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This essay analyses the vision of rural tradition pursued after 1936 and until 1960 by the Junta de Colonização Interna through its internal rural colonization scheme during the Portuguese Estado Novo authoritarian Regime. This vision is compared with the concrete rural vernacular architecture identified by the Portuguese Regional Architecture Survey undertaken between 1955 and 1961. As preliminary conclusions, I stress that the settlement's schemes and the housing design, despite the incorporation of local specificities, can be seen as a reinvention of the rural tradition, revealing the architect's erudite background and their struggle to introduce modernist design.

1. INTRODUCTION

This research is a spin-off of the project MODSCAPES (Modernist Reinventions of the Rural Landscape), which is undergoing in an international partnership gathering several European universities.¹ The objective of this broader research is to understand how several colonization schemes changed, at a small or large scale, the rural landscapes of Europe and in a few cases, its replication in the African colonies. Most of these processes were implemented under authoritarian regimes as in Portugal, Spain, and Italy or under the Soviet Block, which turned them in a way of political propaganda in parallel with the objective of improving and modernizing the agriculture, leading to a delicate and not always pacific balance between tradition and modernity. These national schemes are to some extent already studied and the MODSCAPES project aims to compare them through a larger framework.

This paper focuses on the Portuguese architectural debate about tradition and modernity during the time of the Junta de Colonização Interna (JCI), which can also be identified in the design of housing and settlements in the agricultural colonies promoted by this institution. A new approach to traditional architecture was given after 1955 by the Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos (SNA), which conducted the Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular em Portugal (Portuguese Popular Architecture Survey, published in 1961). This survey covered the entire Portuguese mainland, divided into six regional sectors, revealing the existing rural settlements and their vernacular buildings through a systematic fieldwork. This paper aims to compare the visions of tradition promoted by the JCI in their rural settlements and housing with the visions found by the SNA after the 1955 survey. JCI presents a filtered vision of tradition, which is the result of the political nationalist propaganda of António de Oliveira Salazar's regime mixed with the Architects' interpretation of such tradition, which represents frequently a conflict between modernity, tradition, and politics. The second, as result of the direct fieldwork, represents the genuine tradition found in the Portuguese rural settlements. Both the

MODSCAPES and the current research are still undergoing, so the results presented in this paper are preliminary and will be further refined and transferred.

2. THE PORTUGUESE HOUSE DEBATE

As pointed out by Maria Helena Maia, since the first Portuguese generation of the romantic period in the nineteenth century, the quest for a “Portuguese architecture” became a focus of debate among intellectuals, namely writers, historians, anthropologists, architects, and archeologists.² This initial period was centered in architectural forms and art history and evolved to the discussion about the “Portuguese House” during the first half of the twentieth century. In parallel, the interest for the folk tradition also began in the Romantic period, but it was mainly an idealized vision of the rural world.³ However, as Maia stressed:

Right from the start, there was the problem of identification of the *casa Portuguesa* (Portuguese house)... – a problem connected to ethnographic studies, centered on the issue of whether a national dwelling type actually did exist. At the same time, there was also the problem of inventing the *casa Portuguesa* – the architectural problem of providing a concrete answer to the calls for the nationalization of architecture.⁴

Despite the diverse visions and interpretations of the subject the romantic vision of the rural world was dominant in the sense that it was as seen as the repository of genuine Portuguese tradition. It was far removed from urban architecture, which was “contaminated” with erudite foreign design as the most renowned Architects at the time studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Although the typological variation is great in the urban environment, since the beginning of the twentieth century the variety of the rural vernacular architecture is also recognized.⁵ Rural architecture is also seen as adaptable to the local natural conditions leading to regional variation. However, João Leal has stressed that scholar’s knowledge is essentially theoretical; without any contact with reality they have a romanticized and distorted vision of Portugal’s rural countryside.⁶

