

Conversation about conversations: have we already discussed everything there is to discuss?...

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In this *Conversa sobre conversas* (Conversation about conversations), invited by performingborders, Dori Nigro, Teresa Fabião, Pedro Vilela and Xavier de Sousa discuss the purpose and impact of conversations within the context of festival programmes, pointing towards (including concrete proposals for) futures in which conversation also becomes action. Starting from the history of public conversations over the 10 years of DDD, they share stories, memories and collective understandings of why these conversations are programmed, in what contexts they take place and what remains (or does not remain) beyond them.

XAVIER

Welcome. This conversation takes place as part of the performingborders residency at the 2026 DDD Festival, during which, in collaboration with curator Pedro Vilela, we are exploring the DDD archive and its history spanning the festival's 10-year run.

Within this process of thinking about the archive, reading the archive and questioning the archive – not of cataloguing the archive, that was never the intention, but of provoking it – we realised something: that since the very beginning of DDD, and as with many festivals, there had been a programme of conversations held throughout each festival. At the start, perhaps these conversations were centred more on specific performances – that is, conversations with the creators of the performances, or post-performance discussions, or on specific topics related to current issues at the time.

We also realised that in recent editions there have been fewer public conversations, more directed at certain target audiences, artistic ones, perhaps less centred on specific works and more on current issues in the sector, or in society, in a broader sense.

In a way, perhaps (and I'm not just talking about DDD here, I'm referring to a general trend), there is an institutionalisation of the conversation as a means of covering certain topics and almost creating an artistic programme. "Now let's schedule a range of conversations here on these topics." And this is neither right nor wrong, right? We're not making that judgement here, we are simply questioning the effect it might have, or why these conversations exist.

These conversations often take place behind closed doors or around a table, both of which are closed to people who do not engage with art in their daily lives, or who lack a clear understanding of the issues already being discussed. Consequently, these conversations tend to be somewhat insular and rarely extend beyond that circle.

And often, these conversations involve artists, producers or cultural agents from certain demographics, who, due to the sheer volume of discussions on the same topic, end up falling into a certain instrumentalisation of the issues and the people involved in these conversations.

That's not to say this is deliberate, or done on purpose or with bad intentions, but the reality is that we often reach a point in the sector where, perhaps, *we've already said enough*.

We've had plenty of conversations on plenty of topics, so perhaps what I propose to kick off this 'conversation about conversations' is for us to think about what a programmed conversation means to you? What is its purpose nowadays?

(long silence)

DORI

The silence says it all...

PEDRO

I think I'd like to pick up on a point you've made. I think a conversation is a way for us to articulate something together, and in that sense, I really like it when you say that we've already talked far too much. When I look back at my life and career as an artist, particularly in Brazil, I remember just how many conversations I've taken part in about cultural policy, promoting accessibility, and reflecting on various issues. How many

forums I've attended, how many documents have been produced, how many notes have been taken throughout my life.

But I think that, above all else, when we set out to have a conversation, we set out to listen to the other person, to try to get to the bottom of something that isn't entirely clear to me; otherwise, I might as well stay at home reflecting on my own or talking to myself. In that sense, I think the main difficulty we face is what we do with these conversations, how we manage to put them into practice.

Probably if we were to do an exercise in reviving what has been said, we would do an exercise in re-mounting the archived recordings, looking at the topics that were raised, and then we would switch off the recording, close that door and go back to our daily lives. Once again this conversation would probably come to nothing.

I think it's worth considering how we can activate these conversations and how we can make them a practical reality in our daily lives.

DORI

I'd like to pick up on that point Pedro made, because here in Portugal I've also been involved in many, many conversations.

I must admit it wears me out. I'm there in the spotlight speaking, but I also feel that the audience gets tired of it, tired of the repetition, don't you think? It's always the same old thing... and there they go again, talking about the same old topics, don't you think? And I feel that this weariness reaches the point where the conversations are nothing more than conversations, right? And

I like the provocation that Xavi brings to the dialogue, it reminds me of how we learn from difference, through Paulo Freire's dialogic pedagogy. I think that's fantastic because dialogue isn't always peaceful, dialogue isn't always comfortable. It's uncomfortable too.

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And thinking about that, I've brought in these elements from Grada Kilomba, when she talks about the stages that discomfort causes us: denial, guilt, shame, and then recognition and reparation.

PEDRO

I love.

DORI

It's interesting because that's how our psyche works, isn't it? Even within our own homes, there are conversations we avoid, aren't there? Conversations with our mother, our father, our daughter, our son. We're always stuck in that cycle, or running away from it. Then the conversation brings guilt, and shame, and we deny the guilt and shame, and we stay stuck there.

I feel that the way these conversations have been played out, we get stuck at this stage of... when we bring up concrete issues and always put ourselves in the first person, as Pedro said, it always triggers this denial, or this guilt, or this shame in the other person: 'Oh, that's what happened, it keeps happening, doesn't it?' So I get... This weariness here that makes me repeat this, I also see that it causes this in some people, and it also makes some people not want to go, not want to join in certain conversations, because they know it's going to be the same thing, the same topics.

Because these topics aren't acknowledged or addressed, are they? They keep coming up, don't they? They're always in this ebb and flow, back and forth, back and forth... so it's precisely how we perform all these topics socially, isn't it? How do we actually build something concrete so that the conversation doesn't stay stuck here in this verbal diarrhea—I'm not sure if that's the right word. The verb, you know, that thing with little action, but it doesn't conjugate – it conjugates only in a certain tense but stays there, doesn't it? There's no conjugation beyond a fixed tense, is there?

I don't know, I'm just philosophising about conversations here now.

TERESA

For me, a conversation is a collective creation; it's an opportunity to find inspiration or foster empathy, because I feel that often everyone is stuck in their own little box, or sometimes following their own logic, going their own way.

