

## Design used as a resource in the increase in value of goods and cultures: project design and competitive integration in the Estrada Real territory, Brazil (Phase II)<sup>1</sup>

### Design como recurso de valorização de bens e culturas: projeto de competitividade e integração no território da Estrada Real, Brasil. (Fase II)

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#### **Abstract**

The study presented here aims to demonstrate the advances of the *in fieri* Project: Design and Competitive Integration in the Estrada Real Territory (PER), in the context of material, immaterial and historical culture, in a route corresponding to eight cities of the Estrada Real (ER) in the region of Minas Gerais - Brazil. Through the research partnership between the Design School of UEMG and Politecnico di Torino, we saw the need, continuing as a second phase of this project, to define effective actions, throughout the breadth and scope of design, which should be able to articulate and enhance the development of the territory in question, having as basis the increase in value of the local identity and culture, in pursuit of socio-economic and environmental balance. This research involves the opportune participation of students and teachers from both Athenaeums, in a design action that also includes the insertion and distribution of territorial marketing in the Estrada

#### **Resumo**

O estudo aqui apresentado tem como objetivo demonstrar os avanços do projeto Design e Integração Competitiva no Território Estrada Real (PER), no contexto material, imaterial e histórico-cultural, em uma rota que corresponde a oito cidades da Estrada Real (ER) na região de Minas Gerais - Brasil. Através da parceria de pesquisa entre a Escola de Design da UEMG e o Politecnico di Torino. Este projeto na segunda fase busca definir ações efetivas, a fim de articular e melhorar o desenvolvimento do território em questão, tendo como base o aumento do valor da identidade e da cultura local, em busca do equilíbrio socioeconômico e ambiental. Esta pesquisa envolve a participação de alunos e professores de ambas as universidades, em uma ação de projeto que também inclui a inserção e distribuição de marketing territorial na Estrada Real através das localidades piloto seguintes: São Brás do Suaçuí, Entre Rios de Minas, Casa Grande, Lagoa Dourada,

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Real through the following pilot localities: *São Brás do Suaçuí, Entre Rios de Minas, Casa Grande, Lagoa Dourada, Resende Costa, Coronel Xavier Chaves, Pratos* and *Bichinho*. Actions aimed at the increase in value of local products and services have been established through the recognition of the territorial potential and skills, as well as through the communication relationship between these means and the investigated context, in order to strengthen and propose new systems of production and services that respect the regional vocation and establish creative and innovative cooperation networks of sustainable emphasis. In this second phase of the research, we show the results of the project alternatives that were generated, analyzed, improved and developed by the Italian-Brazilian work team (POLITO-UEMG), in which we prospect possible project issues, such as: information networks, sustainable handicrafts, local nature, typography with regional icons, mapping of local cultural events, merchandising products for hotels and restaurants, local music and melodies (ER Net, Eco-art Zoo, Zoom in on Nature, (Re) Write, Calendar, Info-tools for food and table, Book of Musical Traditions). We emphasize that all concepts to be developed focus on the interface “territory, sustainability and design” and seek to contribute, in an original and innovative way, with the many actions inherent to the Estrada Real territory.

**Key words:** design and local increase in value, territorial culture, meta-project and eco-museum, sustainable development.

Resende Costa, Coronel Xavier Chaves, Pratos e Bichinho. As ações estão voltadas para o aumento do valor dos produtos e serviços locais e foram estabelecidas através do reconhecimento do potencial territorial e de competências, bem como através da relação de comunicação entre estes meios e o contexto investigado, a fim de fortalecer e propor novos sistemas de produção e serviços que respeitem a vocação regional e estabelecer redes de cooperação criativas e inovadoras de ênfase sustentável. Nesta segunda fase da pesquisa, que mostram os resultados das alternativas de projetos que foram gerados, analisados, melhorados e desenvolvidos pela equipe de trabalho italo-brasileira (POLITO-UEMG), onde se identificou possíveis problemas do projeto, tais como: informações em redes, artesanato sustentável, a natureza local, tipografia com ícones regionais, mapeamento de eventos culturais locais, merchandising de produtos para hotéis e restaurantes, música local e melodias (ER Net, Eco-arte Zoo, Zoom em Natureza, (Re) Escrever, Calendário, Info-ferramentas para alimentos e de mesa, livro de tradições musicais). Ressaltamos que todos os conceitos a serem desenvolvidos têm foco na interface “território, sustentabilidade e design” e procuram contribuir, de uma forma original e inovadora, com as muitas ações inerentes ao território da Estrada Real.

