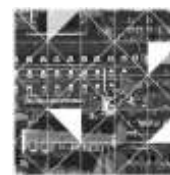

CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios



Recording the optimistic. An audiovisual approach to the city of Lisbon by its architecture school in the 1980s

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Abstract

With the revolution of 25 April 1974, Portugal initiated a unique cultural journey that paralleled, in the architectural field, the questioning of the modern movement that occurred since the aftermath of World War II. The academic context was a particular mirror for this criticism. The director of the Lisbon architecture course pronounced its engagement in “a sort of counter-culture”; the cultural critique that occurred, however, was more of a fortunate accident.

In fact, an optimistic post-traumatic euphoria was a common element in some of the most radical pedagogical expressions that took place. In the face of the ‘creative’ productions that unfolded under the Lisbon architecture school in the 1980s, we acknowledge an unconventional form of expression that leads us to question whether a particular identity frame has characterised Portuguese architectural culture and its interrelation with the city of Lisbon ever since. This paper provides evidence for such a claim by examining previously untapped primary sources – testimonies and documents – that relate directly to Lisbon’s architecture course between 1976 and 1986 and which have informed background research for a PhD. Three videos from the School’s archives were analysed to demonstrate how students related to the topic of urbanity, specifically that of Lisbon, via this particular form of art.

Key-words: Architectural education; Lisbon; audiovisual; video; faculty of architecture; contemporary architectural culture

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In 1974, after 48 years of dictatorship, Portugal entered a new era of democracy. The post-revolutionary period presented a unique opportunity for debate and transformation in the university sector, and Lisbon's architecture school is an ideal example of this phenomenon.

This essay has its origins in an ongoing PhD research project that is investigating the importance of the ten years that followed a revolution in the architecture course of the Superior School of Fine Arts in Lisbon. In this thesis, it will be argued that the School has had a profound though largely unnoticed impact on Portugal's cultural history. This proposition will in part be supported by an account of some relevant initiatives that were taken in the period from 1976, when classes restarted, to 1986, when the 1957 curriculum was taught for the last time and the Superior School gave way to the autonomous Faculty of Architecture. The analysis presented here derives from an in-depth study of one of these initiatives: the conception, creation and materialisation of an audiovisual section³ within the School. The implementation of an audiovisual approach to the city of Lisbon by its architecture school, we argue, supports our belief that the city of Lisbon itself became a dominant setting and object of study in the school's educational programme after the revolution of 25 April 1974.

The ultimate purpose of this essay is to present some of its academic works in the context of a critical analysis of the School's phenomenology in the period under consideration. In the first section, we address some of the social and political factors that led to the creation of a 'video section' in the School, in 1982. In the second section, we focus on three videos selected from the present Faculty of Architecture's Multimedia Centre's collection⁴, considering (1) authorship (by one or more architecture students) and (2) date of production (between 1980 and 1990). In the conclusion, we will argue that these objects denote both an underlying cultural awakening and a general sense of optimism.

1. The Lisbon School of Architecture in the 1980s – A cultural insight

Throughout the 20th century and until the mid-1980s, the official teaching of architecture was confined to the Superior School of Fine Arts in Lisbon and its counterpart in Oporto. Therefore, when a revolution erupted, the suspension of classes in the Lisbon school's first section (architecture course) had a major social impact (Silva, 2011). Student general assemblies vigorously debated the installation of democratic rule (ESBAL, 1974). The detachment of the architecture course from the second section (painting and sculpture courses) and the creation of two separate departments was one of the controversial issues, since it set the practical framework for how the *beaux-arts* pedagogical system should be reevaluated (Taveira, 2014). An alternative proposal, put forward by Nuno Portas, was to establish a new school. This proposal, which became the main polemic (Fernandes, 2013), gained legitimacy because it was supported by the fifth transitory government⁵. Portas proposed the elimination of the first section, implying a turnaround in the existing pedagogical structure. In 1976, however, architecture classes officially reopened under a legal Dispatch (FAUL, 1976), issued under the sixth government⁶, that repudiated this attempt by mirroring the outcome of the revolution within the School, favouring the School's internal prominent political faction.

This option, on the one hand, would ensure continuity, since it acknowledged the creation of an architecture department within the pre-revolutionary purpose of integration in universities (George, 1982:17). On the other hand, this outcome would represent an exception that needs to be clarified.

