

# Architecture as a Possible City. Affinities, Exchanges and Collaborations Between Álvaro Siza and Vittorio Gregotti

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Vittorio Gregotti, Álvaro Siza, Lisbon, Malaga, Architecture and the City

## /Abstract

The essay discusses the affinities, exchanges and collaborations between Álvaro Siza (b. 1933) and Vittorio Gregotti (1927–2020) from the late 1960s to the present. Although they belonged to different geographical and cultural contexts, Siza and Gregotti developed an intense friendship and collaboration over the decades, based on a similar interpretation of the architectural phenomenon centred on the problematic relationship with the place, the tension towards the construction of the city, and the emphasis devoted to the design method rather than the development of a personal style. The text discusses the ways in which they met, Gregotti's early reception of Siza's architecture, the cultural and design pressures that fostered their mutual understanding, and finally analyses a little-known project - the residential neighbourhood in the Teatinos area in Malaga (1992) – which, despite never being realised, was the first and only occasion in which Gregotti and Siza shared a professional commission on a significant scale and complexity.

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In the network of exchanges that progressively tightened the Italian and Portuguese design cultures during the course of the second half of the 20th century, the connection between Vittorio Gregotti (1927–2020) and Álvaro Siza (b. 1933) plays a prominent role, due to the longevity and depth of their relations, which extended from the cultural and editorial level to the more strictly professional one. As is well known, Gregotti – a figure with extensive connections, and over the time editor and director of various magazines – played a decisive role in the international acclaim of the Portuguese architect. Gregotti dealt with the Siza master's work on several occasions, writing about it in Italian and foreign magazines, starting from the in-depth analysis of his early works in the pages of *Controspazio* in 1972<sup>1</sup>.

In 1976, he involved Siza in the events and debates at the Venice Biennale where he was director of the Visual Arts and Architecture sector, and in 1979, he curated his first international exhibition at the Padiglione Arte Contemporanea in Milan, with the collaboration of Italo Rota<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, in 1986, he favoured the publication of the first international monograph dedicated to Siza's work – *Poetic Profession* – which sealed his international fame<sup>3</sup>. On the other hand, Gregotti found in Siza, and more generally in Portuguese architectural culture, fertile ground for his theoretical and design proposals. It is no coincidence that it was in Portugal that Gregotti Associati built its most important work outside the Italian borders – the Belém Cultural Centre in Lisbon (1988–1993), in association with RISCO Manuel Salgado firm – of which Siza, despite his famous reluctance to give speeches and write articles, published an enthusiastic review<sup>4</sup>.

In the following pages we seek to clarify in which context, at the end of the 1960s, Gregotti and Siza met, and which other figures facilitated their contact. We then attempt to argue the theoretical and design premises of their lasting relationship, finally analysing a little-known project – the residential neighbourhood in the Teatinos area in Malaga (1992) – which, although never realised, for the first and only time saw Gregotti and Siza sharing a professional task of considerable scale and complexity: a clear sign of their cultural and design affinity. [Fig. 1]

The two met for the first time at the Pequeño Congreso organised in the Basque city of Vitória in 1968, having been invited respectively by Oriol Bohigas

1 Vittorio Gregotti, "Architetture recenti di Álvaro Siza," *Controspazio*, no. 9 (1972): 22–25. See also: Vittorio Gregotti, "La passion d'Álvaro Siza," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 185 (1976): 42; Vittorio Gregotti, "Porto," *Lotus International*, no. 18 (1978): 65.

2 Siza participated in the exhibition *Europa–America: centro storico–suburbio: 25 architetti contemporanei*, and in its closing debate "Quale movimento moderno?" See Franco Raggi, ed., *Europa–America: Architetture urbane, alternative suburbane* (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1978). In addition, see Léa-Catherine Szacka, "La Biennale de Venise 1976: Le Mouvement moderne en discussion," *Marnes: Documents d'architecture*, no. 3 (2014): 171–233. About the Milanese exhibition, see the catalogue Vittorio Gregotti, ed., *Álvaro Siza architetto 1954–1979* (Milan: Idea, 1979).

3 Álvaro Siza, *Poetic Profession* (Milan: Electa, 1986). Gregotti had been a member of the editorial board of *Lotus International* until 1981, and was closely linked to its editor, Pierluigi Nicolin, who had first been his student and then his university assistant, also participating in the foundation of Gregotti Associati, see Lorenzo Ciccarelli, "Gregotti Associati, o dello studio professionale come struttura teorica," *Studi e ricerche di Storia dell'Architettura*, no. 14 (2023): 70–83.

4 Álvaro Siza, "Un altro italiano in Portogallo," *Domus*, no. 738 (1992): 25–26. It was published also in Spanish edition: Álvaro Siza, "Gregotti en el estuario: centro cultural de Belém," *Arquitectura Viva*, no. 27 (1992): 42–45.



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(1925–2021) and Nuno Portas (b. 1934)<sup>5</sup>. Thus, a first element to consider is the decisive mediation offered by some exponents of Spanish, and in particular Catalan, design culture. They established connections between the most sensitive Portuguese architects, at a time when the Salazar dictatorship was beginning to loosen, and some contemporary figures from the Milanese design culture around the *Casabella-Continuità* edited by Ernesto Nathan Rogers.

In 1952, Gregotti met Federico Correa at the CIAM summer school in Venice. Correa, who in addition to English also spoke excellent Italian, was the intermediary between Gregotti and the young Catalan modernist architects, in particular

5 Nuno Correia, "A crítica arquitectónica, o debate social e a participação portuguesa nos Pequenos Congressos 1959–1968," *Revista crítica de ciências sociais*, no. 91 (2010): 54–55. See also: Vittorio Gregotti, *Autobiografia del XX secolo* (Milan: Skira, 2005), 131–33.

Fig. 1

Álvaro Siza, Portrait of Vittorio Gregotti (1990). (CASVA – Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive, Milan, Vittorio Gregotti fonds)

Bohigas, who quickly became his privileged contact on the Iberian Peninsula<sup>6</sup>. In 1955, Gregotti travelled to Barcelona to strengthen these ties and visit their early works in person, as well as the masterpieces of Antoni Gaudí and Lluís Domènech y Montaner: a long-standing interest, confirmed in the publication of a monographic issue of *Zodiac* (1965) dedicated to Spain, but largely focused on Catalan design culture<sup>7</sup>.

In the meantime, in November 1959, at the impulse of Bohigas, the first of the Pequeños Congressos was held in Madrid, followed by other meetings in Barcelona and in various Iberian cities: a series of informal conferences between young architects belonging to the rationalist movement, with the aim of exchanging experiences, discussing projects and weaving networks of relations between the different local communities, while at the same time opening up the Iberian design culture to international exchanges in years when the country was suffering from political isolation<sup>8</sup>. The congresses regularly invited external guests – Georges Candilis at the congress in Tarragona in 1963, Giancarlo De Carlo in Segóvia in 1965, Nuno Portas in Tarragona in 1967, and Vittorio Gregotti and Peter Eisenman in Vitória in 1969 – who had the opportunity both to present their projects and to evaluate the works of young Iberian architects. If the invitation to Gregotti was extended by Bohigas, the involvement of the young and still unknown Siza was due to Portas, who had already been publishing and commenting on his early works for some years (in concert with Bohigas) in some Portuguese and Spanish magazines<sup>9</sup>.

