Invisible communities – Favelas as spaces for politics

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Readings in the History of Political Thought

s3193829

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Wordcount: 8000

May 24, 2024

Embargo option: public

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Introduction

The sound of music travels through the walls. The drumming brings kids with curious eyes close to the windows, and sooner or later Rodrigo has to open the doors to let everyone participate. He will end up giving a class, making some noise, because for him everyone has the right to become an artist. Even if you live in a favela, like him.

Rodrigo Souza plays music every day, and as he puts it "everything within the favela, it becomes interpersonal". He has lived in Parque Maré and Nova Holanda, in Rio de Janeiro for his whole life. For him, it is important that the kids are able to see a perspective beyond violence and drugs. He writes for Favela Stories (2016) about his connection with music: "we were a band of black musicians from the city's periphery, and we worked with that resistance, of showing our faces and our musicality". The traditional media does not want to portrait the good that is done within the communities. It does not want to report that "the majority of people here are the workers who move this city forwards, because that does not sell newspapers".

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2022) estimates that in 2022 around 16 million people lived in the favelas. They are distributed among 11,403 favelas in the country, amounting to a total of 7% of the Brazilian population. The highest concentration is in the two major cities, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

The first peripheric community was named "Morro da Favella" and was located in Rio de Janeiro. It was a consequence of the civil war "Guerra dos Canudos" at the end of the 19th century. The civil war dislocated many soldiers from the northeastern state, Bahia, to live in Rio de Janeiro. While awaiting payment for their services, they settled informally as a form of protest. Furthermore, the name 'favela' comes from a plant found on the hill they first settled (Valladares, 2019, p. 6). Nowadays, the name is used in Brazilian culture and in international academia to describe specifically the peripheric communities in Brazil, the term "peripheric population" was coined to denominate the residents that fought for basic urban services, such as water, electricity, and sanitation away from the center (Holston, 2007, p. 151). Later, the word 'favela' became itself a synonym for outlawed territory and the term 'favelado' becomes a derogative word to refer to the population in the marginalized (Valladares, 2019, p. 10).

The derogative terms aligns with the idea the media and mainstream academia has of the favelas. A place dominated by the drug trade, where citizens live with constant threats of terror. Literature regarding the violence within the favelas, the drug dealers and the corruption is broad, but misses something essential. The possibility of any positive action is overlooked, with the residents being reduced to lower class citizens. According to Fahlberg (2018), "we are left with the assumption that favela governance has become entirely the domain of its violent actors" (p. 487). The ones forgotten by their own nation find their places within the cracks of society. They tend to live within spaces of crime, violence, and poverty.

Overlooked citizens are denied a space in our world. Some are denied entrance to a country, others cannot vote. The number of migrants, refugees and displaced will continue to rise as conflicts and

climate change worsen. Many nations already cannot administrate their own population, leading many to seek a better living in foreign places. But what happens to the citizens that are invisible to their government, forgotten in their own nation? We focus intently on the problem of migration but rarely stop to think of the problem of people neglected within their own territory. Therefore, in order to counterpoint this idea, the question this paper will try to answer is: **How might invisible communities create spaces for politics?**

To be able to visualize the creation of a space of politics within invisible communities, this paper will turn to Hannah Arendt's work on the "The Human Condition" (1958). Arendt, over a very specific and unique framework, that she names the *vita activa*, warns us of the human need to escape the world**.** She directs our attention away from understanding the greatest developments of technology as the source of all our human power, to exploring the surroundings of common life where we can locate plurality. With the differences of humans, we can create something new. For Arendt, freedom can only be located politically by acting with others. However, what happens when we are denied this space to act with others? Do we lose our freedom? And if so, can we claim it back?

Arendt develops tools through republican ideas enabling us to understand the political power within invisible communities. She offers an understanding of the Greek polis and the enactment of politics as action. She separates human life between public and private sphere, which is essential for the awareness of how some citizens were excluded to the periphery, limited to act politically. In essence, we can conclude that invisible communities through struggles of being neglected by society can create a space for themselves. This space, within its nature of system will be small, where people live close together, which allows it to develop into a polis a community that enables action.

In this respect, to answer the question this paper raises about invisible communities, an exploration of citizenship literature, firstly underlining the current debate and secondly through a deep analysis of semi-citizenship will be done. The literature review will illustrate different cases in which through neglect of the state, invisible communities were able to fight for their rights and claim some kind of citizenship. Subsequently, I will delineate Arendt's ideas of public and private sphere. This will be followed by an elaboration on property and alienation, all concepts from 'The Human Condition" (1958). Additionally, the conceptualization of the polis and action will be done After discussing Arendt's material, this paper will elaborate further on the power within the favelas, giving examples of action through a discussion of different favelas.

