**Social Image and Sociological Image:
Sociological Comics as a visual method for political activism**

**Imagem Social e Imagem Sociológica:
Sociological Comics enquanto método visual para o ativismo politico**

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Abstract
Aims
Current social life is immersed in images of memories and memories of images. Such *memorable social images* can be studied by Sociology through the concept of *sociological image*. This term means the scientific, technological and artistic images, constructed by the sociologist or by other social scientists, to organize contents on the cultural heritage and memory, e.g. for political activism, through visual archives and collections.

The sociological paradigm of social visibilities.
 In substantive and theoretical terms, such sociological narratives of the visible are revealed and unveiled on a threefold plane where visual cultures and transcultures communicate: at the macro-social level of social structures, through the *'(in) visions of the world'* ; at the mediating level of institutions, organizations, associations and groups, by means of *'societal (in)visibilities'*; and at the micro-social level of the interactions among agents, via the analysis of *'social (in)visualities'*.

New media and new methodologies.
To study communities of interaction within the public space of the city, connected to communities of interactivity across the *public cyberspace*, is important to articulate the methodology of the Social / Human Sciences with the *New Media*. An example is *Sociology Comics*, both a sociological method and archive to do research through comics narrative. This device works as a *Sociological Urban Novel*, considering that it is used to demonstrate the potentialities of urban visual stories for sociological research. Furthermore, Sociology Comics uses *hybrimedia*, i.e. the hybridization/transformation of originating (initial, seminal) media such as graffiti and digital social networks, towards original (innovative) media, e.g. a mix/fusion of the precedent.

Keywords: social/sociological image; political activism; (in) visions of the world; societal (in) visibilities; (in) social (in) visualities; hybrimedia

Resumo:
Objetivos.
A vida social atual encontra-se imersa em imagens de memórias e memórias de imagens. Tais *imagens sociais memoriais* podem ser estudadas pela Sociologia através do conceito de *imagem sociológica.* Este termo significa as imagens científica, tecnológica e artística, construídas por cientistas sociais, visando a organização de conteúdos sobre o património e memória culturais, por exemplo para o ativismo político, através de arquivos e coleções visuais.

O paradigma sociológico das visibilidades sociais.
Em termos substantivos e teóricos, tais narrativas sociológicas do visível revelam-se e desvelam-se num triplo plano, onde as culturas e transculturas visuais comunicam: (a) as estruturas sociais macrossociais, através das *'(in)visões do mundo'*; o nível mediador das instituições, organizações, associações e grupos, por meio das *'(in)visibilidades societais'*; e as interações micro-sociais entre os agentes, pela análise das *'(in)visualidades sociais'*.

Novos media e novas metodologias.
Para estudar as comunidades de interação no espaço público da cidade, em ligação com as comunidades de interatividade no *ciberespaço público*, torna-se central articular a metodologia das Ciências Sociais/Humanas com os *Novos Media*. Um exemplo é a Banda Desenhada Sociológica, simultaneamente um método e um arquivo sociológicos para a realização de investigação através da narrativa de histórias aos quadradinhos. Este dispositivo funciona como um *Romance Sociológico Urbano,* pois é usado para demonstrar as potencialidades das histórias visuais urbanas para a realização de pesquisas. Além disso, usa o *hibrimédia***,** que significa a hibridação e transformação de *media originários* (iniciais, seminais) como graffiti e redes sociais digitais, cujo resultado é um *medium original* (inovador), isto é uma mistura ou fusão dos precedentes.

Palavras-chave: imagem social/sociológica; ativismo político; (in)visões do mundo; (in)visibilidades societais; (in)visualidades sociais; hibrimédia

SOCIAL IMAGE AND SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGE:
Sociological Comics as a visual method for activism

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Introduction: social and sociological images

A *social image* is a visual (re)presentation of some social reality (e.g. *images of memories*), produced and shared by common people, in particular urban citizens (in the sense of their *memories of images*).

