

A community's devil's deal

The dynamics of the struggle for hearts and minds in Rio de Janeiro's *favelas*.



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Student: Mathijs Jos Gloudemans

Student number: 0416452

Utrecht University August 13, 2010

Supervisor: Dr. Mario Fumerton
Word Count: 22.251
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Contact: mathijs_gloude-mans@hotmail.com

For my parents, Josefién and Martin

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Abbreviations

ADA: Amigos dos Amigos

AM: Associação de Moradores

BOPE : Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais

CV: Comando Vermelho

PC: Polícia Civil

PM: Polícia Militar UPP: Unidade de Policiamento Pacificadora

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Introduction

On May 20th I was walking down one of the main boulevards in the Zona Sul area of Rio de Janeiro. Zona Sul is one of the richest neighbourhoods in Rio de Janeiro situated alongside the iconic beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema. I was accompanied by Zé, a favela inhabitant, who agreed to meet me there to discuss his life and experiences in the favela. Zé appears nervous to be in this neighbourhood and when asked about this, explains that he is never comfortable in the “rich hoods”. According to him people avoid and dislike him when they notice he is a favelista, and moreover he does not feel safe: “at least in the favela we know when to expect the violence and at whom it is directed. Here it’s just random, I feel much safer in my favela.” After our talks I make my way back to my apartment and as if to underscore Zé’s point of view, shots sound around the corner from my apartment: police units engage in a short fire fight with two robbers which ends in the robbers’ death.¹

Rio de Janeiro is a city of paradoxes: one of the major cities in a country that is known for its beauty and rising economic power as well as its violence and poverty. It is a city that epitomises Brazil’s paradox: famous for its touristic hotspots and beaches as well as the violence that reigns within its slum neighbourhoods or “*favelas*”. There are numerous stories to be found concerning the violence in the slums of Brazil. Most of these depicting a grisly situation with running gun battles between the government’s police forces and military and drug-gangs which are said to rule these neighbourhoods with an iron fist.

In past travels to Brazil I spent several months living with a family in one of the *favelas* in the capital of the north-eastern province, Fortaleza. In the time I was there I personally encountered very little of the violence, but what struck me the most was how violence was only a relative small part of the life of the inhabitants there. It stood in stark contrast with the picture media outlets had painted of these *favelas*. Even more so, I was amazed at the rationality and casualness with which people explained the potential for violence in their daily life. The dynamics behind this acceptance of violence as well as an interest into the processes underlying the situation in *favelas* were the initial interests that would eventually become this thesis. In my studies at the Centre for Conflict Studies I was introduced to the theories behind concepts such as conflict resolution and mediation, structural violence, collective mobilization theories and asymmetrical warfare. Empowered by this theoretical basis I began looking deeper into the principles that govern the struggle for power that is affecting such a large population of Brazil. The drug-gangs in Rio de Janeiro are mostly comprised of

impoverished, poorly educated, non-white young men: one of the most repressed, discriminated and disempowered groups in Brazil. The question begs then: how are these groups apparently able to create a force powerful enough to effectively contest with the government in one of the major cities, of one of the most powerful nations in Latin-America?

When looking at the studies and theories concerning the social structures behind the violence in Rio de Janeiro, they can be divided into two categories, a concise summary of which can be found in the work of Arias (2006). These approaches are the “divided city” and the neo-clientalism approaches. The divided city approach advocates the principle that criminal organizations have created a state within a state: a separate entity within the city which operates with its own laws and that is off-limits to the governmental actors in Rio de Janeiro and contends with the state. This approach claims that government officials failing to effect efficient policy resort to violent responses; effectively falling to the same level as the drug-gangs and therefore legitimizing those gangs as parallel powers. The neo-clientalism approach on the other hand operates from the principle of social networks. It argues that the divided city approach does not address the networks that exist between drug-gangs and political figures which are used to obtain resources such as money for these drug-gangs. Clientalism operates from the basis of asymmetrical relationships between persons and groups. In these relationships the more powerful actors provide aid for the weaker actor in return for favours. In Rio de Janeiro this can take the form of government officials “paying” drug-gang members for votes. The drug-gangs receive funding or less severe prosecution in return for their coercion of *favela* inhabitants to vote for that particular actor. This approach addresses the corruption amongst Brazilian officials and the way the connection between them and the government officials allows the gangs to continue their existence.

My critique on both of these main approaches is that they do not address the basic underlying question: How then are these groups apparently able to create a criminal force within one of the major cities of one of the most powerful nations in Latin-America, powerful enough to contend with this state? I feel all these approaches fail to acknowledge this basic question as they all work from the principle that the powerful position of drug-gangs in Rio de Janeiro is a given and then look into how these groups sustain themselves and become more powerful. I therefore propose to look into how they create this initial position of power within their community and how they are able to sustain this initial “bargaining position” they create. To start answering this initial question we have to begin with looking into the history of Rio de Janeiro and its *favelas*. A *favela* is a residential area inhabited by poor and working-class people, the great majority of whom are black. While some *favelas* have mostly brick houses, paved streets, running water, electricity, and public transportation others are marked by wooden houses and the absence of urban infrastructure. Larger *favelas* such as

Jacarezinho and Rocinha have a mix of areas that are relatively urbanized and areas that are not. In spite of the heterogeneity within and between *favelas*, they all share the fact that most of their residents have historically been excluded from the formal labor market, quality education, and participation in the public and political spheres. The *favelas* and the violence within them, which exist in contemporary Rio de Janeiro, are the result of a history of exploitation of the poor and often non-white population by the Brazilian state and its societal elite. There have been many cases of informal housing and squatter settlements in Brazil, among which were the notorious Quilombos that were formed by runaway African slaves during the colonial age. The first “*favela*” settlement in Rio de Janeiro, however, was formed by ex-soldiers around the year 1900. These soldiers were veterans from the Canudos war and the initial illegal settlement was a form of protest because the state had failed to pay the soldiers. The name *favela* originated from a Bahian plant as the region of Bahia was the stage for the Canudos war. (Zaluar and Evito, 1998)

As the site grew and transformed into a permanent settlement, *favelas* gradually became synonymous with areas of popular and informal housing around the city that were not benefitting from state services such as gas and running water. Between the 1920s and 1940s the government viewed the *favelas* as a spot of shame upon the city. *Favelas* were not listed upon *favela* maps and efforts were made to relocate *favela* inhabitants to specially prepared zones. When the land value of these zones eventually increased due to the rapid growth and lack of housing space in Rio de Janeiro, the residents were expelled from their new homes in an ad-hoc fashion, creating new spontaneous *favelas*. (Burgos in Zaluar and Evito, 1998) These expulsion efforts eventually led to the creation of the first Associação de Moradores or residents association (AM) in 1945 which started to organize and coordinate local residents as well as represent them towards the state. This growth of local community organizing occurred at a time when Brazil was going through its first experience with an inclusive electoral democracy. This led to politicians being quite active in the *favelas* around election time, promising improvements and working with the AM in return for their political support. This all changed in the late 1960s with a nationwide military coup and a local governor who declared a war on *favelas*. Between 1968 and 1975 more than 100.000 people from seventy *favelas* were removed violently to less prominent parts of the city. (Perlman, 2004) AM leaders actively organised protests and petitions against these removal efforts but these protests were met with violent police responses, arrests and disappearances. These brutal tactics succeeded in breaking the protests and led to the AM organizations taking a more introspective view.

With no government services and extensive repression, *favela* inhabitants began to create their own self-help programs, creating basic water and electricity networks funded by private benefactors. Around this time the first marijuana drug-dealers started to appear in the *favelas* although they did not have a very significant impact upon *favela* life. (Leeds, 1996) After the political space opened up

again, with the military regime allowing for more democratic politics in the late 1970s political actors were once again operating within *favelas* to gain their political favour. In the end this increasingly clientalist system of state aid resulted in the loss of influence of the local AMs, as well as fragmentation of the *favelas* themselves as individual *favelas* started to compete for governmental aid.

This process coincided with an expansion of the cocaine trade which started in the Andes region of Latin-America and worked its way into Rio de Janeiro as a popular recreational drug for the rich elite. (Leeds, 1996) This drug trade could then use the existing organizational structures of the marijuana dealers to facilitate its incorporation in Rio de Janeiro's society, with marijuana networks incorporating cocaine into their business or otherwise get taken over by other gangs which do deal in cocaine. This led to greater revenue and therefore more resources such as army-grade weapons for these gangs. This greater revenue does not, however, explain the amount of organisation and the effective combat tactics that contemporary drug-gangs use to resist the Brazilian government. According to Penglase (2008) and Zaluar (1999)

the answer to this can be found in the prison system during Brazil's military dictatorship. During this time common criminals and political opponents alike were incarcerated within the prisons on *Ilha Grande*. During this time the often communist political prisoners in these prisons taught the common criminals, such as the drug dealers, about their struggle. Among the things they passed on were the organizational strategies and military tactics that were being employed in guerrilla warfare by revolutionaries such as in Cuba and Colombia. When these common criminals eventually served their time and were freed, they started employing these strategies, creating powerful gang networks inside and outside the prisons. Due to these criminal networks drug trafficking and other criminal activities such as bank robberies became highly organised and more effective than the diffuse operations they were before.

The tactics that were taught by the political prisoners were based on those used by the guerrillas and insurgents throughout the world. These tactics operate on the principle of irregular warfare, which resorts to using terrorist and guerrilla tactics, when faced with an overpowering opponent. These tactics are focused on mobile hit-and-run actions, mostly operated from areas where government control is limited and the terrain is favourable. These tactics are used not to completely destroy the opponent physically but to erode his will and resources to fight, forcing them to withdraw or surrender. (O'Neill, 1990) These operations require a highly dynamic organizational structure that allows for a high mobility to properly utilise these tactics. The success of irregular warfare depends on the identification problem as described by Kalyvas (2006). This problem states that the difficulty in fighting against guerrillas lies not with fighting them but in finding them. One of the main elements of irregular warfare is that the weaker combatant avoids being identified as a

combatant and blends into the civilian society. This reduces the opponent's options for combat operations (provided they are concerned about collateral damage to civilians). For this tactic to succeed the insurgents need to rely on the civilian population to not identify them as combatants. Therefore, willing or unwilling public support is essential for either side in an irregular conflict to become victorious. Applying these theories to the situation in Rio de Janeiro can help to explain the amount of power the drug-gangs wield and how they can be combated. Informed by these theories and history I pose the following question: *Considering that public support from favela inhabitants is an essential factor in controlling and being able to operate within favelas, how do the main actors in the favelas of contemporary Rio de Janeiro attempt to obtain this public support and how can we explain the effectiveness of their approaches?*

To answer this question I have used social, qualitative research based in an interpretative approach. The most suited methodology for this approach is field-research: it allows for the best observations of social interactions without taking these interactions out of their regular context ('t Hart, et al., 2003). The data for this research has been gathered in a three month field-research in different *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, most notably the *favelas* "Cidade de Deus" and "Rocinha", from April to June 2010.

The locations of this research were partly dictated by the methods I used to ensure I could conduct my research in a comparatively safe manner and gain access to the *favelas*. My status as a foreigner accorded me some protection, as neither the police nor the drug-gangs want the media attention associated with foreigners being hurt in their areas. However the main method I used to limit the amount of risk I was exposed to was through my connection with capoeira. Capoeira is a Brazilian martial art which has deep roots within Brazilian culture and is the second-most practiced sport in Brazil after football. Being an avid capoeira-player (capoeirista) and being able to speak Portuguese reasonably well, allowed me access to a large network of capoeira schools and teachers, many of which are situated in *favelas*. A large group of these teachers are involved in social projects helping to improve the quality of life in *favelas* by combining the sport with education and healthcare programs¹.

Not only did this allow me to rapidly create a large number of associations and relationships, travelling and being associated with these respected members of *favela* communities ensured I would rarely be questioned about my presence in the *favelas*. Furthermore it gave me a way to explain my presence at those times I was stopped and questioned. Simply explaining that I was on

¹ A prime example of this work is the project "Capoeira Cidadã", which combines capoeira classes with basic education and healthcare for children in and around the *favelas* Cidade de Deus and Morro de Macaco. For more information: <http://www.capoeiracidada.org.br/>

my way to a capoeira class or there to visit friends would usually ensure I could operate and conduct my research within the *favelas* without problems. In his account on dangerous fieldwork Peritore (1990) advocates the construction of a support network that allows the researcher to integrate with the community he/she is researching thereby reducing their exposure to potential danger. During my fieldwork capoeira provided an opportunity for me to create such a network. Through this network I was provided with several accessible research locations. Considering the limited amount of time I had to perform this research in I narrowed these possibilities down to mainly two *favelas*: Rocinha and Cidade de Deus. Both these *favelas* have large capoeira groups within their communities allowing for relatively easy access. Moreover these two *favelas* could show me the two sides of the struggle for hearts and minds, with Cidade de Deus being recently pacified by the police forces of the Unidade de Policiamento Pacificadora (UPP) who drove away the Comando Vermelho (CV) drug gang and Rocinha still firmly in the hands of the Amigos dos Amigos (AdA) drug-gang.

