



SMUS

Global Center of Spatial Methods for Urban Sustainability
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SMUS Action 4 – Exchange: Practical-Empirical Implementations
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CRITICAL REPORT

UrbanSus Seminar

Everyday Spatialities of Dwelling in the Streets of Covid-19 São Paulo: Articulating Research and Practice

Location (Hybrid): São Paulo, Institute of Advanced Studies – University of São Paulo

Date and time: 13.04.2022 between 2 pm and 6 pm

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São Paulo, June 2022

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INTRODUCTION

Author: Fraya Frehse

Held in hybrid format (both in-person and remote) at the Global Cities Synthesis Center of the University of São Paulo (USP) Institute of Advanced Studies (IEA) on April 13, 2022 (Frehse; Reis; Castillo Ulloa, 2022), the UrbanSus Seminar, which this report refers to, pairs with the first report on a remote Seminar held at the same institution between November and December 2020 (Frehse, 2020a). The first UrbanSus Seminar addressed what it meant for three different social groups to “dwell in the streets of São Paulo” during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic. I refer here, respectively, to the population in street situation (StreetPop); to the practitioners devoted to making the daily life of that population segment in the city less painful from a sanitary, logistical, and/or institutional point of view; and to the academic researchers who have been engaged for years in understanding the daily lives of men, women and children who spend the night in the São Paulo public places and streets (Frehse, 2020; and Frehse; Kohara; Santana; Costa Vieira, 2020).

Both seminars are part of the actions of the Global Center of Spatial Methods for Urban Sustainability (GCSMUS), which I coordinate at the University of São Paulo. Having been created in 2020 under the auspices of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the GCSMUS is the outcome of a broad international scientific and academic exchange project between the Technical University of Berlin and 47 universities from 7 regions of the so-called Global South, from Asia to Latin America (<<https://gcsmus.org>>). The proposal of the GCSMUS is to identify how empirical research methods of the social sciences sensitive to the social and relational dimension of space may contribute to tackle concrete challenges of the UN 2030 Agenda for urban sustainability (<<https://brasil.un.org/pt-br/sdgs>>).

As coordinator of the GCSMUS strategic action to promote practical-empirical applications of spatial methods, I decided, in 2020, together with Dr. Ignacio Castillo Ulloa – scientific coordinator of the GCSMUS and one of the co-organizers of UrbanSus Seminar hereby discussed – to delve into a specific dimension of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) no. 11: “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (<<https://brasil.un.org/pt-br/sdgs/11>>) – especially during the pandemic. From this undertaking, homelessness – i.e., dwelling in the streets of cities in



the four corners of the world – gained particular sociospatial importance. Recovering what I wrote (Frehse, 2020b: 2-3) in the Introduction of the critical report referring to the first UrbanSus (Frehse; Kohara; Santana; Costa Vieira, 2020: 2),

I conceive homelessness as a pattern of bodily use of urban public spaces (Frehse, 2016). But it is a specific pattern, which concerns the regular physical permanence of human beings in streets, squares, and other public urban places for overnight stays and, thus, for dwelling (the etymology of the term “to dwell” comes from the Middle English *dwellen*: to physically delay, live, remain, persist). In Brazil, on the other hand, there is a lack of a proper noun for the sociospatial dimension implicit in the term “homelessness”. The phenomenon is often associated with its protagonists. It is presently called “população em situação de rua [population in street situation]” or, succinctly and affectively, “PopRua [StreetPop]”; and over a decade ago referred to as “população de rua [street population]”, while the protagonists themselves call themselves “moradores de rua [street dwellers]”.

How may this phenomenon be of interest to the GCSMUS, a university research and outreach center which proposes to include spatial methods from the social and spatial sciences (i.e., ranging from anthropology and sociology to architecture and urbanism, as well as geography) in benefit of the SDG 11 of the 2030 Agenda? Precisely the fact that this phenomenon is sociospatial in nature and inseparable from social inequalities, which flow into urban public spaces that are of relevance to the 2030 Agenda: places with unrestricted legal access marked by social exclusion, insecurity, and vulnerability, in addition to being environmentally, socially, and economically unsustainable (Kim & Kwon, 2018). Dwelling in the streets is a particular sociospatial characteristic of an urban society which produces and reproduces itself globally precisely by way of, among others, this phenomenon. Even though dwelling in the streets entails myriad social, health, and cultural dilemmas for cities, it has become an integral part of how cities are spatially produced and reproduced day after day, especially from the 1970s when dwelling in the streets became an object of scientific research and public policy – first in the United States and later in England and continental Europe (Frehse, 2021, p.48). Nonetheless, it was in particular since the 2000s that dwelling in the streets became a global phenomenon, in the wake of neoliberal urban policies and their global expansion.

The fact that we are faced with a sociospatial characteristic typical to this “mode of production of space” – as aptly summarized by philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre in his *La production de l'espace*, from 1974 – explains, on the one hand, why



it is fruitless to debate circumscribed or localized solutions for dwelling in the streets. As the author emphasized, “changing society” depends on the production of a new space, for it is through this space that society produces and reproduces itself (Lefebvre, 2000, p.72).

On the other hand, the sociospatial nature of dwelling in the streets underlines the social drama behind this phenomenon, especially in socially unequal cities such as São Paulo during the Covid-19 pandemic. There we find a striking increase in men, women, and above all families dwelling in the streets.

This has been scientifically proven in light of the most recent *Census of the São Paulo Population in Street Situation – 2021* (City of São Paulo, 2021) — which, in fact, was a topic of debate during the second session of the UrbanSus Seminar, as we will explore later in this report. The census signaled an increase of more than 31% in the population dwelling in the streets between 2019 and 2021: in contrast to the 24,500 respondents in the October 2019 census, in October 2021 approximately 32,000 people were found spending the night in the streets or in shelters – with the particular historical novelty of the significant presence of families and tents in public places.

Such was the contextual backdrop for the first UrbanSus Seminar to discuss how spatial methods may (i) contribute to a qualitative understanding of the phenomenon, and thus (ii) indirectly mitigate the suffering in the daily life of the São Paulo population in street situation (Frehse, 2020a). When I speak of spatial methods, I am referring to two sets of investigative techniques typical of the social sciences sensitive to the social and relational dimension of space:

- Ethnographic observation of the spatialities of the researched subjects (by way of direct and participant observation and go-along interviews);
- Visualization techniques of these spatialities (mappings via drawings, photographs, etc.).

Our specific interest in the GCSMUS is to seek answers to this question, stemming from the theoretical assumption that what all of us, in everyday life, designate as space does not exist apart from the social relationships and practices that produce this same space. In effect, space is socially produced, constructed, constituted – the terms vary depending on the theoretical approaches employed for understanding the social processes through which space is precisely produced, constructed, constituted. The term “space” is an abstraction operated in social thought to account for the sets of



simultaneous relationships between human beings and material and symbolic goods. Precisely due to this simultaneity, such relationships materialize in different social orderings: i.e., “spatialities”.

In light of the outcomes of the first UrbanSus Seminar, and the subsequent analytical and capacity building developments ensuing from the GCSMUS, it was possible to propose a second UrbanSus Seminar to the USP Global Cities Synthesis Center. During an entire afternoon, the three sessions of the second Seminar assembled different views from university researchers and practitioners working with the StreetPop on the following question: *How may social science methods sensitive to the spatial dimension of social practices (in particular methods from the fields of sociology, anthropology, geography, architecture and urbanism) contribute to professional practice with the population in street situation (StreetPop) in São Paulo during the Covid-19 pandemic – therein including the most recent census (City of São Paulo, 2021)?*

The specific goal of the event was to promote a critical debate on the response of the GCSMUS to this question, notably through the university research and outreach project “Spatial Methods in Action: Everyday Spatialities of Homelessness for Urban Sustainability”. To this end, the different worlds of academic research and professional practice were invited to a direct and candid dialogue on the potentialities and limitations of a specific knowledge about street dwelling, which spatial methods have helped to produce in the framework of a two-month training program (November-December 2021). On that occasion, GCSMUS scientists and social workers delved jointly into the *everyday spatialities* of dwelling in the streets of Covid-19 São Paulo. The everyday spatialities at stake refer to the everyday bodily arrangements that men, women, and children make of the public places where they dwell, while at the same time ascribing meanings to their interactions with people, institutions and objects, and animals and plants in these same places.

The following four sections of this report address and discuss this knowledge. For communicative purposes, each section provides the online links to both the respective event and its resultant video, in addition to details on each of the four stages of the Seminar: the Opening Speeches, Session 1 (“Encounters”), Session 2 (“Dialogues”), and Session 3 (“Challenges”)

We therefore hope to provide the reader with a summary of the discussions that underpinned a critical articulation between the logic of research and practice from a rare



point of view, within the walls of the university. A point of view forged during an entire afternoon of critical conversations about a unique variety of socially, culturally, and institutionally diverse perspectives on the StreetPop in São Paulo during this third year of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I take this opportunity to reiterate, on my behalf and on behalf of the two other co-organizers of the second UrbanSus Seminar – Dr. Castillo Ulloa and doctoral candidate Caio Moraes Reis – our gratitude to Prof. Marcos Buckeridge and employee Larissa Barreto Cruz, of the IEA-USP, for their unconditional support and eager dedication to this event. Furthermore, we are grateful to each of the participants in the training program that engendered the second UrbanSus Seminar. Last but not least, we would like to thank all event keynotes and discussants.

References

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referencia/relato-critico-do-seminario-urbansus-morar-nas-ruas-de-sao-paulo-durante-a-pandemia-de-covid-19-vivencias-intervencoes-pesquisas/>.

