# editoriale
## *editorial*

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## ABSTRACT

The editorial examines the relation between streets and time through five interrelated *Fragments*. *Fragment*#1 focuses on the etymology of rua, highlighting its dual role as place and itinerary. *Fragment*#2 describes streets as wrinkles of time, embodying continuity and change. *Fragment*#3 explores both cyclical and linear time perspectives. *Fragment*#4 looks at streets through the lens of urban morphology. *Fragment*#5 reflects on editorial choices for this issue, emphasizing diverse perceptions of time and space.

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# On the Time of Streets

Our memory is a collection of fragmented moments, not all of them aligned in a continuous timeline and with multiple interrelations that create a complex network of knowledge, both real and fictional. The opening text of this special issue is also a collection of fragments, interrelated and interchangeable reflections: four fragments on the Time of Streets, to which adds up one final fragment that reveals the order that was chosen to organize the articles, one of the possible combinations for the collection that composes this special issue of *in_bo*, "About Streets and Time."

**Fragment #1: On the etymology of the word *rua*, for a definition of street**

Oriol Bohigas has recalled the atemporal interest of Joseph Rykwert on the etymology of the words that refer to street spaces in the European city. In "La Strada/The Street,"[1] similarly to "The Street: The Use of its History,"[2] these words are classified in two main families, each one based in a different root, that consequently refer to two different deep meanings associated to the spatial understanding of street-like spaces.

On one hand, the English *street*, the German *Strasse*, the Dutch *straat*, or the Italian *strada* all share the same *str-* root common to the Latin *strata*, used for *via strata* with the meaning of paved road. *Sternere* means to lay down, to spread out, to pave, thus conferring to these words a profound meaning related to the definition of an artificial surface to support public life, the physical, material qualities of the space, i.e the construction of a place.

In a complementary understanding, Rykwert finds the origin of the French *rue*, the English *road*, and the Portuguese *rua* in the Anglo-Saxon term *ride*, associated to the movement from one place to another, an itinerary. Therefore, this suggestive understanding and classification of the words that refer to street-like spaces establish two poles in the definition of a street as a place and/or as an itinerary.

Nevertheless, we can search deeper the origin of the Portuguese word for street, *rua*. Raphael Bluteau, in what is considered the first Portuguese language dictionary, wrote that *rua* has a direct origin in the French *rue*, derived from the Greek *ruo* with the same meaning of the Latin *fluo* or the Portuguese *corro*. Bluteau explains that this was due to the fact that the rainwater and also the water from fountains that is spilled on the streets run through the streets, like the people that run around on their errands on the streets. Furthermore, he writes that according to some etymologists, *rua* in Latin was named *ruga*, a word that also means wrinkle, because the streets in a city have the same effect of the wrinkles on a person's forehead, dividing the space between the houses.

