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The role of shopping malls in shaping the Lisbon Metropolitan Area: The Amoreiras Shopping Center case study

Abstract

The Amoreiras Shopping Center (Tomás Taveira, inaugurated in 1985) is one of the most relevant case studies for the understanding of the shopping center phenomenon in the Lisbon region. One of the first major examples of this typology in Portugal, the Amoreiras mark the moment when large shopping centers materialize the fundamental space for the development of a consumer society, made possible due to the stabilization of the country in the post-revolution period of the 1980s.

This communication is part of a larger investigation program proposed for a Ph.D. in Architecture and Urbanism, with the provisional title *Urban (re)Centralization – The role of shopping malls in shaping the Lisbon Metropolitan Area: between Centro Comercial da Portela and Dolce Vita Tejo*. The proposed dissertation assumes the shopping center as an essential element in the regional planning of the metropolitan territories, and also as a potential regenerator of depressed urban and suburban areas.

Keywords: Shopping Malls; Amoreiras Shopping Center; Tomás Taveira; Lisbon Metropolitan Area; Amoreiras Tower Complex.

Defining the Study Object

This paper aims to be a first step in a larger study concerning the role of shopping centers in consolidating the urban structure of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. In a primary phase we have identified several types of shopping facilities, from the early ones of the late 1960s and early 1970s – small-scale, urban-based, often located in the ground floor and basements of residential or office buildings – to the later ones of the 21st century – large-scale, regional-based, and primarily placed midway between large suburban areas.

We believe that commercial areas in the suburban expansions, as well as in the Lisbon downtown area, have played a crucial role in shaping, not only the urban structure in itself, but also the pattern of living of the diverse populations that live and work in the city or under its influence. We have opted to broadly limit our research between two great landmarks in the evolution of shopping malls in the Lisbon region (Fig 1) *Centro Comercial da Portela* (Fernando Silva, Portela Urbanization, 1975) and *Dolce Vita Tejo* (Promontório, Amadora, 2004-09).



FIG 1 Above: Fernando Silva, *Centro Comercial da Portela* [source: <<http://www.bing.com/maps/>>].

Below: Promontório, *Dolce Vita Tejo*

[source: http://www.promontorio.net/userfiles/projects_more/pdf/dolce_vita_tejo.pdf].

This paper concerns a particular case study that is somewhat original in this region – the Amoreiras Tower Complex (Tomás Taveira, 1980-86, Fig 2) –, and that stands out as a relatively uncommon large multifunctional typology – a “modern” podium shopping-mall with office and apartment blocks on top with post-modern imagery – with a privileged location.



FIG. 2 Tomás Taveira, Amoreiras Tower Complex (axonometric drawing) [source: Taveira 2002: 23]

The shopping center phenomenon is clearly interconnected with the suburbanization sprawl of the city, which gained enormous strength in the late 1960s and during the next decades. This process was triggered by several factors. Firstly, there was an urgent need for housing to accommodate thousands of migrants from the poor rural areas of the country and later, following the April Revolution of 1974, equally numerous citizens from the former Portuguese colonies, especially Angola and Mozambique. These needs weren't sufficiently met by the central state, and an opportunity was opened for real-estate promoters to shape both the center as well as the new cities.

Other factors were important for the transition – from the cities' historic center to the periphery – of the housing paradigm in the Lisbon area (Domingues, cit. in Ferreira,

2010: 18). These included the rise of new job types (especially in the services sector); the increase in the income level of a large part of the population, which moved towards a middle-class standard; the increase in car ownership and in car-oriented infra-structure; the transformation in the families' lifestyle (including consuming habits) and composition (fewer members per household); and the alteration in the cultural references that, with the developers marketing strategies, helped to valorize the life in the suburbs and to vilify the life in the city.

With an absent, poorly designed or unfulfilled urban planning framework – both locally as well as regionally –, the promoters were virtually free to determine the conditions and features of the big suburban ventures. Almost all these developments share the same principles. They occupy large areas and are car-based – taking advantage of the continuous state investment on new, fast-traffic roads, which permit daily commuting with the job areas, mainly the central city –; focused on housing – with virtually the only jobs locally available being in small commerce –; and almost always deficient in public space quality and proximity services, such as primary schools or healthcare facilities, which came later on. The shopping mall, on the other hand, was sometimes incorporated in the initial urbanization plan, as it was the only profitable facility and a potential generator of a new urban centrality (Ferreira, 2010: 68).

This pursuit for a frequently inexistent or unsatisfactory centrality is also one of the motivations for studying the role that shopping malls played in the Lisbon region's structure in the past forty years. The understanding of the evolution of this typology, of its merits and deficiencies, of the successful and failed ventures, and of the interrelation between commercial and housing zones, it's in our opinion essential to formulate new ideas for recovering a sense of place and identity, and to reinforce the quality and pleasantness of the public spaces, especially in the so called suburban landscape.

Between Centro Comercial da Portela and Dolce Vita Tejo

The Portela Urbanization (1960-79) was one of the first and biggest endeavors of this kind in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, and is seen as a precursor in this typology (Ferreira, 2010). Entirely funded by private capital, the urbanization is assumed as a satellite city by the architect responsible for its design – Fernando Silva (1914-83), a pragmatic architect with strong convictions in the modern ideals and highly focused in providing a better quality of life through urban design.

Silva's strategy was firmly rooted in the Athens Charter (1933, published in 1943): the rectilinear buildings are implanted perpendicularly to the main streets, surrounded by green public areas and frequently elevated from the ground with *pilotis*, allowing free passage underneath; the urban structure follows a clear pattern with emphasis in hierarchy of circulation, functional zoning, typological repetition, scale variation and a cohesive urban image.

