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EDUCATION FOR URBAN ANALYSIS
IN PRECARIOUS AREA:
A STUDY IN THE SÃO REMO
IN SÃO PAULO

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ABSTRACT

The article presents didactic experience that articulated other methodologies and disciplines for socio-territorial reading in São Paulo slum. The postgraduate discipline sought to understand the urban and social dynamics of the slums, relating its historical formation and current reality. Faced with the transformations of social and urban relations in the last 20 years, the need to experiment with other didactic practices of reading and understanding is justified. The formation of researchers and designers suitable for other forms of reading led us to study the San Remo slum, associating theoretical research with the experience in the community. The results, synthesized in cartographies and diagrams, allowed clear access to the historical, territorial and social data of the favela and were ordered on a digital platform (site) to socialize the knowledge beyond the academic scope. We conclude that the analysis of the precarious areas needs an extended field of readings and reflections capable of contemplating the complexity of the place and its inhabitants, breaking the stigma that distances the understanding of city in the life of precarious quarters.

KEYWORDS

Teaching. Research. Slum. São Remo. Cartography.



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DIDÁTICAS PARA ANÁLISE
URBANA EM ÁREA PRECÁRIA:
UM ESTUDO NA SÃO REMO EM
SÃO PAULO

RESUMO

O artigo apresenta experiência didática que articulou outras metodologias e disciplinas para leitura socioterritorial em favelas paulistas. A disciplina de pós-graduação procurou compreender as dinâmicas urbana e social da favela São Remo em São Paulo, relacionando sua formação histórica e a realidade atual. Diante das transformações das relações social e urbana das favelas paulistas nos últimos 20 anos, justifica-se a necessidade da experimentação de outras práticas didáticas de leitura e compreensão do território de intervenção. A formação de pesquisadores e projetistas aptos para outras formas de leitura nos levou a estudar a favela São Remo associando pesquisa teórica à vivência na comunidade. Os resultados, sintetizados em cartografias e diagramas, permitiram acesso claro a dados históricos, territoriais e sociais complexos da favela e foram ordenados em plataforma digital (*site*) para socializar o conhecimento além do âmbito acadêmico. Concluímos que a análise das áreas precárias necessita de um campo ampliado de leituras e reflexões capazes de contemplar a complexidade do lugar e seus habitantes, rompendo o estigma que aparta o entendimento de cidade na vida de bairros precários.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Ensino. Pesquisa. Favela. São Remo. Cartografia.

EXPERIENCING OTHER RESEARCH PRACTICES

The relations of habitability, sociability and spatial significance today in the slums transcend the analysis of census, quantitative geographic data or simply the understanding of the proposed public policy guidelines. Understanding them is fundamental, but it seemed important to us, in addition to the issues of precariousness and inequality that lead architects, engineers, environmentalists and sociologists to intervene in the informal city, also looking from an experience of coexistence with the object of study. Often, inhabitants, public service providers, local entities and leaders are placed on the edge of discussions about the destinations of informal territory as mere spectators. The empowerment of the community, generally with little education or almost no technical training for urbanism, rights and duties in the face of actions in the territory by the government, seems to us a strategic task. At the same time, training capable and attentive professionals for these voices is a way of building citizenship and a fruitful field of research.

This article presents a didactic experience that took as a premise for urban analysis to associate simultaneous activities that crossed different ways of examining the territory. While the group of postgraduate students at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo (FAU-USP)¹ was immersed in a specific bibliography of the debate about the precarious neighborhoods, self-built in Brazilian cities, an agenda of meetings with the community of the São Remo slum was established, providing an immersion of contact with the reality of the research place.

We support work in disciplines other than urbanism and architecture, giving rise to a cross-sectional research laboratory between seemingly tight concepts and methods. Ethnography and anthropology are first tools for broadening urban reading, especially the studies by Arturo Escobar² and José Guilherme Cantor Magnani. He explores a mode of 'approaching' and apprehending a whole of the urban context, that is, a way of examining seemingly scattered fragments:

the nature of the ethnographic explanation is based on an insight that allows us to reorganize data perceived as fragmentary, still scattered information, loose evidence, into a new arrangement that is no longer the native arrangement (but part of it, considers it, was raised by it) nor the one with which the researcher began the research. (MAGNANI, 2002, p. 12).

