

A PLACE OF SEEING: PEOPLE'S PALACE PROJECTS AND THE CITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO

De onde se vê: People's Palace Projects e a cidade do Rio de Janeiro

De donde se mira: People's Palace Projects y la ciudad de Río de Janeiro

PAUL HERITAGE^{1*}
MARIANA STEFFEN^{1**}

<http://doi.org/10.1590/S2178-149420220208>

¹People's Palace Projects, Queen Mary University of London – London, United Kingdom.

*Artistic director (p.heritage@peoplespalace.org.uk)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7432-5404>

**Research and project manager (mariana@pppdobrasil.org.br)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9158-0407>

Article received on February 15, 2022 and approved for publication on February 25, 2022.

ABSTRACT

Since 2002, Rio de Janeiro has been a place from where the People's Palace Project (PPP) beholds the world. Created in 1997, the PPP is a research centre and a professional arts organisation that aims to explore how the arts can respond to urgent social crises and fight social injustice. In this article, the PPP's artistic director, Paul Heritage, and research and project manager, Mariana Steffen, recover previous writings and engage in conversation to revisit the organisation's history and its relation to the city of Rio de Janeiro. The PPP seeks to bring arts to life through research and collaborations, but most of all through listening. As we recount its previous projects and experiences — cocreated with a range of partners from the city's peripheral urban communities —, we reflect on how the arts provide a new lens to view the city, to capture its nuances and reposition the slum (favela) on a map made of music, theatre and colour.

KEYWORDS: Arts; social injustice; Rio de Janeiro; research; collaborations; lens.

RESUMO

Desde 2002, o Rio de Janeiro é um lugar de onde a People's Palace Projects (PPP) contempla o mundo. Criada em 1997, a PPP é um centro de pesquisa e uma organização artística profissional que tem como objetivo explorar como as artes podem responder a crises sociais urgentes e combater a injustiça social. Neste artigo, o diretor artístico da PPP, Paul Heritage, e a gerente de pesquisa e projetos, Mariana Steffen, recuperam textos previamente escritos e incorrem em um diálogo que revisita a história da organização e sua relação com a cidade do Rio de Janeiro. A PPP busca dar vida às artes por meio de pesquisas e colaborações, mas, acima de tudo, da escuta. Ao relatar os projetos e experiências anteriores da PPP — cocriados com diversos parceiros das periferias da cidade —, refletimos sobre como as artes fornecem uma nova lente para ver a cidade, capturar suas nuances e reposicionar a favela em um mapa feito de música, teatro e cor.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Artes; injustiça social; Rio de Janeiro; pesquisa; colaborações; lente.

RESUMEN

Río de Janeiro ha sido un lugar para que People's Palace Projects (PPP) contemple el mundo desde 2002. Creado en 1997, PPP es un centro de investigación y una organización artística profesional que tiene como objetivo explorar cómo las artes pueden responder a crisis sociales urgentes y luchar contra la injusticia social. En este artículo, el director artístico de PPP, Paul Heritage, y la gerente de investigación y proyectos, Mariana Steffen, recuperan escritos anteriores y entablan una conversación para revisar la historia de la organización y su relación con la ciudad de Río de Janeiro. PPP busca dar vida a las artes a través de la investigación y las colaboraciones, pero sobre todo, a través de la escucha. Mientras recordamos los proyectos y experiencias anteriores de PPP, cocreados con una variedad de socios de las comunidades urbanas periféricas de la ciudad, reflexionamos sobre cómo las artes brindan una nueva lente para ver la ciudad, capturar sus matices y reposicionar la favela en un mapa hecho de música, teatro y color.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Artes; Injusticia social; Rio de Janeiro; investigación; colaboraciones; lente.

Mariana Steffen (Researcher and Project Manager: People's Palace Projects) from writings by and in conversation with Paul Heritage (Director, People's Palace Projects).

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 (Silveira, 2014).

INTRODUCTION

The terms *theatre* and *teatro* originate in English and Portuguese from the Ancient Greeks, who named the sites that they created for performance from their verb *theasthai: to behold*. Rio de Janeiro has been a place for People's Palace Projects (PPP) to behold the world since 2002. Created in 1997, PPP is a research centre and a professional arts organisation linked to the Drama Department of Queen Mary University of London/QMUL. PPP aims to explore how the arts can respond to urgent social crises and fight social injustice. The name People's Palace comes from the building in which QMUL was founded and where Paul Heritage originally established PPP's offices: "In the spirit of Victorian philanthropy, the People's Palace for East London was intended to improve the lives of the poor in the local community by providing 'technical education and rational recreation'". Notably, 115 years and one ocean later, PPP's mission still focuses on marginalised communities, but its vision is to look at social crises in collaboration with them and learn how to see the world in different ways.

