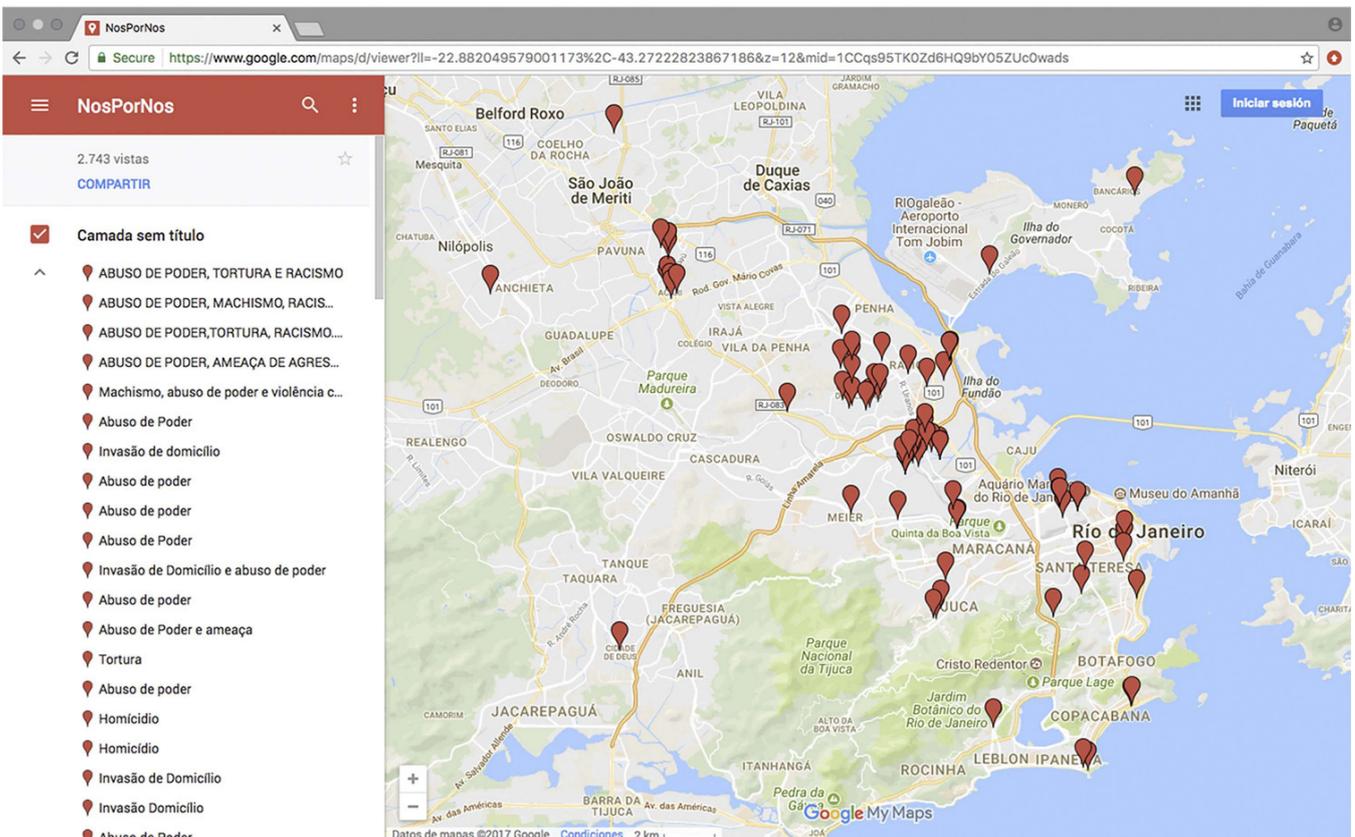
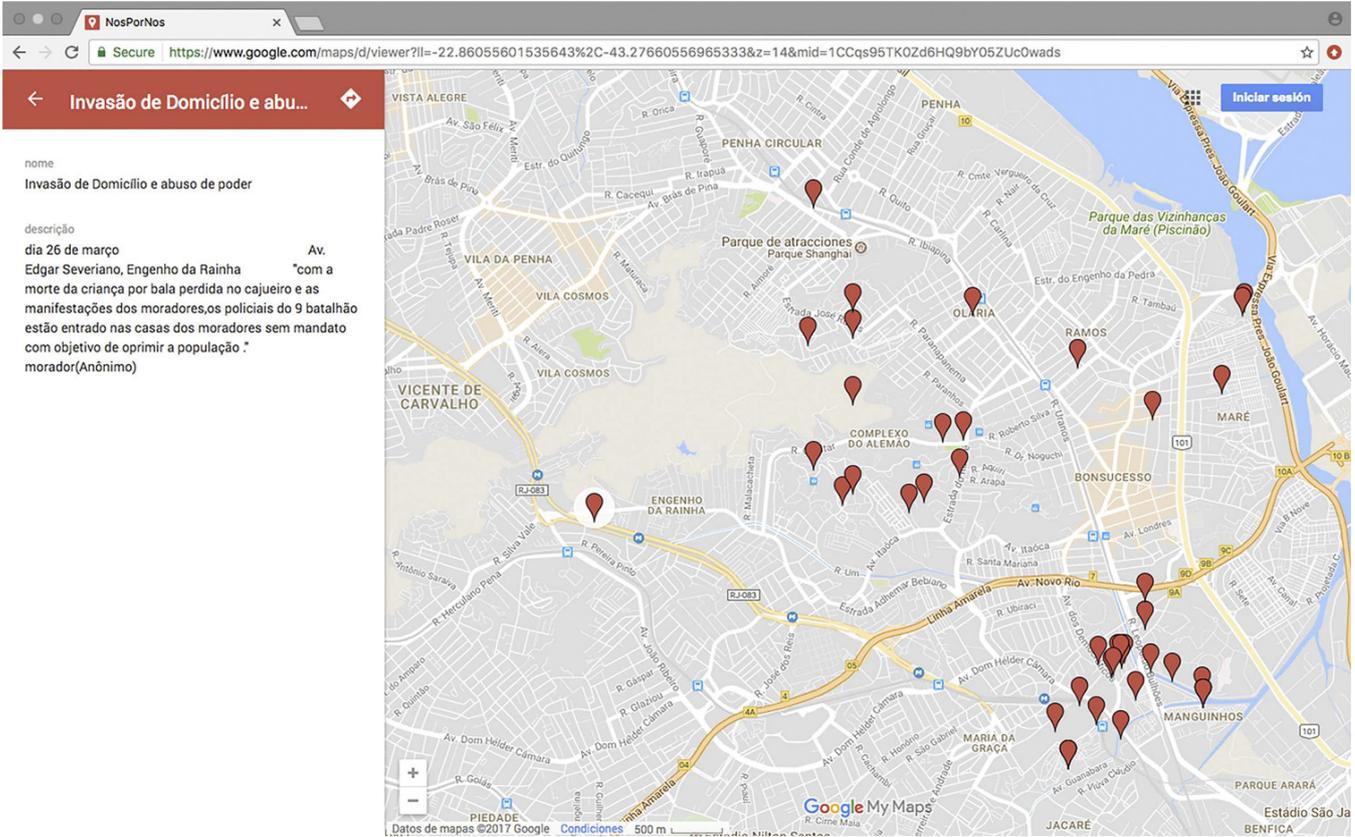


