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Portugal dos Pequenitos as an urban laboratory for rehearsing national identity

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Abstract

Portugal dos Pequenitos (literally, ‘Portugal for the Little Ones’), a theme park built in Portugal as part of the Centenarian Commemorations of the Portuguese Nation of 1940, has been considered one of most controversial pieces of Portuguese architecture in the 20th century. Designed between 1937 and 1962 by the Architect Cassiano Branco, at the initiative of Bissaya Barreto, it features reproductions of uniquely typical Portuguese architecture built to a child’s scale. It includes buildings from mainland Portugal, from the Azores and Madeira islands, and from the colonial territories in Africa and Asia.

The main aims of this paper are twofold: firstly, to frame Cassiano Branco’s architecture in its specific context, in terms of historical contingencies and architectural controversies during the Estado Novo [New State] Portuguese dictatorship (1933-1974); and secondly, to assess the importance of Portugal dos Pequenitos as a laboratory for rehearsing an idyllic urban environment, applying hypothetical principles of national identity.

Keywords

Portugal dos Pequenitos; Cassiano Branco; Portuguese Estado Novo; Nationalism.

Word count including references and endnotes

8751 words

1. Introduction

1.1. Subject and goals

This paper deals with the Portugal dos Pequenitos (literally, 'Portugal for the Little Ones') theme park, a miniature park built in Coimbra in 1940 to mark the Commemoration of the Birth of the Portuguese Nation. The park was designed between 1937 and 1962 by the Architect Cassiano Branco (1897-1970), at the initiative of Professor Bissaya Barreto (1886-1974), the then President of the Beira Litoral Provincial Council. Located in the civil parish of Santa Clara, close to the banks of the river Mondego, the site features reproductions of uniquely typical Portuguese architecture built to a child's scale. It includes buildings from mainland Portugal, from the Azores and Madeira islands, and from the colonial territories in Africa and Asia.

The main aims of this paper are twofold: firstly, to frame Cassiano Branco's architecture in its specific context, in terms of historical contingencies and architectural controversies during the Estado Novo [New State] Portuguese dictatorship (1933-1974)¹; and secondly, to assess the importance of Portugal dos Pequenitos as a laboratory for rehearsing an idyllic urban environment, applying hypothetical principles of national identity.

1.2. Historical background: the Portuguese Estado Novo

After a sixteen-year period of upheaval that followed the establishment of the Portuguese Republic in 1910, a military coup took charge of the destiny of Portugal in 1926, first under the name of Military Dictatorship, and then, from 1928 onwards, as National Dictatorship. In 1933, already under the leadership of António de Oliveira Salazar, the so-called 'Constitutional text' marked the beginning of a long new period of autocracy, the self-proclaimed Estado Novo.

The 1933 Constitutional text was supported by three main pillars: authoritarianism, corporatism and colonialism (cf. Oliveira 1992: 27). In terms of authoritarianism, the regime advocated a 'new' political and judicial 'order', based on the authority of the State and on subordination to the executive power. With corporatism, the Estado Novo envisioned a 'new' economic

arrangement, subordinated to the ‘national interest’, i.e. the interest of the State, and in which the forces of capital and labor were to participate in a non-antagonistic manner. As for colonialism, the regime designed a ‘new’ framework for the relations between the colonial territories and the central State. The guidelines defined the State as the sole controller of all administrative, economic and trade activities and initiatives in the territories under Portuguese rule, in Africa (Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Angola and Mozambique) and in Asia (‘Portuguese’ India, Macao and East Timor).

These three pillars, however, had just one foundation, and that was nationalism, the ‘regime’s greatest idea and ‘inexhaustible source’ (Ramos do Ó 1992: 394). Through nationalism, the Estado Novo regime could reinvent Portugal as a quasi-mythical homogeneous homeland, born and maintained throughout historical contingencies, whose cohesion was the fruit of the willpower and toil of successive generations from all walks of life and social classes, who managed to overcome all conflicts and beyond any conflict or temporary divisions. For the Estado Novo, the Portuguese nation was what resulted from this ‘pact’, and its moral cohesion required the corresponding symbolic and poetic unification, namely in the artefacts it produced, including its architecture and urban design. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that Portugal, under the Estado Novo regime, could be characterized as a police state with press censorship and a secret political police force. Repression by the latter, known as PVDE/PIDE, took the form of imprisonment of opponents and, at times, also their assassination (cf. Adinolfi and Costa Pinto 2014).

1.3. Studying Cassiano Branco and Portugal dos Pequenitos today

The Estado Novo ended in 1974, with the Carnation Revolution of April 25. After this shift to democracy, and in spite of his connections to the former regime, Cassiano Branco has been consistently considered one of the most inspiring Portuguese architects from the second and third quarters of the 20th century. The singularity and importance of his architecture was considered as *‘l’exception [a] la règle’* [‘exception to the rule’] by Gomes da Silva, in a seminal article published in the groundbreaking file ‘Portugal An II’ included in issue no. 185 of *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, which was dedicated to the emergence on the international scene of a new

generation of Portuguese architects (including Álvaro Siza) who were committed to solving the country's deficiencies two years after the political shift.

Fig.01

Gomes da Silva, together with Hestnes Ferreira, went on to conduct a study of Branco's architecture, which led to an exhibition that was held in 1981 at the Portuguese Association of Architects, and was repeated in 1986. These developments, followed by a Master's dissertation by Maia (1986), formed the basis for a catalogue published on the occasion of the public presentation of the architect's estate, which was acquired by the Lisbon City Council in 1991 (Bonneville, Summavielle and Cayatte, 1991). As for Portugal dos Pequenitos and its specific importance for the Portuguese built environment, Bandeirinha (1996) has presented a fundamental study on the park, its designer, and its developer.

The first thorough scientific research relating to Branco's estate and documents held at the Lisbon Municipal Archives was undertaken by Tormenta Pinto. This research project resulted in a Ph.D. thesis (2004). The same author later published a book on the subject matter (Pinto 2007), of which there was a fully revised second edition (Pinto, 2015).

A more recent Ph.D. thesis by Távora (2016) built on and expanded this research, using the park as the main case study for the architectural culture of the period. As far as the field of the social sciences is concerned, a number of studies debate the importance of the park in sociological and historical terms. Ferraz (2010) frames it as a conceptual extension of the Portuguese colonial 'mythology'. Silva (2016), building on his own Ph.D. thesis (Silva 2013), establishes an approach that links the park with Bissaya Barreto's philanthropic entrepreneurship in the area of healthcare architecture.

The research supporting this paper is based on primary sources directly from the estate of Cassiano Branco at the Lisbon Municipal Archives, namely those relating to Portugal dos Pequenitos. These include a wide range of specific documentation – drawings, letters, and descriptions of the project.

2. Portugal dos Pequenitos, its designer and its mentor

2.1. The architect: Cassiano Branco

Cassiano Branco belonged to a specific generation of Portuguese architects who graduated from the Lisbon School of Fine Arts, and whose professional careers began around 1927ⁱⁱ. Having obtained his Degree in Architecture in 1926, the first years of Branco's career were mainly dedicated to private commissions. He developed apartment buildings and new facilities mainly for the private sector, such as cinemas and hotels.

