



Addressing SITU_ACCÃO: Case Study of an Artistic Intervention and Research into Public Spaces¹

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Abstract. This article explores the embodiment of the art historical avant-garde legacy through some of the artistic manifestations across the 20th century, in public spaces. At the same time, it discusses the incorporation of such historical background in contemporary collaborative research practices. It does so by addressing the case study of the collective *Situ_Acção*, a group of artists and researchers from different fields of arts and communication, whose activity is focused on intervention in the city, based on action and collaborative research and shared reflection on urban phenomena, associated with public arts.

First, it will be described how *Situ_Acção* started a common ground for the inquiry: the legacy of urban murals in Lisbon. By investigating the Portuguese digital archives of urban murals of the 1970s and 1980s, *Situ_Acção* applied spatial artistic techniques to overcome the missing information regarding the places of intervention. In addition, the use of performance and on-site installation implements alternative approaches to communicate research to a wider audience. This exercise will allow different degrees of participation within the work of art in progress. The project Memory in the Walls (MOWS) will be described in the concluding chapter, in order to explore such degrees of interaction.

Keywords: Art; participatory investigation; city; public spaces.

[es] SITU_ACCÃO: Estudio de caso de una intervención artística e investigación en espacios públicos

Resumen. Este artículo explora el legado histórico de la vanguardia del arte a través de algunas de las manifestaciones artísticas del siglo XX en espacios públicos. Al mismo tiempo, discutirá la incorporación de dicho legado histórico en las prácticas contemporáneas de investigación colaborativa. Lo hace abordando el estudio de caso del colectivo *Situ_Acção* asociado al tema de las artes públicas. El colectivo *Situ_Acção* es un grupo de artistas e investigadores de diferentes campos de las artes y

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la comunicación, cuya actividad se centra en la intervención en la ciudad, basada en la acción y la investigación colaborativa y la reflexión compartida sobre fenómenos urbanos.

Primero, se describirá cómo Situ_Ação ha encontrado un terreno común para la investigación: el legado de los murales urbanos en la ciudad de Lisboa. Al investigar los archivos digitales portugueses de murales urbanos de los años setenta y ochenta, Situ_Ação aplicó técnicas artísticas espaciales para suplir la información que faltaba sobre los lugares de intervención. Además, el uso del *performance* y la instalación *site specific* implementa enfoques alternativos para comunicar la investigación a un público más amplio. Este ejercicio permitirá diferentes grados de participación dentro de la obra de arte en progreso. Para explorar tales grados de interacción, se describirá el proyecto Memoria En los Muros (MOWS –Memory in the Walls) en el capítulo final.

Palabras clave: Arte; investigación participativa; ciudad; espacios públicos.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. On the Legacy of the Avant-garde Movements in Europe. 3. Again...the blurring of Art and Life: The Situ_Ação Collective. 4. From digital archiving to public space and back again: download, re-experience and re-document the city and nourish research. 5. Memory on the Walls (MOWS) project. 6. Conclusion: the lab has jumped to the street... References.

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1. Introduction. Artistic interventions and research

During the 20th century, the avant-garde artistic proposals were performed to address the fruition of the city. The Dada tour, the surrealist *déambulation* or the *dérive* of the Situationist International are paradigmatic examples of artistic practices that found a form of intervention through the experimental walking, roaming and nomadic use of the urban space. The experience of living turned to aesthetic experience, assuming in this and other contexts a political and social position, based on the relationship between the individual and the collective and, thus, demanding new models and social dynamics.

The legacy of avant-garde continues to be explored within contemporary urban art practices as artists approach the urban environment as a prime matter of their works (Cruzeiro, 2014). Today, the dilution of disciplinary boundaries transformed the understanding of the artistic practice as research and intervention. The new proposals assumed the intervention in the urban space as a possibility of articulating the artistic practice and the lived experience of the city; while exploring the boundaries between public and private spaces, or suggesting a public sphere actuation, as Paul Ardenne has put it, “The city can’t be illustrated, it’s lived” (Ardenne, 2006, p.60).

