



## Activism and appropriation of urban space in São Paulo

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### Abstract

A new type of appropriation of urban spaces is emerging in São Paulo, Brazil. The use of bicycles, the planting of communal gardens and the organization of street parties are part of a phenomenon that gains strength along with direct action of urban activism. These groups aim to discuss the everyday life in cities and seek new ways of building urban spaces. This paper analyzes territories that resistance groups occupy as part of their direct actions and activism. The “Minhocão” is currently a public space with two functions: a highway with 2.1 miles in length that people use as an urban park at night and in weekends. “Parque Augusta” is a private plot of land neighbors and collectives claim as a public green area. As a strategy to preserve the remaining vegetation of the Atlantic Forest, a coalition of activists occupied the land and organized art and culture activities. The urban space becomes a scene of conflicts, with playful developments and political disputes.

**Keywords:** Activism. Appropriation of public space. Direct action. Urban common.

## Introduction

**R**ecently in São Paulo there has been an emergence of activism, in the sense of encouraging questions about the destination of the city and its public and private spaces. These groups originated from the same context as the crisis of political representation that erupted in Brazil with the protests of June 2013. At the time people criticized the democratic system, but the manifestations were defined much more by their development than by their content: Within the context of submission of public policies to economic interests, the vision of the State<sup>1</sup> is exhausted for many people, thus some of them depart for a dynamic of collective actions and occupations of the urban space. The claims gained visibility through mobilizations planned from social networks and “putting the body” on the street was an important instrument of resistance. In this context, public assemblies, direct tactics and resistance were organized in the urban space.

In 1968, when Henri Lefebvre (2001) coined the expression “right to the city”, he paved the way for rethinking the characterization of the city as something more than a product of industrialization. The right to the city would be the right to human emancipation. For the author, the city was standardized and planned in order to restrict the quality of life. The daily life was structured and without spontaneity, made of established paths between home and work. In recent decades, social movements have been struggling to strengthen public services, social protection and labor law. However, with the neoliberal shift since the 1980s and the increasing privatization of state property and services, common interest appears as a new way of challenging capitalism and demanding greater democratic access. As Harvey analyzes, a duality between the common interest and the one the governments uphold is accentuated (HARVEY, 2014, 154):

1. The Social Welfare State never existed in Brazil, but collective social claims are based on aspects such as participation, provision and regulation.

How often are development projects subsidized by the state in the name of common interest when, in fact, the real beneficiaries are some landowners, financiers, and contractors?

In this context, a new dynamic of collective management emerges. The current definition of urban movements of the 21st century, defended by Dardot and Laval (2017), maintains that part of the members of society adopt solidarity measures. The citizen belongs to a political community and acts directly; he contributes beyond enjoying his rights. The logic involves a social sense that is different from the measures of state provision. The dimension of action comprises the participation, decision and direct management of what is “put into commons”. One of the goals of these movements is to guide the public service towards joint management in solidarity, and away from the exercise of power. The commons corresponds to what must be protected from capitalist appropriation and the logic of property. It is also a political principle, not to be attributed, but to be instituted.

It is noted that the matter of the commons is quite broad, not limited to public spaces or public goods. The commons are items that perform an essential function in collective life. One of the major concerns today is that natural assets essential to human life - such as water, coasts, rivers and forests - are at risk of being privatized. This concern is no different in the urban space. Urban commons include so-called public goods and

services, such as: parks, transportation, sanitation systems, garbage collection, universities and public schools.

In the contemporary capitalist city, the public spaces constructed by official means are increasingly impoverished of diversity, focused on consumption and territorial circulation. Produced as a commodity, there is a tendency to dominate the economic dimension from the spaces of public use to the new forms of housing and work (HARVEY, 2014).

This article analyzes two territories in the central region of São Paulo that contain aspects of everyday life, social aspirations and urban disputes, essential for the reinvention of the contemporary public space. The first territory, the “Minhocão”, is currently a public space with two functions: a highway with 2.1 miles in length that people use as an urban park at night and in weekends. The second space, the “Augusta Park”, is a private area claimed by neighbors and activists as a green public space.

