Resourceful   Cities
Berlin (Germany),   29-31   August 2013

FIFAvela:
Mega-event, Favela tourism and Resistance in Rio de Janeiro
(preliminary version)

Bianca Freire-Medeiros*
Malte Steinbrink**

(*) Contemporary Brazilian History Research and Documentation Center
Getulio Vargas Foundation
freiremedeiros@fgv.br

(**) Institute of Geography | Institute of Migration Research und Intercultural Studies (IMIS)
University of Osnabrück
malte.steinbrink@uos.de

Abstract

The present paper attempts to examine how the three levels of government in Brazil, in preparation for the mega events, have put into motion a series of complex interventions aiming to deal with and incorporate into a touristic logic the so-called favelas. We examine not only the 'conventional' strategies, but especially those 'innovative' measures that the public power has activated in order to transmute the favela into a part of a 'festive' city. We do so by drawing, on one hand, upon the concept of 'festivalisation' (Häußermann and Siebel 1993); on the other, by revisiting the notion of 'travelling favela' (Freire-Medeiros 2013). Our intention is to combine both notions in order to analyse the resistances and adaptations to the festi*favela*sation (Steinbrink 2013) policies that emerge on empirical grounds. Our main empirical reference is Santa Marta, which has a long history of resistance and grass root organization, but is presently known as the "Disneyland Favela" due to its high touristic visibility. The paper concludes with some general reflections upon the festivalisation of the favela in Rio de Janeiro.

Introduction

Several authors have demonstrated the growing importance of mega-events within the present logic of neo-liberal economic policies and global competition between metropolises (cf. Sassen 2001; Harvey 1989; Greene 2003). Moreover, in times of prioritization of the tourism sector in urban development, mega-events have emerged as key mechanisms to transform the urban fabric, especially in 'emerging nations' such as Brazil (Steinbrink et al 2011; Melo and Gaffney 2010; Rubio 2005).

For nearly ten years now, Brazilians have witnessed their government invest on urban policies related to global spectacles in general and sport-related ones in particular. In Rio de Janeiro this is well reflected on an impressive list: Pan American Games (2007), World Military Games (2011), RIO+20 Conference (2012), World Youth Day (2013), FIFA Confederations Cup (2013), FIFA World Cup (2014), Summer Olympic Games and Paralympics (2016), as well as Copa America (2019). Instigating conflicts over human rights and urban planning, transparency in public policy and the future of the city (Mascarenhas, Bienenstein and Sánchez 2011), such events offer opportunities to better understand the multiple ways in which subaltern groups contest prevalent tourism policies and which alternative urban scenarios they imagine and demand. With this mind, the present paper attempts to examine how the three levels of government in Brazil, in preparation for the mega events, have put into motion a series of complex urban, social, legal and financial interventions aiming to deal with and incorporate into

a touristic logic the territories of the urban poor in Rio de Janeiro, mainly the so-called favelas.

Our main goal in the next section is to examine not only the 'conventional' strategies, but especially those 'innovative' measures that the public power has activated in order to transmute the favela into a part of a 'festive' city. We do so by drawing, on one hand, upon the concept of 'festivalisation', of the two German sociologists *Häußermann* and *Siebel* (1993); on the other, by revisiting the notion of 'traveling favela', which emerged in the context of one of the authors's writings on poverty tourism (Freire-Medeiros 2013). The 'Festivalisation of Urban Policy' hypothesis describes the instrumentalisation of large-scale cultural and sports events to support image building and to catalyse urban development in European and US cities. The 'traveling favela' refers to various flows, global narratives and cultural products which re-signify 'the favela' – a place associated with poverty and violence -- as a trademark and a tourist attraction. Our intention is to combine both notions in order to understand what is presently happening in Rio de Janeiro.

The third section analyses the resistances and adaptations to the festi*favela*sation (Steinbrink 2013) policies that emerge on empirical grounds. Our main reference here is Santa Marta, a community of five thousand residents located in the prestigious South Zone of Rio de Janeiro. Santa Marta, which has a long history of resistance and grass root organization, is presently known as the "Disneyland Favela" due to its high touristic visibility (Freire-Medeiros et al 2012). The paper concludes with some general reflections upon the festivalisation of the favela in Rio de Janeiro (Steinbrink 2013).

