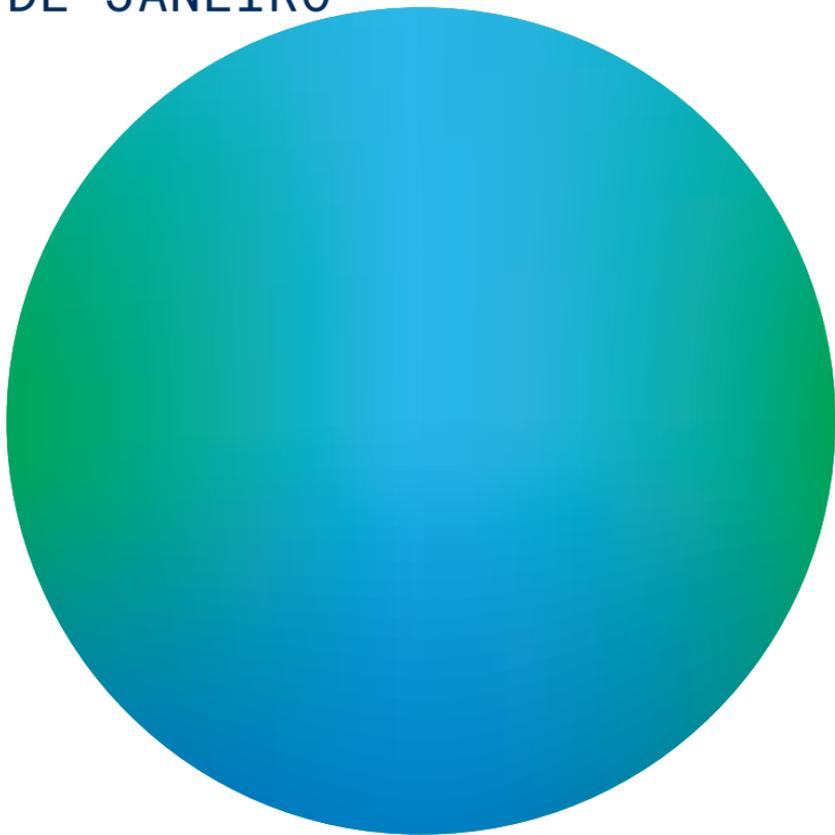


CULTURAL ROUTES,
REGISTERS AND
RESISTANCE IN RIO
DE JANEIRO



PAUL
HERITAGE

Rio de Janeiro

Where Strangers Meet: Art and the Public Realm

Foreword/Preface by Jo Beall

‘I’m not saying I told you so but rappers have been reporting from the front for years.’¹

Why is the British Council interested in the public realm? ‘The public realm can be simply defined as a place where strangers meet’. So says the eminent urbanist, Richard Sennett.² If this is the case then the British Council, a cultural relations organisation that brings people together from different cultures, countries and continents, works squarely in the public realm. For around eighty years, through promoting the English language, the Arts and educational links, the Council has fulfilled its Royal Charter mandate to ‘promote cultural relationships and the understanding of different cultures between people and peoples of the United Kingdom and other countries’,³ bringing strangers together from all corners of the globe to encounter each other. While formal or mainstream diplomacy primarily involves bilateral relations between national governments, the pursuit of cultural relations happens largely among people – in and through educational institutions, cultural organisations, communities and cities.

Unlike the private realm, such as the family where we know each other well and close up, the public realm is characterised by incomplete knowledge and, significantly, by place:

‘Traditionally, this place could be defined in terms of physical ground, which is why discussions of the public realm have been... linked to cities; the public realm could be identified by the squares, major streets, theatres, cafés, lecture halls, government assemblies, or stock exchanges where strangers would be likely to meet. Today, communications technologies have radically altered the sense of place; the public realm can be found in cyberspace as much as physically on the ground.’⁴

While much of the literature on the public realm focuses on politics and citizenship, class and social identity,⁵ the so-called ‘performative school’ offers a more cultural approach, derived from anthropology, focusing on ‘how people express themselves to strangers’.⁶ Taking this as our starting point our interest was in how arts professionals and performers, policy makers, and citizens, connect through the arts in different public realms.

Cities exhibit a critical mass of social, educational and cultural organisations, concentrations of actual and virtual communities, public spaces, and physical and digital connections. As such, they present a unique opportunity to use the power of arts, culture, education and the creative industries to power city and regional economies, catalyse urban renewal and to promote and share our cultural assets. The British Council has a presence in five cities in the UK and over 180 cities around the world, with its work extending far beyond this to several hundred cities and their rural hinterlands. From this base we are working to support cities in the UK and abroad to be internationally inspired and globally connected.

By using our knowledge, experience and connections we can support cities to achieve their international ambitions, working in partnership to create more livable, inclusive and vibrant urban spaces and places and to improve the quality of life for their citizens through exchange of knowledge, people, ideas, insight, culture and experiences. Our cultural relations approach is built on a spirit of

mutuality and co-creation, which inform this collection and how we engage with art and the public realm.

