

Restelo in Lisbon - The Non-implementation of the Original Urban Design
by Faria da Costa during the Dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar

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Abstract

To talk about dictatorships is to address very dark and destructive themes in history, which are commonly associated with a collective human pain. Nonetheless, beneath these destructive themes there are also more controversial elements that need to be deeply discussed.

Under the dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar, it was possible for the urban and architectural dimensions to evolve. Portugal, in particular Lisbon, would finally have a road network, an airport, green spaces, an organization of the territory through zoning as well as new neighborhoods that would eliminate the slums - works that would raise Lisbon to the quality of the major capitals in Europe at the time.

This evolution was possible with Étienne de Groër (who would create the first Urbanization Planning for Lisbon (1938-49), the Portuguese urbanist/architect Faria da Costa (who had studied under the influence of Étienne de Groër and was the technical adviser for the Lisbon Municipality), and the Minister of Public Works Duarte Pacheco (who was also mayor/president of Lisbon Municipality and the right hand of António de Oliveira Salazar).

This paper is part of a major research concerning the work of the urbanist Faria da Costa during the *Estado Novo* dictatorship and focuses on one neighborhood in particular: the Restelo/ Encosta da Ajuda. The Restelo neighborhood would serve as the landscape to the “Exhibition of the Portuguese World” in 1940. Nonetheless, unlike other urban projects of the architect, such as Areeiro or Alvalade, Restelo was not implemented as originally designed.

The research presented here aims to study the genesis of the plan and search for a hypothesis as to explain why the neighborhood was not implemented as planned. This work compares the work undertaken under the dictatorship and the work developed afterwards through an interdisciplinary analysis. It contributes to the discussion dedicated to understanding the quality of urban design developed under dictatorial regimes in the 20th century.

Lisbon, planning the “Capital of the Twentieth Century”

During the *Estado Novo* (New State), the country took a new turn: new roads, ports, airports, railways and hydraulic works were created. The new urban policy was based on three principles defined during the time Duarte Pacheco who was the president of the Lisbon Municipality, Minister of Public Works, and right hand of António de Oliveira Salazar:

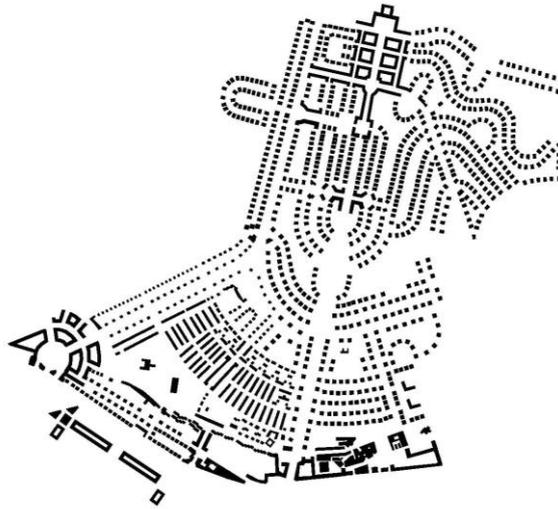
- 1st - elimination of the private monopoly of urban land use;
- 2nd - creation of subsidies (as a response to the economic crisis that was felt in Portugal after 1932, as a consequence of the depression of 1929);
- 3rd - large ventures, including the construction of a major airport, railway networks and roads - which were essential for the development of trade linked to the *Ultramar* (colonies), and the development of the country's industrial capital.

In Lisbon, the growth resulting from rural migration was characterized by a professionally unskilled and low-waged population living in slums. The lack of accommodation and the poor housing were serious issues which the Municipality had to confront, in addition to the lack of infrastructures and social equipments. Duarte Pacheco was to introduce Lisbon to the city's first urbanization planning (1938-49), which was the first document to guide the outlines of the city's future growth. Thanks to the accumulation of Duarte Pacheco's political positions, funds for the construction of large works were provided by the government. This measure, along with the new law of expropriation and a new policy of soil management which was favorable to intervention from the government, made it possible to intervene in the capital of the Empire.

In 1938, Étienne de Groër was hired as urbanist and technical adviser for the Municipality of Lisbon. His first action was to develop an analytical study to understand the real state of the city, its gaps and omissions, lack of structure, infrastructures, orderly growth, consistence and proper functioning. Based on this analysis, Étienne de Groër proposed an urban plan for a city conceived of as a “Capital of the Twentieth Century”. The city's physiognomy was profoundly altered with the onset of several plans, legally supported on the expropriations from the strict system of the “centenarians legislation”.