The methodology of research, as part of a doctoral thesis, was developed using five analysis tools, which overlap: spatial scale, temporality, narratives, questionings and theoretical reference. The research explores the changing urban territory, seeks to redesign and understand the different phenomena, practices and narratives that occur through the daily tensions between the different spatial and temporal scales.

The spatial scale is the knowledge that can be extracted from the territory that is observed. Regarding temporality, the research has its cut in a relatively recent phenomenon in São Paulo: Alternatives for contemporary urbanism that have their origin in the activities of resistance and urban insurgency.

The narratives are not a phenomena in themselves, but they contribute to forming a description. The stories that emerge can be used to understand what is not documented institutionally. Form of narratives can tell a lot about the collective action process and its tactics. Personal interviews and analysis of the available audio, video and conference files help to chart and establish a profile. The questioning explore the differences and gaps in research. The investigation leads to reflection on a new meaning for the common space, public or private, through the inventory of the diverse initiatives and the themes that each causes them.

The research used a base of multiple primary sources of information: newspaper publications; official documents of the public power; photos and documents of the collectives; among others.

It is necessary to make an exploratory examination of concepts and propositions at the bibliographic level, with respect to the authors, that can clarify the object of the investigation. The objective is to extract an essential theoretical framework for data analysis. The research work

has an analytical approach: with the exposition of different initiatives and use of the aforementioned tools, the objective is to describe the phenomenon of activism in the construction of the contemporary city of São Paulo, where the right to the city is claimed, adopting tactics of direct action and urban appropriation.

### **The Minhocão Highway, literally “the big worm”**

The first space of activist experience analyzed is the Minhocão: a space with two functions: during part of the day it is an expressway for car traffic; while at night and on weekends it is appropriated by people who develop recreational and cultural activities. Expressways for the use of individual vehicles are created, since the 50's, with the purpose of organizing and resolving the transport in cities. The main objective was to promote and guarantee urban development. However, years later, it was possible to verify that this type of solution accelerated the peripheral growth and the abandonment of the central areas. In fact, the landscape has deteriorated in many cities around the world due to this type of measure.

In São Paulo, the elevated highway popularly known as Minhocão, literally “the big worm”, was implemented in 1971. It cuts the city center joining eastern and western territories, with a length of 2.1 miles. Since the beginning, its infrastructure devalued the surrounding buildings, due to the closeness to existing properties. Raised only 16

feet away from building facades, it prevents the opening of the building's windows due to exhaust emissions and noise pollution. Even so, through the process of urban sprawl, the entire region of the old center of São Paulo went through three decades of devaluation.

For many years the infrastructure represented a boundary in the urban environment between middle and upper class neighborhoods, and a poorer and emptier central region. This public space has housed a vulnerable population such as homeless, waste pickers, sex workers and chemical dependents. It is possible to say this scenario has been changing in the last decade and the neighborhoods now undergo a process of appreciation, with intense appropriation of public spaces and the arrival of new real estate ventures (ASSUNÇÃO, 2016).

The appropriation of this public space for sports and leisure activities predates the recent transformation process. In 1989, in response to mounting popular pressure, the road was closed at night and on weekends, preserving the neighbors' night rest on every working day and remaining closed on Sundays and holidays. From that moment on, being closed to the cars, the space happened to be used spontaneously by the inhabitants of the region lacking in open public spaces.

It is interesting to observe, regarding the location of the Minhocão, that this space with minimal or no infrastructure allows for a variety of spontane-

ous uses. This makes it an attractive space for appropriation. Today, it hosts sports and artistic activities such as dance and theater. It is also frequently used for urban hiking and cycle. Guardrails are used as concrete benches for resting and sunbathing. The only permanent urban furniture are the trash cans installed on lampposts. A sign with a beach symbol discloses the hashtag *praia de paulista*. Informal salespeople are present on the site, many bringing beach umbrellas, others finding some shade in buildings or trees. They create small resting areas where people can drink chilled coconut water. All accessibility for people is provided by ramps designed for cars. It is also common to walk around an interact freely with domestic animals. There are also tourist activities, because from there, one can admire emblematic historical buildings from a new perspective.

