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PHD STUDY REPORT

Maps ‘Tailor Made’ to the Body of Places: Design Strategies Against the Indifference of Representation

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OVERVIEW This research upholds the Designer’s mediator role in the representation of places and drawing as its privileged tool. In this sense, we

question if each place demands its own representation, maps ‘tailor made’ to the body of places.

We have adopted a method of research through art and design. The different scopes of intervention and their implications have been mapped regularly through diagrams (mind maps). Afterwards, design strategies have been applied, in the representation of places.

The aim is to identify strategies for a significant and different representation of places that can be put into practice by other designers, elsewhere.

The observational drawing emerges as an experience enhancer, and it is not dictated by the cartographic representation codes. The intervention areas are the following: freedom of choice, the significant experience of drawing *in situ*, and the place that dictates its own image.

It goes from drawing as a representational medium, to drawing as a way of knowing places.

KEYWORDS: drawing and representation, drawing and knowledge, spirit of place, landscape drawing, map design

Introduction



This research studies the importance of images as representations of places. In particular, the relationship between maps (as representations of a place) and the places themselves, questioning the role of design as cultural mediator (Branco & Providência 2018) in this process.

George Steiner, in a quest to circumscribe the identity of Europe as a union, tells us to draw the coffee shops’ maps, hence getting one of the essential markers of the idea of Europe (2004, 26). It identifies the coffee shop as a meeting place for different people, alluding to the richness of the confrontation of cultural diversity.

At a time of disunity marked by the Brexit and the rise of populist and nationalist movements seeking to close borders, this idea of mapping the richness and diversity seems to be constantly losing ground. When this idea is confronted with the most massified vehicles of representation and mapping of the territory and landscape, the identity impoverishment and indifference are also manifested.

Some examples can be pointed out: the streetview mode of Google Maps, with a special ability to immerse in the landscape, shows the world from the inside of a sphere in an experience that can be expanded by the use of VR (virtual reality) glasses; Instagram, shaped by a continuous cascade of images of places that appear at a vertiginous speed, superior to the velocity that we are able to follow up; and finally, the navigation apps that benefit from this technological ubiquity, made possible by the spread of smartphones and wearables – devices that can permanently collect geographical data like

localization and movement, photos, sound or video from the places and algorithmically organize the resulting meta-data, turning it into maps.

On Google Streetview, the representation of the city is created through automatic photographic systems that capture the facades, indifferent to the cities in question. The Instagram frames and the filter palette tend to make the images more and more the same, dividing them by typologies like *summer*, *food*, *selfies*. They function as an index that demands a caption or #hashtag that can assign them a meaning or a place.

As Rosalind Krauss described about the issue of the photographic image: 'an absence of meaning surrounds it, which can only be filled by the addition of a text' (Krauss 1977, 77). In mobile mapping systems, meta-information is collected and interpreted in an algorithmic manner, generating infographics and maps updated every second. Given this technological capacity of automatic representation of the



Figure 1.
Cardoso, José (2013), Drawing from Clérigos Tower.



Figure 2.
Cardoso, José (2013), Bird's-eye view of Clérigos Tower.

