CO-DESIGNING PAINTINGS ON THE WALLS: "LIVECOLOR COLORINHABITING" A CREATION OF AFFECTION AND HOPE FOR THE NEAR FUTURE

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Abstract
LiveColour Colourinhabiting, is the case study of my PhD in Design, under the theme – Collaborative Paintings in Residential Facades, and is the name of the action taking place in the São Cristóvão village, Alentejo, Portugal, writ large on residential facades, that tells a story in pictures from a local worldview, and conveys a message of hope, (in participant's own words). The research indicates that, beyond the local participation and empowerment that such process engenders, it also satisfies an individual's need for affection, identity and creativity by exploring the relationship between each resident and her creation of own public space. This paper contemplates also the designer´s role as a catalyst for questioning personal and collective values, their substance and expression. The case study has contributed to the creation of a future culture, promoting design as both a discipline of inner development and generator of social capital.
Key-Words: Co-Design; Painting façades; Public space; Affection, Identity; Creativity.

Introduction

"The dream leads our life", "Farther on, Christopher, farther on ...", "In your hands Freedom starts"(1)

In the legacy of the humanistic ideas from the 60s and 70s, and currently as a response to new urban challenges, the apology of Co-Design has been made as a way to invent, create and implement different components of the public space through participation. This paper presents the case study "LiveColor Colorinhabiting",(2) in which a change in the public space is triggered by painting the walls of a residential *community*, Bauman (2001), and is also developed through the Co-Design process, in this case in São Cristóvão (a village in southern Portugal). In an accurate way, I go back to the basilar questions of Design, seeking answers to the following: what are the benefits and which human needs Max-Neef (1986:237-8), apart from participation (3) can be satisfied in a neighbourhood action of painting their home's facades? And also, how can it be done, and what is the role of the designer in the course of that action?

As background values, the research herein presented is underpinned by the ideas of the designer Ehrenfeld (2008), and the sociologist and economist Max-Neef (1993:40), which point to the need for a development based on people instead of objects, and for the satisfaction of human needs which fosters the development of "to be" instead of "to have". Also having in mind the idea of the "sculpture of self" by the philosopher Onfray (2009:98), I stress the need to build the individual, as the basis for a more complete development of both the individual and the society. The action "LiveColor

Colorinhabiting" converges towards these values through a constant incitement of the participants for their personal development.

We could then ask ourselves "why is this exercise developed by painting residential facades?" Also according to Max-Neef (1986:161-165), human existence is dependent on space, and the quality of life of each individual is the result of their integration in his/her space of existence. I use the word integration, when one person finds a given space as his/her own, contributing to its formation, creation, through their presence and their definition, (as opposed to simply "floating" around), being able to establish certain communication links, enough to be attached to it and also assuming his/her identity. Based on these ideas, the individual possibility of participation (as a human need), in actions like "LiveColor", to build the surrounding space, may prove to be important in the promotion of human development and the quality of life.

And further on, thinking about the house, as the place where ones dwells, not only as a place of protection (which certainly contributes to it becoming the object with which an individual may have the best link between himself and a place) but as the place in coexistence with other houses (whether in urban or rural areas), the outer wall - the facade, an element in shared space, becomes a rich and complex field for the possibility of satisfaction of various human needs and therefore, deserves further attention. By transforming the action "LiveColor" into a tool for the development and construction of the individual, community, and public space, its potential as a satisfier, according to the premises described, is maximized, through a proposal to "make", "feel", and "relate". This essay will describe the concept, the process and the results of "LiveColor" while pursuing the issues of the research during the different stages of the action. By doing so, I hope to provide the design community with an example and opportunity to further enhance their understanding of and appreciation for Co-Design practice, particularly in the design of public space.

