



**Hidden in Plain Sight**  
**POLITICS AND DESIGN**  
**IN STATE-SUBSIDIZED**  
**RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE**

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## The New State, Architecture and Modernism

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to address the architecture of the Portuguese New State (1933–1974) and discuss its modernist nature. Firstly, the historiographic interpretation which opposes the two phenomena is characterised and questioned. Secondly, an alternative proposal for interpretation is presented and grounded. The fully modernist nature of the architecture of New State is argued by the agency of two major contributions: the international historiography on the relationship between modernism and fascism, which has been increasingly questioning and overcoming the previously identified contradiction between the terms; and the historiography of the development of other areas during the New State that show no contradiction in the mobilization of science and technology for the pursuit of a societal project contrary to the liberal political matrix of the Enlightenment. The maximalist definition of modernism advanced by Roger Griffin is adopted, thus explaining it as a heterogeneous set of paligenetic reactions, developed between the second half of the nineteenth century and the end of the Second World War, which aimed to counterbalance the consequences of the process of western modernisation perceived as adverse.

In the light of this analytical framework, which also allows rethinking the classification of the political-ideological nature of the Portuguese New State, a demonstration is sought of how the architecture of the regime integrated the project of social regeneration conceived and applied with relative success. Furthermore, the ways in which this architecture reflects the rationalisation of the governmental practice, characteristic of modernity, are highlighted. It is argued that the New State radicalised and further implemented on an unprecedented scale the transformation which the 19th century operated within the framework of urbanism and building design: its conversion into two distinct technologies of power, albeit articulated: the disciplinary and the regulatory. Moreover, a similar radicalisation and institutionalisation are detected regarding the 19th-century demand for a national art. The search for a national modern (an architecture that was both contemporary and adequate to the specific character of the country or the region), recognisable in countries with different political matrices, is thus differentiated regarding its fascist implementation. The paligenetic nature underlying this artistic agenda, not at all diminished by the use of historicist or traditionalist references, is emphasised, and a parallel is established between the selective and negotiated methodology that operationalised it and the syncretism that can be recognised in other areas of intervention of the New State.

### BIOGRAPHY

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The historiography on the relationship between modernism and architecture during the New State continues to show remnants of an antipodal interpretation. Indeed, despite its already significant problematization, targeted by several monographic studies which have contributed to a more complex and conciliatory vision of the apparent paradoxes of the New State's cultural policy, the historiographical reading which was first established on the phenomenon continues to affect its overall analysis. It is important, therefore, even at the risk of extreme simplification, to commence from its characterisation to further our enquiry and suggest alternative perspectives.<sup>1</sup>

According to this reading, in the initial phase of its institutionalisation, the New State would have adopted or somewhat tolerated an architectural language that posited itself between *art deco* and modernist rationalism. The reason for such could be twofold: either because the image of effectiveness and novelty mattered to a regime that was also presented as a national revolution, or due to the fact that the New State's desired type of architecture had not yet been envisioned. This would happen, according to the previously mentioned historiographical interpretation, in 1938 with the design of the Areeiro Square in Lisbon [Fig. 1] by the architect Luís Cristino da Silva or, more markedly, with the holding of the Portuguese World Exhibition in 1940, in the capital. This exhibition would thus signalize the "death" or the "reversal" of a modernism of compromise labelled as superficial (of false front, not based on a solid theory) and ideologically uncommitted (therefore detached from the democratic or socialist booklet, which are considered to be part of the foundations of the Modern Movement).

Accordingly, the architecture of the New State would be conceived, despite the occasional traces of modernity, as mostly anti-modern, conservative, and traditionalist, given that it resorted to historicist forms, from classic to baroque, or regionalist motifs, both inculcated and fantasized, without critical basis previous to the Survey of Portuguese Regional Architecture, whose results were broadcast at the beginning of the 1960s. The fifties, which corresponded to a new generation of modern architects who were increasingly politicized with the end of the Second World War, and that strengthened—around the First National Congress of Architecture (1948)—their class consciousness, would hence be characterized by the implantation of the ideological component of the Modern Movement, the same that had been amputated in the 1930s. During the 1960s, this would lead to a revision of that same Modern Movement characterized, both in Portugal as well as internationally, by the exploration of a supposedly critical regionalism, which

