

MANTO Project – Design for Social Inclusion in Póvoa de Lanhoso

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ABSTRACT: MANTO (meaning mantle) is the name of an activity dedicated to social integration through design, carried out between May and July 2018, within the framework of the project Generation Lanhoso. This project takes part in an integrative program encompassing a set of activities which highlights solidarity upcycling initiatives to promote sustainable consumption of eco-friendly products, useful and accessible to all, as well as economic integration. It supports the creation of sustainable occupations for populations that are somehow disadvantaged (particularly women) and highlights handcraft knowledge. The foreseeable activities support their training to allow them to evolve in their work, gain competencies and develop their environmental awareness.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Circular economy working hand in hand with social inclusion

This project takes part in an integrative program encompassing a set of activities which highlights solidarity upcycling initiatives to promote sustainable consumption of eco-friendly products, useful and accessible to all, as well as economic integration. This initiative launches partnerships among academy, from interdisciplinary sciences and craftsmen aiming to create innovative solutions for the environment and supports the emergence of green production sectors based on waste materials. It supports the creation of sustainable occupations for populations that are somehow disadvantaged (particularly women) and highlights handcraft knowledge. The foreseeable activities support their training to allow them to evolve in their work, gain competencies and develop their environmental awareness. The revenues generated are a source of empowerment and social inclusion, and the network helps them take responsibilities.

1.2 Framework and objectives of the Generation Lanhoso Project

MANTO (meaning mantle) is the name of an activity dedicated to social integration through design, carried out between May and July 2018, within the framework of the project Generation Lanhoso. MANTO was carried out within the scope of a line of action called creative workshops of the referred project, aiming to promote the social inclusion of citizens of Póvoa de Lanhoso under the responsibility of Associação Sol do Ave, an institution of social solidarity (IPSS) based in Guimarães. The project aims to combat persistent poverty and social exclusion,

often related to unemployment situations, in the context of a multi-sectoral and integrated approach.

The people covered by the project are, to a large extent, women over 50 years old, unemployed or inactive, in a socially vulnerable situation. Some of these people have worked in the textile and confectionery industry or, traditionally, have the skills to embroider, crochet and other textile products. Others, however, present depressed or low self-esteem, or other problems that are translated and manifested by some inertia, difficulties of attention and motivation, problems of fine motor skills, among others. In common, they also share a very fragile economic situation and are dependent on social benefits provided by the ISS (Social Security Institute).

Since the sponsoring association does not possess human resources with design competences, this task was handed over to the Design Institute, under the coordination of Paula Trigueiros. It was an opportunity to develop a project of interaction between the University and the surrounding social fabric, demonstrating the power of design for social inclusion.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 *Maria da Fonte – history and source of inspiration*

The implementation of the project began with an approach to the community of Póvoa de Lanhoso, involving the entire technical team in the areas of design and social service. In order to understand the work context local stakeholders, namely Associação Sol do Ave and Municipality, which demonstrated interest in the continuity of the activities and quality of the results of previous Creative Workshops were also involved in the initial diagnosis, namely through its culture and tourism sector, responsible for the CIMF- Centro Interpretativo Maria da Fonte (Interpretative Centre Maria da Fonte).

2.2 *Historical fair and recreation of Maria da Fonte*

In the first phase of this work, the community was studied and its values, references and a little of its history were carefully analyzed. From this analysis, Maria da Fonte excels: a local heroic figure, known for having spearheaded a popular revolt, mostly carried out by the women of Póvoa de Lanhoso in 1846. (Capela & Borralheiro, 1996)

The theme of Maria da Fonte was also the focus of the first set of activities with the group. The work proposal initially intended that people learn to make "sellable" products. Knowing about the first historical recreation of Maria da Fonte revolt (in 2016, on the day of the municipality - September 22) it was decided to emphasize its importance and take advantage of the local calendar date. Thus, it was decided to orientate the theme and typology of products to be realized in the Creative Workshops in relation to the props and costumes related to the theme. In this way they would be visible in the local festival - so that they could be proud of the people who created them and those who could wear them.

In addition to an annual party, one of the busiest fairs in the city is also taking place on this date. Thus, there was an additional opportunity for the products to be carried out by the trainees at this stage, or later on their own initiative, to be sold - directly or in a municipality-sponsored space, right in the center of the city.

On the other hand, the profusion of events and fairs in which the recreation and manufacture of appearance products and medieval and/or historical production techniques is valued, aroused as an opportunity market for this kind of actions and products - which can broaden the scope and scale of their results.

