

## SETTLERS AND PEASANTS. THE NEW RURAL SETTLEMENTS OF 20th CENTURY PORTUGUESE INTERNAL COLONIZATION\*

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A discussion of internal colonization in Portugal almost immediately point towards the action carried out by *Junta de Colonização Interna* (JCI) [Internal Colonization Department] in the mid-twentieth century, and to the colonies that this organism implemented. This article will deal mostly with JCI because its action, which is, by and large, unknown in Portugal, deserves to be acknowledged, but also because it offers a universe that is at once exemplary and well-delimited in terms of the exploratory study that we have proposed to undertake. Furthermore, to speak of internal colonization in Portugal points to the ancestral practices and experiences of a country which, given its historical bond to the sea, had to fight against the desertification of its hinterland for centuries.

It also points to the multiple parallel forms of construction of boroughs and small urban nuclei that ensued from the 1935 *Lei de Reconstituição Económica* (Law for Economic Reconstitution) (1), which contributed to the

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1. Law nr. 1914, of 25 May 1935 – called *Lei de Reconstituição Económica* – was the first economic plan of the Portuguese State. It defined priorities and a framework for preferential areas of public and private investment in the national economy. From the point of view of Portuguese urban development, this law was key in that it provided a framework for all infrastructural, equipment and urban planning investment until 1950. In 1953 the first stimulus plan was put in place in the wake of the Marshall plan – which Portugal joined in 1948 –, which required the type of economic planning that included this kind of plan. Cfr. L.F. Costa, P. Lains, S.M. Miranda, *História Económica de Portugal. 1143-2010*, A Esfera dos Livros, Lisbon, 2011, in part. pp. 382-384.

fixation of various populations under the pretext of large public works projects, (such as housing for technicians and workers at dam construction sites), the reorganizing of relevant touristic resorts (such as seaside areas and thermal villages) or the building of residential neighbourhoods serving military camps. All of which, we believe, share a great deal in common with the architectural and urban experiments of *Junta de Colonização Interna*.

Indeed, the Portuguese landscape was marked by the interventions of the so-called *Estado Novo* (New State). The tree species favoured at the time, such as *chamaecyparys lawsoniana*, *liquidambar styraciflua* or *quercus rubra*, became indelibly linked to specific architectural languages apparent in the interventions mentioned above, but also in the typologies of houses for forest guards and road maintenance workers, primary schools and inns or community meeting houses (2), which contributed decisively to the reconstruction of the country's image.

### 1. The baldios issue

As for the agricultural colonies, which constitute the principal object at this stage of our research, it is important to clarify what were the circumstances leading to their official implementation and what was the origin of the lands they are associated to. This would necessarily point to the awareness of a need to launch an agrarian reform and to the inability to implement it until the revolution of 25 April 1974. The pernicious effect to the Portuguese economy of the state of abandon of part of the agricultural land in the large estates of the South was known at least since the 19th century. However, the opposition of those interested, backed by the press, prevented any direct action on those tracts of land (3). In the absence of political strength to overcome the resistance to any attempt at an agrarian reform, measures were limited to an intervention on the *baldios*, i.e., the communal, or communally used, lands (4).

At least since the First Republic (5), there had been legislation regulating the agricultural use of communal lands, mostly in the expectation that these would be fertile enough to help address the endemic problem of scarcity in the

2. Community meeting houses, «Casas do Povo» in Portuguese, were established in 1933 to govern the organization of rural work and provide social assistance according to the corporatist principles of the *Estado Novo*.

3. *História de Portugal*. vol. XI. *Da Monarquia à República*, A.H. Oliveira Marques ed., Presença, Lisboa, 1991, p. 70; J.L. Castro Caldas, *Política de Colonização Interna. A implementação das colónias agrícolas da Junta de Colonização Interna*. Instituto Superior de Agronomia da Universidade Técnica de Lisboa, Lisbon, 1988, p. 4.

