



SOPHIA
PEER REVIEW JOURNAL

CROSSING BORDERS, SHIFTING BOUNDARIES – IMAGE, BODY AND TERRITORY

ISSN: 2183-8976 [PRINT] 2183-9468 [ONLINE]

Volume 3, Issue 1 | Publication year: 2018

DOI 10.24840/2183-8976_2018-0003_0001_05

© SCOPIO EDITIONS

HOMEPAGE: [HTTPS://WWW.SOPHIAJOURNAL.NET](https://www.sophiajournal.net)

DISINTEGRATION CULTURE: KNOWING AND DEPICTING THE NORTHER SHORE OF VIANA DO CASTELO

André Castanho

Abstract

Disintegration Culture is a metaphor meant to describe the specific conditions of a sample of the territory of the northern coast of Viana do Castelo, using the transformations originated by the ruin of the physical and cultural structures of agriculture to suggest an alternative gaze and methodology, as a mean to an operative mediation in the recognition of the place. Through the merging of architectural sensibility and photographing expression a new and critical language is born, rehearsing an action of reflection which resizes the theme of abandonment in post-rural territories and forestall the reconstruction of this territory.

Keywords: Viana do Castelo, Post-rural Territories, Agriculture, Photography

DISINTEGRATION CULTURE: KNOWING AND DEPICTING THE NORTHERN SHORE OF VIANA DO CASTELO

Written by André Castanho

Foreword

The work that follows is part of a research project for the integrated master's thesis of architecture of the School of Architecture of the University of Minho, in the area of City and Territory¹, executed between February 2011 and February 2012. However, the research exercise did not end with the thesis context. Its main goal was to get close to a certain condition of a sample of the territory of the North Coast Of Viana do Castelo, aspiring to know it better through a series of representation exercises deeply anchored in systematic photographic surveys.

Up to now, and in the years following the delivery of the project, occasional visits to the site occurred, first of all to confront the exercise, having the opportunity to witness and record changes in its landscape and second, to observe it through different photographic means and improved techniques, from those that initially shaped the exercise. In the period in which this work took place the social and economic environment in Portugal was critical with the country in full recession and under international financial control. The context was that of excessive public debt, unemployment, low GDP and a generalized fiscal burden of the middle and lower classes. The landscape reflected this environment into a state of disturbing suspension. Viana do Castelo, a peripheral city in the Portuguese urban, social and economic panorama, was deeply sacrificed. These regions of the Alto Minho, which have always had their difficulties, suffered at this time even more with low labor opportunities, lack of investment and the depopulation.

In 2011, given this social context, it seemed prominent for a young man finishing his academic training as an architect to take a pause action, to take advantage of this state of suspension in the landscape to reflect, question and relearn with the real territory.

Moreover, this landscape in particular, raised a number of concerns that induced its learning and recognition, mainly due to its geographical and morphological richness and its particular position regarding the city of Viana.

In its recent past, in the years of 2016 and 2017, the material of this exercise has had the opportunity to be exhibited on a number of occasions, including collective and solos exhibitions. 2017 is also the year that marks the last photographic survey carried out by the author in the studied territory, images of which the present work also makes use of.

¹ Correia, André. 2013. *Cultura da Desintegração: representações do litoral norte de Viana do Castelo*. Guimarães: Escola de Arquitectura da Universidade do Minho.



ANDRÉ CASTANHO

White horse in the veiga. March 2016

Scan from 4,5x2 cm negative

In 2018, almost seven years after the beginning of this work, the social and economic context is the opposite and several transformations have taken part in the spaces of the northern shore of Viana and the work carried out over these years gains the dimension and importance that only the temporal distance allows to obtain: on one hand, its objective to register, to document and to create archive of this landscape in that particular period and, on the other hand, stating that there is still doubt on about how to act in its reconstruction.

Over these years and throughout the various research and survey exercises, the northern coast of Viana has become a unique laboratory of experimentation and learning. First of all landscape is transitory sensible to the rhythms of temporal and social changes, pointing to the understanding of the distinct and preponderant processes responsible and resulting of these transformations. Secondly, the evolution of a research around the discipline of photography, related with the *way of seeing* embodied by the author, and its possibilities to teach something more about space, something beyond the simple exercise of looking.

Disintegration: from abandonment to culture

Culture of Desintegration is a metaphor meant to describe the specific condition of a sample of the territory of the north coast of Viana do Castelo, a city located in the northwest of Portugal, facing the Atlantic Ocean, alluding to the transformations originated by the ruin of the physical and cultural structures linked to agriculture and rural communities. The development of this idea intends to rehearse and suggest a new look and an alternative methodology as a means of an operative mediation in the interpretation and representation of this place and the difficult themes around abandonment and deruralization.

The common notion of abandonment almost immediately refers to a judgment of value: abandoned is something left out, something that no longer has utility or interest and, therefore, something that passes to a peripheral plane. Abandonment is the space that extends between something that is prevailing and important and something that is decisively forgotten. Abandonment is a type of haze that hangs very low on the surface, offering a glimpse of what is near but closing completely on that which is far away. Abandonment is nostalgic, fragmented and residual; abandonment is memory. For this common definition of abandonment, this exercise seeks to offer new perspectives: in the landscape of the northern coast of Viana, abandonment can also mean construction, occupation and permanence. With the end of the rural period and paradigm, a process of abrupt transformation of the territory was triggered, frizzing past realities in current space and thus compressing past, present and future into a seemingly meaningless whole.

The term *Culture of Disintegration* comprises a paradoxical meaning. *Disintegration*, by itself, invokes a physical transformation linked with the separation of elements and the loss of material integrity. On the physical and virtual level that interests this work, *disintegration* characterizes the agricultural abandonment due to the ruin and alienation of structures and systems linked to the exploitation of the resources of land and sea. In turn, *culture* determines a set of customs, heritage, tradition that corresponds to a knowledge and a community identity; *Culture* describes continuous action, a process and a construction. *Culture* combined with *disintegration* thus carry an ambiguous and paradoxical meaning that does not contain the negativity of the term abandonment, but is concretized in a factual reality where decay and ruin can be forms of construction.

“Another type of calibration to which the experimented object can be subjected through the photograph is index. To the extent that photography is part of the class of signs that maintains with their reference relations that imply a physical association, being part of the same system as impressions, symptoms, traits and clues”².

