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FROM GOD TO MEN: MEDIA AND THE TURBULENT FIGHT FOR RIO'S FAVELAS

ABSTRACT

Engaging neo-Marxist theorizing from Benjamin and Williams through Deleuze and Lefebvre, we trace media culpability in the continuing transformations of Rio de Janiero's favelas. Using *City of God* (2002) as a starting point we outline a corporate global media blitzkrieg that flows through Rios' successful attempt to attract the 2016 Olympics to a point where institutional authorities are able to place Pacification Police within favelas. With a specific focus on the favela of Santa Marta, we look at the way pacification is about occupying streets and reigning in youthful passions, and we point to ways that young residents fight back through Visão Favela, and how the media component of that grassroots organization moves beyond Santa Marta to embrace a larger swathe of Rio's favelas.

> "… a single, irresponsible flow of images and feelings."
>
> Raymond WILLIAMS, 1974, 86

Directed by Fernando Meirelles and Katia Lund, *City of God* (2002) depicts the escalation of violent crime in a *favela* on the western outskirts of Rio de Janeiro from the late 1960s to the beginning of the 1980s. The movie focuses on the ways young people and, in particular, young children, are enveloped in gangster lifestyles. It looks at some youngsters' attempts to break away from those lifestyles and at police attempts to break the gangs. The main protagonist of the movie escapes the ravages of gang violence by becoming a photographer for a local newspaper. His ability to get candid photographs of notorious gang-members (his neighborhood pals) ingratiates the young photographer with the newspaper editors. The connection between media and the disturbances and transformations in Rio's *favelas* provides one point of departure for this essay. The second point of departure comes from the theme of *violence* and *staying put* as it is immortalized in the *City of God* tag-line: "Fight and you'll never survive… Run and you'll never escape." Our focus is the last two decade's fight for Rio's *favelas* and media culpability – for both good and bad – in that fight.

The spectacular success of *City of God,* and the subsequent television series and sequel film *City of Men,* is important for Rio in three ways. First, it coincides with the creation of the *Unidades de Policia Pacificadora* or Pacification Police Units (UPP) that began occupying the city's *favelas* from about 2008 and, second,

the depiction of cleaned-up and gentrified *favelas* coincides with Rio's successful bid for the 2016 Olympic Games in 2009. The third reason that the success of *City of God* is important revolves around the part it plays in stimulating grassroots activism, including media activism, in response to the excesses of the UPP.

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO THE CITY: STREETS AND MEDIA

Welsh novelist and Marxist social critic, Raymond WILLIAMS (1974) spoke to the *flow* of media and the ways television's continuous sequencing affected him after a transatlantic trip to Florida. James HAYS (2009) points out that WILLIAMS' anecdotal quip about 'flow' has not been interrogated fully in deployments of the term by other media theorists and critics. Many dwell on the formal and aesthetic implications of flow while missing some of its affective and political consequences. Although WILLIAMS did not elaborate fully on feelings and politics in the book where the anecdote appears, he nonetheless notes that television is not just about technological change in communications and media, it is about change in socio-spatial assemblages that situate domesticity (privacy) increasingly at a distance from everything else while nonetheless connecting private sites with each other globally. He coined the term "mobile privatization" (1974, 20) to articulate the changing and geographically uneven interdependencies between social space and media space. The link between the "irresponsible flows" mentioned in our epigram and a regime of mobility and privacy suggests an important connection to the construction of networks of power that disenfranchise the urban poor. It holds up the image of gentrification in the global south wherein walled and gated communities provide secure privatopias for the urban rich who remain connected to the metropole, while the poor occupy increasingly marginalized and dilapidated housing, and unhealthy living conditions (LOW 2000; CALDEIRA 2001). It also suggests a control of knowledge through media that protects the rich and the private sphere. How these media are mobilized and used to further disenfranchise the poor is an important subject of this essay.

This essay is also about hope, and the provocation to act. Leftist Harvard law professor Mark TUSHNET (1984, 1363) critiques liberal theories of rights as a stultified moment that "capitalism's culture has given us." Alternatively, he argues that engagement should not be about rights but about how to fight for life, health and decent housing. In a provocative series of essays, Noel CASTREE and his colleagues (2010) note that democracy is something that only a small minority of the world's people enjoy, and the point is that this social and geographic inequity must change. The hopeful part of our essay comes from the ways grassroots activism enables disruption of corporate media. To the extent that corporate media is an irresponsible flow of images that generates certain kinds of feelings, we argue that a grassroot grasp on media, however tentative, creates turbulence in the flow. In the 1930s, Walter BENJAMIN (2008, 391) wrote about the problems of consumer society and the creation of dull, inarticulate masses. This "barbarism" must be reversed, he says, and in a later essay he talks about the

ability of new media (for him, radio) to "not only orient knowledge toward the public sphere, but also simultaneously orient the public sphere towards knowledge" (BENJAMIN 2008, 404).