4. J. Gralheiro, *Comentário à Nova Lei dos Baldios*. Almedina, Lisbon, 2002, pp. 23-24.

5. *Lei de Aproveitamento dos Baldios* (Law for the use of communal lands), 7 August 1913.

national agricultural output. One of the solutions found for the distribution of the lands thus obtained was to institute the notion of «family, rustic or urban smallholding» (6), with a view to «increase production and reinforce small-scale family agriculture» (7). The «family smallholding (*casal de família*)» was defined as «a house, or part of a house, serving as dwelling to the institutor or to the beneficiary and respective families, with one or more attached lands contiguous to it or at a distance not greater than one kilometre» (8). These smallholdings were indivisible, at least for an initial period, and were allotted to «poor, well-behaved» heads of family.

For more than a decade a series of legislative acts sought to regulate and implement the cultivation of the *baldios*. In 1925, after several preliminary studies, these resulted in the establishment of the first agricultural colony. The Milagres colony, located in Leiria, consists of three nuclei: Triste Feia, Bidoeira and Alcaidaria e Mata, of which only the later still remains (9). Inaugurated on 18 July 1926, with four smallholdings, this colony remained as a unique experiment for more than a decade. The second agricultural colony, Martim Rei, in Sabugal, would only be started in 1937. Completed in 1942, Martim Rei was already a result of the action of the recently created Junta de Colonização Interna (10).

In fact, it would be necessary to wait for the creation of JCI to have a listing and survey of the *baldios* (1939) (11) and for studies to be carried out on the agricultural potential of their soils (1941) (12). It was concluded at the time that soil quality in most *baldios* was not suitable for agriculture. Nevertheless, wherever lands were deemed viable, several settlements were installed – in the *baldios* area of the centre and north of the country – such as Martim-Rei (Sabugal), Gafanha (Ilhavo), Barroso (Montalegre and Boticas) Alvão (Vila Pouca de Aguiar) and Boalhosa (Paredes de Coura). In the south, only one colony, Pegões (Montijo), would be installed, albeit in agricultural land that belonged to the State (Fig. 1).

This form of colonization had its detractors, who considered it as an undesirable fragmentation of the territory that rendered it less productive. Others maintained that the poor population of the North West, who were migrating to Brazil at the time, should be channelled to the fertile lands of the South, a view that was immediately opposed in the press, with some proposing

6. Decree 7033 of 1920.

7. J.L. Castro Caldas, *Política...*, cit., p. 5.

8. J.L. Castro Caldas, *Política...*, cit., p. 6. Originally published in Decree 7127 of 17.11.1920.

9. S.M. Lopes, *De Baldio a Colonato. A Colónia Agrícola dos Milagres, Leiria (1925-1950)*. MA thesis. ISCTE, Lisbon, 2003, p. 46.

10. Bylaw 27207 of 16 November 1936.

11. Junta de Colonização Interna, *Reconhecimento dos Baldios do Continente*, Ministério da Economia, Junta de Colonização Interna, Lisbon 1939.

12. Junta de Colonização Interna, *Plano Geral de Aproveitamento dos Baldios Reservados*. Ministério da Economia, Junta de Colonização Interna, Lisbon, 1941.



Fig. 1 – Portuguese agricultural colonies, new settlements promoted by Junta de Colonização Interna. Localization map. (Source: Isabel Matias' marcation on a map of Amorim Girão, *Atlas de Portugal, Instituto de Estudo Geográficos, Coimbra, 1958 (1941)*, p. 2)

that they should be sent to the Portuguese overseas territories instead (13). The 1940 *Exposição do Mundo Português* (Portuguese World Exhibition), somehow echoes that position, while it can also be read as an action of

13. *História...*, cit., p. 70.

propaganda and recruitment of people for the overseas colonies. However, it was only from the 1950s onwards that Portugal would seek new ways of promoting the settling of those territories, namely through the establishing of agricultural settlements for the white population arriving from Portugal. The most important of these were Cela and Matala, in Angola, and Limpopo in Mozambique (14).