Several recent activist initiatives contributed to the increase of these activities. Simultaneously with the spontaneous appropriation, between 2011 and 2013, a group of young activists from the Baixo Centro movement held several events featuring artistic occupations and temporary interventions. This collective, carrying the banner "the streets are made for dancing", was seeking community-based engagement changes. The activists criticized controversial actions taken during Kassab's term as Mayor of the city between 2006-2012, such as housing removals at the Nova Luz project, and the revocation of street vendors' licenses.

This group carried out several initiatives to occupy the Minhocão and other public spaces in the central part of the city in a collaborative way. These activists had the ambition to encourage people to appropriate the city. In temporary interventions, they used artificial grass, beach chairs and collapsible pools. In 2012, a major collaborative event was organized for the first time with crowdfunding. For three consecutive years, the Baixo Centro movement has produced a festival in the streets with hundreds of free cultural presentations.

In addition to the festivals, the movement organized acts of appropriation in the format of Festa Junina — a popular Brazilian celebration — whose main objective was to encourage the appropriation and to foster the cooperation of the local community. The organization was repeated for three years, each edition bringing an urban theme to the public debate. The horizontal management movement did not want to acquire an institutional character of organization. From the outset, activists were surprised by the massive presence of young people from other parts of the city. According to them, it was possible to notice that the space was gaining visibility, and acquiring characteristics of gentrification. For various reasons, they chose to stop organizing events.

Also in 2013, a group of friends founded the Parque Minhocão association with the specific purpose of influencing the decision of the public power to stop the road use of the Minhocão de-

finitively, and to transform it into a high park for the people. It is not a neighborhood association, but a group of activists who have a well-defined demand: the creation of a park on the high road. During the Biennial of Architecture, the group made possible an exhibition on the High Line Park, New York. The headquarters of the association, an apartment next to the elevated one, evidenced the possibility of transformation of the road. After a few months of action, they got support from city councilors to present a bill<sup>2</sup> to create the Park. According to the text of the proposal, the implementation would occur progressively through the restriction of traffic.

At that time, beginning of 2014, two activisms of different ideas among themselves appear as resistance to the creation of the park. One of the activists of the Baixo Centro movement mobilized a discussion about the process of gentrification on Facebook. Thus was created the SP sem Minhocão movement, which seeks to foster a broad discussion about the theme of territorial transformation and state regulation in the sense of maintaining the sociocultural identity.

The other opposition group, the Desmonte Minhocão movement, part of the neighborhood security committee, defends the interests of the conservative middle-upper class district. It believes that the removal of the enormous structure would be the most appropriate option to restore the physical identity of the neighborhood. This

2. Law Project n.10/2014.





Figura 1. Minhocão: Spontaneous appropriation of a high expressway in São Paulo (April 3, 2017). Source: Own elaboration.

dispute between them made it difficult to approve the law at that time. A public discussion forum was held among the different groups of organized civil society, but the dialogue was not conclusive.

Between 2014 and 2015, some groups of cultural activists continued to use public space for collaborative events. Within this context, one of the most criticized items was the supposed infrastructure insecurity of space use in events. This group, which is characterized by a judicial action, instructed three Civil Inquiries<sup>3</sup> in the Public Ministry. And although no incident associated with infrastructure insecurity has been reported on the spot, it has succeeded in getting justice to prohibit the organization of all kinds of events in this public space, such as festivals, festivals, fairs and carnivals.

Between 2015 and 2016, in the last two years of Mayor Haddad's (PT) administration, the Parque Minhocão association achieved several advances through political action, gradually approving several laws that altered the use of space, such as: (i) extension of opening hours on Saturdays and weekdays for the leisure activities, the highway is banned for cars for longer; (ii) official denomination, when closed for cars, the space is called Parque Minhocão; (iii) the incorporation of an implementation guideline of the park in the content of the Master Plan.

Between 2017 and 2018, during the management of Mayor Dória (PSDB), the association obtained

the approval of the legislation<sup>4</sup> that formalizes the creation of the Municipal Park of Minhocão and foresees the gradual deactivation of the Elevado. The text was modified from the 2014 proposal, including the need to create a Management Council at an Urban Intervention Project process, with the option of transforming into a complete or partial park of the physical structure, and instruments for financial viability. The law also changed gradually regarding the use of space for cars. Traffic is authorized only at peak hours established by the municipality, and, as a consequence, this extends the operation of the leisure activities including holidays and school holidays in July and January. The trajectory of space transformation is a complex subject, and certainly in the near future this will not be a history free of disputes and impacts.

