

## **THE CONFLICTS AND DILEMMAS PRESENT IN THE FAVELAS OF RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL: NEW RESPONSIBILITIES AND NEW FORMS OF PARTICIPATION.**

Rachel Coutinho-Silva<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Graduate Program in Urbanism, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, rachelcc@acd.ufrj.br

Keywords (maximum 3): favelas, urban violence, citizenship

### **Abstract**

*The Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro is putting forward a new ambitious program of pacification and slum upgrading in some favelas in the city of Rio since 2008 – the Pacification Police Units (UPP). It aims to recover the territories once controlled by drug dealers, establishing a program of peace building and institutional reconstruction together with the construction of basic infrastructure and public services. In the favelas with the UPP program, one can observe new urban dynamics, such as new services and commercial ventures, upgrading of homes, expansion of informal real estate, new touristic, leisure and sport activities, which generate new jobs, income and new perspectives for dwellers. On one hand, these new socioeconomic dynamics strongly restructure and redesign the favelas; on the other, the absence of a planning body that coordinates the several ongoing projects, together with the precarious infrastructure and the ominous presence of the police force, diminish the potential gains. The UPP generates new responsibilities and new expectations towards public safety and quality of life in a population now with more income and consumer power, demanding a more effective public response and new forms of participation. As long as these demands are not fulfilled, new conflicts and new forms of resistance appeared in these communities. The objective of this paper is to analyze the progresses and setbacks of the UPP program, focusing on the rising conflicts and dilemmas, taking as case studies two communities in Rio de Janeiro: the Complexo do Alemão and the Pavão-Pavãozinho-Cantagalo.*

### **1. Introduction**

The Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro is putting forward a new ambitious program of pacification and slum upgrading in some favelas in the city of Rio since 2008 – the Pacification Police Units (UPP). It aims to recover the territories once controlled by drug dealers, establishing a program of peace building and institutional reconstruction together with the construction of basic infrastructure and public services. In the favelas with the UPP program, one can observe new urban dynamics, such as new services and commercial ventures, upgrading of homes, expansion of informal real estate, new touristic, leisure and sport activities, which generate new jobs, income and new perspectives for dwellers. On one hand, these new socioeconomic dynamics strongly restructure and redesign the favelas; on the other, the absence of a planning body that coordinates the several ongoing projects, together with the precarious infrastructure and the ominous presence of the police force, diminish the potential gains. The UPP generates new responsibilities and new expectations towards public safety and quality of life in a population now with more income and consumer power, demanding a more effective public response and new forms of participation. As long as these demands are not fulfilled, new conflicts and new forms of resistance appeared in these communities. The objective of this paper is to analyze the progresses and setbacks of the UPP program, focusing on the rising conflicts and dilemmas, taking as case studies two communities in Rio de Janeiro: the Complexo do Alemão and the Pavão-Pavãozinho-Cantagalo.

## 2. Conceptual framework

My analysis is based on the theoretical propositions of five authors: Anthony Giddens' notion of reflexive modernity and Ulrich Beck's notion of risk society; Henri Lefebvre's concept of urban praxis and of the ideology of urbanism, as well as his scales of socio-spatial reality; Michel Foucault's discussion of order as an expression of power and his notion of power network; and Paulo Freire's pedagogical proposition towards the liberation of the oppressed. In this particular paper, I will also refer to Bruno Latour's concept of actor-network-theory in order to understand new social relations being formed in favelas.

This paper is part of a broader research project – “Urbanism in the Risk Society: planning and design strategies for integration in areas of social and environmental conflict and vulnerability” – funded by the Brazilian National Research Council (CNPq) and Chagas Filho Foundation for Research Support in the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ).

The research focuses on 4 case studies which encompasses 4 favelas in Rio de Janeiro:

- Comunidade Santa Marta; South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, District of Botafogo; Middle-Class District;
- Morro da Providência; Downtown Rio;
- Morro Pavão-Pavãozinho; South Zone of Rio, Upper-Middle Class District;
- Complexo do Alemão; Northern Zone of Rio de Janeiro, close to the International airport.

