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Abstract:
The ‘birth’ of concrete prefabrication in Portugal: Pioneer examples in Lisbon and Porto

Construction industry is a major economic sector in contemporary society, as recent crises prove it beyond doubt. However, if its importance is recognized, a set of consistent studies on its history and development is still missing, not so in a worldwide view but mostly with regional perspectives that can relate technology to local characteristics and conditions.

Mainly after World War II building prefabrications had a major increase all over Europe as it could help rebuilding large devastated areas in less time than conventional construction and also because it allowed new uses for the ‘out of business’ war industries. As Portugal didn’t participate in WWII, it remained apart from this industrialization implementation. Nevertheless architects and engineers aimed the construction rationalization that such a fabrication method could bring. From foreign references mentioned in national publication to architects and engineers communications in professional and scientific meetings, desire of prefabrication implementation in Portugal is evident.
This paper aims to contribute to the history of construction industry in Portugal, focusing in concrete prefabrication sector, and in its pioneer examples - in the late 60 and early 70, prior to 25 April revolution. Based on archival sources (first examples building permits), interviews with people related with those experiences (architects, engineers and foreman) and the papers presented in 1948 First Architects’ National Congress and in 1968 First National Conference on Prefabrication we intend to trace concrete prefabrication roots in Portugal, from first low tech and experimental examples to the birth of a new industry.


Member of the Board of ‘Architects without Borders – Portugal’ (ASF-P); Member of the ‘Construction History Society’ (CHS); Member of ‘Portuguese Society for Studies on Construction History’ (SPEHC); Member of the Portuguese Association for the Urban Rehabilitation and Heritage Protection (APRUPP).

Integrated member of the Research ‘Center for Studies In Architecture and Urbanism’ (CEAU), in the following groups: ‘Architecture, City and Territory Heritage’ (PACT), ‘Centre of Communications and Spatial Representation’ (CCRE) and ‘Digital Fabrication Laboratory’ (DFL).

Research focus: Building Physics; Heat and moisture transfer in building materials; Building Rehabilitation and reuse; Sustainability; 20th Century Construction History; The rehabilitation of 20th century architectural heritage; Vernacular architecture; The social role of architecture; Legislation applied to building construction; New technologies, building construction and rehabilitation; E-learning and ICT.
Relevant Publications:


VALE, Clara P., e Vitor ABRANTES. (2014). "An earlier example of Portuguese concrete prefabrication, the 'Torre da Boavista' condominium in Porto." Sustainable Housing Construction - 40th IAHS World Congress on Housing, Funchal, Madeira