In order to understand the present state of the territory of the north coast of Viana do Castelo, to wander vigorously through its layers of time and space construction, this exercise makes use of a recurring photographic activity. The realization of a photographic narrative establishes a commitment to register and document the physical space of this territory, its constructions and its apparently banal, and almost always rudimentary, forms of manipulation.

The images that were produced are in their discourse indexes. They index a concrete spatio-temporal reality – Viana do Castelo, Minho, Portugal, between 2011 and 2013 – and, at the same time, the discourse itself, a reflection in terms of methodological formal approach to the character and meaning of the *Culture of Disintegration*. They select fragments, marks and clues as a motto for an in-depth investigation of their historical and social nature that, when combined together, make a specific meaning of the reality of this territory to stand out.

The photographs taken in this work derive fundamentally from the representation of simple and rudimentary forms of construction to explore the aesthetic condition of their transformation, in their decadence and in their adjustment. The territory of the north coast of Viana is a meeting

² Krauss, Rosalind. 1990. *O fotográfico*, Barcelona: Gustavo Gili. 2002. *Original Le photographique. Pour une Théorie des Écarts*. 1990.

place of diverse temporal realities where its current condition is a convergence of ruined buildings, adapted ruins and new constructions that enunciate new dynamics. Its focus gained a thematic recurrence of objects that allowed the formation of groups of elements such as: agricultural parcels occupied by wild vegetation, irrigation channels and paths between fields, wooden shelters, windmills, ropes from fisheries, old granite walls, new roads and current infrastructures, new constructions, garbage dumps and bales of hay.

This groups start by allowing the understanding of the formal reality of the objects: it was chosen a frontal point of view seeking an objectiveness of the representation as well as the using of black and white negatives and the preference for an homogenic light, both enhancing the formal and the material characteristics. For last, each group opposes different elements thus opening them to comparison and to construct a visual dictionary of different groups of constructions, different elements in each group, and a continuous and transversal reality of ruin, decadence and disintegration.

As said, the light aims recurrently to be homogeneous. It avoids the drama of the high contrasts so that once again the formal character of the elements is evidenced. The light also seeks to stand out some aspects of the particular atmosphere of the northern coast of Viana, marked by the proximity to the ocean, the density of the humidity and by a typical fog in the winter months. To photograph the objects in the context of this fog is an attempt to explore a certain melancholy inherent in this territory: their spaces are mostly calm, silent, intensified by the strength of the natural elements, like the sea in their smells and noises, like the false stillness of wild vegetation and an atmospheric reality that easily oscillates between closed fog, wind gusts or piercing sunbeams.

The images of this project aim to constitute a current and real index of the territory of the Northern coast of Viana do Castelo; intend to record and document a state of condition of a seemingly banal and ruined landscape for the understanding of its historical continuity – if the outcome of the processes of deruralization are the present, their motifs go back a way longer. Understanding these images in isolation can open way to a fanciful understanding of these objects and these scenarios: each image should not be understood as a fragment of this landscape but rather as module of a larger mosaic, where each part is a reflection of the whole and where this whole only makes sense through the juxtaposition between the different parts.

The constitution of post-rural territories is not easy to understand. There is not a comparable reality in international terms and its knowledge at national level is still meager. In the specific case of the Alto Minho region and the northern coast of Viana is even more difficult to pursue; these are peripheral territories in the Portuguese context and the scientific knowledge built on them is scarce.

However, some interest has lately fallen on Portugal beyond Porto and Lisbon, and this exercise would not be possible without the knowledge and work of Álvaro Domingues, namely through *Vida no Campo*³ and a renewed methodology of approach to the landscape understanding of the phenomenon of deruralisation.

³ Domingues, Álvaro. 2011. *Vida no Campo*. Porto: Dafne editora.

In addition to the lessons from the work of the geographer, several references come from the photographic field, such as the work of Walker Evans for the Farm Security Administration⁴ as it constitutes a major study in abandoned rural communities, the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher⁵ as an important methodology of approaching and visual representation, once again, of abandoned structures and the work of Robert Smithson⁶, in the merging of the photographic activity with distinct artistic actions always towards banal and peripheral landscape. The exercise also draws on innumerable informal conversations with local inhabitants, as they are the bearers of unparalleled testimony in the course of the transformations of time and space of this place.

Combining these elements with recurrent visits to the place and with the consultation of current and historical cartography, this exercise aims at the design or, preferably, the transcription of the cultural topography of the landscape of the northern coast of Viana.

Ruins and Ruins in reverse

The incongruity between the temporal character of human action which is always directed towards the future, and the course of the time process, which is always towards the past, is made manifest, whereas in reality not their disparateness but their interrelation is what makes the peculiar dynamics of the life process understandable. The conflict between these two times (that is, the temporal character of human action and the time process) is best expressed in the experience of the later as an alien, threatening power and of the first as inwardness which we identify with the self itself in its intentionality⁷.

The theme of the ruin is central to this exercise, although, the term ruin is explored on different perspectives following the reasoning related to the ambivalence of the term abandonment: ruins are not only the architectural objects whose state is in a process of destruction and that refer to a distant past, ruins can also be those objects and environments that live from adaptation and the construction of new contexts, presenting contrasts and fissures between logics of space and time.



⁴ Evans, Walker; American Photographs; MOMA, Nova Iorque, 1938. ; Hill, John and Mora, Gilles; Walker Evans: The Hungry Eye, Thames & Hudson, Londres, 2004.

⁵ Lange, Susane; Bernd and Hilla Becher: Life and Work; The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2007. ; Lingwood, James; "O Peso do Tempo" in Lingwood, James (ed.); Robert Smithson, Bernd and Hilla Becher: Field Trips; Hopefulmonster Editore, 2002.

⁶ Lingwood, James; "O Peso do Tempo" in Lingwood, James (ed.); Robert Smithson, Bernd and Hilla Becher: Field Trips; Hopefulmonster Editore, 2002. ; Smithson, Robert. 1967. A Tour to the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey. in Flam, Jack .1996. ed. Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings, Berkeley: University of California Press, p.72. Original in Artforum, 1967.

⁷ Friedrich Kummel, "Time as succession and the problem of duration", in The Voices of Time, ed. J.T. Fraser (Nova Iorque: G. Braziller, 1966), 47.

ANDRÉ CASTANHO

View over the Atlantic coast.

November 2012. Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

This ambivalence is still linked to two ways of understanding the course of time and that coexist in the spaces on the northern coast of Viana. The emergence of new dynamics of transformation and appropriation when combined with the residual activities and with the ruins of what have remained from the rural period, show different times in their character: one is characterized by the slow course of the agricultural cycles with almost imperceptible transformations, the other is characterized by the speed of transformation that portrays contemporaneity.