BENJAMIN's ideas are theorized more fully by Gilles DELEUZE (1986, ix) notion of the *affection-image,* which articulates an ontological connection between the virtual, the intensive and the actual. This is picked up by Arturo ESCOBAR (2008) when he argues for *redes* as networks or assemblages that open up the possible of transformative action in the face of blistering and relentless attacks by corporate and colonial capitalism. Life and social movements, he points out,

> are ineluctably produced in and though relations in a dynamic fashion…Images of *redes* circulated widely…in the 1990s [in the global south]…represented graphically as drawings of a variety of traditional fishing nets, lacking strict pattern regularity, shaped by use and user, and always being repaired, *redes* referred to a host of entities, including among others social movement organizations, local radio networks, women's associations, and action plans (ESCOBAR 2008, 26).

With this essay we focus on the *redes* of *Visão Favela*, a grassroots organization in the *favela* of Santa Marta (a *favela* that was particularly isolated thorough 'pacification'), and its attempt to wrestle control of popular media from the authorities who mobilize the UPP. BENJAMIN's notion that *truly popular interest is always active* comes together with DELEUZE's ontology and ESCOBAR's activism to bring clarity to how media work in Rio's *favelas*.

Santa Marta may be understood as the focus of Rio's fight for the right to the city. Henri LEFEBVRE wrote a convoluted and dense essay on the people's right to the city, which later became part of his *Writing on Cities* (1996). Arguing that the laboring body is central to the way cities work, LEFEBVRE noted that bodies have the capacity to create cities in which a wide range of desires, including sexual desires, are realized. LEFEBVRE's humanist hope was that people create cities that fulfill their bodily needs and desires, but his Marxist fear was that abstract representations deployed by architects' and planners' over-coded spaces create a de-corporealized city (HUBBARD 2006, 103). The context of gentrification and privatization further mummifies the corporeality of the people's city. What we will show below, is that the way Rio's *favelados* – *favela* residents – are pacified is very much about removing desire through sanitized control of music, radio and other media. Ironically, however, it is this very embodied passion and desire that Rio has capitalized upon in their 2016 Olympic media campaign. With the slogan, "Live your passion," the campaign celebrates the exuberance of global youth while squelching that same youthful exuberance amongst the city's urban poor. In a very DELEUZIAN and BENJAMINIAN sense, Santa Marta counters this ironic and authoritarian irresponsibility by creating desire and a corporeal city through counter flows of images, sounds and feelings that cause turbulence.

In what follows, we discuss the changes to Rio's favelas from the time of *City of God* and the creation of the UPP. The metaphor of Guiliani's sanitized *Times Square* becomes the paragon of a single, irresponsible flow of images and feelings that disrupts the lives of poor *favelados*. We look at the corporate media blitzkrieg

around Rio's bid for the 2016 Olympics. We then turn to the ways authorities crack down on *favelados'* culture and media, with a particular focus on Santa Marta, and how *Visão Favela* resists this onslaught. We finish by bringing this work on media together with ESCOBAR's ideas about "epistemic borders," where activists produce knowledge and shuttle it "...back and forth alongside the modernity/coloniality, universality/pluriversality interface" (2008, 12-13). By so doing, we argue for a flexible account of media that produces hope and transformation in an age of crisis.

PACIFICATION POLICE UNITS

Every day young men from Rio's *favelas* are murdered, both by gang members and by the police (PERLMAN 2004). Much of this violence is highly gendered, racialized and classed, disproportionately affecting poor, African-Brazilian males (WACQUANT 2008; COSTA VARGAS and AMPARO ALVES 2010). Age also plays into this violence, as demonstrated by the renowned 1993 police execution of eight sleeping street children, known as the Candelaria massacre, which painted a particularly grim picture of one of the city's past attempts to sanitize its streets. Rio's violence is largely territorial-based, as drug gangs and police fight for control of the city's impoverished *favelas*. The *favelas* are over 900 in number, many of which ascend the city's steep slopes and provide limited access to essential services such as water and electricity. With one of the highest income gaps in the world, many of Rio's *favelados* are left with few options other than to eek out a living in the stigmatized urban informal sector. Others, particularly youth, turn to the more lucrative drug trade as a key strategy for household reproduction (WACQUANT 2008).

Mainstream media refer to Rio's *favelados* as *los marginais* – or 'the marginalized', a highly stigmatized word used to denote the "shiftless, dangerous ne'er do well" (PERLMAN 1977, 92) or alternatively, as home to *los bandidos* and their criminal accomplices. Media representations of *favelas* portray them as cesspits of violence harboring dangerous criminals, while protests against police violence are delegitimized by the presence of those associated with the drug trade. Meanwhile, women, children and elders are depicted as imprisoned in their homes, too fearful to leave lest they become victims of gang violence (see PERLMAN 2004). While some truth is found in these representations, particularly due to the reality of the city's extraordinary violence, few of these media representations capture the resilience of residents, nor their grassroots efforts, such as those demonstrated by *Visão Favela,* to organize against longstanding social, economic and political exclusion.

