Gundo Rial y Costas*

➲ Spaces of insecurity? The *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro between stigmatization and glorification

Introduction

Despite democratization of the Brazilian political system during the 25 years following the end of military rule, the foundations of Brazil's democracy have to be described as "precarious", contributing to a "disjunctive democracy" (Holston 2008), characterized by networks of corruption and clientelism, state violence and an extremely unjust distribution of and access to wealth and territory. Through a constant rewriting of Brazil's nationhood as an imagined community with a supposedly "racial democracy", the historical roots of this "disjunctive democracy" have been marginalized for a long time. However, the legacy of colonial practices – including the slave trade – can still be perceived today, for example through spatial arrangements tied to a specific form of ethnic segregation. This issue is discussed by social movements but not placed at the heart of public debate, which tends to subsume Brazil's social and spatial inequalities, as well as patterns of segregation, under the issue of public insecurity. A central ingredient of these debates is a focus on *favela* settlements. Due to the presence of drug-trafficking networks and a media discourse portraying these settlements as spaces of crime – a process which is accompanied by spectacular cultural aestheticization in literature and movies – the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro have acquired a public image in which they represent *favelas* throughout Brazil, producing simultaneously a homogenization and stigmatization of these urban settlements.

Departing from a perspective which conceives of *favelas* as dynamic constructs, this paper aims at reconstructing the production and circulation of some of their most relevant mediascapes.[1] Emanating from an understanding of space as socially constructed by subjects and their practices (De Certeau 1988: 218), I will try to disentangle the different connections between *favela*, *baile funk*, a specific *funk* gesture, drug-trafficking and policing by drawing on empirical fieldwork and following approaches of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1998). As the "real" and its representation are in a constant process of appropriation and staging, the mediascapes of *favelas* and their actors will be ana-

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[1] Referencing Appadurai's approach of conceptualizing the disjunctures of the global cultural economy in so-called "scapes", mediascapes describe image-centered, narrative-based accounts of reality in which the "real" and fictional are often blurred (Appadurai 1996: 33f.).

lyzed by comparing the two Brazilian movies *Cidade de Deus* (Mereilles 2002) and *Tropa de Elite* (Padilha 2007). But before that, I will first address the formation and invention of *favelas*.

The formation and invention of *Favelas*

The term *favela* is quite complex. First, one may speak of a linkage between geographic, ethnic and social markers, which often homogenize *favela* inhabitants as black (Afro-Brazilian) "criminals" from peripheral "spaces of evil". Second, there exist regional variations between *favelas* across Brazil (Lucarelli 2008: 49), and even in Rio less than half of the *favelas* are controlled by drug-traffickers. Third, the term may also refer to the inhabitants' positive identification with the settlements (Valladares 2005: 150). Fourth, semantic references to these forms of housing often function in a kind of double bind: not in all parts of Brazil will they be linked to drug-trafficking and insecurity in the first place, but the often bloody images from the *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro will be evoked on a connotative level. Finally, there is a homogenizing tendency in international debates which tends to subsume *favela* under the label of *slum* (Davis 2007) along with similar marginalized settlements all over the world.

Looking at these five points, there is a need for differentiation in order to avoid the unjustified homogenization of different settlements. Statistics show that there are between 600 and 900 *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro (Valladares 2000b, Valladares 2005, Lopes de Souza 2000) ranging in size from 15,000 residents in Prazeres to 200,000 in Maré, and there are stark differences between them, as some of the residents have a higher income than an average household in many regions of North-East Brazil (de Oliveira 2007: 16). That is why *favelas* with schools, medical services, their own newspaper, radio etc., have been termed *neofavelas* in order to differentiate them from extremely precarious forms of settlement (Oliveira 2007: 12). The same applies to differences within a *favela.* As Licia Valladares puts it succinctly when referring to one of the biggest *favelas* of its kind in Rio de Janeiro, there exist "several Rocinhas inside Rocinha" (Valladares 2005: 21).