In a Lisbon which was drawn according to similar language of the garden city movement, the most important works proposed were the road network, the airport, the green spaces within the occidental part of Lisbon topped by Park of Monsanto - about 2.470 acres of land expropriated for forest -, the organization by zoning, as well as the new neighborhoods Alvalade, Areeiro (social housing) and Slope of Ajuda (Restelo), a neighborhood aimed for social groups of higher status, as designed by the architect and urbanist Faria da Costa. These neighborhoods were undertaken in scope of the city's northward expansion towards the new airport already under construction at the time.

Faria da Costa's urban plan for Restelo and its alterations



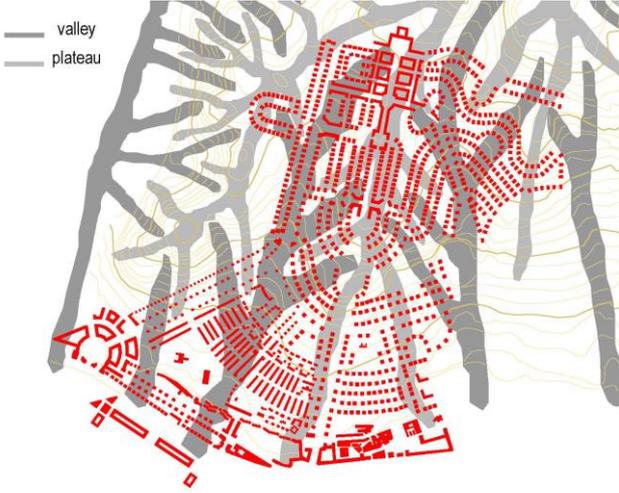
Faria da Costa's plan for Encosta da Ajuda, 1938. Source: Schematic plan by the author. The original plan, with the reference PT/AMLSB/CMLSB/UROB-PU/10/109/02, can be consulted at Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa (arquivomunicipal.cm-lisboa.pt). (02.05.2012)



Encosta da Ajuda/Restelo, 2012. Source: Schematic plan by the author. Aerial view available at <https://www.google.pt/maps/place/Restelo/>. (03.03.2012)

Building on the momentum of the big event happening in Lisbon during the mid-1940s (the “Exhibition of the Portuguese World” - in Belém, Lisbon), the lands of Restelo were already expropriated and freed from slum development, just in time to serve as a landscape from the exhibition. But unlike Areeiro and Alvalade, Restelo was not implemented as originally designed. This happened despite Portugal being in a dictatorship at the time, with the Minister of Public Works being Duarte Pacheco who was at the same time mayor/president of the Lisbon Municipality and with Faria da Costa being urbanist and technical adviser for the same Municipality. When we started looking for answers as to why this came to be, we found there were no publications about Restelo at the time this investigation started. We only knew the construction had several temporal phases which altered the original urban design. So we decided to study the genesis of the plan and explore a hypothesis.

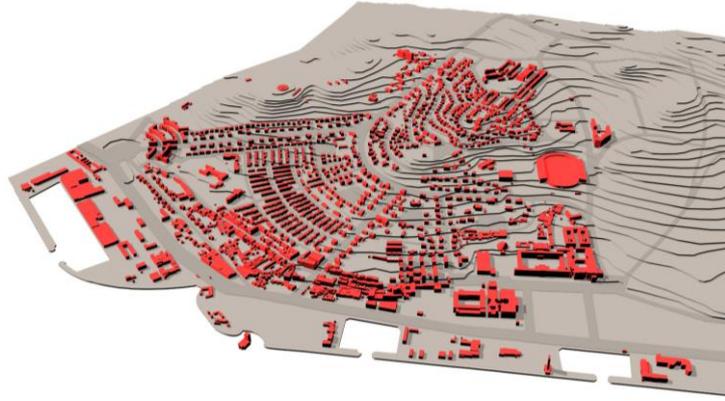
Territory is never a “white sheet”. Keeping that in mind, to understand the basis of the urban morphology of the neighborhood Restelo, it’s imperative to analyze the natural physical/geographical foundation, in order to verify if either (or both) the plan and built reality are justified by it. With the Tagus River at its feet, the site has two different areas in terms of geotechnical conditions: mostly rocks of medium to high strength, and mud/sand (near to Tagus River). The urban design of Faria da Costa strives to not build on the most sandy area (with higher seismic intensity), making instead just a few arrangements around the pre-existing built structures and roads.