Magnani seeks to break the dichotomy between individual and urban mega-structures to construct a "close and inside" look at the object of study. The researcher, from the "lived concrete", has other instruments and knowledge to articulate the indispensable theoretical set. This was the argument that structured the postgraduate discipline as a laboratory for the investigation of

¹Discipline "Interventions in the Informal Space of Contemporary Brazilian Cities", Habitat concentration area, of the Postgraduate Program of FAU-USP. The following students participated: Ana Maria Ferreira Haddad, Daniele Lima Bezerra, Elizabeth Othon, Hemily Beatriz Faria Santos, Isabella Ventura, Joice Genaro Gomes, Lívia Salles de Godoy, Marina Piscitelle da Silva, Rodrigo Luiz Minot Gutierrez and Ronald do Couto Santos.

²thinking of an ontological drawing. Based on the idea that drawing can transform existing conditions into preferred conditions, it values the role of drawing in the creation of collective meanings. See Escobar (2016).

³The term “hodology” was spread by the German psychologist Kurt Lewin from his studies of “topological psychology” (1936). He explored human relations with the landscape, whether urban, natural or domestic, formulating an analytical method between people and their vital spaces. According to Adson Lima, “the expression ‘topology’ has been borrowed from mathematics and postulates a new understanding for space, which in this way would be distinct from Euclidean space, whose properties, as we know, are homogeneity, isotropy and the uniformity. It is, then, a psychological space that would depend on the individual, and within which he fulfills his desires and needs” (LIMA, 2009, p. 2). According to Jean-Marc Besse (2015), the “hodological space” is not Cartesian, it is the result of the individual’s interaction with the world and his walk through it. According to Jean Paul Sartre (1943), the hodological space means the world around us, with its objects, its paths and barriers and how we act in it.

urban values based on contact with part of the slum’s inhabitant community: to put the researcher in contact with the inhabitants, with the slum’s agents, from this experience, to explore analytical relations imbued by knowledge other than those structured in socio-territorial databases.

One of the social investigation techniques adopted to read daily life from the point of view of social and urban dynamics was participant observation. Looking, talking and directly monitoring the daily life on site, from within and closely with the residents of São Remo, revealed local processes that stand out from those known and recorded in the consolidated literature of settlements in the Sao Paulo metropolis, such as consolidation, verticalization, new economic dynamics, social and cultural actions (NGOs), and others. Looking, talking and following up on site allowed us to grasp the daily routine and its dynamics, the social appropriation of space, noticeable only “from near and within” (MAGNANI, 2002, p. 12).

As intrinsic instruments for participant observation, (i) workshops and activities with the children of Alavanca Institute were adopted as a strategy to insurgent children’s imaginary about urban environment and social and economic aspects; and (ii) semi-structured interviews with residents and local leaders to understand the diverse perspectives on their urban environment. These works revealed daily life, individual and collective yearnings, and gave us the elements to build a representation of the territory used (SANTOS, 1996) from the diagrams.

We also base the field of contemporary human geography that has been addressing other modes of mapping and cartography of space and landscape. Especially the work of Jean Marc Besse (2015) and his landscape exercises, in which the idea of “hodological space”³ presents itself as another important analytical reading tool.

The landscape is often examined at a distance by researchers or designers. Besse presents us with different ways of approaching the landscape, especially including in this view the observer-researcher, bringing the concreteness of the world of meanings we have for it. His text always aims at project action, in which the examination of reality is not purely descriptive, but relational, active. Given the term “hodology” as a cartographic method, the path becomes a fundamental place for reading the world. We are immersed in it and what we read is the result of our relationship with the world. The world is not, therefore, an absolute, but a set of approximations and distances that causes us to elaborate different narratives.

This force of spatial reading contributes to academic studies in the field of architecture and urbanism, because we are interested, above all, in the ability to register in the space of the manifestations of human existence, just as Besse put it. In this sense, the landscape presents itself as a phenomenological experience, which progressively is not only a mental representation, but also a reality that can be scientifically investigated. Experience in place is the sensitive field of relationship with the environment (BESSE, 2015). Here we see how geography, ethnography and anthropology can dialogue with phenomenological philosophy to methodologically support our field of experiences and conviviality.

As a concrete action, we introduced walking in the didactics of the discipline. Its presence value is considered as the best action of recognition, and here landscape is not only a place, but a being that escapes the simple reason of those who walk. From this perspective, it is assumed that walking is a critique of the real, being in the oriented and articulated world, because those who walk are not content to walk, they also draw the way. The walk requalifies the space, offers new qualities, new intensities. Thus, the activities of exchange and relationship with the residents and the physical space of the São Remo slum were supported by the recognition of the analytical value of these other space sciences.

