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# In-Between Art, Architecture and Landscape

## Experiments on Poetic Ways of Research-Creation in Rio de Janeiro

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**Abstract.** *The research “In Between Art, Architecture and Landscape” investigates contemporary practices in the expanded field, especially those of a site-specific character. Our group has practiced some gestures of research-creation, inspired by situationist and contemporary artistic tactics in flux - “dérives,” “événements,” poetic images, montages and play-elements - in the suburban neighborhood of Encantado, in Rio de Janeiro, with the aim of investigating its sense of history and atmosphere and raising questions about its possible reinvention. The article presents our artistic actions as the collective “Re-Encantado,” with the engagement of local residents: “Atlas of Encantado,” a ‘montage’ of past and present images, and “Where is Encantado River?” - événements and videos.*

**Keywords.** *Memory, Play-Elements, Suburb*

### Re-Encantado, Artistic Gestures in a Suburban Atmosphere

In the research “In-Between Art, Architecture and Landscape,” architecture is understood as a process of thinking enriched by complex relations to other disciplines, including other forms of art. ‘In between’ is the possibility of a rhizomatic creative thinking, experimental and enriched by crossed fields, that we interpret as a mode of complex knowledge (Zonno, 2014). The term ‘in between’ is also understood as a way of refusing dichotomic oppositions and a way of creating complexity, for instance, subject and object in phenomenological thought. The concept of chiasm, between the visible and the invisible, in Merleau-Ponty’s words, inspired many contemporary artists and architects, affirming the importance of the ‘body’ as central to lived experience.

Talking about an atmosphere, it is a prototypical ‘in between’ phenomenon. As Gernot Böhme (2017, 2-7) puts, it affects us and mediates objective factors of the environment with æsthetics human being feelings, involving intersubjective and social aspects. Urban æsthetics can be understood as atmospheric, concerning what is ordinary, what constitutes daily life and needs to be sensed to be understood. So, it is the presence of time, that can be felt in simple things. City historical depth is manifested not only by its signs, but by the inhabitants’ feelings of time, the impressions caused by qualities of “being old” or “having grown over time” (Böhme, 2014, 51-53).

In this deep feeling of the temporality of places, the power of involuntary memory would be implicit, when the actual opens up to the virtual, in Deleuze’s interpretation

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of Bergson, as an event capable of producing affects. Paul Ricoeur (2007, 68) explains, also from Bergson, that in the “memory’s movement that works” memory-image, a true evocation of the past in the form of images presents itself in an area similar to perception, mobilizing the imagination visualization function. The exercise that moves voluntary and involuntary memory takes us to subjectivity’s field and to the possibility of talking about shared experiences. The dialectic between identity (the self) and alterity (the other) can be mediated by images and fragments of the real-imaginary that we experience. For Walter Benjamin (2014), the remembrance also belongs to an involuntary nature, as in Proust, since that past significant impressions are extracted from the unconsciousness. Thus, in his view of history, he proposes a deep dive into fragments and reminiscences, in any point of reality, to open it, causing flashes or ‘shocks’ in-between the then and the now.

Gathering phenomenology, imaginary and processes of becoming, our research group’s artistic experiments are tactics of approaching, sensitizing and criticizing places. This paper presents the experiences, developed in 2018 and 2019, having the suburban area of ‘Encantado’, in Rio de Janeiro, as a laboratory. The neighborhood is part of the large area of the suburb, which was developed from the expansion of the city’s railway network in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and currently undergoes a process of densification and verticalization. Encantado, a name that means enchanted, resists and distinguishes itself by its unique ambiance, the result not only of the historic character of its architecture, but of daily and collective practices.

We created a team’s collective - RE-ENCANTADO<sup>5</sup> -, proposing actions to enchant the place, between past and future, to re-turn and re-invent it. By engaging in tactics in flux, the condition of becoming, in which the nomads are launched, we allowed ourselves to become other(s) in the condition of openness to events. We created situations, images and poetic writings about time’s presence. Our research “gestures,” “vital” and simultaneously æsthetical, ethical and of knowledge (Flusser, 2014, 53), assumes the condition of being in flux and being collective. ‘In between’ artistic mediums is the way to reach the ‘in between’ dimension of ambiances. The idea of play-elements is also present, as a difference and repetition play: we repeat the will, the gesture of seeking enchantment or poetry through the city experience, and we always discover the difference, which enriches and complexifies the gesture of knowing, making it an openness, which demands us to play again. Creating is this process: playing to perceive, playing to remember, playing to imagine.

