
PART I

Leah Lovett

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I, Leah Lovett confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.
Abstract

This practice-related thesis joins an ongoing debate at the intersection of art history and urban studies about the social effects of art within urban settings and the capacities of artists to disrupt dominant modes of urbanisation and encounter. Using concepts and methods drawn from these fields and performance practices, I argue that urban performance is a spatially productive force with the potential to both project the dominant spatial narrative and to challenge it, through creating an opening within the city for the recognition of conflicting imaginaries and identities across differentiated social groups. There are two main parts to this thesis. Part I investigates Invisible Theatre as a model of urban performance aimed at social liberation developed by Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal. Through critical contextual analysis of archival documents and interviews relating to performances in Buenos Aires, Liège, and Rio de Janeiro, I map Invisible Theatre's emergence in relation to the militarisation of cities during the Brazilian military regime (1964-1985) and its practical transformation through Boal's trajectory in exile. Exploring how contemporary Latin American practitioners have borrowed from Invisible Theatre, I consider whether it provided a model for contesting the national identifications and social exclusions conveyed through the Olympic events of London (2012) and Rio de Janeiro (2016). Part II plots the development of my practice through the research project. Here, the thesis articulates my encounters as a housing activist with Focus E15 and as an artist, creating workshops and digitally-networked performances between Rio de Janeiro and London. Indicating how these projects became entangled in conflicting narratives of London's Olympic legacy, I advance a model of intraurban performance and criticism attentive to the spatial negotiations that constitute them. My contribution is in advancing a critical account of Invisible Theatre relevant to current questions of social justice in art practices and urbanism, and in expressing its potential to connect local and transnational struggles through my own iterative performance practice.
This research has spanned two continents and seven years, and there are a lot of people to thank.

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ONE

Setting the Scene

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London
(July, 2017)

It never rains.

Imagine.

An International Quarter.

People in suits seated on café chairs catch up over their lattes. In the middle of the square, a woman with greying hair studies a sculpture of an elephant – the kind of thing that trails through airports and city centres in summer months. Two guys busk: one plays tabla whilst the other strums his guitar and sings. In the background, water dances in jets like the fountain next to the football stadium where my two play.

This is a childless place.

Here, a transparent tower with an art-filled atrium. There’s a mother and child – a Henry Moore, maybe – but the perspective is off, or it’s scaled wrong and pixelated.

Between the two scenes is a threat:

‘The future is closer than you think’ and a graphic image of an eyeball pierced by a train as it hurtles towards the surface plane.

_Whose vision is this?_

(Look straight ahead. The future shimmers under pixelated suns.)
Introduction

This practice-related thesis begins from an understanding of the city as staging social relations, both in the material forms into which the built environment is shaped, and the performative interactions these forms engender. Highlighting the role of performance in the realisation of urban futures, it sets out to discover whether cultural creative modes of urban performance can be made to disrupt dominant processes of urbanisation and encounter.

The computer-generated images wrapped around the unfinished site of Stratford’s International Quarter offer up a vision of a possible urban future, populated by urban actors who engage in activities broadly associated with professional leisure time. Any social groups that might disrupt the resulting picture of corporate respectability (young children, rough sleepers) are marked by their absence from the scene. These architectural visualisations represent a dominant urban imaginary – that is, an image of the city produced according to a shared set of interests and complacencies, and driven through with combined social, political, economic and material resources – but they provide no guarantees of the development playing out as envisioned. Where the hoardings depict a city suspended in medias res, a slice in time, space itself is dynamic, occurring with time. Space in this context does not refer to the abstract plane of Euclidean geometry, nor should it be imagined as the inert backdrop to the principle action. Following spatial theorist Doreen Massey, I understand the spatial to be socially constituted, as that which allows for the simultaneity, multiplicity and complexity of intersecting events. Being inherently social, the spatial is always and necessarily subject to change. Understood in this way, as an articulation of social space, cities can be recognised as comprising myriad competing urban imaginaries, which may be represented in performative modes of protest and direct action as well as in the everyday interactions of urban actors. For Massey, the unforeseen encounters arising from these heterogeneous and contested performances of the urban create an opportunity for alternative spatial imaginaries and narratives to emerge. As an artist working with performance, this thinking has led me to question the capacities

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of my practice for performing the city differently. **Can urban performances be made to challenge relations of dominance through creating an opening in the city for the recognition of unforeseen imaginaries and identities?**

This research question is addressed in my thesis and practice through an investigation of Invisible Theatre, a model of urban performance aimed at social transformation developed by Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal (1931-2009). Using a combination of performance-based, archival, and critical contextual methods, I trace the development of Invisible Theatre through Boal’s spatial trajectory in exile and in the work of contemporary Latin American practitioners to explore opportunities for contesting the uneven social effects of urbanisation in my practice.

My thesis locates Invisible Theatre, as urban performance, within the wider discourse in art history and urban studies around arts practices that engage the spatial for questioning how art relates to its social contexts. There is no consensus in the existing literatures about how to categorise the work emerging from this broad area of artistic inquiry. I use the term urban performance, which was introduced by spatial theorist Edward Soja and subsequently adopted by performance scholars including Nicolas Whybrow, because I want to give focus to the spatial dimension of cultural practices, including Invisible Theatre, which actively embrace the performativity of the city to contest the social production of urban space. In another context, what I am calling urban performance might be differently classified as public art, site-specific art, interventionism, critical spatial practice, socially engaged art, and, latterly, participatory art. While these terms appear more frequently within the art historical discourse, none of them captures my intentions here. I reject the assumed opposition between public and private that public art infers, and its political association to the democratic public sphere. As this thesis seeks to demonstrate, Invisible Theatre has a close if antagonistic relationship to the dictatorship against

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which it rallied. Conversely, I tend to agree with art historian Claire Bishop, who dismisses the term socially engaged as unhelpfully vague and even meaningless to the extent that all art reflects and seeks to elicit a social response, although her proposal to label Invisible Theatre and associated practices as participatory art misses, for me, the particularity of the social and spatial contexts that condition such work. Where the concept of site-specificity is closer to my aims in drawing out the spatial and historical locatedness of Invisible Theatre and defining an approach to practices that are attentive to their specific contexts, the term has been more broadly applied to refer to permanent and semi-permanent sculptural installations in the civic spaces of the city. Urban performance, by contrast, emphasises the ephemeral quality of Invisible Theatre and related practices, as well their inextricable relationship to the city in practically demanding the population density and the anonymity the urban affords. What is at stake in studying urban performance is the process by which social identities – including national identities – are constructed through dominant modes of urban encounter, and the limits of performance art as a means of contesting dominant urban imaginaries.

Boal began experimenting with undercover forms of theatre in Buenos Aires (1972), following his imprisonment, torture and exile under a US-backed military dictatorship in Brazil (1964-1985). His writings from that time define Invisible Theatre as, ‘the presentation of a scene in an environment other than the theatre, before people who are not spectators’; and later, as ‘actions rehearsed and realised theatrically, but as theatre in an un-revealed form, to a chance audience.’ Invisible Theatre is one of the first techniques discovered by Boal in his development of the Theatre of the Oppressed (hereafter, TO), so called in acknowledgement of Brazilian educator Paolo Freire’s radical Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Freire’s Marxist pedagogy rejects what he terms the ‘banking’ model of education as establishing oppressive social relations, and emphasises the importance of dialogue for a transitive approach to critical consciousness. Similarly, associating established conventions of theatre spectatorship with political passivity, Boal developed TO with the aim of stirring his audiences into action, as ‘spect-
actors’. As one of a set of dramaturgical techniques comprising the TO method, Invisible Theatre attempts, ‘the transformation of society in the direction of the liberation of the oppressed. It is both an action in itself, and a preparation for future actions.’ Beyond recognising the urban as immanently theatrical, Boal’s model of urban performance therefore follows a Brechtian tradition in seeking to mobilise theatre as a ‘weapon’ for combatting oppressions conveyed through the spaces it performs.

Since Boal’s earliest experiments, Invisible Theatre has been performed in cities around the world, including Chiclayo (Peru), Florence (Italy), Liège (Belgium), London (UK), New York (USA), Paris (France), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Santiago (Chile) and Stockholm (Sweden) – these being only the most visible examples. This international trajectory is partly attributable to Boal’s fourteen-year exile from Brazil (1971-1986), which involved further moves to Lisbon (1976) and then Paris (1978) before his eventual return to Rio de Janeiro, but moreover to his commitment to ‘multiplying’ the TO method. Boal discusses the Invisible Theatre technique in no fewer than seven books, including his best known and most widely translated, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, as well as in journal articles, interviews, television programmes and documentary films. Meanwhile, his methods are promoted through the Centres for the Theatre of the Oppressed established during his exile in Paris (1979) and on his return to Rio de Janeiro (1986), and practised in international TO workshops. Through these multiple points of access, actors and non-actors in diverse contexts have been actively encouraged or otherwise motivated to take up Invisible Theatre as a means of representing and challenging specific social issues, including adult illiteracy, homelessness, homophobia, racism, sexual harassment, and unemployment. Acknowledging that these issues are produced and reproduced through the myriad interactions that constitute the social space of the urban, Invisible Theatre regards the city as the stage upon which they may be directly addressed.

Yet, despite the international reach and range of Invisible Theatre, there has
been astonishingly little critical theoretical engagement with the technique, leading German theatre critic Martin Maria Kohtes, in 1993, to declare Invisible Theatre an ‘overlooked form’.\(^{16}\) The theoretical and methodological discussion that follows plots the infrequent appearance of Invisible Theatre in the performance and art historical literatures since then to highlight the lack of any sustained attention to the practice. This gap is particularly striking given the broad academic interest in Boal’s TO practice across a range of disciplines, from theatre studies to social anthropology.\(^ {17}\) Paradoxically, however, Boal’s ability to inspire a staunch following, particularly amongst community and applied theatre practitioners, seems to have had an adverse effect on opportunities for critical engagement with his methods. Not only is the majority of the existing literature written from the perspective of those who continue to practise TO, but a close allegiance to Boal and his often dogmatic thinking can make it difficult for outsiders to advance an effective critique. The risk is that this leads to the practice becoming entrenched, even as TO itself developed out of Boal’s critical re-evaluation of theatrical forms according to his shifting contexts, as this thesis shows.

The tendency for TO researchers to defer to Boal’s interpretation of his practice may also explain why the acclaimed technique of Forum Theatre is so prominent in current debates, with Invisible Theatre more or less relegated to a footnote. This partly reflects TO’s development, with Forum Theatre coming after and effectively superseding Invisible Theatre:

> In Invisible Theatre the spectator is transformed into a protagonist in the action, a spect-actor, without ever being aware of it… That is why it is essential to go further, and make the audience participants in a dramatic action, but in complete consciousness of the reason.\(^ {18}\)

Boal’s introduction to Forum Theatre as an attempt to resolve the unconsciousness of Invisible Theatre participants hints at a possible reason for Invisible Theatre’s peripheral status amongst TO practitioners and scholars. His accounts of Invisible Theatre repeatedly emphasise the opportunity for its chance audiences to


\(^{17}\) Boal’s practice is the subject of a number of anthologies that convey the diversity of academic interest in TO, including Zeca Ligiéro, Licko Turle and Clara de Andrade, eds. *Augusto Boal: Arte, Pedagogia e Política* (Rio de Janeiro: MAUAD, 2013); Jan Cohen-Cruz and Mady Schutzman, eds. *A Boal Companion: Dialogues on theatre and cultural politics* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz, eds. *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 1994).

intervene, unimpeded by theatre’s divisive ‘fourth wall’. The highly ambiguous and, for many, problematic relationship to the audience this implies runs counter to the logic of alienation as a means of consciousness-raising established by Brecht.19

Boal’s methods have received comparatively scant attention within art histories of urban performance, an oversight this thesis aims to address. For Bishop (2012), however, the ambiguity of Invisible Theatre is precisely what recommends it as the ‘hidden precursor’ to contemporary urban performances that ‘operate unannounced and unframed by a gallery apparatus’ and therefore frequently go unnoticed as art.20 Bishop’s suggestion corresponds to my own initial encounter with Boal’s theatrical methods through my performance practice, after being questioned about the formal similarities between my work and Invisible Theatre by an actor participating in Catherine Day (London, 2008), a delegated performance for CCTV staged on the London underground.21 Part II of this thesis (Practice) presents other examples, including Pinned Landscape (Seoul, 2010), Conversation Piece (London, 2010), and Murmuration (Birmingham, 2013; Montreal, 2014). Each of these projects involved unmarked performances inserted into their urban and gallery contexts as part of my sustained artistic inquiry into the performative dimension of the city and surveillance technologies, the social and political potentialities of art, and the contingency of the audience. Much like Invisible Theatre, they were all more or less disruptive, figuring as attempts to use performance to subvert the social cues and directions imbricated into the built environment. The insertion of performative texts into the main thesis – including narrative accounts of some of these works – might be understood as a variation on this strategy, as discussed in the theoretical and methodological section that follows this introduction.

In returning to Boal’s TO method, my specific aims for this practice-related thesis are therefore two-fold: firstly, to contribute to the existing knowledge of Invisible Theatre as an historic model of urban performance, advancing a critical analysis of the practice and its spatial contexts to draw out questions of social justice in art and urbanism; secondly, to test the aims of my practice against Boal’s model and iteratively engage the research process to develop new performative strategies attentive to local and transnational urban struggles, particularly

19 Brecht writes, ‘At no moment must [the actor] go so far as to be wholly transformed into the character played.’ Bertolt Brecht, ‘A Short Organum for the Theatre’ in Brecht on Theatre, ed. and trans. John Willett, 193; Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed, 86-90.
20 Bishop, Artificial Hells, 126.
21 For Catherine Day (2008), a single character played by a tag-team of 36 actors waited on an underground platform for 12 hours, from 07:00-19:00. The role of Catherine Day was based on the woman depicted in Paul Day’s monumental sculpture, The Kiss (2008), which had been recently installed in St. Pancras’ main station concourse.

Bishop’s description of Invisible Theatre as ‘hidden’ highlights a central methodological concern of this research in terms of the limited opportunities for encountering historic performances in a critical capacity, leading to a reliance in the existing literatures on Boal’s autobiographical accounts of his practice (see Theoretical Directions). This issue is particularly pronounced in relation to the earliest examples of Invisible Theatre, with the perceived risks of Boal’s discovery in exile effectively preventing other forms of documentation. My research into the first known performance, RESTAURANT TEATRO: ‘La Ley’ [RESTAURANT THEATRE: ‘The Law’] (Buenos Aires, 1972), addresses this limitation by setting Boal’s memory and interpretation of events within their wider spatial and political contexts. Boal suggests that RESTAURANT TEATRO: ‘La Ley’ was intended to raise awareness of a law entitling Argentinian citizens without means to eat in any restaurant free of charge. Chapter Two tests this claim, combining original research into Argentine legal history, primary sources including newspaper reports and interviews, and an investigation of the conflicting spatial imaginaries projected onto the city of Brasília to trace the emergence of Invisible Theatre through Boal’s exile, against the backdrop of the Brazilian military regime.

The intention to move beyond Boal’s dominant narrative and critically question his aims and approach informed the selection of other historic case studies for analysis in my thesis, in part reflecting the availability of archival materials for critical comparison with his accounts. As well as the Acervo August Boal (Augusto Boal Archive) – which was in the process of being catalogued having been transferred to Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) prior to my visit in 2013 – I consulted the informal library of CTO-Rio and the holdings of the VRT Documentatie & Archieven, Broadcasting Centre, Brussels in the course of this study. A signal contribution of this thesis as a result is the unprecedented critical attention it gives to audio-visual materials relating to televised examples of Invisible Theatre created in Liège (1978) and Rio de Janeiro (1986). The mediatisation of these examples marks them out as unusual in relation to other performances, such as those described in Games for Actors and Non-Actors and Stop! C’est Magique, taking place in cities across Europe. In their representation of Invisible Theatre for television audiences, they raise key questions in my thesis and practice about the

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22 See Boal, Hamlet, 303-305.
23 See Boal, Stop! C’est Magique, 95-146; Boal, Games for Actors and Non-Actors.
spatial contingencies of performative participation, the technological interpolation of the city, and the substantive role of the media in conveying urban imaginaries.

Another factor determining the selection of case studies concerns the relationship between my thesis and practice. In undertaking to challenge and develop my own urban performance practice, the rapid urban development of Stratford, London and the mediatised image of the area’s transformation from post-industrial ‘dodgy wasteland’ to ‘Olympic city’ provided the immediate setting for this research.\(^{24}\) The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games gave political impetus to already existing plans to redevelop East London, and they have continued to shape the urban according to a corporate vision – that of the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) – articulated through the spatial narrative of London 2012 legacy. This backdrop of Olympic-led urbanisation suggested opportunities for comparative analysis in my thesis with historic and recent performances of Rio de Janeiro leading up to the FIFA World Cup (2014) and the Olympic and Paralympic Games (2016). Consequently, a number of other major urban centres for the continuing practice of TO, such as Paris, feature less prominently in this study, although the conversations I had with practitioners affiliated to the Centre du Théâtre l’Oprimé during a brief visit in May 2016 helped to clarify my understanding of Invisible Theatre in practice.

The majority of my research into contemporary Latin American urban performance practices was conducted during a research trip to Brazil and Argentina between October and November 2013, which centred on my participation in an international residency programme offered by the Centro de Teatro do Oprimido, Rio de Janeiro (henceforth, CTO-Rio). In line with the aims of the organisation as a centre for training in TO techniques, I was encouraged to attend and actively participate in two regular TO groups: one involving patients of the public psychiatric hospital, Niterói, a city in the state of Rio de Janeiro; and another with young people in Maré, a favela in Rio de Janeiro’s North Zone. This experience afforded me valuable insights into the uses of Forum Theatre to engage and support specific and vulnerable social groups, and more broadly into the institutional and urban settings for TO. That this work is not directly addressed in the chapters that follow is by no means to diminish its importance and CTO-Rio’s continuing commitment to strengthening communities. Rather, it reflects my distinct focus on Invisible Theatre, which I discovered occupies a relatively minor role in CTO-Rio’s continuing practice.

In a generous effort to facilitate my research, the coordinators had programmed a three-day Invisible Theatre workshop to coincide with my residency. However, the workshop was cancelled due to a lack of wider take up. Chapter Four addresses the possible reasons for this wider disengagement through a set of unstructured interviews conducted with the CTO-Rio curingas (TO workshop leaders, also frequently referred to as jokers) during my residency, concentrating on their prior experience as practitioners using Invisible Theatre techniques.

The timing of my research trip in 2013 coincided with a particularly intense period of political unrest in Rio de Janeiro and across Brazil, with bus fare rises in São Paulo (June 2013) catalysing nationwide urban uprisings on a scale that has drawn comparison since with the 1968 student-led protests against the Brazilian military regime. The immediacy of these performative demonstrations and the spatial conflicts they represent is expressed in the selection and discussion of urban performances by artists and collectives, Eleanora Fabião, Movimento Cidades Invisíveis and Grupo Etcétera in Chapter Four. To the extent they operate beyond conventional gallery and studio structures, contemporary modes of urban performances pose many of the same challenges for research as Invisible Theatre. Aside from the difficulty of being in the right place at the right time to encounter the practice in situ, by chance, there is also the issue of identification. How does one determine where the art practice ends and the city begins? I have adopted two main approaches to negotiating this problem of seeing urban performance: firstly, relying on artist networks and word of mouth to find out about planned events, thereby assuming the role of informed insider and reducing the opportunity for a chance encounter with the work; secondly, through giving critical attention to performative representations, including artists’ texts and performance lectures that seek to convey the affective dimension of the spatial practices they describe, as well as more conventional forms of photographic and audio-visual documentation, and artist interviews. For the most part, my analysis of the urban performances discussed in Chapter Four is based on their serial representations within gallery contexts, during artist talks, and online, as well as in personal correspondence and interviews given to me by the artists. However, participating in the urban interventions strand of the Hemispheric Encuentro, Montreal (2014) alongside Fabião provided an unexpected opportunity to witness her intimate performances of the city in person.

The gap between my research and analysis of these urban performances reflects the intermittent interruptions of this study for parental leave (2012, 2017)

and to take up alternative employment in the railway industry (2015-2016). This highlights a potential limitation in the absence of more recent urban performative engagements with Invisible Theatre, for example, through the important work into art and activism currently taking place at UFRJ under the direction of performance scholar, Alessandra Vannucci.26 My hope is that my research will cast new light on the social, political and spatial contexts for these current practices.

In another sense, however, being interrupted has enabled my thinking and practice to develop in unanticipated ways. It is questionable whether I would have become involved with the Focus E15 campaign were it not for meeting the families concerned as a local parent of a child the same age. Named after the hostel for young, homeless people in Stratford, East London where its core members met, Focus E15 organised in 2013 following attempts by local authorities to evict the women and babies living there. The campaign has been active since in calling attention to the lack of social housing provision in the post-Olympic borough of Newham and across London. The friendships that developed between my daughter and the children previously resident in Focus E15 also provided me with a space to continue developing my thinking and practice in the absence of affordable childcare and structural support, for which I remain enormously grateful. My activities with the campaign are discussed in Chapter Five alongside the digitally-networked performances, Contra Band (2014) and Contracorrente/Upstream (2016), both of which took place concurrently in the Floating Cinema, London and CASA 24, Rio de Janeiro, as transnational, intraurban performances. More obliquely perhaps, though I suggest no less significantly, working logistically to allocate engineering resources for the development of urban infrastructures as a Network Rail employee afforded certain practical advantages in terms of the planning and coordination required to ‘make a scene’ across these differentiated locations and time zones. Reflecting on the ways in which screen-based and digital communications technologies simultaneously enabled and disrupted these attempts to create a space of transcultural encounter, the thesis returns to the technological infrastructures of the urban to explore the potential for urban performance to exceed the social, cultural and political boundaries of either city.

Ultimately, the present work conveys an iterative process of thinking through Invisible Theatre to reframe questions around urban performance in my practice. It does not seek definitive answers about the extent to which Invisible Theatre and more recent arts practices may be understood to have altered their social and urban

sites. Aside from the challenges of identifying art's specific contribution to broader social and political shifts, particularly when considering performances that explicitly resist recognition as art, my research aims call for more speculative approaches. The point here is neither to rehearse Boal's methods, nor his politics per se. Rather, this thesis stages a critical encounter with Invisible Theatre to realise opportunities in my practice for performing the urban now, differently.

Plan of the Thesis

The following section of Chapter One, Setting the Scene – Theoretical Directions surveys the existing literatures on Invisible Theatre and urban performance within performance and theatre studies, art history and urban studies to identify a gap in the current understanding of Invisible Theatre as a spatial, and specifically urban practice. Bringing the art historical and performative discourse around art in urban settings into contact with spatial theories of urban and transcultural encounter, I set out a conceptual and methodological framework for addressing this gap through my research.

Chapter Two, Locating Invisible Theatre investigates the social, political and spatial circumstances leading up to Boal’s first known Invisible Theatre performance, RESTAURANT TEATRO: La Ley (Buenos Aires, 1972). Linking this theatrical development to the spatial politics of the military regime in Brazil, as a performative mode of camouflage, the chapter considers Invisible Theatre as a reaction to and expression of a militaristic urban imaginary. This imaginary is explored through the city of Brasilia and its shifting significance in the national imagination to becoming a symbol of authoritarianism, as the backdrop to Boal’s practice in exile.

Chapter Three, Mediated Space: Invisible Theatre and the Television Audience advances a critical analysis of two performances created by Boal for television broadcast in Belgium (1978) and Rio de Janeiro (1986) to provide original insights into Invisible Theatre as a model of urban performance in practice, both in terms of the spaces it has engaged and its immediate social effects. Comparing and contrasting the social relations and conflicts conveyed through the broadcast media with Boal’s autobiographical accounts of the same performances calls his spatial imagination into question, indicating the limits and potentialities for performing
Invisible Theatre after Boal.

Chapter Four, After Augusto Boal: What Remains? considers some of the different ways contemporary practitioners have taken up the model of Invisible Theatre for contesting dominant modes of urbanisation and encounter in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires. Through a discussion of CTO-Rio’s practice and performances by Eleanora Fabião, Movimento Cidades Invisíveis and Grupo Etcetera, I identify two broad approaches: the first regarding TO as relatively fixed and resolved in seeking to multiply Boal’s methods; and the second acknowledging Invisible Theatre as a creative provocation to develop new performative strategies for engaging the urban and immediate social and political struggles. Highlighting the impossibility of returning to the spatial and political scene of Invisible Theatre, my thesis aligns with the second approach.

Chapter Five, Making a Scene in London and Rio de Janeiro reflects on my attempts to use the model of Invisible Theatre and engage the research process to connect local and transnational urban struggles engendered through the Olympic developments of London and Rio de Janeiro in my practice. Specifically, this chapter discusses the digitally-networked, intraurban performances Contra Band (2014) and Contracorrente/Upstream (2016), both commissioned by UP Projects for the Floating Cinema (London) and CASA 24 (Rio de Janeiro), alongside my activism with the Focus E15 campaign for social housing in Stratford, London. Giving focus to the ambiguities, contradictions and spatial conflicts within and across these projects, I return to Massey to argue for methods of performance and criticism attentive to the spatial relations that construct them.

Conclusion: Towards a Model of Intraurban Performance

The separately bound volume, Part II: Practice presents a selection of my own work created between 2010-2018 to plot the development of my practice through the research and highlight points of intersection and diversion from the main argument. The digital media that accompanies the portfolio includes audio-visual works and documentation of performances, where available, including edited highlights from the live streams of Contra Band and Contracorrente/Upstream discussed in Chapter Five.
An unforeseen encounter


Their tents are pitched like at a festival, but the banners scream at the passing traffic: CAPITALISM IS CRISIS. OCCUPY!

The ones who have been here all night move about the site easily. Near me, a door is unzipped. The guy inside is still in his sleeping bag. He catches me looking. I look away. Across from where I’m standing, a marquee emblazoned with TENT CITY UNIVERSITY shields sleepers from the road. Relieved to have somewhere to be, I pick my way, awkwardly, across the square, and glance down the chalkboard list of speakers. I check my phone. Doreen Massey’s on next.

I didn’t know she would be here. I wait.

‘Of course, we shouldn’t really be here!’ Massey proclaims. ‘All of us, all this should be in Bank.’ She explains how the corporate privatisation of land outside the London Stock Exchange frustrated attempts to set up camp there, and that the support of the Church resulted in a displacement. She talks about the city as a site of constant struggle, its concentrations of global wealth and the risks of complacency. She describes space as social in ways that are already familiar to me as a reader, but now her words are holding us here together. In this place, her ideas connect differently.
Massey’s concept of the unforeseen encounter acknowledges the intrinsic performativity of the spatial as social production, and engages performance as a metaphor and practical method for the radical reimagining of social relations through the urban. This aligns her thinking with Invisible Theatre, as a model of urban performance that aims to excite the dramatic conflict of the city to transform society in the direction of the liberation of the oppressed. My thesis investigates this area of productive overlap in theory and practice, advancing an interpretation of Invisible Theatre informed by performative analyses of the urban as a way of locating and moving beyond Boal’s practice.

I begin here by establishing a set of conceptual and methodological coordinates for the chapters that follow. Starting with Massey, the first part of this discussion traces the idea that dominant social relations are projected onto the built environment and that performance offers a means of conveying alternative spatial imaginaries through theories of urban and transcultural encounter. Where Massey emphasises the potential for performance practices to invigorate the chance of the spatial, looking to urban theorist Peter Marcuse reveals how the inequality of access to differentiated urban ‘layers’ may operate to limit this potential in practice. In Brazil, modernist Oswald de Andrade’s (1928) concept of cannibalism as a model of transcultural encounter negotiated through the consumption of the dominant culture suggests this risk extends beyond the limits of any one city, contingent on global geometries of power. Reflecting on the implications of this for my research encounter between Rio de Janeiro and London, urban geographer Jennifer Robinson’s methodology of comparative urbanism opens up possibilities for situated comparison across these differentiated spatial contexts through the urban vernacular. In turn, emphasising the technological connections between geographically disparate locations through the performance staging urbanism of mediated events such as the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup complicates any assumptions about urban performance as inherently subversive.

In using performative analyses of the urban to think through Boal’s model of Invisible Theatre, this research builds on an existing framework for analysing art in urban settings. The second part of my discussion addresses this discourse, linking it back to the ground-breaking publication of US cultural critic Rosalyn Deutsche’s *Evictions: art and spatial politics* (1996). Tracing Deutsche’s influence through contemporary critics including Bishop and Malcolm Miles, I show how her critique based in the urban development of 1980s New York continues to shape contemporary debates around the capacities for artists to contest processes of urbanisation and encounter in the UK. Specifically, I argue the assessment criteria *Evictions* established operates problematically to polarise arts practices as either complicit or else challenging (never both) in relation to dominant narratives of culture-led urban development. Bishop positions her discussion of South American participatory art, including Invisible Theatre, as an attempt to counteract the dominance of the US and Europe within this field. Developing a critique that I originally advanced as a contributor to the journal, *darkmatter*, I suggest that she falls short in realising this aim at both the methodological and epistemological level through failing to challenge the oppositional terms of the overarching debate.

Against Bishop’s emphasis on aesthetics, I propose opening up the existing analytic framework through theories of urban encounter as a means of exploring the profound ambivalence of urban performance practices including Invisible Theatre.

My specific focus on the spatiality of Invisible Theatre as a model of urban performance sets my research apart from the majority of the existing literature around TO. In the final part of this chapter, I survey the literatures on Invisible Theatre within two related disciplines, though with surprisingly few crossovers between them: namely, (1) theatre and applied performance, and (2) art history and criticism. In the first group, I include theatre historians, TO practitioners and educators whose historical analyses and reporting on practice suggest opportunities for advancing a spatial theoretical critique of Invisible theatre. A continuing source of speculation within this field concerns the extent to which Boal’s model of urban performance was influenced by equivalent practices emerging from the US, something Boal vehemently denied. Meanwhile, doubts about the efficacy of

31 Deutsche, *Evictions*.
32 Bishop, *Artificial Hells*; Miles, *Limits to Culture*.
Boal’s methods raised by practitioners with direct experience of the technique challenge his claims to liberate the oppressed, raising key questions for my thesis about the spatial effects of historic performances of Invisible Theatre. By contrast, art histories of urban performance tend to accept Boal’s account of his practice, holding Invisible Theatre up as an historic model for critical comparison with contemporary urban arts practices. Here, I offer an extended critique of Bishop’s interpretation of Invisible Theatre in *Artificial Hells* – as the signal contribution to the field to date – to reveal inaccuracies and gaps in understanding in terms of how Invisible theatre imagines and engages the urban, undermining the basis of her comparison. These gaps are addressed in my thesis through bringing together debates and approaches from across art history, performance studies and urbanism to contribute to the knowledge of Invisible Theatre as a spatial practice and a model of urban performance for disrupting dominant spatial narratives.

**Stage: The Urban as Performed**

Performative analyses of the urban emphasise the potential for urban actors to exercise their agency and resist oppression through everyday acts of self-actualisation. Against the singular, aerial perspective of the urban plan, performance offers spatial theory a way of conceiving the urban as *lived*; as messy, affective, contested, contingent, and crucially therefore, as open to the possibility of change. This line of thought finds an important precedent in French spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre’s vision of the street as ‘a form of spontaneous theatre,’ in which the individual becomes ‘spectacle and spectator, and sometimes an actor.’ The tacit reference to Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle* (1968) continues Lefebvre’s long-standing dialogue with the situationists, whose *dérives* through the city of Paris are generally considered to be the prototype of urban performance. This first part of the discussion draws out the metaphor of performance as a means of resistance through spatial theories of urban encounter. Focussing on urban geographers and spatial theorists who engage the performative to convey the social dimension of the city, I indicate opportunities for thinking Invisible Theatre through theories of encounter, as a practical method of spatial political engagement.


Following Lefebvre, Massey has argued that the way social groups imagine and represent the spatial is inherently political, reflecting local and global power geometries. In demonstrating this idea, she points to world maps that locate Europe at their centre as a representation and expression of Imperial dominion and militaristic global expansion. While Massey acknowledges that these ‘Western’ maps position the unseen observer above the object of their gaze, she contends that ‘not all views from above are problematical’. French spatial theorist Michel de Certeau established a vertical hierarchy by looking down from the top of the World Trade Centre to the city streets below, but Massey resists aligning the dominant spatial imagination with any singular viewpoint. Dominance here refers to the idea that a convergence and negotiation of intersecting interests leads to social relations, beliefs and behaviours becoming entrenched in ways that obscure their construction, causing them to appear universal, given. Invisible Theatre, which engages issues such as class inequality, racism and sexism, can be understood as attempting to reveal and challenge these hegemonic positions. For Massey, however, Western maps foreclose this performative potential by severing space from time as a stabilising operation of colonial power. This is what makes them so problematic in her view, namely, that in representing space as navigable for the user, they render ‘space itself’ inert, as ‘a flat surface, a continuous surface,’ ordered, coherent and fixed.

The alternative spatial imagination put forward by Massey resists closure by being with time to produce the unexpected as a site of social and political possibility. Calling upon sociologist John Lechte’s (1995) understanding of the city in terms of a generalised notion of complexity and chaos theory, she conceives of the urban as a network of myriad spatial trajectories, variously touching, intersecting, entangling, and diverging to produce sometimes intended, sometimes unforeseen encounters. In developing this key idea of the unforeseen encounter, she looks to situationist cartographies, suggesting they represent the ‘incoherences and fragmentations of the spatial’ to activate the urban as an ‘arena of possibility’. Although this argument seeks to differentiate situationist cartographies from ‘Western-style’ maps, the situationists’ maps are ‘Western’ too, documenting the group’s dérives through

38 Massey, *For Space*, 17, 100-102.
39 Ibid., 107.
41 Massey, *For Space*, 106.
the backstreets and bars of 1950s Paris. To the extent situationist cartographies illustrate an alternative urban imaginary, their reappearance in Massey’s argument serves to reinforce both the notion of urban performance as the privileged domain of political resistance, and the dominance of the situationists within the field. I propose extending Massey’s thinking to Invisible Theatre as a way of discovering performative approaches more closely aligned with her radical spatial imagination. There has been little attention to Invisible Theatre within spatial theories of the urban, however, Ben Campkin and Ger Duijzings have indicated the relevance of Boal’s model of urban performance to the development of new ethnographic methods attentive to ‘the changing realities of contemporary cities and urban life.’

If unforeseen encounters create opportunities for spaces to emerge beyond the dominance of existing relations, Massey acknowledges they are unevenly negotiated between individuals and groups that are always already spatially differentiated. This idea can be explored further through Marcuse’s notion of the layered city. For Marcuse, thinking about the city as ‘a place occupied and used by many actors’ offers another way of challenging the reductive view of the urban plan. Instead of a singular plane, he imagines the city as composed of overlapping and intersecting fields of activity, for instance learning, labour, recreation, commerce, transportation and habitation. Taking New York as his primary example, he conceives of these stratified layers determining when and where urban actors encounter one another, and in what capacities. This spatial imagination reveals a ‘divided city,’ within which the possibilities for individuals to act are powerfully circumscribed by their relative and contingent access to the urban. As Marcuse puts it, how urban actors are regarded ‘depends on who they are and how they react.’ Whilst acting therefore emerges as a metaphor for spatial and political agency, Marcuse’s theoretical model is helpful for thinking through the possible limitations of attempts to engage urban actors through practices such as Invisible Theatre. Reading Massey together with Marcuse suggests the encounter is preceded in part by the expectations we bring to it, the identities that we assign to the other, often at first glance, and the extent to which the space of the encounter empowers or obstructs our own visible identities.

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46 Ibid. 111.
The unforeseen encounter gestures to a way around this problem of the spatial reproduction of power by disrupting the sightlines that serve to preconfigure spatial relations. This is a possibility I explore in Chapter Two to consider Invisible Theatre in its resistance to militaristic forms of urban encounter, as a performative mode of camouflage. For architectural theorist, Neal Leach, camouflage is not a denial of the self, rather he considers it as ‘an interface with the world’ that contributes to a sense of self. Turning to the figure of the actor, Leach imagines adapting to different spaces leaves its mark on the shifting identity of the individual:

The actor, whether or not she or he adopts a physical ‘disguise,’ subscribes to the logic of camouflage. Yet it is not as though there is some originary self concealed beneath the assumed self. What has been concealed is itself an amalgam of previous assumed selves, which have left their mark...as positions that have been either rejected or embraced. The actor will always be conditioned to some extent by the roles that she or he has played.

Leach therefore indicates how the urban ‘inscribes’ itself on the social, whilst emphasising the agency of the actor in ‘rejecting’ or ‘embracing’ the identities she adopts to articulate camouflage as a means of identity production. Cuban-American performance and queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz touches on a similar idea in relating camouflage to the construction of queer identities. In a chapter discussing Andy Warhol’s day-glo Camouflage Self-Portrait (1987) – in which the subject’s face appears veiled by the woodland camouflage pattern of the US military – Muñoz draws out an alternative understanding of camouflage as a natural abstraction. This leads to him reading the painting as an image in which, ‘the natural world...is rendered impossible’. Where Leach problematically downplays the implications of camouflage as a military technique, Muñoz emphasises the militaristic associations of camouflage and the personal discomfort this elicits to suggest how Warhol’s ‘queering’ of camouflage operates critically to ‘call the natural into question’. Camouflage is similarly associated with hegemonic power in the postcolonial theories of Homi Bhabha (1994). In discussing the British colonisation of India, he highlights the uses of mimicry and camouflage as mechanisms of colonial occupation and control. Thereby linking the deception and concealment of

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48 On camouflage as a performative strategy, see Ann Elias, Ross Harley and Nicholas Tsoutas, eds. Camouflage Cultures: Beyond the Art of Disappearance (Australia: Sydney University Press, 2015).
50 Ibid., 247.
52 Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 85-92.
camouflage to the project of Empire, Bhabha calls the distance between Western maps and the unforeseen encounter in Massey’s thinking into question. Seen another way, the unforeseen encounter could equally be an ambush.

A significant precedent in Brazil for negotiating this kind of unforeseen encounter with colonial power is Oswald de Andrade’s Anthropogafic Manifesto (1928).\(^{53}\) Articulating cannibalism as a metaphor of cultural consumption and production that simultaneously acknowledges and subverts the dominance of the coloniser, de Andrade’s manifesto anticipates Bhabha’s thinking on colonial ambivalence. Dunn has traced de Andrade’s particular influence on the development of tropicálism in Brazil during the 1960s, a movement, he points out, that Boal publicly and vociferously rejected as ‘bourgeois,’ ‘inarticulate’ and ‘imported’.\(^{54}\) He notes that, ‘the “politically correct” stance of Augusto Boal...found little common ground with the anarchic and ironic attitude of the tropicalists.’\(^{55}\) However, architectural theorists Elisabetta Andreoli and Adrian Forty argue that the model of transculturation established through de Andrade’s manifesto served to link Brazilian modernism across the arts and architecture to the pursuit of a ‘national project,’ reflecting a patriotic nationalism that I suggest is only differently expressed in Boal’s anxiety about ‘imported’ forms.\(^{56}\) This is an idea that I take up in Chapter Two to explore the relationship between Invisible Theatre and the dominant spatial imaginary conveyed through Brasília, as an exemplar of modernist urbanisation both within Brazil and internationally.

In 2005, Brazilian artist Michael Melamed set out a critique of cultural cannibalism with his performative concept of regurgitofagia: ‘we have already swallowed too many things’; ‘we should vomit the excess and evaluate what, in fact, we want to swallow back.’\(^{57}\) Melamed’s suggestion to ‘regurgitate’ anthropogaphic forms of modernism can be understood in relation to wider moves to decolonise Latin American culture and systems of thought. Theories of decoloniality emerging from Latin America consider that the postcolonial project advanced by Bhabha failed at the epistemological level in deferring to hegemonic Eurocentric paradigms and Western scholarship. For ethnographer Ramón Grosfoguel (2011), this has led to the speaking subject of postcolonial theory being ‘hidden, concealed, erased’ from their analysis in ways that tacitly reinforce the racial, cultural, political and

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\(^{53}\) de Andrade, ‘Cannibalist Manifesto’.

\(^{54}\) Christopher Dunn, Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

\(^{55}\) Ibid, 83.


\(^{57}\) Michael Melamed, Regurgitofagia. (Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2005).
economic superiority of Eurocentric power.\textsuperscript{58} This criticism points to the continuing disparity between the Global North and South as a result of European colonial expansion and modernisation, referred to by Grosfoguel as ‘coloniality’ and by Massey in terms of ‘power geometries’.\textsuperscript{59} Grosfoguel proposes a decolonial epistemology that takes the insights of critical thinkers from the Global South seriously in ‘thinking from and with subalternized racial/ethnic/sexual spaces and bodies’ (my italics) as a means of challenging the uneven effects of coloniality. However, recognising that ‘different places have distinct positions within the wider power-geometries of the global’, Massey emphasises the impact of this positioning on individual opportunities for political intervention, responsibility, and cultural participation.\textsuperscript{60} The concerns this may raise about where criticism is located and who is able to engage in critique speak to my interest in Invisible Theatre as a provocation to social discourse through the urban, while also calling me to reflect on my relationship to the subject and role as a researcher. In setting out to negotiate a performance-based encounter between my home city of London and Rio de Janeiro, how might I resist reinforcing existing geometries of power through the thesis?

One solution Massey has proposed is to adopt an attitude of ‘supportive engagement’ through ‘learning from the progressive experiments in Latin America’ as positive models, instead of ‘expending...energy on constant critique’.\textsuperscript{61} There are two notable contexts for this suggestion: first, and most immediate, is her joining the search for a practical ‘way out for the left’ to challenge the dominant narrative of austerity in the immediate aftermath of the global banking crisis; second, though no less significant, is Massey’s own ‘supportive engagement’ with Hugo Chávez’s government in Venezuela. In 2007, Massey’s concept of power geometries was instated as one of five motors of the Bolivarian Revolution. As she acknowledges, this political application of theory involved the substantive transformation of her concept into a model for enabling direct forms of democratic participation.\textsuperscript{62} Her recommendation to look to Latin America for practical solutions to a global crisis

\textsuperscript{60} Massey, \textit{For Space}, 102.
\textsuperscript{61} Doreen Massey, ‘Learning from Latin America’ in \textit{Soundings}, 50, no.11, April (2012): 131.
should therefore be understood as a reciprocal manoeuvre in relation to this broader set of theoretical and political commitments.

While I recognise in Massey’s writing a desire to convey respect, I question her underlying implication that critique necessarily precludes supportive engagement. The model of studio critique developed through critical art pedagogies is one example that suggests the potential for supporting practice through a form of peer review that need not imply the uneven relationship of ‘expert/novice’. 63 Another concern hinges on the meaning of ‘learning from’. If what Massey is advocating here amounts to the (re-)appropriation of Latin American social models for use in the ‘West,’ it seems uncertain whether that would lead to the redistribution of existing power geometries. Aside from the question of whether social models can be relocated across differentiated spatial contexts, and to what extent, another factor to consider is how the transfer of knowledge takes place – with what resources, and in whose interests? In considering what it might mean to ‘learn from’ in this respect, I look to Robinson’s conceptualisation of ‘comparative urbanism’ as a methodology for ‘thinking through elsewhere.’ 64 For Robinson, acknowledging the locatedness of all theorisation opens up possibilities for comparison across differentiated cities through the urban vernacular. Recalling Walter Benjamin’s concept of the ‘now’ as an analytic constellation of past events, 65 Robinson imagines ‘an infinity of possible urban analytical constellations generated across time and space.’ 66 She conceives of a more global urban theory: ‘beginning anywhere...but emerging through building connections with and identifying differentiations across other instances.’ For Robinson, the results of such comparison would remain open to revision, provisional, and modest, thereby resisting the totalising narratives that Grosfoguel wants to denounce. 67 In seeking to performatively engage London and Rio de Janeiro through learning from Invisible Theatre, my aims align more closely with Robinson’s connective, generative and iterative approach.

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63 See Philip Motley, Nancy Chick and Emily Hipchen, ‘A Conversation about Critique as a Signature Pedagogy in the Arts and Humanities’ in *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 16, no.3 (2017): 223-228.
64 Robinson, ‘Thinking Cities through Elsewhere: Comparative tactics for a more global urban studies’, 3-29.
Massey’s suggestion that global relations are differently and unevenly articulated through the urban at the local level has further implications for this project, both in realising local opportunities for transnational performance and in anticipating how audiences in either city might react. This touches on another important aspect of the unforeseen encounter as an affective phenomenon. Defining affect as that which moves; as ‘intensities,’ ‘lines of force,’ and ‘motion,’ urban theorist Nigel Thrift (2008) proposes a nonrepresentational theory of the urban that concentrates on performance as a field of affective experience. Calling on US performance theorist Peggy Phelan’s (1993) definition of performance as that which ‘becomes itself through disappearance’ and therefore non-representable, he suggests performance simultaneously refers to and operates through spaces of nonrepresentational affect. For Thrift, this creates an opportunity for using performance to ‘lay hold of and produce the moment’ through the urban. However, his argument relies on a fallacious construction. Assuming that affect is not representation and performance cannot be represented says nothing of the relationship between performance and affect. Further, the theory of performance as ‘presence’ on which he bases this argument has been widely contested and revised in recent years, not least for its failure to account for the integration of recording technologies within contemporary performance practices. As Phelan has subsequently pointed out, her suspicion of visibility as ‘a trap’ reflects her context of the 1980s US, as a rejection of commodity fetishism and a critique of identity politics as a struggle for visibility. Writing in the different context of Latin America, where disappearance is recognised as part of the apparatus of military power, Taylor has inverted Phelan’s formulation in recognition that, ‘disappearance, as Latin American activists and artists know full well, becomes itself through performance’. This is a crucial distinction for investigating the relationship between Invisible Theatre and the Brazilian military regime.

