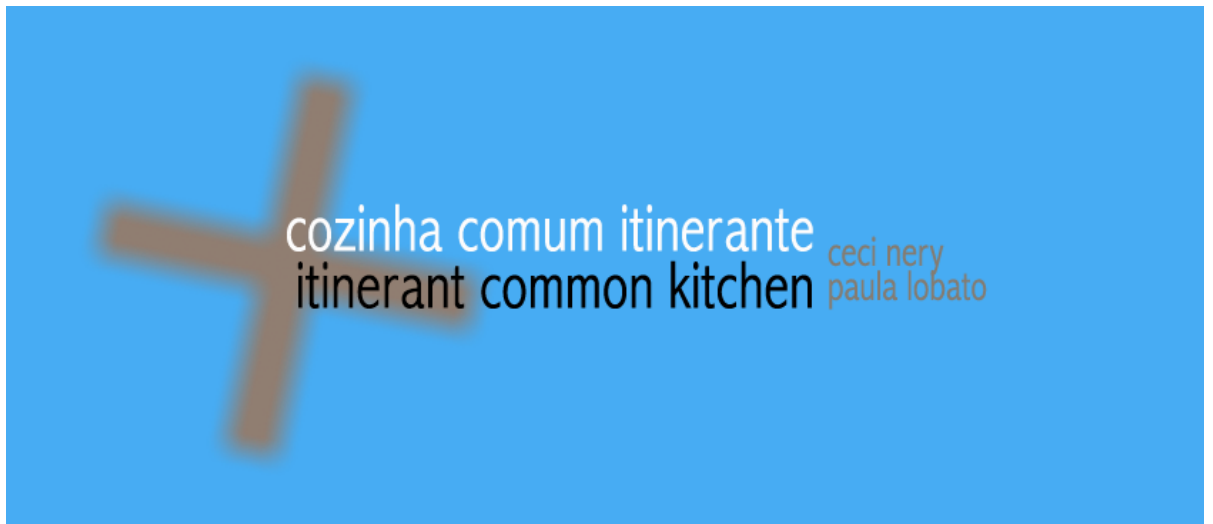


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GUEST AUTHOR ARTICLE

1 About bringing the architect to the place, not the opposite¹

"The good use of public space and urban voids, so that they can serve society in the most diverse forms"². This was the proposal that revolved around the experiences portrayed by the exhibition *Arquitetura Não Solicitada* [Unsolicited Architecture], which arrived in Belo Horizonte in 2012. In a post-crisis world context, its authors proposed a radical change in the work of the architect, leaving the passivity of someone who receives demands and passing to diverse propositions from our analysis of the cities. For a new market configuration, the new work forms and the challenges of our time seem to require a proposer architect.

The discussion of an "unsolicited architecture" began in Ole Bouman's Design Studio at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 2007. It is not only for the sake of new working methods but it also advocates a greater exchange of experiences among architects and other citizens, in order to broaden our perception about the dynamics that govern the cities. In an article about the exhibition, Luiz Antônio Neves writes: "it is architecture - and its professionals - expanding its social reach, dialoguing with the city and its most urging needs. That is, it is architecture in its citizen practice"³.

Turning to the specific context of the collective *Cozinha Comum* [Common Kitchen], in the university we constantly felt instigated to imagine, to propose and to act in the territory of an idealized, unreal, another - which gradually became a discomfort. We take our city imagery to these third parties: community garden, clean rivers, lively squares, streets for leisure, among other scenarios, while our school and neighborhood remain full of its own questions that we do not reflect critically about and do not act on.

Another challenge we found is the search to establish a dialogue with the others that does not go through a technical language, understanding how excluding it can be. Drawings and maps are abstractions - often not even architects understand them - and it would be a mistake to expect all citizens to easily decode them. Our work starts from this attempt to find a way to establish dialogues and approaches avoiding a technical

approach. We believe in and seek a practice closest to the city's daily life and the reality of its inhabitants, sharing our actions with other citizens we know through the course.

The pursuit of doing together with other people provide us a non-authorial work, characterized more by processes than by products. In this case, each of those happens in a different way, with the involvement of different actors. The processes do not belong to the collective, they happen specifically in each work and, consequently, they gather several voices.

Acting in this way is also, for us, a way of challenging certain still modern notions of how to conceive an architectural design, how to behave in relation to the city and, more than that, what the work of an architect consists of. As they are initiatives of each collective, this type of action does not yet have a rule, nor can it necessarily be classified in a single way. It fits into a moment in which Architecture begins to recognize the importance of the presence of another real; not an idealized person, but those who use the spaces in their daily lives.

