

Museums Quarter in Cascais

Redesigning the city through cultural facilities

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Over the last decades, the concepts of cultural cluster and museum district have acquired relevance, not only from an architectural and urban point of view, but also in terms of social, cultural and economic dynamics. In fact, the presence of museums and cultural buildings within a specific area of the city has proven to be an important factor for urban renewal and social development. Moreover, museum clusters have frequently been implemented under the framework of political strategies to enhance cultural heritage and to increase tourism. This paper summarises the dissertation with the same title, produced under the framework of the Integrated Master's Degree in Architecture at the Instituto Superior Técnico, University of Lisbon, Portugal. The study aims at discussing the constitution and importance of cultural clusters focusing on the Museums Quarter in Cascais.

Keywords: Museums Quarter - Cascais; cultural cluster; cultural facilities; urban regeneration; museum architecture; Cascais.

1. Introduction: Cultural Clusters and Museum Quarters

In 1998, Hilary Anne Frost-Kumpf introduced the concept of cultural district, which she identifies as “a well-recognized, labelled, mixed-use area of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of attraction” (Frost-Kumpf, 1998: 7). This definition is still in force today and it is one of the most cited in the literature of the last twenty years (Martín and Martín, 2018). Nevertheless, the bibliography about cultural quarters includes a great diversity of academic contributions from many different disciplines, perspectives and countries, and the concepts that have emerged over time complement Frost-Kumpf's definition (Martín and Martín, 2018).

It is important to stress that each cultural district is unique and reflects the characteristics of the city in which it is located. As Martín and Martín (2018: 54) point out: "The first criteria to be taken into account is that there should be a clear delimitation, which is not always evident. Not less important is that a designation exists either in municipal statutes and/or urban signage or on sites that promote tourism and culture". If the cultural district is to remain successful over time, it must be flexible and adaptable to innovation, otherwise it risks disappearing completely (Montgomery, 2003).

On a larger scale, the links between the different clusters of a city allow diverse museums to complement each other, thus creating a broader and more comprehensive narrative, but also fostering thematic routes which add dynamics and urban character to that narrative (Nikolić, 2012: 160). In this way, the museum clusters transform the urban system and the image of the city, defining different itineraries which articulate the pre-existences and create new points of reference.

For the purpose of this dissertation, four international case studies were selected to illustrate different situations that represent the idea of cultural cluster: the Museumplein in Amsterdam, the Museum Island in Berlin, the MuseumsQuartier in Wien and the *Paseo del Art* in Madrid.

In Amsterdam, during the 19th century, a few museums were constructed around an urban square, namely the Rijksmuseum and the Stedelijk Museum. The presence of these institutions led to the subsequent establishment of new buildings, notably the Van Gogh Museum, in 1973, the Diamond Museum in 2006 and more recently the Moco Museum in 2016, thus paving the way for the consolidation of a new area, the Museumplein, which became a key public space in the cultural life of the city of Amsterdam (Van Aalst e Boogaarts, 2002). The plan for the Museums Island in Berlin attempted to create a cultural area for the city, taking advantage of the natural boundaries established by the Spree River. Its development started in 1830 with the construction of one of the first museums in Europe, the Altes Museum, and followed by the construction of the Neues Museum, the Alte National Galerie, the Bode Museum and the Pergamon Museum. Its influence in terms of urban renewal soon surpassed the island physical boundaries, strengthening the urban fabric by including the cluster in the urban flows through public spaces capable of attracting different activities, designed by David Chipperfield (Nikolić, 2010).