70 Thrift, Non-Representational Theory, 124.
71 See Philip Auslander, Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 159; also, Rebecca Schneider’s excellent discussion of how the notion that performance disappears became established through a dominant US discourse in Rebecca Schneider, Performing Remains: art and war in times of theatrical reenactment (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 87-110.
In a bid to emphasise the irreducible and nonrepresentational dimension of affect, Thrift rejects the notion that individual emotions can be used to decipher the political potential of the city. However, writing about São Paulo, urban theorist Teresa Caldeira has considered affective patterns of urban segregation as a result of fear, particularly as a response to criminality. Meanwhile, the existing literature on affect points towards shame as particularly relevant to spatial theory, as a social emotion that determines relationships between individuals and delineates socio-political boundaries. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick touches on the performative and spatial aspects of shame when she considers how, ‘as a hyperreflexivity of the surface of the body, [shame] can turn one inside out – or outside in.’ The performative visibility of shame simultaneously exposes the individual and overwhelsms them, rendering them invisible. For cultural theorist Sara Ahmed, ‘emotions are not ‘in’ either the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects.’ She imagines shame as sticky, adhering to objects of disgust and passing from body to body, between bodies, to produce powerful political and spatial effects. The metaphor of stickiness allows her to describe how disgust and shame operate within a visual economy to cohere individuals into racialised groups and spatially exclude them, for instance, those who ‘look Muslim or Middle-Eastern’ on the streets of the US post-9/11. In analysing performances of Invisible Theatre for television and the affective responses they elicit, these interpretations of emotion can provide clues about the spatial effects of Invisible Theatre that challenge Boal’s narrative.

In giving attention to the social production and affective performance of the spatial, theories of urban encounter offer a constellation of concepts and approaches for investigating the spatial imaginaries embodied in urban performance practices like Invisible Theatre. Yet, the notion of performance as the privileged domain of resistance to dominant modes of urbanisation that emerges through spatial theory tends to negate certain aspects of performance itself, notably the relative status and positioning of the audience that performance implies. Though Leach touches on the way an actor’s identity may become modified for the part,

there is little consideration in the existing literature of the ambiguous and frequently shifting power dynamics that performing explicitly *for* an audience entails. These are issues I address in relation to the audiences of Invisible Theatre, whether encountering the practice unknowingly in the city, or via its media representations.

As UK-based performance theorist Jen Harvie has observed, performative analyses of the urban also overwhelmingly downplay the ways in which performance has been powerfully incorporated into dominant urban imaginaries. She suggests:

> We might also think of ceremonies for the inaugurating presidents, opening parliaments and launching new shopping malls or ‘flagship’ stores. Such events coercively legitimate the object they honour precisely by celebrating it publicly in a ritual that virtually *demands* audience cooperation and consensus. (My italics.)

The modernist city of Brasília is a signal example of this type of performance-staging urbanism. Art historian and urban theorist Richard Williams (2009) discusses the building of Brasília and its inauguration on 21st April 1960 as an ‘event on a global scale’, which thrust Brazil into the international spotlight and occasioned a performance by the pope in the form of a special Mass for radio. Sporting mega-events including the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the FIFA World Cup also feature prominently in literatures on nation-building modes of performance. For sociologist Maurice Roche, they reveal how performance is used by local powerful elites to consolidate the identity of the host nation and emphasise its claims to ‘a leading status, mission and destiny in the world international order’. He highlights the range of performative genres involved in the staging of international sporting events – ‘ritual, ceremony, drama, theatre, festival, carnival, celebration, spectacle’ – and their various effects on a local, national and international scale.

As global, multi-media spectacles, the inauguration of Brasilia, footballing World Cups and Olympic Games highlight that the built environment is interwoven with communication technologies and infrastructures extending beyond the boundaries of any one city. This is an idea I take up in the thesis to investigate the implications of televisual modes of Invisible Theatre, as well as the intraurban performances developed in my practice through digital networking technologies. As

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Roche suggests, it is not only that audio-visual technologies are used to promote mega-events, since ‘mega-events…often provided a platform for the first public display and use of some of these technologies. So from this point of view the events helped to disseminate the media.’\(^{81}\) For Brazilian urban theorists, Fábio Duarte and Rodrigo Firminho (2018), the inseparable relationship between technological and urban events reveals the city as ‘the quintessential technological arrangement of modernity.’\(^{82}\) Acknowledging the central role of modern technologies in shaping social relations and urban futures, they propose a method for interpreting cities as sociotechnical amalgamations that can also be applied to thinking through televisual modes of urban performance, including my own practice. By treating technological artefacts, such as screen-based equipment and media infrastructures, as entry points to understanding the ‘hidden under-layers’ of the city, this approach brings the social production of the spatial over time into focus.\(^{83}\)

Critics of mega-events have also revealed the ways in which these overt, national and global forms of spectacle are used to legitimate and obscure another type of powerful performance occurring at street level. Writing in the build-up to the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic events in Rio de Janeiro, performance artist Fabião reimagines the installation of the UPP (Pacifying Police Units) in the Complexo do Alemão, a complex of favelas in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro, as a ‘performative act.’\(^{84}\) For social anthropologist Loïc Wacquant, such demonstrations of force by state and private investors intent on ‘cleaning’ Rio de Janeiro ahead of the international sporting mega-events are only the most visible examples of an ongoing ‘militarisation of urban marginality’ in Brazil.\(^{85}\) Their interpretations are discussed further in relation to contemporary urban activist practices linked to Invisible Theatre.

In the different context of the UK, meanwhile, urban theorist, Anna Minton has detailed the exceptionally high levels of security and surveillance surrounding the development of the site for the London Olympics (2012) under the spectre of terrorism.\(^{86}\) For Minton, the Olympic-led development of East London under the independent planning authority of the London Legacy Development Corporation

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81 Maurice Roche, Mega-events and Modernity, 8-10.
82 Fábio Duarte and Rodrigo Firminho, Unplugging the City: The Urban Phenomenon and its Sociotechnical Controversies (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 1.
83 Ibid. 10.
(LLDC) is emblematic of a pernicious trend towards the privatisation of formerly public spaces and the erosion of democratic rights to the city, including the right to political protest. She observes that the managers of these quasi-public urban developments often want to generate the ‘buzz’ that artists and street performers create, but without the risk of disruption to their corporate image of urban sociability. As a result, she suggests, ‘they plan entertainment very carefully. Street theatre and buskers are auditioned and their performances timetabled and choreographed to take place in certain designated spots, which means that the unexpected rarely happens’ (my italics). Though Minton does not develop this critique, I consider the implications of the curatorial role taken on by private land managers from a different perspective on opportunities for creating unforeseen encounters as an artist funded by Foundation for FutureLondon to realise intraurban performances from within, and connected to, the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

An underlying question, then, concerns whether performance can be an effective means of challenging dominant urban imaginaries and processes of urbanisation? To what extent do authoritative modes of performance, as in the Complexo do Alemão, gesture to the limits of performance as a metaphor and as a practical means of resisting oppressive modes of urban encounter? Does the anxiety of land managers such as the LLDC to prevent the unexpected by vetting performance artists indicate the potential of urban performance to disrupt the status quo in terms of Massey’s unforeseen encounter? If so, how might performance artists create unforeseen encounters within the powerfully regulated spaces of the urban now? These are some of the concerns that have motivated me in looking back at Boal’s model of Invisible Theatre as a reaction to militaristic forms of spatial governance.

Scene: Urban Performance

In discussing urban performance, I refer to cultural creative performance practices that seek to challenge dominant modes of urban performativity and encounter alongside performative strategies that are powerfully incorporated into the city. While the performative analyses of the urban discussed above tend to regard performance and the arts more generally as a metaphor and method of resistance, US-based performance scholar and TO practitioner Jan Cohen-Cruz suggests the initial impulse for many artists to move out of strictly cultural spaces is a sense of frustration with the art world and its conventions of spectatorship as limiting their potential audiences. She observes the dominant rhetoric for artists engaging urban performance imagines the city positively, as ‘the gateway to the masses.’ Yet, as Taylor suggests, such a move ‘posits that society as a whole is culture – the site in which symbols and identity are forged, negotiated and contested.’ In considering the broader implications of this, art historians and performance theorists have turned to critical analyses of urban causality to highlight the potential for art to sustain the dominant social order in ways that are often tacitly assumed to contradict the intentions of the artists, cast as unwitting instruments of private developers and the state. In this section, I show how the established criteria for analysing art in urban settings tends to reinvest dominant narratives of urbanisation in categorising urban performance as either challenging or complicit. Against this model, which is dominated by the urban and performative contexts of the US, I propose a less divisive but nonetheless critical approach to urban performance, alert to its participation in the complex negotiations and ambiguities of the spatial as imagined by Massey.

The publication of US art critic Rosalyn Deutsche’s collected essays (1985-1996) as Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics (1996) provided the blueprint for current debates around art in urban settings and the responsibilities of artists for contesting dominant modes of urbanisation. Combining critical methods attentive to the social histories of art with Lefebvre’s theory of space as social production, and therefore ‘inseparable from the conflictual and uneven social relations that structure specific

91 Deutsche, Evictions.
societies at specific historical moments,’ *Evictions* aimed to show how the model of urbanisation adopted in the US since the 1980s used public art to effect spatial exclusions under the guise of social benevolence.\(^92\) Taking her cue from political theorists Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau (1985), Deutsche defines public space as the agonistic sphere in which democratic conflicts play out.\(^93\) Following this thinking, she argues the political potential of public art consists in its capacity to engender democratic conflict through creating a space where, ‘we encounter others and are presented with our existence outside ourselves’.\(^94\) This emphasis on the spatial encounter orients her discussion towards urban performance practices, with Krzysztof Wodiczko’s *Homeless Vehicle Project* (1988-1989) held up against moves by the city to exclude homeless people from the municipal parks.

Whilst Deutsche wanted to address models of urbanisation and encounter in the US, her thinking was quickly taken up by cultural critics in different contexts, for example, with Malcolm Miles (1997) articulating the difference between public art as an arena of either ‘conformity’ or ‘resistance’ to ‘dominant concepts of the city’ in the UK.\(^95\) These binary categories reflect the influence of French cultural theorist Michel de Certeau’s (1984) theory of resistance to spatial forms of oppression.\(^96\) Pitting the powerful ‘strategies’ of the urban planner against the weak ‘tactics’ of the ‘ordinary man … an ubiquitous character, walking in countless thousands on the streets,’ de Certeau’s imaginary has been widely taken to signal the radical potential of urban performance in its proximity to everyday actions and gestures.\(^97\) Like Deutsche, Miles initially looks to performance practices emerging from the US since the 1970s to speculate on the capacities of artists to resist urbanisation in the UK through urban performance. In contrast to the public monument model of public art, which he regards as a projection of national identity and therefore essentially conformist, Miles considers performance artists such as Lacy and Mierle Laderman Ukeles challenged the social fragmentations consequent on dominant narratives of urbanisation through engaging people in ‘local narratives and personal politics.’\(^98\)

\(^{92}\) Deutsche, *Evictions*, xiv.  
\(^{94}\) Deutsche, *Evictions*, 286.  
\(^{95}\) Malcolm Miles, *Art, Space and the City: Public art and urban futures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 113, 121.  
\(^{96}\) Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, x.  
\(^{98}\) Miles, *Art, Space and the City*, 113.
Miles (2015) has since modified his underlying suggestion of urban performance as necessarily synonymous with resistance. Reframing the opposition between ‘regeneration’ and ‘dissident’ art, he argues that dissident performance counteracts ‘the erasure of the alternative imaginaries which might one day be realised as a better world’.99 This proposition notably overlaps with Massey’s spatial imagination, and is an idea I take up in thinking about the potentialities of Invisible Theatre. Against this model, Miles points to the limitations of certain forms of socially-engaged art for addressing complex social problems to argue such practices have become redundant in struggles against culture-led processes of urbanisation, and further dismisses ‘delegated performance,’ involving professional or non-professional actors, for supposedly stripping performance of its political agency. Astonishingly, these claims are made despite him professing to have ‘almost no direct experience’ of such work.100 Where I agree that urban performance may not always succeed in conveying alternative spatial imaginaries, I consider the categorical rejection of certain practical models within current debates around urban performance, particularly in the UK, simultaneously underestimates the artists, their collaborators and the audiences they encounter, specifically their ability to recognise and negotiate conflicting spatial narratives.101

In further exploring the idea of the alternative imagination conveyed through urban performance within art history, US art theorist Gregory Sholette proposes a return to the scene of the 1917 October Uprisings.102 His discussion focusses on ‘interventionist’ art, defined by its ambivalent relationship to the audience in much the same terms as Invisible Theatre: ‘She or he is likely to be a non-art layperson carrying out the logic of the intervention without necessarily recognizing its artistic origins.’103 Connecting the disappearance of art into everyday life with the logic of the gift in defiance of the art market, Sholette suggests that interventionism privileges social, political and economic processes over aesthetic products. For Sholette, this is evidence of interventionism’s social usefulness and connects the activist practices of groups including Critical Art Ensemble (who notably claim Boal’s Invisible Theatre amongst their influences)104 directly to the social Productivist and Constructivist experiments of the revolutionary avant-garde.105 Interventionist urban performance is therefore aligned with the radical imagination, as an alternative to

99 Miles, Limits to Culture, 1-2.
100 Ibid. 166.
101 See also Pritchard, ‘Artwashing: Social Capital and Anti-Gentrification Activism’.
102 Sholette, ‘Interventionism and the Historical Uncanny’, 133.
103 Ibid. 136.
capitalist modes of social production. However, acknowledging the tendency for conflicting interests to become absorbed within the dominance of the marketplace and the rejection of leftist institutional frameworks in favour of more informal and fragmentary politics, Sholette asks what it means to engage revolutionary strategies after the revolution has failed.  Although he does not provide any clear answers, his question is pertinent to my project as an artist and researcher and might be reframed to incorporate the urban, as: What does it mean to engage the urban (as fragmentary, heterogeneous, unfixed) with a performance practice that emerged from and against militarised spatial oppression?

Bishop (2012) raises similar concerns about contemporary urban performance practices lacking a political project in her discussion of participatory art.  Where Sholette ultimately upholds the radical potential of interventionism, Bishop challenges the tendency to regard participation as necessarily radical through calling the assumptions underlying his argument into dispute. For Bishop, an unquestioning acceptance of Debord’s ideas about the aesthetic as synonymous with market logic and cultural hierarchy has led to uncritical and ahistorical notions about participatory art as necessarily leftist and as aligned with democratic forms of participation.  Vannucci’s (2017) discussion of new strategies in Brazilian art and activism is a notable recent example that highlights Debord’s influence in Brazil.  Asking, ‘how can art stand out as an act of resistance in our ‘société du spectacle’ saturated by a normative media that controls our everyday constructs?’ Vannucci proposes a performative method of ‘in-visability’ with marked similarities to Invisible Theatre, not least in seeking to displace actor-spectator relations. Where Vannucci looks to Europe, Bishop turns to South American and Soviet performance histories to challenge the epistemological bias within the field by demonstrating how artists throughout the twentieth century, in varied ideological contexts, discovered opportunities for acting beyond the limits of the gallery by casting audiences into their work. While the situationist dérive features in her argument as an attempt to sabotage spectacular forms of culture, practitioners such as Argentinian artist, Oscar Masotta and Boal are discussed in terms of their resistance to military dictatorship. The inclusion of Czech performance artist, Milan Knížák – for whom participation was a means of disruptively engaging individual creativity under

107 Bishop, Artificial Hells,
108 Bishop takes particular issue with Grant Kester and his emphasis on the socially ameliorative potential of art. See Grant Kester, Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
socialism – complicates any straightforward connection between participation and the revolutionary imagination to which Sholette refers. Contrasting the historic irruption of urban performance in ‘moments of political transition and upheaval’ with the state funding of participatory art in the UK context, Bishop suggests the latter represents the ultimate sublimation of participation as a powerful means of concealing shortfalls in social welfare provision.  

Bishop expresses her concern that the disavowal of the aesthetic and its replacement by ethical demands rooted in identity politics has forced artists to move outside of art’s specific locus of social and political activity. At one point, she questions whether it is fair for artists to assume responsibility for social and spatial problems – either to those with complex needs that would be better met by social care professionals, or to the artists themselves – thereby overlooking the possibility of artists operating across multiple areas of expertise. Her priority, however, is determining whether contemporary practices involved in the politics of social relations can necessarily be considered valid as ‘artistic gestures of resistance,’ insisting that such works must be assessed critically for their aesthetic as well as their socio-political effects. This establishes her methodological approach to participatory models of urban performance including Invisible Theatre, as critic and arbiter of ‘value judgments.’ Bishop sets out her assessment criteria in explicitly spatial terms of, ‘the artist’s talent for conceiving a complex work and its location within a specific time, place and situation’ (my italics).

Rather than engaging theories of place, space and the urban to develop this argument, however, Bishop looks to philosopher Jacques Rancière and his concept of the aesthetic. For Rancière, art’s socio-political potential consists in the possibility of it disrupting the ‘aesthetic regime’ of the social by altering what is seeable, sayable and possible. This idea has been influential for artists, including Hilary Powell who, along with sociologist Isaac Marrero-Guillamón, applies Rancière’s theory to rethink the Olympic legacy of London in contrast to the ‘happy, hygienic images of the future’ projected through the Games, as one of displacement. Bishop draws on Rancière in another way, to challenge the binary opposition of aesthetics/ethics and reinvest the political potential of the aesthetic within contemporary arts practice. I would question whether Rancière’s concept of the

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110 Bishop, Artificial Hells, 5.
111 Ibid. 13.
112 Ibid. 8.
aesthetic is consistent with Bishop’s critical intentions, however, particularly given his attempt to move beyond conventional ideas about the art object. For example, discussing the 1970s Community Arts movement in the UK and its redeploymen by the state as ‘social provision’, Bishop notes that ‘aesthetic quality’ was deliberately left off the agenda of the Association of Community Artists.115 She wants to argue that the social imbrication of UK community organisations like The Blackie and Inter-Action led them to compromise their artistic values, but this value judgement arguably reflects Bishop’s own refusal to see the social as aesthetic. This attitude appears contradictory in the context of Rancière’s calls for a radical revision of aesthetics as congruent with the social ‘distribution of the sensible.’ 116 In concentrating on what she perceives are the aesthetic shortcomings of socially contingent art, Bishop loses sight of the ‘neoliberal new world order’ and the fundamental challenge it poses to political forms tied to the nation-state.117

In her effort to relieve artists (and by extension critics) of ethical pressures, Bishop invokes a different set of demands, which she articulates as a productive tension between the aesthetic and the social. Much like Deutsche, the art she advocates ranges from the socially awkward, to the wilfully disruptive, and the outright exploitative (Masotta, Santiago Sierra), prompting questions about whether quieter artistic gestures might also be agonistic? In challenging the ethical/aesthetic binary, Bishop ultimately reinstates the binary opposition of complicit/challenging. However, the relationship between artists, arts practices and dominant modes of urbanisation are usually more ambivalent than these positions would imply, subject to financial pressures and broader cultural shifts, as well as social and political concerns.118 In acknowledgement of these diverse and sometimes contradictory motivations, this thesis engages theories of urban encounter rather than aesthetics to explore the ambiguities of Invisible Theatre and urban performances involved in complex processes of spatial negotiation.

Act I: Invisible Theatre (Theatre Studies and Applied Perspectives)

Most of the existing research into TO occurs at the intersection of theatre studies and pedagogical research. This area of inquiry is informed by the ideas of

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115 Bishop, Artificial Hells, 190.
117 Bishop, Artificial Hells, 12.
Brazilian educator Freire, whose development of a dialogic pedagogy to enable the oppressed to recognise the causes of oppression, ‘so that through transforming action they can create a new situation’, directly influenced Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed*. 119 The prominent use of practice-based methods reflects a broader disciplinary focus on applying and evidencing the ameliorative potential of existing models in relation to specific identity groups and social issues. Many Boal scholars write from their experience of TO techniques, widely disseminated through Centres for the Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio de Janeiro and Paris. Consequently, the literature surrounding TO tends to be closely aligned with Boal’s political perspective and practice. This methodological approach goes some way to explaining the limited discussion of Invisible Theatre within the field. As the director of CTO, Paris, Rui Frati’s (2001) notes, “invisible theatre”...was abandoned by the Theatre of the Oppressed a long time ago,’ reducing opportunities for reporting on practice, but also opening the way for critical and historical revision. 120 The research that has been undertaken into Invisible Theatre moreover indicates the topic as a preoccupation for English-speaking, European and North American scholarship.

A possible explanation for this bias towards the English language is the role played by US-based academic journal, *The Drama Review* (TDR) in raising awareness of Invisible Theatre amongst English-speaking theatre scholars and practitioners. Between 1970-1998, under the editorship of theatre practitioner and scholar Richard Schechner, the journal published a number of interviews with Boal as well as a key article by him discussing a 1978 performance of Invisible Theatre in Liège. 121 If this helped to ensure Boal’s visibility in the dominant, northern hemispheric discourse, performance artist Coco Fusco suggests how this heightened visibility and the resultant tendency to regard TO as a paradigm of Latin American performance may have had the inverse effect on the take up of his ideas within Brazil:

As brilliant and necessary as the contributions of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal have been to the understanding of radical pedagogy and social change, the desire to restrict the validity of Latin American cultural production to its capacity to politicise the underprivileged is a symptom of the frustration of leftist intellectuals and a way of ghettoizing Latin American cultural production. It has also been turned in the US into an insistence that all ‘authentically’ Latino artists perform this function –

even though the reality is that many Latin American artists’ primary audience consists of their peers, other intellectuals, and audiences that do not respond receptively to what they perceive as outdated and dogmatic paradigms.  

Emphasising the negative critical attention given to TO within Brazil, US theatre critic David George (1995) has implied that this is because Boal’s practice is not authentically Brazilian.  

He argues that Invisible Theatre belongs entirely to a ‘category of U.S. experiments known as “street theatre” and “guerrilla theatre”’ onto which Boal ‘puts an ideological spin ... more adapted to Latin American circumstances’. Writing in 1983, during his exile in Paris, Boal had suggested that, “Invisible Theatre” [performances]...can only achieve systematic form if they emerge from a living, changing reality. That of Latin America, for example.” Boal imagined the ‘reality’ of Latin America in explicitly urban terms: ‘There is the well-known example of Rio de Janeiro: in the hills a few hundred metres away from the luxurious apartment blocks of Copacabana beach is the desperate poverty of the favelas.'  

Williams (2009) brings to mind Boal’s spatial narrative when he mentions TO as one articulation of a politics of liberation that finds material form in the architecture of the urban favela.  

Likewise, applied theatre scholar, Frances Babbage (1996), has suggested that going ‘back to Boal and back to Rio, to the context within which the theories and techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed were developed’ gives practitioners using TO techniques important insights into their ‘original purpose’. 

Meanwhile, theatre practitioner and researcher, Campbell Britton (2006) situates Boal’s earlier work with the Arena Theatre, São Paulo with reference to the Federal District of Brasilia as the symbol of a socio-economically divisive period of modernisation in Brazil. These are connections I pursue more thoroughly in relation to Invisible Theatre in particular (Chapter Two). For George, however, Boal’s calls for Invisible Theatre to be understood as part of the Latin American situation is nothing more than a bid to conceal a formal ‘debt to ... U.S.

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126 Williams, *Brazil*, 166.
and European sources' beneath a cloak of 'nationalism and pan-Americanism.'\textsuperscript{129} This effort to discredit Boal as derivative reveals the arrogance of a cultural perspective from which lines of influence appear unidirectional and unwavering, and processes fixed, a perspective challenged by de Andrade’s concept of cannibalism. That said, the comparison George makes between Invisible Theatre and forms of experimental performance already practised in the US is valid and is explored more rigorously and constructively by German theatre historian, Kohtes.\textsuperscript{130}

Finding no evidence of lineal genealogy despite the similarity of Invisible Theatre to guerrilla theatre developed for ‘the jungle of the cities’ in the US,\textsuperscript{131} moreover, identifying another, earlier example in the Arbeiter-Theater-Bund’s ‘partisan theatre [which] appeared invisible on the street’ during the Weimar Republic,\textsuperscript{132} Kohtes surmises that ‘a certain political soil’ cultivates the (re-) emergence of theatre disguised as everyday life.\textsuperscript{133} He identifies specific political events that he considers prompted these three occurrences of Invisible Theatre: the rise of German fascism; disillusionment with the US political system in the face of the Vietnam war; and violent repression in Brazil under the military regime. In each case, he surmises, ‘the shock of a sudden loss (or the realization of this loss) of formerly enjoyed liberties’ provoked a retreat from the spaces of artistic representation into the city in the attempt to effect ‘real’ change.\textsuperscript{134} Having identified this historical pattern, he observes it has altered since the 1970s as a direct consequence of Boal’s publications, lectures and teaching, although he does not explain how or why the increased visibility of Invisible Theatre as a coherent form should necessarily shift the political grounds for its reappearance. For Kohtes, Invisible Theatre ‘cannot be regarded as an aesthetic phenomenon’ because the contingent audience is neither complicit in nor aware of its role.\textsuperscript{135} Without the consciousness-raising artistic frame, bystanders can only react emotionally or rationally to an apparently real situation, and therefore Invisible Theatre should properly be regarded as activism. Notwithstanding the binaries that are re-established for this argument — art/reality, art/activism, intellect/emotion — in

\textsuperscript{129} David George, ‘Theatre of the Oppressed and Teatro de Arena: In and Out of Context’, 41.
\textsuperscript{131} Kohtes, ‘Invisible Theatre: Reflections on an Overlooked Form’, 86.
\textsuperscript{132} Bela Balázs, ‘Theatre auf der Strasse’ (1949) quoted in Kohtes, ‘Invisible Theatre: Reflections on an Overlooked Form’, 86. For a different account of similar theatrical experiments during the Weimar Republic, see Asja Lacis, Revolutionär im Beruf (München: Rogner and Bernhard, 1971), 121-123.
\textsuperscript{133} Kohtes, ‘Invisible Theatre: Reflections on an Overlooked Form’, 86.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid. 87.
characterising Invisible Theatre as a reaction to political conditions, Kohtes notably assumes an urban scene for political action.

Cohen-Cruz (1998) gives focus to this spatial dimension of activist performance practices with her term, ‘radical street performance’.136 This is the title given to an anthology which includes Boal’s (1979) description of Invisible Theatre as ‘the presentation of a scene in an environment other than the theater, before people who are not spectators. The place can be a restaurant, a sidewalk, a market, a train...’.137 Here, Invisible Theatre appears alongside the practices of parties, groups and artists from the Nazi Nuremberg Rallies to Adrian Piper’s slight, interpersonal urban interventions, and in the context of an opening essay that broaches the significance of the street as the site of cultural and political encounter.138 Acknowledging that space is never universally accessible because it is already marked by use, Cohen-Cruz problematises the assumption that street performances necessarily reach diverse audiences. Recognising that the street and, by extension, the media have consistently been spaces for the display and reassertion of power, she raises the possibility of radical street performance techniques being used to reinforce rather than challenge existing relations. Despite this, Cohen-Cruz is ultimately optimistic that the street can be reconfigured as a space of dialogue and resistance, quoting cultural critic Marshall Berman’s (1988) opinion that this dialogic potential may be ‘the city’s most authentic reason for being’.139 She does not, however, defend these claims with reference to Invisible Theatre in particular, nor does she analyse the performative or spatial conditions under which such a change might occur.

The potential for Invisible Theatre to express dominant modes of urban encounter has been addressed more directly within the field of pedagogical research. Reflecting on her own TO practice, US educator Berenice Fisher (1994) recounts a conversation with a Dutch activist about an idea for a performance simulating rape, intended for a location where a number of rapes had already occurred.140 Considering that such a performance might well ‘reinforce the notion of rape as the order of the day,’ she cautions that the rehearsal of violence as Invisible Theatre can become a force for violence.141 Adult educator, Bonnie Burstow (2005)

136 Cohen-Cruz, ed. Radical Street Performance.
137 Augusto Boal, ‘Invisible Theatre’ in Radical Street Performance, ed. Cohen-Cruz, 121.
138 Cohen-Cruz, ed. Radical Street Performance, 2.
139 Marshall Berman, All that is Solid Melts into Air: the experience of modernity (New York: Penguin, 1988), 322; quoted in Cohen-Cruz, Radical Street Performance, 6.
141 Ibid.
similarly questions the ethics of using Invisible Theatre as a pedagogical tool. Basing her analysis on Boal’s account of a televised performance of Invisible Theatre in Liége, Burstow concludes his methods are incompatible with the Freirean pedagogical principle of non-manipulation. Her calls for minimal deception and ‘reining in the level of conflict’ to reduce the risks of Invisible Theatre undermine the defining aspects of Boal’s model, as well as they disregard the need for agonistic conflict to challenge systems of oppression that have become ingrained.

Korean educator, Yonghee Lee (2015) raises more fundamental concerns about the TO method ‘grounded on personal experience’ as a participant in Invisible Theatre and Forum Theatre workshops facilitated by Boal in Toledo, Ohio (2002). Remarking on the social homogeneity of the group (‘I was the only Asian participant’), Lee describes how she felt ‘silenced’ rather than empowered to speak through the process, partly as a result of language barriers. Attributing this to an overarching structural failure to address the heterogeneity of identities within TO leads her to doubt Boal’s construction of the spect-actor as the subject of social change, and to suppose ‘there is no place for forum theatre practices in the world’. Given the force of these criticisms, Lee’s conclusion that TO might yet become a vehicle for social transformation through remaining attentive to ‘identity differences in the grid of power dynamics’ calls to mind Massey’s concept of power geometries and serves to highlight the difficulties of advancing a critique through participation in TO (something I discuss further in Chapter Four). Taken together, this emergent critique based in pedagogical practice and research indicates the risks of violence, deception and reinforcing hegemonic identities as key areas for critical inquiry in my thesis through the analysis of archival materials.

Within Invisible Theatre, responsibility for directing the unfolding action away from destructive forms of conflict towards more discursive ground is ascribed to the actor-joker. TO practitioner and scholar Mady Schutzman has aligned this role with the cross-cultural myth of trickster. I understand trickster as a transgressive figure whose allegorical boundary-crossings draw the ethical into relation with space. Through comparison with trickster, Schutzman suggests the TO joker (wildcard,

343 On manipulation, see Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 128-133.
curinga) reveals different ways of looking at the world, different perspectives and
different spatial imaginaries. This is an idea I take up in two ways: first, through
looking to Kalapalo trickster myths from the Xingu region of Brazil transcribed by US
social anthropologist Ellen Basso during the 1970s, to tease out the ambiguities of
Invisible Theatre in relation to Boal’s oppositional spatial imaginary (Chapter Three).\textsuperscript{147} Another way I engage with the idea of trickster is as a narrative device,
with the series of vignettes that occur throughout the thesis.

The method of criticism developed in Joel Anderson and Tony Fisher’s
paper, ‘Rehearsing Boal’, is relevant in this regard.\textsuperscript{148} Though not directly addressed
to the technique of Invisible Theatre, it offers a performative model for encountering
Boal’s theatre and politics posthumously, through writing. Setting out their argument
in the form of a scripted dialogue, the authors state their aim ‘to engage the reader
through a deliberately polemical technique: to engage Boal, not as most of the
literature does, through reporting on practice, but through an imagined discussion
with philosophical interlocutors.’ Anderson and Fisher’s approach can be compared
with ‘site-writing,’ a method developed by Jane Rendell (2010) in recognition of art
criticism as a ‘critical spatial practice’.\textsuperscript{149} Alert to the ways in which art and its
criticism have reimagined the role of the viewer as performing the work of art, site-
writing aims to situate the reader as an active participant within the critical text,
comparable to Boal’s attempts to activate the theatre spectator. Interspersing art
criticism and autobiographical responses to art in Site-Writing, Rendell invites
the reader to experience the text spatially, as a series of ‘configurations’.\textsuperscript{150} In thinking
about Invisible Theatre as a practice that actively disrupts conventional modes of
spectatorship through its contiguity with the urban, I engage site-writing as a
method for imagining beyond the immediate performance space into the multiple
sites of its engagement. The narrative texts that punctuate this thesis are conceived
in this way, as a means of locating and displacing the critical authorial voice.

\textsuperscript{147} Ellen Basso, In Favor of Deceit: A Study of Tricksters in an Amazonian Society (Tuscon:
University of Arizona Press, 1987).
\textsuperscript{148} Joel Anderson and Tony Fisher, ‘Rehearsing Boal’ in ‘Theater und Subjektkonstitution: Theatrale
\textsuperscript{149} Rendell, Art and Architecture, 191-194.
\textsuperscript{150} Jane Rendell, Site Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism (London and New York: I.B. Tauris,
2010)
Act II: Invisible Theatre and Art Histories of Urban Performance

In opposition to Kohtes, Bishop considers Invisible Theatre as an instance of Boal devising precise ‘aesthetic solutions’ to political problems.¹⁵¹ She introduces Invisible Theatre as an historic example of ‘an unframed mode of public and participatory action’ emerging from a specific political moment to support her overarching argument concerning contemporary participatory practices as lacking a political project by comparison.¹⁵² Grouping Boal with practitioners such as Oscar Masotta and the Rosario Group in a chapter on Argentine performance, she locates Invisible Theatre decisively within the cultural and spatio-political context of late 1960s Argentina. Her discussion revolves around Boal’s practice whilst exiled in Buenos Aires, with the first known performance in a restaurant her signal example. Rehearsing Boal’s story about how the actors he was collaborating with wanted to ‘promote a humanitarian law whereby those without money could eat at restaurants,’ she argues that Invisible Theatre connected oppression to the ‘economics of class inequality,’ at least initially. It is not clear whether she considers the aesthetic form of Invisible Theatre as explicitly addressed to this economic issue, as she also notes that, ‘the invisibility of this theatre was politically necessary given the extreme violence of the dictatorship at this point.’¹⁵³ An endnote specifies the US-backed dictatorship of General Juan Carlos Onganía (1966-70), although his repressive regime had ended by the time Boal fled Brazil for Argentina in 1971.¹⁵⁴

Given this spatial narrative, it is curious that the restaurant performance Bishop goes on to describe in detail to illustrate her argument is not the example she indicates at the outset was devised to avoid the Argentine police authorities. Instead, she refers to a similar performance staged a year or so later in a hotel in Chiclayo, Peru, as described by Boal in Theatre of the Oppressed.¹⁵⁵ The location of this later performance is evident from details included in Bishop’s retelling, such as the cost of the meal in soles, the currency of Peru. The distinction is crucial because, where Boal may have been at risk from the authorities in Buenos Aires (as I explore in Chapter Two), he was officially invited to deliver workshops in Peru as part of the ALFIN literacy programme (1973-74) established by the Peruvian

¹⁵¹ Bishop, Artificial Hells, 122-126.
¹⁵² Ibid. 122.
¹⁵³ Ibid. 123.
¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 314.
¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 122-126.
Minister for Education.\textsuperscript{156} The work he undertook during that visit was instrumental to the development and formulation of the TO method as a whole, but far from being a necessary response to ‘extreme violence,’ as Bishop suggests, the specific example she describes was state-sanctioned. In failing to address this different spatial context, Bishop misses an opportunity to link TO and its uses by the Peruvian state to her later arguments about the mobilisation of the Community Arts movement in the UK under New Labour. The marked similarity between the performance that she claims to discuss and the one she actually describes raises key questions about the spatial specificity of Invisible Theatre performances and the differences, if any, between subversive and officially sanctioned forms of Invisible Theatre. Both issues are considered in my discussion of Invisible Theatre for television (Chapter Three).

A possible reason for this confusion can be attributed to Bishop’s research methods. Given her intention to push the boundaries of the conversation surrounding participation to include South America, it is conspicuous that her introduction to Invisible Theatre is limited to English translations of Boal’s own writing around the form. Bishop’s reference to English as the ‘lingua franca’ of the art world in acknowledging this weakness further undermines her aims to challenge the hegemonic cultural discourse.\textsuperscript{157} The particular problem this limitation poses for her discussion of Invisible Theatre is highlighted by her assertion that, ‘in the context of contemporary art, it is telling that we do not have images of these experiences [of Invisible Theatre].’\textsuperscript{158} I am not aware of any images of Boal’s earliest experiment with Invisible Theatre in Argentina, though Bishop’s own argument regarding Boal’s avoidance of police authorities suggests a more compelling reason for this absence. However, photographs and audio-visual recordings of subsequent Invisible Theatre performances are accessible via archives held in Belgium and Rio de Janeiro, though in the case of the audio-visual documents, only in the original French and Portuguese respectively. Other documents have become available since the publication of Artificial Hells, with the transfer of the Boal Archive to UFRJ in 2013, most notably a set of scripts associated with the Rio de Janeiro television series. Bishop’s knowledge of that television series through English-language interviews with Boal published in TDR is confirmed with her suggestion that, in its televised form, Invisible Theatre ‘seems to

\textsuperscript{156} Boal, \textit{Theatre of the Oppressed}, 96.
\textsuperscript{157} Bishop, \textit{Artificial Hells}, 8.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid. 125.
anticipate reality television and candid camera documentaries. Incidentally, this remark underestimates the impressive longevity of candid camera, a format that predates Invisible Theatre by some two decades (see Chapter Three). The more pressing issue, however, is that by striving to maintain critical distance, but without recourse to these and other non-English language documents, Bishop has no way of testing the ‘force of Boal’s thinking’ against his practice – whether as a practitioner, a critic, or both. Critically addressing those documents of Invisible Theatre that are available makes it possible to hold Boal’s claims for the practice up to scrutiny.

Bishop ultimately turns to UK-based performance curator, Catherine Wood, to propose Invisible Theatre as ‘a precedent for much contemporary art that seeks to go unannounced in public space.’ Wood introduced Invisible Theatre into the art historical discourse in a 2004 article for the art publication, Untitled, identifying it as a ‘model’ against which to test the objectives of contemporary US and European artists including William Pope L (USA), Pawel Althamer (Poland) and Tino Seghal (UK-Germany). Wood makes no attempt to establish any direct lines of influence between Boal and these artists, rather seeking to highlight how their performances operate similarly to transmit ‘a sense of the pervasive theatricality of encounters in the urban environment’. Thought in relation to Massey’s concept of the unforeseen encounter, Wood’s comparison emphasises the productive overlap between urban performance and performative theories of the urban. However, the focus on formal similarities raises questions about whether there might be different ways for artists to engage Invisible Theatre as a spatial provocation while disregarding the conventions of Boal’s model, and if so, what might that look like?

The comparison Wood draws between Invisible Theatre and contemporary urban performance can be historically extended with reference to US-based performance artist and activist, Suzanne Lacy, who discusses the theoretical and practical convergence between Invisible Theatre and feminist performance practices emerging from the US context. Her discussion focusses on two of her own ‘new genre public art’ from the 1970s, including a collaboration with Evalina Newman, the elderly resident of an urban housing project. Lacy describes a journey from Newman’s home to her own exhibition opening as a form of urban

159 Bishop, Artificial Hells, 126.
160 Ibid. 124.
162 Ibid.
performance: ‘an exercise in danger, at once an exploration of gendered vulnerabilities within public space and an act of affiliation with women like Evalina whose mobility depended upon public transportation.’\textsuperscript{164} Her paper identifies the theme of urban risk as common to urban performances by contemporaneous practitioners including Vito Acconci and Chris Burden, and acknowledges that their form and concerns unwittingly aligned with Invisible Theatre. Of the relationship between Augusto Boal and 1970s US performance practitioners, however, she insists, ‘there was little, if any, knowledge each of the other.’\textsuperscript{165} Though this claim supports Boal’s position, his differentiation of Invisible Theatre from Happenings at the time questions Lacy’s assumption that he was unfamiliar with US performance art, and Chapter Two explores the extent of the connection between them. Lacy further emphasises the difference between Invisible Theatre and visual art performance with regards to their genealogies, locating the latter within an art historical tradition derived from the Constructivists and Futurists. Again, I suggest the development of TO including Invisible Theatre through Boal’s reading of Brecht challenges Lacy’s account. Brecht closely allied to Meyerhold in aiming at the theatrical ‘construction,’ rather than the imitation of life.\textsuperscript{166} Chapter Three considers Brecht’s influence on Boal to consider their historical trajectories as more entangled than Lacy implies.

Lacy notes that, unlike Invisible Theatre, 1970s visual art performance ‘focused its rebellion on cultural rather than political authority.’\textsuperscript{167} Similarly, Wood regards the main difference between Invisible Theatre and contemporary forms of urban performance is the political imperative of Invisible Theatre as a call to action, with Boal’s binary opposition of actor (active)/spectator (passive) as a spatio-political metaphor which is practically applied within TO for the possibility of social transformation. By contrast, she links the contemporary performances of the urban to an increasing paranoia around the pervasiveness of urban surveillance, suggesting that, unlike Invisible Theatre, ‘the work does not imply an enabling sense of agency for the participating spectator but instead registers the fear that any instance of personal encounter might be being manipulated invisibly.’\textsuperscript{168} Miles has suggested that this difference negates the comparison between Invisible Theatre and contemporary modes of urban performance in missing the point that


\textsuperscript{165} \textit{Ibid}, 92-93.


\textsuperscript{167} Lacy, ‘Art and Everyday Life: Activism in feminist performance art’, 93.

\textsuperscript{168} Wood, ‘From Invisible Theatre to Thai Soup’, 45.
Boal’s model is primarily political.¹⁶⁹ I want to question Wood’s distinction in a
different way, by exploring the development of Invisible Theatre as a response to
militaristic forms of surveillance and critically questioning Boal’s claims about
empowering spectators to act in challenging the overarching narrative of TO. Bishop
bolksters Wood’s argument by offering further examples of contemporary practices
that appear to align with Boal’s model, such as the urban interventions of Spanish
artist Dora Garcia.¹⁷⁰ However, despite highlighting the similar ways in which they
‘insert themselves unannounced into the everyday flow of street life,’ she stops
short of critically addressing the spatiality of either Invisible Theatre, or its
contemporary equivalents. This gap is especially striking given Bishop’s nod to
Deutsche, and raises a fundamental set of questions for my thesis: How do such
performances imagine ‘public space’? How is the urban recruited in their attempts to
go ‘unannounced’? Can Invisible Theatre be seen to have affected the social
spaces it engaged, and how?

Directions

Locating this research in relation to performative analyses of the urban
encounter and theories of urban performance including Invisible Theatre, this
discussion has focussed on areas of overlap to indicate the critical and creative
potential for thinking through Invisible Theatre in spatial theoretical terms, as a
model of urban performance. Boal has gestured towards a spatialised
understanding of Invisible Theatre as Latin American, arguably to reassert his own
Brazilian identity during an extended period of exile. Where Bishop groups Boal with
Argentinian artists such as Masotta, other writers have aligned Invisible Theatre
with theatrical experiments occurring earlier in the US and Berlin, overlooking the
spatial and specifically urban context of Brazil. Kohtes’ suggestion that the historic
re-emergence of Invisible Theatre reflects the perception of decreased social and
political agency coincides with Bishop’s ideas about participatory practices
emerging during periods of political upheaval. In turn, the comparisons Bishop and
Wood draw between Invisible Theatre and contemporary practices that integrate
into the urban elide with Cohen-Cruz’s metaphor of the street in relation to radical
urban performance practices. However, despite being variously intimated, the

¹⁶⁹ Miles, Limits to Culture, 166.
¹⁷⁰ Bishop, Artificial Hells, 126.
connections between Invisible Theatre as practised by Boal and the modernist city of Brasília, the uneven development of Rio de Janeiro, and the vernacular architecture of the *comunidade*, have yet to be fully articulated through the literature. My thesis aims to address this gap by building on the existing findings of a political ground for Invisible Theatre to encompass the spatial, exploring the extent to which this international practice developed as a result of shifts in Brazilian spatial politics, and the urban narratives and imaginaries it engenders.

This project will involve a combination of approaches and methods drawn from across performance, art history and urban studies. Massey’s spatial concept of the unforeseen encounter offers a way of moving beyond Boal’s Manichaean stance and, likewise, the oppositional discourse within art history that seeks to categorise urban performance as challenging/complicit in relation to dominant processes of urban development. Emphasising the chance of space to demonstrate how the urban conditions social and political change, her spatial imaginary allows for recognition of Invisible Theatre’s ambiguity, both in terms of its contested aesthetic status and its potential to reinforce existing spatial inequalities. The developing critique by educators trained in TO techniques contradicts the prevailing narrative from art history that regards Invisible Theatre as an historic model of socially transformative practice, demanding critical and contextual analysis of archival materials that have been overlooked within the existing literatures. Yet, despite these criticisms, the established method of reporting on TO practice has made it difficult for applied theatre scholars to realise opportunities for the creative transformation of Boal’s practice. This possibility is explored within my thesis through the method of site-writing, as a narrative strategy for situating, reflecting, and displacing the critical voice. Extending the art historical comparison between historic and contemporary models of urban performance, I aim to engage Invisible Theatre as a vehicle for ‘thinking through elsewhere’, for connecting with artists and urban struggles surrounding the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Therefore, drawing Invisible Theatre back into the conflict of urban space, which as Massey suggests extends beyond territorial boundaries, this thesis sets out to discover new performative strategies for decentring the dominant urban imaginary and puncturing through its segregated layers.
This is how I imagine it.


A man enters a parilla, sits down and orders a meal – steak, maybe, bread, potatoes, salad. He eats, then, when he is done, he thanks the waiter and stands to leave. Or he asks for the bill.

‘The bill,’ the waiter says, ‘you haven’t paid.’ The man who has eaten answers, ‘no, but I was hungry,’ and then, ‘it’s ok. Look.’ He flashes his identity card and starts talking about the law, a beautiful law, a humanitarian law. Others join in.