But beyond recognition of place, hodology and ethnography have supported us for an exercise of experimental value. The landscape of São Remo was summoned in a privileged way to imagine solutions for the meeting, for the relationship between the city and its inhabitants. "The project would be to create something that is already there, and ambiguously imagine the real, to effectively manufacture what is already present and not seen" (BESSE, 2015, p. 98). In this sense, what we seek to study is the possibility of design and research to invent a territory by representing and describing it, weaving connections between signals and leaving latent thinking behind visible forms of a future. The dimension of being in the world, dwelling and exploring is simultaneous and poses the possibility of *drift* as a method of activating this understanding.

To undertake walks as scientific experiments, we also resorted to the studies of Italian architect Francesco Careri (2013) on the aesthetic practice of walking. His work has pointed to *drift* as a tool for knowledge and transformation of the crossed space, placing the landscape as a means in which human existence is verified, recorded and invented. Experiencing the *drift* of a place, overcoming the purely sensitive moment, we move from memory to the report in a translation procedure. Thus, it is presented as perception and representation of spaces the very being in the world and, fundamentally, points of view about things, ideas.



Figure 1 – Walk through the São Remo slum, 2017
Source: collection of images of the discipline.
Photo: Ana Maria F. Haddad.

For our research activity, this definition of the *hodological landscape* and *drift* as a mode of space translation has exerted a defining force in how we simultaneously understand the relationships between community and place and how we represent this understanding. The art of cartography, proposed by Besse, Careri, artists such as Guy Debord and the situationists in the 1970s, became the language through which the group of students could make sense of the fragmented universe of contents learned in the experience and studies of Sao Remo slum. Thus, other channels of perception and assimilation of content were incorporated.

The *drift* was not simply a tool for sensitizing the slum's spatiality, almost always uncommon to the urban researcher, it was a tool for activating other contents on the margins of conventional urban analyses of precarious areas. In general, the degraded environment without infrastructure is read from its urban and social damages, and little is documented about the active daily vitality of these territories. Basically, they are parts of the city like others, but poorer, less planned because they are self-built, less structured with what formal society considers urban quality. Getting in touch with other quality parameters, such as the affectivity of places, the importance in daily life of certain centralities, milestones and meeting points perceived in walking, or even of characters and facts that marked the history of the community, certainly brought a component to the analysis that is much closer to the sense of belonging and the reasons for being of this territory.

The uses of nonverbal language play an important pedagogical role in the field of architecture and urbanism – they necessarily lead the student to a process of selection, content translation and, consequently, synthesis. Drawing is the main language of this architect researcher, so exploring the compositional forms of recording, analysis and graphic synthesis were also fundamental. The coexistence process was recorded in written and photographic reports, route maps and keyword schematic drawings. This process led to a synthesis of three maps and the construction of an online platform available to the entire community, as the group realized during the work that the richness of this organized and readable documentation is a community-owned heritage. As stated by Magnani (2002), there is a time to reorganize the seemingly scattered data by pointing other meanings at what one imagined understood.

SÃO REMO, SIMULTANEOUS APPROACHES

The São Remo slum is located in the west of the city of Sao Paulo, adjacent to the University City, headquarters of the University of Sao Paulo (USP). The history of the formation of the slum is intertwined with that of USP, both due to its physical proximity and the economic and social distance between its communities. The USP was created in 1934 at a time of great cultural and academic unrest in the various fields of science, and also at the moment of formation of specialized cadres for the superior teaching, little existent until then. In this context arises the idea of creating a university city to bring together undergraduate courses scattered throughout Sao Paulo, with the location of