The center of the neighborhood was reserved for the public facilities – which were mostly built after the housing units were completed –, to serve an estimated population of 18.500 inhabitants. These included a large urban park, schools, playgrounds, football fields, tennis courts, gymnasiums, swimming pools and a church. The commercial services were to be delivered by a sizeable central shopping mall and four smaller ones. Only the central one was built, with project also by Fernando Silva (Coelho, 2010: 46).

The *Centro Comercial da Portela* was designed to serve as a meeting point for the neighborhood population and thus help promoting a sense of community and place usually absent from this kind of urban developments. Its form – a low cylindrical building with a rectilinear office and apartment tower emerging in its northern side – and position are also important in providing a major orientation point among the homogeneous housing blocks. Although it has served in the beginning as a shopping center that attracted consumers from a larger area – due to its big size (for that period) and to the lack of this kind of buildings –, it is now essentially a local equipment, as it really was its initial function.

The *Dolce Vita Tejo*, on the other hand, starts from a very different set of principles. It is referenced as a “supra-regional shopping center”, in other words, a commercial equipment with a metropolitan catchment area that is independent of its immediate urban surroundings, as long as it is conveniently accessible by a complete net of fast-traffic roads, allowing for visitors to comfortably cover 20km or more to visit the shopping center – in itself the main attraction.

This strategy largely ignores the potential of the shopping center to provide a sense of identity to the suburban areas in its vicinity. However, the architects – of Promontório – tried to contribute to solve the lacking centrality of the surrounding urban sprawl, through the creation of a covered “public” square in the private enterprise. According to architect Paulo Martins Barata, this architectural space indeed creates «*a public environment aggregative of a potential community*» that could be informally created through the participation in the numerous successful events that take place there. The notion that, as Martins Barata puts it, «*the “shopping” typology has come here to stay and (...) occupies today a key part in the*

habits of the developed countries' communities» (Barata, 2013: 194-197) is critical to change the focus of research in this multidisciplinary field. Mostly determined by factors out of the architect's hand, the shopping center project can, through architectural devices – such as *Dolce Vita's* covered square –, contribute to a better urbanity and sense of place, in the suburbs – that often lack quality public spaces – as well as in the city center – to enhance the urban vitality of some “depressed” areas.

The Amoreiras Tower Complex

The city center was also in the aim of the promoters' land speculation ventures. With the middle and upper classes appeal for a different lifestyle in the suburbs – one that allowed having “the best of both worlds” –, and many degraded residential buildings in the old neighborhoods, the way to the tertiarization of the central districts was open. This process was also essential to another kind of shopping mall, more urban-oriented and with a strong focus on offices and/or housing in addition to the shopping area. The present case study – the Amoreiras Tower Complex, namely its shopping area (inaugurated in 1985) – can be broadly included in this last category, although its location and size aims for a simultaneous local and regional catchment area. Thus, it stands somewhat midway between the urban/city typology and the suburban/regional one.



FIG 3 Tomás Taveira, Amoreiras Tower Complex (location in the Lisbon region) [source: Carta Militar de Portugal, série M888, folha 431, Lisboa, 2009]

The shopping center included in the complex was the first major business of this kind in the country. Its commercial and marketing success was instantaneous, due to its size, innovative concept, easy accessibility and a striking and unusual architectural image, which generated praise and criticism among the Portuguese society. Today, thanks to a solid critical mass built over the years, it still retains part of that initial “aura”. Significantly, a major interior refurbishment project was only initiated in 2007 – when the mall was already 22 years old –, to adapt it to a growing target market: luxury goods consumers.

Pedro Appleton, also of Promontório and responsible for the refurbishment project, reflects on the success of the Amoreiras and points out its location (Fig. 3) – in an «expectant “noteworthy node”, in an “entrance”, similar to what happens in other European cities, as Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, Madrid 2 [La Vaguada] in Madrid, Les Halles in Paris, etc.» (Appleton, 2013) – as its principal strength. It was built in the former site of the Lisbon Electric Tramways, property of the Rothschild Group, the developer of the complex (together with three Portuguese companies). It stands on the edge of the consolidated city, where the old farming land gave way to the 18th century Amoreiras neighborhood, which meets in this hilltop the 19th century grid – *Avenidas Novas* – that extends from the *Marquês de Pombal* Square in the east (Dias, 1990: 81-85). In the 1930s and early 1940s – the *Estado Novo* “golden” period – a great public works campaign left deep marks in the city of Lisbon and its surroundings. One of these projects, the Lisbon-Cascais highway, profoundly changed the region, and opened a new “door” to the city – in the Amoreiras area –, through the *Duarte Pacheco* viaduct (1941), named after the main politician and driving force of these public works.

As we can see, the location of the complex was a key factor for its success. It is easy to reach by car from the city center as well as from the suburbs – via the A5 highway that connects Lisbon with traditionally wealthy towns such as Estoril and Cascais. Also, this location was ideal for local costumers to access by foot – although the multi-lane roads that encircle the complex were never really pedestrian friendly –, benefiting from the proximity of the nearby middle and upper-middle class residential neighborhood of *Campo de Ourique*. The promoters took a peripheral passage zone and transformed it in a destination by itself.