Operating within these *favelas* required a constant awareness on my part. Although I was rarely bothered by police or gang-members there remained the risk of violence due to police or gang incursions resulting in fire fights within these environments. Moreover I needed to be constantly aware of the safety of my informants and connections. There is a code of conduct upheld in most of the *favelas*: the *lei de favela* or law of the *favela*. This law is enforced by gang-members and one of its central tenets is the law of silence. This law prohibits the discussing of gang actions and violence, especially with outsiders. Nevertheless the limits of this law are constantly being tested and pushed by the inhabitants, as is explained in Arias (2006). In practice this resulted in a willingness to discuss topics concerning the gangs but only when people were certain it was relatively safe to do so; at locations which were rarely frequented by gang members or in people's homes. Strikingly this affected the informants in the "liberated" *favela* as well. This resulted in the same situation where informants were reluctant to open up unless they were in a safe environment to their liking, even when discussing the new police units. "Old habits die hard" explained one of my informants.

Moreover I made the promise to all the respondents and informants that they would remain in complete anonymity. Therefore I have used pseudonyms for all the key informants in my research and have left most of the other respondents and informants anonymous. In addition to using participant-observations and informal conversations I conducted fifteen in-depth semi-structured interviews. These interviews were guided by a topic list which was constructed after a month of fieldwork. The respondents of these interviews were all *favela* inhabitants between the age of 16 and 50 who, as a criterion all had been directly affected by the drug-gangs in their *favela*. The choice of a semi-structured interview was made because this allows the respondent greater freedom in their responses and also allows them to broach new subjects. Also it allowed for a greater flexibility by the interviewer which was a necessity, seeing as some of these people were directly affected by the

violence in the *favelas* and these subjects required the greatest respect and care to address. Finally I had two group conversations with children ranging from 7-14 in community centres which shed insight into their perspectives on the situations in their respective *favelas*. Aside from this fieldwork in the *favelas* I have had conversations with government officials which were working on the subject of violence in *favelas*.

Furthermore I have conducted a literature research into the theories concerning urban violence, civil society, social capital, social support, irregular warfare and studies on Rio de Janeiro and its history. According to 't Hart et al. (1998) being able to triangulate research results from several areas of research, as well as multiple research methods, creates a higher internal validity and a better understanding of the data that is found. Receiving data from various sources in a dynamic way allowed for the incorporation of this data in the research process and allowed me to re-adjust and focus my consequent research. This dynamism in research methodology also allowed me to use my time more efficiently in such a fluctuating environment. If one of the research methods was not possible due to circumstances such as a police raid, I could often employ one of the other methods to continue my research.

The main limitations of this research are due to the security situation which dictated my approaches and amount of informants. Even though I had the capoeira network at my disposal, this still limited me in the amount of respondents. Random sampling was not an option due to the fact that, obviously not every resident in the *favela* was linked to the capoeira network. I did however try to alleviate this problem somewhat by employing chains sampling. I used connections and informants from the capoeira network which allowed me to get into contact with further informants such as their relatives and friends who could then point me to new informants and so on. Furthermore I could not speak with any of the local area police officials or members of the drug-gangs. Association with one or the other would have compromised me in the eyes of the locals who are afraid of the drug-dealers and Policia Militar (PM) and still do not completely trust the new UPP police division. This would have potentially cut me off from a large group of potential respondents and informants and was therefore a risk I could not take. This paper does not claim to provide the definitive answer to the question of how drug-gangs are able to operate with such impunity within the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro. It does however aim to provide a new viewpoint for further in depth research by combining theories from several different research disciplines with data found in the field.

In addition to these limitations it is important to note that I as researcher am not able to conduct this research in a completely objective manner. When doing field-research it is inevitable that one enters the field with preconceived notions and discourses. This however does not diminish the validity of the data obtained as long as the researcher is aware of his/her subjectivity. ('t Hart et al

1998). In this case, my discourse is largely formed by being raised in a sheltered and hospitable environment, in a country where neither state failure or urban violence are prevalent. Therefore my practical experience with violence and its normality are quite limited. This will without a doubt have affected the way I see the daily impact of urban violence in the *favela* communities.

My research will be presented in three main chapters. In the first chapter I will address the observed feelings of state neglect that have been fostered over the years amongst *favela* inhabitants. Then I will look into how these feelings of state neglect and state indifference can lead to vacuums within the social structures of society and in particular in the region of civil society. These vacuums afford opportunities for self-serving, non-state actors to take root within these social structures and pervert them to their own goals. I will then enforce these observations by explaining the social theories behind these processes.

In my second chapter I will build upon the theories and results outlined in the previous chapter to analyse how the drug-gangs utilize these vacuums in social structures to place themselves in a position of power and ultimately gain control of the neighbourhoods and play an integral part of *favela* social life. First I will explore how the gangs use the promotion and exacerbations of the grudges *favela* inhabitants have against the government to diminish government control in the *favelas*. This position is then solidified by promoting themselves as a working alternative for state and social services thereby creating perverted social structures. I will again explore the underlying social processes and theories that make these efforts possible. When analysing the situation in the *favela* neighbourhoods it seemed striking that, although the drug-gangs are heavily dependent on public support to operate, the fact that their presence and operations create an often violent environment seems to be an accepted part of life for *favela* inhabitants. I will explain how it is possible that this continued climate of violence does very little to detract from the position of the drug-gangs. This will be done through the analytical frameworks of normalization of violence and structural violence. The final element that allows for the acceptance that is shown to the drug-gangs in the *favelas* is the fact that most of the current gang members are *favela* inhabitants and/or relatives of other *favela* inhabitants. We will come full circle and finalise this chapter with an analysis on how the local inhabitants are recruited into the drug-gangs and what effect this has on the social support within the community. This is done with the concept of the narco-cultura and through social identity and mobilisation theories that will explain data found in the field.

Having examined how drug-gangs are able to quite effectively garner public support it is also necessary to explore their opponent in this endeavour: the Brazilian government and its police forces. This will be consequently done in the third chapter. Although Brazil is a rising world power, it can still be classified as an unstable state. It is a relatively new democracy, having left authoritarian rule behind 25 years ago. Like many young and transitional democracies, Brazilian institutes are

struggling to cope with an explosively growing population. In addition to this situation, there is extensive corruption throughout these institutions, which leads to a failure to provide for basic services for a large part of its citizens; especially the service to provide security.

As explained in earlier chapters these state failings have led to opportunity for various armed groups to breach the states monopoly on the use of violence. The states initial responses to this stems from authoritarian times and has been a series of militarized police actions which resulted in further arming and organisation by these contending armed groups, eventually cascading into the situation today where government is losing their struggle to control the *favelas*. In the beginning of this chapter I will explain which factors are crucial to this decline in public support of state actors. After several years of being stuck in this situation, the new government, under the presidency of Lula has made a concerted effort to combat corruption within its own ranks. Acknowledging that exceedingly harsh militarized approaches (Bope/tropa de elite forces that cause extreme collateral damage in the *favelas*) have had very little or even counterproductive effects against the irregular warfare tactics employed by the drug-gangs, the Brazilian government has changed tactics in recent times. With the introduction of new *favela* community oriented restoration programmes, as well as a new police division versed in counter-insurgency tactics (the UPP) the government aims to defeat the drug-gangs with their own tactics. I will explain the way this new strategy of the government proposes to defeat the drug-gangs in the *favelas*. I will further comment on successes that have been gained in recent years as well as problems that have become apparent during my observations in the *favelas*.

Finally, In my concluding chapter I will combine the findings and my analysis provided in the chapters above to create a clear overview of the struggle for the hearts and minds in contemporary Rio de Janeiro and answer the main question of the thesis; *Considering that public support from favela inhabitants is an essential factor in controlling and being able to operate within favelas, how do the main actors in the favelas of contemporary Rio de Janeiro attempt to obtain this public support and how can we explain the effectiveness of their approaches?* This will be followed by my perceptions on future developments on the subject as well as the possibilities by which this research can be expanded upon.

Chapter 1: Underlying social structures

To begin answering the main question of this thesis as was outlined in the introduction, I will first need to establish a theoretical base which can explain the social concepts and theories behind public support. I will therefore, as a starting point, formulate the definition of public support I will be using and look into how this public support is usually obtained.

The creation of public support

For this thesis I define public support as the support, material and immaterial, that a community gives to an actor (in this context either the Brazilian government or the drug-gangs). This support can take the form of material goods such as money and hiding places, as well as immaterial ones such as information, cooperation and legitimization. This support can be obtained in various ways; either willingly or unwillingly. Willing support can stem from, among others, ideological or material incentives. Unwilling support on the other hand can stem from violent coercion, or fear of violent retaliations (Vinci, 2005). Usually a mixture of these factors composes the support preferences of individual civilians. *'The coexistence of sympathy and sanctions reflects the mix of persuasion and coercion that political actors typically settle upon once they achieve an acceptable level of control.* (Kalyvas, 2006; 102) This element of public support is not a fixed value but a dynamic one. Individuals continuously weigh their options throughout an on-going conflict and will likely side with whoever fulfils their needs best, at that moment in time. (Kalyvas, 2006)

A democratic state's support structure

When looking at the ways public support is generated, one would be inclined to say that a democratically structured state, such as Brazil, would have no problem with retaining this support. Seeing as that in this structure the government of the state is the appointed institution, with the power and the responsibility, to provide for its citizens. The five core responsibilities of the state are the support of a viable political process, sustaining a functioning bureaucratic government, provide security and economic possibilities for its citizens and provide for the social welfare of its citizens. To accomplish these responsibilities it holds the monopoly on violence and the rights to levy taxes and create laws. A state in this context is an institution whose actions are guided by the social contract it has with its citizens (Einsiedel, 2005) Furthermore, a healthy democratic state has an active and vibrant civil society. This civil society is the public space between the citizens and the state where citizens can engage in organized activities that are not affiliated with the government but still serve

several important public functions. These organizations can take the form of trade unions, political parties and religious groups all the way down to small groups such as sports teams. (Walzer, 1991; Putnam, 1995; and Hall, 1995 in Paris, 2004) This public space serves three important functions: firstly private organizations help to counterbalance and check the government. They control, and complement the fulfilment of the state's duties and keep a check on state power. Secondly a strong civil society allows for the free discussing and negotiating of conflicts, problems and grievances through non-violent ways. Finally because citizens have become accustomed to this discourse on problems and conflicts it reduces the severity of these conflicts. There are fewer tendencies to drift to extremes when people are exposed to a multitude of viewpoints. This leads to greater trust and understanding between social and ethnic groups reducing the potential for violence that conflicts in a democratic state can have (Paris, 2004).

The government and civil society combined make up the productive social capital of a state (Putnam 1993). Social capital is defined by Portes (1998) as being the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures. Productive social capital is the combination of social networks, social structures, legal and reward systems that have a constructive and positive effect on communities. (Rubio, 1997) It is important to note that social capital is not a concept beholden to the macro level of the state. Individual communities and individual citizens create their own social capital as well which transcends their respective levels; for example, citizens build upon parts of civil society, the state and their communities as well as other citizens. These collections of social capital are often interconnected, creating a complex structure of social networks and social capital at a micro, meso and macro level within a nation-state. McIlwaine & Moser (2001) build on this with a further distinction between structural and cognitive social capital. Structural social capital contains the social organizations and networks used in a society, whereas cognitive social capital entails the values, norms, attitudes and beliefs of a society.

With these powerful structures supporting a state, the question begs: how is it possible for the Brazilian state to be competing with other actors for the support of its citizens?

The state's failure to provide

To begin understanding why the state is competing for its public support we need to look at the responsibilities it has. These responsibilities are outlined above but can be summarized by stating that the state needs to provide for and support its citizens. This support can be defined as a form of social support. The broadest concept of social support can be found in the definition by Weiss: *'The relational provisions of attachment, social integration, opportunity for nurturance, a sense of reliable alliance, and information and guidance during stressful situations.'* (Yarcheski, Mahon & Yarcheski, 2003,:99). A critique on this definition, is that it focuses solely on the support during stressful

situations. Therefore it ignores the effects on the general wellbeing of individuals. Doeglas et al. (1996) find a more comprehensive definition in the work of Heller and Procidano on social networks. They define social support as the functional component of the social connections provided by the environment. This includes concepts as emotional support, material support and information (Doeglas et al, 1996)

Furthermore there is the distinction that is made by Suuremeij between social-emotional support and instrumental support. Social-emotional support is mainly defined by the concept “Social companionship” which refers to the fulfilment of the need to belong to a (identity) group (Jabri 1996, Douglas et al. 1996). Instrumental support on the other hand is the practical support that will help solve problems. Citizens look to the state to provide these forms of support in an equal measure to all its citizens. However Brazil has been failing to provide this support to a large part of its population.