Now everyone is talking about (about what?) about the right of citizens to eat, the cost of food – and low wages, about hospitality and lending out winter coats.

Not everyone. Alone, at a different table, a man moves the food about his plate and looks on. A smile tugs at the corners of his mouth, but he doesn’t speak. He watches. He doesn’t speak.

Maybe this is how it happened.

Introduction

Focussing on Augusto Boal’s first known Invisible Theatre performance in Buenos Aires (1972), this chapter aims to locate Invisible Theatre in relation to the social, political and cultural contexts of Brazil during a period of military dictatorship (1964-85), as an effect of exile and a performative mode of camouflage. According to Boal, the performance, RESTAURANT TEATRO: ‘La Ley’ (RESTAURANT THEATRE: ‘The Law’) was intended to raise awareness of an all but forgotten law permitting any citizen without means to enter any restaurant in Buenos Aires, order
a meal and leave without paying. However, drawing attention to a municipal decree of 1973 criminalising non-payment in bars and restaurants, I question how far Boal’s model of urban performance aligned with this intention. The alternative possibility explored here is that Invisible Theatre emerged in Boal’s practice as a reaction to militaristic modes of urban encounter, against the backdrop of a dictatorship that found concrete expression in the monumentalism of Brasília. Noting Boal’s references elsewhere to the US-led intelligence and surveillance network, Operation Condor, I consider Invisible Theatre in its connection to covert military practices, as camouflage.

My understanding of camouflage brings together Roger Caillois’ writing about mimicry as an interspecies expression of the ‘lure’ of space with architectural theorist Neil Leach’s concept of camouflage as a means of spatial assimilation and identity production. Considering these theories in relation to the national identity conveyed through Brasília, the chapter maps Boal’s model of Invisible Theatre onto his spatial displacement from Brazil.

In the absence of other forms of documentation, and as a result of the anonymity of the performers, my analysis of the Buenos Aires example inevitably hinges on Boal’s recollection and inconsistent retelling of events. Boal wrote about the performance during his Argentinian exile in Técnicas latinoamericanas de teatro popular, then again three decades later in the autobiographical, Hamlet and the Baker’s Son (2001). The performance is also discussed in interviews conducted by Joan Abellán (2001) and Juan Gonzalez (2005). My own reimagining (above) is based on these sources. However, Boal’s narrative is significantly tested through my archival research and interview with psychoanalyst and director of the Augusto Boal Institute, Cecilia Boal. This original research indicates a direct link between experiments by Richard Schechner occurring in New York in 1970 and Boal’s subsequent development of Invisible Theatre in Buenos Aires. This is significant because, although Boal never claimed to have invented Invisible Theatre, he

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175 Boal, Técnicas, 103-105.
176 Boal, Hamlet, 303.
repeatedly and vehemently refuted any suggestion of having been influenced by US experiments with Guerrilla Theatre and Happenings. Nonetheless, I reject the suggestion that Invisible Theatre belongs entirely to a category of US street theatre, turning instead to Doreen Massey’s notion of space as negotiated through myriad intersecting trajectories and uneven encounters for a more nuanced understanding of spatial encounter.\textsuperscript{178} For Massey, the specificity of place shifts over time to incorporate the multiple and contradictory spatial narratives of those who inhabit and traverse it. Bringing Massey’s writing into conversation with Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade’s influential ‘\textit{Manifiesto Antrópofago} [Cannibalist Manifesto]’ (1928), which calls upon Latin American artists to cannibalise the culture of the coloniser to create new, hybrid forms, I argue for understanding Invisible Theatre as Brazilian — because, not in spite of, its performance elsewhere.\textsuperscript{179}

\textbf{Si un argentino…}

In an interview with Joan Abellán, Boal describes the ‘more or less logical’ sequence of events that led to his first experience with Invisible Theatre in Buenos Aires:

\begin{quote}
\textit{En Buenos Aires, hice una obra en favor de una ley que existía y según la cual ningún argentino podia morir de hambre. Si un argentine tenía hambre, por ley, tenía el derecho de entrar en cualquier restaurant, pedir cualquier comida… Nosotros hicimos una obra en la que ocurria eso; yo ayude a escribirla: la preparamos y, cuando ibamos a hacerla en la calle, mis amigos brasilenos me digeron: ‘No vayas, porque te puede detener la policia. Y si te detienen, con los argentinos no hay problema…pero a ti te mandan de vuelta a Brasil. No vayas.’}\textsuperscript{180}
\end{quote}

[In Buenos Aires, I did a play in favour of a law that existed, and according to which no Argentinian could die of hunger. If an Argentinian was hungry, by law, he had the right to enter any restaurant, order any food… We did a play in which this occurred; I helped to write it: we rehearsed it and, when we were going to do it in the street, my Brazilian friends told me: ‘Don’t go, because you could be arrested by the police. And if they arrest you, it’s not a problem for the Argentinians…but they could force you to return to Brazil. Don’t go.’]

\textsuperscript{178} Doreen Massey, \textit{For Space} (London: Sage, 2005).
\textsuperscript{180} Boal, interview in Abellán, \textit{Boal cuenta Boal}, 187. Translated by Marinella Abbondati.
He goes on to explain that ‘someone’ had the idea of representing the play in a restaurant without telling anyone it was theatre. That way: ‘si viene la policía, vos estaras comiendo. [If the police come, you were just eating.]’\(^{181}\) To what extent can Invisible Theatre’s ambiguous positioning of the audience therefore be understood as a residual effect of Boal’s ambiguous status as a political exile and his avoidance of state surveillance? In the words of Brazilian sociologist and fellow political exile Herbert de Souza, exile is ‘a form of radical repression, which forcibly removes the actor from his natural environment, his country.’\(^{182}\) The legislative basis of this first performance highlights how, as a Brazilian national living in exile in Argentina, identified as an enemy of the Brazilian military regime, Boal was effectively stripped of his citizenship. From this perspective, the spect-actor, the central figure of the Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum Theatre, appears to have been ushered into Boal’s practice in reaction to his own spatialised oppression.

Before turning to the circumstances and significance of Boal’s exile, however, I wish to consider the suggestion that this performance of Invisible Theatre was initially intended for the street. Here and elsewhere, Boal conveys the limited opportunities for working in Argentina after being forced to give up his directorship of the Arena Theatre, São Paulo, where he had worked since 1956: ‘As an ex-political prisoner, the TV people gave me no work, nor did I ever get a call from the impresarios of the Buenos Aires boulevard. The directors of the state theatres…were even less forthcoming’;\(^{183}\) ‘In Argentina I had to do something else, and I like to do theatre in the street.’\(^{184}\) This last statement gestures to Boal’s experience making agitprop theatre in Brazil. One example that tends to come up in the narrative of the development of Theatre of the Oppressed is a piece of agitprop performed for landless workers in the sertão (the ‘backlands’ of northeastern Brazil).\(^{185}\) Boal tells how, at the end of the play, the actors lifted their prop rifles above their heads and called for revolution. When the audience invited them to take up arms against the landowner, however, the actors declined, stating that the guns that they carried were not real guns. Boal has expressed the burning shame of that encounter, with the realisation that he and his actors ‘were not prepared to fight, but were telling other people to do so.’\(^{186}\) Performance theorist Cohen-Cruz argues that

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\(^{181}\) Boal, interview in Abellán, _Boal cuenta Boal_, 187. Translated by Marinella Abbondati.


\(^{183}\) Boal, _Hamlet_, 308.

\(^{184}\) Boal, interview by Gonzalez.

\(^{185}\) See for example Jan Cohen-Cruz, ed. _Radical Street Performance: An international anthology_ (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 14.

\(^{186}\) Boal, _Hamlet_; See also Augusto Boal, ‘Boal in Brazil, France, the USA: An Interview with Augusto Boal’, interview by Michael Taussig and Richard Schechner in _TDR_, 34, no.3 (1990): 57.
this affective experience marked a significant turning point in Boal’s practice, prompting him to develop theatrical forms by which the oppressed might ‘devise their own solutions’.  

Boal’s descriptions of staging street-theatre indicate his relative privilege within the dominant social order of Brazil. If Invisible Theatre emerged as a reaction to a loss of liberty under totalitarianism, as Martin Maria Kohtes suggests, then perhaps this loss of liberty can be understood in terms of how Boal imagined the street. The powerful imaginary of the street as a space of freedom became established within the European discourse of the early twentieth century, particularly through Walter Benjamin’s reading of the flâneur in Baudelaire. The image he paints of the city as a space for aimless wandering represents an experience of a European city, Paris, afforded at the intersection of class, gendered and racialised identities. Needless to say, the same imaginary that gives the flâneur freedom to survey the streets renders the street a potentially fearful, alienating place for those upon whom his gaze falls. Massey has powerfully argued this point with particular attention to the gendering of space to show how, in the UK context, the urban is subject to uneven relations of power that tend to privilege white, male identities. 

Where Boal had evidently played an active role in the street-life of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the perceived threat of being seen to act in the streets of Buenos Aires (a city, incidentally, which is frequently compared to Paris due its wide boulevards) signalled a personal loss in terms of that privileged identity. In Buenos Aires, the street, which had previously offered a space of theatrical freedom for Boal, came to appear threatening in his urban imagination.

However, moving the performance from the street into the restaurant involved a fundamental shift in meaning, from raising awareness of an unenforced law to invoking that law so as to make visible the problem of hunger. In ensuring the performance’s symbolic invisibility, this shift also limited the potential for it to be seen by ‘the people dying of hunger,’ much less provide them the opportunity to devise alternative solutions. Whilst the street may be unevenly experienced and performed in countless different ways, Massey’s spatial imaginary, with its ‘weavings together, mutual indifferences and outright antagonisms of such a myriad of trajectories,’ opens up the possibility of differentiated urban encounters.

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187 Cohen-Cruz, Radical Street Performance, 14.
189 See Doreen Massey, Space, Place and Gender (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).
unclear from Boal’s writing whether the architecture of the restaurant permitted the Invisible Theatre performance in question to be seen from the street – many *parillas* had tables set up immediately outside the premises on the pavement when I visited Buenos Aires in 2013. However, the accidental audiences best placed to participate in a piece of Invisible Theatre in a restaurant – identified in Boal’s account as the other diners and the restaurant staff – are unlikely to have been suffering from hunger. If the performance was intended to prevent citizens from starving by raising awareness of certain legal protections, the actors would have been more likely to encounter individuals who could benefit from this knowledge in the street than in a restaurant.

The doubts this may raise about whether Invisible Theatre is aligned with its social aims become more significant when considering the legislative basis of the performance. In researching the Buenos Aires example, I was unable to find any reference to a law precisely fitting Boal’s description. A possible explanation for this is the incomplete condition of archives of Argentine legal history, especially with regards to the crucial decades of the 1970s and 1980s. Another is that Boal meant to refer to the more widely debated legal principle of *hurto famélico*, literally starvation theft, which establishes necessity as a defence in criminal cases involving the theft of food to prevent starvation. The evidence to support this possibility can be found in *Técnicas*. Written during Boal’s exile in Argentina, this book includes a chapter on Invisible Theatre and the earliest reference to the performance, RESTAURANT TEATRO: ‘La Ley’, which Boal suggests, ‘puede ser “accionada” solo en los países donde existe una ley semejante: Brasil, Argentina, y no sé qué otros…’ [could only be enacted in countries with the same law: Brazil, Argentina, and I don’t know what others…’]. This internationalism seems to point to the unenforceable legal principle of *hurto famélico* over a specific law. In *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal describes another restaurant performance staged later in Chiclayo, Peru (1973), which is sufficiently similar to the Buenos Aires example that

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191 In researching the legal basis of the performance, I consulted the holdings of the University of Buenos Aires, the Bodleian Library, Oxford and the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, London, as well as conducting searches via the international legal databases, LLMC Digital and vLex Global.

192 A combination of political instability and economic crisis kept records low on the agenda of successive administrations. Not only were libraries and archives chronically under-resourced, governments operating in violation of the law had good reason to hide or destroy potentially incriminating records. It may be that evidence of the law to which Boal refers was lost as a result. For a detailed discussion of issues around archival research in Argentina, see Klaus Friedrich Veigel, *Dictatorship, Democracy, and Globalisation: Argentina and the Cost of Paralysis, 1973-2001* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), ix-xi.


Claire Bishop confuses them.\textsuperscript{195} This repetition, combined with Boal’s framing of the performance, seems to indicate a generalised approach to the built environment rather than one which is attentive to the specificity of the social and spatial contexts in which Invisible Theatre might be performed. This is an issue to which I will return in subsequent chapters.

It is therefore conceivable that Boal either misinterpreted or later misremembered the legal precedent for his first Invisible Theatre performance. However, my search turned up a municipal decree issued in Buenos Aires in 1973 – not long after the performance was first staged – which raises further questions about Invisible Theatre and its effects on the urban. \textit{Decreto Ley 8031/73} prohibits anyone from partaking of the services of a restaurant, hotel, or other establishment where food and drink is served, ‘with the intent of not paying, being able to do so.’\textsuperscript{196} This infers those \textit{without} the ability to pay might resist criminal liability, as per the principle of \textit{hurto famelico}. Nevertheless, the decree indicates a shift in power towards the proprietor by legislating the right to payment for services rendered. It would also complicate the restaging of the example of Invisible Theatre under discussion, insofar as it positions anyone performing the central role with the means to pay for their meal explicitly outside of the law. While it is impossible to know whether the Buenos Aires performance influenced this legislative change, the existence of this legislation gives rise to the possibility that the actors were successful in consciousness-raising, but not necessarily to their desired ends. Boal insists that, in the restaurant, ‘[t]he debate was more intense than it would have been in the street.’\textsuperscript{197} What is less clear is whether that intensity of feeling was directed with or against the forces of oppression, with or against those starving outside of the restaurant, circled by the debate.

Boal’s first performance of Invisible Theatre seems to have been devised as a solution to his own loss of political and cultural agency, \textit{as above the agency of those absented subjects of the play}. Given his enthusiasm for the law in question – ‘A beautiful law, a humanitarian law!’ – it is striking that, by his own interpretation, Boal was excluded from its protection as a non-citizen. Without an Argentinian identity card, he was unable to act – even invisibly. Returning to de Souza, if exile amounts to the removal of ‘the actor from his natural environment,’ then I suggest Invisible Theatre emerged in Boal’s practice as an adaptive mechanism, through his attempt to blend into hostile space, as camouflage.

\textsuperscript{195} Bishop, \textit{Artificial Hells}, 123.
\textsuperscript{196} Decreto Ley 8031/73 1973 (Buenos Aires) a.2, s.2, c.59a. Translated by Marinella Abbondati.
\textsuperscript{197} Boal, \textit{Hamlet}, 304.
Brazilian Portuguese, Lesson One

(A Warning)

This is Rio de Janeiro. Never use your cell phone in the street. If you need to make a call, go inside. Use only the ATMs inside the bank. Don't leave your belongings on the beach.

Hide your camera.

Don't show your jewellery. Take it off. Don't ride the bus. The metro is ok. If someone points a gun to rob you, do what they say. Sometimes it's in their pocket and they push it into your back and walk you to the nearest bank and you can't see. Do whatever they say.

Don't open your mouth, don't speak.

Don't go into the favela.

Try not to look like a tourist, or draw attention to yourself.

Don't take out your guide book. All the classes are in the morning. After the language lessons, there are tours. The tours this week are really great. Keep your map folded away.

Don't go into the favela.

This is my number, in case you get lost, or something happens...

I hope you will all have a good week.

This is Rio de Janeiro.

Enjoy! Be safe!

Exile Disintegrates

The language Boal uses to describe his exile in his autobiography conveys the profound sense of loss and disorientation he experienced with the move to Buenos Aires. 198 'In Argentina,' he recalls, 'the emptiness began,' he 'felt invisible,' unable to recognise himself in the 'deserted mirror'; his 'selves had departed,' leaving behind a 'dead man walking.' For Boal, 'exile disintegrates' the self to reveal the inextricable relationship between the identity of the individual and the space they inhabit. Cast adrift from familiar surroundings, he suggests, 'you float.' 199

Boal's description of the disintegrating effects of exile finds an unlikely parallel in Roger Caillois' discussion of mimicry as 'an obsession with space in its

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198 Boal, Hamlet, 297-299.
199 Ibid.
derealizing effect’.200 Having observed the mimetic markings and behaviours of certain insects, and noting the anthropomorphising ocular perspective of existing studies, Caillois dismisses any suggestion that they might function as a defensive mechanism. Instead, he proposes mimesis as evidence of a ‘temptation by space’ (italics in the original).201 With Caillois, space emerges as an active and tangible force: it ‘pursues,’ ‘encircles,’ and ‘digests’; ‘touches the individual directly,’ ‘envelopes,’ ‘penetrates,’ ‘passes through’ and ultimately ‘replaces’ bodies.202 He gives the example of the Phyllia, a genus of moth whose mimicry is said to be so effective that groups of individuals can be observed ‘taking each other for real leaves…the simulation of the leaf being a provocation to cannibalism’.203 Caillois never claims that the moths respond to such a provocation, nor does he present any evidence to this effect. Rather, cannibalism is invoked to convey space as that which devours and reconstitutes itself. Moreover, Caillois suggests, this ‘dark’ space registers in people as the effect of a dispossessed mind, whether due to mental disorder or, as in his case, ‘an attack of ‘legendary psychaesthenia,’ deliberately aggravated for purposes of ascesis and interpretation.’204 The psychoactive drug-induced experience he goes on to describe is remarkably similar to the experience described by Boal. It registers as an attempt to see oneself from beyond the boundaries of the body, frustrated by the sensation of becoming indistinguishable from the environment. Overwhelmed by the dynamism of space, the body is disassociated from the imaginary self. This traumatic process is summarised by Caillois as ‘depersonalization through assimilation into space’ (italics in original).205

Caillois’ paper was written in 1935, in a Europe about to be overwhelmed by the forces of fascism. With this knowledge, his warning against the loss of self through mimesis in terms of a ‘descent into hell’ (italics in original) at the individual level takes on a sinister significance, seeming to anticipate, at the collective level, the mass rallies, concentration camps and gas chambers of Nazi Germany.206 Unlike Caillois, whose experience was self-induced, Boal’s experiences were a consequence of Brazil’s increasing authoritarianism. His feeling of invisibility followed his movement across territorial borders, from living and working in São Paulo, where he ‘made a difference, however minimal’, to being an ex-political

201 Ibid.
202 Ibid. 30.
203 Ibid. 25.
204 Ibid. fn.37.
205 Ibid. 30.
206 Ibid. 31.
prisoner in Buenos Aires, where it seemed he could make ‘no difference’.\textsuperscript{207} For Caillios, mimicry consists in the terrifying dissolution of the self, with the inability to distinguish the self from the surrounding space, but Boal implies a more complex and reciprocal relationship between the individual and their environment. He suggests a coherent identity depends upon the capacity of the individual to affect the spaces constituting it, to make them different. If that is the case, Boal’s first experiments with Invisible Theatre might be understood as attempts to use mimicry to resist being overwhelmed by space, enabling him to redefine his identity in exile. This idea can be examined further with Leach’s theory of camouflage as a model of spatial adaptation and identity production.\textsuperscript{208} Exploring how identities are negotiated through the built environment, Leach imagines architecture as the ‘visible embodiment of the invisible, the vehicle through which the fantasy structure of the homeland is represented.’ For Boal, his inability to see himself reflected in Buenos Aires gave rise to feelings of alienation and his perception of the urban as heavily structured. Taking up Leach’s suggestion, I want to consider whether Boal identified with the national imaginary projected through Brazil’s federal capital, Brasília. The following section articulates the link between Brasília’s inauguration and Boal’s attempts to create a Brazilian theatre through their shared investment in a national project. Regarding Brasília’s subsequent shift to militaristic governance, I suggest the dominant urban imaginary conveyed through Brasília provides the backdrop to Boal’s loss of agency and the development of Invisible Theatre.

\textbf{Brasília: Memorial to the Future}

Boal’s ambivalent relationship to the city of Brasília is revealed in a memory from 1961 – after the inauguration of the new federal capital but before the 1964 military coup. As assistant director of the Arena Theatre, São Paulo, Boal was invested in a nationalistic search for ‘Brazilian forms of representation,’ distinct from the ‘imported forms’ he perceived in much Brazilian theatre of the time.\textsuperscript{209} He recalls an exchange with members of a theatre company on tour from the USSR, during which the visitors ‘told…of their prowess in space.’ By comparison, he suggests:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{207} Boal, \textit{Hamlet}, 299.
  \item \textsuperscript{208} Leach, \textit{Camouflage}, 149.
  \item \textsuperscript{209} In practice, this involved staging plays by young Brazilian writers, and experimenting with popular theatrical forms to realise the ‘nationalisation of the Classics’ by playwrights including Brecht, Gogol, and Molière. Boal, \textit{Hamlet}, 166.
\end{itemize}
… we Brazilians had only a few photographs of Brasilia [sic.], an unfinished symphony: the houses of the capital’s construction workers had yet to be built. We showed the Russians photos of the Cathedral, and they asked about the shacks in the satellite towns. ‘Those are the temporary dwellings of the workers who built the city: soon they are going to build social housing where the people will live in dignity and comfort.’ The pioneers’ homes never arrived…

It is unclear from Boal’s account whether the photographs were taken by members of the company. His autobiography indicates that the Arena Theatre’s search for ‘the people’ – that elusive audience – had led them into Brazil’s interior during the previous year, although he makes no specific mention of having visited Brasilia at that time. That year, 1960, was significantly marked by Brasilia’s inauguration on 21st April, a performative spectacle attended by 150,000, and the focus of international media attention. Boal’s memory of that moment is encapsulated in the feeling that, for once, Brazilians ‘did not have to feel ashamed’. On a national level, the performative staging of Brasilia occasioned the introduction of video technology to Brazil, facilitating the transmission of the city’s inauguration across state lines, albeit only to those viewers in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Minas Gerais. Given this widespread coverage, it is equally conceivable that the images to which Boal refers were distributed through the media. Whatever their source, however, the fact that they were presented in response to the visitors’ talk of space travel – ‘proof of communist superiority!’ – suggests the actors’ initial identification with the national imaginary that Brasilia engendered.

From the outset, this imaginary was simultaneously oriented to an urbanised future and embedded in Brazil’s colonial and militarised past. The Federal Republic of Brazil was established in 1889 following the military overthrow of the Brazilian monarchy. In 1891, a constitutional directive set aside a 14,400 square kilometre area of land in the central plateau for the installation of a federal capital at an

213 The 1950s witnessed the gradual introduction of television to Brazil, with stations operating in 10 out of Brazil’s 23 states by 1960. However, until Brasília’s inauguration, programs were live broadcast by local television stations. With the country’s geography presenting particular challenges for networked television, the introduction of video technology was necessary for the transmission of a single program across multiple local stations. See Elena Shthromberg, ‘Bodies in Peril: Enacting Censorship in Early Brazilian Video Art (1974-1978)’ in *The Aesthetics of Risk*, ed. John Welchman (Zurich: JRP/Ringler, 2008), 265-283.
undetermined point in the future. As Richard Williams observes, the interiority of this imagined capital operated to distance it from the coastal cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, which turned instead towards the colonial power and trade routes of Europe. However, it was only after leftist, democratic President Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1961) realised this national project as the means of driving through his campaign pledge of ‘fifty years’ progress in five’ that the city was actually built. Under Kubitschek, Brasília was to be both a symbol of Brazil’s confidence and the vehicle of its accelerated development. He conceived of a modernist city linking the dominant Rio-São Paolo axis in the south with the northeast of Brazil and opening up the interior for industrialisation to overcome the social, political, economic and cultural distance between them. These aims were represented in the set of sketches that formed the basis of Lúcio Costa’s 1957 master plan. The Plano Piloto (Pilot Plan) depicted two intersecting axes: the east-west Eixo Monumental (Monumental Axis), incorporating the national legislative, assembly and ministerial buildings, as well as the cathedral and National Theatre, all designed by architect Oscar Niemeyer; and, arcing north-south, the Eixo Rodoviário-Residencial (Highway-Residential Axis) connecting Brasília to cities and regions across Brazil [fig. 2.1].

Costa’s vision of the urban as a means of social organising found its most succinct expression, however, in his architectural and urban prototype of the superquadra. As a model of urban habitation, the superquadra integrates single or double rows of apartment blocks surrounded by green space and zoned planting schemes. Envisaged as a series of distinct yet permeable ‘neighbourhoods’, the ground level is left open for shared services and recreational facilities through raising the blocks up on columns. In the pilot plan, Costa explicitly acknowledges the inevitability, if not the need of residential units of differing ‘value’ consummate with their inhabitants’ social and political status. Yet, he also refers to the possibility of the superquadra resisting ‘the undue and undesired stratification of society’ as a result of rapid urbanisation. For anthropologist James Holston, the resulting ambiguity of Costa’s position reflects an attempt to conceal his underlying

218 Costa, Memória Descritiva do Plano Piloto, pt.17
social and political agenda from the state and the selection committee involved in
the construction of Brasília.\textsuperscript{219} As an urban model aimed at social ‘coexistence’, the
\textit{superquadra} tacitly recalls Le Corbusier’s project of social transformation through
what he termed unitary urbanism. Costa had been a vocal proponent of the
supposed social benefits of architectural modernism within Brazil since the 1930s,
when he and Niemeyer worked together with Le Corbusier to design the \textit{Ministério
da Educação e Saúde} (Ministry of Education and Health), Rio de Janeiro (1935-
1936).\textsuperscript{220} Discussing the ‘modern concept of the unit of habitation...constructed not
in function of real estate profit, but in function of the harmonious and better life of
man and his family’ in 1952, Costa situates his design principles within an explicit
critique of capitalist relations.\textsuperscript{221} Following this trajectory, the \textit{superquadra} can be
seen to stage the same issues of economic and social justice that Boal would go on
to direct as Invisible Theatre, with both men disguising their ambition to transform
social relations through the urban.

For Boal, to witness Brasilia ‘rising up from the dry desert’ in just over three
years made it seem that Kubitschek’s promise of accelerated progress was ‘coming
true’.\textsuperscript{222} Williams has described the feat of Brasilia’s construction as ‘the southern
hemisphere’s moon landing’, a comparison that echoes Boal’s exchange with the
Soviet actors.\textsuperscript{223} In Brasilia, progress took on a hyper-mobile form. Niemeyer’s
monumental architecture captures the optimism of the space-age, with the
curvilinear aspects of the National Congress in particular seeming to anticipate later
satellite communications technologies [fig. 2.2]. In a play on aerial perspective, the
resemblance of Costa’s Pilot Plan to an aeroplane when seen from above recalls an
era when commercial air travel, though still out of reach for the majority, was
becoming more widely available within Brazil and internationally. The strategic
positioning of the bus station, meanwhile, where the two main axes bisect conveys
the city’s popular accessibility.\textsuperscript{224}

\textsuperscript{219} Holston, \textit{The Modernist City}, 76.
Alberto Xavier (Porto Alegre: Centro dos Estudantes Universitários de Arquitetura, 1962), 17-41.
\textsuperscript{221} Lúcio Costa, ‘O arquiteto e a sociedade contemporânea’ (1952) quoted in Holston, \textit{The Modernist
City}, 76.
\textsuperscript{222} Boal, \textit{Hamlet}, 173.
\textsuperscript{223} Richard Williams, ‘Building Brasilia: the southern hemisphere’s moon landing’, \textit{The Conversation}
\textsuperscript{224} On the socio-spatial significance of the bus station, see David Epstein, \textit{Brasilia, Plan and Reality: A
Study of Planned and Spontaneous Urban Development} (Berkeley: University of California Press,
The expansive scale of the federal centre makes such mechanical modes of transit necessary, with implications for the kinds of street theatre that Boal describes performing in the northeast of Brazil. As Parisian, Simone de Beauvoir, remarked somewhat irritably after attending the inauguration ceremony: ‘the street, that meeting ground of riverside dwellers and passers-by, of stores and houses, of vehicles and pedestrians...does not exist in Brasilia and never will.’

De Beauvoir calls into question the image of urban sociability Costa wanted to engender by suggesting how the urban plan of Brasília reduces the opportunity for unforeseen encounters in the civic spaces of the city. Costa’s elimination of the street in Brasília can be seen to parallel Boal’s movement of the Buenos Aires performance from the street into the restaurant. Underlying both moves was a concern about the power dynamics of the street and a search for alternative social spaces to challenge dominant structures – whether expressed in the colonial model of the city (Costa), or the authority of the military regime (Boal).

With hindsight, however, Boal indicates that the socially egalitarian urban imaginary of Brasília came undone in the realisation of Costa’s plan. In projecting a more inclusive society, literally and symbolically distanced from Portuguese colonial relations, Brasília was defined by those relations. This underlying paradox is succinctly expressed by Costa himself acknowledging that, ‘[f]ounding a city in the wilderness is a deliberate act of conquest, a gesture after the manner of the pioneering colonial tradition’. As Boal suggests, the tens of thousands of ‘pioneers’, os candangos who made the journey into the interior to take up the dangerous work of Brasília’s construction remained on the periphery, for instance in the euphemistically named Cidade Livre (Free City), whilst the superquadras were occupied by the middle classes. In this spatial division between ordered centre and informal urban sprawl, Brasília grew to manifest the contradictions of the nation it represents.

These contradictions were further exacerbated following the 1964 coup d’état against President João Goulart’s left-wing government (1961-1964) and the installation of the military dictatorship in the federal capital. In one particularly humorous flight of thought, Boal imagines the geography of Brasília and its central location as obstructing the military:

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The army would have to advance on the Planalto... The coup would lose its cinematic suspense, which depended on its rapid execution. War tanks used up more fuel than the commanders’ Mercedes – the tanks would have to refuel in the Esso or Shell stations, on the road-side... a photo of your tanks refuelling in a petrol station is enough to demoralise any army.227

Perhaps as a result of close alliances between Brazil’s media owners and the military regime (see Chapter Three), no such images ever materialised.228 After taking office, the military government introduced a series of sweeping economic reforms whose success in stimulating industrial development and dramatic increases in gross domestic product led to the pronouncement of an ‘economic miracle’ in Brazil (1968-73).229 The other side of this miracle, however, was a widening socio-economic gap between urban and rural populations, resulting in mass rural-urban migration. As informal settlements in Brazil’s major cities, including Brasília, continued to expand, the state of Rio de Janeiro engaged in a violent programme of favela removals that revealed the official view of favelas as aberrations and of their inhabitants as ‘not gente’ (literally, not people – faceless, invisible).230 Even to the extent that it succeeded in driving regional development, populating previously undeveloped land, the image of urbanisation as progressive projected through Brasília began to appear militaristic.

Boal’s cynicism about Brasilia’s perceived failings therefore highlights the distance between the urban imaginary and the city as realised, but this does not account for Brasilia’s subsequent realignment as the architectural manifestation of an authoritarian nation state. Reflecting on the meaning of his song, Tropicália (1968), musician Caetano Veloso describes how it felt to identify as Brazilian during the period of the military regime:

[You feel that there is a reference to the creation of Brasília, and the whole irony of building a monument when there was nothing to be commemorated: a poor country, under a military dictatorship, a dark, terrible monument. It was ... a more or less unconscious expression

227 Boal, Hamlet, 221-222.
230 For a discussion of the struggle to ‘become gente,’ see Janice Perlman, Favela: Four decades of living on the edge in Rio de Janeiro (Oxford: OUP, 2010), 316-20.
what it was like to be in Brazil and to be Brazilian at that time: you’d think of Brasília, of the Planalto Central [central high plains] and you’d expect to derive a certain feeling of pride from the architecture, and yet it was not at all like that. The feeling was more like ‘What a monstrosity!’ And this is because Brasília was built and soon after the dictatorship came and so Brasília remained there as a center of this dictatorship.231

Veloso’s characterisation of Brasília as a ‘dark, terrible monument’ is in stark contrast to the optimism that had surrounded the event of its inauguration, just four years before the military overthrow of Goulart’s government (1964). Yet, Veloso’s song, Tropicália, indicates that event as marking a political turning point into the dark with the lyrics, ‘I inaugurate the moment’.232

Image unavailable due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 2.3 Lucien Clergue, The Ramps as a Stage Setting for the Military (Brasilia, 1963)

Lucien Clergue’s black and white photographic series of Brasília from 1962-1963 appears prophetic in this regard. An image depicting a military guard on the ramp of the Palácio do Planalto, seems to anticipate the dramatic significance of Brasília as a backdrop in official media representations of the 1964 coup [fig. 2.3]. In

Clergue’s photograph, men in military uniform stand column-like in a formation that at once reflects and extends the geometry of the architecture, their white helmets and holsters seeming to mimic the building’s structural elements. The resulting impression is of the military integrated into the built environment, camouflaged against the urban. Contrary to Boal’s image of the frustrated coup, Clergue’s image gestures to the possibility that Costa and Niemeyer unwittingly set the stage for Goulart’s overthrow.

At its inception, Brasília identified a threat to national cohesion beyond national borders, with the imperial power of Europe. Governed by the ideological frontiers of the Cold War, the US-backed military regime identified a new and different threat, an ‘internal enemy’. Alongside sweeping economic reforms, this invisible threat justified a set of Institutional Acts, issued sequentially by more or less extreme military presidents, which legitimated both military and civilian authorities in rescinding rights granted to citizens by the Constitution. Though initially targeted at politicians and political institutions, by the time Tropicália was composed in 1968, the repressive apparatus of the regime had multiplied its critics, culminating in the student-led March of the One Hundred Thousand on Rio de Janeiro (1968). In response to this growing and manifest opposition, military President Artur da Costa e Silva (1967-1969) promulgated Institutional Act Number Five (AI-5) on the evening of 13th December 1968. Suspending habeus corpus, allowing trials to be conducted before military tribunals, and reintroducing the death penalty, AI-5 institutionalised a strategy of ‘control by terror’.233 In turn, legislating for the censorship of cultural mediums ranging from journalism to theatre and popular music, it extended the limits of its own opposition. For the military regime, the work of practitioners including Veloso and Boal now presented a national threat. Little wonder those artists rejected the authorised national imaginary in return, recognising it in the architecture of a city that effectively severed state bureaucratic power from the cultural centres of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and so from cultural practices engaged in social and political critique.

‘Theatre of the Oppressed was Born in Prison’

More surprising than Boal’s rejection of the militarised national imaginary

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233 Maria Helena Moreira Alves, State and Opposition in Military Brazil (Texas, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 100; see also Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira, Development and Crisis in Brazil, 1930-1983 (Colorado: West View Press, 1984), 133-5.
projected onto Brasília is his apparent identification with the architecture of the prison in stating, ‘theatre and prison — both limited in time and space — can become synonyms of freedom.’

I want to explore this notion of prison as synonymous with freedom because, as part of the arsenal of TO, Invisible Theatre is explicitly aimed at liberation from forces of oppression. Boal’s juxtaposition of theatre and prison might be read as a comment on theatre’s powerful role in maintaining social hegemonies, but it also seems to reflect a particular memory of the Tiradentes military prison, São Paulo:

I went into the collective cell and was greeted by fifteen companheiros [comrades]… Each taught what he or she knew: guitar, French (I learned the rudiments!), the history of the parties (pupils disagreed with the masters…), theatre (with me as teacher!), philosophy, and cooking (I learned how to make feijoada!). People knew capoeira, but we didn’t have enough space…”

The image Boal conveys of the collective cell is in stark contrast to the glimpses he offers of DOPS, São Paulo, where he was held in isolation and tortured whilst awaiting trial. This indicates how the prison architectures and the practice of separating political prisoners from other criminals contributed to produce what with Foucault might be called a ‘heterotopia,’ a social space of exception.

Similar accounts by prisoners in varied institutional and geopolitical contexts point to the pedagogical dimension of prison as a spatialised effect. Detailed military records of political trials carried out under the Brazilian regime echo Boal’s experience, revealing instances of prisoners charged with subversive activities including indoctrinating other inmates. In Europe, Antonio Gramsci, whose ideas about hegemonic discourse and the potential for a critical consciousness to liberate the oppressed influenced Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed, was imprisoned on

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234 Boal, Hamlet, 298.
235 Ibid. 293.
236 In an autobiographical article tracing the influence of Brecht on his practice, Boal relates advice given to him by a fellow inmate to recall the alienation effect of Brechtian theatre as a strategy for coping with experiences of torture whilst in prison. See Augusto Boal, ‘Brecht e, modestamente, eu!’ Instituto Augusto Boal (2013) https://institutoaugustoboal.org/2013/06/13/brecht-e-modestamente-eu/
238 This is highlighted within the groundbreaking Brasil Nunca Mais [Brazil No More] (1985), a report on the use of torture by Brazilian military governments (1964-79) compiled by the Archdiocese of São Paulo, and subsequently translated as Torture in Brazil: ‘a group of political prisoners from the Juiz de Fora penitentiary were charged with organizing a ‘veritable communist cell’ in prison, with the help of their relatives. Through this group, the accused had allegedly practiced subversive indoctrination among the other prisoners.’ Joan Dassin, ed. Torture in Brazil, trans. Jaime Wright (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1998), 136.
the island of Ustica between 1926-1936. During that time, he established a *scuola dei confinati* (school for prisoners). Likewise, Nelson Mandela’s commitment to education throughout his twenty-year internment on Robben Island, by encouraging dialogic exchange between prisoners, gave rise to the nickname ‘Mandela University.’ Malcolm X remembers his own imprisonment as a time of being ‘truly free’ specifically because of the opportunities for learning that it offered. More recently, writing about prison as a site of political education for the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party), Kariane Westrheim relays the experiences of men and women imprisoned in Turkey for whom the structured education offered by the movement within prison, ‘helped us to forget the outside war and the problems that followed it’ by providing a constructive alternative.

The determination of all these inmates in transforming spaces of confinement into spaces of learning and collaboration is critical. However, the tendency of prisoners to adapt to the conditions of captivity is more often observed for its psychologically damaging effects. In his analysis of the prison as ‘total institution,’ the sociologist, Erving Goffman, describes a ‘mode of adaptation’ whereby society on the outside, abstracted by its partial representation within the institutional context, is perceived by the inmate to be less desirable than life on the inside. This process of institutionalisation, or ‘colonization’, enables the prisoner to build ‘as much of a free community as possible’ with ‘the limited facilities available’. Paradoxically, colonisation negates the disciplinary function of the prison as deterrent. For Leach, the desire of the prisoner to assimilate within the prison environment, such that the ‘inmate becomes, as it were, part of his cell, and his cell becomes part of him,’ is only a more conspicuous example of a tendency to adapt that also occurs beyond the prison walls. Disregarding the possibility that it represents a loss of agency, he argues that the ability to integrate into space, to identify oneself reflected in it through camouflage, is as advantageous for connecting with and negotiating the unstable and sometimes overwhelming space of the urban as the prison.

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244 Leach, *Camouflage*, 4-6.
In the cities of Brazil under military dictatorship, however, covert operations to identify and silence any possible dissent combined with visible and indiscriminate stop and search campaigns to convince would-be critics that ‘clandestine activities were the only viable form of opposition.’ Boal’s arrest in 1971 on vague charges of defaming the government reflected the strict limits imposed on artistic expression as a result of AI-5, revealing the consequences for artists but also for their audiences, with the years following its introduction still frequently referred to as *anos chumbos* [the leaden years]. To the extent that the relative openness of the cell as a site of critical debate and learning represented freedom, therefore, that freedom was ‘limited in time and space,’ as Boal puts it, by the military dictatorship. His description highlights how the authoritarian strategy of incarcerating ‘subversives’ actually worked to consolidate opposition to the military regime, producing a community maintained by its exclusion from but also of an oppressive social space under authoritarian control. Within Boal’s collective cell, groups of activists, academics, and creative practitioners, thrown together for their resistance to the regime, discovered opportunities for pedagogical and social experimentation. Mirroring the authorised national identity of Brasília, correlative with it, Boal’s representation of the political prison as a space of freedom expresses an alternative spatial imaginary and a repressed national identity.

**Cultural Colonisers**

Whilst Boal was enacting an alternative spatial imaginary in the form of a community opposed to the dictatorship within prison, his case was attracting international attention, not to mention criticism of Brazil’s cultural policy. On 24th April, 1971, just over two months after his arrest, a letter highlighting repression in Brazil and calling for Boal’s release was published in the editorial section of the *New York Times*. Amongst its signatories were a number of prominent New York theatre makers and critics, including Arthur Miller, Robert Anderson and Richard Schechner. The letter implies that Boal’s arrest occurred as a direct result of his work in the US and Argentina, touring plays that were critical of the military regime, and anticipates his return to New York in the Spring of 1971 for the *Latin American Fair of Opinion*. Boal received an invitation from Schechner to return to New York whilst in prison, later querying whether it was genuine or only intended to strengthen

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245 Dassin, ed. *Torture in Brazil*, 52.
his case for release.\textsuperscript{247} He was released soon after the letter’s publication on the understanding that, ‘in Brazil they do not arrest the same person twice. The second time they kill you directly.’\textsuperscript{248} Taking the threat seriously, he and his wife, actress and psychoanalyst, Cecilia Boal fled Brazil with their young son, relocating to be near her family in Buenos Aires for what Boal assumed would be ‘a few months.’\textsuperscript{249} Though Argentina’s increasing authoritarianism in the lead up to the Dirty War (1976-83) prompted further moves to Portugal and eventually France, they would not return to live in Brazil until 1986.

In view of these close ties to the US, I want to reconsider Boal’s anti-imperialism and especially his repeated deflection of questions regarding the influence of US street theatre practices on the development of Invisible Theatre. In \textit{Theatre of the Oppressed}, written in Buenos Aires in 1974, Boal asserts, ‘it is necessary to emphasize that the invisible theatre is not the same thing as a ‘happening’ or the so-called ‘guerrilla theater’.’\textsuperscript{250} Twenty years later, he distances Invisible Theatre even further from these practices. Writing in 1993, Kohtes notes that Boal travelled to the US twice in 1969-70, providing the opportunity for his introduction to ‘what he later labelled \textit{Teatro Invisivel}.’\textsuperscript{251} Newspaper reports from the time confirm the Arena Theatre toured two productions to New York on the invitation of Joanne Pottlitzer, founder of the Theatre of Latin America (TOCA), New York: \textit{Arena Conta Zumbi} (1969, 1970) and \textit{Arena Conta Bolivar} (1970).\textsuperscript{252}

However, Kohtes goes on to acknowledge a letter from Boal in which the latter ‘reports having had no knowledge of troupes like the American Playground’ who were practising Guerrilla Theatre at that time.\textsuperscript{253} While it is possible that Boal was unfamiliar with the work of Marc Estrin and American Playground, I discovered a direct connection with Schechner’s anti-Vietnam War piece, \textit{BRINGING THE WAR BACK HOME}, which was staged by a group of New York University students in May 1970. In an interview given to me by Cecilia Boal, a former actress with the Arena Theatre, she recalled that sometime during their second trip to New York the company was invited by Schechner to watch this example of Guerrilla Theatre.

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247 Boal, \textit{Hamlet}, 299.  \\
248 Boal, interview by Gonzalez.  \\
249 Boal, \textit{Hamlet}, 299.  \\
250 Boal, \textit{Theatre of the Oppressed}, 125.  \\
\end{flushright}
Schechner discusses *BRINGING THE WAR BACK HOME* – an adaptation of Hed’s *Kill Viet Cong* (1967) for the street – in an article on Guerrilla Theatre, published in TDR (1970).\(^{255}\) He describes how, during the performance, three students playing the parts of a South Vietnamese supporter of the National Liberation Front, a black activist and a white Communist were roped together and marched through the streets surrounding the university. On reaching a crowded corner of Washington Square Park, the procession stopped, and ‘a straight-looking man addressed the crowd’:

He told them that the war was expensive and that everyone deserved to get a piece of the action. He told them that there was no difference between the Vietcong, the black militants, and the white Communist agitators. He said that the government had donated one of each to his patriotic group, and that someone from the audience would have the privilege of shooting the three criminals.\(^{256}\)

Boal asserts the difference between Invisible Theatre and Guerrilla Theatre, such as the performance by Schechner, is that, with Guerrilla Theatre, ‘we are clearly talking about ‘theater,’ and therefore the wall that separates actors from spectators.’\(^{257}\) While Boal therefore acknowledges Guerrilla Theatre, he implies Invisible Theatre’s collapse of the ‘fourth wall,’ and the distinction between actor and spectator, makes them incomparable. Yet, reading Schechner’s description of *BRINGING THE WAR BACK HOME*, in particular, the direct address to the crowd and invitation to participate in the act of killing, the wall separating actors from spectators appears less impenetrable than Boal suggests.

Thinking back to Boal’s description of the scene that unfolded in the restaurant in Buenos Aires, it shares at least three important aspects with Schechner’s performance. Firstly, both directors can be seen to have implicated a more or less circumstantial audience through acts of provocation, exciting the conflict always already in the urban as a means of consciousness-raising. In the case of the Invisible Theatre example, this conflict ostensibly played out between restaurant proprietors and starving citizens, though the performance itself is also implicated in the struggle to determine Brazil’s national identity within the theatre of the Cold War. *BRINGING THE WAR BACK HOME* likewise turned on the spatial

\(^{254}\) Cecília Boal, interview by Leah Lovett, Rio de Janeiro, October 2013.


