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Our Society, nowadays, lives upon Communication. Several centuries or just decades ago, this social glue was once Religion, Nationality or Money. Without the pretense of stating here a new condition, which is being discussed elsewhere, this new ingredient, Communication, seems to me more global, right now, than any of the others.

This new ingredient, one could argue, is actually not new at all. Communication has always been an intrinsic condition of Humankind. The change that is possible to perceive around us, today, lays on the fact that the act of communicating seems now more important than the content of the message itself. The individual exists only by expressing himself through Communication with others. The message, though, is often repeated, senseless or even unreadable.

In the last week, we were confronted with several examples of the so called Spontaneous Communication. This spontaneity relies on the fact that there are no official or institutional filters between the first intention and the final result. It doesn't mean that it didn't require any reasoning or effort, but that it represents a free choice of the speaker and an alternative to the instituted ways of communicating.

As students of the City, we must understand that the Spontaneous Communication, spread around us, is an important layer on top of any appropriation process and one special ingredient to the understanding of the Urban Body.

But what is the social impact of such practice? Spontaneous Communication goes from harmless decoration of the private property façade, to the invasion of the Public Space by subjective writings on the wall. Furthermore, these writings on the walls of the City go from unreadable tags to complete political discourses. Should we state that all of them are relevant? Should we state that all of them have the right to exist?

In an era where to communicate stands as a first need to existence, regardless of the message, the examples of Spontaneous Communication in the urban field multiply. In this phenomenon, there are two main issues that, in my opinion, support or destroy its legitimacy: the content of the messages and their place.

Though it can seem strange, even ridiculous, the will to communicate without much to say to others, any effort to fight this is even more in vain. This social reaction, more than an option, is a symptom, which causes I rather not discuss here. Communication is part of our time paradigm, and in that way, it will change into something else, naturally. Society has been adapting itself to this new need, and constantly new platforms and methods of Communication are being created. Each type of message and each method of translating it, belong to a particular space, not by Law, but by Reason.

The problem in this process arises when the limit of individual freedom is crossed – the one that should end when the freedom of the other begins. The problem in this process is also that this border between each individual domain is not a line, but a space. This space, in its widest conception, has always different limits, depending on the observer, and that is why writings on a wall or any other means of spontaneously communicating in the City, can be called rubbish or art, a crime or a right.

I stand for the act of truly communicate with others, when it comes to Public Space – that one where the freedoms meet. By truly communicating, I mean an exchange of ideas and thoughts, by words or images that support their own existence in the message that they carry. In a Society where Individualism is the system and the goal, public space should be the one where Communication is done between a speaker and a reader, instead of ending when the message is released, in an act of pure personal pleasure.

During this last week we reflected upon messages of others. Though coming from different cultures, and with more or less effort, true Communication happened from the moment we could read their words and uncover a possible intention. This process of unveiling messages in space is contagious and inspires the will to also speak.

However, spontaneously communicating in the Public Space, leaving an ephemeral mark, requires determination and something between shamelessness and courage. So far, there was not enough outside stimuli for me to have that will. So far, there was nothing that I

remembered to say that I felt it was worthy to be said, loud and clear, in the public square, for strangers to listen.

Nevertheless, we ended this week with a question in our minds: what would I write in a wall?

If I wrote in a wall, it would be in a Portuguese wall, for Portuguese to read it, because they are still the ones that I understand the most and that I hope would understand me. From far away it gets easier to read the mistakes, the bad habits, but also the unperceived qualities of that local way of being.

The lack of effort, the ease to complain, the pessimism, the fatalism and the deceptive generalizations (from which I clearly also suffer) get annoyingly picturesque, seen in Birdseye view. Rules are sentences written in a paper that you just obey after seeing the consequences of not doing it. Police is there to annoy. The ignorance of each one's duty as a citizen of something bigger with a future, unveils itself as the core problem and the never-ending crisis gets curiously more understandable when comparing to what surrounds me now. In spite of that, I see myself loving some attitudes and habits that I haven't even acknowledged they existed. A capability to smile and to help, a capability to care and enjoy. The silent proud, the poetry in the cities, in the music and in the words, the loud joy, the deep sadness, the shameless humor, the food and the sunlight.

If I would write something in a wall, in a Portuguese wall, it would be: "Dá o exemplo." (Be/Give the example.) To remind that each one should be the best possible in everything that one does and to only demand from others what one demands from himself. That would solve most of our problems (and would also help me remember that...) Writing this on the wall would probably make me a moralist, but I still would prefer that, than one more complaint. Jokes are there to sell.

These last weeks induced in me, progressively, a deeper awareness of an Intangible Heritage of the City composed by all the traces of Spontaneous Communication. This urban dimension has proven to be, to my eyes, a consistent layer of analysis. One could argue it is a completely ambiguous and subjective field of study, and I probably agree. What I have been acknowledging gradually is that doesn't constitute a problem. The City should be consciously analyzed in all its layers, objective and subjective, since it is an everyday product of people, by people, for people.

The processes and products of Spontaneous Communication should be observed with critical eyes, to withdraw the meaningful sense of each manifestation, when there is one to unveil. Finally these messages, under any shape, when seen through an analytical lens, will show themselves as social signs of the time and the place, and a crucial instrument to understand the City.