"This is Iraq. People are afraid."

Resistance and mobilization in the Maré favelas (Rio de Janeiro)

Otávio Raposo

Resumo

A violência entre os grupos criminosos que disputam a hegemonia do tráfico de drogas nas favelas e a intervenção das forças de segurança do Estado nesses territórios promovem um clima de opressão e medo que intensifica a segregação a que historicamente os seus moradores foram relegados. Na Maré, bairro do Rio de Janeiro formado por dezesseis favelas, atuam algumas das mais poderosas facções do tráfico e os confrontos armados e a ação tru-culenta da polícia são frequentes. É nesse contexto que moradores da Maré e organizações locais mobilizaram-se contra as contínuas violações dos direitos humanos, após um recrudescimento dos conflitos. A proposta deste artigo é debater a problemática da violência no Rio de Janeiro, apresentando algumas das lutas sociais que a população da Maré protagonizou nesse período. Relato também a minha entrada no bairro, expondo os cuidados que fui obrigado a ter para evitar surpresas desagradáveis que poderiam pôr em causa a pesquisa, bem como a minha integridade física.
Palavras-chave: violência, favela, segregação, cidadania, mobilização

Abstract

Violence among criminal groups in dispute over domination of drug trafficking in the *favelas* and intervention by the state security forces in those areas encourage a climate of fear and oppression that intensifies the segregation that historically afflicts their residents. In Maré, an area of Rio de Janeiro made up of sixteen *favelas*, some of the most powerful drug trafficking factions operate, and armed conflicts and aggressive behavior by the police are commonplace. This is the backdrop against which the residents of Maré and

local organizations have mobilized against the constant violations of their human rights, following an upsurge in the number of conflicts. This article intends to debate the issue of violence in Rio de Janeiro, presenting some of the social struggles that the population of Maré has fought in recent times.

Keywords: violence, favela, segregation, citizenship, mobilization

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Resistance and mobilization in the Maré favelas (Rio de Janeiro)[1]

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1. Violence and segregation in Brazil

Defined as a problem practically "from birth", favelas are an integral part of the urbanization process in Brazil, specifically in its large cities. The first favelas[2] on record appeared at the end of the 19th century, against the backdrop of a serious housing crisis in the former federal capital, when the city grew exponentially[3] with no housing policy geared toward the working classes. In spite of the lack of housing, large old houses that had been turned into collective housing, *cortiços*[4], were demolished and the residents evicted, in the context of urban reform that intended to turn Rio de Janeiro into a modern, Europeanized metropolis. Known as the "knock-it-down" mayor, Pereira Passos followed, between 1902 and 1906, an authoritarian, cleansing policy that intended to make the city beautiful, at the same time destroying buildings considered unclean or dangerous (Valladares 2008). After the demolition of the *cortiços* there were only two types of housing available to the less privileged: living in the outskirts (which had the disadvantage of residents having to deal with transportation costs) or occupying land not dominated by real estate speculation interests, above all in the city's hills. It

2   Named the first favela in Rio de Janeiro, Favella hill (now Providência hill) was responsible for drawing attention to this new type of popular housing. As the target of cleansing campaigns, like the one in 1907 led by hygiene doctor Oswaldo Cruz, Favella hill began to be shown in the newspapers of the time as the new "evil" to be fought, the opposite of the urban lifestyle (Valladares 2008).

3   The population more than doubled (120%) in only 20 years in Rio de Janeiro, with 520,000 inhabitants in 1890, while the number of homes rose by 74% (Silva and Barbosa 2005:25).

4   Formed of groups of small houses (or rooms) in which many families shared common areas (kitchen, bathroom, yard), *cortiços* were the popular housing *par excellence* at the time.

is interesting that it was exactly those interventions, which sought to clean the city and import a modern, civilized lifestyle, that were responsible for the growth of favelas (Zaluar and Alvito 2006). While previously the elite and the workers lived relatively close to one another, new rules for organizing the urban landscape led to the start of a process of residential segregation. Aided by new means of transportation, the expansion of the city began to be planned according to the location of each social group, and its functionalities thought out in advance: business, industry or housing[5]. Nonetheless, favelas were established in Rio de Janeiro's urban make-up even in neighborhoods that were intended to be exclusively for wealthier classes, and attempts to stop the poorer population from living in higher-value areas failed.

As the favela became part of the urban landscape[6], it became the target of a medical and hygiene-based discourse by sectors of Rio's elite (journalists, doctors, engineers), who described it as a place of poverty, deprivation and marginalization[7]. Those representations were based on the premise that favelas were areas condemned for "anomie[8]", where disorder and uncivilized behavior reigned in a crisis of morality. Once transformed into the place of the "other" *par excellence* in the city, the favela became the subject of psychological theories and cultural essentialism that labeled the lifestyles and cultural practices associated with them as deviating from the norm[9]. Unlike

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5   The streetcar lines made it possible for the Zona Sul and Tijuca to be occupied, preferably by Rio de Janeiro's elite and middle class during the first half of the 20th century, while the advent of the train made it possible to move some industry and working classes to the periphery of the city, while the center was for commerce, the financial sector and state institutions (CEASM 2003).

6   Intense urbanization in Brazil produced chaotic growth in its cities, causing an explosion of favelas and hugely expanding urban peripheries. Over the 20th century, millions of people migrated from the inland to cities in search of better living conditions, thereby inverting the rural/urban relationship. While in 1940 urban residents represented approximately 30% of the total number of people in the country, the percentage rose to 68% in 1980, according to IBGE censuses.

7   The first major campaign against favelas took place in 1920, a time when the phenomenon expanded to the city as a whole. The main driver behind the campaign was the doctor and journalist Augusto de Mattos Pimenta, who defined favelas as "aesthetic leprosy", a problem for public health that had to be fought against (Valladares 2008).

8   Use of the concept of anomie was fundamental for Robert Merton (1970) in producing one of the most influential works on the study of deviant behavior. According to the author, such behavior was not the result of a pathological personality acquired by the individual at birth. It was, rather, the influence of social and cultural structures in a state of anomie that would exert pressure on certain groups and segments of the population within them.

9   The historical socio-spatial segregation of Rio de Janeiro's favelas, together with the presence of numerous points for selling drugs inside them, deeply affected Rio residents' view of their role in the spread of urban violence. Misery, deviant behavior and promiscuity prevailed in favelas, a representation sustained by the poverty-violence-favela link, creating a caricatured interpretation of the areas: illegal occupations on hills, a lack

residents in wealthier areas, who had a civilized urban identity, favelas' inhabitants began to be shown as proto-citizens, souls who needed a "civilizing education" to prepare them for life in society (Burgos 2006:29). This perspective justified many social control and re-education actions undertaken by the state, whose high degree of authoritarianism and violence created, at times, organized resistance by the population.

Meanwhile, since the intensification of violence seen in major Brazilian cities (mostly Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo) in the 1980s, there was potential to blame favelas for the disorder in the city[10]. Blamed as responsible for the increase in criminal activity in the country, young people in underprivileged classes in the favelas and periphery of the city began to be treated as "potential bandits" (Machado da Silva 2008). In light of intensified crime, fear began to be part of daily life for millions of Brazilian families, mostly in the country's largest cities[11]. Although the state and the media sometimes manipulated the feelings of insecurity for political and social control reasons, the fact is that violence indexes for Brazilian society have grown substantially in recent decades. The most tragic example of that phenomenon was the exponential rise in the number of murder victims in Brazil, which in 2010 was 49,932[12], a 259% increase compared with 1980, when 13,910 people were killed. The homicide rate per hundred thousand inhabitants shot from 11.7 to 26.2, an increase that led to more than a million murders in the last three decades[13] (Waiselfisz 2011).

Urban violence became a new collectively-built social category in Brazilians' minds, a reaction to new forms of crime arising from the "globalization of crime" (Zaluar 1996:60), bringing international drugs and arms

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of law and order, a place of degraded dwellings and a high concentration of the poor, the illiterate and criminals.

10   With the large-scale arrival of cocaine in Brazil in the 1980s (due to the globalization of drug trafficking), favelas were further established as the final destination of this illegal journey. The consequences were devastating for their residents, who began to be subjugated by armed groups who took advantage of the historical segregation of these areas to help their criminal activities (Zaluar 1996).

11   According to research by the IPEA (Applied Economics Research Institute) carried out in 2010, eight in every ten Brazilians are very afraid of being murdered, and only 10.2% of those interviewed said they were not afraid (Waiselfisz 2011).

12   In absolute terms, Brazil was the country with the highest murder rate in the world in 2009, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. For more information, see http://www.onu.org.br/estudo-do-unodc-mostra-que-partes-das-americas-e-da-africa-registram-os-maiores-indices-de-homicidios/

13   The lack of correspondence between the growth in total number of murders and the murder rate per hundred thousand people is due to the increase in the Brazilian population during that period. It rose from 119 to 190.7 million residents (Waiselfisz 2011).

trafficking networks to the surface. For Machado da Silva, urban violence became the new paradigm for formulating public crime-fighting policies, which de-politicized the debate on citizenship and blurred the focus on human rights, reducing security problems to "a simple matter of efficiency of the repression systems to guarantee social order" (2006:11-12). Urban violence, for this author, cannot be understood only as common violent crime, but as a practice imbued with force and articulation that is able to sustain itself for a certain amount of time, and whose representation:

> "(...) indicates a range of practices legally and administratively defined as crimes, selected for the physical force present in all of them, which threated basic conditions of the feeling of existential safety that used to be found in the routine of everyday life - physical integrity and guarantee of property. (...) attention focuses not on the legal status of the practices involved, but rather on the force involved in them, which is seen as responsible for the break in 'normality' in everyday routines" (Machado da Silva 2008: 36).

