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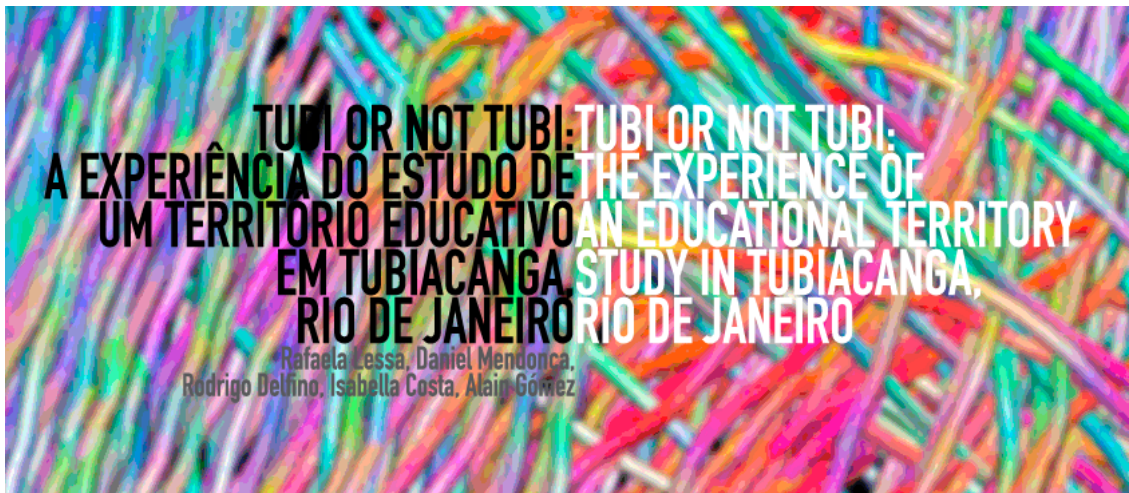project

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TUBI OR NOT TUBI: A EXPERIÊNCIA DO ESTUDO DE UM TERRITÓRIO EDUCATIVO EM TUBIACANGA, RIO DE JANEIRO

TUBI OR NOT TUBI: THE EXPERIENCE OF AN EDUCATIONAL TERRITORY STUDY IN TUBIACANGA, RIO DE JANEIRO

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Abstract

Brazil lives a moment of spectacularization in its social-political context, where citizens increasingly lose their power of decision on the directions of the cities and the society on behalf of an excluding economic development. Following such logic, economic interests start orientating public policies, to the detriment of the population well-being, permeating spheres of action like the education and school curriculum, where disciplines not directly connected to the productive sector have their time loads decreased.

In this process, new fragments of the urban fabric are created, equipped with infrastructure according to market interests while a significant part of the city continues to be neglected by the State, leading the citizens to the gradual loss of their role as an agent that continuously weaves the city. Under the light of these facts, entities and social movements associated with the urban thinking get organized to debate the right to the city and new ways of participation. However, the debate doesn't always include the youth's participation, and especially children, who are seen as future citizens, not as full citizens capable of actively taking part in these discussions.

Therefore, the idea of the city being continuously weaved with the help of many hands enables the inclusion of the childhood universe in this process. As the children absorb knowledge, attitudes, and values of their social circle and replicate them, they aren't merely internalizing the society and culture, but contributing to cultural production and change (Corsario, 2003), becoming co-builders and transformers of the social realities, experiencing and perceiving the territory.

It is in this context that the course Architectural Design III (PAIII in portuguese), conducted by Professor Doctor Vera Regina Tângari at the Architecture and Urbanism College, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (FAU/UFRJ), involves the elaboration of studies and projects for a public elementary school at the Ilha do Governador district, Rio de Janeiro. Using concepts of educational territory and full-time education[1], the course approaches the children's role in the construction of a more equitable city and society, with no distinction of color, gender, age and social class. This development embraces the child as an agent of transformation of its own reality and also leans on the technical and theoretical knowledge of the university.

Thus, the project pursues to compose a new part of this plan, geographically mapping the experiences of four students involved in this activity, in moments of contact with the community, which arose from the critical analysis of the place. Within this scenario, the students saw sewing needles and simultaneously parts of the fabric, perforated by the crossings.

Presentation

Since 2015, the course PAIII started to work on the matter of *educative territories*. The proposal lines up with recent research[2] about the understanding and meaning of extrapolating to the city the services, activities and social practices related to the pedagogical process. Undergraduate students thus participate in the process of analyzing and projecting the qualities of a place where children can fully develop and compose their identity.

Included as a mandatory study discipline in Architecture and Urbanism at FAU/UFRJ, the course evolves outside of the lineament of active extension projects in the structure of the university. It is based on three basic premises of social construction of the knowledge: the understanding of education as a way to intervene in the world, as an intelligent practice, constructive and fulfilling of the human will; the perception of science as an interpretation and a reconstruction of the world in which we are immersed; and the knowledge as an individual and collective translation built from the person-environment interaction (Rheingantz, 2009).

