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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/15941
DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/15941>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

PUBLIC SPACE AND MONUMENTAL ARCHITECTURE

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 28 October 2022

Final Accepted: 30 November 2022

Published: December 2022

Key words:-

Architecture, Climate Change, Public Space, Sustainability, Urban Regeneration

Abstract

The Belém Tower was initiated in 1515, thus being built the last fortress, a military defence mechanism strategically placed on Tagus, but it also served as a protection to the biggest monastery built, the Monastery and Church of Jeronimo's. Paulo Pereira emphasises that this reason explains "the morphology of the Tower and its ornamental opulence, which both accorded with current taste and was suited to its location on the bank of the river".

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Introduction:-

Concluding the Previous articles about this theme with the title "The Ephemerality between the Scenographic and Monumental Architecture" part I and part II are our vision that the Monumentality of Architecture is also assigned in Public Space. In this Scenario we realise that Belém Tower and her opulence appears not just because it's a military defense building, but also because the Public Space that surrounds the building is important.

The Context of Belém Tower

The Belém Tower was initiated in 1515, thus being built the last fortress, a military defence mechanism strategically placed on Tagus, but it also served as a protection to the biggest monastery built, the Monastery and Church of Jeronimo's. Paulo Pereira emphasises that this reason explains "the morphology of the Tower and its ornamental opulence, which both accorded with current taste and was suited to its location on the bank of the river, already being a place of monumental grandeur."¹

The Tower has heraldic decoration motifs, such as the armillary sphere, the king's personal emblem which assumes an important relevance in the Manueline style rhetoric and in presenting a personal and individual mark in the king's works. Later interpretations on the armillary sphere state the presence of King Manuel in the polarity represented by 'Hope', the hope in a new conquered world and in the expansion of Christianity, and the 'sphere', the cosmological vision of the world².

The relationship established between discoveries and Monuments is superficial. The replacement in the Monument of Jeronimos (Fig. 6) of the Order of Christ, highly relevant in Tomar where Prince Henry was the Grand Master, with St Jerome's Order, a contemplative order with relevance in Spain, can be perfectly framed within King Manuel's political goals, towards the unification of Iberian Peninsula³.

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Fig.1:- Jerónimos, the South Church door, Photo from Márionovais, 1954, in Galeria da Biblioteca de Arte da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, [CFT015.208.ic]

It is assumed as a King Manuel's work, which means, as a political work⁴.

“He wanted a powerful piece of propaganda in the shape of a Great monastic house”⁵

On 17th July 1517, a Papal Bull “named the monastery as the mother house of the Hieronymites Order in Portugal”⁶ and the chief of the Order were transferred to the Monastery of Belem. On April 1517, according to King Manuel's testament, the monument is declared as a royal pantheon (thus abandoning Monastery of Batalha). Upon the King's death, in 1521, the work was not yet completed but it was already considered “an imperishable work”⁷. The work stood as an enormous Monument, the church and the dormitories, (the initial dormitories of the St. Jerome's friars would still be the dormitories of the Order of Christ friars, in provisional facilities set near Prince Henry's old church). Undone would remain the ambition of building a temple-palace, a metaphor of King Solomon's temple, which will elevate the king to both king and priest⁸ and intended to communicate a country's grandeur.

The discoveries have a history far more complex than the will to expand the territory, in the Jerónimos, lays the mystery of the expansion of faith written in stone, in a complex and hermetical manner. The quest for the relation between architecture, man, nature and their dreams.

The Built Urban Space

The adjacent space to the Jerónimos (Fig. 2) was much altered since the 17th century, with the most significant changes happening in the 19th century (Fig. 3).



Fig. 2:- Plan of Lisbon, Topographic map of Lisbon, 1856-1858 – drawing by César Goulard, Francisco Goulard and Carlos Pezerat, under direction of Filipe Folque; Coleção de 25 folhas 644x944 mm, 1857 e 1858 in: Gabinete de Estudos Olisiponenses.