As Arias (2004) argues, the Brazilian state is characterized by a state of corruption, official impunity and a lack of hierarchical controls. This is a problem found in states that are transitioning towards democracy as argued by Paris. (2004) A rapid transition towards democracy, if not properly observed and planned, will create weak institutions unable to cope with the amount of conflicts democratization can bring, resulting in corruption and inequality being prevalent throughout these institutions. These unstable institutions in Rio de Janeiro became even more inadequate as the region’s population shifted from a primarily rural based population to a primarily city based population. (Leeds in Koonings and Kuijt, 2007) This led to the institutions becoming stretched thin throughout the city as its populace started to increase beyond expectations. With institutions straining to retain control, this led to upper level bureaucrats and officers often having little or no effective control over the lower-level state agents. While the middle and upper class citizens turned to private actors and companies for security, the *favelas* were depending for their security on the highly corrupt PM and PC. Low level police-officers were able to act with impunity throughout these communities resulting in human rights abuses, theft and corruption.

This problem is then worsened by the social inequality within the cities. Although Brazil has grown to become one of the world’s strongest economies since its transition towards democracy, Gay (2005) shows that it also shares the dubious distinction of being the most unequal society in the world. While the poorest ten percent of the population, mostly comprised of *favela* inhabitants, has not even one percent of national income, the richest ten percent gets almost forty-five percent. As was noted in the previous chapter, *favela* inhabitants have historically suffered from social exclusion and repression a situation which still continues today. This is apparent in the fact that there has been very little political motivation to facilitate constructive efforts by the government to improve living

conditions in the *favelas*. Brazilian society often chose to ignore the plight of its poorest citizens, with media and populist opinion painting *favelas* as areas where crime is rampant and *favela* inhabitants as generally being a criminal breed.

As a result contemporary *favela* inhabitants often feel ashamed of their origins. When I asked some informants who I encountered outside *favelas* about where they lived, they often avoided the question, replied only after repeated pressing or outright lied to me. Despite these issues there are still state actors who are attempting to provide aid to *favelas*. However this aid is usually wasted or misallocated as funding for grass-roots level projects often ends up flowing into the hands of corrupt lower level agents or gang-members. Larger scale projects are sometimes created but these often constitute just as great a misallocation of resources. Ze' s comments on the latest state project in Rocinha exemplifies this: *"We don't need a new million dollar football and sports centre, we need them to use that money and give us elementary schools and a decent electrical grid!"*²

To understand the impacts that this failure to support its citizens has on the public support of a state; we need to look at how this support is perceived. Research in social support has only recently begun to distinguish between concrete support and the perception of support. Concrete support entails the amount of support one receives, be it material or immaterial, without any personal judgements. Perceived social support is the personal experience of this concrete support as seen by the receiver. A definition can be found in Douglas et al.: *"the extent to which an individual believes that his or her need for support, information and feedback are fulfilled"* (Doeglas et al. 1996 :1390). The effects of perceived support are found to be more profound than those of concrete support (Pierce et al. 1997). Another distinction that has been found in recent research is the difference between general and relational support. People have a general perception of the world and other people. This perception is formed as they grow up and forms their expectations on how supportive the average human being is, this is the general perception of social support: *"our ideas about how approachable and forthcoming actors in the social environment are likely to be"* (Pierce et al 1997 :1028). This creates a set of expectations concerning social support that will be used as the norm when judging offered social support or its absence (Pierce et al.1997, Bowbly 1985) Relational support is the support one expects in specific situations from specific relations. Or as Pierce states it: *"expectations about the availability of social support for each of their specific significant relationships"* (Pierce et al. 1991: 1028). Through experiences with these expectations one creates mental schemata that are used as a pattern for expectations on all social support in the future and how this support is perceived. Support from an actor who was expected to provide it will more often be perceived as genuinely supportive. Failure to provide this expected support creates in the same dynamic a higher negative response (Pierce et al. 1991, Davis, Morris & Kraus, 1998).

Favela inhabitants had expectations of the social support their democratic government and civil society organizations would provide and leaned upon these structures in their daily lives. These expectations structured their lives in a way that if these expectations were not met, it would lead to a significant decrease in their quality of life as well as the perception thereof.

The failure of the state to provide security, economic opportunity or even an overarching sense of identity leads to the *favela* inhabitants becoming disillusioned with the government and turning to other actors to fulfil their needs. With their social capital significantly diminished in comparison to their expectations, this allowed for the creation of perverted social capital. This takes the form of actors providing forms of social capital that are inherently damaging to society but still offer great incentives to join. In the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro this perverted social capital is formed by the drug-gangs in the *favelas* which, funded by the influx of cocaine money, started to provide for services the state neglected to offer. Thereby creating a control system based on violence or the threat thereof where traffickers receive community protection in exchange for offering what the state has traditionally failed to provide: the maintenance of social order, support of economic stimulation and the provision of leisure activities. (Dowdney 2003) The services provided are valuable only because the state does not provide them, and because the state entities charged with providing essential security services act as a corrupt and repressive force (Leeds, 1996). *Favela* inhabitants accept this social capital despite it bringing violence within their communities. Both Dowdney (2003) and Leeds (1996) report many negative ramifications for local communities due to domination by drug-gangs, ranging from the omnipresent threat of violence to uphold the *lei de favelas* (*favela* laws), and severe restrictions on personal freedom, to police repression and incursions. In communities where drug groups are active, the state often increases its repressive mechanisms of control in an attempt to counteract the growing power of drug groups.

The growth of bad civil society and the potential for perverted civil society

To explain the current position of drug-gangs I find that the framework of perverted social capital alone does not fully account for the dynamism and the sudden, rapid rise to their place of premonition within Brazilian society. In the space of a few years drug-gangs were able to rise above their marijuana market-driven relationship with their consumers in the *favelas* to being an integrated part of *favela* inhabitants' daily life and wielding powerful positions that can contend with the Brazilian government.

As a 60 year old community worker in Rocinha told me: *"I still do not understand how 'the guys' (a synonym for the drug-gang, used out of fear of someone overhearing red.) were able to control the neighbourhood so quickly. When I was young, of course, you had the dealers, but they only seemed*

interested in selling their drugs and protecting their market, not this, not this total control of the area. I don't think anyone expected the dope heads from back then to be repelling the PM today, not that that is a bad thing; at least we don't have to deal with the corrupt and crazy police here and they helped out quite a few people. Not like the government, I don't think the neighbourhood would be in such a good condition if it weren't for 'the guys'."³

It appears the drug-gangs were able to obtain an accepted position in Rio de Janeiro, providing essential social capital in places where it was needed most, which was not being filled by civil society actors or the state. To explain these phenomena I propose the creation of a new concept of civil society: Perverted civil society.

The creation of perverted civil society is facilitated when there are high profile problems within a state or community that frustrate a part of its members. When this frustration is not addressed by the state or other parts of civil society, either due to incapability or unwillingness, this opens up possibilities for self-interested actors to step up and use the space for their own goals. There are similarities to be found between the concept of perverted civil society and the concept of bad civil society as proposed by Chambers and Kopstein (2001), as both are potentially destabilizing to a democratic state. However there is an important difference.

Bad civil society fits within a state's civil society but instead of aiding in the dialogue between actors within the state and promoting non-violent conflict resolution, it promotes isolationist and dividing ideas leading to exacerbation of conflicts, polarization of positions and can potentially degrade the effectiveness of a democracy. Perverted civil society, on the other hand, is comprised of organizations which employ existing civil society structures and gaps in social capital to improve their own position. Perverted civil society differs from bad civil society in that bad civil society is a part of the civil society which is derogatory to society because, for example, of its dividing ideology and rhetoric. Meanwhile perverted civil society is not centred on a derogatory ideology, but rather adopts the viewpoints and activities which will result in the most profitable outcomes. Perverted civil society can therefore possibly take, but is not exclusive to, the form of bad civil society if this would serve the perverting actors best.

By using the existing structures and support expectations that would be normally associated with "good" civil society, perverted civil society actors can quickly embed themselves within a community's support structure. The dynamic nature of perverted civil society allows it to switch their focus when their initial reasons and grievances for validation have been addressed. As argued above, perverted civil society needs grievances which are not being addressed as well as space within existing civil society and social support structures to operate.

In the case of Brazil this situation is created due to the quick fluctuations in government styles that is described in the preceding chapter: switching from a fledgling democracy to authoritarian regime and then back to democracy again in relative quick succession. In the initial democracy the base is made for the creation of a supportive civil society, as is seen in the rise of citizens organizing which, for example, took the form of the AMs in the *favelas*. This fledgling civil society is consequently repressed by the switch to an authoritarian regime, which only allowed the organizations which were favourable to it to operate and effectively hamstrung the others through violent means. This was then followed by a slowly liberalising and more democratic state system. This opened up the possibilities for expansion of the initial civil society again.

However a large portion of this civil society was initially ineffective as, still existing organizations such as the *favelas* AM's were still apathic towards the government. This apathy is explained in the work by Foley and Edwards who argue that: *"... where the state is unresponsive, its institutions are undemocratic, or its democracy is ill designed to recognize and respond to citizens' demands, the character of collective action will be decidedly different than under a strong and democratic system. Citizens will find their efforts to organize for civil ends frustrated by state policy—at some times actively repressed, at others simply ignored. Increasingly aggressive forms of civil association will spring up, and more and more ordinary citizens will be driven into active militancy against the state or self-protective apathy."* (Foley and Edwards 1996:48) This attitude of apathy and introversion by the AMs and individual *favela* inhabitants towards the government still continues and is even being perpetuated today, with state repression being replaced by the state's (perceived) indifference.

This is a situation which is promoted and exacerbated by the drug-gangs as we will see in the following chapter. Other parts of the fledgling civil society which did not suit the authoritarian regime were actively repressed or destroyed leaving for the most part bad civil society actors remaining. *Favela* inhabitants however did come to rely on their AM and other civil society actors as a part of their social capital. When these actors proved to be ineffective or non-existent, it left an opening within the community's social capital. Inhabitants were accustomed to civil society actors to address at least a part of their grievances and this support expectation allowed drug-gangs to fill the place of good civil society actors within these social capital structures. This allowed them to quickly rise to a position of importance and integration into daily life as people structured their lives around the expectation that outside actors besides the government would provide some form of social capital. There is historical precedent to this reliance of non-state actors providing services in the *favela* to be found as Dowdney (2003) describes: the traditional absence of the state led to the emergence of important local figures known as "*donos*," who provided services in times of hardship and protected the community from crime by enforcing social order. Social order in Brazil has historically been maintained through violence or the threat of violence, even by the government (Leeds 1998). In this

frame, *donos* tended to be strong figures with a reputation for extra-judicial killings. In the 1950s and 1960s these positions often fell to criminals who did not shy away from violence. Criminals were often associated with the role of *dono* due to concepts of the social bandits, or *malandros*, who, in exchange for protection from the police, would not steal from within the community, protected community members from criminals from other areas and would even freely distribute stolen goods to needy community members. Such criminals would guarantee social order and carry out judgement in times of internal community dispute (Misse 1999).

This historical precedence is carried on today as is seen in the normality and acceptance of clientalism based relationships between the state, drug-gangs and the *favela* communities that have been built on the longstanding tradition of symbiotic relationship based on 'favour' trading between *favela* communities and the government. Public benefits or social services that should be provided uniformly are bestowed upon certain *favela* communities by politicians in exchange for votes in a system maintained by 'favours' (Leeds 1998:253 Arias, 2006).

Finally, I argue that *favela* inhabitants drifted towards the perverted civil society of the drug-gangs because of their exclusion brought about by bad civil society in the Brazilian state. With media portraying all *favela* inhabitants as vagrants, thieves and criminals since the establishment of the first *favelas*, often continuing today. The drug-gangs on the other hand are proud of their *favela* heritage and often provide an overarching form of community identity with people identifying themselves through the gangs that control the *favela* they live in.

We can therefore say that the possibility for the rise of the drug-gangs to become a (perverted) part of *favela* inhabitants' social capital is due to a combination of several factors. With state institutions failing or being unwilling to provide the *favela* inhabitants with services, a gap was created in the *favela* inhabitants' social capital. This gap could not be filled by the civil society at the time. One part of the non-governmental organizations was in the process of rebuilding after the repression of the authoritarian regime and therefore these organizations were too small and under-equipped to address the large scale of the problems of *favela* inhabitants. The rest of the civil society was often comprised of organizations which could be described as bad civil society. These were a left-over from authoritarian times and often prejudiced in favour of the richer middle and upper classes in Rio de Janeiro's society. This created a possibility for drug-gangs, with money and resources due to the cocaine trade, to identify and address the problems suffered by *favela* inhabitants, who accepted the help as they had nowhere else to turn and so drug-gangs became a perverted part of Rio de Janeiro's civil society and *favela* inhabitants' social capital. With this initial position secured we now need to explore how the gangs built upon this basis and expanded upon it.

