

# On the Trail of the Storks. Proposal for a Pedestrian Circuit in Faro (Algarve, Portugal)

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**ABSTRACT:** A proposal for a pedestrian circuit in the city of Faro is presented, based on a “small” natural heritage - the White Stork (*Ciconia Ciconia*) - as a starting-point to become acquainted with the cultural architectural heritage. Faro has various cultural routes, but the originality of this circuit consists on the fact that it highlights the cultural heritage of the town, proceeding from an element of its natural heritage, which is one of the town’s landmarks and part of its *genius loci*. It is shown how a simple idea can enhance a locality and encourage the exploitation of the local natural and cultural heritage.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The scope of the article is the cultural heritage as an important differentiating factor of the global city and the cultural icons as promoters of pedestrianism. The proposed pedestrian path aims to provide a tour through the city of Faro under a different point of view. Thus, it will be a promoter of walking and become a cultural icon.

These goals have been achieved in this proposal because it conceives a circuit defined by the location of the nests of White Storks (*Ciconia Ciconia*) that exist in Faro, thus enabling the pedestrians to get acquainted with the buildings where the storks live, as well as the surrounding ones. These birds are already a cultural icon and a reference for visitors to the city, as they are commonly seen taking pictures of the storks.

To prepare this article, a study (presented by João Fonseca in the subject of Sustainable Cities, Specialization in Sustainable Planning and Construction in the University of Algarve) served as a starting-point, having been made an iconographic and bibliographic research and field survey.

For two different sets of reasons – seasonality and maintenance - the photographs used in this paper are mainly from another author. On one hand, the storks migrate, making it impossible to take photos of them. On the other, the buildings need to be cleaned and repaired, creating an occasional necessity to destroy nests, as it recently happened at the Nossa Senhora do Carmo Church.

## 2 FRAMEWORK

Faro is a Portuguese city located in the south of the country and is the capital of the Algarve region (Figure 1).

The Algarve, today known for its beaches, turned from one of the poorest regions of Europe into the second richest in Portugal, due to the tourist industry. The tourism sector is the biggest booster of the local economy, so the proposal presented in this article has relevance and utility.

Faro has been known for a long time as a place of abundant nesting for White Storks. This fact is highly appreciated and valued by the population of the city. The White Storks have become the ex-libris of the city, being a cultural reference, in such a way that the stork was present in the logo of Faro until 2012 (Figure 2).



Figure 1. Location of Portugal, the Algarve and Faro (bottom left: Wikipedia, Faro, 2014; background: Wikipedia, Portugal no Mundo, 2014).



Figure 2. Logo of the city of Faro, until 2012 (UALG, 2014).

A pedestrian circuit defined by the location of the nests of White Storks in Faro is proposed and we intend to give knowledge of the buildings where they are. This proposal, based on the natural heritage and the discovery of the cultural heritage, is a sustainable activity, because it has a base: (a) economic, once it lies in the central area of Faro, where there is more trade and at the same time, it encourages cultural tourism; (b) environmental, since the starting point is a natural element and since one of the goals is the promotion of walking, which constitutes a non-polluting travel mode; (c) social, since storks are part of daily life of Faro's inhabitants and, being a pedestrian pathway, it promotes interactivity between people; (d) cultural, because it relates to cultural heritage buildings, contributing to its preservation and dissemination.

### 3 THE CITY OF FARO

The first reference to Faro dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, about the time of Phoenician colonization of the Western Mediterranean. It was designated by *Ossónoba* and constituted one of the most important urban centers in the South of Portugal, playing the role of a trading post for agricultural products, fish and minerals (CMF, 2014).

After the Roman and Visigoth domination – from 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC until 8<sup>th</sup> century AC – Faro was taken by the Moors in 713. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century it was the capital of an independent Principality and was fortified with a first line of walls. The name of *Ossónoba* was replaced by that of *Santa Maria do Ocidente*, designation that would last until the 11<sup>th</sup> century, when the name was changed to *Santa Maria Ibn Harun*, a name which evolved into *Harune* (*ibidem*).