Most would agree that a good city is one where people's basic needs are met, where public services are delivered affordably and efficiently, where the economy thrives, the environment is protected and where public spaces are not only safe, accessible and affordable but also interesting and inspiring – alive places in which people can engage with each other and where creativity can flourish. Contemporary urban planners adhere to the view that beautiful cities are more liveable cities and culture-led development has become *de rigueur* for urban planners in many places around the world. Within the arts the concepts of public art and public space are intertwined and as Geoffrey Crossick writes in *Understanding the value of arts and culture*, the cultural force of the city and its built environment plays a significant role in this. Yet as Crossick acknowledges, the tangible role that the arts play has been largely untested.⁷

This is a contested area with some seeing the harnessing of the arts to promote creative cities and urban economies as the instrumentalisation of culture.⁸ Conventional public art can also be viewed as exclusionary, foregrounding the interests of elites over ordinary urban dwellers and artist-led gentrification.⁹ The conversation surrounding cultural value is engaging with such challenges and the need to develop appropriate means of engagement and participation in the arts. Cities, with their vast and growing populations, their density and networks of public services, spaces and institutions are central to this wider discussion.

Underpinning our approach and captured in the spirit of this collection is that cities are about people and the character of a city itself and expressions of its attractiveness and liveability is generated as much by those who live in it as by its built environment and infrastructure, its governing body or political leadership. Cities are the sum expression of all their people, civil societies and the institutions that define the experience of being in the city.

Where there is an inconsistency between political rhetoric and local reality then city diplomacy efforts will likely be undermined. We cannot project an image of a city as the 'greatest place on earth to live' if the reality is only that for some of our citizens.¹⁰

This collection focuses on what happens to both identity formation and place making when people engage in the public realm through the arts. Its starting point is to recognise artists less as individual producers of *objet d'art* and more as collaborators, participants or producers of situations, shifting the focus from 'production to reception, and emphasises the importance of a direct, apparently unmediated engagement with particular audience groups'.¹¹ It explores facilitating participation in the arts in everyday and extraordinary spaces and shares ideas and experience of the public realm internationally.

The collection shows public artists grappling with often complex, social dynamics and relationships as they play themselves out in and through public space. Because art operates beyond the rational and the functional, it often challenges urban planners who by definition are Cartesian in their approach. Yet planners do recognise that cities are social spaces and that social spaces continually change and in the process, that cities are constantly made and remade. Amin and Thrift see the city, 'as everyday process, mobilised by flesh and stone in interaction',¹² growing and morphing around the actions and engagement of ordinary people. This is at the heart of the British Council's cultural relations approach, sharing international experience in the hope of inspiring understanding and opportunity.

Footnotes

- ¹ Ice T, *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 7th May, 1992 at the time of the Los Angeles riots. Cited in Edward W. Soja (2000) *Postmetropolis, Critical studies of cities and regions*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, p. 374
- ² Richard Sennett (2016) 'The Public Realm', *Quant*, www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2.aspx?pageid=16&cc=gb
- ³ British Council (1993) *Royal Charter and Bye-laws*, London: British Council
- ⁴ Richard Sennett, 2016
- ⁵ See for example, Arendt, Hannah, 'Public Rights and Private Interests.' In M. Mooney and F. Stuber, eds., *Small Comforts for Hard Times: Humanists on Public Policy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977; Noel O'Sullivan, 'The Concept of the Public Realm', 2010, Routledge; and Douglas Kelbaugh, 'Three Urbanisms and the Public Realm', *Proceedings. 3rd International Space Syntax Symposium Atlanta 2001*, www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/3sss/papers_pdf/14_kelbaugh.pdf; and Richard Sennett, 'Quant: The Public Realm', 2016, www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2.aspx?pageid=16&cc=gb
- ⁶ Richard Sennett, 2016
- ⁷ Crossick, Geoffrey and Kasynska, P, (2016) 'Understanding the value of arts and culture', AHRC Cultural Value project
- ⁸ See for example, R. Florida (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class*, New York: Basic Books and C. Landry (2008) *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, London: Earthscan
- ⁹ See for example Miles (2005) 'Interruptions: Testing the rhetoric of culturally led urban development' *Urban Studies*, 43(2) pp. 421-440; J. Peck (2005) 'Struggling with the creative class' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29(4), pp. 740-770; and S. Zukin (2010) *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- ¹⁰ Jo Beall and David Adam (2017) *Cities, Prosperity and Influence: The role of city diplomacy in shaping soft power in the 21st century*, London: British Council, p. 23 www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/g229_cities_paper.pdf
- ¹¹ M. Kwon (2004) *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*, Massachusetts: MIT Press
- ¹² A. Amin and N. Thrift (2002) *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 10

Cultural routes, registers and resistance in Rio de Janeiro¹

Text by Paul Heritage

In all civilizations humans plan villages, towns and cities according to the patterns of a mandala, a projection in the external world of the structure of their own psyche.
(Nise da Silveira, Brazilian psychiatrist, 1905-1999)²

Avenida Brasil relentlessly resists Rio de Janeiro's spectacular beauty as its eight-lane highway cuts northwards through twenty-seven neighbourhoods of the city's poorest suburbs, each congested metre pushing further from the allure of the iconic beaches of Ipanema and Copacabana. From deep in the heart of Rio's docklands to the extreme outer limits of the city – from Benfica to Caju, from Deodoro to Santa Cruz, from Manguinhos to Irajá, from Guardalupe to Coelho Neto – Avenida Brasil is one of Rio de Janeiro's essential arteries. It takes citizens from the heart of the city to its margins, not only to the formal suburban neighbourhoods but to the dozens of unofficial communities – *favelas* – that line the highway's industrial landscape. Avenida Brasil was designed to connect the city with its peripheries, and remains a symbol of the flow as well as the enduring divisions of Rio de Janeiro today. As drivers hustle into chaotic lanes and passengers squeeze impossibly into buses that take them far from the city centre, they catch a glimpse of Rio's former colonial splendour glistening in the hillside above the Avenida. It is the magnificent neo-gothic-romantic palace that at the turn of the twentieth century was home to Oswaldo Cruz: Brazilian epidemiologist, public health campaigner and champion of urban reforms that ripped away Rio de Janeiro's