## 3. The Context of Urban Violence in Rio de Janeiro

Urban violence has doubled in the last 20 years in the whole world, according to UN-Habitat data, and it is expected that in the next 5 years half of the world's urban population will be a victim of some sort of crime. The increasing crime rates are a problem for cities in the Southern or in the Northern hemisphere. In the latter, petty crimes increased between 3% and 5% annually from 1970 and 1990 in the cities with a population with more than a 100.000 inhabitants. In Latin American and in Brazil, urban violence is growing not only in informal areas, but also in several formal districts of cities. In Brazil the mortality rate linked to urban violence continues to grow, increasing from 59 deaths in 100.000 inhabitants in 1980 to 75,2 in 2002 reaching 90 deaths in 100.000 inhabitants in 2003.

The city of Rio de Janeiro used to be one of the most violent cities in Brazil, in which the rates of mortality from external causes (traffic accidents and violence) rose from 59 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants in 1980 to 75.2 deaths in 2002 and 90 deaths in 2003, affecting mostly the male population between 15 and 19 years and the population in low-income squatter settlements. With implementation of the pacification program, homicides rates from violence have substantially decreased to 10 deaths per 100.000 inhabitants in 2013.

The city presents an interesting case of the dialectical relationship between urban violence, social exclusion and spatial segregation. Urban violence contributes to new forms of segregation and increases the vulnerability of socially excluded groups. Rio de Janeiro also presents an interesting aspect of proximity between low-income squatter settlements and the traditional middle class and upper class neighborhoods, which also makes urban conflicts more visible. This socio-spatial conformation, the result of a historical process of urban occupation and a peculiar geography, encouraged urban policies that are often contradictory and ambiguous.

In Brazil, favelas have become vulnerable areas because of the lack of infrastructure, its housing conditions and the absence of state institutions. In Rio, the illegal drug business found a strategic location in the favelas, with its labyrinth urban pattern and poor accessibility. The favelas are usually located in hilly areas which further contribute to difficult the police actions or raids in those areas.

Urban violence in the city of Rio de Janeiro starts to grow from the late 1980s, with the increasing concentration of income, socioeconomic inequalities and the fiscal crisis of the State. From the 1990s on, violence grew as a consequence of the entry of large drug cartels in the city. Having the slum as local marketing of illicit drugs, drug traffickers inherit a clientelistic relationship from other illegal activities that existed before in the favelas, mainly the “jogo do bicho” (animals lottery).

In 1985, there were 377 slums in Rio de Janeiro, which concentrated approximately 1,800,000 inhabitants, representing 32% of the city population. The number of slums and slum population has grown steadily over the years. In 2005 there were 750 favelas officially recognized by the city. Some slums are in contiguous clusters that form the so-called complex of slums. According to the 2000 census, the city of Rio de Janeiro had a total of 5,857,904 inhabitants, of whom, approximately one-fifth (18.65%) lived in favelas. The Instituto Pereira Passos (IPP), the planning office of the City of Rio de Janeiro, (IPP) estimates that the population living in favelas and illegal subdivisions is approximately 406,000 inhabitants. The area occupied by favelas in the city in 2004 was 41%.

In the case of Rio de Janeiro, the expression divided city (Ventura, 1994) designates the city divided between formal and informal areas. Some authors reject this term, because they believe it feeds the collective imagination of Rio de Janeiro as a violent city. This perception of the city as violent contributes to spatial fragmentation and social exclusion, and the diffuse feeling of fear and insecurity. Milk argues that "the representation of Rio as a 'divided city' strengthens symbolic connections between poverty and crime in the city' slums." The numerous episodes of violent clashes, massacres, and rebellions in the city are increasing from the 90s, and have contributed to the isolation of citizens in their condos or ghettos. It also creates a false opposition between the poor living in the hilly favelas and those living in the so-called asphalt communities (morro vs. asfalto), between slum dwellers and middle class, between gangsters and the police, which contributes to the symbolic level for the urban chaos. Thus a vicious circle is created, where the media and the private security industry benefit from this state of fear among citizens, which further contribute to the perpetuation violence, shifting the focus from the real problem, i.e., the poverty and social exclusion.

