I dwell, therefore I insist: poetics, resistance and autonomy in public space.
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Abstract

The "Do-It-Yourself" sense is revealed in this article to address an autonomous production of public space as a possibility of resistance to a hegemonic production of the space. Reflections are raised on the relationship established between two active groups who stand for the right to the city, the Lauro Vieira Chaves neighborhood — then threatened with the possibility of eviction — and Canto, the Universidade Federal do Ceará's Model Office of Architecture and Urbanism. Based on the concepts of tactics and horizontality, this relationship is observed in its articulation as claim potential through artistic and affective appropriation of urban public spaces.

Keywords: public space; autonomy; artistic intervention; evictions; resistance.

Lauro Vieira Chaves neighborhood

> […] in spite of being who we are, we might also desire to be something else. Herein the role of place is crucial. It is not just a life's background frame but a living space, i.e., a space where experience is always renewed, which allows at the same time the revaluation of heritage and an inquiry on the present and the future. The existence in that space exerts a revealing role on the world. (Santos 2001, p. 114)

Who goes from the Universidade Federal do Ceará's (UFC) school of architecture and urbanism to Lauro Vieira Chaves neighborhood (LVC) runs a simple path: the row that follows 13 de Maio Avenue towards the countryside and a right turn at Expedicionários Avenue until the end of the road. The road ends where the LVC neighborhood begins: a network of narrow streets and a single path which allows the passage of small vehicles. Perpendicular to Expedicionários Av., Lauro Vieira Chaves Street bounds one edge, while the other is delimited by a wall and a vast empty area. Open sewage, windows, doors and fences in very narrow streets. There are always children playing, people passing through, parked bicycles, clothes on makeshift clothes lines and someone sitting by the door in some shaded spot. Maybe because it arose forty years ago and remained discreet, maybe because it have ensured so far real estate speculation indifference in its favor.

By 2013, families from 203 houses in the LVC suffered threats of eviction due to the possibility of the construction of a Light Rail Transit (LRT) that would cross over 11 other neighborhoods, according to the plan of works for the World Cup 2014, which had Fortaleza as one of its host cities. For being set up as an informal settlement, residents still do not have the right of property over the land, culminating in indemnity negotiations with values far below those corresponding to the real estate market. As an alternative, the government proposal established the resettlement of families in a housing complex with 5,536 apartments under construction until the present time, which should receive arising people from various other neighborhoods.

In early 2014, through negotiations with the municipality, the community was able to review the project, which allowed the redefinition of the LRT's course design. Thus, the number of affected houses was reduced to 66, with the guarantee of nearby resettlement.

Fig. 1: Painting on wall held by residents of LVC neighborhood. Source: Camila Matos Fontenelle, 2012.

Back in 2012, in a context of large urban changes in Fortaleza, LVC residents triggered the State of Ceará's Public Defender's Office, which would allow acquisitive prescription processes (usucaption) for the residents. For this purpose a technical report would be required with surveys for each of the lots. The Public Defender's Office then got in touch with the Department of Architecture and Urbanism of the Universidade Federal do Ceará (DAU - UFC), which forwarded the demand to Canto - Model Office of Architecture and Urbanism. Canto is an extension program which features student self-management and provides technical advice on architecture and urbanism to social movements and organized low-income communities.

This paper intends to reflect upon the relationship between two militant groups for the right to the city — LVC and Canto — and how their actions are linked as claim potential through artistic and affective appropriation of urban public spaces. It aims, up from this reflection, to discuss how public art may be manifested as a form of resistance to a hegemonic project of the city, in an attempt to encourage an autonomous process of the production of urban space.

The construction of autonomy and university extension

In order to understand how the relationship between Canto and LVC settles upon an autonomous and resistant process, a prime stage is to address the practices of university extension between them. The university extension as a possibility of communication with society allows the reconsideration of the university as the unique and isolated space for knowledge production. It also allows the recognition of its context as a fundamental element in a practical and theoretical thinking on reality. In this sense, the approach of university extension as communication advocates the construction of a popular university oriented to the social interest.