narrow, insanitary streets. The same reforming zeal that Oswaldo Cruz showed in seeking to eradicate the causes of the frequent and fatal epidemics that devastated the city, inspired Mayor Pereira Passos to open up the back end of the city in 1906 with a road to connect the city centre to the northern suburbs. It was a highway that would eventually become Avenida Brasil. The legacy of Passos and Cruz is imprinted in Rio's seemingly eternal quest to refigure and improve itself. This essay explores how a contemporary cultural organisation that has emerged from Rio de Janeiro's peripheral territories proposes a radical vision of art's role in transforming the health of the city and its citizens with the same passion to reconnect the city with itself. Our journey up Avenida Brasil takes us to where artists have chosen to transform the city and ask how they use their work to insist on the expansion – and reform – of civic discourse.

The ninth pedestrian bridge that crosses Avenida Brasil as it leaves Rio de Janeiro is always my alert that I have reached the point along the expressway where I will turn off into the *favela*³ complex of Maré. As I let the taxi driver know that we need to take the next right, he pulls over onto the forecourt of a petrol station. Leaning across me, he opens the passenger door and indicates that I should proceed on foot. Despite there being no real distinction to divide the *favela* complex from the 4.5 kilometres of Avenida Brasil that it borders, few drivers will make a turn down a side road that immediately pitches you into the street-life of the sixteen communities known collectively as Maré. The taxi has left before I begin the short walk down Rua Teixeira Ribeiro which will take me to Rua Sargento Silva Nunes and the headquarters of the Redes do *Desenvolvimento da Maré*⁴ – the Maré Development Networks – where I am meeting its director Eliana Silva. There is no transition. The screech of a motorbike taxi swerving around me focuses attention as I make my way through the exuberance of the boundless flow of the selling, buying, coming and going that occupies every indivisible inch of the roads and pavements of Maré. At the corner of the first alleyway that disappears away from what constitutes the main street I remember to engage in an act of seeing without looking. A group of adolescents have set out the wares and





weapons of their drug trading. The casual lean of an AK47 against a red plastic bar table is reflected in the window of a beauty salon on the other side of the street.

With a population of over 140,000⁵, Maré is larger than 96% of Brazilian towns⁶. Its history is interwoven with that of the road I have travelled on to be here. When Avenida Brasil finally opened in 1946, many of the construction workers who had spent seven years building the new expressway settled along its borders, dramatically transforming what had previously been a community of families sustained by fishing in the Bay of Guanabara. Eliana arrived here over forty years ago at the age of seven, brought by her family who followed the migrants' route that many of the residents of Rio's *favelas* have taken from the drought-blighted, economically impoverished and culturally rich countryside of the North East of Brazil. It was here in Maré that by the age of 22 she had become the first woman to be elected president of one of Rio de Janeiro's community resident associations. It was here in this complex of sixteen *favelas* on the edge of Avenida Brasil that she brought up her two children, studied to get herself into university and in 2009 completed her PhD on power relations in Rio's marginal territories. It was in Maré in 1996 that she founded the Maré Development Networks (*Redes*), a community-based organization that aims to improve the quality of life in the *favela* in all its dimensions. It was Eliana who insisted that alongside the educational support which *Redes* would provide to enable Maré's residents to follow her into higher education, they also needed to create community photography courses, open an art gallery and an arts centre, establish a library, run workshops on ceramics, plant trees in tubs decorated with poems, set up a community theatre company and invite Lia Rodrigues – one of Brazil's leading contemporary dancers – to move her company to Maré where it has now been resident for over a decade. Eliana was later to become Director and Principal Researcher in the Department of Community Integration at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, where she set up a postgraduate course on Public Security for the Departments of Law and Social Service. Let her be your guide, as she has so often been mine, to the streets of this community:

You feel Maré's daily life immediately as you enter: the strong smell coming from side alleyways because of the precarious waste management; the constant noise, especially funk or *fórró* music; main streets occupied by market stalls; small shops and businesses, many of them serving alcohol; motorcycles, bikes and vans fighting for space among people of all ages – permanently in the streets, all day, every day. The presence of people is the strongest impression that strikes outsiders when they first step into a *favela* like Maré. The streets of middle-class neighbourhoods are empty at night, everyone locked inside their houses surrounded by walls. The *favela* is alive, stores are open and the bars are full.⁷

For anyone taking the right turn after pedestrian bridge number nine on Avenida Brasil, Maré is waiting to tell some of its stories which are of course entwined with the narrative of the *favelas* which are inscribed across the city of Rio de Janeiro.

