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## PROJETO ARQUITETÔNICO AUTORITÁRIO VS. DIALÓGICO: UM ENSAIO AUTHORITARIAN VS. DIALOGIC ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN: AN ESSAY

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### Abstract

The essay discusses the relationship between architectural design and the construction site according to the duality between authoritarianism versus dialogics. It proposes to debate it departing from the experience of university extension and not from research or teaching in a studio. It recognizes, therefore, that extension is an opportunity to question pre-established methods and assumptions about the design-construction relationship, which is the central object of this reflection but also of academic and professional practices. The text starts by defining the meaning of architectural design based mainly on Silva (1998). Then, it discusses the concept of authoritarian design from the perspectives of Freire (1987, 2018) and Ferro (2006), revisiting Marx's criticism on the estrangement (Marx, [1932] 2009). After, it addresses the dialogical design based on Freire's (1987, 2018) concepts of praxis and dialogics and Ferro's (2006) schematic design [*contra-desenho*]<sup>1</sup>. At last, it associates this reflection with the description of a specific action, the Emerging Urban Practices (PUE, in the Portuguese acronym) extension project.

**Keywords:** Architectural design, Authoritarianism, Dialogics, Paulo Freire, University Extension

### 1 Introduction

The question is how to create a dialogue, how to suggest a dialogue between popular knowledge and the so-called scientific-academic knowledge (Freire, 2018, p. 251, our translation)

Brazil is currently experiencing a challenging period. The President in office gets closer to authoritarianism when he verbally attacks the press, the civil society, the National Congress, and the Supreme Court. His references advocate for the flat-earth myth and attack scientific-academic knowledge. His Minister of Education addresses rabid insults to Paulo Freire's thinking. As an example, he supported the proceeding of Law 1930/19<sup>2</sup>, which intended to repeal the Act that had declared the Pernambuco educator as Patron of Brazilian Education. The present situation imposes the need of opposing authoritarianism to Freire's dialogics in all social spheres. As an essay, this text proposes to discuss the relationship between architectural design<sup>3</sup> (its methods and assumptions) and the construction site according to this duality. This discussion does not take part from research or studio-teaching standpoints but from the perspective of a university extension experience. As a process that enables a "transforming relationship" (Fórum de Pró-Reitores de Extensão, 2012, p. 21), that experience is an opportunity to challenge not only the design-construction site relationship, which is central to this reflection, but also academic procedures and professional practices.

This debate was motivated by the experience of the extension activity Emerging Urban Practices (PUE), coordinated by professors of the School of Architecture of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (FA/UFRGS), state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The activity relied on two Freirean concepts (Freire, 1987, 2018): i) praxis – the close relationship that should be established between the interpretation of reality and the practice resulting from this understanding, always from a critical and transforming perspective; and ii) dialogics – the proposal to build new knowledge based on the dialogue and the exchange between different worlds that share the hope of being more. The integration of these concepts into academic life and using them as a professional practice framework allowed the discussion about potentials and limits of Architecture and Urban Planning design.

The application of participatory methods for the development of architectural design [projeto arquitetônico in Portuguese] is not new<sup>4</sup>. Particularly those linked to proposals for pedagogical renewal at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries (Montaner, 2016). However, as mentioned by Ferro (2006), despite exploring cooperation processes, the architectural design remains despotic at the construction site, as it is a service order and an instrument that restrains its workers. A dialogic architectural design method, in addition to allowing participation during its development, should also change the relations of power, control, and heteronomy at the construction site. But is it possible to transform the design into dialogue, as opposed to ordering, at the construction site? This essay specifically discusses this issue.

This text is organized as follows: it starts by defining the meaning of architectural design based mainly on Silva (1998). Then, it discusses the concept of authoritarian design from the perspectives of Freire (1987, 2018) and Ferro (2006), revisiting Marx's criticism of estrangement (Marx, [1932] 2009). After, it addresses the dialogical design based on Freire's (1987, 2018) concepts of praxis and dialogics and of Ferro's (2006) schematic design (or design ready to be changed) [*desenho pronto para se retirar* in Portuguese]. Lastly, it associates this reflection with the description of a specific action, the Emerging Urban Practices (PUE, in the Portuguese acronym) extension project.

