

Port Area of Rio de Janeiro: between the “empty shells” and the potential of everyday urban creative dynamics

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Abstract

Based not only on the survey of the traditional media and socioeconomic data on the territory, but also field observations, informal conversations and semi-structured interviews (conducted with leaders, residents, authorities, producers and frequenters), in this article it was sought to make an analysis of the socioeconomic and cultural situation after the gentrification of the Port Area. It is worth mentioning that this area was once considered an emblematic and strategic locality of the project that sought to convert the city of Rio into a creative city. In recent years, in this area, it has been possible to identify dynamics of articulation and tension between investments that aim to promote spectacular mega-events and small cultural events that traditionally occurred in this locality organized by the actors through social networks. This balance, which highlights the value of live music as a richness that can bring socioeconomic benefits to the Port Area and to Rio, aims to assess the deepening of the country's economic crisis over this territory: with the recession (particularly of the state of Rio de Janeiro) and the public policies developed, this area has suffered a process of loss of vitality, casting doubt on the future of the project of conversion of this metropolis into a creative city.

Keywords: Communication. Culture. Creative cities. Music. Public policies.

Introduction

Since 2014, an extensive research based on Rio das Ostras, Conservatória and Rio de Janeiro¹ cities' case studies has been developed, seeking to analyse the importance of live music events performed in public and private spaces by artists, collectives and/or social networks in the resignification of these towns of the state of Rio de Janeiro. That is, this study has been seeking to evaluate the capacity of these events to convert these territories

¹ We would like to specially thank the research assistants Camila Boecker, Julia Sena and Yasmin Dorado for the significant collaboration in the study that bases the results presented in this article, and also the research promotion agencies CNPq and FAPERJ for the support and resources that have been granted for the development of this research.

(even if in a temporary way) into more democratic spaces (with better levels of inclusion and social participation) and with more intercultural dynamics². The current study assumes that there is a potent “musical culture” in these localities, practiced by several actors, which is capable of creating conditions not only for the expansion of sociability, but also for the innovative resignification of these cities’ spaces. Clearly these towns also have a consistent number of musical events programmed to be performed in private spaces, and these have an important role in the construction of an urban imaginary, “territorialities” (HAESBAERT, 2010) and sociabilities that gravitate towards music. As such, the central hypothesis is that there would be “musical cities” throughout Brazil and the world (evidently, with their respective and relevant singularities), such as the three cities that are being researched within this project. A little different from the notion of *musical cities* (as a type of “creative city”) formulated by UNESCO, this concept is used to designate places with significant “sonic-musical territorialities”³ (HERSCHMANN; FERNANDES, 2014) that, by the action of time, promote expressive changes in the imaginary and urban life. In other words, these “territorialities” – by the recurrence of their presence, the intensity of the affections, the great mobilization, plurality and by their multiplication in several areas – end up producing significant effects in some parts of the city or in the town as a whole.

The case of Rio de Janeiro’s metropolis is of great relevance and complexity, as it involves activities carried out in public and private spaces (paid and for free) – through concerts, parties, festivals and dances – with or without State support. There are no conditions to trace a detailed analysis panel in this article, but we briefly analyse a very illustrative case study, as the Port Area of the city is a locality in which the public authority has been investing significantly in the past years⁴. Over the extensive field research that has been carried out in this metropolis, a “cartography of controversies” (LATOURE, 2012) has been sought, valuing the territory’s existing sociocultural wealth, especially the one that is not always valued by

2 Another version of this article, which is extensively expanded (explores several other aspects involving actors, public power and locality), was published in the collection entitled *Cidades Musicais* (Musical Cities), published by Sulina in 2018.

3 The concept of “sonic-musical territorialities” seeks to value the importance of music and the innumerable sonorities present in the daily life of cities for the processes of reterritorialization that are being carried out by the actors within these spaces. Often the decision of which area will be occupied with music takes into account not only the circulation of the actors, but also the flow and the intensity of the locality’s sonic flows (HERSCHMANN; FERNANDES, 2014). These territorialities – more or less temporary –, by their regularity, generate a series of direct and indirect local benefits for the territory (allowing even the increase of local socioeconomic activities). In fact, as some authors of Sound Studies (KITTLER, 1999; CONNOR, 2000; DE NORA, 2000) suggest, these territorialities are relevant because they affect the rhythm, the imaginary and the bodies in the daily routine, somehow reconfiguring the territories. These territorialities, therefore, would be capable to construct new sonic or acoustic cartographies of the city.

4 Most of the reflections developed here were constructed based on interviews and field observations made in the downtown area of the city of Rio de Janeiro since 2014. For more information on this research, check: HERSCHMANN; FERNANDES, 2014, 2015.

the public authority (SOUSA SANTOS, 2006)⁵.

The recent renovations of the Port Area (inspired by the renovations made in Barcelona at the time of the Olympic Games), the investment in major cultural facilities, especially large museums⁶, and the bets on the changing and moving potential of mega-events – including big music and art festivals (which began to be carried out in the old cargo warehouses of the Port Area) – have not yet re-signified this microregion of Rio de Janeiro’s downtown (HERSCHMANN; FERNANDES, 2014). Therefore, one can see in the Rio metropolis the bet on a globalized city construction project, with a strengthened territorial branding, which does not take into account the existing cultural dynamics – the existing sociocultural ecosystems, of little visibility and/or little institutionalization – in the metropolis (HERSCHMANN; FERNANDES, 2015). Differently from what was planned by the municipality’s technocracy, many actors have been questioning – with the deepening of the economic crisis of Rio and the country – if this area is not becoming a space with many “empty shells”⁷, accessible only for an elite tourism.