Urban art practitioners do work with the materiality of the city and find themselves immersed in such environment while proposing diverse levels of interaction and participatory dimensions. When artists meet academic practice, one may think how the art experience may be undertaken under a collaborative research practice. As recent literature on artistic research and qualitative methods points out (Candy & Edmonds 2018, Skains 2018, Van deer Vaart, Van Hoven & Huigen, 2018), art related research, despite misunderstandings of what is a led or based approach, has become a fruitful element for humanities and social sciences to include in their methodologies of inquiry. In the academy, it is an opportunity to build a shared artistic led practice with other academic researchers. By its turn, practice under such context may offer

to social sciences and humanities a tangible experience and a hands-on approach that add layers of knowledge, otherwise it would not be acquired.

Based on action research and shared reflection on urban phenomena, associated with public arts, *Situ_Acção* takes into consideration a «hands-on» research approach to the subjects addressed. The group focuses on collaborative research through practice, by exploring the specific dynamics of the cities, while addressing the transversal phenomena of urban spaces today.

Participatory research approaches have been pursued regarding the hybridity of research practitioners and their interactions and confluences. In such a framework, experimental methodologies through practice enable artistic and social sciences and humanities researchers to interact and practice levels of capacities and knowledge from both domains. With researchers involved in research training and research development inside the History of Art/Media Arts/Fine Arts domains, the *Situ_Acção* group⁶ has followed this experimental attitude towards research.

While researching the Portuguese digital archives of urban murals of the 1970's and 1980's, *Situ_Acção* detected a significant amount of digital archived mural images without information regarding their original location and context. The group decided to apply spatial artistic techniques to overcome missing information regarding the places of intervention. Through a walking practice approach to the city, *Situ-Acção* has mapped a wide range of urban features that had originally received urban murals. Since many of these urban features exhibited several mural interventions over time, these were, then, envisaged by *Situ_Acção* as urban palimpsests of the city.

In addition, the group acknowledged a strategy to address the work in progress to the research community. As such, the same urban experience has been proposed to the participants of the next public art scientific event where *Situ_Acção* took part. The strategy was to offer the use of performance and installation *in situ* to enact alternative approaches, communicating research to a wider audience. The research group presented the project entitled *The Memory on the Walls* (MOWS) as an urban palimpsests series by projecting sequentially the images of murals found in the archives, later, screened in their original displays. The *Situ-Acção* group intended to show the conference participants how to experience the urban screen projection of murals physically, namely on the space environment and materiality of the walls where they were once painted. Since the project was happening in the public space, such research dissemination event became a participatory moment to address a broader non-academic audience and citizens in general. The experience also allowed different degrees of peers interaction within the artwork in progress.

2. On the Legacy of the Avant-garde Movements in Europe

For the avant-garde movements, such as Dadaism, Surrealism and the Situationist International, the desire to enjoy the city went beyond the typical Baudelairean *flâneur*. For these artists, experiencing the city as an impartial observer or as a form of aesthetic contemplation disconnected from political intervention was not the right way to approach the public space.

⁶ The group is formed by: Catarina Valente, Cristina Pratas Cruzeiro, Helena Elias and Tânia Cortez.

On his reflection on Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin points out that the *flâneur* is set on the margins of the capitalist society (Benjamin, 1974, p. 470). As a result, it is not exposed to the requirements and characteristics of the society, especially, to the accelerated rhythm of contemporary life. In fact, it was only when the avant-garde movements of the 20th century considered the act of walking and wandering around the city as an aesthetic experience that this path towards the rupture and resistance with the capitalist society became effective.

The French Dadaists were the first to engage with the aesthetic proposal and practice. By inscribing their bodies in space and time, they opened the possibilities to performativity in the urban context and, simultaneously, questioned and mapped the spaces of the city according to their experience of public space.