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1. REPORT ON THE OPENING SPEECHES

Author: Fraya Frehse

Event link: <<http://www.iea.usp.br/eventos/morar-ruas-covid-19-pesquisa-pratica>>

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJVketwdAL4>

(Timecode of the Opening Speeches: 00:00:00 → 00:43:28)

Program:

Presentations

Marcos Buckeridge (IB/USP and USPCG-IEA/USP),

Fraya Frehse (GCSMUS and USPCG-IEA/USP)

Presentation by Marcos Buckeridge (Timecode in the video: 00:00:00 → 00:07:59):

In his introductory speech, Prof. Marcos Buckeridge welcomed the audience – which comprised thirty invited participants, including researchers and practitioners from public institutions and social organizations. Subsequently, he detailed the structure of the USP Global Cities Synthesis Center of the Institute of Advanced Studies, emphasizing its commitment to public debate and the formulation of “solutions” capable of solving “problems” of living in the cities. Specifically regarding the phenomenon addressed by the Seminar, the population in street situation (“affectionately dubbed StreetPop”), the Center’s interest in this theme, as approached by myself, the rapporteur for this Session, and my team revolves around the capacity to explore the “issue in all its complexity”, bringing to the IEA the “voices” of those who experience the situation in their everyday lives.

In view of the Center’s proposal – namely to enable a “discussion with consequences” via the UrbanSus seminars (<http://www.iea.usp.br/pesquisa/projetos-institucionais/usp-cidades-globais/urbansus>) –, the Professor acknowledged in the present Seminar the potential to further advance the formulation of public policies ever since the initial discussions held during the first Seminar, between November and December 2020 (<http://www.iea.usp.br/eventos/urbansus-morar-nas-ruas-covid-19-intervencoes>).



It was precisely this transition that the second Seminar has sought to enable through the structure and content of the three sessions, which I subsequently introduced to the audience. Thus, the presentation in fact turned into an elongated Opening Presentation.

Presentation by Fraya Frehse (Timecode in the video: 00:08:00 → 00:43:28):

After welcoming the audience and expressing my gratitude to the institutions and people who made this Seminar possible, I divided my presentation in two stages. First, I epistemologically and theoretically positioned the question that inspired the conception of both the first and the present UrbanSus event. This allowed me, in turn, to single out four particularities of the answer to this question developed by the GCSMUS within the scope of the present Seminar.

The event's underlying question is listed in the event's program: *How may social science methods sensitive to the spatial dimension of social practices (in particular methods from the fields of sociology, anthropology, geography, architecture and urbanism) contribute to professional practice with the population in street situation (StreetPop) in Covid-19 São Paulo?*

The answer is by no means self-evident. After all, the social sciences are by definition devoted to researching social relations and practices – in other words, a quite abstract phenomenon. Hence, its mode of action vastly differs from areas such as engineering, project architecture, medicine, or public health. The exact and biological sciences may offer material contributions to the so-called StreetPop that are visually discernible in the urban landscape: a hostel, service infrastructure (washing machines, bathrooms, washbasins, etc.); medical and psychological treatments that intervene in the well-being and body appearance of those spending nights in the streets. Given this discrepancy, how exactly may the social sciences potentially contribute?

Equipped with theoretical “glasses” to gaze upon the social-relational dimension of space, the GCSMUS has been particularly concerned with the *methodological* contributions that the social sciences can offer to the professional practice of those who devote their working lives to provide a less painful everyday experience for the StreetPop in São Paulo during the Covid-19 pandemic. In no way do we disregard the broad framework of theoretical knowledge that the social sciences have produced about this phenomenon: a vast literature on the subject, within which the moderator of this Seminar



Session 1, anthropologist Maria Antonieta da Costa Vieira, has made pivotal contributions (cf., among others, Frehse; Kohara; Santana; Vieira, 2020: 27-28). Grounded on this conceptual repertoire, the GCSMUS has strived to promote the co-production of socially rooted knowledge about the StreetPop, by both practitioners devoted to working with this population and academic researchers. All of these stakeholders are invited to tread, in the company of GCSMUS researchers, a specific way – or, in a less metaphorical formulation, to adopt defined *methods* (etymologically, “method” stems from the Greek term “way”) to make strange their own everyday ways of dealing with the StreetPop – as social workers, as researchers – in São Paulo’s urban space.

In short, the GCSMUS proposal is that social science methods sensitive to the social-relational dimension of space may contribute to the professional practice with the StreetPop insofar as these methods inspire its protagonists to grasp, in their professional everyday practices, the socially constructed nature of their own deep-rooted notions and convictions regarding the everyday spatialities of dwelling in the streets of Covid-19 São Paulo. Spatial methods may assist to deconstruct everyday spatial preconceptions through the co-production of rooted spatial knowledge. Transdisciplinary by definition, this co-production of knowledge qualitatively changes the professional practice of those devoted to making the everyday life of the São Paulo StreetPop less painful.

I list below the theoretical and methodological foundations of the specific goal of the Seminar to which this report refers to: to enable a critical debate on the GCSMUS critical response to the question regarding the contributions of the social sciences to the professional practice with the StreetPop. The response was developed in the framework of an academic project focused simultaneously on empirical research and on outreach activities; to sum up, a transdisciplinary project. Entitled “Spatial Methods in Action: Everyday Spatialities of Homelessness for Urban Sustainability” this project emerged, in practice, through a training course in spatial methods that GCSMUS student-researchers taught to 26 representatives from four of the main institutional bodies devoted to professional work with the StreetPop in São Paulo:

- (i) the State Movement of the São Paulo Population in Street Situation (MEPRSP), coordinated by Robson Mendonça (who participated in the course and served as a discussant in Seminar Session 1);



- (ii) the Special Social Approach Service (SEAS), which locates and inserts the StreetPop within the São Paulo Municipality service network, and was represented at the Seminar by social worker Patrícia Rodrigues;
- (iii) the São Martinho Living Center, a civil society organization headquartered in the Mooca neighborhood and linked to the Social Organization *Nossa Senhora do Bom Parto* (BomPar), which in turn is responsible for providing assistance and healthcare to the StreetPop, and was represented at the Seminar by Igor Renato;
- (iv) the Street Clinic (Consultório na Rua), also associated with *BomPar*, which takes a mobile and direct approach to the StreetPop in the physical space of the street with the aim of promoting these people's physical and mental health – and as represented at the Seminar by Marivaldo Santos.

Rather than detailing the response of the GCSMUS within the scope of the training course – a task for the three Seminar sessions -, I sought, in the second stage of my presentation, to suggest four possible directions to the audience for apprehending that same response. The project under critical debate within the Seminar has four epistemological particularities:

1. Commitment to *sharing methods*, not theories, beyond the walls of the university;
2. Commitment to the *co-production of knowledge* on social reality through a transdisciplinary approach – uniting the university with the StreetPop and the practitioners around the sharing of spatial methods;
3. Commitment to *sharing spatial methods beyond the walls of the university*;
4. Commitment to the *mediating and multiplying* potential of an *interdisciplinary team of student-researchers*.

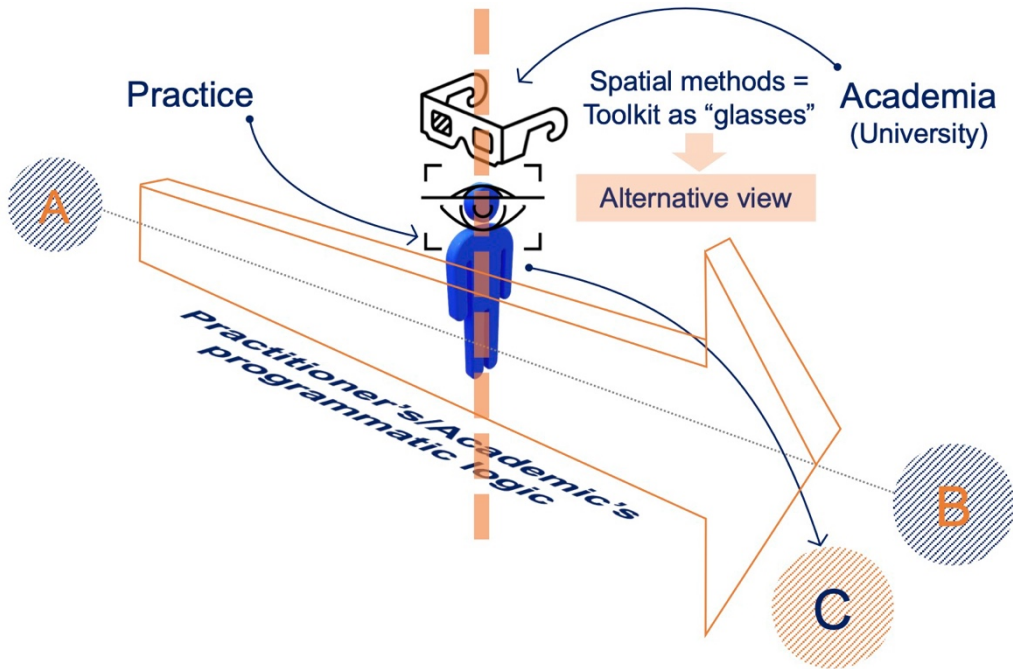
These particularities become more evident when we look at the six structural characteristics of the project discussed within the scope of the UrbanSus Seminar:

1. The GCSMUS did not intend to “convert” anyone into a social scientist through the project. The exchange of gazes proposed in the project and training course “Spatial Methods in Action” is underpinned by a specific epistemological perspective: what this rapporteur calls “ethnographic



perspective” (cf. Frehse, 2006, quoted in Frehse; Kohara; Santana; Vieira, 2020: 20);

2. It all began between November 2020 and January 2021, when the GCSMUS provided a training course on spatial methods to a pre-selected interdisciplinary team of postgraduate research students from the University of São Paulo, the Federal University of ABC, the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), and the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP) devoted to working with the StreetPop as scientists, practitioners, and/or activists. Produced within the framework of the training course “Data Collection + Spatial Methods”, the knowledge produced by the students about the spatialities and temporalities of dwelling in the São Paulo streets of São Paulo during the Covid-19 pandemic was shared publicly for the first time during the first UrbanSus Seminar (Frehse, 2020). Indeed, the spatial methods toolkit was transformed into metaphorical glasses, which the GCSMUS invited, in this initial moment, the student-researchers to put on so they could share with the GCSMUS their impressions about what they were able to see with the aid of these very glasses:



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Partial results of this training course were presented and discussed in the last session of the first UrbanSus Seminar (Frehse; Kohara; Santana; Vieira, 2020: 16-30).