According to this researcher, drug traffickers are normally the main (but not the only) protagonists of urban violence, given the strong influence they have over the everyday life of those who live in neighborhoods (favelas and peripheries) where the illegal drug trade is carried out. Territory disputes for a monopoly on selling drugs in those underprivileged areas are often the cause of death or injury, and residents do not have any choice other than to accept (and support) the gangs' operations. That "inescapable territorial contact" also makes them the victims of police aggression, since the police considers them accomplices of the outlaws who operate around them (idem:13).

At a time when public policies designed to combat poverty were still in their early stages – the State of Social Well-Being (Estado de Bem-Estar Social) would only be treated as a right for the Brazilian population with the introduction of the 1988 Constitution – and when repression by the state began to gather pace, it was the poor, black young people who lived in the favelas and urban periphery that were most affected by the increase in violence: as victims and perpetrators. A new ideological direction in the state's responsibilities, in which the poor needed to be re-educated to live according to what were considered civilized standards, pushed the discussion on poverty as a threat to moral values and civilization to the background. Instead, even

more violent repression and confinement policies were pursued, within the framework of a new balance of power in which neoliberalism become the hegemony and the "Prison State" became the reference to follow[14]. The rise of this state model, for Loïc Wacquant (2008), aims to control and discipline the masses, punishing those who do not adhere to the social inequality that prevails. The criminalization of misery was joined by numerous repression and banishing mechanisms to neutralize and incapacitate the most vulnerable for any type of organized action that could endanger the brutal accumulation of goods and resources in the hands of the ruling bourgeoisie.

The stereotyped way in which the favelas' inhabitants were represented criminalized them as a whole; a generalization that legitimized the police's excesses in the eyes of a large proportion of society. The fight against crime became a plausible argument for repeated infringements of citizens' rights, making authoritarian, violent practices seem natural in those areas. The structural violence exercised by the state followed the organization of a hierarchy of value of life that made a significant portion of the poorest population "killable[15]" (Fridman 2008:83). The clear violation of human rights carried out in the name of suppressing crime blocked attempts to build a fairer and more peaceful society, turning to discourse that dehumanized the urban marginalized people to hide and depoliticize the historical roots of social inequality in Brazil[16]. At the same time, the same state that disciplined, repressed and murdered the most vulnerable let those who really benefited from criminal acts go unpunished, specifically drug and arms traffickers.

To paraphrase Alba Zaluar (2006), the lucrative drug trafficking business did not do anything to reduce social inequality, nor did it allow for any kind

14   Brazil is in the 4th position of the list of countries with the highest prison populations in the world, with 548,000 inmates in 2012. In the last 15 years, the increase in the number of inmates in the country was 221.2% (170,600 inmates in 1997), 7.3 times higher than the world average. For more information, see: http://www.cartacapital.com.br/sociedade/populacao-carceraria-brasileira-cresceu-7-vezes-mais-que-a-media-mundial-nos-ultimos-15-anos-5518.html

15   It is no coincidence that the greatest incidents of violence in recent years in Brazil were led by the police forces - specifically in the Vigário Geral and Candelária slaughters, both committed in 1993 in Rio de Janeiro. In the first, 21 inhabitants of a favela were killed, while in the second eight young homeless people (six of whom were under 18) were killed while they slept in front of one of the main religious monuments in the city. At the Carandiru (São Paulo Detention Center) massacre, 111 inmates were murdered by the military police after a riot in October 1992.

16   In 2007 the ex-governor of Rio de Janeiro, Sérgio Cabral Filho, argued for the legalization of abortion as a way of reducing violence, considering that the high birth rates in favelas turned them into "factories for producing marginalized people". Interview available at: http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Politica/0,,MUL155710-5601,00-CABRAL+DEFENDE+ABORTO+CONTRA+VIOLENCIA+NO+RIO+DE+JANEIRO.html

of improvements in income among favela residents, painted as the people most responsible (and benefited) by the sale and spread of the million-dollar trade. The young people in favelas who appear on television with *Havaianas* sandals on their feet and a rifle in their hands continue to be given over to a lifetime of poverty, with the aggravating fact of not reaching the age of 20. Due to the barbarity of Brazilian violence, they die because they are executed by the police, by rival gangs or even by the groups of which they are a part. Therefore, it makes no sense for those same young people to be (almost) the only targets of police repression and control by the Brazilian justice system, when we know that those who benefit the most (and own) the million-dollar trade live in luxury developments in the nicest parts of cities in Brazil and abroad. In that sense, Michel Foucault's idea of "useful delinquency" is extremely relevant because it highlights the state's mechanisms of domination and punishment and its none-too-pure relationship with economic and political elites (1977:246).

2. Criticisms of the "broken city"

Maré consists of 16 favelas created at different times and in different political situations. It is located at the edge of Guanabara Bay[17], and is bordered by three important roads: Avenida Brasil, Linha Vermelha and Linha Amarela. A few minutes by bus from the center of Rio de Janeiro, Maré has been considered a neighborhood by the city hall since 1994 (Silva 2009), and is the largest "complex[18]" of favelas in the city, home to approximately 130,000 people[19]. Until the start of the 1980s, Maré brought together six favelas: Timbau hill, Baixa do Sapateiro (the first buildings date from the 1940s), Parque Maré, Parque Rubens Vaz, Parque União (1950s) and Nova Holanda (1960s) (Vieira, 2002). The implementation of the Rio Project, launched in 1979 by the National Housing Bank (*Banco Nacional de Habitação - BNH*), profoundly

17   The site of many housing experiments, Maré has multi-family and single-family housing units built by the state to housing created for spontaneous or planned occupancy; from the favela on the hill (with its jumble of maze-like streets) to "favela-ized" housing complexes on Cartesian street systems in flat areas.

18   This term, *complexo* ("complex") in Portuguese, is used to designate a set of favelas and is very common in police and media discourse. It has a decidedly stigmatizing connotation because it was originally used for prison complexes (Alvito 2001:54).

19   The Brazilian Institute of Statistical Geography (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia Estatística - IBGE*) estimated that 129,770 people lived in Maré in 2010. Nonetheless, the Maré census (2012), organized by Redes da Maré and other organizations in the neighborhood counted almost 140,000 residents.

changed the landscape of the neighborhood. The project not only gave Maré basic infrastructure (water, electricity, sewage, paving) but also removed its stilt houses. They were replaced by housing developments that created new locations: Vila do João, Vila do Pinheiro, Conjunto Pinheiro and Conjunto Esperança. With the creation of the 30th Administrative Region of Maré in 1988, new locations were added: Conjunto Marcílio Dias, Parque Roquete Pinto and Praia de Ramos. Later, the state built new housing developments to house families from areas that were considered at risk, and made use of the ample free space and excellent accessibility: Conjunto Bento Ribeiro Dantas (1992), Nova Maré (1996) and Novo Pinheiro (2000).

Maré is not only divided into different favelas, which have rather original occupation histories, but also into areas of influence by the different drug trafficking factions. One need only go into Maré to notice the presence of armed groups, always alert to the arrival of the police or the presence of enemy gangs "in their territory" and feel the atmosphere of conflict to which its inhabitants are subjected[20]. But the conflicts cannot be attributed exclusively to criminal gangs, as the police is also an important actor in promoting violence and the feeling of insecurity that results from it. In the opinion of many residents, the police enters into onslaughts without any planning, triggering shootings that often kill residents who have nothing to do with trafficking. The Vice-Chair of one of Maré's Residents' Associations confided to me in an interview that the police was the main cause of the lack of security in the neighborhood:

> *The ones encouraging insecurity are the public power, because there are only problems here when the police invades, especially with the Caveirão[21]. That's when you have a problem. You're in the street and suddenly the Caveirão appears and shots are exchanged. That's the thing. Every now and then there are problems between [trafficking] factions, but it's rare, it's occasional. But the Caveirão can come in at any*

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20   This situation changed in March 2014, when Maré began to be occupied by the military police and by troops from the army and navy, with a view to installing Pacifying Police Units (Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora - UPP), a mode of community policing specifically directed toward favelas. Nonetheless, the influence of criminal factions over the different parts of Maré remains, although drug trafficking and the presence of armed young people are not as visible as before.

21   The "*Caveirão*" (literally "big skull") is an armored vehicle used by the Special Operations Battalion of the Military Police (*Batalhão de Operações Especiais* - BOPE). It is used to aid police incursions to fight drug trafficking in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. It was given its name by the favela population in reference to the BOPE symbol, which is formed of a skull passed through by a dagger and two golden guns.

time, and there could be gunfire, and there are times when it happens really often.
(…) What does the Caveirão do in terms of providing safety? The Caveirão comes in,
acts, fires, and that's when there's retaliation. The Caveirão doesn't carry out specific
actions, there's no planning: "I'm going there to do this". They don't have that role,
they don't have that planning. The Caveirão is just a form of repression.