On the April 14, 1921, in Paris, several artists⁷ linked to the movement paid a visit to a vacant lot located between the Seine and the church of Saint Julien Le Pauvre. Other tours and visits were planned to the Louvre, the Buttes Chaumont garden and the Gare Saint-Lazare (O'Rourke, 2016, p. 13) – all based on the choice of unlikely places, which represented “a nouvelle affirmation du refus des valeurs dominantes, ici, le refus d’une approche pittoresque de la ville” (Bouchier, 2006, p. 3). By 1924, the Dadaist expeditions would be replaced by the so-called surrealist *déambulation*, spontaneous walking tours across the city of Paris. During those, we recognize the same burden of nonconformity and social criticism and the same awareness regarding the mutability of the city.

André Breton, Louis Aragon, Morise, and Vitrac were among the participants of one of the surrealist experiences of the time, where they were wandering aimlessly to find new perspectives that would free them from Dadaism. André Breton reports that there was a general sense of the need to “depart”, although the way forward was not clear. Thus, between “material paths” and “spiritual paths”, it occurred to them “the idea of combining these two kinds of paths, and hence a deambulation to four (...) undertaken from Blois, a fortunate city on the map” (Breton, 1994, p. 85). At this respect, Mirella Bandini considers that “wandering around the city without any purpose meant penetrating the unconscious actions, where urban agglomeration becomes an adventurous forest whose shops, signs, crosses and statues reveal its true nature as traps of desire.” (Andreotti and Costa, 1996, p. 46).

Surrealistic *déambulation* entailed a sense of disorientation and wonder that was vital to its members, because, through it, they could more easily achieve a state of unconsciousness, that would lead them to the field of subjectivity. Therefore, it became a method, a technique, like automatic writing, drawing and the hypnotic sleep, allowing them to penetrate the subconscious. They did not want to be alienated from reality, although Breton had identified that danger (Breton, 1994, p.86). Between 1960's and 1970's, several artists approached the idea of space as an experienced and dynamic instance.

Despite considering the relevance of studies such as of Henri Lefebvre (1974) or Michel De Certeau (1984), the Situationist International went further in the artistic matter. This collective – developed, mainly, in Europe, between 1957 and 1972 – has blurred the boundaries between art and life, and creation and politics. The

⁷ André Breton, Tristan Tzara, Paul Eluard, Benjamin Péret, Jean Crotti, Georges d'Esparbès, George Rigaud, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, Théodore Fraenkel, Louis Aragon, Philippe Soupault.

International Situationist was, essentially, interested in developing strategies that would allow the construction of moments of life, situations.

The desire to act and create situations intended to rescue the daily life of the spectacle. To achieve that purpose, the Situationists worked through different areas of knowledge, such as anthropology, psychology, aesthetics, philosophy, or urbanism. The goal was to achieve “constructed situations”, defined as “the moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambiance and a game of events” (Andreotti, L. and Costa, X., 1996, p. 68). Its stage of action was the city and its heterogeneous urban space.

To Guy Debord, the construction of situations was particularly concerned with the following statement: “a battle over leisure is taking place before our eyes whose importance in the struggle has not been sufficiently analysed” (Debord, 1957, p. 46). Based on Marxist thought, the construction of situations was understood as a political strategy and its use had an ideological motivation.

The Situationist International highlighted the collaborative experience. The movement focused on the collective subject that emerged from the social environment, developing a series of proposals, methodologies and techniques centred on *urbanisme unitaire*, *psycogeographie*, *dérive*, among others. In 1956, Guy Debord presents the *dérive* as a key method for changing the world⁸. Like the *déambulation*, the *dérive* was a mechanism of spatial recognition of the city, through psychogeography (Andreotti, L. and Costa, X., 1996, p. 69), which took into account the geographical limits of the city but sought to ignore the elements related with the spectacle (Andreotti, L. and Costa, X., 1996, p. 69). As an experimental behaviour, it was through it that the individual could achieve a critical awareness, that would allow him to assume the heterogeneous character of the urban spaces and construct new environments for the city.

