 83 (1964): 103.

<sup>138</sup> Farrel Grehan, phot., "Portugal's Algarve...", *Life*, 23 October 1964, 65.

<sup>139</sup> Adrienne Keith Cohen, "Turn Left at Sagres," *The Guardian*, 28 December 1968, 5.

<sup>140</sup> Designed by a team led by architect Porfirio Pardal Monteiro (1897-1957) and built under the supervision of Jorge Chaves, between 1952 and 1959.

<sup>141</sup> [Pedro Teotónio Pereira], "O Futuro Demonstrará...", *O Século*, 25 November 1959, 7. My italics. POiA (Citation 24).

enterprise to take over from the state and advance the large-scale hospitality structures. And while department officials still seemed determined to combine international standards with the maintenance of local character, the state knew it was taking a serious step: it was passing on the responsibility of interpreting local or regional character through architecture, which it had so closely controlled in the Pousadas programme, to the hands of businesspeople whose key goal was commercial profit. This was a fundamental change in the production of Portuguese hospitality structures, which the Hotel do Garbe process embodied.

The Garbe, however, was not especially problematic: despite its sensitive setting, it was designed for one of those “empty spaces” where “new styles and ideas” could be experimented with, and did not have to deal with the “traditional townscapes” that were consensually considered, along with low living costs and climate, the key to Portugal’s touristic success. As a guide to Spain and Portugal put it naively in 1956, these countries “have sturdily preserved the authenticity of their culture and the originality of their way of life; as a result, their attractions for the visitor remain[ed] unspoiled” and their prestige “as favourite holiday haunts” was rising.<sup>142</sup> Portugal’s remoteness and underdevelopment were still attractive, as were the Algarve’s character, landscape, villages and people. One visitor wrote in 1959: “I am in a way happy to say that there is very little accommodation, since this is undoubtedly why the Algarve is so unspoilt. (...) Albufeira – I hate to say it because I am so afraid that I may spoil it – is one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. (...) There are only two simple pensions here.”<sup>143</sup>

In fact, these personal impressions of “a country not only most beautiful but also completely unselfconscious”<sup>144</sup> ran simultaneously with the international advertisement of Portugal as the land of “The sunniest climate – The bluest sea – The sandiest beaches, etc.”<sup>145</sup> (**fig. 93**), where there was no rain “but tourists pour in”<sup>146</sup> (**fig. 94**). And the fishing village of Albufeira (**figs. 95-97**) embodied the “traditional townscapes” where tensions created by the construction of “small-scale Ritzes” rose in the late 1950s, as illustrated by the planning process of its first large hotel.

### The Sol e Mar case

In September 1959, shortly before the minister’s speech (and possibly prompting his comments), the status of “touristic utility” was requested for the **Hotel Sol e Mar**, designed by architect **Fernando Silva** (1914-1983) for a plot of land immediately below the chapel whose tower was the icon of the older part of Albufeira. The modernist slab of this fifty-room hotel was

<sup>142</sup> *Spain and Portugal*, ed. Eugene Fodor (London: Newman Neame Limited, 1956), vii-viii.

<sup>143</sup> Pierre d’Harcourt, “Time Off in Portugal,” *The Observer*, 8 March 1959, 29.

<sup>144</sup> Garry Lester Hogg and Beth Hogg, “Money Goes a Long Way in Portugal,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 18 April 1955, 12. The first author had previously published his Portuguese travelogue: Garry Lester Hogg, *Portuguese Journey* (London: Museum Press, 1954).

<sup>145</sup> “The Sunniest Climate...”, *The Guardian*, 30 December 1959.

<sup>146</sup> This was the slogan in a poster by Nuno Costa, “No Rain in Portugal but Tourists Pour In,” *Panorama*, March 1959.

to be inlaid in the cliff wall so as not to be seen from within the village (**fig. 98**). Inversely, from the sea side, its presence would be imposing, a six-storey concrete structure interrupting the natural roughed cliff backdrop to the scenic Peneco beach (**figs. 99-102**). Silva claimed that the plot configuration and location “inevitably implied a strong contrast between the building and its environment” and prevented a “more organic” and fragmented solution that could “emulate the heterogeneous and indiscriminate expression of Albufeira’s townscape.”<sup>147</sup> Salazar, who held the final word on the special tax status and reputedly distrusted Portugal’s tourism development,<sup>148</sup> was shocked at the idea. Led to rule favourably on a *fait accompli* (the building was under construction), he nevertheless insisted that his government use this prerogative over hospitality structures to regulate their design:

“[Considering] the crisis that architecture faces among us, it is convenient that the official entities and the technical services are consulted on the architectural quality of hotels that request touristic utility status. The [architect’s assertion] that problems are ‘solved within the principles of modern architecture’ is not enough. We can exert a useful action in moderating the distempers and whims of the modern art of construction, which should not be mistaken for architecture, at least by not granting the status to buildings that lack minimum artistic requisites.”<sup>149</sup>

The conflicting views on the subject were further exposed when, shortly after, an English artist wrote to Salazar begging the dictator to “save Albufeira.” Trimnell-Ritchard thought the “immense block in contemporary style, with all the usual clichés and ignoring the beautiful and simple architectural style of the Algarve,” could still be modified, citing the good example of the Pousadas plan where extant environment preservation and the needs of travellers were conciliated. He alerted Salazar to the fact that Portugal should not try to attract tourists based on the sun-and-sea formula alone, but rely also on “the magnificent buildings and simple, charming villages” – which were being disfigured by modern buildings that, “when trends wear out, will appear as simply ugly.”<sup>150</sup>

More significant than the complaint, however, was the response it triggered. Asked to comment on the letter by his superior (and, implicitly, to account for the construction), the public works minister Arantes e Oliveira (1907-1982) admitted he approved of both location and design. To erect this large building away from the intricate fabric of Albufeira, he conceded, would have

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<sup>147</sup> Fernando Silva, project statement, 6 February 1961, cited in Isabel Monteiro, *A Obra do Arquitecto Fernando Silva (1914-1983)* ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], [2008]), 112.

<sup>148</sup> Salazar is said to have believed that “with tourism there’s a bit of the nation’s soul that is lost,” cf. Paulo Pina, *Portugal: o Turismo no Século XX* (Lisboa: Lucidus, 1988), 161, cit. in Madalena Cunha Matos et al., “The First Moderns in Portugal,” in *ATLAS* (Brighton: 2009). According to these authors, tourism was economically necessary but “would promote the contact between different people and different ways of life, putting at risk the required isolation of the country that so well suited the dictatorship regime.”

<sup>149</sup> Government order n.d. [1959.09] (Lisbon-ANTT-AOS-PC-44B-cx.625-pt.27). POiA (Citation 25).

<sup>150</sup> Edgar Trimnell-Ritchard, letter to António de Oliveira Salazar, 1959.10.13 (Lisbon-ANTT-AOS-OP-9-cx.482-pt.15).

saved the village's picturesque aspect and avoided the clash. Yet the houses of Albufeira were generally modest, in poor condition and devoid of individual "plastic interest," and would not last long; consequently, once the "inevitable transformation" of the village occurs, and the "current, poor picturesque – 'Moroccan,' as it has been called – is transmuted into another formula, less pleasing to the painter and the poet, but more civilised (...), the hotel now under construction will look better."<sup>151</sup>

The short dispute behind the Sol e Mar modernist slab encapsulates the conflicting positions within the highest spheres of Portuguese government regarding the development of Algarve's tourism. Conservative stances such as those of Salazar and his presidency minister persisted, upheld by public opinions (epitomised here by an English artist) that still praised the Pousadas programme, twenty years from its launch; yet they were being gradually overtaken by the developmental pragmatism of other sectors. The assertive position of the minister of public works – with his extraordinary defence of a modernist hotel building as a catalyst for the urban renewal of a backward and deprived, if picturesque, fishing village – makes clear how, at this threshold, there was not one clear road to follow, but many. There was no straightforward balance between such development and the region's characteristics, natural and human, even in as centralised a state as Portugal then was. Central agencies were under pressure from developers, and had only limited leeway to resist their interests, whatever the dictator's own views. Furthermore, the region's village architecture, traditional and picturesque, had a dark, insalubrious, decadent side<sup>152</sup> to which tourist development was likely to be seen as an eagerly awaited antidote. Local character might draw tourism, that modern phenomenon, but would eventually be itself modernised. In Albufeira, the Hotel Sol e Mar was kept hidden from one of the village's best viewpoints (**fig. 95**), and its position in the cliff remained an exception; the pressure of speculation and the perception of the local picturesque potential later converged in unrestrained expansion inland, resulting in an exemplarily flawed case of tourism development in Algarve. The visitor who found Albufeira to be "the St. Tropez of the Algarve" in 1968, and noted with some relief that "Development is almost out of the question because there is only space to go up the hillside,"<sup>153</sup> was at least in that last respect right.

### **The catch of leisure architecture**

Pousadas and picturesque villages were not sufficient to support the region's growth and to accommodate the north and central European travellers that increasingly turned to southern countries for their annual vacations. Salazar and his government were well aware of this. In October 1959, the German *Bundesamt für gewerbliche Wirtschaft* (federal office for trade and industry) sent a "commission of German tourism experts" to "assess the touristic conditions of Portugal,"

<sup>151</sup> Eduardo Arantes e Oliveira's assessment 1959.11.16 (Lisbon-ANTT-AOS-OP-9-cx.482-pt.15).

<sup>152</sup> Occasionally described, e.g. in Frank Huggett, *South of Lisbon* (London: Gollancz, 1960).

<sup>153</sup> Diana Petry, "Only Just Found, Not Yet Lost," *The Observer*, 23 June 1968, 29.



especially those of Algarve.<sup>154</sup> The commission's report, sent to Salazar's office, found Albufeira to be the place "with the best tourism possibilities" of Algarve, thanks not only to the 1.5km-long sandy beach but also to the village itself, which "was built in the Moorish style," its narrow streets and spotless houses "offering a typical and colourful image." (figs. 96-97)

The experts found existing hospitality infrastructure "interesting," naming (once more) the Pousadas network for its fair price and its buildings, "clean, comfortable and decorated according to the region's character." What was being done in Algarve also left a "good impression" on the German commission, who praised the technical capabilities, the construction techniques and materials and the "planning principles" of Portuguese architects, as well as the "excellent results" produced by competent labour. Future construction had a positive outlook: although real-estate prices were likely to undergo speculation, there were cheap, good materials, and devoted artisans who could realise with precision the Portuguese "excellent architectural drawings." There was a setback, however: "In realising new constructions, a certain adaptation to local tradition will be required, since authorities do not support buildings with many floors,"<sup>155</sup> considered economically advantageous and "preferable in most cases" to low-rise, bungalow-type resorts. In this instance, the views of foreign experts and national authorities seemed to clash and the "local tradition" of moderate scale – officially supported in the Garbe example and even, to some extent, in the Sol e Mar – seemed less and less adequate for the purposes of large-scale tourism.

On the subject of communications, however, there was synchrony between these recommendations and national decision-making. In 1959, the Germans considered the construction of a large airport in Faro to be urgent, allowing for the launch of "inclusive tours" and charter flights to Algarve; that same year, the civil aeronautics office in Lisbon concluded the airport's general plan. This modest structure (fig. 103), an "unquestionable necessity" since 1945,<sup>156</sup> was finally opened in July 1965 by the President of the Republic. Significantly, in his visit the head of state lodged at the Alportel Pousada and attended an official dinner and fireworks display in the Hotel Sol e Mar in Albufeira,<sup>157</sup> thus combining two tenses of tourism in Algarve – the past (in the Pousada) and the present (in the hotel) – and evoking the sense of transition towards a future (in the airport) that seemed promising, albeit unclear. In turn, the head of the German civil aeronautics department inaugurated the airport's first tourism office in 1966,<sup>158</sup> a follow-up to the German recommendations of 1960 signalling the establishment of this country as one of the key markets for Algarve, from the outset.

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<sup>154</sup> Hoffmann, Burger, Wahl and Schmid, "Parecer Sobre o Desenvolvimento do Turismo na Província do Algarve...", report 1960.04.30 (Lisbon-ANTT-AOS-PC-61-cx.635-pt.23).

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Direção-Geral da Aeronáutica Civil, José Maria Seguro e A. de Matos Lima, "Memória Descritiva [do Aeródromo de Faro]", n.d. [1959] (Faro-ADF-AHMF-M/F.5).

<sup>157</sup> "Programa da visita de Sua Excelência o Senhor Presidente...", 1965.06 (Lisbon-PCM/AOS-PT/SGPCM/AOS/G-237/06).

<sup>158</sup> (Lisbon-ANTT-SNI-DGT/A/12/5).

Journalists in England (another key market) followed the transition closely. In 1963, Adrienne Cohen still believed that “Portuguese regulations” and tourism planning would confine the “facilities” to certain points, leaving “huge areas of small population and ingrained traditionalism” for the lone traveller to enjoy.<sup>159</sup> But in 1967 Cohen noted the creation of two of the first “luxury developments” on the Algarve coast, the foreign-initiative, golf-related Penina Golf and Dona Filipa hotels, fearing future consequences.<sup>160</sup> It was not long before she realised that those “hitherto hidden promontories (...) are more and more being snapped up for new development, just as the occasional little coastal towns and fishing ports are being expanded,” with “a good deal of totally undistinguished architecture.”<sup>161</sup>

Cohen’s comments, from a foreign, detached standpoint, offer an unexpected script of the hospitality industry developments in the second half of the 1960s. The “Portuguese regulations” mentioned by the journalist, which would protect the country from the excesses of other holiday destinations, had been in the pipeline since the early years of the decade. Architect Francisco Keil do Amaral (1910-1975) established the “Bases for Touristic Development” of Algarve in 1961-1962, setting the guidelines for architect Paulo Cunha’s 1963 “Algarve Touristic Improvement Plan.”<sup>162</sup> The preliminary version of the region’s first comprehensive urban planning instrument was finished in 1964 by Portuguese and Italian planners under the supervision of Luigi Dodi (1900-1983), in a public works office created specifically to plan and oversee Algarve’s regional development.<sup>163</sup> The regional plan, anticipating the urbanisation of the entire coast, stated that “local character and atmosphere should be defended and remain largely unchanged, and the natural qualities, which made Algarve one of the international tourism areas with the highest potential, should be preserved.”<sup>164</sup> Similar concerns supported architect Cabeça Padrão’s 1966 study on the towns and villages of the Algarvian coast,<sup>165</sup> and the region’s first landscape-use plan, outlined in 1967.<sup>166</sup>

The immediate effects of these planning instruments was very limited, however, and “many buildings were continued or initiated based on previously approved projects and existing ‘hospitality equipment plans’.”<sup>167</sup> Such may have been the case with the hotels mentioned by Cohen, two of the first five large-scale, luxury structures in Algarve: after the Penina Golf (Vale de

<sup>159</sup> Adrienne Keith Cohen, “Portugal,” *The Guardian*, 14 September 1963, 6.

<sup>160</sup> ———, “Portugal – A Winter’s Tale,” *The Guardian*, 2 September 1967, 5.

<sup>161</sup> ———, “Next Time I’ll Make It...,” *The Guardian*, 6 December 1969, 10.

<sup>162</sup> Keil do Amaral’s study was called “Bases para o Desenvolvimento Turístico do Algarve,” and Cunha’s plan was called “Plano de Valorização Turística do Algarve.” See Susana Lobo, “A Colonização da Linha de Costa,” *Jornal Arquitectos*, no. 227 (2007[b]).

<sup>163</sup> MOP/DGSU/DSMU, “Planeamento Urbanístico da Região do Algarve – ‘Esboçeto’ e Orientação Geral” (Lisbon-IHRU-APML-NP936).

<sup>164</sup> Cit. in César dos Santos, *Terra Morena* ([Lisboa]: Início, 1965), 164.

<sup>165</sup> Called “Estudo Urbanístico das Cidades e Vilas do Algarve”.

<sup>166</sup> The “Ordenamento Paisagístico do Algarve” plan, by landscape architects Viana Barreto, Frazão Castelo-Branco and Ponce Dentinho, cf. Lobo (2007[b]).

<sup>167</sup> Santos (1965), 164.

Lobo, Faro) in 1966,<sup>168</sup> the Hotel Algarve<sup>169</sup> (Rocha, Portimão, **fig. 104**) opened in 1967. In January 1968, the Hotel Alvor Praia<sup>170</sup> (Portimão) opened, followed, in February, by the Hotel Dona Filipa (Alvor, Portimão) and the Hotel da Balaia<sup>171</sup> (Albufeira). The Balaia (**fig. 105**) was perhaps the most sophisticated of this group: its rich architectural vocabulary transcended the common formula of late international modernist exteriors and exotic (Moorish-style) interiors, incorporating references to Algarvian tradition, Japanese architecture and the works of Wright, Coderch, Kahn and Stirling.<sup>172</sup>

“Portugal, stirring to consciousness of tourism, could become the victim of it. Development is essential, but development conjures up pictures of strings of anonymous modern blocks side by side along a sea front, picturesqueness and privacy down the drain. (...) Discreet development without loss of character or standard would pay off in the long run. Will Portugal go for the quick penny or the long-term investment? The next half-dozen years will show.”<sup>173</sup>

When Diana Petry wrote these words in 1964, there were thirty-two hotels, inns and boarding houses in Algarve (with 890 rooms), but there were also twenty-six projects approved by SNI (2025 rooms).<sup>174</sup> The thirty-one percent increase in existing hotels nationwide, between 1962 and 1969,<sup>175</sup> was small if compared to the eighty-seven percent increase in Algarve. Revenue from tourism increased 360 percent in the decade up to 1964, and in 1962 it supplanted, for the first time, the income generated by Portugal’s traditional activities of cork extraction and canning industries.<sup>176</sup> And even if not all those approved projects were eventually realised, and the mass-tourism boom only truly transformed the face of Algarve in the late 1970s and 1980s, the pressure clearly mounted in the second half of the 1960s. The balance between going “for the quick penny” or “the long-term investment” was, more and more, a difficult one, and architects were called to respond to increasingly challenging commissions.

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<sup>168</sup> Designed by architect Leonardo de Castro Freire and decorated by Conde de Lancastre, Cf. Casa de Portugal, "Informations Touristiques..." (Lisbon-PCM/AOS-PT/SGPCM/AOS/G-420/02). All the hotel opening dates that follow were taken from this source.

<sup>169</sup> Designed by architects Raul Tojal (1900-1969), Manuel Coutinho de Carvalho (b.1922) and António Brito with interiors by Eduardo Anahory and Luís Possolo. See "O Hotel Algarve na Praia da Rocha," *Arquitectura*, no. 97 (1967).

<sup>170</sup> Designed by architect Alberto Cruz (b.1920) with interiors by José Espinho, António Garcia and João Alcobia, Eduardo Goulart Medeiros, Paulo Guilherme d'Eça Leal and Daciano da Costa. See "Hotel Alvor Praia," *Arquitectura*, no. 100 (1967). Alberto Cruz and Daciano da Costa were also the designers of the Hotel EVA in Faro (1962-1967).

<sup>171</sup> Designed by trainee architect Tomás Taveira (b.1938) under the supervision of Francisco Conceição Silva (1922-1982) and Maurício de Vasconcelos (1925-1997), with interior design by Carmo Valente and Francisco Conceição Silva. See Tomás Taveira, "Hotel da Balaia," *Ibid.*, no. 108 (1969).

<sup>172</sup> See Carlos S. Duarte, "Hotel da Balaia," *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Diana Petry, "Portugal Opens Up," *The Observer*, 17 May 1964, 29.

<sup>174</sup> SNI/DST/RIH, "Algarve. Estabelecimentos Hoteleiros" 1963.12.30 (Lisbon-PCM/AOS-PT/SGPCM/AOS/G-285/06).

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Matos et al. (2009), 7, note 1.

<sup>176</sup> Santos (1965), 180.

Leisure architecture in Algarve was asked to engage with the features of a conspicuous vernacular tradition, be it in more linear or sophisticated ways. The forms such negotiation produced configure a catalogue of metropolitan views of the Algarve built identity. Some may have been closer to central policy (the Pousada) and others further away (the Hotel do Garbe), but they shared the same instrumental approach to the Algarvian features, aimed at the integration of new facilities with the extant environment. Both were compromises, viable when the scale was insignificant (the Pousada) or the setting was generous (the Garbe). When post-war modernism refused formal compromises but rather trusted that its vernacular context would be transformed at the same time as it was assimilated into the corpus of modern architecture, the catch was exposed: large-scale hospitality architecture and fine-grained local building identity became mutually dependent, but the former could hardly avoid endangering the latter, and would eventually kill it – or, depending on the viewpoint, deeply transform it.

### 3. Revising stereotypes: Algarve in the “Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional Portuguesa” (1945-1961).

I have placed the Garbe project in the sphere of influence of the “Survey of Portuguese Regional Architecture.” Its stance towards Algarve’s vernacular architecture and the way it surfaced in the design of a sophisticated hotel on the seaside can be best understood in the terms of that long-term project, which galvanised architectural culture in Portugal in the 1950s and 1960s. My discussion of the “Inquérito” will locate it within a lineage of related modernist initiatives to record vernacular buildings, and examine its contribution to metropolitan views of Algarve’s built environment.<sup>177</sup>

#### *Survey or weapon?*

The idea of a detailed study of traditional buildings in Portugal was presented in 1945 by architect Fernando Távora (1923-2005).<sup>178</sup> In 1947, Keil do Amaral suggested a publication where specific elements of Portuguese folk architecture would be collected and classified to provide students and building agents with “the bases for an honest, living and healthy regionalism” and counter the widespread “embellishment of facades and interiors with typical decorations.”<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> A short version of this section was published as Ricardo Agarez, “Vernacular, Conservative, Modernist,” in *Surveys on Vernacular Architecture* (Porto: ESAP-CEAA, 2012).

<sup>178</sup> In a text republished in 1947 as *O Problema da Casa Portuguesa* (Lisboa: Tip. Imp. Libânio da Silva, 1947).

<sup>179</sup> Francisco Keil do Amaral, “Uma Iniciativa Necessária,” *Arquitectura* 20, no. 14 (1947).

After a failed attempt in 1949,<sup>180</sup> the Portuguese architects association (Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, SNA) succeeded in launching the survey in 1955, with a grant from the ministry of public works. Six teams surveyed the breadth and length of the country (divided into six “zones”), following a loose set of criteria that included registering common materials and construction techniques, urban structures, and the influence of climatic, social and economic conditions over existing settlements.<sup>181</sup> The resulting book, *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal*,<sup>182</sup> did not appear until 1961.

The “Inquérito” and book followed years of debate among Portuguese architects about the place of national and regional traditions in modern architecture. The debate was fuelled by the growing popularity of Casa Portuguesa-inspired proposals in the 1940s and by the reaction of younger architects who saw these as conservative, decadent and superficial interpretations of tradition. It peaked in the first congress of Portuguese architects (1948), where several papers addressed the challenge of reconciling “tradition” and “regionalism” with progressive architecture and culture, rejecting official dictates on the matter: “The ‘Portugueseness’ of the work of Architecture may not be imposed further through the imitation of elements of the past.”<sup>183</sup>

In this context, the government’s support for the survey may be seen as a sign of official concern at the architects’ determination to resist the establishment of national identity features. In fact, the 1955 decree defining its terms reads as a direct response to the architects’ 1948 proceedings:

“The government acknowledges the evolutionary character of architecture, adjusting naturally to its time (...). But it also considers that new solutions should always rely on the traditions of national architecture, which result from peculiar climate conditions, construction materials, customs, living standards and the spiritual yearnings of the people, in short, from all the specific factors that (...) throughout the ages, have given them character and have created a sense for the phrase ‘*national architecture*’. (...) Many [solutions] are still appropriate, nowadays, to the national environment and contain a *useful living lesson for the intended Portuguesification of modern architecture in our country*.”<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Cf. Francisco Silva Dias, “Keil do Amaral e o Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional Portuguesa,” in *Keil do Amaral* (Lisboa: CML, 1999).

<sup>181</sup> The antecedents and planning of the survey were detailed in Leal (2000), along with the non-architectural antecedents of the architects’ work, namely the agronomists’ “Inquérito à Habitação Rural,” partly published in the 1940s.

<sup>182</sup> Which I would translate as *Folk Architecture in Portugal*, although the 1988 edition, partly translated into English, used the title *Popular Architecture in Portugal*, conveying a sense that I find broader and potentially equivocal, and not as precise as *Folk*.

<sup>183</sup> Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, ed., *1º Congresso Nacional de Arquitectura* (Lisboa: Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, 1948), LXIII. On the importance of the 1948 congress, see e.g. Ana Tostões, “Arquitectura Portuguesa do Século XX,” in *História da Arte Portuguesa* (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 1995), and ———, *Os Verdes Anos na Arquitectura Portuguesa dos Anos 50* (Porto: FAUP, 1997).

<sup>184</sup> Ministério das Obras Públicas, “Decreto-Lei n.º 40.349,” in *Diário da República I Série*, 227, 19 October 1955 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1955). My italics. POiA (Citation 26).

The government accepted architecture's aesthetic and technical "evolution" but insisted on the relevance of a specific "national architecture," past and present, and on the need to seek a "Portuguese face" for architecture – against which the congress had voted – in the "living lessons" of the country's villages. This was an open-ended text that suggests backstage negotiations<sup>185</sup> and the officials' willingness to support a thorough study of building traditions *in exchange* for their application in future architectural works. However, several authors maintain that the project's central purpose, the architects' "hidden agenda," was to sabotage the government's aims by presenting "a folk architecture that was no longer properly Portuguese but existed, in multiple and diverse expressions, in Portugal."<sup>186</sup> Amaral put it clearly in his 1961 introduction:

"Portugal lacks unity in what concerns Architecture. There is not, absolutely not, one 'Portuguese Architecture' or one 'casa portuguesa'. Between a village in Minho and a 'monte' in Alentejo, there are much deeper differences than between some Portuguese and Greek constructions."<sup>187</sup>

The country's vernacular architecture would be essentially diverse, as varied as the many different geographic, climatic, topographic, material, technical, social and economic circumstances behind it. As such, it was irreducible to the regional formulas to which the vulgarisation of Raul Lino's *Casas Portuguesas* had led. There was, the authors felt, more to regional adjustment than simple typification: stylising elements of a given region was but "an elementary way to conceive integration in pre-existing environments." Lessons were to be had from folk architecture, "in coherence, seriousness, economy, ingenuity, functioning, beauty... that can largely contribute for the training of a contemporary architect."<sup>188</sup>

Furthermore, survey and book were symptoms among Portuguese architects of the "revisionist movement" that originated in the Nordic countries, England and Italy and, as one surveyor put it, "firmly oppose[d] the schemes of modernist formalism," which "blindly applied merely physical principles of functionalism to realisations thus divorced from the integrated thematic of 'habitat'."<sup>189</sup> In this sense the "Inquérito" would have been a key factor in redressing

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<sup>185</sup> Dias (1999) has pointed to how closer readings could identify different authors behind this text, suggesting its contents may have been negotiated between the government and the SNA.

<sup>186</sup> Leal (2000), 176. The author elaborates on the meaningful difference between the initial designation of the project ("Survey of Portuguese Regional Architecture") and the title finally adopted in the book (*Folk Architecture in Portugal*); the change from *Portuguese* to *in Portugal* expressed the survey architects' will to consider this architecture not as representative of national (singular) identity but as scattered in many partial (plural) identities.

<sup>187</sup> [Francisco Keil do Amaral], "Introdução," in *Arquitetura Popular em Portugal*, 3rd ed. (Lisboa: AAP, 1988 [1961]). POiA (Citation 27).

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> António Pinto de Freitas, "Tradicionalismo e Evolução," *Arquitetura*, no. 66 (1959): 35.

the relationship between vernacular and learned architecture in Portugal<sup>190</sup> and in the advancement of the latter as it influenced students of the Porto school of architecture in the 1960s.<sup>191</sup>

Summarising its significance for an ongoing dialog between architecture and anthropology, Leal noted how the survey presented a specific take, bound by precise purposes: for the “Inquérito” architects, *vernacular* meant rural, removed from history, closer to nature, authentic and yet subaltern to erudite practices; above all, it allowed them to demonstrate that folk architecture was in fact modern.<sup>192</sup> This point, a key issue for post-war Portuguese architects, was at the project’s inception: folk dwellings were “the most functional and least subject to fantasy” and those “which best suit the new intentions,” Távora wrote, while Amaral was set to verify if “they are still the most adequate, functionally and economically.” With hindsight, participants admitted flaws in the initial criteria; social, cultural and ethnographic aspects were omitted, as were hybrid variations (“degenerations”) of vernacular elements and their transformation over time. Teotónio Pereira, for instance, acknowledged that although the survey’s conclusions “confirmed the falsity of the official stance,” they merely verified the initial thesis: a “cause and effect” link with the environment, the rationality and “authenticity” of materials and techniques, proving that “folk architecture was, like all ‘true architecture,’ functionality.”<sup>193</sup> The surveyors’ view was, in short, filtered through their specific agendas and, it now seems clear, was as significant for what it left out as for what it included.

Much has been made of the *cleverness* with which the “Inquérito” architects misled Salazar’s government into supporting their project only to obtain a subversive result in which vernacular traditions strengthened the stance of modern architecture rather than that of conservative regionalism.<sup>194</sup> Most contemporary accounts include anecdotes that stress the politicians’ surprise and discomfort at the work and at the architects’ sharp replies.<sup>195</sup> However, to the best of my knowledge, the circumstances surrounding the project’s appraisal by official agencies, both leading to its refusal in 1949 and its acceptance in 1955, have not yet been investigated – an essential step towards redressing the distortions that time might have produced: the conventional narrative by which a control-obsessed government was naïve enough to fully subsidise a project led by Amaral, Távora and Pereira (who were well-known critics of government policies and potential “subversive” elements) seems, today, not totally convincing.

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<sup>190</sup> Cf. Tostões (1997), 159-65, and Rodrigo Ollero Neves, “Letter to Raul Lino” (University of Salford, 2001).

<sup>191</sup> Cf. the testimonies of former Porto students and surveyors in Leal (2000), 185-95, and António Menéres, “Keil e o Inquérito à Distância de 40 anos,” in *Keil do Amaral* (Lisboa: CML, 1999).

<sup>192</sup> João Leal, “Entre o Vernáculo e o Híbrido,” *Joelbo. Revista de Cultura Arquitectónica*, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>193</sup> Nuno Teotónio Pereira, “Architettura popolare, dall’Inchiesta al progetto,” *Domus*, no. 655 (1984): 29.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Nuno Portas, “A Evolução da Arquitectura Moderna em Portugal,” in Bruno Zevi, *História da Arquitectura Moderna* (Lisboa: Arcádia, [1978]), 735-36.

<sup>195</sup> See Dias (1999), Menéres (1999), and Leal (2000).

Without further research the intentions of the “Inquérito” and all its agents cannot be established.<sup>196</sup> It may be that the survey was seen as a means for architects to conduct a dialogue about modern architecture, when other forms of debate were resisted; it could have been a way for modernist architects, inspired by international examples but faced with the official fixation on national idiosyncrasy, to reach an understanding that would allow them to receive state commissions while expressing their own view. The state – represented in the process by the minister Arantes e Oliveira, whose openness towards modern architecture was apparent from the Hotel Sol e Mar case – may in these circumstances have been willing to support the architects’ proposal and wait for results. This was, after all, a timely opportunity to register a built environment that was fast disappearing under growing urbanisation, after previous government initiatives (e.g. ethnographer Francisco Lage’s 1940 plan) had failed.

### *Spanish and Italian precedents*

The set of *lessons* contained in vernacular architecture and its potential interest for modernist architects was surely not a new trope in 1945, when it became central to the Portuguese survey. An architecture “severely *utilitarian* in its use of materials and technology; *functional* in its adaptation to climate, accommodation of activities and utilization of site; and *beautiful* in its sculptural expressions of mass and volume as a result of manipulating the plan and section to accommodate users’ needs,”<sup>197</sup> is now understood to have been had essential influence in the development of modernism, particularly in Mediterranean-related contexts.<sup>198</sup> Since the 1920s, surveys of rural traditions in Spain and Italy played a major part in sustaining claims for modernism’s southern origins and in providing architects with an alternative, Mediterranean lineage for an allegedly universal, North-European construct.

In **Spain**, the pioneer modernist architects Fernando García Mercadal (1896-1985) and Josep Lluís Sert (1902-1983) had also looked for the primary sources of modern architecture in vernacular buildings – in a quest for a *modernism before modernism*, as it were –, highlighting their “human” qualities (scale, material, technique, site-sensitiveness) as antidotes to the perceived excesses of modernism’s mechanical analogies. Theirs was a double purpose, shared by the Portuguese project twenty years later: to provide modernism with solid foundations and, simultaneously, to redress the artificiality of some of its original tenets by inserting natural and human factors. This *critique within a defence*, of modernism through vernacular traditions, gave rise to

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<sup>196</sup> The on-going research project “The *Popular Architecture in Portugal*. A Critical Look” (Porto: ESAP-CEAA, 2010-2013) might answer some of these questions.

<sup>197</sup> Eleftherios Pavlides, “Architectural,” in Oliver, ed. (1997), 13.

<sup>198</sup> See Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino, eds., *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean* (London: Routledge, 2010).



paradoxical arguments such as those around the use of ornament – another feature of the Spanish experience found in the Portuguese survey.

In his pioneering study of Spanish folk dwellings (1930), Mercadal contrasted their permanence, logic, objectivity and simplicity to the confusion, over-decoration and falsity of interwar regionalisms.<sup>199</sup> While architectural history studied only Spain's monuments, Mercadal looked for examples of rationalism *avant la lettre* in buildings that perfectly translated function into form: "No aesthetic pretension, no scholastic or stylistic concern has inspired the villager; only his own well-being and the adequate use of local materials and construction systems."<sup>200</sup> In the Mediterranean house, modern architects would find layouts strictly dependent on the climate and decoration based not on stylistic knowledge but on spontaneous taste, stemming from the structure – not imposed upon it.

For Mercadal, decoration not only was part of vernacular buildings but also made them valuable sources for modernism. When describing traditional houses in Menorca (Balearics) he inverted the functionalist condemnation of ornament by regretting their "exceedingly uniform lines, lacking in expression, deprived of all decoration, without cantilevered balconies, porches or eaves. They are something dead or too strange."<sup>201</sup> Even though Mahón was referred to as "perhaps able to fulfil the aspirations of the most fanatical cubists," his was not the enthusiastic description typical of other accounts of Mediterranean "Cubist" villages (such as Olhão). Decoration expressed the villagers' "naturally inventive fantasy" and was part and parcel of Mediterranean traditions; since it was likely to prompt contradictions in strictly modernist readings, it called for more elaborate interpretations.

This question resurfaced in Mercadal and Sert's editorial initiative *A.C.* (1931-1937). The magazine is best known for a 1931 article comparing a row of houses in a Catalan coastal village to the Stuttgart *Weissenhofsiedlung*, merely a more recent and erudite version of the "Standard" building solutions that, in that "vernacular" precursor, responded to primary needs on a human scale.<sup>202</sup> Yet in a 1935 issue entirely devoted to folk architecture, a sample of Andalusian villages formed a case study of the importance of ornament.<sup>203</sup> The buildings and their simple patios "without style" were shown as inspiration for urban architecture, not because they were *without* decoration, but quite the contrary: city life had killed "all dwelling spiritualisation" and deprived the individual of the "first-necessity elements of life," while villages kept them in a measured ornamentation, "derived from construction" and expressing its underlying "rational basis."

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<sup>199</sup> Cf. Fernando García Mercadal and Antonio Bonet Correa, prologue, *La casa popular en España* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1981 [1930]).

<sup>200</sup> Mercadal ([1930]), 27.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>202</sup> "Elementos 'Standard' en la construcción," *A.C.*, no. 1 (1931).

<sup>203</sup> "La arquitectura popular mediterránea," *A.C.*, no. 18 (1935).

As evidence of the Mediterranean precedent for North European modernism (“spiritually,” for Sert, “a return to pure, traditional forms of the Mediterranean”<sup>204</sup>), *A.C.* hailed Ibiza, “the island that needs no architectural renewal” because it lacked historical styles.<sup>205</sup> In a 1936 monograph issue, German authors surveyed Ibiza’s rural dwellings<sup>206</sup> using the semi-scientific approach (photography and accurate plans, sections and elevations) that, twenty years on, the “Inquérito” architects applied. Mercadal and Sert used these examples, as did their later Portuguese counterparts, to critique the “folk-academic architecture” that retained only the village buildings’ picturesque and “unconsciously destroyed the principles on which they stand.”<sup>207</sup> It is my understanding that by showing examples of simple, *rationally-explained* and *structural* decoration, *A.C.* wanted to reach a compromise between the radical anti-decoration modernist tenets and the allegedly false academic regionalism; that is, to illustrate a middle ground between the two extremes, where there was place for individual, “lyric” elements as natural components of human habitat.

The other fundamental precedent for the Portuguese survey can be found in **Italy**, also in the mid-1930s, when Giuseppe Pagano (1896-1945) and Guarnerio Daniel produced the exhibition of Mediterranean rural architecture at the VI Milan Triennale (1936), and its catalogue, *Architettura rurale italiana*.

Pagano and Daniel presented “the evolution stages” of rural houses and farming structures in Italy, Spain and North Africa through examples typologically ordered and collected in different climatic, geographic, economic and social contexts. Their aim was to show *how* these buildings came into existence, and *why* they were shaped as they were: their “plastic expression” was determined by the land, the sun, the materials used and user’s needs. “And it is through this way of expressing themselves, all but rhetoric, that rural houses, uncontaminated by mediocre, bourgeois architectural falsity, become so interesting in the eyes of the modern architect.”<sup>208</sup>

The “lessons” of vernacular traditions, central to the modernist understanding of folk architecture, were thus clearly laid out in Pagano’s campaign.<sup>209</sup> As in contemporary Spanish investigations, and twenty years later in Portugal, themes such as normalisation, standardisation and repetition were identified with rural architecture, as positive predecessors of modernism. And as they exposed a universal argument – that rural architecture illustrated the preponderance of function over form, in any context – the authors also participated in the wider South European claim to the role of Mediterranean traditional buildings in the making of modernism: many of the “most intelligent architects from the north,” they noted, had rediscovered “the emotion of the

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.: 33.

<sup>205</sup> “Ibiza, la isla que no necesita renovación arquitectónica.” *A.C.*, no. 6 (1932).

<sup>206</sup> Raoul Haussmann and Erwin Heilbronner, “Elementos de la arquitectura rural en la isla de Ibiza,” *Ibid.*, no. 21 (1936).

<sup>207</sup> “La arquitectura popular mediterránea,” *Ibid.*, no. 18 (1935): 15.

<sup>208</sup> Giuseppe Pagano and Guarnerio Daniel, *Architettura rurale italiana* (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1936), 75.

<sup>209</sup> Which comprised the catalogue and two previous articles in *Casabella*, nos. 95 and 96 (1935).

poet-builder” in the Italian rural house. The flat rooftops, the pure blocks with a minimum of projections and decoration, the horizontal window, the asymmetrical composition, the expression of mass walls, the influence of the surrounding landscape “and most of all the unprejudiced functional and technical coherence, are clearly legible in these works (...). Functionality has always been the logical foundation of architecture.”<sup>210</sup>

Despite the architect’s own claim to originality, Pagano’s initiatives belonged in a long lineage of interest in vernacular architecture in Italy.<sup>211</sup> Yet *Architettura Rurale*’s influence extended to the post-war years, and was instrumental in the development of the so-called *Italian neorealism* in architecture. Amongst the multiple readings it has prompted, three points seem essential: Pagano’s moral stance, his political framework, and the consequences of his “populism”.

For Pagano, rural architecture encapsulated a set of moral values that should guide the modernist architect: to derive form from utilitarian purpose was an ethical question, more than an aesthetic one. The pragmatic rationalism of a farm building was morally sound, and superior to any formalism. Furthermore, Italy’s vernacular tradition and regional particularities were alternative, concrete expressions of the abstract notion of *nationalism* – more often expressed in the language of classical architecture by Italian architects working under the 1930s fascist regime.<sup>212</sup> Although associated, at the time, with conservative critics of modernism, Pagano has come to be considered as an intermediary: a supporter of leftist sectors of Italian fascism that argued that “contemporary popular art and architecture produced under the fascist regime should respond to the *Zeitgeist* of the time, and not simply retreat into nostalgia.”<sup>213</sup> His stance, subject to “distortion by nationalist misunderstandings,”<sup>214</sup> seemed to be one of compromise between conservative values (the moral qualities of the rural world) and progressive propositions, in which the latter could profit from the former. This understanding, I believe, could inspire an alternative reading of the Portuguese “Inquérito” by which a strategy of compromise complemented pure resistance and sabotage.

Pagano’s placement in the middle ground between permanence and progress, between anonymous and formal architecture, allowed him to influence the architectural discourse of post-war reconstruction in Italy, as it sought “to make contact with the working class.”<sup>215</sup> Pagano called for a professionally responsible “minor” architecture: an architecture that would be the more *national*, the more it was addressed to the *people* – and this meant blunt clarity, mindful management

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<sup>210</sup> Pagano and Daniel (1936), 76

<sup>211</sup> This background and the wider context of the negotiation between modernism and vernacular in Italy has been thoroughly re-discussed, in recent years and in English, by Michelangelo Sabatino. For Pagano’s role and antecedents, see *Pride in Modesty* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Sabatino (2010), 131.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>214</sup> Maristella Casciato, “L’invenzione della realtà,” in *La Grande Ricostruzione*, ed. Paola Di Biagi (Roma: Donzelli, 2001), 215.

<sup>215</sup> Vittorio Gregotti, *New Directions in Italian Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1968), 54-56, cit. Michelangelo Sabatino, “The Politics of *Mediterraneità* in Italian Modernist Architecture,” in Lejeune and Sabatino (2010), 60.

of public funds, and model simplicity, or “the courage of modesty.”<sup>216</sup> In a broader sense, Pagano’s “populism” has been seen as an attempt to reintroduce “ethical contents” in fascism, drawn from the rural world, against the corruption symbolised by the prevailing classicist monumentality – even though ironically, in the post-war “second wave” of “populism,” the rural world eventually became the “property of anti-fascist culture.”<sup>217</sup>

Pagano’s appeal for moral austerity and essentiality linked pre- and post-war Italian architecture in the attempt to define “a talking architecture” (“un’architettura parlante”) for the popular classes.<sup>218</sup> In Portugal, the “Inquérito” architects followed closely their Italian counterparts. From 1956 on, Nuno Portas (b. 1934) – who was well versed in the latest developments in Spain and Italy, and wrote a chapter on Portuguese architecture for the translation of Bruno Zevi’s *Storia dell’Architettura Moderna* –, co-edited the magazine *Arquitettura* featuring the “provocative Italian works” of Ridolfi, Aymonino, Gardella and De Carlo. Távora and Teotónio Pereira, team leaders in the survey, had their first projects published side-by-side with those Italian “culturalist” examples, as Portuguese pieces of “a post-rationalist research that was meant to take into consideration the tradition of internal space, spontaneous architecture and the criticism of functionalism.”<sup>219</sup>

The double criticism (of simplistic functionalism and superficial picturesque), the celebration of the moral superiority of vernacular traditions, and the insistence on locating modernism’s ancestry in folk buildings – these themes link the Portuguese “Inquérito” with previous initiatives in Spain and Italy. Their consequences in the “call to reality” of post-war architectural discourse, in all three countries, are also comparable; and among those, a degree of “fetishisation” of the vernacular, which concerned Portuguese post-survey critics in the 1960s and, twenty years before, had emerged in Italy. In 1943, critic Ardengo Soffici complained that “the anonymous builders were being fetishised, and that many of the examples cited were actually ‘designed’ by architects.”<sup>220</sup> As I will discuss subsequently, the specific characteristics of the Algarve traditions make this issue a particularly relevant one in the survey’s approach to the region, despite its determination to resist, and defeat, a long-standing tendency to fetishise the picturesque.

The Algarvian section of the “Inquérito” has not been discussed individually before, nor have its particular traits been examined. Mentioned only briefly in wider studies of the survey as a whole,<sup>221</sup> the surveyors’ findings have in some cases been taken uncritically, as *natural*, solid data, through which the region’s folk architecture could still be appraised today.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Giuseppe Pagano, “Architettura nazionale,” *Casabella*, no. 85 (1935), cit. in Giorgio Ciucci, *Gli architetti e il Fascismo* (Torino: Einaudi, 2002 [1989]), 163.

<sup>217</sup> Ciucci ([1989]), 164.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Manfredo Tafuri, “Architettura e realismo,” in *L’avventura delle idee nell’architettura 1750-1980*, V. Magnano Lampugnani ed. (Milano: Electa 1985), cit. in Casciato (2001), 214.

<sup>219</sup> Portas ([1978]), 741.

<sup>220</sup> Sabatino in Lejeune and Sabatino (2010), 59.

<sup>221</sup> Such as Ollero Neves (2001), Leal (2000), and Carlos Cabral Machado, “Anonimato e Banalidade” (Universidade do Porto, 2006).

<sup>222</sup> E.g. in José Manuel Fernandes, *A Casa Popular do Algarve* ([Faro]: CCDRALg, 2008).

*The uncomfortable vernacular of “Zone 6” (Algarve)*

“Between the houses of Fuseta and those of Lamas de Olo, there are barely any links...”<sup>223</sup>

What was the Portuguese survey’s approach to Algarve? How did post-war, learned architects filter Algarve’s built identity, in this new stage of appropriation of regional and local practices by metropolitan agents? The quote above, taken from the book’s introduction and presenting a village in north Portugal as incomparable with the Algarvian Fuseta, seems to indicate that the value of the region for metropolitan accounts lay once more in its difference. If the main purpose behind the “Inquérito” was to demonstrate the diversity of Portugal’s vernacular architecture, Algarve played an instrumental role in reinforcing that diversity and in rendering it more dramatic. Moreover, their aestheticised perception, much as the authors attempted to downplay it, permeated the entire work – and, in the case of Algarve, often was not so far from the stereotypes that the “Inquérito” authors themselves condemned as trite vulgarisations in conservative interpretations.

The survey’s Zone 6, studied by **Artur Pires Martins** (1914-2000), **Celestino de Castro** (1920-2007) and **Fernando Torres** (1922-2010), comprised Algarve and part of Alentejo. The architects referred to the works of geographers (Lautensach 1932-1937, Gouveia 1938 and Ribeiro 1945) to support their account of “the coincidence between the diverse geographic [sub]regions, the farming economy, the types of settlement, and the house-types” of each of those areas.<sup>224</sup> In the brief analysis of two settlements (one fishing village, Burgau, and one farming hamlet, Fontes da Matosa) as samples of a widely varied reality, they sought to demonstrate how the morphologic “individualisation” of settlements was both physical and human, and how, in turn, the population was structured according to its economic activity.

Analysing Algarve’s “urban structure,” Martins’s team introduced one point that emerged consistently: to stress how the cases of Olhão and Fuseta stand out and should be seen as non-representative exceptions. Lacking a dramatic hilly topography, for defence purposes (as in Silves and Aljezur) or proximity to the shore (as in Albufeira), the architecture of Olhão and Fuseta produced distinctive results: “although located on levelled grounds, [the houses] constitute exceptions in the entire Algarvian coast”.<sup>225</sup> The two “unique” villages with their predominantly flat-roofed houses, illustrated over four pages (**figs. 106-107**), were briefly described borrowing existing explanations for such specificity (water-collection requirements, North African influence, Moorish tradition) and sharing in the long-standing perplexity at the fact that other villages in similar conditions had different roofing devices.

<sup>223</sup> [Amaral] ([1961]).

<sup>224</sup> Celestino de Castro, Artur Pires Martins, and Fernando Torres, “Zona 6,” in *Arquitetura Popular em Portugal* (Lisboa: Associação dos Arquitectos Portugueses, 1988 [1961]), 124.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

In the “Climate” section, the architects set out to show how locals ingeniously looked for the best orientation for their houses, opening windows according to the sun and winds, using “the elements that characterise the environment” (porches, terraces, patios and vine pergolas) to control sunlight and achieve “perfect conditions of dwelling” in winter and summer. The impact of climate on traditional solutions prompted them to address the subject of the terrace roof as representative of Algarve:

“Widely popularised conceptions on the defining features of a regional Architecture, anxiously sought and light-heartedly understood, do not always correspond exactly to what one can find in a careful, judicious observation. The role of the terrace roof in ‘Algarvian Architecture’ has been much invoked; however, to the exception of the rural area geographically defined as ‘Limestone Algarve’ (...) and of the settlements of Olhão and Fuseta, it is fair to say that the terrace roof is not frequent in most of the province.”<sup>226</sup>

The authors pointed to the intimate connection between the examples of composite (part terrace, part single-pitch tiled) roofing solutions in central Algarve and the conditions of climate and local economy; and again stressed how special the “cases” of Olhão and Fuseta were, with their combined North African contacts and climate affinities. However, they insisted in every opportunity, the tiled roof solution (**fig. 108**) was more prevalent than the terrace roof, in the region as a whole: in Burgau “no flat roofs may be seen, and the tiled roof is used across the village,”<sup>227</sup> and in Matosa, “there is no roofing type other than the tiled one.”<sup>228</sup> In the section on “Construction materials and techniques” they gathered further evidence: within the range of roofing devices used (tiled roof, terrace roofs over brick vaults or wood joists and terracotta dalles), it was the double- or single-pitch tiled roof that dominated. At the same time, another building feature related to climate, the pátio – not the courtyard but the front (or side) yard, generally south-facing and used for drying fruit, resting and entertaining visitors – was found to be as common as the mythical açoteia. “Nothing is improvised, nothing is arbitrary,” was their moral; “on the contrary, everything is properly justified and verified through experience.”<sup>229</sup>

The terrace-roof issue was central to one of the declared purposes of the “Inquérito” – to dismantle the myths regarding Portuguese regional architecture – since it was an essential part of the strongest stereotype of Algarve architecture. This feature had been adopted by conservative spheres as typical and used to symbolise the entire region, while exerting a fascination over modernist designers for its proximity to rationalist forms. Therefore, by confining the terrace roof to a precise geographical location, the authors meant to expose the fallacy of both conservatives and modernists, and to achieve the survey’s goal of superseding both schools of thought with a new, “scientific” approach to vernacular tradition.

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 166. POiA (Citation 28).

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 171.

Unsurprisingly, in the “Housing Types” section the authors could not identify one single Algarvian house type, but rather referred to the “diverse aspects of housing in Algarve.” This diversity, the result of geographic, climatic and economic circumstances, was illustrated by examples of cottages from the inland hills, the plains and the villages. General features of the Algarvian house were limited to its external simplicity, “very pure in forms and surfaces,”<sup>230</sup> and some layout idiosyncrasies, such as the “importance and significance” of reception spaces over private and service areas.

The discussion of the central or “Limestone Algarve” type (characterised by the composite roof, **figs. 109-110**), essential in demonstrating the variety of Algarvian house types, was clearly inspired by previous descriptions made by geographers, namely Feio (1949) and Ferro (1956). As in other respects, here the architects’ work seems to have been closely influenced by the views and explanations of their non-architect predecessors. One of the architects’ tasks in the survey might have been to amplify those commentaries for the benefit of an architectural audience, highlighting whatever could reinforce their message.

#### **The ambiguous Olhão-Fuseta type**

As to the house-type of Olhão and Fuseta, it was a case of its own: “different and unmatched in the Algarve province,” it was characterised by “the construction system, and the repetition of juxtaposed elements in terraced ensembles [containing] interior compartments, with no direct ventilation.”<sup>231</sup>

The description of a set of terraced houses in Fuseta, whose illustration occupied four pages (**figs. 111-113**), referred to a reality that would perhaps not qualify as the best example of *vernacular*. The exact repetition of the same design and the standardised construction and decoration elements configure a set that does not seem to have grown spontaneously or organically, or to have been built by its inhabitants; rather, it has all the features of a multifamily housing unit, designed and built in one stretch to form one whole street front. Plans and photographs depicted an example of proto-industrial low-budget housing, likely designed and built by professionals, possibly for the fishermen or the canning industry workers. My research found many similar examples, built in the 1910s and 1920s in Olhão (see Chapter 3). Here was an instance of the “fetishisation” by modernist architects of anonymous Mediterranean buildings, condemned by Soffici in 1943; the parallel between the serial dwellings in Fuseta and those in Sert and Mercadal’s 1931 article on the “vernacular standard” also comes to mind.

Yet in Algarve as in Italy or Spain, doubts about the actual origins of such buildings were seldom raised. The architect-authors appeared to be in awe at the formal and functional qualities of the set: the elaborate layout with an entrance hall and a multipurpose wide corridor that doubled as dining-room, the cooking area underneath the arched stairway, and the “remarkably” equipped

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 202.

backyard over a basement storage room. The back prospect was singled-out and enthusiastically described:

“The advantage taken from the existing slope and the movement of building masses give the ensemble’s back elevation, facing south, a very special character.”<sup>232</sup>

Commonly employed at the time to describe a piece of formal architecture, these terms referred here to a reputedly vernacular work. The team’s fascination with the houses of Olhão led it even to set aside characteristic modern concerns with domestic salubrity: the interior bedrooms had “a very pleasant atmosphere by way of their natural light, which they get from a minute skylight.”<sup>233</sup> As in Fuseta, the Olhão backyards with their arched stairways and characteristic “balloon” chimneys in full view (**figs. 114-115**) were considered much more interesting than the street fronts: these did not “stand out from the banality of the neighbouring buildings, and lack the plastic quality of their back sides. This distinction, however, is very common in Algarvian buildings, and particularly in the villages.”<sup>234</sup>

The “plastic interest” of some vernacular features was highlighted against the general “banality” of street fronts. This was a selective view of extant building traditions, prejudiced by the authors’ starting point: they wanted to find seriality and repetition (as they did in Fuseta) and richly contrasted juxtapositions of pure volumes (as in Olhão), because these were features that architects with modernist backgrounds were looking for as a means to associate vernacular traditions and modern architecture – to enable them to say that there was modernity in vernacular, and not conservative, bucolic, retrograde picturesque.

Consciously or not, the team manipulated their results to best attain this purpose, and again what they omitted is as relevant as what they chose to show. All the descriptions and illustrations were of the more recent part of Olhão (of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries); the original, spontaneous settlement of fishermen’s huts perpetuated in masonry in the eighteenth century<sup>235</sup> was not shown or described. Even the pyramidal growth pattern of house extension through consecutive turrets was described only within the modern grid, not in the older fabric of Olhão.

The Olhão and Fuseta house-type was a rare case in Zone 6 whose examples were not unequivocally vernacular, but appeared to blend features of engrained building tradition with clear signs of formal building practices (a matter I will return to in Chapter 3). The “Inquérito” left out the unquestionably vernacular buildings of Olhão, and included what in it was more resonant to modernist architects; by doing so, to some extent it fell in the trap of an “aesthetic view” on vernacular, the very mistake it criticised the romantic, Casa Portuguesa-school approach for having

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 205. POiA (Citation 29).

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. Sandra Romba, "Evolução urbana de Olhão" (Universidade do Algarve, 2008).



fomented. Although diverging in the focus (picturesque settings for a romantic sensibility, pure volumes for a modernist one), both approaches were aesthetically driven.

### The uncomfortable decoration

The *offence* of succumbing to the aesthetic appeal of traditional features was problematic. Introducing a section entitled “Improvement Elements,” the team made clear the discomfort of having to present, under a euphemistic title, features that were essentially Algarvian *and* decorative, and that did not quite fit the functionalist grid according to which many other features were selected:

“It was not without doubts as to the valid contribution of these loose elements to the study of Algarvian regional Architecture, that we have decided to include them in this chapter, although we recognise their undeniable (...) interest (...) Considering that vernacular buildings deliberately convey practical concerns (...) or that, at least, *aesthetical attitudes do not exist openly*, we nevertheless find that very high plastic levels are reached, by employing as formulas nothing but a precise knowledge of materials and a simple and intuitive technique.”<sup>236</sup>

This confusing statement seems to suggest a previous understanding of vernacular building practice as purely “functional,” modified during the survey process by a broader comprehension of this human activity. Decoration appeared “naturally” in the survey, as it had in Mercadal’s or Pagano’s works, and needed to be somehow framed without undermining the project’s aims. The team called those elements, consistently found in buildings of one same region, “the links of close kinship”: the systematic use of whitewash over a variety of materials as a “way to model and provide continuity of surfaces,” and “a certain taste and concern for exterior ornament and ostentation in house building” that transpired in the “exquisite treatment” of parapets, chimneys and patios. In posts supporting a pergola (**fig. 116**), they saw “a tradition grounded on erudite architecture,” finding links between the two spheres. Parapets and chimneys were illustrated and considered “true motifs of folk art”: strongly marked frames brought “an important play of chiaroscuro” and their decoration was attributed to “the ostentation that the Algarvian dweller expresses in his house.”<sup>237</sup> In the enclosed backyards, “the volumes have their whiteness contrasted with the strong colouring of the pavement terracotta dalles.”<sup>238</sup>

Another motif of “captivating expressiveness” was shown in a house in the inland hills: a parapet with a ceramic zigzagging grid (**fig. 118-119**). The house was “a curious example,” albeit not typical, in which “common elements of the Algarvian buildings are grouped in an original way,” providing a synthetic image of “architectural unity” and “almost scenographic plastic interest.”<sup>239</sup> Lino and other conservative designers had used this same motif in their syntheses of the Algarve “colour,” and would have described it in very similar terms – which was possibly why the lace-like

<sup>236</sup> Castro, Martins, and Torres ([1961]), 229. My italics. POiA (Citation 30).

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

chimney top, the quintessential Algarvian decorative element, was more cautiously described, and only summarily illustrated. The authors considered it to be not only aesthetically inferior to the “balloon” chimney (**fig. 117**) but also an adulteration of that “pure” model by the Algarvian taste for decoration. Finally, the wood latticed shutters (*reixas*) could not be found but only occasionally in urban centres, the authors warned; nevertheless, they believed this element could and should be developed and applied, reviving a nearly-extinct tradition. Here, again, they concurred with their conservative counterparts, who employed such shutters extensively.

The Zone 6 team members, writing at a moment of change in the built environment of Algarve, ended their text with a nostalgic note: they regretted that no measures were being taken to “protect what little is left and tends to disappear, not only through the action of time but, worse still, through its destruction in the name of an ill-understood progress that expresses ignorance of [these buildings’] value in the cultural heritage of the country.”<sup>240</sup> Nostalgia pervaded the entire survey; occasionally, its terms resonate with the regime’s own conservative discourse on the need to protect folk heritage from tourism development. Between the two metropolitan discourses on Algarve – the “Inquérito” and Salazar’s – from two diverging political positions, we find some things in common: there were as many grey areas as black-and-white contrasts.

