

# Crowd: sphinx of public health, place of inflection, ideas of common asset<sup>1</sup>

Multidão: esfinge da saúde pública, lugar de inflexão, ideias do bem comum

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## Abstract

Public health emerges and acquires a unique expressiveness in many places, albeit under different forms, according to the power games to which they were submitted. One trace makes itself present: domination, through a certain *savoir-faire* (just like a biopower), of the life dynamics of the population groups, to be able to act upon it and thus also dominate the crowds in their movements: whoever escaped would be monitored, captured and excluded. This is *savoir-faire* power about how many people die, how many are born, what they die of, and how to avoid it. How to enter and control this game, this is the sanitary obsession and paranoia. This article starts a conversation about thinking of the crowd as a kind of sphinx that the public health system must unearth to be able to control it, just like certain ways of governing others, both individuals and groups. Making it a population is always its strategy of central power. In the contingency of Rio de Janeiro, which some time ago raised the street issue intensely, added to the city's presence in the key world events, the FIFA World Cup and the Summer Olympics, the situation of street signals has been acquiring highly specific expressions regarding the relationship between a crowd and public health, which opens windows for our views about some of the dilemmas that we now face: the making of a crowd in several ways puts at risk the very Government strategies that bank on the construction of the 'population' category."

**Keywords:** Public Health; Crowd; Street Signs; Population; Power Relationships; Biopolitics.

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<sup>1</sup> This text is a transcription of my conference about "O que produzimos de (bem) comum ["What (common) good we produce"], at the XIII São Paulo State Congress on Public Health, promoted by the APSP, in 2013. For this reason, it has a style that comes close to a certain degree of orality, which I have tried to preserve.

## Resumo

A saúde pública emerge e adquire uma expressividade única em vários lugares, mesmo que sob formas distintas, conforme os jogos de poder a que estavam submetidos. Um traço se faz ali presente: dominar por um certo saber-fazer (como um biopoder) a dinâmica da vida nas populações, para poder agir sobre ela e, com isso, dominar as multidões em seus movimentos; o que escapasse, seria vigiado, capturado e excluído. Poder saber-fazer sobre quantos morrem, nascem, do que morrem e como evitá-lo. Como entrar e controlar esse jogo, é a obsessão e a paranoia sanitária. Esse artigo abre uma conversa sobre o pensar a multidão como uma esfinge que a saúde pública tem de desvelar para controlar, conforme certos modos de governar os outros, indivíduos e coletivos. Torna-la população é sempre sua estratégia de poder central. Na contingência do Rio de Janeiro, que trouxe há um tempo a questão da rua de uma maneira intensa, agregada pela sua presença nos eventos mundiais, Copa do Mundo de Futebol e Olimpíada, a situação dos sinais da rua vão adquirindo expressões muito específicas no que toca à relação multidão e saúde pública, o que, abre janelas para a nossa visão sobre alguns dos dilemas que temos hoje: o fazer-se multidão de vários modos coloca em cheque as estratégias governamentais que apostam na fabricação da categoria “população”.

**Palavras-chave:** Saúde Pública; Multidão; Sinais da Rua; População; Relações de Poder; Biopolítica.

*Let us turn our differences into powers for production of lives, rather than inequalities*

## Situating the setting

Rio de Janeiro, under the impact of the main decisions about the 2014 FIFA World Cup™ and the Summer Olympic Games of 2016, as seen by a state government which already had a project in place to carry out an urban reorganization by the State, in general, and the “marvellous” city in particular. In this situation, several projects have unfolded, favored by a relationship based on Government credit, coming from the growth in oil royalties, in the general situation of greater value being given to capital by the Brazilian position within the field of negotiations of commodities on the world market and the transfer of part of the federal public funds to support such processes. The set of these projects causes action by distinct social groups, either supporting or establishing resistance and opposition. (Vainer, 2013).

