

SHOCK OF PEACE: INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN SOCIAL WELFARE AND CRIME CONTROL POLICY IN RIO DE JANEIRO'S *FAVELAS*

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Abstract

As Brazil prepares to host the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games, the municipal government of its second-largest city, Rio de Janeiro, seeks to establish infrastructure and security for the hundreds of thousands of expected tourists. To that end, the city is undertaking urban development projects and a novel policing strategy called “pacification” in several of the city’s *favelas*, the informal settlements that house roughly 22 percent of Rio’s population (Hurrell 2011). This paper analyzes the role of social service provision in ensuring the success of both urban redevelopment projects and crime control strategies in the *favelas*.

As Brazil prepares to host the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Summer Games, the municipal government of its second-largest city, Rio de Janeiro, faces considerable challenges. In an attempt to provide the infrastructure and security needed for the hundreds of thousands of expected tourists, the city is undertaking urban development projects that Brazil’s Sports Minister, Aldo Rebelo, says will “build a lasting legacy of economic growth and reducing social inequality” (Smale 2012b).

Some of the areas targeted for new development are the *favelas*, the “slums” that house nearly 1.4 million people, roughly 22 percent of Rio’s urban population (Hurrell 2011). Home to many of the city’s poorest residents, *favelas* developed in the 20th century as a space for rural-to-urban migrants lacking the means to acquire housing through the formal market (Perlman 2005). The Brazilian research institute *Observatorio de*

Favelas outlines four key defining features common to these informal settlements (Turcheti e Melo 2010).

First, business, labor, and property relations in the *favelas* typically fall outside of formal regulatory structures and residents face disparities in access to public infrastructure, social services, and entertainment facilities. Second, investment from formal sectors of the economy is traditionally sparse. Third, residents often lack formal titles to their properties, and development patterns in *favelas* rarely reflect centralized urban planning schemes. Fourth, the majority of residents tend to be black, multiracial, or indigenous, and the *favela* often functions as a space for cultural expression and social and political organizing (Turcheti e Melo 2010).

Anthropologist Janice Perlman (2005) writes that *favelas* have long been a source of social unease and conflict in Rio, noting that their “continued existence and proliferation challenges the legitimacy of the social system that created them” (2). According to Perlman, a common refrain in Rio is that *favelas* are a “social problem” and “a blight on the city,” their very presence attributed to an enduring culture of poverty among the areas’ residents (3). Rio politicians have used this sentiment to justify urban renewal programs focused on *favela* eradication. For one salient historical example, Rio’s government in the 1970s used garbage trucks to forcibly move residents to public housing in other parts of the city, often distant from jobs and social networks and supports (Perlman 2005).

Often rising on the hillsides above Rio’s neighborhoods and coastlines, *favelas* occupy some of the city’s most desirable real estate (3). Many *favelas* cleared in 1970s urban renewal programs were subsequently replaced with high-priced condominiums and other luxury real estate developments (3). The rapid growth in Brazil’s economy and the acute need for accommodations among tourists expected to attend the Olympics and the World Cup have created increased interest in the *favelas* as sites for real estate and tourism development (García-Navarro 2014). For example, one real estate investor from São Paulo who recently bought a property to develop into a high-end tourist lodging in Vidigal, a hillside *favela* overlooking an exclusive beach, said that the space is “going to be almost like a Mediterranean village in 10 years” (Romero 2012).

Human rights groups estimate that 3,000 people have already been evicted from their homes during the development of the World Cup and Olympics, and as many as 200,000 people remain at risk for displacement and resettlement in public housing on the outskirts of the city (García-Navarro 2014). Many *favela* residents perceive that their forcible evictions reflect the desire of Rio’s elites to push them to the margins; in the words of one former resident of the Vila Harmonia *favela*, “In my opinion, they

want us to be there to serve them, then they want us to go as far away as possible” (Garcia-Navarro 2014).

Past efforts at economic development in the *favelas* have been hampered by high rates of drug trafficking and violent crime (Turcheti e Melo 2010; Stahlberg ND). In the 1980s, the *favelas* emerged as key sites for international drug distribution (Turcheti e Melo 2010). To circumvent police interference in their trade, cartels operating there developed significant firepower capabilities and established crime syndicates that included police and public officials (Turcheti e Melo 2010; Stahlberg ND). Police corruption, coupled with a long history of misconduct and brutality, has led many residents to distrust any efforts by law enforcement to crack down on violent or drug crime (Stahlberg ND), leaving the cartels as the lone source of law and order. Cartels have also used threats and violence to intimidate local leaders opposed to the drug trade and to discourage residents from engaging with police. Additionally, cartels provide many residents, particularly youth, with higher-wage and higher-status employment than is available to them in the formal market (Turcheti e Melo 2010; Stahlberg ND). Collectively, these factors have led some government officials and policy analysts to view Rio's *favelas* as “ungovernable” (Watts 2013a).

