

Fernando Távora and the Concept for a New Civic Centre for Aveiro: Urban Project, Modernity and the Enhancement of the Urban Landscape

Fernando Távora, Aveiro, Civic Centre, Urban Project, Revision of the Modern Movement

/Abstract

This article seeks to explore the importance of the urban project for the Central Zone of Aveiro both from the perspective of the work of Fernando Távora and also as a Portuguese example of the concepts of the Revision of the Modern Movement as they were applied in the early 1960s. We present the project and the historical context of its conception. Fernando Távora's proposal, started in 1962 along with the master plan for the city, sought to solve urban problems through architectural intervention, thus promoting a new identity through the creation of a new civic centre for the city, which included new road and pedestrian circulation routes, new monumental landmarks in the consolidated urban space, and the intensification of commercial and service use, in addition to housing improvements and land valuation. The project involved a re-reading of the city's historical attributes and, thus, the buildings designed, despite having a modern character, were intended to promote the appreciation of the historic city and the urban landscape around the city's Central Canal. In the context of the Revision of the Modern Movement, we view this work as an example of the discussions that took place in the last CIAMs – International Congresses of Modern Architecture.

/Author

Fernanda Vierno de Moura
Department of Architecture, FCTUC – Faculty of Sciences and
Technology of the University of Coimbra
<https://www.cienciavita.pt/pt/0E1B-83D8-2B7A>

Fully qualified Architect, with a Masters in Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Historical Sites, from the University of Bahia (UFBA), Brazil. More than 20 years of professional experience, teaching at Architecture Colleges in Brazil and Portugal, providing consultancy for public services, including UNESCO, and developing architectural projects in Brazil, Ireland and Portugal. Research works are on the topics of architectural design, and conservation of monuments and historical sites. Currently developing a PhD thesis in Architecture at the University of Coimbra, Portugal, with a scholarship funded by FCT – “Fundação Para a Ciência e a Tecnologia” (FCT 2020.08571.BD), developing the thesis: “The Urban Project in Fernando Távora: Modernity and Historic Urban Landscape”.

Introduction

Fernando Távora, one of the great figures of modern architecture in Portugal and creator of several architectural and urban projects developed between the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 2000s, is recognized as a man who knew so very wisely how to adopt a conciliatory position between tradition and modernity.

This article aims to explore one of his projects analytically, addressing the insertion of new modern architecture into a consolidated urban space. It refers to his intervention in the central area of Aveiro in the 1960s, where we can see the coherent “dialogue” of modern architecture with the pre-existing historical environment and the creation of a new and broader civic centre for a city that was modernizing and expanding physically. This project, which was characterized by a combination of urban and architectural solutions, was carried out based on the conditions established in the Master Plan of 1962-64, prepared by the Urbanization Office of Aveiro City Council and coordinated by the French architect and urban planner Robert Auzelle.

The investigation seeks to observe how the architect Fernando Távora worked with the concept of the urban project in this decade. In a preliminary analysis, his work is compared to what was being done in Portugal and in the international context at the same time and it is complemented by possible international influences on the process of creating this project. The current debate is the Revision of the Modern Movement.

The urban and architectural design for this area of the city was developed in different phases. Between 1962-1963 the Preliminary Study of the entire central area of the city was carried out. Between 1963-1967, the working drawings for the Municipal Building and the retail centre were developed, and in 1965-1968, the working drawings of the new branch of the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos*. In 1978-1979, the project for the first expansion of the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* was drawn up and in 1984, it was time for the project to undergo its second expansion. Not everything that was designed by Távora for Aveiro was built, whether for financial or political reasons. What is important for us to evaluate, however, is the intentions of the scheme as produced over the years and the application of the concepts in the elaborated drawings. For this, it is important to explore two aspects: its urban design and its architectural design. They give us answers on how the study intended to improve the city centre.

The project as a whole, prepared as a Preliminary Study for the central zone, demonstrates the appreciation of a new concept of urban architecture, which differs from the mono-functional urbanism proposed by the first International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM). In this scheme developed for Aveiro, we see an attempt to learn from the existing city, valuing the historic urban landscape and giving precedence to interventions to improve what already existed, thus exalting the “heart of the city”, theme of the CIAM VIII, which took place in 1951 in Hoddesdon, United Kingdom. Here, the historical circumstances were

those of the second post-war period and the great destruction of cities caused by it, a context that stimulated not only the debate on how to rebuild them, but also how the physical and social structure of the contemporary city could be re-established.

As an urban project, the importance of the study is based on the method used to transform an urban area, different from that outlined by the Modern Movement. For Solà-Morales an Urban Project was defined as a project of intermediate size within the city, achievable in a short period of time, where the urban and architectural scales are intertwined and the architect has considerable authority over the shape of the city. Multifunctional in character, it articulates public and private investments and makes a strong commitment to civic architecture. According to Solà-Morales, "urban design means taking the geography of a given city, with its demands and suggestions, as a starting point, and introducing elements of language with architecture to shape the place".¹ The principle, which according to him was set aside in CIAM speeches, notably when Giedion and Le Corbusier were in charge of the General Secretariat of the congresses, was able to be successfully developed in the work of some independent planners in European and American cities from the 1930s onwards and, as we will see, it was also applied by Távora.

In regard to the project of the new civic centre for Aveiro, we have three important works of reference. The first is the master's thesis by Carlos Manuel Galante Mendes defended in 2016 at the University of Coimbra². In this work, the author initially makes a historical presentation of the city, emphasizing the date of the important architectural landmarks of Aveiro and later analysing the plans developed by Auzelle and by Moreira da Silva. He also analytically describes the parts of Távora's preliminary project and ends by listing three influences on the conception of this project: the ideas of Kevin Lynch, the compositional concepts found in the urban landscape of the city of Venice, and the travel records the architect made on his trip to the USA and Japan in 1960.

The second work of reference is the book *Atlas Aveiro – Edifício Fernando Távora, Biblioteca Municipal, Projeto e obra 1964-2020*³, published by Aveiro City Council in 2021 to celebrate the reopening of the Municipal Building, which saw rehabilitation work coordinated by the architect José Bernardo Távora, the son of Fernando Távora, between the years 2019 and 2020. In this publication it is possible to see images referring to the original project of Távora and to the rehabilitation project, in addition to photos of the works on-site and the finished building. The book also features a chapter written by Carlos Manuel Galante Mendes, whose text summarizes his master's dissertation.

1 Manuel de Solà-Morales, "The Urban Project", in *Progettare città / Designing Cities*, ed. Mirko Zardini (Milan: Electa, 1999), 71.

2 Carlos Manuel Galante Mendes, "Arranjo da zona central de Aveiro, de Fernando Távora (1962-67): das influências teóricas às referências práticas" (Master Diss., Universidade de Coimbra, 2016).

3 José Bernardo Távora, ed., *Atlas Aveiro – Edifício Fernando Távora, Biblioteca Municipal, Projeto e obra 1964-2020* (Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 2021).

A third and final work of reference is the very recent book entitled *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*⁴, by Domingos Tavares, an architect who collaborated with Távora in this project. The author presents a brief history of the city of Aveiro and reports the importance of Távora's contribution to the renewal of the city's monumental image, describing the architect's intentions in his concept of the urban project in the Preliminary Study, with particular attention to the architectural drawings that made up the plan, arguing that its design, in addition to remaining faithful to his knowledge of the history of the place, also explored the symbolic value of the various parts that made up people's collective living experience of the city. He also compares the guidelines of the Master Plan of Auzelle, who was attentive to the historical and cultural conditioning of the place, with the more interventionist measures of the preliminary plan that Moreira da Silva had previously prepared for the city. Finally, he emphasizes, in great detail, the aesthetic intentions of the project for the Municipal Building.

In our text, we seek to complement the studies already carried out, adding to the analysis of the idealization of the work, the historical modern context of the 1950s and the international character of Távora, which was consistent with the universal debate of the Revision of the Modern Movement, promoting in practice the theme of the "heart of the city", or the "civic centre". We will also try to understand the true relationship of Távora with the historic city and with its pre-existing architectures, in an interventionist attitude that was just starting (as we will see) to be concerned with social and heritage issues, a stance that he would demonstrate more consistently in later projects, for example for Ribeira-Barredo in Oporto, or in his acclaimed intervention in the historic centre of Guimarães.

1. The Portuguese Context in the 1950s and Early 1960s

The 1950s in Portugal are notable for the arrival of modern architecture, a relatively late event compared to the rest of Europe, but quite representative. Some of the manifestations of modernism in the country were moderate, others consistent with the International Method.⁵ There were great efforts made in the development of modern architecture in the country by the newly formed groups ICAT – *Iniciativas Culturais Arte e Técnica*, from Lisbon and ODAM – *Organização dos Arquitetos Modernos*, from Oporto. The first National Congress of Architecture was held in 1948 and it is possible to perceive from then on the occurrence of several initiatives of expressiveness.

As modern examples developed at this time in Lisbon, there are the Blocks on the *Avenida Infante Santo*, 1952-1955, by Alberto José Pessoa, the *Bloco das Águas Livres*, 1953-1956, by Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Bartolomeu Costa Cabral, the development called *Bairro das Estacas*, in the Alvalade neighbourhood in 1953, by

⁴ Domingos Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro* (Porto: Dafne Editora, 2022).

⁵ We will adopt the term "International Method" instead of "International Style", as advocated by Montaner (1993) to designate the architecture of the Modern Movement.

Ruy D'Athouguia and Formosinho Sanches, and also, in Oporto, the development for Ramalde, in 1952-1960, by Fernando Távora. These works represent the point when the Modern Movement's code was applied, where the concept of a block is replaced by a wide open space, providing free pedestrian circulation.

Some years before, in 1948 and 1949, there had been two exhibitions of modern Brazilian architecture at the *Instituto Superior Técnico*, in Lisbon, an event widely publicised by the magazine *Arquitectura*, the main vehicle for transmitting this modern ideal in Portugal. The influence of modern Brazilian architecture in the country continued to be felt in the 1950s and 1960s: In 1952, Lúcio Costa was honoured at an exhibition in Lisbon and in 1961, the Brazilian modernist himself came to the Oporto School of Fine Arts for a conference.

In the public investments of the *Estado Novo*, there was a search for a definition of a national identity. Works were carried out with a classic monumentality, as with the Law Courts of Oporto building by Raúl Rodrigues Lima in 1958-1961, and also with a modernist monumentality, as is the case of the Rectory Building of the University City of Lisbon by Pardal Monteiro in 1952-1961, or the buildings around the wide "Marquês de Pombal" roundabout in Lisbon by Carlos Ramos in 1957.

The promotion of the country's artistic and historical heritage by Salazar also dates back to that era, with a large public investment in works of restoration by analogy⁶ of national monuments, with the aim of enhancing the nation's identity. Examples are the restoration of the *Paço dos Duques de Bragança* in Guimarães, in 1960, and of the *Sé Velha* in Coimbra, in 1962, actions that show a perspective of solely restoring the object, rather than enhancing the image of the city or territory, a reality that would only change after the 1960s.

The *Inquérito à Arquitetura Popular Portuguesa* of 1955 was also relevant. This was a pioneering work of survey in the study of Portuguese traditional architectures, promoted by the National Union of Architects – *Sindicato nacional dos arquitetos* –, which had the participation of Fernando Távora and which would contribute to a change in the way national architecture was conceived.

Among Távora's texts, the importance of *Arquitetura e Urbanismo – a Lição das Constantes*⁷, from 1952 and *Da organização do Espaço*⁸, from 1962, deserve mention. In the first one, the architect reflected on the importance of paying due attention to the circumstances of the present day and to the work's location when devising a new architectural and urban project. By doing so he was stressing the importance of the role of history, which determines the possible constants of that present time, discussing the theme of "permanent modernity"; in other words, the aspect that manifests itself in the quality and accuracy of the relationship

⁶ Modern restoration, the theory of architectural restoration according to the dogmas of Viollet-le-Duc.

⁷ Fernando Távora, *Teoria geral da Organização do Espaço. Arquitetura e Urbanismo: A lição das constantes* (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1993).

⁸ Fernando Távora, *Da Organização do Espaço* (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1996).

between work and life. For him, modern works were those that reflected the surrounding conditions, and the architect is merely the organizer and the agent that collaborates with the synthesis of the elements of its composition.

In 1952, the Regulatory Plan for the City of Oporto, produced by the Oporto engineer Antão de Almeida Garrett, was completed. Távora was at that time an architect at the Oporto City Council, where he developed, in addition to the project for the Social Quarter of Ramalde, a Study for the *Avenida da Ponte* (nowadays the *Avenida Afonso Henriques*) in 1955, a project that has a less radical interventionist attitude, if compared to the urbanism that had been carried out until then, demonstrating the change in the conceptual stance that he had towards the city.

It is also important to mention, following the public works policies, the preparation of the Improvement Plan for the City of Oporto, from 1956, which was not implemented in its entirety, but whose main objective was the extinction of the *ilhas*⁹ and the creation of neighbourhoods with healthier living conditions in areas of urban expansion, where the lower income sector of the population could be moved. The French architect and urban planner Robert Auzelle was hired to execute this plan. Afterwards, he was also appointed to prepare the Master Plan for the city, and so he worked as a consultant for the city authorities between 1956 and 1962 to systematize and organize the work started by Almeida Garrett. The objectives of this Master Plan were to modernize and define essential functions for the urban landscape, seeking to develop a more dynamic and cosmopolitan city model and to join the consolidated centre up with its new peripheral areas through functional roadways. It was not fully implemented due to financial constraints. If it had been carried out, there would have been, for example, the demolition of some of the buildings in the Barredo area, the freeing up of the area for the construction of a parking lot, which would have significantly changed the image we have of the city today.

Among Fernando Távora's built works, this decade marks the projects that demonstrate his lucid and coherent interpretation of the international movement that was concerned with the renewal of modern architecture: the Santa Maria da Feira Market, from 1953-1959, the Tennis Pavilion and Park at the *Quinta da Conceição*, in Matosinhos, in 1956-1960, and the House of Ofir, from 1957-1958. The project by Álvaro Siza Vieira for the *Casa de Chá da Boa Nova*, in 1958-1963, is also from this date and context. Another work by Távora that is worth mentioning and evaluating is the Preliminar Plan for Montemor-o-Velho, from 1951-1961, whose descriptive text shows the architect's attention to the historical components of the site.

We must state, first of all, that our work is intended, on the basis of a careful study of the past and present of the town, to propose solutions of a general nature, solutions considered fundamental; and not to solve

⁹ Typical term used for slums in central areas of Oporto.

problems of detail. (...) if Montemor must be rejuvenated, the initiatives that contribute to or result from such rejuvenation should not structurally alter its aesthetic aspect. (There was a time when progress meant destroying the past; today, however, progress must mean being worthy of the past, being knowledgeable and capable of adding something new to the past).¹⁰

According to Sergio Fernandez¹¹, in 1960 the Ministry of Public Works in Portugal began the preparation of urban plans for the regions of Aveiro, the Algarve and Lisbon. Távora was invited to participate in the Aveiro plan, collaborating on the elaboration of one of the three urban arrangements foreseen in the Master Plan that Robert Auzelle had been assigned to manage. The practice of urban planning was thus finally introduced into Portugal, a discipline that had already existed and been practised in the United States of America for over 30 years at that time. Fernando Távora, with his experience and updated knowledge, greatly enriched by his trip and sojourn in America in 1960, would be an important collaborator.

2. The International Context

The beginning of the 1950s is notable for the realization of CIAM VIII “The Heart of the City”, in Hoddesdon (England), and the discussion around the Revision of the Modern Movement. Fernando Távora, along with Viana de Lima, participated in this congress, and in all other subsequent CIAM meetings, a pioneeringly representing Portugal in these very important international meetings of modern architecture. This was due, as discussed above, to the evolution and assimilation of modern architecture in the country.