<sup>1</sup> For additional or different interpretive readings of the one exposed in this chapter, see, among others: N. Portas, "A evolução da arquitectura moderna em Portugal: uma interpretação," in *História da Arquitectura Moderna*, ed. Bruno Zevi (Lisbon: Editora Arcádia, 1973), vol. 2, 687–744; J. A. Franca, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX: 1911–1961* (Lisbon: Livraria Bertrand, 1974); N. T. Pereira, and J. M. Fernandes, "A arquitectura do fascismo em Portugal," *Arquitectura* 142, (July 1981): 38–48; P. V. Almeida, and J. M. Fernandes, *História da Arte em Portugal. A Arquitectura Moderna* (Lisbon: Alfa, 1986); S. Fernandez, *Percursos. Arquitectura Portuguesa. 1930/1974* (Porto: FAUP, 1988); M. Acciaiuoli, "Os Anos 40 em Portugal: o País, o Regime e as Artes. «Restauração» e «Celebração»" (PhD diss., Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1991); A. Tostões, "Arquitectura portuguesa do século XX," in *História da Arte Portuguesa*, ed. P. Pereira, (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1997), vol. III, 507–591; A. Tostões, *Os Verdes Anos na Arquitectura Portuguesa dos Anos 50*. 2nd ed (Porto: FAUP, 1997); A. Tostões, A. Becker, and W. Wang, eds., *Portugal: Arquitectura do Século XX* (Munich, New York, Frankfurt, Lisbon: Prestel/DAM/PF97, 1997); J. P. Martins, "Portuguesismo: nacionalismos e regionalismos na acção da DGEMN. Complexidade e algumas contradições na arquitectura portuguesa," in *Caminhos do Património*, ed. M. Alçada and M. I. T. Grilo (Lisbon: DGEMN, 1999), 115–32; P. V. Almeida, *A Arquitectura no Estado Novo: Uma Leitura Crítica. Os Concursos de Sagres* (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 2002); J. M. Fernandes, *Português Suave. Arquitecturas do Estado Novo* (Lisbon: IPPAR, 2003); N. Rosmaninho, *O Poder da Arte: o Estado Novo e a Cidade Universitária de Coimbra* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 2006); A. Tostões, *Idade Maior: Cultura e Tecnologia na Arquitectura Moderna Portuguesa* (Porto: FAUP, 2015).



Fig. 1 Areeiro Square (now Francisco Sá Carneiro Square), Lisbon. Architect Luís Cristino da Silva, 1938–1949. Source: Studio Horácio Novais, undated. Col. Mário Novais Studio [CFT164.45118], Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation–Art Library and Archives.

would be capable of reconciling architecture with a certain specific geographical character without promoting a reactionary agenda of folklorization of the landscape and of mentalities.

The argumentative structure just laid out has several limitations, among which the most significant will be further highlighted. Firstly, the operability of such a reading, in particular the part concerning the decades of the 1930s and 1940s, was established according to a highly selective presentation of traces. Indeed, among the buildings constructed during the New State, only those which corroborated and illustrated the various steps that—in cohesive and linear form—could be identified in the development of the architecture of the regime were chosen. Amongst the constructions available in the 1930s, the historiographic gaze focused on those closest to the international functionalism archetype. For its part, for the next decade, mainly nationalist prototypes of historicist and regionalist nature were selected. The perpetuations and concomitances of the above-mentioned aesthetic strands, along with their hybridity, were disregarded. They were only natural in a country where the teaching of architecture remained—until the reform of 1957<sup>2</sup>—faithful to the broadly internationally diffused eclecticism of the French matrix, which was marked by the propensity for the treatment of the exterior as an autonomous casing and for the manipulation and combination of different styles.

<sup>2</sup> G. C. Moniz, “O Ensino Moderno da Arquitectura. A Reforma de 57 e as Escolas de Belas Artes em Portugal (1931–69)” (PhD diss., Universidade de Coimbra, 2011).

The compartmentalisation of the architectural reality implies a depreciation of the fact that modernity and tradition have established a dialogue, albeit tense, since the 19th century, introducing this dilemma in the 20th century as well. This is not to deny that the appeals in favour of building adaptation to a national or regional context become more systematic and incisive from the end of the 1930s onwards. Be that as it may, I intend to emphasize the absence of definitive cuts and to reiterate that the attempts to agglutinate the contemporary formal and constructive novelties with the history and/or national landscape, not only mobilized a much broader set of agents (and, therefore, hardly constitute a mere *top-down process*), as well as being something prior to the institutionalisation of the New State in 1933.

Furthermore, the attempts of compromise between tradition and modernity are far from characterising an exclusively Portuguese phenomenon. The regime headed by António de Oliveira Salazar radicalised and operationalised the demand for a national art in the contemporary era on a scale and with efficiency without precedent. This demand, in Portugal as in the globality of European countries, was born from the impact of the French Revolution, the moment from which architecture was requested to express and strengthen the national character.<sup>3</sup>

The second vulnerability of the historiographical interpretation presented as still dominant concerns the association between modernism and democratic or socialist values. In order to question it—without rebutting what was, in fact, a authoritarian mode to produce and experience architecture—it is worth remembering the parallels between the depurated monumental classicism of the public architecture built between the years of 1920 and 1940 in democratic or liberal democratic countries as well as in authoritarian or totalitarian regimes.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, it is crucial to keep in mind that the negative reaction to international functionalism, far from being exclusive to the extreme right or the extreme left, stretched across the entirety of the political spectrum, even reaching the epicentres of the Modern Movement. It is of equal importance to note that, with the furthering of the knowledge of the architectural practices of the 20th century, the perception of the relationships between these professionals and the political regimes under which they lived likewise became more complex. Architects who were politically conservative projected paradigmatic works of international modernism, while progressivist architects—or even those who joined the totalitarian and authoritarian opposition—conceived architectural and urbanistic interventions that historiography has considered reactionary.