*Topography: Original plan - relationship with valleys & plateaus.
Source: Analysis by the author.*

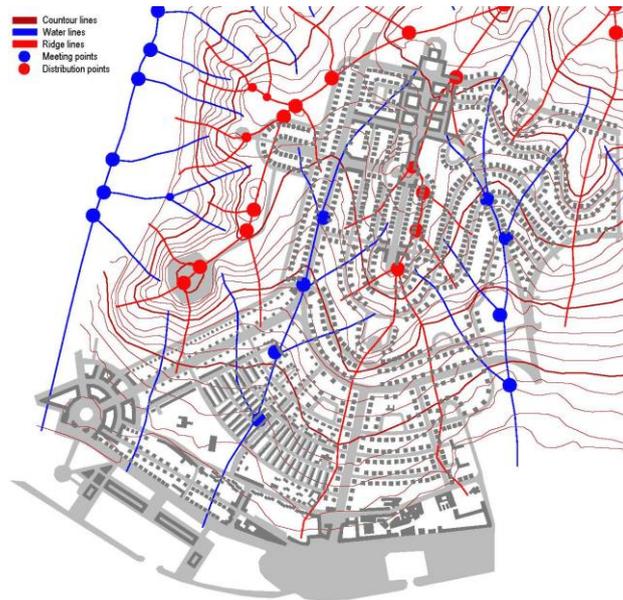


*Topography: Built reality - relationship with valleys & plateaus.
Source: Analysis by the author.*

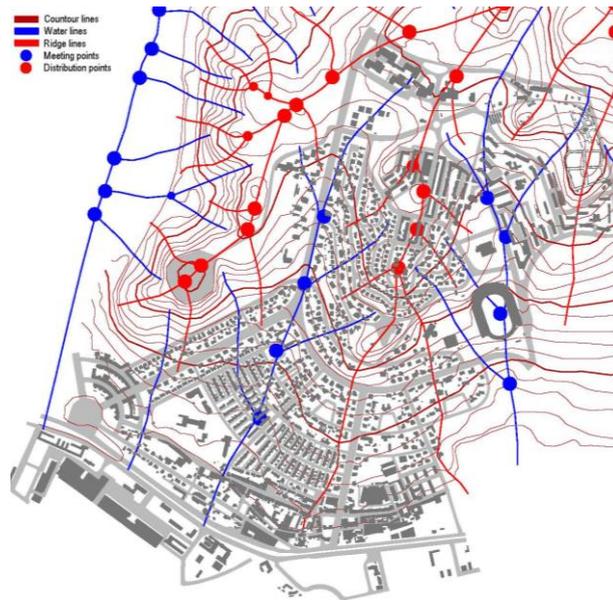


*Topography: Built reality - relationship with valleys & plateaus.
Source: 3D model by the author.*

The southern part of the urban plan has a geometric matrix drawn on top of the natural contour. The northern part also had a relationship with the topography, although the built reality of Restelo follows more the organic lines of the contour. Nonetheless, the urban plan of Faria da Costa was able to create a central axis that structured the plan, based on a natural plateau. That structural axis was lost.

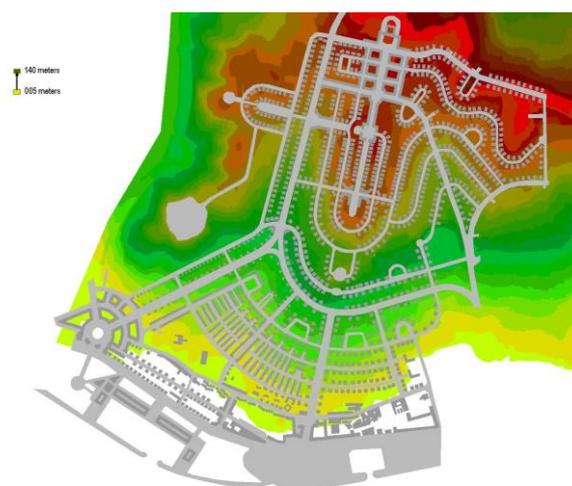


Notable points and natural centers: Original plan. Source: Analysis by the author.