Santa Marta is one of Rio's oldest *favelas* and is located in the heart of the city, nudged up against some of the area's most valuable real estate. It is home to approximately 10,000 residents, housed in 1,000 to 2,000 hillside homes. Perched so close to Rio's beachside condos and key tourist spots, Santa Marta has become a prime target for 'pacification' and state-led gentrification. Along with the City

of God, it has also become a symbol of the poverty and inequality suffered by Brazil's poor, most famously so in Michael Jackson's 1996 music video, 'They Don't Care About Us'. Lyrics from this video include: "I am the victim of police brutality, now; I'm tired of bein' the victim of hate; You're rapin' me of my pride; Oh, for God's sake I look to heaven to fulfill its prophecy; Set me free." Jackson's decision to film Santa Marta sparked great controversy among city authorities, as they declared the video would damage the city's ongoing efforts to rehabilitate its global image. Residents, however, welcomed the film crew in the hopes that Jackson's representations would bring greater awareness of their impoverished conditions (SCHEMO 1996).

Figure 57: Favela und Hochhäuser

Like many cities around the world, Rio is attempting to revamp its urban image in order to out-compete would-be urban contenders for both tourists and investors. Rhetoric promoting the perceived success of zero tolerance policies from New York City[35] has prompted many cities around the world to not only crack down on crime, but also 'regenerate', 'redevelop' and 'restructure' (SMITH 2002; LEE *et al*. 2008). SMITH (2002) argues that gentrification and revanchist urbanism – a punitive, right wing reaction against the poor in order to reclaim the city for the middle and upper classes – has become a global urban strategy connected to the spread of globalization and neoliberalism. While these types of policies have spread throughout the global north (MITCHELL 1997; BOWLING 1999; HERMER and MOSHER 2002; BELINA and HELMS 2003), they are increasingly gaining momentum across the global south, including in Shanghai (HE 2007), Mumbai (WHITEHEAD 2008), Santiago (LOPEZ-MORALES 2010), Mexico City (MOUNTZ and CURRAN 2009) and Guayaquil (SWANSON 2007). Yet, when punitive policies are implemented in the global south where socio-economic inequalities are severe, the spread of global urbanism is worrying. In Brazil the implementation of these types of policies is particularly problematic due to pervasive and deeply entrenched inequality. WACQUANT (2003, 198) argues that New York-styled urban policies "will have dramatic and far-reaching consequences on the social fabric of state-society relations," particularly in Brazil, one of the champions of Giuliani's zero tolerance policies.

Perhaps the most evocative representation of Rio's attempt to remarket itself as an important global city was its successful bid to host the 2016 Olympic Games. Leading up to the bid launch, Rio hosted the 2007 Pan-American Games,

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[35] In the mid-1990s New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Police Commissioner William Bratton launched a 'zero tolerance' campaign to crack down on the homeless, graffiti artists, squeegee kids, street youth and all those perceived as unsightly blemishes on the streets. These policies took inspiration from WILSON and KELLING's (1982) controversial Broken Windows theory, which suggests that intensive policing of low-level, anti-social behavior leads to an overall reduction in crime. This theory has since been widely critiqued (SMITH, 1998; BOWLING, 1999; HARCOURT, 2001; MITCHELL, 2003), yet it remains highly touted as a key municipal crime reduction strategy.

an event widely viewed as a critical test run for the city's impending bid. While mega-events can be used to mobilize resources for poorer neighborhoods (and are often touted as opportunities to do so), the reality on the ground differs. As stated by Raquel ROLNIK, a planning professor at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil, "unfortunately, the dominant approach we have seen with mega-events is that they are part of the machinery of the territorial exclusion of the poor" (cited in RIOS 2010). As demonstrated with mega-events around the world, including the Beijing, Vancouver and the forthcoming London Olympics, troubling social problems are often erased from the public view in order to avoid the critical gaze of an international audience. Instead a sanitized and cleansed image of the city is packaged and delivered. Yet, the implementation of these cleansing strategies varies in style; Rio's approach prior to the Pan-American Games was particularly punitive and brutal.

In June 2007, a large-scale police operation was conducted in a series of *favelas* on the city's northern periphery known as the *Complexo do Alemão*. In what would later be dubbed the "*Complexo do Alemão* massacre," over 1,000 police officers invaded the community on June 27th and killed 19 civilians. Of the deceased, 11 had no relation to the drug trade and the federal government later conceded that several bore bullet wounds were consistent with execution-style killings. Following a week of international headlines, condemnation from human rights groups worldwide, and speculation that the invasion was related to a desire to 'secure the city' prior to the Pan-American Games, Brazilian President Lula da Silva visited the *Complexo do Alemão* and gave an impassioned speech declaring state-*favela* relations would no longer be 'business as usual.' By this, da Silva was referring to, on the one hand, the state's near total neglect in providing social services, infrastructure, and basic necessities like running water, electricity, and sanitation to many of the city's *favelas*. While on the other hand, the president was also referencing over 25 years of an oft-criticized state security policy that propelled periodic violent incursions into narco-controlled *favelas* by police forces. Typical police invasions oftentimes consist of high intensity gun battles that left untold numbers of innocent civilians wounded or dead. Once the police operation was concluded, the unit traditionally departed the community thus ultimately leaving the traffickers once more in charge (COSTA VARGAS and AMPARO ALVES 2010; WACQUANT 2008).

