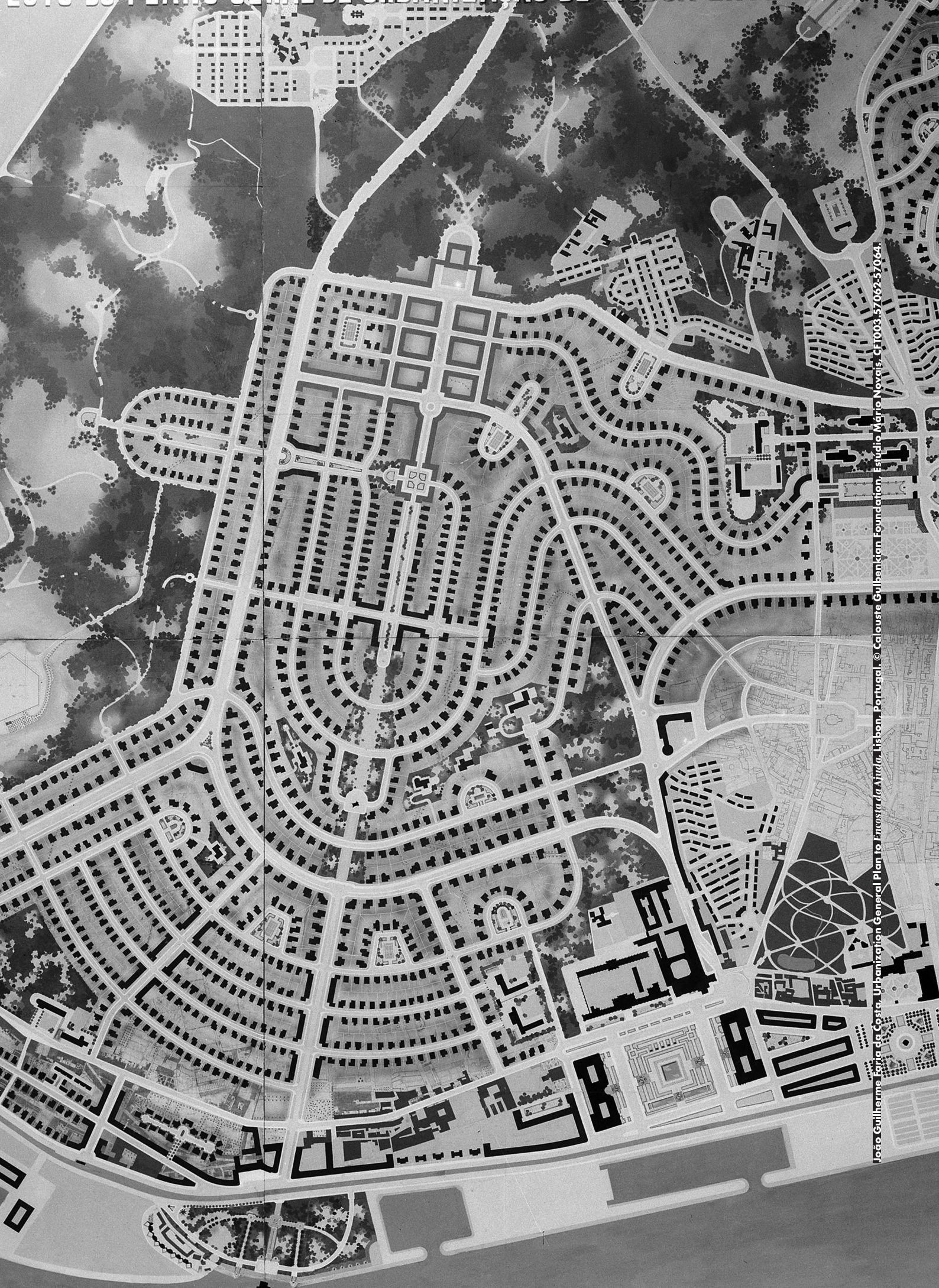


# PROJECTO DO PLANO GERAL DE URBANIZACAO DE LISBOA-ENCOSTA DA AJUDA



João Guilherme Faria da Costa, Urbanization General Plan to Encosta da Ajuda, Lisbon, Portugal. © Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Estúdio Mário Novais, CF1003.57062-57064.



## Towards a Modern Lisbon through the Work of João Guilherme Faria da Costa for the Lisbon City Council (1938-1948)

BY SILVIA DI SALVATORE

The urban planner João Guilherme Faria da Costa (1906-1971) is a leading figure of the generation of modern Portuguese architects, who distinguished himself by an intense professional activity in the field of urban planning since the 1930s, which is when this discipline was introduced into Portugal. In fact, with the institution of the *Estado Novo* regime (1933-1974), a completely new era was initiated for Portuguese urban planning, which evolved from being mostly the result of private initiative, to becoming an instrument for the public control of urban transformation. Faria da Costa, who worked for the Lisbon City Council from 1938, participated directly in some of the great urban transformations of the Portuguese capital which took place during this period.