In fact, when following the dynamics of “social re-organisation” of actors (LATOURE, 2012) – with their “tactics” and “arts of doing” (DE CERTEAU, 1995) – it is clear that what is bringing a certain dynamism to that area are much more the small musical events (micro-events) organised by musicians and their networks of fans, which are regularly offered, free of charge, on the streets, squares and alleys, especially in the surroundings of *Morro da Conceição* (more specifically in the locality and proximity of *Pedra do Sal*, *Gamboa*) and *Harmonia* Square (located in the *Saúde* neighbourhood), activities which have recurrently been attracting thousands of people from all social groups. These events have no visibility in traditional media, but are widely known to the public through social networks. These free and regular small concerts are what have been attracting young people and artists to this region,

5 Regarding the methodological clarifications that underlie this article, it is assumed that the cartography is a relevant and rich methodology for the investigations of the socio-communicative processes in the cities. As we develop our fieldwork with the actors who participate in the Carnival block *Escravos da Mauá*, in the *Black Bom* party, and the *samba* circles *Roda do Samba de Lei* and *Roda do Samba da Pedra do Sal* (as well as other groups and musical networks that occupy the public space of this metropolis), we used the premises of the Actor-Network Theory, in particular the caution to face the “social world as plane”, from the perspective of the “ant”, acting very closely to the collectives and networks, following the actors’ everyday life (LATOURE, 2012). We sought, within the research that bases this article, to perform semi-structured interviews, formal and informal conversations and field observations of all kinds. Thus, the assumption in this work is that the task of the “ant-researcher-cartographer” in the city would be to construct a non-obvious landscape and, for that, one must also “drift” (as the situationists and the psychogeographers) in the urban space (JACQUES, 2012). Perhaps one of the relevant clues to understand our cartographic proposal is offered by Martín-Barbero (2004), author who rejects the “synthesis maps” and generally sought in his work to construct a cognitive map of the “archipelago” type. Another author who has been an inspiration for the proposed cartographic work is De Certeau, who states that where the map *demarcates*, the narratives make the *crossing*. In general, these narratives have allowed us to understand the cunning and tactics built by actors in everyday life (DE CERTEAU, 1995), hence our obsession with “following the actants” (LATOURE, 2012). In fact, when we follow them, we basically pursue what has not yet been stabilized, that is, what is not yet properly consensual. We seek in a sense to make a “cartography of controversy” – insofar as these are rich phenomena to be observed in collective life – trying to explore polemics: not only the evident ones, but also those that are almost hidden in each context.

6 In 2013 the Rio Museum of Art was created and, soon after, in 2015, the Museum of Tomorrow, both located around the *Mauá* Square.

7 Frequently the public authority invests in the exploitation of culture as a territorial development strategy (YÚDICE, 2005), and in the construction of expensive cultural equipment that does not always bring the expected results. As Vivant suggests, “parachuting” a cultural equipment that is neither linked to a specific project nor articulated with the actors and the cultural traditions of the territory, might constitute a vain and risky procedure, that can lead to the waste of important resources in the construction of the so-called “white elephants” or “empty shells” (VIVANT, 2012).

bringing dynamism to this territory. Therefore, it must be emphasized that investing in mega-constructions not always produces significant results that are reverted for the collective or common good at the end of the process. The residents of the city currently have a museum built by the renowned Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, but at the same time the Afro-Brazilian culture, that has always had a significant presence in the history of this locality, has not yet been properly highlighted (relevant archaeological sites of the so-called “Small Africa”⁸ were found in the region). Unfortunately, the case of Rio de Janeiro’s metropolis indicates that there is often a distance and/or tension between the “politics of the common”⁹ (HARDT; NEGRI, 2009) and public policies (even in relation to those that are supposedly more progressive) which have been, in general, implemented in the country.

As already mentioned, the aim of this work is to analyse the Port Area after the World Cup and the Olympics. Clearly the “oil’s royalties crisis”¹⁰ has contributed to significantly worsen the situation in this territory, but it is not the only explanatory aspect for the current loss of dynamism in this area: public policies have their share of responsibility in this process. The proposition in this article is to make an assessment, identifying potentialities (and obstacles) in the locality – in articulation with local micro-events – despite the crisis context of the country.

Another assumption that guides this work is that the case study analysed here is capable of bringing important markers about the conversion or not of Rio de Janeiro into a “creative city”¹¹. These are some of the questions that this article brings up: is some of the

8 Region of the city of Rio comprised by the neighbourhoods of *Gamboa* and *Saúde*, in which lived remaining groups from the *quilombos* of *Pedra do Sal* and *Santo Cristo*. At the time of the works, several representatives of social movements denounced that the Port Area renovations were destroying important archaeological sites. According to the authorities responsible for the works, the materials found in the excavations and renovations of the locality were carefully stored and will be later organised by archaeologists for a future incorporation of these pieces into the collection that will be gathered in the African Diaspora Memorial, which shall be built in the port region. For more information, check: ROMERO, S. (2014). Sítios arqueológicos são descobertos em meio a obras no Rio de Janeiro. In: *ZH Notícias*, March 18, 2018. Available at: <<http://zh.clicrbs.com.br/rs/noticias/noticia/2014/03/sitios-arqueologicos-sao-descobertos-em-meio-a-obras-no-rio-de-janeiro-4449469.html>>. Accessed on: May 3, 2017; and MONTEAGUDO, C. Pequena África renasce no cais do porto do Rio. In: *Extra*, August 31, 2015. Available at: <<https://extra.globo.com/noticias/rio/pequena-africa-renasce-no-cais-do-porto-do-rio-4763936.html>>. Accessed on: May 13, 2017.

9 The “politics of the common” would move beyond the social welfare State (of the institutionalized world), pursuing to strengthen forms of behaviour and subjectivation that slide from the disciplinary and control mechanisms (factory or post-factory and of the transnational financial capital’s biopower) towards a dynamic that favours the cooperation of actors (the crowd), the meeting of singularities, the mobilization and relatively autonomous constitution of social life (HARDT; NEGRI, 2009).

10 The prices of oil barrels have accumulated losses of 60% since June 2014 in the international market. This reflects in the royalties collected by different regions of the country, especially the producer ones, which is the case of Rio de Janeiro state. The main vectors pointed as “guilty” for this fall are increased production, especially in the US shale areas, and lower than expected demand in Europe and Asia. For more information, see: Entenda a queda do preço do petróleo e seus efeitos. In: *G1 (Economia)*, São Paulo: Globo, January 16, 2015. Available at: <<http://g1.globo.com/economia/noticia/2015/01/entenda-queda-do-preco-do-petroleo-e-seus-efeitos.html>>. Accessed on: June 1, 2017.

