

General Project Layout

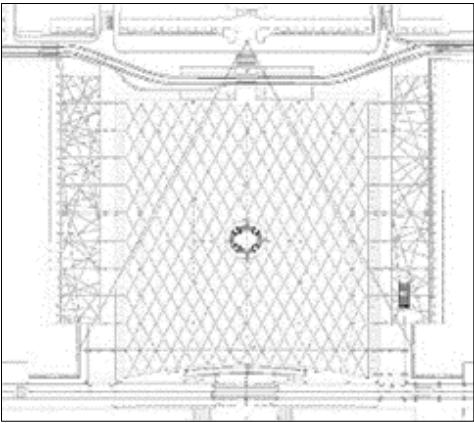
The project entails an extensive, complex rehabilitation of the public space along the waterfront of Lisbon's historical centre, one of the city's long-time aspirations, which began in 2006 and is still in progress.

Work on the waterfront's central zone has included the "Praça do Comércio" square, as well as Rua do Arsenal and Rua da Alfândega, the streets which provide access to it.

Beginning in 2009, the work was done in three phases, ending in 2017.



General view of the square in 2017 (photo by Bruno Soares)



Geometry of the square's surface

The design of the square's space was guided by a pre-defined “matrix” based on the alignment of the 18th-century road network, by the monumental axis delineated by the Rua Augusta Arch, by the "Estátua Real" statue and riverfront steps ("Cais das Colunas"), as well as by the metrics of the surrounding buildings' façades.

- Three features were of key importance in the project's concept and design:
- The central square
  - The diagonal mesh of the ground's surface
  - The steps transitioning from the central square to Cais das Colunas

**Central Square**

The "Estátua Real" statue was placed in the middle of a square space bordered by granite streets, and with a square porous surface (courtyard) with a diagonal mesh in limestone.

The square surface gives the statue a central position which it actually does not have in the metrics defined by the buildings.

**Diagonal mesh**

The diagonal mesh, built of stone, serves two purposes:

Through a slanted orientation to the square and its monumental axis, to accentuate both the diverging vanishing points in relation to the river

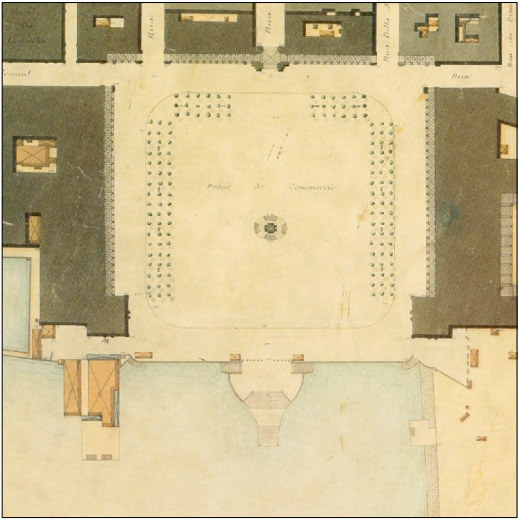
In addition, the mesh's size provides a relationship of proximity with people to help "grasp" the scale of the square's space.

**Transition from centralsquare to “Cais das Colunas”**

The transition to the riverfront “Cais das Colunas” is done through the square's central axis, reaffirming the city's historical connection to the river, which had been lost with the previous five roads to accommodate car traffic.

With four steps designed in large-radius circumferences, it aims to highlight the quay's presence from inside the square. The end of these steps is tied to the circle where the quay's surface is engraved.

The difference in height between the square and the quay is due to the tearing down of the building's west turret during construction, as evidenced by the west end of the square's surface.



Terreiro do Paço in 1911 (topographic survey of Silva Pinto)



*“It is odd to recall a beauty spot which disappeared, only for the same spot to then become even more beautiful. The same went for Évora when I went back there in the 21st century, after living there in 1974. The same goes now for the Terreiro do Paço and the Cais do Sodré. It was a rainy and windswept day yet suddenly the sun came out. There were few people and a lot of space. I couldn't help wishing such inviting - and lonely - places were crowded. Lack of people is a good sign in a city. Places which today seem spacious or poorly laid out quickly fill up and prove to be unsuitable. The River Tagus is pretty, but the city of Lisbon is prettier. The Terreiro do Paço recalls the earthquake and is a soothing expanse of stone, which fears neither water nor earth. Formerly it was merely where the city ended. Now it starts there. And Lisbon is once again where you end up, and from where you do not always have to be leaving.”*

Miguel Esteves Cardoso, writer and journalist Article in the “Público” newspaper.