[Interview, January 12, 2010]

This view was debated at the "First Free Conference on Public Security in Maré", organized by the NGO Redes [22] and 21 other local and supra-local institutions in June 2009. When arriving at Nova Holanda to take part in the conference, I saw several police officers armed with rifles and machine guns, most of whom were waiting in front of the Maré Arts Center (where the conference was taking place), where three military police vehicles were also parked. To my surprise, I saw the *Caveirão* further ahead (in the direction leading into the neighborhood). All of those people and equipment were there, in fact, to ensure the security of the event, more specifically the police officers invited to take part. However, this large security operation had the opposite effect: a few minutes after I arrived, there was intense gunfire between police forces and local traffickers, jeopardizing the safety of all the participants.

Around 200 people were at the conference, most of whom were residents of the neighborhood, along with several representatives from civil society institutions and researchers in the area of human rights. The conference focused on problems arising from police violence, and the presentations pointed to the importance of valuing life in public security policy. The message on one of the participant's t-shirt – "Cabral, enough extermination!" – is an example of the demands, referring to the Governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Sérgio Cabral Filho. His governance was marked by heavy investment in the Pacifying Police Units (UPP), presented as a new method of community policing directed toward the favelas, as a counterpoint to the occasional, violent operations in those areas[23]. In fact, there was a reduction

22   Redes (Redes de Desenvolvimento da Maré - Maré Development Networks) is an important NGO in the neighborhood. Its activities and projects are directed towards the areas of education, culture, local development, social mobilization, etc. The success of the preparatory courses for universities and important secondary education schools organized by Redes is notable. The courses have been responsible for many young people in the neighborhood starting higher education (an average of 80 students per year). For more information, visit the Redes websites: http://redesdamare.org.br/.

23   According to the Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro, there are currently 38 UPPs in operation,

in the number of murders in favelas occupied by UPP, whose areas stopped seeing such an obvious presence of armed traffickers[24]. But the UPPs were not the only public security policy under Sérgio Cabral's management. Before them, in the first years of his mandate, there was in increase in the number of deaths caused by the police in favelas, whose aggressive attitude was encouraged by his government, leading to harsh criticism in public opinion and from Brazilian and international human rights defense bodies[25] (Machado da Silva 2010).

The different discussion sessions were dominated by speeches and witness statements that revealed police brutality. They were not reports about strangers, but first-person narratives involving children, nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters or neighbors. Most of the participants had relatives (or people close to them) who had been murdered by the police or drug trafficking gangs. At the conference, it became clear that the violence in Maré was everyday, not exceptional, and crossed different aspects of residents' lives. I reproduce some of the statements made by those present:

> - *You can't treat violence one way in Leblon* [a wealthy neighborhood] *and another in Maré.*
> - *What about the people who killed Matheus? And the people who killed Felipe26? Were the police officers arrested?*
> - *Patrícia, who lives in Barra da Tijuca* [a wealthy neighborhood], *saw the police officers arrested. What about the police officers who killed Matheus? He was a black kid from a favela, so he doesn't count.*
> - *The people in charge of public security should respect residents. We are really*

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covering 257 locations. For more information, see: http://www.upprj.com/index.php//historico

24   Although there has been a significant decrease in the number of murders in favelas where UPPs were installed, the problem of violence (by the police and criminals) has not been resolved. The areas continue to be treated by the police as exceptions, where the citizens' rights of residents are not respected. The most perverse face of this is police brutality. The case of Amarildo, who was tortured and murdered by police in the Rocinha favela in 2013, is an example of the mistakes in a policy that, by continuing to follow a rationale of repressive and authoritarian social control, does not take into account the rights of favela residents.

25   A declaration that shows the public security policy adopted in the first years of Sérgio Cabral's government was given by José Mariano Beltrame, Secretary for Security in the State of Rio de Janeiro. He justified the police super-operation in the Alemão favelas in 2007 that led to 19 deaths and 13 wounded as follows: "The remedy to bring peace often involves actions that bring blood". The declaration can be read here: http://extra. globo.com/noticias/rio/para-policia-operacao-no-alemao-vai-enfraquecer-trafico-em-outras-favelas-680548. html#ixzz30y5gJP9l

26   Matheus (8) and Felipe (17) were killed in 2008 and 2009 respectively during police operations. Witnesses and families of the victims accused the police of carrying out an execution.

discriminated against because we live in Maré.

- When I was studying at university I was embarrassed to say that I lived in Maré. I said that I lived in Bonsucesso [a neighboring area].

- People say that we're afraid to denounce police abuse, but when we go after [justice], we're threatened.

- Maré is just a neighborhood like any other. This isn't a prison, and we're free, not prisoners.

[Field Diary, June 28, 2009]

The phenomena of violence, stigma and urban segregation were debated at the conference and the Maré residents, who were the main protagonists, highlighted the self-organization and mobilization of some of the neighborhood to reject the dominant public security model. The reports of Maré residents at the conference cannot be disregarded in Rio de Janeiro's context of social and spatial segregation, where favelas are presented as areas "contaminated" by ecological and moral degradation, a "geography of chaos" that would spread delinquency throughout legitimate areas of the city (Ferrándiz 2002:6). These assumptions condition the way that violence is fought by the police forces and how it is experienced by the residents of Rio de Janeiro, which makes the name "broken city[27]" or the "asphalt-favela[28]" polarization very common in media discourse and common sense. Both names offer an uncomplicated interpretation of Rio's segregation, in which the possibility for combinations, ambiguity and cultural exchanges between individuals from different hierarchies in the city are almost non-existent. On the one hand, these two artificial terms ignore the deep transformations seen in many of Rio de Janeiro's favelas (urbanization, development of rich local commerce, emergence of a lower middle class), perpetuating an anachronistic, prejudiced idea. The existence of small and medium-sized traders in the favelas, and even individuals who become the owners of several pieces of real estate, many of whom used the verticalization[29] of their houses to make a good business, negates the theories that apply poverty to all favela residents.

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27   The title of a book by Zuenir Ventura (1994) that tells of the author's experience in Vigário Geral, Rio de Janeiro, immediately following the massacre in which 21 people were killed by an extermination group formed of police officers in August 1993.

28   The "asphalt-favela" distinction is often used to distinguish between two extremes of Brazilian cities: the wealthy asphalt and the poor favela.

29   A term often used in the favela context to describe vertical extensions to buildings.

In Maré, situations of poverty exist side by side with a large supply of modern products and services (lawyers' offices, real estate agents, medical clinics, computer material shops, travel agencies, ice cream parlors), which calls into question the simplistic view that favelas are only for housing and that their residents are all miserable[30].

On the other hand, cultural exchange between social groups from different classes in Rio de Janeiro has always taken place, and the poor (whether they live in favelas or not) never stopped moving around the rich areas of the city. In fact, they were the ones who took up the jobs created by brisk business in Leblon, Ipanema and Copacabana. The main problem is not the lack of mobility for those who live in favelas and the peripheries, but the "cast" social position that they hold in the urban area. The poor always had problems breaking out of the "symbolic and material shackles" that keep them in a subordinate position. In rich areas of the city, they are accepted as doormen, maids, bakers, bricklayers or drivers. Roles that do not place them in a position of power. In any other setting, their presence is rejected and sometimes criminalized, especially in the case of young black people. However, in certain leisure and sporting situations (music and football are two examples), class and "race" barriers tend to be subverted and often it is the young black people from favelas who "run the show[31]". As Alba Zaluar and Marcos Alvito explain, favela residents in Rio de Janeiro were always exceptional artistic and cultural creators for producing regional (and national) symbols. A party would be the motive for forms of "conflict and sociability that use togetherness, sharing food, mingling, and celebration as antidotes to the violence that is always present but contained or transcended by the party" (2006:20).

Although the metaphors cited strengthen a myth that does not take into account mingling and cultural exchanges between residents from different areas (and social backgrounds) of the city, its success in the city mind-set is due to the fact that it calls attention not only to social inequality and citizens'

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30   Incorporating the economic diversity and plurality of social situations in each favela is fundamental in order to move away from the incorrect assumptions of absence, poverty and homogeneity that are constantly associated with favelas (Valladares 2008).

31   Hermano Vianna, in his research on the "invention" of samba (and its incorporation as national music), emphasized the large number of social groups involved – black people, gypsies, classical composers, rich and poor – in a cultural heterogeneity that does not try to minimize the decisive role of Afro-Brazilians. According to the author, the existence of "transcultural mediators" was highly important so that some members of the Brazilian elite and underprivileged groups would create connections with each other based on the musical genre (2004:122).

rights, but also to the presence of armed groups linked to drug trafficking inside the favelas. In light of this fact, residents are presented by much of the media and many political institutions as "outlaws' accomplices" and as having "dubious morality", characteristics that deny them full access to justice and that assign them the blame for the violence problems in the city (Leit 2008:117). This situation legitimizes the police's violent behavior directed toward favela residents and reaches its peak when young black people are involved[32]; they are criminalized in advance by large swathes of society and are victims of extermination policies by public security forces.

