

EXHIBITION AND SPORTS HALL 1979-1987, Braga – Portugal

Coauthor Eduardo Trigo de Sousa

Client Braga Municipality
Engineering J. A. Ferreira Crespo and A. C. Palhoto (structures), António Escameia (metallic structures), Roberto Pereira Branco (electricity), J. A. Almeida Torres (water), J. Rodrigues da Silva (mechanics).
Contractor Soares da Costa

Before joining the European Economic Community (CEE) in 1986 and receiving European funds for the construction of public equipments such as swimming pools, football stadiums, athletics tracks and pavilions, the Municipality of Braga decided to open a national competition for a cultural and sports complex having the first prize been attributed to the proposal of Gonçalo Byrne and Eduardo Trigo de Sousa.

The building is located in the municipal park of Braga, near the former municipal stadium 1st of May (still in use) within a magnificent park (*Parque da Ponte*) where along it, during the 70s, small rural buildings coexisted with large-scale marks. The original building housed a complex program with spaces dedicated to sporting activities, but also to exhibitions, fairs and congresses, thanks to the auditorium associated with the main structure. However still in use today, the building has been modified during the last years with interventions by other architects.

The urban fabric in this area of the city was very dispersed with no apparent urban order whereas the building due also to its scale and program intended to create a new order of relations within the territory as almost founding a new place by marking the territory with a cross, which was, in fact, the intersection of two axes or internal streets. Thought as a city in itself, establishing links between the adjacent urban areas and streets, it established a system that defines the subsequent hierarchies along which the program was structured.

The street running through East-West is wide and open, forming a glazed gallery in the continuity of the voids already sculpted by the preexisting elements. The other street, following the direction North-South, is similar to a wall which becomes perishable in its thickness, helping to overcome the existing difference of levels of the terrain. As in the classic urban solution, from the intersection of both streets result four corners, which correspond to the volumes housing the major part the program.

The major volume corresponds to the sports arena designed to a maximum capacity of 3000 people, corresponding to the number of seats available in the stands. The floor was studied to receive heavy weights and the arena could be easily transformable into the various sports modalities by introducing essential elements to each one, and even the stands could be lifted up in some parts to gain access to the spaces around the arena. Similarly, the first floor was totally designed allowing the assembly and disassembly of events to be carried out with the greatest convenience possible with proper load and unload pier and wide openings. The program was thus completed with a restaurant/cafeteria.