**Palavras-chave:** design, cultura territorial, meta-projeto, eco-museu, sustentabilidade.

## Introduction

The present article has the purpose of presenting the deepened results of the research work applied to the Project: Design and Competitive Integration in the Estrada Real Territory (PER), from the application of Meta-project tools. The richness derived from the material, immaterial and historical culture of the territory conventionally called Estrada Real, has demonstrated a growing potential of local development. The PER has verified, through its researches and analysis, the way this territory has gained visibility does not contemplate all this richness, either because of the investors or because of the local community itself. This way, the PER – partnership among Escola de Design da Universidade do Estado de Minas Gerais (Design School of Minas Gerais State University), Politecnico di Torino, and Centro Minas Design (Minas Design Center)– has worked in proposals, which through design should be able to articulate and enhance the development of the region, based on the increase in value of the territory’s identity and on the pillars of sustainability – society, economy, environment and culture.

The goal of this work of research applied to the design project is to increase the value of the territory through its own resources, either tangible or intangible. Here stand out not only the natural patrimony, the variety of raw-material and productive processes, but also the historical value and the sociocultural diversity of the investigated re-

gion, and the information of where to find all this richness.

At the end, we present the project proposals of intervention, destined to the increase in value of the culture and identity inherent to the territory, considering a determined route as an “experimental laboratory” and the local identity as a model of projectable reference.

## Competitive integration in the estrada real territory

The importance of the paths that integrate the Estrada Real has motivated the appearance of villages and cities throughout them. With time appeared chapels, ranches, sales places, offices, houses of *pau-a-pique*<sup>2</sup>, where the social actors have articulated themselves and become part of a vast and rich political, cultural, economical and social history. With more than 1.600km (994.2 miles) of history, the Estrada Real, comprehends different local cultures, more intensely in the Brazilian Colonial Period, allowing the construction not only of routes and paths, but also of a singular history of this territory and the actors involved in it: *bandeirantes*<sup>3</sup>, *tropeiros* (muleteers), military officials and many travelers and peddlers who have found, in their ways, the material and cultural transportability throughout products, gold and diamonds.

The Estrada Real Territory is a Geo-touristic complex formed throughout the systemic relationship of its paths: the Old Path (*Caminho Velho*), the Path of Sabarabuçu

<sup>2</sup> A type of house that is constructed with wood, bamboo, liana and mud.

<sup>3</sup> Members of the 16th–18th century South American slave and richness-hunting expeditions called *Bandeiras*.

(*Caminho do Sabarabuçu*), the New Path (*Caminho Novo*) and the Path of Diamonds (*Caminho dos Diamantes*), and the neighboring geographical composition, determined by ten zones divided by historical and geographical importance, in certain Touristic Regions of the Estrada Real: *Diamantina*, *Conceição do Mato Dentro*, *Ouro Preto*, *Barbacena*, *Juiz de Fora*, *Rio de Janeiro*, *Vertentes*, *São Lourenço*, *Terras Altas da Mantiqueira* and *São Paulo*. It is important to point out that the Touristic Regions of *Rio de Janeiro* and *São Paulo* are inside the limits of their respective federal states. (Figure 1).

### Focus on the analysis and process

Based on the investigation around the Estrada Real Territory, knowing its paths and relations, associated with the social-environmental relations and with the touristic and economical potential, problems and failures have been verified, with the focus on the study and on the methodological application in a stretch that is not very structured for touristic reception nor has regularity of paths nor proper orientations. Besides physical problems and deficient infra-structures, we have noticed the lack of consideration, by the local actors, of assimilating the local true Eco-touristic potential, by not doing, for example, preventive policies oriented to protect the material and immaterial patrimony.

This way, the maintenance and increase in value become necessary, with the aim of generating income and

currency to the local communities, being identified, therefore, the possibilities of intervention by the design.

The projectual method adopted for this work, the meta-project and the systemic design, associated with the participative methodology. The objective was to develop proposals of actions that can be appropriated by the territory's community that is a fundamental aspect to promote the continuity and, therefore, to give sustainability through those who are part of it. All the information that has lead us to the elaboration of the proposals presented were obtained and/or verified with the communities situated at the selected pilot stretch: *São Brás do Suaçuí*, *Entre Rios de Minas*, *Lagoa Dourada*, *Resende Costa*, *Coronel Xavier Chaves*, *Prados* and *Bichinho* (Figure 2).