In Rio de Janeiro's favelas, there is clear disrespect for residents' human rights, since the constitutional guarantees that limit police action are disregarded. Gratuitous assaults, humiliating searches, unfair arrests and executions (using "suspect resistance" to justify the killings[33]) have become commonplace. The feeling of personal indignity that arises as a result builds true "symbolic walls" that negatively affect access to social circles and cultural facilities in the city, as well as making it harder to gain opportunities in the labor market.

3. "You're in the Vermelhão Area." Maré's Borders

I had been working in the field in Maré for little more than two months when I made a serious mistake that nearly stopped this research from going ahead. When approached by someone linked to drug trafficking, I ended up inadvertently breaking one of the neighborhood's codes of conduct. My inability to deal with a territorial dispute between different trafficking factions raised suspicion about the reasons for my presence in Maré, but the situation was thankfully resolved with a quick "*desenrolo*[34]" (straightening out). Had this not been the case, my subsequent visits to the neighborhood would have had

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32   Reading the *Map of Violence 2012*, organized by Julio Waiselfisz (2011), I would like to highlight some fundamental elements about the violence index recorded in 2010. Firstly, the relationship between homicide and youth, since young people (in the 15-24 age group) were 156% more likely to be murdered than other age groups. Secondly, it is important to highlight that 91.4% of murder victims were male. Lastly, 139% more Afro-Brazilians were murdered than white Brazilians, so a black person is more than twice as likely to be murdered.

33   The term "suspect resistance" ("*auto de resistência*") here refers to resistance to police authorities followed by death. Nonetheless, this terminology hides the fact that a large proportion of victims in those cases were summarily executed by the police (Misse 2011).

34   "*Desenrolo*" (literally "unfolding") is the term used by favela residents to talk about a way of clearing up conflicts and misunderstandings with people linked to drug trafficking, to try to avoid problems with them, including physical punishment (Leite 2008:131).

to stop, because of mistrust that could even have led to physical punishment. My unfortunate story follows.

After a brief visit to the *quitinete* (a small house that normally consists of an all-in-one bedroom and living room) where I intended to live, I began to walk through Nova Holanda and Parque Rubens Vaz to familiarize myself with their roads and alleyways. That afternoon, I also intended to visit the Maré Solidarity Action and Study Centre (*Centro de Estudos e Ações Solidárias da Maré - CEASM*) and the Maré Museum, both of which operate on Timbau hill. The Timbau favela is located at the other end of the neighborhood, a half-hour walk from where I was. I was walking in that direction when I heard a bang caused by fireworks close by. Setting off fireworks in any trafficking-controlled favela is a warning about one of two possible situations: a police operation or an attempted invasion by rival gangs. Inside a pet supplies store, where I ran to protect myself from possible armed conflict, the shop assistant explained to me that an "*olheiro*35" (lookout) had seen a police car nearby and recommended that I stay there for a while longer. Five minutes later, I decided to leave, since the flow of people on the streets seemed to have returned to normal. But after going a few steps from the shop, a limping man aged around 30 asked me where I was going. Although he was not armed, I could tell that he was (directly or indirectly) linked to drug trafficking because he came from one of the stalls set up for that purpose36. Trying not to appear afraid, I replied that I was going in the direction of Nova Holanda and he answered to say that I was already there. Feeling awkward, I asked if it was "*tranquilo*37" (cool) to keep going. He said yes, and then immediately afterwards asked me the same question. I replied:

> *I'm going to Timbau, do you know the best way to get there?*
> *What are you going to do there? Don't you know that you're in the Vermelhão Area?*
> *What are you going to do there?*
> *I'm going to the CEASM to get to know their work and I'm going to visit the Maré*

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35   A member of the drug trafficking operation whose job is to warn (using fireworks or other means) the other members of the gang about police operations or attempted invasions by rival gangs.

36   In Maré, the drugs trade takes place in the open air, using small tables that are used to place bags filled with small portions of marijuana, cocaine, crack and, less often, ecstasy, *loló* (a psychotropic drug made using chloroform and ether) and hashish, ready to be sold.

37   This word is used by Rio favela residents to say that there are no armed conflicts. When the atmosphere is not "*tranquilo*", it is time to be careful.

Museum where there's an exhibition about the history of the neighborhood and...
You're crazy to say you're going there, man! Here it's Vermelhão and there it's Terceiro.
Where are you from?
I'm from Niterói [a town next to Rio de Janeiro].
You're crazy, saying you're going there! I'll take you there.
It's cool, I'll get there. It's better to go down Avenida Brasil, right? Is it "sujeira"
[dangerous] *to go along Rua Principal to Baixa do Sapateiro?*
[Field Diary, September 4, 2009]

The man agreed with me and confirmed that going along Avenida Brasil was better, because it could be dangerous to go through the border areas. A young man approached us to disagree, saying that it was fine to go through the middle. I said goodbye to them quickly and said that I was going towards Avenida Brasil. Before I left, the limping man warned me:

Never say you're going to Timbau or they'll take it the wrong way.
You're right, buddy. I messed up.
[Field Diary, September 4, 2009]

I continued heading in the direction of Avenida Brasil, annoyed about my lack of awareness. After all, as a Rio native, I should have known to avoid mentioning rival territories and groups in favelas with drug trafficking, or I could be misunderstood and cause unpredictable consequences.

Physical attacks or even murders of people suspected of being police investigators or spies from rival gangs are not uncommon events around here, part of a context of bloody confrontations for a monopoly on drugs sales and state repression. This situation requires researchers to take special care when calculating their comings and goings in the field, trying to anticipate possibly unforeseen events. Being able to locate border areas between disputing gangs and realizing when there are police operations form valuable knowledge that reduces researchers' exposure to danger. "Knowing how to go in and how to get out" are essential methodological procedures in areas dominated by crime, as Alba Zaluar explains so well (2009:566). An understanding of the hierarchies and rivalries that make up the "tortuous" rules set by drug trafficking is also important, so as not to disturb or raise unnecessary suspicions from local traffickers.

When I began the fieldwork, there were three drug trafficking factions dominating different areas of Maré, as well as the presence of a militia (a para-military group composed of police officers, firefighters and soldiers who also
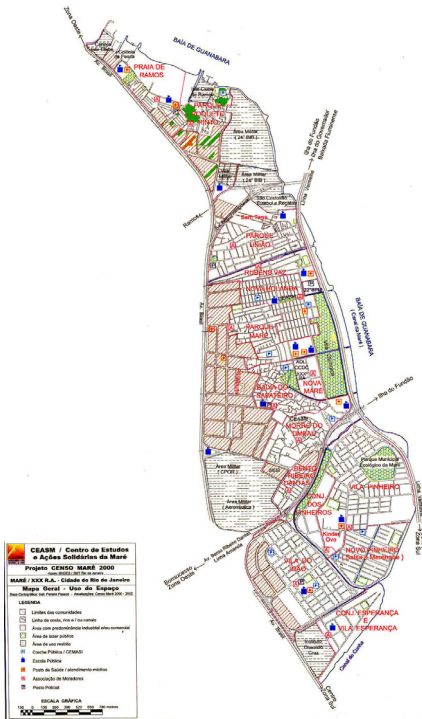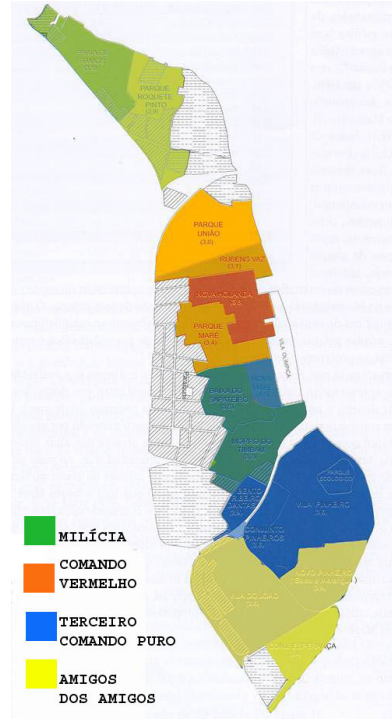
Figure 1: General map of Maré.
Source: CEASM

Figure 2: Distribution of armed groups
in Maré in July 2009

exercise violent territorial control). To symbolically mark that control, numerous pieces of graffiti with abbreviations of the different factions can be seen on walls in the neighborhood: CV, *Comando Vermelho* (Red Command), TCP, *Terceiro Comando Puro* (Third Pure Command), and ADA, *Amigos dos Amigos* (Friends of Friends). The abbreviations are normally joined by the names of local traffickers.

Figure 1 shows the many areas of Maré with some of its most important landmarks. Next to it, in Figure 2, the distribution of armed groups in the neighborhood's favelas can be seen, as in July 200938.

The green areas are dominated by militias: Conjunto Marcílio Dias, Parque Roquete Pinto and Praia de Ramos. The favelas are controlled by the Comando Vermelho faction, in red: Parque União, Parque Rubens Vaz, Nova Holanda and Parque Maré. Terceiro Comando Puro controls the territory in blue, which includes Baixa do Sapateiro, Nova Maré, Timbau hill, Conjunto Bento Ribeiro Dantas, Vila do Pinheiro and Conjunto Pinheiro. The Amigos

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38   Figure 2 was made by me using information collected during the research.

dos Amigos faction is shown in yellow, and its hold is over Novo Pinheiro (Salsa and Merengue), Vila do João and Conjunto Esperança.