So, when I realise that someone else is going through the same thing as me, a space begins to open up. However, it is also a moment that generates a lot of frustration, not only in realising that this is something many people are experiencing, but also that there is little concrete action taken as a result.

For me, this kind of conversation also means, as Dori was saying, expanding our capacity to be with discomfort, which I think is still very limited in each of us, in this country, in my country, Portugal. But basically, I'm very much a person of action and I keep coming back to that question too, which is 'what do we do with this?'

For me, it involves being in a place where we understand what we are going to do with that frustration; it also involves knowing how to deal with risk, because there is a risk in saying certain things in these conversations, and there is a risk that we know also affects us because we want to work with institutions, and say certain things within the institutions themselves.

XAVIER

...and from the community itself, isn't it?... Sometimes you end up being labelled as the person who 'said that'.

TERESA

Exactly. And to address that risk, I think one of my calls to action is really "Let's tackle this together".

We also spoke about this the other day in another really important conversation, at the launch of the Anti-Racist Handbook, that for me we've reached a point in Portugal where it's so difficult for these anti-hegemonic causes to gain traction, to be established, and to be put into action, that for me it only makes sense right now if we unite and create something like a "monster caravan". OK, let's all act with the same purpose: to make space for diversity. Each one of us will sometimes need to take a back seat, but let's join forces, unite our thoughts and share our experiences.

For me it also means taking action, which for me sometimes comes down to verbs: it means organising ourselves, selecting, delegating, etc.

Because it's not just about taking action. And you institutions, what are you doing?... For

our part, if we think about different communities, it's difficult to unite so many causes, so many cultures, to bring together very different life experiences, but by focusing more on the connections than on our differences, how can we start, right from the outset, to call for participation within the artistic community itself.

PEDRO

But I also think that, in a sense, a conversation is a dialogue with the other's otherness. It is from this understanding that I am actually able to build something new. If I remain stuck in my own set of beliefs—which we often know exactly what that set of beliefs is, what understanding of the world it is that primarily governs a country like Portugal...—if I remain stuck in this, we cannot move forward. So I go through the motions of listening, but it doesn't really get through to me to the point where I'm motivated to try and bring about any change within the structures.

I think the exhaustion felt by those who speak is also very understandable because it's so draining. Even though we're reminded every day of the need to speak out. I'll take as an example the conversation we had within DDD itself, and at the end of it it felt like it had sucked the life out of me, like... it felt as though you end up completely shattered, as if all your energy had been drained.

And you go home wondering, "Should we really have brought that up? Was that the best way to approach it?" You keep questioning yourself all the time, even blaming yourself sometimes, don't you? But then you open the newspaper and see a story that reminds you of the need to, yes, speak out about it, to revisit the issue.

You end up becoming the pain in the neck, don't you? You're always bringing it up again, like that. And that's tiring; it tires the listener at times, it tires the speaker. I think demobilisation is a weapon, one of the most widely used in today's world, isn't it?

The last piece I did talks a bit about that, about revolutionary failures, about how to maintain that energy when a revolution breaks out, but like, how do you keep that fire alive? How do you stop that fire from being co-opted, or extinguished, or falling into oblivion? We usually see that things are put on the table, and after a while the best, most practical way to resolve them these days is like, 'no need to even reply, just let time run its course, let it fade away'.

But at the same time, the play I wrote deals with this very issue: that we can't view this as a failure, but as a driving force that never stops. And what remains above all else is dissatisfaction.

I think, like, that dissatisfaction is there and needs to be dealt with in some way. It will never be extinguished or pushed aside; it will resurface at some point.

XAVIER

One of the things you touched on there, this issue of repetition... Is it a good idea to keep coming back to these conversations? Repeating, repeating, repeating? There's that quote which explains that one of the functions of institutional racism is that you're always justifying it, you're always talking about it. And you're always teaching other people what institutional racism is. And it just wastes your time; it's a way of wasting time, in a way.

Thinking about that in terms of the function of scheduling conversations—not necessarily that they're intentionally scheduled to keep the repetition going—it raises this question of the intersection between perhaps repetition and reactivation. They're different things, serving different functions. What you're saying is that it can serve both functions. Right?

Because you were saying that time passes, but things keep reverberating, don't they?

I think there's also another issue here, which is: "it makes sense to talk about this topic now, but perhaps next year we won't schedule conversations about this topic; we'll schedule them around other things that are more talked about at that time". And in the meantime, what remains?

Perhaps this is the next question: what remains in the communities when, after having a conversation within an institution, within the programme, what remains in the communities and in people's minds when nothing is done?

PEDRO

I question the very format of the conversation, because I think it's an issue you raised right at the start, didn't you?

Who is having the conversation? Who was actually talking, for example, in our conversation (Esses Corpos, Nessa Cidade)? Are the issues that were raised actually new to those people? Was anyone surprised by the questions that were asked?

And what's missing, then? Why do we talk? To reminisce?

Look, let's not forget that this still persists within this society. Do we talk to remember, or do we talk to put something into practice, or do we just talk for the sake of talking?

I confess that I'd love a festival that perhaps didn't have any talks, but could say something like, 'This year we won't be holding talks, but we're going to put things into practice, ensuring that the front rows of the venues include certain bodies, or this, or that, and the other...'

DORI

José Gil, in his book *Portugal and the Fear of Existence*, talks about this – how much Portuguese society talks but doesn't – and here he ends up echoing what Grada says – but it doesn't change the situation, it doesn't... and I find myself thinking that conversation is important, very important, isn't it? The therapeutic process, the foundation of any therapeutic process, is conversation. But the therapeutic process isn't a one-off. A person is a continuous being, aren't they?

