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# From Boundary to New Centrality. The Transformation of the Santa Cruz Monastery to Accommodate the New Facilities of the Liberal State During the Nineteenth Century

Margarida Relvão Calmeiro \*

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**Abstract:** »Von der Grenze zur neuen Zentralität. Die Umwandlung des Klosters Santa Cruz in einen Ort für die neuen Einrichtungen des liberalen Staates im 19. Jahrhundert«. During the 19th century, modern facilities and new infrastructures dictated profound urban reforms in European cities. Coimbra, the seat of the Portuguese University, desired the same modernisation but lacked the financial and technical capacity to implement it. Despite all limitations, the liberal regime managed to break through the band of colleges that surrounded the city and carried out an audacious modernisation process. That transformed the old Monastery of Santa Cruz into the new centrality and its farm into the modern bourgeois neighbourhood, dictating the expansion of the urban fabric and giving rise to the current consolidated city. This article emphasises this reorganisation process and how it replicated the old correlation between economic and political centres.

**Keywords:** Urban reform, urban planning, centrality, modern facilities, Portugal, markets, townhall, 19th century.

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## 1. Introduction

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As complex entities, cities go through enormous changes according to time and society. Not only are they places for living and defence, but they are hubs of trading, governance, justice, and social interactions, thus formed by

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various spaces with different forms and meaning according to their purposes and uses. Uses and forms also depend on those who create and use the cities. Therefore, the history of a city and all the processes of its evolution are engraved in the urban form and in their patterns that tend to persist (Corboz 1983, 12-34). Buildings, streets, and squares have adopted different functions, meanings, and uses depending on time. In Europe, the 19th century was a period of profound change in the production system, government regimes, and at the cultural and social level, which had obvious repercussions on the form, organization, and elements of the city. The evolution of technology and medicine were responsible for the widening of streets, the improvement of urban tissues,<sup>1</sup> and new sanitation rules. This dictated the construction of specific buildings to lodge some functions like the market or the slaughterhouse and imposed a new order in the city. As Foucault pointed out, in order to safeguard public health, these urban transformations were also responsible for imposing a sense of discipline and control of the inhabitants (Foucault 1995, 171-2; 2001, 352-3). The new hygienic and modern city was not only the result of the geometrized and organized urban tissue but also of the citizens' behaviour.

In Portugal, a peripheral European country, these transformations were slightly delayed (Serrão 1978, 248) – mainly due to the instability of the first half of the century – when the country faced war with the Napoleonic forces, which then led to both the transference of the King and his court to Brazil and after that the establishment of the liberal regime and the following civil war between liberals and conservatives. Despite this instability, this century was crucial for the development and modernization of the country. Apart from the delay in the industrialization process, this was a time of massive reforms that allowed and supported the later implementation of the modern country. The new regime required new models of territorial administration and management, institution-building, judicial and administrative reforms, and the overhaul of the educational system, in addition to the creation of the first technical corpuses.

Alongside the reform of the municipal boundaries and the administrative system (Silveira 1997), which were crucial to improve the state's efficiency and to break down the old structures, all district capital cities were connected through the first road network and the first railway lines (Matos 1980; Alegria 1990; Macedo 2012). Indeed, at the beginning of the 20th century, Portugal was a modernised country. The biggest cities were facing wide urban reforms, with new avenues being opened and the creation of modern facilities like hospitals, schools, municipal markets, cemeteries, and modern public infrastructures of power, lighting, and water (R.H. Silva 1986, 1997; Fernandes 1993, 2005; Bandeira 2001; Cascão 1989).

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<sup>1</sup> "Urban tissues" refers to the result of urban design, the arrangement of streets and blocks that generate the physical characteristics of an urban area.

Coimbra was, at that time, a middle-sized city, though it had been the seat of the only Portuguese university since the 16th century, allowing the development and exchange of knowledge with the rest of the world. Moreover, this gave Coimbra huge importance since magistrates for both the whole country and empire graduated from the university and, during the regeneration period, most of the ministers had graduated from the University of Coimbra (Almeida 1995, 88-9). The city itself, however, was almost the same city as it was in the 16th century when the city's urban tissue was transformed and *Rua da Sophia* (Sophia Street) was opened to house the Portuguese University (Rossa 2006, 16-23; Lobo 2006, 24-31).

The city is located at a strategic point of the Portuguese country, between the north and the south, precisely at the crossing point of the Mondego River, which connects Coimbra with the productive lands of the mountains, the fertile lowlands, and the sea. This implantation was crucial for its development, which goes back to as least Roman times (Mantas 1992, 149-205; Rossa 2001, 49-121). Despite this, the Mondego also had a destructive nature and recurrently invaded the lower areas and confined urban expansion. Apart from the river, the urban tissue was bounded by a fence of religious colleges that prevented growth to the north, east, and south. This would only be overcome during the 19th century after the extinction of the religious orders and the confiscation of their assets.

The new liberal regime, beyond a new political system, demanded the transformation of the existing city to accommodate the new liberal organizations and facilities. The old Santa Cruz Monastery would then be transformed to accommodate the new city hall, the new city market, other facilities (such as the school, jail, and post office), and becoming the new city centre and setting for the later urban expansion. It was a long and hesitating process that eventually replicated the function assembly that already existed in the old commercial square. We intend to understand the process beyond this urban transformation which in the end justifies the contemporary city form.

