

Public Utility. The process structured by the São Paulo Architecture Biennial: a platform of investigation and the articulation of a constellation of actions in the territory

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Abstract⁵

In this paper we present the construction process of the 11th edition of the São Paulo Architecture Biennial, carried out between 2016 and 2018, focusing on its structure as a research platform. Throughout the text we present a brief narrative about the process of construction of the Biennial, the definition of its format – which emphasizes the action in the territory – culminating in a critical review of the event in the current conjuncture of the field of architecture considering its social and political approach. With a focus placed in the geography of its own territory, the city of São Paulo, we present a constellation of actions, that is, a series of ‘places’ articulated by the event. Based on that experience we promoted a localized and situational reflexion, also globally articulated, introducing the challenges of its process and the outcomes of the event, including the register of the legacy proposed by that format.

Keywords: Architecture and Urban Planning. Urban Space. Collaborative Processes. Research Platform. Mapping.

Introduction

1. As presented by the Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar, non-institutionalized is the knowledge that is not supported by institutions such as governmental, corporate, academic, among others. Escobar devotes his studies at the University of South Carolina towards decolonized practices in economics, anthropology, and more recently in design; seeking to question the hegemonic developmental parameters. Cf. Escobar, 2016.

2. This is particularly true since the second half of the 20th century. One of the references to the discourse of self-construction derives from discussions developed by institutions such as the World Bank and UN-Habitat, which were implemented in the 1970s. Those premises can be identified

in a discourse drawn up at least two decades earlier by authors like Frank Lloyd Wright (USA), Constantino Doxiadis (Greece), Yona Friedman (Hungary), Aldo van Eyck (Netherlands), P & A. Smithson (England), Charles Correa (India), among others – authors who elaborated an understanding of the city from two scales: a structuring network and support for local action.

3 Here we refer to the Ethnographic Trips – Mission of Folklore Research – carried out by Mario de Andrade, from 1927 to 1929. Cf: Andrade, 1976.

4. Cf. Carvalho, 1930.

5.Cf. Magalhães, 1962.

6.Cf. Bo Bardi, 1950s.

7.Cf. Caldas, 1985.

8.Porto, 1973.

In the last decade, we have witnessed the construction and dissemination of a discourse that increasingly gains strength in the field of architecture. These are forms of urban coproduction – fostered by the development of practices based on partnerships and forms of collaboration – that seek to approximate with non-architects, recognizing non-institutionalized knowledge¹. These are materialized in contributions by numerous agents and suggest new ways of practicing architecture. As we will discuss later, even though this approach towards the coproduction of space is nothing new – including what we call ‘insurgent urbanism’ and ‘urban activism’ – its relevance lies in situating a recent phenomenon, thus supporting these practices of design, along with the physical transformation and the experience of space.

In this article, we will present the 11th São Paulo Architecture Biennial, carried out from 2016 to the beginning of 2018 as an opportunity to approach and discuss some of the issues related to the

context of transformation – according to the widespread understanding of ways to actively work and participate in urban space production .

Different from participatory models and forms of activism adopted in the international context², and in parallel to these, a local theoretical and practical referential has been developed in Brazil, supported by the observation of local issues (Mario de Andrade, 1920s³; Lina Bo Bardi, 1950s; Sérgio Ferro, 1982; Carlos Nelson Ferreira dos Santos, 1981; Milton Santos, 1977) and the development of a repertoire in response to specific demands imposed by the Brazilian reality, as presented in works shown at the 11th Biennial such as Flávio de Carvalho⁴, Aloisio Magalhães⁵, Lina Bo Bardi⁶, José Zanine Caldas⁷, Severiano Porto⁸ among others.

Based on these historical references, we suggest another temporal frame, which focuses on the present moment; as well as a geographical sco-

pe, which situates the Brazilian production and articulates a dialogue with the international praxis. It is important to acknowledge and give visibility to local actions promoted by non-technicians which are fundamental to understand the construction of the urban space of Brazilian cities. In addition, it is equally relevant for the construction of an architectural discourse to unveil architectural practices that deal explicitly with this urban condition, placing forms of space production that are essential to understand the logic of production and operation of space, as presented in the opening texts of the exhibition 11th Biennial:

There are many ways to inhabit the urban environment, which cross the imagination and the experiences of its diverse populations. The use of architectures, in their varied dimensions, forms and proposals, is part of the everyday life of those who live in cities, but there are few opportunities to talk about their adequacy to the needs of their residents and passers-by, as well as spaces serving to question existing structures and to propose new configurations, derived from the desires and intentions of their communities.

The 11th São Paulo Architecture Biennial, entitled *In Project*, proposes a public discussion about the paths of architecture and urbanism in contemporary metropolises, being outlined as a platform for collective city projects. The act of designing, fundamental to the practices of professionals in charge of proposing public and

private spaces, is put in question and, above all, presented as possible collaborative action. This encounter of knowledge collected in various geographical points of São Paulo, where the activities of this edition of the Biennial will take place, will form a body of proposals linked to the qualification, edition, uses, occupations and possible transformations of the city.⁹

Having mentioned that, in this paper we will present the construction process of the 11th edition of the São Paulo Architecture Biennial, focusing on its structure as a research platform interested in the investigation of the aforementioned points. Throughout the text we will present a brief narrative about the process of construction of the Biennial, the definition of its format, which emphasizes the action in the territory, culminating in a critical review of the event in the current conjuncture of the field of architecture considering its social and political approach. It is worth mentioning that the focus of the Architecture Biennial was placed in the geography of its own territory, the city of São Paulo and its Metropolitan Region, as the 'place' from which it promoted a reflection that is localized and situational, while being globally articulated.¹⁰

Through its Observatory¹¹, a large archive in process – originated in the studio of the 11th Biennial and complemented by four open calls – we have constructed an inventory of ways to represent, map, qualify, build, edit, use, collaborate and occupy the city. The Observatory served as a ba-

9. SESC São Paulo, opening text of the exhibition "Imaginary of the City", presented at Sesc Parque Dom Pedro II from October 2017 to February 2018.