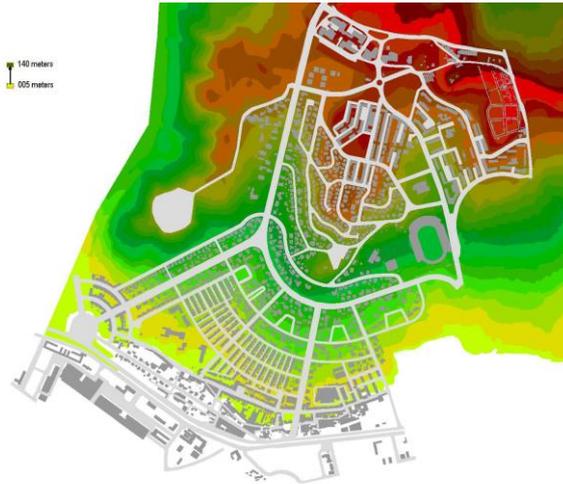


Notable points and natural centers: Built reality. Source: Analysis by the author.

The notable points are natural geographical points within the territory where natural water lines meet (in blue in the above schematics), and where natural ridge lines also meet (in red). Usually they create natural centers. In the urban plan for Restelo, two of the main routes follow natural water lines and the defining central axis of the plane sits on a natural ridge line. Within these, notable points are found in prominent areas of the urban plan with small urban squares. It is important to emphasize, however, that the ridge line is not followed scrupulously, which can be seen in the fact that the exercise included a geometric rule with the intent to adapt to the conditions of the natural geographical conditions for support, and thus creating a dialog between the natural design and the design made by human hand. This rule was discarded in the built reality, but we can still understand the effort to accommodate urban growth to the most comfortable natural path possible.



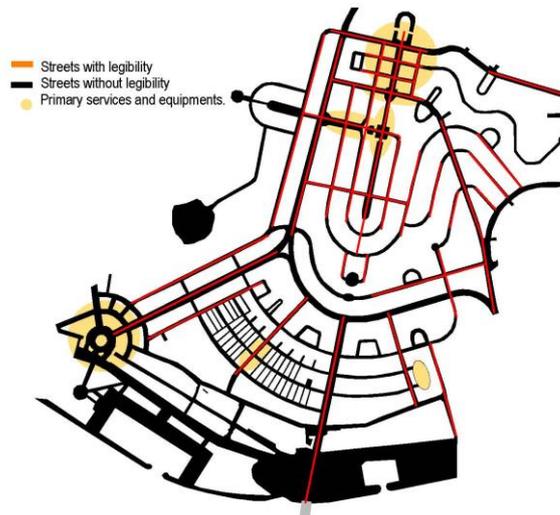
Hypsometry: Original plan. Source: Analysis by the author.



Hypsometry: Built reality. Source: Analysis by the author.

Both in the urban plan designed by Faria da Costa, as well as in the current built environment, it is possible to observe the trial of an understanding of the natural physical support and its translation into the urban morphology. In terms of sun exposure, the area was (and still is) one of the most pleasant in the city, with a south exposure being on a hillside within close proximity to the Tagus River, which receives sunlight all day long. However, the original plan was more exposed to the breezes from the river, giving the urban space healthier ventilation. The built reality which did not take into consideration Faria da Costa's planning (in the north) is more labyrinthine-like and enclosed.

Between the project and the construction, emerges the human variable. Human utilization of space gives it variety and specificity, and can also be a way to show the effectiveness of an urban design in face of a particular social reality.

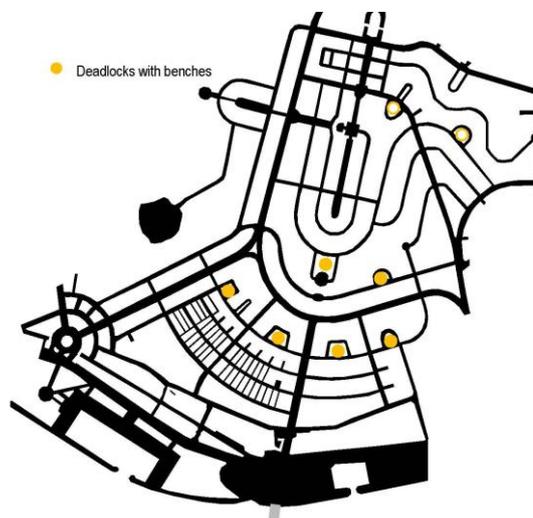


Legibility/Permeability: Original plan. Source: Analysis by the author.