In this main context, four years ago, groups of different institutional origins - University teachers from the health sector; art-education professionals with long track records of work with boys and girls who live on the streets of Rio de Janeiro; street artists, particularly those of the circus; and health workers who were active together with street dwellers, particularly in the field of mental health - come together and establish a process that we have called *Sinais que vêm da rua* (signs that come from the street) (Merhy, 2010a).

The core idea of this grouping was that of creating a group process that could, just like an observatory, make movements due to the expression of the effects (manifestations) that were produced based on the target groups for repression by the State, as they are polluting the city, while also, at the same time, creating a situation offering support to street dwellers or other types of ‘crowds’ of similar ilk, faced with these expressions of violence, such as the ‘cleaning of the city’ to rid the city of ‘human garbage’, also seeking to provide the visibility of these events over there, in their daily life activities, in public spaces.

This ‘signals’ process establishes several events such as, for example, a meeting of 300 people in a

working workshop at an international congress in Rio de Janeiro in 2010; actions staged in public squares like Machado Square, in the neighborhood of Flamengo, with activities of a radio station constructed atop a wheelbarrow, as a mobile radio station; and new offers of approximation with the boys and girls through the actions of the art-educators, which were already being implemented by several NGOs which had already been carrying out such actions in the streets of the city for over 20 years, as the *Se essa rua fosse minha* (if this street were mine) group<sup>2</sup>. We have also held working workshops with several art-educators around the issue “Do drugs exist or not?”; meetings with workers of street consultation offices for exchange of experiences and articulation of actions.

This whole movement was supported by the group event on Micropolitics of Work and Health Care, associated to the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

In this text, I address these places in me.

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My participation in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), also known as Rio+20, held in 2012, was clearly the possibility to understand what was happening in the city of Rio de Janeiro<sup>3</sup> (There, I was able to get hands-on experience of part of the discussions about the type of cities we wish to construct today, in the world, in major urban centers, so expensive for capital (Maricato, 2013). In this event, there were scenes I would now like to share, to start a conversation about common assets.

The UNCSD was placed as an event, based on the national agenda as proposed by the Brazilian Federal Government and which supported the whole of a discussion which had been created 20 years earlier, about the core issue of the world environmental crisis and also held in Rio de Janeiro, which was the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), or Eco 92. Now, faced with the possibility of a new meeting, we were faced with the possibility of checking what happened in the meantime in favour of the construction of a ‘Sustainable Earth’ and also to check if the world

governments and corporations have taken the recommended measures for an environmental policy which is favorable to the maintenance of life, in all its forms, on our planet.

In the process of the organization of this meeting, there was a world battle for the construction of its agenda and also of the way to structure it. Not only the Governments and corporations were active, as also several groups and social movements, also creating a set of parallel activities, as the official organization did not allow any space for their incorporations.

This battle became quite clear in the week of the world meeting. While the Governments of several countries, together with international agencies, several business corporations, some intellectuals and a sprinkling of NGOs came together in a major event held at the Copacabana Fort, many groups and social movements from several ‘peoples’ of the world established themselves, all days, on the Aterro do Flamengo, these including several Native Brazilian tribes from the Amazon region, carrying out a wide range of discussion activities, conversation groups, and cultural actions, among others.

There was an interesting kind of tension in the air. On the one hand, differences produced inequality, thereby generating surveillance and suspicion; on the other hand, differences fascinated, enriched, would pass along the outer edges and connect. The Aterro do Flamengo park in Rio de Janeiro boiled with so many interconnected lives, and several other places in the city were also connected to this park, these being part of an expanded venue space for the parallel event. The agenda was freer, with less protocol and possibly less conjured.

For those not familiar with these regions, it is worth mentioning that the Copacabana Fort is at the far end of Copacabana Beach. This fort is steeped in history, having been the seat of the *tenentista* revolts in the 1920s. This space has now been taken over by the Government as the main venue for its official organization. On arrival, you see a megabuilding, of an enormous size, atop the stones and the structures of the Copacabana Fort and then, as you go through

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<sup>2</sup> Partner in this process. <http://www.seessarua.org.br/historia.php>

<sup>3</sup> (<http://www.rio20.gov.br/>)

this megastructure, you come into an enormous terrace that opened for an awe-inspiring view of the 'beauty' of Guanabara Bay, as if itself saying to the businesspeople and governors there present: "Just look at what a marvellous product we are now offering to you: would you like to buy it? This is an open-air exhibition, a showroom of the market city: Rio de Janeiro."