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## 2. Coimbra at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century

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Despite its strategic position and its celebrated past, dating back to the time when it was the capital city of the kingdom (Rossa 2001, 417-8; 2012, 130) at the beginning of the century, Coimbra was a small city living from and for its university, and its main activities were related to students and teachers. Apart from some monumental buildings and some squares, Coimbra's urban tissue was mainly composed of narrow, unpaved streets with tall buildings without proper ventilation or illumination. Water supply and urban cleaning problems were frequent and the lower neighbourhood was repeatedly

flooded during winter, which led to the old bridge frequently becoming submerged. Morphologically, the city was structured between the founding hill of *Alta*, the upper neighbourhood, where the cathedral<sup>2</sup> and the university were located, and the lower neighbourhood, the *Baixa*, occupying the space between the river and the *ribela* valley (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1** Illustris Civitati Conimbriae In Lusitania ad flumen Illundam effigies by Georg Braun and Frans Hogenberg, c. 1580



Source: <https://am.uc.pt/bib-geral/nabaisconde/item/44525>.

This valley, rich in water and fertile soil and which surrounded the city from the north side and at the base of which the Santa Cruz Monastery was established, is where the Roman baths are thought to have been. This dichotomic urban structure and the progressive occupation of the lower and unprotected areas were common to other Portuguese cities after the *Reconquista* period. However, in Coimbra, the abandonment of the hill was increased by the displacement of the capital city from Coimbra to Lisbon and the subsequent migration of Coimbra's residents. Later, in the 16th century, this emptiness would allow for the installation of the university structures.

These areas, shaped over time and accommodating different functions and complementary spaces, fostered the definition of numerous centralities spread over several areas. *Alta* was the location of the political and religious centre consisting of the royal palace, the episcopal palace, the cathedral, and

<sup>2</sup> In 1759, King D. José I, under the guidance of Marquês de Pombal, expelled the Jesuits from the kingdom and nationalized their assets. In Coimbra, their colleges were given to the university while the magnificent church was appropriated by the bishop and turned into Coimbra's cathedral.

the municipal council chambers (*Casa do Vodo*), and it would later become the seat of the university, installed in the former royal palace and precisely where the Islamic citadel had once been located. Since then, it has been named *Paço das Escolas* (Schools Palace) (Pimentel 2006). After this, the university would attract many religious colleges, nurturing the installation of a fence of religious colleges surrounding the upper neighbourhood that would prevent any later attempts of expanding the city.

As for the market, it was first located in the lower streets inside the city walls (*Quebra-Costas* Street and *Fangas* Street) and progressively transferred to the lower faubourg outside the city walls, while, in the *Alta*, the weekly market in *Largo da Feira* continued, named *Feira dos Estudantes* (Students' Fair) because it was created by King D. João III in 1540 as a free fair for the benefit of the university. The market area was divided between the daily market located at St. Bartolomeu Square, also named *Praça Velha* (Old Square),<sup>3</sup> and stores in *Rua da Calçada* (Cobbled Street) the street that connected the *Largo da Portagem* (Toll Square) to the Monastery of Santa Cruz. The main productive activities were located near the river, which can still be seen in the local toponymy, for instance in the potters' or shoemakers' street. But *Baixa* was also a political and religious centre, mainly because of the establishment of the Monastery of Santa Cruz, a very powerful religious house with deep connections to the Vatican and which had played a fundamental role during the period of the *Reconquista*. As a result, this monastery was the seat of the national notary and was the first Portuguese royal pantheon, where the first and second Portuguese kings were buried. Later, in the 16th century, when the king decided to transfer the university to Coimbra, a new street was planned, Sophia Street, opened on Santa Cruz lands and at their expense, to accommodate all the colleges (Colleges of São Pedro, São Tomás, Graça, Carmo, Espírito Santo and Arts, and two religious convents of S. Domingos and São Boaventura) (Rossa 2006, 16-23; Lobo 2006, 24-31). But soon after, the enormous demand compelled the transfer of the university to the hill, to the unoccupied spaces of *Alta*.

Furthermore, the municipal power would also follow the descent into the lower faubourg, and the municipal council house would be implanted in the main square and main trading area, St. Bartolomeu Square. In addition to the commercial and municipal power, this square also housed the Royal Hospital, the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Coimbra* (a Catholic charitable organisation), and the pillory.

