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Abstract

Urban Negotiations are art strategies that find possibilities for art to engage in the urban environment. Urban Negotiations are collaborative and participatory actions in the production of public and private space. An Artwork for an Imperfect World is a collaborative work with Temple Bar Gallery, Merchants Quay Ireland (NGO) and people suffering homelessness. For a duration the gallery became host, a place of hospitality, where each evening dinner was served from a redesigned Van. The artwork now functions as a mobile needle exchange unit in the streets of Dublin.

Nomadic Kitchen is an interstitial art initiative that engages in the process of negotiating the urban environment with the residents of Vila Nova, São Miguel Paulista (São Paulo, Brazil). The structure functions as a locus where residents self govern and develop flexible and creative ways of building a context for living. The structure of Nomadic Kitchen is flexible, fluid, and adaptable to different occasions and contexts. Urban decisions around producing public and social space are made while cooking, eating and meeting in the Nomadic Kitchen. This interstitial structure becomes a place of dialogue while defining the conditions that determine public and private space.

Keywords: art, collaborative and participatory action, Urban Negotiations

"Social space is produced and structured by conflict. With this recognition, a democratic spatial politics begins." Rosalyn Deutshe (1996)

1. Public Art is linked to direct and participatory democracy and installed with permission from the state. It comes with authority and the spirit of egalitarianism and for the benefit of the common good.

There are discursive and complex relations between concepts of Public, Space and Art. There is currently, theoretical discourse that positions this relationship as having an anonymous aesthetic and social unity in the urban domain. This specifically relates to public art and monumental sculpture. The language and terminology has adjusted to the changing

conditions and definitions of "public art" and "art in public space"¹. What is clear is that there is a relational flux between art, architecture and urban space and this relationship is frequently represented through formal material qualities. These properties of 'public', 'space', and 'art' are visualised in physical urban geographies, in formal terms these entities

It frequently is expressed in the formal qualities of monumental sculpture. Art in public space may or may not come with approval. It may be situated practice addressing context as a significant element in the work or guerrilla like art interventions aiming to address a wider audience.

2. Grant Kester, "A dialogical aesthetic...is based on the generation of a local consensual knowledge that is only provisionally binding and that is grounded instead at the level of collective interaction.

3. Christian Kravagna, Distinguishes the different models of participatory practice from "Interactivity", "Collective action" and "New Genre Public Art". He is critical of its relationship to the powerlessness and inefficiency of politics to address economy and the reliance on citizen labour to do its work.

4. Traditional lines of occupying the urban proceed in historical time, in analogue time. "Lines of Flight" is a term attributed to Deleuze and Guattari. "We think any society is defined not so much by its contradictions as by its Lines of Flight, it flees all over the place, and it is very interesting to try follow the lines of flight taking shape at any particular moment". Gilles Deleuze 1995.

are expressed in abstract modernist sculpture in public and private building and plaza's. More recent art practices have tried to engage with a more expanded idea of audience. New models of practice are described as collaborative art practice, socialist art actions, participatory art practice and dialogical practice have made the materiality of space more fugitive.² There are many models of art practice that address forms of collaboration, participatory practice, and interactive actions. These are among the many references linked to situated practice that emphasize a form of social intervention. These are disputed territories by Christian Kravagna (1998), "Working on the Community, Models of Participatory Practice".³ It would appear that the capacity for art to engage in the first place is to intervene into an already pre-existent space. To this end definitions or constructed meanings of public and private space are not at the behest of art theory and contemporary cultural discourse but rather, more critically attained in the legislature, political theory and politics. The publicity around this relationship and discourse in the public sphere is embedded in concepts of direct and representative democracy. In stratified societies where different political systems prevail, political systems of governance operate from a top down structure; in this model politics prescribes urban identities. Alternatively as Chantal Mouffe writes, "politics is about the constitution of the political community". Locating a person's private concern within the boundaries of public interest is to be found in political theory and the legislature. These are the concerns of the state and its constitution. Nancy Frazer asserts that there are distinguishing characteristics and connotations that denote public space as relating to the state, it is for communal use, accessible to everyone and for the common good/interest. The public sphere is where public opinion is deliberated around matters of public interest and common good. This is an idealised or utopian sphere in the Habermasian sense that the public sphere has a zero degree of culture. It is autonomous from the political sphere, where the middle class debates the issues of public life. Public space is a place of legitimacy, a conflictual space of what constitutes being legitimate. In this sense it is a temporal space that undergoes different uses and utilisations. At its most productive or creative it is not based on coherence and unity but instead

