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Journal

Streetnotes, 25(0)

Authors

Sanchez, Fernanda
Moreira, Clarissa
Santos, Rosane
[et al.](#)

Publication Date

2016

DOI

10.5070/S5251029870

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Possible Counter-Histories: *Artivism* and Popular Action in Morro da Providência, Rio de Janeiro

Fernanda Sánchez, Clarissa Moreira, Rosane Santos, Grasielle Grossi, and Bruna Guterman

Abstract

This paper discusses the social experience of resistance to urban interventions in Morro da Providência (Providence Hill)—one of the oldest neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro—where the project Porto Maravilha was launched in 2009. According to this project, the port area of the City of Rio would be renovated. That would result in the displacement of 832 families from their homes. Without prior warning, their homes were marked for removal. A series of rights violations took place, triggering a strong public reaction, which resulted in a legal action that stopped the removal process. Some collective resistance movements in Providência worked in partnership with foreign artists to use art in the struggle for space. Chief among them was the Favelarte Institute. Founded by Maurício Hora, photographer and resident of Providência, the Institute has been developing artistic, cultural, and socio-educative activities since the 2000s. The results were critical and mobilizing interventions that gained high international exposure, thus taking resistance to a different level and becoming instrumental for the public struggle in Morro da Providência.

Introduction

The port area of Rio de Janeiro has been subject to major changes since the highly controversial urban project and conflict generator: the Urban Consortium Operation Porto Maravilha (Municipal Law no. 101/2009), launched in 2009, in the context of the preparation for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. Portrayed as the bright, new and modern face of the city, assuming its status of an aspiring global city, the project is highly symbolic in various ways. It acts on an area that played a key role in the historical and cultural development of the city. It is one of Rio's oldest neighborhoods, home to the largest slave port in the southern hemisphere, birthplace of many of the cultural symbols of Brazil such as samba and capoeira, and location of the oldest *favela* still existing in the country: the Morro da Providência (Providence Hill), which is being beautified and transformed into a tourist attraction (Freeman), tamed.

The desire to “revitalize” this important area in Rio was not new but it grew exponentially with the sports mega-events agenda. After decades of decline that followed the transfer of the capital to Brasília in the 1960s and the rise of São Paulo as the country's new economic center, the project Porto Maravilha marks the long-awaited entry of Rio de Janeiro in the global arena, as it managed to attract international corporations and brands such as L'Oréal and Donald Trump, to invest in the city (Broudehoux and Sanchez).

In addition, several iconic structures and cultural institutions were added to Rio's landscape: the Museum of Tomorrow (designed by “starchitect” Santiago Calatrava); the Museum of Art of Rio (MAR); and the Marine Aquarium of Rio (AquaRio, the largest aquarium in Latin America). Along with the restoration of the Mauá Square, these projects suggest the promotion of a new urbanity in the area, highlighted by the narrative of middle-class citizens, new users of the “attractive” and “safe” space thus reconfigured, where a modal like the VLT (Light Vehicle on Rail) denotes “sustainable” urbanization like in the “developed.” Consequently, any social use that threatens this new ethos for the area is put aside and discriminated against—“Disorder in the new postcard” is the caption that accompanied a photo of poor children taking a dip in the pier (with the Museum of Tomorrow, which officially opened in December of 2015, in the background) on the cover of the biggest local and national daily news—*O Globo*—on June 28, 2015.

It is worth noticing the creation of such mega-projects as “cultural lures” while at the same time understanding that this urban transformation is, in its essence, all about a hike in real estate value. Next to them, towers of corporate buildings of glass architecture are taking possession of the landscape, producing economic symbols that seek to represent the reconfigured city (Zukin), in a symbiosis between the new image of the area and the “first class” real estate products of large scale urban commercialization. The architecture of power and capital define the new residents, users, and frequenters of the area,

as “the new products of the real estate market” are further linked to “new use values, which are of representation and distinction,” which, operate, in Bourdieu’s sense, as a “symbolic capital,” (Arantes 207). On a symbolic level, a neo-colonization is taking place in the area, molding it in the image and likeness of global seafront spaces.

Thus, similar to the global patterns of urban renewal projects for waterfronts, intense usage conversion and corporate real estate production are being promoted in the port area, combined with large cultural facilities, in addition to tourism promotion and entertainment services. In order to attract operations for medium and high income, the coalition between corporations and the State has made use of territorial control policies that characterize what Manuel Delgado calls “defensive urbanism,” beyond the strategies of city marketing, with strong investment in the symbolic, framing a new imagination for the area, in search of support and consensus for the legitimization of the project Porto Maravilha (Broudehoux and Sanchez).

