

The “*Ribeira*” as Idea of Portuguese city, Genesis, Shape and Sedimentation of the Urban Layout¹

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Abstract

One of the issues in the contemporary debate concerns with the fate of urban territories in the 21th century. How will the city evolve and how the actions of time or the Man can contribute to the consolidation of the urban fabric, now characterized by discontinuity and standardization principles where new parts emerge metastasized, broken, scattered and fragmented, secondarily the public space for a residual nature and the physical links almost exclusively for network accessibility.

Thus, it is accepted as hypothesis the observation of the city built during the long time, where the values of the spatial form of the city reside, which used as a teaching object may set up a way to overcome the contemporary difficulty of the production of the city.

The present work focuses on the study of the physical component of the city and is rooted on the tradition of studies on urban morphology, considering the space as something that is analyzed from its form and the urban fabric from the shape of its constituent elements. As such, it focuses on the urban layout as an analytical and two-dimensional representation of the public form of the city

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The study considers the consolidated urban space of the Portuguese urban context, a limited universe but with very different natures, and proposes a systematization of the spatial matrices of the urban layout, based on the deduction of the phenomena that are in the genesis of the city and that act in the formative process, in the principles where the systems of composition are rooted, in the evaluation of the effect of time and finally infers about the relationship of the urban layout with the construction of the built fabric.

Methodologically, the work uses the inventory built on the context of the Forma Urbis Lab, utilized as a representative database of the diversity of cities in the national territory, which are selected according their state of evolution and morphological, typological and geographical specificity. Consequently, for each city a study area is isolated, from which a graphic restitution of its urban layout is drawn for comparable samples at the present state. From those a classification is undertaken based on parameters that consider: (1) the influence of the *locus*, (2) the generator elements, (3) the evolutionary process, (4) the historical-typological process, (5) the production manner, (6) the composition systems and, additionally, (7) the sizing of the constituent elements in quantitative and absolute terms, thereby establishing the differences between the identified phenomena.

Using the type-morphological analysis we put on evidence the morphological similarities of the urban layouts which in its genesis support the various urban phenomena. Thus, using the comparative method different artefacts are identified, described and related, grouped in according to their attributes and the structural affinities that support the organization of common spatial matrices of the urban layout are defined - the constitution of types.

In addition, we use analytic and interpretive drawings that allow the organizing of types and establish a synthetic descriptive system of the Portuguese city layout through the construction of a typological framework.

At this seminar, in particular, we present the part of the developed work, whose purpose is to reveal the meaning of the "Ribeira" in the specific cultural context of the urban layout at Portuguese matrix, while idea of city and as a composition system that persists over 500 years of urbanistic production.

Thus, we propose the characterization and description of the morphological principles that inform the production of the "Ribeira" through the conceptual exercise of comparison of the coastal cities layout, considering Lisbon as a place of experimentation of urban models that

overlap in a slow evolutionary process, phased and complex, where morphological principles have settled and have been transported to other contexts where it is possible to isolate morphological paradigms. One of these paradigms corresponds to the consolidation phase of the “*Ribeira*” and the stabilization of the harbour city concept. The other stems from the transformation of the “*Ribeira*” and the use of the pre-designed layout in the production process of urban form, within a specific intervention in a specific moment imposed by the need to rebuild the earthquake ruined city.

Regarding the metamorphosis of Lisbon, it interests to evaluate the relation between the composition principles that are maintained and the profound modification on the configuration of the “*Ribeira*” layout, namely the coherence between "initial" and "final" situation, demonstrating the influence which it expressed at different moments in the production of cities, which began symbolically with overseas expansion and the systematic creation of urban layouts until the present.

The “*Ribeira*” remains throughout this period as a network of public spaces structured from the relation of the city with the water and it reveals persistently as an essential component of the morphological matrix of Portuguese coastal cities.

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