After an urban intervention in the 19th century, an important cluster of palaces and imperial collections emerged in Vienna. The construction of two large symmetrical museums – the Kunsthistorisches Museum and the Naturhistorisches Museum - in 1889 and 1891 - gave rise to the Maria-Theresien-Platz, which demonstrated the desire to make a city through the cultural facilities and later became a key element for the Museumsquartier. The historical architecture of the Imperial Stables, where the MuseumsQuartier is located, was complemented with the addition of contemporary buildings, namely the Leopold Museum and the MUMOK (Grande, 2009). The *Paseo del Arte* in Madrid, the most recent cultural cluster, was formed through the adaptation of three existing buildings designed between the late 18th and the 19th century: the Prado Museum, the Queen Sofia National Museum and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum. The presence of these museums and the redesign of the monumental urban axis that unites them has given rise to new cultural spaces, already incorporated into the urban fabric, such as CaixaForum Madrid, La Casa Encendida and El Matadero, and to urban requalification projects: the *Operación Atocha* and the *Plano Especial Recolectos-Prado* (Layuno e Chaves, 2019).

2. The Museums Quarter in Cascais

2.1. Historical background

The Museums Quarter¹ is an ensemble of museums and cultural facilities located in the historical centre of Cascais, in Portugal. The history of the municipality begins in 1364 when King D. Pedro I elevated Cascais to the category of Town (Henriques, 2014). Before becoming a seasonal destination of Lisbon's aristocracy, the development of Cascais was based on agriculture and fishing, as well as stone extraction and preparation.

When King D. Luís I made the Citadel his residence, Cascais was converted into the first tourist resort in the country (Henriques, 2014). This focus on tourism continued with D. Carlos I, who maintained the

¹ Museums Quarter is the official translation of the Portuguese name Bairro dos Museus.

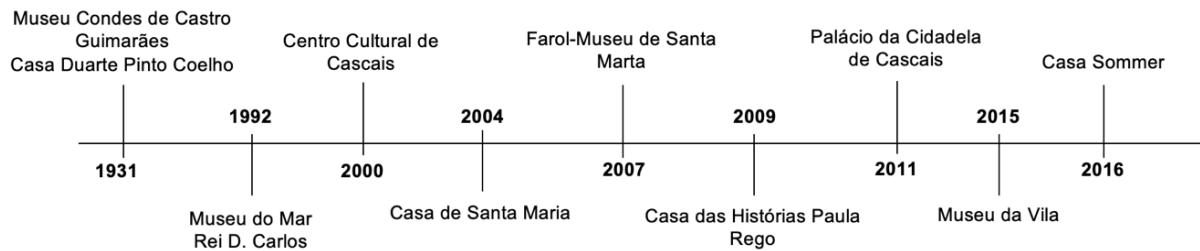
seasonal tradition in the town. However, at that time the village did not yet have the tourist and residential infrastructure adequate to the standards of aristocratic life and this paved the way for "[...] construction of new dwellings, which became the landmarks of the municipality, among which it is important to highlight the Dukes of Palmela House, designed in 1871, and the Dukes of Loulé House, which in 1873 was already completed" (Henriques, 2014: 55). Although the villas built in the 19th century introduced a new relationship between the town and the coastline, it was only in the 20th century that Cascais' modern and coastal skyline was consolidated (Fernandes, 2011: 140).

In 1890, the new street parallel to the Citadel was given the name of Passeio Maria Pia, followed by the construction of Avenida Valbom, connecting the station to the town centre; and, in 1899, the inauguration of Avenida D. Carlos I, giving access to the Citadel (Henriques, 2014: 123). At the same time, the aristocracy followed the court and settled in the village with ostentation, commissioning new houses along the coast, "almost always single-family dwellings, which were built for summer use, although some of them were always occupied throughout the year" (Henriques da Silva, 2010: 14). In 1927, the first museum of Cascais was opened to the public: the Count of Castro Guimarães Museum. The Marginal Road, set up in 1940, was one of the main factors for a profound transformation of the town (Fernandes, 2011). The rapid connection to the capital accelerated the municipality's urban revolution (Henriques, 2014). That year, the Cascais Municipal Park was also inaugurated, named after Marechal Carmona.