Literature Review

Citizenship rights has raised an enormous debate among academics, yet the most explored topics seem to be among the migration and refugee fields. This literature review will explore how other invisible communities are framed within academia as traditional literature can be dismissive of certain populations and their emancipatory potential. This will be done through an understanding of two major writers within citizenship literature: T.H Marshall and Elizabeth Cohen. Afterwards,

an exploration of the role of the state and dichotomous framing of citizenships will be conducted. This will be argued through examples of visibility versus invisibility and unconventional citizenships, like Mexicans in the USA, second-generation immigrants in Greece and citizen-debate within Israel and Palestine. On the second part of this literature review, an exploration of semi-citizenship through Cohen's lenses will be done

Citizenship debate

T.H Marshall (as cited in Ghandour, 2017), considered the grandfather of citizenship studies, has created a framework that is widely used to understand different discussions among the field. He defined citizenship as equality, thus, until everyone has full rights, can we then exercise our citizenship to fullest (as citied by Cohen, 2009, p. 41). Nonetheless, Elizabeth Cohen (2009) is quite critical of aspirational definitions of citizenship. For her, framing citizenship as a normative concept is worrisome as it lacks the ability to grasp those that do not have their citizenship completely fulfilled. Ghandour (2017) also criticizes Marshall's initial denomination of citizenship, as the British-centric focus was specific to the context of the creation of a welfare state during the post war period in the United Kingdom (p. 20).

Additionally, the strong connection to statehood, as the state is the one source of authority that can offer in most cases claims of citizenship, compel most authors like Marhsall, to not separate nationality from citizenship (p. 21). Regarding claim of statehood, Cohen (2009) also believes that the state can be seen as contested authority, as it lacks perfect monopoly. Hence, she argues that actions associated with specific relationships of authority are not an ideal conceptualization (p. 30). Therefore, Marshall's conceptualization of citizenship fosters a dichotomous idea that there is no in-between and it lacks visibility for specific groups. On the other hand, some authors argued for the move to a gradient category of citizenship, as conventional literature can overlook certain populations and their emancipatory capacities.

McNevin (2011) exemplifies how the idea that a dichotomous framing of citizenship is not applicable within the US-Mexico border. Many immigrants feel the weight of a division between 'being illegal' and 'feeling like a citizen' (p. 138), and present how those two identities are not mutually exclusive. Between the struggle of lacking legal rights as full citizenships in the United States, many decide to claim for recognition of the polity in a radical move (p. 131): when taking the decision to not remain hidden from society, the irregular migrants mobilize political forces, in which their reactions to marginalization and lack of rights lead them to search for forms of political belonging (p. 139). Examples are campaigning for candidates, organizing rallies, and reaching out to immigrant-dominated unions in Los Angeles (p. 140). The decision to stay visible, McNevin argues, is important as it helps us move away from looking for acts of citizenship in traditional spaces, and hence look for it on unexpected places.

The movement for visibility that irregular immigrants from Mexico do in the USA is also perceptible in studies of second-generation immigrants in Greece (Gousis, 2023). However, in this case, the ones that had their citizenship neglected were not migrants themselves. During the early

years of the twenty-first century, many Black second-generation immigrants were unable to acquire their own Greek citizenship, even though they were born and raised in the country (p. 606). Most of the children had to ask for a residence permit to continue living in Greece and mothers had their kids birth certificates denied by the government (p. 613). Gousis argues that through the process that they went through of having their citizenship neglected, protests and campaigns started. McKevin (2013, as cited in Gousis, 2023) raises the point about "the transformative potential of struggles based on claims to citizenship" (p. 617). The protests and activism in general create a space for politics (p. 615), building new ideas of citizenship (p. 607).

In another study about migration and visibility in Greece, Mogiani (2022) investigates the interplay between visibility and invisibility among migrants in Patras. The different degrees of visibility allow for the migrants to access the public sphere (p. 1). As an act of resistance, they can create and change the boundaries of spatial relations, acting on citizenship through resistance and its visibility (p 3). Yet, a super-visibility level comes with its downsides, as it does not necessary lead to more recognition of rights. When migrants are "too visible", their identity can be framed into one of criminality, highlighting all their actions and allowing the state to increment control over them. In some instances, the state will act violently to show that action is being taken, deporting people (p. 8). Thus, an equilibrium between visibility and invisibility is necessary, both approaches are important as sometimes migrants need to evade the gaze of the state (p. 4).

Through the claims for citizenship, some groups can further develop their identity by means of resistance, while also being lowered down in the social hierarchy. One specific is the settler-colonial case of Israel in Palestine (Pinson, 2008). After the settlement of Israelis, many Palestinians were granted citizenship, creating the illusion of inclusion (p. 204). They were expected to understand the "inferiority of their state" and reject their collective identity as part of the creation of the new Jewish state (p. 204). As Pinson puts it, Palestinians became a "trapped minority" in Israel, pushed into a place of 'otherness' (p. 202). In this particular case, the idea of 'us' versus 'them' lead the Palestinians to be forced away and excluded in their own territory by foreigners, creating a spatial division (p. 203).

