TECHNOLOGY

OF THE

OPPRESSED

INEQUITY AND THE DIGITAL MUNDANE IN FAVELAS OF BRAZIL

DAVID NEMER

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To Maria

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I started and finished writing this book in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and this accomplishment was only possible thanks to the essential and frontline workers who put themselves at risk so people like me could stay safely at home. In Brazil, favelas were disproportionally affected by the pandemic; their residents were killed, infected, and left unemployed in higher numbers than anywhere else in the country. Once again, they were largely abandoned by the state and had to rely on each other to organize their own responses to fight the coronavirus. Such resilience, struggle (*luta*), care, and sense of community in all things is what inspired me to write this book. Thus, I offer my endless gratitude to favela residents, especially those from Territory of Good, for generously offering their time, allowing me into their homes, and sharing their lives with me.

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INTRODUCTION

Pedro quietly arrived at Games LAN House (similar to an internet café) this morning wearing casual clothes and went straight to his usual desk. He whistled at Ronald—the owner—and pointed at the computer. Ronald released the screen lock, and Pedro started typing a document on a cracked copy of Word. I pulled up a chair and sat next to him. Before I could start a conversation, he objected, saying, "I can't talk right now. I have to finish this and don't have the money to pay for more than thirty minutes on the computer." I looked over at the screen and saw that he was tentatively typing out a CV. He mumbled that he hated technology—which didn't help his hunting and pecking on the keyboard. Leaving him alone, I noticed he had typed a half page listing his skills and experiences: "Basic Computer Skills; Car wash and detailing; Front Desk/Receptionist." After he finished, he whistled at Ronald again and pointed at the printer. Ronald gave him the okay, then retrieved Pedro's freshly printed CV for him. Before I could even speak, Pedro handed me his CV to ask my opinion, saying:

> I lost my job. The owner of the car wash said I arrived late way too many times—but how is it my fault? Yesterday, you saw what happened; the shootout didn't let us get out of our houses before 10:00 a.m. Last week, I had to go to the Citizen House (Casa do Cidadão) to try to issue my Work Card—you know the Car wash owner wasn't signing it—and two days ago I had to run to the hospital to get stitches because I hurt my finger fixing the holes in my roof, and you know that public hospital; they take forever to help you.

I told Pedro his CV looked good. He was a twenty-five-year-old Black man who had been working for eight months at a car wash. In Brazil, employers are responsible for signing their workers' cards so they can access rights such as unemployment insurance and the employee's dismissal fund. Since Pedro didn't have his work card signed by his employer, the state didn't recognize him as a working citizen, leaving him without social protection or assistance. Although Pedro was the first informant to tell me

about working in this precarious condition, this is the norm in Brazil. Some 12.6 million favela residents don't have a formal work contract and therefore cannot obtain benefits.[1] Pedro's story illustrates how favela residents are considered by the state to be "differentiated citizens," a concept coined by James Holston (2011) to highlight how universal citizenship—which was supposed to promote equal rights for all—amplified historical inequalities. Rights in Brazil are conferred not only through a constitution but also on the basis of inherited understandings of who is worthy in a given society.

I asked Pedro about his next steps to securing a job. In response, he said, "I'm a *favelado* Black man; I don't get to dictate my life. What is the point of having plans if the system has a different plan for me? I am not allowed to have plans. . . . Things are just prescribed to me and I can only react to them. I don't make plans; *I just survive them*."

Black people, embedded in a system of oppression, have been excluded from decision-making processes that shape their lives. Pedro started thinking aloud about where to go next to find a new job. He considered going to the mall but quickly gave up that idea, stating, "I don't need more people judging me now. The rich people there will probably think I'm there to create trouble." My meeting with the manager of the Telecenter down the road was approaching, so I invited Pedro to come with me. To my surprise, Pedro didn't know about the location. He decided to join since, after talking himself out of going to the mall, he didn't "have anything to lose or do." After we arrived, I introduced Pedro to Vania, the Telecenter's Inclusion Agent, and asked her if she could show him around. I left them alone and went straight to my meeting, since I was a little late. I didn't expect to see Pedro still around when I came out one hour later, since he had already admitted that he hated technology. But there he was, calmly browsing an employment website and talking about creating an account and uploading his CV.

As Vania was getting ready to close the Telecenter, Pedro's curiosity got the best of him. He decided to explore the web. He grabbed me to say, "Look at this Google thing; you can search for anything. Everything is in there—but I doubt that they know about our favelas. Let's see, let's Google Bairro da Penha. Wow, they have stuff about us; they know about us." After five minutes enjoying the happy surprise of his search's results, Pedro recoiled after clicking on images, then fell silent. "They only talk about

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1. See Mustafa (2020) for more details on the numbers.

crimes, drug traffickers, and tragedy. Is this what rich people think we are? The world? David, you know this technology; can you fix it?" Vania looked to me, hoping that I would say yes. But I just stood there shaking my head and searching for a proper answer. I felt that I couldn't disappoint him. When he had found out about applying for jobs online, Pedro went from complete despair over losing his job to elation. I didn't want to quash his optimism. I also thought of telling him that I distrusted Silicon Valley because it profited from acts of oppression. Instead, I kept it short. I said, "No, I can't fix it." Pedro didn't seem to be disappointed by my answer. Instead, he grabbed his CV and stood up. As he was leaving, he looked at Vania with a hopeful smile and said, "Maybe we can."

Pedro was right—maybe they can. But Pedro and every oppressed favela resident occupy an institutional system designed to exploit them. Digital technologies may be perceived as paving a pathway to a better life, but this route is hardly open to everyone.

Scholars and technology designers have often perceived the oppressed as mere consumers of technologies rather than as agents empowered by them (Rangaswamy and Cutrell 2012). This tension between oppression and empowerment turns digital technologies—as with every aspect of the life of the oppressed—into a site of struggle, revealing the structural violence of the information age. Rendering such oppression visible makes it available for intervention and change (Eubanks 2012). After seeing how his neighborhood was framed online, Pedro became more aware of the biases of digital platforms. But in order for people like him to survive, they need to consciously resist oppressions and appropriate technology rather than reject it. Throughout this book, I explore how the oppressed's experiences with digital technologies allow them to get by and even, at times, flourish. The book is concerned with the spirit, love, community, resilience, and resistance of favela residents in their pursuit of freedom. I believe that they can be sources of hope for all of us.

Digital technology scholars interested in the oppressed initially thought of the oppressed body as being legible only through its perceived absence from the material, technical, and institutional aspects of computers and society.[2] They conceptualized power through simplistic notions of the

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2. I'm paraphrasing André Brock Jr. in *Distributed Blackness*: "When scholars first sought to understand information technology use by Black folk, the Black body was only legible through its perceived absence: absence from the material, technical, and institutional aspects of computers and society" (2020, 1).

"digital divide" and "haves and have-nots." These concepts situated technology as being solely capable of rectifying oppression. Worse, they ignored the complex relationships between specific groups and technology in oppressive environments such as in the favelas of Brazil. In response, I joined scholars (see Ames 2019; Medina 2011; Marques 2005; Irani 2019; Chan 2004; Brock Jr. 2020; Eubanks 2018; Noble 2019) who trace how people have rallied against structural forces. Technology is not a separate world—it is an extension of the struggles we all face. Thus, in this book, I explore how people critically appropriate technologies to navigate both digital and non-digital sources of oppression. To guide this exploration, I borrow Paulo Freire's notion of *oppression*, which he defines as acts of exploitation and violence and a failure "to recognize others as persons" (2000, 55). Over the course of the book, I will evolve and mature Freire's rather vague notion of oppression, building a framework around the challenges that favela residents encounter. This framework represents how I understand the role of digital technologies in favelas: Residents grapple with daily challenges from specific axes of oppression in their lives. Appropriating Mundane Technologies is their act of hope; they use technology to seek liberation. Therefore, we need to shift our understanding of the role of technology in oppressive situations.

MUNDANE TECHNOLOGY: THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE OPPRESSED

It is not a coincidence that the title of this book is reminiscent of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which was first written in Portuguese in 1968, then translated and published in English in 1970. His book sold over one million copies, making it arguably the most widely read text on education and development. Like scholars across the globe, I have been influenced by Freire's teachings and inspired by his care for the oppressed. Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educationalist and philosopher whose radical ideas about pedagogy, learning, and knowledge established the critical pedagogy movement. Freire's philosophy came not only from classical approaches stemming from Plato; he was also inspired by existential phenomenologists, modern Marxists, and anti-colonialist thinkers.