These strategies are part of a process of “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey) that have resulted in forced evictions and displacement of hundreds of poor families from the area, and a constant threat of eviction, still active today. The project in question has been the subject of much criticism for operating a privatization of an important reserve of real estate in the city (75% of the property being public), as well as its potential for gentrification. Thus, it becomes the target of organized popular movements of resistance that seek to protect the fragile heritage of the region and its vulnerable residents and artists, as well as traditional shops and businesses. These groups dispute the vision of the city that aims to transform an area long neglected by the government into a paradise for real estate speculators, a leisure space for the privileged, and an attraction park for tourists. For many, the project symbolizes the current face of “cognitive capitalism,” which incorporates the evils of neoliberalism and bears the dark mark of corruption and revanchism (Broudehoux), appropriating everything that emerges from within the process, sometimes even the fights for resistance and the pains of the weakest—the residents. A great symbol of this constant appropriation is the mural painted on the terrace of the Museum of Art of Rio (MAR), which refers to the work carried out in the Morro da Providência by Portuguese artist Alexandre Farto (aka Vhils), as will be discussed later.

However, although *artivism*, as a form of struggle, is itself the object of a symbolic dispute, proposes a challenge to the project Porto Maravilha and the new image of a global city that is being crafted. Urban struggles and conflicts gain projection on various scales, with the operation of national and foreign artists who, in touch with the local community, express their impressions and draw attention to events that affect one of the most controlled and pressured areas within the context of the transformations caused by urbanization. *Artivism* is thus an undeniable instrument to combat the city scenario, because it believes that “whenever there is a scenario there is also disagreement.” (Jeudy and Jacques 8). *Artivism* is thus an important movement in the daily struggle at Morro da Providência. It allows for counter-histories to be created with artistic and communication instruments, although such resistance strategies may also

be subject to appropriation in the process of the symbolic production of urban transformation.

It is possible to analyze the urban conflicts taking place around the hegemonic project operating in Rio de Janeiro in the first decade of this century, from the major popular actions and practices of artistic activism in Morro da Providência, with emphasis on interventions and actions that take place between 2008 and 2014. It is important to consider that such analysis can account for those actions that are most cited and have gained greater visibility, but cannot encompass all the aspects of creative and everyday resistance, with actions, gestures, speeches, and practices that escape narratives and records, but are also matters of fight and resistance.

This period has, as a starting point, the occupation of the Hill by the armed forces, and as a final point—the inauguration of the cable car (in the context of the project Porto Maravilha), both actions that are aimed at adjusting the image of this area to the general project of an “internationalizing” and corporate character (Mesentier and Moreira). However, these official actions affecting the daily lives of Providência residents directly, far from being passively accepted, have suffered criticism and provoked actions of resistance by different individuals and collectives. To acknowledge their complexity replaces the perspective of the potential for conflict in its various manifestations, as a mode of citizen action, and also the potential of cultural and political activism as re-enactment of the fundamental conditions of democracy itself, which crosses, connects, or stands out from other forms of resistance. Such activism and the vocabulary associated with it are important elements of the re-signification of place and the construction of new narratives gaining force in the contestation of the official image of urban transformation of the Port.

It is worth the effort to recognize and disclose this vocabulary and narratives/counter-narratives that demarcate the recent period of great social, territorial, and urban planning disruptions caused by the installation of the Porto Maravilha project, and more particularly, the Program *Morar Carioca*, as one of the arms of this transformation in the division of the territory of the *favela*. *Morar Carioca* is a program of the Municipal Department of Housing (SMH), for the urbanization of the city *favelas*, which was initiated in 2010. “(...) in the case of Providência, it basically includes the construction of three cable car stations connecting the two sides of the port area, the construction of an inclined plane on the staircase, the implementation of new water, sewage and drainage systems, and the construction of a historical and cultural center in the area that starts in staircase and reaches the Oratório, passing through Cruzeiro. It is important to say that the intervention has been stalled since 2012 due to a lawsuit (...). Such action occurred because while the project declares as an objective the improvement of the lives of the *favela* dwellers, it is meant to remove almost half of their homes. Out of nearly two thousand families living on the Hill, 832 were scheduled to be removed by the intervention, among which 380 on the grounds that they are located in a risk area and the remainder due to the construction of a cable car, inclined plane, and others” (Giannella 221-222). The focus of the analysis lies in the mobilization of residents and

resistance groups that support them, against the projects imposed by the City Council of Rio de Janeiro and the consortium of companies involved in the project of “revitalization” of the port area.

