

# Anthropological and psychoanalytic perspectives concerning violences in the territory of “Cracolândia” Sao Paulo, Brazil

## Abstract

In the last 20 years the concentration of people using crack have raised, making this territory known as “Cracolândia”, referring to this public scene use. The increase of people using crack and occupying public streets presented changes in the conditions of local people’s lives, marked by excessive physical and symbolic violences. These issues led us to undertake this paper that, by ethnographic insertion and listening devices with psychoanalytical referential, aims to explicit a contemporary concern regarding spaces both of drug use and frequency of people in street situation. We want to point out the insistent right violations of people who occupy this space pointing out how psychoanalysis and anthropology can contribute in complementarity on themes such as war, peace, drug abuse scenario, malaise, social transformation and human rights guarantee.

**Keywords:** anthropology, psychoanalytic, drug abuse, public scene, human right, violence

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## Introduction

The interest for this work subject emerged from studies in the field of drugs and from the experience during fieldwork carried since 2004 in a central region of Sao Paulo, Brazil. We followed significant changes and interventions in this region for around two decades, when a scene of public usage of crack took place. Since the 1940s this region held confined prostitution circuits and negotiations between the police and drug sales, from cocaine, amphetamines and barbiturates. In the last 20 years the concentration of people using crack have raised, making this territory known as “Cracolândia”, referring to this public use. The increase of people using crack and occupying public streets presented changes in the conditions of local people’s lives, marked by excessive physical and symbolic violences. These issues led us to undertake this paper that, by ethnographic insertion and listening devices with psychoanalytical referential, aims to explicit a contemporary concern regarding spaces both of drug use and frequency of people in street situation. We want to point out the insistent human right violations of people who occupy this space.

In addition to the specific aspect of crack use in public scene, this space reveals common characteristics to other global contemporary cities regarding the relation between illegalisms and the legal as shown by Ruggiero and South,<sup>1</sup> and in the Brazilian case the works of the sociologist Vera Telles<sup>2</sup> and Gabriel Feltran.<sup>3</sup> We also highlight the work of Veena Das,<sup>4</sup> “El Estado y Sus Márgenes; Etnografías Comparadas” (“State and Its Margins; Compared Ethnographies”). In this paper we point out this space of negotiation and action of the State and its margins. The choice for the ethnographic contribution enabled a wide contact with local culture, exceeding the simple follow up of ordinary characters movement, but also being able to reveal invisible local particularities as an issue of urban anthropology.<sup>5</sup> Ethnographic researches in the urban environment have started with the Chicago School works, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> in the United States, expanding the view of the urban context in a city

where presented an accelerated economic and intense growth, in other words, a look to the reality close to the anthropologists, although without leaving behind the initial founding concerns, the cultural diversity.<sup>5</sup> In the case of Sao Paulo, there are registers of an urban anthropology production since the mid 1930s, already influenced by the Chicago School.<sup>6</sup>

We referred the ethnographic view in the pointed perspective by Raikhel and Garriott<sup>7</sup> as a lived experience and also all the material produced by the experience as “the relations, knowledge, technologies and affections and the recursive impacts of subjectivity”.<sup>7</sup>

The ethnographic view was a resource used to build another perspective regarding the alarmist tone in which the Brazilian media started to focus the public spaces of crack use, which from the city of Sao Paulo spread through large, medium and small cities of the country in the last 20 years, creating a tension center between hygienists public policies—term which became frequent in public debates referring to repressive measures regarding the crack users—and the human rights perspective. These perspectives, which express different views also regarding the use of drugs considered illicit, have put in confrontation two perspectives of policies of assistance to the people who use of illicit drugs: the practice of police repression and forced eviction from the territories and the hospitalization or imprisonment of users in opposition to an assistance perspective based on the so-called “harm reduction” and respect to human rights. According to Rubens de Camargo Ferreira Adorno, it seems clear the need to: “Substantiate researches that sought to acknowledge in the ties, dynamics and the way in which macro social, political, economics processes are in the present in the daily popular sectors and therefore to broaden and make complex the analysis and the comprehension that takes central and problematic aspects the use of drugs.”<sup>8</sup> In this work we have as proposal to bring closer the ethnographic and psychoanalytic approach in the sense that the listening device is present in these two methods. A listening that can produce political effects from the way that subjects place themselves in territory which is allow to be

affected by it. For the listening device to have political outcomes, we believe to be necessary to consider the imaginary effects which a society produces on its own population. In the case of this work it is interesting to question the imaginary effects in people who use drugs and that are in vulnerability situation.

