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124 Notebooks

by

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Abstract

124 Notebooks is a documentary about Brazilian architect and urbanist Jaime Lerner. In 2010, two Brazilians were included in the TIMES Magazine list of the *100 Most Influential People in the World*, the ex and now re-elected president, Luiz Inacio da Silva, known as Lula, and the Architect and Urbanist Jaime Lerner. Lerner was listed among the 25 most influential thinkers for his 40 years working with urban sustainability, starting in the 1970s with his urban revolution of a once obscure city in Brazil, Curitiba. Curitiba is where I am from; Jaime Lerner is my father.

In *124 Notebooks*, I trace my father's trajectory from the seed of his creative process — his lifelong practice of observing and taking notes of the world around him. 124 notebooks are the number of creative notebooks my father wrote in his life; these notebooks are the central

thread in this personal essay documentary about my father’s creative mind and his public and private legacy.

Project Description

Cities, humanity's greatest invention, are man's natural habitat. Setting of survival, territory of mythology, art, and science, it is the communion, the collective dream constructed, as collective as the construction of thought. This is the city of multiple dimensions that inhabits the work of Jaime Lerner.
Valeria Bechara-Jaime Lerner, team architect

For my entire childhood, I remember my father always accompanied by a small 5X7 notebook and a pen — usually a simple BIC — constantly drawing and writing new ideas. I was puzzled. What was he continually drawing and writing in them? “Everything,” he told me. “If you want to remember your ideas, write them down.”

Today, there are 124 notebooks of ideas, numbered and stacked, in his office. From these ideas, a remarkable number became a reality, and others remain only in his notebooks. These notebooks, filled with drawings, sketches, thoughts, and poems, are the backbone of the film. They are a travel log, a map of my father’s interior monologue. They reveal his creative process and introduce his urban concepts, but most importantly, they shine a light on a creative temperament, one that is humble, playful, imperfect, and in constant motion.

124 Notebooks starts in 2020 when I rushed to Brazil to be with my father in the hospital. It is during COVID, and I am the only one vaccinated and able to safely care for him. In the film, I introduce my father, Jaime, an old, quiet, and pensive man — less humorous and vivacious than his usual self — arriving home from the hospital. You see him in his limited

existence, doing physiotherapy, sitting on the table, reading, looking into the horizon from his balcony, and only sporadically meeting his grandchildren due to COVID.

I introduce our family home first. The house was designed by my father in 1962 when he was 22 years old. In 1965, after winning an architecture competition in San Sebastián, Spain, he got the money to buy the land and build the house. By 1967, when I was one year old, my family moved to what became known as “our funny house,” where I stayed until I moved to the US in 1989. With my sister's and my memories' help, we revisit this ‘funny’ house of our childhood, from the grass on the roof to the strange purple fireplace in the living room, all the way up to his studio where, from the skylight, my father could see his beloved city.

My father has been a public figure since I was a young child, the Mayor of Curitiba, Brazil, three times (1971–1974, 1979–1983, and 1989–1992), and Governor of the State of Parana — a State in the South of Brazil with approximately 25 million people — for two terms (1994-1998 and 1998-2002). My father was only 33 when he became mayor, and my mother, Fani, was 25. My mother’s recollection of these first years where difficult, as she remembers, “I married a shy architect and suddenly I was the first lady of Curitiba. I didn’t even have clothes for the occasions.”

Even though for my sister and I, Jaime was ultimately our father, from a young age, we both internalized his public life. My sister, Ilana, says in the film: “We grew up with Curitiba in our lunch conversations, my father thinking of its future, and my mom of its well-being. Curitiba was our little sister.” Our family story interconnects with the narrative of the city.

My father was a man of rituals, and on weekends we had a family routine, “flaneuring” with our father through the city. Saturdays, we visited “Passeio Publico” — the main public park in the

city at the time — and Sundays, the Arts and Craft Fair, where my father listened to “chorinho” while my sister and I looked for wood toys and souvenirs.

Through archive interviews with his grandchildren — Ben, Tobias, Liana, and Sophie — Jaime tells us about his childhood. He was born in 1937 in Curitiba, the son of Elsa and Felix, and the second of five children. To his granddaughter Sophie, he recounts vividly tales of his childhood street, *Rua Barão do Rio Branco*, with the train station where the immigrants would arrive, the TV and radio station, the trolley, the circus, and his parents’ shop. Jaime finishes, “in that street, I had my course of reality and fantasy.” This is the first hint in the film as to what awaits him in his future.

