

Memory and resistance in São João del-Rei space appropriation

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Abstract

There has been a change in the focus of the Brazilian urban studies, in the last 50 years since Lefebvre proposed the Right to the City. In Latin American cities in the 1970s prevailed structural approaches, while the turn of the century goes up to more local and everyday cultural studies (Costa, 1999). Today, we walked to the confluence of these approaches, as a link between spoliation produced by financialized logic of social reproduction and social mobilizations that have taken place in various countries since the Arab Spring.

This reflection is proposed to connect two elements of studies on urban social problems, memory (and its inseparable pair, forgetfulness) and use resistance in urban areas, with the bodily practices in performance-art and "activism". So we emphasize the urban bias by lived body analysis and the relationship with different uses of space, as opposed to commodified logic of appropriation of space. It's a contribution to urban and performance studies at the direction of a Right to the City sense and the performance practice in the current Brazilian context.

By understanding the revealing role of social body practices, manifestations of the perceived, such reflection will occur on the double movement of identity construction in Alto das Mercês community, located in Brazil's historic city São João del Rei. The first movement, on which the city official memory promotes forgetting of its birthplace as a denial of a place of poverty and violence; and the other, a denial of this perception and deletion through its residents that are organized for urban improvement and its recognition as a part of the city.

This will be done by the analysis of speeches and bodily practices and demands of current social mobilization, together with different elements of neighborhood memory, by the Community and the agents that interfere with its everydayness: State, private interests and public University.

The study of body manifestations is based on the "cultural memory", by Paul Connerton, which is fixed in the body practices and postures, such as culture expressed in the living body. Not only signals in the skin (tattoos, scars, etc.), but also gestures, behaviors and postures, expressions of certain interests and cultural values, which incorporate contents of spheres such as institutions, genealogies, governments and family. This would result in objects of a collective memory that conform an environment, a habitat.

As a result of the union between performance art with the urban bias, we follow two forms of analysis that complements each other: the analysis of Urban in Alto das Mercês, as materiality built and are built of mourning - product of historical oblivion and forced marginalization of an urban agglomeration; and also the analysis of the performative practice of mourning corporeal manifestation as an influence in this same materiality. The result is the proposition of activism actions that contribute to urban transformations, with performative practices of a process led in and with the community, and this constitute a community consensus that generates actions from practice and discussion.