### From Lisbon to Paris and back again: background and education

Faria da Costa was born in Sintra on April 6, 1906. He studied architecture at the School of Fine Arts in Lisbon, where he obtained a scholarship from the *Junta de Educação Nacional*, for students of architecture to study abroad. He traveled to Paris in 1933<sup>1</sup> and enrolled at the *Institut d'Urbanisme de l'Université de Paris* (IUUP)<sup>2</sup>, where he had the opportunity to come in contact with some of the masters present at the IUUP, such as Marcel Poëte and Étienne de Gröer (1882-1974), who was involved in the admission of Faria da Costa at the Department of Urban Planning of Lisbon City Council in 1938<sup>3</sup>. He also carried out an apprenticeship at the studio of Donat-Alfred Agache (1875-1959).

During his time in Paris, a city which had been the fulcrum for the international relations of Portuguese architects since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Faria da Costa took part in an intense political and cultural debate, which reflected an institutional debate present throughout Europe, centred on the questions related to urban planning, that involved a new generation of ideas and operational practises<sup>4</sup>.

He finished his studies in 1936 and obtained his degree in urban planning on June 19, 1937<sup>5</sup>. Upon his return to Lisbon that same year he began a period of very intense professional activity in the fields of both urban planning and architecture.

### Faria da Costa's First Works for the Department of Urban Planning and Public Works of Lisbon's City Council (1938-1943)

1938 is a key year since it marks the beginning of a new process of urban planning for the city of Lisbon, thanks to the return on the public scene of Duarte Pacheco (1900-1943), ex-minister for public works<sup>6</sup>, a figure with a peculiar ability

for crystallizing projects, and a great capacity for implementing large-scale undertakings. Duarte Pacheco himself set the guidelines for the great transformation projects for the capital, initiating a global strategic plan, based on various intervention levels, which would produce the Urban Plan for Lisbon, that Duarte Pacheco called “undoubtedly the most important of the city’s needs today”<sup>7</sup>.

It is at this moment that the City Council called in a series of technicians, architects, as well as an urban planner, Faria da Costa, who took his place in a team that included figures of the magnitude of the architects Keil do Amaral (1910-1975), Miguel Jacobetty Rosa (1901-1970) and Inácio Peres Fernandes (1911-1989)<sup>8</sup>. Faria da Costa began his activities at the *Department of Urban Planning and Public Works*<sup>9</sup> (DSUO) in 1938, working incessantly on a great number of projects and development plans within the larger frame of Lisbon’s Urban Plan, begun in 1938, under the direction of the Polish-French architect Étienne De Gröer.

From 1938 to 1948, Faria da Costa undertook the realisation of the plans for the areas of expansion of the capital, some of which were undergoing a vast process of expropriation, that marked the modern gateways of the city, and where most of the projects intended by the City Council were located: that is the airport to the north-east, and the port in the western section of the city<sup>10</sup>, in the direction of the *Costa do Sol*<sup>11</sup>.

The first significant plan to be actually carried out by Faria da Costa (1938-40) was the important plan for the *Encosta da Ajuda* (essay cover), in the western limits of the city, which included the residential area known today as *Restelo* Neighborhood.

This plan envisaged the creation of a residential neighborhood for 36,000 inhabitants in an area of approximately 300 ha in the zone towards the *Tejo* river and next to the area of *Belém*.



This plan, resembling a great stage overlooking the *Tejo*, and structured on large communication axes, with a system of concentric secondary streets, is clearly under the influence of his French years, and has strong connections to the model of the Garden City, applied to the planning of suburban expansion areas in which the plan, as well as the continuity with the existing urban fabric, were devised with a specific residential need, with its own urban structures and services immersed in green areas<sup>12</sup>. The plan was carried out in an altered version in two phases of development, first following a program for social housing (1940–1952) and subsequently, in the area north of the neighbourhood, with the construction of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the *Restelo* neighbourhood, including hundreds of single-family units which in the 1950s represented an interesting experimental laboratory for a combination of traditional and modern architecture.

In 1938, Faria da Costa also started the development of plans for two large residential areas in the north-east section of the city, known today as *Areiro* and *Alvalade*, initially intended as a single unit<sup>13</sup>.

The development of the plan of *Areiro* (32 ha, 9000 inhabitants) (Figure 02), that Faria da Costa carried out first, constituted a preliminary experience for the following famous plan of *Alvalade*, as well as an urban connection between this expansion and the old urban fabric of the city.