From an early 90s interview with my grandparents, Elsa and Felix recount their adventure of leaving Poland and arriving in Curitiba in 1934. They traveled by road, boat, and train for 32 days, with my grandmother pregnant with his first son, until they finally arrived in Curitiba. They remember their adventure with humor, probably to protect themselves from the immensity of feelings they were having at the time, abandoning everyone and everything they knew and arriving on this new continent they knew nothing about but would one day call home.

My grandparents came with nearly nothing from Poland, where they were poor and living in a Shtetl. My grandfather, like most Jews, became a “Klientelshik,” a door-to-door salesman. Jaime was born in 1937, an asthmatic boy with intense eczema in his face and hands, which made him very shy. His fragile health made him openly this mother’s favorite. While not studying, he spends long hours in his parent's store (by then, they had a small clothing store) listening to customers’ conversations, playing with friends in the streets, and according to him, “enchanted by the local circus.”

Jaime revisits the house he grew up in — captured in footage from the movie *HERE WE ARE* that I co-directed in 2014 with Cintia Chamecki about the Jewish immigration to the south of Brazil — in which you can still see the balcony where he spent from 4:00 to 7:00 in the morning waiting for his asthma medication to have effect. I believe his hours on that balcony provided space and time for his curious mind to be activated.

These small details reveal the fabric of his childhood and give him a strong sense of belonging; to his family, his tradition, his street, and his city. Of all his brothers and sisters, he was the one in a hurry to feel part of the people around him, to be Brazilian. He grew up in the 50s and 60s with Bossa Nova and soccer. He often told us he hated having to stop playing soccer in order to go to Hebrew school, something his father would not give up on.

In the film, I contextualize the city of Curitiba. High on a plateau and with a temperate climate— much colder than the rest of Brazil — Curitiba attracted a large group of Eastern European immigrants at the turn of the century. Curitiba was a conservative, hard-working immigrant city with no exuberant beauty, ocean, or tropical vegetation. The fabric of the population mainly consisted of immigrants from Poland, Ukraine, Germans, and Italians, arriving after the 1890s when Brazil finally abolished slavery. With the need for labor in the coffee plantations and a desire to “Branquear” (whitening) the population, the Brazilian Government offered a mile and a mule to white European peasants to emigrate to Brazil. Eastern Europeans arrived mainly in the late 1890s, Japanese immigrants started coming around 1910, and finally, a small number of Jews, Syrian and Lebanese arrived in Curitiba mainly around the 20s and 30s.

My father comes from a religious, immigrant Jewish family. His upbringing was a cliché

of a Jewish community in South America; fresh from the boats, they carried with them a ghetto mentality, keeping to themselves, trying to be invisible. As a Jew, you didn't call for attention; you studied hard, became a doctor or engineer, and created a better life for your offspring.

It did not help that Felix and Elsa arrived in Brazil in 1934 during the presidency of Getulio Vargas, which lasted from 1930 to 1945. Vargas' presidency was marked by authoritarianism and populism, and his policies toward immigrants were often inconsistent and influenced by political and social pressures. The government encouraged Jewish immigration to Brazil while promoting nationalist policies that sought to assimilate immigrants into Brazilian culture. This policy was particularly challenging for my grandparents, or any immigrant, who sought to maintain their distinct identities and traditions.

Although Vargas initially sympathized with Nazi Germany, his government ultimately recognized the threat that Hitler's regime posed to Brazil and the world. However, his government was not immune to anti-Semitic sentiment, and during the Vargas Era, the Integralist Movement (Ação Integralista Brasileira), a far-right nationalist political party, flourished. The movement was founded on October 7, 1932, by the Brazilian writer and journalist Plínio Salgado. They advocated for a nationalist and authoritarian regime based on a fusion of Catholicism, corporatism, and traditional Brazilian values. They were hostile to communism, liberalism, and other perceived threats to national unity and cultural identity, like the Jewish people. Jews were considered not only racially inferior but also potentially seditious and essentially unwilling to adopt a national project, therefore making their assimilation impossible. One of the group's leaders and its most prominent ideologue, Gustavo Barroso, was the first director of the Brazilian National Historical Museum and was considered the most anti-Semitic

Brazilian intellectual.

