Signs of the “Survey” influence in the CODA projects presented in EBAP.

Eduardo Fernandes

Escola de Arquitetura da Universidade do Minho, Guimarães, Portugal/School of Architecture of the University of Minho, Guimarães, Portugal

Abstract

The collection of documents archived at the Documentation Centre of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto, concerning the Contests for Obtaining the Diploma of Architect (CODA) represents a very important image of the work of Porto architects as a result of the teaching in the School of Fine Arts of Porto (EBAP), being the moment of transition between academic training and the beginning of professional work.

The analysis of the CODA presented in the 40s shows an evolution from the first nationalist projects to more hybrid proposals (hesitating between the use of traditional materials and modern languages) and, after 1948, a general trend displaying the influence of the ‘International Style’. But as early as 1955, we can notice in the CODA the appearance of a new theoretical consciousness that clearly shows the influence of the ‘Survey on Vernacular Architecture’.

The enthusiastic adherence to the modern movement after the 1948 Congress is justified by the reaction against censorship and the consciousness of the ideological misconceptions underlying Raul Lino’s ‘Doctrine of the Portuguese House’. However, the cooling of this enthusiasm showed a certain ideological vacuum, because the discourse that dominated the members of ODAM (Organization of Modern Architects) and ICAT (Cultural Initiatives of Art and Technique) was directly imported from an internationalist discourse that revealed inadequate to the realities of our country. The perception of this vacuum (and the will to fill this void) can justify the enthusiastic adoption of the methodology implicit in the ‘Survey’ (and in the early works of Fernando Távora) as a new paradigm, after 1955. But, likewise, this reference lost strength over the years, after the publication of ‘Popular Architecture in Portugal’ (in 1961), as it was becoming clear that the country portrayed there was disappearing and that the ‘Survey’ influenced...
languages were turning into a widespread style that no longer made sense as a reflection of contemporary Portuguese culture.

**Keywords:**

Survey, Vernacular, CODA, EBAP.

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In Portugal, after the end of the Second World War, there was a paradigm shift in the public works; when Prime Minister Salazar loses two of his major architectural external references (Hitler and Mussolini), the conditions to the emergence of a critical position against the official languages of the fascist government begin to appear.

In 1945, in the weekly journal *Alèo* (and again, in 1947, in *Cadernos de Arquitectura*), a young student from EBAP named Fernando Távora published a text called *The Problem of the Portuguese House*, which presented a devastating criticism of the nationalist ideas of Raul Lino. Távora claimed that the study of Portuguese architecture (classical and popular) was still undone, arguing that this study was vital and should be an *element of the new architecture*. Therefore, he believed that Portuguese architects should study the relationship of vernacular architecture with all the conditions that had created and developed it, whether they were *conditions related with the Man*, or *conditions related with the Land*. Claiming that 'the vernacular house will give us great lessons because it is truer, more functional and less fanciful' (Távora, 1945, p. 10), Távora stated the necessity of studying vernacular architecture two years before the appeal of Keil do Amaral (1947) in *Uma iniciativa...*
necessária’ (A necessary initiative) and ten years prior to the beginning of the field work of the ‘Surveys on Vernacular Architecture’.

The audacity and lucidity of this text, written by a 22-year-old student, clearly reveals the results of the teaching of Carlos Ramos in the School of Fine Arts of Porto (EBAP). The freedom and the acceptance of multiple languages and multiple ways of understanding the issues of traditionalism and contemporaneity that characterized EBAP after 1940 was vital in the emergence of a true modern consciousness in the students, which became evident in the first generations formed after his arrival. Távora wasn’t the only example; in the mid-40s, one begins to notice the appearance of a group of architects that did not have a direct modern training, but had the conditions (information and freedom) to search it.

There was a clear difference between the characteristics of the so-called first modern generation (the generation of Cristino da Silva, Cassiano Branco, Rogério de Azevedo, Carlos Ramos and many others) and the features of their young disciples,¹ who were able to organize themselves in two associations that aspired to promote modern architecture: the ICAT (Cultural Initiatives of Art and Technique) was formed in Lisbon in 1946 and ODAM (Organization of Modern Architects) appeared in Porto in 1947. The members of these two organizations were the protagonists of the 1st National Congress of Architecture in 1948, the first major public confrontation between those who supported the stagnation of architectural languages and the young architects who demanded a change: it was the unexpected revolutionary tone of the theses presented by members of ODAM and ICAT that made this event an historic moment in Portuguese architectural history.