Back to continental Portugal, it is also important to note that the experiment of the colonies was finally limited to an insignificant area of all communal lands, the *baldios*, most of which would be used for the reforestation of the country and saw their management transferred to the State, which did not happen without the opposition of local population.

In his novel *Quando os Lobos Uivam* (When the wolves howl), writer Aquilino Ribeiro gives voice to their feelings:

the hills are ours. They are truly ours. We want them to stay that way. It is our right [...] Those people from Lisbon want to cover them with pinewoods...? Let them plant the pinewoods in the parks and gardens that are covered with useless pavements and lawns... (15).

## 2. The action of Junta de Colonização Interna

Created in 1936, the *Junta de Colonização Interna* inherited the issue of the *baldios* from the Ministry of Agriculture, along with the responsibility of promoting the development of agriculture in Portugal. With a mission to implement the internal colonization policy of the *Estado Novo* by promoting measures to develop national agricultural output, JCI began by obtaining actual knowledge of the territory – thence the aforementioned surveys and studies – to then put in place solutions such as agricultural settlements.

The work that was carried out included an attempt at understanding the reasons for the failure of the Milagres colony, a pilot experiment of the First Republic which «for thirteen years [...] led a dim and miserable life; looking more like a field-hospital than a centre of salubrious rural activity where the families of good farmers could thrive» (16). The causes for this situation were thought to be the inadequacy of the crops to the soil and the region, the lack of economic conditions for the settlers to reach their objective, as well as a poor initial recruitment of the selected population. Indeed, a 1936 report described them as consisting mostly of alcoholics, unhealthy old people, professional beggars, «cattle dealers» and only a few farmers. The ensuing restructuring

14. M.M. Fonte, *Urbanismo e Arquitectura em Angola: de Norton de Matos à Revolução*. PhD thesis, Universidade Técnica de Lisboa, Lisbon, 2007, p. 59.

15. A. Ribeiro, *Quando os Lobos Uivam*, Bertrand, Lisbon 1958. This work earned the author a judicial process by the State.

16. S.M. Lopes, *De Baldio a Colonato...*, cit., p. 73. Originally published in *Projecto de Reorganização da Colónia*. Junta da Colonização Interna, Lisbon, 1937.

thus implied that out of the twelve initial settlers seven were forced to leave the colony.

It should be noted that the diagnosis of the Milagres colony had consequences on the *modus operandi* of the JCI, namely concerning the selection of settlers – who now had to undergo a trial period to demonstrate their ability to own a smallholding (in perpetuity) (17) – and the awareness that the smallholding should have the conditions to feed the family without the need for other sources of income (18). On the other hand, it is known that JCI followed the experiments that were being carried out in other countries, namely in Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Belgium and France (19), although the extent of the influence of this knowledge requires further study.

In the case of the settlements that JCI implemented, it is possible to detect a concern with ensuring the commitment of the settlers, who were now selected with renewed rigor and to suit the profile of the ideal *Estado Novo* citizen: the «head of a rural, “healthy”, strong family and a “pillar of nationality”» (20). In fact, the agricultural settlements did serve to counter the formation of a rural proletariat unwanted by the regime in favour of the integration of poor families that would fit the image of the young, hard-working, compliant head of family with the moral profile sought by a regime whose motto was «God, Fatherland and Family». In the case of Pegões, for instance, the candidates should be healthy, robust, non-alcoholics that fulfilled «conditions of physical aptitude and moral integrity» (21). In turn, upon the date of installation, the settlers were given a furnished house, agricultural implements, cattle, seeds and fertilizer. They were also loaned a sum of money considered adequate to the specific needs of each smallholding (22).