Even with the emphasis given to Psychoanalysis as theory and treatment technique, Freud over his work makes recurrent use of collective phenomena analysis to understand individual processes, whereas state in his work that individual psychology is, at the same time, social. According to Freud, in Miriam Debieux Rosa reading: The psychoanalytic listening is, since Freud, transgressor regarding social organization foundations, that to be effective, involves a rupture in the tie that avoids the confrontation between the knowledge of the social situation and the knowledge of the other as a subject who desires. From this listening, especially when the subject reveals as it, the psychoanalyst do not get out exempted—their ethical and political positioning is necessary. The ethical-political dimension comes first based in this acknowledgement.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, the contribution of a psychoanalytic referential can help, together with other knowledge, regarding fundamental references of psychic organization that clarify social groups imaginary, that assign specific places to subjects. The social imaginary is, according to Castorialis, the cluster of significations, norms and logic (money, sex, woman, children, man) which places the spot where individuals occupy in society. We highlight, together with Rosa that only from a particular law, paternity, sexuality conception, for instance, that some are considered excluded as human subjects with no right to access to listening, to words, to citizenship. Another device present in this method is the analysis of the contemporary illusions, referring to the context of current organization, dominated by the neoliberalist discourse.<sup>10</sup> That way, we would like to point out how psychoanalysis and anthropology can contribute in themes such as war, peace, malaise and social transformation. To think about the right violations process in this space, we think it is important to highlight the current drug policies, which with prohibitionist nature, trigger oppression, coercion and violence mechanisms.

## The prohibitionism

The prohibitionist policy is a very recent control strategy of the consumption and trade of psychoactive substances and aim to prohibit the existence of some substances that modify consciousness and behavior. Approximately one century ago there was no criminalization or control on the use of these substances, whether for medical use or not. The journalist Júlio Delmanto, in his dissertation of Social History discusses the origins and the history of this practice, as well as the effects of this policy in peoples' lives. More specifically, our approach on prohibitionism will be about its social and political consequences. The social scientist Eduardo Viana Vargas, explains that this policy match with the "moral share between the use of illicit drugs and drugs of free use, tolerated or controlled use".<sup>11</sup> This moral duplicity in relation to the drug universe put its legitimacy at stake, since its determination justified by the guarantee and protection of public health masks economic and political interests.

In Brazil, the prohibitionist policy it is strengthened in the 1970s, when the President of the United States, Richard Nixon, declares "War on Drugs" globally.<sup>1</sup> Currently, the legal landmark in Brazil is

the Drugs Law 11.343/06 of 2006,<sup>2</sup> which in relation to the previous law raised the minimum penalty for drug trafficking from 3 to 5 years, a significant factor in the increase of the imprisonment number in the country. The lawyer Luciana Boiteux, professor in Rio de Janeiro Federal University point out that: Gradually, more specifically in 2006, with the Brazilian Drugs, Law that, as seen before, raised the minimum penalty of such crime (art. 33), was identified a marking and intentional hardening of the penal answer to the drug commerce, that was considered one of the main factors for the increase of the prison population in the country in the last years.<sup>12</sup> Boiteux emphasizes that this policy reinforce the abyss between the figure of the user and the drug dealer, making that small dealers selected by the system to imprisonment: This factor explains the increase of the prison contingent, because people convicted for traffic have stayed more time arrested, in addition to the hypothesis that many users are being convicted for traffic due to the new law, facing the lack of clear credits of differentiation between such actions.<sup>3</sup>

According to Gomes and Adorno,<sup>13</sup> great part of the current population in "Cracolândia" already has gone through the prison system. It is a population who use crack and also make some small deals around the drug use dynamics. In this scenario, it is hard to distinguish the user and drug dealer figure, because people in street situation, increasingly disqualified by the labor market, start to live and survive from this parallel economy. What we want to highlight is the mass imprisonment policy in effect in Brazil that became to aim specially people who use drugs living in the streets and the poorest layers of the population. The Drugs Law 11.343 of 2006, which establishes an abstract distinction between drug dealers and users, started to be applied as way of social discrimination: poor and blacks are taken as suspects and dealers. Between 2005 and 2012, there was an increase of 420,31% (Ministry of Justice) of imprisonment related to drug traffic crime in Brazil, with the total prison population increased approximately 61% - a significant reflex of the of the Drugs Law of 2006 and the drug traffic imprisonment. Therefore, the prohibitionism is a policy that reflects poorly the drug use phenomenon in certain space and when associated with social and health policies offers, point "a relation of flaws and excesses" linked to the single idea of abstinence.<sup>8</sup> Boiteux states that "before all that has been studied in the drug criminal field, there is no doubts that the prohibitionist model is not appropriate to protect public health and still causes other negative impacts in society".<sup>12</sup> Thereby, Delamanto summarizes the prohibitionism as "the cynic order, that mocks itself and live well with its contradictions and its inadequacies".<sup>11</sup>