The constant armed conflicts between traffickers and violent action by police greatly limit mobility and friendship networks for Maré residents, as in many of Rio de Janeiro's other favelas. One of the clearest ways that this happens is the difficulty in moving freely through the neighborhood. Territorial divisions imposed by the different trafficking gangs force most of the residents, especially young people, to avoid areas controlled by rival groups. They fear being mistaken for members of an enemy faction or police investigators, which would put their lives at risk. They internalize submission, even symbolic submission, that restricts their friendship networks. The influence that the gangs exert on young people pressures them to not engage with other people in the same neighborhood simply because they live in areas dominated by different, rival factions. In this process, a young person "from the other side" is known as "*alemão*" (German), which in local slang means an untrustworthy person, someone who does not deserve respect and is a transgressor. The consequence of that process intensifies the "experience of territorial confinement" felt by the residents (Machado da Silva 2008:13). Fear is strengthened and families who live on different sides of the (trafficking) borders avoid going to houses on the other side; routes across certain parts of the neighborhood are amended so as not to cross border areas; traditional leisure and meeting places start to be avoided, "suffocating" networks of sociability and neighborliness.

One particular feature of Maré that was strange to me (and put me on edge) was constantly seeing young people passing by with weapons, mostly rifles. Residents appeared to be used to it, which does not mean that they agreed with it. Among the people I talked to, showing weapons was one of the most criticized aspects, as well as the abuses of power perpetrated by members of the criminal networks. The leaders that managed to minimize those problems continued to be better respected by residents. Showing off weapons has symbolic value that goes beyond aspects linked to using them. It is a show of warlike power that aims to discourage invasions by enemy gangs[39]. Furthermore, it is a way for a local gang to assert its power in the favela and subject residents to certain social regulation practices.

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39   The work of X-9s (the "native" term for spies) to find out weaknesses in a rival group takes place constantly in Maré, according to Eliana Silva (2009:189).

Reporting or informing the police or rival groups about trafficking operations – the expression "*emic*" in favelas means snitching ("*xisnovar*", literally "exnining", from the term "X-9") – is the worst transgression in the system enforced by criminal factions, punished by death in most cases. Robbery and rape inside the favela are also forbidden and are a direct affront to the leader of the local trafficking group; perpetrators are severely punished. It is not pure coincidence that robbery, rape and theft are rare in Maré. While the previous rules are very clear to residents, there are others that are much less explicit. Wearing a red shirt (the color of the Comando Vermelho) in Rio favelas controlled by ADA or TCP may be slightly dangerous, as well as using certain expressions linked to each gang. The code greeting for "it's us" is "*é nós*" for CV, while the expression "*é a gente*" is used by TCP and ADA[40].

There are no explicit rules in Maré forbidding people from going into rival favelas, but it is strongly discouraged. Stories of arbitrary behavior and fatalities play a decisive role and help spread fear and certain myths, leading residents to monitor their own behavior. Although there may be some exaggeration in the stories, most young people in Maré with whom I had contact had experienced some episode of stress related to moving around the neighborhood. One of the most striking cases happened to Mineiro, a young black man of 27 from Nova Holanda, almost killed by traffickers from Vila do Pinheiro. He was crossing Maré by bus (one of the lines that runs inside the neighborhood) when he was interrogated by traffickers from Vila do Pinheiro who suddenly entered the vehicle. They asked where he lived and he said Nova Holanda and was then violently thrown off the bus. Mineiro tried to argue, telling them that he was coming back from work (he was wearing the company uniform), and that he was a worker who had nothing to do with trafficking.

After being slapped in the face several times, he heard the younger traffickers encouraging the others to kill him and accusing him of being an X-9 (spy). As he was nervous, Mineiro forgot to say that he had family in Vila do Pinheiro, which could have saved him from the impending tragedy. They

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40   There were times when the rival groups to Comando Vermelho (VC) in Maré recommended that residents did not use red clothing. However, this was no longer the case when I carried out the fieldwork. According to one of my informants, the factions were unable to impose that rule because red was the dominant color of the most popular football team in Rio de Janeiro, Flamengo. I also did not see any hostility from traffickers to the color green (associated with TCP) in favelas dominated by CV. Unlike the colors, code greetings are a much more direct reference to each of the criminal factions, and using them in the wrong territory should be avoided.

continued in the direction of the sewer channel, because they did not want to leave his body in a public place. Luckily, he was recognized by a friend who used to do motorbike races with him in Maré, and he vouched for him, saying that he was a good person. The description of Mineiro's motorcycle was recognized by one of the traffickers, which saved him from a pointless death.

This episode illustrates the reasons that drive most of Maré's residents to avoid moving around territories dominated by rival gangs, especially young people, who are more exposed to the violent, arbitrary behavior of criminal groups[41]. As they are forced to take traffickers' pressure seriously, young people in Maré normally follow a set of procedures in order to reduce the unpredictability of the gangs' actions, whose rules vary from faction to faction, style of leader, the characteristics of the individual in question and the specific situation. The precarious stability in the regulation of behavior by the gangs leads some authors to consider the term "laws of trafficking" to be inappropriate (Leite 2008; Farias 2008). "Violent sociability" is the inherent force that regulates social relations perpetrated by drug trafficking factions, whose sense of otherness is practically non-existent, and physical force is the main reference in coordinating actions (Machado da Silva 2008:42).

Since my first visit to the neighborhood, the incident mentioned was the only time I was directly approached by someone from trafficking, in contrast to what I had expected. I had imagined that at several times throughout the fieldwork I would be forced to justify my presence in Maré. To avoid misunderstandings I took some special precautions. One of those was consent from the Favela Observatory[42] (*Observatório de Favelas*) to say that I was a member of staff or researcher from the NGO if I was confronted about my comings and goings in the neighborhood, which was never necessary. I also avoided walking around without the company of young people from the neighborhood at night, when trafficking was more present. I hardly crossed borders between rival gangs, choosing instead to go around (outside Maré) via Avenida Brasil, while remaining constantly aware of possible incursions by the police or enemy gangs. I learned from the dancers in the neighborhood

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41   Women, the elderly and people who carry out certain professional activities (teachers, postmen, pastors, NGO staff) have more freedom of movement**,** since the risk of their being accused of espionage is almost non-existent.

42   The Favela Observatory is an institution based in Nova Holanda directed towards research and developing public policies about favelas and other areas created by underprivileged groups. To see more details, visit the website: http://www.observatoriodefavelas.org.br

to distinguish between the sound of armed conflicts and merely testing or demonstrating weapons[43] and I developed different strategies for getting into and out of the neighborhood: I checked internet newspapers to find out if any police operations were underway, and I tried to detect possible changes in routine or flows of residents around Maré that indicated any danger, or I even asked passers-by or my informants if the "coast was clear".

As I began to gain visibility and trust (the trafficking people saw me in the company of Maré's breakdancers) I began to walk alone at night, and at the same time I explored new areas. I think that it was easier for me to go into and move around Maré because of three elements that weakened the control and censorship mechanisms used by the trafficking gangs. The first is related to Maré's characteristics, since its size and the intense movement of people (residents or otherwise) makes it unfeasible for there to be personalized surveillance of passers-by. Unlike favelas where few NGOs work, the traffickers in Maré (and in Nova Holanda in particular, which was the focus of my fieldwork) were used to seeing people from other parts of the city: NGO workers, teachers, traders and customers who took advantage of the extensive supply of products and services at affordable prices[44]. Secondly, my appearance, attitude, gestures and clothes showed that I did not live in Maré or any other favela. My middle-class social background was expressed in my body, specifically in my skin tone (lighter than most[45]). At the same time, wearing better quality clothes showed a difference in class that ended up alleviating possible suspicions that I might belong to a rival gang. I believe that if I were black I would have had many more problems with traffickers and the police[46], since it would be easier for them to classify me into the stereotype: black/

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43   The sound of weapons testing or training by traffickers is different from gunfire between rival groups or with the police, because different weapons and calibers are used: machine guns, pistols, shotguns and grenades.

44   According to some members of NGOs established in Maré, local traffickers are used to seeing people from outside moving around the neighborhood, which is not so common in other favelas dominated by criminal gangs. Even within Maré, there are differences in the way that trafficker violence and control are enforced, and it varies from gang to gang and leader to leader.

45   There is a large presence of migrants from north-eastern Brazil (mostly white, from north-eastern states) in Maré, especially in the Parque União favela. However, in Nova Holanda, where I concentrated the study, most of the population is from Rio de Janeiro and came from the favelas removed in the 1960s, and black people are noticeably over-represented.

46   As regards the police, I was only stopped once. I was quickly searched, they checked my documents and asked me some questions about what I was doing there. I answered that I lived in Niterói, that I was part of the Favela Observatory and that I was carrying out research for university about young people and hip hop in the neighborhood, and was quickly allowed to move on.

poor/favela resident = outlaw. Finally, my link to a group of recognized and easily identifiable young people – the colorful, loud costumes of the b-boys and b-girls (breakdancers) contrasted with the Maré residents' traditional Bermuda shorts, flip-flops and t-shirt – helped me to become associated with "the hip hop crowd", as it was known by trafficking people. They did not need to approach me, therefore, to find out who I was or what I was doing in the neighborhood. The answers could be found in my face, my clothes and those I was with[47].