Discussions around the theme of the eighth CIAM had many connections and much resonance with the debate on the identity of cities and the conception of public space. The theme “The Heart of the City” was, as far as we can tell, the concept explored by Távora in the project developed for Aveiro. At this Congress, it was stated that the matter of the “Heart of the City” was the issue of the symbolic and physical reform of the structure of the city through the creation of centres of social life, which are understood as “civic centres”.

The great change that took place in CIAM debates between the 1933 meetings in Athens and the 1951 meetings in Hoddesdon was remarkable. The core of the discussion, following the destruction caused by the Second World War, moved away from functionalist urbanism and the theme of reinserting

¹⁰ “Devemos afirmar, antes de tudo, que o nosso trabalho pretende, na base do cuidadoso conhecimento do passado e do presente da Vila, sugerir soluções de carácter geral, soluções julgadas fundamentais e não resolver problemas de pormenor. (...) se Montemor deve rejuvenescer não devem as iniciativas que contribuam para ou resultem de tal rejuvenescimento alterar estruturalmente o seu fâcies (tempo houve em que progredir significava destruir o passado, hoje, porém, progredir deve significar ser digno do passado, saber e poder acrescentar algo de novo ao passado)”. From: José António Bandeirinha ed., *Fernando Távora: Modernidade Permanente* (Guimarães: Associação Casa da Arquitectura, 2012): 218.

All translations of references in the text are mine. Revision of English: Richard Birkby.

¹¹ Sérgio Fernandez, *Percurso da arquitectura portuguesa 1930-1974*, (Porto: FAUP – Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto, 1988).

new projects in the historic core of the city was then highlighted. In this decade, however, despite CIAM VIII registering a new trend in the conception of modernism, the legacy of the Charter of Athens continued to make itself felt in many of the urban achievements in the international context. Lucio Costa's plan for Brasilia, construction of which took place between 1956 and 1960, is an example of this.

However, the publication of *Verso un'architettura organica*, by Bruno Zevi in Italy in 1945, six years before CIAM VIII, demonstrated that the direction that modern architecture should take was beginning to be questioned. Soon afterwards, in 1949, Zevi criticized CIAM in a publication of the Italian magazine *Metron*. For him, it was important that CIAM discuss its own history, "including the importance of the divergent and excluded 'organic' architectures of [Frank Lloyd] Wright and [Hugo] Häring".¹² Zevi argued that there was another field of modern, non-rationalist architecture, a movement called organic, or human architecture, or new empiricism, from architects who had joined CIAM as proponents of the rationalist school ten years earlier and who had since gone through an evolutionary change.

In 1953 at CIAM IX in Aix-en-Provence, France, the largest of all the CIAMs, young British architects Peter and Alison Gill Smithson openly challenged CIAM's discourse on the Functional City and proposed a new "hierarchy of human associations" to replace it. Their Golden Lane project for London, drawn up in 1952, had the clear intention of being a critique of Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse for Paris.

It is also important for our analysis to examine an urban proposal by the Smithsons in 1958 for Berlin. An urban concept of organization entitled "from stem to cluster" is applied in this project, a concept also explored by George Candilis in Toulouse Le Mirail in 1961-62. In the project for Berlin, rather than dividing the city into zones and functions, a complex network of routes was created at different levels, thus allowing the creation of varied environments in the city and the preservation of pre-existing buildings.

The Swedish modernist architect Sven Markelius (one of the founding members of CIAM in 1928) acted similarly in the early 1960s. He demonstrated a refinement of values when he began to work on city planning at the end of his career. For him, "the model of the 'rational city', tested to the limit in its virtual state in the planning of Stockholm, already appears to be insufficient".¹³ In proposing a solution for the city centre, in the area around Hötorget, a square used for street markets, he explored a radical proposal, with the distribution of pedestrians and cars on different levels, so that the area was re-planned around a new Metro station and new road junctions. He also explored a mixed use proposal for the centre (offices, residences, shops,

¹² Eric Paul Mumford, *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928-1960*. (Cambridge: MIT, 2000), 200.

¹³ "Il modello di 'città razionale', verificato al limite delle sue virtualità nella pianificazione di Stoccolma, appare ormai insufficiente". See: Stefano Ray, *Sven Markelius 1889-1972* (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1989): 121.

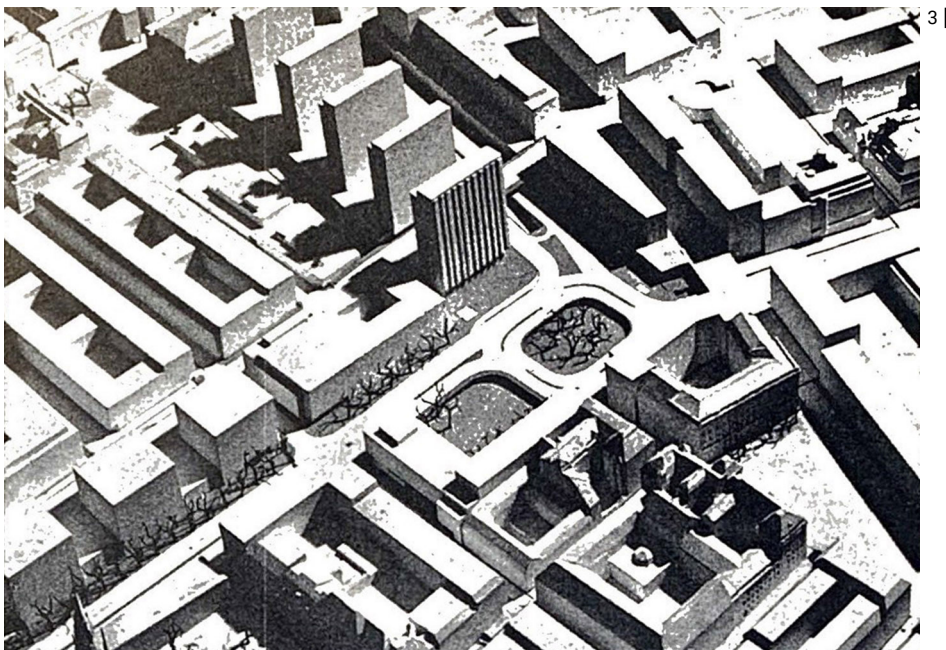
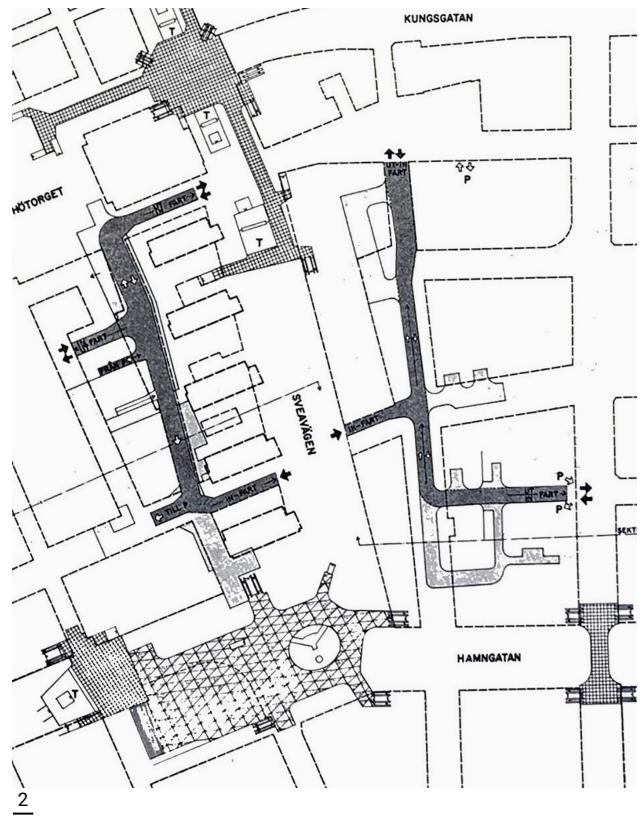
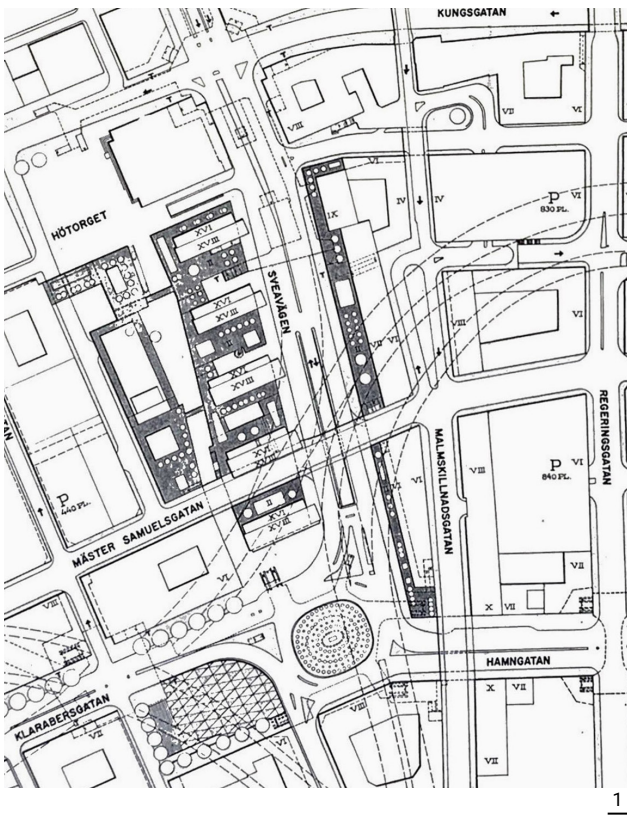


Fig. 1

Sven Markelius for Stockholm Centre – Upper-level floor plan.

Fig. 2

Sven Markelius for Stockholm City Centre – Lower-level plan. Source: Stefano Ray, *Sven Markelius 1889-1972*, (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1989), 125.

Fig. 3

Mock-up of Sven Markelius's Plan for central Stockholm showing the separation of pedestrian routes from motor traffic lanes. Source: Stefano Ray, *Sven Markelius 1889-1972*, (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1989), 125.

restaurants) in order to keep it “alive” both day and night [Fig. 1, 2, 3]. For Stefano Ray, it was in this urban arrangement that the question of the heart of the city emerged.¹⁴

At the last CIAM (XI), in Otterlo, in 1959, or the first meeting of the “Team 10”, the diversity of visions among the members was remarkable, but, despite this, there was a common bond between the architects: the efforts to restore urban life in cities; the exaltation of local traditions, treating them with respect

¹⁴ Ibid.



4 |

and interpreting them anew; the formal review of architecture, distancing itself from the dogmas of the Modern Movement; the pragmatic and empirical work method; and the vision of the social role that an architect must take on.

Távora had common ground at this CIAM with the ideals of the Italian representatives, expressed, among others, by the architects Giancarlo De Carlo, Ernesto Rogers and Ignazio Gardella. In Italy at that time there was a new interest in old city centres, from for which traditional cultural values could be assimilated. Among these, there was a determined will to continue the ideas of the Modern Movement, updating them to the then current state of Italian architecture. It was in this context that the *Torre Velasca* [Fig. 4] was built in Milan, a Project by the B.B.P.R group. Completed in 1958, it is a stand-alone building of great height and modern structure which, due to its location in the old city centre, adopted references to forms and elements of historical architectural language.

This building is the ultimate expression of Rogers' reflection on environmental pre-existence, with the intention of synthesizing and expressing, without any mimicry, the ineffable character of the city. It is also the perfect synthesis of tradition and modernity. Although its volume has clear historical resonances, it is clearly of a modern typology.¹⁵

In addition to the Italian Neo-Liberty movement, notable also are the Brutalist current of the British Peter and Alison Smithson, the new Nordic empiricism, exemplified mainly in the works of Alvar Aalto, and the works of an ethical character in relation to their environment, faithful to their Mediterranean traditions, such as with the examples of the Spaniard Josep Antoni Coderch. Also expressive of this era were the sculptural works of Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil and the

15 "Este edificio es la máxima expresión de la reflexión de Rogers sobre las preexistencias ambientales, en el intento de sintetizar y expresar, sin mimetismos, el carácter inefable de la ciudad. Es también una perfecta síntesis de tradición y modernidad. Aunque el volumen tenga evidentes resonancias históricas, se trata claramente de una tipología moderna". See: Josep Maria Montaner, *Después del Movimiento Moderno: Arquitectura de la segunda mitad del siglo XX* (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 1993), 101.

Fig. 4

Torre Velasca in the centre of Milan (source: www.itinari.com, last view June 2022).

last few works of Frank Lloyd Wright in the United States, such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, from 1956-1959.

Távora's trip around the world in 1960, a few years before developing the urban project for Aveiro and publishing his famous text *Da organização do espaço* is of relevance. The experiences he reported in his diary on the United States and Japan deserve special mention. For what concerns American culture, he expressed his admiration for the works of Frank Lloyd Wright. We know that the vast body of work of this American architect has its own character, very different from the dogmas of the Modern Movement and the teachings of Mies Van der Rohe at the Chicago School of Architecture. Távora's course was also opposed to the formal purism of Mies and consistent with works with their own language arising from a process, and not from the application of preconceived formulas.

In *Da organização do espaço*, published in 1962, we see, in a way, his experiences of this trip. Ana Mesquita analyses the testimony he wrote in his diary:

The organization of space is one of the themes that stands out in Távora's text, particularly the analysis of volumetric relations – in the observation of the city of Washington and on the riverfront of Boston, in a work by Wright, in the pyramids of Giza, in the Japanese temples and on the Acropolis. The relationship between the volumes and the interstitial spaces they created is much described and reflects his way of seeing architecture. This care, with the organization of the space, would also be a reflection of his own way of doing architecture.¹⁶

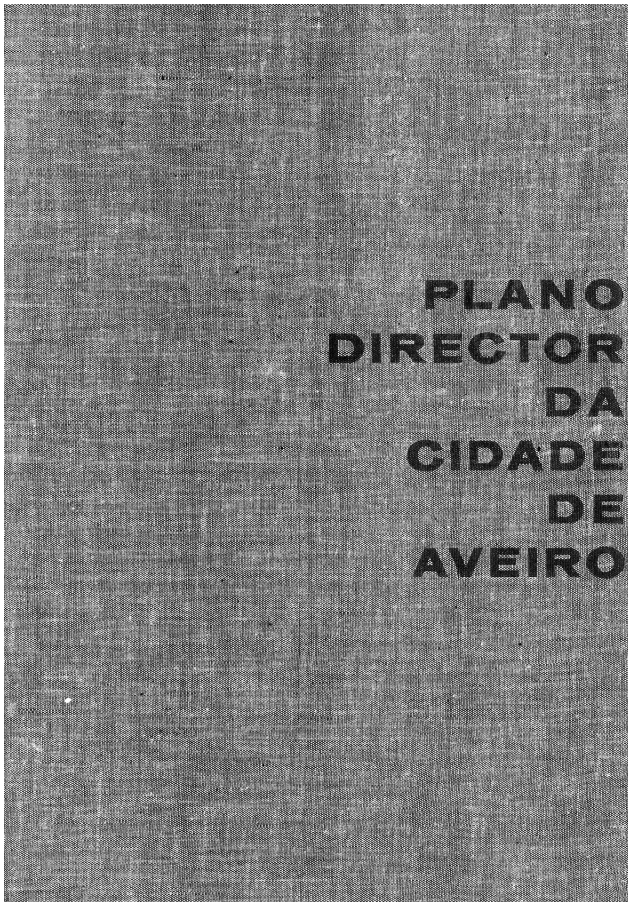
In his architectural design for Aveiro, one is able to see influences from the concepts of the Italians and the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, as will be further demonstrated in this paper. As Jorge Figueira reminds us, "Távora was a privileged observer and interpreter of the process of crisis and renewal of the Modern Movement in the 1950s, in free consonance with the matrix of Zevi's revision".¹⁷ Montaner recalls that in the book *Verso un'architettura Organica*, "the architecture of Wright and Aalto is proposed as a model and is supported by the argument of empirical psychologism".¹⁸

Finally, the book *The image of the city*, by Kevin Lynch, published in 1960, is worthy of mention. It discusses the shape of cities and how people understand their surroundings. Távora met Lynch on the occasion of his visit to the Urban Planning Department of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1960, making reference to this text several times in his classes. We believe that

¹⁶ "A organização do espaço é um dos temas que sobressai no texto de Távora, particularmente a análise das relações volumétricas – na observação da cidade de Washington e na frente ribeirinha de Boston, de uma obra de Wright, nas pirâmides de Gizé, nos templos Japoneses e na Acrópole. A relação dos volumes e dos espaços intersticiais por eles criados, é muitas vezes descrita e reflecte o seu modo de ver a arquitectura. Este cuidado, com a organização do espaço, será também o reflexo do seu próprio modo de fazer arquitectura". See: Ana Raquel da Costa Mesquita, "O melhor de dois mundos: A Viagem do arquitecto Távora aos EUA e Japão – Diário 1960", (Master Diss., Universidade de Coimbra, 2007), 200.

