The Fortress of Sagres: Landscape Renovation of the Main Entrance

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Abstract – The Fortress of Sagres, a mythic place that offers a wide horizon over the ocean, where the nature crosses with geography, religion and art, constitutes today one of the most visited monuments in Portugal. The main objective of this study is the design of a landscape valorisation proposal of the access and entrance to the fortress. The methodology applied consisted on a theoretical analysis of the area in question. The first stage involved the definition of concepts and the legal framing analysis of the area. In a second stage was made a detailed analysis of the case study, involving the historical features, biophysical and the planning instruments in vigour. Due to the actual situation of the Fortress, on the actual context, solutions for the landscape valorisation was needed to the specific situation. The structures that the area is subject may create a setback to de projects development. The analysis of the Fortress of Sagres situation and acknowledgment of the site allowed an intervention strategy definition and furthermore the planning and design of the valorisation project for this case study, The Fortress of Sagres.

Key Words – Monument, Heritage, Fortress, Sagres, Landscape reclamation.

1 Introduction

The Fortress of Sagres, a mythic place that offers a wide horizon over the ocean, where the nature crosses with geography, religion and art, constitutes today one of the most visited monuments in Portugal (Fig. 1). “The unusual site landscape beauty, and historical attested presence of Prince D. Henrques, give Sagres a remarkable position on national mythology and contributed to Sagres to become unavoidable reference in international plan” Rui Parreira (English adapted) [7].

Figure 1 -View of the Cape of São Vicente over the coast.

“Lost in time the references to the Sacrum Promontorium, to the land always blowed by the winds, in the end of the known world, where the ancient gods assembled and where the sun, when shakings into the boiling seas” from Carvalho and Vidigal (English adapted) [2], page 26).

The origin of the Sagres fortress is due, without a doubt to its geographic position; it was a strategic defence to navigation that travelled from the Mediterranean Sea to the Northern Europe. The Sagres Fortress assembles various moments of the world history which granted its recognition as a National Monument since 1910.

This essay has the primary objective the drawing of an intervention proposal that aims the valorisation of the fortress access and the main entrance.

2 The Importance of Landscape as Heritage

Embedded with a past message, the historical monuments remain to our days has living testimonies of several generation tradition. The collective responsibility to protect them to the future generation is acknowledged, and it’s our duty maintain and transmit them with the wealth.

In this essay, there are concepts related to the Site, Place, Landscape, as well as Cultural Landscape and Heritage, inside which appear also the concept of Cultural Heritage. According to Alfaiaete [3], the site correspond to a scenery where occur historic events and are kept there, either natural or man made. The site constitutes the stage of every event, supporting new ones and acquiring
in each one new meaning throughout the times. According to Magalhães [4] the concept of place is a global concept, qualitative that can’t be translated by its own characteristics, through analytic methods. The meaning of place is much more than its location, because it encloses cultural meanings that synthesize and represent surroundings, as well as the several existential situations.

“The landscape refers to the natural’s phenomena’s and its visual physical expression (natural landscape), or to the visual expression to the human intervention in territory (humanized landscape or entropic)” (English adapted from Partidário [5], page 134).

According to the Convention of the Protection to world Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972 Cultural Landscapes are cultural goods and represent the “conjugated works of Man and Nature”. The 1st article of the convention refers to the evolution of society and the human establishments throughout the times, under the influence of the materials conditions and/or the advantaged offered by its natural environment and the successive social, economic and cultural forces internal or external [6]. The Heritage is understood as a set of goods, man made, gifted of a life of its own and a refine interaction with the society [6]. Cultural Heritage is about the cultural resources of a community, which includes the ethnographic heritage, build cultural heritage and archaeological heritage [5].

2.1 Military Architecture – Fortresses and Castles

Military architecture was significantly important on the Portuguese territory during centuries. The implantation of towers and regal and lords castles created defence position but also territorial occupation and organization. “The Portuguese people, similar of what appeared in S. Tomé e Príncipe and Angola, only late started fortifying in Guiné. (…).” [8], page 127. The fortress of the city of Cacheu in Guiné–Bissau has been rehabilitated in the beginning of the 90’s, however, it started to show evidences of degradation and ruin even, just like succeeded to the river adjacent wall, which found it self on risk of collapse, and so it began the work of vertical reposition. At 11 of December of 2003, UNESCO and the Moçambique Government sign a plan of operation to recover the fortress of São Sebastião classified as world heritage by UNESCO since 1991” This rehabilitation measures seemed, besides the restoration of the building, its reutilization, to assume the project viability. From other similar castles in Portugal the Alvito Castle is a building with a military architecture that reminds a fortress. After the earthquake in 1975 this “palace fortress” had benefited several remodelling and restoration works.