#### Augusta Park

The second space analyzed, the area known as Parque Augusta, corresponds to an area of 81.200 square foot of private property. Located in the center of São Paulo, the area preserves remnants of native Atlantic forest, which occupies about 40% of the property. In addition, the history of the place holds collective memories and meaning for public opinion. From 1907 to 1968, it housed the activities of a traditional girls' high school, Colégio Des Oiseaux. When the historic building was demolished, the area became the target of several decrees; such as public utility and preservation of trees, native species of the

3. Civil Inquiries n. 43.0279.0000153/2016; n. 43.279.363/2015-9; e n. 14.279.295/2014.

4. Municipal Law of São Paulo n. 16,833 / 2018 (sanctioned on the basis of the Draft Law n.10 / 2014).

Atlantic Forest, and the remaining of the building. As part of this restrictive context, the owners signed a Term of Commitment with the City Hall, which obliges them to allow free access of the population to the lot and to preserve it. On the other hand, the lot was the object of several unsuccessful attempts to implement real estate projects. For almost four decades without buildings, the property remained with the doors open and was used like a park by the neighbors.

The first activist initiative organized by civil society in favor of the creation of the Augusta Park took place in 2001. The neighborhood association Samorcc carried out a campaign to collect signatures requesting the municipality to implement the public park. Another group emerged in 2004, with the specific objective of claiming this demand, since the beginning of its creation, the Allies of the Augusta Park organized demonstrations and events with the objective of defending the creation of the park. In 2006, the group was able to collect 15 thousand signatures, in a joint action with Samorcc. With this tactic, it obtained political support to present a law project<sup>5</sup> at the City Hall for the creation of the park. However, it was not put to vote by that time.

In 2011, the activists created the event named Picnic no Asfalto (picnic on the asphalt), a mixture of social encounter and claim. It takes place every year and involves various activism groups. In each issue, as a form of protest, people prevent

the circulation of vehicles on the street in front of the lot, drawing attention to the public green area. In a collaborative way, groups organize food and beverage towels to consume while seated on the asphalt. On these occasions, there are music performances.

In the context of the protests in Brazil in June 2013, many young people took to the streets seeking for the right to the city and access to the urban territory. In the case of the Augusta Park, a group of young people heard the protests of smaller groups and decided to claim the preservation of this green area. The group of activists occupied the place in two events during the month of December in 2013. On these occasions, as a new resistance tactic, art and culture festivals were organized in favor of the creation of the park, featuring debates, meals, workshops, theater performances and music. It is interesting to note that the three main groups working for the cause of the Augustas Park are composed by quite different profiles; it can be said that they maintain an ideological plurality. However, they raise their claim together through a unified flag: they argue that the space should be entirely green, and are against the construction of buildings, that is, they are clearly opposed to real estate development.

In response to growing popular pressure in December 2013, the municipal law<sup>6</sup> that promulgated the creation of the Augusta Park was sanctioned. The initiative used the law project awaiting

5. Municipal Law Project n. 345/2006.

6. Municipal Law n. 15.941/2013.





Figura 2. Augusta Park: Occupation in favor of creating a green area (January 19, 2015). Source: Own elaboration.

to be voted since 2006, prepared by the previous movements. This law formalized the park on paper, but did not regulate legal and financial mechanisms to allow its implementation. In addition, the plot is private and the municipal administrator at the time, Mayor Haddad (PT, 2013-2016) argued that it did not intend to spend a large amount of public funds on an expropriation in the central region, already well endowed with infrastructure in relation to rest of the city.

In spite of the approved law, five days after approval, the builders closed the doors of the lot to the public. At that time, even after the site was closed, activists continued to work on and off the ground. The largest activism group that emerged at the protests of that same year was formalized: the Organismo Parque Augusta movement, OPA, a self-managed and horizontal urban resistance collective. The activists, who seek to ensure the existence of green in the urban environment, idealize the Augusta Park as a laboratory of environmental, educational, cultural and social practices. It would be a school with permaculture practices, urban gardens, open lessons, movies, festivals and self-managed activities.