There were many potential buyers: heads of state and their representatives, and also hundreds of businesspeople from major transnational, national and multinational capitalist corporations, everything that can acquire this name.

At the same time, if you walked through the Aterro park, you would almost feel as if you were inside a forest, between tents and groups. There was a gigantic variety of supply, considering the standpoint of multiplicity of peoples, and you could then experience how this difference, constructed by our productions of life, was absolutely marvellous, feeling reached out by a varied possibility of being, in the rich experience of producing ways of life. You would be happy to find groups that were very different from each other, with no threats or paranoid surveillance. Walking around there all day, I always came into contact with intensive ways of production, of self and others. Walking along the Aterro do Flamengo, at that event, was an absolutely fascinating experience for me and for all those who were part of this crowd-movement.

## Signs coming from the street, crowds and public health

The aftermath of this experience unleashes a whole new set of questions and discussions which have captivated me, also because of the kinds of involvement that I have had with different social movements within the city. Over the last three years, I have participated, with several other people, in this process that we have called *Sinais que vem da rua* (signs that come from the street). With these signs, it becomes evident just how the issue of crowds and public health has been woven, sewn, and has been expressing itself in our experiences.

Within the contingency of Rio de Janeiro, which some time ago brought the street issue over in an

intense manner, marked by the place that the city now occupies within the imaginary about Brazil, in several parts of the world, this place having been beefed up by the city's presence in such major events as the 2014 FIFA World Cup™ and the 2016 Summer Olympic Games, the situation of the signals from the streets has been acquiring highly specific expressions with regard to the relationship between crowds and public health.

Many are the cities that have been marked by the presence of several social groups in public spaces such as squares, pavements, bars that move between public and private spaces, beaches, and others. Rio de Janeiro is one of them; indeed, this is almost a characteristic mark of the city. Several social movements have had, and still have, recognition in the public space. What would have happened to the *bossa nova* musical movement, were it not for the meetings in these spaces in Ipanema and Leblon? The Girl from Ipanema would not be visible.

There is an intense movement in some parts of the city, which have been prominent at different times. What could be said of Lapa, since the start of the Brazilian Republic, were it not for the recognition that this is a place with such expression. Of what has been a public space within the construction movement that is the city? The Lapa of yesterday is by no means the Lapa of today, but the mark of occupation by crowds is still there, unfolding.

These are the signs that were interesting for us, the way in which public spaces were being produced and occupied, and by whom. What disquietudes did this generate, and who did this worry? What kinds of movement were in this, what kinds of battles over the public to be privately occupied? What private was this? Well, it is important to remember that not always does this show itself in market order; it could be in the order of the private interest of a group or specific grouping, without any connotation of being a place of definite appropriation. Only a light and temporary use, for a certain time and for a certain non-commercial purpose, for example. It could be a private use of a private asset for a fraction, followed by abandonment; it could also be a tense public, being used by some that admit that there others there. The same place is a non-place. It is an apparatus, a wheel and a square (Merhy, 2006).

It is impossible to see all this happening, as there was not this objective visibility, but our view was, for all that we had already observed, well prepared; and these interests of ours did not come from anywhere, allowing us to have a special way of looking and seeing some signs, rather than others. We saw a struggle for the street, between several individual people and also groupings, similar to what was observed in the case of the Rio+20 event, marked by other components that rallied us around.

The dispute for the use of the street as a place to live and reside had already been raging for a long time, but now acquired significant evidence, at a moment well before the events that unfolded in 2013 (Vainer, 2013).

Street dwellers in Rio de Janeiro are a mark of the city. However, more than 20 years ago, as part of the restoration of democracy after the military dictatorship, there was a sequence of events that one shall have in mind.