<sup>3</sup> Barry Bergdoll, *European Architecture: 1750–1890* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 139.

<sup>4</sup> Franco Borsi, *The Monumental Era: European Architecture and Design, 1929–1939* (London: Lund Humphries, 1987).



To these frailties, already mentioned and recognized in various monographies, one may add the potential of problematization galvanized by two themes that continue to require fresh historiographic investment:<sup>5</sup> the First National Congress of Architecture (1948) and the Survey of Portuguese Regional Architecture (carried out between 1955 and 1960; printed under the title *Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular em Portugal*) published in 1961, both of which were carried out under the Government's sponsorship and validated by the state seal. Characterized as tokens of cultural opposition to the New State (and as a result, acquiring an ideological-political antagonism character as well), and as events that stimulated an architectural counter-narrative, the weight assigned to both events has been excessively inflated. Indeed, what remains to be extensively examined is the actual impact of the Survey and the Congress on the regime's architecture erected from the decade of 1950 onwards. We should, therefore, evaluate the extent to which the changes for which they are accountable were indeed executed: the first, a withdrawal from the stylistic impositions of the regime and a shift in the design of public initiative housing; the second, the ultimate deposition of the belief in the existence of *the* Portuguese house and the setting of the bases for a "critical" regionalism.

Partial analytical contributions, which either focused on a particular typology or on a specific geographical area, have allowed the questioning of such assumptions. Concerning the Congress of 1948, its influence seems to be more productive in enhancing the architects' class consciousness than at the level of the design practices themselves. Regarding the context of the housing promoted by public initiative or support, it is useful to thoroughly analyse the development of collective vertical housing projects (an alternative model to the single-family dwelling, supposedly the most suitable to the regime's ideology). Thus it can be seen if its origins lie in the Congress or if the latter was primarily a vehicle for the expansion and awareness of a transformation that had been underway since the end of the Second World War. Regarding the retraction from the guidelines of the regime, the analysis of the construction campaign of certain typologies of public buildings since the decade of the 1930s up to 1970 does not disclose any rupture in 1948 or the years immediately following the meeting of this assembly. It is, however, an observation made from a single case study.<sup>6</sup> It would hence be beneficial to test their general applicability through the examination of a more comprehensive set of buildings promoted by the government. In turn, the results of the Survey of Portuguese Regional Architecture, despite discrediting the existence of *the* Portuguese house (a thesis erroneously attributed to Raul Lino<sup>7</sup>), in light of the country's geographical diversity of

<sup>5</sup> However, the contributions should be underlined of contemporary rereadings of the First National Congress of Architecture at the time of the facsimiled edition of its Minutes, in July 2008, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the *Ordem dos Arquitectos*—A. Tostões, ed., *1.º Congresso Nacional de Arquitectura* (Lisbon: Ordem dos Arquitectos, Conselho Directivo Nacional, 2008)—as well as the more recent work of historiographical review of the Survey of the Portuguese Regional Architecture, among which are: M. H. Maia, A. Cardoso and J. C. Leal, *Dois Parâmetros de Arquitectura Postos em Surdina. Leitura Crítica do Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional* (Porto: CESAP/CEAA, 2013); M. H. Maia, A. Cardoso and J. C. Leal, *To and Fro: Modernism and Vernacular Architecture* (Porto: Centro de Estudos Arnaldo Araújo, 2013); Ricardo Agarez, *Algarve Building: Modernism, Regionalism and Architecture in the South of Portugal (1925–1965)* (London: Routledge, 2016); M. L. Prista, "A memória de um Inquérito na cultura arquitetónica portuguesa," in *1.º Colóquio Internacional Arquitectura Popular* (Arcos de Valdevez: Município de Arcos de Valdevez, 2016), 273–88.

<sup>6</sup> J. Brites, *O Capital da Arquitectura. Estado Novo, Arquitectos e Caixa Geral de Depósitos (1929–1970)* (Lisbon: Prosafeita, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> See: R. Lino, *A Casa Portuguesa* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1929); P. V. Almeida, "Raul Lino. Arquitecto moderno," in *Raul Lino, Exposição Retrospectiva da sua obra* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1970), 115–88; P. V. Almeida, *Dois Parâmetros de Arquitectura Postos em Surdina. O Propósito de Uma Investigação* (Porto: Centro de Estudos Arnaldo Araújo, 2010); N. Rosmaninho, "A «casa portuguesa» e outras «casas nacionais»," *Revista da Universidade de Aveiro—Letras* 19/20, (2002–2003): 225–50.