2.3 *Before doing: Learning*

In order to deepen the historical and context study, the involved technicians were formed to obtain explanations, documents, books and a visit to the Interpretation Center of Maria da Fonte in Póvoa de Lanhoso. In view of the theme and structure of work, a very experienced trainer in the creation of textile products and costumes for events and performances of a historical and artistic nature was recruited.

In order to emphasize and value the heritage of local traditional vests and encourage people to share and progress in the use of their skills - namely to make traditional lace and embroidery - the group visited Museu do Traje (Costume Museum), in Braga. In this space there are numerous genuine examples of regional costumes, embroidery and some other textile products very familiar to the involved people (Figure 1). The explanation provided by the local technician of the museum added knowledge about details, functions, and other stories related to the customs associated with those artefacts - deserving the attention of the visitors.



Figure 1 – Visit with the participants to the costume museum illustrating the genuine aspects of the materials, shapes and adornments of the time.

2.4 *Forming – Other content implicit in creative activities*

During the sessions of the Creative Workshops the trainer transmitted some notions about the importance of the genuine references of history and the rigor of their representation for the creation of value in their own future creations.

In addition to the selection of embroidery techniques and overall handcraft, some materials were also chosen and worked for the preparation of props for the historical representation - avoiding knits and synthetic materials and trying to use natural dyeing fabrics and techniques that best recreate flax, cotton and other fibers that existed at the time - especially the most characteristic of characters such as the common women who played part in those historical events.

2.5 *Social contingencies and the closure of the activity – 1st phase*

For reasons unrelated to this whole structure and organization, many people who were attending this action were called by Social Security for other training actions - which are compulsory for beneficiaries to maintain entitlement to social benefits. In addition to these other training actions promoted by the Employment Institute, this Creative Workshop is free of charge and does not confer the right to monetary remuneration or payment of expenses (travel or meals) of the involved people. This led to the early closure of this activity, after only 30, of the 100 hours of

the foreseen planned activities. This was only resumed almost a year later - in a second phase that will be further described.

2.6 Widening horizons – Maria de Hoje logo

In the context of a strategy of continuity and expansion of intervention scale, a brand was created, and different packaging designed for different types of products to be carried out in this and other social contexts similar to the case study in point.

The proportion of the feminine gender and particularly vulnerable women in these isolated communities from the interior of the country, led us to emphasize the reference to the figure of Maria da Fonte for the creation of this brand. Thus, the brand Maria de Hoje (meaning Mary of Today) was born, inspired by history and also by the cultural values of the region, namely referred, the Maria da Fonte revolution.

The inverted triangle design, symbolically associated with the female uterus, (Chevallier & Chevallier, 1997) is filled with a regular and functional scratched graphic in its reproduction - which intends to leave in each product the identity of an essentially artisanal work and simultaneously enhances the role and the affirmation of the Woman of today (Gamma, Trigueiros, & Broega, 2018).

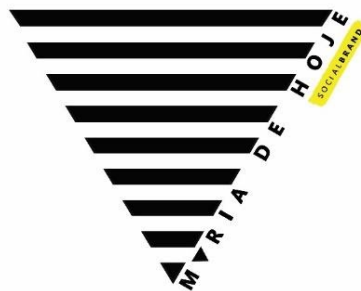


Figure 2 – Maria de Hoje logo brand.

3 MANTO PROJECT

In face of the further developments and in order to guarantee the maintenance of the cohesion of the group, it was also planned at this stage to establish a strategy stability and involvement of people in the activity. The idea of creating a "Mantle" is not alien to all these facts that preceded it, and although it departs from the historical theme, it maintains much of its purpose and must be understood as a continuity of it - constituting a second phase the Creative Workshops.

As in the previous phase, it was necessary to meet with a few (new) persons responsible for the institutions involved - at this stage the sessions were housed in a community center of a small village, the Association "Em Dialogo" displaced from the center of the Municipality of Póvoa de Lanhoso - Monsul. For this phase, Cláudia Ribeiro, a costume designer very qualified in staging and performing events in public spaces related to music and theater, was selected for direct work with those women. The MANTO was held during the months of May to July 2018, in weekly sessions. In parallel, a workshop was also held involving students from different creative areas and several cycles of university studies (product design, textile and architecture) that discussed the inclusion proposal by design and participated actively in the concretion of a fence piece of 7m extension - in an event that took place in a single day. Some of them

participated later in the date of the assembly of the MANTO on the spot and also contributed with the realization of some interviews to the participants.

