MOORS VS. VIKINGS

The History and influence

Landscape and Public Space

AUTHOR:
Ana Sofia Dias - KU:qlh186

Total of pages - 21
INDEX

Introduction 3

History

The Moors 4

The Vikings 5

Influences 6

Climate and Landscape 10

Latin vs. Nordic way

Experiencing Public Space 12

Conclusion 19

References 21
INTRODUCTION

This work aims to study, compare and critique the influences of ancient civilizations, like the Moors and the Vikings, in customs, architecture and landscape, of Portugal and Denmark, respectively.

In both countries we can still see some signs, presences of these civilizations, for example, in Portugal we can find castles built by the Moors, and in Copenhagen we can find a high level of trust between the Nordic people, that comes from the Vikings times.

This work starts with a brief introduction of the two civilizations: the Moors and the Vikings. The assignment will focus on their influence on the inhabitants, as well as in landscape and architecture, with also making reference to the climate and the consequences on the landscape. Finish with the Latin versus the Nordic way of experiencing the public space and architecture, differences and consequences, referring and critique a project in both cities.
The Moors were Islamic people from Northwest Africa and they were responsible for the Islamic Invasion of the Iberian Peninsula of the eighth Century. They were African people who lived where are now Morocco and Argelia. The term moors comes from the Latin *maures* that means black, as a reference to their dark skin. Although most have dark skin, there were some light-skinned, blond and with blue eyes.

The Islamic Invasion of the Iberian Peninsula was long in duration but fast in conquest. The moors needed less than a decade to dominate the Iberian Peninsula, and it was under their control for eight centuries.

In the beginning of the eighth century a.C., after contact with the Arabs from the Middle East, the Moors were converted to Islamism. It was their religion that contributed to their expulsion from Europe, because in the Christian territories they occupied, came a movement of revolt against the Moors. This movement began to gain momentum around 1250. And so Christians recovered most of the Iberian Peninsula. Despite the Moors occupation in the peninsula, they left a strong cultural heritage.

But why was the invasion of the Moors so important for Portugal? If it was not for the long battle which the Portuguese fought against the Moors, Portugal would never have become independent from the rest of Europe, and created a great Kingdom.

Despite the violence and destruction that the moors brought with this invasion, this brought the revelation of a brave and independent people. Portugal although was only a corner of Europe, it made against the Moors and many other people.
The Vikings were warriors, explorers and traders, but were mostly known as the Nordic Pirates. These people explored and colonized different areas of Europe, between the late eighth and eleventh century.

They are a very ancient civilization that had its origins in the region of Scandinavia, an area that today corresponds to the territories of Sweden, Denmark and Norway. The Vikings created a very rich culture that developed due to agriculture activities, crafts and the brave sea trade. Due to the large maritime trade came to piracy as another important economic activity.

The dwellings of the Vikings were quite simple, using wood, stones and dry grass as main building materials. The spatial distribution of the interior of the houses was also quite simple, often featuring only a single room.

Due to the low temperatures that were felt in Scandinavia, the Vikings had a great need for a garment that protects them. Among the different materials they used for their clothing, hides and furs were the most appreciated materials, to protect and keep their body warm. However these people also liked accessories and these were usually made of stone and metal.

The main figure of authority in this society was the king, followed by the earls and chieftains, who also enjoyed great power of authority among the population. The power of decision had great importance for the Vikings, so they get together outdoors and discussed the drafting of laws and punishments for criminals.

As for religion, they had a rich mythology, consisting of several gods. Among the best known, they have Thor was the god who had power over the heavens and guarding the Viking people. However the process of Christianization of Europe, throughout the Middle Age, little by little the Vikings were converted. The extinction of the Viking culture happens between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, due to various conflicts against the British.
INFLUENCES ON THE CITY AND INHABITANTS

THE MOORS

The Moors occupied the Iberian Peninsula during nearly eight hundred years. During this period what influence have they exerted over the city and their inhabitants?

ARCHITECTURE

The architecture left by the Moorish invaders was a fertile contribution to the future world empires established by the Spanish and Portuguese. The Moors left us the Flat roofs, laced chimneys, wrought iron and tiles, that we can find in the south of Portugal with a strong presence.