<sup>8</sup> *Arquitetura Popular em Portugal*. (Lisbon: Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, 1961), XI.

<sup>9</sup> Agarez, *Algarve Building*.

<sup>10</sup> See, namely: D. P. Doordan, *Building Modern Italy: Italian Architecture 1914–1936* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988); W. L. Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence: From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); A. Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-garde* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1993); R. Griffin, "Nazi Art: Romantic Twilight or Post-Modernism Dawn?," *Oxford Art Journal* 18, no. 2 (1995): 103–07; M. Antliff, M. and M. Affron, eds., *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); E. Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: Art and Politics Under Fascism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); M. Antliff, "Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity," *The Art Bulletin* 84, no. 1 (March 2002): 148–169; E. Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); C. Lazzaro and R. J. Crum, *Donatello Among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); M. Antliff, *Avant-garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909–1939* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); M. Fuller, *Moderns Abroad. Architecture, Cities and Italian Imperialism* (London/New York: Routledge, 2007); R. Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); R. Griffin, "Modernity, Modernism, and Fascism: A 'Mazeway Resynthesis'," *Modernism/Modernity* 15, no. 1 (January 2008): 9–24.

<sup>11</sup> See, among others: F. Ágoas, "Saber e Poder. Estado e Investigação Social Agrária nos Primórdios da Sociologia em Portugal" (PhD diss., Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2010); F. Ágoas, "Economia rural e investigação social agrária nos primórdios da sociologia em Portugal," in *O Estado Novo em Questão*, ed. N. Domingos and V. Pereira (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2010), 197–231; F. Ágoas, "Estado, universidade e ciências sociais: a introdução da sociologia na Escola Superior Colonial (1952–1972)," in *O Império Colonial em Questão (Sécs. XIX–XX). Poderes, Saberes e Instituições*, ed. M. B. Jerónimo (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2012), 317–347; C. Castelo, "Ciência, Estado e desenvolvimento no colonialismo português tardio," in *O Império Colonial em Questão (Sécs. XIX–XX). Poderes, Saberes e Instituições*, ed. M. B. Jerónimo (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2012), 349–387; M. B. Jerónimo, "The States of Empire," in *The Making of Modern Portugal*, ed. L. Trindade (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 65–101.

<sup>12</sup> Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*.

vernacular architecture, reinforced the conviction that there indeed existed "in this diversity of features, a common thing, specifically Portuguese," i.e., "certain constants, perhaps of subtle distinction, nonetheless real," that did not concern "a unity of types, shapes or architectural elements, but some recognizable aspect of the character of our people."<sup>8</sup> The Manichaean contrast established by historiography between the regionalism practised before and after the Survey (inconsistent and conservative vs critical and progressive) has, for its part, already been challenged.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, it should be clarified that the Survey's real influence on the design of public works did not undermine the agenda of architecture's "reportuguesifying" advocated by the regime, nor did it displease those responsible for project evaluation. Instead of being the Trojan horse of its contemporary architects (a government-sponsored initiative that would invalidate its own perception of a contemporary national architecture), the Survey decisively contributed to the recognition—by a generation that asserts itself after the Second World War, demonstrates a larger political commitment and that more strongly subscribes a Modern Movement of international nature—of the creative potential of architecture's adaptation to the local context.

After recognising the need for further expanding on the reading of the New State's architectural production, as well as the necessity to overcome a purely formal definition of modernism, it is vital to contemplate a reassessment of the regime's architecture. I consider it a fully modernist phenomenon. To substantiate this fact, it may be appropriate to draw upon two contributions. Firstly, the international historiography that has been produced in the last three decades on the relationship between modernism and fascism, in which is outlined a growing tendency to consider as modernist the artistic production of regimes included within this political typology<sup>10</sup>. Secondly, the most recent Portuguese historiography that, while aiming its attention at the reality of other sectors during the New State (from agriculture to external and internal colonization, taking into account the development of social sciences as well<sup>11</sup>), showed no contradiction in the engagement of science and technology for the pursuit of a societal project adverse to the liberal political matrix of the Enlightenment and, therefore, to liberal and democratic values. Regarding the interpretation of the New State's architecture, the maximalist definition of modernism proposed by Roger Griffin<sup>12</sup> is adopted.