These plans defined the development guidelines for this part of the capital, which in those years was still predominantly rural. The area, limited to the north-east by the area deliberately intended for the construction of the airport,

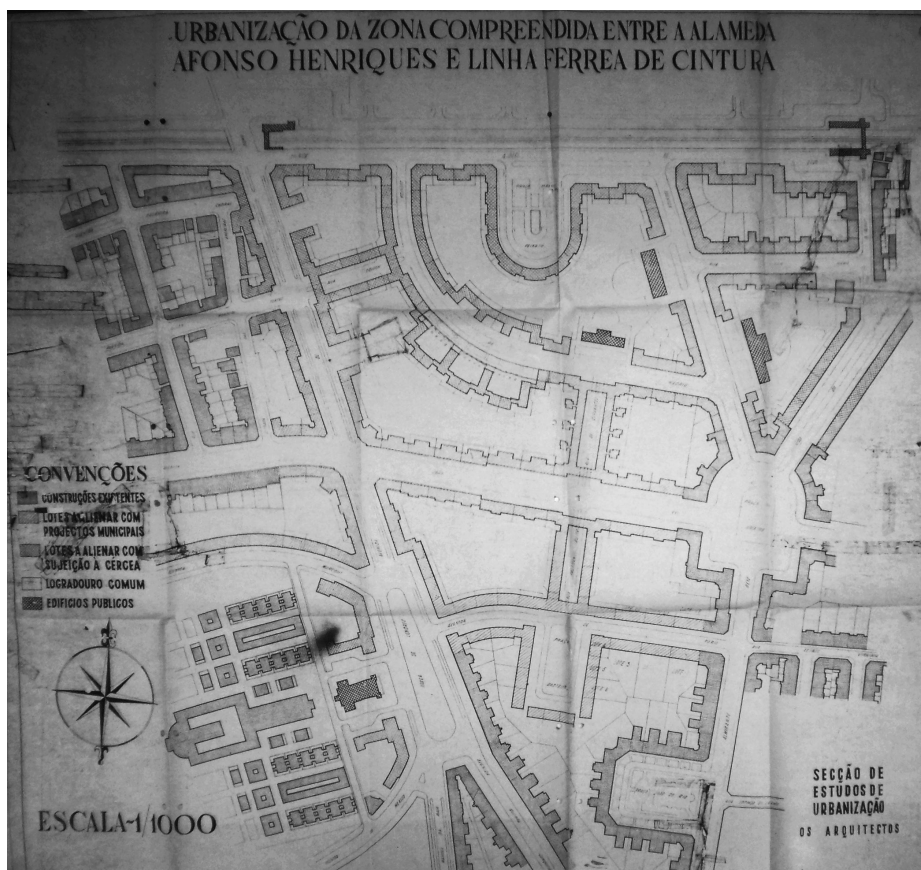
was set on the radial urban axis represented by the *Almirante Reis* Avenue, which connected it to various monumental city landmarks such as the square of *Areiro*, designed by the architect Cristino da Silva (1896–1976) in 1938, the *Alameda* and its Monumental Fountain and the *Instituto Superior Técnico*, the most prestigious school of engineering in Portugal since its foundation, which had been recently inaugurated.

Meanwhile, under a vast conjuncture of events, among which the lack of urban planners and of a topographical map of the city (that was currently underway)<sup>14</sup> and the death of Duarte Pacheco in 1943, the global study of the city of Lisbon, which had been initiated in 1938, had to be abandoned in 1942–43 and later underwent a general revision in 1945–46<sup>15</sup>.

This situation provoked the revision of many detailed plans, such as Faria da Costa's renowned plan for the area of *Alvalade*, called *Plano a Sul da Avenida Alferes Malheiro* (South Plan for the *Alferes Malheiro* Avenue) that was included in the great public interest operation as a part of the construction of the Airport, together with the complex communications infrastructure in the entire expansion area, and finally the construction of a series of social neighbourhoods<sup>16</sup>.

#### **Towards a Modern Lisbon: from the plan for *Alvalade* to the plan for remodelling *Baixa***

The *Alvalade* plan (Figure 04) envisaged the creation of a large residential area for 45,000 inhabitants, including those left homeless by the demolition of a vast zone of the urban



fabric of the historical centre (*Martim Moniz*), and which would also be the object of an urban plan that Faria da Costa would begin to develop in these years, as will be seen further on.

The plan of *Alvalade* introduces remarkably modern urban planning innovations, with a concept involving the integration of dwellings, services and urban facilities, as well as the inclusion of some productive sectors, in accordance with a hierarchy of routes. Faria da Costa applied the principle of the neighbourhood unit, according to which the urban space is divided into sectors, at the centre of which a primary school is placed<sup>17</sup>. The distance between school and dwelling is such to be easily covered on foot, and the same is true for urban services and facilities. 3-4 story buildings are envisaged, a novelty in the panorama of traditional social housing areas, which according to official programs were to be based on the usual single-family house with garden imbued with the symbolic values related to rural life.

