

Siza ATLAS: Filling the Gaps for World Heritage

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Following the ICOMOS study “The World Heritage list: filling the gaps – an action plan for the future” and the Global Strategy of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC) encouraging State Parties to submit nominations on the 20th century Heritage, ICOMOS-Portugal presented an Ensemble of works of Álvaro Siza for the World Heritage (WH) Tentative List, in 2017.

Despite the international recognition of Álvaro Siza’s architecture, there is not yet a complete and systematic inventory of his built works. The information on his work is scattered, partial or incomplete. The existent literature focuses more on compositional issues of the design, and less on the constructive and technical dimension of his works, on the state of conservation of the buildings, or on possible threats affecting them.

In this framework, the scope of SizaATLAS project is to address a comprehensive inventory of all of Siza’s built works, and to develop a detailed documentation and analysis of the 18 buildings selected for the WH List. This research and the comparison with the oeuvre of other architects will result in a better understanding of the unique value of Siza’s architecture, in a national and international context. This will be key to establish the justification of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of his work, its national protection and an effective management system to support the instruction of Siza’s works nomination for the WH List.

The research intends to develop: 1) a COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM for open access, which will allow database management and exchange, as well as forms’ compilation and research dissemination; 2) a georeferenced INVENTORY of all the built works by Siza, in Portugal and abroad; 3) constructive DOCUMENTATION and analysis of the 18 selected built works, supported by archival research and fieldwork, including surveys (photographic, photogrammetric and 3D visualization), record of the state of conservation, surveys to users and threats that affect the assets; 4) RECOMMENDATIONS based on the data collection and its analysis, to help prepare the process instruction for protection at national level, and for the nomination for World Heritage. Also, proposals for comparative analysis at national, international and World Heritage are developed contributing for the establishment of the OUV, as well as for the future management and monitoring of the selected works; 5) DISSEMINATION and transfer of knowledge of the work of Siza is one of the main focus of SizaATLAS, at a large scale, which will allow the exchange and dissemination of his work. This broad and interactive dissemination together with the WH nomination can potentially impact at the economic, social and cultural sector (namely tourism), in a strong connection with local and regional communities and stakeholders (municipalities, heritage offices, managers and owners).

SizaATLAS research project contributes for knowledge through the study and enhancement of Portuguese architecture in an international framework; for the protection of Siza’s works at municipal, national and international level; and for a deeper reflection on its contribution to the 20th and even 21st century architecture, responding to the UNESCO Global Strategy; and assuring the diffusion and the preservation of Siza’s works for future generations.