Maia divides the debate on the Portuguese House into two different objectives: the identification of the Portuguese House and the invention of the Portuguese House.⁷ The first objective relates the emerging interest in the Portuguese House at the end of the nineteenth century with the discovery of a nationality through vernacular architecture. The second objective refers to the production of architecture as affirming nationality through reinventing the notion of traditional architecture. Architects led this reinvention process by mixing erudite models of Portuguese historic architecture with relevant elements of the Manueline style with vernacular elements. In 1900, after an initial eclectic period, the young architect Raul Lino dedicated his

career to develop a Portuguese architecture. His approach is considered to be the most relevant and also the most antagonized by the new generations of modernist architects, who recognize in him the personification of surpassed architectural models which suited the *Estado Novo* regime.⁸ However, his “tentative approach towards a national identity implies/implied a veritable inventory of habitable structures, and not simply cataloguing of formal artifices.”⁹ In that way and as argued by Maia and Almeida, his work was misunderstood because Lino’s aim was pedagogic, by providing an approach that focused on the adaptation of buildings to local conditions and fitting them with the demands of modern life, and respectful of traditional materials and spatial and formal elements present in Portuguese traditional buildings. The examples provided in his books were used by a generation of architects who distorted the original pedagogical intention of Lino by applying formal copies of his watercolors, which were appreciated by the dominant classes of the regime, leading to the style classified by Maia as the *casa à antiga portuguesa* (Old Portuguese-Style House).¹⁰

In the context of the present research it is important to stress that this debate focused mainly on urban models of higher social classes and even when they were in the countryside they assumed the erudite villa model, very far from the vernacular buildings of rural Portugal that later surveys will reveal.

3. INTERNAL COLONIZATION

The Junta de Colonização Interna, an institution created in 1936 during the Salazar regime within the Ministry of Agriculture, marked the construction of the modernist rural landscape in Portugal. Together with the development of agricultural hydraulics and forest settlement, the internal colonization was one of the main objectives of the regime for the agricultural sector.¹¹ Between the 1930s and the 1940s, several studies were carried out to identify and characterize the *baldios* (vacant common land aimed for internal colonization) and the colonization projects of the “first” internal colonization project were designed.¹² The projects of the “second” internal colonization project coincide with the beginning of the 2nd Development Plan and were conceived and implemented in the 1950s and 1960s. Unlike the projects of the first phase, which were strongly concerned with the ideological issues, these projects aimed to turn colonization into an instrument to enlarge the internal market through by establishing economically viable agricultural companies.¹³ Furthermore, these projects enabled a colonization model suitable for the expansion of industrial agriculture, thus contributing to the “green revolution” in Portugal, which has transformed rural territories in nearby countries.¹⁴ Additionally, such projects spread the focus to technological innovations that would later contribute to improving the practices of conventional farmers.¹⁵ The regime allocated the communal forestlands (*baldios*) for internal colonization and was able to target agricultural by improving the soil and introducing pioneer forest species that would help produce fertile soil. The limitations imposed by the

Regime to the JCI ultimately compromised the overall result of colonization. The colonies whose original structures remain today are considered relatively singular experiences that, having assumed the presuppositions of modernity, also try to establish the continuity with the landscape and with the vernacular architecture. This demand is particularly visible in the territories of Minho and Trás-os-Montes. Here, the capacity to interpret the site and its topography is mediated by the careful elaboration of agricultural landscape plans in articulation with the settlement's projects.

Based on the idea that it is fundamental to maintain and defend the "traditional bases of nationality," the settlers were transformed into farmers, like those who already existed in Portugal, and had to share and integrate into a community to create a cohesive settlement. Simultaneously, the regime of *casal* (the conjunction of land plot and house) implied that each family of settlers had an inalienable and indivisible piece of land, which transformed them into landowners. In this perspective, the JCI, following the policy of the *Estado Novo* regime, aimed to contradict the proletarian pretensions and the collective political actions. The profile of the settler resulted from the selection made by the JCI, which defined their qualities to be "head of a rural family, healthy, strong and defender of the nationality."