The *dérive* was a purely temporal experience of what can be called the exploration of individual time. The notion of freedom in using time without practical purpose, in capitalist western societies, is to ‘lose’ time. It is this time that the situationists propose to explore through an approach to what society defines as leisure time.

For instance, the practices developed by the collective *You are here*, formed in Australia, by Zanny Begg and Keg de Souza corroborate the concept of political space associated with physical space⁹.

In 2008, the collective launched the project *Cities Without Maps – Kota Tanpa Peta*. They settled for two months in Ratmakan and Jagalan, two villages in the Indonesian province of Yogyakarta, to take forward an artistic residency. Working together with Invani Lela Herliana, a local resident, the group focused on the mapping of the two villages, in articulation with the community.

⁸ In the text 'La théorie de la dérive' in 'Les Lèvres Nuestras' nr.9.

⁹ On the website of the collective they say:

You Are Here is an open experiment working through art, social research, curating, action, events, discussions and publications. We seek to breakdown the boundaries where one ends and another begins – working as artist/curators, writers/activists, speakers/listeners, cartographers/losties, organisers/disorganisers. You Are Here pursues non-hierarchical and dialogic forms of creativity seeking points of connection between artists, viewers, audiences and subjects. (You are here, 2010)

The map's definition was the first topic to be addressed, due to the need to include social issues, as well as the physical aspects of the site¹⁰. The result of the artistic residency was displayed in video and in a book with several maps: the territorial map, the map of community spaces and structures of self-organization, the map of private spaces and, finally, the map dedicated to the processes of gentrification.

The maps are intermingled with drawings made by the artists and with sound reports focused on the beliefs, omens and creeds of the community. The drawing was a prominent element across the artistic residence and the resulting outputs. The use of it as a tool enabled the artists to work on non-material aspects of the community, such as habits, beliefs and myths or emotions, helping to establish a closer contact.

The strong presence of drawing in this project works as an expressive dimension, while connecting it to the traditional imaginary components that are not always common in these practices. In fact, what is reinforced is what Arjun Appadurai has been claiming as a characteristic of the post-electronic world – that imagination is not confined to the creative medium of art or the artist (Appadurai, 2003, p. 5).

The relational practice, which defines the structure of this work, is based on an activist vision of art that establishes itself in the social field, transforming it, albeit at a micro-scale. The 'being together' is a central issue in this project. During the two months that the collective was in the place, several interviews, workshops and debates were held. The video and the book were documentary features, resulting from a set of decisions taken between the artistic collective and the members of the community. Still, the relational component is not a free act. It intends to build a project that breaks the established silence and disseminates disturbing voices in the current democracies (Wodiczko, 1999, p. 142-143).

This art practice spirit is also possible to be transferred to other environments, namely the institutional academic arena, where there is a long-established culture of scientific research. The following chapter describes the birth context and goals of *Situ_Ação*. The project aims to develop research methods in public spaces, to use art practice strategies to experience collectively research and to propose physically active participatory engagements that go beyond the unidirectional communication format of presentations and the confined space of the conference room.