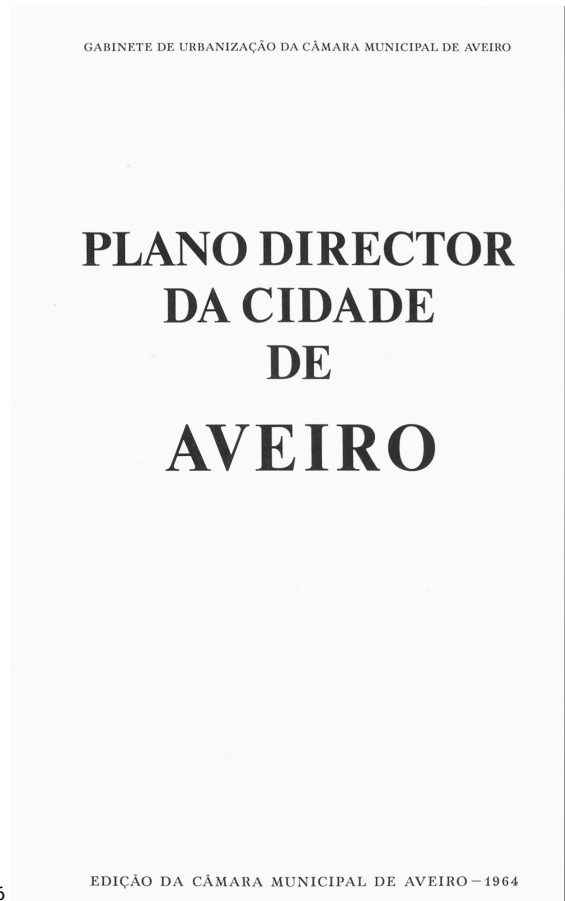
¹⁷ "Távora foi um observador e um intérprete privilegiado do processo de crise e renovação do Movimento Moderno nos anos 50, em consonância livre com a matriz da revisão zeviana". See: Jorge Figueira, *A Periferia Perfeita. Pós-modernidade na Arquitectura Portuguesa. Anos 1960-1980* (Lisboa: Caleidoscópio, 2014), 24.

¹⁸ "La arquitectura de Wright y Aalto es propuesta como modelo y es sustentada con el argumento del psicologismo empírico". See: Montaner, *Después del Movimiento Moderno: Arquitectura de la segunda mitad del siglo XX*, 95.



5 |

| 6



the re-reading of the existing historical attributes in the project developed for Aveiro was, in a certain way, based on this study by Lynch.

3. Robert Auzelle and the Master Plan for the City of Aveiro

The 1962-1964 Master Plan for the City of Aveiro by Robert Auzelle stood out for having been developed “based on the analysis of the growth of the urban fabric over time”¹⁹, where its designer sought to come up with a solution that would correlate the functions of human nature with the reorganization of the entire urban space, defining central axes with a modernist perspective.

The Plan [Fig. 5, 6], which is now housed in the historical archive of the City Council of Aveiro, is a single volume of large dimensions that contains written texts inside which shows the main ideas and fundamental objectives of the Plan, and drawings that refer to the surveys carried out and the proposals for architectural intervention in the city.

Before starting to work in Aveiro, Robert Auzelle had already conceived the Master Plan for the City of Oporto, as mentioned above, and had also visited the ESBAP – *Escola Superior de Belas-Artes do Porto* in 1955 to give a conference,

¹⁹ “A partir da análise do crescimento da malha urbana ao longo do tempo”. See: Lídia Maria Moreira Matias, “Transformações e integração derivadas da mudança de uso do espaço urbano na cidade de Aveiro, Portugal”. V Seminário Internacional de Investigación en Urbanismo. Barcelona: Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2013. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5821/siiu.5860> (last access May 2024).

Fig. 5

Cover of the Master Plan of the City of Aveiro, 1964 (Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro).

Fig. 6

Back cover of the Master Plan of the City of Aveiro (Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro).

an occasion on which the architect Fernando Távora was a teaching assistant at the school. In the academic debate, the Oporto School followed the evolution of modern architecture and urbanism, but the discipline of urban planning in the country was still stuck with pre-functionalist guidelines at that time.

Since 1945, Robert Auzelle had been professor at the Institut d'Urbanisme in Paris and, perhaps this is how in 1955 he came to give a lecture at the Oporto School of Fine Arts. In Oporto, he found a School attentive to the international debate on architecture (and urbanism); not only because Carlos Ramos, the director of ESBAP at the time, was a profoundly modern man, but also because there he found Oporto architects who had participated in the previous CIAMs.²⁰

The contribution of this French architect and urban planner reflects the ongoing debate around urban culture of the 1950s, inside and outside Portugal. The Plan he drew up for Oporto between 1957-1962, better known as the "Auzelle Plan",

is testimony to the move from a "formalist" urbanism, of a "bucolic" nature [more properly of a landscape character] or "monumentalist", to another, of a "modernist" or "functionalist" type, marked by the articulation of the disciplinary doctrine issued by CIAM in the 2nd post-war period, with its "organic" adaptation to the morphology of the city [and is thus, therefore,] an example of an "Organic-Functionalism".²¹

The plan shows that the notion of the city as a "piece of art", as it had been practised by the French academics of the National Superior School of Fine Arts and the French Society of Town Planners in the first half of the 20th century, was being challenged.

For Nuno Grande (2011), this historical moment reinforced the importance of the concept of urban art as one that valued social and environmental issues in addition to the architectural qualities of buildings in the allocation and ordering of free spaces. This concept assigns "the urban 'void' a central role in the 'art' of renovating cities"²² and emphasizes open space, to the detriment of the layout and alignment of facades and heights in large architectural complexes.

In Aveiro, prior to the arrival of Auzelle, the Urbanization Plan by David Moreira da Silva and Maria José Marques da Silva was the plan in force. It was conceived

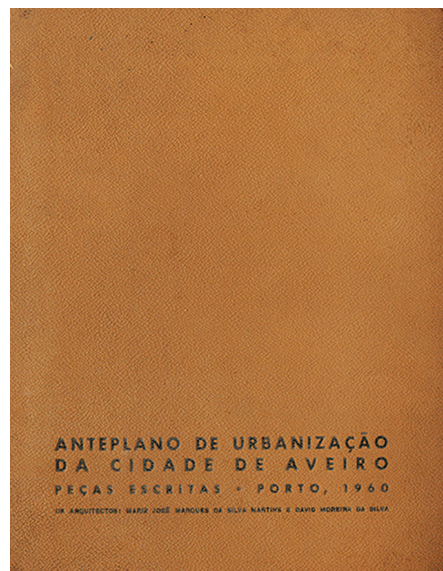
20 "Desde 1945 que Robert Auzelle tinha sido nomeado professor no Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris e, talvez por essa via, vem em 1955 fazer uma conferência na Escola de Belas-Artes do Porto. No Porto encontra uma Escola atenta ao debate internacional sobre arquitectura (e urbanismo). Não só porque Carlos Ramos, o director da ESBAP da época, é um homem profundamente moderno, mas também porque ali encontra arquitectos portuenses que participaram nos últimos CIAM". See: Manuela Juncal, "Robert Auzelle e o urbanismo francês dos meados do século XX no 'Plano Director da Cidade do Porto' de 1962", *Cadernos – Curso de Doutoramento em Geografia. FLUP – Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto*, (2012), 71.

21 "Testemunha a passagem de um urbanismo 'formalista', de cariz 'bucólico' [mais propriamente paisagista] ou 'monumentalista', para um outro, de tipo 'modernista' ou 'funcionalista', marcado pela articulação da doutrina disciplinar saída dos CIAM do 2º pós guerra, com a sua adaptação 'orgânica' à morfologia da cidade [e é assim, portanto] um exemplo de um "Funcionalismo Orgânico". See Nuno Grande, "Funcionalismo Orgânico. Robert Auzelle e o Plano Director da cidade do Porto", in *Jacques Gréber. Urbanista e Arquitecto de Jardins*, Teresa Andersen, Manuel Fernandes de Sá and João Almeida eds. (Porto: Fundação Serralves, 2011), 186-211.

22 "Ao 'vazio' urbano um papel central na 'arte' de renovar as cidades". From: Nuno Grande, "Funcionalismo Orgânico. Robert Auzelle e o Plano Director da cidade do Porto". In *Jacques Gréber. Urbanista e Arquitecto de Jardins*, Teresa Andersen, Manuel Fernandes de Sá, João Almeida eds., (Porto: Fundação Serralves, 2011), 186-211.



7



8



in 1948 [Fig. 7] and supplemented in 1960 [Fig. 8]. This was characterized by being an addition of urban interventions for the city that were distinguished by the rationality of the layouts in which the order and revision of the road system prevailed over the old fabric.

Moreira da Silva envisaged in his preliminary urbanization plan a transformation for the central area that involved several demolitions, mainly with his proposal to widen the street called “Rua de Coimbra” [Fig. 9, 10, 11]. There were also plans to extend this route over the Central Canal by building a new bridge and creating a square on the opposite bank, demolishing other buildings as well for this purpose. This design was a gesture aiming to provide an urban landmark that marked the start of the *Avenida Doutor Lourenço Peixinho*, a thoroughfare of increasing importance in the city. The sum of measures would even have led to the demolition of the Harbour Master’s Building (the *Capitania*), a construction of historical importance for the city. Such provisions were opposed by the city’s population and therefore did not materialize. However, some actions were repeated as proposed in the subsequent Master Plan, as will be seen below.

Unlike Moreira da Silva’s Urbanization Plan, Auzelle’s work in Aveiro in 1962-1964 was to design a whole system for the city.

Robert Auzelle, disciple of Jacques Gréber (1882-1962) at the Institute of Urbanism in Paris, where he was a professor, brought another orientation to urban culture in Portugal. Auzelle practised the idea of a flexible and adaptable plan, in order to integrate future events and information, supported by the analytical method and interdisciplinarity for an in-depth knowledge of the urban unit to be worked on.²³

23 Robert Auzelle, discípulo de Jacques Gréber (1882-1962) no Instituto de Urbanismo de Paris, onde foi professor, trazia outra orientação para a cultura urbanística em Portugal. Auzelle praticava a ideia de plano flexível e adaptável, de modo a integrar acontecimentos e informações de futuro, apoiado no método analítico e na interdisciplinaridade para o conhecimento profundo da unidade urbana a trabalhar. From: Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 24.

Fig. 7

Cover of the Master Plan of the City of Aveiro, 1964 (Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro).

Fig. 8

Cover of the 1960 Urbanization Plan for the city of Aveiro, with 2 volumes: Written pieces and drawn pieces (Historical Archive of the Library of Aveiro).

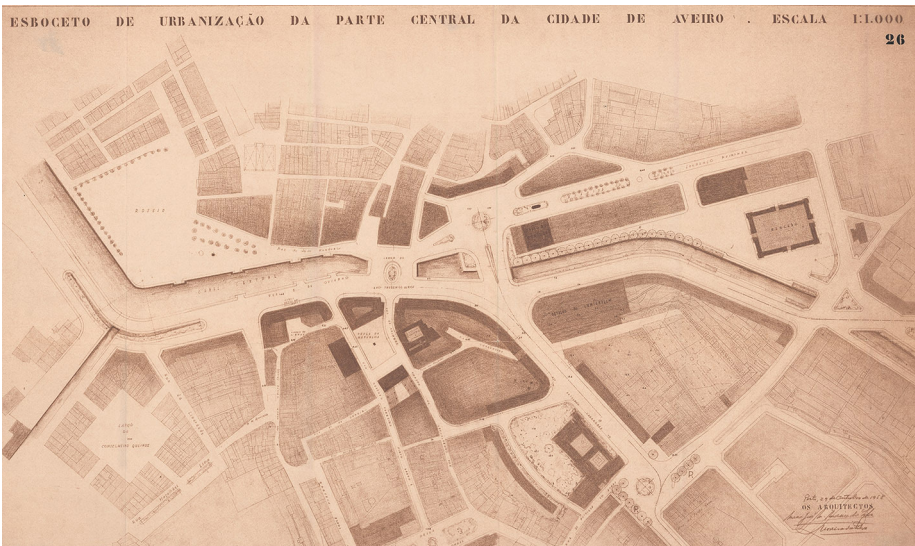
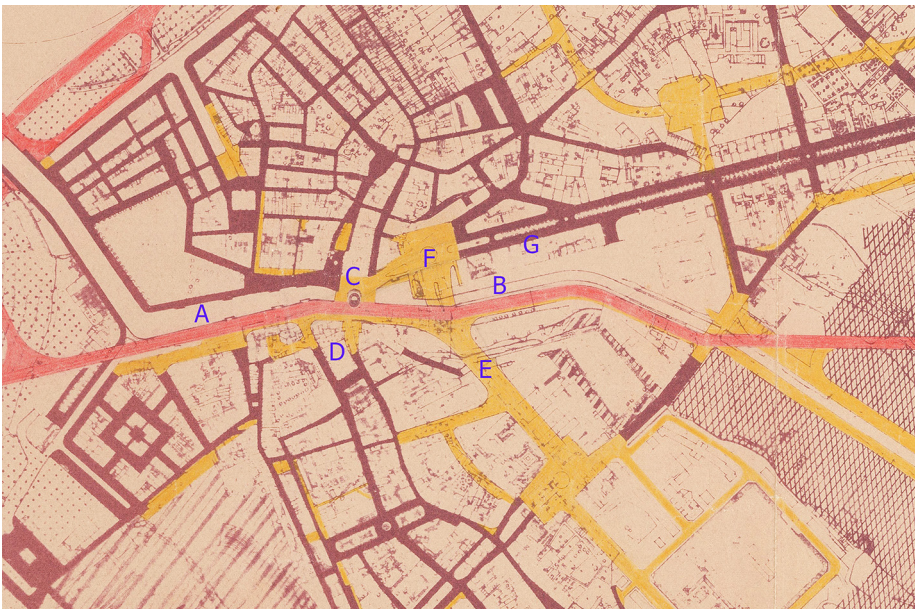


Fig. 9

Aerial photo of the city of Aveiro 1950s (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 10

Interventions planned for the Central Zone in the Preliminary Plan for the Urbanization of the City of Aveiro (1960). Caption: in red – new road system; in yellow – road network to be remodelled; in black – road network to be conserved. A – Central Canal | B – Canal do Cojo | C – Plaza-Bridge | D – Republic Square | E – Rua de Coimbra | F – New road square | G – Av. Dr. Lourenço Peixinho (Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro). Author's notes on the drawing.

