

# Culture

Lessons from the seventies: Cabeça Padrão, José-Augusto França and Fernando Távora

## Rehabilitating rehabilitation

**JOSÉ AGUIAR, VITOR RIBEIRO & MIGUEL REIMÃO COSTA**  
Architect and Professor at the University of Lisbon, Architect and PhD student at the University of Lisbon, Architect and Professor at the University of Algarve

Both Architecture and Rehabilitation, seen as a new design paradigm, are nowadays confronted with the phenomena of globalization, standardization and forced amnesia, which translate (in the opinion of Françoise Choay) into a loss of our capacity to build (and reuse). The predominance of cultural consumerism (architectural as well as that of the iconic architecture of the *starchitects*) fosters a semantic de-complexifying of spatial planning, together with the de-contextualization and atomization of architectural production. At the same time, it also promotes the rehabilitation of urban built heritage as theme parks for mass touristic consumption: heritage became a rushed alternative to the grey sameness of an increasingly more monosomic world (Choay, 2005).

In this framework, a new heritage fetishism can be perceived, one which is grounded in a reactionary ideology (from the time we were so religious, patriotic, pure and good and how amoral, cosmopolitan, mixed and evil we are today), and a shameless commercialization of heritage, which is exploited in the same way as any other resource, thus becoming a commodity. In the new mass industry that exploits experiences of the past, “historical centres” become the new Disneyland or theme parks, complete with medieval fairs or chocolate festivals.

Architectural magazines exalt the egotism of authorial icons when confronted with urban heritage. The current discussion on historical urban landscape is the ideal setting for this confrontation (look to our next door neighbours' Madrid's Caixaforum, or “Las Setas” – Metropoli Parasol – or the Pelli tower in Seville, for notable examples, whilst on our side these have always more concealed and mediocre, such as the facade extravaganza of Heron Castilho – Lisboa – [building] or that of the Cardosas – Porto). And all of this results in a fundamental injustice (mixed with some revanchism, if we follow Neil Smith's sharp reasoning): an accelerated process of social segregation (gentrification), promoted by the majority of European countries and beyond (Neil Smith quotes the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Japan and Brazil), is driving the poor out of the “historical centres” and denying them the *right to the city* [Henri Lefebvre]. The rehabilitation of urban (and cultural) heritage is directed towards tastes of ample economic capacity, in an exclusive, selective fruition. This is the new dream of the real estate peddlers, “historical centres” as private condominiums and the heart-wrenching loss of collective identity that follows!



Picture from Fernando Távora, Study of Barredo Urban Renewal. F. TÁVORA FAMILY ARCHIVES

**"Continuation-through-innovation. People are worth infinitely more than houses"**

When regarding contemporary processes of segregation and urban landscape concerns, it is important to remember the lessons of three Portuguese pioneers from the 60s, Fernando Távora, Cabeça Padrão and José-Augusto França, who authored three proposals that remain, for the most part, largely unknown. Three visions whose confrontation with the international context of their time brought Portugal, in as little as half a decade, to the forefront of the reflection on the conservation of urban heritage (and vernacular architectural practices). They did so by proposing innovative models

as opposed to the alleged inevitability of the need for substitution and sanitization in urban renewal as embraced by Modernism.

These proposals had the additional intention of integrating the principles of the protection of urban heritage into the instruments of design, urban planning and territorial planning.

In the Algarve, architect Cabeça Padrão developed the pioneering but largely unknown studies of “Prospecção e defesa da paisagem urbana do Algarve” [Survey and protection of the Algarve's urban landscape], carried out between 1965 and 1970 under the tutelage of the Directorate-General for Urbanization Services (DGSU) which also saw, in 1968, the pioneering creation of a *Service for the Protection and Restoration of Rural Landscape*. The fundamental idea was to study and delimit urban and vernacular centres with significant heritage value, seeking to protect them from the intense process of urban renewal that had started in the meantime (Padrão et al., 1965-70). There was a plan for fifty publications documenting the her-

itage, architectural and landscape value of forty-seven centres... of which thirty-eight volumes were produced and were then forgotten about somewhere in the central administration archives (which facilitated countless shady dealings).

In Lisbon, the “Estudo das zonas ou unidades urbanas de carácter histórico-artístico” [Study of urban zones or units of historical-artistic character], authored by historian José-Augusto França and promoted by the Municipality in 1967, proposed the demarcation and preservation of different centres of the so-called “Pombaline” style or period, which form part of the rehabilitation programme of Illuminist architecture fostered by the Marquis of Pombal after the 1755 earthquake. Regarded and understood, as a whole, as a “document” for understanding the “global picture” from the various master plans produced in the 18th century (França 1967: 35), they redesigned “privileged areas for preservation” to be established through the Urban Development Master Plan for Lisbon.

Though distinct in their propositional approach and depth of academic research framing each of the proposals – far more developed in the case of J. A. França for Lisbon – these studies share an acknowledgement of the recently-established importance given to issues of urban image, referring us to the studies of Gordon Cullen and Kevin Lynch.

On a different note, the studies of Cabeça Padrão for the Algarve propose a strong component of correction and scenography to the changes detected, which entailed a considerable amount of works said to be therapeutic. This resulted in a degree of economic unfeasibility and a reduction in practical effects, which owes something to a kind of symptomatic effacement or provoked forgetfulness these studies of “Survey and protection of the Algarve's urban landscape” were subjected to for decades.

In the studies of França and Cabeça Padrão, rehabilitation priorities were not yet defined as part of an integrated model for the conservation of heritage like the one proposed by Távora for the area of Barredo, in Porto, which bears close affinities to its contemporary protection plan proposed for Bologna, Italy.