Thereby, the boundaries get blurred and the encounter among different types of knowledge, places and human relations approximate to equivalence and legitimacy. The gathering through the assumed permeability enables the transformation and construction not only of the thinking, but of the public space itself when the focus is on urban issues.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, in his work "The University in the 21st century" (2004), is aware to the urgency of the university to recognize its insertion in local dynamics as a tool for the construction of a new model of knowledge production, whose validity is carried out to the extent that it emanates from society.

> Because society is not an abstraction, these challenges are contextual according to the region or place, therefore they can not be faced with general and unbending actions. The social responsibility of the university must be assumed by the university itself, and accept to be permeable to social demands, especially those originated from social groups who lack the power to impose them. (Santos 2004, p. 68)

The exchange among autonomous groups who seek for the transformation of urban reality in a non-hierarchical structure of reciprocity alludes to the concept of horizontality, defined by Milton Santos (2001, p. 108) as "areas of contiguity that form continuous lengths". This concept can also be appropriated for the comprehension of the relationships: the university and the context in which it operates; the students and teachers; students with each other in different stages of formation; students and active neighborhoods as members of the the extension projects.

Specifically in architecture and urbanism courses the correspondence between theory and practice becomes essential since space, place and territory are objects

of study and parameters for the creation, design and construction of new spatiality. Lina Bo Bardi mentions for courses in Architecture and Urbanism,

> "[…] the theory identifies with the practice, as the practice is demonstrated rational and necessary through theory, in turn, the realistic and rational theory demonstrated through its practice" (Bardi cited in Rubino & Grinover 2009, p. 82)

After the end of military dictatorship in Brazil in the early 1990s, some discussions fostered by students comes up, especially in architecture and urbanism courses, issues concerning the role of university extension and a greater social commitment as a professional charge. As a consequence, rises the extensionistic project Model Office of Architecture and Urbanism (EMAU) from an activist and volunteer work done by students. Since then, Model Offices were created in universities of Architecture and Urbanism in Brazil, with methodological and structural inherent particularities to each context, even within a unit in terms of goals and a constant revision and updating of the principles underlying them, from critical experience and its sharing among the students.

Among the principles that orient the performance of EMAUs, we emphasize: horizontality in the exchange of knowledge between those involved; understanding the extension as emancipatory communication; commitment to critical reflection on reality; and the search for identifying and responding to the collective demands set apart from state action and private initiative. Thus EMAUS intend to promote the enhancement of the claims, demands, resistances and achievements of the locations where they operate.

Annually, this process is revitalized in a National Seminary (SeNEMAU) which brings together participants from other EMAUs and people interested. Moments of discussion, roundtables, thematic mediated talks, lectures and workshops are performed.

Throughout the work performed in partnership with LVC and the Public Defender's Office, Canto organized and hosted the XVI National Seminary Office Model (SeNEMAU) in August 2012. The event enabled this collaboration to be extended toward other issues related to resistance, identity and sense of belonging of the residents. Amongst the suggested activities, a collective building effort in LVC neighborhood came out from the desire of those who live there to reinforce and add up to the claims of abide in the place that they recognize as their own territory.

Until then, that desire was a form of political activism for a specific fraction of residents, mostly workers and adult men engaged within social movements, political parties and institutions. After the collective building effort — and the increasing integration among the dwellers, united by this new threat of removal of greater consequences — it is possible to observe a diversification of forms of militancy incorporating other fractions of residents and other modes of engagement and resistance.

The collective building effort took place with working groups composed of dwellers (children, adults and elderly), students from different EMAUs and several spontaneous militants for the right to the city.

Three lines of action have been proposed: "Public Spaces", "Urban Art and Resistance" and "Community Communication" in "Public Spaces" mainly landscape issues were addressed. The work of "Urban Art and Resistance" was devoted to the mural painting and the "Community Communication" group conducted a series of interviews with the dwellers and developed a proposal for a local community radio. Beside the interventions of painting; flowerbeds were built on previously

impermeable areas and the speakers for the future installation of the radio were located.