\(^{256}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{257}\) Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 125.
politics of the Vietnam War to highlight the involvement of US tax-payers as powerful agents in atrocities being carried out beyond their own borders. Secondly, partly as a means of mitigating any unintended effects of this spatial conflict, both performances involved actors posing as members of the public, hidden in and amidst the unintended audience. In *BRINGING THE WAR BACK HOME*, Schechner tells us, the ‘volunteer’ was played by someone called Rotante, who only mimed shooting at his colleagues with an arm, whilst Boal describes how actors strategically positioned across several tables and performing as restaurant customers were able to stimulate and steer the unfolding debate (see Chapter Three for an extended discussion of this technique). Thirdly, and related to this, in considering Invisible Theatre and its relationship to the militarisation of urban space as camouflage, Schechner’s reference to paramilitary tactics in defining ‘Guerrilla Theater’ is particularly revealing. Like Boal’s initial experiment with Invisible Theatre, *BRINGING THE WAR BACK HOME* was created in defiance of military authority, through the subversive appropriation of militaristic forms including the goose-step, the military salute and the national anthem. The immediate need for Boal to avoid detection may have prevented such an explicit sending up of military practices, but he directly acknowledges the influence of covert military strategies when he reflects that, ‘[r]udimentary forms of invisible theatre … have always existed. In espionage, for instance, spies use techniques such as camouflage, interpretation of roles, and simulated realities — which are all invisible theatre techniques.’

Perhaps these multiple points of contact are what led Cecília Boal, during the course of our conversation, to reflect that Schechner’s performance may have inspired Boal’s Invisible Theatre after all.

If anything, the openness with which Boal refers Invisible Theatre to the militaristic techniques of espionage makes his rejection of cultural influence from the US more striking. It begs the question of why he would choose to align himself with the undercover agents who threatened his freedom rather than with Schechner, whose efforts had been instrumental in securing his release? One possibility is that claiming techniques practised by the military regime as inspiration for Invisible Theatre constituted an act of resistance. The subversive appropriation of dominant forms by cultural practitioners intent on disrupting structures of domination is familiar, if conflicted, territory. In view of his ideas about mimicry, the circumstances surrounding Caillois’ project-idea for an anti-fascist *Contre-Attaque* (1935) and its


259 Cecília Boal, interview.
subsequent take up by Bataille and Breton are particularly intriguing. The signatories of the Contra-Attaque manifesto embraced the strategies of fascism and the threat of violence in the hope of constituting a popular government, ‘an inflexible dictatorship of armed people.’

More recently, Coco Fusco addressed the sexual politics involved in the deployment of women as interrogators within the US military post-9/11 by ironically advocating sexual fantasies of female domination as a means of extracting information. Vice versa, the development of camouflage as a military technique utilised the skills of painters, sculptors and theatre-set artists conscripted during World War One, and its formal similarity to the fragmentary representations of cubism has been recognised, not least by the cubists themselves.

By reclaiming camouflage, role-play and simulation as ‘rudimentary’ forms of radical theatre, Boal undermines the repressive apparatus of a military regime maintained by its censorship of the same.

In relating the urgency of his own invisibility in Buenos Aires, Boal refers to a relationship between Argentinian and Brazilian police. Elsewhere, he clarifies this with reference to a secret intelligence and operations network code-named Operation Condor, which constituted an agreement between US-supported South American military regimes to coordinate information and resources in order to track, torture and execute political opponents across national borders. Though only institutionalised in 1975, this network was developed over several years, remaining almost entirely undetected until the release of formerly classified information in the US during the 1990s. Its secrecy was partly ensured through the use of undercover strategies with marked similarities to Invisible Theatre. Identifying precedents to Operation Condor, Sznajder and Roniger describe a technique for the surveillance of Brazilians in Uruguay implemented as early as 1964, whereby military police ‘posed as security personnel supplied by the local authorities,

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261 Bataille (1945) quoted in Falasca-Zamponi, Rethinking the Political, 137.


263 Gertrude Stein recalls how Picasso, upon seeing a camouflaged truck pass on the Boulevard Raspail, remarked, ‘Yes it is we who made it, that is cubism.’ Gertrude Stein, Picasso (New York: Dover Publications, 1984), 11.; See also Peter Forbes, Dazzled and Deceived: Mimicry and Camouflage (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 101-112.

264 Boal, Hamlet, 303.

265 Other key members were Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, joined later by Ecuador and Peru. See J. Patrice McSherry, ‘Tracking the Origins of a State Terror Network: Operation Condor’ in Latin American Perspectives 29, no.1 (2002): 38.

266 Ibid. The only specific references to Operation Condor made by Boal occur in articles and books published after this date. See Abellán, Boal cuenta Boal, 187; Boal, Hamlet, 303.
supposedly to protect the exiles. They explain how this practice was repeated in other states in order to infiltrate groups of political activists operating, as exiles, on an international scale. Operation Condor can be understood as implicating military and theatre actors in a shared space of identification, an imaginary space governed by the logic of camouflage. From this perspective, the distinction between the actors involved in the Invisible Theatre and those invisible referents of authority, operating undercover, begins to collapse.

Operation Condor also provides an important insight into Boal’s rejection of US cultural influence, as evidence of US involvement in the dominant spatial imaginary of Brazil. Writing about postmodernism in architecture, which he regards as the clearest articulation of an aesthetic shift traceable to the 1950s–1960s onset of ‘late capitalism,’ Frederic Jameson reminds his reader that, ‘this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world.’ Jameson’s critique of postmodernism stands apart from contemporaneous theories connecting postmodernism’s aesthetic plurality to the disappearance of totalising narratives. Locating his analysis within a Marxist framework of class struggle, he instead relates postmodernism to a globalised mode of corporate capitalist production that privileges novelty, and diagnoses a dystopian ‘acculturation of the Real.’ Borrowing from Jean Baudrillard’s concept of simulacra, Jameson highlights a phenomenon observed by Boal in relation to Invisible Theatre: ‘Reality took on the characteristics of fiction, fiction appeared like reality.’

The connection between economic, military and cultural forces that Jameson identifies goes some way to explaining the apparent influence of the New York theatre community on the Brazilian authorities in helping to secure Boal’s release from prison. It also provides a context for Boal’s initial encounter with Pottlitzer and Schechner in 1968, during an over-ambitious tour by the North American theatre critics of seven South American countries over six weeks. This tour was supported both financially and logistically by the Ford Foundation, a paradigm of capitalist production with a particularly conflicted relationship to Brazil. Soon after Pottlitzer and Schechner’s trip, in 1969, the Ford Foundation began funding Operação

Bandeirante (OBAN), a private organisation financed by independent and corporate backers that brought together civil police, state police and militia with the intent of repressing urban guerrillas and political subversives.²⁷¹

The purpose of Pottlitzer and Schechner’s trip was to research a special issue of TDR on Latin American Theatre (Winter 1970), comprising contributions from South American theatre makers and collectives including Boal, Enrique Buenaventura (Colombia), and the Coordinating Committee of the Revolutionary Imagination (Argentina). However, these contributions are powerfully undermined by Schechner’s introduction, detailing his impressions of Latin American theatre and its ‘clumsily borrowed forms’ as colonised by and imitating the culture of the US. In a dialogue with Pottlitzer, Schechner finds particular fault with Boal for failing to begin with ‘Macumba and the rites of the dead, something indigenous,’ and recommends that Latin American artists go through a process of psychological decolonisation if they wish to ‘create something real’.²⁷² He notes the ambivalence of Latin American artists towards US culture, without considering whether it reflects his own ambivalence – especially when faced with the choice between travelling to the north of Brazil to watch theatre in Bahia or lounging on Copacabana beach. In assuming cultural superiority, Schechner demonstrates his blindness to his entanglement in uneven relations of power and influence, not to mention his incomprehension of the languages, socio-politics and above all the theatre of South America.

Cultural Cannibals

Boal highlights the hypocrisy of Schechner’s position in a brilliant and scathing letter to the editor printed in the Autumn 1970 issue of TDR, in which he asks why Shechner doesn’t make a play about Apache death rites, and accuses him of the same ‘imperialist thinking’ that he purports to oppose.²⁷³ He continues: ‘Mr. Schecher did not see theatre in Brazil...That is his problem; but it is our problem not to allow him to say that there is no theatre in Latin America, for the simple reason that he did not want to see it.’ The problem of cultural invisibility produced by the dominant gaze that Boal is identifying here sets up his ambivalent

relationship to Guerrilla Theatre. In the same paragraph, he recalls a lecture in which Shechner spoke about his experiences with ‘guerrilla theatre’ in New York: ‘He thought he was revolutionizing the Brazilian theatre just by giving us the idea of doing theatre in the streets. He was so excited that he didn’t even notice that many actors and directors who were there…had been engaged since 1956 in all kinds of theatre in the streets.’

Schechner’s appeal to Latin American practitioners to create something ‘real,’ uncluttered by colonial, Euro-American forms, aligns with Jameson’s criticism of global capital as producing an ‘acculturation of the Real.’ Both of them come up against the same problem: namely, their investment in the dominant imaginary of an essential reality (the Real), awaiting excavation from beneath a cultural veneer. The logic of camouflage, by comparison, recognises the agency of individuals in constructing identities – which are never finished but always under negotiation – through, with and against culture. Camouflage presupposes a multiplicity of realities and perspectives, leading Boal to conclude: ‘Fiction does not exist: everything, if it exists, is real – all fiction is true.’ In the context of Leach’s concept of camouflage, Boal's imitation of cultural forms circulated by the US is not only evidence of US dominance, but also of an active process of assimilation on Boal’s part. Whilst there is no disputing the economic, military and cultural power of the US, it is not, as Schechner suggests, that ‘imitation savors too much of a humble effort to please, to be as good as’ the colonising power. Rather, imitation brings into view a differentiated negotiation between bodies and cultures, as a means of relating to, but also defining the dominant other.

This possibility finds a strong precedent in the signal text of Brazilian modernism, the ‘Manifesto Antrópofago [Cannibalist Manifesto]’ (1928), by poet and polemicist, Oswald de Andrade (1890-1954). Criticising the influence of European culture on Brazil, de Andrade urges Brazilian artists and intellectuals to forge their own identity as cultural cannibals. Whilst de Andrade looks back to pre-colonial, indigenous Tupi culture, he recognises the impossibility of returning to a landscape, as Schechner puts it, ‘uncluttered by its artefacts of a colonized psychology.’ Instead, he recommends cannibalism as a productive force with which to reclaim colonised territories. Demonstrating his proposed methodology, his manifesto metaphorically cannibalises a range of disciplines and sources, including

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277 de Andrade, ‘Cannibalist Manifesto’, 38-47.
Freudian psychoanalysis, Shakespearian theatre (‘Tupi or not Tupi’) and – of particular relevance to the Invisible Theatre under discussion – the European legal system, of which he had been a student: ‘I asked a man what the Law was. He answered it was the guarantee of the exercise of possibility. That man was named Galli Mathias. I ate him.’ The humour here consists in the name of Galli Mathias, as a pun on the Portuguese galimatias, meaning nonsense, but moreover in the image of the author countering his legalistic rationalisation with an oral but speechless act of bodily consumption. In his irreverence towards European systems of thought and judgement, de Andrade acknowledges the indivisibility of Brazilian and European cultures whilst challenging their hegemonic relationship. The violence embodied in the act of cannibalism empowers the decolonised but nonetheless marginalised culture and exposes the brutality of the coloniser, undermining the binary classifications of body/mind, inferiority/superiority, and imitation/originality inferred in Schechner’s reading of Latin American theatre. If for Caillois, imitation amounts to an incitement to cannibalism – and the loss of the bodily self to space – then with de Andrade, cannibalism becomes a metaphor for embodied identity production through the devouring, transformation and excretion of imported cultural forms.

Chopped Livers

Livers, 6-8 oz. 1 hard-boiled egg. Who’s paying for this now? Good. I didn’t want to tell you too much now because this is a funny story, because… Are you there? Onion. Hello? Are you there? I can’t hear you. Can you hear me? Because what I’m saying is that it’s not a tragic story, it’s a sort of humorous story, or rather a funny story. We were all terrified. Breadcrumbs, 1 teaspoonful. Chicken fat. Before that, the government made everybody write sort of like graffiti on the roads with very heavy white, or whatever, and then they came and made all the people get up and try to, to, er, rub them out. Salt. Cook livers in chicken fat a few minutes till tender. And they were not very kind. They stamped with their feet on the hands and so on, and they had to do it in their pyjamas in the middle of the night. Then, using the finest cutter of the mincing machine… Can you hear me? I don’t know who she was. I wish I found out. She must be dead now. Mince it together with the onion and hard-boiled egg. But she was very kind and a nice lady and she started to cry when my mother told her. Mix with the breadcrumbs. Are you still there? And of course it’s not a serious matter, but it was serious to me. And it was an indication of what was to come.

279 de Andrade, ‘Cannibalist Manifesto’, 38-47.
Season with salt. Do you understand? So that woman gave her, immediately, on the spot, a three months visa. In those days it was monthly, not like everybody comes into England, whoever wants to come. So that’s the story. Add sufficient chicken fat to form a paste. In a funny way, it’s just a human story, you know? Oh yes, it was quite harrowing. I mean, my mother was young. She was much younger than I am now, and she had a great sense of humour, my mother, your great grandmother. Are you there?

In its orientation towards postcolonial and decolonial theories, de Andrade’s anthropophagic manifesto casts doubt upon Leach’s claims for camouflage as a means of connection, posing the fundamental question: connection on whose terms? Boal has claimed that Invisible Theatre ‘never places itself in an illegal position,’ suggesting that the most effective way of questioning the validity of the law is to adhere to it – an approach evidenced in the Buenos Aires example. However, de Andrade’s ingestion of Galli Mathias reveals what is at stake in conforming to an invalid rule of law, not least the embodied knowledges and power of the colonised culture. If Invisible Theatre operates according to the logic of camouflage, then what cultural (gestural, linguistic, aesthetic…) structures govern the encounter between the actor and their environment? This is an issue taken up by Bhabha in his writing on mimicry, which he regards, in contrast to Leach, as one of the most insidious strategies of colonial power. Bhabha understands the ambivalence of colonial power – an ambivalence that Schechner notably attributes to Latin American artists – as an effect of mimicry and its ‘double vision’. It is the result of uneven sightlines: first, with the surveillant gaze, which in its disciplinary effect instates ‘a colonial chain of command, authorized versions of otherness’; and then with the returned and ‘displacing gaze’ of the disciplined other, as that which fragments the totalising perspective of the dominant authority.

Bhabha’s concept of double vision points to a crucial difference between agents of military power assuming false identities for purposes of surveillance and the actors of Invisible Theatre playing out their roles unannounced. Whilst in all probability unfamiliar with the particular strategies being deployed by the military at that time, Boal was aware of the possibility that he was under observation. This is significant because surveillance is only effective as a means of exerting disciplinary

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282 Ibid.
power when the surveillant gaze is both known and unverifiable to its subject; it is with the uncertainty of always-maybe being watched by an invisible referent of that power that the disciplining effect of surveillance becomes internalised, as Foucault has shown. By contrast, as a model of urban performance intended to elude surveillance, Invisible Theatre prevents the audience from seeing itself as such. In an inversion of terms, for Boal (as spectator), it is this not-knowing that provokes the spectator to act. The potential for Invisible Theatre to activate the urban is of far greater significance in Boal’s thinking than any feelings, opinions or prejudices that the audience may subsequently express. Assimilated into the social surroundings of the urban, Invisible Theatre is reciprocally constituted as social space, which as Massey suggests is both active and contested. Against the repressive apparatus of a dictatorship established by silencing opposition, Invisible Theatre remains determinately open to contradiction.

Invisible Theatre recognises the conditions for dramatic action already exist in strictly non-theatrical contexts. As Boal puts it: ‘The Invisible show can be presented in any location where its drama can really occur or has already occurred...’ It assumes theatre is contiguous with the urban, insofar as both are performed. To this extent, Invisible Theatre shatters the image of monumental uniformity conferred upon the military regime by the architecture of Brasília. I have been referring to the regime in the singular, but of course it was not singular in practice. Beyond differences in leadership and any tensions within the military itself, Massey’s relational understanding of space questions whether any power structure operating in and through social space could ever be unified. Exiled artists and activists including Boal were decisive in their opposition to the dictatorship, but their visibility as cultural practitioners created opportunities in this regard. Massey has warned against romanticising the figure of the exile at the risk of reinvesting individualism and elitism in new guises. Whilst Boal affiliated to the oppressed through theatre, the circumstances of his release from prison and exile indicate his relative structural privilege and the advantages that privilege afforded him.

For the vast majority of those living in Brazil under dictatorship, such visible opposition was not possible, not only because of the risks it entailed, but also because to oppose hegemonic power requires social, economic and cultural resources, and an identity that makes that opposition imaginable. In light of

284 Massey, For Space.
285 Boal, Aesthetics of the Oppressed, 6.
286 Massey, For Space, 173.
Bhabha’s work on the ambivalence of mimicry, though, it is conceivable that there were individuals camouflaged within and against the regime expressing their ambivalence in ways which, unlike Invisible Theatre, are still easily overlooked. Boal hints at this when he recalls how the judge who had provisionally authorised the São Paulo Fair of Opinions, staged at the Arena Theatre, São Paulo (1968), was subsequently arrested for belonging to a guerrilla organisation.  

The following, related to me by an academic and lawyer who grew up in Belo Horizonte during the dictatorship, suggests how the scale and structure of the military regime presented opportunities for subversion (my italics):

My father was a police officer, and that created a very interesting dynamic, because he was a police officer, now I know, that had very interesting sympathies to the left. So he was a guy in the government, in the machine, but he didn't like the machine. Actually, he was, now I understand, a very liberal guy. So sometimes they would arrest someone and he would find ways of freeing this person, using the laws to say, ‘uh-uh, this was an illegal arrest.’ ... And he was not one person, because the government was such a big employer. You had people controlling the machine, but many on the clock working against the machine, inside the machine, who are trying to make the machine more flexible – not to accuse people and destroy people's lives. They are there not because they agree with the ideology, but because they need the money. So they play a double role. (My stress.)

Where the performance of Invisible Theatre in Buenos Aires may have prompted a tightening up of legislation, further disadvantaging the same individuals the actors were supposed to represent, here is an example of a representative of the state using the given legislative and social structures to limit their reach.

Ultimately, Invisible Theatre depends on this will to intervene when an injustice is perceived to have taken place. The concept of camouflage gestures to the way in which individuals gain social acceptance through identifying, remaining inside, and reasserting the parameters of acceptable attitudes and behaviours within a particular spatial context. By rehearsing an already familiar, if flexible, ‘script’ — whether as a customer in a restaurant, a citizen of the state, an officer in the military, an inmate in a prison cell or even a performer in an invisible troupe of players — the individual becomes inscribed within that cultural setting. In social theoretical terms, the tendency to conform to normative social influence, even where to do so contradicts inwardly held beliefs, is consistent with the powerful

desire to belong to a social group.\textsuperscript{289} The imitative behaviours that structure social interactions tend towards similarity. By contrast, Invisible Theatre involves the calculated rejection of certain normative behaviours (whilst remaining camouflaged by others) to resinsert conflict into urban space.\textsuperscript{290} In the given example, this conflict arises at the point at which the protagonist too-loudly declares his inability to pay the bill. In the act of transgressing social boundaries, Invisible Theatre draws its unsuspecting audiences into the process of their renegotiation.

**Conclusion**

This chapter set out to locate Boal’s model of Invisible Theatre in opposition to an authoritarian regime that found concrete expression in the monumentalism of Brasília. Through critical analysis of RESTAURANTE TEATRO: ‘La Ley,’ and the circumstances surrounding its performance in Buenos Aires (1972), I have argued that Invisible Theatre appeared as a reaction to militaristic modes of urban encounter to reflect Boal’s spatial displacement within the Brazilian national imaginary. Limited opportunities for practising as a director led Boal to conclude there was ‘no work’ in Buenos Aires. This inability to act upon his surroundings combined with rumours of an emergent network of undercover operatives tracking opponents of the Brazilian regime across borders – possibly as a precursor to Operation Condor – to contribute to his perception of the urban as oppressive. Boal’s transcultural encounters with Richard Schechner and Guerrilla Theatre developed in the US suggested a practical model for negotiating these spatial constraints. Engaging the same militaristic logic of camouflage, Invisible Theatre enabled Boal to reassert his identity as a director and social activist in Buenos Aires, paradoxically through absenting the oppressed subjects of the play.

Through their ideological opposition, both theatre and military actors engaged in processes of identification with the urban and transformations of social space. Just as the socially egalitarian imaginary conveyed through Costa’s Pilot Plan became transmuted in the image of Brasilia as a monument to the dictatorship, so the disciplinary function of the political prison was distorted through the reimagining of that site by Boal and the other inmates in terms of the collaborative


\textsuperscript{290} For evidence that, under controlled conditions, non-conforming individuals can lessen conformity across the social group, see Vernon L. Allen and John M. Levine, ‘Social Support, Dissent and Conformity’ in *Sociometry*, 31, no.2 (1968): 138-149.
space of theatre. Though catalysed by a coercive authority, this deliberate and active process of identification constituted Boal’s sense of freedom, even as individual freedoms were threatened by the same process. A shared tendency towards adaptation with the built environment provoked both strategies of resistance, such as Invisible Theatre, and military strategies including camouflage and covert forms of occupation. If, for Leach, the ability to recognise oneself reflected in the urban amounts to camouflage, then by revealing how the urban encompasses conflicting imaginaries, as inherently social space, Invisible Theatre invigorates the tensions implicit in his claim.

Whilst this chapter has focussed on Boal’s perspective and his experience in exile, Invisible Theatre has been performed by myriad urban actors and through the mutable relations between them. Assimilated into the active space of the urban, its diffusion and disruption of theatrical sight-lines is contingent on the many and varied types of gaze that meet, intersect and cross in social space – not all of which conform or even refer to authoritarianism and its opposition. In moving beyond Boal’s partial narrative to consider the potentialities and weaknesses of Invisible Theatre as a model of urban performance, Chapter Three aims to bring these different and conflicting perspectives into view. Through critical analysis of archival materials surrounding two performances of Invisible Theatre for television, it explores the ideas of social boundary-crossing developed in the present chapter to indicate the limits of Boal’s method for challenging dominant modes of urban encounter.
Day of Celebration, Site of Protest

I stand

Camera trained
On City Hall

I,

Where tens
Upon tens
Upon thousands

Gathered up
in protest,

stand

Solitary

The city
Emptyed out
And in,

Rehearsing occupation

Witness

Who stood here before
and before
and before whom

I stand.

(London, 2016)
The Mediated City: Invisible Theatre and the Television Audience

Introduction

The previous chapter took as its discursive starting point an early example of Invisible Theatre to locate the practice in relation to Boal’s own experiences of military repression and exile. I argued that Boal was influenced by US modes of urban performances, and that his model of Invisible Theatre similarly imagines the urban as more heavily structured, subject to manipulation by covert forms of military power. However, Boal continued to practise Invisible Theatre far beyond the imminent threat of militarised violence that led to his discovery of the technique, in numerous cities, and under differing social and political circumstances. This chapter considers two such performances with the intention of plotting the critical and spatial limits of Invisible Theatre. The first took place in Liège, Belgium (1978) whilst Boal was living in Europe and so, although still in exile, no longer at immediate risk of detection and deportation by military agents. The second was staged in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1986, shortly after Brazil’s return to democratic government and Boal’s return to Rio de Janeiro, where he would reside until his death in 2009. What makes both of these performances remarkable is that they were filmed using hidden cameras and audio recording equipment for television, contradicting Boal’s assertion that, ‘[i]t is very important that the actors do not reveal themselves to be actors.’ In representing and advancing a critical analysis of the resulting television programmes here, my aim is to move the dominant discourse beyond Boal’s own perspective by opening it up to sightlines that are otherwise concealed by Invisible Theatre, namely, of the audience. By giving focus to a multiplicity of perspectives and trajectories, I call attention to the spatial entanglements and contradictions that are smoothed over by Boal in his writing about Invisible Theatre. In return, considering these examples of Invisible Theatre performed for hidden cameras

extends the scope of my thesis beyond the limits of the city per se to include the mediated space of television.

Joel Anderson, a theatre practitioner and former joker (TO facilitator) with the Centre du Théâtre l'Oprimé, Paris, has suggested there are two distinct modes of Invisible Theatre: ‘in one, the audience is never told that what they saw/participated in was a performance; in the other, there is a ‘reveal’ and often a debrief or discussion.’\(^{292}\) He considers that these two divergent modes have different potencies, with the disclosure of the act creating opportunities for critical reflection, but at the risk of its co-option. Following this line of thought, revealing Invisible Theatre via the medium of television could be said to constitute a further transformation. Invisible Theatre in its televised form disrupts Boal's binary attribution of agency to the actor and passivity to the spectator by deferring the performative act to a televisual spectator. The ambiguous and uneven relationship between spectator and participant engendered through the mediating camera is something cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin has explored with the model of carnival versus spectacle.\(^{293}\) Assuming the role of spectator, I argue that the documenting camera reveals the limits of Invisible Theatre as a means of recognising alternative urban imaginaries through the rehearsal of existing spatialised inequalities. As I demonstrate, the spatial problems performed as Invisible Theatre in Liège refer back to 1934, with a poem written by Bertolt Brecht.\(^{294}\) However, I question how accountability for the co-option of Invisible Theatre in the production of spatialised relations of dominance can be attributed to the broadcast media. Developing the concept of camouflage that emerged in Chapter Two, I return to Neil Leach to advance a more nuanced concept of spatial agency that recognises the realm of representation in its contiguity with the urban, as means of constituting identities.\(^{295}\)

The audio-visual material that forms the basis of my critical analysis has received scant critical attention until now. This may be partly because it is relatively difficult to access, held in archives in Brussels and Rio de Janeiro respectively.\(^{296}\) My own access to the archival recordings required me to visit each city and, in the case of the Rio de Janeiro example, take up residency with the Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed, Rio de Janeiro (2013). The Belgian broadcaster VRT is still in operation, and their archive has been digitally indexed and stored in the

\(^{292}\) Joel Anderson, email to Leah Lovett, October 2016.  
\(^{296}\) VRT Documentatie & Archieven, Brussels; CTO Archive, CTO-Rio, Rio de Janeiro.
Broadcasting Centre, Brussels. However, Rede Manchete, the channel that produced Invisible Theatre in Rio de Janeiro, no longer exists, and CTO-Rio’s archive and library is informal, with no digital record of their holdings available online. Another potential barrier for Anglophone viewers concerns language, since there is no existing English translation of either the French- or Portuguese-language programmes, all of which places additional pressure on their representation here.

That said, reference is made to both in the existing Anglophone literature: the Liège example is well-known because it is discussed at length by Boal in an article written in French (1981) and subsequently translated by Susanna Epstein for TDR (1990); meanwhile, during a 1990 interview with Taussing and Shechner published in the same journal, Boal mentions a series of programmes using an adapted version of Invisible Theatre made for local television in Rio de Janeiro. Finally, in relation to the Rio de Janeiro example, my research uncovered scripts and notes related to the television series in the boxes of the Augusto Boal Archive, which were at that time uncatalogued, having been transferred to the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) shortly before my research trip in 2013. These various textual sources provide an opportunity for critical comparison between Boal’s representation of Invisible Theatre and the spatial and political effects of the urban performances he describes.

Liège (1978)

The characters in the following scene never acknowledge the presence of the documenting camera, which is held low and at a slight angle.

A supermarket checkout. A young man in a white t-shirt and leather jacket places the goods from his trolley onto the conveyor-belt: paper towel, bread, a few vegetables... The cashier scans the items and states the total amount.

The customer’s response is unexpected. Explaining he is unemployed, he confesses that he can’t afford to pay. At this, he pats his pockets demonstratively. Then he makes a proposal: to work in the supermarket until he has settled his bill.

The cashier throws him a sideways glance and laughs. You’re joking, she says. He denies the charge: No, I’m serious!

By now, other supermarket employees and customers have become involved. They talk across one another animatedly. The manager is called. Unable to calm the disturbance, she calls for the police.

The protagonist of this performance is readily identifiable. His name is Francois, and he plays the unemployed man who breaks social convention by openly declaring his inability to pay for the goods in his supermarket trolley. I have established that, in doing this, he rehearses a scenario imagined by Brecht in his poem, *The Shopper* (1934). Written during the early years of Brecht’s own exile, this
The poem describes an ‘old woman’ suffering the consequences of deflationary policies introduced during the latter years of the Weimar Republic (1930-32). Following cuts to her state pension, she finds herself unable to buy even essential groceries. However, rather than remaining at home, the old woman determines to make her situation visible:

With care I picked my provisions
Took no more than I used to, but no less either
Put rolls beside the loaf and leeks beside the cabbage and only
When I added up the bill did I sigh
With my stiff fingers dug into my little purse
And shaking my head confessed that I didn’t have enough
To pay for those few things, and shaking my head I
Left the shop, observed by all the customers.  

The poem concludes with an explanation in the voice of the old woman that, ‘…if we come and are unable to buy / They’ll know how it is.’

Boal does not acknowledge the influence of this poem in his writing on the Liège example, although his scripting of the action provides certain clues. For example, his account of the contents of Francois’ supermarket trolley echoes Brecht’s description of the old woman’s shopping list in its simplicity: ‘He has bread, milk, margarine, and eggs. Nothing extra, only indispensable items.’ How far this account corresponds to the action itself is called into question by the video footage, which shows Francois taking non-essential items such as kitchen roll from his cart [fig. 3.1]. However, in a short Portuguese-language article by Boal titled ‘Brecht e, modestamente, eu!’ (Brecht and, modestly, me!, 2013) published posthumously on the Instituto Augusto Boal website, he recalls being exiled in Argentina and remembering a poem by Brecht about ‘a hungry, old woman.’

Appearing to confuse aspects of Brecht’s The Shopper with the Liège example of Invisible Theatre, he goes on to misattribute to the old woman of the poem the line: ‘I don’t know why I got all of these things: I don’t really need anything, not bread, not butter, not eggs, not cheese…’ Therefore, imbuing her character with a sense of shame that is notably absent from the original, he repositions the old woman as a foil to the poet’s proposal: ‘The poem continued with the poet saying that she should not have done it that way… Brecht proposed that she tell the truth and demand a response from society, represented there by the supermarket staff and their customers.’

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goes on to explain how he created a piece of Invisible Theatre following the plot of this poem – but 'in place of the old lady, a young unemployed man' – and to suggest how as model of urban performance Invisible Theatre realises Brecht's proposal.

However, lifting a scenario imagined by Brecht some forty-five years previously off the printed page, enacting it in a supermarket in Liège, Boal transformed it in substantive ways. Most significantly, and notwithstanding the myriad interpretations the reader might bring, The Shopper in its poetic form can be understood as an expression of the author's spatial imaginary. By contrast, as a process of urban co-authorship, Invisible Theatre opens itself up to multiple and conflicting imaginaries – and this is the point. The plot of the Invisible Theatre play, such as it is, remains beyond the control of any individual participant, even the writer-director. Such openness may bring potencies but it also carries risks, such as was captured on camera in the Liège example with Francois' arrest. By embodying the social inequalities the actors want to contest, Invisible Theatre creates a space where different and conflicting opinions can be expressed, including those that conflict with the actors' intentions. Given this turn of events, Boal's claim to have 'never participated in such a rich experience [of Invisible Theatre] as the one in Liège, Belgium, in October 1978' is particularly revealing.302 I return to Boal’s reflections on the circumstances of Francois’ arrest below. For now, I simply wish to speculate that a less desirable outcome from Boal’s perspective would have been that depicted by Brecht, of an action quietly ‘observed by all the customers’.303

With the aim of diverting Invisible Theatre’s latent risk of violence, but also to ensure that conflicting opinions were voiced, the performance in Liège involved nine other actors dispersed throughout the scene. Boal refers to these performers as ‘actors-jokers’ and positions them as boundary-dwellers, neither outside nor wholly inside the play.304 Watching the edited footage of the performance, these actors are much harder to see. That they are recognizable at all is as a consequence of decisions made by the programme’s producer, Annie Declerck, to reveal the rehearsal process leading up to the intervention. Hidden in and amongst the supermarket customers, the nine other actors are shown in their supporting roles, exciting and attempting to steer the emerging conflict towards their intended arguments, though notably their words cannot be picked out from the cacophony of voices. The performance was undoubtedly provocative, but I want to consider

whether the ways it provoked its spectators enabled or prevented different urban imaginaries from emerging to challenge the status quo.

Boal recalls that the intention in staging this performance was to ‘explain the relationship between unemployment and the exploitation to which employees submit themselves...’ 305 What remains unclear from Boal’s article on Brecht is whether this piece had been performed previously in Buenos Aires, a possibility that raises the question of its immediate relevance to the social space of Liège. Boal’s revelation that the Liège performance was developed as part of a four-day theatre workshop with participants from ‘Belgium, Morocco, Tunisia, Italy, France, and other countries,’ which for the most part took place in Brussels, around 100 kilometres away presses the issue further. 306 As Massey reminds us, place, like space, is permeable. The specificity of the local is derived from and subject to global forces, as ‘a place-specific [conjunction] of human and nonhuman trajectories’. 307 The point she makes operates to undermine spatial imaginaries and political ideologies that identify the local through the violent exclusion of perceived outsiders. Crucially, though, Massey’s spatial imaginary remains attentive to the spatial particularity of the local. From Boal’s description, it appears that his workshop participants had travelled to Belgium expressly for the workshop, which begs the question of how well positioned they were to perform the urban in ways that connected with the spatial politics and concerns of their intended participants. Why Liège?

A global event of particular relevance to the present example is the 1974 oil embargo. As an industrialised city that had become increasingly reliant on oil since the start of the local coal-mining crisis during the 1950s, Liège was especially exposed to rising oil prices. 308 The impact of the resulting crisis on the Belgian economy is visible from the OECD data, which shows a marked increase in unemployment rates for all persons across Belgium, from approximately 3% in 1974 to almost 9% by the time the performance was staged in 1978 [fig. 3.2]. There is no comparable data that shows male to female unemployment rates in Belgium for this period. However, Massey’s work on the gendered effects of deindustrialisation in the UK context suggests that rising levels of unemployment as a result of industrial

306 Ibid.
307 Massey, For Space, 171.
decline disproportionately affected men, with the numbers of women in employment as a proportion of the total workforce increasing between 1960-80.\(^{309}\)

![Figure 3.2: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Harmonised Unemployment Rate: All Persons for Belgium (1970-1979)](https://fred.stlouis.org/series/)

If this broader socio-economic context provides an insight into the possible rationale behind substituting the old woman of Brecht’s poem for a young man, then the consequences of this change are nonetheless significant in terms of the gendered relations it invokes. The most striking and troubling aspect of the performance, at least for a contemporary viewer of the film, concerns the exploitation of the supermarket employees – to which, in Boal’s view, they ‘submit themselves’.\(^{310}\) Unlike the store’s customers, who may opt to observe and participate, but equally to avoid the developing conflict, these women face a double bind, being obliged as employees to react to the disturbance of Invisible Theatre.

Whilst the trajectories of employees, customers, police and Invisible Theatre actors can be seen to intersect within the supermarket performance, it is clear that their connection to that space and to one other is differentiated and uneven. Each group performs the supermarket differently in accordance with their roles, across varying time frames and with differing degrees of agency. This idea has been explored by spatial theorist Marcuse using the image of the ‘layered city’ to highlight


\(^{310}\) Boal, ‘*Invisible Theatre: Liège, Belgium, 1978*’, 32.
the increasing social segregation of the urban.\footnote{Peter Marcuse, ‘The Layered City’ in \textit{The Urban Lifeworld: Formation, Perception, Representation}, ed. Peter Madsen and Richard Plunz (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 94-114.} Using a metaphor that hinges on the slippage between politics and theatre, Marcuse imagines the city as ‘a place used by many actors,’ experienced in as many different ways. With a view to making these multiple and differentiated experiences of the city visible, he suggests mapping the city according to divisions of race, ethnicity, occupation and income. The concentrations of each group reveal a divided city but, as Marcuse suggests, there are also telling overlaps. These are the stratified layers, across which actors encounter one another at particular times and in different capacities. Marcuse’s urban imaginary is significant for Invisible Theatre because it suggests how the potential for intended participants to act is always already directed by the urban.

Boal’s version of events signals his failure to perceive the potential barriers to participation through the urban, a failing that recommends his relative freedom in this instance. For example, when he remembers the supermarket manager as ‘a stubborn woman’ for calling on the police to intervene, he displays a remarkable insensitivity to the multiple and complex forces exerted on her as a line manager, not to mention as a woman.\footnote{Boal, ‘Invisible Theatre: Liège, Belgium, 1978’, 27.} From the resulting footage, it is apparent that all the supermarket employees are women, an observation which, in light of Marcuse’s thinking, can be seen to reflect the socio-economic status of women in wider society at that time. Whilst the representation of women within the workforce may have increased between 1960-80, a decisive factor in this shift highlighted by Massey was the relative availability of ‘jobs for women (low-paid ones)...in sectors generated by the spending-power of highly paid men’.\footnote{Massey, \textit{Space, Place and Gender}, 111.} By contrast, whilst Francois played the part of an unemployed man, his participation in a four-day theatre workshop hints at his relative privilege, especially given Boal’s revelation that ‘he [Francois] had a job and earned a regular salary’.\footnote{Boal, ‘Invisible Theatre: Liège, Belgium, 1978’, 28.} In view of this underlying inequality, the questions that arise are: to whom is the problem of unemployment being made visible? And what remains unseen?

Whilst unemployment may have been the intended target, what becomes apparent from watching the video is the extent to which Invisible Theatre and its actors are already imbricated into the uneven relations that structure society. The difficulty of recognising Boal’s description of the supermarket employees as ‘angry’ in the bemused expressions captured by the television cameras emphasises this
entanglement. This discrepancy casts doubt on the reliability of his reconstruction of the performance through memory, just as it positions him within it. By deflecting blame for the way in which events unfolded unexpectedly onto the ‘stubborn’ and ‘angry’ women, Boal acts oppressively towards the employees, whose actions were already constrained by the hierarchies of the supermarket’s staffing structure. This uneven power relation is only exaggerated by the casting of the protagonist as a man, rather than the woman of Brecht’s poem. If this performance reveals the exploitative conditions of labour, then it does so by exploiting those same conditions.

In fact, the women’s nervous laughter conveys a far more nuanced response than Boal’s account would imply. As Henri Bergson has suggested, laughter has a social signification. In an essay which opens with the seemingly straightforward question – ‘What does laughter mean?’ – he attempts to tease out the complex relational processes involved in the act of laughing. He indicates how laughter signals belonging to a group, whether actual or imaginary, when he observes that, ‘laughter always implies a kind of secret freemasonry, or even complicity, with other laughers.’ Laughter therefore operates spatially insofar as it distances that group from the object of their laughter. This distancing effect gives rise to what Bergson considers to be the underlying social function of laughter, that is, to intimidate disruptive elements within society into assimilating such that social cohesion may be restored. By shaming the risible individual into conforming to the group, ‘society avenges itself for the liberties taken with it,’ though he is quick to point out how, as a spontaneous mechanism, ‘laughter cannot be absolutely just’.

Another aspect of laughter discussed in the essay which is of particular relevance here concerns deception. Bergson observes that the identification of a disguise is a common trigger for laughter. In this case, he posits, laughter is a means of exposing the deception, and avoid being laughed at, as the dupe. Returning to the film of the Liège performance, the laughter of the cashier and her manager signals that neither is a willing participant in this piece of theatre. Read across Bergson, their reaction can be understood as a corrective to Francois’ unusual behaviour, but it also signals an awareness that the joke is on them. By asking Francois directly whether he is a blagueur, a joker, they see the performance

316 Ibid. 3.
317 Ibid. 97.
318 Ibid. 19-22.
for what it is, although Francois maintains the deception by shamelessly denying the charge.

The deception marked in the women’s nervous laughter and implicit in my casting of Invisible Theatre as camouflage is often regarded as unethical and irreconcilable with TO’s socially liberating intentions. Boal’s claims that the situations presented as Invisible Theatre ‘actually happened,’ and therefore what Invisible Theatre represents is ‘truth,’ attempt to deflect such criticisms.319 However, like his critics, Boal’s defense assumes deception is inherently problematic. I want to challenge this assumption by considering the joker of Invisible Theatre in relation to trickster, a cross-cultural figure typically characterised by a state of being in-between: between gods and mankind, between human and animal, and, constantly on the move, between places. This is something theatre scholar Mady Schutzman has done to consider the advantages of ‘lying, deceit, imitation, and magic’ within TO as a whole. She imagines:

The TO Joker, as a trickster-like boundary dweller, would link TO with all its borders. Standing on the margin of even that which he or she facilitates, this Joker reminds us that the system we are working within cannot be understood in isolation from that which it is not.320

Schutzman’s understanding of trickster myth is based on US cultural theorist Lewis Hyde’s interpretation of the trickster aspects of cultural practices in *Trickster Makes this World*, which is influenced in turn by Paul Radin and Jung’s study of the Winnebago Trickster Cycle from 1956. Like Hyde, Schutzman argues that trickster’s liminality creates the exciting possibility of non-oppositional forms of resistance. This argument enables different ways of thinking about deception, but I want to go further by considering how the spatiality of the trickster reveals complex social entanglements at play within Invisible Theatre. Where Schutzman refers back to the Winnebago Trickster Cycle, I look to the Upper Xingu region of the Amazonas and the trickster Taugi (a name which translates as ‘lies about himself’) to consider how trickster challenges Boal’s urban imaginary.321

A dangerously unpredictable creative force, Taugi features prominently in Kalapalo trickster myths recorded and transcribed by anthropologist Ellen Basso in the late 1970s, at around the same time as the Liège example. The Kalapo are

inhabitants of the Xingu National Park, a site established in 1961 and reserved for Brazil’s indigenous population. At the time of Basso’s field trip, the Kalapalo were facing increasing pressure from inland industrial development around the Upper Xingu Basin in the wake of Brasília (see Chapter Two). The lines of the park had been redrawn in 1971 to include more territory but of significantly lower quality, much of which was being used illegally by ranchers.

Basso indicates that the Kalapalo understanding of deception is more open-ended than that of her intended readers. She does this with reference to trickster stories – ‘those in which there are characters defined by and through their deceptions’ – because of what they reveal about deception and Kalapalo attitudes towards deception. Kalapalo trickster myth engages deception as a means of negotiating relationships, of approaching the other, and as such it is understood as having a crucial role in structuring society. For example, Taugi is an agent of change precisely because of his uncontrollable drives, his ability to take on animal forms, to move about unnoticed, and his tendency to lie. Sometimes this change is positive, as in the following extract from Kwatingi, when he creates the Fierce People from arrow cane:

Unknown to her,  
  it suddenly happened.  
    Yes.  
She didn’t realize what had happened.  
    He made it happen when she walked over the arrows.  
Then she came back.  
  ‘He must have tricked us,’  
    so she came inside,  
  ‘He must have tricked us.’  
    Her womb had become filled with her future offspring.

This trickery gives birth to an unpredictably violent people who help Taugi destroy the hegemony of furred animals over human beings. Sometimes, however, Taugi makes life more difficult for people, for instance, when he makes the grass used for thatching grow spiny. In this way, deception is regarded as bringing opportunities and potencies as well as weaknesses.

See Stephan Schwartzman et. al. ‘The natural and social history of the indigenous lands and protected area corridor of the Xingu River Basin’ in Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, 308 (April, 2013): 2012.0164

Basso, In Favor of Deceit, 82.

Ibid, 229.

The formatting here follows Basso’s text, and indicates modulations in volume and tone, with indented lines sounding softer. Basso, In Favor of Deceit, xv; 73.
As Hyde points out, trickster is not only a boundary-crossover, as is often stated, but is frequently also a creator of boundaries, one who ‘brings to the surface a distinction previously hidden from sight’. This aspect of trickster can be seen in the Kwatingi cycle, which offers an origin myth for territorial borders and human conflicts. The following passage does not illustrate Taugi’s deceptive character per se, but it does show how trickster is used to negotiate social relations. I quote at length to give an insight into how this is achieved through the performative dimension of storytelling and the narrative. Directly implicating Basso and addressing us, her readers, this extract presents a vivid and compelling challenge to the ideas of progress that caused the Kalapalo people to be displaced:

The Christians grew numerous.
At this place, at that place,
   they went all over.
      They went all over.
They multiplied,
   they multiplied,
   while they settled in many places.
      The Christians settled all over.

We are still here.
   Those who are like us are still here.
We are settled on our own land, which Taugi set aside as ours.
We stay right here because he set aside this place as ours.
But you people must keep to your own land,
   the land of the Christians, I mean,
      which he set aside for you,
         which Taugi set aside for you.
Even newer things were invented,
   you people made airplanes.
You people invent new things.
This thing here…
      the tape recorder was made that way.

It’s over. It’s finally ended.

Here, the speaker invokes Taugi, as arbiter of border disputes, to assert the Kalapalo claim to the land around the Upper Xingu Basin. In so doing, he recognises Basso’s research as a space in which to contest territorial boundaries recently re-drawn by the state. It is worth considering that Basso’s project – to record and translate Kalapalo trickster stories – was facilitated in the context of an authoritarian regime, perhaps as a way of diverting academic attention away from

326 Lewis Hyde, Trickster Makes this World: How Disruptive Imagination Creates Culture (Edinburgh: Cannongate, 2008), 7.
327 Basso, In Favor of Deceit, 79.
the military government. If so, then the speaker’s use of Taugi and of Basso’s recording device to negotiate the relationship between the Kalapalo community and wider society subverts this intention. In the context of my own research, with its focus on Invisible Theatre and urban performance, Basso’s work highlights the impossibility of treating the urban as a boundaried category by revealing the tension between urban and strictly non-urban space.

