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RESEARCH

# Urban Public Works, Drug Trafficking and Militias: What Are the Consequences of the Interactions Between Community Work and Illicit Markets?

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This paper explores some of the interactions between community workers, drug traffickers and militiamen in the city of Rio de Janeiro and in the Baixada Fluminense region. It is mainly intended to examine and compare the tensions created by the territorialization of social housing policies into *drug gang-controlled favelas* and *militia-controlled areas*. To conduct this examination, I specifically sought to grasp how the interactions between public policy agents and illicit market actors can be framed (in the Goffmanian sense) to avoid the use of force and how different interactional framings impact drug and illegal security markets. My fieldwork and interviews with community workers allowed me to identify two lines of argument successful in maintaining social interactions and pushing away the use of force: the *good of the community* and the *good of the business*. I argue that the negotiations between community workers, drug traffickers and militiamen eventually fuel illicit markets in unexpected manners.

**Keywords:** urban policy; illicit markets; community work; drug trafficking; militias

## Introduction

Once again, the routine of the two social workers and five community workers responsible for *community work*<sup>1</sup> in the *condomínios populares*<sup>2</sup> of Parque São José, in the city of Duque de Caxias,<sup>3</sup> had been interrupted by shootings. Rumors that drug dealers had raided a construction site in a nearby neighborhood overlapped with rumors that a mob had attempted to lynch robbers at the bus stop across the street. The shootings lasted longer than usual, so the seven women decided to stop their fieldwork to have an early lunch. At the restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, away from the condos and their residents, they were free to talk about their daily routines of visiting homes, inspecting buildings for maintenance issues and meeting with condo managers. At that specific time, residents were mainly concerned about the collection of *security fees*,<sup>4</sup> questioning if they were paying for a legitimate service or being extorted by the militia.<sup>5</sup> None of the community workers recorded those fees in their fieldwork notebooks, but they were impelled to

<sup>1</sup> *Community work* comprises activities carried out by community workers hired to implement social policies, such as beneficiary enrollment, social diagnostic evaluations, housing assessment, etc.

<sup>2</sup> “Condomínio popular”, or popular condominiums, are real estate projects built under the Minha Casa Minha Vida (MCMV) program, launched in 2009 by the Brazilian federal government then under the Workers’ Party. It was designed to reduce housing shortage through the mass production of new housing units for three income brackets historically priced out of the formal real estate market: earning 0 to 3, 3 to 6 or 6 to 10 minimum wages.

<sup>3</sup> Duque de Caxias is a city in Greater Rio de Janeiro, in the Baixada Fluminense region.

<sup>4</sup> Italics indicate native categories. Double quotes indicate speech collected in the field and bibliographic citations. Single quotes are used to problematize certain notions.

<sup>5</sup> There is no consensus about the legitimacy of charging for protection services in urban peripheries. Many dwellers believe they are being extorted; whereas, many others pay willingly for the security service the militia privately provides. *Milícias* (militias) have a specific meaning in Rio de Janeiro. The term was coined by the media around 2006 to refer to groups of police officers and firefighters charging fees from residents in the West Zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro for protection against drug dealers. Thus, *áreas de milícia*, or *militia-controlled areas*, are specific territories in the city.

act as mediators between residents, condo managers and their dangerous liaisons<sup>6</sup> in view of those mounting concerns.

During my six-month fieldwork with that team of community workers, I repeatedly heard them explain the collection of *security fees* as an illegal way to “fill the void” left by the “absence of the State.” The social and community workers are public policy agents themselves and act “on behalf of the State”, as they say, in urban peripheries. Nonetheless, they regard the beneficiaries of the housing program “as children” who need to be taken care of and guided continuously; otherwise, they would be manipulated by ill-intended people. Even though it had taken the community workers months to enroll the thousands of families that moved to those five large housing estates and the daily *plantão social*, or “social duties”, in which they kept monitoring the new residents settling in, all this effort was regarded as insufficient because it had failed to “strengthen the community ties” among those families, who came from widely different areas of Duque de Caxias (**Figure 2**). If no strong social ties were built among the residents, a *parallel power*—either drug gangs or militias—would fill the “institutional vacuum” left by the State, providing services, such as cable TV, public transportation, cooking gas and security. Accordingly, the program managers believe informal and illicit markets spring up to “fill the gaps” left open by public policy and its inability to create a social fabric from which a legitimate political system can emerge.<sup>7</sup>

I gradually arrived at an alternative interpretation for the expansion of illicit markets in urban peripheries under government intervention, after observing the work routines of community workers involved in the PAC Favelas,<sup>8</sup> Morar Carioca<sup>9</sup> and Minha Casa Minha Vida (MCMV) programs for over eight years. As I will be showing throughout this paper, the very negotiations conducted by community workers employed in urban policy fuel illicit markets organized in poverty-stricken areas in unexpected ways.