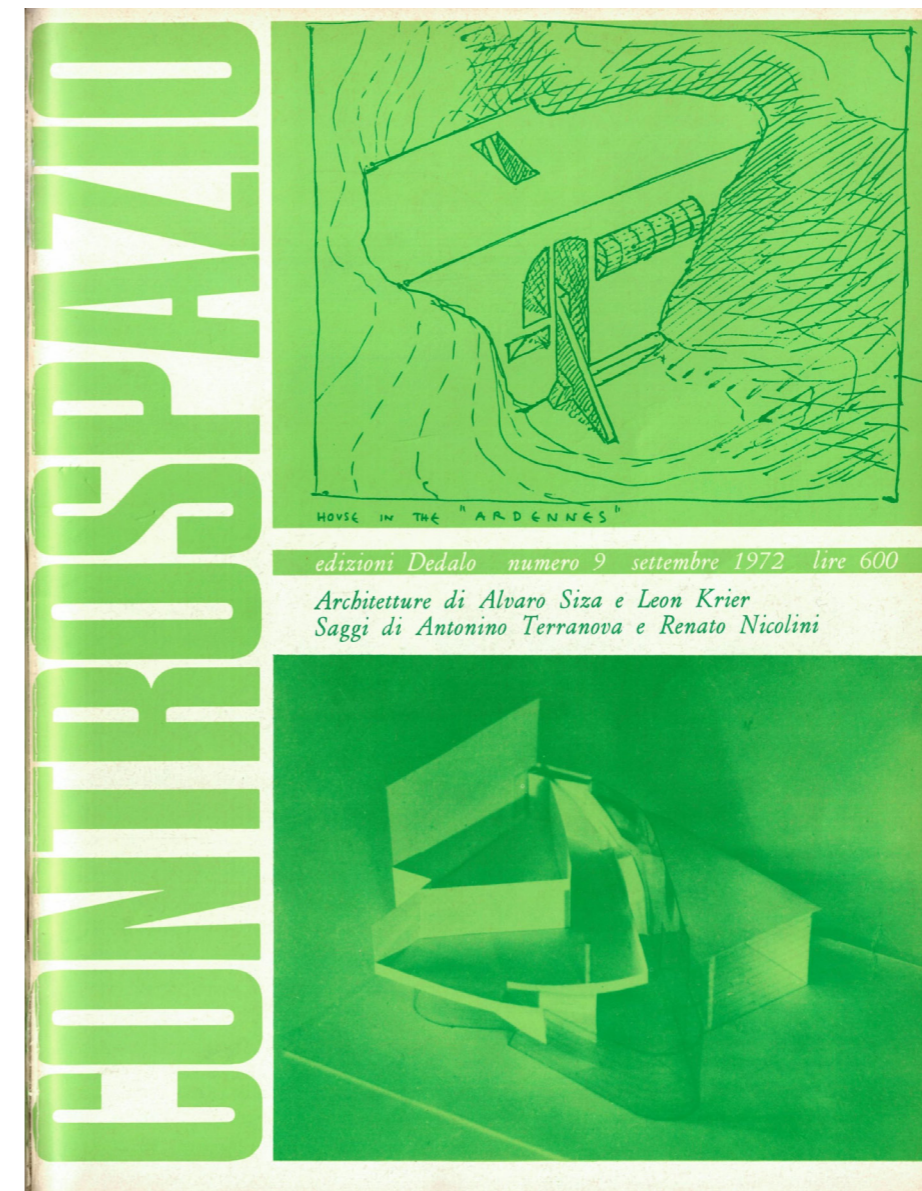
Siza's projects – in particular in Vitória he presented the Casa de Chà in Boa Nova (1963) and the Piscina das Marés in Leça da Palmeira (1966) – had to impress Gregotti so much that in 1971 he travelled to Porto to continue the dialogue with the young Portuguese architect, visit these and other works, and gather material for the publication of the article in *Controspazio* in which Siza was presented as “al mondo uno dei dieci o quindici architetti intorno ai

6 Oriol Bohigas, *Dit o fet: dietari de records II* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1992), 133–40. On the connections between Gregotti and Bohigas see Antonio Pizza and Lorenzo Ciccarelli, “Oriol Bohigas y Vittorio Gregotti: dos arquitectos comprometidos, en defensa de la ciudad pública,” in *Redes transnacionales de la arquitectura española 1976–2006* (Barcelona: ETSAB, 2025), 8–9.

7 See Lorenzo Ciccarelli, “Les voyages de Vittorio Gregotti pour la construction d’une identité,” in *Du voyage de formation au voyage professionnel de l’architecte, en France et en Europe (XVIIIe–XXe siècles)*, ed. Antonio Brucculeri, Marilena Kourniati, and Massimiliano Savorra (Rome: Campisano, 2025), 201–209. About the special issue of *Zodiac* and the exchanges between Gregotti and Catalunya see: Antonio Pizza, “Diálogos plurales entre Italia y España durante los años sesenta,” in *Atravesando fronteras. Redes internacionales de la arquitectura española (1939–1975)*, ed. Antonio Pizza and Enrique Granell (Madrid: Ediciones Asimétricas, 2021), 189–92.

8 Correia, “A crítica arquitectónica.” In addition, see Raúl Martínez Martínez, “Los pequeños congresos, 1959–1968: debates paralelos,” in *La cultura arquitectónica en los años de la Transición*, ed. Carlos Sambricios (Sevilla: Editorial Universidad de Sevilla, 2023), 65–80.

9 Nuno Portas, “Sobre la joven generación de arquitectos portugueses,” *Hogar y Arquitectura*, no. 68 (1967): 77–84; Oriol Bohigas, “A Portugal també els arquitects fan la guerra pel seu compte,” *Serra d’Or*, no. 101 (1968): 59–61. On Siza’s early works see: Giovanni Leoni, “Siza prima di Siza,” *Casabella*, no. 896 (2019): 7–21.



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quarant’anni in grado di fare con l’architettura affermazioni autentiche”<sup>10</sup>. [Fig. 2]

The opening of Gregotti’s essay is striking, and implicitly underlines all the differences between the two. Siza is described as an architect who “non dispone di un apparato teorico, non ha mai affrontato grandi temi di sviluppo urbanistico, parla poco” – an inverse representation of what Gregotti in those years was and aspired to be: a public intellectual for whom the close connection between theory and project had outlined the choice of the territorial dimension of architecture as the most suitable for structural intervention in contemporary

10 “one of the ten or fifteen architects in their forties worldwide capable of making authentic statements through architecture”. This and the following translations into English were done by HPA Editorial Team. Nuno Grande, “Vittorio Gregotti e Álvaro Siza: afinidades electivas entre dois arquitectos contemporâneos,” *Estudos Italianos em Portugal*, no. 12 (2017): 18; Vittorio Gregotti, *Architetture*, 22. It was Siza himself who recalled Gregotti’s visit to Porto, and the establishment of their decade-long friendship, in the lectio magistralis he gave on the occasion of the awarding of an honorary degree at the Milan Polytechnic in 2013, see Roberto Cremascoli and Francesco Moschini, *Álvaro Siza in Italia: il Grand Tour 1976–2016* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, 2016), 277.