10. Later, we will deepen a discussion about networks and places which is fundamental for the comprehension of this proposal, based on theoretical references such as Milton Santos, Gabriel Dupuy, Bruno Latour among others.

11. The idea of installing an Observatory as a research

platform is part of our interest in developing a gaze and listening to many practices raised, with the interest in situating local practices in order to present alternatives to the dominant discourse. In her article 'An Epistemology for the Next Revolution', the Panamanian philosopher Linda Alcoff (2011) argues "for the need for a propositional and reconstructive debate about truth as well as for a reconstructive discussion about how and by whom knowledge is produced." (p. 67)

sis for structuring the contents of the event, later presented in the format of discussions, meetings, tens of actions proposed throughout the city and archive exhibitions – including videographic records, photographic enlargements, map libraries, collections and a library.

The work was based on an investigation in which we identified a latent condition that permeates the work compiled: an apparent willingness to participate in the decision-making processes and the construction of the urban space. This condition was revealed in practices found between the years 2016 and 2017, focusing on the production of the last decade in São Paulo, Brazil and the World. This way, the selected works recognize forms of coproduction of the city in voices of different agents, including architects and non-architects¹², in a series of works that challenge the traditional limits placed on architecture, valuing forms of urban production that include practices of insurgent urbanisms and urban activism. As such, the compilation presented by the 11th Biennial sheds light on other possibilities for collaboration, pointing out relevant contents to a reflection on other possibilities of architecture action, based on issues related to the participation and the democratization of access to design as a tool for transforming the local scale.

Although the architectural discourses and the Architecture Biennial itself in Brazil have historically approached the approximation of the formal archi-

tecture with popular knowledge, especially from the perspective of architects¹³, we suggest here a complementary view that acknowledges both architectural practice and the practice performed by non-architects¹⁴. We seek to understand forms of collaboration and dissemination of knowledge in both directions, that is, not predominantly from a recognition and transformation set by architects on popular culture – used as a reference and developed in elitist architectures and constructions – but including forms of appropriation of high culture by city dwellers (non-architects).

Given the scarcity of resources made available through public calls and public policies to facilitate citizens carrying out actions in the public space – as pointed out by citizens who were already working on this front¹⁵ – we seek to invest material, financial, immaterial and environmental resources in actions with relevance to the city, with the goal to produce a legacy based on the products developed at the event. The construction of a network and of a legacy resulted from the articulation of actors and the current ways they employ to transform and improve living conditions in the built space.

This attitude proposed by the Biennial as an articulating and propositive event in the city, started from a debate explored by the philosopher of science Bruno Latour (2008). The author (2008) addresses the duality between ‘matters of fact’ and ‘matters of concern’. In his text ‘The Cautious

12 Cf. RUDOFISKY, 1964; BARDI, 1995; SANTOS, 2003; JACQUES, 2005; CAMPOS et al., 2005; JANSON; WOLFRUM, 2006; SENNETT, 2009; ROSA, 2012; 2015; FAUS, 2012.

13. a discussion supported by the “critical regionalism”. Cf. Montaner, 2007; Frampton, 1983.

14. The researcher Fernando Lara (2018) discusses the acknowledgement of the architecture production based

on the notions of High Culture – or, the set of cultural products not valued by society – and Low Culture – in the forms of popular culture with mass appeal.

15. In our conversations with collectives, held in July 2018, we were informed by some of them about the scarcity of resources available to carry out their activities, a condition that has become more pronounced in recent years.

Prometheus', Latour (2008) addresses architects and designers to provoke them to a change of focus on professional practices, which are often only interested in the outcome of the built environment and objects ready for rather than the daily demands, concerns and needs of citizens. Although we have embraced such an aspect, we will show how it is not yet possible to work only with 'matters of concern' without also considering 'matters of fact', especially since the nature of the event as an exhibition traditionally presents itself as a 'spectacle'.¹⁶

With the intention of reducing distances between spectacle and reality, we consider it relevant to mention that during the production of the curatorial texts that presented the 11th Biennial, we avoided the use of academic language, including footnotes and references in the text. This choice was guided by the intention of formulating accessible and comfortable readings to a public that is generally distanced from the discussions of architecture, too closed in their circuits of discussion, seeking to bring the questions proposed to an extended audience. In this way, this article gives us the opportunity to situate discourses and to support the proposal based on references from urban studies, architecture, anthropology, sociology, geography among other disciplines and knowledge, within an academic format, revealing discursive encounters that permeated our work and which form the fabric on which this Biennial was structured. From these premises, we bring a

brief narrative of the process of the Biennial, with the intention of situating the reader in the period of two years of development of the event.