How many *favelas* are there in Rio de Janeiro? It's the sort of question that defies the town planner as much as the tourist, and just one of the many mysteries that Rio de Janeiro refuses to reveal. Recent estimates talk of more than 800 *favelas* on the hillsides and borderlands of the city. Over 800 places wrapped round, embedded in yet simultaneously outside the official geography of the city. Over 800 communities improvised and baptised by their own inhabitants. Over 800 territories occupied illegally by 20% of the urban population.⁸ The forces and processes that make up Rio de Janeiro originate beyond the physical and political construction of the city. The *favelas* have for a long time formed an influential part of the city's mythology: of its artistry as well as its reality. For the first half of the twentieth century, the hillside communities were often celebrated as a source of the poetry and musicality of the city, idealised for the dignity of a harmonious life. The unsustainability of such myths is ever apparent today in the face of the social exclusion and extreme poverty of so many of those who live in these communities, so that the relationship between the *favela* and the rest of the city can no

longer be characterised as a source of inspiration but of fear. There are certain dynamics of geography and history that seem to feed a vision of Rio de Janeiro as both Paradise and Inferno. In the early 1990s the Brazilian journalist and social commentator Zuenir Ventura used the term *Cidade Partida* — divided city — as a title for an influential book about Rio's racial, social, political and cultural exclusions, and it has become a persuasive paradigm to articulate the sometime capital and perpetual gateway to Brazil.⁹ Ventura's thesis is that the planning of the city in the twentieth century facilitated the urban elite's desire for separation following the disappearance of the absolute segregations made possible under slavery. The book was published in the wake of a series of violent acts in the early 1990s that brought international attention to Rio's problems, precisely because they happened in the areas that the middle-class elite had reserved for itself. The book *Cidade Partida*, while conceptualising the divided city, was born out of a moment in which the separate worlds had collided and the concept itself was in danger of breaking.

Yet at the same time as Ventura's trope so distinctively marked out the division, it collapsed the city into a paradigm that will never be sufficient. The image effectively masks the social divisions and cultural diversity that are to be found within the *favelas*, as well as seeming to deny or ignore how the *favela* is endlessly looped and repeated within the formal city. The danger of the paradigm is that the complex fragmentation of Rio de Janeiro is subsumed into one overriding partition, and the *favelas* become the 'other' of the city itself.

The residents of Rio de Janeiro experience their city in what might be described as a hybrid condition, as both witnesses of social divisions and forced collaborators in their maintenance. Individual and collective acts of resistance are difficult to register or to codify. Although not everyone may experience the effects in direct or brutal ways, it is difficult to conceive of a life lived in Rio de Janeiro without reference to the violence and divisions that have come to characterise it. If the *favela* is conceived as being 'outside the city', then any entry to it involves the crossing of a certain border. These frontiers to the city's



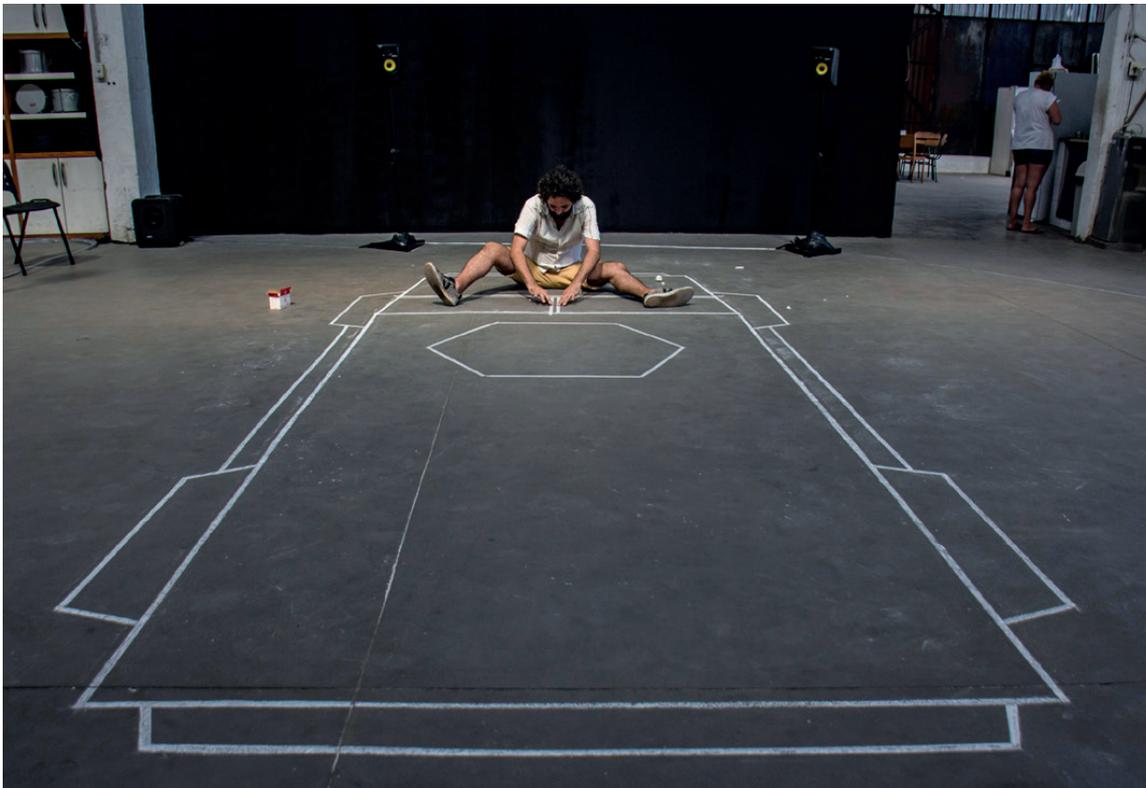
Mostra Outros Registros © Douglas Lopes



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extremities are maintained by both official and unofficial forces and are as concrete as they are also conceptual: access roads are subject to stop and search ‘blitzes’ by the military police and the immediate points of entry to the *favelas* are at least monitored and often ‘secured’ by armed *soldados* – the soldiers of the drug gangs. The divided city is visibly maintained by these rival powers, but the inadequacy of this dualism is evident in the common experience of being subject to the forces both of law and of disorder. Thus the *favela* is not so much the non-city of Rio de Janeiro, but the most powerful signifier of the experience of living there. But how can anyone in this city know which side they are on? The implication of the police in the violence of the *favelas* disturbs any sense of safety that might be expected to accompany interactions with the supposed agents of security. The arbitrary and excessive way in which the police often exercises its power, means that the state is complicit in maintaining these boundaries for all who live in the city, rendering impossible a division that can in any way be based on innocence or guilt.