One of the project's specific goals is to attend the variety of people that interact with the cities and their natural, social and cultural attractions. Local people, Brazilian and foreign tourists, who have demands and needs, sometimes ordinary ones, and sometimes very specific ones. For that, each project proposal that has been developed specially had the precise characterization of their target public. It is worth standing out that, in what concerns the local population, we have tried to integrate the actions of the many proposals with emphasis in the innumerable possibilities of actions with a social-educative character, since the conductor axis of this work is the cultural, material and immaterial patrimony and the historical and environmental patrimony, considered here as the main resources of the Estrada Real territory.



**Figure 1.** Estrada Real Territory | Touristic Regions of the Estrada Real Complex.  
Source: Projects team of Design School of UEMG (2010).<sup>4</sup>

### Methodology of intervention

The methodology of intervention applied and approached by the project, such as the meta-project and the systemic design, used many analytical and reflexive instruments, amongst which, there were study of cases that retreat the Italian experience throughout applicative examples of Eco-museums, such as the *Scopriminiera*,



**Figure 2.** Selected stretch inside of the Estrada Real Complex, in the Touristic Region of Vertentes, for the actions of this project.  
Source: Projects team of Design School of UEMG (2010)..

<sup>4</sup> The projects team of Design School of UEMG is integrated by the professors Dijon De Moraes, Roberto Werneck, Lia Krucken, Paulo Miranda, José Nunes, Ana Luísa Cerqueira, Glauceinei Correa, Igor Rios, Márcio Lambert, Ricardo Portilho, and by students of the third year of Design of Products and Graphical Design.

an Italian Eco-museum created in the Region Valdese of Piemonte, in 1998. The initiative has renewed its installations, transforming an old, deactivated mine of mineral talc into a touristic interactive structure in the well known alpine valley, Val Germanasca, situated at 70km (43.5 miles) southeast of Torino. The actions of this project were coordinated by the Architect Professors: Giorgio de Ferrari, Claudio Germak, Claudia De Giorgi and Maurizio Lucat, all professors from Politecnico di Torino.

The actions undertaken in the project *Eco-museu Scopriminiera Val Germanasca* are extended to many areas. Amongst the most important ones, stand out the preservation and increase in value of the local patrimony for the creation of products of cultural tourism, investigation and formation of local agents, communitarian actions with the development of projects for the creation of communication maps, and production of interactive expositions and the activation and management of local nets in a national and international level (de Giorgio e Germak, 2008).

According to Germak (2008): *“the exaltation of the doing and providing, through the cultural increase in value told by the regional historical context and its traditions, has demonstrated an exponential touristic and economical projection, through simple and directed elements, identified as the socio-cultural and iconographic elements of the territory: people, nature, subjectivity elements, work and artifact tools, culinary.”* For this projectual experience, there was, *a priori*, the raising of the cultural, social and economical value of the region where the oldest mine is situated, and, afterward there was the application of a projectual methodology.

Fundamentally, in this work we have used the **Meta-project applied to the Territory's local identity**, as a projectual model. According to Moraes (2010): *“The meta-project aims to go beyond the project, transcending it by making a critical and reflexive reflection about the projectual context itself. The meta-project thinks the project, analyzes the demand and prospects about an existent or future scenario, having as basis the raising of researches, critical analysis and reflections made earlier, throughout previous data recollection”.*

Moraes (2010) complements that *“the meta-project explores all possible potentialities of design, but it does not produce output, like a single project model, and pre-established technical solutions. This methodology aims to propitiate, through a pack of tools, a previous conceptual analysis (concept) or a corrective analysis (diagnose), where there are positive and negative points related to the project, through the application of models of analysis and meta-project actions.”*

Inside the existing complexities, through the social, environmental and economical relationships which determine the criteria of the sustainability that touches the project, the capacity and amplitude approached in these questions emphasize, in this model, the methodological application of the meta-project as the main instrument for the development of the PER.

Other important references considering the relationship between the territory and its self-increase in value are observed by Bistagnino (2007, 2009), with the application of the methodology of systemic design, as well as the exploration with a sustainable character and attention to the increase in value of the territory with meta-project actions observed contemporaneously by Krucken (2009), Germak, *et al.*, 2010 and Moraes *et al.*, 2010. Other advanced studies

in design, which make specific approaches to the methods, can be contemplated through the organization of Morais *et al.*, 2011, who makes a reflection of researches of many Brazilian and foreign universities about the project models related to design.