In many ways, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* can also be read as a response to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968), which emphasizes the need to provide native populations with an education that was modern and

anti-colonial. Freire argues that education should allow the oppressed to regain their sense of humanity and consequently overcome their condition. However, he recognizes that for this to occur, the oppressed must play a role in their own liberation. Freire highlights the importance of *conscientização*—the process of "learning to perceive social, economic and political contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (P. Freire 2000, 35)—to catalyze transformative actions of the oppressed during their pursuit of freedom.

Many liberal and neoliberal educators have adopted Freire as an alternative to conservative and lethargic pedagogical models that equate free-market ideology with democracy and freedom. However, Ana Maria Araújo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (2001) protest that, over time, pseudocritical educators reduced Freire's teachings to a method, leading his philosophical ideas into a mechanistic world. Freire himself became dissatisfied with how his ideas were approached as a methodology; "I don't want to be imported or exported. It is impossible to export pedagogical practices without reinventing them. . . . Ask [educators] to *re-create and rewrite my ideas*" (A. M. A. Freire and Macedo 2001, 6).

Freire's invitation to others to reinvent his ideas inspired me to develop a framework that seeks to understand why digital technologies can be simultaneously sites of oppression and tools that can be appropriated by the oppressed in their pursuit of freedom. I use the term *Mundane Technology* to describe this framework. It doesn't provide a method or a set of techniques to liberate the oppressed, nor it is a pedagogical plan. Rather, I conceptualize Mundane Technology as an episteme to understand oppression and Freire's process of *conscientização* in the information age. Similar to Virginia Eubanks and her arguments in *Digital Dead End* (2012), I believe that oppression should be the central diagnostic for technology. Using oppression as an outcome of concern allows us to see complex processes of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence as centrally driving inequities of the information age. Identifying and calling out these systems of domination illuminate opportunities for intervention and change.

To understand oppression, we must comprehend what constitutes the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor. According to Paulo Freire, one of the fundamental elements is *prescription*—guidelines that impose the consciousness of the prescriber (oppressor) on the consciousness

of the prescribed (oppressed). In other words, the behavior of the oppressed is defined by the oppressor, a form of control that impedes the oppressed from achieving freedom. *Prescription*, as claimed by Bruno Latour, can also be imposed by nonhuman actants, such as technological artifacts, to dictate human action (Johnson 1988). Thus, in favelas, prescriptions are not only imposed through laws and boundaries but also designed into algorithms and technological affordances of digital technologies, such as the racist bias embedded in Google's search engine (Noble 2019) and algorithmic necropolitics (Richardson 2020). The act of oppression is therefore an inevitable outcome of favela residents' digital experiences. Freire warns that technologies can become powerful instruments in the hands of the oppressor. To him, they maintain "the oppressive order through manipulation and repression. The oppressed, as objects, as 'things,' have no purposes except those their oppressors prescribe for them" (P. Freire 2000, 60). Freire's vague use of the word *oppression* was both a weakness and a strength of his book. It "allowed people from very different backgrounds to read their own experience of (dis)advantage into the text, and to construct their own meaning from it" (Roberts 2016, 70).

I am aware that the categories of oppressed and oppressor can be interpreted as constructing a false dichotomy. Nobody is ever fully oppressed, because people find ways to exercise emancipatory agency despite their limiting social and economic conditions. However, I still use this terminology to discuss the realities of oppression. By recognizing and naming the *oppressed* and *oppressor*, I seek to shed light on people's capacity to fight back against limitations on their humanity. *Prescriptions* operate on many different levels simultaneously, across different oppressed groups. Thus, to ground Freire's ideas in everyday struggles, in this book I show that oppression in favelas takes many forms.

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Scholarship in Science and Technology Studies (STS) supports the validity of Freire's concept of prescription. In *Autonomous Technology*, Langdon Winner (1978) argues that technological artifacts are the result of human design. They embody specific forms of power and authority that encourage certain attitudes and principles, while discouraging others. He suggests that artifacts have politics that encompass political purposes beyond their immediate use. Often, they are used as tools to reproduce and perpetuate oppression from ruling powers. More recently, in *Algorithms of Oppression*,

Safiya Noble demonstrates that online search results are far from neutral. Instead, they replicate and reinforce the racist and sexist beliefs of societies where search engines operate. Noble argues that "search does not merely present pages but structures knowledge, and the results retrieved in a commercial search engine create their own particular material reality. Ranking is itself information that also reflects the political, social, and cultural values of the society that search engines operate within" (2019, 148). Similarly, Virginia Eubanks, in *Automating Inequality* (2018), claims that attempts at automation envision the poor as lesser people, and even barely human. The common view among these scholars is that structural inequalities are being embedded in an increasing variety of new digital technologies.

Given an understanding that technology can mask and deepen oppression, the question becomes, How can favela residents use digital technologies in their quest to liberate themselves and regain their humanity? To address this question, in this book I animate stories of humans living in favelas of Gurigica, São Benedito, Itararé, and Bairro da Penha, who creatively and critically appropriate technologies in their journey to find liberation—Mundane Technology.

I did not coin the term Mundane Technology—it has actually been explored by previous scholars interested in understanding the role of technology in everyday life. Paul Dourish et al. (2010) refer to Mundane Technologies as those that are commonplace, which many people use, such as smartphones, texting, email, word-processing applications, and so on. Mike Michael suggests that "the term 'mundane technologies' connotes those technologies whose novelty has worn off; these are technologies which are now fully integrated into, and are an unremarkable part of, everyday life. To study mundane technologies is thus to explore how they mediate and reflect everyday life, how they serve in the reproduction of local techno-social configurations" (2003, 131). Trevor Pinch (2010) and David Edgerton (2011) have called for a move away from innovation-driven studies of technology to studies of the Mundane Technologies because they have become so integral to everyday use that it is often difficult to identify what is anthropologically and sociologically relevant about them. In the same vein, Payal Arora (2019) recommends that, instead of looking for novel technology from Silicon Valley, we focus on technologies that give the poor the right to pursue leisure and self-expression, to explore sexuality, to engage with political opinions in a safer space, and more.

While I borrow the notion of Mundane Technologies in this book, I expand the term to go beyond digital artifacts to refer to the oppressed's processes of appropriating everyday technologies—technological artifacts, operations, and spaces—to alleviate oppression in their everyday lives. Mundane Technologies encompass nonproductive, quotidian activities and desires that people engage in. They constitute a decolonial framework for understanding how people exercise their agency and consciousness (*conscientização*) and appropriate technologies to mobilize themselves toward a quality of life they desire.

Early research in STS has focused on the production of technology by established professionals or on the impact of technology on the general public (Eglash 2004). However, in this book, I join the scholars mentioned previously and focus on marginalized people as users and producers of Mundane Technologies. As I have defined it, Mundane Technologies are about, in terms developed by Ron Eglash, how people outside the centers of technological and social power use materials and knowledge from professional technoscience for their own kind of sociotechnical production. Such peripheral places are often considered to be unsuitable for studying technology, because they lie outside the main economic, technological, and political centers of the world (Takhteyev 2012). The peripheral location of favelas allows us to learn about place and how technology gains importance in today's society, without assuming that elite users dominate. Thus, Mundane Technologies—as appropriations of everyday technologies—are how technology is reinterpreted, adapted, and reinvented by those outside these centers of power in order to achieve liberation from oppression. Approaching Mundane Technologies as appropriations of technology opens new research avenues for culture and technology and contributes to a renewed concern for democracy.

★   ★   ★

In the field of Information Communication Technology for Development (ICTD), early research has led to the design of technology with a utilitarian focus. These prescriptions about the nature of the technology and the people in the Global South are based on Global North perspectives. Although digital technologies are used for communicative efficiency in much of the Global North, the utility of these same technologies have primarily (and often exclusively) been evaluated in terms of quantifiable socioeconomic

benefits in Global South communities. Yet, the formal utilitarian and intangible benefits cannot be so easily disentangled. More recently, there has been a turn in ICTD, with a growing literature that is critical of the field's utilitarian approach (see Ames 2019; Gomez and Vannini 2015; Burrell 2012; Kleine 2013; Arora 2019; Nemer 2016a; Stratton and Nemer 2020), and a look toward Mundane Technology assists in this turn to provide opportunities for better understanding its uses and appropriations.