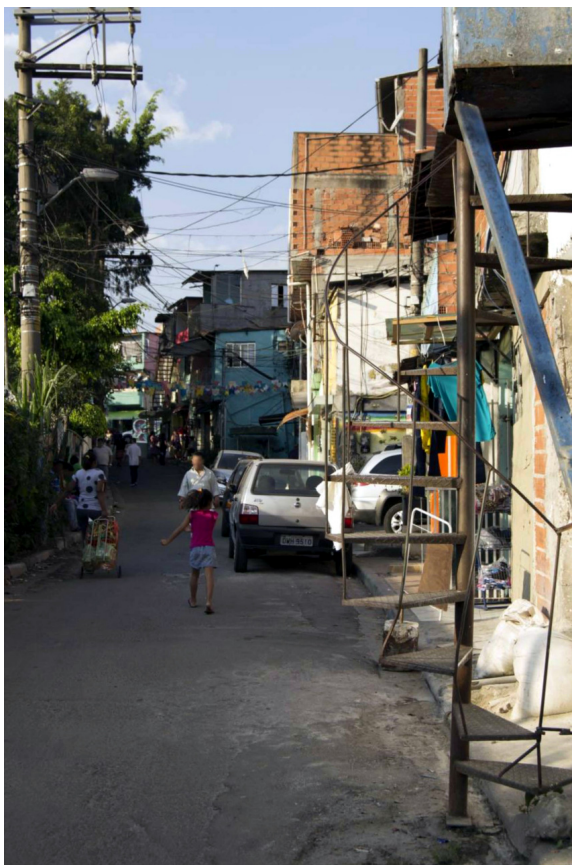


Figure 2 – Photo of São Remo slum. At the top of the image is the University City.
Source: collection of images of the discipline. Photo: Ana Maria Haddad, 2017.

Butantã being chosen, instituting the “University City Armando Salles de Oliveira”. In the 1940s, the first colleges were set up on *campus*, but it was between the 1960s and 1970s that major investments were made in infrastructure works and construction of the first units to transfer courses. And it is during this period that USP and São Remo slum meet.

The history of the formation of São Remo is no different from most of the slums and popular allotments of the Sao Paulo metropolis. The industrialization process and, consequently, the intense migratory movements towards cities were the engines of peripheral expansion - an incomplete and precarious urbanization. The place of those who came here looking for work was not given by policies of access to urbanized land and formal housing, but rather improvised from access to land to self-construction of housing. Thus begins the wait for the state one day to “correct” the problem, provide infrastructure and provide public services.

São Remo, how does it come about? Like so many other slums, the construction company in charge of the work needed labor, and migrant workers arriving in Sao Paulo needed work and housing. How was it resolved? The construction company installed the workers in temporary housing, where today is the São Remo slum, and when the work was completed, the workers settled in the place, thus emerging the São Remo slum and with it the struggles for permanence and improvements, that is, to make temporary housing their “neighborhood”. And if some achievements are made, in 1979 water and electricity services arrive, and over the years, asphalt, social services and punctual improvements emerge. To this day these struggles remain, now for regularization and urbanization.

⁴The “Program Avizinhar”, established in 1998, aims to create a respectful coexistence between USP and the population next to *campus*. The Program operates in educational activities, family, school and community support and cooperation networks.

Since the beginning of the occupation, the relationship between USP and São Remo has been permeated by conflicts and mediated by dependence on labor relations. Conflicts arose over land ownership, were permeated by the stigma of violence and crime attributed to slums and mediated by labor relations. If in the beginning the mediation was due to the absorption of labor for the construction of the campus, today it occurs in the offer of general service jobs in USP units. But the history of these neighbors is also punctuated by other relationships: since the 1990s, research and extension carried out at USP has reached São Remo, such as the Pro-Rectorate of Culture and Extension’s “Program Avizinhar”⁴ Extension Project, and others in progress at the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters and Human Sciences (Portuguese acronym: FFLCH), School of Communications and Arts (Portuguese acronym: ECA), Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism (Portuguese acronym: FAU), Veterinary, Biology, among others.

Today, São Remo is a consolidated neighborhood that continues to fight for recognition, improvements and urbanization. Its urban and social dynamics are very intense, its commerce and service intensified with new bars, bakeries, hairdressers, various shops, restaurants, leisure and sports areas, street parties,

⁵ See Barbon et al. (2017).

⁶ The “Socio-territorial Preliminary Diagnosis of the São Remo Settlement” of the 2016 Housing and Urban Development Company (Portuguese acronym: CDHU) points out that 70% of households have at least one worker within USP.

among other services and especially work opportunities. Cultural manifestations also occur, with the “*pancadões*” (Brazilian funk parties), and other activities focused on culture and education. If it were previously off the map, now has address and zip code. The housing market heats up, new agents emerge from within and outside the urbanized core – real estate brokers, rentier investors, developers and builders – who negotiate, intermediate, produce and manage the purchase and sale of housing⁵, a new dynamic that aims for self-construction and market production.

