COEXISTING NORMATIVE REGIMES, CONFLICT AND URBAN INEQUALITIES IN A BRAZILIAN FAVELA

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ABSTRACT
This article contributes to debates about the everyday negotiation of difference, inequality and conflict in cities by developing the notion of 'coexisting normative regimes'. Normative regimes are plausible parameters of action that are sedimented in subjectivities and reproduced in everyday routines. We argue that in many Brazilian favelas and other marginalised urban spaces, distinct and unassimilable normative regimes coexist in space, each providing distinct frameworks and guidelines for dealing with everyday situations. Based on extensive ethnographic research conducted in a favela in the city of Belo Horizonte, the article identifies the everyday ways in which normative regimes operate, how they link to broader urban inequalities, and the ways in which individuals and groups navigate between them and the various threats they pose.

Key words: normative regimes; everyday life; urban inequalities; ethnography; violence; Brazil

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing interest within geography and urban studies in dynamics of coexistence and cooperation under conditions of 'thrown-togetherness' (Massey 2005), where heterogeneous populations cohabit in the same urban spaces (e.g. Simone 2004; Nowicka & Vertovec 2014; Heil 2015). In both global North and South, such studies have offered important insights into the everyday practices, interactions and tactics that allow urban populations to manage difference, avoid conflict, and achieve some collective aims in contexts of growing diversity and the perpetual flux of urban life. Coming from a different direction, but with some overlapping concerns, recent ethnographic studies in Latin American cities have looked at local dynamics of conflict and coexistence between armed actors, such as police, drug cartels and street gangs, and of the tactics that residents adopt in their everyday lives to navigate the threats that they pose (Penglase 2009; Abello-Colak & Guarneros-Meza 2014; Menezes 2018; Richmond 2019). While these studies also emphasise everyday negotiations and accommodations between social Others, they have tended

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to view them as more heavily constrained by violence and social control exercised at the neighbourhood scale, and by the broader urban inequalities to which they are linked.

This article seeks to contribute to debates about the everyday negotiation of difference, inequality and conflict in cities by developing the notion of 'coexisting normative regimes' as a tool for analysing social life in Brazilian favelas. Drawing on the previous work of Gabriel Feltran (2010, 2011, 2012, 2020), we understand normative regimes as plausible parameters of action that are sedimented in subjectivities and reproduced in everyday routines. We argue that in many Brazilian favelas and other marginalised urban spaces, distinct and unassimilable normative regimes coexist in space, each providing distinct frameworks and guidelines for dealing with everyday situations. These normative regimes are constructed relationally, gaining distinct contours through their interactions with, and differences from, the other regimes with which they coexist. As identified in the aforementioned literature, in everyday situations, individual subjects may adapt their practices flexibly to manage tensions and accommodate proximate Others. Nonetheless, the regimes themselves, and the radical forms of alterity and conflicts that underpin them, persist and frequently overflow the limits of everyday accommodations to produce violence.

Empirically, in this paper and in past work (Feltran 2012; Beraldo 2020, 2021a), we identify three core normative regimes in Brazil's favelas. The normative regime of the state is grounded in the rule of law, promoted by formal institutions and represented on the ground by both agents of repression (police) and of the social state (e.g. the education system, social programmes). The normative regime of crime is based on an unwritten code of 'correct behaviour' rooted in criminal practices and organisations, but which, to some extent, the wider population is also expected to observe. The normative regime of religion rests on moral authority associated with explicit religious doctrine and more diffuse Christian values in Brazil and is actively promoted by religious institutions, particularly rapidly proliferating Evangelical churches. This regime provides a powerful alternative logic for managing relationships and dealing with everyday situations, despite, unlike the other two, not being violently enforced. All three normative regimes are organised around moral classifications that distinguish between right and wrong, justice and injustice, and which subjects do or do not deserve protection.

Based on extensive ethnographic research conducted in a favela in the city of Belo Horizonte, the article identifies everyday ways in which normative regimes operate and interact with one another in marginalised urban spaces in Brazil, and of how these link to and reproduce broader urban inequalities and conflicts. In the next section, we provide an overview of the relevant literature and outline the concept of 'coexisting normative regimes' in greater detail. Section 3 then presents the empirical context of the research, providing background on Brazilian favelas in general and of the research site and methodology. The subsequent three sections then present ethnographic fragments of seemingly banal, everyday situations, that offer insights into the way each of the three normative regimes shape everyday interactions in the favelas. In the conclusion, we summarise the key points of our argument and its contribution to the literature.

CO-PRESENCE, DIFFERENCE, CONFLICT AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN CITIES

Growing ethnic diversity in many cities of the global North has prompted analyses of how individuals and groups develop everyday practices of 'conviviality' that seek to manage, rather than eradicate or subsume, differences with proximate Others (Nowicka & Vertovec 2014; Heil 2015). Such practices might include efforts at cultural translation, forms of everyday civility and even mutual avoidance as tools that facilitate what Heil (2015) has called the continual '(re)negotiation of minimal consensus'. According to this understanding, as much as respect for difference, misunderstandings and tensions posing the possibility of conflict are often present in convivial relationships; indeed, it may be the risk of conflict that generates the need to continually renegotiate the terms on which urban space is shared.