Without the restriction of the phenomenon to the sphere of aesthetics, Griffin conceives it as a heterogeneous set of paligenetic reactions, developed between the second half of the 19th century and the end of the Second World War, which aimed to counterbalance what was then perceived as the adverse consequences of the process of western modernisation. Along these lines, the aspects identified as “pathological” as well as, and above all, their forms of correction and overcoming were varied. Between them stood out, alternately or cumulatively: the diffusion of rationalism, liberalism and secularism, along with the cult of progress and the widespread faith in scientific-technological developments, urbanisation and industrialisation, the development of a society of masses and the globalisation of capitalism. The plurality of experiences encompassed by the concept of modernism (among which fascism itself) shared the search for transcendence and regeneration as a common denominator against the alleged anarchy and decadence that resulted from the transformation of institutions, social structures, and the system of traditional beliefs. Such manifestations wanted, thus, to inaugurate an “alternative modernity.”<sup>13</sup>

In light of this analytical grid, if applied to the artistic field, it is possible not only to exceed a formally limited understanding of modernism but also, within the same interpretive category, to reconcile experiences that at first sight would appear so distinct as the conception of a row of standardized dwellings and the recovery and reinvention of the folk traditions and the traditional customs of a particular people. If the first intended to respond to the pressing needs of the contemporary city, acting upon the imbalances that could promote social revolution, the second aimed to counter the amnesic and denationalising globalisation, seen as an “invasion” of foreignism and/or cosmopolitanism.

Although the typological definition of the Portuguese New State does not meet with unanimous accord in the historiographic community, I opt to include it in the maximalist category of fascism,<sup>14</sup> notwithstanding its specific traits (on a par with any historical phenomenon) and the systematic self-defence of its originality within the framework of modern dictatorships. Arising out of the military dictatorship (1926–1933) which put an end to the First Republic (1910–1926), it organised and consolidated itself as a right-wing dictatorship, tendentially totalitarian. Nationalist and centralist, imperialist as well as protectionist, interventionist and corporatist, the Portuguese New State was radically opposed to liberal, liberal democratic, democratic, and socialist alternatives.

<sup>13</sup> Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 55.

<sup>14</sup> On the debate concerning the classification of the New State, cf., among others: M. B. Cruz, *O Partido e o Estado no Salazarismo* (Lisbon: Editorial Presença, 1988); A. C. Pinto, *O Salazarismo e o Fascismo Europeu: Problemas de Interpretação nas Ciências Sociais* (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1992); L. R. Torgal, “«Estado Novo» em Portugal: ensaio de reflexão sobre o seu significado,” *Estudos Ibero-Americanos* XXIII, no. 1 (June 1997): 5–32; F. Rosas, “O salazarismo e o homem novo: ensaio sobre o Estado Novo e a questão do totalitarismo,” *Análise Social* XXXV, no. 157 (2001): 1031–54; J. P. A. Nunes, “Tipologias de regimes políticos. Para uma leitura neo-moderna do Estado Novo e do *Nuevo Estado*,” *População e Sociedade* 8, (2002): 73–101; A. C. Pinto, ed. *The Nature of Fascism Revisited* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); A. C. Pinto and A. Kallis, eds. *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

In comparison with other fascist regimes, the Portuguese case presents lower levels of “ideological radicalism,” either during Salazarism, or, and especially, during Marcelism.<sup>15</sup> This relative moderation, verifiable both at the level of the exercise of power as in the degree of clarity of its ideological enunciation, is understandable in view of conjunctural and structural, endogenous and exogenous constraints, the need to balance conflicting interests within the internal level, and the top leadership profile of the regime and its intermediate leaders.<sup>16</sup> However, it is believed that such factors did not jeopardise the totalizing project that the New State applied to Portuguese society, nor did it limit its future-oriented dimension. Architecture, as a social technology capable of influencing the behaviour of bodies (in terms of spatial management) and minds (as an ideological discourse expressed visually and a reference for the continuous reshaping of identity), incorporated both aims.

The nationalist, historicist, and ruralist strands patent in architecture—in likeness with other areas of intervention of the regime—despite exhibiting resistance to the process of modernisation, were far from hindering the modernist vocation of the dictatorship led by António de Oliveira Salazar. It is in the context of public initiative housing that one may find some of the clearest evidence of this thesis. It should be sought not in the projects that, in the second half of the 20th century, are closer to the architectural and urban planning ideals of several international modernist currents, nor in the participation of project designers that were part of the cultural and political opposition to the New State. In order to further substantiate the endorsed interpretative approach, it would be more productive to focus our attention on the analysis of the decades of the 1930s and 1940s.

The construction of clusters of single-family housing units [Fig. 2], the model that first characterised the politics of the regime regarding this sector for an extended period, translated the new social order—manufactured, designed, implemented, and supported by devices of censorship and repression—that was to be enforced. The spatial conception of these clusters, small villages idealised for urban space or its periphery, not only reflected a political-ideological programme but also created the conditions for its own implementation and social internalisation, based on what was perceived by the regime as the “irreducible cell” of the nation: the family. It is an exemplary exercise of palingenesis. Its revolutionary nature and its drive for regeneration relied precisely on the enforcement of aesthetic formulations and models of familial existence that would be considered, if not utterly outdated, at least widely challenged by the contemporary demands.