Renewing the Image of Providência: “Pacification” and “Occupation” (2007-2010)

In 2007, one of the urbanization projects developed by the City Council in the Providência community, named “Social Cement,” was released as an attempt to transform the image of the *favela* by restoring houses with higher visibility in order to provide them with aesthetic elements in accordance with hegemonic construction standards. Put into practice by then Senator Marcelo Crivella (PRB, Brazilian Republican Party) during his campaign for the City Council of Rio de Janeiro with the support of the Federal Government, the program planned the reconstruction of 782 homes, through changing ceilings and windows, and repainting walls:

According to the project, the new structures would resist “the impact of bullets of up to 7.5mm gauge, at a minimum distance of 20 meters.” Also programmed was the establishment of a sewage system, the installation of community centers, kindergartens, lampposts and the creation of a protection system for electrical and telephone network. Finally, the area would be reforested. (Tardaguila).

To implement the plan, 200 Army soldiers were stationed in the Morro da Providência since December 12, 2007. This was due to a technical cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Cities, according to which this measure was necessary to enable the reform of the houses, as seen in the Report presented to the UN by Global Justice, Network Against Violence, Group Torture Never Again, Institute of Human Rights Defenders, and Deputy Mandate Marcelo Freixo (<http://www.redecontraviolencia.org/Documentos/359.html>). This raised a number of complaints by the locals, as intimidation and authority abuse by the military, indiscriminate reviews, public humiliations, invasions of homes and other forms of violence and aggression ensued.

The apex of this disregard for the residents of Providência culminated in the episode known as the death of the “Innocents of Providência” (Torre), in June 2008, when three young residents of this *favela* were killed in the Morro da Mineira, also located in the central region. Due to arbitrary and unacceptable attitudes of a group of Army soldiers who were occupying Providência, the boys were given to drug dealers from Mineira, a rival faction of Providência, where they were tortured and killed.

Several demonstrations took place against the presence of the military. The resistance movement was so strong that even workers of the project “Social Cement” stopped working, saying that they would only return to work when the military left the place. This episode highlights the struggle for territory, where strategies in the symbolic field come to play: the tentative “domination” (concealed by improvement actions in the community) and subsequent

resistance actions, both taking place and being legitimized in the territory of Providência and some nearby areas which are occupied strategically, thus revealing territorial grammars in dispute.

Haesbaert observes how relations involved in the temporary or permanent territorial containment and circumvention strategies that generate immobility in the urban fabric are of fundamental importance for an understanding of the symbolic dispute. Coming from alternative actions, these relations resist the constraints imposed by the hegemonic territorial order. Indeed, protests against the permanence of the Army showed that the tactics of territory occupation by the residents were successful, either when they manifested in front of the Eastern Military Command building (Tardaguila, op. cit.), or when they blocked streets and burned some buses in the surroundings of the community, questioning urban mobility as a “weapon.”

Maurício Hora, activist, photographer, and resident of Providência, said in an interview with geographer Nicolas Bautès (Reginensi and Bautès 6) that, in the same period (after the murder of the three young guys), the barracks were “frozen,” that is, the City Council expropriated them and purchased part of their furniture for the tourist to see what a typical *favela* house looks like. The City Council sought to turn Providência into a luminous space, with incentives to sightseeing and a policy of refurbished “landscape.” This “touristification” tendency at Providência was assumed by the program *Favela-Bairro*, which planned to work on the improvement of sanitation and the implementation of an Outdoors Museum in 2005: delineation of a tourist itinerary in the area, in order to valorize historic and cultural assets, as well as the overall importance of Morro da Providência as the oldest *favela* in the city. However, the spotlights pointed at the area were also to show the struggle of the residents fighting for their rights, and their indignation against the violence of the Army or, in various respects, the omission of the authorities.