# Militarization of Rio de Janeiro's Favelas

Measuring Impacts on the Lives of Young Black Men and Women through Social Cartography



Click to zoom the map

A young woman, identified only as Carolina, was going to school when the police raided her house. Grassroots communicators were violently prevented from doing their work and recording police operations in the favelas occupied by the Pacifying Police Unit (UPP) in Rio de Janeiro, which is a sign of the criminalization of social movements and dictatorial control of territories. Children play in fear of the noise coming from the helicopter of BOPE, Rio de Janeiro's military police special operation unit. This is a special battalion of the police force known for its brutal methods and interventions in the favelas. Its symbol and main instrument are, respectively, a skull and an armoured black vehicle called caveirão (which literally means "big skull"). Claudia Ferreira was shot in Morro da Congonha, and her body was dragged by the police in a case that shocked the city in 2014. Since then, dozens of other young residents from the favelas and peripheries have been killed by police officers, making fear a common feeling in places where the State presence through militarization has become yet another form of institutional violence. All these cases were mapped out as part of the project "Militarization of the Favelas: The Impacts on the Lives of Young Black Men and Women of the Youth Forum of Rio de Janeiro", held in 15 favelas of the state of Rio de Janeiro: Maré, Complexo do Alemão, Manguinhos, Jacarezinho, Rocinha, Vidigal, Santa Marta, Vila Kennedy, Providência, São Jorge/Campo Grande and Acari, all in the city of Rio de Janeiro, as well as Santo Cristo in Niteroi, São Bernardo in Belford Roxo, Jardim Primavera in Duque de Caxias and Engenho in Itaguaí.

The project was based on the social cartography methodology so that participants were able to develop ways of identifying, mapping and georeferencing rights violations committed mainly by the State against residents of the favelas and peripheries in Rio, in which black people make up the majority of the population. In total, 153 young people participated throughout the course of the entire project. Through speeches, illustrations and debates, the project was able to emphasize the institutionalized racism and war logic that constitute the State presence in these territories.

In this context, social cartography was chosen as an instrument of struggle by the Youth Forum of Rio de Janeiro. The Youth Forum represents a space in which young people, predominantly black residents of the favelas and peripheral neighbourhoods, can speak up in order to confront the genocide of black youth, institutionalized racism, violence against women, homophobia, lesbophobia, and transphobia.