Chapter 2. Analysis of drug gang efforts towards public support

Now that we have established which openings in social structures allowed drug-gangs to integrate themselves within the *favela*'s communities, we will look into why and how the drug-gangs in Rocinha and Cidade de Deus have solidified this position. Like most *favela* communities in Rio de Janeiro, these *favelas* are built on hillsides and made up of a labyrinth of alleyways and dead ends. This is a result from the initial uncontrolled and ad-hoc building that ensued when there was a big influx of population from the rural areas into the city. These areas have limited, easily controlled access points created by one or two main roads, which then branch into the hundreds of smaller alleys. Due to this structuring *favelas* are easily defensible locations against violent incursions; at the top of the hill you have an overview of the whole *favela* and if you do not know the way you will inevitably get lost in the maze of alleys. Aside from an easily defensible location, *favelas* also offer another form of protection. As stated in the introduction, drug-gangs operate on the principle of Kalyvas' identification problem. When they can blend into a community without informants pointing them out as drug dealers, the government and even rival drug-gangs will be hard pressed to find them, let alone combat them. This allows drug-gang members to operate with impunity as they can blend between the regular inhabitants to avoid retribution from their opponents when they prove to be too powerful, as is often the case with the large scale invasions by PM units. This is the classic use of irregular warfare tactics used by guerrilla and insurgent armies throughout Latin-America and the rest of the world.

Replacing the government

Since their transformation in the 1980s, drug-gangs have become an integrated force in the daily life of many *favela* inhabitants. Their power has been accepted by community populations due to fear and a lack of alternatives. As stated in the previous chapter, most claims towards public support are formed by a combination of willing and unwilling support. A concept which Dowdney (2003) calls forced reciprocity which is maintained by the tactics employed by drug traffickers: coerced support and repression through (the threat of) violence. The only noticeable permanent presence of state activities in the community comes from the limited provision of social programmes: low quality schools and health clinics; the very limited beginnings of an urban infrastructure and a repressive and violent public security policy based on police 'invasion' and 'occupation' as opposed to a continually

present community police force.¹¹ To capitalise on this absence of state support the, drug gang uses economic stimulation of the community and investment in leisure activities to enhance the acceptance of the gang. Drug traffickers benefit poor *favela* communities by providing work for thousands of otherwise unemployed people and a huge cash injection into the community (Souza 2001). This was confirmed by informants who claimed that the token form of transport throughout Rio de Janeiro, Taxi services using small vans to shuttle people around the city for a relative cheap fee, was initially created by drug-gangs who bought the vans to enable *favela* inhabitants to get to their work in the richer neighbourhoods or the factories. Economic stimulation of *favela* communities such as this through drug trafficking has become a direct yet limited channel for the redistribution of wealth between rich and poor as most of the drug-gangs customers are richer Brazilians and tourists. This also serves to strengthen the position of gang domination as it legitimizes them as an equalizing force that helps *favela* inhabitants against the prevalent inequality that they suffer in Brazilian society. This position is claimed even though the vast majority of the profit (around 60-70%) leaves the community and goes to the gang leader, who usually lives outside the *favela*.

Gang support is further strengthened by their investment in community leisure activities; primarily musical events such as baile funks, samba events and community parties.¹² Some research states that the gangs are the only groups which fund these kinds of activities, however I encountered several projects which were not related to the gangs and still provided services such as these to the community. Prime examples of which are the capoeira schools I mentioned in the introduction, which often have projects in the community. As one of the teachers told me: *“Yes I was approached by gang-members if I could use some help for the class, but I told them no. You know how that goes, if you allow them to help you, soon they will be asking things of you and I didn’t want the children’s classes associated with the gangs. I only checked if they were ok with me teaching there.”*¹³ As this teacher was a well-liked and respected person from within the *favela* community, the gang never pushed him on this. However a large amount of other civil society actors, especially those who try to come in from outside the *favelas* and thus have very little status and connections within the *favela*, are negatively influenced by the drug-gangs; effectively becoming subjected to their power. Drug gang control of the community has therefore greatly affected local civil society institutions with most social and political actors that exist in a locality dominated by a drug-gang influenced by them (Souza 2001). As such, local actors often become perverted by the drug-gangs and have to learn to work with traffickers if they want to have any positive impact within the community.

¹¹ Although this is a trend that is changing as we will discuss in the next chapter.

¹² The gang-organised baile funks also serve a secondary reason as they are quite famous throughout the city and function as a way of stimulating higher drug sales as young people come from outside the *favela* to enjoy the free party and to buy drugs.

(Arias 2004, Souza 2001) This allows gangs to covertly frustrate the efforts of these institutions by ensuring they cannot operate properly through the placement of restrictions on the organisation and threats against members of these civil society organisations. However if a non-governmental organisation has the potential for high-profile positive effects on the community, the gangs can present themselves as a crucial factor in facilitating this success, further strengthening the gang's position within the community. This creates a situation where drug-gangs not only take the place of the government and civil society, but can also control the amount of influence these outside institutions can have within the *favela*. In this way they can strengthen their own position by ensuring government aid does not reach *favela* inhabitants or that civil society actors are unable to freely aid and connect with inhabitants without (partly) being controlled by the gangs. This effectively sustains the status quo of inequality which enables the gang to continue operating and being validated and legitimized as a (perverted) part of the inhabitants' social capital and civil society.

As explained in the previous chapter, the government's failure to fulfil the social contract it has with *favela* inhabitants enables drug-gangs to become a perverted part of civil society and to appear to the community as the best practical alternative for the maintenance of social order and support. This perception is further strengthened by the longstanding relationship based on clientalism between *favela* communities and the government. Public benefits or social services that should be provided regularly and uniformly to all citizens are traded to *favela* communities by politicians in exchange for votes in a system maintained by favours (Leeds 1998, Arias, 2004).

Not only has the state failed to uphold its part of the social contract but the behaviour of the police, its primary representative for the maintenance of public order, has such a history of violence, extra-judicial killings and corruption within the community that they are uniformly viewed with suspicion and detested by community members. As one community leader told me: "*No-one joins the police without expecting to get some 'benefits', of course you have some good guys, that want to help but they usually get frustrated with the work. When that happens, they either quit and find other jobs or they go crazy and join the BOPE units, they just want to shoot everybody.*"⁵ Another *favela* inhabitant explained: "*Of course we don't like the police, what do you expect? They beat you when they feel like it, stop you on the street and take your money. How would you feel when that happens regularly around your home?*"⁶ The state's failure to uphold its side of the social contract within *favelas* is further demonstrated by the fact that in communities where drug factions are not an effective force, the maintenance of social order and protection from criminal activity is carried out by smaller scale armed vigilante groups named "*milícias*".

As a substitute power for order that is accepted by the community or that is at least viewed with relative neutrality, gangs enforce social order in the community through several "*lei de favelas*" or

favela laws. These laws both enforce the gang's position and fulfil the needs of the community for social order. Although drug-gangs offer services that the government fails to provide, their enforcement takes the form of an authoritarian system and their relationship with the community may be viewed as forced relationship. However, this exchange is as much 'forced' by the government's failure to provide a serious, non-violent alternative to the provision of social order and public services, as it is done by the drug traffickers through violence. (Dowdney 2003) As a result in the *favelas* the state's democracy has been substituted by the creation of a "*narcocracy*", as the gangs provide the economic and political structures that result from their general involvement in the trafficking of drugs (Leeds 1998). Drug factions enforce their power by making a series of regulations that although not written, are understood by both community members and traffickers alike.

Favela laws

The system of mutual support presented above continues because *favela* populations have little option. Given a realistic alternative by the government, community members are unlikely to accept drug traffickers as a legitimate political force or as being representative of the *favela*. Therefore the gangs need a system that simultaneously creates social order but also punishes infractions by violent means which instils fear of retribution. However philanthropic drug-gangs may present themselves towards the community, the dominant position of drug factions within the community is ultimately maintained and enforced by behavioural codes. Interviewed drug traffickers and community residents explained that if community residents broke established rules then traffickers would be responsible for passing sentence and handing down suitable punishments. "*These guys are judge, jury, and often enough executioners...*" ⁷

The exact rules in communities may differ depending on a number of factor such as the level of gang control and the personality and leadership style of the *dono*. In some *favelas*, gangs are more heavy-handed in controlling the behaviour of residents. The level of control over the local population is usually positively correlated with the potential for profitability of the drug market in the area, and thus the perceived threat of rival faction invasion or of attracting police attention.

The rules that govern the *favela* are not written down, they are learnt by the community through daily co-existence with traffickers. "*No one comes around to tell you what you can or cannot do, you just grow up in the system, rules are shown when they are needed...*" ⁸

The following behavioural rules are the main rules encountered which were enforced by drug-gangs in the *favelas*:

- No stealing within the *favela*;
- No fighting;
- No rape;
- No talking to the police.
- No abuse of women or children;

Enforcement

*"The first time they warn you. After that they will come for you."*⁹

Punishments for not complying with these rules are generally carried out by lower-ranking faction employees and range from expulsion from the community to being shot in the hands or feet, beatings and death. Like the rules, the level of punishments depends on the discretion of the local gang boss and also on the perceived seriousness of the infraction. It was stated however that killings occurred only (relatively) rarely these days. *"...It depends on their mood. If they think you should be killed, you're killed. Though they only killed one guy in the last two months I think."*¹⁰

Punishments that have been commonly reported are:

- Beating

*"If a woman claims that her husband beats her, they will go there and beat him up and tell him that the next time they will kill him."*¹¹

- Being shot in the hand or in the feet

*"One guy was being punished for robbing a local store. They shot him in the hand."*¹²

- Expulsion from the community

*"...and that's if they don't chase the family out of the favela."*¹³

-Execution

"When someone rapes...the rapist dies, same with repeat offenders..." *"Last month they killed a notorious troublemaker, he was a drug addict, beat his wife and robbed several people in the favela... they took him to the top of the hill, wrapped him up in tires and set him on fire.. helps against the smell of dead bodies."*¹⁴

Just as community members are punished if they fail to follow the rules, so are traffickers. When community members were questioned about what would happen if gang members failed to respect community members, the repercussions were clear: *"If a gang-member harms a local without good reason, or just starts harassing someone, he will be held to the same rules as the rest of us."*¹⁵ Such disciplinary action is important to maintain order within the *favela* and also because following the same rules that are imposed on the community helps to morally legitimise the gangs as well as the rules they put in place.

Although one would be inclined to think that these violent repercussions for transgression of forcibly imposed rules would result in grievances towards the drug-dealers, *favela* inhabitants appeared to be relatively moderate on their critique of these methods. To understand this we need to look at the indiscriminate versus selective violence argument. Indiscriminate violence, argues

Kalyvas (2006), is a way of addressing the identification problem, by targeting the response to insurgency actions at anyone potentially associated with the insurgents, indiscriminate violence aims to deter collaboration with the insurgents by collectively sanctioning suspected collaborators and anyone associated with them. In this way it tries to force the targeted community to take actions against the insurgents in their midst or to force the insurgents to change their tactics as they see the kind of impact their actions have on innocents. Kalyvas also argues however that this tactic of indiscriminate violence will at its best be ineffective and at its worst counterproductive. In general it reinforces both the view of the incumbent as an oppressive force to both the insurgents as well as the population, allowing for a greater mobilisation against the incumbent. The selective violence employed by the drug-gangs on the other hand is preferred by inhabitants, the main reason for this is the fact that it conforms to certain patterns: the gang has a set of rules; if you cross them you incite violence. This is a structure that one can plan their life around. As Kalyvas states: *“In short the effectiveness of selective violence hinges not on pinpoint accuracy [of the information upon which the violence is based] and more on the perception of the population that a process of selection is taking place.”* Kalyvas (2006:192). It is therefore argued that selective violence is an optimal method for ensuring collaboration among a ‘conquered’ population. This creates a (perceived) sense of security where *favela* inhabitants think they are safe from violence as long as they abide by the rules that are set by the gang. Furthermore the violent police invasion are in comparison viewed with greater negativity as they put everyone in the community in danger instead of selected members who broke the law. This comparison further strengthened the position of the drug-dealers as they appeared to be the most reasonable and fair actor of the two.

Cooperation due to trust and integration

Holding gang-members accountable to the same rules as the inhabitants of the *favelas* stems from the need of the gang to create a mutual feeling of connection and respect with the inhabitants. Respecting community residents and treating them as equals is another way of guaranteeing the community’s cooperation. If the community’s needs are respected then its members are more likely to guard traffickers from the police by adhering to a *lei do silencio* ‘law of silence’, or providing the necessary information to avoid internal treachery or rival faction invasion. As well as respecting community residents, through the provision of very limited support and basic necessities, traffickers demonstrate a more profound interest in the well-being of the community than the police: *“when I fell on hard times and had no more money, one of my old friends in the gang helped me out with food and money, didn’t ask anything for it, just wanted to help me.”*¹⁶ Interviewed *favela* residents also showed more trust in the informal system of faction justice, even though it is partly upheld by a system of punitive violence, than they did in the state provision of public security.