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Simone (2004) invokes a distinct, but in some respects proximate, idea with his notion of 'people as infrastructure', developed through analysis of cities in the global South where urban life is not extensively regulated by formal institutions or highly integrated, effectively functioning material infrastructures. Under such conditions, Simone finds that city dwellers form into complex, flexible ensembles that in some ways replicate the connective and distributional properties of infrastructures. Unlike conviviality, the notion of people as infrastructure focuses on pragmatic collaborations that seek to meet basic needs and facilitate market exchanges rather than managing difference in and of itself. However, they may ultimately have similar effects in that such relationships necessarily transcend, and in some circumstances may take precedence over, bonds of kinship, ethnicity and religion, thus generating similar forms of negotiated cooperation between proximate Others.

However, a focus on the everyday management of difference and cooperation across ethnic and social boundaries can risk losing sight of the ways that deeply embedded social inequalities and conflicts structure and constrain such relationships. As Segura (2019) notes, this is particularly relevant when applying a concept like conviviality to the Latin American region. Taking into account the extreme socio-spatial fragmentation, social and racial inequalities and routine forms of violence characteristic of many Latin American cities, he argues for the need to identify distinct forms of conviviality in different types of urban space. For example, this includes 'hierarchical conviviality' of gated communities between wealthy residents and low-paid service staff; 'organised conviviality' in shopping centres, where visitors are subject to constant surveillance and marginalised groups may be arbitrarily excluded; and 'disputed conviviality' in the public spaces of heterogeneous city centres, where groups like homeless people, informal street vendors and working-class youths may congregate openly, but are also subject to periodic harassment by police. As this typology suggests, practices of negotiated conviviality can also be observed across Latin American cities, but *who* is present in different spaces and *how* different groups interact are heavily shaped by state and private forms of social control and violence that are tied to broader power inequalities.

Although not included in Segura's typology, distinct forms of social control and conviviality are also found in Latin America's marginalised urban neighbourhoods, including Brazil's favelas. In these spaces, scholars have focused on the co-presence of different armed actors, in particular police and criminal groups, using concepts such as 'hybrid governance' (Abello-Colak & Guarneros-Meza 2014), 'plural orders' (Arias and Barnes 2017) and 'security assemblages' (Richmond 2019). These analyses draw attention to varying and shifting patterns of interaction, which may include direct conflict, mutual avoidance, implicit cooperation to preserve order, and direct collaboration to profit from illegal markets (Misse 2006). These routines are not necessarily characterised by high levels of violence, and in some ways resemble the everyday negotiations and collaborations evoked by descriptions of conviviality and 'people as infrastructure' in their ability to preserve 'order' and avert violence. However, the structural conflicts underlying them constitute a fundamental and persistent condition of life in these spaces, rooted in rival claims to authority by actors with access to the means of violence. For example, even when individual police and drug traffickers collaborate to preserve local order, their fundamental opposition in relation to the rule of law retains a high likelihood that conflict will periodically break out.

Under such conditions, ordinary residents, who lack access to the means of violence, must find other ways to navigate these relationships. These include observing the so-called '*lei do morro*' (law of the hill) in Brazil's favelas, by maintaining a code of secrecy about the illegal activities of criminal groups, and perhaps taking advantage of relationships in the community and contacts within criminal groups to access extra-legal forms of justice (Penglase 2009). Others have noted that religious conversion can provide a degree of protection from everyday conflicts, including as an option for gang members to escape the 'world of crime' (Birman & Machado 2012). Nonetheless, these different strategies for managing risk occur under claustrophobic conditions of local conflict and control by rival authorities. As such, many favela residents experience everyday life

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as a 'minefield' (Menezes 2018) in which they are 'hostages to both sides' (Richmond 2019), constantly fearing reprisals from police or traffickers if they fail to observe the norms of conduct expected by one or the other.

While the literature has tended to focus on fear of violence, a key aspect of these dynamics is the way in which they may come to be experienced as 'ordinary', embedded in everyday norms and expectations. Drawing on Brazil's long tradition of analysing 'coexisting social orders' (e.g. Machado da Silva 1993; Misse 2006), Feltran (2010, 2012, 2020) has developed the notion of 'coexisting normative regimes' to account for how persistent conflicts in Brazilian favelas become deeply sedimented in subjectivities and routines. According to this understanding, the conflict in these spaces occurs between subjects who do not share the same plausible parameters of action; that is, they do not merely occupy different positions in a common urban order, but rather occupy distinct (albeit spatially coexisting) urban orders. Based on empirical research, Feltran has identified three primary sources of normativity informing social action in marginalised urban spaces in Brazil: the state, crime and religion. As we shall discuss further, the last of these can be distinguished from the other two in that the notions of justice on which it rests are not backed up by the likely threat of violence. Rather, it rests primarily on moral authority, linked to explicit religious doctrine or more diffuse religious attitudes that provide powerful grounds for challenging the authority of, and exerting influence over, the other two regimes.