And when I use the words "continuous" and "ongoing", and that the conversation should be continuous and the practice ongoing; it's that what we're doing here isn't just for this one month... I don't know, three weeks, four weeks of DDD, but that it should be ongoing, that this should be continuous.

In other words, how can this conversation of ours also generate critical reflection on the festival itself and on the shows that come through here, because I feel that when people talk, there's also a fear of criticism, isn't there? I mean, the conversation always ends up like, "oh, OK, that's cool, that's fine", right?

José Gil talks about this, when a Portuguese person is approached by someone else on the street: "So, how are you, are you ok?"... So it's as if the person speaks in a very automatic way, and that actually brings about no change, neither for the person who responds automatically nor for the person who asks; there remains a barrier there.

So how do we think about these conversations too, because I think change happens as we

keep repeating, repeating, repeating until we do it differently.

But what I feel is that the repetition here is just to show that a conversation is being planned, without any concern that that conversation will actually lead to anything. The opposite would be if this conversation were part of an ongoing programme, and that group were talking until they arrived at shared dreams, and suddenly that dream came true. Then I feel that it really does bring about change.

Because it's a case of "oh, let's take the same topics and keep talking"... I've taken part in so many in Lisbon where it's always like this. And that looks good for the Programme; it's important for the Programme to say it had a conversation on programme X about decolonisation. But it doesn't last long.

XAVIER

Yes, yes, yes, and it even looks good in the institutions' funding proposals.

PEDRO

I think an institution, like the TMP - Porto Municipal Theatre, plays a key role in this and would perhaps be best placed to put it into practice. Because it has a permanent team of professionals, it's a physical venue in the city, and there's a continuity of funding that's different from, say, a festival which is always in the hot seat, always facing uncertainty about whether it will go ahead or not, and how to manage it. That's one of the big issues for festivals, which aren't institutionalised, isn't it? How to sustain their activities beyond the actual event period.

You'll have to throw yourself into it for a lifetime. It's almost like 15 days of life and the other 350 days of the year spent trying to understand how it survives, if it survives, whether it will go on or not. The Porto Municipal Theatre isn't like that; it's a stable institution within the city, so I think it could put this into practice, if there's the will to do so.

DORI

It's easy.

PEDRO:

It's easy.

DORI

Given what I remember of the Rivoli notebooks, a project that's probably been going for 10 years now, is a somewhat critical yet constructive reflection on the festival's programme; in other words, it has a framework for that, a structure for that.

TERESA

I believe the Porto Municipal Theatre has its own audience outreach team... and that there is also the possibility of partnerships with other similar initiatives and institutions to try to ensure this continuity, so that it isn't just centred around the DDD. We mentioned earlier 'Cultura em Expansão', a participatory project that has been running in the city for many years and which also receives funding.

We're talking about 'Acesso Cultura', partnerships with the Performart, with Victor Córdon Studios and also with other more local initiatives such as Casa Gralha and the LÁRòyé

sharing studio.

I also agree that it shouldn't just be about suggestions for the festival, but also about reviewing issues relating to cultural policies in Portugal regarding diversity in recruitment; and providing diversity training for the teams themselves, because otherwise we sometimes tend to talk about it here and then, when it comes to the actual performance, we come up against these issues head-on.

And there should also be more regular direct consultation with artists, in terms of what we need, and building responses from there. The artists themselves can take on this role of more regular consultancy, rather than it just being a one-off moment of "look, now we want to hear from you". No, we should be called upon and there should be dedicated resources for this, so that we can provide ongoing consultancy to a festival.

PEDRO

I also remembered that connection Silvio Almeida draws, didn't I? That a racist society is the result of racist institutions, just as racist institutions are racist because they feed off a racist society.

So at some point, someone needs to break this feedback loop. From one side to the other.

And it's clear that within the social fabric that makes up this city called Porto, there's already a set of practices being developed by people who are reflecting on this and putting it into practice, whether in their work, in the events they organise, in their academic reflections, or in their reflections on life.

Now these people need to be integrated into these institutions so that this does not remain on a micro-level, so that it can take on another practical dimension – thinking of it as a practice.

DORI

During one of these conversations, I remembered a conversation I had with Francisca (Fernandes); I think it was in 2023, the first time we talked about the logic behind programming choices (Public talk "An (un)sustainable logic and the invisibility of choices", DDD2022) The Question was 'Who Gets to Decide'.

One of the issues we raised was precisely in relation to recruitment, and Francisca raised some very interesting points about the difficulty the institution itself faces in devising inclusive recruitment practices. It was from there that the "Manual Para um Recrutamento Inclusivo" (Handbook for Inclusive Recruitment) was developed. The handbook highlights the importance of considering working conditions as a way of helping to combat precariousness in the sector. And when I talk about this incubator, and when Teresa Fabião raises the point that artists should also be remunerated for the consultancy work they provide, this is another way of combating this precariousness. Setting up a group as an ongoing initiative within the institution, which has the resources to do so, is a way of combating this precariousness, but more specifically, this handbook actually sets out ways of implementing ethnic and racial quotas in recruitment.

There were even some examples from Brazil that Anahí mentioned during Monday's conversation (*Estes corpos, nesta cidade: território, performance e escrita crítica*, 13th of April, in A PiSCiNa, Porto) by way of illustration, where she cited the ethnic and racial quotas in Brazil, which had been in place for over 20 years at the time, whereas in Portugal this issue is still being debated, with the question being omitted from the censuses.

So, how do these quotas also apply to the cultural sector? How does decolonisation take place in the cultural sector?

Then there's a very interesting issue, which is the institution itself, and thinking here of TMP, it shouldn't be seen merely as a venue for programming and screenings, because it seems as though the institution is only fulfilling that role. But it isn't, we know it isn't. It has the power to do other things, and it does, but it still needs to be expanded further. It shouldn't just be a space where people go to watch a nice show, clap at the end and leave, should it?