Narrative

The 11th São Paulo Architecture Biennial began in 2016 at the Institute of Architects of Brazil, Department of São Paulo (IABsp). At the invitation of the director of the IABsp, we started with a small team of only three people. The work began with an investigation on discussions about the city, verified in news, events, activities, project readings and discussions that seemed latent at that moment. Challenging the Biennial as a platform for a lively and continuous reflection, in the two years that determine the event, we inaugurated the Biennial Studio, starting our activities through the observation and aiming at the construction of a project that was capable to facilitate and make visible a series of actions carried out in the city. This process inaugurated what we call a thematic cloud, compiled in the first half of 2016. The cloud became tangible through the use of a file format that provided a brief description of the mapped object, its location and year. It was the Biennial Observatory, an inventory operationalized throughout the two years of the event, continuously fed with practices developed in the last decade in São Paulo, Brazil and worldwide.¹⁷

At first, we sought to indicate thematic threads based on the reading of this 'cloud' and that, la-

16. The notion of spectacle referred to here defines it as an object of contemplation, distancing it from the possibilities of experience. Cf. Jacques, 2004.

17. Already in 2008 and 2009, Marcos L. Rosa, the content director of the 11th Biennial, worked with the mapping of community initiatives (Rosa, 2011) giving visibility to a network of actors

that developed activities related to the urban coproduction. From 2008 to 2013, that same mapping platform was expanded to other cities, including Mexico City, Istanbul, Cape Town, New Delhi and Rio de Janeiro. This and other experiences were relevant in the construction of the proposed cloud to the 11th Biennial in 2016.

ter, would guide the positioning adopted in the 11th edition of the event. We chose not to define and delimit rigid and segregating themes, organizing the materials gathered in a compilation that, although did not have a formal thematic categorization – that is, traditional lines of readings such as housing, transport, urban infrastructure –, allowed us to emphasize the a procedural aspect developed in practices and projects in the city, making it possible to construct an inclusive discourse on architecture, broadly understood from various forms of coproduction of space and from its urban experience.

Based on this initial investigation, our reading identified a scenario promoted by forms of urban coproduction, based on a strong engagement of several agents in the transformation of the urban space, which occurred through the extension to the access of what we call tools. The first evidences of the use of such tools were checked in innumerable guides and manuals shared virtually to encourage and facilitate hands-on action in the city, meetings that promoted debates and discussions on the urban space, mappings, photographic registers and different forms of graphic production that had the city spaces as its object.

It is relevant to point out that, in our investigation, we focused on the localized actions, responsible for the creation or transformation of specific urban situations and distributed throughout the city. This reading is supported by the understanding of

the theoretician Michel de Certeau about the term “tactical” – as a form of localized action, with an immediate objective, projected in the present and seeking punctual solutions – with the goal to subvert the logics of control and prescription that characterize the predominant form of operating in urban space, conferred to spaces by traditional urban planning practices.

Focusing on the city of São Paulo, the process of compiling practices carried out in the Observatory was accompanied by numerous meetings, conversations and encounters with local agents, potential partners, sponsors and supporters. The base was sewn to structure an event that did not prioritize only its expository character, but which proposed to develop the Architecture Biennial as a platform for discussion, with the ambition to contribute directly to the construction of a postulated legacy in the city. As we will detail later, this legacy would materialize both through the development of research in the Observatory and through developments of that research, materialized in micro actions distributed in the territory that would not only promote articulation between groups but would recognize, give visibility and facilitate actions of direct transformation of the urban space and of its experience. Thus, we proposed the construction of a discourse based on existing practices that sought to recognize and bring to the public narratives of the agents that transform space themselves, in the context of architecture and urbanism.

The construction of the event's expanded geography

The mapping of specific practices compiled in the Observatory revealed not only the possibility of performing actions in the city, but a cartography that pointed to the existence of a constellation of urban practices, actions and activities distributed ubiquitously throughout the metropolitan territory of São Paulo. The performance throughout the city could be visualized on the map, presenting a distributed network that was potentialized in the proposal of articulation of urban agents responsible for the coproduction of the city and the urban experience.

The construction of a rationale about the geography of these practices, which was an initial hypothesis, suggested ways for the development of the Biennial itself placed in the city. Decentralized and distributed, the 11th Biennial was made possible by the structuring of a network of cultural partners that includes promoters of culture in the city as well as the cultural production agents that work in urban space. The potency derived from local initiatives became evident, in terms of their capacity for transformation and edition of the collective space in the city, aligned with a questioning of public values in the urban experience.¹⁸

Nine months from the expected dates for the start of the public part of the event, including its expository component, the uncertainty about the possibility of its accomplishment as originally proposed posed the challenge of maintaining

its format, which demanded an event held over many months organized organically throughout the city, or to repurpose it in a format with an emphasis on exhibitions, geographically limited and in a shorter period of time.

The process, as it had been designed, was to launch four open calls¹⁹, from which we would select actions to be carried out throughout the city, as well as exhibition material for the proposed shows. We delayed the public launching of the open calls for many months due to the uncertainty of the event, until the feasibility of the Biennial was confirmed in an expanded process, as initially proposed. Through open calls, – despite the focus placed on the field of architecture in two of its calls – we called on any citizen to participate with the sharing of various knowledges applied in the construction of the city.

In parallel to the launch of the first calls for participation, we organized conversations in different parts of the territory – Sesc Campo Limpo, in the South Zone; Cultural Okupação Coragem, in the East Zone; and Culture House of Vila Guilherme, in the North Zone; Sesc Parque D. Pedro II, in the central region – with the purpose of listening to what people, activists, artists and builders had been developing and understanding their daily practices.