The notion of normative regimes draws on the socio-historical studies of Charles Tilly, which suggest an analytical connection between illegal accumulation (through looting, piracy etc.), the use of violence and the construction of plural political orders (Tilly 1985). Based on this insight, we surmise that underlying mechanisms producing a fractured social order, which have persisted in Latin America for centuries, challenge normative definitions of the city and urban governance. Making the city means producing local order that is experienced as ordinary. When fierce conflictive situations persist without political synthesis, local sources of authority can reproduce relatively autonomous social orders that become entrenched as normative regimes. These are not structured by official institutions nor even, necessarily, concrete organisations of any kind, but may be relatively decentralised and loosely structured normativities that manifest in a variety of continually changing organisational forms. These regimes relate to the operations of power in two fundamental dimensions. Firstly, they inform how a social order should be from a local perspective: shared codes and values on which justifications and senses of justice rest. Secondly, they produce means for the governance of the social order by furnishing concrete instruments and resources, such as money and access to the means of violence. The three ethnographic fragments we shall present below provide snapshots of how coexisting normative regimes operate in Brazilian favelas today.

Before we turn to the case site, we would like to offer some clarifications regarding the role of gender within our analysis. Readers will notice that the three empirical vignettes are all centred on male subjects, which may risk presenting a narrowed sense of the ways in which normative frameworks operate. We would therefore like to emphasise that we understand gender as a broad category of differentiation and production of inequalities that operates transversally across all three normative regimes. Due to limitations of space, we will not be able to dissect the role of gender within each empirical case. However, we would like to flag up some relevant insights from the literature on gender relations within Brazilian favelas and peripheries. For example, Araujo (2019) observes that the expansion of social programmes has tended to strengthen women's centrality as articulators of the state in poor communities and their financial autonomy, while simultaneously reinforcing their role as carers. Gender is also central to criminal dynamics, whether in the hypermasculine culture that surrounds drug dealing (Zaluar 1994) or in the patriarchal relationship that prevails between faction leaders and favela residents, in which strong and powerful men protect, and must be obeyed by, their communities (Penglase 2010). Although in churches most pastors are men, women also take on key

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leadership roles and religious representations of motherhood, femininity and responsibility tend to be linked to the production of difference not only between men and women but among women themselves (Beraldo 2020). As these examples indicate, while the coexistence of normative regimes impacts upon everyone within these spaces, they are likely to materialise differently for women than for men, both in the constraints they impose and in the nature and degree of the threats they present.

FAVELA MORRO DA LUZ: CASE SITE AND METHODOLOGY

There is a vast literature on Brazilian favelas, their historic formation, shifting urban and social conditions, governance structures and relations to broader urban geographies (e.g. Valladares 2005; Fischer 2008).[1] At the most basic level, favelas can be defined as autoconstructed and usually densely agglomerated urban settlements built on adversely occupied land. They have historically been settled by poor, predominantly black and brown, Brazilians, often migrants from impoverished rural areas or those unable to afford rents elsewhere in the city. Depending on particular urban histories and geographies, favelas may be located either in more central or more peripheral areas and are often built on precarious or degraded land where formal land development is less viable. Despite lacking land rights, favelas tend to become physically consolidated over time, to develop significant housing and commercial markets, and to gain access to some public policies, though without ever achieving full legal recognition.

Favelas have diversified significantly over time, often conditioned by their relative positions within citywide economies and political and social geographies. For example, the residents of more centrally located favelas may gain greater access to urban labour markets, public policies and philanthropic investments than those in peripheral areas, with concrete benefits for residents. However, centrally located favelas may also suffer disadvantages, such as becoming key drug sale points and suffering more intense forms of policing and socio-spatial segregation than peripheral areas. In these cases, logics of 'social distance/territorial proximity' (Ribeiro 2016) and 'socio-spatial containment' (Fernandes 2012) uphold spatial ruptures and reinforce urban inequalities between favelas and surrounding areas.

While these patterns can be widely observed in Brazil, conditions vary considerably within and between different cities. In the case of Belo Horizonte (BH), the capital of the Southeastern state of Minas Gerais and Brazil's third most populous metropolis, a major factor still shaping socio-spatial dynamics today was the attempted modernisation of the city at the turn of the twentieth century. Under the rule of Brazil's First Republic and with Minas Gerais' traditional mining economy in decline, BH was conceived by elites as a planned city that would symbolise Brazil's development towards a modern, more Europeanised future (Costa & Arguelhes 2008). However, the 1897 city plan, envisaging a neat separation of functions and social classes, did not take into account the needs of the very poor, who could not afford to live within the regulated area. Just 15 years after its inauguration, 60 per cent of BH's residents already lived in informal housing outside its boundaries (Azevedo & Afonso 1987). Today, more than 300.000 of the city's 2.5 million inhabitants, over 12%, live in favelas.