Amartya Sen (2001) acknowledges that economic growth plays an important role in community development. Going further, Sen suggests that assessing "intangible" impacts provides a base for a more holistic understanding of human well-being. In this same rich vein of thought, Paulo Freire claims that it is impossible to have a neutral concept of who and what a person is without considering a moral dimension of humanity—the same way that we cannot have a neutral concept of the role of technology in society. To Freire, morality relates to values such as freedom, happiness, and social well-being. Thus, in this book I incorporate stories of favela residents that chart how they promote civic participation, education, freedom, and safety and alleviate oppression from social and racial inequalities, censorship, tyranny, poverty, and gender discrimination. By focusing on Mundane Technologies, this book also argues that theoretical positions based on technological utilitarianism need to be expanded. Mundane practices observed in the favelas shed light on the importance of technology in many unacknowledged aspects of people's lives. Their practices contribute to a broader and more nuanced comprehension of the engagements and strategies that help shape the daily use of technology by people who often simultaneously suffer the consequences of being oppressed.

In the thirtieth anniversary edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Donaldo Macedo states that Freire's "highly literate" critics find his writing style difficult to understand. However, as Macedo questions, "Why is it that a sixteen-year-old boy and a poor, 'semiliterate' woman could so easily understand and connect with the complexity of both Freire and Giroux's language and ideas, and the academics, who should be the most literate, find the language incomprehensible?" (P. Freire 2000, 23). Thus, in this book, I attempt to bring a simple and accessible language, not to those in the favelas, as they are more likely to understand it, but to those academics who are detached and don't identify themselves with the complexity of the favelas.

MUNDANE TECHNOLOGY AS AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

Intersectionality has been widely used by academics, activists, policy advocates, and practitioners as an analytical tool to understand experiences that arise from multiple, co-occurring facets of marginalization. Due to the different ways people use and understand intersectionality, I rely on the overarching description provided by Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2020, 2) to explain how Mundane Technology represents an intersectional approach:

> Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves.

The favela residents I describe in this book had to grapple with discriminations in their everyday lives. These discriminations created a system of complex injustices and disadvantages that they were forced to navigate. For example, some women were oppressed and preyed on as sexual objects because they were simultaneously poor *and* female *and* black. These categories are not a system of summation of oppressions, but they interact to accentuate, neutralize, or reduce the effect of one category on another; as feminist scholar Carla Akotirene claims, intersectionality is an "interconnected system of oppression" (2019, 14).

Intersectional approaches aim "to give theoretical and methodological instrumentality to the structural inseparability of racism, capitalism and cisheteropatriarchy—producers of identity avenues in which black women are repeatedly affected by the crossing and overlapping of gender, race and class, modern colonial apparatuses" (Akotirene 2019, 13). When using Mundane Technologies, women from favelas had to develop strategies to alleviate forces of oppression that worked together at the intersection of those social categories. In the field of ICTD, approaching technology use through an intersectional approach is relatively new (Schlesinger, Edwards, and Grinter 2017). To chart a path forward, Neha Kumar and Naveena Karusala (2019) propose a mindset called "intersectional computing," which

shifts the conversation from how we might "better acknowledge and design for intersections" to how we might "approach technology in a way that honors intersections more broadly." Mundane Technology as a framework engages with this mindset, highlighting different oppressions and how they work together when favela residents engage with their everyday technologies. Once oppressions are made visible, we can derive insights into how the oppressed might achieve liberation. In other words, Mundane Technology provides a framework to analyze how the oppressed critically and consciously appropriate their technologies in order to liberate themselves from such intersectional oppression.

Taking an intersectional approach does not mean simply using the word *intersectionality*, nor does it mean "being situated in a familiar genealogy" or "drawing on lists of standard citations." Instead, intersectionality is the "adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power" (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013, 795). Thus, an intersectional approach emphasizes what intersectionality does rather than what intersectionality is. Mundane Technology's concern with action provides us with a framework to approach social injustices by understanding how different forces of oppression work together.

FAVELAS: THE SITE OF OPPRESSION

The oppressed are often referred to as a uniform group, as if all oppressed people have the same difficulties, access, and aspirations in life. Such generalizations are disrespectful to those facing oppression, since they render their unique life struggles and resistance invisible. A homogenous view of oppression is also dangerous, since the perceived uniformity of their challenges sows acceptance for one-size-fits-all policies. Simply put, different groups of people face oppression in unique ways. In this book, I tell the life stories of people who live at a site of oppression known as favelas. In this section, I briefly trace the history of favelas in Brazil and show how they became sites of oppression.

The first favelas emerged in the nineteenth century in Rio de Janeiro, when freed and runaway enslaved Black people established settlements on the hillsides of the city, due to the lack of inclusion policies for them (Custódio 2017). In the late 1890s, impoverished soldiers returning from the Canudos war, in the northeastern state of Bahia, settled on the hillsides

of Providência in the center of Rio de Janeiro. The hill was later renamed Favella, according to anthropologist Licia do Prado Valladares (2019), for two possible reasons: (1) the steep hill of Providência reminded some of the soldiers of Favella Hill in Bahia during the Canudos war, and (2) the favela plant, which had given its name to Favella Hill in Bahia, was also found in the vegetation of Providência. According to Maurício de Almeida Abreu (1994), it was only in the second decade of the twentieth century that the press began to use the word *favela* as a category to refer to poor settlements of illegal and irregular occupation, usually located on hillsides—no longer exclusively referring to the Favella hill. Favelas spread rapidly in the first half of the twentieth century, when *nordestinos* (people from the northeast) fled recurring droughts and limited rural job opportunities to the fast-growing urban centers in the southeast region. Their ranks swelled the populations of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Vitória (Custódio 2017). The exact number of favelas varies, but according to the Brazilian census of 2010, there are 6,329 favelas with a combined population of approximately 12 million people occupying 5.12 million residences.[3]

Favelas have become a vital part of Brazilian urban cities that profit from the labor and exploitation of favela residents. However, these same people also struggle for their right to the city. The term "right to the city" was coined by the French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre as part of his analysis of how "the expansion of existing cities and creation of new ones has continued to support relationships of dependency, domination, exclusion, and exploitation" (2006, 34).

In Brazil, such segregation and exclusion are still maintained by social prejudice and governmental approaches that reinforce the top-down relationship between political and economic elites and the working poor (Custódio 2017). Such approaches are "paternalistic authoritarianism"—a colonial practice that has shaped social relations in Brazil: "the relationship between landlord and vassal was always ambivalent, both oppressive and protective, authoritarian and paternalistic" (Gomez Diaz and Rodriguez Ortiz 2006, 45). In *Favela Media Activism*, Leonardo Custódio claims that a paternalistic authoritarianist relationship materializes when a minority group, proclaiming itself enlightened and superior on the basis of its cultural

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3. See the latest census report by Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) (IBGE 2013).

and financial capital, "assumes guiding roles identifying what is good, promoting what is convenient and establishing what is necessary for the rest" (2017, 47). In Brazil, the lighter-skinned and economically well-off middle and upper classes constitute the minority that dominates the economic and political spheres of the country. Brazil inherited from the colonial system a highly stratified society that still persists. One of the ways that Brazil's population is organized is through social classes—A, B, C, D, and E—which are based on monthly household income. Upper classes are A and B, and favela residents are in classes E, D, and lower C, as shown in table 1.1.

Prejudice has been documented since the very beginnings of the hillside residences. In 1900, *Jornal do Brasil* reported that the Favella hill was "infested with vagrants and criminals that are shocking to families." This view was also expressed by a police chief from the same time period: "Even though there are no families in the designated locale, it is impossible to do policing there because in this locale, which is a focal point of deserters, thieves, and common soldiers, there are no streets, the hovels are built of wood and covered with zinc roofs, and there is not a single gas outlet on the entire hill" (Bretas 1997, 75, as quoted in Valladares 2000). Since then, the hills came to be seen as a place for dangerous and marginal people. Obviously, back then, there was no marked influence of drug trafficking, so prejudice had a lot to do with race and the customs of the people facing poverty.

