



São Paulo, a mosaic as viewed from Paim Street

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Abstract

Todd Lanier Lester is a founding member of Lanchonete.org, and Paula Van Erven came onboard in the last two years of its five-year project, which questions the Right to the City. They consider urban artistic intervention and community organizing in São Paulo against the backdrop of their respective experiences. Lanchonete.org is an artist-led, cultural platform lasting for five years and focused on how people live and work in, navigate and share the contemporary city with the Center of São Paulo as our outlook. It gets its name from the ubiquitous lunch counters—convivial, fluorescent-lit, open-walled, laborious, points of commerce—that populate almost every street corner. Lanchonete.org is about the issues that big cities face, the different forms of 'urban power', and the Right to the City, but not insomuch as to define these construct, but to stretch the 'platform' as far as is necessary to consider diverse viewpoints.

Keywords: Lanchonete.org. Cultural platform. São Paulo. Right to the city.

Lanchonete.org looks back briefly on artistic intervention in and around the Center



Figure 1. Member of Lanchonete.org, Raphael Daibert, with (local) youth of the Novolhar Association, during a workshop in front of Tarcisio's lanchonete. Source: Leandro Moraes/Lanchonete.org

1. The first project between the Cultural Center of Occupation São João and Lanchonete.org was during the 2013 São Paulo Architecture Biennial.

In early 2015, listening in on a discussion between University of Leuven students planning the Insurgent Cartography workshop at Hotel Cambridge Occupation and Raquel Rolnik, FAU-USP professor and former UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, she observed the pronounced role of cultural agents as a newer development in the housing and public space movements of São Paulo. The ensuing Insurgent Cartography workshop indeed sought to integrate inhabitants of Hotel Cambridge Occupation, an instructional design 'studio', and an 'open call' group of participants through a creative form of mapping research that resulted in an exhibition installed in the occupation's cultural center, a communal space including a library and cyber cafe adjacent to its bakery on the second floor. Hotel Cambridge also features an entire playground (or lobby, depending on how you look at it) made of tires by the Spanish artist, Basurama who also turned the Viaduto do Chá into an enormous, oversized swing-set some years back.

Nazaré Brasil, who manages the Cultural Center at São João Occupation has told us that collaboration with international artists and cultural producers lends credibility to their approach and use of cultural strategy to 'build a bridge' between people who came to the center when it still had abandoned buildings seeking convenience and those who now 'come down from Paulista' and often hold negative impressions of occupiers, ethnic enclaves, informal groups and low rent payers. By explaining their strategy in its beginning¹ Nazaré helped Lanchonete.org find its 'footing' in São Paulo's urban issue landscape, and through a repeated partnership—co-curating artist residencies and public programmes—Lanchonete.org and the São João Occupation developed a deep relationship over five years.

And by using art terms—such as artistic research, durational, platform, and site-specificity—to refer to community organizing, we attempt to call-out

and partially reduce the distinctions that heavy, disciplinary orientation and related vocabularies can place on a hybrid practice that moves between the art world, urban planning, different class orientations and the lived experience of social movement members. From the introduction of Dialogues in Public Art, discussing the 70s and 80s ‘failures of the planning establishment’ in New York City, the present Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner, Tom Finkelpearl (2001) points out that:

Just as architects were demonized as the destroyers of the city, artists were unrealistically asked to salvage it. At some basic level, there was a hope that art could revive an old idea of the city. It is not so much that people wanted art on their buildings. Rather, they wanted to return to the sort of urban environment that they imagined was present at the time artists were regularly included in architecture. The initial impetus was conservative—a nostalgia for the premodern rather than any sense of the Postmodern. The laws were spawned in an effort to attract people back to the downtown areas that they were abandoning. And, in fact, urban redevelopment is still a primary motivation in many public art programs.

Intervention on Intervention

By considering its five-years focused on the Right to the City in the center of São Paulo—and by comparing the strategies and approaches of occupations and other enclaves, such as the community of

Conjunto Santos Dumont on Paim Street—Lanchonete.org poses a set of questions that also alternate between theoretical approaches and community organizing tactics for using the contemporary, megacity: What is the role of an urban artistic intervention such as an occupation cultural center, Lanchonete.org and some of the others discussed in this text? With whom is the intervention in dialogue? And, what is the process by which an audience member becomes participant?

