

## **The Urban Archaeology of Lisbon: the desire for regularity as the original intent.**

**Paula André**

DINAMIA-CET, Escola de Tecnologias e Arquitectura, ISCTE-IUL,

Av. das Forças Armadas, 1649-026, Lisboa, Portugal

paula.andre@iscte.pt

Key words: Lisbon, Landfill, Street, Alignment

A long term study of the urban archeology Lisbon, the kingdom's main city since the reign of D. Afonso III who was an implementer of projects and exporter of practices, provides for a comprehensive understanding of Portugal's urban form or of the Portuguese roots of the urban form.

We propose to analyze, understand and interpret the urban identity based on the characterization of the substantive elements that compose it as a morphological palimpsest, in other words, those that can still be perceived in the long evolution process of Lisbon's urban form.

As "the city's form is the mapping of its history"<sup>1</sup>, we adopt a multidisciplinary methodology that applies the transversality of the city's physical and conceptual history, linking different knowledge areas such as, Geography, History, Archaeology, Architecture, Urban Development, in an open dialogue throughout history; more specifically, the constant overthrowing of royal power, religious control, municipal action and private intervention in an on-going bid to elevate the city. This transversality is also articulated and crossed with different archives of information sources, notably on cartography, iconographic representations, notary records, municipal ordinances and other written documents.

Our study will focus on the evolution process of the urban composition, starting objectively from current Lisbon as a primary source, using history in its Greek etymological sense, that is, from a "seeing" or "knowing"<sup>2</sup> perspective, and working on an active past. On one hand, we focus on the shoreline and subsequent landfills which correspond to the expansion of the city on the river in the eras of D. Dinis, D. Fernando, D. Manuel I, D. José I and in the 20th century; this always represented a new growth engine for the city and was where attractive development centers were placed, leading to the form of the city we inherited. On the other hand, a set of streets is selected (*Rua Nova*, *Rua Nova d'El Rei*, *Rua Direita das Portas de Santa Catarina*, *Rua Nova de Almada*, *Rua dos Ourives da Prata*), structural and active

---

<sup>1</sup> Texto de J. M. Hernández León na obra de Terán F (2009) *El pasado activo: del uso interesado de la historia para el entendimiento y la construcción de la ciudad*, Akal, Madrid, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Pinto, L. (2009), A cidade etimologizada : os sentidos acerca do espaço urbano nas Etymologiae de Isidoro de Sevilha, *Archai*, n.3, Julho, p.107-118.

axes of the "urban morphogenesis"<sup>3</sup>, preferred stages for the never-ending making and remaking of the city.

This morphological evolution will be achieved through a regressive analysis going back to the reign of King D. Dinis, "the first moment of decisive intervention in the urban setting"<sup>4</sup>, the historic period of the Middle Ages that consolidated the city's future. An interpretation will be made that revolves around both the practice and consolidation of the "alignment law" or so-called "practical and tangible news"; this is a true lesson of fieldwork and a reflection on the rationale underlying the action of what we call the straight line matrix<sup>5</sup>, understanding the intelligent and sensitive flexibility of the functional regularity as seminal.

The analysis of the city-making process reveals the intervention that took place in the city, most of which involved works on pre-existing structures, remaking and renovating as opposed to works done from scratch so that the city emerges as an experimental theater of city-making. Method prolonged over time, materialized in space and recorded in Manuel da Maia's *Dissertação*. The urban program is not only the implementation of a previous model but also what derives from a careful and affective interpretation of the territory's physical nature, from which the composition's diversity would result, exposing a clear pragmatic and programmatic spirit that is both erudite and vernacular.

The ultimate goal of this approach is to obtain a topographic interpretation of the city's evolution intersected with a culturalist versus progressive reading of contemporary practice; one that contemplates an urban morphology prospective of the capital's territory and considers that historical knowledge "at a time of transition"<sup>6</sup> must be an operative tool when intervening in today's city.

---

<sup>3</sup> Desmarais, G. (1995) *La morphogenese de Paris. Des origines à la Revolution*, Paris, l'Harmattan.

<sup>4</sup> Silva, J. (2006) Lisboa Medieval, breves reflexões, *Revista de História da Arte*, FCSH-UNL, Lisboa, nº 2, p.37-42, p.40.

<sup>5</sup> André, P. (2010) A pré-existência do Cardo / Decumanus no Plano Pombalino e a sua herança na Lisboa Contemporânea. Oliveira, F.; Oliveira, J.; Patrocínio, M., ed. lit., *VII Congresso Internacional da APEC. Espaços e Paisagens. Antiguidade Clássica e Heranças Contemporâneas*, Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Clássicos; Centro de Estudos Clássicos e Humanísticos da Universidade de Coimbra, Vol. 3, p. 265-277. <https://bdigital.sib.uc.pt/jspui/handle/123456789/56>

<sup>6</sup> Mészáros, I. (2008) O desafio e o fardo do tempo histórico, *Política e Sociedade*, nº 13, Outubro de 2008, p. 17-33.