“When the abandonment of the fields and agriculture does not mean abandoning the people, rurality is transformed inside or absorbed by what is called urbanization. There are two ways to understand this. One, the most commonly used is that of the city that grows in oil slick, processing and swallowing the rural territory (...). Another is the in situ mutation of rurality, which will also be called urbanization”⁸.

These temporal contrasts are also spatial contrasts and form a new type of landscape, where ruins mix and adapt to new constructions and where new uses arise from the use of the abandoned, decayed, and decadent situation of certain contexts. The current reality of the landscape of the northern coast of Viana is full in the offer of contrasts, in the convergence of unbalanced values and logics of implantation and transformation of space. The concept of the ruins in reverse⁹, original of Robert Smithson’s text on the Passaic River, is essential for the understanding this kind of elements and which are part of the list of studied subjects: the monuments of the northern coast of Viana are generally constructed objects that are not part of the rational domains of historical events, the so called popular or vernacular constructions, while the word vernacular serves as a vehicle for the differentiation between types of architecture and for the categorization of a smaller, common and ugly architecture with no historical interest.

The Northern Coast of Viana do Castelo: sea, veiga and mounts

The fundamental catalyst for this work is the state of conservation of an agricultural plain located northwest of the central pole of the city of Viana do Castelo. This plain is part of the RAN (National Agricultural Reserve) domains and, over the last few centuries, has been an important social and economic pole, centering the activities of a rural community. Its agricultural potential was given by the morphology of its flattened terrain and its strong and refined hydrography. These characteristics have a special denomination for the agricultural vocabulary which is a *veiga*. This *veiga*, which develops between the parishes of Areosa and Carreço, in its current configurations has aroused and encouraged the development of this project.

The *Veiga da Areosa*, which is the name by which is known, is a plain that is located in the northwest part of the city of Viana do Castelo. It extends for 5km long between the Atlantic coastline and a parallel mountain range. With a width of about 1km, the *veiga* contains an area of around 500 hectares that develops between the +3.00 and +10.00 meters above sea level. To

⁸ Álvaro Domingues, *Vida no Campo* (Porto: Dafne editora, 2011), 38.

⁹ Smithson, Robert. 1967. *A Tour to the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey*. in Flam, Jack .1996. ed. Robert Smithson: *The Collected Writings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p.72. Original in *Artforum*, 1967.

the west, its limit is defined by the crossing of National Road 13 (EN13), constituting the main axis of access to the city for those arriving from or going to north (Caminha, Valença, Galicia). In parallel and very close to the EN13 is the railway which describes the same gesture between north and south. From these communication routes to east the mountainous slope develops. This slope can be divided into two platforms: a first with a relative smooth pendant that varies between the +12.00 and +60.00m of altitude, and a second, with a steeper slope between the quotas +60.00 and + 200.00m, in a width of 400m. The first platform of the slope supports a construction with diffuse characteristics and mostly single-family dwellings. It comprises a terraced morphology that also supports some land dedicated to orchards, vegetable plots and gardens. The upper platform is almost entirely dedicated to the planting of eucalyptus, practically up to the summit where, already on the plateau, the vegetation becomes low and wild. The morphological configuration and geographical location of the *veiga* make it a unique site in the Portuguese coastal context: this region, between the rivers Minho and Lima, is characterized by a successive maritime line of plains to which mountain ranges are added with great proximity. This diversity, in a short strip of land, about 1.5km between the marginal and the beginning of the plateau, was responsible for the development, over the last centuries, of a unique system of exploration and deployment in the territory, having allowed access to various resources to their communities, between sea, *veiga*, and mounts.

Despite the richness of resources their communities were generally poor. Most of the territory was divided in large properties corresponding to a small number of landowners - the *agrarian patrimony*¹⁰. This patrimony was divided between mounts, *veiga* and sea¹¹ and was a catalyst for an economic and social dynamic based on rent¹². Its major rural expressiveness will have been from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, arriving its peak in the 30's of the twentieth century. The rupture, and the beginning of the process that would come to be denominated by deruralization, would be but more abrupt. Between the first and the second half of the twentieth century the contrasts are remarkable and deeply illustrative of the crisis and the fall of the rurality and rural populations between the decades of 50 and 70 are vertiginous¹³.

Several are the mobiles that may frame this process but they all can be rooted in a basic principle: impoverished populations in search of a better life. The desertification of the labor force for emigration, or other sources of income, the inability to modernize and mechanize agriculture, the smallholding and an impracticable parcel structure for an agricultural economy with scale, the conservative mentality of the populations and their connection to land – that *piece of land* - the lobby of the agrarian patrimonies and their reactionary mentality, later on opened up to the European community in political and economic terms, with the implementation of the *Common Agricultural Policy* (CAP) and the need for competitiveness in relation to external markets and more advanced agricultural dynamics, are factors that help to perceive the composition and layers that quickly overlapped the rural, small-scale communities of northern coast of Viana do Castelo.

¹⁰ Fernando Baptista, "A agricultura e a questão da terra – do Estado Novo à Comunidade Europeia," *Análise Social* XXIX (4o), no. 128 (1994), 908.

¹¹ Alberto Abreu, *História de Viana do Castelo* (Viana do Castelo: Câmara Municipal de Viana do Castelo, 2009), 194.

¹² Joaquim Castro Caldas, "Alto Minho: Caseiros sem Terra à Terra sem Caseiros", in *O Voo do Arado*, coord. João Pais de Brito (Lisboa: Museu Nacional de Etnologia, 1996), 288.

¹³ Fernando Baptista, "A agricultura e a questão da terra – do Estado Novo à Comunidade Europeia," *Análise Social* XXIX (4o), no. 128 (1994).

The result was a landscape difficult to understand, to explain and therefore difficult to work with. This apparent absence of meaning creates a void in its classification and the lenses focuses to two distinct points: either it is classified as ugly, looking exclusively at exuberant and discontinued forms, or appeals to memory and nostalgia, an unreliable and usually inoperative process.

“It is difficult to learn the rural and build new identities. It is difficult to find continuities between more or less fictionalized memories of the past and what is happening to them. It is difficult to understand the simultaneity and contradiction of events and the way they succeed. It is difficult, above all, to control the emotions about what happens. We are one step away from a total crisis of meaning”¹⁴.

