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Shadowing Shapes of Portuguese Heritage and Visual Culture. Design Process and Storytelling.

Explorar o Património e a Cultura Visual Portuguesa. O processo de design e a narrativa visual.

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This exploratory design research focuses on the relationship between cultural and social identity, and the homogeneity of cultural transitions in the domains of Portuguese legacy and heritage in the former colonies. As an alternative research, it aims to gather visual and cultural references about artifacts in architecture and graphic ornaments, as part of a cultural and identity system. The research methodology involves an in-depth analysis on Portuguese nation identity in the fields of heritage and legacy and aims to uncover a potential cultural homogeneity and cross identity in former colonies. This analysis is based on conceptual maps including cultural and visual coding as part of the research and creative process. Research data and insights has been analyzing from different perspectives. Storytelling and visual narratives will contribute to the visualization of results and knowledge sharing. They also intend to contribute to the appreciation of the historiography of Portuguese communities and their diversity, as well as to research through design and design. Participatory Design methods aims to involve communities as part of the cultural, historical and social process that involve cross identity.
Findings and ongoing documentation from the research process, will be disseminated through a digital library on service for academic and cultural organizations; as well a printing and digital publication; a documentary film and interactive exhibitions in Portugal and former colonies.

Keywords visual cultural, cultural identity, Portuguese heritage, storytelling, design methods.

*Esta investigação exploratória de design tem o seu foco na relação entre a identidade cultural e social, e a homogeneidade de transições culturais nos domínios do legado e do património português nas antigas colónias. Como pesquisa alternativa visa reunir referências visuais e culturais sobre os artefactos na arquitetura e ornamentos gráficos, como parte de um sistema de identidade cultural. A estratégia envolve uma análise aprofundada da história e cultura local e a procura de uma identidade transversal nos domínios do património e legado português. Os mapas conceptuais na análise dos códigos culturais e visuais fazem parte do processo de investigação, como estratégia na criação de narrativas visuais da historiografia da cultura e identidade portuguesa nas antigas colónias.
O Design Participativo visa envolver as comunidades parte do processo cultural, histórico e social. As narrativas visuais contribuem para a visualização dos resultadose partilha de conhecimento. Pretendem ainda contribuir para a valorização do historiográfico das comunidades portuguesas e da sua diversidade, assim como, para a investigação através do design e para o design. Pretende-se a divulgação e disseminação através de uma biblioteca digital em plataformas digitais ao serviço de organizações acadêmicas e culturais; através da publicação impressa e digital, através de filme documental e ainda através de exposições interativas em Portugal e antigas colónias.*

Palavras-chave *cultura visual, identidade cultural, património português, storytelling, métodos de design.*

1. Introduction

Design has become a fashionable term that is applied to almost everything. Design research is a highly complex and extremely multifaceted systematic enquiry whose goal is knowledge, embodiment of configuration, composition, structure, purpose, value and meaning in man-made things and systems. Design research would therefore fall into three main categories, based on people, process and products:

- Design Epistemology as the study of forms of knowledge of design
- Design Praxiology as the study of design practices and processes
- Design Phenomenology as the study of the shape and artefacts configuration.

As design researchers, we need to visualize the big picture, the entire system. Effective design tools and methods requires not just understanding the visual design context but a clear understanding of the different levels investigated by different disciplines. Research through design is similar to research to practice.

Fig 1. Visual references from colonies.
pictures from the author
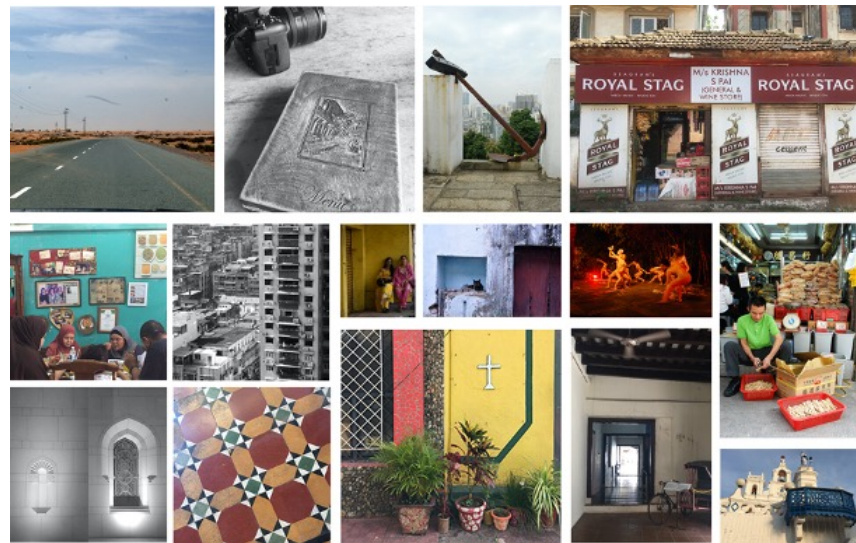
Considering cultural processes as communication processes (Eco, 1976), using an infinite number of codes and sub codes, decodable by means of extra and inter semiotic conditions and occasions, the methodological challenge of design research lies in finding ways to integrate a large number of small-scale research problems activities to make cumulative progress.