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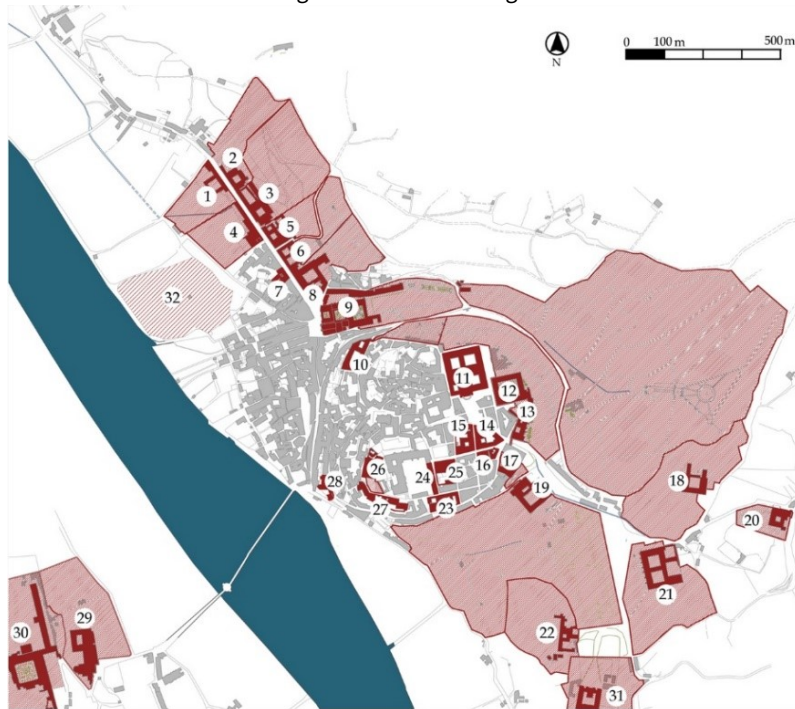
<sup>3</sup> We should highlight that in Portuguese, the term "Praça" is used both for the open public space and for the marketplace. This coincidence reveals the centrality of this public space in the city, combining not only daily commerce and socialization, but also the places of administration and justice. About these terms, see Luisa Trindade (2013, 584-9); about the evolution of the market-places in Coimbra during the medieval age, see Trindade (2004).

This progressive transformation of the city created a partition of different centres spreading their influence around the entire city's territory. Due to this polarization, but also because of the city's reduced dimension, Coimbra was a multi-diverse and poorly segregated city. Despite that, we can roughly distinguish the upper part of the city as the zone of the academics, the literate elite, the aristocracy, and the clergy, while the lower area, the one closer to the river, was where artisans, servants, and the bourgeoisie population were mostly to be found (Mota 2010, 356).

However, we should highlight that Coimbra had a reduced number of inhabitants. This was one of the obstacles to the development and modernization of the city during the 19th century. Throughout Europe, the introduction of modern infrastructures came from private businessmen, but in Coimbra, the small number of inhabitants and the low expected profit did not interest entrepreneurs, which led to a long delay.

Furthermore, the city faced a lack of free space to grow, mainly due to the river that recurrently invaded the lower zone and constrained the occupation of the downtown area and the expansion of the city along the valley. The lack of technical knowledge and capacity postponed the resolution of this problem until the end of the 19th century, when the riverbanks were finally regularized and a new bridge was built, defining a new landscape for the city (Calmeiro, 2013, 71-90). Additionally, urban growth was also limited by the existence of a fence of religious colleges that circumscribed the city to the north, east, and south. In addition to limiting the expansion of the city, these colleges stood out in Coimbra's urban morphology for their volumetry and for the space occupied by their lands, occupying an area greater than the area of the two neighbourhoods of *Alta* and *Baixa* (Figure 2).

**Figure 2** Hypothetical Reconstruction Plan of the City in 1845, with Emphasis on the Ancient Religious Orders' Buildings and Their Lands



1. College of S. Tomás; 2. College of S. Pedro; 3. College of Graça; 4. College of S. Domingos; 5. College of Carmo; 6. College of the Holy Spirit; 7. College of S. Boaventura; 8. College of Arts; 9. Santa Cruz Monastery; 10. College of St. Agostinho; 11. College of Jesus; 12. Roayal College of Arts; 13. College of S. Jerónimo; 14. College of Lóios; 15. College of St. Boaventura; 16. College of S. Paulo; 17. College of the Militaries; 18. College of Tomar; 19. College of S. Bento; 20. Convent of St. Tereza; 21. Convent of Santana; 22. College of Sao José; 23 Holly Trinity College; 24. Royal College of S. Pedro; 25. Royal College of S. Paulo; 26. College of St. Rita; 27. College od St. António da Pedreira; 28. College of St. António Estrela; 29. Convent of S. Francisco; 30. Monastery of St. Clara; 31. Seminary; 32. Hypothetical location of the old S. Domingos Convent

Source: Calmeiro 2021, 80.

### 3. The Establishment of the Liberal Regime and the Need to Reshape the City

On 8 May 1834, the liberal army entered Coimbra, and a few days later, on 22 May, the first liberal city council was sworn in, putting an end to the old regime and opening the path to a series of profound transformations. As for the country, we should note that the signing of the Évora-Monte Convention on 26 May ended the civil war and was followed by one of the main measures outlined by the new liberal regime by decree on 28 May, namely the



extinction of male religious houses and the appropriation of their assets by the national treasury. This last measure had double meaning. On the one hand, it aimed to attack the economic and social power of the clergy who had supported D. Miguel in the civil war and, on the other, helped to strengthen the public finances and the centralization of the state that thus began to take on assistance and teaching, which had been traditionally guaranteed by the religious orders.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, this measure allowed for the repurposing and reconversion of large areas and notable buildings within the consolidated urban fabric.

In the city of Coimbra, this measure led to the closure of 22 colleges and forced the education reform that eventually led to the loss of the exclusivity of higher education with the introduction in Lisbon and Porto of polytechnic education and medical schools. But, most importantly for the purposes of the present study, this measure enabled the modernization and growth of the city that was belted between the river that recurrently invaded the *Baixa* and a fence of colleges and monasteries that limited the growth of the city (see Figure 2).

