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A Park Integrating Natural and Urban Systems in Rio de Janeiro Periphery: a participatory urban design studio

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1. Introduction

- Present the experience of a participatory design studio entitled Water Sensitive Urbanism in the Metropolitan Periphery: A Participatory Proposal for APA São Bento, Duque de Caxias, Rio de Janeiro
- The park was a demand from some social movements gathered in the Fórum de Articulação da Sociedade Civil (FORAS) against and alternative to municipal government project
- The city's goal was to transform the area into a 'logistic gated community' (condomínio logístico) that would include a State Supply Center of Rio de Janeiro (CEARJ).

APA São Bento



Petrópolis

Cachoeiras de Macacu

Paracambi

Duque de Caxias

Magé

Guapimirim

Japeri

Nova Iguaçu

Queimados

Belford Roxo

Seropédica

Mesquita

São João de Meriti

Itaboraí

Rio Bonito

Itaguaí

Milópolis

São Gonçalo

Tanguá

Rio de Janeiro

Niterói

Maricá



Rio Iguaçú

Rio Sarapuí

2. Context of the Project (1)

Campo do Bomba was part of a much larger environmentally protected area called APA São Bento, which belongs to the Federal Government.



Campo do Bomba is floodplain (i.e., a 'sponge' area) absorbing water and minimizing the effects of floods in six municipalities in the region.

Floods tend to worsen in the context of climate change.



2. Context of the Project (1)

The city government removed Bomba from APA in 2006, categorizing it as an Economic Interest Zone, without previous environmental studies or public consultation, and requesting its ownership. The city's goal was to transform the area into a 'logistic gated community.

FORAS called upon three public hearings in 2021, reuniting all actors involved—such as the residents, social movements representatives, public administration officials, university professors, and researchers—in order to expose the arguments against the municipality proposal



As a result in 2021 The State Bill No. 4773/2021 for the Quilombo do Bomba State Park

3. Development

A participatory approach: members of FORAS participated in all sections of the studio, with professors and master degree students

Ten weeks and was divided into three parts: (1) site visit, (2) theoretical and technical lectures, (3) and design.

The first and the second parts made clear that that proposal could not be centered only on the Bomba area; it should expand itself to its surroundings.

A conceptual approach and reference projects were chosen: WSUD an Sponge City (Yu Kongjian, Turenscape)

Design Proposal

Park Quilomobo do Bomba



4.Reception:the meeting

The goal was not to deliver a finished product but to use the proposal as a means of dialog, a tool to foster the discussion of potentials, issues, and needs. In other words, the presentation was not an end to the State Park

With this in mind, the six students presented their design proposal to residents, social movement members, local leaders, public officials, and researchers. The audience was significant for a Saturday morning; about 30 people, including the course professors.

Discussion lasted more than two hours



4 Reception: a new view of Duque de Caxias

For a long time, the city was viewed and planned to be one of the logistic centers of the metropolises.

A concentration of industries and warehouses within the municipal boundary fosters problems such as pollution and urban fragmentation. This vision was recently reinforced by a metropolitan master plan (PDUI) by labeling Caxias as the metropolis “logistic city.” The proposal for the area was logistic center.

This vision was contested by local social movements who blamed the former for being a top-down approach that neglects the residents’ real needs and the latter for intensifying floods in at least six cities within the metropolitan region, among other issues.

The State Park proposal came as a counterview to both endeavors giving hope for a better future. As one resident said, referring to the students, “They are making us hopeful!” [Estão fazendo a gente ter esperança - personal communication 07/09/22].

4 Reception: social movements demands

An economic viability study of the proposal and to conduct on-the-ground research with the residents to understand the local economic vocation as well as to identify potential private investors. The idea was to confront the economic arguments against the state park.

The inclusion of some residents in the next steps of the park design gives them a leading role and empowers them to fight against visions that do not reflect their needs and will.

Present the state park proposal in a public hearing with all actors involved in this process (e.g., the municipality, elected officials, residents, social movements, and private actors). Unmistakably, the proposal will serve as an instrument in the struggle to preserve Quilombo do Bomba.

5. Lessons Learned

A positive answer to the challenge of bringing together the representatives of local social movements (FORAS) and the students.

An innovative experience: unlike some cities in the global north, in the Metropolitan Region of Rio de Janeiro periphery—and particularly in Duque Caxias—experiences of participatory design are almost non-existent.

The final presentation to the local community was particularly positive and enriching. The proposal presentation brought new issues to the project, in addition to the principles of WSUD.

Acknowledgments:



Thank you

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