The “Inquérito” has been signalled as the “birth of a ‘modern view’ of vernacular architecture” in Portugal.<sup>241</sup> Yet in the Algarve section, this “modern view” partly repeated other, previous views. Determined to dismantle the stereotype of the Algarve house, this section’s authors seem nevertheless to have fallen for that model’s aesthetic appeal and to have lost some of their intended objectivity. The Algarvian traditions of building decoration, seen as an embarrassment in a modernist’s mindset, were provided with an alternative frame, not without its problems. Such difficulties exposed the tensions and challenges presented specifically by the Algarve regional customs: pared-down, elemental and whitewashed for modernists, intricate, exuberant and picturesque for conservatives, but equally seductive for all. More than merely reinforcing the survey’s claim as offering covert resistance to state conservatism, and despite those tensions, I see the Algarve section as evidence of the wider attempt to reconcile modernist values with an appreciation of *picturesqueness* – in other words, to explore the middle ground that Spanish and Italian were pointing to: the possibility of an understanding, in Portugal, between the pressure of tradition and the eagerness for contemporaneity.

The hesitation over bringing such “human” features into the survey stemmed from the fear that, as one of the authors put it in 1959, “we may find ourselves enmeshed in an era of neoprovincialism in architecture, retrograde and sickening, comparable to other neoprovincialisms. We need to have clear conscience of such eminent risk.”<sup>242</sup> The results of the “Inquérito” could either be the re-vitalisation of Portuguese contemporary architecture through a new take on local

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>241</sup> Leal (2000), 185.

<sup>242</sup> Freitas (1959): 37.

features or, on the contrary, its strangulation by further misinterpretations of tradition. Yet another superficial approach to regional and local features, applied in urban works, would be “a re-enactment of recent absurdities, this time by the respectable hands of modern architects.”<sup>243</sup>

The risk of fetishisation was clearly felt among the architects’ elite. In fact, *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal* became very popular with subsequent generations of architects, not only Portuguese.<sup>244</sup> It was read with a mixture of proactive interest (as inspiration for many urban and non-urban works of formal architecture) and nostalgia, since it soon became a document of a lost, or significantly altered, world. The few works designed under the survey’s influence for Algarve and published at the time – the Garbe and Balaia hotels, architect José Veloso’s (b. 1930) mountain refuge in Monchique, 1961-1963,<sup>245</sup> and architect António Freitas Leal’s (b. 1927) chapel in Figueira (Vila do Bispo), 1961-1963<sup>246</sup> (**figs. 120-121**) – all were sophisticated elaborations whose cosmopolitan stance, combining disparate cultural references, minimised what were seen as the “dangers” of excessive “familiarity of modern architects with regional architecture.”<sup>247</sup> Yet in a context where mass-tourism architecture gained ground every year, the “vogue of traditional motifs” feared by Duarte and other critics grew stronger and increasingly alienated from what the “Inquerito” and its predecessors proposed.

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From the standpoint of central, formal architecture, regional building identity was not a straightforward matter. The set of features formulated in fields outside architecture was strong and contributed to the abstract image of an idiosyncratic Algarve folk house – but it had to be adapted in metropolitan practice. Architects filtered such abstraction and combined it with their individual agendas, backgrounds and on-going careers. Lino, reputed father of Portuguese regional types with a nationalist intent, was interested in the scale, technique and decoration of Algarve custom, not as components of a self-sufficient type but as elements of a more generic “South” character expression. Cottinelli and Ramos looked at Olhão for both inspiration for their modernist proposals *and* a setting with which these would be integrated harmoniously.

Whenever the region was represented in temporary architecture, the choice fell on “Cubist” Olhão as a surrogate for Algarve, a scenographic formula that had lasting impact in mass-tourism

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<sup>243</sup> Carlos S. Duarte, “Breves Notas Sobre a Arquitectura Espontânea,” *Arquitectura*, no. 66 (1959): 40.

<sup>244</sup> Images from the book were used e.g. in Erwin Gutkind, *Urban Development in Southern Europe*, vol. 3 (New York: The Free Press, 1967), and in Bernard Rudofsky’s famous exhibition and catalogue *Architecture Without Architects* (London: Academy Editions, 1964). In a recent lecture by the Brazilian architect Marcello Ferraz, I learned that the book was also very influential in Lina Bo Bardi’s understanding of folk culture.

<sup>245</sup> “Abrigo de Montanha na Serra de Monchique,” *Arquitectura*, no. 85 (1964).

<sup>246</sup> “Capela de Nossa Senhora de Fátima,” *Távola Redonda*, no. 23 (1963).

<sup>247</sup> Duarte (1959): 40.

times. At the outset of this new age, leisure architecture provided different answers to different requirements, as national politics and international circumstances evolved, and was a privileged ground for the materialisation of Algarve's modern identity. The small 1930s Alportel Pousada was still a countryside house from which to contemplate bucolic landscapes in short stopovers; the generic, inconspicuous "South" formula was preferred and combined with modernist components, with hybrid, original results. Twenty years on, the large Hotel do Garbe was a sun-and-sea facility that still held on to traditional features, stylised and sophisticatedly spun, epitomising Algarve's untenable balance between economic development and regional specificity; the Hotel Sol e Mar's uncompromising modernism signalled how vernacular traditions and industrial-scale hospitality would become mutually exclusive.

For metropolitan post-war architects, the "Survey of Portuguese Regional Architecture" was the opportunity to debunk Algarve's stereotypes. Its architect-authors took pains to demonstrate the true diversity of regional folk buildings, but their purpose was hindered by reality. They were seduced by Algarve's proto-modernist "vernacular," rational and serial, not recognising it was in fact modern and industrially produced. They struggled to include ornament (real and widespread) in a functionalism-focused account, and finally framed it using questionable discourse formulas. Both the misled fascination with pseudo-vernacular buildings and the challenge posed by ornament were common to the Portuguese survey's precedents, in Spain and Italy. Yet ornament was instrumental in metropolitan attempts to establish a middle ground between modernism and regional elements hitherto seen as superficial and picturesque. Difficulties and contradictions notwithstanding, the Portuguese survey sought to create a dialogue with the local concerns that doubled as a means to humanise modernism and allow it to progress.

The "centre" – the architects and the state – appears to have been much less doctrinaire in its views of regional identity than has been thought, certainly in Algarve's case. Commonly seen as a powerfully coherent creator of well-defined regional stereotypes, the "centre" held a whole variety of not necessarily compatible views and interpretations of Algarve's built identity. How the region itself and its agents contributed to these views, is the subject of the second part of this work.

Regionalism, modernism and vernacular  
tradition in the architecture of Algarve,  
Portugal, 1925-1965

**Part II – The Region**

## Chapter 3

# Modernism and vernacular in a negotiated identity

## The buildings of Olhão, 1916-1966

All through the first half of the twentieth century, architectural practice in Olhão, Leeward Algarve (Vol. II, Appendix 2, **fig. 122**), drew upon what was perceived as a well-defined set of elements from local building traditions. The flat-terraced-roof house was predominant there and had been, throughout the town's short history, subject to vertical extension, a characteristic "pyramidal growth" pattern of superimposed elemental volumes, stepped roof terraces and consecutive flights of stairs. This much-described and admired feature – Olhão, the "Cubist town" – became a stable constituent of local identity in metropolitan readings. Yet how was it processed in everyday building? How was it understood locally?

This industrious town saw substantial growth in population during the period,<sup>1</sup> a consequence of the appeal industrial and fishing activities exerted on rural communities.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the housing supply was under increasing pressure and living conditions deteriorated; shanty areas grew in the periphery and dwellings in the centre became overcrowded and insalubrious. Central and local governments were led to invest in subsidised housing for the working classes, schools and other public facilities, creating opportunities for that stable set of traditional elements to be used in new works. Olhão's relative prosperity also supported extensive new construction by private initiative, another domain where its built identity could be worked on, elaborated and transformed.

This chapter is a case study on the way formal building discourse and practice appropriated and explored references to vernacular tradition. Reading through fifty years of professional and non-professional architecture, of designing and building (or failing to build) in the Olhão municipality, this text will look at the lineage of what seemed to be a 1930s trend: that of

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<sup>1</sup> 7.000 inhabitants in 1885, 9.993 in 1900, 13.627 in 1940, and 18.000 in 1949, according to [Francisco Fernandes Lopes], "Olhão," in *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira* (Lisboa, Rio de Janeiro: Editorial Enciclopédia, [1949]), 297.

<sup>2</sup> According to Mariano Feio (1949), in 1949 there were 27 fish canning factories in Olhão, representing 36% of the total production of sardine conserves in Algarve. To these, Fernandes Lopes ([1949]) added 23 other workshops of salted preserves, as well as 17 large sardine-fishing companies and over 300 smaller ones.

considering local, “Cubist” architecture and its components (plain whitewashed surfaces, flat roofs, external stairs) as the inescapable source and reference.

My argument, drawn from an extensive body of archival and bibliographic material, will be structured around three essential points. Firstly, I will investigate the antecedents of such a trend, in local practice, questioning the extent to which this was a new metropolitan construct or a consequence of earlier developments. In other words, I want to interrogate the commonly accepted notion that architects discovered the value of vernacular buildings irrespective of existing, everyday practices. Secondly, I will examine the modernist discourse on local traditions through the analysis of the public works activity, where national projects encountered specific local demands. Architectural history has catalogued one low-budget housing scheme, in particular, as a remarkable example of the modernist use of vernacular inspiration; this prompted me to contextualise it and, in the process, a rich fabric of other cases came to light. Through Olhão’s first master plan, I will enquire how the negative features of vernacular buildings – their often poor living standards – were addressed. Thirdly, I will observe the process of dissemination of post-war modernist features combined with local custom in the work of architects and non-architects. Designed and built for both urban and rural contexts, these objects facilitated the popularisation of a locally developed form of modernism, in which existing traditions still participated.

## 1. The codification of vernacular in everyday building.

### *Pre-modernist expansion of a small town*

In the early 1910s, Olhão’s urban fabric was limited by the marshes and salt fields bordering its riverfront to the south, east and west, and the Algarve railroad to the northwest (**fig. 123**). Beyond the railroad (**A**) lay a cemetery, orchards and vegetable gardens (*hortas*), and dispersed cottages concentrated along three main roads – to Estoi (**B**) and Moncarapacho (**C**), and the Faro-Vila Real de Santo António national road (**D**), parallel to the railroad. Between these two lines, the extension of the town’s only boulevard, Avenida da República (**E**), was developed from 1912 on<sup>3</sup> with residential buildings for the local upper strata (**fig. 124**).

Other expansion areas, in the fringes of the centre, were best suited for more modest dwellings: to the east the recently-built Rua Nova do Levante (**F**); to the northeast Horta da Cavalinha (**G**); to the northwest Cerca do Júdice, beyond the railroad (**H**), and Cerca de Ferro, between the centre and the tracks (**I**); to the west the market area (Campo da Feira) and the so-called Bairro do Mundo-Novo<sup>4</sup> (**J**). In these areas, plots were small, narrow and long, with one

<sup>3</sup> José Joaquim Lopes, “Projecto... da Avenida da República na vila de Olhão,” 1912.07.19 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>4</sup> The “New-World” neighbourhood, where emigrants to North America built their houses upon returning to the motherland, in the early twentieth century, cf. António Simões Júnior, *Antiga Crónica de Olhão* (Olhão: Gráfica Algarve, 1996 [1956]), 29.

short side on the main street and sometimes the opposite side accessible from a secondary street or passageway.

Small, single-family houses were built in such plots to a recurring one-storey base-type – that of Lázaro da Costa’s house in Rua do Cruz<sup>5</sup> (**fig. 125**), from 1916. In its layout, a long corridor, often starting in the “outer room” (*casa de fora*), led to a dining and cooking area, open to a minute backyard with a well, and served a battery of interior rooms. In the street façade, generous openings made the best of the light and ventilation possibilities; the parapet (*platibanda*) allowed full and safe use of the roof terrace – the traditional *açoteia* – while giving the whole façade a more urban, dignified proportion, and enough room for classical decorative motifs such as pilasters, cornices, balustrades and tables (**figs. 126-128**). My research found numerous planning applications of the 1910s for this very simple type of building.<sup>6</sup>

The twin house was a popular variation of the base-type in wider plots. José Leal’s building in Rua Almirante Reis from 1916<sup>7</sup> (**figs. 129-131**) shows the backyard – the functional core of traditional Olhão houses – translated into formal design: it maintained its function as an outdoor living area and circulation for the dining room, pantry, kitchen, bathroom and water-closet. These compartments were not added in response to need over time, as in spontaneous architecture: they were designed and built replicating this “natural” addition process but crystallising it in a single moment, in a planning application.

A similar process can be observed in the twin maisonettes of Rua Nova do Levante, approved in August 1916<sup>8</sup> (**figs. 132-133**), in which the absence of a backyard is compensated in the use of the two roof terraces, front and back. Here, the vernacular practice of extending confined dwellings with the addition of new volumes on the rooftop, source of the iconic “Cubist” profile, is emulated in design.

The spontaneous, “natural” pyramidal growth rationale, used to illustrate the uniqueness of Olhão’s townscape, seems to have been largely integrated with formal building practice, undermining a clear distinction between “vernacular” and designed construction. The extension to a small house in Rua António José de Almeida, in August 1920<sup>9</sup> (**fig. 134**), enlarged an existing *pangaio* (the turret covering a stair to the *açoteia*) and added the traditional *mirante* on top (the observatory platform) and corresponding stair. This case illustrates, in a formal design, Fernandes Lopes’s descriptions of the informal, step-by-step vertical additions to the Olhão house over the years, responding to need and tradition.<sup>10</sup> It epitomises the formalisation of a popular, informal building practice that was being recorded, possibly following requirement to deposit plans in the

<sup>5</sup> Anon., “Alçada do trabalho... da Rua do Cruz,” approved 1916.11.09 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>6</sup> The type represented the majority of the 95 planning submissions found in the Olhão municipal archive for 1916-1917.

<sup>7</sup> Anon., “Projecto... na Rua Almirante Reis,” approved 1916.05.18 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>8</sup> Anon., “Projecto... na Rua Nova do Levante,” approved 1916.08.04 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>9</sup> Anon., “Projecto... na Rua A. José de Almeida,” approved 1920.08.20 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Lopes (1948).



municipal planning office.<sup>11</sup> This was a widespread process (another example, **fig. 135**) that prolonged earlier spontaneous customs into modern modes of construction.

Lastly, another variation of the base-type suited average-width plots with no back access, as those in Cerca do Júdice. In two adjacent houses in Rua Sacadura Cabral (**figs. 136-139**), from 1917,<sup>12</sup> the designers/builders used that extra width to externalise the corridor that runs the full length of the base layout, allowing for wider rooms and making the backyard directly accessible from the main street, albeit imperceptibly so. The elemental drawing for the corner house (**fig. 138**) is evidence of how blurred was the line separating formal and informal building, and how rudimentary these early records could be.

Base-type and variations were sometimes assembled in larger structures, such as the remarkable eight-house complex in Horta da Cavalinha, approved in 1917<sup>13</sup> and now lost (**fig. 140**), exemplary of a pre-modernist working-class housing scheme. It was based on local construction customs (the elevations and flat roofs were the same found in the centre, as were the interior rooms or the private backyards and wells); yet it outdid the informality and spontaneity of its predecessors and clearly belonged to the sphere of formal building trade with commercial purposes.

These hybrid buildings – created through formal design and planning processes but remarkably close to spontaneous constructions – confounded visitors to Olhão. The base structure and variants I have described were recorded by the Italian geographer Gaetano Ferro and presented as the most common dwelling types in coastal Algarve (Chapter 1, **fig. 17**), believed to be descended from the vernacular fishermen’s huts that, in Olhão, predated more lasting buildings.<sup>14</sup> Others traced them back to the Berber *Taddart* house – whose backyard, in Portugal, did not evolve into the inner patio as it did in Spain: it became a smaller, vegetable-growing quintal.<sup>15</sup> Whatever the explanation provided, most accounts imply that their objects of study are spontaneous, non-designed constructions, and made no distinction between these and formally-produced constructions, including everything in the broad category of “vernacular.” In Ferro’s case, two possible interpretations arise: one, that his findings refer to strictly vernacular (spontaneous) buildings, and therefore there was a seamless continuity between those and the early-twentieth-century examples of design in Olhão; two, that he was in fact recording very recent, formally-created objects, and mistaking them for “vernacular” buildings.

Similarly, for the Algarve team of the 1955-1961 survey of folk architecture in Portugal the distinction did not seem relevant, or to deserve attention. The set of terraced houses found in Fuseta and enthusiastically depicted in *Arquitetura Popular* (Chapter 2, **fig. 113**) is very similar to the housing scheme designed for Horta da Cavalinha in 1917, and its layouts are replicated in most of

<sup>11</sup> Although I could find no record of a code of building regulations specific for Olhão until 1944.

<sup>12</sup> Anon., “Projecto... na Cerca do Júdice,” approved 1917.05.21, and Anon., “Planta e alçado... na Cerca de Júdice,” 1917.12.10 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>13</sup> Anon., “Alçados e planta... na Horta da Cavalinha,” approved 1917.04.02 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ferro (1956), 114-15.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Dias and Brissos (1994).

the examples I showed above. For the 1950s architects, these were fascinating structures that demonstrated how *modern* vernacular architecture really was, all repetition and rationality – which was hardly surprising if, as it seems, they were in fact looking at the product not of spontaneous activity but of construction entrepreneurship.

Another example of continuity between what was represented as “vernacular” and what was actually “designed” was the building typified in Mariano Feio’s 1949 guidebook as the “modern house”<sup>16</sup> (Chapter 1, **fig. 16**). Found across Algarve with its central door, symmetrical openings, integrated warehouse or retail space, and decorated parapet (Chapter 1, **fig. 5**; Chapter 2, **fig. 110**), it was repeatedly built, to approved designs, in Olhão. In a twin set of houses and stores submitted in 1920<sup>17</sup> for Rua 18 de Junho (**figs. 141-142**), the residential-commercial-storage brief – a sign of the multifarious activities of the people – was given a compact and uniform solution, undifferentiated in elevation.

These flexible building types – not specifically rural or urban – reflected the geo-economical mobility of the people (“landowner seamen,” as Fernandes Lopes called Olhão folk<sup>18</sup>) and remained current until as late as the 1920s. Instances of their formal modernisation in the 1940s (keeping varied purposes, such as processing and storing fruits or fish in a town residence) can be found not only in Olhão but also in Faro, Loulé and Tavira. The persistence of the same functional needs in time was one way by which vernacular traditions imposed themselves on formal architecture: pragmatic imperatives drove everyday building, regardless of external composition and its modulation over time.

This was also clear where construction technique was concerned. Manuel dos Santos’s house in Rua do Comércio, approved in January 1920,<sup>19</sup> had a traditional structure (**fig. 143**): load-bearing masonry external walls, wood partitions and the ground-floor brick vaults supporting the first-floor pavement. The açoteia used a specifically Algarvian technique, with terracotta dalles applied in consecutive, crossed layers over closely placed timber joists – the so-called “dormentes” system.

A decade later, when the new reinforced-concrete technique slowly replaced the traditional ways of building roof terrace slabs (the barrel or cloister vault and the “dormentes” system), this still did not amount to introducing a complete, three-dimensional concrete skeleton (of pillars, beams and slabs): the cost and the technical skills required for its calculation and execution generally delayed its adoption in everyday action for at least another two decades, becoming truly common only in the late 1950s.<sup>20</sup> Instead, what we see is a hybridization of building modes, which

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<sup>16</sup> Feio (1949), 143.

<sup>17</sup> Anon., “Planta do edifício... na Rua 18 de Junho,” approved 1920.06.29 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>18</sup> [Lopes] (1949), 296.

<sup>19</sup> Anon., “Projecto... na Rua do Comércio,” approved 1920.01.20 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, early 1940s’ project statements often mention that “mix construction systems” were adopted to face increasing difficulty in acquiring materials due to the war, e.g. in the building on Rua do Comércio 48-56, cf. Jorge de Oliveira’s project statement, 1944.03.27 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-33804-A).

resulted in the so-called “mix structure” used across Portugal and more clearly in peripheral contexts: traditional crafts and materials were kept in the largest part (the stone foundations, the masonry bearing walls, the wood and plaster partitions, the stone balconies and frames) while concrete was employed in elements more vulnerable to physical decay (especially by water) and statically independent. The roof was one such element; keeping its planar shape – a more frequent requirement in Olhão – and improving its resistance was immediately possible with the use of a concrete slab.

Many early cases of new buildings in the 1930s presented little morphological change, and the concrete slab could only be spotted in section drawings. In 1933, a house in Rua das Lavadeiras<sup>21</sup> (**fig. 144**) had a simple, conventional layout and façade design. Yet the thick external walls were covered with a thin concrete slab and, on it, a rooftop volume emulating the traditional mirante contained a toilet and bathroom. Also topped with a concrete slab, these prosaic signs of a growing demand for improved conveniences were easily accommodated by the old model, in enduring coexistence. In 1940s Olhão, the replacement of roof terraces built with the “dormentes” technique while the rest of the building remained intact, became a common operation.<sup>22</sup> The concrete slab, a reputedly modernist technique, was gradually integrated in the “vernacular” context and became virtually inextricable from it.

### *Between vernacular and modernism*

In short, the analysis of everyday building in the early decades of the century suggests: one, the permanence of established types in both layout and external composition; two, the gradual introduction of technical innovation without significant consequences for layout and appearance; and three, the presence of ambiguous objects that can be clearly placed neither in the sphere of strict vernacular practice nor in that of formal design. This has prompted me to reflect more widely on our understanding of the role of vernacular traditions for modernist architecture.

The theme of modernised vernacular / vernacularised modern architecture in the Mediterranean context has recently been given an important historic overhaul, by which the long-established view of modernism and popular traditions as opposites has been re-assessed.<sup>23</sup> From being a footnote in modern movement history and a transitory stage in the rise to high modernism,<sup>24</sup> the role of vernacular has been worked on as continuously oscillating between

<sup>21</sup> Anon., “Planta... na Rua das Lavadeiras n.º4,” approved 1933.08.17 (Olhão, CMO/SOPM).

<sup>22</sup> For instance, my research found eleven applications for permission to replace joist-and-dalle slabs with concrete ones in existing buildings, granted in the period between January 1943 and June 1944.

<sup>23</sup> From pioneering texts, e.g. Pavlides (1991); Antonio Pizsa, ed., *J. LL. Sert y el Mediterráneo* ([Barcelona]: Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya, 1997); and Francesco Passanti, “The Vernacular, Modernism, and Le Corbusier,” *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56, no. 4 (1997), to more recent compilations, e.g. Umbach and Hüppauf, eds. (2005).

<sup>24</sup> In the view of traditional scholars such as Nicolaus Pevsner, cf. Bernd-Rüdiger Hüppauf and Maiken Umbach, “Introduction,” in Umbach and Hüppauf, eds. (2005), 13-14.

“modernism’s other and its foundation myth.”<sup>25</sup> Authors working on detailed accounts of the process generally convey the impression that the appropriation of vernacular was a voluntary and conscious action by architects, in a ground-breaking relationship between architectural design and extant building traditions that implied the discovery of the latter by the former. Furthermore, they tend to base their findings in the work of central professionals – often internationally or nationally acknowledged architects – adopting and prolonging the standpoint of the centre, and of the profession/discipline, in their analyses. Lejeune and Sabatino, for instance, aimed at defining “the transnational phenomenon of Mediterranean modernism that existed within, rather than in opposition to, modernism,” and has been downplayed by a North-based scholarship. Suggesting the existence of a shared heritage that “helped Mediterranean modernists identify with a collective ethos without necessarily forgoing national or pan-regional identities” – thus conciliating attention to local context and culture with participation in a broader trend – they claim: “By exploring the impact of the vernacular buildings of stonemasons and craftspeople on the rise and diffusion of modernism, [the essays] take a novel look at the moment when professionally trained architects began to project modern values onto anonymous building traditions that had flourished [in the] Mediterranean basin.”<sup>26</sup>

Scholarship therefore seems to perpetuate the concept of this process of projection (of modern values onto building traditions) as one whose inception can be traced in time (“the moment”) and predominantly determined by the will of learned, intellectually sophisticated, centre-based professional architects – quite a *modernist* concept in itself, it seems. One is lead almost to believe that an extant, rich and inspiring vernacular reality was there waiting to be discovered by educated designers and turned into solutions for their contemporary problems; that these two spheres – anonymous building traditions and professional architecture – were the two only important sides in the process, and that this would have been a one-way action of appropriation between the former, providers, and the latter, consumers.

The idea of “discovery” of a vernacular source by modernists has been present in critical and promotional writings since the time of the very first examples of this conscious process, and it is therefore not entirely surprising that such concept should prevail in present-day works.<sup>27</sup> A similar conception of this relationship as one of “finding,” almost an archaeological campaign, can

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<sup>25</sup> Barry Bergdoll, "Foreword," in Lejeune and Sabatino, eds. (2010), xviii.

<sup>26</sup> Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino, "North *versus* South: Introduction," in *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>27</sup> For instance, when Benedetto Gravagnuolo essays a genealogy of the architects’ interest in vernacular buildings, he consistently describes the relationship between Schinkel, Hoffman, and Le Corbusier and Mediterranean built forms in terms of “discovery,” and quotes Pagano and Daniel’s claim that North European architects had “discovered [in the Mediterranean] the emotional power of the poet/builder.” (“From Schinkel to Le Corbusier,” in *Ibid.*, 36). In the same collection, Sabatino looks at “how traditional buildings realized by anonymous masons or peasants were ‘rediscovered’ or revalued and appropriated by professionally trained architects to construct Italy’s modernist image during the 1950s” (“The Politics of *Mediterraneità* in Italian Modernist Architecture,” 42).

be found in most existing accounts of the way post-war modernist architects in Portugal “discovered” the country’s vernacular heritage.<sup>28</sup>

When I outlined my research project for Algarve, my hypothesis was that this process of modernist appropriation of the vernacular would have been more complex, and that a closer, more precise look would reveal further layers to it. Data from 140 planning applications of pre-modernist years (the 1910s and 1920s) in Olhão begins to show evidence of such strata and of the intricate game of influence and interference that originated them. An intermediate layer, visible in the examples above, developed between the “purely” vernacular material of anonymous, non-designed built objects that constituted the basis for inspiration by architects and their own proposals processing such inspiration. A transition stage, not confined in time but persistent throughout the entire period, resurfaced and became more apparent when architects were absent (as was the case in early-twentieth century Olhão). This was a step where the traits and modes of building tradition, common in everyday practice among contractors and clients, were codified and integrated into the bureaucracy of modern-day urban regulations, for the purposes of planning and building permissions required by urban and economic growth. Neither produced by trained architects, nor part of a metropolitan mind frame searching for antidotes to abstraction or industrialisation, this work was done largely by builders or clients themselves, or by their draftsmen. By way of this transition layer, informal construction and design habits, daily repeated over time in the modest houses of a small town, entered the realm of formal practice, in a most natural and uneventful way.

When the modernist “discovery” of vernacular forms begun to unfold and produce its more visible results, and centrally trained, official architects started to provide their sophisticated interpretations of tradition – modernist or conservative –, they worked over a ground of well-established vernacular-inspired motifs, to which they had to relate. In Olhão, the elemental volume, the sharp-edged surface, the invisible roof and the parapet, the external masonry stair, decorated to a lesser or greater extent, had already been integrated into formal design through this transition step and thus brought from building tradition to the sphere of semi-industrial construction, *before* architects started doing the same. The result was an increasingly complex reality where “true” anonymous objects were mixed with others belonging to a codified design process; in their enthusiasm, modernist scholars and writers included both spontaneous and designed objects in one all-encompassing category of popular building, crystallised in the singularly picturesque “Cubism”.

Drawing from the evidence of my case study, I suggest that in small peripheral contexts like Olhão, there was an immediate precedent, a living thread between vernacular and modernism, and that the latter did not unearth the former, as if working on ancient ruins. The process of appropriation was already well under way and embedded in everyday practice. As an underlying, ongoing reality, vernacular and its filtered images were not merely an optional “modernism’s other” – they formed a condition imposed on modernism, which modernism chose, in several instances,

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<sup>28</sup> E.g. Leal (2000), 176-85.

not to refuse. Modernist architects and modernist-inspired builders were compelled to temper their generic influences with the traits of a consistent, pervasive local tradition.

The examples of modernist-inspired works in central Olhão in the 1930s translate this pragmatic confluence of references, and reiterate the permanence of local custom. Their unidentified designers, most likely not architects, created a recognisable type, visible in two designs approved in September 1939<sup>29</sup> (Avenida da República, **fig. 147**) and August 1940<sup>30</sup> (Rua da Liberdade, **figs. 148-150**). The mix brief of ground-floor store and first-floor single-family house extended the engrained hybrid rural-urban use in limited plots that required vertical solutions. External arrangements were updated, with elevations marked by horizontal lines, from which wide openings and concrete balconies seemed to hang; behind elaborately designed parapets were concrete açoteias topped with concrete stairways and mirantes.

Along similar lines, the building designed in 1942 for the peninsula-like plot between Rua Dr. Miguel Bombarda and Largo Sebastião Martins Mestre (**figs. 151-153**), was one of the last to be approved for the centre, in January 1943,<sup>31</sup> before a new municipal advisor stepped in to control Olhão's aesthetics. Prominent in the urban fabric, with rounded corners and a watchtower emulating the cabin of a vessel, its naval analogy was particularly resounding in Olhão; further streamlining of the elevations was achieved with uninterrupted horizontal lines. But the whole effect was obtained with very little experimentation: the layout of the residential upper floor was reminiscent of nineteenth century solutions and the decorative apparatus of the elevations was realised with render and plaster in mainly opaque masses, exception for the reinforced concrete railings and parapets.

By the early 1940s, a form of delayed, surface modernism was popular currency in Olhão, as in other parts of Algarve (**figs. 145-146**). Inextricably combined with traditional design mandates, layouts and techniques, it was practiced by local designers who were possibly also builders and developers, and extended in time the intermediate layer between spontaneous practice and formal architecture.

### *Conservative reaction*

The very existence of this layer was perceived as a problem in metropolitan spheres, and the popularised strand of modernism that its designers adopted was seen as a nefarious foreign influence. The appointment of a Lisbon architect, Jorge de Oliveira (1907-1989), to provide technical assistance to regional and municipal institutions in Algarve, in 1943, should be seen in this light. I will detail Oliveira's assignment and action in Faro (Chapter 4), but it was in Olhão that this

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<sup>29</sup> Anon., "Plantas... na Avenida da República n.ºs 109 e 111," approved 1939.09.14 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>30</sup> Anon., "Projecto... na Rua da Liberdade," approved 1940.08.22 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>31</sup> Anon., "Projecto... na Rua Dr. Miguel Bombarda," 1942.11 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

purpose and its defining lines became first apparent. In a context where no other architect had a permanent role, public or private, Oliveira's services in Olhão between January 1943 and February 1945 established not merely a bureaucratic authority but above all an aesthetic one. To this end, he resorted to a discourse reminiscent of the Casa Portuguesa campaign, which countered internationalist tendencies with features of acknowledged "Portugueseness" and allowed him to elevate his practice above the popular trend of modernism.

Oliveira's double status as municipal planner and private designer provided a solid basis on which to build his alternative vision of local identity. In April 1943, house builder Francisco Lopes applied for permission to radically refurbish an existing house in Rua Mouzinho de Albuquerque 1-7 with a modernist-inspired design (**fig. 155**); it was rejected by Oliveira, who explained that new regulations for the whole area were being studied, and warned the applicant that

"Proposals of modern character will not be accepted in remodelling existing façades, as this entire area is considered of regional interest and to be preserved."<sup>32</sup>

Considering modernist designs to be incompatible with local character, the architect took over the commission and used this opportunity to outline his understanding of Olhão's buildings: there were few of

"Any architectural interest, apart from the small-scale houses with their *açoteias*, of high regional and aesthetic value. This building's features, leftovers from a time more fortunate than ours, when we are invaded by pretentious, poorly balanced and roughly arranged Modern, made it easy [for me] to adopt, with simple and harmonious lines (...), the character so peculiarly Portuguese of some fine examples of our eighteenth-century architecture."<sup>33</sup>

In elements such as the carved-stone opening frames or the uninterrupted balcony on the *piano nobile* one would "feel the intentional search for Portuguese palatial architecture features – but freely interpreted, without the concern for reconstitution, best suited to Archaeology." "Pretentious Modern" had to be resisted, and the Portugueseness of past styles – in this case, the neoclassical "Pombalino" style developed in Lisbon after the 1755 earthquake and non-existent in Olhão – could be creatively interpreted by the architect (**figs. 156-157**).

There is stark contrast, in effect, between what local builders were introducing in Olhão – a fashionable, naive version of modernism, evolved from an established local archetype – and what Oliveira proposed: a disciplinary "return to order" issued by a metropolitan architect after decades of free local practice. The architect brought to Olhão a *pot-pourri* of erudite references from baroque and neoclassical works, an exclusive language accessible only to a few. This lexicon, frequently employed to dignify public buildings and experimented with in metropolitan residential commissions, formed another side of the Casa Portuguesa prism.

<sup>32</sup> Assessment 1943.04.12 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-31330-A). POiA (see Vol. II, Appendix 1, Citation 31).

<sup>33</sup> Project statement 1943.08.23 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-31330-A). POiA (Citation 32).

By the mid-1940s, the pastoral side of the Casa Portuguesa and its vernacular roots were complemented by this other side, a traditionalist or classicising one, which increased the level of abstraction in architectural design proposals and rendered less clear the results of a dialog with local or regional features. “Regional” became a very open, undefined category where elements of contextual tradition and popular practice (plain surfaces, narrow openings or flat rooftops, in the case of Algarve) were blended with principles of classical order (three-tiered façades, hierarchy, symmetry, openings and materials, intricate decorative formulas). Oliveira’s work in Algarve pursued a balance between these two equally strong, often conflicting sides.

In Olhão, the architect began by conveying the generic Portuguese “nobility” in his elevations (e.g. Rua do Comércio 48-56, 1944,<sup>34</sup> **fig. 154**), and eventually evolved towards a more specific version of a regional lexicon. His unbuilt 1947 proposal for Rua General Humberto Delgado was marked by two features that became Oliveira’s trademark (**fig. 158**): the ceramic V-shaped panels on parapets and staircase, and the openings framed in horizontal bands of glazed brick cladding. These details were presented as features of an “entirely contemporary stance” to balance the “traditional character” of the massing, “quite appropriate to the local environment.”<sup>35</sup> Such formula had its currency in Olhão in the 1940s, when buildings in the low-rise areas around the centre were replaced by two- and three-storey constructions. The civil engineer Humberto Carrapato’s 1949 design for Rua 18 de Junho 243A<sup>36</sup> (**fig. 159**) elaborated on the same set of elements suggested by Oliveira and was presented as a “modern interpretation” of local traditions that included, as the previous examples, updated versions of the açoteia and platibanda.

After Oliveira set his guidelines for everyday building, inspiring local builders and civil engineers, the previous “popular modernism” practice lost strength, especially in the urban context. In February 1946, in a corner of Avenida Dr. Bernardino da Silva and E.N. 125, another metropolitan architect – António Gomez Egea, the official who, that same year, designed the town’s largest social housing scheme – replaced another rejected “modernist” proposal by his own (**fig. 160**): with a grid of regularly-paced openings, corners simulating towers with generous ground-floor arches, *piano nobile* doors with elaborate pediments, balconies and cornices, Egea aimed to give the elevations “some of the local character, but keeping the general balance that such a building demands, given its location.”<sup>37</sup> In a significant duality, this design faced one of Olhão’s main thoroughfares with the schematic dignity of noble features of the past; but its roof, a concrete slab “as usually employed in Algarve,” and back elevations were treated to another standard, that of regional features (plain walls, ceramic panels, lace-like parapets and chimneys, **fig. 161**). Placed at the town’s fringe, this object seemed to be symbolic: for its metropolitan author, Olhão might want

<sup>34</sup> (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-33804-A).

<sup>35</sup> “Projecto... em Olhão,” project statement 1947.11.19 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>36</sup> (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-32508-A).

<sup>37</sup> Project statement, 1946.02.18 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-8580-A).



to keep her local character within her walls and in low-budget, everyday buildings, but needed the input of foreign elements to lift her status on her most visible face.

The diffusion of this current was intense during the second half of the 1940s. Very seldom were these designs the work of architects: the codification of element shapes and corresponding building templates (windows, doors, gargoyles, cornices) made it easy to industrialise both its design and its production. To some extent, this was an inversion of the modernist appropriation of vernacular features: elements from erudite architecture were “vernacularised” and popularised by speculative builders and the group of design professionals (engineers, technical engineers and draftspeople) who served them. Other than the more common, standardised façade lexicon – e.g. the 1949 elevation for Avenida Dr. Bernardino da Silva 41, by technical agent Martiniano Leal (**fig. 162**)<sup>38</sup> – such a “vernacularisation” produced a range of variations on offer. In the ensemble elevation signed by house builder Francisco Lopes for a row of four houses in Rua João da Rosa (**fig. 163**), the choice included the degree of ornament, its detailing and even its stance – from the more baroque profile of the house on the left, to the more subdued, “regional” tone of the one on the right. The layouts of these two-storey cottages were clearly up-to-date, and all identical, which makes this elevation a good example of a straightforward façade menu.

I have shown above how hybrid construction formulas mixing traditional and modern (industrial) materials and techniques, were used since the 1920s regardless of the architectural stance taken. By 1955, the year this façade “menu” was approved, the reverse operation had developed. As traditionalist proposals reached refined levels of decorativeness and stylisation, mixed technologies receded and the use of industrialised techniques and standardised elements (hollow blocks or pre-cast frames, for instance) grew in importance and diffusion. Consequently, there were now modern structures covered in conservative compositions, on a par with other proposals where reinforced-concrete structures followed their modernist tenet as conveyors of the “truth” in building.

## **2. Establishing a model for a local, vernacular-based modernism: the first low-budget housing schemes in Olhão.**

Small-scale, everyday private residential and commercial building enterprise in the early decades of the century created a solid home-grown fabric in Olhão, in which informal custom became crystallised in industrial construction processes. For metropolitan architects, such fabric was a particularly fertile ground of experimentation with vernacular (or quasi-vernacular) elements; it provided them with opportunities to respond to all the extra-architectural “buzz” that Olhão’s image was gathering since the 1920s. I will now look at a succession of centrally-produced low-

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<sup>38</sup> “Projecto... na Av. Dr. Bernardino da Silva,” 1949.07.07 (Olhão, CMO/SOPM).

budget housing schemes, which had pivotal influence in installing and stabilizing a model of vernacular-inspired architecture for large-scale diffusion, on both public- and private-led projects.<sup>39</sup>

*Bairro Operário Lucas & Ventura, c. 1923-1925*

The predecessor to this series, as it happens, dealt with references that differed from what subsequently became that model – and did so consciously. Around 1923-1924, Carlos Chambers Ramos, not yet a graduate architect, designed a compact, fifteen-unit set of workers housing for his brother-in-law's canning company Lucas & Ventura; it was sited next to the factory, in Rua Martins Garrocho (figs. 164-165).<sup>40</sup> Having family in Olhão's elite<sup>41</sup> accounted for Ramos's regional connection (a number of his early works were designed for Algarve) and reinforced the architect's particular interest in Olhão's aesthetics. In fact, when he published this **Bairro Operário** in 1927 (fig. 166), Ramos wrote that although his initial intention had been to "preserve the Cubist character" of most Olhão buildings, "with their characteristic açoteias," an undisclosed "overall criteria" had led him to employ four-pitch tiled roofs instead.<sup>42</sup> This suggests that Ramos was well aware of Olhão's "Cubist" reputation, growing through literary and pictorial depictions, but chose to direct his proposal differently, towards a more inconspicuous and generic position.

Dwellings were built to minimum standards, with communal toilets and washhouse, and avoided the frequent absence of natural light and ventilation in all rooms with a layout in *redans*: cottages were separated by courtyards and a narrow inner street, replicating solutions typical of turn-of-the-century workers' housing. With whitewashed walls, segmental arches, curved eaves and voluminous chimneys, the composition evoked the "generic South" atmosphere and not specific features of the vernacular Algarvian house, or of Olhão's townscape; rather, it was closer to the generic Casa Portuguesa references set out by Raul Lino.

Such an open, yet markedly pastoral, set of references justified the first commentary on Ramos's Bairro Operário, in 1925: it was presented as an example of "Regional Architecture," "a valuable step in the national decorative arts, both by its styling and by its wonderful adjustment to regional needs."<sup>43</sup> Ramos had chosen to experiment with broader "regional architecture," rather than with specific Olhão architecture, in his first works for his wife's hometown – his 1925 design

<sup>39</sup> Parts of this section have been published in Ricardo Agarez, "Olhão, Modern Vernacular and Vernacular Modernism," in *First International Meeting EAHN* (Guimarães: European Architectural History Network and Universidade do Minho, 2010), and ———. "Metropolitan Narratives on Peripheral Contexts," in *Peripheries*, ed. Ruth Morrow and Mohamed Gamal Abdelmonem (London: Routledge, 2012 [forthcoming]).

<sup>40</sup> In June 1944, the firm "Saías, Irmãos e Companhia" bought the buildings in Rua Manuel Martins Garrocho 40 from "Lucas & Ventura" (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-760/1987).

<sup>41</sup> Ramos's client in this project was Cândido do Ó Ventura, a local figure and important industrialist, cf. Carlos Ventura Ramos, the architect's son, in discussion with the author, August 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Carlos Ramos, "Alguns Problemas de Arquitectura," *Arquitectura* 1, no. 9 (1927): 133.

<sup>43</sup> "Arquitectura Regional," *Europa*, June 1925.

for an elderly shelter, built in 1926-1928,<sup>44</sup> ran on similar lines. Another interesting point to Ramos's "regional" approach was its technology. In the Bairro Operário, he said to have been "careful to employ construction materials specific to the region,"<sup>45</sup> and the scheme was swiftly built and long-lived, remaining in use until it was pulled down in 1988.<sup>46</sup> Yet in the architect's bolder modernist design for the Alportel hospital (1930-1931, above), his insistence on techniques other than the strictly local originated in construction and budget problems, and the building was left incomplete as a consequence. In this light, "regional" was also pragmatic, viable, adjusted to modest local possibilities ("regional needs"), while modernist was challenging, uncertain and sometimes outstretched.

This early instance of workers housing in Olhão was not an official, public initiative, but the enterprise of a canning industrialist. A common undertaking at the time (although rarely as elaborate), it addressed the dramatic housing shortage that afflicted Portuguese fishing centres and entailed significant social disruption.<sup>47</sup>

### *Bairro Municipal, the first failed public project, c. 1929-1930*

The first design for a public low-budget housing scheme in Olhão remained unbuilt. Despite playing a central role in Portuguese architectural culture, architect Carlos Ramos's **Bairro Municipal** (fig. 167) – his second project of the kind for Olhão – has been enmeshed in historical mistakes. In the catalogue of the 1986 Carlos Ramos exhibition<sup>48</sup> it was wrongly dated to 1925 and mistaken for the architect's other housing scheme in Olhão – the Bairro Operário Lucas & Ventura (figs. 164-166), first published in 1925. This small error was amplified in subsequent studies where it was mistaken for yet another one of Olhão's housing schemes, the fishermen's ensemble (Bairro de Casas para Pescadores), designed by others in 1945 and completed in 1949 (figs. 188-189). Ramos's Bairro Municipal was regarded as the only low-budget housing complex of its kind, at a national scale, to show the "use of local architectural language,"<sup>49</sup> as if it had been built; in fact, it has been referred to as an existing reality by all authors who mention it,<sup>50</sup> and illustrated with images of the 1945 fishermen's scheme. In view of its mistaken early date (1925), it was considered not only Ramos's "first act of maturity" but also "the first example of a modernist reading on

<sup>44</sup> For a short history of the shelter ("Asilo para a Velhice"), see Antero Nobre, *História Breve da Vila de Olhão da Restauração* (Olhão: A Voz de Olhão, 1984), 127-28.

<sup>45</sup> Ramos (1927): 133.

<sup>46</sup> (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-760/1987).

<sup>47</sup> These first workers' quarters were very modest structures, often improvised in existing buildings (warehouses) under the industrialists' initiative, cf. Joaquim Rodrigues, "A Indústria de Conservas de Peixe no Algarve (1865-1945)" (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1997), 243.

<sup>48</sup> Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, ed. *Carlos Ramos. Exposição Retrospectiva da Sua Obra* (Lisboa: FCG, 1986).

<sup>49</sup> Ana Assis Pacheco, "Bairro Económico de Olhão," in Tostões, Becker, and Wang ([1998]), 165.

<sup>50</sup> All those mentioned here, plus Ricardo Carvalho, "Morada: Rua, Casa," *Jornal Arquitectos*, no. 224 (2006), and Pinto (2010).

traditional architecture” in Portugal.<sup>51</sup> Finally, it was also mistaken for the fishermen’s complex in Fuseta,<sup>52</sup> a separate scheme designed and built in parallel with the Olhão project.

In short, Carlos Ramos’s Bairro Municipal is the typical example of a project that everyone knows of but that no one knows about: it is prominent in every overview of twentieth-century Portuguese architecture yet it is wrongly dated and, most importantly, it is treated as an existing work, built in either one of two locations (Olhão and Fuseta), when in reality it was not built even in one.

In the light of Ramos’s family connections and of its designation as “municipal,” this is likely to have been a local authority commission. The project can be dated to 1929, for the architect exhibited it in Lisbon in 1930<sup>53</sup> and published it in Spanish and German journals in 1930 and 1931 (**fig. 168**), claiming that the scheme’s architecture fitted the “evident Arabic character” of Olhão, “the Cubist town *par excellence*.”<sup>54</sup> Ramos’s effective publicity echoed through time and reached present-day scholarship, which seized upon elements from the 1925, 1929 and 1945 projects and used them to produce its own single construct of Ramos’s unbuilt modernist design.

How and why did this curious case of mistaken identity develop? It developed, I suggest, because the authors wrote their texts based on their metropolitan sources – previous texts based on existing misconceptions – and failed in three essential points: 1. Primary sources (the archives) were never used to document the existing buildings, 2. The available published data (images and drawings) was not carefully analysed, and 3. The texts were written in Lisbon, and the existing buildings in Olhão were seldom visited. I see the conflation of these three disparate objects into one single construct as symptomatic of an architectural culture and history that is essentially metropolitan: it is constructed by metropolitan architects and focused on reinforcing the roles of other metropolitan, acknowledged architects in history and on simplifying their position within grand narratives.

I question the negligent celebration of Ramos’s unbuilt design by Portuguese scholarship – and not the subsequent influence of this first translation of Olhão’s “Cubist” vernacular into public housing architecture, with its compact composition of terrace-roofed houses, twin patios and exterior masonry stairs in the backyard (**fig. 169**). The pairing of stairs over a single round arch became an iconic element of modern architecture in Algarve, and further explains the confusion between Ramos’s design and the 1945 fishermen’s housing schemes, where the same element was used. However, a more detailed look reveals the misinterpretations of this celebrated design: for instance, in the use of central patio houses (**fig. 170**) – never, as I mentioned above, a vernacular

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<sup>51</sup> Bárbara Coutinho, "Carlos Ramos (1897-1969)" (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2001), 44.

<sup>52</sup> Fernandes (2005), 89.

<sup>53</sup> Carlos Ramos and Jorge Segurado, "Catálogo do I Salão dos Independentes" (Lisboa: [n. pub.], 1930).

<sup>54</sup> Jorge Segurado, "A Arquitectura no '1.º Salão dos Independentes', Lisboa," *Arquitectura* 12, no. 136 (1930), and Carlos Ramos, "Pläne und Entwürfe eines Portugiesischen Architekten von Carlos Ramos, Lissabon," *Wasmuths Monatshefte. Baukunst & Städtebau*, June 1931.

practice in Algarve or Olhão –, of a communal backyard – traditionally private and an essential place of domestic life in Olhão – and of the bulky Alentejo chimneys – not the lacelike Algarve chimney nor the local box-like, “balloon” chimney. Yet it is interesting to note how internal domestic spaces were structured in a sequence of communicating rooms with no apparent functional hierarchy, much in the way of the traditional house of Olhão still in use in the 1920s (save for the replacement of the customary interior room with the disproportionate patio).

This is a good example of how an image of vernacular can be rendered abstract, manipulated and deformed to serve a modernist proposal; whitewashed, covered with *açoteias* and paced with arched stairs as it may be, it still is above all a Carlos Ramos design, similar to others of the same period with which no vernacular association has been made.<sup>55</sup> In its tightly knit twenty-four terraced houses, in two opposing bands with a long inner street-like yard, I see a closed, finite, self-standing *siedlung* that conveys an uncanny sense of confinement, as if designed for easy surveillance (**fig. 171**). In fact, there were official, non-aesthetic concerns underlying commissions and proposals for social housing in Olhão: for instance, the need to control the widespread smuggling with which seamen and canning industry workers complemented their meagre earnings, and in which so characteristic a townscape played an important role. The novelist Raul Brandão described how

“Everyone in Olhão, rich or poor, protected smugglers and joined the trade. Never was a bolt of fabric seized on land. It would be passed from *açoteia* to *açoteia* – merely stretching your arms would suffice – and it would run, need it be, the entire town.”<sup>56</sup>

Addressing the housing shortage in the old centre of Olhão became a social and political need in the eyes of metropolitan decision makers, alarmed by the constant demonstrations of unrest coming from the local canning industry workforce. To install labourers and fishermen in new housing complexes, designed and built from scratch in the outskirts of town, was a way to appease social anxiety and render more difficult the pursuit of illegal activities, while effectively beginning to modernise and bring salubrity to Olhão.

### *Workers housing framework*

The first state-funded housing schemes built for Olhão’s working classes coincided with a string of legal and administrative initiatives by the new Estado Novo regime, which supported nationwide state policies until the late 1960s. Concurrently, the workforce for whom they were intended – fishermen and canning industry workers – belonged to one of the first economic

<sup>55</sup> Designs such as the Dona Filipa de Lancastre high school (1929) and the Navarro de Paiva Institute (1931), both in Lisbon, and the Bairro Económico do Funchal (1931), in Madeira.

<sup>56</sup> Raul Brandão, *Os Pescadores* (Lisboa: Livrarias Aillaud e Bertrand, 1924), 277. POiA (Citation 33).

spheres to be regulated by the new corporative state.<sup>57</sup> The first experiments of social housing in Algarve (Olhão and Portimão) served therefore as a trial for the pursuit of a national policy that closely associated housing provision with social and political control.

Before Estado Novo was even officially established, the formula of Melhoramentos Urbanos (urban improvements) was created by law in September 1932.<sup>58</sup> A range of public facilities in centres other than Lisbon and Porto – including schools, hospitals and other welfare facilities, museums and monuments –, framed by new urban planning instruments, would henceforth be considered “of local interest and collective benefit” and either built directly by the state or by the municipalities and professional bodies and co-funded by the state; financial support of up to 50% of costs comprised design, technical support, and labour expenses, the first two being initially channelled through the ministry of public works office for public facilities and monuments (Direcção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais, DGEMN) and, from 1945, through the purposely established office for urbanisation (Direcção-Geral dos Serviços de Urbanização, DGSU).

The bureaucratic and financial structure was thus set to provide smaller centres, which lacked political or financial autonomy, with basic infrastructure. The public works policies of Estado Novo were closely related to the rise of unemployment in Portugal in the 1920s and with the need to mitigate potential socio-political unrest; indeed, on the very same day of the Melhoramentos Urbanos law, the unemployment commission and fund were created within the ministry of public works with the specific goal of providing both financing instruments and affordable workforce to support the public works policy.<sup>59</sup> The unemployment fund became known as the public works’ bank and was the driving force behind the country’s infrastructure re-equipment, launched by Salazar’s trusted minister Duarte Pacheco (1899-1943). Under the ensuing 1933 Casas Económicas (low-budget houses) law,<sup>60</sup> the government would channel the unemployment fund to promote the construction of dwellings in co-operation with municipalities and official corporations, through the public works and welfare departments.

These were houses for “heads of household, employees, labourers or journeymen, members of the national trade unions, civil servants and military staff” who committed to creating a family home (“casal de família”). As I have mentioned before, such definition was fundamental in the regime’s understanding of the family as the basic brick in the vast edifice of the nation; hence

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<sup>57</sup> The constitution of the Portuguese Estado Novo (New State) was approved in plebiscite on 19 March 1933. Estado Novo was a corporative state in that it forced control on every aspect of social and political life through “corporations,” non-elected bodies that brought together business leaders, landowners or industrialists of a given activity with government representatives so as to frame and “conciliate” their private interests with those of the nation.

<sup>58</sup> Ministério das Obras Públicas e Comunicações, “Decreto n.º 21.697,” in *Diário da República I Série*, 230, 30 September 1932 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional de Lisboa, 1932).

<sup>59</sup> ———, “Decreto n.º 21.699,” in *Diário da República I Série*, 230, 30 September 1932 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional de Lisboa, 1932).

<sup>60</sup> Presidência do Conselho, “Decreto-Lei n.º 23.052,” in *Diário da República I Série*, 217, 23 September 1933 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional de Lisboa, 1933).

the legal imposition of the single-family cottage with adjoining garden as the sole model for low-budget housing, clustered in schemes of no more than 150 units.

Article 15 of the Casas Económicas law determined that their designs, construction systems and materials would “vary from one region to the other, and the use of national workforce and materials shall be maximised.”<sup>61</sup> This rule was dutifully followed by the DGEMN officials, among which Raul Lino (see Chapter 2), and accorded with the general trend of conferring “regional variety” to all the national infrastructure programmes originating from that office, be it schools, prisons, inns or meteorology stations. Yet such variation cannot be considered merely as a matter of architectural representation of regional diversity. The requirement derived, as I see it, from a strategy of “standardisation of the vernacular” analogue to that adopted in the Spanish “Casas Baratas” programme of the 1920s.<sup>62</sup> Portugal had a cheap, abundant, and flexible workforce, and state planners were sensitive to the Deutscher Werkbund-inspired rationalism of employing, in each region, the local materials and construction techniques underlying popular architecture; the adoption of traditional features, their simplification and standardisation was seen as a convenient means to lower the costs. Not only local materials and freights would be cheaper – steel, for instance, was produced only in the main centres, and largely imported, while stone and clay were locally available – but local builders, paying lower wages and using local, tried-and-tested techniques, would result in savings. Accounts of this important step in contemporary Portuguese architecture generally fail to acknowledge the preponderance of such social and economic reasons, preferring instead to focus on the aesthetic side of the question.

### *DGEMN's first Bairros Económicos, 1935-1938 / 1945-1950*

“Coming into Olhão from Faro, the tourist notices (...) the modern Bairro Económico, with its sixty rectangular cottages, in the local architectural style – two symmetrical rows of white cubes from whose terraces one enjoys a Levantine panorama. (...) on the açoteias, (...) children play and women toil in their chores. The açoteia is used for cooking (...), for hanging clothes to dry, for neighbours’ chat, and also to inspect the sea, in anxious curiosity, looking out for the white sail of the boat that brings the men, and the day’s catch: love and bread. The white cubist town is a Dream Land...”<sup>63</sup>

In 1933, unemployment and social unrest in Olhão reached a peak, with demonstrations, attacks on canned-fish factories, and attempted assaults against industrialists.<sup>64</sup> In January 1935, the minister of public works granted the newly-restructured Consórcio Português de Conservas de

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., Art. 15.

<sup>62</sup> Carlos Sambrício, "La normalización de la arquitectura vernácula," *Revista de Occidente*, no. 235 (2000).

<sup>63</sup> João Trigueiros, "Roteiro da Vila Branca de Olhão," in *Almanaque do Algarve* (Lisboa: Almanaque Alentejano, 1943). POiA (Citation 34).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Letter from national guard command to minister of internal affairs, 1933.04.04 (Lisbon-ANTT/MI-Mç.458-[1/120]).

Peixe (CPCP, the canning industry consortium) funds for the immediate launch of four forty-five-unit workers' housing projects in Olhão, Vila Real de Santo António, Setúbal, and Matosinhos; these initiatives were expected to improve the workers' living and sanitary conditions, provide work for the unemployed and "boost the construction of Casas Económicas" at a national scale.<sup>65</sup>

The immediate result of these combined efforts of state and industry, in Olhão, was the commission, design and construction of the town's truly first social housing scheme, the work of architect Eugénio Correia (1897-1987) of DGEMN in Lisbon, for CPCP. Designed in 1935 and completed in 1938, the **CPCP Bairro Económico (figs. 172-173)** instantly entered State propaganda documents and very soon replaced, as the quote above illustrates, the old centre of Olhão in the fantasised accounts of travellers and journalists, who transferred their focus from the vernacular fabric to its modern, salubrious version in an almost seamless manner. The image of the just-finished 66 cottages, their pared-down walls gleaming under the sun in a picture of tidiness and cleanness (**fig. 175**), was used to internationally promote this "social aspect" of the canning industry as a matter of national interest: "the possession of a good house," every family's "great ambition," was deemed instrumental "to inspire in the workman a consciousness of his position as an active value within the Nation."<sup>66</sup>

Together with its Portimão predecessor (Chapter 2), the CPCP Bairro of Olhão became an official landmark that assimilated public housing policies and nationalist public conscience: both schemes were disseminated as pioneering examples of how the Casas Económicas law could help transform Portuguese towns and countryside.<sup>67</sup> Their completion, unsurprisingly, was appropriated by the regime in the nationwide centennial celebrations of 1940, when the Olhão scheme was advertised as a "Modernist setting (...) true modern work of art, which honours contemporary Portugal"<sup>68</sup> (**figs. 176-178**).

The project's potential as a model for the extension of Olhão was recognised by the architect and planner Aguiar, designer of the town's 1944 master plan, as the best recently built set of houses in Olhão.<sup>69</sup> Accordingly, when the municipality asked DGEMN to design and coordinate the construction of a second, 100-unit **Bairro Económico in Horta da Cavalinha**, in 1945, Correia carried the lines of his first creation onto this second project, albeit with two-storey variations and a different road layout; the scheme was completed in 1950 (**fig. 179**). And between his first and second Casas Económicas projects for the town, Correia produced a "special report on the construction of ultra-low-cost dwellings, for the poor families of Olhão," including their

<sup>65</sup> Letter from CPCP to minister of public works, 1935.01.21 (Lisbon-DGPA/B-IPCP27/02).

<sup>66</sup> Instituto Português de Conservas de Peixe, *The Golden Book of Portuguese Tinned Fish* (Lisbon: IPCP, 1938). This work was published in English and French.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *O Século. Número Extraordinário Comemorativo do Duplo Centenário da Fundação e Restauração de Portugal* (Lisboa: O Século, 1940), and Ministério das Obras Públicas, *Mais Melhoramentos, Mais Trabalho* (Lisboa: Ministério das Obras Públicas, 1953).

<sup>68</sup> Instituto Nacional do Trabalho e Previdência (1940).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. project statement 1944.09.07, 45 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-U-75-A).



project, in 1939<sup>70</sup> – a document that is likely to have served as the basis for the largest housing project of the 1940s in Olhão, the 300-family poor classes’ scheme of 1946. He became a sort of Lisbon-based specialist in social housing for Olhão.