In 2008, Providência drew the attention of French photographer J.R., who worked directly with the local residents and photographer Maurício Hora, producing huge pictures in black and white, printed on the facades of houses, slopes, and stair cases of the Hill (Fig. 1). Silva notes that, “In his last day of work in Providência, on Saturday, J.R., finally, told *Folha de São Paulo*: ‘The stars are the characters appearing in the photographs, those who gave their houses. If I keep showing up, giving interviews, the focus is no longer on the work’” (Silva).

With striking expressions, the “eyes” of the residents were re-signifying the area as symbolically disputed, making the spotlights illuminate the real characters in a conflict area, giving way to a new dimension, absent in the mainstream media. Among these characters, two women were directly related to the tragedy involving the Army occupation. The people who posed for the photographs were also involved in the preparation of the material: they suggested strategic spots to stamp the pictures. Thus, the residents actively participated in this genuine art, in the same way as an artist would in graffiti paintings, “not as the transcendent creation of a class, but as a social and socializing practice” (Cava).



Fig. 1. J.R.'s installation at Morro da Providência (Photo: André Teixeira/Agência O Globo, 2008).
Source: <http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Rio/0,,MUL724088-5606,00-ARTISTA+INSTALA+OLHOS+EM+CASAS+DA+PROVIDENCIA.html>

In June 2008, the Army finally vacated the Morro da Providência, after the Regional Electoral Court (TRE) decided to suspend the project “Social Cement” (despite the General Attorney’s statement to the Union claiming that the Decision that the Army leave Providência is a “serious injury to public order” (Vizeu), considering, after much public pressure, its electoral character.

Meanwhile, the military’s overt attempt at occupying that territory would not stop there. In April 2010, in the context of Rio’s preparation to host the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, a Pacifying Police Unit (UPP) was installed in Providência. This security policy, undertaken by the government of the State of Rio de Janeiro, leans on images of the unsafe city, the need to “reconquer the territory,” and the “urban warfare” against enemies, clearly associated with the *favela*, which are part of the repertoire of urban imaginary constructed and disseminated by certain media. “Fear” becomes a cause and consequence for public policy, common sense formation, and the acceptance that a situation of war calls for extreme measures, all for the good of all, so that a “pacified” Rio de Janeiro can be built.

So, one witnesses the installation of the UPP’s in specific areas demarcated by the “Olympic rings” in areas of tourist interest or close the important axes of circulations (BRT—Bus Rapid Transit), which suggests that these investments in security are part of a strategy of social control taking place in specific sectors related to the realization of mega-events, and that they foster a set of actions that enable the valorization of land through cultural and tourist mega-projects.

Disputes Brought by the Project Porto Maravilha (2010-2014)

The installation of the UPP in Providência took place in 2010, the year following the launching of the project Porto Maravilha described above. The official discourse conveyed the idea that the area was “degraded” and “obsolete.” It needed to be transformed into an imposing touristic and investment pole for businessmen from various sectors. In this context, similar to what happened a few years earlier, the Morro da Providência became the stage for projects that aimed at increasing tourism in the area, only that this time numerous threats of removals were actually carried out.

Seeking to strengthen the resistance movements that began to emerge, or to just take more breath, the Favelarte Institute—an initiative of the photographer and local resident, Maurício Hora—was created in 2010. Although it was institutionalized in 2010, discussions about the creation of Favelarte date back to the 1990s. Its activities began in 2002, when young residents and students of the workshops conducted by Hora launched an electronic page, meant to record and disseminate the local memory with photographs of everyday life in Morro da Providencia and its surroundings. Guerreiro and Oliveira confirm that “Favelarte, especially Maurício Hora, is recognized in different places as the main cultural agitator of Morro da Providência, as a mediator between the spheres of government and the Providência community, acting directly in cultural policy (84).

Until 2008 Favelarte did not have a specific place to develop their activities. That changed with the visit of French photographer J.R., who acquired a residence at the top of the Hill to house social and cultural projects of the community (Guerreiro and Oliveira). Thus emerges the *Espaço Cultural Casa Amarela* (then located at 226 Ladeira do Barroso, Largo da Igreja; now at 61 Rua Pedro Ernesto, in Gamboa), which for a significant time was the core of Favelarte activities. Among these activities, in addition to the photo workshops, were the “Cineclub Morro da Favela” which took place every two weeks at Largo da Escadaria and was aimed at discussing film production with the locals and, with the same frequency, the “Sarau Providencial,” a reading circle with prose and poetry interpretation, but directed at children.