¹ This difference is mainly in the conviction of their ideas and the coherence of their work, rather than in a critical judgment of foreign theoretical models, that the first generation cannot show due to their lack of information and the second cannot have, because of their excess of enthusiasm...
The overall work presented in the Contests for Obtaining the Diploma of Architect (CODA)² represents a very important testimony of the production of Porto architects as a result of the teaching in the EBAP, being the moment of transition between academic training and the beginning of professional work.

The analysis of the CODA presented in the 40s (but prior to 1948) shows an evolution from the first nationalist projects³ to more hybrid proposals, hesitating between the use of traditional materials (and techniques) and modern languages. Paradigmatic of the dilemma that disturbs Portuguese architects at this time is the CODA of Delfim Amorim (1947) ‘A Minha Casa’ (My House), who presents two projects (with different languages) for the same program, showing his indecision between a modern design with vernacular roots (solution A) and a language in which we can clearly see the literal application of the ‘five points of the new architecture’, as Corbusier presented them in the twenties (solution B). This dual response (the unique case, in all the CODA analyzed) is paradigmatic of the difficulties of the EBAP students (patent in many other works) in reconciling the will to respect tradition and the desire for avant-garde design.

After 1948 everything was different. In the CODA presented after the ‘Congress’ (but prior to the beginning of the fieldwork for the ‘Survey’, in 1955), there are few proposals influenced by nationalist doctrine or seeking the difficult synthesis between traditional architecture and modernist language, and the general trend seems to be a growing and enthusiastic adherence to the ‘international style’: the Oliveira Martins (1949) design of a house for a middle class family (António Rocha’s house) is a good example of this trend, presenting all the typical repertoire of quotes from Le Corbusier.

² This paper summarizes some of the conclusions from an analysis of 369 processes of CODA presented in EBAP between 1935 and 1979; this study was carried out at the Documentation Centre of Urban Planning and Architecture of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto between October 2007 and December 2008, for the PhD thesis The Choice of Oporto: contributions to update the idea of a School (Fernandes, 2011).

³ In the CODA projects presented in the first half of the 40s, the nationalist trend can be divided into three groups with different languages: a monumental design influenced by the Fascist architecture of Italy and Germany, a urban nationalist design (influenced by Portuguese architecture of the eighteenth century) whose main reference is the design of Cristino da Silva for the Areeiro Square (Lisbon, 1940) or a design that seeks a revival of the traditional ‘Portuguese house’, influenced by the drawings and writings of Raul Lino.
Exemplary of this tendency is the first prize of the Christmas contest promoted by the magazine ‘Eva’, that offered a house design by the Architects Vitor Palla and Bento de Almeida, and was announced in the press (Comércio do Porto, 11 Dec. 1955) in these terms: 'Decorated with great taste and comfort (...) and built where the winner wants'. The idea of offering a modern design house as a prize on a contest in a non-specialized magazine clearly shows that the acceptance of the modern language was widespread in Portugal, seven years after the ‘Congress’. But, on the other hand, the idea of providing an architectural design that can be built where the winner wants, implies a particular understanding of architecture: a house is like a piece of furniture, which can be placed anywhere and does not have to establish relations with the place where it is built.
Figure 2. Announcement in the journal *Comércio do Porto* (11 Dec. 1955) of the Christmas contest promoted by the magazine *Eva*, in which the first prize was a house design by the Architects Vitor Palla and Bento de Almeida (photographed by the author).

This background is important to understand the direct reflections that the remarkable experience of the 'Survey' had on the new generations of students from EBAP, causing the emergence of a new theoretical awareness. However,
the enthusiasm with which the methodology implicit in the 'Survey' is received in the second half of the fifties has to be justified with a certain ideological vacuum that existed before. The pedagogy of Carlos Ramos was based on the empowerment of the students, who could choose their own ideological or linguistic paths, within a Vitruvian philosophy in which, however, Venustas should be the result of Firmitas and (especially) of Utilitas: more important than any justification (aesthetic, theoretical or conceptual) was the way the proposal responded to the functional needs of the program. This was mostly an attitude of common sense, evident in the texts of the few CODA presented before 1955 that showed some concern with the justification of the so called 'aesthetic party':

(...) the plan is not the result of any architectural preconceived idea, but it arises naturally from the function and the development of all factors considered, and other provisions imposed by the regulations. The architectural expression of the elevations is intended to reflect the order of the plan (Faria, 1951, p. 1).