Fig.02

In technological terms, Branco was amongst the first to witness the dissemination of reinforced concrete in Portugal. The new system gave him the freedom to explore façade compositions with cantilevered shapes and elongated horizontal windows, allowing for a sense of modernity that aligned with the modern advances and the frenzy of urban life. This technology also allowed for the rapid expansion of urban settlements, and the high levels of demand led to a crisis within the traditional Portuguese building industries (cf. Delgado and Pinto 2016). Such was the case for the ceramics industry, one of the most important and prosperous in Portugal during the 1930s, which was responsible for the production of several components for the building sector, most importantly, tiles, roof tiles and sewage pipes, to name just a few.

This rupture generated extensive debate that even made it into several articles published in magazines and newspapers concerning the features of new buildings. At the center of the architectural discourse, a specific dispute reached ideological levels, i.e., the rivalry between pitched tiled roofs and flat roofs. On one side, there were those who defended the nationalist legacy, which was embodied by traditional ceramic roof tiles. On the other, were those who advocated for the more progressive forms of expression offered by the infinite possibilities of concrete as a building material. Branco managed to strike a balance between both positions, adapting his designs according to the commission (cf. Pinto et al, 2015). As we will see, Portugal dos Pequenitos is an important example here, as it reveals the architect's capacity to follow Bissaya Barreto's demands and wishes, inverting, in a certain way, his own tendencies towards modernity.

2.1. The mentor: Bissaya Barreto

Bissaya Barreto was an illustrious and respected figure in the Beira region, particularly in the city of Coimbra. His time spent at the city's prestigious and ancient university began as a student, then as a medical doctor and professor. He first ventured into politics in 1911, as a Member of the Constituent Assembly; he later became leader of the Republican Evolutionist Party, for the period 1926-1928. In 1932, Bissaya Barreto joined Portugal's new ruler, Oliveira Salazar – a close acquaintance of his – in the National Union Party, just before assuming the presidency of the Beira Litoral Region Provincial Council. Throughout his political career, Bissaya Barreto always used his philanthropic reputation and his Republican past as the chief assets to raise the profile of the Beira region in the national context.

Fig.03

Nevertheless, Bissaya Barreto's convictions were deeply conservative and nationalist. He always rejected 'foreign elements in Portuguese architecture', claiming in a later text, of 1958, that 'neither the purism of Mies Van der Rohe, nor the dilettantism of Le Corbusier, nor Wright's organic shapes, and not even structuralism, serve any purpose at all' (Bandeirinha 1996: 33).

A further development of his endeavors to achieve better conditions for mothers in Portugal, Portugal dos Pequenitos was regarded by Bissaya Barreto as an innovative investment in children's education. His motivation for this came from his interest in and knowledge of child pedagogy, particularly the work of Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Friedrich Fröbel (1782-1852) and Maria Montessori (1870-1952). Education systems based on giving children more freedom to play were a rarity in 1930s Portugal. Kindergartens and schools followed old methodologies, which Bissaya Barreto saw as wholly inadequate, as he believed that they created rejection and, consequently, contributed to dropping out of education. He believed that something new had to be provided in order to generate a pleasant learning experience.

Having already defined for himself his aims for Portugal dos Pequenitos, Bissaya Barreto sponsored Branco in a nationwide study, which was to research the typical features of Portuguese architecture and its monuments. This study had a significant impact on Branco's architectural

work, and it can be said that the commission of the park was a turning point in his career. In the context of Estado Novo nationalism, Branco and Bissaya Barreto may be considered important ‘societal actors’, as defined by Thatcher (2018: 39), i.e., non-state actors who contributed to the creation of a national identity through their work.

3. Portugal dos Pequenitos as part of the 1940 Commemorations of the Birth of the Portuguese Nation

3.1. The 1940 Commemorations: history and culture as nationalistic tools

From the outset in 1933, the Estado Novo regime began planning for a hugely significant event to be held in 1940. The event was to commemorate what was ideologically understood as ‘the glory’ of the Portuguese nation. The date was appropriate, as it corresponded to the 800th anniversary of the birth of the country, which took place around 1140, and also to the third centenary of the Restoration of the Portuguese monarchy from Spain in 1640. The event was to integrate several initiatives throughout the country and would culminate in the Exposition of the Portuguese World to be held in Belém. This exhibition site on the outskirts of Lisbon was next to the monumental Hieronymite Monastery – regarded as the ‘mythical place’ from where the Portuguese caravels departed on the expeditions of the 15th and 16th centuries, which brought to Portugal new trade routes and, thereafter, the extension of its colonial possessions.

Fig.04



The regime and the intellectual class that supported it were fully aware of the role of history as the main substance for engaging people around a shared sense of identity. The travels of the Portuguese navigators – particularly the search for the sea route to India in 1498 and the landing on the Brazilian coast in 1500 – were regarded as the most heroic phase in Portuguese history. In the regime’s view, a ‘valiant people’ was to be proud of its past and of its culture, as expressed in the ways it occupied and lived in the overseas territories under Portuguese administration. The 1940 Commemorations were thus designed to emphasize the emotional components of the Estado Novo version of nationalism, grounded on feelings of belonging, loyalty and identity (cf. Smith 2010).

3.2. Between public works and national propaganda

However, the great upcoming event was seen as something more than an opportunity for rewriting national history; it also provided an opportunity to shape the present and the future. For the regime, the year 1940 was to celebrate the ‘renaissance of Portugal’, with Salazar at the ‘helm’ of a new political regime. As the event was being scheduled, an ambitious public works program was also being launched, with the aim of changing the face of the country, by providing essential facilities, community services, and much needed developments in sectors such as education and health care. (cf. Payne 1973: 673-8).

In this sense, the 1930s may be perceived as a particular moment of change in Portugal. Public buildings and urban plans, alongside a vast program of rehabilitation for historic buildings, were intended to demonstrate the capabilities of the Estado Novo (Lôbo 1995). This notion thrived under the stern leadership of Salazar’s Public Works and Communications Minister, Duarte Pacheco (1900-1943). The works were an opportunity for a new generation of architects (Branco included) to test the vocabulary derived from an Art Déco aesthetic.

Nevertheless, this modern impetus deeply informed by a sense of rupture with the immediate past, was to be fused with concepts of the so-called ‘Política do Espírito’, or Policy of the Spirit, as it was defined by the Secretary for National Propaganda, António Ferro (1895-1956). His main argument was that it should be possible to achieve a scenario combining popular culture and sophisticated erudition (Ferro 1932). In other words, Ferro aimed at fusing heritage and cosmopolitanism in one and the same artistic and architectural expression (cf. Acciaiuoli 2013).

Consequently, art and architecture were to merge the ‘glory’ of an idealized past with the then present-day reality. By means of this almost intolerable combination, the built environment was to reflect a specific way of being Portuguese, in order to create a particular landscape, ideologically represented by the political regime in its specificity. Places, buildings and facts were to be reassessed, in order to define a new symbolic geography in which people could participate as characters in a newly staged order.