To achieve the previous objectives, during the 2016.2 term, the place approached for the study was Tubiacanga, an unofficial neighborhood close to International Airport of Rio de Janeiro-Galeão, characterized by the almost inexistent interaction with the rest of the city. The municipal government, responsible for guaranteeing services for all the neighborhoods in the territory of Rio de Janeiro, neglects the community in not even recognizing it. In the face of this fact, the community relies on only one public equipment, an elementary school, and on poor urban mobility. It isolates the residents and hampers attempts of articulation with the other neighborhoods in Ilha do Governador and Rio de Janeiro.

Residents did not establish in the region for their own will since it was a result of the removal of fishermen communities, destroyed in the many stages for the construction of the airport. When the fishermen started being reallocated into a new area, they began to build a new neighborhood, unique, settled by many families coming from different places. This past, marked by the isolation and uncertainty of a new removal in a future expansion of the airport, boosts the political organization of the residents and turns the study of the implementation of an educational territory a matter of great importance, not only to the community but also to the university.

During the course development, the Architecture and Urbanism College went through a situation that hampered the academic year: a fire that affected the facilities of Jorge Machado Moreira building (JMM). Consequently, the process occurred so as to meet new calendars and deadlines, even if, for this matter of a shorter term, the possibilities of exchange with the community of Tubiacanga were to be reduced. Most contacts were made, therefore, with Sérgio Ricardo, one of the most active representatives of the area. He works in close collaboration with different instances of the college to the development of urban environmental Popular Plan of Ilha do Fundão and Governor in Rio de Janeiro. Ricardo is also an active participant of Movimento Baía Viva, in defense of the ecosystems and communities living by the Guanabara Bay, involving civil society, environmental activists and fishing communities.

Contemplating the limits of such process, this experience can be considered not an integrally participative project, but an attempt of innovation within the methods of a regular undergraduate discipline. A course which intends to adopt premises of an open and participative practice, based on actions that incorporate the intentions of different subjects. Encouraged to build their own autonomy, students, teachers, and community generate debates and create alternative solutions for the same kind of problem, broadening their capacity of learning and interfering dialectically on knowledge.
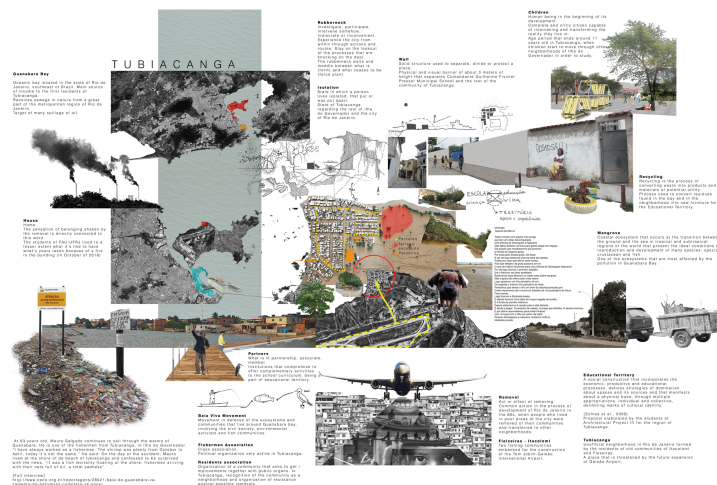
The experience: mapping the process

By the time it was presented, the course Architectural Design III (PAIII) already showed itself as different than the ones we had attended so far in college, and different than the way it was approached with other teachers. It was not a ground discipline and neither would we project a school as a final product. Because of the methodological limitations, the proposal was not exactly of a participative project, where decisions were made together with the community. However, we would deeply evaluate the real demands of the residents. Many visits, during and out of class time, allowed the teams contact with the place and its problems/qualities so that by the end of the term we could present our final work in Tubiacanga.

To get acquainted with the discussions about education and educational environment, we performed exercises in which we presented to the rest of the class what were like the schools we had studied in our memories, and the school of our dreams, with a poem of desires, containing ten verses and intentions. In such dynamics, some of the questions that later would return to the debate came up: how the schools engaged with the surrounding area in which they are inserted in a non-aggressive way; and how to incorporate the exterior and games as part of the learning process.

While other classes of PAIII decided to work with consolidated neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro, we were introduced to the unofficial neighborhood of Tubiacanga, at Ilha do Governador, by Professor Vera Tângari. She had already conducted a survey in the Ilha, in partnership with civil entities of the neighborhood and other university's research groups. We found out it was a quite delicate region, a result of an old removal of communities for the construction of Galeão Airport's runways, and that they still lived with the fear of going through the same problem, due to a future expansion of it.

Our first contact with the theme applied to the proposed territory was through an analysis of the place, collecting historical, environmental and acoustic comfort information (fairly impaired by the air transport), characteristics of the existing vegetation, buildings and their uses. The goal was to understand the consolidated ways and identify possible partners who could help us to build the network of an educational territory.