FAVELA PACIFICATION PROGRAM

As it prepares to host the upcoming mega-events, Rio has sought to reduce crime in the *favelas* with the goal of improving the city's public image and securing the areas proximate to event sites (Watts 2013a). The city government has instituted the Favela Pacification Program (FPP) in about 30 of the city's 700 *favelas* (Arsenault 2012; Smale 2012a), the majority of which are located near event or tourist areas (Watts 2013a). Based on US counterinsurgency doctrine (Arsenault 2012) and New York's “broken windows” policing (Emert 2009), Rio's “shock of peace” (Smale 2011) strives to “pacify” both the drug trade and social unrest through militarized occupation of the *favelas*, the long-awaited provision of social services (Bailly 2011), and the integration of local businesses and properties into the formal economy (Stahlberg N.D.).

There are three phases of pacification: first, military troops confront drug gangs and secure the area; then, riot police patrol the area for about a week, before they are finally replaced by community police called the Pacification Peace Units (UPP) (Schiller 2013). Besides keeping the peace, the UPP are also tasked with helping to establish—and even themselves provide—social services, such as garbage collection, improved electrical grids, recreational classes, educational opportunities, and community

engagement (Barrionuevo 2010; Schiller 2013). A 2010 *New York Times* article describes the role of the UPP as “part traditional policing, part social work” (Barrionuevo 2010). According to policy analyst Stephanie Stahlberg (N.D.), community policing and the provision of social services are designed to set the stage for a subsequent phase called “shock of order” (28), in which business and property relationships are formalized.

In some of the *favelas* occupied by UPP forces, it appears the pacification strategy is having notable successes. According to the Brazilian Forum for Public Security, the homicide rate has dropped by 80 percent in select areas policed by the UPP (Schiller 2013). School attendance in “pacified” *favelas* has increased, up by 90 percent in one high school, and some areas have seen improvements in sanitation, health, and social services (Barrionuevo 2010). In some cases, *Favela* residents have launched profitable businesses, often targeted toward foreign tourists who are expected to come in droves for the mega-events (Garcia-Navarro 2013); for instance, some residents build extra rooms to rent out and advertise on Airbnb.com (Garcia-Navarro 2013). One enterprising resident told a journalist from National Public Radio that pacification has been a good thing and that residents no longer pay taxes to drug gangs (Garcia-Navarro 2014).

Yet while many hail these and others successes, the FPP has also been met with a battery of criticisms. The FPP is “stirring the ghosts” (Romero 2012) of historical urban renewal programs, causing residents to express suspicion that the FPP derives from perceived profit potential, rather than concerns about residents’ welfare (Arsenault 2012). Among the criticisms leveled at the program are claims that it facilitates gentrification, causes a migration of crime from pacified *favelas* to other neighboring shantytowns, and that it criminalizes public space in the *favelas* and leads to discretionary policing of residents.

GENTRIFICATION

As some long-term *favela* residents enjoy reduced violence and long-awaited improvements to sanitation, health, education, and social services, many other residents, academics, and journalists question whether these benefits are worth the inevitable price of gentrification (Timerman 2013). After the UPP units occupy the *favelas*, companies, banks, and infrastructure projects often quickly follow (Arsenault 2012). Some of the “pacified” *favelas* “persist amid a sprawl reminiscent of South Florida, with palm-fringed condominiums and shopping malls” (Romero 2012). According to resident Flavio Carvalho, “Things have become more expensive. You see in the newspaper that the economy is growing, but I haven’t seen it for real. Most of the money goes to companies” (Arsenault 2012).