"LiveColor Colorinhabiting": origin and concept

"LiveColor Colourinhabiting" is the case study for my PhD in Design, under the theme "Collaborative Paintings in Residential Facades" at the Faculty of Architecture - Technical University of Lisbon, in collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism Design - University of Buenos Aires. Before establishing the concept for "LiveColor Colorinhabiting", an initial research was made on paintings in facades involving participatory processes, mainly developed in Buenos Aires. This part of the research followed a non interventionist methodology through field observations, interviews with actors (residents, proponents and participants), specialists (architects, designers and researchers from the social sciences), and documentary research, Conte, (2011). Among those case studies, I highlight the activity of the NGO "Más Color" (4) and "El Abasto y el fileteado porteño"; (5) and the work of the Brazilian artist Monica Nador (6). Compiling knowledge from previous research, the concept for the action "LiveColor", also intends to work together with the inhabitants of a street or

neighborhood, to transform the public space by painting the facades. But in the present case, the design for the paintings is born under a consensual concept and is developed in a constant dialogue between the designer and the inhabitants, at all stages of the process. Yet, the justification for the existence of "LiveColor" does not report, as in the cases studied before, to a way of improving or recycling deprived or uncharacterized urban environments, or denunciating social disadvantages, but is intended to be a proposal for a participatory construction of a dwelled-space, and of the inhabitant him/herself, whatever the space or whoever the person might be. Walls become a witness-place of this action and carry a message, thus turning the whole process into an opportunity for the personal development of those who participate.

"LiveColor Colorinhabiting" in São Cristóvão - a case study

São Cristóvão is a village in the municipality of Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal, with a surface area of 147 km2, and 754 inhabitants. The image of São Cristóvão is that of a beautiful and typical village in southern Portugal, with a predominant typology of family houses, mainly one-storey buildings. The facades are mostly painted in white with blue and / or yellow skirting around the windows and doors. From a social standpoint, as many Portuguese villages, São Cristóvão is facing aging problems, high unemployment, lack of opportunity for young people with an activity rate (rate that defines the weight of the active/ working population under the total population), of 39.70%, (7) resulting in recurring feelings of loneliness and isolation by the inhabitants. From a cultural standpoint, the care of the facade is something that is already a part of the visual culture of the village. Its origin is the whitewashing, working as maintenance of protection and cleaning, and also for aesthetics of the facade. This whitewash painting on the wall, a heritage of the Arabic world. Today the material used, is hardly, the whitewash, yet the white remains and as well as other colors that closely relate with the appearance of the natural pigments. In São Cristóvão, the aesthetic ritual of painting the facade is renewed every year, just before the local festivities, and is held with pride. The white of the wall paint is considered as an owner´s calling card. Taking these dimensions into account, the care of the facade has a privileged place in the local visual culture, which brings great advantages to the proposed action. From the methodological point of view, São Cristóvão, corresponds to the idea of a small place, where information and communication can occur in the most horizontal way as possible, and also where, according to bibliography, this type of development receives maximum acceptance Vega & Alarcon (2008). At this point, São Cristóvão has not only the necessary scale, but is also a village already with references in participative actions, because it was elected for development of Local Agenda 21, in 2010. It is also remarkable that participants are the owners of the houses, which facilitated the course of action, in terms of commitments. From the institutional point of view, "LiveColor" had financial support from the artistic residencies in "New Ways and Techniques in the Transition", produced by the NGO "Oficinas do Convento", from the local government on behalf of the Municipality of Montemor-o-Novo, and the Parish of São Cristóvão, also functioning as media broadcasters.

Concept and Methodology

Once the place was chosen, I felt the need to present the bases for a design concept for the action, to be consensually accepted by the population. "LiveColor Colorinhabiting" proposed to work in collaboration with the inhabitants, to paint designs on walls, skirting, around doors' and windows´ frames, and also on chimneys, taking as a starting point, personal and local expressions with affective or aesthetic significance through evoked memories or emotions, as well as proposals for the future. Thus, from the presented outset, a need for active collaboration was established, without which the design would not have been produced. This participation would require an affective involvement, a survey of memories, and a questioning of the decision as to whether or not to share with other users of the public space; a personal statement through a brand, a singularity placed in a traditional facade. According to the PhD methodology, I followed a participatory research in immersion during the four different stages of "LiveColor Colorinhabiting": Presentation of Action; Development and Negotiation which ended on a Public Exhibition of the proposed drawings for the paintings; Painting´s with Public Presentation, and Evaluation.