## The Conceptual Proposals

The continuation of the Project: Design and Competitive Integration in the Estrada Real Territory defines, as the next step, the execution of the hereby proposed actions, leading to their implementation. Considering that each proposal involves products with different characteristics and implementation time frames, it is also necessary to have them individually assessed, to allow a precise understanding of their technical and financial requirements. Thus, the further development of the proposals depends on the future actions carried out by entrepreneurs: UEMG, CMD, FAPEMIG and local authorities from the participant communities.

### Eco-Art Zoo

The Eco-Art Zoo is the proposal of a museum about the fauna, which consists of a space that values and promotes the local artistic diversity, the handicraft techniques, the region's nature, the richness of local raw materials and traditional cultural values and that also enhances the tourism in the region. The goal is to articulate actions with the local community and to develop its territory, through the local values and patrimonies. The proposal is to integrate the environment with the cultural, social, economic and technological development of the region, making it a place of gathering, research, conservation and interpretation of natural and cultural elements.

The concept of the Eco-museum is variable since it depends on the ecosystem and society that lives in that particular environment. *“It is the society that creates it, since an Eco-museum is a reflection of the population, which is a reflex of the culture and traditions of a territory”* (Silveira, 2010). The Eco-museum is, therefore, a territory, a patrimony in which culture and community come together in a common and shared space, defending the preservation of natural resources.

The context is local handicrafts. The proposal is justified by the fact that there is already expressive craft work representing the regional fauna (Figure 3). There is also natural diversity to be explored, presenting a vast range of opportunities to be developed with craftsmen and artists of the region (Figure 4).

### Calendar

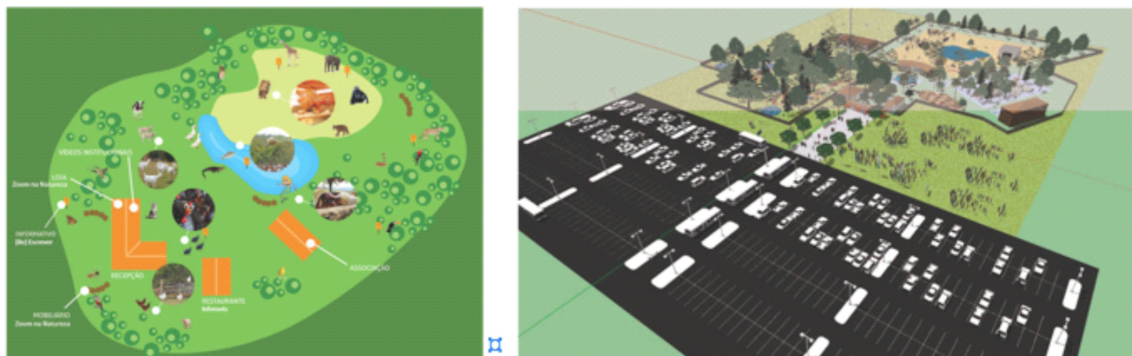
The calendar aims to promote the events of the cities involved, in an organized and objective way. The main objective of the system's implementation is to provide community members, visitors and potential visitors with information about activities in the region, contributing to the participants' social integration while increasing economic and touristic flow in the region.

The information available in the Calendar can reach the main public in multiple ways. Different media formats





**Figure 3.** Some samples of many of the various craftsmen and artist expressions that can be found in the research area. Source: Synthetic board elaborated by the projects team of Design School of UEMG (2010).



**Figure 4.** Conceptual proposal. Source: Synthetic board elaborated by the projects team of Design School of UEMG (2010).

and semantics will be studied accordingly to the project's directives, to promote the events planned for the Estrada Real Territory.

To develop the Calendar project, it is necessary to have full knowledge of all existing events in the region. It is also necessary to analyze the available media formats and to promote the interfacing with other proposals of the Project: Design and Competitive Integration in the Estrada Real Territory. Based on this information, it is possible to build models capable of fulfilling all the calendar needs for both, digital and printed promotional products (Figure 5).

### ER Net

The ER Net Project consists on the development of a touristic information system, designed for handheld devices, in the range of towns and locations sheltered by the Estrada Real Project. It also extends its coverage to the planning of the outdoor structures by which the system will be

offered and will support information platforms for users.

The project's goal is to promote the natural and cultural (material and immaterial) richness of the territory – generating more visibility for the regional attractions – and to enrich visitors' experience, by widening and improving their access to information, while attaining to sustainability parameters.