The purpose of these conversations – which summoned agents identified since the Observatory – was to approach practices carried out beyond

18. In 2013, we conducted a research in Rio de Janeiro on community initiatives aimed at transforming the spaces of the metropolis and qualifying daily life, seeking resilience. That research was conducted as the structured research platform for the Deutsche Bank Urban Age Award. Although it is the same research carried out five years earlier in São Paulo, in Rio de Janeiro the existence of more politically motivated groups – with a determined and confident position on the relevance of their methods and practices in the trans-

formation of urban quality of life, offered viable and tested alternatives to practices traditionally implemented in our cities –, better structured financially and better articulated with each other, mainly due to the development and access to social media.

19. By July 2017 we launched four international open calls: 'The imaginary of the city', 'Public Utility', 'Schools of Architecture' and 'Urban Architecture'. These calls created the opportunity for the public to participate with exhibition material or with proposed actions.

20. It is worth emphasizing that, while proposing another format to the event, the 11th Biennial moved the focus from its traditional exhibitions to give visibility and voice to tens of consolidated practices, presented in its own contexts. 21. Although many of the proponent groups that participated in the activities of the Biennial call themselves “peripheral”, in the discussion of urbanism made by the academy, the notion of ‘periphery’ and its binary understanding are questioned by VILLAÇA (1998), MARICATO), MEHROTRA (2008). Regarding the center periphery relationship, we recommend reading Volume 32 of the magazine *Centers Adrift*, published in 2012. 22. Quote by a participant in the first conversation we made as part of the open calls of the Biennial at Sesc Campo Limpo in August 2017. 23. Although we have recently witnessed an exponential increase in visibility of practices performed outside the city centers, presented by its own agents, it is important to note that these manifestations were already

present and were studied by researchers in the field of architecture and urban studies more than half a century ago. Carlos Nelson dos Santos worked on favela urbanization projects in a collaborative way, in which residents actively participated in the construction of their dwellings and transformation of public space. Cf. Nelson, 1981. 24. Since the nineteen seventies, geography situates a bipolar opposition of the net and the self, arguing for more horizontal ways of organization - the network-like organizations - suggesting a transformation on the ways social organization is carried out (CASTELLS;). The ‘self’ generated from this understanding shares responsibility and takes proposing roles in creating a cultural landscape, based on the assumption that space itself is social (SANTOS; 1977). In the nineties, the same field of study focused in the urban aspect of networks, discussing other planning instruments for the network city (DUPUY; 1987). That analysis is compromised with an operational level of networks.

the expanded center of the city, of fundamental importance to understand the social construction of urban space within the proposed proposal.²⁰ An unusual architecture dialog was sought with non-architects, relevant to illuminate other possible means of actuation of the architecture in face of real demands.

To talk about the peripheral (periférico, in portuguese) engagement – as it is called by the collectives of the geographical edge themselves – must include the acknowledgement of other centers.²¹ The understanding that those many centers are determined in relation to the individual experiences – including practices that offer solutions to local problems based on the opportunities found and available resources – questions a common reading based on the center-periphery dichotomy, a question posed more than once by the agents themselves in our conversations, perfectly illustrated in the phrase “My center is here, where I live and where I am.”²² Historically described by the hegemonic literature in homogenized form, the questioning of that view has recently gained visibility²³ from peripheral representations and activist movements, thus introducing the periphery not as a single space, but as a series of constructions based on expressions and plural socio-cultural identities.

In this process, we sought to understand what they were doing, what practices they developed, in order to approximate the architecture discour-

se and that of the practices developed by non-architects and to recognize forms of design action developed by architects with the objective of responding to latent demands, often not solved by the most traditional and predominant – the same ‘matters of concern’ earlier situated in Latour’s (2008) reading.

Format

Based on these premises, the curatorial project – entitled “In Project” – proposes to discuss the place of architecture and the place of the Architecture Biennial. Thus, we have proposed the Biennial as a space for complementary exchanges that gives rise to places of speech – that means, to recognize the place from which one is speaking – by different actors equally relevant in the social production of space²⁴, distributed throughout the city, based on projects presented by the proponents.

These projects, or actions articulated with the exhibition, took place in a network of official spaces, which received a fixed schedule; in partner spaces that received punctual activities; and satellite modules, designed to articulate and give visibility to the actions of the Biennial, atomized by the city, guaranteeing support for interaction, conviviality and dialogue.

We sought for a format capable of rendering legibility to processes that already occurred in the

city, presented in loco and that require a format different from that of a single exhibition. This format was presented as a research and exchange process, fostered by a continuous program of actions throughout the city and orchestrated to allow the effective experience of means of space production. With this objective, the 11th Biennial was constituted as a constellation of articulated situations that privileged the experience, promoted by its activities, offering the public the effective experience and contact with a series of transforming acts in the city, avoiding spectacularization or fetishization of situations – as explained by Paola Berestein Jacques (2004) – and presenting them ‘as found’ (as defined in 1991 by Peter and Allison Smithson²⁵), or ‘in the realm of reality’, as described by Alcoff (2011). As those are existing practices in the territory and not practices commissioned by the Biennial, this constellation follows in a continuous and unfinished process of exchange²⁶ of knowledge and experiences in the city.

The design of the presence of the Biennial of Architecture in the territory took into account the premises designed for the event as presented previously. The 11th Biennial was structured through the articulation of a series of actions organized in its territory, its documentation and articulation in a common project, accompanied by an exhibition.

The Satellites of the Biennial are modules on wheels that have moved among four Sesc units.