After framing ‘The City as Site’ in Chapter One of Dialogues in Public Art, Finkelpearl details Richard Serra’s Tilted Arc sculpture that was commissioned by a NYC federal office building and later removed from the site by the same governmental agency, and another when artist, John Ahearn was commissioned by NYC to create three bronze sculptures for a police station in the Bronx—where he lived—that Ahearn later asked to be removed due to community protest. One cannot always discern artistic intention in such urban interventions, nor can it be argued that all site-specific artworks—whether material, processual or both—have community organizing as a tacit goal. And, in some cases, the artist might explain his overall approach to goal-setting and utility, such as Thomas Hirschhorn did with *The Spectre of Evaluation*², then refusing to answer much about his intentions on specific art projects, such as *The Gramsci Monument* in the Bronx in the midst of a public housing ‘project’ or compound. Serra’s reaction to the 1980s Tilted Arc

2. http://www.gladstonegallery.com/sites/default/files/FlashArt_2011_e.pdf



Figure 2. Tarcísio plays the triangle during a Festa Junina event. Source: Leandro Moraes/Lanchonete.org

3. Theorising Art Interventions: Manifesta 6 and Occupy 38

4. Representation, Contestation and Power: The Artist as Public Intellectual

situation was to articulate what are now widely accepted tenets for site-specificity that Andrea Liu explains in her essay, *Theorising Art Interventions: Manifesta 6 and Occupy 38*³:

1. Antagonism towards a site is a crucial component of site-specificity; 2. Inseparability: Against the notion of ontologically hermetic, ‘portable’ sculpture that could be circulated and plopped anywhere at any time, oblivious to its context, Serra insisted that site-specific work had to be inseparable from its site; 3. Unrepeatability: Not only against the notion of portability, Serra insisted that site-specific work had to be unrepeatably. (LIU, 2013, 96)

However, some artists and projects offer to explicitly articulate goals – social and otherwise – for their artworks. In an October 2004 essay⁴, Simon Sheikh asserts that “the counter-public is a conscious mirroring of the modalities and institutions of the normative public, but in effort to address ... other imaginaries.” There have been numerous moments over the past four years when Lanchonete.org was the platform on which these other social, economic, political and cultural imaginaries became more familiar to me. And, this is what Lanchonete.org aims to do in the broadest sense. Therefore, it can use these aforementioned tenets of site-specificity as an ‘art historical barometer’, while also attempting to establish a question, such as ours on ‘A Right to the City’ and offer to get to know deeply the community

in which it seeks to learn and do things together. This perhaps assures ‘inseparability’ in a different way. For this, I’d like to talk about two topics together – intentions and research.

Entering into a relationship with a community is a high-responsibility proposition. This is likely no different for the fields of art, architecture, planning and so forth. If one wants to gain trust, then it stands to reason that there is responsibility embedded in the relationships that form over the course of a project. Lanchonete.org has attempted to constantly reconsider its intentions – holding them to some accountability – by setting an end-date for the project. It does not mean that we will stop being involved abruptly at the end of a project, but that by having a milestone, those involved may know when a project will be assessed, modified, transformed, taking on bigger risks, changing leadership, etc. This may differ between different types of participants – artists and non-artists – such as the lanchonete/bar’s long-term owner, Tarcísio, who is much more interested in milestones laid out by a continued lease and any rent increases he might expect.

We use the word ‘platform’ to describe the evolving activities and colliding networks that comprise Lanchonete.org. It’s a clever word, but what does platform mean? To date, we are 30+ people, including an architect, journalist, chef, designer, gardener, a publishing collective, a street artist and videomapper, but to name a few. Together



Figure 3. Member of Lanchonete.org, chef Abdoulaye Guibila, and artist in residency, Adler Murada, during event at the lanchonete. Source: Leandro Moraes/Lanchonete.org



Figure 4. Mr. Zé Nilson, resident of Santos Dumont Complex, showing a plate that he had just prepared for the event, along with Abdoulaye Guibilia, member of Lanchonete.org. Source: Leandro Moraes/Lanchonete.org

we are developing a methodology via our workshop series. For Lanchonete.org, the goal was to remain an open process for its five-year duration, inviting ideas and projects into the ‘mix’ until culminating in various forms of dialogue and feedback as well as documentation. Perhaps it is only by picking a stopping (or slowing down) point from which looking back at ‘what happened,’ the platform and its impact can be described. And, this is what we mean by artistic ‘research’.