Other factor for the early success of the shopping center – and that even today provides a solid anchor to it – was clearly the multifunctional character of the complex. Relatively far from the more consolidated urban framework of the capital, the Amoreiras aimed to create a “city within a city” – actually an early slogan of the mall –, through three office towers with 16 floors each – with about 1100 square

meters of usable area per floor – and three housing blocks that comprise 115 luxury flats. In addition to the two stories of shopping mall at street-level, there were incorporated four underground levels for storage and parking for residents, workers and customers. This scenario created an interconnected dynamic that was reinforced with the construction in the surrounding area of numerous other developments including hotels, high-end housing and office buildings. The commercial and business hub character of the zone generates high amounts of car and pedestrian traffic, and it has become a public transportation terminal – of buses and taxis – for both inner and outer city routes.

The Architectural Project – Background

The controversial post-modern architectural image of the Amoreiras complex was, as Appleton puts it, its best marketing advantage. Symbiotic with the consumer society – then emerging in Portugal –, the post-modernist architecture trend that fused *pop* culture, neoclassicist and *kitsch* elements in a colorful, vibrant way was the style that shopping malls needed to convert the initial small and usually more sophisticated commercial galleries into the enormous, mass-appealing, image-focused complexes that shaped the urban development of many cities in the last quarter of the 20th century, and in even more recent times.

The architectural project of the Amoreiras was conditioned by an earlier plan – approved by the Lisbon City Council in 1979 – that defined the general form, the multifunctional character, the location of the various blocks on top of the podium, the urban relation with the surrounding area and some of the volumetric characteristics, leaving for architect Tomás Taveira (b. 1938) the detailing and the production of the architectural and urban image (Taveira, 1985: 24). The reading of the descriptive document (Taveira, 1981), signed by the architect, reveals the position that was assumed in the further design of the complex. The project was developed by Taveira (with collaboration by Raquel Coutinho) with the objective of providing it with the *«necessary coherence so that Lisbon will obtain a unique urban complex, at the closing of the century»*. The architect develops in this document a small essay-like text that contextualizes this and other works of his office at the time, all linked together by his post-modern principles.

Although mentioning the urbanization plan as *«overly rigid»*, Taveira states his commitment in approaching the project in a contemporary way, with the *«modeling of an image more in accordance with the values that have been developed in the last 15*

years», that is, from the 1960s onward. *«In fact the age of the “International Style” is over, (...) and a new dimension of relationship with the “PLACE” [is emerging], with the site in physical terms and in terms of cultural overload»*. Keeping some distance from the high-tech trends, Taveira sustains that *«we haven’t sought a simple image of progress, we didn’t design the buildings so that they were an affirmation of technology, but [in such a way that] they are placed in the position to affirm a possible architectonic culture for our country and for Lisbon in particular»*. Through a *«universe of forms, suggestions, images, colors and lights that allow for a extension of memories»*, Taveira unites his early influences – that we will explore later on – with his post-modernist approach that includes such things as neo-classicist elements to counter the International Style modernism – *«The architectonic neo-classicism is like the dissolution of the idea of simple, direct, utilitarian and permissive architecture to give way to the reinvention of a complex universe, rich in contradictions and where one can glimpse the pulse of history»*.

It is easier to frame the architectural image of the Amoreiras complex if we look at Taveira’s career before 1980. As Jorge Figueira writes, *«the key-moment is the 1960s and the visits to London [in 1966] by Taveira, where he contacts with the pop culture, later evident in the Valentim de Carvalho Shop, in Cascais, in the article The Lettering in the magazine Arquitectura, or in the book Discurso da Cidade [Discourse of the City]»* (Figueira, 2011: 127). Before assuming a stronger pop position (from 1973 onwards), Taveira is seduced by New Brutalism, especially through Reyner Banham’s 1966 book – *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*. The work of architects like Alison (1928-93) and Peter (1923-2003) Smithson, Louis Kahn (1901-74), Paul Rudolph (1918-97) and especially James Stirling (1926-92) had great influence in Taveira’s early work as project architect in Atelier Conceição Silva, the biggest architectural office of its time in Portugal, where Taveira worked between 1965 and 1971.

Buildings like the *Hotel da Balaia* complex in the Algarve, comprising a hotel (1965-67), apartments (1966-69) and villas (1966) combine the Anglo-Saxon New Brutalism with Mediterranean influences by architects such as Josep Antoni Coderch (1913-84) and Carlo Scarpa (1906-78). Others like the Valentim de Carvalho Record Plant (1968-70) or the Alfragide Towers (1968-74), both in the Lisbon region, directly quote the University of Leicester Engineering Building (with James Gowan, Leicester, 1959-63). This last building was even the theme of a critical analysis by Taveira for his Professor tender lesson in Lisbon School of Architecture (Taveira, 1975).

The two most fundamental works of this time that are later reflected in the Amoreiras project are Taveira’s initial incursions in retail architecture (Fig 4): the Valentim the Carvalho Record Shop (Cascais, 1969-70) and the Castil Building (Lisbon,

1967-72). They are results of the «*itinerary of the construction of (...) [Taveira's] imaginative/cultural infra-structure. On the one hand, "history"; on the other hand, pop; on yet another, "industry", with Stirling, new-brutalism and the Smithsons; the cinema and its lesson of light... These have become my anchors for practicing the profession*» (Figueira, 2011: 144). The record shop combines historical forms – renaissance and baroque – in a neoplastic way, and is built with painted concrete – merging New Brutalism with *pop* art. It is assumed as a total artwork and as an urban object, a product of "talking architecture" – with contributions by Rolando Sá Nogueira (painter, 1921-2002) and Herberto Helder (poet, b. 1930). It is also manifest of the importance Taveira has given to other two influential books of 1966: Aldo Rossi's *The Architecture of the City* and Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*.