A group of street artists, within the universe of circus theatre, made contact with boys and girls who lived around Copacabana Beach, acting within a connection that showed itself from premeditated changes of the perception that these young residents liked to leap and jump of the walls, doing somersaults towards the sand. It could be realized that it was possible to offer teachings to enhance these exercises; on the other hand, they could offer themselves to the meeting.

From this process, there was the construction of many social projects which sought to establish this meeting and also, based on this, the production of new links of interest between the boys and girls living in the street and the artists, seeking to open new offers of possibilities of living.

Among the many groups, here I highlight the group known as “*Se essa rua fosse a minha*” (If this street were mine), as it came from these connections and is still active today. This, also because we met each other in the street, near the construction of the *Sinais que vêm da rua* (signs that come from the street) group.

We got as far as promoting a joint working workshop at the 10th Congress of the United Network, held in 2010, in the city of Rio de Janeiro. This workshop lasted three days, and had the p-participation of 300

people (Merhy, 2010a). In this intense activity, we had the presence of a wide range of people and groups who had something to do with this “Signs” idea.

One of the art educators, who is active in the street with boys and girls in several points of the city of Rio de Janeiro, and not only in Copacabana, presented himself by reporting on his very own history: a street dweller in the city as a minor, who had been brought over to the possibility of living in other ways, thanks to the action of this “If this...” group. This is *Nego da Bahia*.

At this event, there was an interesting report by the co-ordinator of this Group, Antonio César Marques. He said that the work carried out with these children paved the way for negotiations about the use of drugs, such as sniffing glue or solvents, which they used intensively. With these children, they created a drawing with a scale which showed how much, through recent use of drugs, they were or were not at the bottom of the well, which in turn determined the possibility of doing, or not doing, certain circus exercises, due to the potential risk that was presented as they were not completely lucid and lacked control over their bodies. On this scale, there was the following interpretation: the lower down the *poço* (well), the less I *posso* (can) - the two words in Portuguese have almost the same sound - do the exercise as proposed.

In this way, the treatment of relations, which did not propose to have any connotation in the health area, did not abstain from causing certain positive effects on the line, a procedure which in the health area is known as ‘harm reduction’. This process, as experienced by the group of art educators and also by several boys and girls, ends up creating and sustaining a much more ample project, which becomes the base of the construction of the “Se Essa Rua Fosse Minha” NGO, with the support of Betinho, Herbert José de Sousa, the forerunner of the *Fome Zero* (Hunger Zero) policy of the Government.

There, in the first meeting we had in 2010, at that workshop in the Congress of the United Network, the plethora of experiences recorded, and which we could exchange among the participants, was very encouraging. Not only were many involved in this front, as they also felt that the signs coming from the streets were highly significant and opened a good chance of

new knowledge about our daily activities, and also the chance of constructing common agendas for action. In the blog of the work group by the name of *Micropolítica do Trabalho e Cuidado em Saúde* (Work and Health Care Micropolitics)<sup>4</sup> there is an important set of information about the whole process.

This brief essay allows me, now, to go more directly to my talk about crowds and public health.

Living the current situation of the city of Rio de Janeiro, from the street standpoint and with many other groups, opens windows so that our sight may be aimed at some of the most important dilemmas which we now face: the construction of a crowd in its several different forms may put at risk all the Government strategies that bank on the production of the 'population' category as being the main object of sanitary action. This phenomenon comes from a long time back, but acquires dramatic expression in our contemporary life as one of the signs of the streets.

Not a long ago, not more than five centuries back, crowds would terrify several locations across Western Europe, expressing themselves in many ways. Whether as hordes of wanderers that had no respect for the borders of kingdoms, now under the geopolitics of countries, and treated as vagabonds, maladjusted people or similar ilks; or as bands of people rising up against the laws, not wanting to be subjected to them; or as strange people, foreigners coming from afar or who were on the outside of what was considered "common" (Merhy, 2014).