Regarding the Palestinian case, they are not immigrants, but were excluded and forced into the private sphere of their own nation. It is critical to notice that cases of citizenship do not evolve only around migration, but many can feel like second-class citizens in their state. Isin and Wood (1999) describe the collapse of the bipolar world as a test to the centrality of the state, as it lacks the ability to "encompass the whole" (p. 118).

Thus, some authors argue that is necessary to move away from categories that focus on the nation-level of exclusion, understanding beyond the immigration literature and state focused research. Current phenomenon cannot be understood with a state system lens. Nationals themselves might not have rights and feel like foreigners within their own borders. To conceptualize citizenship beyond the cases of foreigners versus nationals, Elizabeth Cohen develops the framework of citizenship and semi-citizenship on her book 'Semi-Citizenship in Democratic Politics' (2009).

Cohen claims that defining citizenship is a complicated task, yet most authors on the topic overlook the importance of having the category of semi-citizenship. In her words, "citizenship rights are related with their fundamental relationship to the idea of political membership", and it relates to three mechanisms: the individuals, the individuals' relationships to one another and their relationship to the agent that impose the rights (p. 64-65). She establishes the importance of semi-citizenship studies, as it is "neither new nor produced exclusively or even primarily by evolving understandings of borders, migration, and sovereignty" (p. 53).

Semi-citizenship & Insurgent citizens

Some authors have started to move away from the understanding of citizenship as a dichotomous concept. Therefore, for us to be able understand invisible communities and their ability to act, a gradient understanding of citizenship is needed. This will be done through an exploration of Cohen's idea of semi-citizenship. Secondly, the debate of the creation of identities through places of neglect is raised, bring James Holston into discussion, as his studies focus on insurgent citizenship specifically regarding the peripheries in Brazil. Consequently, an exploration of Holston's concept of autoconstruction will be done as it helps us understand later on Arendt's idea of action.

Cohen (2009) states that the largest classes denied full citizenship are within native born residents, concluding that the lack of full citizenship is not only a product of borders (p. 53). Semi-citizenship allows us to understand the ones that have their citizenship partially neglected: second-class citizens, who are mostly lost within borders. She creates four orders of semi-citizenship, constructed through separating between the autonomous rights and relative rights, levelling them in four levels of weak and strong (p. 66). She defines autonomous rights as any particular social or political context, things human beings would need no matter where they are located, e.g is healthcare. If we were to analyze citizenship on only autonomous rights terms, residents of the United States would have semi-citizenship because of the lack of access to healthcare (p. 62). Additionally, relative rights are context dependent and justified by different political structures (p. 67), for example the right to property would be relative if one were to live in a communist society, it would be different from someone that lives in a liberal capitalist society.

Undocumented immigrants would be fourth order semi-citizens, as they have both weak relative and autonomous rights (Cohen, 2009, p. 70). On the other hand, guestworkers would rank on the third order semi-citizens, as they have weak relative rights but strong autonomous rights (pp. 72-73). Someone as first order semi-citizenship would be in the LGQBTQIA+ community, as they have both strong autonomous and relative rights, yet in some places are not full citizens, since some rights, like marriage, are denied to them (p. 73). This categorization of semi-citizenship helps understand the type of people that are overlooked within ideas of citizenship of migration. However, Cohen (2009) does not define semi-citizenships as social identities, but "as a person's position within a political structure and their effective rights within it" (p. 86).

Having established the current debate within neglected parts of society and invisible citizens, it is understood that the literature misses two important aspects: firstly in regard to the US-Mexico immigration case, a move away from the migration framing is necessary, as it does now allow for us to understand differentiated citizenship within one specific nation. Secondly, none of the cases are illustrated through republicanism: the idea of a small community that can enable action. They are about citizens that in general are neglected, but do not necessarily form a community. For political spaces to be create, the small and close understanding of an organization is needed.

Thus, it is necessary to further investigate the settings needed for the creation of space for action. The idea of polis through the lens of the *vita activa* provides the understanding within a nation through a small-scale community. To do so, an exploration of the political action within the peripheries of Brazil, specifically the phenomenon of the favelas with the framing of Arendt on "The Human Condition" (1958) will be done. This paper has the goal of understanding how the invisible communities have become a space of action beyond the neglect of the state. Additionally, it raises the question if by acting to claim their own citizenship, invisible communities can to some extent be considered a polis.

In conclusion, the question that will be answered is: How do invisible communities create spaces for politics? To answer this question, this paper will trace the idea of the favelas as a periphery, regarding the part of the population that has their citizenship rights denied and are relocated to the order of semi-citizenship. Firstly, this paper will elaborate on Arendt's ideas of the private versus the public sphere, the idea of property and alienation of society. While this part of society struggles to survive in improvised housing, I argue they have their private realm taken away, impeding them to enter any public realm. Additionally, it will build on Arendt's arguments regarding the making of the polis, its action and power. Then, I will shed light on how these concepts are actualized with an illustration of action and politics within the favelas.