3. After concluding the course, myself and Reis, a student-member of the interdisciplinary team and co-organizer of the second UrbanSus Seminar, conducted, between March and September 2021, the analysis of the qualitative material resulting from the data collection carried out by the student-researchers through the use of spatial methods. Accomplished with the aid of the software MaxQDA, the analysis comprised part of the second phase of the GCSMUS project. We organized and categorized, under spatial and temporal terms, the textual and visual information contained in the field notebooks, interviews, photographs, drawings and maps produced by the team of student-researchers and by the StreetPop who wished to collaborate with the project. This allowed us to shed light on the crucial methodological role of two spatial data collection methods mentioned in the Introduction of this report: what we call ethnographic observation and visualization



techniques – both referring to the everyday spatialities of dwelling in the streets.

4. Both methods were hence jointly promoted to “tools” of the GCSMUS spatial methods “toolkit” or “glasses” (in short, the SMUS Toolkit). During the third phase of the GCSMUS project, this toolkit was put into practice within the scope of a second training course, which targeted at practitioners working with the StreetPop. Based on our previous contact with these professionals within the framework of the earlier training course, the students and I invited them personally to engage, between November and December 2021, in the practice of, on the one hand, *making strange the everyday spatialities of dwelling in the streets that seemed familiar to them*, in their routine work with that population segment; on the other hand, *making familiar what seemed strange to them, in those same everyday spatialities*.
5. Under my academic supervision and in dialogue with the method of “problem-posing education” developed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1967: 111-121), the team of students transposed the analytical data about the daily spatialities of dwelling in the streets in São Paulo (phase 1) and on the SMUS Toolkit (phase 2) in an eight-session training course. Based on the ethnographic immersion of the student-researchers in the daily work routine of the practitioners, each session (sometimes physically mobile, other times stationary) was an “encounter” in which students and professionals together defamiliarized themselves with their (pre)conceptions about the StreetPop. Mindful of the objective of inviting the practitioners to put on the “glasses”, as implicit in the use of the SMUS Toolkit, without (!) converting them into scientists or scholars, the students avoided any conceptual or methodological terminology. Instead, they relied on ethnographic observation and photography, drawings, and WhatsApp audios to address the daily spatialities of dwelling in the streets so as to encourage ethnographic dialogues with and among the participating practitioners.
6. The specific goal was to ethnographically sensitize these participants to the spatial dimension of their own preconceptions (and prejudices) regarding the target audience of their daily professional practice: the StreetPop. Therefore, the general goal was to promote a qualitative development of the social



competence of the practitioners when dealing with their target audience in their everyday work. Accordingly, the course was structured as follows: the first meeting thematized the participants' views about dwelling in the streets with the help of the lessons learned by the student-researchers in the scope of the training course of the GCSMUS project (phase 1); in turn, the final meeting returned to the same theme based on the lessons learned by the professional agents in the training course (phase 3). Each of the six meetings in-between scrutinized a spatially sensitive subject related to the everyday life of the StreetPop who attended the four institutions the course participants were attached to: the StreetPop's daily routine within the respective institution and beyond; the past, present, and future spatialities of the StreetPop; their conceptions about their daily spaces of circulation (streets, squares, homes, the institution in question, shelters, tents, etc.); the respective role of violence, personal objects, pets and plants, and friends and family in the everyday life of the StreetPop; and the theme of how they entertain themselves.

By hoping that these details could facilitate the understanding of the Seminar subsequent presentations and discussions, I concluded my speech by summarizing how the three ensuing sessions were articulated. Finally, I invited the members of the first panel to the stage.

References

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[referencia/relato-critico-do-seminario-urbansus-morar-nas-ruas-de-sao-paulo-durante-a-pandemia-de-covid-19-vivencias-intervencoes-pesquisas/>](#).

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2. REPORT ON SESSION 1 (“ENCOUNTERS”)

Author: Ignacio Castillo Ulloa

Event link: <http://www.iea.usp.br/eventos/morar-ruas-covid-19-pesquisa-pratica>

Video link: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJVketwdAL4>>

(Timecode for Session 1: 00:43:53 → 01:52:48)

Abstract:

Presentation and debate regarding the results of the Training Course “Spatial Methods for the Professional Practice with the Street Population”

Program:

Moderation

Maria Antonieta da Costa Vieira (StreetPop Network & Fraternal Aid Organization)

Presentations

4 spokespersons for the GCSMUS Research Team – comprised by Ana Gil (PUC-SP); Anna Martins (Unifesp); Caio Moraes Reis (USP); Ednan Santos (UFABC); Giovanna Bernardino (UFABC); Giulia Patitucci (USP/City of São Paulo [PMSP]); Paula Rochlitz Quintão (StreetPop Network); Tales Fontana (USP)

Discussion

Robson Mendonça (State Movement of the Street Population – São Paulo)

Igor Renato (São Martinho Living Center)

Marivaldo Santos (Street Clinic – PMSP)

Patrícia Rodrigues (Specialized Social Care Service – City of São Paulo [PMSP])

Introduction:

This report discusses the central ideas presented by four members from the group of postgraduate students and researchers, who served as training agents in the four “institutional domains” to test the SMUS Toolkit. The main goal was for the presenters-researchers to discuss, based on their own experience using the SMUS Toolkit, to the active members in each of the chosen institutions (State Movement of the São Paulo Population in Street Situation; São Martinho Living Center; Street Clinic; and



Special Social Approach Service – São Paulo Municipality) their contributions to understand, from other perspectives, the phenomenon of people dwelling in the streets and how this can eventually contribute to the improvement of the coordinated and implemented actions. Said test constitutes the final tier of the course “Spatial Methods in the Professional Practice with the Population in Street Situation”, which was conceived and taught by Prof. Dr. Fraya Frehse. In this context, the first section of this report discusses the experience of the presenter-researchers during their presentation, articulated in the form of lessons learned, retrospective reflections on specific moments, among others.

Subsequently, this report summarizes the reactions, comments, as well as reservations regarding the SMUS Toolkit by the four representatives of the “institutional bodies”: Robson Mendonça (State Movement of the São Paulo Population in Street Situation); Igor Renato (São Martinho Living Center); Marivaldo Santos (Street Clinic); and Patrícia Rodrigues (Special Social Approach Service). Their perspectives, in this regard, comprise a kind of response to the arguments laid out by the presenter-researchers. Furthermore, representatives of the “institutional bodies” also expressed their own reflections, similar to those presented in the first part of the report.

1. Perspective of the presenters-researchers, who served as training agents

(Timecode in the video: 00:47:03 → 01:12:50):

According to the presenters-researchers, the introduction of the “toolkit” in the designated “institutional domains” led to four interlaced “moments of appraisal and learning”. The first was characterized by a contrast of (pre)conceptions (and, perhaps, to a greater or lesser extent, prejudices) about the role that the different actors involved should play: the presenters-researchers acting as “training agents”; the active members of the four “institutional domains” to whom the SMUS Toolkit was introduced and, lastly, the population in street situation. This, to some extent, was expected insofar as proposing operational and methodological changes to already established institutional domains entails some disturbance. As such, identifying how to better implement suggested changes and improvements is no easy task. As a mechanism to approach this initial moment of “appraisal and learning”, the training agents contextualized what it means and, therefore, the implications, of working with the street population. In other words, how to approach the working logic of each one of the “institutional domains”.



Subsequently, the presenters-researchers complemented their contextualization by discussing how and, so to speak, “where” the use of the “toolkit” could lead to a substantial contribution.

To this end, and as a second “moment of appraisal and learning”, the presenters-researchers deemed it necessary to “map” the agents involved in each of the “institutional domains”, in order to understand the roles, competences, professional profiles, type of expertise, and knowledge of the people in charge of implementing the various assistance and monitoring activities for the street population. (It should be noted here that the SMUS Toolkit was conceived in such a way that its implementation should not be overly complex in terms of academic and/or professional qualifications). Akin to the experience of the training course taught by Prof. Dr. Fraya Frehse, the implementation of the SMUS Toolkit may be preceded by a capacity building process to make its use as accessible as possible.

Upon mapping the “institutional design” of each domain, the presenters-researchers shared their impressions about their diagnosis and understanding of the work of each of the four institutional ecosystems working with care and assistance to the street population. At this point the presenters-researchers raised a central question: should there be a movement that allows moving from “simple care” towards “mutual work”? This question led to a third “moment of appraisal and learning”: the relationship established between the people who provide care and assistance (from each of the chosen institutions) and the street population. This relationship presumes a mutual appreciation between the professionals within the “institutional domains” and the street population. In other words, how do the professionals providing care and assistance to the population in street situation perceive and define them: are they “passive recipients” of care and assistance? Are they active and upright members of society? In this regard, according to the presenter-researchers, people working in the “institutional domains”, immersed in the demands of their work (and for various other reasons, such as the “technocratic rationality” that reduces the population in street situation to a number or indicator) lack any opportunity to carefully reflect on who are those people dwelling in the streets. This reflective exercise, as the presenters-researchers emphasized, would offer the possibility of rethinking the act of providing care and assistance to the population in street situation and, thus, open the opportunity to make use of, and take advantage of, the SMUS Toolkit.



On the other hand, the way through which the population in street situation imprints symbolic meaning on the bond they establish with those who provide them with care and assistance revolves around critical questions such as: is it merely a source of “assistencialism”? Is it a form of dignification that acknowledges the human condition beyond material deprivation? While this point, by no means insignificant, exceeds the scope of the “toolkit” it should not be overlooked insofar as it connects to the fourth “moment of appraisal and learning”: the inherent bureaucratic and administrative limitations in the work of each “institutional domain”. This fourth point is perhaps the most tangible and complex challenge to overcome. As reported by the presenters-researchers, in each of the “institutional domains” the deep-rooted “bureaucratic-administrative culture” that governs daily tasks is less – perhaps even not at all – prone to changes such as the use of the “toolkit” (or even reflecting on the bond developed with the street population).