15 J. P. A. Nunes, “A memória histórica enquanto instrumento de controlo durante o Estado Novo. O exemplo do anti-semitismo,” *Revista de História das Ideias* 34, (2016): 141.

16 J. P. A. Nunes, “A memória histórica,” 142–143.



Fig. 2 Single-family houses in the Affordable Houses neighbourhood of Belém, Lisbon. Architect Raul Lino, 1933–1938. Source: Mário Novais Studio. Col. Mário Novais Studio [CFT003.023724.ic], Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation–Art Library and Archives.

The recovery of the nation's origins, of its genuine and wholesome core, on which the national rebirth would be based, contained a programme of radical social transformation under the cover of the alleged rescue of authenticity. In this way, the demand for authenticity was entirely artificial. It translated the action of the "Gardening State"<sup>17</sup> which, in favour of the reorganisation of the national garden, enforced the elimination of weeds in the interest of the growth and proliferation of regular plants. The summoning of a "healthy" past acted, therefore, as curative and as prophylaxis simultaneously: not only did it eliminate the degenerative symptoms already present but it also prevented future deviations. In any case, this excursion into the past always assumed a scheduled return to the present, where a "battle" of "salvation" was fought, and a "mission" of "regeneration" of an allegedly sick nation, weakened by a century of monarchical and republican liberalism, was put into motion.

<sup>17</sup> Z. Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 20.



It is within this context that the architecture of Portuguese fascism must be understood. It is one of the social engineering mechanisms exploited by the regime. It reflects, therefore, a modern political practice that, although applied on behalf of an agenda far from the political and social illuminist ideals, corresponds to the Enlightenment's assumption that it was possible to shape and improve human nature.

Furthermore, the development of architectural programmes so methodically organised and on such scale, operating within a structured legal framework and implying such technical know-how, rationalisation, and bureaucratisation as the one fostered by Salazarism, could only have materialised within a modern state. Indeed, the New State radicalised and further implemented on an unprecedented scale the transformation which the 19th century operated within the framework of urbanism and building design: its conversion into two distinct technologies of power, albeit connected: the disciplinary and the regulatory.<sup>18</sup> The former aims to control the body, by the agency of mechanisms for the spatial management of individuals, in order to normalise their behaviour. The latter, targeting the population as a whole, establishes the rules and patterns of leasing, house credit, health insurance and pensions, hygiene and sanitation as well as the organisation of the urban fabric, etc.

Both of these mechanisms (disciplinary and regulatory) can be found in the architecture of the New State. Each public building obeyed, according to its nature, certain spatial distribution criteria designed to ensure the correct and orderly performance of its allocated functions (courthouses, agencies of the state bank, stations of post offices, telegraphs and telephones, etc.). This control, practised over the body, protruded further in the infrastructures dedicated to education (schools, colleges, universities), to the organization of free time (holiday camps, among others), to health and social care (hospitals, sanatoriums, houses of the people, etc.), to the housing of public initiative (affordable houses programme, among others) and to correction/punishment (jails, prisons, etc.), the design and construction of which in most cases entailed specialized administrative entities—primarily consisting of engineers and architects—which studied their configuration.

This research could require trips to other countries for the observation of the most advanced typological proposals. Although many of the architectural typologies that have just been mentioned can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and therefore not an invention of fascism, it is with this regime that such functional programmes tend to undergo a standardisation, to be centrally planned and systematically deployed.

<sup>18</sup> M. Foucault, "Society Must be Defended." *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76* (New York: Picador, 2003), 250–251.

Its sole purpose was not the satisfaction of functional requirements. It also aimed to architecturally materialise the multiform state apparatus of domain, domestication, inculcation, and ideological repression. Regarding the mechanisms of a regulatory nature, there was an effort to establish a legal framework for project assessment, supervision and execution of public works, as well as policies concerning urban planning, social welfare and housing of public initiative, leasing and expropriation, construction, hygiene, health and sanitation.