People's Palace Projects works in partnership with artists, medics, researchers, community leaders and cultural organisations across a range of projects that make connections between people who use art to make a difference in their own lives and the lives of others. Over the past 25 years, the PPP team has included artists and academics from the UK and Brazil, and currently runs arts-based research projects in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, India, Pakistan, Peru, and the UK. We are learning with healthcare workers and people with psychosis how Theatre of the Oppressed can be used to raise awareness and change attitudes about mental health in Chennai (India) and Karachi (Pakistan); we have taken Brazilian filmmaker TakumãKuikuro from the Xingu Indigenous Territories to COP26 in Glasgow so he can show how his community experiences the climate crisis; we are working alongside local artists and cultural organisations in Brumadinho, Mariana, Itabira and Nova Lima in Brazil's Iron Quadrangle to investigate the role of cultural heritage in the resistance to and recovery from the mining disasters that blight the region¹. But wherever it goes, it seems that PPP never loses sight of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Porque, Brasil? (Why, Brazil?): this was the title of a poem written by a 21-year-old inmate named Moisés who participated in the first workshop with incarcerated men that Paul

Heritage ran in Papuda — the prison complex in the Federal District of Brasília — in 1993. Later, he took 20 participants from that workshop to stage a theatrical enactment of Moisés' poem in the foyer of the Ministry of Justice, with *Porque, Brasil?* inscribed across the Brazilian flag in place of *Ordem e Progresso*. Moisés died in prison 6 months after Heritage had invited him and his colleagues to perform at the vertex of a system that had deprived him first of his liberty, and then his life. The theatrical process they initiated together enabled Moisés to articulate his consciousness and interrogate the social and political myths that sustain a brutal, racist and dehumanizing prison system, just as People's Palace Projects sought to maintain this legacy by establishing theatre programmes in dozens of Brazilian prisons over the subsequent decade. But for all our successes, it is our collective failure to protect Moisés that has guided our enquiries into the interaction between research and cultural action. We have gone on to create learning and cultural exchanges in Rio's *favelas*, in Indigenous villages and sometimes even in theatres. But it was in prisons that we first explored the limits and possibilities on how those who have been dispossessed and excluded by social and historical processes can activate their agency through performance. Running through all our work are critical questions about how far we can — and should — go as artists and academics.

Peripheral urban communities reflect back on the city in different ways: through the arts, we have been proposing a new way that they can see and be seen by the city. This essay is a reflection on how the arts provide a new lens to view the city, capture its nuances and reposition the *favela* on a map made of music, theatre and colour. PPP seeks to bring arts to life through research, collaboration and co-creation, but most of all, through listening. This is the only way we can unveil hidden realities and propose new ones. Recently, a collaborator from the *favela* of Manginhos in Rio de Janeiro said that the arts allowed communities to change their narratives from documenting violence and death to celebrating life. In this article, we try to recount a bit of this story, focusing on some of the projects that PPP has traced along the routes and roots of Rio de Janeiro.

RIOS

How many *favelas* are there in Rio de Janeiro? This is a question that defines the town planner as much as the tourist and is just one of the many mysteries that Rio de Janeiro refuses to reveal. Estimates suggest that there are over 1,000 *favelas* on the hill-sides and borderlands of the city. Over 1,000 places are wrapped around, embedded in, yet simultaneously set outside the official geography of the city. Over 1,000 communities are improvised and named by their own inhabitants. Over 1,000 territories, outside formal civic regulation, are occupied by 20% of the urban population. As Nise da Silveira (2014)

reminds us, cities are projections in the external world of the structure of our own psyches. The forces and processes that make up Rio de Janeiro, therefore, originate beyond its physical construction. 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 which was idealised for the dignity of their harmonious existence. The unsustainability of such myths is ever apparent today in the face of the social exclusion and extreme poverty experienced by so many of those who live in these communities.