## The law outskirts: street, bars and wagons

The repressive actions of 'urban qualification' taken place in this territory got to demolish entire blocks, chase and arrest users with constant police approaches in this space in the city. Body of the justice system backed to the defense of vulnerable populations started to be activated by social groups and movements often preventing the continuity of repressive intervention practices for certain periods, however the interventions aiming the area "cleanness" aligned with urban regeneration have been serving the real estate speculation. The constant confront and depreciation of the space and those who live there became efficient instruments for that process. The city

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_ato2004-2006/2006/lei/111343.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2004-2006/2006/lei/111343.htm)

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Boiteux, L. et al. Tráfico de Drogas e Constituição. Série Pensando o Direito. Brasília (Secretaria de Assuntos Legislativos, Ministério da Justiça), 2009.

<sup>1</sup>Araújo, T. O Fim da Terceira Guerra Mundial. Revista Super Interessante. Editora Abril, edição 322, Ano 10, agosto de 2013.

government elected 2013 that governed the city until 2016, developed a program based on the perspective of Harm Reduction, following a comprehensive look for the drug use and population living in the streets. The program started to focus its actions on providing access to housing in popular hotels partnered to the program and also the offering of jobs and income. It assumed that it would not intervene in the crack use itself, as the programs based on the medic-psychiatric hospitalization and abstinence perspective proposed, but to offer alternatives to life in the street and the exposure in the territories of use. From the implementation of this program, we continue with the ethnographic register and listening in this territory. According to anthropologist Claudia & Andrea Cardarelli, in text of Rights of the more and less humans, "the nation of human rights in its abstract and out of context forms has little significance. As this notion is translated in practice—and its particular consequences—depends on power relations, shaped in specific historical contexts and expressed in precise semantic categories".<sup>14</sup>

We consider together with the authors that it was possible to register in practice, we problematize the human rights comprehension from the job offer, income and accessible housing by this city program that was called "De Braços Abertos" Program, when a correspondent say to us: "it's very nice this access to all these rights, but if to have access to this is necessary to lose my rights of staying here on the streets, I don't want. Thank you very much!". We endorse all the effort and strategy perspective of this program, we agree with the unprecedented and subversive effects attending in this attempt. Although understanding that what makes us advance part of the elaboration of structurally contradictory aspects, this speech amplifies the possibilities of space insertion and individual agency regarding the offered policies. Also, it is characterized by the fact that despite of the city hall as State to propose the essential access to a first stage of housing policy (Housing First),<sup>4</sup> the repressive actions aimed at illegal drugs continued to exist in this territory. The implementation of a "Braços Abertos" program together with repressive actions gave support to a broader view of State action and the street users continued to be victims of greater police repression in the drug traffic fight. Situations like that brought us attention to the issue of guarantee and violation of rights in this territory. The space, besides the public crack use, has several bars, pensions, collective houses, etc. The impact of hygienist policies takes place also in all neighborhood citizens, including the local merchants. Two months after the implementation of the "Braços Abertos" Program, the following situation attracted considerable attention. In 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014, Sao Paulo city hall with the support from municipal police performed an action which sealed three bars at Dino Bueno Street.<sup>5</sup> At the time "the flow" (concentration of people around the crack use and dealing) was concentrated in this street, in front of the bars. At this occasion, one of the merchants responsible for two bars, Mr. Matias, 64 years old, gave a testimonial to the press: "It's absurd! They closed without notice, because of a single document and they gave no deadline to regularizing the situation". In a conversation with us he added: "it's a lack of respect they get here and close a citizen's bar like this without notice, overnight, without giving time to the person to organize. This is absurd!"

