

Introduction

'To Turn the Witchcraft Against the Wizard'

There are many ways to bring water to one's mill. Arguments can be found to demonstrate that tradition has less weight than it seems. But to accept it, and to derive from it a means of defence for modern architecture, is to fight the opponent in the opponent's own field; it is to turn the witchcraft against the wizard, which is much more useful than creating one's own witchcrafts.¹

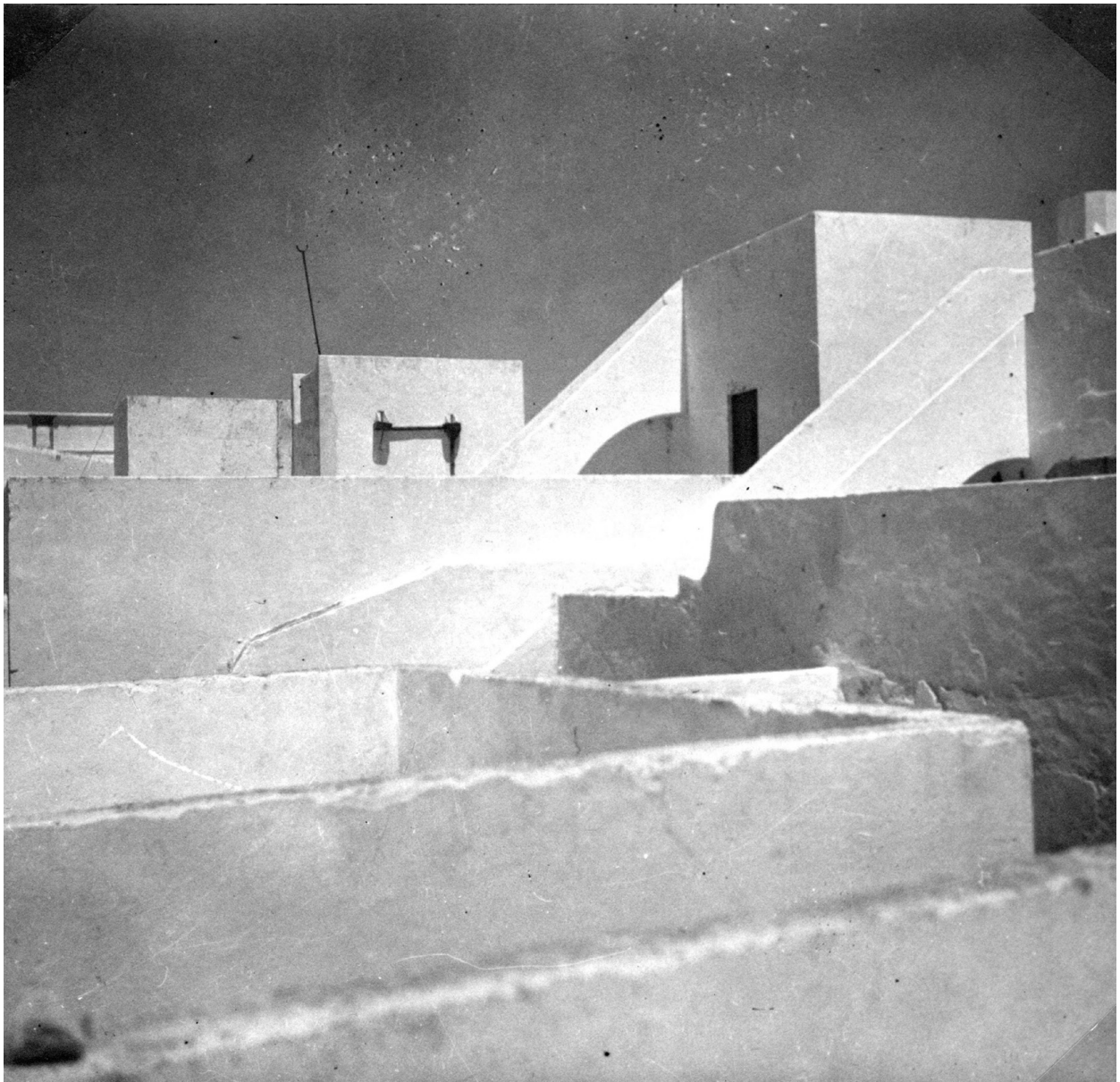
In 1949, Portuguese architect Victor Palla sought to illustrate with a popular epigram what could be the role of tradition in the fortune of post-war modern architecture: sixty years on, the enigmatic formulation was one of the starting points for this book. How did tradition become wizardry for modern architecture? What tradition exactly, and whose? To be turned against whom?

Algarve Building sets out to study how local traditions were understood in modern-day building practices in a specific region. It uses the example of the Algarve, south Portugal, between the 1920s and the 1960s to investigate how the presence of contemporary architectural discourse was negotiated with the real or perceived customs of a particular locality. In the years around 1949, worldwide, modern architecture's 'mill' still turned but there was increasing awareness of its need to somehow channel previously neglected streams, including an understanding of human knowledge as it was translated in traditional building solutions, both technical and formal; this was present in the architects' discourse of the time – sometimes in unexpected terms, as Palla's words exemplify – and later became part of architectural history's canon. Yet concerns with the use of local and regional practices emerged frequently in the decades that preceded that renewed interest, and the relationship between the two often-contrasted tropes of 'modernism' and 'regionalism' modulated not only along architectural lines but also cultural, social and political ones: to observe these developments, this book proposes a strongly empirical enquiry that borrows, at least partly, the local standpoint for its analysis. Accounts of regionalist architecture and its variants are largely the result of metropolitan initiatives, based on metropolitan sources; moreover, and despite the apparent paradox, constructs of regional identity are generally seen in Portugal as central, imposed on peripheral subjects with little contribution from these. What, in turn, could a specific region, with its agents and vehicles of negotiation, bring to a discussion of regionalism in building practice?

2 INTRODUCTION

The Algarve is not only the southernmost region of Portugal or the one most exploited for tourism. Uniquely Mediterranean (and North African) in an Atlantic country, historically and culturally differentiated, its building traditions were essential markers of its specificity and attracted long since the attention of both picturesque-driven, conservative observers, and modernists who, as in Capri and Ibiza, found there examples of modernism *avant la lettre* (Figure 0.1). Both modernism and the popular building traditions commonly known as 'vernacular' played leading roles in the construct of a contemporary building identity for the Algarve, making this region the ideal ground for a close-up observation of the exchanges between modernism and regionalism. The use of a fine-grained investigation into a peripheral Portuguese context not known for its architecture is also an opportunity to highlight architectural history's need to overcome the constraints of the canon: this

Figure 0.1 View of the rooftops in Olhão, c.1930.



project's methodological proposition was to probe the potential of fringe building practices to question established historical constructs, and to galvanise our understanding of identity construction mechanisms, knowledge transfers and the circulation of ideas in other temporal and geographic circumstances where the negotiation of national, regional and local identities also made intense use of architecture and building traditions.