The institution has the power here to actually achieve recognition and genuine redress, doesn't it? And when we talk about redress, we mean a space that is truly for everyone, an inclusive space, a space for building knowledge. A space where otherness is embraced, not divided.

TERESA

I think this is a really important issue, particularly when it comes to concrete measures for redress. How do we address this? How do we put it into practice and start resolving these issues? I think what you said about the 'incubator' is really important... there are already a few companies here in Porto, such as Erva Daninha and others you mentioned as examples...

DORI

The A Estrutura company.

TERESA

A Estrutura (Porto-based company by Cátia Pinheiro and José Nunes)... I think there are about four who have a permanent place within the Support for Structures programme. And why not also set up a working group of artists? Artists who are thinkers, artists who are researchers, who are engaged with these issues and who can carry out work that involves both action and reflection, but with a strong focus on action. And that this can be an ongoing process.

I think that was one of the measures, beyond the issue of establishing a more inclusive recruitment process - actually prioritising certain communities that should be part of the teams at the institutions here in Porto.

And amongst ourselves, we should also draw up a concrete list of priorities. For me, that's important too, because I think that sometimes these conversations open up so many avenues and we end up feeling a bit overwhelmed... We find ourselves in this overwhelming position of 'where do we even start?'

So, drawing up a concrete list of priorities, I think, is also important for us to move into action.

PEDRO

It occurred to me whilst Teresa was speaking that there's a certain kind of joke, quite common in Brazil, when, for example, a racist advert appears on television. Usually, people go to the comments section and make a joke along the lines of 'don't you think there's a real need for a Black person in the marketing department at that agency?'

Because I think that's what it's about... and I think that Brazil, even though it's an extremely racist country, built on the prism of colonialism, many of the advances, for example, that we see in Brazil relate to people occupying positions and places.

I remember the incident with the show "A mulher do trem" of Os Fofos theatre company, in Itaú Cultural (2025), that included a performer in blackface. This raised a whole host of issues for the theatre world and for the institution.

Rather than denying that this incident had taken place, an incident that involved the use of blackface, Itaú organised a series of discussions with Black artists and reviewed its entire inclusion policy and the institution's recruitment policy.

So if we look at it today, the person in charge of the performing arts coordination unit is a Black woman from the Nordeste region who has also completely revamped her team, and this in some way reverberates through the practices of the entire institution as a whole, right?

If we are to conceive of post-racist, post-patriarchal, post-capitalist institutions, these spaces need to be occupied by the people who actually practise these values, don't they?

DORI

Yes, and that got me thinking, going back to my conversation with Francisca. She mentioned that there was a certain... I mean, whenever the lack of representation within institutions was highlighted – in this case, the Municipal Theatre of Porto – the excuse given was that "oh, but Black people don't apply". So, it's very easy to project onto others, isn't it?

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So, regarding this Handbook for Inclusive Recruitment, I'll highlight a few points from it here, which are available there: "Reduce barriers that prevent access." Who is this offer reaching? Is this call for applications reaching everyone?; "Review the application forms", applications which, often, require the applicant to write a PhD thesis; it's almost a thesis that's being asked of applicants;

"Advertising the opportunities", which is about ensuring that this information gets out there, and making the application process clear! And giving people feedback too, because what we feel is that we apply for jobs and pfff... Unlike that, Pedro brings home the reality of Brazil. In the applications I applied for in Brazil, I at least had an idea of who was assessing me, what they were looking for, and afterwards I received feedback on my assessment. In other words, it's not just a case of being one of 300, 400, I don't know, applications, and suddenly they pick one – OK, the person was deserving – but then they don't give any feedback... so for me it starts internally, as if the problem there were – and it is! – in the institution's structure, where the very way of recruiting isn't clear, is it?

PEDRO

I also think, Dori, that that comes a little earlier, a place of belonging. Claire (Sivier), who is developing the writings (for the Live Art Writers Network), has been developing a lovely exercise. She was invited by LAWN to develop the writings and she said, "As a practice, I want to go to these spaces with other women who aren't used to inhabiting this space here."

So I think there's a sense of belonging here, a way of recognising yourself, even as a member of the audience, and thinking, 'Wow, this really speaks to me as someone who lives in this city. And I want to nurture it, to support it, to be part of it, to help make sure it

means something to other people too', right?

I think there's also this aspect that needs to be considered: we need to create spaces where Black bodies aren't just seen as cleaning staff, or at best as front-of-house staff, or relegated to the margins of the programme itself. Like, out of, say, 90 shows a year, I only get the chance to see a Black body on stage once or twice. So, there's a whole set of practices involved there...

XAVIER

And then there are the programmed public conversations themselves; more often than not, it is people of colour or members of minority communities who are on stage having this conversation, for an audience that is itself almost entirely white and middle-class.

PEDRO

The text I produced as part of last year's *LAWN* ('Let us cultivate the forest', Pedro Vilela, 2025) touched on how festivals should stop being an oasis in the desert, so that "for 15 days, yes, here we are open to diversity". I played with the idea of the forest that was set up there at Café Rivoli (Porto Municipal Theatre). "Wow... there's life here now, there are plants, there's a forest... look at the diversity of bodies inhabiting this moment, because it's a festival."

Obviously, the very nature of the festival involves a sense of celebration and all that; it's a time when the city takes on a different vibe. But when you think about an institution like this that makes the festival possible, its role is much greater than just organising it over a period of 15 to 20 days. It has a commitment to the city, to other groups, to other areas, to other marginalised communities, which is of a different order altogether, isn't it?