Fig. 2

The issue of *Controspazio* no. 9 (1972) in which Vittorio Gregotti presented and discussed the first works of Álvaro Siza.

situation<sup>11</sup>. Despite the fact that in Gregotti's opinion Siza was simply an architect interested only in the project, a visit to his "secche architetture"<sup>12</sup> revealed all its conceptual charge, and the slow labour concealed in apparently elementary forms. For Gregotti, Siza's works are in fact presented as "modificazione e potenziamento del contesto", in which a few, meditated signs on the one hand reinforce the "legami" and "adiacenze" with the site, and on the other tell of "i tentativi precedenti, le correzioni, gli errori in qualche modo presenti nell'assetto finale, costruito per accumulazione e depurazione di successive scoperte"<sup>13</sup>. In Gregotti's reading, Siza's work did not therefore appear to aim at a generic setting of the new constructions in the place in which they are located, but, on the contrary, seemed to emphasise the conflicts between the aims and geometries of the project and the unique characters and possibilities offered by the site<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, he recognised in Siza an architect focused on design method and not on style, not interested in developing a personal poetics, but rather committed to linking each individual building to the specific conditions of the site, to be surveyed and embedded in the project through a slow work of tentatives and overlapping of signs. There were conceptual assumptions and procedures to which Gregotti was akin, and which can perhaps be traced back to the theoretical parallels between their masters: the attention towards "preesistenze ambientali" professed by Ernesto Nathan Rogers and that towards the "circumstances" of the project repeatedly expressed by Fernando Távora<sup>15</sup>.

These early links with Portas and Siza made Gregotti aware of the Lusitanian political and cultural situation, to the extent that among the papers in his archive there are records of his participation in the Italian Committee in support of the Portuguese struggle against dictatorship<sup>16</sup>. When, following the illness and death of António de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970) and the presidency of Marcello Caetano, the Estado Novo was dismissed in 1974 and the country opened up to democracy, Gregotti, together with Bernardo Secchi and Paolo Ceccarelli, was one of the first and most eminent foreign architects to be called upon to help tackle the serious housing shortage<sup>17</sup>. Portas, meanwhile appointed Secretário

11 "lacks a theoretical framework, has never addressed major issues of urban development, and rarely speaks". Lorenzo Ciccarelli, *Vittorio Gregotti: Architect of the Modern Project* (London: Routledge, 2025), 15–34. Later, Gregotti said how "as often happens, we are attracted by diversity... I was quite fascinated by the fact that Siza was capable of developing theories directly, by means of architectural form," in Vittorio Gregotti, "Álvaro Siza is an architect who's out of fashion..." *Casabella*, no. 744 (2006): 103.

12 "austere buildings".

13 The quotations in Italian appearing in this paragraph can be translated as follows, respectively: "modification and enhancement of the environment"; "connections"; "surroundings"; "the earlier attempts, the revisions, the errors that are somehow present in the final structure, built through the accumulation and refinement of successive discoveries"; Gregotti, "Architetture recenti di Álvaro Siza", 22.

14 On the relation between Siza and the "context" see also: Vittorio Gregotti, "Portugal, Europe," *Casabella*, no. 760 (2007): 110.

15 "existing environmental issues". Although necessary, a more in-depth analysis of the relationship between Rogers and Távora is beyond the scope of this paper. See: Antonio Esposito, "Fernando Távora e l'architettura portoghese del dopoguerra," in *Fernando Távora: opera completa*, eds. Antonio Esposito and Giovanni Leoni (Milan: Electa, 2005), 17–21. Concerning Távora's problematic connection to place, see also, in the same book: Leoni, "Oltre il 'moderno,'" 64–71.

16 CASVA Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive (Milan), Vittorio Gregotti fonds, Correspondence, 1973, *Per il Portogallo*.

17 José António Bandeirinha, *O processo SAAL e a arquitectura no 25 de Abril de 1974* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 2007), 114. See also: Gregotti, *Autobiografia*, 139–41.

de Estado da Habitação e Urbanismo do Primeiro Governo Provisório, involved both Siza and Gregotti in the construction of housing "for the greatest number" of Portuguese citizens disadvantaged by the unfair housing programmes of the dictatorial period. In particular, Gregotti – already well-known in Portugal for his design of the ZEN housing district in Palermo (1969–1973), which was also widely published internationally – received a voluntary commission to design a social housing quarter for 12.000 inhabitants in the context of the Fundo de Fomento para a Habitação on the Setúbal peninsula, which remained on paper<sup>18</sup>. Portas suggested that Gregotti assigned the supervision of the work to one of his former architecture students at the School of Fine Arts in Lisbon, who was then involved in other social programmes in Setúbal, Manuel Salgado, who would work alongside Gregotti on many other Portuguese projects in the following decades<sup>19</sup>.

At the same time, Siza's involvement in the experiment of the SAAL brigades – an acronym for Serviço Ambulatório de Apoio Local, a kind of cooperative and participatory design by the future inhabitants of social housing neighbourhoods – further reinforced his fame in Italy, where wide sectors of the design culture were at that time extremely sensitive to the connections between architecture, the city and political and social commitment. It was Gregotti again who favourably presented Siza's projects in the context of the SAAL brigades in Bouça and São Victor, Porto (1974–1977), and then Quinta de Malagueira in Évora (1977–1997)<sup>20</sup>. [Fig. 3] Projects that the Portuguese architect, together with Portas and Alexandro Alves Costa, was invited to present in the spring of 1977 in a series of Italian universities from the north to the south of the Peninsula – Turin, Milan, Venice, Florence, Pescara, Rome, Naples and Palermo – in a sort of Grand Tour that helped to strengthen his presence in Italy and foster new ties with local architects, at the origin of several projects that Siza would be called upon to carry out, especially in Campania and Sicily during the 1980s and 1990s<sup>21</sup>.

The project for the SAAL neighbourhood in Quinta de Malagueira, and the first photos of the residential complexes under construction, were widely published by Gregotti in March 1982, in the first issue of his editorship of *Casabella*<sup>22</sup>. [Fig. 4] Siza's project, to which no less than 12 pages were dedicated, opened the issue in an evidently programmatic function, even preceding the new director's editorial. It is no coincidence that Siza quickly became one of the main references of the cultural project carried out by Gregotti's *Casabella*, in defence of the role of architecture in the transformation of the city and the territory, and against the autobiographical, authorial and stylistic drifts that he saw embedded in the

18 CASVA Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive (Milan), Vittorio Gregotti fonds, Photos, 1974 *Setúbal*. See also: Vittorio Gregotti, *Álvaro Siza è un architetto fuori moda*, 70.