Despite these variations, the Brazilian media often represent the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro as monolithic spaces of evil, frequently framed in binaries such as "*favela*" and "asphalt" (outside the *favela*) along with "North" and "South". The latter represents peaceful middle class life, evoking the growth of the centre of Rio de Janeiro around the rather wealthy zones of Copacabana, Ipanema and Leblon in the 1950s and 1960s. The former may be attributed to the fact that the Brazilian north has historically been regarded as the poor part of the city, associated with peripheral exclusion, violence and the supposed Afro-Brazilian origin of its inhabitants. Despite the much higher density of *favelas* in the north of Rio de Janeiro at around 85% compared to 15% in the south, one should not forget that this relation is often represented as one of 100% to 0%.

The historical beginnings of *favelas* might provide some explanation for the prevalent usage of the North-South binary, which serves as a platform for further ascriptions and as a marker of spatial segregation. The earliest settlements of poor people on the periphery of Rio de Janeiro were stigmatized as deficient and marginal – even though they were located in the southern part of the city. What the dissenting accounts of the

construction of the first *favelas* in Rio have in common is that they link spatial periphery to social marginalization and ethnicity. According to these accounts (Valladares 2000a: 64; Valladares 2005: 29; Souto de Oliveira/Marcier 1998: 64), at the end of the 19th century returning soldiers from the Canudos war in North-East Brazil – soldiers who were mainly of Afro-Brazilian origin – settled down on the Morro de Providencia in Rio de Janeiro, where the mayor had allotted them a space on a hill, a *morro*. The hill was re-named M*orro de Favella* after a hill called Favella in the soldiers' home area of Monte Santo in Bahia.

The link between "marginalized people", the returning Afro-Brazilian soldiers, and the space allotted to them seems to be of particular interest. In his monograph *Do Quilombo á Favela*, the geographer Andrelino Campos (2005) links these settlements to already existing ones, the so-called *quilombos*, founded by escaped slaves. Accordingly, one may speak of a conflation of geographically-spatial segregation and somatic features, as the peripheral spaces were already inhabited by particularly groups of Afro-Brazilians before they were joined by the returnees from the Canudos war. This seems to explain the continuation of the strong connection in the Brazilian social imaginary between *favelado* (*favela* inhabitant) and *nordestino/Afro-brasileiro* (from the north-east and dark-skinned).

If one takes a look at historical maps, however, one will discover that at the end of the 19th century, *favelas* could also be found in the south of Rio. At that time, these mostly arid areas were not considered very attractive for urban planning. With a shift in urbanization patterns, triggered by the consequences of the abolishment of slavery and a strong migratory influx, especially from Europe, many of the formerly neglected settlements were converted into the basis of the new urban design of the city. As a consequence, in the 1930s, complaints about these settlements[2] turned into a public "problem", articulated in the language of (social) hygiene. A decree from 1937 illegalized these settlements (Benetti 2009: 186). Stigmatized by this legal segregation, the *favelas* and their inhabitants became the objects of public criticism.

Under president Vargas, disciplinary measures were established in so-called "proletarian parks" (Peralva 2000: 80f.), where *favela* inhabitants were kept under surveillance. In the age of populism, in the 1950s, a relatively uncontrolled mushrooming of these settlements was reported (Valladares 2005: 22). Under the military regime, not much occurred in the way of modernization. The image of poor housing areas with limited access to electricity and drinking water remained. Due to the "social explosion", rising birth rates of *favela* inhabitants and shifting visions of urbanization, entire *favelas* were dislocated and relocated, often from the central and southern parts of Rio de Janeiro to the more distant and less populated parts in the north. This initiated a shift towards a negative perception of the "North". Only in the 1960s did a public interest in *favelas* emerge, spurred by a populist mayor who tried to win the votes of *favelados* by incorporating the settlements into the city (Nunes 1980: 52).

More or less efficient programs for the improvement of living conditions in these settlements were developed from the 1980s on. The most relevant ones were *Morar sem*

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[2]   *Favelas* were mostly inhabited by migrants from the states of Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais and from the north-east (Ríos 1961: 240).