11 The notions of “creative industries”, “creative economies” and “creative nation”, from which the concept of “creative cities” (most of these created in the first half of the 1990s) was derived, include dynamics of production, circulation, and consumption of creative and cultural goods, diffusely covering areas such as architecture, arts, crafts, antiques, audio-visual, design, publishing, video games, software, fashion, music, advertising, television, theatre and radio. In general, the creative sectors constitute a group of absolutely heterogeneous sectors, which commonly gain great visibility thanks to the strength and omnipresence of globalized tourism and the strength of the entertainment logic in everyday life. More details in HARTLEY, 2005; FLORIDA, 2002. According to UNESCO, “creative cities” would bring together in their territory sectors of the powerful creative industries (for more information, check: Creative Cities Network. Available at: <<http://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/home>>. Accessed on: April 3, 2018). About the polysemy of meanings attributed to the concept of “creative cities”, see REIS, 2012.

urban equipment in this territory almost unnecessary – kind of “white elephants” –, built as part of a project of “urban sanitation” and spectacularization of the city, and from now on need to be artificially sustained¹²? Did the gentrification process of this locality not properly fulfil a creative city¹³ building project, but rather a great strategy of punctual city marketing, which in turn acted as a kind of “smokescreen”, making it easier for politicians, contractors and entrepreneurs to steal huge volumes of public resources? Even if the objectives were not only collective concerns (but instead those of political and business groups): is it possible to get hold of this process through endogenous and inclusive projects, and convert this emblematic area into a kind of “laboratory” of a new and more democratic city, that is capable to generate socioeconomic benefits for wider sectors of the population?

Brief background of investments and renovations in the Port Area

Traditional media and social networks have been occupied by statements and contents that continue to interpret in a very different way, almost in a dichotomous perspective, the transformations in Rio de Janeiro that derive from a set of interventions in the public space carried out by the State. On the one hand, we find a set of stories that exalt the changes promoted by the State: “(...) the bucolic neighbourhoods of Rio de Janeiro’s Port Area receive investments again and a strong tourist appeal. The *Porto Maravilha* project, which aims to prepare the city to receive the great world events (...) works of the Rio’s city hall are in full swing in the Port Area to revitalize the neighbourhood (...)”¹⁴. On the other hand, stories that denounce an exclusionary project that will widen social inequalities: “this project of city’s commodification is a project that converts certain areas of the city into business (...) and not to the people’s interests (...) this has a direct impact on the increase of sociospatial inequalities (...)”¹⁵.

The guidelines of the Port Area’s renovations that were implemented in the first decades of the 21st century differ from the logic that guided the urbanistic project of the “Cultural Hall”, executed in the 20th century’s last decade. At that time, a rhetoric of “patrimonial loss of the city” (PIO, 2014) was very present in the technocratic discourse, which allowed the preservation of the *Lapa* neighbourhood historical architectural complex and its later reorganisation as an important historical, gastronomic, and cultural pole of the

12 It is important to highlight that Rio de Janeiro has more than 60 cultural centres, foundations and museums that do not know how to continue their existence, because they have scarce public resources. Many leaders in the city question the construction of new museums and cultural equipment, as public authorities have been unable to maintain the relevant institutions that already exist in this metropolis.

13 Rio de Janeiro’s Strategic Plan 2009-2012 makes clear the importance of culture in restructuring the city and preparing the environment for mega-events such as the Olympics and the World Cup. The document establishes as the main guideline for the orientation of cultural policies the strengthening of the Rio de Janeiro’s metropolis “as a cultural reference of the country through patrimonial revitalization, urban renewal and promotion of diversity”. Rio de Janeiro is also the first city in Brazil to join the Creativity World Forum.

14 FREITAS, C. Porto Maravilha. In: *Jornal do Brasil*, July 13, 2015. Available at: <<http://www.jb.com.br/rio/noticias/2015/02/22/porto-maravilha-corte-de-arvores-provoca-indignacao-nosmoradores-da-gamboa>>. Accessed on: July 18, 2015.

15 SIMÕES, M. O lado B das Olimpíadas para o Rio de Janeiro. In: *Exame*, May 29, 2017. Available at: <<http://exame.abril.com.br/brasil/os-jogos-da-exclusao>>. Accessed on: 15 June, 2017.

city (HERSCHMANN, 2007). As for the guidelines of Port Area’s renovations, they return, in a certain sense (although anchored to other grounds¹⁶), to a proposal which considered once again the city’s territory as a kind of “clean slate” (MOREIRA 2004; SEMENSATO, 2012). More than the idea of “poor conservation”, the notion of “emptiness” plays a role in the construction of the area’s image, of the urban imaginary and in the formation of a classification system of the local memory. Analysing the subjects that circulated in the traditional media, it is possible to attest to the recurrence of the use of stigmatizing terms by the technicians who worked in the area, often seen as “degraded”, “in ruins”, “falling apart” or “decadent”. As Guimarães (2011) reminds us, a “rhetoric of emptiness” has been established, interpreting forms of local sociability from a specific language, in spaces discursively constructed as empty and abandoned. According to these narratives, the “problem” of the port area would not be the physical condition of the buildings, as it happened in *Lapa*, but rather the “idleness” of the region, in the “ruined” spaces and existing “voids” (PIO, 2014)¹⁷. It is not without reason, therefore, that Mayor Eduardo Paes – who during his two mandates has been carrying out the current renovations in the Port Area – ended up identifying himself with Pereira Passos (CORREIA, 2013), mayor of the early 20th century who was noted by interventions (inspired by the Parisian renovations of Haussmann, from the 19th century) which became known as “knock-it-down” (by the destruction of the colonial houses and the opening of important avenues in downtown Rio de Janeiro)¹⁸. So much that at the inauguration of “*Porto Maravilha*” first works phase, in the renovated garden of the *Valongo* Wharf on July 1, 2012, Paes was accompanied in the ceremony by an actor characterized as Pereira Passos¹⁹.

According to the Company of Urban Development of the Port Region of Rio de Janeiro (CDURP – acronym in Portuguese), directly responsible for the management of this strategic area of the city and for the Port Area’s renovations project that includes *Gamboa*, *Saúde*, and *Santo Cristo* neighbourhoods, this big intervention aims at the recovery of urban infrastructure, transport, environment and the historical and cultural heritage of the port

16 Instead of “civilization” and “progress”, slogans like “globalization”, “innovation”, “attraction of investments” and “territorial branding” emerge.

17 The linking of the commitments regarding the Olympics to the Master Plan for the City’s Sustainable Development – approved by the mayor and councillors in 2009 – to the Rio Strategic Plan, as well as the alignment with other levels of government, were fundamental elements of this process since they guaranteed the political-institutional foundations for these commitments’ execution.