Stage 1 - Preparation and Presentation of the action | October - November 2011
(Stage characterized by inclusion and confidence building)

The presentation of "LiveColor" was publicized through posters and flyers available in the mailbox, a "prototype" painting was done in a ruined parish house, an interview for the Portuguese TV channel TVi was recorded, and also, an interview for the local radio was given. I conducted the presentation of "LiveColor Colorinhabiting" in a meeting scheduled at the Parish of São Cristóvão in (November 12th, 2011), where examples of some places in the world distinguished by color characteristics or artistic facades were shown, as well as the entire basis for the project concept. In the end, participants had the opportunity to ask questions and a consensual decision was made for the concept to be developed.

As doubts emerged; they were mainly focused on finance of the costs for the implementation of the action, and the possible resultant image of the houses. The idea of murals or graffiti was strongly rejected in favor of discreet drawings in accordance to the architecture style of the area. At that very moment, those present got the idea to paint the bus stop, with the sentence "Don't come late" (a humoristic sentence relating a Portuguese Fado song, with the bus's usual delays). The intention was to publicize and expand the number of participants. Even if this goal wasn´t achieved, painting the bus stop increased the confidence of all the inhabitants, by the observation, approval and the quality of the painting's execution. Also the advertising of "LiveColor" on the television and radio (which were not predicted in the beginning), had no impact on the number of participants, but it seemed to favor a better integration for me as designer in the community, for showing the village itself, thus gaining the kindness even from those

who didn't participate in "LiveColor". The action started with eight participants (which were among the fifteen people present at the parish presentation meeting).

The challenge of this stage was to arouse interest and generate proximity between the inhabitants, the proposal and me. Any social interaction proved important. Thus, the work of painting the bus stop took as much time as possible - a whole day - in order to enhance the dialogue with passersby. At the end of this stage, information about an action to paint some houses in the village was already circulating, though no one was sure what would happen.

Stage 2 - Development and negotiation + Public Exhibition with proposed drawings for the paintings | December 2011 April 2012
(Stage characterized by the development of the proposal through research and negotiation)

During the second stage, the number of participants reached twenty, (many of them in representation of the entire family who came to engage in the action equally after some negotiations). Thirteen of the participants are residents in São Cristóvão, the others have their second houses in the village, and one of them is in temporary housing (The Priest). The ages of the participants are mostly between 30-40 years old and above 60 years old. Education levels are very diverse across the participants, from the categories of primary, secondary school, technical and higher education.

The first work of this stage was the collection of contents for the drawings, i.e. phrase/s and object/s. Through a series of interviews (usually between three and four open individual interviews), the drawings were developed, always searching for the involvement, discussion and negotiation around the proposed pictures, between each participant or his/her family and me. At the end of this stage we had a Public Exhibition of photomontages in the Parish, (April 14th 2012) with a moment for a presentation generating a discussion around the resultant set of drawings. Apart from the participants, friends and relatives were also present, as well as people representing the sponsors, and a group of students from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon, which generated, an opportunity of conviviality, with about 30 people. This was a very important moment for the action. It was only at the end of this stage that participants assigned to paint their houses according the photomontages.

The interviews took place in the interviewees' homes, in the parish, or in my local-residence, (granted by the artistic program). It was intended to provide openness, and the conditions for the necessary intimacy and trust, during the interviews, which were seen as a guarantee for the deposit of memories and affections, which resulted in the statements of the drawn proposals. The objects brought up, are mostly associated with the place, with crafts and common objects chosen for their aesthetic and personal value. The selected sentences were chosen among poems by well known authors, phrases used within the family, expressing values and ideals, or also strengthening ties of affections:

1 - We go further. Don´t come late.
2 - … roots to go back to, and reasons to stay on…
3 - If you like it, smile.
4 - In your hands, freedom starts.
5 - Truths. May you meditate upon them.
6 - Oh life of a thousand transboarding faces.
7 - I have so much to tell you
8 - Love, love, love.
9 - Landscape is what you have the most on earth of.
10 - Tall corktrees die, small ones grow.
11 - Good morning, morning flower day.
12 - The best in the whole world…
13 - Be strong and you will overcome.
14 - Dreams lead our paths.
15 - In goodness-dreamed.
16 - If you can see, look. If you can look, notice.
17 - Wish-me-well. Wish-me-evil.
18 - Much further… Christopher, much further.
19 - I love all countryside, the flowers, the calla lily, and the forever love flower.