da Silva spoke on the site that was the latest symbol of Rio's failed security policy, a new series of initiatives were introduced that would not only garner more positive media attention going into the Pan American Games, but also radically alter state-*favela* relations for years going forward. In terms of infrastructure and social services upgrades, da Silva pledged to direct R$1.2 billion from the federal government's *Programa de Acelerao e Crescimento* – Acceleration and Growth Program - (PAC) for *favela* upgrading. For da Silva, supplying basic services to communities in need was the best way to undercut the power of trafficking organizations: "If the state doesn't fulfill its role and does not provide services for the people," he said, "drug traffickers and organized crime will. We want people to have road access, street lighting, hospitals and schools" (BBC News 2007).

In addition to redressing the government's neglect in supplying infrastructure and social services, newly elected state governor Sergio Cabral and secretary of state security Dr. Jose Mariano Beltrame began crafting an alternative set of policies to counter the "invade-shoot-leave" approach that had brutalized the city's *favelados* over the last 25 years. Their solution was to create a series of community-based police units, consisting of younger, less battle-hardened, better paid, and better trained officers who were placed permanently in the *favelas*. Beltrame named his alternative police corps the *Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora* (UPP), or Pacification Police Units. Drawing parallels to the frontier mentality used by gentrifiers in New York City (SMITH 1996), the UPP was tasked to "pacify" the *favelados*, seemingly perceived as wild, savage and in need of taming. Theoretically, the UPP addressed several deficiencies of the preceding policy. First, an in-situ police force would both remove the presence of armed traffickers from the community and preclude the need for future violent police invasions. Second, a state security presence hypothetically allows the chronically neglected infrastructural improvements, social projects, and basic services to be implemented without interference.

It would not take long for the government to take action. In November of 2008 Special Forces invaded the *favela* of Santa Marta wresting control away from the local drug gang. One month later, the first UPP battalion was installed in the community. Between December of 2008 and June of 2010 a total of twelve *favelas*, with a combined population of well over 150,000 people, had UPP units in place. By this time, it was estimated that over 15 percent of the city's *favela* population was under UPP control (the government wants to double this figure by the end of the 2010). Authorities have publicly stated their desire to have UPP forces in each of Rio's more than 900 *favelas* by the time the Olympic torch arrives in 2016. The extent to which Rio's *favelas* will actually be 'pacified' by 2016 remains to be seen. The government's track record in comprehensively deploying infrastructure and social projects is poor. Historically, a small number of *favelas* have tended to receive the majority of NGO and government resources, thus contributing to deepening inequalities (CAVALCANTI 2007).

Seventeen months into the UPP initiative, it appears a calculus of risk and social visibility, informed by both damaging global headlines and the impending 2016 Olympic Games, is engendering the spatial distribution of Pacification Police units. As of June 2010, 'pacified communities' appear to fulfill one of the three following criteria. First, and most apparent, *favelas* lying adjacent to the wealthy neighborhoods and tourist districts of Rio's South Zone have been expressly targeted, including Santa Marta. Second, once the *favelas* proximate to the South Zone's wealthy areas had become thoroughly 'pacified,' the government shifted its focus to the middle-class neighborhood of *Tijuca*, in the North Zone. Coincidently, *Tijuca* also happens to be the site of several Olympic venues, including *Maracanã* Stadium, home of the opening and closing ceremonies. Finally, UPP forces have been placed in several of the city's more infamous *favelas*, at least in terms of media exposure, including, famously, City of God.

Figure 58: Karte Zonen Olympische Spiele

MEDIA FLOWS AND THE ENERVATED CITY

Although it is difficult to thoroughly assess a program still in its infancy, there has been one conspicuous and indisputable effect of Rio's UPP program: the media discourse emanating out from the city has changed. The international press corps assembled in Rio no longer sends stories about police massacres, extra-judicial killings, or the latest narco turf-battles back to their home bureaus in North America and Europe. None of the over 100 *favelas* still run by extra-governmental militias has received significant international press coverage in the last 12 months. One would also be hard pressed to find a recent story in an international daily documenting the city's extraordinarily high murder rates and/or the vast numbers of civilians Rio's police force continues to kill each year.

Instead, the global media have focused their collective gaze on Rio's new security initiative: the Pacification Police. Globally renowned media outlets such as *Newsweek* and The Economist have come to Rio in the last year to report on the UPPs. And by in large, they have liked what they've seen: "A magic moment for the City of God" reads the title of a June 2010 Economist article singing the praises of the UPP's presence in the City of God. They continue with a woman from the Cidade de Deus who states, "It was horror before…Now the children can play in the streets." While the article does include some skepticism regarding persistent police corruption, this is diminished as belonging to a "dreadlocked unemployed welder" and his friend, "who has the blank stare of a crack addict" (Economist 2010).