Language is particularly important in a book written within the English-speaking academic tradition by a native Portuguese author, on a topic of Portuguese architecture that is commonly characterised with the use of widely (internationally) employed key terms such as 'modernism', 'regionalism' and 'vernacular', some of which have an inescapable linguistic root – as Adrian Forty so lucidly explains in his foreword. It seems therefore essential to note here the nuances, variations and gaps of meaning that those words brought to this project, according to context and chronology, so as to better position the readings suggested and unpack well-established categories in the light of how the subject's main actors originally used them.

Regionalism, Modernism and the 'Vernacular'

The study of local conditions, in a pure and elevated regionalism, where routine and academism do not dominate and imagination is free to reshuffle the dice – placing the architect in the position of the untiring researcher – can lead to surprisingly simple, effective, and even elegant results.²

'Regionalism', reinterpreted and reformulated, was key in the Algarvian architect Manuel Laginha's (1919–1985) modernist proposals of the 1940s (Figure 0.2). The quote above, characteristic of his rationale, implied two forms of regionalism – 'academic' and 'pure', the latter a reaction to the former and both conveyed as variations in building style. Yet regionalism has been given a different sense in contemporary architectural discourse, the 'ism' referring to its potential as an instrument of local agency, charged with attributes that far exceed matters of style. To write about mid-century regionalism in peripheral Portuguese regions raised, therefore, compelling questions: how 'regionalist' was that building practice, how much agency and intention was there and by whom was it exerted? How much of it stemmed from engrained local tradition – that is, how 'regional' was it, determined by pragmatism more than by strategy, well before it could be called 'regionalist'?

Latter-day theoretical constructs of architectural culture such as 'Critical Regionalism' have built on the binary oppositions between a 'critically resistant architecture' and 'free-standing aesthetic objects';³ between literal and non-literal (or defamiliarised) interpretations of regional traditional features,⁴ extracting from such distinctions moral lessons deemed useful for contemporary design practices: regionalism can be good if resistant (critical), but it is reproachable if simply replicating features identified with local tradition – and even dangerous as an instrument of nationalism.⁵ Yet these concepts must be read in the context of the early 1980s,

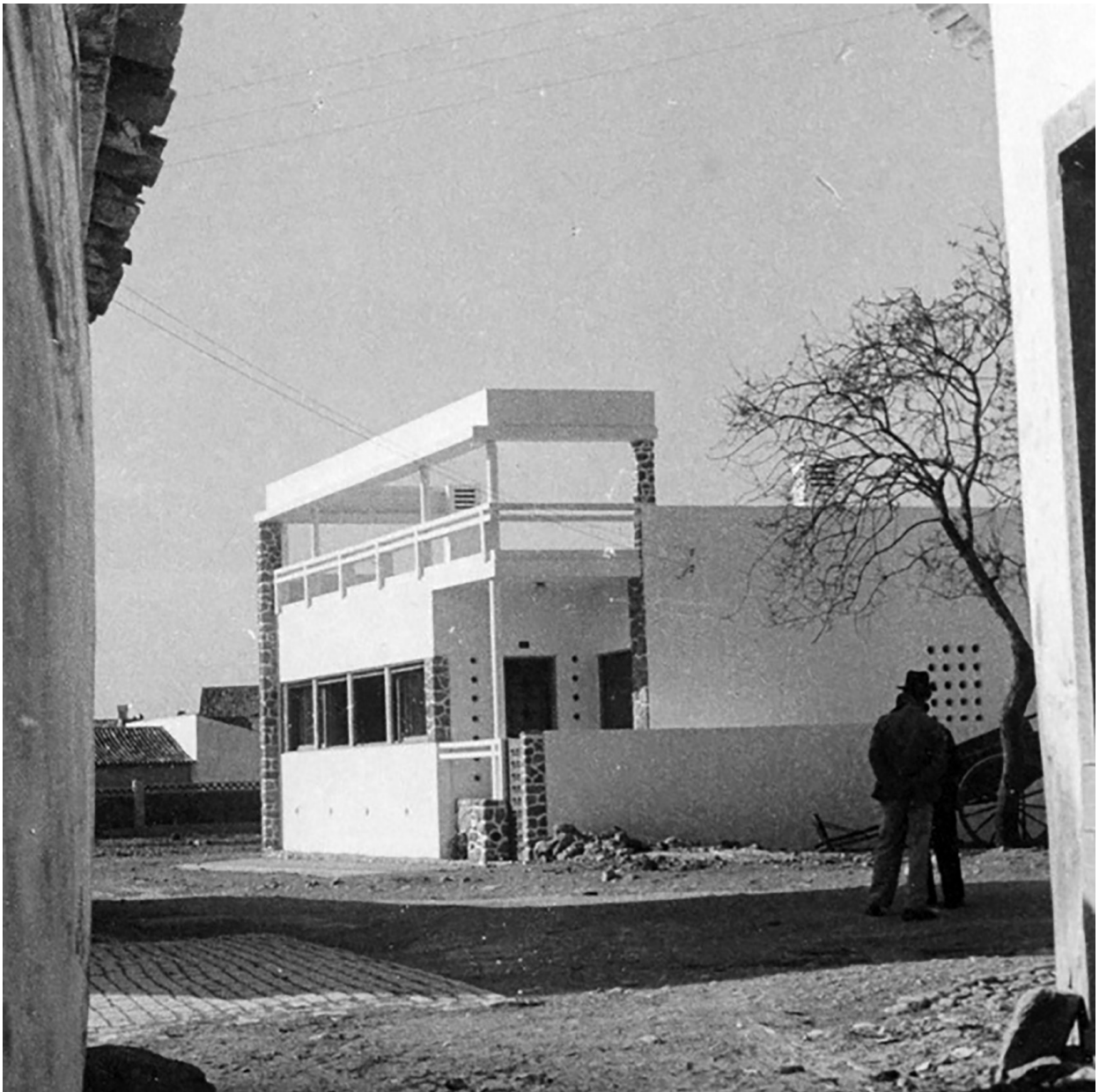


Figure 0.2
M. Laginha,
Aleixo house,
Rua Maria
Campina 145,
Loulé,
1946–1947.

when they first emerged, and in the frame of their intended double critique – in Keith Eggener’s words, a critique of both ‘the placeless homogeneity of much mainstream modernism and the superficial historicism of so much postmodern work’.⁶ Applying them retrospectively risks leaving out the subtleties and particularities of sixty-year-old works devised with rather different concerns in very specific circumstances; adding to this problematic use of contemporary concepts of regionalism in hindsight, there were cases (such as the Portuguese) where mid-century practices used regional and traditional elements to criticise and resist not modernism or postmodernism but what they saw as conservative and retrograde. In fact, as Palla’s and Laginha’s words implied, they could be means of reinvigorating modern architecture, not of superseding it.