Although they worked in different areas, Pacheco and Ferro became influential figures in Salazar's government and in the regime's culture. In addition to picking the illustrious figures for the 1940 Centennial Commission, their influence on the event was significant. Pacheco, as the Public Works and Communications Minister, oversaw all urban plans and building works related to the event. He was responsible for the main decisions, including the selection of architects for the themed pavilions. As for Ferro, acting as Secretary for National Propaganda, he was mainly entrusted with coordinating all visual arts. The most visible results of his actions was a survey about ethnography, on one hand, and both the Folk Art Pavilion and the Section of Portuguese Villages [1], on the other.

Fig.05

Reinterpreted and adjusted to a child's scale, the Section of Portuguese Villages in the Exposition of the Portuguese World in Lisbon was one of the two main inspirations for the Portugal dos Pequenitos park in Coimbra, the other being its Colonial Section. This similarity was in line with a strategy, pursued by Bissaya Barreto and Branco, of ideological and stylist alignment with the Exposition. The approach proved to be beneficial in terms of financial and representative gains, and was completely achieved. The Portugal dos Pequenitos park opening ceremony took place on the 8th of June of 1940, fifteen days before the main exhibition of Lisbon, during the Centennial Commemorations for the Foundation of Portugal, held in Coimbra. The city was chosen to host the event as a symbolic tribute to Afonso Henriques (1109-1185), first king of Portugal, whose tomb is located in the local Santa Cruz Monastery.

4. Portugal dos Pequenitos in the context of European nationalism

4.1. Portuguese nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries: a brief overview

It thus seems clear that nationalism, both in its ideological and cultural assumptions, was the central concept of the 1940 Commemorations. Portugal dos Pequenitos was no exception. This was very much in line with the fact that nationalism was also the central concept behind Salazar's regime. Given that Portugal can be considered as a fully formed nation-state since the 12th century, that nationalism took on certain tones that differentiate it from other European countries,

e.g. Spain, Italy, or Germany. Nevertheless, and as is the case for those and other European countries, the roots of Portuguese nationalism of the 1930s and 1940s can be traced back to the 19th century (Marques 1976).

After the independence of Brazil (proclaimed in 1822), and the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade (in 1836), the exploitation of natural resources in Africa became increasingly important for Portugal. The production of rubber in Angola and of oilseeds in Mozambique, together with the plantation of coffee in São Tomé, generated substantial financial revenue throughout the 1870s and 1880s (cf. Rosas 2018: 25).

Nevertheless, some sectors of the Portuguese political spectrum envisioned a larger role for these undertakings. For instance, the republican oppositionists to the monarchist regime saw the exploitation of African territories as the foundations for Portuguese economic self-reliance, a goal they considered crucial to overcoming the country's situation of chronic underdevelopment, on one hand, and negating the historic fear of Spanish annexation, on the other. Accordingly, the African colonies quickly became the main focus of a national debate around Portuguese identity and capability: to occupy and to exploit territories in Africa was equated with having domestic security and international relevance.

The debate overlapped with the so-called 'scramble for Africa', a term used to describe the extensive exploitation and colonization of the African continent and its dividing up among the European powers (Coelho 1996). The Portuguese ambition in this context was to link and to occupy the territories between Angola, in the west coast of Africa, and those of Mozambique, in the East.

The aspiration, however, collided with the strategic interests of Britain, leading to what is known as the British Ultimatum. This term, one 'that makes sense to the Portuguese only' (Coelho: 1996), refers to a *memorandum* sent to the Portuguese Government by the then Prime Minister Lord Salisbury (1830 - 1903) on 11 January 1890, demanding the withdrawal of all Portuguese troops from the abovementioned area. By way of this diplomatic stance, Britain claimed – and later achieved – control over all African territories set between Angola and Mozambique,

disregarding the fact that they had been considered as Portuguese possessions by the 1884 Berlin Conference.

Although this incident may be considered as just a lesser episode in the larger picture of 19th century European rush to Africa, some English-speaking authors have given it extensive research (Axelson 1967; Clarence-Smith 1985; Hammond 1966; Nowell 1982). These scholars recognize that, in Portugal, the consequences of the tensions with Britain – and their aftermath – were dramatic and manifold. In political terms, they eventually led to the fall of the monarchy, in 1910. Previously to that, in the ideological and cultural realms, the standoff generated a debate on the sense of nationality and national identity. This discussion had two different outcomes, one in the overseas colonies, and the other in mainland Portugal.

As for the African possessions, the Lisbon Geography Society, like so many other European equivalents, sponsored scientific expeditions in the African continent. These were aimed at carrying out anthropological studies of native communities, as a way of consolidating knowledge and influence over their territories. In mainland Portugal, on the other hand, artists and thinkers initiated an intellectual examination of what it meant to be Portuguese. Triggered by the ‘liberal inspiration’ of figures such as Alexandre Herculano (1810-1877), they developed a collective consciousness concerning national history, seen both as a cohesive narrative and a ‘heroic march towards freedom’. (Thiesse 2005: 131).

Visual artists, particularly Romantic painters, adhered to these values through their depictions of landscapes, heroic battles and epic discoveries. Architects responded with a reassessment and revival of architectural styles regarded as quintessentially Portuguese, such as the late gothic ‘Manueline’, the Baroque ‘Joanine’ or the Enlightenment’s ‘Pombaline’ styles.

4.2. Universal Exhibitions and World Fairs as stages for European and Portuguese nationalisms

In short, one had the strangeness of the ‘uncivilized world’ on the one hand, and a nostalgia for the integrity of the national countryside and history on the other. In the end, these two forces came together in the revision of historic architectural styles. Far from being a Portuguese specificity, such ideas were widely explored in other European countries, as reflected by the universal

exhibitions of the late 19th century, and they furthered the definition of a transnational paradigm for national identities (cf. Thiesse 2005: 122-43).

The early beginnings of these ideas can be traced back to the Caribbean hut presented in London at the 1851 Great Exhibition, and used by Gottfried Semper in *The Four Elements of Architecture* as a foundation for his architectural doctrine. In the context of world fair exhibitions, this marked the urge to display diverse recreations of existing types of architecture, or even entire villages, in a search for forgotten lessons.

Several cases serve here as examples, namely: the Swedish ‘National Village’ recreated at the 1878 Paris Exposition; the ‘Medieval Village’ designed by the Portuguese architect Alfredo d’Andrade (1839-1915) for the 1884 Italian General Exposition in Turin; the ‘German Village’ at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair; or the ‘Swiss Village’ built for the 1896 Swiss National Exhibition in Geneva.

In this context, 1900 was a critical year for Portugal. A fierce debate was ongoing, with the engagement of a wide range of artists and thinkers, with echoes in the local media. The discussion concerned the competition for a national pavilion, meant for the Paris World Fair. The dispute placed the ‘progressive’ cosmopolitan proposal designed by Ventura Terra (1866-1919) against the ‘cultural’ regionalist design by Raul Lino (1879-1974).

Fig.06

Lino’s pavilion was discarded in the end. Nevertheless, its design, essentially a composition of fragments from different Portuguese historic buildings, was of crucial importance for a far-reaching campaign for a truly ‘Portuguese House’ (Figueiredo 2007: 319-66). Lino, who had studied in Germany under the supervision of Albert Haupt (1812-1888), had returned to Portugal in 1897 and had since then been deeply involved in the ongoing discussion regarding nationality and national architecture (cf. Ramos 2010).