Avenida Beco
Estrada
Travessa
Rua
Azinhaga
Calçada

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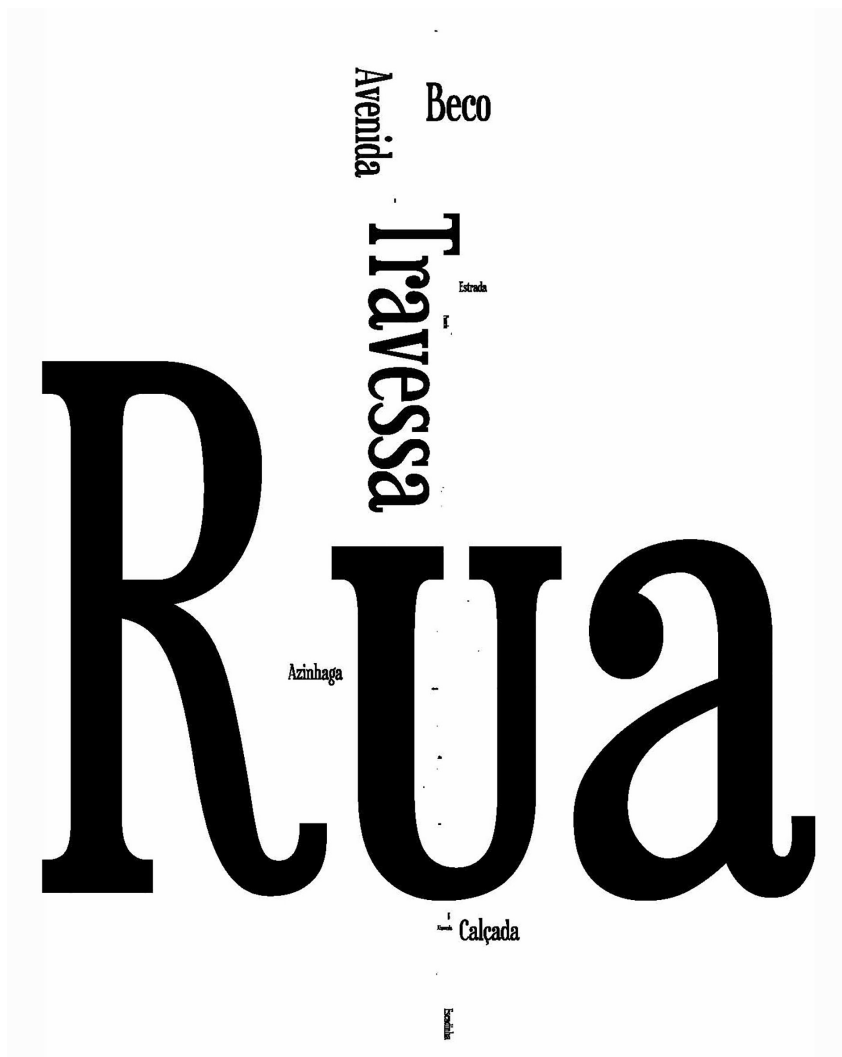
Therefore, we might consider that the Portuguese word *rua* congregates the idea of movement and the idea of a physical linear spatial element which are usually attributed to distinct words. *Lato sensu*, etymologically, we could almost claim that any street like space is a *rua*, a wrinkle, a groove formed by the repeated motion of people in time. Public space is made up of several elements, nevertheless, in most cultures, the street is its predominant element, the one that is most recurrent in the composition of the city's urban layout, the one that defines most of the city's common urban tissue and which, however, also configures structuring elements of the city form and the city image recognition.[3] Therefore, distinct spaces can be integrated into this category of space, the morphological richness being translated into the variety of toponymic designations that can be found. This diversity is, of course, dependent on the culture and context it is integrated in, as Phillipe Panerai and David Mangin remind us in the final chapter – "Lexique" – of *Project urbain*.[4]

Different languages and even different cities will have specific toponymical designations to refer to street-like spaces. If we focus on a single city, for example Lisbon, we will find twenty-seven different toponymical designations, such as *avenida*, *alameda*, *rua*, *travessa*, *calçada*, *beco*, *vila*, *caracol* or *escadinha*. **Fig. 1**

These refer to specific characteristics of these street-like spaces, whether regarding their form, their function or their position in the landscape.[5]

Nevertheless, all share common characteristics that help us to build a consequent definition of street. We can therefore define street as any element of the city's public space that constitutes a channel or corridor, linear and continuous – thus excluding spaces of an exceptional nature in the urban fabric that deviate from these characteristics, such as squares – and that cumulatively fulfills the functions of passage and building support. In other words, we can understand the street as a morphological element of the city's public space that is linear and continuous, at the same time route and address, itinerary and place.

**Fragment #2: On Time and the formation of the Form of streets**

In cities which have formed in a long-time duration, it is common to find streets that evoke the idea of a wrinkle which is subjacent to Raphael Bluteau's definition of *rua*. The idea of a line that is created by the repeated movement of people in time. Paradoxically, while the practical reason for the creation and maintenance of a street is to support that fluid human movement, it is its mineral physical form in any given moment in time that is the clearest and the most

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7   8     a          e
9   10 Hôtel R       l
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17   18
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Colegio d'Hulst 21   22 Societé des Pretres de Saint- Francois de Sales
restos de un hôtel 23   24    des Recollettes  Convent des
vieja casa de un piso con mansarda 25   26    des         des
27   28 Convent des      Recolettes
29   30    des         des
31   32    des         des
33   34    des Recollettes  Convent des
35   36
37   38 una casa
39   40
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Medidas

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lasting expression of a street. In fact, the representation of a street is usually the representation of its form, and even alternative representations take its form as a base to express the idea of the street. **Fig. 2**

Any image that is taken of a street will fixate that moment in time. That single image is a relatively faithful representation of that moment, it can be a photograph, a plan, a section, or any other representation. Nevertheless, as a space that continuously changes in the course of time, it can be a relatively misleading representation of all other moments of its existence. To be more precise, we can say that it consists in an incomplete representation of the complex and lasting existence of the street.