As particularly research project, has been integrated throughout a multidisciplinary approach. Shadowing, witnessing reactions and observe without intervene, gather data, analyze patterns and visual codes through design research methods to visualize the big picture of Portuguese heritage worldwide. Cognitive, social and cultural processes interacted inside the role of design research forming a logical outline of the subject. Similarities among the various artefacts, recognizing visual and pictorial elements as part of a unique and visual culture, is a pathway for proliferating the culture and history of the Portuguese worldwide and a clear input of how Portuguese culture influenced and was influenced by several overseas civilizations and communities. Documenting the interpretation of artefacts, colors, forms, iconic elements, composition, common factors among cultures of former colonies is fundamental for design process and a strong contribution for research through design and for design.

Fig 2. Portuguese signage in Goa and Macao.
pictures from the author

Research documentation is an integral part of this ongoing research. A visual summary has been recording, step by step, all processes with a critical analysis of the outcomes, seeking to cultural context. We expect to create a unique and visual reference of Portuguese Discoveries as a milestone in the visual culture of Portuguese society.

All the insights collected on the ongoing research, will be a strong contribution for Portuguese society and for future research about the Portuguese history and culture around the world. Despite the cultural diversity and natural evolution of the history of the former Portuguese colonies, the visual and cultural heritage of Portuguese nation is clear and must be collect in a unique document.

2. Storytelling as part of design research

Design research is a strong pathway for sharing and establish a common ground across the boundaries of Portuguese culture worldwide. Preserving and documenting the visual culture is also a way of proliferating the culture and history of a nation. Portuguese nation and society have a deep contribution for the history of civilization. Portugal was the first country to launch itself in maritime discoveries. In early 15th Century, justified by war, economic and political causes, Portuguese crossed the seas searching for new emotions and maritime discoveries and Portuguese expansion to Africa.

Fig 3. Houses, Rua dos Mercadores, Taipa | Macau.
pictures from the author

On August 22nd, 1415, driven by Infante D. João I, around twenty thousand men, embarked from Lisbon and conquered the African square of Ceuta, a very important commercial city in the Muslim world of the Mediterranean. Later on, for almost a century (1500–1600), the Portuguese held a monopoly on European exploration and trade over Indian Ocean. Portuguese interests on the west coast of India were largely determined by sailing conditions, and in Goa they found a defensible island site with excellent harbor facilities on either side. Goa, Malacca (Melaka) and Ormuz, gave to Portugal the control over orient trade routes. Portuguese consolidated the power in east with the creation of a network of ports and squares that controlled access to the main commercial route.

In 1500, a second mission to India, headed by Pedro Álvares Cabral a Portuguese navigator and explorer, captain of the Portuguese fleet with 13 ships, departed from Lisbon. Although there was a detour along the route leading the fleet to the Brazilian coast, on April 22. Little is known about his life and only in the twentieth century was his burial discovered. Brazil would only assume importance in the Portuguese empire long after his death.

When we take a look back to a world map, and point out the Portuguese former colonies, is clear to see how Portuguese culture spread from east to west. These cultural references have associated values that transform them into vehicles for the affirmation of a Portuguese identity, regardless of location and time factor.

Thinking of design as a way to reconnect processes and understand ways of acting, we understand the visual data as a scientific language and part of design research process that we use to understand and visualize the phenomenon. Sketches, drawings, and diagrams are particularly valuable in early design process as a way of thinking strategically about the research rather than illustrating the right answer (Whitney, 2015). Design research communicates through a universal language and visual data is increasingly focus on human being. In the past few decades, it has become mandatory to understand how humans interpret visual data. Communicating through visual systems, design principals and design criteria, throughout design thinking research methods and strategic processes, it is a strong contribution to the growth of interconnected entities and to promote a critical thinking and experimentation.

3. Design Thinking approach and Mapping Design Research

Considering the socio-economic background, historical or the cultural identity of a country, we need to look at the matter in depth to obtain results that will have a social and cultural impact. Visual Culture, commonly known as window displays, is recognized as a competitive factor for a country's identity. Design Thinking as a systematic, iterative and human-centered approach to solving complex problems in all aspects of life, is a starting point for an immersive research to identify challenges that have the greatest impact on people's lives.

This chapter presents a selection of methods to think strategically and share a design-led approach experience, exploring experimentation throughout design research. This approach promotes the construction of visual narratives and the visualization of data that aim to contribute positively to visual research and cultural archives.

This ongoing research is based on the design thinking approach as a system. And adopt a disciplined innovative in design spread to understand the pairs of four main steps on the design process: real and abstract, understand and make. Design can abstract a problem or input and create options (Whitney, 2010). Through visual design, visual maps, data visualization and visual narratives, we will bring clarity to the critical thinking and the effective mapping of the design process.