With the Moorish presence in the city, the mosques, palaces and libraries started to appear. One of the best preserved examples of Moorish construction is the Moors Castle in Sintra, Portugal.

This Castle has an irregular plan, consisting of a double ring of walls. The internal wall has a battlement and strengthening provided by five towers. That are pointed out, inside, the tank is supplied by rainwater and the Royal Tower, the tallest tower of the castle has a range of view that allows us to understand the relevant Sentinel function of fortification over time. At the beginning of the course, before entering inside the walls, you can see two Arabs silos excavated in the rock, originally used to store grain. What we see today, is only the base of the towers and walls. To construct this castle they used a Muslim technique referred to as...
"rope and firebrand," according to which the walls were made of stones linked by lime, which is burned in the end, thus consolidating the entire structure. ¹

SCIENCE

The Moorish influence in science was also felt, especially in astronomy, they perfected the astrolabe, an instrument of Greek origin which allows the orientation at the sea by observing the stars. This instrument was helpful for the Portuguese, they used it during the maritime travels, in the fifteenth century.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

With regards to handicrafts, they left us leather items and the famous moors carpets. With regards to the music, the characteristic musical styles of Portugal and Spain, fado and flamenco, respectively, were influenced by Moorish rhythms and instruments. With the invasion of the Peninsula, Arabic language was adopted. The main influence was in the lexicon related to agriculture, commerce and administration.

The Moors were no longer just a people who invaded Portugal, but were a people who had and still have great influence on the Portuguese people. Based on what was previously written we can say that they have left us a rich heritage, and we could see it all over Portugal, but with greater presence in the South, because was closer to the North of Africa, where the Moors were from. Of all the influences that have brought us perhaps the architecture and urbanism are the most present. Especially the “provision of the village traditional villages of the interior, with the core urban farms and gardens”²

¹ Based on: RODIL, João & CARVALHO, Sérgio Luís – “Sintra: As Pedras e o Tempo (Roteiro Histórico de Sintra), Algueirão, 1995

INFLUENCES ON THE CITY AND INHABITANTS

THE VIKINGS

The Vikings were not just a nation of barbarians but navigators, explorers and great merchants, and occupied the whole of Scandinavia, but what influence have they left in Denmark?

ROSKILDE

Røsnæs is perhaps the Danish city where the Viking heritage is more present. It is just over 30km west of Copenhagen, and is known as one of the oldest cities in Europe. It was founded by the Vikings in the tenth century. Although today is a small town, was once the capital of Denmark and one of the largest cities in northern Europe.

Here we find the Roskilde Fjord, where they found five Viking ships with more than 1000 years. Where is the Viking museum, that every year sets up a Viking camp, where we can get an idea of what life was like at the time of the Vikings, from clothing to crafts represented.

MITOLOGY

Contrary to what many people thought, the Vikings were a very religious people and developed a very peculiar religion. For in addition to their religion also had several myths with dragons, and elves, among others which today are still remembered and studied. About the religion, this was a very complex set of gods very similar to Greek mythology, but the social motivation was not only to explain unexplained phenomena, but mainly to encourage people to improve their lives. The Viking religion was thus the name of Ásatrú.
OUT OF SCANDINAVIA

Several English words derived from the Nordic invasions. But in addition to English, the Vikings influences spread through some names of some European cities, such as Dublin. But the greatest influence of the Vikings, outside Scandinavia, is in the blood of the town of Northern England. A research with the blood inhabitants of that area by the UK BBC in 2001 showed that many Englishmen have similarities with Norway on chromosome Y.  

LANDSCAPE

The Vikings left their imposing mark on European history, as I said before, but they also left their unique mark on the Danish landscape.

JELLINGESTENENE - THE RUNIC STONES

This space has been one of the symbols of the founding of Denmark and the Danish monarchy. The Jelling Runic Stones have been declared, by UNESCO, monuments of outstanding universal value to the world, in 1994.

THE STRONGHOLDS

The Vikings left some great monuments, but their circular strongholds are the most impressive. The Trelleborg Castle in West Zealand is one of the best preserved, and were we can see clearly, the circular shape. We also have the Fyrkat Viking fortress in Jutland.

