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PRACTICE: Advancing New Tools and Models for Public Space and Placemaking.

How is your street?
Questioning and creating urban design tools towards more humanized places.

PITA, Maria João (ATELIER DA RUA); MENDES, Pedro (ISCTE-IUL, DINAMIA'CET-IUL); RODRIGUES, Ana Filipa (IS-UP)

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atelier.da.rua@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

A group of architects, urban designers and sociologist of different generations spread in Europe form Atelier da Rua (Street Atelier), a project that promotes a participated urban design methodology along the different phases of an urban design project.
Between urban design, architecture, sociology, participated processes and social entrepreneurship, Atelier da Rua was finalist of the social entrepreneurism competition IOP'2014 (PITA, 2014).

Atelier da Rua addresses different issues through the design production process of public spaces as activity productively engaged, contributing to the shift from the individual and the monumental to the collective, respecting commonplace activity of everyday life; and finally, the crucial role of globalization in 21st century research (FRASER, 2014).

This paper presents Atelier da Rua's methodology as an urban design tool and toolkit able to contribute among communities to raise awareness, empowerment and engagement of public and private actors, as advocated in (JACOBS, 1962), along the different phases of an urban design project.

The present paper is divided into 4 parts:
I. Introduction;
II. Methodology: a useful toolkit;
III. The toolkit in 3 steps;
IV. Conclusion.

I. INTRODUCTION

Streets comprise more than 80% of public space in cities (NACTO, 2013), but are they recognized as an important social space able to valorize public and private space? Are streets a place of inclusion or exclusion? Why are there so many architects "on the street" and so many streets without architects?

Many areas are branded by negligence, lack of ambition concerning investment, development, use and maintenance of streets. These situations illustrate the contradiction between an urgent need of urban design intervention and the scarcity of work for architects. It also demonstrates the difficulty for public administrations and decision makers to promote new strategies to transform and activate public space (PITA et al, 2014).

We defend that it is urgent to recognize and explore the value of our streets.

To achieve this, we recognize the need of awareness and the involvement of local administrations and decision makers, 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 their human and urban environment (MENDES et al, 2014).

The recognized gap between people and their power and willingness to change and improve their streets demands to question in a broad perspective: "How is your street?".

Raising this question Atelier da Rua pretends to contribute to more participated public spaces and common places, connecting local and global, tradition and innovation around one simplified methodology.

Atelier da Rua points first the need to:
- defend the street as a structural city element;
- stimulate and activate the street as a social-human-economic-environmental space vector;
- make the street a place of debate and construction of collective human processes;
- activate and implicate the street scale consciously in everyday life.

Second, Atelier da Rua proposes to create a street project methodology based on a conventional architectural design approach. Issues such as programming, architectural design, implementation/action, relation promoter/usufructuary (QUARONI, 1977) apply and overlap to a bottom-up and a top-down approach based on a participated process. In this way, Atelier da Rua aims to contribute to the reflection and research about action and action methodologies towards a regulated urbanism in reaction to the liberal urbanism without any social aim (BOURDIN, 2010).

Third, Atelier da Rua affirms the need of interdisciplinarity and mixture of skills on urbanism towards the management and development of our cities, and promotes the redefinition of the existing human, physical, technical and political resources (CABRAL, 2011), contributing therefore to tilt from an *island-working mode*, to a *network-working mode*.

These objectives anchor in the pursuit of dialogue between the different actors, namely: users, residents, owners, workers, local authorities, companies, investors, stakeholders, and researchers. This approach will generate a platform that looks for the conciliation of the different actors' interests. Simultaneously, alternative funding solutions are to be explored. Atelier da Rua embodies these principles by integrating other contributions from different areas of research and design practice.

Therefore, Atelier da Rua's ultimate aim is to approximate people of their power to transform the street. Hence, all actors will be able to participate on the construction of their social and architectonic street identity. Atelier da Rua looks for a strategy with local and global impact that can contribute to the improvement of the living quality of the streets, the neighborhoods, the cities and even the countries.

In addition, Atelier da Rua proposes the development of an open database promoting communication between actors along the different project phases and between the different local projects. It should present, explore, and compare, in a systematic way, the object of each

project. This catalogue associated to the project methodology pretends to be an available working tool for all actors dealing with urban design and urban intervention.