ER Net targets tourists already familiarized with the use of new technologies in their daily life, and will be of great help for foreigners, which will be provided with comprehensive information on locations and events.

Context - Squares: In general terms and in the studied region, squares are public urban meeting spaces, frequently linked to cultural religious aspects, but also related to commercial, administrative and civic activities. Urban furniture: concerns distribution, appearance and functionality in public or private outdoor areas. Contributes to the development and well-being of the population. Focuses on how people live and use the urban space, targeting economical development and strengthening of the local culture (Figure 6).





**Figure 5.** The Calendar, benchmarking and conceptual proposal.  
Source: Elaborated by the projects team of Design School of UEMG (2010).



**Figure 6.** ER Net, benchmarking and conceptual visualization.  
Source: Elaborated by the projects team of Design School of UEMG (2010).

**Info-tools**

The shortage and limited access to information regarding the region is one of the foremost deficiencies encountered by researchers in the Project Design and Competitive Integration in the Estrada Real Territory. Given the immense touristic potential of the region, it is crucial to solve this issue.

The proposal allows for the conception of several products, related to several different contexts. Thus, a need for limiting the scope was perceived at the beginning of the project. It has been decided that, in this first stage, the Project will aim Gastronomy, comprising table and kitchen as ambiances, since the theme is one of the region's greatest strengths. Hence, restaurants, cafes and diners are excellent locations for distributing information, as they will surely receive a great number of tourists.

The project's goal is to extend information vehicles as to promote the richness and values of the region. The strategy to do so relies on developing a wide range of items, targeting their use by local businesses, taking advantage of the tradition of the local cuisine. Info-tools target several niches of travelers, as to widely spread information on regional points of interest.

The Info-tools project targets tourists, Brazilian and foreigners, who visit the region willing to experience to the maximum its peculiarities and attractions – especially those with autonomy to make slight changes on their itinerary and that are interested in taking home items that refer to their experience while traveling (Figure 7).

**(Re)Write**

The (Re)Write proposition was thought as an answer to the lack of Identity regarding Estrada Real re-

lated material. The idea is to develop written and visual languages from elements of the territory's culture, and to let people use those elements in their own way to help building an Identity more directly related to the Estrada Real.

This proposition's goal is to create typefaces and dingbats related to the culture, history, nature and habits surrounding the Estrada Real. The intention is to use this production in all sorts of materials related to the territory. By doing that, we hope to contribute to the construction of an Identity more directly related to its traditions. The results of this project can also be used as basis to the visual identity of the other PER proposals (Figure 8).

Theoretical Guidelines: “[vernacular typography is] writing's handicraft”- Martins (2007); “the term vernacular suggests the existence of visual and local languages that refer to different cultures” - Dones, Vera Lúcia (2004); “multiplicity of visual repertoires that coexist in our culture (...) it is up to the designer to transform them into new visual languages that translate our cultural identity” - Finizola, Fátima (2010); “popular lettering (...) gives us a large amount of visual experiences that can be used as a rich source of inspiration to formal design.” - Finizola, Fátima (2009).

**Book of Musical Traditions**

The uniqueness of the culture of Minas Gerais is reflected on productions, practices and customs related to the music in this territory. Many of the values there built still have a large presence in its current cultural dynamic. The Book of Musical Traditions emerges in this context as a necessary mean of registration, as well as an alternative way to bring to the general public this cultural content of musical character, that still carries an important presence in the daily life of the regional communities.



**Figure 7.** The Info-tools, benchmarking and conceptual proposal.  
Source: Elaborated by the projects team of Design School of UEMG (2010).





**Figure 8.** The (Re)Write, benchmarking and conceptual proposal.  
Source: Elaborated by the projects team of Design School of UEMG (2010).

The proposal was conceived as a mean of providing registration and visibility to the memorial and current practices related to the Musical Tradition present in the Estrada Real region.

In order to reach the best format to configure the Book of Musical Traditions, several books were analyzed through different scopes, such as format, content and organization of the information (Figure 9).

### Zoom in on Nature

The Zoom in on Nature proposal is based on the concepts of Bionics and Bio-mimetic, which seek to learn from the organic and structural solutions applied by nature to its elements, and use this knowledge to the development of new products. The proposal aims to value and promote the diversity of the regional biome and explore the values and richness of the area, involving local artists and craftsmen in the conception of new products, valuing, as well, the diversity of techniques and materials present in the region.