On top of, and to a greater or lesser extent derived from, these four “moments of appraisal and learning”, the presenters-researchers outlined a series of aspects that offered valuable lessons. For example, there was a clear consensus regarding fragmentation both at the *inter-institutional* level (i.e., the different “institutional domains” practically do not interact with each other) and *intra-institutional* level (that is, the different people working in each of the “institutional domains” have a low level of interaction). Consequently, and once again unanimously mentioned by the presenters-researchers, this fragmentation becomes a direct hindrance to the provision of assistance and care to the street population. Likewise, the severe limitation of resources (human, equipment, financial) aggravates the lost potential for improvement. Nevertheless, and as a positive counterpoint emphasized by the presenters-researchers, in some “institutional domains” (for example, the São Martinho Living Center) we find a certain degree of resilience insofar as, despite the fragmentation and scarcity of resources, those in charge of performing the daily tasks maximize and optimize the resources and tools available so as not to halt the provision of care and assistance to the street population. (This, in turn, suggests that the “bureaucratic-administrative culture” is not, after all, entirely inescapable).

On the other hand, the presenter-researchers observed that the activists or professionals operating in the “institutional domains”, whether with formal ties or operating in partnership with the state apparatus (for example, managing a cooperation



initiative), experience a loss of motivation in their daily work not only on account of the inevitable corrosion and deterioration in dealing with the state bureaucracy, but also because of the increasing frustration at not being able to match ends and means.

Similar to the aforementioned inter- and intra-institutional fragmentation, the presenters-researchers reported a dissociation in the constellation of “contextual spaces” – engendered from the interaction between the people who provide care and assistance and the population in street situation in specific physical spaces. This leads to reduced effectiveness, since the “contextual spaces” should be interconnected to form a consistent framework that reflects all the instances from where the daily trajectories of the population in street situation intersect with the task of those who provide care and assistance. It is in this situation, as pointed out by the presenters-researchers, that the “toolkit” would come into action to enable us to ascertain and understand, from an alternative angle (that is, an angle that includes the social and relational dimension of space), the consistency and correlation between the physical and institutional dimension of care and assistance and the everyday spatialities of the population in street situation. To reinforce the relevance of this point, the presenters-researchers, at first based on their own training experience, and later activating the “toolkit”, emphasized how the discovery and understanding of spaces with symbolic and significant meaning for the daily practices of the population in street situation helped to remove their own preconceived ideas about this population.

Likewise, and as a consequence of the presentation, this constitutes an essential first step towards promoting a synergy between: (a) academic-scientific research, (b) the practical work of people committed to caring for and assisting the population in street situation and (c) the daily spatial practices of street dwellers.

2. Perspective of the discussants, who were participants in the training course and are agents of change (or not) alongside the street population (Timecode in the video: 01:13:50 → 01:51:25):

The discussants agreed that, in their direct experience working with providing assistance and care to the street population, they lack a culture of the use of “methodologies” as a resource. There was a consensus in the opinions of the discussants that this partly owes to the inaccessible and incomprehensible nature of the academic-scientific language. The question, in this regard, as the discussants argued,



would be how to achieve a “common language” that bridges the gap between the practice of care and assistance to the StreetPop and the “methodological issue” stemming from academic-scientific activity. A central point, and coincidentally also argued by the presenter-researchers, is the need to (re)conceptualize the notion of “the street person” and, thus, better acknowledged the subsequent implications in the practices of care and assistance. Furthermore, we must urgently overcome preconceived and depreciating ideas that permeate the stigma embedded in public opinion. Similarly, and as an intersection with the arguments of the presenter-researchers, the discussants advocated the need for a multisectoral approach in the creation of “pragmatic” public policies (i.e., with attainable objectives in a reasonable timespan and available resources) with substantial content (i.e., aimed at reconsidering, continuously, the practices and methods of care and assistance to the StreetPop).

As for the experience of the presenters-researchers and the presentation of the SMUS Toolkit, some of the discussants stated that they initially perceived it as “another university work”. However, as time went by, they acquired a better understanding of the pursued objective. There was, of course, resistance; above all, the resistance to change the work routine and dynamics (as previously reported by the presenters-researchers). Nonetheless, on the other hand the proposed dialogue was ultimately understood, and accepted, as different insofar as it evolved on an “equal to equal” ground; without stigmas or contempt. Furthermore, the discussants emphasized that the absence of an imposing or condescending attitude by the presenters-researchers was vital for them to accept to listen to the proposal.

As part of the main retrospective reflections, the discussants agreed on the importance of understanding “the street dweller” and their everyday spatial practices, respectively from the standpoint of “expert” and “work environment”. From this change of focus can emerge a mutual and edifying learning process, even if it may seem contradictory, among the people who pay attention to and assist the street population.

On another topic, and as a reaction to one of the remarks made by the presenters-researchers, the discussants, while acknowledging that the abysmal distance between the population in street situation and the institutional-bureaucratic world may seem ubiquitous, this distance can be bridged by alternative paths (for example, promoting solidarity networks whose potential members have the knowledge and ability to “extract” resources and aid from government institutions and bureaucracy).



Interestingly, according to the discussants, while their own experience exposed the gap between investigative and scientific-academic work and the provision of care and assistance to the StreetPop, they had never considered alternatives to address this contradiction. In this case, the contribution offered by the presenters-researchers, when sharing their experience in the training course and using the SMUS Toolkit, allowed us to begin to identify the existence of plausible possibilities. Based on this, and once again in clear harmony with the opinion of the presenters-researchers, the discussants emphasized that a “humanized” approach and treatment towards the population in street situation implies an important change, in the very foundation, to edify an alternative gaze and in pursuit of opportunities that are much more responsive to their (extremely) complex needs. More specifically, the discussants acknowledged that cooperating with the presenters-researchers and carefully listening to their experience with and knowledge about the SMUS Toolkit led to a reevaluation of their daily work with the StreetPop. Eventually, some of the discussants argued that this may well lead to reconsidering the operational logic that underpins the care and assistance actions they provide to the street population. For example, one of the discussants referred, as a contribution of the training course, to the positive impact in managing conflicts between the StreetPop and the inhabitants of the communities where they circulate, thus overcoming the stigma that defines, “by their own nature”, the street dweller as “violent” and “conflictive”.

Another similar point that the discussants emphasized was the promotion of dialogue with the street population, based on their valuable knowledge, to deconstructing care and assistance practices. In other words, not only to dignify the needs and even expectations of the street population, insofar as they are now taken into account, but also for them to become an integral part of the work in the “institutional domains” (which is in line with the objective of introducing the discussants to the scope of the SMUS Toolkit). In this regard, the discussants mentioned that the population in street situation respected hygiene guidelines during to the pandemic – use of masks, social distancing, etc. – when given proper attention and assistance, which serves as a fundamental reference to begin to shape, in a more permanent way, an environment of respect and interaction among peers (contrary to, for example, regarding the street dweller as a “passive recipient” of help).



SMUS

In general terms, while the discussants openly expressed their reservations (some only initially while others were more persistent) about the exchange with the presenters-researchers and the presentation of the SMUS Toolkit as a way to complement and improve – and not to eliminate and replace – the care and assistance practices for the StreetPop, they also acknowledged the positive and productive points (re-conceptualization and “de-stigmatization”, promotion of an adequate deliberative space, etc.).

Final remarks:

Change, by default, engenders rejection and suspicion. That said, the work carried out by the presenters-researchers (from their training course to their exchange with the discussants from the “institutional domains”) proves that change is possible. This provides further empirical evidence for the premise that academic scientific knowledge (more specifically in “spatial research methodologies”) is entirely consistent with the field of practical action. Likewise, the experience of the project signals the need to take into account possible strenuous preconditions (such as lack of financial and human resources) when assuming the challenge of generating synergies between scientific-academic activity, the field of action of the “institutional domains”, and the everyday life of the population in street situation. Lessons learned, we should recall, may also be applied to generate synergies between other scientific-academic activities, “institutional domains”, and phenomenologies.



SMUS

5. REPORT ON SESSION 2 (“DIALOGUES”)

Author: Caio Moraes Reis

Event link: <<http://www.iea.usp.br/eventos/morar-ruas-covid-19-pesquisa-pratica>>

Video link: <<https://youtu.be/FJVketwdAL4>>

(Timecode for Session 2: 01:53:20 → 03:01:49)

Abstract:

A methodological debate on the *Census of the São Paulo Population in Street Situation – 2021* in light of the everyday spatialities of dwelling in the streets in Covid-19 São Paulo.

Program:

Moderation

Fraya Frehse

Presentations

Carolina Nakagawa Lanfranchi (Social Assistance Surveillance Observatory – PMSP)

Viviane Ferreirinho (Social Assistance Surveillance Observatory – PMSP)

Discussion

GCSMUS Research Team

Introduction:

The “Dialogues” session of the second UrbanSus Seminar encompassed a debate between professional agents involved in the formulation of public policies for the population in street situation (StreetPop), at the Municipal Secretariat for Assistance and Social Development (SMADS), and part of the team of students who participated, as researchers, in the university research and outreach project “Spatial Methods in Action: Everyday Spatialities of Homelessness for Urban Sustainability”. The core of the discussion involved the methodology of the *Census of the São Paulo Population in Street Situation – 2021*, based on the theoretical and methodological contributions of the GCSMUS research, presented by the students in the first session.



To this end, sociologists Viviane Ferreirinho and Carolina Nakagawa Lanfranchi, respectively analyst and coordinator of the SMADS Social Assistance Surveillance Observatory, were invited to speak about the *Census of the São Paulo Population in Street Situation – 2021*, with a discussion furthered by students Giulia Patitucci and Caio Moraes Reis.

Opening Speech by Fraya Frehse (Timecode in the video: 01:53:20 → 01:55:18):

Fraya Frehse, as coordinator of the research and outreach project “Spatial Methods in Action” and as session moderator, invited speakers Viviane Ferreirinho and Carolina Nakagawa to the stage, while thanking their presence and announcing the proposal of the session: to present and discuss, from the perspective of the “glasses” of everyday spatialities, the method employed in the *Census of the São Paulo Population in Street Situation – 2021* (<https://tinyurl.com/bdezhf8n>) – notwithstanding the importance of the substantive data presented by the Census and its paramount importance for the design of public policies, as Marcos Buckeridge emphasized earlier.