II. The travelling favela and the mega events in Rio de Janeiro

Before standing for almost every poor and segregated area in urban Brazil which develops and operates partially outside the formal control of the state, the term "favela" denoted a specific urban form: the agglomerations of substandard housing that emerged in Rio de Janeiro in the early 20th century. Throughout history, conventional wisdom placed favelas in an ambiguous semantic logic which associates them with solidarity and joy ('cradle of samba, carnival and capoeira') but also with poverty, moral degradation and violent criminality ('cradle of marginality'). This semantic association gained even more negative contours since the 1980s when heavily armed groups turned

several favelas into the main territory for the sale of weaponry, cocaine and other illicit drugs (Leite 2008; Machado da Silva 1994).

Favelas are increasingly diverse both in social and economic terms. This empirical diversity, nevertheless, is subsumed by encompassing narratives which produce what one of us calls the "traveling favela": a space of imagination and a mobile entity that is traveled to while traveling around the world (see Freire-Medeiros 2013, especially chapter 3). A trademark and a touristic destination, it is at one and same time an effect and the condition of possibility of different but interconnected flows. While legal and illegal capitals pour in and out of it, we witness international tourists and worldwide celebrities, always with their cameras, turning the favela into a mediatic landscape which accommodates precarious houses and an amazing view of the ocean within one photographic frame. In the process, it is commodified many times in unpredictable configurations, adding market value to fancy restaurants and clubs – the *Favela Chic* chain being the obvious example --, pieces of design furniture and smart cars. If travel guides, movies, fictional accounts, photologs, souvenirs etc. are part and parcel of the traveling favela, so are academic books, articles, thesis and dissertations.

Since the 2010s, not only the number of travel agencies offering favela tours in different localities has grown, but also the number of groups that each season are taken on tours to these various localities. Meanwhile, the position of the three levels of government has shifted from an initial posture of opposition followed by indifference to open support in the present. This significant shift, as argued before, should be seen as part of a broader neoliberal ideology which places Rio de Janeiro as a competitor within the 'world-cities market' and that includes increased investments in strategic planning which are aimed at presenting the city as a non-violent and friendly site for the all those mega-events mentioned above. In other words, despite the mantra-like 'legacy and sustainability' rhetoric – i.e. the reference to long-term positive effects (for all) –, the actual priority setting in Rio de Janeiro is primarily orientated to (short-term) global staging and 'neo-liberal dreamworlds' (*Davies* and *Monk* 2007). Consequently, the main target groups of this festivalisation policy are not the residents and especially not the urban poor but the billions of TV viewers, international visitors and investors.

If mega-events primarily aim at showcasing a visible image of the city rendering everything that is invisible as unimportant, as *Häußermann* et al. (2008, 265) states with regard to festivalisation policies in the Global North, in Rio de Janeiro it is hardly possible to overlook poverty and inequality which are materialized in the favelas. On

more practical terms, such communities are sometimes located in places earmarked for developments relevant to the events (stadiums, roads, etc.). On a symbolic level, favelas conflict with the cities' image-building efforts: governments, city administrations and organising committees often perceive these settlements as 'eyesores'. As the host city, Rio de Janeiro is therefore compelled to cope with these visible problems, or rather with the problem of their visibility (*Steinbrink* et al. 2011). There is no room for strategies of sustainable settlement development, firstly because of the condensed timeframe typical of such events, and secondly because the limited financial resources flow into other event-related investments. As a result, cheaper short-term measures are preferred: 'visual protection screens' such as fences and walls, as well as the demolition of settlements and forced evictions.

Extensive eviction measures had already been taken in the period prior to the 2007 Pan-American games; and relocations of 'less advantaged communities' were also mentioned in the Olympic bid book (*Rio 2016 Candidate City* 2009, Vol. 2: 145). In 2009, Rio's municipal government published a list of 119 favelas to be partly or fully removed before 2016 (cf. *Gaffney* 2010a, *Silvestre* and *Gusmão de Oliveira* 2012). Though the pretext for most removals is the construction of roadway projects, their direct association with big real-estate business is undeniable. For the most part, decisions about budget allocations, chosen priorities and projects predicted for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games were not, at any time, submitted to public scrutiny and debate, and it was not uncommon for them to be implemented through administrative measures that bypassed the spaces for civil society participation, such as the City Councils or the Urban Policy Councils, or the appreciation of the affected individuals themselves.