FIG 4 Above: Atelier Conceição Silva, Valentim de Carvalho Record Shop [source: <<http://www.panoramio.com/photo/69854117>>]. Below: Atelier Conceição Silva, Castil Building [source: author's photo].

The Castil Building stands as an example of the transitory phase of shopping malls: from the ground and basement levels to the building as a whole, with a unified image, with emphasis on graphic design and communication, and a strong urban

presence. Referred as «*the first big modern shopping center in the capital*» (Gomes, 1995: 556), the Castil it is nonetheless primarily a «*late modern*» (Taveira, 1985: 30) office building, but the three lower floors comprise shops and a bank branch (originally a cinema), and there are four underground levels for parking and storage. In a busy, central tertiary zone, the street corner was resolved with an architectural object that imposes its cosmopolitan atmosphere.

Although diluting the transition between the inside and the outside, through the extensive use of glass, the focus of the shopping area is in the interior space. The then usual inner space of shopping galleries – with, for today's standards, low, narrow, dark and labyrinthic corridors, as well as small shops – is broken by a three-story atrium with a sculptural staircase and an information desk that reinforces the common management and the centralized organization of the mall. This concept is intensified with the attention given to constructive details and interior/graphic design, areas where Conceição Silva's office was exceptional.

In this works we can also see early attempts to experiment with multifunctional typologies to provide solutions to the new urban reality, both in the consolidated orthogonal grid – with the Castil Building (offices, shopping mall, parking) – as well as in the emergent suburban landscape – in Alfragide (three apartment towers united at the bottom by a low volume housing the shopping and civic center, with swimming pools, gardens and parking). Francisco Conceição Silva himself acted as developer in these projects, and in both cases it was decided to underline the public character of the complexes with sculptures – by artist Fernando Conduto (b. 1937) – as if stressing the idea that a multifunctional program needed public art to establish an immediate landmark, opening the way for a long-lasting identity and a commercial-driven appeal via its distinctiveness. The building does not try to be “contextualist”; it tries to comply to its program with the maximum efficiency, disregarding its immediate “physical” surroundings. “Context” is, in this building and in most of Taveira's work, of *cultural* rather than *material* nature. Taveira will return to this and other typological studies in the 1980: the roots of the Amoreiras Complex, despite the architect's evolution in terms of style, clearly go back to this earlier projects (Gomes, 1995: 556).

Another decisive moment takes place in 1972 when Taveira travels to the United States to gather inspiration for his Professor tender written dissertation, later published as *Discourse of the City* in 1974. There he contacts first-hand with the initial ideas that would form the theoretical basis of post-modernist architecture. He is greatly influenced by Venturi's second book *Learning from Las Vegas* (with Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, 1972, revised in 1977), and travels to that city to «*extract a libertarian influence far beyond the reductive vision of kitsch*» (Figueira,

2011: 147). The portrait of the “Strip” systems and its “popular” architecture, based on symbolism and on everyday culture, and including ornament and signage as an operative part of the buildings’ functions, had a great effect on Taveira’s formulation of “pop architecture”: *«the consecration of popular objects, images and ideas (...), in the sense of being part of the imaginary of certain social groups or of the society as a whole; transforming those images in architecture or any other art»* (Figueira, 2011: 149). Taveira’s book analyses authors such as Kevin Lynch – *The Image of the City* (1960) –, Gordon Cullen – *Townscape* (1961) – and Christopher Alexander – *A city is not a tree* (1965) – and uses a diverse range of references, including works by Archigram and the Japanese Metabolism movement. In the book it is argued that, from the 1960s onward and *«for the first time the architectural territory is understood, not as being related to the production of the “object” – the house – but as an attempt to organize itself as part of a great ambition (...) – establishing the continuity between: regional planning, urban planning, city planning and building planning, and all of them integrated in the irreducible process of the consumer society (...) – a phenomenon to be assumed within the new coordinates of the civilization of the image – of information, and nonetheless, of the democratization of the urban space»* (Taveira, 1974: 23).

According to Taveira, for the understanding of the contemporary city, the architect must be able to comprehend the city in all its aspects – not only in terms of form/function relation as present in the modern city –, using critical analysis in order to meet *«the needs of the community in the physical, psychological, functional and economical levels»* (Taveira, 1974: 24). Writing extensively about the historic cities and the idea of center, he defends the development of *«Urban Renewal as an urgent measure to assure the permanence of cultural values and the continuity of those [degraded] areas in relation to the evolution of the City»* (Taveira, 1974: 34). Displaying the Smithsons’ project of *The Economist* (London, 1964), Taveira shows his position regarding this matter: *«the need to revitalize the central areas requires the search for the incorporation of progress in the idea of the urban spaces’ historic evolution, seeking an environmental integration, which does not exclude the violent and bold intervention»* (Taveira, 1974: 52).

In terms of urban layout, and in line with the revisionist conceptions of the post-war period, Taveira proposes the return to the simple elements of the traditional city: streets, squares and city blocks. About streets, he writes that they are *«the major city entity, the most correct urban element in the sense of translating the capacity of movement – the essence of being in a city – and [through the presence of signs, they are endowed with] “a character”, far beyond any function»* (Taveira, 1974: 57). Streets must *«reacquire its old vitality, (...) compensate in terms of space what they contain in*

terms of information, (...) reacquire its old didactical capacity and not only exist as modern urban planning understands them, as transitory and ephemeral connections or passages» (Taveira, 1974: 56).