Correia’s two Bairros exhibit the architect’s references from both popular sources and European works, gathered in his many travels.<sup>71</sup> The first was notably informed by Anglo-Saxon garden suburb schemes, in the curved road layout and distribution of the cottages for improved variety and picturesqueness of the streetscape (**fig. 172**) – a trait the architect regretted having had to let go of in his final design for the second Bairro, constrained by the dictates of the urban master plan (**fig. 182**). Still, he insisted on “providing the inhabitants with the impression of living in a garden complex, and not in a mere conglomerate of houses.”<sup>72</sup>

The simple but strongly characterised cottages of the 1935 project, and consequently the 1945 variations (**figs. 183-186**), were influenced not only by Correia’s stated take on Olhão’s “architectural characteristics,” but possibly also by foreign designs for workers’ housing, such as those by Tony Garnier for *Une Cité Industrielle* in 1917,<sup>73</sup> with which a parallel can be drawn (**fig. 174**). Correia used a precise set of features: elemental self-standing volumes with unadorned openings, the açoteia bordered by a stylised parapet reminiscent of the traditional platibanda, and exterior stairs on rampant round arches that imitate their vernacular Olhão counterparts. In the two-storey types, he added a pergola over the entrance door – an element that gained currency in south Portugal in the 1930s and Garnier had used in all his house-types. But two differences from Garnier’s work balance the possible foreign influence on Correia, and bring the latter’s work closer to the Algarvian context: a strict separation between cooking and eating / living functions, placed in different compartments following local custom; and the rooftop terrace, non-practicable for Garnier but an essential extension of the house for Correia.

Finally, Correia’s construction techniques epitomise the standardisation of vernacular building traditions. Complying with the law, construction was to be economical and “adequate to the region” – in this case, with materials and techniques traditionally employed in Olhão: stone masonry in foundations, exterior walls and stairs, timber structure and boards in upper floors, and exposed brickwork in steps and window sills. Specifications used in 1935-1938, which proved successful and were used again in 1945-1950, configure a close link with local tradition and a serialisation of old methods and materials aimed at controlling the costs of construction, while introducing new techniques in roofing (reinforced concrete) for improved resistance. As in 1910s and 1920s private building practice, the pragmatism of “mixed structures” was adopted in public works.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. note 1940.02.05 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-Pessoal-0041/05).

<sup>71</sup> Cf. curriculum vitae 1941.04.09 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-Pessoal-0041/05).

<sup>72</sup> “Bairro Económico Olhão,” project statement 1945.08.23 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>73</sup> See A. Guiheux et al., *Tony Garnier, l’œuvre complète* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1989), 13.

Eugénio Correia's designs were appropriated by regime propaganda, criticised by Olhão's intelligentsia,<sup>74</sup> even popularised in local postcards (**fig. 179**) – but never published in architectural circles. And yet, through the combined effect of socio-political and extra-architectural dissemination, Correia's 1935 project seems to have been much more consequential in architecture for social housing in Algarve than any of Ramos's proposals, built or unbuilt; it directly influenced three schemes for Olhão as well as the contemporary Bairro Económico in Faro, also designed by Correia (**fig. 180**). This emerges as a good example of how our historical references, often confined to the boundaries of the best-known architects and works, distort and impoverish our perception of more diversified processes.

### *Large-scale fishermen's and poor classes' housing, 1945-1950*

From 1945 on, government action in tackling a mounting "Housing Problem" throughout the country was shared between two offices of the ministry of public works, the existing DGEMN and the new DGSU. This "urbanisation" office was to develop all the housing projects devised by the fishermen's guilds representative (Junta Central das Casas dos Pescadores, JCCP<sup>75</sup>), to be built in every major fishing centre and co-funded under the Casas Económicas act; and the even larger number of projects to be erected under a new law, the Casas para as Classes Pobres (housing for the poor classes) act,<sup>76</sup> by which 5000 houses were to be realised in association with municipalities and Catholic Church charities.

And so the second batch of public housing projects in Olhão was framed by more ambitious initiatives, and the architecture that served it, while profiting from previous experience, strengthened the potential of such projects to enact a modernised version of the town's built identity. On the other hand, it was only possible once a new master plan for Olhão was in place, since these projects implied significant extensions to the urban fabric.

As in 1935 with the canning industry initiative, Algarve was again prioritised in the 1945 fishermen's programme and four projects were developed for its two most important fishing centres, Olhão and Portimão, and the two satellite villages of Fuseta (Olhão) and Ferragudo (Portimão). This set was considered as a whole in DGSU offices, and design ran in parallel for the four locations; general principles and structure, house-types and layouts were identical; only the

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<sup>74</sup> Doctor Fernandes Lopes considered the Bairro Económico to be very commendable in terms of living conditions but a "nonsense" in the detail of the external stairway leading from the backyard to the açoteia: in the traditional houses, it was always internal and provided with a turret. Cf. Lopes (1948).

<sup>75</sup> Casas dos Pescadores (fishermen's guilds) were created nationwide in 1937 as "social co-operation" bodies to represent, educate and mutually protect communities of fishermen and their families, as well as to "preserve and cherish local customs and traditions." JCCP framed and controlled the guilds' action under the corporative state. Presidência do Conselho, "Lei n.º 1.953," in *Diário da República I Série*, 58, 11 March 1937 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional de Lisboa, 1937).

<sup>76</sup> Ministério das Obras Públicas e Comunicações, "Decreto-Lei n.º 34.486," in *Diário da República I Série*, 78, 6 April 1945 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional de Lisboa, 1945).

architectural envelope of the units differed. Four basic types were created for Portimão by the designer for the Algarve set, architect Inácio Peres Fernandes (1910-1989), and their generic regional features – simple double-pitch tiled roofs, round-arched front porches, and Moorish-inspired chimney tops (**fig. 187**) – modified for use in Olhão as a result “of one of [the town’s] peculiar characteristics: the use of an açoteia as roofing device.”<sup>77</sup>

In his **Bairros de Casas para Pescadores** for Olhão and Fuseta, Peres Fernandes used the four most iconographic and immediate Olhanense elements: the açoteia, the pangaio, the platibanda, and the arched stair. The tiled roofs were replaced by açoteias bordered by pared-down platibandas which gave the ensemble the “Cubist” look so appreciated in the old town; access to these roof terraces, enabling their use, was given by the characteristic pangaio or turret in the two-storey types, and, in the one-storey types, by the paired exterior stairs over a three-centred arch, which paced the street fronts with a distinctive stance (**figs. 188-189**). This last element caused the confusion between Ramos’s 1929 unbuilt proposal and Peres Fernandes’s schemes. Yet although possibly inspired by Ramos in his elevations, Peres Fernandes inverted the stairs’ position and brought them to the main elevations; and while Ramos provided only the patios as exterior private spaces, Fernandes followed both the legal recommendations and their application by Correia in Olhão by providing each unit with a private vegetable garden.

The 120 double-unit houses finally built in Olhão between 1946 and 1949, good examples of modernist low-cost house layout with optimised minimum standard areas and innovative solutions,<sup>78</sup> represent one-tenth of what Fernandes included in his 1945 outline plan (**fig. 190**). The architect, experienced in large-scale public projects,<sup>79</sup> was given an entire new portion of Olhão reserved for low-budget housing in the 1944 master plan and proposed a town within the town for 2480 families in 1240 double-unit houses. The four different house-types (one, two and three floors, **figs. 191-193**) were used to “avoid whenever possible the monotony that seems to fatally derive from serial buildings.” Departing from the common solution of detached or semi-detached cottages (as used by Correia), Fernandes employed larger rows of up to fourteen units “with which the street fronts are best defined and the view of the backsides – always a note of unpleasant dirtiness, no matter what one may do or impose – is prevented.”<sup>80</sup> These types were displayed with largesse, meticulous order and cleanness, in stark contrast to the living conditions of the old centre (**fig. 189**). In Fuseta, a scaled-down version with 30 houses for 60 families followed similar lines.<sup>81</sup> The two schemes were built simultaneously, in a single contract, by local builder Francisco Lopes,

<sup>77</sup> “DGSU. Casas de Pescadores. Olhão,” project statement, 1945.10.02, 3 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>78</sup> Such as the central room in the smallest house-type, a sitting-dining-living space serving all other rooms.

<sup>79</sup> As a civil servant in the Lisbon city council since 1938, Fernandes followed the design of the most important developments in the capital in the 1940s, such as the Encosta da Ajuda and Alvalade neighbourhoods; working for DGSU, Fernandes authored a number of other projects throughout the country.

<sup>80</sup> “DGSU. Casas de Pescadores. Olhão,” project statement, 1945.10.02, 3 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>81</sup> (Faro-UA/A-DUF-170/MU/45).

who was involved in private housing construction in the 1940s and 1950s; through this link, local builders came into first-hand contact with the metropolitan view on local building traditions, potentially influencing their own designs for the town.

Fernandes's statement for the Olhão outline plan provides a valuable insight into this metropolitan view. The architect described how he visited the town accompanied by the mayor and the municipality technical consultant (Paiva Chaves), and how they advised him on the best and most economic construction techniques to adopt; how they recommended the use of a local alternative to the concrete slab for roof terraces (hollow blocks reinforced with steel), which was lighter, cheaper and allowed better insulation; and how, when asked about the more traditional local alternatives still in use (brick vaults and "dormentes"), those officials discouraged their application as disadvantageous. By writing "when our visit took place," Fernandes suggests that his work was based on one visit to Olhão – possibly guided by local figures such as doctor Fernandes Lopes, and possibly complemented by images of a townscape that postcards and books copiously depicted. On the other hand, the architect's words show how, while filtering the reality before him through his educated eyes, he was also incorporating the result of local experience and, furthermore, how those who closely followed such experience were correcting his notions of local building tradition.

My point here is to stress that the appropriation of local features by metropolitan modernist architectural discourse was not a simple, one-way process between officials in Lisbon and a distant vernacular reality: it was a much richer negotiation that involved expectations and intentions on both sides, and a delicate balance between the drive for modernity and the will to maintain a distinct identity. Another illustration of this point comes from the last example of this series, the 300-unit poor classes' scheme (**Bairro de Casas para as Classes Pobres**) commissioned by the municipality and designed by architects António Gomez Egea and Luís Guedes for DGSU in 1946, completed in 1949 (**fig. 181**). The units' design was possibly based in Eugénio Correia's 1939 study on the subject, and their architectural features show close similarity with his 1935 Bairro Económico, which this new project actually extended towards west. Yet it was, once more, based on national types only partly adapted to Olhão's built identity. And because the adjustment was not complete, the town council requested, and DGSU agreed, to have the chimney design modified "so as to obey regional use"<sup>82</sup> (**fig. 194**).

As they became built evidence of a modernised version of local traditions, the new large-scale housing projects started to impose their new order on other metropolitan type-designs. In 1948, as the state intended to employ the same 1944 "Algarve" school template, designed by architect Alberto Braga de Sousa (**fig. 195**), in elementary schools for the poor classes' and fishermen's schemes, Olhão council asked DGSU to replace the template's tiled roofs with açoteias:

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<sup>82</sup> Letter from DGSU/RMU to 2.<sup>a</sup> Secção 3102, 1946.08.13 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-76/MU/45).

“My request expresses the unanimous view of the people of Olhão supported by the local architectural manner, and considers the disruption such element would bring to these estates, entirely covered in terrace roofs.”<sup>83</sup>

Once again, the request was acknowledged by the Lisbon office, and as a result a new, customised “Olhão” school template was created by Inácio Peres Fernandes and used in both schemes; it comprised replacing the four-pitch roof with a concrete-and-hollow-blocks açoteia, complete with an exterior stair and parapet (**fig. 196**). The schools were finished in 1951 (**fig. 197**), when a similar process of customisation was under way for the fishermen’s scheme school canteen: because “all the houses have terrace roofs and the school itself is also covered in a regional-type terrace,”<sup>84</sup> the canteen’s envelope was also modified so as to be integrated with the ensemble. Schools built in Fuseta (1949-1950, enlarged 1958-1960) and Olhão (Largo da Feira 1958-1962) went through similar negotiations and had their designs transformed into a specific “Olhão variant” that was eventually used in other points of Algarve.<sup>85</sup>

In short: between 1935 and 1946, five social housing schemes were designed in Lisbon, by government agencies, for Olhão and Fuseta; by 1950 the 766 houses were finished and held a strong presence in both centres. They helped establishing the metropolitan view on how the building tradition of Olhão should be used in the town’s extension – a view shared not only by government officials but also by non-architectural scholarship, irrespective of what architectural culture favoured. The fishermen’s scheme – not the celebrated proposal of 1929 but the real buildings of public architecture finished in 1949 – was cited as exemplary of modern architecture’s appropriation of the vernacular heritage by geographer Orlando Ribeiro, who believed its “very good taste in the traditional style” had influenced “many houses in the modern and wide streets of Olhão.”<sup>86</sup> The Horta da Cavalinha’s “spacious two-story houses with all the modern amenities” prompted geographer Wilhelm Giese to praise “the mixture of old and new” in Olhão.<sup>87</sup> And architect Vasco Leone (1915-1973) in his final design for the town’s post office, in 1956, commended the “fine interpretation” of local architecture “in the recently built low-budget housing projects, with the best of results.”<sup>88</sup>

The five schemes were an effective demonstration, for metropolitan scholars and architects, of the potential in a compromise between national types and local requirements. Modern architecture had found a distinctive “Olhão formula” in the production of low budget housing, welcome by most.

<sup>83</sup> Letter from CMO to DGSU 826, 1948.03.15 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-76/MU/45). POiA (Citation 35).

<sup>84</sup> Project statement 1950.12.28 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-33795-A).

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Filomena Beja et. al., *Muitos anos de escolas*, vol. II (Lisboa: Ministério da Educação, 1996), 110.

<sup>86</sup> Ribeiro (1979 [1961]), 68 and 71.

<sup>87</sup> Giese (1959).

<sup>88</sup> Project statement 1956.06.30, 4 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSC-0010/01).

### 3. The dark side of vernacular: Olhão's 1944 master plan and its consequences

The narrative behind the production, reception and consequences of Olhão's first master plan, which determined the town's buildings and urban spaces from 1945 on, provides an interesting insight into the understanding of its built identity in that period, across different levels.

Although circumstances compromised its effectiveness as a planning instrument, the history of the plan exemplifies how fragile is the dichotomy between central and local visions of regional identity, of which there was also not one metropolitan understanding but many, and how eventually such differences led to the preservation of a *status quo* that accounts for the city's heritage as it stands today.

The architect João António de Aguiar (1906-1974) was officially commissioned by the municipality to prepare the Plano Geral de Urbanização (master plan) for Olhão in July 1944; he had been working on it, since December 1943, largely based on material (reports, surveys, statistic data and photographs) provided by his enthusiastic client, the mayor José Xavier.<sup>89</sup> The development of such a study was, generally, a unique opportunity for peripheral urban centres to convey their concerns and shortcomings on to the metropolis. In October 1944 Aguiar, one of the foremost urban planners in Portugal in the last century, handed in his work, promptly and unanimously approved by the client; it then went on to public display and started a tour of official consultations (DGEMN in February 1945, DGSU in March) ending with the submission to the Conselho Superior de Obras Públicas (CSOP, the higher council for public works), on whose assessment the minister based his ruling; in July 1945 the proposal was approved, not as a definite instrument but as a mere outline of a future master plan, and with important corrections to be incorporated in the final version – which was never ultimately produced.

The plan depicted Olhão as a hard, problem-ridden town, reinforcing the case for a thorough, and in some points extreme, modernisation. Aguiar admitted that the original core kept a “certain character,” with its buildings topped with açoteias and its narrow alleys – but stressed how these lacked basic hygiene and habitability, with no running water or sewerage, the town's foetid environment being worsened by a guano factory just next to the centre. The dense landscape of roof terraces and towers left no room for open spaces, private or public, and it formed one massive, uninterrupted construction, deemed unsuitable for a warm climate. The pyramid-growth model of the Olhão urban house, lauded by travellers, journalists, writers, and scholars, was showed to be an imperfect form of housing, in which poor families rented out their mirantes to even poorer families; the traditional narrow backyard was explained as being the result of building more houses, in recent times, on what were originally gardens; in all of Olhão's urban fabric, de Aguiar estimated only 200 buildings could be considered “habitable.”

Housing conditions were described in detail, and more dramatically those in illegal concentrations (slums) and legalised settlements (adapted former factories and warehouses), where

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. project statement 1944.09.07, 7 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-U-75-A).

human degradation was striking. The project statement used data from a purpose-made survey on the housing needs and illustrated it with captioned photographs: a former canning factory where 24 families (90 people) lived in walled cubicles with no roof; a backyard where five “homes” (21 people) were improvised in 80 sq m. (**fig. 198**); or, in the very centre, a three-compartment house shared by two families (12 people, **fig. 199**) where natural light came in “through one single door, in an alley already quite sombre. Nearly all the old houses in downtown Olhão are like this.”<sup>90</sup> The document painted the town in very dark shades, and reads as an illustration of Huggett’s 1960 social-realist account of vernacular Algarve (see Chapter 1).

There were no public baths, washhouses, gardens or social assistance premises; schools, hospital, public services (court, customs, police) were poorly installed in improvised facilities; industry was spread throughout town, mixed with housing, and fishermen – the very soul of Olhão’s workforce, nearly 7000 people – had no fishing harbour to work in.

Following a typical modernist urbanism policy, Aguiar set out to zone the town into well-defined sectors (industrial, residential, commercial and official) with specific concerns regarding new areas for “economic” housing – the schemes discussed above –, the creation of docks and related facilities, and the complete sanitation of the existing urban fabric. The incipient road network would be entirely replaced (with few exceptions) by a hierarchy of boulevards and squares structured around the new public buildings, essential nodes of the plan (**fig. 200**).

For the purpose of sanitation of the extant areas, de Aguiar introduced his most controversial – and, to my study, most relevant – proposal: he defined as “precarious areas” the larger part of Olhão’s centre, including not only its original core but nearly all the blocks south of the railway; isolated them from the new areas with newly-open streets; and suggested they should be gradually emptied, as new extensions grew, and have their properties devalued by forbidding the refurbishment, restoration and maintenance of the buildings; after a 20-year “complete devaluation” period, these areas could be redeveloped by the municipality.

This proposal raised serious concern in the CSOP council, whose assessment report, uncommonly rich in elaborations on architecture, was largely the work of its two architect-members: Carlos Ramos and Luís Cristino da Silva (1896-1976), a reputed supporter of traditionalist Casa Portuguesa architecture. As editor of the report, Cristino’s hand can be seen, for instance, modifying Aguiar’s description of the recent extensions in Olhão as he transcribed the original project statement onto CSOP’s document: where Aguiar merely noted that “new buildings no longer use the açoteia roofing device, which has been replaced by pitched, tiled roofs,” Cristino’s version read that “contemporary buildings have entirely lost the regional characteristics,

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 25.

[replacing] interesting açoteias with vulgar and unaesthetic tiled roofs behind pretentious parapets.”<sup>91</sup> The agenda behind CSOP’s view was clear.

Under such view, the old town was where “the Moorish influx [was] so strongly manifested”; its modest houses, chimneys and terraces crowned by “oriental” observatory towers, although parts of an insalubrious fabric were “purely regional architecture [whose] demolition would represent an irreparable loss.” They should be carefully studied in a partial plan, and sanitation measures implemented after eliminating the improvised structures that had been illegally added to them; most importantly, CSOP believed that by identifying the “fundamental characteristics of typical regional architecture,” the results of these studies would “certainly benefit” (i.e. influence) future residential areas. Perhaps to increase the opportunities for this influence, CSOP suggested that the master plan’s regulations should require new constructions to “respect, whenever possible, the traditional elements of local architecture.”<sup>92</sup> This, in fact, was Cristino’s personal proposal, his hand-written addition to a draft of CSOP’s assessment.<sup>93</sup>

The conditions CSOP imposed on the approval of the master plan meant that, until it was reviewed and completed by de Aguiar, it would be considered a mere outline, with little legal authority.<sup>94</sup> The criticism it raised, and a change in the law in September 1944 (which increased the requirements to be fulfilled by master plans,<sup>95</sup> shortly before the architect handed in his work), created a friction that partly explained why Aguiar’s final version of this document was, to the best of my knowledge, never delivered.<sup>96</sup> Yet notwithstanding the bureaucratic conundrum, the questions raised by Olhão’s master plan illustrate the different views of the town’s future.

From Aguiar’s standpoint, the master plan was an opportunity to sanitise and profoundly modernise Olhão, and its traditional values, seen as problematic shortcomings more than as rare features, were incompatible with modern urbanism principles. Although remarkably parsimonious in written references to Olhão’s architecture, Aguiar possibly admitted its potential to inspire new realisations, but not to the extent of keeping the original. The desire to improve local living standards, at the cost of destroying the extant fabric, was fuelled by his client’s (the mayor’s) political determination, combined with his own modernist beliefs.

From the standpoint of the other central player, the CSOP board, a diverse set of principles was evident, in which notions of conservation, authenticity and uniqueness are mixed with a conventionally metropolitan, detached perspective of everyday reality. The council was more

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<sup>91</sup> “Conselho Superior de Obras Públicas. Processo N.º 1631,” assessment report, 1945.07.24, 3-4 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29, 34.

<sup>93</sup> Manuscript of assessment report, n.d. (Lisbon-FCG/BA-LCSM-137).

<sup>94</sup> Although every new construction, refurbishment or maintenance works within “urbanisable” areas still had to be submitted to the ministry of public works (DGSU) by the municipality.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Ministério das Obras Públicas e Comunicações, “Decreto-Lei n.º 33.921,” in *Diário da República I Série*, 197, 5 September 1944 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional de Lisboa, 1944).

<sup>96</sup> In my research, I found mention only to an existing “revised” version of 1963, commissioned in 1951, the details of which I was unable to trace.



sensitive to aesthetic values of picturesque and superficial exoticism (with Oriental and North-African associations) than to its flaws. Within this composite view, the vernacular context was to be purified, cleansed of “extraneous” additions – as if vernacular was not itself essentially the result of a porous process – and preserved. The long-propagated romantic construction of Olhão as a rare remnant of times past and of foreign places was given an official seal of approval by CSOP.

Concurrently, local press conveyed concerns that Olhão would be transformed into a “uncharacteristic agglomerate” copied from national or foreign models.<sup>97</sup> Local elites managed to have their say in maintaining the status quo: during the months between the approval of the plan by the municipality and its assessment by CSOP, the minister of public works was sent a series of complaints by the main landowners and industrialists of Olhão. Concerned with the extent of the demolitions and expropriations foreseen, they invoked the picturesque value of their buildings: the people, they claimed, were upset and wished the plan would “not collide so violently with their interests. What has been designed is too grand (...). Olhão has her own characteristic, unique in the whole country and so admired by nationals and foreigners, which we believe should be spared.”<sup>98</sup>

Although it may seem that such claims reinforced CSOP’s critique of the plan, I find it misleading to regard either one of the two central players as being closer to a local sensibility: since the politics were not consistent in the long run, interests at play varied and evened each-other out; moreover, this local agency was largely economy-driven, and architecture was but an excuse. Nonetheless, there were two direct consequences of this process. Firstly, private building activity in the centre of Olhão in the 1950s and early 1960s was seriously hampered by the absence of a final version of the master plan and by its central actors’ conflicting visions. Secondly, the general guidelines and public works programme contained in Aguiar’s 1944 plan was initially followed by the municipality: the Horta da Cavalinha scheme, the industrial and harbour areas, the location of low-budget housing and some public buildings were accordant with the plan. In the design for such facilities, the Olhão and Algarve architectural features were translated by a myriad of individuals and agencies, local and national, in whose work we find a constant exchange on the subject of local built identity in public modern architecture.

### *The sphere of public buildings*

As with most urban centres in Portugal in the early 1940s, Olhão had no purpose-built public facilities to speak of. The first four initiatives of the decade, launched in 1942 and mentioned in Aguiar’s plan proposal as being under way, set the tone for subsequent works.

From 1941, architect Rodrigues Lima developed a typology of prison buildings to be applied nationally, and in each town and village used stylised elements associated with local traditions, in a never-ending catalogue of regional variations. His tiled-roof proposal for the **county**

<sup>97</sup> [Antero Nobre], "Olhão. Vila Branca," *Correio do Sul*, 17 May 1945.

<sup>98</sup> “Reclamações ao Plano,” 1945.02.28 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-U-75-A).

**jail** in Olhão, presented in April 1942, was criticised by CSOP (again, with Cristino da Silva as counsellor) and he was asked to integrate it with “the local ambiance, to which terrace roofs would be best suited.”<sup>99</sup> Accordingly, Lima modified the elevations to take full advantage of plain, whitewashed surfaces, while dramatizing the openings by giving them a slit-like form, and was only able to keep the tiled roofs – hidden by a generous parapet, as he had always devised them – on the grounds of economy (**fig. 201**). The jail was completed in 1946.

The first, October 1942 version of design for Olhão’s **post office** building, in turn, sported a concrete-slab rooftop as a means of giving the building a “regional character”, and it was precisely this argument that convinced the ministry of public works to accepted its extra cost compared to a more common tiled roof.<sup>100</sup> Called to elaborate a second proposal in 1946 for the new (final) location dictated by the master plan, architect Adelino Nunes (1903-1948) issued a template-like design, similar to post offices he designed and built across the country, and with no regard for the town’s features (**fig. 202**). Such abstraction was refused by the municipality, whose mayor asked for the tiled roof to be replaced by an *açoteia*, in obedience to “Olhão people’s feeling” towards the town’s built character<sup>101</sup> and in line with what he did for the school buildings, soon after. The exchange did not, however, end there: from 1956 on, architect Vasco Leone designed another three versions to meet not only technical but also aesthetical requirements.<sup>102</sup> Leone’s final design, of 1958, was a whole new approach to a modern southern architecture, where the quintessential element of Olhão vocabulary – the *açoteia* – was given a hybrid slant, projected horizontally over the walls as the eaves of a pitched roof would (**fig. 203**). This inverted parapet and its dramatic shadow line resonate with Carlos Ramos’s 1930s customs outposts, designed for the same office (DGEMN).

One of the most important trendsetters for the establishment of a custom-made official architecture for Olhão was the small building designed in 1942 for the seat of Grémio dos Industriais de Conservas de Peixe do Sotavento do Algarve (the **GICPSA building**), and completed in 1945. It was commissioned to architect Fernando Coruche (1911-1976) and civil engineer Costa Ritto by the canning industry association, an essential local piece of the corporative state’s structure. Departing from a previous outline deemed costly and inappropriate, the new version was a critical reading of local conditions, not merely the reiteration of a standard palette of elements (roof terrace, stair, chimney). By simplifying the layout, eliminating the porticoed galleries that lined the patio and half the openings originally devised, the designers increased internal areas and spared costs, while also producing an uncommonly tectonic play of masses (**fig. 204**). They aimed, in a

<sup>99</sup> Assessment report 1942.06.01 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-004/177-0268/02).

<sup>100</sup> Letter from AGCTT to MOPC AG8682/8000.1.0, 1942.10.13 (Lisbon-FPC/CTT-Cx37-SGCA-Edifícios).

<sup>101</sup> “Construção do novo edifício dos CTT,” letter from CMO to DCNECTT 479, 1947.02.10 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>102</sup> Cf. minister’s assessment 1957.09.25 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSC-0010/01).

“Simple and rational manner, [to] preserve the region’s own character, while attending to the particular conditions of solar incidence for each different elevation (...). The main elevation, facing the sun throughout most of the day, was thus given appropriate means of defence, such as the great plain surfaces interrupted, only when necessary, by lattices cut open in the mass.”<sup>103</sup>

This was a sensitive combination of vernacular lessons (careful consideration of the sun in the limited openings) and modern rationality, and suggests how more conservative proposals such as this, symmetrical and subdued, could encompass an understanding of tradition not far removed from what post-war modernists later claimed to bring about anew. What this implies is that conservative architecture not always had a merely superficial take on vernacular, as post-war modernist reaction preferred to present it and celebratory scholarship later helped to perpetuate.

Yet the GICPSA building became a trendsetter of Olhão’s townscape owing to one of its main composition features: the pair of arched stairs, symmetrically placed in the back elevation. This was the element favoured by Carlos Ramos in 1929 for the back elevations of his unbuilt Bairro Municipal, in its complete, elliptical arch form; in its segmental form (rampant round arch) it was simulated by Jorge Segurado in his 1940 Olhão mock-up for the exposition of the Portuguese World; used in Eugénio Correia’s housing schemes for CPCP (1935-1938) and the municipality (1945-1950), as an essential mark on an otherwise spartan architecture, it was paired again in the GICPSA building (1942-1945); once this facility was finished, and the effect of pairing was evident, the double stair was repeated by Peres Fernandes in his fishermen’s schemes for Olhão and Fuseta (1945-1949) and by Jorge de Oliveira in his dormitory and canteen for vagrants in Olhão (1945-1949, **fig. 205**),<sup>104</sup> where it was combined with the pergola-lined patio and axial chimney as the design’s main features. Oliveira was not merely inspired by Ramos’s use of the element as filtered through Correia’s, Peres Fernandes’s and Coruche’s buildings: he had Ramos’s 1929 project in his archive, which suggests he had direct access to that source of inspiration. The route followed by the paired stairways between 1929 and 1945, from an unbuilt suggestion to a widespread symbol, illustrates the importance of instantly recognisable and aesthetically appealing items in the construction of a regional identity by metropolitan agents (which all of the above were), irrespective of their more progressive or conservative stance.

The analysis of the process of building in a confined peripheral context along an extended period of time offers a number of possible readings. For instance, of how the same metropolitan actors shifted between the public and private spheres in a given moment; when commissioned by a central or local agency, they would often go on to work for private clients in the same area.

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<sup>103</sup> Project statement n.d. [1942] (Olhão-CMO/AHM-GICPSA-G/A.3). I could not find the first outline design. POiA (Citation 36).

<sup>104</sup> “Projecto do Edifício da Associação de Assistência à Mendicidade” (Olhão-CMO/SOPM; Lisbon-AJO).

Such was the case of Ruy Borges and António Gomez Egea, officials in the ministry of public works (DGSU) who designed a small **cinema-theatre for Fuseta** in July 1947 (**fig. 207**). At around the same time, while Egea developed his proposal for the poor classes' scheme and built an important private residential block at the eastern entrance to Olhão (above), Borges signed the design for a new **municipal market hall** in November 1947 (**fig. 206**). This was one of the master plan's cornerstones, together with Jorge Oliveira's 1945 studies for a new town hall and a municipal stadium; like those, the market was generously dimensioned, disproportionate to local finances, and left unrealised. It was described using what was becoming a conventional formula: "Terraces, arches, large white smooth planes," in accordance with Olhão, "white, Cubist, terrace land."<sup>105</sup> The cinema-theatre, in turn, was given a generic overall response, made specific only in the large-scale concrete lattice motif over the doors, considered the most adequate means to convey "the character of regional architecture, so prominent in this part of the country."<sup>106</sup>

For reasons I could not determine, this proposal was abandoned and replaced, in March 1952, for one that could not be further away from it: trainee architect Francisco Modesto (b. 1923), the son of an important canning industrialist from Olhão, designed the **Topázio cinema house** (**figs. 208-209**), a compromise between a bold, almost naive experiment and the everyday building possibilities and skills in Fuseta. The abstract composition of planes and strong chiaroscuro play on the main façade – rather sophisticated and up-to-date features –, were thus realised with traditional construction techniques (stone masonry and wood) and unrefined detail. In an alternative understanding of architecture's capacity to stem from the context, Modesto stated his intention to identify the design with its future users by making it as "simple, economical and pleasant as the village and its inhabitants."<sup>107</sup> The humanist critique of early modernism, popular in 1950s architectural discourse, surfaced in this village cinema.

It was possibly this simplicity, and the economy it implied, as opposed to the more elaborate and expensive 1947 version, that accounted for its completion in 1953. Yet, such replacement may also be seen as revealing of a change in local sensibility toward custom-made designs, provided by a new local class (Modesto was the first Olhão-born architect, graduated only in 1961) and steering away from metropolitan proposals announced as "regional" with the mere use of well-known discourse formulas. However, the Fuseta cinema was an early exception: while there were no trained architects in Olhão, the design commissions were shared between metropolitan architects, for the bigger jobs, and local civil and technical engineers, for smaller, state-funded and locally-promoted facilities.

Technical engineer Manuel Paiva Chaves played the latter role, designing the **public baths** in Largo da Feira, next to the old centre (1947, unbuilt, **fig. 210**), and the **washhouse** in the poor classes' scheme (1947-1949, **fig. 211**). Both were facilities intended to provide what the houses did

<sup>105</sup> "[Mercado Municipal de Olhão]," project statement, 1947.11.18 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>106</sup> "Anteprojecto do Cineteatro da Fuseta," project statement, 1947.07.06 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>107</sup> Project statement 1952.03.31 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-33812-A).

not; both fulfilled rather prosaic functions, but were studied in detail by Chaves and given elaborate solutions. Their architecture represents the local contribution for a lexicon that was taking anonymous features commonly found in Olhão and filtering them together with stylised elements of more imprecise origin, generically southern and found in both the Alentejo and Algarve countryside. Such elements were frequent in works by Jorge de Oliveira and, for instance, in Borges's unbuilt market; Chaves succeeded in composing his proposal for the washhouse entirely based on the round arch filled with ceramic latticework and the stone-clad buttresses (*gigantes*), two traditional features recurrent in rural buildings of the South; and gave his bathhouse a vessel-like form, streamlined by the bands of openings but grounded by the buttressed edges.

Chaves's commissions were made possible by the achievement of the most lasting infrastructural consequence of the 1944 master plan, the complete replacement of Olhão's water-supply system. In November 1947, the Lisbon-based engineering contractor for these works suggested an economical use for the reinforced-concrete frame of the main water tower, to be built on a high, panoramic point: a **pousada and restaurant (fig. 212)**, the first tourist facilities of this kind in Olhão, would provide foreign and native visitors with the elevated, visual perspective that persisted in every modernist written account of the town's "Cubist" skyline. Designed by trainee architect Enrique Albino (1921-2003) and never built, it would have had "a modern character, not only because it is impossible to treat a work of this kind in any other way, but also because this architecture of simple and sober lines adjusts perfectly to the characteristic forms of the region."<sup>108</sup> In 1947, with a glass, curved curtain-wall protected by a skin of pivoting *brise-soleil* fins, it would also have been a unique realisation nationwide,<sup>109</sup> and the very first openly post-war modernist building in Olhão.

The Topázio cinema and the pousada signalled a gradual change: from the tectonics and tradition-based materiality of the first batch of public facilities built within the terms of modern architecture (the jail, the GICPSA), to a structurally more sophisticated approach to local tradition that embraced the formal guidelines stemming from the global post-war rebirth of modernism and, once more, looked to accommodate extant features in a renovated lexicon. Working on a persistent regional architectural stance, post-war modernism developed and amplified its references.

This development was piecemeal, and Jorge de Oliveira's late 1940s work illustrated it well (see Chapter 4). In his proposal for the **Maria Helena Rufino nursery school** in Olhão (1948-1950, unbuilt, **fig. 213**), the architect was experimenting with new elements in his lexicon – the bare concrete structural parts (pillars and beams) or the hanging concrete steps in the side elevation – and combining them with well-known pieces of his "regional" menu – rusticated stone cladding, chimneys and wood-lattice *louvres*. This transition was a conscious one for Oliveira: in his words,

<sup>108</sup> "Aproveitamento da Estrutura do Depósito de Água," project statement, 1947.11.26 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>109</sup> Cf. [Antero Nobre], "Olhão Vai Ter Uma Pousada," *Correio Olhanense*, 1 July 1948.

“the architectural stance blends in with the characteristic regional simplicity, although the play of masses, and the detailing, give the building an entirely contemporary stance.”<sup>110</sup>

The compromised hybridism of works such as this blurs any conventional reading of the process as a simple chronological progression from 1940s conservatism to 1950s modernism. Context, clients and designers consistently escape simple categorisation, and my reading enhances this fact, rather than camouflaging it, averting the potential misgivings of linear positivism. But if, for the sake of clarity, I were asked to establish a defining moment for the consolidation of post-war modernism in the public building sphere in Olhão, this would have to be the design by Manuel Laginha (1919-1985) and Rogério Martins (1920-1997) for a **multipurpose social service facility**, Centro de Assistência Social Polivalente (**CASP, figs. 214-215**). Comprising a crèche and maternal, neonatal and family management guidance facilities, this centre replaced Oliveira’s nursery school project and was financed with a government grant diverted from the extension of another of Oliveira’s works (the dormitory and canteen for vagrants): it epitomised change, not only architectural but also in public policies of social assistance.

Olhão’s CASP was designed in 1952 and completed in 1958, within the frame of an ambitious regional plan set out by Agostinho Pires, Governador Civil in Faro (1951-1953), to help tackle the absolute lack of social service facilities in the province, and avoid, again, the unpredictable socio-political consequences that such a gap potentially entailed.<sup>111</sup> The result of this pioneering plan within the Portuguese context<sup>112</sup> was an uncommon set of buildings conceived by a new generation of Algarve-born architects for the towns of Algarve: Olhão, Loulé (1952-1958, **fig. 216**) and Vila Real de Santo António (unbuilt), by Laginha and Martins; Aljezur (1957, **figs. 421-423**) and Tavira (unbuilt), by Manuel Gomes da Costa (b.1921); and Portimão (1957) and Lagos (1959), by António Vicente de Castro (1920-2002). Nevertheless, Laginha’s proposal for Olhão was the only one to deserve attention from architectural circles, both at the time (it was published as a design in 1952<sup>113</sup> and as a completed building from 1958 on<sup>114</sup>) and later in historical accounts, as an example of the diffusion of modern movement principles in peripheral locations in Portugal.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>110</sup> “Projecto de Um Infantário e Parque Infantil,” project statement, 1950.06.26 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>111</sup> The Olhão municipal assistance committee, when asking the minister of Public Works for the state’s financial support for the initiative, used this concern explicitly as an argument. Letter from CMAO to MOP, 1951.10.22 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-137/MU/52).

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Alberto Pessanha Viegas’s assessment, 1952.02.30 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-137/MU/52).

<sup>113</sup> [Manuel Laginha], “Centro de Assistência Polivalente a Construir em Olhão,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa e Cerâmica e Edificação* 45, no. 1 (1952).

<sup>114</sup> In “Centro de Assistência Social Polivalente em Olhão (1952-1957),” *Binário*, no. 6 (1958); Subsecretariado de Estado da Assistência Social (ed.), vol. 131-132, *Boletim da Assistência Social* (Lisboa: Tip. Casa Portuguesa, 1958); Ministério das Obras Públicas, *Relatório da Actividade do Ministério nos Anos de 1957 e 1958*, vol. 2 (Lisboa: Ministério das Obras Públicas, 1959); and *A Habitação em Portugal* (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos de Urbanização e Habitação Engenheiro Duarte Pacheco, 1963). It was featured in the Contemporary Portuguese Architecture exhibition organized by the Smithsonian Institution and presented in Washington and London, cf. *Contemporary Portuguese Architecture 1958* (Lisbon: Nova Lisboa, 1958).

<sup>115</sup> *Portas* ([1978]), 739, Tostões (1997), 104-05, Fernandes (2005), 99-102.

Within my argument, and aside from its notable architectural qualities,<sup>116</sup> this work exemplifies the diversity of approaches to regional identity, and of corresponding architectural translations, that local and metropolitan agencies were ready to foster. If compared with the previous Oliveira project for a similar brief, Laginha's CASP in Olhão was a radically new structure: functions were distributed in autonomous but integrated pavilions whose architecture broke established conventions such as front / back façades or interior / exterior spaces. More than an ensemble of related buildings, it took the form of a generous playground. Volumes suspended on *pilotis*, external covered galleries, ramps and an exuberant array of sunlight control devices (vertical and horizontal fins, canopies, ceramic latticework panels) created a ludic environment intended as a breakthrough from the squalor of the daily life of labourers' children,<sup>117</sup> to which the facility was dedicated.

Although clearly influenced by international modernist experiences, from the work of pre-war Italian rationalists to the developments in Brazilian modernism (which enjoyed increasing popularity among Portuguese architects),<sup>118</sup> the architects stressed that they followed the principle of adopting regional traditional materials and techniques. This would be not only a means of reducing the cost of construction, but especially a way to integrate the centre in the "local atmosphere" through the use of whitewashed plain surfaces, terraces, wood-lattice panels and ceramic latticework; elements whose plastic expression, according to Laginha and Martins, was "so similar to the delicate lace-like effect of Algarve chimneys."<sup>119</sup>

As a large-scale public commission within the Algarve context, this work was to some extent innovative, although Laginha had experimented with the contemporary use of traditional features in earlier private works (see Chapter 4). In the CASP project, he took these quintessential elements of popular tradition and stylised them. Yet reacting to what was by then the custom of replicating their shape and creating easily recognisable templates, Laginha used the material qualities of such elements, irrespective of their formal appearance: texture, structure, natural colour, ability to filter and control sunlight, to maintain privacy while allowing through-vision, and to establish buffer areas between interior and exterior. These qualities were then applied at a new scale, in elements and spaces designed according to modernist principles, as a means to establish a permanent link with extant practices and forms. In this, the Olhão CASP was a precursor of works such as Chaves's and Sant'Ana's Hotel do Garbe (see Chapter 2).

Laginha and Martins's proposals met with conflicting responses within state bureaucracy, whose approval was required to assure funding for the construction. As I have discussed elsewhere,

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<sup>116</sup> Which I have detailed in Ricardo Agarez, "Centro de Assistência Social Polivalente / Infantário Maria Helena Rufino" in *Inventário do Património Arquitectónico* ([http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP\\_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=16281](http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=16281)).

<sup>117</sup> Details of child mortality rates in Olhão were included in the municipality's funding application, cf. letter from CMAO to MOP, 1951.10.22 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-137/MU/52).

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Agarez (2005).

<sup>119</sup> [Laginha] (1952): 7.

the first CASP design to be assessed (Loulé, **fig. 216**) was opposed by the minister of public works, who “totally disliked the kind of building” proposed, comparing it to a “trade fair pavilion.”<sup>120</sup> Yet in choosing not to veto the design and to concede the final word to regional authorities, the minister eased the way for a string of similar structures to be raised throughout Algarve. In the case of Olhão, this acceptance matched a general enthusiasm for the design in the ministerial lower ranks: António Egea, whose Fuseta cinema-theatre and poor classes’ housing are shown above, was one of the supporters of Laginha’s proposal in DGSU.<sup>121</sup> By not only allowing but also financing such projects, central and local agencies were sending out the message that an alternative, up-dated interpretation of traditional features was possible, and even desirable.

In fact, architects working within bureaucracy were open to different understandings of public architecture in the 1950s. Alberto Braga de Souza (1909-199?), who in 1944 created the Alentejo and Algarve templates for elementary schools (later customised in a “Olhão version”), was still working for DGEMN when he designed the **customs police complex** for Olhão, in 1957, along entirely different lines (**fig. 217**). This was a mainly utilitarian brief, without the repeatability requirement of the school programme – but essentially these were different times, and the work expressed this sense in the truthful use of structure, with which a coherent set of separate buildings was given “economy,” “unity,” and “sobriety.”<sup>122</sup> While Laginha was using structure in a playful way, Sousa was combining its aesthetic virtues with the dignity and representation demands of official buildings. Both were whitewashing all surfaces and roofing every volume with terraces – which is not to say they were still employing the traditional açoteia roof.

Abstraction and the use of local features in a non-literal way extended the possibilities of establishing a dialog with the context beyond the well-tested fields, where elements *were* what they referred to: a açoteia with mirante was a terrace roof with multiple uses and a waist-high parapet, upon which a tower could contain one or more rooms. The 1950s trend of extracting the essence of traditional elements to give it a new role in architectural lexicon resumed the pre-war association between modernist forms and what was considered vernacular architecture, in its more abstract sense; the 1940s literality was refuted and abandoned. Pared-down walls, flat roofs, elemental volumes were general categories – not the flat roof of Olhão, but simply a flat roof, with no stairs, no turrets, no towers. From this standpoint, the final result did seem much closer to an international modernist design than to the local, extant reality. Followed by most private building designs in the 1950s and 1960s, this abstraction route was also found increasingly in public buildings, and criticised.

Rodrigues Lima designed the **courthouse** for Olhão in 1959, 17 years after the jail project, and again the public works council CSOP condemned his initial proposal (**fig. 218**). Author of courthouse designs nationwide, where he consistently used devices of monumentality and

<sup>120</sup> MOP ruling [1953.07], cit. in Agarez (2005).

<sup>121</sup> Cf. DGSU’s assessment, 1953.03.11 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-005-2515/02).

<sup>122</sup> Project statement 1957.01.03 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-001/177-0179/01).



classicism tempered with regional stereotypes, Lima suggested that the town's characteristics, "appropriate as they may be in housing, could never be used in the design of a Court of Law, for this building must have a remarkable dignity and even a certain monumental appearance."<sup>123</sup> His only direct reference to "local atmosphere" – the flat roofs – was no longer considered sufficient by CSOP, the council where Eugénio Correia, the designer of Olhão's first low-budget schemes, now sat: the "very special architectural character of the town (...) suffers if one imposes upon it a building such as this, *whose only compromise with the context lies in the flat roof slabs.*"<sup>124</sup> Lima was thus asked to produce a "more distinctly regional" design and to avoid the use of glazed tiles (with which he meant to cover the main elevation) because these would "shock violently" with the local whitewashed walls. In truth, the architect eventually changed very little in his design, but replaced the glazed-tile panels decorated with medieval scenes with mosaics depicting Olhão's "Cubist" houses (**fig. 219**); instead of taking his architecture to evoke such iconographic context, Lima chose to simply stamp a figurative representation of it onto his building.

As Lima himself admitted, formal citation of the vernacular would be easier in a residential work – and architect Armando Martins seemed to give him reason when designing, also in 1959, the pair of **magistrates' houses** with which the new courthouse was complemented (**fig. 220**). It is worth noting how, featuring his project in a 1960 magazine, nearly 40 years after António Ferro coined the expression, Martins still described how he found Olhão to be Algarve's most characteristic town thanks to its "white Cubism," a feature the architect illustrated with the same photographs used in every 1940s guidebook and that he assimilated "with an architecture of today."<sup>125</sup> Completed in 1963,<sup>126</sup> the houses provided exterior leisure spaces that could be protected from solar incidence, in a rather hermetic, uncommon solution.

### *The sphere of private residential buildings*

Between 1945 and 1963, private building activity in Olhão was hindered by a constantly revised, unratified master plan, which was criticised by central government and regarded with distrust by the municipality and by local people. As official correspondence shows, planning applications were delayed given the plan's provisional nature and the expectation that, at any moment, its final version would be produced.<sup>127</sup> The problem was more acute in the old centre, where the plan's intentions to prevent new construction on existing plots clearly countered both local and central agendas.

<sup>123</sup> Project statement 1959.05 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-005-2514/04).

<sup>124</sup> Assessment report 1959.08.04 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-005-2514/04). My italics.

<sup>125</sup> "Casa dos Magistrados (Olhão)," *Binário*, no. 19 (1960).

<sup>126</sup> (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-1089-A).

<sup>127</sup> Correspondence between Olhão municipality and DGSU, and between the former and the planner Aguiar, focuses on this matter consistently from May 1946 on.

One way around this impasse, however, was found by replacing buildings on streets that were to be enlarged, at the edges of Aguiar's "precarious areas." Florentino Topa developed two facing corners on one such street, **Rua 18 de Junho**, showing different approaches to the centre's immediate proximity. In the north corner, architects Carlos Ramos and Alexandre Bastos (1914-?) interpreted Olhão's characteristic massing in a 1930s modernist key, both in an earlier, unbuilt version<sup>128</sup> (**fig. 221**), with pared-down surfaces and clear-cut openings, and in the 1953 built version<sup>129</sup> (**fig. 222**), where opaque parapets replaced metal railings in the balconies.

The opposite corner (**fig. 223**) was designed in 1957 by civil engineer Joaquim Belchior (b. 1920) and exemplifies the sort of everyday building being produced in non-architectural circles not only in Olhão but in other Algarve towns in the 1950s. Its main feature was the "bookshelf-like" set of balconies on the main elevation, encompassing the full height and width of the upper floors. This orthogonal grid was partly filled with panels of different materials, textures and transparency, and used as the building's second skin, to protect the first from excessive sunlight or to hide undesired sights (such as kitchens and laundry lines). Ceramic latticework and concrete fins, placed in vertical and horizontal sets, configured a popular, everyday version of the *brise-soleil* that gained currency in the late 1950s and 1960s in Lisbon and Algarve. Here, the wood-lattice panel was common: it was not only a traditional craft still in use and therefore affordable, but also an established symbol of regional identity which could be easily appropriated by the building industry. Belchior used them as awnings hanging from the slabs, as many (architects and not) were doing in Faro (see Chapter 4). Many also employed the striking skills of masons to achieve more elaborate shadow effects and similar functional purposes with concrete elements: e.g., civil engineer Apolónia Correia's 1961 design for **Rua da Liberdade 16** in Fuseta (**fig. 224**). The use of cantilevered balconies and sun-control devices placed these proposals firmly on modernist ground, as the reference to the "Olhão Cubism" was losing prevalence.

Given the planning impasse, applications for refurbishments in the centre streets were discouraged during the 1950s; yet in 1957, architect Gomes da Costa managed to obtain permission to entirely refurbish the **Farracha stationer** in Rua do Comércio (**fig. 225**). Costa was one of Algarve's foremost architects in the mid-twentieth-century (see Chapter 4). This was his first built work in Olhão, and in it he used the elements that would become permanent features of his architectural lexicon: the façade is a pictorial composition of planes, protruding and receding, opaque and transparent, parallel and perpendicular, neutral and colourful. Costa's aim was to counter the idiosyncratic heaviness of the traditional Algarve model while maintaining features such as "simplicity" and "whiteness."<sup>130</sup> The stationer's appeared to go against the known views of the planner, who objected to any operation likely to increase property value, and of officials in Lisbon,

<sup>128</sup> "Anteprojecto de Um Bloco a Construir Pelo Exmo. Sr. Florentino Topa. Olhão," n.d. (Lisbon-IHRU/CCR-Pac35-Rol2).

<sup>129</sup> (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-9395-A).

<sup>130</sup> Project statement 1957.05.06 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-34096-A).

who required the area to be faithfully kept and held the last word. Were these officials willing to accept Costa's proposal for downtown Olhão? The construction, I suggest, might have been possible thanks to the influence of Costa's other client in Olhão in 1957, doctor Matos, the town's public health delegate (whose agreement was necessary for any planning permission) and a member of the small Olhão elite. By commissioning his residence in **Rua de "O Algarve" 22** (figs. 226-227) from Costa, the doctor signalled how local figures were open to new proposals, sanctioning a taste for post-war modernist architecture, and possibly eased the approval of Costa's stationer.

The analysis of planning applications in the 1960s shows that renewal of the "precarious areas" was slowly taking off, and that non-architect modernist solutions were resisted, in favour of more conservative alternatives. In 1961, permission to build a small house in the centre was granted by the municipality against the judgement of the town planner and the ministry of public works; when asked to halt the construction, the town council replied it no longer felt bound by the master plan, seeing that the minister had determined its thorough revision in 1951.<sup>131</sup> Tired of a decade's wait, the council seemed determined to allow the renewal of the central areas to start.

However, the grip of central power, exerted through DGSU's Faro regional office, was difficult to avoid, and in 1962 this agency and the town council reached an understanding on how to allow for building replacement to occur while keeping control of its form. In June that year, the application for a two-floor apartment building in **Rua Capitão Nobre 46** was based on a design by João Matamouros with the common traits of an everyday 1950s small-scale rental enterprise (fig. 228). For DGSU-Lisbon, its setting comprised some of the most "typical and authentic" buildings of the old "Cubist town," and since the 17-year-old CSOP assessment had ruled out the demolition of the entire quarter, the service admitted construction "as long as it is a faithful reproduction of the ensemble."<sup>132</sup> Approved by bureaucracy and the minister, the requisite of "faithful reproduction" was, from 1963 on, the answer to similar applications for the "precarious areas," which then officially ceased to exist. As a result, Matamouros re-submitted his "reproduction" for the same plot in June 1963 (fig. 229): he sought to satisfy the requirement by introducing an opaque parapet, wrought-iron railings, heavy cornices and pilasters, thus replicating the features of early twentieth-century buildings, then and in other occasions thereafter.

Builder Francisco Lopes's very plain design for a modest building in **Travessa do Júdice 10**, submitted in May 1963, was faced with the same requisite of "faithful reproduction." Yet what engineer Apolónia Correia proposed in its place, in 1964, did not mimic the town's presumed traditional forms. He had been collaborating with Gomes da Costa since the early 1950s (my research found 42 such projects in Faro, Olhão and Tavira), and was naturally close to the architect's modernist practice. On this occasion, Correia timidly showed Costa's influence in details such as the detached, opaque parapet or the render setbacks (fig. 230); he supported his design

<sup>131</sup> (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-32773-A).

<sup>132</sup> DGSU/RMU's assessment, 1962.10.16 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-U-75-A-88).

with a statement copied verbatim from Costa's 1964 application for a set of twin houses in **Rua da Comunidade Lusíada 23-25** (Olhão, **fig. 233**), with its reference to the purpose of countering traditional weightiness with modernist weightlessness.<sup>133</sup> Asked by the town planners to revise a design that lacked "characteristic elements of local architecture," Correia submitted the final version in 1965 (**fig. 231**). This reinforced a tectonic tendency that designers would have preferred to avoid but planners found best suited the town's identity, despite maintaining obvious modernist elements (the balcony, the cantilevered "L"-shaped parapet). The final result (**fig. 232**) showed such elements filtered through not only an engineer's practice but also the resources of the builder who realised it: a technical pragmatism that distanced the finished object from its drawn versions.

In this light, and while taking into consideration the modernist influence, I see this example as being closer to Olhão's vernacular tradition of building. In a process similar to that discussed above for the 1910s and 1920s, the drawing became an instrument for the bureaucratic approval of a building practice that had become popular. Far from being a faithful copy of the traditional Olhão house, it maintained a local sense of tectonic mass without dispensing with signs of modernity such as the balcony or the slab.

In the 1960s building practice in Olhão, modernism became popular currency, in hybrid forms that took vague inspiration from metropolitan models but followed their own ways. This was propelled by the interpretations of local engineers, builders and clients who seemed to have been seduced by the appeal of modernity as displayed in some public and private works, and combined some of its emblems with their own customary building traditions. A similar process has been identified, for instance, by Fernando Lara in mid-century Brazil where, as a result of the dissemination of key modernist projects, "elements of high architecture are appropriated by laypeople and rearticulated into the vernacular" in self-design middle-class houses.<sup>134</sup> In Olhão, the process was not as clear, since the traits of a traditional basis remained strong and elements seen as modernist were adjusted to it in a subtler manner. Furthermore, the basis itself was a recent construct of discourses inside and outside architecture: the product of a combination of older elements with modern stereotypes of the Algarve and Olhão houses. Finally, the Olhão buildings of the 1960s cannot be strictly called vernacular since they, as their predecessors of the 1910s and 1920s, were subject to a process of formalisation (through planning applications) that excluded, or largely minimised, spontaneity – one of vernacular's unstated principles. They were not the work of laymen but rather of non-architect designers; their nature raises the question of defining the limits between architecture and non-architecture, vernacular and learned, spontaneous and designed.

There are many good examples of this appropriation process in Olhão's urban perimeter: engineer Apolónia Correia's Travessa do Júdice building, his 1961 twin houses in **Rua da**

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<sup>133</sup> Project statement 1964.11.21 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-33419-A).

<sup>134</sup> Lara (2008), and ———, "Modernism Made Vernacular," *Journal of Architectural Education* 63, no. 1 (2009).

**Comunidade Lusíada 15-21**<sup>135</sup> (figs. 234-235) or his set of terraced houses in **Rua de Olivença 12 to 18**<sup>136</sup> (1960-1963, fig. 236), are among them. The Cabrita residence in **Rua de Olivença 10**<sup>137</sup> (1960, figs. 237-238), by João Matamouros, reiterates that local middle class (Cabrita being a customs police lieutenant) was receptive to the modernist lexicon. Yet it is in the design of single- and double-family houses for the outskirts of town and the countryside that the creation of this crossbred form of post-war modernism can be best read.

### *Rural modernism*

Let us consider a detached house in **Bias do Sul**, Moncarapacho, designed in 1959 by technical engineer Mário Lima for Custódio Estevão (fig. 239); another in **Sítio da Igreja**, Pechão, by civil engineer Fernando Mendonça for José Vicente, 1961 (fig. 240); and another in **Piares**, Quelfes, also by Mendonça for Raul Rodrigues, 1963 (fig. 241). Any of these three homes fulfil Mendonça's description of his Sítio da Igreja project: "a modest building, of the kind usually found in the countryside, containing four compartments and bathroom."<sup>138</sup> All have elemental layouts and structures that resonate with those of their vernacular, non-designed countryside neighbours (see Chapter 1, fig. 21), and a similar mixed brief (residence plus storage); some have concrete turrets and conspicuous chimney tops, replicating common features of Leeward Algarve rural buildings. All present elevations inspired by their designers' practice in urban works, be it in a more exuberant or subdued manner. In any of the three, we find the popular box-like building that modernists took as representative of Olhão's (and Algarve's) building identity and disseminated, through housing schemes, jails or washhouses. Enveloping the box, traces of post-war modernism as practiced by Faro and Olhão designers appear in a fragmented way: thin parapets, frames and slabs, render setbacks, slanted cantilevers, geometric bounding lines.

This lengthy process of dissemination resulted in elevations that, although designed in the 1960s, combine features characteristic of previous periods in metropolitan design trends (1930s, 1940s and 1950s). The anachronism is typical of diffusion phenomena and explains how, in Algarve, heavily decorated parapets of Beaux Arts resonance were common in the 1910s, and parapets with Art Deco compositions were still being built in the late 1940s.

In a pair of twin houses in **Meia-Légua**, Pechão, designed by technical engineer João Matamouros in 1962 for António Inácio e Francisco Domingos (figs. 242-243); and in another in **Bela Mandil**, Pechão, by civil engineer Apolónia Correia for José dos Santos e Gabriel Matias (shellfish gatherers and traders), 1963 (figs. 244-245), similar features can be found. When topography allowed, the upper floor was levelled with the road and the lower, levelled with the

<sup>135</sup> (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-32941-A) and (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-40132-A).

<sup>136</sup> (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-33467-A) and (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-33468-A).

<sup>137</sup> (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-43905-A).

<sup>138</sup> "[Construção de moradia no Sítio da Igreja]," project statement 1961.02 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

backyard, used for storage purposes (related to farming and fishing activities). Because these two-storey volumes have larger back elevations, one particular constant of the Algarve vernacular house (countryside or urban) resurfaces here: the concentration of the decorative device on the main elevation, and very sober back façades, composed with the common elements of the backyard.

