



Technological Appropriation

A strategic improvisation on MetaReciclagem

MetaReciclagem

Felipe Fonseca

MetaReciclagem is not an independent collective.

MetaReciclagem is not (and does not want to be) a formal NGO (even though it's a non-governmental and nonprofit organization).

The name MetaReciclagem does not define a group of people, but instead it's the name that some people use to identify and refer to an open methodology about the re-appropriation of technology to foster social transformation.

Thus, MetaReciclagem is a decentralized project about social technology.

MetaReciclagem project self-organizes itself onto three main levels of articulation:

- 1) **Spores** are physical labs where people do MetaReciclagem. Spores also host research and development, both technical and theoretical, about MetaReciclagem. The current MetaReciclagem spores are Parque Escola Spore and Olido Spore, and there are almost ten projects being implemented as independent spores of MetaReciclagem in different cities of Brasil.
- 2) MetaReciclagem **Online Infrastructure** (detailed on the next pages) is the environment where conversations about MetaReciclagem take place. It is the responsible for the maintenance of a strong connection between all the main instances of such a decentralized project. It consists also of some online environments created to face the demand for a space for interaction about any given subject.
- 3) **ConecTAZes** are permanent or temporary labs that “benefit” from MetaReciclagem actions. ConecTAZes range from a lowtech paper-and-pencil collaboration workshop to a Linux InstallFest or a video presentation. ConecTAZes often (but not always) become independent multimedia telecenters, like the Autolabs project, Chico Mendes telecenter and the women’s association of Jarinu.

Other examples of ConecTAZes are:

- Midia Tatica Brasil
- CyberSocial
- Oficina Nomade, with Etienne Delacroix

Running across all the three levels of MetaReciclagem are some special projects that require resources from more than one spore or that consist of plenty of ConecTAZes.

Some of them are:

- Corrente Viva
- Pontos de Cultura
- Epac

Space Design

MetaReciclagem has already created over a dozen different spaces, and has over time developed an approach about space occupation that promotes a dialog between deep local identity, other MetaReciclagem spaces and functionality orientation. Below are some examples:



About MetaReciclagem

First approach to strategic thinking

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Unfortunately, we don't have many answers, but a lot of questions.

It is clear to people involved with MetaReciclagem that the main question yet to solve is now to develop a decentralized methodology that enables collaborators to dedicate full- or part-time to experiment and implement social technology. Until the present time, the more feasible way to keep such thing has been to rely on almost pirate occupations of some government actions related to digital inclusion, education and "income generation", and at the same time growing the relation with NGOs and independent projects. That brings us in a year like the present one a lot of trouble: one doesn't know if his work will survive the next mayor, or has to collaborate with the political agenda of the current one. Nevertheless, we were able to maintain around 15 people dedicating great part of their lives to the project.

We'd like to think and develop other paths to the sustainability of MetaReciclagem. Some conversations has been started with universities, companies and nonprofit organizations, but institutionalized organizations don't seem to understand that a project that was born decentralized works in a completely different way than the ones they currently deal with.

Personally, I think it would be a waste of resources (both material and human) to promote the creation of a new space, given that MetaReciclagem already has two laboratories, free access to at least four other centers, a media center of its own under development, and contacts with hundreds of other spaces and groups. Some MetaReciclagem collaborators think of the creation of a center as a great opportunity to set up a R&D lab, but we already realized that we can't afford to re-allocate people from any Spore, as they are deeply involved with the local contexts. And there's another thing: we already do R&D in a completely decentralized way: using the infrastructure of universities, government and our own homes. Do we need to change that? Sure, physical contact is very important. But we already meet every week. Is a space only for that really needed?

The Process

It was a hard assignment to develop collectively a systematic approach to a project that aggregates more than 50 people with completely different backgrounds and dedications. The main problem was to integrate two perspectives that seem almost opposite: those who felt MetaReciclagem was a group of around 10 technology hackers, and those who thought about MetaReciclagem as a sort of special mailing list. Fortunately, most people were in the middle of the two definitions. At that point, we started thinking of MetaReciclagem as a methodology, a concept that kept those people together.

Next step was to design what would be an ideal logical infrastructure. That wasn't much of a burden. The complication here was (and still is) getting people to use that infrastructure to share documentation about what they do. We realized we needed two kinds of documentation: generic reports and technical processes.

We hired a journalist to collect information and generate the reports. The results were good, but still seem to us too static. This kind of report will never become completely updated.

The technical documentation can only be created by those people who are involved with MetaReciclagem actions. And the fact is that people are not used to document their work. We'd stress that point during every meeting, and at least twice a week through the mailing list. Some people actually changed: Fernando, head of Komain linux distribution, created Texugo, a website where he publishes his own and other people's documentation. Other problem is that different people prefer different interfaces (weblog, email, forum, wiki). The temporary solution has been, after putting up a server over an old computer at my home, set up a number of different systems and then integrate all of them using RSS on planet.metareciclagem.org.

As for the space design, I asked Dalton, articulator of Parque Escola spore, and the artist Glauco Paiva, to design an ideal workspace. Their answer was: that can't be done. They absorbed deeply the way Henrique Zanetta built the whole park: constructively, creating new functional solutions out from the transformation of left material, thus creating an identity that is organic, unique and completely local.