The realization of the plan of *Alvalade*, which was well on track since the end of the 1940s, was characterised by proposing a completely innovative conception of the organisation of the city, which represented a step towards a modern Lisbon, due in part to the presence of solutions (the neighbourhood unit, for example) to questions that are present in the context of the European Rationalist debate concerning urban planning, and which resulted in the latter phases of the construction of the neighbourhood, with certain alterations, in the application of the principles of the Athens Charter, as in the case of the social housing estate

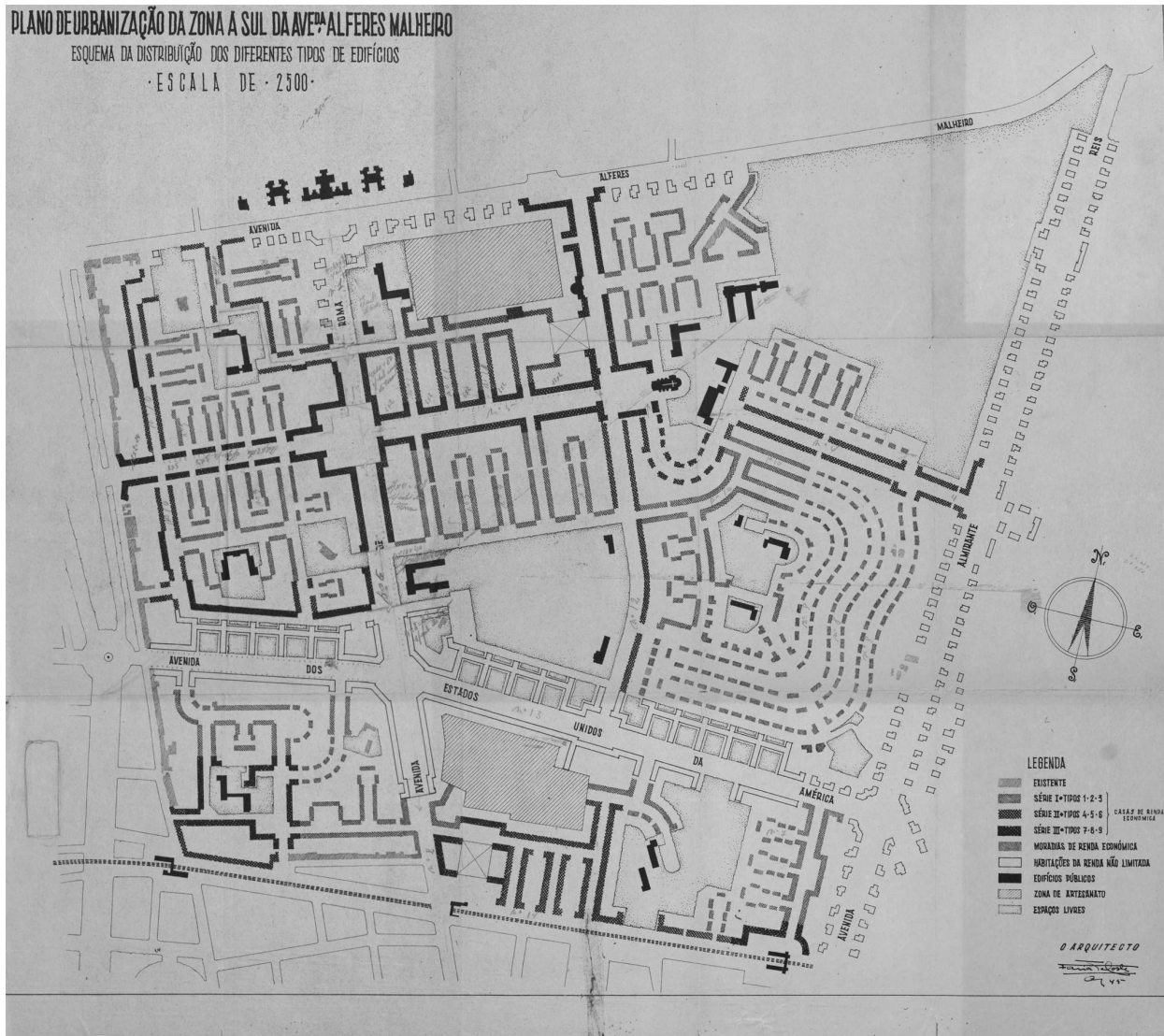
*Estacas* Neighborhood, which followed suggested layouts of Rationalist inspiration created initially in 1949, based upon a project by Sebastião Formosinho Sanchez (1922–2004) and Ruy Jervis d’Athoguia (1907–2006)<sup>18</sup>.

