Wikipraça: reinventing the public space of Sao Paulo.
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Fig. 1: Wikiplaza (Hacktitectura, Spain), Project Wikipedia Monmouth (País de Gales), Gezi Park, Istanbul (Source: Bünyamin Salman) and festiATO Augusta Park, Sao Paulo (Source: Vitor Prat)

How would be a square that works like Wikipedia? How to read an urban space where anyone could add paragraphs, objects, like a Wikipedia entry? How would be done the collective management of its content? Who would write the rules? What processes would activate the collective intelligence? Since the birth of Wikipedia, the wiki term (meaning 'fast' in Hawaiian language) has become synonymous of collective, collaborative. The encyclopedia made by few people is vertical. Wikipedia, cooked by many, is collective intelligence. Interestingly, in recent years, wiki participatory imaginary permeates everything. From economics to culture, from education to ecology . Although we can not speak of wikiurbanism as a trend or a consolidated method, there are several practices that bind the wiki and the urban.

One of the first cases of wikiurbanism was the Wikiplaza project, by the Spanish collective Hackitectura, developed from 2006. A physical structure of cyberpunk aesthetic that temporarily occupied the heart of a square, was the perfect metaphor for the digital connection between physical spaces and a networked Government prototype. On the other hand, the project WikiBrest (France) investigates the collective revitalization of the territory using a digital wiki (a kind of collaborative website) and promoting physical encounters. The Wikipedia itself is encouraging the connection between specific urban spaces and entries collectively written in its Monmouthpedia project (Wales): a simple QR code facilitates the Internet-urban space bridge from any telephone with Internet access. Wiki is more than a word, much more than a digital platform. Wiki is chiefly an attitude. An imaginary, a desire to do things together, to inhabit the void with new relationships.

Technology has evolved in the last decade. So much that the futuristic Wikiplaza dome , that first dream, is no longer needed. Today, the public space is occupied by wiki wires, wireless trails connecting ideas, desires. A photo of a place, shared on any social network, communicates with users around the world. A hashtag connects in real time the streets of Sao Paulo to Bogota or Moscow. The reality is more hybrid than ever: analogical and digital. Pixels blend with sidewalks. The at-signs, with the shadow of the jabuticaba tree. Digital photo galleries, with stone walls.

The Wikipraça Arouche - # WikipraçaSP (*WikiSquare, ndt*), which exists since half a year at the Arouche Square in Sao Paulo, took a mixed skin of bits and atoms. It was smell of ficus tree mixed with the effervescence of digital chats. The Wikipraça has not installed physical structures or dressed ideas: it was (and it will remain) a space to collectively draw relationships, desires, demands. It has been mostly a blank page than an untouchable poem.

Fig. 2: WikipraçaSP - Wikipraça Arouche Project logotype. Source: WikiPraça project.

Wikipraça as method

The first six months of the project already changed the original *Wikipraça* code. Each territory is unique. Predetermined formulas and closed solutions are useless. Especially in the Arouche Square, a plural and heterogeneous space in which mingle bohemia of Sao Paulo, the very diverse LGBT audiences, the Northeastern immigrants and a new wave of young (freelancers, creative, designers ...). Although Arouche is a green oasis in the city center, it is not without problems, conflicts and tensions. The different audiences do not talk much to each other. The place is still stigmatized by some São Paulo. In addition, the Arouche space is a living area, already occupied. We quickly realized that Arouche did not need a classic intervention (occupy public space), but a mediation.

We therefore have enabled many listening mechanisms for the Arouche territory: many informal conversations, meetings and lectures, workshops, chats, filming .... We launched, for example, a series of short interviews, # VocêeoArouche (#YouandArouche, ndt) with protagonists of the territory (street vendors, neighbors, merchants, goers, LGBT activists ...). In parallel, we opened a spreadsheet in Google Drive to map all the actors of the territory, divided into categories. The mechanism of action and listening was both analogical and digital, hybrid. On the Internet, the Wikipraça project relies on different channels. Facebook is the most important: we have a Facebook group, a collective discussion entitled WikiArouche, events for the key actions, and the profile WikipraçaSP (no fan page) which facilitates interaction. We have a Twitter account (to dialogue with relevant people and to communicate the process) and Instagram (more emotional interactions). We use an open email list (on standalone servers and Mail Man, free software) and a closed list for the most active group. The project team also created a group on WhatsApp and another one at Telegram. Living territories, in real time, formed by distributed information. This is one of the Wikipraça faces.

