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Bernardo Neves is architect and urban planner, member of research group Indisciplinar, of Architecture and Urbanism Graduate Program, at Federal University of Minas Gerais. He is a militant of Brigadas Populares.

Gustavo Tristão is architect and urban planner, and autonomous woodworker. He is Art Professor at Brighenti Cesare State School, graphic designer at Teatro da Pedra company.

Aleska Oliveira is student of Architecture and Urbanism course, and member of Empresa Júnior of Architecture and Urbanism course, at Federal University of São João del-Rei.

Translated by **Sávio de Oliveira Nogueira**

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Fig. 1: Parklet finished. Source: Author's collection.

In order to dialog with the theme of this V!RUS journal issue "Weaving the City", this article intends to discourse – in a free and fun manner – about the city as surplus value and consequently as a class struggle from the experience of the collective production of a parklet, in 2015. This ephemeral street furniture aimed to give support to a possible change in the way people and the city itself relate to the urban center.

A vida é a arte do encontro. (Vinícius de Moraes)

This parklet was the object of the workshop lectured by Bernardo Neves e Gustavo Tristão during the Second Seminar of Urban Reform "Cidade para Quem?" (City for Whom?), which was a partnership between the Brigadas Populares São João del-Rei and the Junior Enterprise Arché. Brigadas Populares are a militant, popular and mass organization, which sustains itself by its grassroots and

direction structures, a young militancy that fused together in 2011 and has a nation-wide coverage, with headquarters in nine Brazilian states and the Federal District. The guideline for a brigade acting is the oppressed self-organization with democracy and mass participation from people's life situation and the fundamental relationship between direct action and political action (BRIGADAS POPULARES, 2016). The Junior Enterprise Arché is a university enterprise where architecture and urbanism students from the Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei (UFSJ) experiment professional practices during undergraduate studies, applying the knowledge developed in the classroom in the job market, producing architectural projects in direct contact with clients and construction sites. This meeting between junior enterprise and militant movement comes from both the organizations' desire to complement each other. While Arché politicizes its actions, the Brigadas move forward in its propositional and project skills.



Fig. 2: Second Seminar of Urban Reform "City for whom?" flyer. Source: Second Seminar of Urban Reform "City for whom?", produced by Aleska Oliveira.

The second edition of the Seminar "Cidade para Quem?", that took place in the UFSJ between 23 and 28 of November 2016, had as central theme the urban mobility in the dispute for the right to the city, to give fresh air to the fight for quality public transportation in São João del-Rei. Such fight started in 2011 with high school students' mobilizations against the raising of bus fares, and it hasn't left the discussion ever since. This anti-capitalist and multitudinary insurgency (HARDT; NEGRI, 2005), in favor of the right to the city, found in the bulge of the Brazilian journeys of June 2013, its intensity peak, bringing São João del-Rei to the select group of cities that had their bus fares diminished, after protests. Academic research decrypted the fraudulent ways in which the value of the fare was calculated (SANTOS, 2014), public audiences and denunciations made to the public prosecutor's office, the movement conquered in that year, besides the fare decrease, the fall of the concession to operate the public transportation services in the city. At the time, the manager of the company the concession was given to was also the president of the City Council. Along with this mandate, the public transportation legislation was abusively demeaned in favor of the company (BRIGADAS POPULARES, 2014). In the following years, the local oligarchic block blinded itself against this insurgent dynamic and the movement, consequently, changed its geographies of counter-power.

To deal with a broad specter of urban mobility, the 2015 edition of the "City for whom? Seminar" was divided into three thematic axes: pedestrian mobility, bicycle mobility and public transportation. Each theme was envisioned in one night of lectures and one practical workshop during the seminar. The parklet workshop was related to pedestrian mobility and the recapture of the public access to the center.