The true creator of Marxist communism is the old Jewish materialism that has been undermining the foundations of Christian civilization for many centuries. He influenced the rise of liberalism, which opened the door to communism. Bourdeau recognizes the “close affinities that link socialism to the distinctive traits of the Jewish race, among which the cosmopolitan, rationalist and messianic spirit.” The entire philosophical-materialist current, which comes from the 18th century, corresponds to the political-intellectual movements of the Jews. (BARROSO, 1935, 39-40)

The Integralist Movement was particularly strong in the southern region of Brazil, where my grandparents arrived as immigrants. But during this period, my father was a toddler.

His grandchildren, Ben and Sophie, are curious about how he became an architect. Jaime talks about his early perception of space (his parent's tile floor) and infinite (the can of Royal Ferment) and how these concepts intrigued and ignited in him the idea of becoming an architect. The subsequent influence came from the work of Brazilian modernist architect Oscar Niemeyer, with his organic lines and his sensuous and nature-inspired designs. My father was a studious boy who graduated as an engineer — there was no Architecture school in Curitiba at first — and later extended his studies to become an Architect.

Accompanied by Jaime's recollections — personal essays from his last book, *Quem Cria Nasce todo Dia* (The One Who Creates, is Reborn Every Day) — we travel back in time to 1962, when Jaime first arrived in Paris as a scholar to study urban planning. He recalls his first night in Paris and the loud street protests against the Algerian War: “OAS assassins, OAS assassins.” The vibrant street life of Paris was, in my opinion, another strong imprint in my father's architectural DNA.

Back in Brazil, he quickly gets involved with an inspiring team of architects, engineers, and policymakers at IPPUC (Institute of Research and Urban Planning of Curitiba). Although

shy, my father became IPPUC's president, and suddenly, in 1971, he was invited by the Governor of the State of Paraná to become Mayor of Curitiba. I am not sure why, of all architects in IPPUC, my father was the one invited to become mayor. Based on interviews with other architects of IPPUC at the time, I can only speculate that my father was a natural leader with a meek temperment but fearless motivation. Later in his life, his collaborators often compared his leadership to a maestro, a great conductor that harmonizes and guides the orchestra, setting the tempo and motivating the orchestra to create the best sound possible. I can only imagine that those characteristics were already apparent early in his life.

In 1971, Brazil was under a military dictatorship, and there weren't democratic elections. The mayor was an administrative position. My father never became part of the military's political party (ARENA), but he was what was called a Bionic mayor, meaning he was not directly elected by the people.

My mom had a theory that my father accepted the invitation because of his immigrant upbringing. My father and many of his team at IPPUC were first-generation Brazilians and probably grew up similarly to my father, with a lack of political engagement in Brazilian society. On the other hand, they spent years toiling over plans for their city and suddenly had the opportunity to make them happen. My father and his team jumped on the occasion and abstracted the idea of collaborators. They were progressive young people with an urgent call to revolution, the urban revolution they planned for Curitiba. Among them, there were also some communists, and a few years later, my father recollected that "we learn to work fast because we never knew when the military would remove us."

Through his notebooks and old sketches, in conjunction with interviews with his

collaborators, I introduce the main concepts that motivated the urban revolution in Curitiba in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. These transformations were part of a team effort, fearless architects and engineers that strongly believed they could build a city that said no to cars and yes to people, a city with multiple functions, working, living, and leisure together, a city with democratic spaces where people would meet and talk, with green spaces, with affordable housing, and accessible and affordable public transportation for all. A city that met the tangible and intangible needs of its people. As collaborator Paulo Nakamura says in the film: “The intangible was intrinsic to the planning; it was important for the intangible to be present in the city's design.”

The film looks into what happened in Curitiba in 1971, starting with Jaime’s unorthodox way of creating the first pedestrian street in Brazil, Rua XV, known as Rua Das Flores. Rua XV was the city's main shopping street, and traffic was already impossible in the late 60s. Years earlier, my father and other architecture students did a study to transform it into a pedestrian street. Still, the business owners were not convinced their shoppers would abandon the cars. Once my father became mayor, he decided, not in a very democratic way, to build the first two blocks in 72 hours. If they took longer to make it, there would be judicial fights, and they would never get the project going. When the population returned from a long weekend holiday, the street was closed, fully equipped with urban furniture, flower pots, benches, purple plexiglass domes, and tables and chairs in the street outside the old bars. Quickly the population embraced the street life, and the business owners asked the city to close the rest of the street to cars.