Body

Invisible communities can be only understood as such if we recognize how the lines between the public and private realm have become blurred with the rise of society. Thus, this paper will firstly delineate in which spaces inviable communities have come to be organized, as they transition from "the hidden" parts of society, the private realm and towards the public realm where they can finally appear and act. Afterwards, this will be exposed through the understanding of the rise of society and alienation. This will be followed by the delineation of the idea of property within the private realm. Finally, an exploration of Arendt's polis will be done, followed by power, as it fits the republican idea of a small scale and tight community that can foster politics. Hence, the conditions for action can be find within the struggles of small communities.

Public and the Private Sphere

In "The Human Condition" (1958) Arendt separates the *vita activa* into two possible realms: the private and the public. The private realm is understood as the household, while the public is the polis, the place where one can act and disclosure itself. The public and the private are intrinsic to each other, as one can only enter the public realm when one is free from the necessities entrenched into the private realm (p. 31). The household carries within itself inequality, where the polis is divergent from the household, as it is a place only for "equals" (p. 32). Consequently, no activity regarding sustaining the process of life should be found within the political realm (p. 37). For some things to exist at all, they need to be covered and on the other hand, some things need to be exposed publicly to exist at all (p. 73). This will result in a physical and spatial relation of the private, as Arendt describes "the four walls of one's private property" (p. 71). She also delineates the danger of the growth of the social realm, that blurs the line separating both realms (p. 28).

Emergence of the social, nation-state and alienation

The rise of society has happened as the activities that should have stayed hidden within the private, have come to focus on the public sphere (Arendt, 1958, p. 38). The development of the modern age corresponds to the political organization of the nation-state (p. 28). However, this comes with a cost: the lines between public and private become more blurred and the divergence with the two realms is harder to be understood (p. 28). Consequently, the private realm of the household starts to disappear (p. 29). This happens through the "nation-wide administration of housekeeping", as the essential affairs and the necessities within the private sphere start to be taken by the nation-state (p. 28) and start to appear in public (p. 46). Thus, a part of society loses its private sphere and "all the matters pertaining formerly to the private sphere of the family have become a "collective" concern" (p. 29). As the lines blur, we lose sight of politics, and it becomes harder to pinpoint it outside of what should be the private realm (p. 45).

Modern society starts to sacrifice private property for the sake of the accumulation of wealth, thus part of society is deprived of their home and lose the ability to act (p. 67), specifically with regards of the peasant classes in during the Reformation (p. 66). However, as wealth does not equal poverty, Arendt claims that one can have property and be able to act even within a position of lack of wealth (p. 67). Thus, action can never be done in alienation from others. One can only act with the presence of others (p. 190) which is one of the things that distinguish the simple fabrication and laboring from action (p. 190).

Alienation, the hiding from the space of appearance is very much present in Arendt's idea of labor, as one hide to take care of the necessities of life. However, she warns us about the dangers of isolation through tyranny. One cannot be seen by others when one is laboring, as it is the most intimate process (1958, p. 209) Thus, as one loses the public space, one becomes alienated within their private realm. Morality arrives from the will to live together with others to act and speak,

"thus they are like control mechanisms built into the very faculty to start new and unending processes" (p. 246) Staying together in our plurality and avoiding isolation, will help us not fall into a tyrannic organization of society.

Property

Her elaboration on property is important, as she claims is misunderstood as wealth (Arendt, 1958, p. 61). Through her distinguishment between both concepts, Arendt discusses the importance of property for the public realm and "full-fledged citizenship" (p. 61). The lack of wealth, poverty did not stop one from owning property and consequently the citizenship that came from it (p. 62). Originally, property meant no more or less than to have one's location in a particular part of the world and therefore to be able to belong to the political body. She illustrates that "this piece of privately owned world was so completely identical with the family who owned it that the expulsion of a citizen could mean not merely the confiscation of this estate but the actual destruction of the building itself" (p. 61-62). When someone is deprived of a private realm, having no access to a household, they are also deprived of any chance of achieving something in society (p. 58). A citizen that is thrown out of their household, Arendt details, might as well mean the literal destruction of their property in Ancient Greece. She equates the idea of having no property, and thus no household to being denied citizenship. The "private man does not appear, and therefore it is as though he did not exist" (p. 58).

Arendt understands citizenship as equal to holding a property within the private realm. A person with no private place of their own, in Arendt's view, is no longer considered a human (Arendt, 1958, p. 64) and cannot participate in the public realm, as they have no location of their own (p. 29-30). "To own property meant here to be master over one's own necessities of life and therefore potentially to be a free person, free to transcend his own life and enter the world all have in common" (p. 65).

The polis and power

The web of relationships can be actualized through the polis. Arendt's conceptualization of polis is different within the ancient times and modern times. In ancient times, the Greek polis might have been a literal wall, "without which there might have been an agglomeration of houses, (...), a political community" (Arendt, 1958, p. 64). This literality of the wall enables us to frame the polis within spatial terms in ancient times, and it does not stop us from doing the same in the modern age. The public realm is the place for action in both cases, where one can appear to others (p. 176). Thus, I will delineate action, the idea of making the space, the polis and finally power.