The Italian and Spanish experiences were the main sources of analysis for the Portuguese model, however, I would like to note that in comparison with these two countries, both in terms of land occupied and in number of settlements, there was less work in Portugal. Nonetheless, the colony of *Pegões* was an example of the propaganda of Salazar's regime, spreading the idea of "national resurgence."

The president of the JCI between 1941 and 1948, José Pereira Caldas, made a study trip to Italy in 1937 resulting in a report influenced by the *Bonifica Italiana* at several levels specifically the idea of property sharing combined with the large hydraulic works. Later, in 1960, the architects Vasco Lobo and Alfredo da Mata Antunes, presented drawings of houses promoted by the Spanish Instituto Nacional de Colonización (INC), referring to examples of minimum housing obtained from a single type of plan. From Italy, *Riforma fondiaria in Puglia and Lucania*, justified the inclusion of the last case by its interest if applied to more elaborate programs and not by what it represents as an architectural proposal.¹⁶

The JCI promoted a total of seven new or reorganized colonies (Milagres, Martim Rei, Pegões, Gafanha, Barroso, Alvão and Boalhosa), which were designed and built between 1936 and 1960. After 1960, the JCI completed only a few adaptation projects in the colonies built in the previous period.

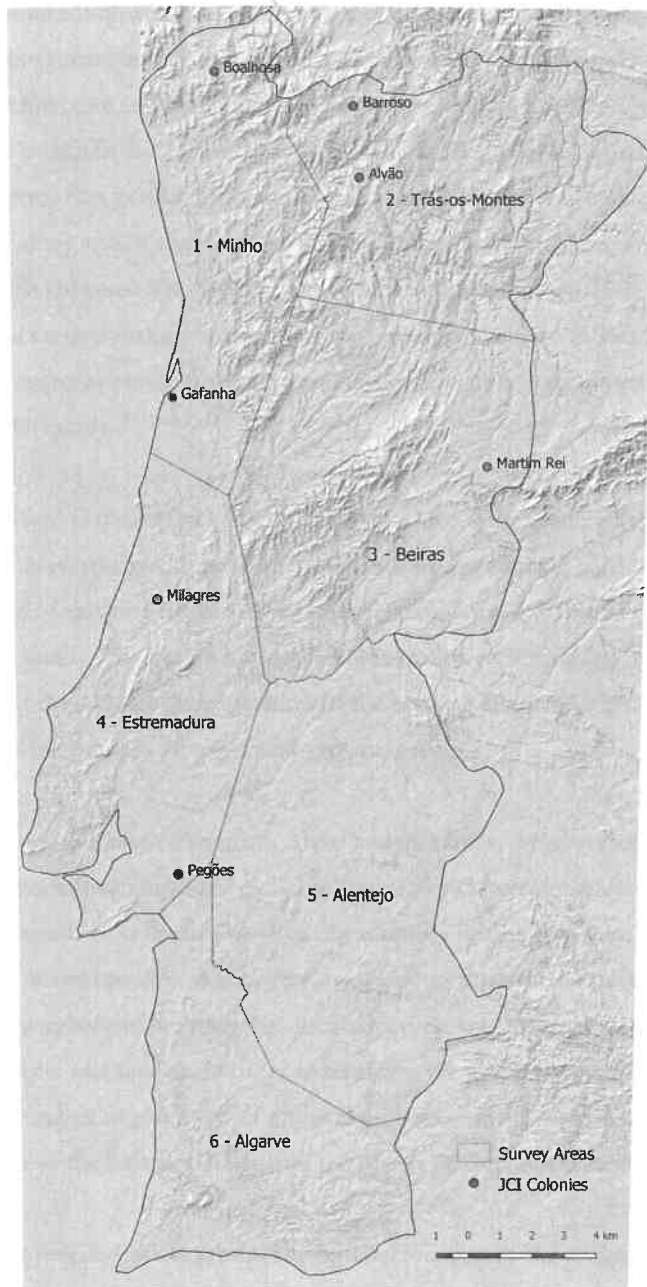


Fig. 1: Junta de Colonização Interna Colonies' location and Portuguese Regional Architecture Survey regions. (Source: author).