This representation of fear and insecurity contributes to intolerance and individualism, undermining the foundations of urbanity. The cariocai spirit has always been guided by solidarity, warmth and joy. In the collective imagination Rio de Janeiro is a city with a democratic spirit and integrator of different races and social classes in their urban space. Places, such as the beach and cultural and sports activities such as samba and football, are places that congregates different groups. In the street corners, one can see different segments gathering for a beer in the popular bars. Thus, the sense of insecurity and fear contributes to increase the social and physical boundaries between rich and poor and between the formal and informal areas. It also contributes to the reduction of the civil rights of favelas inhabitants, since in these areas dominated by drug trafficking, citizenship and public safety are incompatible from a conservative viewpoint. The crackdowns against drug trafficking are almost always surrounded by arrests and indiscriminate killings, where police clashes with armed drug gangs. In this scenario the residents of these areas are those who suffers the most. These police raids are being conducted systematically since the early 90s. Instead of producing the decrease in crime rates, it has had the opposite effect and contributed to its increase. It also contributed to the emergence and strengthening of private security apparatuses in illegal slum areas, the militia, who in the name of protecting the residents, has taken control of basic services such as bottled gas distribution and transportation (usually vans and motorcycles) and also access to illegal cable television, therefore creating another parallel power. These militias are formed by retired police officers and express the fine line between legal and illegal power.

The phenomenon of police violence is not new in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Holloway shows how the police was created to serve the elite and aristocratic classes, and not the common citizen, since

the nineteenth century. The author argues that civil society has always supported the brutal actions of police repression (Holloway, 1993). Police violence and its repressive methods, rather than contributing to reduce urban violence, has triggered processes of resistance and social exclusion.

#### **4. The program of pacification police units in the city of Rio de Janeiro (UPP)**

The city of Rio de Janeiro is hosting two mega events: part of the Soccer World Cup, which already occurred in 2014, and the Olympic games of 2016. Because of the magnitude of these events, the State Government or Rio de Janeiro with the support of the City Government, are putting forward new public safety programs in the favelas. Drug dealers, mostly in the form of cartels, dominated the majority of these squatter settlements.

Until 2008 the majority of urban projects for favelas focused only on the improvement of public spaces, with little concern for the problem of public safety. In 2008, the Department of Public Security of the government of the State of Rio de Janeiro launched a new program called Pacification Police Units (UPP) aiming at dismantling the drug gangs that controlled the territory of almost all the slums in the city of Rio de Janeiro. This program aims to inaugurate a total of 40 UPPs in favelas of Rio and encompasses up to April 2014, 37 favelas. The first UPP was established in the Favela Dona Marta in November 2008. According to the official description of the program, the UPP "intends to establish a new model of public security and policing which aims at promoting closer relationship between the population and the police, as well as strengthening social programs. Another goal was to recover territories controlled by drug dealers and to promote social inclusion of the poor inhabitants of these areas."ii

The UPP program takes its concept from the international peace building programs implemented in countries where there is an institutional and political crisis, usually after civil war. There is a difference between peace enforcement and peace building. The first is based in the imposition of peace through military occupation. The second one is based on the reconstruction of state apparatus and social rebuilding of democracy. Brazil has a solid experience on peace building since it has been a key actor in UN actions in Haiti.

The UPP program intends to generate peace in these highly vulnerable areas. The first phase of the program is the occupation of the favela (after a military action of invading these communities, arresting the drug dealers, or in most cases, expelling them) with the establishment of a physical unit of the police in a strategic place where it can oversee streets and movement of come and go. The second phase is to gradually bring social services and public institutions into the favela. In this phase there is the creation of the social UPP (UPP Social) -- the counterpart of the municipal government.