3. Again...the blurring of Art and Life: The *Situ_Ação* Collective

Situ_Ação collective is a team of researchers that interact with the artistic matter on a daily basis. Although not restricted to the academic context, the collective aims to foster new ways of engagement within the academic research and take it to a wider public dimension, while upgrading modalities of reception on the communication

¹⁰ The artists explain the process:

Beginning the process of making a map – for a place which exists relatively happily without one -presented us with the challenge of reinventing what a map is. Do we just map the geographic space, or do we map other social aspects which constitute this physical space? For example, how does a map reflect issues such as how many people live in each house or how space is used differently by men and women, older or younger people? What purpose does a map represent for a community who has shaky legal ownership of the land they live on, and who navigate between houses based on long term memory of which families have lived there? How do we map things like the numerous ghost stories which collect in a community built on a former grave-yard and which provide traces of the lives of past residents? How do we include the numerous social maps inked directly onto the body through the strong tattoo culture in Kali Code? (You are here, 2010)

of the scientific events. Prior and parallel to this affiliation, academic members have been actively involved in public art research, following alternative approaches within the academic scientific culture, namely the creation of site-specific collaborative work installations in conferences and workshops (Elias & de Luca, 2018).

The group acknowledges that research methods and art practice is a far well-developed issue in academic literature, especially in qualitative research (Wang *et al* 2017), arts-led-research and artistic research (Coessens, Crispin, Douglas, 2010). Also, *Situ_Açção* considers the legacy of artistic manifestations, which have addressed the social, political, economic and cultural frameworks of the city. The team regards the practices of the historical avant-garde groups as strategies to engage with the audiences, through research activities performed in public spaces.

Performance and installation as spatial artistic practices aim to take the collective experience to places that embody the object of study. Such environmental contact enables the group members to raise evidence and organize data and to improve their own research projects. Some of the experiences that are being taken forward by the collective provide an immersive experience within public space by recovering memories, symbols, traditions and imageries that were part of key historical moments, belonging to the Portuguese collective identity.

Rather than adopting Debord terminology for situation, the group follows Alain Badiou philosophical apparatus of the situation by conceiving their collective practice as within the situation, the new can come into being, but only through the rupture that is an event. The event is, for Badiou, a rupture with the order of things, when the new can come into being and exceeds the situation. Accordingly, as we stand within the situation, it is not possible to predict the eventual site – *site événementiel*, where a true procedure is released¹¹, because it is an excess to the situation. Nevertheless, one can possibly desire such (Elias, 2012). It is through such commitment that *Situ_Açção* intervenes. By borrowing Badiou's concept, *Situ_Açção* takes forward arts-based research practices and builds proposals that may increase possibilities for the eventual site to occur.

Situ_Açção is also committed to an identity of collaboration based on collective practice and non-hierarchical common ground for experiencing and share research. The team members are looking forward to involve the community in this model by creating a horizontal approach to art, where every participant may offer a contribution to the collective result. Unlike the usual protocols within academic research institution, horizontal connections among the members are required at this regard. The collaboration may entail various forms of participation, depending on the project and the context where it is developed. The diagram illustrates the interaction performed in *Situ_Açção* common ground activity

¹¹ Alain Badiou's description of a truth procedure, set free by an event, constitutes an appropriate metaphor. An event is "a rupture in the normal order of bodies and languages (...)" (Badiou, 2010, p.6), which necessarily creates new possibilities. Badiou emphasizes that it is not the realization of possibility that already resides in the situation. A rupture is thus necessary; the point of rupture is random and sets free the truth procedure. A truth procedure is an "ongoing organization of the consequences of an event" (Badiou, 2009). The truth procedure assigns a fixed measure to the excess of the situation.

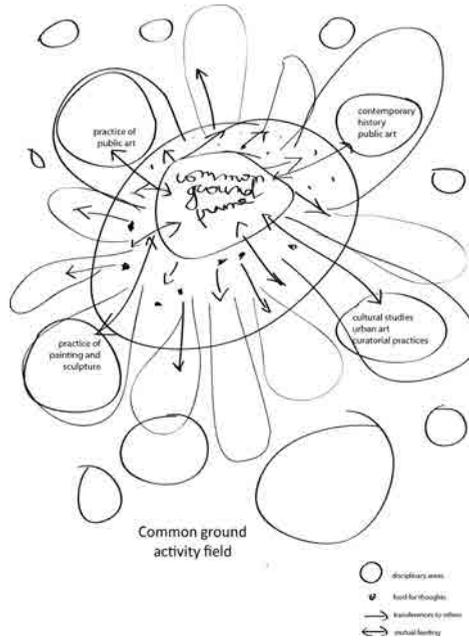


Figure 1. Drawing of the interaction of the Situ_Ação collective regarding diverse disciplinary research areas: Collaboration with peers, transference/exchange and mutual feeding. (Situ_Ação Collective).