Belo Horizonte also exhibits distinct characteristics vis-à-vis other Brazilian cities in terms of the organisation of criminal groups and their territorial dynamics in favelas. Unlike São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, where favela-based traffickers are linked to a few very powerful groups who regulate both prisons and illegal markets across large urban areas (Feltran 2010, 2012; Richmond 2019), in Belo Horizonte, small, relatively autonomous gangs of young men dominate small contiguous favela territories. These gangs engage in interpersonal conflicts, demonstrations of force, and market competition (Zilli & Beato 2015), sometimes clashing in so-called 'gang wars' that lead to cycles of retaliatory homicides (Rocha 2017). However, as we shall discuss, the pulverised nature of criminal structures in BH does not prevent crime from producing normativity and

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constituting a key organisational dimension of the social order in favelas, just as it does in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

The fieldwork presented in this paper was conducted by Beraldo in a centrally located favela in BH called Morro da Luz.[2] Figure 1 shows the average per capita income in different zones of the Metropolitan Area of Belo Horizonte in relation to the country's minimum wage, with the lighter shades of purple indicating areas with high levels of poverty. While this reveals a broad centre-periphery pattern in the city, with wealthier areas in the centre and poorer ones in the peripheries, the central zone also contains several favelas, shown as light points surrounded by darker regions. It is in this area of the city where Morro da Luz—one of the oldest favelas in BH—is located.

Between 2011 and 2020, Beraldo engaged in various research activities and other projects in Morro da Luz. Between 2017 and 2018, she conducted intensive ethnographic fieldwork, making three to four visits per week to

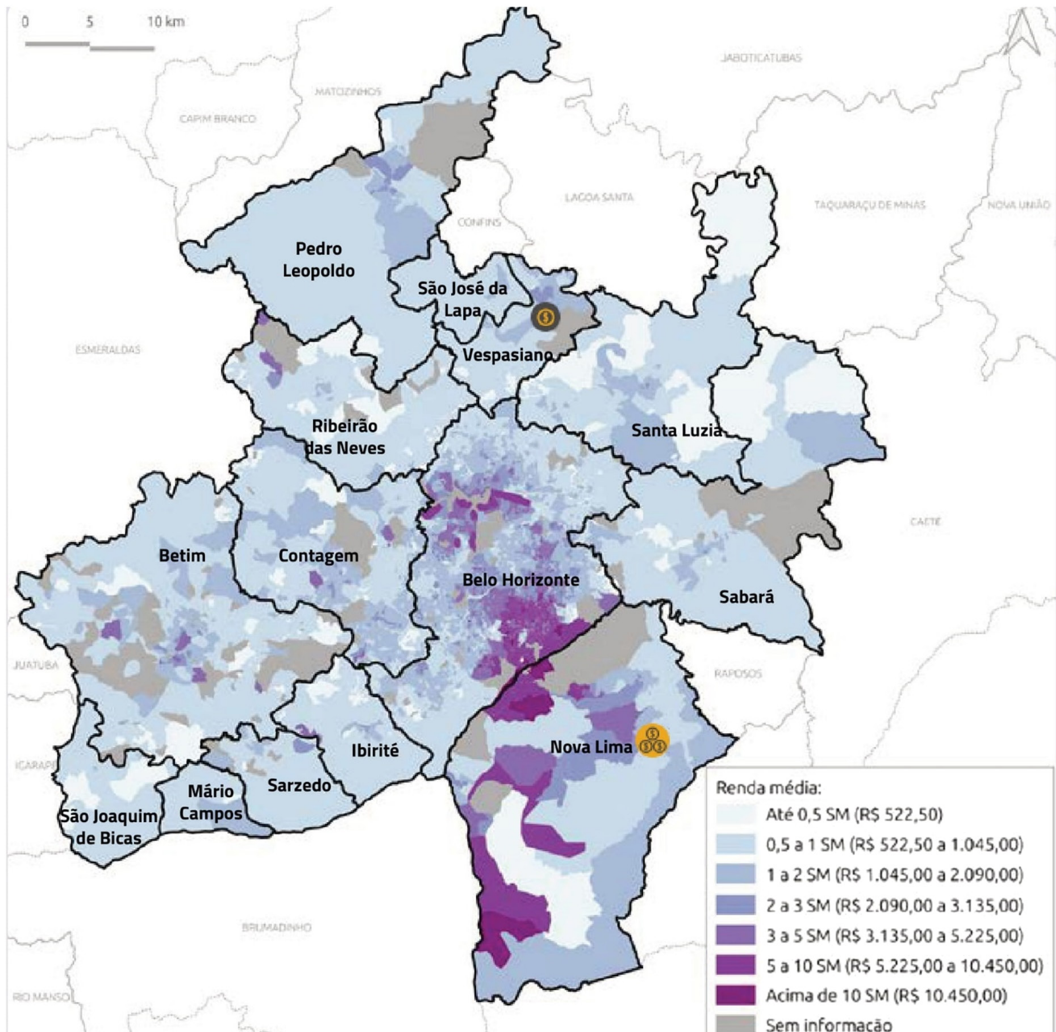

Figure 1. *Average per capita income in relation to the minimum wage, Metropolitan Area of Belo Horizonte. Retrieved from: Inequality Map of Belo Horizonte, Our BH Institute (2021, p. 25).*