Presentation by Viviane Ferreirinho and Carolina Nakagawa Lanfranchi (Timecode in the video: 01:55:18 → 02:32:56):

Viviane Ferreirinho is a social scientist with a Master’s (2004) and a PhD (2009) in Education. Her main research interest is the socio-assistance surveillance systems under the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) in the São Paulo Municipality. She works as an analyst at the SMADS Social Assistance Surveillance Observatory, an institution that conducts territorial analyses of vulnerabilities that afflict the population of São Paulo. Carolina Lanfranchi is a sociologist, researcher at the Metropolises Observatory, and coordinator of the SMADS Social Assistance Surveillance Observatory, with experience in monitoring and evaluation and public policies and sociocultural projects for the StreetPop. Both of them have worked in the planning and implementation of all censuses related to this population segment in São Paulo since the year 2000.

Ferreirinho and Lanfranchi organized a joint presentation around a timeline to indicate the background, milestones, and unfolding developments of the current StreetPop Census in São Paulo. Their objective was to describe the City’s efforts,



particularly the efforts of the SMADS, to quantify the StreetPop with the goal of improving the design of public policies.

Ferreirinho was the first to speak. She expressed gratitude at the opportunity to share, within the scope of the Seminar, her knowledge about the censuses in São Paulo. She recounted part of the history behind the government's efforts from the perspective of someone responsible for implementing public policies for the StreetPop. She then defined the StreetPop censuses as the result of a "methodologically academic research, albeit implemented by a public institution": an important consideration for the dialogue proposed in this session.

Before continuing, she briefly described the history of social assistance in the city to contextualize the StreetPop within this field of government activity, and presented an enlightening set of slides. According to Ferreira, the SMADS was created¹ with a focus on children and adolescents, particularly in the provision of daycare centers. The StreetPop emerged as an issue at the time linked to migrations, especially from Brazil's Northeast Region to São Paulo. The SMADS only began to turn its focus to social issues, among which the StreetPop, after the Education Secretariat became responsible for daycare policies.

The background and history of the censuses, according to Ferreira (and her slides):

- 1991: first attempt by the São Paulo City to count the StreetPop, with the use of techniques from the SMADS;
- 2000: for the first time, the City hires a company (Economic Research Institute Foundation – Fipe) to design and consolidate a counting methodology for the StreetPop, with a second stage comprising sample-based data collection in the research to identify their socioeconomic profile;
- 2003: the City attempts to design an updated counting methodology based on estimates, inspired by the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)² and including the

¹ Under the name Municipal Secretariat for Social Welfare – SEBES, established by Decree No. 24,269, dated July 27, 1987.

² The PNAD annually updates, through sample-based estimates, the characteristics of the Brazilian population tracked every 10 years by the IBGE Demographic Census. To this end, it utilizes a systematic sampling of households in selected cities in the country, thus enabling a



“sheltered” population – that is, individuals spending the night in the city’s shelters;

- 2007: the first census of children and adolescents and child labor is carried out, with conceptual and methodological gains (especially in defining the scheduled times for data collection);
- 2009: the City conducts another census, once again together with the Fipe, abandoning the proposal to work with estimates in tandem with the PNAD-IBGE methodology, and adapting the survey to the National Policy for the Street Population, introduced that same year through Decree No. 7053, dated December 23, 2009 (Brasil, 2009);
- 2011: this time in partnership with the São Paulo Foundation School of Sociology and Politics (FESPSP), the City conducts a new census, with the inclusion of a “shadow researcher”, whose role is to monitor data collection disguised as a person in street situation, in order to control the quality of the process. According to Ferreirinho, this edition of the census was pervaded by political controversies, which hindered data dissemination even within the City’s institutions, between municipal departments;
- 2015: A new census is carried out in partnership with the Fipe, this time including a third stage of data collection for “identifying needs”, thus providing a more in-depth approach at specific profiles of the StreetPop and qualifying the government’s responses. Ferreirinho mentioned that 2015 was the last year in which the company was hired to carry out the census “without a public bidding process” – that is, based on the quality of the proposal and experience of the institution. In 2015, the City Court of Auditors determined that the City uses public bidding process for new hires for the census and select the most low-priced proposal;
- 2019: the first census contracted through public bidding is performed, and the selected company was Qualitest, which included instantaneous georeferencing in the data collection in all three stages of the census.

methodologically reliable and economically feasible survey to update the demographic and socioeconomic data of the Brazilian population in between demographic censuses.



Based on this timeline, Ferreirinho returned to the operational definitions of “street population” used in each edition:

- 2000-2009: the census used the definition “street dweller” which, as indicated on the slide, corresponded to a “very low-income population segment, who, whether temporarily or permanently, spends the night in public areas of the city – squares, sidewalks, marquees, gardens, under overpasses –, abandoned places, vacant lots, hideouts, cemeteries, and vehicle carcasses. The term street dweller also comprised those who spend the night in public shelters or social entity shelters”;
- 2007: for the census of children and adolescents, the slide indicated the following: “[a] distinction was made between those who dwell in the streets and those who ‘work during the day’ in the streets and return to their homes. The distinction was necessary due to the differentiated use of spaces in the city and the different ways of staying in the streets: for children and adolescents who *dwell* in the streets, the public space is, primarily, their home; for *workers*, it is, above all, their workplace”;
- 2011-2019: the censuses adopted the definition in line with Decree No. 7,053, which instituted the National Policy for the Street Population, which defined “street population” as a “heterogeneous population group that share in common extreme poverty, interrupted or deteriorated family ties, and lack of regular conventional housing, and who use public places and degraded areas for dwelling and for their own livelihood, temporarily or permanently, as well as shelters for temporary overnight stays or as temporary housing”.

Guided by this list of definitions, Ferreirinho then specifically addressed the census methodology as a specific byproduct of quantitative research. Currently, the methodology results from the dialogue between, respectively, the technical team of the SMADS Social Assistance Surveillance Observatory, the company hired for each new census, and the Intersectoral Committee of the Municipal Policy for the Street Population – known as the StreetPop Committee (created in 2013). This methodology resulted from the recognition of the StreetPop’s intra-urban mobility dynamics, and the primary objective was to avoid double counting: data collection was to take place at night, from Monday to Thursday (excluding rainy days), in geographically selected census districts defined prior to the start of collection, throughout three stages – which comprise, respectively, the census count, the sample survey, and “identifying the needs”, according



to the speaker. This methodology would thus provide a “photograph” of the moment, seeking to address a shortcoming of the IBGE which, both in the decennial demographic census and in the yearly PNAD, failed to account for the StreetPop.

In addition, Ferreirinho alluded to two moments in which the census methodology was updated to incorporate challenges inherent to the recognition of the greater complexity of the StreetPop: in 2015, the census included questions regarding the gender identity of the StreetPop, their tents, and family composition in addition to the “needs” of specific population profiles; in 2019, the census included questions about survival strategies in the streets and shelters, incorporated instantaneous georeferencing, and hired street dwellers as census takers.

Subsequently, Carolina Nakagawa Lanfranchi spoke, as she addressed the unfolding developments of each census edition on the City’s activities. The slides were very revealing:

- 1991: the City acknowledges the need to provide new forms of protection and care on top of the former Screening and Forwarding Center (CETREM);
- 2000: the census provides subsidies for new standards in the provision of public services and user acquisition, while the City begins to encourage the formation of political leaderships with ties to the StreetPop;
- 2003: a technical ruling consolidates standards for providing public services through public bidding, with a policy focused on the institutional care of the StreetPop;
- 2007: creation of an integrated assistance flow among basic social protection services, in addition to the establishment of interdepartmental actions for childhood protection;
- 2009: following the 1st National Meeting of the Street Population in São Paulo, and the publication of the decree instituting the National Policy for the Street Population, the City aligns its typology in line with the national standard regarding the provision of public services, costs, indicators, and service monitoring goals for the StreetPop, with the subsequent diversification of services provided;
- 2011: the focus continues to be on institutional protection and care;



- 2015: in view of the initial efforts to “identify needs”³, shelters are created for the more vulnerable social segments of the StreetPop (LGBTQIA+ and elderly people);
- 2019: right to housing is recognized as a policy focus for the StreetPop, expressed in the provision of housing services.

Following this long list of information, Lanfranchi moved on to discuss the GCSMUS research, detailed in the first session of the UrbanSus Seminar. She reaffirmed the relevance of the exchange between practice and the University and the need for public authorities to adopt a gaze towards identifying the “potentials of the street”, beyond the preconceptions of policymakers, so as to forge state interventions in dialogue with the target audience. According to Lanfranchi, we must urgently undertake an “anti-shelter fight”, as such spaces violate the subject and reinforce their “subalternity”. Lastly, the speaker emphasized the importance of qualifying the services offered to the StreetPop. This would involve the physical infrastructure, the team staff, and the design of the public policies aimed at this population segment.

Once the presentation was over, Frehse, as moderator, emphasized that the presentation managed to summarize “everything you always wanted to know about social assistance in the city of São Paulo but were afraid to ask”.

Discussion by Giulia Patitucci and Caio Moraes Reis *(Timecode in the video: 02:36:07 → 02:52:00):*

Giulia Pereira Patitucci is an architect, and holds a Master’s degree (2022) from the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism-USP. She served as coordinator of Public Policies for the Street Population at the São Paulo Municipal Secretariat of Human Rights and Citizenship (SMDHC) between 2019 and 2022. I, Caio Moraes Reis, author of this account and discussant during the session, am a PhD candidate in Sociology at the USP Faculty of Philosophy, Literature, and Human Sciences. Furthermore, I served as technical collaborator for the SMDHC within the scope of the Interdepartmental

³ The third phase of the census, “identifying needs”, consists of expanding the results of the previous phases – respectively, the census and sample research, to outline the socioeconomic profile of the StreetPop – to determine the needs of special subgroups of the StreetPop for the subsequent improvement of public policies for this population segment.



Workgroup for Monitoring Deaths Among the Population in Street Situation, in a collaboration effort to develop a “monitoring dashboard of deaths among people in street situation” in São Paulo during the year 2022.