This contribution was made with decisive theoretical studies. As early as 1918, Lino published *A Nossa Casa: Apontamentos Sobre o Bom Gosto na Construção de Casas Simples* [Our House:

Notes on Good Taste in the Construction of Simple Houses], a book whose ideas were further developed in the 1933 publication *Casas Portuguesas: Alguns Apontamentos sobre a Arquitectura de Casas Simples* [Portuguese Houses: Some Notes on the Architecture of the Simple House].

This ideological and cultural framework, here presented in its schematic traits, is the nationalist background against which the 1940 Centennial Commemorations have to be assessed. In the Exposition of the Portuguese World, the Section of Portuguese Villages, recreated the typicality of traditional Portuguese settlements. Conversely, the Colonial Section, was meant as a representation of the Portuguese overseas possessions. Both sections were devised under the legacy of the nationalist debate of the late 19th century and the cultural inspiration provided by world fairs of that period.

As already mentioned, these two sections had considerable influence on the overall design of Portugal dos Pequenitos. It must also be said that its concepts owe much to Lino's legacy. Branco absorbed both the typicality of 'Portuguese Houses' – represented in several illustrations published in Lino's homonymous book of 1933 – and the possibility of testing an architectural composition based on a process of collage, following the ideas launched by Lino's 1900 proposal for the Paris World's Fair.

5. Portugal dos Pequenitos cultural and ideological program: 'an open history book'

Portugal dos Pequenitos can be read as a stage built to protect the fragments of a threatened legacy. Bissaya Barreto's brief had two main points: firstly, the park was to be developed as an innovative playground, associating children's play with knowledge of Portuguese history and architecture; secondly, it was to be built far from the capital city, protected from all external threats, i.e., in the idyllic place of Santa Clara, Coimbra.

The enclosure was planned as an extension of the Santa Clara Ninho dos Pequenitos (literally, 'Nest for the Little Ones') a kindergarten for children up to 4 years old, born to mothers suffering from tuberculosis. It was part of Bissaya Barreto's significant social work in the Beira Litoral Region, which at the time was devastated by an infant mortality rate that reached 40,000 newborns

per year, namely from diseases like tuberculosis, syphilis, leprosy, cancer and mental disorders (cf. Colaço 1936: 43-51). When the project for the park began, the Regional Council headed by Bissaya Barreto had already built a significant set of facilities, such as the Penacova Preventorium, for children aged 4 to 10; the Semide Vocational School; the Celas Sanatorium for women; and the so-called Colónia Portuguesa do Brasil Sanatorium for men.

In the description of his project, Cassiano Branco underlined this position:

After several educational studies and financial possibilities, the conclusion was reached to realize an old idea, that of creating a park that was developed more in a cultural sense, with the aim of teaching children a world of things without requiring much mental exertion, always dangerous at a young age, and through direct observation, holding their attention and curiosity, recreating in the exhibited elements what would take too long and require a lot of effort to register in their mind. (...) With these direct and appropriate lessons, displayed in summaries that were easy to understand, full of discipline and finally, contained educational and cultural goals (Branco 1939).

Bissaya Barreto's idea was pioneering in the programmatic approach to this type of enclosures dedicated to children, anticipating other similar initiatives built in the 20th century, such as: the 1951 La Republica de los Niños in La Plata, Argentina; the 1952 Madurodamⁱⁱⁱ, in The Hague, Netherlands; and the 1955 Disneyland, in Anaheim, California. Portugal dos Pequenitos, however, was different, as it was planned to be an open history book or, as Branco put it, a library for children, that could be read through all their senses, promoting the intimate satisfaction of learning without effort; it is precisely this pedagogical aspect that the natural school of Coimbra could provide' (Branco 1939).

From the outset, Branco interpreted the brief through a complex methodology for manipulating building scale reduction. His chief idea was to avoid the conversion of the park into an ordinary 'museum for Portuguese architectural miniatures' (Branco 1940). The architectural replications were to be the result of two different scales, having children's bodies as the main reference. Following this strategy, it was possible to create a morphological continuity in the park, regardless

of the real dimensions of the original buildings, while also allowing for children to get inside the miniature buildings. The final result was unusual because it did not correspond to simple accurate reduction of scale but was actually the result of free interpretation of reality. This process became more and more refined over the course of the project. As we will see, the last phase of the enclosure took this method to its ultimate logical conclusion.

6. Portugal dos Pequenitos and its development: sections and phases

By the time the park design began to be outlined, there was already clear awareness of the steps that were necessary to ensure that it would broadly represent Portugal as an Iberian, insular country and colonial power. The main idea was that the park was to be divided into three ‘lessons’, corresponding to three different sections.

The first lesson was ‘intended for classes of children up to 10 years old. The second, which was to be more developed in terms of subject matter and documentation, was to consist of eight pavilions of representing the eight Portuguese provinces, with each pavilion integrating ethnographic, historical and artistic elements aimed at older children, to whom the third lesson would be also dedicated. That third lesson was to be made up of pavilions representing all the Portuguese colonies and island territories’ (Branco 1939).

The first phase of construction corresponded to the first section of the park, integrating the ‘Village Nest for the Little One’, which was completed as early as 1940, in order to be inaugurated during the National Centennial Commemorations. The second and third phases of construction didn’t follow the pedagogical sequence of the park. The second construction phase, which included the Ethnographic and Colonial Section and the Coimbra Pavilion, was completed in 1951. The last construction phase, for the Portuguese Metropole Section, was finished in 1962.

6.1. First phase (1937-1940): the ‘Village Nest for the Little Ones’

At the beginning, the entrance to the park was on the East side of the site, on Rua António Augusto Gonçalves, where a symmetric garden was planned, containing the representation of a globe and a national standard. The design of this ‘village’ was structured around a ‘little square’, which also reproduced the churchyard of the Santa Clara Monastery. The equestrian statue of King Afonso

Henriques was placed at the center of the place, in relation to which the typical houses from Nazaré, Alentejo, Douro and Minho were organized.

Fig.07

The village also featured a roundabout with a fountain where a chapel and a group of houses, such as the Rector's house, and houses from the Caramulo, Beira Baixa, Aveiro, Ribatejo and Estremadura regions, converged. In a second ring, other house models were placed, such as an Algarvian house, a Beira mansion and a Saloia house.

Fig.08

Fig. 09

The environment of this regional Village included also a mountain with a dolmen, coal and steel mines evoking those at Cape Mondego, and a farmyard with domestic animals. Other compositional elements contributed to the diversity of this recreated Portuguese landscape, e.g. an aqueduct and a water spring creating a 'river' that led to a 'sea', where an archipelago, a dock, and a harbor were designed.

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

6.2. Second phase (1940-1951): the Ethnographic and Colonial Section and the Coimbra House

After 1940, the second phase of the construction of the park started with the Coimbra House. This phase also included the Ethnographic and Colonial Section, which consisted of a set of pavilions alluding to the 'overseas' territories, including the Atlantic islands of Madeira and Azores. Moreover, Brazil, although independent since 1820, was part of the exhibition in the capacity of 'brother country'.