This paper is intended to serve as a contribution to two corpora of literature on urban studies. First, it provides an ethnographic account of the ambiguities and contradictions of social development policy in Brazil. After an “urban adjustment” in the 1980s (Arantes 2004), multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank and the InterAmerican Development Bank, have become key political actors in Latin America’s urban policy. The creation of the United Nations Human Settlements Program in 1978 paved the way for a new scale of international funding for social policy in developing countries. If the absence of local resources justified international funding, the funds came with numerous mandatory prescriptions of state restructuring. Brazilian architect Pedro Arantes (2004) analyzed the institutional building process that gave birth to a prolific development niche in Latin America designed to eradicate urban poverty. Brazil particularly has been standing as a “laboratory” for housing programs in this ever-growing circuit of “poverty capital” (Roy 2010). For the last four decades, accounts of urbanization experiences across Brazil have been compiled and systematized in social reports, political assessments and best practices handbooks exported as guidelines to other developing countries (e.g. Villarosa & Magalhães 2012). In this emerging “circuit of capital and truth”—in which knowledge and truth politics on urban poverty (Roy 2010) have consolidated a powerful “interpretative community” (Mosse 2005) of consultants and managers—people, documents and intervention models circulate in a certain way.

<sup>6</sup> I have borrowed the phrase “dangerous liaisons” from Michel Misse (1997), whose work traces the connections between the drug market and police corruption. This phrase is good enough because it demonstrates the overlap between criminal and state practices, which ultimately allows the reproduction of the illicit market. In the above-mentioned case, the expression “dangerous liaisons” describes the relationship between the type of condo management and the connections with the militia controlling the area in which the *condomínio popular* has been built.

<sup>7</sup> Concern about the organization of illicit markets in areas under government intervention, whether they be favelas being urbanized or housing projects and *condomínios populares*, was not limited to the social work team I observed between 2014 and 2015. In 2014, the Caixa Econômica Federal (CEF), or Federal Savings Bank, a government-owned bank responsible for funding countless social policies, issued a call for urban and social intervention projects in twelve *condomínios populares* built under the MCMV program throughout Brazil. The purpose was to use the bank’s social and environmental fund to introduce a plan for *the integrated and sustainable development of territories* to handle the “issue of urban violence” in those new housing areas, then profusely covered by the media throughout the country. I worked as a consultant in two of the *condomínios populares* selected in this CEF call for proposals: one in Ribeirão das Neves, Minas Gerais State, and the other in São José de Ribamar, Maranhão State. Just as the Duque de Caxias community work team, the employees from the CEF and the housing departments of those cities regarded illicit markets—in both cases, the drug market specifically—as a result of insufficient community work.

<sup>8</sup> The PAC Favelas program was a part of the Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento (PAC), or Growth Acceleration Program, created in 2007 by the federal government under the Workers’ Party. The PAC was an important infrastructure investment policy in Brazil. PAC Favelas focused specifically on the urbanization of poverty-stricken areas, with the construction of urban infrastructure and social service facilities.

<sup>9</sup> Morar Carioca was a favela urbanization program created in 2010 by the city of Rio de Janeiro. It was designed to ensure homes had minimum living conditions and to build urban infrastructure in a number of favela clusters in the city.

In the contemporary flows in this circuit of poverty capital, Medellín rose as a best practice hub in 2014 when it hosted the Seventh World Urban Forum. *Social urbanism*, the urban planning theory that guided the urban interventions in Comuna 13, is based on two premises: first, that the citizens (not the government) are the urbanist's clients, and second, that urban planning is only one gear in the social organization of space, alongside social work, urban law and sanitary medicine, among others. On its turn, the ongoing interactions between beneficiaries and social technicians, before, during and after the urban works is the key element in the promotion of social inclusion, resulting, it is expected, in increasing rates of employment and income and decreasing rates in crime (Echeverri 2016; Quinchía 2011).<sup>10</sup> In Brazil, social policies based in *community participation* are not a novelty and have existed since the end of the 1970s (Araujo 2013; Cortado 2018). Despite the presentism in the urban studies (Fischer 2014), *social urbanism*, as implemented by the Colombian architect and urban planner Gustavo Restrepo in the famous interventions in Medellín, was widely disseminated in Brazil by the Conselho de Arquitetura e Urbanismo, or the Architecture and Urban Planning Council. In 2013, it also inspired the national methodology of poverty eradication consolidated in the Caderno de Trabalho Técnico Social (CEF 2013), the Social and Technical Work Guideline for nationwide urban policies, such as the PAC Favelas and the MCMV programs. The community workers in the opening scene of this paper followed this specific methodology in their work routines.

In the face of these patterns of capital urbanization (Harvey 1982), it is not surprising that urban scholarship in Latin America shares an agenda. In Brazil (Rizek & Georges 2014; Shimbo 2010), Mexico (Carvalho 2016; Valenzuela-Aguilera 2015) and Chile (Araos 2016; Hidalgo 2005), researchers have explored the commoditization of housing and the effects of housing policies on low-income family arrangements. Furthermore, economist Mariana Fix (2011) examined the financialization of the Brazilian real estate market. Architect Lucia Shimbo (2010) investigated the development of the "social housing market niche" as a result of the new relationship between the state, construction companies and financial capital, in which the right to housing drives capital accumulation. Architect Eliana Andrade (2011) analyzed the differences and continuities between the Banco Nacional de Habitação (BNH), or Brazilian National Housing Bank (1965–1986) and the MCMV program. Architects and urban planners Aduino Cardoso and Luciana Lago (2013) explored the peripherization effect of social housing nationwide, driven by the MCMV program. Wellington Conceição (2016) studied the efforts to discipline the program's beneficiaries. My own doctoral dissertation in sociology (Araujo 2017a) dealt with what I called the "circuit of urban construction works" that regulate the flows of money, people and documents through which housing is produced and distributed to the low-income families.