Fig. 11

Intervention proposal in the Central Zone and beginning of Avenida Dr. Lourenço Peixinho in the Urbanization Plan for the City of Aveiro, 1960 (Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro).

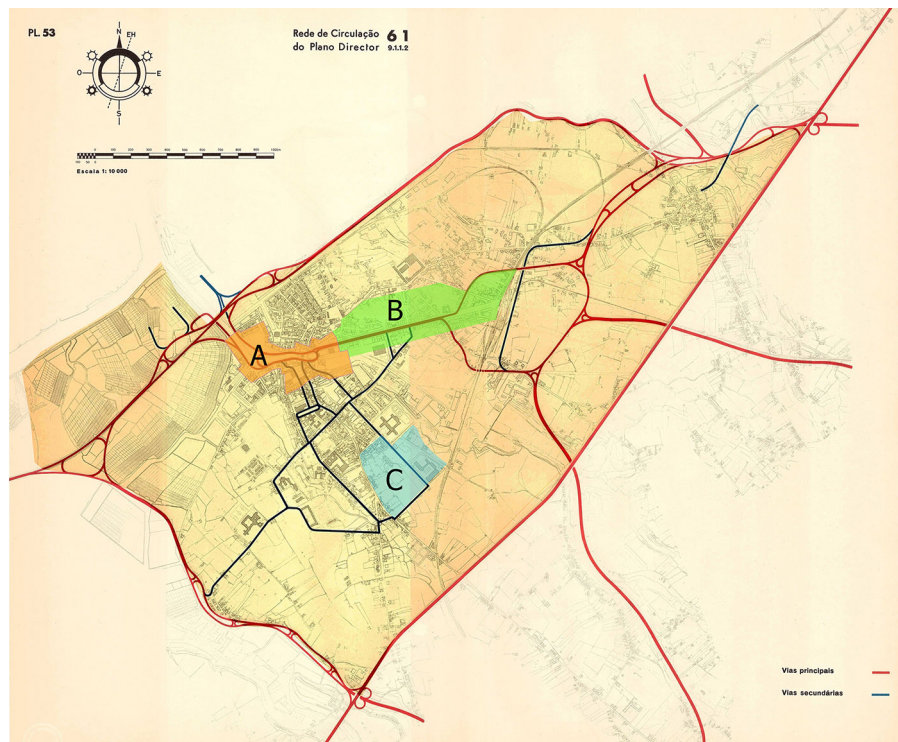
The Master Plan of Aveiro had as its guidelines the economic and social development of the region. Prior to its implementation, survey work and analyses were carried out, which served as a basis for establishing general guidelines and proposals for urban arrangements. The document mentions that, at the time, there was a prediction of a 40% demographic increase in the area by the year 1985²⁴ and that, therefore, special attention should be paid to the problem of the increase in motor traffic in the urban agglomeration. Thus, the Plan proposed to devise a new road system that allowed connections to the industrial and port areas independently, i.e. without crossing the city centre, so that the routes to and from the port to the north and south of the country would be simple to follow and would not cause any disturbance to urban traffic.

The enhancement of the natural landscape of the *Ria* (the surrounding lagoon) was also mentioned as being of great importance. According to Auzelle's justification, exposing this landscape was the main factor taken into account in the Plan's proposals. As such, the road layout of the urban arrangement, in addition to responding to the needs of the port and industry, also had the character of tourist routes. A semi-circular road [Fig. 12], passing through certain elevated sections of the area, would offer visitors panoramic views of the *Ria* to the north, and of the salt pans to the south, providing drivers with the best view of the beauty of this area, in addition to responding to the need to prevent them from encroachment by the urban agglomeration.

In similar fashion we have the rationale for the construction of a tower in the centre of the city:

In order to make the most of this exceptional region, which, until now, has only be able to be appreciated from the air, a building of convenient height was located in the centre of the city, to allow everyone, in the best conditions, a view of the *Ria*, of its salt pans, its flotilla and its ports.²⁵

For the interior of the urban agglomeration, the author of the Plan proposed a hierarchical system of roads, seeking to avoid intersections and create a



12

Fig. 12

Master Plan circulation network. Legend: in red, main roads; in blue, secondary roads; yellow spot: limits of the master plan; Letter "A" – Location of the Detailed Plan for the Arrangement of the Central Zone; Letter "B" – Location of the Detailed Plan for the Urban Arrangement of *Avenida Doutor Lourenço Peixinho*; Letter "C" – Location of the Detailed Plan for the Urban Arrangement of the sector at the east of *Bairro Dr. Sampaio* (Master Plan of the City of Aveiro, 1964, Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro). Author's notes on the drawing.

24 Robert Auzelle, *Plano director da cidade de Aveiro* (Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 1964), 11.

25 Auzelle, *Plano director da cidade de Aveiro*, 12.

“roundabout system on a large scale”²⁶ in the city. It also proposed that the “plaza-bridge”, built in 1952, be demolished, giving way to a new road scheme, with two new bridges over the Central Canal, with one-way traffic around it. The justification for its dismantling was that this bridge, configured as a roundabout over the canal, with its centre in the shape of a well, was considered by him a physical and visual “barrier”, which divided the canal and did not solve the road traffic problem in ideal fashion.



13

This proposal to build new bridges would also result, as in the Moreira da Silva Urbanization Plan in the demolition of the Harbour Master's Building (the “*Capitania*”) [Fig. 13, 14], an action that created indignation as to why it had been downgraded as a historic building. We can only assume that, although this was erected on a structural base of arches on piles from the ruin of an old 15th century watermill, because the building was rebuilt in 1830 with only one floor and in 1903 expanded to two floors in an eclectic style, it was considered by the municipality to be “a more recent construction”,²⁷ in comparison to other historical buildings.



14

The Plan also highlighted the need to create new surface parking lots in the centre, at the edges of the rebuilt area, east and west of the Central Canal [Fig. 15]. One of these parks would occupy the large area of the “Largo do Rossio”, west of the Central Canal. With this change in use, the square's traditional local activity of fairs and city festivals would be relocated to a new, wider and greener area, close to the “Canal do Cojo”.

The Master Plan even provided for industrial activity, housing, public services or services of common interest, and the corresponding regulations for each of the activities. The housing guidelines mentioned the construction of new neighbourhoods to the east and south, and the rehabilitation of existing housing, especially in the central area of the city. A new regulation also set out construction

Fig. 13

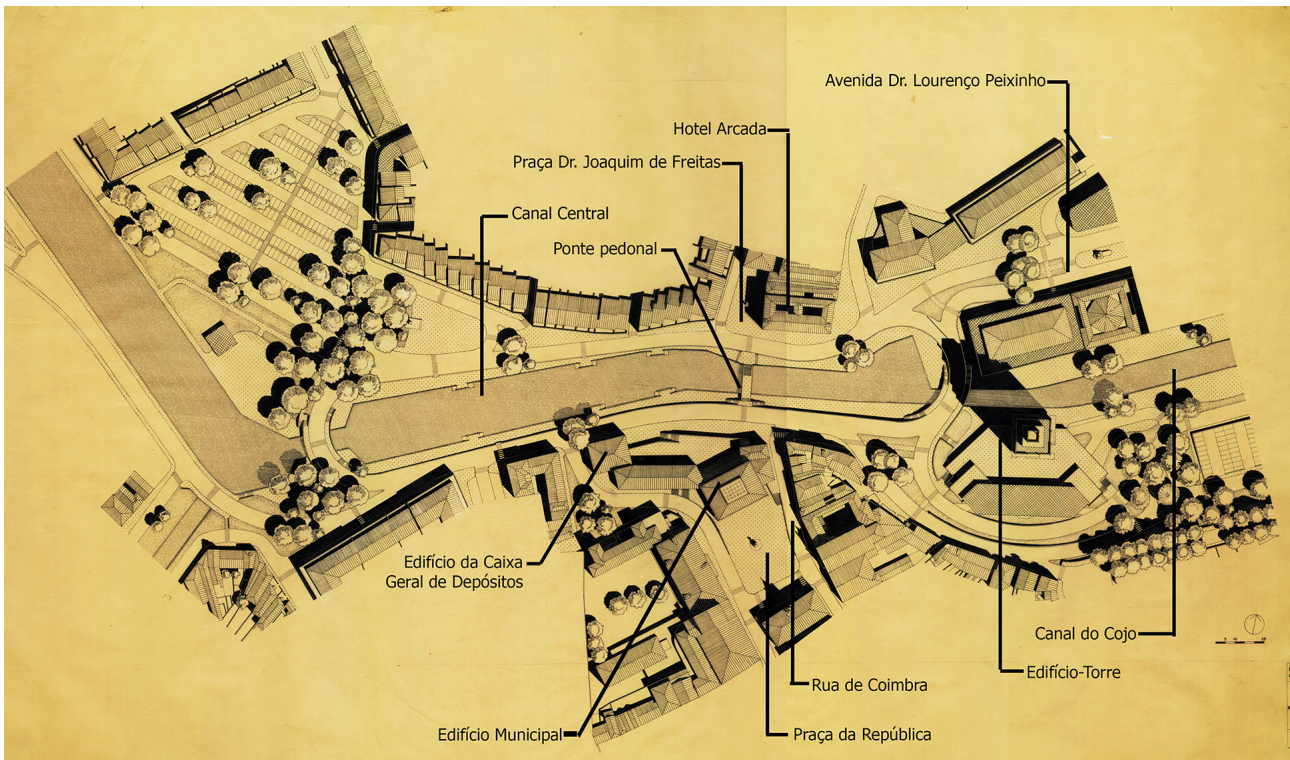
Photo of the Harbour Master's Building (the “*Capitania*”) after the first renovation (Urbanization Plan for the City of Aveiro, 1960, Historical Archive of the Municipal Library of Aveiro).

Fig. 14

Photo of the Harbour Master's Building (the “*Capitania*”) rehabilitated in 2004, (Francisco da S. Dias, Tiago S. Dias and Maria João Soares, “P01 Arquitectura – Edifício da Antiga Capitania de Aveiro. Arquitectos Francisco da Silva Dias e Tiago Silva Dias”, *Arquitectura e Vida*, no. 51 (July-August 2004): 48.

26 “Sistema de plataforma giratória em grande escala”. Auzelle, *Plano director da cidade de Aveiro*, 14.

27 David Moreira Silva, Maria José Moreira da Silva Martins, *Anteplano de Urbanização da Cidade de Aveiro*. (Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 1948).



15

criteria to avoid “a false style of contemporary architecture”,²⁸ demonstrating the importance of conserving the city’s traditional architectural complex.

Of note is the proposal to regulate and limit the maximum height of the buildings on the *Avenida Doutor Lourenço Peixinho* to seven floors, evidence of the plan’s aim to create order and control over urban densification in a growing region in the service sector. The city’s tallest buildings were located on this avenue and the Auzelle plan contributed both to its densification and to the consolidation of its character as a commercial and service hub in the city. This avenue, with the new residential areas, was then defined as an area of greater elevation in Aveiro. Furthermore, establishing a maximum height in these zones demonstrated the care and concern taken to set off the new Tower-Building against the urban landscape as the only building that should have visual prominence in terms of height in the city.

Detailed plans for some areas complemented the general guidelines. These defined the construction constraints, which were distinct from one area to another and clearly aimed at creating a new image of the city. There were 3 proposals. The first one was the Arrangement of the Central Zone, whose architect in charge Project was Fernando Távora. The second was the Urban Arrangement of the *Avenida Doutor Lourenço Peixinho*, and the third the Urban Arrangement of the sector to the east of the *Bairro Doutor Sampaio*, given to architects J. Carlos Loureiro and L. Pádua Ramos for development.

Given the above as guidelines, Domingos Tavares writes:

[...] the Master Plan for the City of Aveiro had a greater ambition than a simple technical guideline based on zoning and density criteria. Auzelle

28 Auzelle, *Plano director da cidade de Aveiro*, 8.

Fig. 15

Presentation drawing of the Preliminary Study of the Arrangement of the Central Zone of Aveiro, June 1963 (FIMS/AFT). Author’s notes on the drawing.

proposed the principle of density in the configuration of the central historical nucleus, with the clear notion that the form of the city is more dependent on the culture of the place than on the programmatic geometry of the management plan. He understood the place beyond topography or physical geography, taking stimuli from social complexity such as the significance of its history and the natural human ambition for progress.²⁹

4. The New Civic Centre

The Arrangement of the Central Area of Aveiro by Fernando Távora (1962-1967) was characterized by being an urban renewal plan in its entirety, where there was an intention to create a new civic centre for the city. The project combined the creation of new spaces with the preservation of the historic environment, distinct aims in balanced proportion. From what was newly proposed, two areas are notable: the Tower-Building block and the regeneration of the "Praça da República". As concerns what was recommended to be preserved, the intention to maintain the configuration of the urban morphology stands out. For Mendes:

Távora has a clear intention with regard to the treatment of the historical environment of the city. For most of the existing buildings in the central area, Távora simply adjusts its heights, preserving its historic character. That is, it maintains the urban forms sedimented throughout history.³⁰

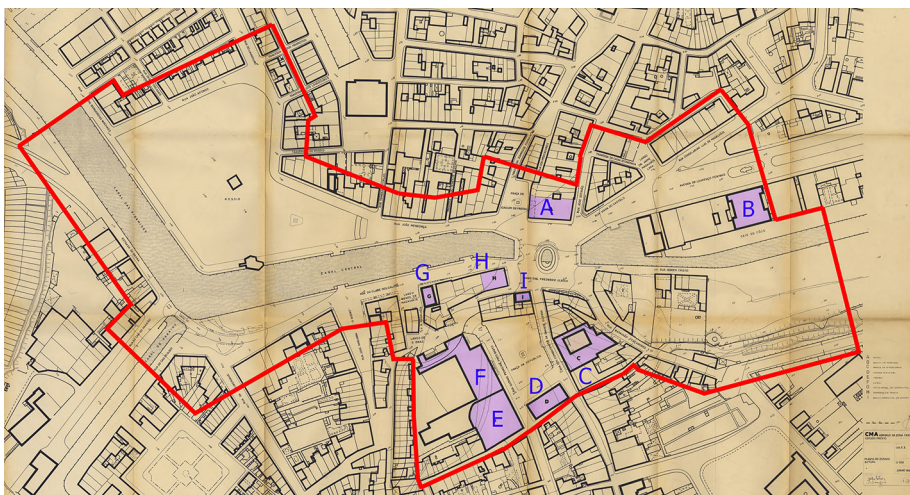
It can be said that the modification of the central area of the city was entirely defined in Auzelle's Scheme and that Távora was the creator of the architectural approach adopted for the materialization of the pre-defined concepts by the Urbanization Office of the Municipality of Aveiro. In this way, Auzelle's guidelines and Távora's proposals can be characterized by being complementary products.

According to Fernando Távora,

The Scheme [prepared by the Director Plan Office] (...) contained, in its simplicity, a whole happy and powerful conception of arrangement of the central area of Aveiro, full of possibilities that its development through the Preliminary Study prepared by us confirmed. This will be a point that should not be forgotten, thus paying homage to those who conceived this Scheme and putting our work in its proper place, which had the joy of starting from such a clear and significant idea, thus proving itself, and

29 [...] o Plano Director da Cidade de Aveiro tinha uma ambição maior do que a simples orientação técnica assente no zoneamento e em critérios de densidade. Auzelle defendia o princípio de densidade na configuração do núcleo histórico central, com a clara noção de que a forma da urbe é mais dependente da cultura do lugar do que da geometria programática do plano de gestão. Entendia o lugar para além do topográfico ou da geografia física, tomando da complexidade social estímulos como a significação da sua história e a natural ambição humana de progresso. See: Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 33.