Towards the end of *Discourse of the City*, Taveira shows concerns with what he calls the inadequacy of the historic centers – namely in Lisbon – in absorbing the new uses related with the tertiary and quaternary sectors. Although considering that the old and/or the historic center *«shouldn't remain mute and static, and should instead be included in the daily practice of living the city»* (Taveira, 1974: 231), the architect proposes the creation of another center, alternative and complementary, that allows to decentralize the necessary uses. In fact, Lisbon and its metropolitan region have, from the late 1980 onward, gradually developed into a polycentric structure – not always in the most organized or well-designed way, but with some positive results –, without losing the dynamics of its historic center – essentially due to tourism and commercial features, but lacking urgently in urban rehabilitation for some population recovery (Rodrigues, 2010: 77). With some of his projects, Taveira would have the opportunity to participate in this decentralization process and in the creation of new centers, of diverse sizes and uses.

Other sources for Taveira's work in the 1980s had begun to materialize in the United States, to where the architect went again in 1977-78 to participate in postgraduate studies of Urban and Regional Planning in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Charles Jencks (b. 1939) designated the emerging style as “post-modern classicism” and was the main divulgator of the movement through influential books such as *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (1977). Paulo Varela Gomes concisely describes the scenario found by Taveira there: *«in 1977, it was under construction in New Orleans a monumental fountain in Piazza d'Italia designed by architect Charles Moore [1925-93] and in the following year began the work on the AT&T headquarters in New York, by Philip Johnson (...). Moore's fountain is a baroque exercise with historic forms (pediments, columns and curvilinear entablatures) and modern materials – including neon lights. Johnson's building is a skyscraper that repeats the triple division (base, shaft and capital) of Sullivan's buildings (...), adding in the top a broken pediment»* (Gomes, 1995: 567).

Other influential buildings of this time were causing controversy in architectural circles and even in civil society – because these were buildings that had noticeable civic and urban concerns, and a strong emphasis on public image, apparent in the highly “figurative” elevations –, with strong opinions from both supporters and detractors. Works like the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (1977-1983), by James Stirling, and the Portland Building (1980-82), by Michael Graves (b. 1934), are *«key-moments in the*

consolidation of post-modernism» (Figueira, 2009: 171). The new style was theoretical anchored in *«antimodernist speeches based on an extrapolation of Venturi's and Rossi's arguments that led to assert the right of architecture to monumentality and irony (...), the right to historical forms (and to the end of history), [and] to communication»* (Gomes, 1995: 567).

When Taveira returned to Portugal and begun the work on the Amoreiras project (1980), he was also dedicated in spreading the post-modern "word". He promoted a series of conferences (1982-83) in the Lisbon School of Architecture, with guest lecturers such as Maurice Culot (b. 1937), Leon Krier (b. 1946), Charles Jencks, Steven Izenour (1940-2001), Michael Graves, Peter Eisenman (b. 1932) and Edward Jones (b. 1939). Moreover, throughout the 1980s, Taveira had a significant presence in both the national architectural press and the general press, announcing to a broad audience that *«Modern Architecture is dead and Post-Modern Architecture is born!»* (Taveira, 1982: 22-23). In fact, Taveira was probably the first Portuguese "starchitect" due to the mediatization of his works and of himself: *«It was with Taveira that the word "architect" has ceased to be a designation of obscure meaning in Portugal»* (Gomes, 1995: 570). Taveira himself related his experience abroad and the effect that that episode caused on him:

«During the 1970s I went to the United States for the first time, on a grand tour. I discovered that the attitude towards architecture was more flexible, freer in Las Vegas and Los Angeles. When Post-Modernism emerged, I was totally open to make my affirmation in Portugal as a different architect. I brought back some certainties in my luggage: one was that history would have to play a new part in our life as artists, that colour should return to the cities with architecture as a support; that a certain sense of place and anthropological culture would frame our life and our professional thought and finally that imagination should be free or at least not imprisoned as much as it is today by codes or prejudice. I'm convinced for myself that architecture must be, beyond everything, art: provoking emotion, the controversial, the contradictory. It is a public art, with a certain kind of glamour, a certain kind of excitement» (Taveira, 2002: 18).

A previous experience that had direct consequences in the approach to the Amoreiras Shopping Center was Taveira's project of the Olaias Complex (Lisbon, started in 1972, Fig 5), a multifunctional, privately-funded district including housing, a shopping mall, offices, a hotel, a sports and leisure club and, more recently, a subway station (1998). This development is referred by Geoffrey Broadbent as *«Taveira's test bed»* (Broadbent, 1994: 8). In fact, the time it took to complete the project as a whole

allowed for (essentially) esthetical experiments, combining Taveira's various references, from New Brutalism to New Classicism. The shopping mall (now named Olaias Plaza) was then an essential element in meeting the daily needs of the residents in and around the neighborhood. Positioned in a longitudinal direction, it *«is modeled up and into the third dimension with Taveiran roof-lanterns for the control of light, whilst the entrance to the Mall is by a semi-circular colonnade, with pediments, and (...) Las Vegas neon»* (Broadbent, 1994: 8). Taveira's previous experiments are here synthetized *«in an urban scale, with complexity and great decorative effect»* (Figueira, 2009: 422). Jorge Figueira summarizes the importance of this complex in later works: *«the populist explosion of an architecture that wants to animate the city, that wants to create an imaginary city that will be in the 1980s the center of the post-modernist discourse assumed by Taveira, is already sketched here»* (Figueira, 2009: 422).