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the favela, and systematically recording observations in a field diary. During more intense periods of research, some key spaces and institutions provided strategic access to different groups within the favela, including (1) a public school; (2) a pre-college preparatory course; (3) a cultural group from the favela; (4) two Social Assistance Reference Centers (CRAS); (5) a health care centre and (6) an international missionary evangelical organisation. In each of these spaces, Beraldo developed different methodological tools, such as: conducting workshops on everyday life in Morro da Luz; holding a series of meetings with elderly residents to discuss their views about the past, present and future prospects of the favela; attending the meetings and observing the activities of different institutions; participating in cultural events; tracking social media accounts; and engaging in informal conversations. From this starting point, she also used snowballing to identify and speak to other residents and visit other spaces of interest within the favela (people's homes, churches, bars, etc.). Finally, she conducted 10 in-depth interviews with key interlocutors in the area.

Feltran supervised this research and contributed to the article, drawing on his long ethnographic experience in similar contexts in São Paulo and co-constructing the analysis to further develop theoretical perspectives he has established in previous works. Richmond has previously collaborated with both Beraldo and Feltran and contributed to the article drawing on his own past ethnographic experiences in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. This collaboration represents a collective effort, focused on the empirical case of Morro da Luz, to develop a more spatialised understanding of how 'normative regimes' operate and reproduce inequalities in Brazilian favelas.

BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG: CRIME AS A SOURCE OF NORMATIVITY

> April 24, 2018, Monday morning, at school.
>
> The courtyard was crowded and noisy as schools usually are. Children ran, played, and shouted; teenagers listened to music on their mobile phones. Caio, a 40-year old, light-skinned black gym teacher (who also lives in Morro da Luz), arrived, panting, almost half an hour late for the interview we scheduled a week ago.
>
> With his motorbike helmet still in his hand and amid constant interruptions of children greeting him effusively, the teacher tries to explain what had happened: in recent days, cars had been parking in front of his garage, preventing him from leaving for work.
>
> He had spent part of the morning trying to get around the situation, until he finally decided to come in by motorbike. The interview began shortly afterwards, in one of the school's administrative rooms, and with the participation (which had not been arranged) of Fatima, a physical education intern who was also a resident of Morro da Luz.
>
> The car incident in front of the garage disappears from the scene, as an unimportant event, and other issues start to permeate the conversation: childhood memories, school trajectories, goals for the future. When asked about the positive and negative aspects of living in Luz, Caio replies that he has built such valuable friendships throughout his life in the favela, that he rarely feels lonely. There are, however, significant difficulties inherent to life in the favela, and Caio—like many other residents—expresses ambivalence towards 'the crime'.[3] At the same time that it represents a source of protection and of the production of order for a part of the population that is usually unprotected and criminalized (Cozzi *et al.* 2015) by state security forces, it also represents, for this same population, a constant potential threat of violence.

The regulation of daily life by 'the crime', which entails the control by armed groups of an unarmed population, is based on violence, either concretely applied or its implied threat. But the normative capacity of crime is not only sustained by violence. For the logic of crime to transcend those who are directly part of its 'world' and organise relations in communities more generally, it has to represent a minimally validated morality. This emerges from the everyday construction of systems for defining what is right and wrong, just and unjust, in which crime plays an important role (Marques 2016; Beraldo 2020, 2021b). These systems may also, in many cases, create a greater sense of predictability for those living in favelas than is provided by state institutions (Machado da Silva & Leite 2007). Violence is, thus, not random or equally present for everyone who lives in the

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territory: criminal groups have exercised a constant historical influence over defining what is or is not morally acceptable (Zaluar 1985).

The interview with Caio continues, the subject now being what people do when faced with a conflict and who they turn to. Calling the police can be a risky choice, 'the boys don't allow it', he comments. Soon after, however, he points out that the consequences for those who do so can vary substantively:

> It depends a lot on who calls the cops. Why is that? If some 'Mr. Zé', some old guy who has been living here for I-don't-know-how-many-years, they would even call him a 'resident', right? If he calls the police to sort out a problem with noise in the neighborhood, are they going to cause trouble for Mr. Zé who called the police? They'll try to understand what happened in some way. They'll go there, they'll say 'Mr. Zé, what happened here?' (…). Generally, this question of parallel control exists (…). It has happened that a person calls the police and the traffickers beat up the person, for example. But those who get beaten up are the ones that are [already] involved with them [criminals], that is, people that already have proximity, who use and buy drugs. (Interview with Caio, teacher/resident, April 2018).

What Caio's narrative suggests is that there is an important space for negotiation in the favela, but that this negotiating power is not equally distributed: in practice, what is 'right' is determined a posteriori and depends on the situation, the actors involved and the performances of these actors in the episode in question. Thus, in Caio's hypothetical example, the elderly, honest 'Mr Zé' is different from a drug user. With Mr Zé, there is the possibility of dialogue ('Mr Zé, what happened here?'). That is to say that, for the old man, there is a greater margin for manoeuvre within what crime considers to be *right* and *wrong* than for a 'junkie'. Furthermore, it is important to note that the normative understandings of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and by whom, are at least to some extent also shared by residents of Morro da Luz in general.