With such a large number of unoccupied buildings and land inside the overcrowded urban fabric, the new liberal municipality began to outline a strategy to reform the city by appropriating and reusing some of these buildings. In the following year, the municipal council drew up an extensive plan of intentions for urban reform from the occupation of several of these spaces. This plan was presented to the government in two letters sent by the Coimbra Municipal Council, the first on 10 January 1835, and the second on 30 May 1835 (Calmeiro 2021, 87). Although it was not immediately implemented, it served as the basis for the main urban transformations carried out in Coimbra during the 19th century and structured the contemporary city (Calmeiro 2014, 2021).

The plan proposed the concession of part of the old colleges and fences to install multiple facilities essential for the city. The main concession consisted of the buildings of the former Santa Cruz Monastery to establish the city hall, the courts, and all the public offices of the city. It was also intended to lodge the public market in the former courtyard of the monastery. Likewise, the plan included the concession of the old barn house of Santa Cruz recreation farm for the installation of the municipal slaughterhouse and the rest of the farm for a public park. In addition to the properties of the Santa Cruz Monastery, the plan proposed the creation of two municipal cemeteries, one on each side of the river, using the fence of the former Jesuit college and the Convent of São Francisco. Furthermore, the Colleges of S. Bento and College of Graça would be turned into barracks, the College of Estrela would host the

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<sup>4</sup> This first confiscation of religious orders' properties was later extended to other properties, namely the royal family's properties, and was in line with what was happening in other European liberal states, e.g., in France and Spain (A. Silva, *Desamortização e venda...*, 1989).

public jail, and the College of Santo António da Pedreira in Alta an asylum. Finally, it was planned to reinforce the city's water supply network, to develop a drainage network in the lower city, to build a dam along the river, to widen the Coruche Street, and to install a public lighting network.

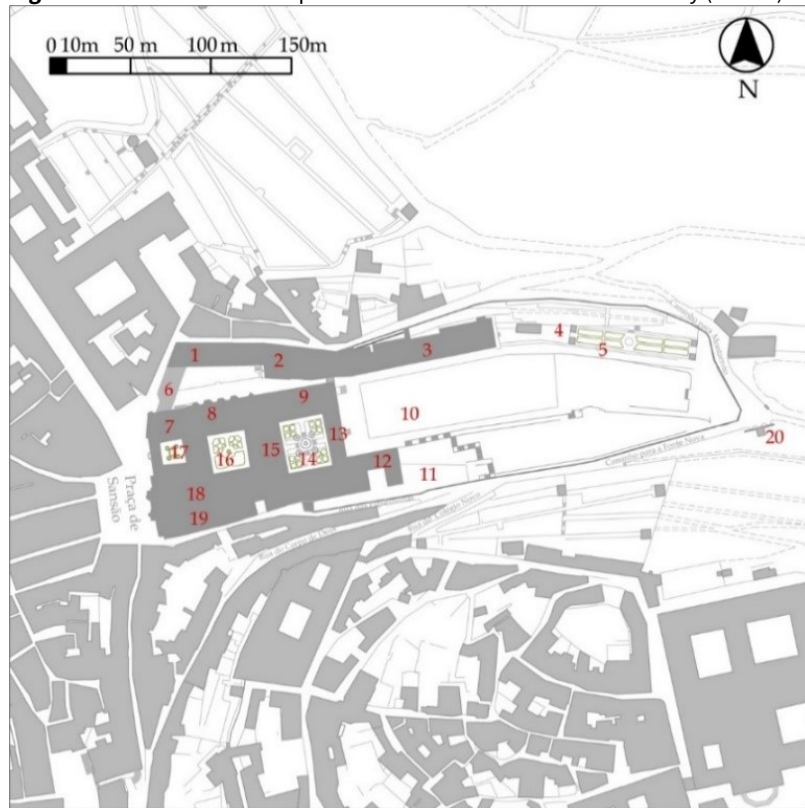
As in other cities, the emphasis was on essential facilities for urban sanitation, such as cemeteries, a market, a slaughterhouse, barracks, jails, hospices, the water supply network (which was fundamental for the cleanliness and hygiene of the city), and public lighting (which was indispensable not only for comfort but for policing the streets). The enlargement of Coruche Street, corresponding to the section of the Lisbon-Porto Road, was part of the dual intention of improving the circulation of vehicles and people and urban sanitation by increasing ventilation.

However, from the analysis of this plan, it is possible to verify that the municipality was not limited to the simple use of the voids left by the religious corporations but, and fundamentally for practical reasons, this plan created a new centrality in the old Monastery of Santa Cruz, concentrating all the administrative functions and the commercial functions there. While still far from the modern notions of urban zoning, this plan proposed a new organization for the whole city.

Despite the pertinence and urgency of this plan, the government only made part of the municipality's strategy possible, offering the "three Buildings of the extinct Convents of Santa Cruz, Graça and S. José dos Marianos [...], in order to be applied – the first for the Courtroom, Jail, City Hall, County Administration, and Post Office; the second to serve as barracks; and the third finally to establish the Hospital of S. Lazaro" (AHMC/Títulos Originais, 3).