19 Grande, "Vittorio Gregotti e Álvaro Siza," 21.

20 Gregotti, "Porto," 65. See also: Alves Costa, "The Oporto Experience," *Lotus International*, no. 18 (1978): 66–103.

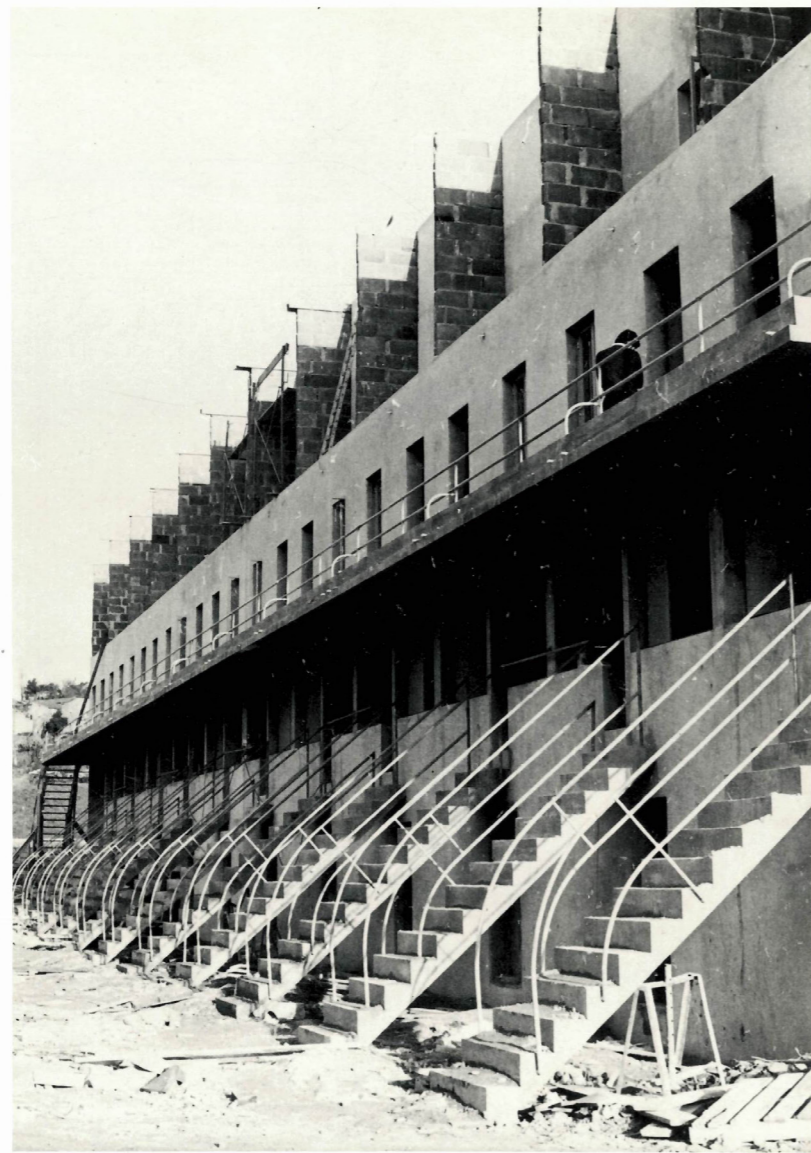
21 Cremascoli and Moschini, *Álvaro Siza in Italia*, 49–53.

22 Álvaro Siza, "Il quartiere Malagueira a Évora," *Casabella*, no. 478 (1982): 2–15.

**Bouça**  
 Associazione degli abitanti  
 128 alloggi popolari in Rua da Boavista  
 Alvaro Siza - architetto.  
 Il progetto di massima è stato realizzato per incarico del « Fondo di incentivazione della casa » (Fundo de Fomento da Habitação), nel 1973, per un terreno che confina con una zona residenziale degradata. Gli abitanti della zona, organizzati in associazioni di abitanti e integrati nel processo S.A.A.L., con l'appoggio di una brigata tecnica, hanno chiesto nel 1975 il terreno e il progetto. Dopo laboriose trattative e una volta raggiunti gli obiettivi dell'associazione, lo studio è stato adattato al relativo programma.



**Bouça**  
 Residents' Association  
 128 low-cost dwellings in Rua da Boavista  
 Alvaro Siza - architect.  
 The outline plan was drawn up on behalf of "The House Promotion Fund" (Fundo de Fomento da Habitação) in 1973, for a site bordering on a degraded residential zone. The inhabitants of the zone, organized in a residents' association joined up with S.A.A.L., and helped by a technical assistance brigade, asked for the land and for the implementation of the plan in 1975. After laborious discussions, the objectives of the association were agreed on and the outline plan was adapted to exact requirements.



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postmodern phenomenon<sup>23</sup>. Siza's projects and realisations were constantly observed and published by Gregotti: for example, in the opening issue of his editorship and in the closing one, as well as in the most important monographic issues, such as the one dedicated to architecture as "modification" of January-February 1984<sup>24</sup>.

If the SAAL settlements were Siza's projects that drew the most attention from Italian design culture during the 1970s, by the end of the following decade the reconstruction plan for the Chiado area in Lisbon (1988–1998) received similar attention. A few months after the fire that destroyed four blocks between Baixa and Barrio Alto in central city, Siza presented the design intentions and

23 See Marco Francesco Pippone, *La "Casabella" di Vittorio Gregotti: temi e confini di un progetto culturale* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2019).

24 Álvaro Siza, "L'accumulazione degli indizi," *Casabella*, no. 498–99 (1984): 84–91, in addition, for example: Kenneth Frampton, "At the Still Point of the Turning World," *Casabella*, no. 514 (1985): 4–11; Pierre-Alain Croset and Antonio Angelillo, "Scuole in Portogallo di Álvaro Siza," *Casabella*, no. 579 (1991): 4–20.

Fig. 3

The Bouça SAAL neighbourhood in Porto (1974–1977) by Álvaro Siza presented in *Lotus International* no. 18 (1978)

Lavorando in mezzo agli antagonismi tra le istanze municipali, provinciali e nazionali del Portogallo, l'architetto Alvaro Siza sta realizzando a Evora, a 140 km da Lisbona, un importante quartiere di 1200 abitazioni

unifamiliari. Ricco di riferimenti sia alle Siedlungen razionaliste che alle abitazioni tradizionali portoghesi, il nuovo quartiere di Malagueira può attualmente esser letto nel suo rituale di fondazione.

Among the antagonisms that emerge where municipal, provincial and national demands meet, the Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza is working on an important residential district comprising 1200 one-family houses, at Evora, 140 kilometres from Lisbon. Rich in

references to the rationalist Siedlungen and traditional Portuguese housing, the new Malagueira district can at present be read in the ritual terms of its foundation.

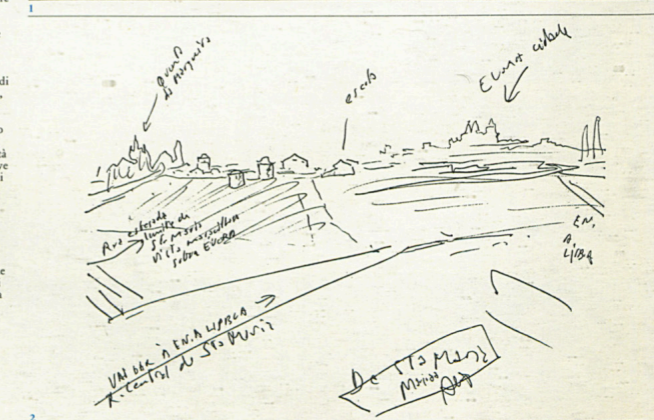
## Alvaro Siza Vieira

A 140 km da Lisbona, Evora, con 30.000 abitanti, è la città più importante dell'Alentejo, una pianura latifondista (querceti e sughereti, agricoltura, allevamento). Acropoli romana, vera città museo, rappresentativa delle principali manifestazioni architettoniche arabe ed italiane del XV e XVI secolo (corrispondenti alla ricchezza delle prime conquiste), di quelle austere autenticamente portoghesi del XVI secolo, del manierismo e del barocco tedesco del XVII sec. (dopo l'arrivo dell'oro dal Brasile e l'allontanamento dei Gesuiti da parte del Marchese di Pombal), dell'architettura francese ed inglese del XIX e del XX sec., nella buona e nella cattiva sorte.

Evora è continentale, ha la stessa latitudine di Atene, il clima è assai soleggiato e la temperatura scende raramente sotto lo 0°. Architettura colta, patrizia e popolare si sovrappongono in un accostamento sempre molto curato. Il futuro quartiere di Malagueira, un terreno di 27 ha di cui si è conservato il carattere bucolico, occupa una posizione centrale, in una recente estensione fuori le mura, ad ovest della città. Quartiere nuovo di villini borghesi, caseggiati collettivi cruciformi a 7 piani, degli anni '60, costruzioni abusive da una parte e dall'altra dell'asse Est-Ovest, qualche costruzione privata isolata ed un podere riattato lo circondano con maggiore o minore coerenza. Un complesso universitario è progettato a nord, dove esiste già una piscina.