Certain geographical and historical dynamics 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 (1994) used the term *cidadepartida* — divided city — as the title for his influential book about Rio's racial, social, political and cultural practices of exclusion, and it has become a persuasive paradigm to articulate the former capital and perpetual gateway to Brazil. Ventura's thesis is that the planning of the city in the 20th century facilitated the urban elite's desire for separation, following the disappearance of the absolute segregation 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. Although the book *Cidade partida* conceptualised the divided city, it 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 maintaining them. Individual and collective acts of resistance are difficult to register or 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 the city. If the *favela* is conceived as being 'outside the city', then any entry into it involves crossing a certain border. These frontiers at the city's extremities are maintained by both official and unofficial forces and are as concrete as they are 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 the armed soldiers of 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 of both law and 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 *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 exercise their power means that the state is complicit in maintaining these boundaries for all who live in the city, rendering a division that can be based on innocence or guilt impossible.

Over the past 25 years, through a series of interconnected arts initiatives and research projects, PPP has been asking what interventions or actions artists can make along the city's fissures. What are the cultural experiences that individual citizens can look for across the divide? Does Rio's seemingly irresistible urban paradigm bind artists to an imperative to eliminate or reveal the boundaries that circumscribe the civic lives of others? In this article, we highlight only a small number of our projects, mainly in the Complexo da Maré, because every hyper-local, micro-urban intervention opens up new ways in which the city — and art itself — can become a way of seeing.

THE VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

After two decades of making theatre in prisons in the UK and Brazil, Heritage shifted focuses to create projects at the intersection between art, violence and poverty. These began with a project called *Love in a Time of War*, in partnership with Grupo Cultural AfroReggae² in 2004. Heritage invited well-known actors from Brazilian television and cinema to stage readings of two Shakespeare plays with the participation of artists from AfroReggae's theatre and drumming projects. The programme was launched with a performance of *Antony and Cleopatra* on a contested no-man's land between Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas, two of Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* that at the time were dominated by rival criminal factions. The 200 metres that divided the two communities were patrolled by young men with AK-47s and AR-15s at either end of a rough road whose houses were riddled with bullet holes. Over 2,000 people from both communities gathered at this site for the one and only performance of the play, and then saw themselves again later that night on the main television news. PPP and AfroReggae subsequently produced a 3-month tour of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Measure for Measure* that bridged the city of Rio de Janeiro, with free performances in *favelas* and paid performances in mainstream theatres (to which *favela* residents were invited and provided

with free transport and tickets). Similar to the residents, performers, technicians, journalists and armed gang members who had shared their common vulnerability on the opening night of that contested borderland between the communities of Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas, audiences across the city gathered to witness impossible acts of theatre which they themselves were making happen by being present at^{3,4}. *Love in a Time of War* invited all who participated to become sentinels as theatre built its temporary ramparts and bridges across Rio de Janeiro. By offering a rare vision of the city, the act of performance was a way of asking not who we are, but who we may become⁵.

PPP always creates its artistic and academic bridges in partnership with local artists and arts organisations. With Grupo Cultural AfroReggae, we built a four-year programme called *Favela to the World* that enabled the artists from Vigário Geral to perform on major international stages, as well as to transfer their transformative social technology to young people living in a wide range of different contexts. For over a decade, Nós do Morro and the Royal Shakespeare Company travelled between Stratford-upon-Avon and Vidigal, as PPP created ways in which what can be seen from the hillside of a *favela* can make us look again at Shakespeare and ourselves. Similarly, it was on his journeys along Avenida Brasil to the Complexo da Maré that Heritage forged a series of arts-based collaborative research projects with Redes da Maré and its director Eliana Sousa Silva.

In 2015, Silva invited Heritage to join her in thinking about new ways to understand the policing of Rio de Janeiro's urban areas. *Someone to Watch over Me* was the name of a 2-year project they devised to investigate police, culture and the city in Rio de Janeiro, with specific reference to the Complexo da Maré⁶. At international seminars in London and Rio de Janeiro in 2016, the project 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. In November 2016, Redes and PPP presented the initial findings of *Someone to Watch Over Me* at the Sala Cecília Meireles. In an auditorium named after one of Brazil's great modernist poets and designed almost exclusively for classical music recitals, Silva and Heritage revealed the facts, figures and stories behind 15 months of the Brazilian army's invasion and occupation of the Complexo da Maré in 2015–2016. Addressing military colonels and investigating officers in the Civil Police, those responsible for public security policy in Brazil and Britain, human rights lawyers and policy makers, academics and civil society activists, journalists and bloggers, those who had been shot, and the mothers, brothers, and neighbours of those who had been killed, Silva and Heritage insisted that we look again and that we look harder in order to avoid reductive responses that weigh heavily on human, social and economic loss.