The UPP tries to reinforce public safety through a 24-hr control of the favela space. The police personnel designated to serve in the UPP receive a special training, which includes courses on social skills and on how to establish a positive attitude.

Since the UPP program is very recent the first studies about its degree of success are starting to appear. The majority of analysis deals with the UPP Dona Marta because it is the oldest. Before the UPP, an important favela upgrading program was already been implemented, with a very important equipment being created: the inclined tramway, a sort of elevator that transport people and goods from the lower to the upper part, or vice-versa. More than half of the dwellers of Comunidade Dona Marta are in favor of the UPP. They resent the ominous police presence, which although better trained, still intimidates the dwellers.

#### **5. New internal dynamics in the favelas**

So far, 38 favelas or "complexos" (adjoining favelas forms a complexo) received the UPP program. The results are diverse. In some favelas, mainly at those located in the Southern zone of the city

(inhabited by the wealthiest classes), the UPP program is succeeding in bringing violent conflicts to a minimum level. Comunidade Dona Marta, Complexo Pavão-Pavaozinho-Cantagalo (PPC), Chapéu Mangueira, among others, showed a decrease in the crime rate in general, particularly in the homicide rates. In others, such as Complexo do Alemão, Complexo da Maré e Rocinha still suffers from violence and armed confrontation between the police and drug gangs, which usually affects civil population.

#### **a. Complexo do Alemão**

The area that encompasses the set of adjoining favelas, known as Complexo do Alemão is considered a neighborhood by the city, for statistical purposes. It is located in the Planning Area 3, in the Northern zone of the city, which is traditionally a working-class area. It has an official population of 69.143 inhabitants and has 4 UPP's: Nova Brasília, Fazendinha, Alemão and Adeus/Baiana. An important structure of transportation based on cable cars was put in place in 2011.

This transportation structure had a profound impact on the landscape of the favela, when seen from a distance, from people who transit in car in the main expressways of the city. But, more important, has also a very important impact on dweller's daily life, since it goes over the rooftops of the houses. The cable cars together with the 4 UPPs have prompted a cycle of tourist influx to the favela, attracted by the curiosity to visit an informal settlement, but also to enjoy the wonderful views of the city one has from its several observation points. As a consequence, a new internal urban social and economic dynamic is installed in the favela. Just as an example, the Complexo do Alemão and its cable car is the second touristic attraction in the city right now (the first is the Sugar Loaf hill), receiving 8.400 visitors per day in the high season. 12.000 people access it in one day, 70% being visitors. The cable car is free for favela dwellers; but it only costs R\$ 5.00 to outsiders, while the Sugar Loaf costs R\$ 62.00. As a result of the increase in safety and in the numbers of visitors, a series of new restaurants, bars and hostels are being opened. Commerce has also benefitted from this dynamic. Another important aspect is that the value of real-estate (mostly informal housing or buildings) is increasing with concerns over a gentrification process.

NGO's and "coletivos" (informal association of artistic and cultural groups) are increasing, as well as many cultural groups and associations.

#### **b. Pavão-Pavãozinho-Cantagalo**

The area, known as Comunidade Pavão-Pavãozinho-Cantagalo, is located in the Southern zone of the city, in a traditional area inhabited by the middle- and upper-middle classes, in Planning Area 2, close to the touristic areas of Copacabana and Ipanema. It has an official population of 10.338 inhabitants, and has 1 UPP. The connection between the neighborhood of Ipanema and the upper part of the favela is made through a public elevator opened in 2010. Like Complexo do Alemão, one can observe new internal dynamics as a result of the pacification and the improvement in accessibility. The public elevator represents a direct connection from the General Osório station of the subway (in Ipanema) to the top of the hill. The views of the beaches of southern Atlantic coast of Rio are also splendid, and its location next to Ipanema and Copacabana has attracted many visitors. Dwellers have seized the opportunity, and opened new commercial and service ventures, such as, bars, restaurants, hostels, B&B in the favela. PPC shows an impressive number of NGOs, "coletivos" and cultural groups, that have many programs and actions in the community.