Risco (Living without risk), *Morar Carioca* (Living in Rio de Janeiro) and *Novas Alternativas* (New Alternatives) (Benetti 2009: 164). Probably the most efficient and extensive of these programs, which only benefitted a limited number of settlements, was *Favela Bairro* (Favela Borough) implemented in 1996 with the intention of integrating *favelas* into the city. That was complemented by similar programs for smaller *favelas* such as *Bairrinho* (Little Borough) (Vaz 1994: 54) or *Vida Nova* (New Life) (Chaves Pandolfi/Grynszpan 2003: 52), which tried to reintegrate young school dropouts.

It was not before the beginning of the 21st century that a new law turned *favela* inhabitants into owners of their land (Lucarelli 2008: 50). This approach to land legalization, however, was accompanied by growing prejudice among large parts of the population who saw *favela* inhabitants as a menace to public security, thereby shifting the image of *favelas* as places of suffering to spaces that cause suffering (Vaz 1994: 242). This social stigmatization provoked the development of the *favela* inhabitants' collective identity, which may be interpreted as a defense mechanism against being labeled residents of "illegal cities within the legal city" (Valladares 2000a: 64).

The spatialization of *favelas*: drug-trafficking and the police

Whereas the preceding section offered a brief historical perspective on the genesis of the *favela* in Rio de Janeiro's overall urban imaginary, this section will turn to the ways in which the relationship between *favelas* and insecurity is constructed.

In order to address this issue, we have to move back to the 1970s, when a new constellation emerged which was to alter the image and territorialization of the *favela* and its inhabitants. This new constellation was the shift of drug-trafficking from the more central areas to the more peripherally located *favelas*. Drug-traffickers frequently operated from inside state prisons. Under the military government in the 1970s, left-wing activists and "ordinary" criminals were locked up together. Some of these "ordinary" criminals appropriated some of the activists' ideas (Amorim 1993: 319) and formed criminal groups which began to operate outside the prison. The imprisoned bosses of these groups provided released prisoners with financial and logistic support in order to construct criminal networks concentrating on drug-trafficking, but also on car theft, gambling and (bank) robbery (Roio 1997: 117).

Groups such as *Comando Vermelho* (CV) and *Terceiro Comando* took over already existing drug-dealing locations (*bocas de fumo)*, exploited existing illegal gambling networks (Campos 2005: 84) and appropriated new spaces at strategic points in *favelas*. Frequent territorial disputes over the drug-dealing locations led to a bloody war in many of Rio's *favelas* with a clear hierarchic spatialization (Garzón 2008: 86). New commandos, such as AdA (*Amigos dos Amigos*), factionalism inside established commandos, the intrusion of the São Paulo-based *Comando do Capital* and the emergence of various paramilitary groups complete this landscape of criminal territorial control over *favelas* which, until the 1970s, had been described as rather calm and peaceful settlements, even by the police (Peralva 2000: 82).

The state response to this development came in the form of constant police and military raids and involved police, drug-traffickers from the *favela* and politicians in a complex network linked by the *arrego*, the bribes paid to police by drug-traffickers so that

they could sell drugs in certain areas. The formation of an elite police squad, the BOPE (*Batalhao de Operações Especiais*), in 1987, led to further changes, as an increased police presence in *favelas* and disputes with other police units triggered further conflicts over spatial and economic control – in part because BOPE officers share a code of conduct which supposedly condemns any form of bribery (Soares/Baptista/Pimentel 2005: 8).

Favela funk: music, *bailes* and crime?

In this section, I will discuss one specific form of *favela* music and its connection to the actors and the space in which it is produced. This type of music is called *baile funk*, *favela funk* or *funk carioca* and is rooted in *funk* music from the USA.

In the late 1980s, music did much to build national identity when DJ Marlboro brought about a "nationalization of funk" (Essinger 2005) with Brazilian tunes. The music, which until then had been played in the *favelas* of Rio, soon became a national phenomenon[3]. Around the 1990s, *funk* parties were organized every weekend, according to sources in more than 700 hundred different locations in Rio (Viana 1988: 13). Mostly they took place inside *favelas* but also in large music clubs. A prerequisite for these events were massive sound systems. They were rented from so-called *equipes* composed of technicians, DJs, and MCs, and were accompanied by large fan groups, the so-called *galeras* composed of funk fans (*funkeiros*) who followed them to parties all over Rio (Essinger 2005: 27).

