

Resistance and Transgression in Rio de Janeiro: From favelas' cultural movements to the 2013 Riots

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Urban planning in Brazilian metropolises has gone through paradigmatic changes in the last three decades, finally and fully adopting urban entrepreneurialism in the 1990s; the considerable delay in turning towards hegemonic planning in comparison to First World local administrations only made the process more aggressive. Strategic planning has since become central in order to pursue the creation of a "modern city" image, in which elements associated with the notion of backwardness should not be on display (Harvey 2014; Vainer 2009). The process of trying to erase the features which do not fit in a marketable image of Rio - such as favelas, homeless and prostitutes - together with a tabula rasa policy – based on des-investments to create degraded territories worth cleaning to be re-marketed – has generated a lot of tensions, conflicts and dissent. Hence, the imposition of strategic planning has come to depend largely on control and oppression mechanisms of demonstrations, of grassroots political demands and of spaces considered "dangerous" and/or degraded. As has been documented and discussed by a number of authors, unequal policies together with repression often lead to highly creative times.

This paper argues that this process has also raised a transgressive and creative wave in Rio, resulting into a different political and cultural insertion of citizens in the public arena, notably built on social movements that transform culture into a political aesthetic attitude and politics into a cultural resistance attitude, both creating diverse manifestations in the public sphere. They range from artists groups proposals in Rio's favelas, showing their diversity and their proliferating capacity, to the 2013 Rio riots organization, assembling highly viral and transgressive networks, and the rioting citizens' (not so new) creative manifestations.

Both types of resistance – stemming from favelas and from the riots - have been studied recently: the Favela Observatory mapped cultural movements through a qualitative study with one hundred youngsters from Cidade de Deus, Complexo do Alemão, Complexo da Penha, Manguinhos and Rocinha slums. Graduate students at the Architecture and Urban Planning Program of the Federal Fluminense University also conducted a probabilistic survey with 385 participants of the June 2013 riots together with different qualitative approaches to the manifestations, allowing us to speculate on the organization and the cultural forms of the demonstrations.

Among the main findings the paper supports Carlos (1996) argument that the production of the quotidian in Post-modernity reproduces an urban way of life that highlights mass culture and globalization forces by standardizing procedures and practices that tend to homogenize individuals' behaviors and demands. This seems applicable to both the stigmas on favela residents, which determines a generalized prejudice and very homogeneous judgements of their characters, and to the 2013 rioters, as they mirrored other manifestations around the world. While protesting mostly against general causes, like government

mismanagements and corruption, or for a better quality of life, the middle classes present at the 2013 riots in Rio reflected more of a homogenous and globalized culture than one of their own when carrying banners and posters against the FIFA World Cup and corruption, or showing off communist and anarchist symbols as the hammer and sickle or the Anonymous mask.

On the other hand, as argued in the paper, the possibilities of transgressing apparently consolidated models are exposed in daily life through small and spotted expressions that recover traditional practices common to different social groups. Favela residents intense and diverse daily lives in Rio's favelas are unequivocal demonstrations of their challenges to the poverty-stricken and violent stereotypes and stigmas imposed on them by the hegemonic model. As also argued, the dimensions of what is human, of what is expressed as power, as a reproduction of life with its representations provoke relationships that encompass integral realities of societies and individuals. In favelas, the residents' territoriality is expressed in the territorialization of individuals, as a manifestation typical of humans: it is their expression in society and culture, building relationships of a symbolic order. That makes them reflective human beings.

Favela residents engage in identity-creating practices that transform culture into a political aesthetic attitude in order to face society hegemonic representation of favelas and, as a consequence, the stigmas and prejudices they are subjected to, while the 2013 protesters mimicked other movements around the world – together with their symbols - and ended up reinforcing globalization and the neoliberal canons they were rioting about. Both groups efficiently use(d) the internet as a communication tool, but with very different proposals and outcomes: while favela residents culturally manifest and cry their territorial/corporeal distinction processes out, the 2013 protesters use of the web was instrumentalized and engulfed by the mainstream media losing the transgressive character.

As such, planners should not only encourage genuine and creative ways to express territoriality, but also be careful when reading urban social movements in the informational era.

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