Also, it should be pointed out that the word essay used at the title has two meanings. The first refers to its discursive-argumentative aspect as this text does not intend to report a scientific study. The work does not aim to establish a search for critical, methodical, and rigorous patterns regarding ideas, nature, or society (Bunge, 2012). Instead, it discusses and stands for an opinion on this issue from the perspective of a university extension activity. The second meaning implies acknowledging university extension as experimentation or as a preliminary practice of an alternative pedagogical method, which is concerned with the process (the path) rather than with the product (the arrival point).

## **2 Design [projeto]**

The etymological meaning of the word *projeto* [in Portuguese] refers to the action of launching forward, which corresponds to its current meaning: the intention to accomplish something in the future (Houaiss, 2009). Architectural design, which is a specific type of project, can be preliminarily defined as a hypothetical response to a problem whose solution will be a building. In the field of Architecture and Urban Planning, the term also refers to a specific product: "a set of plans, sections, and elevations developed as required by the public authorities and ready to be submitted to their approval" (Corona, Lemos, [1972] 1989, p. 389).

According to Silva (1998, p. 26), design "is not an inevitable stage of the building's production process"<sup>5</sup>. Its requirement arises from the necessity of reducing unexpected and unknown factors at the construction site, and from the increasing on the complexity and the number of decisions that must be informed to the work's completion (Silva, 1998). Design is, as previously mentioned, a means. The end is the finished building and not the design comes before it. A building may not necessarily result from a design, and designs may not always result in buildings. "When one perceives that a particular building is needed and it is clearly and exactly known how this building should be, there is, technically speaking, a design problem" (Silva, 1998, p. 36). This is the case of vernacular buildings, which are closely connected to tradition. The need for design

arises from the acknowledgment that there are possible alternatives, and from “the need for an early visualization” of one of these alternatives (Silva, 1998, p. 28). Based on dictionary entries and the debate proposed by Silva (1998), there are two criteria to define architectural design: i) it is a solution proposal for a problem that can only be solved constructively [by building it]; ii) it is a precise prescription that anticipates and directs the construction (of a building or a city).

The design is also central to the training and professional identity of architects and urban planners<sup>6</sup>. Regarding training, Oliveira (1986, p. 79) states that the “studio is the fundamental unit of architecture training, and the sequence of design disciplines is the 'backbone' that structures the activities of the entire course”. Concerning professional activity, Silva (1998) mentions that design development [*projetualidade*<sup>7</sup> in Portuguese] “is connected to essential aspects of the architects’ professional identity. Today, the architect is defined as the professional who, as a rule, works within the development of building designs” (Silva, 1998, p. 28-29). The term architect is so closely related to his professional identity that the dictionary of Brazilian Architecture mentions that the term *projetista* [designer] is “used to designate the architect” (Corona, Lemos, [1972] 1989, p. 389). Therefore,

*projetualidade*, that is, the possibility of conceiving and resolving an architectural issue in anticipation, abstractly, in conceptual terms, independent of physically matter manipulation, is a *sine qua non* for the existence of the architect’s profession” (Silva, 1998, p. 29, our translation).

In social imagination, the successful professional model corresponds to the individualized and creative designer, which brings the architect closer to the artist. As Silva (1998, p. 31) mentions, “the condition of artistry means, then, the opportunity or the requirement to explore the possibilities to express shapes associated with the architect’s subjectivity to individualize their accomplishment”. The design is, in this perspective, the individualized work of an author, the expression of an isolated subjectivity. However, the needs and expectations of the actors involved in the building process – user, designer, entrepreneurs, and builders – are not always convergent (Silva, 1998, p. 26). How can they be reconciled? In general, the builder’s freedom to contribute is “suppressed to preserve the integrity and the unity of the design” (Silva, 1998, p. 26), which is directed (and monopolized) by the architect.

Still according to Silva, (1998, p. 26), in complex societies, architectural design “assumes the role of a collection of prescriptions and instructions, and presupposes the strict compliance with the design provisions by those responsible for its execution” The more accurate and complete is the design, the better it will transmit the order about how the finished product should be. The elements that comprise it are, therefore, a set of technical prescriptions – drawings, texts, calculations – that must be strictly followed. In this context, the design is a unidirectional message that provides exact and unquestionable information, precluding any objections or reformulations, and thereby, it is characterized as “despotic discourse” (Silva, 1998, p. 16), and it is this aspect that will be explored in the next section based on Freire (1987, 2018) and Ferro (2006).