This paper, in turn, is intended to shed light on the invisible dynamics of policy administration: those which are morally repelled and overlooked in the production of social reports and the negotiation with illegitimate actors who control prolific illegal markets in Brazilian urban peripheries. As I have pointed in the opening scene of this paper, the interactions between community workers, drug dealers and militiamen are crucial to the daily management of housing projects, but they stay out of the official documents.

Community work is a key part of the enrollment in, and the distribution of homes under, Brazilian housing programs. Part of a lasting political tradition dating back to the 1960s, when the Catholic Church antagonized the Communist Party over the political guidance of urban workers (Lima 1989), community work was institutionalized in the late 1970s as part of the social services the state provides for the urban poor. Since then, community workers are themselves residents of Brazilian peripheries hired as public policy agents responsible for "creating ties between the peripheries and the government" (Araujo 2013; Feltran 2007), through a wide range of activities: enrolling beneficiaries in social programs, providing urban planning guidance, assessing shacks and houses and organizing meetings with local leaders. Community workers, therefore, gather information without which architects, urban planners, sanitary physicians and social workers would not be able to work and negotiate the territorialization of urban intervention plans with local residents.

Negotiations over the performance of public works in poverty-stricken areas involve a great deal of tension. As some researchers have been arguing (Abramo 2009; Araujo 2016, 2017a; Magalhães 2013), social housing policies eventually boost local real estate markets because they impact overall housing conditions.

<sup>10</sup> Housing policies focusing on community engagement are not new to Brazil. They have been in place since the 1980s, when it was recognized that favelas (Araujo 2013) and loteamentos irregulares, or illegal urban lots, (Cortado 2018) should be urbanized, rather than eliminated by evacuation policies. My research on the emergence and consolidation of community work, as opposed to what the supporters of *social urbanism* say, shows the effects of housing policies are far more complex than the much sought-after *social inclusion*, with controversial consequences regarding the fall in urban crime rates.

During the execution of urban construction works, community workers start managing the purchase, sale, leasing and exchange of, as well as compensation related to, houses and apartments. The price and symbolic value of buildings and urban services involve fierce disputes in those transactions. Although the consequences of social housing policies for beneficiaries have been studied previously (Abramo 2009; Araujo 2017a; Cavalcanti 2007; Conceição 2015; Coutinho 2017; Magalhães 2013), little has been said about the effects of those policies on illicit market actors operating in *favelas* and *comunidades*.<sup>11</sup> What sense do drug traffickers and militiamen make of urban public works? How is authorization to implement public policy in the areas under their control obtained?

To that end, I use ethnography as a sociological magnifying glass that allows grasping the patterns of interaction between community workers, drug traffickers and militiamen. Community workers anticipate the effects urban policies might have over illicit market dynamics and develop approaching strategies that help prevent the use of force against them. In the attempt to turn fear into strategies, community workers assume the point of view of drug dealers and militiamen and reflect upon the values that light poles, paved roads, sewerage system and garbage collection might embody for those illicit actors. How community workers frame the approach to those violent actors to defuse tensions is the question I seek to answer.

In this regard, my interest in this paper focuses on the different “techniques of social management,” or the arrangement of social activities in space and time (Goffman 1982), employed by community workers to *do community work*: the skills to interpret the important elements that make it possible to frame the interactions at issue, the ability to “put into brackets” the social action of the other and to create zones of relevance to their own attention and action (Schutz 1974). What conflicts arise and what adjustments can be made in the face-to-face interactions between those social housing policy workers and illicit market actors? (Thevenot 2002). How do community workers “take hold of the environments” (Thévenot 2001: 5) in *favelas* and *militia-controlled areas*? Taking the community workers’ perspective, I describe and compare the negotiations occurring in *drug gang-controlled favelas* and those occurring in *militia-controlled areas* to figure out how urban public works conflict with, and accommodate, illicit markets.

### Negotiating with the *boys of the drug trade*

The municipality began to mediate contact between contractors and residents’ associations in the 1990s, during preparations for the urban public works. Residents’ associations were entrusted with collecting resumes from residents seeking job opportunities and with mediating the relationship between construction teams and drug traffickers.

The use of force always looms large in the interactions between community leaders and drug traffickers, and rumors and stories of extremely gruesome acts abound. However, some transactions make it possible for the works to be performed in the *favelas*. Leaders may pay a *permit fee* in cash or cement bags, or provide favors, such as signing someone’s *carteira de trabalho*, the Employment and Social Security Record booklet, giving a family member a job or providing *bandidos*, criminals with construction worker uniforms so that they “dress as workers” during police raids. In return, they obtain the *authorization* needed to perform the works, a guarantee that becomes “political merchandise” (Misse 1999) because the strikingly asymmetrical power becomes a resource with economic value. Since the pioneering interpretation of Michel Misse on drug trafficking (1999), the *arrego*, or *fix* (i.e., the permission drug traffickers purchase from the police to conduct their trade in the *favelas*) has been seen as a type of “political merchandise” that ensures the existence and operation of the drug market in Rio de Janeiro’s *favelas*. My interviewees emphasize traffickers themselves charge community leaders and community workers for *authorization*.