Although they were developed under the guidance of an agrarian policy that remained faithful to its social principles along this period, the seven agricultural colonies were not concluded accordingly to the predefined global project.

The design of these colonies resulted from a prolonged action, constantly influenced by a variety of events and transformations that occurred in different political and economic contexts and under the disciplinary debate of the period's architecture and urbanism. The projects were thus developed from settlement and architectural models that were adapted accordingly to the diverse visions and programs of the rural territory exploitation occurring during that period. The early projects and constructions concerning the reorganization of the existing Milagres colony and of the new Martim Rei colony constitute a dispersed but orderly settlement pattern in which the *casais* (families) are distributed in the colony's *baldios*.¹⁷ The base model used on these colonies is based on optimizing the design of the traditional *casal* to reflect a political and methodological thinking centered on the (experimental) resolution of the agricultural productivity and the economic autonomy of the family.

In the colonies of Pegões and Gafanha the government applied the same model of dispersed settlement as in Milagres and Martim Rei. Nevertheless, there were more studies regarding the agronomic aspects but again with the singular objective of studying the possibility of providing farms capable of guaranteeing the self-sufficiency of the settling family. The design of these colonies followed strictly functional principles, which dealt with the suitability of the soil, the determination of the housing and property's matrix, and the criteria for achieving efficiency in the primary infrastructures organization.

In the case of the agricultural colonies of Barroso, Alvão and Boalhosa, the government adopted a concentrated settlement model that privileged global solutions, which were considered more advantageous regarding the use and proximity of collective services. By adopting this type of solution, the *casais* of these colonies were made up of several parcels, which were organized to form more compact settlements. The settlements scheme was complex and the design of their structures was organized in order to define spatial systems constituted by streets and squares, in order to reinforce the global idea and to promote a community environment. The understanding of place and of physical support constituted one of the fundamental premises for the definition of the colonies design and the matrix of their settlements.

In general, all JCI colonies revealed a concern for the optimal location of the settlements in order to ensure their accessibility, their proximity to the core of the existing villages and, at the same time, to land with a higher agricultural capacity than the surrounding area or even to achieve more favorable sun exposure conditions. Further, special concern was paid to the topography in parallel with site selection to enhance the relationship of the settlements in the landscape.

This concern, which is particularly visible in the Minho and Trás-os-Montes colonies, not only revealed a great capacity for understanding and taking advantage of the site's topographical characteristics but also a

conscious intention of building a landscape. The buildings in the agricultural colonies present an architectural diversity resulting from renovations to the architectural premises between the design and their construction works and from the application of principles, which have taken into account the regional specificities and the site particular conditions. In addition to taking into account issues related to the expression, organization, and architectural design, the projects and solutions took advantage of the use of materials and construction techniques from the region with the objective of reducing costs and ensuring the best quality.

The study by Vasco Lobo and Alfredo da Mata Antunes reported the results of the 1957 Cologne meeting of the Commission du Logement Familial, where delegates from 12 countries, including Portugal, discussed minimum dwelling areas. The colony in Milagres was used the isolated single-family house model and the global settlement results essentially from the juxtaposition of volumes facing a courtyard, where the dwelling, the agricultural annexes, and the sanitary facilities are inserted. In Martim Rei the model remains almost identical; the courtyard prevails as the element. The structures in the built complex, however, are enhanced by the introduction of a shed.

Apart from the colony of Boalhosa (also in the colonies of Pegões, Gafanha, Alvão and Barroso), where the *casais* were organized in semi-detached or row buildings, the model adopted for the agricultural settlement was the detached single-family house. In these colonies, differently to Milagres and Martim Rei, the ensemble was no longer designed and built uniquely and exclusively to fulfill the needs directly associated with its function. In fact, in the colonies of Pegões, Barroso and Boalhosa, the housing and agricultural dependencies were grouped and inserted in a single volumetric element, allowing for a rationalization of the composition and simultaneously giving it a greater representativeness from the architectural and social point of view. Regarding the public buildings, the most significant investment was done in the second phase, after the stabilization of the principles of location and construction of the *casais*. Several public facilities were then built, whether for technical, medical, social or religious services, or for the storage and processing of the agricultural products.