Furthermore, such theoretical constructs are moulded on the works of the foremost names of a given context, and on its main centres. This is very much the case in regard to twentieth-century Portuguese architecture, which is largely unknown abroad. The country's few, now-classic calling cards, namely the works of Fernando Távora (1923–2005) and Álvaro Siza Vieira (b. 1933), are persistently seen as 'deeply rooted in local contexts' – in Jean-Louis Cohen's recent suggestion⁷ – both at home and in international surveys, and celebrated as new forms of regionalist architecture. Siza's early work was associated with 'Critical Regionalism' already in the second edition (1985) of Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*: the Portuguese architect 'grounded his buildings in the configuration of a specific topography and in the fine-grained texture of the local fabric' but – and importantly for the moral judgement underpinning Frampton's concept – his 'deference towards local material, craft work, and the subtleties of local light . . . is sustained *without falling into the sentimentality* of excluding rational form and modern technique'.⁸ The third edition (1996) of William Curtis's influential *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, which signalled the beginning of the author's long-standing interest in Távora's and Siza's works, introduced them as configuring an attempt

to cut through the prevailing eclecticism and provincialism of Portuguese architecture, and to return to local roots . . . [Távora] sought an architecture that was modern but sensitive to a unique cultural landscape, and one of the keys for him was the Portuguese vernacular which he interpreted for its general principles and types.

Siza, sensitive to the 'lineaments of topography and to the spatial transition between buildings . . . had *no intention of mimicking peasant architecture*, but did wish to draw on its social pattern and sensitivity to both landscape and light'.⁹ While embarking on the same celebratory account that, in Portuguese scholarship, positions these names against a supposed 'eclectic' and 'provincial' background – and passing the same moral judgement that permeates almost all scholarship on regionalism, in that 'The best of these buildings seemed able to draw upon indigenous wisdom, but without simply imitating vernacular forms: to penetrate beyond the obvious features of regional style to some deeper mythical structures rooted in past adjustments to landscape and climate' – Curtis nevertheless questioned the generalising inclusions that weakened the 'Critical Regionalism' construct as it recurred to

*a selection of creditable modern architects whose work embodied a vital synthesis of the local and the general – figures like . . . Siza or Ando in the then recent world of architecture. Theoretical post- (and pre-)rationalizations are one thing; works giving shape to ideas, insights, and intuitions, another.*¹⁰

This book shows regional practices under a very different light. It goes beyond the repetition of the same well-known names and works, and the categories to which they have been confined, and suspends post-rationalisations to look at the works and ideas that developed before the so-called 'Portuguese Masters', and away from their context; as it happens, the two leading Algarve-born architects discussed

here – Manuel Laginha and Manuel Gomes da Costa (b. 1921) – belong to Távora's generation and were his colleagues in architecture at the Porto school of fine arts, but they are generally overlooked by Portuguese architectural culture and entirely absent from international surveys. Meaningful parallels can be drawn with the position of lesser-known designers in most small-scale architectural cultures, and even in more significant ones – domestic and foreign interest in modern architecture in Brazil, for example, is recurrently focused on Lúcio Costa, Óscar Niemeyer and few other names, virtually obliterating the army of other designers, architects and not, that advanced modernism in that continent-size country.¹¹

What happens when the object of research is displaced from the centre to the periphery, and from the outstanding works to everyday building? This seems a necessary move to further our understanding of the role of regionalism at regional and local scales. What is produced and experienced as high architecture does not necessarily have a direct or immediate impact on local practices; rather, it undergoes prolonged interaction and filtering, potentially resulting in gaps between 'regionalist' strategies, centrally devised, and their 'regional', concrete manipulation in the everyday. This text deals, to a large extent, with the often-overlooked everyday production that fills our built environment and constitutes the irrefutable expanded field of architecture's past; without it, regionalism in building cannot be discussed. In a more minute account, closer to the essentials of everyday building in a peripheral setting, political, social, cultural and economic circumstances can be brought into relation with building activity, and observed at regional and local scales. Allowing for a deeper understanding of regionalism to develop, this study of building practices in the Algarve adds to 'the "many voices" of a multilateral and multifaceted modernity'¹² that have captured architectural history's attention in recent times, and brings to the fore little-known aspects of twentieth-century architecture in Portugal and of the development of modernism in the south of Europe.

*If the modern expression [of the design] seems appropriate . . . it represents not an attempt to reach a questionable modernism, but the anticipation of a well-balanced building that . . . will have architectural value and considerable scale.*¹³

'Modernism' is another key term of this text. In the above project statement by the Algarve-based architect Jorge de Oliveira (1907–1989), for a house design of 1954 (Figure 0.3), 'modernism' was derided as a passing fashion while 'modern' was commended as an expression of civic progress, assimilating meanings well beyond architectural style. Modernism is a broad trope in architectural history: it applies, in both Portuguese and English, to practices ranging from Art Deco-inspired designs (*Style Moderne*) to the interwar dissemination of Modern Movement models and their post-war, mature counterparts. Modern architecture, in turn, comes ring-fenced in the difficult definition of 'architecture' and its boundaries: for a project focused on building practices both by architects and non-architects, the category was inadequate. In this light, modernism as 'in the modern manner', progressive and keeping-up-with-the-times, and not confined by professional distinctions, seemed a more flexible and encompassing term, and was preferred here.



Figure 0.3 J. Oliveira, Soares building,
Avenida Cinco de Outubro 50, Faro,
1954–1955.