Mainstream media outlets have tended to position the efficacy of the UPP program in laudatory terms. As the vanguard of the UPP operation, Santa Marta has received the majority of this attention. A casual reading of press clippings on Santa Marta over the last 16 months would have the reader believe upwards of 95 percent of residents prefer the UPP to the drug traffickers: one year into the operation not a single resident has complained about police abuse or unwarranted searches. The reader might be led to believe the 'pacifying police' are indeed a kinder and gentler version of the notoriously corrupt, abusive and violent institution responsible for over 2,400 civilian deaths between 2007–2008; many of those killings thought to be extra-judicial according to Human Rights Watch. "Rio police show new face in battle-hardened slums" reads the title from a *Reuters* January 2009 article. The media have also been keen to voice the opinion of government authorities, like Rio state governor Sergio Cabral who recently told the New York Times: "The testimonials I have received from the people that have been freed from the parallel power are just incredible. We are now free from terrorism. Finally, governor, I can sleep at night (New York Times 2010)." Testimonials from actual Santa Marta residents, however, have been few and far

between in the major international and domestic dailies. From the outside looking in, then, the Unidades da Policia Pacificadora appear to be the solution to the city's now infamous image problem of narco-territorialized slums, uncontrolled violence, and egregious levels of police abuse.

Yet, the same casual reader of Santa Marta press clippings might have been quite surprised if they were in the community in March of 2010, when a large rally was held to contest the illegality of UPP policing practices. Representatives from Humans Rights Watch, the Public Defender's office, and the Residents Association were in attendance to witness over 2,000 pamphlets passed out to community residents detailing how to resist police misconduct, illegal searches, and other human rights violations. The pamphlets, put together by Santa Marta's grassroots community organization, *Visão Favela*, in coordination with local lawyers and human rights groups, was the product of 15 months of perceived excessive UPP police abuse. Youths were illegally arrested for not carrying identification cards. Houses were illegally searched. A few residents, primarily adolescent males, were stopped and searched as many as 10 times in one day. For one Santa Marta resident, the UPP were no different than the notoriously brutal Military Police: "it's the same truculent police that walked up the hill in the past, the same police who abused the residents. It's the same, no differentiation at all" (Cultura NI, April 2010).

In addition to the excesses of 'community policing', Santa Marta residents are also subjected to an acute form of social and cultural displacement. Soon after the UPP consolidated in the community they banned hip-hop performances and the extremely popular community dance parties known as *Baile Funks*. The *Baile Funk* is a *carioca* cultural phenomenon both born and practiced almost exclusively in Rio's *favelas*. It is a vibrant youth culture of no small significance to *favelados*, as evidenced by the following description of the *baile* by its principal ethnographer Paul SNEED (2008, 60): "At its core, funk music is a transformational and countercultural practice through which these young people experience a sense of unity and find a greater sense of courage to resist the wearying effects of the harsh realities they face on a daily basis." The UPP, however, claims *Baile Funks* are little more than venues for drug distribution and they are therein justified in prohibiting this vibrant musical practice. *Pagode*, *Samba*, and other 'traditional' forms of musical expression enjoyed mostly by older members of the community are still allowed. Meanwhile, youth are left with few outlets for diversion.

The UPPs regulate other social events in the community. Parties, festivals, and cultural events must now be negotiated with the police. Itimar Silva, founder of Santa Marta's youth outreach program *Grupo Eco*, wrote an open letter to Santa Marta residents in June of 2010 criticizing the UPPs suppression of cultural activities and other 'festive events' beyond hip-hop and funk:

> It is increasingly clear that their goal is the territorial control of the favelas and the imposition of a behavioral pattern defined as good and right by the police. So if the residents behave "properly" according the standards of the police, they have access to the benefits (public

policies) offered by the state and implemented from the UPP, and, perhaps, celebrations, within the limits predefined by the police (Visao Favela, June 2010).

In imposing control measures such as these, the UPP crushes desire and passion of Santa Marta's youthful residents.

LEFEBVRE's spontaneous and corporeal city contains the right to urban life, but authoritarian power regards spontaneity as the enemy and so, by crushing youthful desire and passion from Santa Marta's urban life, then so too a vital spark and the possibility of the political is removed. When *Visão Favela* published on its website a picture of the smiling and youthful Chief of Police for Santa Marta's UPP holding a 2016 Olympic flag before an iconic Rio backdrop it did so as an ironic gesture with the intent of creating media turbulence.

