Walk to Plan, Plan to Walk: II International Summer Workshop in Urban Design, Lisbon - Summer 2019

Vicente del Rio  
PhD, Professor, City and Regional Planning, Cal Poly.  
Visiting Professor, Universidade Lusofona de Lisboa.

Diogo Mateus  
PhD, Professor and Coordinator, Urbanism Program, Universidade Lusofona de Lisboa.

In the Summer 2019, the authors coordinated an international two-week urban design workshop in Lisbon, Portugal with sixteen international students. The CRP Department has a long established relationship with the Urbanism department at the Universidade Lusofona, and over the years they have collaborated in various short-term programs and publications. This article briefly describes this successful program.

From June 24 to July 5, 2019, a group of seven Cal Poly’s BSCRP students joined the II International Summer Workshop in Urban Design at the Universidade Lusofona (UF) in Lisbon. Coordinated and taught by professors Vicente del Rio (Cal Poly) and Diogo Mateus (UF), the group also included students from other parts of the US (3) and from Brazil (2), Portugal (4), and Russia (1).

Repeating the success of the first workshop in 2018, in 2019 we focused on walking as a fundamental method to learn about the qualities that make cities and places special and as a goal to make them livable and sustainable. The students used their findings as inspirations for the next phase when, divided into three teams with individuals from different backgrounds and nationalities, they had to come up with imaginative and feasible short/long terms development ideas for a site within walking distance of the UL Campo Grande campus, where we had our workspace (Figure 1). The 12-acre site, vacant due to a series of political battles, had been used as a popular fairground for many years and, before that, held the livestock market facilities and a large domed neoclassical building for the auctions. Surrounded by high-density development, the site is bound by important avenues and an elevated railroad line. A multi-mode station at its south side serves the trains, several bus lines, and a subway line that provides fast connections to the airport, the downtown, and the rest of the city. Facing this challenge-complex but full of potentiality-the student teams conducted a brief inventory and a SWOT analysis that led to programming decisions, development visions and goals, site plan diagrams, and design concepts (see the figures for selected examples of the teams’ ideas).

The 2019 workshop finished with the teams submitting final reports and Powerpoint presentations to faculty. The proposals for the site included smart, culturally and contextually sound design ideas, and envisioned feasible and sustainable development solutions. Having Lisbon as a learning laboratory with the city’s multitude of fascinating and walkable places, together with the unique planning/design challenge and the international, interdisciplinary and multi-level mix, energized the student teams immensely, leading to a very successful workshop.

1 On the 2018 workshop, see FOCUS 15, pp 123-124.
3 Details about the workshop and the student reports are available at: https://www.ud-workshop-lisbon.net/
Figure 1: The 12-acre project area in Entre Campos. A train and subway station at its south boundary, and the Campo Grande park on north.

Figure 2: The students in front of a typical street car, during the study walk in Alfama.

Figures 6, 7 & 8: General view, a proposed section for a surrounding street, and detail of internal space. Project by M. Driscoll, E. Huang, R. Miguel, B. Norton, I. Panetta & J. Richey.