*“Are you going to trust in a policeman that you’ve never seen before, or are you going to trust in your old high-school friends, that although they are in the gang, grew up with you? I’ll trust in my old friends...”*¹⁷

As well as a higher amount trust, some also seem to gain a higher amount of satisfaction from the corporeal punishments that are used by the gangs. As a shop owner in the *favela* explained his perspective: *“I prefer it like this you know, nobody is stupid enough to break favela law, not like with the police who you can pay and then go on your way. It is an eye for an eye here, the most honest system if you ask me.”*¹⁸

However, interviewed community members were aware of the costs to personal freedom and the underlying danger in adhering to this system. As one inhabitant mentioned: *“It’s a protection for which there is a high price, sure, we would prefer governmental support, but what are you going to do? No one else will step up to provide for us. At least the gang provides.”*¹⁹

In addition to providing in the need for social order and economic stimuli, traffickers have concrete personal links to the community and therefore some genuine reasons for upholding their part of the social contract. Although notions of ‘mutual support’ may be seen as a way of legitimizing themselves to the community, and subsequently gain control, often the younger members of drug trafficking factions work within the *favela* communities where they have grown up. Children and adolescents thus have a strong bond with these communities. When children that have friends who work for the gangs were asked why they liked the members of the gangs: *“It’s because we know them, they are our age, we play with them and they have a good relationship with everyone here.”* *“People from the gangs are cool. They’ve known me ever since I was small. They like everyone here.”*²⁰

Many community residents have connections to gang members due to growing up alongside them or having family members involved in drug trafficking. *“So in the favela you have one big family...I grew up here, my friends as well. They got involved...but I won’t distance myself from them, they are my friends!”*²¹ Interviewed *favela* inhabitants demonstrated a profound understanding that although drug traffickers and “non-involved” residents are part of the same community and represent the same community, there exists a fundamental difference between them. Residents are expected to be loyal to the local faction and show this through obedience and silence but not to get involved when there are problems. Although a useful rhetoric to gain community support, interviewed residents claimed that traffickers did show a genuine belief that it was their responsibility to provide for the poorer and more vulnerable members of the community as the government had failed to do so. *“Here nobody steals from anyone else, you can leave your stuff out and it’s left alone... If a resident needs a gas cylinder, they can get it for him, if another resident needs a place to live because the rain*

*has destroyed his house, they support him. Just like when there were the earthslides^{IV}, it wasn't the city government that helped. The "guys" helped us. They wanted to help us. When we needed help the most, the rest of Rio turns its back. The government? Those guys only come during an election year, shout a lot, throw some trinkets around, and then afterwards they turn their backs on the favela."*²²

The trust of community members in drug-gangs is far greater and more natural than the trust they have in the government; they do not even presume to look towards the government for help, but naturally go to the gang members for help as is evident by these quotes: *"If you have no food, or something happens to you outside of the favela, nobody helps you. If you need money and don't have any, the guys will give you money from their own pocket because they know you they'll say: "If you need something from me, you will not go hungry. Take it, one day if you can, pay me back.""* *"They help. If you need medicine, if you need food, they'll help you. If you're going to have a party they sponsor it... they are generally good to the community. "* *"The rules exist and in a way they help to organise the community. They only get involved if someone breaks the laws. In the favela robbery doesn't exist, there are no fights. These are certainly things that provide in the favela's organisation and safety".*²³ Many of the younger generation, that have known little else but the drug-gangs domination of the community, trust completely in this system of social order.

Cooperation out of frustration

*"My cousin started working with the drug-gang... he said it wasn't due to the money or the attention or stuff like that. It was because he was just fed up with the way of life here. The gang provided him an out you know... I can't blame him for it."*²⁴

Some of the *favela* inhabitants do not give their support to the drug-gangs out of fear or because they are providing a form of support but rather out of frustration with their situation. To explain this situation we need to look at the concept of structural violence. Galtung describes structural violence as *"avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs or, to put it in more general terms, the impairment of human life, which lowers the actual degree to which someone is able to meet their needs below that which would otherwise be possible."* (Galtung, 1968: 168) Farmer then further elaborates on Galtung's formulation of structural violence and states that structural violence is *"not the result of accident or a force majeure; they are the consequence, direct or indirect, of human agency"*. (Farmer, 2005: 40) Specifically, this human agency is implicated through structures that

^{IV} In April 2010 Rio de Janeiro was hit by extreme rains and floods which caused severe damage. Especially throughout the poor communities and *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro and Niteroi. With housing built upon the sides of hills, which was swept away due to landslides which occurred as the ground got saturated with water, hundreds of peoples lost their homes and dozens were killed.

reflect an unequal distribution of power. Structural violence, therefore, originates in this unequal distribution of power among actors and can further trace its origins to human agency. This unequal distribution of power then systematically disadvantages those who do not hold much if any power at all, resulting in an unequal distribution of resources which results in actively constraining agency. The additional layers and dimensions of structural violence are then built upon this fundamental inequality and manifest themselves in terms of economic and social inequalities. The unequal distribution of power through structures enhances the agency of some at the expense of constraining the agency of others (Ho, 2007). Vanderschueren (1996) argues that structural violence in the form of inequality is the most prominent form of structural violence encountered in contemporary urban contexts such as Rio de Janeiro and that it is significantly connected to the everyday reactionary violence that can be found in urban contexts. Structural violence in this context includes a difference in income but also the lack of access to basic social services and universal state protection. It is argued by Briceno-leon and Zubillaga(2002) that this structural violence, due to state institutions failing to provide basic services, creates a response. This response takes the form of reactive violence which can be criminal (aimed at other individuals and their assets) or political (aimed at the state and its assets) in response. I argue that this reactive violence can also take the form of cooperation or collaboration with actors who counter the source of the inequality. This is seen in the *favelas* where inhabitants cooperate or join with the drug-gangs out of frustration with the government's failure to provide for services.

This structural violence can become an ingrained part of a social group's identity and discourse, seeing as the behaviour a group adopts is not purely reactive but also based on their collective memory of what has happened in the past, and expectations of what may happen in the future. *Favela* inhabitants have constructed their identity according to the structural violence done to them by the government as well as the image created of them by the bad civil society. As most of the gang-members who operate in the *favelas* stem from the same *favela* or another *favela* they also construct part of their identity around this inequality. This shared suffering and discrimination creates another connection between the gang-members and inhabitants which further strengthens the gang's position. In addition, as was stated earlier, many *favela* inhabitants are ashamed of their *favela* inheritance, however gangs and its members on the other hand seem to enjoy their *favela* lifestyle. Many, especially younger, inhabitants of the *favela* often look up to the gang members with envy. "Sometimes I think about trying to join them, you know, I work hard every day and barely make ends meet... then you look at these guys and you see them with expensive jewellery, new clothes, all the girls like them." ²⁵

Providing an alternative: the Narco-Cultura

To explain why it appears to be so attractive to be associated with the gangs, even though they sell drugs and promote violence, we first need to start with Gaviria's (1998) research in Colombia. He argues that drug traffickers have played a distinct but *indirect* role in the escalation of violence in Colombia. He also claims that, while only 10 per cent of homicides are directly associated with drug-trafficking, the trade generates high levels of everyday violence through various criminal externalities: congestion in law enforcement, spill over of criminal knowledge, supply of weapons and the creation of a "culture" that favours easy money and violent conflict resolution over more traditional values. On the account of this culture he argues that there has been a shift in values brought about by widespread and visible criminal activity, and by the emulation of the actions of drug traffickers. In this way, criminal violence becomes a source not only of income but also of pride and status, which has, in turn, created an environment in which the drug trade could take a substantial accepted place in people's lives. The dynamics of this narco-cultura can in part be explained by Gurr's (2007) mobilisation theory which explains the propositions for communal conflict. The greater the salience of ethno-cultural identity for communal groups, the more likely they are to define their interests in ethno-cultural terms and the easier it is to mobilize members of the group towards collective (violent) action. (Gurr, 2007) This is seen in the Brazilian *favelas* in the emergence and promotion of this narco-cultura in, among other things, pop culture and other forms of the community's discourse. The (imagined) identity wherein the inhabitants of the *favelas* are seen as a separate group within Brazilian culture that is being ignored and discriminated against by the Brazilian government is a central theme in this narco-cultura. Furthermore the narco-cultura promotes the idea that members of drug trafficking groups are not only part of this community but also the most successful part as they have the most wealth and power. (Penglase, 2008) This promotes a feeling of a common struggle shared throughout the *favelas* and makes it attractive for (young) inhabitants of a *favela* to join these identity groups out of frustration with the structural violence in the form of inequality in their society. As can be seen in Staub's article (2001) economic problems deeply affect people, therefore unemployment and poverty lead to calling into question one's own identity and self-worth. This can then lead to people needing a renewed basis for their identity, security, sense of connectedness and their comprehension of reality which will often result in them turning to a new group for identity. The increasing social fragmentation and polarization that are a result of the structural inequality are countered in some cases by the development of an alternative societal membership, and in this context the violence of gangs can become "...a resource with which to obtain an acknowledged identity" (Briceño-León and Zubillaga, 2002: 27).

This primal wish of belonging to a group and creating a shared identity is concurrent with the Social Identity Theory; which states that every individual has a basic need to belong to and identify with an effective and valid identity group. (Jabri, 1996) The inequality that creates these identity issues can also be seen as part of the incentive structure for *favela* inhabitants to join with the violent drug-gangs, as Gurr (2007) argues: aside from the shared identity, there is a need for shared incentives among members of ethno-cultural identity group to mobilize for violence or support violent actors. The more prevalent these incentives are the more likely group members are to support and participate in communal violent action. Gurr (2007) distinguishes four general incentives which shape group conditions.

- Collective disadvantages such as economic political and cultural discrimination
 - The loss of political autonomy
 - Repression (in the short run repression causes fear and caution, but on the long term it causes resentment and incentives to resist and retaliate)
 - Frames for communal action that allow for mass-motivation and justifications for the actions
- These incentives are common themes among the “narco-cultura”, where the popular culture perpetuates the perception that *favelas* and their inhabitants are deemed unimportant and inferior by the rest of Brazilian society and are in fact separate from it, with the only real way to gain wealth and status through membership of a drug-trafficking group. Hereby it focuses on the collective disadvantages found in the structural inequality and it provides a framework to justify the violent actions of drug-groups; they have no other choice.

Furthermore the perpetual violent cycles often cause a more repressive governmental approach resulting in more grievances towards state actors. This results in further recruits for the traffickers, and a willingness to participate in violent activities or refrain from working with authorities.

(Penglase 2008) Collier’s (2000) criticism on grievance and structuralist based analysis of violence shows us another element of the narco-cultura that fosters participation in violent actions; he states that violent movements can arise due to an aspiration to become wealthy instead of rebellions rising, because they aspire to rid the nation of an unjust regime.

With the increasing globalization of trade and job markets and the rise of international media, *favela* inhabitants encounter a higher standard of living enjoyed by others when they look at the television or when they travel to richer areas of Rio de Janeiro. With Rio being a rising economic power, its average standard of living is steadily increasing for most of its population, except for the *favela* inhabitants, who hardly profit from the country’s rising economic fortunes. Furthermore this standard of living is considered perfectly normal by most part of the society, while the *favela* inhabitants are not in a position to obtain these “normal” standards themselves. This leads to increasing economic expectations being combined with decreasing economic opportunities and thus

frustrations. Through their engagement in crime and drug trade, gangs offer the prospect of economic sufficiency in the face of a lack of alternatives. Often, the balance between the economic and social motivations of gang membership shifts from grievance driven towards economic driven. (Briceño-Leon and Zubillaga, 2002, Moser et al., 2003) Although gang-members initially joined because of their frustration with their situation, they remain in the gang because it provides them with the means to live above “*favela*” standards and so become an object of admiration. Organisations that fight out of greed are unlikely to be so naïve as to admit to greed as a motive, because narratives of grievance play much better in the local and international community. This discourse explains another dimension of the narco-cultura; the quest for income and status does play an important role for some recruits to join the gangs. (Penglase 2008) This situation has been observed in research among gangs in middle America as well “...*young people can become gang members, integrate themselves in drug distribution networks and live in violence not only because they live in situations of poverty and social disadvantage, or because their parents abandoned them when they were young or because they systematically mistreated them, but also because they do not find any resources in their immediate social setting which provide them with what their family and the economic institutional order has not been able to give them*” (ERIC, IDESO, DIES, IUDOP, 2004: 21) The narco-cultura, however, explains the actions of the gangs as resistance to the establishment and as a way out of, government created, poverty and inequality. This accounts for a lot of young *favela* inhabitants joining the gangs out of frustration with their situation and as a way out this situation, as well as of economic reasons. (Penglase 2008, Zaluar 1999) Although the narco-cultura explains why it is attractive for inhabitants to join or collaborate with the gangs, it does not explain the casualness and acceptance with which almost all *favela* inhabitants talk about the (threats of) violence which they encounter in their day to day life.

