XIII

Reflection

Considerations on the project

Overview

The following chapter concludes the report by a reflecting on the foundation, methods, outcomes and opportunities of the project, as well as limitations and further considerations.

Sections

i. Research and Graduation studio

Development processes and spontaneous urbanization in Brazil

This graduation project is associated with the urbanism master track and the selected studio – Planning Complex Cities – through a research that engages with the recognition forces behind urbanization process, which foster the fragmentation phenomenon in Rio de Janeiro. Specifically, the project focuses on the complex social conditions produced by the phenomenon, and the vulnerable groups of the system.

The contribution of the research to the studio involves the recognition and exploration of alternative developments in cities of the Global South. In regards to the graduation programme, the research complements the repertory of the masters, through the exploration of topics as co-production, spontaneous urbanization and complex social issues of the Global South – topics that are not very elaborated throughout the course.

ii. Research relevance

Opportunities for future practices

The research has elaborated an extensive material that discourses and analysis the spatial conditions of the fragmentation phenomenon and vulnerable communities in the city. Furthermore, the research builds upon the discussion of public policies and programs that have been used in Rio de Janeiro to address *favelas*. However, it contributes to the topic by counteracting strict policies and regulatory planning mechanisms, through the proposal of an open project, that enables the co-production of spaces between local communities and multiple stakeholders. In that sense, the research contributes to the academic and professional knowledge of the field.

iii. Research-oriented Design

Process: Research-Scenario-Design

Since the beginning of the project, the research, focused on the recognition of the fragmentation phenomenon, was put forward as a crucial element for the definition of the strategies. The intention was to develop a project that corresponds to the local demands and recognizes the complexity of the issue.

In summary, the research process involved a multidimensional and multiscalar analysis, that translated into the built environment, the vulnerability conditions fostered by the fragmentation phenomenon. The research was elaborated through a continuous process of analysis and scenario construction, that have been elaborated for the multidimensional aspects and scales. The intention was to analyze the multiple aspects and, simultaneously investigate opportunities that can address the issue. Further on, the addition of the field research enabled the understanding of local perspectives and demands. Conclusively, the process of research – analysis, scenario constructions and fieldwork – created extensive instructions that informed further strategies.

Supported by the analytical framework, the scenarios and interviews, the strategies then address particular and systematic vulnerability conditions, through a research that recognizes local conditions as well as broader relationships.

Main research question

How can spaces of co-production, within polarized communities, enhance socio-ecological resilience and promote the integration of vulnerable contexts with the city, in Rio de Janeiro?

The framework to give a response to the question have elaborated through an extensive analysis of the fragmentation phenomenon in Rio de Janeiro, investigating multiple scales and conditions of the 'Broken city' (Ventura, 1994). The analysis intended to recognize the polarized areas and reveal local spatial, functional and organizational opportunities, in order to to understand how to reinforce the socio-ecological resilience and integration of those areas.

The conclusions of the analytical framework formulated a matrix that led to the recognition of three spatial conditions that are fostered by the fragmentation phenomenon: fragments, in between zones and borders. Specifically,

the identification of those conditions allow to understand the polarized territories, the fragments and in between zones. The results drive the definition of strategic locations and actions that can increase the integration and capacity of vulnerable contexts in the city.

To answer the question, spaces of co-production can produce physical fields that increase the interaction between local dwellers, institutional organizations and ecological systems, reconstructing the fragmented connections in the city. The act of generating spaces that promote socio-ecological exchanges, empowers the local population, reinforcing their self-organizational character and articulating new socio-ecological connections.

SRQ1 - Pre-conditions

How did the urban evolution of Rio de Janeiro influence the social, spatial and environmental segregation within the city?

Throughout its morphogenesis, Rio de Janeiro has been directly or indirectly creating multidimensional borders that fragment the vulnerable contexts of the city. The consequences are reflected in an increasing societal gap and a city that neglecting its ecological structures.

The reasons behind the oppressive urbanization process that segregates social, spatial and ecological structures in Rio de Janeiro, are bound to the private interests of the actors that control the veins of urban development. Traditionally top-down, the development of the city has been led by mutual economic interests between public and private sectors. Aiming high profits, urbanization processes have been prioritizing the economic gains instead of social or ecological capital, leading to the segregation of groups and systems that do not fit to the economic model or are interrupting higher profits.