Another central piece of Curitiba’s transformation was “fostering meeting points.” The Brazilian poet Vinicius de Moraes used to say, “Life is the art of the encounter,” to which my father replied, “Cities are the scenery for these encounters.” During Jaime’s mayoral tenure, the

population witnesses the revitalization of its historic center and the fomenting of new cultural spaces in the city. Curitiba's landmark buildings were nothing memorable from the architectural perspective, but it was the identity of the city they were trying to reclaim. My father used to say: "The city is like our family portrait, even if you don't like the noise of your uncle, you don't remove it from the portrait." All these changes are even more expressive if you understand that Curitiba was going the opposite way of the urban ideas exported to South America by the US in the 70s and 80s; suburbs, highways, and shopping malls. And in some ways, they were also in contrast to the temperament of the shy and conservative immigrant city of Curitiba.

Prioritizing green spaces was an essential policy for Curitiba, but trying to do it with a small budget was challenging. In the early 70s, Curitiba had 5 square meters of green space per capita, and by the early 90s, when my father left his third term, it had 52 square meters of green space per capita and was considered one of the greenest cities in the world. Curitiba was surrounded by rivers, and floods were constant when it rained. You can see in the film how, instead of controlling the floods by building concrete channels, Curitiba created vertical corridors of green parks next to river banks, simultaneously serving as greenspaces and flood management spaces.

Curitiba is mainly known for its public transportation. And though the film, I explain the gradual maturation of the system. In 1971 when my father became mayor, Curitiba had 700,000 inhabitants. The common idea was that any city with 1 million people needed a subway system. The city had no money for a subway system, so my father and his team looked into other solutions. Curitiba prioritized public transportation in connection with the city's economic and physical growth by pioneering a new Bus system with its dedicated lane today known as the bus-

rapid system (BRT). They also introduced a single fare payment, so people who lived far away could pay a single fare to use a series of buses. They started the system humbly in 1974, initially only with the introduction of dedicated bus lanes, but incrementally introducing bi-articulated and later tri-articulated buses. Finally, in 1989, they created elevated tube-shaped stations to allow for fare prepayment and platform-level boarding. By 1992, when the population of Curitiba had grown to 2 million people, the system was carrying 1.5 million passengers daily, and its cost was at least 50 times cheaper than a subway system.

Another vital program introduced in the film is the recycling program *Lixo que nao e Lixo* (Garbage that is not Garbage). Curitiba started this program by educating public school children, making them the ambassadors for the most extensive recycling program in the world at the time. In Curitiba in 1989, more than 80% of the houses were recycling garbage. And in poor communities where the garbage truck could not get in, they would buy the resident's garbage by exchanging their trash for fresh products. The recycling program, the creation of new green areas, and the inauguration of UNILIVRE (Free University for the Environment) — where different groups of students and workers would have classes on how their specific group could help preserve the environment — were part of a larger master plan, to encourage and promote an active engagement of the population in protecting the environment, transforming Curitiba in an example of sustainable practices of low costs. But it was essential to give ownership to the people; they were the ones, in partnership with the government, to be the guardians of these policies.

Suddenly the Curitibaanos, famous for their cynicism and harsh judgment, were becoming proud Curitibaanos. In Brazil, it became “cool to be from Curitiba.” This is what Nicolau Guppel

meant when he mentions “that even the Curitiba accent started to change.”

With UNILIVRE, the Lewinsky Quarry, Opera de Arame, and Franchise Rischbieter Botanical Garden, I present a few examples of *Urban Acupuncture*, a concept my father explains as “pinpricks” of urbanism — small and often quick interventions capable of reinvigorating a city’s energy flow. As one of the lead advocates of urban acupuncture, Jaime saw it as a means to bring immediate improvements to the urban environment, bypassing long decision-making processes and surpassing economic impediments: “The lack of resources is no longer an excuse not to act. The idea that action should only be taken after all the answers and the resources have been found is a sure recipe for paralysis.”

In the film, I briefly present a few projects Jaime develops while Governor. These projects share the blueprint of his early Curitiba programs, simple, cheap, and involving the population. One example is the cleaning of Guaratuba Bay, Clean Bay, where fishermen were invited to fish the bay’s garbage in exchange for food and remuneration. And the *Comboio Cultural*, which consists of recycled buses that transformed into stages, transporting presentations of itinerant theater, music, dance, and opera to all the 398 municipalities in Paraná and was considered one of the most successful cultural undertakings in the country.