### **3 Authoritarian design**

Freire (1987, 2018) differentiates authority from authoritarianism. Authority has a positive character, as it stimulates the search for freedom and creates the conditions for the construction of responsible and committed autonomy. The author places it between two extremes: authoritarianism and permissiveness (or spontaneity). For this reason, a democratic teacher, in his pedagogy, “cannot evade his authority or stunt the student’s freedom” (Streck, Redin, Zitkoski, 2008, p. 61). Authoritarianism, in turn, proposes a vertical dialogue, imposes passivity, silence, and obedience of the people and the oppressed, impeding them to express any reaction or creativity (Freire, 1987). Its presence “inhibits the eager search of the students, denies the possibility of curiosity” (Streck, Redin, Zitkoski, 2008, p. 59). Therefore, authoritarianism is defined as the right or power to order, to be obeyed, and to think in the other’s place. Freire’s pedagogical effort is to make the transition from the naïve conscience to criticism. That is, to make the oppressed people reject the oppressor present in their conscience so that they can pronounce their world, say their word (Freire, 1987).

Even though Ferro (2006) relies on Marx’s and not on Freire’s thinking, he presents the concept of drawing (or architectural design) as an order that demands obedience. He recognizes in it “an indispensable part of the despotic management” (Ferro, 2006, p. 107) of the construction site. He further proposes that “to speak of design as we know, it simultaneously denotes dependence [on the capital] and despotism [on the construction site]” (Ferro, 2006, p. 107). The design may be good, bad, postmodern, but its only premise is “to be a design for production” (Ferro, 2006, p. 109) and, therefore, a heteronomous decision. Design is a command, because “on the construction site, plans and specifications (...), decoded by foremen and given as work orders, command the divided work” (Ferro, 2006, p. 108).

It should be noted that Ferro understands architectural design as a commodity (Ferro, 2006, p. 105), resulting from the capitalist mode of production like any other object. Therefore, “architectural design is an

irreplaceable mediation for production totalization under the capital" (Ferro, 2006, p. 107). In this context, the impenetrable language of the design generates a lack of understanding and alienation in those who produce the architectural object, because "most (...) do not understand the reasons for what they do" (Ferro, 2006, p. 110). When workers cannot comprehend the whole picture, the process of producing the object causes estrangement.

Marx ([1932] 2009) also mentions that "estrangement is manifested not only in the result but in the act of production, within the producing activity, itself" (Marx, [1932] 2009, p. 30). To the worker, the product of his work does not belong to him; the energy spent to produce it emanates from him, but it does not belong to him; the decision on how to execute it does not belong to him; the product is not a free physical and spiritual manifestation. "Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labor is shunned like the plague" (Marx, [1932] 2009, p. 30). The authoritarian design is alien to the worker because it is the "instrument of those who do not expect the conscious participation of the worker – which, nevertheless, is indispensable in the construction site. It does not expect it, because it does not want it and cannot allow it – otherwise, it will not be useful to the capital" (Ferro, 2006, p. 198). Because it is authoritarian, it is also an externalization of the isolated – and exclusive – subjectivity of the architect who conceived it, increasing the estrangement of those who execute it. Another aspect established by the authoritarian project is hierarchical. The complex chain of the construction industry challenges and controls in order to eliminate production gaps, to impose productivity, efficiency, speed, and precision. It represents the capitalist mechanism for the exploitation of labor and the extraction of the surplus-value.

In addition to the characteristics described above, the authoritarian design aims to erase the traces left by the construction workers on the construction site. As an abstract work, they must disappear, because, "although diluted and confused, the pieces of evidences of the workers' hands disturb the consumer's fragile peace, evoke feelings of guilt, raise questions on the anonymous and rejected authors of that appropriated treasure" (Ferro, 2006, p. 129). The building must hide flaws, erase the marks of the workers' gestures, and prevent their active presence, the exteriorization of their life in the matter. The better the manufacturing control, organization, and quality, the more the externalization of labor of the work in the product will disappear, consequently representing an excellent product.

Construction site work, as previously described, thereby means the dehumanization of the tool-man, as he must strictly follow the orders from the design and the capital. In brief, some characteristics of the authoritarian project are: i) it assumes a hierarchy, it is vertical; ii) it imposes passivity, silence, and strict obedience to orders; iii) it does not allow the creative action of the production hierarchy basis; iv) for this very reason, it is the worker's estrangement in the construction site; and v) it imposes the disappearance of the worker's traces from his work.