Image 5 – Jellingestene - The Runic Stones
Image 6 – Trelleborg Castle in West Zealand

3 www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/vikings/
CLIMATE

PORTUGAL

Portugal has a Mediterranean climate with a wet winter. During winter the maxima temperature during daytime is 16ºC, but is much wetter, with only just approximately 14 dry days. The weather slowly gets warmer during the spring months, and the temperature can reach the 22ºC. The sunshine light is like 10 hours a day.

In the summer, the sea breezes arrive, creating pleasant conditions. The maximum temperature is 25ºC, and the sunshine light is 11 or 12 hours a day. But some area of Portugal, we can have so subtropical anticyclone that makes the temperatures rise up to 40ºC. Sometimes the September and October can form an extension of summer.

DENMARK

Situated between three different European climate zones, the Atlantic, the Borea and the Continental, this country presents a mixture of these three climate zones.

Through the year, the rain is more and less distributed, although the evaporation is less in October to March. The winter humid most of the time, and the temperature over the year is over 8,5ºC. The warmest month is July with a temperature over 17,5ºC and January is the coldest month in Denmark.

During the summertime the climate is really pleasant, May is a month charming, because is when spring is at its highest. On other hand the winter can be really cold, temperatures can go to -15ºC to -30ºC, and we can see the country cover with snow and icy winds. In the winter we only have a few hours of light, but in the summer the sun rises at 3a.m. and goes down at 9p.m. With this type of weather we have to have proper clothing, especially in the winter,
like waterproof and warmer clothes. But we should have always an umbrella and a sweater most of the year.  

**LANDSCAPE**

Portugal is split into two by the main river, named Tejo. Among the major rivers in Portugal, we can mention Minho, Douro and Guadiana. Another important river is the Mondego, which originates in Serra da Estrela, the largest mountain in Portugal, which height reaches 1993m. To the north, the terrain is mountainous, in the center of the country’s highlands where it is possible the development of agriculture. Towards the south, to Algarve, there are plains with a warmer climate and drier than in the north, which is colder and wetter.

There are several ponds in Portugal, in Serra da Estrela is located the Dark and Long ponds, they were formed by ancient glaciers. Some ponds have their origins in the ocean or in a river, the ponds example is Albufeira and Óbidos. Others were originated between dunes.

Denmark is flat with little elevation. The highest points are Ejær Baunehoi and Yding Skovhøj, with approximately 173 meters. Although it is a flat land, Denmark is formed by a lot of islands, and so it’s a land of coastlines. Where ever you are in the country, the distance to the sea is not that big, and you could

---

5 Based on: http://www.weatheronline.co.uk
have some really pretty sea-views. The fjords, islands and beaches, are really attractive to tourists. It is interesting the way the sea impress the continental tourist, like the mountains impress the Danes.⁶

**CLIMATE AND LANDSCAPE**

**DIFFERENCES**

As we know Portugal and Denmark are almost in opposite sites of Europe, Portugal with a Mediterranean climate and Denmark with a Nordic climate. And it is logic that different climates originate different landscapes, because as we know the climate is direct related to the construction of the landscape. Portugal is a very irregular land, with a lot of hills, and some mountains, on the other hand Denmark is flat. Portugal is known for is long beach coast, beautiful hills and warm weather, one the other hand Denmark is known for the coastlines and cold winter. As the climate affects the landscape also affects the people that live in them.

---

⁶ Based on: http://www.ponty.dk/photos03.htm
LATIN VS. NORDIC WAY

This analysis of history, influences, climate and landscape was made to try to understand the differences in perception of public space. Try to find points that so we could understand why the public space in Portugal is felt in one way and another in Denmark. Perhaps because of the weather? Or some historical influence?

EXPERIENCING THE PUBLIC SPACE

There are some studies done on the importance of public space, like this one, done by CABE Space that is part of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment for the United Kingdom. This study talks about: The Economic Value of Public Space, The Impact on Physical and Mental Health, The Benefits for Children and Young People, Reducing Crime and Fear of Crime, The Social Dimension of Public Space, Movement in and Between Spaces, and Value from Biodiversity and Nature. As Sir Stuart Lipton said:

“Public space is all around us, a vital part of everyday urban life: the streets we pass through on the way to school or work, the places where children play, or where we encounter nature and wildlife; the local parks in which we enjoy sports, walk the dog and sit at lunchtime; or simply somewhere quiet to get away for a moment from the bustle of a busy daily life. In other words, public space is our open-air living room, our outdoor leisure centre”

On this study they talked about the fundamental functions of public space, like it allows moving around, on foot, by bicycle, by car or public transportation. Another important thing of the public space is that they are associated with green space and green space helps reduce de temperatures in the city.