São Remo comprises an area of 64,000 m² and houses more than three thousand families. The relationship with USP is still strong: 70% of these families have some relative employed at the University, however, education and technical training is low throughout the community⁶. USP, in these 50 years, has been much more of an opportunity for employment than a relationship for the emancipation of vocational training. The relationship with the University is ambiguous and made by dissonant voices, actors who go beyond volunteering and establish a fruitful partnership such as the São Remo Circus School, the Alavanca Project, the São Remo newspaper, fraternities and sororities of students and actors that see the slum as a focus of violence, building walls and gates of control.

The discipline group’s first contact with the slum’s environment was through Alavanca Project, an NGO focused on the support of school-age children that offers school tutoring, family support, and art-educational activities. The institute had international funding between 2005 and 2013, and today survives poorly with donation resources. However, its role still persists as a center for documenting the history of the slum and social care for some families.

Seeking to work in response to this first contact, the group decided to organize with the Alavanca Project children an affective mapping program to playfully, know the places of identity, the community focal points, the pieces and the activities that awaken the belonging (MAGNANI, 2002). Simultaneously, we selected authors from the theoretical field to work the look of the researchers Antonio Candido, Adauto Cardoso, Celso Athayde, Gabriel Feltran, Jessé Souza, Yvonne Mautner, Miguel Bustamante Nazareth, Suzana Pasternak, among others, and we seek to build knowledge on the subject of precarious neighborhoods in the Brazilian metropolises.

It can be said that the “problematic” slum is no longer an unknown phenomenon. The last century closes with a consolidated set of studies that conceptualize, represent, specialize, quantify, analyze the changes and transformations of slums, as well as studies on policies and programs for slums urbanization, from social and urbanistic impacts of interventions, urban and land regularization to programmatic, methodological and project aspects. These studies, both in the theoretical and empirical sphere, guided us to ground and guide the themes with the group of students.

If, until the 1970s, little was known about the slums of Sao Paulo, little by little, in the 1960s, the “problematic” slum began to come into the agenda, either by the state or by the action of urban social movements, which began to fight for

the recognition of the slums. Until then these were recurrently named by society as a place of urban poverty, social disintegration, danger, crime, marginality. The lack of studies and recognition of the slum as a right to be in the city has left its mark on the social imagination, and the slum remains, to this day, full of prejudices and stigmatized. From the 1970s, a cadre of researchers at Brazilian universities and technicians in the public power began to consolidate their work on urban precariousness, opening up new interpretations of the slum, not just as a place of crime and an urban problem to be eradicated.

The founding texts that supported us come from the 1970s, when a group of teachers from FAU-USP began to research popular housing and its relationship with the expansion and structuring of peripheral space⁷. These texts supported the contrast between the structuring of peripheral space and the almost unsuccessful theory of marginality prevailing in the academic circles of the time, and outlined the concepts of self-construction and periphery by deconstructing the hegemonic idea that the places of the poor in the city were of marginality and violence – on the contrary, they are workers' dwelling places⁸ (MAUTNER, 2017).

Other selected texts introduced the current interpretation of the reality of the peripheries and slums, their social and urban dynamics. These start from the "close and inward" look (MAGNANI, 2002), in which "peripheral situations" are not only considered as the place of informality, incivility and violence, but as the place that leads to recognizing the "other" as subject of valid interests, values and legitimate demands (FELTRAN, 2008). In addition, the book *A Country called Favela* (ATHAYDE; MEIRELES, 2014) provided unpublished data and testimonials from residents about the current social, economic and cultural conditions of the slums in Brazil and the "new discourse" of the slum as a place of opportunity, prompting a series of questions in the fieldwork.

While these texts opened the interpretation of the current social and urban dynamics of the peripheries and slums, on the other, they deepened the interpretation of new conflicts and social tensions related to other normative regimes in the slum. The peripheral neighborhoods and the slums are not only those where the discourse prevails that the state is absent, it is where conflicts of power and social and political order manifest themselves, consequently, where "crime" gains control and dominion over them⁹, as "owner" of space, sustaining fear and intimidation (NAZARETH, 2017). In the false discourse of the absent State there is the action of the State in maintaining order motivated by repressive and violent actions to guarantee "public safety".

