

Political Poetics in Amazonia

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ban space to interact , re-signify and learn ways of living individually and collectively in the places through performance based actions in the city. I describe here some artistic practices held in Amazonia , to raise questions about interventionist actions held by artists from the city of Macapá/AP in Amazônia, Brazil , focusing specially in the performance 'O batedor', in a reflective exercise upon sociological, aesthetic and educational issues of urban life through the lens of the ritual as a communication and relational socio practice.



In this essay I am interested in addressing urban interventions presented in performances in the city of Macapá-AP (Amazon region in Brazil) by the members of the Research Group : Poetical Education and Visual Culture (Ensino Poético em arte e Cultura Visual) to understand how these performances are woven in reflective mediation about the problems of cities, particularly on a city nestled in the Amazon region, described as inhospitable and with scarce human presence. In the national imagination cities are conceived as huge urbes, places for modern sociability, denying all other scenarios that escape this definition, judged as wild and devoid of the necessary conditions for human life. This group integrates students and former students of the University of Amapá, where I teach. In the group, we explore performance through its poetic, politic and aesthetic dimensions. We believe that artists/teachers need to be aware of their culture and use their bodies for educational purposes.

In this sense the approach proposed here is informed by the notion of performance and the ritual idea, highlight the performances as artistic interventions in the cultural production of the city as they reveal discussions of how subjects [people?] think and live. In this sense, the described experiences provoked by artistic interventions contain learning that converge to realise that culture as a creation in terms of diversity following the idea of social interaction in the city as discussed by Agier (2011), Agier also points out other possibilities to understand the social dynamics of a city, and such possibilities made me investigate the city, as a 'flâneur' walking and experien-

cing it. In this exercise I noticed that aesthetic performances in Macapá could be ways to think about the meaning and significance of the places as artistic actions or situations configure spaces for dialogue in the city in a poetical and political way. Such actions are hybrid possibilities for sociability and learning similar to ritualistic processes that communicate, inform and transmit. I believe such artistic actions are also social actions, referring to the subjectivity of the people as artists or as audience who are both creators and makers of reflective spaces. I evoke here the idea of performance as viewed by Peirano (2001), codified and transmitting behaviours where aesthetic ideas are objectified as tensions between entertainment and efficacy, being symbolic and intending to communicate learning tactics. Tense moments, entertainment moments, are efficient and work in the logic of ritualistic processes. As Schechner (2012) explains, rituals are codified memories in action that help people (and animals) deal with difficult transitions, ambivalent relationships, hierarchies and problematic desires (p. 49-50).

So, entertainment in Schechner and Peirano's perspectives integrate rituals that are special and critical events. In the same way, I see aesthetic performances in the city as rituals, moments for social interaction as a form of collective learning. They are rituals of excess, breaking daily life norms, problematizing (SCHECHNER, 2012, p.50). They appropriate moments to remember and create communication processes through words and other means. Such performances have a symbolic dimension as they

integrate meanings and problematize excess or break daily life norms.

Artists as creators of political spaces: poetical insurgences in the city

Wagner's idea (2000) that people are inventive and create cultures helps me to think about the role of artists in urban areas as inventive subjects. I think, that by occupying the street spaces, they challenge the borders of normal interactions and dialogues with art in unconventional ways of thinking about art; they develop social criticism and promote other ways to reframe the urban contexts. This dynamism is political as they are using tactics, recalling Certeau's utopian and libertarian claim (2009) to occupy and take ownership of the street spaces, causing perceptions, rearticulating positions and producing ways of making, ways of being and forms of visibility on society. (Rancière, 2005, p. 17). In that sense I understand those practices as embodied in the collective fluxus of the street, sharing experiences, generating sensations and giving sense to the learning situations. It is not only about interacting with the audience, or using the arts as a tool for protest, but for entertainment and pleasure. It is about stimulating reflections about the life in the localities as a form of demonstrating politics through aesthetics.

From the different artistic scenarios in the polyphonie of the city I will describe the one, which has had the most impact had in

my experience. The first contact with the performance was quite ambivalent. It seemed familiar, but strange to me. I was astonished, asking 'What's up here?'



Figure 1 O BATETOR: The experience of Living

I understood that the artist intriguing dress was not to make a beautiful festival dress decoration, but rather to provoke sensations, perceptions in the imagination of the people, dialogical possibilities. Many people in the street were laughing, shouting to call attention, clapping, creating rhythms with the sounds, and by doing so they were integrating themselves in the





Figure 2 O BATETOR: The experience of Living Many people

performance as active agents. Some others claim this is the Hero of Amazonia, this man whose body is covered by lumps of Açaí. Açaí is a local fruit from the forest that is precious in the native diet. This fruit is a symbol for that region. People were applauding the performer giving way to that emblematic figure.

Artistic productions have much to say about cause and effect, because this is where we can see the sociological mechanisms that govern and instruct social interactions in environments where these productions are manifested as a social behavior

Encountering the performer in town invited us to think about artistic interventions in the city, and ask questions like: "What leads a person to walk in silence on the public street dressed like that?" The reactions, wherever he went, were not unnoticed or disregarded by the public. People were urged to follow or simply stop to look at the artist's trajectory. I was busy trying to register the moment with the camera and thinking about the incredible potential of artistic production in contemporary times, the provocations and questionings that an action like that has to say to the people in this particular city in two layers of meaning. The first layer was the interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the dress created by the artist with the local food. The second layer was the identification process to the people to connect with, to belong to the place of the

region of Amazon.

The red flag raised in the performance brings up the symbol of belonging to the place, signals of Amazonian people for food resistance, against global idealism of the model of Western civilization. Açaí here stands against the standardization of cultural differences, disadvantaging the otherness and the homogenization of thought. Açaí, which is a local food, is the symbol for those who dare to modify the mainstream structure of a globalization society. The performance is positioned between cultural production, artistic production, and sociological political action.

I believe that current artistic productions in Macapa city extend reflections on living and being in the Amazon, revealing problems that put ordinary subjects as active subjects of thinking and making the city. And provide an opportunity to rethink their social activities through the encounter with artistic/aesthetic performances that reveal real events that make up the city nowadays. Just as important is the production of knowledge tied to life in peripheral languages by placing the artists as creators of reflective spaces. Because the performances are effective social events driven by entertainment moments they are establishing possibilities for political and poetical existence within its location.

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