Beyond the interviews, case studies, data analysis and seminars that constituted *Someone to Watch Over Me*, perhaps the most eloquent element was music, which was fitting for a project that took its name from a popular song. To coincide with the final seminar, PPP 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 academic⁷ from Chile, Belgium, Brazil and Belfast collaborated to transpose Rio de Janeiro's brutal homicide data into music that could be experienced viscerally through a sound 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 for Public Security, to create a sound installation about past, present and future police violence in Rio de Janeiro. As shootings are a daily occurrence in the city, people turn into data, becoming dehumanised in a statistical maze. A victim of homicide is a father or mother, a son or daughter, a teacher and more, yet in the statistical universe, a person is reduced to a number. With *Other Registers*, the data was transformed into music. The aim was to create a living legacy through sounds that let the public experience data through an aesthetic experience.

To live in a *favela* in Rio — as in many other places in Brazil — is to live with the permanent threat of lethal violence and without the rule of law. Silva and Heritage wanted to ask how this affected the mental health of *favela* residents in Rio de Janeiro. What is the effect of armed violence on the minds and bodies of people living in these communities? How do they manage their well-being amidst the risk of everyday violence? These questions guided a new research project called *Building the Barricades*, a 3-year investigation (2018-2020) into the intersection between violence, poverty, mental health and the arts in the 16 *favelas* that make up the Complexo da Maré in Rio de Janeiro⁸. In the absence of adequate medical interventions and social assistance in Maré, the studies undertaken in the original research have drawn attention to the importance of active participation in arts and cultural activities to recover from mental health disorders, as well as to build resilience and increase well-being. Can the arts build metaphorical barricades that not only protect individuals and communities but also inspire a sense of revolt, like the Paris communards in 1871 (whose barricades were constructed in the great Parisian tradition of the 1789 Revolution, the 1832 Uprising, the 1848 Revolution, and would, in turn, inspire students to build their own barricades in the streets of Paris in May 1968)? It is interesting to note that when the project was translated into Portuguese, Silva and Heritage chose a less confrontational image for the title: *Construindo Pontes/Building Bridges*.

The project is a pioneering initiative that aims to measure and analyse the impact of violence on the health of residents in low-income neighbourhoods. The research demonstrates that people exposed to violence are vulnerable to mental distress and a lower quality of life.

Post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, phobias and suicide attempts are some of the mental disorders affecting those who live in situations characterised by armed conflict. Their physical health, and social and emotional relationships are frequently damaged. The research also investigates how Maré residents participate in the arts and cultural activities, and develop resilience: the capacity to react positively to trauma and adversity.

Building The Barricades interviewed 1,411 Maré residents aged 18 and over. Most of this group — a total of 1,211 people — were randomly selected to create a typical sample of Maré's adult population. Data from this sample was added to information obtained during qualitative research, which consisted of 27 interviews and 4 focus groups. The survey reveals that Maré residents experience situations of extreme violence, such as being caught in gunfights or witnessing murders, with startling frequency. The data also shows that the majority of this population lives in a permanent state of fear. One-fifth of respondents believe that this emotional state harms their physical health and nearly one-third describe an impact on their mental health.

In the survey, the question 'Has anyone close to you ever been killed or injured?' revealed that one-quarter of residents (25.5%) knew a close acquaintance who had been injured or murdered (Heritage *et al.*, 2021).

A friend of ours died in a shooting, Paulo, he died the year before last; my hairdresser was shot with a rifle, she went to the window to see what was happening and died, and there was a neighbour who went to buy bread in the morning wearing headphones, he didn't hear the shooting start and died in the street carrying his bread (male, aged 23, resident) (Heritage *et al.*, 2021).

In addition to the data that Maré residents experience violence on a level that is associated with living in a warzone, the quantitative survey, qualitative interviews and focus groups conducted during *Building the Barricades* offered several indications of how participating in creative activities — whether as an artist, participant or the general public — can be considered a significant factor in building resilience against mental health and substance abuse disorders. Through the use of arts-based research practices, the project also sought to produce new narratives that reflect the complex and constantly shifting stories of how people manage mental health crises and substance abuse disorders in these communities.