What are the interventions or actions that artists can make along the fissures of the fragmented city? What are the cultural experiences that individual citizens can look for across the divide? Does Rio’s seemingly irresistible urban paradigm bind artists with an imperative to eliminate or reveal the boundaries that circumscribe the civic lives of others? Here I do no more than point to a sequence of acts that led to one small action by a group of artists within the *favela* complex of Maré in November 2016; but I do so because each and every one of such hyper-local, micro-urban interventions opens up new ways in which the city, and therefore culture itself, can be calibrated.

In 2015 Eliana Silva invited me to think with her about new ways to understand the policing of Rio de Janeiro’s urban realm. She is a sociologist who is also director of a community-based educational and cultural organisation; I am a theatre academic who is an arts practitioner and a producer. Someone to watch over me was the name of a two-year project we devised to investigate police, culture and the city in Rio de Janeiro with specific reference to the Complex of Maré.

It was made possible by a Newton Advanced Fellowship awarded to us by the British Academy. As part of the Fellowship, Eliana made a number of visits to the UK to look at the policing of fragile communities that are subject to multiple risk factors and where there is a perceived threat of increased levels of social violence. During the research we met with senior police officers in London, Newcastle upon Tyne and Belfast who are responsible for neighbourhood and community policing as well as the investigation of homicide and organised crime. We visited arts projects that have made interventions in these relationships as they sought to use culture as a tool to create spaces where mutual understanding and trust can be built. In the engagement with artists and arts organisations we sought to understand to what extent they perceive themselves as being part of the network of government agencies and non-government organizations that is responsible for the civilian oversight of the police in UK urban environments.

Impossible encounters are at the heart of urban dramaturgy. The same Fellowship that brought Eliana and me together also made it possible for us to invite Brazil's Federal Secretary of Public Security, the head of Rio de Janeiro's homicide division and a colonel from the Military Police to walk the beat with the Metropolitan Police in London. At international seminars in London and Rio de Janeiro during 2016, Eliana and I brought together Brazilian and British police officers, politicians, civil servants, human rights lawyers, representatives from local police authorities, NGOs, academics, activists and artists to share and reflect. We invited British participants on the project to travel with us along Avenida Brasil and take a right turn just before the ninth bridge. Two senior officers from the London Metropolitan Police, a British lawyer, a director of an NGO that specialises in bringing the police to account for deaths and other abuses in custody, a policy advisor on public security from the London Mayor's office, and a commissioner from the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) joined Eliana and me beneath an unforgiving tropical sun to walk slowly and mindfully down the streets of Maré.

In November 2016, we presented the initial findings of *Someone to watch over me* at the Sala Cecilia Meireles, perhaps Rio de Janeiro's most prestigious cultural venue. In an auditorium named after one of Brazil's great modernist poets and designed almost exclusively for classical music recitals, Eliana revealed the facts, figures and stories behind fifteen months of the Brazilian army's invasion and occupation of the Complex of Maré in 2015-16. With military colonels and investigating officers in the Civil Police, with those who are responsible for public security policy in Brazil and in Britain, with the human rights lawyers and the policy makers, with the academics and civil society activists, with journalists and bloggers, with those who have been shot and with the mothers, brothers, and neighbours of those who have been killed, Eliana insisted that we look again and look harder in order to avoid reductive responses that weigh heavy in human, social and economic loss.

Beyond the interviews, case studies, data analysis and seminars, perhaps the most eloquent response of *Someone to watch over me was musical*, fittingly for a project which took its name from a popular song. To coincide with the final seminar, we produced an immersive sound installation called *Outros Registros/Other Registers* at the Centre of the Arts in Maré, a cultural space set up and run by *Redes*. A composer, a computer scientist, a performance artist and an academic,¹⁰ from Chile, Belgium, Brazil and Belfast, collaborated to transpose Rio's cold homicide data into music that could be experienced viscerally through a sonic installation. They worked with the register of civilian deaths at the hands of the Military Police as recorded and published by Rio's State Institute of Public Security.¹¹ Here is their description of the installation from the catalogue. They begin by explaining the name of the installation:

[Its] name comes from the data spreadsheets produced by Rio de Janeiro's Institute of Public Security, where the statistics about deaths resulting from police actions appear in a section with the title 'Other Registers'...