This work, developed without formal preconceived concerns, resulted in an architectural solution that translates the concept of the inside in the outside, corresponding to its function (Segurado, 1954, p.1).

It is evident in this type of discourses (as in the drawings of the correspondent CODA, regardless of the language they adopted) the idea that a good plan always leads to a good elevation, a notion that we can find in EBAP since the teaching of Marques da Silva. This design philosophy is reinforced during the teaching of Carlos Ramos, applied as a truly functionalist ideology (especially after 1948), that gains direct influence from the writings of Le Corbusier.

This philosophy can be updated from 1951, when the teaching in EBAP is enhanced with four new members that provide, voluntarily, an unofficial and

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4 In most of the CODA presented before 1955 the text only described functional and constructive aspects.
5 Marques da Silva was professor of Architecture in the School of Fine Arts of Porto from 1906 to 1939.
unpaid collaboration (Filgueiras, 1986): Fernando Távora, Mário Bonito, José Carlos Loureiro and Agostinho Ricca. Consequently, as early as 1953, we can find some differences in the works of CODA, both in the drawings (more closely influenced by external models) and in the writings (which show new concerns, in addition to the prior strictly functional speech); to express the intention to 'organize a sculpture of architectural space' (Ribeiro, 1955, p. 2) or a 'composition of brightly colored volumes' (Quintanilha, 1953), to seek 'contrast between volumes and planes' (Ramos, 1954, p. 1) and to reference the design to 'principles of architecture that value the harmony of the whole: NATURE + WORK OF MAN' (Fonseca, 1953) are new concerns that we can only find in the CODA after 1953. They do not collide with the prior focus on functional organization, construction technique, economy and constraints of the site, but add other values that change the priorities in the options of design.

We can also find the reasons for this paradigm shift in other aspects of the context that precede the work of the 'Survey' in EBAP. The book Brazil Builds, with wide circulation among students, emphasizes the relationship between modern architecture and territory: it defines the modern Brazilian architecture as a movement that results 'of the country itself and the artists that launched it' and 'fits the climate and the materials available' (Goodwin, 1943, p. 103). Implied in the contents of this book is also the idea that the modern movement in Brazil reflects the same attitude that characterizes its traditional architecture: the adaptation to the conditions of the territory according to the needs of the present. At the same time there is a growing interest among EBAP students in the writings of Bruno Zevi and, therefore, in the organic architecture of Wright and Aalto. Triggered by the influence of these new theoretical references, the 'Survey' begins ahead of time, in EBAP.

It seems clear that the interest in vernacular architecture (and, therefore, in the Man and the Land of rural Portugal) that is rising in the School of Porto results from the pedagogical action of Távora, who already in 1953 guided a survey on the Portuguese traditional expressions and techniques. In the report that Carlos Ramos presents in May 1954, he refers the interest that this work of research
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and fieldwork (that took place in the north of the country and in the Centre of Studies of Peninsular Ethnology) had aroused among the students (Filgueiras, 1986), presenting the CODA work of Octávio Lixa Filgueiras, *Urbanismo – Um Tema Rural* (Urbanism - a Rural theme), as an example of this interest. This is the first theoretical thesis presented as CODA in EBAP, based on a critical review of the CIAM Grid; its contents are close to the fields of geography, sociology and ethnology, with a very ambitious effort of local inquiries (Filgueiras, 1953).

Following the path of Filgueiras a second theoretical CODA appeared in 1957: *Formas do Habitat Rural-Norte de Bragança, contribuições para a estrutura da Comunidade* (Forms of Rural Habitat in the North of Bragança, contributions to the structure of the Community), by Arnaldo Araújo. It presents the work done by the Porto team in CIAM X, justifying their proposal with the study of vernacular constructions from the north of Bragança and of the living conditions of their populations. Araújo proposes the creation of a 'national plan for the habitat', assumes the will to 'raise awareness of this region' to 'improve the living conditions of its people' and suggests that this kind of work can be taught in the schools of architecture 'as an indispensable part of the education of an architect'. We can relate directly this CODA with the fieldwork of the 'Survey', as Araújo integrated the group of 'Zone II' since 1955.