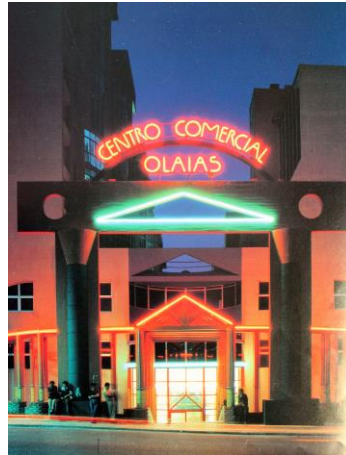


FIG 5 Tomás Taveira, *Centro Comercial das Olaias* (front entrance) [source: Taveira 1990: 92]

The Amoreiras Shopping Center

Many of the concerns addressed by Taveira from the 1960s onward would be consubstantiated in the Amoreiras project. As we have mentioned, the basic features of the complex were already defined in an earlier plan, approved by the municipalities, and designed by Gefel (now named Reply and part of the Focus Group). This plan was only schematic, but defined the podium option, the position of the three office towers and of the housing blocks (Fig 6). Taveira then developed the urban-

architectonic image and detailed the complex. In a first attempt, the architect completely maintained the volumetric solution, only altering its “skin”, towards a neoclassicist imagery – in what could be seen as a continuation of the experiments initiated in the nearby Satellite Office Building (1972-82) – a compromise *«midway between the neo-classical, late-Modern, and Pop»* (Broadbent, 1994: 32). During the development of this design, Taveira opted to transform the office towers – previously in a more or less “T” shape – in more notable buildings (Taveira, 1985: 24).

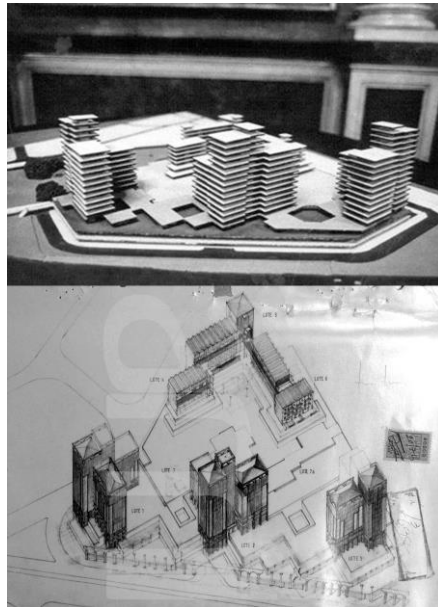


FIG 6 Above: Gefel, Amoreiras Tower Complex (initial plan) [source: < <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=910888&page=3>>]. Below: Taveira's early detailing of the complex [source: Arquivo da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa: n. ° de Obra 60684].

According to the architect, the Amoreiras project could only be produced in Lisbon and in that period. He positions himself against the city produced by the Modern Movement, of which he identifies its principles, causative of what he considers the boring, repetitive and non-friendly modern buildings: *«annulment of ornament and (...) decoration; absolute subordination of form to function; purity in the use of materials; assumption of the idea of progress as a democratic one; serial production as something that expresses that democracy; cut with the historic continuity (Bauhaus)»* (Taveira, 1985: 26).

To this scenario, Taveira responds with some of the post-modern approaches that architects from the 1960s onward developed to endow the city of an identity and vitality they considered lost: «*from the Cultural Anthropology, (...) the idea of “Genius Loci” (...); the “Neo Rationalism” inspired in the 1920s architecture and in the reading of the city before World War II; (...) a more “folk” position [that leads to a meditation] of the spatial forms and organization of certain regions (Venturi) stimulating in this way the idea of context; (...) [and other idea] based in History and in the restoration of bonds with the past, generating an architecture now “known” as neo-classic*» (Taveira, 1985: 27).

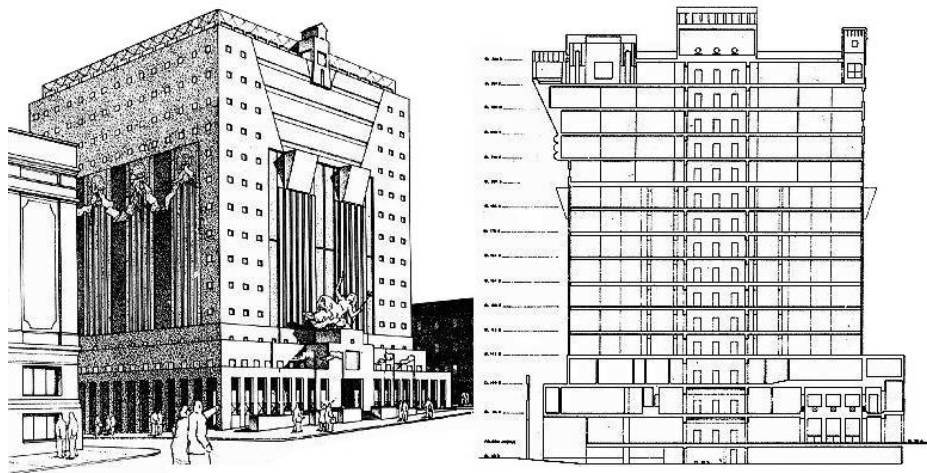


FIG 7 Michael Graves, Portland Building (perspective and section) [source: <http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Portland_Building.html>].