After the implementation of the UPP in Providência, many things began to change. According to Guerreiro & Oliveira, the Casa Amarela organizers were “advised” by the military to submit their cultural activities to the “new representative in power.” For clear reasons they did not prevent their realization (even though there has been indeed some interferences with the Casa Amarela schedules, such as the organizers’ decision to postpone the opening of the Sarau Providencial—from March to mid-2010—since it was a children audience and there were some doubts about exactly what the new dynamics imposed by the arrival of the UPP would be like), unlike what happened with the most popular cultural activity in the community: the *baiões funk* were banned not only in Providência, but in all “pacified” communities. Only the commanders of the UPP could eventually grant permission for their realization.

These new times also brought new questions such as media visibility and the possibility of making profit individually through new credit lines, entrepreneurship workshops, and residents' initiatives for professional qualification, in the context of the revitalization project and its opportunities for public and private investment. This situation also had effects on the socio-cultural scene: it was now possible to apply for project resources, such as the Micro-Project Territories of Peace, released by the Ministry of Justice (Guerreiro and Oliveira).

According to the coordinators, this new reality was asking for a debate within Favelarte itself, for what would be the position of the Casa Amarela organizers about the UPP and the transformations, both material and symbolic, at work in the community? The contradictions between receiving funds for projects supporting the interventions and, at the same time, holding a critical position against them should be addressed. These contradictions became more visible when, in 2011 under the program "*Morar Carioca*," many interventions were already at an advanced stage: several houses were marked with the initials SMH (Municipal Department of Housing) while others were already demolished. Amidst all this, Guerreiro and Oliveira pointed at a curious dichotomy,

On the one hand, resources for socially-acceptable cultural projects—such as an incentive to reading, cine-club, etc. On the other, removal, destruction of intangible cultural heritage, and investments not prioritized by the residents (91).

Such situation reflects emblematically the dichotomy experienced by resistance movements in conflict areas, living among "invited spaces" and "invented spaces" (MIRAFTAB). The former refer to spaces characterizing the contemporary use of inclusion practices through official policies and social participation in the institutional arena, for which citizens are "invited" to participate. Yet, the latter, invented spaces, are forged within social struggle itself, regardless of State action, in the search for participation in the processes, through demonstrations outside the official structures.

This is when collective and artistic actions became fighting instruments in the process of struggle for space. In one of them, in 2011, Maurício Hora photographed residents whose houses were scheduled to be demolished, and the photos were glued in front of the actual houses. For the second time, that was a joint intervention with French photographer J.R., part of a project that he conceived, "*Inside Out*," held in various communities around the world. In Providência, the goal was to draw attention to the problems relating to forced evictions. With this project, J.R. won the international TED prize (Technology, Entertainment, Design) in 2011.

The marking of houses for removal also appears in two films: the movie "*Casas marcadas*" ("Marked Houses") (2012), which received the Honorable Mention Award at the 12th International Festival of Film Archive (Recine) in December 2012, and the second place in the competitive show Visorama and Imaginary Borders, at the 7th Festival Peripheral Visions 2013, in Rio de Janeiro; and the documentary "*Domínio Público*" ("Public Domain") (2014), which investigates the period between 2011 and 2014 and the process of transformation in Rio de Janeiro due to the sports mega-events, addressing, in

addition to removals, issues such as the UPPs, the privatization of public space, and popular uprising. It is also worth noting that this practice was not specific to Providência: the mark “SMH” followed by a number can be seen on the houses of several communities in Rio de Janeiro, where removal processes are under way (Fig. 2). In an act of protest to these actions, street artist Kamuro Rioga spray-painted the same acronym in several buildings of Rio’s prime area: South Zone. According to activist, his “SMHs” are a response to City Council’s own vandalism: “It is a discussion on what vandalism is about. Is it about the SMH you see on a building in South Zone, or is it about what City Council does in the hills?” (Kuhnet).



Fig. 2. House marked by the Municipal Department of Housing (SMH) in Morro da Providência. Source: own collection (2013).

Yet by 2011, in the heat of the intense transformations under way in the area, a group of residents organized to discuss the possibilities of mobilization and resistance to the project. Other actors joined the group of residents, such as NGOs, universities and politicians, thus forming the Port Area Community Forum (FCP). This mobilization needed to be strengthened in some way, since in 2012 the works for the installation of the future cable car began, as the ones for the inclined plane and the sports center, which would result in the removal of numerous houses.