The veiga

Experiencing the northern coastal areas of Viana and its agricultural plain, the veiga, is quite frontal and notorious in the absence of activity and in the absence of maintenance. Being a space dedicated exclusively to the practice of agriculture, the impermanence of activity reflects immediately in the development of wild vegetation. The productive potential of the land of the veiga, when not cultivated, gives rise to the development of an extensive, limitless, mantle of brushwoods.

A survey carried out in-situ in March 2011 shows, through a representation made on an orthophotomap, this kind of parceling occupation at different levels: the most prominent, all black, are the areas occupied by brushwoods in a state of advanced development when, in contrast, the existence of some areas where cultivation is still present there is no representation; an intermediate degree is attributed to parcels whose occupation of brushwoods is still at an early stage, also an expression of the lack of activity.

¹⁴ Álvaro Domingues, *Vida no Campo* (Porto: Dafne editora, 2011), 317.



ANDRÉ CASTANHO

Bales of hay with hiss in the veiga.

February 2013. Scan from 4,5x2 cm negative.

The brushwoods are a new layer of occupation that mark the current period of this territory and whose growth overlap the previous layer, relative to the rural paradigm of the region and to the forms of organization and construction of the veiga.

The parcel structure, the main one of these constructions, is defined by the fine cut between irrigation channels and road routes. The hydrographic and the road fluxes are a link between sea, veiga and mounts, forming a stratified continuous connection network, being only divided by the preponderance of EN13 and the railway.

The majority of the agricultural parcels of the veiga are characterized by their minimum scale, thus forming a very stratified plain. Smallholding parcels, the *minifúndio*, have been considered as one of the main obstacles to the economic and sustainable development of agriculture in these regions. Because they are small in size, these parcels could never obtain a production scale adequate to the market need. On the other hand, and by what can be witnessed today, these are the only cultures that remain in the spaces of the veiga and conform a preponderant economic dynamic allowing access to food products to families whose income is very low, thus diluting part of their misery and contributing keenly to the local economy. After decades of discussion in which the minifúndio was considered a hindrance, this kind of agriculture for self-sufficiency, derived from this type of parcel, begins to reemerge and to regain importance. Many examples, mirroring this dynamic, arose in urban contexts - the *hortas urbanas* - recurrent in large European cities, as an economic mean and as an action against a general and arising mistrust towards food products.

The images obtained from the veiga are grasped. A well-defined line divides sky and ground with a unique contrast of textures: the flat and opaque sky enhances the exuberance of vegetation of the ground with its textures and varied forms that charge the potential and fertility of these spaces with meaning. The legal context that defines the appropriation of the space of the veiga safeguarded its parcels and prevent it of being urbanized. The domains of the RAN¹⁵ are very precise in the protection of the soil resource and in the veto to its construction, contributing to the maintenance and fostering of new farming practices in these soils. However, in contrast to the permanence of punctual agricultural dynamics, one of the images that most stimulated this work is given by the implantation and arrangement of bales of hay, dispersed on the land, aligned or stacked. ese bales are usually wrapped with plastic, black or white, allowing to realize the mechanization of agricultural activity. But, accompanying the progress of the bushwoods, some of these deposits present bundles consumed by wild vegetation. is induces a paradox and restlessness while indicating a deregulated agricultural activity, where the very matter of production is abandoned.



ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Map of the abandoned agricultural parcels in the veiga
March 2012. Black marker over inkjet printed orthophotomap.

¹⁵ DGADR - Direção Geral da Agricultura e Desenvolvimento Rural. 2017. Reserva Agrícola Nacional, <http://www.dgadr.gov.pt/ambord/reserva-agricola-nacional-ran>



ANDRÉ CASTANHO

September 2012. 7.1 Path and hiss in the veiga. 7.2. Path and hiss in the veiga.

January 2014. 7.3. Path and hiss in the veiga. 7.4. Path and hiss in the veiga.

7.5. Irrigation channel in the veiga. 7.6. Stream passage in the veiga.

Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.



ANDRÉ CASTANHO

8.1.. Bales of hay in the veiga. Februray 2013. 8.2. Bales of hay aligned in the veiga.

January 2014.8.3. Bales of hay with hiss in the veiga

Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.

The form and matter of these bales deconstructs any romanticized image we may have of agriculture. Its cylindrical shape, natural to the movements of the baler, as well as the plastic material, does not cease to invoke an absolute artificiality. In these bales two antagonistic worlds are linked, those of the natural purity of the soil resources and the fresh herbs, with the mechanization and trivialization of the plastic and the industrial procedures. The same imbalances can be found in another set of parcels of the veiga, with the presence of a vast area of pinewood. These dynamic escapes the generalized understanding of a veiga geared to agricultural activity, marking a contrasting position of the pines in relation to the flattened plots. This type of solution can bring some benefits to both the owners and the rest of the community. The pine forests do not require as regular maintenance as the cornfields and their formation provides a curtain of protection against the coastal winds that can be especially aggressive in this region.

Susceptibility to fires is, however, a reality. Some of the images taken from this pinewood explore a clearing caused by a fire that happened a few years ago: the light penetrates to the ground among the pine trees parched by the fire and without crowns, where new vegetation is emerging. During the initial period of this work, this pinewood had a strong presence in the horizon of some spaces of the veiga however, and after about twenty years of its planting the

pinewood was cut in 2014. The grounds were cleared of roots and its wood was sold. Currently, corn is planted in the plots where the pinewood was located.

“Rural landscapes and territories are in a game of expectations and contradictions, where designs for the protection of biological resources and biodiversity, the preservation of soil and water, the enjoyment of the pleasures of the countryside, the protection of landscape and cultures, patrimonialization (...)”¹⁶.

The elasticity of the terrains of the veiga, the diversity of occupations, scenarios and dynamics that it can support is reflected in the distinct and sometimes antagonistic faces in which the landscapes of post-rurality have become. The legal regime itself, being limiting on the one hand, can also constitute a contradiction allowing for mergers and the coexistence of contexts as disparate as agriculture and the forest. The impracticality of construction in these soils safeguards for a future that is always uncertain while not letting it limit its potential. Finally, the parcel structure and the profuse and disorganized division in a large number of landowners make it difficult to the development of some public usage of such an emblematic place while at the same time allows the obtainment of food contributing on a small but very significant scale to the local economy.



ANDRÉ CASTANHO

9.1. Clearing in the pinewood in the veiga. 9.2. Clearing in the pinewood in the veiga.

9.3. Clearing in the pinewood in the veiga. 9.4. Clearing in the pinewood in the veiga.

January 2014. Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.