Although less than desired, the yielding of the former Monastery of Santa Cruz enabled the installation of the new offices created by the new liberal regime, namely the district offices. Thus, even before the legal transference in 1839, the municipality transformed the old building of the barn house of the Quinta de Santa Cruz into the municipal slaughterhouse. As soon as the concession was communicated, the old Monastery of Santa Cruz was divided to house the courtroom, the city council premises, and the post office. The installation of these services in the old monastery, largely due to practical issues and the lack of financial funds, was made without major works, with the construction of little more than interior partitions and connecting stairs between floors. Shortly after, other services were installed there (e.g., the orphanage in the old dormitory and the mutual school, next to the garden of Santa Cruz) while the rest of the premises were rented to the population to sponsor the costs of the maintenance and conservation of such a large old building (A. Silva, *Anais do Município...*, 1973, 103-4).

**Figure 3** Plan with the Occupations of the Old Santa Cruz Monastery (c.1856)



1. District Jail; 2. Tower of Santa Cruz; 3. Orphanage; 4. Fence; 5. Fountain of the Magdalene;
6. Part demolished, it had been occupied by the post office; 7. City Hall, on the upper floor and County Administration, on the ground floor; 8. Court and Notaries, in the old refectory and part of the upper floor of the dormitory of S. Francisco (in 1866 the Refectory was ceded to the local Society of Artists); 9. Post office; 10. Former garden- space destined to the market; 11. Novitiate fence; 12. Old carpentry shop; 13. Direction of Public Works of the District and Telegraph; 14. Cloister of Manga;
15. Direction of Public Works of the Mondego and Office of Weights and Measures; 16. Cloister of the Angels; 17. Cloister of the Limeiras; 18. Church of Santa Cruz; 19. Old Church of São João of the Donas leased to a citizen; 20. New Fountain

Source: Calmeiro 2021, 106.

A few years later, a new division was made in order to concentrate all the city council premises in the same part of the building, which would allow the construction of a new monumental building representative of the municipal power in the late 1870s (Figure 3).

The idea of building new premises for the city hall was an early one.<sup>5</sup> However, the urgency of other works and the limited financial resources of the municipality postponed this project and the municipal council remained in the building of the former monastery practically unchanged.

One of the most urgent works was the construction of a municipal market. Although the 1835 plan foresaw the establishment of the daily market in the courtyard of Santa Cruz, it was only in 1840, and under great protest from the vendors, that the market began to operate in this place (Andrade 2001). The contestation was due to the peripheral location, away from the usual routes of the population.

Indeed, since the 16th century, the main market had been located in St. Bartolomeu Square, the most central square of the city. However, in the early 19th century, the scarcity of space led to the use of other places to sell some products, such as cereal, that began to be sold in Sansão Square in front of Santa Cruz Church (Figure 4).

**Figure 4** Plan of the Market Places in the Nineteenth Century



Source: Calmeiro 2021, 90.

<sup>5</sup> The first reference to the need to hire a technician to design a new city hall was during the Chamber Council of 9 October 1845 (A. Silva, *Anais do Município...*, 1973, 126).

Then, despite the concentration of services located in the ancient monastery, the shape of the complex and its old image made it difficult for the population to recognise its new central role.

The vendors' protests escalated when the municipality started the process for the construction of a new modern building to house the public market with all the sanitary and hygienic conditions in the old garden of the Santa Cruz Monastery.<sup>6</sup> This was an extensive plot that had been conceded to the municipality with the rest of the monastery, but it was located behind the old monastery, with no visibility and removed from the usual circuits of the population. Thus, an intense discussion began between the municipality, which intended to build the new market in this area, and the population, represented by the local press and the local merchants' association, which proposed a new location near the Largo da Sota (*O Conimbricense* 20 March 1866, 1-2; 27 March 1866, 2; 31 March 1866, 2; 14 April 1866, 1).

While, on the one hand, the option to reuse the ancient religious orders' buildings was clearly justified by economic reasons, on the other hand, the desired reform and reorganization of the existing dense urban fabric would only be viable with a huge reform plan to install new facilities, like the market. For that reason, the population required the reform of the Largo da Sota in *Baixa*, next to the main entrances of the city, the Ameia Pier, and the Portagem Square.

The studies carried out by the municipality concluded that the location in *Largo da Sota* represented an increase of about 30% of the costs of the market's construction in *Horta de Santa Cruz* due to the cost of the expropriations and the landfill of the area (A. Silva, *Anais do Município...*, 1973, 310; AHMC/Diversos. Box III, Folder XVII). Despite this increase in costs, this project would allow for the urban reform of the *Baixa*, opening new wide streets at a higher level, and sanitizing the old urban fabric. As argued in the press, this work was in articulation with others, like the projected railway station near the river in Ameias Square, and could be the opportunity to carry out the land field work and the urban reform of all the *Baixa*.