Outros Registros is a sound installation about past, present and future police violence in Rio de Janeiro. As shootings are a daily occurrence in the city, people are turned into numbers, dehumanised in a statistical maze. Because it is a common occurrence, people are becoming numb to the pain caused by these events. A dead person can be a father or mother, a son or daughter, a teacher and more. In the statistical universe, however, the person is reduced to a tiny element. With Other Registers, we want to take the data and make them human again by transforming them into music. In this way, we want to make the people's legacy live through sound and let the public experience the data in an aesthetic way. We hope to create awareness of the violence in Rio, stimulate discussion and engage the public to help in tackling this chronic problem... Transposition of the data to other registers is our way of giving back the lost (musical) intention in translation, while suggesting new perspectives and reflections. (Nicolas Espinoza, Samuel van Ransbeeck, Rafael Puetter (Rafucko) and Tori Holmes)¹²

Official data shows that over 900 people were killed by the police in the State of Rio de Janeiro in 2017, a level of lethality that is twice as high as all of those killed annually across the entire United States of America. In absolute terms, Rio's police not only kill more than any other police force in Brazil but more of the police themselves die in and out of the line of duty (over 130 in 2017).¹³ The artistic and scientific team for the installation took those de-humanised numbers and transformed the data into music which bears the legacy of lives lost, families ripped apart and communities living in fear. Deaths which had become numbers became musical notes from eight speakers that circled the audience. In the centre of an octagonal space in the cavernous main space of Maré's Centre of the Arts, the team chalked a representation of the *caveirão*: the armoured vehicle that the military police use for their invasions of the *favelas* and which has its own soundtrack that mixes funk music with the gunfire.

The musical score for the *Other Registers* installation had three interconnected layers. The most constant sound was produced by the sonification of the numbers of the civilians killed by the police. The second layer was a bell-like sound which created a melody from the juxtaposition of the numbers of the deaths of police and of civilians. The third layer brought a human voice reading newspaper headlines related to police violence. The audience was being asked to listen to and be present with this data within a poetic register, instead of being mere witnesses of the dehumanizing spectacle of statistics that is played out in the media. Most important was the space in which this performance installation was staged. Just 500 metres from Avenida Brasil – but already deep into the *favela* complex – there in the Centre of the Arts of Maré, art was transforming murder into mathematical musical forms on the street that yesterday and tomorrow will echo to the terrifying sound of the *caveirão*.

29th July 2017. It is eight months since *Other Registers* was dismantled at the Centre of Arts in Maré, but the comments we invited from visitors to the installation are still chalked on the black wall we left in place. Eliana and I are casually reading out the observations and remarks that draw our attention as we await the arrival of two UK academics¹⁴ visiting Maré as part of a lecture tour about the creative industries. The installation seems as prescient as ever, just hours after the federal government had sent 10,000 soldiers to ‘secure’ Rio de Janeiro. My journey up Avenida Brasil this Saturday morning was accompanied by tanks, armoured vehicles and troop carriers (to the great satisfaction of today’s taxi driver). Eliana is absorbed in thinking about how *Redes da Maré* would respond to a further escalation of public insecurity and her reflections take us back to what had motivated our research and the setting up of the installation in Maré.

Other Registers was trying to capture something very specific to our city of Rio de Janeiro: the violence of the police and the violence of the armed criminal gangs. It’s the same as what we were doing in our research and what we always do at *Redes da Maré*. We collect data. Why? To quantify the violence. To know what happens in the day-to-day

of this community and to ensure that there is a historical record. We are engaged in a constant act of registering violence and violations. Why do we collect all this information? Why are we making our own registers? Because we are trying to prevent it being seen as something inherent to our community. Maré residents have to lead their daily lives like this, so that the violence becomes something that they just have to accept. But we shouldn't have to put up with this constant state of war. We must never see this violence as something that is a 'natural' part of daily life. If there are armed civilians on the streets of Maré and this has become our reality it is because other rights don't exist. There is no such thing as 'public security' here, because the State doesn't prevent this happening. Our aim is to say that this violence is not a normal part of where we are or a characteristic of who we are. That's what *Other Registers* did. It called attention. We need an element of art in this cold, hard, sad place. Art transposes this violence so that it becomes strange or alien to us again.

There is a particular noise frequency here in Maré: the sound of shooting. Someone is hit and someone dies, whether it is the police who are shooting or a young man from one of the armed criminal groups. When we hear that shot in the context of art it provokes a new perception and perhaps the possibility of a new way of being in this reality. Art takes us to a less rational place. We *feel* the effect of this process on an individual and the collective. There is a very rational analysis of the violence that terrorises the schools in Maré, which shows exactly how it disrupts the everyday functions of education here. But art reveals how this violence is changing the way children see where they live, how it is in their bodies and how they speak. Art can enable them to begin to express their fears, which are always subjective. We need to create places which express the irrational. We need moments that are about what we are feeling. It is another way of dealing with this context. We have to construct places and time for art here in these communities, because sometimes the rational becomes too hard, too complex and leads to a place where there seem to be no solutions. The residents here in Maré don't know how to get justice. They feel as if they live outside the Republic, because the State doesn't function for them. Art dislocates, alienates and creates a new

sensibility. It takes us to a subjective place in which we recognise or express our emotions. Here in the Centre of Arts the residents can discover that life doesn't have to be like this. And from that realization you can create other mechanisms, other ways of fighting.

It is so important to register life. I loved the title of *Other Registers* because it talked to us of new ways of registering what is happening to us. There was something very objective in the way the installation registered the data of a city at war. And it also reminded us that there are certain deaths that are outside the normal parameters established by the rest of the city. When a murder takes place in the *favela*, it won't be investigated or recognised as a violation for which someone will be punished. There is a different form of death here, another way of dying. That's why the police invented this other way of registering murders they commit in these territories. And it is why we have been looking to art to find our own way of bringing attention to these deaths. We have to create our own memorials. To re-signify the murders and the places where they are taking place. To ensure that these deaths are not ignored or forgotten.