Such commitment was tested through a common ground research issue for all the group members: the urban mural legacy of Lisbon. For the group, the investigation should not be circumscribed to the study of the static object itself, namely, the image found on the digital archives. The physicality of the spaces portrayed should be revisited, experienced, compared with the original ones and possibly merged, whether or not in the case of finding the original urban features.

4. From digital archiving to public space and back again: download, re-experience and re-document the city and nourish research

New technologies are shaping the way we perceive public space and the memories of places. Many institutional archives regard the city and urban practices as mostly used by researchers and specialised users. Non-commissioning urban murals are mostly ephemeral and have their existence archived through image documentation. At this regard, the murals were registered by different photographers or amateurs covering the phenomenon, long before the democratization of digital infrastructures. The information regarding its precise location was not the main issue at stake.

For so, the information attached to the image files of the photographic archives do not provide the entire location of the urban mural. Since most of the registers are dispersed across the city, *Situ_Ação* adopted the practice of walking to find the original sites of intervention. At this regard, De Certeau referred to the importance of walking as a rhetoric practice of observing and absorbing the city, the so-called

“elementary form” (Certeau, 1988). This is especially important if the researcher is dealing with images and questions regarding the process and the production, along with the display and result. This is the case of the object of study of the *Situ_Acção* collective: the urban murals created after the Revolution of 1974, in Portugal. For so, the group has designed a strategy to address research and developed the *Memory on the Walls (MOWS)* project. The procedures involving the appropriation of archived images can be described as following: a) searching, select and download images; b) walking practices in the city to find and map the sites of intervention and surfaces of display; c) confrontation with the original and actual surfaces of display; d) project and experience the selected images at their original sites; e) re-document the murals on those urban surfaces; f) share the new images of the projected murals and new murals compositions, in order to multiply the murals’ instances and their significance; g) return to each individual research project to resignify data.

5. Memory on the Walls (MOWS) project

Situ_Acção took forward the artistic action *Memory on the walls*: a symbolic event to celebrate the Portuguese Revolution of April 25, 1974. Before describing MOWS project, it is important to provide an historical and political contextualization of the presence of urban murals during the 1970s and early 1980s, in Portugal. The consolidation of the Portuguese revolutionary process in 1974 was followed by the popular occupation of the public space. This argument sustains the military operation at the time, which guaranteed its success more long than the *coup d’etat* at April 25. The appropriation of the street leads to a much more democratic public space, following the will to avoid another dictatorship.

The interventions emerging in public spaces were the testimonies of a poetic and visual expression, celebrating the liberation of the public sphere from censorship. Following the revolutionary period, Portuguese society witnessed the realization of some of the most ambitious expectations addressed by the artistic avant-garde: 1) free and universal access to artistic creation and fruition; b) the refusal of the institutional power; 3) the acclaim for space; 4) the people awareness of the existence of the public collaboration; 4) the dissolution of the authorship; 5) the mobilization of the artists in the public space. The western artistic manifestations have attached themselves to an array of movements and groups of protest under the motto ‘art-life blur’. During the Portuguese post-revolutionary period, the artistic manifestation confirms the existence of such assumption, by the interventions of artists happening freely in real time.