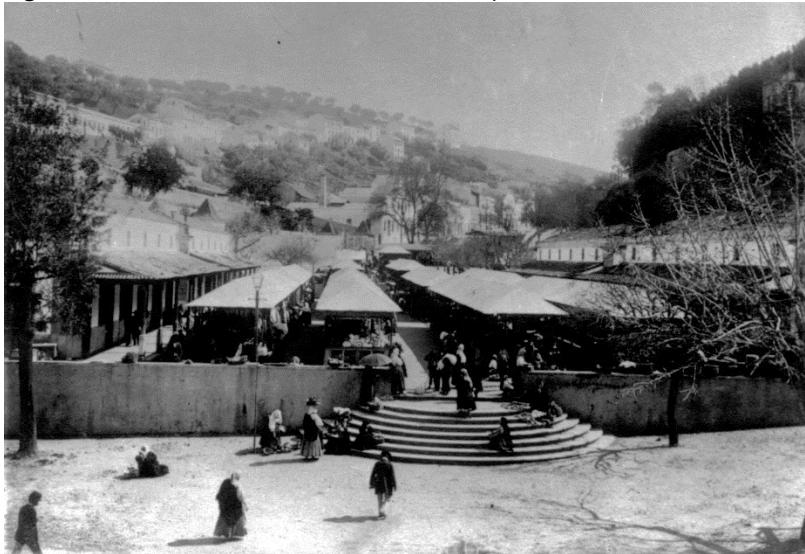
Should not the municipality help this great work? For if this is so, prudence demands that one should wait until then to choose the market place, which should be as near the current centre of commerce as possible. Then the point could be made for this construction and without great cleansing to make a market worthy of the third city of the kingdom. [...] Make [...] other improvements [...] and do not rush to bury the local market where many conditions are lacking, [...] which represents a real waste. (*O Conimbricense*, 14 April 1866, 1)

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<sup>6</sup> After 1840, fines were imposed on salespeople trying to sell elsewhere in the city; as a result, on 11 September 1841, a regulation for the vendors was created (AHMC/Vereações 1841, 28 July 1841, 169v; 11 September 1841, 178v-179).

This explains the municipality's hesitations and the amount of time that lapsed before the final decision. In the end, the financial difficulties faced by the municipality led to the solution in Santa Cruz Garden. Works began in October 1866, and the new building drawn up by Cândido d' Oliveira Cortez (AHMC/Diversos, Box III, Folder XVII, doc. No 17) was inaugurated in November of the following year and named Mercado D. Pedro V in honour of the king. This new facility would not foster the desired urban reform of the *Baixa*; however, it would lead to a new centrality that would predict the future development of the city instead (Figure 5).

**Figure 5** Market of D. Pedro V, Biblioteca Municipal de Coimbra



Source: s/a, *D Pedro V Mercado*, BMC-B 289.

During this decade, in addition to the new market, the city faced other crucial improvements, like the construction of the Conchada Cemetery (1852–1872), the construction of the railway (1864), and the beginning of the construction of the Beira Road, which would link the city to the interior of the country (*O Conimbricense* 22 December 1866, 2; 26 December 1866, 3).

Nonetheless, the following decade would end up being the decisive one as it represented a change in the practices of the city council, recognizing the role of technicians. In fact, in 1873, with the city council facing an increase in the works of the municipality's roads network and planning to reform the riverfront and the entrance of the city, in accordance with the regularization plan of the river designed by the Mondego's Public Works Office, the hiring of the first municipal engineer was decided. António José de Sá was hired on April 1873 to design the improvement plan of Portagem Square and a new

riverfront capable of preventing the recurrent floods (AHMC/Repartição de Obras Municipais, Folder 31, doc. 3; Calmeiro 2021, 280).

As the city began to reform the riverfront and transformed the urban landscape of Coimbra, the desire to build a new monumental city hall increased. In 1876, the mayor, Lourenço de Almeida Azevedo, hired a new municipal engineer, Alexandre Simões da Conceição, to design the new building for the city hall. Work on the building began that same year but faced an enormous controversy raised by the local newspaper, which called into question both the necessity of the work before other more urgent necessities and the demolition of the old monastery (*O Conimbricense* 1 July 1876, 2).

This last question also involved the Architects Association, which contested the demolition of the old monastery, evoking the loss of an artistic and monumental building. This question gained enough traction that it eventually was taken to the national parliament. However, the municipality clarified that the demolition was restricted to the old “dormitory that [...] is a mass of masonry without taste, without comfort, without art, without elegance, without any title which justifies its conservation” (AHMC/Representações 1874-1880, 19 February 1876, 127) and the demolition and construction works advanced. Regardless, the opposition of the newspaper followed the whole work, which faced serious failures and design errors that led to a huge increase in costs. The main criticisms were focused on the materials used, which were considered too expensive. The most visible error was in the coat of arms of the city, which was commissioned from in Lisbon, but the figures were sculpted in reverse, according to the flag (*O Conimbricense* 8 de November 1881, 1). It still adorns the main façade of the building to the present day.

Despite these setbacks, on 13 August 1879, the municipal council met for the first time in the new building and, in April of 1881, the court was installed on the lower floor. The interior works continued until 1886 (AHMC/Vereações 96, 1 December 1879, 48v; AHMC/Vereações 97, 4 May 1881, 96; AHMC/Vereações 974 January 1882, 165).

With the new city hall, the liberal political centre of Coimbra was defined, replacing the old monastery and next to Santa Cruz Church, the first Portuguese pantheon (Figure 6).

**Figure 6** The New City Hall next to the Church of Santa Cruz



Source: Calmeiro 2021, 108.

Meaningfully, the square in front of the building was renamed 8th of May Square, celebrating the date of the entrance of the liberal army in the city.

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#### 4. Santa Cruz Neighbourhood, the First Urban Expansion beyond the Boundaries

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Despite the creation of this new centrality in the ancient monastery, the city continued to be compressed within its old boundaries. After the extinction of the religious orders and the appropriation and conversion of their buildings into new uses, their fences were not occupied and the city remained densely concentrated in the old cores.

