Hybrid architecture. Ontologies of the land within Comércio, port of Salvador de Bahia

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Abstract
In Brazil, Europeans appropriated the land, endowed with an imperialist right. The Northeastern state of Bahia is the place for multiple alternatives to this relation to land, implemented by the descendants of the nearing 1.5 million slaves who disembarked in the port of the state capital Salvador. Multiple human-environment alliances co-exist, as brought by the MSTB (Movimento Sem Teto da Bahia, homeless movement for land rights), the Quilombolas (escaped slaves communities), and in Salvador alone within the city's 234 favelas as well as in the Candomblé's 1200+ terreiros (voodoo sites of worship).
It is in this context that following the 1980s economic crisis, Salvador's port Comércio (UN World Heritage) emptied. While the city's governing bodies dream of attracting international investments, can this site offer the possibility of revisiting a colonial past and imagining an alternative future – a hybrid architecture or complex manners of building communities, inhabiting and relating to the land?

In 1501 two cultures enter the Bay of Bahia. A European-centered society establishes the capital of Brazil in Salvador. After the Tupi nation proved its uselessness, 1,206,934 African registered-slaves land in Comércio (1) - Salvador's port - during the 365 years to follow. The descendants of all these actors still inhabit Bahia.

What parameters help outline the main tendencies of the port environment - participating to its construction and transformation - and devise an architectural contribution to this story? Limited to the common history of slavery, the territorial narrative separates the population in two groups: those who possess all and of those who possess nothing – a line of separation divides by race, education, wealth and a potential to project towards the future. As an architect, the ability to recognize differences, which precede the founding of Brazil and their persistent coexistence on the territory of Salvador, complicates my perception of the context. Thus naturalist and animist ontologies such as outlined by anthropologist and philosopher Philippe Descola (2) help distinguish this cohabitation. The former, of an 18th century European inheritance, has led to Brazil's global economic development and persistent dynamics of colonialism. On the other hand, in continuance with African and Tupi tradition, another ontology remains through the practice of Candomblé otherwise known as Brazilian voodoo – the root to a social construct, as well as an understanding of and interaction with an extremely complex milieu. Each of these ontologies is endowed with a different cosmology.

Based on human singularity, the naturalist ontology aims at the secure-stable extension of his power and rights. Society sees to this distribution within environments by establishing a codified and hierarchical access. Institutions control knowledge, wealth, and professional roles. Behaviors are fortified. What is named exists, legitimized and secured – governance results in disparities only for those who do not fit the norm (for which they are blamed). The institutionalization of rights is a manner of controlling environments and relations. To a social infrastructure corresponds a material infrastructure. The categorization

and separation of objects and meaning ensures the controlled relation between all parts - a frictionless circulation of wealth, material resources or bodies. The consumer-based society is fed. Laws govern, seclude and secure, provide a stable institutionalized infrastructure of beliefs. The architectural practice is too often a user or participant in the construction of these infrastructures and thrives on the wealth of resources, solely focused on evaluating performance capacities. Environments are stage backdrops to these role-plays. They provide stable human, financial or material resources, available upon request. Architecture, land ownership, infrastructure or collective structures are a step to attain expanding power, enabling the participation to a planetary game of land-management, of rules and of rights to act.

Meanwhile through animism is crafted a shifting relational-web, within a preexisting Axé or energy of emergence, convergence and interaction, permanently rediscovered, reinvented and renegotiated. The animist ontology is founded on the individual's relation and place within the continuous framework of the living. Humans are included within the vibrant energy of all fauna, flora, and forces of nature. Each individual participates to forms of collectivity, to establish lines of interaction with the environment. Decisions are taken on a constant cooperation base, on the capacity to act. The consequence for architecture or construction of environments is that most structures are self-built, in constant transformation and reinvention. Collectivities emerge as a gathering of interests, of common values and desire of engagement, a political act. While no infrastructure supports such forms of collectivity, the individual is immersed within, interrelates with, and crafts a rich, complex and unpredictable environment. He is exposed and adapts to, rather than aiming to find a stable secure immutable environment - owns a right to constantly choose, create alliances to reinvent his path and battles.