On the other hand, we work with a document tree in TitanPad.com (most open), spreadsheets in Google Drive and Trello to organize tasks. Most digital layers are open enabling everyone to participate. For example, to collect ideas, we activated a collective PAD entitled Ideas for actions and interventions. We understand the communication work as a communication-action in multi-layer networks in transmedia platforms. The territory is undoubtedly one of the major layers or platforms.

Within the territory Arouche, we have been developing various actions. Workshops on memes and participation in social networks. On the construction of street furniture with copyleft license. We also promoted some gatherings (digital debates) projected on a screen in the square of Arouche as Political Bodies (micro, feminisms and crowd) or Baderna Brazil (new movements and protest tactics). In hang outs participated activists throughout Brazil. The dialogue in real time from different cities is a happy glimpse of glocal space (global and local) and hybrid (digital and analog).

One of the most powerful experiments, inspiring and conflictive at the same time was the installation of the Wikirede (*Wikinet, ndt*). The net eventually died a few weeks later, making visible the main problems of the territory. We thus created a collective PAD to report jointly the process. I reproduce here a part of the post content: (See full post in Portuguese at http://wikipraca.org/nascimento-e-morte-de-uma-rede/)

"Birth and death of a network [the brazilian word *rede* designates a network as well as a hammock, ndt]

Built collaboratively by WikiPraça partners, residents and goers of the square, on a sunny Wednesday (december 17th), the WikiRede changed the dynamics of Arouche Square. At the beginning of the activity, [the spanish collective] Mister Basurama presented to the group the ropes mooring techniques and different possible supports. The group dressed a field study to evaluate the best place to build the net. Two networks would be built between four large plant pots, arranged in the middle of the square in front of the newsstand.

The design culture in Brazil is very far away from what really happens in the public space. An object as a hammock is very popular in Brazilians' private lives. The urban space could be filled with light, hanging furniture, which could be woven as hammocks, large enough for one or more persons lie down. But this never happens. Rather, the furniture of our parks is heavy and simple. The concrete bench that we find today in most urban areas is designed in order to be economical and to not allow people to lay horizontally (targeting the use of homeless persons).

Fig. 3: WikiRede. Source: WikiPraça project.

A few weeks after being built, problems began to emerge. Some residents and goers argued that the WikiRede had attracted thieves and homelesses. Some commented that a person assaulted the newsstand, after having been lying in the hammock watching the movement of the newsstand seller. On the same day that the project # WikipraçaSP - Wikipraça Arouche organized the debate on

Gentrification, a group of people cut one of the two networks. Some project participants talked to them, who argued that the network brought problems to the square: drugs, sex, tensions. Other residents, like Mariza Pinto, in the same conversation, defended the network as a communitary leisure space. Few suspected that the second network would also disappear. The participants of the #Wikipraça project invited everyone to a conversation about the #WikiRede. However, none of detractors attended to any assembly. The second #WikiRede died. A Arouche goer helped the detractors of #WikiRede to withdraw the last network tied to a pot. According to the testimony of Hélcio Beuclair, only three people were responsible for the death of the network.

The birth and death of the #WikiRede is a perfect metaphor for the difficulty of network creation, of networks. Human networks, in which the physical spaces and the infrastructure created not always help. The infrastructure may worsen dialogue and collective work. But we believe that the network, in this case, the #WikiRede, was not the problem. The problems were different. The #WikiRede put on the table very thought-provoking questions for the #WikiPraça project and for the society.

The history of the #WikiRede confirms one of the main conclusions of the project: the extreme difficulty of dialogue among different audiences of Arouche Square. It also sends a message to the organizers and creators of networks (especially for the network gurus) who think that only infrastructure can solve the network .

For different reasons, another hammock set up last year at Augusta Park had the same fate. During a festival, swings were installed in the trees of the park and a network was woven connecting two trees broken on the floor. Both in Augusta Park and in Arouche Square, networks fit in a complicated historical context of collaboration and care for the public space. It is not easy to break the inertia of these spaces. Many are the years of neglect and concrete.

The network is much more than infrastructure, much more than a physical space or physical connections (either bits or nots). The Network is an attitude. It is a process, is a method of listening and co-creation."

I think, however, that the highlight of Wikipraça Arouche process is that we had, every Wednesday, a meeting between residents and visitors of Arouche Square. The audiences who do not talk to each other are beginning to talk. One of the meeting's goals is to think about what to do throughout the Wikipraça project and what we are doing together in that territory. At the meetingone of the most aggregating proposals of the whole process has emerged: #WikiHorta, a community garden. The idea came from a neighbor. On the other hand, there is a #WikiMural [WikiWall, ndt] to write ideas and proposals. The surprise is always part of the project. The digital pad, with ideas for Arouche, joins the collective mechanism in the territory. And the square and its conversation return to the Internet again in the text Listening to the Arouche, where word clouds visualize the desires of Wikipraça Arouche community. New narratives are important. So we made a first graphic facilitation in the Urban Autonomies debate, to understand the conversations that circulate through Arouche.