The first alteration made to the riverside happens in 1678, with the construction of a jetty, which was not parallel to the Jerónimos, (King Pedro II) to protect the Belém beach from tidal forces¹¹, but the problem prevailed until King João V's reign, during which some general improvement plans are put forward. These include Carlos Mardel's Plan, around 1750, which aimed towards the shaping of the riverside from the Terreiro do Paço to Belém, including a public walkway along the margin and several spaces dedicated to naval construction, workshops for a new 'Arsenal da Marinha'¹², planning for a big port in Lisbon.

In the final half of the 19th century, many projects came forward considering the pier. The embankment works began on 1859, while there was some discussion regarding the plans that would alter the river's irregular margin, now handling the construction of a new jetty parallel to the convent, finished in 1872¹³. This area begins to be gardened and, in the beginning of the 20th century, it has 5 small monuments: to Bartolomeu dias, to King João II, to King Manuel I, to Vasco da Gama and to Prince Henry the navigator, which disappear with the Exhibition of the Portuguese World; there was still a Calvary near the Jerónimos church's southern door symbolizing Vasco da Gama's embarkation¹⁴. This riverside area suffers a great morphological and functional restructuring, which alters its meaning and its relation with the city. According to the decree of 9th April 1887, the Real Companhia dos Caminhos-de-ferro was given permission to develop and exploit direct line between Alcântara, Belém and, from here, to Cascais¹⁵. Apart from the embankment which gave it a rectilinear margin, a railway track was also built, thus enhancing people and goods mobility.



Fig. 3:- Plan of Lisbon, drawing by engineer Silva Pinto e Alberto de Sá Correia, 1904-1911 in: Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, Gabinete de estudos Olisiponenses.

Commerce grew stronger, an important example of such fact is the fair in Belém, which took place in the Jerónimos square and became regulated by 1871 public notice. The Belém Market was built, the works began in 1880 but it was demolished in 1940, to make room for the Exhibition of the Portuguese World. The famous house of the Pastéis de Belém, started in 1841, sells the pastries created according to the monastic gastronomic tradition, which, as the Monastery faced some troubled times, began selling these pastries, since 1739, in Rua de S. Jerónimo (now Rua de Belém), now known as 'pastéis de Belém'. The house was part of a set of cafés and restaurants which started their activity with the increase in the local commerce.

On the 31st of October of 1887, the king placed the first stone for the shaping of the river line. Other infrastructures were also developed such as the Cais do Sodré's Railway Station, a port terminal connected to the railway. The entire area between the railway track and the river, since the embankment construction, became propriety of Lisbon's Port Administration.¹⁶

The work was developed under supervision of French engineer Pierre Hildernet Hersent. On 1910, with the implementation of the Republic, the royal Palace of Belém is transformed into a Presidential palace. On the same year, the Jerónimos and the Torre de Belém are classified as national Monuments. The most emblematic monuments are classified and, among these, are the Jerónimos monument and the Tower of Belém¹⁷. In 1923 comes the conclusion of the embankments and the margin's shaping.

In the spaces built, appeared some fishing and industrial nuclei, a clear demonstration of economical growth. From there until 1940, the place demonstrated a clear economic growth, through commerce and the settlement of factories.

Thus, the urban set is the result of continuities and discontinuities, intrinsic to a successive unplanned growth. The monumental presence and the industrial vitality are entwined in the same urban space of the capital and this situation endures during the 20th century¹⁸. For the Commemorations of the Centennials, the Government performed a series

of works and infrastructures, such as the national Stadium, and new roads, such as the road to Cascais. Around this time, trees were planted over a vast area, Monsanto. The space in front of the Jerónimos was chosen for the Exhibition of the Portuguese World¹⁹. The urban intervention that took place for the exhibition not only had the intention of linking the river to the city but also of provide that “the Jerónimos looked, once again, at the River Tagus, the universal road of our civilization”²⁰. Between the Tagus and the Jerónimos was left the pre-existent railway track and the riverside road to Cascais, also built at that time. The railway track stands, to this day, as an urban barrier, although several intervention plans tried to eliminate its impact on the space in front of the Jerónimos. This barrier does not impede the 1940 exhibition.