Fig. 2: LVC dwellers during the collective building effort in XVI SeNEMAU. Source: Anna Lúcia dos Santos Vieira de Silva, 2012.

With the end of the event, students and residents kept in touch and set out to continue the activities. From the work done on the shaft "Urban Art and Resistance" and "Public Space", university extension project was developed in 2013. "Se essa rua fosse nossa" (If this street was ours), also linked to Canto. The draft consisted of participatory co-creative interventions with the intention of qualifying public spaces, walls and pathways in the neighborhood; to accomplish a document containing information about the process of resistance in order to submit it to public instances, and integrate students of Architecture and Design with the residents of Lauro Vieira Chaves in educational processes by surveying new demands, artistic interventions and interactions with the community, thus favoring its visibility.

Public sphere and the city as a base for resistance

Are the social spaces public? Can spaces be considered media? Before we locate the studied actions as a form of appropriating public space for expression of public opinion in the public sphere, we believe it is necessary to clarify the concepts that involve the meaning of "public". In a thorough study, Lavalle (2005) presents three lines of interpretation of public term since their opposites.

First, the idea that the public is opposed to privacy and hence implies openness, absence of restrictions on entry, free access or passage that relates to social life. Second, the meaning of the word public opposed the property. That would be related to general interests, therefore linked to the state and political life.

Finally, it presents the public opposed to particularity, to the limited or not widespread, what is disclosed, published. Here we might also consider the sense of audience, people for whom something is transmitted, who receive the transmission, or attend an event.

Habermas (2003) calls "public" the events accessible to all, adds state-related sense, the "government" as responsible for providing the "public good" to the

citizens. The author goes on with what he considers the most common use of this class:

> […] in the sense of a public opinion of a public sphere angry or indignant or well informed, these meanings correlative to public, advertising, publishing. The subject of this public sphere is the public as carrier of the public opinion; its critical role is what refers to 'publicity' (Habermas 2003, p.14)

Confusion is usual when trying to understand what comes to be social space, communicative space, cultural space, political space. For each of the mentioned spatial amplitudes there are areas of humanities responsible for identifying them and mainly locate them. Here all these abstract spaces are located in a single term: the public sphere.

From the parameter of the transformations of the public sphere that Habermas (2003) provides us with in passages from nineteenth to the twentieth century, we may study the meaning of a new structure which takes place at different levels, as spontaneous, voluntary, autonomous and unyielding sociocultural action.

We believe that the visibility, the scope and the potential that spontaneous street art features, is sufficient to discuss their location in the public sphere, from the perspective of an urban, social, cultural, communicative and militant action. It is the action that manifests as opinions and positions of a social group that appropriates the city walls, the construction of places, adaptation and definition of territorial boundaries or simple graphic expression in public spaces where it is not always allowed.

If we think the actions held in Lauro Vieira Chaves in a political sense, as a specific posture in public space that manifests in a communicative way, we make a connection with what Deutsche (1998) characterizes as public art, because it operates and presents itself in the public sphere:

> For the interpretation of public art as art operation in or as a public sphere – whether it follows or rejects the Habermasian model – means that an art public, by contrast with an art audience, is not a preexisting entity but rather emerges through, is produced by, its participation in political activity. (Deutsche 1998, p. 288)

Thus there is an update for the term public sphere for its not only communicative implication with a range as public opinion or through a sort of open media, but also by a political standpoint, the manifestation of an opinion and a desire which is a right as a form of social legitimacy.

Thus there is an update for the term public sphere beyond its communicative implication – with a range as public opinion or through a sort of open media – to a political standpoint – the manifestation of an opinion and a desire that is a right and a form of social legitimacy.