How did modernist architecture and building practices develop in the first half of the century in the Algarve? How did the national and international currents of the period manifest themselves in that peripheral setting, and on whose initiative? What, if any, were the local, regional and national forms of reaction to such currents? What non-modernist expressions were there, and how did they look to tradition for support? (Was this the tradition Palla saw as a possible ‘wizardry’ for modern architecture?) How was ‘modern’ used, manipulated and resisted throughout the period? By paying attention to both modernist and non-modernist practices it is this book’s intention to avoid a preconceived notion that prevails, largely unchallenged, in Portuguese architectural culture, according to which modern architecture in the country was the victim of a conservative dictatorship, and ostracised; that ‘true’ modern architecture never really existed. Portugal’s other internationally renowned architect, Eduardo Souto de Moura (b. 1952), recently gave a clear indication of how engrained this notion is by using it to diminish postmodernism and justify his own late-modernist stance, in his acceptance speech for the Pritzker Architecture Prize 2011:

Post-modernism arrived in Portugal, [where there] had barely existed any Modern Movement at all . . . What we needed [after the 1974 revolution] was a clear, simple and pragmatic language, to rebuild a country, a culture, and none better than the forbidden Modern Movement to step up to that challenge.¹⁴

In Portugal, the trauma of forty years of Estado Novo dictatorship (1933–1974) impacted on post-revolutionary cultural production, and the restricted circle of architectural thought and education was no exception. After 1974, the history of architects and buildings became partly an account of resistance and collaboration, of guilt and redemption. The period was generally divided by authors into three main episodes: an early stage of experimentation with modernist forms (until the mid-1930s), an interlude of conservative, backward practice with nationalistic purposes, and the late-modernist episode in the 1950s and 1960s, in which a politically engaged new generation of architects was said to have overcome official resistance and caught up with post-war international trends, albeit belated and incompletely. From the 1980s on, the debate was centred on whether or not the 1940s’ conservative interlude had seen coherent state policies and individuals creating an Estado Novo architectural style; and the extent to which architects had been manipulated, or had wilfully collaborated, in this endeavour,¹⁵ given that many early modernists went on to experiment with the lexicon of traditionalism and historicism, apparently betraying their modern inheritances. Although some authors did point to the variety of influences and determining factors over such an extended period,¹⁶ many chose to focus on the state’s power to impose retrograde formulas.¹⁷ To accentuate the sense of a strained but decisive architectural turning point in the 1950s, most late twentieth-century accounts appropriated a post-war narrative that emphasised the struggle of modernist architects to overcome conservative constraints; this narrative was titled, in 1950, the ‘Battle of Modern Architecture’.¹⁸ Non-modernist practices

remained the preserve of specialised studies,¹⁹ and largely unpopular in contemporary architectural culture. Holding on to the romantic idea of a resistant post-war modernism, contemporary authors also tend to dismiss its subsequent popularisation as industrial-scale degeneration; they remain hesitant to admit that the prolific work produced in the late 1950s and 1960s was evidence of the adoption of modernism by the establishment under a dictatorship regime – that there was a post-war modernist Estado Novo architecture. State-imposed conservatism and romanticised modernist conquests are deep-set conventions that this project seeks to unpack in order to make way for alternative readings.

*What shall we do? Show them that we never had a national style, and that we merely adopted what came from abroad? Sacrilege! Tell them that the only truly Portuguese architecture in our land is folk architecture, born straight out of the needs and possibilities of the people? And that the one architecture that modernism is closer to is precisely the folk one?*²⁰

‘Vernacular’ is the third widely used term to require particularisation here. Its association with architecture is relatively recent and was generalised in the 1950s, when the appropriation of traditional buildings by architects to legitimise functionalist principles became commonplace.²¹ In Portuguese language, it did not gain currency until later: as in the quote above, post-war modernists increasingly discussed the qualities of ‘folk’ architecture (my preferred translation for the Portuguese term *popular*), while before then authors, designers and other sources most commonly referred to such artefacts as ‘regional’. This variation notwithstanding, the concern with what is now termed ‘vernacular’ was consistent throughout the last century, and this study examines the nuances that anticipated the mid-century levelling of its usage. The worldwide ‘discovery’ of vernacular features by learned architects has been under architectural history’s scrutiny; yet it seemed likely that all agents of the built environment had been negotiating with traditional methods and forms, in their everyday activity, long before that. The suspicion that this would be particularly clear in peripheral locations determined the choice of context for the study and its two cases: the towns of Olhão and Faro, in Leeward Algarve. Sceptic of the use of ‘vernacular’ to encompass very diverse artefacts – many of which are clearly not spontaneous, or self-made – this text proposes the broader category of ‘building traditions’.

Algarve Building does not intend to discuss the features of the Algarve’s vernacular buildings (which have recently been studied in detail,²² and consistently throughout the last century). It turns instead to the ways in which such features were manipulated in formal building practice (Figure 0.4), and how certain types constructed with the Algarve traditional elements – often formulated as ‘regional’ types – originated, were disseminated, consolidated and dismantled. Specifically, this investigation focuses on the use of traditional features in both modernist and non-modernist designs: were these appropriations selective, or systematic? What (if anything) did they highlight and ignore? What were the boundaries of the so-called