With the foundation of Portugal (1143), the reconquest of the territories occupied by the Moors began and Faro was conquered during the reign of Afonso III in 1249. It was then called *Santa Maria de Faaron* or *Santa Maria de Faaram*, name that evolved for the current assignment: Faro (*ibidem*).

Due to its geographical position, its safe harbour, salt trade and the exploitation of agricultural products from the interior territory, Faro became a prosperous city in the following centuries (*ibidem*).

With the Portuguese Expansion and Discoveries (1400-1520), these trades increased and contributed to the city's commercial flourishing. The Jewish community in the 14-15<sup>th</sup> centuries was very prosperous. It was one of the most distinct of the Algarve region and one of the most remarkable in the country. The rise of the town was interrupted during the reign of King Manuel I, when, by the Edict of 1496, the Jews were expelled from Portugal (*ibidem*).

At the site of the former Jewish Quarter, located in the Intramural Vila Adentro, the Convent of Nossa Senhora da Assunção (Our Lady of the Assumption) was erected, sponsored by Queen Leonor, wife of King Manuel I. In 1499, during this reign, drastic changes in the morphology of the city took place, having been created several equipments. Faro was elevated to a city in 1540 by King João III, and in 1577 the residence of the bishop was transferred from Silves to Faro (*ibidem*).

In 1596 the city was sacked and burned by the British troops led by the Count of Essex, having inflicted enormous damages to property and materials. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the city expanded with a new defensive line consisting of a ring of walls built during the Restoration War (1640-1668) (*ibidem*).

In the 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1755, there was the Great Earthquake that devastated Lisbon and caused catastrophic damage and destruction, especially in the Algarve. In Faro, the defensive walls, the castle with its towers and defensive bulwarks, quarters, prison, the convents of San Francisco and Santa Clara, among others, were ruined or even destroyed (*ibidem*).

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century the defensive walls (Cerca Seiscentista), built in 1660 in Vauban style, suffered a progressive degradation, either due to the Earthquake (1755), the Napoleonic wars (1807, 1809 and 1810), or the civil war between liberals and absolutists (1828-1834), remaining currently only a small part (Paula & Paula, 1993).

Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the city remained within the bounds of what was left of the defensive walls of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (CMF, 2014). Its design is still perceived in the division of properties and urban morphology of that part of the city (Paula & Paula, 1993).

In the last decades Faro expanded like any other district capital city due to tourism and the University of the Algarve, which are simultaneously factors for the development of the region and centres of attraction for people from out of town and out of the region.

#### 4 THE WHITE STORK

The White Stork (*Ciconia Ciconia*) was an endangered species until some time ago, having managed to recover. Currently the population is large enough to exclude any risk of disappearing in Portugal (Figure 3).



Figure 3. White Stork: *Ciconia Ciconia* (Wikipedia, Cegonha branca, 2014).

This bird is able to adapt to anthropomorphic environments, and much of their nests are made on the top of man-made structures.

In Portugal the stork mainly inhabits the regions south of the Mondego River. It appears particularly in the Alentejo and the Algarve. The animal is welcomed, tolerated and even defended by the population who appreciate the cleaning of fields and because they are part of their culture, being the protagonist of many fables and legends.

The White Stork lives during about 20 years and is generally a migratory bird (Figure 4). In January the bird returns from the south to build the nest and to begin its breeding season in early spring. It is faithful to its partner and to its nest from last year, devoted to its children, preferring

to die when they are unable to save the fledglings, and devotes much attention and care to older storks.

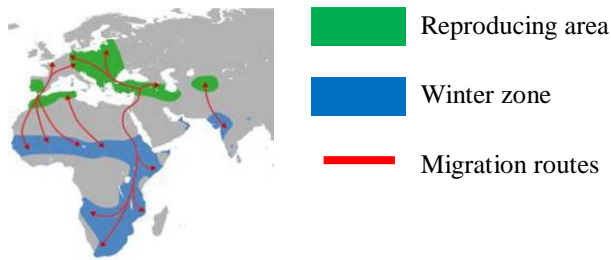


Figure 4. Approximate distribution and migration of White Storks (Wikipedia, Cegonha branca, 2014).