is a place of process, materially and discursively negotiated. While coherence supports structure and efficiency, temporal space is open to lines of flight.⁴ Public space as a site of conflict, dispute or protest is an unpredictable place. Discursively, public space is a social space and a precondition for the urban. What material and social forms constitute public space? What is it about space that is public? What processes are a precondition to its legitimacy and illegitimacy? What are the public forms that locate public space? What strategies are employed in its appropriation and negation? These are fundamentally ethical positions that favour a particular way of life, mapped out in the principals of justice.

Nancy Frazer theorises space as something out there, that out there is where political theory provides the possibility for politics as a place of constructing the political. Where space is to be perceived as a void to be filled with objects, buildings or a static mass, is where politics is performed. These notions underwent a radical revision; post the urban explosion of the 1960's. New thinking around how we engage with urbanism regarded space as socially produced. Urban theorists such as Edward Soja, David Harvey, Neil Smith, Doreen Massey, Henry Lefebvre among others suggested we experienced a spatial turn. This spatial turn embraced the idea that the relationship of entities like space and politics are symbiotic. Edward Soja and Lefebvre refer to this as a heterotopia, a trialectics of space the links the material, conceptual and the spatial as a symbiotic relationship.

I acknowledge that the initial premise of this inquiry on concepts around public space is influenced by the principle of political western democracy and the planning of cities that promotes ideas of a single and comprehensive public space. In the Habermasian sense of the public sphere and public space is a place for reasoned rational debate to resolve differences. Rights to access are predetermined by the legitimacy of the law and formal planning laws. Subaltern groups, squatters, migrant workers offer alternative strategies and challenges to negotiating participation and access to public space. Participation is never based on participatory parity; access is about adapting or appropriating the language of the dominant group

to being heard. Alternatively subaltern groups firstly need an arena of their own to deliberate and build their solidarities and objectives, to find their own voice in framing a position outside the standard modes of talk that construct a 'public' and 'space'.

New spatial metaphors of public space are no longer only grounded in physical spatial phenomenon. The public sphere of discourse now takes on a virtual sphere; it is about flows and speed. The virtual public sphere has a greater degree of participatory democracy of connection and communication, e.g. text messaging, Internet chat rooms, bebo-blogging, radio and T.V. The capacity to communicate is largely a condition of media and education. Public space from the Greek agora to the modern marketplace, corporate and state architecture and urban communities give sign value to the conditions of urban life. This value is expressed in social relations played out in the street.

Urban spaces are arenas of multiple and competing publics, occupied by people unequal in gender and class. They are locational and situational spaces of conflict among disputing interest groups and individuals. "Urban space is the product of conflict. This is so in several, incommensurable senses. In the first place, the lack of absolute social foundation – "The disappearance of the markers of certainty" – makes conflict an ineradicable feature of all social space. Second, the unitary image of urban space constructed in conservative urban discourse is itself produced through division, constituted through the creation of an exterior. The perception of a coherent space cannot be separated from a sense of what threatens that space, of what it would look to exclude. Finally, "urban space is produced by specific socioeconomic conflicts that should not simply be accepted, either wholeheartedly or regretfully as evidence of the inevitability of conflict but, rather, politicized – opened to contestation as social and therefore mutable relations of oppression"(Deutsche, 1996). Mediating urban space involves building a framework of negotiation that creatively seeks out a new image of spatial urbanism. Negotiating the urban is as much a political activity as it is an aesthetic one. This invokes the notion that spatial heterotopias are political, economic, capital and aesthetic. Artists do not exist in a vacuum, they also inhabit this

urban spatial phenomenon. The notion of art practices being disconnected to society is a more recent modernist phenomenon. Investing in the notion of the artist as genius and transcendental subject and the autonomy of the art object as something outside that connect with society through a shared system of signs is a dislocation. It is connected to an industry that invests the art experience singularly to the object. To re-connect art to the urban requires other models of intervention in shaping new relationships and narratives.

