In recent years, the “right to the city” has re-emerged at the center of global debates about urbanization, democracy, and the fate of the left. Social movements around the world have adopted it as a mantra and, in 2016, the UN enshrined it as key to a “New Urban Agenda.” But where does the right to the city come from, and what does it mean in practice? Have its translations into law and policy satisfied grassroots demands for radical inclusion in the urban fabric? This talk explores the history of these questions in Brazil, a country that is both widely praised as a global pioneer in institutionalizing the democratic right to the city and widely pilloried for its chaotic and violent urban landscapes.