As for tactics, they self-organize in weekly assemblies, work in groups and perform direct actions in the street. The movement has no headquarters, and meets preferably in public spaces. Roosevelt Square, after the ground's closure, is one of the public spaces used for being close to

the site. The organization is structured around social networks, and has 26,000 followers on its Facebook page.

O movimento OPA, em seu primeiro momento, teve como referência os ativistas do Parque Gezi, na Turquia. Em 2013, o parque no centro de Istambul seria transformado em um centro comercial. Ambientalistas protestaram contra o processo de transformação urbana. O movimento se espalhou por meio das redes sociais entre milhões de pessoas em todo o país, abraçando diversas causas. Os grupos de ativistas do Parque Augusta e do Parque Gezi trocaram experiências que vão desde a ocupação cultural e espacial até formas de resistência contra possíveis atos de violência policial.

In the beginning, the movement had a reference in the activists of the Gezi Park, in Turkey. By 2013, this park in the center of Istanbul would be transformed into a shopping center, but environmentalists protested against the process of urban transformation. The movement has spread through social networks among millions of people across the country, embracing various causes. The activist groups at Augusta Park and Gezi Park have exchanged experiences ranging from cultural and spatial occupation to forms of resistance against possible acts of police violence.

During the year 2014, the Organismo Parque Augusta movement continued to organize events

6.Lei Municipal n. 15.941/2013.

and assemblies on the enclosed area, but on a smaller scale. In January 2015, in an attempt of resistance, the activists opened the doors that remained closed since December of 2013 and occupied the area as an act of protest. Among other things, they accused the owners of environmental crimes and pointed out that the area was unlawfully closed. The occupation of 2015 had a cultural character, in the format of the festival, it was renamed Verão Parque Augusta and featured a program of various activities and artistic presentations. The purpose of the occupation was to make the cause visible and consolidate the idea of park in the collective image of the city.

On March 4, 2015, two months later, there was the act of reintegration of possession. Four activists resisted and there was police violence. But most of the group left peacefully and went on a demonstration towards the City Hall. Although the Augusta Park area is privately owned, there are a number of irregularities of public emphasis, such as the closure of the public access area since 2013 and the lack of conservation of the forest and remnants of the historic building. Shortly after the repossession process, the Public Prosecutor's Office sought the activists to open a civil investigation to inquire about possible damages to the protected heritage and forest, as well as to examine the process of obtaining building permits at the city hall.

From that moment on, the profile of the activists

of the Organismo Parque Augusta movement was gradually altered. It was no longer represented by a younger and more artistic profile, but composed of a more mature and technical profile. Likewise, there was a major shift in tactics of action. On the other hand, several municipal agencies suspended the procedures to building permits, considering the existence of the civil lawsuit. Since then, there have been different attempts at judicial reconciliation. In the negotiations promoted by the Ministério Público, during Mayor Haddad's administration (2013-2016) attempts were made to expropriate without cost and to negotiate the sale value, but the offers were always rejected by the construction companies.

During the decision process in Mayor Dória's administration (PSDB-2017), the possibility was considered of exchanging the plot for other public land. The municipal property suggested was close to the Pinheiros River, also of collective and environmental interest. This strategy was not approved by most of the activists involved in the cause. Nevertheless it found adhesion in the association of district Samorcc, what possibly caused a fissure of the coalition between movements.

On August 10, 2018, during Bruno Covas' administration (PSDB-2018), an agreement was signed for the application of the urban instrument for the transfer of construction potential. Frequently used to stimulate the preservation of built historical patrimony, the instrument has not yet been

used in areas of environmental preservation. Its application involves the donation of land ownership that would become public and would bring a new regulatory framework of collective interest to the city. The transfer of ownership of the land is a great achievement for the movement, but the question of managing and building the space in a collaborative way is still an open dispute process. The agreement foresees investments by the construction companies in the area and surroundings, as a form of payment of fines, and the opening of a park by 2020. For the moment, the group intends to follow with strategies of attendance of the collective interest in the justice.