Walking through the neighborhood streets, feeling the environmental conditions and perceiving the place provided us with the first design guidelines. We noticed, for example, how the beautiful view of Guanabara Bay (one of the area's most influential design potentials) is directly affected by a high pollution rate and a significant concentration of garbage. In parallel, it is evident the privatization of public spaces on the shore by the construction of housing units, a process that ends up blocking the direct connection with the bay even more. This occupancy, considered informal, refers to the one found in slums. Both are spaces where the public action is extremely reduced, and for this reason, innumerous urbanistic, constructive and property irregularities can be seen (Abramo, 2007). The decrees, general legislation about urban construction, aren't applied in these environments on account of a constraint of public investments to specific and more consolidated areas.

On the following visit to the field, we got to know in detail the Comandante Guilherme Fisher Presser Municipal School, the only educational equipment present in Tubiacanga. The visit did not had the aim of a formal architectural learning, as the school architecture was not a design reference, but rather the contact with the children from the community, who would be our target group, which happened mainly at that moment. This contact was of extreme importance because it revealed us a public that was different than expected. The children from the community were like most children from the globalized era, who would rather follow channels on Youtube than play on the streets. A new question came up: how is it possible to work on a strategy interesting enough to attract those children to return to the appropriation of their role, on the neighborhood streets? Since it was not a simple task, we started thinking about the support of partners and residents of the community as essential elements to be able to work on the contact with children with the outside space in a more sensible way. Gradually, they would know the spots of learning outside of the specific area of the school walking with their teachers throughout the drawn route. With this watched freedom, the maturing of the children becomes possible, knowing that they are part of the city as any other person and, this way, being able to intervene in the city.

Despite the fact that the course does not consider only one lot, due to the adoption of the educational territory concept, we had to choose a ground to implement the new school, establishing the external partners to the defined limits afterward. The choice was made collaboratively by the class, who preferred to use a free and extensive area close to Guanabara Bay that could host the route to be designed by the partners on the territory.

Another particularity of the course is the fact that the adaptations of the core program, made from the perceptions about Tubiacanga, came from the students themselves (individually and collectively, always fostering the debate in the classroom). What initially caused a strangeness showed later that we were able to criticize and learn through the other groups' proposals. We decided this way our suggestions of implantation, conceived from a poem of desires, word concept and pedagogy (Park school, Montessori and Freire schools), that would be developed and detailed. The largest group of students, with four members, was responsible for detailing the chosen route and its free spaces: a new anchorage, demanded by the residents; elevated crossings and shared streets in order to guarantee universal accessibility, and two new squares to rescue the contact of the community with the mangrove[3] and the sea.

Accomplishment

By the end of the term, we had the opportunity to present the result of the class work to the community and local civic organizations. We noticed their joy to see a sensible project for a school. Their satisfaction was also directly connected to the fact that something that had never happened before was then consolidated. Someone (the academy) was thinking about their neighborhood, being available to the dialogue and listening to their proposals. Regarding our experience, being able to contribute with our tools to the struggle and resistance of the community in their territory developing proposals that could press the government, showed the empowering potential of architecture and the role of the students in the processes that create and modify the urban tissues.

With that experience, we understood that subjects within the university could work with more realistic demands. It is usual at universities to picture a public, a place, and its demands throughout the course and that blinds the academy to its biggest potential, which is the exchange with society. We also observed that not having a predefined building terrain – as it happens to several subjects – forced the students to pay more attention to the surroundings of what was to be constructed and its relationship with the existing urban landscape. After all, we wished to establish a new relationship between Tubiacanga and the rest of the city, in which it would finally be seen.

Credits

Undergraduate students of the course Architectural Design III:

Gabrielle de Almeida Maia da Silva

Leticia Martins do Valle

Luíza Aimée de Souza dos Santos

Marcela Melo da Silva Andrade

Ricardo Magno Silvestre Corrêa

Talita da Silva Pomodoro Duarte

Victória Helena Michelini Junqueira

Local partner:

Sérgio Ricardo Verde (Movimento Baía Viva)

Alex Sandro Farias dos Santos (Presidente da Associação de Pescadores Livres de Tubiacanga)

Escola Municipal Comandante Guilherme Fischer Presser

Clube Flexeiras Atlético

Head professor:

Professor Doctor Vera Regina Tângari

Academic support:

Architect and urban planner Mariana Valicente Moreira

Landscape architect Flora Olmos Fernandez

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[1] The concepts of educational territory and full-time education intersect with each other in search of reverting the effects of an isolated school throughout the years, distant and closed to other social instances. However, in the making of a full-time education, the school by itself will not be able to comply with this renewed social function, given that it becomes necessary to transcend the systematization of universal knowledge. The educational territory broadens the dialogue with other spheres of society, being able to offer spaces for interaction and learning, a different experience that will contribute to the students with a wider qualification.

[2] From the school space to the educational territory: architecture's role in the discussion about the school of the full-time education with the city incorporates the conceptual and methodological approach of the research groups Environment-Education (GAE), Quality of Place and Landscape (ProLUGAR) and System of Free Spaces in Rio de Janeiro (SEL-RJ), bound to PROARQ-FAU/UFRJ.

[3] Mangrove or swamp is a coastal ecosystem of transition between terrestrial and marine environment. Please see explaining GIF image available.