The main entrance to the compound was also built during this second phase of construction, with framing turrets and two bugle-playing figures, and a Gothic arch. The entrance was designed to

represent an ‘open book,’ as a metaphor for the park itself, displaying the name: Portugal dos Pequenitos.

As far as the Coimbra pavilion was concerned, Branco sought to reference ‘architectural elements from monuments of great historic tradition in the city’ (Branco 1939). They were to be built with ‘carefully chosen artistic details and set in relation to each other using a scale and forms of expression accessible to a child’s intelligence, in order to synthesize in documental elements [...], as well as in the composition of its architectural aspect, the historical, artistic and social value that characterizes the city of Coimbra’ (Branco 1940). Branco proposed a composition that merged several local monuments^{iv}, thus composing the facades of the Coimbra House using ‘the most beautiful and valued monuments of the city on the Mondego, revealing its multiple external aspects of greater cultural interest’ (Branco 1940).

Fig.12

Fig.13

The Ethnographic and Colonial Section, in the extreme north of the park, was planned as early as 1940. At this stage, the deployment intentions for the third phase (Metropole section) had been already defined. This part of the park was greatly inspired by the Colonial Section of the Exhibition of the Portuguese World, namely the pavilions of Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Portuguese India, Macao, and East Timor, and resulted, in a certain way, from adaptations and recreations of the concepts that had been used in the Exhibition of Lisbon in 1940. Besides the representation of each overseas colony, there was also a pavilion dedicated to the Catholic Church, which occupied a prominent place within this colonial scenario, highlighting the importance of the missions in the civilization of the indigenous populations.

Fig.14

Fig.15

Fig.16

Fig.17

Before its final completion, this section went through several versions. The final version was defined only in 1951 and included the pavilion from Brazil. The Madeira and Azores pavilions were integrated as part of a tribute to Henry the Navigator, whose figure would be part of a mural. Bearing the sentence: 'If There Was More World, He Would Reach It', and preceding the area of the Metropole Section, the mural represented the main sea routes of the 'Lusitanian epic'.

Fig.18

6.3. Third phase (1951-1962): the Portuguese Metropole Section

The third and final phase of construction corresponds to the core of Portugal dos Pequenitos. It comprises the Metropole Section of buildings depicting the provinces of Iberian Portugal. Branco's designs for these pavilions, dating from 1952 and 1954, represented a synthetic approach to historical monuments, in a way similar to the approach he had already tested in the Coimbra pavilion. These syntheses merged in the same building several architectural monuments from each Portuguese region.

Fig. 19

In the Estremadura pavilion, for example, Branco used Lisbon as his main reference. Accordingly, he fused the triumphal arch from Rua Augusta with the Belem Tower and the Hieronymite Monastery. He still managed to cite directly the Casa dos Bicos and to design a view from the Cathedral and from Castelo de São Jorge, with all of the elements embracing in their core a reference to central Lisbon and to Dona Maria National Theater.

Fig. 20

As for the Ribatejo region pavilion, the monumental synthesis integrated architectural portions from Tomar and from Santarém. Such is the case of the windows of the Chapter House and the church of São João Baptista in Tomar, along with the rosette window of Graça Church and Figueiras Fort in Santarém.

7. Portugal dos Pequenitos as a laboratory for nationalistic architecture and urban design

7.1. A new stylistic possibility

In all its phases, Portugal dos Pequenitos was designed by means of the fusion of several fragments, conveniently reassembled and rescaled. This amalgamation recreated a new stylistic possibility, linking the park with the ongoing debate concerning national identity. As early as 1939, the ultranationalist journalist and playwright Thomaz Ribeiro Colaço (1899-1965) speculated about the full potential of the Portugal dos Pequenitos design. Its expressed aim was to enlighten Portuguese architects and artists as to the character of the works they should be building in Portugal (Colaço 1939: 8-9):

That most inexplicably enigmatic feeling that makes it possible that, when we look at an old Douro house or an Alentejo farm, we can at once feel the physical specificity that separates them from us and the identity that so compellingly unites us with them; the feeling that the men from the provinces of Trás-os-Montes or Minho are, like those from other Portuguese regions, the mere names of related metals, that are cast together in the identity of one and the same alloy; so many things that our architecture, like our literature or our music, should mirror lovingly – all this our tender children, to whom this paradise is offered, will learn (just through the pleasure of watching, of touching, of enjoying). While it is possible that such an invasion could sour the happiness of the residents, I do not hesitate to declare that the Portuguese architects, the Portuguese artists – those in charge of igniting and preserving the spiritual bonfires that are responsible for the formation of the soul – should go in pilgrimage in order to learn that great lesson, to that divine City of Children.

In the Portugal dos Pequenitos project, Branco not only tested some typified models of Portuguese architectural styles, but he had also the opportunity to experience the application of an urban model in the organization of that small trapezoidal site of roughly 13,000 sq. m (approx. 230 x 56 m). For Branco's career, the park was one of the few moments where he was able to realize the implementation of an urban design, albeit in a laboratory process.

Whilst in the Nest Village and in the early designs for the Ethnographic and Colonial Section, there was a classicizing intention of structuring the buildings around recognizable urban typologies, i.e., the square, the roundabout, the avenue, and the street, throughout the following phases, Branco took a different approach and, in the end, the buildings seemed to take on a power of their own independent of any urban support structure. In a controlled setting, this created the same discontinuities that can be found in a growing city in constant renewal, e. g. Lisbon, the city that served as the scenario for most of Branco's architecture.

Especially in the Metropole and the Ethnographic and Colonial sections, the interstitial relationships between the buildings constitute areas of relevant informality, involving visitors along with the irregular cuttings of the pavilions, while they are adjusted to the surrounding space in an organic way, without any prior subordination to an eventual orthogonal plot division.

7.2. Collage as urban design strategy

Branco achieved this effect by merging parts and spaces borrowed from different existing buildings and urban schemes, using a design approach that can be compared to a surrealist collage of ready-made objects. The viewer's imagination is triggered by the clashing of these haphazard allusions. Branco thus subverted the taxonomic element that was present in Portugal dos Pequenitos, both by means of the refusal of pure objects and the fragmentary recreation in hybrid constructions.

It is in the Metropole Section that the orientation of Branco's thought on architecture and the city itself is revealed in a more conscious way, clarifying his own architectural output in the 1940s and 1950s. The fusion of dissimilar architectural styles in the same building thus became an argument that provided a response to the 'Portugueseism' required by Thomaz Ribeiro Colaço.

For this reason, Portugal dos Pequenitos transcends the notion of child's play and the very program behind its existence, becoming a mediation based not only on the Estado Novo regime ideology, and also, and principally, a search for architectural answers to the demands of society of the time, which had committed to the search for identity, following their seduction by nationalist ideology.

7.3. A template for the Estado Novo urban development policies and programs

Before looking at that specific context, it is crucial to assess the importance of Portugal dos Pequenitos in the general framework of urban development policies and programs as they were launched by the Estado Novo, especially during the 1940s and the 1950s. The first impulse would be to search for some link between the planning methodology or spatial structure behind Portugal dos Pequenitos and that of any other particular scheme.