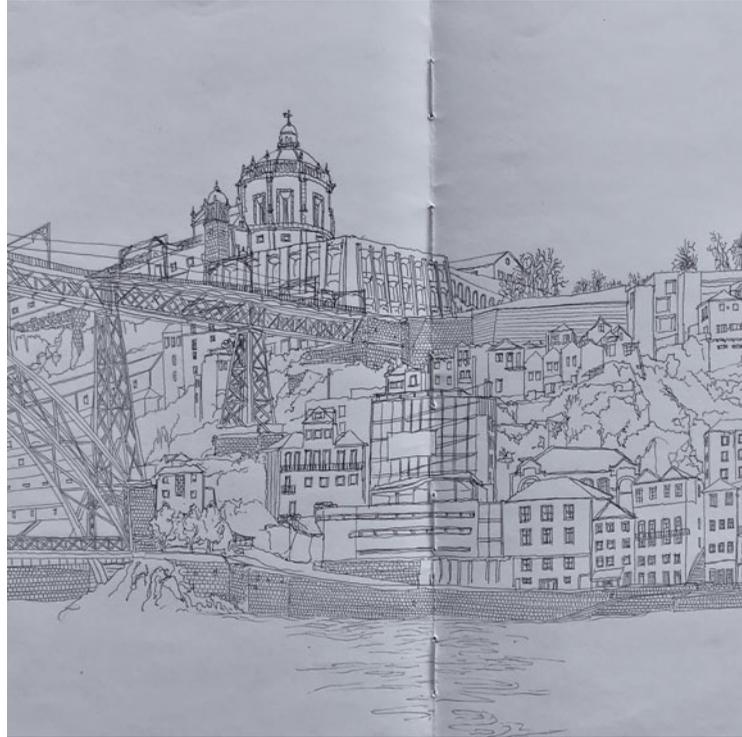


Figure 3.
Cardoso, José (2014), Desenho da margem de Gaia.



Figure 4.
Cardoso, José (2014), Catavino's Port Lodge Map.

territory and the cities' landscape, one can question if there is still some role for the designer in this process. Is the hand that draws the map in a specific site now anachronistic?



Figure 5.
Cardoso, José (2016), Panorama of São João da Madeira.

Villem Flusser identifies this problem as a forgetfulness of the purpose by which images are created, calling them 'technical images' (Flusser 1983, 14). According to Flusser, images have the purpose of being world maps, acting as folding screens; that is, they exist between the human being and the world. 'Man, instead of using images in relation to the world, begins to live the world according to the images' (Flusser 1983, 29). In this inversion, the world is experienced according to images with high efficacy and accuracy, but without consciousness or meaning.

Sometimes the best way to get to know a city is not by means of the most effective orientation, but through disorientation instead. Knowing how to orientate oneself in a city does not mean much. However, 'to lose oneself in a city, as one gets lost in a forest, requires instructions' (Benjamin 1994, 74). This appears to be a paradox, because usually instructions aim to perform a task accurately, without deviations or creative and interpretive freedom. Laurene Vaughan addresses this virtue of a *flâneur* walk and the artefacts of particular walks because it 'provides us with a means to share and convey the particularities of certain locales' (Vaughan 2009).

In this sense, the importance of the designer's mediator role shall be in the 'conversation that takes place between place or location, the maker, the reader and the map' (Vaughan 2009, 319). All affects



Figure 6.
Cardoso, José (2016), Illustrated Map of São João da Madeira.



Figure 7.
Cardoso, José (2017), O Porto de vista larga.

the decisions taken during the act of drawing. When seeing through drawing, in a dialogue between the mind and the hand, the designer is the subject of an experience of time, and therefore, original and unrepeatable. It promotes a sense of place that underlines its identity and opposes the indifference of representation.

It is not about creating wayfinding maps, intended for a literal orientation already solved by technology, but about a response, through Design, to the 'normalization of the mapping practice' (Jackson 2013). A dissatisfaction manifested through 'an increasing amount of hybrid practices that incorporate maps and different forms of arts' (Caquard, Piatti, & Cartwright 2009) resulting in a panoply of artefacts that seek to map 'the soul of the city' (Harmon 2016).