Correia's houses in Bela Mandil exactly reproduce the layout, and largely the elevation, of this engineer's 1961 design for Rua da Comunidade Lusíada (above, **figs. 234-235**). These cottages belong in a long series of buildings that illustrate the hybridism of rural and urban models in Algarve. They illustrate the smooth transition between contexts that can be found both in vernacular tradition and in this popular strand of modernism: Olhanenses being simultaneously farmers and fishermen, their rural and urban houses never fundamentally differed. The elevations are somewhat simpler in Bela Mandil, the concrete canopies are smaller, but the same horizontal lines run along the elevations and frame concrete parapets, flowerpots, benches and the protruding central volume. With his collaboration on high-architecture works with Laginha and Gomes da Costa, and his local background as Algarve-born resident and builder, engineer Apolónia Correia connected the two worlds of vernacular and educated architecture, possibly more than his fellow countrymen architects did. Correia and other non-architect designers (civil and technical engineers, draftsmen) made the modernist formula of vernacular and erudite references available to be absorbed in the world of everyday construction; they were the relays between formal architecture and the vernacular building practice. Further research would require non-documental sources (such as oral history and ethnographic enquiry) to investigate this practice in Algarve in the 1960s. Extant testimonies across the Algarvian countryside suggest a continuing dissemination of the formula along the lines essayed here; a similar process has been studied in Ovar, north Portugal, based on the activity of a single builder (Farinhas), with inspiring results.<sup>139</sup> However, that investigation lies beyond the limits of my project.

The prolific non-architectural building activity in a small town like Olhão created problems for architects, who were suspicious of the hybridism brought about by uncontrolled dissemination.

In June 1966, architect Francisco Modesto designed a set of fourteen one- and two-story houses in **Quelfes (fig. 246)**, to be built within a new state programme promoted by the welfare department (Federação das Caixas de Previdência) to encourage single-family house building. In his statement, the architect of the modernist Topázio cinema in Fuseta (1952) complained about his fellow residents of Olhão and their view on architecture: he had decided to break up the volumes into parts because their future inhabitants “would not accept the expression resulting from a total architectural integration, through which simple and pure forms would be obtained.” The residents of Algarve and particularly those of the “Cubist town”, he complained, had lost the taste for such simplicity, as a consequence of the “absence of aesthetic guidance.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> See Tavares (2008).

<sup>140</sup> Project statement 1966.07.14 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-40039-A).

These words express the frustration of an architect who saw how the modernist model for appropriating vernacular, based on the use of its most rational and modern-form-friendly features, had not followed as straight a path as the discipline might have liked, but had fallen into the hands of all sorts of individuals, who had manipulated it according to different circumstances. What else explains the perceived resistance of Olhanenses to the dictates of “total architectural integration”? It is possible that, from the standpoint of the buildings’ future inhabitants, the image of the vernacular model was too close to the deprivation and discomfort of the town’s oldest and poorest quarters, from which they wished to move away; this would, I believe, partly explain the popularity of post-war modernism with its explosion of colours, materials and forms, and the enthusiasm with which clients received hybrid versions of modernism (as the case study of Faro will further illustrate). Furthermore, as I have shown, one of the foremost vehicles for the dissemination of that particular Olhão model of “simple and pure forms” was the 1930s and 1940s social housing scheme – which may also account for the reluctance of local residents to new versions of models that had become associated with low-cost housing, and therefore with social depreciation.

And even if Modesto aimed at a compromise between his own preferences and those of his future clients, the present state of the work shows how he was right not to opt for cubic uniformity: rejecting repetition and sameness, residents have since covered the walls with glazed tiles or painted them in different colours (**figs. 247-248**), in the same way as builders in the 1910s used to decorate their platibandas to distinguish one house from the next in downtown Olhão.

\* \* \*

In the first decades of the century, before the arrival of professional architecture, everyday building practice in Olhão revealed a third, little-studied layer between *vernacular* proper (spontaneous and anonymous) and its *appropriation* by educated architects. In this intermediate layer, traditional elements were stylised, stereotyped and weaved into formal planning applications by draftsmen and builders, in modern-type “architectural” projects. Those elements’ status was elevated (from a high-culture standpoint) as they left the world of informal building practice, entered the sphere of design and were combined with classical features and composition conventions. Their potential for quick dissemination was enhanced; in the form of designs, they could be scrutinised and discussed prior to the start of construction work.

Integrated with the traditional townscape, the buildings that configure such layer have been mistaken for anonymous, timeless works, repeatedly confounding twentieth-century accounts by metropolitan observers. Yet those artefacts have an author, a (recent) date of construction, were represented in building documents and underwent planning application. They question the contemporary narrative of a “discovery” of vernacular by modern architects as an unprecedented encounter with, and appropriation of, ancient traditions. Instead, there was a living thread of

building custom, being manipulated and transformed everyday by local builders in commercial practice; a seamless transition between informal custom and codified, regulated construction for the fishermen and the canning industry workers, occurring some time before trained architects started doing the same thing. In the late 1950s and 1960s, in turn, the work of civil engineers and builders in urban and rural houses, in and around Olhão, showed signs of the return of the architects' interpretation of vernacular to the context of semi-informal practice where it had originated. Modernism, in itself hybridised by vernacular custom, was “vernacularised” and disseminated widely in everyday construction.

Olhão's sea-related workforce sustained the town's expansion in the early decades. Later, its substandard living conditions and potential for political instability captured the state's attention and justified a series of low-budget housing schemes. A detailed analysis of this series revealed not only how perceived “vernacular” features were instrumental for modern metropolitan designs (and responded to non-architectural stereotype-building), but also how superficial historical accounts can produce flawed constructs to suit established narratives – to the point of celebrating unrealised projects as if they were existing structures.

At a broader level, Olhão epitomised how the creation of a local building identity originated neither exclusively from the centre nor from the periphery, but out of the combined agencies of local, regional and central actors, mediated both through local building practice and discourses outside architecture. In the face of a simplistic understanding of 1930s regionalism in Portugal as a tool of nationalism, emanating from the centre and belittling local response, the buildings and urban master plan of Olhão suggested negotiation and interaction, leading to the adoption of local variants of national type-designs to accommodate local demands.



## Chapter 4

### “Miracle” in Faro: towards a modernist regionalism

My case study of the mid-century building practice in Faro, the capital of Algarve, takes as a starting point a house, published in the national media in 1953 and designed by the architect who later became the town’s foremost. The fine-grain, factual analysis of this project is the entry point to a discussion of its context, geographic and chronologic, and the meanings with which architectural culture has invested it in a broader narrative that opposes modernism to conservatism. Attempting to shed new light on such narrative, the text will also explore the way in which a consistent concern with regional identity was negotiated with the growing prevalence of modernism in the late 1950s and 1960s, looking at the parts played not only by the few architects who operated in the region but also by other actors.

#### 1. The “Miracle in Loulé [Faro]” house (1950-1953): a symbol in the “Battle of Modern Architecture”

##### *Prelude: the battlefield at national scale*

In April 1953, a special issue of the magazine *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* showcased Portuguese single-family housing architecture.<sup>1</sup> The text that presented it read as a pamphlet, densely written by an undisclosed author, as often was the case in Portuguese architecture magazines until the late 1950s. A single, continuous text, it neither closely accompanied the projects nor described them, instead using them loosely as examples to illustrate the points the author wanted to put across. The projects, submitted and selected, were by architects Alfredo Viana de Lima (1913-1991), Manuel Gomes da Costa, Fernando Távora (1923-2005), Rui Pimentel (b.1924), Eduardo Matos (b.1921), Maurício de Vasconcelos (1925-1997), and Manuel Laginha. With the exception of Vasconcelos, they had all studied architecture at the Porto school of fine arts. Vasconcelos and Costa were then still trainee architects, although both already had built work and chose to present it. Costa and Laginha were Algarve-born.

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<sup>1</sup> José Maria Correia Victorino (ed.), "Habitação e artes domésticas," *A Arquitectura Portuguesa e Cerâmica e Edificação*, April 1953, 4.

Viana de Lima, the oldest and most experienced of the group and a well-established modernist, designed the house that opened the issue (Vol. II, Appendix 2, **fig. 249**). The editor named this project “Eclecticism in Porto” and used it to illustrate one of his main points: the need to protect architectural practice from the dictates of bourgeois taste, especially insofar as architecture might participate in forming contemporary national identity:

“Suddenly, everyone started discussing once again what truly Portuguese architecture should be like. Of course, generally the opinion of architects interested only other architects. Dr. So and So, very well known for this and that, said amusing things that found much more popular resonance than the arid words of those who know what they are talking about.”<sup>2</sup>

It would be much easier, the author argued, if the actual circumstances facing the architect chimed with contemporary times, or if he could afford to design only when he believed the conditions were appropriate. But that was not the case “in a confusing age” where views within and without the discipline diverged. Indeed, the “formal eclecticism” of Lima’s house was not, it seemed, externally imposed: its “undeniable compromise must be intentional, either conscious or unconsciously so. (...) Unlike certain schools of thought, whose well-defined positions in Modern Movement raise violent reactions in different directions (Wright and Le Corbusier, for instance), the *new eclecticism* – as the *Review* called it – seems to await for posterity’s final judgement without taking a categorical side within modern trends.” Compared to an earlier Lima house, the author found this one “perhaps ‘organic’ rather than rational. It is intriguing to find both these attitudes in the same architect.” And he concluded, defending the architects’ field: “Will honest experimentation not be enough to convince Dr. So and So that this business of architecture can’t be resolved with two more-or-less funny brushstrokes?”

The article presented Portuguese modernist architects in 1953 as being caught between three fires: one, the on-going debate over national architectural identity (see Chapter 2); two, the interference from non-professional opinions and taste<sup>3</sup>; and three, the diverging international references of the time. The text was not clear or accessible to laymen, despite its colloquial tone. It was almost hermetic, as if directed to a small audience of Portuguese architects who could read what the author meant, between his lines, as well as make sense of his cultural references.

Yet the source of the “new eclecticism” formula was clearly stated: the English magazine *The Architectural Review*, which had published Robin Boyd’s article “A New Eclecticism?” in 1951,<sup>4</sup> and Reyner Banham’s “Casa del Girasole. Rationalism and eclecticism in Italian architecture” in

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<sup>2</sup> “Eclétismo no Porto,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa...* 46, no. 3-4 (1953). POiA (see Vol. II, Appendix 1, Citation 37).

<sup>3</sup> Famously the subject of a series of short humorous texts by Keil do Amaral in the magazine *Arquitectura*, entitled “Maleitas da arquitectura nacional” (“The aches of national architecture”), published in 1947-1948.

<sup>4</sup> *The Architectural Review* 110, no. 657 (1951).

1953.<sup>5</sup> The *Review's* editors put the question of shifting international references with particular clarity when presenting the first text: “Modern architecture the world over is divided by a new war of the styles – the Organic versus the Functional. What will be the outcome?” Boyd, comparing two houses in Australia as representatives of each of those “styles,” concluded:

“At the present moment of hesitancy, at the height of the discussion of the differences (...) to switch to the other side might indicate a weakening of resolve and lack of decision. But the theoretical discrepancies between the schools are of less importance than the apparent mutual aim to achieve ultimate simplicity of means. So long as this is the aim and it is not lost to sight, architecture can surely allow his practitioners an occasional change of mood.”<sup>6</sup>

The article was translated into Portuguese and published in *Arquitectura* in 1952,<sup>7</sup> thereby becoming familiar to the readers of *A Arquitectura Portuguesa*. However, there was a significant difference between the latter’s words and those of Boyd’s. Unlike the free-choice Australian examples, in which one trend or another were followed according to the designer’s “mood,” the Portuguese houses were deliberately presented not as choices in a world of diverging tendencies, but as responses to adverse circumstances – as expressions of resistance. A case in point was Vasconcelos’s 1951 design for the Rangel de Lima house in Lisbon (**fig. 250**). Nowadays a famous example of modernist residence, it betrayed the architect’s Brazilian influences in the “butterfly” (inward-sloped) roof and the abundant use of concrete louvres, ceramic grids and other shading devices.

The text focused on the criticism Vasconcelos’s work had received: the house

“Brings up those comments we all now know by heart, from ‘box-like’ to ‘bolshevist architecture’ (...). That *that* is not for our country, that it is a copy of foreign models, that it is not national. (...) The nationalism remark can only mislead those who think nationalism in architecture can be measured by the number of superficial things in a building that evoke ‘what has already been done here’ (...). What shall we do? Show them we never had a national style, and that we merely adopted what came from abroad? Sacrilege! Tell them that the only truly Portuguese architecture in our land is the folk one, born straight out of the needs and possibilities of the people? And that the one architecture that modernism is closer to is precisely the folk one? Explain to them that (...) even the smallest gesture of a meridional or Nordic architect can be enough to characterise a work of architecture? And that it is much more natural for us to look like Brazilians and their healthy architecture in a luminous country, than to look like French palatial *barocchismo*? And that architecture must be truth, above all? – Truth! (...) Is a house not always truth? (...) – No; that building presently under construction opposite your door, whose very appropriate and light concrete structure has been covered in brick so as to leave nothing but small openings – it is a shameless lie.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.113, no. 674 (1953).

<sup>6</sup> Robin Boyd (1951): 153. Original English text.

<sup>7</sup> ———, “Um Novo Eclétismo?,” *Arquitectura* 24, no. 44 (1952).

<sup>8</sup> “Moradia,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa*... 46, no. 3-4 (1953). POiA (Citation 38).

At this point in the text, the illustrations showed Laginha's house (unbuilt), with two floors communicated by a ramp whose lines, followed by the glass curtain-wall and the "butterfly" roof, dominated the main elevation and section (**fig. 251**). The project was entitled "True architecture": "Look at this house: brief, formal choice, and structure are a perfect whole (...). Was this not what happened in all true architectures?"<sup>9</sup>

This anonymous text summed-up the essential themes being debated within Portuguese architectural culture in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The architecture magazines *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* and *Arquitectura*, the only two published at the time, were the chosen vehicles for modernist architects to vent their proposals and frustrations, both in images and in words. In most articles, technical explanations were minimised and the role of describing projects was fulfilled by the images – evidence of their specialised audience. Texts were, instead, dedicated to defending the architect's work from the influence of public "bourgeois" taste and non-architectural practices (civil engineers and builders' designs). Authors focused on their belief in the truth of modernist principles (the apparent structure), on the one hand, and of folk architecture, on the other. They critiqued the repetition of elements from the past in contemporary buildings, as a means of producing a national architecture,<sup>10</sup> and ridiculed the concept that international references were necessarily associated with abstract alienation or socialist political systems.<sup>11</sup>

The debate was mostly restricted to a circle of active young architects who supplied such magazines with material, hardly reaching public notice. This was reflected, I believe, in the discourse itself, which tended to adopt a patronising tone that indicated its inward focus. It was a debate between architects that often sounds more like a monologue from an engaged, dynamic small group inside the already small community of Portuguese architects.

These themes defined the modernist agenda of 1950s Portuguese architecture. At the same time, that agenda has become embedded in the history of the country's mid-century architecture, as this has been constructed almost exclusively by architects and is based almost exclusively on printed sources (such as those magazines). Architects writing about their colleagues' past work – or even their own<sup>12</sup> – have tended to give their writings the same sense of heroism and resistance that 1950s printed texts conveyed.

The result was, I believe, an over-simplified version of practices and events, elaborated around a basic dichotomy established in mid-century architects' discourse and still employed today: the opposition between conservative and modernist practices, known since then as the "Battle of Modern Architecture." This dichotomy was invoked to symbolise the conflicts between the

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<sup>9</sup> "Arquitectura Verdadeira," Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> A good example of this critique was architect João Correia Rebelo, who attempted to reach a wider audience by publishing two manifestoes, in 1953 and 1956, protesting against recent architecture in Azores, his homeland. See Tostões and Caldas, ed. (2002).

<sup>11</sup> An association made clear, for instance, during the debate about Lisbon's "Architectural Problem" in 1952-1953. For more on this debate, see Agarez (2009), 42-43.

<sup>12</sup> As was the case of Nuno Teotónio Pereira (b.1922), who was already a practicing architect in the late 1940s and has since written extensively on his generation's history, e.g., in Pereira (1999).

modernist architect and the planning authorities (be it the state, the municipalities or other), the ill-informed public (headed by the obstinate client), the greedy real-estate developer, and eventually the dictatorship regime itself. In post-revolutionary architectural history, works and architects have been systematically placed in one of the two opposing sides of this black-and-white account. While the modernist side was seen as morally and politically sound (rooted in the same progressive, leftist circles that helped shape the 1974 revolution), the conservative side was marked as reactionary and compromised by association with the finally deposed regime. Works placed in the latter group still bear this stigma in Portuguese architectural conscience.<sup>13</sup>

### *An Algarvian instrument in the “Battle”*

To illustrate the development of the “Battle of Modern Architecture” narrative, I will briefly discuss the Algarvian example – Lagingha’s 1950 article for magazine *Arquitectura* on his own work<sup>14</sup> for Paderne, Albufeira (**fig. 252**) – in which the expression was first employed.

The **Paderne house** was a run-of-the-mill commission in rural mid-century Algarve, albeit uncommon for a metropolitan architect: a two-storey building comprising ground-floor fruit storage and first-floor single-family residence. Set in an existing farm, it confined with a small vernacular house and its main elevation was to stand flush with the old structure, facing a curve of the road in a prominent location.

Lagingha created a contrasting two-tier composition (rusticated stone socle and white-rendered upper floor), emphasised by the horizontal-band windows and a low-, mono-pitch roof. The resulting trapezoidal main elevation vaguely evoked the profile of rural Algarvian houses, where single-pitch roofs were common, as Lagingha explicitly referred. But clear integration was complicated by the double ramp and the concrete louvres shading the south-facing glass wall. These were clearly modernist elements, intended to signal a very different formal language. The link between the traditional wooden pergolas and the inverted-L louvres, following uninterrupted from the wall plane to dramatic plastic effect (**fig. 253**), was not self-evident.

Consequently, the architect hailed the relationship between his work and its context as representative of a novel approach:

“The fluent use of common materials allowed for a thorough integration into the surrounding environment. Our attention is drawn, however, to the significant victory of the clean principles of rational architecture this magazine stands for, over certain formal

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<sup>13</sup> A short version of this section was included in the essay to be published as “Metropolitan Narratives on Peripheral Contexts” (2012 [forthcoming]).

<sup>14</sup> Although the text was anonymous, I believe it was Lagingha’s writing: in his archive, I found the manuscripts for other articles published in *Arquitectura* at the time, written in his recognizable “voice.”

templates, already consecrated and therefore easier to impose in a difficult milieu such as this. That means *the battle of modern architecture* is hard, but it is definitely not lost.”<sup>15</sup>

This modest building in a remote roadside plot deep in rural Algarve was a condenser of new possibilities for a regionally-aware architecture. Laginha was particularly critical towards the widespread “formal templates” that he felt hampered the architect’s work with the so-called “local conditions.” In 1948, commenting on his design for a multifamily building in Loulé published by the same magazine (**fig. 257**), he wrote:

“The study of local conditions, in a *pure and elevated regionalism*, where routine and academism do not dominate and imagination is set free to reshuffle the factors of the problem – placing the architect in the position of an unsatisfied researcher – can lead to surprisingly simple, effective, and even elegant results.”<sup>16</sup>

In his manuscript of the article, Laginha further maintained “that regionalism does not always mean a copy, stylised to a greater or lesser extent, and that the respect for tradition should not stop us from using the lessons of the past to produce a new and more effective functional arrangement.”<sup>17</sup> He admitted that, in the “adolescence of the machine age,” the consideration for the “natural conditions of the site – I mean, the pure regional elements,” had been neglected. Modernist architects should re-learn “the eternal recipe”: the “study of form through structure and function.”

Two points were central in Laginha’s argument: the need to dissociate regionalism from academism (i.e. conservatism) and imitation; and the need to bring modernist architecture back into contact with the specific conditions of its context, if it were to claim victory over conservatism. This implied the observation of local constructional responses to such conditions – the local traditions – without the picturesque or the stereotype filters. New buildings would be unequivocally modern, and break away from any literal identification with their informal counterparts while subtly relating to them through the contour of a roofline, the colour scheme, the shading device, the texture of a surface, a recognisable element, etc.

In these early experiments of an alternative regionalism, the “lesson” to be taken from local traditions was selective. As often happened with the stylised copies it criticised, this approach focused on external features: no mention was made to traditional precepts of layout design, for instance. Laginha’s layouts were clearly modern, sometimes experimental (the entrance and living areas in Paderne, **fig. 252**). Moreover, the unequivocally modern character of the work should be inspired by its context, but not encumbered by it. Laginha took pains to depict his house as a clean-cut piece of modern architecture, set in a frame of rural elements – the road, the trees, the small

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<sup>15</sup> [Manuel Laginha], “Moradia no Algarve,” *Arquitectura* 22, no. 35 (1950): 4-6. My italics. POiA (Citation 39).

<sup>16</sup> ———, “2. Prédio em Loulé,” *Arquitectura* 20, no. 26 (1948): 14. My italics. POiA (Citation 40).

<sup>17</sup> “Notas, apontamentos e correspondência sobre diversos assuntos”, n.d. (Lisbon-IHRU-APML-919).

cottages – kept at convenient distance. He manipulated the images in photomontage, as the original prints reveal (**figs. 254-256**): to the right of the main elevation, the adjoining cottage was eliminated. The close-up view was essential to show the louvres’ plastic effect – so the contiguous window was erased and the sidewall turned into a freestanding white plane, eluding the inconvenient proximity of extant constructions. Similarly, his Loulé apartment building was “retouched” for publication (**fig. 257**) and the existing corbels under the openings and parapet (**fig. 258**) were eliminated so as to simplify and “modernise” the lines of the elevation.

In short, the Paderne house article shows how modernist architects found a new take on regionalism to be a fundamental step in the “Battle of Modern Architecture,” and echoes the dramatic accent in contemporary discourse that rallied architects to embrace the modernist side of the combat. Laginha’s articles epitomise the close involvement of a native (Loulé-born) professional working in Algarve, one who had grown up surrounded by its traditions and everyday practices, with the process of re-thinking regional built identity.

### *A “miracle” dissected*

The publication of Gomes da Costa’s house in the 1953 special issue of *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* (**figs. 259-260**) must be seen within this frame. The same dramatic tone found in Laginha’s texts emphasised young Costa’s exceptional achievement, no less than a miracle in its context – the project was entitled “Miracle in Loulé”:

“Our provinces are being foully developed (...) left at the discretion of a half-dozen house builders and municipal draftsmen! (...) Towns like this one in Algarve, with local conditions and needs asking for, begging for a simple, sound architecture [have been taken over by low-quality construction]. The councils – poorly informed – demand traditional and regional characteristics (...) How much of this is the fault of architects? Perhaps some. (...) To be stuck in the provinces and to design in an honest manner is the equivalent of a true apostolate (...) Costa’s house, clear, elegant, very suitable, full of freshness and imagination, would be exceptional even in a new Lisbon designed by architects; in Loulé it is a miracle. Let us unveil<sup>18</sup> ourselves.”<sup>19</sup>

The project was presented as a symbol, therefore details were not important: the author commented on the design in very generic terms and mistook the place where the “miracle” had occurred – the house was built in Faro, not in Loulé.<sup>20</sup> Which town had local conditions that “beg” for a simple architecture? It was irrelevant. This was a text written possibly in Lisbon or Porto, and its main purpose was to critique the development of design practices away from these centres by

<sup>18</sup> In catholic tradition, covering one’s head with a veil is a symbol of humility and obedience to Christ, reserved to women; removing it signals the occurrence of something of exceptional significance.

<sup>19</sup> “Milagre em Loulé,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa*... 46, no. 3-4 (1953). POiA (Citation 41).

<sup>20</sup> This mistake has entered architectural history, e.g. in Fernandes (2005), 103.

“builders and draftsmen,” in peripheral places where to be a professional architect was compared to engaging in a crusade.

The implications were two: that there was no professional architecture to speak of in the provinces, and that the existing local practices demanded conversion to the rightful principles of metropolitan designers – i.e. to modernism. This text shows how progressive architects were determined to take their belief in modernism to remote parts of the country, and celebrate their group’s realisations, while not especially concerned with the matter of their integration in local contexts. Whereas Laginha’s words were largely dedicated to defending modernism as an alternative approach to local tradition, and kept a consistent reference to the need to integrate architecture with regional environment, the 1953 text held a more radical view of the matter: modernism was in opposition to existing practice. It was a breakthrough, a miracle; little attention was given to how modernism could relate to local building practice.

The publication of the **‘Miracle’ house** showed, in fact, a straightforwardly modernist proposal (**figs. 261-262**). The two sections of its first floor (living-service and sleeping-study) were arranged on uneven levels around a stepped patio, with a connecting corridor/ramp. It was a rigorous and imaginative layout, by contemporary standards, as were the features of its external composition: tall *pilotis* at regular intervals, a box-like upper floor regulated by the structural grid, and a smaller, concrete-frame cantilevered balcony. An asymmetrical play of receding and projecting clean-cut volumes, and the comprehensive use of the structure’s plastic qualities, helped to place this house safely in modernist ground. On the other hand, the all-encompassing whitewashed rendering and, especially, the introduction of rusticated stone in large surfaces, were signs of departure from both the modernist and conservative lexica: traditional materials and techniques were used without mimicking existing forms.

This was all the material published on the “Miracle in Loulé” in 1953. The house, in Rua Eça de Queiroz 5 (Faro), is hardly recognisable since its complete refurbishment, possibly in the 1970s. Photographs from Laginha’s private archive show the rendered and whitewashed bounding frame of the backyard elevation (**figs. 263-264**): it had opaque sides and its perforated top simulated a pergola. A screen of vertical concrete louvres was as if suspended from a beam placed at door-height. Above the openings, wood ventilation panels occupied the gap below the roof slab. A metal railing served as parapet on the roof terrace, recessed well behind the façade.

Other photographs from Laginha’s archive, taken at the 1951 exhibition of the Organização dos Arquitectos Modernos (ODAM, modernist architects network) in Porto, show two projects by Gomes da Costa labelled “in Faro.” I identified one (**fig. 265**) as the “Milagre” house, of 1950, and the other (**fig. 266**) as the **Baptista-Dores house**, designed for Rua Frei Lourenço de Santa Maria 36-40 (Faro), also in 1950.

ODAM was an informal group of Porto-taught architects and students created in 1947. Historians have stressed the importance of this group in the establishment of a collective



professional and ethical conscience among the Portuguese followers of the CIAM debates.<sup>21</sup> Today, it is often evoked to explain the Porto school of architecture's development as a centre for avant-garde experimentation, as opposed to the academism and backwardness of its Lisbon counterpart. Of the 30 works on show in 1951,<sup>22</sup> four were included in the 1953 special issue of *A Arquitectura Portuguesa*: the designs by Távora, Pimentel and Matos, and the "Milagre" house. The fact that Costa was, of these four, the only non-official member of ODAM<sup>23</sup> suggests that he was committed to be associated with this progressive group, and to have his work presented and published. His presence in the ODAM exhibition may have granted him a place in the magazine.

Although he graduated only in 1953, Gomes da Costa had long been trying to make his work known. In 1949, while a student in Porto, he sent the result of one of his assignments to the fourth Exposição Geral de Artes Plásticas (EGAP), an annual arts show in Lisbon. The brief was a modernist favourite, a summer cottage with minimum size standards, and Costa's answer combined structural prowess with clear Corbusian references (the single central column, the geometry and proportion system).<sup>24</sup> This school design was then chosen by magazine *Arquitectura* to illustrate an article on the EGAP event (**fig. 268**) and the issue's cover.<sup>25</sup> The "Pillar House," as Gomes da Costa later called it, acquired the status of a small modernist manifesto, at a time when *Arquitectura* magazine was engaged in publishing the Portuguese translation of the Athens Charter.<sup>26</sup>

The success of Costa's 1949 exercises in publicity (exhibition and magazine) led him to submit more work to the 1950 EGAP, where again it was exhibited, with a brief report in *Arquitectura*.<sup>27</sup> According to the exhibition catalogue, Costa presented three projects there, "in collaboration with architect Jorge de Oliveira": a coach station in Alentejo, an apartment building and a house, in unspecified locations.<sup>28</sup> I will return further on to the implications of this "collaboration" with Oliveira; as to the house exhibited in 1950, it may have been one of the two then under way in Faro.

Both these works (the Baptista-Dores and "Milagre" houses) showed an approach somewhat different from the experiment in the "Pillar House" exercise. They were designed to be built, for an actual site in a Portuguese town, not an abstract pavilion for an undetermined landscape. Arguably, Costa presented the "Milagre" project in the 1951 exhibition as a self-standing structure devoid of context (**fig. 265**). Yet these houses had rather objective constraints: both were

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Sergio Fernandez, *Percursos. Arquitectura portuguesa 1930/1974* (Porto: FAUP, 1988), 54-55.

<sup>22</sup> Listed in Edite Figueiredo Rosa, "ODAM" (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2006), 49.

<sup>23</sup> Although the architect himself claims to have been a member, his name is not in the list compiled in *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Fernandez (1988), 74-75.

<sup>25</sup> João Simões (ed.), "A IV Exposição Geral de Artes Plásticas," *Arquitectura*, April-May 1949, 20.

<sup>26</sup> The Portuguese translation of the charter was published in eleven parts, between February 1948 (issue 20) and August-September 1949 (issue 32).

<sup>27</sup> Cândido Palma de Melo and João Simões, ed., "V Exposição Geral de Artes Plásticas," *Arquitectura* 22, no. 35 (1950): 22.

<sup>28</sup> "Catálogo da 5ª Exposição Geral de Artes Plásticas" (Lisboa: Sociedade Nacional de Belas Artes, 1950).

designed for trapezoidal plots with sloping street profiles, and confined by other constructions in continuous fronts of conventional urban blocks. They served to experiment not only with structural elements but also with the local techniques and materials. Reinforced concrete was by then of common use, although not in thin slabs such as the ones Costa employed to frame his elevations, or in slender *pilotis*. Stone masonry was part of the local building tradition as the common substance of walls, and in rusticated socles, but not covering entire walls and sharply defining detached planes without load-bearing need. Finally, whitewashed surfaces and elaborate chimney tops were essentials of the Algarve convention, but not as Costa used them. Whitewash was employed here both in solid planes and in delicate structural elements (beams, pillars), and the chimney tops were stripped of decorations and reduced to their geometric basis, while keeping their part in the composition.

In a way, both these designs presented a circumstantial, technologically conscious and formally hybrid version of modernism. They could be included under the category of “New Eclecticism” suggested by Boyd and adapted by Portuguese magazines. They showed radical forms of modernism tempered by a conscience of the place that expressed pragmatism, not only technical but also formal. Costa was looking for a new language – but where was he looking? He only started invoking his Algarvian context as inspiration from 1956 on, preferring until then to use a Corbusian discourse – but what other references were there?

### South African suggestion

Both the “Milagre” house back elevation and, most notably, the Baptista-Dores house street elevation (**fig. 266**) showed striking similarities to the façade of South African architect Rex Martienssen’s own house in Johannesburg, built in 1940. Portuguese magazine *Arquitectura* published this work in 1949<sup>29</sup> (**fig. 267**), in the same issue that included Costa’s “Pillar House” school project. The Portuguese trainee architect, an avid reader of architecture magazines,<sup>30</sup> may have been impressed by the geometrically clear elevation framed with a continuous slab, the plain brickwork surface where windows were dramatically extruded, or the free-standing L-section balcony cantilevered like a drawer in a piece of furniture – but also by Martienssen’s rationale. The 1949 Portuguese-language text was only a partial translation of a 1942 article by Martienssen himself, in the *South African Architectural Record*, in which this CIAM member explained his design principles (**fig. 269**). Nevertheless, his considerations provide an unexpected parallel to Costa’s own formal concerns, as expressed in these two 1950 designs and in many other works since then (e.g.

<sup>29</sup> [Rex Martienssen], “Casa na África do Sul,” *Arquitectura* 22, no. 30 (1949): 4-7.

<sup>30</sup> In my interview with Gomes da Costa, he noted how since school times in Porto he consistently bought magazines such as *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, and studied the works published paying close attention both to their architecture and to their structure. This enabled him to discuss his own structures with civil engineers who often had to be pushed into accomplishing what his designs demanded. Manuel Gomes da Costa (22 May 2008), *Interview with Manuel Gomes da Costa / Interviewer: Ricardo Agarez*. Transcription in possession of the interviewer.

**figs. 462-464**), where they became part of the Portuguese architect's personal architectural lexicon. Martienssen's words are useful tools for better understanding Costa's work.

The South-African architect drew on Ruskin's concept of an uninterrupted "boundary line" as an essential disciplinary element in architectural composition to support his use own use of "the most fundamental of all bounding lines, the rectangular frame. (...) a boldly projecting and virtually uninterrupted frame."<sup>31</sup> Through the use of such a device, Martienssen introduced a scale "unrelated to ordinary values," and "the lack of familiar elements of measure" gave it "an abstract, or in more everyday terms, a model-like appearance." Pictorial abstraction inspired him to overcome the multiplicity of small repeated elements (floors and openings) that characterised domestic architecture in the past and create an "architectonic painting":

"The surface and position of component parts are significant in relation to the whole, and these components do not undergo a further breaking up into secondary surfaces. The maintenance of 'pure' surfaces is an important factor in the production of unity, and it is by the use of colour that accent and articulation are given to the surfaces of these component parts."<sup>32</sup>

To treat elevations as "architectonic paintings" became Costa's lasting concern. The uninterrupted, rectangular "boundary line" provided the frame within which his compositions of recognisable elements occurred. In the Baptista-Dores house (**figs. 270-272**), the façade was divided into three parts of uneven dimension and weight: the middle section was an opaque surface that lent tectonic mass to the composition. In the left-hand section, the entrance door and one window were aligned with a void parapet, all three elements treated as "pure surfaces." And the right-hand section, the busiest part of the composition (doors, *brise-soleils*, drawer-like balcony), corresponded to Martienssen's two-storey glass area. Unlike the South-African example, where the underside of the boundary frame was "cut back so that the house stands clear above the lawn," emphasising its perfection, the Faro house stood on a rusticated stone podium: a threshold between the public sidewalk and the domestic domain (cleverly organised on three levels), whose cut-out flowerbeds enhanced the everyday character of a modest building, Costa's very first built work in Faro.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from the size differences, the "Milagre" and Baptista-Dores houses seem equally important as first-work demonstrations of Costa's skills and stance. Both were designed and submitted for planning permission in the last third of 1950, and construction started soon after. Both were publicised by their author in the 1951 exhibition in Porto, where the new generation of post-war modernists came to show their work. So why was the former promoted in 1953 as a

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<sup>31</sup> Rex Martienssen, "Evolution of an Architect's House, 1940," *South African Architectural Record*, February 1942, 33.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-40.

<sup>33</sup> Planning application was presented in September 1950 by Florival Mendes Baptista and Luís António das Dores, co-signed by Costa and civil engineer João dos Santos Baleizão, given that Costa was not yet certified; he signed as "A student in the Porto Fine Arts School" (Faro-CMF/SAO-340/1950).

“miracle” in a peripheral place, while the latter was ignored by everyone, starting with the architect himself?

### **A project of symbolic importance**

The answer, according to Costa’s own account of his career, was because the “Milagre” house was born amongst difficulties and official resistance. In his narrative, this became the foundation stone for his entire life’s work: a highly symbolic moment when his ethical and political principles are combined with his architectural education and determination to overcome conservativeness. As a result, the “miracle” house has been presented as a mythical turning point, although it can barely be substantiated as an historical fact.

Costa’s narrative of his own professional life was assembled long after the exhibition and publication of his first works. Until his retirement in 2002, he worked alone in Faro, designing over 400 buildings in Algarve but never becoming the object of scholarly interest. The average quality and consistency of his work, and its preponderance in Faro’s urban fabric, eventually attracted attention from fellow architects; recently, a selection of his works has been studied by Fernandes (Lisbon)<sup>34</sup> and exhibited by Vargas (Faro).

These accounts all originate in the testimonies and materials provided by Costa himself. The monographic exhibition was the most personal project, a tribute to the architect’s career from his peers, aimed at showing local communities the value of familiar architecture and at consecrating Costa as the “most important representative of the modernist generation in Algarve (...) a region kept apart for too long, crystallised in traditionalist dogmas or in the increasingly florescent, uprooted bourgeois production.” It closely followed the architect’s autobiographical account and presented his works as steps in his self-imposed “mission to equip society for the future, with its own contemporary technical and linguistic [architectural] means.”<sup>35</sup>

In this celebratory discourse, Costa was the consummated modernist hero and the “Milagre” house his first building in Faro, “extremely important as the basis for his future career.” To have his controversial design approved, the exhibition curators claimed, the architect had to overcome “numerous difficulties,” causing the dismissal of a corrupt municipal officer and prompting *Arquitectura* magazine to greet the building with an article entitled “Miracle in Faro [sic]”; this story consolidated “the professional ethics, strength and passion for Architecture” in young Costa.<sup>36</sup>

Fernandes’s historical accounts stressed Costa’s role in the post-war renewal of architecture in Algarve. He was one of three Porto-taught professionals working in their home region (with architects Laginha and Castro) who brought up-to-date, international and central inspiration to local practice. In what I see as a clear example of a historical appropriation of the “Battle of

<sup>34</sup> Fernandes (2005) and ——— (2006).

<sup>35</sup> Gonçalo Vargas, curator, *Manuel Gomes da Costa: Moderno ao Sul* (2009). Exhibited Faro: Museu Municipal de Faro. Exhibition viewed 1 November, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> “Habitação Unifamiliar ‘Milagre em Faro,’” in Vargas (2009).

Modern Architecture” construct, Fernandes specifically placed Costa’s work in opposition to that of another important architect in mid-twentieth century Faro, Jorge de Oliveira.

This historical account of Faro architecture set up a convention wherein its two foremost professionals were positioned on opposing sides of the “Battle.” Oliveira represented the establishment, the official, civil service architecture, and produced conservative objects through the use of regional and historical elements. Costa, on the other hand, represented the new generation, which refused to accept existing formal and ethical models. He employed “a language totally opposed to that of state commissions of the time, be it in plastic expression (modern and technologically innovative) be it in political determination (socialist, internationalist, leftist).”<sup>37</sup> While Fernandes conceded the “urban and technical quality” of Oliveira’s conservative architecture, he underlined its “clear retrograde language”; the account clearly associated progressive architecture with young modernist Costa. Analogously, when Costa began his personal narrative by describing the design and planning permission process of the “Milagre” house, in my interview with him, the architect styled himself as a resistant avant-guardist, from the very start.

Since his client was an elderly couple (Mr. and Mrs. Guerreiro), Costa designed a house where the two uneven sections of the upper floor were linked by a ramp, instead of the conventional stair. This meant that there was no complete staircase serving all levels of the building – which had given the municipal planning officer grounds to reject it, for failure to meet the code of regulations. The officer, civil engineer Manuel Almeida Carrapato, “understood nothing of the layout,” and was prejudiced against the modernist proposal. Furthermore, there were rumours in Faro that Carrapato illegally designed buildings that would then be submitted to himself, as a planner, for approval – and was, therefore, prone to using dubious methods to reject others’ applications. The arrival of a new architect was as a threat to his practice.

The refusal of the Guerreiro house project, Costa told me, had two immediate consequences: he sent a complaint letter to the Portuguese architects association (SNA), along with his design, asking for its compliance with regulations to be confirmed; and the structural designer for the house, the Faro-resident civil engineer José Apolónia Correia, set out to prove the allegations of Carrapato’s corruption. Costa’s story ended with Correia finding proof of payments made to Carrapato for projects, which resulted in an audit being undertaken by the Faro municipality and the dismissal of the officer, who eventually moved to Mozambique. Consequently, his project, backed by SNA, was reappraised and approved by the municipality, and finally built. The publication of the Guerreiro house, by a metropolitan magazine, as a “miracle” of modernist architecture in a remote province was the final brushstroke in this heroic account. A condensed version of the “Battle of Modern Architecture,” it balanced ethical and design ingredients, with a successful ending. It comes as no surprise that subsequent history should chime with this account.

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<sup>37</sup> Fernandes (2006), 145.

It seems only natural that a specific object should be made to embody, in hindsight, the concerns and achievements of an architect's lifetime. However, some of the findings in my research raise questions that this version cannot accommodate, and provide a more complex and nuanced picture of the process. The importance of Costa's architecture in the making of post-war Faro and Algarve cannot be downplayed; yet my argument at this point is to draw attention to the way Portuguese contemporary architectural culture – I would call it an *architectural conscience* – relies largely on symbolic moments, and how the “miracle” of the Guerreiro house presents a clear example of this. These moments have been repeatedly accepted uncritically by historians (most of whom are architects) and included in a broader narrative of resistance and heroism, predominantly built on bibliographic references such as the magazines quoted above. Archival sources are seldom used. Once this narrative becomes established, it is hard even for their protagonists to diverge from it: when interviewing Costa I found his discourse to be very close to what has been written on his work by others, making it an inextricable medley of external and internal references – a chicken-and-egg loop where subject and object fuse into one crystallised historical product.

My study of the Guerreiro/“Milagre” house case was hindered by the fact that the original planning application could not be found in Faro's planning archive. According to Costa, it was wilfully destroyed. Given the current state of the archive, under no strict control, it could as easily have been lost or misplaced; or, as it is common procedure in Faro, attached to a much more recent planning file, related to the 1970s refurbishment of the house. But because my systematic reading of the archive, between 1923 and 1963, stopped short of this decade, and since I could not determine the name of the 1970s applicant (the sole key for direct access to the planning files), I could find neither the initial nor the more recent documents.

The archive's original card index, however, shows that Manuel Guerreiro presented the initial application after September 1950<sup>38</sup> and building permission was granted in November 1950; alterations to the initial design were submitted in September 1951 and approved the same month.<sup>39</sup> Finally, the panel exhibited in June 1951 at the ODAM display showed the house under construction. These elements suggest that what seemed like a long dispute between the architect and the municipality, with enough time for the architects' association to intervene and a corrupt officer to be dismissed, was actually reduced to the period between mid-September and November 1950, i.e. an interval of one and a half months to obtain building permission. Such time would have been enough for technical and planning regulation issues to be raised by the municipality, and this likely happened. I could not find any specific code of regulations being enforced in Faro in that period (only a 1943 study), and if there were none the municipality would apply the national law or

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<sup>38</sup> Application for the Baptista-Dores house was submitted on 12 September 1950, and given the number 340/1950. Since the Guerreiro application was given the number 362/1950, it can be dated to some point after that, possibly October 1950. The next application I found was numbered 374/1950 and dates to 1 November 1950.

<sup>39</sup> Application 285/1951, submitted by Manuel Guerreiro. This process possibly portrayed discrepancies between the design and as-built stages, which required a separate application to be submitted.

extrapolate Lisbon council codes.<sup>40</sup> In either case, these documents made no reference to the use of ramps in residential buildings, which could explain both the municipal officer's doubts and the architect's indignation – cleared and settled, according to the card index data, by November 1950. In turn, the plans in a 1955 application by Mr. Guerreiro (to replace the upper-floor patio with two bedrooms) matched the plans published in 1953, and included the interior ramp.<sup>41</sup> The Guerreiro house was, in short, built according to Costa's design between 1950 and 1951, after a relatively short assessment period.

Furthermore, municipal officer Manuel Almeida Carrapato ran the technical services at Faro municipality between February 1946 and, at least, January 1955.<sup>42</sup> Which means that, if the Guerreiro project epic was in fact the cause for his dismissal from those services, it took four years to accomplish it. Otherwise, and even though individual planning applications bear no trace of disciplinary proceedings against Carrapato, his dismissal on the grounds of corruption is plausible. Firstly, because the practice of designing for private developers while holding official positions was common (I have shown examples of this in Olhão). Secondly, because civil engineer Humberto Almeida Carrapato (b. 1920), one of the most successful designers in town and possibly related to the municipal officer, had at least twenty-four works approved in Faro between April 1950 and July 1959, upheld by the planner's assessments until 1955; I also found Humberto Carrapato's assessments, as a municipal officer, in two planning applications presented in 1950. It seems to have been the case, therefore, that two family-related civil engineers colluded in easing the approval of planning applications produced by one of them, possibly attracting developers to become their clients in the scheme.

Finally, the SNA archive provided no further help in clarifying the matter. Having examined the association's correspondence between 1950 and 1953,<sup>43</sup> I could find no trace of the complaint Gomes da Costa allegedly presented, nor the record of any request by SNA for Faro municipality to reconsider the architect's design and approve it.

These notes on the backstage of Faro's design and construction world suggest the frailties of the established discourse. A discourse that closely associates, as we have seen, the affirmation of post-war modernism with the defeat of deep-set unethical or illicit procedures – and whose power is the greatest, the more it can be shown to have been the cause of certain results, for the benefit of a collective architectural conscience. By confronting personal accounts with archival data I aim not to reinstate an untold truth, 60 years on, but rather to demonstrate, with a concrete case, how simplified the historical account of mid-twentieth century Portuguese architecture has become, and how one-dimensional is the subject of the "Battle of Modern Architecture" in that account.

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<sup>40</sup> Private building was regulated at national scale by the 1903 building code (14 February) until 1951; from 1930, Lisbon municipality followed its own code (6 December).

<sup>41</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-680/1955).

<sup>42</sup> I found his official assessments in planning applications submitted between February 1946 and January 1955, and consistently throughout this period.

<sup>43</sup> (Lisbon-OA/SNA-20/1639/1640/1652).

More interesting than the economic drive behind these dealings (an officer approving planning applications in exchange for design work is, above all, an economic fact) is the issue of aesthetical judgement. When asked about the real reasons behind the Guerreiro planning permission refusal, Costa stated that Carrapato “did not like” the project’s modernist stance, and that he “did not understand it.” I will now attempt to verify the consistency of the municipality officials’ alleged refusal on aesthetical grounds, by looking at what was being built in Faro in the years around 1950. In the heroic modernist narrative, this aesthetical obstacle was what made the acceptance of modernist architecture difficult and every breakthrough, such as the Guerreiro house, seem a “miracle” in Faro.

### *The battlefield in situ: Faro around 1950*

In 1950, architect Jorge de Oliveira designed the **Montepio bank branch** in Faro (**figs. 273-274**). This was a Lisbon commission for a symbolic building. For Oliveira, the “representation” of that financial institution would be best served with a composition of “nobility, simplicity and balance.”<sup>44</sup> The architect chose the Portuguese late-baroque style and divided the street elevation to match the classical canon (basement, *piano nobile*, upper floor, cornice) and the brief (bank, manager’s apartment, rental apartment). The decorative apparatus, concentrated in the stonework around the openings, in the balustrade, and in pilasters that framed the elevation, was a demonstration of Oliveira’s ability to create a stylised version of classical composition – the means by which, as in his Olhão work, the architect established a difference between his architectural abilities and those of his local counterparts. This classicist face was, he believed, the “most appropriate architectural expression” of the building’s purpose and contents – a trait praised by the municipal planner: the elevation “clearly shows the function of the building.”<sup>45</sup>

The Montepio building is often chosen to epitomise Jorge Oliveira’s conservatism and confirm his role as the representative of Estado Novo official architecture in Faro, in clear contrast with Gomes da Costa’s innovative proposals.<sup>46</sup> Yet only four months later, in May 1950, Oliveira submitted plans for the Fomento Industrial e Agrícola do Algarve (**FIAAL**) **building**, on the market hall square, a mixed industrial and residential commission with two rental apartments (**figs. 275-276**). The design could not be further from his bank project. An uninterrupted concrete slab framed the entire elevation and partly covered the roof terrace, in a manner very similar to Costa’s contemporary work in the two houses discussed above. Strong formal analogies can also be found with the widely published Casa Rustici in Milan (Terragni and Lingeri 1933-1936), albeit in smaller scale. The terrace, enclosed with steel-mesh railings and adorned with assorted chimneys and a traditional pergola, had the features of a suspended garden.

<sup>44</sup> Project statement 1950.01.10 (Faro-CMF/SAO-30/1950).

<sup>45</sup> Humberto Almeida Carrapato’s assessment 1950.01 (Faro-CMF/SAO-30/1950).

<sup>46</sup> Fernandes (2006), 144.



It was a symmetrical and subdued composition, but one clearly modernist. Oliveira called it a “purely rationalist” proposal given “its functional stance, entirely according to the new trend and evolution of this art and science.”<sup>47</sup> A sign of such rationalism was, he wrote, the clear division of each home into two independent “intimate-domestic and public” areas (family and social living quarters). The designs for the Montepio bank and for this building, although prepared at the same time, are so disparate as to suggest there was someone else behind the architect’s signature. Or that Jorge Oliveira’s work was by then taking a different route, and that he was trying to keep up-to-date with the more or less recent “trends and evolutions” of architectural culture.

The narrative of an “opposition of two sides” in the architecture of mid-twentieth century Faro, represented by Oliveira and Costa, does not easily accommodate collaboration between the two. And yet Costa recalls how, when he first came to Faro, Oliveira was the only other architect in town, how they unavoidably met and eventually worked together; this is confirmed by the 1950 EGAP exhibition catalogue, listing Costa’s three exhibits “in collaboration with” Oliveira, of which the apartment building was, I suggest, the FIAAL project. Its composition matches that of many subsequent works by Costa and, as a possible co-authorship, it also signals Oliveira’s shift towards post-war modernism. It is, moreover, an example of how Oliveira’s status as a representative of political power in Faro was not as straightforward as has been depicted: the municipality withheld the application and suggested the layout be modified: two of the rooms were windowless and misleadingly named “pantry” and “storage,” in clear disrespect for the “disciplinary principle” of not allowing interior rooms disguised as storage – a principle that “the architect himself has helped to establish.”<sup>48</sup> The planners seemed to want to demonstrate their independence and to show that Oliveira’s name alone would not justify irregularities; significantly, the scheme was never built.

Between May and September 1950, another three decidedly modernist proposals were submitted to Faro municipality, all sharing the FIAAL project’s features: the André building in Rua Frei Lourenço de Santa Maria 37 and the Américo Baptista house in the countryside hamlet of Campinas, both signed by civil engineer João dos Santos Baleizão alone; and the above-mentioned Baptista-Dores house, co-signed by Baleizão and trainee architect Costa. This last co-authorship and the similarity of all three designs suggest that young Costa might have also been co-designer of the other two.

The **Américo Baptista house** was the radical redesign of an existing rural structure (**figs. 277-278**): the basement walls were clad with rusticated stonework, the openings were squared off, a generous balcony was introduced, and the double-pitch roof was replaced by a terrace slab, whose receding metal railing and chimney were the same used in the “Milagre” house. Planner Almeida

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<sup>47</sup> Project statement May 1950.05 (Faro-CMF/SAO-222/1950).

<sup>48</sup> Manuel Almeida Carrapato’s assessment 1950.05 (Faro-CMF/SAO-222/1950). The practice of circumventing existing planning regulations by naming interior compartments with functions such as storage, was common in the 1930s and 1940s in Portugal, and consistently resisted by municipal authorities. Cf. Agarez (2009).

Carrapato passed the application just two days after it was submitted.<sup>49</sup> The **André building (figs. 279-280)** is a good example of modernist design adapted to the needs of a dry-fruit trading town such as Faro in the mid-century, where producer-traders demanded residence and storage in one and the same building. These buildings, integrated with the urban structures of Faro, Loulé and Tavira, are one of the originalities of 1940s and 1950s architecture in Leeward Algarve. They seem to illustrate their owners' and designers' will to adopt a contemporary form for their buildings, characteristic of urban contexts, while maintaining functional needs that prolonged essentially rural practices.

As in Laginha's Paderne house (also published in 1950, **fig. 252**), in the André building the elevations translated the brief in a functionalist manner. The ground floor (storage) was solid, covered in rusticated stone "to improve the appearance of the building."<sup>50</sup> The upper floor should contrast by means of texture and colour, and by the use of horizontal elements (windows in a continuous frame, balconies, roof-terrace railings). Planner Carrapato considered the modernist-inspired elevations "well elaborated,"<sup>51</sup> but asked for the layout to be re-designed. Jorge de Oliveira, called to assess the application as a consultant to Faro municipality, also considered the proposal "well conceived," with minor remarks as to the balance between ground and upper floors. Not only did he not oppose the modernist stance, but also he recommended the construction to "follow scrupulously" the proposed detailing.<sup>52</sup> In his assessment of the Baptista-Dores house, Costa's first official project in Faro, Oliveira was even more supportive: the design was a "fine architectural conception, a rational solution, carefully devised in its multiple aspects."<sup>53</sup> As a result, this application was passed within one week, with no sign of resistance or criticism from the municipality or its representatives.

Oliveira consistently supported Costa's designs while he was a consultant to the municipality, rarely questioning his aesthetical stance. Until 1955, Costa's modernist architecture was equally filtered by Manuel Carrapato, the officer he claims to have forced out, generally obtaining positive assessments. I will discuss further on how substantial criticism was aimed at Costa's tendency to push the limits of legal regulations. At a time when such regulations were being more rigorously enforced – the publication of a new building code in 1951 was a national turning point – local government bodies and their agents focused with more determination on technical and dimensional standards. With occasional exceptions, my research shows that Costa's planning applications, if opposed at all, were met more often with *technical resistance* than with *aesthetical resistance*.

The account of obstruction by the established powers and its heroic overcoming in the "Battle" was a fundamental constituent of the collective modernist architectural culture in post-war

<sup>49</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-269/1950).

<sup>50</sup> Project statement 1950.05.10 (Faro-CMF/SAO-190/1950).

<sup>51</sup> Assessment 1950.05 (Faro-CMF/SAO-190/1950).

<sup>52</sup> Assessment 1950.05.22 (Faro-CMF/SAO-190/1950).

<sup>53</sup> Assessment 1950.09 (Faro-CMF/SAO-340/1950).

Portugal. Within this narrative, there were clear political implications, which in time became overlaid on the more factual, objective account of everyday practice. I contend that the diffusion of modernist architecture that took place in the late 1950s and 1960s in Faro can only be understood through a return to the factual. If modernist architects won the “Battle,” as a wealth of examples in Faro might suggest, it is essential to enquire how they did it, and how they used regional building identity to achieve their ends.

The circumstances behind this politicised and, in many ways, romanticised narrative, are revealed if we look at the building practice in Faro in the 1930s and 1940s. Young designers such as Laginha and Costa reacted against engrained design procedures, criticising them and striving to replace their creators. Design and construction activities were largely controlled by non-architects (civil engineers, technical engineers, draftsmen, builders) whose “architectural” culture was outdated when compared to that of post-war architects. The design of everyday housing layouts, for instance, seemed to prolong old customs and repeat conventional solutions without reflection or experimentation. Most designers chose to concentrate on elevation composition, often solely on the façade, perpetuating a reputed beaux-arts convention that modernists despised. In short, peripheral centres like Faro were filled with buildings that, in the eyes of post-war modernist architects, were the cause of criticism or lament.

One such example was the **Reis house (figs. 281-282)**, built next to the Baptista-Dores house and approved shortly before the latter, in July 1950.<sup>54</sup> Given a similar plot and residential brief, civil engineer Joaquim Belchior distributed non-differentiated compartments along a straight corridor, disregarding the functional nuclei into which modernism divided domestic spaces. The guidelines of this layout and some of its details – such as the exterior water-closet cubicle – stem directly from nineteenth-century housing design and building custom. The elevations, on the other hand, do show some effort to assimilate traits of recent architectural trends, exemplifying what I would call a conservative regionalist approach. Its features dominated everyday building practice in the 1940s in Faro: the stone-faced socle, the pared-down, whitewashed or pastel-coloured surfaces defining the upper floor, the openings carved in these surfaces by thick stone frames, the flowerpot shelf, the glazed-tile panes and semi-circular recessed lintel of one window defining a composition axis. Traditional elements were modernised: the cornice was a recessed strip, dotted with brackets and, over the axial window, with V-shaped brickwork; the concrete roof terrace had an up-dated access staircase and turret.

Buildings like this were commonly found in Faro, and were palpable examples of what, from the standpoint of metropolitan architectural culture, was wrong with architecture in the province. It was to these examples that *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* referred to when it complained that the provinces were being “fouly developed.” Yet in the case of Faro, this disparaging reference was

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<sup>54</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-279/1950).

not new, it was not exclusive to metropolitan media, and it included objects from previous stages of everyday building practice.

### *The background: building practice before 1950*

A small political, administrative and commercial centre of 18.000 inhabitants (1944) with a fertile rural hinterland, Faro had urban and rural features combined in its physical structure (for instance, in the orchards and enclosures that filled in large tracts of the town, **fig. 283**) and in its buildings (**figs. 284-285**).<sup>55</sup> It lacked the marked profile that characterised Olhão, being unanimously depicted as devoid of monumental relevance, largely low-rise and unremarkable.<sup>56</sup>

1920s building design combined conventional layouts (very similar to those found in Olhão) with heavily decorated, eclectic façade compositions. Tiled roof eaves and glazed-tile friezes from the popularised Casa Portuguesa lexicon, pilasters and frames from classicist custom were everyday currency (**fig. 286**), along with more elaborate reference blends inherited from nineteenth-century revivals. This was especially the case with Moorish and Late-Gothic Manuelino styles, whose popularity lasted until the 1930s (**figs. 287-289**), best exemplified by the much-derided Banco de Portugal branch (1916-1926<sup>57</sup>) by architect Adães Bermudes (1864-1948), a Lisbon-based, Andalusia-inspired elaboration on the regional identity of Algarve (Chapter 2, **fig. 42**), later rejected by local and central elites. In his 1927 critique of Faro, Proença's words were directed at the outcome of this eclectic period:

“Little by little the *açoteia* houses, the wood-lattice screens, the Moorish patios and the delicate southern chimneys have vanished; and what has been built recently (palace-hospitals and *Manuelino* bank offices), conceived ignoring tradition, context and even the buildings' purposes, are true oddities of building logic, *aesthetical mistakes* and *geographical contradictions* (...) equally divorced from common sense, from nature and from art.”<sup>58</sup>

Despite the strong reaction of regionalist circles<sup>59</sup> to this portrait, locals generally agreed on the “quite poor taste” of Faro's ostentatious buildings.<sup>60</sup> In the 1930s, local practice turned towards modernist-inspired forms as part of a wider drive to simplify compositions and decorations led by those who shared this criticism, in particular, mayor Lyster Franco (1932-1934, 1937-1939) and his creation, the municipal aesthetics committee (Comissão Municipal de Estética). The committee's remit was to improve Faro's “aesthetic conditions” and safeguard its “picturesque aspects,” and in

<sup>55</sup> On the particularities of Faro's urbanisation see the articles by Marado, Horta Correia and Rodrigues in *Monumentos*, no. 24 (2006).