In Rocinha, Rio's largest slum, the FPP brought a new swimming pool, bank, and infrastructure, as well as foreign tourists who resident Leandro Lima says view the neighborhood as a sort of "exotic urban safari" (Arsenault 2012). Some tourists and expatriates express their interest in experiencing the perceived "authenticity" of life in the *favelas*, as compared with other, more conventional, tourist sites. Said one 23-year-old from Philadelphia who recently moved to Vidigal, "I think there are a lot of young people and a lot of students who come here with this idea of: How can we come and live here and really try and learn from a place?...How can we really try and insert ourselves in the community?" (Garcia-Navarro 2013). Others attribute the security provided by the FPP with their decision to reside in a *favela*; said a 22-year-old American who just moved to the Babilonia *favela*, "I always say I feel a lot safer at night walking here than I do in Copa or Leme...I like sprint through Copa or Leme when I get off the bus. When I get here, I say whoa, OK." Whereas previous fears about safety may have kept foreigners or more affluent residents from considering a visit or move to the *favelas*, in spite of their affordability or convenient location, an increased sense of security provided by the FPP seems to have paved the way for new types of *favela* residents (Garcia-Navarro 2013). These trends may validate the fears of residents who are concerned that the FPP will lead to gentrification and displacement due to elevated costs and increased competition for space.

As previously noted, displacement takes a more explicit form for residents of *favelas* that have been slated for destruction. In these communities, residents are served eviction orders, minimally compensated and resettled in areas on the periphery of the city (Romero 2012; Garcia-Navarro 2014). While Jorge Bittar, the head of Rio's housing authority, stated that "No one is resettled if not for a very important reason" (Romero 2012), critics note that these condemned *favelas* are almost exclusively located in areas slated for event sites (Romero 2012) or tourist infrastructure (Garcia-Navarro 2014). Condemned *favelas* in Brazil have been sites of protest—for example, Rio's Vila Autódromo *favela* has filed injunctions and resisted eviction (Romero 2012). Alternately, "pacified" *favelas* have largely surrendered quietly (Smale 2012a).

CRIME MIGRATION

In *favelas* proximate to those where the pacification program has been implemented, there have been reports of possible crime migration. For example, Rio newspapers report that drug traffickers from Mangueira, one of the "pacified" *favelas* located near Rio's Maracanã stadium, have merely relocated to Preventorio, located across the bay (Phillips 2012).

This is indicative of the spatial inequality of the pacification program and security in Rio's *favelas* in general: law enforcement regimes are territorialized and differ greatly depending on their proximity to valuable real estate, future mega-event sites, or pacified shantytowns. Many question whether pacification could ever be a sustainable security strategy for the city writ large; as Paulo Lins, author of the book *City of God* about Rio's eponymous *favela*, stated, "Are you going to have millions of policemen in the more than six hundred *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro? Or are you just going to occupy the main *favelas*? The ones that show up in the media?...They call them pacifiers, but what are they? It's a bunch of men armed to the teeth in a *favela*" (Furloni and Kollman 2010).

If one accepts the oft-leveled critique that the pattern of pacification in the city maps onto the valuable property located near tourist or event sites, then the patchwork quality of Rio's pacification regime is an inequitable byproduct of Rio's urban political economy. As Fainstein (1991) notes, when urban planning is coupled with the objective of economic development, "market rationality and local competitiveness [replace] comprehensiveness and equity as the primary criteria by which planning projects are judged" (79). Even if one accepts the merits some politicians, analysts, and *favela* residents claim for the FPP, its effects are distributed unequally, in a mere fraction of Rio's *favelas*, while other *favelas* with real estate of lesser value deal with chronic neglect and, potentially, the spillover of crime.

CRIMINALIZATION OF PUBLIC SPACE AND DISCRETIONARY POLICING

Pacification was designed following New York City's model of "broken windows" policing, a "zero tolerance policy" against petty crimes such as loitering and panhandling that disproportionately focused on the city's marginalized and indigent (Sampson and Raudenbush 2004). This kind of policing leaves residents vulnerable to police discretion in determining what acts represent "social disorder" (Sampson and Raudenbush 2004). The discretionary policing may explain in part the "intangible something-lost" (Barrionuevo 2010) that some residents have described, as pacification alters prevailing social norms. For example, Barrionuevo (2010) describes how drug traffickers used to subsidize block parties in the *favelas* as a method to recruit dealers—and now the police are controlling the parties, "limiting alcohol consumption among minors and censoring misogynistic lyrics that glorify drug gangs."

THE "SOCIAL ARM OF THE STATE" IN CRIME CONTROL AND REDEVELOPMENT

The philosophy behind the Favela Pacification Program was articulated in documents from the US Consulate in Rio, which, exposed by WikiLeaks, showed that the FPP "shares some characteristics with US counter-insurgency doctrine and strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq" (Arsenault 2012). The documents emphasize that the FPP's success will depend on "*favela* residents' perception of the 'legitimacy of the state'" (Arsenault 2012). The dispatch also stresses the need to "convince [the] *favela* population that the benefits of submitting to state authority (security, legitimate land ownership, access to education) outweigh the costs (taxes, utility fees, civil obedience)" (Arsenault 2012). Officials argue the "program has little chance of success" if merely framed around the Olympics; "If, however, the program wins over 'hearts and minds' in the *favelas*, [it] could remake the social and economic fabric of Rio de Janeiro" (Arsenault 2012).