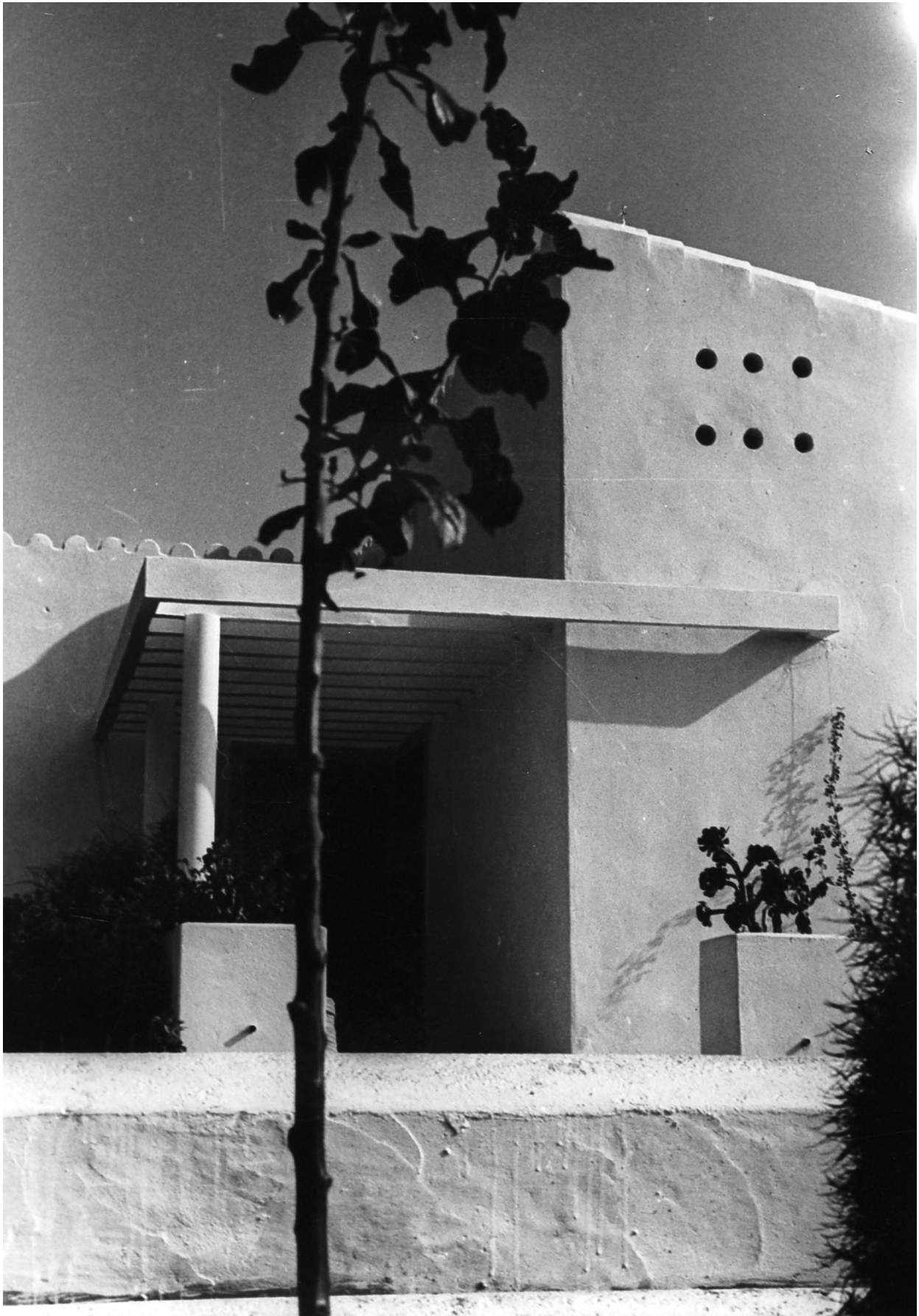


Figure 0.4 M. Laginha, Brito da Mana house, unknown location, c.1950.

vernacular – where was the line between formal and informal practices? Finally, do those reputedly spontaneous buildings, upon which visions of regional tradition were constructed, have a history that can be documented?

A particular interest in examining the boundaries between formal and informal building practices partly explains the inclusion here of works by architects and non-architects, although this was equally a consequence of the displacement of the research subject to a peripheral setting: in a remote region of Portugal in the twentieth century, the larger part of the formally created built environment would not have been designed by architects, in all likelihood. Lastly, previous experience suggested that non-architect designers play an essential part in the dissemination of models and currents in the country, often facilitating the renewal of everyday customs.²³ There was, thus, a clear intention to accept this condition and explore it. Who were these non-architect designers? What was their architectural culture, and how did it contribute to the developments under scrutiny? Frequently in this text, the reader will find that the expression ‘building practice’ has been preferred over ‘architecture’ to describe a range of activities included in the production of a peripheral built environment, led by a broad cast of actors.

The Algarve, 1925–1965

By looking at the Algarve, this book examines a subject (regionalism) in a context (regional) where it seems particularly relevant and not sufficiently discussed. *Algarve Building* is based on objects created, for their larger part, in the middle decades of the twentieth century, stepping back to the early decades of 1900 to trace the development of issues that were questioned and revised in mid-century years. The dates chosen for the title are meaningful but above all symbolic: 1925 saw the first publication of a work by an important metropolitan architect in the Algarve (Carlos Ramos and his Bairro Operário in Olhão, Figure 0.5), and 1965 was the ‘airport year’. The opening of an international airport in Faro was the hinge of a dramatic change in the Algarve’s built environment, when the process of transformation of an agrarian society into a tourism-driven one was accelerated. Matters of regional building identity were then increasingly taken over by large-scale leisure and commercial architecture, altering the entire framework of production and reception. Such a change was piecemeal: it started in the late 1950s, and the present book discusses this threshold stage between the first hospitality initiatives and the landmark infrastructural achievement of the airport. It was the project’s stated intention, however, to leave out the last third of the century – a time when a radically different Algarve emerged, where regional identity was commoditised to a previously unknown scale (Figure 0.6). In regard to international architectural culture, in turn, the mid-1960s were also markers of change, and essential questions regarding modernism, vernacular, materiality, technology and history shifted significantly, further justifying the choice of 1965 as a goalpost.



Figure 0.5
C. Ramos, Bairro
Operário Lucas
& Ventura,
Olhão,
1924–1925.

The first six decades of the century were crucial in shaping the relationship between regionalism and nationalism in Portugal: its traits form the background to this project. Especially after the institution of a republic (1910), Portuguese nationalism was intricately related to regionalism. These were not conflicting concepts: a region (province) was then seen as a small-scale fatherland, and regionalism was an indispensable preliminary for true patriotism, instrumental in the process of fabricating national traditions.²⁴ Ethnography participated in the exploration of Portuguese regional folk culture, assembling a 'gallery of typical portraits' all of which represented, each in its own way, the essence of nationality.²⁵ Nationhood-building through ethnography, and ontological equivalence of the regional and the national, were transported from republican Portugal on to the fascist period. For Estado Novo, regional diversity was devoid of conflict potential and understood as a 'chromatic variation within the same'.²⁶ Even possible signs of strong cultural distinction – represented, for example, by the Muslim inheritance in southern Portugal – were not disguised but highlighted in an all-encompassing 'Unity in Diversity' mantra. From the 1950s on, anthropologists systematised diversity, grounding national identity in Portugal's 'pluralist ethnogenealogy'.²⁷ National and regional identities were therefore not seen as incompatible, either in democratic or dictatorial times, but as fundamentally complementing each other. In this frame, regional identity was not merely desirable: it was essential.

The Algarve played a special part in this construct of national diversity, and that was one important reason to choose the region for this investigation. In the past



century, it still combined the perceived mystery and allure of an exotic land – a former Moorish kingdom within the borders of Europe – with the evidences of a well-defined cultural region, distant and isolated until very late. As such, it was ideal material for the kaleidoscopic construct of modern-age Portugal. In the reputedly superficial regional types that made up 1930s' national-regionalism, Algarve was perhaps the easiest to outline. Its Mediterranean-like features within an Atlantic country were subject to apparently straightforward stereotype creation during the conservative years, allegedly prescribed by central authorities (Lisbon) and received with passivity by locals. These were, however, preconceived notions instilled by the same general historical accounts that appropriated the above-mentioned heroic narrative of post-war modernism overcoming conservative resistance. A close-up observation of events at the local and regional scales could show the degree and direction of control exerted by central, regional and local authorities, in a way that a centre-focused research could not.