Another question we might ask is whether arts-based community organizing only works when the participant is also a member of a social movement such as the housing movement that ‘claims’ a territory or built environment, or are there implicit strategies that come from class and culturally homogenous communities such as the one that has organically developed at Paim Street within the three buildings of Conjunto Santos Dumont?

Conjunto Santos Dumont—Rua Paim

The composition of Paim Street and the entire neighborhood of Bela Vista, which comprises the area from Bixiga to lower Augusta, have been subject to large modifications. They offer a view on the structural power of the real estate sector, and the drastic changes that it brings. These changes not only affect the aesthetics of the neighborhood, but they also highly impact the prices, and, naturally, the population that is able to remain in the location.

The Santos Dumont complex is, today, one of the last remnants of this previous architectonic (and demographic) composition of the street. A modernist complex from 1955, built by the architect Aron Kogan, the three buildings (Demoiselle, Caravelle, and 14 Bis, all named after the first three airplanes of the aeronaut and inventor Santos Dumont) carry a complex past, largely portraying a part of the history of the Northeastern migration to the city of São Paulo.

Our entry-point for working with the residents of Paim took place through Tarcísio, resident of the complex for more than 30 years. Originally from the state of Piauí and owner of the bar at the “Store 3,” which is located at 235 Rua Paim, in the gallery (the street in the complex that cuts across the buildings) of the tallest building, 14 Bis, on its ground floor, alongside several other bars and shops. As soon as we began our involvement with the space, we soon realized the strong influence of Northeastern culture in the location, due to most of the residents’ provenance. Among other things, our work in collaboration with Tarcísio naturally geared towards a highlighting of these cultures of the Northeast, which, due to a history of migration to the large Paulistana metropolis, are carried by a demographic that comprises a large portion of the workforce of São Paulo.

As such, the work of Lanchonete.org began to focus on supporting the existent cultures of the complex, as well as on better understanding the necessities and spacial limitations of the buildings after four years of making city-wide and in-



Figure 5. Tapioca printmaking workshop, conducted by Adler Murada and Sol de Noite (Ingrid Cuestas) at Tarcísio's lanchonete. Source: Leandro Moraes/Lanchonete.org

ternational programming on the Right to the City. Contemplating the idea of the right to housing in the center of São Paulo, the project developed, during the year of 2017, a series of events and debates that experimented new ways of using the existent space, in all of its constrictions. Conceived alongside the Philadelphia-based, Amber Art & Design collective, the “Neighborhood Museum” was developed in one of the apartments situated in the building Demoiselle of the complex. In it, weekly community lunches, workshops, roundtables, and other events, all served as moments to unite residents, curious visitors, and partners (activists, artists, architects, etc), fostering joint discussions about what it is that composes this right to the center of São Paulo.



Figure 8. Chat during “Monday lunch” at the Neighborhood Museum. Source: Leandro Moraes/Lanchonete.org

To commemorate the ending of Lanchonete.org as an artistic project in 2018, an open class on ‘local power’ in partnership with Escola da Cidade was offered in the Neighborhood Museum. The class became a place to elaborate on different ways that we could bring, from the inside out, the community dynamics that had been developed throughout the project’s entire process. This “turning outwards” could take form, for example, in the creation of a community garden. A community garden that will be used in the long-term as a common space on the ground floor of the complex, after the Museum and Lanchonete.org’s term of artistic research comes to an end. The understanding (of the city) by the platform, its five-year duration, as well as its practical, activity-based production approach – creativity workshops, nutrition and food programming, communication and alternative media focus – are all conscious gestures of exchange, openness and seriousness, and indeed borrow from various community organizing methodolo-



Figure 6. Groups of artists, activists, and residents, at the Neighborhood Museum. Source: Leandro Moraes/Lanchonete.org



Figure 7. The groups Loka de Efavirenz and Coletivo Amem during a roundtable discussion at the Neighborhood Museum. Source: Leandro Moraes/Lanchonete.org



Figure 9. Carla Perez on the wall of Tarcísio's lanchonete. Source: Leandro Moraes/Lanchonete.org

gies. There are other important questions as well that come from considering the different gendered experiences within a given context.