TERESA

I believe that the issue of inclusive recruitment can address this problem of having a direct dialogue, which is directly linked to what you were saying about a sense of belonging. Because when you don't just bring these issues up, when they aren't treated merely as a passing trend, but are part of a direct dialogue, they gain much more traction. And that's what you're saying too: not just including communities, but changing the formats.

I felt that the conversation we had on Monday, the hour and a half or two hours we spent on it, it is extremely... it can sometimes end up being counterproductive, because it opens up whole new worlds and touches on very sensitive emotional issues, and then people go back to their lives wondering, 'What am I supposed to do with this?'

For example, I am part of another community, the capoeira community, just as others are part of communities such as Candomblé, where time is experienced differently – a time in which there is no set timetable, or at least not one so rigid; a ritual time, where the duration of a conversation is determined by its own needs.

Whether it's 2 hours, 3 hours... we had over 3 hours here on Saturday (at the Laboratory – Archive, writing and performance as practices of reflection and critique) and it was important to let it run its course without an abrupt cut. So it's also about seeking out those different formats that that kind of conversation, that kind of topic, requires.

Decolonisation can also be about asking, 'What can we bring to the table?' There is certainly a sense of dissatisfaction and frustration, and it is very real. Sometimes that serves as the fuel we need to drive the change we're striving for here... but I also always like to remember the space for pleasure. And so, the great Black activist, Adrienne Maree

Brown, in her book *Pleasure Activism*, presents a series of essays not only to talk about not losing sight of pleasure in activism, but also to think about this in action – about how we can make direct exchanges, so that we who are on the front lines do not lose heart.

For example, as well as dancing, I also work as a massage therapist. So how can these networks be not just for action and concrete projects, but also a network of care.

I think this is very important, and it's one of the themes addressed in DDD's *Conversas 2023*, which was "the place of health". For me, it's very important that health isn't just mental, but that we understand we're talking about "body-mind"; how this can also manifest as a concrete step, as support among artists, and as support for health and well-being. Another theme that, for me, stemmed from this was support for artists in transition. These days there is a lot of talk about transition in terms of gender, but it can also be a transition in terms of career.

I've been dancing for 30 years, I'll be 43 soon, so there might come a time when I'm not so much part of the scene anymore, right? There was a programme here in Portugal called 'Professional Identity in Transition' (Victor Córdon Studios), which was launched in 2022 and then I think it just fizzled out...

How can we also think about this – human longevity and sustainability across different models? We're already in the realm of cultural policies, but a festival like DDD, which has been running for 10 years and is perhaps now taking stock of what the next 10 years might hold, could serve as a catalyst and a space for reflection on these public cultural policies that Portugal urgently needs to implement.

DORI

That's really interesting and I keep wondering how these conversations reach a wider audience. For example, take TBA's podcast programme *Dito e Feito*.

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Suddenly it occurred to me: the topic Teresa raises is really interesting, and just imagine if it were part of a conversation, but one that didn't end there, with just the group taking part, but was expanded through a podcast. I don't know if other people see it that way too, and it remains a bit of a mixed bag, but I also feel that this extension of the conversation beyond the conversation itself reaches other audiences and generates knowledge, and fosters a sense of connection here. Just to give an example, the podcasts produced by TBA get around 3,000 views.

In other words, I also find myself thinking about the power this can have, that the conversation needs to revolve around a single theme but have an umbrella that suddenly points in various directions, and for this to be documented, even something that constantly extends beyond the festival. Building this up over time, right?

But of course, this goes back to what Pedro says: you need the right conditions, you need a whole framework for this to happen.

PEDRO

I keep thinking about this, and it's something I'm very hard on myself about, not least because I've never managed to put it into practice. But consider this: why aren't public conversations held in public spaces?

Even re-thinking this very notion of what is *public space* that Tiziano raised (in his opening remarks to the conversation "These Bodies, In This City") as well, because the TMP is a public space, OK, but the fact that it's inside a closed building... why can't public

conversations take place in public squares, for example, so that someone on their way to work might stop and say 'wow, I've never seen anyone thinking about dance in my life' or at least know that there's a dance festival happening in the city.

XAVIER

There is a tradition in England known as Speakers' Corner, which is a spot in a park in London with a platform. It's called a soapbox, a literal, small platform in the park. The tradition is that anyone can climb onto the box and say whatever they want to say. This ends up drawing a large crowd of passers-by, and Hyde Park is a very busy park, and they hear something that catches their attention, so they go over, stay there, and a debate ensues, a dialogue takes place.

But I've also often seen public conversations that are really just conversations between the people actually having the conversation.

The people around them end up not being part of that conversation. So they end up recreating the same 'fourth wall', if you like, that exists inside theatres and within the enclosed spaces of festivals and artistic production venues.

When we go 'out there', what sort of setup do we want? What sort of connection do we want with the people passing by? Because otherwise we're doing the same thing; we're just reproducing the same sort of things. What sort of openness do we want to have? Is it a conversation or a dialogue?

PEDRO

It's almost as when we in Brazil used to think a lot whether the groups were doing theatre 'on' the street or 'of' the street? They require different approaches and methods.

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TERESA

Yes, it ties in with what we were discussing before we started recording. One suggestion we put forward to the festival is that it could also reach out to the public, rather than just waiting for the public to come to the festival – perhaps using this as a starting point for future editions.

Not just reaching out to communities that are represented in the city, but also to spaces... we've talked here about outlying neighbourhoods, and initiatives such as 'DDD Out' could be taking place in those neighbourhoods. I'm thinking of parks too, as a park is a much more democratic space.

And I also found myself wondering, for example, to what extent should we change the name of the initiative?... Call it an assembly? Not just what Pedro was saying about 'why can't the conversation take place in a public space', but also changing the name so that the name itself encourages participation.