There were other moments of crowds at several times, but in these last centuries, in the countries of Western Europe and their colonized territories, something different was going on. Foucault (2008) got as far as characterizing this situation, which he terms modernity, as that which brings from within new practices regarding forms of governing others and also self-government. He suggests a shift in the Government practices. The figure of a State emerges within a practice of exercising power which associates the limitation of nation-territories and also the imperative of strategies of power relations that outline new regimes of truth regarding what a crowd actually is, and how it can be governed, as

also who the individuals are and how they can be controlled, or produced for self, the Sovereign State, the territory-nation.

The French territory-nation should therefore contain and produce French people, as the English territory should produce English people. So, how could this be possible if previously the identity territories were in other places? This, only if it could be possible to construct ways of governing others that should be subordinated to some subjectivities and not others.

Several have been the fields of action seeking this goal, but nothing has been so powerful as the combination between a State armed by its police office and army, and a State that is organizer and actor of social policies for these aims. The invention of a real regime, by which the crowd was formed by several population groups and that these groups obeyed, for their own development and regulation laws that could be assimilated in the same way as there was the study of laws governing the market, and economic processes, was like a *eureka* in this process. Political economy had everything to learn, and the eye that peeped through it saw population groups that could be manipulated.

We know that around the 15<sup>th</sup> Century there was the advent of vital statistics at the service of the State, in these new budding European countries. This process had the encouragement of trying to explain why populations increased or decreased, how they regulate themselves and so on, and if this was within the domain of the human being who could use it to interfere with this populational process, in line with certain interests and not others.

Public health arises and takes on a unique expression at this moment, in several different places, albeit under different forms, according to the power games to which they were subjected. However, there is one trait clearly present: domination, through a certain *savoir-faire* (like a type of biopower), populations' life dynamics, to be able to act upon it and thus dominate the crowds in their movements; anything that escaped would be monitored, captured and excluded. This is being able to exercise *savoir-*

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4 A platform of interactivity that brings together discussions about micropolitics, institutions, and government of the living: <<http://saudemopolitica.blogspot.com.br/>>.

*faire* about how many die, how many are born, what they die of, and how death can be avoided. How to enter and control this game: this is obsession and sanitary paranoia.

## The crowd was the sphinx that public health care had to unearth to control it, according to certain ways of governing others, individuals and groups. Its central power strategy was that of constructing it as a population.

The biopowers over production and individuals' and groups' life management go through a boom after that, and new truth regimes are carved out. Apart from the concept of population, that of the biological body also acquires a new central operational dimension. As a substrate of a field of signs that can be read and interpreted from the viewpoint of mechanisms for regulation of the production of individual life, the body is constructed and becomes a powerful field to govern others, with the strength of support on the notion that the Government itself, of its own biological body, may extend Government mechanisms to the maximum molecularity of existence within the crowd.

To mention the normal limit as the common desire and the abnormal as something strange to be controlled is imperative in these truth regimes, which more than just feeding off a certain rule for production of the truth, invent such a rule and establish it as a path to be followed by all wishing to know the laws about different ways to produce human life, in their individual and group expressions, making this a policy of the State.

Public health care becomes a paradigm for the field of production of knowledge with its procedures for investigation of population laws, at the same time as it becomes the golden earring in the way the State materializes as a bureaucratic and administrative body. The modern State has always been a biopolitical State, a centre for the construction of knowledge and strategies to govern the production of life (Foucault, 2010a; Negri, 2002).

In the scope of this text, one cannot address the different abnormalities that have been invented over the centuries, but we can say that at some moments we face the 'senseless' as a dangerous abnormal, as in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, when they emerge in such a strong manner that psychiatry is invented, a field of biopower which is highly significant for all, to this day (Foucault, 2006).

However, nowadays in these processes that we have experienced together with the many groups and groupings that live on the streets, and seeing the public mechanisms of action for them, we could say that the 'senseless' have been replaced by those 'with abnormal desire'. These are the targets of the current policies of action in the streets, through a morbid combination between the Military Police and public health care;. These are considered as deviants from the normalized desire of the capitalistic order (Merhy, 2010b).