The motives published for closing the bars was a possible

<sup>4</sup>Care Strategy that offers housing in the first place, recognized in several countries such as France, Japan and Canada. In Vancouver, Canada, this strategy is part of the care net for over 20 years. <https://www.phs.ca/index.php/housing/>

<sup>5</sup>Street where concentrates people who use crack.

involvement with drug trade, irregular documentation and noise exacerbation. The city hall published that since 2012 it was happening a fiscal process to the regularization of these properties and up to that moment it did not happened. In a conversation with Mr. Matias, after three months with the bars closed, he explains: My bar has never had an incident with drug apprehension. They have music and drink in the middle of the crack use scene, if they sell drugs around here it's not my business, it might happen, but it's not my bar who's selling! They claimed the noise as well, a lot of music and people dancing. Where there is music and 'cachaça' people will surely dance. There was happening big fuzz in cracolândia and am I the guilty one on cracolândia? I'm not! I don't have to say anything about cracolândia. I work here for 15 years and people know me! (Field diary 06/17/2014)

The owner of another bar that remained opened in Dino Bueno Street said they did not close the bars due to music, otherwise they would have closed hers as well. Other owner of another bar argues: "How can they close the bars and use the properties to the hotels of "Braços Abertos" Program in the same conditions? Everything is precarious, irregular and also without permit". She comments that one hotel with 30 rooms is dangerous, very precarious and can catch fire at any moment. In the backstage, there were comments that the hotel owners did not want to partnership with the city hall to integrate the program because the value was too low. As a forced negotiation, the strategy was that if they didn't accept they would close the hotels for irregularities. Therefore, the hotels that offered a counterpart entered the negotiations, now the bars closing seems to be a strategy to change geographically the "flow", to a place where it was possible to contain, observe and control. From there, the "flow" moved and settled in front of the Metropolitan Civil Guard bus, where remained until May 2015. In the week of June 10<sup>th</sup> 2014, 97 days after the bars closing, it began rumors of a possible reopening of the bars. The merchants of these facilities were eager and outraged for the "lack of respect" with the population, including them, the merchants. They complained about the sudden closing and the damage they had with goods and products. Mr. Matias explained in a conversation with us:

It happened on Monday, a normal day. They arrived at 9:40am and when was 10:15am they were closing everything! They didn't present any written justification. The reason they told at the time was that it was a city hall order. I think they couldn't come and close, they should have notified and not seal with all the goods that can rot inside. I have lost 9 to 10 thousand Reais in merchandise! I couldn't even organize myself. I got to know at the moment, they came and tuck the blocks then, came two city hall inspectors with more 30 guards from the Metropolitan Civil Guard. Bah! It looked like they were catching thieves. The facilities are rented; both of them summed 2,300 Reais. We have to pay water, energy, gas and taxes (Urban Territorial and Building Tax). I pay the rent; I hold a company and I have it all. I had to sell some things to pay the bills. I've lost products like meat, milk, bread, beverages, because the refrigerator shut down and everything rots. It was 90 days fighting, if we didn't ask the mayor to come here, to require him to open, the engineers and city hall inspectors wouldn't do anything. We brought him (the mayor) here, explained the reality and he gave the solution of in 10 days himself would order to open. And that what has happened. Now it's opened, but I had to take out the music machines. It can only work from 6am to 10pm. It cannot have music anymore. They imposed that. It cannot have because disturbs the police base (Coração de Jesus Square). The music disturbs the communication radio. That wasn't in any document, but it was said by the police officers. Now there are the costs to open the bar as well



cleaning, painting, fire extinguisher, etc. All that is money, paint is money, fire extinguisher, everything! Nothing is free. When they closed I felt like a defeated worker, because I think they had to send the inspector to notify and in the period of at least 30 days to do so, regulate. That should be the right thing and not coming at 9:40am and seal. This is an absurd to a Brazilian citizen. (Field Diary–06/17/2014) The responsibility for the other bar, the young Laura, was also in the street that day and when she met us she started to tell the situation: I showed to the mayor, I made him come here! He (Fernando Haddad) was walking in the street and I showed him my situation, selling packed lunch to raise money. He gave me attention and said that would come back. He came next day and looked for me, I had to go to the hospital. On Friday he came again to look for Mr. Matias and Roney, the owner of the properties. After they schedule a meeting Policeman William and decided that they would give authority to reopen the bars. So we are opening but we cannot work, because first an engineer has to come and give the report to approve let's see how many more days we will have to wait. That came immediately closing and gave 5 minutes to get out of the bar. There wasn't any prior notice. I've lost all my products and I'm in bad credit list. I have 11 thousand of bank checks returning. All because of 90 days closed. I was living in a one room flat and didn't have conditions to pay the house rent and had to get out! I'm living sharing an extremely small flat by favour with four sons. To survive, I was selling packed food and delivering here and there so I can try to raise some cash. After they closed the bar my life is falling apart. Bank checks returning, bills coming, car parking lot delayed. If I count it I get close to 40 thousand of loss in 90 and something days (Field Diary–6/17/2014).