#### **4 Dialogical project**

The architect's profession determined the radical separation between thinking and doing, establishing a hierarchy between them. Thinking is a superior activity, whereas doing is a subordinate activity. In other words, as Ferro proposes, "the architect is the designer who is completely disconnected from production" (Ferro, 2006, p. 171). Would the end of the authoritarian project, as an order, be the end of the architect's profession? Is a dialogical design possible?

To introduce this issue, we need to revisit some concepts of Paulo Freire. Dialogics is one of the essential categories of his humanist-liberating pedagogical proposals. It is contrary to "Banking Education", which is vertical, the domestication which, instead of communicating, issues "communiqués" and "deposits" knowledge on the students, who must memorize them, thwarting their creative power. The participants have fixed and hierarchical positions: it assumes the existence of someone who is knowledgeable and bestows information (the teacher) and someone who is ignorant and receives that information (the student).

Dialogue, on the other hand, "is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, to name the world" (Freire, 1987, p. 78). It is, therefore, an act of creation. For Freire, "dialogue is the driving force of critical and questioning thinking on the human condition in the world. Through dialogue, we can name the world as we see it" (Streck, Redin, Zitkoski, 2008, p. 130). It implies "social praxis, which is the commitment of the spoken word with our humanizing action" (Streck, Redin, Zitkoski, 2008, p. 130). The challenge that Paulo Freire proposes is "to build new knowledge from the dialogical situation that generates interaction and exchange of different worlds, but that share the dream and hope of building together our way of being more" (Streck, Redin, Zitkoski, 2008, p. 131). The dialogue is closely linked to the concept of action-reflection, synthesized in the proposal of praxis.

In his concept of praxis, Freire "takes the view of modern dialecticians, overcoming the separation between theory and practice. For him, both are closely interwoven" (Streck, Redin, Zitkoski, 2008, p. 332). Education, in this perspective, starts with reading the social-historical context where men and women are. But just thinking is not enough. He encourages doing because praxis is the "action and reflection upon the world to

transform it" (Freire, 1987, p. 67). The concepts of dialogics and praxis suggest a relationship of equality and horizontality, in which the teacher "does believe he is the owner of time or men, nor the liberator of the oppressed. He commits himself to fight with them" (Freire, 1987, p. 27). In this sense, the world must be forged with him and not for him, "increasing the knowledge of both parts" (Freire, 1987, p. 27). Therefore, praxis symbolizes an "attempt to prevent the separation between the hands and the brain, between doing and knowing, between language and the world" (Streck, Redin, Zitkoski, 2008, p. 27). It expresses a "boost to overcome the dualism between reflection and action, which takes the form of capital-labor antinomy in the capitalist society" (Streck, Redin, Zitkoski, 2008, p. 27). In Freire's method, it corresponds to a "dialogue between the subjects, who together elaborate knowledge and the world" (Streck, Redin, Zitkoski, 2008, p. 27).

Ferro (2006) recognizes that construction workers have knowledge about the production process to perform specific tasks. This also makes dialogue necessary, considering that, although "calculation and material sciences have considerably progressed, the millenary experience deposited in the workers' know-how has not been superseded" (Ferro, 2006, p. 419-420). Based on his criticism of the despotic project, Ferro seeks for the practice of an alternative construction site. He calls it schematic design, and proposes that it can be practiced, at least initially, in low-complexity works. His proposal represents a program that "would favor, at first, the humility, detachment, and patience of the architect, who would not carry, diluted in his flesh, the germs of authoritarianism" (Ferro, 2006, p. 429).

Among the guidelines that his schematic design should adopt, I highlight i) the intention to decrease the hegemony of the final product over its means. Therefore, it proposes an operational mediation that focuses on the process rather than on the final product; ii) the respect for the "traces" that every work team leaves on the building, which are not flaws, but signatures. This would mean allowing "the presence of the producer's footprint in the product, of the workers collective, of their essence, in the shape of their work" (Ferro, 2006, p. 430-431); iii) that the building site has a pedagogical value when teaching how to build with autonomy. Ferro considers that "only in areas that new social movements (of the landless and the homeless) start to open up in the system's network that we may expect the emergence [of alternatives]" (Ferro, 2006, p. 428). New production would, therefore, result from initiatives that emerge from the relation between technical-scientific and organized popular movement knowledge. Going beyond theory, Ferro exercises his proposal and reports some of his impressions. According to him:

Out of several drawings, I only showed the most general ones, which I glued to the construction site walls, allowing them to get dirty, not taking care of them. And before anything started, we discussed how to do it or what we need to change. I kept my solution to myself. But we often came up with more interesting solutions as a group. Little by little, through collective elaboration, the initial design was changed. My 'general' design is still recognizable – but the building has its own history (Ferro, 2006, p. 428, our translation).