One specific event in the 1990s, in combination with new, violent forms of *funk* parties and a specific connection to organized crime led to an "incorrect" semantic extension which established a link between *favelado, funkeiro* and violence. This can be seen as a form of middle-class fear that *favelados* from the northern periphery were invading the middle classes' (southern Rio) space. This fear, in turn, may be attributed to three factors. First, the myth (Herschmann 2000: 96) of the so-called *arrastao* (rampage) in 1992, near Copacabana beach, where different groups of *funkeiros* celebrated their fight rituals. Sources refer to the event as a mass invasion during which several hundreds of *favela* residents supposedly took over the beach, stealing everything they could. However, according to police sources, the only thing that was stolen were some towels (Herschmann 2000: 69; Medeiros 2006: 54). Yet this event was later blown up into a "looting rampage conducted by hordes of dark kids from the slums in the northern suburbs" (Yúdice 2003: 118).

The second factor was the so-called *bailes de briga* (fight parties) that started in the mid-1990s. Although there were not many of these compared with the many *funk* events in Rio, at these parties one-to-one or group combat occurred. Although these events ceased after the turn of the millennium (Medeiros 2006: 67), repeated cases of rape and murder at the *bailes de briga* led to a gradual marginalization of all funk parties, accom-

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3   One has to differentiate between several denominations of *funk* (*funk carioca*, *favela funk* or *baile funk*) and the different subcategories (*funk romantico*, *funk porno* and *proibidao*). In some cases funk tunes address misery and violence, often provocatively accompanied by a bass line, which symbolizes the shooting of machine guns.

panied by attempts to ban them altogether. In any case, the *bailes*, the partygoers and the DJs were stigmatized.

The third factor which contributed to the linkage of *funk* and *funkeiros* with crime and violence is their alleged entanglement with organized crime. According to my interviewees from *favela* settlements, it seems to be the case that a large number of *bailes* in the *favela* are sponsored by criminal organizations who cover the costs of renting the sound systems and paying for the MCs. The subcategory of *proibidao funk* illustrates this very well: banned and censored due to its veneration of violence, drugs and cop-killing, MCs often get paid large amounts of money by the bosses of the commandos for composing their lyrics. Against this background, the next section will challenge these assumptions using my own ethnographic fieldwork at two different funk events in Rio de Janeiro from 2007-2010.

Visiting the *favela funk* world

The first funk event I will describe here took place at *Castello das Pedras*, which is one of the most commercialized *bailes funk* in Rio de Janeiro. My interviewee Wellington told me (March 2008) that the club was controlled by a paramilitary group, which is why drug-trafficking was forbidden there. The parties took place inside a big club, with an average of 1,500 guests, where visitors were searched for weapons before entry. A spatial separation into rich and poor actors is inscribed in the architecture of the venue, which is divided into a ground floor for "normal" people and a so-called *camarote*, a gallery overlooking the club which costs extra money and is equipped with its own bouncer. The majority of the guests at the *camarote* were white middle-class Brazilians and international tourists.

An MC played through the night and offered dance competitions for the spectators. Women were supposed to do "sexy" *funk* moves and men were supposed to take off their shirts. The atmosphere during the funk party was not aggressive. There was so sign of anybody with a weapon, nor was *proibidao* played. According to my interviewees, the majority of the party people came from all over Rio, although the vast majority of people on the ground floor was of Afro-Brazilian origin.

This event can be contrasted with the *baile funk* at Arará, which took place on one of the main streets of the *favela*. There were some street vendors around, but no formal control or security services were present. There was a huge *equipe* with loudspeakers covering the whole street. The music had a strong focus on *proibidao* which glorified *Comando Vermelho*. Almost all of the approximately 300 party guests were of Afro-Brazilian origin and there were no tourists in sight. The partygoers frequently imitated guns with their hands and tossed them into the air when machine gun rattles were imitated by the tunes. No fights could be observed, and I was never approached by anybody. According to my interviewees, this is because the *baile funk* is a community-based event. Therefore many people know each other and are situated within a dynamic of social control. Alex, a resident, adds (July 2010): "The people love to come here, to dance, to drink, to have fun with their friends. Often they wait the whole week for the *baile*. Many of them do not have any other place where they can go for entertainment, because they do not have the money. And here you are safe too."

