

The Preservation of Authenticity and the Awareness of the Necessary

3 Buildings, 3 Case Studies, 3 Levels of Intervention

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The architecture of the Modern Movement in Oporto, Portugal, built between 1940 and 1960, is a recent heritage, whose scant recognition has been accelerating its natural degradation and increasing interventions of questionable quality.

On one hand, the technical and structural weaknesses of the architecture of this period can be the cause of accelerated degradation, which are, in part, a consequence of successive experiments of new materials like concrete. On the other hand, we note the absence of disciplinary criteria in contemporary interventions, which suggests the fragility of the legal and logical framework for the material protection of this architectural legacy.

This study analyses multi-family housing buildings built in Oporto with undeniable architectural quality and characteristics of the Modern Movement – the *Parnaso*, *Ouro* and *D. Afonso V* buildings.

Apart from a reflection on the strategies for renovation, reuse and effective adaptation of these buildings to contemporary living requirements, this study aims to establish a relation between the spatial, technical and social transformations and the preservation of the originality/authenticity of these buildings.

Multi-family housing arises from the transformation and densification of single-family housing as a consequence of population growth in urban centers. Initially, it was a part of the traditional development of the 19th century.

According to Francisco Barata, the typology that prevailed in Oporto until the 40s was single-family housing, and it was from its transformation and densification that multi-family housing solutions were created¹. In Oporto, buildings resulting from private and dynamic initiative stand out, especially those that were built in the 40s. They are often high quality buildings that show new architectural principles. These buildings arose as a consequence of the increasing demand for housing and as a reference for bourgeois society with its new needs and modern ideals. The resultant solutions reveal innovative ideas on the development of new access systems, on the juxtaposition of different typologies, and on spatial organization.

Ana Tostões² has identified the qualities of this modern housing universe and endorsed, from an architectural culture point-of-view, the importance of preserving and reusing this heritage. The study begins with the analysis of 3 dwellings in 3 multi-family buildings built in the 50s, in the city of Oporto. They are

important examples of the Modern Movement because they highlight the introduction of innovative issues and conceptual changes in architectural housing production.

These dwellings show distinct conservation/degradation statuses and underwent several different contemporary interventions. They are inserted in different social, economic and functional contexts and have often been adapted to the inhabitants' current needs.

Through the analysis of the case studies, we seek to identify the main transformations resulting from contemporary interventions. This study aims to establish a relation between the preservation of existing buildings and the subsequent changes, recognizing their spatial adaptability to current requirements for comfort and domestic life. The objective is the protection, preservation and renovation of this architectural ensemble.

Parnaso Building

The Housing, Commerce and Services' building *Parnaso* is a pioneering work where original functional and spatial programs were tested. The building was designed in 1955 and arises from a commission made in 1954 to the architect José Carlos Loureiro (1925) by the composer and music teacher Fernando Corrêa

de Oliveira. The building, which was located near *Boavista*, should be a symbol of modernity, with a program combining housing, commerce and a school of music, ballet and theatre.

The upper two floors of the volume facing *Rua Nossa Senhora de Fátima* form a duplex dwelling that was designed for the enjoyment of the building owners and suited to their needs. Originally, the lower floor contained a second, autonomous dwelling. It was a house with a living room and one bedroom facing the inner garden, while a kitchen, a laundry and a second bedroom were placed along the access gallery.

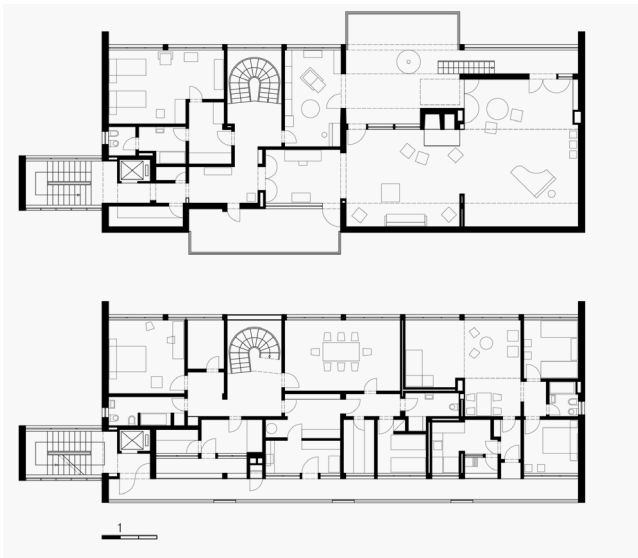
In the project as it was built, the lower floor of the original duplex dwelling comprised a dining room, a space for storage and a guest room facing south and a reserved area for service spaces facing north, with one service access from the gallery to the kitchen. The service area contained a maid's room, a pantry, a kitchen, a laundry and a linen room. Still on this floor are two bathrooms, one on the inside and another with natural light from the side. A helical staircase connects the two floors. This unique element for private use occupies the centre of the dwelling and stands out due to its imposing size and the exceptional geometric design.

