

LOLA in Florianópolis, State of Santa Catarina, Brazil

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The article has the aim to present the first experience of application of the LOLA (Looking will go Likely Alternatives) methodology in the discipline Eco-Design of the fifth phase of the course of Graphic Design of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), with disseminate LOLA methodology as social innovation cases inquiry on the basis of the sustainability in Santa Catarina. The Looking for Likely Alternatives (LOLA) project is a pedagogical tool for teachers and students, which assists them in the process of identifying, evaluating and documenting cases of social innovation for sustainable lifestyles. The LOLA project's goal is to help teachers and their class to discover, approach and give visibility to new sustainable lifestyles in their surroundings.

1 Introduction

In the second semester of the academic year of 2008, the LOLA methodology was inserted in the program of Eco-design, a course which is part of the curriculum of the fifth semester of the Graphic Design undergraduate degree program, in the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), in Florianópolis, State of Santa Catarina, Brazil.

The innovation brought together professors and students who were then concerned with the course of Eco-design, and was seen as part of the efforts that aimed to approximate the undergraduate degree program of Graphic Expression, and the graduate degree program of Design and Graphic Expression. Such collaboration was inspired in a proposal of the Program for the Re-structuring and Expansion of Federal Universities (REUNI), a program run by the Coordination for the Improvement of High Education Professors and Students (CAPES).

So, LOLA was first applied in an environment formed by College Professors and Students, in a way that catalyzed contributions from both of these groups, regarding its mastery. Since the students of the fifth semester already had some skills in handling other methodologies, this kind of environment was deemed proper to stimulate them to do their best, under the guidance of their professors.

The students were divided in four groups, which were formed according to the regions their members came from. It was expected that, with such a division, they could more easily conduct investigations in their respective areas of residence. It should be remarked that Florianópolis, the capital of the State of Santa Catarina, is located in a beautiful island, in the Atlantic Ocean, in the south of Brazil. It attracts many tourists, all over the year, especially during the summer, due to its numerous beaches and fantastic natural resources. In addition to that, Florianópolis holds a comfortable place in the economic ranking of the Brazilian cities. One of the reasons for such a performance lies in its network of Information, Technology and Communication industry. In the year 2000, it was granted an outstanding Index of Human Development – IDH: 0,875. Its population is close to 400 thousand inhabitants.

2 The motivation

The insertion of LOLA as a topic of the program of one the curricular subjects (Eco-design) of the course of Design of Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) was a result of a joint initiative taken by a university professor (Dr. Luiz Fernando Gonçalves de Figueiredo), a master student (Marco Ogê Muniz) and a college student (Ricardo Goulart Tredezini Straioto).

Marco Ogê Muniz, a master student, is working on his dissertation (“THE SYSTEMIC PRACTICE OF DESIGN IN TRADITIONAL LOCAL COMMUNITIES AS A WAY OF PROMOTING SOCIAL INNOVATION: THE CASE OF GUARDA DO EMBAÚ”), and is using LOLA as a tool to identify the social innovation case which is the subject of his research. As a result, the insertion of LOLA as a topic of the program of one of the subjects of the course of Design, besides helping to validate its use in Marco’s master dissertation, was also a starting point in the process of investigation of cases of social innovation in the area of Florianópolis, State of Santa Catarina.

This first experience can be regarded as a pilot program; hopefully, it will inspire the dissemination of LOLA in secondary schools, in universities and even in informal Design courses. The next step will come with the expected nomination of a local LOLA Ambassador, who will have the mission of promoting the use of LOLA in the State of Santa Catarina.

3 The process

As mentioned before, university students of the fifth semester of the undergraduate degree program of Design were the first ones to have LOLA inserted in the course program of Eco-design. The course program includes the discussion of the Eco-design theories, which focuses

environmental aspects related with the development of a product. So, in line with the principle of sustainability, it disseminates the idea of life cycle assessment.

The use of LOLA caused an academic move from a theoretical to a practical approach. The process of implementation of LOLA was carefully planned, especially considering that it was going to be applied at the undergraduate level. As mentioned before, the students of the fifth semester of the undergraduate program of Design already had some skills in the handling of other methodologies. Because of that, they were able to play an important role in the adjustment of LOLA to meet their needs and to face a new social and economic environment.

So, the students were divided in four groups, according to the city areas they lived at. Being organized this way, they were able to conduct researches in their own neighborhoods. In the class LOLA was introduced for the first time, an overall view of the project was presented, including some information about its creators and a brief description of its objectives, proposals and tools.

Following that, LOLA as a whole was approached, mainly through the presentation of the Step by Step Cards, which was followed by the organization of these cards, so that the students could get acquainted with the entire process, and could become prepared to use it.

By the way, there was a small innovation in the size of the cards, which were printed in such a way that they could fit in a hand.