The *bailes* are organized and paid for by the *Comando Vermelho*, that is why the *bailes* were also free of charge. Every time I went to the *baile*, some of the drug-traffickers were present too. They arrived in groups of up to ten, armed with pistols or machine guns that they held high up in the air. They would *marcar territorio*, that means they "mark territory" by walking around and performing specific dance steps accompanied by their weapons. Sometimes acquaintances of the drug-traffickers clutched at them. The traffickers never attacked or insulted anybody, although the bystanders had to make room for them.

The open space and the rehearsed dance choreography of the dealers seemed to me to be a performed theatre of power, or even a musical one, which began with the "cast" walking on to the stage past the spectators. The only difference was that this happened in a public space rather than a theatre, with "real" social actors performing a specific form of self-fashioning through their appearance in groups, their use of "real" props – such as guns and machine-guns – their appropriation of the space, the "veneration" displayed by some people who clutched at them, and the *mise-en-scène* of producing, appropriating and controlling the territory. Hence the drug-traffickers placed themselves at the centre, as "actors", in contrast to the others, who were temporarily transformed into passive spectators.

Comparing both events one may perceive how the subdivision into rich and poor (or white vs. Afro-Brazilian) is reflected in the two *bailes*. In the first example, a further dimension was added through the vertical aspect of the gallery, which located some people (mostly white) above the others (mostly Afro-Brazilians). The second example from a community event reproduced the structures of the *baile* in that *favela* on a rather equal, horizontal level with the almost exclusively Afro-Brazilian guests – yet with a specific form of territorial control.

Therefore, the above mentioned homogenization of *funkeiro* as criminal has to be refuted as the large majority of the partygoers and *funk* actors were not directly connected to drug-trafficking. Nevertheless, some mechanisms of a specific spatial control could be observed in the second example, as exemplified by two facts. First, the presence of weapon-bearing dealers, openly performing their "duties". Second, the "taking over" of a public street on a weekly basis for the *baile funk* events.

The circulation of a *favela* gesture: *A danca do créu*

This section aims to describe the dynamic between *favela* spaces, local actors and a specific *funk* gesture. In order to show that matters are more complex than a division into north and south would suggest, and to investigate how funk relates to "criminality", for example, possible disjunctures of some of their possible flows (Appadurai 1996: 33) will be highlighted. I shall be discussing the *funk* tune *A danca do Créu* by the *favela* MC Sérgio Costa from Rio de Janeiro, known as MC Créu. The song was launched at the beginning of 2008. Initially a success at *funk* parties in *favelas*, it soon became a nationwide hit. It is a decoded instruction to have sexual intercourse in five different velocities using the fantasy word *créu* accompanied by a *funk* "dance". Following anthropological theory, *créu* has to be regarded as a gesture, because it provides evidence for the embodied basis of thought from the domain of metaphors (Cienki 2008: 16). This is the case as

the gesture consists of a pelvic movement with the arms which clearly simulates sexual intercourse.

In the following, I refer to different scenes and interviews in which I experienced the impact of this gesture. Although a media debate was initiated with reference to the *favela* origin of the MC, including his female dancers around *mulher melancia*, the following examples stress how these pieces of information are often blocked or dubbed by specific forms of appropriation which suppress or stress the signifier "*favela*".

A first example is the Taça de Guanabara football cup final between Flamengo and Botafogo, which took place in the Maracaná stadium in March 2008. Flamengo is the favorite fan club of a large number of Rio's *favela* inhabitants. Some of its players are from these settlements and the Maracaná, the local stadium, is located in the northern part of Rio in proximity to several *favelas*. Inhabitants of these shanty towns often wear their Flamengo T-shirts during the *bailes funk*. This close-knit relationship between music-football-*favela* is further exemplified by favela *funk* tunes that contain samples of the cheering of Flamengo fans, or by DJs wearing their black and red Flamengo shirt during *bailes*. This latter fact serves as context to explain the dynamics of the events following the victory of Flamengo in the last minute of the game. First, the player who scored did the *créu* gesture and was soon accompanied by his teammates. Then, after the game, MC Créu himself, a supporter of the Flamengo football club, started to sing the tune in the stadium. This was accompanied by the entire Flamengo community standing up and imitating the *créu* gesture – children and grandparents included.