Returning to the scene of the "Rio+20" event, we could say that this invites us to think of the fact that there was an intense battle about what a 'common asset' should be, such as all these I have here mentioned, about the emergence of public health care within the fields of biopolitics.

From one standpoint, that of the logic of world governments and capitalist corporations, both ultra and transnationals, which was on offer at the event was that of life-goods, the city-goods; from the other, being offered the whole time along the Aterro do Flamengo, what was important was the contagion, on each of us, of the force of production of the other's life in the difference, like **producing on the difference without generating inequality**.

There are some thinkers who assimilate this movement in a way that it interests me, such as the case of Negri (2005) who, on speaking about the crowd, suggests that on one side there is the crowd, and on the other side the capitalist molarities. On the side of the crowd there is always the multiplicity of the networks of collective existences, always in production, and in events, like a power for the establishment of a common element within a process of differentiation. As something impossible to be taken in as part of its multiplicity as a whole unit, due to its role as a constituent element, an event, in permanent production of itself. On the side of the

capitalist order there is the common element with identity, the common element as subordination, the common element as the standardized form which is appropriate and functional, and the difference is seen as the “abnormal”, the foreigner, the unequal, and the unproductive to be standardized.

In these formulations, Negri allows us to say that, on the side of the capital, in the construction of territorial expanses with identities, there is the single, where the clone is sought, where the logic of city common life is sought as a market, in the game of biopower. The other side, the territory of the crowd, is where the permanent production of the difference is implemented, the field of biopotency.

This author works with these two images, which are not concepts fully adopted by several thinkers who also work with some of these ideas. For example, at the opening of this Congress there was a speech by philosopher Peter Pál Pelbart, who has published several works in dialogue addressing these issues, including *A vida capital* (Capital Life, 2004), in which he brings to the fore a conversation about the general issue of biopotency, albeit not in an identical way. This is interesting because, if we visit the works of other thinkers such as Deleuze, we shall see that this issue of biopower, biopolitics and biopotency has been acquiring some variation. Here I have no intention of convincing people about which one, in my opinion, presents the most correct concept, all the more because I don't think concepts are correct; I think concepts fit the bill here (Deleuze, 2013).

In this regard, these concepts are OK for me and yes I can indeed use what Antonio Negri offers and which I see as interesting, when I dialogue with the types of problems I must face in my actions, including that of thinking about the ‘other’. Indeed, such concepts are only interesting for me because they can talk to me about this intense issue in the field of political struggle: on one side the single, in its field of identity, and on the other side the crowd with its aspect of multiplicity. And, there, there is a key issue for the image of my debate about the crowd being a sphinx for public health, in its emergencies, as already mentioned.

Effectively, public health has a direct and carnal contact with the construction of biopowers and interventions in the biopolitical field, to regulate

crowds in population or individual form. The population becoming the object of intervention by public health is a way to construct this transit of multiplicity, from crowds to the single aspect of populations. Public health appears in the territory of State policies that hunger to manage other people's lives, and also manage ways of life, in a form of collective action on specific groupings and their habits, for example, and in an individualized form of action over someone's body, using medicine as an axis of biopower (Foucault, 2008; 2010b).

This movement of the crowd, which is always including, in the biopolitical and biopower fields, the idea of ‘may be’ of public health, by questioning it, is something where it is worth us monitoring, also these days. These days are highly fertile for us, as they have been making it evident that the crowd sphinx operates in a way that all of us, not only in the field of public health but also in the area of institutional arrangements in general, putting us all into a state of shock, a kind of dealing without being able to say “everything”.

In the case of “signals that come from the street”, we used a reinforced look to try to see group movements on the streets and also the issue about what was public on pavements, squares, gardens and beaches, regardless of the several possible reasons behind these movements; what has been made evident is that there were not only means of occupation but also bets on living in the street, also outside the normal capitalistic identity categorization.

In its sanitary obsession, in the single order field, public health as Government policy comes out to the field in close liaison with the police forces. Not that this could be totally smooth, as it is done in a paradoxical way and has also been showing the different ways of casting the concept of the common asset into dispute; what is normal, what kind of life is worth it, what is public and private space (Merhy, 2006).