Another essential factor in choosing the Algarve lay in what seemed to be this region's unique characteristic: its being simultaneously seductive for the (reputed) stereotype creators in the conservative years and for the modernist-minded designers who, before and after that interval, were equally eager to associate their contemporary proposals with regional idiosyncrasies. Even a superficial approach will

Figure 0.6
Azulejo panel
with Schweppes
advert on a
roadside house
outside Faro,
2010. Produced
at the Aleluia
workshops in
Aveiro, these
panels became
a regular sight
along Algarvian
roads from the
late 1960s on.

stumble on persistent references to the proximity between the Algarve's pared-down, elemental-solid buildings, entirely whitewashed, and modernism's formal palette. The well-known effect of comparable Mediterranean 'vernaculars' (the Balearics, Capri and the Greek islands) on other European modernists and pre-modernists suggested that a similar process might have developed in the south of Portugal with particular clarity. In no other region of the country did extant building traditions offer such a dual, apparently paradoxical possibility, and this specificity within the Portuguese context made the case of the Algarve worthy of investigation.

This suggestion was strengthened by my previous research experience on the work and archive of the region's first mid-century modernist, Manuel Laginha: his practice was marked by a clear and consistent discourse on the need for modern architecture to engage with regional identity, if it was to survive and flourish. Laginha's short but intense private practice for patrons in the Algarve in the 1940s and 1950s, yielding a series of concrete expressions of his commitment to an alternative modernism supported by eloquent writings,²⁸ inspired a broader investigation of other agents, moments, modes and products of the interaction between architecture and regional building practice in that part of the country.

Background, Sources, Structure

The presence of vernacular and regional influences in modern architecture culture, particularly in the Mediterranean context, has been the subject of important work in the last two decades. *Algarve Building* – the first book originally written in English and entirely devoted to the architectural history of a single period in Portugal since George Kubler's 1972 landmark *Portuguese Plain Architecture: Between Spices and Diamonds, 1521–1706* – aims to be the 'Portuguese companion' to a set of outstanding references in recent international scholarship, on the Mediterranean world and beyond, to which it is, in turn, indebted: the studies by Eleftherios Pavlides,²⁹ Jean-Claude Vigato,³⁰ Ákos Moravánszky,³¹ D. Medina Lasansky,³² Hilde Heynen,³³ Michelangelo Sabatino³⁴ and Jan Birksted,³⁵ and edited volumes by Goldhagen and Legault,³⁶ Lejeune and Sabatino³⁷ and Umbach and Hüppauf.³⁸ My reading of the 'vernacular' as a concept and word, and of related concepts, owes much to those of Peter Collins,³⁹ Paul Oliver,⁴⁰ Adrian Forty⁴¹ and Brown and Maudlin,⁴² as well as to the series of essays edited by Oliver.⁴³ On the dissemination of modern architecture and its appropriation by peripheral communities, architects and non-architects in everyday architecture (in a form of reversed 'vernacularisation'), the works of Fernando Lara on Belo Horizonte, Brazil,⁴⁴ and Domingos Tavares on Ovar, Portugal,⁴⁵ were especially inspiring, as was Ballantyne and Law's study on the modern-day diffusion of 'Tudoresque'.⁴⁶ Vincent Canizaro's anthology of regionalism's multiple faces and theories⁴⁷ is an essential reference; it includes, among others, Alan Colquhoun's important 'Critique of Regionalism',⁴⁸ a lucid account of how this trope has been consistently present in western practice throughout the last two centuries, and associated, by adhesion or repulsion, with multiple aspects and routes of such practice.

Regionalism and historicism, and eclecticism, and nationalism, and avant-gardes: regionalism as an underground current that consistently emerges and interacts with other tensions of architectural practice and discourse – a reading that influenced this book’s understanding of the Portuguese case. Together, these works describe and interpret the background to the mid-twentieth-century reassessment of regionalism in architectural discourse.

Matters of national identity translated into architecture and tradition/modernity dualities have weighed on Portuguese culture throughout the century; consequently, Portuguese scholarship has visited them frequently, providing a basis for further research.⁴⁹ However, such accounts have observed developments mainly from a metropolitan standpoint and provided overall views based on the best-known – often best-loved – works and designers, seldom pausing to sift through local sources and minor artefacts; the few exceptions⁵⁰ confirm the rule. Modern architecture in the Algarve, in turn, has been recently worked on, both in large-span, general surveys⁵¹ and in monographic studies and exhibitions.⁵² Yet such inaugural studies focus, once more, on the (relatively few) works and designers that best conform to the standards of metropolitan architectural culture, often extending to these readings the grand narratives and engrained biases of that culture. Building on existing studies but departing from the established views, *Algarve Building* investigates the social and cultural circumstances of building practices in the region, their background and regional/local influence, the dissemination processes in which they participate and the myriad of agents, designers, institutions and works that defined them.

This book stands on a substantial empirical foundation of primary source material and extensive fieldwork. The research supporting it identified and recorded around 450 buildings and building ensembles across the Algarve, informed by on-the-ground survey missions and readings in the archives of architects, municipal planning offices and regional government bodies. Considering these and the national archives, national and specialised libraries and central government departments in Lisbon, the investigation was conducted in over thirty different locations. Forty years of planning applications, funding submission files, design and building records, correspondence, central government and local council minutes and a range of other documents were scrutinised: since different architecture-related archives in Portugal yield different data and require different approaches altogether, the spectrum of research sites was necessarily wide.⁵³ On the one hand, using local sources extensively was essential in a project structured upon the displacement of the researcher’s standpoint to the periphery; on the other hand, returning to the records of bureaucracy in a deliberate, patient manner – which meant file-by-file readings across forty years’ worth of documents, in the case of many non-catalogued fonds – was equally central in a context where very little architectural work has ever been published or thoroughly studied.

The insistence here on primary sources was not merely driven by concerns with quantity but especially with quality. This stems from a strategy of giving equal importance to the drawn and written documents that substantiate building practice.

Written design statements included in planning applications, in particular, were privileged vehicles for Portuguese mid-century designers to convey information other than technical and functional. These texts often contained elaborate explanations for what was then called the author's 'architectural stance' (*partido arquitectónico*): the set of principles and concerns, not only formal but also ethical and even philosophical, behind a given design proposal. It will become clear throughout the book how these pieces of writing, produced for bureaucratic purposes and hidden away in seemingly arid planning files, proved a remarkable source, invaluable complements to the drawn and built material, as they sometimes configured a veritable architectural discourse produced by designers who did not publish their ideas.⁵⁴

Drawings, writings and the buildings themselves (through photography and first-hand experience), along with published sources, formed the bulk of the material used – completed, whenever possible, by a direct access to the designers and their papers: the estates of three of the foremost architects working in the Algarve in the period were studied (Manuel Laginha, Jorge de Oliveira and Manuel Gomes da Costa, who was also interviewed), as were those of architects who worked in Lisbon on key projects for the region (Raul Lino, Carlos Ramos, Inácio Peres Fernandes, Cristino da Silva, Jorge Chaves). Personal testimonies of designers and family members were included with full awareness of the shortcomings associated with oral history as a research tool: in fact, the particular effects of distortion that affect it (personal biases, nostalgia and the influence of collective and retrospective versions of the past⁵⁵) have not only been recognised here but also occasionally used as a starting point for discussion. Prevailing narratives, many perpetuated by oral history, were questioned through systematic archival research and critical analysis, and had their subtext explored and their significance revised.