Sequential images, or even movies, may capture the movement of the street in an extended period, with varied intervals between exposures, in a longer or shorter time frame. Yet, it will always exist a degree of uncertainty in this incomplete register. It is a fragmented perception of a continuous reality that is veiled in most of the time of existence of the space.

To unveil the life of the street in the gaps between the known moments of its evolutionary process confers a special value to these unknown realities. In an operative perspective, it is the decoding of these moments that allows us to explain the continuous life of the street as an urban element with longevity, and to consolidate its historical evolution reading. Creativity plays an important role in decoding and recomposing the formal definition of the gaps of knowledge that exist in the evolution of a street. To be clear on the notion of creation, we must refer to the affirmation of Robert Bresson that "To create is not to deform or invent persons and things. It is to tie new relationships between persons and things which are, and *as they are*."[6] These moments are therefore inferred based on the known form of the street, both precedent and sequent, and on the processes that generate and transform the form of the streets in time. Unveiling preexisting moments therefore resorts to instruments analogous to a design process, and for designers or architects the act of decoding the unknown moments is mostly captivating. It is when reading becomes project.

**Fragment #3: On a polyhedric understanding of Time**

Redrawing the form of a street in different moments in time becomes a kind of time travel in which we do not only observe but also propose alternative realities – hypothesis – and choose the most adequate to form a narrative of an understanding of reality – a thesis – that explains the present from a linear sequence of events and actions in time. The present becomes an evident consequence of past events,

even if some of them are somehow fabricated deductions inferred from the existent knowledge. As Benedetto Croce wrote, "all history worthy of its name is contemporary history … preoccupation with present problems impels us to do research on past problems."[7]

There are evident similarities with this understanding of looking at time from the present moment, and with the contemporary mindset, with the understanding of time proposed by St. Augustine of Hippo that in his *Confessions*, book XI, chapter XX wrote:

> What now is clear and plain is, that neither things to come nor past are. Nor is it properly said, "there be three times, past, present, and to come": yet perchance it might be properly said, "there be three times; a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future." For these three do exist in some sort, in the soul, but otherwere do I not see them; present of things past, memory; present of things present, sight; present of things future, expectation.[8]

In the exhibition *os dias estão contados / the days are numbered*, Daniel Blaufuks reveals his concern regarding the passage of time in the continuous sequence of daily compositions in landscape A4 format pages. This "non-diary," as he calls it, is better described by João Pinharada, curator of the exhibition:

> By exposing his memory, his days and the days of the world intersect. (…) Individually or jointly, the diary's pages assert themselves more as successive states of mind vis-à-vis the manifestation of the eternal return of things, of seasons, of places, of facts…[9]

The daily polaroids glued on the A4 landscape pages reveal a cyclical nature of time while exceptional world events testify the passage of a linear, irreversible time.

Linear time is an invention of Man with the purpose of keeping the memory of exceptional events – the birth of a son, the end of a war, the eruption of a volcano, the passage of a comet. Regarding the city and city streets, it allows to register its evolution and transformation, the permanence and rupture in the form and in the life of the city, in the sequential and continuous passage of linear time. Therefore, it has the virtue of allowing the diachronic reading of the spaces we inhabit in the city.

"Let us enter deeper in the thickness" is a sentence attributed to São João da Cruz, repeated as a mantra by one of the characters of the book *Flores*,[10] written by Afonso Cruz, which addresses how to overcome memory loss or how to live beyond it. To enter deeper in the thickness of linear time reveals an entangled cord of time, cyclical, in which the events are dependent of natural rhythms: the earth rotation movement that generates day and night; the earth translation movement that generates seasons; the moon rotation around the earth that generates tides, among others. This acknowledged repetition of events and actions, even in longer cycles, fosters a living memory

from the recurrence and allows to make it alive, real, and provides a sense of comfort from the expected, from the apparent control of temporal events.