### 3. Urban form and landscape

Agricultural settlements, most of them comprising of several population nuclei, were almost all installed on mountain territory, on communal lands. In fact, the sole exception, corresponding to the largest planned colony, was

17. J.L. Castro Caldas, *Política...*, cit., p. 17.

18. S.M. Lopes, *De Baldio a Colonato...*, cit., p. 78.

19. JCI, *Alguns Aspectos Sumários de Problemas de Colonização na Itália, Suíça, Espanha e Bélgica. Síntese da legislação portuguesa de interesse para a colonização do continente* (1959); J.D. Vaz Pereira, J.B. Conceição Silva, A. da Silva Ferreira, *Visita de estudo aos serviços de emparcelamento da propriedade rústica de Espanha e França: relatório 1959*. Ministério da Economia, Secretaria de Estado da Agricultura, Junta de Colonização Interna, Lisbon, 1959.

20. J.L. Castro Caldas, *Política...*, cit., p. 21.

21. Lei 2014 de 27 de Maio de 1946.

22. Cfr. Provisional use licences in the different colonies and Law 2014 of 27 May 1946



Fig. 2 – Settlers houses. Vascões settlement of the agricultural colony of Boalhosa, Paredes de Coura, North of Portugal (Source: © Maria Helena Maia photo)

implemented on lands belonging to the State (23), in Pegões, in the south of the country, in a fertile area close to the Lezíria in the region of Ribatejo.

The agricultural smallholdings, installed in thirteen nuclei that constitute the six agricultural settlements implemented during the *Estado Novo*, correspond to around 500 households. However, not all the planned nuclei would actually be built, such as in the case of the Lameira do Real nucleus, in the Boalhosa agricultural settlement, which means that in the whole of the national territory only twelve nuclei were built. The various urban nuclei comprised not only the agricultural smallholdings, but also equipments for collective use, aside from the residences for teachers and priests. These equipments, essentially used for the education and training of the residents, included primary schools (for each sex), chapels and, in some cases, clinics. However, in some colonies not all of the planned equipments were built, such as in the Vascões nucleus, where the clinic and the chapel were never constructed (Fig. 2). According to the law, an agricultural *casal agrícola* (smallholding), included a dwelling «with annexes adequate to

23. On lands donated to the State by philanthropist José Rovisco Pais: *A Colónia Agrícola de Santo Isidro de Pegões*. Câmara Municipal de Montijo, Montijo, 2013, p. 17.

rural work» (24) and lands sufficient to sustain the family. Therefore the implementing of these units defined, by and large, the structure of the planned population settlement. According to the agricultural and urban models defined at the time, which were the foundation for the building of these nuclei, JCI should maintain a service to provide the assistance required by the settlers not only to ensure the best possible cultivation and management of the smallholdings, but also to ensure the «physical, intellectual and moral health of the family» (25).

Aside from the aforementioned definition of the profile of the family of the prototypical settler to be selected, there was also a definition of the rules guiding the colonization techniques to be adopted that impacted the organization and allotment of agricultural land and thereby defined the structure of population settlement. In Vasco Lobo and Alfredo Mata Antunes' publication on rural dwellings (26), we have found models concerning the characteristics of population settlement and architecture that regard agricultural smallholdings. Although the first colony implemented by JCI followed the model of dispersed population distribution, fundamentally more adequate to the type of crops and agricultural production, with agricultural smallholdings within the perimeter of the holding, this settlement structure does not constitute the most widespread model. The architects who planned the majority of settlements chose a concentrated urban model, designed pragmatically, with dwellings either standing isolated or in pairs along thoroughfares that defined axes – along which stood equipments for collective use – that would outline the urban morphology of each nucleus. All these dwellings had yards, an aspect reminiscent of the urban model hailed by Frederic Le Play in *L'Organization du Travail*, which greatly influenced Patrick Geddes (27), and through him Lewis Mumford (28), who was well known in Portugal at the time.

The planning of the parcelling in each colony depended upon a series of technical aspects that were studied on a case-by-case basis by JCI technicians and covered the different elements relevant to the project at hand, such as topographic, agrologic and hydrologic surveys. All these factors were decisive to the programmed agrarian structure and to the design imposed on the landscape through the repetition of smallholding dwellings and their territorial distribution, which was simultaneously conditioned and defined by the physiographic characteristics, relief and pre-existing infrastructures.