Although necessary, that transaction is not all that is needed for works to be performed. *Authorization* for works is merchandise that prevents and postpones the use of force, but there is never any equivalent to it. Those who buy *authorization* are trapped in a spiral of debt that is hard to manage. Accordingly, those paying the *arrego* must adopt a series of self-monitoring strategies. The construction workers are cautious about saying where they actually live, fearing the wrath their address in *favelas* under the control of opposing

<sup>11</sup> I make a distinction between *favelas* and *comunidades* as native categories to stress the moral distinction made by the social actors themselves between *drug gang-controlled favelas* and *militia-controlled areas*. The term *comunidade* is widely used as a means of moral cleansing (Machado da Silva 2008) and distinction between residents and *criminals* (Birman 2008.) In *militia-controlled areas*, *comunidade* refers to the moral region of *tranquility*, of *freedom from the drug trade* (Araujo 2017b). Because the presence and activities of militia groups are scarcely discussed in the public life of those localities, the term also establishes a distinction from *criminals*. I will be using the term ‘poverty-stricken areas’ to refer to both spaces just as Machado da Silva (2008) did.



gangs might cause, as well as using expressions or singing songs associated with rival factions. It is crucial to do favors, such as buying a *quentinha*, a packed lunch, or carrying a *drug load*, to maintain the *authorization*. The construction workers never know to what situations they may be submitted.

Community workers also engage in specific interactions with drug traffickers, in addition to residents' associations. They all, mainly those living elsewhere, must have an ID, wear a uniform and a badge and carry a clipboard to move around the area. Above all, they must be able to feel the "*atmosphere of the favela*" (Cavalcanti 2008) and interpret the changes of the elements that make up that environment. It is important to know the terms and slang; however, it is imperative to be able to *ler o movimento* (i.e., interpret the dynamics of the *boca de fumo* [the drug-selling spot], the circulation of *bondes* [the groups of drug dealers], *gerentes* [managers of drug-selling spots], *soldados* [armed security guards], *aviões* [bagboys], *olheiros* [lookouts] and motorcycle taxis around the favela,<sup>12</sup> as well as the relaxed tone of the conversations in drug-selling spots and the sound of firecrackers) to move around safely. Nevertheless, community workers are often caught in *crossfire*, in shootings with rival factions or the police. Instruction about those situations is an important part of training new community workers.

Gender and age are two key distinguishing categories in framing the interactions between community workers and drug traffickers. If community workers were mostly women in the late 1970s because their activities were regarded as *a woman's job*,<sup>13</sup> gender has gradually become a decisive factor in the expansion of social programs. From the 1990s, care activities and the supposedly feminine qualities of empathy and understanding were merged into what Brazilian sociologist Bila Sorj has named "social care" (2016) in community work team selections. I have also pointed out the consolidation of the illicit drug market has made gender a key distinguishing category in both the circulation of technicians around favelas and the performance of public works (Araujo 2013). Let us look into how gender frames social interactions and makes negotiations between community workers and drug traffickers possible.

In any favela, women inspire less mistrust than men, who are always suspected of being undercover police officers. Just as leaders, community workers depend on *authorization* to *do community work*. The resources at their disposal—enrollment in social programs, assessment reports, social diagnostics, et cetera—are much less tangible than money and disguises. As a result, *authorization* is obtained through other means, (e.g., small services, such as *escorting* drug traffickers out of the favela or taking messages between *morros* [literally translated as *hills*, but widely used to mean *favelas*] controlled by the same drug faction).

Although women do not capture drug dealers' attention or inspire mistrust, their gender alone does not set the tone of their interactions in the *bocas de fumo*. Age is the second distinguishing category handled between the actors. Older community workers are seen mainly in their roles of mothers and aunts. To them, the *criminals* can be seen as the *boys of the drug trade*. The men's chronological ages matter less than the relationship established with them, based on moral superiority. This may have a twofold effect. The women involved in taking care of the *boys of the drug trade* when they were little—as mothers, neighbors, childminders or daycare workers—earn enough attention to talk. Their social role as caretakers inspires respect and authority. Depending on how close their personal relationship with the *boys* may be or might have been, those women take into account certain elements of the *boys'* life stories to excuse their involvement in crime. Therefore, age is more than just a distinguishing category, it is a moral category.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast, younger community workers refer to drug traffickers as the *guys of the movement* and are always alert to any flirting signs. In the favelas in which those women live, their social ties help prevent those situations. *Being someone's wife*, knowing, or being related to, someone from the *movement*, those women are in a position to demand respect. In those cases, the existence of a male figure between the community worker and the *criminal* interested in her ensures the latter will keep his distance.