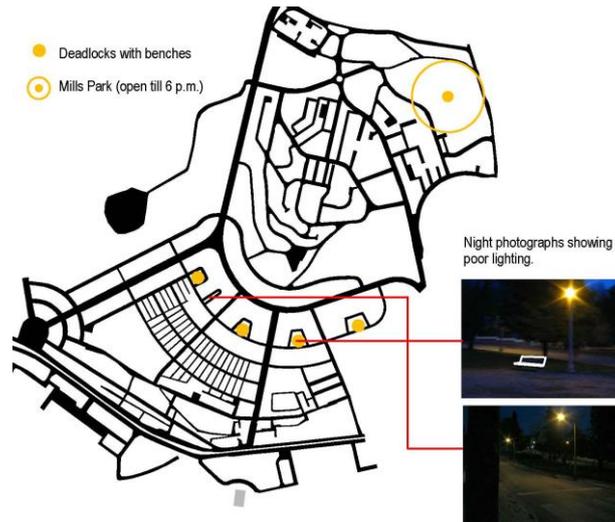


Legibility/Permeability: Built reality. Source: Analysis by the author.

In the original plan, the main activities of the neighborhood would be located along the routes of easy legibility/permeability, i.e. routes with no dead ends, and/or in which we can see what takes place from the routes beginning to its terminus. In the current Restelo, when compared with the original urban plan, there is a fewer amount of these kinds of routes. This affects life in the neighborhood; its interior (in the North) is presented primarily as residential area, with only a few private kindergartens and embassies among the housing dwellings. Even in the newer areas we still have an area primarily for housing, with only few stores located along the roads connecting the area to the city.



Urban Furniture: Original plan. Source: Analysis by the author.



Urban Furniture: Built reality. Source: Analysis by the author.

The *impasse* (deadlock) is an artifice of urban design, introduced by Faria da Costa in Restelo as in Areeiro and Alvalade. The block attains an area of semi-public or public character (in yellow), but also encourages social living and relationships between the residents. Moreover, the plan offers more building fronts and a higher variety of facade insulation. Nonetheless, although planned, the living areas located in deadlocks did not materialize. Even the built ones lost the intent originally proposed by Faria da Costa since the number of sitting opportunities was drastically reduced (there are only 5 instead of the 15 considered in the plan), with few lamps and dim lighting. There is a public garden, the Parque dos Moinhos (Mills Park), which however closes at 6:00 P.M., leading us to the conclusion that the built reality is poorer in terms of public living spaces in comparison to the original plan.

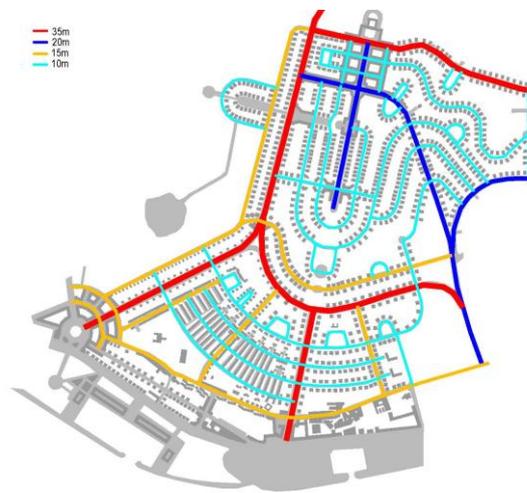


Green/Leisure areas: Original plan. Source: Analysis by the author.



Green/Leisure areas: Built reality. Source: Analysis by the author.

The major green space of the plan was Monsanto Park. There were a few deadlocks implemented, and in addition there is the Parque dos Moinhos in the North, which comprises some pre-existent mills not originally considered by Faria da Costa. In some streets, trees were placed in the plan as if they were facades, creating visual stringing between important points of the urban structure. The actual neighborhood lost part of this green structure.