To draw on Michel Foucault (1997), the FPP involves both "technologies of power" that "determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends of domination," and "technologies of the self," which transform *favela* residents' "bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being" (225). Foucault (1978) further argues that state power manifests through both violence and political technologies focused on "health, modes of subsistence and habitation, living conditions, the whole space of existence" (144). For Foucault, technologies of power focused on "the task of administering life" (139) provide an impetus for individuals to become self-regulating subjects who willingly reproduce mentalities and behaviors that support existing structures of power. The "technologies of the self" employed by the UPP were summed up by tour guide Sergio Castro who said, "We must above all give poor people a new perspective" (Käufer 2010).

A challenge to *favela* residents' perceived legitimacy of the state is the long history of police misconduct, abuse, and corruption. A Human Rights Watch report accuses Rio police of routinely using excessive force and committing extortion (Boyle 2009), and a highly-publicized case in which ten UPP officers were charged with the torture and killing of Amarildo de Souza, a resident of Rio's Rocinha *favela*, led to large-scale protests and a heightened sense of apprehension about the program among many residents (Watts 2013b). Such records of violence only amplify the role of social work in establishing the legitimacy and credibility of the UPP (Stahlberg ND). US consular representatives emphasized the need for "civilian government and NGO personnel" to establish governance structures and service delivery networks following pacification, warning that "if such a vacuum persists,

it will wear down police capacity and lead to frustration among residents in pacified *favelas*” (Bailey 2011). The use of social services as tool for establishing trust and complicity among *favela* residents refers to what Wacquant (2001) calls the “social arm of the state” in achieving the FPP’s critical objective of winning over “hearts and minds” (121).

Thus, the FPP has significant ethical implications for the field of social work, particularly as social service delivery intersects with criminal justice and economic development. While public officials champion the FPP as a “softer touch,” in reality the consequences may be the same as those of more contentious “slum removal” efforts, if indeed results include the displacement of residents through increasing gentrification. *Favela* residents who have long lacked social services and infrastructure tentatively welcome trash pickup, sewage disposal, and a public pool—even as many complain that development projects seem to favor private investment and tourism. Contrast their muted response to those served eviction orders who coordinate protests, civil disobedience, and legal injunctions. These protests have been a bane to the municipal government, forcing construction delays, shaking investor confidence, and attracting negative publicity (Romero 2012). “Pacification” has proven a more efficient governance strategy, demonstrating that the project of winning “hearts and minds” through the provision of public and social services can play a powerful role in establishing quiescence and social order.

CONCLUSION

At this stage, it appears impossible to say whether the Favela Pacification Program will ultimately be deemed a sustainable benefit to residents of the targeted *favelas*, a passing program that fades away as the city recedes from its spot on the world stage, or a unique yet functionally equivalent mechanism for displacing *favela* residents to make way for new development. Community activist Theresa Williamson of the *favela*-empowerment NGO, Catalytic Communities, offers possible solutions that might help protect *favela* residents against the potential negative secondary consequences of pacification (e.g. gentrification, displacement). Her suggestions include financial education to help residents avoid coercion by real estate speculators; collective ownership of land; and innovative economic initiatives aimed at preserving, rather than displacing, local communities (Timerman 2013). These solutions offer a possible role in pacification for social workers, non-profit organizations, and community groups that goes beyond merely winning *favela* residents’ cooperation in the early stages of the program, but instead involves setting up structures

and supports to ensure that the benefits of the pacification program continue to accrue to *favela* residents in a sustainable way.

Yet such efforts will do little to address the geographic disparities that exist between those relatively few *favelas* in which the FPP has been introduced and the more than 700 others that were not targets of the program. Unfortunately, the FPP remains paradigmatic of the spatial inequality of citizenship that can emerge when private investment dominates the urban political economy. Moving forward, unless Rio prioritizes equity and cultural preservation as it proceeds in its mega-event preparations, there remains a great risk that historic Maracanã stadium, like Beijing's Bird's Nest, South Africa's Soccer City, and the many white elephants that came before it, will tower over the changing *favelas* as a monument to the city's failure to adequately protect many of its poorest denizens.

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