Therefore, the forms of address between community workers and drug traffickers involve a certain morality. Just as drug traffickers can request information about the people moving around the *morro*, their activities and the urban intervention projects, community workers can introduce themselves to conduct

<sup>12</sup> For information about the hierarchy of a *boca de fumo*, the *drug-selling spot*, see Grillo 2013.

<sup>13</sup> The first community workers in the early 1980s were teachers, cleaning ladies, healthcare center assistants and monitors at daycare centers or community schools (i.e., women dedicated to providing care).

<sup>14</sup> By describing supermarket situations, Brazilian sociologist Alexandre Werneck (2011) explores how old age serves as a moral device to adopt certain morally questionable behaviors. In the case discussed in this paper, the infantilization of drug traffickers as *boys*, regardless of their biological ages, is used to distinguish them, frame any possible interactions with them and pave the way for negotiations.

negotiations. The manner in which the rapprochement among the actors unfolds is crucial to coordinate expectations and “take hold of the environment” (Thévenot 2001).<sup>15</sup>

The use of the terms *boys of the drug trade* or *guys of the movement* to refer to *criminals* also depends on a third factor: the use of force. An aggressive attitude—extorting, constraining, demanding excessive favors and imposing degrading conditions—which shows a *wicked nature* that resorts to the power of *ferro* (literally *iron*, but used to mean *gun*) (Zaluar 1985) to impose oneself, is frowned upon.<sup>16</sup> It shows a *lack of respect* for others and indicates rapprochement and negotiation are not possible.

*Respect* is a key value in the combination of gender, age and the probability of the use of force and sets the tone for certain negotiations to unfold. It is not possible to negotiate with *bicho ruim* (violent criminals), only with the *boys of the drug trade* or *guys of the movement*. By introducing themselves as mothers, aunts, caretakers or respectful women, community workers ensure a territorialization of their selves (Goffman 1982), which gain the attention they need to express their ideas.

Having met and interviewed over twenty community workers, I identified two arguments mainly used as the most generalized and effective convincing strategies: the *good of the community* and the *good of the movement*.

In the former case, there is an effort to develop identification and empathy. Having known the traffickers' families or the traffickers themselves from birth or childhood, community workers can tap into this closeness to set the tone of the interaction and ask for circumstantial attention. In this case, they put the *boys'* illicit activities “into brackets” (Schutz 1974) and focus on other ties—kinship, neighborhood or friendship—so a set of certain shared interests and values can prevail. The *community* serves as the bonding category that encompasses the entire group of favela dwellers, no matter how they make a living identified by their lack of social prestige. Based on that framing category, certain sets of *improvements* are seen as efforts to implement the *good of the community* effectively (e.g., cleaning, opportunities for children and decent housing).

An example may help understand how the *good of the community* is engaged effectively. A community work team was struggling to keep the favela's garbage deposit clean. Some residents, along with technical teams from the city hall, organized a *mutirão*, a joint effort, and everyone *pitched in* with the work; however, some dwellers failed to dispose of trash at the scheduled days and times, and the area became infested with rats, cockroaches and flies again. Recognizing the community workers' commitment to keeping the place clean, one of the *gerentes da boca* (managers of the drug-selling spot) called a meeting with the head of the team and installed a sign with the *dono do morro's* (highest ranking member of a favela-based drug gang) initials commanding the garbage deposit be kept clean.

It should be noted housing and urban service issues *mess things up* at the drug-selling spot if any *gerentes* or *soldados* are called to solve them. On the other hand, stepping in to provide an external guarantee to the community work is not necessarily a problem. Respecting community workers carrying out their activities ensures some level of cooperation.

The second most effective argument I identified is the *good of the movement*. The market regime (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991) is used to convince drug traffickers of the benefits the public works can bring to the *drug-selling spot*. I have heard countless times that “the drug trade is their job”, in a clear effort to qualify those business activities by putting the illicit nature of goods traded “into brackets” (Schutz 1974). In this regard, the interventions of public works should be considered based on their positive effects on the business. No case can be made for the installation of a light pole near the place in which cocaine is packaged for sale because that would draw too much attention to this important stage of the production process. In contrast, small squares and paved streets make it easier to organize the activities of the drug-selling spot, make the area more comfortable for *gerentes* and *soldados* and provide easier access to customers. Those are good arguments for businessmen.

<sup>15</sup> In Thévenot's own words, “My approach aims to account for not only the movements of an actor but also the way his environment responds to him and the way he takes into account these responses. That is what I refer to as the “realism” of each regime. Most conceptions of practice pay little attention to this type of responsiveness. [...] Differentiating regimes brings to light variations in the relevant reality which is put to a test in the dynamics of each kind of pragmatic engagement. The relevant reality depends on the different ways one has to “take hold” of the environment” (2001: pp. 4–5).

<sup>16</sup> In turn, the use of law enforcement against drug traffickers in the many violent raids occurring in favelas turns drug traffickers back into *boys*.