It was fascinating that these artists chose to work with sound, because noise is a dominant feature of communities like Maré where there is such a high density of population and where residents share their lives in intensely restricted spaces. *Favelas* have distinctive sounds: lots of good noise but also noises that disturb. The sounds of each *favela* deserve much more attention, because they define how communities organise themselves, how they live and react to a particular environment – even how they respond to violations. A *favela* is alive in its noise, whether it is the babble of neighbours talking, the sound of a birthday party, a bar advertising its promotions, a resident who has directed their home speakers out into the street or the gunfire. *Other Registers* insisted that we enter a completely different world of sound. It dislocated everyone who put on those headphones or stood in the centre and let the sounds of the music absorb them. It was both intensely familiar and totally unknown. It put us in contact with the sounds of those deaths.

What potential does this installation have? What can it do? Perhaps to answer that we have to think about where this installation was taking place. While we insist that the Centre of Arts of Maré (CAM) is regarded as one of the cultural institutions of the city of Rio, and not just of Maré, it is a place that local residents regard as a legitimate part of their community in which the art work has territorial significance. The residents can see things that speak to their realities. CAM has an intensive programme of daily activities – plays, workshops, seminars, book launches, exhibitions – in which we want to create a different relationship with art and the places where art happens. We know that most residents look at the cultural institutions in the city and think ‘this place isn’t for me; it doesn’t belong to me’. That’s why at CAM our doors are always open and although we have rules about the use of the space, they can’t be ones that exclude people. For example, we are very close to a street corner that has become a focus for the consumption of ‘crack’, and it is great to see that some of the drug users are increasingly visiting CAM. Of course, that upsets some of the other users of the centre but I’m delighted. There are still very few places where art takes place that are genuinely ‘popular’ – in the sense that the institutions are ‘of the people’ whoever they may be. We need art centres that take us out of ourselves if they are going to estrange us from a world which has become too familiar.

Rio de Janeiro needs projects that reduce the distance from the *favelas* that separate them from those who live in socially and economically privileged neighbourhoods. Those who have reduced their vision of what this city can be, need to recognise the rich potential of places like Maré that they have never visited. We need to construct a different way of looking and listening.

Eliana and I opened our original proposal to the British Academy with a quotation from the German playwright Bertolt Brecht, “Nothing is impossible to change”. The phrase is the last line of a poem which bears the same title and which for us spoke not only to the disordered, bloodied, habitual city of Rio de Janeiro but of the denaturalising that art makes possible. *Other Registers*

insisted that we remember deaths but in its own impermanent and mutable presence as a work of contemporary installation art in Maré, it celebrates life and the human capacity to re-write, re-imagine and resist. When artists stimulate civic discourse they enable us to hear the possibility of transformation.

Nothing is impossible to change

Distrust the more trivial, in appearance simple.
And examine, above all, what seems habitual.
We begged expressly:
don't accept what is of habit as a natural thing,
because in time of bloody disorder,
of organised confusion
of unmerciful humanity
nothing should seem natural,
nothing should seem impossible to change.
(Bertolt Brecht)

A post script from Eliana Silva (22nd June 2018)¹⁵: I begin writing this text in a total state of shock. Three months have passed since the assassination of the city councillor Marielle Franco¹⁶ who described herself as an adopted daughter of Maré. There has been absolutely no result from the investigation into her murder. A State of Emergency has been declared in Rio de Janeiro¹⁷ – or should I say, in Brazil – which makes it even harder to understand the true depth of the violations of the justice system by those who govern us. I write these words from the *favela* of Nova Holanda in the Complex of Maré, home to impoverished residents who are predominantly black. Many of them, like me, came to this city from the State of Paraiba in search of work, of dignity, of survival. The violence of those who govern us is revealed twice over: in the denial of basic urban rights and in the failure to guarantee public security and a right to life.

Two days ago a police operation which included members of the Civil Police and troops who are part of the Military Intervention in Rio de Janeiro wrote a new chapter in Maré's story. Total disrespect

for the *favela* residents was stamped clearly across the operation. The action began in Vila dos Pinheiros, a house was invaded and five young people were assassinated. At the same time in Vila do João, another 18 year-old suffered the same fate at the hands of other agents of the state. Who are these young people? What happened that each of them had to die? Their deaths have been justified in the media using the police version of events which says that these boys are part of armed gangs in Maré. How true is this statement? If they were under suspicion, did they need to be assassinated? Was there an investigation? How can we get answers in the context of a military interventions that once again has no regard for the lives of the residents of *favelas*, just as in every other plan for policing peripheral communities in Rio de Janeiro.

Today's operation quickly grew to include other *favelas* such as Nova Maré, Nova Holanda and Parque União. A helicopter was used as an aerial shooting platform, which is as illegal as it is immoral in such a context. The logic is clear: this is a war in which those who live in the *favelas* belong to the army of the enemy.

As it hovered above, the helicopter was shooting, hitting whatever was below: bullets riddle houses, cultural buildings, streets and the people in them. And so we get to Marcus Vinícius da Silva, a 14-year old boy making his way to school. The seventh life cut short today because of the state's logic that insists on the extermination of black youth in this country. That's why we demand yet again: how far will this go? That's why, in the middle of the pain, the tears and the sorrow, we demand answers and refuse to allow our voice to be silenced. We want justice. We want an end to the genocide and we lay full responsibility on the state for pursuing a war that destroys the lives and the hopes of people in the *favelas* and peripheries of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil.