And, faced with its favorite monster, the crowd, public health goes out to search for styles of knowledge and doing that allow operation on this terrain of multiplicities, highly plastic, and then try to categorize it in the format of population groups, but now of new orders. As already said, this is the order of ‘abnormals of desire’.



However, it does not get close to this monster in a plenipotentiary manner. The monster is putting it at risk, showing resistances, drilling holes in the wall, and conquering partners and allies within the health sector itself. Apart from revealing an item of data that is more interesting to read, these signs are also giving a tip of the fact that, from the standpoint of those who are occupying the streets, the institutions of previous centuries that are still preserved already have their days numbered. However, these signals are paradoxical.

We could be facing substantial changes, but it seems that this needs to find groupings in intensive disputes, that do not forsake self-care and protagonist in their own existences, against the single, radically defending that the difference is wealth in the production in collective life and not a substrate of inequality.

In the street movements, we believe that we are now facing new issues in the political field, also on the notion of what politics are. What are we really talking about when we talk about politics? Could there be new territories forming within the realm of politics? Isn't this what is in scene? In such a way that the political institutions formed in this period of republics are not fully aware of this, as shown in the leaking of the field of public health before its current sphinx? How is the leakage of the current Republican political representation? How can we perceive this? Where is this most complicated? Could it be that these movements are not organized - or are they organized in a different way? Both when disputing slogans in demonstrations, and when discussing the right to live in the street?

I could illustrate this with a bit of fun here, at this moment. In ten minutes, just to give you an idea, I could construct a closed television circuit with everyone who has a smartphone. If you don't know what it is, then I could give a course about it, but I could do this in ten minutes. With a small transmission programme that any 3G telephone could support, I could turn each of you into a media transmitter and create some space on social networks so our transmissions could be shared. Each one could leave here now, walk around town while transmitting, and we could follow each other and

exchange messages. What is visible to one becomes visible to the other.

In ten minutes we could establish a closed television circuit with 200 people, and this closed circuit would support one of us in a confrontation front or a square where people being repressed are living; all could be at the same time in this front, all together. The media Ninja<sup>5</sup> has does this in the current protests in Brazil.

If we extended this to several groupings, could the question be valid: what political party could cope with these new forms of organization? These new types of subjectivity and movement? I don't see any. To see, I would have to visualize the invention of new ways to organize the very meaning of a political group and a destitution method, as well says Agamben (2013), without the intention of generating rules as a whole.

At the start of the *Movimento Passe Livre* (Free Pass Movement), in Rio de Janeiro, this was clearly shown. Mayor Eduardo Paz, when the streets were first stormed, said: "I am open to conversation! May the leaders of the movement come and talk to me", and opened his office. Nobody went, because there was not this leadership that he expected. Because there was no interest in going beyond that in which it was inserted, and had been implied.

On 20 June 2013, on the streets of Rio, with the participation of many of us, we could see interesting things about the issue of street signs. There was a highly interesting movement, with an amoeboid appearance with thousands of people. This was different from the protest marches we made against the military dictatorship; this was not one of the movements of my generation which often tackled Army tanks in Republic Square, in São Paulo. It was not this. This was something very different while also very much connected; processes which happened at a distance, but which were also shared. It subjected those who were not there through live broadcasts in real time; it made anyone in another place establish a common connection, albeit common of another type. Not of the commonness of the single, the identity, like what we had before - we are all against the dictatorship, for example - but a different type of commonness, in which

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something that happens to someone or to a group that is completely different from me and my group, even ideologically, manages to stir up relations of immediate attachment, which stir me up for immediate action, but which can be undone soon afterwards, or be reinstated also soon afterwards.

So, how then to regard politics? There is a new sphinx before us all and not only for the State and its policy of control and capture. What has public health got to do with this? Could they cope with these amoeboid processes?