If Invisible Theatre consists in the intervention of theatre into the space of the urban, then its mediation by televisual technologies signals a reciprocal intervention of urban social relations into the space of popular culture. In this case, the context for the broadcast was a one-off documentary as part of an arts series for the Flemish television station, VRT, intended to offer the viewer insights into Boal’s creative process and practice. However, theatre critic George has noted how this effect of the hidden camera is preceded and paralleled in the long-running television series, Candid Camera, a programme conceived in 1947 for the radio, as Candid Microphone, by presenter Allen Funt.328 George’s intention in making this comparison is to dismiss Boal’s idea of Invisible Theatre as neither unique nor authentically Brazilian, claims which I have argued reflect his own cultural colonialism based on values of originality and presuming cultural influence to be one way (see Chapter Two). Nonetheless, the comparison itself is valid and, thought about another way, may help to address some of the problems Invisible Theatre raises. In particular, I want to consider Boal’s contradictory claim that theatrical invisibility ‘make[s] the spectator act freely and fully, as if he were living a real situation’.329 Whilst we may well question the freedom of a spectator ‘made’ to act, his intention seems to be to liberate the subject from the stultifying anxiety that an audience can induce in an actor. Similarly, explaining the advantages of the Candid Camera technique to the study of human behaviour, James Maas and Kathleen Toivanen suggest that, ‘there is little influence on spontaneous behavior by factors that frequently contaminate psychological experiments’ because ‘all recordings are done without the subject’s awareness’.330 Where Boal talks about spectators acting freely and fully, these authors indicate the spontaneity of the reactions unwittingly caught on camera. In both cases, the implication is that the subjects’ responses are more authentic, or as Boal puts it, more ‘real’, when at least part of the spatial context for the action is concealed from them.

329 Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed, 125.
I have already suggested how Invisible Theatre engages strategies of camouflage to integrate itself into urban. Captured by the documenting camera, the participants of Invisible Theatre are supplanted into another, different space, against which their actions stand out instead of blending in. Is the hidden camera then a technology for detecting camouflaged social interactions through their displacement? If so, who is the audience, and what is their relationship to the action? By recording and editing Invisible Theatre for television audiences, Declerck effectively produced an audience of non-participants, or what Claire Bishop refers to as the ‘secondary audience.’ The distinction she draws implies the primacy of the participant as culturally privileged through their inclusion in participatory art including Invisible Theatre. This notion is consistent with Bakhtin’s theoretical model of the carnival as opposed to the spectacle: ‘Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates...’ For Bakhtin, carnival resists the dominance of any individual imaginary precisely because it includes all of society as participants in the trickster-like transgression of social hierarchies. Yet, like the speaker of Taugi myth in Basso’s transcriptions, the anxious response of the supermarket employees indicates a more complex relationship between the participants and spectators of Invisible Theatre. Comparing Boal’s recollection of the 1978 Liège performance from 1981, in particular his characterisation of the supermarket employees, with archival footage of the performance as represented for television viewers at the time enables us to challenge his version of events. To this extent, the hidden camera opens Invisible Theatre up to critical scrutiny.

Vice versa, however, it seems likely that Boal’s attempt in writing this article to deflect criticism of the Liège example is a direct consequence of the performance having been filmed in the first place. Seen in this light, audio-visual and screen-based technologies can be understood as mediating and displacing a relationship between participants and spectators, as with Basso’s recordings of Kalapalo trickster myth. Leach has discussed this effect of the camera in his work on camouflage. He quotes US cultural critic, Christopher Lasch: ‘Cameras and recording machines not only transcribe experience, but alter its quality, giving to much of modern life the character of an enormous echo chamber, a hall of mirrors.’ What Lasch means to highlight here is the way the visual economy operates according to the logic of the spectacle to produce disorientating surface

331 Bishop, Artificial Hells, 124-6.
332 Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, 7.
333 Leach, Camouflage, 129.
effects that give way to a culture of narcissism. For Leach, however, the deceptive qualities of the mirror image suggest the potentialities of recording technologies in opening up a non-identical space, a space of difference. The effect of the documenting camera is not to distort reality, so much as shape it.

Boal recognises the active role of technology when he states, ‘[t]he fact that television was documenting this event added a new dimension to this story.’ He goes on to recall what happened after the televised scene ends, when two of the actors were taken by the police for questioning:

Annie and Francois arrived at the police station and continued in their roles. Being such good actors, they could keep up their Invisible Theatre personas without being suspected. Eventually, however, the police discovered the truth. Besides discovering Francois’ microphone, they found out that he had a job and earned a regular salary. As the investigation proceeded, Francois finally confessed that he was just doing Invisible Theatre.

Here, we learn how the presence of a microphone concealed on the protagonist alerted the police to the ‘truth’, which is to say the theatrical context for Francois and Annie’s actions. Boal describes how the policeman ‘became extremely upset’ and suggests that the reason for this was, ‘because he felt that his authority was being mocked.’ Whilst the relationship to authority may explain the police officer’s reaction to some extent, I suggest that his response was amplified by his discovery of the microphone. Specifically, the microphone signaled to the police officer his exposure to an invisible and unknowable audience. To extend George’s comparison, the discovery of the microphone might be imagined as corresponding to the moment when the deception is revealed with the catchphrase, ‘Smile, you’re on Candid Camera!’ In clip after clip, victims do smile, but they also lower their heads, cover their faces, and turn away from the audience, signalling their shame at having just been made the fool. It is not simply, as Boal imagines, that the police officer’s authority was challenged by the deception of Invisible Theatre. Moreover, the microphone signaled to him the potential for this challenge and his role as an unintended actor to become the spectacle. The discovery of the dramatic context for the action shifted his attention at least from the issue of unemployment to the subversion of his own identity, from authority figure to the subject of popular entertainment. This shift touches on the possible limits of revealing Invisible Theatre

336 Ibid.
337 Ibid.
to its audiences after the event. In this way, the television spectators of the Liège performance can be seen to have acted back upon the urban drama as it unfolded, calling their (our) role as 'spectators' into question.

* 

**London (2014)**

A colour reproduction of a photograph of an encounter. A young boy stands separate amidst conversations. He is at a safe distance from the action which holds his attention. A performance (the photographer’s subject). Three women conjoined into a precarious surveillance unit, held in formation and filming the exhibition space from above. Their arresting uniform: black stilettos, leather-capped leggings, hi-vis jacket and ex-police issue riot helmet-turned-tripod-foot.

**London (2009)**

There are more of you, but they are situated strategically. A few occupy the monumental plinths, tracking troublemakers through telephoto lenses and preventing those who would address you from taking the stage. The rest wear full riot gear and stand shoulder to shoulder in lines, bridging gaps between boarded-up buildings and dividing your lot from passers-by. Then the boundary their bodies makes begins to contract and you are condensed with the rest into a mass.

You surge forward, and drag back, a maelstrom of affect. This is how your argument is exhausted. You need to piss but there is nowhere to go.

**London (2011)**

Moving in this getup is difficult. Doorways force us to teeter with bended knees. The helmets muffle sounds and blinker sight-lines. Visors coated with mirror film, we watch our audience facelessly.

From what I can see, there are two reasons to worry: first, that they might not react at all; and then again that they might, but too vigorously. I feel our vulnerability to the uncertain role this audience will play (which is every performer’s vulnerability).

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As it happens, some laugh, several ask if we can see, others try to peer underneath, one group playfully challenges us, a couple becomes irritated, ignores the interruption, and eventually moves away. Further off, a boy is watching. As we step forward, he takes small steps back.

Figure 3.3: Katy Beinart, Leah Lovett, Helen Simms, TRIPOD, *Surplus to Requirements?* (London: UCL, 2011).
Rio de Janeiro (1986)

Unlike the intervention in Liège, which appeared in a documentary about Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed, the following example is one of a set of ‘aberturas [openings]’ commissioned by Rio de Janeiro television station, Rede Manchete, in 1986 as a regular Invisible Theatre feature for Sunday broadcast. From notes and scripts stored in the Augusto Boal Archive, UFRJ, it appears that at least ten scenarios were planned to be televised over as many weeks. Listed on a single side of A4 under the heading ‘AUGUSTO BOAL: TEATRO INVISÍVEL [sic.]’, they cover a variety of urban settings and social relations signposted by titles such as ‘O Homem Que Queria Comprar Um Vestido [The Man Who Wants to Buy a Dress]’; ‘A Mulher Com a Coleira de Cachorro [The Woman with a Dog Collar]’; ‘O Homem Escravo [The Slave Man]’ and, a notable hand-written addition, ‘Supermercado [Supermarket]’.

The first three in this list are typed and crossed-off in blue ink, presumably after they were shot. However, most were never realised, with the series being withdrawn less than two months after it first aired for reasons that are discussed below. I have seen four: the first two in the above list, a third revolving around a single woman ordering a man – a stranger – a glass of wine, and one other. Referred to by the hand-scrawled title ‘Racismo no Casal [Racism in the Couple]’ as number six on Boal’s list, and elsewhere as ‘O Casal Com Marido Racista e Mulher Não [The Couple in which the Husband is Racist, but the Woman is Not]’, this programme is listed as ‘1’ on the archival recording I have seen, and forms the focus of my discussion here.

The Invisible Theatre aberturas produced for the Rede Manchete series last approximately seven minutes each, and all of them follow the same basic format. The static title screen, which flashes up for a few seconds, features the image of a young, white woman’s made-up face, bleached-out against an over-saturated background in two of the episodes, and partially obscured behind a reflective, transparent screen in the other two, as a ground for the words TEATRO INVISÍVEL [fig.3.6]. This image cuts to a medium close-up of Boal seated within a studio and speaking straight to the camera as he introduces the performance and discusses the social issue it is intended to address. After the viewer’s attention has been duly directed, a synthesized theme tune plays in the documentation of the performed action, which culminates in rapidly cut responses from the crowd and, in all but the first episode, a brief summation by Boal. Foregoing end credits, the abertura ends.

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339 Augusto Boal, Teatro Invisível. (c. 1986), August Boal Archive, UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro.
even more abruptly than it begins, either with an advertisement, or the over-exposed profile of the anonymous woman again, but now signalling the start of a cookery programme.

Boal introduces the abertura featuring the performance of *Racismo no Casal* in terms of the differentiated construction of racialised identities and the societal problem of racial prejudice. He articulates this in terms of ‘cor [colour]’ and the binary division of black and white. However, his monologue is intercut with stock footage that complicates this binary, including moving images of contacted indigenous people and territories. This is followed up in quick succession with scenes of Shakespeare’s Othello, Ronald Regan – then President of the US, an unidentified General in the uniform of the Ugandan air force, and social rights activist and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Comparing these figures uncritically, without attention to their particular social or political contexts, Boal gestures to the performative dimension of power and urges the viewer to imagine a different and more equal Brazil, in which social roles are not determined by the colour of a person’s skin. His monologue ends with a nod to the Brazilian constitution: ‘The second law states all Brazilians are equal, and it would be lovely if the law were true, but we know it is not so.’ I describe the action that follows and its media representation in detail because of the difficulties outlined above concerning access to the source material.
Abertura 1.

The scene is shot from above and across the street.

‘Praça Saens Peña
Uma hora da tarde’

A plaza in the North zone of Rio de Janeiro, at one in the afternoon.

I.

A white, middle class couple sits at a restaurant table. She orders. He says that what she has asked for is too expensive. They argue. She becomes animated, then angry, and tells him to change the order to coffee. He gets up and exits the frame.

Whilst he is away, a younger man walks past. The wife smiles at him, invites him to take a seat. The two strangers introduce themselves and talk flirtatiously.

The husband returns to find his wife sitting with another man, a black man. He wants to leave.

‘Leave?’ His wife is incredulous. ‘You ask me here for a drink and now you want us to leave?’ It’s not just the money, he explains, but ‘a person like you sitting with someone like him…’

The young man jumps up. ‘Someone like him? Like who? How am I different?’

This woman asked him to sit at the table. He didn’t know that she was here with her husband. She interjects: ‘I can sit with whomever I choose!’

The young man turns his attention to her, tells her that he resents being used to fuel a row. ‘Thank you very much!’ His voice is sharp. ‘Good day!’

The camera cuts to the gathering crowd of onlookers and pans, lingering on the faces of the men with the darkest skin.
In the restaurant again, other men weigh in. It is the husband’s fault for allowing his wife to be with this man in the first place. She isn’t very clever, he could be dangerous.

II.

The camera cuts back to the street. The actors have moved from the restaurant and are standing in and amongst the crowd.

The wife explains to women passing by that her husband is angry because her boyfriend is black. ‘You’d be better off with the boyfriend,’ they say.

The young man asks the husband whether he would react this way if he had white skin? He thinks he would. A woman with a strong regional accent, a Carioca, speaks up: ‘You wouldn’t! He’d be a white man!’

III.

To camera, passers-by in the crowd express their points of view:
‘All Brazilians have a drop of black, we are all mixed race.’

‘The problem is that white and black don’t marry. There are white houses and black houses.’

‘The problem is money. A wealthy black man would have blonde women running after him.’

What should be immediately apparent is how, in turning on the issue of racial prejudice, this performance brings a whole constellation of social tensions to the surface. Before considering this complex set of social entanglements, however, I want to draw attention to the structure of the performance. The dramatic episode can be divided into three parts, denoted above by the numerals I-III. Part I involves the rehearsed action, performed within the restaurant premises. Set apart from the street but open to it, the architecture of the restaurant functions as a stage for the actors. Seated on the terrace, their dialogue can easily be heard from outside, but the crowd that gathers around the unfolding drama is kept at a distance from it. Part II is marked by the actors’ movement out of the restaurant and into the space of the street. From within the by now sizable crowd, they directly engage people gathered there to witness the action, involving them in the performance as participants. Here, there is some blurring between the roles of actor and what Boal calls actor-joker, insofar as the protagonists can be seen steering their spectators into the emerging conflict. Any actors-jokers hidden within the crowd remain indeterminable on-screen, as off. Part III marks a significant departure from the Liège example by inviting audience responses to the performance in the broadcasting convention of vox populi. Thinking back to the distinction made by TO joker Anderson, their analyses of the underlying issues recommend this as an example of Invisible Theatre in which the theatrical context is revealed to the co-present audience as a means of promoting further debate. Cecilia Boal, who recalls writing scripts for the series and is credited under her maiden name, Thumim, in at least one episode, confirms this: ‘they always said at the end that it was theatre, and that it was to discuss something.’

Candid Camera, the individuals who do speak are evidently aware of the documenting camera as they turn to face it.

In light of Maas’ observations about the advantages of the hidden camera technique as a means of eliciting more spontaneous reactions from study subjects, it is revealing to compare the responses of the participating audience before and after the televisual context is disclosed to them. How far does the visibility of the audio-visual technology and the imagined viewer shape the discussion, with regards to who speaks and what is said? To what extent might any apparent shift be attributed to the production of the television programme, as a function of editing?

An immediate difficulty here concerns the ambiguous role of the actor-joker, as boundary-dweller, in terms of differentiating actors from everyone else in and amongst the crowd. Nonetheless, the reactions filmed by the hidden camera can be seen to diverge from those shot at street-level in several telling ways. First, there is a marked difference at the level of affect – both as directed and as expressed. In its unrevealed form, Invisible Theatre instrumentalises affect to realise the agency of its primary audience, moving them to (re)act in anger, pity, empathy, fear – and this list is by no means exhaustive. For example, the woman filmed unknowingly from above who interrupts the character of the husband to rebuke him for denying the issue of race directs her anger and disbelief at the actor playing him precisely because she does not recognise the scenario as fictitious (assuming, that is, she is not also a member of the cast). However, this intervention into the affective register of the city is a high-risk strategy, not least because of its potential to provoke unwanted or violent reactions, often directed at the actors themselves, as the Liège example demonstrates. The woman’s remark compels the actor playing the husband to improvise, feign surprise and deny her accusation, propelling the performance into uncharted territory. By drawing participants further into the deceptive space of the imaginary like trickster, the actors enlist them in shaping social space in the present.

By contrast, the respondents who express their views to camera translate their affective experience of the performance to signal their recognition and understanding of the issues it raised. Referring back to the performance, in the past, they treat it as complete and fixed. With the visibility of the documenting camera, there is also a marked shift in the representative identities of the participants. Where the actors appear to engage a relatively diverse cross-section of the crowd through direct address, the closing debate is significantly dominated by men whose comments (‘a drop of black’) position them as white. Of the ten individuals whose opinions are featured in the final edit, only two of them are women. Meanwhile, the
man the camera lingers upon for the longest whilst scanning the crowd never speaks, but dispassionately returns the camera’s deflected gaze before walking away [fig. 3.5, left].

What remains unclear from watching the archival footage is how far the identities represented after the reveal are the result of editorial decisions made by the programme producers and, connected to this, how far they reflect the cultural effects of television in constituting representable identities. In exploring both possibilities, I return to Boal and an interview with Taussig and Shechner in which he recalls a conversation with one of the producers at Rede Manchete:

The television program was very popular. It lasted about two months. But the program never got aired in other cities. ... [A] young woman who was a producer took me aside. ‘Don’t say I told you,’ she said, ‘but the owner of the station doesn’t want this program anymore because you showed people in the streets and the people are mostly black. He doesn’t want so many blacks on his television station.’

The localised urban infrastructure of Rede Manchete offers one explanation as to why the series was only aired within Rio de Janeiro, as I discuss below. Before that, however, I want to address Boal’s underlying suggestion that Brazil’s black population was systematically rendered invisible by Brazilian television. This is a problem that has been brought to light by cultural theorist Joel Zito Araújo through his influential study, A Negação do Brasil [The Negation of Brazil]. Analysing the representation of black people in nearly seventy per cent of Brazilian telenovelas (a popular form of television melodrama – see Chapter Five) produced between 1964-1997, Araújo demonstrates that the majority of black actors and actresses played subservient, criminal or sexually promiscuous roles, or a combination of these, with only four middle-class black families being represented across all telenovelas during the period. Beyond this, their infrequent and minoritised representation, he reveals how infrequently black characters further the narrative of the telenovelas included in the study, highlighting the naturalised casting of white actors except where the presence of a black actor was specified. Araújo’s findings of the role played by the mass media in perpetrating negative stereotypes constructed at intersections of race, gender and class, can be recognised in the particular context of Rede Manchete from the station’s telenova output, which in 1986 included Dona Beija,

341 Augusto Boal, ‘Boal in Brazil, France, the USA: An Interview with Augusto Boal’, interview by Michael Taussig and Richard Schechner in TDR, 34, no.3 (1990): 55
Novo Amor, and Mani de Querer, but also in the over-exposed image of the young white woman selected to introduce features including TEATRO INVÍSIVEL [fig. 3.6] and then again in the authoritative positioning of Boal himself.

![Image]

Figure 3.6: Title screen for Invisible Theatre (Rio de Janeiro: Rede Manchete, 1986). Courtesy CTO Archive, CTO-Rio, Rio de Janeiro.

Against this backdrop, the decision to produce a performance directly addressing the issue of racial prejudice, moreover casting a black actor in a pivotal role, can indeed be understood as creating an *abertura*, an opening, as the series’ title suggests. By focussing in on the reactions of black spectators in the street, the programme exposes the routine misrepresentation of identities hegemonically constructed as black by the station – that is to say, it reveals the station’s part in an overdetermining deception. That said, the issue of underrepresentation and the powerful reinforcement of marginalised identities through media channels reveals how identities become unevenly inscribed across territorial *and* mediated space, pointing to a flaw in Leach’s idea of the camera image opening up a space of difference. That the series should have been withdrawn as a result of the oppressive relations that, through that series, the actors sought to counteract emphasises the extent and reach of the problem. As a mode of censorship, it reminds us that invisibility is more often a means of limiting the social, political and cultural influence of less powerful groups. It also calls back into question the notion of the television spectators as non-participants by gesturing towards the distorted
relationship between them and the ‘people in the streets,’ tacitly cast by the station’s producer as other.\textsuperscript{343}

Articulating the spatial relationship between participants and television spectators in this case calls for closer scrutiny of the broadcaster mediating the encounter. Established towards the end of the dictatorship, in 1983, Rede Manchete was one of two stations to succeed Brazil’s first television network, TV Tupi (1950-1980). The other, SBT, assumed responsibility for TV Tupi’s São Paulo station, whilst Rede Manchete took over operations within Rio de Janeiro – explaining the localised broadcast of the Invisible Theatre series. The transfer of media ownership had been ordered directly by the federal government, under military control, to prevent the further expansion of the TV Tupi network and promote market competition. The new owner of the Rio de Janeiro station was Adolpho Bloch, whose media empire included one of Brazil’s most influential weekly news magazines, \textit{Manchete}, as well as the Radio Manchete network. Bloch’s personal views of the military dictatorship are ambiguous – he was a close friend of the popular democratic President Juscelino Kubitschek, and invited the journalist Carlos Heitor Cony to join \textit{Manchete} magazine shortly before his arrest for open criticism of the regime.\textsuperscript{344} However, \textit{Manchete}’s publication of a ‘supposed interview’ with President João Goulart in November 1964, emphasising the nation’s economic instability and anticipating revolution as a national threat, was subsequently implicated in the military coup.\textsuperscript{345} As a result, Bloch was widely regarded as a supporter of the military regime, a perception which may be reflected in Boal’s negative opinion of him.

The history of Rede Manchete points to the development of Brazil’s television network infrastructure through alliances between the Brazilian military regime and media owners. The military was quick to recognise the power of television to build political consensus and galvanise an urban middle class emerging as a result of economic policies focussed on urbanisation and market integration. In 1968, during the most repressive period of the dictatorship, television sets were incorporated into the national installment credit scheme.\textsuperscript{346} This move helped to ensure the penetration of television media into a growing number of Brazilian homes over subsequent years, no longer as the preserve of the very

\textsuperscript{343} Boal, ‘Boal in Brazil, France, the USA: An Interview with Augusto Boal’, 55.
\textsuperscript{345} See Phyllis Parker, \textit{Brazil and the Quiet Intervention, 1964} (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974), 50.
wealthy. Yet, despite widening participation in television culture in Brazil in general, Rede Manchete anticipated viewers from within a relatively narrow social demographic, designated as ‘class A and B.’ The channel’s aspiration to a ‘European standard,’ with an emphasis on journalistic content, cultural programming and Japanese-language imports, was noted at the time for appealing to an educated, affluent and mobile urban elite, a social group whose number had increased in Rio de Janeiro through the ‘Brazilian miracle’ of the 1970s. The producers’ deliberate white washing of the city can be understood as a reflection of this intended audience – the inequality of opportunity for entry into classes A and B being just one indicator of the racial prejudice that Boal and the actors wanted to disrupt. Leach has gestured to the close connection between the spaces of the city and the screen when he suggests: ‘If identity is a performative construct – if it is acted out, like some kind of ‘film script’ – then architecture could be understood as a kind of “film set.”’ In making this comparison, however, Leach fails to acknowledge the significance of the audience his metaphor implies. The contrast between the social identity of the audience conveyed through Rede Manchete and the identities represented as Invisible Theatre addresses this oversight, revealing the ambiguous relations conveyed through televising theatre of – though not necessarily for – the oppressed.

The city’s topography, its spatial divisions with their boundaries drawn along socioeconomic fault lines, made Rede Manchete’s intended audience more or less locatable. The familiar trope of Rio de Janeiro as a cidade partida [divided city] is more frequently invoked with reference to the informal and sprawling hillside favelas, to infer their urban and social marginality in negative terms of poverty, violence, danger. This is the image of them perpetrated by the military regime with the state’s aggressive policy of favela removals, which forced inhabitants into public housing schemes including the notorious Cidade de Deus [City of God] (see Chapter Two). However, in the introduction to her intergenerational study, Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro, Janice Perlman offers

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348 Ibid.
349 For an excellent analysis of social mobility in Brazil and the intersection with race, see Carlos Antonio Costa Ribeiro, ‘Classe, raça e mobilidade social no Brasil’ in Dados: Revista de Ciências Sociais, 49, no.4 (2006): 833-873.
another perspective.\textsuperscript{352} From her experience living in and amongst \textit{favela} communities, she regards them as radically open places – ‘where the unexpected is expected and spontaneity is the norm’ – occupied by ‘people trying to be recognised as people by other people \textit{for whom they are invisible}.’ By contrast, she suggests, ‘the rich have imprisoned \textit{themselves}, walling themselves off from urban conviviality in the process of protecting themselves from those whom they would not include in their city’ (my italics).\textsuperscript{353} These middle-upper-class enclaves are concentrated in Rio de Janeiro’s South Zone, often clinging to the coastal periphery, in districts such as Gávea, Ipanema, Leblon, and Urca. The district of Tijuca in Rio de Janeiro’s North Zone, where the Invisible Theatre performance took place, is predominantly middle class, with Praça Saens Peña having become increasingly commercialised during the 1970s. Relative to the city’s most affluent areas, though, Tijuca is socially diverse, comprising a number of \textit{favela} communities within its boundaries, including Borel, Formiga and Casa Branca.

The performance of racialised identities as Invisible Theatre must therefore be understood as intervening in the immediate urban setting of Praça Saens Peña, and also in the highly structured urban imaginary of its intended television audience. Locating themselves within the district of Tijuca, the actors increased the potential for engaging participants who were representative of the divergent interests and subjectivities encompassed by the performance. By arguing in the restaurant – initially about money, afterwards about the nature of the interaction between the characters of the wife, as a white woman, and the young black man – they simultaneously rehearse and deviate from the codified set of behaviours which are socially permissible within that place. They cause a scene, a threat to social order against which those unaware of the variously mediated contexts for their dispute might cohere. Watching the disagreement between the couple unfold, individuals come together as a crowd, for and against the disruption of the performance. Thinking back to Marcuse’s image of the layered city, Invisible Theatre offers a way for people from differing social groups to encounter and negotiate the same place in a shared capacity, as an audience.\textsuperscript{354} In return, it complicates Marcuse’s stratified image of the city by momentarily cutting across its layers, enabling its participants to transgress social boundaries like trickster. Moreover, in this particular case, the performance and its subsequent broadcast offered an alternative vision of the city –

\textsuperscript{352} Janice Perlman, \textit{Favela: Four decades of living on the edge in Rio de Janeiro} (Oxford: OUP, 2010), xxiii-xxiv.
\textsuperscript{353} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{354} Marcuse, ‘The Layered City’, 94-114.
a distorted reflection – in which a young black man could be seen alerting a white couple to their objectifying assumptions and interactions, thereby challenging his own status as the object of their displaced fear.

That is not to suggest this mediated performance transcended the unevenly configured spaces that it occupied. The questions about the representation of gendered relations that arise with the Liège performance resurface in this example when an actor-joker or simply a member of the public (it is unclear which) makes the sexist assertion that it is the husband’s responsibility to keep his wife in check. Likewise, the man who insists that money rather than race is the issue, but who illustrates his point with the image of the wealthy black man who has blonde women running after him. Seemingly oblivious to the racist and sexist assumptions involved in his claim, namely, that a black man’s potency should necessarily be measured in his desirability to blonde (white) women, his response further indicates the complexity of the social context for this performance. With both of these examples, the prejudices expressed remain unchallenged on film, showing that, even where Invisible Theatre brings social issues into view, this is no guarantee of them being identified as such and counteracted.

Conclusion

The image of the built environment as a television set conveys the mutability of the city, adapting to and with the performed identities it stages. A powerful example of this can be found in Rio de Janeiro’s rapid and uneven urban development as a result of the military regime’s integrationist economic policies, concomitant with the growth and increasing segregation of the city’s middle-upper class population. The instrumental role played by the television media in reinforcing uneven spatial divisions, for example by rendering invisible any imaginary that might complicate the hegemonic production and othering of non-white identities, reveals the imbrication of urban and televisual space. Invisible Theatre can be understood in this context as an attempt to perform identities which have been powerfully excluded – to paraphrase Brecht, so that they might at least see how it is – as a provocation to imagine and negotiate another and different configuration of social space.

However, performing within the city and to camera, the actors of Invisible Theatre are positioned by and subject to the same spatialised relations of power they would subvert. The sudden cancellation of the Invisible Theatre series by Rede
Manchete vividly highlights this, and reveals the inequality of access to the performative spaces of culture, which traverse image-based media and architectural space. Boal for his part came to regard the television industry as exceptional precisely because of the restrictions it placed upon him, refusing subsequent invitations from producers interested in filming Theatre of the Oppressed with the explanation that he could not accept ‘the regulations of television’. What he fails to acknowledge is that the alternative spaces of the street and theatre are no less regulated per se, except insofar as he occupies a position of relative privilege within them. Moreover, he can be seen to have exercised this privilege oppressively by using his access to print media to admonish the supermarket manager unwittingly caught up in the Liège example for calling the police. In offering a translation and interpretation of Invisible Theatre intended to tackle unemployment (Liège) and racism (Rio de Janeiro), what surfaces is the extent to which the actors rehearsed their own prejudices. For example, their perpetration of heteronormative and sexist behaviours is marked to a contemporary viewer. Even where the actors themselves are aware of the social problems they are representing, the audience feedback from the performance in Rio de Janeiro alerts us to the possibility that those problems might not be recognised, a risk which points to the limits of invisibility for effecting social change. This is something I explore further in the following chapter, which investigates contemporary practitioners engaging Invisible Theatre as a model for urban performance in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires.

Where Boal ultimately rejects televisual modes of mediatisations, the Kalapalo speaker whose performances were transcribed by Basso shows the potentialities of mediating technologies for negotiating spatially inscribed forms of oppression. In telling *about* Taugi as creator of borders and arbiter of border disputes, he also embodies trickster characteristics by *performing* that spatial role for his audience. Making Basso’s recording device visible within his narrative, articulating the distance between them with it, he engages its reflective properties such that her readers might glimpse *themselves* as powerfully implicated in the struggles of Brazil’s indigenous populations to assert territorial rights and resist being assimilated into the hegemonic culture. In this way, the recording technology itself becomes a spatial boundary – as the site of meeting, of connection, but also of difference – mediating a relationship between participants and spectators, as urban actors encountering one another across time and space.

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355 Boal, ‘Boal in Brazil, France, the USA: An Interview with Augusto Boal’, 55.
After Augusto Boal: What Remains?

Birmingham, UK (May, 2013)
Action: a group makes a loop from a gallery space, through the city, a shopping centre, the Bullring, an industrial park, and back again. We move at arms’-length from one another, and from others who move through the group. We clap. When one rhythm connects we listen, still clapping, for a different rhythm to take hold.

I am surprised by how many join in. A driver hoots his horn. A swagger of twenty-something men up for a Friday night jeer, ‘YOU’RE ALL A BUNCH OF WANKERS’, then they clap. They laugh. We laugh. A couple at the traffic lights joins the group for as long as our routes coincide. Others don’t appear to notice us at all. A man smiles and, bringing hands together, sets us off on a different beat. A police car tacks alongside. Then, in a moment, looking up, birds flock directly overhead.

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CTO, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (October 2013)
I am sitting in a dimly-lit office space. The office is open plan, but more by default than design. I am watching a documentary about the Centre for the Theatre of Oppressed on a grubby desktop computer. The headset has lost the foam pads that stop the plastic from digging into my ears, and the splinters of the formica desk keep catching my sleeve as I write.

I am interrupted: a series of staccato bangs ricochets around the room from outside. I glance around but nobody else seems to have registered the noise. Everyone carries on working. Taking my cue from them, I try to tune back into the DVD, but my ears don’t adjust quickly enough before another round of cracker bangs begins. This time, they seem to be closer. Stoked by films like City of God, my imagination conjures up rounds of ammunition, and I look to my main contact nervously. ‘Protests,’ he says, anticipating my question. Then, for clarification, he explains that the sound is not the protesters, but the police.
Introduction

The previous two chapters explored Boal’s development of Invisible Theatre as a model of urban performance and a practical means of challenging hidden relations of dominance through the urban. Revisiting his account of the first performance of Invisible Theatre whilst he was exiled in Buenos Aires, I discussed Invisible Theatre in relation to militaristic strategies of camouflage and surveillance, as reaction to militaristic forms of urban governance. Questioning, then, what it meant for Boal to deploy the cover of Invisible Theatre without any immediate threat from the military regime, I went on to analyse two separate performances mediated for television audiences in Liege (1978) and Rio de Janeiro (1986), as a way of testing Boal’s claims for the practice. In this chapter, I turn my attention to contemporary practices and contexts to ask what remains of Invisible Theatre. To what extent has Invisible Theatre informed critical performance practices in and of the urban, and how far do these performances go beyond the capacities of Invisible Theatre in developing models of theory and practice aligned to their immediate urban contexts?

In addressing these questions, the following discussion focusses on Latin American practitioners and the spatial politics of Rio de Janeiro in particular. There are three main reasons for this: First, Rio de Janeiro is the location of the Centro de Teatro do Oprimido (CTO-Rio), established by Boal on his return to Brazil in 1986 as a means of ‘multiplying’ the TO method. In line with this aim, CTO-Rio provides a semi-structured residency programme for international practitioners and researchers to demonstrate how TO continues to be used to tackle the multiple and overlapping oppressions encountered by the city’s most disadvantaged inhabitants, and as a means of funding those activities. My analysis of Invisible Theatre in relation to contemporary spatial practices proceeds from my participation in this programme for a month, during October-November 2013. After reflecting on the cancellation of the Invisible Theatre workshop scheduled to coincide with my residency, the following analysis of CTO-Rio’s practice focusses on the set of interviews that I conducted with the organisation’s resident curingas (jokers, workshop leaders) as part of the programme and, separately, with Cecília Boal. The most cited example of Invisible Theatre across these interviews concerns a performance from the mid-1990s, intersecting with the construction of racialised identities in Rio de Janeiro. In an attempt to make sense of the repeated retelling of this particular performance now, I take up cultural theorist Sara Ahmed’s (2004) discussion of the emotional effects of repetition, as the means by which identities
tend to adhere to social bodies, to call attention to CTO-Rio’s narrative repetition as a sticking point.\textsuperscript{356}

Another reason for situating this chapter in relation to Rio de Janeiro is the intensification of performance practices and urban interventions throughout the city in the lead up to and during the World Cup (2014) and the Olympic and Paralympic Games (2016). Here, I mean to include the performing bodies of athletes within the sporting stadia, as bodies that stand in for nations, as well as those activists and artists taking to the streets and social media to unsettle national imaginaries and identifications, many of them caught up in displays of authority through encounters with police.\textsuperscript{357} Critics of sporting ‘mega-events’ have emphasised the lasting effects of spectacular urban restructuring and securitisation on social space, with Rio de Janeiro-based urban theorist Christopher Gaffney (2010) suggesting that mega-events ‘impose mechanisms of militarization’.\textsuperscript{358} Reading urban anthropologist Loïc Wacquant’s (2008) account of the ‘militarization of urban marginality’ in Rio de Janeiro since the 1990s, I argue for an understanding of controversial urban policies adopted in the lead up to the events, such as ‘pacification’, in terms of the acceleration and escalation of already existing mechanisms and relations of power.\textsuperscript{359} In light of art historian Rebecca Schneider’s (2011) affective reading of reenactment in art and war, I ask in that case whether reenacting Invisible Theatre as a reaction to and against militarised forms of governance might be a way to perform connections and circulate affects that cut across the interests of powerful stakeholders.\textsuperscript{360} This possibility is explored with reference to performative urban interventions by Eleonora Fabião and Movimento Cidades Invisíveis (Invisible Cities Movement), practitioners living and working in Rio de Janeiro who have taken up Invisible Theatre as a creative provocation, rather than a resolved method, to challenge dominant modes of urban encounter.

Finally — a third reason — the limited research into the relationship between Invisible Theatre and contemporary performance practices that is available tends to focus on contemporary practices from North America and Europe. To some extent, this reflects the influence of Boal within those regions, not least because of his

\textsuperscript{360} Rebecca Schneider, \textit{Performing Remains: art and war in times of theatrical reenactment} (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).
spatial trajectory in exile. However, as performance artist and theorist Coco Fusco points out, it also reflects the dominance of North American and European cultural theory. By highlighting the various ways in which artists working in Brazil and, in the case of Grupo Etcétera, Argentina reenact, open out and redirect the questions around invisibility, participation and urban space that Invisible Theatre poses, I seek to address this oversight, above all, as a way to connect with contemporary Latin American art practices beyond and also informed by Boal.

**Nonparticipation**

This discussion begins, however, with a cancelled workshop, an Invisible Theatre performance that never happened, and the events and effects of it not taking place. On a timetable given to me by CTO-Rio co-ordinator and **curinga** Alessandro Conceiçao and folded into my notebook at the outset of the programme, three squares containing the words **Oficina Teatro Invisível**, Invisible Theatre Workshop are crossed out in black ink. The workshop was initially scheduled to coincide with my residency, as a result of my research study, and opened up to anyone wanting to participate and able to cover the workshop fee. It was called off due to a lack of take up. If this turn of events indicates the peripheral role of Invisible Theatre, not least within CTO-Rio’s practice, then the decision to charge the workshop participants raises a more fundamental set of concerns. In the context of mass urban demonstrations during 2013 to protest rising bus fares (São Paulo, June 2013), stagnating wages and the perceived diversion of public spending from essential public services to the forthcoming FIFA World Cup (2014) and Olympic and Paralympic Games (2016), it begs the question, who would play the role of the oppressed? Ahmed has suggested that, 'the more access subjects have to public resources, the more access they may have to the capacity to mobilise narratives of injury within the public domain.' Her aim here is to draw attention to the ways that injury and victimhood tend to be claimed as grounds for acts of xenophobic aggression, particularly in the post-9/11 context of the US and UK. However, in emphasising the cultural and material resources required to construct and mobilise spatial narratives through public spaces including the media, her discussion touches on issues that are critical to Invisible Theatre as a model of urban performance.

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operating through the oppressive structures it seeks to dismantle. The question it raises is, who has the economic, social and spatial means to participate in Invisible Theatre, and how far does this ability to act inflect the recognition and performative representation of oppressions at the local level?

The cancellation of the workshop by CTO-Rio released me from this contradiction and from my anxiety at the prospect of performing in a second language, as someone who had paid to ‘intervene’ in a city where my being was already an intervention. Practically speaking, however, my nonparticipation in Invisible Theatre (so far I am aware) meant tracing CTO-Rio’s Invisible Theatre practice through the set of five interviews that I conducted with the curingas and Cecilia Boal, both in her role as a former theatre practitioner and as director of the Augusto Boal Institute since 2009. Given its marginal position within TO, I was surprised to hear most of the curingas speak about the efficacy of Invisible Theatre as a means of provocation, and for generating debate around issues that would not otherwise be discussed. Only Flavio Sanctum offered any explanation as to why it is not used more often by CTO-Rio when he suggested that, through its concealment, Invisible Theatre reduces the potential of theatre as a space of critical reflection. The others, for the most part, remembered performances from the mid-1990s, during which time Boal was director of CTO-Rio and serving as an elected official in the municipal government (1993-1997).

Here, I make a brief detour to offer some context around CTO-Rio, and the social and political circumstances of its institution. Brazil was officially returned to democracy in 1985. The following year, Brazilian anthropologist and politico Darcy Ribeiro persuaded Boal to return to Rio de Janeiro. Around the same time, Boal received an invitation from the Vice-Governor of Rio de Janeiro to open up the city’s public schools and transform them as spaces for cultural activities at night. He responded by creating a ‘Factory of Popular Theatre’, from which CTO-Rio was established. The idea was to ‘form groups of cultural animators, catalyzers, dynamizers — I don’t know what — to help people use theatre (and other arts) to express themselves, to study their realities and to change them!’ But the reality he encountered there had already changed. In an interview from 1990, Boal describes the difficulty he had identifying with the country he had fled fifteen years

364 Boal had intermittently returned to Brazil throughout his exile, for example, to present work with a Parisian group in 1979, and to lead workshops following the amnesty in 1984. As such, there is some disagreement regarding the date of his repatriation. 1986 is the date offered by CTO-Rio and suggested by an open letter from Boal to TDR of the same year. See Augusto Boal, ‘Letter from Augusto Boal’ in TDR, 30, no.3 (1986): 9.
previously: ‘During my exile I dreamt of going back and when I went back it was not Brazil anymore, it's not me anymore’ (my italics).\textsuperscript{366}

The period immediately after the military regime was marked, in Brazil, by economic stagnation and inflation, followed up in the 1990s with a range of social and economic reforms to reduce the role of the state and open up channels to international trade and capital. If the intention was to stimulate the economy, and tackle the effects of mass unemployment, then Wacquant diagnoses the social cost of these policies in terms of ‘abysmal’ social inequality and a systematic failure to invest in public services.\textsuperscript{367} He describes how this situation combined with endemic police and juridical corruption in Brazil’s cities to contribute to the notorious rise of gangs such as Comando Vermelho and Amigos dos Amigos in the favelas and, with them, ‘the inexorable growth of criminal violence’.\textsuperscript{368} Wacquant underlines his analysis with the shocking claim that, since 1989, ‘lethal crime has been Brazil’s leading cause of mortality’.\textsuperscript{369} However, this is something of an exaggeration. Aside from the recognised problem in Brazil with inconsistencies in recording cause of mortality in death certification, the article by de Souza that Wacquant cites to support his claim actually states that, in 1989, violent death was second only to cardiovascular diseases as the leading cause of mortality.\textsuperscript{370} Violent death, moreover, refers in this context to traffic accidents as well as murder and manslaughter. Of these, at around the time of Wacquant’s writing, in 2007, murder and manslaughter were the leading causes of ‘external death’, with ‘young, black and poor men the main victims and perpetrators’.\textsuperscript{371} In highlighting this error, my intention is to expose the way Wacquant inadvertently reinforces distorted perceptions of violence in Brazil that tend to give way to moral panic. That said, I suggest that his argument regarding the detrimental effects of social and economic policies in terms of escalating inequality and criminal insecurity holds with the less sensational observation that, since 1989, fatal crime has been the leading cause of death for young men in Brazil’s urban centres.\textsuperscript{372} Boal left Rio de Janeiro in 1971 because of the violence he had endured at the hands of military police, as referents

\textsuperscript{366} Augusto Boal, ‘Theatre of the Oppressed Workshops with Women: An Interview with Augusto Boal’, interview by Jan Cohen-Cruz and Mady Schutzman in \textit{TDR}, 34, no.3 (1990): 73.
\textsuperscript{367} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{368} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{369} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{372} For a breakdown of violent deaths amongst men and women in 1989, see de Souza. ‘Homicídios no Brasil: O Grande Vilão da Saúde Pública na Década de 80’, 47.
of an authoritarian regime that used mechanisms of fear to shut down political opposition. When he returned in 1986, violence was to an extent, but, more to the point, was seen, in particular by predominantly white middle- and upper-class Cariocas, to be a problem of young, black and poor men from the favelas, as ‘folk devils’ and objects of fear.373

This fear has had a marked effect on urban developments in the predominantly white middle- and upper-class areas of the city, such as Zona Sul, where armed private guards, attack dogs, security fences and surveillance technologies are ‘coveted ingredient[s] of elite status’.374 Meanwhile, politicians on the right and the left of the political spectrum have demonstrated their commitment to tackling the perceived problem of crime through the promulgation of punitive measures, including importing techniques of ‘Zero Tolerance’ on crime showcased by Rudolph Giuliani in New York (1994-2001). This disciplinary approach to the criminal effects of social inequality and disinvestment coincides with the institutional racism of Brazilian police, whose ‘early role...as a disciplinary agent directed against slaves left a persistent legacy in police techniques and in the mutually hostile attitudes between police and those sectors of society that felt the brunt of their action.’375

The effect of all this, as Wacquant suggests, is that the imminent threat of police violence never really left the comunidades, and in fact the widespread problem of police corruption and brutality have contributed to the criminal insecurity of their inhabitants.376 Wacquant points to the military occupation of the favelas in 1992 to preempt incidents ahead of the International Earth Summit, a global event sponsored by the United Nations. A more recent example is ‘pacification’, initially implemented by the state government in 2008, shortly after the 2007 announcement of Rio de Janeiro as a host city for the World Cup, as a means to ‘retake’ comunidades under the control of drugs-running gangs. This timing is significant insofar as it suggests that what is at stake is less drugs trafficking and gang violence than their visibility and perceived threat to global events, both in terms of security and the diversion of international media attention away from the main

373 The racialised associations of the folk devil as a social type are explored by Stuart Hall et. al. in tracing the construction of the ‘mugger’ as a signifier for disaffected black youth by police and through the British media in 1970s and 1980s Britain. See Stuart Hall et. al., Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order (London and Basingstoke: Pan Macmillan, 1978).
376 See, for example, Enrique Desmond Arias, Drugs and Democracy in Rio de Janeiro (North Carolina: UNC Press, 2006).
spectacle. A dramatic means of preempting this threat, pacification involves the mass incursion of the UPP (Police Pacification Units, made up of armed military police) into one comunidade at a time to take out, or more often move gang members on to other comunidades. Once an area has been overwhelmed, a UPP unit remains behind to maintain order, thus, in the view of Christopher Gaffney, effectively replacing ‘one arbitrary, militarized system of justice with another’. This re-occupation of the comunidades by the military police not only indicates the limits in terms of the longer-term efficacy of such aggressive tactics, but also attests to the continuation of what Wacquant has termed the ‘militarisation of urban marginality’.

In considering whether and how urban performance might begin to counter such spatially-produced relations of power, I want to recall Boal’s expression of the ‘impossibility of going back’. If that is the case, why return Invisible Theatre, a practice developed as a reaction to strategies of violent repression and surveillance by the military regime, to this seemingly other, ‘not Brazil’? Then again, what are the implications of the CTO-Rio curingas and Cecilia Boal rehearsing performances from the 1990s for me, in 2013, as we sat in the CTO-Rio meeting room in a crumbling Portuguese colonial building in Lapa, or in the pristine consultation room in Ipanema, where Cecilia Boal practises psychoanalysis? Are embodied practices exhausted or altered by their participation in spaces that are always already mutable and in flux? Or might these serial reenactments cut across time and space in ways that disrupt ideas of social and spatial development? In her searching analysis of reenactment in art and war, Schneider discusses reenactment as the attempt to ‘stand again in [the] footprint’ of a past performance. She goes on to imagine the temporal and spatial effects of such an attempt, as ‘then and now punctuate each other’ and the ‘placedness’ of an original trace is challenged through its ‘replaced-ness’. Boal’s sense of being dislocated again after returning from exile speaks to the disorientating effects of reenactment that Schneider describes. By turns, Schneider’s staging of reenactment as a tangling of time and place gestures to the potential for performative repetition to disrupt notions of social progress and urban development through a touching of temporalities, spaces and affects.