3 Characterizing the study item

3.1. Localization

The Fortress of Sagres, is located in Sagres, Vila do Bispo district of Faro, Algarve. Its precise localization is in the Southwest of Algarve in an area called “Barlavento Algarvio” between two distinct morphological areas – the occidental and the Algarve border (fig. 2).

Figure 2-Location of the study area (a: Portugal, b: Algarve region.

4 Historical review

For a better understanding we must learn the history of this singular place. It is the point of the extreme Southwest European continent. Since the classic ancient times named as “Promontorium Sacrum” (which integrates both Cape St Vicente and Cape of Sagres). The sacred character that stays associated to the Promontorium Sacrum is for
sure in the origin of the name of this region, Sagres, which comes from the Latin Sacris (Sacred).

At a short description of the village history we can mention the following:

- 26th July 1415 - Infante D. Henrique first visit the border of Sagres.
- 27th October 1443 - Infante D. Henrique asked for the donation of this place which was granted to him.
- 13th November 1460 - Infante D. Henrique dies in the village that he founded.
- In the end of XV century, and in beginning of the XVI century, the mains activities of this village were fishing, ceramic industry and some agriculture.
- In 1524 this village was completely abandoned, which scenery has been through XVI century.
- May of 1587, the British corsair Sir Francis Drake attacked and destroyed the most part of the fortifications between Cape St Vicente and Baleeira and at the time he decided to conquer the Fortress of Sagres.
- After the earthquake of November 1st in 1755, the square damaged and on the XIX century, the Sagres Fortress entered a difficult period.
- Nowadays, the monumental set that was built on this place is a result of the several interventions which granted it an unmatchable character.

### 5 Sagres Fortress access renovation

#### 5.1 Intervention Space

The intervention space corresponds to the entrance and access of the fortress (fig.3), located between the height of 20 and 40, and assumes a form of a plateau, “Where the land ends and the sea begins” [7]. It’s an open site and the space assumes great dimensions. The people who visited it have the feeling of an immense space. It is a place connected to tourism by excellence, through the mythical and historical charge that contains. The access is made by the national road, from Lagos by the EN 125 to Vila do Bispo.

The morphology of the space is characterized by the existence of scarps with variable heights that shapes the platform. It’s an area that, due to its climate and Mediterranean characteristics of the region is very limited in vegetation. Soils are poor and shallow which constitutes also a set back to the growing of plants and trees, being mainly small herbs.

The strategy of intervention established the following: Safeguard the characteristics of the place; Draw a proposal that fill the needs of the place, without interfering with its identity; Promote a connection to the cultural past.

Having in mind the history of the place, the project proposal should be minimalist and should not interfere with the place itself. Thus the analysis and diagnose of the situation at Sagres Fortress inclined to the following objectives:

- To integrate all and any kind of intervention on the surroundings that characterize the place without interpose with its identity; having in mind its stature and legal conditioning.
- To find low construction and maintenance costs landscape solutions.
- To avoid native vegetation and landscape degradation with the use of elevated board walkways to direct and limit public access.

#### 5.1 Intervention Concept

As an intervention concept was used a set of words associated to the Sagres landscape interpretation: **GREATNESS | INFINITY | HORIZON**

Having these three words as the starting point, a minimalist drawing was created represented by an arrow, that lead us to the fortress entrance and pointing to the ocean and inspiring the discovery of
the new world over it. In space, this arrow is represented by the allocation of the project vegetation (fig. 4).

![Figure 4-The Master plan of the Sagres fortress access and main entrance rehabilitation.](image)

6 Final Considerations

The Fortress of Sagres, a mythic place that offers a wide horizon over the ocean, where the nature crosses with geography, religion and art, constitutes today one of the most visited monuments in Portugal. The minimalist concern that came up in this case study came up after a careful search of the site as a place. In this intervention the valorisation of the area couldn’t interfere with the sensitive and protected landscape and history of the place. Assuming the understanding of the site that this proposal inserts, it was presented a minimalist drawing according to the required objectives.

References