II. METHODOLOGY: A USEFUL TOOLKIT

Reacting to a liberal urbanism which has characterized the last three decades with a lack of place for a scientific approach, multiplication of actors and powers, generating too complex, unclear and incomprehensible operations and languages (BOURDIN, 2010), Atelier da Rua answering to local needs, contributes to projects of public space valorization triggered by local and dynamic citizens, associations, municipalities, companies, entrepreneurs, and other institutions through collective urban design projects, implicating private and public, local and global, tradition and innovative actors and tools along the different phases of the project, applying to the different local case studies the following methodology (Fig. 1) :

Phase 1 - a participated sketch (Fig. 2);
Phase 2 - a participated project (Fig. 3);
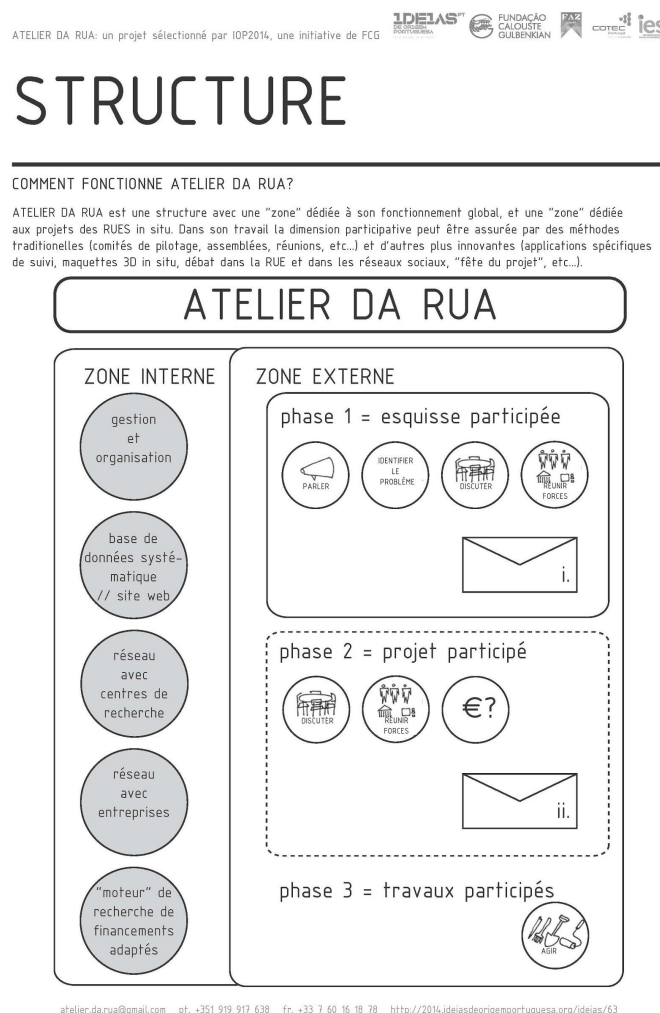*Phase 3 - a participated working site* (Fig. 4).

Fig. 1: Atelier da Rua, structure and methodology key phases

These three steps represent an urban design toolkit, able to develop and link local projects to a global dynamic, based on a simplified and accessible language, allowing easy comparison between case studies. A common and global base and approach able to generate different scenarios, projects and local solutions.

In each project phase, Atelier da Rua defends the experience of a participated process, valorizing each actor and their skills towards a dynamic of horizontal empowerment and confidence between actors, developing at the same time an accessible and synthetic urban design folder able to represent, objectivize and expose the problems and the proposed solutions to the different actors towards a co-built-work (ALEXANDER, 1977; BOURDIN, 2010).

The engagement, responsibility and valorization of the different actors in each project is crucial - users, associations, technicians, administration, politicians, entrepreneurs, institutions, outsider professionals, but above all citizens with different skills and sensibilities, all wanting to contribute to a collective work and conscious about the difficulties and need of common agreement to move forward. To do so, the clear valorization of all actors involved (citizens and professionals) is needed, as contributors to a horizontal platform of know-how accumulation and sharing. The work produced has a value that includes the time, knowledge and work of each actor directly involved, even if we understand the differences and difficulties between estimating the value of a *regular* work or an *oppus incertum* one (DUJARIER, 2014).

The implementation of the methodology of Atelier da Rua establishes the foundation stone on the production of architectural and urban design linked to a bottom-up and top-down glocal process and approach. This way, it is possible to generate efficient, citizen centered public spaces (streets), enabling the public awareness and confidence on the decisions, and generating sense of belonging. The apprehension of the specific context (local communities identities, program and resources) along with the effective strengthening of citizen participation on design decision will set the conditions to reach "partnership", the rung of the ladder where "power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders" (ARNSTEIN, 1969).