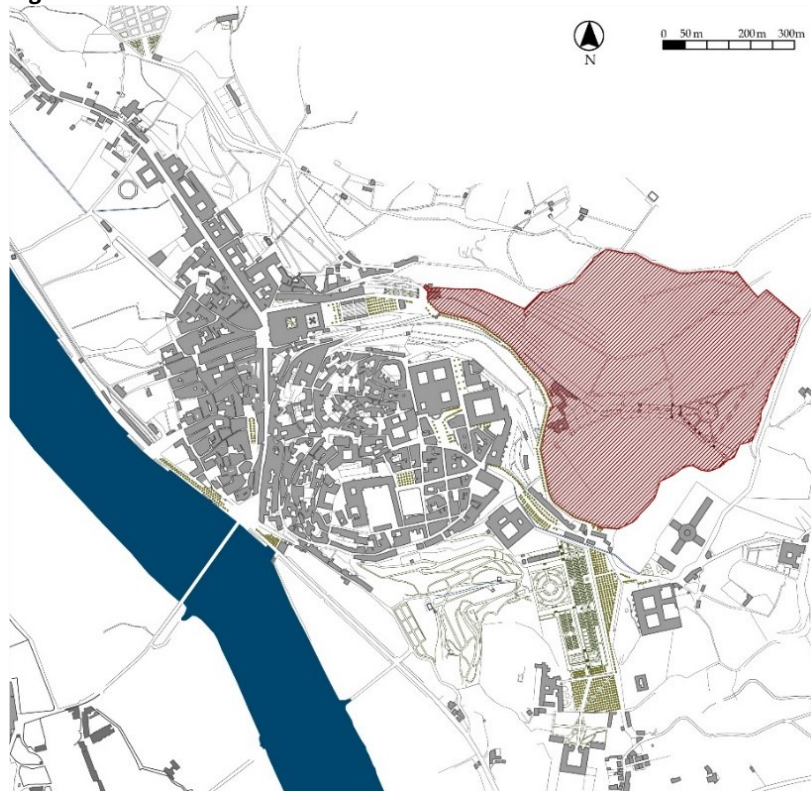
This would change a few years later, again thanks to the will of the mayor Lourenço de Almeida Azevedo. It must be pointed out first that the work of the city hall, along with the work of regularization of the riverfront, led to a change in the municipality practices that began to further value the skills of the technicians. With this awareness, the municipality ordered the first topographical survey of the city. Executed by Francisco and Cesar Goullard,<sup>7</sup> between 1873 and 1874, this plant allowed the mayor to foresee the strategic importance of the Santa Cruz estate, occupying the whole valley behind the old monastery and with an area bigger than any of the old neighbourhoods (Figure 7).

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<sup>7</sup> These engineers had worked with Filipe Folque on the Lisbon survey between 1856 and 1858.



**Figure 7** Plan of the Santa Cruz Recreation Farm Limits



Source: Calmeiro 2021, 129.

This valley enabled the expansion of the city and the improvement of the connection between the *Alta* and the *Baixa*. Moreover, the expansion would strengthen the centrality of the whole area of the city hall, eliminate the peripheral character of the municipal market, and also cater for the construction of some new facilities (e.g., the new fish market to expand on the municipal market, a better slaughterhouse, a public garden, and a kindergarten). These efforts also provided space for both the fair of Santa Clara and the annual fair of St. Bartolomeu and enlarged the city water network with the springs from the Santa Cruz recreation farm (AHMC/Representações 1881-1892, 18 February, 24-16).

A large loan to purchase the farm was required, and in January 1885, Engineer Adolfo Ferreira Loureiro and Botanical Professor Júlio Henriques were invited to design the Quinta de Santa Cruz Improvement Plan, Coimbra's first expansion neighbourhood following modern and hygienic models (Macedo 2006a, 122-9; 2006b, 43-57; Calmeiro 2021, 129) and

emulating the urban transformation taking place in Europe (Alphand 1867–1873; Cerdá 1867) (Figure 8).

**Figure 8** Hypothetical reconstruction of the Quinta Santa Cruz Improvement Plan Drawn Up by Adolfo Loureiro in 1885



Source: Calmeiro 2014, 236.

Influenced by Lisbon's Avenues Plan, this new plan designed a boulevard 50 metres wide, starting at the municipal market and ending in a large square next to the public garden, converting part of the old recreation garden of the Santa Cruz monks. From each corner of the large square, wide symmetrical avenues were designed, sprawling through the surrounding hills.

The sprawling modern streets were inaugurated at the end of 1889 (Loureiro 1937, 301). However, the construction of Sá da Bandeira Avenue, the designed boulevard, was postponed because of the difficulties with the valley's landfill work. To facilitate its execution, it was planned that the landfill would be made with the material of the excavations for the construction of the new streets, which took a few years (AHMC/Diversos, *Memoria descritiva...*, Box III, doc. 2).

By the beginning of the 19th century, the plan was almost complete. The slaughterhouse was installed on the north limit of the neighbourhood (AHMC/Vereações 108, 20 May 1897, 67). The market was enlarged with the construction of the fish pavilion between 1905 and 1907. In 1909, a renewal project for the rest of the building was approved but it was never built (Loureiro 1952, 52). The public garden was denominated the Santa Cruz Park and began to be used by the population. In December 1885, part of the park was assigned to become a tennis court; a few years after, in 1916, a fence was built and the park underwent restoration works (AHMC/Vereações, 100, 65; AHMC/Diversos, Box III). A children's playground was built next to D. Luís

Square between May 1935 and May 1936 (R. Silva 2013, 123-9) and the springs waters were led to the public fountain near the jail. The planned boulevard, an icon of 19th-century urbanism, was built in 1906 (AHMC/Vereações 116, 127).

