

# WEB OF KNOWLEDGE

A LOOK INTO THE PAST,  
EMBRACING THE FUTURE

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# Web of Knowledge | A Look into the Past, Embracing the Future

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# Understanding a nation's culture through the magazine *A Construcção Moderna*

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**ABSTRACT:** The study of the most relevant periodic magazines of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a significant project carried out by the project RIC - Revistas de Ideias e Cultura (Magazines of Ideas and Culture), with the challenging aim of providing access to the entire collections of the most significant Portuguese dedicated publications. Acknowledged by the editorial board as an important source of ideas and culture, the architecture team is dedicated to exploring concepts, understand modern perceptions and expressions of the art of designing and building, and identify technical developments in the construction of our architectural legacy. The first Portuguese magazine dedicated to architecture, *A Construcção Moderna*, is the starting project, at a work in progress stage, this paper addresses the project, the magazine significance and the research methodology design.

## 1. THE RIC PROJECT

The project RIC - Revistas de Ideias e Cultura – (Magazines of Ideas and Culture) aims to provide access to complete collections of periodic publications of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that discussed ideas and cultural issues. To achieve this aim, a judicious selection of the most relevant has been conducted. The online database, with easy access to search complete collections through specific indexes (<http://www.ric.slhi.pt/>) has been considered of great value to research. In addition, the *Magasin* offers further relevant documents related to each one of the magazines. The open access to the most relevant Portuguese cultural and architectural movements' magazines from the 20<sup>th</sup> century offers the possibility to study them, which may induce new research interests.

*A Construcção Moderna* (Fig. 1), the first architecture magazine selected by the RIC, is the first publication dedicated to architecture in Portugal, printed between 1900 and 1919. Providing opinion articles on issues such as architecture, construction, arts, history, materials, engineering and cultural events, the study of these contents can shed some light on the modern ideas that shaped the socio-cultural atmosphere of an era (Mesquita, 2011). Other historically important magazines were published in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as: *A Architectura Portuguesa* (1908-1929); *Arquitectura* (1927-1936); *Arquitectura Portuguesa, cerâmica e edificação – Reunidas* (1936-1951); and *Revista Oficial do Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos* (1936-1942).



Figure 1. Front page. In *A Construcção Moderna*, Year 1, 1900.

The team aims to display the architectural research potential of the developed tool, which may support new research questions and contribute to developing further knowledge on culture and architecture in Portugal, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2. A CONSTRUÇÃO MODERNA

The magazine *A Construção Moderna* was issued between February 1st, 1900 (Fig. 2) and July 25th, 1919, and published every two weeks in a total of 542 issues. The magazine's editorial board was composed by: the typographer Nuno Colares (1850-1928), the engineer José Maria Mello de Mattos (1856-1915) and the architect Rosendo Garcia de Araújo Carvalheira (1864-1919), which reveals an understanding of the link between technical and artistic knowledge in construction in the 1900's (Mesquita, 2011). *A Construção Moderna* has been acknowledged as a pioneer experience and a significant contribution to the architectural culture at the beginning of the modernity (Nunes, 2011).

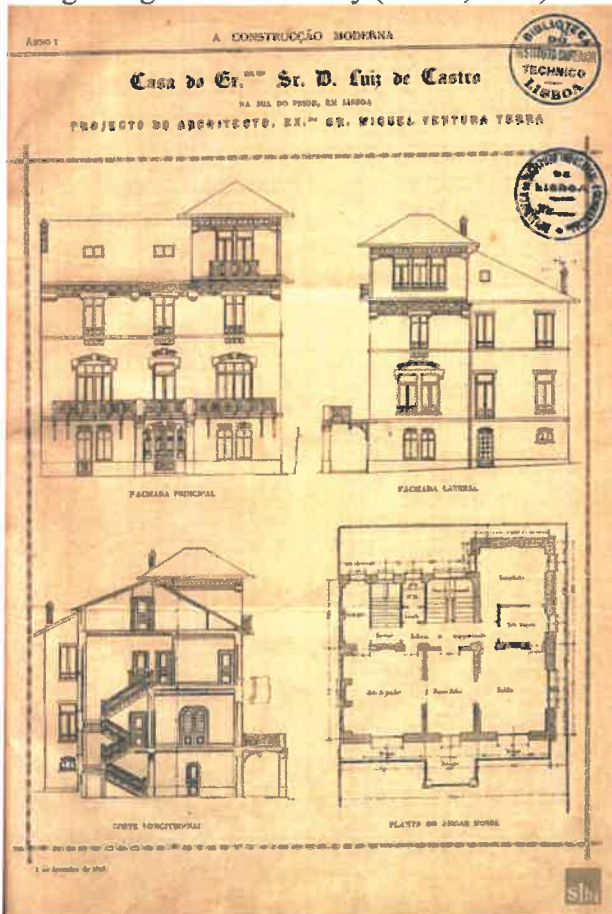


Figure 2. The first architecture project to be published. In *A Construção Moderna*, February 1900, n.º1, p. 1.