In the second phase, the search for new architectural expressions was particularly remarkable because it aimed to find the “alleged national architecture.” The introduction of these public buildings intended to provide the colonies with collective services, which were essential to reinforce the sense of community and the social cohesion of their population.

The colonies were abandoned because of deviations from the established rules of behavior; for example, the irregular behavior in private life (leading to the expulsion), internal conflicts between settlers of the same colony, an inability to manage the *casal*, settler’s difficulty to adapt to the operating standards imposed by the JCI; financial difficulties, and the execution of other paid activities (leading to the voluntary abandonment).

In the 1960s the agricultural colonies were not immune to the emigration growth. The settlements departure was initially repressed, but later on was tolerated if the rest of the family remained in the colony.

4. SURVEY ON PORTUGUESE REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE

The quest for the Portuguese House was not exclusive of the traditionalists or incompatible with the new modernist approaches. As wrote by Maia:

The Olhão workers' housing development, designed by Carlos Ramos circa 1925, made a clear reference to vernacular architecture of that region. Carlos Ramos, who Pedro Vieira de Almeida identified as the root of his concept of *critical internacionalism*, travelled through Portugal with the geographer Orlando Ribeiro and together they worked on a privated survey of national architecture.¹⁸

The geographer's work was a reference for the further interest on the regional diversity of the country and their traditional dwellings. This private survey may have established the basis for the *Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional Portuguesa* (Survey on Portuguese Regional Architecture) which was launched in 1955 by the *Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos* and its results were published in 1961 under the title *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal* (Popular Architecture in Portugal).¹⁹

It is also important to mention a previous survey, which approached the social factor, but was absent from the Architect's survey. This survey, *Inquérito à Habitação Rural* (Rural Housing Survey) was completed at the end of the 1930's by government-funded agronomists from the *Instituto Superior de Agronomia*. The survey was intended to be published in three volumes (North, Center and South of Portugal), but the results, which also addressed the living conditions of the rural population, contradicted with the regime's romanticized version of the rural countryside revealing miserable living conditions. As consequence, the first volume was only published in 1943 (North) and the second in 1948 (Center), while the third did not pass the censorship and was never published during the Regime's time.²⁰ This survey establishes the bridge with the JCI's rural settlements because its authors were JCI technicians and worked on the plans.

The Survey on Portuguese Regional Architecture divided the country into six regions (see fig. 1) and a team of three architects surveyed one region. The survey embarked mainly rural housing, their support structures, and the rural settlements organization. The results were synthesized in location maps and typological tables for each region surveyed like the examples in figure 2 and figure 3, confirming the vernacular architecture,

typological diversity based on the regional characteristics, stating by that way the inexistence of a unique Portuguese House. The climate, local materials, and culture distinctively produced diverse house models, confirming in the field the common-sense vision of Portuguese vernacular architecture. To the stone (granite or shale) houses with two floors (animals in the ground floor heating the upper living floor) in the colder North, and the one floor white painted houses of the sunny South, are good examples that revealed local adaptability.