Must be added to Salvador's narrative a historical context of economic expansion under the 1960s dictatorship, the rural exodus of the 70s and the 80s global economic recession to explain the city's massive population increase, the appearance of 234 Zones of Special Social Interest ZEIS (3) and Salvador's empty port (resulting in repeated attempts to implement an economic and foreign investment recovery plan) (4). The narrative of Salvador's founding is thus enhanced by the intricacy of a hybrid urban-rural cosmology - an extension of the city's timeless singular role as a prolific producer and exporter of agricultural products (fruits being the main freight of Salvador's port). Likewise, in quilombo land-reclaim processes such as Pitanga dos Palmares (5), anthropological studies uncover a complex narrative beyond the one of a free-slave community inheritance – portraying the production of a compound identity and territory, occupying a forgotten landscape, a gathering through solidarity of rejects from a dominating model of society.

Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism (6) further supports this acknowledgement of an inherent multiplicity of coexisting dimensions, dynamics, agencies, values and meaning. Governing instances attempt to help this "other" population which slows it down, by lifting it, providing infrastructural "living conditions" in good faith in order to integrate it, save it from itself, while incapacitated in respecting its cultural otherness. When recognized as a perspective in its own right, this other can be acknowledged as a quality, have value and contribute to the collective environment of a shared territory. It can become more than a shameful cultural trait that solely entertains tourists once properly packaged. More than rights awarded by a "benevolent power" to help the needy who can't save themselves, an addition of perspectives broadens the collective scope of Bahian values. Opposite worlds confront within a common environment, society and culture reduced to a single dominating narrative. The non-recognition of a duality can account for the resistance to as many uplifting attempts by the governing institutions, which deny, reject and erase a non-dominant ontology to the benefit of the other.

In Evolution and technique (7), paleontologist and anthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan outlines technology as what humans create to interact with or adapt to their environment. Each group of interest on the grounds of Salvador sets different processes into motion to interact with its milieu. Each locality and people matures a specific technical evolution consisting in as many diversified "states of technicity". Each can be identified on a

development gradation, possessing its own path and direction. As such, technology cannot be a tool to compare evolutionary statuses between social groups. Yet each technology is an apprehension and prehension tool, setting into motion the acquisition of knowledge. Architecture is such an instrument of interaction or technology.

While each member of the animist ontology is a builder, constantly modeling his environment, the naturalist delegates the building of a secured infrastructure to symbolize and stabilize this very environment. The combination of these traits draws the portrait of a cohabitation opposing manners of being, perceiving and building the world. The shared environment of Salvador incessantly resists an oversimplification - a form of resilience as some have named it. If the world is different for each ontology, environments are also distinctive. Social structures are at odds, the act of building and architecture are as well. An extremely dynamic horizontal society in network confronts a hierarchical structure of thought, of governance, of building. Each carries with it its own cosmology, environment and technological narrative - a construct of the social interaction and power dynamics translated into matter. Incessantly the individual is confronted to his choices, his posture, perspective and manner of inhabiting as it produces and shifts environments.

Tupi anthropophagy has been used as a metaphor of Brazil's abounding contradictions (8). Decades of policies attempting to resolve a social disruption result in the overwhelming number of 63,880 young black men killed nationally in 2018 (9). The state concerns itself with social disparity as national narrative - believed to be the main factor preventing Brazil from being a world major economic player (10). The United Nations' Unit of Human Development focuses on an education and economic opportunities to all (11). The nation, state and city attempt a socio-economic plan drawing the whole of Brazilian society towards globalization - yet it is confronted with multifaceted blind spots. Within a land-ownership recognition process, Zones of Special Social Interest (ZEIS) are proclaimed in 1980. Massive land-right policies and movements encounter resistance in their application. That same year Brazil's literacy is at 70%. It jumps to 94% in 2016 yet violence

has also inflated. Something is missing. Another contradiction operates in the same manner: only 4% of the population officially self-proclaims as Candomblé followers (12) while 1267 terreiros or sites of worship occupy the territory of Salvador (13). A non-recognized, historically harassed population hides to escape a new wave of Evangelist bombings (14).

A common core slavery inheritance turned into a narrative of disparity erasure, integration and normalization of all, does not account for an ill-fitted complexity. Does decolonization simply solve itself by claiming equality, then blaming the unfit? Are all humans reduced to a consumer identity? What assets do those who are left out resist sacrificing to the global narrative? These refuse to be labeled by the other in order to be categorized and used. The gathered-unfit embrace an ontology and cosmology different from the global. In the same manner as Candomblé participants have systematically refused to be called animist or celebrated as the root of syncretic Brazilian culture, Quilombolas refuse to be limited to the history of free-slave communities in their identity-territory narrative. These all affirm their will to self-proclaim, self-define their own narrative.