24. Decree 36.709 of 5 January 1948.

25. J.L. Castro Caldas, *Política...*, cit., p. 18.

26. V. Lobo, A.M. Antunes, *Problemas Actuais da Pequena Habitação Rural*. Ministério das Obras Públicas, Direcção Geral da Urbanização, Centro de Estudos de Urbanismo, Coimbra, 1960.

27. Le Play's ideas influenced Patrick Geddes work *Cities in Evolution*, Williams & Norgate, London, 1915.

28. More specifically the work *The Culture of the Cities*, Harcourt, Brace & co., New York, 1938.

The matter of choosing the ideal type of population settlement for establishing agricultural settlements was far from consensual among the various technicians that were involved, so that the debate on nucleated versus dispersed habitat unfolded around both the features of dwelling location and the interpersonal relationships generated between families depending on proximity, which would enable a better human development of the settlers.

A publication of *Centro de Estudos de Urbanismo do Ministério das Obras Públicas* (Urban Studies Centre of the Ministry of Public Works) lists four options at the disposal of JCI for the organization of the rural homestead:

- a) dispersed habitat, in which the position of the dwelling is subordinated to the work place in a medium size holding (agricultural smallholding);
- b) semi-dispersed habitat, harmonizing reasons for proximity between centres of interest and work;
- c) pro-nucleated habitat, materializing the needs of neighbourhood living and basic equipment;
- d) nucleated habitat, accentuating those needs and making them prevail over factors of dispersion (29).

The order planned for these nuclei also addressed the double role of agricultural settlements both as civilizing agents and preservers of the traditions of rural Portugal (30).

The agricultural settlements national plan translated into few urban nuclei, unlike what happened in other European countries, namely in Spain and Italy. For this reason, the urban design experiments that were carried out do not allow for an in-depth, well-founded analysis of the characteristics at play due to their small-scale nature. It could be concluded that from the point of view and type of structure of population settlement these fall into two categories: dispersed population settlement (Martim Rei colony and the Faias nucleus of Pegões agricultural colony) and nucleated population settlement, despite some variations, with an urban form that adapts to relief and therefore varies between an axially defined type – with a central axis drawn by the main thoroughfares and more formally rigid characteristics (Aldeia Nova do Barroso and Lugar de S. Mateus nucleus, in Barroso agricultural colony, Vascões nucleus, in Boalhosa agricultural colony) – and a less regular, more organic structure adapted to the physiographic characteristics of the land (Pegões Velhos nucleus, in Pegões agricultural colony, Aldeia de Criande nucleus, in Barroso colony). A unique case is that of the Gafanha colony in Ilhavo, which shows a structure with a central nucleus, where all equipments are concentrated, combined with a clearly modern regular grid. However, the Figueiras nucleus, in Pegões agricultural colony, shows some resemblance to the later, as it is located in an area of leasehold land where the pre-existing structure is regular and therefore gave way to an orthogonal grid defined by large blocks (Fig. 3).