Dal 25 aprile 1974 la situazione politica del Portogallo non ha smesso di essere incerta. Oggi, la spinta socialista, con la composizione organica del partito, con le alleanze congiunturali con la destra, si è rinvigorita, ha ripreso in mano il potere centralizzato e s'accompagna alle incerte responsabilità degli organi decisionali. Ad Evora, dove esiste una forte presenza comunista, gli antagonismi tra le istanze municipali, provinciali e nazionali si focalizzano sulla realizzazione del quartiere di Malagueira, divenuto una posta nel gioco politico. Il finanziamento degli investimenti sovvenzionati viene stornato, l'operazione subisce tutte le pressioni esercitate da Lisbona, capitale amministrativa, nel momento in cui si intraprende la lotta per l'indipendenza economica e culturale delle regioni.

## Il quartiere Malagueira



recompositional strategies of his plan in *Lotus International*, preceded by an essay by Gonçalo Byrne linking the reconstruction project to the 18th-century plan of the Marquis of Pombal<sup>25</sup>. In the following years Siza was interviewed, and published in other Italian magazines, while the progress of the Chiado reconstruction was closely monitored and discussed, not least by Gregotti's *Casabella*<sup>26</sup>. [Fig. 5]

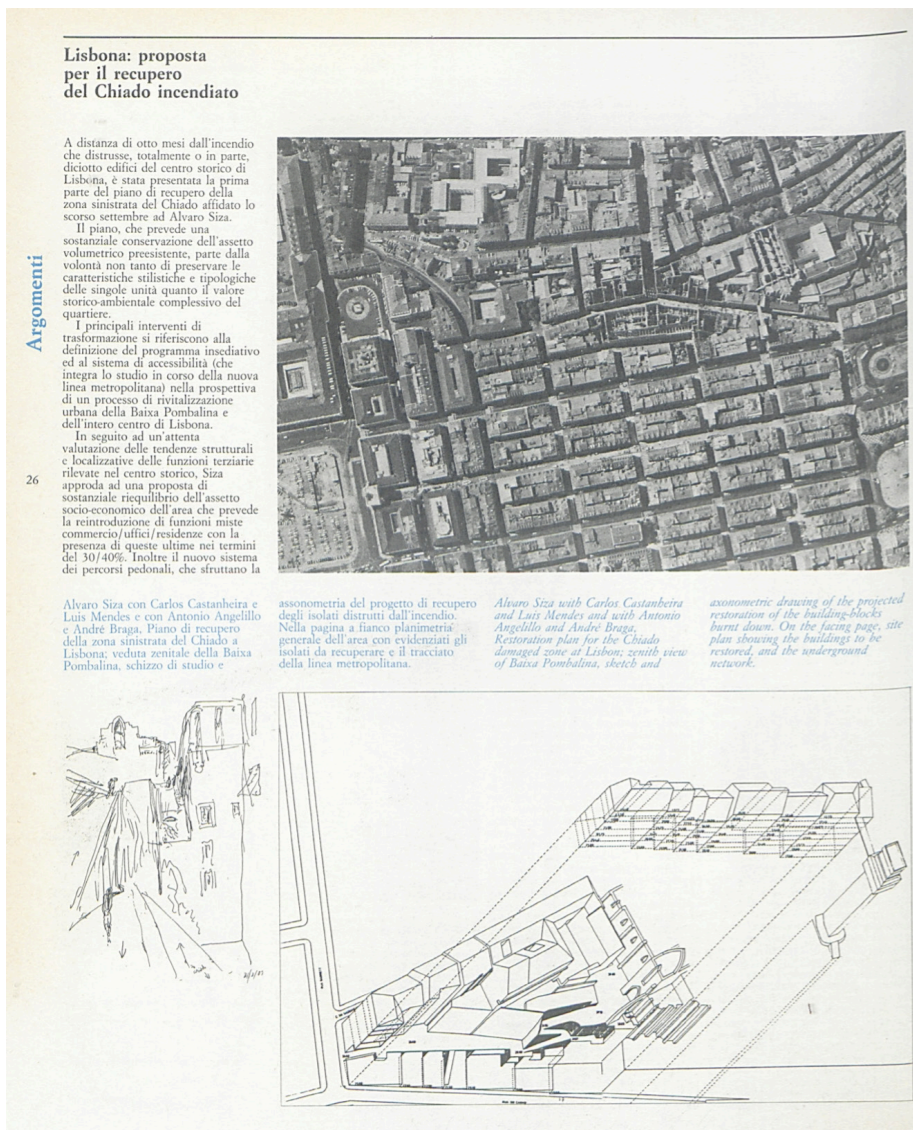
In the same years, while Siza was working on the reconstruction of Chiado, a few kilometres away, in the western suburbs of the city, Gregotti Associati, together with the RISCO – Manuel Salgado firm, won the international competition for the construction of the Belém Cultural Centre: an imposing complex for exhibition spaces, auditorium, library, hotel, restaurants, cafeterias and a

25 Gonçalo Byrne, "Lisbon: A Vulnerable City. The Chiado by Álvaro Siza," *Lotus International*, no. 64 (1989): 33–37; Álvaro Siza, "What It Is...," *Lotus International*, no. 64 (1989): 38–53.

26 For examples, see: "Progetto di recupero per l'area del Chiado, Lisbona, intervista di Álvaro Siza con Giacomo Borella," *Domus*, no. 714 (1990): 48–55; Antonio Angelillo, "Lisbona: proposta per il recupero del Chiado incendiato," *Casabella*, no. 558 (1989): 26–27; Antonio Angelillo, "Il recupero del Chiado: un piano d'autore," *Casabella*, no. 628 (1995): 18–33; Pierluigi Nicolini, "Osservazioni sull'intervento di Álvaro Siza al Chiado," *Lotus International*, no. 92 (1997): 7–27.

Fig. 4

The Quinta de Malagueira SAAL neighbourhood in Evora (1977–1997) by Álvaro Siza presented in *Casabella* no. 478 (1982), the first issue of Vittorio Gregotti's editorship