The next day, there was extensive coverage of this *créu* performance in the Brazilian press, as a look at the headlines of the front pages of three newspapers from that day reveals: "The Red and Black Créu dance" (*O Globo*, 25.02.2008), "Champion of Créu" (*Extra*, 25.02.2008) and "Flamengo wins the Cup and does the biggest Crééééééu of History" (*O Día*, 25.02.2008). In addition, the latter example onomatopoetically underlines the beat of the *funk* tune with the six-fold repetition of the vowel. Furthermore, in all three cases there are images of the exclusively Afro-Brazilian Flamengo players copying (embodying!) the *créu* gesture. The *créu* gesture was thus established as the victory gesture for Flamengo's football players and fans. It continued to be performed and danced during and after the remaining games of the season, always when the team had scored or won.

The footballers' appropriation of the gesture can be regarded as a metonymic displacement of the *créu* gesture in relation to sexual intercourse (as in "screwing") to a gesture of triumph, demonstrating the inferiority of one's opponent (as in "to screw someone up") as well as the construction of a collective identity that includes the entire fan community while excluding others. In this case, the reference to the *favela* – or underdogs – is denotatively visible as the Flamengo football team is directly linked to the marginalized through the fact that the team consists exclusively of players of Afro-Brazilian origin. On a connotative level, this holds true because of the geographic location of the stadium and MC Créu's live concert there.

Despite all these inscriptions of the *créu* dance as coming from the north and its relation to *favela* and Afro-Brazilian culture, several scenes observed in different regions in Brazil in 2008 showed a distorted disjuncture of the *créu* gesture. A similar imitation of the gesture by people of all age groups – even pensioners spotted at a birthday party and mothers teaching *créu* to their small children on the beach – and other sections of the population could be observed. That held true for upper class people in posh night clubs

in Rio or Sao Paulo, as well as for beach animators during the carnival in Bahia (where one of them was nicknamed "Créu Raffael"). However, in all of these cases the *favela* as the signified "object" was suppressed. This provides an interesting insight into the complexity and deterritorialized movement of concepts and practices, stripped of their original content. This complex situation which has present-day repercussions[4] is elucidated through the following statement by Bianca, a naval studies student from Rio de Janeiro, but a Sao Paulo native (August 2010): "I remember that last year I went to 'Happy News', this posh club in São Paulo, and even there all these *piruas* [chic upper class women] did the *créu* dance. Something like that would not have happened one year ago, as people would have despised it as a *favela* dance. Now they do not care or even think it is hip."

Mediascapes of *favelas* in Brazilian film: Hyper visibility and aestheticization

This last section will elucidate the complex and intertwined linkages of the mediascapes relating to *favela*, *favelado*, and *funk* music/actors by focusing on how they are constructed cinematographically. Imagined and "real" social imaginaries can never be completely separated – as one perceives when returning to the example of the Canudo War and the beginnings of *favela* settlements in Brazil. According to Valladares (2000a: 9) it was only some years after its narrativization in the Brazilian national novel *Os Sertoes* by Euclides da Cunha that the term *favela* entered Brazilian collective memory.

Taking this as a background, a new tendency can be observed: from an early strong interest by Cinema Novo for *favelas*, followed by a silencing, in the new millennium, one may perceive something like a "hyper visibility" (Hamburger 2008: 200). This concept alludes to an almost omnipresent staging and sometimes forced visualization of violence in *favelas* with an appropriation of local images by cinematography. Although contributing to a certain form of representation of subaltern positions, a vast part of these productions aestheticizes the periphery and explicitly links it to drug-trafficking and other forms of crime.