The discussion that Patitucci and myself, as representatives of the GCSMUS group of student-researchers, proposed for this session sought to compare the census methodologies with the SMUS Toolkit. Our proposal was to identify, with the help of the data produced within the scope of the GCSMUS project, how to use the “glasses” offered by this toolkit to positively qualify the census methodology.

I started the discussion by comparing the different approaches and forms of dialogue implicit in both methodologies. A central difference in the approaches concerns what we summarized as “bodies”. The census proposes physical and symbolic distance between census takers and the StreetPop, while the SMUS methodology suggests a gradually established proximity, investing in trust and qualitative sensitivity towards these categories, which anthropology commonly designates as “native” – in this case the StreetPop’s own native terms. Additionally, the modes of dialogue differ according to their reference point: while the perspective of the research planners prevails in the census, the SMUS methodology proposes an ethnographic perspective, an “actual” dialogue with the other (Frehse, 2006).

Based on this argument, I listed, on behalf of the group of student-researchers, three critical characteristics of the last Census questionnaire, in light of the data obtained from the use of the SMUS methodology. The Census (i) considers only the past educational experience of people in street situation, thus making it difficult to identify cases in which people dwelling in the street had returned to school; (ii) is insensitive to two types of temporality of the StreetPop: the cyclical temporality of the street situation, which implies successive “departures” and “returns” to the street due to employment instabilities, and historical and/or biographical time frames of the StreetPop rather than chronological milestones; (iii) fails to accommodate the multiple conceptions of family that pervade the StreetPop’s sociability.

In light of these considerations, Patitucci took over the presentation, pointing out, on behalf of the group of student-researchers, four contributions that the SMUS methodology could offer to the census design for the StreetPop. The everyday spatialities, analytically identified with the help of the SMUS Toolkit, could (i) be used to review the census design, especially when breaking it down to specific districts; (ii) serve



as a training guide for census takers; (iii) contribute to socially and culturally “root” certain conceptions of schooling, family, etc. used in the questionnaire during the three stages of data collection; (iv) improve data collection in the streets, by nurturing a “rooted” communication with the StreetPop during the census application.

In conclusion, Patitucci emphasized our appreciation that the census, resulting from quantitative research, serves as a quantitative photograph of a given moment. In any case, she reaffirmed, on behalf of the group of student-researchers, the difficulty entailed by this methodology in the government’s dialogue with the StreetPop’s “native” categories. Lastly, the speaker emphasized the need to complement the census with other qualitative tools, such as the Participatory Social Survey, carried out in 2015 as a complement to the Census that year.

Reactions by Viviane Ferreirinho and Carolina Nakagawa Lanfranchi (*Timecode in the video: 02:52:20 → 02:59:00*):

Following our inquiry, speakers Ferreirinho and Lanfranchi briefly exposed their reactions.

Ferreirinho suggested that the differences we outlined between the methodologies of the census and the university research and outreach project, which envisions the use of the SMUS Toolkit, corresponds to a distinction between anthropological and sociological perspectives. She reaffirmed the particular demand that the census has to respond to – namely, to quickly count the StreetPop. That said, the speaker acknowledged that the census methodology is invasive, especially in the 2019 edition, in which, according to Ferreirinho, there was not enough preparation time before applying the questionnaires.

Lastly, Ferreirinho described the empirical field when conducting the census – which includes both the StreetPop and the census takers – as more “hostile”, especially since the pandemic. Furthermore, she singled out training and monitoring of the census takers teams as the greatest current challenge for conducting the census.

Continuing this theme, Lanfranchi mentioned the need to “recover” the training of the census takers as a current challenge, since the activity results from a public bidding



process⁴. She also suggested awareness-raising initiatives among census takers based on the census results.

Returning to Ferreirinho's responses, Lanfranchi also emphasized the need to balance the temporal demands of conducting the census and its objectives. This would entail difficult methodological choices. Hence, for Lanfranchi, the SMUS approach would make more sense for psychosocial care, since the main goal and challenge of the census would be to ensure the possibility of a historical series. Lastly, Lanfranchi gave an important tip for future researches: the SMADS website includes the raw data from each census.

Final considerations by Fraya Frehse (Timecode in the video: 02:59:06 → 03:01:49):

The moderator reiterated the pertinence of the argument developed by the group of student-researchers: knowledge about the everyday spatialities of dwelling in the streets developed with the help of the GCSMUS "glasses" could requalify the training of census takers, the content of the census questionnaire, as well the methodological design of the research, serving as a parameter for a potential preceding training course, with a qualitative approach, for the census takers.

Final comment:

The second session achieved two results. On the one hand, it enabled a fertile dialogue between researchers and public policymakers concerning the research methodologies employed in their respective works, in furtherance of different objectives – on the side of the group of student-researchers, understanding the everyday life of the StreetPop in Covid-19 São Paulo from the methodological standpoint of their everyday spatialities; on the side of the SMADS agents, to quantify this population and identify

⁴ The bidding process demands that service providers – whether individuals or companies – submit proposals in which they describe not only the financial cost of each service provided, but also justifications for the intended action plan. Proposals that meet all requirements listed in the public notice for the provision of services must be then evaluated according to the lowest price offered. Therefore, the training of the teams, which Lanfranchi refers to the need to "recover", would require including, in the public notice, specific stages, such as training in the field for two weeks, etc.



their socioeconomic characteristics to subsidize changes or even develop new proposals for state intervention.

On the other hand, the session highlighted some challenges inherent to this dialogue. The proposals presented by the group of student-researchers, such as revisions to the current Census questionnaire and to complement the training of census workers through spatial methods, found resistance from public policymakers. The latter, aware of the difficulties inherent in their work and, particularly, the very feasibility of a survey such as the StreetPop census in São Paulo, suggested that any future debate on the SMUS methodology would take place within the scope of the care services and facilities of the SMADS itself, and not necessarily through a survey to complement the census.

In my view, this resistance stems less from the different nature of the activities of each party (academic work vs. public policymaking), although not at all extraneous to such difference, but more from the methodological controversies specific to the social sciences, the background area of the four session participants. The will towards dialogue exists, which became clear during the session. However, the obstacles to this exchange between academia and professional practice are not limited to the (supposed) division of labor between both areas. They are also crossed by divergences (re)produced within academia itself, from where the professional agents – especially those operating in public policymaking – received training and graduated.

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SMUS

6. REPORT ON SESSION 3 (“CHALLENGES”)

Author: Caio Moraes Reis

Event link: <http://www.iea.usp.br/eventos/morar-ruas-covid-19-pesquisa-pratica>

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJVketwdAL4>

(Timecode for Session 3: 03:02:08 → 04:32:40)

Abstract:

Presentation and critical debate on the methodology regarding the everyday spatialities of dwelling in the streets of Covid-19 São Paulo.

Program:

Moderation

Carmen Santana (School of Medicine-USP)

Presentations

Fraya Frehse (GCSMUS-USP/USP-Global Cities)

Ignacio Castillo Ulloa (GCSMUS-TU Berlin)

Discussion

Marcos Buckeridge (Institute of Biosciences-USP/USP-Global Cities)

Suzana Pasternak (School of Architecture and Urbanism-USP/USP-Global Cities)

Pedro Jacobi (Institute of Energy and Environment-USP/USP-Global Cities)

Marcelo Nery (Center for the Study of Violence-USP/USP-Global Cities)

Introduction:

The final session of the UrbanSus Seminar, “Challenges”, focused on a critical discussion regarding the theoretical and methodological framework underlying the GCSMUS research and university outreach project.

To this end, Fraya Frehse and Ignacio Castillo Ulloa presented the institutional context and the theoretical and methodological guidelines of the proposal to the assessment of four researchers from the USP Global Cities Program of the Institute of Advanced Studies (IEA): Pedro Jacobi, Suzana Pasternak, Marcelo Nery, and Marcos



Buckeridge. The session was mediated by Carmen Santana, a collaborating researcher at the School of Medicine of the University of São Paulo (FM-USP).

Opening Speech by Carmen Santana and Fraya Frehse *(Timecode in the video: 03:03:33 → 03:06:56):*

Santana is a psychiatrist, researcher, and coordinator of the university outreach project “Course and Guide: Mental Health and Psychosocial Care for Immigrants and Refugees”, resulting from a partnership between the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). As for the three discussants, while they are all researchers at the USP Global Cities Program, they have diversified educational profiles. Jacobi is a professor of Environmental Sciences at the USP Institute of Energy and Environment (IEE) and one of the coordinators of the “Cities” thematic area of the “Thematic Axis Program” at the University. Pasternak, in turn, is a retired professor of Urban Planning at the USP School of Architecture and Urbanism (FAU), as well as a researcher at the Metropolises Observatory. Nery is a sociologist and researcher at the USP Center for the Study of Violence (NEV). Buckeridge is a professor at the USP Institute of Biosciences.

After introducing the discussants, Frehse announced the content of her joint presentation with Castillo Ulloa through on a slide presentation on the “Practical-empirical implementations + Pilot Project” structured in four parts: (i) “Practical-empirical implementations: what are they?”; (ii) “Our pilot project: an alternative view of the StreetPop”; (iii) “Retrospective: what have we learned?”; and (iv) “Next steps”.

Presentation by Ignacio Castillo Ulloa and Fraya Frehse *(Timecode in the video: 03:07:27 → 03:30:21):*

Castillo Ulloa began his speech with a broader institutional overview of the research and outreach project in focus during the UrbanSus Seminar. The objective of what the authors call “practical-empirical implementations” refers to a specific public policy proposal in line with one of the goals of the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations (UN), namely Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #11 – “Sustainable Cities and Communities” –, which aims to “make cities and communities more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable”. Its main staple: scientific knowledge in favor of urban sustainability grounded on the investigative use and practical dissemination of spatial



methods. Such is the core of the GCSMUS Action 4. In fact, its central assertion is to promote further synergy between scientific knowledge and the world of practice via spatial methods, thus nurturing a “spatial gaze”.

