

Favelas' urbanization in Rio de Janeiro: tracing the making and breaking of a policy

Hector Becerril

hbecerrilmi@conacyt.mx

In Brazil, the design and implementation of housing policies were heavily modified in the 1980s. After the fall of the authoritarian regime in 1985, Brazil started the elaboration of a new constitution that was enacted in 1988. The new constitution, contrary to urban policy and other policy sectors such as education and health, did not set up a preferential hierarchy for organizing housing policies (Arretche & Rodriguez 1999). Nevertheless, it gave the capacity and responsibility to municipalities to develop housing programmes. During the 1990s a variety of housing policies were developed across the 5,564 municipalities and some of them aroused interest and gained national and international recognition.

Rio de Janeiro's housing policy started to be developed in 1993, gaining national and international interest during the 1990s; in particular, due to the implementation of Favela-Bairro programme which aimed to turn favelas into neighbourhoods. However, during the first decade of the 2000s, it faded and Favela-Bairro was abandoned. The existing literature has focused on actor interests (political will) and ideas (paradigm change) to explain this evolution (Bahia 2000; Broudehoux 2001; Randolph 2004; Silva 2006; Simpson 2013; Fiori & Brandao 2010; Burgos 2003), overlooking the role of "policy instruments" which also shape policies (Lascoumes & Le Galès 2004). Moreover, the existing literature has paid little attention to Rio's housing policy decline, during the first decade of the 2000s (Soares & Soares 2005; Brakarz et al. 2002; Aduan & Brakarz 2004; Rojas 2004; Magalhaes & Conde 2004; Cardoso 2002).

Aiming to address these gaps, this paper explores Rio's housing policy "making and breaking processes" through the analysis of slum upgrading "instrumentation" (Lascoumes & Le Galès 2004). The paper conceptualized the Favela-Bairro Programme as a "meta-instrument" i.e. an instrument constituted by two or more instruments (Lascoumes & Le Galès 2004). Through this analysis, the paper seeks to build a more comprehensive understanding of Rio's housing policy development and erosion, completing the existing analysis on interest and ideas. Beyond Rio de Janeiro's case, this paper aims to contribute to the broader debate on the entities and processes which shape policies such as the one promoted by policy motilities studies that focus on the role of socio-material assemblages in the mobilization of policies (Baker & Temenos 2015). The paper also aims to contribute to the debate on the renewal and expansion of urban theory through the study and theory building from urban phenomena in the Global South (Roy 2009; Robinson & Roy 2015). This paper contributes to this conversation (and task) by analysing Rio's case on housing policy development and erosion, from which novel conceptual landscapes could be constituted, expanding urban theory.

To operationalize the analysis, the paper mobilized Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) which is one of PPI's theoretical roots (Lascoumes & Le Galès 2004), and understands the "social" as a heterogeneous network of human and non-human entities (Latour 2005). Building on this understanding, it considered Rio's housing policy instrumentation as a translation process, involving humans and non-humans entities. Thus, the paper focused on tracing this mechanism that resulted in the constitution and then erosion of Rio's housing policy. Subsequently, through "detective work" conceptualized as a hermetic method by Latour and Serres (Austrin & Farnsworth 2005), it traced Rio's slum upgrading "translation mechanism". Accordingly, the paper unfolded slum upgrading associations through a micro processing of data that allowed the reconstruction of Rio's housing policy instrumentation sequence of events. Using municipal archives, semi-structured

interviews and policy documents, this process resulted in the production of a chronological “thick description” that shed light over Rio’s housing policy constitution and erosion processes.

Throughout this description, the paper reveals how the instauration and use slum upgrading, fostered by a policy landscape marked by accumulated experience and specific cognitive and normative frames, crucially supported Rio’s housing policy development. It also shows how the use of slum upgrading fostered the emergence of controversies about Rio’s housing policy, influencing its erosion during the first decade of the 2000s. Based on these elements, the paper suggests that political will and administrative changes were important but not decisive in the making and breaking of Rio’s housing policy. The description proceeds in two steps: the first unfolds Rio’s housing policy making while the second its breaking.

The paper seeks to contribute to the debate about “the range of forces which shape how policies are formulated, altered, legitimated and contested”, and in particular “the role of local histories and political traditions in shaping urban policies”. This by highlighting through the analysis of Rio's case the role of “local policy landscapes” and policy instruments.

© Hector Becerril

Paper presented at the RC21 International Conference on “The transgressive city: Comparative perspectives on governance and the possibilities of everyday life in the emerging global city” Mexico City, 21-23 July 2016. <http://rc21-mexico16.colmex.mx/index.php>