<sup>56</sup> A common trait found in two disparate accounts fifty years apart: Pinto (1894), 17-20, and [Mário Lyster Franco], “Faro,” in *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira* (Lisboa, Rio de Janeiro: Editorial Enciclopédia, [1944]), 957.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Francisco Lameira, *Faro* (Faro: Câmara Municipal de Faro, 1995).

<sup>58</sup> Raul Proença, “Faro,” in Proença (1927), 233. POiA (Citation 42).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. José Dias Sancho, *Roteiro do Algarve* (Lisboa: Empresa Nacional de Publicidade, [1928]).

<sup>60</sup> Franco (1929), 36.

its short life opposed the popular eclecticism that, by then, included exuberant Art Déco-inspired examples (the **Tavares house**,<sup>61</sup> **figs. 290-291**). Franco's terms in office coincided with the first examples of local modernism (the **Emiliano da Costa building**,<sup>62</sup> **figs. 292-293**, and the **Fundado house**,<sup>63</sup> **figs. 294, 297**), simple and unadorned. Soon however, this was crossbred with the engrained custom of builders and designers, who increasingly complicated and ornamented the compositions – much to the chagrin of the committee, who persistently expected Faro developers would modernise their designs and overcome “the routine in which they have delved for so long.”<sup>64</sup> The effects of this crossbreeding were clear in the **Porfírio house** (1939,<sup>65</sup> **figs. 295-297**) and in António Carvalheiro's 1941 designs for **São Francisco**<sup>66</sup> (**figs. 298-299**) and **Rua do Norte**<sup>67</sup> (**figs. 300-301**).

Only from the late 1930s on did the designers' discourse start to articulate concerns with the presence of elements of regional custom – and even then, in a rather loose, unstructured way. “Regional style” was cited in the **Dourado Ferreira house** application (1939,<sup>68</sup> **fig. 302**), and represented by V-shape decorations in parapets, terrace roofs and exterior stairs over rampant round arches, amalgamated with generic round-arch openings and pergola-covered porches. In their massing, their structure and occasionally their layout these buildings signalled the extended influence and popularity of 1930s trends and the strength of metropolitan modernist architectural culture.

Two interesting examples of this turn-of-the-decade hybrid practice were architect Artur Simões da Fonseca's (1910-1959) **Ascensão twin-house** in Faro (1940,<sup>69</sup> unbuilt, **figs. 303-304**), with its intricate composition of different materials, recessed and protruding surfaces and conventional elements over an effective modernist, minimal-dwelling (low-budget) layout; and the Portimão **port authority headquarters** designed for the Portuguese navy (1939-1940,<sup>70</sup> **figs. 305-306**). The modernist structure is clearly visible here: a combined volume of elemental solids (cubes, parallelepipeds, and a half-cylinder), complete asymmetry, pared-down surfaces covered in whitewash. Metal railings and porthole openings build up the naval association commonly inscribed in modernist imagery and, in this case, possibly deemed appropriate for its function and location. A number of secondary elements fill the modernist skeleton: round-arched portico and openings, ceramic grids in parapets, intricate chimney top, and corbels supporting the upper volume in the back elevation. Through them, the designer of this essentially practical building seems to have

<sup>61</sup> By J.J. Lopes in Rua João de Deus (Faro-CMF/SAO-808/1936).

<sup>62</sup> By architect José Maria Pinto de Vasconcelos in Rua General Teófilo da Trindade 102 (Faro-CMF/SAO-856/1937).

<sup>63</sup> By J.J. Lopes in Rua Reitor Teixeira Guedes (Faro-CMF/SAO-822/1936).

<sup>64</sup> Comissão Municipal de Estética, minutes 1937.11.09 (Faro-ADF/AHMF-B/B.6).

<sup>65</sup> By Carlos Porfírio in Rua Ataíde de Oliveira 69D (Faro-CMF/SAO-16/1939).

<sup>66</sup> In Rua Dr. Pereira de Sousa (Faro-CMF/SAO-15/1941, Faro-CMF/SAO-27/1941).

<sup>67</sup> (Faro, CMF/SAO-6/1941).

<sup>68</sup> By António Contreiras in Rua Dr. Justino Cúmano (Faro-CMF/SAO-4/1939).

<sup>69</sup> In Rua Rasquinho (Faro, CMF/SAO-22/1940).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *O Século...* (1940), 96. I could not determine who designed this building.

sought to engage in a dialog with what he perceived as the regional identity of Algarve. In effect, he was also contributing to a new built identity for the region, filtering national and international, modernist and picturesque, conservative and progressive inputs and producing a hybrid response.

The originality of these works and other contemporary ones (such as the Alportel Pousada, Chapter 2), resides in that their experimental regionalism does not let go of or deny the modernist influence, but incorporates it in alternative proposals. The late 1930s were, therefore, a moment of transition. Modernist layers, sometimes added to local building customs, were still clearly visible. As the subsequent decade advanced, designers increased the weight of decoration as the first evidence of their dialog with the local and regional traditions.

In the following section, I will examine the development of 1940s conservative regionalism in the architecture of Algarve, using Jorge de Oliveira's work in Faro as a starting point. This will be an opportunity to verify what happened to the modernist layer in that period, and to contextualise the "Battle of Modern Architecture" narrative that later had such prominence.

## **2. Conservative regionalism: the dissemination years (1943-1952).**

### *Under Jorge de Oliveira, an envoy from Lisbon*

I have revised, above, the relationship between architects Jorge de Oliveira and Manuel Gomes da Costa, questioning existing preconceptions. However, Oliveira's preponderance in the architecture of Faro – essential in such constructs – should not be downplayed, even as our understanding of his action towards post-war modernism accommodates new data and opens up to a more complex perspective. He held, after all, a strong official position in Algarve, as well as determinate views on how architecture should serve diverse purposes in diverse ways, which he expressed not only in designs but also in the extensive written statements that complemented them. In this text, I intend to avoid the dichotomies that generally classify Oliveira's architecture as "retrograde" and dispense with the modernist moral lens through which works such as his are often filtered in architectural history. I suggest his work could be considered as conservative in the 1940s, and richly eclectic in the 1950s. Oliveira's words and designs play an important part in an investigation of the regional and local faces of architecture in Algarve, since he devoted his time and influence to equip the region with a specific built identity.

Architecture was a late interest in Oliveira's student life, and his second degree (after Pedagogical Sciences). Having transferred his enrolment from the fine arts school of Lisbon to Porto due to disagreements with his design tutor, architect Cristino da Silva,<sup>71</sup> he obtained his

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<sup>71</sup> Alberto Souza Oliveira (Oliveira's son), in discussion with the author, 3 September 2010.

diploma only at the age of 38, in 1945, possibly with the project of the new market hall in Faro as his thesis.<sup>72</sup>

From 1936 to 1943, not yet a certified architect, Oliveira worked as head of architect Porfírio Pardal Monteiro's office in Lisbon. This experience was vital for his training in the field of public architecture. According to the architect's 1985 curriculum vitae, he co-authored a number of Monteiro's public commissions in the capital, such as the cruise ship terminal in Alcântara (1938-1943), the Lisbon University campus (1935-1938) and the partial refurbishment of the Houses of Parliament (1940).<sup>73</sup> Monteiro's grandiose compositions, strongly influenced by Perret, combined the innovative use of vast concrete structures and classical references in creating a monumental *Moderne*, much appreciated by the political establishment in the early decades of Estado Novo. The search for a particular dignity or nobility in public architecture, the moderate adoption of the modernist formal palette (toned-down by a characteristic tectonic stance) and the attention to detail are essential features in Monteiro's late 1930s architecture that I find influenced Oliveira's 1940s work.

Spanish public architecture may have been another strong influence. In the architect's personal library, I found extensive collections of two important official Spanish magazines of the period, *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura* and *Reconstrucción*, which suggest Oliveira's close attention to the development of architecture in Spain under Franco's regime. The works published in *Revista Nacional* (1941-1958) were very similar to those that Oliveira was later asked to produce: schools, nurseries and kindergarten, social service and healthcare facilities, stations, market halls, administrative buildings, religious structures, housing and urban renewal operations. In fact, this magazine is testimony to the similarities between public works policies in the Portuguese Estado Novo and the Spanish Autarquía period (1939-1959). Among those, the housing programmes for workers, farmers and fishermen stand out (*Viviendas Protegidas* and *Poblados de Pescadores*<sup>74</sup>), for which Spanish architects sought regional architectural variations in much the same way as Portuguese architects did.

Oliveira would have been primarily influenced by the mainstream formal discourse of Spanish architecture, conveyed by the *Revista Nacional*: heavy compositions based on symbols of the Spanish golden age, often disproportionate to the size and purpose of the building, and equally dense combinations of these nationalist references with regional specificities. The resulting eclectic elevations attempt to convey a representational role while evoking regional identities by providing controlled, modernised, at times fantasised versions of them. Although this exuberant use of past and regional elements was a widespread trend in Portugal at the time, the level of intensity to which Oliveira took it – e.g. in the Montepio building (**figs. 273-274**) – can be more easily found in Spain.

<sup>72</sup> “Projecto de um Mercado Municipal. Concurso para Obtenção do Diploma [de Arquitecto],” 1947 (Lisbon-AJO). The date of 1945 is from the architects' association registry.

<sup>73</sup> Dates according to [www.parlamento.pt](http://www.parlamento.pt), [www.monumentos.pt](http://www.monumentos.pt), accessed 2011.02.01, and João Vieira Caldas, *Porfírio Pardal Monteiro* (Lisboa: AAP-SRS, 1997).

<sup>74</sup> E.g. the fishermen's housing project in *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura* IV, no. 42 (1945).

Designs like that of a kindergarten in the Canary Islands, built in 1941<sup>75</sup> (**fig. 309**), and the unbuilt proposal for a market hall in Madrid, of 1947<sup>76</sup> (**fig. 310**), offer interesting parallels with the Portuguese architect's work. Ironically, it was the exaggerated size and decorative programme of some of Oliveira's proposals – those closer to a Spanish scale – that stopped them from being fully realised. The architect also referred to the *Revista* for advice on technical and functional matters: explaining his design for a 120-bed sanatorium in Alportel for the fishermen's guilds, in 1947, Oliveira said to have studied the "types defined and approved by Spain's Plan of Sanatoria Building,"<sup>77</sup> and their special requirements – the same types that the magazine published in 1943<sup>78</sup> and 1944.<sup>79</sup>

*Reconstrucción* (1940-1957), in turn, was dedicated to the propaganda of Franco's post-Civil War reconstruction programme. The new villages presented were generally provided with a ruralised, subdued architecture, whose features varied according to the region; often though, the projects brought in the forms of noble, historical buildings into the composition. In the pages of *Reconstrucción*, the contemporary Spanish taste for replicating erudite elements was dominant, ranging from the design of village squares (as in Brunete, 1940<sup>80</sup>) to that of new-built structures in large cities (e.g. the police barracks in Oviedo, 1942,<sup>81</sup> **fig. 311**). Again, Oliveira's characteristic lexicon of the 1940s could be seen as a Portuguese counterpart to Spanish reconstruction architecture, albeit without its scale and urgency. These magazines were essential vehicles in the parallel development of Portuguese and Spanish architectural cultures; indeed, Oliveira's case counters accepted views of such cultures as independent and unrelated.<sup>82</sup>

The appointment of Jorge Oliveira as official technical advisor for Junta de Província do Algarve (JPA) and for the municipalities of Faro, Olhão, Portimão, and Vila Real de Santo António, formalised in April 1943, followed a personal invitation by the public works minister Duarte Pacheco,<sup>83</sup> who sought to reinforce the state's technical assistance to regional and municipal authorities in his homeland.

Oliveira's contract specified that he would be the sole responsible for all projects requested by the municipalities or the Junta, and head the latter's new architecture and urbanism department (Serviços de Arquitectura e Urbanismo, SAU). He would also assist the provincial and municipal authorities in assessing private planning applications, as both a permanent technical advisor based

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. I, no. 2 (1941).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. VII, no. 72 (1947).

<sup>77</sup> Sanatório da JCCP, project statement [1947.06.26] (Lisbon-AJO).

<sup>78</sup> "Concurso de anteprojectos de sanatorios antituberculosos," *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura* II, no. 15 (1943).

<sup>79</sup> "El sanatorio antituberculoso Generalísimo Franco en Bilbao," Ibid. III, no. 33 (1944).

<sup>80</sup> *Reconstrucción* I, no. 2 (1940).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. III, no. 20 (1942).

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Pereira and Fernandes, col. (1987), 352.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Souza Oliveira (2010).



in SAU in Faro and visiting consultant to the mayors' offices in the above-mentioned towns. He was not allowed to accept any other private or public commissions unless those specifically authorised by the Junta de Província.<sup>84</sup>

The terms of this agreement should be seen in the context of provincial Portugal in the early 1940s. A general policy of strengthening the control of central government agencies over every aspect of national life matched the tangible lack of technical structures and staff in the more peripheral regions: Faro municipality only appointed its first full-time technical advisor in 1928, choosing an engineer for the role.<sup>85</sup> Jorge Oliveira was the first architect to serve as permanent advisor not only in Faro but also in Olhão and possibly in Portimão and Vila Real: the need for an architect in their staff is likely to have driven these underfunded municipalities to congregate around the Junta and employ him. This was simultaneously a problem and an opportunity for the establishment in Lisbon: since there were no architects living in Algarve (or very few)<sup>86</sup> and the technical level of the production and assessment of architecture, private and public, was perceptibly poor, the road was open for the metropolitan authorities to designate whoever they believed would best serve their interests.

The position was formally one of great power. It combined the exclusive responsibility to design public architecture and urban space for every town and village in Algarve, with the possibility of controlling the face of private architecture in three of the most important and fastest-growing centres in the province (Faro, Olhão and Portimão) – and did not exclude the occasional opportunity to practice as a freelance professional. Yet the creation of such a position also added some complexity to the network of power relationships in the cadre of public and private building in Algarve. The control of each of those two spheres of building activity, nationwide, belonged to distinct entities whose actions seldom intersected up until the mid-1940s, when important changes occurred.

The responsibility for commissioning, and therefore controlling, public buildings was unevenly shared by the ministry of public works (the main role) and the municipalities. National and local agencies began to interact more frequently after the creation of the unemployment fund and its partial allocation for public works and infrastructure (see Chapter 3). The growing importance of this policy was translated in the creation of the central public works office DGSU, in

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<sup>84</sup> Contract between Jorge de Oliveira and Junta de Província do Algarve, Câmara Municipal de Faro, Câmara Municipal de Olhão, Câmara Municipal de Portimão and Câmara Municipal de Vila Real de Santo António, 1943.04.21 (Faro-ADF/AHMF).

<sup>85</sup> In July 1928, after Proença's criticism of Faro in *Guia de Portugal*, the city council approved the appointment of a civil engineer to head its technical services, justified as essential in order to provide those with a "decent and convenient" direction and to avoid the repetition of "past errors" in the management of the city. I suggest there is a direct link between the appointment and the scathing criticism received. Faro council meeting 1928.07.12 (Faro-CMF/AHMF-17).

<sup>86</sup> I am not in a position to guarantee that there were no architects based in Algarve in 1943: the records of the Portuguese architects association are not entirely reliable for this purpose, since there were always non-registered architects. The few architects who worked in Faro, for instance, before that date – such as Vasconcelos – did so occasionally, which suggests they were not based there.

1945, and its regional branches, among which was the Algarve-based Direção de Urbanização de Faro (DUF).<sup>87</sup> This service, strongly dependent on the Lisbon head office, effectively supervised not only what the municipalities built, through the control mechanism of funding applications, but also what the Junta de Província itself promoted, since this regional body was equally dependent on state funding. By creating the SAU office under architect Oliveira's supervision, the state was providing the municipalities and JPA with much needed technical advice, and simultaneously placing their building initiatives under the control of someone deemed trustworthy. But at a higher level, the ministry was also placing SAU, Oliveira and their regional initiatives under the control of DGSU in Lisbon and DUF in Faro, the paymasters. In this respect, the power in Oliveira's position, while considerable at a local level, was diminished towards regional and national levels.

The control of private building had previously been the exclusive responsibility of municipalities, apart from the occasional assessment by the central office for public facilities and monuments (DGEMN), whenever a private development affected listed buildings. From the mid-1940s onwards, with the approval of the first master plans for medium and small centres across the country, that competence changed significantly: it came to include the ministerial office DGSU and its regional services, which had to be consulted for every planning application in areas covered by a master plan. In the case of Oliveira's role in Algarve, what this meant was that although he was given a dominant position in 1943 as technical advisor to the municipalities, in charge of assessing private planning applications, he was almost at once forced to share this power with others above him in bureaucratic hierarchy, from the moment plans for Olhão and Faro were produced.

These points support my view of Oliveira's action in SAU: it was an exercise in negotiated power, not a plenipotentiary role, and his was an action changing in time, not a monolithic body of work. This understanding counters the commonly held notion that Oliveira exerted his "design initiative (...) in every municipality in Algarve, with no need for further permissions."<sup>88</sup> Once again, the image of Oliveira as a dominant figure who shaped, unchallenged, the face of Algarve and represented the sombre side of the "Battle of Modern Architecture," stems from a superficial, black-and-white view.

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<sup>87</sup> Between 1946 and 1948, the Algarve branch was not an autonomous service but merely a section (Segunda Secção, headed by civil engineer Vicente Almeida Brandão) of DGSU's Direção dos Serviços de Urbanização do Sul, based in Évora and in charge of the entire south Portugal (Alentejo and Algarve). After DGSU was restructured, in December 1948, one regional branch of the central authority was created in each circumscription (*distrito*) of the country. The Faro branch (DUF) was headed by civil engineer Alberto Pessanha Viegas. Cf. "Correspondência Recebida Entidades. DGSU," 1945-1954 (Faro-ADF/AHMF-C/A.2-63).

<sup>88</sup> Fernandes (2006), 143.

*Early works: conservative regionalism and the “appropriate expression”*

Having moved to Faro early in 1943, Jorge de Oliveira set up an architecture office for SAU based on the template of Pardal Monteiro’s atelier in Lisbon.<sup>89</sup> In 1945, Oliveira’s staff included chief draftsman-designer António Rolão Júnior and draftsmen Joaquim Madeira, Manuel Palmeirinha and Francisco Barradas,<sup>90</sup> recruited from amongst his students at the first professional course on building techniques of Faro’s industrial and commercial school (Tomás Cabreira).<sup>91</sup> The small group had a part in disseminating Oliveira’s architecture beyond the limits of the public office; Rolão Júnior, for instance, appears to have been an undisclosed partner in the architect’s private practice.

During the years of his contract with the Algarve agencies (between 1943 and 1957), Oliveira signed at least 139 projects, for both public authorities (89 commissions) and private clients (50 commissions). The list, in which I was able to confirm and date 70 projects,<sup>92</sup> conveys the diversity of Oliveira’s task, ranging from public restrooms to church restoration, from multifamily housing to children’s summer camps, and from state and municipality offices to shelters for beggars and the elderly. His first study for Faro municipality was a building code proposal (1943) which set out general requirements for new developments concerning the boundaries between public and private spaces, salubrity and townscape aesthetics.<sup>93</sup> Its recommendations were partly adopted in Faro’s 1945 general urban plan but it was never legally imposed, being overrun in 1951 by the national building code.

The bulk of Oliveira’s work in Algarve, both public and private, was concentrated in seven years between 1944 and 1950. The decline of his output from 1951 on coincided with the shift in Oliveira’s architecture towards post-war modernism: from the FIAAL building on, as his designs were updated and lost to some extent their strong conservative key, so the number and importance of his commissions seem to have dropped, and he concentrated more on his private clientele. This change may be connected to the shrinking power of Junta de Província in providing technical assistance to local authorities engaged in building new public-use facilities, as the DGSU office and its regional representative DUF increasingly assumed that role. Also, changes in political personnel influenced Oliveira’s commissions. The replacement of the central government’s top political delegate in the circumscription (distrito) of Faro, the governador civil, in June 1951,<sup>94</sup> and the corresponding shift in regional welfare policy, meant that a number of projects commissioned in

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Souza Oliveira (2010).

<sup>90</sup> Creche de Nossa Senhora de Fátima, file cover [1945.08.01] (Lisbon-AJO).

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Souza Oliveira (2010).

<sup>92</sup> I reached a provisional version of Jorge Oliveira’s complete list of works in the *distritos* of Faro and Beja between 1939 and 1963 by collating data from my archival research and the architect’s own curriculum vitae (1985), in which his works are undated.

<sup>93</sup> “Projecto do Regulamento Geral da Construção Urbana para a C.M.F.,” 1943 (Lisbon-AJO).

<sup>94</sup> Luís Vaz de Sousa, governador civil of Faro since 7 September 1948, was replaced by Agostinho Joaquim Pires in 20 June 1951, whose mandate lasted until 28 March 1953. Cf. [www.gov-civil-faro.pt/governo\\_civil/historia](http://www.gov-civil-faro.pt/governo_civil/historia), accessed 2011.02.18.

1950 and 1951 to Oliveira (the shelters to be built in Tavira, Portimão, Albufeira and Monchique, and a nursery school in Olhão) were suspended and replaced by entirely different programmes, trusted to a new generation of post-war Algarvian architects.

Oliveira's reputation in history as a symbol of conservative architecture in Algarve rests essentially on the work he produced during his first seven years in Faro. To better understand the place and role of this architecture in a discussion about regionalisms in Algarve in the twentieth century, I have looked not only at designs and buildings but also at the architect's written discourse: his *memórias descritivas* (project statements), which have not been used before. Files from the architect's personal archive, from the regional DUF archive, and from Faro and Olhão municipal archives, offer a comprehensive reading of Oliveira's comments on his own architecture. This was at times puzzling and contradictory, evidence of a loquaciousness that did not necessarily find correspondence in design. Today, it provides a valuable peephole into the rationale behind the architecture that determined so much of the public and private building activity in Algarve in the 1940s.

Oliveira repeatedly said that he wanted his architecture to be "modern," while being clearly "Portuguese." It should be modest, economical, sober, almost frugal, and avoid the expensive and unnecessary decorations that, he felt, predominated in his time – but not destitute of the local colour and grace, by which he sought to integrate his new works with the extant "local environment." If this was one outstanding concern, the other was a strict obeisance to what he called "the most serious principles of Architecture" and, above all, to one rule: the face of the building should at all times have "an expression appropriate to its function."<sup>95</sup>

The "appropriate expression" of elevations was of utmost importance for many designers of 1940s conservative architecture, and was a key part of a latent criticism of international modernist works. Its lineage can be found in the French classical tradition and the eighteenth-century use of the notion of the "character" of architecture: according to it, all buildings should have a character or expression suited to their purpose,<sup>96</sup> particular and unmistakable, which set their designers apart from mere builders. The principle was laid out by Boffrand and Blondel, and had a parallel with the German Romantic generic theory of character that, highly influential in nineteenth-century architectural discourse, also contributed to the understanding of architectural expression within 1940s regionalism. In it, character was related to the national identity in art, and works of a given national or regional group were the "outward expression of their makers' spirit"; in this sense, national (or regional) distinctions in architecture were "the outcome of the expression of the specific, historically developed characters of particular peoples."<sup>97</sup>

In Oliveira's understanding, one building's "appropriate expression" was also related to its purpose within a larger frame. There was an unstated overall narrative of the built environment, a

<sup>95</sup> Cinema Pax, project statement 1945.04.20 (Lisbon-AJO).

<sup>96</sup> Forty (2000), 123.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

set in which each building played an assigned part, had a different functional purpose and an “appropriate expression.” A well-defined regional built narrative would provide an overarching script to be followed, and each building would be an opportunity to complete the general picture and substitute dissonant or minor pieces. Jorge de Oliveira’s works pursued the goal of defining one particular narrative for the built environment of Algarve: balancing the “Portuguese” with the “modern,” he found the means to realise his version of a clear regional narrative.

His 1944 design for a branch of **Banco do Algarve** in Portimão (**fig. 308**) was to have a “sober and harmonious composition, and being a straightforwardly modern work it could not do without a Portuguese architectural character.”<sup>98</sup> It was “modern,” if at all, in the pared-down walls, tri-partite strip windows and porthole openings. It was noble in the prominent doorway: the role it played in the townscape narrative was that of financial stability and wealth, therefore nobility was *de rigueur*. And it was Portuguese in the elaborate carved stone decoration framing the large central window and balcony, reminiscent of the late-baroque style.

The combination of modern and traditional Portuguese features was again invoked in Oliveira’s proposal for the **Coração house** in Praia da Rocha (**fig. 307**): “a modern work where a traditionalist Portuguese stance can be revealed, combined with the absence of superfluous details.”<sup>99</sup> To some of his contemporaries, these were false or empty formulas meant merely as part of a carefully arranged verbal envelope to Oliveira’s designs. How “modern” was this elevation? How could such an elaborate composition be described as spare in superfluous details?

“Modern,” in Oliveira’s discourse, was clearly not synonymous with “modernist.” The term was used to describe how the layout, the furnishings, the construction techniques and some materials were up-to-date, and how they differentiated these works from the common buildings of their context. The house was modern in that it was solidly built, had no windowless rooms, and its plan was optimised around uses, for example. The use of the qualifier “modern” was part of a critique of existing local building practice, in which architects played a small part. Such practice, controlled by local builders and fed by informal tradition, constituted the “old” against which this “modern” formal architecture reacted. The persistent reference to “excessive detail” conflated this critique of the popular with the Casa Portuguesa-inspired reaction against Beaux-Arts eclecticism, and the officially nurtured praise of modesty and economy. When Oliveira wrote, as he often did in his memórias, that the “virtues” he pursued in his projects were “simplicity, commodity and economy,” and that he wanted to avoid “slipping into the exaggerated, disproportionate luxury, so frequent among us, which creates a setting contrary, so to speak, to our average resources”<sup>100</sup> – he was tuned to the Estado Novo propaganda discourse of a happily modest, and proud, nation (see Chapter 2).

<sup>98</sup> Agência do Banco do Algarve, project statement 1944.03.17 (Lisbon-AJO).

<sup>99</sup> Vila Coração, project statement 1944.05.01 (Lisbon-AJO).

<sup>100</sup> Pensão em Albufeira, project statement 1944.06.03 (Lisbon-AJO).

In the context of Algarve architecture before 1940, Oliveira's words have specific meaning. Analysing building series in Olhão and Faro since the early twentieth century, I have shown how even the humblest buildings displayed elaborate decoration. Drawing from a wide set of references – from Neoclassical, Beaux-Arts and neo-Moorish, to Casa Portuguesa and Art Deco – these popularised versions of erudite motifs concentrated on the *platibanda* (parapet), one of the distinctive features of the Algarve house. Metropolitan architects looked at their exuberance and colourfulness with scepticism and occasional critique, and Oliveira shared this stance. For a refurbishment in Albufeira, he deemed it “appropriate” to replace the existing “unaesthetic parapet” with a “Portuguese eave.”<sup>101</sup> And in his first public work in Faro, a *crèche* designed in 1945 and built in 1947 (**fig. 312**), the architect defended a return to the “Algarvian characteristics” – or rather, to his own concept of these – in the same terms:

“This building's face was to have a regional slant, drawn with simple lines and strongly evidenced Algarvian characteristics, while avoiding the exaggerated use of decorations.”<sup>102</sup>

In these words lies the key to Oliveira's concept of regionalism: the establishment of a concrete, clear, easily recognisable set of formal elements – an architectural lexicon – was essential to a *return to order* in the built environment of Algarve. When Oliveira arrived in Faro he found a heterogeneous townscape composed of vernacular architecture, serial-built 1920s housing with heavily decorated elevations (and ostentatious parapets), neo-Moorish inventions and 1930s modernist-inspired buildings. To oppose the variety of styles and forms that populated Algarvian towns and villages, of which Faro was but a sample, a new creation was necessary: a regionalist formal menu, drawn in very clear lines, which could eliminate the more visible, abstract and international face of modernism, while keeping some of its fundamentals intact (e.g. in the layout design). He proposed a well-defined architectural language, to replace the “ill-defined” architecture he found in buildings around him.

I would call this trend *conservative regionalism*. In 1943, in his double role as official designer and assessor of others' designs, Oliveira was uniquely positioned to set those guidelines, both in the public and in the private spheres. Contrary to what he repeatedly wrote, the resulting buildings were not frugal: the economy argument was Oliveira's way of making his discourse fit with official propaganda and with his client's concerns.

He experimented with his conservative regionalist lexicon in a number of small-scale works: the *crèche* in Faro and a shelter for vagrants in Olhão, both from 1945, his prototype for a Casa do Povo to be replicated throughout the province and a children's summer camp in Ilha do Ancão (Faro), both from 1944. These were all pavilion structures with an underlying social function, relatively simple programmes and not encumbered by pre-existing urban plot configurations. They

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Creche de Nossa Senhora de Fátima, project statement 1945.08.01 (Lisbon-AJO). POiA (Citation 43).

were perfect opportunities to test and fix the precepts of an architectural language and its basic terms: the patio, the porch, the gallery, the mono- or double-pitch tiled roof, and the well-defined decorative elements.

In the vagrants shelter in Olhão, the architect managed to include the patio, a feature that he thought had been lost from Algarve tradition, and surrounded it with a pergola. In the crèche, with not enough compartments to justify the need for a patio, he inverted the layout placing the building in the middle and a portico / gallery on three of its sides (**figs. 313-314**). The gallery motif, usually formed by round arches and stone-faced columns, covered with a tiled roof and occasionally filled with V-pattern ceramic grid panels, was a favourite of Oliveira's. Drawn from monastic structures (where it enclosed the cloister), the open gallery was widely used in public and private buildings in Portugal and Spain at the time, in its modernised version; because of its origin, it was found in institutional facilities such as hospitals, homes, reformatories and prisons. Oliveira combined it with stone-faced buttresses at the angles (a superfluous device that referred to construction techniques from before reinforced-concrete times) and used it in several of his proposals for elderly homes, social service facilities and shelters: in the Santa Luzia fishermen's guild building<sup>103</sup> (1947-1953, **fig. 318**), for example.

The porch and round arch was another fixture of this palette, being the reduced version of the gallery. It evoked a sense of domesticity and formed, together with the mono- or double-pitch roof (whose tile eave was always double), the outline of the western quintessential image of a house. Oliveira employed this easily recognisable symbol, widely popular in Portugal, in the crèche in Faro, in the Casa do Povo prototype, and in the Casa do Poeta in Faro (1944-1947).<sup>104</sup>

The **Casa do Povo** (literally People's House) was a fundamental element in the Estado Novo policies to support Portugal's largely rural population, providing it with basic medical, training and recreational services while keeping it under socio-political control.<sup>105</sup> Oliveira's prototype of 1944, itself the regional adaptation of a national type, was further detailed and built in the villages of Luz (Tavira, **fig. 315**) and Santa Catarina da Fonte do Bispo (Tavira) from 1945 on.<sup>106</sup> The **Casa do Poeta** (**figs. 316-317**) was also a public commission, by Faro municipality, to replace poet Cândido Guerreiro's old house, pulled down during the urbanisation of the Santo António do Alto area.<sup>107</sup> It was an official tribute to the poet and local figure<sup>108</sup> as much as a compensation for the owner's property loss. The Casa do Povo and Casa do Poeta projects have

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<sup>103</sup> Casa dos Pescadores de Santa Luzia, project statement 1947.01.30 (Lisbon-AJO); (Faro-UA/A-DUF-384/MU/46).

<sup>104</sup> Casa do Poeta, project statement [1944] (Lisbon-AJO).

<sup>105</sup> See Melo (2001).

<sup>106</sup> The project was also developed for the village of Moncarapacho (Olhão) but later abandoned (Faro-UA/A-DUF-F-111).

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Lameira (1995).

<sup>108</sup> Francisco Xavier Cândido Guerreiro (1871-1953) was a lawyer, playwright and poet who also served as mayor of Loulé and Faro between 1923 and 1941. "Guerreiro (Francisco Xavier Cândido)," in *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira* (Lisboa, Rio de Janeiro: Editorial Enciclopédia).

some points in common. Both were houses, one for a single family and the other for community use, and regardless of the fact that only the first was to be lived in, they had an identifiable domestic quality. They were both “of the People” inasmuch as one was a gift from the people of Faro to the poet, and the other the result of a local community’s initiative supported by the central state. This “popular” common trait and its many facets – i.e. the moral and humanist virtues bestowed by Estado Novo on rural populations, their modesty and truthfulness – were also to be straightforwardly conveyed: the *hous*e was the “appropriate expression” of the people’s “character.”

Oliveira’s architecture was engaged in illustrating these points effectively, while fabricating a version of rural architecture for urban use. He wanted his Casa do Povo design to express, he wrote, “the spontaneity of the deeply utilitarian and, above all, human sense that rural life’s needs and conditions impose,” through the simplicity and picturesque of its “thoroughly regional character.”<sup>109</sup> In the Casa do Poeta elevations, the pastoral qualities of this architecture were given by the roofline, buttresses, porches and side gallery, all combined for a schematic, matter-of-fact image of *hous*e. The external decoration programme (despite the repeated allegation that he had “no decorative concerns”) established a catalogue on which Oliveira drew for all his works of the 1940s and was part of his architectural conservative regionalist lexicon: a variety of windows sizes and shapes (round-arched, squared) and corresponding wood shutters (lattice-work, vertical boards<sup>110</sup>), the rich ironwork in railings, window protections and weathervanes, and the indispensable laced chimney tops. Oliveira scaled up the chimneys to imposing dimensions and used them as vertical, widely visible symbols of Algarve’s “regional character.”

In these early works, the architect consolidated his architectural vocabulary for the towns and villages of Algarve, whose general lines he then applied in larger scale in the second half of the decade. They gained him the reputation in history of being the regional representative of conservative architecture, contributing to a reinvention of regional built identity that post-war modernists fought and defeated. Occasionally, Oliveira did look at alternative ways to use Algarve features, dispensing with elaborate decoration and focusing on volume and material. He experimented with the single-pitch roof and traditional trapezoidal section (**fig. 319**) in a little-documented low-income housing scheme (1939, **fig. 320**)<sup>111</sup> and in his somewhat clumsy proposal for a beach house in Montegordo (1944, **fig. 321**); yet he did not pursue this route until the mid-1950s. Meanwhile, Manuel Laginha had mastered the use of similar features (section, wood shutters, rusticated walls) in the low-income housing scheme for Loulé (1947-1952, **fig. 323**) and the Brito cottage (undated, **fig. 322**), buildings that may have been influential in Oliveira’s shift towards post-war modernist regionalism.

<sup>109</sup> Edifício para uma “Casa do Povo,” project statement 1944.12.01 (Lisbon-AJO).

<sup>110</sup> Originally a substitute for glazing in poorer households, cf. Stanislawski (1960), 274.

<sup>111</sup> “Anteprojecto de Casas para Famílias Pobres,” 1939, Lisbon, AJO.



*Public buildings, private difficulties*

A number of small and medium-size public commissions throughout Algarve, of 1944-1945, extended the lines of those experiments. Yet in 1946, Oliveira started work on proposals for the municipal market hall in Faro and Portimão fishermen's guild building (**fig. 324**), which suggest he was looking to reduce the weight of decoration in his public works, either as a result of self-restraint or external imposition. In fact, large-scale public commissions seem to have been the source of problems for Oliveira, and this somehow counters the generalised notion of the architect as a fully empowered envoy from Lisbon. Being the official architect in the province did not exempt Oliveira from critique by central authorities, on both economic and aesthetic grounds, just as it did not excuse him from being questioned by municipal officers on regulation-compliance grounds.

The **Faro market hall** process was long and eventful, its inception dating back to 1928.<sup>112</sup> Oliveira got the commission when the 1945 general urban plan, by architect João António de Aguiar, established the final location for the building. It was to be not only an important functional element but also an urban landmark, set on a large square just off Faro's nineteenth-century circular road and at the centre of a new neighbourhood (São Luís, **fig. 325**).

The urban significance of the piece led Oliveira to design, in August 1946 (**fig. 326-327**), a scaled-up version of what should be a small-town "rural-urban type" market hall, in much the same way as he designed, the previous year, a disproportionate version of a small-town stadium for Olhão. Both facilities were common in 1940s urban planning as key elements of extension schemes, and their role was charged with symbolic and formal meanings that largely exceeded their strict functional purpose. The scale and ambition of the Olhão stadium design was such that it prompted DGSU to dictate new guidelines, discouraging municipalities from presenting similar projects.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, the market hall's scale was considered excessive, well above the recommended square metres per inhabitant.<sup>114</sup> The size was reduced in Oliveira's second design, dated March 1947, and a number of layout shortcomings were corrected, but this failed to convince ministerial officials: they still found the exaggerated "rigidity of symmetrical composition and concern with the embellishment of elevations" to be prejudicial, and to be obtained at the cost of adding an unnecessary, entire upper floor.<sup>115</sup> Although ready to support one third of the total estimated cost, the state was concerned that the municipality would not be able to raise the remaining funds.

Here we find evidence of an economical problem behind Oliveira's conservative regionalism. The resources of small local authorities could not easily support architectural compositions that relied upon the devices of monumentality and classicism such as repetition, mass

<sup>112</sup> (Faro-CMF/AHMF-17/18); (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-REE-0203/28).

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Letter DGSU to MOP 1946.09.18 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-386/MU/45).

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Repartição de Melhoramentos Urbanos, assessment 1946.08.21 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-348/MU/46).

<sup>115</sup> Repartição de Melhoramentos Urbanos, assessment 1948.03 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-348/MU/46).

and verticality. These were reserved for some centrally commissioned public works in Lisbon and Porto, and for representational buildings throughout the country (e.g. courthouses). Economy of construction was a consistent concern of central bureaucracy, and repeatedly led to failed applications for state funding and project reviews. As the ministerial officials recognised when assessing the application for Olhão municipal market hall (above, **fig. 206**), these initiatives often weighed disproportionately heavily on municipalities' budgets, at the expense of other necessary facilities, for the sake of improving local aesthetics.<sup>116</sup>

In Faro's market, Oliveira made additions to the brief (including a ballroom) to justify an upper floor: without a two-storey elevation, the monumentality of the whole would be seriously compromised. Yet between the initial design and the final one (**fig. 328**), only the extremities of the façade were reduced and simplified. The central tower was never given a functional justification: it would stress the focal axis of the composition, enhance the perspective of the ensemble and be an "orientation element."<sup>117</sup> The municipality ignored DGSU officials' suggestion to install a water tank in it, as a way to justify its cost. The project realised between June 1948 and October 1953, in a prolonged construction process riddled with suspensions, delays and unscheduled costs, was not very different from its initial version.

The market hall project was the opportunity Faro municipality seized to build a monumental building in a new area of the town (**fig. 329**). Oliveira employed the best of his skills and much of the practice acquired in Pardal Monteiro's office: his experience in the Lisbon cruise ship terminal project, concluded just before moving to Faro, was a clear influence in the classical play of masses and paced strip-like vertical openings of the market hall. Regional elements were kept to a minimum, confined to the V-shaped ceramic grids, and the false belfry topping the tower could have been designed for Portugal, Spain or France. The "adequate expression" of a market hall in the catalogue of public facilities was eminently utilitarian; to this, urban imperatives added requirements of monumentality and scale. Decoration had a relatively small place in the project.

The small scale and prompt realisation of private housing commissions – and the fact that sometimes he himself had a say in their approval – made them a much easier practice field, if compared with the long, obstacle-ridden public commissions. Captain Freitas Guimarães, a former governador civil and mayor of Faro, commissioned Oliveira in 1947 with a two-family **house on Rua João de Deus 18-22 (fig. 330)**, requesting that it was to have "a certain traditional character" – to which the architect quickly added "although the play of masses, the grouping of openings and the details give it a contemporary garb."<sup>118</sup> The Sousa Coutinho and Martins de Magalhães were other traditional families for whom Oliveira worked: he was the only architect fully established in town, apparently well connected, and in tune with the nationally widespread trend of conservatism in the 1940s.

<sup>116</sup> Letter RMU to CMO 5433, 1947.10.17 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-6-EP).

<sup>117</sup> Mercado Municipal de Faro, project statement 1947.07.07 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-348/MU/46).

<sup>118</sup> Project statement 1947.10.28 (Faro-CMF/SAO-123/1947).

Aimed at diverse social strata, the extension areas of Faro were concurrently taking shape, dictated by the 1945 general urban plan. The new buildings designed for **Rua Nova de São Luís** were single-storey twin houses with narrow frontages and long side elevations, whose layouts (**fig. 331**) still evinced, more than twenty years on, the same engrained customs that inspired 1920s housing in Faro (e.g. **fig. 286**). Their elevations, in symmetric compositions, drew from a choice of elements suggested by larger, more central buildings: stone-clad socles, round-arched openings, corbels under protruding surfaces, and V-shaped ceramic grids in parapet openings (**figs. 332-333**). In the whole, they were simplified, smaller versions of Oliveira's proposals. Draftsman António Rolão Júnior signed the projects of three of those twin houses (Rua Nova de São Luís 12-14,<sup>119</sup> 37-39,<sup>120</sup> and 6-8<sup>121</sup>) in August, October and December 1947, respectively. Given the similarities to Oliveira's projects, and the fact that Rolão Júnior was SAU's chief draftsman-designer, it seems likely that the two were partners in these small-scale private projects; in fact, Oliveira led a freelance activity, in parallel to his official task, throughout his stay in Algarve.<sup>122</sup>

Oliveira also took every opportunity to push other designers to follow his concept of an "appropriate expression" for each type of building in Faro's urban narrative, during his first years as a municipal advisor. For **Avenida Cinco de Outubro 59-61**, technical engineer Mário Lima designed a four-apartment building with a tectonic image, plain elevations with reduced decoration, a terraced roof and parapet (1949, **fig. 334**). For Oliveira, these elevations conveyed the expression of a "public building, only lacking the flag pole, coat-of-arms, etc.," and not that of "a residential building that is supposed to embellish the area."<sup>123</sup> The appropriate image for a large residential building on the town's new boulevard was consequently adjusted with the conservative attributes of a *house*: tiled pitch-roofs, extensive use of stone and ironwork, elaborate decoration around the openings (**fig. 335**). Styled to play its role in the urban setting, it was approved in November 1949.

### Detering over-decoration

Jorge de Oliveira's views of regional and "appropriate architectural expression" raised *economic* issues that weakened his position before the other regional and central powers – the market hall's monumentality was one instance –, but there were cases where Oliveira's *aesthetic* stance provided grounds for generalised criticism.

<sup>119</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-102/1947).

<sup>120</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-112/1947).

<sup>121</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-25/1947).

<sup>122</sup> It happened in Olhão in 1943 (R. do Comércio 48-56 and R. Mouzinho de Albuquerque 1-7), 1944 (R. das Lavadeiras 4), 1947 (R. General Humberto Delgado), and 1955 (Av. República 154); in Faro in 1943 (Royal shoe shop), 1947 (kiosk in Manuel Bivar square, Ford dealership in the market hall square, EVA coach depot in R. Infante D. Henrique, and Guimarães house in R. João de Deus), 1948 (R. Mouzinho de Albuquerque 10), 1949 (Magalhães house in R. General Humberto Delgado), 1950 (R. João de Deus 30-34, FIAAL building in the market hall square, and Montepio bank branch), 1952 (Aliança hotel and R. Bernardo Passos 26), 1954 (Horta do Ramos development in São Luís), and 1955 (houses in Praceta Coronel Pires Viegas); in Portimão in 1944 (Banco do Algarve branch, Mendes house in Praia da Rocha); and in Vila Real de Santo António in 1949 (Palma house in R. D. Francisco Gomes).

<sup>123</sup> Assessment 1949.03.09 (Faro-CMF/SAO-29/1949).

The **provincial shelter** (Albergue Distrital) in Faro is a clear example of this. It was the leading feature in governador civil Luís Vaz de Sousa’s social service policy, a complex and large structure devised to institutionalise the homeless, beggars, elderly handicapped and undisciplined youth from the entire province, as well as to feed the poor. Its creation was closely associated with that of another policing facility, the Polícia de Segurança Pública headquarters, also designed by Oliveira (1950-1957) for the same central department behind the governador (Ministério do Interior, the Home Office). The police-run shelter was a functional hybrid, conflating re-education and social assistance with containment of problematic urban phenomena.

In his initial memória, Jorge Oliveira praised his client’s initiative (as he always did in his memórias) and vowed to design an up-to-date facility without “slipping into the exaggeration of giving it a disproportionate value,” creating a “modest but clean and honest environment.”<sup>124</sup> Yet the first project submitted in 1949 to DUF for funding showed heavily decorated elevations, abundant stone-carved elements and a cost that more than doubled the initial estimate. Oliveira designed the long main elevation (**fig. 336**), looking onto the Faro-Lagos road, as the roadside façade of an eighteenth-century manor house: balconies with elaborate iron and woodwork railings, tall windows and carved cornices marked the *piano nobile*. Between these balconies – stylised samples of palatial architecture –, two other kinds of windows lined the elevations: square openings with wood-lattice shutters, essential in Oliveira’s pastoral imagery, and tri-partite windows in horizontal strips, corresponding to the washrooms. Stone-clad pilasters and solid obelisks signalling the corners, baroque-inspired arched gates and the distrito’s stone-carved coat-of-arms completed the simulacrum of a nobleman’s house.

Perpendicular to this main body of the building, devoted to sleeping and teaching quarters, a shorter arm housed meal-supply facilities and was very differently styled (**fig. 337**). Walls were pared-down planes with perforated parapets and rustic corner stones in lieu of pilasters. A concrete pergola hovered above the terraced roof, and generous arched galleries surrounded the dining halls. This seemed like a different building altogether, unrelated to the first, a scaled-up version of Oliveira’s early experiments of an Algarve-based lexicon.

Regional and central authorities, however, were unwilling to fund this extravagant proposal. Civil engineer Alberto Pessanha Viegas, the head of DUF, gave its “architectural aspect” a withering assessment: the division of the building into two parts was

“Shocking, especially given the diversity of appearances between the two. If the main elevation no doubt pleases those who appreciate the style chosen, *which is not the case of the subscriber*, it also seems like the other elevations lack artistic cachet, are mannered and overloaded with ornamental elements (...) that I find unnecessary. The style (?) [*sic*] they originate from invariably results in expensive solutions, even though the designer expressed in his memória the intention to produce a sober and economical work.”<sup>125</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Project statement 1949.06.30 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-7/MU/50).

<sup>125</sup> Assessment 1950.01.18 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-7/MU/50). My italics. POiA (Citation 44).

Viegas suggested all the elevations be simplified and stripped of “excessive” ornaments, and the stone elements eliminated, as a condition for funding.

The assessment by DGSU in Lisbon was even more severe. Aside from numerous instances of over-dimensioned, unjustified and wasted spaces and layout flaws, civil engineer Blanco Morais and architect Gomez Egea found the main elevation to be “improper, for its wealth and the excess of decorations, characterising the building in a way that is extraneous to its purpose”; they recommended the project be completely remade, and all the elevations redesigned so as to form a “balanced ensemble.”<sup>126</sup> When he approved a revised version, in August 1950, the minister of public works again insisted the architect should further simplify details and finishings so as to maximise economy. Construction started in July 1953 and finished in November 1959, more than ten years after the process began.

The **Junta de Província do Algarve** headquarters (figs. 338-339) is the third and final case I bring as evidence of how government officials questioned, and resisted, Oliveira’s work. The building was a highly personalised initiative (of president José Correia do Nascimento’s), devised to be the seat of provincial government and to express, despite the limited powers of the *juntas distritais*, the dignity and nobility of Algarve’s “highest administrative body.” It had to be a palace, the province’s palace. It would house the province’s administrative and technical services, along with cultural facilities: a lecture hall, the provincial library and archives, and two museums – in short, a modern-day, small-scale public palace of administration and culture.

Oliveira was not only JPA’s in-house architect, but also particularly fluent in the kind of historical architecture one might expect to find in a conventional palace. He had been creating new-built palaces in late-baroque style since he arrived in Algarve; to describe the JPA palace’s initial design (1951) he used the same terms employed in his 1943 Fernandes building in Olhão (see Chapter 3), mentioning the influence of “austere lines and markedly Portuguese character [that] are peculiar to some beautiful examples of our palatial architecture.”<sup>127</sup> He had also been engaged in the refurbishment of town halls in Portimão, Olhão, Faro, Silves and Lagos, all exercises in re-creating or updating palatial architecture for public use.

Oliveira’s province palace was a U-shaped building with its main and narrowest elevation looking onto a square. With perfect symmetry, the fulcrum of the two-tiered composition displayed doors, windows and balconies framed in varied baroque-style jambs, lintels, and pediments. Balustrade, socle, pilasters, parapets, and obelisks were carved in stone. Wrought-iron balcony railings and window grids, and a mansard roof completed the eighteenth-century analogy. Although modest in size, the ensemble exuded undisguised pretention to nobility and wealth. In reality though, the Junta needed state funding to build its palace.

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<sup>126</sup> Assessment 1950.04.18 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-7/MU/50).

<sup>127</sup> Junta de Província do Algarve, project statement 1951.07.30 (Lisbon-AJO).

DGSU in Lisbon criticised the design as it exceeded the actual needs of JPA, and functional and economical principles were overshadowed by aesthetical convenience (e.g. double-height rooms for façade composition purposes). The elevations were considered inadequate, “complicated” and needed re-designing, so that the building, “since it is being produced in our times, may have a more modern imprint, thus following the natural and progressive development of Architecture.”<sup>128</sup> Following his services’ advice, the minister of public works insisted the entire project be revised to match the budget (one-third over the initial estimate) with the Junta’s resources and needs, since the state grant would be small and balanced with funding for “other, more urgent and necessary works.”<sup>129</sup> Only after JPA accepted to support, alone, the excess cost of construction derived from external decorations, did DGSU agree to stop objecting to the “excessive wealth of the façades” and allow for the funds to be assigned, in 1953.<sup>130</sup> With simplified detailing and less stone and ironwork, the long construction process was not finished until November 1962.<sup>131</sup>

The three large-scale public buildings designed by Oliveira in Faro in the late 1940s and early 1950s – the market hall, the shelter and the province headquarters – tell an intricate, multifaceted story. They suggest the establishment of conservative regionalist architecture in Algarve was a complex process, rich with instances of negotiation between local, regional and central agents. Oliveira had the means and power to influence such dealings, but was equally subject to interference by those agents – and did not, alone, determine the architecture of mid-century Algarve. Private clients that requested “traditional character” for their residences, municipalities wishing to improve the image of their towns, and regional bodies willing to invest heavily in dignified buildings, were instrumental in shaping the architect’s production; they supported his penchant for monumentality and his belief in the semiotic qualities of a conservative regionalism. Yet the difficulties of combining such proposals with the pragmatic possibilities of the public works’ sphere, and their perceived anachronism, soon became evident; a decade had passed since Oliveira’s appointment, and his conservatism was not consistently supported by an evolving bureaucracy. Together, economy and changing aesthetic paradigms dictated the decline of Oliveira’s stance.

### *Diverging viewpoints on Faro’s built identity: the savings bank affair*

Oliveira was not alone in addressing the difficulty of Algarve’s building identity in the 1940s. The design and assessment process underlying the construction of the first **Faro branch of**

<sup>128</sup> RMU, Gomez Egea’s assessment 1951.12.27 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-F-160).

<sup>129</sup> Letter DGSU to DUF 1952.04.01 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-F-160).

<sup>130</sup> DGSU, Manuel de Sá e Melo’s order 1953.01.27 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-F-160).

<sup>131</sup> Cf. “Edifício da Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Algarve,” Daniel Giebels in *Inventário do Património Arquitetónico* ([http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP\\_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=24864](http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=24864)) accessed 2011.03.03.

**central savings bank** Caixa Geral de Depósitos clearly illustrates the conflicting views between the historicist and regionalist models for public architecture; in this case, the argument between public works office DGEMN in Lisbon and Faro municipality evolved specifically around issues not of economy or over-decoration but of identity, which makes it particularly relevant for my discussion.

The building was the work of Lisbon-based architect António Veloso Reis Camelo (1899-1985), an early modernist with important commissions from the mayor of Lisbon and public works offices in the 1940s and 1950s. With João Simões (1908-1993), Camelo designed the Vida Popular pavilions in the Exposition of the Portuguese World (1940, **fig. 340**), a building-size, temporary display of the country’s regional folk traditions of which the “Aldeias Portuguesas” were part (see Chapter 2). The Faro bank was a different task: not an abstraction of generic elements but an interpretation of concrete features of a given region. An entirely central project (designed, financed and built on state initiative), it was communicated to the municipality not for approval but purely for information purposes, given its importance and prominent location, on the corner of Rua and Praça D. Francisco Gomes, Faro’s noblest public spaces.

In his preliminary design (1947, **fig. 341**), Camelo joined the two two-storey, terrace-roofed wings (one aligned with each side of the obtuse angle) with a cylinder, the composition’s focal point, topped by a rendered cone. Strips grouping ground- and upper-floor windows heightened the vertical stance, and a thinly capped parapet strengthened the volumes’ box-like appearance. The manager’s apartment, in a rooftop pavilion, was recessed so as not to interfere with the pure volumes seen from street level. The design combined features of a state commission for an outstanding location requiring a dignified image – stone cladding, frames and ornaments, wrought-iron railings – and some of the regional elements that modernist architects recognised and cherished – elemental geometry-generated volumes, sharp edges and pared-down walls.

DGEMN official Raul Lino supported the proposal and deemed it “correct and exactly in accordance with its purpose,” despite recommending the cone to be replaced by a simple terrace to avoid complicated construction and maintenance.<sup>132</sup> But Faro municipal advisors Jorge de Oliveira and Almeida Carrapato openly criticised the design, namely the conical element,

“whose lines are best suited in the Alentejo province, where conical roofs were widely employed and have been happily inspiring contemporary creations. Its expression, however, is not adequate to our province nor is it to the local context where it is to be built.”<sup>133</sup>

Furthermore, the Faro officials regretted the new building did not follow the height of the adjacent Banco de Portugal and Misericórdia hospital buildings, topped by “characteristically Portuguese” tiled eaves. The mayor and his councillors not only agreed with these opinions but also considered the elevations “poor and uncharacteristic, not harmonised at all with the other façades that frame the square.” The construction would “counter this council’s effort to improve the

<sup>132</sup> Assessment 1947.08.05 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-003-0052/04).

<sup>133</sup> Assessment 1947.08.27 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-003-0052/04). POiA (Citation 45).

architecture of the most central and busiest square in the city.”<sup>134</sup> DGEMN, however, held its ground: small town squares were not supposed to follow the requirements of uniformity and grandeur that originated squares in Lisbon or other “progressive” cities:

“Our provincial town squares live based on their picturesque features and, since they are framed by the most heterogeneous buildings (in height, volume and purpose), it doesn’t seem logical to require them to be entirely uniform in their height.”<sup>135</sup>

On the subject of height, the minister of public works supported the local authority’s view and required the design to include a full-sized top floor, so as to integrate it with the existing ensemble. This revision, the minister determined, should also consider the refurbishment of the Banco de Portugal façade, the 1916 eclectic Moorish-Manuelino design that was by then judged “unacceptable.”

In Camelo’s revised version of April 1948 (**fig. 342**) – three-storeys high and covered in a tiled double-pitch roof, with a neatly protruding eave framing the elevations – the “Alentejano” cone was unchanged, and remained the focus of disagreement. Informed of the revision, the mayor again refused the conical roof, which would constitute an “absolutely anomalous architectural element in its context, devoid of regional tradition.”<sup>136</sup> The DGEMN office’s opinion, however, was unswerving, insisting that it not an anomalous element in the regional context but frequently found both in the Algarve and the Alentejo provinces. This time, the minister sided with his service, as often was the case when internal and external views were irreconcilable. In the final design (1949, **fig. 343**) the roof remained, supported by Camelo’s statement that mentioned the wish to express “our palatial architecture, even though we avoided the classical rigidity of formulae and forms of any past age.”<sup>137</sup> The palatial reference, hitherto absent from the architect’s statements, seemed intended to appease Faro’s resistance.

The local authority saw the savings bank project as an opportunity to beautify and dignify Faro’s most monumental square, which was framed with eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century works of metropolitan architecture (**fig. 374**). There was nothing in the square’s buildings that conformed to contemporary views on regional architectural features. The town’s officials would have preferred to follow the classicism of the few monumental façades of Faro, which happened to grace the square, as a source of inspiration for the new design. Instead, what they obtained from Lisbon was Camelo’s interpretation of Algarve regional architecture –based on a variety of generic South Portugal elements and mixed with modernism-imbued features. As monumentality and uniformity requirements gained importance, the project evolved towards a more hybrid result that seemed to convey none of the true intentions of any of those who had intervened in the debate.

<sup>134</sup> Letter CMF to DGEMN 1947.08.27 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-003-0052/04).

<sup>135</sup> Assessment 1947.12.23 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-003-0052/04). POiA (Citation 46).

<sup>136</sup> Letter CMF to DGEMN 30 April 1948.04.30 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-003-0052/04).

<sup>137</sup> Project statement 1949.05 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-003-0051/02).



In fact, a decade after the process started its results had still not been digested by local opinion. In 1957, councillor and vice-mayor Raul Cúmano de Bivar Weinholtz stated bitterly:

“Traditionalist Farenses like myself would be proud to show visitors one of the country’s finest squares. But what have twentieth-century architects done? Without the least notion of the context’s aesthetics or any criteria, they came up with building models of undefined style and entirely contrasting with the extant ones. The Banco de Portugal was the first disaster. The next one was the [savings bank] building, which by the way is the least disruptive one but, without the changes imposed by the municipality, is still not appropriate, and lastly the Hotel that eventually ruined the square. The three buildings designed by three different architects, none of which was able to integrate his building with that site.”<sup>138</sup>

In this process I find expressions of an on-going dispute between the central and local authorities as to Faro’s built identity, which could be seen as an example of the opposition between metropolitan and local views as to the architectural character of provincial centres in the entire country. Eager for occasions to develop and embellish their towns and replicate central formulas, local officials wanted monumentality, classicism and homogeneity. But metropolitan designers and services had different plans for these peripheral places, and wished to maintain the diversity and picturesque traits that, from their point of view, distinguished them. To do so, they sometimes applied stereotypes that local agents received with suspicion and, as was the case here, direct resistance. Because Faro did not have the same well-defined set of traditional features as Olhão, it was not able to influence and negotiate those central stereotypes in quite the same way as Olhão had. As a result, the savings bank branch in Faro was given the generic image of a north Alentejo building.<sup>139</sup> Faro’s identity, and even the generic Algarve identity, gave way to an abstraction of “the South.”

### *The building practice of non-architects in Faro*

In Faro’s periphery, everyday building practice developed well removed from these official dealings. The **Machado house (figs. 344-345)** was designed in 1950 for a roadside plot in Estoi, a rural parish of Faro by civil engineer Joaquim Belchior. Recently graduated, he seemed more interested in showing his knowledge of the modernist principles in housing design than in elaborating on the traditional models, whether fantasised or rooted in local experience. He supported his proposal for a modest, “economical” cottage in his home village with an elaborate explanation of “all the requirements of a modern house” included in the layout: the proximity of bedrooms and bathroom to spare residents to sudden “temperature changes,” the interdependence

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<sup>138</sup> Comissão Municipal de Arte e Arqueologia, minutes 1957.01.17 (Faro-ADF/AHMF-B/B.9-1). POiA (Citation 47).