29. V. Lobo, A.M. Antunes, *Problemas Actuais...*, cit., p. 112.

30. J.L. Castro Caldas, *Política...*, cit., p. 39.

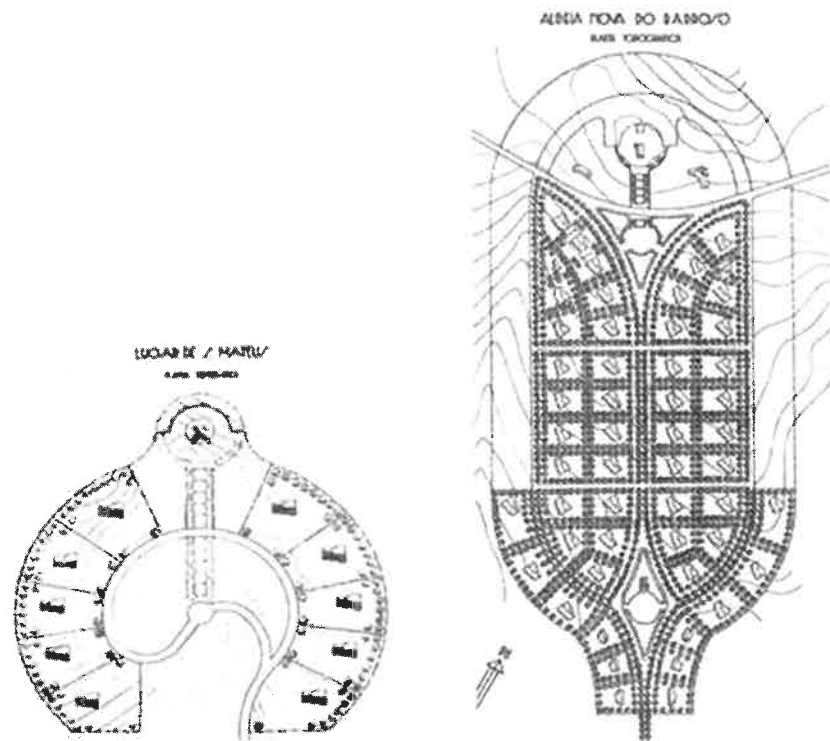


Fig. 3 – Two of the Barroso colony settlements: Lugar de S. Mateus and Aldeia Nova do Barroso (Source: J. Rapazote, 'Aldeias-Jardim' no concelho de Montalegre – O projecto da Junta de Colonização Interna para os baldios do Barroso, in «Revista de Geografia e Ordenamento do Território», 1 (2012), pp. 207-236)

The teams working for the agricultural settlements, and JCI as well, included landscape specialists. This fact translated into a careful landscape planning – both at the level of the colony's territory and the urban spaces –, which was reflected on the requalification of the region's landscape. The example of the design of the *Ordenamento Paisagístico e da Urbanização da Colónia Agrícola da Gafanha* (Landscape and urban planning of the Gafanha agricultural colony), by landscape architect António Campello, who produced careful and detailed studies, raises the problem of authorship, since the data currently available do not allow for a precise knowledge of the role of this author in the global project. Indeed, in the current stage of the work it is impossible to identify the authorship of most designs, which requires a systematic survey of the archives.

On the other hand, it is important to understand the relationships between the different specialities that were involved in the conception of each colony. For the time being, we have identified the participation of architects, landscape architects and agronomy engineers in the teams that carried out the urban,

agricultural and landscape planning and the construction and hydraulic projects. However, the responsibility of each technician in each colony project is yet to be established.

#### 4. Architectural forms

The *Junta de Colonização Interna* was committed to provide the settlers with the conditions necessary to the lifestyle they were expected to lead, which implied housing and equipments indispensable to the existence of the small communities that formed the agricultural colonies. In this process two attitudes can be identified in the architectural design approach: one closer to the vernacular tradition of the region and apparent in the designs for standard houses for the settlers; the other showing greater formal freedom resulting in examples of great modernity, which is apparent in the designs for collective use equipments.

In terms of housing, we believe that the experiments carried out by JCI must be read in the context of a generalized interest in vernacular architecture and the problems that rural housing presented. In fact, since the nineteenth century, Portugal had seen a growing interest in vernacular architecture, particularly in its rural dimension, which was seen as both a reserve of the national architectural tradition and identity, and a source of privileged inspiration for the reinvention of an architecture that would be unmistakably Portuguese. It is in this context that the whole matter of the *casa portuguesa* (Portuguese house) should be seen – in its double aspects of typological “identification” and architectural “invention” (31) – alongside with the evolution of the thought and practice linked to architecture that were to follow.

For almost a century, rural housing was a point of interest and discussion for a wide range of professionals. At least since the first ethnographic field works carried out in the late nineteenth century, a series of successive surveys were undertaken leading to a progressive deepening and updating of scientific research tools. This is why geographer Orlando Ribeiro, in his remarkable work *Portugal: o Mediterrâneo e o Atlântico* (Portugal: the Mediterranean and the Atlantic) (1945), paid special attention to popular rural housing. Around the same time, Portuguese anthropologists also started to attribute greater importance to the theme of housing. By 1947 they wanted to «carry out a global survey on this theme, analysing and studying the house in the complex variety of its architectural, ethnographic and historical aspects». In the following decade, numerous studies were published on various types of houses that should contribute towards a «planned global survey» (32).