Among the factors that support the singularity of this period, one is particularly significant in the context of the present video analysis. Although the Architecture Department (DA) would become a Faculty of Architecture

³ This section had various informal designations.

⁴ Centro de Multimedia da Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade de Lisboa.

⁵ Nuno Portas was appointed by Avelãs Nunes, the Secretary of State for Superior Education of the fifth government, as a member of an implementation committee for a new school; the design of its pedagogical structure was one of his responsibilities as head of this committee.

⁶ The fifth and the sixth governments are specifically mentioned here since there was a significant political change in the transition between them. In fact, the first five transitory governments form a series. The third to the fifth in particular can be seen as part of a radical left-wing trend, while the sixth was already moving towards a European-type democracy.

(FA) integrated with the Technical University of Lisbon in 1979⁷, the School's facilities continued to be based in Saint Francis Convent, at Chiado, Lisbon, until December 1993 (FAUL, 1994). It therefore had a close relationship with the other fine arts courses, sharing the medieval building with the historical city as background. This meant that the Lisbon School of architecture developed its own identity even though, in practice, it 'followed the line' of a single director and did not engage in a participative form of management, as suggested in the 1974 discussions⁸. In the present context, it is important to be aware that the revolutionary debate of the mid-1970s had little impact, although the School's embeddedness within the external cultural environment, and the conduct of the institution's leader, were significant.

Augusto Brandão's role in the direction taken by the Lisbon school of architecture from 1975 to 1992 is of particular importance for this analysis. Research has shown that, in terms of leadership, he understood where and how he could play an effective role. In some ways, he was a step ahead of his time; in hindsight, his actions mark him out as a strategist and visionary⁹.

During the 1974 crisis, Brandão became a staunch supporter of Frederico George, a senior professor who was the only academic capable of uniting all the internal political factions. George's support, in turn, was essential if Brandão was to successfully advocate for the re-opening of the course. From then on, although George assumed the formal leadership position, Brandão effectively managed the School. By 1986, when Portugal entered the European Economic Community (EEC) and architectural education was liberalised¹⁰, Augusto Brandão had unquestionably been the School's core.

In respect to the institution's formal structure, he had chosen to administer it "like an enterprise" (Brandão, 1981). Having sensed early on the cultural environment into which the School was going to emerge, Brandão engaged in 'liberal' conduct. He was supportive of many teachers' agendas¹¹ and of requests from students, individually or as a group¹². He would positively favour rival parties (Silva, 2015), encouraging the school population to acknowledge his 'inclusive' tactics¹³.

Brandão understood the risks of following liberalism's fundamental principle of taking account of minorities¹⁴; that is, he knew that adopting a *laissez-faire* approach would open the way to experimentation and to getting it wrong, or not getting it done at all, which ultimately led to peer disrespect. Order was important, as was clear in several formal school activity plans (e.g. FAUL, 1982). Brandão would eventually adopt an aggressive external discourse, providing an official narrative to justify his 'liberal' course of action. For instance, as early as 1981, he claimed to the media that the School was engaged in "a sort of counterculture":

⁷ Decreto-Lei 489-E/79, 21 de Dezembro. (Decree Law 489-E.79, 21 December).

⁸ In 1974, groups of politicised students took direct action by, for instance, expelling some teachers from their classes.

⁹ Augusto Brandão graduated with honours in architecture from the Lisbon school in 1957, becoming an assistant professor at the same School the following year. His influence was apparent during the revolutionary crisis. From 1978 to 1991 he assumed several formal academic positions: president of the governing board of the architecture course, a member of the implementation committee of the new Faculty and, later, president of its pedagogical and scientific board (various dates). From 1992 on, he left public teaching to continue his career in private architecture schools. (Brandão, s.d.).

¹⁰ The first private university architecture course (Cooperativa Lusfada) was authorised under the Despacho 135/MEC/86, 21 de Junho. (Ministerial Dispatch 135/MEC/86, 21 June).

¹¹ On some occasions, Brandão supported events proposed by the teachers, such as the post-modernist Symposia, organised by Tomas Taveira (Silva, 2015).