In 1944, Faria da Costa started important studies for the historical centre of Lisbon, in the lower part of the city, known as Lisbon *Baixa*, within the larger framework of a vast operation of urban renovation and enhancement of urban mobility.

One of these studies was the project for connecting the western bank of the *Tejo* river (constituted by the *24 de Julho* Avenue) and *Praça do Comércio* (the former *Terreiro do Paço*), facing the river. Faria da Costa, who in 1946<sup>19</sup> had been given indefinite leave by Lisbon’s City Council authorities, developed in 1947, under invitation by the Ministry of Public Works the project for connecting *24 de Julho* Avenue to *Comércio* Square (Figure 05), the relief of the traffic congestion of a small internal street (*Arsenal* Street) and the creation of a connection between *24 de Julho* Avenue and *Terreiro do Paço*, thus creating a continuity along the river.

Another important study was the “traffic project at the city center and sanitation of the area between *Socorro* and *Rossio*” (Figure 07) concerned the area of *Mouraria*<sup>20</sup>, the highest density area in the *Baixa*, which, from 1949 onwards, for questions concerning public hygiene, was subjected to a series of numerous, progressive and drastic demolitions, an urban disembowelment that produced what is now known as *Martim Moniz*. The operation, which caused a deep transformation in the urban fabric, would





completely modify the urban image of this part of the historical centre.

Faria da Costa's proposal was the first step towards the creation of a ring road around the historical centre that would connect the various radial axes which converge in the *Baixa*<sup>21</sup>, an operation which, due to the topography of the area, was possible only through the creation of a system of tunnels. This solution was already present in De Gröer's plan, and would be developed by Faria da Costa in his plan for the remodelling *Baixa* presented in 1949 (Figure 04).

The proposal envisaged a ring road that connected, with a tunnel, the nodal points of the radial axes (from the *Largo do Corpo Santo* to the *Restauradores Square*, from *Restauradores* to *Martim Moniz* and finally from there to the *Campo das Cebolas*). These nodes were solved with a modern underground terminal in *Praça dos Restauradores*, and a roundabout on the surface at *Martim Moniz*, whereas a series of underground commercial galleries were envisaged for the two main squares of the *Baixa*: *Rossio*, and *Figueira Square*<sup>22</sup>. The *Praça de D. João I*<sup>23</sup> (Figure 08) was projected as a nodal point for the connection of the radial axis of *Almirante Reis*

Avenue, thought of as a modern nucleus with the integration of dwellings, services and urban facilities. The project reveals a vision of a functional and modern city referring to the ancient urban fabric and conjugated with a conception of a monumental urban system based on an axis of symmetry and a clear urban image with continuous façades, as in the French tradition.

The years devoted by Faria da Costa to the planning projects for the historical centre would be the last of his career at Lisbon's City Council, from which he would resign on February 26, 1948<sup>24</sup>. In the following years, Faria da Costa kept on working incessantly on the revision of the plan for remodelling *Baixa*<sup>25</sup>, as technical consultant, but it was never approved nor carried out.

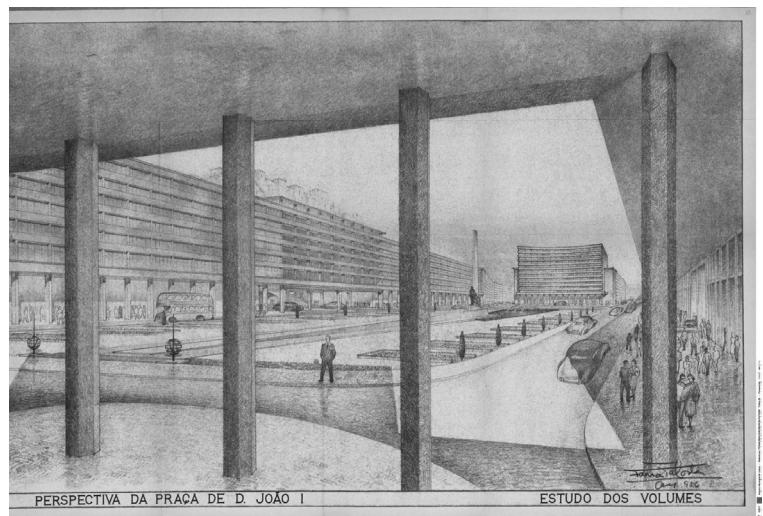
### Conclusions

The city of Lisbon underwent through an extraordinary urban transformation during the years in which Faria da Costa worked at the Lisbon City Council. The first period, from 1938 to 1943, corresponds to the first years of frantic activity with the drafting of numerous projects concerning

04 João Guilherme Faria da Costa, Plan for remodelling *Baixa*, Lisbon, Portugal. © Lisbon Municipal Archive, *Estúdio Mário Novais*, PT/AMLSB/MNV/S00254.