It seems obvious that, at least in its first and second phases, Portugal dos Pequenitos, with its straightforward hierarchic structure, could present clear patterns for other urban design plans. It is also easy to imagine such outlines being used later, either in Portugal or in its overseas colonies. However, for reasons that go beyond the scope of this paper, any attempts to identify such patterns in subsequent arrangements risk being fruitless. It should be pointed out that Portuguese urban planners and architects – Branco included – all had the same academic training, based on the 19th century Parisian Beaux Arts system, and, accordingly, their approach to urban planning was always quite static and predictable.

The relevance of the Portugal dos Pequenitos experiment, as a case for understanding most Estado Novo urban programs, lies elsewhere, far from any positive structural analysis. It lies in two major outcomes, which are independent of each other but connected. To begin with, the experiment proved the possibility of shaping the built environment through the handling of a single thematic issue, one that was entirely driven by a cultural and political agenda. Moreover, it showed that such a theme could be rooted in a specific notion of ‘Portugueseism’, a neologism later to be coined by the Estado Novo in order to identify what was regarded as inherently Portuguese.

Furthermore, at Portugal dos Pequenitos, the grouping seems less important than the unit, as Branco approached urban matters in such a way that the individual building emerged as the main feature. This attitude relegated other planning issues to lesser roles. Everything involving scientific or technical processes, e. g. land development, resources, transportation or infrastructure, seems to be vague. There is also no evidence of any study regarding techniques that are today considered basic in urban planning, such as zoning, geographic mapping or

evaluation. In short: whilst 'urban design' as a procedure came close to having a scheme behind it, 'planning' as a discipline was almost absent.

The consequences of this outcome are twofold, and they may be traced back to the first and third phases of the park, respectively. By interweaving the conflicting features of a theme park and a cultural shop window, the first phase of Portugal dos Pequenitos presented itself as the perfect showcase for further and later Portuguese stylistic references.

However, and contrary to common belief, this 'Portugueseness' was achieved by something more solid and more profound than any decorative trait, such as the use of ceramic roof tiles or stone ornaments, could be. Here, Branco was able to set a stage where every building, far from just forming part of a background scenography, was to be considered as a character in itself. Accordingly, Portuguese traits are not used in the individual buildings as assets designed for a particular scene in a play, but as investments in the overall appearance of the character. In the third phase, through the persistent interplay between a sense of spontaneous randomness and one of careful orchestration and planning, the building is no longer to be seen as a character playing a fixed role, but as a performer continuously enticing its audience.

8. Conclusions

Broadly speaking, this paper aimed at presenting and evaluating Portugal dos Pequenitos as an ideological artefact of the Portuguese Estado Novo, a nationalist regime that may be defined as authoritarian, corporatist, and colonialist. In conclusion, the experiment led by Cassiano Branco at Portugal dos Pequenitos offered three major outcomes for the future shaping of the Portuguese built environment:

1. 'Portugueseism' as a major cultural and ideological theme;
2. Dominance of individual buildings over urban design and/or planning;
3. Townscapes as stage sets of a nationalist production, where individual buildings could be considered as either characters or performers.

How these three outcomes influenced further urban schemes is something still to be fully assessed. The typical traits associated with ‘Portugueseness’ were definitely employed throughout the country, and they mark the landscape to this day. The same may be said regarding the dominance of the individual building. Even when they had to obey to strict planning regulations, Portuguese architects managed to enhance the importance of the single buildings they were designing.

As for the third outcome, there is something that must be added. Although Branco seems to be the first and only one of his period to be given such a stage, that mark stayed with younger generations, including those active today. For them, the building-performer, as a tragic hero, is the only person responsible for redeeming the built environment.

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ⁱ For references on the history of Portugal for English-speaking readers, see Saraiva (1998), and also Marques (2018). For a trustworthy online reference, one that compares Portugal with other Iberian nations, see Payne (1973), accessible in <https://libro.uca.edu/payne2/index.htm> and also in <https://libro.uca.edu/payne1/index.htm>

ⁱⁱ Known as the 'modern pioneer generation', it included other figures, such as Cristino da Silva (1896-1976), Pardal Monteiro (1897-1957), Cottinelli Telmo (1897-1948), Carlos Ramos (1897-1969), Paulino Montez (1897-1988), and Jorge Segurado (1898-1990).

ⁱⁱⁱ The 'Madurodam' later inspired 'Swiss Miniatur' on the shore of Lake Lugano, opened on 6th of June in 1959; or more recently Mini-Europe in Brussels, which opened to the public in 1989.

^{iv} Branco borrowed features from the Old Cathedral, the Bishop's Palace, the Tower of Santa Cruz, the São Sebastião Aqueduct, and a part of the medieval wall. Other representative fragments were also introduced, e.g. the University turret and the Santa Clara Monastery. To complete this set, Branco used references from the Celas Convent, the Portal of São Tomaz, the Church of Santiago, the Almedina Arch, and the House of Nau.

Source Information			
Figure	Author	Title	Publisher
Fig. 01	(-)	Architect Cassiano Branco.	Municipal Archive of Lisbon, Ref. PT/AMLSB/CB/12/04/11
Fig. 02	Mário Novais Studio	Cassiano Branco: Victória-Hotel, 1935.	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Ref. CFT164 00139.ic
Fig. 03	Mário Novais Studio	Doctor Bissaya Barreto	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Ref. CFT003 120350.ic
Fig. 04	Eduardo Portugal	Portuguese World Exposition	Municipal Archive of Lisbon, Ref. PT/AMLSB/CMLSBAH/PCSP/004/EDP/001554
Fig. 05	Casimiro dos Santos Vinagre	Portuguese Villages in Portuguese World Exposition	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Ref. CFT178 020.ic
Fig. 06	(-)	Raul Lino: Pavilion for the Paris World Fair of 1900	RAMALHO, Margarida in Portugal 1900 (2000) Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon., LFMCG
Fig. 07	(-)	Cassiano Branco: General Plan of the Village - Nests for the Little Ones, 1938.	Municipal Archive of Lisbon, Ref. PT_AMLSB_CB_01_05_05
Fig. 08	Mário Novais Studio	Equestrian Statue of the King Afonso Henriques	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Ref. CFT003 068496.ic
Fig. 09	Mário Novais Studio	Village Nest for the Little Ones'	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Ref. CFT003 068608.ic
Fig. 10	Mário Novais	<i>Basse cour</i> with domestic animals	Studio, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Ref. CFT003 068571.ic
Fig. 11	Mário Novais Studio	Village Nest for the Little Ones'	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Ref. CFT003 068497.ic
Fig. 12	(-)	Cassiano Branco: Synthesis of Coimbra, patio, 1940	Municipal Archive of Lisbon, Ref. PT_AMLSB_CB_01_01_09
Fig. 13	Mário Novais Studio	Cassiano Branco: Reproduction of the Episcopal Palace Balcony by Filippo Terzi	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Ref.CFT003 067460.ic
Fig. 14	(-)	Cassiano Branco: Plan of the Metropolitan, Ethnographical, and Colonial Sections, 1940	Municipal Archive of Lisbon, Ref. PT_AMLSB_CB_01_05_18
Fig. 15	Mário Novais Studio	Timor Pavilion	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Ref. CFT003 068615.ic
Fig. 16	Mário Novais Studio	Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Prince Pavilions	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Ref. CFT003 068616.ic
Fig. 17	Mário Novais Studio	Indian Pagoda	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Ref. CFT003 068585.ic
Fig. 18	Mário Novais Studio	Catholic Church of Missions	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Ref. CFT003 068583.ic
Fig. 19	(-)	Cassiano Branco: Plan of the Metropolitan Section 1944	Municipal Archive of Lisbon, Ref. PT_AMLSB_CB_01_05_22
Fig. 20	(-)	Cassiano Branco: Pavilion of Extremadura Province, Lisbon view, 1944.	Municipal Archive of Lisbon, Ref. PT_AMLSB_CB_01_05_22