¹² For example, a letter to a state office stated: "We hereby manifest this Faculty's interest in putting forth internships for our new graduates in the urban planning field". (FAUL, 1984). Student engagement, however, was low. During the period in question, rates of absence from class by both students and teachers were very high (Silva, 2011).

¹³ This included various self-aggrandising events, such as spectacular, American-style graduation ceremonies (Silva, 2016).

¹⁴ "Liberals often have been wary of democracy ... because of fears that it might generate a tyranny by the majority. One might briskly say, therefore, that democracy looks after majorities and liberalism after unpopular minorities." (Britannica, "Liberalism", 2014).

By intervening actively in the city of Lisbon, the School creates a sort of counterculture, since it calls into question the existing architectural culture. ... That is the renewing vitality that turns a university institution into an unsatisfied and globally critical one.¹⁵ (Brandão, 1981)

Various official statements from the 1980s all suggest the same: on the one hand, an official branding for the Lisbon school; on the other hand, a reaction against the cultural hegemony of the Oporto school¹⁶. As previously explained, Brandão's agenda in relation to self-image was essentially reactive: If the smaller Oporto school was culturally prestigious because its size gave it a kind of elite status then the Lisbon school's pedagogical openness – either intentional or accidental – was a reasonable image to project.

The post-revolutionary Lisbon school of architecture faced complex problems, of which education was just one. In this context, if individuality, free enterprise, experiment, novelty, and the like helped the institution to stand out, Brandão would support them. In the absence of consistent disciplinary roots, the outcome of this 'liberal' conduct was, in the end, incoherent, resulting mostly in architectural styling, pedagogical disintegration and favouritism. Being essentially undisciplined, some radical pedagogies that emerged spontaneously in this context actually represent brief signs of a cultural shock, desynchronised from the 1960s¹⁷.

Brandão's conception of a video section (FAUL, 1982)¹⁸ is a good example of a cultural accomplishment that shows, if nothing else, that he intended to be technologically and culturally up-to-date¹⁹. This, together with the students' artistic drive, would lead the architecture school to resemble a forum – something akin to a video store. This idea is well expressed by Richard Brody (2015) in his account of Tom Roston's essay *I Lost It At the Video Store: A Filmmakers' Oral History of a Vanished Era*. He compares the film-school generation of Scorsese, De Palma, Spielberg and Lucas with the French New Wave, suggesting an underlying dialectic between the orderly educational system and "autodidactic methods". Since the Lisbon architecture school's 'video section' did not adopt a specific didactic programme, comparing a video store with a film school is like comparing an architecture school with architectural practices; in those days, students worked in both:

Then, when these younger filmmakers went to film school, video stores were a kind of counter-programming, an assertion of values and of personalities different from those found in their studies. They exalted the anti-academic values of disorder, spontaneity, and enthusiasm. (Brody, 2015)

In fact, while actual architecture education was practised in real life – mostly in offices with senior architects in charge – then the Lisbon architecture school represented a site that proposed an implicit radical pedagogy. On another level, if participating in an architecture course was an autodidactic experience, then learning was about the amount of engagement and satisfaction one extracted from its possibilities. In the end, the question of optimism was decisive for a cultural embedment within the Lisbon school in the 1980s.

¹⁵ "Com a sua acção de intervenção na cidade de Lisboa, a escola cria uma espécie de contracultura, na medida em que põe em causa a cultura arquitectónica existente. ... É essa vitalidade reformadora que faz da instituição universitária uma instituição insatisfeita e crítica do mundo circundante".

¹⁶ The silent North-South scholarly dialogue is fundamental to understanding architectural culture in the 1980s. (For an account of the 'outspoken' mediatic history, see Figueira, 2015). In the following decades, this action-counteraction would fade due, among other reasons, to the proliferation of architecture schools, which helped to soften reactivity to societal change.

¹⁷ We support this thesis on the basis of Beatriz Colomina's work as well as Pedro Bandeira's research on pedagogy. Specifically, Colomina's (2012) 'Radical pedagogies' project states that "pedagogical experiments played a crucial role in shaping architectural discourse and practice in the second half of the 20th century". Similarly, Pedro Bandeira, who studied what went on 'behind the scenes' of the mainstream School of Oporto, observed "other narratives, certainly smaller, but that represent a counterculture, a radical pedagogy, or self-taught trajectories identified with a critique of everyday life and demonstrated in projects, in interventional actions, in performative gestures, and in movements of insurrection or irony" (Bandeira, 2014:12).