The transformations of the 1930s and 1940s defined a set of new urban spaces whose occupation took place mainly during the 1950s and 1960s, based on two major architectural currents: the architecture of Estado Novo and the Modern Movement (Fernandes, 2011: 143). In the following decade, the investment in the construction of new access roads was maintained, together with the development of tourism and leisure facilities. In this context, in 1968, the new Estoril Casino opened its doors, designed by the architects Filipe Nobre de Figueiredo and José de Almeida Segurado.

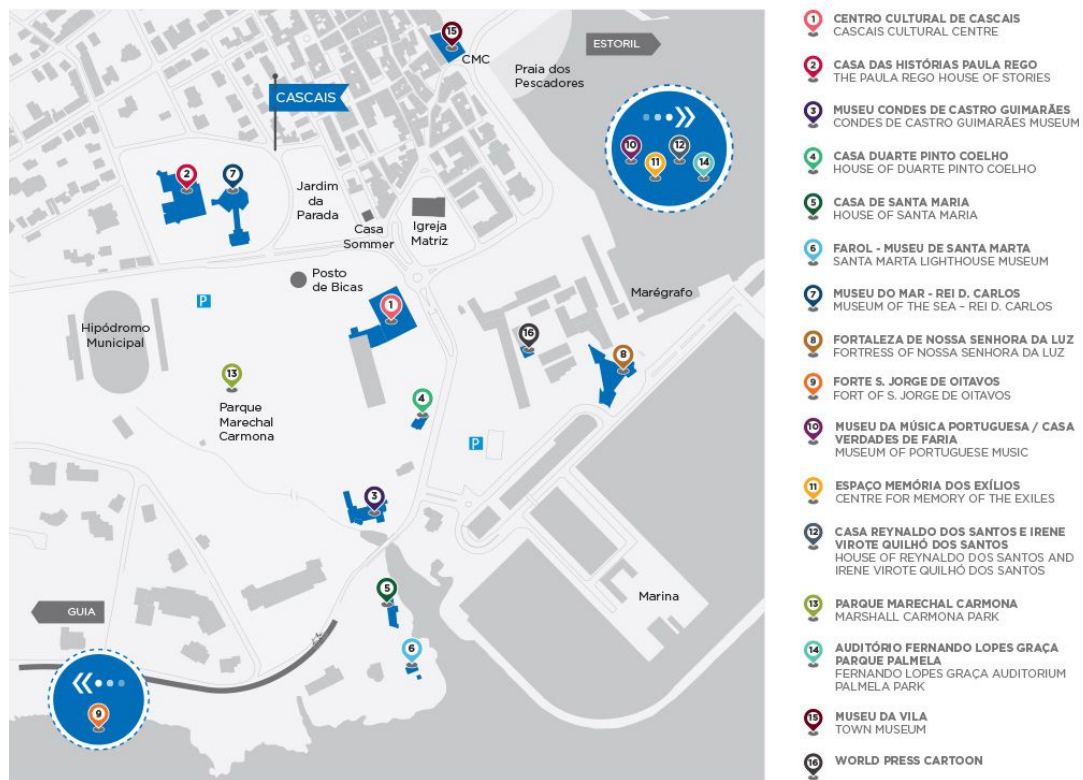
The Revolution of 25th April, 1974 marked the passage from the dictatorial regime to democracy and generated profound political, social and cultural transformations. Although in the aftermath of the Revolution the public investment in architecture was mostly directed to housing, in the following decades, the development of tourism and culture had an unprecedented expansion. At the end of the century, new venues were created in Cascais, such as: the Sea Museum, in 1992, the Auditorium of the Palmela Park, in Cascais, in 1995, and the Memory Space of the Exile, in Estoril, in 1999 (Henriques, 2014). The investment in the conservation and rehabilitation of the historical, cultural and natural heritage also led to the creation of new infrastructures, such as the Cultural Centre of Cascais in 2000, the Fort of S. Jorge Oitavos in 2001, the Santa Maria House in Cascais and the Reynaldo dos Santos House in Parede in 2004, the Farol-Museu de Santa Marta, in 2007, the Conservatory of Music of Cascais, in Monte Estoril, in 2008, or the Casa das Histórias Paula Rego, in 2009, distinguished with the Turismo de Portugal Award, in the category of Best New Public Project (Henriques, 2014). The restoration and opening to the public of the Citadel, whose palace was reopened in 2011, was also promoted, soon followed by the inauguration of Henrique Sommer House converted into the headquarters of the Municipal Historical Archive (Cascais, 2020).