4. "Another Maré is possible". Organizing action for peace

I've never been to Baghdad, I've never been to Bosnia, I've never been to Afghanistan, but I imagine that it's the same there. They really are acts of war: screaming, a grenade exploding, rifle shots, people shouting, saying that I-don't-know-who has died, screaming that they're going to kill the other one. In my street, near my house, a friend (neighbor) had his house shot at. It really feels like war, but it doesn't turn into a war itself.
[Jorge, 34. Interview, November 26, 2009]

For around five months in 2009 there were intense conflicts in Maré between two drug trafficking factions, which led to the deaths of more than 40 people (many of whom were not involved in crime in any way), according to information from the neighborhood's NGOs. They were difficult times, mostly for the residents of Vila do Pinheiro, Conjunto Pinheiro, Vila do João, Salsa e Merengue and Conjunto Esperança, trapped by armed confrontation between the ADA and TCP gangs, rivals in a territorial dispute. Although violence was not new to Maré, it intensified from the end of May 2009, when TCP traffickers increased their hold over Vila do Pinheiro and Conjunto Pinheiro. Practically overnight, these favelas woke up under a new yoke. Members of ADA, forced out of those areas after intense exchanges of fire, focused on the other territories that they controlled, in an attempt to secure what they still had and recover what they had lost[48]. For many of the neighborhood's residents, the police's action in that incident was not neutral and

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47   Later, I found out that local traffickers had asked some young people in the neighborhood questions about me.

48   At the time when I started the fieldwork (June 2009), these confrontations had already begun. The distribution of armed groups in Maré at the time can be seen in Figure 2.

did not confront both parties involved. They denounced the police for supporting one of the gangs (TCP). The police, aided by the *Caveirão*, altered the balance of power and triggered the terrible armed conflicts that followed[49]. This would be the start of one of the bloodiest periods in Maré's history.

My entry into the neighborhood was marked by that climate of fear and tension. In the first few weeks of fieldwork, I did not dare to visit the locations being disputed, since they were scenes of intense gunfire and arbitrary behavior. I got news about the evolution of this "war" through Jorge, a geographer and researcher at the Favela Observatory and Vila do João resident. In fact, it was he who warned me about the inaccuracy of using the word "war" to describe the violent atmosphere at the time:

> *It isn't a war. The way I see it, war involves two enemies without any kind of dialog. If you have participation by police, if you have participation by public actors, if you have corruption then there is no war. What you really have are confrontations between armed groups for control over the territory.* (…) *Otherwise the guys will start thinking that this is a war, and civilian losses become acceptable: collateral damage. That's when you'll see the secretary* [from the Secretariat of State for Security] *saying, when confronted with the death of five residents: "No, but it's collateral damage, they're civilian losses, this is a war". It ends up justifying the militarization of favelas.* [Jorge, 34. Interview, November 26, 2009]

In fact, José Mariano Beltrame, Secretary for Public Security of the State of Rio de Janeiro said, in 2007, to justify the many deaths resulting from police operations in the favelas: "This is a war, and in a war people are wounded and killed[50]". Using the justification that some areas of the city were in civil war, the deaths of innocent people began to go unpunished, and police excesses understood as inevitable in the struggle against crime. At the same time, exterminating members of trafficking gangs, mostly young people and teenagers, is legitimized by an unprecedented criminalization of poverty. These ideas are consistent with the ideology, widely spread by the media and political authorities, that a "good outlaw is a dead outlaw", a view tolerated by many segments of civil society[51].

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49   This version of events can be read in several newspapers and blogs. One example is this story: http://extra.globo.com/casos-de-policia/caveirao-servico-do-trafico-na-mare-297199.html

50   Interview available at: http://veja.abril.com.br/311007/entrevista.shtml

51   It is not uncommon for Members of Parliament and other Brazilian politicians to use this type of rhetoric,

After the invasion of Vila do Pinheiro and Conjunto Pinheiro, there was an impasse in the conflict between the two rival gangs, and violence rose in the other locations (still) under the control of ADA: Vila do João, Salsa e Merengue and Conjunto Esperança. For some months, the criminal groups disputed the hegemony in those areas, and armed confrontations stopped being exceptional and profoundly changed the residents' day-to-day life. Some local businesses had to close or change location; leisure and socializing in the neighborhood's streets began to be avoided; and abuse by traffickers increased significantly, along with the number of victims of "stray bullets[52]". In an attempt to respond to the situation, residents, neighborhood organizations (NGOs, churches and other institutions) and members of human rights associations joined to organize a demonstration for peace.

The preparation meetings for the demonstration took place at the Vila do João Residents' Association and involved between 20 and 30 people, mostly residents from the neighborhood. The demonstration was called "Action for peace. Another Maré is Possible. To Value Life and Put an End to Violence" and was scheduled for September 20 (Saturday) 2009 at 8 a.m. It was organized by several representatives of the "association world" in Maré. At the first meeting I attended, discussion focused on drawing up the text for the leaflets that would be distributed throughout the neighborhood, and there was controversy over whether the murder of two young people by the police, months before the spread of the violence experienced at the time, should be mentioned or not. One of the participants did not agree with mentioning it, since it could link the demonstration to police violence. She argued that the priority was to denounce the confrontations between trafficking gangs, responsible for the death of approximately 20 people in June alone. Most of those present agreed with that view, and they began to discuss whether they should include the expression "conflict between traffickers" or not. The alternative was merely using the word "conflict" and leaving the rest of the message implicit. One of the young people present did not agree with removing the word "trafficker", until one resident said very naturally:

which is also part of the discourse of many sensationalist programs that exploit the phenomenon of urban violence in the hunt for bigger television audiences. According to research carried out in 2008 by the Special Secretariat for Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic, 43% of Brazilians agree (fully or partly) with the expression "a good outlaw is a dead outlaw". For more information, see: http://zerohora.clicrbs.com.br/rs/noticia/2008/12/bandido-bom-e-bandido-morto-43-dos-brasileiros-concordam-com-a-expressao-2329250.html

52   This term is used for shots from firearms of unknown origin.

We're scared! What residents are going to go to the demonstration if we talk about traffickers?! The residents will think: "Am I going to badmouth them? No way am I going to the demonstration".
[Field Diary, September 4, 2009]

This was a controversial topic, and several people wanted to take part, talking at the same time. One of the main neighborhood leaders, the director of an important local NGO, spoke and began to direct the discussion:

We are meeting here not because of this particular conflict, which has gone beyond all acceptable limits. We are meeting because we want to build a movement that can discuss another kind of public security here for Maré. We don't want police occupation, like the ones in the Alemão favelas that didn't bring any safety for the residents, only fear and abuse.
[Field Diary, September 4, 2009]

Everyone accepted that the text on the leaflet should not make any mention of trafficking, with the aim of ensuring that residents participated and were safe at the event. But there would be some mention of abusive, violent police intervention. Another important point at the meeting was related to a sensitive subject: how would they mediate the event between police and local trafficking gangs? With the first institution, it was simpler, and it was decided that two representatives from the movement and an official letter would be sent to the Military Police Battalion that operated in Maré to inform them about the demonstration. The organizers feared that the police would come to the event, and it would cause gunfire and for the action to be shut down. The ill-fated actions of the police at the Conference on Public Security in Maré were also discussed, when the presence of the *Caveirão* triggered armed confrontation with local traffickers. The participants agreed that the trafficking gangs needed to be told about the event indirectly using leaflets that would be distributed, since many said that they did not recognize it as "representative of anything at all". According to the program established, the demonstration would begin with a religious celebration at 8 a.m., followed by speeches by local representatives. The proposal for cultural groups to perform was welcomed, and the following collectives were chosen: the Vila Olímpica da Maré dance group, the Maré breakdance group, the carnival group "Se benze que dá" and APAFunk. To end the demonstration, it was suggested that a minute's silence be held to honor those

Figure 3: Action for Peace leaflet

killed in the conflicts. Finally, all those present undertook to mobilize institutions and "Maré civil society": Evangelical pastors, Catholic priests, workers from schools, crèches, health units, NGOs, Angolans[53], residents' associations, young people from hip hop groups.

At the second meeting I attended, there were around 30 people, split into a group writing the text for the leaflet and another that discussed the logistical preparations for the action for peace. There were more representatives from institutions than at the previous meeting, among whom three Evangelical pastors and a Catholic priest, easily identifiable by the bibles on the table. The Catholic Church had already undertaken to support the demonstration (it would provide a vehicle to publicize the event) and the participants had highlighted that it was important for other churches to participate in the process. The small number of Evangelical church representatives worried some of those involved, who wanted to incorporate more religious persuasions in the mobilization process. Their concern was understandable, since churches were among the most active institutions in Maré, and were able to mobilize a wide range of residents. For that reason, it was decided that a letter would be written to invite Maré's churches to join the demonstration. It was further decided where banners advertising the event would be displayed, the number of leaflets that would be printed and distributed, the vehicles that form the "sound car", among other tasks. The two groups joined to read the latest version of the leaflet and some suggestions were incorporated. The demonstration leaflet can be seen in Figure 3.