I emphasize again the double face of Wikipraça. On one hand, it activates collective mechanisms, enables and encourages self-organization. On the other hand, it creates a nonlinear institutional dialogue, in this case between the city and the citizenship of Arouche (not only with residents). Must the new public policy activate, protect and legitimize the urban autonomy, rather than trying to manage all processes? I suspect that the new institutions will not arise within public institutions. They will be born between the streets and networks, between the practices of the common and the government. However, the government should

support, encourage and protect in every sense (especially with funds) these new institutions of the common. It is also important to set distance from the British "Big Society" or the new concept of Collaborative Netherlands, which are proposals to do away with the State, putting the responsibility on citizens, without transfer of funds.

Children of June?

The days of June 2013, which exploded in São Paulo, were a real hurricane in Brazil: mass demonstrations, occupations of public buildings, public lectures on the street, new political subjectivities. "There will be no return to normal," boasted a poster in June 2013. And it was so. June irreverence deployed in multiple initiatives, projects and processes. June crystallized into a new policy fiction of citizens, weaving politics and relations outside the usual spaces. According to Jacques Rancière, a political fiction activates three processes simultaneously: it creates a name or a collective character, produces new reality and disrupts the existing reality. The revolts of the vandals, the self-proclaimed troublemakers, opened the door to a new reality. A new reality made of permaculture guerrillas, pianos in the subway and shared bicycles. In São Paulo, the triangle car-shopping center-condominium was interrupted by a burning desire for street, by another possible urban participation, by collective prototypes built and improved in real time.

Sao Paulo is indeed experiencing a new normality that gradually replaces the capitalist and individualist inertia artificially fabricated for decades. From the endeavour of collective management of Augusta Park to the constant intervention of the "*A Batata Precisa de Você*" movement (*Batata* Square Needs You, ndt), from the Spring Park activities to the many new community gardens, Sao Paulo changes its skin. And the urban desire which arised in June, the hint of another possible city, seems to be influencing municipal policies. June triggered the birth of the Right to the City Promotion Department, at the Human Rights and Citizenship Secretariat of the city of Sao Paulo, into a new municipal era led by Fernando Haddad (PT).

The hurricane called June accelerated dreams that seemed impossible: hundreds of miles of bikeways, experiences as the Green Zone (temporary occupation of car parking places within the parking Blue Zone, called parklets), a new municipal call for projects about Networks and Streets that provides public funds to projects of urban occupations. And three pilot projects to encourage citizenship in the streets. The Wikipraça Arouche #WikipraçaSP is one of those projects.
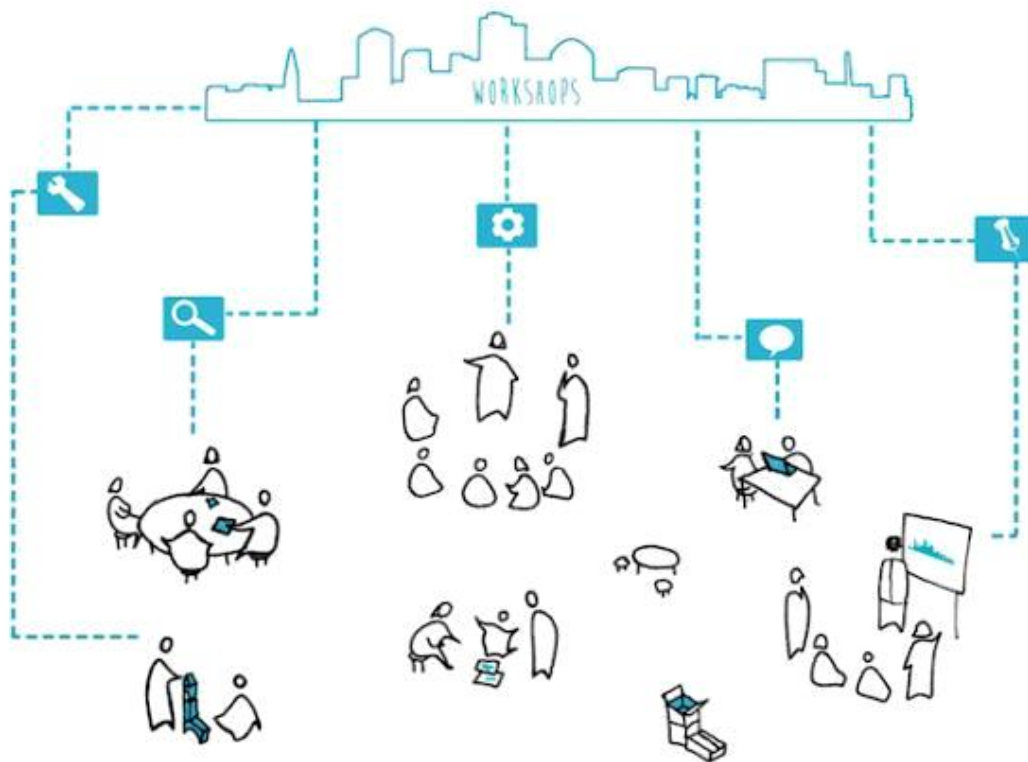
Fig. 4: Workshops. Source: ThinkCities.org.