The waterfront and the sea

¹⁶ Álvaro Domingues, *Vida no Campo* (Porto: Dafne editora, 2011), 153.

Walking along a marginal is a satisfying action for any individual anywhere on the planet. The presence of the sea, with its noises, its smells - the strong presence of iodine that exudes the experience of nicotine - and the possibility of admiration of the distant horizon, has inspired thoughts and reassuring spirits throughout the centuries.

It is no different for those who try to ride along the shores of the north coast of Viana. In the studied sample of this region there are no beaches and the marginal is marked by rocky platforms composed mainly of shale. Along a course that extends between north and south the individual wanders between two plains, the sea and the *veiga*; while the gaze expands to the distant horizon of the sea, on the side of the *veiga* the surface stops abruptly against the steep slope of the hills.

In the relationship between sea and *veiga* there is the space of the waterfront where activities common to fishing and agriculture have developed for centuries. Some of the remnants of this reality still hold today in the form of stone windmills and small shelters. The windmills¹⁷ were small factories that transformed matter: through the force of the coastal wind, the corn, produced in the *veiga*, was placed between two rotating mills which crushed it to generate flour that served both animals and people. Of these mills only the hardest materials of its construction, that is, the granite pieces, like the grinds, the walls or cover, remain. The rest of the structures disappeared, as in the case of blades.

In addition to the strong presence of the wind, the sea influenced agricultural activity through an essential product: the seagrass - *sargaço*. e seagrass is abundant in the coast and was collected for fertilization of the fields, orchards and vegetable gardens. is practice comprised specialized workers, the *sargaceiros*, who harvested during the stages of the full tide, possessing their own instruments and techniques. Having fallen into disuse during the twentieth century, namely from the introduction of chemical fertilization, the remains of this practice are some small shelters that were used as bathhouses and warehouse of utensils, and can still be found implanted in the parcels of the *veiga* adjacent to the waterfront. is implantation shows a relationship of great complicity between sea and land activities, a relation of interdependence that is specific of this territory.

The shape and construction technique of the shelters is extremely simple and its dimensions are small. Its materiality confirms its fragility: most of these shelters are built with wood plaster, some more perennial, resorted to a masonry system, mixing the shale with the granite and, more recently, you can find some shelters built with the use of metal structures and plates.

¹⁷ Viana, António.1999. *Areosa, terra de moinhos em Aurora do Lima* .144:49, Viana do Castelo.



ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Jeep in the veiga . January 2014.
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.

ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Terrain in the veiga after pinewood slash. January 2014.
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.



ANDRÉ CASTANHO
12.1. Windmill and shelter for sargaceiros in the veiga. 12.2. Windmill and shelter for sargaceiros in the veiga.
12.3. Windmill and shelter for sargaceiros in the veiga. 12.4. Shelter for sargaceiros in the veiga.
12.5. Hiss over parcel in the veiga with windmill. September 2012.
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.



ANDRÉ CASTANHO

13.1. Windmill in the waterfront. 13.2. Windmill in the waterfront. 13.4. Windmill in the waterfront. 13.5. Windmill in the waterfront.

Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

With the disuse and lack of maintenance, exposure to the elements and the growth of moss, these shelters are slowly disappearing. Mills and shelters are constructions that assume a preponderance in the landscape being of the few that can be found in the *veiga*. In the case of the shelters, they are the only constructions located in the *veiga* where the current domains of the RAN does not allow any type of new construction. Some of these shelters were therefore patched or widened into a set of heterogeneous or even ironic mixtures.

The images of mills and shelters are of singular beauties in the scenarios of the border and *veiga*; the verticality of the former contrasts with the horizontality of the plain, marking the border punctually while the low, fragile shelters imbued with the agricultural parcels seem to humanize the *veiga*, that is, to give a human scale to the vastness of the plain. In the current experience of the *veiga*, the few remaining mills and shelters, assume an important reference in space influencing and inciting the route. As both are located parallel to the Atlantic coast, their proximity is exciting and baffling.

By consulting the Military Charter of 1949 we can see that the presence of these constructions were more intense: in the case of the mills, in addition to several elements present along the border, it could also be found by the plots of the plain and / or flanking streams. Of this last typology, in which the mills were hydraulic and non-wind, there is no longer any one. In the case of shelters, all parcels appear to contain one.

Along the coastline it also can be found several objects scattered in the ground, deposited by the sea. Among some spoils of varied nature, such as bottles, plastics, clothes, there are elements preponderant and easily connectable with the fishing activities that run along the coast. One of these elements are ropes and can be found mixed and camouflaged among the various materials that make up the waterfront, like coddle, herbs, rocks or sand. Many still appear with the specific nodes of the function they have performed.

In a way that is not as evident as the secession of the agricultural activity in the *veiga*, the fishing activity that was carried out in this coast also understood its circumstances of abandonment and still remains in a residual form. e ropes that are scattered around the waterfront can reflect a fragmented and rudimentary activity without economic significance.

With more frequency than the presence of the old windmills and the shelters of *sargaceiros*, it is possible to be found along the route that traces the sea front, several type of deposits. From the heaps of garbage to the deposits of building materials, these events occur in plots of the *veiga* attached to the waterfront, appropriating the hisses and taking advantage of some of the obscurity that these spaces allows for its lack of usage.



ANDRÉ CASTANHO

14.1. Shelter for *sargaceiros* in the *veiga*. 14.2. Shelter for *sargaceiros* in the *veiga*. October 2012.

14.3. Shelter for *sargaceiros* in the *veiga*. 14.4. Shelter for *sargaceiros* in the *veiga*. February 2013.

Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.



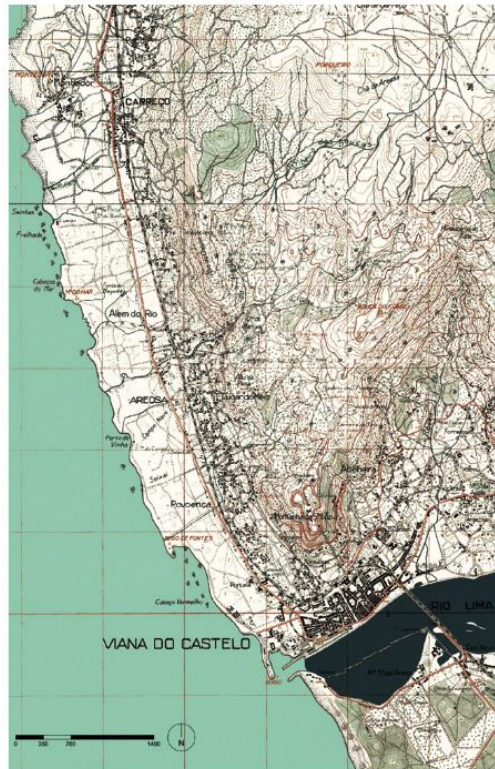
ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Shelter for sargaceiros in the veiga. September 2012.
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative



ANDRÉ CASTANHO

Approach to a shelter for sargaceiros in the veiga. March 2012.