## Negotiation with the *militia* guys

The dynamics of social work are somewhat different in *militia-controlled areas*. The association is the *parallel power* (i.e., the local political institution itself controls illicit markets). *Security* is the militia's distinctive political merchandise (Misse 2011) due to the privatization and sale of the service provided by security officers. As I have argued previously (Araujo 2017b), the manner in which security is provided is what distinguishes militiamen's activities from the protection provided in *drug gang-controlled favelas*, as anthropologist Alba Zaluar (1985) showed in the early 1980s, and the security services sold by private sector companies operating in this market niche. There is a range of possibilities in those areas, from extortion to the deliberate purchase of goods (Cano & Duarte 2012.) I have argued the distinguishing feature is the moral claim that warrants the use of force against the very same people who pay for security services. Reports of corrective *coças*, *trashings* said to have turned younger people into *good citizens*, are very common.

If militiamen can batter and even kill locals in the areas under their control,<sup>17</sup> against what exactly do they sell security? The specter of urban violence (Misse 1999) looms large in those areas and is believed to be lurking around all the time, just about to *take them over*. As I have pointed out, the 'fear of living in fear' eventually leads to submission—more or less legitimized—to the rule of militiamen. The residents of militia-controlled areas pay to *keep violence away*.

*Security fees* can be charged from residents and merchants depending on each area. As Misse (2011) shrewdly observed, the value of the merchandise is set not by the supply side—by improving product quality, increasing production or enhancing techniques—but by the demand side. The more people pay for security, the more valuable it is. After all, no one wants to be left out. Therefore, the greater a militia's capacity to expand the areas under its control, the higher the demand for its security services.

The negotiations with community workers eventually pave the way for the militias to take over new areas. My research has shown that the expansion of militia-controlled areas in the city of Rio de Janeiro and in the Baixada Fluminense region is not determined solely by conflicts with drug traffickers for territory, as Alba Zaluar and Isabel Conceição identified in 2007. Based on my fieldwork and interviews with community workers, I identified two specific unexpected consequences of the interactions between those professionals and militiamen.

The first is a strengthening of the respective militia's political domination. That effect is not exactly different from that which results from the community workers' relationship with any residents' association. Social programs bring urban services and infrastructure to poverty-stricken areas, strengthening local powers (Araujo 2013; Silva & Rocha 2008.) Indeed, an entity must prove able to provide services for the locals to exercise power legitimately, as sociologist Luiz Antonio Machado (1967) showed so many decades ago.

In the case of residents' associations in *militia-controlled areas*, the incidence of community work on local real estate markets has specific effects. I cannot say the militias control the real estate markets in their areas. A survey I conducted jointly with the anthropologist Mariana Cavalcanti about the labor and real estate markets in some communities close to the Olympic Park, in the western part of the city of Rio de Janeiro (**Figure 1**), showed a small concentration of properties in the hands of some individuals; however, we did not collect enough information to establish a connection between those individuals and residents' associations (**Figure 2**). In any case, the impact of community work on housing conditions, serving as an intermediary between public and private works, affects the size of militia-controlled areas and has specific economic effects.

Those interventions are not a new phenomenon. The experience of one of the community workers I observed allowed me to trace them back to the early 2000s. In the late 1990s, a housing project was built in the Vargens region, in the western part of the city of Rio de Janeiro, as part of the works of the Favela Bairro<sup>18</sup> urbanization program. Families from different *areas prone to geological hazards* in the city were evacuated to the Prefeito housing project (real name withheld) so that people from *drug gang-controlled favelas* and a major *militia-controlled area* started living side by side. The negotiations with the *militia-controlled area's* residents' association for the evacuation were quite tense, with many people threatened at gunpoint. The

<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that, as Misse, Grillo, Teixeira & Neri (2013) showed, the areas with the highest rates of *autos de resistência* (killing suspects supposedly resisting arrest) (i.e., deaths resulting from police activity) are in the western part of the city of Rio de Janeiro, widely controlled by militias.

<sup>18</sup> Favela Bairro was created in 1993 by the Municipal Housing Department, the program aimed at providing urban infrastructure that would transform the favelas into formal neighborhoods. Funded by the InterAmerican Development Bank, Favela Bairro lasted more than ten years. For more information on the program, see Mariana Cavalcanti's doctorate dissertation (2007).