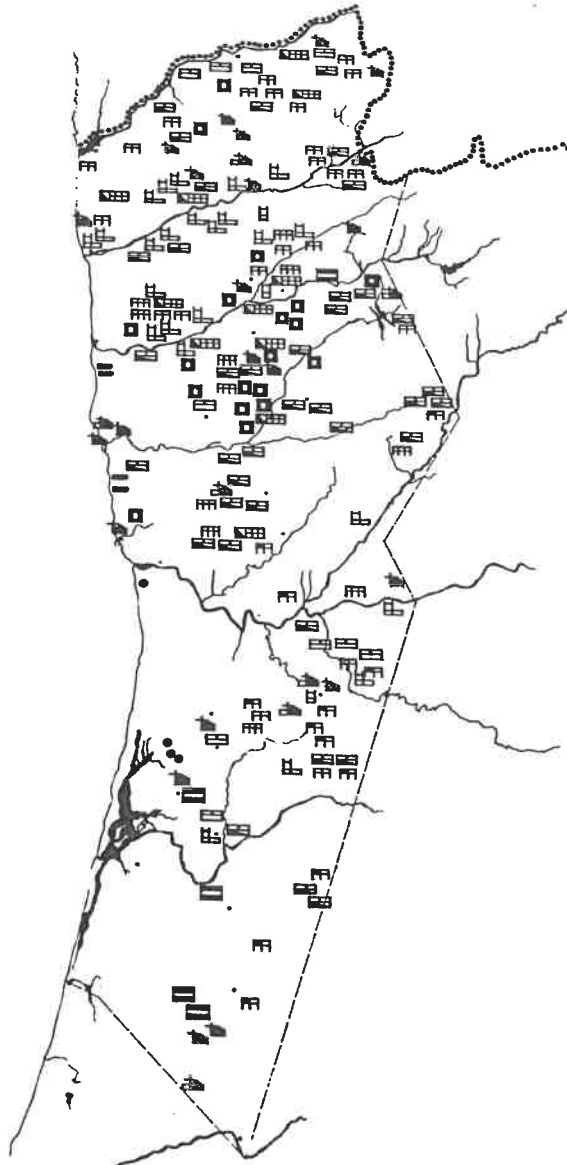


Fig. 2: Minho Region Typological location map from the Portuguese Regional Architecture Survey *in Ordem dos Arquitectos*. 2004. (Source: *Arquitetura Popular Portuguesa* (4th edition). Vol. I. Lisbon: Ordem dos Arquitectos, p. 110).

		<i>Torres</i>			<i>Espigueiro de madeira</i>
		<i>Solares</i>			<i>Espigueiro de pedra</i>
		<i>Complexo agrícola</i>			<i>Igrejas</i>
		<i>Casa de lavoura (cl escada integrada)</i>			<i>Capelas de peregrinação</i>
		<i>Casa de lavoura</i>			<i>Mercados</i>
		<i>Casa-sequeiro</i>			<i>Noras cobertas</i>
		<i>Sequeiro</i>			<i>Abrigos de barcos e utensílios de sargaceiros</i>

Fig. 3: Minho Region Typological table from the Portuguese Regional Architecture Survey *in Ordem dos Arquitectos*. 2004. (Source: *Arquitetura Popular Portuguesa* (4th edition). Vol. I. Lisbon: Ordem dos Arquitectos, p. 113).

This work was promoted with the aim of safeguarding the rural architecture, which was disappearing in its original forms, but also as a reaction to the reinvention of the Portuguese House conducted by traditionalist architects. Keil do Amaral, the main author of the survey, considered that the results of the survey should provide “students and professionals of construction (...) the basis for an honest, active and healthy regionalism.”²¹ As pointed by Maia:

By challenging the notion of a national architecture, modern Portuguese architects returned to the source of vernacular architecture and its reappraisal will have a marked influence on the architecture of the period. Indeed, in articulation of the theoretical aims of the Survey a *third way* (Portas, 1961) emerged in Portuguese architecture, employing tradition in the construction of modernity.²²

Portas points to the work of the architect Fernando Távora as an exact example of the alternative path for architecture. He graduated during the forties in a modernist architectural environment at the Porto School of Fine Arts, which was led by the aforementioned Carlos Ramos. Távora’s practice as an Architect reveals a miscegenation between modernist and traditional influences, which constitutes one of the major characteristics of his work. This dichotomy is expressed on the project of the Santa Maria da Feira Market, that was presented on the 10th CIAM (Dubrovnik, 1956) and which he crossed the modernist spatial concepts with the vernacular roof shapes.