**Fig 4.** Diagram for design research process.
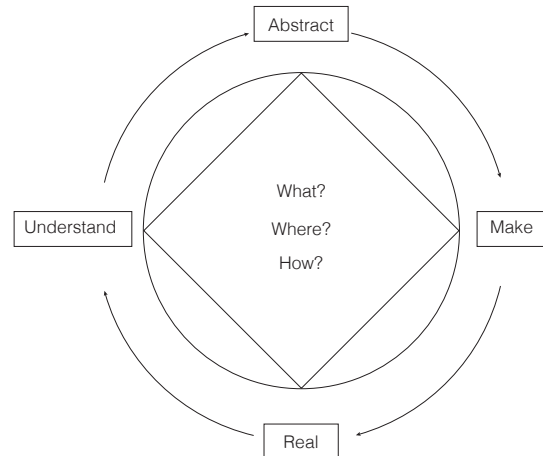
Thinking deeply on processes, it might have both input and output, as on the following diagrams. In between, something can happen - the process itself - a transformation. We undoubtedly find two "basic" stages of analysis and synthesis; that is, when we consciously solve problems or when creatively involved in the design activity, these two basic steps are necessary.
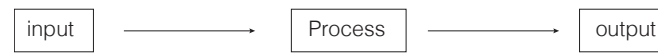
First, we divided the situation or the whole problem into parts for examination (Analysis) and, second, we remount the situation based on our understanding of the improvements found in our study (Synthesis).
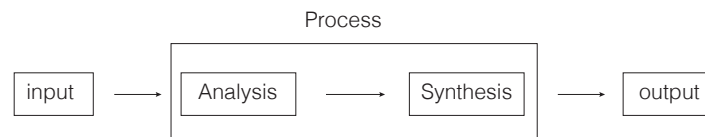
A broad view helps us to find out what new situations may be appearing on the horizon and might provide the answers for following research question. However, designers require feedback, and most of design processes include feedback loops. The following diagram model emphasizing feedback and a continuous improvement.
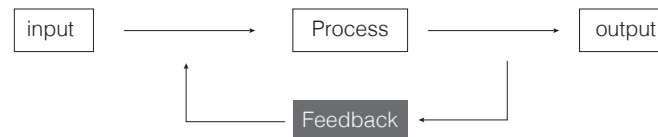
The simple model recalls on the first diagram process model. When we added a feedback loop, some of the output signal is split off and "fed back" into the input signal. This is very usual in design process. This schematic diagram is for the actual design process and it include the importance of feedback in design research.

3.1. What to make?
To rethinking conventions and seek for opportunities to develop innovative ways to present research progress and findings for results, it is fundamental to frame the subject space through a quick diagnosis of the situation. Kumar (2012) identified this first activity as a Sense Intent. It is about to set up the initial direction and ask where the research should be moving, in in other words, forming an intent for the research.

3.2. How to make it in a general scheme of research?
Gather insights to structuring and planning the research, is the main goal to provide sufficient early direction for research and exploration. Visual expressions such as sketches, diagrams and scenarios, are part of design research in which the designer / researcher builds the connection between fields

of knowledge and progresses toward a subject. Speaking the language of experience, mapping design started with a full understanding of surrounding conditions. Knowing context is a successful approach about what we know and what we still need to understand about Portuguese visual culture and old colonies. Observation and interactions with interest groups give us a point of view to narrow down and discuss the particular subject matters.

This first activity gives us some impactful insights about subject matter. Insights from expert interview might be collected. Those experts belong to groups affiliated with a professional organization, as an example, *Charles Correa Foundation* in Goa.

Fig 5. Concept map on design research process.

Innovation as a systemic approach is focus on human needs, behaviors, motivations and experiences. Empathy is fundamental for design process. The concept of "human-centered" is not new, but it is always fundamental be sensitive to people's needs and behaviors patterns (Kumar, 2012). According to the author, to get valuable insights we should be in the mindset to deeply understand motivations and some overall experiences to create significant new value. The ongoing research included methods and tools as field visit, cultural artefacts, image sorting, video ethnographic, and very useful on this "new normal", the remote research.

Frame key insights and principles is based on the analytical framework process to the gathered data in a clear perspective. Using Entities Position Map allows the analysis relationships of entities groups, intersecting attributes and grouping patterns.

3.3. Why will it create value?

On exploring concepts using opportunity mind maps helps to create the concept catalog and visualizing concepts, shapes and design principles in abstract terms.

Potentially valuable concepts need to be integrated in whole picture. Defining a clear criteria is one of the most important phases on the design process. Each concept needs to be evaluated according to strengths and weaknesses, to frame the systems-level solution that will meet desired design criteria and principles. Morphological synthesis activity had the benefit to reveal strong systems, create options encourages comprehensiveness and structures existing knowledge.

4. A step forward

Research led by design, research methodologies applied on visual culture, design methods and design tools enhance the research process and provide different perspectives on data analysis and synthesis. Building visual narratives as an "inventory" of the visual references, anticipate the emergence of issues that we will seek to frame by the design thinking methodology. Visualizing the cultural context will not only make it possible and offer choices without excess production, but it will also help us choose the most appropriate path for design-led research.

The whole research project is a constructive contributing for the revitalization and archiving of Portuguese visual history worldwide.

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