The normalization of violence

In his paper, Cruz (1999) analyses the psycho-social effects of violence in San Salvador, arguing that the normalization of violence requires the evolution of a system of norms, values or attitudes which allow, or even stimulate, the use of violence to resolve any conflict or relation with another person. This value system may pervade behaviour in all spheres of life. Similarly, it is argued that the legacy of institutional violence during the apartheid has created an atmosphere in South Africa where violence has become a normal rather than extreme form of conflict resolution (Simpson, 1993; Chabedi, 2003). Furthermore as I argued in the previous chapter being the case for Brazil, Rodgers (2003:213) claims that in the context of Latin America, the transition to democracy has often been too rapid, resulting in there being no effective systematic dismantling of past institutional structures of violence and repression. So we see a contemporary continuation of the cultures of violence from

the past. With states lacking the institutional means to resolve social conflicts democratically, urban violence threatens governability and democratic consolidation. In such a situation, violence is no longer a monopoly held by the state but appears to become “...an option for a multitude of actors in pursuit of all kinds of goals” (Kruijt and Koonings, 1999: 11).

Overall, sustained political or institutional violence significantly contributes to the normalization of violence, as does the related inability of the state to provide legitimate institutional control of violence. Both of which as show above are central problems in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro. With a history of state violence and repression that started with the first *favelas*, as well as a history of violent conflict solving which was initiated by the first *favela* leaders and which is continued by the drug dealers today, it is no wonder that *favela* inhabitants have gotten used to violence. The society of *favelas* has grown up with violence and violent conflict resolution, either by state or non-state actors, creating an acceptance in its inhabitants who have grown accustomed to the continual cycle of violence and who have come to see it almost as a natural thing. As one *favela* inhabitant described it to me: “Yeah sure, people get killed by the gangs and the shootings and we mourn them, but it is no different from people getting hit by cars or people getting diseases. You can try to control or manage these things but inevitably those kinds of things are going to happen.”²⁶

The evidence presented in this chapter has shown that the base in perverted civil society that was obtained by drug-gangs has been expanded upon by the drug-gangs in various ways. Their position of power and trust is facilitated by a belief of *favela* inhabitants that the gangs are the only ones who want to help them. This is a view that is being strengthened by a general absence of state actors and institutions and gang-members and organisations quickly and efficiently taking the place of these actors. This situation is perpetuated as the gangs try to make it impossible for government institutions to operate in the *favelas* as well pervert non-government institutions to make sure the status quo is maintained. Furthermore as the gangs position of power continues, it is reinforced by a growing integration into the community, with community members and gang-members being connected through a growing network of friendships and family ties. Finally the promotion of an over-arching *favela* identity as well as the narco-cultura reinforces the gang in that it provides possibilities for ashamed and frustrated *favela* inhabitants to obtain an identity that provides them with prestige, power and wealth as well as a way to vent their frustrations by directly or indirectly opposing government presence and power. Although inhabitants understand that this is not an ideal situation, they have come to accept the gangs and the violence they bring as they are also the only actors who (appear to) care for the *favelas* fate and they have nowhere else to turn. The only actor in Brazil who can break this vicious cycle of gang power is the Brazilian government. This is the only actor with the power and resources to “liberate” the *favelas* from gang-control. In the next chapter

we will look at past governmental efforts towards controlling the *favelas* and why they have failed, as well as recent policy and institutional changes which might hold promise for the future.

Chapter 3. Governmental policy and police approaches

Now that we have analysed how the drug-gangs in Rio de Janeiro have acquired their position of power within the social structures of *favela* inhabitants' daily lives, we need to analyse why the state has so singularly failed to retain support from its poorer citizens in the *favelas*. Seeing as, despite the possibilities for the drug-gangs outlined in the previous chapters, a democratic state is an institution which has the resources of a nation at its disposal as well as being legitimized by its citizens in its powers and responsibilities.

Historical perspective of government involvement in *favelas*

As shown in the previous chapters, Brazil has a longstanding history of minority and poor elements of their society being marginalised by their government. Rio de Janeiro has approximately six and a half million inhabitants, a quarter of whom lives in one of the over 750 *favelas* scattered around the city. Although *favelas* exist for more than 100 years now in Rio de Janeiro, they have been largely ignored by the Brazilian government ever since their inception when it comes to improving living condition or any other productive form of social capital (Perlman 2004). *Favelas* are regularly seen as filled with the cities 'undesirables', the criminals and vagrants of Brazilian society. This perception, perpetuated by bad civil society actors, has led to the government not only neglecting to address the structural inequality that the inhabitants of the *favelas* suffer from, it is also a reason for harsh approaches towards policing these communities. This policing approach has historically been based on prejudice and discrimination. This attitude towards the residents of *favelas* is still present among the contemporary police as can be seen by the rampant police violence. This is mostly directed at the poor, socially excluded and non-white citizens, who for the most part live in the city's *favelas*, and are consequently subject to stigmatization, discrimination and criminalization. In addition to this the services that a state is supposed to give to its citizens (Einsiedel 2007) is being commercialised in Rio de Janeiro. Political actors who are actively campaigning will trade government services with community leaders (usually the drug-gangs) of *favelas* in exchange for votes. This allows the drug-gangs in turn to reinforce their perverted position in the perverted social structures within the *favela* community. It is therefore that historically *favela* inhabitants have held the perception that state actors have no interest in aiding them or that they are even considered citizens at all. This naturally results in frustration and feelings of aversion towards government actors as they are viewed as profiting from and perpetuating the structural violence that

favela inhabitants suffer from.

Improving the situation: state and civil society actors who try to improve life for *favela* residents

Although it is often suggested in research that the drug-gangs have obtained their position of power in absence of the state and police institutions, this is not the case. It is not their absence, but their failure to operate in a constructive manner, and therefore becoming part of the productive social capital of the communities, that allowed for the rise of drug-gangs to prominence. As Arias (2006:35) notes: “ *Evidence of government activity is in the form of expended shells from gun battles between traffickers and police and weapons in the hands of traffickers sold by corrupt officers and soldiers, not to mention the fact that projects funded by state agencies and clientelist politicians literally fill favelas.* This is also the case in the communities that I researched, however most of these projects where, although gladly received by the communities, often viewed as a misallocation of resources. As was noted earlier, these projects often do not address the underlying problems of the community. As one community leader told me: “ *Yeah ok, they built a large new school building with space for computers and everything.. what they don’t have however, is teachers because the pay level for the teachers is too low, most of the teachers are of very low quality, it is all just a public-relations effort.*”²⁷ Furthermore, the drug-gangs operate in a way that according to Lynch (2002) can be categorised as being a spoiling factor. Lynch uses this classification in the context of peace-building, however it applies to the current situation in Brazil as well. Although some civil society and state actors genuinely attempt to improve conditions in the *favelas* to moderate the amount of structural violence done to the *favela* inhabitants, drug-gangs impede these processes. This is done either through direct obstruction such as forcefully removing actors from a community or denying them entry as well as through subversion and perversion of local organisations as was described in chapter 2. Therefore we can say that state actors as well as non-state actors will not be able to operate in a productive manner as long as the gangs control and manage social order in their respective neighbourhoods. Security for these operations is a crucial factor as without it they are literally at the whim of drug-gangs who can make demands of them backed by their locally legitimized monopoly on violence. This is where the basic problem with government efforts in Rio de Janeiro becomes apparent: the forces who are responsible for maintaining safety and social order, the police.

Police violence and the undermining of social order and security by the police

*“The police protecting us? Don’ t be crazy, we need to pay them to not beat us up, the guys need to pay them to leave them alone, everybody pays them...”*²⁸

The police in Brazil is made up of the Polícia Civil (Civil Police – PC) and the Polícia Militar (Military

Police - PM). The PC are plain-clothed officers, divided into battalions who are involved in the criminal investigation and oversee the operation of the various police precincts or *delegacias* (Arias 2006). The PM on the other hand consists of the uniformed officers who patrol the streets, maintain public order and respond to and investigate crimes in progress (Pereira 2000). The contemporary functions of the PM were initially developed during the authoritarian regime with the PM being military policing troops, guarding bases and providing anti-riot squads. The authoritarian regime started using these troops in daily life and assigned them with patrolling duties. The PM often worked in conjunction with “anti-terrorist groups” who were wielded against armed opponents of the government. Initially the PM were under directive of the military and delegated to governors of states. In the 1996 however the PM were transitioned back under civilian control, in response to the high number of extrajudicial killings by police. In addition the PM has specialized units, of which the most (in)famous and one is the BOPE (*Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais*). This unit is a highly trained, militarized outfit, which is equipped with heavy weaponry and armoured vehicles. The unit is usually called in for special operations, such as raids on *favelas* occupied by heavily armed drug factions. These operations often result in the use of excessive force against the *favela* population as a whole. (HRM 2009). Additionally there are the shock units (*Batalhão de Polícia de Choque – BPChq*) who operate as small, mobile and highly violent teams and six groups for the policing of ‘special areas’ which are called the GPAE (*Grupamento de Policiamento em Áreas Especiais*). Recently these units have been joined by the *Unidade de Policiamento Pacificadora* (UPP) Who I will be analysing later in this chapter.

In a recent research published by Human Rights Watch, the amount of civilians killed in 2008 by on-duty police officers was 1,137. This was a marked decrease from 2007 where the number was 1,330. In Figure 1 the number of police killings is shown compared with the amount of killing in the state of Sao Paulo and the nations of South Africa and the United States of America.

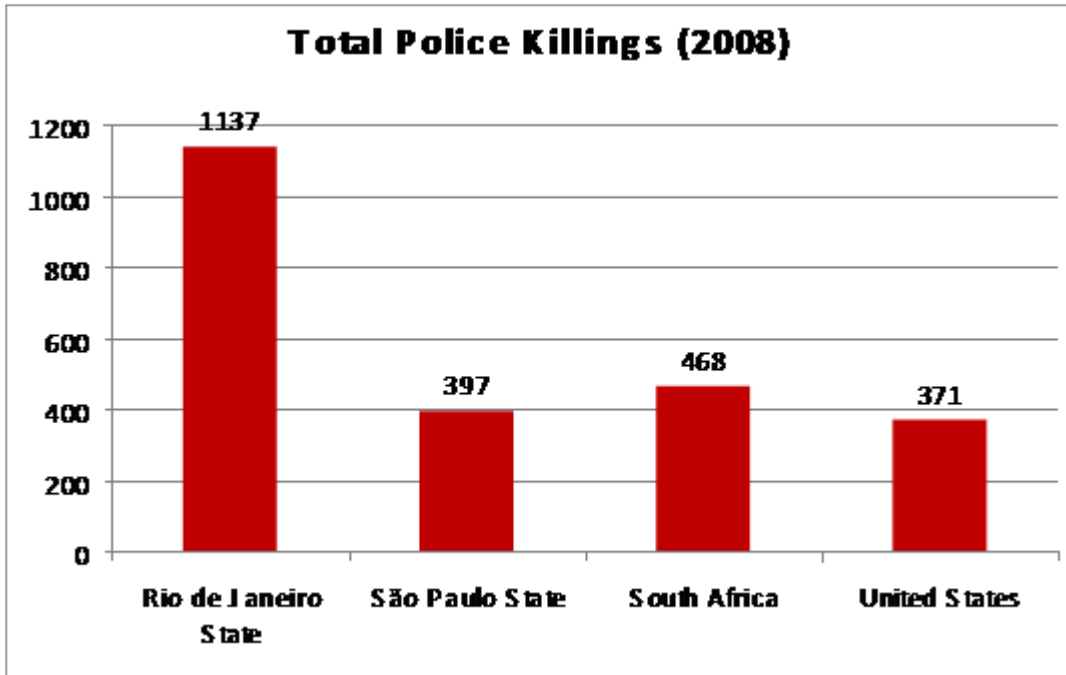


Figure 1: Total amount of civilians killed by police in 2008 (HRW-report 2009)

These incidents are labelled as ‘acts of resistance to arrest’ or ‘resistance followed by death’. Theoretically these events are instances in which the police have used necessary and proportionate force in response to the resistance of criminal suspects to the orders of law enforcement officers. (Chevigny 1995;; HRW-report 2009) There is substantial credible evidence however that many persons killed in alleged shootouts with police were in fact executed by the police officers. The Human Resource Watch report notes that in a large number of the “resistance” cases, *“the shootout narratives alleged by the officers appeared to be incompatible with forensic reports documenting certain types of gunshot wounds. In many of these cases, gunshot residue patterns were consistent with the victim having been shot at point blank range.”* (HRW-report, 2009:20) In addition police officers are sometimes members of illegal armed militias which are responsible for hundreds of murders each year. In many supposed “resistance” killings and killings by death squads, police officers have covered up the true nature of the killing. Furthermore police investigators often fail to take the steps that are required to determine what has taken place, resulting in an inability to establish criminal responsibility. Police officers often attack or threaten witnesses to discourage them from reporting what they have seen. While many factors contribute to this chronic impunity, one in particular stands out: the criminal justice system in Rio de Janeiro currently relies almost entirely on police investigators to resolve these cases. Practically, the police are left to police themselves. (Gay, 2005; Arias 2006; HRW-report 2009;) This results in an extremely high number of reported ‘resistance killings’, 11,000 since 2003. The claim that the police forces are excessively

violent is also strengthened when the numbers of killings are compared to the amount of arrests made per killing and the amount of casualties that police forces have suffered in return. As is shown in figures 2 and 3, the amounts of violence committed by the police are extraordinary when one looks at the apparent danger they are in or the amount of criminals they arrest.