Carla Perez's photo, which now gathers dust alongside decade-old bottles of cachaca, and whose inkjet-printed colors begin to fade into a tone of cyan, still arouses a strange mix of terror and endearment. What child in Brazil did not grow up with these hypersexualized portrayals of women, transiting seamlessly between children's TV shows and Playboy magazine covers?

Carla's photo embellishes the backdrop of everyday scenes at Tarcísio's bar on Paim street. Three men drink their cold beer and discuss the current polemics in Brazilian politics: "with the new welfare reforms, it's only going to get worse for us." This quickly incites agreements from the other two, who then conclude that "they [politicians] are a bunch of thieves." As tired workers who have just finished their long day of service in restaurants all over town, they gather around a drink for roundabout conversations and jokes that ease the daily strain. They also give themselves the right to, just for a little while, simply sit in silence, together. It is, all the while, blatantly remarkable the fact that no women are present to engage in these informal discussions, or important moments of a shared quietness. Where are they?

Looking at the street from the large opening at the front of the bar/lunch counter, called lanchonete

in Portuguese, women of all ages pass back and forth, often with strollers and small children. That capitalism thrives on "invisible" workforces is, at this point, well understood, having permeated human relations for centuries. The view from inside of this male-dominated bar becomes a picture of this naturalized social structure. This invisible and most often female labor that cooks, cleans, and puts the kids to bed, so that these workers can themselves provide economic sustenance to the family, and spend their evenings drinking beer alongside one another. An anguishing reality that portrays consequences, it seems, of a mixture of real practical necessities and stubborn sexist constructs.

As part of our series of Encontros na Paim – curated encounters in which we experiment with different forms of interactions with and dialogues at the lanchonete, we invited Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti to chat with us about her research on the decolonization of linguistics and pedagogy. Andreotti proposed that instead of attempting to represent existences that have been systematically erased from a historical narrative, or to render present that which is invisible, these existences should, rather, be made "visibly absent."

When sitting at that countertop, recognizing this invisibility is immediate, and part of a history of normalized practices that represent a much larger structural condition. A condition delineated by a dependency on an under- or unpaid workforce, that continuously carries a burden that Brazil's

political agenda, generally, refuses to give the importance it requires. The population finds itself locked into cycles of labor that replicate exploitative economic systems internally in order to sustain itself, as is often the case in how domestic labor comes to be assimilated. Of course, this occurs alongside an unnecessarily sexist division of labor between genders.

And then there is the cake. Asides from coffee and drinks, there is a single other classic item that Tarcísio sells at his shop, a hit with faithful clients who chow it down with some coffee quickly on their way to work everyday, in the early hours of the morning. The story that the cake carries is entangled in the discussion of where the female presence lies in the bar, when it seems so extinct-Tarcísio's wife, Mundinha, has been preparing this cake for years, and today her two sons often step in and take care of the morning baking when Mundinha is busy with other occupations, such as caring for her granddaughter.

As a matter of fact, Mundinha, her daughter-in-law Larissa – a recently graduated architect – who has been a part of Lanchonete.org's Neighborhood Museum project., and her granddaughter, Alice, are probably the most present women in the bar. They often stop by to chat with Tarcísio, to drop things off, and to just generally use the space as an extension of the family's household. Their long-time friend and neighbor, who is almost a family member, Maria, also appears quite

often in the bar, and pulls us over into another personal narrative.

Maria and the Right to the Center

Maria do Carmo came to São Paulo when she was eleven years old. Originally from the state of Piauí, she came to help take care of her sister's children, and ended up staying for good.

For over 30 years, Maria has lived in the Bela Vista neighborhood, in the center of São Paulo. Displaced by rising rent, she has moved from one building to another around this area of São Paulo. Her migratory pattern embodies the struggle many low-income families face to remain living in a familiar neighborhood. As prices continue to rise, it becomes increasingly more difficult for these populations to remain living in the center of the city, close to their workplaces and amenities.

Since Maria first arrived in São Paulo she has worked as a hostess in an Italian restaurant, walking distance from her current apartment. Having a three-hour mid-day break between shifts, this proximity allows Maria to return home to rest before her late night shift. She explains that she tried living away from the center for two years, when prices were too high and she could not find affordable housing nearby. Maria would spend over four hours commuting to work everyday, not to mention the three hour break in the middle of the day during which she could no longer return

home. A total of over seven extra hours with no compensation. The distance quickly proved to be too difficult to endure.