The upper floor has direct access from the common building stairway. On this floor are located the main spaces that form the dwelling. The central space has a large area for music and living, which extends to a south terrace with an access to another terrace on the roof. A folding door separates this space from another, smaller space, with access to a second terrace facing north. The remaining program consists of a bedroom with anteroom and private bathroom, a storage room and an office with acoustic treatment specifically ordered by the owner.

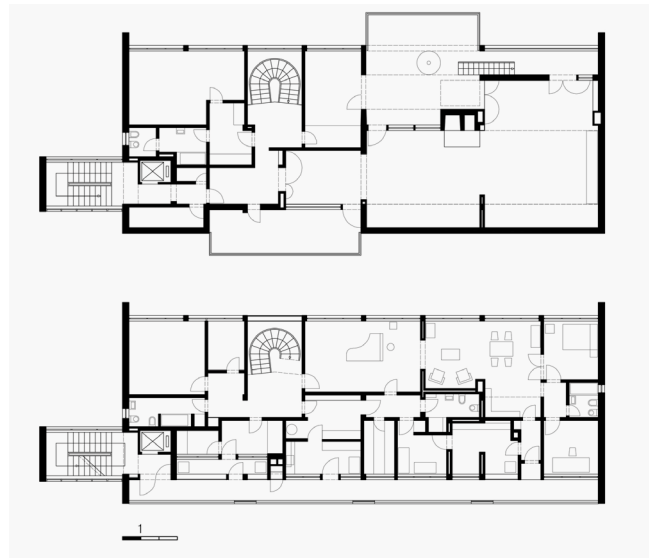
Currently, the second dwelling, originally on the lower floor, is an integral part of the duplex. This means that, apart from the initial program, described above, this dwelling now has another independent access from the north gallery and additional interior spaces: foyer, storage, living and dining room, bathroom, bedroom and office.

Among the main layout changes are the connection between the two living rooms, the bedroom and the common room, as well as the connection between the two storage areas (one of them was the kitchen in the previous dwelling). The bathroom was changed, not corresponding to the original, and one of the bedrooms is now an office. The wall between the kitchen and laundry room from the

01 José Carlos Loureiro, *Parnaso* building, 1955 - 1959, Oporto, Portugal. © Luciana Rocha, 2014.



02 José Carlos Loureiro, *Parnaso* building, 1955 - 1959, Oporto, Portugal. Duplex floor plans. From top to bottom: top floor; lower floor. Current situation. Drawings by Luciana Rocha based on drawings provided by Daniel Oliveira.



03 José Carlos Loureiro, *Parnaso* building, 1955 - 1959, Oporto, Portugal. Duplex floor plans. From top to bottom: top floor; lower floor. Original partitioning. Drawings by Luciana Rocha based on licence n° 687/1955, drawings from *Arquivo Histórico Municipal do Porto*.



04 Mário Bonito, *Ouro* building, 1951 - 1955, Oporto, Portugal. © Photo by Luciana Rocha, 2014.



05 Mário Bonito, *Ouro* building, 1951 - 1955, Oporto, Portugal. Floor plans. From left to right: original partitioning; current situation. Drawings by Luciana Rocha based on licence n° 568/1952, drawings from *Arquivo Histórico Municipal do Porto*.

