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The Value of Rural Voids

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Abstract— The research of prospecting system that we are developing under the theme of the Investigation Project “Territory, Establishments and Border Architecture” that studies the territory in the Northern of Portugal, complained the need to deepen the occupancy profile of indigenous pre-Roman resorting to such readings whose content falls within the realm of social organizations which despite its importance not always contributed in scientific terms to improve the result of observation. In this sense, we choose the village of Moimenta to reflect on the value of voids of the public space.

Key Words— Architecture, Identity, Public Space, Voids.

I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this approach about the value of the voids comes in the line of the research that we have been doing under the Investigation Project “Territory, Establishments and Border Architecture” that in financed by FCT – Foundation to the Cience and Technology, and register under the nº PTDC/AUR-AQI/120606/2010 that studies the Border Line in the Northern of Portugal, as a framework to the changes that occur in the areas of occupation, structure and organization of the space that have been considered in the context of economic, cultural and geographical coordinates. In this sense, the structure of settlements and the lives of the rural community - the phenomenon we call the value of voids - has to do exclusively with the origin of space devoid of any experience, but essentially all the empty spaces that are complementary to the built ones, since the rural public space alone is not enhancer of community life. Learning to observe these practices in rural areas - including both use this notion of space as its design - leads us to search for an understanding of the relationships between space, culture, history, ecology, and between space and identity groups that inhabit them.

II. THE RURAL VOIDS

If we understand the rural structure as a music score, their vacuums are missing notes, or temporarily seem misfits of the overall score. In this sense, these gaps should not be evaluated separately, because it is with its union that the score gains the unity that gives the consistence and the new dimension.



Fig. 1. Plan of Moimenta

This metaphorical representation allows us to overcome strictly the visual dimension of the space and architecture, and the primacy of the two-dimensionality of the image that has conditioned both the practice and the debate about the value of the community life in the rural centers. This fact is leading us to understand the space from the practices that are developed and carried by men over time, from the interactions that takes place through the boundary definition, and boundary crossings or by communication that is mediated through it [1].

The memory of these places, sometimes of great importance in the collective imagination, leads us to face the empty lot beyond a merely pragmatic vision, since its value does not derive only from its availability as a territory for physical or infrastructural transformation, because its memory makes these places unrepeatable.

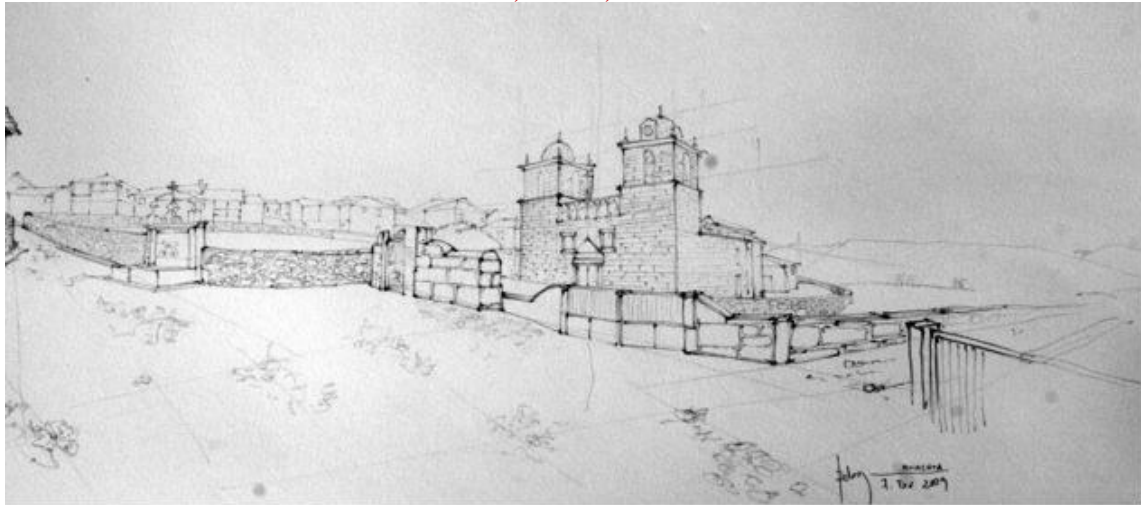


Fig. 2. The public space that access to the churchyard of Moimenta's church.

It was this fascination about the voids, that we had from the beginning of our investigation, that caused by the implantation of the buildings in an area without great prospects for development, that supported the genesis and the peasant way of life that was conditioned by an economy of self-sufficiency, the isolation and the interpersonal relationships that the distance between clusters accentuated.

For Heidegger in [2], these marks printed in the territory are a natural extension of the human being, that may in certain circumstances, give to the place a dimension of metaphysical presence, as the symbolic values of rural communities are closely linked to the notion of collective space of communion and participation, whereas the relationship between man and geographical space was processed from the primitive communities through symbolic processes.