Another common justification for removing several favelas is the argument of environmental preservation: these communities are accused of being either threatened *by the* environment (landslides, floods, etc.) or a threat *to the* environment (extension of settlements to forest conservation areas). Ironically, after partially removed, the remaining of such favelas have become insalubrious due to the enormous amount of construction rubbish that was not removed by the municipal government, favoring zoonoses (Comitê Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro, 2012).

Though not always associated with public safety policies, the construction of walls –or 'eco limites' – around 19 favelas in the better-off part of the city is another example of how mega-events serve to catalyze arbitrary practices. Moreover, walls are

not only erected along forest fringes, but also along connecting roads that are important for the events. The Favela da Maré, located in a route between the International Airport and the prestigious South Zone, was surrounded by a wall, the purpose of which, according to the government, is acoustic isolation. According to a poll carried out by the Observatory of Favelas, 73% of the neighborhood's inhabitants believe that the wall was constructed merely to hide the favela: the wall would be part of the process of "dressing up" the urban space (Cf. Comitê Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro, 2012).

It is also remarkable that the term 'favela' does not even appear once in the three volumes of Rio's 419-paged Olympic bid book (cf. *Rio 2016 Candidate City* 2009); here and in other official documents the politically correct and generic alternative term '*communidade*' ('community') is used in its stead. Favelas are also left out on the Official Tourist Map (*RioTur*), while *Google Maps* had to amend their cartographic representations according to the Mayor's Office's demand. Today the term 'favela' is absent of the online maps and favela areas are indicated as green spaces.

However urban measures in Rio de Janeiro are not only about 'invisibilisation', but equally concern aesthetic transformation and touristic interventions, which aim at directing and diverting the tourist's gaze. The municipal, state and federal governments are out to display favelas, located in areas of strategic importance, in a way that fits into the intended image of the event city. The intention is not to render these favelas invisible, rather more attractive. The Santa Marta Favela renders perhaps one of the best examples of such *festifavelasation* and the residents' resistances to it, as we attempt to demonstrate in the next section.

III. Festi*favela*sation and Resistances: The Santa Marta's case

A)   The transformation of Santa Marta

1.   The "Pacification Police Unity"

2. Aesthetic transformation (re-modelling/redisgn of Santa Marta)

3. Touristic staging (The Rio Top Tours policy): How is the tourist gaze directed and how does it fit to the travelling favela

B)   … and the residents?

1.   What does it mean for the people?

2.   How do they perceive it?

3.   How do they react (The Committee for Tourism Activities at Santa Marta)?

IV. Final remarks

Mega-events are both profoundly commercial and highly political. The entanglement of these two spheres (politics and economy), as it was argued here, is constituent of the processes surrounding the event and highly influential on the urban development dynamics initiated or stimulated by the event (Steinbrink et al. 2011).

The measures in the favelas seem to be designed to mainly serve the outwardly directed objective of festivalisation policy (image production, positioning on the global market etc.). This, however, is only one possible interpretation. The event-related measures can just as well be interpreted in line with the inwardly directed objective of promoting particular urban development dynamics and at the same time as a means serving powerful economic interests: For the city, the events constitute an opportunity to legitimise certain policies. This applies particularly to the expensive favela pacifications. Many private providers are currently making every effort to formalise hitherto informally connected public infrastructural facilities (such as water, electricity, TV and WIFI). It remains to be seen whether and to what extent the favela residents can meet the additional costs (cf. *Freeman* 2012; *Gaffney* 2010a).

The urban policy strategies described in this paper, then, are not only orientated towards the short-term requirements of mega-events. The market-interest-orientated interventions of the state must instead be placed in the context of *Harvey*'s notion of 'accumulation by dispossession' (*Harvey* 2003; *Harvey* 2005): By opening up new lucrative market areas the state serves almost directly the interests of capitalist accumulation (especially those of the real estate sector). The neo-liberal orientation of festi*favelas*ation policy is just as visible as are its far reaching implications for the urban poor. Decrees, provisional measures, a new legal typification and special courts, as well as an entanglement of sublegislation composed of endless ordinances and resolutions, make up an 'institutionality of exception' (*Comitê Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro*, 2012). For a country that less than 30 years ago was subjected to a dictatorship, implementing the festi*favelas*ation through a city of exception is very doubtful legacy.