These features led to the Roman law *Lex Ciconiarum*, which forced the children to sustain their parents in old age.

The White Stork is considered the “Bird of the Year 2014” by the Portuguese Society for the State of Birds (SPEA, 2014), which states “cherished by all Portuguese people, the White Stork is part of our culture and day-to-day. It is certainly one of the birds that we all know or have seen at least once in our life”.

## 5 THE CITY OF FARO AND THE WHITE STORK

The fact that the city of Faro’s logo has been the stork until 2012, demonstrates the importance that this bird has in this town as part of its *genius loci*. There is even a statue in the Garden of Alameda, symbolizing the fable “The Wolf and the Stork”, from Aesop (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Statue alluding to the fable “The Wolf and the Stork”, from Aesop, in the Garden of Alameda in Faro (author).

In this city the storks nest mainly in buildings near the Ria Formosa, especially in historic areas. The buildings chosen for nesting have diversified types: churches, convents, palaces, administrative buildings or monuments, for example. The preference for this town area may be related to the proximity of the Ria Formosa which is a rich food source; with the landing facility; with the existence of high building elements; and with the fact that they are relatively calm areas, due to its usage.

When the storks arrive in Faro, coming from the south, the view they have of the city is similar to Figure 6. Their number has increased around the town, nesting in specially interesting places at the heritage level and they are, since several years, a symbol of this city that many tourists take in memory and in their photographs (Figure 7).



Figure 6. Perspective that storks have when they arrive to Faro, coming from the south (Faro, 2014).



Figure 7. Vila Adentro zone, showing various stork nests on the City Hall, on the Misericórdia Church, on Arco da Vila and on the Cathedral (João Fonseca, March 2012).

## 6 THE PEDESTRIAN CIRCUIT “ON THE TRAIL OF THE STORKS”

The proposed circuit starts at the city’s *Baixa* (down town), in D. Francisco Gomes Square, next to the marina, and leads through the historic district of the city, visiting places in the *Bairro Ribeirinho* (Riverside Quarter), the *Mouraria* (Moorish Quarter) and Vila Adentro (Intramural Vila Adentro Quarter).

The identified sites are part of the cultural heritage of Faro. Some of them are classified and have national interest (National Monument and Building of Public Interest). Some places, despite not being legally classified, have the designation of "Notable Building" assigned by the City Council; these are buildings which have an interest for the city, although not being covered by a level of legal protection. The chosen locations are as follows (Table 1 and following):

Table 1. Sites selected to integrate the pedestrian circuit “On the trail of the storks”.

- 1 – Capuchin Convent
- 2 – St. Peter Church
- 3 – Building of Regional Health Authority and Post Office
- 4 – Nossa Senhora do Carmo Church
- 5 – Nossa Senhora da Esperança Hermitage
- 6 – Pé da Cruz Hermitage
- 7 – Belmarço Palace
- 8 – Ancient City Walls
- 9 – Cathedral
- 10 – City Hall
- 11 – Arco da Vila
- 12 – Misericórdia Church and Hospital
- 13 – Caixa Geral dos Depósitos Building
- 14 – D. Francisco Gomes Street (Shopping Street)
- 15 – D. Francisco Gomes Square

Right panel: circuit considered (author, based on Google Maps)



When appears “date”, it means: Date of construction/reconstruction/other interventions.



Figure 8. Capuchin Convent (site 1) (João Fonseca, March 2012)

Property of Public Interest. Date: 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Capuchin convent with church in *chão* style, longitudinal plan preceded by a narthex and gabled frontispiece with three equal arcs; belongs to the capuchin convent architecture by the typology of the temple, cloister and facades (IGESPAR, 2014). Inserted into the Riverside Quarter.