After the Revolution, and until the 1980’s, political muralism became the paradigm and the so-called muralism schools were born. The mural practice was deeply rooted in the ideological sphere, enhanced by anonymous people but mostly by specific political parties, such as PCP, PCTP-MRPP, UDP, MES, PSR, PS, PPD, PCP (ML), PCP (R), MDP/CDE¹², among others. But the parties that most adopted

¹² PCP (Portuguese Communist Party), PCTP-MRPP (Portuguese Workers' Communist Party/Re-Organized Movement of the Party of the Proletariat), UDP (Popular Democratic Union), MES (Movement of Socialist Left), PSR (Revolutionary Socialist Party), PS (Socialist Party), PPD (Democratic Peoples' Party), PCP (ML) (Communist Party of Portugal (Marxist-Leninist)), PCP (R) (Communist Party (Reconstructed)), MDP/CDE (Portuguese Democratic Movement/Democratic Electoral Commissions).

the mural as a political tool were the PCP and the MRPP. The murals of these two parties had an incredibly significant expression in social and aesthetic terms to the Portuguese society. Both instances encouraged mural production to reach a wider audience and to get close to the communities: the voters. In the periphery of great cities, mostly Lisbon and Oporto, almost every urban wall was occupied with a mural or a political message. With the advertising industry growth in the 1990's, political intervention adopted other means to interact with their followers, such as the photographic outdoors.

Meanwhile, the birth of graffiti in Portugal turned the attention back again to the wall. At last, within the millennial context, the urban mural resurges again, whether attached to the cities brandings or to projects that look for citizen engagement.

Such was relevant to the so-called “activity of dissention”, because of the “innovative potential to disrupt forms of domination”, since the “freedom of the aesthetic is based upon the same principle of equality that is enacted in political demonstration” (Ranci re & Corcoran, 2010, p.15). This approach meets what Suzan Gablik calls the *connective aesthetics* (Gablik, 1992), which emphasises community engagement through artistic practice, based on a collaborative and interdependent process (Gablik, 1992).

Memory on the Walls was first launched at the Public Art Conference, at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Lisbon (2018). The presentation was divided in two parts: 1) a formal presentation of the research on palimpsest walls that carried urban murals over time, reporting the methodology of mapping, walking to the sites of intervention and comparing those to the archived images of murals; 2) visualising and experiencing *in loco* such research procedures. By projecting, chronologically, the images of murals in such sites, the conference participants and the passers-by approached the subject directly. During the happening, the collective projected several images of mural interventions, performed during the revolutionary period, on the walls that carried out such works in Bel m, Lisbon.



Figure 2. Situ_Ac o screen projection: slide presentation of the project Memory on the Walls. The screen projections of the murals produced unexpected poetic encounters with the remaining physical urban structures. (Situ_Ac o Collective).

Regarding the process, the collective gathered several images with the permission of *Associação 25 de Abril* and *Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa*. These images were grouped according to the information regarding the city district areas, where the murals were painted.

The following steps involved the walking practice of recognition of the walls that once welcomed these murals or in face of non existence of such, the location of the intervention. The screen projections of the murals that were once exhibited there produced unexpected poetic encounters with the remaining physical urban structures.

This process was documented visually, and a brochure was distributed to the audience, so they could understand the symbolic attempt to recover the memories, regarding the mural practice during the post-revolution period, especially, between the 1970's and the 1980's. The flyer had an open frame drawn on it, so the participants could interact with the composition of the mural image and snapshot it.



Figure 3. The flyer contained also a frame in order to encourage participants and casual passer-by to interact physically with the image, select a composition, and shared it via social networks as an instance of the mural image projection. (Situ_Ação Collective).

After the action, the collective created a blog, assigned to be a forum of exchange, reflection, discussion, and intervention about art in public space and its contexts, discourses, styles, narratives, languages, and positioning.

Due to its ephemeral nature it is not possible to get in direct contact with most of the murals from past decades. Looking over the photographs of the action, we recognise the layering of mural interventions as urban palimpsests.



Figure 4. Mural images screen projection in Belém. (Situ_Ação Collective).