18 Pereira Passos himself made interventions in the Port Area before Mayor Eduardo Paes. During the Mayor Pereira Passos’ administration, at the beginning of the 20th century, the first large-scale landfill was made, with the objective of creating a central port area: the demolition of the *Senado* Hill to land 170 hectares in the front of the hills of *Livramento*, *Conceição*, *Providência* and *Saúde*. The new coastline made it possible to build the cradle of *Gamboa*, the first dock of the modern port. At the western end of the pier, the *Mangue* canal was extended and *Francisco Bicalho* Avenue was created as a suture element with the old city. From *Mauá* Square, at the other end of the cradle, began the works on Central Avenue, now known as *Rio Branco*, with 1,750 meters long and 22 meters wide, designed in Haussmannian boulevards’ style, and which would brace the first modern buildings of the present Rio (ANDREATTA et al, 2009).

19 The then mayor even told the press at that time that he would like to be remembered as “an urban planner such as Pereira Passos”. For more information, check: Em campanha Paes tenta vincular a sua imagem às transformações feitas por Pereira Passos. In: *O Globo, Caderno Rio*, July 09, 2012. Available at: <<https://oglobo.globo.com/rio/em-campanha-paes-tenta-vincular-sua-imagem-as-transformacoes-feitas-por-pereira-passos-5433676>>. Accessed on: 22 June, 2017.

region. The following renovations – which were supposed to be completed by 2015 – were among the most visible interventions: demolition of *Perimetral* viaduct and conversion of the space into a pedestrian area; opening of new avenues in the area; construction of underground access tunnels; expropriation and demolition of several historical houses in the region, creation of waterfronts and boulevards (named *Conde* and *Olympic*) and expansion of squares (such as *Mauá* and *Harmonia*); improvements and urbanization works in the microregion’s slums; construction of new important cultural and entertainment facilities such as the Rio Museum of Art, Museum of Tomorrow and the aquarium (AquaRio) in the locality (as well as a shopping mall that will soon be built in the former *Moinho Fluminense’s* building); viability of the installation of cycle paths and VLT trains connecting the locality to the adjacent downtown neighbourhoods²⁰.

Evidently, the way in which this urban project was conducted (the management of the processes was carried out in an undemocratic way in the majority’s opinion) and the idea of a “social legacy” have been very questioned by experts and city leaders. The critics are focused mainly on the “concentrationist” perspective of the project: be it the centralization of benefits in a privileged part of society (especially business groups), or in what refers to the spatial grouping of the legacy. Since the beginning of these renovations, several social movements have been denouncing, among others: cases of violation of housing rights, labour irregularities, obstruction of social and citizen participation, lack of transparency in accountability, and an increasing inefficiency of public transport in the locality²¹.

In addition, it is possible to identify several narratives that denounce traditional media silencing regarding a range of authoritarian and social exclusion processes, which, for some actors, establish a kind of “state of exception” (VAINER, 2014) in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

(...) Investments in the (re)construction of stadiums with billionaire costs, while lacking schools and basic health equipment; public works in areas of the city chosen to remove the largest number of poor people and ensure the highest private real estate gains; environmental crimes committed under the urgency speech; immense expenditures on urban mobility projects, directed to already privileged areas of the cities; these were some of the greatest

20 The Company of Urban Development of the Port Region of Rio de Janeiro (CDURP – acronym in Portuguese) was established by Supplementary Law no. 102/2011 and is the city hall’s manager in the *Porto Maravilha* Consortium Urban Operation. It is up to CDURP not only the articulation with the other public agencies (including the *Porto Novo* concessionaire), but also the execution of works and services in the 5 million square meters of this area which is considered of Special Urban Interest. As manager of the operation, CDURP reports to the Securities and Exchange Commission (CVM – acronym in Portuguese) and participates in the approval of real estate projects in a technical group of the Urbanism Municipal Department (SMU – acronym in Portuguese). It is also the body that has the responsibility to make available to the market part of the land in its area. Among the company’s functions is also the activity as a promoter of the economic and social dynamism of the port region, delimited by Supplementary Law no. 101 (which created the *Porto Maravilha* Urban Operation). Regarding *Porto Novo*, it is a concessionaire contracted via public bid to perform the works and provide municipal public services until 2026 in this area of the city. For more details, see: SILVA, A. *Porto Maravilha, cidadania e cultura*. Available at: <<http://www.portomaravilha.com.br/artigosdetalhes/cod/19>>. Accessed on: June 23, 2017.

21 See COMITÊ POPULAR RIO – COPA E OLIMPIADAS. *Dossiê Megaeventos e Violações dos Direitos Humanos no Brasil*, 2013, p.7-8. Available at: <<http://rio.portalpopulardacopa.org.br/?p=2952>>. Accessed on July 15, 2015.

“legacies” of the mega-events (...), especially in downtown, in the Port Area (...). Private benefits were favoured instead of the public ones, openly violating the principles of impersonality, universality and publicity of the law and the public administration acts, what we define as the establishment of a city of exception (VAINER, 2014, p.61 – Our translation).

Although acknowledging that a significant part of the population appreciated the measures of “embellishment of the area” and that there is a context of economic recession in the country since 2014, especially in the state of Rio de Janeiro, what is visibly noticeable in this territory today is a significant decrease of investments in this area (which was once considered strategic and emblematic in the city) in the management of Mayor Marcelo Crivella (which began in January 2017), threatening various aspects of the urban project, among them, the security project of the downtown’s historical region of the city, known as “*Centro Presente*”.²²

The Direction of the CDURP – responsible for the management of this important area of the city – does not believe that the microregion will empty after the sports mega-events that affected the daily life of the city in 2014 and 2016 and that levered the works in the Port Area: “(...) the Port Area will not empty after the World Cup and the Olympics, because people come to the Rio Museum of Art (MAR), they go to the Museum of Tomorrow, they walk in the Boulevard, they go to the Aquarium (...) we have here a pulsating life with show houses, the sheds and especially the warehouses of *Mauá* pier that are wonderful (...) amazing events are being held in these places throughout the year, attracting a big crowd”²³.