Against this background, I shall try to elaborate the way in which mediascapes of *favela* have evolved in the last few years by analyzing two paradigmatic examples: *Cidade de Deus* (2002) and *Tropa de Elite* (2007). The first film is about the way in which an inhabitant of a *favela* – with a homologous name to a *favela* in the poor part of the western zone of Rio de Janeiro – recounts his life history, and the transformation of some *favela* inhabitants from thieves to drug-traffickers. *Tropa*, on the other hand, shot in the height time after the "*favela* hyper visibility", is a movie about the captain of the BOPE police squad, who invades *favelas* and looks for his own successor.

In *Cidade de Deus, favelas* are represented as remote spaces, with exclusively Afro-Brazilian inhabitants, hermetically separated from the "real" world. In a revealing scene, the "good" drug dealer Bené starts a bike competition with Tiago, one of his clients. After his victory, in which he had to surpass the limits of the *favela*, Bené asks Tiago to

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[4]   Even one and a half years after the Créu hype, in 2009, participants in the Brazilian version of the TV show Big Brother (BBB) were asked to do the *créu* gesture in a competition.

buy him clothes from the city as it would be too dangerous for him to go there. Hence, a clear line of separation is drawn between asphalt and *favelas* with their supposed location in the distant parts of the city. The latter is further accentuated by the fact that Bené is of Afro-Brazilian origin and Tiago is white and red-haired. This contrast is further accentuated by Bené's wish of becoming someone from the "asphalt". When he dies, his hair is blond and he wishes to leave the *favela* with his white girlfriend from Rio's south.

The *favela* mediascapes automatically connect their inhabitants to criminality as exemplified by the triple meaning of "shot": the first and second ones, shooting with a gun and with a football, depict a gang of youngsters in *Cidade de Deus* who distribute money after a robbery and then swap their T-shirts and play football in order to hide from the police. When the police disappear, one of the thugs shoots the football into the air, and pierces it with his gun. This scene alludes to the *favela* inhabitants' dream of becoming famous football players, which are shattered (or "pierced") by a gun, the criminal object. The third meaning, the shooting with the camera by the first person narrator Buscapé, also alludes in an indirect way to crime. Only the documentation of the violent scenes in the *favela* offer Buscapé a job as a photographer outside the *favela.*

The idea of *favela* and distant periphery is therefore represented in a very dense network of relations. On a narrative level, Buscapé tells how his family had to move to the *favela Cidade de Deus*, referencing the urbanization strategies after a landslide in the 1960s. The description of this migration experience suggests the construction of a "new distant world" on three levels: on the level of the motif, it recalls the Jews' exodus from Egypt while ironically substituting "Jews" with "Afro-Brazilians", and "Canaan" with *Cidade de Deus* – by alluding to misery. On an onomastic level, the image can already be found twice in Augustine who asked in "The City of God" (Augustinus 1997 [336]: 95) whether the holy city could be traced from the flood, evoking catastrophe (as in the landslide caused by heavy rainfalls) and the new world, as reflected by the name of the *favela.* Finally, the eroticization of the gaze of the camera, exemplified by the close-up on the body of a pretty Afro-Brazilian girl accompanying the long lines of newcomers to the *favela* settlements, with the Buscapé's voice over – "and we all came because we expected something new" – suggests the latent desire for reproduction and the hope for a continuation of his people. Inside this signifying network one can find a further onomostaic and visual link which dialogs with the first one regarding motif, as one of the gang members of Afro-Brazilian origin is called Paraiba, like the region in north-east Brazil, which therefore turns him into a signifier for the great historic migrations from that region to Rio.

The above mentioned shot can be used as a connecting leitmotif for *Tropa de Elite*: in this film the shot interrupts a weapons deal between the military police and some drug traffickers. It is fired by an intervening BOPE officer. As in *Cidade de Deus*, the shot serves as the cue to retrospectively recount what had happened up to that point. The multiple meanings of the object from which the shot was fired condense the narrative of the film. On an allegorical level, the firearm turns into an agent for the key question of the film, the one over (spatial) control amongst BOPE officials, military police and drug-traffickers, inside and outside the *favelas*. On a symbolic level, the weapon leads to an enquiry about the existing order because it not only symbolizes the law instituted by the police but also the crime committed by the drug-traffickers and the corrupt military police. On a metaphorical level, it alludes to another weapon, the knife in the skull on the

BOPE's logo which symbolizes the officers' supposed life commitment to their battalion, visualized later in the film through the same officer who tattoos it on his arm.