They are small modules of 3 x 2 meters, which allowed the Biennial to travel around the city, offering support for some activities and as engines of interaction, socializing and dialogue. The satellites articulate and give visibility to the actions of the Biennial atomized in the city, including the environments of the Sesc. Each module presented works selected by the Biennial, organized the documentation of the activities proposed in the surroundings of SESC and shared information that occurred in other spaces of the Biennial.

As satellite structures that circulate around the city, they aim to reach other territories, emphasize various speeches and voices, and broaden access to the content produced by the event. This reasoning of the ubiquity of the exhibition and, consequently, of the information and articulations generated by the event, runs through the entire discourse of the 11th Biennial of Architecture that believes in the democratization of knowledge.

In addition to the Satellites, four exhibitions – presented in various archive formats – showcased the Biennial process, aligned with their calls, and their legacy to the city. These were: ‘The Imaginary of the City’, in the Sesc Parque Dom Pedro II; ‘Public Utility’ at Vila Itororó Canteiro Aberto; ‘Biblioteca da Bienal’, at the Mário de Andrade Library; besides ‘Devires do Brasil’ and ‘Biennial Observatory’, in Praça das Artes. Throughout the next topic we will detail the format of each part that composes the larger structure of the Biennial.

25. SMITHSON, P and A. The ‘As Found’ and the ‘found’, in: ROBBINS, D. (ed.). *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990. Pp. 201-202.
26. Cf. GATT; INGOLD, 2013. The authors argue for research

practices that generate correspondence, so that the action remains ‘alive’ even after the process of which it is part is completed. In this case, the articulated network of activities to which the Biennial gave visibility.

Characterization of the proposal

'In project' insinuates an attentive gaze on the processes of research, elaboration and construction of the cities. It refers to urban space as a construction in progress and in constant transformation. Choosing not to choose predetermined themes, we started the course of this edition with the construction of a research and mapping platform, which we call the Biennial Observatory, where we documented coproduction of urban space and the tools used in this realization. We identified in the territory actions responsible for transforming the urban experience, which guided the development of the Biennial research in its two axes: The Imaginary of the City and Public Utility.

The Imaginary of the City

The Imaginary of the City was structured from the observation of everyday experiences, spatial perceptions and urban situations that give other meanings to the urban space, questioning how to engage citizens in a process of constructing an urban imaginary, necessarily inclusive and collaborative.

With the objective of reflecting on these issues and giving visibility to the spatial perceptions, punctual actions, experiences, situations and urban imaginaries produced daily by different agents in the city of São Paulo, we made a call to engage and give voice to those who recognize urban realities of their environment and compo-

se, with these, records of different formats, prescribing and enhancing spaces of the city – or as recorded in the curatorial text of the exhibition Imaginary City (Rosa, 2018):

The imaginary can refer to something that is not real, to what is fictitious or created by the imagination. The urban imaginary, however, more than anything that could only exist in the imagination, beyond any collection of images, refers to the set of records of moments, of lived contents. As such, they offer us different perspectives, transform perceptions, reveal urban experiences, ways of experiencing the same city, and inspire reflections about life in the city and in the community. The urban imaginary materializes from the meeting of a constellation of actions, because it is understood that space only becomes a 'place' [AUGÈ 1992] from its performative component: it is the experience and the experience of a space that build the perception of it. [ALBAN, WOLFRUM 2006]²⁷

These are non-technical gazes of the city that can materialize in records of routes, practices of listening, observation, collaboration, denunciation, production of social cartography, experimental actions, corpographies, photographs, videos, among others. Once related, these works reveal different perspectives on the projected territory, in diverse forms of reading and expression.

Public Utility

27. Cf. Catalogue of the 11th São Paulo Architecture Biennial, in Rosa 2018.

The interest in the imaginary of the city, which showcased forms of urban coproduction, frequently developed by non-architects, was added by the questioning of the public utility of architecture. In the contemporary practice of design, we may find architectures that aim at transforming, adapting and qualifying the urban space to the everyday uses, along with countless other agents involved in the city's coproduction. In articulation with other disciplines, knowledge and experiences in alignment, the opportunities for the architect's action are extended, particularly in response to urgent demands.

From these two thematic threads, we focused the discussion on ways to edit and transform the city, through the realization of the project in its innumerable fronts of action and considering different forms of collaboration:

It seeks to deal explicitly with a framework of instruments and tools related to listening, observation, experience, editing, use, occupation and urban design, among many others. They provide practices in the form of test-construction, prototyping, participatory processes, manual, manifesto, among others, whose content is often presented in ways that facilitate sharing, or whose content proposes to rethink modes of action that may eventually inform new urban instruments of regulation and design, drafts of law, tools and models of observation, cartogra-

phy and mapping, experimental or alternative models of management, among others.²⁸

We understand the importance to reposition the place of speech and action of the architect in face of collectivity and to foster collective awareness based on the action; to value the local references of the country's architecture, arts, and historical and popular culture; to foster a design practice that brings the design closer to the place it proposes; to give visibility to the work of groups dealing with issues related to human rights and their relationship with urban space; to defend the equitable appreciation of different knowledge. In addition, it seemed fundamental to democratize access to architectural knowledge and to broaden the architect's activities through collaboration with other disciplines and knowledge.

The Observatory of the Biennial

The Observatory of the 11th Biennial was developed as a large archive in process, which originated in the Biennial Studio and which objective was to map, articulate, evidence and democratize forms of action, construction and registration of the city, reflecting on the public utility of the practice of architecture.