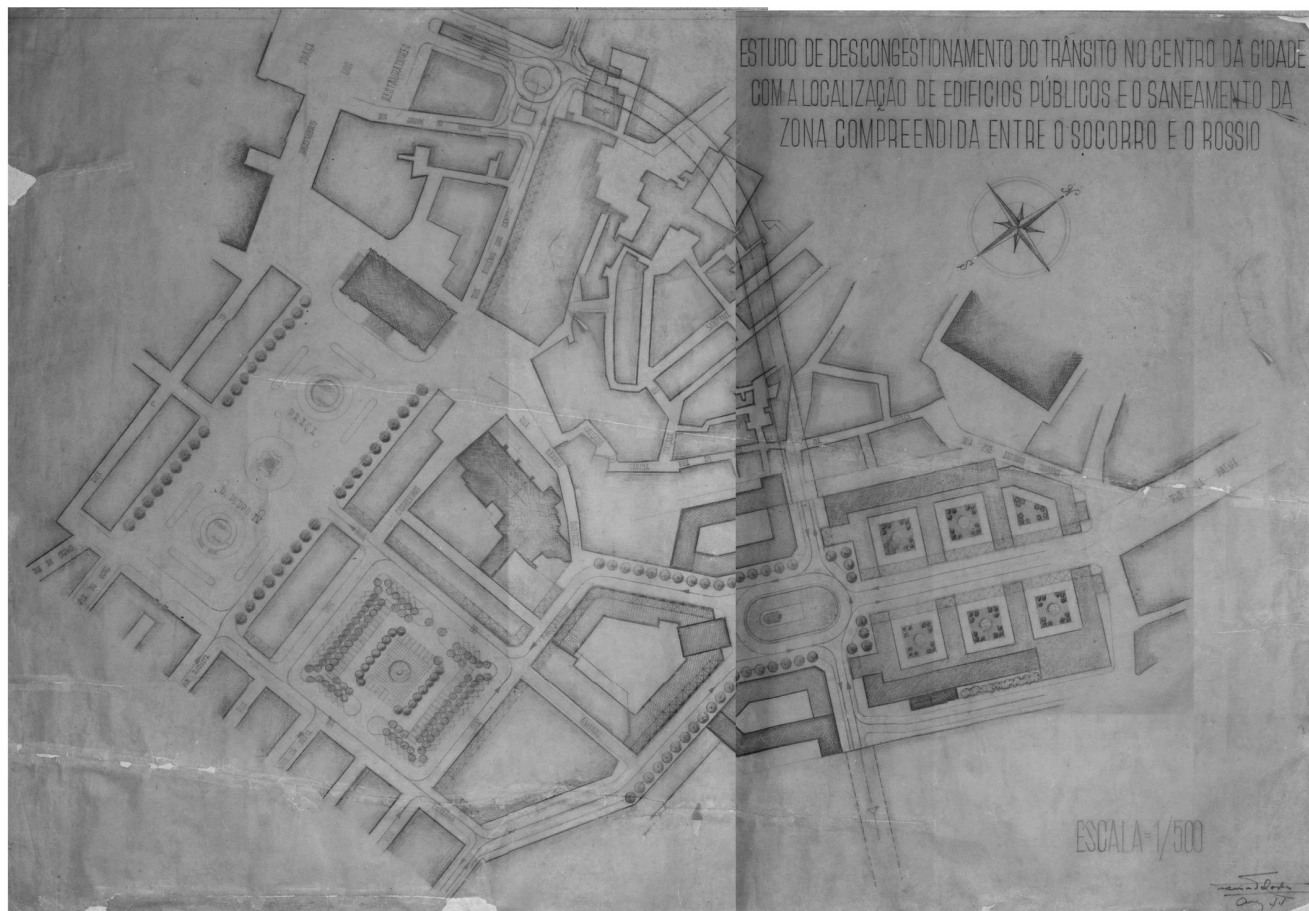


05 João Guilherme Faria da Costa, Preliminary project to the connection of 24 de Julho Avenue and *Comércio* Square, Lisbon, Portugal, 1947. © Lisbon Municipal Archive, PT/AMLSB/CMLSB/UROB-PU/10/174.



06 João Guilherme Faria da Costa, Plan for remodelling *Baixa*, Lisbon, Portugal, perspective from *D. João I* Square, volumetric studies. © Lisbon Municipal Archive, PT/AMLSB/CMLSB/UROB-PU/10/291.





the comprehensive transformation of the city, reveals a process of adaptation to the Portuguese context, and a strong influence from the French tradition, which he absorbed whilst in Paris. Subsequently, fully engaged in the urban planning section of the City Council, in the period between 1944 and 1948, Faria da Costa underwent a process of great growth, which is reflected in his most important project, the plan for the *Alvalade* neighbourhood, that, along with the *Restelo* neighbourhood, today represent the areas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Lisbon expansions with the most equilibrated spatial structure and a recognizable urban image that translated into neighborhoods with a good quality of life and which are very much sought after.