### **Dérive, “Atlas of Encantado” and “Where is Encantado River”?**

The situationist group defined *dérive* as the “affirmation of a playful-constructive behavior” in the production of cities where the spectacularization processes intensified the impoverishment or destruction of corporal experience. The play-element for the situationists, taken from Huizinga, is a way of transforming subjectivities, a ludic but serious play, with political contours. Capable of bringing a poetic character to daily experience, *dérive* is understood as an æsthetical practice (Careri, 2017).

We wandered for several months, starting from different points in the neighborhood,

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5. The Re-Encantado collective, under the coordination of Professor Fabiola Zonno and collaboration with Professor Claudia Nóbrega, has the participation of doctoral students Lis Pamplona and Daniel Milagres (resident of Encantado) and of graduate students Gabriel Martucci and Gabriel Nigri, among other students in distinct times: Priscilla de Mello, Laura Gomes, Mariana Castro, Marcela Dorea and Igor Dias. The work had a partnership with Rio de Janeiro’s City Hall, under the coordination of Juliana Oachin.

walking in groups and registering our perceptions and encounters, through photographs, drawings and cartographies. We explored the tactic of cards, randomly drawn by the participants, each one containing a verb, suggesting a bodily and relational action: “to cross,” “to peek,” “to decal,” “to smell,” “to listen,” “to collect.”...

Our first *dérive* was in the Saint Peter’s Church, between the walls of the ruined building. On this and other drifts, we have discovered villages and modest houses. A frontispiece, a railing, a tile - many tiles with images of religious saints -, and we started to make collections as part of the game. Repetition and difference. Pixos and graffiti on the walls sometimes invade old houses frames. There are signs “for sale” (anything) attached to the posts and colored kites attached to the wires. A window, a small balcony, a terrace - spaces for exchange and socialization -, fluid boundaries between public and private. People inside the house asked who we were, what we were doing there. We are playing... Where is Encantado River? There were people on every corner. Meeting in a specific corner we discovered the place we have seen in an old photo. In the bakery on the corner, we ate “*pé-de-moleque*,” a sweet we remembered from our childhood. A small flower bed on the street became a community garden. We were told that the singer Aracy de Almeida lived there, that there were samba parades on the streets in the past. Today there is soup on the street, Saint Peter’s soup. Eating this soup is sharing the common, the community. We had the soup. Enchantment.

The experiences in the neighborhood were configured as a set of paradoxes between the lived space of perception and the lived time of memory. We recognize our photographs, as fragments of our passages, poetic images and “site writings” (Rendell, 2016). Then, we were already provoking ourselves to construct in more collective ways, including others, as locals, an action we performed through the *atlas*.

Combined with our testimonies-fragments of the neighborhood, the collective Re-Encantado began to gather diverse materials, varying between poetic and documentary texts and images of the past and the present. Our testimonies were added to a larger file, where songs, maps, poetry, newspaper reports, photographs and paintings of the neighborhood consolidated themselves as an open collection, available to manipulation and constant reorganization. From this living archive, our group was confronted with the possibility of researching and producing with the residents. Different from archiving the memory, which removes it from its lived flux, we rather guarantee its movement and vital force by being close to its agents.



Figure 1. *Atlas of Encantado's* montage, Re-Encantado, 2019.

Therefore, the event “Atlas of Encantado,” performed in a week of activities with residents in a municipal’s sports center, was configured as this opportunity to face the

problem of living memory. Starting from Georges Didi-Huberman's studies on the atlas as a form of knowledge through imagination (Didi-Huberman, 2017), we were guided by the manipulation of graphic and textual images to cross the contemporary material and immaterial reality of Encantado. In this event, we jointly manipulate fragments in the montage table, producing relationships between characters, myths, places, and events that traced Encantado from an expanded field of perception.