06 Francisco Pereira da Costa, *D. Afonso V* building, 1953 - 1955, Oporto, Portugal. © Nuno Graça Moura, 2009.

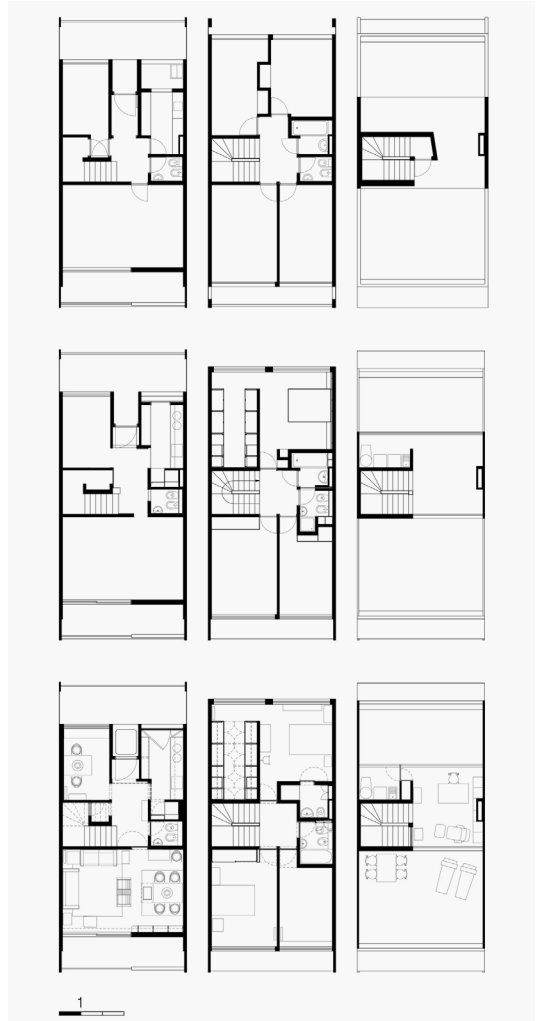


08 Francisco Pereira da Costa, *D. Afonso V* building, 1953 - 1955, Oporto, Portugal. Duplex. The Kitchen. Current situation. © Nuno Graça Moura, 2010.



09 Francisco Pereira da Costa, *D. Afonso V* building, 1953 - 1955, Oporto, Portugal. Duplex. The Kitchen. First intervention. © Nuno Graça Moura, 2009.

07 Francisco Pereira da Costa, *D. Afonso V* building, 1953 - 1955, Oporto, Portugal. Duplex floor plans. From top to bottom: original partitioning; first intervention; current situation. From left to right: first floor; second floor; third floor. Drawings by Luciana Rocha based on drawings provided by the architects Lourenço Rocchi and Nuno Graça Moura.



10 Francisco Pereira da Costa, *D. Afonso V* building, 1953 - 1955, Oporto, Portugal. Duplex. The Kitchen. Original situation. Similar dwelling in the same building that was used as a reference. © Nuno Graça Moura, 2009.

smaller dwelling no longer exists, and these rooms are now storage areas. This space was previously turned into a library, since the owner had a lack of space for books. In the kitchen and laundry, there are shelves and closets instead of the previous fixtures; in the bathroom, the sanitary equipment was completely replaced. From a technical point of view, there are alterations to the infrastructure of the bathroom and of the new storage rooms.

However, the identified changes were generally introduced in the smaller dwelling, which is located on the lower floor and that was linked to the duplex shortly after building. Changes have also been carried out as a consequence of this connection. This smaller area is also the space that is lived in. The remaining spaces on the lower and upper floors remain mostly original and authentic, although without a current function. It is important to note the preservation of the original features of this case study and the visible functional and spatial inadequacy to the current needs of the owner and inhabitant.

Ouro Building

Architect Mário Bonito (1921–1976), in collaboration with Rui Pimentel (1924) designed the *Ouro* building between 1951 and 1955. The authors, both members of O DAM³, experienced in this work the principles they consider significant for modern architecture. They were influenced by international architectural language such as that of Le Corbusier in his *Unité d'Habitation*.

In this case, the analysed dwelling is located next to the east entrance, on the 4th floor. It is a housing unit with reduced dimensions and a clear and functional spatial distribution. The entrance is located on the south, facing the central hall. The dwelling includes a kitchen with extension to a laundry area, a living room with an outside balcony, a bedroom facing north (*Rua Fernandes Tomás*) and one bathroom and two bedrooms placed along the access gallery, to the south. The relation between the dining/living room and the kitchen is through a servery, which defines the position of a table and, as a consequence, determines the organization of this central space. The lower height differentiates the distribution spaces (entrance hall and inner hall) from the other spaces. There are no other circulation spaces; therefore the spatial organization is optimized. It is worth noting the difference in height between the access gallery and the interior spaces, which ensures privacy in the spaces facing south.

This flat was recently changed by the owner. The most affected spaces are essentially the kitchen, the laundry room and the bathroom. The introduction of new domestic appliances,

such as a refrigerator, dishwasher and an electric stove, seem to be one of the major obstacles to the maintenance of the original kitchen, given the change in the appliances' conventional dimensions. The fixed cabinetry is changed as well as the water supply systems. In the laundry room, the installation of a washing machine also required technical changes such as new services. In the bathroom, the flooring was replaced with tiles and the finishing material on the walls was also partially changed. In addition, there are changes in the services and sanitary appliances, with the exception of the original bathtub.