Such memorable social images can be studied by Sociology through the concept of *sociological image*. This term refers to scientific images, but also includes the technological and artistic images, constructed by the sociologist or by other social scientists, in order to organize contents on the cultural heritage and collective memory, through visual archives, collections of pedagogical sources or research data.

1. Theory: Social Visibilities: a sociological paradigm

In substantive and theoretical terms, such sociological narratives of the visible are revealed and unveiled on a threefold plane where visual cultures and transcultures communicate:

(a) at the macro-social level of social structures, through the *'(in) visions of the world';*
(b) at the mediating level of institutions, organizations, associations and groups, by means of *'societal (in) visibilities'*;
(c) and, at the micro-social level of the interactions among agents, by the analysis of *'social (in)visualities'* (Andrade, 1995, 1997).
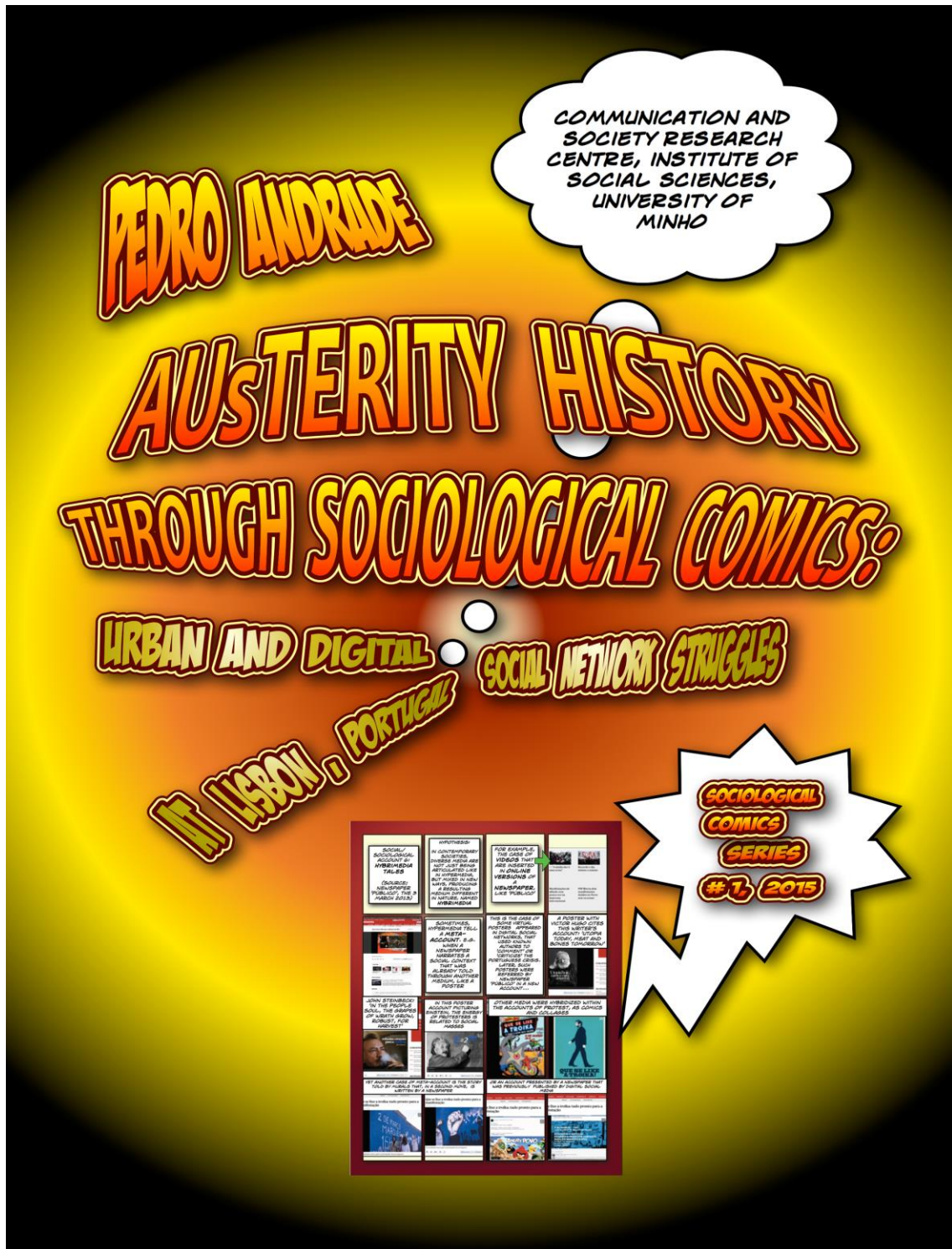
Figure 1 - *Sociological Comics'* book cover (Source: Amazon)