The whole project is thus formulated in relation to the “Spirit of the Place” from the point of view of Cultural Anthropology, regarding Lisbon as an essentially medieval city, to which the architect answers with multiple references: «*the three office towers have an anthropomorphic design (pure neo-classicism); the ones at the edges resemble warriors (they are evidently masculine!), the central one a dame (also evidently feminine), while the general image concerns the medieval towers! The great myth of the middle age is then consummated – the warriors defending their dame!*» (Taveira, 1985: 27). Although substantially different – especially in the materiality of its “skin” –, the previously referred Portland Building seems to have had a noticeable influence in the Amoreiras towers, not only in its volumetry and tripartite division – Graves, like

Taveira, «*very much believe[d] in the tripartite arrangement of base, body and head to buildings*» (Arehart, 2012) – but also in its urban insertion and street-level arcade design (Fig 7). Some of Michael Graves' considerations on the Portland can similarly be said about some features of the Amoreiras project, and they are reflections of a certain post-modern idea to reincorporate architecture in continuity with the urban fabric, as in the traditional city:

«I wanted to make an urban building. In opposition to let's say the Orbanco building (currently Congress Center) across the street, which for me is not an urban building, it's a stand-alone building and it could be built out in the desert, and it wouldn't make any difference. Because its ground level is not pedestrian friendly and I wanted to make something that people could use at the ground level. (...) That's why we have a loggia around three sides of our building» (Arehart, 2012).

With the same kind of concerns, Taveira chooses to circle the lot with an arched arcade, which acts as a memory of the 18th century aqueduct that crosses the valley below. With this element, the architect gives unity to the complex and provides transitional – enclosed and open – spaces for access to the various functions and to circulate around the base. It is also, as we have said, an attempt to restore the relation with History: *«In the Amoreiras, I created an artificial spirit of the place, a ruin, an aqueduct that "sacralized" the site of intervention around the lot, and that destroyed the "Modern" side of the podium»* (Taveira, 1985: 35). It again echoes some of the options of the Portland Building; as Graves says, *«I think it's important that when we walk in the city, that we are part of the city, that the buildings of the city speak back to us»* (Arehart, 2012).

Other classical archetypes are reinterpreted throughout the buildings. In the apartment blocks, for example, a simple arrangement is improved with the presence of a "bourgeois" element, the bow-windows: *«the late afternoon nooks of the living rooms and the study areas of the bedrooms that result in the exterior as glass "columns"»* (Taveira, 1985: 35) that have visual affinities with works such as Ricardo Bofill's (b. 1939) monumental "baroque" housing blocks in Marne-la-Vallée (1978-83). Other elements from past architecture help to compose and unify the exterior volumes of the complex: "void" pediments top the glass curtain walls of the office towers, and a medievalist crowning composes the housing blocks top. The whole project exterior is also unified by vibrant colors – one of the most polemic aspects at the time of its inauguration – that also "contaminate" the interiors. Color is used by Taveira as pop device (Figueira, 2009: 435), and as a *«provocation to the Modern*

Movement theories that proposed the purity and truth of the materials above everything else. Egypt, Greece, Rome, were colorful (...). Color is for me, today, nothing more than a counterforce in relation to the constraints of the Modern Movement» (Taveira, 1985: 35).

As we have tried to explain, through the brief review of Taveira's career before 1980, the architectural success of the Amoreiras Shopping Center is not only related to its location and to the qualities of its interior design, but also to the presence of the complex in the city – a megastructure that forever altered the skyline of Lisbon –, which *«captured the public's imagination in a spectacular way»* (Broadbent, 1990: 9). As Jorge Figueira says, *«the Amoreiras are a mediatic, cultural and commercial phenomenon»* (Figueira, 2009: 265).

According to Figueira, the 1980s in Portugal are marked by the combination between the post-revolutionary anxieties and democratic desires – that included a bigger diffusion of popular and mass culture as well as the progressive installment of a consumerist model – and the post-modernist stance that accelerates, underlines and hyperbolizes these dramatic changes in the Portuguese society (Gomes/Figueira/Baía, 2012: 17). In his sense, the Amoreiras – and particularly its shopping center – is a symbol of the new phase in the country, where the newfound prosperity – reinforced by the integration of Portugal in the European Economic Community (1986) that was the culmination of an integration process initiated decades earlier –, the enlargement of the middle class and a general increase in the population's purchasing power, meant that these big retail complexes were then viable. The Amoreiras Shopping Center attends to the emergent economic and sociocultural needs:

«In its program, form and detail [the Amoreiras] embodies an idea of luxury, of consumption, of body cult and even of exhibitionism that the Portuguese society aspires for in the post-revolutionary context. The shopping center model, until then an enclosed and dark space, gains here a glam resonance, a shiny look, and a spatiality where color is the protagonist. From the Amoreiras on, shopping centers began to take into account natural light, benefit from color and textured surfaces: understanding decoration as an element of architectonic "seduction"; more perennially, to privilege the qualities of the circulation and walking spaces» (Figueira, 2009: 434).

The Amoreiras Shopping Center occupies the majority of the two street levels of the triangular podium, which measures approximately 200 meters in each side. It currently has 238 stores, six of which are anchor stores, comprising 26.000 sq m of

Gross Leasable Area (GLA) in a total of 45.000 sq m of Gross Floor Area (GFA). The two basement levels for public car park have 900 parking spaces, and its manager company boasts, nowadays, 11 million visitors per year.

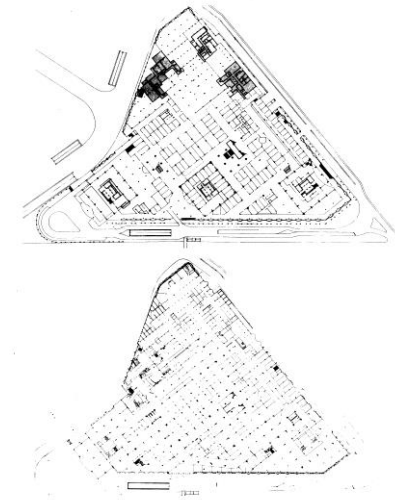


FIG 8 Tomás Taveira, Amoreiras Shopping Center (above: first floor; below: second floor) [source: Fernandes/Dias 1985: 27].

