

(Un)Useful Architectures – An entrance for FA

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Abstract

This article was developed from the pedagogical experience carried out within the course (Un) Useful Architectures, lectured by teachers from Faculdade de Arquitetura (Fernando Moreira da Silva, Margarida Louro and Francisco Oliveira) during the 1st semester of the academic year 2014/2015. The central subject was the critical reflection on the concept of experimental architecture and its various assertions of ephemeral, reusable, transformable, adaptable, etc..., applied to practical contexts of specific intervention. Thus from the practical experience developed by several students, we reached to the present intervention, a critical reflection that focuses on the following key points: conceptual innovation and the scale of the (un)useful architectures; methodological, projective and constructive processes; analysis of case studies on larger scale: object/building/territory. It is intended to promote a reflection on innova-

tive construction solutions that will encourage effective response instruments to the multiple needs, experienced by contemporary cities, reusing materials, techniques or spaces. It is intended a transversal approach to different and training areas interconnecting themes of architecture, urbanism and design. The main objective is to explore new paradigms of architectural and urban quality under sustainable development, from an integrated understanding of the (un)usefulness on going in certain contexts and identifying and imposing rules of innovative and viable organization.

Keywords

Experimental Architecture, Ephemeral Architecture, Reusable Architecture, Transformable Architecture, Adaptable Architecture

So it was on this basis that it was designed the program of the exercise that was developed by five groups of students, having as statement the intervention and requalification of the entrance area of Faculdade de Arquitetura (FA) covering the outer space turned to Sá Nogueira street, and the area that accesses to building 2 – the court of the administrative building. Thus, from the emblematic idea of space and of its implicit feature of “entrance” in the building of FA, it was intended to take this interventional reflection as a new way of thinking, and appropriating this space enhancing it as “the entrance” in the building of the faculty. By promoting new approaches and new uses such as: seating/waiting areas; promotional media; support for large-scale areas (periods of registration, enrolment), etc..., this intervention was assumed to be a challenge on a pilot project-space. It proposed creative responses in terms of certain assumptions and functional arguments, associated with large utility spaces as social/meeting and ludic spaces and on the other hand, constructive

design using sustainable building premises such as recycling and reuse resources.

The five proposals are:

1. **FLUX AMONG FLUXES** developed by the students: Anna Sienzi, Andrea Ottaviani, Beatriz Bento

This intervention had as main starting point, the understanding of the needs of an input space that marks the entrance into which is the Faculty of Architecture, currently a public space, depersonalized, empty and anonymous. Thus, the intention of the project was to give a “new” entry to this space, making it more attractive, remarkable and useful. Thus it was intended to take advantage of a great feature of this space related to mobility, concurrency, and to the current flows, by building a path in the axial direction that marks the entrance at the Faculty of Architecture, and seeks to meet the space needs through a ephemeral building with a provisional

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character. This construction is based on an undulating shape a metal structure that builds the design of a flow that accompanies each person on his/her way through the space. All panels are based on that metal structure and its plans are filled with colourful wires or cables stretched between the iron bars. This system also provides a lighting infrastructure that during the night period allows more quality to space, to its users and to the urban surroundings. Since this is a place that is also inhabited during the early evening, it makes sense to turn it into a space with more light, more life and more energy. A place where the view of the city is extremely remarkable, especially for its lighting. So it is desirable to make the space of the Faculty into a place that even far away can be seen with the energy and the life that identifies it. It should also be noted that these panels are adaptable to a range of functions and can be removed from the space or adapted taking into account the needs of the different ti-

mes of the year. Turn entry into a new place, or especially in a place that is part of every day, an event, a playful moment or a space for new moments. Understanding the urban and architectural context of the surrounding of the Faculty of Architecture, made possible to create an object that is foreign to this universe but hopes to become part of this context and add to it all the design features with the purpose of a living space, showing that it could not be there but that makes all the difference when it passed to be.

2. DINAMIC ATMOSPHERES developed by the students: João Lopes, Pedro Cardia, Inês Ferreira

The starting point for this proposal was the intervention and rehabilitation of the zone situated in the west front of Architecture Faculty of the University of Lisbon, which contains three



Figure 1 - Flux among fluxes

Source: Anna Sienzi, Andrea Ottaviani, Beatriz Bento, 2015



Figure 2 - Dynamic atmospheres

Source: João Lopes, Pedro Cardia, Inês Ferreira, 2015

main entrances, entries that serve this space both to receiving students, as well as employees, teachers or guests.

As this is an area of reception of the school, it was assumed that it should have a careful treatment that enhanced the character and the image of the institution. It was intended to emphasize the identity of the arrival point, connecting all the west area from block 4, passing by the administrative area and reaching the area of the cafeteria through a discontinuous element that will contaminate the spaces as if it were a human being.

This element consists of a mobile infrastructure that can adapt to needs of different spaces, having in its basic constitution a metallic structure that will be wrapped with strips of ply which are embedded in the epoxy resin that will confer stiffness to the structure, creating a standard full/empty that will form different environments with a strong spatial role.

A kind of a raised "cloak" that may have multiple functionalities that can be covers, floors or seats.