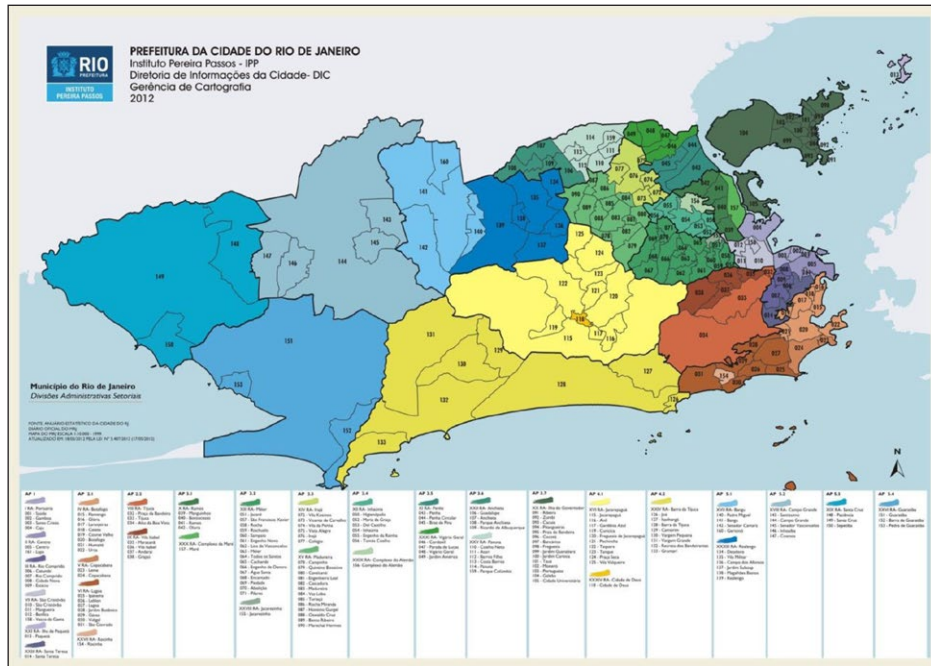


Figure 1: Shows the Administrative Regions of Rio de Janeiro.



Figure 2: Shows the map of the metropolitan region.

proposed evacuation of about a thousand families from the sandy area to new homes would affect the collection of *security fees* significantly.

The solution found by the head of the community workers' team was to take some members of the residents' association's executive board to visit the new housing project. Unlike other housing projects built in the vicinity of favelas covered by the Favela Bairro program, the Prefeito project had a city guard station, school, daycare center, healthcare center and sports court. Envisioning the possibility of expanding *security* and so many other services to that housing project with a good infrastructure, the residents' association was convinced that the eviction could be a good deal.

And it was. A group connected with the residents' association of that *militia-controlled area* took over the local association, which was then headed by a community worker evacuated from the Cidade de Deus

favela four years earlier. That woman had capitalized on her contacts in the governmental bureaucracy and established herself as a community leader of the new housing project. After the *militia people* came, she was ousted from her position and the association was relocated to the facility supposed to house the city guard station. I do not know whether there was any negotiation between the *militia people* and the city guards living in the housing project.

More recently, community workers from the MCMV program also found themselves involved in negotiations with militiamen over housing units. Some communities near the Olympic Park almost ceased to exist when families were registered for evacuation due to the combination of a number of urban policies. In one, apartments were granted to members of the residents' association's executive board, and this allowed the militia to expand its territorial control. One of the *community leaders* became the condo manager and, as such, started charging *security fees* from the hundreds of condo dwellers.

In the city of Duque de Caxias, the managers of MCMV *condomínios populares* also started charging fees. The five housing projects of the opening scene of this paper were built in a vacant lot in an area controlled by a militiaman. In turn, the construction of stores was agreed upon in negotiations with the contractor; however, they remained empty as late as 2015, when I conducted my fieldwork. All condo managers charged for security and passed on the money to the militiaman.

In all those cases, *security fees* were left out of community work reports. As I said in the introduction to this paper, I heard residents question the legality of the fees countless times during home inspections and visits. The beneficiaries started paying for utilities—water, light, cooking gas, taxes, et cetera—every month after moving to the condos; therefore, many of them wondered whether they had to pay for security as well. Unlike in other cases, no invoice was issued for this service, which had to be paid for in cash directly to condo managers.

Different paths can lead to an acceptance of the fee depending on a comparison between the institution charging for it and other forms of protection provision in urban peripheries. A comparison between the stories mentioned above allows us to examine certain differences thoroughly.

In the case of the Prefeito housing project, the families from the *militia-controlled area* were evacuated to their new homes in the project after the dwellers of the *drug gang-controlled favela* had already settled in. As a result, each side of the housing project had its own market and territorial control for a certain time. The attempt to expand business—both the drug trade and security services—led to a *war* eventually won by the militiamen.

The drug trade had no territorial control in the vicinity of the the *condomínio popular* in the Olympic Park area. The acceptance of the *security fee* was mainly based on an ideology of fear. In fact, there is a widespread fear of *raids by drug gangs* in the region. Recurring rumors that retail drug trade factions were about to “raid the areas” shaped residents' expectations and experiences. At first, any conflict or use of force triggered a red alert just as any murders and shootings were seen as *raid* attempts. Then, there were extensive investigations into all the emerging rumors, and the nature of the events was determined more precisely after collective inquiries.<sup>19</sup> Those rumors caused widespread tension, which warranted the collection of *security fees* by the condo manager.

In the *condomínios populares* in Duque de Caxias, security started being sold as an alternative to two types of territorial control. There are numerous *drug gang-controlled favelas* in the vicinity, so the same ideology of fear mentioned above prevails. On the other hand, there is also an effort to relativize the *security fees* charged for surveillance services. Active for decades, the *polícia mineira*<sup>20</sup> controlled that area through intimidation and murder. In comparison, the *militia* did not use force against the locals so arbitrarily and “only” charged “modest” fees, supposedly compatible with family budgets. In contrast to the aggressiveness of the *polícias mineiras*, paying *security fees* provided a sense of continuity of everyday life that was far from negligible.

Experiencing *war*, the ‘fear of living in fear’ and the fear of death leads to three ranges of possibilities that allow the militias to prevail eventually. Distinguishing between them allows us to understand how *militia-controlled areas* shape a moral region (Park & Burgess 1967 (1925)), with specific social boundaries within which a certain urban sociability prevails: the tranquility of *keeping violence away*, which allows daily routines, and the prospect of *progress* in life (Araujo 2017b).