III. THE TOOLKIT IN 3 STEPS
Phase 1 - a participated sketch (Fig. 2):
This phase corresponds to the starting point of each street design project: an inclusive process of reflection that corresponds to the definition of the foundations and principles of the design project.

Within this phase, based on a horizontal dialogue and debate between the different implicated actors, the initial context observations, needs, and suggestions are exposed.

Since this phase of each project, the various actors' work together around the problems they all want to solve, facing together the management of conflicts and participating together to the development of concrete possible scenarios and a shared decision-making process.

With this phase we achieve: an approach and strong contact between actors; the establishment of notions of trust and respect about different knowledge and points of view; the experience of a participated process; a positive dialogue between different skills; the construction of a *win-win* perspective and engagement; the co-construction of a program; and the development of the sense of belonging and responsibility around a common and collective project and work.

In terms of first physical results, we will get an understandable folder constituted by a set of simplified reference boards: - 1 written note to contextualize the operation and proposed program; - 1 written note about the guide lines of the two proposed design scenarios; - 1 graphic urban analysis allowing the understanding of the integration of the site in a larger urban system and consequent impacts; - 1 base drawing of the current situation (plan, section, axonometry); - 1 drawing of a soft scenario (plan, section, axonometry); - 1 drawing of a hard scenario; - 1 gallery of photos participating to the memory of process; - 1 gallery of references reporting similar situation and parallel solutions in other world contexts; - 1 budget forecast for each proposed scenario; - 1 list about project funding options and models adequate to the context.

This urban design physical folder can also be produced in an environment of open workshop with moments of interaction and observation around this moment of more clear design production.
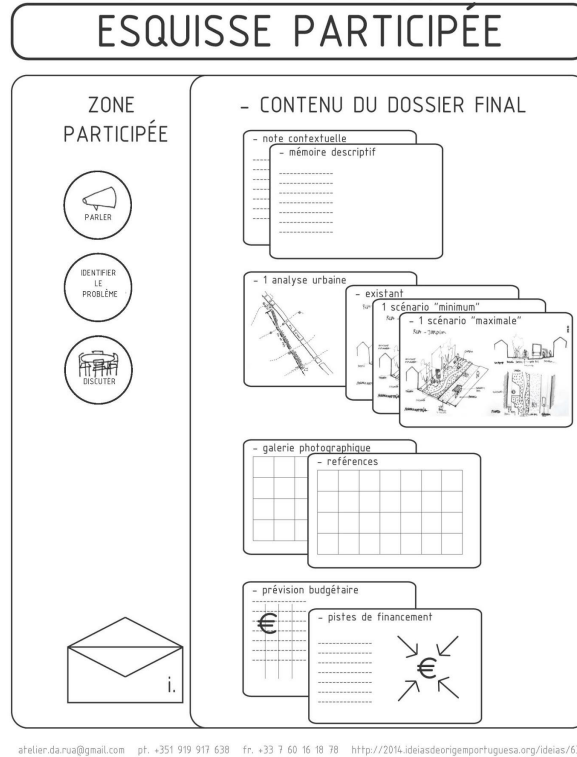
Fig. 2: Atelier da Rua, phase 1 – the participated sketch

Phase 2 - a participated project (Fig. 3):
This phase encourages the analysis, discussion and collective decision about the two proposals established in the previous phase 1. The goal is to produce collectively a definition of the urban design project's principles, program, funding and planning, moving forward together towards the working site.

This phase corresponds to the technical development of each street design project, based on the collective decisions and context conditions. This more technical phase, where the collective proposed solution will be draw in detail allows testing its technical feasibility.

Within this phase, key debate moments based on an horizontal dialogue between the different implicated actors will be promoted, in order to achieve an horizontal understanding and participation on project key decisions, for example its materiality, form, color, price, time, funding model, impacts, etc.

Also in this phase the various actors work together around the problems they all want to solve, and the collective project they want to build.

During this phase will also be promoted: a continuous approach and strong contact between actors; the establishment of notions of trust and respect about different knowledge and points of view; the experience of a participated process; a positive dialogue between different skills; the construction of a *win-win* perspective and engagement; the co-construction of the urban design project; and the development of the sense of belonging and responsibility around a common choices and a collective urban design project.