Through projects involving music, poetry, photography and theatre based on their experiences and life stories, Maré artists and residents were invited to contribute to the investigation. The outputs that resulted from this process have created a rich narrative study, bringing alternative voices to the research. The possibility of having participants actively producing and sharing knowledge related to their own understanding of mental health and substance

abuse offers diverse and innovative insights, and reflects an approach to academic research that is characteristic of PPP over the past 25 years.

In March 2020, the *Building the Barricades* research team had just concluded the quantitative survey with 1,411 respondents when the rise in new coronavirus infections meant that a series of lockdown measures were implemented by Rio de Janeiro's municipal and state governments. Plans to start the qualitative research were postponed and artistic activities were suspended until we could understand what research during the pandemic could entail. Three interconnected narrative studies had been planned for the final year of *Building the Barricades*: a choir project with participants from Maré's open drug use areas; a series of 'photovoice'⁹ workshops to be undertaken with residents participating in the qualitative research interviews and a creative writing project with young poets from Maré.

Plans for the 'photovoice' programme were immediately suspended, as were the face-to-face writing workshops with local poets. All choir activities were cancelled, just as they were about to do their first public performance in the gardens of the Sítio Roberto Burle Marx¹⁰. Initiated in September 2019 in partnership with the Espaço Normal¹¹, the choir rehearsals were a creative space in which singers and guitarists, percussionists and lyricists, storytellers and dancers emerged from the participants who frequent the open-use drug scene. The participants called their choir *Normal Sounds*. However, as soon as we understood that group meetings and singing together presented a high risk of contagion, we temporarily suspended activities. During 7 months of activities before the pandemic, from September 2019 to March 2020, around 10% of the 200 regulars from Maré's open drug scenes became assiduous workshop participants. These workshops were coordinated by teams from the Espaço Normal and PPP. This brief experience produced ample evidence of the scope of the methodology that we developed to create alternative narratives for this community. Written texts and music produced by choir members were eventually incorporated into an audio drama called *Becos (Alleyways)*, created by six poets from Maré as part of the revised programme of narrative studies.

Tatiana Altberg, a research associate responsible for the 'photovoice' workshops, developed a revised photographic project entitled *Maré from Home*, which produced a unique record of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on mental health and well-being during the first 5 months of quarantine. This work was carried out by a group of six young Maré photographers who created diaries using photography and written text. We also launched a project entitled *From My Window*, inviting submissions of photographs and texts based on what Maré residents saw from their windows. The best photos on the project website were chosen every month by a public vote. The materials from both projects were collected by the team and are exhibited on a dedicated website: www.amaredecasa.org.br.

The original plan for a narrative study undertaken with young artists from Maré's vibrant poetry scene was due to be led by Catherine Paskell, the founder and creative associate of National Theatre Wales and artistic director of the award-winning theatre company, Dirty Protest. The cancellation of Paskell's visit to Rio de Janeiro due to COVID-19 restrictions led us to conduct virtual workshops on a digital platform instead. Twice a week, from April to August 2020, Paskell and Heritage led 3-hour creative writing workshops with six poets, namely, Jonathan Panta, Matheus Araújo, MC Martina, Rodrigo Maré, Thainá Iná and Thais Ayomide. Writing and recording poems, stories, lyrics, soundscapes and dance videos, the group explored the role of creativity in building resilience against mental health crises in their own lives. The poets shaped their work as an audio drama in four 15-minute episodes entitled *Becos*, which was performed by the poets themselves, directed by Heritage and Paskell (via Zoom) and recorded by sound editor Rodrigo Campelo in his studio in Rio de Janeiro in August 2020. *Becos* is widely available on most digital platforms, as well as on a website dedicated to the project, which includes interviews with the artists and general information about the project¹². The Brazilian percussionist, Rafael Rocha accompanied the writing workshops and created a soundscape for the recording of *Becos* in partnership with Rodrigo Maré, one of the Maré artists responsible for creating the audio drama. Later, Rocha also created a new narrative for the research through the production of *Satélite*, an 11-track music album in which he revisits and responds to the texts, sounds, images and rhythms produced by the poets and the choir of regular visitors to the open drug scenes in Maré. The album is widely available on all digital platforms and the project website¹³.