The project consists of an analysis of this biome in the region of the Estrada Real Project, observing solutions - structures, shapes, textures and colors - that can be applied to the development of regional products, offering a variety of surface patterns with a representative set of structural types and colors of the region.

Influenced by the resources, characteristics and needs of the new economy, the tourists are showing behavioral changes that call for a reevaluation of both services and products currently offered. This new kind of tourist shows a more conscious consumption and the desire for objects representing a bond to the place visited, with some sort of reference to the region's nature, landscape and culture. These objects should reflect the experience the tourist went through in that territory (Figure 10).

Biome of the Region: "The Southeast region of Brazil summarizes the major Brazilian ecosystems: rainforests and seasonal forests in the highlands in the east and south-center; Cerrado in west and center; Caatinga in the north;

and mixed and Araucaria forests in the hills of the south and south-center." (Radambrasil, 1983; Veloso et al., 1991); "Regions where different ecosystems occur side by side, forming a true mosaic" (Desjardins et al., 1996); "The natural vegetation is very diverse, featuring several Eco-types within a radius of 1 km (0.62 miles). South of the studied area, in the talus slope, the Seasonal Semi-deciduous Forest is the dominant vegetation, but nearby it there are mixed forests, with the occurrence of Araucaria. At the north and east, the savannas predominate. And from 1250m (4,000 feet) of altitude, at the mass metarenites, the area is dominated by alpine pastures" (Radambrasil, 1983, Carvalho et al., 1994).

### Expected results

We expect, with this experience among Minas Gerais State University - UEMG, Politecnico di Torino - POLITO and Minas Design Center - CMD, that: new opportunities open in the ambit of the stretches involved, having as support the design; new opportunities of tourism, commerce and consume appear, exploring, in a sustainable way, the whole potential of the originality of the local handicraft; innovative interaction nets will be established, allowing the territorial marketing in the localities, touristic points, inns and hotels in the Estrada Real; and, above all, promote a research in fertile field of academical study, throughout the creation of a rich space for the professional maturing of the students and professors, from Brazil and Italy, involved with the challenges of this project.

### Final considerations

The great contribution of the project is in the preparation of the students in the competences of design, which were experimented when dealing with the elements of the territory culture and its competitive integration. Besides that, it offers the region feasible conceptual proposals, which can be implemented to enhance the touristic potential and, consequently, the income of each city.





**Figure 9.** The Book of Musical Traditions, benchmarking and conceptual proposal.  
Source: Elaborated by the projects team of Design School of UEMG (2010).



**Figure 10.** Zoom in on Nature, benchmarking and conceptual proposal.  
Source: Elaborated by the projects team of Design School of UEMG (2010).

## Conclusion

The continuation of the Project: Design and Competitive Integration in the Estrada Real Territory / PER establishes, as next step, the projectual execution of the proposals, leading to their implementation. Knowing that each one of these proposals involves products with specific characteristics and implementation time frames, it is necessary to have them individually assessed, to determine with more precision their technical and financial specifications. The further development of the proposals will depend, therefore, on future actions of the entrepreneurs: CMD/UEMG, FAPEMIG and City Halls.

## Acknowledgments

The Project: Design and Competitive Integration in the Estrada Real Territory / PER, was carried out through a partnership established between the Minas Gerais State University – UEMG and the Politecnico di Torino, with the support of the Secretaria de Estado de Ciência, Tecnologia e Ensino Superior – SECTES (State Secretariat of Science, Technology and Higher Education), with participation of Minas Design Center – CMD, being Design School of UEMG the executive entity. For its viability, the present project has counted with the financial support of the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa de Minas Gerais – FAPEMIG (Foundation for Research Support in Minas Gerais), which credits and acknowledgments are offered to the Coordination ED-UEMG: Ana Luiza Freitas, José Nunes, Roberto Werneck; to the advisors of the ED-UEMG: Ana Luiza Freitas, Glaucinei Correa, Igor Rios, Márcio Lambert, Ricardo Portilho and to the students of the ED-UEMG: Ana Carolina Ribeiro, Diego Gonçalves, Fernando Borges, Gabriel Figueiredo, Gabriela Silva, Márcio Pinho, Ravi Bellardi, Thayana Meneses, Wanés Abraão.

The authors of this work thank **FAPEMIG** for making this project feasible and for financing our participation in the **3<sup>rd</sup> International Forum of Design as a Process**.

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Submitted on January 07, 2012  
Accepted on December 12, 2012