Since the team has identified, mapped and experienced several mural images in the same wall. The overlap of murals in the same support show the presence of the mural practice over time in certain areas of the city and such walls as permanent displays. Through this procedure, the collective highlighted strategic walls for mural practice. Such traces are important historical testimonies of the evolution of cities. As such, mural practice communicates symbolic benchmarks, referring to the history and the heritage of cities.



Figure 5. Children interacting with the mural projection – mural containing a political message of the Portuguese Communist Party to the People of Lisbon (late 1970s). (Situ_Ação Collective).

Murals exist because people want to give meaning to a wall, transform the site of intervention or reassure that the message achieves a wider audience. In the context of the Portuguese Revolution, murals meant democracy, solidarity, free communication and critical thinking, despite the political source supporting it. Large-scale murals had to be collectively built and such circumstances would give rise to a set of actions

to live the public space. *Situ_Ação* found that research work should consider the experience of analysing the images of murals in their urban environment. Since image files are just one of the instances of the murals, methods such as finding the once painted walls, mapping and experiencing the murals revealed to be crucial to gather missing data from murals that no longer exist.

6. Conclusion: the lab has jumped to the street...

The close relationship between art and life has been at the backbone of most of the avant-garde manifestations along the 20th century. The city has been the main ingredient for those who wish to immerse into life and politically interact with public space.

Nowadays, several artistic practices follow the steps of the avant-garde groups, by working in the public space through the city mapping, among other formats. To those who assume this kind of intervention as a political matter, the articulation between the artistic practice and the lived experience of the city is ideological driven. For most of the avant-garde movements, ideology and critical thinking were on the top of their manifestos, which turned out to be important references for future outcomes, such as graffiti. Public space was the perfect stage to fit their expectations and to reach a wider audience of potential co-authors. As such, most of the happenings were taken as disruptive approaches that could potentially disturb the settling system. The artistic practice turned to the collective and collaborative methodologies began to arise.

Within the academy, such framework is also pursued by researchers who wish to assume a position regarding alternative research and collaborative practices. It is well-known that the arts have embraced the academic arena more recently than other disciplines. Art practice is a malleable activity that may act collaboratively across several environments. If artists have merged their art practice into everyday life and fostered strategies for collaborative action and participation, so do wish artistic researchers. This means to create new collaborative research paths with other academic subjects. Such is the statement of *Situ_Ação*: 1) reinforce the idea of the collective, where the members experience artistic practice driven methods that include researchers bounded by the same subject of investigation; 2) propose new performances to communicate research in progress to a wider audience, challenging the conventional scientific communication; 3) drawing attention to the potential of such strategy to analyse shared issues in research (e.g. murals). Another practice that resulted of such collaborative research is the return of the images to their original sources. The documentation of murals is fully understood if screened in the wall that originated the intervention as well as in the city environment that surrounds it.

Each *Situ_Ação* experience enriches the personal research of the members. MOWS project was built with two artists, an art historian, and a curator, which are senior and junior researchers of different academic projects but sharing the pleasure to act in the street as a method for lab research. In fact, the group, which desires that eventual sites happen, as in Badiou description, also share the spirit of the April 25, 1974, as experienced by the Portuguese artist and poet E.M. de Melo e Castro:

I have been dedicated to visual research as a lab, and after the 25 of April, this lab has jumped to the street (...) has jumped to the street in the way that traffic signs have been violated/appropriated and carry now political messages, has jumped to the streets as an explosion of visualism that one can find now in the Portuguese cities and roads (...) I had the opportunity to verify the enormous relevance of much of the postulates and researches carried by me and my colleagues during the sixties decade on visualism. I could also say that at this moment, that the post 25th of April explosion of visualism gives a jubilee reason to all the experimentations that looked a bit disconnected from the context. But I would say that it was rather the context before of the 25th April that was disconnected from true human creativity. (Melo Frazão, 1975, s.p.).

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