The property owner showed up while we were talking to Laura. He calls Laura and they talk for a few minutes in front of the bar. We were inside the bar, while some people were cleaning it. Everything was very dirty. All the time Laura is holding her small baby. The owner calls us to talk. He asks us to not disclose the material at that time because he said he was afraid of having troubles with the city hall and they close his bar again. As a property owner in the region, his perceptions says a lot in few words that summarize this space characteristics regarding right establishment: At the moment expose this situation is risky, it can harm what we have conquered in the agreements until now. Here is different from the rest of the city. In other places is one way, here is another, here is different, here is cracolândia! Here, the most rights you want, the less you get (Field Diary–06/17/2014). Both merchants reported that their respective bars have reopened due to conversations and negotiations that developed directly with the mayor. The sequence of the facts of this episode shows questions regarding the legal procedures of the already traditional commerce closing in the region of Luz. It seems inappropriate to close a facility with no justify reason and without prior notification even less to re-open it from private conversation with the mayor. The fear feeling of the owner illustrates clearly how the public authorities and the figure of the police adopt enforcement positions in the territory. The owner seems to conform himself with the agreements negotiated with the city hall guided more by control and fear than by current legislation. In addition to the merchants' damage, this situation sounds like an explicit abuse on the local dynamics of the market, consumption and entertainment. This situation lays bare arbitrariness in the law enforcement able to legitimize citizens' rights violations by abuse of power. However, this happens in a subtle way, in a field where is not directly connected to

the controversy and great theme visibility of the crack use, it happens in the 'backstage', with no possibility to great media impact.

Negotiations like the episode of the bars puts us the following question: Which constitutional state acts in cracolândia? Have those who speak (negotiate) directly with the mayor, privileges than those who do not? In relation to the drug traffic, the public security claim that would stop with the collective approach (by the police) in the street and started a study and observation through cameras spread out through the territory and in the bus given by the "Crack é preciso vencer" ("Crack we must win") program from the Federal Government. From this ostensive surveillance, they would perform specific detentions in the fight against traffic. In a public meeting for evaluation, after 3 months holding the program, in April 2014, arguments were brought on the difficulty to differentiate drug dealers to users in the context of Cracolândia and the territorial confinement and surveillance 24 hours a day is the explicit representation of power and therefore, a extreme violations of rights. The argument of the mental health coordinator was that the cameras had the role of avoiding police excesses and bad behavior, aiming thus the "right guarantees".

Recovering part of the history, we noticed that, in one hand people's life are constantly going through prohibitions of the "to come and go" imposed by police raids, as well as the landscape disfiguration, idle lands, surveillance by countless observation cameras and by routine police repression. On the other hand, is also covered by the recent access to housing, work, income and culture and surprisingly the acceptable use of crack as well exactly in front of police units. Over the years, the public security strategy of preventing the settlement of crack user street dwellers in certain spaces, making them to circulate continuously, seems to move on into controlled contention practice. What once looked like a systematic attempt to expel people, now we can think of daily control strategies? On April 29<sup>th</sup> of 2015, it was happened the controversial wagons episode described in the following.

From the mayor effort to end with the "crack street market", throughout April several times during the field work we heard rumors that there would be an action to remove the 'shacks' that were starting to settle inside the "flow". The argument was that these 'shacks', that actually were nothing more than wagons clustered with tarps stretching to cover, were responsible for the trading and distribution of crack, in other words, they gave support for the traffic organization. The public authorities announced that was negotiating with "local leadership" known as "disciplines" that are directly involved with traffic and in 29<sup>th</sup> April, Wednesday, the intervention happened indeed. In the morning, everything went well. The "flow" and also the wagons left the boulevard and moved in the direction of the Dino Bueno Street. The contrasts and opposition of the intervention took place in the afternoon, when extremely violent events, including two real firearms shots and people severely injured, mixed among the data disclosed by the "Braços Abertos" Program on the registering of approximately 80 new beneficiaries. From that day on the atmosphere was tense, but we will not approach this event,<sup>6</sup> we will approach the reports that started to emerge gradually in the street in the following days.