Action is intrinsic to the idea of speech. Through acting and speaking, humans can disclosure themselves, showing their uniqueness and making an appearance in the world. (Arendt, 1958, p. 179). Again, is in reference to the "who", and not "what" somebody is. An action with no speech

is not action anymore, as "the actor, the doer of deeds" does not exist anymore, because he can only come into being when he is the "speaker of words" (pp. 178- 179).

For disclosure to have its "revelatory quality", one has to act and speak in closeness to other people. However, Arendt makes a case that for action and speech to actual be powerful for someone to appear among others, it has to be when people are united with others and not for or against them (Arendt, 1958, p. 180). Only then the "revelatory quality of speech and action can come to existence." Action is only possible in the public realm, as it appears to all (p. 180). Through action, the agent will disclosure themselves, thus human togetherness is needed (p. 182). Without this disclosure, action and speech would not be relevant as it retains men's "agent-revealing capacity" (p. 182).

Making the space

The lawmaker that "builds" the structures for the people to later act on, does not have to be a citizen. In Ancient Greece, they could have been called from another place (Arendt, 1958, p. 194). In a most literal sense of the building of place, besides the idea of the laws, the aesthetic of a space, how beautiful it is and how easier life gets, it is the role of the homo faber, as he makes the world a better place through constructions (p. 208). Thus, the public realm, the space men appear, is more "the work of man" (p. 208)

It is extremely important to set a space beforehand man begins to act: to do so, the idea of work comes into play, as building the space and the structure one can act are products of making (Arendt, 1958, p. 194-195). This is done in comparison to Ancient Greek times, as the "wall around the city, were not results of action but products of making. Before men began to act, a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions could take place, the space being the public realm of the polls and its structure the law (pp. 194-195).

The polis

Arendt's idea of a polis is the location of "sharing of words and deeds" (1958, p. 197), where one can act and has more chances of disclosing itself. The foundation of the polis comes as a remedy of the frailty of action (p. 196). Even if the political realm is not exactly a physical space, it rises from acting together and not wanting it to disappear (p. 198). It is an organization of people, that if they were to exit this place, the polis would still be with them. The identity that is formed by acting with others and disclosing oneself is something that can be found anywhere (p. 198). Therefore, the polis does not necessarily need to be a physical location. Arendt states that very clearly as "wherever you go, you will be a polis" (p. 199). The space of appearance for Arendt, predates the "various forms in which the public realm can be organized", meaning it does not have a set organizational structure (p. 199).

For Arendt, the size of the polis is also important: a small polis is needed for the politic body to survive. The larger the population, "the more likely it will be the social rather than the political that constitutes the public realm" (Arendt, 1958, p. 43). In consequence to the small scale of the polis, Arendt illustrates her idea of power and the importance of close-tight communities: "Only where men live so close together that the potentialities of action are always present can power remain with them" (p. 201). Thus, for the polis to exist as a place of action, it is important that it does not include a lot of citizens and that it fosters close spatial relations between them.

One example of a failed political organization was the labor movement, which Arendt reserves a whole chapter for it (1958, p. 219). She explains it through two different ideas it had an evasive content and aim, which made it lose its political role. The movement had the goal of creating a new public space with new political standards, which replaced action with labor, thus failing, as the people lose the ability to act and have a polis. The polis is there to "inspire men to dare the extraordinary" and action's nature is to "break through the commonly accepted" (pp. 205-206) to reach that set extraordinary, which can only be done by moving away from labor.

An important action is the idea of boundlessness, as action can happen anywhere and create a chain reaction where it starts new processes (Arendt, 1958, p. 190). Consequently, action can never be contained among two people for example, as it does not move in a closed circle. One deed has the power of changing a whole eco-system of actions (p. 190). Through this boundless, action "always establishes relationships" and it fosters what Arendt names the "web of relationships" (p. 190).

Power

The author of the Human Condition outlines the ability of power to stay within action through proximity. She argues that by living together, close to one another, it helps with the potentialities of action and power is able to stay (Arendt, 1958, p. 201). For her, power is needed to maintain the space of appearance. Power cannot be measure and also not as reliable as force for example, it is viewed in potentially terms (p. 200). But these potentialities can only be actualized when "men live close together" is what maintains humans together after the moment of action is gone, the organization and also keeping power alive "through remaining together" (p. 201). Power's limitation it is also its own pre-requisite: the existence of men together, the plurality we found within humans (p. 201).

The togetherness implicit in the polis is necessary for the actualization of power. Power happens when words "disclose realities" and deeds establish relations and create new realities (Arendt, 1958, p. 200). It maintains the public realm, the potentiality of acting together present. People need to live in proximity to others, as a manner to maintain power with them. The construction of cities is "therefore the indeed the most important material prerequisite for power" (p. 201).

