

MERCADO DAS NAÇÕES
LISBON, PORTUGAL
2025–2019

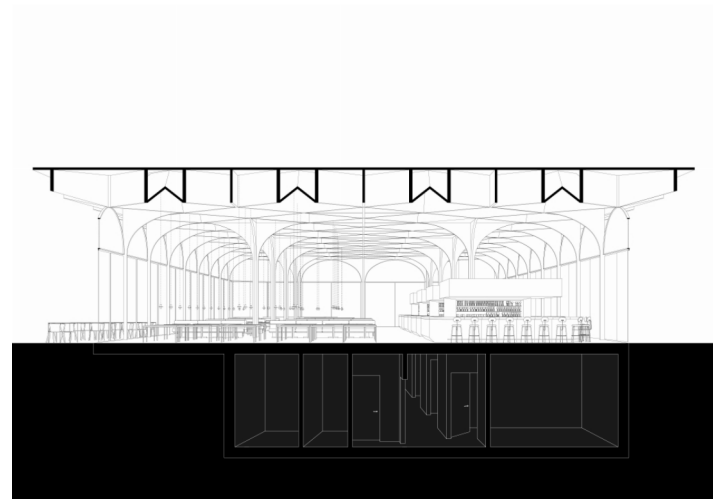
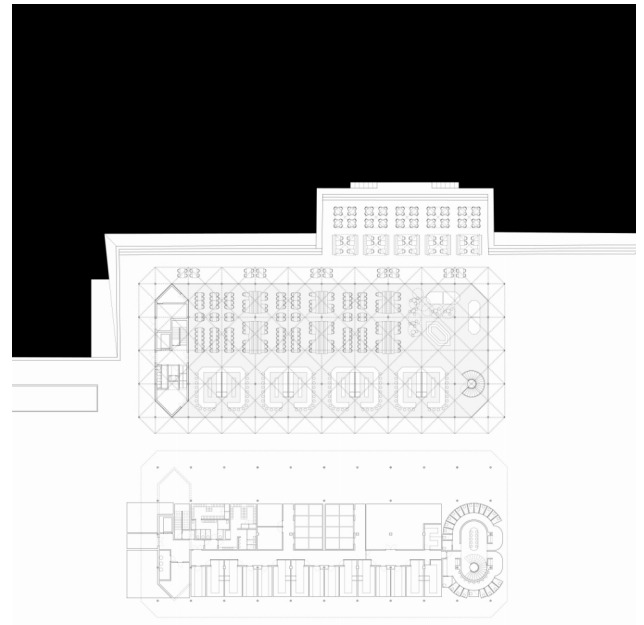
Located on the waterfront precinct of the former Lisbon Expo '98 World Exhibition, the programme of the Mercado das Nações (Market of Nations) consists of a large food hall catering for both local and international gastronomy, with an informal atmosphere that follows a concept similar to other such complexes emerging in various cosmopolitan centres in Europe.

Although relatively recent in historical terms, the exhibition precinct is, paradoxically, one of the most recognisable and characterful spaces in the context of the city and the modern history of Portugal. The symbolic character of the place rests not only in the successful consolidation of the master plan, but in a group of prominent buildings and their authors, notably Álvaro Siza's remarkable Portuguese Pavilion. The site is the old Olivais dock, a seaplane airport built in 1938 and decommissioned in the 1950s, that was renovated and reclaimed for Expo '98. Its bevelled retaining walls, built in a honeycomb stereotomy of solid limestone, include an access ramp for the ships and aircraft, which is adjacent to the boundary of the future building.

The project brief called for a highly transparent pavilion-like building able to easily mediate the transitions between indoors and outdoors. In terms of programme, the market building functions on two floors, namely a basement with public restrooms, kitchens and technical areas, and a ground-floor level with the dining hall. The layout of the latter comprises a row of food outlets along the north façade and sitting areas towards south, with the outdoor terrace overlooking the dock.

Conceptually, the design tries to critically revisit the typology of the 'market hall', seeking to create bridges in terms of place, typology and history, while keeping in mind the type, in itself, as an evolved one. From this vantage point, and although this is not a market in the strict sense but a food hall, the function clearly emerges from the need to cover the commercial activity of the open market, drawing on its predecessors from the 19th-century onwards with an architecture that led to increasingly larger metal-structure spans using cast iron and large glazing panes. Thus, still nowadays, the market is implicitly a steel building —light, transparent and, given its public nature, easily accessible to all.

The design adopts a certain figurative dimension derived from the spirit of the late International Style, the so-called 'neo-Gothic modern', whilst using a lexicon that revives the interstices of postmodern language. In this sense, the building is intended as a tectonic celebration of large-span steel construction without, however, yielding to the techno-scientific impulses of so-called 'high-tech'. The crisscrossing of the rolled steel arches generates a system of coffers with a structural rigidity, which, in turn, are anchored to the structural core where the technical area and loading bay are located, guaranteeing the pavilion's anti-seismic capacity.



Location: Parque das Nações (former Lisbon Expo '98), Lisbon, Portugal

Client: Multifood Group

Scope of services: Architecture

Project brief: Dining hall for multiple outlets with capacity for 600 seats

Gross floor area: 1,270 sq. m (plus 1,140 sq. m basement parking)

Project status: 2019 (concept design) – 2025 (estimated completion)

Rendering: 4+Arquitectos