3.1 Concept and Description

The MANTO concept was inspired by crochet or patchwork blankets, made mostly by women of some age who thus occupy free time. These are made up of modular pieces made separately, taking advantage of the waste remains of wool from textile industry and other used raw materials offered by several members of the community. Those are then sewn forming blankets, shawls or other utilitarian products. Based on a triangulated network made of PVC pipes, participants in the initiative contributed with their own creations to fill triangular modules of the structure. In each triangle, the participants carry out various works, some of them result of their own creative experiences and others with support during the sessions led by the trainer, to learn and practice some techniques of weaving, embroidery, macramé, among others. With the support of “Em Diálogo” Association, at the beginning of July a session was held that brought together other people from the community of Monsul and surrounding parishes. In this session many simple triangular modules were produced with various colored fabrics donated by textile companies in the region.

3.2 Notes

In the days prior to the pilgrimage and with the support of the local Parish Council, a wire structure was created, which was incorporated, radially, centered on a large pole on the local. The contributions of all were grouped together creating a large mantle (MANTO), raised from the ground about 4 to 6 meters, forming a great sunshade. This was mounted on the churchyard of Saint Tiago and Saint Luzia, to shade the space during the annual pilgrimage of Monsul in Póvoa de Lanhoso. This gave visibility to the collective installation, promoting the pleasure of concretization and the pride among the participants.



Figure 3. Final assembly of the MANTO, in the churchyard of the local church, with the participation of the community.

4 PROCESS DESIGN

4.1 *Participated process*

The history of participation in design was also highlighted by the defense of civil rights in the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1960s (Sanoff, 2008). This political context inspired the creation of community design centers, where designers and urban planners assisted in the design and demand of their needs and planning aspirations (Carvalho, 2018). Design for democracy, social design, design for participation, design for/of/in a democracy, political design, design for politics, design activism are examples of the increasing social/civic/political relevance of research and practice of self-directed and societally oriented design (Binder et al., 2015). This decentralization refers to the concept of co-creation (Carvalho, 2018).

4.2 *Systematization of the method*

4.2.1 *Study and community approach*

This task consisted in a deep and integrated study of themes, of history and local references, logistics, material and policy requirements as well as the preparation and coordination of work in collaboration and in harmony with partners and all involved institutions, at social, industrial, and local authorities.

4.2.2 *Inclusive creation: tolerant in individual participation and valued by the collective*

In accordance with the proposed strategy, the methodology involved the development of a module - or isolated element, executed individually. Each module gives meaning to the content of the training/techniques developed during the work sessions. The object of the training component and the practice is the experience of various techniques (weaving/embroidery, among others), welcoming diversity - from the work of the most virtuous to the apprentice.

4.2.3 *Community visibility and the symbolism of the collective festive experience*

The meeting of the elements in a large facility helps to unite the collective common mission - technicians and trainees, as well as authorities and local references are proud to be represented in these works with local visibility on festive dates. A symbolic and relevant date in the community calendar and an objective implementation schedule, contributed to the dynamics both project and the people.

4.3 *3rd Phase: Future work*

The third and final phase of this project is ongoing, resuming the intention of the creation of utilitarian and salable products by the people themselves - stimulating the creation of income and promotion of self-esteem. Product design at this stage incorporated the concept and spirit of collective or participatory construction, which emerged and was successful in the project MANTO. For this purpose, products have been designed benefit from the learning provided by all the previous process - the notion that the final product can result from the set of individual participations. We call these products “Outros Mantos”, (meaning other mantles) by incorporating these values and principles, regardless of their actual function.

5 REPLICABILITY, SCALE UP AND FINAL REMARKS

Under the concept of circular economy, a new definition for the concept of social sustainability arose. This definition includes society, culture and politics, involving social justice, social

cohesion, poverty reduction, equality, labor rights, education, social care, social responsibility, the right of self-determination, but also social networking, security, democracy, health and social development. The social sustainability mainly refers to ensuring equality within and between generations, combating all forms of discrimination, social inclusion and cohesion, tackling all forms of exclusion, political participation, social mobility and respect for cultural diversity. The project Manto was the basilar stone for the definition of a future strategy in which, the exchange of ideas and practices under the concept of ‘circular knowledge’, along with the concept of seizing waste as an opportunity, act as a core function that can be fundamental to a true metabolism of society and culture, and lately of economy. It was demonstrated that at social and organizational contingencies level, design can participate, unite and give meaning to the whole. It was a successful view of an open and tolerant project that welcomed different visions, from that of local technicians, participants and experience and skills of the trainers. Ethics and the value of art and training was highlighted, showing that their role should not be neglected nor misunderstood. Even in the cases when trainees do not understand it, they were able to recognize the value of the work/art and gather consensus around it, always underlying the determination to give discarded materials a second life.

6 REFERENCES

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