Regarding the city and city streets, the cyclical nature of time is revealed by recurrent human practices that give them a raison d'être and shape the spatial conditions of streets. After all, a street is a line made by the repeated movement of people, but a street is shaped by far more actions and events than going about from one point to another. In one of Louis Khan's drawings for *City/2 Exhibition, The Street is a Room,* he wrote that "a street is a room by agreement"[11] and this agreement is a dynamic balance in time generated by human interactions aiming at satisfying individual and collective wills and needs. Tensions that arise from distinct individual wills must find an agreement space in streets that resorts to implicit or explicit rules, with respect, generosity and compromise, to organize space and collective practices that extend beyond a common right of way.

The cyclical nature of the recurrent actions and events in the public space such as the placement of fruit stalls or terrace tables, hanging washed clothes to dry, a weekly or monthly street market, a seasonal festival or an annual celebration confer usefulness and social meaning to street space. Sometimes overlapping in space, given to the different periods each one occurs. It is the fact that these events repeat in time that creates the need for shaping the street in a specific way, confirming the street existence as such, and reciprocally in the form of each street society acknowledges a vocation and a common ground for social life to exist. In fact,

> [streets] must be able to maintain their structure and, at the same time, have a sufficiently flexible spirit of space, capable of adapting normally to the changes that time and society ask of them, without ever losing their democratic character that constitutes its essence.[12]

The computer-generated image that Joy Division used on the cover of the album *Unknown Pleasures* somehow echoes this idea that it is the recurrence of a fact that proves its existence. The image is a vertical overlay of the record of successive pulses, spaced 1.337 seconds apart, from the first pulsar ever discovered, CP 1919 – the Cambridge Pulsar at 19 hours 19 minutes right ascension – originally published in Scientific American in January 1971. **Fig. 3**

This pulsar radiation is due to the rapid rotation of a neutron star. In fact, the light radiation emitted by the star is relatively constant, but we only observe it when, during rotation, it heads towards the Earth, and this originates its period.

We can imagine that if the star was static and its light went in another direction, we might never recognize its existence. George Kubler, in *The Shape of Time*, in the sequence of Henri Focillon's book *Vie des Formes*, addresses the question of "the shapes of time" and affirms that "the time of history is too coarse and brief to be an evenly granular duration such as the physicists suppose for natural time."[13]