Nonetheless, a crucial aspect of these judgments is the significant degree of ambiguity surrounding them. If *right* and *wrong* can only exist *a posteriori*, and are ultimately determined by a violent, unaccountable authority, one must always be careful in one's conduct. Caio again brings up the problem of the car parked in front of his garage. This specific problem had direct, concrete consequences for him, just like other problems associated with local coexistence in cities, like noise or littering, can affect everyday life. However, it is not clear to residents of Morro da Luz *who* can resolve such challenges. This places the onus on them to skilfully navigate these challenges while avoiding any, potentially costly, 'misunderstandings'.

Caio explains that his decision to go by motorbike was not only because he was in a hurry, or because the motorbike was small enough to fit through the small space between the garage and the parked car. It was also a means of managing ambiguity. He mentions that he had thought of calling a tow truck, but that he first needed to warn the 'boys' at the nearest drug selling point. In the favela, even an everyday act like calling a tow truck involves strategic planning. Fatima, the physical education intern, nods her head in agreement with Caio's cautious attitude, commenting 'you always have to think twice'.

BETWEEN PROTECTION AND REPRESSION: THE STATE AS A SOURCE OF NORMATIVITY

> November 1, 2017, Wednesday afternoon in a Community Centre.
>
> Ten teenage boys and one adult woman, all black, are sitting along a rectangular table with their eyes fixed on a screen showing video clips of artists from African countries, commenting on the musicians' clothes and accessories. The activity was planned to discuss black ancestry. This was a meeting of the ProJovem programme,[4] a public policy that aims to integrate youngsters living in poor areas of the country into the educational system and labour market.
>
> The group met every afternoon for different activities such as art workshops, debates on gender, race and sexuality, visits to museums or cinemas etc. The woman was Cristina, a social educator who lives in another favela and coordinates these activities in Morro da Luz.

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> A few weeks earlier, the group had arranged a trip to Inhotim, a prestigious art museum located just outside Belo Horizonte. The preparations for the excursion had taken almost a month and the boys were eagerly looking forward to it.
>
> On the day of the meeting, however, some of them were atypically late. When they finally arrived at the Centre, the boys reported that because of a shootout between local gangs the night before, military police had entered the favela and were aggressively stopping and searching residents, especially young men. As the boys had to leave home with backpacks full of snacks and bottles of water to spend the day out, they were stopped and joined many others whose plans were also interrupted by the police that day. The youngsters were stopped, pressed against walls and aggressively searched by the officers. That's why they were late.

Being aggressively searched by the police was not a surprise for the boys. Many of them had been through similar experiences before, and those who had not knew that it would happen to them at some point. It was almost like a rite of passage, Cristina said. She then emphasised, with an air of concern, that the interventions of the most repressive arm of the state, the Military Police, were preventing the boys from participating in something that the state itself was offering them: cultural activities and the possibility of visiting places that they would not usually be able to.

This illustrates a fundamental tension whereby at different moments the state treats different individuals and groups as being either citizens in need of protection or as threats to the wider community, deserving of repression and the suspension of rights and freedoms. As Cristina notes, this may occur through the way different state organs treat the same populations. States are large, complex entities composed of diverse institutions that operate with distinct objectives, organisational logics and everyday practices, producing different forms of interaction with the populace (Abrams 1988). However, in aggregate, the way states treat their populations tends to rest on certain principles, which may be specific to particular periods and vary between countries, such as the differences between authoritarian and liberal regimes (Hindess 2001). In contemporary Brazil, tensions within the state's normative regime produce extreme contrasts and, periodically, significant threats for young favela residents.

Brazil's redemocratisation in the mid-1980s, following more than two decades of authoritarian rule, did not bring about the end of violent state repression, but rather a shift in its primary targets, methods and political dynamics. The figure of the 'internal enemy' persisted (Caldeira & Holston 1999), but rather than being attached to leftist political 'subversives' as under the military regime, it became associated with '*bandidos*' (criminals). Building upon deep, historically constituted social and racial inequalities, young, black favela residents came to symbolise this category in public debate and popular imagination. As repressing the internal enemy became understood as paramount for protecting wider society, arbitrary police violence against the broad social categories associated with criminality was allowed to continue with relatively little constraint (Sanjurjo & Feltran 2015), meaning that the transition to electoral democracy failed to produce substantive democratic citizenship for these groups (Caldeira & Holston 1999).

However, following redemocratisation, and especially after the rise of the Worker's Party to national government from 2003, efforts were also made to integrate the poor through social policies and expanded consumerism. Even as they were collectively blamed for rising crime and feelings of insecurity, Brazil's poor were also celebrated as a growing category of 'worker-consumers' contributing to the development and prosperity of the country. As a result of these historically coinciding processes, a state normative regime emerged that has sought to continually construct, classify and sort the poor, especially young favela residents (Motta 2017), between 'worker-consumers', to be invested in and '*bandidos*', to be eliminated (Rizek *et al.* 2014).