¹⁸ Brandão had already asked the Gulbenkian Foundation for financial support to acquire filming equipment as early as 1979 (FAUL, 1979).

¹⁹ Michael Newman points out that video technology was introduced as an instrument for architectural education in the USA as early as the 60s: "Before it was a consumer technology, videotape was in use in a variety of contexts other than television production ... In the later 1960s, the Chicago Tribune reported that videotape was widely used in 'education' ... The National Education Association published a how-to book in 1968 entitled *Portable Video Tape Recorder: A Guide for Teachers*, detailing myriad uses and techniques" (Newman, 2014: 22).

By 1984, the ‘video sector’ was already in the habit of living in the present, that is, major events were recorded with no long-term purpose. It is precisely this practice of recording “everything”, regardless of its immediate utility, that makes today’s archive an important testimony to this optimism.²⁰

2. Recording the optimistic - Video Analysis

The methodology for the present study of FAUL’s archives involved collecting all material that would, firstly, generate better understanding of the institution’s history and, secondly, identify a focal area. To that end, we began by reviewing all of the video production listings and previewing a sample of those that seemed relevant and interesting. The video archive, however, contained little information about the production of any of the materials from the 1980s. The credits make reference to title, authorship and date, but these are all questionable. Nonetheless, the materials presented here contain significant information in their own right. Aside from the content of the creative videos (we did not include films of conferences or classes), the fact that they do not comprise a coherent assemblage of work supports the optimism thesis, in the sense that they were not subject to quality controls or standardisation, although some might have been cut from the archive to reduce its size along the way.

The criteria for inclusion of particular videos in this collection were: they all had a number of features in common and therefore represented a unique group in the archive’s legacy; they were executed in the 1980s; and there was reason to hypothesise that they were grounded in a scholarly experience of celebration (although this was sometimes distorted by the aesthetics of the film itself, as we will see). Specifically, for the following analysis, the videos were selected according to three main common features: having the ‘historical city’ as a subject²¹; being informed by experimentalism; and having a contemporaneous character.

1.

Title: Tedium [Original: Tédio]

Authorship: António Rocha

Collaboration: Maria João Araújo

Music by: Epic Decline [original: Ocaso Épico]; Author’s nickname: ‘Farinha’

Year of production: 1983(?)

Length: 20’07

Type of film: Animation (Archived as School Work)

Description:

This video comprises a series of drawings organised as a story board and filmed with a fixed camera that zooms in and out. A colour filter and a strong soundtrack were added in post-production. It is divided into two parts: the first is an introspective narrative and the second is more experimental.

The first drawing shows a stylised Portuguese modernist neighbourhood. There is insufficient information to determine whether it is central European modern (1930s generation) or late modern. The importance of this drawing is, precisely, the imaginary city – where all modernisms converge into one, and all influences and idealisms add up to minimal expression. Hence, modernism is an historical aspect here, an imaginary past, and

²⁰ Today, the archive contains more than 2596 titles, most of which are records of school life.

²¹ ‘Historical city’ is here used following Telles (1987: 15).

not a purpose. In that sense, this animation feature could be grounded in the historical city of Lisbon, which was a basic urban reference for all students at the Lisbon school of architecture.

The first five minutes have a long, monotonous soundtrack. The fixed image is partly dynamic because of a rapidly changing colour range, which introduces an element of suspense and the expectation of a narrative to come (Figure 1). The next frame marks a shift to the interior of an apartment via movement of the camera over a drawing that includes a street, a building façade and an open window. A new image shows the interior of the apartment: the back of a sofa turned to a TV screen, where a man seems to be sitting and smoking. (We get to see only his foot and hand) (Figure 2).

The second half of this video starts when the camera zooms in to the TV screen, after which the viewer is presented with eleven minutes of ‘textures’– cloths, wall paper or construction surfaces. At first, these images induce a psychedelic impression, but gradually formalise into identifiable objects, such as flowers.

Figure 1. First sequence (excerpts) from the video Tedium.



Source: FAUL's Archive.