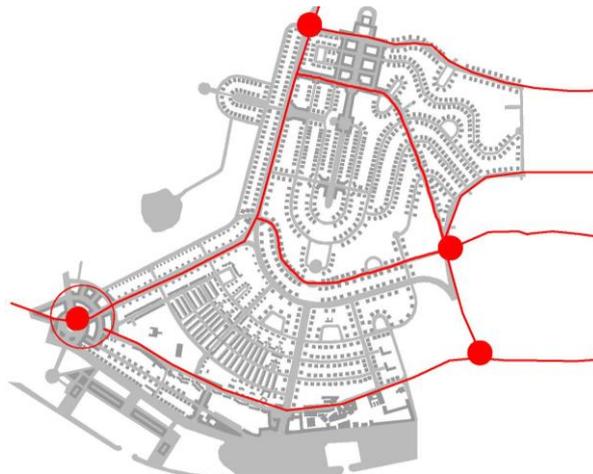


Streets Hierarchy: Original plan. Source: Analysis by the author.



Streets Hierarchy: Built reality. Source: Analysis by the author.

The original road hierarchy was clearer in Faria da Costa's design. There is also a hierarchy in the width of the built neighborhood's streets, but one fact is worth mentioning here: what we realize once we visit Restelo is that roads with a hierarchically superior design were transformed into local distribution pathways. On the other hand, roads with secondary importance were transformed into urban structural pathways, being lost the correspondence with the hierarchy of the designed plan.



Relationship with the city network: Original plan. Source: Analysis by the author.

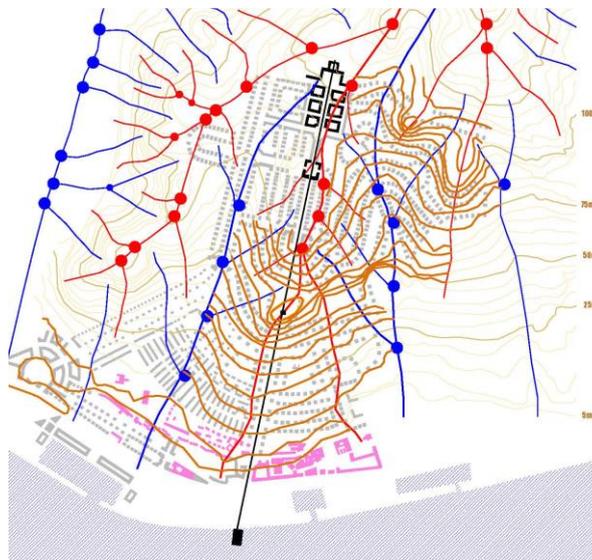


Relationship with the city network: Built reality. Source: Analysis by the author.

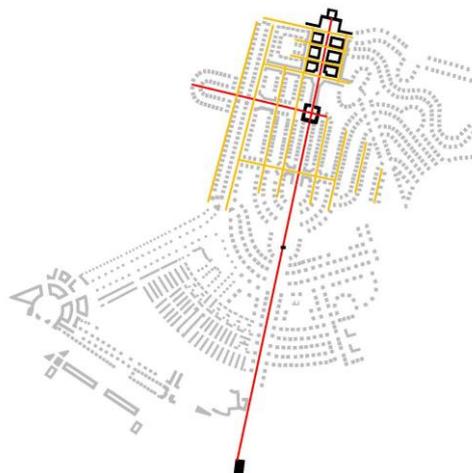
There are currently more points of continuity between Restelo and the surroundings than in the original plan, although not greatly different. The plan was always integrated in the major network that made it possible to get in and out of Lisbon.

City models found in Faria da Costa's plan

In order to decode the intentions of the urbanist, and given the absence of a written document associated to the urban design for Restelo, we have taken our analysis of the urban morphology and confronted those conclusions with the principles of urbanism that were being tested at the time throughout Europe. Upon closer inspection, we have to say that Faria da Costa's plan for Restelo seems as an extraordinarily experimental exercise of several theories which were being tested after the Industrial Revolution and its consequences. Faria da Costa had studied in France, so he knew these theories well. But more than that, he combined some of those theories with principles of Portuguese urbanism (rooted in the Greek and Roman urbanisms).



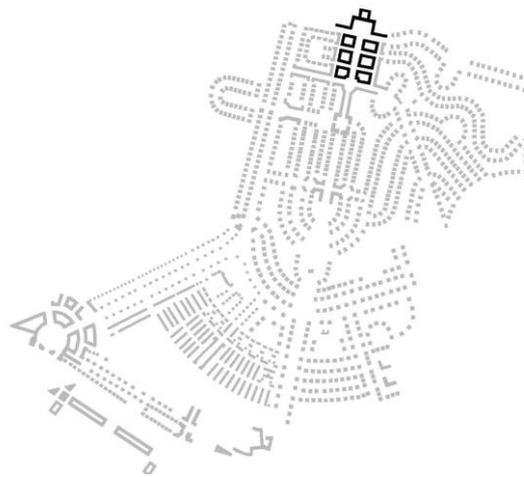
Portuguese urbanism principles – the Greek influence: The plan and the notable points of the territory with important social areas. Source: Analysis by the author.