Integrating social sciences in a pioneering way, Fernando Távora's truly ground-breaking “Estudo da Renovação urbana do Barredo” [Study for the Urban Renovation of Barredo], was developed together with the Municipality of Porto in 1969 [and it is important to bear in mind that, at the time, the term “rehabilitation” was not in use, only much later – through the initiatives of the European Council in the mid 70s – did it become widespread]. Rejecting the Modernist-driven intentions of a systematic demolition of Porto's historical neighbourhoods, which until then had been considered insalubrious – but which today are listed as a World Heritage site – Távora proposes a new goal, that of an integrated and more cautious rehabilitation, searching for a model capable of being rolled out to the whole city (Távora, 1969).

With its conception of rehabilitation that is absolutely contemporary and offers the individual perspective of the architect (and of his/her role in general), it is Távora's proposal in particular that has nowadays acquired a new, specific relevance. This is owed to the inclusive character that it acknowledges or proposes (by associating physical action to social intervention), as well as by the *social and cultural dimension* of what is at stake: “People are worth infinitely more than houses...” (Távora, p.32), and by the emphasis placed on the importance of *participation* (active, not merely acquiescent). Above all, Távora's proposal stands out for the “enduring lessons that the past assures the future”, as it establishes a principle that postulates and synthesizes its entire programme, that of “... continuation-through-innovation, in a constant movement for change towards better conditions, but respecting the positive values that may exist and should not, therefore, be destroyed.” (Távora P.33). This encompasses the surpassing of the dichotomy between major art practices/minor art practices and the rejection of pastiche. All of these principles had already been stated by Távora in the early 60s, in his book *Da Organização do Espaço* (1962) [Of the Organization of Space]. It was thus that integrated rehabilitation was invented in our midst!

## Rés-do-Chão

Rés-do-Chão (Ground Floor) is the name of an initiative led by a group of 4 young architects that identified the vacancy of commercial ground floors as a main cause for the built heritage degradation in Lisbon. With the aim of promoting the occupation of vacant ground floors as a promoter of urban regeneration, they began to develop a project with two complementary fronts: raising the awareness of the importance and benefits of occupying commercial ground floors and creating a network between all the concerned parties: owners, tenants, associations and local merchants. Looking for proposing new ways of occupancy and tenancy, they propose the idea of co-working spaces as a more affordable solution. They gave the example with their workspace rehabilitating a vacant ground floor for their studio. The pilot project of rehabilitation in the ground floor is now encouraging the rehabilitation on the other floors.

ZARA FERREIRA



## Agulha num Palheiro

“In Lisbon there are nearly 1,900 empty buildings in urgent need of intervention” they say. Needle in a Haystack is a project developed by the architecture studio Artéria. Its first phase was funded by the Lisbon's City Council BIP/ZIP program created by the Local Housing Program, in 2011, enabling the creation of a website: an online platform that identifies and share information about old vacant houses in the center of Lisbon, available in the real estate market. The main goal was to turn the process of searching for old houses to rehabilitate, to live in the city center, into an easy task.

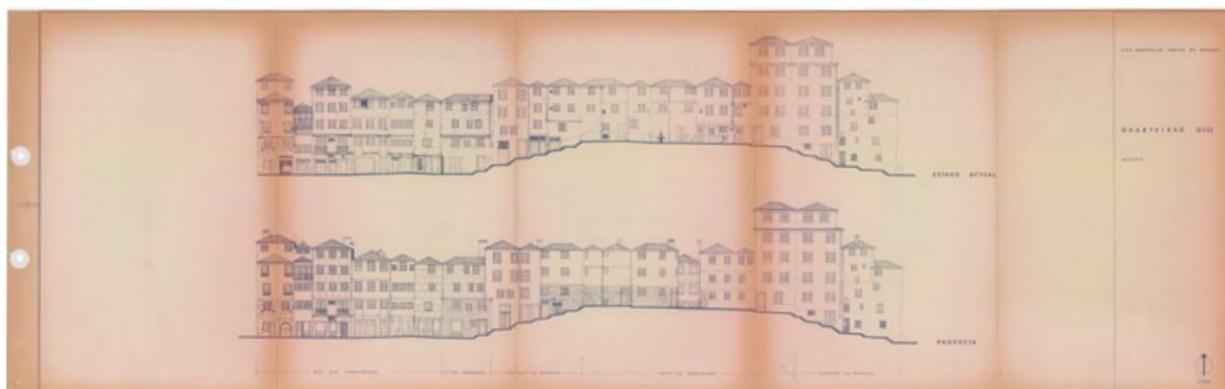
On a second phase Needle in a Haystack was supported by the Crisis Buster Grant promoted by the 2013 Lisbon Architecture Triennale, allowing the construction of an instruction manual to guide citizens on the process of refurbishing their properties.

Designed as a clarifying and intuitive tool to support the rehabilitation of the Lisbon center, this project articulates a mapping of possible rehabilitation cases – connecting new clients with institutional partners or real estate agents – with a specific know how given by qualified professionals about the whole process of rehabilitation, both in technical and legal terms.

In times of economic crisis, Needle in a Haystack believes the community has an important role to play in regeneration; through this project, citizens are closer to know how they can participate of the revitalization of their city, in the most sustainable way for everyone.

ZARA FERREIRA

<http://www.agulhanumpalheiro.pt/>



Fernando Távora, Estudo de Renovação Urbana do Barredo. Regeneration of the block QIII Barredo: status and proposed elevations

DRAWING FIMS / FT / 0197-01-0030, FUNDAÇÃO INSTITUTO MARQUES DA SILVA, ARCHIVES