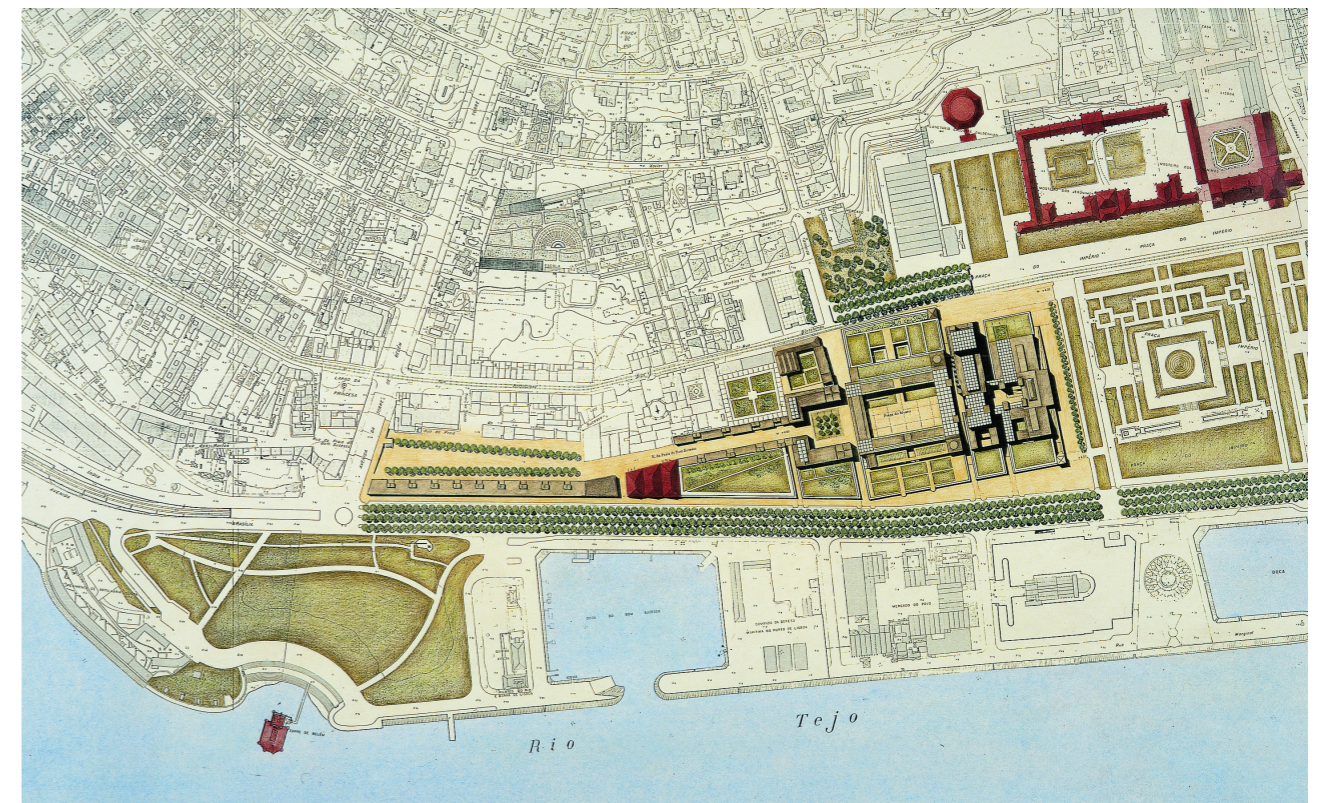
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conference centre that was initially intended to house the offices and activities of the European Commission during the first six months of the Portuguese presidency in 1992<sup>27</sup>. A cultural centre that, as mentioned, once completed, was presented and publicly praised by Siza himself<sup>28</sup>.

Despite the clear programmatic, dimensional and design strategy differences of the two projects, Siza's and Gregotti's interventions share a confidence in the means and disciplinary tools of architecture for the construction of the city, and the conviction that adherence to history, culture and the site's specific characteristics must take pre-eminence over the stylistic and formal research of the project: in other words, the conviction that the city – creating the city, or at least helping to design a part of it – is more important than architecture, and that every architectural project must first and foremost propose itself as a piece of a possible city.

27 See Pierluigi Nicolini, "Fabric and Monument," *Lotus International*, no. 61 (1989): 24–28; Vittorio Gregotti, "Centro culturale di Belém," *Domus*, no. 738 (1992): 27–37; Gregotti Associati and Manuel Salgado, *Centro culturale di Belém, Lisbona*, special issue of the magazine *Anfione e Zeto*, no. 10 (1994).

28 See footnote 4. Gregotti also devoted a monographic issue of the magazine *Rassegna* which he had directed since 1979, to the city of Lisbon and its urban history, in which Siza also wrote a page. See *Lisbon*, special issue of *Rassegna*, no. 59 (1994).



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Fig. 5  
The plan for the reconstruction of the Chiado area in Lisbon (1988–1998) by Álvaro Siza presented in *Casabella* no. 558 (1989)

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In the Chiado, Siza refrains from disrupting the urban fabric, typologies and façade layouts of the Pombaline blocks, developing an open strategy which on the one hand strictly respects the public image of the neighbourhood to which the inhabitants were familiar – the façades, the height of the eaves, the design of the holes, the materials, the decorative elements are meticulously defined – while on the other hand only allowing a certain margin of freedom in the definition of the spaces inside the various buildings. In other words, the architect respects the shape of the historic city, and limits himself to leaving his mark, discreetly, in the definition of the internal parts of the blocks, and in the integration between buildings and public space: in the internal mobility of the lots, in the pedestrian paths that link different heights, in the provision of public transport lines and stops<sup>29</sup>. Similarly, in the vacant area adjacent to the Praça do Imperio, Gregotti's intention was to create a building "in the form of a city", reinterpreting and reworking the dense integration of pathways, open spaces, covered spaces and buildings of different scales and functions of the overlooking Monastero dos Jerónimos: a strategy more evident in the first sketches and in the competition project than in the final complex, only partially realised<sup>30</sup>. The rocky, walled form of the cultural centre, the visual alignment of the auditorium's scenic tower with the tower of Belém on one side, and the monastery's bell tower on the other, the articulation of "piazzes" (squares) of different sizes and heights, the tracing of transversal paths through the building mass like the alleys and lanes of a town centre, and the choice as a unitary covering of the same stone that characterises Lisbon's major monuments, are all choices that speak of Gregotti's aim to design not only a building, but a piece of the city as coherent and connected as possible to the urban grid of the district, and to the material and immaterial tradition of the Portuguese capital. [Figg. 6–7]

On the reciprocal admiration, and on the common design and cultural foundations that we have quickly traced, is also based the unique professional collaboration between Siza and Gregotti, which took place between 1992 and 1993 – while the former was working at Chiado, and the latter was completing the Belém cultural complex – for the design of a new neighbourhood in the suburban area of the Teatinos in Malaga.

The project was part of the context of both the 1992–1995 Plan Nacional de la Vivienda (which for Malaga foresaw the construction of at least 2,000 new dwellings per year) and of the city's Plan General approved a few years earlier<sup>31</sup>. In this double track, at the same time national and local, in the autumn of 1991 the Ayuntamiento de Malaga, through the Oficina del Plan General, promoted a first construction plan of 500 dwellings, in 5 autonomous units of 100 dwellings each, to be located in the peripheral belts of the city, involving national

29 From the Italian perspective, the Chiado reconstruction plan has been extensively illustrated and discussed, for example in the issue of *Lotus International*, no. 61 and 64 (1989), and no. 92 (1997).

30 Gregotti Associati RISCO, *Concurso para o projecto do Centro Cultural de Belém em Lisboa*, Caderno 2, 6–7, 1988 Lisbon CCB, Projects, Fondo Vittorio Gregotti, CASVA Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive (Milan).

31 Oficina del Ayuntamiento, *Plan general de Málaga*, 1992 Málaga, Projects, Fondo Vittorio Gregotti, CASVA Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive (Milan).

Fig. 6

Gregotti Associati and RISCO – Manuel Salgado, General plan for the international competition of the Belém Cultural Centre in Lisbon, between the Torre de Belém on the left and the Monastero dos Jerónimos on the right (1988). (CASVA – Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive, Milan, Vittorio Gregotti fonds)

Fig. 7

Gregotti Associati and RISCO – Manuel Salgado, Belém Cultural Centre in Lisbon (1988–1993). One of the urban roads that cross the cultural complex, connecting the rua Bartolomeo Dias to the sea. (CASVA – Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive, Milan, Vittorio Gregotti fonds)

and international architects for each of the lots: Gregotti Associati, Álvaro Siza, Lluís Domènech & Roser Amadó, José Seguí and Francisco Pol, through a programme that envisaged the delivery of the final designs by the end of 1992, and the construction of the buildings in the following two years<sup>32</sup>.