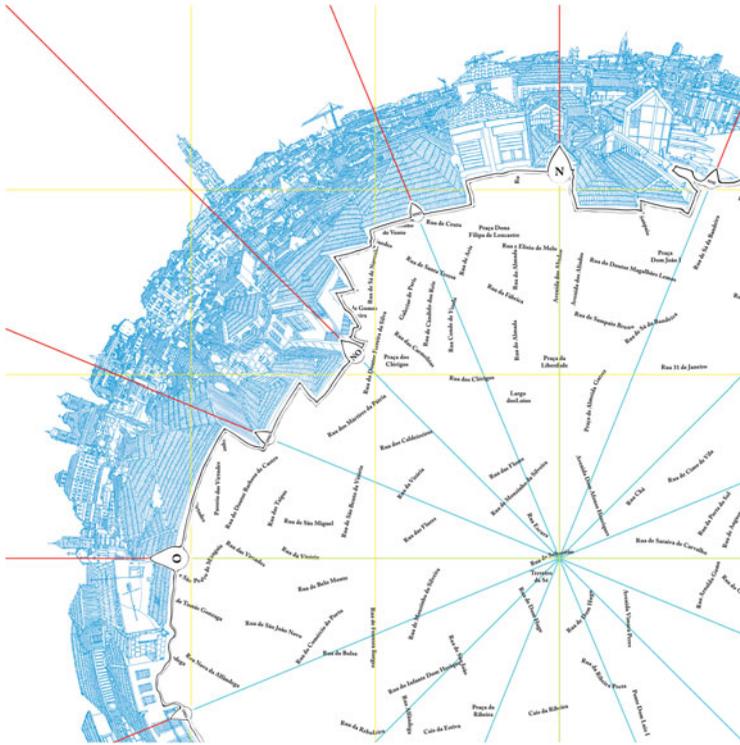


Figure 8.
Cardoso, José (2017), Mapa do Terreiro da Sé.

This investigation questions if there is a *Genius Loci* (Norberg-Shulz 1979) in each place that demands or allows its own representation. A map 'tailor made' to the body of each place.

Methodological Strategies

Practice through design and drawing is advocated as a way of knowing. In this sense, the methodological approach 'Research Through Art and Design' (Frayling 1993, 5) was adopted, in a subdivision identified as action research. In this subdivision, both the practical experimental work and the use of the logbook, by registering all decisions step by step, are important, resulting in a report that contextualizes them.

In an evolution of this approach, which emphasizes the valences of observational drawing as a way of knowledge, Gemma Anderson proposes the research 'Through Drawing Practice' (Anderson 2017, 17). She formalizes the proposal in a matrix of identified functions and operations: drawing as a form of knowledge, through the observational drawing of places; in relation with the historical and contemporary context of the representation of places, through drawing from



Figure 9.

Cardoso, José (2018), Bird's-eye view from the D. Luiz I Bridge.

historical works; contribution of the author to a morphological understanding, through the production of artefacts, maps of places.

As a synthesis of the documentation resulting from practice, we propose design strategies. The term 'drawing strategies' was applied by Juan Molina (1999), assuming a military terminology. Strategy highlights the qualities of insight and opportunity. It has an implicit adequacy to the place of conflict, a detailed visual knowledge of the elements of battle intervention, as well as who is aware of one's own strengths and knows the weaknesses of the opponent. There is foresight in the strategy, but it addresses the solution to the problems we face in the field. Thus, the act of drawing is compared to a battlefield.

The term 'design strategies' has been adopted because it is based on a certainty of intentions and areas of intervention, but with uncertainty of results. The strategies are being identified along the constant practice of drawing places.

It is expected that these strategies promote and facilitate the transmission of knowledge to other authors/designers.

Work Done

The maps are inspired by the tradition of creating *Portulano* charts in the Portuguese discoveries and the urge to describe the world through observation, from the golden era of Dutch painting. The