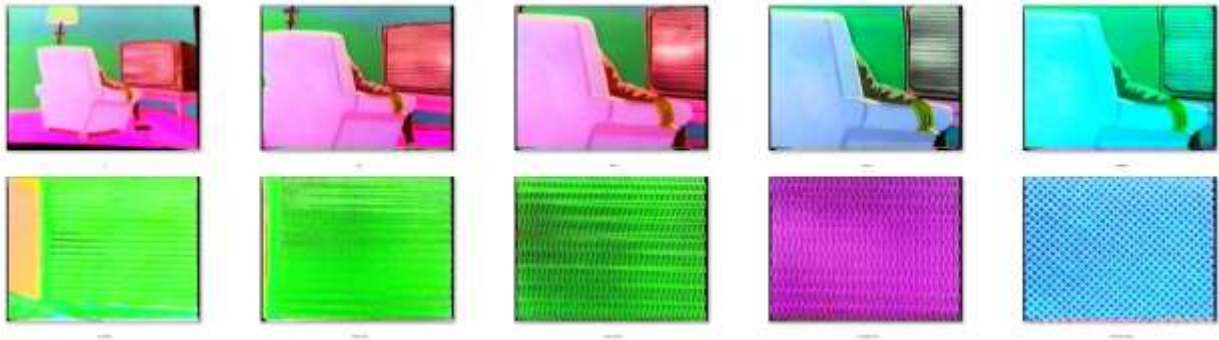
The camera fixes on a drawing in a five-minute sequence of changing background colour and repetitive electro-acoustic music.

In the second half of this first experience, all connection with architecture ceases and the video merely explores the technical and artistic potential of the medium (zoom in/zoom out, colour range, soundtrack).

At this point, an appropriate question would be: If this film were to be found away from the archive of the Lisbon school of architecture, what does it relate to? One possibility is that it is a ‘telefilm’, as the author describes it in the beginning; that is, a film produced to appear on a TV screen. In that case, although very close to computational imaging, it would have an animation or music video purpose.

Nonetheless, the final product also has the appearance of video art. Although there was at that time “scarcely any interest in multimedia”²² (Pinharanda, 1995: 626), Ernesto de Sousa had presented videos in his art performances as early as the 1970s and, in 1985, just two years after it was founded, the Modern Art Centre of the Gulbenkian Foundation (CAM) in Lisbon had also supported a two-week multimedia event involving a number of artistic and technological performances.

²² “um raro interesse pelo multimédia.”

Figure 2. Last figurative image of the video *Tedium*.

Source: FAUL's Archive.

The drawing and camera are still, but the TV screen shows an uninterrupted sequence of colourful texture-like images.

An analogy that could help to clarify the influence of contemporary pop culture on the scholarly environment is *Money for Nothing*, a 1985 Dire Straits' music video (Barron, 1986). Part of *Tedium*'s imagery is connected to it²³. Furthermore, *Money for Nothing* represented an overvalued prospect of prosperity that had not existed before MTV – a sign of social optimism that would be portrayed by music video clips and by video broadcasting itself²⁴. In *Tedium*, by contrast, the light image of optimism is avoided: colour and music are aggressively varied and dense. Its title was probably added after it was produced, as in a viewer warning. This video nonetheless shows the meaning of initiative and optimism in a practical sense, regardless of the object's substance.

2.

Title: The Place Where I Was Born [Original: O Lugar Onde Nasci]

Authorship: Paolo Sousa and Margarida Corvo

Year of production: 1988

Length: 20'52

Type of film: Documentary (Archived as School Work)

Description:

The first scene of this video is the filming of a reproduction (photocopy) of the Largo de São Carlos (Saint Charles' Square) during which a fixed camera zooms in to the rear tower of Basilica dos Mártires. The transition to the second scene – the streets of Lisbon – is accomplished through a *raccord* (match cut) over this tower (Figure 3). From then on, the video combines footage of the city of Lisbon's historical sites with frames of posters of each of the School works that were exhibited under the title "The City of Pessoa".

Fernando Pessoa was a famous poet born in Largo de São Carlos in 1888. Therefore this video (and the School works) probably had as its theme the city where the poet lived his everyday life, i.e., the historical city of Lisbon.

²³ Cf the first image in Figure 2. The *Money for Nothing* music video includes pieces of a computerised animation of vivid colours and patterns. In the middle of a living room, a man sits on a sofa next to a standing lamp and a dog, in front of a TV that plays images of Dire Straits.