However, he also acknowledges some limitations of this experience when he reveals:

Once the workforce has been sold, the acceptance of the orders received cannot be partial. Even if I arrived at the construction site offering participation, some freedom, and respect, objectively, it was still a command: I was the one who dictated some autonomy – which automatically became heteronomy (Ferro, 2006, p. 426, our translation).

Despite not referring to Freire, Ferro acts in a Freireian manner: he combines reflection and action into a critical and transforming perspective.

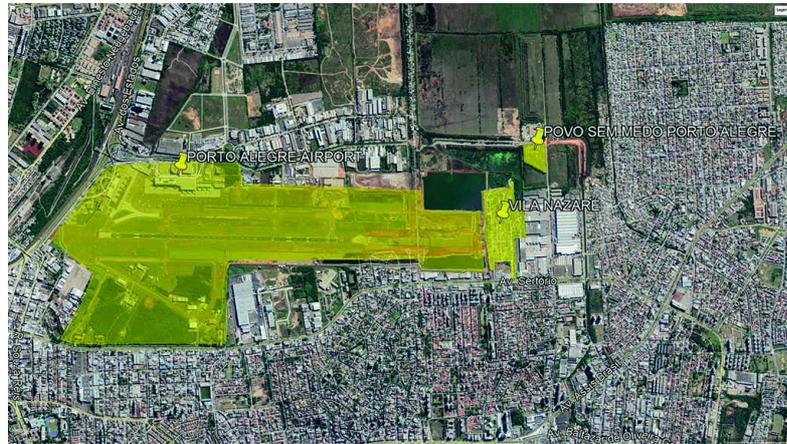
At last, some characteristics I tried to outline as the dialogical design are: i) it presupposes equality, it is horizontal; ii) it allows a shared speech; iii) it allows giving space to the creative action of all people; iv) it welcomes the conscious exteriorization of the worker; v) it allows workers' traces in the materialization of their work. Exposing our praxis – action in reflection, reflection in action – is a way of articulating the arguments outlined above with the report of a concrete action. For this purpose, we present some aspects of the extension project PUE, of FA/UFRGS PUE.

## **5 Extension essay**

In 2019, PUE carried out activities in the "Povo Sem Medo de Porto Alegre" (PSM/POA) settlement, in southern Brazil, coordinated by the Movement of Homeless Workers (MTST). The area was occupied in September 2017 to denounce the lack of housing in the northern part of the state capital. It focused on exposing the territorial dispute between Fraport Brasil/Porto Alegre, a subsidiary company of Fraport AG Frankfurt Airport Services Worldwide (a German company that won the concession to undertake the Porto Alegre airport), and Vila Nazaré, a low-income irregular settlement whose 1,500 families are being evicted to

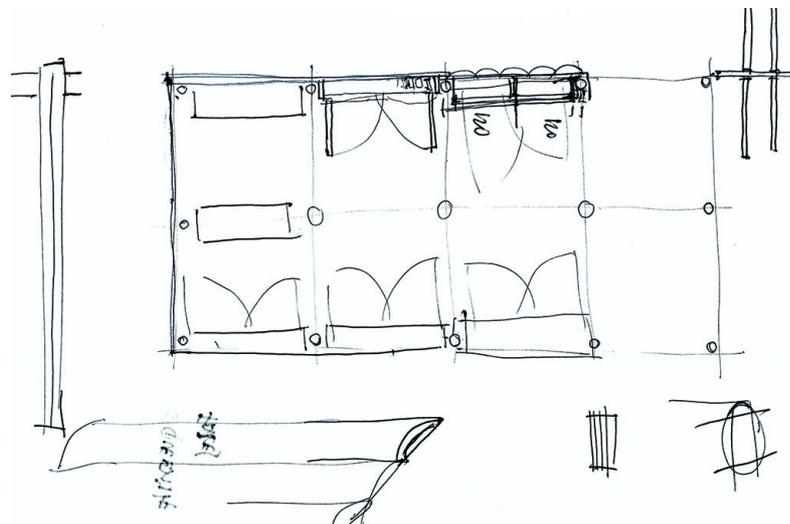
extend the airport's runway. This is a delayed eviction process, planned since the 2014 FIFA Football World Cup, which only now is being completed.

