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Affective Mapping of Rio de Janeiro: the Spaces of Passion and the Soul of City

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Abstract

This paper presents the cartography of temporary interventions in Rio de Janeiro as a way to identify the city's places of passion, expressions of its citizens. The cartography is dedicated to mapping the passion printed in the city through interventions such as spontaneous appropriations, public art interventions and local festivals. Its objective is to present how the cartography allows a reading and interpretation of the city through the interventions that take place in its public and collective spaces, using the tools available in the platform.

Keywords: Cartography; public space; intervention; art; appropriation

1. Introduction

"I love the street. This feeling of intimate nature would not be revealed to you by me if I did not judge, and I had no reason to judge, that this absolute and thus exaggerated love is shared by all of you. We are brothers, we feel alike and equal; in cities, in villages, in towns, not because we suffer, with pain and displeasure, the law and the police, but because the love of the street unites and makes us all one." (Rio, J. do: 1910)

In cartography a concept of geographical space is expressed and shaped. When we choose a certain theme as something that needs to be "on the map," we act to create space, even if immaterially. By getting in contact with the number of contemporary actions and interventions practiced in the public space we perceive a connection between person and space that is rarely registered, and therefore seldom visible or perceptible. Such actions and interventions stress the boundaries between art and urbanism and city planners and practitioners of the city as well.

This work presents the cartography of temporary interventions in Rio de Janeiro as a way to identify the city's places of passion, expressions of its citizens. The cartography is a platform (available at: http://intervencoestemporarias.com.br) created by the Temporary Interventions and Tactical Urbanism Lab (LabIT), hosted in the Graduate Program in Urbanism (PROURB) of the School of Architecture and Urbanism (FAU) of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), and is dedicated to mapping the temporary interventions in Rio de Janeiro through actions such as spontaneous appropriations, public art interventions and local festivals. This cartography registers in space and time a latent city, an expression of the passion temporarily printed in the city by the actions of its citizens. Through the collaborative feeding, produced by the research team, and its on-line availability, the platform allows the continuous and constant edition of its content, offering a dynamic and contemporary cartography to visitors.

The paper aims at presenting how the cartography allows a reading and interpretation of the city through the interventions that take place in its public and collective spaces. The methodology used to meet this purpose is based on the crossing data allowed by the navigation tools available on the platform.

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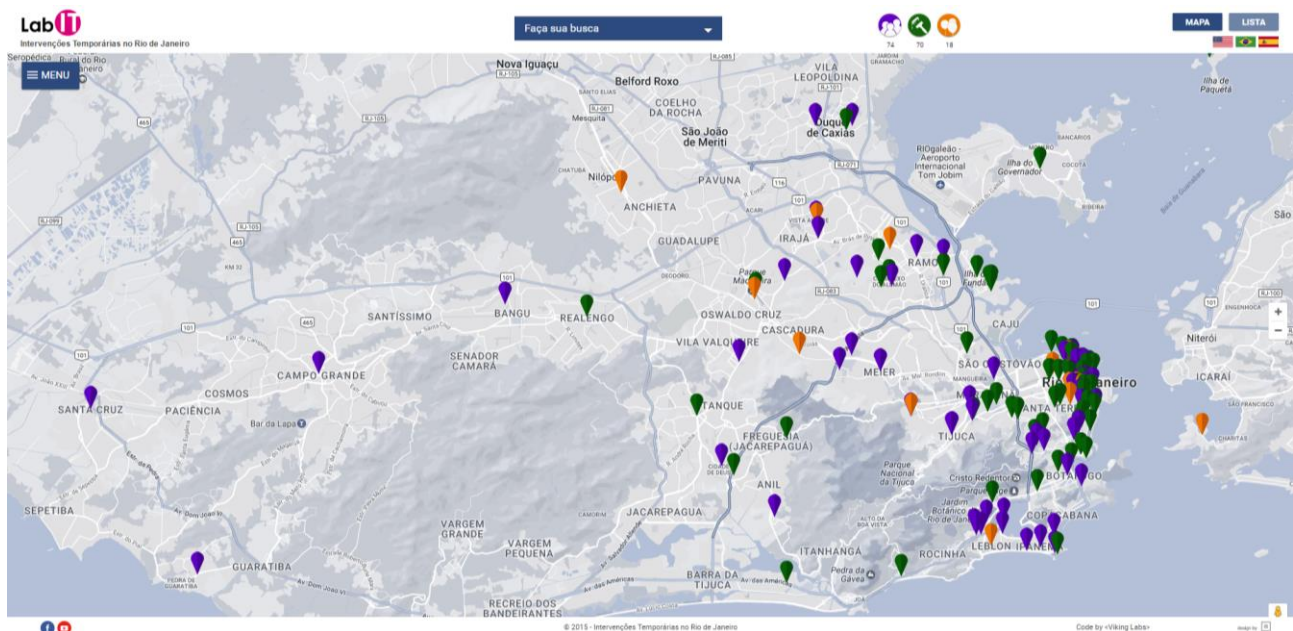Tel: +5521 993 737 691
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Fig.1. Cartography of Temporary Interventions in Rio de Janeiro (Homepage).