Portuguese urbanism principles – the Roman influence: Cardus and Decumanos, ending where the topography imposes itself. Source: Analysis by the author.

Faria da Costa appropriates certain features that characterize Portuguese urbanism along the centuries, rooted in the Greek and Roman cultures. “Greek urban culture: associated with a concept of architectural and urban space in which the object is predominant: the fundamental structural elements [...] are the architectural objects that are binders’ poles and give meaning to the surrounding space.”¹ The city's prime location is located along the coastline, with the structuring of the city on two levels: a higher city (institutional and politic area) and lower city (port and commercial area). The adaptation of the street layout to the local topography and buildings are the important elements of urban planning (urban space only unites these buildings). “The adoption of rational models [...] is a constant over the centuries, always associated with planning actions promoted by power. [...] The Roman urban culture [...] is associated with a concept of space in which, more than buildings, it is the urban space itself that is the key element, being molded by the built masses that shape it.”² Urban planning in this case is characterized by regularity, rationality, order, the orthogonal structure of streets and blocks, two main axes of “Cardo and Decumanus”, adjacent to these two axes can be found the Forum (center of public and religious life), and other routes which are parallel to the axes, which define the orthogonal grid of the blocks. As in the Roman planning, there’s an association between the urban design and the demonstration of power which imposes a geometric rule. Nonetheless, that geometrical imposition still manages to articulate itself with the natural physical and geographical support of the territory.

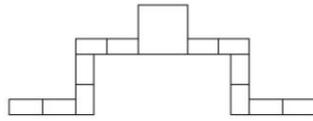
It is also possible to identify urban instruments used by the City Beautiful Movement: the search for regularity (already tested by the Roman urbanism), the choice of an ancient or modern monumental building as a “landscape” for a new street (also essential in the Greek urbanism), the obligation to maintain uniform the architecture of the facades in the most important squares and streets (as it had been done in the Renaissance), first attempt to associate trees to public welfare in cities by associating them with large boulevards and promenades, wider streets, and finally new squares designed to create impact in the urban planning. However, this “square” turns out to be a roundabout. The roundabout of Restelo can be compared to the square of Etoile, in Paris, which has a very similar design.



Phalanstery principles. Faria da Costa's urban planning with the top building similar to Phalanstery's. The adjacent buildings were also present in Jean-Baptiste Goudin version of the Phalanstery: the Familistere. Source: Analysis by the author.

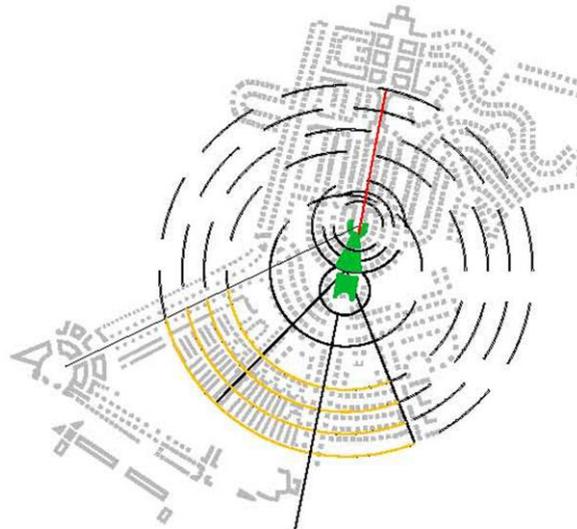
¹ Teixeira and Valla 1999, 18

² Ibid.

