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In the panel I moderated, participants discussed artistic, cultural and activist organizing and self-making during the economic crisis in Puerto Rico (before and after María). Dennis Colón, Director of the Asociación de Artistas y Torneros en PR, joined us via Skype to discuss his artisan work; and his art work making pieces with wood discarded after the hurricane. Beth Colón discussed the work of Colectivo Moriviví and Colectivo Artistas en Resistencia, to address the polemics around the representation and use of the Puerto Rican flag and feminist art and politics in public space; while Bárbara Abadía-Rexach discussed her activism work with Colectivo Ilé, a group of Afrodescendant identified women who have been doing work through "calderos" or pots of ideas around civic and social matters. Carina del Valle Schorske read a translation of Puerto Rican poet Marigloria Palma's collection "The Night and Other Electric Flowers" (1976); which showed the power of translation, but also the poetics of survival and lyricism of the Puerto Rican condition. Finally, Dr. Sebastián Otero discussed his activist work as a trans man who traveled to Puerto Rico before and after the natural disaster with the aim to help trans communities. As it happens in many parts of the world, trans communities in Puerto Rico not only live in extreme poverty but are also victims of daily violence.

In my discussion I covered the poetics of language, art, and strength in Puerto Rico, and the fact that mourning and resilience is part of our daily language of survival through creativity and poetics; also, the fact that many activist groups are re-working a language of resistance rooted in metaphors of community, race, and cultural nationalism; and the gendered (feminine) nature of activism in Puerto Rico; which activates state violence of all kinds. The fact that creation (like artisan work) and words are so rooted in forms of self-making opens up spaces of agency and negotiation vis à vis the violence of the economic crisis.

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