Figure 9. St. Peter Church (site 2) (João Fonseca, March 2012)

Property of Public Interest. Date: 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Gothic religious architecture, Mannerist, 18<sup>th</sup> century. Parish church with rectangular plan, with three naves and four bays, which still retains Gothic and Mannerist elements (IGESPAR, 2014).



Figure 10. Building of Regional Health Authority and Post Office (site 3) (João Fonseca, March 2012)

Building of Regional Health Authority (left). Date: 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has a turret on the corner and an interesting facade. Post Office building (right). Date: 20<sup>th</sup> century. Communications architecture, post office characteristic of the Modern Movement of Portuguese regional expression in the post-war period (IGESPAR, 2014).



Figure 10. Nossa Senhora do Carmo Church (site 4) (João Fonseca, March 2012)

Property of Public Interest. Date: 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Religious Baroque, Rococo architecture. Carmelite Church of longitudinal plant composed of ship only preceded by narthex incorporating two bell towers, four side chapels reentrant and square pulpit. The sacristy, court-

yard with access to several dependencies. Symmetrical altarpiece, flanked by two bell towers with individualized access per port fitted with lintel curve; shot in balustrade (IGESPAR, 2014).



Figure 11. Nossa Senhora da Esperança Hermitage (site 5) (João Fonseca, March 2012)

Notable Building. Date: 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Religious *chã* architecture, Baroque and Rococo, longitudinal plant, ship only and covered by an octagonal dome, with baroque interior decoration and Rococo, as the dome, interior paints and the exterior stuccoes (IGESPAR, 2014).

Figure 12. Pé da Cruz Hermitage (site 6) (João Fonseca, March 2012)



Still in the process of sorting. Date: 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Seventeenth-century religious architecture, Baroque and Rococo. *Chão* style chapel, longitudinal plant, ship only covered by dome, 17th century interior adornment, main facade of Mannerist typology with Rococo reformulations; monumental Step with niches decorated by Rococo mass jobs and cut tile panel, blue and white, with the figuration of Calvary (IGESPAR, 2014).



Figure 13. Belmarço Palace (site 7) (João Fonseca, March 2012)

Property of Public Interest (IGESPAR, 2014). Date: 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Civil revivalist architecture. Partially coated monumental facade. Diversity of frames of the spans, mass work, corners and ornaments. Inside, tile panels depicting the Tower of Belem, the harbour of S. João do Estoril and Castelo da Pena (CMF, 2014). Inserted into the Moorish Quarter.



Figure 14. Ancient City Walls (site 8) (João Fonseca, March 2012)

Property of Public Interest. Date: 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Military architecture, medieval and modern. Curtain walls with parapet, embattled in some stretches, punctuated by several towers of quadrangular section, rectangular and semicircular, being some of them poly-face mesh in half superior. Bridge protection as Vauban typology situated in the south, with trapezoidal plant and equipped with hold still. Other contributions of new aesthetic modern defensive are still present in the reinforcement of the old medieval walls. Base semicircular towers and poly-face mesh in the upper half of the body is possibly a late-Roman Foundation and a Byzantine addition (CMF, 2014). Inserted in Intramural Vila Adentro Quarter.



Figure 15. Cathedral (site 9) (João Fonseca, March 2012)

Property of Public Interest (IGESPAR, 2014). Date: 13<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Religious architecture with Gothic-style demonstrations, *chão* style and Baroque. Longitudinal plan with pulpit, two collateral chapels, three ships, seven side chapels and chorus-high. Facade preceded by porch Tower and arched broken portal (CMF, 2014). Inserted in Intramural Vila Adentro Quarter.



Figure 16. City Hall (site 10) (João Fonseca, March 2012)

Notable Building. Date: 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Political-administrative architecture. 19th century town hall, rectangular in plan, with two floors, facades rectilinear with iron guards in the first floor (IGESPAR, 2014). Inserted in Intramural Vila Adentro Quarter.