30 "Távora tem uma intenção clara no que diz respeito ao tratamento do ambiente histórico de cidade. Para a maior parte dos edifícios existentes na área central, Távora ajusta simplesmente as suas cêrceas, preservando o seu carácter histórico. Ou seja, mantém as formas urbanas sedimentadas ao longo da história". From: Mendes, "Arranjo da zona central de Aveiro, de Fernando Távora (1962-1967): das influências teóricas às referências práticas", 67.



16 |



17 |

once again, the need and the advantage of basic studies in terms of urbanism for defining and framing architectural solutions.³¹

Távora played the role of organizer of the necessary synthesis to carry out a broad programme, which covered “aspects as diverse as the enhancement of the historic core with the value of a civic centre and its fitting into a complex web of car traffic”.³² Its conception encompassed both the urban design, which defined the road infrastructure, the regeneration of public spaces, the buildings to be demolished and to be built, and the architectural design of the proposed new buildings [Fig. 16, 17].

Among the architectural measures adopted were the spatial reorganization of an entire block, the demolishing of some existing buildings, proposing new ones and introducing a new pedestrian connection on different levels between

Fig. 16

Plan of the Central Zone of Aveiro prior to the project, emphasizing the striking buildings, June 1963. Caption: A: *Hotel Arcada* | B: *Banco de Portugal* | C: *Misericórdia Church* | D: *City Hall* | E: *Aveiro Theatre* | F: *Lyceum* | G: *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* | H: *Fishing Company* | I: *Banco Regional de Aveiro (FIMS/AFT)*. Author’s notes on the drawing.

Fig. 17

Plan of Fernando Távora’s Proposal for the Central Zone of Aveiro, June 1963. Caption: A: *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* | B: *Offices and Commerce* | C: *Trade* | D: *Municipal Building*; E: *Banco Regional de Aveiro*; F: *Offices and Hotel* | G: *Trade* | H: *East Car park* | I: *West car park (FIMS/AFT)*. Author’s notes on the drawing.

31 “O Esquema [elaborado pelo Gabinete do Plano Director] (...) continha, na sua simplicidade, toda uma feliz e poderosa concepção de arranjo da zona central de Aveiro, cheia de possibilidades que o seu desenvolvimento através do Estudo Prévio por nós elaborado veio confirmar. Este será um ponto que não convirá esquecer, prestando assim homenagem a quem concebeu tal Esquema e colocando no seu devido lugar o nosso trabalho que teve a dita de partir de uma ideia tão clara e tão significativa, provando-se assim, e mais uma vez, a necessidade e a vantagem de estudos básicos em termos de urbanismo para a definição e enquadramento das soluções arquitetónicas”. See: Fernando Távora, *Arranjo arquitetónico e urbanístico da Zona Central. Estudo Prévio. Memória descritiva e justificativa* (Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 1963), 3.

32 “Aspectos tão distintos como a valorização do núcleo histórico com valor de centro cívico e o seu encaixe numa trama complexa de trânsito automóvel”. (See: Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 41).

the *Praça da República*, with the City Hall, and the Central Canal. In the arrangement suggested for all this new block, Távora kept only the pre-existing building of the *Banco Regional de Aveiro*³³ and redesigned all the rest of the block. At first, he suggested remodelling the existing *Caixa Geral de Depósitos*³⁴ building (building A in fig. 17), which was subsequently demolished and a new one built. He designed three new buildings, an annex to the Bank for extension (building E in fig. 17), another annex to the *Caixa* for the installation of offices (building B in fig. 17), and a third intended for commerce (building C of fig. 17). All of them were thought together, in order to form a new mixed-use urban nucleus that eased the transition between the higher elevation of the *Praça da República* and the lower elevation of the Central Canal.

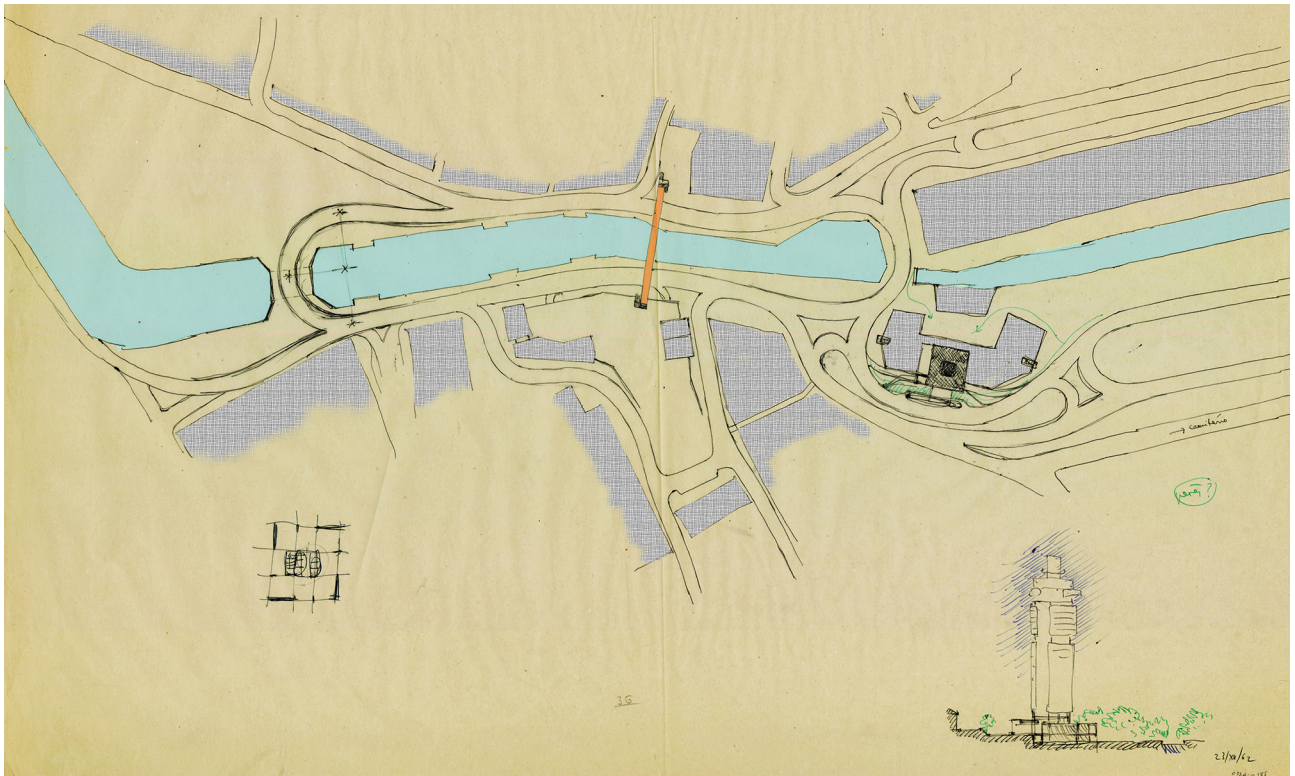
The second area with new buildings was the Tower-Building complex (building F in fig. 17), a building with 25 floors (about 90 meters high), expected to be conceived as a modern landmark for the city in the Auzelle Plan, in contrast to the prominence of the surrounding historic core. This building, with a commercial complex (building G in fig. 17) and a car park (building H in fig. 17), was intended to be located to the east, next to the *Cais do Cojo*, in a place dominated by buildings in poor condition that would be demolished. The complex would expand the provision of spaces for trade and services in the city, leaving the representativeness of administration and culture to the core of the old town.

Necessary adjustments were made to Auzelle's pre-established guidelines for materializing the ideas of these two building complexes. The first one was a small change to the configuration of the new set of buildings on the *Praça da República*, which was planned to be completely opened up on its north side in the Auzelle scheme, visually linking the square to the Central Canal, also featuring a pedestrian bridge over the canal, which would start at the higher level of this square and finish on the opposite bank, in *Praça Doutor Joaquim de Freitas* [Fig. 18]. In addition, the importance of this opening up was to encourage the shift in focus from the *Praça da República* to the new, revitalized public space of the canal. "Underlying the intention of the Auzelle team would be the creation of an open square, following the prototype of the symbolic places of the main Portuguese cities, masterfully represented in the transformation of the *Terreiro do Paço*, in Lisbon [...] open to the Tejo [river]".³⁵ Távora, however, contradicted this idea and resolved this permeability in another way [Fig. 19], proposing the construction of a building there, sitting in classical fashion opposite the City Hall on the other side of the square, but with a free space underneath it, thus allowing for a continual visual horizon from square to canal (building D in fig. 19). This opening also allowed the square to be extended to the position of the roof of the commercial building (building C in fig. 19), which was designed at a

33 The name of a bank from Aveiro.

34 The name of a national bank.

35 "Subjacente à intenção da equipe de Auzelle estaria a criação de uma praça aberta, seguindo o protótipo dos lugares-símbolos das principais cidades portuguesas, magistralmente representados na transformação do *Terreiro do Paço*, em Lisboa [...] aberta ao Tejo". (See: Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 50).



18



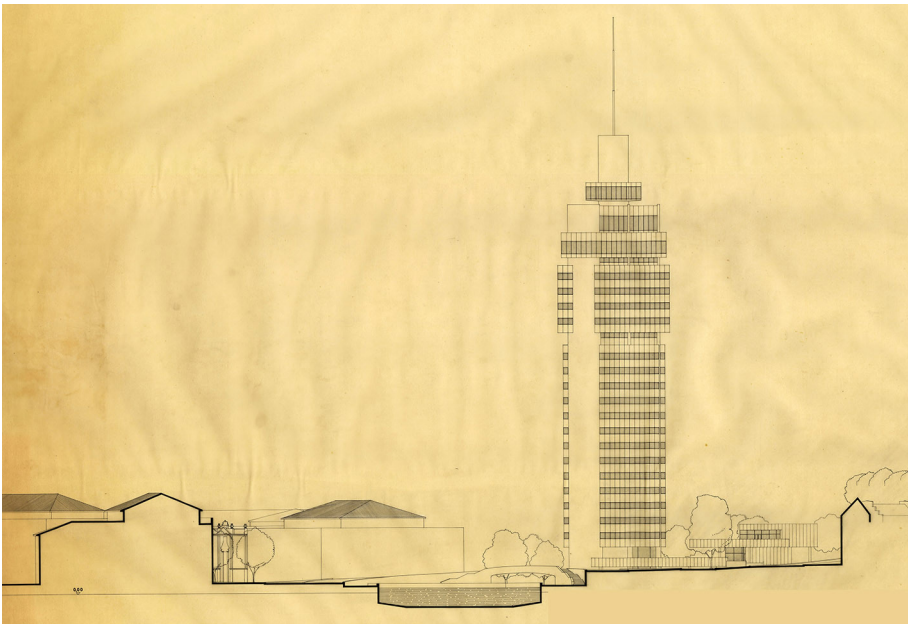
19 |

Fig. 18

Initial sketch of the architectural design, showing the north side of the *Praça da República* open to the Central Canal and a pedestrian bridge (highlighted in red) from the high level of this square to the other side of the canal, over the canal and the arteries of traffic (FIMS/AFT). Author's notes on the drawing.

Fig. 19

Implementation of the set of buildings on the south bank of the canal, adjacent to the *Praça da República*, showing the piers of the Municipal Building, June 1963. Caption: A: *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* | B: Offices and Commerce | C: Terrace of the Commercial Building | D: Municipal Building (Entrance Floor) | E: Extension of the *Banco Regional de Aveiro* (FIMS/AFT).



20 |

lower level, with direct access to the street bordering the canal. The connection to the canal was created with steps, linking the level of the square to the level of the street on the edge of the canal.

It is interesting to note that Távora accentuated the relationship between the square and the canal with his design. By designing the commercial front of this complex facing the canal, it confirms where he wanted “the eyes” of the city to be directed after this intervention. In addition, the roof of this commercial building (letter “C” in fig. 19) is also a lounge area, with a belvedere to the canal, promoting a recreational pedestrian route and the quality improvement of public space in the centre of Aveiro.

Távora’s second adjustment to the Auzelle Plan was in relation to the exact position of the Tower-Building. “After considering several hypotheses for its location, it was confirmed that the best position would be the one indicated in the diagram provided (forming a triangle with the ‘Church of the Misericórdia’ and the Hotel [Arcada])”.³⁶ The proximity of the tower to the Central Canal accentuated its relationship with the same, giving even greater prominence to this important waterway in the city [Fig. 20]. The building, which also had a shopping centre surrounding it on the ground floor, had its projection area significantly reduced because of this block, for reasons of profile and proportion in relation to the new solution for the road for cars.

With regard to the road scheme, in addition to satisfying the new road arrangement provided for in the Auzelle scheme, Távora proposed the design of the two new car bridges, and the pedestrian bridge. He planned to widen the roads running along the canal banks and to link this road scheme to the city’s main streets and avenues, as well as to the two new car parking lots. The appreciation of

Fig. 20

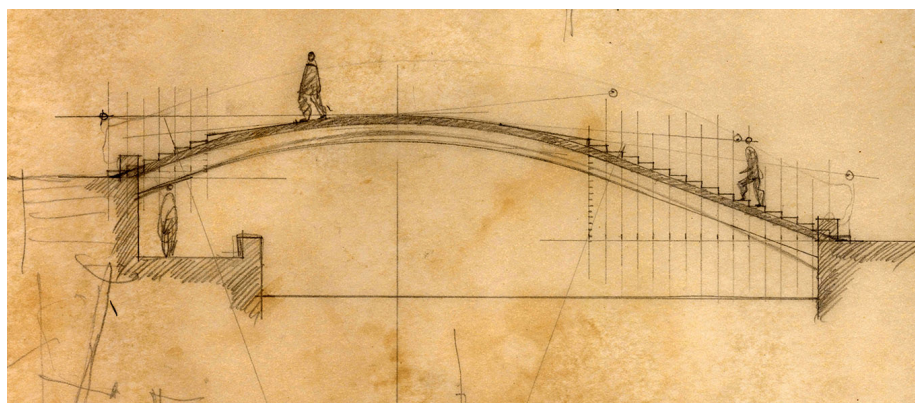
Cross section through the central channel showing the elevation of the Tower-Building in the background, June 1963 (FIMS/AFT).

36 “Depois de encaradas várias hipóteses para a sua localização, confirmou-se que a melhor posição seria a indicada no Esquema fornecido (formando um triângulo com a Igreja da Misericórdia e o Hotel [Arcada])”. See: Távora, “Arranjo arquitetónico e urbanístico da Zona Central. Estudo Prévio. Memória descritiva e justificativa”, 4.



21 |

the Central Canal would thus be down to the intensified use of its banks, especially by pedestrians. The model [Fig. 21] shows the wide expansion proposed for the narrow pavements that bordered it, which sometimes reached dimensions that transformed them into living



22

zones at a single level (1.5m). Roads, on the other hand, have variations in levels in the layouts. "It can be said that the pedestrian route works as a level platform, around the water, enhancing the canal".³⁷ In addition, the extension of these pavements under the new bridges promoted the removal of same-level intersections with vehicles, allowing the underpass of pedestrians without interruptions to the pedestrian route [Fig. 22]. The crossing of the channel by pedestrians in this scheme was achieved through dedicated pathways, with access via stairs and ramps, in both directions, east and west of the canal, adjacent to the road bridges created by the new scheme.