The archives, in fact, were placed at the centre of this work, as a creative engine for research: they were not employed to corroborate preconceived ideas or theories but were at the root of much of what is discussed. While addressing many of the questions outlined in the early stages of the project and mentioned in this introduction, my research strategy also allowed the material to suggest alternative enquiries, leading it to follow new interrogations, prompting it to change and adapt.

Algarve Building is structured in two parts that range from the general to the specific and, geographically, move from the centre to the periphery.

Part I – *From the Centre* – is dedicated to dissecting the ways in which Algarve's built environment was understood in metropolitan spheres (both Portuguese and foreign) and its building traditions were codified. Within it, Chapter 1 investigates the creation of models for regional architecture outside the discipline, while providing an introduction to the Algarvian building culture and custom. In a region often identified with its built environment in non-specialised accounts, repeated depictions of specific features contributed to the creation of stereotypes, which in turn influenced architectural production. Accounts produced in fields such as Literature, Ethnography and Human Geography are examined, and their connections with both the extant 'vernacular' and contemporary formal architecture discussed; the chapter then proceeds to the

analysis of references to the Algarve in pre-mass-tourism travelogue and guide-book publication, and the role of such genres in creating a layman's impression of the built environment that eventually permeated through specialist spheres.

Chapter 2 examines how regional types were formulated in Portuguese metropolitan architecture and the links between this and other, peri-architectural, discourses. Drawing on built and unbuilt proposals by some of Portugal's foremost architects since the turn of the century – Lino, Cottinelli, Ramos, Segurado and others – the first three sections of the chapter address the part played by central government and its designers in the construction of a regional stereotype through works produced for national infrastructure programmes and key propaganda occasions. The Algarve's hesitant, piecemeal turn to mass tourism and its consequences on the built environment are subsequently analysed in a discussion of the architecture produced in the 1930s for a state-sponsored roadside inn programme – the *Pousadas* – and, twenty years on, of the activity of private developers pioneering medium- and large-scale leisure structures on the coastline. The chapter concludes with an examination of the region's specific role in the 'Survey of Portuguese Regional Architecture', an architect-led, nationwide study of folk buildings that represented, in Portugal, the global mid-century reassessment of vernacular references by, and for, modern architecture. The (nationally) famous '*Inquérito*' is seen here as the final instance of a metropolitan-led building identity construct for the Algarve, before the onset of mass tourism.

Part II – *From the Region* – explores the two towns of Leeward Algarve chosen as case studies to investigate the interaction of regionalism and modernism locally. Chapter 3 considers Olhão, a town whose particular 'Cubist' profile made it a preferred source of inspiration for modernist proposals. A first section addresses the inextricability of informal (reputedly 'vernacular') and formal building practices in the early decades of the century, the process of codification of traditional customs brought about by modern industrial and bureaucratic requirements, and the seamless way in which new construction techniques and modernist formal tropes were grafted onto extant, local processes until the early 1940s. In a subsequent section, my empirically based analysis of the most significant low-budget housing schemes in Olhão in the first half of the century supports a critique of hasty historiographic readings, attributions and categorisations; it questions conventional narratives of how metropolitan proposals univocally defined local built identities in dictatorship, shedding new light on how a diverse cast of players, many of whom were local, negotiated such identities. Lastly, the third section builds on the history of Olhão's 1944 urban master plan to trace the way in which conflicting views on the town's identity, past and future, materialised in mid-century urban planning measures and the attendant effects on cross-bred (vernacular and modernist) urban and rural architecture until the 1960s.

Chapter 4 sets the enquiry on the echoes of metropolitan disputes between conservative and modernist stances towards tradition – 'The Battle of Modern Architecture' – in Faro, the Algarve's administrative capital. Some of Faro's streets are walk-in compendiums of a local strand of post-war modernism, yet modernism's penetration there is, still today, portrayed as heroic in accounts that cursorily appropriate the old narrative. Previously ignored developments on the shift

between those stances are examined through empirical evidence of projects, buildings, clients and designers, using as a starting point a house design – the ‘Miracle in Loulé’ house – that has been particularly laden with symbolic meaning in historiography. The chapter then turns to investigating the antecedents of that shift and to the proponents-disseminators of a conservative understanding of local identity, dubbed here *Conservative Regionalism*, against which the ‘battle’ was waged.

Finally, Chapter 5 exposes the circumstances behind the consolidation of a modernist take on regional architecture in Faro – of the rise and popularisation of a local *Modernist Regionalism*. Its three sections follow the work of Faro’s foremost designers to examine the fine-grained detail of this new stage. Suspending architect-centred narratives and taking in the parts played by other forces – from patrons and builders to planning authorities and building codes, from civil engineers to the building industry at large – the text seeks a more encompassing view of a process for which a narrowly architectural rationale is no longer sufficient.

The epilogue to the book offers concluding remarks on how abstract concepts such as regionalism and regional identity construction materialised, or not, in works of modern architecture in the Algarve; on the role played by informal building customs (local and foreign) in the process; and on the impact of important developments in the region’s social history – namely migration – on those customs. It further reflects on the role played by the inclusion of local traditions in the advancement of Portuguese architects’ modernist agenda in the 1950s, and on the particularities of the Algarvian case in this regard.

Notes

- 1 Victor Palla, ‘Lugar da Tradição’, *Arquitectura*, 28 (1949), p. 5. My emphasis.
- 2 [Manuel Laginha], ‘2. Prédio em Loulé’, *Arquitectura*, 26 (1948), p. 14. My emphasis.
- 3 Kenneth Frampton, ‘Critical Regionalism Revisited’, in Maiken Umbach and Bernd-Rüdiger Hüppauf, eds, *Vernacular Modernism* (Stanford, CA, 2005), p. 194.
- 4 Liane Lefaivre, ‘A Forgotten Episode in the Suppression of Regionalism’ (*Globalisation or Regionalism?* Symposium, The Bartlett School of Architecture, 2012).
- 5 See Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, *Critical Regionalism* (Munich, 2003).
- 6 Keith Eggner, ‘Placing Resistance’, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 55(4) (2002), p. 228.
- 7 Jean-Louis Cohen, *The Future of Architecture. Since 1889* (New York, 2012), p. 427.
- 8 Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture. A Critical History* (London, 2007 [1980]), pp. 317–318. My emphasis.
- 9 William Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (London, 1996 [1982]), pp. 482–484. My emphasis.
- 10 Curtis (1996), pp. 636–637.
- 11 See, for example, Adrian Forty and Elisabetta Andreoli, eds, *Brazil’s Modern Architecture* (London, 2004), and Felipe Hernández, *Beyond Modernist Masters* (Basel, 2010).