The investigated content was systematized in an archive – formatted in standard files, proposing the compilation and organization of themes present in latent urban discussions recognized in São

28. Cf. Catalogue of the 11th São Paulo Architecture Biennial, in Rosa 2018.

Paulo, Brazil and in the world. We have gathered tools used for the recognition, reading and listening of situations, supports that aim at the spatial transformation, legal parameters and public policies that can support small initiatives, devices that facilitate collective organization, alternative forms of financing, manuals and scripts, open platforms, digital fabrications, and other means of editing and intervening directly in the city.

Based on these contents, the Observatory results in a kind of glossary, shared with the public in an open and free way as one of the legacies left by the 11th Biennial, by contributing to the contemporary production of space, its articulation, social and cultural belonging, collectivizing access and the debate on the construction of the city and its ongoing process of transformation, as argued in the text of the Biennial Team²⁹ (2017) that presents the exhibition:

The work carried out at the Observatory showed us that the search for citizen participation in direct decisions and actions in the city has gained greater visibility and presence, especially with social networks and, along with these, the sharing of diverse urban imaginaries. These, in turn, pointed to a more inclusive construction of the city, revealing a framework of practices and approaches that are diverse and complementary to traditional urban projects and plans.

The Observatory recognizes specific actions that strategically point to possibilities of effec-

tive transformation of the contemporary metropolis. Once shared with the public, they elucidate other ways for the practice of architecture, aiming the propagation of this knowledge. Through this trajectory, the Observatory is structured as a legacy of the Biennial by contributing to contemporary production, its articulation and social and cultural belonging, collectively accessing and debating the construction of the city and its continuous process of transformation.

Big Urban Walk through São Paulo

The 11th Biennial presented a great walk through the geographical border of the city that marked its official opening, as well as symbolized the geographic expansion of the event. The initiative proposes to incorporate a series of practices carried out by groups throughout the city, which discuss a multiplicity of ways of making, editing and transforming space and urban experience, in an effort to give voice to groups that have been historically excluded, especially in what concerns their experiences in the coproduction of the urban, which is often under recognized despite their prominence and importance in the construction of the urban landscape. The walk facilitated meetings with architectures, with local agents and with places. According to Kohler, “the walk offers an experience of sewing and articulation of diverse agents and practices in the territory. As a political practice, the walk unveils the multiplicity

29. Team of the 11th São Paulo Architecture Biennial, 14 December 2017.

and power of socio-cultural production linked to the territory traveled” (Baratto, Sept. 14, 2017)

German architect Martin Kohler and cultural producer Tiago Kinzári traveled with local agents and the general public for a 120-kilometer walk through the city for 7 days. The course was guided by predefined points (units of SESC and community initiatives), in which there were activities of debate and reflection around the theme of cultural production and forms of collective construction of the city. The trajectory of the walk provided for the future itinerary of the Biennial Satellite which toured Sesc units, articulated to a program of actions in spaces throughout the city.

The walk produced graphic and video content presented on satellites during the event. Produced by Martin Kohler and the Biennial team, the photographic essay “Arquitetura Paulista” (Paulista Architecture) results from that journey and alludes to the Escola Paulista, as the architectural production of a group of architects from São Paulo became known internationally. The essay provokes reflection on other imagery of popular architectures found in São Paulo:

These are architectures of different natures: self-built, buildings with overlapping interventions, appropriations of buildings for artistic and protest demonstrations, and architectures of various morphologies throughout the city. The essay presents architectures produced in a ter-

ritory built with little participation of architects, revealing latent urban codesign processes in the metropolis of São Paulo.

The 11th Biennial: a constellation of actions

The Biennial hosted more than 80 activities, from which 53 actions carried out in the City of São Paulo by diverse proponents, from September 2017 to February 2018. Each of these actions spatialize at the local scale questions on the ways of co-producing the urban, thus focusing on the construction of the “place”.³⁰ In many of these moments, the actions consisted of an opportunity of exchange between the architect and other space agents, as we described in the article published for the online magazine Archdaily³¹:

The more than 50 local actions participating in these Biennial point to opportunities that appreciate and learn from other knowledge, with other disciplines, present and applied daily in the construction of cities. A common point valued in this project is the place from which one speaks, valuing those who are responsible for diverse initiatives in the construction of cities, as well as agents involved in cultural production, who are responsible for the transformation in urban uses and experience. In many cases, the architect is not the protagonist of the action, nor is the one who brings solutions beforehand. It is a careful gaze that values reading, listening, mapping, narratives, as well as more proposi-

30. Cf. Augé, 1992.

31. Team ArchDaily Brasil, Rosa, 2018.

tional forms of action that involve the effective construction of things and places. It is also worth mentioning that, in the latter case, there are different levels of collaboration and participation (in terms of their intensity and format) that open up for us to think of many possibilities for the architect to work together in a practical and objective way, starting from practices rather than a utopian project.

The cartography of the 11th Biennial is a product that is transversal to all others formatted by the event, including the geolocation of practices carried out, the experience of multiplicity unveiled by the Big Urban Walk through São Paulo, the results of the open calls, the experience facilitated by the Satellites and the archive-format exhibitions, as well as exhibitions in partner spaces.

This cartography reveals the articulation and gives visibility to the network of actors in the territory of the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo, thus, presenting the geography of the 11th São Paulo Architecture Biennial. The actions are summed up in a 'constellation of situations', moments of urban co-creation articulated in a network, throughout the city.