378 Schneider, Performing Remains, 2; 16-7.
Performative Repetitions

The Invisible Theatre performances described to me during the interviews represented a range of specific issues, including sexism and gendered inequalities, sexual assault on public transport, racism, education and teacher’s working conditions, homophobia, and corruption. Of these, two examples aimed at homophobia and structural forms of corruption are relatively recent, devised and performed since 2010. The majority, however, were realised between 1993-1997, whilst Boal was serving as Vereador (City Councillor). According to Geo Britto, during this period, the group staged Invisible Theatre in the municipal square so frequently that a ‘drunk guy’ living there would shout them out as actors before the plays even began.\(^{379}\) Aside from the curiously dismissive way this character was presented as an inconvenience, albeit an amusing one, Britto’s description raises again the question of whom Invisible Theatre becomes visible to — in this instance, a man who occupies a space and for a duration that corresponds to the performances themselves. Connected to this, and by way of an answer to the question of who performs Invisible Theatre, both Cecilia Boal and Helen Sarapeck, a curinga with CTO-Rio since 1990, indicated an issue is that the actors need to be ‘really good’ so as not to arouse suspicion.\(^{380}\) All but one of the examples relayed to me were performed by the curingas themselves, a revelation that sits uneasily with the basic tenet of Theatre of the Oppressed that anyone can make theatre.

One example in particular kept coming up, a performance intersecting with the construction of racialised identities and the spatial (re-)production of racism. Initially scripted and performed to camera for the 1987 television series made for local television in Rio de Janeiro (see Chapter Three), it became part of CTO-Rio’s repertoire and was reenacted multiple times within Rio de Janeiro during the 1990s. It was described to me by Cecilia Boal, Geo Britto and Helen Sarapeck, and was the most repeated example across all interviews. This is how Sarapeck remembers the performance:

He was selling himself, to work. His wife came along too. She was black, like him. She asked what he was doing. She was ashamed, you know: ‘What are you doing? Please, go home! Come home!’

He answered, ‘I can’t go home because we don’t have a home. There’s no money. There’s no food for the children.’


Why did we do this play? Because under slavery, had he been a slave, it would have been better. Back then, he would have had a house, he would have had food. He wouldn’t have had a salary, but he would have had everything he needed. So, the play was about this.\(^{381}\)

The implication that slavery might be less intolerable to the protagonist in this scene than his precarious freedom is deeply shocking, not only because it troubles the prevailing opinion of emancipation as socially progressive. To some extent, of course, this is the point. In holding this performance up as a signal example of Invisible Theatre, the interviewees emphasised the intensity of the reactions that it provoked, particularly anger toward the man offering up his freedom, and their attempts through dialogue to redirect that anger toward the barriers to social mobility encountered by Brazilians of African descent. When Sarapeck states that slavery was, in certain respects, ‘better,’ she does not mean to imply that freedom is undesirable. Instead, she is gesturing to the contingency of freedom in a system where uneven relations of power produced through slavery are reproduced as an effect of economic, social and spatial insecurity.

This suggestion corresponds to an argument put forward by Boal’s close contemporary, Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro, in his metanarrative of *O Povo Brasileiro* (The Brazilian People, 1995).\(^ {382}\) Ribeiro asserts that, after the abolition of slavery in 1888 (Brazil being the last country to officially abolish slavery), the freed black man ‘saw himself yoked to new forms of exploitation, which although better than slavery, allowed him to be integrated into society and the cultural world that had become his only in the status of a subproletarian compelled to fill his former role...’ In spatial terms, he goes on to explain how emancipation gave rise to the growth of *favelas* in cities and towns as those who had been freed were displaced from plantations and forced into precarious forms of labour under conditions dictated by landowners. Ribeiro turns to census data to demonstrate the persistence of these uneven relations of power at around the time of the performance in 1990, pointing to high illiteracy rates amongst those identifying as ‘*preto*’ or ‘*pardo*’ (the masculine forms of black and mixed-race), at 30% versus 12% amongst those identifying as ‘*branco*’ (the masculine form of white), as well as differences in income, with the categories *preto* and *pardo* earning on average one third as much as their *branco* counterparts.\(^ {383}\)

\(^{381}\) Sarapeck, interview.


\(^{383}\) Ibid.
It is, however, worth noting the limitations of such data, particularly in terms of the information and sections of society it excludes. Significantly, *favelas* do not appear on government maps, and are not reliably represented within official censuses. This is partly a result of informal building methods, uncertainty about settlement boundaries and physical difficulties of access, particularly to their highest and furthest reaches. However, these various barriers to statistical analysis have been compounded by controlling criminal interests, as census takers tend to be met, as strangers and in their official capacity, with suspicion and noncooperation — a situation with interesting implications for Invisible Theatre, predicated as it is on the acceptance and anonymity of the actors.  

In short, it is questionable how far the statistics upon which Ribeiro’s analysis hangs represent the extent of the racialised inequalities he is describing, or their effects. More than that, however, by uncritically adopting the racial classification system of the official census, Ribeiro rehearses categories determined in the early twentieth century by Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, a professor of legal medicine at the University of Bahia. In elaborating his racial typology, Rodrigues attributed to black Brazilians an innate proclivity toward lawlessness to the extent that it would warrant establishing separate penal codes and degrees of criminal accountability for each group. Beyond oversimplifying the multiplicity of ethnoracial relations that make up Brazilian society, not least by overlooking Brazil’s Indigenous and East Asian populations, to speak uncritically in the categorical terms of *preto, pardo* and *branco* is therefore to repeat the violence of a system by which racialised hierarchies are maintained through mechanisms of differentiation that constitute the category of black as radically other, whilst effectively disappearing other ethnoracial categories.

In relating this criticism back to the CTO-Rio performance of Invisible Theatre, I want to bring into focus the way the construction of racialised identities within the performance was repeated in its retelling through the use of language by each of the interviewees to position themselves. Most immediately, Britto identified himself in the context of the performance as the white, male oppressor in his casual summary of the final scene: ‘We buy the guy, the white woman gives her shopping to the black woman, we leave.’ Sarapeck indirectly asserted her own racial identity, not to mention the paternalistic and heteronormative operation of power, in sharing her father’s reaction to her own sexual partners to express the extent of racism in

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Brazil: ‘Just try having a black boyfriend if you are white... My father isn’t racist, but I’m sure he was racist with my boyfriend.’

Most problematically, Cecília Boal differentiated herself from a colleague, also a psychoanalyst, when she admitted ‘sometimes my patients move to me because she is black’, therefore revealing not only the racism to which her colleague is regularly subjected, but also the extent to which Cecília Boal, being identifiably white, professionally and materially profits from such racism. Given the extent of Cecília Boal’s involvement in creating the performance, as a writer for the television series, her ambivalent relationship to racial discrimination raises a serious question about whose view of racism the performance represents.

In this context, it is significant that, whilst attempting to convey to me the persistence of racialised inequalities staged by the performance, all three interviewees redrew the dividing line between the binary black/white, and situated themselves on the side of hegemonic power.

Invisible Theatre’s underlying premise is that rehearsing existing oppressions enables them to be recognised and negotiated as such. In the Derridean sense of trace, it might be argued that repetition opens up the structural possibility of change through incorporating difference. For Jacques Derrida, the trace ‘dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself’, gesturing to the contingency of difference — the ‘not-that’ and ‘not-here’ — in the structure of meaning. Invisible Theatre plays on this contingency in representing the performative mechanisms of differentiation, of ‘othering’, that produce and maintain spatial relations of dominance in order that they may be contested. Sarapeck describes how this works in practice when people reveal prejudices that they would usually keep hidden upon hearing Invisible Theatre actors expressing opinions affirming their own beliefs. She suggests that making those prejudices public enables them to be publicly challenged by other actors in turn. However, to my mind, the notion of an individual hiding certain beliefs already implies the recognition of those beliefs as socially unacceptable. Moreover, the act of concealment expresses a determination to hold onto their beliefs in spite of social pressures, raising doubts about whether they would be receptive to the challenge.

In contrast to Derrida, Ahmed points to the limitations of performative repetition. She argues that opening up the future by repeating established conventions leads to the ‘sedimentation’ of existing identity categories. She

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conceives of 'stickiness' as a metaphor that addresses the structural resistance of signs to change through repetition. With Ahmed, stickiness is an emotional effect of repetition that causes signs to adhere to each other, and to bodies that have been socially marked as other. Understood in terms of stickiness, emotion is neither that which escapes individual bodies (as is suggested by Massumi), nor does it penetrate the individual from the outside, as a product of the social. Instead, Ahmed imagines emotion, in its stickiness, as always relational, as in-between, as crossing. In this capacity, emotion unsettles the sedimentation of relations and identities within social and spatial politics, even as its mobility, its passing between and through bodies, the way it moves bodies, make emotion a powerful weapon of spatial control.

Thinking back to the performance intended to challenge racialised inequalities in terms of stickiness, it is striking that the character of the wife is determined by her emotion, as being ashamed. What are the effects of this shame? To what extent is shame an effect of uneven relations of power reproduced within the performance, and how does shame cause the signs of those uneven relations to adhere? The shame and nausea Frantz Fanon experiences upon hearing himself described through the eyes of white people — ‘Dirty nigger!’, ‘Look, a Negro!’ — are effects of the ‘infernal circle’ of misidentification that begins and ends with the colour of his skin. Similarly, Simone de Beauvoir describes the sensation of shame that results from being gazed upon as a young woman before identifying oneself as an object of desire: ‘The young girl feels that her body is getting away from her, it is no longer the straightforward expression of her individuality; it becomes foreign to her; and at the same time she becomes for others a thing: on the street men follow her with their eyes and comment on her anatomy.’ In both instances, shame is an effect of recognition of the distance between the individual’s subjective identity and his or her identification by a dominant other, which, through its repetition, spatially orients the body of the shamed in relation to power. Both Fanon and de Beauvoir express this spatial effect in terms of a desire, that is, to become invisible, to disappear. In this respect, the performance of shame by the black woman upon discovering her ‘husband’ attempting to sell himself appears to repeat the affective process by which identifiers such as ‘black’, ‘woman’, ‘poor’ adhere to her body as shameful. More importantly, this process does not seem to have been challenged.

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by the audience in their anger. Britto recalls how a ‘Jew’ became ‘very angry’ and started to shout, ‘You can’t do this! You are free! People died in the war!’[392] In identifying this man and, by extension, his anger as Jewish, Britto infers his reaction to the performance as a displaced effect of anti-Semitic violence. Whilst exposing the extent to which uneven relations of power actually overlap and intersect, Britto’s imitation of the man’s reaction, his fixing of that reaction as Jewish, calls into question the efficacy of the performance as a means of challenging racism. After all, the anger Britto conveys was not directed toward the social and spatial inequalities for which it was intended, but toward a character who would relinquish his precarious freedom. What space do these emotions of shame and anger leave, then, for imagining and moving beyond the conditions of inequality?

A significant and recurrent question in the thesis resurfacing through the interviews concerns the rehearsal of violence within Invisible Theatre performances as a means of challenging violence. In the context of Ahmed’s discussion of the sedimentation of identities with repetition, the problem can be recognised as an effect of the representation of social issues as discrete and as defined according to normative identity categories. Therefore, the performance under discussion here, as a trigger for debate around racial discrimination, calls attention to the persistent effects of slavery on the social and spatial organisation of Rio de Janeiro only insofar as it reproduces uneven relations of power produced according to the binary identification of black/white. This is not only the case within the structure of the performance, for example, as an effect of the shame attributed to the character of the black woman, but, more troublingly, in the language used by the speakers to position themselves and me in relation to the performance as white, and therefore privileged by racialised hierarchies. Taken together, their identifications raise a crucial question about the limitations of the performance, connected to who constructs the narrative before, during and after the event, and to what ends. The intention of Invisible Theatre may be to present a strong image as a provocation, a position from which to trace more complex and nuanced analyses, and a demand for change. However, in rehearsing problems that are readily identifiable, the tendency is toward the representation of identities as preceded and pursued by their relation to dominant structures of power.

In turn, the repetition of set performances devised under Boal’s direction highlights a broader problem, which concerns the resistance of those working within CTO-Rio to deviate from the TO method. When speaking about Invisible Theatre,
the curingas tended to rehearse *Theatre of the Oppressed*, a book written in the 1970s with all the anger and urgency of a man in exile. As ‘multipliers’, the curingas essentially repeat Boal’s method, treating it as coherent, resolved and relatively fixed. The same cannot be said of Boal. In the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal insists that the actors of Invisible Theatre should never reveal themselves as actors.  

However, his adaptation of Invisible Theatre for television discussed in the previous chapter indicates an iterative approach to practice that regards such claims as open to revision. This openness is evident in the series of still images below, showing a four second sequence from a programme in the series made for local television in Rio de Janeiro [fig. 4.1]. Boal can be seen here on the farthest right-hand side of the screen, looking up and out toward the viewer, in the midst of a crowd gathered around a man attempting to buy himself a dress.

![Image of Augusto Boal acknowledging the television camera from the right of the screen in 'O Homem Que Queria Comprar Um Vestido', Invisible Theatre (Rio de Janeiro: Rede Manchete, 1986). Courtesy CTO Archive, CTO-Rio, Rio de Janeiro.]

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With the crowd shouting ‘*Porta! [Buy it!]*’, Boal puts his hand to his chin and grins toward the camera. At 07’37’, as the shot zooms out, Boal glances down before looking back up to the camera’s lens for a further two seconds. These repeated glances away from the main action, towards the screen, indirectly acknowledge the televisual audience at the risk of exposing the performative construct of the scene. At 07’39”, a woman in the bottom middle of the screen, dressed in bright yellow, appears to follow Boal’s gaze, perhaps in a bid to identify the object of his attention. By contrast, the *curingas* I interviewed at CTO-Rio reiterated Boal’s early statement on the need to conceal the dramatic frame of Invisible Theatre from its audiences, which is surprising given that several of them were directly involved in the television series.\footnote{394 Britto, interview; Sanctum, interview; Sarapeck, interview.}

What I am suggesting here is that the *curinga’s* adherence to Boal’s 1974 text, and their resulting reluctance to continue developing the model of Invisible Theatre has contributed its disappearance within CTO-Rio’s practice. However, another issue highlighted through my research concerns an over-investment in performances from the 1990s, after the military dictatorship had ended and around the time Boal himself was democratically elected as a city councillor into a position of political authority. It is hardly surprising that practitioners who affiliate themselves to Boal’s thinking should refer back to their experiences of acting under his direction in this way. Nevertheless, the overlaying of historic moments (1970s/1990s) within CTO-Rio’s narrative encapsulates the contradiction between the conception of Invisible Theatre as a reaction to Boal’s political repression, and its performance within cities under relative democracy, as a consequence of Boal’s considerable cultural, social and political sway. Thinking again about Schneider’s definition of performative reenactment as the attempt to ‘stand again’ in the ‘footprint’ of the reenacted, the ambiguous placement of the footprint of Invisible Theatre within CTO-Rio’s narrative appears to have led to the *curinga’s* circular retracing of Boal’s steps. In an effort to interrupt this loop, the following section considers whether the militarisation of Rio de Janeiro offers up opportunities for reenacting Invisible Theatre as it was initially imagined, that is, in relation to militarised power. I am interested in particular in the affects and effects produced in the attempt to touch across temporalities and geographies in this way — on audiences, on urban performance, on Invisible Theatre itself.

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UCL, London (April, 2014)
I am standing next to a hot plate working ink into etched copper. I slick the copper plate with black, take a ball of inky scrim, and begin to lift the excess in small circles. What’s left is held in acid-bitten lines that describe a starling feather. I place the plate on the steel bed, cover it over with wetted and blotted white paper, and crank the gears of the printing press. I repeat this process 49 times. The movements become automatic. My thoughts take flight.

The feathers are gifts for participants I haven’t met, for when Murmuration migrates. In Montreal, the performance will play out differently. This print will collide with the symbol of the First Nation people, and our clapping hands will echo the angry beating of pots and pans in 2012. In Canada, starlings are an invasive species, Shakespeare’s unlikely legacy. Is it that the piece will acquire new meanings in a different city, or were the meanings and discomforting relations they insinuate only hidden in the first place?

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Re-actions

For the remainder of this chapter, then, I consider whether there are other artists who have taken something from Invisible Theatre, and run with it into different territory. I discuss artists who have made the connection between Invisible Theatre and their own practices explicit, and made works that challenge and open out some of the problems that Invisible Theatre comes up against. Specifically, I focus on Eleonora Fabião’s series of urban interventions, Ações Cariocas (since 2008); an action by Movimento Cidades Invisíveis titled A Cidade Marca (2014); and Argentinian collective Grupo Etcétera’s development of Errorismo (since 2005). Whilst these artists share a commitment to the social, political and spatial potential of art, their practices reflect diverse positions, concerns and methodological approaches. In bringing them together here, I am interested in the ways these practitioners engage with the issues around invisibility, participation and urban space. To what extent do their projects reenact the spatial politics and practices that provoked the earliest experiments with Invisible Theatre, if not the performances themselves? What, if anything, do the resulting points of contact — between people, places, moments — reveal about contemporary spatial politics and Invisible Theatre’s ongoing potential and limits as a model of urban performance? What is at
stake when artists lay claim to Invisible Theatre and represent it within an arts discourse?

Brazilian performance artist and researcher Eleonora Fabião has written about Invisible Theatre, and the ambiguity of art that abandons ‘proper’ locations. She suggests that this ambiguity results in a paradox, a precariousness that prevents conceptual rigidity. Whilst in some ways making sense of the contradictions in Boal’s and CTO-Rio’s descriptions of Invisible Theatre, her analysis calls into question Boal’s attempts to locate the practice within a Marxist conceptual framework. Referring to the way Invisible Theatre ‘abdicates’ the ‘consciousness of the public’, she undermines claims regarding Invisible Theatre’s transformation of spectators into spect-actors by highlighting those passers-by who ignore the scene, touching on the likely reason for its marginalisation within CTO-Rio’s practice. However, for Fabião, this precariousness and the uncertain status of the audience, far from defusing Invisible Theatre, suggest opportunities for opening up urban space to a multiplicity of subjectivities in ways that cut across the interests of powerful stakeholders.

Fabião characterises these power-holders as ‘bandits’ when, in Performing Rio de Janeiro (2011), she describes living under the conditions of a ‘banditocracy’. This term aligns her analysis with that of Brazilian sociologist and former National Secretary for Public Security, Luiz Eduardo Soares, who writes of Rio de Janeiro:

The territorial control of the bandits subtracts the zones of urban poverty from the national State and creates an archipelago of independent areas, a species of clandestine feudal barony, nonetheless visible, that the rule of law cannot reach, where democratic institutions, the Constitution, and the law do not operate.

Soares therefore emphasises the spatial division of Rio de Janeiro, as a city in which the poorest areas are set apart from state and subjected to premodern forms of authoritarian rule. However, he also points out that this division persists as an effect of intense corruptibility, suggesting that ‘there is no significant mode of

criminal action in Rio that does not involve corrupt policemen.’ For Fabião, this ‘absence of polarity’ between traffickers and corrupt officials diagnosed by Soares amounts to a ‘pathological mode of collective subjectivity’ oriented by a shared object of desire, as the basis of what she calls banditocracy. She describes how corruption, violence and fear extend beyond the uncertain limits of the comunidades, impeding the different identities that constitute properly democratic modes of sociability.³⁹⁹

In this context, Fabião regards the project of pacification in somewhat conflicted terms: as an official acknowledgement and an attempt to construct the absent polarity between law enforcers and criminals that, she hopes, might bring about the decline of banditocracy; but then again as a violent mode of territorial control which, spectacularised by the media, conjures the military dictatorship and its promotion of ‘a fabricated mode of national identity rooted in soccer passion and class differentiation rather than democratic discussion and social justice’.⁴⁰⁰ Here, she refers to the Brazilian military regime mobilising the national football team’s 1970 World Cup victory in Mexico to further its domestic political agenda. This touches on the relationship between international sporting events and militaristic conflict, both of them reinforcing the identity aspect of citizenship and asserting distinctions between national identities.⁴⁰¹ The tension between the rules governing team membership based on nationality set out by international organisations such as FIFA, on the one hand, and the multiple nationalities of many of those participating in the sporting contests, on the other, reveals how these identities are ‘fabricated’ by pulling at their seams. Fabião therefore highlights the performative function of sportsmen and -women in the construction of national identities, the identification of their bodies as national bodies with which other citizens might identify, although her dismissal of ‘soccer passion’, her implication that football fans are especially manipulable, might be construed as an effect of the very class differentiation to which she stands opposed. Crucially, however, it is in responding to a desire to challenge the violence of hegemonic spatial relations, and to perform different and contradictory identities without fear, that Fabião herself enters into a corporeal dialogue with Rio de Janeiro. In this, their affective dimension, as

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.
attempts to ‘produce active modes of belonging in this culture of fear’, Fabião’s actions can be seen to stand in the footprint of Invisible Theatre.

Ações Cariocas (Carioca Actions, 2008) is a programme of seven subtle, poetic gestures performed in an urban square in downtown Rio de Janeiro, and the narratives developed from them. In one performative lecture, silhouetted against the blank, white slide of a PowerPoint presentation, Fabião described an action that involved polishing, with brush and soapy water, a straight line across the curvilinear paving the square [fig. 4.2].

A large, bustling square located off Avenida Rio Branco, Largo da Carioca (literally, Open Space of the Carioca — used to refer to people from Rio de Janeiro) is recognised by many as the ‘heart’ of Rio de Janeiro. Fabião’s choice of this site for her performative interventions resonates with a desire to reconnect with her city and the people she shares it with, and to reinvigorate social space in ways that quietly disrupt the temporalities, trajectories and affects governing the interest and circulation of capital and goods. In her own words, her performances figure as attempts to harness ‘the power of artistic devices to transform mechanisms of domination into capacities for inventing and living potent lives.’ Her language here is reminiscent of the language used by Boal in describing theatre as a weapon of the oppressed, allowing people to express their realities and change them. However, compared to the performances of Invisible Theatre I have described, which instrumentalise theatre to target a particular and identifiable social problem, usually from a determinately leftist position, Fabião’s action is much more open-ended in its associations. It does not anticipate any particular response. Whilst she was polishing the grey and white slabs, she says: ‘A kid approached me and said: “You are doing this because later a theater piece will happen here, right?”’

Marking a slow, laborious passage across a space where street vendors, prostitutes, business people, street performers, students, tourists and pigeons cross paths, the line draws attention to the layered marks and traces it negates. It calls to mind the language of federal and state governments and private investors who combined forces to ‘limpeza da rua’ (clean the streets) of Rio de Janeiro in time for the World Cup and the Olympics. In this respect, Fabião’s action connects historically and transnationally with Cleaning Event, a 1964 performance by Japanese collective Hi Red Center involving the use bodily implements such as cotton buds and toothbrushes to clean a street in Tokyo’s business district as a way of sending up the metropolitan government’s hasty

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beautification efforts ahead of the 1964 Olympic Games.\textsuperscript{404} As a form of urban excavation, Fabião’s action collapses present with past instances of social and cultural cleansing. It is an intimate gesture, and an act of purging; a line drawn in the ground.

Invisible Theatre demands that actors have ‘strong arguments’, anticipate possible reactions from the public and rehearse ways of directing the debate accordingly.\textsuperscript{405} By contrast, Fabião actively embraces the precariousness and the unpredictability of interrelational encounters. For one action, she sat barefoot, facing an empty kitchen chair, holding up a hand-written sign to passers-by:

\textbf{WE CAN TALK ABOUT ANY SUBJECT}

As with Invisible Theatre, this performance sets up a space of dialogue, but by invitation rather than agitation. Barefoot, she is connected with the ground and grounded in the performance, waiting over an extended duration, to listen. Far from


\textsuperscript{405} Cecilia Boal, interview.
determining the discussion, Fabião provides a rhetorical opening for anyone who wishes to sit to give voice to issues, beliefs, ideas, feelings and imaginaries that may be less readily identifiable, and even invisible to the artist. Of course, such an invitation presumes a degree of literacy and a common (Portuguese) language, as well as the ability to converse, since conversation involves developmental, physical, cognitive and social capacities, as well as time. Even so, and not to diminish these potential barriers to participation, her action comprises of the subjective differences that constitute democratic space.\textsuperscript{406} Where Invisible Theatre takes aim at spatially-produced inequalities between different identities constructed by their relation to an identifiable oppressor, Fabião aims at the production of space as a means of destabilising identifications: ‘To slow down spectacularity, to accelerate relationality; to invest in creating zones of instability, precarious territories where chair, ground, self, other, words, voice, communication keep changing significance.’\textsuperscript{407} However, as with Invisible Theatre, a difficulty for me as I attempt to write concerns the idiosyncrasy and intimacy of each exchange and, consequently, the impossibility of experiencing the action in its entirety. While the performance is susceptible to the subjectivities and the voices of its audience-participants, its retelling invariably returns them and us to the voice of the artist, as author and authority.

To that extent, it is striking that both Boal and Fabião express how the creative strategies they developed in defiance against mechanisms of fear provoked different feelings of amazement and excitement. Fabião in particular suggests the affective potential of performance: ‘At the end of each day I feel euphoric, electrified by this new way of relating with my city and my co-citizens’ (my italics).\textsuperscript{408} She is speaking here in the first person, but taking on board Ahmed’s ideas about the ‘stickiness’ of emotions as socially productive, Fabião’s euphoria can be thought with her relationship to the city and her co-citizens, as an affective residue of reaching across, connecting, touching. Fabião’s feeling of electrification, as a metaphor invoking circuitry and energy, emphasises this connection and the movement of emotions between artist and audience-participants, a movement that reoriented the relationship between them. By contrast, the excitement expressed by Boal came from watching the scene unfold at a distance, as a covert spectator. Invisible Theatre elicits feelings of pain, anger, hostility, envy, shame (and these emotions are neither discrete nor exhaustive) as means of provoking people to participate. Of course, anger is a justified reaction to many of the injustices

\textsuperscript{408} \textit{Ibid.}
represented as Invisible Theatre. Feelings of anger alert us to wrongs and can, moreover, move us to confront and change unjust situations. Yet, as Ahmed writes, anger ‘translates pain, but also needs to be translated’ if it is to open up the future.\textsuperscript{409} This process of translation involves critical reflection to identify the object of anger, and determine its direction, a task given to the actor-jokers of Invisible Theatre (see Chapter Two). However, thinking about the Invisible Theatre performance discussed above, a difficulty is that anger was directed toward the black man selling himself into slavery, rather than the white couple buying him, or indeed the discrimination that made the precariousness of his fictive situation believable in the first place. Anger in this context reinforced the violence against and with which the performance was devised. In the mutual and intimate relationships it sets up, \textit{Ações Cariocas} suggests ways of circumventing this problem of Invisible Theatre’s tendency to reproduce violence, countering violence with vulnerability, openness, tenderness; activating and then \textit{yielding} to relational space. The question that remains is whether the affective residues of Fabião’s encounters stick with their representation and, if so, where do the connections that result intervene?

In considering further the capacities of anger when translated through action, I turn now to Movimento Cidades Invisíveis (Invisible Cities Movement), a ‘fluid’ collective of Rio de Janeiro-based artists and activists founded in 2010 following assaults on three women in the walkway leading to a theatre and dance school where its founder members were studying at the time. As its name suggests, this group shares with Invisible Theatre an investment in the invisible, both as a social, political and spatial effect of uneven relations of power, and as performative urban strategy. For their action, \textit{A Cidade Marca} (The Marked City, 2014), a performer walked through the city holding a bucket of watered-down, red paint and a soaked cloth. Making her way through the streets and squares, she dragged the paint-heavy fabric behind, leaving a positive trace that, in this context, mirrors the negative line made by Fabião. At points along the way, she would pause, plunge both hands into the bucket and, lifting the drenched cloth up over her head, strike the ground, then again, and again, punctuating the walk with pounding slaps and red splash-mark stains. This, the first iteration of \textit{A Cidade Marca} was performed in and around Lapa by Ítala Isis, founder member of Movimento Cidades Invisíveis. She acted alone, save for a documenting cameraman who maintained his distance, and whose video footage of the walk was subsequently uploaded to YouTube [see

\textsuperscript{409} Ahmed, \textit{Cultural Politics of Emotion}, 175.
The second iteration of the action involved Isis again, together with two other women, all of whom were followed by an exhibition audience from CASA 24, an artist-run space in nearby Santa Theresa, across Lapa’s Praça da Cruz Vermelha and along Rua dos Inválidos.

For Isis, the difference between these two iterations was marked by their distinct emotional effects. Of the solo performance, she explains how her feelings of vulnerability affected the action, as she chose to stay away from symbolically resonant but heavily policed areas. Despite the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Brazil making explicit provision for freedom of artistic expression, Isis explained in a private email to me that she was anxious to avoid a potentially violent confrontation with the authorities.\(^\text{410}\) Such anxiety toward the authority tasked, in theory, with defending her right to access the city without fear of violence reflects a widespread distrust in the police, and gestures to the ways that distrust orients social and spatial relations within the city through the exclusion of vulnerable and contradictory identities. By contrast, the crowd assembled to witness the second iteration of *A Cidade Marca* gave the performers ‘a sense of security’, enabling them to be more ‘strategic’ about the route and the points at which they beat the ground.\(^\text{411}\) Significantly, the sites identified by the three women together were those with a strong police presence, such as the Arcos, where displays of police violence are known to have occurred. To the extent that this shift dramatises the agency of the audience as witness within performance, it troubles Boal’s thinking about spectatorship as passive, but more than that, it suggests the limits of invisibility as performative strategy in situations where remaining unseen precludes access to those spaces within which the action acquires its deepest resonance.

As with Fabião’s actions, *A Cidade Marca* operates on multiple levels simultaneously, as material intervention, symbolic reenactment, and affective action; as physical encounter, evidence and metaphor. This is immediately apparent in terms of the slippery significance of the paint-soaked cloth. Seen one way, the cloth is a makeshift tool for marking the streets, recording a trajectory through the city in paint; then again, slapped down against the ground, in a heap, it conjures a bloodied, beaten body. The red marks it leaves behind are the colour of blood, and the flushed cheeks of shame. In turn, the rhythmic slapping of wet fabric on concrete and stone rehearse and testifies to instances of violence in Lapa and throughout the city, with Isis highlighting the intensification of police brutality in the

\(^{410}\) Ítala Isis, email to Leah Lovett, September 2014. Reproduced with permission.

\(^{411}\) *Ibid.*
lead up to and during the World Cup, and citing the mass protests of 2013 as a turning point. More directly, however, the marking and pounding of the streets is exactly that: an immediate expression of anger, impotence and grief directed toward the city at the violence exercised in an effort to maintain hegemonic relations of power (sexual, gendered, political...) and attempts to suppress critical forms of cultural creative expression.

Unlike Invisible Theatre, which depends on deception and the representation of constructed identities, these multiple and shifting associations of *A Cidade Marca* are never forced by the performer. There is no attempt to convince the viewer that the red paint is blood, the cloth a weapon, or a body. Rather, these images are evoked in the action and its affects, and negotiated by performers and audiences together, and individually. In the text accompanying the online video of the first performance, Isis writes: ‘With the blessing of Kali, to share with that rag in horror, anger, helplessness, fear, all the blows that do not fit within any one body. There is no name for that which moves [us]. But peace, it certainly was not.’ Invoking Kali, as the Hindu goddess of destruction and war, Isis therefore frames the action in the context of militaristic conflict, as motivated by violence, like Invisible Theatre, and also as a gendered, and specifically female expression of horror, anger, helplessness and fear. Therefore, retaliating against violence in fear and anger, with anger, to what extent does Movimento Cidades Invisíveis also repeat and perpetuate the violence of militaristic conflict?

In addressing this question, I want to consider how *A Cidade Marca* differs from Invisible Theatre in the ways anger is translated. Where Invisible Theatre moves its audiences to anger so that they may intervene, the cathartic spilling over of anger in *A Cidade Marca* does not necessarily adhere as anger to its viewers so much as call upon them to translate the anger of the performers, and to reflect on the cause of their pain. In this, Ahmed’s sense of anger as translating pain, and as demanding translation in its turn, Invisible Theatre can be seen to excite anger in its audiences only insofar as it inflicts pain. By contrast, the release of anger in *A Cidade Marca* calls attention to pain that has already been inflicted on the bodies of the performers, as on the various bodies represented through the action; to all those bodies, together, as marked. Moreover, with Movimento Cidades Invisíveis, anger is not unleashed on any one body, but on the city itself, on the concrete and stone of its squares and streets. To this extent, *A Cidade Marca* can be regarded as an

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412 Isis, email.

attempt to act back upon the materiality of the urban, understood as an affective product of the social and as producing socialising affects.

What, then, does marking the city do? How might such an action effect change, if at all? After all, Isis herself admits a sense of helplessness, a futility evoked in her performance with the image of cloth striking hard ground, as if the ground might yield. From the video footage, it is noticeable that nobody passing by turns to watch the action: Isis receives a few sideways glances, but most who move into shot ignore her altogether. Unlike either Invisible Theatre or the actions by Fabião, which actively engage passers-by in conversation, A Cidade Marca resists conversational modes of participation. The refusal of people walking past to look directly at Isis perform, their averted glances, may signal their shame at her performance of anger and grief. Not looking can be a perverse way of acknowledging something seen, and does not necessarily indicate the failure of the action to connect, to produce affects. However, the act of not looking puts pressure on the traces A Cidade Marca has left behind: the painterly traces of an encounter with the city, as well as the digital traces of the action online. Just as Boal embraced opportunities to disseminate Invisible Theatre through more conventional media channels, Movimento Cidade Invisíveis actively engages the internet and social networks for raising awareness of the group and its activities to invite participation, and as a space for critical reflection. Translated through these networks, the marked city draws a line under the spatial effects of a collective desire not to see that which is uncomfortable, or unjust, as an expression not only of anger but also of freedom, a refusal to capitulate to fear, and a challenge to those who do see to really look.

The third and final collective signals a departure within my discussion from Rio de Janeiro to Buenos Aires, where Boal’s first experiments with Invisible Theatre took place (see Chapter Two). Grupo Etcétera is a collective of actors, artists, musicians and poets who met in Buenos Aires’ parks and squares in 1997, coming together through their links to HIJOS (Children for Identity and Justice, Against Oblivion and Silence), the children of people disappeared by military and security forces during the ‘Dirty War’ (1976-1983). Throughout 1998-2001, Grupo Etcétera worked alongside HIJOS to organise a series of escraches to mark the torture and execution of as many as 30,000 political opponents of the military junta. Escraches is an invented term, a play on language that elides escracho, meaning a scam, with scraccé, slang for ‘to smash someone’s face in’. As young people with limited resources but sensing an urgent need to make the disappearances visible for families without a body or place to mourn, and angry about the systematic failure
of the political and juridical establishment to expose and hold those responsible to account, their tactics included antimilitary processions, street theatre and urban interventions such as hurling paint-bombs at the residence of former military doctor, Raúl Sánchez Ruiz, ‘to mark the front of the house of genocide’.\footnote{Grupo Etcétera, Etcétera... Etcétera... (Buenos Aires: Centro Cultural Recoleta, 2007) https://grupetcetera.files.wordpress.com/2008/11/catalogoetcetera.pdf}

Grupo Etcétera has never claimed Invisible Theatre as a signal influence on their practice. However, founding member, Loreto Garin, directly engaged Boal’s model of TO in defining the collective’s aims and methods when, in a 2006 interview with Santiago García Navarro, she suggested:

> The spect-actor is he who submits to the cathartic experience and who casts out what he has repressed. He becomes an actor. It may happen that in everyday life he remains a spectator... He becomes an actor-cide when he becomes conscious of the fact that this theatrical tool is constant.\footnote{Loreto Garín speaking in Grupo Etcétera, interview.}

For Garin, Boal’s characterisation of the spect-actor is constrained by the binary construction of actor/spectator ultimately maintaining theatre as a boundaried zone of political and social action. She proposes an orgasmic loss of the self to the performance in ‘actor-cide’ as a means of transcending Boal’s model to realise the pervasive theatricality of social relations and their media manipulation. In their direct connections to and critical engagement with disappearance as a euphemism for militaristic violence, the group rejects invisibility as an artistic strategy. For these reasons, and because of their commitment to constructing ‘new forms of militancy’ through street-based actions but also within cultural institutions, I suggest Grupo Etcétera’s practice poses a productive counterpoint to Invisible Theatre and the other performances discussed in this chapter. Here, I examine how the collective mobilises the irreverence and deceitfulness of trickster to spread humour and confusion as means of disarming the opposition and actively engaging the international news media, turning attention to identities and contradictions that are usually invisible within the representational spaces of politics and culture.

An early escrache that typifies this approach took place on 17\textsuperscript{th} June, 1998, the same day that Argentina played England in France for the World Cup. Wearing the blue and white strip of the Argentinian national team, members of Grupo Etcétera and HIJOS took to the streets of Villa Devoto, Buenos Aires for their own, absurd football game: Argentina versus Argentina. This impossible match — in
which every goal would inevitably be an own-goal — was played in front of the residence of former military General and, from 1982-3, President Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri. Newspaper reports tell how the property was protected against possible damage by a temporary metal fence, four armoured Federal Police trucks, three patrols and an ambulance.\footnote{See Sonia Winer, ‘HIJOS resiste y actúa: El escrache’, Pagina/12 \url{http://www.pagina12.com.ar/1998/suple/no/98-06/98-06-25/nota2.htm}, accessed 13 December, 2016.} Before kick-off, a document indicting Galtieri for human rights violations under his presidency was read out to the crowd, and the players, in comedy disguises and masks caricaturing military leaders, performed a parody of Galtieri’s 1982 address to the nation, declaring Argentina to be at war with Great Britain over the Malvinas. The game commenced, each kick causing red paint to spurt out from the paint-filled ball, though play was frequently interrupted due to illegal tackles by the ‘military’ players. The match ended when a penalty taken by a member of HIJOS sent the ball flying over the goal-post of the police barrier, and into a first-floor window of Galtieri’s house. With the paint-splattered police threatening arrest, the players and the gathered crowd, made up of local residents as well as members of activist networks including the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, dispersed.

The context of the World Cup for this escrache is doubly significant. The parodic declaration of war makes the intention behind performing the action on the day of the football match between Argentina and England unambiguous, that is, as a criticism of the Malvinas conflict that draws parallels between war and international sporting mega-events as means of conveying dominant national identities. In staging their alternative match in the streets of Buenos Aires, Grupo Etcétera and HIJOS rehearsed the controversy surrounding the 1978 World Cup, which went ahead with Argentina as host nation following assurances from General Jorge Rafael Videla to FIFA and the international community to conduct the tournament in ‘peace’.\footnote{General Jorge Rafael Videla quoted in Frederico Finchelstein, \textit{The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina} (Oxford: OUP, 2014), 150.} The contingency of this peace, however, is revealed in the powerful testimonies of political prisoners who recall being hooded and hearing the football crowds roar from within the confines of the military torture and detention centre, less than a mile from the stadium.\footnote{See Jon Spurling, \textit{Death or Glory: The Dark History of the World Cup} (Kingston upon Thames: Vision Sports, 2010). Kindle.} Far from curbing the military campaign to eliminate ‘leftist’ elements as part of a ‘process’ of social reorganisation, cultural critic Simon Kuper points to the media event of the World Cup as the impetus for
Operation *El Barrido*, resulting in the ‘disappearance’ of up to 200 people a day.\(^{419}\) The junta was quick to grasp the significance of the World Cup as a media spectacle in providing an opportunity to stabilise their position domestically and gain international legitimacy. Their coordinated effort to determine the narrative surrounding the events also involved media manipulation, censorship and, many suspect, match-fixing to help secure Argentina’s ultimate, jubilant victory.\(^{420}\) In light of FIFA secretary-general Jerome Valcke’s remark in the lead up to Brazil 2014, that ‘less democracy is sometimes better for organising a World Cup’,\(^{421}\) the historic role of FIFA in legitimising state violence raises serious doubts about the claims of the organisation to political neutrality, and highlights the performative force of sporting mega-events in shaping social relations.\(^{422}\)

If the timing, setting and structure of the *escrache* situate it in relation to these histories of violent conflict and political oppression, then trickster tactics come into play with the darkly comic move of matching Argentina against itself. Thinking back to Ellen Basso’s discussion of the trickster Taugi (see Chapter Three), she describes how Taugi adopts disguises and manipulates his unusual ability to exist in multiple places simultaneously in order to confuse people and to thwart their skepticism about him through deception.\(^{423}\) In Grupo Etcétera and HIJOS’s football match, the opposition of teams in identical strips operates in much the same way to disrupt play, not least by negating the score, and to confuse spectators’ attempts to follow the match. To this extent, Argentina versus Argentina works to collapse the opposition between players and/as ‘military’, and to invoke a third term, enacted within the game through the appropriation of the temporary police barrier as goal. Then again, and paradoxically, the opposition of Argentina and Argentina subverts past and present attempts by the state to use football as a way to construct a coherent national identity. Seen in this way, the action reasserts the contradictions inherent within such a construction, and gestures to the social identities that were violently disappeared for the image of cohesion.

\(^{422}\) Article 15 of the *FIFA Statutes* states that member associations must, ‘be neutral in matters of politics and religion.’ FIFA, *FIFA Statutes* (April, 2016), a.15. https://resources.fifa.com/mm/document/affederation/generic/02/78/29/07/fifastatutsweb en_neutral.pdf
As with trickster myth, the overt humour of the escrache brought people together, undermined the authority of those who would break up the group (in this case, by marking and implicating them directly in the game), and opened up a social space for memories that had been officially forgotten to surface and circulate. Such humour is further evidenced in Grupo Etcétera’s development since 2005 of the Errorist International movement. Basso suggests the crucial role that language plays as a means of deception both within and in the telling of trickster stories. Likewise, as ‘erroristas’, Grupo Etcétera evade and undermine the symbolic danger of terrorism with the slippage of the accidental noun, ‘errorist’, between ‘terrorist’, ‘error’ and ‘err’ — error and erring being characteristic of trickster.

ERRORISTAS. This is the word emblazoned across a banner held aloft by members of the Errorist International on 5th November, 2005, the same day that President George Bush arrived in the city of Mar del Plata, in Buenos Aires province, for the failed Fourth Summit of the Free Trade Area of the Americas. His

424 Basso, In Favor of Deceit, 3.
arrival in Argentina had been preceded by US marines, who directed traffic for the event and provided additional security against mass demonstrations, a move seen by many to belie the nation’s supposed sovereignty. Away from the main event, on a sandy beach, a strange troop dressed all in black with scarves wrapped around their heads emerged as if washed up out of the sea. They made their salute, pointing photocopied Kalashnikov rifles with cartoon red flags at the barrel saying ‘bang!’ up to the sky, and, just as they did, two helicopters followed by Bush’s private jet flew overhead. By the time the armed police arrived, the performers were standing around on the beach, talking and laughing. The police, for their part, were unyielding. To the bemusement of a gathering crowd, one insisted, ‘this is serious’, and gestured angrily toward the camera to stop filming. At that, in a double sleight of hand, the erroristas produced a counterfeit permit made ready for the occasion and denied the seriousness of their action with the explanation that they were only making a movie. Operation Bang: ‘a parody of the media’s exaggeration of terrorism’.

Far from avoiding detection by the authorities, as Boal intended with his initial experiments in Invisible Theatre, the erroristas actively embrace the sightlines and operations of militaristic surveillance and the media through highly theatrical modes of visibility, claiming the space of representation to expose the error in the system. When making costumes and props for theatre, the designer considers how those objects will appear under particular lighting conditions, on stage, from the distance of the auditorium. Therefore, an example from my own experience as a theatre costume designer, what may be legible to an audience as a space-suit within the context of a play can be recognised close-up as having been constructed from inexpensive materials such as cardboard, nylon, velcro, and gloss paint. It is conceivable that, seen from the helicopters’ height, or even at a distance by nearby police, the erroristas’ photocopied guns were perceived as a genuine threat to Bush and, by extension, the integrity of US power. Inherent to this suggestion is an understanding of such a perception as shaped by and consistent with narratives of injury elaborated by the Bush administration post-9/11. As in the example of Invisible Theatre discussed above, the erroristas rehearse an identity — in this case, that of the terrorist — constructed as the fearful other against which hegemonic power is defined and asserted; a threat, imagined or real, that justifies

426 Ibid.
the militaristic securitisation of the urban, even in cities purportedly outside of US control, such as Mar del Plata.

Crucially, however, and unlike with Invisible Theatre, the error of this identification becomes apparent with the proximity of the interpersonal encounter, an encounter that occurred (if the erroristas are to be believed) by coincidence, in error. At this point, the difference in consensus between theatre audiences and the armed police comes into play, with the refusal of the police to admit the illusion provoking an affective response in laughter, through which the serious narrative underlining the production of militaristic urban space and the authority of the police comes unstuck. The erroristas themselves describe the action as a ‘liberation in error’.428 This can be understood not only in the sense of laughter liberating the citizens from the referent authority of the police, but also with the liberation of the bodies of the police from the power to which their authority refers, as an authority that adheres to them in all seriousness. Therefore, the uniformed official who, asked by one of the group, el Mota, if he had never made an error himself, glances back at the beach, the camera, the scene and lets slip: ‘Sure, the error I made was to become a cop! I wanted to be an actor...429

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PUC, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (October 2013)
I am standing on the concrete balcony of a lecture theatre next to Eleonora. She has just delivered a lecture, a performance in which she relates the encounters and coincidences that punctuated a journey through New York City, a journey whose full-stop was a plunge into the icy grip of the Hudson River. I ask her how the city figures in her work. She answers with a gesture. Bringing her palms together, she moves right across left. ‘The city is a body, too,’ she says.