The area where PSM/POA and Vila Nazaré settlements are located became highly valued due to the prospect of the airport's expansion. There have been several significant works in the area: the extension and duplication of avenues, implementation of urban infrastructure, the construction of business condominiums, etc. Therefore, in the coming years, it will become an important vector for urban expansion in one of the last available land stocks (Figure 1).



**Fig. 1:** Porto Alegre's northern area and the indication of Salgado Filho international airport, Vila Nazaré and Ocupação Povo Sem Medo. Source: Google Earth, 2020.

During the experiences in the PSM/POA settlement and the workshops held at the university, there were several work proposals. From this conversation, the building of the community shed was considered the most urgent. The needs, defined collectively, for this simple building were: a kitchen, a hall for meetings and classes, two storage rooms, and a porch. The architectural draft design, which was also discussed with settlement residents, consisted of a 6 x 15-meter rectangle floor plan, with wooden structure and closures, a roof made of galvanized steel sheets, and a coarse concrete slab. A small and simple building (Figure 2), funded by donations.



**Fig. 2:** Design collectively developed for the construction of the community shed. Source: Bruno Mello, 2019.

The shed was built by the academic community of FA/UFRGS and PSM/POA residents. The self-construction task forces worked always on Saturdays, over five months. During that time, both students and residents became construction workers. They started to physically and mentally put themselves in motion to convert a drawing into a building (Figures 3, 4, and 5). Below, I highlight some aspects of this extension exercise, associating it with the debate about the dialogical architectural design.



**Fig. 3:**In the foreground, the community shed model. Right behind, the structure of the building under construction.  
Source: Bruno Mello, 2019.



**Fig. 4:**FA/UFRGS academic community and PSM/POA residents building together with the community shed. Source: Bruno Mello, 2019.



**Fig. 5:** FA/UFRGS academic community and PSM/POA residents building together with the community shed. Source: Bruno Mello, 2019.

Two important assumptions of the extension activity were: the constructed building would not be a commodity (what mattered was its use value, not its exchange value), and its production renounced the sale-purchase of the workforce (as it assumed collaboration). These aspects, *per se*, interfered in the process and challenged the logic of capitalist production. Another important aspect was the elimination of hierarchy at the construction site. The design was always present but as an invitation to dialogue, rather than an order. That is why it was never up to a conclusion; it has always been ready to incorporate or revoke suggestions. As a result of teamwork, the authorship of the architectural design was diluted among all those who discussed its solutions. It was also a means of questioning the conventional professional practice, which is hierarchical and attributes value to the authorial work of star architects.

This horizontality created difficulties, obviously. The mediation of antagonistic positions related to the construction required some effort. Each opened small decision required an intense debate. The positive and negative aspects of the solution hypotheses were subject of lively arguments, but eventually, the decision was collectively taken. It was a rich learning experience, as it put knowledge into dialogue. Building the shed also allowed individuals to build themselves as political agents of transformation. Agents who believe in collaborative work, who listen, speak, try to convince, negotiate. At last, the production process itself was the criticism of the method for workforce domination and control in the workspace.

A frequent result of the joint efforts were the small flaws in the building – off-plumb parts, slightly skewed centerlines, cracks, uneven sections, gaps. However, those imperfections subverted and challenged the design; they represented its humanization, the effort against its authority; they denounced alienation and estrangement, making the work a result not only of the articulated partial physical forces but also the externalization of human subjectivity. All those who participated in the joint efforts left their “traces”. This was how each worker – student or resident – materially “spoke their words”.

Another important aspect was that of temporality. Production time that has profit as its horizon “does not tolerate ‘any useless movement’” (Ferro, 2006, p. 121). In the settlement, however, there were many useless movements, much waste of time, and no repression of gestures. The worker’s time may lose efficiency, but it gains humanity, which represents not only a change in the goal but also a change in the process. The work of building the community shed also represented the re-union of knowledge and thinking. The experience has shown that all those involved in the work had always anticipated it in their minds. You only need space for the emergency of proposals. The suggested changes to the design during the shed construction were a shared way of naming and making the world; they allowed the conscious exteriorization; they harbored a creative action; they gave visibility to the hand that produced the shed; they welcomed more horizontality in decisions about solutions. As a result, there was less order and more dialogue between scientific-academic architecture and popular architecture.