In its first issue the editorial team clearly stated their aims: to fill a gap in the dissemination of art and techniques in the construction field, opened to international events by addressing aesthetic, technical and scientific knowledge; by disseminating works of art; by promoting the multidisciplinary debates in times of transformation imposed by industrial civilization; by contributing to the definition of competences and attributions of the various professional groups linked to construction; and finally by considering decorative arts relevant to modern times.

*A Construção Moderna* addressed multidisciplinary discussions regarding not just construction and decorative arts (Fig. 3), but also a wide range of themes, from fine arts and architecture history, sanitary and hygienic needs, and technical developments, from transportation to electrical novelties. This brought to the interested professionals a range of new materials and construction systems that were being developed in Portugal and abroad. Finally, it informed the readers about conferences and exhibitions related to modern construction. These are the reasons why Nunes (2011) has considered that the magazine *A Construção Moderna* introduced in Portugal the modern architecture.



Figure 3. An article of applied arts. In *A Construção Moderna*, March 1903, n.º89, p. 36.

## 3. WORK IN PROGRESS

The main objective of this project is to make publicly available this important part of Portuguese culture by creating an accessible and intuitive way to use a large database, enabling the correlation of information within each magazine and with other subject magazines included in RIC project, and already available (such as the magazine *A Águia*, available in [http://ric.slhi.pt/A\\_Aguia/revista](http://ric.slhi.pt/A_Aguia/revista)).

The aim to provide access to the scanned magazines' pages but also to a search engine online requires an extensive work of reading, identification and contextualization of the themes addressed in the

published articles. The gathered information from each magazine, as part of the database, allows the correlation between each one of the existing indexes. This creates the possibility to create maps of ideas, history and culture of the century in study and particular of the architecture development at the time.

### 3.1. Methodology

Following the RIC guidelines, the qualitative methodology designed for *A Construção Moderna* (Fig. 4) follows a sequential order: to thoroughly read each issue, identifying the main topics, and the writing of a brief description of the topic(s) presented in each article. The database provides six fields: authors, subjects, concepts, quoted names, quoted works and, finally, geographical locations (Fig. 5). All this information is to be confirmed in the second reading of each article, with special attention given to the subjects and concepts, as they derive from the central theme. The biographical information on the authors is checked in the Dictionary of Portuguese architects written by Pedreirinho (2017). After this identification, the gathered data is inserted in the database fields, in a dedicated record for every single article. Finally, all the information is analysed and reviewed by the architecture team of the RIC project.

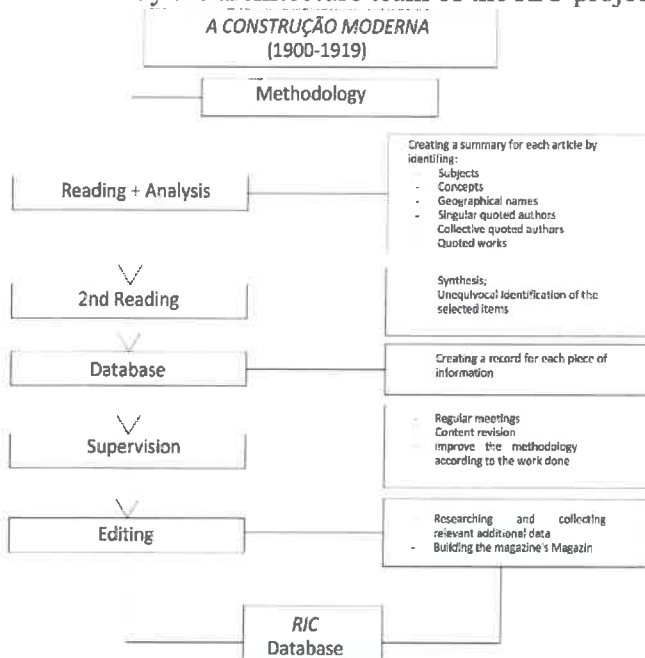


Figure 4. *A Construção Moderna*: methodology designed according to RIC guidelines.

### 3.2. Preliminary findings

The ongoing work is starting to highlight a group of recurrent topics in the issues read so far (170 in a total of 542), such as architecture projects, technical discussions related to construction and urban infrastructures, and arts, such as applied arts, literary works, theatre and international exhibitions.

## EMPREGO DAS ESCORIAS DO CARVÃO

As escórias de carvão que eram em tempos causa de pejsamentos nas fabricas, nos depositos dos caminhos de ferro, ha muitos annos que alcançaram valor real como materiaes de construção.

Os empreiteiros empregam-nas para o fabrico de argamassas e nas edificações. As fabricas fazem com ellas muros de cerca, tijolos que lhes servem para construccões de annexos e até para habitações operarias.

O Bulletin technologique de la Société des architectes des Ecoles d'arts et metiers acaba de publicar um estudo interessante a este respeito, devida a M. St. Gendre.

É o resumo de esse trabalho que aqui publicamos.



