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Arquitectura y paisaje: transferencias históricas, retos contemporáneos

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Geographical events as etymology of urban landscape¹

A contribution to understand Arrábida's desires (Porto, Portugal)

Over the three decades between the 40's and 70's of the 20th century, two main urban problems occupy Porto (Portugal): the construction of a new city gate associated to a new Douro river crossing in the Arrábida.

Translating a vehement desire for transformation and contemporaneity, in that short period, the Municipality ordered, sequentially, five urban plans for Arrábida, from four of the most relevant architects/urban planners working in the city - professionals of different nationalities and professional expertise, committed to varied architectural/urban references.

An analysis of these urban plans concentrated on their conceptual approaches, emphasizes individual character, suggesting that each one proposes an urban landscape always radically new and with a tendency towards utopia.

On the contrary, an in-depth analysis constructed on the perspective of place and insightful redrawing, reveals the existence of a similar notion of landscape during those three decades. Notion that, being always present through those architects/urban planners' ideas, allowed the persistence of a common point of view on "what could be and should be" the urban landscape of Arrábida.

In this common perspective, the identification and reinterpretation of its matrix characters plays a fundamental role in the construction of the place's urban landscape. These proposals intend to continue Arrábida's landscape identity, allowing the discovery of what previously existed, as a permanent source, from which architecture (an essential component of these proposals) illuminates the roots, the invariants and its fundamental identity features.

The intersection of this reading with the knowledge of the Arrábida's landscape transformation in the "longue durée" will allow to deepen these considerations, by identifying traces of this landscape construction tradition since the 14th century.

The purpose of our communication and its relevance lies in identifying, in detail, the landscape's common matrix characters interpreted by all these architects and builders.

In Arrábida, we foresee these architectural proposals connected with its natural conditions and topographical characteristics. Beyond any vicissitude or transformation, in Arrábida's landscape, we identify a strong link to geography, a predisposition based on topological and geographical reasons, even though this link or predisposition may be obscured in the course of time.

We believe that this notion of landscape transformation, Arrábida's in particular, understood within the same tradition is the only territory where architects interested in its survival and progression will be able to work, today and in the future.

* The title of this communication recalls Carlos Martí Arís (1948-2020): Martí Arís, Carlos, "La cimbra y el arco". Barcelona: Fundación Caja de Arquitectos, 2005 (p.56-59).