Given Bela Vista's rising real estate prices, Maria worries she will have to move out once again. Currently she houses her daughter, a pharmacy student, and her nephew who is unemployed. Maria is a relentless caretaker, not only helping to raise several children besides her own, but also continually taking in individuals who are in need of extra help due to financial, health, and/or psychological difficulties. She also keeps the elderly residents of the building company, chatting with them and doing arts and crafts together. Sewing and painting, hobbies that Maria says she would pursue further had she had more free time.

As evidenced by Maria's and countless other similar stories, the current system of hourly remuneration cannot fully compensate the entirety of work that individuals are actually doing. Be it the labor of caring for family or of time spent on long commutes, these overlooked hours are significant. It is impossible to discuss economic development without questioning what is not being factored into remuneration, posing severe limitations on individuals' capacity to be resilient in the face of changing demographics. Maria's salary has remained the same for 30 years, and yet, the housing prices in her neighborhood are consistently rising. If time is to be commodified in how it can translate into financial compensation,

perhaps it is time for policies to address a larger dynamic that dictates the importance of living in the center of the city.

In her 2007 essay on Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces⁵, Chantal Mouffe asserts that:

Public spaces are always striated and hegemonically structured. A given hegemony results from a specific articulation of a diversity of spaces and this means that the hegemonic struggle also consist in the attempt to create a different form of articulation among public spaces.” (MOUFFE, 2007)

The Cultural Center at São João Occupation: A deeper look

The Occupation São João is a constituent member of the citywide housing movement, Frente de Luta por Moradia (FLM) to which Hotel Cambridge is also affiliated. Antonia Nascimento, its leader has been in the movement for 25 years. It is comprised of approximately 60 families and 170 residents overall. Most come from the same part of the east periphery, São Mateus (including some extended families), even if the community includes newer arrivals from other parts of the city and and country as well as a family from Colombia. The community led the process to landmark their building, the historic Hotel Columbia Palace, and is generally known for being politically active given its small size.

5. <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/mouffe.html>.

One example of an international artists working with the housing movement is a 2011 collaboration between Occupation São João and New York artists, SWOON and Paula Segal when they were in São Paulo for the De dentro para fora, De fora para dentro exhibition by MASP. SWOON engaged the São João community in her Ersilia Encampment⁶ underneath the museum, and Paula got to know the occupation where SWOON later provided the murals that now accentuate its renovated, first floor cultural center. And, during the 2013 São Paulo Architecture Biennial, Lanchonete.org and the Centro Cultural São João produced a project together in their courtyard with artist, Thiago Gonçalves called 'Acarajé + Gravura'. Using food and entertainment, the one-day event was merely a gesture to invite the public to visit the occupation, something that is rare outside of architecture, urban planning, artist and activist circles.

In September of 2014, Jakub Szczesny (Poland) was the first Lanchonete.org artist resident to live in the Ocupação São João. After two weeks of daily contact with the families and the collective tasks of the occupation, he staged a flag-making workshop, produced by Lanchonete.org that focused on the histories of families living in the occupation. The flags were eventually made (mostly by the youth during a Sunday sewing session) and eventually hung on the outside of the old Hotel Columbia Palace as a "coat of arms" installation. Lanchonete.org makers Raphael Daibert

and Lorena Vicini presented the concept behind the flag-making workshop at São João during a Cities as Community Spaces⁷, a conference in Valletta, Malta in November 2016. In their presentation, Developing identities to improve collectivity⁸ they offer that:

Given the way the Brazilian mass media criminalizes the city's many occupations, the act of raising the flags from the front of the Ocupação São João has its own symbolic importance. It goes beyond the exhibition of an artwork, demonstrating to passersby that the space is occupied by people and families, all with their own singular complexities. (DAIBERT; VICINI, 2016)

This de facto criminalization dealt by the media is a common experience shared by other disaffected communities such as refugees and immigrants, and thus a source of the solidarity we see between the housing and immigrant movements and exemplified in the relationship between Hotel Cambridge and Grupo de Refugiados e Imigrantes Sem-Teto (GRIST) and framed in a May 2015 statement from the GRIST open forum at Hotel Cambridge entitled, Morar no Refúgio.

