Social and Cultural Design in Monchique

CiAUD



Participatory multidisciplinary project in the areas of urbanism, architecture and design with the support of social sciences. It is about rethinking and requalifying localities and people's life in the contemporary rural environment through strategies of valorization of the local culture.

Principal Investigator / PI

Prof. Designer Rita Filipe

Integrated Researchers of CIAUD

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Keywords

Ruralidade, design social, design cultural, sustentabilidade, inovação, Monchique

Partner Institutions

University of Algarve University of Aveiro University of Copenhagen

Expected Future Partner Institutions

City Hall of Monchique Monchique Parish Council Crafts Association of Monchique

ABSTRACT + IMAGES

This is a collaborative project working on cultural and social innovation in Monchique. With a focus on contemporary rurality, it aims at rethinking contemporary cultures and societies through design. What role can design play in rethinking contemporary cultures and societies? The project takes issue, in particular, with rethinking the value of rurality through a local cosmopolitanism.

Through proposals in the fields of architecture, equipment and product design, communication design, fashion design and interactive design, the project envisages an updating of the interest of Monchique, a rural town in inner Algarve, with valuable cultural heritage and an ageing and gradually diminishing population.

Monchique is a village in Southern Portugal, with 2,300 inhabitants, located between the mountains and the sea, with vibrant craft and agricultural traditions and at risk of desertification. Monchique has also suffered the effects of dramatic fires in the region. It is therefore urgent to repopulate in the most appropriate way; to discover new solutions capable of attracting and retaining populations and to revitalise a traditional culture at risk of extinction.

Dynamising local practices and framing a new sense of rurality in the 21st century is key to retaining and attracting younger inhabitants. The project aims at contributing by working towards valuing the existing material and immaterial heritage, encouraging the sharing of knowledge and social collaboration amongst local communities that are nowadays characterised by important cultural diversity. By implementing new practices that show the opportunity and sustainability of traditional practices; by introducing new concepts and social and cultural connections, the project will foster the revalue and reinvention of life in Monchique's rural environment.

We propose to work towards a mountain and village networking with the world, sharing social practices and cultural production, Nature, high and low technology, and sustainability. To promote the vision of a cosmopolitan and dynamic rurality, today much closer to the urban imaginary. As an integrated experience for a global network of collective innovation and sustainability projects.

The project builds up on the dynamic already launched during a multidisciplinary workshop in 2019, under the coordination of Rita Filipe, with an architecture professor and a design professor, and undergraduate students of Urbanism, Architecture, Product Design, Communication Design and Fashion Design, who went to Monchique on fieldwork for a

After this first stay, we consider it is pertinent to continue this project in order to deepen the study and implement new projects that reflect on situations previously observed. It is the case of the connection and interconnection between people of different nationalities living in the mountains and in the city; strategies for mutual assistance and collaboration in the field of social design; provide support in situations of isolation in the mountains, mapping their presence there and promoting moments of social and cultural contact; promoting strategies for communicating knowledge about material and immaterial culture. These are needs that have already been assessed during the first short stay; before interruption by the end of the semester and the beginning of pandemic.

Regional points of interest have already been mapped, including water courses, location of artisans, workshops or art galleries, structures that can be equipped with new technologies, among others. Architects and urban planners have already carried out visits, research, photographs, films etc. Ideas were recorded on the ground and as issues emerged through naturalistic and participatory observation. Meetings were held with municipal institutions and local producers, mental and subjective maps were drawn up marking local production, points of architectural, landscape and environmental interest in the region. New equipment and objects to be produced with the craftsmen were sketched out and photographic records were collected. Artisans' life stories were started, inquiring about their motivations, intentions, individual and social meanings of their production, which should be extended to other social and cultural protagonists. On returning to the school, concepts and visions were shared, project proposals were discussed, and in the end all the work has been brought together in the same illustrative map of a joint intervention, and a series of drawings outlining the first ideas.

