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Designing with the People,  
on the Street, Towards the City

1. This paper is focused on the project of 'Atelier da Rua' (Street Workshop), which goals are the transformation and the activation of ordinary public space using a participative methodology. Animated by a team of four architects of three generations, Atelier da Rua (fig.1) was one of the 10 projects selected by 'Ideias de Origem Portuguesa 2014' (Ideas of Portuguese Origin), promoted by Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Portugal, a competition looking for social entrepreneurship projects created by the Portuguese diaspora. The paper is divided into 2 major parts. Firstly we present a brief characterization of the main problems and objectives. Secondly the working methodology of Atelier da Rua.

2. Many areas in Portugal are marked by negligence, lack of ambition concerning investment, development, use and maintenance of streets. These situations illustrate the contradiction between an urgent need of architectural intervention and the scarcity of work for architects. It also demonstrates the instituted power incapacity to promote new strategies to transform and activate public space. Atelier da Rua assumes that citizens need to live the street in a positive way, recognizing and exploring its value (Bourdin, 2011). To reach this, we recognize the need of awareness and the involvement of local government representatives, street users, inhabitants and stakeholders (Jacobs, 1962). However, one of the main project challenges lies in the difficulty to reach communities, reinforcing their conception of the street as an important structure to improve the spatial and social quality of our cities. The generalized gap between people and their power to change and improve their street demands to question in a broad perspective: How is your street? In order to contribute to a possible answer, Atelier da Rua firstly aims to:

Secondly, we propose to create a street project methodology based on a conventional architectural design approach. Issues such as programming, architectural design, implementation/action, relation promoter/usufructuary (Quarioni, 1977) apply and overlap to a bottom-up approach based on a participatory process (Bourdin, 2011). These objectives anchor in the pursuit of dialogue between the different actors, namely: residents, owners, workers, local authorities, investors, stakeholders, and researchers. This approach will generate a platform that looks for the stakeholder's interest's conciliation. Simultaneously, alternative funding solutions are to be explored. The core working team embodies these principles by integrating other contributions from different areas of research and design practice.

Therefore, our ultimate aim is to approximate people of their power to transform the street. Thus all actors will be able to participate on the construction of their social

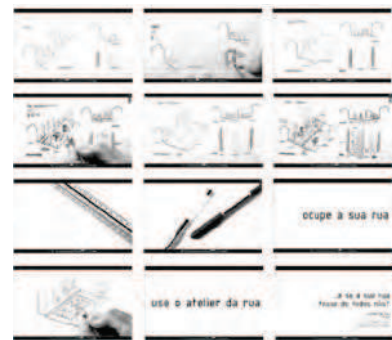


Fig. 1. Pita, M., Marques, P. & Mendes, P. (2014) Extract from the video of the project "se essa rua fosse minha..." - ATELIER DA RUA: programme, methodology and examples.



Fig. 2. Pita, M., Marques, P. & Mendes, P. (2014) Extract from the video of the project "se essa rua fosse minha..." - ATELIER DA RUA: methodology.



Fig. 4. Cruz, T. (2014) Case-study: street in a consolidated urban context - Rua do Salvador, Lisboa.

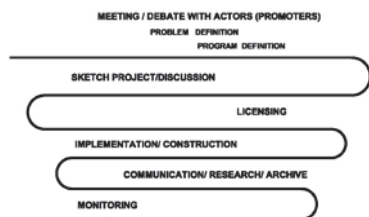


Fig. 3. Pita, M., Marques, P. & Mendes, P. (2014) Working methodology - ATELIER DA RUA.

and architectonic street identity. Atelier da Rua looks for a strategy with local and global impact that can improve the living quality of the street, the neighbourhood, the city and even the country.

In addition, we propose a website that is a dynamic database promoting communication between agents. It presents, explores, and compares in a systematic way the object of each project. This catalogue associated to the project methodology pretends to be a working tool for all actors dealing with architectural design and urban intervention.

3. The working methodology will establish a systematic perspective of each project (fig. 2, fig 3). Nevertheless the specific solutions will be based on the work and dialogue between citizens and experts, in a human, simple, accessible, understandable, and architectural tool (Alexander, 1977). Each project is case-sensitive to each particular context, time and space scale, but also submitted to a systematic approach. This enables a comparative analysis of different case-studies. The ongoing proposal for Rua do Salvador configures the specificity of a case-study of a street in a consolidated urban context (fig. 4, fig 5).

The proposed methodology is based on the use of classic architectonic tools (plans, sections, axonometric drawings), without neglecting a critical and active use of contemporary research and intervention tools to develop design schemes with collective authorships. Six main steps support the methodology:

- Meeting with demanding actors (promoters) and other groups of interest. Identify/ create the promoters representativeness structure (neighbourhood association); agreement signature; problem definition, diagnosis and data collection; and finally program definition.
- Production of the sketch project: - written part: note about the project context and the specific proposed design solutions; -graphic part: plan+section+axonometric of the existing situation; plan+section+axonometric of a minimum scenario; plan+ section+axonometric of a maximum scenario; -photographic gallery.
- Presentation of the final document and discussion of the solution, payment; project calendar of further phases, copy to the competent local authorities; licensing implementation/construction.
- An online database will be developed as communication, research and archive tool. The structure of this database will focus on: the physical and architectonic aspects, the participation models and the alternative funding solutions.
- Monitoring.
- The application of this methodology is not seen with a rigid sequence. It is rather seen as a non-linear process, full of advances and retreats, characterized by ongoing interplay of factors involved in the development of a participated synthesis.
- Once Atelier da Rua is running it will be crucial to identify the tools and indicators that allow a strategic monitoring of the project. It is also during this period that is possible to assess the design fitness between form, context (Alexander, 1964) and participation, to implement in future improvements

To conclude, Atelier da Rua, through a bottom-up and participative model, proposes to intervene in ordinary public spaces, streets in special, and to create a systematic catalogue of case studies, potentially helpful to other disciplines. The central goal is to enable the emergence of a participated and articulated architectural design that enriches different stakeholders in an active way. The potential of this process is not seen as the dissolution of architectural design, but rather a new strategy that reinforces its character and effectiveness.

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**Fig. 5.** Cruz, T. (2014) Case-study: street in a consolidated urban context - Rua do Salvador, Lisboa.