The pedestrian access system proposed for the central zone is a demonstration of Távora's intention to prioritise pedestrian life and also to confer pleasure, beauty and variety on the routes. There was also, in addition to the proposal for the renovation of the *Praça da República*, with all its extension of the space there, as already mentioned, the renovation of the *Praça Doutor Joaquim de Freitas* north of the Canal, where the existing car park was to undergo a change of use exclusively in favour of pedestrians, for living and socializing. In Távora's

37 "Pode-se dizer que o percurso pedonal funciona como uma plataforma de nível, em redor da água, valorizando o canal". From: Mendes, "Arranjo da zona central de Aveiro, de Fernando Távora (1962-67): das influências teóricas às referências práticas", 79.

Fig. 21

Model of the Preliminary Study of the Arrangement of the Central Area of Aveiro, presented with the Master Plan of the city, in 1963 (FIMS/AFT).

Fig. 22

Cross section through the central channel showing the elevation of the Tower-Building in the background, June 1963 (FIMS/AFT).

layout there is a correspondence between the two squares, which at first was a direct connection from the higher level of the *Praça da República* to the lower level of the *Praça Doutor Joaquim de Freitas*, which meant not only crossing over the channel, but also over its side roads, but which in the final proposal was simplified, limiting itself to crossing only over the channel.

The passage of pedestrians over the central canal, between the two squares, was simplified, either to obtain a more economical solution or due to the almost impossibility of naturally raising pedestrians on the side of *Praça Doutor Joaquim de Freitas*, at the necessary elevation, with the further inconvenience that, to service zones at low elevation, one would have to go up on one side (*Praça Doutor Joaquim de Freitas*) to descend on the other to an elevation similar to that of the starting point.³⁸

With regard to the elimination of crossings at the same level between pedestrian and vehicle lanes, one notes the architect's coherence with the examples of his time, with the lessons learned from modern thought, such as the Smithsons' project for Hauptstadt, Berlin, and the Stockholm civic centre proposed by Markelius.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the new vocation of the banks of the Central Canal: it would become a new civic centre, or the new "heart of the city", and with this, we can see the concern and care taken to create greater social dynamization for the area.

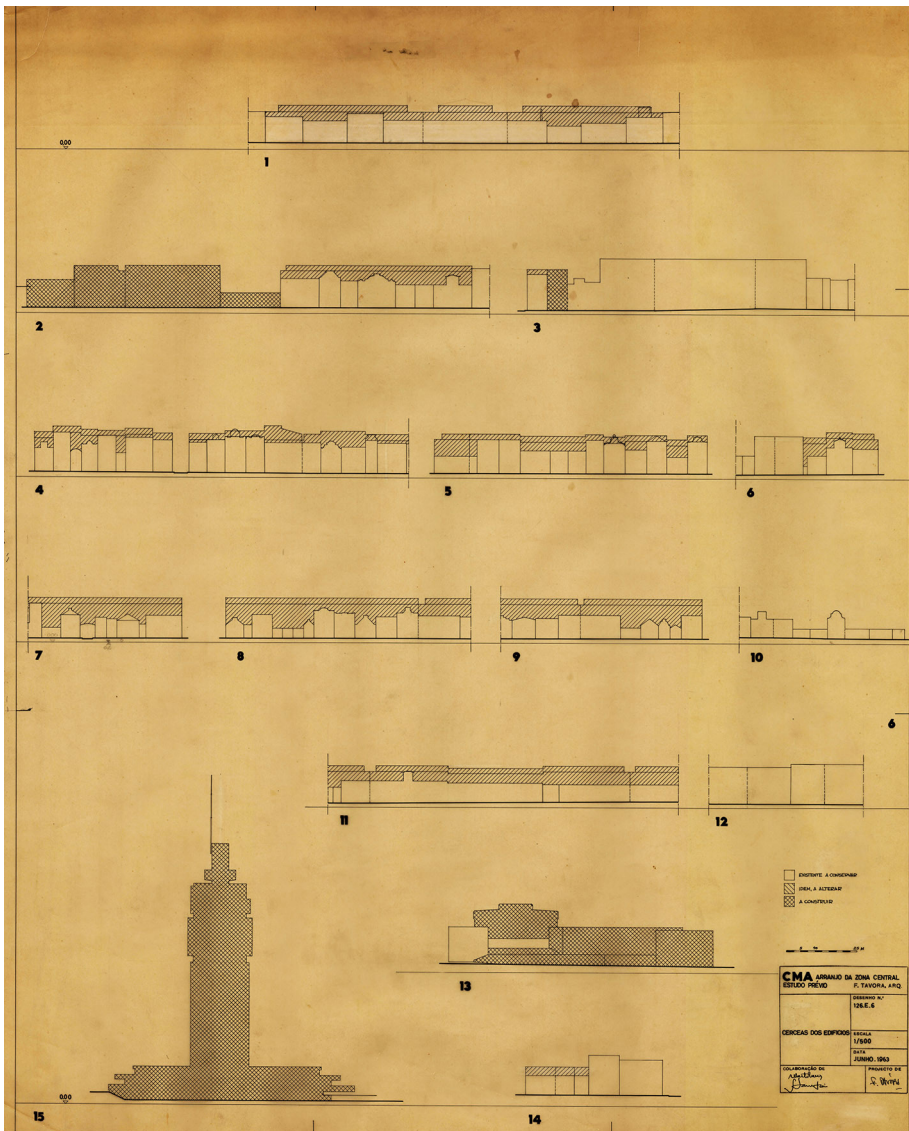
5. Urban Guidelines and Regulatory Standards

As a form of urban standardization, the Scheme of Auzelle's Master Plan proposed the regulation of the heights of the city's buildings. For some high-density areas, such as the long *Avenida Doutor Lourenço Peixinho*, these were limited to a maximum height of 7 floors.

For other zones, the threshold was lower. These restrictions implied some kind of relationship between the buildings in the city as a whole, in order to allow a better balance of volumes and to emphasize the prominence of the Tower-Building in the urban landscape. For the buildings located on the banks of the Central Canal, the Preliminary Study suggested that in the long term changes could be made, implying an increase in the number of floors up to a standardised maximum height [Fig. 23]. This regulatory measure aimed to guarantee the maintenance of the horizontality of the urban landscape in this area of the city.

However, the regulatory measures were not limited to establishing new constructive indices for the area. Távora also proposed, in his Preliminary Study, a

³⁸ "A passagem de peões sobre o canal central, entre as duas Praças, foi simplificada, quer para obter uma solução mais económica quer pela quase impossibilidade de elevar, naturalmente, os peões, do lado da Praça Dr. Joaquim de Freitas, à cota necessária, com o inconveniente, ainda, de que, para serviço de zonas a cota baixa haveria que subir de um lado (Praça Dr. Joaquim de Freitas) para descer do outro para cota semelhante à do ponto de partida". From: Távora, "Arranjo arquitetónico e urbanístico da Zona Central. Estudo Prévio. Memória descritiva e justificativa", 4.



23 |

constructive recommendation for these buildings on the banks of the Central Canal, which not only provided the guarantee of horizontal harmony in the landscape, but also created a typological alteration of the whole set [Fig. 24]. According to the descriptive memory of the project, for these buildings:

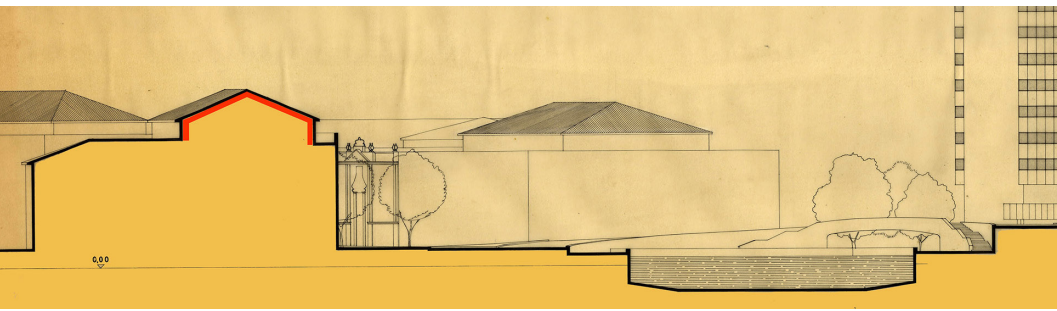
It is suggested that the top floor, generally set back, be covered in two pitches and not in four pitches as is currently the case, a fact that will certainly alter a little the general appearance of the buildings, for the simple reason that this type of roof makes it possible to solve in better conditions the problem of water infiltration that the existing buildings are victims of.³⁹

In analysing the buildings on the north bank of the Central Canal today, we note that two buildings adopted this alteration in the typology of their roofs [Fig. 25]. We observe that for this modification to take place, a new floor had to be

³⁹ "Sugere-se que o último piso, de um modo geral recuado, seja coberto em duas águas e não em quatro como atualmente acontece, fato que certamente alterará um pouco a fâcies local, pela razão simples de que tal tipo de cobertura permite resolver em melhores condições o problema das infiltrações de água de que são vítimas as construções aí existentes". Távora, "Arranjo arquitetônico e urbanístico da Zona Central. Estudo Prévio. Memória descritiva e justificativa", 19.

Fig. 23

Proposal for the regularization of the heights of the buildings on the banks of the Central Canal, June 1963 (FIMS/AFT).



24 |

Fig. 24

Schematic section of the buildings in front of the Central Canal, showing in red the volume added to the existing structures to align the heights, as justified by the Descriptive Memory of the Preliminary Study by Fernando Távora (FIMS/AFT). Author's graphic on the drawing.

added to the buildings, as well as the recommendations of the Preliminary Study, in making a slight frontal retreat of these new volumes in relation to the respective facades. Nowadays, it can be seen that these are the only buildings that have gabled roofs, one facing the street and the other towards the back of the lot, visibly changed recently, while the others remain with the hipped roof typology.

This measure implies a long-term intention to change the general appearance of the existing buildings, as it can be seen in the photo of the model [Fig. 26]. Távora probably sought with this recommendation a conciliatory move between modernization and preservation of the existing structures, but in fact, what can now be perceived is a mis-characterisation of the historic properties that such a policy involves, and as such a measure of little use for conservation purposes.



25

26



Fig. 25

Building complex on the north side of the Central Canal showing two buildings with alterations to the roofs as per the architect's intention to alter and standardize the rest of the block. Photo by the author, 2022.

Fig. 26

Photo of the model of the Preliminary Study of the Arrangement of the Central Zone of Aveiro, presented with the Master Plan of the city, in 1963, showing the built complex in front of the Central Canal with roofs changed to 2 pitches, as justified by the Descriptive Memory of the Preliminary Study by Fernando Távora (FIMS/AFT).

6. Preserve Renovating

The sheer number of buildings that the Távora Preliminary Study proposed to demolish demands our attention. In order to implement the guidelines established in the Master Plan, namely, the widening of the roads by the canal and some of the secondary transverse roads, some single-building demolitions were proposed, and even some complete built-up sets of buildings were dismantled [Fig. 27].

The removal of two blocks to the north of the Central Canal was proposed. One of them was bound by the streets *Rua Viana do Castelo*, *Rua José Estevão*, and *Travessa da Caixa Econômica*, and the other one was located to the north of the first one; the recommendation for this area, according to a suggestion by



27

the City Council's Urbanization Office, was their replacement by a single building (Letter A in fig. 27), in order to satisfy the new street alignments, and to free up the east façade of the Hotel Arcada (today called "Aveiro Palace") to mark the start of the *Avenida Doutor Lourenço Peixinho*.

To the east, the designer of the Preliminary Study proposed the demolition of the building that was occupied by the Harbour Master at that time, and the removal of its functions to the port area (Letter B in fig. 27), a questionable attitude, as it was a building with Neoclassical aspects. The idea of demolishing this building, however, was not a new one, but originated from the Urbanization Plan drawn up in 1945 by the architect Moreira da Silva, as discussed earlier. It can be seen that Fernando Távora was not opposed to this idea, since its demolition would allow the construction of one of the bridges in his intended road system.

Next to the complex that would have included the new Tower-Building and the shopping centre, he proposed the doubling in width of the *Rua do Batalhão de Caçadores* in order to provide it with two-way traffic. The roadways were designed on different levels, with the east-west direction at a lower level, giving access to the new building complex through a secondary and service road. For this entire complex, the demolition of buildings that were in poor condition at the time was proposed. (Letter C in fig. 27).

In addition, in order to widen the roads running alongside the Central Canal to 8 metres, the south side of this canal had removed from its setting an entire block of the *Rua do Clube dos Galitos*, which included a recently restored building, where the Aveiro Fishing Company and the club *Clube dos Galitos* were installed, and the old building of the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* [Fig. 28], giving way to the new block formed by the buildings of the *Praça da República* (Letter D

Fig. 27

Proposed demolitions in Távora's Preliminary Study (FIMS/AFT). Author's notes on the drawing.

in fig. 27). Also, in order to widen the coastal road, the demolition of the buildings located before the bridge over the *Canal do Paraíso* was proposed (Letter E in fig. 27).

Adjacent to the *Praça da República*, the demolitions led to the opening up of a new street called *Rua Belém do Pará*, which was made necessary by the design of the new architectural arrangement there and, as a result, there was a change in the existing urban fabric. The new construction of the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* [Fig. 29], in a similar way, fulfilled the role of configuring, with its new volume, the limits of the new street layout.

It is also important to mention the proposed replacement of the plaza-bridge (letter F in fig. 27) with three new bridges. This large-scale construction was the result of a recent investment in the city, a modern work, but which constituted a visual obstruction to the reading of the Canal and a poor solution for the urban road layout, as it would have worsened a vehicular traffic problems instead of relieving them. According to Tavares (2022), by building new bridges “the authors of the plan were convinced that they would recover one of the most solid memories of the city, the old ‘Arcos’ bridge”.⁴⁰ While the pedestrian bridge would have a light aspect in Távora’s scheme, or a “transparency effect”⁴¹, the other two would have homogeneous masonry treatment, configuring an extension of the pavements by the edge of the canal.

The proposed demolitions demonstrate the intention to renovate the centre of Aveiro, adding monumentality and a new identity to the area, by inserting architectural landmarks at strategic points: revealing the existing building of “Hotel Arcada” at the start of a prominent thoroughfare; constructing a new Tower-Building on the banks of the Central and Cojo Canals; and erecting a new municipal building to accentuate the character of an administrative centre in the *Praça da República*. The other above-mentioned demolitions had the purpose of guaranteeing the opening up of the necessary space for the enlargement of the motor traffic lanes, a necessary action to supply the demand that the new traffic generating sites would provide.

⁴⁰ “Os autores do plano estavam convencidos de que recuperariam uma das memórias mais sólidas da cidade, a velha Ponte dos Arcos”. See Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 58.

⁴¹ Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 49.



28



29

Fig. 28

Building where the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos de Aveiro* branch was initially installed in the 1930s (Joana Brites, *Filiais e Agências da Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Crédito e Previdência (1929-1970)*. Lisboa: Prosafeita Lda, 2014: 67).

Fig. 29

Building of the new branch of *Caixa Geral de Depósitos*, after the demolition of the old building and the construction of a new one in the same location in the 1960s (Joana Brites, *Filiais e Agências da Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Crédito e Previdência (1929-1970)*. Lisboa: Prosafeita Lda, 2014: 77).

The post-war concept of “urban renewal” refers to the idea of pure and simple replacement of existing physical structures as a condition for cities to adapt to the needs of modern life. The planning for the new arrangement of the central area of Aveiro, however, not only aimed at innovations and new perspectives. The city, which was experiencing territorial expansion and the modernization of its structures, also wanted an environment where the inhabitants felt good, by conserving and rehabilitating many of the existing structures.