CDURP bets in this area’s continuity as a kind of “creative cluster of the city of Rio de Janeiro” and this is not only based on the existing cultural equipment (and in the activities that are carried out in private spaces). After all, this management body was created to manage and support the area’s development, including in the public spaces. Several artists and local leaders recognize that CDURP has been fostering the training of local labour (through workshops and courses) and the cultural, gastronomic and entertainment activities that take place in the Port Area’s public spaces. One also must remember that CDURP is committed to support these activities with 3% of the company’s revenue²⁴, according to its bylaws. Despite recognizing the value of CDURP, the interviewed actors emphasize that resources, especially after the Olympics, have become scarcer for these purposes: “(...) we must give credit to the institutions that came to manage this area, such as *Porto Novo* and the CDURP, which have always supported local cultural initiatives. Unfortunately, after the

22 For more information, check: Programa Segurança Presente está ameaçado no Rio. In: G1. April 25, 2017. Available at: <<http://g1.globo.com/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/programa-seguranca-presente-esta-ameacado-no-rio.ghtml>>. Accessed on: July 3, 2017.

23 Interview with Néia Favero, advisor of special projects of the CDURP, granted to the research on February 7, 2017.

24 Some interviewees complained that a significant part of this CDURP’s budget is passed on primarily to the major museums in the region. Therefore, local artists would be left with a small slice of the annual available resources.

mega-events such as the World Cup and the Olympics, the flow of initiatives in the region has decreased”²⁵. “Before, we had ties to local and government institutions, but nowadays we feel that it is very difficult to communicate: our requests are seldom fulfilled”.²⁶

Largely unheard voices in a scenario of uncertainty

In this background of uncertainty, we have gathered below some actors’ testimonies – collected between 2013 and 2017 – in which they analyse the current situation of the Port Area on important issues such as transportation, cost of living, public safety, jobs, sustainability and cultural offer.

The current Direction of the CDURP states that the new management will not only invest in the commercial and business aspects (as the Mayor Eduardo Paes’ government prioritized), that is to say, that they are especially concerned to invest in the repopulation of this territory (by offering it to low-income people for housing). Despite highlighting some positive points in the urban interventions carried out and the support granted in recent years, the residents’ feelings expressed in the statements below contradict these CDURP projections. Several residents (and even some former residents who have left the area) say that not only the life of the local population has not benefited in a number of ways from the changes implemented there, but also anticipate that, with the increasing gentrification of the territory, they tend to be expelled from this locality very soon: “(...) the Port’s works embellished and improved a lot, such as the demolition of the horrible *Perimetral* viaduct, but at the same time they brutally increased the region’s living costs (...) there is a lot of real estate speculation in the region and the rent prices have skyrocketed from five years to now (...) people are not being able to afford the rents of apartments, houses and many of the shops. There are a lot of people who have lived here for decades and already left”.²⁷ Not only do many residents fear they cannot keep up with the rising cost of living, but they wonder if there will be any room for local cultural traditions (held there for decades) in the new project that was designed for this territory.

The issue of precarious public transport in the territory is pointed by residents as one significant problem not only unresolved but also, in some sense, worsened in the region: “Not only is public transportation still scarce, but residents have basically lost all their bus lines. (...) In addition, the VLT should be free, because it is an integration transport and no one goes the whole way using only the VLT to solve most of their day-to-day affairs”.²⁸

25 Interview with Orlando Rey, resident of *Saúde* neighbourhood and founder of the Carnival block of *Prata Preta*, granted to the research on March 27, 2017.

26 Interview with André Peterson, owner of the *Bodega da Pedra do Sal*, granted to the research on June 17, 2017.

27 Interview with Silvania Silva, resident of *Gamboa* neighbourhood and member of *Sabores do Porto* Association, granted to the research on April 15, 2017.

28 Interview with José Gustavo, resident of the region, writer, reviewer and musician of *Conceição* Band, granted to the research on February 21, 2017.

The security concern, always praised as “solved” by authorities, is seen from a different angle by local residents: “the drug trafficking in the region has greatly increased and this is related to the presence of more money circulating in the Port Area (...) furthermore, shootings are common in *Sacadura Cabral* Street, but in the area of museums they do not occur because it is more watched”.²⁹ Another important matter very remembered by local merchants, many of whom live in the region, is the constant presence of street vendors, who “invade” the locality coming from different parts of the city: “(...) our concern regarding street vendors is (...) not that people can’t work, or seek alternatives at this crisis moment, but we can’t compete with them, (...) after all, the traders here who are legalized have the cost of the tent and of the licenses for the occupation of spaces in the streets”.³⁰

Region’s potential and ability to contribute to a “musical city” consolidation and enhancement

With the exception of a few sporadic musical events that occupied *Mauá* Square and the Olympic Boulevard³¹, the recent cultural activities of the port area are, in general, held in private spaces such as show houses, museums, and aquarium or in the *Mauá* Pier’s warehouses³². Tickets to these cultural facilities can vary from 20 to 200 *reais* in the region, which has made the access to these cultural attractions difficult for the less privileged population of the city, according to the interviewees of this research³³.

In addition, there was a deviation of public transport lines and the region’s mobility was practically reduced to the VLT (or through bicycle paths). Still, one can notice that part of the public is willing to combine the use of subway or bus lines (that go until *Vargas* Avenue) with a walk of several blocks to access some cultural activities of the locality, especially the free musical circles and concerts that are performed in public spaces next to the *Morro da Conceição*. It is especially in *Pedra do Sal* and *Largo do São Francisco da Prainha* that most of these creative activities are concentrated, which have guaranteed certain vitality to the locality, although there has been a drastic reduction in these initiatives since the Rio Olympics (held in mid-2016 in the city).

29 Interview with Silvania Silva, resident of *Gamboa* neighbourhood and member of *Sabores do Porto* Association, granted to the research on April 15, 2017.

30 Interview with Silvania Silva, resident of *Gamboa* neighbourhood and member of *Sabores do Porto* Association, granted to the research on April 15, 2017.

31 Most of them only occurred during the World Cup and the Olympics. Eventually, activities are held during the New Year and Carnival period.

32 According to Winnie Andrade, “(...) *Mauá* Pier is also a leasing space for a varied agenda of events. We started to shelter from important cultural events like ArtRio to weddings of the city’s big shots’ sons” (interview with Winnie Andrade, event coordinator of *Mauá* Pier, granted to the research on December 13, 2016).