Art and the Political

One might ponder what is the motivation and enthusiasm of art to intervene and do what could be considered the work of politics? What are the implications for art when it engages with public concerns, public welfare and social problems? Should possibilities for art and artists restrict practices only to systems of representation and reflection? What are the challenges for art in urban space that engage in urban practices that are only articulated at the level of the iconic, metaphoric or symbolic? What are the implications and consequences for art that crosses over into the corpus of the Political and the Urban?

Does it run the risk of cannibalism and is consumed by society and disappears into the sediment of the urban interstices.

I would like to outline two projects that test possibilities for art to negotiate urbanism, to intervene as an urban catalyst in the production of social space.

"An Artwork for an Imperfect World" and "Nomadic Kitchen" – Urban Negotiation are two case studies that test: What are the limits of art in negotiating urban space? What are the conditions that define it as art? What is the relationship and role of art and audience?

An Artwork For An Imperfect World

"An artwork for an imperfect world" is an art initiative that took place in Temple Bar Gallery Dublin Ireland in February 2005. "An Artwork for an Imperfect World" is an art strategy that address's the

social and political structures that creates homelessness. The concerns of this project address the issues of homelessness in the context of urban space, democracy and the possibility for art to respond to these relations. Democracy is an ongoing project in the process of renewing itself. While Ireland has become a very rich society, there is a sense of political apathy and impotence shrouded in self-interest. Concepts of citizenship are about participation, one feels a sense of belonging that is inclusive rather than exclusive. Participation regards one as a member of a community, country, in effect, protected by the legislature. The compelling challenge to participatory democracy is “what does the membership entail?” Citizenship is legitimated through forms of cultural and economic exchange in producing evidence of ownership of property or tenancy. To participate in the economy one needs a credit rating, show evidence of tenancy, to have receipt of address and utility bills permits access to the system. Homelessness is not something that just happens, it is created by society; it is structural. This project evolved as a collaborative process bringing together a number

of NGO organisations that support people suffering homelessness. Merchants Quay Ireland, Focus Ireland, The Homeless Agency, people who are homeless, Temple Bar Gallery, City Arts and the artist. One of the challenges asked by the artist and the artwork is “How can the artwork respond to this social concern and engage beyond systems of representation, metaphor or the symbolic”? Homelessness is on the doorstep of Temple Bar Gallery, which is situated in the heart of the cultural quarter of Dublin. Similarly, “how can the gallery engage beyond aesthetic representation” to actively engage in the issues beyond the reflective, to welcome homeless men and women into their space?

“An Artwork for an Imperfect World” redesigned a van (a more sophisticated soup kitchen) capable of serving a hot meal to people who are homeless, in Temple Bar Gallery, for a period of two weeks. This was carried out in partnership with Merchants Quay Ireland, an NGO organisation who offered the expertise and personnel skilled in supporting marginal people in society. The project also offered information and advice on social services, i.e., health

Image 1: An Artwork for an Imperfect World, Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin, 2005. Sources: Mike O’Kelly’s file.





Image 2: An Artwork for an Imperfect World, Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin, 2005. Sources: Mike O'Kelly's file.

care facilities, emergency accommodation, etc. The artwork would become entrusted to Merchants Quay after the gallery experience and be an integrated element, an extended dimension to their public outreach program (see Image 1)

The act of placing the artwork (an altered van) capable of serving a hot meal into Temple Bar Gallery, questions the role of gallery as site and art as object as an appropriate place to hold this discourse. The project disrupts the ordinary function of a gallery as a place of aesthetics and cultural exchange. Instead it alters the encounter in terms of ethical relations where acts of exchange are worked out in the face to face. From 21st February 2005, for a two-week period, Temple Bar Gallery became a place of hospitality where dinner was served each evening between 6.30p.m. - 9.30p.m. The Gallery was screened from the public gaze to create an intimate space, where (what Merchants Quay call their clients) could eat dinner, talk, exchange stories, read the newspaper, magazines and use the toilet. The structure of the work was a method where different activities took place.