Scan from 4,5x2cm negative



ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Carta Militar de 1949
Fonte: Departamento de Geografia do ICS da Universidade do Minho



ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Ropes from fisheries in the waterfront. April 2012.
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative



ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Truck in the veiga. February 2017
Scan from 6x6cm negative



ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Garbage deposit between the veiga and the waterfront, February 2017
Scan from 6x6 negative



ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Rope from fisheries in the waterfront. February 2017
Scan from 6x6cm negative

The same lack of current use of the border converged with the need to create a place for training and gaming of the sports club of the parish. Implanted in the waterfront, between shale rocks and the *veiga* parcels, the football field rises over the flattened profile of the topography to interrupt the linearity of the marginal course.

Another construction apparently disconnected from the environment and the scenarios that the waterfront can offer is an Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) that is also implanted on *veiga* lands annexed to the marginal. Its construction is formed by a large steel manifold about one meter in diameter that penetrates and projects onto the *veiga* coming from the slope. e sanitation waters thus flow into a series of cylindrical tanks that filter it, distinguishing materials in a separation action that recalls some agricultural methods, with separation of leaf and spike, wheat and tares or grapes and leaves.

These new types of appropriation, the football field and the plant, make the waterfront experience a paradox: this is a physically and concrete reality but out of context, being a sign of abandonment by occupation. The white walls of the football field and its lampposts blend with the fullness of the sea and the fields of the *veiga*. At the same time the waves that break in the rocks of schist are fused with the noise of the machinery of the WWTP as the odors of the waters of sanitation penetrate the smell to the sea air. It is a parallel universe where fragments are arranged disconnectedly on a flat surface, endowed with a strong visual enchantment which is about to rip.

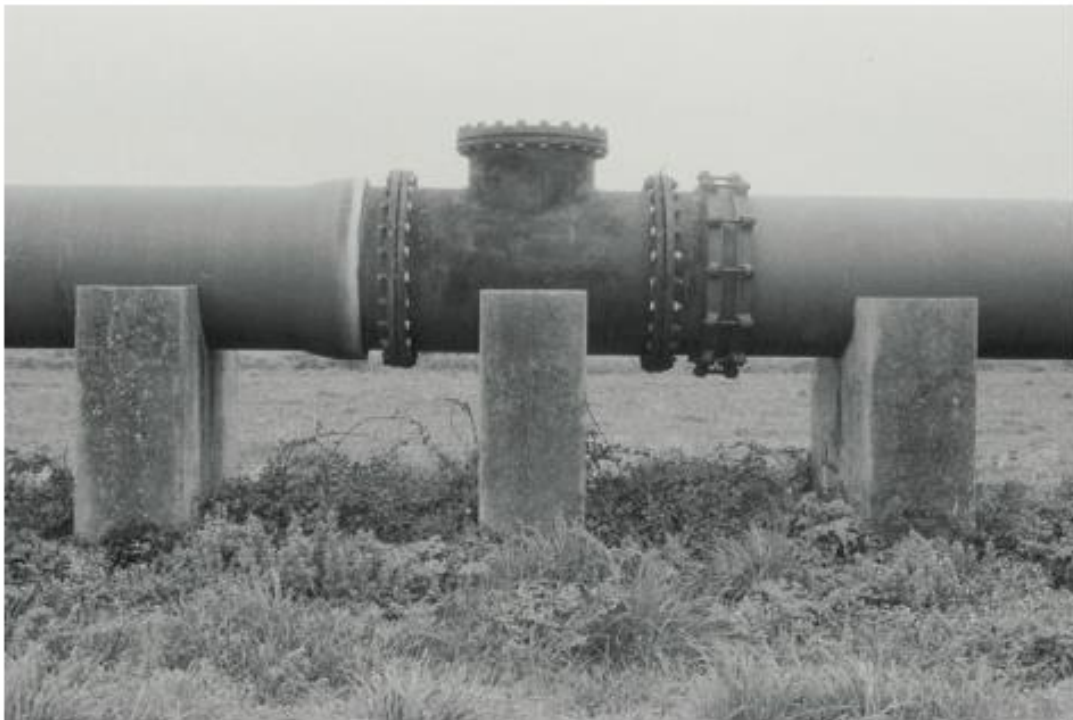
Hills and mountain slope

Contrasting with the flat reality of the *veiga* and the waterfront, where the construction is punctual, and fragile, the spaces that make up the mountainous slope of the north coast of Viana have been a channel for the urban expansion of the city since the second half of the twentieth century, constituting an important pole of housing area. e confrontation between historical and current cartography allows to discern on the presence, adaptation and disappearance of a particular model of settlement of the rural period of this region. As in the *veiga* and waterfront spaces, this model survives in a residual way through fragments of what constituted it, namely through the old granite walls that delimited the properties, of segments of a road structure that persisted in urban development, or some buildings characteristic of the period and the hegemony of agrarian patrimonies.

The EN13, bordered by the railroad, is the physical and legal boundary that distinguishes the non-buildable area of the *veiga*, belonging to the RAN, from the buildable area of the slope.



ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Garbage deposits between the veiga and the waterfront. February 2013
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative



ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Football field between the veiga and the waterfront, February 2013.
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Waste water pipe in the veiga. February 2013.
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative



ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Farm granite walls in the slope, November 2012.
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

The matrix that characterized the settlement related to the rural period and that conformed this landscape until the middle of the last century were denominated by farms and a network of routes that allowed to transit to the *veiga* and the waterfront. In these properties were located the manor houses and the houses of the housekeepers, the cuts of the animals, the vegetable gardens and the orchards. The formation of these properties, often with considerable areas, was

made possible by earth-moving terrain, thus forming large terraces able for agricultural activity and construction. The granitic soil made these actions difficult yet, at the same time, it provided raw materials for the construction of walls. These walls had the clear function of protection, as much to invasions of strangers or of wild animals as of the wind, being able to reach considerable heights. It served as an arrangement for the stone that appeared on the earthworks and support for the terrain.