Many people, especially the wagon men, whom operate with trade in recyclable materials, started to complain that the city hall was

<sup>6</sup><http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2015/04/1622665-operacao-na-regiao-da-cracolandia-tem-tumulto-e-corre-corre-fois-sao-feridos.shtml>

taking their wagons. In a newspaper article by Estadão,<sup>7</sup> the city hall pronounces that "they are making the work of reorganization of public space confiscating the barracks and big size wagons, where people can carry drugs and guns". The concern emerged, were they being careful to differentiate the wagons used to carry drugs from the ones used for the practice of collecting and selling recyclable material? In practice, in the next days there were no wagons to see in Cracolândia. They were all confiscated by the GCM (Metropolitan Civil Guard) and the urban janitor work. The excuse for the apprehension informed by GCM was that the wagons were involved in the drug traffic organization. The wagons were gone, but the wagon men remained there and the contact with us and others teams who act in the territory was essential for the listening of this demand and create bridges with the core of the Human Right Public Defender of Sao Paulo Estate. The Public Defender organized to perform an action in the territory on May 26<sup>th</sup>, when collected 33 reports from the wagon men about the apprehension of their wagons. According to the lawyer and public defender at that time Raul Nin Ferreira: Whoever confiscates objects in conditions like this is police under judicial determination. Then, if people were really using their wagons to drug traffic, these people were to be arrested and prosecuted and their wagons would be confiscated inside a determined criminal process by a criminal judge. This is a right that is in the Federal Constitution, which in the article 5<sup>th</sup> says that no one will be deprived from your freedom and properties without due legal process.

The city hall has some powers in the intervention of individual freedom in the sphere of property apprehension. For example the sanitary surveillance, when sealing a restaurant or a business for violation of sanitary norms, however, this interference in the sphere of the particular demands some formalities. It is need to issue an infraction notice with information of the act, where the owner receives one copy as a proof of what happened, which also informs the possibilities appeal to this determination. In the case of the wagon men, if the city hall had the power to confiscate their possessions by committing an illegal act, the city hall should leave documentation with the person who had their wagons confiscated. They should inform about where they have taken their wagons, in which accusations... finally, a series of requirements so that people have the opportunity to question that administrative act of wagon apprehension. That wasn't done. The city hall simply confiscated and didn't account for anything an action absolutely illegal and unconstitutional. We met wagon men that definitely were not involved with traffic and depend on their wagon for their daily activity and livelihood. The low voice and distant look of some of them make clear that they were miserable. In the action of the Public Defender one of them volunteer to give testimonial and afterwards, when we spoke alone he stated: The wagon is my house, my work, where I organize my stuff. I don't have much. I organize myself in my mess. Now I don't have anything I even feel disgust. I have to beg for money, cigarette and other things you know that I like to manage on my own. I had five little sound boxes from people here to fix. They took everything and now I owe them the sound boxes. People are pestering me already. I don't know from where I should start. It is like I am naked with hands and feet tied. (Field Diary – 26<sup>th</sup> May 2015).

The wagon men were truly with no perspectives and looking at their survival possibilities being ripped off their daily life. It was

from a mapping proposed by the Project Oficinas<sup>8</sup> that was possible to mobilize the actors and offer a response. From this movement emerged the collective 'Sem Ternos' ("No Suits"), a net articulation that aim to propose actions in the territory. Is about a movement that formulate and execute actions in a jointly way and horizontally, specially, in the mistakes and trampling, they are dedicated to space where is possible to change reality. This is one of the tactics to certain contexts in this political moment, which is always changing in a incomprehensible dynamism. This tactic enabled a net articulation and got the workers closer to their respective practices, but also in the proposal of concrete interventions in the territory.<sup>9</sup> Considering the subjects, listening is a sine qua non-condition which supports this praxis. With this partnership, the public defenders built a report and sent a notification to the city hall requesting the restitution of their property or compensation for their wagons. According to the statement disclosed in the Public Defender website, the Human Rights core considers the "administrative apprehension of the wagons and personal objects of this people is illegal and unconstitutional and harm the right of possession". "It is rigor that not only the return of their property, personal objects and work instruments must be done, but also the investigation of the circumstances that happened, that might characterize, moreover, the crime of authority abuse."<sup>10</sup>

With this partnership, after almost two months, the city hall answered the Public Defender informing that the deponents could go to the yard in Cruzeiro do Sul Avenue and take back their wagons. We mediate and facilitate this restitution to the wagon men. After of that happening, the "flow" remained concentrated in Dino Bueno Street, which in the next weeks had gone through 3 daily interventions from GCM and urban cleaning/janitorial. After the cleaning, when Public Security finally permitted the returning of the people to Dino Bueno Street, the only passage was to cross a corridor of GCM officials. The orientation was that they inspect "objects that cannot get in the 'flow'", such as umbrellas, pieces of wood and other objects that could facilitate the assembling of new shacks an arbitrary generalized raid in public thoroughfare. We were victims of some of them as well and in several occasions this invasive and coercive incursion turned into conflicts and aggressions ending up in firearms shots, tear gas bombs and lots of injured people. One of the authors of this piece, Thiago Calil, had his forehead hit by a bomb fragments that exploded in the middle of the "flow" (Figure 1).<sup>11</sup> In one hand, it was noticeable an advance in the rights offer and interesting alternatives of public policies in Cracolândia, on the other hand we felt unsafe, fragile and also victims of constant aggressions. One more criminalizing intervention that infringes human's right on cracolândia. According to Human and Health Rights Guide:<sup>12,15</sup> Around the world, the criminalizing of possession and use of drugs "creates more damage than the damages it tries to prevent." Repressive drugs legislation and