The delivery of the materials caused some delays. The difficulty of this stage of work for the participants was to combine the image with the text, in a result that continues to match an idea of themselves. It was a *design exercise* that though difficult, showed compensatory. It was the biggest expression of dedication of almost all participants. However, the use of the "word" was intimidating. Some people haven´t participated for fear of not knowing what to say (due to the uncertainties coming from the prejudice, of a low level of education).

At the end of this stage affectionate ties, and individual responsibility for the action were established, and only two people did not take part in the painting.

The moment of the Exhibition was also important forming group cohesion among the "participants" and a consensual acceptance of almost all proposed drawings was obtained. The presence of some people from outside the village was seen as a gain and generating feelings of pride, although with little interaction between the two worlds.

STAGE 3 - Paintings + Public Presentation of the path I May - July 2012
(Stage characterized by the realization of the work already proposed)

At this stage we proceeded with the manual labor. Simple techniques were chosen, aiming for an idea of autonomy, to transform these tasks into DIY (Do It Yourself). Each participant was asked to write the phrase, in their handwriting, the size of the drawings was measured and their correct location on the facades was verified according to pre-established photomontages; each participant was asked to collaborate in cutting stencil. Eighteen facades were painted and in most cases with the participants and residents' collaboration.

(Please consult the action websites: http://cargocollective.com/vivercor or www.facebook.com/VivercorCorabitando).

The inaugural moment followed the path of the painted facades. During the refreshments in the Parish Council, a public discussion of the results was held along with a photographic exhibition of the paintings, by participants and collaborators (on the July 7th, 2012). It was on this day that an interview for the Portuguese channel SIC news, was recorded highlighting the present participants. The moment was attended by over 40 people from outside the village.

During the work process, the biggest surprise of this stage was the resistance felt from the participants when they were asked to write their sentence in their handwriting. Again, it was a vote of trust in the designer that removed their strongly felt insecurities. Despite that, one of the participants refused to write by hand out of shyness, but in some cases it came out surprisingly positive: "writing the phrase by my hand… I had never imagined…" says one participant during the evaluation interviews.

The moments of painting proved to be privileged occasions for meeting neighbors and friends, who joined the conversation, talking about what "is happening in the village," or about the "sense of beauty." The path of the paintings began to be used even before the end of the works, as an amusement for the walk after-dinner; it was photographed and started to appear on Internet social networks, creating a sense of pride and satisfaction for the most of the inhabitants.

Stage 4 - Evaluation | August - September 2012
(Stage characterized by recognition, appreciation, affection and some revelations of personal thoughts)

Eighteen open interviews with script, were conducted with the participants, and recorded along with a survey relating "LiveColor" to the satisfaction of Human Needs. Sixteen open interviews with script were conducted with non-participants, but this time not recorded. These interviews enabled an analysis of the action performed. They also contained a set of didactic questions that invited the interviewee to reflect on his own self-assessment, the potential advantages from the action, and encouraged the continuation of the same. This moment proved to be extremely important in the contact with non-participants. During the interviews, many doubts were dissipated and the village is, once more, available to receive a new number of participants.

The response to the result of the action was unanimous and considered very satisfactory. In order to check the answers given during the interviews, the survey was also applied at the end of the interview. This survey consists of examples of satisfiers of human needs, grouped in four ontological categories proposed by Max-Neef (1993:58-59): to be (in the sense of self), to have, to be (in the sense of location) and doing, which were scored from 1 to 5.

Thus, I concluded that, the human need that has been assigned the greatest satisfaction was affection by sharing, developing and deepening relationships. Also important was meeting the needs of identity, understanding, participation, creation and leisure. We verify the assumption, that the proposed action (through its process, which serves as a satisfier of needs questioning about what is valued and what is willed to be shared on the façade), constituted an opportunity for personal development, along with the construction of the public space (8).