33 It is very common to see the poor population occupy this area for jogging and/or families who come to admire the port’s pleasant landscape, but hardly enter these cultural spaces or even have the resources to consume the *gourmet* sandwiches and drinks of the food trucks installed there (and authorized by the city hall). They end up consuming something sold by street vendors, who have been increasingly illegally occupying these areas (which has created tensions with local merchants and security agents).

Recognized as a historical meeting place for the great *samba* musicians of the past³⁴, *Pedra do Sal* has been converted into an important natural amphitheatre in the latest years, a place where street concerts, not only of *samba*, but also of black music, jazz and fanfare, were being successfully held (HERSCHMANN; FERNANDES, 2014). Currently, due to lack of support, the area has reduced its activities to two traditional weekly *samba* circles: *Samba da Pedra do Sal* and *Samba de Lei*³⁵.

The artists who play there, fear that the great popularity of their work, which is intended – according to them – to promote a bit of social inclusion, also brings, in a second moment, the gentrification and expulsion of the artists, merchants and fans who have traditionally occupied *Pedra do Sal*. The actors expressed (in testimonies given to the research) a certain fear that the urban renovations and the private interests quickly modify the profile of this place: “(...) we hope that, even with speculation and the works that have changed a lot in the neighbourhood, a great part of the musical and democratic tradition of the place can be preserved”.³⁶

In turn, the *Largo de São Francisco Prainha* (located near *Pedra do Sal*), which is also of historical and cultural importance³⁷, is currently occupied by musical events that extrapolate the dimensions and dynamics of the circles, such as larger concerts, parties and blocks (which can congregate up to 20 thousand people) and, therefore, do not fit in the natural amphitheatre of *Pedra do Sal*. In these events the music plays in an amplified way, usually with a certain structure (speakers, lights and even stage) and to be performed, these events need the approval and support of public and private institutions. The best known, regular, and which attract the greater audiences are without any doubt the *Black Bom Party* and the rehearsals of the *Escravos da Mauá's Block*.

Organised by the musical group *Consciência Tranquila*³⁸, the *Black Bom Party* has already been held monthly in the *Pedra do Sal* region (nowadays, it occurs more seasonally

34 *Pedra do Sal* occupies a special place in *samba's* mythology: its bars were places of meeting of important musicians, such as Donga, João da Bahiana and Pixinguinha.

35 The two *samba* circles are held from 6 pm to 11 pm and congregate an average of 500 people. The *Samba da Pedra do Sal* circle (founded in 2007) has as main lead the percussionist Paulo Cesar Corrêa and is held on Mondays. In the repertoire of this circle we highlight the re-readings of the so-called “*samba de raiz*” (traditional *samba*), since the musicians generally mix *jongo*, *tambor de crioula*, *lundu*, *afoxés*, *congadas* with *samba de roda*. And the *Samba de Lei* circle (founded in 2011) is held on Fridays and has as main leaders Thiago Torres (voice and guitar) and Wagner Silveira (tambourine). In its repertoire, there are re-readings of successes from the *samba* world, especially some hits composed by Cartola, members of the *Velha Guarda da Portela* and Chico Buarque. For more details on these *samba* circles, see: *Samba De Lei*. Available at: <www.facebook.com/gruposambadelei>. Accessed on: April 3, 2018; and *Botequim Bodega do Sal*. Available at: <www.facebook.com/bodegadosal>. Accessed on: April 3, 2018.

36 Interview with Paulo César Corrêa, percussionist of the *Samba da Pedra do Sal* circle, granted to the research on March 31, 2014.

37 Before the Rio de Janeiro's Port construction, there was a small beach called *Prainha*, which stretched as far as where *Mauá Square* is currently located. The square was named after the Church of *São Francisco da Prainha*, built in 1696 according to orders of Father Francisco da Motta. The locality has hosted several cultural and religious activities associated with Afro-Brazilian culture throughout its history (PECHMAN, 1987).

38 The band *Consciência Tranquila*, created in 2002, performs in all editions, and is formed by Antonio Consciência, Sami Brasil, Carrão Beatbox, Alan Camargo and Igor Swed, as well as six other contracted musicians. In all there are eleven members: two rappers, a vocalist, a beat box, two backing vocals, a drummer, bass, guitar and keyboard players and a DJ. It is worth mentioning that this musical group is reasonably known in the city and even was a semi-finalist of the 2015 edition of the SuperStar TV Program, aired by Globo Organisations on open television.

due to lack of resources and support), an important historical stronghold of the black *carioca* culture, in which descendants of slaves settled (near the port region) in Rio de Janeiro.

According to the party’s founders, the choice of location is related to the historical relevance of the place to the Afro-Brazilian culture: “(...) I think that the fact that we did it at *Pedra do Sal* and *Largo da Prainha* was very important, because these are places where very important moments of the Afro-Brazilian culture were lived (...) this region has a different vibration, many people from the Black Diaspora came here”³⁹.

The proposal of the musical group and the party consists not only in promoting an occupation of the public space – the “ethnic awareness” – but also in celebrating an “afro-black” style based on the musical consumption of Brazilian and international black music hits. The event also concentrates workshops on Afro art and culture, an Afro-Entrepreneurs fair and projections of images related to the theme, among other actions⁴⁰.

This party is held for free in the public space and the organisers have a small support from CDURP (which until recently offered some chemical toilets for public access)⁴¹ and from the local merchants regarding the installation of lighting and sound infrastructure. There are also street vendors selling drinks and food at low prices. All this contributes to a more intercultural attendance (GARCÍA CANCLINI, 2011) in the locality, and one can notice a much greater presence of people of varying ages, from an occasional audience (neophytes or even tourists) to members both of the Rio de Janeiro’s hip-hop movement and the old regulars of *charme* and black parties. The party is also held at a more accessible time in a central region of the city, which favours as well the movement of workers and students, the vast majority of whom use public transportation.

Another important cultural initiative that occupies the locality, especially in the summer months, is the *Escravos da Mauá*’s Carnival block. Founded in 1992, this network of *samba* composers and regulars promotes, in the area, events throughout the year that can gather up to 20 thousand people in the Carnival and pre-Carnival period. They do not just perform Carnival parties there. They are articulated in a network of cooperation with schools and community artists to offer open workshops covering different languages: wooden legs, street theatre, dancing *samba*, research and preparation of costumes, banners and props, costume sewing, graffiti painting, among other activities. In addition to these actions, the

39 Testimony of Antônio Consciência, vocalist of *Consciência Tranquila* group and one of the founders of *Black Bom* Party, granted to the research on May 10, 2013.