2. Method: new methodologies and new media

In order to study the communities of interaction within the public space of the city, in connection with the communities of interactivity across the public cyberspace, it becomes central to articulate the methodology of the Social / Human Sciences with New Media, within research, teaching and archiving (Andrade, 2011a). Moisés Martins

(2015) establishes such an articulation in what regards the Lusophony, within our intercultural world.

Under such perspective, the digital collection and archiving of data acquires new looks, such as the *cyber-questionnaire in multimedia* made in 1996 on the webpage of the Luso-French magazine *Atalaia-Intermundos*. And the analysis of information or the interpretation of knowledge, may be done through innovative and complementary ways, using the following methodology:

(a) quantitative analysis (factor analysis, multidimensional analysis, clusters, etc.;

(b) qualitative hermeneutics (multimodal socio-semiotics, grounded theory, psychoanalysis, elicitation, knowledge bases, etc.).

One of these qualitative methods will be presented here in some detail: it is named *Sociological Comics*, as it applies a mixed procedure that articulates sociological techniques and visual literature (see Fig.1)

2.1. Sociological Comics as a Sociological Urban Novel (SUN)

A Sociological Urban Novel does not just tell a story through a plot as a common like novel does, but also narrates some aspects of urban practices, discourses and knowledge, through a specific social story (see Andrade et al, 2010 and Figure 2).

In other words, sociological stories and images can be taken as a theme, but also may constitute a way, a style, a method, and a genre of understanding society and History. For instance, the Sociological Urban Novel 'Sociological Comics' (Andrade, 2015) tries to articulate, via a comics' story:

(a) the actions and *common knowledge* produced by urban digital citizens.

(b) the *expert knowledge* implemented by institutions located at the contemporary communicative, democratic, and digital city, such as the academy.