A argamassa de escorias. Nas localidades em que o preço da areia é bastante elevado, quer pela sua raridade quer pelo custo do transporte, os

## OS NOVOS TUMULOS DO MOSTEIRO DA BATALHA

Em 1888, no sumptuoso mosteiro da Batalha, que bem deve considerar como pantheon magifico da dynastia de Aviz, as vassalhas de D. Afonso V, de sua primeira mulher D. Isabel, de D. João II e do malogrado infante D. Afonso, seu filho, não tinham ali sepultura condigna.

A isto se obviou construindo tres tumulos nos ediculos rendilhados do lado direito da capella do Fundador, em frente dos que, do lado esquerdo, encerram os restos de alguns dos filhos de D. João I.

Os novos tumulos, ou jazidas, e respectivas capellinhas ornamentaes, foram executados pelos operarios canteiros empregados pela direcção das

Figure 5. A qualitative approach to the magazine contents. In *A Construção Moderna*. Top image: September 1902, n.º70, p. 117; Bottom image: October 1902, n.º73, p. 132.

In the magazine *A Construção Moderna*, articles about architecture published what is now considered historic references, regarding new programs and typologies, in addition to domestic architecture. They also published projects for public buildings such as commercial and finance houses (warehouses, banking buildings, cafes, Fig. 6), healthcare facilities (hospitals, sanatoriums, asylums), school buildings and industrial schools, leisure spaces (theatres, casinos) and industrial facilities (manufacturing units). Technical articles disseminated knowledge that contributed to the material and technical progress of the country, introducing new materials and construction processes. Urbanism, promoted in

opinion articles, regarding hygiene and health in the public space, expressing the problems faced in the daily life. Articles on applied Arts, discussed the Academism, Art Nouveau, Gothic Revival and Eclecticism. The debate on monumental heritage and its safeguard has been found to be present in several issues (Fig. 7) offering an international perspective on the topic. The legislation was another subject published in this magazine namely by discussing Building Regulations.



Figure 6 Architecture and construction themes: private house. In *A Construcção Moderna*, March 1903, n.º 90, pp. 43.

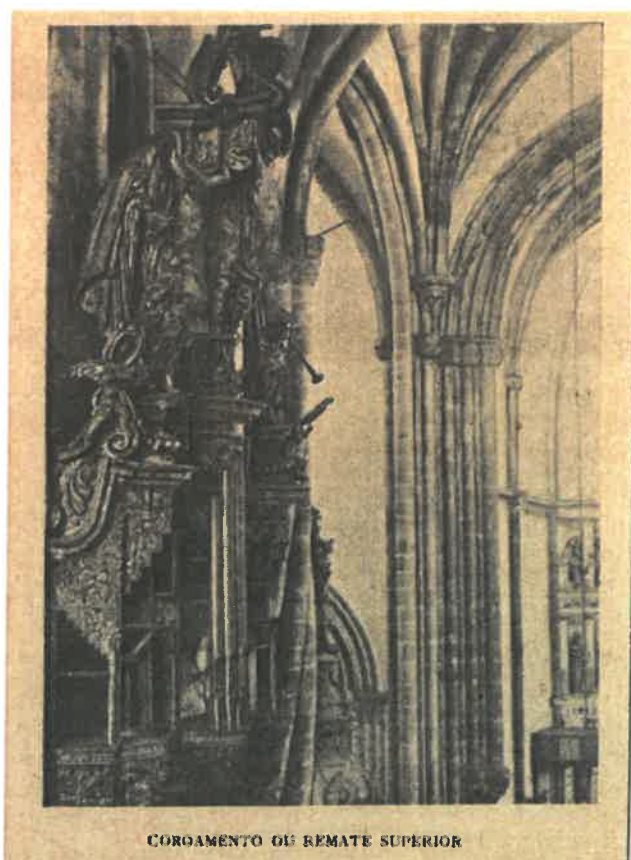


Figure 7. Heritage and safeguard discussions. In *A Construcção Moderna*, August 1902, n.º 68, p. LIII.

#### 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to the fact that the first architecture magazine in Portugal was *A Construcção Moderna*, it will be the first to be made available on RIC's website. The publishing of technical and cultural content at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been recognized as of cultural relevance in broad spreading knowledge on construction practices while simultaneously aiming to end the national isolation regarding the developed European scene (Mesquita, 2011).

The online access to these records, along with a search engine that provides tools to question the database, will contribute for a thorough understanding of the subjects and concepts discussed in this magazine. Although *A Construcção Moderna* is already considered an indispensable source of knowledge for the study of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture and construction issues, the availability of this tool will undoubtedly unveil new lines of inquiry, new research questions and it will, consequently, contribute to future research on culture and architecture in Portugal.

#### 5. NOTES

The editorial board for the magazine *A Construcção Moderna* is composed by the director of the RIC and curator Luís Andrade; published by *Seminário Livre de História das Ideias* and *Fundação Mário Soares*; edited by the architecture team with Sofia Aleixo and Luís Andrade; with executive edition by Pedro Lisboa; and the descriptors Sofia Aleixo and Patrícia Faustino.

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