Later, we go to hear a conversation by the dance artist Xavier Le Roy and his collaborator, art historian Chris Wavelet at the Museum of Art Rio. MAR only opened in March 2013. It’s an impressive space with an imposing glass facade that reveals a central atrium to the street, but keeps it separate all the same. Time Out declared it ‘an excellent excuse to come

to what was until recently a gritty, dangerous part of the city and witness first-hand its ongoing transformation and a slice of carioca history being made, before the final vestiges of the seedier side of traditional port ‘entertainment’ are banished forever.’

So, here we are, inside this gallery space, listening to a conversation about Le Roy’s exhibition, *Retrospectiva*, when Wavelet begins to rub his hands together. He moves them, one across the other, like so. This, he is saying, is the action offered up by Kurt Schwitters when asked to define *merzing*. It was a gesture intended to express doing nothing. For Wavelet, though, it is more than that. This is a performance of the ‘body as common’.

**Conclusion**

Investigating some of the different ways contemporary Latin American practitioners have taken up the model of Invisible Theatre after Boal, this chapter has highlighted two divergent approaches: the first regards Boal’s method as coherent, resolved and relatively fixed, whilst the second engages Invisible Theatre as an historic iteration and creative provocation to realise performative strategies attentive to the artists’ immediate urban and spatial contexts. The cancellation of the Invisible Theatre workshop scheduled to take place during my residency appears consistent with a broader move away from urban performance within TO, which tends to focus on the subsequent technique of Forum Theatre. If this move reflects doubts about the alignment of Invisible Theatre with TO’s socially transformative aims, however, these were suppressed in the interviews I conducted with the CTO-Rio *curingas*. Whilst Sanctum acknowledged the limited opportunities for critical reflection through Invisible Theatre, the narrative built up across the interviews closely follows the method described in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, written before Boal had adapted the model for television. In the previous chapter, critical contextual analysis of two of these televised performances indicated the potential for Invisible Theatre to inadvertently perpetuate oppressive relations constructed at the intersections of race and gender, calling Boal’s spatial narrative into question. This issue resurfaces here in the interviews through the repetition of an historic performance aimed at racism revealing the limits to participation through the social relations and modes of urban encounter it establishes.

Where the *curingas* returned Invisible Theatre to the social conflicts of the 1990s, the second group of artists conveyed Boal’s model of urban performance into their immediate spatial contexts. For Fabião, Invisible Theatre’s ambiguous
relationship to its audiences and dialogic form suggested opportunities for connecting with Rio de Janeiro and its citizens, enabling them to overcome fear as an affective mechanism for orienting spatial relations of dominance. Like Boal, Fabião overstepped normative social boundaries in subtle ways to invite social interaction. However, while Invisible Theatre involves scripted dialogues that direct its audiences towards pre-determined and oppositional arguments, Fabião’s open-ended actions create space for unforeseen encounters and recognition through the mutual negotiation of multiple and differentiated subject positions. The iterative urban performances of Movimento Cidade Invisíveis likewise countered the spatial effects of fear, figuring as a response to sexual violence against women within the city. If rehearsing oppressions as Invisible Theatre risks reproducing the trauma of the violent encounter, Movimento Cidade Invisíveis shows a way of adapting this model to give agency to the victim of oppression through translating the fear and pain of past encounters into rage. Directing her anger toward the built environment, Isis marked the traumatic event and claimed space in the city to resist her feelings of helplessness. As a counterpoint to these approaches, the escraches of Grupo Etcétera highlight the potential for harnessing the misdirection and misunderstandings of Invisible Theatre to humourous effect, as a means of disarming authority, like trickster.

The range of the second group suggests possibilities for the further transformation of Invisible Theatre as a model of urban performance. Where a rigid adherence to Boal’s interpretation of his practice has revealed inconsistencies in CTO-Rio’s organisational narrative and the binary structure of TO, for these artists, moving beyond Boal’s account in responding to the creative provocation of his practice has given way to new performative strategies and modes of urban sociability. Investigating their urban performances through Invisible Theatre and Boal’s heavily structured urban imaginary, moreover, draws attention to the militarisation of cities as an effect of international sporting mega-events. Following this trajectory, Chapter Five returns to post-Olympic London and my own iterative practice to express the potential for Invisible Theatre to connect local struggles through performances of transnational solidarity.
Making a Scene in London and Rio de Janeiro

The Floating Cinema, London
17.58 ‘Welcome, I say, in a moment we will connect with Rio de Janeiro. This event is live and we will be streaming. Anything could happen. Please turn off your phones.’

17.59 I pick up my phone and try to make the call. It cuts out. I smile at the audience apologetically, take a beat and try again. This time it rings.

Casa 24, Rio de Janeiro
13.59 The phone buzzes in my hand. ‘Aceito. Now? Are we ready?’

18.00 ‘Cue credits,’ I say. The technician hits the key. ‘We’re rolling.’

14.00 ‘What did you say? I can’t hear you. You need to speak up, please.’
18.01 Breathe. Breathe. ‘Enter.’
14.01 ‘Entrem!’

…

18.03 ‘Familiar but strange.
Hasta pensar en Inglés me resulta un poco extraño. As árvores, the trees, elas estão maiores, much bigger than I remember.
Olha esse rio ai, eu conheço, mas tem alguma coisa…
What’s wrong about it? El agua. Es el agua.
Is it flowing uphill?’

…

18.07 I check the stream. The Rio side has flipped. The Green Child is gazing off-screen. ‘Turn around!’
14.07 ‘Are you talking to me? You need to say Meri…’
18.08 My voice gives me away. ‘The direction has changed! Signal to Rapha, he needs to look the other way…’

Introduction

In this final chapter, I reflect on the ways in which my thinking about Invisible Theatre and the urban as performed has shaped and been shaped by my practice. Part II (Practice) offers an overview of my trajectory as an artist through the research. It seeks to represent the breadth of my practice, including examples of urban performance and performances for gallery contexts, alongside installations, prints, and videos, to reveal multiple points of intersection and departure with the thesis. By comparison, this chapter offers a more focussed discussion and analysis of three works created between 2014-2016: Contra Band (2014), Childsplay: A Den Building Workshop (2014), and Contracorrente/Upstream (2016). These three examples, which are also included in Part II, map closely onto my main argument as attempts to make urban performance informed by Invisible Theatre to challenge dominant modes of urbanisation and encounter.

The specific spatial context for all three of these examples was the re-envisioning of the urban for and through international sporting mega-events in London (2012) and Rio de Janeiro (2014, 2016). However, the differences between
them – in terms of their settings, performative strategies and imagined audiences – reflect my attempts within this overarching context to address distinctive urban struggles and imaginaries. *Childsplay* refers to a workshop for young children, delivered voluntarily as part of the Focus E15 campaign’s occupation of boarded up homes on the Carpenters’ Estate, Stratford, London over two weeks in September, 2014. Formed by a group of young, single mothers who were threatened with displacement from Stratford in the immediate aftermath of the 2012 Olympics, Focus E15 has been actively campaigning against property-led gentrification since 2013. In this chapter, I discuss the way their occupation and my contribution to it blurred the boundaries between domestic/urban, private/public space that urban performance implies. Meanwhile, taking the form of multi-lingual, digitally networked, intraurban performances, *Contra Band* and *Contracorrente/Upstream* built on relationships established during periods of research in Rio de Janeiro (2011, 2013). *Contra Band* (2014) was performed on six occasions over the summer of 2014 to coincide with the FIFA World Cup, Brazil, with Rio de Janeiro one of twelve host cities.430 *Contracorrente/Upstream* (2016) was live streamed in the week leading up to the opening ceremony of the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games against the backdrop of London’s Olympic landscape. Whilst therefore alert to the specific context of Rio de Janeiro, both projects were commissioned by London-based public art organisation, UP Projects, for the Floating Cinema (London, UK), CASA 24 (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) and the UP Projects website (online). They brought together artists and audiences across all these locations more or less simultaneously, although not necessarily symmetrically, as I intend to show.

In revisiting these projects here, I want to consider whether the spaces and strategies each of them engaged allowed for the recognition of different urban imaginaries and identities across social groups. Chapter Three explored the reciprocal effects of Invisible Theatre’s tevisual mediation on the participating audience, in part as a consequence of editorial decisions seemingly beyond Boal’s control. Picking up this thread in relation to *Contra Band* and *Contracorrente/Upstream*, the following discussion considers how the screen-based and digital communications technologies they deployed operated to facilitate the encounter between London, Rio de Janeiro and audiences online, and to what extent they frustrated that encounter. Further, how did these urban and

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430 The other eleven host cities of the 2014 World Cup were Belo Horizonte, Brasília, Cuiabá, Curitiba, Fortaleza, Manaus, Natal, Porto Alegre, Recife, Salvador, and São Paulo.
technological spaces of performative encounter inflect the significance and reception of the work?

My principal method of addressing these questions is critical self-reflection, as an attempt to apply the same spatial and performative analysis to my own artistic process and work as I have to Invisible Theatre and urban performance in previous chapters. Boal’s writing about Invisible Theatre highlights the main risk associated with this method, namely, of misrepresenting the performances in ways that align them with my spatial imaginary and narrative. Part of the reason for using a spatial theoretical framework is to mitigate this risk by remaining alert to the urban and social contexts for my practice. Taking up Massey’s account of space as emerging from active material practices and of urban space in particular as demanding of complex negotiation, I write through my encounters as a practitioner occurring at the intersection of a multiplicity of trajectories to give focus to a set of spatial entanglements emerging in my practice.431

In recognition of the limits of my perspective as lead artist, photographic and, wherever possible, audio-visual documentation of the performances included here and in Part II allow for comparative analysis, just as Boal’s claims are tested in my thesis through the archival traces of his practice. As with the televisual modes of Invisible Theatre discussed in Chapter Three, however, defining aspects of the projects are also lost in these representations – most notably, the reciprocity of the performative encounter, and the interplay between live performance and screen-based technologies in Contra Band and Contracorrente/Upstream. These gaps are partially addressed through exchanges with my collaborators (as in the WhatsApp conversation with Maria Eugenia Lombardini that opens this chapter), audience feedback gathered by the commissioning organisation, and responses directed to me in private emails. In addition, discussing moves by the commissioners and partners to control the content of Contracorrente/Upstream, I refer to two interviews that I conducted with practitioners whose experiences of creating commissioned work within the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park may indicate a wider policy of limiting critical creative engagement with that space.

Ultimately, I suggest Contra Band, Childsplay, and Contracorrente/Upstream signal my orientation towards a practice that, whilst remaining open to the imaginary and spatial possibilities of Invisible Theatre in its contiguity with the urban, as camouflage, rejects Invisible Theatre’s indeterminate relationship to the audience. Invisible Theatre rehearses and provokes the conflict inherent in social space so

that it might, but equally might not be resolved. *Contra Band* and *Contracorrente/Upstream* take a different approach, as attempts to create spaces of connection that cut across the national identities and conflicts played out in the sporting arenas and through the media, explored here and in previous chapters. However, the circumstances surrounding these two commissions and their mobilisation within the dominant narrative of legacy surrounding the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games indicates their involvement in conflicting imaginaries of East London. Articulating this spatial conflict through my encounters with the Focus E15 campaign, I seek to make visible the challenges and potentialities of a performative practice engaged in the same modes of urbanisation and encounter it aims to contest.

**Contra Band: Uncensoring Space**

Commissioned in 2014 by UP Projects, Somewhere and the Live Arts Development Agency (LADA) as part of the Floating Cinema’s ‘Extra International Season,’ *Contra Band* brought together musicians and audiences in London and Rio de Janeiro for a live set comprising songs that were censored in both countries between 1964-1985, the years of the military dictatorship in Brazil. During the performance, each musician took turns to sing along with songs written in their non-native language as they listened to them through an earpiece, and to accompany their counterpart. The link was established via Google+ Hangouts, a video conferencing system with two practical advantages: firstly, it is full-duplex, meaning it allows audio to travel in both directions simultaneously, unlike half-duplex alternatives such as Skype, which cut out the quieter half of the conversation; secondly, Google+ Hangouts is freely available in both Brazil and the UK to anyone with internet access. However, even as Google+ Hangouts enabled the musicians, Nick Underwood (UK) and Raphael dos Santos (Brazil), to play together, the latency of the network and technical set-up frustrated their attempts to do so by introducing a significant delay of up to three seconds. This lapse articulated the distance between the two halves of the performance and meant that the songs were heard differently depending upon the listener’s location. For the audiences engaged in

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collective, co-present listening, the live-ness of the event was therefore always partial and relative.

Contra Band included a total of eight songs, four each from Brazil and the UK. This number was determined by the journey times of the Floating Cinema, a screening and performance venue on a refitted narrow boat, as the London audience was transported along sections of the Regents Canal (from East to West) during each performance. As discussed in Chapter Two, the introduction of Ato Institucional Cinco (Institutional Act Five, or AI-5) in 1968 under the dictatorship of Artur Costa e Silva made provision for the surveillance and censure of artists, resulting in creative forms of self-censorship and, for Boal and many other artists, exile to Europe to escape violent forms of repression. Brazilian musicians targeted by and subverting state censors included Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, and Tom Zé – all of whom had worked together with Boal for the 1965 theatre production of Arena Conti Bahia – as well as Boal’s close friend, Chico Buarque. Meanwhile, in the UK, musical censorship during this period was an effect of a conservative broadcast media, with songs by the Beatles, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Ian Dury and the Blockheads, and the Sex Pistols all falling foul of BBC censors on grounds of indecency. All of the songs included in Contra Band were by male artists and bands. Whilst I attempted to redress this gender imbalance by actively seeking out songs by women in the first instance, the only music that I was able to find from the period by UK artists, including Blondie and Lulu, was blacklisted by the BBC much later, during the Gulf War (1990-1991), usually for employing weaponised metaphors. My search for women artists censored under the terms of AI-5 was even less successful, suggesting how their access to the arts and broadcast media was already restricted, and revealing the ambivalent status conferred upon censored artists.

Despite the different spatio-political contexts, censorship played a significant role in the construction of public space in both countries by demarcating political and moral boundaries, that is, the political identities and moralities that were representable to the public. Many, but not all of the songs subjected to censorship in Brazil were critical of the military regime, with Tom Zé’s Guindaste a Rigor (1970) apparently blacklisted because of a burp. Vice versa, whilst the majority of songs censored in the UK during this period were prohibited by the BBC because of their references to sex, the Sex Pistols punk provocation, God Save the Queen (1977), renamed in honour of the Queen’s Silver Jubilee, was banned for its explicit

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criticisms of Queen Elizabeth II in aligning her with fascism. The Sex Pistol’s manager Malcolm McLaren notoriously arranged for the band to perform the song from a boat, the Queen Elizabeth, a publicity stunt that was in a sense rehearsed for *Contra Band* by audiences aboard the Floating Cinema. Unlike the Floating Cinema, the Queen Elizabeth was charted to cruise down the River Thames past the Houses of Parliament, mimicking the royal flotilla. The performance was interrupted when police forced the boat to dock and arrested eleven of those on board, including McLaren. Such controversy did little to halt the song’s commercial success, and likely helped to secure its top ten UK chart position, revealing the potential for capital to co-opt displays of state authority as readily as critical artistic practices.

![Image of people and a screen with text](image)

*Figure 5.1: Leah Lovett, *Contra Band* (London/Rio de Janeiro: UP Projects, 2014)*

Bringing the historically censored music together, *Contra Band* called attention to strategies for shutting down critical practices, but likewise to the creative

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ways in which practitioners have cut across censorship. Inspired by Boal’s discovery of Invisible Theatre as a means of resisting military authority, it invited audiences to consider how limits on artistic freedom of expression have necessitated different ways of seeing, listening, experiencing and communicating. A signal example is Chico Buarque and Gilberto Gil’s poignant song, Cálice (1973), which eluded military state censors who were reading rather than hearing the lyrics because of a homophone.435 When written, câlice translates as chalice, but spoken, it sounds as the imperative cale-se, meaning shut-up, or silence. What appeared on paper to be a song about Jesus in Gethsemane was therefore heard as a criticism of the military regime’s violent silencing of political opposition. The song includes the lyric, ‘Silêncio na cidade não se escuta’ [In the city, silence is not heard], words that suggest the city itself as resisting censorship.436 Cálice was performed by Buarque and Gil as part of the Phono 73 Festival (1973), a mass event staged in a city-run convention centre in São Paulo. Whilst they were playing, the military police came on stage to unplug their microphones. This spectacle of censorship took place as a spatial and political effect of Buarque and Gil’s deceptive play on words. By demonstrating the critical message of Cálice to a mass audience, the censors unwittingly cemented its status as an iconic protest song.

In rehearsing works by artists who have creatively subverted censorship in this way, my intention was not to imply that censorship is creatively desirable. As discussed in an earlier chapter, the years following the introduction of AI-5 in Brazil are usually referred to as os anos de chumbo (the leaden years), a term that describes the suffocating effects of censorship on critical art practices.437 Nor do I mean to suggest an equivalence between the political contexts of Brazil under military dictatorship and the UK during the same period, although the revelation of the 2011-2014 National Truth Commission that psychological torture techniques used by the Brazilian military regime were developed by the British and honed in Northern Ireland reveals a decisive link.438 Whilst performances by Buarque and Gil and the Sex Pistols may have been interrupted in superficially similar ways, there

435 For an extended discussion of Cálice and censorship under the Brazilian military regime, see Christopher Dunn, Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 161–3.
436 Chico Buarque and Gilberto Gil, Cálice, Record, Polygram/Philips (1978 [1973])
was undoubtedly more at stake, politically and in terms of the threat to life, for Buarque and Gil.

I have already mentioned one way in which this distance was articulated within the performance due to network latency, that is, the delays between the transmission and reception of data as a consequence of physical constraints and variables such as Internet traffic. It was also expressed with the shifts in register as the set alternated between songs by Brazilian and UK artists, in their faltering rendition by non-native singers, and with the mutual visibility of the Rio de Janeiro and London audiences, in the differences between the audiences’ responses to each song. For example, on more than one occasion, Nick Underwood found himself singing three seconds ahead of his Rio de Janeiro audience to Geraldo Vandré’s, *Pra não dizer que não falei das flores* [So as not to say that I did not speak of flowers] (1968). Whilst the popular title of this song, *Caminhando* [Walking], and its marching rhythm both evoke mass protests, this collective echo conveyed its lasting significance for Brazilians as the unofficial anthem of resistance to the military regime. Following this trajectory, the question that concerned me with *Contra Band*, and to which I have repeatedly returned in thinking about Invisible Theatre, is whether and how creative counter-strategies for resisting censorship might be recovered, mediated and redirected to challenge the political and social limits of public space in another place or time. How did songs censored in such different circumstances resonate in London and Rio de Janeiro, as host cities to international sporting mega-events?

One possible answer came in an email from the artistic director of CASA 24, Filipe Espindola, writing a few days after the first performances of *Contra Band*:

> We are experiencing a difficult period in terms of police oppression here in Rio, because of the World Cup. Our street theatre and performance group was arrested on the day of the game against Mexico. … We hadn’t committed a crime, so they couldn’t charge us with anything, but it was a moment of tension in a difficult period. Participating in *Contra Band* feels important, because we don’t want to be silent at this time, like [artists] during the dictatorship of 1964.\(^{439}\)

Espindola suggests how, in Rio de Janeiro, the performance of *Contra Band* combined with experiences of police oppression and censorship during the World Cup to align the artists of CASA 24 with artists like Boal operating under the constraints of military dictatorship. His repeated references to a ‘difficult period,’

\(^{439}\) Filipe Espindola, email to Leah Lovett, 1 July, 2014. Reproduced with permission.
characterised by ‘tension,’ and ‘police oppression’ are reminiscent of the narrative surrounding Boal’s first performance of Invisible Theatre, and similarly convey his impressions of the urban as heavily structured (see Chapter Two).

Meanwhile, the associations he makes between urban performance, participation and resistance position CASA 24 and Contra Band in direct opposition to that dominant urban imaginary. In communicating the risks of performing in Rio de Janeiro to those of us observing from London, away from the threat, Espindola tacitly allies us to this position. His underlying assumption seems to be that Contra Band resonated in more immediate and expansive ways for collaborators and audiences in Rio de Janeiro engaged in struggles against police oppression, and living in the shadow of Brazil’s military regime.

Espindola’s references to police oppression as an effect of the World Cup are consistent with criticisms of sporting mega-events giving way to the increased securitisation of the urban (Chapter Four). Evidence of this phenomenon in London would include the redeployment of military troops for the 2012 Games as a result of the notorious failure by private security firm G4S to recruit to the required staffing levels. However, where CASA 24 became the scene of a dramatic encounter between artists and authorities during the World Cup, the Floating Cinema was commissioned in 2012 as part of the Cultural Olympiad – an aspect of the Olympic and Paralympic Games mandated by the IOC. As set out in the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad evaluation report, the £126.6 million public money assigned to the arts was allocated to individuals and organisations on the basis of their meeting the four main funding objectives: (1) celebrating multiculturalism, (2) signposting ‘hot spots for cultural tourists,’ (3) using culture to engage ‘local communities’ with the main events taking place in London, and (4) leaving behind a ‘legacy for those who participated’ (my italics).

Despite the positivist rhetoric employed in the report, this checklist reveals a set of social divisions along fault lines of ethnicity, culture and class through indicating the uneven relationship between London and the regions, cultural tourists and local communities, and the differentiated social groups that constitute the multicultural imaginary. In uncritically associating the dominant narrative of legacy with participation, the report calls to mind Claire Bishop’s criticisms about the recent uses of participatory models such as urban

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performance within the UK, specifically as means of compensating for gaps in social provision by the state.\(^{443}\) Moreover, it points to the instrumental role of the Cultural Olympiad in creating the image of social cohesion, as the other side of security measures deployed in both London and Rio de Janeiro. The question this raises is whether Contra Band was therefore complicit in process of Olympic-led processes of urbanisation and encounter, as existing critical models might suggest? Alternatively, do the different ways of seeing, hearing Contra Band constitute a refusal of any singular narrative?

In addressing this key issue of determining spatial narratives, I want to consider the underlying paradox that in both London and Rio de Janeiro steps were taken to conceal spatial conflicts internal to the nation state whilst international conflicts were being staged within the sporting arenas. By relocating conflict beyond the borders of the nation state and presenting a common cause for diverse publics to rally behind, international sporting competitions provide an important ground for the reassertion of national imaginaries and identifications.\(^{444}\) The prominent role of national anthems during the events provides a telling counterpoint to the music included in Contra Band in showing how international mega-events function to stage national identities, and the influential role of music in this process. Where censorship demarcates the boundaries of moral and political acceptability as an instrument of exclusion, official national anthems operate on a symbolic and performative level as attempts to constitute the social group as a nation.

During the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, the national anthems of the competing teams were played before every match.\(^{445}\) As the music began, the players lined up shoulder to shoulder on the pitch in their national strip, either side of the centre line. In front of them, a squadron of child mascots selected from 70 countries formed another row, joining hands in a sentimental display of international unity and future hope. Clad in the red and yellow strip of the multinational corporate event sponsors, McDonald’s, the children represented an image of futurity that cut across the national symbolism of the competing teams and anthems, both visually and ideologically. For both the 2012 and 2016 Olympics events, meanwhile, the national anthem of the winning team was played after the competition, as part of a medal ceremony that elevated the victors on a pedestal, and in the collective imagination.


Instrumental versions of the music played during all three events provided an accompaniment (with few exceptions) for the collective voices of the sporting competitors and their co-present spectators, as national representatives. Meanwhile, the televised scenes of these ritual performances cut between close-ups on the faces of the athletes and wider shots of crowds dotted with flags, some waved in hands, some painted on skin in affiliation to the national team.

The resulting spectacle of nationalism was further underscored in a majority of cases with official lyrics projecting a defining aspect of the dominant national imaginary. The words of the Brazilian national anthem, penned by Joaquim Osório Duque Estrada in 1909, emphasise the country’s massive scale, natural diversity and future prosperity: ‘Gigante pela própria natureza / És belo, és forte, impávido colosso / E o teu futuro espelho essa grandeza’ (Vast by nature / Beautiful, strong, brave colossus / Your future mirrors this greatness).\(^{446}\) The official version of *God Save the Queen*, meanwhile, focusses on the ideological structure of monarchy and Empire, much like its counterpart by the Sex Pistols. Discussing national symbols including anthems in their relationship to the modernist project of nation-building, Michael Geisler considers that they represent ‘the power of the state to define a nation’ whilst also serving as important markers for the national imaginary.\(^{447}\) The contested history of the British national anthem provides a glimpse into the conflicts this entails. Literary historian Alison Morgan traces the uncertain origins of *God Save the King* to the Jacobite Rebellion, as a drinking song used by the Jacobites until 1745 when, she suggests, ‘it was taken out of the popular, radical culture to which it belonged and reinvented as a symbol of authority and sovereign power over the people.’\(^{448}\) Morgan argues that subsequent adaptations of the national anthem through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by literary figures including Percy Shelley can therefore be interpreted as the ‘reclamation of it as a populist song, returning it to the people and the culture that created it.’\(^{449}\) From this perspective, the Sex Pistols might be regarded as continuing a well-established tradition of cultural appropriations within an ongoing struggle to articulate the dominant national narrative played out between state actors and their critics. As evidence that national symbols produce ambivalent affects and effects across the


\(^{449}\) Ibid.
population, their music highlights that dominant narratives are always subject to negotiation and change, however stable they may appear to be.

To the extent that anthems represent the power of the state, as Geisler suggests, I would contend that this power is conveyed with the capacity of the music to elicit a performative response. As a ceremonial aspect of international sporting mega-events, national anthems call the players and crowds to attention in a patriotic display of national allegiance, and out of respect for the opposition. The dutiful reactions they engender make this form of popular music a particularly powerful tool in controlling public space. Musicologists Martin Cloonan and Bruce Johnson offer an astonishing example of this in relation to the Beatles’ 1964 Australian tour. They describe how the management would play the national anthem at the end of each concert, prompting the over-excited audience to ‘rise to its feet and stand silently,’ thereby giving the Beatles an opportunity to slip out quietly via the stage door. Invisible Theatre can be understood as a resistant model of urban performance insofar as it seeks to disrupt such habituated performances of authoritarian power. National anthems demand dignified modes of behaviour in attempting to cohere the nation as a unified body. Invisible Theatre, by contrast, anticipates multiple possible reactions and a cacophony of dissenting voices as means of disturbing the established order. However, protest anthems like *Caminhando* show how singing in unison can also operate to consolidate social groups in defiance of authority. Where national anthems institute a top-down distribution of power through official music and lyrics, the music of protest tends to be negotiated from the ground up, like Invisible Theatre, in ways that challenge dominant social structures.

*Contra Band* explored this potential through the inclusion of the Beatles’ *Come Together*, towards the end of the set. In line with local legislation in both territories, the producer UP Projects acquired licences for the performing rights to all of the songs included in *Contra Band*, except *Come Together*. The high costs involved in securing rights to perform music by the Beatles would have been prohibitive to a project on this scale, though the connection between the Beatles and the genre of Brazilian popular music, MPB, which featured prominently in

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452 *The Copyright, Design and Patents Act* 1988 (UK), and *Ley No. 9.610*. 1998. (Law on Copyright and Neighbouring Rights, Brazil).
Contra Band recommended its inclusion.\textsuperscript{453} The solution we came up with was to list the song as part of the set, and share a link to lyrics online, whilst explaining to audiences why it could not be performed by the musicians. Given this information and a few guiding chords, the audiences to each of the six performances took up the challenge more or less enthusiastically, negotiating their own unrehearsed versions of Come Together through the technology. Where Invisible Theatre provokes urban actors to engage in social conflicts through concealing its performative context, as camouflage, Contra Band exposed the structural conditions for the performance as a way of insinuating the audiences to participate in a collective act of defiance, a side-stepping of the law.

In connecting across territorial space and national boundaries, Contra Band created an opening for unexpected social relations to emerge that troubled the coherence of national identities staged through the sporting mega-events. On several occasions, this connection dropped out, leaving audiences in either city with a fragile voice or a voiceless accompaniment. Chapter Three explored the distancing effects of screen-based technologies in relation to televisual modes of Invisible Theatre, with the reproduction of uneven social relations between participants and television spectators watching the drama unfold retrospectively, partly as a consequence of editorial decisions. Whilst televised sporting events typically operate in a different convention of live broadcasting, the introduction of an intentional gap in transmission – commonly referred to as the seven second delay – allows for similar editorial control in censoring unplanned performative interventions. A notable example of this occurred when Russian comedian Vitaly Zdorovetskiy streaked across the pitch during the second half of the 2014 FIFA World Cup final between Germany and Argentina. In the UK, the televised match cut to an image of Rio de Janeiro’s iconic Cristo Redentor monument at sunset, effectively removing viewers from the unforeseen encounter on the pitch. The gap between the action and televisual reception of both Invisible Theatre and sporting contests functions in this way to mitigate the uncertainty of the performative event. By contrast, the technological lapses and interruptions of Contra Band were integral to the performative encounter between London and Rio de Janeiro insofar as they introduced an element of chance. The sense of incompleteness when the connection was lost intensified the musicians’ and audiences’ desire to reconnect,

\textsuperscript{453} On the influence of the Beatles on the development of MPB, see Sean Stroud, \textit{The Defence of Tradition in Brazilian Popular Music: Politics, Culture and the Creation of Música Popular Brasileira} (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).
an echo perhaps of the ways in which censorship made resistance more urgent for musicians and artists such as Boal.

If the city resists censorship, as Buarque’s lyrics imply, then surely that is because cities are places where people amass, where numerous trajectories intersect, and therefore where encounters between competing spatial imaginaries can occur. From this perspective, communications technologies can be seen to create more opportunities for multiple, varied and challenging connections that extend beyond the territorial boundaries of any one city.

**Childsplay: A den-building workshop**

I arrive after several wrong turns, pulling a red suitcase behind me, pushing the buggy in front. It’s warm for September, and the flattened cardboard boxes wedged between the pushchair’s handles and hood keep sliding. I set them down.

I recognise the place from the banners staked into the ground:

**THESE PEOPLE NEED HOMES. THESE HOMES NEED PEOPLE.**

Black on green. I’ve seen them in photos posted online.

On the grass, an artist I know from a show we were both in over the summer smiles and nods, invites my girl to sit. We both sit down. ‘It’s a kids’ cooking workshop,’ she says, ‘we’re making lunch.’ It’s something she does for stuff like this.

All around us, windows are boarded up. We have to pass a huge metal door to get inside, climb concrete steps. The flat has green carpet and the sweet smell of damp, but the kitchen looks like it’s just been done and the place is a good size.

I try to find someone to ask. There’s an effigy with a David Cameron mask in the corner, a reporter on the floor, and beside me, a group of white guys with beards discussing Marx. I squeeze past and cross the hall into another room humming with activity. They’ve had a letter from the council, and are writing a reply. The mums read out short sections to people on either side who know what they’re doing, all experience and furrowed brows.

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454 Massey, For Space, 155.
I take a beat then quietly leave them to it.

My girl has befriended another child. ‘Who wants to make a den?’ I ask, and lead them both outside.

In September 2014, a few weeks after the final performances of *Contra Band*, Focus E15 activists entered and occupied 80-86 Doran Walk, Carpenters Estate, Stratford, East London. I developed *Childsplay: A Den Building Workshop* in response to that action, delivering the session on site as a practical means of supporting the campaign. Where the Floating Cinema and *Contra Band* are entangled with the Cultural Olympiad and the narrative of legacy, the circumstances surrounding *Childsplay* speak to another legacy of London 2012, one that belies the image of national societal cohesion projected for the Games. I have argued that, as a model of urban performance, Invisible Theatre reflects Boal’s perception of the urban as militarised and his experiences of being displaced as a political exile (Chapter Two). Similarly, describing his experiences of police oppression during the World Cup, Espindola conveys an urban imaginary of Rio de Janeiro as structurally closed to artists and urban performance. Focus E15 identifies a different target of spatial exclusion from the dominant urban imaginary of Stratford, that of the young, single, working-class mother. In this section, I show how moral panic surrounding the identity of the single mother has enabled the privatisation of social housing in post-Olympic London through the reassertion of patriarchal and gendered divisions of public/private space. I argue that Focus E15 performatively reclaims the representative identity of the single mother to challenge the negative imaginary perpetuated through the media, using the strategy of occupation to disrupt the boundaries between public/private within the urban. Asking what this means for existing models of urban performance, like Invisible Theatre, articulated in relation to the street, I discuss how *Childsplay* operated on the fringes of the occupation to rehearse the spatial politics of the campaign.

The Focus E15 campaign takes its name from the hostel for homeless young people in Stratford where its organisers met as residents of the Foyer and the Mother and Baby Unit. In August 2013, they received letters from the landlord, East Thames Housing Association, informing them that Newham Council had withdrawn funding from the unit and they were being served notice to leave. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government had recently passed the *Welfare Reform Act* (2012), introducing caps on housing benefit that combined with a strong private rental market to make large swathes of London unaffordable for
low-income residents. Furthermore, Newham Council’s housing allocation policy had changed in 2012 to prioritise military personnel, followed by those in work. Consequently, when the mothers approached Newham Council for assistance, they were offered private sector accommodation as far away as Birmingham, Hastings and Manchester. Under sections 191(1) and 196(1) of the 1996 Housing Act, declining offers of accommodation in these locations could have resulted in their being considered ‘intentionally homeless,’ and ineligible for further support, whilst their spatial dislocation would have meant separation from family and other vital support networks. Refusing to accept the intractability of this legal position, they organised under the banner of ‘social housing, not social cleansing’, as Focus E15.

Before going on to discuss the campaign in more detail, I want to make the point that, as single, working-class mothers, the women were the intended targets of spatial displacement at the central government as well as local authority level. Whilst the Welfare Reform Bill was being debated, Prime Minister David Cameron delivered a speech on the ‘fightback against the riots’ that succinctly expressed the ideology behind the post-welfare austerity regime. Framing the riots as evidence of a ‘moral hazard in our welfare system,’ Cameron held single mothers accountable for the outpouring of young people’s anger into London’s streets:

I don’t doubt that many of the rioters out last week have no father at home. Perhaps they come from one of the neighbourhoods where it’s standard for children to have a mum and not a dad, where it’s normal for young men to grow up without a male role model, looking to the streets for their father figures...

In setting up this image of the ‘problem’ family, Cameron rehearsed a set of assumptions about the spatial organisation of the urban along fault lines of gender and class. His urban imaginary closely maps Massey’s description of the nineteenth century division of the Western city into public, masculine and private, feminine spheres by aligning the mother with the neighbourhood and the home, the father

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457 See The Housing Act 1996, ss.191(1) and 196(1).
460 Ibid.
figure with the street. Social housing is aberrant to this urban imaginary, an incursion of the public into the private. Articulating the riots as a breach of these distinct spheres due to single mothers failing to maintain the boundary ("Why aren’t they keeping the rioting kids indoors?") Cameron laid the ground for subsequent attacks on state housing provision and their archetypal beneficiary according to the media, the single mother – as in the case of Focus E15.

Focus E15 reclaims this image of the single, working-class mother as a political identity and performatively reinserts it into the dominant urban imaginary. An early example of this occurred in January 2014, when the mothers set up a tea party for their children in an East Thames show flat. The disruption caused by the relocation of the children’s play into East Thames’ offices served to highlight their failure to accommodate the families within their prototypical model of ‘affordable living’. This strategy of occupying nominally private space can be compared with the silent vigils of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, another group of activists whose civil resistance came about as a function of motherhood in their search for children disappeared during Argentina’s Dirty War (1976-1983). The urban square with which the Madres are associated, the Plaza de Mayo, represents the political, economic and symbolic heart of Buenos Aires. Today, their symbol of a white headscarf is painted onto the ground in a repeating pattern that circles the central Piramida de Mayo monument. Unlike the monument, which pierces the city’s skyline from a distance, the Madres’ surface markings are only revealed with proximity to those who, pacing the square, heads lowered, re-enact the women’s vigil in their act of looking. Taylor has suggested that this recuperation of the public square marks the distance between essentialising notions of motherhood ascribed to the Madres by a patriarchal society and their performance of motherhood as a political identity in defiance of patriarchal and militarised power. Boal’s model of Invisible Theatre identifies the voice as the privileged register of political expression, a position that reflects his own relative privilege. Forbidden from speaking out, the Madres engaged visibility as a political strategy, marking the disappearances of their children through their refusal to stay in their homes.

Like the Madres, Focus E15 blurs the boundaries between public/private space, but their strategies address a different politics of spatial displacement through the threat of homelessness, and the risks of being on the street. In occupying the Carpenters Estate, the mothers of Focus E15 linked their struggle to

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the narrative of Olympic-led regeneration. Revealing the private interests and economic forces driving the development of Stratford City and the Olympic Park, Minton has argued that the real legacy of the Games consists in the transfer of public land to private companies, unaccountable to the people who live there.463 A 1960s’ social housing development occupying a site adjacent to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, the Carpenters Estate provides key insights into the conflict this entails, as the scene of collective resistance to dominant modes of urbanisation.

Anticipating revenue from residual land values, Newham Council began to ‘actively decant’ social tenants from the Carpenters Estate in 2005, following the IOC’s announcement of London as host city of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.464 Setting out the case for demolition and redevelopment, they emphasised the deprivation of the estate, citing disrepair, asbestos and the prohibitive costs of its safe removal.465 However, the severity of these risks was later called into question when the top floors of Lund Point and Dennison Point, two of three high-rises on the estate, were let to the BBC and Al Jazeera for broadcasting during the Games.466 The image of the Carpenters Estate as deprived projected by Newham Council aligns with Cameron’s imaginary of the troubled neighbourhood and a dominant discourse deriving from the US context that associates social housing with alienation, underemployment and crime.467 This narrative enabled Newham’s mayor, Sir Robin Wales, to recommend UCL’s 2011 ‘vision’ of a university quarter on the site of the Carpenters Estate as offering a ‘legacy for the community’ in the form of employment and widening opportunities for young people through university-led regeneration.468

However, the dominant narrative of the estate failed to reflect the experiences of the people living there, as researcher and activist Paul Watt has

464 Income from residual land values following the Olympic delivery phase was estimated at £106 million as part of the scoping report for the bid to host the 2012 Olympics. UK Parliamentary Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport, *Third Report, IV Bidding for the Olympics* (2003), http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmcumeds/268/26806.htm
466 Paul Watt, ‘“It’s not for us” Regeneration, the 2012 Olympics and the gentrification of East London’ in *City* 17 (1), February (2013): 99-118.
shown. Through extensive interviews with present and former residents, he conveys a different image of ‘neighbourliness, local social capital and positive place identity,’ threatened by disinvestment: ‘When the decant happened they [Newham Council] stopped investing in the area... They’ve deliberately run it down...’ By amplifying the voices of the estate’s residents, Watt highlights the active role of Newham Council in realizing the dominant imaginary of the Carpenters Estate as troubled in order to recommend it for redevelopment. Geographer David Harvey has identified this process of ‘[u]neven geographical development through dispossession’ occurring on a global scale and within the Global North, and linked it to capital accumulation as a corollary of capitalist stability.

In writing about urban performance, a recurrent issue in my thesis concerns the limits of rehearsing violence as a means of consciousness-raising. The televisual examples of Invisible Theatre in particular demonstrate the risks of inadvertently reinforcing both the specific oppressions the performers seek to represent (e.g. unemployment, racism), as well as intersecting social issues, such as sexism, which they may not recognise (see Chapter Three). This suggests that visibility is not enough to alter the ways in which differentiated social groups are perceived. What the example of Focus E15 and the Carpenters Estate highlights is the need to challenge the underlying narratives that shape dominant social attitudes.

In 2013, UCL withdrew from their discussions with Newham Council to develop the Carpenters Estate. Whilst no public announcement about the reasons for the withdrawal was forthcoming, the objections raised by the residents and research community and their success in disproving the image of the estate as empty and run-down was a contributing factor. What this means is that when the single parent families of Focus E15 were threatened with homelessness in September 2013, less than a mile away, some 400 boarded up homes – many of them unoccupied for the best part of a decade – were being held by Newham Council in vacant possession without any imminent plans for redevelopment. Through their re-occupation of one of the low-rise blocks, Focus E15 exposed this spatial injustice and the systematic decanting of Newham’s social tenants. By making public domestic spaces earmarked for privatisation, they expressed the
social potentialities of the vacated space, revealing its negative attribution by Newham Council as structurally anti-social to be the means to its own ends.

Figures 5.2 and 5.3: Leah Lovett, Childsplay: A Den Building Workshop (Carpenters Estate, London, 2014)
The social space created as a result of Focus E15’s occupation of the Carpenters Estate challenges models of urban performance that align the public with the street in ways that reinvest gendered divisions of the urban. Invisible Theatre is a method oriented around Boal’s spatial displacement and the pervasive threat of military surveillance. In adopting the logic of camouflage to engage the anonymity and audience of the urban crowd, it reflects the actors’ relative freedom within the urban settings where the performances play out. By contrast, the occupations of Focus E15 organised around the mother-child relationship, staging that relationship over an extended duration to express alternative modes of urban sociability and vulnerability. Newham Council responded by claiming the mothers are ‘not vulnerable, but they are needy,’ positioning them as undeserving and initiating legal proceedings to end the occupation with an Interim Possession Order. This move created an immediate need for support structures to enable the Focus E15 campaigners to prepare for their court appearance.

Where Invisible Theatre aims to alert its audiences to oppression as a provocation to resist, Childsplay figured as an attempt to sustain resistance by remaining alert to the emergent contexts of the Focus E15 campaign. Inviting the children involved in the occupation to construct and decorate their own den, I called upon my experiences as an artist and as a parent to engage the youngest participants in creative play away from the anxious preparations for court going on upstairs, and to give the mothers involved in those discussions an hour or so free from interruption. Erected on a grassed-over patch of land immediately in front of the occupied building, the children’s riotous architecture preceded and reproduced the social and spatial politics of the occupation [fig. 5.2]. On a symbolic level, their collective activity showed up the inaction of Newham Council and the systemic failure of those in need of social housing, whilst the materiality of their cardboard box hiding place evoked the rising incidence of homelessness and housing insecurity amongst children in Newham. However, like Francois, the employed actor who assumed the role of an unemployed man for the Invisible Theatre performance in Liège (see Chapter Three), I was not the subject of these spatialised inequalities.

Whilst delivering the workshop and, subsequently, supporting the campaign’s regular Saturday street stall in Stratford, a number of researchers and

journalists inquired about my involvement with the campaign. Entering into the
occupation with my young daughter, performing motherhood as a political identity, I
was aware of the possibility of us being seen as former residents of Focus E15. The
model of Invisible Theatre exploits this potential for misrecognition in adopting the
logic of camouflage. Assuming the role of the oppressed enables the actors to
confront the social issues that they themselves represent, and to expose relations of
oppression to social contestation. A problem with this approach, however, concerns
the spatial narratives and encounters of Invisible Theatre being overdetermined by
the same systems of oppression to which they are nominally opposed, thereby
limiting the scope for imagining alternative ways of relating to the contested subject.
Whilst being mistaken for one of the Focus E15 families afforded opportunities to
convey my criticisms of Newham Council’s management of the Carpenters Estate
and the displacement of social tenants through Olympic- and property-led
developments, this did not entail me denying my role. Where questions from
supermarket employees and police prompted Francois to further conceal his identity
(Chapter Three), I performed my representable maternal identity to challenge a
dominant spatial narrative aligning me against the mothers of Focus E15, for
example, by conceiving access to university and employment as irreconcilable with
access to social housing. Concealing how I have materially benefitted from the
narrative of Olympic legacy and the urban restructuring of Stratford as an artist (as
the above discussion of Contra Band indicates), not to mention through this
research, as a student of UCL, would have weakened the force of this argument.

In analysing Invisible Theatre, I have consistently emphasised that criticism
does not automatically locate the critic in opposition to forces of oppression, and
moreover the critical act can be an expression of oppressive power. However, I also
suggest the underlying causes of the resulting ambiguity cannot be resolved by
refusing to act. The answer Massey proposes is to find the courage to operate ‘with
a concept of spatiality which keeps always under scrutiny the play of the social
relations which construct them,’ without attempting to erase or deny those
relations. The challenge for urban performance is to create the opportunity for
encounters with the potential to set that spatial imaginary in motion.

Contracorrente/Upstream

7th July, 2016

Mouse Tail Coffee, London (Production Meeting)

UPP: Is there any nudity? Any violence, you know, stuff that might offend anyone, or families?

LL: No.

UPP: Are you sure? Because sometimes... I worked with this artist, and she assured me there wouldn’t be nudity, then during the performance there was – a lot – and afterwards I had a problem trying to explain.
LL: There’s no nudity. Except the aliens, but they’re actors in swimsuits.

UPP: OK. Is there anything else, anything we might need to run past Foundation for FutureLondon, or the team at QEOP?

LL: Why? What could they do?

UPP: Worst-case scenario, they could refuse to pay.

LL: Would the actors be paid? And the team in Brazil?

UPP: No.

LL: Shall I send you the script?

