

# Presentation

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At the beginning of 2017, the **arq.urb** Editorial Board decided the organization of each year's last issue should constitute a bilingual thematic edition (Portuguese/English). That year, the thematic edition was left in charge of Fernando Vázquez, who brought together articles related to the universe of architectural curatorship and exhibitions.

This year the organization of the thematic issue was accorded to me, Eneida de Almeida, who chose, at the time the proposal was outlined, to work in partnership with Maria Carolina Maziviero, also a lecturer at PGAUR-USJT (Graduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Judas), with whom I share a fruitful academic production in which we merge our specific interests. Those of Maria Carolina Maziviero are related to urban activism and the process of production and appropriation of urban space, contextualizing, for the most part, São Paulo's northern and eastern peripheries and the transformation of its actors and agendas in

the struggle for the people's right to urban space. My own are linked to actions related to the memory and preservation of heritage in a broad perspective of reconnaissance and documentation, taken as assertion of individual and collective identities, aiming at the appreciation of a symbolic dimension involving the construction of specific narratives and the co-creation of reality.

In the meantime Maria Carolina Maziviero has left PGAUR-USJT to take on a vacancy as lecturer under a Regime of Exclusive Dedication in the Department of Architecture and Urbanism of the Federal University of Paraná - UFPR. This has by no means disrupted the continuity of the tasks related to the organization of this edition – contrariwise, it points to further prospects of interlocution, from now on in terms of inter-institutional cooperation.

The interest in themes linked to participatory processes and to the experiences of appropriation and

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production of urban space gains importance with the perception that socio-spatial segregation shows itself as one of the most persistent aspects of the contemporary urban phenomenon. Connected both to the hegemonic market logic and to dominant models of State action which prioritize private property rights and the profit rate over all other legal entitlements, it contributes to place the right to city space, in terms noted by Henri Lefebvre, among the central issues of the debate concerning contemporary cities.

This phenomenon tends to accentuate as the weakening of democratic processes takes place. Hence the importance of the role of resistance movements in occupying gaps, indicating porosities, enabling spaces with greater political and creative capillarity, as well as tracing alternatives beyond the market logic which may point, conversely, to other possible kinds of property ownership, architectural intervention, planning and production of urban space.

In this perspective, it is essential to understand the dimensions of the perceived, lived, everyday space, in which new manners of spatial management and the methodological procedures implied in practices aimed at subverting established models are anchored, thereby causing other forms of mediation and participation, ordinarily left aside, to prevail.

These concerns find a possible convergence in the new cycle of protests against the representative governments' economic model and structures, which have gained remarkable global expression since

2011, heightening tensions between the urban social movements and the State, and aggravating the legitimacy crisis of current representative democracy. The global economic situation, pervaded by rising unemployment and unfavorable ratios between revenue and expenditure, which resulted in austerity measures taken by many governments, can be pointed out as the fundamental reason for the protests. These struggles are staged primarily in the urban sphere and check the production of the contemporary city.

According to the approaches gathered in this issue, the traditional urban intervention paradigms, both modernist and neo-liberal, seem no longer viable in face of the contradictions regarding space, which explode at institutional level. In this moment of worldwide advancement of conservatism and fascism, we understand that the challenge posed to the field of urban studies is to deal with the new realities created by the practices relative to the use of space in their daily subversion, that is, in the dimension of immediate, perceived, experienced space. To understand them, encompassing other forms of mediation and participation neglected in traditional practice, is to make the necessary confrontation in order to oppose the frequent threats to every citizen's right to city space.

It is on the basis of these assumptions, therefore, that this special number of the academic journal **arq.urb** is issued. The idea for overcoming the problem stated in these pages does not aim at destroying traditional

practices, but to incorporate this understanding and treatment of empirical matters to formal logic. This volume presents ten articles that shed light on the theme, which are based on three complementary approaches, namely: i) a theoretical-conceptual approach, proposed in the first four articles; ii) an approach guided by the cultural and symbolic dimension, in the following three articles; and iii) an approach based on the analysis of concrete experiences, in the last three texts.

This thematic edition was conceived last March and has its release coinciding by chance with the deterioration of the political scene, when criminalization of social movements begins to be promoted. We can only wish that this set of articles be disseminated and that it may, by joining in with other voices, bring a breath of better winds.

We were inspired by Giorgio Agamben who, in *What is the Contemporary? and other essays* (2009), gives us clues to face the challenges before us:

(...) the contemporary is not only the one who, perceiving the darkness of the present, grasps a light that can never reach its destiny; he is also the one who, divining and interpolating time, is capable of transforming it and putting it in relation with other times. He is able to read history in unforeseen ways, to "cite it" according to a necessity that does not arise in any way from his will, but from an exigency to which he cannot not respond. It is as if this invisible light that is in the darkness of the present cast its shadow on the

past, so that the past, touched by this shadow, acquired the ability to respond to the darkness of the now

And that we may, as the philosopher suggests, when facing contemporary life with an attentive gaze directed to that not-lived in all the done living, recover the ability to respond to the darkness of the now.

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Dez. 2018