Sociological Comics was first exhibited at a collective art exhibition the 8 - 9 December 2015, at Stockwell Studios, London.
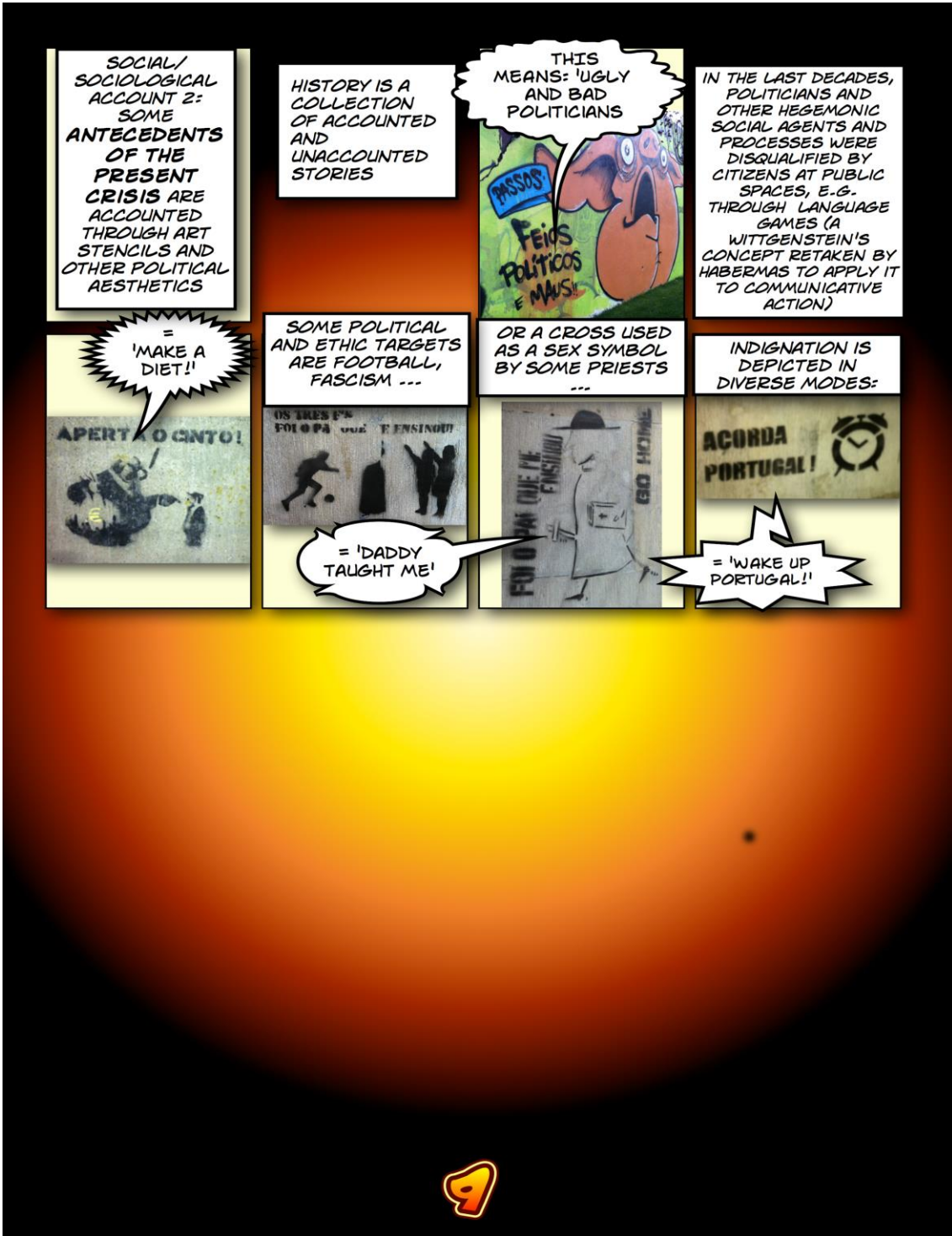
Figure 2 - Sociological Urban Novel (SUN) as a sociological method

Figure 3 - Sociological Urban Literature (SUL)

2.2. Sociological Urban Literature (SUL)

Sociological Urban Novels are part of Sociological Urban Literature (SUL), used to interpret the social sphere, fictionally and visually, including social images and visual images (see Figure 3).

In fact, not only literary and artistic genres, but also *scientific and technological genres*, are undergoing irreversible transmutations, that sometimes engender unprecedented *genres of political action*, citizenship and accountability, within the Social and Human Sciences.

2.3. Digital visual stories as sociological archives and method

Our contemporary society is not just a knowledge society, but also a *research society* and *journalism society*. These notions mean that everybody and not just professionals and experts, are called to do research and journalism. Often this processes is undertaken through the consultation of information engines such as Google, and/or by means of digital devices (mobile phones, etc.). To know more about this subject please consult Andrade, 2011a. Therefore, we need new sociological insights on the social fabric, e.g. through *digital stories* and digital visual methods for research and archiving, such as Sociological Comics:

(a) within a substantive level, Sociological Comics, in its first version, provided *knowledge about struggles against austerity*, promoted through the political movement 'tides' in 2013 (See Bibliography: *Que se lixe a troika* (2014). Austerity was debated under multiple perspectives: as a core economic and social indicator of the present global crisis (Giugni, 2015); as a strategy to demolish the Welfare State (Mendoza, 2914); or as a process related with gender and media (Negra, 2014).
(b) inside a stylistic perspective, Sociological Comics use a specific dispositif (the *comics narrative)* to tell a story.