The dialogical architectural design, the schematic design, focused on the process methodology, and not on its result. It questioned the conventional professional practice. It diluted the authorship of the work when it shared the decisions with the different stakeholders. It was a struggle for the humanization of all those involved in the building work. Finally, it meant the possibility of reshaping the relationship between design and the construction site. This critical exercise of new methods was not something that could be “deposited” on students. This was experienced in practice, as a result of extension – the most appropriate academic-university space for exercising praxis and Freire’s dialogics during the pedagogical path.

In 2019, PUE participants fully realized that extension work is, per se, an ethical-political practice. The search for understanding the arenas and the actors in the dispute for the territory was constant during this activity. Comprehending that all pedagogical practices are political, we did not adopt a supposedly neutral position, but we were involved in this activity from the beginning, taking sides with the PSM/POA settlement population. As Freire quotes, every educational practice corresponds to a politicalness. However,

it is not an invention of subversives, as reactionaries would have it. On the contrary, it is the very nature of the educative practice that leads the educator to be political. As an educator, I am not political because I want to be, but because my condition as an educator so imposes (Freire, 2016, p. 21).

This premise was consciously present during the entire activity: the method we set in motion was not neutral. Therefore, the tensioning of the architectural design by praxis and Freirean dialogics in the extension action was not **for** the commitment to human struggles for social justice in the city, but **in** the effective exercise of this commitment.

## **6 Final considerations**

Students and professors should recognize themselves as “hosts” of certain methods and assumptions of the profession linked to what limits it: the design. This means that not only the design activity but also its teaching can be challenged. Freire’s pedagogy and Ferro’s reflection currently emphasize the necessity of rethinking the way we relate to things and to people that manifest a radical criticism of the world we live in. It is necessary to put in crisis the architecture of the monumental, of the excessive, of star brands, of submission to capital, of the violation of workers’ rights, of hi-tech. And thus, to open space, at the university and work, for the architecture of the ordinary, of restraint, of bare feet, of cooperation, of social activism and solidarity, of decent work, of lo-tech, of *Hacer Mucho con Poco*<sup>8</sup>, in short, the exercise of a bold architecture – risky, but necessary.

University extension, in addition to causing the revision of pedagogical methods and the emergence of new research subject matters, represents the possibility of a critical, participatory, and solidary education (Betto, 2018). A way to put knowledge (and its construction) in motion, searching for social justice in the city. It proposes a university that is not content with merely contemplating reality from a distance. It forces it to interact, to get involved, and to forge bonds. It humanizes it. However, all this liberating change “is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly” (Freire, 1987, p. 34). Exercising a dialogical, as opposed to an authoritarian, architectural design in university extension was our way of pursuing it.

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**1** Translator's note: Term coined by Ferro, which can be loosely translated as schematic design.

**2** News article on the mentioned Bill of Law: <https://www.camara.leg.br/noticias/558470-projeto-revoga-lei-que-declarou-paulo-freire-patrono-da-educacao/>. Accessed on: May 06, 2020.

**3** The proposed debate is not limited to the architectural design but it also includes urban design.

**4** We can mention several experiences of popular participation for the development of urban designs and plans. Such as those carried out by Carlos Nelson Ferreira dos Santos (1960s-70s) and Jorge Mario Jaurégui (1990s and 2000s) in Brazil and Alejandro Aravena, in Chile. Also, there are recent experiences from Brazilian studios that provide technical assistance to social housing projects, such as Peabiru in São Paulo and AH! Human Architecture in Porto Alegre..

**5** An illustration of this fact – the essentiality of the design – is the classic book of RUDOLFSKY, B., 1964. *Architecture without architects: a short introduction to non-pedigreed architecture*. NY: Doubleday & Company Inc.

**6** For text conciseness reasons, hereafter I will refer to the architect and urban planner professional only as architect, although that the title currently conferred by the professional Council is that of architect and urban planner.

**7** TN: in the original text of Silva (1998).

**8** Reference to the film *Hacer Mucho con Poco* [Doing much with little], which shows contemporary architectural experiences in Ecuador.