The concentration of violence in favelas has indeed been a serious problem. Yet, this violence primarily comes not from residents but from armed conflicts in disputes for territorial control by drug cartels, militias, and state security forces. The high rates of violence in favelas also relate to patterns of

Table 1.1 Brazil's social classes

	From		To	
	Brazil	US	Brazil	US
Class A	R$11,262.00	$4,249.81	—	—
Class B	R$8,641.00	$3,260.75	R$11,261.00	$4,249.43
Class C	R$2,005.00	$756.60	R$8,640.00	$3,260.38
Class D	R$1,255.00	$473.58	R$2,004.00	$756.23
Class E	—	—	R$1,254.00	$473.21

Notes: Social classes organized by FGV Center for Social Policy. US$1.00 = BRL R$2.65. Currency from December 31, 2014.

authoritarian paternalism of the economic and political elites in governance. The history of the police, for example, inherits "an enslaving, clientelist and authoritarian heritage which we can observe in a mere police operation with the different treatment that vary according to the social strata to which the citizen belongs" (Sousa and Morais 2011). For two centuries, local governments have correlated the growth of working poor populations with urban violence. Thus, instead of tackling the consequences of social inequality to improve the living conditions and occupational opportunities of the working poor, solutions to violence have historically emphasized repression and violent surveillance. The upper classes use armed conflict to justify their prejudice against favelas and employ the word *favela* pejoratively. They unfairly associate these neighborhoods with violence, crime, poverty, and lack of order. For those who live in favelas, however, the term brings a valuable sense of shared community (Alves and Evanson 2011).

Resistance to slavery predated the formation of favelas; however, due to the lack of inclusion policies after slavery's abolition in 1888, favelas became a kind of social experiment that brought together oppression, suppression of rights, and violence from the state and organized crime—thus resistance, with both physical and social dimensions, became a strong part of Black people's life in the favelas. Before favelas, runaway enslaved Black laborers formed independent settlements known as *quilombos*. They strengthened community bonds among different tribal groups, preserving symbols and cultural identity and creating grassroots solidarity in survival and collective work (Zaluar 2000). Brazil's 1988 constitution, the current constitution, recognized the right to the territory of communities that descended directly from original *quilombos*. This was the case of São Benedito in Vitória, where several *quilombola* families from São Mateus, a city in northern Espírito Santo, settled. Urban movements also sprang up, inspired by the history of the *quilombos'* resistance. They retained their traditional artistic roots and incorporated contemporary international music and dance trends, as expressed in graffiti, samba, and funk.[4] Urban movements in Brazil are proud

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4. The funk genre in Brazil is very different from that in other places. A type of music derived from Miami bass and African-style music, funk became popular in the favelas as a way to show the residents' culture, resistance, and protest. Funk's origin is in the transnationalization of protest and Black culture. At soul dances (like Black Rio and those at the Clube Renascença in Rio de Janeiro), Black people

of their artistic and music culture and ability to adapt to adverse conditions and keep legacies intact (Alves and Evanson 2011). The connection to cultural roots is also present in Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Candomblé and Umbanda. The martial dance art of *capoeira* was developed by enslaved Black people as a means of breaking the bonds of slavery, both physically and mentally, and it has been officially recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

Favela communities are characterized by a long collaborative history of working together as a people and solving problems in solidarity (Penglase 2009). Perhaps the most visible aspect of this legacy is the *mutirão*, in which people gather to build houses, pave roads, install sewage systems, clean streets, or do any work that is best done collectively. Neighbors help one another solve problems and simultaneously strengthen ties that bind them together and form the spirit that they refer to as community (*comunidade*). This collaborative spirit fills the void left from the paradoxical relation between the excess of state (violence) and the absence of state (lack of infrastructure, health, security, and so on). Even garbage collection must be done by favela residents, organized by the Residents' Association. The favela's concept of community thus expands Gurstein (2007) and Gusfield's (1975) definition of communities as physical spaces where the residents develop mutually supportive relationships. Favelas are communities because, like other communities, residents watch out for each other, work together to address shared problems, and feel a shared sense of belonging with their neighbors.

In Vitória, favela residents often say they are from one community and ask others, "Which community do you live in?" They also feel different from those who live in upper-class neighborhoods. Their strong relationship to the community may be contrasted with the lack of feeling of community in the city's upper-class neighborhoods. One cannot, for

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got together and dressed like the characters from *Shaft*, a US TV series with Black protagonists, and projected translations of lyrics of singers like James Brown on the walls. Soul dances were a festive gathering of the nascent contemporary Black movement, under the motto of "Black is beautiful," influenced by civil rights movements in the US and the Black movement of the French colonies (Giacomini 2006a). Funk, then, is a synthesis of many influences from the 1970s and 1980s that has become the preferred form of entertainment for peripheral youth in recent years.

example, say that one belongs to the community of Praia do Canto, Mata da Praia, or Ilha do Frade. In these places—similar to large modern cities around the world—neighbors do not feel inclined to know one another and have an impoverished sense of what a community is. Favela residents told me that this sense of community is one of the reasons they do not want to leave:

> I think there's a lot on the internet that we can use. We can learn a lot from it and even improve our lives. But better life doesn't mean getting out of the favela. Nobody wants to be away from their friends. . . . Here everyone goes to the streets, talks loud, [and] asks neighbors for sugar. Why would I want to live in a wealthy neighborhood? To stay imprisoned at home? No way! (Olavo, twenty-one years old)

The sense of community in favelas is reinforced by a strong local culture that includes a community-supported samba school (Escola de Samba). The samba schools, founded in connection with communities' preparations for Carnival, run year-round training sessions for children and adults. Community residents participate in annual competitions to choose a theme song—the samba *enredo*. Such events are an enormous source of energy and creativity for designers, seamstresses who make the costumes, sculptors who create the magnificent figures in the different allegorical floats, and writers who compose the story that will be told by the samba schools. It is unlikely that the samba schools would exist without the historical legacy brought by the enslaved Africans. They certainly could not exist without the sense of community and collective work that is expressed in the tradition of *mutirão* (Perlman 2006).

One of the samba schools that represented Gurigica, São Benedito, Itararé, and Bairro da Penha was Pega no Samba (Catch the Samba). Pega no Samba was not just a safe space where favela residents could find some entertainment; it was also a way to materialize their struggle and pain in forms of music and art. Although

> one can say that people in the favelas have been shaped by a history of exclusion, exploitation, and resistance, one should also take note of these astonishing efforts of collective and individual creativity and the tenacious maintenance of community traditions. At their best, the favelas offer the rest of Brazil lessons in community spirit and the strength that comes from joining together with

neighbors. They show people working together in a way that overcomes race and regional ties. (Alves and Evanson 2011, 25)

TERRITORY OF GOOD: GURIGICA, SÃO BENEDITO, ITARARÉ, AND BAIRRO DA PENHA

This book is based on an ethnographic project; the bulk of my fieldwork took place in the neighboring favelas of Bairro da Penha, Gurigica, Itararé, and São Benedito in two phases: phase 1 from June to July 2012, and phase 2 from April to October 2013 (see the appendix for more details on the methodology). These neighborhoods are located in the city of Vitória, the capital of the state of Espírito Santo, Brazil. Along with five other neighborhoods, these favelas belong to a planning area defined as Polygonal 1 by the city hall. The residents, a population of near thirty-one thousand, have branded the area as Territory of Good (Território do Bem). It is located on the center-west side of Vitória, comprising the São Benedito hill and Jaburú hill. On a map it lies between the avenues Marechal Campos, Maruípe, Vitória, and Leitão da Silva, as shown in figure 1.1.