31. M.H. Maia, *From the Portuguese House to the “Popular Architecture in Portugal”*: notes on the construction of Portuguese architectural identity, in «National Identities», vol. 14 (2012), issue 3, pp. 243-256.

32. The study of the traditional house became a veritable line of research for the Centro

In the mid 1950s, the architects also undertook a revision of their relationship to popular architecture. The graphic and photographic survey «Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional Portuguesa» (Survey on Regional Portuguese Architecture) paid particular attention to rural housing; the survey is in itself an important document in terms of the history of architecture as well as a record of a Portugal that began to disappear. The results were published in 1961 (33). Around the same time, at the Porto School of Fine Arts, theoretical theses for graduation in architecture started to emerge with themes such as *Urbanismo: Um Tema Rural* (Urban planning: a rural theme) by O.L. Filgueiras (1954) or *Formas do Habitar Rural – Norte de Bragança. Contribuição para a estrutura da comunidade* (Forms of rural dwelling – North of Bragança. Contribution to the communal structure) of Arnaldo Araújo (1957). The later thesis, by Arnaldo Araújo, was the basis for a study presented by the Portuguese delegation (34) to CIAM X, in Dubrovnik, in 1956 (35). The study, *Plano de uma Comunidade Rural em Trás-os-Montes* (Plan of a rural community in Trás-os-Montes), deals precisely with the area of the Survey, where an approach that was «largely articulated upon an ethnologic aspect» (36) was applied. Aside from a civic centre and an agricultural cooperative that was also used as a school venue, the plan proposed the construction of houses for a community of forty people, «whenever possible using local materials [...] and with the home as its focal concern»; the proposed plan should allow for «a wide variety of types adaptable to the growth of the family unit» (37). The Portuguese team drew attention to the «relevance of the rural habitat, which CIAM cannot ignore if they intend their proposals to be truly universal» and to «the relevance of intensive surveys [...] a principle that will gradually eliminate projects studied in disregard of local realities» (38).

de Estudos de Etnologia (Centre for ethnology studies) since its inception in 1947 and it is clearly present in the work of researchers linked to that institution. Cfr. E.V. Oliveira, F. Galhano, *Arquitetura Tradicional Portuguesa*, D. Quixote, Lisbon, 2000 (1992), p. 11. Originally published in E.V. Oliveira, Introduction to the 2nd edition of *Casas Esquilas do Porto e Sobrados do Recife* (1986).

33 *Arquitetura Popular em Portugal*. Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, Lisbon, 1961.

34. The Portuguese delegation included six architects, four of which from the teams that prepared the Survey: Viana de Lima, Alberto Neves, Fernando Távora, coordinator of Zona 1 (Minho) and the entire team of Zona 2 (Trás-os-Montes): Octávio Lixa Filgueiras (team coordinator), Arnaldo Araújo and Carlos Carvalho Dias.

35. P.V. Almeida, M.H. Maia, *As Décadas pós-congresso in História da Arte em Portugal*, vol.1-14, *Arquitetura Moderna*, vol. 14, Alfa, Lisbon, 1986, pp. 147-153, in part. p. 152.

36. P.V. Almeida, A. Cardoso, *Arnaldo Araújo, Arquitecto (1925-1982)*. CEEA, Porto, 2002.

37. Proposal of team CIAM-Porto, Portugal, *Plano de uma Comunidade Rural em Trás-os-Montes*, CIAM X – Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, 3 to 13 August 1956. Octávio Lixa Filgueiras Archive.