Another dispute that the movement faces is the cancellation of the protocol right<sup>7</sup> of the builders in the Federal Public Ministry. The argument in the judicial process at the national level debates that no project in an area of environmental interest can use less restrictive preservation legislation by means of protocol right. If this happens, the construction project that is subject of the dispute must obey the current zoning, which is more restrictive. Since 2014, the environmental aspect of the Organismo Parque Augusta movement has been strengthened in defense of a network of parks in São Paulo. Thus, it has arisen as a broader environmental cause movement denominated Rede Novos Parques SP. Currently, it defends the preservation of 48 green areas within the city.

### **Achievements, ambiguities and contradictions**

The controversy that may arise relates to the kind of power these activisms can exert within the city's production process. There may be contradictions and ambiguities between activist tactics and the process of territorial transformation. In the public space of Minhocão it is interesting to observe how, without any change in the physical structure, it was possible to transform the intensity of space use. Once considered degraded it has become one of the most sought after spaces in the city for leisure activities on weekends. The positive legacy is the creation without any direct public investment of a public space of metropolitan scope, of a playful, sporting character and of social interaction in the open air. After six years of acting, it can be said that the activists have achieved a transformation in the collective imaginary.

As defended by Zukin (2010), the resumption of the streets represent an act of authenticity, bringing the vitality and diversity of desired uses to the central areas. But this process of "revitalization" entails the displacement of the poor population. According to the author, allied to the predatory leisure culture, an urban transformation strategy was created to attract investments from shopping centers and suburbs to the central areas. Thus, more attractive open urban spaces - such as parks, theaters, museums and gastronomy - are created that exhibit an exclusive creative product of a city center and seek a wider audience outside the territorial period (ZUKIN, 2010, p.4):

7. The "protocol right" is the application of the legislation in force at the time of protocol and not of the legislation in force at the time of the assessment of the administrative process.

Bistros replace bodegas, cocktail bars morph out of old-style saloons, and the neighborhood as a whole creates a different kind of sociability. [...] Who can say, though, that these new spaces are not authentic? New stores and new people produce new urban terroirs, localities with a specific cultural product and character that can be marketed around the world, drawing tourists and investors and making the city safe, though not cheap, for the middle class.

The cities that experienced the model of sprawling witness a difference between the physical and social environments in the center. Thus, renewing the physical fabric often means losing in social diversity, so the author argues that cities are losing their “soul” or their meaning as a space of social expression.

Conflictingly, the gentrifying aspect of the creation of parks and attractive public spaces is well known (HARDT; NEGRI, 2016:180 and ZUKIN, 2010:10). In the Minhocão, the first experiences appear of artistic movements, and later tactics of political action. Along with this, this districts witnessed the massive arrival of new real estate development in the surroundings, such as residential and cultural buildings. Similar gentrification processes were seen in several cities around the world. In the Minhocão, recently the Municipality appeared as an agent linked to the production process of the city through changes in the laws in favor of the park.

The Minhocão represented, for decades, a clear

limit, between a more valued area and a poorer one, in the central region of the city, that border already has been notably diluted. Recently, the municipality established the possible development of an Urban Intervention Project, which has not yet been presented. It is urgent to establish regulatory measures and housing projects in the central region of São Paulo. This dispute is a complex process that has not yet ended.

In the case of the struggle for the Augusta Park, the process of resistance on private land marks an unprecedented process of struggle against the construction of the city ruled by economic interests. Organized civil society has managed to unite a wide range of ideas around a single struggle of public interest. In addition, solutions are sought in unpublished urbanistic instruments, different from expensive expropriation. Another achievement is to develop an alliance of local movements in a network of environmentalist actions in Rede Novos Parques, an urgent environmental theme in the metropolis.

Contrary to this, the presence of a greater collective interest resulted in the illegal closure of the private land by the owners. It is a dispute process that lasts for several decades and gained momentum alongside the revolts of June 2013. The area that was appropriated by neighbors and used as a Park since the 70's now has been closed for more than 4 years. During this recent period the population is prohibited to use the space, moreover the lack of use is prone to increase the degradation of the area.