We recognize the existence of a diverse and distinct knowledge, some of which we learn at the University, others through everyday life, others through traditions, others through orality. The architect, thus, places himself in a position of constant apprentice: curious, provokes dialogues and mediates encounters. Our work is a way to bring about the process of constant exchange of knowledge with residents of the places where we act on. Those practices make us go back to traditional knowledge, seek youth movements, go to schools and cultural centers, among others, all in an attempt to get closer, perhaps in a more real way, to people. Doing together is a way of listening to others.

2 Mediating with food, and a project that is done in the process

Cooking together brings us a possibility of intense exchange, in which conflicts become learning relationships. Food is a language that everyone dominates and, in this way, can also interact with it. Much of the knowledge about food is passed through generations, including recipes, medicinal uses and food rituals, ways of preparation, crafts and production processes appropriate to a culture and time.

Cooking is also a way of approaching otherness, finding a common territory that allows one to know other ways of life and of doing. The proposition of practicing together such a personal act arouses the own forms we have to do things, showing that what is considered standard or normal for one person may have another meaning for another. Sharing the kitchen, we relieve absolute truths and put ourselves in a position of constant negotiation, in which we learn to see other ways of doing things that we already knew. And we begin to understand that distinct interpretations are possible, without one eliminating the other. Those who share affective recipes with us are sharing their history, their life paths and also many other implied information.

From this perspective, cooking gets an educational dimension; in shared environments, this learning takes place through the exchange and crossing of the frontiers between knowledge - usually reinforced by the academy. Thus, culinary cooking brings people together without erasing their individualities. Through the transformation of conflicts into learning relationships, cooking practice brings together forces that can activate new relationships that are transposed into space, whether public or domestic.

In large cities, cooking generally occurs in private spaces, keeping people away from the logistics involved in planting, growing, harvesting, transporting, preparing and selling food. Even if, for many people, food is just a product, the cooking activity continues to arouse the interest of many people, proving itself to be powerful mechanism to think and create collaborative processes. This is also a spatial discussion, since the investigation of the dynamics around food goes through the forces that build and control the use of urban space.

Cozinha Comum began as a collective space in the School of Architecture of UFMG. Its history begins in 2013, when a group of students proposes the creation of a shared kitchen in the university building, a logical solution to the necessity of autonomy regaining of its students, limited by the high prices of the area and the small variety of food options available (vegetarian, vegan and / or lactose-free lunch options were not very constant at the time). During the 5 years of its existence, we have experimented different formats of events, workshops and group lunches, which enabled conversations and propositions, strengthening relationships and connections in the discussion about food and many other topics that comes with it. Gradually we disassociated ourselves from space and turned it into a way of thinking and acting.

In contrast to the strategic logic of conventional design, along the way, we experienced a tactical construction in which the experience of space itself led to decisions, where the everyday experience allowed us to live an architecture in process, constantly reconfigured and re-imagined by the people who use it. Space here does

not appear as the result of an arbitrary design or an individual will, nor does it seek to respond to an over-determined demand.

Food preparation was done in the same way: each person was able to think diverse recipes for each ingredient - even for the same dish, preparation method hardly is the same. Therefore, we negotiate recipes and exchange cooking tips and, along with them, stories and knowledge. The kitchen gradually gained another dimension: we began to think of it as a neighborhood equipment, which brought new flows into the school, overcoming institutional and epistemological frontiers by proposing experience exchanges, recipes and stories with people who were not directly connected to the academic field.

2 The experience of the Cozinha Comum Itinerante

The invitation to take the cooking activity to the streets took form through the Cozinha Comum Itinerante [Itinerant Common Kitchen], an outcome of our interaction with the School of Architecture of UFMG neighborhood, which made the idea of circulating this interface through other areas of the city. With the sponsorship of Rumos Itaú Cultural, we built two mobile structures that, together, form a kitchen-device for shared use between the collective and the partners of each territory, acting primarily on three axes: activation of public space, updating of culinary memories and registration/circulation of culinary knowledge of various people who inhabit the city. By constructing the *Cozinha Comum Itinerante*, we have created a structure that allows collective activity in many ways, especially by the spontaneous formation of groups and the consequent direct contact between the people who cook. We also chose to design a structure that generated diverse spaces open to interaction with the city's own environment, stimulating people to appropriate streets, sidewalks and urban furniture.

The *Cozinha Comum Itinerante* is activated through local partnerships. From an exercise of shared research of the territory and the community, it elaborates proposals for the collective use of the equipment: public preparations, discussions about medicinal properties of foods, seedlings exchange, cooking workshops, research on local plants, among many others. Sometimes the equipment is also added to community events: street cinema, parties and celebrations. The recipes are thought with these local actors, working on traditional culinary of different cultures updated in the contact with other references.