Since there was nothing on display, there was no spectacle to be observed, the gallery became a place of ethical exchange, a place of occupation and use. This alters the relationship of audience from spectator to user/occupier, where participation or engagement is a constant negotiation.

The gallery became an interstitial space where the artwork creates the occasion that leaves enough room for others to interfere, use and negotiate urban practices. Meaning is generated by valued judgements of sign value, use value, art, non-art, and surplus value. This work is not structured around consensus, but acknowledges that the public sphere is not all-inclusive. The temporary nature of the work awkwardly draws attention to the fault-lines of how we see ourselves as a society. This project is about Urban Nomadism and dislocation, it tried to comprehend the complex condition that create homeless and how art can contribute and engage in that debate in a meaningful way.

The gallery space becomes transformed to a place of dialogue where human exchange is an ethical

encounter. This brings with it a level of obligation. Initiating this discourse in a gallery transmogrifies it to become a space of ethics. Since the launch of "An Artwork for an Imperfect world" in February 2005, Merchants Quay Ireland subsequently uses the altered van as a mobile needle exchange utility as part of their outreach program.

Nomadic Kitchen – An Urban Negotiation

Nomadic Kitchen is an urban negotiation in how urban space is constructed and socially produced. This idea emphasizes space not as a natural phenomenon but as socially produced and negotiated through ethical relations. These relationships are experienced in urban practices and the built environment. The site of this discourse is placed between the formal-city as a predetermined object/artifact that renders public and private space as prescriptive and fixed and the informal city, regarded by orthodox urbanists as illegitimate space, non-space in some instances does not register on local maps. Marginal communities, *informal*

settlements are signified as zones of exclusion. These are spaces of proximity, interstitial spaces of territorial assemblages whose structures are in an indeterminate state of impermanence and incompleteness. The future of Urbanism does not hold a universally applicable image, neither for a cultural vision or a method of intervention for artists, architects or town planners. The Global City or megalopolis is not only challenged and influenced by their own expanding suburbs but by their secondary cities and beyond. The reach of this influence is considerable, not only addressing centre and periphery but also intersecting with formal and informal economies on a global scale. Informal urbanism offers alternative ways to negotiate and articulate particular urban practices in finding new urban imaginings.

Spaces of Proximity

Mudança De Cena, (MDCN) an NGO organization that works with marginal communities on the periphery of São Paulo invited me to make an art intervention with an informal settlement. In advance

Image 3: Aerial Photograph of São Miguel, Paulista, Brazil. Sources: Mike O'Kelly's file.



of making any proposal, we made a research field trip. We visited a number of informal communities in São Paulo and its city limits where MDCN have a long and committed working relationship. It emerged that the Vila Nova, São Miguel would be a suitable partner to build a sustainable collaboration. Vila Nova is an informal settlement about 24km north east of São Paulo. It sits between the river Tietê and a railway track on reclaimed land that is prone to seasonal flooding (see Image 3, aerial photograph). It has a population of 45,000 inhabitants, more than half of which are approximately 18 years of age and under. Vila Nova is robust and resolute in its determination to exist and modernize as a regenerative urban community. It is environmentally fragile, difficult to urbanize and volatile to clandestine developers and planning authorities. Up until the 1970s, informal settlements were mostly ignored by urban planners and frequently not regarded to be part of the formal city register. Their existence was illegitimate and provisional.

5. Participatory Budgeting translates as "Orçamento Participativo". This fosters citizen involvement to the planning and management of their locality.