This theme fits in the Bauhaus and Shantiniketan University purposes, in the sense that it puts the students working about today's rurality, inserted in the locality under study, in a multidisciplinary perspective by the meeting of all arts, by the 'aggregation of all living forces' (Cantz 2009, p.17) as in Hans Meyer. Working with populations, reconciling traditional production and contemporary consumption, blurring the gap between erudite and popular culture - which here means blurring the gap between urban and rural culture, towards a local cosmopolitanism, as in Tagore's concerns.

OBJECTIVES

- To retain the population in a rural region in process of desertification.
- To teach students the practice of participatory social and cultural projects, of social and environmental sustainability, in line with the real life of people.
- To bring academia and civil society closer together, applying the theoretical and practical knowledge acquired in class to the social, economic and environmental needs of the population.
- To create employment opportunities and entrepreneurial dynamics in agreement with the objectives and opportunities pointed out by this project.
- To produce projects suitable to the productive capacity of the region, actively contributing to the development of the region and the valorisation of local handicrafts.
- We think that including students can contribute to a better interaction with the younger population of Monchique.
- This project meets the assumptions and objectives of the New European Bauhaus - Green Deal, and may compete for the New European Bauhaus awards.



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SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE FOR THE DISCIPLINE

This is a research project developed by students and teachers, working side by side, sharing experience and work processes as an open book in the teaching of design practice.

The multidisciplinary scope of the project, bringing together students from all degrees will illustrate what joint project work will look like in the future, actively contributing to the formation of multidisciplinary teams.

Social participation is a way of listening to contemporary needs, and a project opportunity to be developed in collaboration with the social sciences, as key tools in working with the population, in a humanist and sustainable perspective in all its aspects.

EXPECTED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT

To contribute to maintain and increase the amount of population in a rural region threatened by desertification.

To contribute to more balanced human and environmental relations – preventing aditional demographic decline in the mountains is crucial for the prevention of fires, amongst other aspects of sustainability.

To improve communication of and in the region - the isolation of the uplands contributes to the progressive distancing of craftsmen - who live isolated, with few business opportunities, and see their production cyclically destroyed by fires.

To create job opportunities and entrepreneurial and sustainable dynamics among young people, in line with the objectives and opportunities pointed out by this project.

Sharing and updating the material culture and local know-how are instruments that give meaning to new collective practices and local traditions and boost local development and their active presence on the global scene, contributing to the settlement and increase of the population in the rural environment.

RESEARCH PLAN AND TASKS

The phase of diagnosis or recognition of the territory has already started with one student from each degree programme and two researchers, two of whom underwrite this proposal - Designer Rita Filipe and Architect Jorge Mealha. The students were chosen by a teacher from each FAUL project area, among undergraduate students, and one of them, now collaborating on this proposal, continued with this theme for his Master's thesis. We think that we can continue with the same model, working with undergraduate or master's students who want to pursue this theme in their studies. We think that we will have no difficulty in calling upon students, due to the topicality of the theme, within the scope of social design and cultural design, the opportunity to intervene in a real situation, and the practical viability of the project, supported as one of CIAUD's Embryo Research projects.

In line with the anthropology of design (Gatt and Ingold, 2013) the project will allow us to refine collaborative methodologies that bring together, in the same research venture, design, anthropology and local knowledge. This phase of the research will begin with the holding of at least one focus group with local actors/agents where the diagnosis made by the team during their first stay in Monchique will be shared and updated. After the analysis of its results, a participative workshop will allow the researchers (design & anthropology), students and local actors to map together the surveys to be carried out, with the researchers looking for partnerships (local support) to carry out tasks that will allow the defined objectives to be achieved.

To this end, we propose an initial phase of deepening the theoretical framework of the research within the scope of social and cultural design.

Afterwards, we will go again to Monchique for two periods of one week during one year, with students and teachers. Working to design situations of social sharing, create new interests for local daily life, and stimulate projects of creation and enjoyment of cultural heritage. Working on ideas and projects for social dynamization; integrating isolated people in the mountains into a shared experience of the region; directing scattered and ill-informed visitors; updating, viability and visibility of the craftsmen's work; arousing new interests for new notions of rurality in the younger, today more cosmopolitan and informed residents.