Derived from this assertion was the emphasis on the development of the SMUS Toolkit referenced during the previous sessions – and applied both in scientific understanding and in practical activities regarding the everyday spatialities of dwelling in the streets of Covid-19 São Paulo. In fact, the proposal of the “Spatial Methods in Action” project was to mobilize two qualitative research methods, as detailed by Frehse during the Opening Speeches of the UrbanSus Seminar as a set of “glasses” that enable an alternative gaze both towards the professional agents and the scientific researchers themselves. The idea behind the glasses, pondered Castillo Ulloa, would not be to provide a definitive answer or solution to the issue of dwelling in the streets. However, its use within the scope of the project made it possible to highlight three aspects related to the value and objective of the practical-empirical implementations envisaged by the GCSMUS.

First, it allowed to show the research participants – both student-researchers and professionals – how to make use of these methodological tools in particular circumstances. Secondly, the project promoted a dialogue between academia and practice – notwithstanding the intrinsic limits to this exchange – with future implementation potential in public policies. Finally, the project encouraged innovative alternative solutions by both the student-researchers – in their own postgraduate research and within the scope of the two training courses they participated in – and by the professionals who took the training course, discussed on the report on the first session of the UrbanSus Seminar.

Frehse then took over the presentation, focusing specifically on the project “Spatial Methods in Action”, and detailing alternative characteristics to those she presented during the event’s Opening Speeches. The original objective of Action 4 was to bring the university closer to practice within the scope of the SDG #11 goals⁵. However, the beginning of the project, in early 2020, coincided with the onset of the

⁵ Each SDG includes goals that call for help from society. There are ten goals in SDG #11. Cf. “Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities”, <https://brasil.un.org/pt-br/sdgs/11>. Retrieved on May 14, 2022.



Covid-19 pandemic in Europe and Latin America, which posed operational challenges. The solution found was to explore a research theme previously studied by Frehse – dwelling in the streets of São Paulo – within the scope of a pilot project that focused on the practical-empirical implementation of spatial methods in qualitative research amidst the pandemic.

In the university research and outreach program, Frehse demonstrated how the SMUS Toolkit configured itself in the process of training students in spatial methods. The speaker once again summarized this toolkit. The methodological “glasses” would comprise two sets of qualitative techniques in empirical research: (i) ethnographic observation of the spatialities of the researched subjects, via direct and participant observation and walk-along interviews; and (ii) visualization techniques for these spatialities, via mapping through drawings, photographs, etc.

Frehse drew a conclusion from this presentation: what the social sciences sensitive to the social and relational dimension of space could do, in the furtherance of urban sustainability through dialogue and encounters with practitioners regarding any theme of the 2030 Agenda, would be to “mess up the stage”, “disorganize the order of preconceptions” – in this case the preconceptions about the StreetPop in terms of affectivity and mental health. In other words, spatial methods contributed, within the scope of the project discussed in the UrbanSus Seminar, to urban sustainability insofar as they revealed to the student-researchers and practitioners who work with the StreetPop their own prejudices and preconceptions about the StreetPop.

Subsequently, Frehse discussed the more specific interpretative results achieved by the project: the everyday spatialities of dwelling in the streets of São Paulo during the pandemic reveal that “urban sustainability is not a problem for the StreetPop nor for those who work them on a daily basis”. At the same time, the everyday spatialities reveal that the StreetPop has “sustainable spatial practices that involuntarily contribute to the urban sustainability agenda”. Examples of such practices include recycling and care for nature and the urban flora and fauna. All of this in the midst of “unfathomable” social and health conditions and psychological vulnerability.

Methodologically speaking, the project points to seven outcomes: (i) against all odds, they managed to collect data during the first months of the pandemic; (ii) the participation of student-researchers was an important catalyst for the entire process; (iii) capacity building played an instrumental role in the transfer of methodological



knowledge. In this case, Frehse stressed the importance of the so-called Paulo Freire Method, referenced earlier during the event's Opening Speeches, and adopted by the student-researchers under Frehse's guidance in order to train professional agents within the scope of the third phase of the research and outreach project; (iv) the challenges of scientific communication, in particular with practitioners working with the StreetPop; (v) the effectiveness of concise and intensive training courses; (vi) the importance of a knowledge co-production process through "learning by doing"; (vii) the application of spatial methods as a process of learning and transforming subjectivities.

Based on this panorama, Frehse briefly alluded to the next steps envisioned in the project. In particular, she emphasized the imminence of a call for applications for funding, which would enable the practical-empirical implementation of projects within the scope of the SMUS Toolkit in other corners of the planet, and thus enable a transdisciplinary approach to a chosen theme within SDG #11. The ultimate goal would be to elaborate a "global" university research and outreach agenda around the methodological proposals for public policies to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Urban Development.

Discussion by Pedro Jacobi, Suzana Pasternak, Marcelo Nery, Marcos Buckeridge, and Carmen Santana (Timecode in the video: 03:30:22 → 04:10:48):

Jacobi initiated the discussion. He praised what he called "talking as a citizen", which he witnessed in all Seminar sessions. The discussions, in his view, succeeded in bringing to the debate "the *citizen* in street situation, beyond the 'street dweller'".

Drawing attention to the need to discuss public policies for this population, the discussant stated that the major question for those who research and work with the StreetPop is how to make public policy more effective in the search for social inclusion. For Jacobi, the pandemic exposed this population's lack of access to basic sanitation, and thus ensuring such access could offer them more dignity, mitigating their suffering and precariousness. However, such advances are challenging, as the government's dialogue with the StreetPop is hindered by the abusive use of drugs by this population.

From these observations, Jacobi questioned what kind of social learning could be acquired from the work presented at the UrbanSus Seminar. Fundamentally, the contribution of the discussed research would be to strengthen dialogic practices. However, it would be necessary to show that there exists a gap in the spatiality of those



who have and those who do not, between the center and the periphery. Cities would be – according to Jacobi in reference to the works of urban sociologist Lúcio Kowarick about urban dispossession in São Paulo – dual.

When we speak of the StreetPop, we are referring to a hopeless, disconnected population, unable to “insert itself” – as also observed in other cities, such as San Francisco, California in the US. Moreover, for Jacobi, academic research must always and increasingly be associated with university outreach, showing that our cities harbor, in the most precarious way imaginable, “social exclusion” (of the StreetPop), and therefore the dialogue between university and professional practice would be essential. However, “there must be hope”, an answer that goes beyond “talking”, associated with a commitment by public authorities to provide “concrete” solutions. This response is constantly hindered, however, by the discontinuity of municipal administrations, characterized by a “Manichaeism” that disqualifies the StreetPop and contributes to disseminate an “image of fear” towards them. It would thus be up to public policies to “requalify” the presence of the StreetPop and their image in society, since their inclusion has been, up till now, precarious.

Pasternak, in turn, anchored his speech in what he identified as three ways of conducting research: census research, the subject of the previous session of the UrbanSus Seminar; ethnographic research, also discussed earlier as a counterpoint; and what she defined as “research on spatialities and sustainability”. All three types of research open up the possibility of “interfering in public policy”, but each in its own way. The census reveals possible changes in the StreetPop profile, and how these changes occur, in order to adapt public policies to the scenario identified by the research. In the case of São Paulo, however, the main “problem” is that assistance policies for the StreetPop developed from censuses have “never” sought to provide a “solution” for the street situation, proposing only palliative and provisional measures.

Ethnography, on the other hand, could enable more inclusive policies, providing subsidies for policymakers to reflect on how to “better shelter” the StreetPop. More specifically, the architect drew attention to the shelters in São Paulo: these have now begun to shelter the pets of the StreetPop, since public management (through ethnographic research) identified that people in street situation who had and cared for pets refused to stay in these shelters.



Finally, Pasternak pointed out that the research on spatialities discussed at the UrbanSus Seminar revealed that the StreetPop is not really that “nomadic”. However, the discussant questioned to what extent this type of research would help public policy management to intervene to “solve the StreetPop problem”. If any research aims to identify the street situation and provide intervention elements, focusing on spatialities, as proposed by the GCSMUS project, does not clarify “elements for intervention”.

Nery, on the other hand, began his speech by praising the importance of the event and the outcoming discussion, which, in his view, “raised the question” about how the university may contribute to a “solution to the StreetPop problem”. To develop the theme, the discussant addressed his own research, with an eminently quantitative approach.

According to Nery, on account of certain public policies, the national as well as global economic and political scenario, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic, poverty and inequality are on the rise in São Paulo. This would lead to a rise in “crimes against property”, which typically occur in places with a shifting population and significant economic activity – the same characteristics of the places which concentrate the StreetPop in the city. Therefore, this same StreetPop is doubly victimized as these individuals find themselves in a context with violent tendencies, which in turn contributes to them being generally understood as “agents of insecurity” – even though it is organized crime, in particular criminal factions, that have been occupying the downtown areas of São Paulo in the wake of the gradual return to in-person activities and the suspension of Covid-19 public health restrictions.

Based on this verdict, Nery argued that the vulnerable population should be the subject of public policies, and the StreetPop is the most vulnerable of all. However, since the StreetPop in São Paulo has a contingent of approximately 30,000 people in a universe of 12 million inhabitants, what would be the feasibility of a public policy aimed at such a statistically small audience?

Buckeridge, in turn, used Nery’s comments to state that the StreetPop, in São Paulo, comprises 0.4% of the city’s population, which would mean that 2 out of every 300 inhabitants are dwelling in the streets. In fact, taking into account Nery’s estimate, 30 thousand people in a universe of 12 million inhabitants means that the most correct proportion is that 0.25% of the city’s population is dwelling in the streets, the equivalent of 1 in every 400 people. While these numbers may suggest that the “problem” of the



street situation should be simple to “solve”, in fact we are faced with a “huge problem”. Basing himself on the first UrbanSus Seminar on the subject – and addressed by Frehse in the Introduction of this Critical Report –, “we saw” that “many street dwellers do not want to leave the streets”, as they claim they have found a family in this space.