The occupation of this territory began in the late 1920s, in the lower parts, and intensified around 1960, in the upper parts, with migrants coming from the interior of Espírito Santo and from other states—expelled from the fields by the coffee crisis and attracted by the recent industrialization of Vitória and its surroundings. In 1945, the first houses were built on the Jaburú hill, but it wasn't until 1954 that the first settlers effectively occupied the area. This period marks the time when the city urbanized the old mangroves where Leitão da Silva Ave. is currently located. The expansion of the earthworks and the advancement of urbanization in Vitória evicted the poor population from their homes. They were forced to relocate to uninhabited areas, such as areas of the Baixada da Égua Farm and Maruípe Farm—currently Territory of Good. In the 1960s, the area was occupied by migrants from rural areas, including *quilombolas* from Sapê do Norte and the states of Minas Gerais and Bahia (Salomão 2006). They arrived in Vitória hoping for a better life and better working conditions. The first occupations took place in the lowlands (the bottom of the hills) due to ease of access and proximity to the city center. As people were relocating to the region, the lowlands quickly became crowded, making it hard
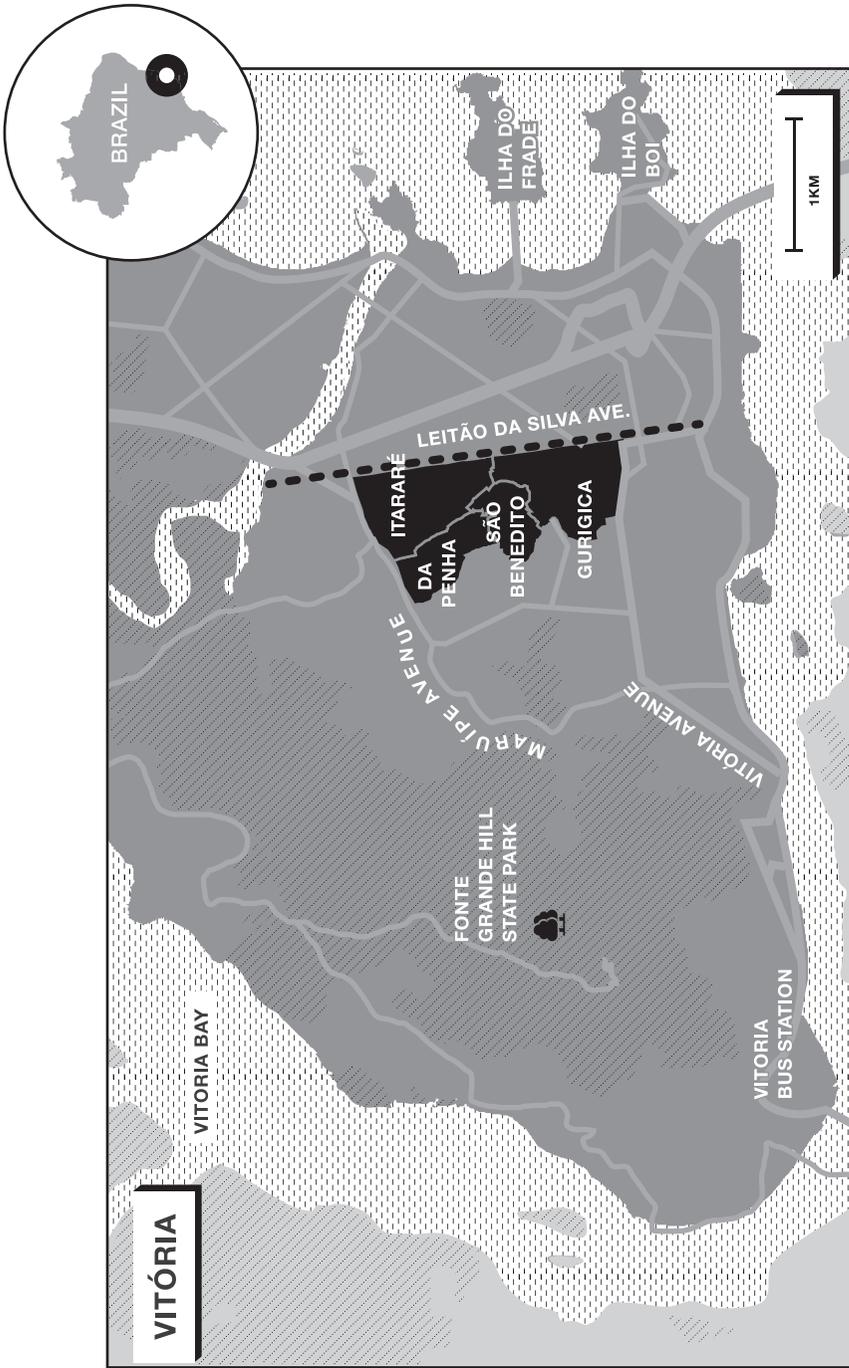
Figure 1.1
Vitória, with the author's fieldwork area in black.

to find an empty piece of land. The new arrivals settled in the upper areas of the hill where most of the lands were unoccupied (Programa Terra 1999).

According to Francisco, a charismatic eighty-year-old and longtime resident of Territory of Good, the Helal family owned the Baixada da Égua Farm and the Monjardim family owned Maruípe Farm. Both families lived on-site in the 1940s and 1950s and tried to prevent the occupation of their lands. The owners appealed to police intervention, which brutally responded to prevent occupation. There were seven intrusion attempts by new arrivals between 1945 and 1954, and the first six failed due to police intervention. Most occupations were undertaken suddenly by families who had no place to live. At the time, the occupation leader was Arcendino Fagundes de Aguiar, known as Sergeant Carioca, a retired military man from Rio de Janeiro who planned the strategies. The occupation also had the support of Colonel Hélio, who encouraged people to live at the top of the Jaburú hill. For many years the water from the well on the property of Colonel Hélio was the main source of supply for local residents. Hélio was also the founder of the local samba school Pega no Samba (Biscotto and Dantas 2019).

The occupiers used night raids to divert the police actions. During the day, residents acted as lookouts, blocked the police's arrival, and organized protests. They tried to occupy as many public spaces as possible, including roads of access. The occupiers built the first streets and alleys with machetes and hoes. At the beginning of the occupation, there were no stairs or ramps on the hill. Due to the constant conflicts and the successful occupation of 1954, the government of Espírito Santo intervened by acquiring the land. There was no evidence of the conditions and negotiations between the government and the Helal family regarding the transfer of the Baixada da Égua Farm. Some of the area in which Territory of Good is located belonged to Fazenda Maruípe, owned by the Monjardim family, who donated that area to the Federal University of Espírito Santo, who later donated it to the city of Vitória.

In 1964, Mayor Sólon Borges divided the lands into neighborhoods, which were no longer used as farms. In 2003, the municipal Law 6077 finally regulated the neighborhoods' titles, making Gurigica, São Benedito, Itararé, and Bairro da Penha their official names. Although the residents were content about having an official neighborhood, some of them did not agree on how the neighborhoods were demarcated. Gil (forty-three years old) told me how confusing this disagreement made his life. "Right on that

street sign, it says that I live in Jaburú, but I can tell you that I don't! I live in Gurigica, I grew up in Gurigica, and all of my family and friends live in Gurigica. Someone in the city government, that didn't know anything about this place and us, came up with these ways of dividing our neighborhoods." Other local residents also did not identify themselves with the official neighborhoods. Instead, they chose their neighborhood according to their history of relationships. Such misunderstandings motivated the residents to come up with the concept of Territory of Good. These two ways to define the neighborhoods—by government and by locals—caused bureaucratic headaches for the residents.

The city government did not account for the local cultural context of the communities when officially recognizing their boundaries. Such lack of state interest was just the start of the troubled life of the favelas. According to the 2010 census, the latest one at the time of my fieldwork, Territory of Good had a population of nearly thirty-one thousand residents—and according to Denise Biscotto (2008), over 84 percent of households earned less than R$1,245 each month (approximately US$300, which is worth three monthly salaries or less). The area also had a low education rate: 6 percent of the people were considered illiterate, 49 percent had not finished middle school, and 11 percent had not earned their high school degrees. Such statistics reflected the low number of public schools available and the poor education they delivered. The area also suffered the high unemployment rate of 15 percent, and only 17.5 percent of the employed residents had their work cards signed (Biscotto 2008).

The number of informal businesses exceeded the number of formal ones, which could explain the low formal employment statistics. Many families depended on informal jobs for their livelihoods, which insulated them from the precariousness of the formal job market. Informal activities ranged from housekeeping, bricklaying, painting, hairdressing, and working as craftsmen, manicurists and pedicurists, and LAN House owners.

Favelas also suffered from poor-quality services delivered by the state. The residents mentioned that, among all state services delivered to favelas, they were most concerned with safety. Due to the state's absence in the favelas, non-state armed groups emerged, controlling drug dealing and using violence to enforce contracts and maintain power. Since the residents settled at the bottom and middle parts of the hill, the drug traffickers found the perfect location for their base at the upper half of the hill. Their

buildings worked as watchtowers from which they could see cops or rival gangs coming up the hill. They maintained order in the favelas by enforcing their own laws and making treaties with other gangs, which defined what cartel would be responsible for which territory. The residents respected the drug traffickers not only because they feared retaliation but also because they created an environment where critical segments of the local population felt safe, despite perpetuating high levels of violence. Drug traffickers also tried to please the local population so they would not protest and call the attention of the media, police, and government, which could compromise their drug trafficking (Nemer 2013b). Such an agreement system is described by Luke Dowdney (2003) as "forced reciprocity," in which traffickers maintain some semblance of law and order in exchange for residents' silence about their criminal activities (Larkins 2015).

The most famous favelas in Brazil—such as Rocinha and Cidade de Deus (City of God)—are in the city of Rio de Janeiro. In order to prove the city could be a peaceful venue for the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016, the government deployed pacification operations that aimed to occupy Rio's favelas with military units and clear drug gangs from them. Many of the drug traffickers who escaped attempted to hide inside favelas in nearby cities such as Vitória (Val 2012). Their presence in Territory of Good turned the favelas into a war zone. At the time of my fieldwork, the drug traffickers from Rio de Janeiro teamed up with a rival cartel from Bairro da Penha and were trying to take over Gurigica and São Benedito's territory.