“Vegetation also provides an opportunity for people to be close to ‘nature’, with the associated positive impact that this can bring in terms of mental health and the

---

7 WOOLLEY, Helen; SIAN, Rose; CARMONA, Matthew & FREEDMAN, Jonathan – “The Value of Public Space”, CABE Space
Another study about experiencing the public space is the one publish on Topos Magazine, where they conclude that for a public space to be great needs: protection, comfort and delight.

So with these two studies, and many more done on this subject, we know that public spaces are really important, and for them to be great, they need some qualities. And is that what people look for in a space: comfort, protection, delight and aesthetic beauty, to name some. So how do Portuguese and Danish experience the public space? Is it different? Or is it the same?

PORTUGAL - LISBON

Lisbon is a city known for their seven hills, and it is a really old city, where some of the street are really narrow, and where is hard to have green spaces. Nowadays, in new area of the city is easy to have public green spaces, what is vital for the sustainability of any city. But in Lisbon the citizens don’t actually participate on territorial planning processes, mostly because participations are limited to the periods established by the Portuguese law, which are obviously insufficient, or because the population is burdened with numerous participatory processes that overlap, most often without producing visible results, leading to the discrediting of citizens from this type of processes. (Urban Planning in Portugal, Vol18, July2011).

More and more, in Lisbon, the public space are getting quality and being enjoy by the young people. And some of the old historical gardens, are being restore, so people can use them and enjoy them. Normally, the public space is use us a meeting point for younger people, not a place o hang out. The people we see using the space is the older people, either to seat in a bench or to play chest with a friend. But now it’s changing.

---

8 WOOLLEY, Helen; SIAN, Rose; CARMONA, Matthew & FREEDMAN, Jonathan – “The Value of Public Space”, CABE Space
“The public spaces (..) are promoters of a distribution network of ecological continuity and cultural, essential for the sustainability of any city.”

In a study about “Metropolitan Areas – Living, moving and Life quality” they came to a conclusion, that Portuguese see the public space in the residential area as gardens, which give a strong contribution to the quality of urban life for the well-being, relaxation, recreation and aesthetic pleasure. (Observa, June 2004).

With the grown of every city, is hard to have contact with the nature, and the public green space allows that and to have a better environment, working like little lungs of the urban area.

Something very interesting, that was the subject of study for a Landscape Architect colleague, is that use of public spaces by immigrant communities of Brazil, Cape Verde and Ukraine in the greater Lisbon area, is being increased.11

In this study, in addition to other conclusions about the different qualities that each community demand, she came to the conclusion that there is a need to draw more spaces that have more quality, and the need to involve people in the consultative process of designing the space.

Public Space – Tejo-Trancão Park

An example of important public space in Lisbon is the Tejo-Trancão Park, by PROAP. Situated by the Rio Tejo and resulting from the urban regeneration following the Expo’98.

The proposal aimed to establish the organization of the scenic area with great diversity, visual and sensory. Supported with a structure of units of terrain

modelling that are the structural element key, determining the ecological consequences, scenic and experiential laying the foundation of landscape that you want to create a three-dimensional landscape, diverse and rhythmically.

In a study, done by Architecture University in Portugal, on “Public Space, Place of Urban life”, they analyse the Tejo-Trancão Park. And their conclusions is are: “people enjoy staying in their day doing day activities or leisure; the permeability of the urban fabric proved to be very good, particularly in the periods of higher affluence and concentration of people in the public space; the quality of urban drawing; the environmental quality of the space and where factors that allowed testing the pleasantness of the space and the dynamic of the relations between space and people, showed that the former stimulated the latter to stay in the area for longer periods of time.”

DENMARK – COPENHAGEN

Copenhagen is one of the oldest city of Europe, is known for the Little Mermaid, the amusement park Tivoli and bikes. Copenhagen is the idyllic city that has the highest happiness ratings, where public safety can be taken for granted, and where everyone feels responsible for the public space.

Gehl and Gemzöe (2000) consider that the use of public space, as social and leisure places, has been growing gradually.