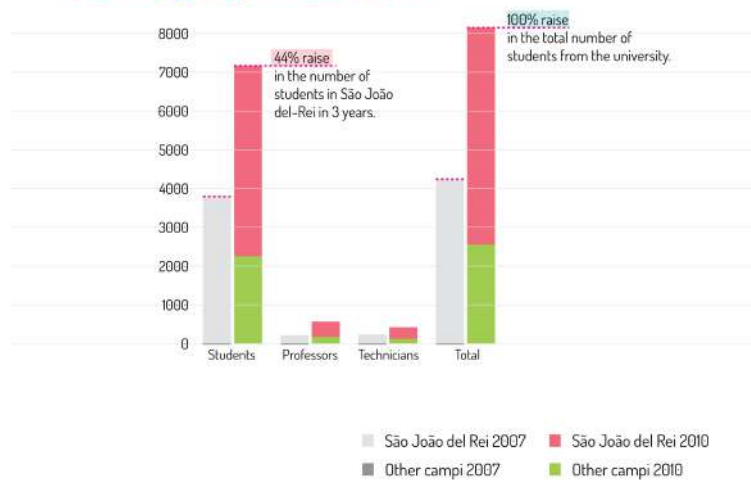


Fig. 3: Parklet workshop web flyer. Source: Second Seminar of Urban Reform "City for whom?", produced by Gustavo Tristão.

Before discussing specifically the parklet workshop, a brief analysis of the context in which it inserts itself is worthy.

São João del-Rei is a city in the state of Minas Gerais, founded in 1713. It holds a complex historical center with churches designed by Aleijadinho. Its historic center is marked by an atypical mixture combining patrimonialization and live urban dynamics, with active and spontaneous commercial activities. The architectonic set listed by the Municipal Council for Preservation of the Cultural Heritage (CMPPC) and by IPHAN gathers houses from various ages and typologies, revealing its constructive history throughout the centuries. São João del-Rei had its financial dynamic marked by gold mining, by the Estrada Real commercial route, and by the vapor industrial cycle. With a population a little over 90,000 inhabitants (IBGE, 2016), the city is today, like other cities in the state, a university town – the largest of UFSJ's four headquarters. The creative process of the parklet workshop links directly to the gentrification process caused by the university expansion through the REUNI program, achieved in São João del-Rei between 2007 and 2010. In those years, the number of places at the university jumped from 790 to 2850, a growth followed by an increase in the number of professors, technicians, servers and outsourced employees (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SÃO JOÃO DEL REI, 2012). This demographic and financial alteration in the social fabric, impossible to be followed by the urbanization process, meant real estate speculation, gentrification, overpopulation of university' shared houses, hipsterization of the historical centre and expulsion of some social sections from the social life, specially concerning the night and bohemian aspects of the city centre.

UFSJ's demographic boom



Source: UFSJ, 2012.

Fig. 4: UFSJ's demographic boom. Source: Produced by Aleska Oliveira.

The process of real estate speculation and entrepreneurship associated to the expropriation of the urban space public dimension is directly connected to what Dardot and Laval (2016) call the new way of the world on neoliberal society. If the right to the city, as Harvey (2014) suggests, can be understood as a significant emptiness, passive of appropriations and resignifications, it has become more and more restricted to a small economical and political oligarchy, with means to shape the city according to their interests. The fight for the right to the city, today, is a declared war against the neoliberalism.

It is certainly a little ironic to dispute the right to the city in a context of militant fights resorting to one of the speculative devices most used by the hipster urbanism: the parklet. Therefore, our strategy was to produce a place able to subvert the neoliberal subjectivity that attends to aesthetics and politics where there would be no more subjects and society, only capital and capitalists; where competition is the standard for the conduct and the company of the model of subjectification (DARDOT; LAVAL, 2016).

To dribble (with humor) the neoliberal logic hegemonic in the territory of the city, a parklet project was chosen where there wouldn't be the typical chairs and tables that work as appendages to nearby bars and stores. Instead, the design made for the workshop predicted a set of chaises forming topographic object, both unusual and inviting for inventive and libidinal uses. The seminar organization made an agreement with the City Hall to install the parklet at Tiradentes Avenue, in front of the number 538, limit area

between the heritage zones of the historic center and the historic surroundings. The area is very frequented during the day, for its commercial activity and institutional equipment, and at night for the bars, restaurants and nightclubs.



Fig. 5: Floor Plan. Source: Executive project produced by Gustavo Tristão, montage produced by Aleska Oliveira.



Fig. 6: Section A. Source: Executive project produced by Gustavo Tristão, montage produced by Aleska Oliveira.



Fig. 7: Section B. Source: Executive project produced by Gustavo Tristão, montage produced by Aleska Oliveira.