These concerns, which emerged in the final stages of the constitutional monarchy and during the First Republic, experienced a decisive legislative reinforcement at the hands of the military dictatorship and especially with the formalisation of the New State in 1933. On the one hand, this shows an increasing governmental aptness regarding this specific course of action and understanding it as a priority. On the other hand, it reveals a process of complexification and bureaucratisation, enshrined in an increasing legislative detailing and densification which, in turn, helped to reduce the margin of error and enhanced the standardisation of aesthetic options and outcomes.<sup>19</sup>

On a par, knowledge and scientific procedures were mobilised (with a particularly relevant role played by social sciences) to map and meet the reality that was to be transformed with the greatest possible accuracy. One could refer, for instance, to the implementation of the Survey of Rural Housing in the 1940s, which was part of the set of studies and surveys that sought to justify the reform of the economy and rural societies, put in motion by the regime from the second half of the 1930s onwards.<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, the New State's architecture reflects the rationalization of the governmental practice, characteristic of modernity. The development of the regime's architecture occurs within the framework of a campaign of infrastructural works, urban planning and equipment construction. This was carried out by Salazarism, following the improvement of the country's financial and economic situation, in response to specific conjunctural (the Crisis of 1929 and the Great Depression) and structural traits (the transformation of the modes of socio-economic regulation and the growth of state's intervention in the economy). Its planning, implementation and monitoring was the responsibility of the socio-professional group of the engineers, a technocratic elite which played a major role in the theorization and conduction of a modernisation that, alongside conservative traditionalism, found expression both in its actions as well as in the composition of the middle and upper state boards of the regime.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Brites, *O Capital da Arquitectura*.

<sup>20</sup> F. Ágoas, "Saber e Poder."

<sup>21</sup> See, among others: F. Rosas, *Salazarismo e Fomento Económico (1928-1948)* (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 2000).

The campaign of public works obeyed to a hierarchical, specialized and centralized organization, achieved through the confluence of two operating principles. With the first, commenced during the military dictatorship, the aim was for all responsibility referring to the preparation, execution, and supervision of construction or renovation of public buildings to be aggregated in the Ministry of Public Works and Communications (MOPC)<sup>22</sup>—created interim. The second resulted from the awareness of the considerable volume of works, many of which were urgent in nature, and of the specific technical knowledge which they would imply. Such conditions led to the establishment of a panoply of organisms—councils, delegations and administrative committees, consisting of an independent body of technicians (autonomous or under the remit of the Directorate General of National Buildings and Monuments albeit, in any case, still dependent on MOPC)—to which was assigned the task of coordinating the planning and construction of the body of public buildings belonging to distinct typologies throughout the national territory.

Accordingly, a division of labour guided by criteria of rationality, efficacy, and efficiency, such as the determination of action plans and the listing of intervention priorities, was likewise enacted. To this can be added the growing tendency for the typification of the programme(s) to be adopted in each architectural typology (stations of post offices, telegraphs and telephones; courts; agencies and branches of the Caixa Geral de Depósitos; barracks; schools; health care units; prisons, among others) and the establishment of a standard bureaucratic method for the evaluation and approval of architectural projects, financed either partially or entirely by the government. This course of action, marked by the intervention of different spheres of decision-making, proved to be able not only to influence but also shape any architectural proposal, regardless of its potential initial radicalism.

Alongside the legal system established to oversee the architectural practice, Salazarism created mechanisms for the ideological surveillance and indoctrination of architects. In addition to being the primary contractee of architectural projects and chief promoter of the most significant percentage of exhibitions at the national and international levels, the government also assured, among other aspects, a compulsive class corporatization, the monopoly of the teaching of architecture, as well as the censure of the essays and scientific discourse concerned with it. Moreover, it established institutions and programmes for the framing and/or disciplining of the artistic phenomenon (among others, the Superior Council of Fine Arts, the National Academy of Fine Arts, the Secretariat of National Propaganda, the Board of National Education, the artistic

<sup>22</sup> Created in July 1932, from the processing of the previous Ministry of Commerce and Communications, the Ministry of Public Works and Communications became designated only as Ministry of Public Works (MOP) from December 1946.

awards and the so called “Missões Estéticas de Férias,” programmes that supposedly immersed the artists, during their vacation, in the national landscape subsequently promoting the realization of creative work within this framework<sup>23</sup>).

Adequately inserted into a specific framework, the discipline of architecture and its professionals was subsequently summoned to participate not only in the construction of the (non-static) image of the regime, but also in the recasting of the nation, contributing to the transformation of sociabilities and the worldview that was underway. Its modernist nature expressed itself at the level of its aesthetic language, which was another means, only artificially separated, of the pursuit of an alternative modernity. This was, as the expression itself suggests, a selective process, syncretic and negotiated, which can be further recognised in other areas of intervention of the New State. The search for a national modern—an architectural language that was, at the same time, contemporary and appropriate to the specific nature of the country and/or region—it is the common denominator, despite adopting different formulations, of the entirety of the architectural production of the regime. In essence, it coincides with the agenda pursued by other fascisms, such as the German, Italian or Brazilian, whose artistic realities were met with the admiration of some Portuguese architects and critics.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, it is also possible to find corresponding parallels with the cultural worldviews of radically different political systems. As an example, we could mention the North American and Finnish cases, whose architecture was praised both in generalist and specialist periodicals of the time.<sup>25</sup>