2. Temporary interventions

Every map has a discourse. Inserting temporary interventions on the map means recognizing this dynamics of the city and relating it to the places which people are fond of and which they appropriate. At the same time, it is a way to make these interventions less ephemeral, more permanent, allowing us to see what is still unknown.

Approaching "intervention" as "interference" - intentional transformation that aims at influencing the development of a given space (Sansão-Fontes, A.: 2013) - we call temporary interventions the small ephemeral and contestatory actions carried out in urban space that break the continuous and homogeneous writing of everyday life.

Such interventions are characterized by the transience and the small scale, but also by the subversion and activation of space, by interaction with and among citizens, by their participatory nature and by the particularity of the context (Sansão-Fontes, A.: 2013), and are expressed in three typologies: spontaneous appropriations of public space, public art interventions or small/medium architecture and local festivals.

3. Temporary mapping

"Mappings do not represent geographies or ideas; But act on their update." (Corner, J.: 1999)

The word Cartography is a term forged in 1877 by the Vicomte de Santarém that condenses support and graphic gesture (Jacob, C.: 1992). Our way of approaching cartography is based on the idea of the map as a discourse (Corner, J.: 1999), action and narrative, in this sense, we elaborate an affective mapping that, unlike the scientific one, does not require exactness. Thus, by condensing support and graphic gesture, the cartography of temporary interventions takes as support the interactive (digital) map and as content, or gesture, the narrative interventions, using technology to understand the affection condition, the spaces appropriated and enhanced by the interventions.

Our mapping provides the recent memory of Rio de Janeiro collective spaces, constantly appropriated by interventions that eventually claim for more lasting consequences. The mapping seeks to understand and represent the city not from its officially recognized structures, but by monitoring its movements and processes. It aims at giving visibility to changes made from the soul of the streets, through the contributions of its citizens.

We identify our work with Rena's N. research (2014), which argues that in the cartographic processes,

insurgencies and powers in flux predominate, connecting worlds and ways of life. Cartography, according to the author, is not only a method of classical geography, but a daily tactic, an insurgent and dynamic labor, always processual and creative. As small-scale actions serving a larger purpose (Lydon, M.; Garcia, A.: 2015), the mapped interventions act tactically on the territory, pointing to possibilities for positive transformation of living spaces.