Between these walls the paths and the road structure are developed. The matrix that corresponds to the rural settlement had a logic that was shaped according to the quality and quantity of the traffic and in straight relation to the topography. Between streets, which run from north to south, along the slope and maintaining similar heights, to the crossways – *travessas* and *quelhas* -, which were transverse streets from east to west that accompanied the steep slope of the terrain, the existing network of paths had by measuring scale the size of the individual, the ox cart and the slow and gentle mobility of the calm flow. Its character could be labyrinthine but its articulation with the topography and the ways to the *veiga* were exuberant.

The presence of these walls and roads is noticeable in certain areas of this region, especially those farthest from the central pole of the city and where urban expansion was not so imposing. Its scale and dimension, with the combination of stone, construction equipment and vegetation, forms a unique environment in the urban reality of the city of Viana.

The photographs that have taken place in these spaces try to explore these aspects as a desire to value the form and value that compose them. With the great changes that have occurred in the last decades regarding the urbanization logics, namely the new housing settlements and mobility logics, the spaces conformed by farms, paths, walls and streets of narrow section have become residual and in some cases obsolete. When persistent in space it is residual and fragmented being part of the ruins, in its most canonical sense, of this territory.

Being the area of this territory that has become more visibly transformed due to the urban expansion, the slope produces the kind of realities that have come to be called transgenics¹⁸ in the context of the descendant spaces of rural communities. This metaphor, using a methodology of genetic transformation of food and agricultural products, serves to classify a heterogeneous landscape of its constructive forms and in the process of adapting a pre-existing matrix.

¹⁸ Álvaro Domingues, *Vida no Campo* (Porto: Dafne editora, 2011), 153.



ANDRÉ CASTANHO

Crossroads - travessa or quelha - between granite farm walls in the slope. November 2012.

Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

The hillside spaces now fuse almost antagonistic forms of space transformation. The terraced farms were opened for incorporation of allotments where there are twinned houses and collective housing buildings. Accompanying the development of these models, the infrastructure networks have evolved to adapt to the speed and size of the car, to the needs of sanitation and water channeled in mass, to the illumination of the streets and of the dwellings.

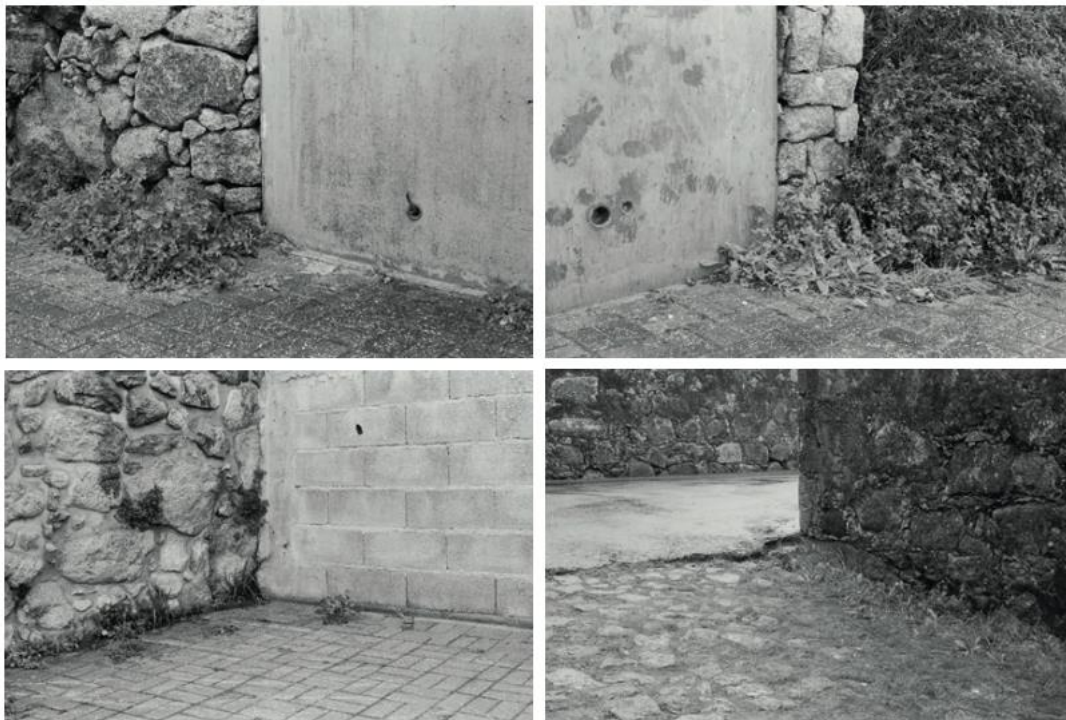
The divergence of scales from these heterogeneous spaces production processes is clearly visible in the representation of details and junctions between new and pre-existing materials. The images that can be taken from the hillside are a reflection of a juxtaposition and a composition without harmony of the granite walls with cement sidewalks, roads of tar, to concrete walls. That same tar that paves streets of sidewalks or beaten earth and now appear punctuated with sewage caps, gutters, electric poles and garbage containers.

The kind of transformation that can be witnessed along the northern coast of Viana is not part of an action that has sought to reflect on this pre-existing matrix. The overlap and suppression are the means that sustain and allow a natural approach to real estate speculation characteristic of the last epochs, being this a kind of planning common in Portuguese cities and not only in this region. The imposition of forms, the objective and discontinuous planning produced similar spaces from the Minho to the Algarve, indifferent to the specificities and the continuities of each territory.

Conclusion: disintegration and construction

*Aqui na orla da praia, mudo e contente do mar,
Sem nada já que me atraia, nem nada que desejar,
Farei um sonho, terei meu dia, fecharei a vida,
E nunca terei agonia, pois dormirei de seguida. (...)*

*Dêem-me, onde aqui jazo, só uma brisa que passe,
Não quero nada do acaso, senão a brisa na face;
Dêem-me um vago amor de quando nunca terei,
Não quero gozo nem dor, não quero vida nem lei. (...)*¹⁹



ANDRÉ CASTANHO

Details of walls and roads in the slope. February 2013

Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

The exercise that was presented is based on the exploration of a void in the understanding and classification of a landscape built in the hangover of a secular period of rurality and of the eruptions that resulted from its deruralization. It is in the exploration of these eruptions, marks and fragments that the current history of this place is constructed where the prism of abandonment serves different points of view: the desertification of the activity of the *veiga* and the ruins of its infrastructures, the conjugated presence of new buildings with old mills or fishing ropes on the waterfront and also the severe regimes of urban overlap and alteration of the models of settlement in the slope.