“The social changes of our era can help explain the dramatic increase in urban recreation – premium public spaces, with their diversity of functions, multitude of people, fine views and fresh air obviously have something to offer that is in great demand in society today.” JAN GEHL

We can conclude that the public space it's getting more and more important. And here in Copenhagen, we can see how people really enjoy those places. After a cold winter nothing is better than laying on the grass of a park on a summer day. So we can say that the public space is really important and cherish by the Danes. Want probably they have more care for those places that some Portuguese.

A consulting office is studying “The Viking Approach to Project Management” where they describe the reasons way Viking approach is related to Project Management, and they are: “Firstly, the Vikings really seemed to make successful managers, hence their approach might also be useful in today’s project management. Secondly, project management in any context reflects some culturally determined values that do not change that much – even over a period of a thousand years.” (FANGEL)

Public Space – The Harbour Park

The Harbour's Park is a simple and real park, that grown as the claims of the park’s users. And was made with the help of the residents, who were fighting since the 1980s for better conditions, and wanted the harbour to be a space for them.

“The Harbour Park is a new form of park for the 1990s, which met the needs of the city at the time of its creation.”

This park is an example of the fight of the people for better spaces and they won, so it's a good example of perseverance. The Harbour park is an example of exception, because in a city like Copenhagen, where most of the water front are covered with high design. Because with his simplicity creates a contract on the water front view. And as Jan Gehl said “Copenhagen should make it a priority to site these new parks next to important civic buildings, such as the Library and the new Opera House, that could showcase themselves to the public to far greater effect if given the opportunity.”
So if I compare the chronological limits between the Viking Age in Denmark and the Moors Ages in Portugal it is possible to find a real correspondence: they more or less comprehended a period between the eighth and the twelfth centuries, and this could be one point to consider. Another point is why both civilizations were ended, and the reason is the same, expansion of Christianization. Another point is that both civilizations, Moors and Vikings were warrior and great traders. So these are some points in common, but there are some different points, like the climate, the landscape, and the way to see the space.

Although the presence of this civilizations wasn’t that long, they both left strong marks on these countries. And those marks are present in the populations. In Denmark, for instance the open society and the high degree of trust between the Nordic people, comes from the time of the Vikings, as some studies are trying to prove it. But basically, this trust comes from the trades, because Vikings didn’t have organization to safeguard the trades, so they had to trust people. And that passed from generation to generation, till today. In Portugal, one of the main marks is our physical characteristics, brunettes with light dark skin.

The climate plus some factors were really important to create the landscape as we known. It is important to say that Portugal and Denmark are in opposite limits of Europe so is natural that the landscape is different. And that originates different types of architecture and planning. And we can see really clear the differences between Lisbon and Copenhagen. Lisbon, because of her seven hills, the city has an irregular, circular urban planning. In contrary Copenhagen is flat, has a squared urban planning, very geometric.

With the analysis of this three topics, history, climate and landscape, we can understand the way Portuguese or Danes experiencing the public space. We can conclude that the Danes feel and protect with more intensity the public space. Instead, the Portuguese don’t have been treating the public space with that much respect, but times are changing, and so are people. More and more the public space is being appreciated.
This work helped to see and create some connections between historic influence, climate and landscape, with the way people see the public space. Sometimes to know a place or work on it, we have to know the history of the place, so we can understand it.
REFERENCES


BENDSEN Jannie Rosenberg – “On the Writing of Danish Architectural History”- Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen and Danish Architecture Centre Copenhagen, Denmark

FANGEL, Morten – “The Viking Approach to Project Management” - fangel Consulting as, Denmark


GEHL, J. & GEMZØE, L. - New City Spaces - The Danish Architectural Press, Copenhagen, 2000


MARCHETTI Emanuela – “Viking Denmark and Early Medieval Italy: a possibility for a comparison”- Moesgård depts. of Archaeology, University of Århus Denmark and University of Torino Italy.

MATOS, José Luís – “Lisboa Islâmica”, Instituto Camões, Colecção Lazúli, 1999


RIBEIRO, José Cardim - “Sintra - Património da Humanidade”, 1998


WOOLLEY, Helen; SIAN, Rose; CARMONA, Matthew & FREEDMAN, Jonathan - “The Value of Public Space”, CABE Space, UK