According to these ideas, we ask: which places do individuals or groups appropriate? What are their features? How do the proposed interventions use them? These are some of the issues involved in the action, which essentially proposes an affective cartography of the city based on how the spaces are appropriated. From the identification of the places where the city is changing, driven by the temporary transformation of the ordinary space, it is possible to create more friendly and meaningful spaces for people.
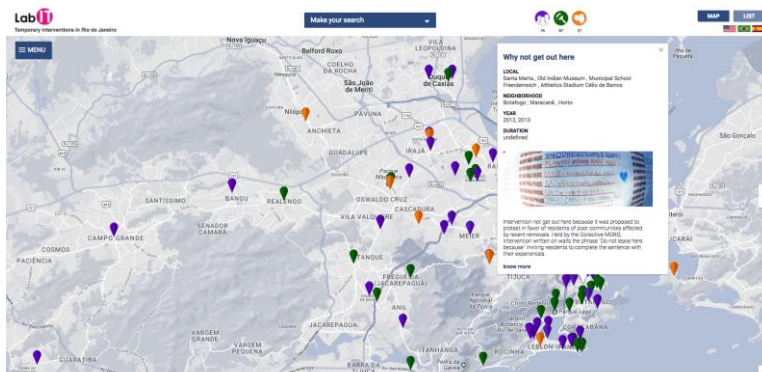

Fig.2. After Selecting the Pin on the Map, the Corresponding Intervention Sheet is Presented.

4. Method

Our method dialogues with the procedural nature of the object. It starts by the identification of interventions, the analysis and the interpretation of its features, mapping and crossing recorded data. It is also coherent with the digital format adopted, which allows constant growth, unlike the traditional static physical map.

The navigation in the digital environment enhances the visualization of the interventions inserted in the urban fabric, allowing different levels of approach of the distinct places, according to the interest of the interactor: the subject who acts as an active receiver and immersed in projects presented in cyberspace, where the narrative is constructed through his interventions (Machado, A.: 2001). The online map also enables the feeding of new data from simple publishing and editing tools, allowing the research team work from any platform and anywhere, developing a collaborative construction. This way we are able to register new interventions quite promptly, strengthening the contemporary role of the platform.

The platform offers multiple inputs for research, articulating a big amount of information and spatializing data from the observation of the city (Rena N.: 2014). The information is organized in physical, temporal and social categories. The physical entries gather data such as location, spatialization form and physical support of each intervention. The temporal entries involve information such as frequency, duration and shift of the actions and the social ones organize the actors involved in their construction.

The environment available in cyberspace offers navigation modes based on the desire of the visitor: (1) by the affective map, where all interventions are pointed out; (2) by the list of interventions; (3) by categories; (4) by keywords and (5) by a complex search system, specially programmed for the platform. Through the map, it is possible to experience the city, to imagine routes, to seek Rio's soul. Or still imagine where it would be interesting to intervene, discover places, contact active artistic collectives, analyze proposals already made, among other possibilities of interaction.

We can see, through different forms of navigation, some examples of the diversity of interactions between intervention and place, such as (1) actions to encourage the exchange of books in a network of public spaces (fig. 3); (2) collective appropriations of degraded spaces (fig. 4) or; (3) art interventions in historic gardens (fig. 6), actions that express the passion for the city and help in the shaping of the soul of our city.
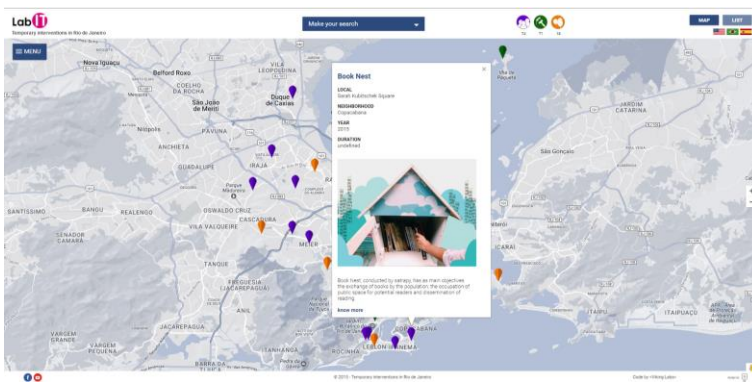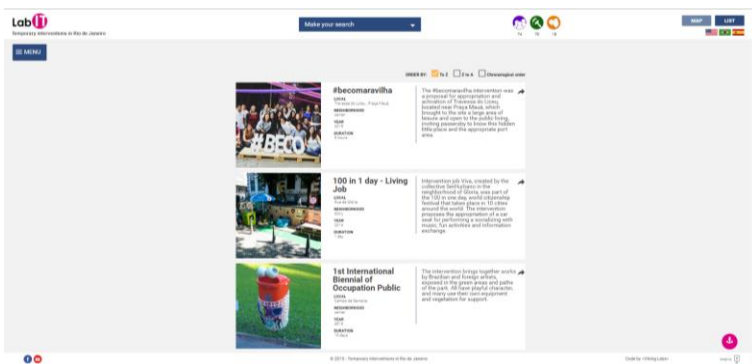
Fig.3. Navigation by the Affective Map.