The data and information that were produced in such diverse ways were consistent and coherent about mental health. The quantitative and qualitative data is publicly available on PPP and Redes websites¹⁴, and published in a four-volume collection. The arts outputs are available on the same websites and also on a variety of digital platforms. But Silva and Heritage also wanted to engage the communities of Maré in discussions about the research and explore how they could be made visible in ways different to research reports and academic publications. How could Maré itself become a site for those who had provided the data to see and talk about the research results and findings?

In August 2021, we created *Rema Maré*: a week of Mental Health Awareness activities in Maré. Roundtables, discussions and webinars presenting key findings from the research provided accessible information to stakeholder organisations, institutions and residents of the territory. Hardcuore — one of Rio de Janeiro's leading advertising agencies — created a highly visible marketing campaign based on the data and key phrases that emerged from the focus groups and arts workshops, featuring posters, t-shirts, baseball caps, a ceramic wall mural,

graffiti, digital art on social media and poetry suspended on banners on the 9 bridges that cross the 12 lanes of Avenida Brazil, which borders the 16 *favelas* of Maré. PPP and Redes produced and distributed a simple but striking guide for Maré households, explaining how to recognize signs of mental distress and how to take action to support yourself and others. *Rema Maré* also featured daily performances of a live staged version of the audio drama *Becos*. Maré residents, adolescents from local schools, psychologists and health workers from local health clinics, drug users and their dogs came to watch the poets — now turned into actors — perform a 40-minute show three times a day addressing how poverty, structural racism and armed violence contribute to mental distress in their lives.

Identity, representation and a sense of belonging were just a few of the terms used by attendees who watched the performance. What PPP understands as our role can be seen in their testimonies: to enable new ways for residents to see themselves; to create art that fights injustice; to reposition the *favela* and its inhabitants in relation to not only the rest of the city, but also themselves.

PAST/PRESENT/FUTURE

*Genocide doesn't move anyone
111 or 80 shots don't move anyone
our daily tragedy does not move anyone.*

*Dead. Alive. Dead. Alive.
Dead. Dead. Dead.
That's how I lost most of my friends.*

That in the back wasn't a bullet, it was a whip.

*MC Martina
(from the audio drama *Becos*¹⁵)*

Brazilian anthropologist and former Federal Secretary of Public Security Luiz Eduardo Soares¹⁶ describes the “theatricality of the discursive order” (Soares *et al.*, 1996) which creates the culture of fear used to govern Rio de Janeiro. In a study published by Heritage and Silva as part of a collection of essays in the fourth book about *Building the Barricades*, Soares graphically elaborates how the State of Rio de Janeiro’s ‘troops’ fatally play this out in peripheral communities:

If on the one hand we have the multiplicity, the human diversity of the residents, crushed by the acts and attitudes of the troops, on the other we have the performative affirmation of the impenetrable and indivisible unity of the State, as pure violence in its most immediate form: “shooting, beating and bombing”, in its colloquial version. After all, authority and force are reduced to brutality in actions that equate bodies with things: individuals are killed; objects, shattered. The troops act as a bloc, promoting the distribution of its functions internally according to tactical definitions, and find the symbolic expression of their identity in the *caveirão* [armoured attack vehicle] and the helicopter. The two vehicles represent the hyperbole of the balaclava, of impenetrability, of impermeability. Faceless, by land and air, they present the great Other that intervenes to address the degradation of the city into what would be considered the centre of evil, symbolically and spatially circumscribing the refuge in which “crime” would take shelter, a circumscription whose limits are drawn by the circle of gunfire from police artillery. The community perceives the State as the Other, the active figure that holds the power to destroy (Soares, 2021: 40, free translation).

Research will never be enough to combat such barbarity, nor will poetry prevent such crimes happening in the future. But PPP will continue to create alternative realities to the political and ideological symbolism of the city of Rio de Janeiro which — as the *Becospoets* insist — make the Past visible in the reconstruction of a Present from which we can see a different Future. Perhaps then, we can learn with Nise da Silveira to plan a city that traces the patterns of a new mandala.

Conflict of interests: nothing to declare.

Funding: none.

Authors’ contribution: Heritage, P.: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review and editing. Steffen, M. W.: Conceptualization, Project administration, Investigation, Writing – original draft.