When referring to the UrbanSus Seminar discussed in this report, the “message”, according to Buckeridge, would be that the street is “a space like any other”, and must therefore be respected. There are other reasons as to why people decide to stay in the streets, and so the problem should be analyzed from the perspective of individual psychology, not social, since the solution should include each individual heterogeneity, rather than a collectiveness. As for the “Methods in Action” project, Buckeridge identified it as an “experiment”, rather than a “university outreach” venture. After all, he argued, the students, particularly those who taught the training course to the practitioners working with the StreetPop, “interfered in reality” through an “unusual” method of transdisciplinary research. In addition, he stated that the UrbanSus Seminar “complemented” the first seminar held in November 2020. However, while the project includes implicit proposals, it would be necessary to advance in regards to the “model of public policy that we need” to “tackle the problem of the street situation”.

In conclusion to his speech, Buckeridge thanked the panelists of the second session of the Seminar, Carolina Nakagawa Lanfranchi and Viviane Ferreirinho, for the StreetPop censuses in São Paulo. Furthermore, he criticized the legal obligation demanding the public power to adopt the lowest value proposed in the bidding process to hire the company responsible for the census. Lastly, the discussant indicated that, while the 2021 census “showed” the aggravating effect of the pandemic on the street situation in São Paulo, it would be important to wait for the next censuses to confirm whether the end of the pandemic would lead to a decline in the number of people in street situation akin to pre-pandemic values.

In the role of moderator, Santana, in turn, emphasized the importance of action-research in public health. For her, research and intervention cannot exist separately, and this characteristic was clearly present in the project presented by Castillo Ulloa and Frehse. Furthermore, the contribution to public policies emerges in four dimensions: (i) in the methodology proposed for university outreach; (ii) in the connection proposed between university outreach, research, and teaching; (iii) in interdisciplinary teaching; (iv) in the intervention proposed, with a clear change in the world view of the agents of



practice “in a very short time” – especially in comparison with psychotherapeutic processes.

Lastly, Santana emphasized that the areas of health operate within a “biopsychosocial” conception of the human being. In fact, without interdisciplinarity and intersectoriality, grounded on the tripod “housing-health (mental)-work”, people would not leave the streets. However, while medical sciences and psychology work with the “bio” and “psycho” dimensions of this conception of the human being, Castillo Ulloa and Frehse’s research drew attention to another dimension, that of social care, promoting a change in the subject while producing knowledge and “resistance”.

Reactions by Ignacio Castillo Ulloa and Fraya Frehse (Timecode in the video: 04:10:56 → 04:25:46):

For Castillo Ulloa, the preceding critical discussion revealed the conceptual, discursive, and practical richness of the StreetPop, as well as a certain disarticulated views on the subject. The project presented at the Seminar would indeed be experimental, and, through its methodological and spatial perspective, would have helped (i) to integrate this richness in question and (ii) to propose both an epistemological movement through which the formulation of public policies and urban planning are more sensitive to the StreetPop, as well as a methodological and practical movement towards collaborative change. In summary, the project enables us to reflect as to why we perform research – which would involve both the desire to understand reality and the discomfort with that same reality. Nonconformity would propel us towards wanting to know more.

Frehse, in turn, summarized four critical points from the comments of the discussants regarding the project’s alleged limited contribution to public policies: for Jacobi, “conversations” would not provide a solution; for Pasternak, why focus on spatialities?; for Nery, public policies are extremely limited insofar as the StreetPop comprises a quantitatively small population contingent; for Buckeridge, the project in focus would be an “experiment” insofar as it is “interfering with reality”.

As a counterpoint to Jacobi’s remarks, Frehse emphasized how these “conversations” clearly signaled the extent to which public policy is contingent upon the preconceptions of those operating on the “low end”, in the streets, in everyday contact



with the StreetPop – as is the case of the participants of the training course developed with the practitioners (and discussed in the first session of the UrbanSus Seminar in focus). Furthermore, the project also teaches that the practitioners, the students, and the university professors all implement different public policies.

Frehse answered Pasternak that the project in focus, sensitive to the cultural and social dimension of space, as well as the social sciences in general, would reveal “patterns” of experiencing the physical materiality of space, which would thus help us to “tackle the reality” of the city streets in a more socially and culturally rooted and localized approach, away from abstract simplifications.

In regards to Nery's remarks, Frehse agreed that, in fact, the project did not offer *quantitative* solutions. However, the project developed an intervention proposal for professionals working with the StreetPop *grounded on* scientific research. Ethnography would allow us to qualify the “employment-housing-health” tripod referenced by Santana. It would now be up to the participants of the training course, discussed in the first session of the Seminar, to disseminate the research results. The present Seminar is just the first step in that direction.

Lastly, regarding Buckeridge's observation, Frehse argued that, unlike a deductive experiment, the project was grounded on inductive methods typical of the human and social sciences. Thus, it would evidently call into question any “positivist” propositions based on the conception that any “non-interference” in “reality” is even possible.

Concluding her comment, Frehse argued that the project's focus on everyday spatialities has “opened the door” to a vast underworld invisible to public policy. She emphasized, in this regard, the importance of “dialogue” in the co-production of knowledge to feed public policies. As an example, she mentioned that, in the first phase, the project trained 8 students, who in turn trained 26 professional agents. In all, therefore, 34 people had been affected in four months of work, and led to think differently about their own professional, personal, and academic life.

Closing Speech by Marcos Buckeridge (Timecode in the video: 04:26:00 → 04:31:28):

Concluding the event, Buckeridge emphasized an innovative characteristic of the project: the proposal for the university to intervene. In the project, the university undertook the role of “public policy operator”. Furthermore, the work offered “answers



that are not really answers”; its “major contribution” would be the “breaking down some myths”. While in the first UrbanSus Seminar, in November 2020, the researchers showed that the people in street situation would help someone who had recently arrived in the streets, this Seminar contributed to breaking down the myth of fear towards the StreetPop.

Third, Buckeridge praised the project’s focus on SDG #11. The Seminar helped to “break the myth” of the alleged lack of sustainability of dwelling in the streets. An exemplary case would have been the agreement, detailed in the first session, made by social movements, such as the one Robson Mendonça belonged to, with the urban cleaning staff of the City of São Paulo to prevent that the free distribution of lunchboxes to people dwelling in the streets might dirty public places. The Seminar clearly showed that there is an “organization” in the street, which is a “lesson in sustainability”. The biologist pointed out, however, that the environmental issue must be considered alongside the work-health-housing tripod previously discussed by Santana.

Finally, for Buckeridge, the major lesson of the Seminar was to show that the StreetPop is connected to all dimensions of urban sustainability.

Intervention by Carolina Nakagawa Lanfranchi (Timecode in the video: 04:31:37 → 04:32:40):

Following the Seminar’s closing remarks, Lanfranchi, the coordinator of the Social Assistance Surveillance Observatory of the Municipal Secretariat for Assistance and Social Development (OVS-SMADS), who participated as a speaker in the second session of the event, asked for the floor to invite Frehse. On behalf of the SMADS, she invited the professor’s team to develop a training course akin to the one offered to the professional agents working with the StreetPop, within the scope of the project discussed in the first session of the Seminar, for the teams of the Special Social Approach Service (SEAS) and the city shelters. All this under the terms of an institutional partnership between USP, GCSMUS, and SMADS.

Frehse promptly accepted the invitation, conclusively ending the Seminar with the statement that, through steps like this, change could happen: “Now, it’s the rest of our lives”.



Final remarks:

The third session was an opportunity to revisit the research and outreach project presented by Frehse during the Opening Speeches of the UrbanSus Seminar, but now through a newly qualified approach enabled by sessions 1 and 2. Following the efforts to establish a dialogue with the “street level” professional workers and the StreetPop, and the potential contributions to the formulation and implementation of public policies, more specifically regarding the StreetPop census in São Paulo, the third session brought an eminently academic discussion to the Seminar. It provided a multidisciplinary evaluation of the results of the research and outreach project, detailed in previous sessions, and its underlying theoretical and methodological framework, as evidenced in the joint presentation by Frehse and Castillo Ulloa.

The criticisms raised by the discussants pointed to two unanticipated features of the academia’s relationship with its efforts to establish dialogues beyond the walls of the university. First, there was a unanimous demand that university outreach, whether as an independent project or linked with research, must point to the formulation of more efficient public policies, regardless of the reference theme. This convergence of expectations, by the scientists themselves, signals a commitment by the university in assuming its role in the promotion of better living conditions for society in general, especially through exchanges with social institutions capable of implementing, in practice, the knowledge produced by the university.

On the other hand, such expectations may exacerbate, within the academy itself, divergences that are typical to the university’s relationship with the world of practice. The pressure that the academy puts on itself could lead to overly strict evaluations of projects that propose innovations to the university’s relations and activities with other institutions.

The potential synergy between quantitative and qualitative approaches, which the GCSMUS project strives towards – as evidenced in the second session of the seminar – was underemphasized by the discussants in session 3. Despite endorsing the contributions of the SMUS methodology, materialized in the spatial methods toolkit, for a deeper and more multi-layered knowledge about the reality of the StreetPop, the discussants questioned the effects as well as the scope of this university outreach action among practitioners and public policymakers. Perhaps this stems from a strict conception of public policy, forged around the importance of legislation and an



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institutional action plan – without including, as Frehse pointed out in her response, institutional agents that work at the street level, “at the low-end” of these policies, such as social workers, activists, and university professors and students.

If we seriously consider the interactional and symbolic dynamics of the professional agents working with the StreetPop, what comes to light is a dimension of public policy that escapes high-level government offices and legislative deliberations – and undoubtedly crucial for any progress in social development. Such dynamics permeate precisely the fine fabric of everyday life: in the services provided to the population segment of interest; the closer relationship between the population and the public authorities, necessarily mediated by the social worker at the city shelter, by the nursing technician at the health clinic, by the university scholarship student in their fieldwork.

This interactional dynamic of public policies in fact requires outreach projects that are unique and challenging for the university. In my view, such dynamic must integrate university debates around possible dialogues between academia and professional practice. And all this for scientific and critical knowledge to increasingly permeate not only the formal documents which materially underpin public policies, but also – and above all – the gaze and daily life of those who implement these policies, in the rich and sensitive encounter with those who most need hope.