The programme, which envisaged the co-participation of public and private initiative, for both social and market-rate housing, was revised in the course of 1992, envisaging the urbanisation of only three plots in the Teatinos area, with changes also in the team of architects: Domènech and Amadó were entrusted with the southern portion of the area, José Seguí and Ramón Engel (who replaced Francisco Pol) with the northern portion towards the built-up area of Puerto de la Torre, and Siza and Gregotti – who involved Salgado, with whom he was building the Belém cultural centre, and was engaged in other Portuguese projects – with the central part of the area: the key part of the urbanisation that was to link the western suburb to the historic city, taking advantage of its proximity to the Ronda Oeste and the university district<sup>33</sup>. It was for this area, of approximately 43 hectares, that the three architects realised their design proposal, which however remained on paper.

The intention of the Malaga municipal administration was not to create a simple residential district, but rather an "auténticas piezas urbanas que posibiliten y potencien la relación entre la ciudad y su periferia"<sup>34</sup>. For the area assigned to Gregotti, Salgado and Siza, the request was to provide about 3.500 dwellings, divided between public housing with social rents and flats to be placed on the market, as well as spaces for commercial activities, sports facilities and a large urban park of about 250.000 square metres<sup>35</sup>. On this basis it is not difficult to understand why Gregotti and Siza agreed to collaborate: as we have seen, they shared the principle that the architectural project was not a tool for pursuing a formal and stylistic research of a personal nature, but an element of construction of the city, linking the new urbanisation to an attentive reading of the local context. Hence the choice of pursuing an urbanisation by regular grids of blocks with a square or rectangular base, variously open or enclosed, which Gregotti was already experimenting with in the transformation of the Pirelli area in the Bicocca district of Milan (from 1985) and Siza in other large urban projects, such as the one for the Pendino district of Naples (1986–1987)<sup>36</sup>.

Despite the close collaboration, from archival explorations it seems possible to propose the hypothesis that Gregotti Associati mainly drew up the urban layout of the new district, while Siza concentrated his attention on the typological layout and plan arrangement of the various housing typologies in the different

32 Letter by Francisco Pol to Vittorio Gregotti, Gregotti Associati RISCO, Fondo Vittorio Gregotti, CASVA, Milan.

33 Elena Castilla, "Las propuestas para Teatinos contradicen el plan vigente y crean barrios autónomos," *Diario Sur*, September 24, 1992, 3.

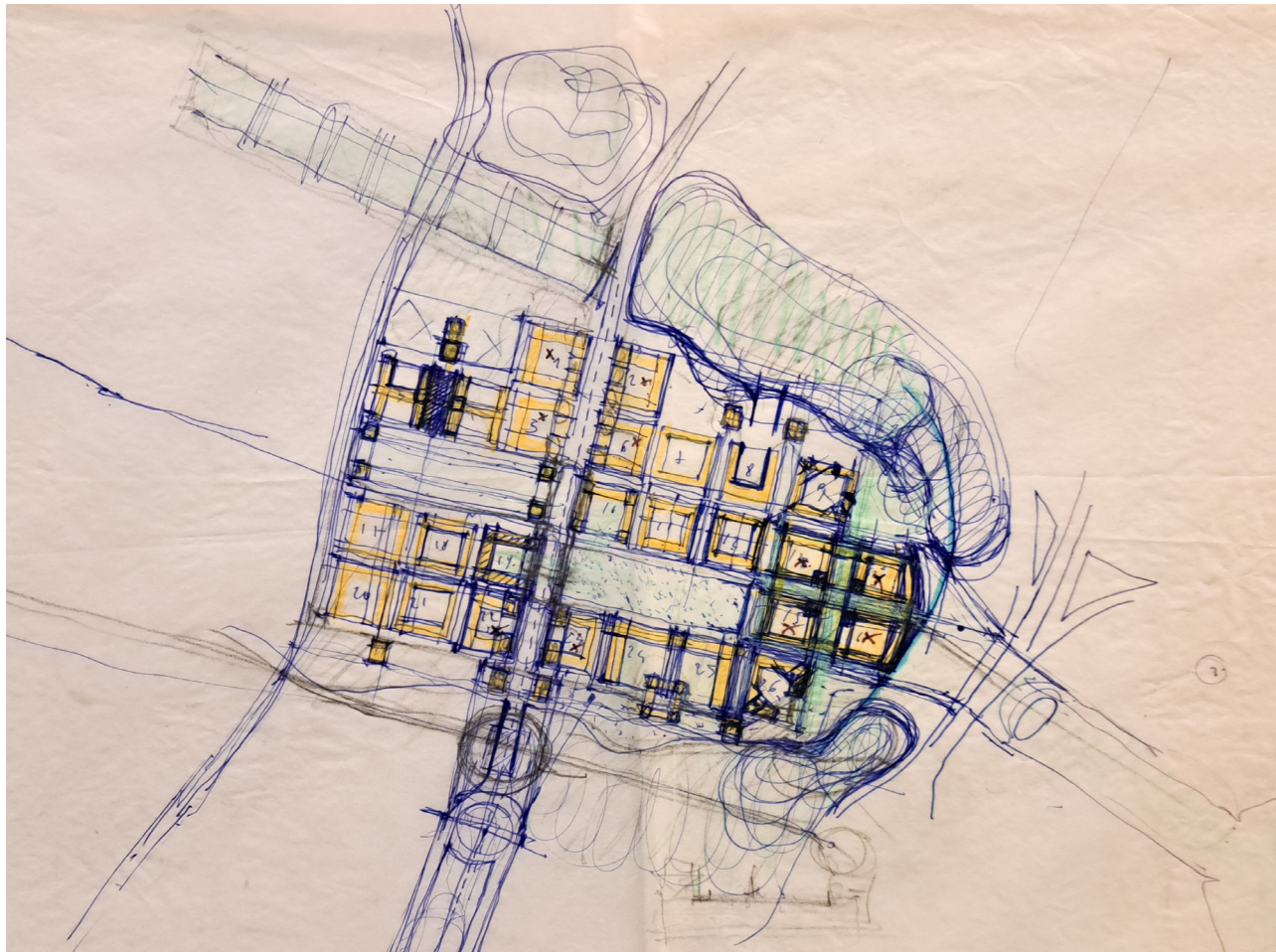
34 "authentic urban spaces that foster and strengthen the relationship between the city and its outskirts"; Oficina del Ayuntamiento, *Plan general de Málaga*, 10, 1992 Málaga, Projects, Fondo Vittorio Gregotti, CASVA Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive (Milan).

35 Oficina del Ayuntamiento, *Plan general de Málaga*, 10, 1992 Málaga, Projects, Fondo Vittorio Gregotti, CASVA Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive (Milan), Resumen características Teatinos centro.