Regarding the layout of the shopping center (Fig 8), Tomás Taveira remembers his stay in the United States and that he «*saw and studied several malls from Houston to Miami and had the opportunity to talk to promoters and managers, [stating that] in a way the Amoreiras corresponds to what was known then in the United States about Shopping Centers integrated in the City*» (Taveira, 2013). The mall is organized in a structure of main and secondary “streets” and of “squares” of various sizes that unite the two levels via stairs and escalators. In the bigger “squares” and in the larger “streets” the section is detailed so the pyramidal or arched skylights illuminate both floors (Fig 9). Taveira wanted to provide the shopping with «*a clear structure, close to the classic structure of Cities: a City Block Structure that allowed a good orientation by the visitors; an organization close to what they were used to*» (Taveira, 2013). This good orientation was to be reinforced by the presence of “urban equipment” and “monuments” of various colors according to the different areas of the mall and by signage that was never produced due to budget constraints. All that remained were

two “fountain-sculptures” (designed by Taveira) located in key places, but later removed.



FIG 9 Tomás Taveira, Amoreiras Shopping Center (interior view) [source: <http://www.mundicenter.com/images/presskit_am/Amoreiras_vistainterior1_rgb.tif>].

One important aspect that was considered in the project was the connection between the mall and the urban network, which was achieved via the dematerialization of the podium in the various entrances, through various in-between zones that *«invited people in (...)». It was like an extension of the City, annulling any possible barriers»* (Taveira, 2013). This feature was especially evident in the northern entrances (Fig 10) where the exterior zone indeed continued into the mall area with a great dynamic that was reinforced, especially at night, with the presence of neon lights (now removed). These in-between zones of access to the mall were later closed with glass windows and doors.

The “reign” of the Amoreiras Shopping Center was only challenged in the mid-1990s with the construction of bigger ventures of this kind in the Lisbon region, such as CascaShopping (Cascais, 1991) and Colombo (Lisbon, 1997). With competitors with bigger GLA, wider interior spaces and especially more parking spaces and also good accessibilities, the current strategy of Mundicenter (the proprietor of the mall) seems to be marked by two different (one may even say opposite) approaches. On the one hand, certain features of the mall – the high-end housing and big companies that

occupy the office towers in the complex and nearby; the absence of subway access (the cheapest transport in Lisbon); and the relatively small and confusing parking area – enabled a strategy focused on small and medium luxury stores with very precise target markets. On the other hand, large anchor stores in the clothing and sports equipment sectors (Zara, Sport Zone) indicate a need in appealing a wider public to provide economic sustainability to the enterprise.



FIG 10 Tomás Taveira, Amoreiras Shopping Center (north entrance) [source: Taveira 1990: 92].

Conclusion and Further Studies

Paulo Varela Gomes wrote in 1995: *«until today, Portuguese architecture has not produced a more interesting or inventive shopping center interior than the Amoreiras: the largeness of the space, the light, the decoration and the pathways have made the Amoreiras an unmatched popular success»* (Gomes, 1995: 570). In fact, the popularity of this complex in the Lisbon region drew attention, from the part of promoters and architects, to the importance of architectural, equipment and graphic design and urban image in this kind of ventures, at the time considered an outrage to “traditional” city values, this is, to the city before World War II. *«The Amoreiras were maybe pioneers of a certain way of making city, but only recently began to generate a significant attraction... Firstly it was the “astonishment” that generated the most varied “attractions” and “repulsions”»* (Taveira, 2013). That didn't prevented, however, the Amoreiras to become *«the biggest public square of the Country»* (Gomes, 1995: 569).

Apart from the reasons enunciated above for the success of the Amoreiras Shopping Center, one aspect that is not always taken into account – and that is inherent to the architectural project – is, in our opinion, fundamental for the understanding of the complex. In the Amoreiras, Tomás Taveira attempts to solve the question of continuity and evolution of modern architecture that is assumed by some post-modern trends in the 1980s. In that sense, one can find an interplay of opposing forces in this project. References to “traditional” and “erudite” architecture, and to past and futuristic times; the use of materials in a “truthful”, modern way – glass, stone – and in a more “false” way – painted walls and ceramic tiles suggesting solid bricks –; and a desire to be both nationalist and internationalist, European and North American. This is a fundamental part of the post-modernist condition, born of this “Americanization” of European values: *«the contaminations and seduction games between these two phenomena, high culture vs. low culture, are formative of the [North] American culture. That would win a name: post-modernism is the American appropriation and rewriting of European modernism in articulation with the overwhelming advent of popular culture»* (Figueira, 2011: 12). In a way, this duality seems to even “leak” to the commercial strategy of the Amoreiras Shopping Center, as we have seen above.

The Amoreiras remains an icon in the city’s skyline – and is even present in tour guides, receiving regular visits from tourists – and its importance in shaping the Lisbon region “shoppingscape” cannot be underestimated. Further studies on this subject include the identification and examination of many other relevant case studies, additional analysis on the urban impact of this kind of facilities and the polarizing relation between them. Only with a global notion of the shopping center “map” of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area we will be able to really understand this phenomenon in all its dimensions, and only then we will be prepared to integrate it in the future planning design of this city-region.

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