Figure 59: Polizist mit Olympiafahne

Residents of Santa Marta also complain about a phenomenon known locally as *remoção branca*, or white removal. *Remoção branca* is a guised form of economic displacement in which the community is suddenly subjected to an unceasing wave of new expenditures and rent increases beyond the means of many long-term residents. According to Santa Marta resident MC Fiell, the founder of *Visão Favela*, since the UPP arrived in Santa Marta in December of 2008 a typical apartment, which would have rented for about $150 *reais* prior to the UPP, now costs upwards of $400 *reais*. The UPP also abruptly shut down Santa Marta's previously free access to electricity and cable television. Residents are now forced to pay what community residents complain is a widely fluctuating and expensive electricity bill. The majority of Santa Marta residents simply do not have the disposable income necessary to absorb an extra $300 to $400 *reais* in expenditures per month. Many residents either earn near the nation's minimum wage of $465 *reais* working service sector jobs or they are employed in the increasingly volatile informal sector. *Visão Favela* estimates at the very bare minimum a single person would need $570 a month to live in Santa Marta. Those unable to meet the new economic demands are either displaced from the community or forced to move in with neighbors or family members. For Fiell, *remoção branca* is nothing more than a slightly more nuanced version of the same *favela* displacement policies the Brazilian government has used regularly over the last 100 years:

> Politicians are changing their theories of policy. Previously, they spoke to, literally, removal of slums. Today the policy is not to say that we will remove, but they are going to do is make things more expensive … The policy goes, though not literally, moving people from Santa Marta. (Cultura NI, April 2010).

It is not unreasonable to imagine that a large percentage of renters in the community may be forced to move if current rent and utility prices remain constant. Thus, slum removal policies have shifted to more insidious gentrification strategies (SLATER, 2008).

In each of the *favelas* occupied by the UPP since 2008, the government has also promised 'social occupation' consisting of significant government investments in social services such as health clinics, schools, and community centers. In Santa Marta, government funds have indeed been distributed to a number of projects. For example, a new soccer pitch and a transportation cable linking the bottom of the hill to the top were built. Yet, a large amount of government expenditures poured into the community between December of 2008 and June of 2010 have been geared towards 'security measures'. For instance, some three million *reais* were spent to build a large Gaza-esque wall around the perimeter of the community. Although portrayed as an eco-barrier to prevent Santa Marta from expanding further into the surrounding Atlantic rainforest, residents perceive it as an attempt to segregate and hide the slum from adjacent beachfront condos, particularly in light of the forthcoming Olympic Games (Darlington 2009). Along this newly-built wall, a graffiti artist asks: *muro para quem*, wall for whom? (see CALDEIRA, 2001). An additional half million *reais* went into installing surveillance cameras throughout the *favela*. As of June 2010 no new schools, health clinics, or cultural centers have been built. The government's priorities could not be clearer: to ensure the police occupation and pacification of the community prior to rolling out any type of 'social occupation.'

Figure 60:Besprayte Mauer "Muro para quem?"

The government's and mainstream media's complete lack of interest in either addressing or highlighting the threat of displacement in Santa Marta suggests the *status quo* will continue unless community-based interventions can successfully resist the de-localizing and de-corporealizing effects of state intervention. In the following section we discuss attempts to resist displacement by constructing an alternative politics of place based on articulations of difference, emergence, and with respect to local cultural and economic practices. Particularly important for *Visão Favela* construction(s) of Santa Marta as a 'figured world' (ESCOBAR 2008), has been a series of activist media projects that the group distributes through its various networks.

MEDIA TURBULENCE AND THE EBULENT CITY

> The point of Visão Favela is to show our reality to the rest of the world. Because, formerly, it's always been people from the outside that come here and make things up about the inside (Fiell, Personal Interview, June 2010).

ESCOBAR (2008, 65) argues that strategies for battling displacement

> should take as a point of departure an understanding of resisting, returning, and re-placing that is contextual with respect to local practices, building on movements for identity, territory, and autonomy wherever they may exist.

More specifically, he is interested in the ability of activist groups to create 'figured worlds' in which those local practices, culture, and identities are deployed effectively enough to create a visible (spontaneous, emotional and corporeal) space for authoring which may contest the current dominant representation(s) of that place. Or, to put it differently: to create turbulence in WILLIAMS' irresponsible flows of images and feelings.

Visão Favela – the 'vision of the *favela*' – was launched in Santa Marta in 2007 as a platform for residents to express their views of life in the community. The initial post on their activist weblog was titled: *a vision that many do not see*. By this, the organization was referring to the everyday cultural and economic practices, feelings and images that reproduce life in Santa Marta, yet are rarely included in mainstream representations of the *favela*.

"If you do anything with culture in the *favela*, the media doesn't want anything to do with it," explains Fiell (*Personal Interview*, June 2010). To redress this imbalance, *Visão Favela* works towards circulating images of the community's indigenous cultural activities – such as hip-hop, *capoeira*, art, graffiti, etc. – through information and communication technologies (ICTs), cinema, and traditional journalism.

Figure 61: Junger Mann vor Graffitiauge

For an organization that receives no government or NGO financial aid, *Visão Favela* has been quite successful at producing a high volume of grassroots media projects. In 2008 they completed a short documentary, *788* (a reference to the number of steps it takes to walk from the base of Santa Marta to the top), emphasizing the social realities of living in Santa Marta. The film, which Fiell describes as representing the "total geography of the *favela*, from those that live up high to those that live at the bottom," was screened in Holland where it won several awards. A new short film, *Winged Kite*, is in production. Several hip-hop albums and music videos have been independently produced; the songs use consciousness-raising lyrics to discuss both the productive capabilities of *favelados* and the various forms of discrimination they suffer. The organization also distributes a free community newsletter/fanzine showcasing the artistic talents of Santa Marta youth. The fanzine was "born of the need to reproduce the truth" about *favelas* and is dedicated to "sharpening the minds of young people and adults" (Visao Favela, April 2010). In addition to these media projects, *Visão Favela* currently sponsors a poetry project, study groups, a web-based television channel, and a community library entitled 'Evolution.' Each of these projects is electronically linked and accessible through the organization's central network node, and an activist blog www.visaodafavelabr.blogspot.com, thus making materials readily available for public consumption. *Visão Favela's* grassroots media blitz is productive in the sense that it works towards assembling an alternative visuality of the *favela*. It engages in a struggle over the construction of place identity.