However, as the above situation shows, the boundary between these categories is blurred and highly sensitive to changes in local context. During 'normal' periods, the state seeks to separate *bandidos* from worker-consumers, institutionally and spatially, through the actions of key institutions. Although the

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Military Police do not have a permanent base within Morro da Luz, they seek to repress the threat represented by the favela's street gangs through strategies of containment. Their policing tactics and patrols enforce perimeters that prevent open drug dealing and the flaunting of arms outside the favela, and make it risky for those involved with crime to circulate freely. Meanwhile, the ProJovem programme mediates the state's relationship to the category of worker-consumers through their educational activities, providing some resources and formal supervision that allow young people to circulate beyond the favela on terms established by the state. By opening up the horizons and offering protection to those 'at risk' of becoming involved with crime, these interventions are seen as complementary to police containment in protecting society from the internal enemy.

However, during periods of 'war', socio-spatial conditions rapidly change and the binary categories on which the state's normative regime in the favela rest suddenly collapse into a single, unitary one. Police enter and seek to control circulation within the territory by monitoring suspect individuals, while the aim of repressing an imminent threat takes total precedence over the protection or rights of worker-consumers. As Cristina explained, this produced a paradoxical situation in which the same empirical subjects who are sometimes normatively believed to deserve the state's protection from crime are suddenly viewed as the threat that society needs to be protected *from.* It also shows the ways in which those subjects, lying at the tense boundary (Feltran 2011) of a high-stakes, binary process of social categorisation, seek to navigate the state regime during times of conflict. As Cristina explained, they do so by developing a resigned attitude to the inevitability of being criminalised by the state and by avoiding provoking police when this does occur. More generally, they come to understand that the normative values of pursuing education, culture and expanding their horizons beyond the favela can be instantly withdrawn for reasons completely beyond their control.

BETWEEN GOD AND THE DEVIL: RELIGION AS A SOURCE OF NORMATIVITY

> May 05, 2019, Sunday afternoon, ice cream parlour.
>
> Plastic tables and chairs, crowded streets, motorbike noises. Thiago, aged 23, agnostic, black, with a large afro, serves himself three scoops of ice cream and adds almost every available topping. Young people of a similar age pass by the ice cream parlour and greet him saying, 'peace in the Lord,' and he replies, 'peace in the Lord'. His greetings remained evangelical, even though Thiago no longer attends church and is now sceptical about whether or not God exists, questioning the very core of his upbringing.
>
> Thiago has spent much of his life deeply involved in Evangelicalism. His social activities were mainly connected to the church, where he learned to play music and started a gospel band. His siblings and parents also developed social networks in this religious environment, and the family could reasonably be considered to resemble the common stereotype of poor evangelicals in Brazil: hard-working, law-abiding, church-going people who walk around with bibles under their arms. But this was not the only type of believer who attended the church.
>
> Often, the 'boys in crime' also sat on the pews of his church. The same happened in the dozens of other evangelical churches in Morro da Luz that, interspersed with bars, drug selling points, state buildings and local business, made up the architecture of the favela. In a territory divided up between rival armed groups, every piece of land has at least one evangelical church. The traffickers—whose circulation is restricted by the very real possibility of being killed if they cross into enemy territory—could always find a place nearby to attend sermons. In the signs put up at the entrances of the churches, there are usually sayings like 'Get the devil out of you', 'We fight evil', or 'Jesus can save you'.
>
> When entering the doors of the churches, the traffickers were generally welcomed by the pastors and the other congregants. They prayed, sang and danced just like everyone else. Thiago saw nothing strange in this, since 'being a criminal and being an evangelical are not mutually exclusive things'. Once inside the church, they can somehow put their identity as gang members on hold and can rest momentarily from their constant task of avoiding death.

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The fact that Thiago no longer attends church does not mean that everything he learned has ceased to be part of his life. On the contrary, his experiences in the 'religious world' were formative of his subjectivity. When he was growing up, religion was an important influence for Thiago and its behavioural norms and social commitments helped to structure his everyday routines and discipline his body. He had to obey his parents and respect other adults. He did not swear and went to bed early. These norms differentiated his behaviour and outlook from some other young people in the area who were being pulled into the orbit of crime.

However, religion also helped him to maintain his distance from this world and the threats it represented in very concrete ways. The church itself constituted a kind of 'safe space' (Rubin *et al.* 2014), that even most gang members and police understood should be spared from the effects of conflict. Even beyond its walls, when circulating around the neighbourhood, being categorised as a 'believer' could provide a kind of invisible armour, allowing individuals to avoid being drawn into everyday conflicts. Those who more visibly performed religiosity, for example by dressing in typical Evangelical style (suits for men, long skirts for women), carrying a bible and adopting certain ways of speaking and acting, could even gain some protection from external threats, including police and gangs from other territories. Even after he had left the church and now rejected some of its core teachings, Thiago had still retained important aspects of his religious formation and could still perform rituals of interaction and normative behaviours that could be of use in navigating the threats of the favela.