2.2. Concept and organisation



1. Timeline of the opening of the main museums included in the Museums Quarter.

In this context, the Museums Quarter arises in 2015 as a joint initiative of the Cascais Town Council and the D. Luís I Foundation. The Museums Quarter is an innovative and pioneering concept in Portugal that covers a range of cultural facilities and is defined by a geographical perimeter, identified by signs, street furniture and public lighting (Carreiras, 2020).



2. Museums Quarter site plan in 2015.

Located between Marechal Carmona Park and the historical centre of Cascais, the district initially included twelve cultural facilities (three of which geographically more distant) and two urban parks: the Cultural Centre of Cascais, the Casa das Histórias Paula Rego, the Counts of Castro Guimarães Museum, the House of Santa Maria, the Duarte Pinto Coelho House, the Santa Marta Lighthouse Museum, the Sea Museum – King Carlos, the Fortress of Nossa Senhora da Luz, the Fort S. Jorge of the Oitavos, the Museum of Portuguese Music and the Exiles Memorial Center, in Estoril, the House Reynaldo dos Santos, in Parede, the Marechal Carmona Park and the Palmela Park (Soares, 2015). Prior to the Museums Quarter, the access to these venues was mostly free, except for the Condes de

Castro Guimarães Museum and the Sea Museum - King D. Carlos. However, with the implementation of the new cultural concept management structure, it became necessary to acquire an individual ticket for each museum or a daily ticket which covers all the facilities.

According to the Municipality: "The concept of the Museums Quarter is intended to make the town of Cascais a grand stage with artists working live within the perimeter of the neighbourhood. It is also intended that this cultural environment will bring a greater involvement of the local community with the equipment, as well as the attraction of the creative industry [...]" (Cascais, 2015). Over the last few years, the Cascais Town Council and the D. Luís I Foundation have organised a wide range of cultural events, exhibitions, concerts and street shows to promote tourism in the region.



3. Counts of Castro Guimarães Museum (1931).



4. Duarte Pinto Coelho House (1931).



5. Sea Museum (1992).



6. Cascais Cultural Center (2000).



7. Santa Maria House (2004).



8. Lighthouse-Museum Santa Marta (2007).



9. Casa das Histórias Paula Rego (2009).



10. Citadel Palace (2011).



11. Village Museum (2015).



12. Sommer House (2016).

Currently, the cluster comprises eighteen cultural facilities (twelve museum spaces and six cultural spaces) and an urban park which, all together, contribute to preserve and enhance Cascais' landscape and architectural heritage. Over the years, the Museums Quarter has been growing, including, in addition to the twelve initial facilities, the Village Museum, the Museum of the Presidency of the Republic (an extension of the museological space at the Belém Place, in Lisbon), the Palace of the Citadel, the Cascais Tide Gauge, the Sommer House and also the Boa Nova Auditorium.

Over these first five years, all together, the museums included in the cluster doubled their visitors (Brandão, 2020) and obtained international recognition by being awarded the first prize in the category "Heritage Interpretation" by the European Cultural Tourism Network in 2019. The Museums Quarter was also recently awarded the 2020 Five Star Regions Award, by the brand *Cinco Estrelas* for products, services and brands, according to the users' satisfaction.

2.3. Relationship between the museums and the town

As previously mentioned, the Museums Quarter is a cultural initiative driven by the protocol signed between the Cascais Town Council and the D. Luís I Foundation, responsible for administering this structure in terms of programme, management and communication. This concept added new meanings and interpretations, creating a new layer of perception and appropriation of the urban space without carrying out large-scale interventions.