Some residents considered Hermínio Blackman Ave.—which divided the neighborhoods—the Gaza Strip due to its constant conflicts and shootings. The drug war also further confused the location of neighborhoods, since the constant battles defined new unofficial boundaries. Although most of the locals were not associated with the cartel, if one belonged to a given territory ruled by a certain drug trafficker, she or he may not be welcome in other territories of the favela. This made it hard for the residents to know where they could travel.

RACE DIVIDE: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE AVENUE

There is a strong popular belief in Brazil that the country has a problem only with socioeconomics.[5] In other words, the real inequality in the country is related to class and not race. Maria Nilza da Silva (2000) describes this pseudo-characteristic of the population as strongly defended by Brazilian scholars, such as Gilberto Freyre (1963) and Thales de Azevedo (1966), who preferred to simply acknowledge the presence of people of color—theoretically excluding the racial issue, thus denying the existence of racism in Brazil. While academia was critical of the idea of racial democracy,[6] the popular understanding of Brazilian society based on class and not on racial relations was cultivated as Brazil's national discourse of racial democracy. It effectively eliminated language that might describe the racial inequalities that affected Black Brazilian people's lives (Collins and Bilge 2020). This erasure of Blackness as an analytical and political category allowed discriminatory practices to take place against Black and Brown people in areas such as education and employment. There were neither officially recognized terms for describing racial discrimination nor official remedies for it (Twine 1998).

The racial issue in Brazil has been gradually revealed, although there is still resistance to the recognition of its importance (M. N. da Silva 2000). The scholar Silvio Almeida (2019) has been particularly concerned with untangling the dominant national myth of "class and not race." In *O Que É Racismo Estrutural?* (What is structural racism?), he points out that racism promotes and justifies immense economic inequality. This is why any action

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5. This section is also based on the report written by Bourguignon (2014).
6. In Brazil, three paradigms are distinguished in the study of racial relations during the twentieth century.

> The first one, the paradigm of *morenidade* [and racial democracy], is associated with Gilberto Freyre. . . . The second paradigm is associated with Florestan Fernandes, who stresses the merely residual character of race prejudice and racial inequality in Brazil. The third paradigm, due to Carlos Hasenbalg, posits persistent racial discrimination as the cause of the inequality between whites and non-whites in levels of economic, educational and other attainment. The differences between these paradigms, and even between authors whose conclusions belong in the same paradigm, are largely due to their underlying models of historical development. (Motta 2000, 665)

to combat racism that does not take class into account will not be effective. In Vitória, the favelas materialize the connection between race and socio-economics, as I show in figure 1.2. Using city mapping and IBGE's 2010 census data, I mapped the residents of the seventy nine neighborhoods of Vitória according to their income and race. The dotted line, Leitão da Silva Ave., divides the city. On one side lie the neighborhoods with a predomi-nantly White population and high income. On the other side are the neigh-borhoods where the majority of lower-income Black and Brown people live. Inequalities by race and income are mutually reinforcing and cannot be considered separately. Therefore, to address perpetuating systems of ineq-uities, we should promote liberation from intersecting oppressions of race and class, as well as gender (Collins 1998).

As Natalia Bourguignon (2014) reports, Jairo, a twenty-six-year-old Black man, lived in Territory of Good since he migrated from a small town in the state of Bahia at age seven with his parents. Thalison (also twenty-six years old) was born in Itararé and was the son of a stay-at-home mom and a locksmith father. Jairo and Thalison both lived in western Vitória—on "the other side" of Leitão da Silva Ave. The region divided by the avenue ran from Nova Palestina (New Palestine) to Ilha do Príncipe (Prince Island) and included Territory of Good. The whole region had a population of about 177,000 people, mostly Black and Brown (Bourguignon 2014). But Tha-lison described how this macro picture was quite different from his vantage point on the ground. "If you walk around in Praia do Canto and Jardim da Penha [wealthy neighborhoods], you will think that Vitória is a White town. But this reality changes completely, if you cross the avenue, in the neighbor-hoods of Maruípe and São Pedro, for example." Tereza (thirty-two years old) added: "You can see that the difference is not just socioeconomic, but also racial. Unfortunately, this division is explicit even in public spaces that should be open for everyone to use, such as squares, parks, and beaches."

According to another resident, Neiriele, the urban mobility plan helped to enforce these two sides of the city. "In Ilha do Boi, a rich neighbor-hood, there is just one bus line that went through the area, and the resi-dents have already asked the city to remove it. The same thing happened in Ilha do Frade. The residents do not want outsiders there, because they don't want these Blacks circulating in their space. It's surreal." Thalison and Neiriele's words "reality changes completely" and "surreal" may have

BLACK AND BROWN POPULATION IN NEIGHBORHOODS IN VITÓRIA

- 20% or less
- 21% to 40%
- 41% to 60%
- 61% or more

AIRPORT ✈

FONTE GRANDE HILL STATE PARK 🌳

LEITÃO DA SILVA AVE.

1KM
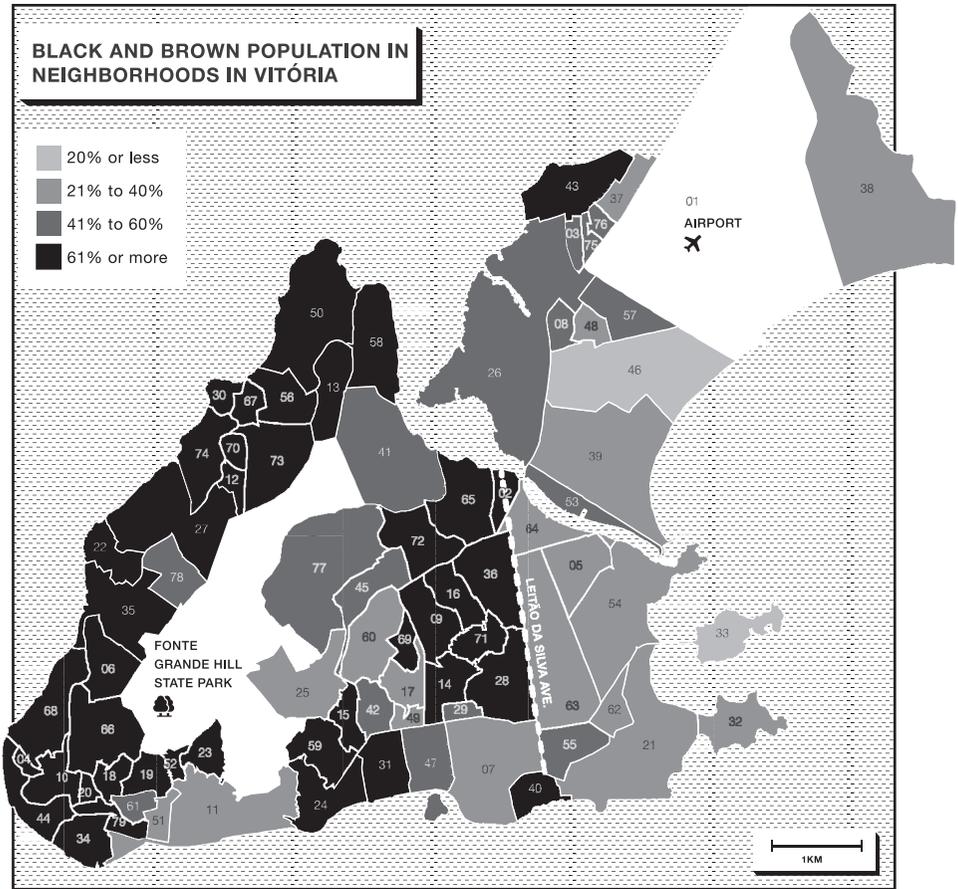
NEIGHBORHOODS

01 - Aeroporto	14 - Consolação	29 - Horto	44 - Mário Cypreste
02 - Andorinhas	15 - Cruzamento	30 - Ilha das Caieiras	45 - Maruípe
03 - Antônio Honório	16 - Da Penha	31 - Ilha de Santa Maria	46 - Mata da Praia
04 - Ariovaldo Favalessa	17 - De Lourdes	32 - Ilha do Boi	47 - Monte Belo
05 - Barro Vermelho	18 - Do Cabral	33 - Ilha do Frade	48 - Morada de Camburi
06 - Bela Vista	19 - Do Moscoso	34 - Ilha do Príncipe	49 - Nazareth
07 - Bento Ferreira	20 - Do Quadro	35 - Inhanguetá	50 - Nova Palestina
08 - Boa Vista	21 - Enseada do Suá	36 - Itararé	51 - Parque Moscoso
09 - Bonfim	22 - Estrelinha	37 - Jabour	52 - Piedade
10 - Caratoíra	23 - Fonte Grande	38 - Jardim Camburi	53 - Pontal de Camburi
11 - Centro	24 - Forte São João	39 - Jardim da Penha	54 - Praia do Canto
12 - Comdusa	25 - Fradinhos	40 - Jesus de Nazareth	55 - Praia do Suá
13 - Conquista	26 - Goiabeiras	41 - Joana D'Arc	56 - Redenção
	27 - Grande Vitória	42 - Jucutuquara	57 - República
	28 - Gurigica	43 - Maria Ortiz	58 - Resistência