3. **(IN) BOXES** developed by the students: M^a Leonor Freitas, Afonso José, Fábio Cabral, Cristina Paniagua

The initial premises of this intervention were raised from the idea of upgrading the entrance area of the architecture faculty, enhancing it as a "gateway" in the built set of the area. Thus, motivated by the idea of recycling and reuse of materials, the students elected a plastic fruit box made of high-density polyethylene (HDPE) as a working material, from which they designed their proposal. This configuration had as premises the search for a organic form, sustained in structural arches, that promotes a fluid space able to interconnect the different areas of the building set, and to promote spaces with different features of passing through or of staying. The chosen material can be perfectly adapted to the desired effect, due to the lightweight, robustness and abundance in nature. The use of this combination of materials, as well as an iconic and affirmative college entrance, allowed to the



Figure 3 - (In) boxes

Source: M. Leonor Freitas, Afonso José, Fábio Cabral, Cristina Paniagua, 2015

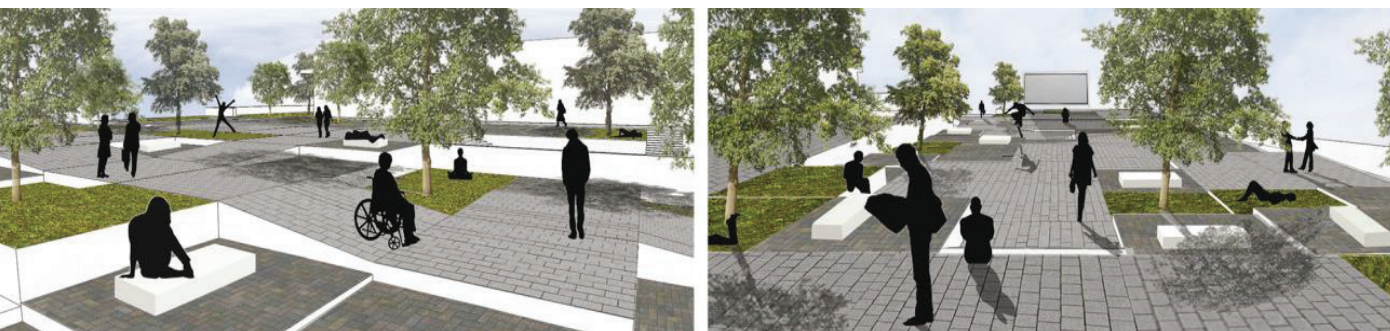


Figure 4 - The entrance
Source: Margarida Monteiro, 2015

creation of spaces able of interaction, socialization, that constitute a break with the daily college routine, not belonging to the interior, but not only from the outside, existing in a space shared between the two, creating a join between them.

Is conceived a unitary body, one continuous piece that moves the outer space of the college, contamination that begins at the entrance near the office - the main point - and spreads along the “streets” forming protected areas, sun and rain shelters and occasionally local seating areas.

4. THE ENTRANCE by the student: Margarida Monteiro

This proposal had as argument of the project, the creation of an “Arrival Square”, by setting up a geometric deck that is configured three-dimensionally, creating walkways, curbs, benches, sitting areas, etc... The main objective was to create an entry space that dilutes and distributes by the remaining buildings and college spaces.

Thus it sets up an axis that joins the two dimensions of access to the college (high elevation on the north side) and the lower level (the south side of the canteen). In these two extremes were assumed two entrances, and along the street bordering of the college it was created a transition access of lower level, combined with common leisure spaces where may even happen some events or activities.

Project assumptions also took into account sustainability and reuse. Thus, both the street furniture and flooring of the blocks would be made from the reuse of materials. The street furniture has a light inert core and concrete, in order to reduce the amount of concrete in the block, and hence its weight. Outside this core it would then have a concrete layer to supply con-

sistency. As for pavement blocks, blocks would be made from recycling inert construction and waste. Another important consideration is related to ground movements. An attempt was made along the idealization of the project touching lightly the ground and not requiring large land transport. The main idea is just to move it into the place of intervention in order to create a more controlled slope.

5. UNDER CONSTRUCTION by the students: Filipa Pimpão, Helena Simões

Under Construction is a performing action that occupies the entry space of the Faculty, through a set of modules that are grouped together and create spaces for moments of social relations. The concept is based on the reuse of structural scaffolds that can give rise to a variety of programs and events, such as workshops, meeting places, exhibition places of work, concerts, or to an information centre.

Under Construction is thus an architectural installation that transforms simple scaffolding boosted in a potential space. Easy to build, versatile, reliable and affordable, it is used a scaffolding type, covered by a translucent skin of metal. The perforated sheet metal used in scaffolding, acts as a support for information, artistic display, image projection screen, and also protects the solar incidence providing shelter. It is a visual and structural component that impresses with its dynamic and sense of lightness, an element that visually transforms the integrity of the scaffold.

Two uses:

MODEL MUSEUM creates a three-dimensional maze. The idea of the labyrinth is based

on the concept of exploring the environment around us through the concept of getting lost. Its complexity undergoes makes the user to become an integral part of the intervention experiencing actively the versatility and discovering and creating their own path through the various places of work and art exhibition, and its combination with the discovery of the surrounding space.

STAGE MODEL shows up with a simpler structure but with enough dynamism. Its “U” shape invites us to position ourselves as a centre of expectant that something amazing happens designed for school music and fashion events.

In summary, the proposals demonstrate the critical and creative capacity of intervention, based on the initial assumptions of (un)useless



Figure 5 - Under construction
Source: Filipa Pimpão, Helena Simões, 2015