Beyond characterizing an ephemeral event, articulating a discussion based on this platform led us to systematize the knowledge edited in the Observatory in supports capable of rehearsing the result of this process as a legacy in two formats: an inven-

tory of contemporary forms of architecture – and an articulated network of actions that, articulated by the Biennial, promotes material and immaterial results in space and in its territory.

Legacy

The rationale behind the 11th Biennial's proposal has been to ensure that the resources used are not restricted to an exhibition, but are of public utility, also fulfilling a social function. To this end, the Biennial Studio worked to ensure that the content produced was systematized and published in an open and free format. In addition, it was determined that the resources available to carry out actions during the event would be granted primarily to groups located at the margin of resources and decision-making bodies, often located outside the central areas of the city, where we observe this demand. With this, it is also intended to enhance the participation of actors who traditionally are not recognized as co-producers of the city, inviting them to contribute to the debate about the experience of urban space.

The Legacy of the 11th Biennial is also the basis for our questioning about the place of an architecture biennale: we recognize the historic vocation of this event in São Paulo as a space to talk about the challenges posed by its territory, within a national and international context. In addition, as a platform, it suggests a permanent space for reflection, a place from which we can talk about

our ways of practicing architecture and ways of living in our cities.

In alignment with the developed process, its Catalog – and its documentation – was conceived as a document in process, under construction, developed over time from the introduction of several graphic pieces that added up to a single piece. The rationale behind this graphic design, both in the documentation and in the exhibition formats, aligns with the curatorial proposal of the event: it is supported in media that function as parts – standard documents – within a system applied to all graphic pieces and signaling, allowing the whole to be constructed from the sum of the parts, based on the logic of the object, articulated, scaled and replicated. These formats were translated into the Biennial Observatory and in the exhibitions, presented in the research files in various formats.³²

Critical review and reflections

Based on the presented content about the 11th São Paulo Architecture Biennial we consider relevant bringing a few reflections and critical reviews that were listed before and after the event. From the development of the Biennial it was possible to notice how the progress of a process, as mentioned before, is complex and detached from other evoked models for Architecture Biennials, which usually prioritizes their spectacle in an exhibition format instead of the experience in the city, the

exchange processes among social actors and the learning legacy.

In this context it is worth emphasizing the importance of the X Biennial, accomplished in 2013 as an event that transformed the way in which the exhibition had been presented, by means of the discussion and proposed format. That edition ruptured with the traditional exhibition hosted at Ibirapuera Park, closed and limited to a specific public, taking it to the axis of public transportation configured by Metrô de São Paulo.

This opening allowed that the 11th Biennial departed from another baseline. We started this edition thinking that the Biennial, as a platform, could offer an opportunity to function as a permanent space of reflection and criticism of the architecture practice. Therefore, we tried to value the production of the Architecture Biennials prior to ours, in addition to suggest to deal with other themes, no doubt complementary to them, using the opportunity to focus on practices carried out by architects and non-architects, with a view to organizing in the territory still little recognized by the field, especially by revealing tools that promote the democratization of access to design, with a view to transforming and qualifying the urban environment to many hands.

Throughout its research process, the path that defined its location in the territory was natural and would structure in an incremental way a network of

32. The Graphic Studio of the Biennial was coordinated by the architect Julia Masagão, the Editorial Nucleus by the architect Joana Barossi in collaboration with Romullo Baratto and the Expography Nucleus by the architect Helena Cavalheiro. The photos of the process were carried out mainly by Fotocoletivo Dicampana, commissioned to carry out the documentation of the activities.

actors at the metropolitan space, suggesting a geography proper to the event. The act of atomizing the event, however, brought with it a series of difficulties in the creation of often inedit bonds, engagement, above all in the construction of a negotiated relationship capable of contemplating reciprocity and mutual relevance in the proposed actions.

The intention to break with the traditional model of the exhibition offered the opportunity to reach an enlarged and diversified public that, to a large extent, was unaware of the very event and the role of an Architecture Biennial. This was one of the greatest challenges posed by the edition, calling a conversation between those who live in the city and not centered on those who traditionally design it.

The articulation with the participants and constructors active in the city occurred fluently, since the conversations carried out in the territory and the open calls facilitated the reach of the event to numerous actors and groups. Although the event did not alone allow the construction of a long and mature bond with activists, collectives, organizations and institutes, the formation of a network articulated throughout the city did occur, and it would then lead to a direct impact on the territory through the proposed actions and urban meetings. The exchanges with the participants showed us the relevance in democratizing the dialogue as well as the conflicts, recognizing the existing differences. In order to give voice to the plural iden-

tities of the territory, it was necessary to negotiate insurgent conflicts throughout this process.

The Biennial revealed the need to dialogue in different 'languages': that of the enablers and that of the makers of the city. The partnership with Sesc São Paulo was essential, joining forces with an important cultural promoter who already lived in the spaces of the metropolis, negotiating the differences and recognizing conflicts for decades. This partnership valued the pioneering vision of this Biennial, but also made it possible to reach out to diverse audiences – not limited to the city center and an intellectual elite.

Regarding the experimental character of the Biennial presented as a process, we gave up a format based on an exhibition to adopt another one, interested in this proposition to the city. We dealt directly with adverse and unpredictable situations, such as the negotiation with groups and their actions along with the formation of partnerships with cultural equipment for the realization of exhibitions, and the schedule of the satellite roaming throughout the city, among others.