Discussion

In this section, I illustrate the idea of creating a space for politics within the invisible community of the favelas in Brazil. As mentioned above, the concepts discussed within the Arendt section of this paper will be highlighted within the reality of the favelas. This paper has two main claims: through struggles for a place in the world, communities can create spaces for action, but this will only be done through the polis: a small and connected community. To bring these claims to life, an exploration of James Holston's on Brazilian peripheries will be done. Secondly, a spatial understanding of the favela within the private and public realm will be exemplified, followed by the importance of property. Afterwards, the idea of making the space will be discussed within the architecture of the favelas. Finally, the small polis and community is portrayed through community-based organizations allowing power to stay within the favelas.

Holston (2007) has recognized political power within these invisible communities, specifically to the favelas in Brazil. His book focus on marginalized citizens in Brazil and the surge of new types of citizenship (p. 4). To do so, he traces the history of the urbanization of São Paulo and uses ethnography studies to understand the start of segregated parts of society. Holston argues that eviction of the population in the 1950s led to "enduring patterns of peripheral segregation and urbanization" (p. 147). The first residents that came to live in the outskirts of the city had to fight politically to obtain basic urban infrastructure and rights (p. 151). Through a process that he names "autoconstruction', residents of the periphery build a new space and claim for a new type of citizenship (p. 6).

The process of autoconstruction conceptualized by Holston can easily be put into discussion with Arendt's idea of action. I argue Holston's argument of autoconstruction falls within Arendt's republican understanding of the polis. As citizens fought to access basic rights in the periphery of the city, they engaged in a process of autoconstruction (Holston, 2007, p. 6), or in Arendtian terms: the creation of a polis. They built houses in illegal spaces and constructed their lives in this new space where they were segregated to by the state. Thus, to some extent a new private sphere is built. As Holston delineates it, autoconstruction refers to the process which "difficult conditions of illegal residence motivated people to pursue new articulations of citizenship" (p. 235). In sum, these new articulations of citizenship can be seen as action.

Public and the Private Sphere – in the favelas

The inequality within society is spatially represented through the segregation of the urban space. It is expressed within differentiated citizenship through the favelas and the center. The favelas become the place for inequality, the place where one fights for the necessities of life, as Arendt would argue. The Brazilian state is contested about its "absence and negligence as a provider of essential services" (Holston, 2007, p. 248) as the invisible citizens within the Brazilian community are denied "political rights, disallowed education, excluded from legal property ownership (…) and estranged from law" (p. 312). This refers to the argument made by Arendt, delineated earlier

on this paper: the “nation-wide administration of housekeeping the surges through the rise of the social, deprives part of the society of a place in the world. Thus, these invisible citizens are being pushed into a private realm.

What follows from this is a movement from the people at the center, as they perceive the favelas only through the framing of violence and negativity, to then hide away. The upper and middle classes can “engage in sophisticated techniques of social separation” and create a wider distance from the favelas (Holston, 2007, p. 281). Their economic power allows them to further segregate the two groups spatially, structuring the Brazilian cities further away into two different political organizations (p. 281). An example is the increase in securitization of the houses, with tall walls and bullet proof houses. Hence, the different between the spaces can easily be perceived visually.

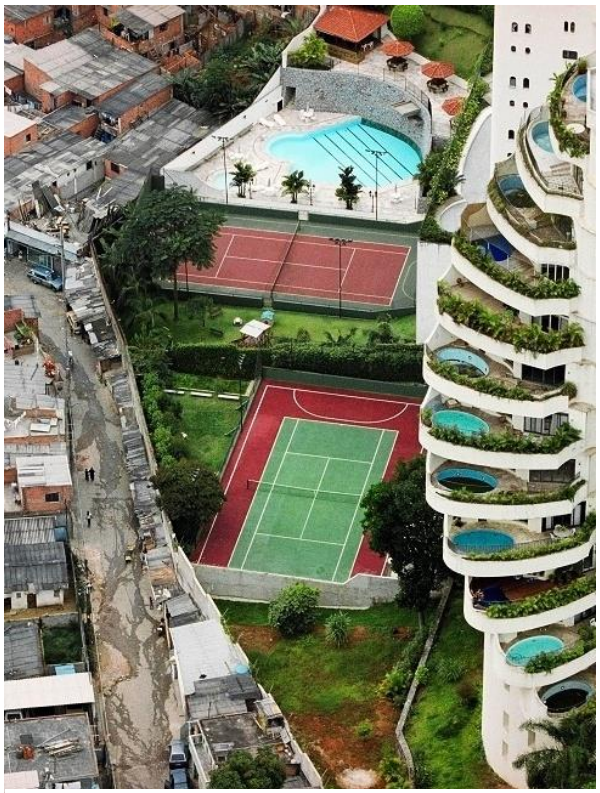

Photo 1: Paraisopólis, favela in the city of São Paulo that borders the upper class neighborhood, Morumbi, Tuca Vieira (2004)

Property – in the favelas

The citizens of the favelas can only create their own polis after they are able to build their residence, thus having a property for their private sphere The creation of a polis within the favelas demands to some extent a breach of the laws, reaching a place of illegality (Holston, 2017, p. 312). It is necessary for the periphery to construct their own houses outside of the law since it is the only

solution within the neglect of the state. The construction of their own property, which is not equated to wealth according to Arendt, is done in illegal terms because they do not have the means to buy land and "properly" construct houses.