The compulsion to associate contemporary buildings with its geographical and/or historical-cultural specificity was not a concern exclusive to fascist regimes. Thus, one might wonder what ascribes them a particular political and ideological nature in architecture. In my view, it is their mode of production (a short interval between the maximum and minimum limits of creative freedom, the negotiation of aesthetic options and the containment of differences), how their use and occupation was stipulated and encouraged, as well as the high degree of ideological and political propaganda that charged them. The specificity of fascist architecture should not, therefore, be correlated to a putative degree of aesthetic cohesion and uniformity regarding its built heritage, nor to the alleged level of the discipline’s knowledge present in the discourse of the dictators. Both interpretations have been already widely challenged by artistic historiography, including the one which looked on National Socialism,<sup>26</sup> the case that would express the presence of these two assumptions with higher probability.

<sup>23</sup> On the intervention of the State in the cultural field, see, among others: J. R. Ó, *Os Anos de Ferro: O Dispositivo Cultural Durante a Política do Espírito, 1933–1949: Ideologia, Instituições, Agentes e Práticas* (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> R. Lino, Carta a António de Oliveira Salazar (7 Março 1933) (*Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo: Arquivo Oliveira Salazar. AOS/CP-156, pasta 4.3.7/21*); T. R. Colaço, “Nota,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 24, (Março 1937): 25; T. R. Colaço, “O exemplo do Brasil,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 23, (Fevereiro 1937): 1,8; G. C. Branco, “Manifestação cultural. A moderna arquitectura alemã através da interessante exposição que vai abrir nas Belas-Artes,” *Diário de Lisboa* 6807, (3 November 1941): 5,7.

<sup>25</sup> “Arquitectura de hoje pelo estrangeiro,” *A Arquitectura Portuguesa* 37, (Abril 1938): 37, 22; “Arquitectura das cidades finlandesas,” *Diário da Manhã* 4552, (5 January 1944): 3.

<sup>26</sup> B. M. Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany: 1918–1945* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1985).

The ambiguity of the motto of fascist architecture and its consequent hegemonic “pluralism,”<sup>27</sup> instead of hinting at the absence of a singular cultural policy, attest to the inclusive logic that these regimes employed in the artistic field, similar to the way in which they managed conflicting forces and agents in the political, social and economic spheres.

The demand for a national modern was nebulously enunciated and, therefore, expressed more clearly what it disapproved of rather than what proposed. In Portugal, it encompassed aesthetic narratives as diverse as the simplified update of historicisms, regionalisms, *art deco* and the International Style. Its hybridisation—by which the eclectic *modus operandi* of the 1900s is prolonged in the next century—was achieved to a greater extent via the juxtaposition of stylistic references than by its synthesis.

<sup>27</sup> M. Stone, “The State as patron: making official culture in Fascist Italy,” in *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy*, ed. M. Antliff and M. Affron (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 208.



Fig. 3 Branch of Caixa Geral de Depósitos (State Bank), in Leiria. Designed by architect Luís Cristino da Silva between 1940 and 1942 (demolished decades later). Source: Mário Novais Studio. Col. Mário Novais Studio [CFT003.23702], Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation–Art Library and Archives.



As a consequence, the buildings often exhibited facades that conciliated different aesthetical references [Fig. 3]. The questionable critical character of this intersection was no impairment, however, to the modernist intention that presided over its creation. The exercise itself did not represent a rejection of modernity, but its correction; not the rebuke of artistic modernism, but the amendment of what was perceived as a stateless and disaggregating internationalism, and that did not agree with the climate, landscape or the nature of the country.

In conclusion, an attempt to explain the modernist nature of the New State's architecture does not require the disclosure, within itself, of formal vestiges of the Modern Movement. This procedure would maintain of a evaluative scale regarding the interpretation of modernism and the subsequent detection of levels of completeness and impurity. Modernism in architecture includes the Modern Movement, although it is not limited to this phenomenon, nor should it be taken as a model of analysis for disparate proposals. Despite its traditionalist camouflage, and to a greater extent because of it, the architecture of the New State was an instrument used to reshape Portuguese society and to modify its way of conceiving and being in the world. In this way, the more archaic or historicist characteristics of this architecture do not disturb in the slightest its palingenetic nature, namely, its purpose of social regeneration. The selective use of the past bolstered a project for the future. Far from being an unwavering path, it should be more accurately described as reactive and corrective. In parallel, what justifies the interpretation of the New State as a modernist phenomenon must not be confined to the identification of the developmental traits that Portuguese fascism comprised. Likewise, it should predominantly depart from the recognition of the existence of a societal project and the intended making of a "new man," and focus on the analysis of how these goals, rejecting some of the premises of the process of modernisation, were sought after with the use of instruments and procedures which are characteristic of modernity.

#### NOTE

The author submitted this chapter in April 2018. Although further literature has been published on the subject in question, the text remained unaltered until its final publication.

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