Throughout the film, I want to highlight my father's unconditional love for cities, especially for his city, Curitiba. He advocates that cities are our best solution for a sustainable and diverse world, and ultimately, “Cities are our best opportunity for solidarity.”

In between terms, he and his team kept working as urban advisors, and once he left politics in 2002, he opened Jaime Lerner Architect Associates and made his collaborators partners. Together they worked on many projects for cities worldwide. In the film, I show the extent of these

advisories, from projects in Rio de Janeiro to Angola, from Oaxaca to Shimokitazawa. In the movie, we travel to Porto Alegre, a city in the very far south of Brazil, where we can see his last urban project, the revitalization of *Orla do Rio Guaíba*, with the leadership of partner Fernando Cannali. Another critical project is the revitalization of Luanda, the capital of Angola.

Traveling through my father's legacy is, more than anything, an attempt to shed light on his process, which is imperfect and constantly ongoing, involves simple and viable solutions, and is often quick in its implementation. Understanding that cities are living organisms in constant transformation, one cannot spend years planning for a city that will have a whole new set of problems ten years later, and the old solutions will no longer be pertinent. “Jaime teaches us that to change the future, we need to start now without losing the teleological vision of things. “The sense of urgency he carries intoxicates everyone around him.” (Valeria Bechara, his 30 year collaborator).

When he is not working on large projects, Jaime designs furniture, an electric car made of cardboard, portable street modules, and even a bag that carries his owner, which he tries to sell to Samsonite. He writes a few books and a few haikus — his favorite kind of poems, but most importantly, he waits for his grandchildren's visits.

Starting in 2019, his health deteriorated, and his mobility was limited. In 2020 COVID isolated him even more, and eventually in October of 2020, he had to be hospitalized, and I rushed to Brazil to be with him. I spent six months with him, in and out of the hospital, day after day of dialyses. He is, for most of the time, quiet and introspective, but once in a while, his humor and joy de vivre emerge. His last days were shared with me and his caretakers. There are small moments of reunion, like with my sister's family on Passover, but mostly, even his

grandchildren must be away because nobody is yet vaccinated.

If his urgency and vision are contagious and inspiring for his collaborators, for me, as an artist and a daughter, it is his constant need to create that intrigues me. *124 Notebooks* materialized my belief “that even to be a dreamer, one needs practice.” His curious mind, his extensive sense of belonging — to his family, to his street, his neighbors, to his city, and his country — his porous and open nature, his kind and humorous mood, and his way of inspiring others to be their best, were all things that made strong imprints on me.

When I moved to New York City in 1989, I was curious about the world, I was looking for professional experiences in my field, and I wanted to live in a country where I did not have to feel constantly guilty about my privilege. I also was looking for a neutral place to prove myself away from the shadows of my father. But now that I am older and after spending years away from my family, I can better grasp the reason for this push and pull between my early years of hiding and this later stage of seeking his legacy.

My father passed away in May of 2021 while I was working on this film; finishing this film will be yet another way to say goodbye to him.

Research Analysis

As an artist, I have always been fascinated by questions of creativity. How do we nurture the creative mind? What triggers an authentic thought, a unique point of view, or an original solution to a problem? Is creativity powered by a gene, a system of qualities, or a combination of intelligence, intuition, and free association? Are there common threads between different creative persons?

In the early '80s, while in high school, one of my teachers, a very old man, once pointed out during class: “*You can never know for sure with your students; I remember having this reticent student, always having A’s, but really not remarkable in any way, and guess who he is today? Jaime Lerner*”. The students laughed and told the teacher I was Jaime Lerner’s daughter. I never forgot what the old teacher said, that he could not see in that young boy any sign of my father's visionary persona.

What was Jaime's inner life as a boy? Did his introspection influence his imagination? What triggered his imagination? Was his creativity there all along but dormant? What were the early influences that shaped who he eventually became? These were a few of the questions I was hoping to answer with *124 notebooks*.

My father’s 124 notebooks were my first significant source of research. I sought to understand what made it into the book. There were two kinds of entrees: the first were seeds of ideas in the form of drawings, writings, and poems. The second were commentaries on his encounters with new places and cultures. He would draw or write what he saw, often accompanied by funny comments or poetic remarks. He transformed some of these notes into mature ideas in later notebook pages. Some concepts haunted him for years, reappearing in subsequent notebooks and from time to time transforming slightly or recycled for new purposes.