The spatial organization remains original. However, there are several changes in the function/use of the spaces, which are usually adaptations to the current needs of the inhabitants. Of the three bedrooms, two are transformed into an office and storage/guest room. The common central space is the most used and serves the function of living room, dining room and office.

In this case, occasional interventions predominate, mainly related to service areas – kitchen, laundry and bathroom. These changes are a consequence of the essential adaptation to the current needs of domestic life, often to the detriment of authenticity.

D. Afonso V Building

The housing and commercial building *D. Afonso V* was designed by the architect Francisco Pereira da Costa (1923–?) between 1953 and 1955. The project was presented in an academic context, for the CODA⁴ in response to a real demand from the father of the architect.

The duplex (or triplex including the terrace) on *D. Afonso V* building tries to combine the intimacy of the individual house and the convenience of the collective housing. The architect Francisco Pereira da Costa used this argument in the supporting document on 2nd March 1953. In this case, the dwelling has two floors separating two distinct zones: day and night. The entrance level, on the lower floor, includes the service spaces and common areas (daytime). The entrance is set back in relation to the hallway, forming a transition space between the outside and the interior. The central hall establishes the relationship between the different spaces: kitchen/laundry, toilet, living/dining room, the upper access level and a small complementary room. The kitchen with laundry area and the office were located facing east, while west, the living/dining room, and the main common space, occupies the whole width of the module, and has a balcony facing the square. The service spaces such as the toilet, the access to the floor above and a small storage room are located in the centre of the house. The four bedrooms are located on the second floor — intimate area (night-

time) — two facing east and two facing west, with a central sanitary system that divides the bathroom and the toilet. Each house also has, according to the original project, a solarium on the terrace/roof.

This house was recently renovated by architect Nuno Graça Moura who is also its current owner and inhabitant. However, it is interesting to note that, when the house was purchased and this intervention was carried out, it had already been significantly modified by its previous owner. The house therefore went through two phases of transformation.

In the first phase, most interesting from the spatial point of view, was the re-sizing of the entrance hall, the removal of the laundry room and one of the bedrooms, the introduction of a storage space near the kitchen and a dressing room, and the reuse of the third floor — where the laundry and an additional space were located — that was closed following the renovation of the general building.

The architect started his design from a house already quite different from the original. Considering the spatial changes that took place between the original and the current version, it is relevant to underline the redefinition of the vestibule and entrance hall, the reorganization of the kitchen, the redefinition of a storage room, the elimination of one of the bedrooms, the extension of the second bathroom with a bath for common use, and the creation of an office and a laundry room on the third floor (terrace/roof).

The main goal of the renovation project was to adapt the house to the needs of the current inhabitants, who considered it essential to place a dressing room and a private bathroom in one of the bedrooms, by joining two individual bedrooms. Despite the identified transformations, which demonstrate the architect's awareness of the inhabitants needs, one can also notice the intention of "restoring the original in its proportions, scale, materials and details, on their environment"⁵.

An Interpretation

The analysis of the relationship between the preservation of authenticity and the changes resulting from the adaptation process to contemporary housing needs starts with the recognition of the main needs and the identification of the different levels of intervention.

The concept of authenticity is thoroughly explored in the Nara document, 1994⁶. More than just proposing a definition, this document aims to warn about the diversity of the cultural and heritage values involved in this issue. Herb Stovel, one of the drafters, highlights the conscious effort "to avoid imposing mechanistic formulae or standardized procedures in attempting to define or determine authenticity of

particular monuments and sites⁷⁷ and stresses the importance of respecting cultural diversity. According to the authors, it is crucial to identify the fundamental points that define the building character taking into account their specificity.

In this case, considering the heritage value of this architectural ensemble, the preservation of authenticity is understood as the conservation of the main spatial and technical characteristics, as well as the finishing materials. Through the spatial analysis, it is important to understand the transformations of the interior organization, from its use or from its configuration point-of-view. While the study of technical changes includes the identification of services, equipment and window frames, the study of finishes covers the identification of material changes (floors, walls and ceilings). Basing the analysis on these points it will be possible to define the extent of the intervention.