In opening the event to propositions by several actors, the observatory received contributions, signaling to our understanding that those add up, but do not exhaust the ways of making. Thus, the open calls have given us the opportunity to broaden our spectrum about the various ways of collaborating in urban space, allowing any citizen

to propose their participation in the event, within the previously established formats.

Among the lessons learned, we pointed out the value of recognizing local agents as protagonists of the transformation in the territory, which made it possible to understand what was being done and how professionals from the design disciplines could collaborate in the construction and transformation of the city, in areas where the architect usually has little participation. By shedding light on different ways of acting in the city, legitimizing practices carried out by non-architects rather than architects, we seek to understand where and how this dialogue may occur. To this end, we aim to expand the range of ways of collaborating through the profession, avoiding to exclude what has already been produced in the city and acknowledging the ways of making to propose extensions to existing practices.

Within that framework, we laid the Biennial as a place to share things as they are. The participation of the 9th of July Occupation as one of its official spaces is perhaps one of the clearest examples of this attitude. Without fetishising or spectacularising, we sought to give visibility to the initiative, giving prominence to these voices and seeking to create an opportunity for the public to know the Occupation and the way in which its organization contributes to the construction of a more human and just city, revealing a path for the fulfillment of the social function of property, a

principle developed from the 1988 constitution.

In this context, it should be emphasized that the architect is not responsible, nor should it, through design, to alone seek to solve complex problems materialized in the city. We recognize a scenario, shaped by many situations, in which many actors collaborate and where the architect is one among many collaborators. It is a professional stance in which the architect does not act as a volunteer, through a caregiving perspective, but as a collaborator in a “fraternal” vision that sketches reciprocity and mutual learning (Thorpe and Gamman, 2011).

The Architecture Biennials, all over the world, exhibit very different content and lines of thought of their own. This is what strengthens them as localized but international events. Historically, we can say that the São Paulo Architecture Biennial, has established itself as a space to talk about the challenges within Brazil – our architecture and our cities – reflected in an international context. The 11th Biennial reaffirmed its commitment to talk about its territory, fostering international exchanges articulated to the exhibition, where projects from around the world were presented, permeated by references of Brazilian urban thinking.

We launched this project to talk about the process in an experimental way and accepting the difficulties and challenges of such a complex process. Talking about the process is talking about ways

to negotiate, about successes and mistakes and includes lots of learning. It is not about displaying beautiful, ready-made images that record single moments, but about all the complexity behind them that often the practice of the project simplifies and flattens, or finds no space to understand and develop.³³

A common point for reflection on many of the actions carried out and that deserves attention in this discussion is the need for the architect to listen. It is a matter of questioning the figure of the technician who predefines the solitary and disconnected design of the world and his experience from his office, or the hero-architect, responsible for healing the world's problems based on an imposed design, often detached from everyday reality. Faced with this challenge, this process presents itself as an opportunity to find ways of collaborating in urban development practices, situating the usefulness of its specific knowledge within a range of knowledge and an interdisciplinary practice.

As we have previously shown, within this perspective, something common among many projects is a claim on the right and place of speech of groups that traditionally have not taken place in the debate on the city project and its design. This is an urban condition which, according to our experience, may follow an international tendency, but finds in São Paulo very peculiar conditions of development, based on urgency, resistance movements, frequent shortage of resources desti-

ned to the qualification and valorization of urban culture, as well as the opportunities offered by the use of different knowledge – from cooking to biology – in urban design, in the transformation of places, by creativity, resilience, tolerance of use and occupation in spaces where activities were not foreseen by the project, etc.

We note an increasing willingness to participate in the decisions and direct construction of spaces, but also in the forms of their use and occupation, which transform the experience of urban life. It is a legitimate demand and a form of political action in the micro scale of space, based on direct action. This fact posits to the architect specific and urgent demands on a more refined drawing with the actors who construct the social and cultural fabric in the city, sensitive to the daily life and urban life, but also designed with the participation of them, and can occur in a series of ways. An example of representativeness in our programming was the discussion about the gender issue in the city, trying to think how other actors could contribute to think of a more equitable city in this and other aspects, rarely addressed in urban design.

The valorization of the making and forms of action of those who participate in the construction and urban production in a city like São Paulo could be something absolutely obvious – the status quo – within the discourse of our discipline and, without doubt, transformed into something urgent to be done. On the basis of this lacuna, we have raised

33. Cf. Latour, Hermant 1998

an urgent discussion with the perspective to approximate architecture to a wider audience: “Who do we talk to? who do we want to talk to and who can we talk to? What design opportunities can be created from new dialogues so that we can find other ways to contribute to the lived space of our cities?”³⁴

Acknowledgments

Even though we have written this article at four hands, we’d like to acknowledge that the body of work presented here results from a large number of individuals and collectives, as we already stated above. Specifically, Joana Barossi and Romullo Baratto Fontanelle worked at the editorial content of the event, being cited above where those texts have been quoted. André Goldman, Máira Fernandes, Tiago Kinzári, Julia Masagão, Helena Cavalheiro, Martina Brusius, Letticia Rey, Luiza Strauss, Pedro Caravaca and the students selected for internship participated in the intellectual production of content and/or contributed to its formatting and must be acknowledged. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the support of our partners and supporters, without whom this Biennial would not have been possible, notably Sesc São Paulo. More importantly, the collectives, artists and architects that have participated in the open calls, and later in the event, contributing with the content generated for it. All of their names are individually credited in the catalogue of the event.

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