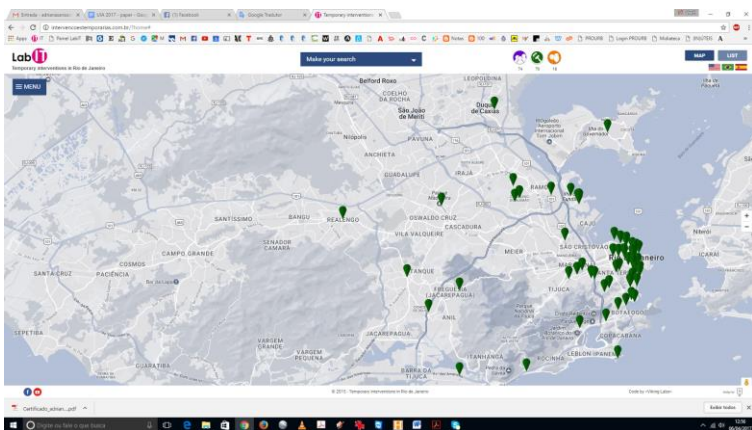Fig.4. Navigation by the List of Interventions.
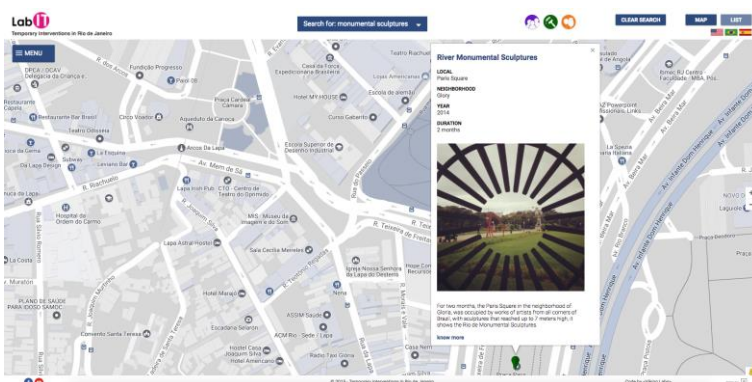

Fig.5. Navigation by Categories.
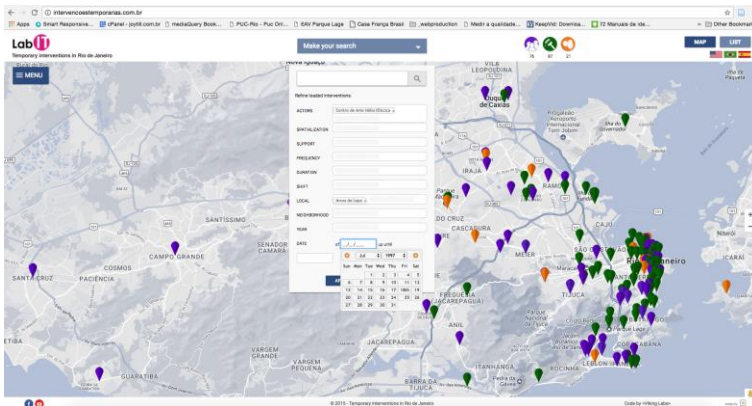

Fig.6. Navigation by Search Box.

Fig.7. Navigation by Search System: Keywords.