As communities organized and formed subaltern groups, they found their own voice and mechanisms to agitate State Authorities to provide infrastructure, to supply water, electricity, sanitation, roads, footpaths, refuse collection and public space. Government investment in urban regeneration is always a project in progress and always seems to

be in a state of catching up. Informal settlements through self-regulation and governance struggle to avoid eviction and secure land tenure. New tools of negotiation evolved to help a public vision around the realities of diversity of urban habitation at local government level. These were known as "special social interest zones (ZEIS) or areas of special social interest (AEIS), the concept of ZEIS's was to identify specific needs and alternative strategies for living by communities. To recognize diversity in occupant's requirement that correspond to informal settlement, new categories in spatial planning legitimately started to look at and address the relationship between formal and informal urbanism. Recife was the first city to adapt ZEIS strategies in the 1980s. Other initiatives in developing instruments of representation where citizens are resourced to affect the planning and management of their localities are participatory budgeting (OP)⁵. Participatory budgeting was initiated in Porto Alegre in 1989 and Belo Horizonte, an urban district, was the first to establish a participatory housing budget. Participatory budgeting is now common in other Latin American countries, Venezuela, Uruguay, and Argentina.

Nova União Da Arte (NUA) in Vila Nova is such an NGO organisation that negotiates such volatile urban conditions. They appropriate art activities to build confidence around individual character and creativity in the social process of daily life. NUA and

Image 4: Front View, Vila Nova. Sources: Mike O'Kelly's file.

Image 5: Rear View, Vila Nova. Sources: Mike O'Kelly's file.



MDCN have been active agents in creating community and campaigning for social inclusion as part of the urban regeneration project in Vila Nova.

I was invited to sit in on a number of meetings that addressed strategic planning for future development of NUA, Vila Nova, São Miguel. The dominant issues discussed were the demolition of the existing workshop space and the re-appropriation of its land by the City Authorities. The consequences of this where, that NUA would be without a locus or arena to meet, deliberate, negotiate and discuss their needs, strategies and solidarities. The recent workshop space was an informal self-build initiative. It was a temporary "make-do" structure that was basic in its ability to function as a workshop space for residents. The facility comprised of two buildings divided by an open area. The dimensions were 12 x 5m and 8 x 5m. This included spaces for a workshop, office, classroom and toilets. It was a very bright and cheerful place with a welcoming atmosphere. The workshop space was demolished by the City Council firstly because it was an illegal structure and also because it did not comply with building, health and safety regulation, specifically inadequate toilets.

Thus the City Authorities demolished the structure and re-appropriated the land. Additional issues under discussion by the NGO group Nova União Da Arte in Vila Nova were to design and build a multi-purpose community space. This project had been under discussion since 2001. The current circumstance brought to bear a renewed sense of urgency to resolve the pressing crisis. The motivation of this project is to develop community through collaborative action, to develop Vila Nova as a place of hope. The long-term goal is to develop a coherent and professional plan for a community centre and apply for government and private sponsorship to build a centre for Nova União da Arte in Vila Nova.

At this meeting were discussed ideas about the possibility for art to engage and intersect with the current regenerative issues. Being sensitive to the volatile and uncertain circumstances of life in informal settlement requires a kind of solidarity that looks to new spatial narratives as a tactic to negotiate urban space. Within the speculative nature of these conversations we explored potentialities of human

interventions into urban practices. The nature of these dialogues were not linear speculations, but more explosive, explorative as *lines of flight* in finding desire and new spatial forms for urban living. As well as trying to transgress the boundaries of established norms of the every day, there was uncertainty as to how art could transgress into the real life politics of an informal settlement. I proposed an artwork, a structure that would support the concrete and life context of living in Vila Nova. The artwork would be an active agent in negotiating public / private space. This was to be developed to a more concrete proposal titled "Nomadic Kitchen".

Nomadic Kitchen

The concept and juxtaposition of "Nomadic Kitchen" derived its impulse and desire from attending meetings in the house of Hermes Cabrueras, the senior NGO in Nova União de Arte. Cuisine and food play a significant role in the way people organise the social and political of the day-to-day. Urban decisions around the process of regeneration were made while cooking, eating and conducting meetings at the kitchen table. The concept of Nomadic Kitchen is an open ended proposition that embraces the organic indeterminate nature of an Informal settlement "self build", "make - do" strategy.