Thus, with this plan, the city of Coimbra created a new and modern district that would dictate the expansion of the city throughout the 20th century, from the Santa Cruz Valley, extending east and north (Montes Claros, Celas, Cumeada, Penedo da Saudade, and Calhabé).

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## 5. Some Conclusions

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At the beginning of the 19th century, Coimbra had a unique urban configuration that prevented any growth. The city was squeezed between the Mondego River that recurrently invaded the lower zones of the city and a continuous boundary of religious houses and their premises. In the south, there was the College of S. Bento, in the east, the Jesuit fence and the Monastery of Santa Cruz's recreation farm, and in the north the Colleges of S. Pedro, Graça, and Carmo. The extinction of religious corporations and the consequent confiscation of their assets in 1834 allowed this situation to change, and the municipality took advantage of the opportunity to occupy and transform these ancient buildings, thus outlining a strategy to modernize the city. In the first stage, this process was the simple occupation of buildings and vacant lots, without large works of adaptation to the new functions, but also without neglecting the general organization of the city. In the second stage, aware of the needs of each function, the municipal council promoted works of adaptation or construction of new buildings, in some cases involving drastic works, like the demolishing of the existing buildings, as in the case of the city hall. This strategy reconfigured the city and created a new and symbolic centre, which aggregated administrative, justice, municipal, and commercial areas. Although resulting largely from pragmatic reasons, this modernisation process and this new centrality represent a distinctive characteristic of Coimbra, which in the end, replicated in the area of Santa Cruz the centrality and the concentration of functions and powers previously existing in St. Bartolomeu Square, joining the city hall, the pillory, and the market.

Meanwhile, concerns about urban sanitation and the general well-being of the population were increasing and Coimbra needed to improve its sanitary conditions and expand its urban tissue. The maturation of the administrative experience and the ongoing improvement works on the city's riverfront contributed to a new understanding that was responsible for the first survey of the city in 1873. With this knowledge of the city, the municipality managed to move beyond the limits of the conceded premises and to undertake the first

operation to expand the city since the opening of Sophia Street in the 16th century. The old recreation farm of the Santa Cruz Monastery was thus converted into a modern neighbourhood to accommodate the new functions of the liberal city, allowing for an easy connection between the city's upper part and downtown.

Coimbra's first expansion plan created not only the first bourgeois neighbourhood, with large streets and a central square, but also catered for space for the new facilities of the modern city, like the slaughterhouse, the new fish pavilion for the municipal market, the fire station, the primary school, the children's playground, the public park, and even the first social housing neighbourhood. Alongside this, the new modern avenues and the new boulevard were designed with the new infrastructures of water, sewage and light networks, and the new public transport in mind. Hence, at the ending of the 19th century, the *Alta* and the *Baixa* were finally easily connected, linking them to the rest of the city and to the new urban areas on the outskirts of the city. The new wide avenues created a privileged connection between the new quarters and the Santa Cruz complex.

The peripheral area chosen for the municipal market had been converted into the central area, linking every part of the city and everyone through the new public spaces. Thus, the *Praça D. Luis* – shortly afterwards renamed Republic Square – and Santa Cruz Park would be the spaces chosen to host fairs, exhibitions, and popular festivals at the beginning of the 20th century, taking on the role of spaces of horizontal centrality.

Consequently, during the 19th century, Coimbra converted the old Santa Cruz Monastery premises, the ancient space of religious power and closure, into an open, modern neighbourhood that represented both the seat of the new public services and an available space to everyone. Moreover, the old Sansão Square was turned into the new 8th of May Square, the seat of the new municipal power and symbol of the liberal regime as well as the main point of the connection between the old city and the modern city that was growing along the valley. Furthermore, the modernization of Coimbra during the 19th century and the assembly on the Santa Cruz area of both municipal and market facilities did not lead to strong spatial segregation; instead, it replicated the ancient relation and integration between daily market and town hall.

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## Images

- Figure 1 – *Illustris civitatis Conimbrae in Lusitania ad flumen Illundam effigies*, Georg Braun, Frans Hogenberg, c. 1580, <https://am.uc.pt/bib-geral/nabaisconde/item/44525>.

- Figure 2 – Hypothetical reconstruction plan of the city in 1845, with emphasis on the ancient religious orders' buildings and their lands, Calmeiro 2021, 80.
- Figure 3 – Plan with the occupations of the old Santa Cruz Monastery (c.1856), Calmeiro 2021, 106.
- Figure 4 – Plan of market places in the nineteenth century, Calmeiro 2021, 90.
- Figure 5 –Market of D. Pedro V, Biblioteca Municipal de Coimbra, s/a, *D Pedro V Mercado*, BMC-B 289.
- Figure 6 – The new City Hall next to the Church of Santa Cruz, Calmeiro 2021, 108.
- Figure 7 – Plan of the Santa Cruz recreation farm limits, Calmeiro 2021, 129.
- Figure 8 – Hypothetical reconstruction of the Quinta Santa Cruz Improvement plan drawn up by Adolfo Loureiro in 1885, M. Calmeiro, 'Apropriação e conversão', 236.

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