PEDRO

It all comes down to communication. I often tell those closest to me that, for me, the Municipal Theatre's communication is always very confusing. There have been years when I'd look at it and think, 'Goodness me, for heaven's sake'... It's just that it doesn't say much. I find myself wondering about my uncle coming home from work, whether he stops to look at that poster there, to read it, and whether it moves him.

And that's something that's already been thought through because it's very clear, for

example, the way the City Council promotes the city's São João festivities. It has direct, visually clear communication, because they know they want to reach as many people as possible.

XAVIER

Now there are those who refer to it as a 'festival' abroad. The marketing campaign for São João aimed at foreign audiences is the São João Festival.

PEDRO

It's like, you walk around the city and anyone who lives there knows that São João is in full swing: concerts, street parties, the community, everyone together, all mixed up, just living it up, I don't know what.

And why, for other forms of communication, does it seem as though you're saying, 'from here on, we're going to start drawing some lines, deciding who we want to inhabit this space and who doesn't'? Because it's about clarity, isn't it, about things.

XAVIER

It strikes me that this is a question of class, of who is generally allowed into the spaces where these conversations or performances take place, isn't it? For example, the example you're using of São João: it's seen as a community scene, but at the same time it's a magnet for the city, right?

Whereas the theatre and the institutions in which they exist, and there are fewer and fewer non-institutional spaces within Porto - and we've talked about this several times because of gentrification - are spaces exclusive to people who have access to them. In other words, people who are generally from the working classes or less privileged classes, or the lower middle class, for example, don't have access to that space. I also sometimes think there's an attempt to make these people seem a bit of a nuisance to have here.

DORI

Yes, yes. It really is a structural problem here, isn't it?

Anahí brought up a few examples from the scene in Rio de Janeiro, so it's a different context and a different dialogue too. Here, however, and it really bothers me, for instance, that there are people who have never set foot in the Porto Municipal Theatre. Take the example of Dona Cláudia, a lady of almost 90 who took part in the performance-parade I organised. The first time she set foot in the Porto Municipal Theatre was to perform, to take part in my performance. A lady who was born here in Porto, nearly 90 years old, had never been inside the Porto Municipal Theatre - that says a lot about the city, doesn't it? Neither had anyone in her generation, and so this intergenerational pattern repeats itself, because her sons and daughters have never been inside the theatre either.

So I find myself thinking - and Tereza mentioned this, didn't she, before we started recording here - about this proposal for free transport, right? So it's not just about issues of ethnic-racial quotas, but public transport, because often going to Matosinhos seems close, but it isn't. Going to Constantino Nery, going to Gaia, I mean...

I say this because when I was invited to put on a performance here as part of DDD, there were potential venues for me. One of them was the Port of Leixões and I turned that venue down because there wasn't... in other words, the only people who would come to see my performance would either be the wealthy people disembarking from the ships

there at the port, or those with a car to make the long journey. I tried walking that route and spoke to the production team and the theatre, who said it didn't make sense. There was no availability of transport, neither public transport, nor from the theatre, nor from the council, in the case of Matosinhos.

I ended up giving up on doing it there; I went and did it in the nearest venue. It had to be Matosinhos, so I ended up doing it at the architecture centre not out of choice, but really thinking along those more sustainable lines of people being able to access it, right?... So these are such simple things, aren't they? Things so simple that wouldn't be a burden for the Porto Municipal Theatre.

Teresa talks about this human sustainability, how people are sustaining themselves, how this inclusion happens, right? Because thinking about ecological sustainability is also thinking about human sustainability. That was a theme of the conversation 'An (Un)sustainable Logic and the Invisibility of Choices' (Mala Voadora, DDD Festival 2022). I remember that the conversation stemmed largely from the debate about Jérôme Bel's decision to stop travelling by plane, and we started thinking about the privileges of those who decide whether or not to travel, when you have a base. The artist has a base in France, and he has several projects happening simultaneously, including here in *The show must go on* (TMP, 2021), which I danced in.

That brings us back to the issue of mental health. When we think about mental health from a very class-based perspective, and also forget that people are dying, there are people here who are in a different stratum of mental health, and this isn't taken into account. So it's as if we were talking about very different levels, or hadn't found a way here to balance this issue, which is one of class, but also of race.

PEDRO

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Yes, but I think it also comes down a lot to understanding once again what the social role of a theatre like this is. When we think, for example, of SESC São Paulo, SESC is the commercial service, that is, it's a public-private institution funded by people who work in commerce. They pay a small fee to enter those huge buildings where they can have dental treatment, go swimming, do exercise classes and also take part in cultural activities.

So it's very clear which audience it needs to target, isn't it? Who funds that institution, who it's designed for, and where all its activities should be directed.

We need to remember that a Municipal Theatre is funded by everyone in society. And in that sense...

DORI

Who is it servicing?...

PEDRO

But is it serving us? That is the question then...

DORI

Is it serving society, and what kind of society is it serving, right? What choices does it make?

TERESA

I completely agree. It seems that both theatre in general and the festival itself are still very much confined to the realm of artistic and social classes, in this case the middle to upper-middle class.

This issue of there being so many people who, for whatever reason, have never set foot in the Rivoli... for me, a shortcut to addressing this issue is precisely the street. The street, even today, for example, is one of the most democratic spaces in society.

So, for me, it was very important for the festival to think carefully about how it occupies the street, which streets and which spaces it occupies beyond the central areas.

PEDRO

But I think this is a chronic problem, even within the Portuguese performing arts. When we think of festivals like this, we think of FITEI (Festival of Theatre and Iberian Expression) where there are no street performances, no street theatre. We think of DDD – there's hardly any... there's Corpo + Cidade, DDD Out and I don't know what else...

