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Working the hyphens of artist-academic-stakeholder in Co-Creation: A hopeful rendering of a community organization and an organic intellectual

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Introduction

Perhaps it is easy to look at a city like Rio de Janeiro and despair. It is a city wherein the inequalities of its populace are seen and felt upon entrance. Nowhere is this more evident than in the city's favelas where approximately one fifth of its population live. Brazil's favelas, like other slums around the world, are quickly becoming dominant modes of current urbanity (Davis, 2006). Frenzel (2016) proposed that two discourses commonly shape popular understandings the favela. The first is a narrative of despair. This narrative recognizes that those who live in favelas, or favelados, are situated at the intersection of multiple power formations and inequalities, and who experience the stigmatizing effects of mainstream media and policy through drug and gang activity, low-income levels, unsanitary conditions, lack of education, policy brutality, spatial stigmatization, gender and sex-based violence, employment and education discrimination, and racism. The second narrative, and which is less prominent, is a narrative of hope. In this narrative, the favela is more of a growing pain of urbanization where its spaces are neighborhoods, sites of the vibrancy of urban life, collective agency, self-reliance, creativity, and entrepreneurialism. Winning of rights and legal positions, or increased access to public services are examples of its progress. Rio de Janeiro is replete with both (Perlman, 2009). It is within a narrative of hope, and in particular the creative activism in one favela, Santa Marta, that we focus. Co-Creation is capable of responding to urban stigma through creativity, collectivity, and activism, and thus also capable of generating narratives of hope, which develop in this chapter.

From 2016 to 2019, a team of more than 30 researchers and activists from the EU, Mexico, and Brazil worked together to deliver Co-Creation projects in five cities around the world. Co-Creation is both a methodology and a knowledge project that brings together researchers, artists, and stakeholders in order to produce shared knowledge that can challenge, resist, or modify urban stigmatization (see Chapter 1). Rio de Janeiro was one case amongst the five. In 2018, more than twenty researchers from the EU and Mexico, and several researchers from Rio de Janeiro collaborated with local stakeholders in Santa Marta, a favela in Rio de Janeiro's Zona Sul (South Zone). The key community organization in Santa Marta with whom the project collaborated was Grupo Eco, which was lead by Itamar Silva. Over the course of five days, researchers, artists, and stakeholders aimed to produce shared knowledge that could challenge, resist, refute, or modify urban stigmatization (see Chapter 1). Here, we refer to Co-Creation as a methodology and knowledge project as outlined in Chapter 1; we refer to cultural activism as a broader set of artist-activist/stakeholders practices or projects.

In this chapter, we—the three authors, one of which is Itamar—reflect on the Co-Creation process in Santa Marta from 2016 – 2019 by examining the relationships amongst artists-researchers-stakeholders, and more intensively on the role of community organizations and activists, and the role of the researcher. Like other participatory methodologies, Co-Creation centralizes the relationship between academic and non-academic partners (Banks & Hart, 2018). Examining these relationships is a way of 'working the hyphens' (Fine, 1994); that is, the process of examining the relationships between people in research. Fine suggested that in doing so writers interrogate how written representations may speak *of* or *for* Others through methodological, ethical, and epistemological considerations, a point reiterated by Ribeiro (2019) in a Brazilian context. A key aspect of this process is placing research and researchers in broader historical political, economic, and social context. As this Co-Creation project brought together researchers from the global north with researchers, stakeholders, and artists from the global south, a key aspect of the reflection here focuses on global north-south relations. To guide our reflection, we drew on observations from Co-Creation projects in Santa Marta from 2016 to 2019 and conducted interviews with two academic professors in Brazil, two