36 See Manuel de Solà-Morales, "Another Modern Tradition," *Lotus International*, no. 64 (1989): 20–21.

Fig. 8–9

Álvaro Siza, Gregotti Associati, RISCO – Manuel Salgado, Study of urban layout of the residential neighbourhood in the Teatinos area in Malaga (1992). (CASVA – Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive, Milan, Vittorio Gregotti fonds)



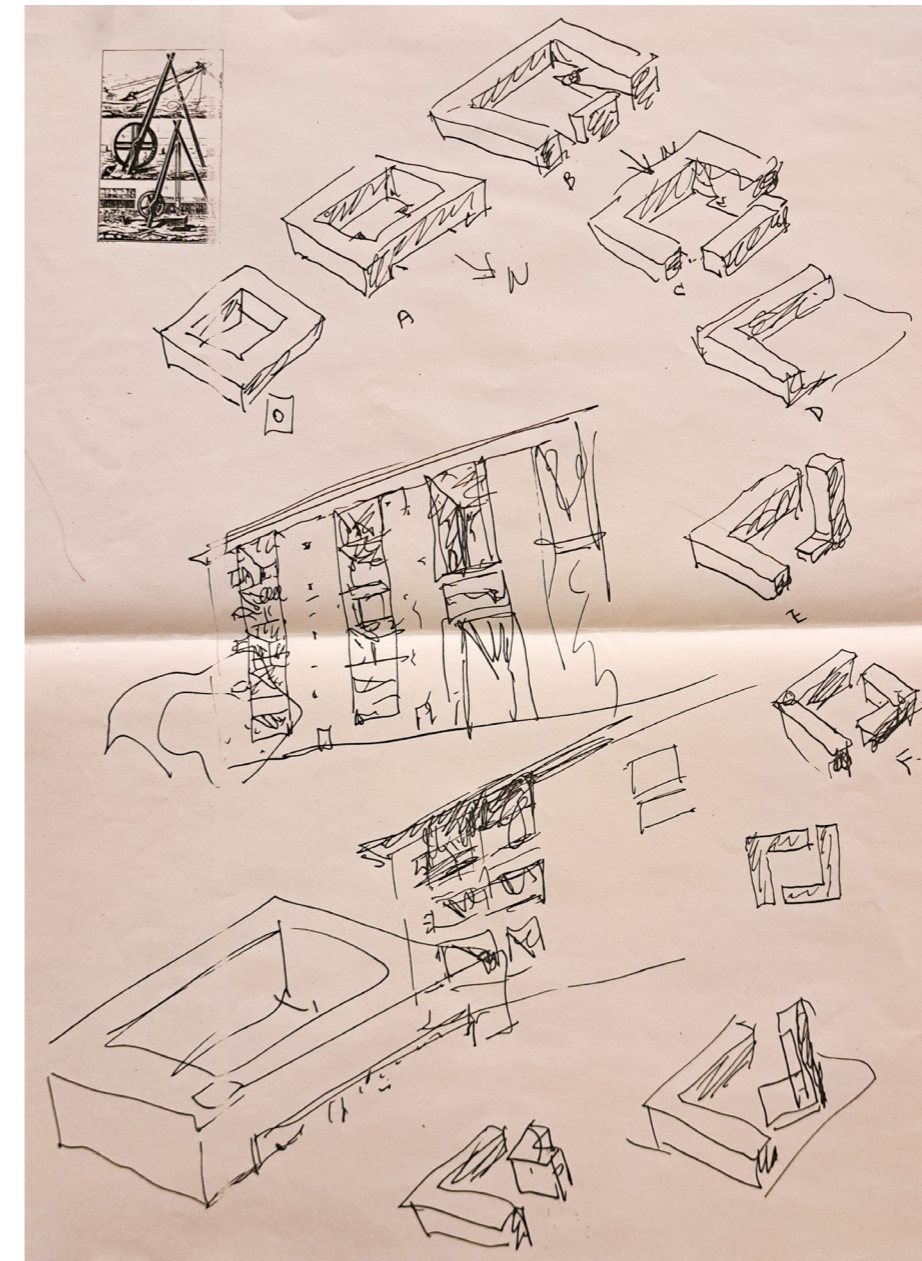
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residential buildings<sup>37</sup>. [Fig. 8–9] From the earliest sketches, the neighbourhood was organised according to a chessboard of square blocks, arranged in five parallel rows and surrounded by the urban park that shields the new settlement from major traffic routes. The main access road, which cuts the district longitudinally in a north-south direction, is partially underground, allocating the area to parkland. In a median and orthogonal position, this axis is intersected by a strip destined for green areas and public facilities: a sports centre to the east and cultural and administrative poles to the west. The residential buildings are five storeys high on the north and four storeys high on the south, and although showing compact fronts on the main road axes, they have been designed with respect to a different opening and integration of green areas. The blocks facing

37 A large number of sketches and drawings of the urban layout of the neighbourhood are kept in the Gregotti Associati fonds, while only a few drawings concerning plan studies of the various buildings are preserved. On the contrary, in the monographs dedicated to Siza's work, of the Málaga project only the latter are published. See, for example: Kenneth Frampton, *Álvaro Siza: tutte le opere* (Milan: Electa, 1999), 458–59.



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Fig. 10  
 Álvaro Siza, Gregotti Associati, RISCO – Manuel Salgado, Study of the volumetric and elevation possibilities of the blocks of the residential neighbourhood in the Teatinos area in Malaga (1992). (CASVA – Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive, Milan, Vittorio Gregotti fonds)

Fig. 11  
 Álvaro Siza, Gregotti Associati, RISCO – Manuel Salgado, General plan of the residential neighbourhood in the Teatinos area in Malaga (1992). (CASVA – Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive, Milan, Vittorio Gregotti fonds)

Fig. 12  
 Álvaro Siza, Gregotti Associati, RISCO – Manuel Salgado, General view of the residential neighbourhood in the Teatinos area in Malaga (1992). (CASVA – Centro di Alti Studi sulle Arti Visive, Milan, Vittorio Gregotti fonds)



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the park show an open plan, while others are broken on one of the corners to create more generous intermediate squares. In the middle of the façades, portals open up pedestrian walkways that connect the residential units, creating crossing axes parallel and independent of the roads and connecting the gardens inside the blocks with the green areas at the centre of the neighbourhood. The blocks have common staircases at the four corners, and the different apartments are served by balconies. The external fronts are designed by series of balconies, which nevertheless ensure a uniform and coherent image to the different buildings. [Fig. 10]

Looking at the perspectives of the neighbourhood, in which calibrated exceptions in plan and elevation counterpoint the regular score of residential buildings, it comes to the mind the contemporary design experiments that Gregotti was conducting both at the Bicocca in Milan and in the Lützowstrasse neighbourhood in Berlin, but also what Siza had elaborated for the social housing at the Giudecca in Venice (1985–2005)<sup>38</sup>. [Figg. 11–12] The long-lasting and fruitful relationship between Gregotti and Siza, and the collaboration on the Malaga project, are essentially based on the common sharing and acceptance of certain cornerstones of the European urban tradition, common to Lisbon and Milan, as well as to Berlin and Malaga: the alignment on the street as an ordering element of private lots; the architectural intervention as the completion of urban situations that are not clearly defined; the multiple relations between the public space of the city (streets and squares) and the semi-public or private space of the blocks (alleys and courtyards). A pre-eminence of the city's reasons over those of architecture, for which the design language must avoid uniqueness and spectacularism, producing "as little noise as possible" and pursuing "simplicity, order, formal clarity and linguistic rigour", which bound Gregotti and Siza well beyond the Malaga project, until the Milanese architect's death in March 2020<sup>39</sup>.

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38 See Carlo Magnani, "Il concorso dello IACP di Venezia per Campo di Marte alla Giudecca," *Casabella*, no. 518 (1985): 4–21; Kenneth Frampton, "Building in a War Zone," *Casabella*, no. 525 (1986): 54–63.

39 Vittorio Gregotti, *Le scarpe di Van Gogh: modificazioni dell'architettura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1994), 46. The translation from Italian to English was done by the author. In addition, see: "Vittorio Gregotti, entrevistado por Nuno Grande e Roberto Cremascoli," in *CCB: Vinte e Cinco Anos*, ed. Nuno Grande (Lisbon, 2018), 161–67.

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