²⁴ The song and lyrics of *Money for Nothing* were inspired by an encounter between Mark Knopfler, the lead singer of the band, with a man working in a household appliance store. In a conversation about TV, at a time when MTV broadcasting was becoming popular, the man claimed that being famous and playing music was not real work.

The Largo de São Carlos is a favourite film location, followed by the Chiado, as well as Baixa and some areas of the waterfront such as Santa Apolónia and Belém.

The video is 20 minutes long, almost all of which is recorded with a hand-held camera. Anonymous people and transport, and modernist Portuguese architecture, figure prominently in the city.

The recorded images are very dynamic, indicating extensive post-assembly work in which interior and exterior images alternate. The interior shots were made with a fixed camera focused on the panels of School work that displayed photographs and photocopies of a real and imaginary city of Pessoa.

The music is smooth jazz, in the style of the time. Sometimes it becomes less even in character, seemingly synchronising with images that correspond to the invigorated Lisbon city of the 1980s, teeming with people and traffic.

Figure 3. First scene of the video *The Place Where I Was Born*



Source: FAUL's Archive.

Raccord over the tower of Basilica dos Mártires from the Largo de São Carlos.

Although architecture provided the motivation for this piece and it was produced within an architectural pedagogical context, architecture and the city are clearly excuses to experiment with film. In that sense, it is an experimental film. The students are, in fact, trying to explore their script and the techniques they know – the *raccord* being one of them – and, possibly, drawing on their cultural references (Figure 4). The video camera is not used to interpret the occupying space or to substitute for it (for instance, in brainstorming sessions) as part of the design process. Rather, it is an instrument for registering and documenting the architect's previously gathered ideas and self-conception of the object he is filming – here, the urban space. Therefore, it could be characterised as a documentary film²⁵.

²⁵ As listed, this film is classified as a School work. In Portuguese architecture school, the final studio class assessment was usually a presentation of the student's pathway through a combination of drawings, models, posters, portfolios, etc.. In this context, a video could have been accepted as the medium for a final presentation.

Figure 4. Sequence from the video *The Place Where I Was Born*.

Source: FAUL's Archive.

This scene closely resembles one from Manoel de Oliveira's *Lisboa Cultural* (1983).

Filming the city, with its ever-present movement, is an old²⁶ as well as a contemporary practice. In this film, movement and the metropolis are transmitting an idea of contemporaneity. The city of Lisbon, as the capital, is depicted to highlight its vibrancy and scale, but there is also a clear effort to present an image of psychological openness. Despite the narrow streets and traffic, openness is portrayed by the inclusion of views from elevated locations across the distant Tagus. These contrasts are part of the 1980s' idea of Lisbon as a new cosmopolitan centre, renewed after decades of shutdown. The ubiquity of the old and the dirty are merely details – optimism stands out, represented by the rapid transition between filming locations and emphasised by the sensual, sometimes vibrant musical soundtrack.

3.

Title: Harbour Station (Rocha de Conde de Óbidos) [original: Gare Marítima (Rocha de Conde de Óbidos)]

Director: José Gorjão Jorge

Director's Assistant: João Redondo

Script: Luísa Pacheco Marques e José Gorjão Jorge

Texts: Luísa Pacheco Marques, José Gorjão Jorge e Michel Toussaint

Producer: Quevídeo

Year of production: 1990

Length: 16'06

Type of film: Documentary (Archived as a Faculty of Architecture Production)

Description:

Among the three videos here examined, this is the best documented. Its credits are complete, and its history can be traced through old correspondence involving the Faculty of Architecture. We were also able to add the testimonies of José Gorjão Jorge, the film's director (assistant professor at the Lisbon school) and of João Redondo, architecture student, who worked closely on the film as director's assistant.

²⁶ As Luís Urbano states, filming the city – observing, registering and representing the metropolis – occurred early on in filmmaking. As an example, Urbano points to the Lumière brothers and their particular concern with movement (Urbano, 2013: 70).

Although it is clearly a documentary film about an established city riverfront, it was described by the Faculty's director at the time as an 'architecture film' (FAUL, 1990). This video is rigorously designed and carefully executed; it is, without doubt, an aesthetically pleasing and serious explanation of an architectural piece. The question of whether it is a film about an architecture piece or an 'architecture film' depends not only on the focal object, but also on the recording process – should the video represent the director's point of view of that specific work of architecture, or should the video camera be an extension of a three-dimensional live incursion into the historical city?