Figure 1.2
Average household incomes and percentages of the Black and Brown population in Vitória by neighborhood.
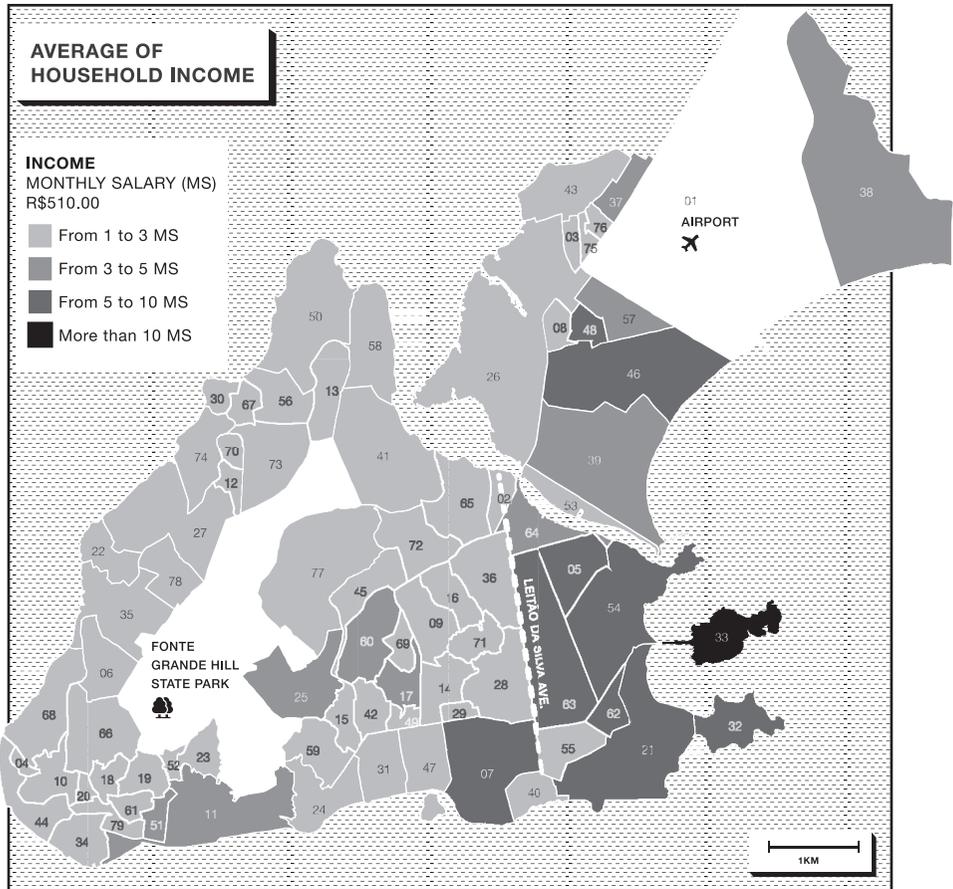
AVERAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME

INCOME
MONTHLY SALARY (MS)
R$510.00

- From 1 to 3 MS
- From 3 to 5 MS
- From 5 to 10 MS
- More than 10 MS

AIRPORT

FONTE GRANDE HILL STATE PARK

LEITÃO DA SILVA AVE.

1KM

59 - Romão
60 - Santa Cecília
61 - Santa Clara
62 - Santa Helena
63 - Santa Lúcia
64 - Santa Luíza
65 - Santa Marta
66 - Santa Tereza
67 - Santo André
68 - Santo Antônio
69 - Santos Dumont
70 - Santos Reis
71 - São Benedito
72 - São Cristovão
73 - São José

74 - São Pedro
75 - Segurança do Lar
76 - Solon Borges
77 - Tabuazeiro
78 - Universitário
79 - Vila Rubim

indicated that these divides can be explained by the history of the area, but they still seemed strange and troubling to the population. As I explained earlier, the ethnic-racial configuration of Vitória did not happen by chance. Jairo agreed that the positionality of the Black population in the city was a historical consequence rather than a coincidence.[7] "From the times of slavery and until very recently, the Black population was considered fugitive, and not welcome in white neighborhoods. It's almost like a war strategy to live hiding in high places like the favelas on hillsides."

From the top of the hills and the edge of the swamp, the residents of the poorest neighborhoods in Vitória had privileged views of the city. However, the hard life of those who lived on the other side left little time for them to contemplate the spectacle (Bourguignon 2014). Neiriele said, "We read and hear so much about the violence that we forget that honest people are the majority there. And these people who wake up at five o'clock in the morning to catch the bus and come home late, do not have time, nor energy to think about their own situation and what to do to effectively try to change it." She did not blame White people or those who lived in wealthier neighborhoods for the problem of the suburbs.[8] Rather, she saw that "everyone is inserted into this perverse logic, which is not fair for anyone."

The situation Jairo and Thalison observed in Vitória resembled Alves and Evanson's (2011) findings in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Many favelas there were under stress produced by criminal groups and the police, which had people calling favelas the twenty-first-century *senzalas*. *Senzala*—an African word that entered Brazil in the sixteenth century—describes the huts and dormitory spaces for enslaved laborers living under the domination of the *casa grande* (big plantation house). Enslaved laborers only left the *senzala* to work in places such as sugar plantations, coffee crops, and mines or in the *casas grandes* taking care of White families. When applied to the contemporary favela, the reference suggests crowded living quarters in dormitories and communities turned inward. The structure of police repression was mounted outside ready to intimidate, beat, and even kill.

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7. *Positionality* in cultural anthropology means the placement or social location in which someone is found in a particular environment.

8. In Brazil, *suburb* is a term used to describe areas where poor people live. Suburbs are located on the periphery of or far from the city center.

The idea that favelas are present-day *senzalas* partly explains why those outside—who live "on the asphalt"—tend to ignore the repression and killing that goes on so close to them. The other side of the coin is the mentality of those who live in the *casa grande*—one might fairly compare many residents of the rich in Praia do Canto, Mata da Praia, and Ilha do Frade to the occupants of the *casa grande*. Further developing the comparison to the *senzalas*, the state, in carrying out its policy of armed invasion to repress drug traffickers, can be compared to the *capitão do mato* (slave hunter) sent into the forest to recapture fugitive enslaved laborers. In the case of favelas, only the target has changed. The police enter a favela to arrest drug traffickers and seize their drugs and weapons. They prefer to view the residents as accomplices, much as the *capitão de mato* might have viewed all enslaved laborers as likely runaways.

<div align="center">DIGITAL INEQUALITIES IN VITÓRIA</div>

Vitória ranks at the top of Brazil's rankings of access to digital technology. During the time of my fieldwork in 2012 and 2013, the city ranked third in "access to personal computers at home," with 74 percent of the population having access. It also enjoyed a second-place ranking of "access to personal computers with internet at home," with 68 percent of the population. Among state capitals, Vitória was the leader in broadband access at home; 81 percent of the computers with internet access had a broadband connection (Neri 2012). According to Neri, these impressive numbers were a consequence of Vitória being one of the Brazilian cities with the highest human development index and concentration of people in upper classes. Nonetheless, one-third of the population still did not have access to the internet at home and depended on Community Technology Centers (CTCs)—such as Telecenters and LAN Houses—for access. Given my observations and the locations of the Telecenters, digital inequalities followed the same geographic class and race distributions in Vitória.[9]

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9. According to the Telecenter manager, the city deployed the CTCs in the neighborhoods where the residents had low literacy and difficulties with infrastructure and internet provider services. Two Telecenters were located in wealthier neighborhoods, such as Jardim da Penha and Jardim Camburi, to serve their high student populations.