The different forms of navigation allow each user to choose their way, based on their interest at the moment of the research. Surfing through the map enforces the geographic relation with the urban mesh, whereas surfing by list favors the names of interventions and the alphabetical or chronological search. The platform also offers a system of simple search, refined by the use of keywords; and by categories. It spans all of the registered material and shows the results on the affective map.

This affective mapping is much more complex than a repository of autonomous information accessed virtually. We are dealing with a strategy to bring out something that has not been seen, from the cross information of different natures, set in different interventions, allowing multiple interpretations of reality. The result, therefore, is open since each combination can generate a personal reading.
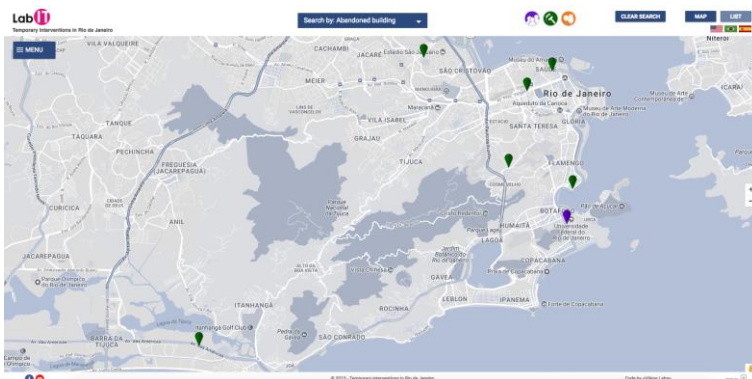

Fig.8: Example of Search for Interventions in Abandoned Buildings and Residual Areas.

Inserted in the web environment, the affective map goes beyond a space support that allows a dynamic navigation. It is the protagonist on a site where the potentialities of hypermedia (Moura, M. 2002) are explored, articulating the temporary interventions through analytical texts, static and dynamic images, analysis charts, hyperlinks to keywords and to the original publications of each intervention.
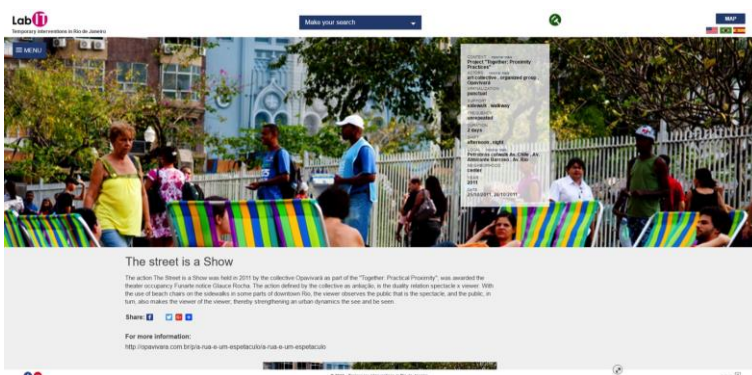

Fig.12: Example of Detailed Intervention Sheet.

5. Conclusion

In this work we seek to highlight the power of mapping to reveal and record a latent city in space and time, since the cyberspace support provides the permanence of temporal actions related to art and passion. Thus, we want the registered interventions not to work just as historical records, but as inspiring sources for future actions, structured from the affections and souls of the citizens.

Maps and visualizations of information represent the view of those who designed them, according to the intention of research and analysis. They are also tools for producing realities and can be agents of change. As this project is being built collaboratively and continuously, an increasingly expressive panorama of the diversity of Rio's temporary interventions is produced, accessible through multiple entries. As a consequence, we want this digital environment of discussion and experimentation to be configured as a generator of ideas for new citizen propositions.

The navigation paths allow the visitor to find interventions articulated with the places where they take place. However, they go further, enabling the analysis of the most diverse relations between the events. At different points in the city, the wishes and desires of its citizens are manifested, often with similar intentions. The online platform aims to bring them together. In this way, intends to show a little bit of the urban soul of Rio de Janeiro.

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