<sup>139</sup> In fact, the conical, rendered roof was very popular at the time in stereotypes of Alentejo traditional architecture in Évora, for instance.

of kitchen and dining room, the sufficient natural light and ventilation in every compartment, and the “rational” separation of garage and house to prevent smell and noise propagation.<sup>140</sup> Such lengthy description seems enigmatic and inconsistent: not only was the actual layout design somewhat schematic but also, in his other commissions of the same date (e.g. dos Reis house above, **figs. 281-282**), the engineer omitted any reference to a modern layout.

The “external configuration” of the house, Belchior wrote, followed “modern architectural trends,” although in a simple manner so as to “frame the building in its surroundings.” Simple, orthogonal geometry and plain surfaces possibly represented the modernist side, while details such as the glazed brick window jambs and the notes of rusticated stone on the edges were likely an attempt at integration in the rural context. Based on the same set of pastoral decorative references that informed Oliveira’s early designs in Algarve – consistent with the circumstance, in this case –, Belchior’s proposal nevertheless introduced a novel element into the process. Despite the ultra-peripheral location and relative insignificance of Machado house, its planning application was the first case in Faro where I found a discourse on layout design being given the same emphasis as elaborations on external, “regional” character.

That this concern should be found in the work of a civil engineer, in 1950, is not insignificant. Belchior seemed determined to demonstrate he could master the design of a “modern” home as fluently as the architects he sometimes worked with. That same year, trainee architect Gomes da Costa (in partnership with civil engineers, as it happens) designed and built his first works in Faro, and the discourse on the “Battle of Modern Architecture” gained intensity in architectural circles. Yet in the provincial context, this seems to have been not only a battle against conservative stances. Other than a mere internal dispute in architects’ circles, in peripheral practices this was also a “Battle of Professional Architecture,” where the qualifier “modern” was the factor of difference. It opposed a fragile, small socio-professional group – the architects – to all the other players in the design and building community.

Oliveira’s role in Faro was focused in the public sphere and in wealthy private clients. But as developers moved in to build Faro’s new extension areas in the 1940s, they were served by a new generation of metropolitan-educated and socially well-connected, non-architect designers: the civil and technical engineers. Their formal choices were informed by Oliveira’s work, and by that of other architects in Lisbon and Porto, and they initially produced a simplified version of conservative architecture, employing some of Oliveira’s regionalist motifs. To a significant extent, the “battle” discourse was directed against them, as they took over everyday, small-scale architectural work, especially in small centres. It should be noted how, in his account of the “Battle” given in hindsight, Costa directed his anger not at fellow architect Oliveira but at the civil engineers that controlled design and building circles in Faro.

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<sup>140</sup> Project statement 1950.02.06 (Faro-CMF/SAO-52/1950).

The “Battle,” therefore, was for the control of buildings by architects, instead of engineers and builders – who, in reality, led the bulk of building activity at the time. It was their activity, rather than that of the group with formal architectural knowledge, that had most importance in this region, throughout the period of my study. Non-architects practice in the early 1950s extended Oliveira’s conservative regionalism beyond what the architect himself did, both in chronological and geographical terms. It operated a transition between 1940s conservative regionalism and what I will call 1950s modernist regionalism. If these categories are hard to define and by no means bounded by chronological periods, the transition between the two is even more indistinct. I will briefly characterise the early stages of this transition before I move on to discuss the work and influence of Costa as the exponent of modernist regionalism in Faro.

Joaquim Belchior, designer of the Machado house, became one of the foremost agents in the transformation of Faro from the 1950s on.<sup>141</sup> With civil engineers Humberto Almeida Carrapato, Bento Viegas Louro, João dos Santos Baleizão, João dos Santos Luz, Filipe da Silva Pêra, José Apolónia Correia and Fernando Soares Mendonça, and technical engineers Mário Lima and José Marciano Nobre, he formed a group of professional designers trained in Lisbon and Porto that determined the face of Faro until at least the mid-1960s. Some had family connections with the building industry or important landowners, and many came to combine design and building activities in extremely productive careers, as was the case of Belchior.

Designers were legally obliged to sign Faro’s municipal registry for responsibility of building works from January 1950.<sup>142</sup> Among the first forty-six names, inscribed in the registry between that date and October 1960, only four were of architects, and only two of them were registered before 1959 (Oliveira, in January 1950, and Rui Silveira Borges, in August 1951). All the other forty-two names were of civil engineers, technical engineers or master builders, who were all officially acknowledged as competent designers and / or constructors. These figures suggest the preponderance of non-architect professionals in building design in Faro at the time, although they should be considered as merely indicative: no accurate assertion can be drawn from them, since some of the names were only associated with the construction stage and not involved in design. Furthermore, non-registered architects were often the designers behind a number of projects in the period, which were submitted to municipal bureaucracy in partnership with a registered professional; such was the case of all Costa’s works before June 1959, when the architect became the forty-first name in the list.

However, my file-to-file research into the planning application series in Faro municipality from 1923 to 1963 seems to confirm this first impression. It showed that, in the 1950s, the vast majority of design work was concentrated in the hands of a few names, especially when projects

<sup>141</sup> Joaquim Lopes Belchior (b. 1920) was the son of Estoí landowners and farmers. After graduating from the Porto school of engineering (1947) he was technical supervisor in a maritime structures company in Faro from 1951 to 1957, and run his own construction company from 1957 to 1974. He was mayor of Faro between 1974 and 1979. Cf. Mário Lyster Franco, *Algarviana*, vol. 1 (Faro: CMF, 1982), 283-84.

<sup>142</sup> “Registo de Técnicos de Obras: Livro 1,” 1950-1977 (Faro-CMF/SSOP).

were to be built within the confines of the town. From the list above, civil engineers Joaquim Belchior and Humberto Carrapato stand out, in the first half of the decade, as the most prolific. The heavy decorative grammar of Jorge de Oliveira’s buildings seems to have had strong influence in the initial years of their careers. Their domestic layouts were not innovative at that time, despite what they wrote in the planning applications. In most cases, they followed deep-set conventions – for instance, in the location of sitting rooms next to the entrance or secluded dining rooms at the back. As with Oliveira, their houses were “modern” in that they added to those conventions a layer of contemporary domestic features such as adequate light and ventilation, fully fitted sanitation and sometimes functional clustering.

The Machado house (above) was a good example of the period’s everyday layout design, and also showed Belchior’s use of some of Oliveira’s favourite elements in simplified versions, applied in less affluent commissions in secondary streets. This was a watered down, cheapened conservative regionalism, adjusted to the pragmatism of everyday building. The engineer’s eclecticism in this transition moment, however, allowed him to respond differently to wealthier clients in the Santo António extension area. In the **Filipe house** in Rua General Humberto Delgado 27 (1952, **figs. 346-347**),<sup>143</sup> the clear geometry was hinged on the large cantilevered canopy of the front porch, an element still reminiscent of the 1930s modernism found in many works in Faro. For the **Fonseca house** in Rua Reitor Teixeira Guedes 107 (1954, **figs. 348-349**), Belchior chose to draw on the more imposing elements of what he called “Portuguese style constructions,”<sup>144</sup> perhaps at the client’s request, and his design was closer to the early 1940s elaborations of Oliveira and other metropolitan architects.

Humberto Carrapato, graduated in Porto in 1949, was related to the head of Faro’s planning department Manuel Almeida Carrapato, and might have been the source of the illicit practices that Costa claimed to have put an end to. His work of the early 1950s concentrated in the secondary areas that were then fast developing. For **Rua Gago Coutinho**, for example, Carrapato designed two houses, in May and July 1951<sup>145</sup> (**figs. 350-351**), which show his economical version of regionalism – in simplified stone frames and socle-cladding, and parapets with V-shape ceramics and a strong protruding edge. As Belchior before, Carrapato made sure to mention in his statement that his layout design “uses the plot rationally and clusters the compartments according to their function.”<sup>146</sup>

Engineer Carrapato demonstrated in his works how he shared Oliveira’s concept of an “appropriate expression” of buildings according to their location and function. Within his practice of conservative regionalism, a range of different buildings translated such variation: from the rustic

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<sup>143</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-122/1952).

<sup>144</sup> Project statement 1954.04.27 (Faro-CMF/SAO-135/1954).

<sup>145</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-155/1951, 238/1951).

<sup>146</sup> Project statement 1951.07.30 (Faro-CMF/SAO-238/1951).

expression of a set of twin houses in **Rua Reitor Teixeira Guedes 117** (1952, **figs. 352-353**),<sup>147</sup> with pergolas and wood board shutters, to the three-piece set of apartment buildings in **Rua Mouzinho de Albuquerque 7-11A** (1950, **fig. 355**),<sup>148</sup> with elaborate opening frames and flowerpot shelves, and to the series of apartment buildings in the two mirrored corners of **Praceta Engenheiro Duarte Pacheco** (1950 and 1951, **fig. 354**),<sup>149</sup> marked by the clumsily-scaled tiled spires, iron globes and sumptuous balconies. These works were all commissioned by developers, to rent or sell, yet their composition varied according to their role in the urban setting: bucolic quietness in suburban roadside locations, metropolitan-style nobility in new-built neighbourhoods and central boulevards. Carrapato's ability to exercise its stylistic skills was suggested in his 1952 design for a twin apartment building in **Avenida Cinco de Outubro 62-64** (**fig. 356**). The heavy composition, branded by the stone pilasters and urn-like roof decorations, was approved by the author's relative, municipal advisor Almeida Carrapato, as "remarkable by its harmonious conception in Portuguese style."<sup>150</sup>

Humberto Carrapato's design stance changed in May 1952, when, under the combined influence of Oliveira's planning assessments and Gomes da Costa's alluring modernist practice, he started to move towards further simplification and the use of modernist elements in his architectural compositions. The engineers' work, as we will see, played an important part in this change to a different local building language, following a parallel trajectory to that of formal, professional architects.

### 3. Modernist regionalism: from alternative to establishment (1952-1969).

In the early 1950s, the kind of modern architecture that was influenced by contemporary, post-war international trends was an exception in Faro. But from the early 1960s, it became the rule, for objects designed both by architects and non-architects, whose international-looking features were combined with a selection of persistent local characteristics. Works were created not only by designers with a freshly acquired modernist culture, but also by some with a long and more conservative practice. Post-war modernism came to be a widespread trend, still visible today in Faro's streets.

The gradual replacement of practices I grouped under the denomination of conservative regionalism by ones I will describe as modernist regionalism, took place during the 1950s in Faro. I have used the example of Faro before to illustrate the diffusion of conservative regionalist practice, based on the special circumstances surrounding the work of Jorge de Oliveira for the town and for the entire region. Similarly, Faro can be seen as a particularly rich case study for the development of

<sup>147</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-72/1952).

<sup>148</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-374/1950).

<sup>149</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-425/1950, 75/1951).

<sup>150</sup> Assessment 1952.02.22 (Faro-CMF/SAO-63/1952).

a strand of modernist regionalism in Algarve, since the bulk of one of the region's most prolific post-war architects, Manuel Gomes da Costa, was concentrated in it. Along with Oliveira's later works and the design and building activities of a string of civil engineers who adhered to the main traits of post-war modernism, Costa's works epitomised a change of paradigm in Algarve architecture. Between 1950 and 1960, his designs for Faro went from representing an avant-garde resistance to deep-set conventions – symbolised in the “Milagre” house – to becoming the basis for a new convention. Fuelled by Costa's close association with the foremost actors in the building industry, a regional modernist architecture became mainstream practice. Its easily identifiable traits have led some to call it “Gomes da Costa Style.”<sup>151</sup> The growing size and number of buildings erected to Costa's designs in the middle three decades of his career (which spanned for 52 years) consistently inspired other professionals in the field, and his “style” became a part of the building establishment across the region. As a DGSU officer put it when assessing a project signed by Costa for Tavira in 1962, its unashamed modern elevations were accepted precisely because “they can be seen as integrated with the general trend of contemporary building in Algarve.”<sup>152</sup>

This shift from conservative to modernist regionalism was nuanced and piecemeal. The categories I offer are artificial and not watertight, and transition moments are equally significant, since they contain many of the essential elements of both ends of the line that links the two building practice tendencies. Investigating the transition between these two stances, the sophisticated works of a metropolitan-learned architect such as Costa are as relevant as the hybrid, tentative, often clumsy works of civil engineers such as Apolónia Correia, Humberto Carrapato, Belchior and Marciano Nobre. While the architect's work engages in a clear departure from his recent predecessors – even if actually in association with them, as I've shown to be the case in his first works –, the non-architect designs operate in an intermediate stage between past and future trends; in this case, between practices characteristic of the 1940s and of the 1950s. I will examine how, in that transitional period, a sort of “soft” modernism developed in the hands of civil engineers and draftsmen, in small-scale, everyday housing construction, and ran parallel to the rise of Costa's “hard” or “perfected” modernism in Faro. This observation requires, I believe, a comprehensive account of Costa's oeuvre – at times admittedly too exhaustive –, which goes further than a repetition of his best-known works to encompass the mass of buildings he designed for Faro, Olhão, Tavira and Vila Real de Santo António and influenced, by its quantity and features, non-architect practice.

### **A changing work-frame**

During the decades of 1950 and 1960, Faro's built fabric changed dramatically. New urban extension areas were created, 1940s extensions were consolidated and, in the stabilised centre, existing construction was replaced or extended. There was a marked change in the scale of

<sup>151</sup> “Nota biográfica,” in Vargas (2009).

<sup>152</sup> Orlando Jácome da Costa's assessment 1962.02.16 (Tavira-CMT/AMT-LU12/1964).

buildings: generally considered, the single-family, single-storey urban house was the typical work of conservative regionalism practices, while the multi-storey apartment block was where modernist regionalism gained currency. In the early 1950s, Faro was a fast-growing centre whose population had doubled since the turn of the century – yet still a “flat and uniform” place, with wide streets and low-rise buildings.<sup>153</sup> Its low-rise profile was seen as a shortcoming, which local practitioners, politicians and chroniclers sought to overcome: by the end of the decade, Lyster Franco emphasised not only how the recent public buildings were a measure of Faro’s provincial importance, but also how former inner-city enclosures and unbuilt outskirts had recently been replaced by

“Modern-design neighbourhoods, airy and uncluttered, in which hundreds of good-looking buildings were erected, thus reinforcing more and more (even in the ancient part of town) the general trend to replace the old single-storey buildings – which conveyed a sense of pettiness and poverty not accordant with Faro’s importance – by more grand and majestic buildings, often several storeys high.”<sup>154</sup>

The former mayor acknowledged the change was pushed by the municipality, who created specialised urban areas and “enforced buildings of a certain magnitude in specific locations,” therefore contributing to the restyling of Faro’s image. But he stressed the role of private developers above all, noting how “the private initiative has entirely corresponded to these developments” and built “many hundreds” of buildings in the previous years. The upsurge in the building industry was, he wrote, “the foremost modern characteristic of the Algarvian capital.”

Private developers were, in fact, very much aware of this public concern with the scale of Faro’s buildings, and during the 1950s sought to profit from it whenever their financial possibilities allowed. My study found early cases where construction of single-storey buildings was permitted by the local authority *on condition* of their vertical extension in the near future.<sup>155</sup> As larger developments became common, builders and designers some times still invoked Faro’s reputation to defend their ambitions. For example, when technical engineer Marciano Nobre tried to gain approval for a three-storey building in a narrow street, in 1958, he invoked (to no avail) “the often reiterated ambition of both the Mayor and his councillors, to see our buildings gain height in order to give the town the imposing character it is entitled to.” His project would “serve as a stimulus for other builders, so that Faro will no longer be a ground-floor-house town.”<sup>156</sup>

At the same time, there were also important changes in the needs behind new constructions. Franco’s list of public buildings in Faro shows that strong public investment in market halls, school facilities and representative buildings coincided with the affirmation and

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<sup>153</sup> Ferro (1954): 59.

<sup>154</sup> [Mário Lyster Franco], “Faro,” in *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira* (Lisboa, Rio de Janeiro: Editorial Enciclopédia, [1959]), 581. POiA (Citation 48).

<sup>155</sup> For instance, the refurbishment of a single-storey building in Rua de Santo António 125-127, submitted in August 1951 (Faro-CMF/SAO-250/1951).

<sup>156</sup> Project statement, 1958.10.07 (Faro-CMF/SAO-686/1958).

diffusion of conservative trends (be they regionalist or based on historical styles). Modernist regionalist practices served a different set of functions, both in public and private commissions: offices, shops, snack bars, petrol stations, holiday homes, hotels and restaurants, along with social service and church facilities.

Finally, the individuals involved in the design and construction process – designers (architects, engineers), clients, builders and developers – appear to have changed. The input of (and exposure to) external influence seems to have been intensified. And as the architects' presence seems to have grown, the ambition of patrons, builders and developers also seems to have reached new levels, as Faro expanded and a well-defined construction industry emerged. The economics behind building in Faro changed significantly between the mid-1940s and the late 1960s. Capital from the flourishing fruit export trade – later replaced by tourism – was invested more and more in real estate development. In a number of planning application records in Faro, applicants identified as “landowners” who started commissioning small buildings in the early 1950s became associated with increasingly larger projects, and with higher numbers of them, in the 1960s. New generations of traditional landowner and fruit-trading families turned to the building industry and related activities: this was the background of the foremost architects, civil engineers and house-builders of Faro in the period.

*Infiltrating conservative regionalism: between Costa's first works and Oliveira's last*

Manuel Gomes da Costa came from a merchant family in Vila Real de Santo António, the port and frontier town in the eastern tip of Algarve. Aged 20, Costa was a first-year Architecture student at the school of fine arts in Lisbon; he did not finish the year, allegedly due to the lack of dialogue between teachers and students, and also to the pressure exerted by the state political police on both groups.<sup>157</sup> Transferred to Porto, where he lodged with fellow Algarvian students Manuel Laginha and António Vicente de Castro, Costa eventually graduated from that school in 1949, with a design for his hometown's market hall that won him a student merit award.<sup>158</sup> After a training period in Lisbon – in Laginha's office (1950-1953) and in architect Fernando Silva's office – Costa moved back to Vila Real de Santo António and then to Faro. There, he prepared his degree project, the farm co-operative building for Santa Catarina da Fonte do Bispo (Tavira), defended in the school of Lisbon in 1953 and built, to a modified design, in 1960. In his first years of practice and together with Oliveira, Costa taught professional courses at the industrial and commercial school of Faro, where he came into close contact with the town's building scene: civil engineers among his fellow teachers, and draftsmen and house-builders among the pupils. His long-lasting and

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<sup>157</sup> Costa (2008). Both the Lisbon and Porto fine arts schools were renowned hotbeds of political dissents in Estado Novo times, and Gomes da Costa was a leftist intellectual since the early years of his architectural education. According to Gonçalo Vargas (2009), Gomes da Costa became a member of the anti-fascist platform Movimento de Unidade Democrática in 1949, his final year in Porto.

<sup>158</sup> “Nota biográfica,” in Vargas (2009).



instrumental working relationship and friendship with Faro-born engineer Apolónia Correia, for instance, began then.

In fact, in 1951 and 1952 Apolónia Correia played the same role as had the engineer Baleizão in Costa's very first designs of 1950: while Costa was not certified (before 1953), Apolónia Correia – and Bento Viegas Louro, in one instance – co-signed and validated the designs in the municipal bureaucracy. According to my findings, the first of the duo's projects in Faro was the **Brasileira cafe** refurbishment in Rua de Santo António 125-127 (1951, **fig. 357**),<sup>159</sup> which launched Costa in shop design. In a field that proved a steady source of commissions, Costa focused especially on the potential of the shop front as a buffer between public and private space. Other examples in Faro were the Artys stationary and bookshop project (Rua de Santo António 92-98, 1953),<sup>160</sup> the **Jak shoe shop** (Rua de Santo António 15-17, 1955, **figs. 358-359**),<sup>161</sup> and the Luso-Belga shop (Rua D. Francisco Gomes 40-42, 1958).<sup>162</sup> He designed three shops in Tavira (Rua Estácio da Veiga numbers 11-13, 1954,<sup>163</sup> and 4, 1955,<sup>164</sup> and Rua Dr. José Pires Padinha 36, 1956),<sup>165</sup> as well as the Farracha stationer in Olhão (1957, **fig. 225**).

Gomes da Costa's shop designs were strongly disruptive of the existing buildings, providing an entirely new image for a new retail philosophy in which product display was paramount, irrespective of extant building features. This was accepted by Faro technical services and all of Costa's proposals before 1955 were approved by the council – except for one: the **snack-bar in Rua Primeiro de Maio 11** (1954, **figs. 360-361**). The proposal replaced a section of the ground floor in an eighteenth-century townhouse next to Faro's noblest square (Praça D. Francisco Gomes) with a geometric composition of glazed surfaces, tile-faced pillar and metallic canopy. Advisor Carrapato raised no questions as to its "aesthetics, and although this is an old building,"<sup>166</sup> but the newly appointed municipal committee for art and archaeology (Comissão Municipal de Arte e Arqueologia) had a different understanding. The committee included members of Faro elite who admitted to be "shocked" by Costa's design:

"Despite the committee's consideration towards [the author's] attempt at an aesthetical renewal, deemed worthy of praise, it has decided unanimously to require the elevation to be more harmoniously integrated with the building of which is part and the street where it stands, since its sharply modern lines offer a shocking appearance."<sup>167</sup>

<sup>159</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-250/1951).

<sup>160</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-271/1953).

<sup>161</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-196/1955).

<sup>162</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-861/1958).

<sup>163</sup> (Tavira-CMT/AMT-32/33-cx.3-1954).

<sup>164</sup> (Tavira-CMT/AMT-212/2-cx.6-1956).

<sup>165</sup> (Tavira-CMT/AMT-85/86-cx.6-1956).

<sup>166</sup> Assessment 1954.11.27 (Faro-CMF/SAO-480/1954).

<sup>167</sup> Comissão Municipal de Arte e Arqueologia, minutes 1954.12.03 (Faro-ADF/AHMF-B/B.9-1). POiA (Citation 49).

The proposal was eventually passed in March 1955, following changes in the elevation's colour and material palettes, and joined Costa's long list of successful shop designs. This particular case seems to suggest just how open the local elite was – or wanted to be seen as being – to Costa's modern stance, as long as it did not interfere with what was left of Faro's built heritage. The members of the committee praised Costa's work in terms they employed with no other project they were asked to assess (quite the contrary) and they supported modern architecture on other occasions – but in this instance they feared its impact on the existing fabric, perceiving the arrival of a trend that would leave entire street frontages in Algarve unrecognisable.

In fact, the reception of Costa's early designs was seldom focused on aesthetics alone but included other concerns, and even when his aesthetical stance was criticised this was not a unanimous official position. A case in point was the **Machado Jr. twin patio houses**, co-authored with engineer Viegas Louro for Rua Manuel Ascensão 18-24 (1952, **fig. 364**). In Costa's work, the patio house was an essentially economical solution: it allowed for the layout to occupy most of the depth of the plot while providing natural light and ventilation to otherwise interior rooms and avoiding the area-wasting lateral corridor. In this device, there is no trace of the regionalist romantic ideal of the "Moorish patio"; it did not belong to an Algarve building tradition, nor did Costa ever claim that or consider the patio worthy of mention in his statements. In small-scale real estate developments for the renting market, the patio house was a key element in exploring the income potential of the available area while keeping the design within the legal regulations, albeit often forcing their limits.

It became one of Costa's specialties. For the Machado Jr. houses, he employed a recurrent "subtraction" procedure: from an initial single-storey volume occupying the entire plot, he subtracted one slice from the back (three-meter wide, the minimum legal width) and two parallelepipeds from the centre (the twin patios, divided by a partition wall). These voids illuminated and ventilated the kitchen, sitting room, bathroom and corridor, and contained the staircase to the roof terrace (*açoteia*). The exiguous backyards provided the same standards of natural light and ventilation for the bedrooms; in the front elevation, the dining rooms were entirely glazed with tilted, picture-frame-like compositions of sliding windows, sliding and fixed louvres, and flowerbeds. "A rational layout," Costa and Louro wrote, varied materials and "balanced proportions," originated an equally rational and "harmonious" façade.

Although some examples of everyday architecture I found in Olhão in the 1920s also explored the patio as an expedient to address longstanding sanitary shortcomings, the Machado Jr. layouts were indeed different from what was then common practice. Even in Costa's and Apolónia Correia's **Patacão houses**, of 1951<sup>168</sup> (**figs. 362-363**), with similarly updated frontage compositions, the traditional practice of lining up the rooms along one corridor and illuminating and ventilating them by way of another, exterior corridor, endured. The patio as a usable open-air

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<sup>168</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-320/1951).

compartment – not just a light well – that made a long and narrow, side-to-side layout possible within existing regulations, was a novelty in the context. But the novelty was even more striking in the “rational” combination of layout and elevation design, the two interdependent in a way that was not apparent in many conservative practices of the time. Costa seemed fully conscious of this, and used his *memória* for the planning application – a purely bureaucratic document for a small commission in a second-rate street of provincial Faro – to elaborate on his philosophy of architectural design. “As any other work of architecture,” he wrote, a house that is

“The exact combination of useful spaces, usefully placed for the body and the spirit, will be ‘biological reality’. Wise, economical, frank disposition of the matter, it will be ‘physical and mechanical reality’. Balance of extensions, of surfaces and of volumes, harmony of materials and colours, it will be ‘sensitive’ and ‘intellectual’ reality.”<sup>169</sup>

With his well-learned Corbusian lesson, Costa seemed to be addressing his restricted audience – those involved in the assessment of the project – with a clear message: unlike his engineer and house-builder competitors, he possessed a knowledge of modern architecture as an intellectual practice, and he was able to elaborate a discourse based on that knowledge. His elevations were not merely inspired by a contemporary trend, they were the work of someone who, from within the discipline, had mastered its lexica of both forms and words. As Oliveira had done a decade before, Costa was raising himself and his work above its context, and attempting to influence it.

Oliveira (in his official role) criticised on this occasion the young colleague with whom he had co-authored at least three projects in 1950 and whose first steps in Faro he had supported. Acknowledging the layout as “logical” for low-income housing, he challenged the glazed elevation as unable to assure “living conditions in intimacy.” He seemed careful not to question the aesthetics of the proposal, as did not Manuel de Almeida Carrapato, the municipal advisor, who signalled “the remarkable improvement in this elevation, compared to other projects”<sup>170</sup> by Costa, and focused on non-conformities in the layout. Nevertheless, Faro council rejected the application on account of the advisors’ remarks “and because the building is considered unaesthetic.”<sup>171</sup> This was the first time the council had expressed its view on Costa’s proposals in such clear terms, adding aesthetic judgement to the services’ technical arguments (that would have been enough to refuse the application). The explicit ruling may have been provoked by Faro vice-mayor Raul Weinholtz, member of the important Bivar family and chair of the committee for art and archaeology from 1954 on; in such position, Weinholtz occasionally criticised Costa’s work (the snack-bar design, above), and the work of twentieth-century architects in general (also above). It is possible that Weinholtz, representing the old dynasties of Faro, wished to hold on to more conservative stances.

<sup>169</sup> Project statement 1952.04.24 (Faro-CMF/SAO-127/1952). POiA (Citation 50).

<sup>170</sup> Assessment 1952.04 (Faro-CMF/SAO-127/1952).

<sup>171</sup> Câmara Municipal de Faro, minutes 1952.05.10 (Faro-ADF/AHMF-B/A.1-Lv.71).

Accordingly, Costa withdrew his proposal and engineer Louro alone submitted a second version (**fig. 365**) in which the layout was kept unchanged but the elevation conformed to the common practice in the area: Louro himself wrote of his concern to “respect urban aesthetics” and not to “escape what is currently built in Faro” with a design “inspired in modern architecture.”<sup>172</sup> This conventional version was received with scepticism by the municipal advisors, who made clear that they “had not considered the [previous] elevations unaesthetic,”<sup>173</sup> but it was subsequently approved and built (**fig. 366**). It remains the only example in my research of a Gomes da Costa design that was not realised for aesthetic reasons. A footnote in the architect’s prolific career, it nevertheless may help to understand the narrative of heroism he himself built in hindsight. On the other hand, it is evidence of qualified support from officials for Costa’s modernism, suggesting that the lower tiers of local bureaucracy were ready for his proposals, willing to foster designs that “escaped” local routine through modern architecture, and that his philosophical elaborations may have found some resonance in those official circles before they were received in wider social spheres.

What was “currently built in Faro,” as Louro put it, was nonetheless also evolving in those years. The small everyday commissions designed by civil engineers were the best measure of this change. Engineer Humberto Carrapato’s prolific work was not always automatically approved by the municipality (as his family link to the local official Almeida Carrapato might lead one to expect), and it seems an ironic coincidence that at the same time as Costa was forced to drop his fully modern design for the Machado Jr. houses, Carrapato was modernising his compositions. In May 1952, the engineer submitted a planning application for **Rua D. Diogo Corte-Real 67 (fig. 367)**, and his elevation was criticised by Jorge de Oliveira as “unbalanced.”<sup>174</sup> Carrapato had to eliminate the arch and tiled eave – precisely the elements Louro introduced at the same moment to have the Machado Jr. houses approved – and replaced them by a feature that was gaining currency: the stone frame that enveloped the elevation and, in this case, doubled to encompass the gate and the parapet (**figs. 368**). This was not Costa’s frame in the Baptista-Dores and “Miracle” houses, dramatically cast in reinforced concrete and bounding an abstract geometric composition; but it was not so far from the picture-frame motif of the Machado Jr. houses either, and it was a new term in Carrapato’s formal vocabulary.

In this very modest design, the engineer first used the frame and the bracketed parapet, elements that he employed together with pared-down wall surfaces and simplified carved surrounds in openings. In works such as the low-income housing block in **Rua Ascensão Guimarães (1957, fig. 369)**<sup>175</sup> and the double house in **Praceta Coronel Pires Viegas 15 (1952, fig. 370)**,<sup>176</sup> Carrapato went further in his watered-down version of conservative regionalism, towards

<sup>172</sup> Project statement 1952.05.22 (Faro-CMF/SAO-167/1952).

<sup>173</sup> Assessment 1952.05 (Faro-CMF/SAO-167/1952).

<sup>174</sup> Assessment 1952.05 (Faro-CMF/SAO-149/1952).

<sup>175</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-146/1957).

<sup>176</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-396/1952).

increasingly hybrid proposals. These buildings combined the influence of Oliveira's works of the 1940s with that of early 1950s modernist experiments, the latter being apparent in the use of protruding frames and hollowed surfaces. This was perhaps best epitomised in the **Rua Dr. Coelho de Carvalho 18-24** twin houses (1957, **fig. 372**).<sup>177</sup> Significantly, its clean-cut design replaced a failed application by engineer João Frazão (1955, **fig. 371**), deemed by the municipal committee for art and architecture "totally outdated, considering the concepts that guide new architecture."<sup>178</sup>

By 1957, the once-conservative practitioner Humberto Carrapato was supplying Faro with updated designs and replacing proposals by then seen as old-fashioned and unacceptable. Moreover, he had been led to modernise his lexicon in 1952 under the incentive of Oliveira, the architect who helped establish the essential features of conservative architecture in Faro. Everyday building activity in the town was therefore shifting towards post-war modernism in the first years of the 1950s not only through the direct influence of young Costa's proposals but also through the work and bureaucratic influence of older Oliveira.

#### Oliveira's "modern expression"

The shift in Oliveira's own work was particularly striking, given the architect's record of heavily decorated, historic-style structures. Having co-authored some of Costa's first designs in 1950, he followed in 1951 with the extension of **Hotel Aliança** in Faro (**fig. 373**), a composition of elemental volumes devoid of surface decoration that betrayed modernist influences, approved and built in 1952. The sharp corner overlooking Praça D. Francisco Gomes featured prominently a two-tier set of loggias suspended on slender pilotis, framed by a deep brick-faced case and topped by a tilted concrete canopy. Significantly, Oliveira wrote that his solution was the result of all site and brief requirements coming together and "not the product of a concern with originality."<sup>179</sup> He seemed worried that his adhesion to contemporary trends would be mistaken as superficial experiments with passing formalist fashion. In fact, vice-mayor Raul Weinholtz later included Hotel Aliança in the list of architectural atrocities committed in Faro's finest square (**fig. 374**): it was "the Hotel that eventually ruined the square."<sup>180</sup>

Oliveira's most meaningful proposal in 1951, however, remained unbuilt. The **children's summer camp** on the Ancão island (Faro's beach resort) had been designed in 1944 for local charity Misericórdia in Oliveira's early manner.<sup>181</sup> When asked to resume the process Oliveira admitted that, seven years later, the design was "out of place" and had to be entirely reworked within "strict economical concerns."<sup>182</sup> Apparently acknowledging the uneconomic nature of his

<sup>177</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-768/1957).

<sup>178</sup> Comissão Municipal de Arte e Arqueologia, minutes 1955.07.23 (Faro-ADF/AHMF-B/B.9-1).

<sup>179</sup> Project statement 1951.11.12 (Faro-CMF/SAO-209/1952).

<sup>180</sup> Comissão Municipal de Arte e Arqueologia, minutes 1957.01.17 (Faro-ADF/AHMF-B/B.9-1).

<sup>181</sup> Colónia Balnear Infantil na Praia de Faro, project statement 1944.12.01 (Lisbon-AJO).

<sup>182</sup> Project statement 1951.12.30 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-109/MU/52).

previous compositions, Oliveira seemed encouraged to follow post-war modern trends for their perceived economy. His second version for the summer camp (also unrealised, **fig. 375**) was an organic assemblage of single-pitched-roof pavilions around a generous pergola-covered playground – once more the recurrent patio theme in Oliveira’s work, now a shed-like structure designed with pre-fabricated elements. The whitewashed slanted side elevation that defined many rural Algarve vernacular buildings had been employed by Oliveira in his 1940s version of conservative regionalism, but was diluted amongst its many other constituents; in the 1951 Ancão summer camp, it was the design’s main regional feature, together with the wood trellised panels.

In the last years of his official position in Faro, Oliveira’s architectural production for his private clientele continued to change. In the small **Bôto building** in Rua Bernardo Passos 24-26 (1952, **figs. 376-377**),<sup>183</sup> he introduced that very contemporary formal trope – the uninterrupted frame – which Costa and the civil engineers were exploring at the time. He created an elaborate composition of protruding and receding planes, multileveled frames and cornices, a drawer-like central balcony and a deeply excavated ground floor, in a dramatic play of light and shadow that used the plastic potential of abstract geometry without any of the literal references to regional traditions. The back elevation’s chequer-pattern concrete grid (**fig. 378**) became a trademark of Oliveira’s 1950s work, and featured prominently in the vast terraced ensemble of low- and moderate-income housing for developer Mendonça André in **Horta do Pinto** (ruas Dr. Emiliano da Costa, José Joaquim de Moura e Actor Nascimento Fernandes, 1954-1956, **figs. 379-380**).<sup>184</sup> Each house type (**figs. 381-383**) was clustered in groups of four, allowing for a uniform streetscape to which different colours would add variety; types A and B were single-family dwellings in which the partial upper floor could be extended over the terrace – an unstated example of evolutive housing design. The elevations were rather modest examples of Oliveira’s search for a new way to employ some of his favourite regional elements (the tiled eave on the parapet, the Algarve chimney top, the rusticated stone planes); in an economically restrained context, the result was hybrid and awkwardly proportioned.

Hybridism was a feature shared by Oliveira’s last works and Gomes da Costa’s first realisation outside Faro, the **Tengarrinha beach house** in Rocha, Portimão, co-authored with engineer Apolónia Correia in 1952 (**figs. 384-387**). The commission involved the complete refurbishment and extension of an existing turn-of-the-century cottage (**fig. 385**), deemed by Costa not only functionally but also morphologically “deficient,”<sup>185</sup> but he eventually replaced one example of eclectic architecture with another. The main volume was stripped-down to its fundamental shape – a double-pitch tiled roof on whitewashed walls – as if to return it to a

<sup>183</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-475/1952).

<sup>184</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-179/1954, 212/1954, 352/1954, 435/1954).

<sup>185</sup> “Projecto de Remodelação para a Habitação...,” project statement n.d. [1952.11] (Portimão-CMP/DTPU). Material kindly lent by Gonçalo Vargas.

quintessential form of house; then sectioned and extruded with other, newer elements. With a generous loggia that overhung the retaining wall and the adjacent spill-shape concrete canopy on steel rods and undulating windscreen, the architect extended the living area towards the sea views and broke the conventional separation between interior and exterior spaces. From the earlier Patacão houses to many of his apartment buildings in urban settings, Costa insisted in creating buffer or transition areas for outside living, both sheltered from the elements and benefiting from them, using a range of fixed and movable devices from which he drew plastic advantage. Traditional architecture in Algarve provided him with suggestions of these intermediate areas: e.g. the patio (back-, front- or side-yard) where social life developed in urban and rural areas. In this particular, however, Costa seems to have been inspired more by international trends in comparable contexts – such as the Brazilian – than by his own regional customs.

Colour played an essential role in the architect's hybrid, playful concept of the summer cottage, and his artistic skills were displayed in the azulejo (glazed tile) panels that decorated the car porch and the canopy-topped observation tower. These panels, Costa wrote, were inspired by “the eighteenth-century examples but with a new expression, accordant with our age.” Azulejo, mosaic and mural paintings were decorative resources consistently employed by Costa in his works of the period, whenever his control over the building process allowed. Along with the structural experiments that tested his engineer's ability, and the wide range of sun-control devices, the exuberant colour palette and decoration elements contributed to “avoid the rigidity of forms,” he wrote, and resulted in “a plastic value that exceeds mere functionality.” Costa's take on post-war modern architecture implied a voluntary departure from what he perceived as functionalist excesses. The hybridism of the Tengarrinha house was one clear step in this critique of early modernist rigidity.

The three final projects by Jorge Oliveira in Faro could be seen as other instances of the same critique of early modernism, expressed in architectural hybridism and in Boyd's “New Eclecticism” suggestion. Oliveira experienced the “occasional change of mood” Boyd thought reasonable to allow practitioners, in the post-war “moment of hesitancy” – but the Lisbon architect, at the end of his term as official representative in Algarve, did not seem to be entirely comfortable with these ambiguities, or to be able to rival Costa in thoroughly exploring them. Between October 1954 and January 1955, Oliveira designed three residential buildings whose formalistic exuberance signalled the designer's discomfort with the new formal resources. His discourse seemed increasingly confused:

“If the modern expression [of the design] seems appropriate (...), it represents not an attempt to reach a questionable modernism, but the anticipation of a well-balanced building that (...) will have architectural value and considerable scale. As an architect, I know that our people's lack of culture and very poor aesthetic preparation are sometimes powerful

obstacles to our determination to put an end to the pernicious practice of banalities. This is not a project of modern experimentation, but one of modern expression.”<sup>186</sup>

As before in the Hotel Aliança project, Oliveira appeared determined to rebut any criticism of his adhesion to post-war modern trends, preferring his long-time favourite term “expression” to the unstable concept of “experimentation.” Simultaneously though, the architect implied that only through the use of “rational movement,” asymmetry, colour and material diversity can the vicious circle of repeated “banalities” be broken, thus apparently endorsing the value of modern forms; *modern* and not *modernist*, the latter used by Oliveira to refer to a style that he deemed “questionable” and superficial.

The three disguised apartment blocks (composed as single-family houses) are good samples of hybrid post-war modern architectural lexicon in Leeward Algarve, and of the transitional stage in early 1950s practice in the region. These little-known works also question the tendency to contrast Costa’s and Oliveira’s works as belonging to two opposing sides in a battle of styles. In the eclectic surroundings of a newly-built square, the double houses of **Praceta Coronel Pires Viegas 10-11 and 6-7 (figs. 388-391)**<sup>187</sup> display rather conventional volumes of pared-down walls and well-defined openings, similar to many Oliveira’s earlier works. But the volumes are covered with an array of popular contemporary symbols: boxed loggias, concrete canopies on V-shaped steel rods, rusticated stone surfaces, slanted rooflines and screen walls perforated with stamps of varied shape and size. The building on the **Avenida Cinco de Outubro 50**<sup>188</sup> is larger (four apartments on two floors, **figs. 392-394**) and incorporates yet a wider range of elements, including concrete pergolas, steel-rod screens and trellised panels hanging from the loggia ceilings – a popular shading device repeated in Olhão, for instance, by engineer Joaquim Belchior in 1957 (above, **fig. 223**).

While Oliveira tentatively adhered to contemporary architectural trends, Costa showed growing confidence in his ability to create effective façade compositions while struggling with existing urban constraints. In the unbuilt designs for two mixed-use buildings in **Rua Manuel Ascensão** (1954, **figs. 395-396**), Costa applied in the residential floors the same subtraction technique used in the 1952 Machado Jr. project. Commissioned by engineer Baleizão (who had co-signed Costa’s very first projects for Faro in 1950 and, by 1954, had emigrated to São Paulo, Brazil), the architect took the technique one step further by building up to the edges of the plot, leaning his row of bedrooms on the property boundary and creating a side patio. In the suite of front rooms, updated spatial fluidity was assured by floor-to-ceiling windows, wall-to-wall doors and a service hatch directly linked to the dining table. Describing the elevation, Costa used a formula he was perfecting:

<sup>186</sup> Project statement 1954.10.14 (Faro-CMF/SAO-426/1954). POiA (Citation 3).

<sup>187</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-512/1954, 537/1954).

<sup>188</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-426/1954).



“Aesthetic synthesis – the plastic appearance of the construction is the result, not only of a good layout solution, but also of the balance of proportions and mindful choice of materials and colours. The use of a full-width balcony, sun-breaks and ceramic grids is meant to avoid the intense insolation during the summer and provide the elevation with harmonious rhythmical movement. These elements on the upper floor, and the azulejos panel on the ground floor (...), will contribute, together with the appropriate colour palette, to a building whose plastic stance expresses our time.”<sup>189</sup>

Proportions, balance of materials and colours, plasticity, rhythm, and harmony – the essential themes in Costa’s discourse, which he not only tried to express in his architecture but also in the writings that accompanied each project. Although its translation into form varied from the early 1960s onwards, the set of words remained largely unchanged for the period of this study – with one important exception: the reference to regional or local features was absent from Costa’s early writings, and only entered the architect’s discourse in 1956. Until then, the rare references to the context were sometimes critical – in the 1951 Patação project, for instance (**figs. 362-363**), he justified his work’s blatantly modernist “architectural guise,” “because nothing in that place suggests that there was ever a similar concern.”<sup>190</sup>

In the Baleizão projects, no mention to the context was made – and in their assessment, no questions of aesthetic nature were raised. The elevations were “well conceived” for Almeida Carrapato, who nevertheless drew attention for the fact that the full occupation of the plot length was against the rules of the general urban plan and suggested a standard three-meter gap at the back be left free of construction. Urban planner João de Aguiar’s verdict on both projects was more severe: Costa’s design simply ignored one of the “fundamental purposes of urbanisation, that of assuring the separation of buildings, [in this case] through one continuous and unobstructed [free space inside the block] providing ventilation and insolation for the dwellings.”<sup>191</sup> De Aguiar alerted Faro municipality to the danger of projects such as these – regardless of their stylistic choice – for the harmonious growth of the town, and urged the local authority to regulate in detail the expansion of that specific area and limit the depth of constructions.

It was therefore the layout, not the style of some of Costa’s early designs that resulted in their refusal by the municipality. Particularly on long and narrow plots, the architect combined his design skills with a pragmatic solution to an eminently economical problem, calculated to maximise the profits of development. The combination led him to solutions that clashed with existing regulations and occasionally provided Faro and Lisbon bureaucracy with grounds for refusal. Returning to the argument that opens this chapter and questions the black-and-white view of the “Battle of Modern Architecture” in Faro, I would suggest that once occasional opposition from local authority on aesthetic grounds was overcome (and this seems to have happened early on), regulation and technical issues remained as the single most important obstacle to the realisation of

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<sup>189</sup> Project statement 1954.04.01 (Faro-CMF/SAO-104/1954). POiA (Citation 51).

<sup>190</sup> Project statement 1951.10.09 (Faro-CMF/SAO-320/1951).

<sup>191</sup> Assessment 1954.05.19 (Faro-CMF/SAO-104/1954).

Costa's designs. By appropriating the narrative of the "Battle" uncritically, historical studies have failed to bring these aspects into consideration and have tended to include all opposition and difficulties found by post-war modernists under the umbrella of an aesthetical struggle. Archive-based investigation suggests, instead, that post-war modernism had consistently infiltrated conservative regionalism by the mid-1950s. Although Costa's work was the most sophisticated and radical, Oliveira and the civil engineers in Faro also filtered contemporary trends through their building practice. Meanwhile, new shops and commercial buildings (from banks to car dealerships and petrol stations) accordant with the same trends meant that Costa's clients in Faro's upper strata were increasingly surrounded by modern forms. So who were they? What was their role in the establishment of the architect's modern version of regionalism?

### *Establishing modernist regionalism: Gomes da Costa and his clients*

#### **The emigrants**

In December 1955, Gomes da Costa designed his most conspicuous work yet in Faro: the **Gago Rosa building** in Rua General Humberto Delgado 17 (**fig. 397**). Alfredo Gago Rosa had emigrated to Venezuela and, returning from a very different context, looked for someone who could provide him with a different kind of building and, through one of Costa's developer clients, commissioned the young architect.<sup>192</sup> This client, I suggest, was looking for something closer to what he had seen in Latin America. Costa designed two superimposed apartments for a prominent corner plot on the square where Humberto Carrapato's 1952 and Jorge de Oliveira's 1954 houses stood (above, **fig. 388**). Unlike these designers, he did not camouflage the two apartments to make them appear as one large single-family house; instead, he created a low-rise apartment block such as had not yet been produced in Faro (thus responding to Rosa's request), suspended on visible *pilotis*, separated from the street by a shield of greenery and set in a cocoon of loggias, sun-breaks and ceramic grids (**fig. 398**). The shell of the construction was de-materialised, and its precise contour was unclear: while the glazed walls that enclosed every compartment conformed to the overall orthogonal geometry, concrete slabs and frames followed the angular line of the west side (**fig. 399**). The building seemed to realise the architect's wish for elevations where "movement" and "variety" broke down the traditional mass of architecture. Different planes, surfaces, textures, degrees of transparency, materials, and colours, were summoned up by Costa in his quest for a "lighter architecture," as he often called it, and one that at the same time provided "heat-protection areas" enveloping the living quarters.<sup>193</sup>

The use of reinforced concrete in lighter, more delicate elements had a triple purpose in the architect's rationale, as he formulated it in hindsight. It was a means to "break down the solidness"

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Costa (2008).

<sup>193</sup> Cf. project statement 1955.12.10 (Faro-CMF/SAO-708/1955).

of conventional masonry techniques, in a manner that he compared to the effect of stonework in Gothic architecture. It allowed him to show that “Algarvian modern architecture could be something lighter,” in an implicit critique of more tectonic interpretations of regional identity. Lastly, it could be manipulated so as to counter the bad reputation concrete structures had earned with early modernism:

“People would claim constantly: ‘it’s always reinforced concrete’ – but [this reaction happens] when [the building] looks like a box, when you give it the expression of a masonry construction – not if you give it the expression of a different construction technique altogether.”<sup>194</sup>

Mr. Gago Rosa was not the only returned emigrant to have become a regular client. António Pinheiro Brandão, for whom Costa first worked in 1952, had also emigrated to Venezuela and, on his return, became one of Faro’s leading developers, namely in the Santo António do Alto area. There, Brandão gave Costa his first large-scale commission for multifamily housing, the double four-storey apartment block on the **south top corner of Avenida Cinco de Outubro** (1957, **figs. 400-402**).<sup>195</sup> Front and back elevations were covered in a net of vertical and horizontal concrete bars, aligned with the structural slabs, partitions and lintels. The resulting checkerboard pattern was filled with sun-breaks, railings and ceramic hollowed-block panels whose density increased according to the orientation. The back elevation was unusually enriched with the sculptural forms of two service staircases, topped by the concrete canopies that partly covered the flat roofs. Four moderate-income rental units per floor had neatly separated living, service and “intimate” areas.

As the large block was under construction, in 1959, Brandão gave Costa two other commissions, two single-family houses in the new adjacent high-end residential street, **Rua de Berlim** – the first in a long string of works by the architect there. In his initial proposal for number **15 (fig. 403)**, Costa tried to subvert a local planning requirement (pitched roofs only): he covered the house in an inward-sloping double-pitch roof, which Brazilian architects then called a “borboleta” (butterfly) roof, and supported the solution with an elaborate argument about ventilation. Furthermore, the architect explained how the combination of pitched and flat roofs

“Extends the solution found in countryside houses throughout Algarve. The contour produced by the combination of two forms of roofing – tiled and açoteia – not only breaks the monotony of the massing but also enhances their horizontal and oblique movement (...). The architectural expression of this project stemmed from these characteristic examples of Algarvian rural construction. Regional architecture can therefore provide excellent examples of composition and extend itself over time, constantly rejuvenating itself according to the historical period in question.”<sup>196</sup>

<sup>194</sup> Costa (2008). POiA (Citation 52).

<sup>195</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-1098/1957).

<sup>196</sup> Project statement 1959.01.12 (Faro-CMF/SAO-162/1959). POiA (Citation 53).

Although this was not the first time the architect had presented the features of traditional architecture as precedents for his own work, this 1959 statement was the first where he cited the traditional composite roofline (part single-pitch, part flat) of rural Algarve buildings as a formal reference. It was clearly an abstract, de-familiarised reference (hence possibly the need for an easily recognisable symbol such as the prototypical Algarve laced chimney); otherwise, the composition was laden with non-traditional elements, from suspended concrete canopies to a large loggia encased by louvres on the upper floor. Since the town council objected to the irregular roof, Costa produced a second version of the house<sup>197</sup> by simply replacing the busy roofline by a much simpler and conservative four-pitch tiled solution, and extending the loggia around the side (**fig. 404**). Wanting to create “a certain architectural unity between the two buildings,”<sup>198</sup> he repeated the resulting compromise between the bold geometric play of planes, materials and colours and the conventional domestic four-pitch roof in **Rua de Berlim 13**, also for Mr. Brandão (1959, **fig. 405**). Yet his idea of a regionally inspired composite profile survived and re-emerged in 1962-1964, when he designed a set of multifamily housing buildings up the road.

The apartment blocks on **Rua de Berlim 35, 61** (both 1962) and **37** (1964, built in 1968 as a guesthouse, **fig. 406**), expressed a renewed attention to what Costa by then considered a regional idiosyncrasy: “The composite roof is one of the region’s characteristics, and allows for a wide panorama to be enjoyed from the açoteia,”<sup>199</sup> he wrote on the guesthouse project. The combination of flat and pitch-roofed volumes was what made number 35, for instance, simultaneously “integrated with the surrounding constructions but introducing a differentiated play of masses.”<sup>200</sup> This difference was evident in the side elevations (**fig. 407**): the tiled roof, apparent from the street (thus satisfying the planners’ requirement), was part of a more complex composition when seen from the side. Using the characteristic Algarve feature of composite volumes with distinct roof forms in a more familiar way – and not as a disguise for Brazilian-style proposals – allowed Costa to comply with local regulations and pursue his own interpretation of regional custom.

Upon Mr. Brandão’s death in 1960, his business was inherited by José Brandão Pinheiro, a developer for whom Costa worked extensively in the 1960s, thus extending the good relations between the architect and the family of the former emigrant. In fact, the examples of the Baleizão, Gago Rosa and Brandão commissions suggest that the architect’s returned emigrant clients consistently encouraged Costa to create buildings that echoed those they had seen growing around them while abroad – or, in any case, at least “different” and more “modern” than what they saw (or where they lived in) in Faro. It may be no more than a coincidence, but it seems striking that four of the most South American-looking projects of Costa’s first decade of work – the Baleizão buildings, the Gago Rosa house, the Brandão multifamily housing block and the unbuilt proposal

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<sup>197</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-192/1959).

<sup>198</sup> Project statement 1959.04.27 (Faro-CMF/SAO-484/1959).

<sup>199</sup> Project statement 1968.06.22 (Faro-CMF/SAO-780/1964).

<sup>200</sup> Project statement 1962.12.10 (Faro-CMF/SAO-1265/1962).

for Rua de Berlim – were designed for patrons who had made their way in Brazil and Venezuela. Less celebrated than Brazil, Venezuela was also undergoing modernisation, following the 1920s oil extraction boom. Latin America’s largest urban renewal and public housing projects were in full swing in Caracas in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>201</sup> Both Brazil and Venezuela attracted scores of Portuguese emigrants, many employed in construction work, and as in other times in history they brought back home the references of modernity that surrounded them abroad. Back in Faro, richer and willing to invest in real estate, they required modernist architecture and became Costa’s valuable allies in its dissemination.

### The Church

Gomes da Costa’s reputation as a respected architect in Faro, nurtured by those early works, was consolidated with the help of a few important figures of regional scope. Perhaps the most surprising help – given the Portuguese Catholic Church’s reputation for conservatism – came from the bishop of Algarve between 1953 and 1965, D. Frei Francisco Rendeiro (1915-1971). Considered a dynamic and progressive clergyman, he was credited with the material improvement of the dioceses’ facilities,<sup>202</sup> commissioning a series of modern architecture works of which three were designed by Costa. They signified, locally, worldwide changes in the Church’s relationship with communities, formalised in the Second Vatican Council proceedings (1962-1965), attended by Rendeiro.<sup>203</sup>

The **Santa Luzia** (Tavira) **parish church (figs. 408-411)** was the project of father António Patrício who, in his own words, wanted “a symbol of his time” and asked the architect for a “modern church, although not scandalously so, and as inexpensive as possible. The latter requirement was not accommodated.”<sup>204</sup> The clergyman and some Tavira figures defended the replacement of an old building, “devoid of artistic interest and in ruins,” by Costa’s “large and modern” proposal; the old church was, the architect claimed, unrelated “to any architectural style.”<sup>205</sup> Both designer and client showed little interest in the vernacular artefact; in Costa’s composition of elemental whitewashed solids, the rendered dome eventually acted as the only, symbolic link between new and old. The 1956 design used some of Costa’s choice themes, on a small scale: the protruding frame on the main elevation and sacristy wall, the concrete louvres in horizontal and vertical positions (clerestories on both sides of the nave), and the cantilevered concrete steps to the açoteia. With structural design by engineer Apolónia Correia and funding from the state (granted through DGSU/DUF), the works were finished in December 1958.

<sup>201</sup> See Valerie Fraser, *Building the New World* (London, New York: Verso, 2000).

<sup>202</sup> [Mário Lyster Franco], "Rendeiro (D. Frei Francisco)," in *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira* (Lisboa, Rio de Janeiro: Editorial Enciclopédia, [1959]).

<sup>203</sup> Cf. [www.catholic-hierarchy.org](http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org), accessed 2011.04.05.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Rui Pereira Salve-Rainha, "Da Antiga Capela à Moderna Igreja de Santa Luzia," in *Santa Luzia: De Lugarejo a Vila com Brasão 1705-2005* (Tavira: Tipografia Tavirense, 2005).

<sup>205</sup> Project statement n.d. [1956.06] (Faro-UA/A-DUF-208/MU/56).

The small Santa Luzia church was a sample of modern architecture crossbred with regional features (simple, white volumes and pared-down walls), offering new possibilities for buildings to accommodate to, while not emulating, existing contexts – or, in father Patrício’s words, for something “modern but not scandalously so.” In Costa’s **retreat and summer camp house for seminarists** in Alcantarilha (Silves, **figs. 412-413**), the context was the open countryside, with different integration requirements. Having supported the Tavira church project, bishop Rendeiro hired the architect in 1957 upon recommendation from the Faro public health official Brito da Mana and took him on a tour of similar structures in Andalusia.<sup>206</sup> Costa produced a building his client later advertised as “well integrated with the bucolic environment to which it was devised, (...) an ensemble of great architectural beauty.”<sup>207</sup> It was said to answer all of the client’s complex functional requests: primarily a house for retreats by seminarists and clergymen, set in silent isolation in a rural setting, but also a summer camp for disadvantaged children from the entire province, and a permanent social centre for local children.

Costa’s response was a longitudinal three-level structure on stilts, with public and common areas in the ground floor, recessed behind the structure lines and under a generous bow-tie-shaped canopy, and sleeping and reading quarters in the upper floors. The full-length loggias that lined the long sides of the elevated volume, cantilevered from the pilotis, provided protection from insolation to both sleeping and living areas. The chapel formed an independent volume at the rear whose profile, a double paraboloid vault, has been compared to that of Niemeyer’s São Francisco church in Pampulha (Brazil, 1942-1944).<sup>208</sup> The “integration” with local and regional environment would be obtained through “local materials, ceramic grids and the prevailing white colour, typical in Algarve,”<sup>209</sup> but this was route was little explored. This sophisticated pavilion set in the Algarve countryside was praised by both DGSU (Lisbon) and by DUF (Faro) for its international features: the generous loggias, some lacking functional purpose, were accepted as part of the “aesthetical standpoint” adopted, and considered “very interesting.”<sup>210</sup> Only the structure’s real social benefits for Algarve’s deprived strata, vis-à-vis its costs, were consistently questioned in the funding application process. This somewhat extravagant initiative, with its prolonged construction (1958-1962, with parts finished in 1967), recalls Jorge de Oliveira’s difficulties with his over-decorated public works.

Another Church-related and state-funded commission of 1957 was the charity home and school **Casa de Santa Zita** in Faro (**fig. 414**). Describing his tightly-knit ensemble of post-war modernist forms, Costa insisted that “the use of these characteristic Algarve elements [the louvres and grids enveloping the volumes], the predominant white colour, common in this province as a

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<sup>206</sup> Costa (2008).

<sup>207</sup> D. Frei Francisco Rendeiro, *Uma Casa de Retiros e Colónia de Férias* (Faro: Bispado do Algarve, 1958).

<sup>208</sup> Cf. “Colónia de Férias de São Lourenço,” in Vargas (2009).

<sup>209</sup> Project statement 1957.04.09 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-102/MU/57).

<sup>210</sup> DSMU’s assessment 1957.05.23 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-102/MU/57).

sun-reflecting device, and the simplicity of forms, will contribute to the integration of this architecture with the region.”<sup>211</sup> By then, Costa’s discourse on the “regional integration” of his architecture repeated those three points – sun-break devices, white surfaces and simplicity of forms – and while he seemed to be true to his words in the use of the first two, the third was not as easily verified: his growing formal expressionism, increasingly complex compositions of volumes and daring structures, appeared to escape just such simplicity. While Algarve “simple” buildings were well-defined, enclosed masses with occasional openings and little diversity of materials and textures, Costa’s version of a regionalist modern architecture was charged with varied geometries, multilayered outer shells and interstitial spaces. In the architect’s works, the simplicity of Algarve building tradition had become a more complex and cultured concept than ever before, where a wide range of influences converged.

