

Towards a critical archaeology of architecture

Summary

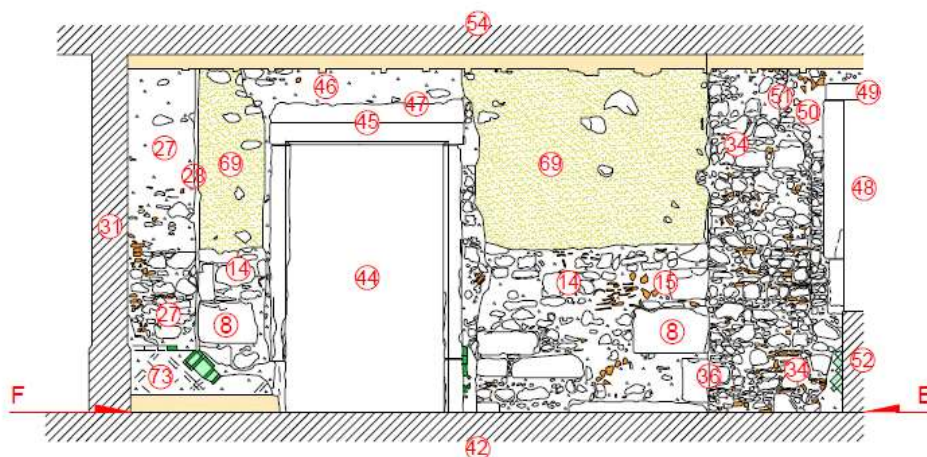
Both architectural heritage and stratigraphy of architecture are acknowledged in the current legislative framework, as archaeological heritage and as archaeological work, respectively. Between the publication of the basic law of cultural heritage in 2001 and the enactment of the regulation of archaeological works in 2014, the archaeology of architecture also gained due institutional recognition in Portugal, adding to the scientific acceptance that this subject already enjoyed in various other countries. Since then, the archaeology of architecture has been conducted in this country under the constraints imposed by the protection of cultural assets as a measure of protection for architectural heritage, to be applied when that heritage is at risk of being affected within the scope of rehabilitation projects.

Nevertheless, interpretation of the terms of the law is subjective, the time during which archaeology of architecture applies is problematic and the technicians responsible for applying it still lack preparation. These factors have led to archaeology of architecture being only a circumstantial service with erratic results, which may in practice play a part in the scientific knowledge of a historic building, but contribute little to effectively preserving it. It is thus important to understand why the level of the archaeology of architecture's contribution is still low in Portugal, as well as to indicate ways in which the continued limitations on its potential scientific contribution can be resolved. Architectural heritage, symbolically and phenomenologically charged as it is, cannot, however, be understood today only as the result of a constructive process, but is also the materialization of social and aesthetic intentions. As such, scientific interpretation of it requires archaeological analysis as much as diagnostics from other disciplines. Thus, the present thesis, moving towards a fairer and more holistic strategy for protecting heritage, is invested in the synthesis of epistemology and already legally recognized methods specific to archaeology with the contribution of other disciplines, such as art history or architecture.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. It starts with the problematization of the concepts of intervention and rehabilitation of architectural legacies as active agents of history itself, aiming to question the contribution of architectural stratigraphy in the adoption of different strategies for the rehabilitation of architecture. From the stratigraphic heritage of archaeology, it then progresses to the conjectures that led to the affirmation of architecture as a document subject to archaeological interpretation. It encompasses acceptance and rejection of the archaeology of architecture, in order to discuss the institutional and legislative frameworks that led to its establishment in Portugal. From the consecration of architecture as an archaeological heritage, listing the main problems of architectural archaeology, it moves on to discussing possible ways to improve its performance in the scientific field and as a tool for safeguarding Portuguese architectural legacy.

Keywords

Archaeology of architecture, urban rehabilitation, stratigraphy, architectural heritage.



Experimental procedure (the House of Talhas).



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