After the Exhibition: Renovating Public Spaces

The impact created by the exhibition on this space, regarding the physical transformations, still remains to this day. Conceived as ephemeral, it was neither such a thing, not even immediately after, nor can it be analysed as an ephemeral event, because it determined physical alterations to the space, which still linger today (Fig. 4). Its presence is there, in the urban fabric, particularly in Prac, a do Império and some small buildings, although with many contradictions in time. It still endures because the project determined some guidelines which favoured implementations such as Centro Cultural de Belém, the water mirror permanency and its relation with the dock, the gardens, the conception behind the Monument to the discoveries, only to name a few aspects.

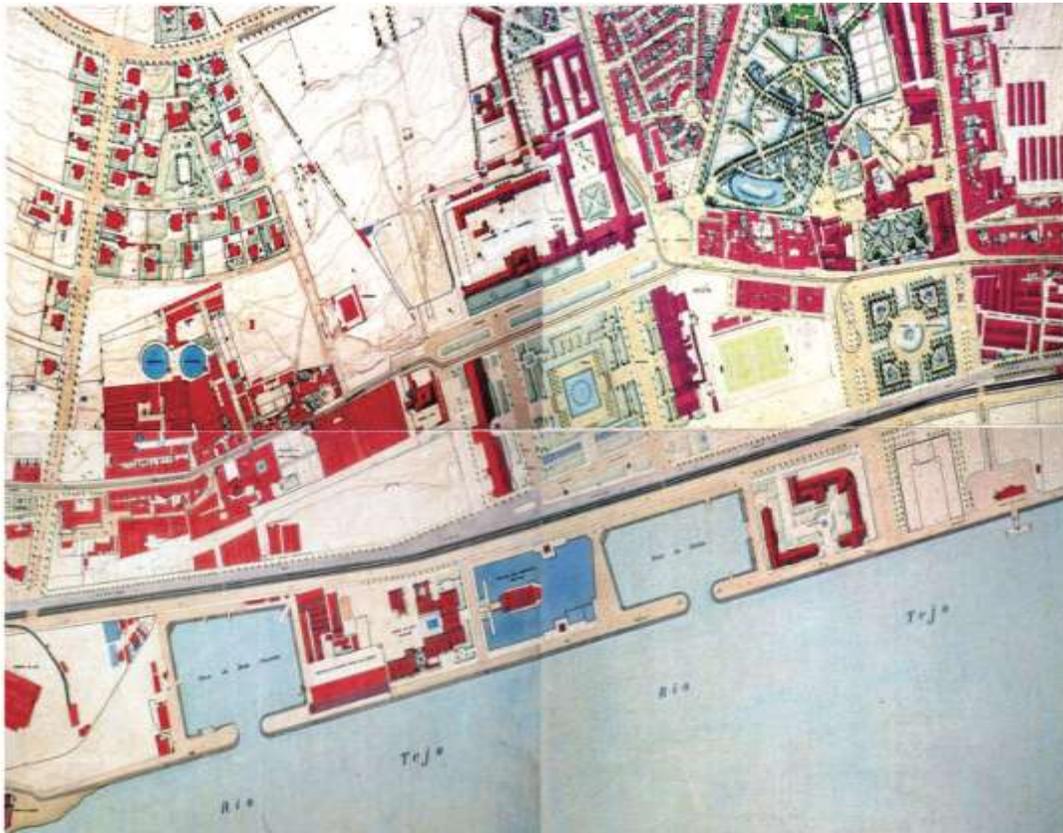


Fig. 4:- Belém after the Exhibition of the Portuguese World, Survey and drawing by Instituto Geográfico e Cadrastral, 1948-1949: in Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, Gabinete de estudos Olissiponenses