I think Trengo Festival is the one with the most street performances, and we can see how much of an impact that has, because you turn up at any Trengo event there in Coveiro Park, and there's a crowd watching people who are sometimes just hanging out there. Because they went to take a child to play in the park and end up finding a circus-like atmosphere and so on.

DORI

And for this piece of mine, I tried to stage it on the street—to put on a street parade. I thought of Santa Catarina—I don't know, a street where there would be this endless parade and the body would just keep parading on and on. It wasn't possible because certain spaces were designated, and that was that; due to bureaucratic issues, we end up complying. I also proposed it in Lisbon as part of the Alcântara festival, and while it's more decentralized, it isn't set up for the street.

I wanted to do it on the streets of Lisbon too. I thought, "Wow, it would be amazing to do it at Terreiro do Paço", on a big avenue where festival-goers are sitting there watching, but then other people would be like, "Wow, what's that?! Those outfits, those bodies!" and they'd be drawn in to watch the parade too, right? Thinking about the fashion industry as well, events like Moda Lisboa and Portugal Fashion are extremely segregated. I walked the runway myself and was one of the few Black models there, yet the only people cleaning the runway between shows were Black workers.

PEDRO

This also has to do with how our bodies are regulated within this city, right? How we can and cannot move about and use public spaces.

I remembered that they used to do this—I don't know if they'll still do it under the new administration—but they used to close Rodrigues de Freitas Avenue on Sundays so people could hang out there. That's in August, when it's still summer and all. Since I live there, I said, "Hey, it's Mariana's birthday—let's celebrate down there." Once the street was closed off, we set up some chairs and stuff, and then people from city hall showed up and said, "No, you can't have a birthday party here"... "But what do you mean? Can't I set up a little table here and hang out with people in this space that you closed off for us to use? We're going to stay here, okay?.. We're going to do this here; if you want to make

this even more tense, we can make it even more tense.” And the person gave up on that approach, and we stayed there. But there are regulations all the time...

DORI

Most of the street performances Paulo and I did were without a permit. Because of all the red tape involved in what we had to apply for and all the questions people asked, we ended up just going ahead without one.

And it worked out—the police didn’t stop us, it happened. But going through the red tape of the Porto City Council, then getting approval, then explaining, then sending it in, then... no!

XAVIER

It’s what that Tiziano was provoking during our conversation on Monday. What counts as public space these days, and what counts as private?

The center or the periphery? In other words, when we talk about going out and encountering public spaces, are we talking about going to Via Santa Catarina? To the Bolhão Market? Or are we talking about going beyond those spaces that are no longer for us? They’re no longer public spaces.

TERESA

I’m also thinking we should talk about building networks or forming partnerships with those who are already doing this. Cultura em Expansão is already organizing events at Barco do Cerco, at Pasteleira... for better or worse, we’re in the process of building this, instead of everyone trying to blaze their own trail...

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That’s why I’m talking about dialogue, about establishing dialogue.

PEDRO

I also remembered, still on the topic of mental health, that there’s a branch of medicine in Italy where some doctors are actually prescribing art to certain patients who come to see them. The patient goes in saying something like, “I don’t know what’s wrong,” and the doctor says, “Okay, I’m going to prescribe that you go to the theater twice a month; it’ll help you.”

So it’s about understanding the role of this institution from a broader perspective, not just based on feedback from a small club. Or whatever...

DORI

And we really do feel that lack, that difficulty in communicating with everyone. When I take a ride-hailing service to the Campo Alegre theater, which is farther away from where I live, the driver doesn’t even know it’s a theater. If people can’t tell from the outside that it’s a theater, if it’s not communicating that to the outside world, imagine what it’s like on the inside, right? In other words, people don’t know that it’s a theater.

TERESA

Yes, or sometimes when the festival itself moves to a particular venue, even if it’s in the city centre, as was the case with Bolhão Market, there needs to be more signage, a proper introduction, and some form of communication with that venue.

I think it's important to highlight how we can encourage people not just to stop, but also to linger, to stay there. By investing more in communal spaces, for example, places to sit... sometimes we have to wait between one performance and another taking place in the same venue, so why not have a beanbag there?... Creating environments that encourage people to come together.

PEDRO

Ways of co-habiting...

TERESA

Pre- and post-performance, because that's how you make long lasting connections.

PEDRO

We've been talking for an hour

DORI

That bird's song was beautiful.

XAVIER

It's lovely, isn't it? Even against the sound of police sirens.

Perhaps to wrap up, I think we could look towards a speculative future. We've already talked about what we want, but perhaps we could talk about something more focused on concrete actions that we want to see in the next 10 years of DDD, given that this timeframe is now being set... What concrete actions involving dialogue or public conversation do we want to see put in place?

DORI

I'll put it very simply: I think a concrete action is simply ensuring that what we're doing here continues, that it's an ongoing, sustained effort. You don't even need to look very far afield, nor will I give examples from that far away... you know that in Portugal the National Arts Plan has a Letter to Porto Santo (a formal Charter by the Culture Sector, which functions as a roadmap of principles and recommendations for implementing and developing a paradigm of cultural democracy in Europe; Carta de Porto Santo). What I feel is that this Porto Santo Charter raises such interesting points here regarding inclusion and diversity, bringing to the fore the three Ds of the 25th April Revolution: Develop, Decolonise and Democratise.

This letter is very interesting; it sets out proposals for cultural institutions to develop, and I feel that the idea remains largely on paper. It looks very good on paper, but in practice it's just a talking point, isn't it? So one of the 3Ds, for example 'Decolonise', is actually so far off... It's a transformation, and it looks very good on paper, but in practice we don't see any concrete revolution.

This Handbook for Inclusive Recruitment is now available, and it was developed within the context of the Porto Municipal Theatre itself, as it was an integral part of that process. I also feel that, in practice, I don't see much real change, particularly given the lack of ethnic and racial diversity, as Pedro mentioned, in these spaces.