"Nomadic Kitchen" is an art initiative, a sculptural structure installed in the community of Vila Nova. The structure of Nomadic Kitchen is flexible, fluid, nomadic and adaptable to different occasions and contexts. This artwork is sympathetic to the organic "make- do", "self-build" culture of the informal city. Nomadic Kitchen functions as a community locus where residents participate and collaborate in developing flexible and creative ways of building a context for living. Urban decisions around the regeneration process are made while cooking, eating or conducting meetings in the Nomadic Kitchen. To this extent, it becomes a public place of dialogue in negotiating the function of public and private space. In this sense, Nomadic Kitchen is a place of intervention where the aesthetic leaves enough room for others to reclaim, use and imagine new and creative ways of producing urban space. Nomadic Kitchen is an ethical project; it is an art/architecture of care. It is built by local labour in partnership with Mudança de Cena and residents of Vila Nova.



Images 6, 7: Vila Nova Workshop. Sources: Mike O'Kelly's file.

The working strategy for Nomadic Kitchen as an urban negotiation is to find a potential for art initiatives to engage in real life issues rather than reflect upon them. Among the many affiliated participants in urban regeneration are planners, architects, public utility workers, health care professionals and the residents. I see the role for art and artists to have a significant contribution beyond its capacity to decorate. Nomadic Kitchen will work closely with residents in seeking imaginative interpretations in producing social public space. This will evolve in an exchange of cultural positions, where art is one element in the exchange. The building of the sculptural structure will reveal a physical aesthetic that will bring a visibility to local forms of knowledge. This will be seen in local building techniques in producing public and private space. It is worth noting that residents in Vila Nova build their own living space that is they physically produce the social space in which they live. This is in contrast to formal city planning where western societies have become consumers of space.

Ownership and Urban Desire

To develop a sense of individual and collective ownership, I ran a series of workshops NUA and residents of Vila Nova. The objectives of these

workshops were to develop the concept of Nomadic Kitchen, to develop a public visual aesthetic for the future of the project. This involved discussing the aspiration of Nomadic Kitchen, as a locus for current social arrangements, its location and context and function in negotiating the regeneration process. Drawings and maquettes make visible the individual and collective desire of the project as an urban negotiation. The conceptual and communicative properties of the workshops created a dialogue around individual and collective need. The workshops developed and revealed an imaginative vision between the participant groups and the artist involved, to find an aesthetic creative process that looks to multiply possibilities. Using bits of drawing, masking tape, glue and cardboard that would take on urban dimensions and spill into the street and alleyways in unpredictable and diverse ways. A desire to celebrate nature was a recurring motif in many drawings and maquettes. This revealed the inclusion of plants, flowers, trees, vegetables and gardens. To respond to nature and explore the imagination of this desire, it was proposed to build a temporary / nomadic garden on the roof (see image 6 and 7). The logic of this initially motivated by utilizing the limitation on space but just as significantly, it disrupts the conception of the garden as implicitly natural. This garden would above ground, an interstice between the earth and the sky.