Brazilian NGO leaders, and eight Santa Marta residents and Eco members aged 18 to 70 in order to gain insight into various moments over Eco's more than 40-year history. First, we contextualize Santa Marta and Grupo Eco in terms of its historical inequalities and the role that creative expression and activism have played in a post-dictatorship Brazil. Second, we paint a picture of Itamar's central role in the history and creative activism of Eco, who was also the leader, gate-keeper, and partner of the Rio Co-Creation case study. We conclude by unpacking some of the elements that should be considered when engaging with local leadership in co-creative endeavours. Co-Creation represents an opportunity for the urban marginalized to contribute to knowledge production across the global north and south in a way that incorporates different perspectives, traditions, and origins of knowledge. If successful, Co-Creation can contribute meaningfully to the debate around the place of marginalized people in knowledge production. We argue that in order to achieve its aims as a creative, participatory methodology and knowledge project, any Co-Creation project must examine the relationships it builds between its three key actors. To do so requires contextualization in the country, city, and spaces in which it is undertaken, and indeed the people with whom it works.

Santa Marta and Grupo Eco: A history of popular cultural activism in Rio, a Brazilian context

Santa Marta is located on the steep hillside of Dona Marta in the historic Botafogo neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro. Migrants from the north began to populate the hillside, a prelude to the significant Brazilian rural to urban shift beginning in the 1940s. Protected by the vegetation on the hillside, people made homes out of wood and stucco; continual migration, lack of water and electricity, and the muddy hillside were all challenges residents faced. This was exacerbated by the lack of legal recognition for the settlement, which deprived residents of public services. Today, houses are made of brick, and running water and electricity have been installed in homes. The approximately 5000 residents who now live there are bounded on one side by a government constructed wall to prevent further expansion, and on the other is a funicular to transport people up and down the hillside. Still, inadequate garbage collection and open ditches pose serious health risks to the favela. Santa Marta's history of residential activism to improve quality of life there includes resistance, struggle, sorrow, and hope. Increasingly, activism in Santa Marta, like the rest of Brazil's cities, incorporates artistic and cultural expression.

The terrain for activism, democratic participation, and citizenship in Brazil has shifted over the last 50 years. In the waning few years of the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship in the late 1970s and early 1980s, discernible collective action began to emerge. A prominent example is the mobilization of the metalworkers' unions and strikes that challenged the military with new leadership, and which gave rise to the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT)—the Workers' Party—and leftist leader, future President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, or Lula, (Bourne, 2008). In reverberation, it is here in the 1980s that forms of collective action (Dagnino, 2006; Caldeira & Adriano, 2014) from a range of peoples grew and strengthened, notably slum movements, black resistance, gender and sexuality movements, and ecological action. These leftist movements fostered the emergence of a new political imaginary wherein democratic participation became possible (Dagnino, 2006; Ferrero, Natalucci, & Tatagiba, 2019). In the 21st Century, a new protagonism emerged in the public space of Brazilian cities — partially in response to the formal integration of the left in formal governmental and bureaucratic systems. Groups of mostly young, black people living in segregated and stigmatized areas, favelas, mobilized cultural expression and intervention in the form of painting, writing, film, and other digital and electronic media to occupy spaces historically dominated by upper classes (Caldeira & Adriano, 2014). With often aggressive language, they denounced the discrimination against them, refute their positioning as victims, and resignify the city's criminalized spaces (ibid.). Beginning in Sao Paulo, such groups spread across Brazil's urban environments, transgressing and even inverting the cultural productions of urban space. As cultural productions continue to be a form through which activism, resistance, or social justice are expressed and might occur, it is at this contemporary juncture in Brazilian history and culture that Co-Creation becomes a suitable academic methodology that can contribute to such agendas.