¹⁹ Fernando Pessoa, "Aqui na orla da praia, mudo e contente do mar", in Poesia de Fernando Pessoa, coord. Adolfo Casais Monteiro (Lisboa: Presença, 2006).

Culture of Disintegration is thus an instrument that sense seeks to explore the palimpsest²⁰ of the territory of the northern coast of Viana and to flatten, or to place in a same level of comparison, the different spatial and temporal logics present, without prejudice to the landscape considered ugly or extrapolation of nostalgia of the rural landscape. Both contexts are data that must be considered equitably because it is in the complexity and sensitivity of this territory that its beauty subsists. is is admittedly a reflective work, a work that was nourished by a climate of economic stagnation in the Portuguese reality to inquire and better understand the reality of the northern coast of Viana and thus to draw a base and a mediating thought in its recognition. His interest is in architecture, on ways of manipulating space, on constructions and their interaction with physical, social and cultural circumstances, making the use of photography to register, document and synthetize those relations.

The camera is an instrument that encourages a deep involvement with physical reality allowing a distinct range of the simple activity of observing, highlighting distinct elements of the spaces. On the other hand, the creation of photographs establishes an idea and a discourse that, in the case of the northern coast of Viana, merges with the post-rural reality of the Culture of Disintegration.

How can the Culture of Disintegration mediate the reconstruction of this territory? Can this exercise have some operational sense in the activity of architects and designers who dwell on this territory? Can it be reconstructed? Should it be reconstructed?

Different feelings can be aroused by the experience of the spaces of the northern coast of Viana. Between sea, *veiga* and mountain slope, these feelings can be contradictory and are always complex; it is extremely difficult to encompass a whole in a space as it is deeply fractured in different temporal domains and in distinct dynamics of appropriation.



ANDRÉ CASTANHO
Broken mirrors in the slope. February 2017
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

²⁰ André Corboz, "El territorio como palimpsesto", in *Lo urbano en 20 autores contemporaneos*, ed. Angel M. Ramos (Barcelona: UPC, 2004).

The beauty of the combination of natural elements, the morphology of the terrain, the proximity between sea and mountain or water richness, are elements that overwhelm this landscape of potential and expectation. On the other hand, the constructions and manipulations that appear on this physical context appear to be fragile and volatile, with no character, and a sense of entropy seems to be present in every space, environment or setting, however contradictory and unbalanced they may seem. Following the directives on peripheral and vague spaces, marginal to the urban flow, with which this sample of the northern coast of Viana finds some similarities, of Solà-Morales on *Terrain Vague*²¹, the attention of the technicians involved in city planning should focus and redouble its attention on the flows, energies, and continuities established over time.

But, it is not wrong to think that the continuity of the territory of the northern coast of Viana is fragmentation and lack of meaning that characterizes the multifaceted genres of post-rural territories. For Robert Smithson it is the fragmentation and discontinuity that justifies art: “only when art is fragmented, discontinuous and incomplete we know about that vacant eternity that excludes objects and determined meaning”²². Rebuilding the northern coast of Viana do Castelo may have this meaning of uncertainty and irrationality. Its continuities are the discontinuities and temporal coexistence where order and object are easily corruptible and where certainty and rationality have little value.

²¹ Ignasi de Solà-Morales, “Terrain Vague” in *Anyplace*, ed. Cynthia Davidson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

²² Robert Smithson, “The Shape of the Future and Memory” in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 333.

Bibliography

Abreu, António. 2009. História de Viana do Castelo. Viana do Castelo: Câmara Municipal de Viana do Castelo.

Baptista, Fernando. 1994. "A agricultura e a questão da terra - do Estado Novo à Comunidade Europeia", em *Análise Social*, vol. XXIX.

Caldas, Joaquim Castro, "Alto Minho: Caseiros sem Terra à Terra sem Caseiros" in Brito, Joaquim Pais de, e outros (coord.), *O Voo do Arado*, Museu Nacional de Etnologia, Lisboa, 1996.

Corboz, André. 1983. El territorio como palimpsesto. Em Ramos, Angel M. ed. *Lo urbano en 20 autores contemporaneos*, Barcelona: UPC. 2004. Original em *Diogene* 121, 1983.

Correia, André. 2013. *Cultura da Desintegração: representações do litoral norte de Viana do Castelo*. Guimarães: Escola de Arquitectura da Universidade do Minho.

DGADR - Direção Geral da Agricultura e Desenvolvimento Rural. 2017. Reserva Agrícola Nacional, <http://www.dgadr.gov.pt/ambord/reserva-agricola-nacional-ran>.

Domingues, Álvaro. 2011. *Vida no Campo*. Porto: Dafne editora.

Evans, Walker; *American Photographs*; MOMA, Nova Iorque, 1938.

Hill, John and Mora, Gilles; *Walker Evans: e Hungry Eye*, Thames & Hudson, Londres, 2004.

Krauss, Rosalind. 1990. *O fotográfico*, Barcelona: Gustavo Gili. 2002. Original *Le photographique. Pour une Théorie des Écart*s. 1990.

Kummel, Friedrich. 1966. Time as succession and the problem of duration. In Fraser, J.T. (ed.) *The Voices of Time*, Nova Iorque: G. Braziller.

Lange, Susane; Bernd and Hilla Becher: *Life and Work*; The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2007.

Lingwood, James; "O Peso do Tempo" in Lingwood, James (ed.); Robert Smithson, Bernd and Hilla Becher: *Field Trips*; Hopefulmonster Editore, 2002.

Pessoa, Fernando. 1929. *Aqui na orla da praia, mudo e contente do mar*. em Monteiro, Adolfo Casais .2006. *Poesia de Fernando Pessoa*. Lisboa: Presença.

Smithson, Robert. 1966. e *Shape of the Future and Memory*. in Flam Jack. 1996. ed Robert Smithson: *The Collected Writtings*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Smithson, Robert. 1967. *A Tour to the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey*. em Flam, Jack. 1996. ed. Robert Smithson: e *Collected Writtings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p.72. Original in *Artforum*, 1967.

Solà-Morales, Ignasi de; "Terrain Vague" in *Anyplace*, 1995.

Viana, António.1999. Areosa, terra de moinhos em Aurora do Lima .144:49, Viana do Castelo.