My research for this film also included my father’s books: *Vizinho, Parente Por Parte de Rua (Neighbors, Relatives From Street Proximity)*, where he explains the city to children, *Urban Acupuncture*, the concept of quick urban interventions capable of changing cities’ energy, and *Quem Cria Nasce Todo Dia (The Person Who Creates, Reborn Everyday Day)*, which is a collection of my father's personal essays that provide a glimpse of his early life impressions. The

tone of these recollections reveal his playful and ingenuous self.

Another essential resource I relied upon was archival material collected and created by my father's friend Carlos Deiro. Deiro moved to Curitiba in 1988 to work on my father's political campaign, and he never left. They became close friends, and since then Deiro filmed both private and public events of my father's life. In Deiro's archive, I found interviews with Jaime's parents, his grandchildren, my mother, and his collaborators, along with interviews of my father at different moments of his life. There was also extensive footage of my father at official functions, openings new programs, receiving awards, and other significant life events starting in the late 80s when Jaime and Deiro first met.

I also reviewed academic papers, articles, and books about Curitiba, as well as news reels from different networks that covered the urban transformation of Curitiba. Two sources in particular were significant for my research, Geraldo Pogy's book *CURITIBA: URBANISMO ESSENCIAL*, from 2020, and *Arquitetos da Revolução*, by Yanko Del Pino. Both offer compelling insights into the entire process of the urban revolution in Curitiba, adding an historical context and focusing on the journey that began in the 50s and 60s and encompasses a bigger story than just that of my father.

Mayor Arzua Pereira, elected in 1962, was "... troubled by what he characterized as the 'urban degeneration' of the city." Therefore, as part of his request for a low-cost housing office, Pereira requested "... funding to incorporate a comprehensive analysis of urban development possibilities in the city." The result was the Preliminary Plan of Urbanism, completed in 1965 by the winner of six firms bidding on the project. It was later revised by adding two chapters of action proposals prepared by professionals from Curitiba who had participated in the analysis. This became known as the Master Plan or Guidelines because it provided only a general set of guidelines for what needed to be accomplished. The Guidelines were approved in 1966 (Schwartz, 2004, p. 29).

While editing this film, I constantly fought to balance the historical context, trying to control the amount of historical information that invaded my movie. Still, these were essential sources for me to understand the context and motivation of this team of architects, engineers, lawyers, and policymakers who, before and with my father, were responsible for the urban revolution in Curitiba.

In addition, my research included a list of documentaries made by sons and daughters about their parents. *Stories We Tell* by Sarah Polley, *News From Home* by Chantal Akerman, *Measures of Distance* by Mona Hatoum, *My Architect* by Nathaniel Khan, *Nobody's Business* by Alan Berliner, *Tudo é Projeto* by Joana Mendes da Rocha about her father and architect Paulo Mendes da Rocha, *Ziraldo_Era uma vez um menino....* by Fabrizia Pinto about the Brazilian Cartunist Ziraldo Pinto, and most recently, *Dick Johnson Is Dead* by Kirsten Johnson, and *Last Flight Home* by Ondi Timoner. These final two films evoke a remarkable similarity to my situation with my father; they are both daughters that share a profound love for their fathers and have to navigate the present — this moment when their fathers are descending into a health decline, and their presence is opaque in comparison to what they once were. In both cases, but very differently, the filmmakers approach their father's death, and the film is an anticipation of their loss and grief. Both films remind me of two original approaches I left behind. In Johnson's case, the idea of the father as a co-creator of the film — the way Johnson engages her father in the plot, he becomes her collaborator in crime. And like Timoner's film, I almost chose to have *124 Notebooks* focus on my father's last days of life, his illness, my process of letting him go, and sharing my family's grief in the public arena. Ultimately, I did not approach my film in either of these ways — I expand on the reasons for that in the next section of this paper

— but their effect on me was significant in choosing my approach.

Another important film for the process was *El Pepe: A Supreme Life*, about the ex-president of Uruguay, José "Pepe" Mujica, directed by Emir Kusturica. Mijuca, like my father, was a South American politician with rare humanity and humility; observing how Kusturica depicted Mijuca inspired me. My greatest challenge crafting my personal film was navigating my father's private and public life. After two years of working on the film, I finally realized how needless it was for me to attempt to create a separation between these two realms. My father's work reflected his being and his way of working reflected his values. Even our family's "none existing" movies are memories re-enacted both at home and flaneuring Curitiba with my father and sister.