In the second chapter, Kubler focuses on how objects compose "formal sequences" and characterizes distinct
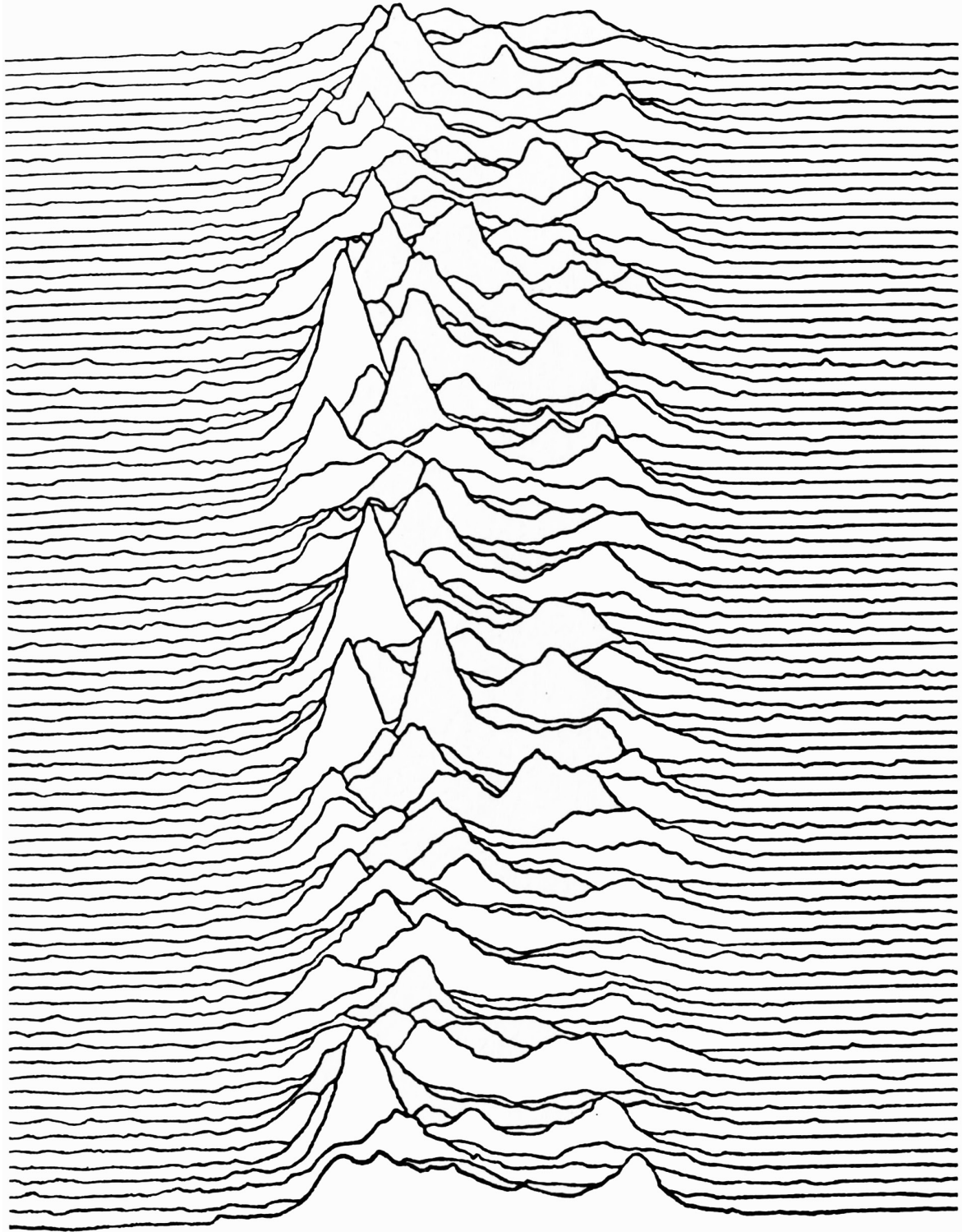
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relations among them: "linked solutions;" "open and closed sequences;" "fashions." Underlying these concepts and the very idea of formal sequences is the understanding that answers to problems generate a sequence of solutions, and these answers might exist in continuity or in a more sparse or fragmented existence in time. Ideas that might be important in a moment and vanish only to emerge after a long period, for example. Nevertheless, observing and uncovering the recurrence of problems that are addressed and answered by distinct solutions, allows tracing a genealogy of objects, even if they emerge in discontinuous fragments and not in a continuous line.

The notion of nonlinear time in creating a narrative is present in Christopher Nolan's movies and it is particularly revealing for the understanding of alternative conceptions of time. In *Memento* (2000) besides fragmenting time, the fragments are presented in an inverted timeline, which paradoxically allows revealing the whole plot in the end of the movie, which is the beginning of the action in time. *Dunkirk* (2017) continues to explore the idea of a nonlinear understanding of time and presents the same events experienced by different actors of the action, in fact these perspectives are perceived as distinct timelines that run parallel and intersect at specific moments.

Denis Villeneuve's *Arrival* (2016) extends the possibility of a nonlinear understanding time by proposing a sort of compressed time, a full comprehension of time in every moment of existence. As result, it seems that it renders even more important the focus in the present moment as a way of looking and acting coherently with a complete notion of time.

As Daniel Blaufuks writes on the page of the day 0490: "constellations, not sequences, carries the truth."[14] Therefore, we might transfer Kubler's sequences to constellations, which are variable according to the lens we can use to observe and establish relations. This fact presupposes that regarding ideas, time in fact is not linear nor cyclical, rather more fragmented and variable, allowing a greater freedom in the composition of a consequent argument that may change according to the constellation that is delineated. In each drawn constellation we can condense time in one moment that overlaps all the fragments that are chosen to build time.

