Editorial Introduction: Architectural Projections of a ‘New Order’ in Interwar Dictatorships

Roger Griffin
Oxford Brookes University
rdgriffin@brookes.ac.uk

Rita Almeida de Carvalho
University of Lisbon

The genesis of this special issue lies in the initiative of Rita Almeida de Carvalho, post doctoral research fellow in cultural history under Salazar at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon (ICS) to visit Roger Griffin (History, Oxford Brookes University) in May 2013 after reading his Modernism and Fascism. Though that volume was concerned predominantly with making an elaborate case for seeing the totalitarian experiments of Fascism and Nazism within the wider context of socio-political and aesthetic ‘modernism’, as a specialist in the inter-war period of her own country, Rita immediately grasped its potential relevance to a radical reappraisal of the nature of cultural production under Salazar’s dictatorship. His regime was assumed by many scholars in Portugal and beyond (often working with Marxist premises) to be fascist and by the same token reactionary, and hence hostile to the ethos of modernity and any sort of ‘progressiveness’. Almeida de Carvalho, on the other hand, saw Salazarism as too rooted in traditional social and Catholic visions of society to be fascist, and yet at the same to be attempting in its own way to institute an alternative modernity, and secure the institutional bases for a stable, productive and uniquely Portuguese future.

Her own work had independently confirmed that, even if Salazar’s Portugal was not fully fascist, some of its most forward-looking artistic elites and social theorists aspired to take advantage of the suppression of liberal democracy and the increasingly authoritarian state to pioneer a dynamic synthesis of conservatism and modernity so as to realize its own ideal of a healthy society. This would replace the stagnation, backwardness and anarchy of a fledgling democratic Portugal with a corporatist, Catholic, but rejuvenated and modern
state, capable of defending the nation from the twin threat posed both by communism and the most ‘pagan’, radical, and socially disruptive forms of fascism. From this perspective, it was not just cynical propaganda that led the regime which emerged from the new constitution of 1933 to be baptized *Estado Novo*, the New State. It was chosen also, at least for Salazar and some within his political, intellectual and creative elites to signal the institution of Portugal’s own ‘third way’: not fascism’s third way between liberal democracy and Bolshevism, but a hybrid of reactionary conservatism with revolutionary fascism. It was in the aspiration of some architects to demonstrate through additions to the built environment the ethos of innovation and regeneration that corresponded to Portugal’s peculiarly ‘parafascist’ third way that Almeida de Carvalho had sensed an affinity between the creation of the totalitarian ‘modernist state’—which according to Griffin’s analysis, was the ultimate goal of Fascism and Nazism—and elements of original synthesis visible in the state architecture and urban renewal of Salazar’s regime after it had assumed an openly dictatorial form.

The result of the Oxford meeting was the organization at ISC in May 2014 of the workshop ‘Politics and Aesthetics on the Move: The Uses of Architecture in Fascist and Dictatorial Regimes’. This event brought together Rita Almeida de Carvalho with Roger Griffin, Aristotle Kallis (History, University of Keele), and Sultana Wahnón (Theory of Literature, University of Granada), for presentations on architectural developments in Hitler’s Germany, Mussolini’s Italy, Salazar’s Portugal, and Franco’s Spain respectively, chaired by Professor António Costa Pinto (ISCTE). It was to further explore the thesis that parafascist regimes reflected in some projects of architectural and urban renewal their underlying kinship with the more radical socio-cultural modernist experiments of the two fascist states, that the participants decided to invite submissions on the interwar architectural scene in Brazil and Argentina. The plan was to devote a special issue of *Fascism* to architectural modernity in Germany and five ‘Latin’ societies in the inter-war period, one fascist (Mussolini’s Italy) and four widely seen, if not as parafascist, then as influenced by fascism. The articles

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1 Parafascism here refers to interwar dictatorial regimes that adopted some of the trappings and policies of the two fascist regimes but without the ultimate totalitarian goal of a total transformation of society, which in the long run would have demanded the destruction of traditional elites, social structures and religious institutions on a par with Bolshevism. See: António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis, ed., *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe* (London: Palgrave, 2014).

2 This topic is explored in Chapters 6, 8, 10 and 11 of Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave, 2007).