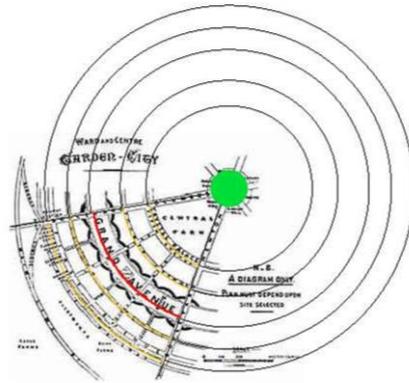


Schematic plan of Fourier's Phalanstery. Source: Analysis by the author. Original drawings can be consulted at <http://pixshark.com/charles-fourier-phalanstery.htm>. (08.07.2013)

The design of the Phalanstery by Charles Fourier offers the theory that important buildings were located at the top of Restelo, in direct relation between form (with a prominent design) and function (important for the neighborhood organization). In the original theory, the central building of the Phalanstery incorporated several functions of a community character, along with the other buildings next to it also with community functions. We do not believe Faria da Costa had any interest in recovering the theory of Fourier's social organization (who advocated the formation of a "phalanx", desegregating the traditional "family" unit); quite to the contrary, the neighborhood was substantially conceived of for the creation of single family dwellings. However, it is easy to see the similarities with the design, having the same street passing along the main buildings, linking it to the adjacent countryside.



Garden City principles. Faria da Costa's plan with a public garden at the center, and the radials with housing and trees. Source: Analysis by the author.



Howard's scheme for the Garden-City, 1902. Source: available at <http://urbanplanning.library.cornell.edu/DOCS/howard.htm>. (08.07.2013)

There is an almost exact translation of Howard's Garden-City scheme within the southern area of Restelo. Instead of a city the exercise applies to a portion of a neighborhood, but the garden city concept is present, as well as the radials with their housing and streets with trees. Similar to the Garden Cities Movement, the urban design for Restelo also considered respect for the environment (clean air, good sun exposure, natural beauty of the landscape), small urban concentrations, decentralization of the city (the neighborhood is located outside the city center), decentralization of different functions, self-sufficiency, the center serving as a green space (garden), proximity to the center, playground equipment, housing in concentric rings each with a lot with its own garden, several green spaces, deadlocks (almost squares) to isolate housing from pathways, a major boulevard, (most of) the infrastructures (such as schools) located within a radial distance considered to be the maximum distance to walk comfortably during a certain period of time (the "neighborhood units"), as well as a green belt (Monsanto, which does not really represent a belt but is assumed as the lung of Lisbon).

Conclusions

After all the historical, cartographical, social, geographical and urban research we have undertaken on Faria da Costa's urban planning for Restelo, we realized that all the identified principles, by their characteristics, were in perfect communion with each other, giving the order, hierarchy and dignity the new regime was looking to apply to the capital of the Portuguese Empire. In our opinion, the original plan had a very powerful design, which gave morphological and functional structure not only to the neighborhood, but also to Lisbon through the provision of social spaces and main activities served by local roads that connected the neighborhood to the city. That structure was lost once the plan was not completed.

The location of the neighborhood was "handpicked": hillside in Lisbon facing southwards, bathed by the Tagus River. The exercise of adaptation and combination to the topography of the site with portuguese urbanism principles and various theories of the city structure being experimented with at the time (the Phalanstery, the Garden City and the City Beautiful Movement just to name a few), which were studied by Faria da Costa's during his training in France with Étienne de Groër, was unique in Portugal. The geometrical matrix worked in such a way that incorporated the natural physical support and some pre-existing features (e.g.

monuments, which would serve as structural elements of the plan - a general characteristic of Portuguese urbanism).

The current neighborhood is a product of urban plans that try to patch with each other, with some services located near to the paths that link the area to the city center and the attempt to adapt the district to the topography without having a unique morphological structure which unifies the entire neighborhood.

In the absence of an identified significant reasons that could justify the non-completion of the original plan, we return to the beginning, looking at the bigger picture; at the time there was a war taking place in Europe, and even though it did not take place in Portugal, its consequences were still felt. There was economic instability which led to a lack of resources and hence higher prices of materials, energy, construction, rents, etc.. Meanwhile, in 1943 Duarte Pacheco passed away, the one person that had managed to control the real estate speculation, and accelerate the execution of his plans in the country (especially the ones related with road networks, major social equipments and housing).

The most urgent needs of the time was to respond to Lisbon's expansion to North (towards the airport, also in construction), and to provide social housing for a growing population. Restelo which was especially designed for the upper classes, was thus not a priority, and was only built due to the designation of a part for affordable housing and the rest for individual homes. Not having been imprinted on the main routes to the North, and not having the strong hand of Duarte Pacheco behind it anymore, the neighborhood turned out to never be created as originally planned by its creator.

English version revised by Karl Eckert

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