- 12 Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino, 'North versus South: Introduction', in Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino, eds, *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean* (London, 2010), p. 9.
- 13 CMF/SAO-426/1954, Project statement, 14 October 1954. My emphasis.
- 14 Eduardo Souto de Moura, acceptance speech for the Pritzker Architecture Prize 2011, 2 June 2011, Washington D.C.
- 15 For example, Nuno Portas, 'A Evolução da Arquitectura Moderna em Portugal', in Bruno Zevi, *História da Arquitectura Moderna* (Lisboa, [1978]).
- 16 For example, Pedro Vieira de Almeida, 'Arquitectura e Poder', in Ana Tostões, Annette Becker and Wilfried Wang (org.), *Arquitectura do Século XX. Portugal* (Munich, [1998]).
- 17 For example, Nuno Teotónio Pereira and José Manuel Fernandes, col., 'A Arquitectura do Estado Novo de 1926 a 1959', in *O Estado Novo das Origens ao Fim da Autarcia 1926–1959* (Lisboa, 1987), and Nuno Teotónio Pereira, 'O Combate Pela Arquitectura Moderna em Portugal', *Atlântida*, 1 (1999).
- 18 [Manuel Laginha], 'Moradia no Algarve', *Arquitectura*, 35 (1950).
- 19 For example, José Manuel Fernandes, *Português Suave* (Lisboa, 2003).
- 20 'Moradia. Maurício de Vasconcelos', *A Arquitectura Portuguesa . . .*, 3–4 (1953), My emphasis.
- 21 See Robert Brown and Daniel Maudlin, 'Concepts of Vernacular Architecture', in C. Greig Crysler, Stephen Cairns and Hilde Heynen, eds, *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory* (London, 2012).
- 22 For example, José Manuel Fernandes, *A Casa Popular do Algarve* ([Faro], 2008), and João Vieira Caldas, 'Verdade e Ficção Acerca da Casa Rural Vernácula do Baixo Algarve', in *Cidade e Mundos Rurais* (Tavira, 2010).
- 23 See Ricardo Agarez, *O Moderno Revisitado* (Lisboa, 2009a).
- 24 See Rui Ramos, 'A Segunda Fundação (1890–1926)', in José Mattoso, ed., *História de Portugal* (Lisboa, 1994).
- 25 João Leal, *Etnografias Portuguesas, 1870–1970* (Lisboa, 2000), p. 57.
- 26 Joaquim Pais de Brito, *Onde Mora o Franklin?* (Lisboa, 1995), p. 11.
- 27 Leal (2000), p. 59.
- 28 See Ricardo Agarez, 'O Centro de Assistência Social Polivalente de Loulé no Arquivo do Arquitecto Manuel Laginha', *Monumentos*, 23 (2005).
- 29 Eleftherios Pavlides, 'Four Approaches to Regionalism in Architecture', in Spyros Amourgis, ed., *Critical Regionalism* (Pomona, 1991).
- 30 Jean-Claude Vigato, *L'Architecture Régionaliste* (Paris, 1994).
- 31 Ákos Moravánszky, *Competing Visions* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).
- 32 D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected* (University Park, PA, 2004).
- 33 Hilde Heynen, 'Anonymous Architecture as Counter-image', *The Journal of Architecture*, 13(4) (2008).
- 34 Michelangelo Sabatino, 'Ghosts and Barbarians', *Journal of Design History*, 21(4) (2008); and *Pride in Modesty* (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2010a).

- 35 Jan Birksted, *Modernism and the Mediterranean* (Aldershot, 2004).
- 36 Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault, *Anxious Modernisms* (Montréal and Cambridge, MA, 2000).
- 37 Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino, *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean* (London, 2010).
- 38 Maiken Umbach and Bernd-Rüdiger Hüppauf, eds, *Vernacular Modernism* (Stanford, CA, 2005).
- 39 Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1750–1950* (London, 1965).
- 40 Paul Oliver, *Shelter and Society* ([London], 1976 [1969]).
- 41 Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings* (New York, 2000).
- 42 Brown and Maudlin (2012).
- 43 Paul Oliver, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Vernacular Architecture of the World* (Cambridge, 1997).
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- 45 Domingos Tavares, *Francisco Farinhas* ([Porto], 2008).
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- 47 Vincent B. Canizaro, *Architectural Regionalism* (New York, 2007).
- 48 Originally published as ‘Osservazioni sul concetto di regionalismo’, *Casabella*, 592 (1992).
- 49 For example, José António Bandeirinha, *Quinas Vivas* (Porto, 1996); João Paulo Martins, ‘Portuguesismo: Nacionalismos e Regionalismos na Acção da DGEMN’, in Margarida Alçada and Maria T. Grilo, eds, *Caminhos do Património (1929–1999)* (Lisboa, 1999); Ana Vaz Milheiro, *A Construção do Brasil* (Porto, 2005); and Paula André Pinto, ‘Arquitectura Moderna e Portuguesa’ (ISCTE, 2010).
- 50 For example, Tavares (2008); Ana Tostões and João Vieira Caldas, eds, *João Correia Rebelo* (Angra do Heroísmo, 2002).
- 51 José Manuel Fernandes, *Arquitectura no Algarve* (Faro, 2005).
- 52 José Manuel Fernandes, head curator, ‘António Vicente de Castro’ exposition (2004) and ‘De Jorge de Oliveira a Gomes da Costa’, *Monumentos*, 24 (2006); and Vargas, head curator, ‘Manuel Gomes da Costa’ exposition (2009).
- 53 See Ricardo Agarez, ‘“The Gleaners and I.” Architecture in Archives’, *Comma. International Journal on Archives*, 2009(1) (2009b).
- 54 For a more complete discussion of this particular form of discourse, see my essay ‘The Architectural Discourse of Building Bureaucracy: Architects’ Project Statements in Portugal in the 1950s’ in T. Amhoff, N. Beech and K. Lloyd-Thomas, eds, *Industries of Architecture* (London, 2015b).
- 55 See Alistair Thomson, ‘Memory and Remembering in Oral History’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History* (Oxford, 2011).