In 1976 in Santa Marta, eight people came together to publish a community newspaper, *The Eco*. Headquartered in Itamar Silva's parent's home, the paper recorded activities in the community and reflected upon the role of the Residents' Association (Pandolfi & Grynszpan, 2003). Over time, and as the group expanded its work in the community with ditch digging and cleaning, building housing, or cultural activities, they became known as "the Eco people" (ibid.). Grupo Eco—self-defined as *a school without walls*—was established. It nurtured two major areas of work, those needs within the favela and those in connection with other favelas, institutions, NGOs, government, or universities in Rio. Explicit in its agenda has been a cultural arm. Its initial newspaper, a cultural product in of itself, included publicizing cultural events, like Samba and festivals, and as it expanded its cultural expressions did, too. Its annual Holiday Camp was an example of responding to the total absence of vacations for children in the favela who by-and-large stayed in their homes through the summer months. For children, the opportunity to move beyond the walls of the favela safely was rare. This was the first holiday camp in favelas in Rio.

Another cultural output of Eco was its productions, such as theatre, music, and art. One notable example is its theatre group, which formed in 1977 to communicate with residents. The impact of the theatre activities, in particular, resonated with residents. One favela resident (43, female) recounted her experience in theatre with Eco:

I fell in love with theater. Looking for a theater group in 1992, I found the Eco theater group in the nursery at Casa Santa Marta. Itamar was an actor. Eventually he invited me to the Eco group for a Sunday meeting. I was very young and I wanted to be an actress. I took theater courses in other places and tried to become an actress. The Eco group captivated me, and I started working at the Holiday Camp.

Through her school and work with Eco, she desired to go to college and pursue a degree and profession in communications. From her contacts in the communications industry, the news organization TVT recorded the holiday camps and published a piece on them, a testament to the influence of Eco, its participants, and their ability to speak to broader audiences about the challenges and possibilities in Santa Marta. The theatre group performed in schools, the samba school of São Gonçalo, other favelas of the State of Rio de Janeiro, and in Santa Marta, and other venues during a short series of tours. The group's formation and their performances are reminiscent of the leftist politics and inspirations of Boal (2006) and Freire (2005): Theatre brought residents together, introduced avenues of mobility around the city and beyond, called forward discussion of important issues in the urban margin and its stigmatization, and brought some of those discussions with them around to the places in which they performed. She still volunteers with Eco.

Perhaps less artistic but no less cultural, another example sprouted in the area of tourism. One resident (45, female) is the Founder and Operator of a tourism initiative in Santa Marta. Born in Santa Marta and a participant in Eco since adolescence, she lives there with her son and mother. From her experience with Eco and while studying tourism at University in the early 1990s, she sought to bring political activism into the domain of tourism. In Santa Marta, she created a social enterprise in her tour to achieve this. She shared that the central aim of her company is "to disrupt favela stereotypes," which she framed like this:

We go to discussions with other groups that are developing tourism in other favelas to develop a communitarian tourism base. We do understand that if we do not make discussions of the favela then people will never come here and will never develop a different perspective of the favela. We have to work very hard with stereotypes. Sometimes, people come in here reinforcing stereotypes rather than deconstructing them.

Walking through the streets and homes in Santa Marta, she shared the favela's history, sought to educate and provoke on the challenges the neighbourhood faces, and fostered discussion rather than offering a romanticized or stigmatized image. Her efforts directly resonate with the contemporary efforts to resignify the city's stigmatized spaces (Caldeira & Adriano, 2014).

Cultural expression has been a central role for progressive moments, actions, and activism in Santa Marta for more than 40 years. Arguably, Eco's 40-plus year existence resides at the heart of this collective mobilization. That history is evident, too, when walking through its streets. Graffiti frequently splashes across with political messages, such as one cascading colourful representation of Santa Marta with the message, 'The rich want peace to continue to be rich, we want peace to continue to be alive.' The infamous statue of Michael Jackson about three-quarters of the way up the hill celebrates the celebrity-musician from when it was selected as one site in Rio for the filming of, 'They don't care about us.' That knowledge and statue now helps funnel tourists up its slope. In its shops, a range of material culture produced by local artists depict life in the favela, which serves the double purpose of contributing to the local economy and claiming some of the ground upon which favelas are depicted.

