

The “Rua Direita” as part of the urban fabric of the Portuguese city

Typological Essay

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ABSTRACT

The "Rua Direita" is an urban element present in a significant number of Portuguese cities. The recognition of its diversity as an urban element possesses very specific characteristics, namely its different morphology, its functional nature and even its particular name, that justifies the depth of this study to demonstrate its importance as a translator element of order and structural hierarchy, giving rise to the urban fabric where it belongs.

The purpose of this communicationⁱ is to present a report of separate case studies of “Rua Direita” that, even when inserted in different urban contexts, continuously demonstrate that this is an essential structuring element in the genesis and formation of the urban fabric.

The name "Direita" refers to the abstract concept of “direction”, specifying its inherent functionality allowing us to extract from the toponym "Direita" its conceptual nature, namely its qualities of direction, articulation and crossing. The "Rua Direita" will always be understood as a direct road, which means a straight direction. The three underlying concepts to the process of designing the urban element expresses the clear objective of determining a specific direction, of articulating other urban elements and to prioritize the urban fabric where it belongs.

Therefore, is considered as qualities of this urban element:

Direction - to establish a forward and unique way in order to achieve a certain spatial place, taken as a reference within its urban context;

Articulation - to establish relations between the remaining elements of the urban fabric by ordinary elements, such as streets and alleys, or by exceptional elements, such as squares and plazas, forming a hierarchical network by linking the different elements of the fabric and its urban functions.

Crossing - to establish itself as the structuring design element of an area that it relates, giving it a recognizable order, creating a homogeneous area.

Regarding of the qualities mentioned above, the "Rua Direita" catalyzes in itself an outstanding set of urban functions, becoming a support for very different uses and revealing itself as a

multifunctional urban element, particularly as a commercial space. Consequently, adds to its importance and claims to be predominant over all other associated urban areas. Preserving the intrinsic qualities to its concept, the "Rua Direita" is presented as an urban element of objective direction that in its direct crossing path gives a single referential direction. That reveals itself as articulating and structuring of the remaining elements of the fabric, highlighting the urban element hierarchically over the area, or it naturally generates, overvalue has an urban element with readability and consistency.

The significant number of "Ruas Direitas" identified in the country reveals distinct identities of the urban element, intrinsically linked to the evolutionary dynamics of their own urban areas where they operate. In the abundant number of Portuguese cities where the "Rua Direita" is identified, it usually turns out to be only a single occurrence. Its existence as a singular element occurs in urban areas that have small or medium size, with a small dynamic evolution or established by a consistent sedimentation. Its presence in these cases is closely linked to the primordial nucleus of the urban cluster. Given that a cluster during its formation and consolidation is subjected to expansion needs, we often find that the "Rua Direita" occurs in continuity with a primordial axis in the expansion area, assuming itself as an urban element essential to the construction of new urban fabric. Including cases of the doubling of the urban element that is the "Rua Direita", thus revealing the existence of a continuation of a previous primary axis, sharing a similarity with this twinning.

An exceptional case in the national scene, given the number of occurrences of the urban element, takes place in Lisbon, this being understood by the very high number of occurrences as a phenomenon of reproduction of various orders. Which reveals this urban element as doubled and multiplied not only in continuity, meaning although placed in the same urban core it emerges in particular contexts of the same core but associated with the formation of new urban fabric.

A single understanding of the urban element in particular is less appropriate its reading together with the other elements is indispensable and can not be interpreted as an exclusive design of an affected area but expanding its role as a support to the expansion of the city from radial axis.

In a comparative study of the element "Rua Direita" but in a dissimilar context where its presence happened due to the integration in different areas of the urban fabric we would like to highlight the intrinsic qualities of the concept, that are the common and dissimilar features in each particular case as a structuring element of the "simple linear model" that highlights the sense of axial space, basis of the organization and composition of the Portuguese city tradition.

Keywords: Street; Portuguese City; Urban Fabric; Urban Morphology; Typology.

ⁱ Article is written under the Master in "Urban Design and Public Space Project" with the title "The "Rua Direita" in Portuguese cities – a type-morphology reading of the urban element in present" (ongoing) at the Faculty of Architecture of the UTL, In Following the participation of the Research Project "Streets in Portugal - Morphology Inventory", funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology (PTDC/AUR/65532/2006) under development at the FormaUrbis Lab of the Faculty of Architecture of UTL, under the direction of Professor Carlos Dias Coelho.