Thesis Production Process

The process with *124 Notebooks* was long and underwent many mutations. Initially, I planned for the film to be a collaboration between my father and myself, an attempt to deconstruct his creative process with the help of his 124 notebooks overflowing with his ideas. I intended to have my dear friend and highly accomplished Brazilian filmmaker, Helo Passos, collaborate on the project as its cinematographer; she was also born in Curitiba, and we share many artistic sensibilities.

Helo Passos, with her camera work, would translate into images the poetry of my father's thinking. I imagined a layered film, a dialogue between images and audio. Rather than a factual camera that would follow him around, I pictured a metaphorical camera that would be using the city, our old house, his notebooks, and drawings in connection and conversation with his audio.

I imagine them as two separate elements that would dance together.

In 2019, while Hello was still busy finishing other projects, I informally started filming my father at home with his grandchildren and at his office with his collaborators, but soon his health drastically deteriorated, and I had to change my plans for “a collaboration” with him. I tried sitting with him and his notebooks and conversing about them, but his mind wasn’t sharp, and his speech was slow. He was no longer able to walk, and he was frail. And suddenly, it seems invasive to have someone else around. Now I would be the camerawoman of my film, and that was a nightmare. I am impatient, inexperienced, and adverse to technology, a recipe for disaster. I bought a microphone and a gimbal, but I could not make them work properly. My presence behind the camera and the homemade quality of my shots became deliberately part of the language of the film.

In March 2020, when COVID arrived, I could no longer visit him. In October 2020 I rushed to Brazil to help him. He eventually left the hospital, and we kept shooting small things at home, but he was quiet, sometimes having difficulty retrieving words, and the filming process felt too painful. His presence was diminished and only periodically could one glimpse what he used to be like.

I started relying on archival material shot by different people at different times of his life, mainly material shot by his friend Deiro. Deiro's generosity was enormous, but these interviews, well-shot and professional, were recorded with different intentions than mine. They were celebratory and factual; they never challenged my father or asked him hard questions. The questions I was interested in I never had a chance to ask him.

Once I started using other people's footage, the film gradually shifted. From the original

idea of making a more personal film between my father and me, the film took a different turn, and my father's work and legacy grasped a more prominent space within it.

Another reason the film changed from its original form was the audience. I am unsure when and why I decided to make this film for a non Brazilian audience. I guess the excitement of sharing my father's work with my advisor Andrew Lund motivated me to tell my father's story to people who knew nothing about him; It felt more urgent and relevant. Once I understood that I was not making a film for a Brazilian audience — and used Andrew as my general viewer, often imagining I was telling him the story — I realized many new questions would be raised. In Brazil, my father was relatively known; by contrast, he was known only in architecture circles in the US. There was a more significant need for context. What was Curitiba like? How did he become mayor? What was the political situation at the time, etc.? And eventually, historical details took up more and more space in the film.

With history came the difficulty in handling the scope of my father's work. Between three terms as a mayor and two terms as a governor, Jaime's legacy is so vast that I was constantly fighting with this gigantic content. There was too much to address, and I often agonized about how much I left out. I did not want to give a wrong or incomplete notion that my father's work is focused on embellishing the city because I think this misrepresented his work profoundly. For my father, the tangible — transportation, housing, education, social programs, job creation — and the intangible — parks, meeting points, identity, belonging — are all interlaced to create a more livable city. So my concern about misrepresenting his legacy was constantly on my mind.

There was a time it felt as if I was working on two different films; the material was extensive, and the longer it went on, the less objective eyes I had to judge its trajectory. The

more questions I had to answer, the more it felt like the film was escaping me. Even shooting Curitiba was difficult. It was during COVID, and the city was quiet. It was hard to evoke the exuberance of the parks and streets when they were mostly empty.

My father passed away in May of 2021 while we were shooting, which, besides the deep sadness, was a significant disruption for me. My focus shifted utterly, and suddenly, I wanted to make a film about letting him go, like *Last Flight Home* by Ondi Timoner, even though I had not seen her work yet. I filmed hours of him in the hospital and us in the house doing very little. His appearance was compromised, and I wasn't sure how to make ethical decisions or how he would feel about it. I also wondered if I had enough emotional distance to understand why and how it could be relevant to others. Since I was still grieving, everything was relevant and meaningful to me. Why would anyone else care?