Thus, it is proposed to retake the observation and diagnosis phase, in a first week of fieldwork, promoting interviews and surveys of the local population, making an initially non-participatory observation of local customs and traditions, studying possibilities of relationships between different generations and social groups (foreigners), assessing technical and logistical resources for the implementation of new projects (workshops, exhibition halls, public squares, abandoned buildings, disused productive structures) and ascertaining how to communicate in the future a new dynamic agreed upon there.

We aim at working directly with local workshops, the Monchique City Council, artisans' associations, local independent entities with alternative projects in progress, within the scope of the production of resources and sustainable practices, local cultural associations, trying to work as a network in the region valorisation.

The research will be developed in a qualitative or interpretative perspective, in direct contact with the population, in a context in which both students and inhabitants are simultaneously interpreters and constructors of meanings (Usher, 1996, p.19). However the designer's work is iterative, and moves between fieldwork, the design studio and the college (Drazin, in Otto and Smith, 2013, p. 34).

The project phase, alternated with fieldwork trips, will be carried out at FAUL, in an office available for that purpose. It will be divided into a preliminary study, a basic project and an execution project. Starting from a study that is common to all the areas, from where it is expected that work proposals will emerge in each study area that will be opened and demultiplicated into projects of urban intervention, equipment, services and communication.

We hope to produce new urban design, mapping points of interest, establishing urban connections, proposing areas of intervention or rehabilitation, seeing the region as a sustainable urban? system; in the field of product design - producing urban environment projects and urban furniture design, updating local craftsmanship working close to the craftsmen; in the field of communication and interaction design - communicating the region, publicising services and interests, designing communication and information networks; in the field of fashion design - working with the craftsmen to produce local textiles, embroidery and clothing.

The prototyping phase of equipment, product and communication models will be carried out with the local support of workshops and craftsmen, but also with the support of the faculty's workshops for the execution of scale models and study models.

The 2nd week of fieldwork - will be an opportunity for development, gauging of objectives and suitability of solutions, testing of proposed solutions on site. In the middle of the stay there will be an exhibition of the work done in the Galeria Municipal de Monchique to discuss the actions and solutions proposed, with local population. By the end of the week we will try to implement some of the solutions approved by the population, feasible in good time.

The final beneficiary of the project will be the local population, with the fundamental and continued support of Monchique Municipal Council and the Parish Council as partners. And the country at large, if indeed we are indeed able to communicate change and a renewed interest in the Monchique region and the contemporary rural environment.

The project will culminate in presentations at conferences, promotion of exhibitions, publication of articles and sharing of experiences with the wider community.

Timeline:	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	September
Project launch:											
Documental research, literature review, case study research and analysis											
Preparation of fieldwork - phase 1:											
Execution of the fieldwork (phase 1):											
Development of the project in atelier:											
Implementation of the fieldwork - phase 2:											
Final exhibition of the works:											
Project closing seminar											

EXPECTED SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

Profiting for the partnership with the University of the Algarve, we propose to hold a scientific meeting in Monchique, open to the population and all the local institutions and associations, to present the accomplished work and to contribute to the successful implementation of the project.

We propose the publication of a book about the project, reflecting on the theoretical and practical aspects of the research. This book would have the theoretical contribution of all the participating teachers and all the practical projects developed in collaboration with and by the students.

This project meets the assumptions and objectives of the New European Bauhaus - Green Deal, and may compete for the New European Bauhaus awards, as this theme is in agreement with several different calls for papers and projects.

BUDGET: 7.500 euros

2 week Stay - 14 nights:

- Mountain shelter 60 euros / 3 teachers / 3 rooms October 2,520 euros Casa dos Batalin 150 euros / 6 students / 3 rooms October 2 100 euros
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 External consultant accomodation: 300 euros (Prof. Elisabete Figueiredo, University of Aveiro)

Transportation:

- 9 train journeys X 4 = 1,080 euros

Material to support the execution of the project:

- Large format prints (work and exhibition in Monchique) 300 euros
- Paper, pen, digital media for presentations 100 euros
 Cards for models, markers, cutters, glues, paints, other materials 100 euros
- wood, iron and others building materials for project prototyping 500 euros

External consultant fee: 500 euros (Professor Jorgen Primdahl, University of Copenhagen)

Total value of the proposal - 7,500 euros