In the course routine, each moment of socializing with the children and their personal and territorial relationship networks provided a moment of reflection and direction of the study, the drifts (CARERI, 2013) were both a tool for deepening local knowledge and input for reflective analysis. By successive approximations (PIGNATARI, 2004), the group was electing questions mainly motivated by the gregarious character of Alavanca Project and the historical material that were found in the archives.

⁷ See Lemos and Sampaio (1978, 1994), Maricato (1979) and Pasternak and Mautner (1982).

⁸ John Turner's studies of barricades in Peru excited Brazilian researchers at the time and contributed to revising the idea of marginalization of the popular strata that self-built on the outskirts of cities in Latin America. They showed that the barricade was not a disorganized process nor a place for bandits and outlaws, but a place for workers who had no access to popular housing. (MAUTNER, 2017).

⁹ As an example, in the 2000s the "pacification of internal relations with crime" was consolidated in the state capital of Sao Paulo, and the "world of crime" began to mediate internal tensions within the community, from neighbors' fights to thefts and thefts (FELTRAN, 2008).



Figure 3 – Unraveling the map of São Remo
Source: collection of images of the discipline. Photo: Elisabeth Orthon, 2017.



Figure 4 – One of the guide boys in the activity of knowing São Remo
Source: collection of images of the discipline. Photo: Elisabeth Orthon, 2017.

The first approaches were made with the Alavanca Institute group of students in a mutual recognition workshop, where students from USP and Alavanca mapped locations from aerial photography. This activity played an important role in initiating bonds between students and researchers, but also in recognizing links with the place. As they scanned the map with their eyes and fingers, all involved were building a universe of affective points in the territory of the São Remo slum.

The first workshop unfolded into another, now in the actual urban space of the slum. Proposed as a playful activity for the Alavanca adolescent students, along with the postgraduate students they should go through the slum, passing through important places for them and marking this route on the map. These “important places” brought a rich understanding of urban space and revealed different levels of what we call important places here. Certainly, the young people wanted to take the students to know their homes, but with the activity, they also ended up visiting other important places of daily life, such as the market, the bakery, the school, the health center, the circus, the soccer field and also meeting places, such as the headquarters of the association, the square of the parties and the main access points of the slum. Spontaneously, the boys and girls who embarked on the play invited the students to make daily journeys and recognize together the places of affection and importance for life in São Remo.

These two workshops associated with classroom seminars resulted in a mapping of the São Remo slum’s identity places in a different key than conventional mapping that defines equipment, open spaces, services and housing, for example. The difference is precisely in the qualification of urban space from the place of speech of the inhabitant. This hierarchy of places of importance is therefore very potent for the development of intervention projects, mainly because it is associated with values from within the territory in dialogue with the researcher’s scholarship, conquered by his activity of simultaneous analysis between experience and theoretical reading.

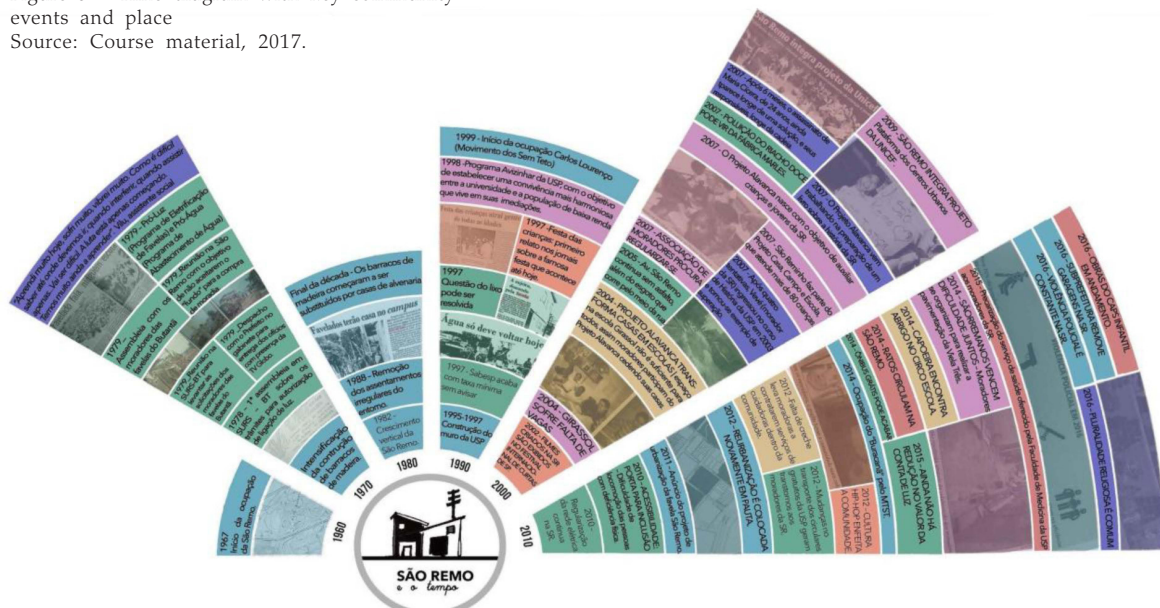
Another extremely rich activity that also developed in direct contact workshops with the community was the reading of the collection of documents about the