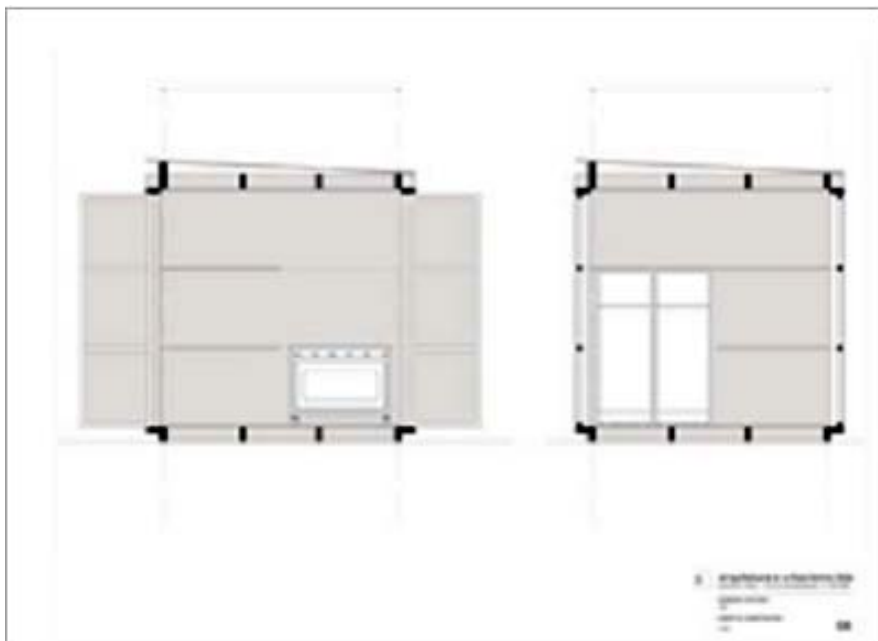


Image 8: Architectural Drawing, Plan and Elevation. Sources: Mike O'Kelly's file.

Image 9: Architectural Drawing, Section Detail. Sources: Mike O'Kelly's file.

To establish the project as a legitimate enterprise, the artwork “Nomadic Kitchen” to have ascension into the normative city, had to comply with mandatory building, health and safety regulations. There was the need to utilize the professionalism and language of architecture, to language the details of building methods and communicate the project to the City Planners. A young and emerging architectural practice group 5 / Obra was invited to collaborate with the concept and ambition of the project. They reviewed all material documentation and research framing the concept and context of the project. The drawings and maquettes from the workshops were an inspirational influence in developing design decisions. Acknowledging the limitation of space, it was proposed to locate the kitchen and temporary garden on the roof of the one storey two-bedroom house. This was the site of the project. This would symbolically bring a new visibility to the project and to the public image of Nova União de Arte and the surrounding community (see image 8 and 9).

The project has brought together different players in the regeneration process. The residents are embedded and integrated into the origination of the work; to this extent they are co-producers in urban negotiations. The parameters of this urban action binds together the context and different language narratives of a migrant community engaged in the creative process of building a context for living in Vila Nova. This is carried out in an unstable and volatile environment where its inhabitants seek out new trajectories of survival in an unforgiving urbanism.

The temporary interstitial artwork is integrated into an informal and unofficial house on appropriated land. The negotiation of the site is clearly materially and discursively disputed. There are similar and dissimilar interests distinguishing the relationship of formal (state control) and informal (self-organisation) at play in working out the narratives of what Michel De Certeau calls *daily life*.

Public/Private space does not so much pre-exist as a priori, in which urban negotiation takes place. It is created through the process of repeatedly reinventing itself over and over. Human interventions or intrusions into the urban do not only create the

site of discourse, but also discursively constructs the conditions of its existence. This creates a dislocation. Therefore aligning political practice, public action and art practices offers temporal moments of intrusion into the public domain, where new urban instruments create new urban imaginings in how we produce public/private space. There are intriguing questions that will find meaning, value and definition relating to disputed trajectories of public / private-ness of the project that straddles both positions simultaneously. During the course of the project we conducted a number of round table meetings with affiliated participants and residents. These were informal conversation held in the Nomadic Kitchen to discuss and identify a conception of the ephemeral and concreteness of public and private space. It was generally, a shared view that public space belonged to the state. While publicly, it belonged to no one, it also belonged to everyone at the same time. It is a gift from the state and available to the people for public use. The only public urban forms identified in Vila Nova were the schools. There are no public places to meet, public parks, gardens or play areas for children. What emerged from these discussions was a formality of public space that is premised on an ideal, the ideal that public space is for the common good. While the ideal can be kept in tact, access is not based on an equality of peers but rather is based on a social bracketing. Many mothers expressed “there are no public space in Vila Nova and that they could not bring their children to public parks. They were geographically far away and they could not afford the bus fare”. These perspectives confirm the legitimation of formal constituted public spaces. The conditions that constitute public space are authorised and administered by the state but there public vision was somewhere else.