The sense of appropriation

> Since any site has the potencial to be transformed into a public or, for that matter, a private space, public art can be viewed as an instrument that either helps produce a public space or questions a dominated space that has been officially ordained as public. (Deutsche 1998, p. 288)

The marking of territory and the construction of places in the public art occur through the appropriation of public space. The word appropriation is used in

different ways by authors who discuss the domination and control of the urban environment and the different ways of acting in these areas.

In Lauro Vieira Chaves, the urban intervention took place in the neighborhood's internal public space. It may seem a bit contradictory to speak of appropriation of public space when what happens is a differential use of a space that was already used and understood as belonging to all who live there. However, the collective and creative action implies a strengthening of the sense of community and the public space within the neighborhood enhances another quality and meaning when it is transformed by a common purpose, in this case, the resistance to remain in place.

Pol (1996) discusses the appropriation through two interacting components: symbolic identification and action-transformation. In the Lauro Vieira Chaves neighborhood, emerges a type of action that is determined by identifying and delimiting its own territory, that once threatened, reverberates as a claim to permanence, where the will and autonomous action are decisive.

In search of a better understanding of the term appropriation in its different nuances, Rosalyn Deutsche (1998), in addition to situate issues of public space and the powers that manages it, explains the uses and meanings of the term appropriation used by Lefort, Lefebvre and Certeau.

Firstly, the urban space is presented as a whole composed by substantive groundworks where any action, for specific purposes, is beneficial if the use of space is drawn up by an absolute foundation, that according to the author is: human needs; configuration and organic evolution of cities; technological progress; natural forms of social organization and objective moral values.

Then, the justification of this plea authorizes the state power to exercise a power over public spaces. Thus emerges an incompatibility of public power with values and needs of the people.

Here rises the first meaning of appropriation, used by Lefort (cited in Deutsche 1998) to affirm the takeover of public space by public power, whose claim is "to occupy – in the senses of filling up, taking possession of, taking possession by filling up – the locus of power that in a democratic society is an empty place" (Deutsche 1998, p. 275); although Lefort does not deny the importance of the political process in decision making, the sense of appropriation equates to an undemocratic strategy that legitimizes itself by granting to public space an incontestable meaning, drifting in its enclosure.

Lefebvre calls domination and Certeau, strategy (Lefebvre, Certeau, cited in Deutsche 1998), this sense of agency and control of public space by a power that stands indifferent to social needs, where an entity that holds the power postulates a certain place as its own.

The appropriation sense used by Lefort is opposite to that used by Lefebvre (cited Deutsche, 1998). As for Lefort, appropriation is an action of the state power, for Lefebvre it denotes the action against this power. This is the meaning we will use in this work, the appropriation as taking possession by the society, by groups or individuals occupying any part of the public space and transforming it, critically and without permission, equivalent therefore to Certeau's ways of making, specifically the tactics, that take into account the difference and exclusion and expose the power where it was hidden.

The art of resistance can be understood as a form of appropriation of public space. Places receive intervention according to the choices and specific needs in the transmission of a content with vindicating discourse.

This is how the process of territory marking is constructed, which can attain levels of recognition between groups and visibility of a particular content or demand. The territory marking can also highlight and strengthen the sense of belonging and place.

On one hand the community Lauro Vieira Chaves appropriates the wall to show their resistance to remain in the place. On another way, in the interaction among the residents and those involved in SeNEMAU, resistance is possible, the initial image is re-appropriated and the entire surroundings are transformed with paintings, seedlings and reform of the open sewer's path. Thus the sense of community and territory grow stronger in the process. In a third step, the activities of transforming public space start to be managed solely by the community. With the conquest of dwelling, the resistance of the graffiti was no longer necessary and the autonomy of the neighborhood unfolds on the walls with the overlapping vines over the claiming images.