**Fragment #4: On the Form of Streets**

Assuming that it is possible to study the city from its form, both segmentation and decomposition are operations that allow to reduce its complexity for analytical and interpretative purposes. This assumption, while addressing the morphology of Lisbon streets already a decade ago, led to decompose the form of streets in three components: layout; cross-section; and partition.[15]

The street layout is defined as an abstract bidimensional projection of the space of the street in a horizontal plan. The street layout is often misinterpreted as the street vector, and when taken with the remaining streets and public spaces it is understood as the city urban layout. The simplified representation of the street form by the layout abstraction is useful for its interpretation and comparative study, given the fact that nevertheless its complexity is reduced, a significant part of the morphological characteristics remains and can be acknowledged in the street layout.

The reading and interpretation of the layout of different streets allows to extract objective and relative dimensions, therefore quantitative, but also allows a comparative and qualitative morphological interpretation of the streets in question. This fact becomes particularly evident when the shape of the layout is addressed in confrontation and overlapped with urban and territorial layers which are relevant to its own formal definition. **Fig. 4**

Although the most common orthogonal projection of the form of streets is the plan, the one that is closer to our perception when walking the street is the cross-section. In fact, the width and the height of the street, as well as the formal and material characteristics of its sides, are essential for the definition of the form of the street and the spatial contention of the public space corridor that constitutes the street.

Allan B. Jacobs acknowledges the importance of the vertical dimension in the definition of streets.

> Streets are defined in two ways: vertically, which has to do with height of buildings or walls or trees along a street; and horizontally, which has most to do with the length of and spacing between whatever is doing the defining.[16]

Furthermore, the importance of the street cross-section is also recognised in the fact that the street evolution exists in parallel with the street cross-section progressive complexity. In the video projection *Biografia de la Calle*,[17] the contribution of Llop, Jornet and Pastor to the itinerant exhibition *La rue est à nous... tous!*, illustrates the evolution of the street based on the transformation of its cross-section over time, overlapping cross-sections that become progressively wider and more complex, gaining elements, subdivisions and levels while the marginal buildings are also rendered of greater expression and height.

The third component for the definition of the form of the street, in addition to the layout and the cross-section, corresponds to the spatial configuration of partitions and their formal and functional nature. The diversity of uses that occupy the street space has sometimes led to the configuration of its space with partitions dedicated to a function and the permanent or ephemeral appropriation of these partitions for specific uses. Formally, these distinct parts were designed using different composition elements, the most common being the difference in levels and the use of different materials or textures in the paving. Afforestation, arcades and permanent or ephemeral elements of urban furniture are part of a lexicon of elements that were progressively introduced in the street composition and contribute to the definition of distinct partitions of the space. Nevertheless the increased complexity of elements that compose and define the street partition, the most common partition continues to be a tripartite division
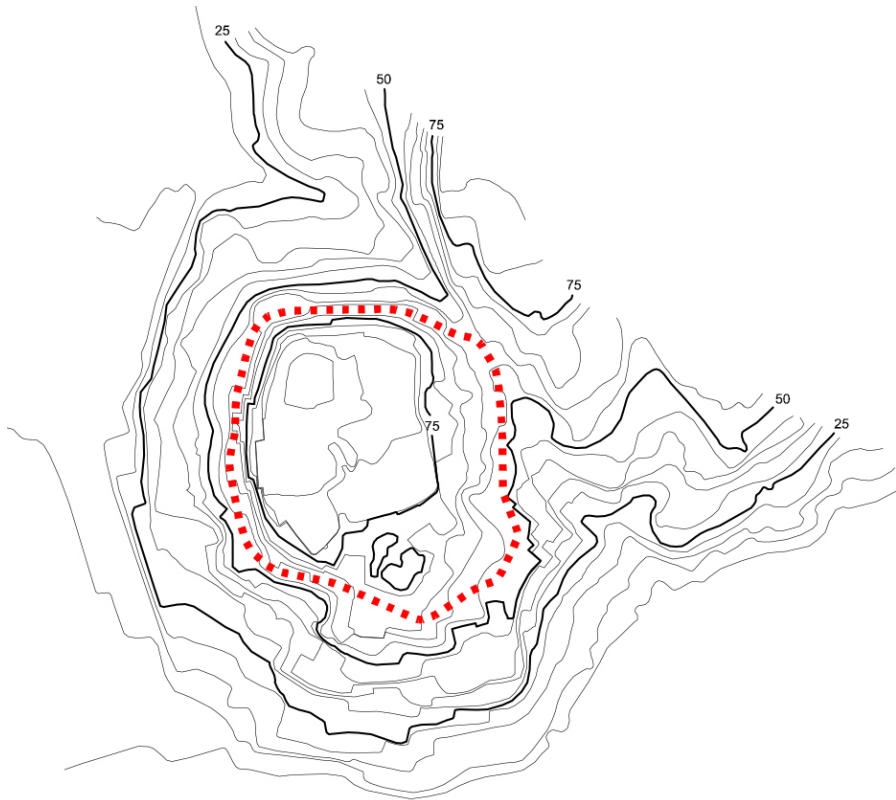
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Street layout mimetic adaptation to the topography.
Costa do Castelo, Lisbon (Sérgio Proença, 2014).