NOTAS

1. For more information on PPP’s projects, see <https://peoplespalaceprojects.org.uk/en/projects/>. Accessed on: Jan 15, 2022.
2. See the AfroReggae’s website for more information: <https://www.afroreggae.org/>. Accessed on: Jan 15, 2022.
3. For more information about this project, see: <https://peoplespalaceprojects.org.uk/en/projects/love-in-time-of-war/>. Accessed on: Jan 20, 2022.

4. See Heritage (2005).
5. Like Ophelia as she observes the world through her madness in Act Four of *Hamlet* (Shakespeare, 2020).
6. *Someone to Watch Over Me: New Ways of Understanding Police, Culture and the Favela in Rio de Janeiro* was funded by the British Academy and granted Eliana Sousa Silva a British Academy Newton Advanced Fellowship at Queen Mary University of London.
7. Creative Lab Artist-Researchers: Nicolas Espinoza, Rafael Puetter (Rafucko), Samuel van Ransbeeck, Tori Holmes. This project was a part of CreativeLab, funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council through the Newton Fund.
8. Building the Barricades is led by Redes da Maré, People's Palace Projects, Queen Mary University of London, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (Social Sciences and Psychiatry Departments) and NECCULT. Principal Investigator: Paul Heritage; Co-Investigators: Marcelo Santos Cruz, Miriam Krenzinger, Stefan Priebe; ResearchConsultants: Eliana Sousa Silva, Luiz Eduardo Soares, Leandro Valiati. The project was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and Arts and Humanities Research Council, through the Global Challenges Research Fund and the Arts Council England. For more information, visit <https://peoplespalaceprojects.org.uk/en/projects/building-the-barricades/>. Accessed on: Jan 20, 2022.
9. 'Photovoice' is a qualitative method that combines photography and grassroots social action, often used in participatory community research to document and reflect reality. For more information, see Sutton-Brown (2014).
10. Sitio Burle Marx is located in Rio de Janeiro and is a UNESCO Heritage site. For more information, see <http://sitioburleburlemax.org.br>. Accessed on: Apr 28, 2022.
11. For more information about the Espaço Normal, see <https://www.redesdamare.org.br/br/info/14/espaco-normal>. Accessed on: Apr 28, 2022.
12. The podcast is available at <https://becos.art.eng/>. Accessed on: Apr 28, 2022.
13. The album is available at <https://becos.art.br/album-satelite/>. Accessed on: Apr 28, 2022.
14. For more information, see <https://peoplespalaceprojects.org.uk/en/projects/building-the-barricades/>. Accessed on: Apr 28, 2022; and <https://www.redesdamare.org.br/br/info/63/construindo-pontes>. Accessed on: Apr 28, 2022.
15. Translated from Portuguese by the authors. For the original, see the Becosaudiograma website: <https://becos.art.br/>. Accessed on: Jan 15, 2022.
16. Luiz Eduardo Soares is one of the co-investigators on the research project, Building the Barricades (Construindo Pontes).

REFERENCES

A MARÉ DE CASA. Available at: <https://www.amaredecasa.org.br/>. Accessed on: Apr 28, 2022.

HERITAGE, P. Parallel power: Shakespeare, gunfire and silence. *Contemporary Theatre Review*, v. 15, n. 4, p. 392-405, 2005. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10486800500280396>

HERITAGE, P. et al. *Building the Barricades: mental health, violence, culture and resilience in Maré*. Research bulletin. 2021. Available at: https://peoplespalaceprojects.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/BOLETIM_CONST_PONTES_INGLES_ONLINE.pdf. Accessed on: Feb 9, 2022.

SHAKESPEARE, W. *A tragédia de Hamlet, príncipe da Dinamarca*. São Paulo: Ubu, 2020.

SILVEIRA, N. da. In: MELLO, L. C. *Nise da Silveira: caminhos de uma psiquiatra rebelde*. Rio de Janeiro: Automática, 2014. p. 143.

SOARES, L. E. *Maré e a longa gestação do novo mundo*. Rio de Janeiro: People's Palace Projects do Brasil, 2021. (Coleção Construindo Pontes.)

SOARES, L. E. et al. (org.). *Violência e política no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Relume-Dumará, 1996. 309 p.

SUTTON-BROWN, C. A. Photovoice: a methodological guide. *Photography and Culture*, v. 7, n. 2, p. 169-185, 2014. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2752/175145214X13999922103165>. Accessed on: Feb 9, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175145214X13999922103165>

VENTURA, Z. *Cidade partida*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1994.