Another interesting answer is that both participants and non-participants, identify and recognize themselves with the paintings, either as an individual or as a collective identity element. The resultant paintings are seen with a manifest sense of pride, joy, and beauty. Interpretating why people like the drawings and according to Norman (2004), I can say that they appeal not only to the visceral sense of beauty, by an emotional and affectionate answer but also connected to the self, likewise for its reflexive sense by providing emotions of pride and ownership as well as underlining cultural aspects.

Drawings look well integrated into the tradition while innovating (9). These qualities brought to the village a distinction, an element of identity and a reason to get out of anonymity, become "a place on the map" (10) and welcome new visitors. Reaffirming the value of "LiveColor", the tourist office of Montemor-o-Novo scheduled a guided tour entitled "São Cristóvão the village of the paintings." The participants' worldview, mixes with the local reality and common values, to materialize a narrative whole. (11). Here may lay the difference of "LiveColor" because even if images have been rescued from local memories, the result tries to drive a culture of the future. This is accomplished through an exercise of empowerment, in the sense described by Appadurai (2004), as an exercise of aspiration, by opening the ability to dream and achieve. In addition, moreover through the lexicon of personal narratives, itself generator of hope, inscribed and testified on the walls that are read by passersby.

The interviews also confirmed the importance of some interpersonal skills like empathy, presence, communicativeness and confidence given by the designer during the process. If empathy was required in the first stage, trust was crucial during the proposed *design exercise*, paintings and assessment (where a sort of "full disclosure" comes out, sometimes with the revelation of more intimate reasons that had remained hidden, as illiteracy, or difficulties in family relationships); as well as the recognized ability to listen to different backgrounds and interests, to ascertain the reasons for the choices brought, providing intimacy enough to understand the desires and develop a proposal design for the facade (12).

However, the picture is not all rosy, and this work was at least four times slower than authorial work (13).

Conclusion

Recalling the first research question, "what are the capital benefits and human needs that may be satisfied when we paint residential facades through a co-design action?" By the data analysis provided and collected over the course of the work, (by observing behavior), and interviews, we may say that the action developed, gave a distinct possibility of individual satisfaction of affection, identity, creation, leisure, as well as an opportunity for participation. We can also reflect that we have different levels of participation: the inhabitants were informed, there was a consensus among participants for the action concept (they took the collective decision of painting the bus stop and the individual decision to paint the facade), and yet, there was a sharing of risks at the individual level (the exposure risk, and costs if the wall would need to be repainted), Dominguéz (2008:71).

It is most keenly valued by all respondents of the relational and affectionate component, through friendship, appreciation and sharing, expression of emotions and desires. The manifestation of individual identities, and associated with this, the possibility of adding an element of beauty and uniqueness to the village, whose effective social capital Fuad-Luke (2009) is also widely recognized by all. This process helped develop and reinforce some traditional decorative places, helped innovate by grounding the drawings in emotional source material, and brought a poetic sensibility through the introduction of the written word onto building facades. So, I do believe that the foundations for a territorial attribute have been laid, and that the creation of a territorial brand, an image identity for the village is underway.

For the narrative possibility and not just as a matter of empowerment, or a participatory possibility, a message of aspiration can be potentiated. Actions like this can plant a seed in building values for a culture that is associated not only with the rescue of the past but also proposals for a hope and a future.

In my view, these benefits are possible only by the complexity of the participants' involvement, responsibility, commitment and recognition of each participant in both individual and collective results. Finally, recalling the second research question, "the role of the designer", seems imparted with the task of constantly provocating participatory moments, and internal questioning of participants, as well as promoting reflection on personal and social values. But such provocations must be accompanied by intense listening, and trust which puts the designer in the role of witness, in a society where time for personal communication is confronted with virtual competition. I see this quality time of listening to people as a "product" exclusive for designers, which brings together the local knowledge, the negotiated design of images and the ability to build a public space, in a meeting between a professional and the inhabitants.