Other Portuguese architects attended this symbolic CIAM, which critically reviewed the modernist vision of architecture and urbanism. Those architects presented the Plan of a Rural Community in Trás-os-Montes that was in accordance with some of the Team X presentations and revealed their involvement in the Survey on Portuguese Regional Architecture (in process at the time) and on which Távora was one of the regional team leaders (Area 1 – Minho).²³ The plan presented at the CIAM was the architecture graduation thesis of Carvalho de Araújo and also reflected the growing number of graduation projects approaching this theme in Porto’s School of Fine Arts.²⁴

5. CONCLUSION

The housing design used in JCI settlement’s deliver a general image, which resembled traditional rural buildings. In a certain way it is possible to affirm that the JCI housing design followed the concept advocated by Raul Lino, by using traditional local materials and techniques and vernacular forms and spatial characteristics, like traditional roofs, porches, and integrated stables. However, like in Lino’s proposals, the introduction of contemporary improvements, like inner toilets, were also promoted but in a minority of

house models. Some formal architectural elements of erudite traditional influence, as arches and cornices are also present in some houses, revealing the erudite background of architects and their interpretation of rural housing (see fig. 4).

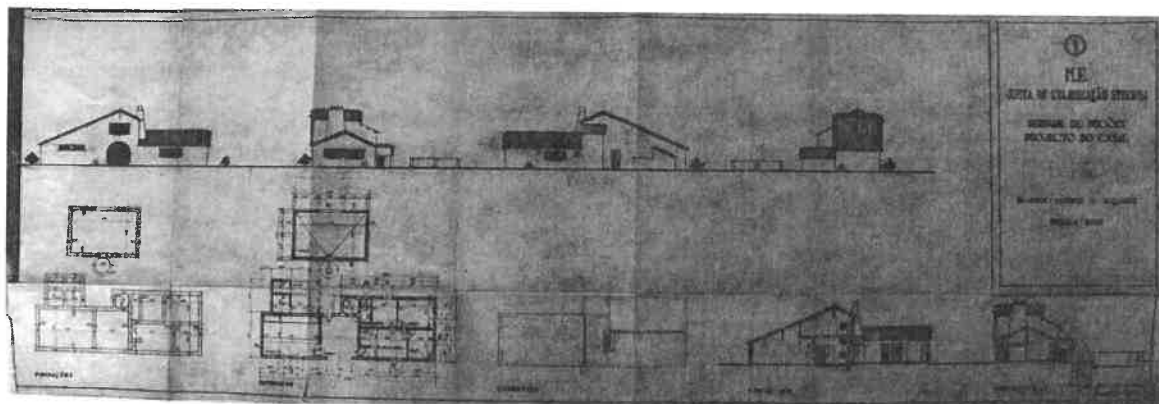


Fig. 4: Pegões Colony – House project in A. Trigo. 1950. (Source: *Herdade de Pegões – zona A. a: Projecto do casal. b: Casal de Pegões: orçamento.* Lisbon: JCI.)

Is also possible to identify a change in the design approach between the two mentioned periods of the JCI interventions. The first reveals a more ideological vision by promoting houses with the architect's interpretations of the rural models and reinforcing the romanticized vision of the rural countryside advocated by the regime. The second period, from the 50's, reveals variety, which allowed the introduction of some modernist design solutions. In parallel, the design of public facilities instead of housing, permitted this amplitude of design, which achieved their highest examples in the 1951 Pegões Chapel of Santo Isidro, the School and Teachers House designed by the Architect Eugénio Correia, are the Social Centre designed by the Architect Celestino Castro (see fig. 5).