In terms of physical results, Atelier da Rua will generate in this phase an understandable folder constituted by a set of simplified reference boards: - 1 written note to contextualize the operation, previous choices, collective proposed program and urban design project; - 1 written note about the guide lines concerning the proposed design project; - 1 graphic urban analysis allowing the understanding of the integration of the site and proposed project in a larger urban system and consequent impacts; - technical drawings of the design project (plans, sections, axonometry); - 1 gallery of photos participating to the memory of process; - 1 gallery of references reporting similar situations and parallel solutions in other world contexts; - 1 budget forecast for the proposed design project; - 1 note about the funding model adopted.

This urban design project folder can be produced in an environment of open workshop with moments of interaction and observation around this moment of more technical design production.

PHASE 2

LE PROJET PARTICIPÉ

La phase 2 de chaque projet encourage l'analyse des propositions issues de la phase 1, permettant de prendre une décision collective en définissant les principes du projet à faire avancer ensemble.
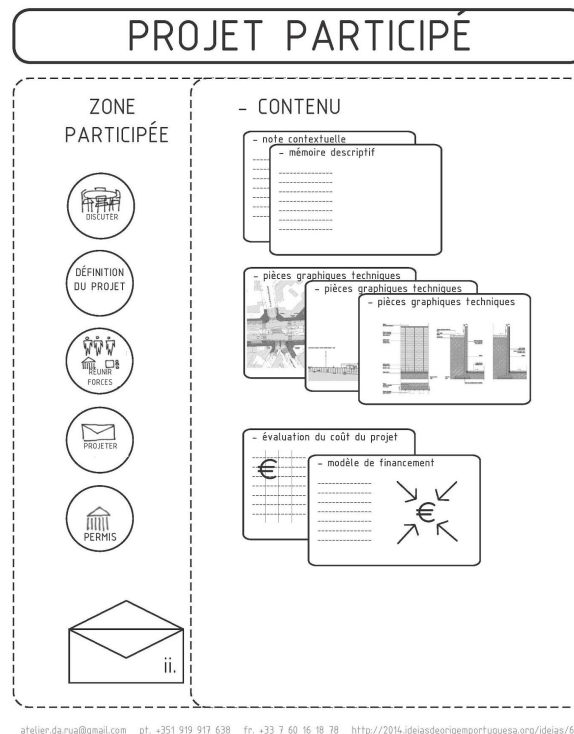
Fig. 3: Atelier da Rua, phase 2 – the participated project

Phase 3 - a participated working site (Fig. 4):
The final goal and success of the proposed methodology is to get together to the physical implementation of the urban design project on the site.

This phase encourages to bring the different actors to the working site in order to follow and when possible to participate on the material construction of the urban design project. The idea is to switch from a surveyed working site to a participated working site where the different actors can feel to be part of it, being able to participate through a direct or indirect input.

The main actors who pilot this phase are the working teams leading the implementation of the project on the site, but they will be strongly supported by all actors engaged positively in the operation.

This phase corresponds to the effective construction of the urban design project based on the collective decisions and context conditions. This very technical but also very social phase allows promoting rich actions of capacitation between all actors. For example the moment of

placing a tree alignment, a pavement, a line of stones or street lights, etc., are key moments to be together in order to understand the difficulties to arrive to this moment, understand better in what it consists, and being proud to contribute to its achievement.

Within this phase key debate moments will be promoted based on an horizontal dialogue between the different implicated actors, in order to an horizontal understanding and participation on project key decisions, for example: last working plans validation; need of initial project changes due to new evolutions not previewed or lack of information on previous phases; prototypes validation; visits to involved factories; exercises or meals together with the daily workers; workshops of laying together some working elements such as trees, stones, furniture, etc.

Also in this phase the various actors work together around the problems they all want to solve, and the project they want to build.

During this phase will also be promoted: a continuous approach and strong contact between actors; the establishment of notions of trust and respect about different knowledge and points of view; the experience of a participated process; a positive dialogue between different skills; the construction of a *win-win* perspective and engagement; the co-construction of the urban design project; and the development of the sense of belonging and responsibility around common choices and a collective urban design project.