Echoing WILLIAM's 'mobile privatization', ESCOBAR (2008, 32) approaches conflicts over the production of locality as being tantamount to two conflicting, yet at times mutually constitutive 'processes of localization'. On the one hand, there are the dominant forces of the state, capital, and mainstream media which attempt to "shift the production of locality in their favor," thus ultimately creating "…a delocalizing effect with respect to places." In the case of Rio's *favelas*, dominant flows of media representations, from the cottage industry of '*favela gangster films*' to the news reports which only write about *favelas* when they turn violent, flatten the meaning of the '*favela*' and exported it to such an extent that each of Rio's more than 900 *favelas* do not have identities of their own. Rather, they are each the *favela* of *City of God*, bounded war-zones filled with trigger happy adolescents, drugs, and inescapable poverty. Place, de-localized. Prior to the UPP's 2008 arrival in Santa Marta, this domineering form of localization, scaled-down onto each of Rio's *favelas*, was the very thing *Visão Favela* sought to resist.

One informative and paradigmatic example of *Visão Favela's* resistance is the music video for the *788* rap song. The video's initial scenes show a series of zoomed-out, panoramic images of Santa Marta's exterior that are reminiscent of how the community is most often gazed upon by the mainstream press: from the outside peering in. The following shot is then filmed from the vantage point of a helicopter, again invoking the frequently consumed 'birds eye' visuality of the *favela* most commonly used by TV news stations when they cover flair-ups of violence in community. This is LEFEBVRE*'s representation of space* (1991, 50) "…in thrall to both knowledge and power…adolescence perforce suffers from it, for it cannot discern its own reality therein: it furnishes no male or female images nor any images of possible pleasure." Soon thereafter, however, the camera is thrust into the interior of the *favela* where a slew of cultural activities are occurring. This shift, then is to LEFEBVRE*'s representational space,* which is embodied, sensual and intimate. Youth are shown in the public spaces of the community making art, practicing hip-hop dancing, and playing *capoeira*. Various sorts of musical performances are taking place in the *becos* (alleyways) and *pracas* (squares) of the *favela*. Young children, for example, are drumming samba beats, adolescents are playing the guitar and bass, and a twenty-something male is playing the *berimbau* (a string instrument used in *capoeira*). A large group of residents are shown encircling a break-dancing crew as they perform in one of the community's larger public spaces. And, finally, Fiell and his crew are found rapping at the summit of the *favela*. In all, over 30 actual residents of Santa Marta are shown in the six minute video clip, and none of them are using or selling drugs, carrying a weapon, or appear to be related to organized crime in any sense. Rather, they are living with passion and spontaneity, while children are playing with impunity in the streets, all of this is contrary to the image the mainstream media presents.

The *favela* of *788* is reminiscent of the corporealized city of Henri LEFEBVRE: a self-built community with abundant public spaces for fulfilling the bodily needs and desires of its residents; yet still untouched by planning professionals,

architects, and the state. The video invokes the pleasures of the community through highlighting its everyday cultural practices. Critically, the desires of *788's* protagonists are realized as they are (in)placed within the physical space of the *favela*; its *becos*, *pracas*, and *quadras*. Their bodies find pleasure in these self-built community spaces, free from either territorializing, drug gangs or morally regulating pacification units. "In as much as adolescents are unable to challenge either the dominant system's imperious architecture or its deployment of signs," writes LEFEBVRE (2001, 50), "it is only by way of revolt that they have any prospect of recovering the world of differences – the natural, the sensory/sensual, sexuality and pleasure."

The arrival of the UPP engendered new and unique sets of dislocating media images, over-coded with sterile abstractions of youthful, Olympic vigor. The mainstream media presented post-UPP Santa Marta as a safe, idealized model-*favela* full of pacified and appreciative *favelados*. Laudatory television reports about the community almost always use the evocative image of one particular section of the *favela*, *Praca Cantao*, which was recently painted in an array of tasteful colors by two Dutch painters.

Figure 62: Bunte Favelahäuser

For Fiell, the circulation of these gentrified images, which he refers to as "the beautiful movie that TV Globo loves to show about Santa Marta (*Personal Interview* June 2010)," is one reason wealthier outsiders are increasingly interested in coming to Santa Marta to purchase housing and thus elevating property values. As the effects of the UPP in Santa Marta and other communities became more apparent, *Visão Favela* began devoting an ever increasing share of its media space to raising consciousness about this new reality.