In March 2016, UP Projects invited me to develop a proposal for a live-streamed performance to follow Contra Band, once again linking London with Rio de Janeiro. Where Contra Band asserted its critical relationship to the World Cup without the commissioners’ expectation of that connection being made, the Olympics provided the explicit context for this commission. The project would be funded by Foundation for FutureLondon, a charity set up to deliver ‘the London 2012 promise to be the first city to regenerate an entire community for the direct benefit of everyone who lives there, through the unique opportunity of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park’ (my italics), and staged in the week leading up to the opening ceremony of Rio 2016.476 The £10,000 budget offered the potential to build on the technical discoveries and networked relationships of Contra Band, to address the limitations of that project by extending and expanding the collaborative model it proposed, and to divert capital to support CASA 24’s unfunded activities around transgender experiences and rights. These opportunities were offset by the potential risks to those excluded by Foundation for FutureLondon’s ‘vision’ for East London, with its use of the present tense tacitly disregarding everyone who lived here before, such as the former residents of the Carpenters Estate. The challenge was to come up with an idea to hold space for the creative contributions and

political concerns of my intended collaborators, whilst remaining alert and responsive to the spatial conflicts that Foundation for FutureLondon would conceal.

Like Contra Band, Contracorrente/Upstream combined cultural influences from Brazil and the UK. Building on research into media histories for Chapter Three, the work took the form of a telenovela, an episodic genre of television melodrama popular in Brazil. The storyline meanwhile was inspired by British art critic Herbert Read’s only novel, The Green Child (1935). All three episodes were written and directed in collaboration with Maria Eugenia Lombardini, a TO practitioner from Argentina living and working in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Following an intensive two-week rehearsal period, Contracorrente/Upstream was performed over three hours on 30th July, 2016 between actors in CASA 24 and the Floating Cinema, moored at Queen Mary’s University, East London, and live streamed via Open Broadcast Software (OBS) to the UP Projects homepage. As open-source software designed for real-time video editing, OBS enabled the actors – Freddie King, Raphael dos Santos and Farelis Silva (in Rio de Janeiro) and Rocio Galan, Tessa Parr and Rafael Pera (in London) – to be projected across these two locations and time zones into a shared telematic space [fig. 5.4]. Through the use of identical sets and blue-screen backdrops, reminiscent of the Olympic-blue fencing from London 2012, their performance appeared on-screen within a continuous, virtual landscape, represented predominantly by the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London [fig. 5.5]. However, the actors in either location were unable to pass across the centre-line of the screen. The seemingly straightforward direction of crossing from left to right, and vice versa, required two actors cast as the same character to synchronise their movements, whilst a 30 second delay between live action and live stream prevented either side from seeing, in real-time, what their counterpart was doing. Simulating interaction between the two halves of the screen therefore involved a separate audio link between Lombardini and me to communicate cues and convey them to the actors, with this solution adding another performative dimension to the melodramatic attempt.
Figure 5.4: Leah Lovett and Simon Cummin, preparatory image showing composite stream set-up for Contracorrente/Upstream (Rio de Janeiro/London and online: UP Projects and Foundation for FutureLondon, 2016).

Figure 5.5: Leah Lovett and Maria Eugenia Lombardini, Contracorrente/Upstream (Rio de Janeiro/London and online: UP Projects and Foundation for FutureLondon, 2016).
Like other forms of melodrama, the plots of telenovelas typically focus on romantic relationships and tragic suffering rather than political and spatial conflicts. However, the popular success of telenovelas in commanding audiences from across Brazil's social and geographical divides – such that, ‘religious ceremonies and sessions of the Senate changed their schedule’ so as not to clash with prime-time broadcasting slots – guaranteed their spatial and political significance. Cultural theorist Mauro Porto has revealed how Brazilian telenovelas became entangled with processes of urbanisation as a result of the military regime’s policy of ‘national integration’ and the Brazilian Miracle (1968-1973). He suggests a significant factor contributing to the emergence of the telenovela in Brazil during the early years of the military dictatorship was the 1965 establishment of Brazil’s dominant media outlet and major telenovela producer, TV Globo, in Rio de Janeiro.

The broadcasting license to extend Roberto Marinho’s multi-media Globo empire was issued under President Kubitschek’s popular democratic presidency in 1957, but the financial and technical backing necessary to set up the channel was secured in 1962 through an agreement with the US company, Time-Life. A supporter of the 1964 coup against Goulart’s government, Marinho used his influence across media channels to promote the military dictatorship’s policy of ‘national integration’ through the markets. TV Globo’s telenovelas from this period plot the tension between rural traditions and the military ideology of progress through urban industrialisation. Vice versa, the military invested in the satellite technologies required to link stations across the country, launching the Brazilian Enterprise of Telecommunications (EM-BRATEL) in 1969. In this way, as Porto puts it, ‘government censorship and a close alliance of interests between media owners and the military contributed to shape telenovela representations’ according to the authoritarian regime’s national imaginary. However, telenovelas were also produced that challenged the dominant spatial narrative in subtle ways. For example, O Espigão (The Skyscraper, 1974) conveys the negative effects of rapid and chaotic urbanisation within Brazil by representing the alienation of individuals within big cities and their oppression by power-holders, including urban developers.

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478 Ibid.
479 Ibid. 126.
480 Ibid.
481 Ibid. 129-30.
including Boal to disrupt those representations, *Contracorrente/Upstream* aimed to challenge contemporary processes of urbanisation through the use of telematic technologies.

Just as Brecht’s poetry provided the inspiration for the televised example of Invisible Theatre in Liège, Lombardini and I engaged Read’s literary imagination to address the Olympic narrative articulated through our respective cities. In tracing the plot of *The Green Child*, we wanted to reassert the connections between Argentina, Brazil and the UK Read makes in expressing their social and political landscapes as entangled. *The Green Child* follows its protagonist (Oliveiro/Oliver) to the imaginary state of Roncador, and back again, to an imaginary English village where water flows the wrong way, before descending with the eponymous Green Child (an alien other) into an apolitical green underworld. Though the locations in which the novel is set are fictionalised, the geological features Read describes places Roncador in the borderlands between Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil: ‘about 1,200 miles’ journeying north of Buenos Aires, at the point where the river (‘our constant companion’) descends ‘through the mountains in a series of rapids and immense waterfalls,’ presumably Iguaçu Falls. The description of the moorland village in England is characteristic of the Yorkshire dales, where Read grew up, whilst the legend of the green children can be traced back to the 12th Century Suffolk village of Woolpit. Each of the protagonist’s three journeys is marked by his real or imagined death, as a metaphor for a process of political transformation: from authoritarian dictatorship, to communism and ultimately anarchy. The story ends when, stilled by thinking, the protagonist ossifies and becomes subsumed into the rocky features of the alien land. Unlike the active and overwhelming space described by Caillois in his writing on mimicry (see Chapter Two), Read imagines this final relinquishing of the body as a powerfully creative act, a constituting of space.

The ways *The Green Child* conceives of space as in flux and the places it conjures seemed to open it up to a telenovelistic reimagining of recent urban developments within Olympic host nations. Further, the novel’s conclusion offered an opportunity to revisit theories of camouflage as a practical means and metaphor for negotiating identities within the urban suggested by Invisible Theatre. However,

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483 Ibid. 10-11; 16-17.
just as the model of Invisible Theatre reflects Boal’s spatial encounters and trajectory, Read’s narrative reveals his social, political and cultural contexts and Eurocentric perspective. The multidimensional journey it describes plots Read’s ideological position as a vocal opponent of Franco’s Spain and an anarchist who believed in the transformative potential of art. In mapping the novel’s three sections onto the three episodes of Contracorrente/Upstream, the aim was to hold onto its narrative threads whilst adapting the story in ways that cut across its historical, geographical and political positioning and pulled it into the present.

One of the ways that we attempted this is through language, by combining English, Portuguese and Spanish – the mother tongues of the project’s collaborators – into a linguistic hybrid (see below for an example). Where the televisual convention of subtitling involves acts of translation, those translations tend to be read too easily as authorised versions of the text. Communicating across languages, we wanted the audience to negotiate cultural gaps in meaning with us, to acknowledge partial understandings and recognise how meaning is differently structured linguistically. Some of the implications of this approach are discussed below.

Another strategy was to alter any aspect of Read’s narrative that risked diverting attention away from our intended target, namely, the Olympic urban imaginary. For example, a key plot point in The Green Child occurs when Oliveiro stages his own assassination to escape office as the accidental dictator of Roncador. The opening episode of Contracorrente/Upstream reimagined Olivero’s mock assassination as a staged assault on the revolutionary leader Oliveirã by papier-mâché shot-put, filmed on smartphones and televised via rolling news media [see fig. 5.6]. Recasting Read’s protagonist as a woman, Oliveira/Olive (played by Farelis Silva/Rocio Galan), had two immediate effects. On one level, it resisted the stereotypical gendering of politics as masculine perpetuated by the novel. On another, it invoked a political drama playing out simultaneously in Brazil with the impeachment of the former left-wing president, Dilma Rousseff (2016).

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487 On Herbert Read’s politics, see David Goodway, Herbert Read Reassessed (Liverpool: LUP, 1998), 177-196.
From top: Figure 5.6: Oliveira’s staged assassination by shot-put.
Figure 5.7: The boxing match between Oliveira and the Dictator.
Figure 5.8: Scenes of regeneration and removal.
Leah Lovett and Maria Eugenia Lombardini,
*Contracorrente/Upstream* (Rio de Janeiro/London and online, 2016).
Like Boal, Rousseff was charged for acts of subversion and tortured under the military regime, an experience that led her to set up the National Truth Commission (2011-2013). Many on the left, including those critical of Rousseff’s handling of the state-owned oil company Petrobras, suspected her impeachment on corruption charges represented a coordinated effort by those on the right to silence her following the report’s publication (2014). In 2015, right-wing urban demonstrations across Brazil called for Dilma’s resignation over the bribery scandal surrounding Petrobras, and in some cases a return to military dictatorship. The impending Olympic Games focussed international media attention on these protests, which combined with overrunning and dangerous Olympic construction projects, pollution in Guanabara Bay, and the Zika virus to project a negative image of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil as structurally and environmentally corrupt. Against this backdrop, the dissolution of progressive pro-women, indigenous rights and anti-racist governmental departments immediately following the installation of Michel Temer’s interim government signalled a return to hegemonic structures of power, and an attempt to reclaim control of national narrative. For anyone aware of this context, the opening scene of Contracorrente/Upstream may have been understood as dramatising Rousseff’s removal in the run up to Rio 2016.

The opening scene also indicates how the story was situated in relation to Olympic architecture and mediated space. Transporting the political conflicts articulated by Read into the Olympic arena – in this instance, with the reference to shot-put, elsewhere, depicting Oliveira’s overthrow of the dictatorship as a boxing match, with punches thrown awkwardly across the split screen [see figs. 5.6-5.7] – the telenovela parodied the political mobilisation of the Olympic Games in reasserting nationalisms. Meanwhile, collaborating with practitioners who are not recognised as citizens of the nation-states in which they live and work emphasised the limits to participation in concepts of nationhood. The majority of the background footage was shot in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park due to its relative accessibility, with additional locations identified along the Regents Canal. As well as


the London location enabling me to take on the task of filming prior to the performance, the site of the 2012 Olympics was no longer subject to the same high levels of security that obstructed access to Rio de Janeiro’s Olympic Boulevard during the build-up to the Games. Taking up criticisms of the universal narrative structuring the localised production of the ‘Olympic city,’ we imagined Contracorrente/Upstream as an occupation dislocated in space and time, operating like the governing institution, the IOC, on an international scale.491

However, the process of securing filming rights from the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park planning authority, even four years after London’s Olympics, highlights the continuing mobilisation of the Olympic discourse in shaping the urban according to the spatial narrative of London 2012 legacy. This can be contrasted with sensationalised reporting of the abandonment and disrepair of Olympic venues constructed for Rio 2016, and the lootings of the Maracanã stadium.492 The difference suggests how globalising spatial narratives of development are articulated at the local and international level according to differentiated and uneven power geometries, as Massey suggests.493 Where English Common Law protects the right to film with a small crew on London’s public highways without causing an obstruction to other users,494 obtaining a permit to film within the boundaries of London 2012 required me to sign a legal agreement which presumed the transfer of image rights for promotional use by the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) whilst prohibiting any implied association with the Olympic Games.495

The close control of Olympic space and its image, which were the critical targets of Contracorrente/Upstream, therefore manifested as a threat to censor its content.

This experience is echoed by other artists working on projects for the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park during Rio 2016, further indicating how the Olympic imaginary simultaneously operates at the local and supranational level, across Olympic host cities. For example, one of the artists commissioned to write a script for ZUUK’s project, Rio Phone Hack, which involved the installation of Brazilian telephone booths adapted to play scripted sound works across the park between June-December 2016, describes how, ‘all scripts had to be read by the commissioner [LLDC] and the central Olympic authority in case of damage to the brand’ (my italics). Recalling a section of their script ‘following the water from Stratford to Rio de Janeiro,’ the artist indicates how the proposed edits served to negate any potential critique: ‘I think we had the word ‘toxic’ in there, but we had to take it out.’ Asked how this editorial process compared with other commissions they had undertaken, including another project within the Olympic park, the artist replied:

It felt like a compulsory editorial process. I have never had the sense that there was a compulsory edit [with other commissions]. I’ve had people make suggestions before, ... but I’ve never had the sense that it wouldn’t happen if you didn’t change it.

They went on to speculate that this ‘compulsory’ control over the content may have been due to the recorded form of the work and its explicit connection to Rio de Janeiro, though Minton identifies a wider tendency towards ‘planned creativity’ within privately managed urban developments like the Olympic park. Either way, I suggest moves to delimit critical creative engagement with the site signal LLDC’s awareness of the potential for urban performance to disrupt as well as to reinforce their urban imaginary.

In Chapter Two, I argued that the model of Invisible Theatre reflects Boal’s experience and perception of the urban as militarised and highly structured (Chapter Two). Similarly, measures to control the representation of Olympic space impacted upon the research and development of Contracorrente/Upstream, both in terms of the creative choices made and the relationships between collaborators and stakeholders. The vignette and WhatsApp exchange (above) highlight this with reference to a sequence from the second episode. Part of an extended flashback, the sequence follows the defeat of the dictator by the protagonist, reimagined in our

497 Ibid.
498 Minton, Ground Control, 54.
version as a boxing match [see fig. 5.7]. In the novel, Oliveiro successfully overthrows the dictator of Roncador only to assume the same role, albeit governing according to a set of socially egalitarian principles. He later stages his own assassination after recognising his dream to establish a new society ‘free from the oppression and injustice of the old world’ has failed.499 Read therefore represents an ideological conflict unfolding in Europe at the time between fascism and communism, concluding with irony that both constitute forms of totalitarianism.

In Contracorrente/Upstream, we used Oliveira’s victory speech to address the contradiction between the aims of Olympic urban developments as stated by powerful stakeholders, including Foundation for FutureLondon, and the impact of regeneration on inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro’s comunidades and former residents of Stratford’s Carpenters Estate. The linguistic strategy we developed together as a means of resisting the dominance of English served another function here, concealing our quotation of the positivist rhetoric published on Foundation for FutureLondon’s website from readers who might censor the script.500 Like Invisible Theatre rehearsing the dominant spatial order as a way of hiding the performance in plain sight, the following extract rehearses the organisation’s ‘vision’ for the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park:

...we want to construir uma grande comunidade made of everyone’s interests e necessidades,
Made of people of todas partes, and habitando ela.
With the love que o people que moram num lugar share
Uma community de igualdade de opportunities
Onde everyone participates das politics, urban planejamento, esportas and arts.501

The speech was delivered to camera by both Oliveiras, the only scene in which the two actors playing her appeared together. As they spoke, a sequence of found images revealing the destruction and militarised violence underpinning the Olympic urban imaginary appeared behind Galan’s Oliveira on the London side of the screen. Juxtaposing this, a series of architects’ impressions and official press photographs of Rio de Janeiro’s Olympic Boulevard and London’s Olympic Park flashed up behind Silva’s Oliveira on the left, projecting the sanitised image of the Olympic city [see fig. 5.8]. UP Projects sanctioned this sequence of regeneration

and removals on behalf of Foundation for FutureLondon on the basis it represented both ‘positive and critical’ perspectives, a comment reflecting the ambiguity of my position.502

This ambiguity was also expressed at the technological level. In discussing Contra Band, I proposed that communication networks create the potential for alternative spatial imaginaries to emerge, recalling Leach’s idea of recording technologies opening up a space of difference.503 I want to revisit this notion to consider whether network infrastructures limit that potential, as Boal suggests television structures imposed themselves onto media representations of Invisible Theatre (Chapter Three). Documentation of Contraorrente/Upstream reveals a marked difference in moving image quality between the two halves of the screen, with the Rio de Janeiro stream appearing more degraded [see figs. 5.6-5.8]. The video from Rio de Janeiro was subject to additional compression due to a disparity in network speeds, resulting in a shift in editorial control for both halves of the composite stream to the technical team in London. The inequality of this solution exposes the structural basis of the commission and the infrastructures it employed. Where the development of satellite technologies during the Cold War facilitated television broadcasting across territories such as Brazil, the majority of digital communications are conveyed via subterranean and undersea cables. This largely invisible infrastructure is an expression of military power, ‘layered,’ as Nicole Starosielski suggests, ‘into a geopolitical matrix of pre-existing colonial and national routes.’504 Britain developed the first underwater telegraphy cables as a means of establishing cultural dominion and smoothing the flow of capital from the colonies by giving maritime traders access to information about local market rates. Despite technological advances and the expansion and decentralisation of underwater communications networks, Internet infrastructures closely align with these colonial power geometries. Contemporary maps reveal London and Rio de Janeiro to be linked via either US or Portugal, with information conveyed between urban nodes.505

Beyond reinscribing the geographies of power structuring the commission, centralising editorial control for Contraorrente/Upstream in London introduced another set of technical challenges. A glitch near the beginning of the first episode resulted in the loss of Rio de Janeiro’s stream for several minutes, whilst issues with the sound dropping out rendered the dialogue inaudible at various points throughout

the transmission. If the delays of *Contra Band* underscored the encounter between the two musicians, feedback from online audiences to *Contracorrente/Upstream* revealed their confusion about the narrative as a result of these intermittent interruptions.

Where I argue Invisible Theatre for television defers participation to unknown televiral spectators, *Contracorrente/Upstream* privileged the audiences of the live event over and above the majority who logged online for the live stream. In an inversion of televised examples of Invisible Theatre, the deceptions involved in constructing the *telenovela* were only visible to our co-present audiences, revealed in the interplay between the performance and its media representation. Audiences in either performance space witnessed hurried costume changes and watched as actors delivered lines off-stage to other actors, some 5,800 miles away. They overheard the awkward negotiation between Lombardini and myself and saw us signalling to make the interactions between London and Rio de Janeiro *appear* on screen. Via the on-set video monitor, they could observe the Olympic landscape being projected into an imaginary space held by blue-screen, and onto the chroma-key green bodies of the actors as they faded into the background in the final scene. In these ways, *Contracorrente/Upstream* playfully rehearsed the mechanisms of media spectacle surrounding Olympics events and the projection of the Olympic spatial imaginary. The laughter that bubbled up when the intended effects were subsequently revealed on screen, whether as successful or failed attempts, was audible to online audiences, but always out of sync with what *they* could see. Our project was always already subject to the uneven spatial relations that made it imaginable and realisable, as revealed in the myriad and often challenging negotiations that occurred throughout the development process. However, by making the social and material conditions of its construction visible to audiences in either city, *Contracorrente/Upstream* created a space for recognition across differentiated social groups, and held those spatial relations up to scrutiny.
Conclusion

The projects discussed in this chapter gesture to two parallel modes of performative engagement through the urban emerging within my practice: one approach affiliates to social groups and campaigns fronting the movement against dominant modes of urbanisation, for instance, by contributing my skills as an artist to support Focus E15’s occupation of the decanted Carpenters Estate; the other sets established art structures, organisations, spaces and audiences into motion to contest dominant modes of urban encounter through creating opportunities for unforeseen encounters, connections and spatial narratives to occur, as with Contra Band and Contracorrente/Upstream. Attending to each of these three projects in turn, I have suggested how both approaches reflect and build on my research in different ways and to differing degrees, whilst also indicating my move away from Boal’s formal concerns and Invisible Theatre as a fixed model of urban performance.

Thinking about the urban development of East London comparatively, with Rio de Janeiro and through Invisible Theatre, reveals how the overarching narrative of Olympic legacy intersected with local forms of spatial governance to construct and displace the social identity of the single parent family. In acting upon this discovery and negotiating my own shifting social identity through Childsplay, the violent provocations of Invisible Theatre gave way to more open, responsive, and supportive modes of urban sociability. Likewise, Contra Band and Contracorrente/Upstream engaged concepts (camouflage), cultural forms (MPB, telenovela), organisations (CASA 24) and individuals that I encountered through researching Invisible Theatre to realise the possibility of an alternative model of transnational, intraurban performance. The digital link up techniques developed through these projects enabled the performances to take place in either city and online more or less simultaneously, but that it not to say their potentialities were evenly expressed across these locations. For Espindola, Underwood’s anglophone rendition of Brazilian songs censored by the military regime coincided with his encounter with police during the World Cup (2014) to catapult the past into the present and give voice to transnational forms of solidarity. As well as giving an insight into what it might mean to engage the urban with cultural strategies aligned to past struggles, this suggests how intraurban performance connects with collective memory, culture and social space at the local level to produce differentiated meanings and affects.
Considering these three projects individually and together revealed my ambivalent positioning within the dominant urban imaginary projected through London’s Olympic legacy, and in relation to my collaborators in Rio de Janeiro. This is perhaps clearest in my discussion of Contracorrente/Upstream, evidenced in Foundation for FutureLondon’s controlling interest in the work; my attempts with Lombardini to resist control, and in the process obfuscating our critique; the relative degradation of the Rio de Janeiro half of the screen; and the diversion of funding to support grassroots social organising within CASA 24. However, bypassing formal cultural structures for Childsplay and participating in the Carpenters Estate occupation alongside Focus E15 did not necessarily resolve this ambiguity, in part because the dominant narrative that regards the displacement of mothers and babies as an educational, cultural and economic opportunity is addressed to Newham residents such as me. Urban performance is always already complicit in the spatial structures it would challenge, but then, as Massey suggests, there is no position of exteriority from which to critique spatial relations.\(^{507}\) Rather than negating the attempt, I suggest that this knowledge reinvigorates the potential of urban performance as a means of exposing the dominant narrative to unforeseen spatial imaginaries.

\(^{507}\) See Massey, *For Space*, 195.
Conclusion: Towards a Model of Interurban Performance

Performance can transform a prison cell into a space of freedom. Through urban performance, a model city such as Brasília can go from being a symbol of the nation’s confidence and progress into a stage setting for military dictatorship; a post-industrial urban landscape may be reimagined as an Olympic city; and a decanted housing estate can be opened up as a hub of social organising. Performed a different way, a restaurant could also be a theatre.

This thesis set out to investigate Invisible Theatre as a model of urban performance for contesting dominant modes of urbanisation and encounter in my practice. It had two main aims: first, to give critical focus to the urban and spatial contexts for Boal’s practice of Invisible Theatre and the encounters it engenders as a means of drawing out questions of social responsibility in art and urbanism; second, to engage that model and the research process in developing urban performances attentive to local and transnational struggles articulated through the Olympic narrative of London (2012) and Rio de Janeiro (2016). Using a combination of performance-based, archival, critical and comparative methods, I researched the development of Invisible Theatre through the cities and spaces of its performance as a provocation for my own iterative performance practice.

Summary of Main Findings

As a model of urban performance, Invisible Theatre conveys Boal’s perception of the city as militarised and heavily structured, both in its camouflaged form and the oppressive relations it rehearses. In Chapter Two, contextual analysis of the earliest known performance, RESTAURANT TEATRO: ‘La Ley’ (Buenos Aires, 1972), revealed the entangled relationship between Invisible Theatre and the spatial politics of the US-backed Brazilian military regime. My research into Argentine legal history called the premise of the play as a means of consciousness-raising around the legal rights of citizens into dispute, prompting speculation that it inspired a subsequent legislative change to criminalise non-payment in bars and restaurants. Rather than presenting an aesthetic solution to economic conditions, the emergence of Invisible Theatre in Boal’s practice represented a personal loss in terms of his position within urban society. Brasilia provided the backdrop for understanding this loss as an effect of urban militarisation following the 1964 coup.
As a theatre director in Brazil, Boal’s practice was linked to the same nationalist and social project that underpinned the founding of Brasília. Brasília’s shift in the popular national imaginary to become the terrible monument to military dictatorship paralleled Boal’s shifting relation to dominant processes of urbanisation and encounter: from adapting the dominant European and North American canon for Brazilian audiences of the Arena Theatre, São Paulo; to realising a creative community in the collective cell of Tiradentes military prison; to devising Invisible Theatre as a reaction to the threat of military surveillance and the spatial displacement that caused him to feel invisible in exile.

An interview given to me by Cecilia Boal revealed that Boal’s practice of Invisible Theatre was significantly informed by his transcultural encounter with Guerrilla Theatre, in particular Richard Schechner’s performance of *BRINGING THE WAR BACK HOME* (New York, 1970). This discovery contradicts Boal’s repeated attempts to distance his model of urban performance from parallel forms developing in the US. As well as confirming Boal’s opportunity to see Schechner’s performance, my analysis revealed areas of overlap with the performance, *RESTAURANTE TEATRO: ‘La Ley’* (1972), particularly concerning the appropriation of militaristic forms and ambiguous positioning of the audience. Adopting the militaristic strategy of camouflage, Guerrilla Theatre suggested a practical means for negotiating perceived and actual spatial constraints to enable Boal to reassert his identity as a theatre maker and social activist in Buenos Aires. Conceived as a ‘weapon’ within the ‘arsenal’ of TO, Invisible Theatre similarly engaged the combative rhetoric of military power to express spatial conflict in binary and oppositional terms of oppressor/oppressed, visible/invisible, actor/spectator, and to align Boal with the oppressed.508

Critical analysis of archival documents related to televisual forms of Invisible Theatre in Chapter Three challenged Boal’s spatial imagination, revealing the city to be more open and his role as an urban actor more ambiguous than his oppositional narrative would imply. Though the model of Invisible Theatre conveys Boal’s oppression by the Brazilian military regime and within the hegemonic cultural discourse, television programmes filmed in Liège (1978) and Rio de Janeiro (1968) emphasised its performance in cities under democratic systems of governance. This may reflect the difficulties of documenting Invisible Theatre created under more repressive regimes, indicating the limits of archival research as a method for investigating the practice. Nonetheless, as evidence of Boal’s privileged access to

the broadcast media, these archival materials cast doubt on the extent of his spatialised oppression, not least in relation to the specific social issues the performances were intended to address, namely, unemployment (Liège) and racism (Rio de Janeiro).

The recording and televisual technologies operated as sites of unforeseen encounter to extend the social space of the urban, creating an abertura, an opening for recognition across differentiated spaces, temporalities and identity groups. However, this opportunity was limited by the social relations and attitudes conveyed through the performances and by the television broadcasters. In representing the specific oppressed identity being performed as the exception, both programmes tacitly reinforced normative (white, male, middle-class, heterosexual, etc.) subject positions. In Liège, for example, the recasting of the old woman of Brecht’s poem, The Shopper (1935), as a young, unemployed man served to reinforce Boal’s patriarchal relationship to the women employees of the supermarket where the performance took place. Understanding the city in terms of Marcuse’s concept of layering revealed that the positioning of the women as employees directed their reactions to the disruption caused by the actors, calling the relations of oppression between them into dispute. That is not to say the roles were simply reversed in my argument, with Boal cast as the oppressor. Considering the ways in which the Rio de Janeiro example perpetuated white supremacy and normative gender stereotypes, I questioned how far this was attributable to editorial processes beyond Boal’s control, reflecting television channel Rede Manchete’s representation of racialised and gendered identities.

In exploring the implications of Invisible Theatre crossing the oppositional boundaries between oppressor/oppressed that Boal wanted to assert, Chapter Three introduced trickster myths from the Xingu region of Brazil collected and transcribed by Ellen Basso during the 1970s. The figure of trickster has reappeared in different guises throughout this thesis: as a police officer, using the ‘machine’ of the Brazilian military regime against itself; with Francois, brazenly denying his intention to deceive the supermarket employees and the police; in the screen-shot of Boal grinning to camera from in the midst of an Invisible Theatre crowd; with Grupo Etcétera, wielding photocopied guns before an officer who always wanted to act; in the multi-lingual speeches of Contracorrente/Upstream.

Seen through the eyes of trickster, the urban, which appeared heavily structured to Boal, provided more and varied opportunities for creative disruption and recognition than he might have imagined.

Paradoxically, the image of Rio de Janeiro and London conveyed through my discussion of contemporary practices, including my own performances, in Chapters Four and Five aligns more closely with Boal’s heavily structured spatial imaginary. Comparing the dominant modes of urbanisation and encounter engendered through the overarching narrative of the Olympic city, I found that measures put in place to ensure the integrity and security of international sporting mega-events intersected with local histories, social structures and systems of governance to produce differentiated spatial effects. For Eleanora Fabião and Filipe Espindola, policing strategies including the incursion of military police into the comunidades to ‘pacify’ the city in preparation for the World Cup (2014) and Olympic Games (2016) conjured memories of the military regime. As a performance of power dramatised by the media, the policy of pacification combined with forced removals and the erection of walls around informal settlements located in the vicinity of the upcoming events to demonstrate the state’s view of their inhabitants as not gente, as invisible. In this respect, the international sporting events cast light on a phenomenon identified by Loïc Wacquant in terms of Brazil’s ‘militarisation of urban marginality’. This context also impacted on artistic engagements with the urban, a fact that became immediately evident with the arrest of Espindola’s performance group. Connected to these events, but at a remove, the regulation of the production of artworks, including Contracorrente/Upstream, commissioned to appear within London’s Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park during the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics was reminiscent of censorship, although significantly the risks for the artists involved were less severe than in Brazil. In London, working-class mothers and their children were identified as the prime targets of social cleansing in Newham’s bid to capitalise on residual land values following the 2012 Olympics, partly due to housing allocation policy changes locally giving priority to military personnel. The immediacy of these differentiated struggles through the research contributed to shape my perception of the urban as heavily controlled.

Despite the parallels in the spatial imagination articulated through Invisible Theatre and the Olympic restructuring of Rio de Janeiro and London, however, my analysis did not support the use of Invisible Theatre as a model for contesting dominant modes of urbanisation and encounter. In Chapter Four, the set of

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interviews conducted with CTO-Rio curingas experienced in the technique suggested that Invisible Theatre has become a sticking point in the TO narrative. Through their performative repetition of the same set plays in different contexts, the curingas treated Boal’s method as relatively fixed and resolved, denying the iterative and spatially responsive approach characteristic of his earliest experiments and his enthusiastic participation in the television media. Moreover, in rehearsing spatial conflicts articulated through the construction of oppressor/oppressed identities (white/black, man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, etc.), they tacitly reinscribed normative and binary subject positions, raising serious questions about whether Invisible Theatre can be a means of social liberation from hegemonic societal structures. The complexity and urgency of local and transnational urban struggles, such as those intensified through the international sporting mega-events, steered my practice away from Boal’s model in this fixed form.

However, investigating Invisible Theatre as a model of urban performance, critically addressing its limitations and exploring some of the different ways contemporary practitioners have responded to Boal’s practice through this thesis did suggest opportunities for performing the urban differently. Chapter Four traced the development of Invisible Theatre through the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, turning to Latin American artists and collectives who have variously acknowledged Boal’s practice as an historic precedent and a provocation to engage their immediate social and political contexts. In disregarding the rigid structure of TO, these artists realised the conceptual and practical potentialities of Invisible Theatre: as a means of connecting with Rio de Janeiro and its citizens in a culture of fear (Fabião); to give agency to the victims of sexual oppression through translating the fear and shame of past encounters into rage (Movimento Cidade Invisíveis); and for humourously subverting excessive displays of authority through misdirection (Grupo Etcétera). Where Boal’s model of Invisible Theatre directs urban actors towards pre-determined arguments and binary subject positions, the work of these artists expresses an openness to the unexpected and the multiplicity of social space. Through revealing the diversity of artistic engagements with Boal’s thinking and practice, this research opened up the possibility of further transformations in my practice, attentive to power geometries extending beyond my immediate context of London.

The second part of this thesis, Part II, is presented chronologically to reveal a shift in my practice through the research from experimenting with disruptive modes of urban performance aligned to Invisible Theatre (Pinned Landscape, Murmuration), to creating performative installations and events that are more
explicit in their relationship with institutions in seeking to create connections across differentiated spaces. The principle method developed through the thesis for making a scene in London and Rio de Janeiro employed existing cultural forms (music, literature, telenovelas), linguistic hybrids and digital communications technologies to connect artists and audiences in the Floating Cinema and CASA 24 during the World Cup (2014) and Olympic Games (2016). As intraurban performances, *Contra Band* (2014) and *Contracorrente/Upstream* (2016) applied the same performative strategies to two cities more or less simultaneously to create the possibility of unforeseen encounters on a transnational scale. If any comparison can be drawn with Invisible Theatre, it is in the decision to make the performative space as accessible as possible, in this case through the use of open source software and technologies readily available in both locations.

Chapter Five openly explored the technical frustrations of this approach and the ways in which the projects intersected with their multiple sites to produce differentiated responses and effects, often unevenly. Discussing them in relation to the Focus E15 campaign for social housing and my response to the occupation of the Carpenters Estate with *Childsplay: A Den Building Workshop* (2014) highlighted this through their ambiguous positioning in relation to the dominant narrative of Olympic legacy. These performances marked attempts to acknowledge and operate through the contradictions that thinking about Invisible Theatre has raised, and to create an opening for the recognition of alternative spatial imaginaries.

**Discussion of Main Findings**

The signal contribution of this thesis is the critical attention it gives to the spatiality of Invisible Theatre via interviews and archival discoveries that have enabled me to move beyond Boal’s interpretation of his practice. A key example is my finding that Boal saw Schechner’s *BRINGING THE WAR BACK HOME* during his 1970 tour to New York as director of the Arena Theatre, and that this encounter inspired the performance of *RESTAURANT THEATRE, ‘La Ley’*. Circumstantial evidence pointing to a connection between Invisible Theatre and comparable models of urban performance taking place in the US has been the focus of considerable speculation within the wider literature, fuelled by Boal’s repeated attempts to distance his practice from Guerilla Theatre and Happenings. My research makes a substantive contribution to this debate in identifying the point of contact between them. There is every possibility this will be read as confirmation
that Boal’s practice was derivative of North American cultural forms, an attitude that may explain his attempts to disassociate from Schechner. This is a line of thinking I refute for failing to acknowledge both the creative force of transculturation as expressed through de Andrade’s concept of cannibalism, and the historic significance of European and Russian cultural practices on the development of both models, as indicated in Boal’s references to Brecht. I suggest that the greater significance of my discovery is in calling Boal’s credibility as a witness to his own practice into question. The evidence of his statements needs to be read in the wider context and the kinds of narrative he intentionally constructed.

Boal recommended Invisible Theatre as a means of counteracting oppression, making social issues visible to enable them to be recognised as problematic and contested through open discourse in the urban realm. However, my archival findings add to emergent pedagogical critiques by revealing the limits of rehearsing spatialised inequalities as a strategy of social and political consciousness-raising. The discussion of performances addressed to the economic conditions of food poverty and unemployment in Chapters Two and Three respectively raised serious doubts about whether their oppressed subjects were in any position to participate in the conversation, let alone act to change the structural basis of their oppression. This points to the contradiction implicit in the attempt to address marginalised social groups that are marked by their exclusion from the spaces in which Invisible Theatre is performed. The risk in Invisible Theatre perpetuating spatial exclusions is succinctly expressed with my finding that the 1972 performance of RESTAURANT THEATRE: ‘La Ley’ may have inspired a legislative change in the interests of the restaurant owners who were implicated in the drama. Any conclusions this might infer about the positive effects of participation on those unwittingly caught up in the act are challenged in the analysis of audio-visual materials and practitioner interviews. Although my findings in this regard are speculative, it seems unlikely that the disruption of Invisible Theatre inspired an enabling sense of agency for the supermarket employees in Liége. The reasons for this have to do with the flagrant disregard extended to them by the actors, not least Boal in seeking to shame the women after the event as ‘stubborn’.

In light of more recent feminist and postcolonial/decolonial theories that emphasise the need for intersectional approaches to challenging hegemonic social relations, my research highlights the problem in seeking to address specific instances of oppression in

isolation, specifically, that this can result in interrelated forms of oppression becoming reinscribed.

There is a risk in looking back at historic performances through the lens of contemporary critical theories that the transitive contribution of practices such as Invisible Theatre to changing social attitudes becomes obscured. The advantage, however, is in bringing into focus the potential for urban performance to interact with its social and political sites in ways that, as artists and performance makers, we may not intend, anticipate, or conceivably recognise, even after the event. The underlying implication that urban performance is often involved in sustaining dominant socio-spatial relations is already widely accepted in the existing literatures on art in urban settings. My original contribution to the field is in testing Boal’s claims for his practice against the urban and mediated spaces in which it played out to show that the same criticisms can also be levelled at historic performances of Invisible Theatre. This is significant because of a tendency for art historians and urban theorists to uncritically engage Boal’s narrative of social liberation in identifying Invisible Theatre as an historic model for comparison with contemporary modes of urban performance. The problem is that this establishes an impossible paradigm, against which the more modest aims of contemporary artists invariably fall short. Seen from a singular perspective, the past can appear less complicated, giving a distorted view of more recent practices as somehow exceptionally compromised by their participation in conflicting spatial imaginaries.

Another danger in interpreting the model of Invisible Theatre too rigidly became clear to me as a resident artist within CTO-Rio. Boal’s willingness to reassess and adapt his theatrical methods in response to his past encounters and present situation resulted in the transformation of Invisible Theatre from a practical means of avoiding militaristic forms of urban surveillance into a televisual media spectacle. The subsequent disappearance of Invisible Theatre within CTO-Rio’s repertoire and the cancellation of the planned workshop due to a wider lack of take up demonstrates how a close adherence to established models can lead to them becoming displaced as the social, political and cultural backdrop shifts. Boal’s iterative approach to practice integrated his previous experiences whilst engaging the dynamism of the urban in an attempt to shape the relations it stages as part of an ongoing process of spatial negotiation. My findings in this regard can serve as a reminder to practitioners that critical reflection on past performances and the spaces the work occupies can be another way of learning from elsewhere, revealing different perspectives that may challenge our account and call us to reorient the practice accordingly.
While I therefore reject reductive interpretations of Boal’s theatrical method, that is by no means to dismiss the force of Invisible Theatre as a model of urban performance. What I am arguing is that this force can only be realised by moving past the determining narrative of TO. Boal’s success in aligning his model of Invisible Theatre with the oppressed ultimately limited its impact across the arts and urbanism. I suggest one of the reasons for this is the binary construction of oppressor/oppressed suppressing the ambiguities that have come through my discussion of the technique as a performatively mode of camouflage. Looking at the edges of Boal’s model where they clash with contemporary urban performance practices has revealed opportunities for actively embracing this ambiguity to subvert authority and trouble official images of urban sociability, particularly surrounding international sporting mega-events.

In contrast to the historic examples of Invisible Theatre described to me by the curingas at CTO-Rio, the urban performances of Rio de Janeiro by artists in the lead up to the World Cup and Olympic Games were more exploratory, contingent and semantically open in their approach to addressing the violence that underpinned the city’s cleaned-up image. Fabião’s actions hinged on her ability to navigate interpersonal encounters with empathy and generosity, to make connections. The performances as such remained provisional, both subject and attentive to the multiplicity of the spatial in expressing the potential for quiet gestures to cut through the city’s stratified social layers. Another way of engaging ambiguity came in Buenos Aires with Grupo Etcétera, and their trickster-like invocation to embrace the error, the mistakes: ‘failure as perfection, error as appropriate move.’ This position seeks to expose the error of the global, capitalist system whilst acknowledging that we are all of us, in a manner of speaking, ‘inside the machine’. With the errorists, the complicity this implies was refracted through surprise and confusion, but also absurdity, to produce autonomous zones, as ‘lapses’ in the collective imagination. Thought in relation to critical frameworks that seek to polarise arts practices through their relation to urban planning processes, as either challenging or complicit, the impulse to err reminds us that things are seldom that straightforward. In different ways, the contemporary artistic approaches explored in this thesis reflect a refusal to accept the conditions of any singular spatial imagination, and they offer glimpses of alternatives (connections, lapses). The challenge for criticism is in recognising and articulating those alternative narratives.

Understanding that urban performance is always, inevitably, and necessarily subject to the contradictions and conflicts of the spaces it engages and engenders raises exciting questions for practice about how to work with, through and around the tensions this produces. Far from negating the performative attempt to challenge spatialised inequities, recognising the integral role that performance has played in shaping the built environment and the imaginaries it projects gives us the advantage as practitioners in conveying alternatives. At the outset of this research, I was making performances that shared certain formal concerns with Invisible Theatre in seeking to destabilise the relationship between performer and audience, as Part II shows. Projects such as Murmuration and Day of Celebration, Site of Protest – which also appeared as interruptions in the thesis – marked attempts to reinsert the forms of popular protest into the urban as an aesthetic strategy for disrupting the temporality of the city and mobilising diverse audiences. In hindsight, however, although Murmuration was encountered by myriad potential participants in Birmingham (2013) and as part of the Hemispheric Encuentro, Montreal (2014), the abstraction of political forms and the resulting obscurity of the urban performance operated to alienate those audiences (‘You’re all a bunch of wankers!’). Murmuration marked an uncomfortable turning point in this research, calling me to question (again) my role in directing the potentialities of the performative encounter through the spatial.

Where Murmuration was launched at the city and urban actors unannounced, causing them to scatter, Contra Band and Contracorrente / Upstream suggest a possible model for actively engaging the multiplicity of the spatial, both within art’s ‘proper’ locations and through the technological assemblage of the urban. Unlike Invisible Theatre, which generates conflict out of simple interventions into the everyday life of the city, these intraurban performances embraced complexity at every level. There is something absurd about attempting to create a performance simultaneously across London and Rio de Janeiro – two cities in different time zones, with differentiated infrastructures, histories, politics, languages, and cultural references. The specific technical, linguistic and cultural strategies my collaborators and I employed evolved in the process of acknowledging this absurdity and negotiating our spatialised differences to produce new modes of transnational urban sociability. In reflecting critically on my own practice, I have tried to be open about the failures of this endeavour, to leave the work open to further critique, not least as a reaction to uncritical accounts of TO that have led to Boal’s practice becoming entrenched. In the case of Contra Band, the perceptible time lag constituted a contrived failure, a structural condition of the performance that
contributed to its sense of humour while also serving as a surprisingly poignant reminder of the distance to overcome. The technological interruptions only really became a problem during *Contracorrente / Upstream*, as the more ambitious and technically challenging project of the two. Given the chance again, a thorough technical rehearsal would have enabled us to anticipate some (if not all) of these limitations. Despite these challenges, the shared endeavour to overcome the multiple potential barriers to participation was felt in the uneasy sense of incompleteness that surfaced when the connection dropped out, and the desire to reconnect.

I have gone some way in this thesis to exploring how the distinct settings for the work inflected back upon the action to generate spatially-specific meanings, audience responses and effects. This line of inquiry suggests the potential for my research and the model of intraurban performance in particular to offer new insights to the field of postcolonial comparative urbanism emerging in the social sciences. Within my own practice, I am keen to build on these discoveries in exploring further opportunities for performing across multiple locations simultaneously.

I began this project with a question about whether urban performances can be a means for creating an opening in the city to enable instances of recognition of hidden spatial imaginaries and social identities. I suspected that spatial theories of urban performativity and specifically the unforeseen encounter might provide clues to grasping this potential, both in the analysis of historic modes of urban performance, and also in my practice. The challenge, as I saw it, was in working out how to create the conditions for chance encounters to occur within an urban environment that seemed to be becoming increasingly hostile to the unexpected. The research, however, called me to reflect on the modalities of the unforeseen encounter as a spatially transformative mechanism in practice. Critical analysis of *Invisible Theatre* and critical reflection on my own performance practice revealed the irruption of social conflicts across urban and mediatised sites does not always, necessarily translate into instances of recognition, either of oppressed identities, or of individual participation in systems of oppression. This suggests that the greater challenge for arts practices and urbanism is not so much how to create the unforeseen encounter (that is the easy part), but rather how to negotiate the unforeseen encounters that urban performance creates? How – as artists, audiences, urban actors – do we remain alert and responsive to the myriad, conflicting spatial imaginaries and narratives that constitute the work? There may be
no straightforward answer, but in nudging closer to the problem, this thesis plots a trajectory in allowing discomfort to orient practice, and committing to the attempts.
The Aftermath

\textit{Parque Olímpico Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro}

\textit{Google Street View}

\textit{(May 2018)}

It is winter.

Grey buildings set against a grey sky. The paving slabs sweep around in dove- and blue-grey stripes. The leaves on windswept trees are grey-green.

June, 2016. (T-2 months.) There’s no going forward, or back.

A city suspended in anticipation of crowds.

On the in breath.

I pan. Tilted down, the lens distorts the scene so that the lampposts curve out from a foreshortened world. A solitary figure in a flat-cap locks onto me with his camera lens and I engage him in a game of being followed without being seen, being virtually there, here, then.

Behind him, two pristine, orange bins, their lids flipped back; two blocks of colour on a bleached-out screen.

The future’s bright. The future’s done.

Again.


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**Audio-Visual Resources**


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Archives

Augusto Boal Archive, UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro.

CTO Archive, CTO-Rio, Rio de Janeiro.

VRT Documentatie & Archieven, Broadcasting Centre, Brussels.