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4



Image 5

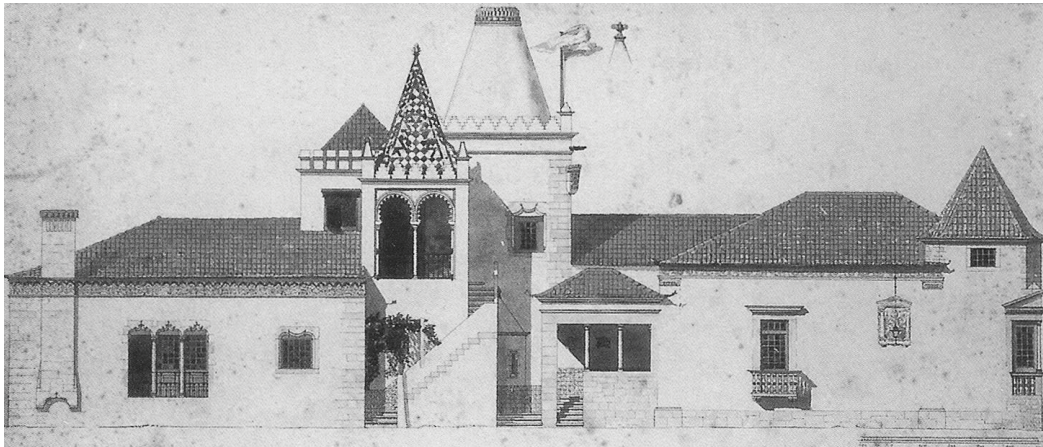


Image 6

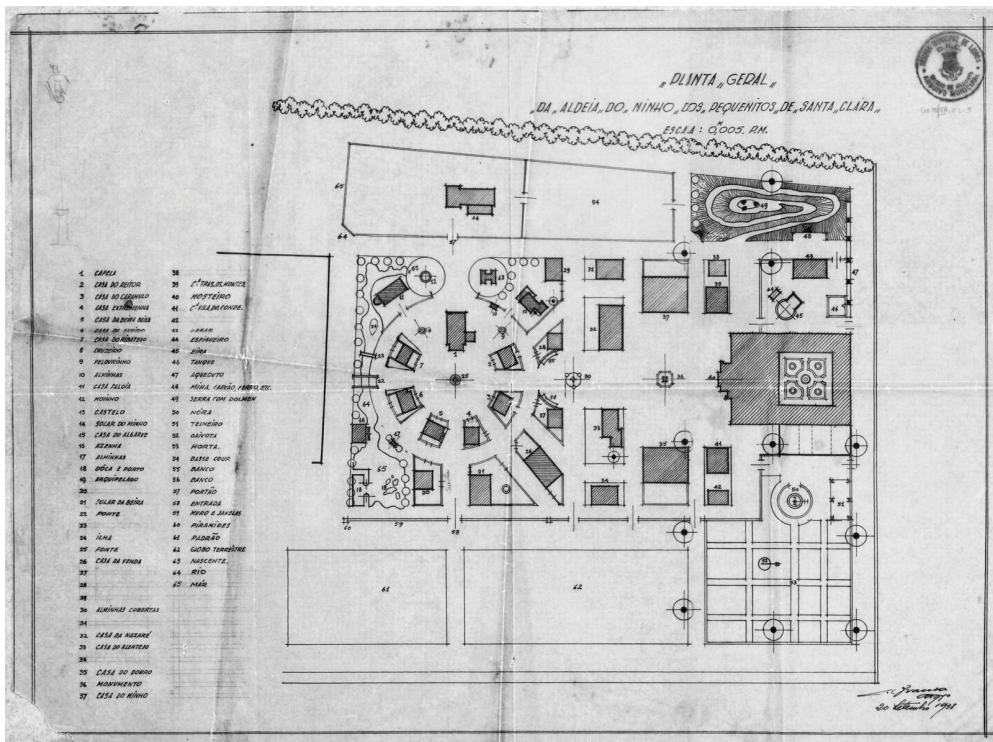


Image 7



Image 8



Image 9



Image 10



Image 11

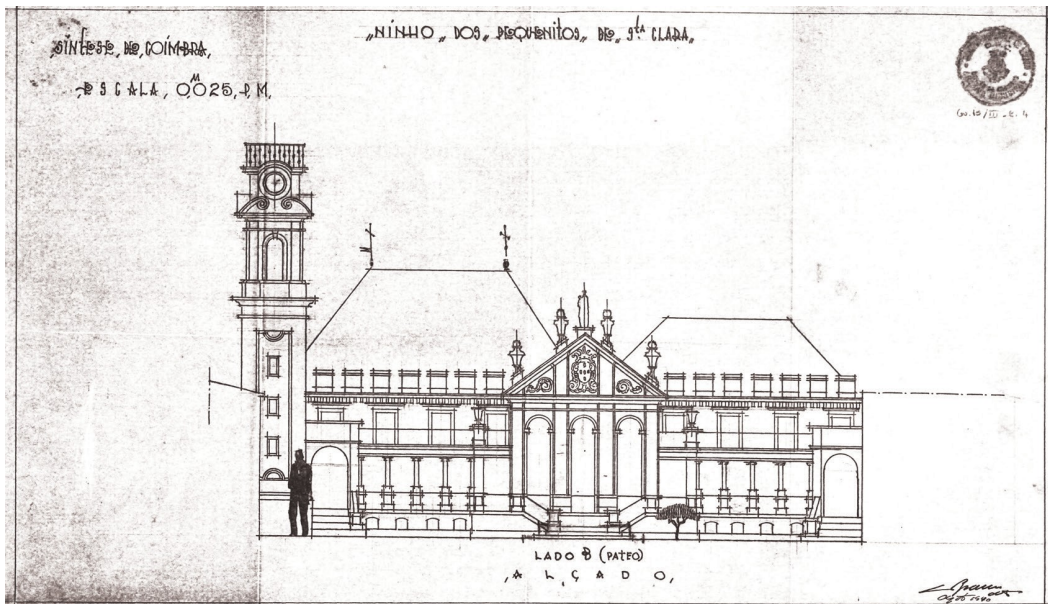