To make the area recognisable and build up a brand that defines and identifies the new urban space, the Municipality of Cascais invited the graphic designer Irina Blok, creator of the Google Android logo, to develop a visual identity for the Museums Quarter. The solution helps to communicate cluster's concept and was created as an open-source identity, which means that it can be adapted to any museum by other authors, thus establishing Cascais as a cultural reference (Blok, 2020). Besides creating the

cluster's logo, the communication strategy involved the production and dissemination of posters and news in newspapers and on the Internet, as well as the creation of a dedicated website (www.bairrodosmuseus.pt).



13. View from the Lighthouse to the Santa Maria House, the Counts of Castro Guimarães Museum and the Marechal Carmona Park.



14. Bicycle lane that connects the Fort of S. Jorge to the nuclear museums.

The Museums Quarter brand has a strong presence in the municipality's cultural promotion, being easily recognised by means of the spatial markers scattered throughout the urban space, such as signs and street furniture. While walking around the town, it is easy to identify the Museums Quarter, due to the insertion of its logo on lamp-posts, the installation of garden benches painted in blue and the distribution of advertisements and billboards throughout the town, often highlighting current or upcoming exhibitions and cultural activities. Moreover, the affiliation of each venue with the Museums Quarter is also emphasised at the entrance of each building, where the visitor can find a panel with a brief description.

To promote Cascais according to its visitors' interests (architecture, nature, history, or culture), the Cascais Town Council has developed a set of thematic routes, including the Museums Quarter Route. This itinerary begins in the Fort of S. Jorge of Oitavos and passes through the district's main facilities. Regardless of these formal itineraries, visitors have obviously the freedom to define their own path according to their motivations and to the existing mobility and accessibility solutions.

The core museums, located in the centre of Cascais, are close to each other and linked by a cycle lane. As the distance between the central facilities is five to ten minutes walking, this route becomes accessible by foot and for users with reduced mobility. On the other hand, museums and other cultural spaces located in a wider geographical perimeter are unlikely to be reached on foot, as they are more than five kilometres away and there is no public transportation connecting them. It is also possible to go through the Museums Quarter by car, since all the museums and cultural spaces have parking facilities nearby.

Until the creation of the Museums Quarter, the several spaces that constitute it were managed autonomously. Nowadays, they follow a management model that promotes network programming and seeks to preserve the specificity of each museum and cultural space, being the D. Luís I Foundation responsible for its organisation, communication and media management. In the last five years, there has been a great diversity of artistic activities within the Museums Quarter, which extends throughout

the year and contradicts the seasonality of tourism dynamics. The cluster's programme is based on a simple idea: a common theme approached differently by each museum (Carreiras, 2020).

In addition to the exhibitions and events held by each institution, several initiatives extend the Museums Quarter activity beyond the physical spaces, promoting actions of dissemination and cultural creation that deliver a new dynamic to different areas of the city. Among the initiatives aimed at promoting the artists' work, the Foundation's visual art programmes stand out. The transformation of Cascais into a centre of creativity draws on partnerships with institutions, artists and creative industries, involving the awarding of scholarships and the provision of spaces for artistic and literary residences.

The Museums Quarter cultural and educational programme involves the various museums and parks and engages guest artists, researchers, writers, curators and educators, fostering a multidisciplinary approach. As the President of the Town Council explains:

“The work with artists, on the rise of their careers or with careers already recognised, involves the mission of making the creative process accessible, bringing them closer to the community and disseminating their works. The proposals seek to meet the needs and expectations of the public, in this case, in particular, the younger population (in a school or academic context), through practical and dynamic incentives, which call for participation in some creative processes, and experimentation with techniques in the field of arts. There is an invitation to share the museum/gallery/landscape among artists, mediators and audiences.” (Carreiras, 2020).