For example, street boys and girls in Rio de Janeiro are also amoeboid, albeit in a different way. Not in this process of social networks, but in the perception that the state occupation forces, both the Police and the sanitary forces, tend to establish territories and even settle. They strongly tend towards the figure of the single. The boys and girls realize this and become highly mobile, exploring the intensity of nomadism, and the crowds themselves.

There, by the Aterro do Flamengo, where there have always been many street children, whose appearance one could even expect at set times, due to the source of water that allows them to bathe, the movements have been morphing. The band of boys and girls, band both in the sense of abandonment as of outlaw groups, which are an enticing bait for the objective of sanitary action, does not present itself 'easy to get'. The band moves and turns, crossing fixed territories. They move where the fixed forces cannot reach them.

On the other hand, this unprotected them, as they cease to be visible by those who have come in conflict with them, like art-educators, and not by the State Forces. This means their exposure in the umbra of this invisibility.

This is the challenge for these art-educators: being able to connect and even fuel this amoeboid movement with a possibility of gaining visibility without relinquishing nomadism. This is a challenge that could mean blending the technology of current social networks in with the new formats of the movements that several groups have been trying, without a will to control them or to know everything (power).

This paradox of street populations gives an important sign. Despite having reinvented their strategies for existence, they can be eliminated more

easily through the loss of certain protective visibility that a more fixed territory would allow. This is an issue to be analyzed by all the parties involved with the crowd as a common asset in itself, rather than the capitalistic singularity that is fragmented into identity groups.

So this brings us back to the core issue right now: what politics is this, which is on scene in all these places we have mentioned? What is politics now, if one can no longer confuse it with instituted classic arrangements of traditional political organizations, based on modernity, according to a Foucaultian view?

Part of the answers can come from the most unexpected places, meaning not from social movements organised as specific political groupings, but from the drug-addled region locally known as *Cracolândia* (Crackoland). From this standpoint, this area is paradigmatic as, seen from a public health standpoint, and also as seen by the Police, this is a target of the most perverse control measures. Seen from within, as envisaged by its constructors, it is not even Crackoland.

As you intermix with these groupings on the streets, you shall realize that they are much more complex, much more than just Crackolands; these are territories where there is production of existences; territories for production of new sociabilities. Well, what do we really do when faced with this situation? We have implemented an imaginary and symbolic type of dynamics which allows it to be reduced to a certain construction, a single unit, which allows the legitimate production of technologies for intervention, capture and interference in the issue of the lifestyles of these people, who do not even deserve the desires they have. So let's move over and manage them.

There seems to be a sign which could suggest that we currently think about the main field of political struggle. The field of existence politics (Foucault, 2010b). Public health has tried to make inroads into it, in several different ways. Maybe the most subtle has been then argument of defense of health promotion, allowing the dispute of the formation of the desire to produce and take care of self, as a mechanism that can make the difference if there is self-affirmation, or with the extraction therefrom of certain ways of life that are risks in themselves, cloning healthy lifestyles.

Being able to produce an imagination that someone of their desire is a risk in himself or herself is the most contemporary way for public health to invade and capture the contemporary crowd, betting that they should go over to daily activities to operate the construction of a desire to be equal, in a single unit, to the other, always being common and in fashion (a certain commonness). They also count on medicine in this strategic terrain, as never before.

For this reason, the more subtle processes of biomedicalization of living are operated under the format of being in fashion, working out, dieting, sex and other things, provided that this is to produce health, following a general notion of healthy ways of life, and also saying that the party who can speak of this issue is public health and not the unique means of desiring, shown by each individual or by some groupings in action.

Only desire over the control of the single has validity, in the contemporary scene. Desire as a happening, as an exercising of unknown ways of existence, is dangerous for possibly agitating the crowd. Being healthy is therefore the common asset that the public health services of our times construct as the object image of their very existence; on the other hand, a crowd without control is all that its voracious appetite wants. Here we must mention, in counterposition, the notion against the single, reaffirming the crowd as a representation of multiplicities in the production of innovative ways to exist and also denouncing the homogenizing look of a political field in the State that makes everything the same.

The “abnormal” desiring party is the capital, and not crowds.

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