References

Comitê Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro. 2012. Megaeventos e Violações de Direitos Humanos no Brasil. Available at www.apublica.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/.../DossieViolacoesCopa

Davis, M. and Monk, D. B. Eds. 2007: Evil Paradises: Dreamworlds of Neoliberalism. – New York.

Freeman, J. 2012: Neoliberal Accumulation Strategies and the Visible Hand of Police Pacification in Rio de Janeiro. – In: Revista de Estudos Universitários, 38 (1): 95-126

Freire-Medeiros, B. 2013. Touring Poverty. New York, London: Routledge.

Freire-Medeiros, B. et al. 2012. Gringos no Santa Marta: quem são, o que pensam e como avaliam a experiência turística na favela. In: Angela Penalva Santos; Glaucio Marafon; Maria Josefina Gabriel Sant'Anna. (Org.). Rio de Janeiro: Um território em mutação. Rio de Janeiro: Gramma Livraria e Editora, v. 1, p. 183-205.

Gaffney, C. 2010a: The Production of Olympic Space in Rio de Janeiro. – Conference Paper. International Conference Mega Events and the City, November 2010, Rio de Janeiro.

Gaffney, C. 2010b: Mega-Events and Socio-Spatial Dynamics in Rio de Janeiro, 1919-2016. - In: Journal of Latin American Geography, 9 (1): 7-29.

Greene, S. J. 2003: Staged Cities: mega-events, slum clearance, and global capital. – In: Yale Human Rights and Development Law Journal, 6: 161–187

Harvey, D. 1989: From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism. – In: Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography, 71 (1): 3-17

Harvey, D. 2004: The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession. The Socialist Register, 40: 63-87

Harvey, D. 2005: The New Imperialism. – Oxford and New York

Häußermann, H. and Siebel, W. 1993: Die Politik der Festivalisierung und die Festivalisierung der Politik – Große Ereignisse in der Stadtpolitk. – In: Häußermann, H. and Siebel, W. Eds., Festivalisierung der Stadtpolitik – Stadtentwicklung durch große Projekte (= Leviathan 13), Opladen: 7-3
Häußermann, H., Läpple, D. and Siebel, W. 2008: Stadtpolitik. – Frankfurt a.M.

Leite, M. P. 2008. Para além da metáfora da guerra: violência, cidadania, religião e ação coletiva no Rio de Janeiro. São Paulo: Attar Editorial/CNPq- Pronex Movimentos Religiosos no Mundo Contemporâneo.

Melo and Gaffney 2010;

Machado Da Silva, L. A. 1994. Violência e sociabilidade: tendências da atual conjuntura urbana no Brasil. In: Ribeiro, L. C.; Santos Jr., O. A. (Eds) Globalização, fragmentação e reforma urbana. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.

Rio 2016 Candidate City 2009: Rio de Janeiro 2016. Candidature File for Rio de Janeiro to Host the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Volume 1-3, http://urutau.proderj.rj.gov.br /rio2016_imagens/sumario/English/Per%20Volume/Volume%201_eng.pdf, 05/06/2012

Rubio, 2005

Sassen, S. 2001: The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo (Second Edition). – Princeton

Silvestre, G. and Gusmão de Oliveira, N. 2012: The Revanchist Logic of Mega-Events: Community Displacement in Rio de Janeiro's West End. In: Visual Studies, 27 (2): 204-210.

Steinbrink, M. 2013: Festifavelasation. Mega-Events, Slums and Strategic City-Staging – the Example of Rio de Janeiro. In: DIE ERDE, (2): forthcoming.

Steinbrink, M., Haferburg, C. and Ley, A. 2011: Festivalisation and urban renewal in the Global South: socio-spatial consequences of the 2010 FIFA World Cup – In: South African Geographical Journal, 93 (1): 15-28