This was an urban renewal programme for the old central area, maintaining the existing mixed use and increasing its vocation for the commercial and services sector with new buildings and a new social dynamic. By proposing new structures at certain points in the area, and reclassifying the urban space as a whole, the value of the existing urban complex in this area would be consequently enhanced.

As observed by Nuno Portas:

It should be noted that conservation does not mean “freezing”, but the defence of structures, areas or even “monument cities” [...] that deserve it. In a global sense, the rehabilitation of cities consists of the continuous renovation of existing structures, the construction “step by step” and the development of its own potential, finding the most adequate solution for each case and not a preconceived generic solution.⁴²

For part of the existing urban fabric, Távora proposed to keep it intact. Nuno Portas still reminds us that:

The value of an old area is not only that of the buildings: it is a value of location or “centrality” for those who work there, live there or may come to live there; it is the value of the already installed infrastructure even if, in some cases, it needs reform; it is the accumulated value of investments by thousands of citizens who own or do not own their homes, stores, warehouses or workshops.⁴³

The term “preserve renovating” is, in our understanding, a concept close to the intentions of this proposal made by Távora and also by the municipal interests of modernization, both of the physical environment, as well as the social and cultural area.

By proposing the motto “preserve renovating” or “renovate preserving”, we propose a policy of physical recovery and social reuse of the existing number of buildings, which opposes both the idea that old areas are dead

42 “Convém assinalar que conservação não significa “congelamento”, mas sim a defesa de estruturas, áreas ou até “cidades monumento” [...] que o mereçam. Num sentido global, a reabilitação de cidades consiste na renovação contínua das estruturas existentes, na construção “passo a passo” e no desenvolvimento das suas próprias potencialidades encontrando para cada caso a solução mais adequada e não uma solução genérica preconcebida”. See: Nuno Portas, “Velhos centros vida nova”, in *Os Tempos das Formas, volume I: A Cidade Feita e Refeita* (Guimarães: Universidade do Minho, 2005), 158.

43 “O valor de uma área antiga não é apenas o dos edifícios: é um valor de localização ou de “centralidade” para os que lá trabalham, moram ou podem vir a morar; é o valor da infraestrutura já instalada mesmo se, nalguns casos, carente de reforma; é o valor acumulado de investimentos de milhares de cidadãos proprietários ou não nas suas casas, nas suas lojas, nos seus armazéns ou oficinas”. Portas, “Velhos centros vida nova”, 157).

museums, for tourists to walk around and photograph, or the idea that they are pasture for surplus value without any benefit to the community.⁴⁴

7. The Enhancement of the Historic City

The Central Zone of Aveiro is an area whose urban landscape has peculiar characteristics, with the extraordinary presence of the Central Canal, which is navigable and integral to the daily life of the local population. We consider this core of the city an urban complex of historical, cultural and environmental value due to its unique quality. Its environmental value is emphasized in the descriptive memory of this project: “[the preliminary study] is based on the premise of conservation and improvement of existing values – among which the Central Canal stands out – and is intended to solve the most acute problems of various kinds that the central zone presents”.⁴⁵

The historical and cultural values of the centre of Aveiro can be seen from the architect’s attitude towards the city. More than an urban plan that tried to solve the area’s road problems and insert a new visual landmark to the city, Fernando Távora was also dealing with the regeneration of a historic centre with his new proposal. It is notable that there was attention paid to the urban fabric as a historical fact and guarantee of the permanence of man’s experiential places. “In the design of the joint arrangement of the zone, he instituted the principle of continuity, accepting the formal diversity of the pre-existing buildings”.⁴⁶

Fernando Távora also put some of his theoretical concepts into practice in Aveiro. For Tavares,

In Aveiro, in the very heart of the old town, Távora managed to put his reflection on *A Lição das Constantes* into practice in a consolidated historic centre. He worked with the historical memory overlapping with the generational memory that accompanied it, to generate the timeless modern in his own reading of the thread of time.⁴⁷

Fernando Távora’s study trip to the United States of America in 1960 is another point to consider for this approach. The architect’s reports show us his concern with preserving the historic urban landscape of cities. His contact with North American cities allowed him to perceive the positive urban consequences of the application of planning systems. From his visits to these cities, he elaborated

44 “Ao propor o lema “conservar renovando” ou “renovar conservando” defendemos uma política de recuperação física e de reutilização social do parque de edifícios existente, que se opõe quer à ideia de que as áreas antigas são museus mortos, para turista passear e fotografar, quer à ideia de que são pasto para as maiores valias sem qualquer proveito para a coletividade”. Portas, “Velhos centros vida nova”, 156.

45 “[O estudo prévio] assenta na premissa da conservação e beneficiação dos valores existentes – entre os quais se destacam o Canal Central – e pretende resolver os problemas mais agudos e de vária ordem que a zona central apresenta”. From: Távora, “Arranjo arquitetónico e urbanístico da Zona Central. Estudo Prévio. Memória descritiva e justificativa”, 2.

46 “No desenho do arranjo conjunto da zona, instituiu o princípio da continuidade, aceitando a diversidade formal do edificado preexistente”. Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 43.

47 “Em Aveiro, no exacto lugar do coração do velho burgo, Távora conseguiu levar à prática a sua reflexão sobre “A lição das constantes” em centro histórico consolidado. Trabalhou com a memória histórica sobreposta à memória geracional que o acompanhava, para gerar o moderno intemporal na sua própria leitura do fio do tempo”. Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 21.

concepts and observed the importance of the areas surrounding the monuments and landmark buildings, a modern concept. But he also noted some negative characteristics that harmed urban landscapes, especially in Boston and Chicago, where meshes of skyscrapers were built next to vast flat areas, especially on the sea and river fronts, promoting a great contrast of masses in these American cities, something that he was trying to avoid happening in Aveiro.

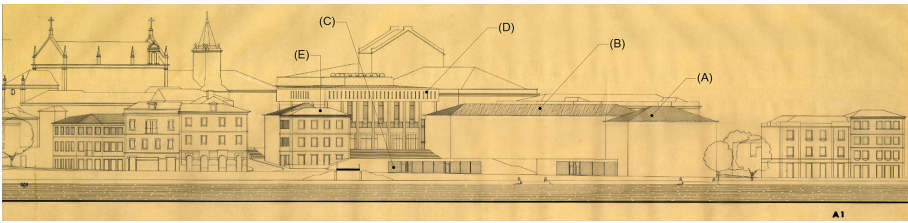
Domingos Tavares also cites some interesting aspects to be considered to justify the erection of a Tower-Building in Aveiro, showing the importance of symbolic values. The first one was to increase the influx of people in this area, thus creating an attraction for the new civic centre that was to be formed in the zone around the Central Canal. The second point was “to find, through the art of invention, an image capable of overcoming the lack of a cathedral tower like those that were made, in medieval times, by the towns of northern Europe”.⁴⁸ In this respect, there was a discreet landmark in the centre of the city, the bell and clock tower of the old City Hall in the *Praça da República*, a building from the late 18th century but whose height did not have enough visual strength over the surrounding environment to qualify as a landmark.

Also relevant for Tavares is the reference that Távora makes to the *Piazza San Marco*, in Venice, in his tract *A Lição das Constantes*, treating the urban environment of the Square as an example of formal diversity and permanent quality, where the buildings were built with a few centuries of difference, which meant stylistic diversity, typological variety and constructive evolution, and where the constant of modernity regulated the whole set. This square is characterised by the verticality of the Bell Tower of St. Mark, a tower almost 100 metres high, the only vertical element of this scale and magnitude in the city of Venice, a singular element in the urban landscape. This verticality, which contrasts with the horizontality of the complex, also seems to be the design of the architect Távora for Aveiro, aiming to highlight the value that the surroundings have as a pre-existing building mass.

There was also another way of valuing history in the Távora Scheme: to promote the rescue of a remarkable historical element of the city through its reconstruction in a new location. This is about the old *Fonte dos Arcos* (also known as *Fonte da Praça*), dismantled in 1932. This fountain, which was once in the *Praça Joaquim Melo e Freitas*, located north of the Central Canal, had value for the memory and identity of the city, and acquired in Távora’s project a special site, next to the new commercial building of the Municipal Library complex, in front of the Central Canal.

Thus, one of the contributions of the project to the city was to show that the presence of new architectural elements in the centre of Aveiro, in a well-studied way, would not overshadow its existing values. Távora did not appeal to *pastiche* in the proposed new composition. The challenge faced by him was to insert the new structures without obstructing the already consolidated local identity, or

48 “Encontrar, através da arte da invenção, uma imagem capaz de superar a falta de uma torre de catedral como as que se fizeram, em tempos medievais, pelos burgos do norte da Europa”. Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 44.



to find the best solution in adding “pieces” to this set, intending to enhance the context even more.

8. The Architectural Language

The design for the new *Praça da República* building complex was, in our judgment, influenced by the principles of post-war Italian modern architecture [Fig. 30].

When analysing Fig. 30, what attracts our attention in this new block is the composition of the 5 buildings – the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos* (A), Offices and Commerce (B), Commercial Building (C), Municipal Building (D), and Extension of the *Banco Regional de Aveiro* (E). The intention is clear: it is to formally highlight the new modern language of the Municipal Building, but also, in a way, to “dilute” it to the rest of the block. It is important to note that in this drawing the architect showed volumetric blocks without facade definitions for two new buildings. For these, there was only the definition of their heights and the material of their roofs, in ceramic tiles, a traditional typology of city buildings. The relevance of the design lies in the harmonious relationship between the volumes. Even though the elevations of these two blocks were not defined, the stylistic contrast, highlighting the arrangement’s central building, is a decisive guideline for its conception. The new Municipal Building is designed in detail. It has a fenestration that follows the repetition of supports and voids of the pre-existing neighbouring buildings, with the clear intention of diluting it among the edifying mass. However, some of the five points of Le Corbusier’s modern architecture were also applied to this building, namely, the building on piers, the free plan on some floors and the roof as a garden terrace. And that is where its detachment lies. According to Bernardo Ferrão,

Its design seeks an environmental integration that, far from morphological mimesis, nevertheless accepts and extends the pre-existing architectural discourse. The composition of the facades, the careful treatment of the exterior areas, the autonomy of the detailed design and the chromatic finish of both this building and the neighbouring *Caixa Geral de Depósitos*, built in 1965, suggest here [...] the influence of ‘historicist’ architecture ‘ by F. Albin and I. Gardella.⁴⁹

49 “O seu desenho procura uma integração ambiental que, longe de um mimetismo morfológico, todavia aceita e prolonga o discurso arquitetónico pré-existente. A composição das fachadas, o tratamento cuidadoso das áreas exteriores, a autonomização do desenho de pormenor e o acabamento cromático quer deste edifício quer da vizinha Caixa Geral de Depósitos, de 65, fazem pressentir aqui [...] a influência da arquitetura ‘historicista’ de F. Albin e I. Gardella”. See: Bernardo José Ferrão, “Tradição e Modernidade na obra de Fernando Távora, 1947-1987”, in *Fernando Távora*, Luiz Trigueiros, ed., (Lisboa: BLAU, 1993), 34.

Fig. 30

Elevation “A1” of the preliminary study, 1963, showing the new block with the Municipal Building and the supporting buildings (FIMS/AFT). Author’s notes on the drawing.

For Nuno Portas, the interest of the study, which called for architecture as an urban project, lay “in Távora’s clear attitude towards the historical environment: interpreting an atmosphere by commenting on it through a work in figurative contrast”.⁵⁰ This interpretation shows the architect’s ability to abstract (or reduce) his design in order to harmonize its language with that of the surrounding traditional environment.

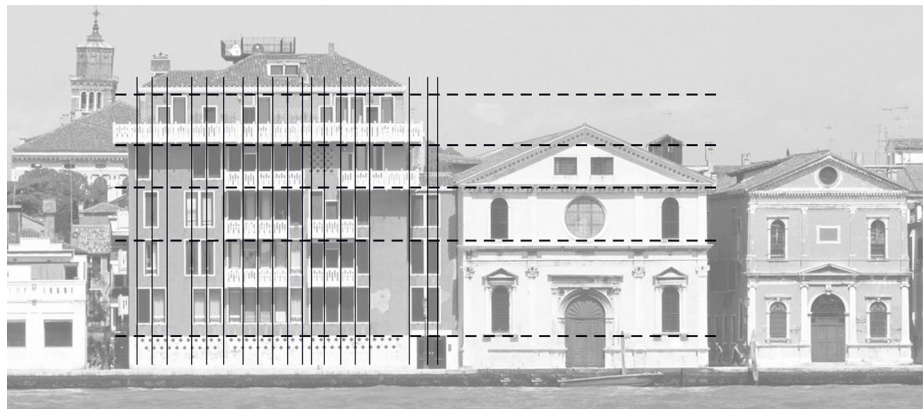
The influence of Ignácio Gardella, to which Bernardo Ferrão refers in “Tradition and Modernity in the work of Fernando Távora – 1947-1987”, is probably seen in the Casa alle Zattere building [Fig. 31, 32], constructed between 1958-1962 in Venice. This is an example of Italian Neo-Liberty style, a movement that, from the second half of the 1950s, promoted a renewed dialectical relationship between architecture and history. One can see Gardella’s care in harmonizing the new building with the pre-existing environment, the result of a design process that seeks a balanced solution between the old and the new. The result was to obtain an architectural language where the temporal distance between them was progressively reduced, becoming an exchange between two interpenetrating realities.

The harmony on the Venetian building’s facade is achieved through the alignment of the floors with the compositional elements of the neighbouring building’s facade (seen in the scheme shown in fig. 32) and also by the skilful use of supports and voids, seeking a harmony of masses. The windows have different heights and are grouped in series, vertically aligned and horizontally misaligned. The balconies, in turn, break the solidity of the building block and generate an asymmetry that can also be found in some other buildings in the city. The work still guarantees a certain visual spacing from the neighbouring buildings and the final set, modern in every sense, does not stand out in the landscape, but integrates into it despite all its distinctive character.

On the other hand, despite focusing on spatial continuity in the arrangement of the block adjacent to the *Praça da República*, Fernando Távora does not



31



32

Fig. 31

View of the Casa alle Zattere from the Canale della Giudecca, Venice (www.photographer-michelle.com, last view June 2022).

Fig. 32

“Casa alle Zattere”, project by Ignazio Gardella and Church of the Holy Spirit (Allegra Maria Albani and Francesca Filosa, Dottorato di ricerca in Teoria e Progetto – XXXV cycle, Università di Roma La Sapienza).

50 “Na clara atitude de Távora perante o ambiente histórico: interpretar uma atmosfera comentando-a por uma obra em contraste figurative”. Ferrão, “Tradição e Modernidade na obra de Fernando Távora, 1947-1987”, 34.



33 |

nullify its modern essence, and asserts its contemporaneity by also promoting a rupture and the creation of a new landmark for the urban landscape with the Tower-Building. Thus, with his proposed demolitions and with the new figure of this tower, there was also a change in the relationship with the existing space.

In his proposed design for the Tower-Building and attached shopping centre, Távora sought a balanced solution between the internal arrangement and the value and meaning of its form. By proposing a design for this skyscraper, he was also, in a way, trying to repeat the examples that he admired on his study trip through America, where the references that he makes in his diary to buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright stand out, with all the poetics of the design and the rich plasticity that it imprints on American buildings. We believe that the artistic inspiration that Távora sought for the tower of Aveiro is from this architect's design. We found it in the Johnson Wax Research Tower, the component building of Johnson Wax Headquarters [Fig. 33], built in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1944-1950, and in the Price Building [Fig. 34, 35, 36], a skyscraper built in Bartlesville Plains, Oklahoma, in 1956, some references that illustrate the plasticity of Wright's design.