This demonstrates that even if it does not participate in violent conflict with the regimes of the state and crime, religion constitutes a third normative regime, that arguably has an even deeper capacity to shape the behaviour, subjectivities and sociability of favela residents. The alternative it offers is most dramatically embodied in the act of conversion. Across Latin America, and in Brazil especially, Evangelical churches have grown spectacularly in recent decades, in part by appealing to those suffering from the effects of poverty, alcoholism, drug abuse and involvement with the world of crime (Côrtes 2007; Smilde 2007). For the churches, attracting these converts is understood as a triumph of a winning transcendental war of good against evil (Birman & Machado 2012). Once converted, subjects understood as previously under the influence of the devil, gain a new identity, becoming 'ex-addicts', 'ex-alcoholics' or 'ex-*bandidos*' (Teixeira 2009).

However, as the field notes above demonstrate, the separation between these spheres is not as rigid as Evangelicals' own discourse suggests. Those who are very much still immersed in the world of crime may at times also find value in the normative regime of religion and in the safe space offered by the church. As this shows, we should understand normative regimes as being analytically separate from one another, promoting distinct codes of conduct and tied to different organisations able to enforce or at least validate them. However, individual subjects may, to different degrees, internalise norms of more than one regime, allowing them to draw situationally, and even strategically, on different frameworks for action. Furthermore, representative organisations—whether police, social organisations, gangs or Evangelical churches—may find it necessary to flexibilise their criteria for how they treat outsiders and attract new members, even as they seek to uphold the core principles of their normative regimes. In the moralised hierarchy of Evangelical churches, subjects are ranked as being closer to God or closer to the devil, but it is never too late to 'find God'.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: NAVIGATING COEXISTING NORMATIVE REGIMES

Based on ethnographic fragments from the favela Morro da Luz in Belo Horizonte, this article has outlined an approach for analysing everyday practices, interactions and conflicts in marginalised urban spaces in Brazil and, potentially, beyond. This approach is grounded in the notion of normative regimes, understood as radically distinct frameworks

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that guide actions and classify subjects, which coexist within the same urban spaces. Each of the three regimes we have discussed promotes particular norms of conduct that help individuals to deal with everyday situations, while also constructing proximate Others as more or less important, deserving and expendable. These regimes are the product of deep historic inequalities in Brazil that have, over time, given rise to distinct social orders that cannot today be assimilated into a single order based on the rule of law and overseen by a secular state with a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence. Instead, in certain territories, the state's normative regime coexists with others based around criminal and religious normativities. These regimes become self-reproducing by embedding norms in subjectivities and routines, and, more practically, by generating material resources and constantly evolving organisational forms.

The notion of coexisting normative regimes implies deeper antagonism between subjects and more immediate potential for conflict than is presumed by most analyses of 'throwntogetherness' and related concepts like 'conviviality' and 'people as infrastructure' (Simone 2004; Massey, 2005; Nowicka & Vertovec 2014; Heil 2015). However, as we have shown, subjects do engage in everyday practices of negotiation and mutual accommodation that can often resemble such accounts. Gangs adapt how forcefully they enforce criminal norms with different residents, and, in ambiguous situations, residents also adjust their behaviour to 'avoid misunderstandings' with the gangs. During times of conflict, the state manifests primarily as a force of arbitrary repression, but in more mundane moments frontline state agents provide protection to some favelas youths and even police engage in practices of everyday accommodation with criminal actors. Evangelical churches preach that criminals and drug users are possessed by the devil, but they routinely allow these subjects to pass through their doors even when they have not left their sinful lives behind.

In their ideal forms, these normative regimes are separate and are constructed relationally. The crime regime gains coherence and self-recognition by identifying which subjects act correctly according to the norms of the criminal world, and which do not, for example by calling the police or other agents of the state. The state regime, in turn, is built on the separation of worker-consumers, who are protected by the rule of law, and of *bandidos*, who lie beyond it and must be eliminated. The religious regime is constructed through a distinction between good and evil that distinguishes believers from the sinners of the world of crime and, more subtly, the secular rationalities of the state. However, in practice, no empirical subject perfectly fits moral categorisations of right and wrong, worker-consumer or *bandido*, good or evil. In their everyday lives, our interlocutors are typically closer to one or other of these regimes, but there is always some ambiguity, always situations that will challenge classifications and generate the need for negotiation. Nonetheless, even as individuals and organisations negotiate their everyday co-presence and accommodate alterity, the regimes themselves and the conflict between them, persist. Therefore, at the normative level, they only ever *coexist*, rather than 'hybridising' or achieving some kind of synthesis. This ensures that, even in apparently banal situations, failing to effectively navigate between them can prove deadly.

Endnotes

[1] While much of this literature is focused specifically on the city of Rio de Janeiro, many (though not all) of its core insights apply more widely.

[2] Pseudonyms have been used for the favela and for all individuals cited in the paper.

[3] In Brazil, "the crime" and "world of crime" are widely used terms to refer to those involved in organized criminal activity and the normative universe surrounding it.

[4] See http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2008/lei/l11692.htm (accessed 15 December 2021).

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