With the area at the height of a symbolic dispute at the heart of the port area, another foreign artist joined the local resistance movements to perform an expressive artwork in Morro da Providência. In the second half of

2012, Portuguese artist Vhils developed, along with his team, the project “*Descascando a superfície*” (“Peeling the surface”), in which the residents of Morro da Providência became the protagonists of artistic activism again (Figs. 3 & 4). On the walls and other debris that remained of their houses already demolished, Vhils engraved portraits of residents who had been evicted. The intervention had great international repercussion, showing that it is possible, through the instruments of art and communication, to tell counter-histories and dispute territorial significations—a key strategy for resistance movements. The creative process for these faces engraved in houses in ruins (involving artist and staff, along with local residents and activists), resulted in an object of art that is also a political intervention, which gave visibility to the conflicts and contradictions at play, circulating the discussion through different scales and not just the local one, revealing its potential for raising awareness.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.

Figs. 3 & 4. Vhils' intervention at Morro da Providência, project "*Descascando a superfície*" ("Peeling the Surface"). Source: Own collection (2013).

It is important to mention that the Museum of Art of Rio (MAR), one of the anchor projects of Porto Maravilha, incorporated into its terrace a piece of Vhils' intervention: the face of a man, witnessing the effects of the port's major renovation on his own life and community, as he gets immediately transformed into memory although his drama is still active and current—an ambiguous process of conflict naturalization by the "domesticated" use of *artivism* itself, transformed in real time as it is, into cultural heritage (Figs. 5 & 6) (Moreira 2014, 2015; La Barre).

It is disturbing how the way in which this capture of struggle and territorial resistance tends to hold the viewer at a distance when the processes at play are in fact extremely violent and they are taking place, as if such context of basic rights violations became so natural due to the imperious necessity and inevitability of "urban transformation." Also naturalized is the perverse logic of sanitization and "touristification" through the "renewal" project of the area.



Fig. 5. Vhils' work at the Museum of Art of Rio (MAR). Source: own collection (2016).

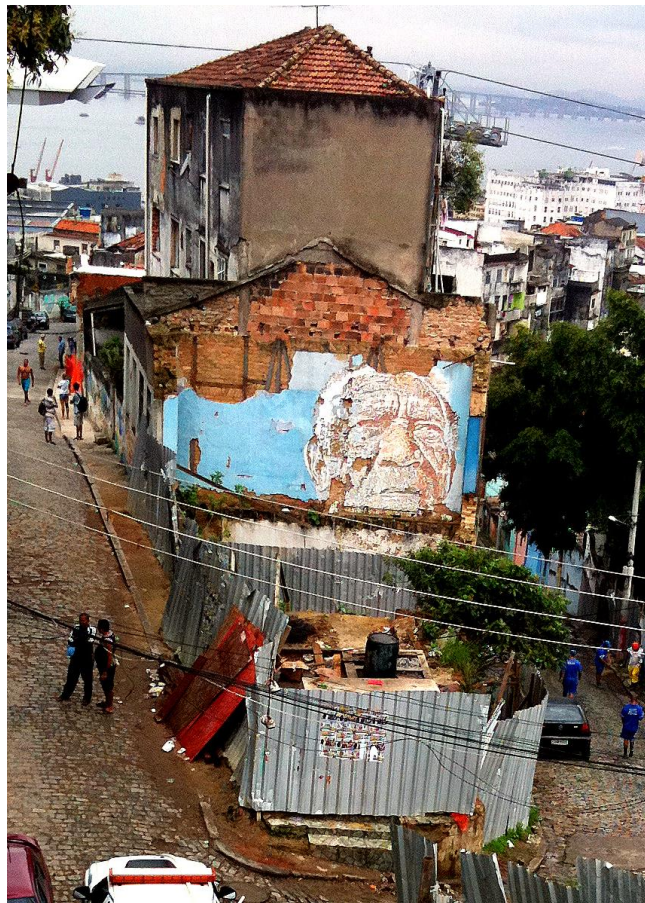


Fig. 6. Vhils' work at Morro da Providência. Source: own collection (2013).

Various examples can be found on the electronic pages of project Porto Maravilha (<http://portomaravilha.com.br>), UPP (<http://www.upprj.com>), City Council, or local and national media (<http://oglobo.globo.com>): lively socio-educational projects and cultural/artistic initiatives developed by the residents and their supporters are presented as results of the “pacification” process and the recent “transformation.” As it seems, there is an intention to capture a pre-existing vitality, *pari passu* the veiling of all sorts of conflict, canalizing and reformulating them in any case into artistic narratives as seen above, but also by official discourse’s legitimation arguments.