Fig. 8: Structural System. Source: Executive project produced by Gustavo Tristão, montage produced by Aleska Oliveira.

For bureaucratic and budget reasons, the workshop aimed to produce an ephemeral object that would withstand the weather and usage for a few weeks. To be aesthetically and constructively assertive, the design had to consider some conditions, as participants' beginner level in woodworking, the one-week-deadline given by the seminar, the limited toolset, materials, infrastructure, and budget. Some design constraints were also evaluated such as accessibility, ergonomic comfort, safety and the dialog with the historical center ruled by contrast, determinant variables in the design development and construction technique.



Fig. 9: The process of construction. Source: Author's collection.

The workshop was divided into four steps: structure, coating, transportation, and installation. In the "structure" step, developed in the UFSJ's Architecture and Urbanism Models Lab, the parklet was divided into six structural skeletons; during the "coating" step, the parts were joined into only three, to make feasible its transportation to Tiradentes Avenue, where it has been finalized and assembled into a single piece.

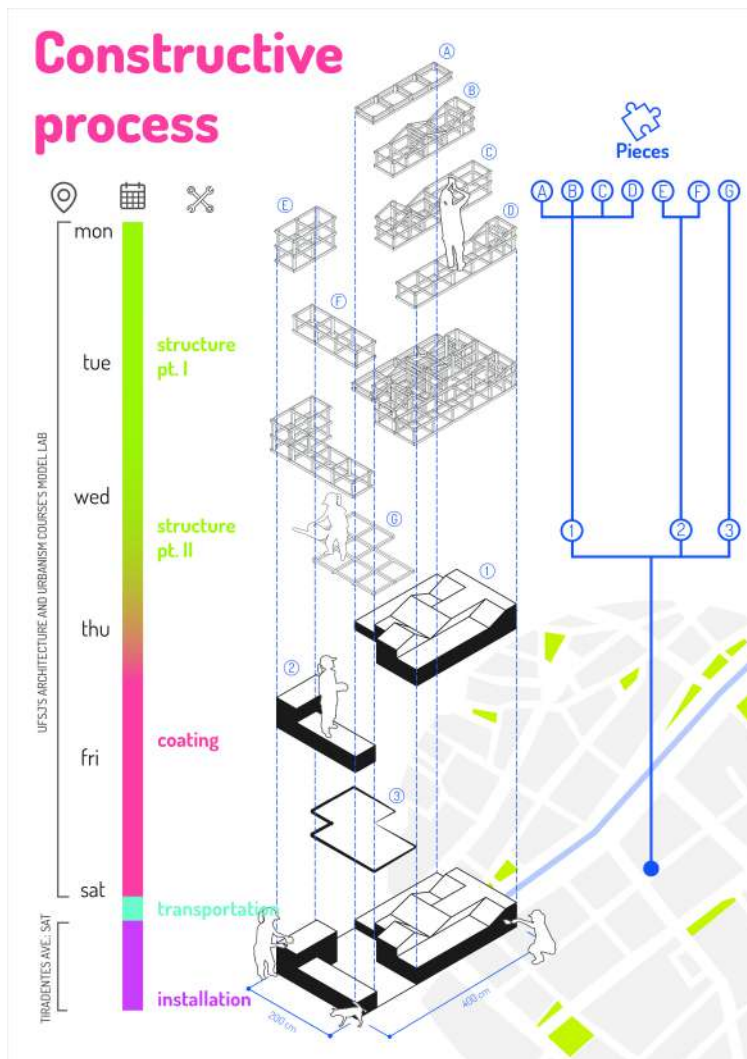


Fig. 4: UFSJ's demographic boom. Source: Produced by Gustavo Tristão.

To produce collectively non-profitably, with no speculative and gentrification purposes, all the money collected from the enrollment fee plus the donation from shopkeepers surrounding the installation site was employed to buy material for the parklet construction. A big part of the material was donated by furniture factories from the region. As a way of actualizing, in the capitalist relations' interior, an object that could subvert the logic of the city as surplus value, we donated our collective work and got in return unexpected doses of pleasure.

agents involved in the parklet workshop



Fig. 11: Agents involved in the parklet workshop infographic. Source: Produced by Gustavo Tristão.