Working methodologies are created for each situation, we create practices that use food and cooking as action devices. Preparing food and eating collectively allows many levels of exchanges between the agents that take part in the process. When cooking in many hands, you practice cooperative and negotiating skills.

It is important to take care to know the territory to be worked, to seek partners or local cultural agents to make the interlocution between the community and the collective, opening the possibility of dialogues and joint creation of a structural model to act as an activator of the project in each territory. The methodologies adopted aim to assure contact in the scale of the body, 1: 1, assuming the responsibilities that arise in direct contact. We believe that the creation of dialogue situations strengthens the understanding of the sense of society and, through them, partnerships are articulated, provoking a rediscovery of the power of micro actions, allowing an awareness that we are active agents in the transformation of our spaces.

The equipment of the Cozinha Comum Itinerante are, in this sense, a new social actor inserted in the existing configuration, they establish new relations between the agents and of the agents with the existing objects and participants of the food, territory and society configuration. They become powerful dialogue mechanisms capable of, through the proposal of doing together, enabling new public exchanges between agents and processes that were not previously related because they were limited to the private sphere.

3 The performance in the first three territories

The process in the neighborhood of the School of Architecture of UFMG, the first territory investigated with the *Cozinha Comum Itinerante*, initially took form of public events with discussions on themes that aroused interest, involving students and neighbors, as well as more free preparation, from the interaction with the neighborhood and the people. Starting from our reflections on the Common Kitchen and our experiences in the neighborhood, we proposed a calendar with activities that allowed us to approach the neighborhood and establish specific dialogues around themes that interest us as research lines in the territory: *Cozinha na Hora* [Kitchen in Hour]; *Troca de Mudanças* [Seedlings Exchange]; *Comidas que Curam* [Foods That Cure]; *Caminhada PANC* [Unconventional Food Plants Walk] and *Memória Gustativa* [Gustatory Memory]. These were the lines from which we set out to provoke, to create channels of exchange, dialogue and approaches to these various local actors.

During the period that the kitchen was there, the school was occupied by the students as a mobilization strategy against PEC 241 approval by the government of Michel Temer (2016). The occupation was organized through Working Groups (GTs), among which was the Kitchen GT, responsible for feeding everyone who were

involved in the movement. Gradually a group of more than 30 students gathered to join our GT, in charge of preparing the 3 main daily meals for all occupants. Many of its participants were already involved with the *Cozinha Comum*, others saw at the time of the occupation a reconfiguration of the spaces of the school and the relations established between all, feeling more comfortable to approach to the school's kitchen.

Besides the concerning on organization in order to keep the food production always active without overloading the cooks, the group took other questions from the beginning of the occupation, unfolded in researches of new menus, food knowledge and possibilities of preparation. The main concern was to provide an inclusive diet. It was assumed that veganism, as opposed to being a restrictive diet, as is commonly pointed out, is an inclusive diet, since it can be consumed and fulfill the body needs of both meat eaters and vegetarians, and lactose intolerant people. Through the reciprocal exchange between cooks and neighborhood visitants, it was developed a large repertoire of extremely nutritious vegetarian and vegan meals and snacks, which was even unfolded in workshops in other occupied schools.

The preparation, done always in a collective way, was organized differently every day, with one or two people with more experience managing what had to be done, while those who wanted to learn started with simpler functions such as chopping, grating etc. Thus, people learned from each other in a free pedagogical format, where everyone has something to teach, since a recipe tip to preparation methods, seasoning, logistics to deal with time better, organization to keep space clean, to how to cook for a lot of people. Cooking in the square, we called attention of passers-by who were surprised to see, in a political occupation, a itinerant kitchen with well-prepared dishes. Some approached and, talking about food, they became interested in the movement and began to support the students' action. During this period, some neighbors chatted with us, talked about personal recipes, brought donations to the movement and even cooked with us.



Fig. 1: Activity performed during the occupation of the Escola de Arquitetura da UFMG. Source: The authors.

In Morro das Pedras, the second territory of action, we experimented with the use of the *Cozinha Comum Itinerante* in three simultaneous axes. The first consisted of weekly actions with the group *Projovem Adolescente*, a socio-educational service of basic social protection, which works with Art and Education with youngsters from 13 to 17 years. The second axis dealt with actions with traditional families. We have met locals who have lived on the area for many years, from whom we approached through the interest in kitchen, building relationships beyond it. The third axis refers to an action carried out by the residents of Morro, who appropriated the Itinerant Common Kitchen to add activities to proposals of the Vila Antena community (one of the villages that make up the Morro das Pedras).