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and during the lockdown phase, the D. Luís I Foundation continued the cultural and educational programme of the Museums Quarter at a distance, sharing a set of activities to be carried out at home, with the family (Fundação D. Luís I, 2020). In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, online 3D guided tours of six facilities in the Museums Quarter and their permanent and temporary exhibitions were created, allowing online access and improving users with reduced mobility experience.

2.4. Urban, architectural, tourism and media impacts

The location of the Museums Quarter took into account a large number of pre-existing cultural facilities and the need to revitalise this area. The concept brings different cultural areas together, namely Cascais, Estoril and Parede, through a common itinerary and language that translates into the signage and street furniture used next to the district's facilities (Cascais, 2020 a). Over the last few years, the municipality has made a substantial investment in the rehabilitation of Cascais' built heritage and in the creation of new cultural spaces, in order to promote tourism and to update the town's economic, urban and social profile. The vast majority of the facilities in the Museums Quarter are the result of contemporary interventions with the adaptation of heritage buildings into museums. Among the new facilities founded during the last decades of the 20th century stand out the Santa Marta Lighthouse-Museum, designed by architects Francisco and Manuel Aires Mateus (opened to the public in 2007), and Casa das Histórias Paula Rego by architect Eduardo Souto de Moura (inaugurated in 2009).

Included in the offer of thematic routes created by the Cascais Town Council, the aforementioned Museum Quarter Route connects the various facilities in a single itinerary. However, it would be interesting to explore other dynamics of thematic itineraries associated with the cluster, for example, by creating an architectural route of the Museums Quarter. This route would attract different audiences and, at the same time, highlight the exceptional architectural features which stand out in the district.

Other interesting hypotheses would be creating sound itineraries (as happened in Lisbon Architecture Triennale 2020), as well as landscape or exhibition itineraries.

Considering that the vast majority of the museum buildings is listed as being of Public Interest and Municipal Heritage, it becomes difficult to overcome accessibility problems, such as climbing the Condes de Castro Guimarães Museum tower, since it is impossible to install any lift. Virtual tours were already planned in order to minimise this limitation and acquired additional importance with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2014, the affluence to all the museums that are currently part of the Museums Quarter has been growing, demonstrating the visitors' high receptivity to this project (Cascais, 2020 b). The introduction of common ticketing in 2015 led to a 30% annual increase in visitor numbers over the last five years and enabled a better characterisation and categorisation of the audiences (Telles de Menezes, 2020). In 2019, the Museums Quarter reached 400 000 visitors (Cascais, 2020 b), the highest number since its inauguration with 190 000 visitors during 2015 (Telles de Menezes, 2020).

A survey of the news in the Portuguese and international media about the Museum Quarter in Cascais shows that 96% of the dissemination happened on a national scale, through different platforms such as newspapers, magazines and television. Nevertheless, the international media coverage is still not very expressive, only 4%.

This dissertation has also analysed the presence of the Museums Quarter on social media, observing that it is more substantial on Facebook. In fact, this is the platform where the cluster achieves the highest number of followers (17125 in October, 2020) and a more significant interaction, while on other social networks, such as Twitter and Youtube, it has a lower impact (1279 followers in October, 2020). However, such platforms constitute an excellent opportunity for the expansion of the brand's communication. Of the ten best museums in Cascais identified on the TripAdvisor website, seven correspond to museums of the Museums Quarter (TripAdvisor LLC, 2020). Considering the TripAdvisor's importance for the tourism sector (Kinstler, 2018), providing information and opinions on content such as museums, restaurants and activities, a specific page dedicated to the Bairro dos Museus would certainly favour the dissemination of the cultural cluster among potential tourists.

3. Conclusions

Through the research carried out for this Master's dissertation, it became clear that several pre-existing conditions favoured the creation and implementation of the Museums Quarter, namely the concentration of architectural heritage within a reduced geographical perimeter. Another advantage was its privileged location, which benefits from the flows generated by heritage and landscape (the various parks and the seafont) that surround and integrate this area.