From 1948 started a period of changes, ensuing from the 1<sup>st</sup> National Congress of Architecture, which witnessed the production of some of the most uncertain results in the work of Faria da Costa, as a consequence of his attempts to reconcile recent trends in urban planning and design derived from the Modern Movement with the formal principles of the French tradition. It is a phase of great transformation in his work, the least well-known and also the least fulfilled, especially under the strong historical and morphological constraints of the areas in question, like *Martin Moniz*, which still represents an unresolved urban question in contemporary Lisbon.

#### Notes

- 1 Maria do Carmo Marques Pires, *O Ateliê de Arquitetura/Urbanismo de David Moreira da Silva e Maria José Marques da Silva Martins, Visibilidade da Memória*. PhD Thesis, Faculdade de Letras, Universidade do Porto, 2012.
- 2 Formerly known as *École des Hautes Études Urbaines (EHEU)*, founded in 1919 by Marcel Poëte (1866–1950) and Henri Sellier (1883–1943).
- 3 Teresa Marat-Mendes; Vítor Oliveira, “Urban planners in Portugal in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Étienne de Groër and Antão Almeida Garrett”, *Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 28, No. 1, London, Routledge, 2013.
- 4 Donatella Calabi, *Storia dell'urbanistica Europea: Questioni, Strumenti, casi Esemplari*, Milano, Mondadori, 2004, 127–130.
- 5 With a thesis which consisted of the urban plan for the small Portuguese city of Figueira da Foz. Lisbon Municipal Archive, Diploma from *Institut d'Urbanism*, João Guilherme Faria da Costa personal archive, proc. n.º1657, f. 9. PT/AMLSB/CMSB/GRHU/01/08310.
- 6 With the leadership of Duarte Pacheco, who took on his appointment as Mayor of Lisbon during the first 5 months of 1938 and then returned to the appointment as Minister of Public Works from May 1938, in the process of a deep reform of the municipal administration, legal and financial conditions were created to execute a vast program for the urban transformation of Lisbon, supported by specific legislation called *Regime dos Centenários*, Cfr. Decree Law 28 797/38. *Diário do Governo*, 1.ª série, n.º 150, of 01/07/1938, 1044. In this period there was a strong attraction towards French legislation and planning that probably influenced the design of the new legislation that Pacheco planned with the creation of the *Plano Geral de Urbanização* (DL n.º 24802, 21/12/1934), the first legal instrument which regulated town planning in Portugal and established the obligation for municipalities to develop town plans. This is an historic turning point beginning a season of great production of urban plans across the country, several of which were developed by Faria da Costa.