The **Nossa Senhora do Alto college extension** in Faro (1960-1965) was Rendeiro’s last direct commission and one of Costa’s finest pieces of public-use architecture. In it, he integrated the new construction with the lush surroundings of a park, while ignoring the building it was to extend: the former Fialho palace, Faro’s utmost example of eclectic bourgeois residence, by architect Norte Júnior (1913-1915,<sup>212</sup> **fig. 415**). The bishop was the first to challenge Costa to disregard the pompous edifice: “that building must not interfere in any way with your work,” Rendeiro said, “please feel free to design at your will.”<sup>213</sup>

Gomes da Costa created a three-aisle layout (a central, two-storey building for classrooms and two lateral, single-storey satellites for offices and a multipurpose hall), with a connecting gallery (**figs. 416-417**). The fragmented layout solution was meant to allow the park’s vegetation to “surround the three parts of the building thus making them cooler and more pleasant, exerting a positive psychological influence and improving the comfort of students and teachers.” The overall impression envisaged was one of “sobriety, fragility and simplicity, as the children for whom it was devised.”<sup>214</sup> To achieve these purposes, the architect designed a large-scale concrete portico structure with deeply recessed glazed walls, from whose beams a secondary metal structure was suspended; the rods held fixed aluminium sun-breaks, which together with the roof slabs offered shading. This multi-part pavilion in the park, raised from the ground as a light-weight temporary structure (**fig. 418**), evoked contemporary ephemeral and industrial architecture; the hall’s daring concrete parabolic ribs, uncommon in 1960s Faro, required special calculations by engineer Belchior.<sup>215</sup> The design was swiftly approved by the Faro municipality, who did not challenge its proximity to the existing palace: “Although these are works of different architectural ages, the integration with the place is perfect.”<sup>216</sup>

<sup>211</sup> Project statement 1957.08.31 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-309/MU/57).

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Lameira (1995).

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Costa (2008).

<sup>214</sup> Project statement 1960.08.01 (Faro-CMF/SAO-383/1961).

<sup>215</sup> The remaining structure was the work of engineer Apolónia Correia.

<sup>216</sup> Alfredo Villares Braga’s assessment 1961.05.05 (Faro-CMF/SAO-383/1961).

In fact, Costa's architecture found increasing acceptance – and encouragement – in the bureaucratic circles of Faro; the municipality itself commissioned the architect to design the town's **magistrates' residences** (1960-1964, **figs. 419-420**). Treated as an everyday multifamily housing block and devoid of the common distinctive features of municipal buildings – and “framed in the spirit of sober regional building tradition while expressing the spirit of modern architecture”<sup>217</sup> –, the Casas dos Magistrados project signals the rise of Costa's profile as Faro's architect of choice, not only for private but also for municipal commissions.

Support came from the highest rank of ecclesiastic hierarchy in Algarve and from some key figures involved with the funding and building processes at regional level. In Faro, their daily meeting place in the 1950s was Café Aliança, where landowners and fruit traders mixed with civil engineers, top civil servants and regional representatives of national government agencies. Among these, two individuals stood out in the establishment of modern architecture in Algarve. The Loulé-born civil engineer Alberto Pessanha Viegas was head of regional public works office DUF from 1949 until 1963 (when he moved to Lisbon to head the Gabinete do Plano Regional do Algarve). He played an important role in the assessment of funding applications and resisted, for instance, Oliveira's over-decorated designs in unabashed terms. His positive assessments of Costa's modernist proposals for the Santa Luzia church, the Alcantarilha retreat, Casa de Santa Zita and other public-use buildings eased their acceptance and approval for state funding. Doctor Brito da Mana, also from Loulé, was chief public-health officer in the distrito and regional representative of Instituto Maternal (the central advisory agency for childcare affairs). Together with governador civil Agostinho Pires (1951-1953), and with full support from Viegas's funding filter and bishop Rendeiro's clergy (through local Misericórdia charities), Brito da Mana set up a new social assistance and healthcare policy for Algarve, by which some conservative projects were suspended and replaced by those of a new generation. Thus a regional network of new-built facilities, the Centros de Assistência Social Polivalente, became a fertile testing ground for post-war architecture in Algarve (see Chapter 3). In 1957, with the Loulé and Olhão buildings nearly completed, Brito da Mana was again instrumental in selecting the authors for the second batch: Gomes da Costa (Aljezur, Tavira and Vila Real, the latter two unbuilt) and Vicente de Castro (Portimão and Lagos).

The **Aljezur multipurpose social centre** (**figs. 421-423**) was largely based on Laginha's and Martins's pioneering experience in Loulé and Olhão. The asymmetrical disposition of two parallel parts (kindergarten and healthcare centre), uneven both in plan and section, and the exact extension of these parts seem to stem directly from dimensional and functional requirements, and not from any pre-defined, formalist concern. As in Laginha and Martins works, the concrete pillar-and-beam structure had plastic attributes that went far beyond strictly static requirements. A range of expressive architectural events punctuated the design: patios where vegetation grew, ramps and portico galleries, V-shaped columns, cantilevered roof slabs and suspended concrete louvres all

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<sup>217</sup> Project statement 1960.09.04 (Faro-CMF/AHMF-Mç125-cp55).



contributed to the work's associations with international post-war trends. In particular, the slanted volume encasing a richly textured loggia affiliated this with contemporary works of Brazilian architecture, which were well known to Portuguese designers.

Costa became part of the important *Café Aliança* social circle in Faro, and the influence of some of its members is likely to have helped the architect obtain commissions further afield: doctor Assunção Matos, for instance, was the Olhão representative of the regional health service run by Brito da Mana and had his own residence designed by Costa in 1957 (see Chapter 3), just as Brito da Mana was recommending the architect for *Alcantarilha* and *Aljezur*. The friendship and working relationship with engineer Apolónia Correia developed there: he not only came to collaborate in a large number of Costa's works but also became a client for whom the architect designed many medium- and large-scale rental housing projects in the 1960s and 1970s. Finally, according to Costa's testimony, it was within the *Café Aliança* circle that the suspicions of corruption amongst the Faro municipal assessors were first raised.

### Themes of multifamily housing

Concurrently, Costa's professional practice outside Faro also helped to establish his reputation as a reliable designer for everyday building developers, in the mid-1950s. In Tavira and in his hometown Vila Real, Costa produced between 1955 and 1960 a series of multifamily housing and single-family, mixed-use buildings in which he perfected skills and specific design devices: his focus on intricate shading devices and alternative circulation schemes for even the most modest everyday construction, for instance, developed there.

The building in **Rua de Ayamonte 40-50** (Vila Real, 1956, **figs. 424-425**), was a complex combination of varied-size apartments, all of which were provided with independent access at street level. This was not typical for multifamily buildings in Lisbon, for instance, where one collective staircase gave access to two or more units per floor, their front doors located on the landing and not at street level; it was a different typology, closer to the Dutch tradition of the *Haagsportiek* (although entirely interior) than to Lisbon building conventions. It possibly grew out of a concern with providing dwellers with the sense of living in a self-standing house, while at the same time avoiding expensive common areas whenever possible. I believe this to be an access solution characteristic of small urban centres, where large-scale rental buildings were then uncommon and largely unviable. It was not exclusive to architects or to Costa's work: engineer Belchior used the same solution in his design for a set of four buildings in **Rua Antero de Quental 77-91** (Faro, 1955, **fig. 428-429**), specifying that front doors had been placed "to provide independent access to each of the homes."<sup>218</sup> But Costa developed the independent access model systematically in Faro in the early 1960s, and it became one of his housing layouts' trademarks, together with the inner patio.

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<sup>218</sup> Project statement 1955.07.29 (Faro-CMF/SAO-373/1955).

Costa's Rua de Ayamonte elevations were an example of the use of sun-breaks and other fixed construction elements for combined aesthetical and hygrothermal purposes. "The image of the elevations," Costa wrote, "comes out livelily with chiaroscuros, in a way, due to the use of elements aimed at protecting them from the effects of the sun."<sup>219</sup> Insolation control elements had been widely experimented with, to this double effect, in modern architecture throughout the world and naturally in Algarve. Laginha had published in *Arquitectura* (1948) his design for a multifamily building in Loulé where three "traditional elements" – windows, opaque shutters and lattice screens – were combined in such a way that four different levels of ventilation, insolation and privacy were obtained (above, **figs. 257-258**). This was used by Laginha as an example of "pure and elevated regionalism," of how a designer preferring investigation of local customs and traditions rather than their mere copy could expect to achieve "simple, effective and even elegant results." Costa took the cue from Laginha and transformed the simple casement wood-lattice screen of Portuguese building tradition into a fixture in his designs. When designing the **Horta das Neves house** in Tavira (1960, **fig. 432**), Costa explained that the lattice screen (*reixa*) was a "typical element" in the town's architecture.<sup>220</sup> Tavira was, in fact, one of the centres where this tradition remained visible for longer, and the *reixa* was an important detail in the façades of his buildings there – namely, in **Rua da Liberdade 32** (1959, **fig. 431**)<sup>221</sup> and **Rua Primeiro de Maio 1** (1960, **fig. 433**).<sup>222</sup>

Costa's 1950s elevations were described consistently by the architect in terms of "simplicity," "movement," and "rhythm," achieved through the use of the sun-break mechanisms and also through structure ("The structural elements are paced, marking the rhythm of the façades,"<sup>223</sup> he wrote on the building in **Rua Conselheiro Frederico Ramirez 71**, Vila Real, 1956, **figs. 426-427**) and colour ("The elevations seem simple, paced with openings and fillings, while each salient or recessed element will be enhanced or dimmed through the use of colour"<sup>224</sup>). The effect of colour can be clearly seen in the **Galhardo building** (Tavira, 1956, **fig. 430**). Often adopting a playful attitude in his designs – which seemed, at times, in contradiction with his intended "simplicity" – Costa would add other motifs to his apparently inexhaustible palette, such as the suspended canopies or the drawer-like balconies (**fig. 426**).

Loggias, used whenever possible, combined shading purposes and spatial qualities. On the **Marreiros Serafim** house in Rua Mouzinho de Albuquerque 1B (Faro, 1958, **fig. 434**), Costa wrote: "The loggias will be the extension of the living and intimate areas to the exterior, and will obstruct the direct effect of the sun on them."<sup>225</sup> This concept of the loggia as an extension of

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<sup>219</sup> Project statement 1956.03.16 (VRSA-CMVRSA/AM-379/1956). All material on Vila Real kindly lent by Gonçalo Vargas.

<sup>220</sup> (Tavira-CMT/AMT-LU48/1963).

<sup>221</sup> (Tavira-CMT/AMT-LU7/1961).

<sup>222</sup> (Tavira-CMT/AMT-LU16/1961).

<sup>223</sup> Project statement 1956.03.31 (VRSA-CMVRSA/AM-415/1956).

<sup>224</sup> Building in Rua Conselheiro Frederico Ramirez 63, project statement 1956.06.16 (VRSA-CMVRSA/AM-678/1956).

<sup>225</sup> Project statement 1958.01.08 (Faro-CMF/SAO-52/1958).

domestic space is traceable to the Corbusian concept of “*logis prolongé*,” a buffer between interior and exterior environments, a threshold of private and public life. In its current state (fig. 435), the Marreiros Serafim house has reverted to the opacity, the enclosure, the clearly defined frontier between interior and exterior that characterised traditional buildings in Algarve and that, in his proposed alternative regionalist architecture, Costa had tried to subvert.

### The “rural” reference

The group of works created in 1956 for Vila Real included a large single-family house, the **Folque de Brito residence** (figs. 436-437), in which Costa developed his recurrent themes of layout design: optimized functioning, correct orientation, gardens and loggias as extensions of interior areas that broke conventional differentiation. Being a high-standard commission on a generous plot, this was an opportunity to hone these points while taking inspiration from well-known contemporary examples of similar structures: the long elevated wing of rooms and uninterrupted loggias, over a glazed, fluid space for living and dining areas, and the slanted profile of the side elevation, evoke works such as Vasconcelos’s Rangel de Lima house (fig. 250), published together with Costa’s “Milagre” house in 1953, and many Brazilian examples. However, the importance of this project for my argument is that here, for the first time, Costa explicitly associated his architecture with traditional rural architecture in Algarve.

“Our concern was to give the construction a sober look, integrated with the typical rural constructions of Algarve, where large white surfaces and sober forms prevail. (...) All attention will be focused on obtaining an architectural stance that is a continuation of that type, framed in our environment, updated, sober, the product of a dynamic age, and yet humanised.”<sup>226</sup>

Prior to 1956 Costa had never evoked rural Algarve building tradition in his memórias. He had identified his designs with modern architecture (“biological, physical and intellectual reality”) and provided detailed insight into the aims of his layouts and façade compositions – but not yet mentioned his intention to establish a direct relationship of form between his works and their context. According to the Folque de Brito house statement, Costa envisaged his design, though a product of his own age, in a continuum with local, informal tradition; he would integrate it with its environment by offering an updated version of such tradition. Most importantly, he meant the design to be contemporary, i.e. modern, *but humanised*. This essential safeguard was guaranteed, in his words, precisely through the use of traditional features such as colours, materials, and sun-break devices: they worked as humanising mechanisms, a defence against the perils of abstraction, the tendency of all international architectural trends.

“International architecture,” Gomes da Costa explained fifty years on, “is what you do when you leave school, as toddlers crawl before they learn how to walk.” Later, one learns that “architecture, as an expression of our own society, of our own way of being and living, must be

<sup>226</sup> Project statement 1956.06.16 (VRSa-CMVRSa/AM-679/1956). POiA (Citation 54).

different from one place to the other. For a specific human settlement, a specific environment.” When asked what he had thought of his region’s vernacular architecture, the architect conceded: “Here in Algarve, I would drive through countryside areas with cottages, mere walls and roof, and I would say ‘here is something so well-balanced, so humanised, entirely on a human scale!’ Now, this popular architecture was made at a particular time, with particular materials, it has that expression; but nowadays we have new materials and techniques, we can use them and play with them in all seriousness, and give it [architecture] our expression, one of our own time! That is the fundamental point.”<sup>227</sup>

This was the rationale behind Costa’s understanding of the relationship between regional (popular, vernacular) features and his up-to-date, post-war, cultured modern architecture. A rationale, it must be noted, filtered by fifty years of architectural culture, personal experience and reflection and, in this case, historical narratives based on the dichotomy between what I have called conservative regionalism and modernist regionalism – in which it was essential to capture the use of regional features from the conservative field to the modernist one. A rationale consolidated in the early twenty-first century, after the “regionalist” sensibilities of Távora, Siza and other famous Portuguese architects had become the foremost distinctive trait of contemporary architecture in the country. A valid, consistent, operative rationale nevertheless, one that does not contradict the architect’s concrete investigations with traditional elements – even though their exuberant use may have led, at times, to results where the decorative excess seems to reach the levels of many conservative works.

One question remains: why did Gomes da Costa wait six years before he started invoking these “humanising mechanisms” of tradition as relevant factors in his design process, to which he then made repeated reference in the following decade? Was he “learning to walk” during that time, or was it not a matter that seemed to deserve attention until 1956? In his interview, Costa gave a possible clue. Before mentioning the impression caused by his countryside drives, he stated: “We have the *Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular* [survey of folk architecture]: there we see, throughout the country, the [architectural] expression [varying] from one place to the next, the materials used in each place, each area with its particularity.”

The national survey of Portuguese folk architecture was launched in 1955 and involved the avant-garde of architectural circles in Porto and Lisbon (see Chapter 2). Although it was published only in 1961, the idea was discussed long before and, in 1956, the teams – in which many of Costa’s former Porto colleagues took part – were in the field. The process and results of the *Inquérito* encouraged Costa’s generation to look for the “balance” and “human scale” in their regional environments, and the “humanising” qualities of the folk buildings of each region became a fashionable subject of Portuguese architectural discourse in the late 1950s. Moreover, familiar with the latest international developments of the discipline, Costa was most likely aware of the rise of a

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<sup>227</sup> Costa (2008).

humanising trend in foreign architectural discourse, in the works of the Italian post-war reconstruction or of masters such as Alvar Aalto, whom he admitted to admiring.

It seems likely that the shift – or rather, adjustment – in Costa’s descriptions of his designs coincided with the realisation of the long-awaited national survey. If this was the case, it reveals just to what extent the architect, in his peripheral daily practice, was exposed and sensitive to the changes in architectural thought that were unfolding in metropolitan forums. I have already described how Laginha had been gathering arguments since 1948 for an alternative regionalism that incorporated modern architecture, using his first works in Algarve as manifestos. Costa’s first works, in turn, had been focused on experimenting with post-war modernism, and had temporarily suspended references to regional context, thus creating a hiatus in this prevailing thread of twentieth-century architecture in Algarve.

The now lost 1956 Folque de Brito house may have been the point when, influenced by the architectural debates of the time and led by his own personal investigations – which he consequently learned to articulate in a coherent discourse –, Costa took up the thread of regionalist references. With more whitewashed, opaque surfaces and a more sober stance than, for instance, the 1955 Gago Rosa house (above, **fig. 397**), it seems to have translated that shift of discourse into form. In this light, the presence of an underlying, persistent regionalist current in Algarve’s building culture becomes clear. This would have been the strong, driving axis, the stock onto which other currents – first conservative, later modernist – were grafted. Such grafts morphed the regionalist stock in Algarve into new forms of building, acquiring new foreign elements that added to its local root. Locally nurtured, it was not the sole product of metropolitan culture but the result of multisided negotiations.

Signalling the strength of this axis, regionalist references became automatic in Costa’s discourse, dominated by “sobriety” and “simplicity” as the elected Algarvian qualities: the whitewashed vertical planes that defined the **Afonso house** in Rua Reitor Teixeira Guedes 65 (1960, **fig. 438**), were described as “obeying the characteristics of Algarvian buildings, of simplicity and sobriety, and the predominance of white surfaces.”<sup>228</sup> The appearance of the building on **Largo de São Luís 13** (1960, **fig. 439**) was “sober,” “employing the regional characteristic wooden-lattice elements, and the typical Algarve white colour will predominate.”<sup>229</sup> Similar wording pervaded the architect’s planning applications until at least 1965, eventually reduced to one formula that synthesised Costa’s programme: to create buildings “fully integrated with local context, but in such a way they also express the spirit of our time.”<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Project statement 1960.04.25 (Faro-CMF/SAO-417/1960).

<sup>229</sup> Project statement 1960.05.06 (Faro-CMF/SAO-440/1960).

<sup>230</sup> Project statement 1963.07.19 (Faro-CMF/SAO-885/1963).

*Modernism accelerated: the engineers' role in the turn of the decade*

The second half of the 1950s decade in Faro saw Gomes da Costa develop into the town's leading architect in the sphere of private building. At the same time, many more commissions were given to the civil engineers, before Costa himself in the 1960s became the dominant designer for projects within the stabilised urban fabric. Their designs were generally less adventurous than Costa's, in that they tended to extend previous building customs: for example, instead of opening their rooms onto the street in wall-to-wall windows, they kept openings smaller and easily recognisable as such – a traditional window, framed in stone and surrounded by rendered surfaces. Nevertheless, the civil engineers' work moved decisively away from the conservative decorated elevations of the 1940s, adopted new elements – such as the popular protruding frame contrasted with hollowed surfaces – and, towards the end of the decade, testified to the growing diffusion of post-war modern architecture in Portugal.

Working in Faro and, in many cases, developing close relationships with Costa, they were also inspired by the architect's work. Their designs illustrate a “soft” modernist practice, hybrid and restrained, through which a wider acceptance of more radical, “harder” proposals was accelerated. In fact, in lieu of the conventional understanding of influence (from the metropolitan-schooled architects towards local non-architects), I suggest an inverted, complementary reading: the engineers' work could be said to have had an influence on the dissemination of modernism and, by consequence, a positive effect on Costa's popularity.

Engineer Belchior's first version for a small shop and house on **Rua Nova de São Luís 4** (1957, **fig. 440**)<sup>231</sup> combined the cautious choice of pared-down walls and simple openings with a sophisticated, fluted staircase, topped by a canopy. Apolónia Correia's contemporary design for a house in **Rua Reitor Teixeira Guedes 26** (**figs. 441-442**)<sup>232</sup> employed some of the engineer's favourite motifs (frames around openings and entire wall sections, elaborate parapets) and some experiments (e.g. curved, trapezoidal-profile balconies). The result was an essentially conventional volume and fenestration, exuberantly decorated. Costa's influence on Correia's work can be best appreciated in a house on **Rua Ataíde Oliveira 126** (1959, **fig. 443**)<sup>233</sup> whose play of skidded volumes seems more as Costa would have worked it, with a box-like loggia exceeding the limits of the two main elevations.

Belchior, municipal counsellor and future mayor, was responsible for a large number of Faro's buildings in the 1950s, especially in the new extensions. His practice of an everyday modernism in run-of-the-mill, rental apartment buildings played a central role in the diffusion of this less celebrated strand of post-war architecture. Among many possible examples, his self-stated “own and contemporary imprint”<sup>234</sup> transpired in the **Rua de São Luís 15** building (1957, **figs.**

<sup>231</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-526/1957).

<sup>232</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-550/1957).

<sup>233</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-1179/1959).

<sup>234</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-546/1957).

444-445), whose frontage was “enriched” with concrete posts, lintels and sun-breaks, a central ceramic grid strip, generous flowerpots and a canopy topping the rooftop lift box. Belchior’s “imprint” relied on the use of needlework-like panels of ceramic hollowed blocks (grelhagem), the same that Costa had employed to such impacting effect in the Gago Rosa residence in 1955 or the 1957 Brandão apartment block (above, **figs. 400-402**), and that Lisbon designers were applying to their elevations in everyday architecture as a means to keep service areas and clotheslines hidden from street view.<sup>235</sup>

Belchior used them, on a larger scale, in the triple set of apartment buildings in **Praceta Engenheiro Duarte Pacheco 47-53** (1958, **fig. 446**).<sup>236</sup> The ceramic grid panels lost the strictly functional purpose and became part of a chequered composition, variously placed over the tiered loggia, the whole elevation ruled by a network of projected frames; this simulacrum of structure, which evoked the actual concrete pillar-and-beam web underneath, was used to plastic effect in a manner parallel to Costa’s and Laginha’s use in their designs. Compared to the architects’ elevations, however, civil engineers’ designs tended to be more simplified and standardised whenever possible, resulting in less varied compositions; other than signalling different design skills, this reflects the fact that most engineers also built their own projects, preferring easier to build and cheaper solutions.

The simplified use of colour variation, grid panels and other motifs used by architects was also a feature of the apartment building Belchior designed for **Rua D. Teresa Ramalho Ortigão 1** (1959, **fig. 447**). In words that echoed Costa’s memórias, Belchior suggested his “play of volumes and colours will avoid all monotony, while the loggias and their elements will offer protection from insolation, and be integrated with local environment.”<sup>237</sup> A shared architectural discourse followed, at times, a shared written rationale.

Technical engineer Marciano Nobre was another prolific designer in Faro in the 1960s, who later also served as mayor (1979-1982). His career, initiated in the late 1950s, did not have the earlier conservative phase common to others. Designs such as the twin houses in **Rua Reitor Teixeira Guedes 127-129** (1958, **fig. 448**)<sup>238</sup> suggest that some local agents adopted post-war modernism from the start of their careers. Once more, colour differentiation and volume displacement generated “simple and modern-looking” elevations, which, in the case of Nobre’s work, tended to be “valorised” with the use of few elements and minimum mixture of geometries. In his and Belchior’s hands, the ceramic grelhagem became a feature of everyday elevation design, giving plastic interest to conventional residential buildings. Nobre carefully described this increasingly popular feature in his project statements: for **Rua Dr. Coelho de Carvalho 3-7** (1958, **fig. 449**), for instance, he wrote that the façades, “markedly modern architectural compositions,”

<sup>235</sup> Cf. Agarez (2009).

<sup>236</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-575/1958).

<sup>237</sup> Project statement 1959.02.25 (Faro-CMF/SAO-160/1959).

<sup>238</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-126/1958).

were “functional and provided with full-width loggias with moulded concrete mullions forming panels, one of which is filled with knit-like grelhagem, with the purpose of providing residents with an isolated resting area.”<sup>239</sup>

In more central areas, however, designers were asked to show restraint in their modern compositions. For a sensitive site just outside the castle walls, in, Nobre’s 1960 design was devoid of loggias and ceramic panels, had reduced openings, an elemental volume and a single balcony. He wrote:

“In what concerns the architecture, both the site and our contemporary age were considered. To attend to the former, a sober building was designed, so as not to clash with the surroundings; in what concerns the latter, we believe its conception and finishing with contemporary processes and materials will clearly express its time.”<sup>240</sup>

In fact, regional and local contexts and the long-standing quest for a synthesis of modern and regional features continued to be issues in early 1960s building practice, whether led by metropolitan-educated architects or engineers. One 1963 proposal by Belchior illustrated, furthermore, how the apparent dominance enjoyed by civil engineers could still be obstructed by municipal bureaucracy, on grounds of insensitivity to the site. The single-family house for his home-village of Estoi, in **Rua João de Deus 40 (fig. 450)**, had a modern layout, with living and dining areas separated by a screen, and a façade composition defined by self-standing, white-rendered and rusticated stone-clad planes. The volumes were elevated on rusticated socles and set in rendered frames that encompassed the open parapets of the açoteia. But Alfredo Braga, Faro municipality’s technical advisor since April 1960, rejected the application claiming that the project was not “integrated with the constructions of the Algarve type, nor with the village’s architecture.”<sup>241</sup> Engineer Fernando Mendonça, in his revised (and accepted) version of the project (**fig. 451**), replaced the stone-clad planes and chimney with all-whitewashed walls and a stylised Algarve chimney top; the windows of the south elevation, previously set in vertical bands of different colour and texture, were turned into simple openings with hinged shutters, evoking the traditional models. Belchior’s suggestion of a village modernism for the Algarve hinterland was nevertheless retained in the built work, where regional features were minor details in an overall “cosmopolitan” image (**fig. 452**). Municipal bureaucracy seemed unable to force the return to a less fragmented, more elementarily composed architecture that more clearly corresponded to the quintessential rural Algarve building tradition. Adding stylised chimney tops and shutters was the easy concession that designers and local authority seemed willing to accept.

Through the work of Costa and engineers such as Belchior and Nobre, an exuberant strand of post-war modern architecture gained unprecedented popularity in Algarve. In the Faro area,

<sup>239</sup> Project statement 1958.09.02 (Faro-CMF/SAO-686/1958).

<sup>240</sup> Rua de São Francisco 9, project statement 1960.10.01 (Faro-CMF/SAO-999/1960). POiA (Citation 55).

<sup>241</sup> Assessment 1963.03.26 (Faro-CMF/SAO-327/1963).



aside from the town and villages, there was another important test bed for these changing trends, from 1957 on: the development of one of the barrier islands of the Ria Formosa delta, Ilha de Ancão, as a resort for single-family summer residences, in which the foremost players in the building activity in Faro took part<sup>242</sup> (figs. 453-458). In it, works that synthesised regional and modern, or raised related questions, render testimony of the extent to which the modernist trend was popular among clients, architects and engineers in the early 1960s. Yet the size limits of this dissertation, and the need to prioritise other evidence for its overall argument, prevent me from discussing that process here.

*Modernist regionalism at urban scale: Costa and the construction industry*

The career of Gomes da Costa, Faro's first full-time modern architect, ran parallel to the urban growth of Algarve's capital in the 1960s. If the 1950s were a time for experimenting and perfecting design skills – occasionally resisted by the social and economic elite of Faro but generally well accepted –, the 1960s were a period of intense work for Costa. Faro's construction industry adopted the architect's manner and provided him with opportunities to create entire ensembles of buildings, street fronts and squares; some of Costa's most remarkable medium- and large-scale works were produced in that decade. The historicised image of an outsider that brought to this peripheral, backward setting the novelty of metropolitan trends and filtered them with local references, operating "miracles" in remote Algarve – was replaced, de facto, by the practice of an establishment insider. Costa's 1960s works consolidated post-war modernism as the prevailing architectural trend in Faro. They became the style of choice of the status quo, configured a sounding victory in the "Battle of Modern Architecture" and converted the pioneering lines of his early proposals into everyday currency.

Costa's work in the 1960s established his regional version of post-war modernism – set within the uninterrupted continuity of regional references in the architecture of Algarve –, through a sequence of commercial and multifamily apartment buildings that replaced the largely single-family residential commissions of the 1950s. More than in these commissions, often customised to the requirements of a client-user, it was in his work for the rental housing and office market that the architect systematised design mechanisms and recognisable recipes for layout and elevation solutions, which constitute the so-called "Gomes da Costa Style."

The São Luís extension area of Faro, for example, was filled with Costa's 1960s architecture, in sets of terraced and freestanding apartment buildings. In the terraced building type – of which the four-unit set of **Rua José Joaquim de Moura 12-28** (1961, figs. 459-460)<sup>243</sup> for Apolónia Correia, is paradigmatic – the architect perfected the semi-patio and patio house solutions

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<sup>242</sup> My research in CMF and DUF funds resulted in a sample of thirty-one projects for the area between 1957 and 1966, of which nine signed by José Apolónia Correia, seven by Manuel Gomes da Costa, three by Joaquim Belchior and three by José Marciano Nobre.

<sup>243</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-1119/1961).

he had experimented with in single-family dwellings in the 1950s, i.e. layouts on two floors where the compartments are displayed around a courtyard which, depending on the width of the building module, can either be placed closer to the centre of the house or at the rear, open to the backyard. The courtyard, a trademark of Costa's, allowed the layout to extend deeper into the plot, while still assuring the regulation requirement of natural light and ventilation in every room. Placing two superimposed dwellings in terraced sets allowed, in turn, independent access to every dwelling, with separate street-level doors, a fixture of housing design in Faro. The elevations of this and adjacent sets for the same client (e.g. **Rua Actor Nascimento Rodrigues 2-10**,<sup>244</sup> 1963, **fig. 461**) show how the architect's lexicon was evolving in those years: the predominance of large rendered surfaces stamped with square reliefs or openings, the preference for opaque parapets, the repetition of external stairs as motif in the rear elevations, and the introduction of large concrete sun-breaks topping the roof slabs, as permanent awnings protecting the "outside extension" of the apartment, were all then becoming distinctive features in Costa's work.

The building on **Rua D. Jerónimo Osório 16-18** for José Brandão Pinheiro (1962, **figs. 462-464**) is a good example of his freestanding multifamily housing type: a tri-dimensional pictorial composition like those theorised by South African architect Martienssen, who had conflated the architectural façade design process with composition principles of modern objectivist art and directly inspired Costa's first works, in 1950. To emphasise the tri-dimensional nature of his 1962 exercise, Costa specified that it was the result "of the careful study of all elevations," a possibility denied in terraced constructions.

"The harmonious distribution of surfaces and openings aims at breaking all the rigidity that a compact plan solution, driven by the need to fully reclaim the available construction area, forces on the volume. Such distribution is complemented by the frames that neatly enhance the openings, the floor slabs and the edges. The architectural pace of these elements will be combined with colour, which further provides the composition with movement, comeliness and freshness."<sup>245</sup>

The architect verbalised his long-time aversion to rigid volumes – a shortcoming of modern architecture he aimed to overcome – and combined the prosaic demands of commercial dwellings with his compositional concerns. In a side elevation, for instance, regularly displayed loggias served the bedrooms while a seemingly random distribution of small openings obeyed strict compositional requirements, freely illuminating the interior staircase. In these works, Costa's design became unprecedentedly plastic. In **Rua Ataíde Oliveira 120** (1966, **figs. 465-466**),<sup>246</sup> the randomly perforated opaque parapet was combined with other of his 1960s favourite motifs, such as the frame-within-a-frame: one uninterrupted frame marked each loggia and was included in the larger frame that encased the upper floors. The four-storey block on **Rua José Joaquim de Moura 2A**

<sup>244</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-518/1963).

<sup>245</sup> Project statement 1962.06.15 (Faro-CMF/SAO-512/1962). POiA (Citation 56).

<sup>246</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-713/1966).

(1965, **figs. 467-468**), designed in tandem with the previous example, added the brick-clad surfaces, the concrete awnings overhung between two floors, and a double vault atop the açoteia (possibly a reference to Le Corbusier's Jaoul houses, 1954-1956), to Costa's already ample palette of forms and finishing materials.

“Through the play of these sun-breaks and other elements in the composition, the building gained an expression of lightness and movement,”<sup>247</sup> Costa wrote on this last project. Constrained by the repetitive characteristic of design work commissioned almost exclusively by rental housing developers – to which the “full reclamation of construction area” was the first and foremost goal, the *sine qua non* for any architecture – Costa sought creative compensation in the play of composition elements. His clients' and their contractors' close attention to the architect's designs led to a generally high standard of results.

Despite the number of broadly similar projects running simultaneously, Costa paid close attention to the layouts, which varied considerably. Primarily devised to satisfy commercial requirements, the dwellings were functionally optimised, each area (living, resting, service) clearly separated but interdependent, with little rentable area wasted on circulation or undefined uses. Faro town planners seldom raised questions about their compliance to existing regulations: the patio house device and the resulting depth of construction, substantially larger than that allowed in Lisbon, for instance, was resisted only by urban planner de Aguiar.<sup>248</sup> Similarly, Costa's habit of including maid bedrooms that were too small to be legally named as such, sometimes with reduced natural light and ventilation (e.g. **figs. 459, 463, 466, 470**), went largely unnoticed to Algarve local authorities and was only occasionally detected and criticised by central offices.<sup>249</sup> Other than revealing the loose grip of municipal bureaucracy or the downside to the architect's tendency to push the limits of regulations to his clients' benefit, I see these stratagems as anecdotes within the larger canvas of Costa's work: they suggest how he had definitely overcome, by the early 1960s, the regular resistance by local authorities he claimed to have faced in his early years, and held as symbolic in the heroic narrative of the “Battle of Modern Architecture.” Having overcome what resistance there may have been on aesthetic grounds, very early on – now even the regulation compliance issues that obstructed official approval of some of Costa's opening works were no longer an issue. The architect had become fully integrated with the local establishment, not only in the economic sphere but also in its assessment circles.

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<sup>247</sup> Project statement 1965.09.10 (Faro-CMF/SAO-1202/1965).

<sup>248</sup> In Costa's plans for the Baleizão buildings in Rua Manuel Ascensão (1954, above), and for Rua Conselheiro Bivar 77 (Faro-CMF/SAO-117/1957).

<sup>249</sup> For instance, in DGSU's 1962 assessment of an application for Rua dos Mouros 52 in Tavira (Tavira-CMT/AMT-LU12/1964). My research found rooms of this kind, occasionally as small as 3,20 square metres and generally named as “storage,” in thirty-one projects designed by Costa between 1954 and 1967. I have discussed the use of a third-bedroom-as-service-bedroom subterfuge in the 1950s, by designers who were encouraged to use the available area to the fullest, pushed by their clients' aim to obtain the highest revenue possible with the operation, in Agarez (2009), 68-71.

In this context, Costa's artistic skills – he painted, created the azulejo panels for his buildings, and designed the furniture for some of these – flourished in some of his finest architectural designs, while layout limitations were compensated by ever-renewed façade inventiveness. In my final examples, the architect's everyday practice in peripheral Faro stretched the limits of this prosaic programme and was taken to a remarkably sophisticated level, in a proactive local response to post-war modernism.

The building in **Rua do Lethes 51** (1963, **figs. 469-470**) was designed for Manuel Pires Mendonça and José Mendes Pereira, Costa's clients in at least five other occasions before 1967. In this instance, Costa enveloped two unremarkable apartments with a composition featuring the individualised balcony motif that broke conventional solutions of the time (tiered balconies in a “bookshelf-like,” full-width and full-height element), explaining such separation was “not only to improve insolation protection, but also to induce the appearance of movement.”<sup>250</sup> This was an opportunity to play with the opaque and trellised planes, the vertical and horizontal concrete elements variedly placed, and the shades of white, grey and colour that having entered Costa's lexicon before, were now rephrased.

Luís António das Dores was also a good client of Gomes da Costa's (since his first-ever signed project, the Baptista-Dores of 1950, above, **figs. 270-272**), and went on to develop Costa's projects in at least five other occasions before 1969. Together with large-scale developer Amadeu Mendonça André, das Dores built one of the architect's most notable small buildings: the apartment block on **Rua de Alportel 2-4** and Rua Baptista Lopes 56 (1963, **figs. 471-473**). It was a demonstration of the unsuspectedly ample possibilities offered by a low-income housing brief, an existing plot in the centre of Faro, and the local everyday construction techniques and materials. The low-rent purpose that justified two-bedroom minimal dwellings in a three-unit-per-floor building should not, according to Costa, diminish the care put in its architectural composition, so as to avoid an “exceedingly poor” appearance: “The play of openings, individual balconies and wall surfaces resulted in paced, lighter elevations.”<sup>251</sup> Within an overall structure frame, these elements were excavated and extruded, producing half-suspended balconies, embedded concrete blades and filling walls slit with a range of rectangular shapes. With his acute sense of plasticity, Costa created an urban-scale sculpture that plays a notable aesthetic role in the streetscape *and* is also a residential building. In the late 1960s and 1970s he developed this line further, reaching a high point in the design for the twelve-storey tower in **Rua Frei Lourenço de Santa Maria 2** (1969-1973, **fig. 474**).<sup>252</sup>

The 1965 double apartment block on the north top corner of Avenida Cinco de Outubro (**fig. 475**) marked Costa's route towards larger and more important commissions. The seven-storey, curved block completed the upper end of Faro's main boulevard, together with Costa's 1957 south-

<sup>250</sup> Project statement 1963.03.22 (Faro-CMF/SAO-322/1963).

<sup>251</sup> Project statement 1963.11.22 (Faro-CMF/SAO-1495/1963).

<sup>252</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-763/1969).

corner block, and was to appear “suspended,” in the architects words, over a glazed ground floor for retail and a carefully planted garden with exotic species and traditional Portuguese black-and-white stone pathways. A large-scale aluminium profile grid, filled with aluminium lattice panels in a chequered design, was Costa’s latest experiment in insolation control and in the search for “weightlessness and balance” that drove so many of his compositions.<sup>253</sup>

The aluminium reixa (lattice panel) and the geometric-pattern azulejo, used as wall facing, were the two key-elements in the architect’s most important projects of the second half of the decade. By then, Costa had dropped all mention of specific regional references in his writings, apart from the occasional “typical white colour” remark. Instead, the architect was actively creating his own version of a regional modern architecture – another form of modernist regionalism – by combining influence from the latest contemporary, international forms with inspiration in traditional materials and elements, in increasingly abstract solutions. In the **Sol mixed-use building** (Rua de Portugal 2, 1965, **figs. 476-477**), on the corner of an important carrefour, Costa conformed to a planner-designed portico template and created sculptural pillars that neatly suspended the edge of the volume and allowed for pedestrian traffic. The solution, furthermore, gave the structure a “plastic expression that enhances its grandiosity,”<sup>254</sup> and he repeated it on the opposite corner, in the retail and office **Nogueira building** (Rua de Santo António 68, 1966, **figs. 479-480**).

While the elevations of the Sol building were treated with panels of facing brick and aluminium reixas enveloping the concrete balconies in what was, then, Costa’s usual manner, the architect’s work on the Nogueira building façades took the potential of the aluminium frame further.

“From the module-driven structure, a rhythmic unity emerged among all the elements in the façades, enriched by the alternated movement of the sun-breaks. In the façades, anodized aluminium posts, frames and jalousies (with the aluminium colour) will be used, as well as vertical sun-breaks, equally in aluminium. The edges of floor slabs will be faced with ceramic elements and the parapets with traditional azulejo tiles, rich in colour.”<sup>255</sup>

This was Costa’s interpretation of a curtain-wall in Faro in the mid-1960s, combining what were then cutting-edge materials (aluminium frames and panels at that time were still uncommon in Lisbon) and commonly found, locally sourced ceramic elements such as the colourful and glossy Portuguese azulejo. With the architect’s own residence, designed in 1966 for Rua Reitor Teixeira Guedes 42-44 (a small-scale “Case Study House” in Faro, testament to Costa’s up-to-date influence from Californian architecture, **figs. 481-483**), and the 1969 building on Rua Rebelo da Silva 3, with its coloured glass and aluminium curtain-wall (**fig. 478**), the Nogueira building shared the zenith of Gomes da Costa’s architectural work of the 1960s.

<sup>253</sup> (Faro-CMF/SAO-700/1965).

<sup>254</sup> Project statement 1965.07.26 (Faro-CMF/SAO-1025/1965).

<sup>255</sup> Project statement 1966.04.10 (Faro-CMF/SAO-575/1966). POiA (Citation 57).

Looking back at a long and productive career largely dedicated to the everyday, rental-housing industry, Costa remarked: “A lot of it is of no interest whatsoever.” Embedded with an architectural culture that gravitates around symbolic and outstanding works, the architect is the first to belittle the value of his work for the building developers, that constituted the bulk of his 300+ project oeuvre. Yet many of these “economical” projects, that Costa said he had to work on “when there was nothing more important going on,” helped define a paradigm for 1960s architecture in Algarve. This was the time when, as never before, private building activity took control of Portuguese urban centres, and Faro was a very good example of this. What seems to make this a remarkable case, in the national context, is that even in this essentially economically driven phenomenon, the subject of regional built identity still held a place in the equation. To a higher or lesser degree of literalness or abstraction, in more unadventurous or sophisticated ways, the old concern with the Algarvian features was no less there than it had been before.

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In this chapter, studying forty years of building practice in the capital of Algarve was an opportunity to return to the facts of architectural history, its objects (buildings) and circumstances (social, economic, political, cultural), and suspend established accounts. The accepted canon of Portuguese architectural history, commonly projected from the centre on peripheral contexts, becomes shaded with nuances. Faro’s example shows how rich the history of peripheral building practice can be – how much richer if stemming from the documents, the buildings, the builders and the actors of Faro, rather than forced into the explanatory grids devised in Lisbon and Porto, then and now.

The architect sent from Lisbon to restore order to the perceived chaos of non-professional design in provincial Algarve, imposing a conservative, literal version of regional architecture from his position of power – emerged as the subject of a less linear process. Jorge de Oliveira may have played this part, but he also struggled to realise his proposals in regional and central instances of assessment and funding. He collaborated with and supported his younger, local counterparts, who disputed his architectural stance and power until they succeeded in eclipsing both with their new versions of regional architecture. Oliveira eventually transformed his own stance, in the face of the new generation’s ascent and clearly under their influence. By doing so, he proposed yet another strand of regional design practice: hybrid, tentative but no less relevant as a product of peripheral architecture, spurred by local developments.

Similarly, the young architect who styled himself as the avant-garde representative in a backward context, a post-war modernist who fought conservatism, whose proposals shocked and faced resistance – came out as part of a more complex picture. In fact, Manuel Gomes da Costa was the most prolific architect in Faro in the twentieth century, gradually supported by local and regional elites and eventually adopted by the construction industry with his own version of a modernist regionalism. Avoiding the perceived excesses of pure modernism without questioning its

ethical and formal principles, he looked to use essential regional elements (surface, colour, material and technique) and pushed them to new levels of abstraction. Accommodating the prosaic (economic) requirements of the local building industry, he became a key player in Faro architectural establishment and had the opportunity to fill entire street fronts with his designs.

This understanding implies a departure from a black-and-white reading of developments in Faro as mere echoes of the metropolitan “Battle of Modern Architecture” narrative in Algarve. Faro’s modernist renaissance in the 1950s and 1960s was the work not only of the early proponents of an up-to-date alternative to conservative regionalism, but also of a myriad of other actors. The clients were essential in supporting this shift, from returned emigrants to cultured clergymen. The town planners, reputedly conservative and resistant to experimentation, sought to elevate the town’s perceived poor building quality by supporting modernist proposals. The state-controlled assessment and funding offices, also portrayed by generalist histories as disinclined to foster change, transferred support from conservative to modernist projects, allowing for their materialisation. Lastly, the non-architect designers, mainly engineers, shifted their everyday practice from a conservative to a modernist stance, thus vastly broadening the dissemination potential of the latter. They were the young Costa’s best allies.

The analysis of Faro’s buildings clearly illustrates the different versions of architectural regionalism that flourished in Algarve throughout the first half of the last century. Not only the conservative regionalism, whose literalness must be contextualised and freed from our collective modernist moral frame, but also the post-war modernist attempts to re-invoke the humanising qualities of regionalism, and the intermediate, hybrid regionalist practices that acquired features of both trends in the hands of architects and non-architects.

## Conclusion

### The stock and the graft

In the first six decades of the last century, architecture and building practice in Algarve evolved under the double influence of regionalist and modernist currents, echoing distant architectural discourses but modulating according to local particularities. In a region characterised by strong popular traditions, building implied negotiating the definition of a specific regional identity, where international, national, regional and local actors and agencies converged.

Algarve emerges as a case where the regional was the stock, strong, deep-rooted in the communities and consistently present throughout the period; modernism was grafted onto it, intensely in post-war years, producing a rich, specifically regional hybrid. Algarve's buildings tell the story of a relationship between regionalism and modernism that is different, in some important points, from the generally adopted narratives on the subject. They also illustrate the rich variety of practices, discourses and aesthetic programmes that, at different moments in time and under diverse circumstances, were conveyed under the name of *regionalism*.

#### Post-war regionalism, revised

Through the example of Algarve, my thesis questioned a persistent construct of contemporary Portuguese architectural culture: the myth of post-war regionalism. This centrally-produced construct has been grounded on two essential arguments. The first argument suggests that 1930s and 1940s regional diversity, essential for nationalist policies in Portugal, had its architectural expression in conservative stereotypes generated in central state departments, projected onto, and imposed on, the provinces of the country in a one-way process typical of authoritarian regimes. With little or no participation or interference from either other fields of knowledge or local and regional actors, these merely bureaucratic regional types would have, according to this argument, resulted in engrained provincial conservatism that mirrored national conservatism. My work shows (1) that the stereotype of Algarve's built identity (elemental volumes, flat roofs, stairway, chimney top, all-encompassing whiteness) came not originally from architects, but was built up by non-architectural discourses (scientific, literary, journalistic), which created an *unstated model*: a descriptive model (i.e. not designed but depicted in words and suggested in photographs and art works), alongside which architectural discourse and practice developed, with frequent points of contact and exchange. This work also shows (2) that the regional construct was –



particularly in the case of Olhão – the product of negotiation with, and interference from, the region and its agents, regarding both the “theoretical” formulation of a model and its use in architectural design. The idea that ministerial officials in Lisbon singlehandedly prescribed an Algarve-type design recipe for public buildings, consequently determining the stance of private commissions, was challenged by my findings. Algarvian agents had an essential role in consolidating a modern version of Olhão’s built identity, just as they did, later, in resisting the use of what they saw as inappropriately conservative features in Faro’s public architecture, to give but two examples. Although their views were occasionally defeated, these agents played a much larger part in the region’s architectural profile, be it conservative or progressive, than is usually recognised. Lastly, (3) I show that central views on regional built identity – which of course existed and were strongly held – were more diversified, and less prescriptive, than accounts of 1930s and 1940s conservative regionalism generally depict. Central views adjusted to different programmes and purposes, from temporary architecture to leisure infrastructure, and evolved in time, often following – rather more than determining – the structural changes that affected the region as a whole.

The second essential argument in the metropolitan myth of post-war regionalism is that it developed when modern architects overtook provincial conservatism, drawing upon regional characteristics to create a vibrant new architecture that brought to life what it found in the region and had been misused or distorted by conservatism. To achieve this end, post-war modernists would have had to cleverly subvert the terms by which architecture employed regional elements, against state-imposed stereotypes and local non-architect practices, providing truthful, non-literal and non-superficial renderings of regional diversity – proofs, simultaneously, of site-sensitivity and of political resistance. The argument owes much to the desire to present modernist practice as *radical*, to the influence of late-twentieth-century theories such as Critical Regionalism, and to subsequent attempts to re-frame earlier practices according to those constructs.

My work opens up a discussion on this argument along alternative, less straightforward lines: my version of the story is more plural than this centrally generated (and now largely crystallised) account, and rejects many of its black-and-white contrasts. It shows that (1) practices of interpreting building traditions in formal design, albeit by non-architects, had been current long before architects (conservative or modernist) started doing the same: filtering informal elements into formal building processes was a local custom, well established when metropolitan actors came into play. The narrative of an unprecedented “discovery” of the vernacular by educated architects, launched with the accounts of pioneer north-south European appropriation and resumed in the Portuguese reports of a post-war re-conquest of regionalism by the modernist side, does not fully correspond to the evidence. By overlooking previous custom (just as their conservative predecessors had), post-war modernist approaches to the vernacular and regional betrayed the same superficiality they had set out to supersede; by failing to acknowledge, to any measure, the already existing consciousness of a “regional” culture in local practices, contemporary architectural culture embarked on the uncritical celebration of the post-war process, taken as a natural fact, and

embedded it into our collective view of the past. This work shows (2) that the reputedly conservative handling of regional identity is multilayered and its products are complex hybrids (and there lies their richness and interest), requiring a more detailed analysis than that allowed by post-war narratives. Labelling these products as literal and reactionary, as such narratives have done, hinders our understanding of their origins, their meaning and their purpose. Although underrated in the hierarchy of architectural history's canon, they should not therefore remain overlooked or poorly studied. The same applies to the hybrid practices that, following conservative or modernist trends, stimulated widespread diffusion of impure versions of metropolitan models. Finally (3), the thesis shows that to depict post-war modernism as the opponent of conservatism, and the latter as a powerful, established trend ultimately brought to a defeat by committed metropolitan architects who, with considerable sacrifice, produced "miracles," gives but a partial, romantic, conscience-comforting version of the story. In contemporary Portuguese architectural culture, it still seems important to regard post-war modernism (and its claim to a reinvented regionalism) as the result of a hard-fought battle that, in reality, had as much political as architectural meaning. Official resistance – central, regional or local – to modernism on aesthetical grounds was only occasional in Algarve; such resistance as there was was more frequently associated with technical and regulation-related matters, and even in this form it was never consistent or long-lasting. In Algarve – as the cases of Olhão and Faro indicate – post-war modernism quickly became an ally of the construction industry, not only tolerated but encouraged by central departments, regional and local agencies and actors. By the mid-1950s there was little trace of support for (let alone imposition of) conservatism, be it by the state, by the municipalities or by the clients. Modernism's victory in the post-war "Battle of Modern Architecture" was much swifter, more collectively supported and less heroic than is often said. It was a process participated in not only by the architects but also by many others: the funding and control bodies and planning authorities, certainly, but also the non-architect designers and the clients, its unsung protagonists. And, significantly, local modernism in its advance used regional identity – sophisticatedly spun – as a vehicle.

### **The many actors of Algarvian architecture**

The relative ease with which civil engineers in peripheral regions of Portugal used the modernist "ruler-and-set-square" lexicon in their designs has been noted, and seen as an explanation for the popularity of this stance compared to the more elaborate and demanding conservative compositions.<sup>1</sup> In Faro and Olhão, however, this distinction seems to have been less marked: the engineers' part in these towns' building practice was significant throughout the period studied. Their adoption of early modernist-inspired solutions in the 1930s, of intricate historicist decorations in the 1940s and of up-to-date post-war modernism in the 1950s and 1960s showed a consistent architectural sensibility, albeit seldom the result of a comprehensive intellectual approach

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<sup>1</sup> This would have been specifically the case in the Portuguese African colonies, where few architects were active, cf. Pereira (1987), 336.

to architecture. Engineers, many of them trained in Lisbon and Porto, replicated in Algarve what was being built in those cities and what the few practicing architects in the region were designing, assimilating it with their own custom. Through their strong agency in the industry (many were developers and builders as well as designers), they helped disseminate trends and extend them in time. In the 1950s and 1960s, when building gained preponderance in local economies, the engineers' role was particularly marked. As traditional farming-related revenue was increasingly re-directed to urban property development and construction activities boomed, the number of well-positioned engineers also grew. They were closely associated with the architects, creating their structures and often co-signing their designs; they were among the architects' best clients, and sometimes borrowed their elaborate written discourse to substantiate their own designs.

Considerably active at all scales, from the town centre to the isolated rural plot, engineers disseminated the formal lexicon of modernist buildings, codified it and made it available for appropriation by other agents of the built environment. Buildings in the countryside of Faro and Olhão suggest that dwellers themselves used this filtered modernism in their self-designed houses, even though their often truly *informal* activities make it difficult to document this practice and distinguish between professional and non-professional designs. The engineers, in turn, with their abundant, well-documented practice in these super-peripheral places, clearly emerge as the fundamental relay in the popularisation of post-war modernism in Algarve, in the devolution of filtered "vernacular" forms to their original context.

Although there has been no intention to question here the use of *architecture* as applied exclusively to the work of architects, my findings suggest that architectural history does need to find a place for the works of other designers in its sphere of interests, in either new or existing categories, and especially in studies that deal with dissemination and peripheral contexts. To ignore the activities of these other groups causes us to consider architectural quality purely in accordance with the architectural profession's own principles, when we should be approaching instances of variation, inconsistency and hybridism unprejudiced by disciplinary value-systems.

### **Buildings and migration, a hidden theme in Algarvian architecture**

The continuing influences between building practices in diverse places, sometimes very distant, emerged consistently throughout this study of Algarve. Early accounts of the specificity of Olhão, where flat roofs with arched stairways were concentrated as nowhere else in the region, alluded to the significant trade and fishing activities of modern-day migrant Olhanenses in North Africa as a possible explanation for this local preference.<sup>2</sup> Many planning applications for house building in Olhão since the 1930s, found in my research, were submitted by patrons who had emigrated to Morocco and were domiciled in Tangiers or Rabat, cities where construction is known to have flourished in those years. In the meanwhile, features that came to be seen as traditionally

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Vasconcelos et al. (1975), 291-2.

Algarvian underwent parallel developments across the Atlantic. For instance, the *platibanda* (*parapet*) atop the elevation, hiding both flat and tiled-pitch roofs, was introduced in Faro and Porto Alegre (Brazil) simultaneously, in the 1870s; in both places, it was initially imposed as an official requirement with technical purposes and later developed into the ornament core of the house. Other similarities linked folk buildings in Algarve with their Brazilian counterparts, long after colonial times.<sup>3</sup> Later accounts also mentioned how Olhão fishermen proudly fitted their homes with the latest modern appliances acquired in America; and how farmers who had lived in California planned to go back one day. Records showed that Olhão's post-war modernist masterpiece, Laginha and Martins's social service centre (**figs. 214-215**), was financed by a returned emigrant to Mozambique,<sup>4</sup> and that the remarkable Garbe hotel in Armação de Pêra (**figs. 83-88**) was commissioned by a returned emigrant to Angola.<sup>5</sup>

Cross-referencing the patronage of post-war modernist architecture in Faro, my research found that many of the clients of the most experimental designs in the 1950s were emigrants who had settled in South America, or recently returned from there: civil engineers living and working in São Paulo (Brazil) and developers who had accumulated savings after years in Venezuela, for example. This prompted me to speculate about the impact of living and working in fast-developing countries, on the agency of Algarvian emigrants. Brazil and Venezuela in those years became references for post-war modernism, and taking part of this transformation would have formed well-defined images of modernity and new expectations for the returning emigrants. These circumstances created, I would suggest, a new social demand for modernism, which supported post-war architects' proposals and contributed to their popularity. Architectural history would benefit from considering the agency of these little-known participants, which seems to complement the role of the architect. In these instances, the geographic dimension in building practice emerges side-by-side with the temporal one: this was an evolving, multileveled relationship between different places, not only central but also peripheral, where developments short-circuited established narratives of dissemination and actors moving in forgotten paths had their part in cross-fertilising building customs.

Recent research in social history seems to corroborate these speculations. Marcelo Borges's thorough investigation of the settlement of Algarvian migrants in Argentina in the turn of the twentieth century offers a comprehensive panorama of the "systems of migration" of which Algarve was part. Borges shows how emigration was a well-documented, consistent practice in Algarve – a regional idiosyncrasy, just as Mourão-Ferreira had hinted at in his Algarvian literary anthology (Chapter 1) –, and how the Algarvians connected with other regions of Portugal, with other European countries, with Africa and the Americas.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. "The Portuguese-Islamic Contributions" for Brazilian folk architecture, in Weimer (2005), 91-107.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. José dos Santos Rufino, cf. Nobre (1984), 139.

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Francisco Oliveira Santos, cf. Manuel Ferreira Chaves in discussion with the author, August 2010.

“The individual circumstances and places of origin and destination varied: rural workers from Loulé who worked in the Alentejo harvests, the copper mines of southern Spain, or construction work in São Paulo, Brazil; farmers from Tavira who worked in the Alentejo mines and the fields and company towns of California; fishermen from Olhão who participated in the fishing season off the coast of Spain and also migrated to Angola or the northeast of the United States; artisans from the parishes of Loulé who migrated to Morocco and to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and many other combinations.”<sup>6</sup>

The southern Iberia migration system included Andalusia, Gibraltar and the coast of Morocco. From the last third of the nineteenth century on, Algarvian emigrant communities included significant numbers of building-related craftsmen, established in villages that were the Spanish counterparts to Olhão (as examples of Moorish-inherited “Cubism”), or in the African originals themselves: in the 1930s, 16 percent of all Algarvian migrants were in Casablanca and other French Moroccan cities, of which the majority (70 percent) were construction workers, masons, stone-masons and bricklayers.<sup>7</sup> Borges found that farmers and fishermen migrated to support the household economy and acquire land at home, securing a better social position. I suggest that those who went to work in building trades (many originally farmers and fishermen) brought back not only capital to invest in their own properties but also a different knowledge of their craft, while also disseminating their traditions in the places where they settled. Their practice was possibly influenced by their displacement, just as the reverse effect occurred: Borges mentions a fisherman’s family from Fuseta (Olhão) who settled on the coast south of Lisbon in the 1860s and “built a house whose style (...) echoed the architecture of their ancestral Algarve.”<sup>8</sup> Fishermen had not only brought back to Olhão, from their living made elsewhere, some of the “Cubist” architecture that made the town famous, they also took their own building traditions to other places; moreover, they may have also brought back, for instance, inspiration from the French Art Deco and *Stile Moderne* which was employed on the Moroccan buildings they helped to construct.

As to the transatlantic currents of Algarvian migration, their pattern changed from the 1950s on, when previously dominant flows to Argentina, Brazil and the United States decreased and were replaced by new overseas destinations: the oil boom in Venezuela attracted growing numbers of Algarvian workers, which amounted to 19 percent of all departures in that decade.<sup>9</sup> Some of the best clients of architect Gomes da Costa, the post-war modernist who won the favour of Faro’s building industry in the 1960s, were in that group. They returned and asked the architect to design “something different” for the houses and apartment blocks they wanted to build in Faro. This incentive was instrumental for the renewal of Faro’s architecture and for Costa’s career, and as relevant as the architect’s skills and creativity for the creation of a specific form of late modernism in Algarve, with a regional profile.