Rebel Cities

From Tahrir Square, Cairo, to the Puerta del Sol in Madrid, from Zucotti Park, New York, to Coco Park, Fortaleza, from Gezi Park in Istanbul to Largo da Batata, in São Paulo, the world's cities are still standing. Standing against the urban neoliberalism slaying the green and human encounters in public space. But the rebel collaborative cities on which David Harvey writes not merely fight against "parasitical urbanism". They are not antagonists. They not only generate classical resistances. Rebel collaborative cities build, cook imperfect prototypes, as seeds of the new world. While the market tries to take ownership of the imagery of collaborative cities with its start up urbanism, citizens reinvent resiliencies, changes, adaptations. They renew, by loving it, their desired Invisible City.

What exactly is the Wikipraça Arouche, the #WikipraçaSP? Rather than a consequence of the global riots or of the June days, the Wikipraça Arouche is a confluence of desires and needs, of subjectivities and practices which are redefining the relationship between humans and cities. Firstly, the Wikipraça Arouche is an open definition, under construction. It is an unfinished device, an application to be completed by its users. Wikipraça Arouche is a collaborative method which wants to be a bridge between different Arouche communities and Sao Paulo. Perhaps it is a new distributed policy interface between citizens and institutions. A common space to be inhabited otherwise. It will be a network imaginary, framed by everyone, trying to fit into the Arouche Square as a subtle second skin. It is already a new landscape for the set of relationships and emotions that compose the definition of territory of the Bahian Milton Santos. The Wikipraça is a mirror of desires, a megaphone to formulate proposals.

Wikipraça Arouche, # WikipraçaSP, is also a political fiction. A fiction-reality in which fit many others. # WikipraçaSP can be a personage, a collective mask. It creates a new reality, but cooked by residents and visitors of the Arouche Square. The classic architecture would place urban furniture and answers in the urban space. The Wikipraça arrived at Arouche with questions ("What do you want to Arouche Square?"), with flexible methods, with analog and digital tools, and mechanisms to seek answers collectively.

The Affective Cartography, which is mapping Arouche affections, memories and desires is one of the axes of the project, which will evolve in the coming months. In the post "An affective mapping for Arouche" we talk about it:

"The map is not the territory." The term coined by Alfred Korzybski indicates that each of us creates a representation of the world according to what we feel, according to our own vision, hearing, touch, smell, taste, experiences, traumas. But this mental map we create is not the territory itself, that is, is not reality. My mental map does not represent reality because it is mine only, ie, a single way of seeing and perceiving the territory. Territory, in fact, is much more complex than a single map. Territory is the weave of maps created in the mind of each person. Territory is the multiplicity of layers, looks, memories, feelings, dreams and desires making up a given space. Territory is more a set of subjective relationships than a sum of objective data.

Precise answers to these questions do not exist. They are multiple and changeable, depending on the angle, the day, the hour. There is only one certainty: the answers are not in a classic map. Therefore, the project #WikipraçaSP - #WikipraçaArouche starts a new cartographic way to Arouche. A living cartography, affective, emotional, to find common spaces for all of the Arouche audiences."

A phrase to complete: our bodies are the hardware, our behavior is the software. The Wikipraça Arouche aspires to be a new software, a common and free process for Arouche Square. And a phrase the size of our desire: the #WikipraçaSP wants to be a new application for bodies and squares. An application that hopefully will make work Sao Paulo public space in a more human, more collective way.

We will publish at Wordpress a new multisite template of Wikipraça/WikiSquare. Our design will be "shared code". Anyone shall have both the template and our method to build and invent his or her own Wikipraça.