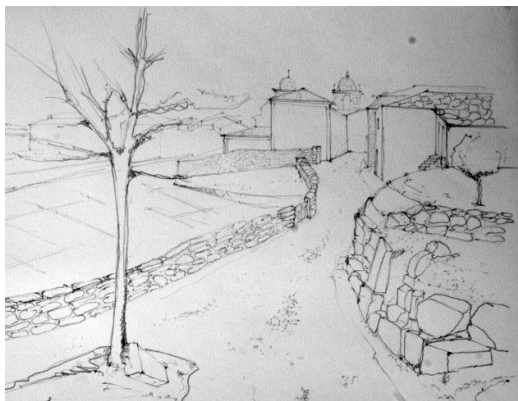


Fig. 3. East view of the Church.



Fig. 4. Access to the Church

This notion was removed by Aldo Rossi, as we can see in [3], when he came in defense of the symbolic dimension of urban space abandoned by city model functionalist and Norbert Shultz to associate the concept of *genius loci* to the notion of permanent type on spatial configurations of a place, used as a way to the construction of memory referenced by inhabiting a particular cultural situation [4].

In fact, the public spaces of the rural centers (Fig. 3 and 4), when converted into party venues, gaming and participation, empower the community and the citizens' sense of belonging and identification.

Incidentally, there are numerous references to the formalities of religious order associated with physical boundaries, whose signs express the appropriation of space and the prohibitions associated with it, to the point that we consider the limits to transpose traditional cultures can be defined by milestones and natural pathways or human constructions which refer to all scales of territorial space.

III. MOIMENTA

In terms of spatial organization, as an example we can refer to the village of Moimenta that developed organically around alleys, streets, squares and plazas punctuated by granite buildings that still combine the practical aspects of life with the local tradition, a synthesis that could not be more current in the preservation of the collective memory as we can see in figures 7 and 8.

A. Physical Context

In figures 5 and 6 we can observe that the demarcation of the geographical area can be defined by physical and administrative framework for the District of Bragança within the national territory and the natural boundaries of dry streak and International Douro that makes the support of our work. That is understood by territories of Bragança, Vimioso, Miranda do Douro, Mogadouro and Freixo de Espada à Cinta (fig.6). Moimenta is a rural village situated in the North of Portugal, in the municipe of Bragança that is implanted in the border with Spain, a line that we call “dry streak” [5].



Fig. 5 and 6. Plan of Portugal with the location of the District of Bragança and his division

B. The Voids

Each monument which chance has preserved - the mother church, the Roman bridge and natural viewpoints, public sources, the cruise located in the center of the village and the remains of old constructions, threshing floors, ovens and mills - represent various signs of community life and testimony of a survivor who obstinately persist.

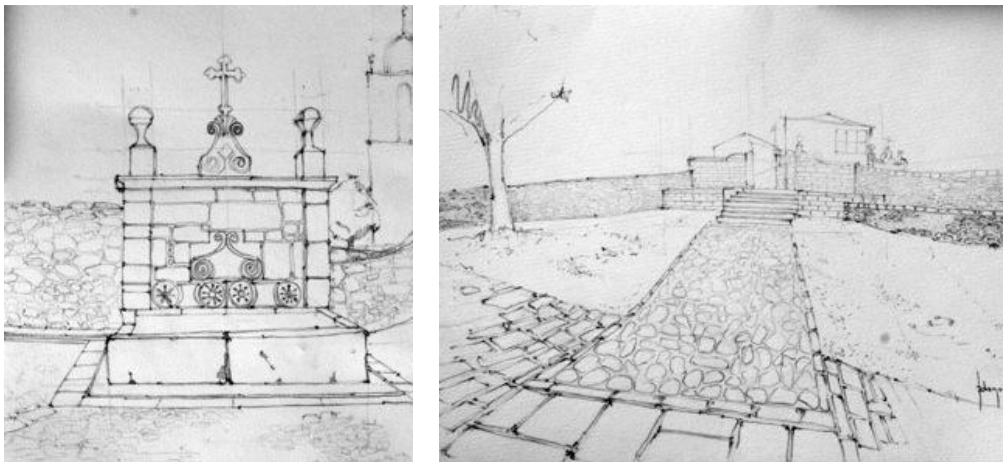


Fig. 7 and 8. Fountain and Churchyard of the Village of Moimenta

Under these considerations, the approach to the temple will establish physical connotations of space through architectural elements of complexity and of increasing significance, establishing the churchyard as the first partitioning by limiting through the construction of an elementary wall a parcel of land that does not reduces to be a space for reception of the faithful who attend worship or where on occasions of religious expression is established the beginning and end of processions.