In terms of physical results we will arrive finally to the physical realization of the collective design project on site also accompanied by a physical folder constituted by a set of simplified reference boards in order to assure the memory of the process: - 1 written note to contextualize the operation, previous choices, collective proposed program, urban design project and working site decisions; - 1 written note about the guide lines concerning the proposed design project and the final result; - 1 graphic urban analysis allowing the understanding of the integration of the site and its new form in a larger urban system and consequent impacts; - technical drawings of the built design project (plan, section, axonometry); - 1 gallery of photos participating to the memory of process; - 1 gallery of references reporting similar situations and parallel solutions in other world contexts; - the real budget of the participated urban design project; - 1 critical note about the funding model adopted, facing its positive and negative consequences.

In parallel with the working site, this urban design project folder can be produced in an environment of open workshop with moments of interaction and observation around this period of concretization of the proposed urban design project on the site.
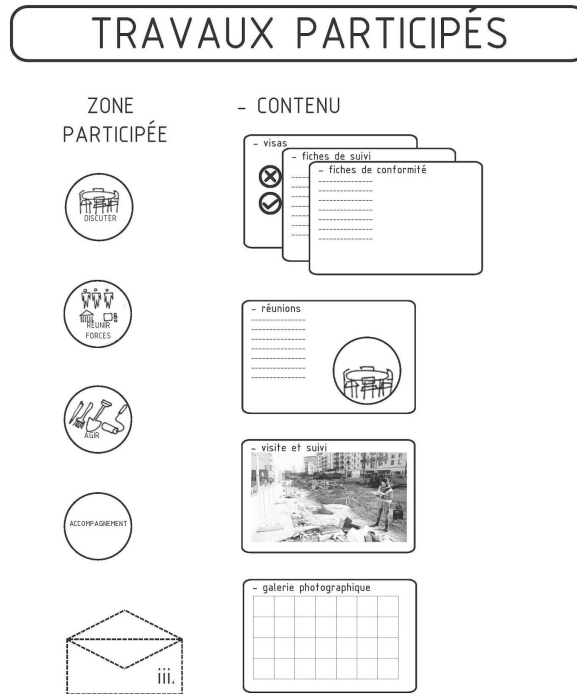
Fig. 4: Atelier da Rua, phase 3 – the participated working site

IV. CONCLUSION

The urbanism as been focused on doing without giving space to questioning (BOURDIN, 2010), but today there are renewed social and technical signs of pressure against this o way of operating: Tactical Urbanism (LYDON, 2015) with its light but strategic interventions, testing the limits between the possible and impossible in the actual normative frame; Do It Yourself (DIY) tools as the Unlimited Cities DIY or the WikiBuilding - Open Architecture (RENK, 2014); Collaborative and Meet-Up Platforms to generate and accelerate new teams and ways of doing as the recent call made by the city of Paris re-inventer.paris; Participatory Budgeting (PB) proposed by municipalities all over the world through different ways of doing it, are affirming their levels of participation and hybridization as we are observing in the current Paris PB – "Madame la maire j'ai une idée", where citizens can merge ideas and doing it together with the city technical staff available to build-up together the project folders since the beginning of the process; but also the urban design methodology proposed by Atelier da Rua, a group of professionals but above all citizens, towards a participated and long term urban design and collective projects with the aim of approaching actors with impact on the understanding

and construction of our common urban environment (PITA et al, 2014). This and other movements and statements emerging and affirming themselves all over the world, act glocal in a more and more connected society, bringing to all fields the pressure of the network power in order to affirm the empowerment necessity and the masses wish to take part on the decision making process from the starting point. Among others, this different signs show that different urbanism related actors are able to face their lacks, wanting to develop open tools with common signature able to absorb multiple and dynamic questions more than affirm crystalized solutions behind an author signature, normalization and liberal market rules (BOURDIN, 2010).

Atelier da Rua, in-between a top-down and 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 overarching goal is to enable the emergence of a participated and articulated urban design tool 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, effectiveness and proximity to the ones who need.

Atelier da Rua is certainly not something original or brand new. Multiple reflections, proposals and acts on the field, in the past and in the present, relate to this approach and subject, but the theme about co-construction of the public space remains a promising field of study and action.

In this context, Atelier da Rua wishes to participate and contribute to glocal on-going reflections: Is Atelier da Rua methodology a small contribution to one urbanism of innovation and regulation? Is it a model of co-operation? Is it a tool towards a social urbanism? Is it a collective urbanism or a h'urbanism? Is it now time to affirm the change from the society of image and form to the society of empowerment and dynamic of sharing? Is it time to tilt from an *individual-ware* to a *common-ware*? What can means *nowadays-horizontal power*?

KEYWORDS
public places, urban design tool, participated methodology, street, Atelier da Rua

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