The spatial ordering of legitimate urban space can be perceived to being inhibiting and invulnerable to change. Urban negotiation opens new trajectories of use, like De Certeau’s tactics of walking. “If it is true that a spatial order organises an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In a way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting

away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements". De Certeau 1984: 98

This is a tactic of fluid space, where creative urban practices adapt to the changing condition of informal urbanism. These could be called spaces of *appropriation*. Adjacent to the project there is an empty space; an abandoned piece of land that once had a tight network of informal houses. Residents have erected make shift goal posts and transformed this open space into a football pitch.

This is a creative act of antagonism, operating on the limits of interdiction between formal and informal urbanism. Informal appropriation of empty spaces offers another understanding on what is public about space. This illegitimate occupation, "making-do", tactic is about isolated actions, a response to the outside space of the formal city. Public spaces of appropriation are spaces of exclusion that change the organisation and operation of imagining new urban forms. The appropriation of space to become public space is about the lexicon of its future users.

Image 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15: Nomadic Kitchen Urban Negotiation Nova União da Arte in Vila Nova Sao Paulo Brazil. Meetings in Kitchen on public space and workshops in rear courtyard.





Negotiating public urban space, individually or collectively, brings with it a sense of obligation. Deutsche argues in favour of creating a “radical and plural democracy” that is premised on participator action in finding opportunity in disputed openings.

De Certeau’s appropriated tactics to delineate space is contingent and relational. “Dancing on a tightrope requires that one maintain *an equilibrium* from one moment to the next by recreating it at every step by means of adjustments; it requires one to maintain a balance that is never permanently acquired”. Nomadic Kitchen, as an interstitial structure and an urban negotiation, tests the potential of art in these disputed openings. The project offers a discourse through its instruments and method, creating different kinds of activities as an exchange. What is critical, is determining the value of that exchange. Implicit in generating value regarding the art enterprise is the role of audience in relation to the artwork. Nomadic Kitchen is in

an informal settlement situated on the periphery of São Paulo, occupied by residents who in generating human narratives through urban practices, takes a position of insider, one of occupation and not the gaze of the spectator, outsider. The potential for art and the production of space to engage in urbanism, creates a new dialectic and project paradigm. In part this asserts that new models of art practice has a public but not spectators. In the process of producing space, subjects are constructed in multiple trajectories creating a plurality of publics. Urban negotiations are tactics of appropriation, ways of intervening on the every day.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* De Certeau speak about the native of Kabylia. “Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its laws for him, he establishes within it a degree of *plurality* and creativity. By an art of being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation”. De Certeau 1984: 30



Image 16: Nomadic Kitchen-
Urban Negotiation, Nova
União da Arte in Vila Nova,
Sao Miguel, Brazil.

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Urban negotiation, art and the production of public space

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Abstract

Urban Negotiations are art strategies that find possibilities for art to engage in the urban environment. Urban Negotiations are collaborative and participatory actions in the production of public and private space. An Artwork for an Imperfect World is a collaborative work with Temple Bar Gallery, Merchants Quay Ireland (NGO) and people suffering homelessness. For a duration the gallery became host, a place of hospitality, where each evening dinner was served from a redesigned Van. The artwork now functions as a mobile needle exchange unit in the streets of Dublin.

Nomadic Kitchen is an interstitial art initiative that engages in the process of negotiating the urban environment with the residents of Vila Nova, São Miguel Paulista (São Paulo, Brazil). The structure functions as a locus where residents self govern and develop flexible and creative ways of building a context for living. The structure of Nomadic Kitchen is flexible, fluid, and adaptable to different occasions and contexts. Urban decisions around producing public and social space are made while cooking, eating and meeting in the Nomadic Kitchen. This interstitial structure becomes a place of dialogue while defining the conditions that determine public and private space.

Keywords: art, collaborative and participatory action, Urban Negotiations