From theory to practice, the parklet, alongside other workshops in the same seminar, fixed in space the debate around the right to the city, crossing insurgency and architectural practice. The right to the city, according to Lefebvre (2008), would come from the assumption that the use value of the urban space would overcome its exchange value. Therefore, for us to achieve the essentially

anti-capitalist experience of the right to the city, we would have to produce an object free from its exchange value. It could not be appropriated by local shopkeepers and privatization processes of what is public in central areas but could be deliberately appropriable by passers-by. From the exchange value point of view, the parklet not only took a position of alienated and unowned but occupied a public space colonizing territory: a parking place.

Responding to Lefebvre's call, the parklet produced a ludic and festive space, with possibilities of surprise, unforeseen events, and public appropriation. It was frequented by children and playfulness, by bohemian youth with their Catuaba bottles, it was a selfie scenario, it housed homeless people and couples in love in night endings. It also brought to the surface urban contradictions and discontent of some. Some people were indignant by the parking place removal and threw their garbage on the parklet. Some other people, for being and feeling socially stigmatized, didn't appropriate the space that they felt like "a bum's thing". During a few days, the parklet was support for a fiery popular debate in social networks about urban values and the territorial dispute it represented, evidencing, as Ermínia Maricato (2015) proposes, the city as a class struggle.

We highlight a friendly testimony shared in one of the debates in social networks: "Man, I needed to tell you this. This dawn I gave myself the luxury of killing my curiosity and lay down in that "thing" with a friend... It was very nice... We saw the São João Building from another perspective, and it reminded me a freaky story of the guy who painted the building (laughs). There was a smell of wet wood and that was strange (laughs). I saw the sky lightening up and I laughed a lot. I found a cigarette butt which someone left to save me and a hairclip, but since it wasn't much of my type, I left it there (the cigarette really saved me). Suddenly, a bus passed by and filled my face with carbon monoxide (laughs), that part was kinda unpleasant. After a few minutes, that I don't even remember how many they were, we left by walking and faced ourselves with two rainbows at the Cadeia Bridge. I kept imagining that if there was a crew, there was going to be a party there (laughs)... Very nice, I liked it! :)"



Fig. 12: Parklet being used. Source: Author's collection.

Before finishing, we need to highlight that the parklet was not an isolated case of extitutional urbanism (ESQUERRA; FONTAIO; PEREZ, 2016) in São João del-Rei. It joined a living scene of popular production of a desiring city, of which stand out the Rap na Bika group, composed by peripheral young people. From May 2016 on, they have been producing an agenda of cultural events around the skateboard practice and the hip-hop culture at the Biquinha Square, which is a depredated and criminalized central area. The Cachorros Park is a popular mobilization in the surroundings of the Cachorros Bridge that, since the beginning of 2017, is transforming an environment abandoned by the public administration, violent, taken by the bushes, garbage, and rubble, into an insurgent linear park at the margins of the Lenheiros Stream. The Bike na Leite is a UFSJ's university extension program discussing urban mobility with the community through experience, originated as a practical course in the Architecture and Urbanism studies, in which students produced an ephemeral bicycle path at Leite de Castro Avenue, September 19 and 20 of 2015, and a second temporary bicycle path in December of 2016 in the Matozinhos neighborhood. And Chacrinha Park began in 2014 as another UFSJ's university extension program congregating Architecture and Urbanism and Biologic Sciences students in the process of rehabilitation of uses and spaces, from workshops and "mutirões" (collectively self-constructed buildings) with residents from communities socio-environmentally vulnerable in the surroundings of the Dom Bosco campus. There is a new scene of insurgent planning (MIRAFTAB, 2009) fighting for right, public policies and, at the same time, weaving the city, producing new urban territorialities through collective and insurgent action.



Fig. 13: Insurgencies in São João del-Rei map. Source: Produced by Aleska Oliveira.



Fig. 14: Spontaneous appropriation of the passers-by. Source: Author's collection.

Credits

Architecture project and workshop: Bernardo Neves e Gustavo Tristão

Executive project: Gustavo Tristão.

Workshop participants: Anna Paula Alves, Paula Mateus, Luiza Melo, Betânia Dornellas, Laura Cunha and Rodolfo Andrade.

Organization: Bernardo Neves, Aleska Oliveira, Anna Paula Alves, Carol Camargos and Joice Martins.

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