40 The *Black Bom* Party was created in 2013, with record attendance for each edition. The proposal is to recall the old *charme* and black parties of the 1970s, mixing old hits with new hits and remixes created by the band’s DJs. Another bias of the party is to articulate black music and cultural activities in an event with actions for the valuing of the black culture and identity. For more information on the band and the party, check: Baile Black Bom. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/baileblackbomgrupo>>. Accessed on: September 20, 2015; and Consciência Tranquila. Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/bandaconsciencia>>. Accessed on: September 20, 2015.

41 The party as a cultural event received the Local Actions award in 2015 from the Culture’s Municipal Office of Rio de Janeiro. The selection was made throughout the city of Rio de Janeiro and the projects with the greatest impact in the regions were contemplated with the seal. *Black Bom* Party’s social action uses music allied to affirmative action as a platform in social and racial issues, seeking to promote free educational activities as well, through social inclusion music workshops for young people from communities in Rio de Janeiro.

block has also a great community articulation, regularly participating in festivities and events with local groups and institutions: “(...) with a beautiful *samba* and a lot of strength in the revellers’ throats, the Carnival block *Escravos da Mauá* did a magical parade through the streets of the Port Area (...), in fact, before anybody talked about the revitalization of the port region, *Escravos*’ block already sang the history and traditions of the place”⁴². Elected several times as one of the most “friendly” blocks in the city, *Escravos da Mauá* is a cultural network marked not properly by a managerial logic, but rather by a dynamic that mixes spontaneity, cooperation and affection (COSTA; BARROS, 2014).

It must be emphasized that, besides these two meeting points located in *Gamboá*, we identified in the research that the *Saúde* neighbourhood is another location in the Port Area that has potential for growth in creative activities, especially in *Harmonia Square*’s⁴³ surroundings. There are already some regular musical activities being performed in that location, which promote dynamics of sociability and have been attracting, for many years, countless actors from the region and other parts of the city. What has been hampering the development of this area are the slow progress of infrastructure works (supposedly due to lack of resources) and the risks that the great business interests that operate there (associated with the construction of malls and other large enterprises still under study) overlap with the interests of local communities.

The difficulties in promoting the free musical ecosystems of the locality – which enhance the Port Area as a creative and democratic territory – do not stop there. One of the leaders of the group *Consciência Tranquila* and organiser of the *Black Bom Party*, Sami Brasil, feels sorry that these two street events – which are a kind of “flagship” of cultural attractions in the *Gamboá* area – are having difficulties to carry out their activities throughout the year⁴⁴. Although previously widely supported, it has become increasingly evident that, since 2016, the difficulties range from obtaining the licenses to carry out these events (of medium and large size in areas considered strategic in the region) to the lack of public

42 See ROMEO, M.; LIMA, L. *Escravos da Mauá se destaca no Prêmio O GLOBO de Blocos, que teve outros 6 ganhadores*. In: Extra, March 16, 2011. Available at: <<https://extra.globo.com/noticias/carnaval/escravos-da-maua-se-destaca-no-premio-globo-de-blocos-que-teve-outros-6-ganhadores-1319698.html>>. Accessed on May 15, 2017.

43 The square was named after the *Harmonia Market*, which operated there in the late 19th century. Currently the square and the region are being renovated. Some of the historical buildings that should be observed in the locality and that stand out are the *Moinho Fluminense* buildings (all made of bricks like the industrial British constructions of the 19th century) and the modernist building of the *Boa Vontade Hostel* (PECHMAN, 1987). According to Orlando Rey: “*Saúde* is a very musical region, but few people know that. A lot of creative things happen in this region. Of course, in general, *Saúde*, *Santo Cristo* and *Gamboá* are very musical neighbourhoods by the Afro-Brazilian influence. People look a lot at the *Gamboá* and the museums’ area and forget that Dolores Duran, guitarists like *Dino 7 Cordas* and *Mão de Vaca* are all from here, from the *Saúde* neighbourhood. One of the events that creatively occupy the *Harmonia Square* is the monthly *samba* circle of the *Velhos Malandros*, organised by Alexandre Nadai. In addition, there are many Carnival blocks that were pioneers in the recovery of street Carnival in the port region and that are headquartered here. Ancient blocks, which had stopped their activities, resumed their activities a few years ago. We could mention *Coração das Meninas*, *Fala Meu Louro* and *Independente do Morro do Pinto*. We host all the activities that involve the *Prata Preta* Block throughout the year. Besides the rehearsals and the parade, a bimonthly circle is organised, which we call *Samba Honesto* here in the neighbourhood of *Saúde*”. (Interview with Orlando Rey, resident of the neighbourhood of *Saúde* and founder of the Carnival block *Prata Preta*, granted to the research on March 27, 2017).

44 Interview with Sami Brasil, singer of the *Consciência Tranquila* group and one of the founders of the *Black Bom Party*, granted to the research on May 19, 2017.

notices and funds to finance the significant costs to perform these activities⁴⁵.

Concluding remarks

The situation of these two cultural groups in the port area is very illustrative of the region’s background. As can be seen – from the case studies analysed here – unfortunately the musical (and cultural) street activities are still not considered a priority by the cultural policies generally pursued in Rio de Janeiro. Thus, one can attest throughout this work that this type of street manifestation is spontaneous and, at some level, transformative of the urban experience: it does not require great works to be concretized, great interventions in the traces of the main roads of the city or the construction of new cultural equipment. However, such street cultural initiatives have little sustainability – they depend on the will of the actors and, often, on their “cultural activism” (HERSCHMANN; FERNANDES, 2014) – and should be supported by renewed public policies that, until very recently, stated that they aimed the conversion of Rio de Janeiro into a “globalized creative city”⁴⁶.