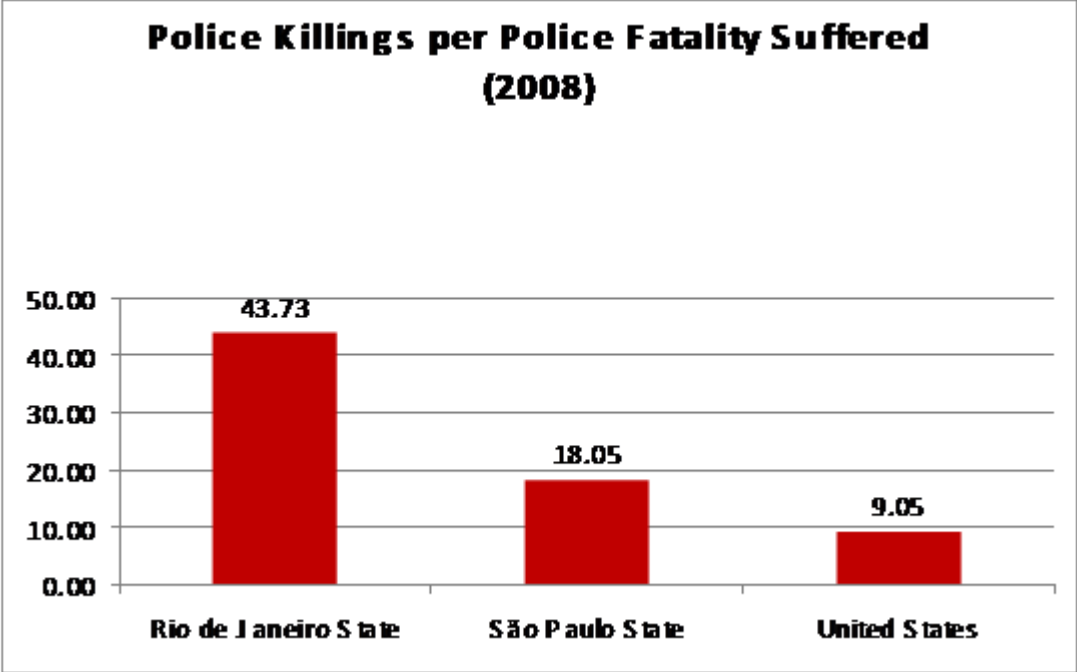


Figure 2: Police killings per fatality suffered in 2008 Source: HRW-report (2009)

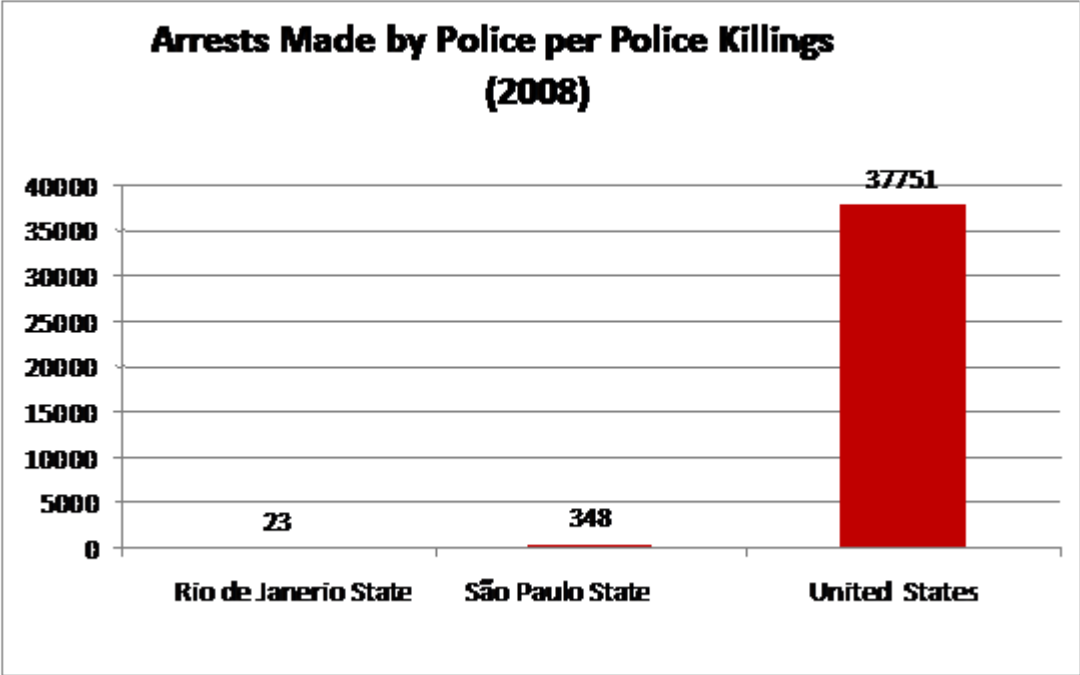


Figure 3: Arrests made compared to total amount of police killings HRW-report (2009)

This results in the police being held in very low esteem among both the rich and poor communities in Rio de Janeiro (Ramos and Musameci, 2004), the difference being that most richer citizens turn to private communities to support their security. The poor, not having access to the resources required to pay private contractors, are caught between the violence of the police and drug-gangs. Aside from these high levels of police violence, the corruption of the police forces is another major problem. Informants reported that police, both the PM and the PC are regularly involved in extortion of civilians and other criminal activities such as drug and arms sales.^v Furthermore it has been reported that police units will conduct small scale raids to “arrest” drug-dealers or impound drug stashes as the opportunity present itself. These dealers and the drugs are then ransomed back to the drug-gangs, effectively turning a public service into a money-making effort. The effect this has on public security is of course negligible, with dealers returning back to the street within days. These actions have the result that they further delegitimize the police as actors who provide for security and social order. In addition it once again creates a situation where state actors obtain money and favours thanks to the inequality that *favela* inhabitants, who identify themselves with the gang-members, suffer from.

As one *favela* inhabitant summed up: “...help us? Hah, they are far too busy making money off of us.”

According to respondents police corruption is due to the police being generally badly funded resulting in underpaid staff as well as poorly trained agents. The lower ranks of the police that are often involved in criminal activities often share the same lower-class background and non-white identity with the *favela* residents (Pereira 2000). But as police are subject to mistrust and hatred, those who live in drug-gang controlled areas have to disguise who they are and what they do for a living. (Gay 2005) Police officers from *favelas* are posted at different *favelas* than the ones they live in to protect their identity. This also removes them from any connections they could have with the community they are policing. It could be argued that some of the same processes which underlay the cooperation and joining with drug-gangs, also can explain the amount of low-level police agents’ corruption and violence. As they share the same living conditions as most of the *favela* inhabitants, they will also be frustrated with their situation. Their reaction however is not to fight against the system of structural inequality or support actors who fight against representatives of this inequality. Instead they use the structures of authority provided by the state, without identifying themselves with the state and the responsibilities it has. Just as the drug-gangs are a way towards money, power and prestige for some, the police units provide the same route only through other social structures.

^v This is a fact that is also reported by Arias (2006) and Leeds (2007) 40

The impunity with which police officers can operate within the *favela* is facilitated by the purported 'war on drugs and crime', which generally results in police units being given a free reign when operating within *favelas*. The reasoning behind this is constructed through the populist negative view of *favelas* and states that they are attacking highly violent organised crime units in effectively hostile territory. A government representative I spoke to defended the practice by saying that the police "*do what has to be done to clean out the favelas*"²⁹. This is also often seen as the official state's position on the situation; they claim to be strengthening public security through the destruction of organised crime. When talking to my respondents however, the police are often criticised as being worse than the drug-dealers.

An explanation for this was given by an insightful comment of a community leader in Cidade de Deus: "*It is not strange that the police act worse than the drug dealers, nobody controls them!*"³⁰ This comment shows the paradox which has occurred in the Brazilian *favelas*, where drug-gangs are often held more accountable for their actions than the governmental police units that are supposed to provide for social order in the state. In addition to the extraordinary amount of (extra-judicial) police killings and police corruption, many residents complained about the amount of military hardware used; most notably the armoured personnel carriers used by BOPE, nicknamed *caveirões* or skulls and the helicopters used for air support. The most heard complaint was that the police turned the neighbourhood into a temporary warzone when they did one of their invasions. This is an extraordinary claim in the fact that it presupposes the police are the ones who instigate the (unnecessary) violence. This shows how heavily the state's 'policing' has estranged its citizens who live in the *favelas* and how they now view the state and police forces as the problem. This is in part due to the natural preference for predictable and targeted violence when compared to random and indiscriminate violence that was explained in chapter two. Police invasion create a situation where there is a possibility for everyone in the community to be affected by the violence, whereas the drug-gangs only use violence against the police or people who break the *favela* laws. Even though *favela* inhabitants acknowledge that what the gangs do is inherently criminal and wrong, they see police units as doing essentially the same as the drug-dealers but without being accountable for any of their actions. Furthermore they are seen as profiting and perpetuating the structural inequality they suffer from. This is remarkable as essentially the drug-gangs are doing the same, however the police is traditionally supposed to hold the 'moral high-ground'. This connects back to the social support theories explained in chapter one, which state that the (perceived) support or absence of support by actors who are expected to be supportive has greater impact than the (absence of) support from actors which are not expected to be supportive. Does this mean that *favela* inhabitants will permanently live in this violent crossfire and remain to be exploited by both drug-gangs and state-actors?

Perspectives for the future: the UPP

*"I like these new police, they are much braver now than they used to be, this time they stay in the favela. Before they came we thought the dealers were cool but now the police are our heroes."*³¹

After decades of not being in control in parts of its major cities and a death toll which exceeds many contemporary wars, the Brazilian government has acknowledged that the current policies on *favelas* have had very little effect. Indeed we can argue by the evidence provided above that government policies have increasingly worsened the situation in the *favelas* and consequently the opinion *favela* inhabitants have of the *favelas*. To counter-act this they have in 2009 and 2010 initiated several new projects with the goal to restore state control in these areas. One half of this effort is comprised of projects which aim to improve the life of *favela* inhabitants. These are reminiscent of projects in the past and aim to improve facilities within the *favelas* such as infrastructure, schooling and healthcare. As noted above however, these projects are unlikely to be effective or even succeed at all when the drug-gangs remain a dominating presence within the *favelas*. Therefore, the government has started the creation of several new police units, the *Unidades de Polícia Pacificadores* or Pacifying Police Units (UPP). These units are comprised of police officers who have been specifically trained to operate within a community and build ties with these communities.

The goals for these units are stated as being:

- Return state control to those areas that are currently being controlled by organised armed crime
- Allow the evolving of the local community in peace and return social order
- Contribute to breaching the culture of war that is prevalent within Rio de Janeiro

Looking at these goals it appears that the government has acknowledged the failing of its institutions outlined above and sets out to address them through the UPP. The strategy for these units is reminiscent of those used by counter-insurgency units in locations such as Afghanistan and Iraq. It is initiated by a large scale invasion of the target community with overpowering force so that the drug-gangs are forced to retreat from the community or at least disrupt their large scale combat abilities. This is then followed by the 'stabilising phase' where remaining opposition by drug-gangs is persecuted and rooted out. Upon completion of this phase, there comes the creation of a permanent, fortified police post within the community^{VI}. This post is used as a base of operations for UPP units who will remain in the community. Their main objective is to serve as a force of prevention rather than repression. In addition they are trained to operate in conjunction with the community instead of against it. The remaining objectives for this phase are to start by integrating the police unit into the community by providing the policing tasks the PM was supposed to do on a permanent base

^{VI} For the building plans of these posts see appendix 1

and by adopting an active, approachable and inclusive stance towards community members named '*policia de proximidade*', which can be literally translated into neighbourhood police. Furthermore UPP units are expected to aid in the state sponsored community projects which aim to improve the standard of living in the *favelas*. After this phase comes an expanding and solidifying phase which calls for the further integration into local institutions and the community by the UPP as well as further participation in community projects by UPP units.^{VII}

So far 8 of these units have started operations in 11 communities namely :

- Babilonia/ C. Mangueira
- Batam
- Cidade de Deus
- Pavaozinho/Cantagalo
- Providencia
- Santa Marta
- Tabajara/Cabritos
- Tijuca

Almost all these projects have reported significant successes in their communities affecting a reported 140,000 inhabitants. Effects include the drastic reduction of crime in the target communities while effective policing has gone markedly up.^{VIII} One has to keep in mind however that these are numbers being provided by the government itself who not only has the most to gain from reporting the success of this project, but is also the actor with initially the least amount of connections within the community. Nevertheless, interviewed *favela* inhabitants were cautiously optimistic about this new approach to policing. Praise concerning the UPP is mostly centred around their proper behaviour, especially when compared to the PM as well as the fact that they are a permanent force within the community. *"It is a relief to no longer be afraid of either upsetting the gang or police, I hope it will stimulate the community. It's a positive change, people feel respected by the new police units, it a comforting feeling"*.³² Another development many informants were happy about was the switch to the use of selective violence against dealers during the initial phases of the occupation. As one resident in Cidade de Deus said: *"we were used to the caveirões just coming and shooting at everything that moved, but during the last big invasion the police focussed on driving the gang out, not killing everything that looked like a gang member."*³³ Overall the community feels a greater amount of safety, respect and validation being provided by the government, combined with the influx of government projects, it makes the *favela* inhabitants feel less marginalised and excluded

^{VII} Source: A. R. C DE SÁ Sub secretary of planning and integration of the ministry of state security

^{VIII} See Appendix 2 for graphs of reported results by the UPP in Cidade de Deus and Santa Marta. Source: Ibid

from the city as a whole. This is explained as outlined in chapter one, by the fact that the perception of support is even more important than the physical support itself. Therefore, by showing the *favela* inhabitants that they matter and are an important part of Rio de Janeiro's society, the government will finally be fulfilling its part in the social contract it has with all its citizens as well as meeting the social support expectations that such a contract creates. When these initial UPP actions prove successful and pave the way for large scale economic development projects, it will be very probable that with the increase in the standard of living, will also come an increase in public support for the government. If this public support is provided by the large majority of the *favela* community, it will make it practically impossible for the drug-gangs to return as they rely heavily on the asymmetrical warfare principles which in turn rely heavily on the public support of the *favela* inhabitants to succeed.