Image 12



Image 13

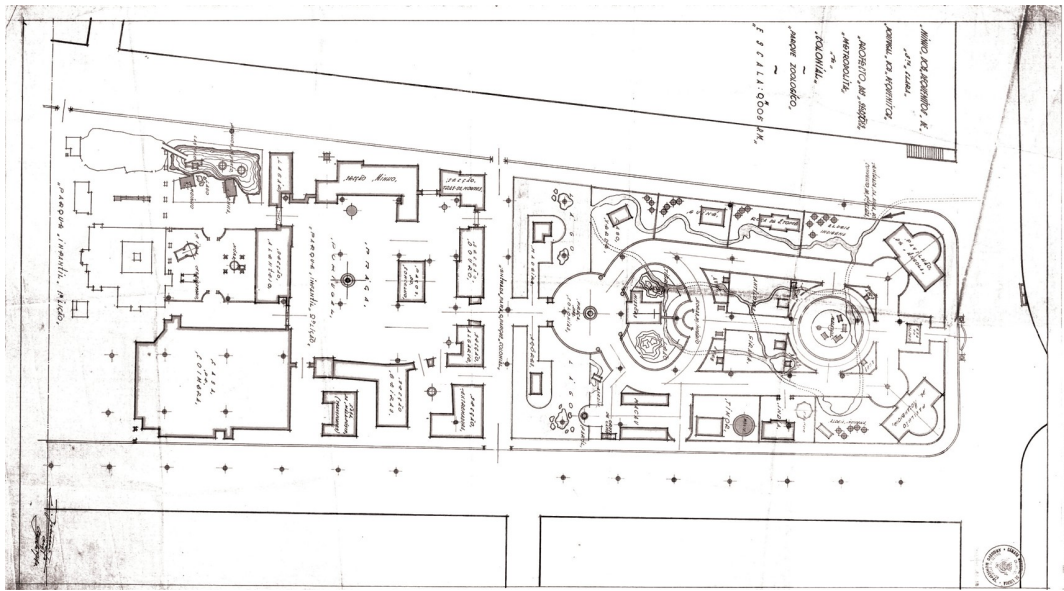


Image 14



Image 15



Image 16



Image 17



Image 18

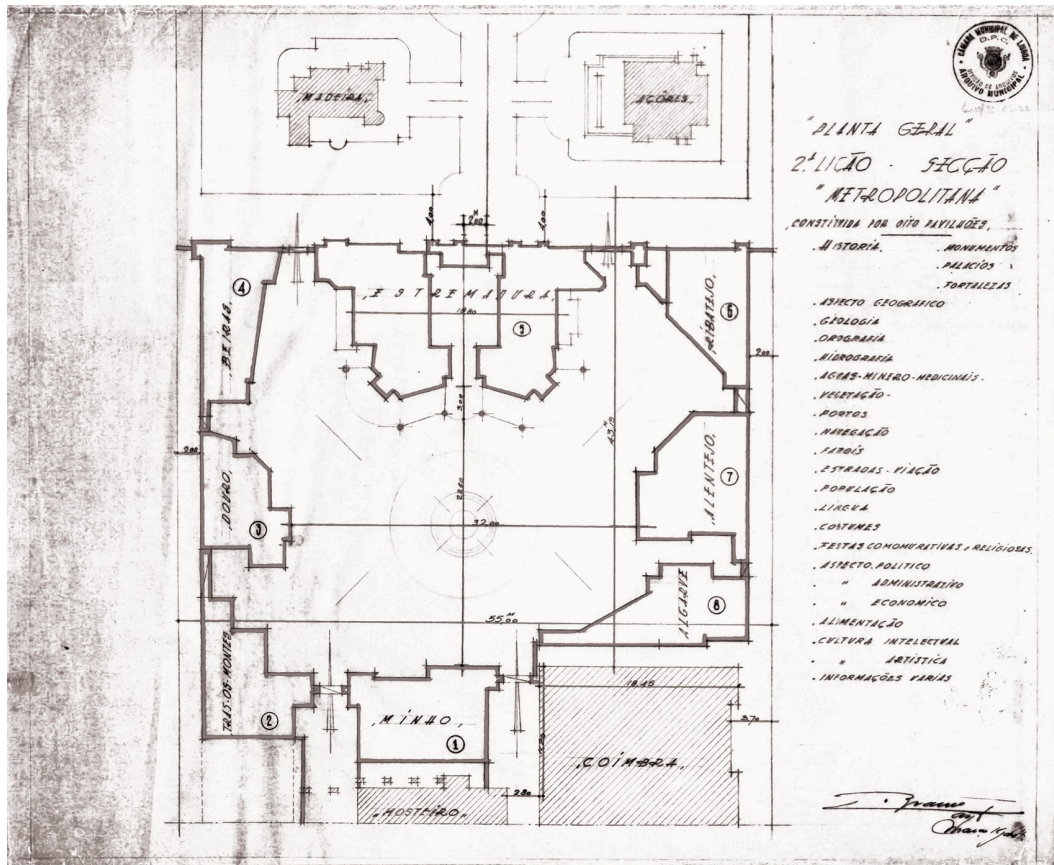


Image 19

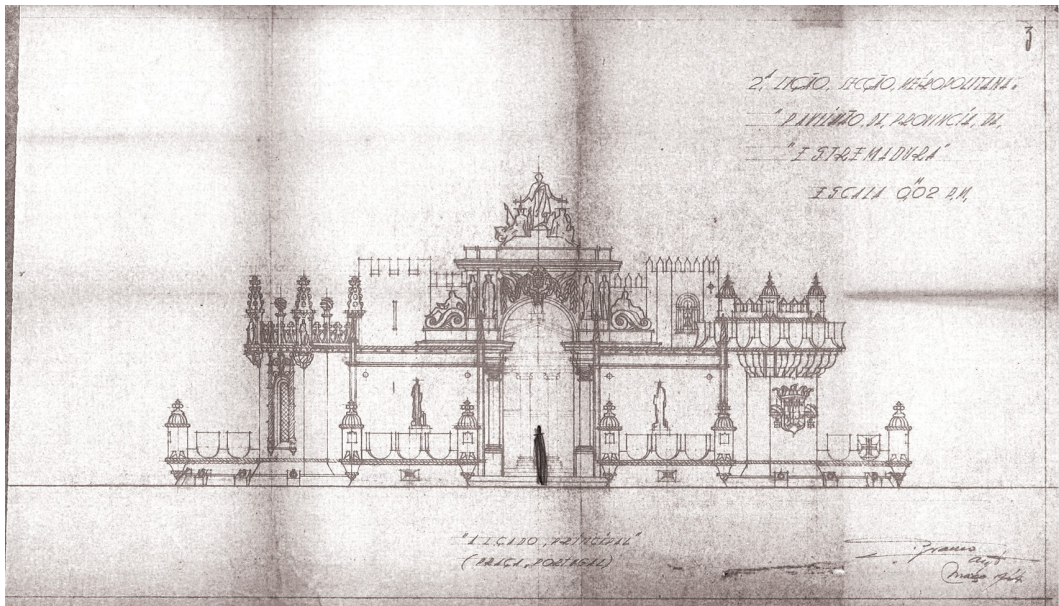


Image 20