Figure 5. Scene from the video *Harbour Station* (Rocha de Conde de Óbidos)



Source: FAUL's Archive.

Excerpt from travelling across the ground floor interior of Pardal Monteiro's modernist foyer.

As in the first video analysed in this essay, the film's experimental nature is reflected in its ability to make the Faculty of Architecture address a building in terms it had not used before; that is, video might have been used in the School environment since the early 1980s, but cameras had not previously been handled at this level of professionalism.

This film is the product of a complex workforce, most of whom came from outside the School²⁷, but it was unlikely to have been created if it had not been for the mind-set of the promoters from within.

Both its technical and architectonic elements justified sending the video to the FIFARC²⁸ festival in France. Should all these steps – imagining the film, executing it, exposing it abroad – have actually been considered experimental, and not just circumstantial, then a 'video section' might have become consolidated from the 1990s on, based on what its Director at the time, Troufa Real, claimed as the School's "interest (...) in continuing this video series about our architecture"²⁹ (FAUL, 1990).

²⁷ This video was produced with the financial aid of not only the CAM (Centre of Modern Art) but also the National Commission for the Commemoration of the Portuguese Discoveries [Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses].

²⁸ Festival International du Film d'Architecture, d'Urbanisme et d'Environnement Urbain de Bordeaux.

²⁹ "Interesse ... em continuar esta série de videogramas sobre a nossa Arquitectura".

Figure 6. Scene from the video *Harbour Station* (Rocha de Conde de Óbidos)

Source: FAUL's Archive.

Film of the upper arrivals platform through silent, slow motion shot from a high vantage point.

If nationalism was the official predicate under dictatorship, then after the revolution, anything that would invoke Portugal's empire – like this film object³⁰ – was most likely not consensual. The contemporary debate on Portuguese architecture in the 1980s and early 1990s was about freedom at what cost? Yet the crisis was quickly overcome, followed by the emergence of a new sense of respect for the country's built environment, to the extent of hosting an international EXPO on its capital's riverfront in 1998. In this context, the idea of making a documentary about a 1940s modernist harbour station was contemporary.

In addition to this renewed engagement with celebrating the past, there was a clear interest in different techniques of film making – travelling and Steadicam being the most widely explored (Figures 5 and 6) – and in different languages (visual, audio, literary, etc.), reflecting the School's interest in semiotics that began in the 1970s. For instance, in the first part of the film there is no narrative: The building itself is described exclusively by the assemblage of moving images and radiophonic excerpts. In the second part, the camera is placed on a boat leaving the harbour and a narrative voice describes the building's history (authorship, dates, etc.). On another level, although the building served to bring multitudes together, at various times the only soundtrack is silence; this highlights the building's archaeological character, as if in rehearsal for the later narrative description.

Conclusion

Research to date suggests that a clearer picture of architectural education in Lisbon in the 1980s will enrich our understanding of contemporary Portuguese culture.

This essay had its origins in the Conference Optimistic Suburbia and, in particular, its sub-theme Outside looking in: Visions from others – art, literature, cinema and music. It examined the establishment, and some of the outputs, of a video section within Lisbon's school of architecture through an analysis of three videos, mostly executed on its own initiative and using its own human and technical resources. In doing so, the first part of the discussion provided cultural insight into the factors that made their accomplishment possible.

On a deeper level, a more speculative hypothesis was presented in relation to the videos' production. Scaling and objectivity, however, lead to the conclusion that is summarised in the paper's title.

Recording the optimistic is indeed one way of describing the audiovisual work of students of the Lisbon school of architecture. It summarises what the school had to offer from 1976 to the end of the following decade, and the three videos analysed in this paper are a reflection of this because they used the historical city as their main

³⁰ The Harbour Station's building, by architect Pardal Monteiro, was the facilities for the departure and arrival from the African colonies.

resource and they provide evidence of diversity and experimentation within the school. Moreover, these materials indicate that the school was part of a contemporary landscape in which radical pedagogies flourished, as in many schools around the world.

NOTES

The images of the video footage presented in this essay have not undergone any digital modification.

All quotes and terms in the original language (Portuguese) have been translated by the author.

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