<sup>8</sup>Partnership of CEDECA INTERLAGOS with City Department for Citizenship and Human Rights (SMDHC)

<sup>9</sup>Worth reminding that the actions performed by this collective are aligned with the concepts of articulation, net, territory and shared care, from the principles of SUS (Unified Healthcare System), SUAS (Social Assistance Unified System) and Harm Reduction.

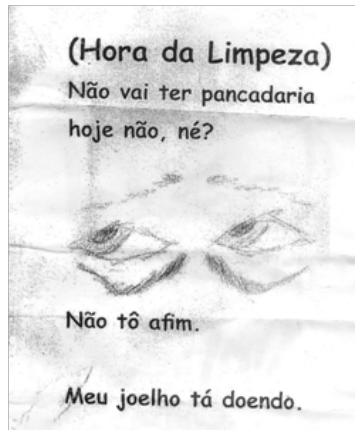
<sup>10</sup><http://www.defensoria.sp.gov.br/dpesp/Conteudos/Noticias/NoticiaConsulta.aspx?idItem=59474&idPagina=1>

<sup>11</sup>Illustration drew in workshops by people in Cracolândia conducted by Project Oficinas, CEDECA Interlagos. The illustration was published in fanzine and distributed by people in the "flow" and community.

<sup>12</sup>Health and Human Rights Resource Guide: <http://hhrguide.org/2014/03/12/how-is-harm-reduction-a-human-rights-issue/>

<sup>7</sup><http://sao-paulo.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,acao-na-cracolandia-termina-em-confronto-dois-sao-feridos,1678369>

policies that disproportionately punishes people who use drugs and drug dealers policies that perpetuate the stigma, less safe usage and negative health and social consequences—not only for those who use drugs, but to all community around.<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 1** Cleaning time.

Daily situations like this can dissolve the rights concern offered by innovative programs, as was the “Braços Abertos Program”. In a territory where the legal and illegal are negotiated all the time, there is a possible opening for silenced violations of rights to specific social actors. In this regard, how this contradiction reverberates in peoples’ daily lives? Prohibitionist drug policies are based on repressive interventions which criminalizes and incarcerate great part of population and exclude themselves from constructive and citizenship relations. According to psychologist Mônica Gorgulho, it is prohibited simply; it is created an obedient population. However, when the question is put to dialogue and debate, the motivations that created such rules and restrictions get cleared and a critic population is created. Isn’t it what we want? But have been doing a choice, shameless and outrageous, for an obedient.<sup>16</sup> regarding the human rights issue, the territory looks like lowland in all senses. Both by the informal parameters that can justify many violations and also by the difficulty of the fight for rights guarantee to advance in this field surrounded by interests (Figure 2).



**Figure 2** ‘The rights outskirts’. Illustrated by Marcelo Maffei.

## Conclusion

We presented in this work different scenes and populations that are marked by a violence coming from the social. In different positions (wagon men, merchants, drug users and street population) are people interpreted through an immediate need, which clearly have their importance, but with that we ask ourselves if we are not reducing people to their needs. What these people want to talk about? Do we know their daily lives? Do we give space for this to emerge? For a long time, these people are saying things and are not being heard. Also for a long time that institutions got discredited in what they were supposed to do and assumed very quickly that these people do not have anything to say, that are accommodated and because of that do not look for help. Aren’t they tired of feeling that “nothing works”? In the field of human rights and the listening need to humans and their respective rights, we ask ourselves how some socially built marks have significant impacts in a person’s life. “They treat me like a thug,” as Sr. Matias pointed out.