SRQ2 - Development process

What is the most effective strategy for slum-upgrading and housing policies in Rio de Janeiro? How can future strategies benefit from the knowledge derived from the precedent initiatives developed in the city?

The questions have been investigated by a thorough analysis of the literature that discourses on the impact of major public initiatives that addressed vulnerable contexts in Rio de Janeiro. The answer to the questions has been formulated by the recognition of significant strategies that have to be present in slum-upgrading initiatives in the city. The impact evaluation of the former initiatives *Projeto Mutirão*, *Favela-Bairro* and *Minha Casa Minha Vida* has led to the understanding of three essential strategies: infrastructure, social capacitation and housing. The combination of those strategies can increase the success of a project, as the local population is given the tools to grow along with the urban development.

*An extensive argumentation is presented in *section ii: Theory paper – Breaking the vicious cycle.*

SRQ3 - Development process

How can planning mitigate gentrification processes in slum-upgrading projects?

Urbanization development in favelas always lead to the fear of gentrification processes. However, they cannot be confused. In order to avoid the uncertainty concerning permanence of the local population throughout or after slum-upgrading projects, planning has to increase the participation and economically develop the exsitng population. Development has to support a broader participation of citizens in the decision-making process, as well provide strategies that engage with the socio-economic development of the existing communities. Only is that way, the existing residents can withstand the gentrification processes in urban renewals or slum-upgrading projects.

SRQ4 - Evolution process

How can collaborative networks help to construct a mutually beneficial relationship between formal and informal dwellers?

As elaborated in the answer to the main research question, the co-production process reinforces local institutions and gives them power to participate on their own development. Specifically, the elaboration of collaborative networks between 'formal' and 'informal' dwellers can enable the creation of new institutional arrangements that support the mutual benefit of the involved parts. The promotion of a dialogue between the different communities, increases their integration and the recognition of their particular and mutual conditions. The knowledge derived from the collaboration between the communities, reinforces new institucional organizations that can empower the communities by promoting mutually benefitial strategies.

SRQ5 - Evolution process

What are the necessary conditions to promote an endogenous self-organization process in informal settlements in Rio de Janeiro?

The main restrictions for an endogenous self-organization process are related to economic, institutional and political uncertainties. As elaborated in the project limitations and through the stakeholders' iterations, the financial support and robust institutional arrangements are critical elements for the development of grassroots initiatives. Even though economic and institutional uncertainties can be mitigated by strategic actions that reinforce the bottom-up development, the political aspect cannot be controlled. Uncontrollable, the government instability and political mistrust are present are several governmental administrations, and is one condition that will still be a limitation for some time.

viii. Political and regulatory limitations

Political uncertainty and criminal organizations

Political uncertainties, oppressive administrations and criminal organizations comprehend the main limitations for the implementation and continuity of the project. As previously elaborated while analyzing the 'rule of law' in Rio de Janeiro, the game of interests is the instrument that guides the development of the city. However, in here there will not be any further elaborations, but only the reflection on two ruling powers: the State (in its multiple levels) and the 5th Power (*milícias* and drug dealers).

Firstly, concerning the public administration currently in power, it is important to stress their perception over the *favelas* and intentions for city development. In Rio de Janeiro, from the mayor Marcelo Crivella (evangelist preacher), to the governor Wilson Witzel (lawyer, former federal judge and navy officer), until the president Jair Bolsonaro (former army officer), the city is covered by conservationist administrations that only differ on the degree of radicalism - becoming abnormal in the presidential level. The current economic and political situation of Brazil and more specifically, Rio de Janeiro, is

not prosperous, especially for the low income population. In fact, all administrations seem to share the perception of *favelas* as a birthplace for criminality, communities that occupy irregular areas and cause damage to the city. The position of current public administrations is to endure the legacy of evictions and displacements, continuing the construction of monofunctional social housing in disconnected areas of the city. It sure does not seem prosperous for the continuity of the project. At the same moment, the criminal groups that control the communities neglected by the State, increase the limitations for the project, as there is a way to know how they can take advantage of the proposed strategies for their own benefit.