<sup>19</sup> It would be interesting to conduct a study on the rumors circulating in *militia-controlled areas*, based on Palloma Menezes' thesis about the rumors about the pacification (2015). That could be an interesting methodological strategy as far as violent settings are concerned. However, it falls out of the scope of this paper.

<sup>20</sup> *Polícias mineiras* were vigilante groups that killed robbers on behalf of merchants. They became known in the 1950s, especially in Greater Rio de Janeiro. Zaluar and Conceição (2007) discussed the lines of continuity between *polícias mineiras* and *militias*.

As can be seen from the three cases discussed, the market regime makes it possible to frame the interactions between community workers and militiamen. Unlike drug traffickers, militiamen are always *guys*, never *boys*. They are *grown men* who run a well-structured business. As the president of a residents' association once pointed out to a community worker, both "work for the city hall." Therefore, competition between community workers and militiamen over the control of real estate markets may entail risks. In one of the housing projects in Duque de Caxias, the condo manager, who presented himself as a former police officer, threatened to kill a community worker. To dispel the rivalry over the control of real estate markets—less economic than political—the only argument community workers could use in negotiations was the economic gains resulting from urban interventions. Urban services strengthen the local political power relations significantly. Home evacuations cause the most strain. In those situations, the community workers had to recognize the monopoly of power and ensure housing units were effectively granted, which allowed *people from the militia* to expand their services to new territories and take over representative bodies—residents' associations or condo management boards—through intimidation. The security business starts once the territorial political control is guaranteed.

### Closing Remarks

Different transactions result from the manner in which community workers' interactions with drug traffickers and militiamen are framed. The *good of the community* can be used as an argument in negotiations with drug traffickers; whereas, the *good of the business* seems to be more effective when dealing with militiamen. In both cases, what is at stake is the value of infrastructure and urban services for the respective illicit market actors. To prevent public works from putting a strain on those markets, community workers must prove duly competent, as well as be able to put into brackets the illicit nature of the goods traded and argue for the value of urban improvements to the business by taking the point of view of the other party. It is worth noting how effective the value of the community is for the execution of community work activities in *drug gang-controlled favelas*. However, framing the illicit drug and security markets in purely economic terms ensures rapprochement, interaction and some understanding between community work teams and the actors of urban crime.

The consequences are different, just as the manner in which the negotiations with each of those markets are conducted. That does not seem to be a fortuitous difference, nor can it be overlooked. By exchanging *authorization* for disguises and money, drug traffickers raise funds to use in their interactions with the police. In addition, they take tables, benches, light poles and sidewalks as their own to improve both their "working conditions" and access for their customers. Militiamen, in contrast, find in public works and urban services resources to strengthen their power relations with the residents of territories under their control. As *leaders who bring improvements*, they lay the political foundations on which they start organizing the sale of security services. During evacuations, they negotiate for homes and take new territories, with which they then expand their protection business.

The effectiveness of both systems also makes it possible to consider the prospect of violent sociability, as proposed by Machado da Silva (1994, 1999, 2004). Machado da Silva argues the urban crime wave emerging in large Brazilian cities in the 1980s differs from previous criminal practices, especially the *jogo do bicho* (an illegal animal lottery), for two main reasons: On the one hand, the social organization of crime is centered on the drug trade. On the other hand, the interactions have undergone a qualitative change. Not only has the number of crimes risen, but also the use of force has ceased to serve as an external guarantee and has become a means of interaction among *criminals* themselves. Silva (1994, 1999, 2004) also argues the development of a pattern of sociability centered on the use of force, sufficiently permanent, takes on the character of a social order—a violent order—for practical purposes. As Silva himself acknowledges, the analytical consequences lead to the paroxysm of social theory. Ultimately, handling violence as a mode of interaction shatters the assumption of otherness on which social theory is based.

Machado da Silva's view on the formation and consolidation of the drug trade in Brazilian favelas and peripheries is innovative for a second reason as well. He suggests the development of this pattern of sociability leads to the emergence of a sphere of independent social life that does not challenge the internal legitimacy of the state, but coexists with public order. Consequently, the violent order runs parallel to the state order.

As I have shown throughout this paper, the use of force is within the realm of possibility, but it is possible to prevent it by approaching the actors of urban crime in specific manners. On one hand, what is interesting about the *good of the community* is that it allows claiming the recognition of a coexisting social order

that neither supplants, nor comprises the violent order. The above-mentioned example of the warning sign shows the use of force becomes an external resource when the *good of the community* prevails.

On the other hand, the principle of the *good of the movement* brings into focus the importance of money as a mediating factor in the coexistence between both social orders (Feltran 2014). The effort to translate the value of urban infrastructure from “*improvements to the community*” into “*improvements to the business*” can be seen as a tournament of value (Appadurai 1986) in which the very object of value moves between social arenas governed by different principles—the law arena and the market arena. It is by bringing economic value to the drug markets and the security markets that the value of public works, infrastructures and urban services eventually becomes effective as the *community's* right to housing.

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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