As we are collecting the effects of the different marks imposed on the subjects, we also question the discursive order with which they are establishing themselves. What the subject lived as a manifestation of hatred of the other cannot be heard in a neutral way. The professional who listen to this manifestation needs to consider the necessary mobilization of confronting this speech. Need to consider that the policies that will be built with their partners will emerge from the discomfort and from the non-acceptance of this speech, which insist in thrive and that we cannot, here, pretend not to listen. Is at this moment when we can listen to the violence suffering and from that understand that a human right is not validating with this strategy, without the listening. We do not know what is best for someone indeed. Before the violence scene that this subjects are facing, to assume that we understand what the others are living, besides of configuring as an illusion, can become another type of one significant violence. People talk about this meaninglessly. And it is not necessary to fulfill many protocols to address a word to professionals and that they can give conditions to someone that they recognize themselves for beyond the marks destined for the position of “marginal”. Thereby, when we face individuals who are in a position of “discredited”, we have the opportunity to make, through the journey together with them, another institution signification. To build bridges that sew up paths in an articulated function, which provokes intersectionality between services as well as mobilization and formation of a net that is capable to stimulate and build actions in a perspective of guaranteeing rights, maybe not in the traditional way as we usually understand.

It is urgent; especially in the instability moment we are living in, as workers of the public health, social assistance and human rights policies sphere, to establish what is common to us and highlight the potential of certain praxis that it is only possible from what is common.

Endo<sup>16</sup> points out that to act in solidarity, to care about the other, to modify with own actions, words or presence something in someone’s life who asks for human aid, can look like a pointless action and, in the same time, is the only possibility to stimulate pleasure and hope that the solidary gesture puts in circulation once again. It is true that where the own survival imperative stands out – in this case assuming the survival in the space of Cracolândia—to continue to live on the streets with the uses and consumptions of the street space, including illegal drugs, everything seems to make individuals to fortress themselves



and renounce any possibility to be affected by others. The efforts to reconnect to others involve the rights and obligations imperative and the responsibility to take care of oneself urgently and without distractions when life is threatened intensively every day.

Therefore, we endorse that the collectivity promoted by the action of the 'Sem Ternos' ("No Suits") in the heart of extreme situations, as reported in the episode of the wagons confiscation in Cracolândia, creates possibility of seeing restored, although fleetingly, an identity project, a future beyond the preservation of the organism and a moral that goes beyond the desire of sovereign and frightening power.<sup>16</sup> The fellowship shows as possible where stories are preserved and where singularity can be exercised. Part of the citizens of Sao Paulo metropolis, yet that they do not live in a declared war scenario, establish pacts and agreements with the State and great part of the society, determining who are the enemies to be fought and eliminated and wishing the expelling of part of the population to outside of the city, exposing their bodies to authoritarian orders. There is also the desire of absolute appeasement, founded in homogeneity fantasies that are translated by the great investments in high walls, shields building, personal security and uncountable examples that indicate that the city seized to be peaceful and safe to anyone.

The only coexistence possible is among equals and the most prudent action is the imprisonment and occlusion of the city as a place of conviviality and sharing. The foreign, the different, those who cannot reproduce the poor codes of sociability, disturb this alleged harmony. What Primo Levi<sup>16</sup> named as communicability need is not the need to only find the family (the own language, relatives, news of your origin place), but also the urgency to be recognized in their differences and not to be eliminated and mistreated because of that. Therefore, a violence of the body emerges that only reach its complete success when reaches the un-subjection of the subject, depriving them from the places where they are constituted. The experience that the body is subjected is, in that case, an impossible, traumatic, unactable, where the language fails many times. We follow the author in the understanding on the city context where the public institutions of justice and security, when ignoring the needs of this subjective place—but public—, leave their citizens by their own account and risk. The public powers become absent as interlocutors, forcing the affected to hold their own pain in the intimate and private sphere. This scan is processed more effectively as more un-subjective the places are, as far as the streets are being emptied by fear, the known faces fade, the circulation of the places become explicit or implicit controlled and we keep following the degradation and ruin of the places where before it coexisted, worked, loved and existed. Sao Paulo city, as well as Cracolândia, is permissive areas for the arbitrary, abuses of many orders and intrusions grey areas where those who lives in or those who forms it are potentially removable or killable. The areas marked as violated zones, are at first and last instance, the body of those who inhabits the city, being some bodies more 'violentable' than others. In this account, the isolation, the support to hard police action and permissiveness to the disrespect of civil rights are involved. Therefore, we are dealing with a frightened population, sometimes panicked, that frequently, do not see any other way to fight violence unless violently, indicating a catastrophic future and potentially inviable for a city. To coexist with the traumatic do not cease to be a way of perpetuating the excessive conditions that trigger the trauma, of establishing subjective conditions of its reproducibility, repeating what traumatizes and

produce suffering. The non-admission of the suffering generated by violence, the total lack of public recognition of these traumas, is what makes Sao Paulo and more specifically 'Cracolândia', to be subjected to intentions of explicit power by the State, collecting the consequences and effects of the violence that generates and allows.

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## Conflict of interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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