The peripheries articulate their demand through the creation of their residence within the space, as the household is constructed, for them to later enter a place of politics (Holston, 2007, p. 312). Residents start to create different projects of citizenship; they start to become poverty owners and gather a broader understanding of their "personal competence through their urban practices" (p. 199). After the construction, the lower classes within the urban space are able to demand the rights of a citizen.

The first political power within the favelas is initially created through the fight for the continuity of their housing. (de Oliveira, 2014, p. 214). This is done through neighborhood associations that are born for the protection of the illegal building of the houses. The neighborhood groups have as their main goal to claim for resources (Holston, 2007, p. 241). The participation is filtered through residency, the only people allow to participate are the residents of the specific favela, thus is not wealth that allows one to enter the public realm, but the property within the favela (p. 247). Residents start to create different projects of citizenship; they start to become property owners and gather a broader understanding of their "personal competence through their urban practices" (p. 199).

Making the space – in the favelas

The relation between property and the ability to act in society is reflected visually through the architecture of the favelas. One illustration of work we find within the favelas is the construction of the housings: it tells the story of the residents. The older a house is, with more features, like a roof top for barbecue, windows made of glass and structurally strong doors, the more established the family is within the favela (Holston, 2007, p. 168). The newer houses, resembling mostly shanties are representations of the recent residents that are still living within precarious means, hidden within their private realm of the household, unable to act. The development of the houses shows explicitly the ones that are already able to act, while others are still fighting for basic survival, taking care of the necessities of the life. As mentioned before, Arendt delineates that before man can begin to act, the building of the structure is necessary.

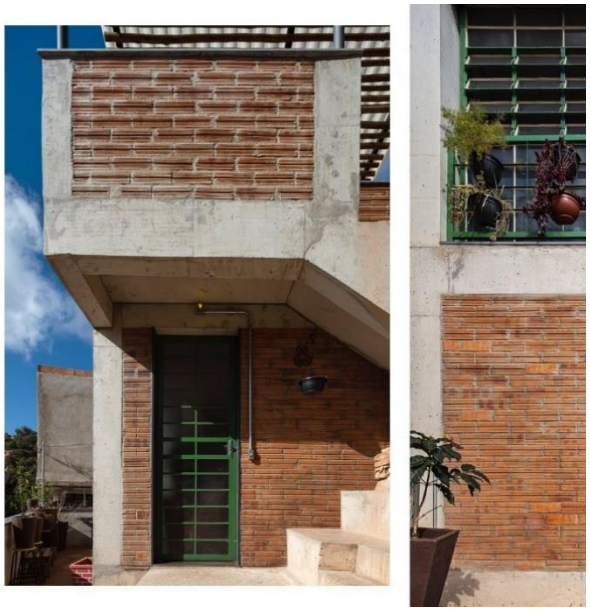

Photo 3: Kdu dos Anjos house in the favela Algomerada da Serra, Belo Horizonte (2023)

Photo 2: Unkown's house in the Favela dos Sonhos (Dream Favela), São Paulo (2023)

A clear example of such are *Photo 2* and *Photo 3* put into contrast. *Photo 2* is a house in the favela of in Aglomerada da Serra, in the state of Minas Gerais (Fabricio, Casa em favela de BH ganha prêmio internacional de arquitetura", 2023). The house won a prize for its architectural achievement in 2023. On the other hand, *Photo 3* is a house in the Favela dos Sonhos (Dream Favela), known before as Boca do Sapo. The Favela dos Sonhos has currently been going through a process of renovation, through the help of the NGO Gerando Falcões, many houses like the one in *Photo 3* are having their components replaced for more durable, sustainable alternatives (Plurale, "Casas Sustentáveis: Favila garante dignidade aos moradores da Favelas dos Sonhos". 2023). This allows the residents to have a better standard of living. Thus, we can conclude that within favelas there is a big gradience into the development of the houses, but they are in a constant process of change.

Polis and power – in the favelas

The polis must have a small scale, close and connected community for it to enable action. This can be found within the favelas, as houses are built within one another. The closeness of the community, as exemplified within the case of Rodrigo in the introduction of this thesis, shows figuratively that one should be able to "hear" the music through the walls of the community (Rodrigo, Favela Stories, 2016). No one goes unnoticed within the favelas, enabling the residents to be seen and heard most of the time. This is done through speech and action, as the web of relationships is stronger in small communities, people can act more constantly.