First, *Visão Favela* began expanding its activist networks in an attempt to more thoroughly cut through the media's tacit endorsement of the UPPs. The group has been particularly successful at creating both vertical and horizontal links with other networks. For instance, on the one hand, they have created vertical networks with law firms, NGO's, and Human Rights organizations in order to both ensure that the constitutional rights of Santa Marta's citizens are upheld and to create solid links with institutions capable of airing the communities' grievances to government officials. Partnerships have been formed with Amnesty International, Global Justice Brazil, and The Center for the Defense of Human Rights amongst others. On the other hand, *Visão Favela* attempts to export their localized knowledge(s) on how to fight against displacement (economic and cultural) and police abuse to other communities facing similar circumstances. For example, their *Cartilha Popular do Santa Marta*, a 32 page booklet vividly illustrating citizen's constitutional rights as they relate to illegal police actions, has been distributed to a number of other *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro and beyond. The group has also gone on several lecturing tours at local colleges to raise consciousness about the UPPs. These events have typically consisted of a film screening and lecture, followed by a brief hip-hop performance.

Second, *Visão Favela's* blogspot has become the *de-facto* site of UPP resistance journalism. The organization works hard to fill in the absences left by mainstream media's venerating depiction of 'pacified *favelas*'. Residents from Santa Marta and other UPP occupied *favelas*, for example, can be found on the website giving testimonials about conditions in their communities via podcasts. "The truth about the UPPs on the Morro da Providencia" is the title of one such podcast given by the president of the residents' association of Morro da Providencia, a recently pacified *favela*. Any instances of abuse suffered at the hands of the Pacification Police are also reported. For instance, an article was recently written about the strip search and subsequent detention of famous Brazilian film director Rodrigo Felham in the City of God. Felham, the story reports, was leaving his house for Cannes, France to screen his latest film when the police accused him of carrying illegal drugs or guns and demanded he pull his pants down in the presence of other residents of the community. Finally, members of *Visão Favela* write consciousness-raising essays discussing a range of topics. Themes have included everything from racial and class discrimination, to the connection between (direct) *favela* removal policies of the past and the contemporary context of *remoção branca*.

THE FIGHT TO STAY PUT

With this essay, we demonstrate the ways that civic authorities close down and pacify Rio's *favela* streets in the wake of a mainstream media blitzkrieg that was touched off by the city's desire to attract the 2016 Olympics. The image event of violent *favelados* as famously portrayed in *City of God* is used as a reason to create further spectacular images and policies as foils to the vibrant, sensual, corporeal practices of everyday *favela* life. The policies that created the Pacification Police Units are successful to the extent that the *favela* streets are patrolled and controlled, and local spontaneity and passion is dampened. Challenging these dominant forms of localization and emerging from the epistemic borders of place-based conflicts, are what ESCOBAR (2008, 32) refers to as subaltern forms of localization: "place-based strategies that rely on the attachment to territory and culture." *Visão Favela's* grassroots media activism, then, can be understood as a series of subaltern acts attempting to construct an alternative visuality of their *favela* against the over-coded '*favela*' of *City of God*. In this sense, LEFEBVRE's (1991) *representations of space* take on a different twist as mainstream media use a particular form of coding to create spectacle, and policy makers use the same coding to justify the repressive tactics of the UPP.

For LEFEBVRE, the corporeal city is a spontaneous city. More than likely, LEFEBVRE would have sided with TUSHNET's (1984) critique of rights-based liberal theories in favor of more immediate action. In the face of oppressive UPP measures, *Visão Favela* provides an immediate reaction. It flares, amongst other things, a spontaneous turbulence in the flow of sanitized corporate media and this has the capacity of a prodigiously creative force. "Power", wrote LEFEBVRE

(1996, 70), "regards spontaneity as the enemy." LEFEBVRE's Marxist politics saw the street as the public place where spontaneous resistance, contestation and revolution occur to transform everyday life. Powerful institutions fear the street, and create forces like the UPP to cordon it off, and dampen its passions. Streets are explicitly political, but they are also localized, and a symbol of only "partial practice." Andy MERRIFIELD (2002, 87) notes that if spontaneous street-contestation is the strength of political uprising, then it is also its weakness because streets can be controlled by powerful institutions. Media has the capacity to fill this political void, providing a fuller practice that is mobile, that is hard to cordon off and pacify; a practice that creates turbulence in the flow of irresponsible global media.

In the face of UPP's attempted enervation of Santa Marta's youth culture, *Visão Favela's* successful disruption of mainstream media – 'to set the story right' – creates new forms of youth passion and desire. Pacification of *favela* streets is followed by a dangerous ebullience from young people through the media of *Visão Favela*. And because it is difficult to cordon-off these new media, there is leakage to other *favelas* and other young people. In so doing, *Visão Favela* embraces Escobar's desire for place-based *redes* that are ill-fitting and constantly in need of repair but are also indomitable. *Visão Favela* creates that immediacy and a desire to stay put that is based on corpulent local passions rather than contrived and anesthetic Olympic aspirations.

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