During the period under the responsibility of *História em Construção* [History in Construction], a cultural collective formed in 2008 and that today has a physical space in the Vila Antena, the kitchen was used in the food preparation of the first planting efforts for a community garden that they built (Morro Verde); in the film screenings in "*Cine-Parede*"; as a space to exchange seedlings and knowledge in an Mother's Day event; and it was also appropriated by event organizers from the area who observed its aggregating potential. In one of the events, it was observed how the smell of food, going through the neighborhood, attracted people to the street and to the other activities carried out.



Fig. 2: Activity performed at Morro das Pedras. Source: The authors.

In Urca, a neighborhood located in the border of Belo Horizonte with a municipality of its metropolitan region, we hold collective preparations in a public square once a week. The wealthy diversity of the group of neighbors led us to organize the preparation in themes divided into two types: those that showed an interest in learning and those that could contribute to teaching. This was a strategy to guide to the emergence of other voices, experiences and culinary knowledge, and to stimulate the exchange of recipes by the group. Another issue that united a great part of the group was the concern with restrictions and healthy food. On this, we proposed the preparation of food that would expand the culinary universe already formed by them, now without gluten, sugar or animal derivatives, and sometimes rich in complex carbohydrates, fibers and proteins. During the 8 weeks of activities, we tried out dishes and heard stories and recipes based on particular trajectories, but that referred to a greater field of culinary knowledge.

The itinerant kitchen has proved to be a great mediator between us and people of different backgrounds and contexts, serving as a reason to meet and exchange stories with many people. The agglomeration of agents in the public space establishes another relationship with the built environment, transforming, in an ephemeral way, the exchange value of the city in use value. The aggregate character of the preparations on the street interrupts the positivist ordering of the urban planners and establishes a convivial situation. People establish relations through sharing food.



Fig. 3: Activity at Urca. Source: The authors.

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interrupts the positivist ordering of the urban planners and establishes a convivial situation. People establish relations through sharing food.

5 For the restoration of frontiers of action, or conclusion

The experiences of the *Cozinha Comum Itinerante* go through a different way of learning, in which its participants are simultaneously in a position of apprentice and teacher. The information exchange gives us different knowledges and, from them, we understand the political, educational and relational potential of the kitchen. Food is a basic necessity for human survival and it establish relations between individuals - with each other, with the territory and the political and economic system in which they are inserted. In this way, it is also a possible language for the establishment of new networks, new forms of encounter and dialogue in the urban space.

To discuss food in the city is to think of existing production forms, resistant and erased by urbanization processes. It is also to think about the diversity of cultures that inhabit the urban environment, that are expressed through traditional culinary, which store complex knowledge that goes through health, tastes, spirituality and sociability. A complex network of social, labor relations and spatial structures is built and mobilized in these processes. This is all about the shape of our cities.

Cozinha Comum Itinerante is not a project that seeks to formulate a final product, much less a closure, but a practice that envisions continuities. Small products are materialized during processes, in event formats, recipes, publications and propositions. But it hopes that these partial products will only be the beginning of other processes, triggering other initiatives aroused in the participating agents and allow the collective, always reflecting on the practice itself, to take the project to new places, experiencing other partnerships.

The departure of the *Cozinha Itinerante* from the territories in which it transited does not mean the end of the processes activated by the device. It is impossible to measure the effects of the proposal on the individuals involved and the individual and collective changes brought about by experience. Nevertheless, we can see, from the discourses of these agents and some concrete developments, that the *Cozinha Itinerante* inserts new imaginaries about the city by proposing other forms of sharing and collectively inhabiting the space, or even by giving visibility to these resistant forms of inhabiting investigated throughout the process.

Some of the experiences discussed in this article are still ongoing; others arose as a result of them. During 2018, we held workshops at Projovem in two other neighborhoods in Belo Horizonte, where we developed specific activities for each group of adolescents. Often we were led to adapt the practices during the preparation, adapting ourselves to the youngsters' involvement.

The analysis carried out here and the ideas formulated about them are then an attempt to deepen the experience, to grope networks and ideas awakened by the action - so common in their practice - to gather people in the public space to cook and talk. Among the diverse practices possible to the contemporary architect, we propose the use of the kitchen as a mediating device of meetings in public space. It is from this that we see a way of challenging a system that homogenizes the ways of producing both food and space.

1 The *Cozinha Comum Itinerante* was proposed and executed by Ceci Nery, Paula Lobato and Thiago Flores

2 <http://g1.globo.com/pernambuco/noticia/2012/07/mostra-itineraria-arquitetura-nao-solicitada-chega-ao-recife.html>.

3 <http://sinaenco.com.br/noticias/arquitetura-cidada-e-transformacoes-urbanas-nao-solicitadas>.