It is worth noting the maintenance of authenticity and spatial originality of the duplex located in the *Parnaso* building. Except for the area corresponding to the smaller dwelling later linked to the duplex – transformed and actually inhabited – the rest of the house has been only slightly changed with small repairs of installations, paint or finishes. There are significant pathologies and it is evident that the house is not adapted to the inhabitants' needs. Although the current owner and inhabitant has an awareness of the need for an urgent intervention and the will to intervene in a careful way, the dwelling remains obsolete.

The analysed dwelling in the *Ouro* building has changed significantly as a consequence of a moderate intervention carried out by the owner without architectural input. Apart from small repairs of installations, painting or finishes, there are repairs/renovations of finishing materials and changes in services and equipment. These occasional interventions partly pervert the original spatial authenticity. However, these changes improve the adaptation of the house to the inhabitants' new requirements.

The case study located in *D. Afonso V* building was the subject of a profound intervention by the current inhabitant, owner and architect. There are spatial alterations involving significant demolitions and reconstructions that express a response to spatial adaptation to new habits. However, the original identity of the dwelling is recovered by restoring the initial materials and by rebuilding the original joinery details, especially those of the interior openings. In this case, there is an awareness of the necessary adaptation of the dwelling to the new inhabitants and the expression of a careful intervention that aims to restore the original identity of the dwelling.

Final Considerations

The complete conservation of buildings ensures the authenticity of the spaces that were originally designed. However, it does not guarantee its timeless habitability, and can lead to obsolete spaces, which are inadequate to the needs of contemporary living. An example is the case study on the *Parnaso* building, mostly original but inappropriate to the needs of the users.

While a careful intervention is essential to ensure the renovation and reuse of these buildings, it should be noted that the main alterations are essentially to the equipment and services. The introduction of new domestic appliances seems to be the major obstacle to the maintenance of the original kitchen, given the change in the appliance's conventional dimensions. In the case of services, it is important to mention changes in water supply systems in bathrooms and kitchens/utility rooms, largely due to normal wear or malfunction of the previously existing system. In this case, there are two distinct interventions: a moderate intervention in the case study on *Ouro* building, with occasional alterations in terms of materials and equipment; a profound intervention in the duplex of *D. Afonso V*, a project previously thought and designed by an architect, that introduces essentially spatial transformations from its use and configuration point-of-view.

Generally speaking, a profound and irreversible intervention, with consequences in terms of spatial configuration (organization and interior distribution) is more intrusive than a moderate intervention, where changes to the finishes prevail. However, in this case, the participation of an architect seems to influence the quality of the solutions, and it can be said that the intervention in the *Ouro* building, although moderate, partially undermines the authenticity of the space. The changes to the finishing materials and equipment in the kitchen and bathroom include spatial modifications that go beyond the necessary. Likewise, in *D. Afonso V* building, the objective is to restore the original identity of the dwelling, so that the consequences of spatial transformations are controlled. In this way, questions arise that involve the owner's will, the user requirements and the participation of an architect.

In conclusion, it is essential to intervene for the renovation, reuse and adaptation of these buildings and it is possible to do it while preserving their originality/authenticity. However, this balance requires a careful analysis, which is based on the particular characteristics of each case. The intervention strategy may involve a demand for variety that takes advantage of the typological diversity and the response of the buildings. The most important

is to ensure the continuity of the values and materiality of the buildings. ■

Notes

- 1 Francisco Barata, *Transformação e Permanência na Habitação Portuense. A Forma da Cidade na Forma da Casa*, 2^a ed., Porto, FAUP publicações, 1999.
- 2 Ana Tostões, *Os Verdes Anos na Arquitectura Portuguesa dos Anos 50*, Porto, FAUP publicações, 1997 [1995]; Ana Tostões, *Cultura e Tecnologia na Arquitectura Moderna Portuguesa*, PhD thesis, Lisboa, IST–UTL, 2002.
- 3 Organization of Modern Architects (*Organização dos Arquitectos Modernos*).
- 4 Course for obtaining the diploma of Architect (*Concurso para a Obtenção do Diploma de Arquitecto*).
- 5 Nuno Graça Moura, explanatory text for the renovation project in the dwelling on *Praça D. Afonso V* building in www.nunogracamoura.com.
- 6 The Nara Document on Authenticity was drafted by the 45 participants at the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention, held at Nara, Japan, from 1–6 November 1994, at the invitation of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (Government of Japan) and the Nara Prefecture. The Agency organized the Nara Conference in cooperation with UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS.
- 7 Herb Stovel, *The Nara Document on Authenticity*, Nara, UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, 1994.

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