This phase will be perceived as the ephemeral attitude which becomes permanent through the drawing of the public space, considering Prac, a do Império as the centre of urban transformation. This is not an attempt to break away from the relationship with architecture, with pre-existent buildings as the Jerónimos or created for the Exhibition like the Monument to the discoveries including some minor constructions at the Museum of Popular Art. One should also emphasise the importance of ephemeral drawings, freer from preconceived concepts and responsibilities that are rather important for the development of ideas for architecture. The study cases will dwell the research question, but, at this stage, we will analyse what happened after the Exhibition and the relations between

permanence and necessary transformation in the buildings and in the public space. The exhibition was closed to the public after a decision made by Salazar and, as it was published in an editorial dated 18th november 1940, in “diário de notícias”, the exhibition was a page in History, “a lesson, a memoir, and it served no other end” Margarida Acciaiuoli recalls²¹ what was then written “an ephemeral figure dies the day it’s born” and it is accomplished in the “mission which was its destiny”.

Conclusion:-

For the local press,²² the exhibition did bring some good things to Belém and several authors agree with this opinion.

Some pavilions were to be demolished because they were ephemeral and those with a steel frame would remain as, for example, those parallel to Praça do Império and the Monument to the discoveries would also be conserved²³.

In February 1941, a cyclone destroyed some ephemeral constructions, which eventually hurried the exhibition’s demolition process. Prince Henry’s statue ended up falling unto the river¹⁰⁹ and, later, was dismantled. Many Pavilions were effectively demolished, others endured and others were still reused and even occupied for a short time, while the future of the entire space was still being analysed. After the exhibition, a large area was urbanised but, behind the Jerónimos, several detached houses were built, which currently serve, for the most part, as embassies (Fig. 4). A commission was created to study the space occupied by the exhibition and to perform some works on Praça do Império²⁴. CAPOPI²⁵ - Comissão Administrativa do Plano de Obras da Praça do Império (lit. “Praça do Império’s Work Plan Administrative Commission”) – was a technical commission in charge of preparing, together with Lisbon’s City Hall (CML), Belém’s area renovation. This commission saw its work area extended outside the area occupied by 1940’s exhibition, becoming responsible for the works in Praça do Império (Fig. 5), according to the contract established on 12th december 1942.



Lisbon’s City Hall performed some improvement works on the lake and on the water mirror, both designed for the celebratory year. CAPOPI continues the restoration works and maintains some decorative elements belonging to the centennial exhibition.