As explained through the research, the project has developed alternative strategies and stakeholder iterations that enable the implementation and management of interventions, through collaborative bottom-up initiatives. However, more research is still necessary for the development of strategies that can address the criminal organizations that control the irregular territory.

Fig. 13.2
Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, Rio de Janeiro's mayor Marcelo Crivella and Rio de Janeiro's governor Wilson Witzel.
photographer Tomaz Silva. *Source. Agência Brasil.*
Retrieved from https://pleno.news/brasil/cidades/bolsonaro-rio-de-janeiro-recebera-etapa-da-formula-1.html

vii. Open Project / Exploratory Design

Alternative development processes

One thing is a collective that is born of joint discussions, and another thing is a collective that is born of the ideas of some, who are controllers, and give you options. In these areas, what happens is that often their "managers" (militias) control the decisions. And to what extent, to not have the place of the social gathering, is not it a purposeful question? (...) if you have spaces that allow social exchanges, the community can empower themselves and can begin to take actions, to question, and to redefine the directions imposed by regulatory managers. So, until what extent goes the interests of those managers to support his kind of (collective) space?"

Excerpt from the interview with Vera Hazan.
see full interview in section iii: Appendix

Initially set as the primary strategy for the definition of actions, the co-production processes that were intended to be realized with the community on the fieldwork, did not happen. Limitations regarding time, lack of contacts in the community and even criminal organizations, have led to a turn into the strategic approach of the project.

The foundations of the proposed actions have been articulated to promote an open project, one that does not present a final solution or a definitive plan, and can respond to current socio-economic and political uncertainties. In fact, the openess of the strategies, creates possibilities for multiple spatial explorations that can be developed by different actor-networks. The open project, listed in here as an exploratory design, increases the adaptive capacity to temporal uncertainties, promoting pathways for the continuity of the project. The open process has been developed through multiple actions that stimulate diversified iterations between stakeholders from civil society, public and private sector. Even though the elaborated iterations display a complex network of stakeholders, more research should be done on the local actors in order to detail the scenarios of possible iterations.

Finally, the concept of the open project displays supplementary bottom-up and top-down development alternatives in order to address political distrust, regulatory regimes, economic crisis, and other temporal uncertainties.

ix. Considerations on 'Informality'

Formal, (in)formal, (formal), in(formal)?

Following the ideas elaborated in the right to the city movement, put forward by Lefebvre (1996) and others like Harvey (2003), it is necessary to reflect upon the political, philosophical and ideological phenomena that surround the discussions around equality in the city. The urbanization processes and involved practices in the world have developed conditions of winners and losers. In this system, for some to win, many more have to loose. Despite the simplified explanation, basically, that is how the system is constructed.

In Permeable borders, the research has focused on vulnerable groups that are usually positioned in what has been labelled as informal settlements. Usually spatially segregated from the rest of the city, those communities are left aside, neglected by a society that identifies them as informal; in other words, as an agglomeration of the population that is NOT formal, considered as external structures of the city. However, how can we define an informal settlement as not part of the city, or inverse to the city, when the fastest and largest type of urbanization processes currently occurring are from spontaneous, self-constructed settlements (slums, *favelas, barrios, vila,* among other nomenclatures depending on the location)? Informal settlements have outpaced the growth rhythm and urbanized area, if compared to what is considered nowadays, the formal city (Revell, 2010). In the end, what is formal or informal, regular or irregular, legal or illegal?

It all depends on who defines the terms, and specifically in this case, who defines what legality is. Therefore, the definitions are subjective to political decisions, that are usually made the dominant classes that rule the system. In the end, the power of a minority defines "*who is in and who is out*" of the decision table, excluding the majority of the society and diminishing their power.

"...so he does not have the money to go to school, he does not have money to go to the street, he does not have money for nothing. The city costs a lot, but it does not collect, nobody pays anything. The crisis on the horizon is already here. We already live it. The insecurity, the shootings, the deaths, all that, is the result; is what Rio de Janeiro lives on. We have to try to reduce this difference between informal and formal, this inequality in the urban sense as much as possible."

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Excerpt from the interview with Pedro Évora
see full interview in section iii: Appendix