For the purposes of Co-Creation this history is important. Artistry and activism have long been present in Santa Marta. Amongst the three central actors of Co-Creation's methodology—artists-researchers-stakeholders—Eco members and residents form a central part of the favela's stakeholders while the cultural vibrancy of Santa Marta only expands. A strong historical relationship already existed amongst the three methodological actors. For researchers from the global north who arrived to Santa Marta, we suggest that the capacity to *do* Co-Creation became a moment for a meeting of knowledges between the global north and south, and between community activists, artists, and researchers. Itamar, as an organic intellectual, played a pivotal role in this meeting and process.

Community partners, academics, and organic intellectualism in Santa Marta

Essential to the success of Co-Creation are collaborations with community partners. The community groups and individuals with whom those striving to *do* Co-Creation seek to work are numerous and varied. *How* researchers link up with a community and *with whom* are points of choice and tension. Working with an entire organization, people with specific roles, a single individual, a team or group, or an amalgamation of individual activists, artists, or residents all bring unique benefits and challenges. How people are involved in their community, and how they become involved in a project carry significance for the shape, direction, and success of a project. Like other participatory methodologies, Co-Creation raises issues about power relations, hierarchies, and ownership in the research/co-creation process, which need to be acknowledged by all participants (Mitchell, De Lange, & Moletsane, 2017). The process by which the global north research team established links for our Co-Creation project in Rio de Janeiro, and therefore began to form relationships between project members and the community of Santa Marta, occurred through Itamar.

From the beginning, researchers from PUC and Eco worked with the academic drivers of the project from the global north in the planning and preparation of the workshop. The research team had an immediate researcher-community from previous PUC-Eco collaborations. Because Eco opened their network, the team were able to access a range of people using cultural practices in response to urban stigma, notably: activist-oriented tourism; other tour operators; graffiti artists, such as Tick (see Chapter 17); local residents with whom the research team could speak and conduct activities, such as urban mapping, photography, and food practices; Escola Bola's football players and coaches with whom the research team spoke and played; and slam-poets with whom the research team performed. Part of this was to assist in the development of the project, but part of this was also to communicate with the research team the cultural-activism already happening in Santa Marta. To begin setting in motion all of these opportunities, the Eco group brought the idea of working with the research team for discussion. They were an advocate for the project. It represented a transformative methodology using creativity to combat stereotypes, promote social justice, and account for perceptions of various urban actors. The project also sought to bridge Eco's commitments and agendas.

Since the 1970s, the favela became a prominent area of study for social scientists, notably among urban studies, anthropology, and sociology. Of this work, Valladares (2019) raised the question, "has the favela become the location of research, rather than its object?" (pp 135). The distinction here is

important. The former risks reifying the very social stigmas that have claimed a strong representational form through a variety of knowledge. Valladares points to three dogmas in academic research: a) the construction of the favela as a “different” space, which marks it out as separate; b) the territorialisation of the favela as a space of and for poverty, which actually fortifies this idea; and c) reducing the idea of the favela into singular association, undermining their diversity, differences, and distinctions of favelas while treating them all the same. Santa Marta, in particular, has received considerable attention in the last fifteen years because of its designation as the model favela for pacification beginning in 2008, location within Zona Sul, and magnification through investment from the Federal Plan for Growth Acceleration (PAC) and international attention from global sporting mega-events (Clift & Andrews, 2012; Gaffney, 2010). Although Eco’s leadership knew well the debates about research in favelas and the challenges/possibilities that they bring, the organization welcomed the research team in the spirit of collaboration and being part of their fight for social justice, both of which speak to group’s community-driven mindfulness.