Footnotes

- ¹ My first visit to Brazil was at the invitation of the British Council. I arrived in Rio de Janeiro on 31st July 1991 at the start of a three-week Brazilian tour by the British theatre company Cheek by Jowl. They performed their all-male version of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* while I gave a lecture on sexuality in Shakespeare's comedies. I have been thinking and writing about the city ever since. Much has changed in Rio de Janeiro during those 25 years but I still find myself travelling the same routes in my writing so inevitably some of the thinking and writing on the city's cultural landscape can be found in other texts that I have written over the years.
- ² Mello: 143
- ³ Ghetto; Shanty town; slum. Urban poverty is specific and none of the translations available in English express the particularities that characterise the peripheral, improvised communities that are known in Portuguese as favelas. So I will name them as such in this text
- ⁴ A non-governmental organisation set up and run by residents and ex-residents of Maré and legally constituted as an OSCIP (literally 'Social Organisation for the Public Interest', a special status certified by the Ministry of Justice that streamlines the paperwork for NGOs to enter into agreements with government and raise public funds, and that also requires increased transparency in their accounting). Its mission is to construct a process of sustainable development within the complex of 16 favelas that constitutes their community
- ⁵ Population census carried out by Redes da Maré in 2013
- ⁶ IBGE (Brazilian Geographic and Statistical Institute). Census, 2010
- ⁷ Interview with Eliana Silva recorded by Heritage 28th September 2016
- ⁸ IBGE. See Luís Mir, *Guerra Civil* (Geração Editorial: São Paulo, 2004), p80
- ⁹ Zuenir Ventura, *A Cidade Partida* (Companhia das Letras: Rio de Janeiro, 1994)
- ¹⁰ Nicolas Espinoza, Samuel van Ransbeeck, Rafael Puetter (Rafucko) and Tori Holmes
- ¹¹ www.isp.rj.gov.br/
- ¹² *CreativeLab: Social Change through Creativity and Culture* (Rio de Janeiro: Circuito 2016) p81
- ¹³ www.forumseguranca.org.br/
- ¹⁴ Professor Geoffrey Crossick, former Chancellor of the University of London and co-author of the Arts and Humanities Research Council's report on Cultural Value; Professor Andrew Pratt, Professor of Cultural Economy at City University of London and co-author of *Creativity, Innovation and the cultural economy*, Routledge, 2009
- ¹⁵ This is a translation by the author of an article that appeared in the *Jornal do Brasil* www.jb.com.br/rio/noticias/2018/06/22/depoimento-a-dor-que-une-marielle-marcus-vinicius-e-a-mare/
- ¹⁶ www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/18/marielle-franco-brazil-favelas-mourn-death-champion
- ¹⁷ In February 2018, the Brazilian Federal Government announced that the military would take over public security in the State of Rio de Janeiro. It was the first time since the end of the military dictatorship in 1988 that the army had intervened directly in a state's government. The Centre for the Study of Security and Citizenship at the University of Candido Mendes (Rio de Janeiro) published an assessment of the first four months of the military intervention which showed that after 120 days of federal intervention in the security of Rio de Janeiro (February 16 to May 16, 2018), there has been an increase in shootings, of killings, of deaths resulting from police action and of the murder of police officers. Their report highlights the high costs and limited results. www.ucamcesec.com.br/textodownload/quatro-meses-de-intervencao-federal-operacao-operacao-operacao/



Paul Heritage

Professor of Drama and Performance, Queen Mary University of London, and Director of People's Palace Projects.

For over three decades, Paul Heritage has created cultural projects as an investigation of the power of the arts in social change.

Reaching thousands of prisoners, guards, and their families, Paul's theatre-based projects in Britain and Brazil have included award-winning work on HIV/AIDS and human rights. He has produced a rich flow of exchange between Britain and Brazil which has supported artists and cultural activists from vulnerable territories to explore the social technologies and cultural value of the arts in diverse contexts. Current research includes a partnership with the Kuikuro people of the Xingu Territories to create an immersive digital experience for London museum goers; an investigation about how social and cultural resources strengthen mental health and build resistance to substance abuse in vulnerable urban communities; and The Agency with BAC and Contact and Agência de Redes para Juventude in Rio de Janeiro. Further details: www.peoplespalace.org.uk

In 2004, Paul was made a Knight of the Order of Rio Branco by the Brazilian government.



Claire Doherty (Editor)

Claire Doherty is the Director of Arnolfini, Bristol.

Previously, Claire Doherty was the founding Director of Situations. Over the past decade, Situations emerged as one of the UK's most innovative and pioneering public art producers, commissioning and producing temporary and long-term public arts projects, creating public art strategies and visions for city-wide initiatives and leading publishing and research initiatives to improve the conditions for, and skills to produce, new forms of public art worldwide. Claire has developed an international reputation as a leading thinker in new approaches to public art policy and planning, and is dedicated to engaging those for whom the arts might have seemed irrelevant or inaccessible through transformative art and cultural experiences; advocating for the social value of the arts, and finding ways to catalyse positive change in specific places.

Claire was awarded a Paul Hamlyn Foundation Breakthrough Award for outstanding cultural entrepreneurs, 2009, and appointed MBE for Services to the Arts in New Years Honours List 2016.

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