- 7 Lisbon Municipal Archive, Resolutions of Lisbon City Council, *Livro de Actas de 1938*, Acta n.º4, Sessão de 17 de Março de 1938, 11.
- 8 Architectes Keil do Amaral, Miguel Jacobetty Rosa and Inácio Peres Fernandes were accepted at DSUO in February 1938. Cf. Lisbon Municipal Archive, Personal File of Francisco Caetano Keil Coelho do Amaral, proc. n.º1658, f. 2. PT/AMLSB/CMLSB/GRHU/01/8311.
- 9 The DSUO is the municipal department where, in 1938, all the activities in the field of urban planning, previously dispersed, were concentrated. Duarte Pacheco accepted Faria da Costa at DSUO on 17/01/1938. Cf. Lisbon Municipal Archive, *Anais do Município de Lisboa de 1938*, Lisbon, Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1939, 11.
- 10 These two areas, the western zone and the north-eastern zone, are highlighted as priority "1" and "2" in the map indicating the urgent order for the execution of the land survey (*Map of Ordem de Urgência da Execução do Levantamento Topográfico*), Lisbon Municipal Archive, *Programa Concurso e caderno de encargos para levantamento topográfico*. PT/AMLSB/CMLSB/UROB-PU/10/090 Pasta 1, fl. 2.
- 11 The *Costa do Sol* is the region, along the coastline of the estuary of the Tejo river, leading from Lisbon to the town of Cascais, which is approximately 30 km away, where was developed a plan for the creation of an international tourist area that had been developed since the early 1930s, first by Alfred Agache and later by Étienne de Groër. From 1938, Faria da Costa developed a large number of plans and projects along the *Costa do Sol*, such as along the coastline at *Paço d'Arcos* and along the coastline of Cascais. He also collaborated on the project of the impressive bridge over the valley of *Alcântara*. This work, which was part of the construction of the inland Lisboa-Cascais-Sintra highway, marked, together with the *Costa do Sol*, the limits of the western expansion of the city of Lisbon. The project envisaged as well the creation of the Monsanto Forest Park. *Relatório da DSUO*, in *Anais do Município de Lisboa de 1939*, Lisboa, Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1940, 19.
- 12 Patrícia Almeida, *Bairro(s) do Restelo Panorama Urbanístico e Arquitectónico*, PhD Thesis, *Universidade Nova de Lisboa*, 2013.
- 13 See Faria da Costa, *Esboço dum bairro residencial para a zona norte da cidade Lisboa*, Lisboa, Portugal. Lisbon Municipal Archive, PT/AMLSB/CMLSB/UROB/[PFC]/002.
- 14 The Italian company *Ottico Meccanica Italiana e Rilevamenti Aerofotogrammetrici* was designated to execute the land survey of Lisbon on February 14, 1939. The photographic survey was used as a base to develop the plan of Lisbon but the expected draft of the 243 maps (scale 1:1000) was not yet ready in 1947, so the assignment was given to the Portuguese institution *Instituto Geográfico Cadastral*. Lisbon Municipal Archive, *Relatório da DSUO*, in *Anais do Município de Lisboa de 1947*, Lisboa, Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1948, 113.
- 15 AML, *Relatório da DSUO*, in *Anais do Município de Lisboa de 1947*, Lisboa, Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1948, 112–113.
- 16 Beginning with the *Encarnação* neighbourhood, and followed by *Alvalade*, *Olivais* and *Cbelas*.
- 17 One of the pivotal points on which lies the extraordinary contribution of Faria da Costa to a new conception of urban planning, is the introduction of the paradigm of the neighbourhood unit, a planning concept that played a very important role in urban planning theories since the Garden City theories by Ebenezer Howard, who had a significant influence on Faria da Costa. Howard, in 1898, proposed the division of the city into areas, or wards, of approximately 5000 inhabitants, each with shops, services, schools and urban facilities. The principle was based on the allocation of services in a central position in the ward, in such a way as to allow the inhabitants to reach them on foot. The principle found no application in English cities but we find a reinterpretation theorized by architect William E. Drummond during the years 1913–22, and then commonly attributed to Clarence A. Perry (as published in 1929). During the 1940s, the Neighbourhood Unit, had a new application in The Greater London Plan (Abercrombie, 1944) and was also developed by Le Corbusier within the framework of European Rationalism. In particular, during the 1930s, as a part of that process of passage carried out by the protagonists of the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM)* from the house-centered theme to a more comprehensive perspective on the city, the interpretation of the neighbourhood unit was an essential step. It was adopted as an element in CIAM's own theory, and played a part in the change of perspective from the analysis of individual functions to their interrelationship in the urban development design. Cf. Guido Morbelli, *Un'introduzione all'Urbanistica*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2005, 179. See also Donald Leslie Johnson, "Origin of the Neighbourhood Unit", *Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 17, No. 3, London, Routledge, 2002.
- 18 Ana Tostões, "La città degli anni cinquanta", *Rassegna*, No. 59, Bologna, CIPIA, 1994, 63–71.
- 19 Ofício n.º 3456 from *Director dos Serviços Centrais de Agosto de 1947*, Lisbon Municipal Archive, João Guilherme Faria da Costa personal archive, proc. n.º1657, f. 54. PT/AMLSB/CMLSB/GRHU/01/08310.
- 20 *Mouraria* is the ancient Muslim quarter of Lisbon which was created by the first Portuguese King Afonso Henriques on the north-western slope of the castle of *São Jorge*.
- 21 Lisbon has 4 radial urban axes which converge in the *Baixa*, the heart of the city centre: the axis along the eastern bank of the river *Tejo*, the axis *Palma Street – Almirante Reis – Aeroporto Street*, the axis along the *Liberdade Avenue* (the boulevard built in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which constitutes the main access to the *Baixa*), and the axis along the western bank of the river *Tejo*.
- 22 Ana Tostões, "Precursos do urbanismo e da arquitectura moderna", *Lisboa 1758. O Plano da Baixa Hoje*, Lisboa, CML, 2008, 208–216.
- 23 Lisbon Municipal Archive, *Anais do Município de Lisboa de 1962*, Lisboa, Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1963, 174.
- 24 *Idem*, 1.
- 25 In 1954, with the purpose of allowing a better support for the urban development works that were being carried out in Lisbon, the City Council created a new technical department, the *Gabinete de Estudos de Urbanização (GEU)* which consisted of a group of specialized technicians, aimed specifically at the revision of the Urban Plan for the City of Lisbon, the final revision of the Plan for Remodelling *Baixa* for its approval and execution, and the undertaking of new urban studies and plans for new urban areas. Resolution of Álvaro Salvação Barreto, the Major of Lisbon, 13/01/1954. Lisbon Municipal Archive, *Anais do Município de Lisboa de 1946*, Lisboa, Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1947, 147.

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