Recognizing the numerous challenges of Santa Marta residents and his lifetime commitment to improving the quality of peoples’ lives, Itamar’s approach to leadership and political action can be characterized as that of an organic intellectual. Gramsci (2006) suggested that organic intellectuals carry a unique ability to *see* hegemonic conceptions of the world and bring about modes of thought that challenge and engage with the power structures affronting self-empowerment and sovereignty. Importantly, Gramsci made a distinction between “traditional” professional intellectuals who are established standing through specialized training, roles, and professions (e.g., teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc.) with accrued socio-economic statues that sets them apart from social and political life, and “organic” intellectuals who arise within and in response to political moments and challenges of marginalized or oppressed groups. In Itamar’s case, he founded and lead Eco while also choosing to work with two NGOs and then the Instituto Brasileiro de Analises Sociais e Economicas (IBASE)—a not-for-profit citizenship organization founded in 1981 that contributes to public debates on social issues in Brazil, and that seeks to build a democratic culture of rights, strengthen associative fabric of civil society, and broaden citizen participation in policy making (IBASE, 2019). Maintaining his connection to Santa Marta and favela life is evident not only in his employment choice but his residential ones, too.

Itamar chooses to live in Santa Marta despite having the ability to move out, in what would otherwise be considered an upward socio-economic change. One Professor of Sociology (UFRJ, 70, male) who was an intellectual mentor to Itamar spoke about his choice:

A striking example is the fact that he did not stop living in the favela, and surely he would have the financial, cultural and intellectual conditions to leave. A lot of people go out and stay connected in a favela, but no longer live there. This is a process of upward mobility that goes beyond the favela's space. Itamar? No, he still lives there. Most of the favela's organic intellectuals leave the favela precisely because they are intellectual and organic. Not Itamar. He makes a point of staying in the favela. For me, it's Itamar brand.

Itamar’s choice to live in Santa Marta illustrates the connection he shares with its people and the community while he drives forward a progressive, consciousness-raising agenda. A further example of Itamar’s strong connection to Santa Marta, the professor noted, were the holiday camps that he runs each year, remarking that Itamar takes his break from work to run these. Using his holiday time away from work, Itamar lead’s Eco in their engagement with 200-300 children of Santa Marta. In doing so, he reiterates the enduring relationship that he has developed with the community. That professor further remarked that he has “tremendous admiration for Itamar” and that it is not just him. There are many scholars who research favelas and who admire him because of his “authenticity as an intellectual of the periphery in general and of the favela in particular. ... He is one of the slum’s organic intellectuals.”

The impact of Itamar, Eco, and their cultural activism is profound. Consider the following testimonials from Santa Marta residents and Eco participants. One woman (26) discussed Itamar's and Eco's presence in Santa Marta:

Itamar is an advisor, someone you can question. Today, I have a relationship with him of Respect. Itamar plant's the seed [to us] for the future. What is the continuity for Eco? Who are the next to continue it? You can't think of Santa Marta without Eco.

She also communicated the impact her participation had on her:

Today, as an adult you may be able to discern issues of inequality, but when you are a teenager, especially in a favela, it is very difficult for you to do so. It is very difficult for you to position yourself in the world. Saying 'no, I am a beautiful, black woman, I am empowered, I can work in the field I choose' is difficult. Even to create a hope that you can and are capable of achieving is hard. We know the issues that limit our journey. Women in leadership positions are difficult to find, but we cannot lose hope that somehow we can achieve and achieve together. I think that Eco has brought me, or strengthened within me, if not created this feeling that I and we can win. But it is of no use if your community is not with you, thriving together. ... Eco helped me a lot to position myself. I survived in terms of gender, race, being able to speak. I work in an engineering company that has many more men than women. There is the issue of race and gender. I am a woman, black and peripheral.

Another woman Santa Marta resident (18) went as far as to compare the children who participate in Eco against those that do not:

Eco has been here for a long time. Everyone knows this. Itamar's ideas spread. Eco is something that cannot die ... something we cannot let die. The children who are not in Eco, unfortunately, are in drug trafficking. There are teenagers who went to my classes, they are trafficking now. I don't keep in touch. They really wanted to show off, to make easy money.