Figure 1 – Size of the cards. Source: NasDesign UFSC collection



Following that, discussions were opened about the particular situation of each group's neighborhoods. Some academic tasks were assigned:

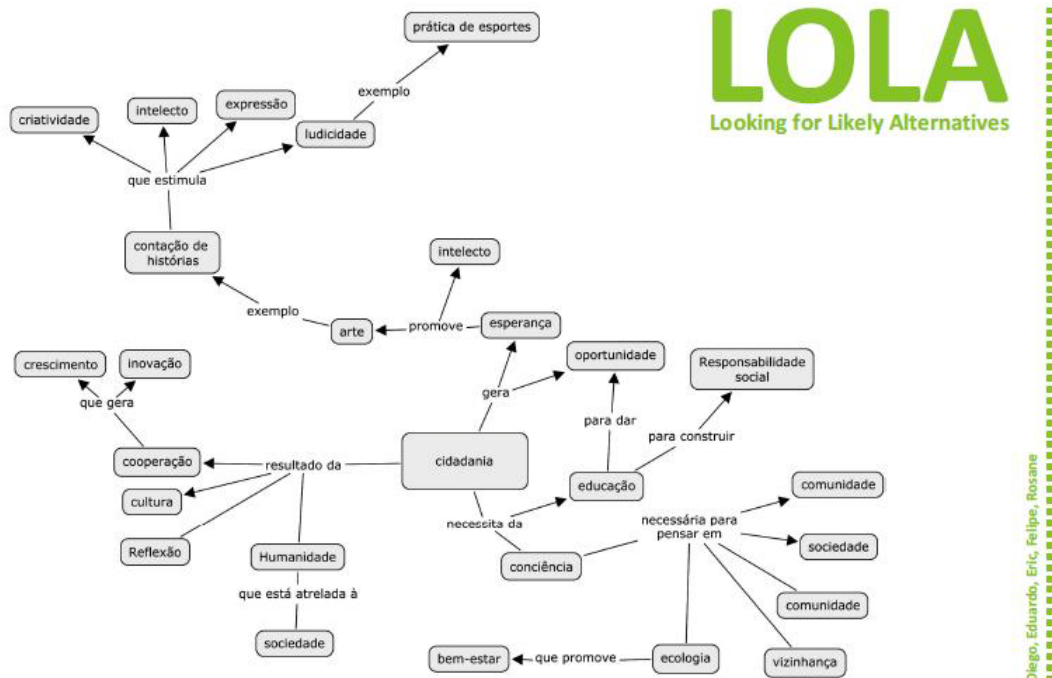
- 1) based on the class discussions, each group was to draw a Concept Map, pointing out the positive aspects of the concerning neighborhoods and the possibilities of linking these positive points and the respective communities;
- 2) the groups were challenged to sort the Step by Step Cards the way they found more proper, in the context of the investigation they were to trigger; they were also challenged to suggest methodological improvements;
- 3) the groups had to justify, though, the way they ordered the Step by Step Cards, and had to choose and justify four criteria to be applied in the more relevant investigations. In the following week, the groups made a short presentation, regarding: the Concept Map, the organization of the Step by Step Cards (and its justifications) and the four criteria (and its justifications) for the more relevant investigations.

Figure 2 – Professors and Students in LOLA process. Source: NasDesign UFSC collection.



The presentations were summarized in graphic pieces that were affixed on the wall, so that everyone could visualize them. In the third week, a catalog of social innovation cases was made available at the webplatform named “Sustainable Everyday Project”. These cases were taken as references for academic debates, as well as models for further researches. As the students had already looked for and selected some initiatives, a step forward was taken, regarding the choice of the more promising cases, so that, after the elaboration of a Student Reporter Book, more advanced researches could be triggered.

Figure 3 – One of the conceptual maps. Source: NasDesign UFSC collection.



Regarding that, a two weeks term was established, during which the groups should conduct their own individual field investigations. During this term, the groups could get in touch with the professors, in case they deemed it necessary to clarify any points or to get some essential

guidance. The students conducted their field investigations, especially their interviews, following the directives of the Student Reporter Book.

Figure 4 – Teaching Pack of LOLA (Step-by-step Cards and Student Reporter Book). Source: SEP.



An upgrade was added to the process, since the students should also remark the potential use of design, in the cases they were investigating. Two weeks later, each group presented the findings of its field investigations, detailing the questionnaire of the Student Reporter Book and adding proposals of possible design interventions. Debates were held over the findings of the groups and over the role of design, especially regarding the relevance of the latter for the development of creative communities.

Following that, a new two-weeks term was set, during which the groups had to elaborate projects regarding the design interventions they proposed. Again, the professors were open for clarifications and guidance. During this period, the groups received the visit of two social entrepreneurs, who shared with them their experience in the field of social innovation. The visits were arranged with the collaboration of Professor Doctor Eugenio Andrés Díaz Merino, who is responsible for the subject Methodology of Projects II, and of the master students Giselle Schmidt Alves Díaz Merino e Isadora Burmeister Dickie.