As an example of this, I'd like to mention a very interesting project by Rodrigo Ribeiro

Saturnino, a.k.a. ROD, who's here at the festival. It's called 'Repara', and in it he maps out faces and skin tones. That's exactly the idea: stop and take a look. Have a *look*.

We see who it is that has always been at the helm of Portugal's cultural institutions. Until we have some diversity, we are effectively stuck with a single perspective; and even to prevent and mitigate issues of internal racism, which does happen.

When there's no diversity, people might even laugh and say, 'Look at her hair, it's so frizzy.' And that kind of light-hearted racism just goes on, and there isn't really any... I won't say punishment, as that's a strong word, but an intervention, a challenge to the idea that that gesture, however funny it may seem, is a racist gesture, isn't it? So I'd say that's what it is.

PEDRO

I'd say that if Porto were to take such pride in the diversity that has permeated the city, in being a multilingual city made up of different cultures, then this should go beyond a capitalist perspective, which boils down to "oh, we have a greater variety of restaurants in the city! Here you can enjoy a wide range of flavours, or here you can encounter many different cultures."

Let this move beyond being merely capitalist rhetoric and become an everyday reality of life in the city. That will require the institutions that govern this city to be permeated and occupied by these other voices that seem to have an interest, right? So that this can truly become a reality, because otherwise, if that doesn't happen, it will only generate even more tension and even greater division, because within this diversity, opposing forces will obviously emerge to fight against it, won't they?... So this needs to have an almost educational aspect to it as well, not just about the benefits of expropriation, but about building something together.

TERESA

Inclusive recruitment has already been discussed at length here, and this is what Dori was bringing to the table: putting into practice what has already been established. This Handbook for Inclusive Recruitment can serve as a useful resource.

Diversity training for institutional teams during working hours, expanding the role of educational services and public engagement. For example, the Porto Municipal Theatre already has a team working on this throughout the year.

Consultoria e recursos para os artistas que estão na prática a tentar implementar estas mudanças; criação de grupos de trabalho também poderão ser pensados como incubadoras ao abrigo do Teatro Municipal do Porto.

E também falo aqui de uma criação de entidades de apoio aos artistas, e temos o exemplo com muito sucesso da Loja Lisboa Cultura, que presta não só um apoio a nível de desburocratização dos processos de candidaturas a apoios, etc.

XAVIER

Right, see you in 10 years' time then! Let's see how things are in 10 years' time...

PEDRO

Will we still be here?...

The text maintains the authors' choices, both in terms of spelling variations and stylistic expression.

Pedro Vilela is an artist, curator and researcher. A PhD candidate in Art Education at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Porto, he runs TREMA!, an association that fosters artistic links between Brazil and Portugal, and collaborates with various organisations in the city of Porto. His primary focus is on the Afro-Latin American scene, exploring themes such as decoloniality and mechanisms of raciality. He is also the first Latin American to win the Magaly Muguercia Scholarship, awarded by the Iberescena Programme.

Dori Nigro is a creator, performer, art educator and researcher, having studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto and the College of Arts at the University of Coimbra. Since 2007, he has been dedicated to interdisciplinary artistic practices. He holds a PhD, a master's degree and a specialisation in the fields of contemporary art, artistic practices and art education. He has a degree in education and a bachelor's degree in media studies and photography. He lives and works between Portugal and Brazil, facilitating collaborative activities with artists and local communities. Together with Paulo Pinto, he runs LÁRoyé, a home/studio for the sharing of emotional, creative and ancestral traditions, developing research and creative work within the fields of artistic practice and art/education. He is a member of the Black Union of the Arts (UNA).

Teresa Fabião is a dancer, teacher and activist, with an international career that spans art, health, education and social intervention. Her work is characterised by movements between cultures, bodily languages and different contexts of dance practice and theory: artistic, pedagogical and academic. She holds a PhD in Performing Arts and a Master's degree in Dance from UFBA (Brazil), and also trained at the Tamalpa Institute (USA) with Daria and Anna Halprin. A specialist in the Life/Art Process method and certified in Gyrokinesis®, she teaches and develops practices that integrate dance, therapy and somatic approaches. A pioneer in Portugal in integrating HIV into artistic creation, she develops projects that promote HIV+ art as a practice of social transformation and historical redress. In this context, she created the performance UNA, which has been performed internationally, and the community project IMUNE. Her work has been recognised by institutions such as the Gulbenkian, PARTIS & Art for Change, DGArtes, GDA, Porto City Council and the Goethe-Institut. Throughout her career, she has received numerous grants and carried out projects in countries such as Brazil, Spain, Cape Verde, Belgium, Italy, Colombia, Benin, Guinea, Mozambique, Cuba and the United States.

Xavier de Sousa is a performance artist, editor and curator specialising in performance art, critical writing and digital art. He runs performingborders and is Artistic Director of Associação Liminal and Associação Reflexo Azul.

performingborders is a curatorial research and knowledge-sharing platform that explores the relationships between performance, the digital space and lived experiences of intersectional borders. Run by Xavier de Sousa, Anahí Saraiva Herrera and Alessandra Cianetti, *performingborders* has woven a hybrid tapestry of interconnected and cross-border experiences through interviews, artistic commissions, publications (print and digital), residencies, workshops, conversations, events and more – all freely accessible on its website. *performingborders* focuses on the development and collaboration with Transborder Artists – migrant and diasporic professionals, thinkers, writers and organisers whose lived experience is shaped by intersectional barriers. Its work seeks to nurture these practices, while also designing new spaces, networks and ways of working, informed by a deep understanding of systemic injustice. *performingborders* is a platform where artists, methods and approaches intersect, think together and imagine expansive new ways of connecting through live art and performance.