Verses of the samba "Caco Velho," the legend of Encantado River, the afro-american artists and their sonorous balconies, the ceremony of Saint Peter's Soup, football fields, pixos, the train, the poetry of Cruz e Sousa, the insane, the church, the carnival, Mrs. Maria's backyard, the children, the kites, the streets. All alive, all present at our table. Thus, we have lived the atlas as a field of simultaneities, as a slow cuisine where smells, textures, flavors, and colors have come together under Encantado's name. Our atlas, as action and force of possible realities, of possible atmospheres, restored an imaginary sense of place.



Figure 2. Montage of "Where is Encantado River?," Re-Encantado, 2019.

"Where is Encantado River?" is provoked by the presence-absence question about the river that crosses and names this neighborhood. As an urban legend says, the river was "enchanted," because things were mysteriously dragged by it. Moved by this enchanted dimension of the river and its poetics, we constructed three actions that unfolded many situations, performed by two members of the collective - Gabriel Martucci and Gabriel Nigri - as play-elements of pursuing Encantado River.

The first action is called "Re-taste" and its program concerns preparing a soup, taking the necessary material to settle down and eat it at the riverside. The river was vegetation, breath, sewer, pipes, fishing, rubbish and freedom. The soup was pray, coconut sweet, lit candle, procession, beer, Saint Peter, people standing in the street, priest, fireworks and samba. An important sensation in this created situation was the smell of the river shocking with the soup's taste. These waters - soup and river - affected us as paradoxical mnemonic forces: the food that is the origin of common life happening in a river almost dead. In-Between indifferent, uncomfortable and laughter faces of others and positive waving to our presence in this riverside, Encantado River came to life.

The second action, called "Re-bed," is performed by releasing a mirror in the river. We stalked some parts of the river to enhance the construction of an imaginative play between the presence of that element and its (majority) absent parts. Soon the mirror turned down with the water's movement and, poetically scanning the river's bed, continued in flux until it finally stopped. Gabriel Martucci jumped over the margins wall and managed to catch it. Intercrossing the situation to images from "Atlas do Encantado," the action of getting into the river to catch the mirror convokes the memory of fishing, of bathing in once clean waters. The now and the then critically shocked.

The third action, “Re-orientation,” is a sequence of *dérive* that shows historical images of the neighborhood and asking residents “Where is Encantado River?.” The purpose of the play was to expose residents’ perception, assuming an errant posture, in the search of a strange-familiar condition. Wandering structured the whole action. The *dérive* and encounters produced an intense process of orientation, dis-orientation and re-orientation, which was manifested through spoken words and gestures. Each encounter has constructed situations, envisioning a relation of proximity with the river, as possible atmospheres.

## Poetic Ways to Atmospheres

The research gesture, as proposed by Flusser, is above all a gesture of human life (Flusser, 2014). The poetic experiments that took place in Encantado neighborhood were gestures of research-creation, recognizing testimonies, being witnesses, collecting traces of floors and windows, belonging to life forms and their mutations, and creating possible new forms of life. Our gestures unfolded in making art, history, politics and education.

We started as nomads, willing to play to perceive, to play to engage others, and then we realized that we were playing to imagine. Through événements, possible atmospheres have emerged from the here and now, enhancing imaginable ways to transform the space - return to reinvent. In the movement of memory, past rises in the present and, via imagination, in the future, as constructed meanings expand the possibilities of these places. In this process, we realized that our work steps were folded in each other, allowing apprehension and enchantment, meanings’ insurgencies, images of memory and desire, intertwining different threads of time and space, making the understanding of this researched-created place more complex.

Our practices investigated a sense of past present, encouraging time meaning and production of affects. We recognized that our perception was enriched by crossed time imaginary - the images produced by us and the images of the past - producing new senses. Drawings, photographs, videos, created poetic images or site writings, also sites of critic. *Dérives*, événements and montages are artistic tactics that can lead architects and planners to develop a relation of proximity in experiencing places and being with “others”; these are ways to feel atmospheres and create atmospheres. Artistic practices not only may transgress conventional ways of perception and representation, but enrich architecture creative thinking, influencing the production of places in æsthetical, ethical and social terms.

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