Although it is a private plot, there are irregularities in the municipal administrative process and in the Term of Commitment questioned in justice regarding aspects of public utility and preservation of the area. The movement worked with collective direct action until 2015, but currently seeks a resolution through judicial.

In both territories, another contradiction appears if the proposed privatization of the parks is carried out by the current municipal administration. If this happens, as suggested by Harvey (2014) and Dardot and Laval (2017), the struggle for the common good is constant in the sense of maintaining collaborative management in space, even after the conquest as public property. It is important to say that the region surrounding the Augusta Park, as well as the Minhocão, was also valued recently. As noted, the activist struggle for the transformation of the city did not establish tactics with guidelines of housing policies, and other themes related to the socio-cultural resistance, urgent issues in the central region.

Comparing the type of action, different tactics and activist strategies of artistic and cultural, environmental, political and judicial aspects were present in the two territories. In Minhocão it was possible to observe that groups that represent an ideological plurality acted through different strategies. Today the specific cause association achieves changes in the laws through a political alliance. Meanwhile, the Committee of Neighborhood - Conseg, seeks

to inhibit spontaneous appropriation for leisure activities through practices of judicial activism with the State Public Prosecutor. The court banned the use of space for events in 2015, nowadays, the group seeks a total ban on use by people. At the Augusta Park in São Paulo, the Public Prosecutor's Office appears to consider the issue on private ground among the various actors involved: Organized Civil Society (unified staff), entrepreneurs and municipal management.

### **Final considerations**

The article explores the idea of the presence of activism revealing new ways of seeing and using urban space, consolidating an unprecedented type of spontaneous appropriation and collective transformation of the city. The work relates the tension between the institutionalization and the freedom of action existing in the dispute for urban spaces. Over time, in the spaces analyzed, it was possible to verify that most activist actions stopped using direct action tactics and started adopting more institutionalized action strategies.

In its moment, the activists of the Baixo Centro Movement implemented forms of resistance and activation of the territory of Minhocão. However, later came the Parque Minhocão Association, which acts mainly through a political and mediatic approach, with the objective of influencing the decision and pressing the public power to definitively allocate the public space to the people. And

the Neighborhood Council - Conseg that seeks to exercise power through the judicial system.

In the Augusta Park, the young profile of the movement Organismo Parque Augusta, horizontal and self-managed, has changed over time. It stopped integrating a more artistic activist profile and began to be composed of a more mature technical profile. Recently, it acted with a judicial approach with the Public Ministry. It is interesting to note that there are several groups acting in the cause, of ideological plurality, always aimed at a certain collision and unification of the agenda. On the other hand, this cause gave rise to another movement that acts on the environmental issue in municipal scale. Named Rede Novos Parques SP, the group is in defense of a network of parks in São Paulo and articulates local movements within a scenario of environmental recovery.

During the investigation, it was possible to identify that in the territories analyzed, a type of direct action activism appeared, characterized mainly by the cultural appropriation of the city. It was possible to prove that this type of occupation of collaborative management was emblematic in the urban construction and the reconquest of the public space. In the case of São Paulo, it was not just neighbors and groups of urban activists who carried out interventions of low financial cost and high social value. But also a new long-term discussion about the process of building the common space, or the type of urbanism and collectively urban de-

sign. In a territory of local dispute, the groups wish to build a new urban paradigm capable of incorporating citizen collaborative practices.

The struggle for the common defined by Harvey (2014) and Dardot and Laval (2017) is a process of continuous resistance, related to community appropriation and collective construction of space. Activists push the state more at the same time they act with a certain autonomy. At the moment, the autonomous groups analyzed formed a broad and diverse basis: artistic, cultural, urban, tactical, environmental, urban permaculture, among others. They succeeded in reaching a large number of adherents to the occupation of public space in the central area. They consolidated a repertoire of action, a new form of struggle for the city. They were organized horizontally and mobilized over the internet. They encouraged recreational activities, parties, picnics, social gatherings, shows, artistic presentations, characterized by a non-partisan, festive and relaxed political appropriation. They were important to form spaces of experimentation, laboratories of urban construction and citizen.

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