Figure 17. Arco da Vila (site 11) (João Fonseca, March 2012)

National Monument (IGESPAR, 2014). Date: 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Commemorative, neo-classical architecture. Triumphal semicircular arch of ionic columns support the architrave from which rises a niche crowned with triangular pediment (IGESPAR, 2014; CMF, 2014). Inserted in Intramural Vila Adentro Quarter.



Figure 18. Misericórdia Church and Hospital (site 12) (João Fonseca, March 2012)

Property of Public Interest (IGESPAR, 2014). Date: 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Health and religious architecture, Mannerist, Rococo and pombaline style. In spite of different chronologies, buildings form a single architectural ensemble, consisting of three cores: the old hospital, rectangular with two interior courtyards, Church in Greek cross inscribed in square and the old recoil (CMF, 2014). The Church is the only copy in the Algarve of centralized plant and the only Mercy (Misericórdia) of the country with this typology. The main portal combines elements of Mannerist and pombaline style model (*ibidem*). Inserted into the Moorish Quarter.



Figure 19. Caixa Geral dos Depósitos Building (site 13) (João Fonseca, Março 2012)

Date: 20th century. Financial civil architecture, eclectic. Bank with irregular plant without coincidence with the outside world. Articulated volumes with masses arranged horizontally in 2 and 3 floors with basement. Facades plastered and white painted (IGESPAR, 2014). Central front with great austerity and restraint, of keen sense classic so the taste of the architecture of the New State. Facades of the same front with identical composition, although with different number of spans (*ibidem*). Inserted into the Moorish Quarter.

Figure 20. D. Francisco Gomes Street (Shopping Street) (site 14) (João Fonseca, March 2012)



One of the main streets of downtown Faro, known also by the Shopping Street. There are numerous notable buildings and buildings of public interest. Inserted into the Moorish Quarter.



Figure 21. D. Francisco Gomes Square (site 15) (João Fonseca, March 2012)

Date: before the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This space established the link between the current Conselheiro Bivar street, main shaft of access North and West, and the Inside of Wall village. Since the beginning of the Christian occupation of Faro, this square plays a central character, where administrative zones and port activities are situated (Paula Paula &, 1993). Here were located, before the 17<sup>th</sup> century, important buildings, designating then *Praça da Rainha* (Queen's Square). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century appears beside the so-called *Jardim do Bacalhau* (Garden of Codfish) due to its design, calling nowadays *Jardim Manuel Bivar* (Garden Manuel Bivar). Later the markets of vegetables, fish and a gazebo were built. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the dock area is significantly reduced due to a large landfill, where currently is the Hotel Eva (*ibidem*). Integrates the Public Garden of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is a free public space, with larger dimensions of the entire downtown area (CMF, 2014). Inserted into the Moorish Quarter.

## 7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed circuit can work as another offer of cultural tourism in the city of Faro and can be an example for other cities.

With the knowledge acquired in this circuit, the attitudes of people may be even more positive in relation to the storks and their city, developing their sense of identity and influencing their social and environmental responsibility in a positive way. It can also influence the attitude of the authorities and the population in relation to the harmony between culture and nature, encouraging urban governance.

Another goal of this circuit is to encourage the rehabilitation, preservation and classification of these sites and of these buildings, starting from the idea of “use to conserve.” Many of the buildings that are part of the circuit can be visited. It may be interesting to include them as a complement of a sightseeing tour, combining the historical information related to the cultural heritage with a natural heritage of the city.

Due to the concentration of nests of storks in the central area of the city, the circuit would ideally promote pedestrian walking at the same time that it promotes culture.

Target groups can be, beyond the tourists, schools, people and institutions connected to the tourism industry, such as tour guides, or the Ciência Viva Centre, among others.

Faro has various cultural routes, but the originality of this circuit is that it proceeds from an element of the natural heritage, ex-libris of the city and part of its *genius loci*, to highlight the cultural heritage.

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