Since 2009, the city has been trying to alleviate digital inequalities by installing Telecenters in poor neighborhoods with problematic access to digital technology and the internet. In 2012, Vitória was ranked fourth among state capitals in providing free public access, with twenty Telecenters and the Vitória Online project. Vitória Online was a set of technologies that allowed the residents and tourists to access the internet using a wireless network without the need for a commercial provider. The project started in 2009 to promote digital inclusion and support for tourist and economic development through a public mesh network. The open wireless network was available in seventeen neighborhoods, in forty-nine hotspots (parks, public squares, and government buildings), on two beaches, and in five Telecenters (PMV 2012).[10]

Telecenters are facilities where the general public can access computers for free. The computers are usually equipped with a variety of open-source and proprietary software and an internet connection. In Vitória, Telecenters started with seven units in 1998, incorporating old computers, desks, and chairs donated by the city government. In 2011, the city applied to a federal program called Telecentros.BR and was awarded twenty kits of ten PCs, one server, two routers, one printer, and ten desks and chairs each.[11] According to the Telecenter manager, the city opened only twenty units because that was the number of kits awarded. However, she also mentioned, Vitória needed more than twenty Telecenters to fully cover every poor neighborhood in the city.

LAN Houses were centers that also provided internet access to the population. These are privately owned establishments like cybercafés where people pay to use a computer with internet access and a local area network (LAN). These establishments were also important digital inclusion venues

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10. Vitória Online's hotspots were not necessarily in poor neighborhoods; they were available in rich areas, such as Mata da Praia and downtown, as well as in poor areas, such as Itararé and Bairro da Penha.

11. Telecentros.BR was a program sponsored by the federal government that supported public and community spaces for digital inclusion. The program awardees were provided with internet routers, computers, and financial aid to hire and train Inclusion Agents.

in the area.[12] They were not associated with the government, and their owners did not receive incentives to run their businesses, other than their income. According to my observation, each neighborhood in Territory of Good had two to three LAN Houses. They were used by favela residents to access the internet and its games and to gain skills, socialize, and develop their communities. LAN Houses first became popular in rich neighborhoods, but due to factors such as the diffusion and affordability of home computers and broadband internet, they did not stay in business for long. In the favelas, however, LAN Houses were still operating, since ownership of digital technologies and broadband availability were still low.

<div align="center">POSITIONALITY</div>

I came to the favelas from an upper-class background and always must keep in mind that background and what brought me to them. Since the beginning of favelas' growth on the edges of Brazilian cities, outsiders have perceived them as sites of violence and drug trafficking. They think of their residents as *favelados*—uncivilized, poor, low level of education, culturally sterile (Alves and Evanson 2011),[13] and a source of danger and instability to their neighboring cities. Unfortunately, because I grew up in Vitória, I was also part of the large group of outsiders that believed that the city's troubles primarily came from the favelas. Along with the city's strong classism and racism, my prejudice was heavily reinforced by media that described favelas through crime reports from police blotters.

The environment I was immersed in growing up did not impart positive representations about favelas. I didn't hear anything non-stigmatizing in conversations with family or friends, from news reports, on soap operas, or in government discourse. Despite their bad reputation, favelas caught my attention in other ways. I remember watching documentaries about Brazilian soccer players from poor communities, where I could see a less

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12. *Digital inclusion*, in the context of Telecenters and LAN Houses, means physical access to digital technology and appropriation of such technology to improve the local residents' lives.

13. People that belong to places that are culturally sterile do not have belief systems, knowledge, art, morals, law, customs, or any other capabilities and habits.

derogatory view of the favelas. My private-school friends used to say that I had a *forbidden fruit syndrome*—a fetish with the unknown—to explain my fascination with favelas. Because of our background, it may have been easier for them to say that I was obsessed with forbidden favelas than to realize that these places had value and deserved respect.

I played volleyball for a club called Álvares Cabral (also in Vitória). Álvares Cabral prepared athletes for professional volleyball clubs in Brazil. They drafted players from all over the state of Espírito Santo, regardless of their class or race. Through this club I had the opportunity to play and become friends with people from the peripheries, who showed me around their communities and enlarged my perspective. My interest grew. I began to read about their neighborhoods, talk with residents, and participate in programs that could provide me with a fairer sense of the favelas. Slowly, favelas became more than a personal interest.

As I was getting better acquainted with the favelas, I became more and more aware that there was a side of their story that was being ignored. Favelas could indeed be violent places due to drug cartel and police activities, but their residents were not culturally sterile or uncivilized—as they are often perceived. Quite to the contrary—I found them to be savvy and *fully human* (see P. Freire 2000, 55). I came to believe there was more to be learned from them than they could learn from outsiders. While I studied in private schools in Brazil that followed Western educational models, I was surrounded and influenced by the local practices and situated knowledge.[14] This learning and knowledge went beyond Western standards such as playing *pelada* (Brazilian pickup soccer) in the streets, going to rehearsals of samba schools, and participating in *capoeira* circles—these are activities that have their roots in Brazilian black culture and that have also been appropriated by the upper classes in the country.[15] During my college years studying computer science, I helped to develop two digital inclusion programs in which I taught computer

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14. Donna Haraway (1991) coined the term *situated knowledge* in her book *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*. Situated knowledge is the idea that "all forms of knowledge reflect the particular conditions in which they are produced, and at some level reflect the social identities and social locations of knowledge producers" (Castree, Kitchin, and Rogers 2013, 464).

15. *Capoeira*, a martial art that combines elements of dance, acrobatics, and music, was developed by Africans in Brazil.

basics to favela residents. However, instead of coming to them with a top-down teaching approach, I used the programs as a way to learn from them about their life experiences as I was instructing them.

My interest in telling their untold side of the story stayed latent until I started my PhD, when I learned about methods and literature that would let me study favelas and help others understand them better. During my research, I lived in my mom's residence in Bairro Vermelho, where I had lived from 2001 to 2007. Located in an upper-class neighborhood, it was just one mile away from Territory of Good. In spite of the proximity to the favelas, I was unfamiliar with it. However, this useful distance, combined with the empathy of my approach, allowed me to see beyond what would be considered irrelevant or uninteresting by our upper-class neighbors.

During my ethnography, I was aware of the differences in power and status brought by my background as a White upper-class man. To alleviate the barriers that such differences may have caused, I approached the favela residents as what Rubin and Rubin (2011) refer to as "conversational partners." I listened to the favela residents with an open heart and mind and was receptive to what they expressed. My motivation was not to judge them but rather to understand them. Such an attitude is perceived as the art of listening sympathetically, in which the researcher is deeply engaged and actively thinking about what is being expressed (Madison 2012). Thus, in this book, I try my best to amplify the voices of the favela residents, instead of speaking for them.

My being inside the favela, at first, seemed to be an issue for different groups of people. On the one hand, my family was worried and not pleased with the timing of my fieldwork, due to the intense drug war that was happening. Some of my friends thought I was insane for risking my life "to teach poor people how to use computers," which I thought was ironic since I was the one being taught by them. And in the favela itself, I observed that the word *research* caused silence, conjured up bad memories, and stirred up distrust between me and favela residents. They mentioned being approached by previous researchers, who treated them, they said, as "laboratory rats." A harmful history had infused the idea of research with classism, racism, and condescending power. The research they had participated in did not benefit them. Instead, researchers deployed their outsiders' perspectives to report outcomes that unfairly classified and represented residents' life experiences. Residents did not identify

with how their stories were told and felt (once again) exploited. Smith (2012) claims that many researchers believe their research projects serve humankind but become oblivious to their own practices and the harm caused to indigenous communities by framing outcomes from the vantage point of the West. Although my internal biases and identity as an upper-middle-class Brazilian affected my approach to the field, I attempted to carefully move across boundaries while being attentive to class-based concerns. I hope not just to "help" favelas but to relay the voices I heard in them.

But relaying others' voices is not straightforward. As Smith (2012) suggests, critical and post-colonial researchers are obliged to represent marginalized communities by respecting their history, values, and beliefs. Representation has consequences, because how people are represented influences how they are treated (Hall 1997)—which I saw in the unfair media portrayals of favela residents that re-entrenched historical structural inequalities. Hence, it is my responsibility to "resist domestication" by using the available resources, skills, and privileges to amplify the voices of favela residents and provide a fair and empowering account of their stories , which are often untold, particularly outside of Brazil (Madison 2012). Telling the untold side of story through the lens of the oppressed—who have been suffering the consequences of marginalization and exploitation—promotes their recognition as human beings who deserve respect and recognition for their values and beliefs.

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