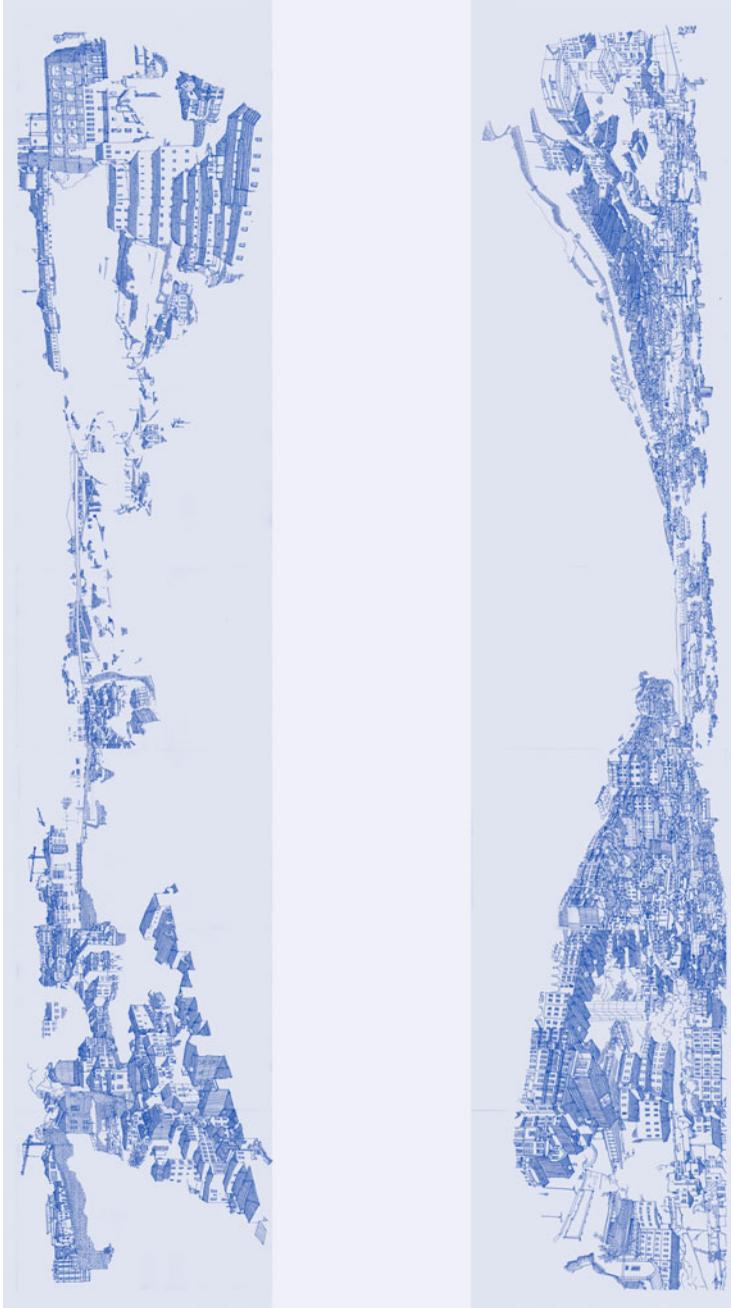


Figure 10.
Cardoso, José (2018), Mapa da Ponte Dom Luiz I.

design strategies are a synthesis of the relation between: the chosen place, the observational drawing and the *mise en page*.

The map of *Torre dos Clérigos* (Figure 2) shows what can be seen from one of the most iconic places in the city of Oporto. This

360-degree vista (Figure 1) was drawn in a sketchbook. When the double pages are juxtaposed, the cardinal and collateral points are marked.

The *Catavino's Port Lodge Map* (Figure 4) breaks the cartographic convention of the North at the top of the representation. The observer is placed in the north margin of Douro River, looking South to the port wine lodges (Figure 3) and, simultaneously, the map, in an invitation to plan one's port wine tasting.

The *Illustrated map of São João da Madeira* (Figure 6) presents a metaphorical dialogue between the freedom and uncertainty of hand-drawing discourse and the accuracy and security of cartographic representation. The observer in the centre of the map is framed by a 360-degree panorama (Figure 5) of the city's landscape, offering a direct relation between the map and the surrounding landscape.

The map of the *Terreiro da Sé* (Figure 8) in Porto city represents the place by its absence, showing what can be seen from there. The wind rose assumes an anthropomorphic quality, marking the eye of the observer facing the landscape (Figure 7).

The map of the Dom Luiz I Bridge (Figure 10) arises from the confrontation between the landscape drawing (Figure 9) from two opposing observation points. The East and West views exist simultaneously in the same composition, creating between them an empty space that draws the deck of the bridge. The corridor between the two views brings the map to a three-dimensional approach, inviting people to cross the bridge.

Provisional Conclusions

The evolution of the research with the continuous practice of observational drawing emphasizes an iterative game between perspective and prospection towards the landscape. The result of applying the identified design strategies contributes to create ways of seeing the world.

In these strategies, the relation between emphasis and exclusion leads to the suspension of landscape elements creating reserves in the drawings, empty open spaces for other authorships and subjectivities.

In a quest to represent the underbelly of the city, other problems and other issues arise. Attempting to represent the city's digestion in its night component, what other techniques will be relevant, apart from the linear drawing? And what would happen if the observer was not fixed, but moving through the city?

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Biography

José is passionate about good food and wine, and obsessed with drawing and visual arts and currently residing in São João da Madeira, Portugal. He regularly creates and designs maps, combining the drawing of vistas with the cartographic code. He holds an MFA in Design by University of Barcelona and an MFA in Drawing by University of Porto. He is currently a PhD candidate in Design at the Aveiro University.

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