The song *O Iraque é aqui* ("This is Iraq"), by Samba musician Jorge Aragão, was chosen to publicize Action for Peace. The lyrics of this song reveal the atmosphere that was experienced in Maré:

O Iraque é aqui	*This is Iraq*
Tá pegando aqui dentro	*It's taking hold in here*
O Iraque é aqui	*This is Iraq*
O povo tá com medo	*The people are afraid*
E há que se entender. Crer	*And everyone must get along. Believe*
Eh! Carandiru, Bangu	*Hey! Carandiru, Bangu*
O Iraque é aqui	*This is Iraq*
O gueto tá fervendo	*The ghetto's seething*

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53   There is a large number of Angolan immigrants living in Maré, primarily in Vila do João.

Pior que isso aqui	*Worse than this here*
Que a gente tá vivendo	*That we are living*
É saber que o poder	*Is knowing that power*
Pode poder	*May, might*
Trocar de mão	*Change direction*
Fingir que até ficou de mal	*Pretend that it's against us*
Sabe porquê?	*Do you know why?*
Aqui tudo é bom, aqui tudo é bom	*Everything's good here, everything's good here*
Aqui tudo é bom, aqui tudo é bom	*Everything's good here, everything's good here*
Aqui tudo é bom, aqui tudo é bom	*Everything's good here, everything's good here*
Toca bola e samba que eles baixam o som	*Play football and samba and they'll turn down the sound*

[Song, O Iraque é aqui. Jorge Aragão]

We left the meeting to hang up one of the banners that announced the demonstration at the border between Vila do João and Vila do Pinheiro. As there were no signs that there could be gunfire at that time, we crossed a small bridge over the sewage channel that divided the two places. We were at the "heart" of the conflict, and while we were hanging up the banner, one of the young people exclaimed: "It's been months since I last set foot on this side".

Afterwards, I had lunch at a nearby restaurant with one of the representatives of Ação Comunitária (Gabriel), and I took the opportunity to visit the NGO's facilities, which operated in Vila do João. That afternoon, I walked to Nova Holanda inside the neighborhood, and not via Avenida Brasil (outside) as I had done the last time. I was accompanied by Gabriel, who knew the best ways to avoid possible armed confrontations. We were still in Vila do João when we came across a *Caveirão* parked on one of the streets, with police talking next to the armored vehicle. Children were playing in the neighboring streets, which seemed to suggest that there was no imminent danger of conflict. We passed by the *Caveirão* and, in Conjunto Pinheiro, Gabriel showed me the path for pedestrians, which crossed the Linha Amarela (one of the city's important expressways), that made the connection to the other part of the neighborhood, and I continued my journey alone. From the heights of the footpath I could see the vastness of Maré, with Timbau hill and Conjunto Bento Ribeiro Dantas, better known as "*Fogo Cruzado*" (Crossfire), in front of me. It is formed of post-modernist inspired houses: its walls are brick and

exposed concrete and the roofs sloped[54]. This place had been in the firing line of battles between criminal factions for a long time. So the name "*Fogo Cruzado*" is more than a metaphor. Nonetheless, since the recent expansion of TCP, residents in the area were experiencing times of relative calm.

5. "I want to be happy. I want to walk peacefully around the favela where I was born." Demonstration for Peace

I arrived at Vila do João at around 8.30 a.m. to take part in the action for peace. I found some participants from the preparation meetings distributing leaflets close to the bus stops. They were apprehensive about the demonstration, because the night before there had been a "hell of gunfire between two rival gangs". I went with one of them towards the inside of the neighborhood, when I noticed a crowd of around 400 people gathered next to the Catholic church São José Operário, located between Vila do João and Vila do Pinheiro, i.e., on the border between ADA and TCP domains. The walls of the church were riddled with bullet marks, something that was stopping worshippers from going to mass.

> "*I canceled the evening masses. Others, which used to bring 400 to 500 people, now barely bring 100. The church is covered in bullet holes. This is a never-ending, constant war that, as unbelievable as it sounds, sometimes reaches its peak on Saturday mornings.*"
> [Father João Carlos, September 20, 2009]55

Most people who had gathered for the demonstration had just come out of mass (the best attended in recent months, as Roberto, a researcher from the Favela Observatory, told me) after the priest João Carlos had strongly encouraged the congregation to participate in the action. I asked Roberto about the residents' apprehension. He was harsh in his response:

> People may say that they're afraid of getting shot, but when it's time to go to a funk dance, nobody's afraid. [Adalberto. Field Diary, September 20, 2009]

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54   Built in 1992 by the public power, Conjunto Bento Ribeiro Dantas ("*Fogo Cruzado*") received residents from other favelas that were considered to be at risk from floods, landslides, etc. Its unusual architecture, specifically the sloping roofs, was planned with a view to discouraging residents from changing the original plan and avoiding verticalization (Jacques 2002:47). But this did not stop some residents making modifications to the buildings, including vertical expansion.

55   Interview taken from the websites: http://www.chicoalencar.com.br/chico2004/chamadas/pronuncs/pronunc 20090924b.htm

Figure 4: Action for Peace in Maré

The banner inviting people to the action led the demonstration and was accompanied by representatives from local bodies (NGOs, churches, associations), members of the human rights sector and other supporters. Many people were dressed in black, and others were in white t-shirts with the action's motto, "Another Maré is Possible. To Value Life and Put an End to Violence". There was a strong religious element, and many people (mostly women) carried chalices, crosses and other Catholic symbols, as well as flags from several countries: Brazil, Portugal, Japan, the UK, etc. We stopped in the middle of a street in Vila do João, where João Carlos spoke. He stressed the importance of unity to fight for peace and, at the end of the speech, he asked if there were any representatives from Evangelical churches who wished to speak. Since no-one appeared, he asked for all those present to join hands and pray. After this brief ritual, a neighborhood leader made a speech stressing the importance of coming together to demonstrate. Holes opened up by bullets in the walls of houses and cartridges on the ground were the physical signs of the violence that was being experienced, which was reinforced by numerous pieces of graffiti referencing gangs' power – "TCP", "3 Comando Puro", "Negão Tudo 3" – followed by traffickers' names: "Bin Laden", "Pé de Sapo" and many others56. Jorge explained to me that at

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56   The number 3 was also used as a symbol of Terceiro Comando Puro (TCP).

that time Vila do João was a neutral area. ADA had been weakened and only controlled Conjunto Esperança.

We continued in the direction of Vila do João, and the sound car began to play the song *O Iraque é aqui*, accompanied by a recording calling people to the protest. Leaflets were distributed by the demonstrators, slogans were chanted and songs were sung, ranging from Catholic songs (in which the name of the "Lord" was mentioned repeatedly) to Rio de Janeiro funk. One of the demonstrators' favorite songs was the funk song *Rap da Felicidade* "Happiness Rap":

Eu só quero é ser feliz,	*I just want to be happy*
Andar tranquilamente na favela onde eu nasci.	*And walk in peace in the favela where I was born.*
E poder me orgulhar,	*And be proud,*
E ter a consciência que o pobre tem seu lugar.	*And know that poor people have a place.*
Minha cara autoridade, eu já não sei o que fazer,	*Dear authority, I don't know what to do anymore,*
Com tanta violência eu sinto medo de viver.	*With so much violence I'm afraid to live.*
Pois moro na favela e sou muito desrespeitado,	*Because I live in the favela and I'm disrespected,*
A tristeza e alegria aqui caminham lado a lado.	*Sadness and joy walk side by side,*
Eu faço uma oração para uma santa protetora,	*I pray to a saint,*
Mas sou interrompido a tiros de metralhadora.	*But I'm interrupted by machine gun fire.*
Enquanto os ricos moram numa casa grande e bela,	*While the rich live in a big, beautiful house,*
O pobre é humilhado, esculachado na favela.	*The poor are humiliated, abused in the favela.*
Já não aguento mais essa onda de violência,	*I can't take this wave of violence anymore,*
Só peço a autoridade um pouco mais de competência (…).	*I just ask for a little more ability from authority (…).*

[Song, Rap da Felicidade. MC's Cidinho and Doca]

Sometimes local leaders took the microphone and explained what was happening, to try to get residents (on the streets and at the windows) to come and take part in the protest. The number of demonstrators rose substantially during the demonstration (it almost doubled) and halfway through almost 700 people were travelling through the streets of Maré demanding peace and a change in public security policy. We crossed a narrow bridge over a sewer

channel to get to Conjunto Esperança, formed of five-storey social housing buildings. At that moment, the carnival group "Se benze que dá" joined the demonstration with several percussion instruments, which enlivened the demonstration even more. Furthermore, the songs became more political, drowning out the religious chants. One of the slogans sung was: "*Não, não, não! Não quero Caveirão: quero meu dinheiro em saúde e educação!*" ("No, no, no! I don't want the *Caveirão*: I want my money in health and education!")