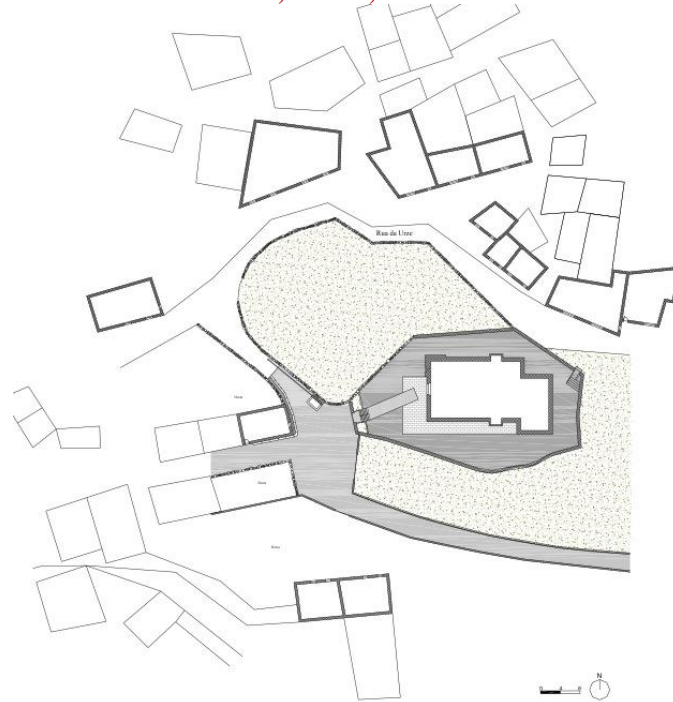


Fig. 9. Plan of the Public Space around the Church of the Village of Moimenta

The irregular hexagonal (fig. 9) organization of the public space that surrounds the church, premises to fit the terrain between an agricultural parcel and the confluence of pathways that favor the accessibility and mobility of people and goods, and the stage of leisure activities, leisure, socializing and demonstration, consecrating the enjoyment of the events that become tradition, while provide it with a sheet and witnesses whose value is to be aware.

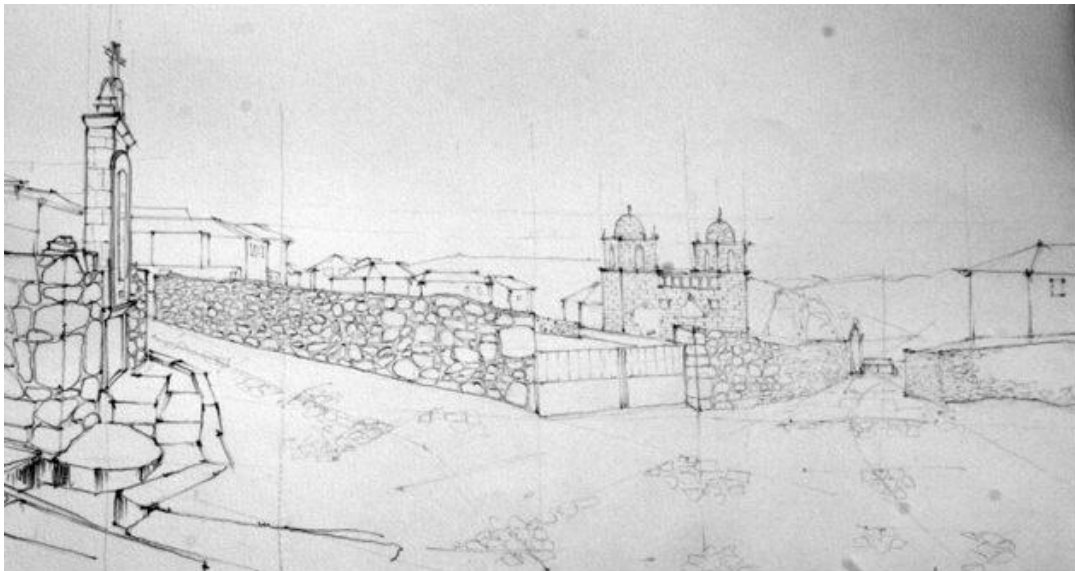


Fig. 10. Perspective of the accesses to the church of Moimenta

In this sense, the interpretive feature of the structure of a city, a village, a block, a square or a street in particular may be the boundary between public space and private space, between the profane world and the sacred world. However, for those of us dealing with the design of the spaces and the symbolic value of objects that support the everyday life seems especially significant finding that the value of the gaps in rural infrastructure is characterized by the use of systems behavior and language specific and emblematic signs whose meaning is a common property of a community.



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IV. CONCLUSION

Suppose, even, that from the identity transmitted by the rural public voids we can conclude that these voids have a unifying character of the fabric and design of the structure of rural settlements, although not always been consciously designed and coordinated in their organization. From the viewpoint of the architect, the study of these gaps is of great importance because is a conceptual support of analysis, such as basis for the synthesis operations of project and design.

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