### **6. Associations and new forms of participation**

One can see that many types of associations, formal and informal, public, non-governmental and private, are appearing in these communities. These groups stimulate new forms of participation and new forms of representation of favelas problems and demands. One can also observe that the use of digital media and its apps, such as Facebook, whatsapp, google, is increasing, as well as the use of

crowdsourcing, crowd mapping, and so forth. These represents new forms of assembly as well as new forms of communication. Pamphlets and printed ads and posters refers to new forms of manifestation or resistance, and also to humorous criticism of the new structures and projects going on in these communities. If these will represent a real voice or a real participation in the public arena and in the city is something to be observed and analysed.

## 7. Conclusions

The UPP program has brought some benefits to favelas, as well as pitfalls. Among the main benefits, one can see that favelas are more safe and secure, and that homicides rates have a decreased and that the State has regained territorial control of favelas; at the same time, local economy have been stimulated, as well as entrepreneurship with new commercial and service activities appearing, which, in turn, stimulated local tourism.

Despite the positive aspects, one can verify that there is no empowerment of local communities, no citizenship awareness program. Most policies are top-down, reflecting a State assistance approach. Moreover, UPP maintains a 24-hr surveillance and control of the territory, and shows an ostensive presence of armed police.

One can also observe that new forms of association are appearing in those communities, and with the easy access to digital media, have prompted new forms of assembly and manifestations. Whether these will be favourable to a more inclusive environment and to a more democratic participation is something to be verified.

## 8. References

- Beck, U., 1992. *Risk Society: Toward a New Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bennett, C., & Haggerty, K. (Eds.) 2011. *Security Games: Surveillance and Control at Mega-Events*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Cornelissen, S. 2011. Mega event securitization in a third world setting: Glocal processes and ramifications during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. *Urban Studies* 48,15, 3221-3240.
- Coutinho M. da Silva, R., 2009. Exclusão social, violência urbana e reconfiguração espacial na cidade brasileira. In: D. B. P. Machado, org. *Tipologias e projetos urbanos na cidade contemporânea*, Coleção *Arquitetura Urbana Brasileira*, vol 2, Porto Alegre: MarcaVisual, pp. 21-40.
- Coutinho M. da Silva, R., 2010. “Violência, Vulnerabilidade e Exclusão Sócioespacial: uma revisão conceitual”. *Revista Interfaces CLA/UFRJ*, 12 (2) pp. 22-28.
- Coutinho M. da Silva, Rachel (org.), 2012. *Desafios Urbanos para a Sustentabilidade Ambiental das Cidades Brasileiras*. Rio de Janeiro: PROURB/UFRJ.
- Foucault, Michel, 1979. *Microfísica do Poder*. Rio de Janeiro, Edições Graal.
- Freire, Paulo, 1970. *A pedagogia do oprimido*. Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra.
- Giddens, A., 2005. *Mundo em Descontrole: o que a globalização está fazendo de nós*. Rio de Janeiro: Record.
- Giddens, A.; Beck, U.; e Lash, S, 1997. *Modernização Reflexiva: política, tradição e estética na ordem social moderna*. São Paulo: Editora da UNESP.
- Harvey, David, 2004.. *Espaços de Esperança*. São Paulo: Edições Loyola.
- Holston, James, 2008. *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press.
- Latour, Bruno, 2004. *Políticas da Natureza: Como fazer ciência na democracia*. Florianópolis, EDUSC.
- Latour, B. 2005. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Santos, Boaventura de Souza Santos, 2003. *Pela mão de Alice: o social e o político na pós-modernidade*. São Paulo, Cortez.

<sup>i</sup> Carioca is how inhabitants from Rio de Janeiro are called.

<sup>ii</sup> [http://www.upprj.com/index.php/o\\_que\\_e\\_upp](http://www.upprj.com/index.php/o_que_e_upp)