Although most of the initial responses are positive, most inhabitants are also cautious about the project. Some informants reported fearing the return of the drug-gangs or continued exploitation by government forces as they have experienced in the past. These experiences and ways of life, that have defined *favela* inhabitants for many years, are not summarily forgotten after a few months of successful governmental intervention. Other criticisms include fears that this project is mostly for show towards the international community as Brazil is elected to host the coming Olympic Games and wishes to show it has Rio de Janeiro under control. Residents are afraid that only *favelas* that have a prominent position close to touristic hotspots as well as potential Olympic sites will be targeted for intervention. This will only lead to the transportation of the problem, with drug-gangs moving and setting up their operations in other, more distant *favelas*. This is a legitimate fear as the costs and investments of time and manpower involved with "liberating" all 700+ *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro is enormous and the state has expressly stated that the UPP is not a cure-all solution that can be applied to all communities in Rio de Janeiro. In the end however, the UPP symbolizes a hopeful switch in policy making within the Brazilian government. A change which can, if continued, provide a much needed boost to public support for the government in the *favelas* and, even more important, can play an important part in liberating the *favelas* from not only the drug-gangs, but also the structural inequality they have been suffering from for the past 100 years.

Conclusion

As stated in my introduction the aim of this thesis was not to create a complete and comprehensive account of why the government has such difficulties controlling the *favelas*. It did however aim to create a new analytical viewpoint which can help us understand how urban violence is organized and facilitated. When considering that due to the asymmetric warfare tactics employed by the drug-gangs the main problem when fighting these drug-gangs lies in identifying them, it becomes quickly apparent that public support is a critical factor in the struggle for control in the *favelas*.

To understand how the drug-gangs obtain their public support it is also essential to understand how they have been able to quickly become a part of *favela* inhabitants' daily lives. With state institutions failing or being unwilling to provide the *favela* inhabitants with services, a gap was created in the *favela* inhabitants' social capital. Although in a stable democracy, a strong civil society can compensate somewhat for the states failings, due to the authoritarian regime's legacy this gap in social capital could not be filled by non-government organisations at the time. This created an opening for drug-gangs, with money and resources due to the cocaine trade, to identify and address the problems suffered by *favela* inhabitants. Thereby using the pre-existing social support expectations of *favela* inhabitants, who constructed part of their life around these expectations, as a means to quickly become a structural and integrated part of their daily lives. *Favela* inhabitants in turn accepted the help as they had nowhere else to turn to.

When this initial position of power was established in Rocinha and Cidade de Deus, the gangs started to expand on this position in various ways. Their position of power and the amount of trust they are granted is facilitated by a belief of *favela* inhabitants that the gangs are the only ones who genuinely want to help them. This is a view that is being strengthened by a general absence of effective state actors and institutions which is perpetuated as the gangs try to make it impossible for government and non-government institutions to operate in the *favelas* by means of threats, violence and perversion of local organisations. Additionally as this central position of power in the community continues, it is reinforced by a steadily progressing integration into the community, with community members and gang-members being connected through an ever expanding network of friendships and family ties. Finally the promotion of both a powerful *favela* identity and a narco-cultura reinforces the connection the gang has with the *favela* inhabitants by showing the gang as an exemplary way to get out of the poverty and inequality of the *favelas*. Although inhabitants agree

that this is not an ideal situation, they have come to accept the gangs and the violence they bring as they are also the only actors who (appear to) care for the *favelas* wellbeing.

In conclusion we can state that the Brazilian government in Rio de Janeiro has had an appalling record with respect to gaining public support from its poorer citizens. With rampant police violence, corruption and almost no practical economic stimulus from the government, it is no wonder that the government has been losing the battle for hearts and minds in its *favelas*. With the introduction of new initiatives such as the UPP program however, comes the hope that this might signal a change in the way of thinking of Brazilian policy makers. A way of thinking that is no longer focussed on military force and repression but on integration and equality for all its citizens. This would be an important step forward for Brazil in moving from an authoritarian regime to a truly stable democratic state.

Future research opportunities manifest themselves along the lines of analysing the effects and results of the new government policies. Whether or not they will have a lasting impact on the situation in Rio de Janeiro remains yet to be seen. Furthermore I have analysed only two *favelas* in this thesis, to provide for a greater external validity and possible generalisability of the theoretical constructs provided in this thesis, it would be advisable to perform further research on other and more *favelas*. Finally, the new theoretical construct of perverted civil society needs to be further refined and tested, preferably compared to other case-studies to see if it can be used as a legitimate new analytical framework.

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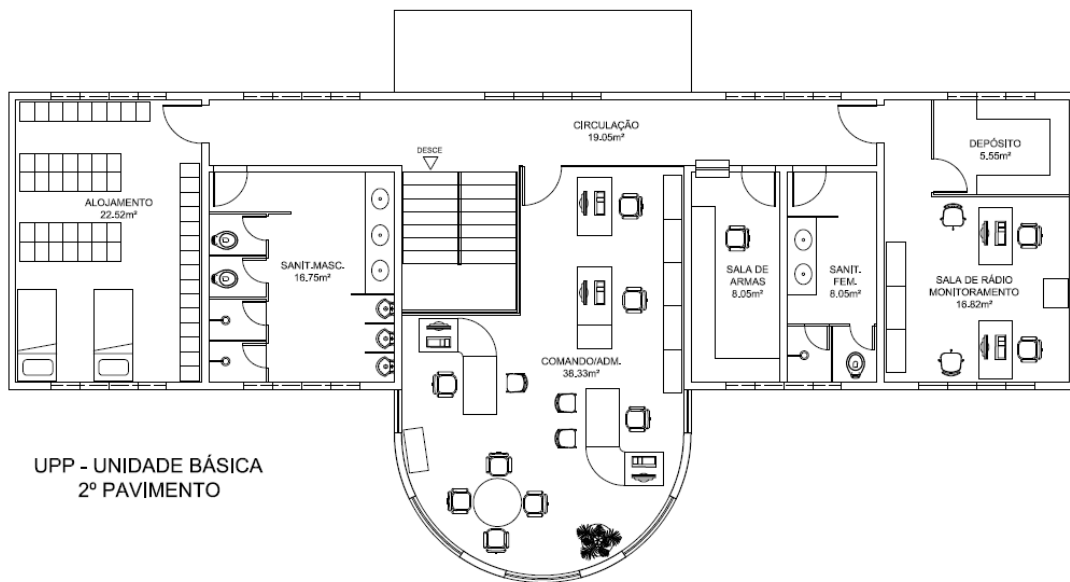
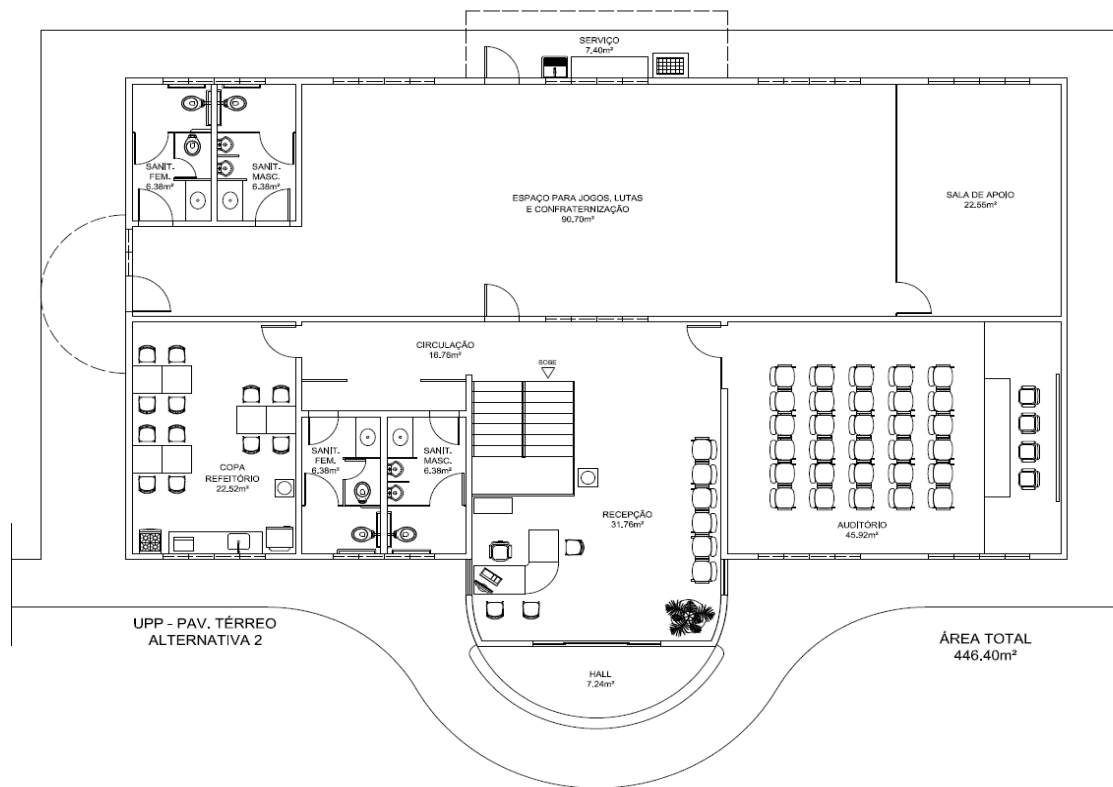
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Endnotes

- 1 Interview with *Zé in zona sul of Rio de Janeiro on May 20th*
- 2 Interview with *Zé in Rocinha; May 12th*
- 3 Conversation with a sixty year old community worker in Rocinha April 29th
- 4 Interview with a high-level capoeira teacher in Cidade de Deus May 2nd
- 5 Interview with community leader Ferdinand in capoeira center just outside cidade de deus May 15th
- 6 Interview with resident of Rocinha inside Rocinha June 1st
- 7 Conversation with a shopkeeper in Rocinha June 3rd
- 8 Conversation with a resident in Cidade de Deus May 8th
- 9 Interview with a restaurant owner in Rocinha June 10th
- 10 Conversation with *Zé in Rocinha May 28th*
- 11 Interview with a 18 year old resident of Rocinha April 27th
- 12 Conversation with local store owner in Rocinha May 29th
- 13 Conversation with Ronaldo in Rocinha May 20th
- 14 Conversations with Ronaldo in Rocinha on May 21st
- 15 Group talks with *favela* members in a capoeira centre in Rocinha on May 19th
- 16 Informal talk with a capoeira player in Rocinha June 12th
- 17 Interview with 20 year old inhabitant of Rocinha May 7th
- 18 Conversation with shop owner in Rocinha July 2nd
- 19 Conversation with Ronaldo in Rocinha may 20th
- 20 Group talk with *favela* children in a community center in Rocinha April 30th
- 21 Conversation with adolescent capoeira player in Cidade de Deus July 14th
- 22 Conversation with *Zé in Rocinha May 5th*
- 23 Interviews with *favela* inhabitants in Rocinha on April 27th
- 24 Conversation with a 19 year old construction worker in Rocinha on May 4th
- 25 Conversation with a 17 year old cleaner in Rocinha on April 27th
- 26 Conversation with Ronaldo in Rocinha May 24th
- 27 Interview with a community leader Ferdinand in Cidade de Deus June 20th
- 28 Conversation with a post-office worker in Rocinha May 26th
- 29 Interview with a representative of the ministry of security in Rio de Janeiro, May 30th
- 30 Interview with community leader Ferdinand in Cidade de Deus June 20th
- 31 One of the children in a group talk in a community center near Cidade de Deus 9 years old June 19th
- 32 Elderly *favela* resident in Cidade de Deus June 17th
- 33 Self-proclaimed housewife in Cidade de Deus June 14th

Appendix 1



Appendix 2