The implementation of the Museums Quarter has generated a number of dynamics, at a social-cultural level and, above all, at the urban level. One interesting dynamic is the presence of contemporary art in the public space, combined with a broader promotion of the arts. The educational programmes articulated between all the district's facilities also contribute to the interaction between school communities and museum institutions. At the urban level, the creation of an itinerary encourages the discovery of qualified urban and architectural spaces in Cascais. It is also important to mention that,

although the construction of the bike lanes in the centre of Cascais has not derived from the implementation of the Museums Quarter, there is an interesting joint urban impact.

On the other hand, there are still several aspects which could be optimised, as well as opportunities to be explored in order to enhance the ensemble, reinforcing its national and international visibility and, consequently, its success. Equally important to attracting tourists is the communication of this concept. In order to increase the platforms for a dialogue with the audiences, it would be important to strengthen the presence of the Museums Quarter in the international media. Moreover, it is important to produce information leaflets about the neighbourhood and its programming, as well as to provide an updated map of the Museums Quarter, both in a physical and in a digital format with the existing itineraries marked. However, to ensure effective communication in the Museums Quarter, it is necessary to know its audiences. Priority should therefore be given to statistical treatment of visitors to the various facilities and to qualitative studies that allow a characterisation of the various audiences.

At the urban level, the Museums Quarter has the possibility of contributing to the definition of new routes and to the requalification of the public spaces that integrate them. To this end, it is essential to improve accessibility between the various facilities in the neighbourhood by creating a more extensive network of cycle paths or by offering specific public transportation. In this context, it is important to question whether the expansion of the Museums Quarter beyond the nuclear area has not overly diluted the very concept of the Quarter. In fact, by extending the cluster to facilities located outside the historic nucleus of Cascais, particularly in Estoril and Parede, it is no longer possible to perceive a territorial delimitation at the intermediate scale of the neighbourhood.

Thus, in order to avoid excessive geographical dispersion, it is considered that it would be more advantageous for the neighbourhood to evolve towards a densification of cultural spaces within the historical nucleus, rather than focusing on a territorial expansion of the concept. This strategy would make it possible to recover some of the idealised and later abandoned projects, such as the proposal for the Museum of Urban and Contemporary Art, in partnership with the Portuguese artist Alexandro Farto aka Vhils (Lusa, 2020), which would have a pioneering role at the national level, or the project for the Automobile Museum (Ganhão, 2019), both located at Praça D. Diogo de Menezes. It would also be interesting to explore the consolidation of the ensemble through the redesign of the thematic route that connects the buildings and the public space, also integrating in this route more expressive spatial and urban markers.

From the architecture point of view, this study concluded that contemporary interventions played a fundamental role in the creation of the Museums Quarter, having a strong potential for its future development. At the same time, the high presence of architectural heritage serves as a support for the new equipment and guarantees part of the identity of the whole. In fact, the museum buildings that stand out the most and are more appealing to visitors are the Lighthouse Museum of Santa Marta, designed by architects Francisco and Manuel Aires Mateus, and the House of Stories Paula Rego, by architect Eduardo Souto de Moura, which confirms that projects signed by renowned authors contribute significantly to the relevance of cultural facilities.

In terms of future developments, it is considered that a comprehensive audience study and a set of interviews with the leaders of the various local institutions would be important to outline the future of the Museums Quarter, in particular for its next five to ten years.

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Picture credits

1. Timeline of the opening of the main museums included in the Museums Quarter. Beatriz Luz, 2020.
2. Museums Quarter site plan in 2015. Irina Block, n.d. Source: www.fundacaodmluis.pt
3. Counts of Castro de Guimarães Museum (1931). Unknown author, n.d. Source: www.farol.com.pt
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12. Sommer House (2016). Beatriz Luz, 2020
13. View from the Lighthouse to the Santa Maria House, the Counts of Castro Guimarães Museum and Marechal Carmona Park. Beatriz Luz, 2020
14. Bicycle lane connecting the Fort of S. Jorge to the nuclear museums. Beatriz Luz, 2020