Moreover, Sociological Comics is in itself a social and *visual political small archive*, selected from a corpus of digital content that constitutes a *Sociological Knowledge Base.* A knowledge base means a discursive dispositif and digital device, used to curate and organize content, mainly through the transformation of information into knowledge. It allows not just the description and narration of content, but also its interpretation and understanding.

Figure 4 - Questions and hypotheses

Typically, a knowledge base, in addition to organize data as much databases do, includes propositions and other semantic and logical material, which better clarify the relations among data and the disambiguation of meaning.

In particular, the visual practices and counter-discourses aforementioned were developed by common citizens, through 3 modes of communication articulated with one another:

(a) Co-presence communication (urban murals, graffiti, political demonstrations);
(b) Mass media communication (newspapers, television);
(c) Digital communication (social networks, such as Facebook).

2.4. The Sociological Comics method.

Four main ph(r)ases are involved, within the Sociological Comics methodology:

Firstly, *questions* about the social story are raised and *hypotheses* are formulated (see Figure 4).

Secondly, data within the social story are collected through several *sources*: written or digitized texts, photos, social networks raw content, previous curated content, etc.

Thirdly, these gathered contents are analyzed and interpreted using a *hybridization of scientific and literary methods*.

Finally, *hypotheses are tested* and demonstrated along the frames of the Sociological Comics book. Ex: political demonstration may be considered as a genre of scientific demonstration (see Figure 5).

In other words, as a sociological method, Sociological Comics includes narratives where social and knowledge questions are discussed through comic's stories.

However, such social questions are not just understood and used as a substantive theme to propel the plot. They are also immersed within the very way of representing and presenting real or imaginary worlds.

Figure 5 - The political demonstration understood as a sociological demonstration

In sum, social problems may be not just narrated, but also analyzed through a sociological research using specific visual and textual arguments within concrete comics frames. In this process, two different but complementary plots occur: a *literary*

plot is visible inside the comics progression, and is augmented through Sociological Comics; and a *scientific and artistic plot* is at work via the inherent scientific or artistic research undertaken through this medium.

2.5. The Conceptual Abstract

Another knowledge instrument useful for understanding the social fabric in new ways is the Conceptual Abstract (see Figure 6). This is an instrument to consult textual, audio-visual and digital sources that include the following characteristics:

(a) from a procedural point of view, it is an abstract of a text, based on the itinerary of exposure of the author's ideas.

(b) at a substantive level, it presents content in the form of concepts followed by a brief definition, and systematically ordered by semantic fields including the various subjects discussed. This strategy establishes a difference with a Glossary, which organizes content based on an alphabetical order.

(c) in a methodological perspective, the Conceptual Abstract shows some main pillars of the text's argumentation and of its conceptual progression. In this way, the Conceptual Summary includes a sense simultaneously: more pedagogical, since it is useful for the assimilation and debate of the contents presented; more experimental, because it works as a semantic and logical map of possibilities, regarding the texture of research carried out or to be carried out, about a given problem or on related areas.

Usually, a Conceptual Abstract is presented at the beginning of a text (book, article, etc.), in order to provide a more dynamic reading of this text. In fact, it allows a presentation, prior to the reading, of a collection of subjects to be developed in a second stage. In sum, the Conceptual Abstract works, according to the words of Gerard Genette, as a 'paratext', which is a text that anticipates, in a synthetic manner, the main text to be read.

Figure 6   Conceptual abstract (extract)

In other words, the Conceptual Abstract functions as a sort of preparation, 'aperitif', 'business card' of the main text. In short, this reading dispositif and communicative device, located at the principle (i.e. origin, beginning) of reading, works as a reading principle (i.e. guide, grammar, rule).