In 2013, when the prediction was that Providência would receive R\$131 million worth of investment arising from the revitalization plan of Rio’s port area for the 2016 Olympics, threats of removal also increased. Again, the City Council was intending to remove some 26 houses, but now in the vicinity of the *Oratório*, a site of great historical importance, claiming “scenic reasons” for the valuation of the premise. A scenic environment was designed, replacing these family houses by houses in eclectic style, creating an ambience inspired by the architectural complex of Paraty (State of Rio de Janeiro). These houses, with the *Oratório* at the center, brought about some composition of a false historical setting aimed at attracting gazes and tourists (Galiza et al.). However, after intense debates and pressure during the large protests of June 2013 (notably in the auditorium of the Brazil Institute of Architects—IAB, see www.iab.org.br), the City Council suspended the removal of these 26 families, which certainly was an important victory.

According to Souza, “power is not exercised only in space (...), but also through space and by space” (31). Furthermore, there are several insurgent spatial practices, Souza insists: “Violent or non-violent; durable or ephemeral; immediately political or immediately cultural; noisy or silent; open or concealed; local or supra-local...” and it is through them that it becomes “possible to envision alternatives to the great narrative imposed” (33).

Conclusion

This short trajectory of analysis allowed to verify that both strategies of the official discourse and the counter-narratives, intensified throughout the implementation process of project Porto Maravilha, revealed symbolic and material disputes around the territory of Providência. Various acts of resistance were identified: artistic intervention (sometimes with the help of a foreign look); demonstrations (residents collective); lawsuits against arbitrary and collective cultural actions (aimed at training young people in the community).

In some cases, differences were identified, disputes between groups and tactics that set the collectives apart in their ways of dealing with the conflict. At other times, however, the actors and the various expressions of conflict operated in synergy, strengthening popular struggle in defense of Morro da Providência, crossing different scales, asserting the narrative of resistance and residents’ struggle in the international media. Also, art exhibitions outside Brazil contributed to mobilize support from NGOs and international platforms of

human rights, such as Amnesty International, Dhesca Platform, and others. Several national and international media highlighted artistic interventions while addressing the fight in which the residents were involved in the defense of their living space.

In the age of globalization, collective action may be reinventing social and artistic criticism. What are the possibilities of producing an oppositional culture within the cognitive frames of flexible capitalism (Mesquita 142)? Reflecting in this light, we may conclude that artistic interventions prove to be doubly resistant actions. They are vital to the conflict process, acting directly or indirectly as a resistance to dehumanization and violence with which these places of life are treated by official projects. There are people, looks, bodies, lives behind numbers and statistics, and the artistic interventions described above give visibility and resonance to the residents' struggle, also locating the conflict on different scales—local, national, and international.

Translated from Portuguese by Jorge de La Barre.

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About the authors

Fernanda Sánchez is an Associate Professor at the School of Architecture and Urbanism (EAU/UFF) from Universidade Federal Fluminense (Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). Researcher at Laboratório Globalização e Metrópole, Graduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism (PPGAU/UFF), and Associate Researcher at Laboratório Estado, Trabalho, Território e Natureza / Instituto de Pesquisa e Planejamento Urbano Regional (ETERN-IPPUR/UFRJ). Email: sanchezf2010@gmail.com

Clarissa Moreira is an Associate Professor at the School of Architecture and Urbanism (EAU/UFF) from Universidade Federal Fluminense (Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). Researcher at Laboratório Globalização e Metrópole, Graduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism (PPGAU/UFF). Email: clarissamoreira@gmail.com

Rosane Santos is an Associate Professor at the School of Architecture and Urbanism (EAU/UFF) from Universidade Federal Fluminense (Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). Email: rosanerebeca@gmail.com

Grasiele Grossi is a PhD candidate in Architecture and Urbanism with the Graduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism from Universidade Federal Fluminense (PPGAU/UFF). Email: grasidaher@yahoo.com.br

Bruna Guterman is a PhD candidate in Architecture and Urbanism with the Graduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism from Universidade Federal Fluminense (PPGAU/UFF). Email: bruna.guterman@gmail.com