We went back to Vila do João and continued to Novo Pinheiro. Formed of low-rise houses, mostly two storeys high, this area is better-known as Salsa e Merengue, and keeps its original housing project, which shows its recent construction[57]. It was in Salsa e Merengue that we saw heavily armed young people in the demonstration for the first time. They joined us, slightly apart, for some of the journey. In spite of the tension caused, there was no hostility, and demonstrators kept up the same chants and liveliness as before. I took photographs throughout the event, making use of the exceptional situation to record not only the demonstration itself but the neighborhood, too. Capturing images was extremely restricted in Maré, since it raised strong suspicions among traffickers, who feared that the photographs would be used as a means of reporting them or informing others about trafficking operations[58]. Without noticing, I turned my camera to a group of armed young people. One of the protest organizers ran in my direction to rebuke me, saying that I should only photograph those participating in the action and never local traffickers. Inadvertently, I had ended up breaking one of Maré's most important internal codes – capturing footage of members of criminal gangs without due authorization – which could open the way to unfounded accusations (that I was a journalist or police investigator) that could put my physical integrity at risk.

A little further ahead, we arrived at Vila do Pinheiro, an area that was also planned by the state, something that could be seen easily in the wide, perpendicular streets. Several pieces of graffiti with the "newly installed" gang's initials marked the side of the houses, some in a clear attempt to

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57   Salsa e Merengue was the last housing development built in Maré, in the year 2000.

58   I rarely dared to record images in the outside areas of the favela (I restricted myself to enclosed spaces) because I did not want to be confused with a journalist, which could compromise the progress of the research. Little by little, I gained the confidence to take photographs in the neighborhood's quieter streets, which I always did in the company of a resident.

win residents over to the recent change: "TCP. No *Esculacho* [abuse]"; "TCP. Resident. The *Esculacho* is over[59]". We went down the main streets of Vila do Pinheiro and returned to the starting point. During the journey, Jorge said that several young people in the neighborhood had been killed by trafficking gangs because of misunderstandings and abuses of power. He explained the importance of being convincing when interrogated by a trafficker, because the slightest mistake could decide a "death sentence". He confessed that he had seen a young person murdered by a trafficker in front of him. The killer then bragged: "I killed an X-9 [spy]". After telling this story, Jorge concluded: "here, your life isn't worth anything". Back at the São José Operário Church, the leaflet was read and applauded by the people present. A breakdance performance was planned, but the dancers' delay and the intense heat forced the action to close. Although the media outlets had not come, all the participants were quite satisfied with the demonstration's success.

The conflicts between TCP and ADA would still last a few more weeks, until the latter was definitively pushed out of Maré. Day-to-day life in the affected territories went back to "normal": children returned to the football pitches, funk dances once again attracted young people at weekends and conversations in front of the house were no longer a risk. At least until the next confrontation with the police or between rival gangs. The lack of memory and conformism of some residents in relation to Maré's cyclical transformation into an "arena for confrontation" (Silva 2009:192) for (criminal and state) armed groups were viewed critically by Jorge, in a traumatic assessment of that time:

> *A lot of people died. According to calculations by some institutions, more than 50 people died among those involved in drug trafficking, police officers and residents. Where is that shown? Who is that important to? To no one, the "guys" don't even care, and then residents forget that people died. Today "peace" is achieved and life goes on: "let's think about the funk dance at the weekend"; "there's going to be pagode [type of music], "the forró [type of music] dance was full of women". They're the kinds of things people say. Until another faction comes in and people die again. It's a disheartening cycle, almost fatalist.* [Jorge, 34. Interview, November 26, 2009]

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59   "*Esculacho*" is common in Rio de Janeiro slang, and means physical and psychological attacks or arbitrary behavior.

One of the more recent episodes of serious violence in Maré was triggered by a police operation, against the backdrop of large-scale mobilizations in June 2013, which had demands that varied from an end to public transport price increases to a public security policy that respected human rights. The police action in Maré took place on June 24, with the justification of repressing a mugger who was robbing motorists who were stopped in a traffic jam on Avenida Brasil caused by a demonstration close to the neighborhood. After the suspects of those thefts escaped into Maré, an officer from the Military Police's Special Operations Battalion (BOPE) was killed after being shot in the head in a confrontation in Nova Holanda. Retaliating against the death, several police units with hundreds of men occupied the favela, aided by armored vehicles (Caveirão) and helicopters, causing a climate of terror among the residents. What came next was a real massacre, and led to thirteen dead and nine injured (many of whom were not connected to drug trafficking in any way), as well as a series of rights violations: home invasions followed by ransacking, thefts and police threatening residents.

About the murders committed by police officers, José Mariano Beltrame said the following: "it is hard to tell if there was excessive behavior by police officers in the Nova Holanda operation because it was a war scenario[60]". Once again, the justification that we were experiencing a "war" was used to exonerate police and legitimize the murder of poor people in favelas, the faithful representatives of a dangerous class that has been assigned responsibility for the increase in violence in recent decades in Rio de Janeiro. Since the military dictatorship, the expression "war" has been used to mask exceptional measures that are clearly abusive and violent. If, before, it was "terrorists" who destabilized national security, nowadays it is the poor people who live in favelas and in the urban periphery who put the "democratic" regime at risk (Coimbra 2001). In this process, the assumed inextricable connection between poverty and dangerousness is artificially strengthened, justifying acts of confinement, punishment or even extermination.

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60   Declaration taken from site: http://noticias.terra.com.br/brasil/policia/beltrame-sobre-operacao-violenta-na-mare-dificil -avaliar-cenario-de-guerra,2c4a238e6e08f310VgnVCM10000098cceb0aRCRD.html

6. Final considerations

The intensification of urban violence, its representations and fears during recent decades in Rio de Janeiro is creating distance and avoidance among residents from different areas of the city. The feeling of insecurity is chronically present in Rio de Janeiro residents' day-to-day life, from conversations at cafés to care taken when leaving the house, which compromises enjoyment of the public space and social interaction and influences discourse, social practices and worldviews[61]. Poor regions, specifically favelas, took hold in the urban mind-set as the cause of the violent crime that afflicted the city, a social problem that has gained public notoriety since in the 1980s. Taken for probable delinquents, favela residents are accused of spreading terror and disorder in the city, so that police brutality in the areas is seen to be acceptable by a large proportion of the Brazilian population. In this case, the language of human rights loses its effectiveness, faced with a demand by wealthier classes for a type of public security that favors rich neighborhoods and private property. This is how the partiality of the rights of those who live in favelas becomes blatant, in the different treatment that they receive from the police, from the media and in access to justice. An example of this situation is the fact that state institutions do not recognize their residents and organizations as legitimate interlocutors in political arenas, since the discourse that links them to drug trafficking is constant (Machado da Silva 2008:45). This criminalization *a priori* denies them the "power of the word" and condemns them to isolation, in a process of socio-spatial segregation that is strengthened by economic uncertainty and racial discrimination (when black people are involved), in "overlapping vulnerabilities" that restrict residents' access to the city (Fridman 2008:81).

Young people are hardest hit, both by the discourse that stigmatizes favela residents and by police repression and the arbitrary behavior of trafficking. The difficulties and dangers faced when moving around in areas dominated by factions that are rivals of those in their area of residence are much higher, since they are easily considered to be members of opposing criminal groups[62]. In this context, young people from favelas are limited by a triple "barrier": by the traffickers who dominate their area of residence, by the police who

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61   While there is historical hostility from wealthier segments in relation to poorer populations, there is also increased mistrust and enmity between neighbors of the same social class.

62   Drug trafficking gangs consist of, above all, black and mixed-race men under 30, meaning that individuals with these characteristics are much more likely to be subjected to mistrust and unfounded accusations.

constantly make violent, murderous incursions into their areas and by the prevailing portrayals that see them as a "nearby enemy" (Bauman 2004:310).

In spite of the widespread violence to which they are subjected every day, favela residents may be slightly optimistic about that matter. Indignation about their living conditions is growing, and many no longer passively accept the constant attacks on their citizens' rights by police and by outlaws. Engaged in political, cultural and artistic projects, they draw up creative strategies to assert themselves in the city and dispute their portrayals on an equal footing. In Maré's case, the explosion in formal and informal citizen participation initiatives, together with the many relational, political and cultural processes that are transversal to them, is an example of the rationale of "city making" mentioned by Michel Agier (2011:41). Protestation against discourses of un-civilization and non-citizenship directed towards those that live in a non-city, the favelas, has been joined by intense struggles by the population, who have achieved significant improvements in the urban conditions of a place that was once a "naked city" (idem:12). Until the 1980s, the struggles focused on more basic rights to infrastructure, in light of the neighborhood's extremely precarious situation. That was what Eliana Silva, director of Redes, calls the first generation of Maré rights, whose demands were for water, sewage facilities, road surfaces, public schools, brick houses, etc. The achievements in that period were tremendous, and meant that over the following decades the organization's work and community mobilization have focused on demands for other rights. Cultural institutions and urban facilities were created with the second generation of rights: access to culture, leisure, sport, education, artistic and vocational workshops. In addition to the previous demands came the third generation of Maré demands, which were more linked to recognition for individual differences and the condition of citizenship: the right to be black, homosexual, women's rights, religious freedom and, most of all, the issue of public security. These examples are part of wider changes in the political field, in which the population's social and civic engagement is expressed in the sphere of citizenship, identity and culture, at the same time rejecting traditional forms of organization (in parties, unions or residents' associations). The Action for Peace expressed that new dynamic of citizen organization and participation that helps to create an alternative design for urban areas, in which the favela does not "besiege" the "civilized city" but rather become integrated into it.

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