São Remo slum at Alavanca Institute. The Institute’s library, the neighborhood newspaper collection and the USP’s collection made it possible to recognize the striking facts of the struggle for the right to housing, land and essential urban services such as water, electricity, schools and health centers. Access to the notebooks of the assemblies of inhabitants and the diaries of collective activities can also bring to the group the importance of some characters of the history of the place. It was from this concern that the workshop of interviews with inhabitants was born.

The struggle for infrastructure, for resources for public health and education equipment has been the subject of precarious neighborhoods since the 1970s, as we saw earlier. Thus, research was included in a broader sphere of significance in relation to the theme of precarious neighborhoods. In São Remo slum was no different, knowing which of these questions are still latent and which emanate from the consolidation of the territory and the local community was content awakened by the readings of historical documents. Again the theoretical tools appeared to support this investigative method in response. Understanding once again with Antonio Candido (1985), Décio Pignatari (2004) and the language structures, the group sought to build a narrative structure that ran through the history of the slum’s formation; the construction of meaning and identity from the election of actor characters (associations, churches, children, the elderly, the First Command of the Capital – PCC, schools); the motivations (urban infrastructure, property rights, public facilities, mobility, security).

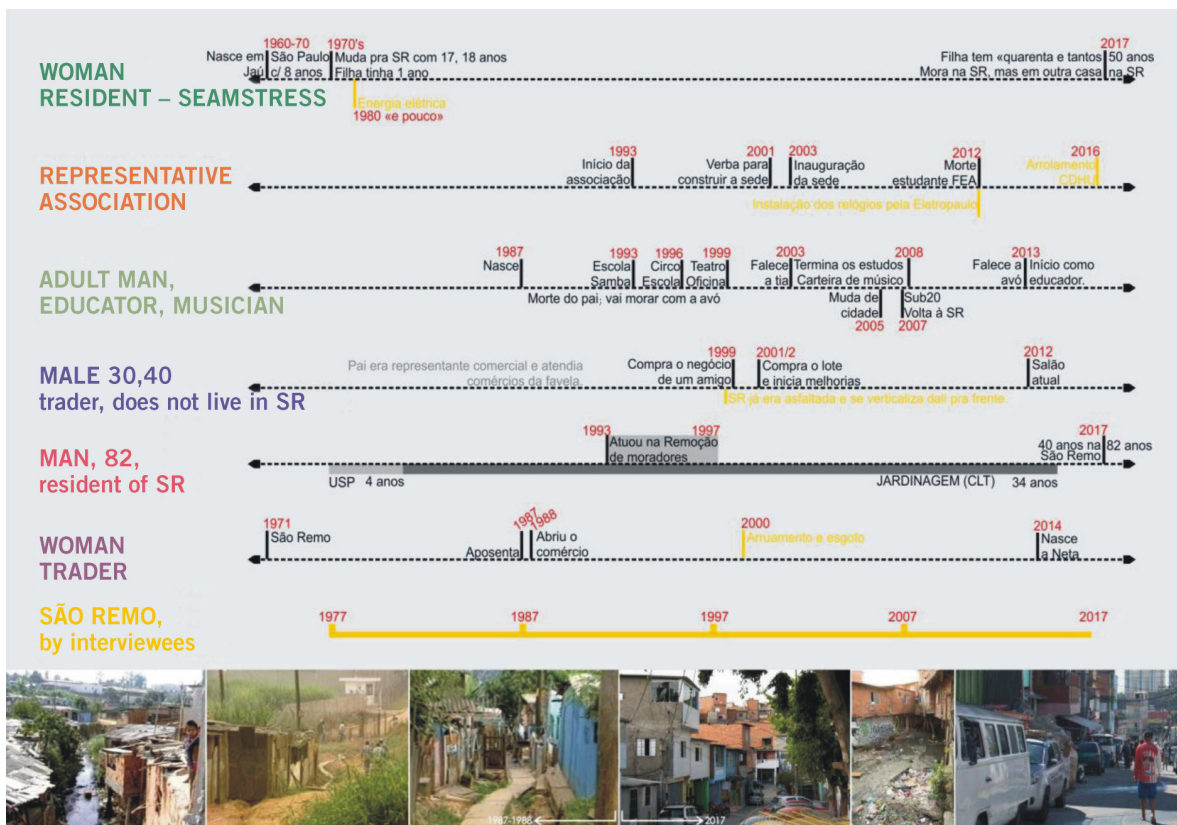
Crossing the experience of walking with boys and girls, reading the places of importance, the group of students realized that the conversation with some residents would be important to think about the publication of the research results. The list of interviewees was made by choosing the characters that would add to the various levels of reading a qualitative look at the documents. The