In view of the foregoing, it is clear that there has been a loss of dynamism in the territory since mid-2016 and that this is related not only to a deepening of the economic crisis in Rio de Janeiro and the country, but also to a discontinuity of policies implemented at the municipal level. At the same time, in the formal and informal conversations, several artists (of different artistic expressions) have maintained a proactive attitude and almost every time show a great distrust of the recurring processes of institutionalization involving the creative sectors. Many of them criticize the idea of building a “creative city”, or at least the way in which this type of project is commonly being implemented in Brazil (DE MARCHI, 2014). They come at some point to suggest that it is only interesting for politicians and entrepreneurs, and many of them choose to act in a more autonomous way (practically without public resources and/or through alternative sustainability strategies) and say that they do not bother with the invisibility of their respective niches or cultural ecosystems: “(...) regardless of what will happen in the next years, I can say without fear that we artists, who are in the public spaces (...), we have seen a lot and we even know how to survive in a submerged and invisible way in the city. After all, our work has developed in this way to a large extent, and achieved significant results, building

45 According to Julio Morais, a technician from the Culture’s Municipal Office, “we are aware that there is a lack of support for music groups and other artistic expressions. (...) We have helped within possible, with the budget available so far. This year we are trying to map the main street cultural initiatives of the city with the help of the Pereira Passos Institute (...). There is a great possibility that the municipal development bids such as Local Affirmative Actions and others will be resumed until the end of 2017 or early next year” (Interview with Julio Morais, Coordinator of the Street Culture Working Group of the Culture’s Municipal Office, granted to the research on June 27, 2017)..

46 On June 27, 2017, the Rio Museum of Art gathered representatives of several cities that are part of the Districts of Creativity Network, which the city of Rio de Janeiro joined in 2010. This is the second time that this metropolis hosts an event of this type. In 2012, the Creativity World Forum also had the Port Area as its headquarters. Five years later, with much of the great works in the region of Mauá Square already completed, participants of the two events compared the previous and current contexts. These two events of this Network were organised in the Port Area by the Rio Patrimony of Humanity Institute (in partnership with the International Relations Coordination of the City Hall of Rio de Janeiro and CDURP). For more information, check: [Distritos criativos do mundo se reúnem no MAR](http://portomaravilha.com.br/noticiasdetalhe/Distritos-Criativos-mundo-%C3%BAnem-MAR:4714). Available at: <http://portomaravilha.com.br/noticiasdetalhe/Distritos-Criativos-mundo-%C3%BAnem-MAR:4714>>. Accessed on: July 2, 2017.

a strong cultural tradition of this city (...) ⁴⁷.

In the case of musicians, many of them argue that Rio de Janeiro is already a “musical city” – regardless of whether or not it has a UNESCO label ⁴⁸ –, offering as main evidence the weight of “street musical culture” throughout the year or even the gigantism of Rio’s street Carnival ⁴⁹. Some of these actors who play music on the Port Area’s streets suggest that the processes are much more complex than they seem: when institutionalizing and/or supporting with resources, the presence of mobilized and active actors in a locality is not necessarily being achieved.

I believe that the culture of the port is based on a struggle attitude, in practices of “resistance” of the local population (...) and not exactly on the support that is granted by the public authority. The rich local culture exists by the willpower of those who were already in the region, acting in an organised way. Of course, a lot of people came later and is collaborating and cooperating. These people help a lot, provided they have the same mentality: as long as they are committed to the valuing of the history and culture of the region. Unfortunately, the fostering of the public authority, in general, goes to the great constructions and to the material patrimony. The idea is always almost like this: we will build great equipment in cities, such as museums, boulevards and aquariums. As for the immaterial patrimony, it does what it can do! This is the prevailing mentality in Brazil’s public policies: large libraries are built and then there is no money to buy books, cultural centres are built and then there are no funds to hire artists (...) it is all very repetitive and sad (...). In mega-events, which are heavily financed by public resources – such as those being held at *Mauá* Square and at the Olympic Boulevard – unfortunately, in general, priority is given to hiring famous artists, all from outside the Port Area. It’s the same old story: when there is a lot of money, the professionals of the great cultural industry are called. When you have few resources, you call the local folks, who perform for any crumb or even for free. Fortunately, we are already hardened by all this that is recurrently happening in the country (...). It may get more difficult from now on, but we will not stop acting. We are determined

⁴⁷ Interview with Richard Righetti, leader and clown of the *Off-Sina* group, granted to the authors on July 6, 2015.

⁴⁸ The city of Rio de Janeiro is recognized as the main centre of the country’s music industry (HERSCHMANN, 2010). In spite of this, the city of Salvador (which is another important centre) applied officially and was awarded in 2016 by UNESCO with the “musical city” seal. For more details, see: Unesco reconhece oficialmente Salvador como Cidade da Música. In: G1, June 1, 2016. Available at: <<http://g1.globo.com/bahia/noticia/2016/06/unesco-reconhece-oficialmente-salvador-como-cidade-da-musica.html>>. Accessed on: May 14, 2017.

⁴⁹ Rio de Janeiro’s Carnival has been moving an economy (of culture and entertainment) of over 800 million *reais*, generating 500 thousand direct and indirect jobs (PRESTES FILHO, 2009). In the last decade, the practice of street Carnival in the city of Rio has been constantly increasing, mobilizing residents and tourists. According to data released by the official tourist agencies and by the city hall of Rio, the growth of the blocks in the city was of 10% per year at the beginning of this decade. Still in view of the projections of the entity: in the last years about 5.5 million revellers paraded in the 500 blocks authorized by the city hall. Several tourism authorities increasingly recognize that street Carnival has contributed significantly to the growth of this productive chain in the first months of the year. One of the most popular destinations for tourists during Carnival, the city of Rio has received an average of 1.2 million visitors, more than 30% of them being foreigners. With so many tourists, the occupancy rate of hotels scattered throughout the city in the first months of the year revolves around an average of 90%.

to show our art (...), we help each other a lot in the region and we believe that we need to collaborate to make this place a better environment to live in (...)⁵⁰.

All in all, often the actors suggest in their testimonies that are the artists in the daily life that effectively keep re-signifying the city – with or without institutional support –, regardless of the urban projects traced by this or that management of the public authority. In sum, the interviewees, despite the enormous financial and sustainability difficulties of their respective activities, do not seem to get carried away by immobility, indicating that these are the actors who, even in their low visibility condition (HERSCHMANN; FERNANDES, 2015), have been significantly contributing in the day to day for the (re)construction of a (musical) city that is more democratic and open to the social coexisting.

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⁵⁰ Interview with José Gustavo, a resident of the region, writer and musician from the *Saúde* neighbourhood's *Conceição* Band, granted to the research on February 21, 2017.

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