3. Hybrimedia as a sociological medium

Finally, Sociological Comics use hybrimedia as one of its main media. Hybrimedia means the transformation of *originating* (i.e. seminal) media into *original* (that is, innovative) media. Ex: news disseminated through a digital social network (e.g. Facebook) may be mixed or hybridized with TV news produced at CNN. Multiple other media may be mixed, fused, enmeshed, entangled, ensnared, embroiled and hybridized, such as newspapers, videos, posters (see Figure 7). Hybrimedia was first used in a former digital fiction named *Geo Novel* (2009), where the story narrative was mixed with GPS, in order to locate the characters and action during the plot, at a specific real location and time within digital maps (Andrade, 2011b).

Later, Geo Novel was also called *GeoNeoLogical Novel*, due to its innovative nature: 'Geo' as it uses space; 'Neo' because it occurred in an ever changing real/digital time; and 'Logical' as it incorporates a logical plot including the *logos* (meaning the reason and language) of several social actors and fictional characters. This work was first presented at the University of S. Paulo in 2009, and selected to be shown at i-klectic Art Lab (London) within the 2nd exhibition *Off the s{h}elf-the self and subjectivity in the artist's book*, the 29 May 2012.

Conclusion

Visual culture is not just a social context for the interpretation (for interpreting the…) of the social life of images, but is also a sociological pretext for a posture that mobilizes sociological imagination to understanding of sociological images. In other words, *radical imagination* (Haive, 2014) can be used within social action, but as well as a tool for an *open sociological research*.

Figure 7 Hybrimedia as a sociological operator

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Curriculum Vitae

Pedro Andrade is a Sociologist and Researcher at University of Minho. Phd in Sociology of Culture at FCSH, New Univ. of Lisbon (2002). Previously, he taught at University of Coimbra - Faculty of Economy and at University of Lisbon - Faculty of Fine Arts, in the areas of Sociology of Culture, Communication, Sociological Methods and Digital Humanities. Major areas of research: urban cultures, art communication, art and science museums, literacies, digital social networks (Web 2.0/Web 3.0), methodologies and hypermedia. Coordinator of several research projects and teams e.g. *Scientific-Technological Literacy and Public Opinion: the case of science museums*; *Public Communication of Arts: the case of local/global art museums*, both funded by Foundation for Science and Technology, Lisbon.

Participation within international university webs e.g. Virginia Comm. Univ., USA; member of project *Manifesto Art and Social Inclusion in Urban Communities*, coordinated by Mel Jordan at Univ. Loughborough, and including King's College, Chelsea School of Arts, Universities of Plymouth, Leuven, Utrech, Gronigen, Minho.

Author of several books and of scientific papers published in international and national journals with peer review, some with high impact factor in their areas and

indexed in prestigious bibliographic databases, e.g. Web of Science; Scopus; Google Scholar; WorldCat; Library of Congress; Latindex; Bulletin Signalétique du CNRS-Paris; LORETO: Base données Culture Temps Libre-Bruxelles; PORBASE; Repositório UM.

Director of the first Luso-French scientific journal, *Atalaia-Intermundos* (since 1995).

Other activities: fine arts and cinema: as member of Paris Film Coop, director of *Film Saboté Spatial nº1* (1975) and *Body Cinema* (production of images and music based on humidity and temperature of the body, 1976). Sites: development of the first Portuguese website (1995) including a coherent cultural project, the 1st Luso-French journal *Atalaia-Intermundos; Hybrilog*, an hybrid blog, 2006; *Social Semantic Sites* (in Web 2/3.0, 2011). Games and hybrimedia: *Sociological Games* (made in Flash and Action Script, 2006); *GeoNeoLogic Novel* (plot based on GPS, 2009). Presently, he is coordinator of Tech Science area at Engage Lab, School of Engeneering, University of Minho.