In September 2015, Jakub returned to work with at the occupation with a gardening organization, Cidades Sem Fome⁹ based in the east periphery near São Mateus (where many of the occupiers came from before occupying the Hotel Columbia Palace in 2011) on a project¹⁰ to build a garden at the oc-

5.<http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/mouffe.html>

6.<http://caledoniacurry.com/ersilia.php>

7.<http://conference.valletta2018.org/speakers/lorena-vicini-raphael-daibert>

8.http://lanchonete.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/developingidentities_presentation.pdf

9.<https://cidadessemfome.org/en/>

10.<http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2015/10/15/immersed-context-jakub-szczesny>

cupation and to offer a four-day workshop on gardening for the members of the housing movement more broadly and the general public in so doing. The garden workshop and resulting ‘guide’¹¹ were supported by Casa das Caldeiras and the Goethe Institute, and it was the first time that a foreign government’s cultural organization had supported any programming within the occupation.

In 2015 Pepe Dayaw (Philippines) was the second international artist to stay at Occupation São João through its cultural center’s collaboration with Lanchonete.org, and in 2016, Edgar Calel (Guatemala) was the third. On all three occasions, the artists collaborated with Nazaré Brasil who manages the occupation’s cultural center and their activities were incorporated into its monthly, thematic cultural evening, Café Imaginário¹².

Conclusion

Thus far, we acknowledge a distinction between international and local artists, as well as one between those local artists observing an occupation or movement context for research purposes and those living within it by dint of economic necessity. Professor Rolnik offered some more examples she witnessed during the Parque Augusta campaign that relate her ‘cultural agent’ observation to urban gardening initiatives, greenspace networks, and anti-gentrification actors, as well as within labor-based cooperatives such as COOPAMARE, a collective of cardboard pickers and

recycling families situated under a viaduct in the neighborhood of Pinheiros. In 2016, Ms. Rolnik would participate in a speaker series at the Hotel Cambridge Residency intervention by artists Icaro Lira, Juliana Caffé et al; Escola da Cidade professor and HABITACIDADE working group member, Carla Caffé would spearhead a gardening design charrette and installation also at Cambridge; and Lanchonete.org would produce a project by two local artists conducting a six-week series of workshops on photography, social media and self-empowerment with COOPAMARE through its Zona da Mata garden programme¹³ at the neighboring Goethe Institute in the same year. The Hotel Cambridge Residency intervention also included dialogue-based projects with members of both .Aurora¹⁴ and O grupo inteiro¹⁵, artist collectives based nearby in the city center, as well as Dulcineia Catadores¹⁶, an artistic offshoot named after a beloved member of COOPAMARE.

The complexity and overlapping nature of these cultural spaces, movements and agents in the center of São Paulo—meeting on the ‘bridge’ that Nazaré evokes in her strategy—is paralleled by one’s inability to capture all the relevant actors and influences in one text. In trying to do so, one must include art historical and site-specific references such as Nelson Brissac Peixoto’s arte/cidade¹⁷, the former Coletivo Comboio space at Prestes Maia Occupation, the artist Mundano, and Julia Masagão’s 2008 thesis research for Escola da Cidade, Entre, living in the Conjunto

11. http://pontoaurora.com/download/HORTAS_LIVRES_A4.pdf

12. <https://www.facebook.com/Ocupação-São-João-MSTRU-490900594319238/>

13. <http://www.zdm2016.lanchonete.org>

14. <http://www.pontoaurora.com>

15. <http://www.ogrupointeiro.net>

16. <http://www.dulcineiacatadora.com.br>

17. <http://www.artecidade.org.br>

Santos Dumont on Rua Paim years before Lanchonete.org worked there. As well as the film screenings atop Hotel Cambridge Occupation and Arnaldo de Melo developing a temporary cultural space on the top floor of Marconi Occupation in 2011-2012 during his doctoral research at FAU-USP, and Leandro Viana's portrait series with the families of Occupation São João¹⁸, later exhibited in its cultural center.

We must consider collectives such as BaixoCentro, Ocupecidade¹⁹, and Terreyro Coreográfico²⁰, an artistic collective emerging from their actions during the 2013 Architecture Biennial, focuses on access to space and waterways through a cultural programme under and around a viaduct in the neighborhood of Bixiga facing Teatro Oficina. Terreyro Coreográfico is then implicated in a decades-long struggle over public space led by Oficina's artistic director extraordinaire, Ze Celso. Not only considering, work focused on the city's center, it is important to include the work of groups from other parts of the city and its so-called 'periphery', such as Coletivo Coletores, an urban art collective, making and using different different forms of engagement and action, ranging from interactive and digital art (video mapping), hip hop production, street art, video, built and mobile environments, counter mapping and neighborhood walks based in the neighborhood of São Mateus, a part of São Mateus em Movimento, in the city's East Zone. Coletivo Coletores has worked all over the city.