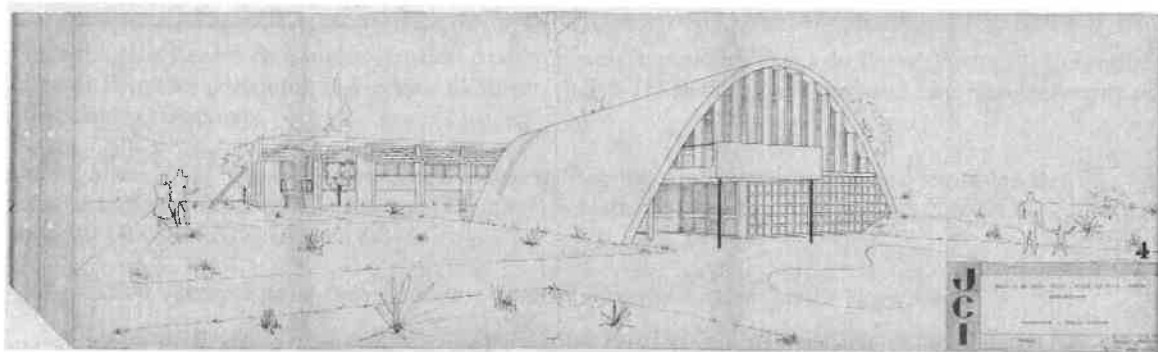


Fig. 5: Pegões Colony – Social Centre in C. Castro. 1951. (Source: *Edifício do centro social a construir no núcleo das Faias: Pegões. Anteprojecto.* Lisbon, JCI, p.4).

Is interesting to stress that those times were close to the beginning of the Survey on Portuguese Regional Architecture, and globally revealed a new and wider approach emerging in the Portuguese architectural debate and practice.

Finally, it is necessary to stress that the housing and facilities promoted under the JCI's scope are essentially reinterpretations of the rural tradition and their design are, despite showing general vernacular resemblances, expressions of the architect's interpretation of the traditional models crossed with the erudite urban background of their authors. Proof is the replication of the same house, designed by the same architect but in different colonies despite the diverse local conditions. When compared with the Survey on Portuguese Regional Architecture, I can conclude that the local diversity identified by it has limited reflections on the design of the house regarding the adaptation to the local specificities of each colony.

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³ J. Leal. 2006. *Antropologia em Portugal. Mestres, percursos, transições*. Lisbon: Livros Horizonte.

⁴ M. H. Maia. 2012. *Op. cit.*, p.244.

⁵ M. H. Maia. 2012. *Op. cit.*, p.245.

⁶ J. Leal. 2006. *Op. Cit.*

⁷ M. H. Maia. 2012. *Op. cit.*

⁸ In 1947 the young architect Fernando Távora wrote the text *O Problema da Casa Portuguesa* [The Problem of the Portuguese House] expressing this vision.

⁹ P. V. Almeida and M. H. Maia. 1986. "Sociedade e Identidade Nacionais", in *História da Arte em Portugal (14) Arquitectura Moderna*, ed. P. V. Almeida and J. M. Fernandes. Lisbon: Alfa, p.47.

¹⁰ M. H. Maia. 2012. *Op. cit.*, p.247.

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¹⁴ D. Freire. 2011. "Ensayos de ingeniería social: reforma agraria y modernización de la agricultura en las últimas décadas de Estado Novo (1954-1974)", in *Agriculturas e Innovación Tecnológica en la Península Ibérica (1946-1975)*, ed. D. Lañero and D. Freire. Madrid: Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Rural.

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¹⁶ -V. Lobo and A. Antunes. 1960. *Problemas actuais da pequena habitação rural*. Coimbra: Direcção Geral dos Serviços de Urbanização, Centro de Estudos de Urbanismo.

¹⁷ Originally built in 1926, before the JCI.

¹⁸ M. H. Maia. 2012. *Op. cit.*, p.252.

¹⁹ Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos (Portugal). 1961. *Arquitectura popular em Portugal*. Lisbon: SNA.

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²³ The Portuguese team was composed by the architects Viana de Lima, Fernando Távora and Octávio Lixa Filgueiras, by the trainee architects Arnaldo Araújo and Carvalho Dias and by the architecture student Alberto Neves.

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²⁴ M. H. MAIA and I. MATIAS. 2016. "Settlers and peasants. The new rural settlements of 20th century Portuguese internal colonization", in *Storia Urbana*, 150: 97 - 111. ISSN 0391-2248 (print), 1972-5523 (Online) DOI 10.3280/SU2016-150006.