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Costa do Castelo, Lisboa (Sérgio Proença, 2014).

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between a central roadway for faster movement and pedestrian sidewalks, where access to plots and buildings is provided. Thus, the most common and apparently most ancestral partition of a street space corresponds to the main functions essential to the very definition of what a street is: support of address and movement, a place and a route.[18] **Fig. 5**

The decomposition of the form of the street in layout, cross-section, and partition, allows to acknowledge predominant affinities between the layout and the place that supports it; between the cross-section and the cultural period that frames the creation or reconfiguration of the street; and between the partition and the uses or the role determined for the street by the society in each period. The latter is the most volatile of the three components, but paradoxically the most efficient when the aim is to change the appearance or the functional role of the street investing fewer resources.

Perhaps we can assess the quality of a street, or of any urban building as a matter of fact, by the way in which the form responds with precision to a program determined within the urban organism and relates to the place in which it is established, when it is both rational and relational, typological and topological.[19] Nevertheless, it is in the test

of time, in how the form acknowledges and incorporates the action of time, throughout the street formation and transformation process, that a street is infused with cultural depth and contributes for the identity of the city.

**Fragment #5: On the organization of the special issue**
Organizing a set of elements, in the case the set of these ten reflections, is an exercise of establishing and choosing a criterion to establish a narrative. Having as common ground the street and the time, the different reflections may be read as autonomous articles, each one addressing a specific theme in this broad universe that was established as a common ground for this special issue *about Streets and Time*.

In this case, the distinct reflections are organized according to the duration of the phenomena it is addressed in the street space, from the most ephemeral to the most lasting. The first three articles – "Beirut Street Museum;" "'Regeneration' and Black Atlantic Music in the London Borough of Lewisham;" "Street Imagery in the Work of Team 10: Detecting the Everyday" – framed in distinct historical and geographical contexts, all address the question of temporality and the ephemeral use and

intermittent appropriation of the street space, nevertheless not considering the description of precise rhythms of that transient use of the street.

The second set of articles – "Re-reading, Revaluing Residential Streets: Exploring Neighbourhoods in Beirut's Suburbs;" "Streetscapes as Collective Spaces in Dar es Salaam's Informal Settlements;" "EAT (in) THE CITY. An Adaptive Process of Transformation Applying the Tool of the Food Metaphor;" "Street Rhythms in Dharavi: The Cyclical Flood Adaptation in Coastal Urban Slums" – dealing with case studies in Africa, Asia and Europe, all consist in descriptive approaches of the street space from temporary street appropriations. The varied themes that are addressed, such as food or water, all generate streets' adaptation and shaping made from elements that are established in a perennial or transient way to allow the domestication of the street in cycles with daily or seasonal rhythms.