Later, in the 60s, we can find other CODA students working on habitat types of the rural areas of the region of Bragança: José Joaquim Dias and Sergio Fernandez. In the *Ensaio de Recuperação de um Conjunto na Aldeia de Espinhosela - Contribuição Metodológica para Planos de Recuperação* (Methodological Contribution to Recovery Plans in the village of Espinhosela), José Joaquim Dias (1963) states that the rural aesthetics 'is now in fashion' (he speaks of a *mass hysteria for the new rustic*), but points out that we can still find in the small villages 'values that the cities lose everyday' (p. 73). In the next year, Sergio Fernandez presents his CODA: *Recuperação de Aldeias - equipamento colectivo. Rio de Onor, Bragança* (Recovery of villages and

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6 As a result of this work, Filgueiras is chosen to lead the team of the "Zone II" of the "Survey", and has the opportunity to participate in the delegation of Porto for the CIAM X; in 1958, Filgueiras and Arnaldo Araújo are invited by Carlos Ramos to teach in EBAP.
collective equipment in Rio de Onor, Bragança); this thesis presents both a detailed survey of the existing constructions and a set of proposals for action. In the conclusions, there are some recommendations applicable in future interventions on rural areas: they should be based on the 'knowledge of the habits and possibilities of the rural cluster' and performed according to special concerns with location, knowledge of the people, simplification, economy, versatility of use and the effective participation of the population (Fernandez, 1964).

These experiments seek ('with a certain romanticism') to achieve concrete results through a disciplinary action taken 'in an adverse political environment and without the necessary scientific accuracy' (Fernandez, 1988, p. 143), placing the technicians involved in the service of the population, living (and working) on the site and seeking effective participation of the population. This line of work represents a change of attitude of the architect as a professional but also implies
a new strategy in his education: an approach to the knowledge of the social realities of the country, highlighting the field work, the research and the survey as instruments to gather information that can inform the design.

These exceptional examples of CODA work represent the emergency of a new collective theoretical consciousness, clearly showing that the influence of the 'Survey' in EBAP begins before the publication of Popular Architecture in Portugal (Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, 1961). In other CODA presented at this time, we can find drawings and texts embodied in this methodological proposal, that leads to new formal demands: in the design for a house in 'Serra da Estrela', Luis Baptista (1955) claims to 'express "functional", constructive and plastically new aesthetic ideas with a perfect integration into the environment', and states that 'the roughness obtained by the choice of materials, the frankness and simplicity provided by the sobriety were the basic factors that influenced the aesthetic program'. In other cases with similar ideas, the theoretical influence of Távora is evident (mainly the aforementioned text O Problema da Casa Portuguesa):

Because of the way it meets the conditions of the region's climate, due to the simple form and the materials used, inspired in the local constructions, this work can be classified both as "regional" and "national". (...) A national and regional 'style' cannot be produced insisting on the arbitrary mixture of decorative elements, materials and construction methods that were most commonly used in the ages that preceded us (Castro, 1955).

The connection between the examples of the past and future can and should occur in the houses for today's Man. This connection cannot represent an obligation to repeat, (...) in repetition there is no evolution. It must consist, therefore, not only in the interpretation of traditional techniques and materials, but also (...) in the economic and social evolution of man. It must therefore be assumed that traditional architecture is evolutionary (Brito, 1957).
Similarly, we can trace obvious influences of Tâvora in the family house in Amorim that Alfredo Matos presents as a CODA work, both in the written discourse and in the drawings (where it is also noticeable the influence of Alvar Aalto). In the text, it is evident how the discourse of Tâvora can intersect with the experience of the ‘Survey’, that Matos presents as 'one of the positive aspects of the arduous road traveled so far by modern architecture in Portugal', because it led to 'the determination of the specific values of the various regional expressions of popular architecture' and to the recognition ‘of an architectural "tone", able to express the purest virtues of (...) national spirit'. Therefore, it has corrected ‘the pseudo-national expressions of current official architecture' and can also 'provide a basis for (...) overcoming the symptoms of crystallization that functionalist have already revealed between us'.

**Figure 4.** House in Amorim, presented by Alfredo Matos as CODA in 31 Dez. 1958 (photographed by the author).

This text (like the corresponding drawings of the CODA) summarizes how a student could, in 1958, synthesize the main contemporary influences: an organicist doctrine (with influences of Wright, Aalto and Zevi) mixed with an
interpretation of the results of the 'Survey' and influenced by the pedagogical discourse of Távora.