Figure 5 – Time diagram with key community events and place
Source: Course material, 2017.





Figures 6 and 7 – Synthetic cartographies of the studied actors of the São Remo slum, a temporal and spatial reading
Source: Material produced in the discipline, 2017.



result of the conversations was the strengthening of urban reading and the understanding of a historical collective path that explains much of the morphology of the territory. The speeches helped to understand the main centralities, the typical needs of self-built territories and separated from more inclusive public policies, but, above all, to recognize the urban characteristics of the São Remo slum.

By this recognition it was possible to build a timeline that mapped the main collective initiatives, achievements, disputes and, deep down, the rooting in place and the construction of a sense of belonging beyond individual or family feeling, the value of community life as a force (ATHAYDE; MEIRELES, 2014). Also essential were the Alavanca Project documents, which told the story of the occupation and formation of the São Remo slum, and the collection of the *São Remo Newspaper*, the main information vehicle in the neighborhood from the 1990s until 2010.

Interesting discussions have emerged from this analysis that revise the concept of precariousness and the notion of the slum itself, in which the theme of self-construction, self-management, builds a community power that is now associated with entrepreneurship and a less pejorative view of the concepts of adaptation and inclusion. The struggle for autonomy of functioning and for the right to urban goods and services, which began as a struggle for survival in the face of lack of planning, suddenly, today it can also be read as a determination that led to a struggle for greater autonomy, for the expansion of rights, for the construction of the meaning of belonging.

This process of analytical and purposeful reading has recognized that the slum is also a city, with its groups, its elites, its privileged and degraded places, but with a relatively stronger community dimension than other middle-class or even upper-class neighborhoods, now housed in condominiums where services are all privatized. São Remo still has many environmental, social problems, due to precariousness, a struggle that must continue and is constantly threatened by factions linked to drug trafficking and weapons, which see the construction of autonomy as a threat to power. The research work that articulates different instances of knowledge about the place has the vocation of structuring more assertive analytical readings about the understanding of the informal territory.

RESULTS

These findings discussed in the classroom resulted in the organization of an open and free web platform. All material collected, research sources, other academic works on São Remo, testimonials, preliminary records and summary maps were made available on the site. With this product, the group also sought to answer one of the first questions that the contact with the community raised: build yet another emancipation tool from shared knowledge. Whether for future academic works or to propagate the identity of residents of the São Remo slum and prove that the historical, anthropological and urbanistic foundations consolidate one of the essential platforms for building knowledge about the contemporary urban environment.

The results of the work described here were shared with the community as we returned with the maps and the online platform for the Alavanca group. Part of the motivating questions of this research was to provide residents of São Remo with tools to recognize their citizens' rights and to contribute to identity building – a fundamental step towards social autonomy.

Thus, this article aimed to point out the methods adopted in the academic research laboratory on the subject of precarious neighborhoods in large urban centers. Our reflection came from the recognition that the tools that originated in the historical movement of struggle for housing, urbanity, and intersected public action projects are no longer sufficient to support reading and action in these urban realities.

The role of public faculty transcends the issue of pure documentation and systematization of data. Other cross-sectional methodological articulations need to be constructed and researchers must be trained to recognize the complex diversity of these urban and human tissues. If we can recognize one of the vocations of the public university, in its extension field, the dialogical action between academia and society starts from the necessary understanding of equality before knowledge.

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