The first social entrepreneur to make the visit was Ademir dos Santos, a partner of the AVINA Foundation. He lives in the neighborhood of Ribeirão da Ilha, in the city of Florianópolis, State of Santa Catarina. He addressed the projects regarding the use of recycled cooking oil as fuel for mariculture boats and as raw material for the production of handmade soap. The second visit was made by Marli Luisa, a social entrepreneur from the locality Guarda do Embaú, in the city of Palhoça, State of Santa Catarina. She addressed the craftsmanship in the place she lives at.

Two weeks later, the groups reported their design intervention proposals, and, as a closing phase, a debate was promoted, in order to evaluate this first experience with LOLA, for academic purposes. Overall, the activity involved the participation of three conductors (a Professor, an Assistant Professor, and a Monitor Student) and of the 29 students who performed the several phases of the process in a period of near two months.

3 The results

The results that arose from the experience with LOLA at the university were remarkable. As a consequence of the division of the students in four groups, four cases of sustainable social

innovation in the area of Florianópolis were detected and reinforced. The group named “Marmoset of the Mountain”, from the neighborhood of Pantanal, identified an initiative conducted by the Community Council of Pantanal (CCPan), an association of local residents that organizes social activities for the community. The group named “Captain Planet”, from the neighborhood of Córrego Grande, identified the case of the “Forest Park of Córrego Grande”, an organization that promotes environmental education courses, as well as park tours. The group named “Go, Planet, go”, from the neighborhood of Estreito, identified the “Sea School”, which conducts boat tours for children, initiating them in sea studies. And, finally, the group “United People of TITRI”, from the neighborhood of Trindade, where the Federal University is established, identified the case of the “Natural Products Fair”, a fair that offers organic products in the area.

Figure 5 – LOLA cases in Florianópolis, State of Santa Catarina, Brazil. Source: NasDesign UFSC collection.



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As to the design intervention proposals, they focused the visual identities that could better promote the social initiatives that were investigated by the groups. Some groups refined their design intervention proposals, by sketching: a) webplatforms that aimed to display their messages; b) folders of environmental campaigns; and, c) projects of ecological garbage collectors.

Figure 6 – Design proposals. Source: NasDesign UFSC collection.



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4 Final Considerations

The pedagogical gains for the students were remarkable. The first contribution arising from LOLA was a link between a theoretical and a practical approach. In line with this directive, field investigations were added to the study of design, as a complement to the explanations and discussions related with it.

Thus, the students were put in touch with what happens in the real world. This experience resulted in the detection, in their own neighborhoods, of cases which, prior to that, were not noticed by them. In addition to that, the confrontation of the theoretical and practical aspects also dealt with important concepts of Eco-design, like the concepts of: social innovation, sustainability, creative communities, collaborative organizations, and so on. Another important result was the adjustment of LOLA to the needs of the College students, as well as to the particular aspects of the local communities. Both professors and students made their best to build a satisfactory final format that met the needs of the local contexts.

So, all phases – identification, search, selection, investigation and discussion – were performed. The use of LOLA, however, did not end at this point. As an upgrade, potential chances of design intervention were detected, and projects were sketched regarding such possibilities. It was found that, especially through projects of visual identity, design can contribute to the development of sustainable social innovation cases. A summary of this experience with LOLA was presented at the SEPEX (the Week of Education, Research and Extension of the Federal University of Santa Catarina), an official event which, in its seventh annual edition, attracted near 50 thousand people from the academic community, from public schools of the whole State of Santa Catarina and from the general public.

The didactic material used in the process – the Step by Step Cards and the Student Reporter Book - was downloaded from the web platform named “Sustainable Everyday Project”. Since

some adjustments in LOLA were required, due to the specific needs of the academic activity, and to the specific demands of the field investigations, a close collaboration was established between professors and students, aiming to make them.

Thus, some adjustments were made, and they proved to be proper, since after them the use of LOLA flowed more smoothly and effectively. The main adjustments made were: a) the discard of a few Step by Step Cards, when their use was deemed unnecessary; b) changes in the order of some steps, when deemed more effective.

Most of the students saw the Student Reporter Book as a helpful briefing for the identification of potential cases of design intervention. The students also found that, being a thorough guide, the Student Reporter Book could play an important briefing role for field investigations, in other design projects. They also enjoyed the visual way the LOLA steps were presented, in didactic drawings, and took the order of the Step by Step Cards (except for forementioned adjustments) as a guide for the implementation of their tasks.

Another source used as a support was the catalog of cases, which was available at the web platform named "Sustainable Everyday Project". These social innovation cases served as references for the debates and as models for the field investigations.

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