So the construction of identity, was associated with the place and the community, and connected it with the construction of the individual identities. This action reaffirms the values and the role of the designer, to build shared public space, identity construction of

the participants and landscape, again combining art and life, current thinking in the present, with the objective of generating a sense of hope and openness in the future, a more human future, believing in design as a discipline encouraging this change.

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Acknowledgments

1. These are some of the phrases painted on the facades of the houses by the participants in the action LiveColor Colorinhabiting, São Cristóvão, Portugal, 2011-2012.

2. All the action is documented on: www.vivercor.com.

3. We take into account the nine fundamental human needs described by Manfred Max-Neef: Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Leisure, Creation, Identity and Freedom. What contributes to the satisfaction of a human need is called Satisfier.In Co-Design the promotion of empowerment capabilities of populations often arises as its main benefit, often overshadowing other intangible values, due to the difficulty of interpretation.

4. "Más Color" became a reference because of the way they challenge the inhabitants of a place to paint the entire walls of their homes, for further information see the website: www.mascolor.org.ar [Accessed: 26 Feb, 2013].

5. *"El Abasto y el fileteado porteño"* was the name of the contest launched by a residents' association, which achieved an urban reference, by bringing back and transferring *fileteado*, from buses to the facades, (*fileteado* is a popular pictorial art form born in early 1920s Buenos Aires. Its decorative character results in part from the use of straight and curved lines mixed with flowers, scrolls, ribbons with Argentine colors, natural elements and dragons).

6. Monica Nador, after her master's thesis "Paredes Pinturas/ Walls Paintings" (developed at the School of Communication and Arts, University of São Paulo, Brazil in 1999), actively involves people in the decorative painting of their home facades in the *favela*, Jardim Miriam, in São Paulo (Brazil).

7. Data from "Agenda 21 Local de Montemor-o-Novo. Freguesia de São Cristóvão. Diagnóstico Sintético. Diagnóstico Selectivo do Desenvolvimento Sustentável. Volume 3: Relatórios Específicos para cada Freguesia do Concelho, 16." 11-15.

8. "I think this is so much more beautiful than I had thought. The idea is very appealing... to involve someone, and their affections and feelings, and being so personal... it's because it touches everyone. [The action] did not disappoint me. It was far beyond ... We have been asked (for) a sharing of affection. ". Answer given by a participant during the evaluation interview.

"On a personal level, the expectation [that I had of "LiveColor"] was in the growth process of drawing. The expectation was more limited, and was surpassed, on the issue of inner knowledge, and of what I did to transpose it to the facade. For me, regardless of whatever the visual aspect of the design is, the most important [part] was the search, discovery and rediscovery of what I did alone. That was fundamental". Answer given by a participant during the evaluation interview.

9. "Because it adds values to architecture, aesthetic and cultural values ... because it respects the architectural features that we have kept under a watching eye, and says

something about the population and this is beautiful". Answer given by a participant during the evaluation interview.

"To be beautiful it needs various features ... because they accepted the paintings that were made there with satisfaction, beauty is in the proposal and acceptance, negotiation ..." Answer given by a participant during the evaluation interview.

10. "[The action] made the village known, that's a very important thing. Everyone saw it on the net and on TV. And we are isolated here, at the end of this world... to be seen, and for the people to be understood... is very valuable. ". Answer given by a non-participant during the evaluation interview.

11. "Maybe [I seek] those [things] that are implicit in the phrases of the poem I chose, this ability to look at life with the ability to see the good things and what it can give us, this positive outlook and enthusiasm towards this existence. It's over there. Life is beautiful. ". Answer given by a participant during the evaluation interview.

"We brought the audience to something that is private, very private. I shared. I deeply believe in the phrase. In that value. It is a call for the others, that they also put into practice. It is an appeal. ". Answer given by a non-participant during the evaluation interview.

12. "The link is the work done by you, and the people, the ability to expose themselves. They give so markedly what lies in their soul ". Answer given by a participant during the evaluation interview.

13. Having in mind the concept of Slow Design developed by Alastair Fuad-Luke.