Following the Second World War, the multi-perspectival technological space of Cybernetics has expanded, turned into a planetary scale experience - similar to the animist interactive engagement, set within a naturalist infrastructure. Within the secure infrastructural setting of a man-made environment, those who have created a living-bubble are protected by it, avoiding environment unpredictability. Environments can shift or collapse - infrastructure will distance its occupants from the impact. Nevertheless cybernetics proposes a space for action, enabling the fusion of both naturalist and animist ontologies. Its principles are of interest to a proposal, in the context of a territorial intervention in Salvador. This cybernetics manner of thinking has transited into multiple theories in the humanities concerned with a political purpose set within a post-humanist planetary future (15) (16). Consequently, the non human-centered, non purpose-centered animist ontology shares similarities with the most avant-garde contemporary humanist and technological research. In architecture the technological shift

Figure 1. Cidade alto (high city): grey / Cidade baixa (lower city): blue (original city "gutter"), brown (landfill 1837), dark yellow (landfill 1910), light yellow (port construction 1964, extension 2000 and 2020) / Infrastructure: red (from bottom to top): Mercado modelo, Lacerda elevator 1867 (72 meters high), Plano inclinado Goncalves 1884, Plano inclinado Pilar 1896, Feira Sao Joaquim. Source. Background google earth

often occurs in a mechanical perspective (rather than in the perspective of the living). It is concerned with problem solving, optimization and risk-assessment - a realm based on performance, and management, within a limited will to concede power or trust an invisible mass. A profound ontological shift towards cultural hybridity requires a social reflexive understanding, a complex vision and enactment placed within a larger context or environment, assessed on an extensive timescale. The manner by which humans build "nature" and social models, by which they inhabit their environment, must be considered. Architecture is the instrument to the building of the common, a shared space.

The island port of Salvador

The port of Comércio is where it all started in Salvador. Following the recession, parts of the neighborhood were abandoned. A socio-economic rehabilitation plan is currently formulated. Beyond being a player willing to fit the global economic world game, can Comércio stand out, proposing a singular avant-garde architectural project? A techno-anthropological approach will consider a local culture of dual human-environment relation - a hybrid use and policy of the land, between infrastructure and network. Amidst Descola's Ontologies, Viveiros de Castro's perspectives, and Leroi-Gourhan's technologies, values, cosmologies, and knowledge coexist. Architecture is the tool to construct an environment that reflects complex social, relational, technological, individual and collective building processes, environment production or reproduction, narratives and symbolization. This proposal aims to explore the space in-between milieus - it's degrees of friction and exchange. First by outlining how this in-between or common space is perceived or understood (focusing on Comércio, set within the larger context of Salvador). In a second step is portrayed the in-between as experience (visiting 8 localities across Salvador).