Furthermore, as already state, the struggles that the favelas must go through enables the creation of a space for action. The lower classes of society will fight for basic rights, constructing their own houses and basic infrastructure. The residents then demand inclusion and rights, and as Holston

puts it, are motivated by the illegality of their condition to further demand services. Therefore, they create spaces for politics within the realms of property and the missing services within the periphery (2007, p. 247)

The creation of new places of action within the periphery "turned the poor residents of the peripheries into new citizens" (Holston, 2007, p. 199). Through participative democracy, the residents within the favelas start working in many different projects, such as private and public organizations, becoming activists into creating a more accessible and political place for the favela. They can participate in a series of political parties, syndicates, NGOs and social movements (Fahlberg, 2023)

An illustration is the Society of Friends of the Camélias that was able to demand basic services, such as pavement on the streets of the favela Jardim das Camélias. One specific resident exemplifies how through the struggle, the favela was able to develop itself: "Today we have the majority of streets completely paved with asphalt, all well-made, sewage lines and piped water in all the streets, public [street] lights, and electricity in all the houses. All this, when I came to live here in 1970 did not exist. From that point on, we began to struggle to obtain this development" (Holston, 2007, p. 239).

The "small, nongovernmental, community-based organizations (CBOs)" are of extreme importance to the favelas, as they are exactly the creation of a space of action through a republicanism lens. They are founded and managed only by local inhabitants of the favela and have almost no funding (Fahlberg, 2018, p. 495). They are a combination of social services with education that fosters multiple forms of politics within the favelas.

The City of God favela (Cidade de Deus), widely famous because of the movie with the same name, has been an example of community-based organizations for years. Through volunteers that organize classes for the youth, children that reside within the favela can take a wide range of classes, from photography to sewing, painting, music and more specifically citizenship classes. Citizenship classes are important for the youth to reflect on their position within the Brazilian state, understand the challenges of the police brutality and learn how to claim for their rights, how to act politically (Fahlberg, 2018, p. 496). Additionally, students can also learn about the different forms of discrimination and racism against the black population as part of the structure society. Thus, through the challenges and struggles that the youth face within the favelas, community-based organizations use this as a medium to empower the children politically and teach them about action.

Another illustration is presented through the thoughts of one of the residents' board members from the City of God, Carmen, a self-proclaimed militant, and activist that has been working for rights for her community since the dictatorship in the 1970s (Fahlberg, 2018, p. 499). She says that they "we fight for the community no matter what, even when there is no money, no time, we fight for the community". The board members within Carmen's community are focused on teaching the

citizens of the favela City of God about the “injustice and oppression and to work collectively to demand equality and inclusion in the state and society” (p. 499)

One unexpected struggle that the favelas had to go through was the COVID-19 pandemic, which allowed for the further creation of a space of politics within the communities (Martins, 2024). The pandemic exacerbated the neglect of the state within invisible communities, further expressed the void left by the state. Yet, some already established community-based organizations started to produce a communication plan to bring awareness and teach the residents about the health procedures needed within the pandemic. The “Frente de Mobilização da Maré” (Mobilization Front in Maré) inside the favela of Maré in Rio de Janeiro started their own communication action, producing posters and using cars to go around the favela with essential information regarding the pandemic (Martins, 2024). This was important, as the consequence of the polis is the small and closeness characteristic. However, during the times of the pandemic, governmental organizations lacked in developing a specific plan that could be adapted to the small and close scale of the favelas. As a consequence, local organizations through the struggle of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic started to supply masks, alcohol, food and hygiene kits. Thus, the conditions of the polis that foster a space for politics within the favelas was one of the reasons that they struggled further within the pandemic. Nonetheless, it was also what enabled them to act and mobilize the population through their own specific actions, strengthening their web of relationships.

The alternative organization of the favelas as a polis can been interpreted through the idea that the “residents of the periphery imagine that their interests derive from their own experience, not from state plans”, thus focusing the part of the creation of a political space within the favelas and not the state (Holston, 2007, p. 248). The ability to “retain their personal dignity, their laughter, and their music is certainly a measure of human resilience” within this neglect from society (p. 312). Their polis is organized through performance of the residents that have had their rights historically denied (p. 241)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the question “**How might invisible communities create spaces for politics**?” can be answered through two claims: firstly, through the struggles of the invisible communities, such as the favelas, the residents fight for their rights and access to basic needs, demanding conditions and acting on it. Secondly, the invisible communities, specifically in this regard to the favelas, can create their own polis by acting through Arendtian republican lens: a small, close and tight community. This is what differentiates the favela from other examples, such as diasporas or illegal immigrants. The close and spatial condition of the favelas, as the houses are built in literal connection to one another, allows the community to retain the power and act for their space in a new public sphere.

Nonetheless, the limitations of this research are inherent to the idea of republicanism: the same limitations within this philosophical strand can be found in this research: the ideal Greek polis

within the classical understanding of the republican tradition can continue to grow and it starts to lose its struggles as a medium to claim spaces for action. If this happens, the polis of the favela can end up urbanizing and becoming an essential part of the city center, with no wide distinction. Additionally, some favelas can be dominated by organized crime, which is not brough up by this paper. Thus, further research should investigate how violence intersects with the idea of the polis and the pre-political conditions intrinsic to violence.

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