In this way, we can say that the influence of the "neo-empirical" architecture of the Italians, which inspired Távora in the conception of the new Municipal Building in the Praça da República, was not manifested in the formulation of the Tower-Building. Due to the historical context and proximity to the year of construction (between 1954 and 1958) of the *Torre Velasca* in Milan, a project created by the Italian Studio BBP and, above all, due to the close relationship that Távora acquired with the participants of CIAM XI, in Otterlo, especially with Giancarlo de Carlo and Ernesto Rogers, we can easily imagine that the Aveiro



34

Fig. 33

Johnson Wax Headquarters, Racine, Wisconsin (<https://www.scjohnson.com/Interacting-with-SC-Johnson/Tours-and-Architecture/Our-Architecture>, last view June 2022).

Fig. 34

Price Building, general view (source: Cao, Lilly. "Lições do único arranha-céu de Frank Lloyd Wright, válidas até hoje". [The Tree that Escaped the Crowded Forest: Lessons from Frank Lloyd Wright's Price Tower] (Translated by E. Souza). ArchDaily Brasil, 2022. <https://www.archdaily.com.br/959013/licoes-do-unico-arranha-ceu-de-frank-lloyd-wright-validas-ate-hoje>, last view June 2022).

Tower would have followed the same compositional principles as the Italian tower, with the intention of synthesizing tradition with modernity. However, we believe it is more appropriate to approximate its architectural language to the examples of Frank Lloyd Wright we showed here, due to the contrast and strong character of its architectural language. In fact, the reference to the *Torre Velasca* is given as a theme, as it is the European example of the time, an attitude that proved to be successful in Italy and of which repetition was sought in Portugal: to introduce a large modern structure into the centre of a historical city.

9. The Consequences of the Toning Down of the Initial Idea

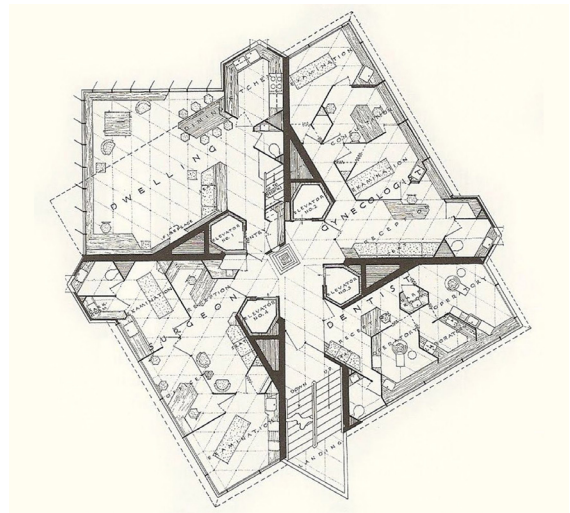
The preliminary project for the central area of Aveiro aimed to give the city a new monumental image and create a new civic centre. The Central Canal was the focal point of the intervention in Fernando Távora's urban design. The treatment of its banks, with improvements in access for pedestrians and a new system for motor traffic, were intended to further promote appreciation in the urban landscape of Aveiro.

Unfortunately, this study only resulted in the regeneration of the *Praça da República*. The justifications for not building the Tower-Building, nor any of the proposals related to the road and pedestrian infrastructure of the canal, were political and financial. The plaza-bridge was not demolished, and with that the Harbour Master's building was also preserved. According to Tavares "The resistance of public opinion regarding the demolition of the Harbour Master's building (the *Capitania*) became insurmountable"⁵¹ and today this building is classified as a Protected Structure.

Because it was not undertaken in its entirety, the impression left for posterity was that the 1962-1964 Master Plan was not properly concerned with promoting spaces for sociability. However, in our understanding, when analysing the plan and the project, we noticed that they showed real attention to valuing the "heart of the city" of Aveiro, in promoting a new and broader civic centre for an equally broader city. The never erected Tower-Building was fundamental to this idea.

At the time, the vast majority of the local population still lived in this old part of the city. The expansion of the zone with urban equipment for social use, such as revitalized squares, free of parked cars, and new buildings for collective use, would also be a way of encouraging residents not to migrate from there to other areas.

⁵¹ "A resistência da opinião pública quanto à demolição do edifício da Capitania do Porto de Aveiro tornou-se inultrapassável". See: Tavares, *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, 54.



35



36

Fig. 35, 36

Price Building, plan and close-up view (source: Cao, Lilly. "Lições do único arranha-céu de Frank Lloyd Wright, válidas até hoje". [The Tree that Escaped the Crowded Forest: Lessons from Frank Lloyd Wright's Price Tower] (Translated by E. Souza). ArchDaily Brasil, 2022. <https://www.archdaily.com.br/959013/licoes-do-unico-arranha-ceu-de-frank-lloyd-wright-validas-ate-hoje>, last view June 2022).



37

For Portas (2005) "if it is important for citizens to see their basic needs met, it is no less important to enjoy living in this city for its aesthetic or emotional sense".⁵²

Another important point of Távora's programme to be considered and which was not implemented was the construction of all the blocks of the new complex for "Praça da República". Among the 5 planned buildings, one of them, the one for offices and commerce, positioned between the Caixa Geral de Depósitos building and the Municipal Building, was not built. This block was important as a volume; it was planned to have the function of agglutinating the complex and making a transition in scale between the new bank building, at the canal level, and the new municipal building, at the square level. Its volumetry was simple and its implantation would favour the visual highlight that the central building, with a new architectural language, should have. In addition, the building was intended to be another attraction for increasing commercial and service use in the area and for attracting more people to circulate. In the place where it should have been there is nowadays only an empty space, consisting of a platform that serves only as a viewpoint over the Central Canal [Fig. 37].

The measures, envisaged as a whole, aimed, in our view, to value the central area as a hub of human activities, regardless of whether the city was or was not expanding, at that time, to new neighbourhoods. The Master Plan of 1964 was designed within the principles of urban renewal of modernism. However, in addition to adapting the city to the needs of modern life, it was also possible to notice the intention to adopt measures for the regeneration of the existing public space, ideas rooted in the Revision of the Modern Movement.

⁵² "Se é importante para o cidadão ver satisfeitas as suas necessidades básicas, não é menos o fato de gostar de viver nessa cidade pelo seu sentido estético ou emocional". From: Portas, "Velhos centros vida nova", 163.

Fig. 37

Final configuration of the set of the new block adjacent to the Central Canal and *Praça da República* proposed by Fernando Távora, after the second refurbishment of the *Caixa Geral de Depósitos*. Approximate date: 1990s (Antonio Esposito, Giovanni Leoni. *Fernando Távora. Opera Completa*. Milano: Electa, 2005: 187).

Conclusion

In Aveiro of 1964, it is noted with Auzelle's plan and with Távora's project, the existence of a pioneering urban planning attitude in Portugal and a careful attention in creating greater social dynamism for the central area of the city.

When analysing the current architectural debate of this decade, we assume that before any intervention proposal for Aveiro, Fernando Távora probably came across the following question: what are the attributes or values responsible for the cultural characterization of the historical site of Aveiro? After all, it is necessary to understand the specificities that make up the architectural complexes and urban spaces. Its attributes drive its recognition and appreciation as a cultural asset.

The Arrangement project for the central area of Aveiro shows the architect's first attempt to promote the conciliatory position of the modern man towards the old city, a characteristic method of the future projects by Fernando Távora. In this case study, the modernist does not intend to radically transform the image of the city, but rather intends to regenerate it. He has a clear reading of the city's symbols and historical architectural landmarks and, with a clear urban idea, inserts his new landmarks as a lesson of continuity, accepting the formal diversity of the pre-existing buildings.

The intention to modernize Aveiro, however, was unquestionable. There was a vision for growth in the region until the 1980s and the urban project had to respond to this demand. The intention was to create a new centre of social life for a new city, the Aveiro of the 20th century. Távora accomplished this by transposing, physically and on an urban scale, the city of the 19th century, concentrated in the surroundings of the *Praça da República*, where the City Hall was located with its clock tower, to the city of the future, a very much wider area, enhanced around the landscape of the Central Canal and its new modern 90-metre-high tower. He brought about this connection through another architectural landmark, which acquired the function of a mediating building, a structure raised on piers that makes the transition from one space to another and favours not only the pedestrian route, but also the visual route.

It is important to remember that this intervention changed the urban morphology of this part of the city. The *Praça da República* also partially changed its appearance. Its new configuration, however, allowed it to have a new significance. The ordering of the free spaces created was able to renew the image of the city, in addition to emphasizing its social and environmental qualities. There was the application of the principles of "space organization", a theme addressed by the author of the project years before in a publication in Portugal and for this reason we say that the work is consistent with his ideals: it arises from a process, and not from the application of pre-designed formulas.

The CIAMs are of great intellectual influence to this work. In these congresses, especially after the 8th meeting, the issue of the identity of the city and the conception of public space was intensely debated. The challenge of reconciling

the expansion of motorways and the creation of new civic centres was great. Creating networks of routes at different levels, generating varied environments in the city and maintaining pre-existing buildings was a premise adopted by the Smithsons in the unrealized project for Berlin, by Sven Markelius in Stockholm, and also by Távora (naturally on a more measured scale) in Aveiro.

New interpretations of local traditions were also discussed at CIAM, emphasizing the view of the architect's social role, an exercise that Távora adopted when choosing the symbols to preserve, such as the recovery of the old fountain, and also the symbols to value, such as the tower of the 18th century municipal building, and the tower of the new civic centre of the city. Ernesto Rogers' discourse on environmental pre-existence is also acknowledged by Távora when he synthesized and expressed, without mimicry, the formal character of the city in its new architecture for the new Municipal Building.

That said, we understand that the project for the Arrangement of the Central Zone of Aveiro was certainly a milestone in Portuguese urbanism for combining these experiences that the modern historical context of the 1950s provided. Furthermore, we see that this work by Távora applied the concept of urban design as defined by Solà-Morales (1999). For him, "designing the place" is the fundamental method for what he called the "Urban Project" and there is an empirical effort in this, where not only the geographical characteristics of the place are assimilated, but also the cultural ones.

Despite proposals for the demolition of some pre-existing blocks and the reconfiguration of the heights and roofing systems of the buildings located on the banks of the central canal (including some examples of local Art Nouveau architecture), proposals imbued with a clearly modern attitude, this work demonstrated the beginning of an attentive attitude towards the existing city in Távora's career, which attitude would be developed later in the urban intervention projects for the Ribeira-Barredo area, in Oporto, and for the historic centre of Guimarães. What had already been manifested in Aveiro was the principle of the architect's respectful relationship with the historic city and its identity.

Nowadays, the concept of the historic urban landscape stands out. Its principles are to preserve the quality of the human environment, improve the productive and sustainable use of urban spaces, recognize its dynamic character and promote social and functional diversities. The exhibition of this work by Távora allows us to ascertain that in the 1960s in Portugal there were already the beginnings of a demonstration of the expression of these concepts.

Bibliography

- Auzelle, Robert. *Plano director da cidade de Aveiro*. Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 1964.
- Bandeirinha, José António, ed., *Fernando Távora: Modernidade Permanente*. Guimarães: Associação Casa da Arquitectura, 2012.
- Brites, Joana. *Filiais e Agências da Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Crédito e Previdência (1929- 1970)*. Lisboa: Prosa-feita Lda, 2014.
- Cao, Lilly. "Lições do único arranha-céu de Frank Lloyd Wright, válidas até hoje". [The Tree that Escaped the Crowded Forest: Lessons from Frank Lloyd Wright's Price Tower] (Translated by E. Souza). *ArchDaily Brasil*, (2022). <https://www.archdaily.com.br/br/959013/licoes-do-unico-arranha-ceu-de-frank-lloyd-wright-validas-ate-hoje>.
- Dias, Francisco da S., Tiago S. Dias, and Maria João Soares. "P01 Arquitectura – Edifício da Antiga Capitania de Aveiro. Arquitetos Francisco da Silva Dias e Tiago Silva Dias", *Arquitectura e Vida*, no. 51 (July-August 2004): 44-51.
- Esposito, Antonio and Giovanni Leoni. *Fernando Távora. Opera Completa*. Milano: Electa, 2005.
- Fernandez, Sérgio. *Percurso da arquitectura portuguesa 1930-1974*. Porto: FAUP – Faculdade de Arquitetura da Universidade do Porto, 1988.
- Ferrão, Bernardo José. "Tradição e Modernidade na obra de Fernando Távora, 1947-1987". In *Fernando Távora*, edited by Luiz Trigueiros, 23-44. Lisboa: BLAU, 1993.
- Figueira, Jorge. *A Periferia Perfeita. Pós-modernidade na Arquitectura Portuguesa. Anos 1960-1980*, Lisboa: Caleidoscópio, 2014.
- Grande, Nuno. "Funcionalismo Orgânico. Robert Auzelle e o Plano Director da cidade do Porto". In *Jacques Gréber. Urbanista e Arquitecto de Jardins*, edited by Teresa Andersen, Manuel Fernandes de Sá and João Almeida. Porto: Fundação Serralves, 2011.
- Juncal, Manuela. "Robert Auzelle e o urbanismo francês dos meados do século XX no 'Plano Diretor da Cidade do Porto' de 1962". *Cadernos – Curso de Doutoramento em Geografia*. FLUP – Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2012, 61-74.
- Matias, Lúcia Maria Moreira. "Transformações e integração derivadas da mudança de uso do espaço urbano na cidade de Aveiro, Portugal". V Seminário Internacional de Investigación En Urbanismo. Barcelona: Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2013. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5821/siiu.5860>.
- Mendes, Carlos Manuel Galante. "Arranjo da zona central de Aveiro, de Fernando Távora (1962-67): das influências teóricas às referências práticas". Master Diss., Universidade de Coimbra, 2016.
- Mesquita, Ana Raquel da Costa. "O melhor de dois mundos: A Viagem do arquitecto Távora aos EUA e Japão –Diário 1960". Master Diss., Universidade de Coimbra, 2007.
- Montaner, Josep Maria. *Después del Movimiento Moderno: Arquitectura de la segunda mitad del siglo XX*. Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 1993.
- Mumford, Eric Paul. *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928-1960*. Cambridge: MIT, 2000, 200.
- Portas, Nuno. "Velhos centros vida nova". In *Os Tempos das Formas*, vol. I: *A Cidade Feita e Refeita*, 155-170. Guimarães: Universidade do Minho, 2005.
- Ray, Stefano. *Sven Markelius 1889-1972*. Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1989.
- Silva, David Moreira and Martins, Maria José Moreira da Silva. *Anteplano de Urbanização da Cidade de Aveiro*. Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 1948.
- Solà-Morales, Manuel de. "The Urban Project". In *Progettare città / Designing Cities*, edited by Mirko Zardini, Milan: Electa, 1999.
- Tavares, Domingos. *Fernando Távora em Aveiro*, Porto: Dafne Editora, 2022.
- Távora, Fernando. *Arranjo arquitetônico e urbanístico da Zona Central. Estudo Prévio. Memória descritiva e justificativa*. Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 1963.
- Távora, Fernando. *Teoria geral da Organização do Espaço. Arquitectura e Urbanismo: A lição das constantes*. Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1993.
- Távora, Fernando. *Da Organização do Espaço*. Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1996.
- Távora, José Bernardo, ed., *Atlas Aveiro – Edifício Fernando Távora, Biblioteca Municipal, Projeto e obra 1964-2020*. Aveiro: Câmara Municipal de Aveiro, 2021.