But on the other hand, who would not care? Everyone loses dear ones; it is universal. But the image of death and illness is delicate, and I am not an experienced documentarian; I felt too haunted and entangled in my grief to trust myself. One day, I will make another short film with this footage.

There were months and months of internal battle and confusion, which was sometimes paralyzing. Still, gradually I started to understand that my father and his work were very entangled, and this entanglement became an essential part of the film.

Audience and Exhibition

124 Notebooks has the potential for a broad and diverse audience. The professional community of architects, city planners, policymakers, politicians, community organizations, and

university students learning about urban sustainability would be a logical starting point. But the environmental implications of my father's work open the film to an immense array of events that focus on climate change and public policy, from film festivals to university symposiums and global leader gatherings. The focus would be to inspire audiences and communities to find their own simple solutions with short and long-term effects and implications. When the problem seems too big, there is often paralysis and impotence. This film could motivate big and small actions that could be implemented in the "now," mobilizing children, students, politicians, and community organizers to be involved in practical changes in their communities.

124 Notebooks can also attract documentary festivals around the globe, especially ones specific to environmental and climate change issues, immigrant stories, and Jewish, Brazilian, and South American film festivals.

I want to make a Portuguese version of this film for a Brazilian audience. There is a vast reservoir of materials that I did not include in this cut that I would like to expand on in the future. I will re-record my narration making minor changes to account for content that is already familiar to Brazilian audiences. I imagine expanding the project to a mini-series of three chapters in three hours.

Either in the shape of a film or as a mini-series, I could see it programmed by major Brazilian TV stations like *Rede Globo*, *Bandeirantes*, or *TV Cultura* (our Public channel) or by Brazilian cable channels with extensive cultural programs like *Canal Brasil*, *ARTE 1*, *Canal Curta!*, *GVT*, and *SESCTV*.

This film was a big project to embrace with no money and no collaborators. It is, at the moment, very homemade, which I have incorporated into the film's tone. But some basic

technical improvements are urgently necessary. I want to finesse all post-production elements like color correction, re-record and remix the sound and narration, produce a more robust treatment of the images, and work with a motion graphics designer to better animate Jaime's notebooks. I plan to apply for grants in the US and Brazil to fund these changes.

I have permission to use most of the footage in the film, which was either shot by me, my friends, or Deiro. I officially was granted access to archival material, primarily photographs, through Casa da Memoria (Memory House) in Curitiba. But there are some historical materials, like the images from Paris, news reports about garbage recycling, footage of the Comboio Cultural, and a few other elements, that I need to secure permission to use and/or determine whether I can use them under a Fair Use claim instead of licensing them. I found these images on Youtube channels, and I plan to contact the channel owners about using the footage. In some cases, if I don't get the rights, I could re-shoot images from places in Curitiba or Parana.

I have permission to use some of the music included in the film. The different soundtracks about Curitiba in the 70s are from the album *Cidade sem Portas*, and I secured permission from the musician Paulinho Vitola to use it. I also received permission from the musician OTTO to use the film's final song, *Naquela Mesa*. I am still in the process of rights acquisition for other critical thematic songs, like *A Casa*, from Vinicius de Moraes.

I am using many pieces of music only as placeholders. Ideally, if I get a post-production grant, I intend to hire a composer to create a more unified soundtrack. I want to invite the Brazilian music producer, Beco Dranoff, an old friend, to be the sound designer for the film.

Conclusion

For a long time, I was sure the essence of the film relied on my father's *124 Notebooks*, a materialization of a resilient practice that made him a fearless artist. But looking back, the movie reveals something equally important: my father as a rhizomatic being. A rhizomatic person feels connected and part of something bigger than themselves. My father's early sense of belonging to his family, traditions, street, city, and country was the root of everything that mattered to him. This formed the foundation for everything he did later. For my father, it was never a vanity project; it was a faith project, faith in humanity and its potential. This documentary is about the love story between my father and society, how he sees people as potential and the world as possibilities. The film aims to transcend his legacy and permeate his optimism and creativity, inspiring the audience to start writing their ideas in their own notebooks.

There is no endeavor nobler than the attempt to achieve a collective dream. When a city accepts as a mandate its quality of life; when it respects the people who live in it; when it respects the environment; when it prepares for future generations, the people share the responsibility for that mandate, and this shared cause is the only way to achieve that collective dream."

Jaime Lerner

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