The port of Salvador, Comércio, is an "artificial island", an infrastructure successively built over the sea, clearly outlined on all sides. Originally a one-street landing-site, entry point to the city, the port has expanded in stages. The Cidade Baixa is split from Cidade Alta by a fault. An Elevador and two Plano Inclinados bridge the gap. Comércio is further demarcated by two gateways to the site – Feira Sao Joaquim to the North (Brazil's biggest open fair and Candomblé supplier) and Mercado Modelo to the South (Bahia's slave market turned into a tourist gift-shop). The original one-street port borders Comércio to the East. The city fears the fault or historical "gutter", place of the ladeira outlaw (17). The ladeiras or slopes, where slaves would carry loads on their back to be laughed at and spat on by the bourgeois from their balconies. It is statistically merged to Comércio. With its 7% occupation, the port becomes the most dangerous neighborhood of Salvador. While Gilberto Gil sings of a ladeira colorful strolling community and market (18), the city turns its
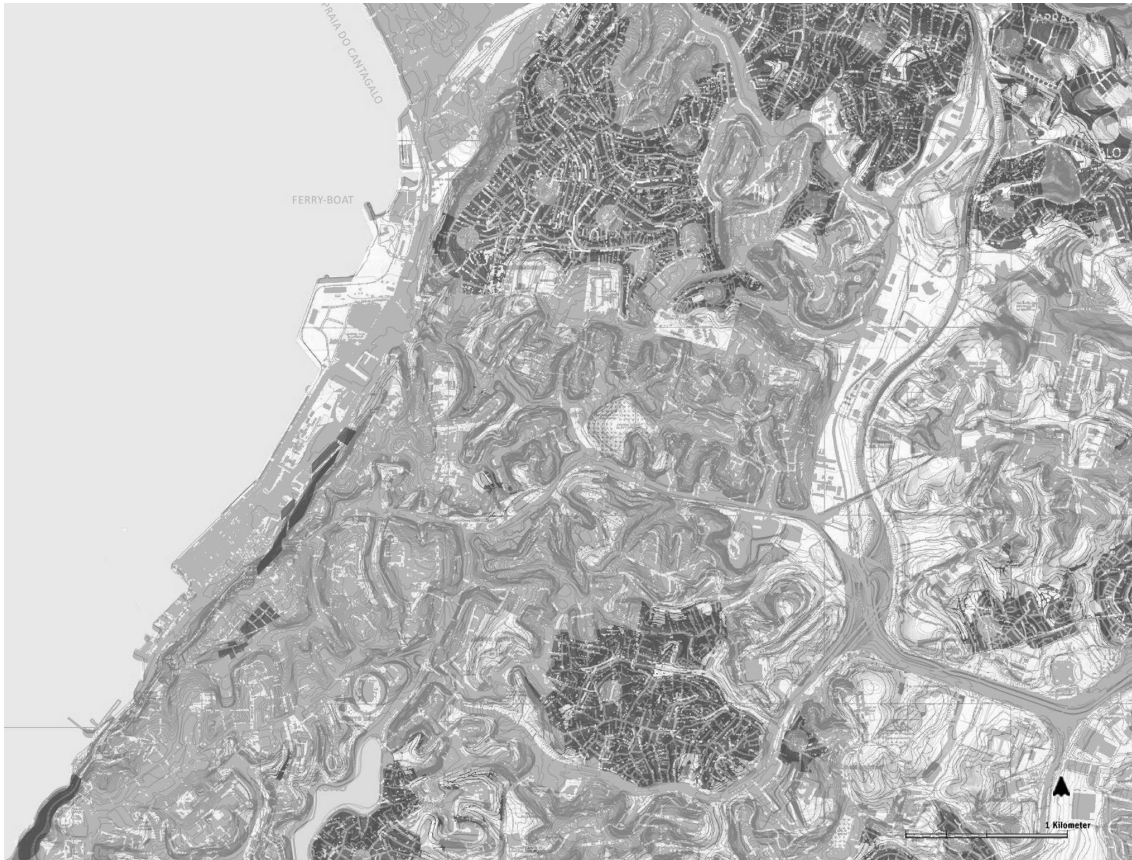
Figure 2. Collage superimposing Salvador's topographic lines with a map of the city's Special Areas of Social Interest (ZEIS). Source: Master Plan for Urban Development of the Municipality of Salvador, 2016 (red)

back to the "weed", focusing on the city's window-dressing - a "postcard" of secure investment.

Comércio, the third landscape

The city of Salvador's rugged topography has undergone multiple shifts: from the 1970's economic expansion attracting an influx of rural workers (Salvador's population multiplied by 10 in 60 years - yacht club, supermarket or bus terminal builders settle), to the 1980's economic recession. Salvador's territory is covered in steep hills mixed with "primary" or never exploited spaces filled with society's rejects - favelas, quilombos - woven alongside, multiplied by an intricate web of roadsides. Life in all its forms squats in the cracks. These spaces have all been included in the 2000 ZEIS national campaign in recognition of land rights. Salvador's 2016 PDDU accounts for 234 ZEIS (33 in the background map of Figure 2).

French landscape architect Gilles Clement coins such spaces as Third Landscape (19). He adds to these spaces, those "reserved" by governing institutions in waiting for future projects. Comércio fits in the same group of spaces as ZEIS. Government maps "white spaces" can also be added to this group. With a goal to preserve a planetary diversity, Clement labels all these spaces as Third Landscape and advocates for indecisiveness elevated to a political posture in order to apprehend and name the unseen - species and beings - thriving at the profound encounter between environments. The Third Landscape constitutes a continuous rich and mutating web dominating, structuring the city. The "artificial island" of Comércio, coastal expansion infrastructure, participates to this welcoming of life in all its forms. It is an equivalent to Viveiros de Castro's inclusive of multiple perspectives applied to landscape - zones of resistance and avant-garde.

Figure 3, 4 and 5 Ilhas de Salvador series (excerpt). Source. Cécile Martin
Three examples of a photographic exploration within 8 territories of Salvador, namely Saramandaia, Vila Brandao and
Plataforma - from the series of 45 images produced during a 2-month residency at the Goethe institute de Bahia in 2018,
focusing on processes of transformation within the landscapes of Salvador.

Endnotes

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