References:-

- ¹ Pereira, Paulo, Torre de Belém , Scala Publishers , (Ministério da Cultura and IPPAR Instituto Português do Património Arquitectónico) 2005, ISBN 1857593111, pg 23
- ² Pereira, Paulo, Torre de Belém , Scala Publishers , (Ministério da Cultura and IPPAR Instituto Português do Património Arquitectónico) 2005, ISBN 1857593111, pg 52
- ³ During the Philippine occupation, between 1580-1640, the Order is neutralised by the dominium of the kings Filipes of Spain.
- ⁴ King Manuel aspired to unify the Portuguese kingdom with the Kingdom of Castile.
- ⁵ Pereira, Paulo, Jerónimos Abbey of Santa Maria , Scala Publishers , (Ministério da Cultura and IPPAR Instituto Português do Património Arquitectónico) 2002, ISBN 1857591798, pg 11
- ⁶ Pereira, Paulo, Jerónimos Abbey of Santa Maria , Scala Publishers , (Ministério da Cultura and IPPAR Instituto Português do Património Arquitectónico) 2002, ISBN 1857591798, pg 26
- ⁷ Dicionário da História de Lisboa, direcção de Francisco Santana, pg 154
- ⁸ Figures of King Manuel and of King Salomon are displayed in the cloister
- ⁹ Reinforcing this will was also the political idea of unification with Spain , he married his first wife's sister, Queen Isabel (widow of King Afonso , son of King João II and died in Saragoza on 28th August 1498), Queen Maria de Castilla.
- ¹⁰ According to Paulo Pereira , Boitaca faced some problems with King Manuel since the military disaster in Marmora and João de Castilho , who have performed some important works like the Abbey in Braga, in 1509, Viseu's Abbey in 1513 and Tomar's Convent of Christ, in 1515, answered the complexity in the vault's construction.
- ¹¹ Ramos, Paulo Oliveira , do Porto do Restello , a-par-de-Lisboa ao Cais de Belém in Centro Cultural de Belém , Concurso para o projecto do Centro Cultural de Belém , Catalogo, Lisboa Instituto Português do Património cultural 1989, pg 118
- ¹² Nabais, António e Ramos, Paulo, Porto Lisboa – Subsídios para o estudo das obras, equipamentos e embarcações na perspectiva da Arqueologia Industrial, Lisboa, AGPL, 1995 in Lisboa a cidade e o rio, Concurso de Ideias para a Renovação da Zona Ribeirinha de Lisboa , AAP 1998 Legal deposit 22510/88, pg 6
- ¹³ Néu, João B. M., Em volta da Torre de Belém Vol . III, World Monuments Fund – Portugal, Junho 2006, ISBN 972-99625-3-0 Legal deposit 244092/06, pg 317. Works performed by the Head of Casa Pia at that time , José Maria Eugénio de Almeida . The space created would be a little further south from the current luminous fountain . Belém's City Hall decided to call this space 'Praça Infante d. Henrique' (lit. "Prince Henry Square"), a 1886 itinerary called it 'Praça Vasco da Gama' (lit "Vasco da Gama Square") and later it became known as Alameda dos Jerónimos (lit "Jerónimos Lane").
- ¹⁴ Néu, João B. M., Em volta da Torre de Belém Vol . III, World Monuments Fund – Portugal, June 2006, ISBN 972-99625-3-0 Legal deposit 244092/06, pg 318
- ¹⁵ Ramos Paulo Oliveira , do Porto do Restello , a-par-de-Lisboa ao Cais de Belém in Centro Cultural de Belém , Concurso para o projecto do Centro Cultural de Belém , Catálogo, Lisbon, Instituto Português do Património cultural 1989, pg. 117
- ¹⁶ This Administration made the infrastructure's management difficult, from the sanitation works to the access facilities in the western area of the river. To the east, after Expo 98 took place, the city was left with a bigger connection with Tagus. As for the sanitation facilities, there is a treatment station to the east of Alcântara, another to the north, which solve the problems until the airport area ; Belém is on a low area and still hasn't managed to solve the sanitation problem.
- ¹⁷ The Monasteries of Batalha and Alcobaça, the Convent of Christ in Tomar , the Abbeys of Guarda , Lisbon, Évora and Coimbra were also classified as national Monuments.
- ¹⁸ It was a gas factory until the first half of the 20th century; a part of the area occupied by Belém's cultural centre was a fishnet factory and the following nucleus, currently converted into a University, was also a set of factories.
- ¹⁹ The space behind the Jerónimos was also under consideration in what concerns its use . One of the reasons for this consideration was the presence of the Jerónimos Monument as an important scenery for the exhibition , another because it was an expectant space which could be used; nevertheless, some demolitions were considered in favour of the Jerónimos, thus demonstrating that the choice of the space didn't just happen because it was vacant.

²⁰Castro, Augusto, Revista dos Centenários, Year 2, no. 6

²¹Margarida Acciaiouli, As exposições do Estado novo, p. 193

²²newspaper Ecos de Belém, 1940.

²³Margarida Acciaiouli, As exposições do Estado novo, p. 193

²⁴Margarida Acciaiouli, As exposições do Estado novo, p. 193

²⁵Arquivo do Ministério das Obras Públicas – Comissão Administrativa das Obras da Praça do Império – CAOPI

²⁶ Commission named by the minister for Public Works, Duarte Pacheco, of which Cottinelli Telmo was a part and, from 1955 onwards, Cristino da Silva.