These are just some examples, among many possible, of the changes of language occurring in the CODA, after 1955: the influence from the nationalist doctrine of Raul Lino almost disappears, the pure influence of the international style (uncontaminated by any regionalist or organicist element) becomes rare and the majority of the drawings and texts show a clear influence of the results from the ‘Survey’. This is a trend that lasts throughout the 60s and replaces (especially in single family dwelling) the opposition between national and international (typical of the 40s) with the new paradigm of the relationship with the local environment, that can be materialized in a more rural approach (tiling roof, timber beams, stone walls, wooden shutters, etc...) or in a brutalist trend.7 Apart from the obvious changes in design, we can also find in the CODA a new attitude at a conceptual level: a major concern in relating to the context and a new approach to the functional paradigm, replacing the prior abstract ideas of functionalism (obsessed with ideal modes of functioning) with an intent to find actual useful spaces (of vernacular influence) inspired by the knowledge of local uses and specific clients.

However, this attitude may or may not embody a reflection on the new theoretical paradigm; in many cases, it only represents the adoption of a trendy style. Two years before the publication of Popular Architecture in Portugal, António Freitas (1959, p. 37) alerted to the dangers of 'being caught in an era that can be defined as a neo parochialism, retrospective and unhealthy', although he considers that 'the elements contained in the “Survey” may contribute decisively to the revitalization of our architecture'. Likewise, Nuno Portas (1963, p. 16-18) states that the recent 'attention to rural areas and popular arts and crafts' can be extremely fruitful 'to feed an anthropological reflection on the content of those "spontaneous" forms', if it’s done 'without the incantatory character that leads to forgetting the irreversibility of the radical changes’ it has suffered.

7 In which we can find the influence of the most vernacular houses of Le Corbusier (Errazuris, Celle-Saint-Cloud, Les Mathes and Jaoul).
It is in this context that, in 1965, Álvaro Siza presents his CODA: a preliminary study for a group of four single family houses in Moledo do Minho. The text begins by explaining the delicacy of the intervention, given the growing real estate speculation in the North Coast (‘the construction of a single dwelling in Moledo do Minho broke the prudent attitude adopted by the Preliminary Plan’ of the Municipal Council) to justify his choice of design: ‘ground floor houses, on platforms that include transition spaces (indoor-outdoor)’. Siza points out that he did not intend 'a mimetic integration or a transposition of artificial effects', but attempted to follow 'the example of old local construction built in similar terrain, to the south, as a criterion for the relationship with the landscape' (p. 6). We can also find on his speech the report of another problem that could be seen in Moledo, but coexisted in the whole of the Portuguese territory: 'The relatively recent flow of emigration' leads to a situation in which the hand-labour is 'expensive and generally of low quality', because experienced workmen are scarce and costly and the constructions tend to be made by incompetent personnel (p. 3).

This work appears as one of the few exceptions, in the context of the CODA from EBAP, to the dominant trend of its time: to transform the findings of the 'Survey' in a style directly applicable to single-family housing projects conducted in rural areas, as a formal set of rules, using the themes of popular architecture as a model, either directly or reusing solutions learned in the earlier works of renowned authors (Távora and Siza himself). In this design, Siza presents an aesthetics inspired by the heroic period of the modern movement (a neoplastic approach, with the emphasis on horizontality), in reaction to an already evident erosion of the formal influences of the 'Survey'. This was an important step in the path of Siza, clarifying his relationship with the cultural heritage of vernacular architecture (in a clear inflection in respect to previous projects) and stating a new path to the architecture of Porto, that will gain increasing importance henceforth, while the influence of the 'Survey' loses strength.
In conclusion, it is clear that the language of most of the CODA from EBAP reveals a rapid adherence to the ideology that characterizes each time, from the nationalist projects (before 1948) to the internationalists (after the ‘Congress’) and to the neo-vernaculars (after 1955): the national paradigm is replaced by the international paradigm, which is also replaced by the local paradigm that gradually, from 1961 on, will also lose strength and meaning. However, the focus on the relationship between architecture and site will prevail in the future work of Porto architects.

Acknowledgments

This paper summarizes some of the conclusions of the work developed in the PhD thesis presented by the author at the School of Architecture of the University of Minho in February 2011; for further development of the topics covered here see Eduardo Fernandes, *The Choice of Oporto: contributions to update the idea of a School* at https://repositorium.sdum.uminho.pt.

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