Therefore, the objective of this project was to map out violations that go far beyond the geographical aspects traditionally being made visible. The use of social cartography aimed at breaking an imposed silence on local narratives about the impact of militarization in the lives of the favela residents. The project's participants were young black men and women between the ages of 14 and 29 years, which represents the age group most affected by violence. In Brazil, young black people are 2.5 times more likely to be murdered than young white people. This data is from 2015 and was published by the Brazilian Forum on Public Security, in cooperation with UNESCO and the National Secretariat for Youth. Unlike in a Democratic State of Law, violence in the favelas is not an exception to the rule. According to the Institute of Public Security, which reports to the Secretariat of Security of Rio 497 (or 77%) of the 644 people killed as a result of police actions in the state of Rio de Janeiro in 2015 were black or dark-skinned. However, it is important to note that, although high, this number still does not correspond to reality since one major problem is the underreporting of cases.

<h3Method

The first step of the project was to hold workshops in the many participating favelas. The people responsible for the workshops were local partners and members of the Youth Forum who were trained on the New Social Cartography of the Amazon methodology and acted as facilitators. These are residents of favelas and peripheries that, for years, have been immersed in and actively contributing to urban debates on the genocide of black youth and other rights violations. On the basis of this engagement, the Youth Forum proposed the following themes for discussion in the social cartography: institutional racism, the right to the city and the very mapping constructions.

The project's supporters promoted the workshops. Each workshop was conducted in order to foster an open dialogue on the issues mentioned above. The goal was to stimulate the debate and interventions as part of the cartography construction process, which would be carried out by the young people involved. Each theme was explored in an open debate in discussion groups. The first step was to facilitate the free expression of participants, who were able to use various forms of communication to present their views, experiences, and ideas to change this reality.

Each workshop had its specific goals and themes, but all of them were conducted in accordance with the proposal to deconstruct the word "map". At each meeting the articulators first worked on the concept of "map" that young people had had in their mind until then. After that the notion of map was presented as something that is also built from a particular perspective and from the daily experiences of those who will use it to express themselves. The methodology followed was the New Social Cartography of the Amazon, one of the main subject references in the Latin American Region, especially in Brazil.

After the first moments of debate and open dialogue, the participants were invited to illustrate their own favelas through drawings, comics, speeches and other forms of expression. The experience showed that different kinds of expressions complemented each other. What might have been overlooked in certain kinds of speech was manifested through drawings, debates, music and so on. Some of the participants identified mostly with drawings, cartoons and collages. At the same time there were those who preferred to express themselves through musical styles, photographs, videos, etc. The project opened itself up to all of these communication tools which, throughout the process, were used as recording methods.

Gradually the favelas revealed themselves on paper, with elements that are usually overlooked and hidden within traditional maps. These included such things as the local youth gathering venues, the courts where parties, soirees and debates are held, football fields, day care centres and schools. Those are all elements that are often invisible in the favela representations created by outsiders. The maps also showed NGOs working in the favelas and places where people meet commonly. At the same time, the participants also pointed out drug trading spots; the favela access points where the police often carry out degrading searches, making people feel violated on a daily basis, places where women suffered violence, homes raided by UPP officers and so on.

The objective was to collectively build another geographical perspective that would also work as the basis for the affirmation and claim of rights. After that the material was assembled in a final project report.

## Next Steps

After the initial gathering of information, the project is at the stage of building a virtual geo-referenced database of the themes and situations exposed during the process described. The first result is a mobile phone app for denouncing the different forms of police violence which people in the favelas and peripheries of Rio de Janeiro suffer from. Created by the Youth Forum of Rio de Janeiro, and based on the social cartographic project, the app #NósporNós (meaning "by Us for Us") can be downloaded by anyone using a smartphone (via Playstore).

The app went live in March of 2016 and has already registered over 138 complaints. The most common complaints are the abuse of power, invasions of homes, torture and racism. The app has a support network composed of the Centre for Human Rights of the Public Defender's Office of Rio de Janeiro State, the Public Ministry and NGOs such as Global Justice, Amnesty International and IBASE. Complaints are forwarded to the relevant bodies. The purpose of the app is simple: Anyone can submit a violation of rights occurring in the city. The purpose is to map out the amount of rights violations carried out by the State and to also understand the nature of these actions. Thus, people are free to detail the violations as much as they want. In addition, some cases are beginning to be sent directly to the Public Ministry of Rio de Janeiro, which will have the responsibility of defining a possible investigation. It is worth mentioning that the Brazilian Human Rights Fund supported the creation of the application, which facilitated the initial communication and dissemination. As a result, during the first 6 months an average of one to three complaints arrived per day via the app. While all of these were reported to the Public Ministry, the immense workload of the Youth Forum prevented the representation of all of them in the map of the application. After this initial phase and with the expiration of the support of the Human Rights Fund, it became difficult to continue promoting the app, which resulted in a decrease of denunciations. The general feeling is that from now on the social cartography method has entered the routine of the Youth Forum of Rio de Janeiro as a new fighting tool for the favela residents of the city.

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## Illustrations

Photograph 'Military Police' by Luiz Baltar.

Illustration 'Logo of the Mobile Phone App "NósporNós"' by Youth Forum of Rio de Janeiro.

Photograph 'Using NósporNós' by Youth Forum of Rio de Janeiro.

Photograph 'Military Police raiding home' by Luiz Baltar.

Map right column by Youth Forum of Rio de Janeiro