Like the tourism activist previously, these two women and other residents communicated the relevance and importance of Eco and Itamar in improving the lives of those who choose to join Eco. The group's work is a continual community effort to challenge refute and combat urban marginality. Itamar's character, and his leadership, prominence, and commitment in Santa Marta with Eco evince the character of an organic intellectual. For the research team, he became the hinge through which the academic-artist-stakeholder relations were made possible.

For researchers seeking to *do* Co-Creation, recognition and attention must given to the idea of who has control over a project. Researchers must develop the comfort to cede control. This comes with tremendous upsides in some instances as well as several challenges. In the Santa Marta case study, we established links with a person and group with such strong ties to the community that we were linked into a network of people and places in numerous ways. Yet, entering into a network of such strong communal ties also brings tension.

Reflections on the importance of context and (intellectual) leadership in Co-Creation

After our experience of Co-Creation in Santa Marta, we recognize that what does and does not work is always contingent to the people in a context of the research itself. In the Santa Marta project, the people with whom the research team collaborated played a pivotal role, prominently Eco and Itamar. The context of Santa Marta, Rio de Janeiro, and Brazil's broader position in the global south further offer insights into the workings of co-creative practices. Through these two important considerations, people and context, we offer several reflective questions for readers considering Co-Creation as a methodology.

Collaborating in the global south makes us aware of broader power dynamics. The very authorship of this chapter drew together different positionalities. The first author, Bryan, is a cultural studies researcher from the global north who has limited time and experience in Rio de Janeiro but is learning; he does not have a grasp of Portuguese beyond a basic level. In Santa Marta, he represents an extreme outsider who is anxious about conducting research that colonizes the urban marginalized. The second author, Sarah, has worked as a professor of sociology and urban marginality for more than thirty years. Despite this track record and location within the global south, she, too, faces challenges around producing knowledge when trying to write not from the point of view of a researcher but rather from the point of view of the urban marginalized. Is it up to academics to write about favelas? Or is it for its residents to do? Are there ways of producing knowledge that better enable this to occur? These are questions that have been placed on the table of sociology for some time in the global north and south. The third author, Itamar, has a vested interest in the community but he cannot speak for everyone. Inside the favela, he faces the challenge of producing knowledge that is valuable for residents while acknowledging the impossibility of representing everyone. Collectively, we come from radically different perspectives: This chapter itself is a good opportunity to discuss and wrestle these challenges.

In the case of Santa Marta and Eco, a rich history of cultural activism and artistry brought together in different ways already exists. It is clear that artistic and creative endeavours in Santa Marta open “cracks in the system” Mouffe (2013). Thus, an important aspect of this chapter is our aim to recognize the marvellous social and cultural activism that largely goes un-noticed by an academia that tends to see things only through its own theories, methods, and views. Co-Creation is an opportunity to produce knowledge through a variety of perspectives; it is one that can reframe how academic knowledge is produced by doing so more on the terms of those about whom it produces that knowledge. This process, however, is not simplistic, nor straight-forward.

