

Pedro Silva Rocha Lima, 2022

Manchester, Social Anthropology

Humanitarianism Otherwise: Risk Management and Armed Violence in Rio de Janeiro

My research investigates what happens when a global humanitarian actor focused on providing aid in warzones decides to move to Greater Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to respond to urban armed violence as a humanitarian problem. If humanitarianism is usually a response to specific moments of violent crisis (armed conflict) what happens when its logics are applied to enduring forms of urban violence? Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, I analyse an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) program that instructs public service workers (school and clinic staff) on how to use risk management to protect themselves from armed violence in their daily work. The ICRC turns its attention to the state itself, to shape the management of lives in the city by turning urban armed violence into a given social fact that state actors must manage through behavioural protocols to protect lives. Focusing on conceptions of normality in relation to violence, I intervene in the anthropologies of humanitarianism, the state, and violence, offering ways to theorize an emerging form of global governance that redefines what it means to live in and manage situations of ongoing urban violence.