Fig. 3: Entrance of the LVC neighborhood before the XVI SeNEMAU. Source: Anna Lúcia dos Santos Vieira e Silva, 2012.
Fig. 4: Entrance of the LVC neighborhood one year after the XVI SeNEMAU. Source: Anna Lúcia dos Santos Vieira e Silva, 2013.
Fig. 5: Entrance of the LVC neighborhood two years after the XVI SeNEMAU, during the realizations of the FIFA World Cup. Source: Anna Lúcia dos Santos Vieira e Silva, 2014.

Tactic and resistance in the autonomous spaces

This image of the vines express the strength of what Certeau (1998) defines as a tactic, where the survival of the weakest essentially depends on their invisibility in face of totalizing actions.

> [...] What it (the tactic) gains is not conserved. This non-place allows it mobility undoubtedly, but on a docility to the hazards of time, to catch on flight the possibilities offered for an instant. Vigilant, it has to use, the failures that particular conjunctures will open in monitoring the power proprietor. [...] Can be where nobody expects. It is cunning. [...] In short, the tactic is the art of the weak. (Certeau 1998, pp. 100-101)

Certeau provides the idea of tactic as a tool in the context of the individual so he can perform his art, but it is possible to expand this concept to collectivities.

Because the tactic does not own a proper, hence it can not incide on any territory, it appears functional to the Milton Santos' concept of horizontality (2001) mentioned before: it is liable to occur in any space, to the extent that it becomes invisible to hegemonic power. In the encounters that take place in the relegated public spaces of the city, individuals recognize themselves in common struggles and desires – it is due to the unlikely alliances through which the tactic can be collective.

Certeau (1998, p.175) discusses the ordinary culture, not as a background for a social activity, but as its very own articulation to hypothesize that "space practices effectively weave the determining conditions of social life." To compose the realm of actions defined through intentionality, organization and implementation of the language, the author offers the concept of urban tactics:

> These deviationist tactics do not obey the law of the place, although they refer to the possibilities offered by circumstances. They are not defined by that. From this point of view, they are as localizable as the technocratic *strategies* that aim to create places according to abstract models. What distinguishes these from those are the *types of operations* in these spaces which the strategies are capable of producing, mapping and enforcing, whereas tactics can only use them to manipulate and change it. (Certeau 1998, p.92)

The focus of Michel de Certeau (1998) involves analysis of relationships, operations and actions that imply individual, interactive practices and methods capable of appropriating urban spaces and transform them creatively by a "way of making" the everyday. The author defines the strategy in a specific place, determined by forces of power, while the tactic has no place, rather, it is where freedom of movement is not constrained by external rules. This allows the action wherever it is not expected and thus enables the surprise. Under this view, the public art that fits into the particular circumstances of resistance is tactic, if we comprehend as strategic the government and legislature power over public space and, as a tactic, the illegal action of appropriating the walls and other urban brackets to communicate to the public power itself the need to dwell and the relativity of possession.

The actions of art produced in LVC resisted even the usual ways of using and experiencing the city since they were created with street performers of the city and students of architecture and urbanism throughout Brazil, with converging interests. Together, they appropriated the space on a tactical way to strengthen and explicit the legitimacy of permanence of the neighborhood over the government's strategic enforcement.

Final considerations and possible deployments

After interventions mediated by the university extension project, there was a continuity of the work by many residents with creative developments. This continuity denotes a seed of autonomy and resistance, which enables a more comprehensive understanding of DIY in a plural, everyday and collective sense.

Currently, a new project for expansion of Lauro Vieira Chaves Avenue aims to remove once more much of the LVC neighborhood. This process, which is repeated endlessly, albeit on different pretexts, reveals a permanent policy of exclusion that outweighs any possibility of dialogue or specific benefit that it can forge.

Which potencial resists on the tactical and autonomous action against the strategic action of excluding production of the city? To look from above, by a wide angle or macro scale, may not make sense. Perhaps the sense can be perceived if we look at the process from a real scale, a micro scale, understood as the transformations resulting from bodies in space, human interactions, which are capable of motivating

a latent desire and a way of life that does not cease in resist because, although punctual, are collective, hence can not be measured in terms of future impacts.

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