Where cultural activism already exists, researchers from the north and south risk becoming colonizers themselves of knowledge already in existence. Doing so can reify divisions within a city’s centre and margin. This can also reify the divisions between the global north and south wherein the south and urban marginalized are positioned as underdeveloped and known only through a colonialist or neo-imperialist fantasy. Researchers, from the global north or south, in this framing, descend upon the favela with knowledge to share or pass on to “un-educated” or “impoverished” favelados. Through collaboration, knowledge exchange, and communication, Co-Creation as a knowledge project seeks to directly disrupt this danger. In the more collaborative spirit of Co-Creation, the process of creating together enables researchers, artists, and activists/stakeholders to work together to further advance the agendas already set in motion through a new/modified series of actions that develop something that otherwise would not be possible. The artistic and creative elements of Co-Creation are intended to be the instrument that “levels” differential voices/footing that systemic power structures typically reinforce (see Chapter 1). Doing so can generate a respectful and mutually beneficial way of advancing socially progressive agendas. In the Santa Marta case study, this resulted in a collective reflection on Santa Marta from a diversity of perspectives, its challenges and potentiality. Only in a few moments in its history have its leaders and activities been brought face-to-face, without tension, to discuss local projects and dynamics. The process of Co-Creation broke some internal resistances that enabled these discussions to happen. Moreover, the role switching between actors enabled a renewal of views of the favela. Residents and leaders who live in a favela can reproduce the favela based solely on their specific struggles and points of view, and thus lose the ability to account for a diversity of actors and the complexity of demands. Artists, residents, leaders, and activists who participated in the project experience Santa Marta a little more, opening views and potentials.

The artist-researcher-stakeholder triad poses an earnest, relationship-focused process for Co-Creation. Who sets the agenda? engaging with community partners, researchers must recognize that this triadic relationship has several impacts upon the possibilities of research. Any entry-point into a community opens up opportunities but closes others. In Santa Marta, the Co-Creation project was delimited by working with Itamar and Eco. As such, the research team gained access to the people and spaces familiar to this group, but the people who do not regularly engage with Eco were excluded. There is a

significant portion of the community that we did not reach, and is there another Santa Marta organization with whom to work on Co-Creation. One strategy for overcoming this can include snowballing from initial contacts to the wider community. Doing so requires time and care to maintain a positive and productive relationship with those people from whom we snowball. This is a seriously challenging endeavour for work that includes numerous researchers who predominantly live and work in the global north. Nor can we link up with one person just to get to another, which effectively undermines the collaborative and collective spirit of Co-Creation. For researchers, the agenda must be open to change based on the needs, interests, motivations, and passions of those within a given context.

Relatedly, in practice how do Co-Creation participants envision their relationship to the people of a project? Co-Creation requires researchers to be diverse in their interactions. In some instances, researchers can lead whereas in others they can be participants. The ability to shift our roles and interactions is always contingent upon the location, time available to people, language differences, and so forth. How close or how far are the researchers and the place chosen for Co-Creation? In Santa Marta, people are already engaged in the artistry and activism aligned in response to iniquitous conditions. In this position, researchers must ask: What is our role here? What and how do we contribute? Do we bring anything new to the table? Are we just incorporating these forms of knowledge production in the academy (and in doing so at risk of become colonizers ourselves)? Are we (academic) reporters? Or are we trying to do something *new* with these groups, where our presence has a positive impact on the artistry-activism already happening? In a context where there is little organization such a project would look radically different. Our first task in Co-Creation, then, is to begin to know a place, its people, their organization, and their histories.

If Co-Creation is to be a successful knowledge project to and for the people for whom it claims to represent, speak, and speak with, then it necessarily must openly reflect upon the relationships it develops in the process of its unfolding. Consider that Itamar with Eco has been active in the fight against urban marginalization in Rio de Janeiro for more than 40 years: Who, then, is the “expert” or “intellectual” here? Listening is one of the most powerful things researchers can do. Too quickly researchers can become complicit in the writing of the Other (Spivak, 1988; Ribeiro, 2019). Fine suggested, like Spivak (1988) and Scott (1988), that rather than try to “know” or “give voice” researchers should listen to the voices of those Othered, as themselves constructors and agents of knowledge. In this reflective chapter, we aimed to listen and write together, a global north researcher, a global south researcher, and an organic intellectual of the favela.

This reflective illustration, contextualization, and working of hyphens compel us to constantly locate our work within broader power formations as we consider the roles of those involved. In Brazil, considerations assist in thinking through Valladares’s (2019) rhetorical question, on whose terms is the favela (re)invented? In Co-Creation *processes* and *products*, asking this question is a necessity in all cities and their margins.

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