The final set of articles – "Linking the In-Between: A Strategy for the Integration of Urban Interstices in Lisbon;" "Recombining Lisbon's Streets and Private Spaces in a Three-dimensional Network;" "Streets Love Aqueduct: Águas Livres Aqueduct in Lisbon" – although addressing different themes, share the fact that the backdrop is the city of Lisbon, and in what concerns our criterion all fall into a category that address streets or street systems which have formed in a long-time span.

## Acknowledgements

[1] Oriol Bohigas, "La Strada/The Street," *Domus* 802 (1998): 4–7.
[2] Joseph Rykwert, "The Street: The Use of its History," in *On Streets*, ed. Stanford Anderson (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1978), 15–27.
[3] Raphael Bluteau, *Vocabulario Portuguez & Latino, Aulico, Anatomico, Architectonico, ...*, Tomo VII (Coimbra: Real Collegio das Artes da Companhia de Jesus; Lisbon: Oficina de Pascoal da Sylva, 1712–28), 390–91.
[4] Philippe Panerai, and David Mangin, *Projet urbain* (Marseille: Éditions Parenthèses, 1999).
[5] Sérgio Proença, "A Diversidade da Rua na Cidade de Lisboa. Morfologia e Morfogénese" (PhD Diss., Universidade de Lisboa, Lisbon School of Architecture, 2014).
[6] Robert Bresson, *Notes sur le cinématographe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).
[7] Benedetto Croce, *History as the Story of Liberty* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1941), 19.
[8] St. Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. Edward B. Pusey, D.D. (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., and New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1907), 266–67.
[9] João Pinharanda, "The Betrayal of Time," in *Daniel Blaufuks: os dias estão contados / the days are numbered*, visit guide (Lisbon: MAAT Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, 2024).
[10] Afonso Cruz, *Flores* (Companhia das Letras, 2015).
[11] Louis I. Kahn, *Drawing for City/2 Exhibition: The Street is a Room* (1971). Charcoal, 34 x 34" (86.4 x 86.4 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of Louis Kahn.
[12] AA.VV., "Las Calles," in *La U Urbana. El Libro Blanco de las calles de Barcelona* (Barcelona: FAD – Fomento de las Artes y del Diseño, 2009), 308.
[13] George Kubler, *The Shape of Time. Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1962), 32.
[14] Daniel Blaufuks, *os dias estão contados / the days are numbered,* exhibition (Lisbon, MAAT Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, 17 July – 7 October 2024).
[15] Proença, "A Diversidade da Rua na Cidade de Lisboa."
[16] Allan B. Jacobs, *Great Streets* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1993), 277.
[17] Sebastià Jornet i Forner, Carles Llop i Torné, and Joan Enric Pastor Fernández, *Biografia de la Calle*, videoprojection, Paris, April 2006.
[18] Panerai and Mangin, *Projet urbain*.
[19] When addressing the qualities of João Luís Carrilho da Graça's architecture, Emilio Tuñón hints on a possibility of assessing the value of architecture in an essential way: "... what is truly relevant in the architect's work are the links and transformations that his architectures establish in the city and the territory where they are located. These links and transformations build a new workspace based on the permanent oscillation between the objectual and the relational, between a typological architecture, typical of a process of rational optimization, and a topological architecture, whose meaning is no longer the shape of the objects themselves, but the broad field of relationships that exist between them and the world that surrounds them." Emilio Tuñón, "Por uma Arquitectura Relacional," in *Carrilho da Graça: Lisboa*, by João Luís Carrilho da Graça (Porto: Dafne Editora, 2015), 83.

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# Il tempo delle strade

Sérgio Barreiros Proença

## PAROLE CHIAVE

*tempo; strade; morfologia urbana; etimologia; continuità e trasformazione*

## ABSTRACT

*L'editoriale esamina la relazione tra le strade e il tempo attraverso cinque fragments interrelati.*

*Fragment#1 si concentra sull'etimologia del termine rua, evidenziandone il duplice ruolo di luogo e itinerario. Fragment#2 descrive le strade come rughe del tempo, incarnando continuità e cambiamento. Fragment#3 esplora prospettive temporali cicliche e lineari. Fragment#4 analizza le strade attraverso la lente della morfologia urbana. Fragment#5 riflette sulle scelte editoriali di questo numero, sottolineando le diverse percezioni del tempo e dello spazio.*

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