38. Proposal of team CIAM-Porto..., cit.

Indeed, already in the late 1930s, a group of agronomists had been interested in this theme and went on to carry out an officially sponsored *Inquérito à Arquitectura Rural* (Survey of rural architecture) (39), headed by Lima Basto and Henrique de Barros. Because the results of this Survey denounced the dismal living conditions of the population the publication was censored, which is why only two of the three volumes that had been intended were published at the time (40). This episode is relevant to this work for two reasons: (a) because it is the first survey that really paid attention to the living conditions of rural populations; (b) because it was carried out by technicians with responsibilities in the internal colonization process, such as Henrique de Barros, who played a significant role in the Pegões colonization process.

The architectural options chosen for JCI colonies belong to the same universe of concerns to be found in the theses presented in Porto or in the proposal taken to CIAM X, a set of concerns that defined the path taken by twentieth century Portuguese architecture. In fact, the agricultural colony housing designs seek to respect traditional architectural references, combining them with the best dwelling conditions, i.e., they seek to reinvent the Portuguese agrarian homestead. To that end, JCI resorted to local labour and to the processes, techniques and material traditionally used in each region (41). The influence of local traditional forms was also markedly present in the housing designs. One example is the preference for two-storey construction in the North and one-storey construction in the South – following folk regional architecture –, as well as the familiarity of the forms used in each location. However, this was not entirely new in Portuguese architecture, which had, since the nineteenth century, resorted to regional techniques and materials leading to the production of a regionalist type of architecture that was clearly appreciated by the Regime. These houses were organized in «(a) single family isolated units, usually with a yard and own access; (b) twin blocks, for reasons of space, construction and access economy; (c) groups of row houses, for general reasons of economy or specific reasons of context; (d) single or multiple family units, integrated in holdings of variable dimensions» (42). Interested as they were in the possibility of finding a mode of internal organization that would allow for

39. E.N. Lima Basto, H. Barros, *Inquérito à Habitação Rural*, I, s.n., Lisbon, 1943; H. Barros, *Inquérito à Habitação Rural*, II, Gráfica Lisbonense, Lisbon, 1948. Volume III would only be published in 2012.

40. P.V. Almeida, M.H. Maia, *As décadas...*, cit. João Leal establishes a direct link between the denouncing implicit in the agronomists' Survey and the «nebulous politics» in which its promoters were involved, «all of them joined in a stance of criticism or opposition to the Estado Novo»: J. Leal, *Arquitectos, Engenheiros, Antropólogos: Estudos sobre Arquitetura Popular no Século XX Português*, Fundação Marques da Silva, Porto, 2009, p. 38.

41. V. Lobo, A.M. Antunes, *Problemas Actuais...*, cit., p. 111.

42. Ivi, p. 112.



*Fig. 4 – Primary school of Vascões settlement of the agricultural colony of Boalhosa, Paredes de Coura, Portugal (Source: © Maria Helena Maia)*

any orientation on the land – such as in Italy (Puglia and Lucania) – and in the models of expandable houses of the Spanish National Institute of Colonization (43), the architects of JCI conceived different designs of prototype houses which, in their simplicity, were a substantial improvement on the habitability of the rural house.

Formally freer, the equipments built in these settlements present at times a surprisingly modern character. Designed by modern architects, who should be identified so as to contextualize and deepen the reading of these forgotten works, the authorship of many of them is not referenced in the scarce bibliography devoted to them. An example is the depurated design of the primary school in the Vascoes nucleus of Boalhosa agricultural colony (Fig. 4), or the unique case of the group of buildings designed by Eugénio Correia for the Pegões Velhos nucleus of Pegões colony – a church, two primary schools and three houses for the priest and teachers – which combines traditional materials from the region with innovative construction techniques to obtain radically new forms resorting to parabolic surfaces reminiscent of Niemayer's work for the Pampulha complex.

43. Ivi, p. 67-70.

Finally, it is important to verify that the urban and architectural approach to the colonies, and to the work carried out by JCI, requires systematic research work to identify not only the authors, but also the relationships that can be glimpsed with the other interventions punctuating the Portuguese rural space of the time and which have in a way or another have contributed to the image that we currently have of Portugal.