In all the aforementioned examples there is a blur between 'activist' topics (e.g. gardening, water, permaculture, public space, housing and immigrant rights) and collective forms that are historically present amidst the struggles of both social and artistic movements alike. And while the art market and its institutions have a healthy appetite for both the physical and process byproducts of urban relational aesthetics, there are normally multiple intentions and influences embedded in any such projects. Mouffe (2007) stresses that she does "not see the relation between art and politics in terms of two separately constituted fields," while relegating the artistic intervention to a microcosm of the broader social context it either affirms or resists:

From the point of view of the theory of hegemony, artistic practices play a role in the constitution and maintenance of a given symbolic order or in its challenging and this is why they necessarily have a political dimension. The political, for its part, concerns the symbolic ordering of social relations, what Claude Lefort calls 'the mise en scene', 'the mise en forme' of human coexistence and this is where lies its aesthetic dimension. (MOUFFE, 2007)

In a 2004 interview with Multitudes, André Gorz proactively suggests that a widening of the field of art is needed "by intervening directly in a multiplicity of social spaces in order to oppose the program of total social mobilization of capitalism," and offers that "a front of total resistance to

18.<http://www.leandroviana.com/ocupacao/>

19.<http://popupcity.net/brazilian-situationism/>

20.https://www.facebook.com/pg/terreyrocoreografico/events/?ref=page_internal

this power is made possible” by the production of subjectivity to capital and that:

It necessarily overflows the terrain of production of knowledge towards new practices of living, consuming and collective appropriation of common spaces and everyday culture.

If what Gorz is alluding to is the connective intuition, empathy and resulting solidarity of those fluctuating masses somewhere on the underside of capitalism, then David Harvey (2005) explains the conditions under which this solidarity turns to resistance in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*:

It is precisely in such a context of diminished personal resources derived from the job market that the neoliberal determination to transfer all responsibility for well-being back to the individual has doubly deleterious effects. As the state withdraws from welfare provision and diminishes its role in arenas such as health care, public education, and social services, which were once so fundamental to embedded liberalism, it leaves larger and larger segments of the population exposed to impoverishment. ...Behind these major shifts in social policy lie important structural changes in the nature of governance. Given the neoliberal suspicion of democracy, a way has to be found to integrate state decision-making into the dynamics of capital accumulation [in order to form, restore, sustain] the networks of class power. (HARVEY, 2005, 76)

In *Times of Interregnum*, Zygmunt Bauman (2012, *Ethics & Global Politics*), asserts that “Finding an exit from the state of interregnum and chronic as well as unredeemable uncertainty would require the restoration of the commensurability of power and politics.” (BAUMAN, 2012, 52)

The Modernist ‘Treme Treme’ (as the Conjunto Santos Dumont is pejoratively called) in which the lanchonete is located is the lone hold-out reflecting the previous economy of the neighborhood on a small, yet very connected, street in the Center; there are seven new high-rise, luxury apartment buildings going up (or already up) on the street; the cumulative ‘purchasing power’ of the streets’ inhabitants is changing quickly and drastically. Doria’s *Cidade Limpa* campaign—and banning of forms of street art—has inspired a citywide surge of *Pichação* ‘writing’, São Paulo’s homegrown visual language of dissent²¹.

There is reason for caution when asking if art can easily transcend the neoliberal urban set-up, and the class-based struggles that are implicit therein. We must question the impact of mainstream cultural production and usage, which can be effectuated by longer hours on the *Minhocão*, urban garden hype, and more bike lanes and accessibility in the Center (under the previous mayor, Haddad) and even the role of the street party scene as discussed in this crassly named article, *Reclaiming the Jungle*²². We must consider these implicit and explicit power differentials, aspiring for solidar-

21. <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/jan/06/pixacao-the-story-behind-sao-paulos-angry-alternative-to-graffiti>

22. <http://www.brasilwire.com/reclaiming-the-jungle/>

ity and trust, when working with our diverse urban neighbors to insure that something mutually meaningful be shared in the process.

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