<sup>6</sup> Marcelo Borges, *Chains of Gold* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), 72.

<sup>7</sup> Borges (2009), 81 and 99.

<sup>8</sup> A case related in Paul Descamps, *Le Portugal* (Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie., 1935), 266-8, quoted in Borges (2009), 98.

<sup>9</sup> Borges (2009), 116-7.

The social history of Algarve's transatlantic connections, about which Borges's study has illuminated my research just as it was drawing to a close, would be an essential complement to the region's building practice history. It substantiates the hypotheses raised by my interrogation as to who were the agents behind such a practice and what was their architectural culture. The combined analysis of international migration and local building custom, both in Algarve and in the migrants' destinations, appears as a new research possibility, to which this work may contribute. Algarve's regionalism would then be seen, even more clearly, as the combination of many diverse regional and local practices, at an unsuspected scale.

### **Vernacular *ma non troppo***

The drive for modernity demonstrated by the returning migrants in Algarve leads us to another issue that resurfaced consistently throughout this work: the perception of vernacular buildings as something to be got rid of, rather than used as inspiration for formal architecture. From Frank Huggett's scathing portrait of living conditions in picturesque Algarve houses (Chapter 1) to the public works minister's strategy to use a modernist hotel as a catalyst for the renewal of picturesque but decayed Albufeira (Chapter 2), to the urban planner's attempt to replace Olhão's highly-praised but utterly insalubrious centre, overcrowded by families living in improvised dwellings on the typical flat roofs (Chapter 3) – vernacular was often associated with the deprivation that afflicted the Algarvian people.

The region's poverty, which had prompted emigration from Algarve throughout its modern history, possibly led those who returned to more readily accept (or require) a clearly contemporary built environment, rather than to repeat the minimal, windowless rooms, the constructional simplicity or the plain exteriors of their ancestors. Associating Olhão's "vernacular" features with the deprivation experienced in the town centre, its inhabitants introduced surface decoration and colour, namely in the exuberant parapets. Such changes disrupted the modernist construct of a "Cubist" townscape and were seen with dismay in metropolitan circles – for instance, architect Cristino da Silva derided them in 1945 as "pretentious."<sup>10</sup> This attempt to depart from the ideal, pure form of vernacular and modernise it with a less spartan face can be found repeatedly in Algarve. It led architect Francisco Modesto to complain that the people of Olhão, for whom he designed a housing scheme in 1966, had lost the taste for simplicity of their ancestors, for lack of "aesthetic guidance," and "would not accept the expression resulting from a complete architectural integration."<sup>11</sup> The people, much to Modesto's irritation, refused the "pure and simple forms" and preferred something more elaborate. Architect Gomes da Costa responded to this with a balanced formula of regional and modernist elements that did not avoid exuberant formalism and seemed to

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<sup>10</sup> "Conselho Superior de Obras Públicas. Processo N.º 1631," assessment report, 1945.07.24, 3-4 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM).

<sup>11</sup> Project statement 1966.06.14 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-40439-A).

capture the popular Algarvian penchant for ornament. His Tengarrinha beach house in Rocha was iconised in postcards of Algarve's famous resort as a model to follow (fig. 484).

The history of architecture and building practice in Algarve in the first half of the twentieth century seems to have been marked by a persistent tension between the will to maintain recognisable regional and local elements, and their association with enduringly low living standards. Metropolitan and local agents shared this dilemma, in cases such as the dispute around Olhão's urban master plan and the solution to its centre's shortcomings. The popularity of post-war modernism in urban and rural centres suggests an eagerness for a different paradigm. Yet further research with a specific set of instruments (ethnographic survey, oral history) would be necessary for a closer understanding of what vernacular traditions meant for local communities. For example, the use of de-familiarised regional elements (sophisticated interpretations of material and formal characteristics of a region's building traditions, avoiding a direct, literal translation) has been seen in architectural culture as the fundamental criteria to differentiate *positive* and *negative* forms of regionalism. The best-known and appreciated works of 1950s architectural regionalism – e.g., in Portugal, those of Távora and Keil do Amaral – are those that present de-familiarised regional elements, and they are generally held as positive instances of a reaction against 1940s literal compositions, where features were mimicked. Even in this thesis, the degree of abstraction (or literalness) in the interpretation of building traditions was initially used as one of the markers of conservative and modernist regional practices. However, the question remains as to how did local individuals perceive the tension between literalness and abstraction: which did they favour, at what point and under what circumstances?

Some accounts of the time point to surprising directions. In a rant against modern architecture, in 1965, Algarvian journalist and writer César dos Santos (1907-1974) claimed that the correct route for contemporary design in the region was closer to the literalness and stereotype of quintessential features preferred by foreigners than to the abstract, de-familiarised use of regional "qualities" (surface, material, form) that metropolitan architects offered: "We want all the comfort improvements, hygiene and facilities of modern utilitarian technique, but all that enveloped in good taste, and molded to the regional environment," as he found in nonnative houses on the coast.

"Especially Englishmen (...) build their excellent villas, fitted with all modern comforts and inspired refinement, integrating them with the landscape. Sometimes with subtle and gracious imagination, their physiognomy acquires the Algarvian flavour suggested in particular details – brilliant whitewash, terraces like açoteias, sloped tiled roofs and laced chimney tops (...). Here is a good lesson, particularly for Portuguese, be they Algarvian or from other regions, who out of nasty pedantry have been tainting the landscape and atmosphere of our most original and typical province. It is to them that we owe those widespread detestable buildings in a pretentious, obnoxious and unaesthetic modernism."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Santos (1965), 166. POiA (see Vol. II, Appendix 1, Citation 58).

To be taught a lesson in architectural integration by English tourists: this was something no Portuguese post-war architect would be willing to accept, certainly not in Algarve. Yet it was what Santos suggested, expressing a fundamental discrepancy between local and metropolitan understandings of what was desirable and suitable for Algarve's built environment in the mid-twentieth century, and how best to employ regional and vernacular references. Certainly many examples of local building practice evidence the adherence of individuals and institutions to more sophisticated (by metropolitan standards) and less literal proposals. However, Santos's suggestion of literal traditionalism as a perfectly viable solution for the conciliation of contemporary standards and regional identity exposed the long-standing divergence between Portuguese architectural culture and the country's popular masses as to the most adequate key to that riddle. Santos's words, and the Algarve example, offer a glimpse into this complex and enduring issue.

### Tradition and modern architecture's fortune

"I would like to give a name to the method of approach employed by the best contemporary architects when they have to solve a specific regional problem (...). This name is the *New Regional Approach*. (...) The modern architect should not strive to produce an external appearance in conformity with traditional buildings. Sometimes the buildings will conform to a certain extent, sometimes they will be basically different."<sup>13</sup>

In a 1954 article on contemporary architecture's state of affairs, Giedion endorsed the appropriation of traditional regional features as a positive trend, and tried to create a new category for it. The "New Regional Approach" was a viable alternative *if* the architect did not imitate traditional building features but made use of them through new techniques and materials and a "new aesthetic" – an understanding that encapsulated the above-mentioned distinction between positive (post-war, abstract) and negative (pre-war, literal) translations of regional traditions.

In Algarve, architects like Manuel Laginha, Gomes da Costa and Jorge de Oliveira were experimenting with this "new approach" to regional traditions, the first two fiercely engaged in overcoming the conservative, literal interpretations that the third had realised across the region. Laginha's 1949 house in Paderne (**figs. 252-256**), for example, was a condenser of the new possibilities for a regionally-aware architecture, following-up on his pioneering exploration of traditional elements in everyday buildings in Loulé. Yet I resist framing these Algarvian practices as either simply the outcome of the architects' determination to counter conservative manipulations of tradition, as the discourse of the time presented it, or the attempt by the post-war generation to overcome the mechanist/functionalist shortcomings of early modernism by returning to the human qualities of traditional buildings, as history tends to portray them.

The 1950s re-engagement with vernacular tradition had a wider set of purposes. In Portugal at the time, modernist architects were struggling to realise their proposals, given the negative

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<sup>13</sup> Sigfried Giedion, "The State of Contemporary Architecture: I. The Regional Approach," *Architectural Record* 115, no. 1 (1954): 137.



reputation modern architecture had acquired, after the 1920s experiments and the 1940s conservative criticism, of a cold, inhuman, international style. As their counterparts in Europe and the Americas appropriated traditional elements into modernist practice, Portuguese architects faced one problem: regional traditions had been the preserve of the conservative practices they looked to supersede, and were hailed in conservative discourse to counter precisely the de-contextualised, abstract qualities of modern architecture. When architect Victor Palla wrote about the need to “turn the witchcraft against the wizard” (see Introduction), he was outlining a solution for this conundrum. Re-engaging with vernacular traditions was also part of a pragmatic attempt to recapture the field from practices perceived as conservative by drawing closer to their sources.

Algarve is a case where modernism was extended throughout the 1950s and 1960s, without being substantially questioned. Unlike later currents that sought to criticise the bases of modernism through the regional approach, the turn to the regional in Algarve was a way to shield modern architecture from critique, to allow it to thrive, rather than as a means to suppress it. Therefore, another purpose of this re-engagement was to restyle modernism as sensitive to local traditions without letting go of its principles, and to provide post-war modernists with the opportunity to practice, once perceived official resistance had been satisfied. In effect, for the Estado Novo bureaucracy, the reconciliation of modern architecture with traditional features may have been seen as a desirable way ahead: the Algarve study showed reputedly conservative ministerial offices and municipalities gradually accepting, and eventually fostering, modernist proposals that expressed a specific regional awareness.

Yet the double agenda of post-war regionalism – the “new regional approach” –, of invoking regional features without fundamentally questioning modernist hegemony, caused perplexities and inconsistency. The Portuguese folk architecture survey’s take on Algarve exposed these difficulties, uneasily accommodating the region’s idiosyncrasies. An apparent inconsistency can equally be found in Gomes da Costa’s work, as a result of the same dual agenda. The Algarvian architect was primarily concerned with practicing up-to-date modernism, which he saw as an essential condition for contemporary life: an ethical, as much as aesthetical, necessity. He possessed the knowledge of modern architecture as an intellectual practice, and was able to elaborate a discourse based on it – something that, according to architectural circles, distinguished him from his engineer and house-builder counterparts. But he also seems to have realised, from the beginning of his career, that for modernism to thrive in Algarve it would have to be integrated with Algarve’s strong building traditions – if not clearly through form, then through material and constructional custom.

Costa’s critical understanding of Algarve’s recognisable model of building – bulky, opaque, muted – led him to seek to reinvent it using the tools of modernism – generous openings, interstitial inside-outside spaces, multilayered elevations, intricate compositions that followed pictorial and sculptural guidelines, weightlessness and slenderness. As a result, many of his buildings – perhaps his best works – strike us first and foremost as modernist, and their regional

element is sometimes difficult to read amongst the evidences of solid international (European, Latin-American) influences. Costa himself incorporated references to regional identity in his written discourse only in the mid-1950s, coinciding with the surge in international and national interest in the subject, when Giedion and his own Portuguese colleagues, engaged in the folk architecture survey, generated a debate within the discipline. He then perfected a written formula for his combination of modernist and regional features, which by the mid-1960s had boiled-down to three key elements (sun-control devices, white surfaces and “simplicity of forms”) in a complex and cultured construct of Algarvian tradition. Apparently somewhat removed from its real source, this construct allowed Costa, or so he claimed, to create buildings “fully integrated with local context, but in such a way they also express the spirit of our time.”<sup>14</sup> Formulaic as it may be at times, and taking into consideration his patent international references, still I find Costa’s work specifically regional: he adjusted such varied references to the possibilities, material and technological, of Algarve’s building industry, while pushing it into acquiring new capabilities; he combined quintessential modernist forms with the wide range of possibilities offered by Algarve’s tradition, seen since long as proto-modernist in many aspects. Opaque planes of mass, rendered or stone-clad, alternated with transparent surfaces, tectonic elements contrasted with lightweight elements, and the reinvention of parapets, composite flat-and-tiled roofs and glazed-tile cladding, are some of the constituents of Costa’s version of mature modernism that, I believe, have to be seen as specifically Algarvian. His was a modernist-slanted form of regional practice, and in that light I have dubbed it *modernist regionalism* – even though, as noted in the introduction to this dissertation, these are forms of regionalism that lack the politics and strategy that were present in other forms across the world. Costa’s work is pragmatically *regional*, more than comprehensively *regionalist*.

Lastly, a particular trait of the 1950s re-engagement with tradition in the everyday built environment of peripheral regions, seen clearly in Algarve, was the way in which it responded to the enduring problem of the architect’s relevance to society. As in previous moments, the establishment of a clear connection between formal architecture and local building traditions was a way for the profession to legitimise itself before local urban societies where building activities had traditionally been the remit of builders and engineers. If Italian “Neorealist” architects saw the vernacular as a means to communicate with peasantry recently converted into proletariat citizens,<sup>15</sup> in Algarve modernists attempted a similar dialog, but with rather different purposes: here, it was a matter of securing a place in the building sphere. Other than recapturing the field from conservative architectural stances, re-establishing the link with regional features was also a way to acquire new scope for professional architecture, and to reinforce the architects’ authority in contexts largely controlled by non-architects. Modernist architects had the added advantage of being uniquely positioned to supply local clients with new versions of regional character, which included a much sought-after sense of contemporaneity.

<sup>14</sup> Project statement 1963.07.19 (Faro-CMF/SAO-885/1963).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Sabatino in Lejeune and Sabatino (2010), 60.

Tradition became, then, the key to architecture's future.

Regionalism, extending a long-standing concern of architectural discourse with the question of the building's "character,"<sup>16</sup> offered an understanding of locality that early modernism had been seen as lacking. For modernist architects, in turn, anonymous buildings provided what Sybil Moholy-Nagy called "a superb lesson in regionalism without romanticism, in functionality without mechanism, in structure without ugliness, in tradition without regression."<sup>17</sup> If obtained through direct vernacular inspiration, regional expression would be redeemed from the fault of architectural and political backwardness, and become a safe ground for modernism. A "new regional approach" ensured modern architecture's progress, extending its lifetime. Tradition-based regionalism, a consistent undercurrent of twentieth-century architecture, was appropriated and transformed by modernism into a tool of progress.

In Algarve, in the mid-twentieth century as often before, the regional was the main axis. It was the stock, onto which modernism grafted itself in order to survive. Throughout the century, building practice in the region had not been regionalist merely because high architectural culture read it as such in contemporary times, nor because a centralist state constructed it as such – but because it was always there, stemming from the inventiveness and support of local people in ordinary, everyday peripheral circumstances. It encapsulated the qualities, and suffered the shortcomings, of a locally sourced and nurtured process. It transpired in a wide variety of practices, attitudes and aesthetic programmes, all under the mark of the *regional*, albeit not strictly and comprehensively *regionalist*.

The regional stock, historically strong, was not replaced but rather strengthened by the modernist graft. Commonly depicted in generalist accounts as mere footnotes in the narrative of modernism, vernacular tradition and regional agency acquire new relevance: through the fine-grained analysis of concrete built evidence, they appear as important chapters in modernism's main text.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Forty (2000), 120-131.

<sup>17</sup> Sybil Moholy-Nagy, "Environment and Anonymous Architecture," *Perspecta* 3, no.1 (1955), cit. in Heynen (2008), 480.

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## Appendix 1

### Non-English citations used in the thesis

Original non-English-language quotes from texts that were translated and cited at length in the thesis (singled-out and not incorporated in my text). All translations by myself, with the exception of the German quote, translated into Portuguese by Francisco Agarez and into English by myself.

#### Citations in the Introduction

##### *Citation 1*

“Há muitas maneiras de levar água a qualquer moinho. Também se encontram argumentos para demonstrar que a tradição não pesa tanto como parece. Mas o aceitá-la, e derivar dela uma defesa da arquitectura moderna, é combater o adversário no seu campo; é virar o feitiço contra o feiticeiro, o que é muito mais proveitoso do que inventar feitiços próprios.”

Victor Palla, “Lugar da Tradição,” *Arquitectura* 21, no. 28 (1949): 5.

##### *Citation 2*

“O estudo das condições locais, num regionalismo puro e elevado, onde não presida a rotina e o academismo e onde a imaginação se liberte para por de novo sobre a mesa os dados do problema, colocando portanto o arquitecto na posição de pesquisador insatisfeito, conduz (...) a resultados surpreendentes de simplicidade e eficiência, e de elegância até.”

[Manuel Laginha], “2. Prédio em Loulé,” *Arquitectura*, no. 26 (1948): 14.

##### *Citation 3*

“Se a expressão moderna se afigura equilibrada (...), representa pelo seu traçado, não uma tentativa de um modernismo discutível, mas a projecção de um edifício de equilibradas linhas, que, pela natureza dos materiais empregados, pelo seu colorido, pelo movimento racional de suas frentes, de suas largas varandas, e pormenores que poderão escapar aos desentendidos, [adquire] valor arquitectónico e de apreciável escala. Como Arquitecto, sei que a incultura e a deficientíssima preparação estética da nossa gente, são por vezes poderosos obstáculos ao desejo de pôr cobro à prática perniciosa do banal. Não se trata de um projecto de experiência moderna, mas de expressão moderna, (...).”

Jorge de Oliveira, project statement 1954.10.14 (Faro-CMF/SAO-426/1954).

*Citation 4*

“Que se lhes há-de fazer? Mostrar-lhes que nunca tivemos um estilo nacional, e que nos limitámos a adaptar o que nos ia chegando do estrangeiro? Sacrilégio! Dizer-lhes que a única arquitectura verdadeiramente portuguesa do nosso território é a popular, a que nasceu directamente das necessidades e possibilidades do povo? E que é precisamente dessa arquitectura que a arquitectura moderna está mais perto?”

Anon., “Moradia. Maurício de Vasconcelos,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa...* 46, no. 3-4 (1953).

## Citations in Chapter 1

*Citation 5*

“As *soteias*, ou *açoteias*, são elemento típico da casa olhanense. Toma-se lá o sol, às vezes, com toldos; sobe-se também aí para ver o mar. Servem para enxugar roupa, secar figos e pôr vasos de flores. O acesso faz-se por escada interior ou exterior, saída do quintal, que é ladrilhado, bem como o chão da *soteia*. Da *soteia* nasce escada para o mirante, quando o há; está assente sobre um, dois ou três arcos apoiados em pilares ou em cachorros de pedra, metidos na parede. O mirante é, às vezes, maior que a *soteia* propriamente dita. (...)

Ouvi dizer a um velho marítimo de Olhão que elas vieram de Marrocos. Havia dantes muitas relações entre Olhão e Marrocos.”

José Leite de Vasconcelos et al., *Etnografia Portuguesa*, vol. VI (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1975), 291-92.

*Citation 6*

“A higiene e a engenharia nunca ali foram ouvidas nem achadas. O olhanense, mal lhe tilintou nas algibeiras o dinheiro bem ganhado em Cádiz, Gibraltar, Ceca e Meca, levantou as estacas e o colmo das cabanas e, no mesmo chão, com um desdém supremo pela simetria, construiu os seus penates de pedra e cal. E aí estão e estarão largos e prósperos anos, modestos e aconchegados, solidários e íntimos entre si, cheios duma nobre indiferença muçulmana pelo autoclismo, o esgoto, a árvore frondosa, a ânsia de ar das ruas novas, embasbacadas. (...)

Dum prédio para o outro as açoteias e fachadas imbrincam-se, acavalam-se, sobrepõem-se, desarticulam-se, anuladas pela brancura e pela miragem as leis da perspectiva e do volume. São milhares de cubos em equilíbrio instável, paradoxal, absurdo, como cantarias duma Babel juncando um campo raso.”

Aquilino Ribeiro, “Olhão”, in Raul Proença, *Guia de Portugal*, vol. 2 (Lisboa: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, 1927), 75-78.

*Citation 7*

“É impressionante observar a mescla do antigo e do novo, do que está morrendo e do que está crescendo, (...).

Geralmente conservada é a antiga casa de origem berbere, na sua forma mais primitiva uma casa de cubo dum só quarto. Continua ainda a soteia em Loulé, Faro, Olhão, Fuseta e Tavira. (...)

Em 1927 usou-se o terreno bastante extenso entre a estação ferroviária de Olhão e o norte da cidade para fins agrícolas. Hoje vemos neste lugar a ampla Avenida da República com casas modernas e uma série de ruas secundárias com casas que correspondem mais às construções tradicionais provando a vitalidade da tradição. Ao norte do caminho de ferro formou-se um bairro expressivamente moderno. Há uma série de novas construções com muitos andares e uma secção com casas brancas de dois andares (...). Mas estas casas espaçosas de dois andares com todas as comodidades modernas têm adaptado um elemento tradicional. Duma porta exterior do andar superior, na parede mais estreita da casa - é a única abertura nesta parede - conduz uma [escada] de pedra com peitoril do mesmo material à soteia da casa, também provida dum peitoril de pedra. Sem dúvida, serviu como modelo a [escada] que na antiga casa tradicional conduz da soteia da casa à soteia da pequena torre.”

Wilhelm Giese, *Conservação e Perda da Cultura Material e Tradicional no Sul de Portugal* (Porto: Junta Distrital do Porto, [1964]), 8-10.

*Citation 8*

“Più vicino alla costa e sul litorale, dove i centri sono più affollati, il tipo più frequente presenta pianta rettangolare, ma con il lato più corto affacciato sulla strada; qui si apre (con una porta ed almeno una finestra) la 'casa de fora' e dietro ad essa sono ubicate una o due camere da letto, ed infine la cucina (talora piccolissima), che porge sul 'quintal', a sua volta separato da un muretto, rispetto alla strada opposta.”

Gaetano Ferro, *L'Algarve* (Genova: Istituto di Geografia, Facoltà di Lettere, 1956), 114.

*Citation 9*

“Nenhuma das nossas províncias mostra, como o Algarve, tal variedade na cobertura das casas. Predomina, como em toda a parte, o telhado de duas águas, com telha de canudo nas construções antigas e rurais e telha de Marselha nas construções recentes e urbanas; mas no litoral oeste e na *serra* domina o telhado de uma só água; Olhão sobressai pelo recorte ‘cubista’ dos seus terraços sobrepostos; Tavira, pelos seus múltiplos telhados, sempre de quatro águas e bastante inclinados, que cobrem não a casa toda mas cada um dos seus compartimentos.”

Orlando Ribeiro, *Geografia e Civilização*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1979 [1961]), 59.

***Citation 10***

“Em resumo, creio que se pode aceitar, com W. Giese, a origem moura das açoteias de Olhão, uma vez que as encontramos em outros lugares do Algarve; o clima não contrariou a introdução de uma forma de cobertura originária de regiões áridas e propagada pela expansão islâmica [ou seja, mais do que o clima, “parece ser a ‘civilização’ a principal responsável pela sua difusão”]; as relações frequentes de Olhão com portos muçulmanos e mediterrâneos poderão ter ajudado, por imitação, a manter uma forma de construção existente na tradição local; em ruas apertadas, a falta de espaço não será estranha à tendência para o desenvolvimento da casa em altura, assim como o desejo de espreitar a chegada dos barcos de pesca. Em todo o caso, a *açoteia*, cujo valor decorativo e pitoresco só modernamente foi posto em relevo, é remate de casas humildes, num bairro de pescadores e de marítimos que, se uma ou outra vez fizeram bons negócios, nunca se elevaram à prosperidade de armadores.”

Ibid., 77-78.

***Citation 11***

“A açoteia e o mirante usam-se para arrumos e neles se encontra tudo o que prejudicaria o arranjo das modestas e pequenas habitações; no bairro novo dos pescadores, construído com muito gosto dentro do estilo tradicional (o que é raro neste género de obras oficiais...), as casas têm quintais e as ruas largura suficiente para que a interdição de utilizar as açoteias seja respeitada sem prejuízo; o terraço é assim um lugar de desafogo, procurado em altura, onde as casas apinhadas e as ruelas estreitas não deixam outro espaço livre. Fixado, por uma razão funcional, o estilo de construção, compreende-se que ele se alargue até onde já não é necessário – e muitas casas das ruas modernas e largas de Olhão continuam a ter o mesmo remate.”

Ibid., 68-71.

***Citation 12***

“Si le Portugal est peu connu des voyageurs, on peut dire que le royaume des Algarves est à peu près inconnu des Portugais eux-mêmes et cependant c’est peut-être la province la plus intéressante du royaume et la plus curieuse à visiter. (...)

Moins vous aurez de bagages mieux cela vaudra (...) et n’espérez pas trouver, comme nous, un confortable relatif, car tout cela n’existe pas, à moins de voyager comme nous l’avons fait.”

G. de Saint-Victor, *Portugal: Souvenirs et Impressions de Voyage*  
(Paris: Librairie Blériot, [1891]), 217-218.

***Citation 13***

“É esta ausência de telhado, transição imediata do esquadrado das paredes, todas caiadas de branco, para o azul intensíssimo que o céu quase sempre ostenta, que acentua o ar cubista e lhe dá o aspecto marroquino que a caracteriza e impõe.”

Mário Lyster Franco, *O Algarve* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1929), 34.

***Citation 14***

“[O Algarve] não é apenas cenário ou panorama (e muito menos saudosista varanda para contemplação do passado): é realidade cultural, com os seus mitos gravados no inconsciente colectivo; é realidade social, com os seus problemas e aflições. Observados mais de perto, veremos aliás que os mitos e os problemas intimamente se relacionam: a constante recorrência ao substrato muçulmano, assim como a episódica assunção de modelos helénicos, denunciam, uma e outra, a nostalgia de uma Idade de Ouro; e representam, no plano psíquico, formas de ‘compensação’ para o drama secular de carência económica que se resolve, ou tenta resolver, no plano social, através do recurso à emigração. Emigrantes são, igualmente, os que partem e muitos dos que ficam: uns emigram no espaço; outros no tempo. É essa a única diferença.”

David Mourão-Ferreira, *O Algarve* (Lisboa: Bertrand, [1962]), 7-13.

**Citations in Chapter 2*****Citation 15***

“Der erste Eindruck, der uns die algarvische Landschaft vermittelt, ist derjenige ihres Maßstabes: Sie ist klein und zierlich. Die Provinz ist arm an Kunstdenkmälern; keine hohen Bergen erheben sich; der Hauptton aller Landschaftsbilder ist die Bescheidenheit und die Zartheit (...) Wegen aller dieser Dinge schien mir die algarvische Landschaft immer etwas Weibliches an sich zu haben: im Maßstab, im geringen Ausmaß der natürlichen Formen, in der Kleinheit der Bäume und nicht minder in der zarten Schüchternheit der demütigen Häuser.

So war das Algarve, das ich liebte.”

Raul Lino, “Weiblich, klein und zierlich,” *Merian. Algarve*, February 1968, 4, 6.

***Citation 16***

“Nunca se pergunte em que estilo se vai construir. É lógico que se construa no estilo da região. É natural que se respeitem tradições locais, que adoptemos processos de mão-de-obra experimentados, que nos sirvamos dos materiais circunjacentes.”

Raul Lino, *A Nossa Casa*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. ([Lisboa]: [n. pub.], [1918]), 26-27.

***Citation 17***

“Os elementos de arquitectura com os quais se possa definir a feição regionalista do Algarve, escasseiam quase por completo. Existe mais tradição que elementos concretos, essa tradição diz-nos que é a arte oriental, na sua feição latino-bizantina-árabe onde nos devemos inspirar. (...) reservando-me para no projecto definitivo estudar uma forma moderna que lembrando esta tradição não entre em rigores de estilo que acho contraproducente.”

Carlos Rebelo de Andrade, project statement 1924.05.31  
(Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DREMS 008/4).

***Citation 18***

“As casas de habitação do Algarve e muito especialmente as da vila de Olhão têm um cunho inconfundível que é indispensável perpetuar, tanto mais que, como simplicidade de linhas e equilíbrio de volumes, a sua expressão arquitectónica está não só na ordem do dia como porventura na de todos os tempos.”

José Ângelo Cottinelli Telmo, “Casa de 6 Compartimentos para o Sul do País,”  
*A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 26, no. 6 (1933): 1.

***Citation 19***

“Concebe-se, sem dificuldade, a razão de ser da indústria turística, com todos os benefícios que dela possam advir, mas é legítimo não a estimar-mos, em tão larga escala, para nós. Sobretudo, porque ao turista preferimos, mil vezes, o forasteiro. Este, não nos incomoda ver e sentir vibrar a nosso lado, sempre que nos encontramos, sem binóculo nem máquina fotográfica, perante um trecho marítimo ou bucólico da nossa paisagem. É que o forasteiro, mesmo oriundo de estrangeira terra, é um ser humano que transporta, quando não ideais, pelo menos objectivos desinteressados e um gosto, bom ou mau, mas muito seu. O outro é um sujeito de gosto convencional e de vontade colectiva. Só irá, em rebanho, aonde o levarem ou lhe disserem que deve ir. (...) Consulta o guia, assesta o binóculo, tira fotografias e sorri. Pode ser, internacionalmente, inofensivo – e, até, muito útil – mas macula a paisagem. Por isso a nossa paisagem não gosta de turistas.”

Luís Reis Santos et al., *Paisagem e Monumentos de Portugal* (Lisboa: Secção de Propaganda e Recepção da Comissão Nacional dos Centenários, 1940), 11.

*Citation 20*

“Pode supor-se que os portugueses, obedientes à sua vocação atlântica, preferem os panoramas marítimos aos bucólicos (...). Puro engano. Afora essas praias que entre Julho e Outubro se pejam (...), os mais belos trechos (e muitos habitáveis) da costa do País permanecem desertos, como se fossem hediondos.”

Ibid., 8-9.

*Citation 21*

“Exteriormente serão casas de arquitectura regional batidas no granito duro, como no Marão, ou construídas de tijolos como no Serém (Vale do Vouga) de forma a integrarem-se na tradição e no conjunto arquitectónico das zonas que representam. Interiormente as Pousadas são mobiladas e decoradas com as mesmas preocupações regionalistas de modo que quem as percorra guardará na retina as imagens doces da etnografia e arquitectura das várias regiões distintas deste velho Portugal.”

“As Primeiras Pousadas de Turismo Estarão Prontas em Agosto,”  
[*Diário de Notícias*], 4 May 1940.

*Citation 22*

“S. Brás fica de um lado. É mesmo o primeiro amontoado branco que os nossos olhos abarcam quando chegam ao alto da serra e são inundados pela luz clara do Algarve florido (...). em volta, a paisagem é mais de sonho que real. Serras, penedias, jardins suspensos em jeito babilónico. Ao fundo, entre o corte suave de duas cordilheiras, o mar infinito, (...). S. Brás (...) sinaliza a fronteira de entre o bem-estar e o desconforto (...). Para o automobilista que entra no Algarve (...) a Pousada de S. Brás assemelha-se a um oásis que o acolhe de braços abertos. (...) De uma varanda circular, o panorama é deslumbrante. (...) [A digressão turística] hoje já não oferece perigos, nem dificuldades de monta. Há estradas e há pousadas.”

Armando de Aguiar and Anne Marie Jausse, il., “Digressão Turística à Volta da Pousada de São Brás,” *Panorama. Revista Portuguesa de Arte e Turismo* 1944.

*Citation 23*

“Na distribuição das massas construtivas do edifício, tivemos a preocupação de que estas não dominassem sobre o elemento natural recortado e sinuoso da falésia rochosa ao ser esta observada da praia que lhe fica aos pés, antes pelo contrário, procurámos valorizar o seu recorte sobre o céu azul, criando-lhe um novo perfil mais puro e nítido, resultante das massas de construção chapadas de cal, aquela mesma cal que desde há séculos vem cobrindo os telhados, os terraços, as paredes, os pavimentos e os degraus, esborratando-se mesmo sobre o solo. Foi nossa principal preocupação projectar um edifício (...) que não constituísse uma surpresa para quem chega a Armação de Pêra, ferindo a sensibilidade por

ser grande, majestoso ou exótico; antes pelo contrário um edifício que antes de ser visto, já tenha sido pressentido, por ser igual em espírito a outras massas construtivas, encontradas aqui e ali, um pouco por toda a parte, no Algarve, onde espontaneamente o Homem fez surgir uma arquitectura que é orgânica, que é viva, porque brotou do solo e do espírito humano (...). Para isso nada mais é preciso do que saber compreender e sentir aquilo que há de verdadeiro nas construções do Homem no Algarve, isto é, compreender e respeitar a sabedoria que o ‘arquitecto’ do Algarve patenteia ao estabelecer uma escala humana para dimensionar, um carácter para modelar os seus edifícios, que vem da lógica da aplicação dos seus materiais e principalmente, muito principalmente do seu próprio conceito de habitar, que ele sente na massa do seu sangue; que o leva a parir a carne da sua carne com aquela mesma fatalidade com que uma fêmea não pode deixar de dar à luz aquilo que não seja o seu próprio filho, igual a ela, sempre melhor e apto a viver no meio ambiente em que ela vive.”

Jorge Ferreira Chaves and Frederico Sant’Ana, project statement, 1960.02.05  
(Lisbon-AMFC).

#### *Citation 24*

“Em velhas povoações do interior ou do litoral, na Beira como no Algarve, onde houver carácter e beleza local, o papel dos artistas não é reproduzir indiscriminadamente pequenos Ritzes de tipo mais ou menos económico, mas interpretar as sugestões do ambiente (...). Não faltam espaços vazios onde ensaiar novos estilos e novas ideias (...) Entretanto, criemos de Norte a Sul do País uma verdadeira consciência do que é preciso preservar, defender e até melhorar e completar, se possível, em matéria de paisagens urbanas tradicionais. É isso que a grande massa dos que nos visitam mais aprecia e procura conhecer. (...) Toda a vasta infra-estrutura que o moderno turismo nos impõe deve ser sensível a esse espírito de compreensão dos valores locais. Antigo no antigo, moderno no moderno, coerência e bom gosto em todos os casos.”

[Pedro Teotónio Pereira], “O Futuro Demonstrará...,” *O Século*, 25 November 1959, 7.

#### *Citation 25*

“[Considerando] toda a crise que atravessa entre nós a Arquitectura, convém que as Juntas e os serviços técnicos se pronunciem sobre o valor arquitectónico dos hotéis que pretendem ser declarados de utilidade turística. A [referência] de que os problemas são ‘resolvidos nos princípios da moderna arquitectura’ não basta. Nós podemos exercer uma acção útil e moderadora dos destemperos ou caprichos da moderna arte de construir, que não se deve confundir com a Arquitectura, ao menos não declarando de utilidade turística os prédios sem um mínimo de requisitos artísticos.”

António de Oliveira Salazar, government order n.d. [1959.09]  
(Lisbon-ANTT/AOS-PC-44B-cx.625-pt.27).



*Citation 26*

“Integra-se nessa orientação [do governo] o reconhecimento do carácter evolutivo das soluções arquitectónicas, que tendem naturalmente a adaptar-se à sua época, acompanhando o aperfeiçoamento das técnicas construtivas e da própria evolução dos ideais estéticos. Mas reconhece-se, ao mesmo tempo, que as novas soluções não deverão deixar de apoiar-se nas tradições da arquitectura nacional, resultantes do condicionalismo peculiar do clima, dos materiais de construção, dos costumes, das condições de vida e dos anseios espirituais da grei, de todos os factores específicos, em suma, que (...) em épocas sucessivas, lhes conferiram cunho próprio e criaram um sentido para a expressão ‘arquitectura nacional’. (...) Muitas [soluções] continuam perfeitamente ajustadas ao ambiente nacional e contêm em si uma lição viva de evidente valor prático para o desejado aportunamento da arquitectura moderna no nosso país. (...) Dispõe-se assim o Governo a dar o seu apoio (...) a uma tarefa de cuidadosa investigação (...) dos elementos arquitectónicos tradicionais nas diversas regiões do País (...)”

Ministério das Obras Públicas, "Decreto-Lei n.º 40.349," in *Diário da República I Série*, 227, 19 October 1955 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1955).

*Citation 27*

“Portugal (...) carece de unidade em matéria de Arquitectura. Não existe, de todo, uma ‘Arquitectura portuguesa’ ou uma ‘casa portuguesa’. Entre uma aldeia minhota e um ‘monte’ alentejano, há diferenças muito mais profundas do que entre certas construções portuguesas e gregas. (...) Entre as casas de Fusetas e as de Lamas de Olo, quase não existem sequer elos de ligação...”

[Francisco Keil do Amaral], “Introdução,” in *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal*, 3rd ed. (Lisboa: AAP, 1988 [1961]).

*Citation 28*

“Nem sempre os conceitos popularizados sobre os tipos definidores de uma Arquitectura regional, tão ansiosamente procurada e levianamente compreendida, correspondem com exactidão ao que se pode observar em atenta e criteriosa procura. Muito se tem evocado o papel do terraço na ‘Arquitectura algarvia’, no entanto, com excepção da zona rural a que corresponde a divisão geográfica de ‘Algarve calcário’, (...) e aos aglomerados urbanos de Olhão e da Fusetas, pode-se afirmar que a cobertura em terraço das habitações não é frequente na maior parte da província.”

Celestino de Castro, Artur Pires Martins, and Fernando Torres, “Zona 6,” in *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal*, 3rd ed. (Lisboa: AAP, 1988 [1961]), 166.

*Citation 29*

“O partido conseguido do declive do terreno e o movimento de volumes das construções dão ao conjunto do alçado posterior, voltado ao Sul, um carácter muito especial.”

Ibid., 205.

*Citation 30*

“Elementos de Valorização. Não foi sem duvidar da validade da contribuição que nos pode trazer para o estudo da Arquitectura regional algarvia, que decidimos incluir os elementos soltos que acompanham este capítulo, embora reconheçamos ser inegável e positivo o seu interesse do ponto de vista da qualidade e riqueza de [expressão]. (...) Havendo na edificação das construções populares, e duma forma declarada, preocupações de ordem prática (...) ou, pelo menos, não existindo abertamente atitudes estéticas, observa-se que se atingem níveis plásticos muito elevados, usando apenas como formulário um conhecimento exacto dos materiais e o uso de uma técnica simples e intuitiva. Parece, portanto, estarem naturalmente presentes factores de ordem emocional (...) constituindo a base dos valores plásticos definidos.”

Ibid., 229.

**Citations in Chapter 3***Citation 31*

“A remodelação da fachada não será permitida para partidos de carácter moderno, quando se pretende salvaguardar toda esta zona, considerada de interesse regional.”

Jorge de Oliveira, assessment 1943.04.12 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-31330-A).

*Citation 32*

“Possui a Vila de Olhão, poucas construções que mereçam pela sua importância de volume, qualquer interesse de ordem arquitectónica, aparte a pequena habitação com as suas açoteias de tão grande valor regional e estético. Assim, pelas características apresentadas pelo actual edifício, restos de uma época bem mais feliz à actual (...) representada pela invasão de um pretenciosismo de Moderno, mal equilibrado e toscamente composto, fácil se tornou estabelecer o partido de fachada que se apresenta de linhas simples e harmónicas, obtendo-se (...) o carácter português tão peculiar em alguns belos exemplos da nossa Arquitectura do Século XVIII.”

Jorge de Oliveira, project statement 1943.08.23 (Olhão-CMO/SOPM-31330-A).

**Citation 33**

“Também, diga-se a verdade: toda a gente em Olhão, ricos e pobres, protegia os contrabandistas e entrava no negócio. Nunca em terra se apreendeu uma peça de fazenda. Passava-se de çoteia para çoteia – para o quê bastava estender os braços – e corria, se fosse preciso, a vila toda, porque nessas ocasiões até inimigos rancorosos se julgavam no dever de esconder o contrabando, e todas as casas tinham uma guardadeira ou falso entre as paredes.”

Raul Brandão, *Os Pescadores* (Lisboa: Livrarias Aillaud e Bertrand, 1924), 277.

**Citation 34**

“Vindo dos lados de Faro, o turista entra em Olhão [e] divisa (...) o moderno Bairro Económico, com as sua sessenta moradias rectangulares, em estilo arquitectónico local – duas fileiras simétricas de cubos brancos de cujos terraços se desfruta um panorama levantino. (...) Nas açoteias, (...) brincam crianças e lidam mulheres (...) na labuta doméstica. Procura-se a açoteia para cozinhar (...), para estender a roupa em secadoiros, para conversas da vizinhança e, ainda para inspeccionar o mar, com ansiosa curiosidade, na espreita da vela branca da lanchinha que traz os homens, e o produto da faina pesqueira: o amor e o pão. A vila branca cubista é um País de Sonho...”

João Trigueiros, "Roteiro da Vila Branca de Olhão," in *Almanaque do Algarve* (Lisboa: Almanaque Alentejano, 1943).

**Citation 35**

“Tenho a honra de solicitar os bons ofícios de V. Exa. no sentido de não serem permitidos os telhados, substituindo-os por açoteias. O meu pedido traduz a opinião unânime da população do Concelho fundamentado no traço arquitectónico local e ainda no desequilíbrio que se verificaria nos aludidos bairros – um conjunto total de prédios com açoteias – se as escolas viessem a ter telhados.”

Letter from CMO to DGSU 826, 1948.03.15 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-76/MU/45).

**Citation 36**

“Na composição dos alçados procurou-se, dentro de uma forma simples e racional, conservar o carácter próprio da região, atendendo às condições particulares de orientação para cada alçado e sem perder de vista a harmonia do conjunto. Deu-se portanto ao alçado principal, exposto durante quase todo o dia a acção solar, os meios de defesa caracterizados por grandes lisos apenas interrompidos, quando necessário, por grelhas rasgadas no próprio maciço.”

Fernando Coruche and M. da Costa Ritto, project statement n.d. [1942] (Olhão-CMO/AHM-GICPSA-G/A.3).

## Citations in Chapter 4

*Citation 37*

“De repente, toda a gente começou outra vez a discutir como é que havia de ser a verdadeira arquitectura portuguesa. É claro que em geral a opinião dos arquitectos só interessou aos outros arquitectos. O Sr. Dr. Tal, muito conhecido por isto e por aquilo, disse coisas espirituosas que calaram muito mais no ânimo das gentes do que as palavras áridas de que fala daquilo que sabe.”

“Ecletismo no Porto,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa e Cerâmica e Edificação* 46, no. 3-4 (1953).

*Citation 38*

“A casa que aparece a meio da Avenida do Aeroporto, ali pousada como se ali tivesse aterrado vinda dum mundo diferente das que a precederam, suscita aqueles comentários que todos nós já sabemos de cor, desde o ‘caixote’ à ‘arquitectura bolchevista’ (...). que *aquilo* não é para cá, que é copiado do estrangeiro, que não é nacional. A da cópia é inevitável, e a mais frequente; quem souber meia dúzia de coisas de arquitectura ri-se e passa adiante. (...) A do nacionalismo pode enganar só quem julgue que o nacionalismo em arquitectura se mede pelo número de coisas superficiais que numa obra fazem lembrar ‘o que já cá está feito’. (...) Que se lhes há-de fazer? Mostrar-lhes que nunca tivemos um estilo nacional, e que nos limitámos a adaptar o que nos ia chegando do estrangeiro? Sacrilégio! Dizer-lhes que a única arquitectura verdadeiramente portuguesa do nosso território é a popular, a que nasceu directamente das necessidades e possibilidades do povo? E que é precisamente dessa arquitectura que a arquitectura moderna está mais perto? Explicar-lhes que sendo o ferro, o tijolo, o cimento os mesmos em toda a parte, pelo menos a esses materiais devem corresponder formas idênticas e internacionais, mas que até o próprio gesto mais ou menos feroso do arquitecto mais ou menos meridional ou nórdico pode chegar para caracterizar uma obra? (...) E que é muito mais natural que nos pareçamos com os brasileiros e com a sua arquitectura saudável de país luminoso do que com o barroquismo palacial francês? E que a arquitectura deve ser acima de tudo verdade? – Verdade! faz o público, que anda muito desabitado dela – Verdade! Pois que tem a verdade que ver com a arquitectura? Então uma casa não é sempre verdade (...). – Não; esse prédio que estão a construir diante do seu e que tinha uma estrutura de cimento armado muito certa, muito leve, que agora taparam com tijolo à face dos pilares para deixar umas janelas pequeninas – é uma mentira descarada. Aquela moradia que um senhor seu amigo fez na encosta da Ajuda, e que tem as salas de estar viradas para o norte porque ao norte é que é a rua – é falsa como Judas.”

“Moradia,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa e Cerâmica e Edificação* 46, no. 3-4 (1953).

**Citation 39**

“Como resultado da compreensão e consideração pelos dados tradicionais, em sentido contrário ao da rotina e do academismo, adoptou o autor uma cobertura inclinada num só tramo e com franca tradução em alçados. (...) Atente-se ainda na forma fluente como foi conseguido com materiais comuns a integração do conjunto no ambiente geral. A nossa chamada especial faz-se, contudo, para o significado de que se reveste a vitória dos lavados conceitos de arquitectura racional defendidos nesta Revista, sobre certos moldes formais já consagrados e sempre, por isso, mais fáceis de impor em meio certamente repleto de dificuldades, como este. Isso quererá dizer que a batalha da arquitectura moderna é árdua, mas que, decididamente, não está perdida.”

[Manuel Laginha], “Moradia no Algarve,” *Arquitectura* 22, no. 35 (1950): 4-6.

**Citation 40**

“O estudo das condições locais, num regionalismo puro e elevado, onde não presida a rotina e o academismo e onde a imaginação se liberte para por de novo sobre a mesa os dados do problema, colocando portanto o arquitecto na posição de pesquisador insatisfeito, conduz (...) a resultados surpreendentes de simplicidade e eficiência, e de elegância até.”

[Manuel Laginha], “2. Prédio em Loulé,” *Arquitectura* 20, no. 26 (1948): 14.

**Citation 41**

“A província desenvolve-se criminosamente. Quantas cidades a crescer incaracteristicamente, sem dignidade, ao acaso de meia dúzia de construtores civis e desenhadores das Câmaras! A época de certos bairros de Lisboa, como o do Campo de Ourique, não acabou ainda na província. Cidades como a do Algarve, com condições e imperativos locais a pedir, a bradar por uma arquitectura simples, sã – e ao menos decente – são Campos de Ourique pegados, são-no desde o século passado. (...) As Câmaras – pouco esclarecidas – exigem características tradicionais e regionais (...) Que parte de culpa têm os arquitectos em tudo isto? Alguma, talvez. A paciência, a persistência, o tempo perdido são de poucos. Meter-se na província a projectar honestamente equivale a um verdadeiro apostolado; hoje as cruzadas são incómodas. A moradia de Gomes da Costa, clara, elegante, muito certa, cheia de frescura e de imaginação, seria já excepcional numa Lisboa nova feita por arquitectos; em Loulé é um milagre. Descubramo-nos.”

“Milagre em Loulé,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa e Cerâmica e Edificação* 46, no. 3-4 (1953).

**Citation 42**

“A pouco e pouco foram desaparecendo as casas com terraços e açoteias, as janelas de adufas, os pátios descobertos à mourisca e as delicadas chaminés do sul; e o que se tem construído modernamente (palácios-hospitais e casas bancárias *manuelinas*), concebido fora da tradição, do ambiente e do próprio destino dos edifícios, são verdadeiras aberrações da

lógica construtiva, *erros estéticos e contra-sensos geográficos* (...) por igual divorciados do bom-senso, da natureza e da arte.”

Raul Proença, “Faro,” in *Guia de Portugal: Estremadura, Alentejo, Algarve* (Lisboa: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, 1927), 233.”

### *Citation 43*

“Procurou-se que esta construção traduzisse no seu aspecto exterior um cunho regional, de linhas simples com as características algarvias mais fortemente vincadas, sem contudo cair no exagero, tão frequente entre nós numa aplicação exagerada de elementos decorativos, deixando assim de presidir o espírito de economia que baseou a realização deste trabalho.”

Jorge de Oliveira, Creche de Nossa Senhora de Fátima project statement 1945.08.01 (Lisbon-AJO).

### *Citation 44*

“Debaixo do ponto de vista arquitectónico o edifício pode, em face do projecto, considerar-se dividido em duas partes. Uma respeita à fachada principal, virada à EN 125; a outra às restantes fachadas. Esta separação que é já de si discutível, choca sobretudo pela diversidade de aspecto que apresentam as duas partes indicadas. Se a fachada principal agrada inegavelmente a quem gosta do estilo utilizado, e não é esse o caso do signatário, parece-me também inegável que as restantes carecem de cunho artístico e estão por demais amaneiradas e carregadas de motivos ornamentais (gradilhas, revestimentos de pedras de tipo rústico, etc.) que julgo dispensáveis. O estilo (?) [sic] nelas considerado resulta demasiado artificial e conduz sempre a soluções caras, embora o autor do projecto na MD tenha deixado expressa a intenção de fazer obra sóbria e económica.”

Alberto Pessanha Viegas, assessment 1950.01.18 (Faro-UA/A-DUF-7/MU/50).

### *Citation 45*

“Sob o ponto de vista estético imprimiu o autor a todo o edifício uma sobriedade de linhas que estão dentro do espírito arquitectónico destas instalações especiais. Porém, ressalta no eixo de toda a composição uma pequena torre, que pelo seu traçado, de sabor e cunho mais apropriado para a Província Alentejana, onde a cúpula cónica tem largo emprego e servido de bela inspiração às expressões actuais, não possui pela sua configuração, a expressão mais apropriada a esta Província, nem ao próprio ambiente local e que conviria harmonizar.”

Jorge de Oliveira and M. Almeida Carrapato, assessment 1947.08.27 (Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-003-0052/04).

*Citation 46*

“De um modo geral se pode dizer que estas praças nas nossas cidades de província não obedecem às mesmas normas urbanísticas que as que são agora delineadas na Capital ou nas cidades mais progressivas, (...). Estas praças das nossas cidades de província vivem em geral da sua feição pitoresca, e, sendo guarnecidas de edificações as mais heterogêneas quanto a importância, volume e destinos, não nos parece lógica a exigência de se manter uma acentuada concordância quanto a medição de altura. Importante, sim, parece-nos que é a categoria das edificações, quanto ao espírito da sua arquitectura e a nobreza de material e processos empregados na construção.”

DGEMN – Comissão de Revisão, assessment 1947.12.23  
(Lisbon-IHRU/DGEMN-DSARH-003-0052/04).

*Citation 47*

“Hoje nós, os Farenenses tradicionalistas, orgulhar-nos-íamos de poder mostrar a quem nos visita uma das mais belas praças do país. Mas o que fizeram os arquitectos do século XX? Sem a mínima noção de estética de ambiente, de critério, arranjaram modelos de edifícios sem estilo definido e inteiramente discordantes com os que já existiam. O Banco de Portugal foi o primeiro desastre. Seguiu-se a Caixa Geral de Depósitos que, diga-se de passagem, [é] o que menos destoa, mas sem que fizessem as últimas modificações impostas pela Câmara, ainda não ficou bem, e por fim o Hotel que acabou por estragar a praça. E estes três edifícios da autoria de três arquitectos diferentes, nenhum deles soube enquadrá-los naquele local. Ousamos perguntar se alguns dos arquitectos do século XX (há honrosas excepções) se limitam a dar asas às suas fantasias ignorando os mais elementares princípios de estética e ambiente?”

Raul Cúmano de Bivar Weinholtz, statement, in Comissão Municipal de Arte e Arqueologia, minutes 1957.01.17 (Faro-ADF/AHMF-B/B.9-1).

*Citation 48*

“Antigas hortas, algumas até existentes dentro do próprio perímetro da cidade, nomeadamente as do Colégio, de S. Francisco, do Ferragial, do Carmo, do Ramos, do Pinto e do Nogueira, todo o vasto Campo de S. Luís, os sítios do Bom João e do Alto da Forca, o Alto de Rodes, a Senhora da Saúde e o velho Cercado Ascensão, deram, na sua quase totalidade, origem a bairros de linhas modernas, espaçosos e arejados, em que se construíram centenas de edifícios de bom aspecto, acentuando-se cada vez mais, e mesmo na parte antiga da cidade, a tendência para substituir os velhos prédios de rés-do-chão, que ofereciam um aspecto de mesquinhez e de pobreza que não correspondia à importância da urbe, por edifícios de mais porte e majestade, muitas vezes com vários andares.”

[Mário Lyster Franco], “Faro,” in *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira* (Lisboa, Rio de Janeiro: Editorial Enciclopédia, [1959]), 581.

*Citation 49*

“Sem qualquer menosprezo pelas qualidades já reveladas pelo autor, quer em projectos para construção nesta cidade quer noutros pontos da província, e apesar de toda a consideração e apreço que lhe merece a sua iniciativa de renovação estética que considera de louvar, deliberou, por unanimidade, dar o seu parecer no sentido de que a fachada projectada deverá ser enquadrada com mais felicidade no conjunto do edifício de que ficará a fazer parte e da artéria onde está situada, dado que as suas linhas acentuadamente modernas oferecem um aspecto chocante (...).”

Comissão Municipal de Arte e Arqueologia, ruling, minutes 1954.12.03  
(Faro-ADF/AHMF-B/B.9-1).

*Citation 50*

“Tendo em atenção que uma moradia, como qualquer outra obra de arquitectura, é: combinação exacta de espaços úteis e utilmente colocados para o corpo e para o espírito, ela será 'realidade biológica'. Disposição sábia, económica e franca da matéria, ela será 'realidade física e mecânica'. Equilíbrio de comprimentos, de superfícies e de volumes, harmonia de materiais e de cores, ela será 'realidade sensível' e 'intelectual'.”

Manuel Gomes da Costa and Bento Viegas Louro, project statement 1952.04.24  
(Faro-CMF/SAO-127/1952).

*Citation 51*

“Síntese estética – o aspecto plástico da construção resulta não só duma boa solução de planta como também do equilíbrio de proporções e da aplicação criteriosa dos diversos materiais e cores empregados na composição. A criação de um terraço no 1.º andar a todo o comprimento da fachada e a aplicação dos quebra-sol e grelhagem são elementos destinados a evitar a acção intensa do sol durante o verão e que dão à fachada, movimento rítmico harmónico. A utilização destes elementos (no 1.º andar) e dum painel de azulejos (segundo os exemplos do século XVIII), mas com nova expressão de acordo com a nossa época (no r/c) contribuem, juntamente com a aplicação de cores apropriadas para a obtenção duma construção de aspecto plástico exprimindo o nosso tempo.”

Manuel Gomes da Costa, project statement 1954.04.01 (Faro-CMF/SAO-104/1954).

*Citation 52*

“Eles diziam constantemente – é só betão armado, betão armado – mas o betão armado é quando se parecem caixas, dá-se uma expressão como se fosse para uma construção de alvenaria – não, se se der a expressão duma técnica de construção diferente, e com o cuidado devido, pois muda, diferencia logo.”

Manuel Gomes da Costa (22 May 2008), *Interview with Manuel Gomes da Costa / Interviewer: Ricardo Agarez*.



***Citation 53***

“O aspecto arquitectónico (...) prolonga as soluções das casas de campo que se encontram por toda a província do Algarve. O recorte obtido pela combinação de duas coberturas a de telhado de uma água e a de açoteia não só quebra a monotonia das massas como enriquece-as de movimentos horizontais e oblíquos sem contudo impedir o equilíbrio do conjunto. Foi partindo desses exemplos tão característicos da construção rural algarvia que se obteve a expressão arquitectónica aqui presente neste projecto. A arquitectura regional pode portanto fornecer ótimos exemplos de composição e prolongar-se no tempo rejuvenescendo-se permanentemente em função do período histórico considerado.”

Manuel Gomes da Costa, project statement 1959.01.12 (Faro-CMF/SAO-162/1959).

***Citation 54***

“Aspecto estético: Teve-se o cuidado de dar à construção um aspecto sóbrio e que se integrasse no tipo das construções rurais típicas do Algarve, onde predominam as grandes superfícies brancas e sobriedade de formas. Deste modo, a cor dominante será o branco, nas paredes exteriores, contrastando com outras cores nos pilares, painel de azulejos (...), estores de madeira, floreiras, terraços de mosaico vermelho, grelhagens, etc. Todo o cuidado será tomado a fim de que se obtenha um aspecto arquitectónico que seja uma continuação do tipo acima citado, procurando assim ter-se uma construção enquadrada no nosso ambiente, actualizada, sóbria, produto duma época dinâmica, mas humanizando-a.”

Manuel Gomes da Costa, project statement 1956.06.16 (VRSA-CMVRS/AM-679/1956).

***Citation 55***

“No ponto de vista arquitectónico, foi tido em conta o local onde se edificará o prédio e a época presente. Para atender ao primeiro caso, projectou-se um prédio de linhas sóbrias que não destoasse grandemente das construções vizinhas e para o segundo, a sua concepção e acabamentos com materiais e processos actuais, cremos que vincará a época da sua edificação.”

José Marciano Nobre, project statement 1960.10.01 (Faro-CMF/SAO-999/1960).

***Citation 56***

“O aspecto arquitectónico obtido, foi o resultado de um estudo cuidadoso de todas as fachadas. Uma distribuição harmónica das superfícies e dos vãos de modo a quebrar toda a rigidez que a solução compacta da planta, pelo aproveitamento total da área coberta, impõe ao volume construído. Aliada a essa distribuição de superfícies e de vãos encontram-se as molduras que marcam mais nitidamente os vãos e as lajes dos pavimentos e os cunhais.

Assim à marcação arquitectónica desses elementos juntar-se-á a cor que irá dar a todo o conjunto, maior movimento, graciosidade e frescura.”

Manuel Gomes da Costa, project statement 1962.06.15 (Faro-CMF/SAO-512/1962).

#### *Citation 57*

“Da modulação da estrutura resultou uma unidade rítmica entre todos os elementos das fachadas, valorizadas pelo movimento alternado dos quebra-sol. Nas fachadas, serão utilizados elementos verticais de alumínio anodizado (na cor do alumínio), caixilhos e venezianas de alumínio assim como os quebra-sol também verticais e colocados alternadamente. Os topos das lajes serão revestidos de elementos cerâmicos e os peitos terão como revestimento os azulejos tradicionais, ricos de cor.”

Manuel Gomes da Costa, project statement 1966.04.10 (Faro-CMF/SAO-575/1966).

#### *Citation 58*

“Em especial os Ingleses (...) edificam as suas excelentes moradias, onde não faltam o máximo de comodidades modernas e refinamentos de inspiração, integrando-as na característica da paisagem. Por vezes, com subtil e graciosa imaginação, a fisionomia exterior adquire o sabor algarvio na sugestão dos pormenores particulares – rutilante brancura de cal em profusão, terraços ao jeito de açoteias, ou telhados de recurvos beirais e as rendilhadas chaminés (...). Eis uma boa lição, principalmente para os nacionais, Algarvios ou de outras regiões, que, por antipático pedantismo, vêm conspurcando a paisagem e o ambiente da nossa província mais original e mais típica. A esses se devem as detestáveis construções num pretensioso modernismo obnoxio e inestético, generalizado por toda a parte (...).”

Santos, *Terra Morena* ([Lisboa]: Início, 1965), 166.