Innovatively, and in contrast to many other films, *Tropa de Elite* depicts *favelas* in the southern part of the city, as one of them, the *Morro de Babilonia*, is the target of a military operation by the BOPE. The film further visualizes the geographic proximity through fluid character constellations and juxtapositions of ethnic markers between asphalt and crime: in Babilonia there is also the headquarters of an NGO run by people who live outside the *favela*. Its white boss runs for a parliamentary seat while having a certain agreement with the gangsters. One of the other NGO members is a white student in a prestigious university, who also has an arrangement with the drug-traffickers to buy marihuana which he sells at university.

The linkage of *favelado*-Afro-Brazilian-criminal develops into a two-fold solution in this film: as already revealed by his name – Baiano means "from Bahia", a state in the rather poor north east – Baiano plays the stereotypical cruel drug-trafficker of Afro-Brazilian origin as so often represented by the media and also evokes the character of Paraiba from *Cidade de Deus*. Yet at the same time, André, one of BOPE's officers, is black too and studying law at the prestigious Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, amongst exclusively white students. Coming from a humble background, his destiny is juxtaposed with Baianos' destiny and contributes to this complex new "hyper visibility".

In sum, in different ways and with the exception of the police as new "*favela* actors", the mediascapes of both films contribute to the imaginary of the *favela* as a place of crime and evil. However, in *Tropa*, at least it is highlighted that *favelas* are not only located in the center of the media leading to a certain kind of a *favela* hype, but also of Rio's geography, different to the marginalizing mythologizations of *Cidade de Deus*.

A focus on two concrete scenes may further elucidate the connections between crime and *favela funk*. In one of the first scenes of *Tropa de Elite* during a *baile funk* in the Babilonia *favela*, there is a montage of the BOPE symbol with images of girls in mini-shorts dancing sensually to *funk* music and drug-traffickers lifting up their arms. This scene is connected to a wide shot of an approaching group of teenage boys arriving at the party who imitate with their hands the arms alluded to in the tune. This represents a liquid signification chain ranging from police squad, the sexualization of *favela funk*, crime and its staging.

The second scene features the MCs Cidinho and Doca as masters of ceremony. Their appearance works very well to explain the reproduction of the above mentioned entangled power relations: first, Cidinho and Doca, both of Afro-Brazilian origin, represent a famous funk duo and the dream of social advancement – the link to real life is particularly stressed as the musicians play themselves. Second, in this scene they sing *O Rap das Armas* which links drug-trafficking to its glorification extrinsically through lyrics about the invasion of a rival *favela*, and intrinsically through the imitation of a machine gun salvo accompanied by samples of Eric Clapton's "Cocaine". Third, it shows the spatialization of *funk* music and crime as the MCs are paid for their gigs by members of the drug-trafficking commandos. Sometimes musicians are even obliged to play *proibidao*. *Fé em Deus* (Faith in God) expressed by Cidinho and Doca in the *funk* tune may be judged as such a decoded tribute, because it is the slogan of Comando Vermelho. This highlights the way in which *funk* as a *favela* practice is constructed as a desired commodity, celebrated by people inside and outside the communities while tied to the power asymmetries inside the *favela*.

Conclusion

Models of periphery and center do not hold true in the conception of the different linguistic, social, geographic and medial constructions of *favelas*. Already of a complex spatial distribution, they are further constructed in polyvectorial ways through social actors, media debates, music lyrics, movies and gestures. Nevertheless, the frequent repetition and reproduction of *favela* terms may deepen dualistic ideas of "margin(al)" and "centre". The term and its imaginaries have been linked to ethnic (Afro-Brazilian) and geographic (north, implying north-east Brazil and north Rio) markers and have been subject to stigmatizations (poor, marginal). That these ascriptions are of a more complex nature is demonstrated by the fact that the first *favela* as well as the first *baile* were located in the southern zone and not in the northern one.

The generalized image of drug-trafficking as located in *favela* settlements is a further erroneous assumption, that of being "criminal" as *a pars pro toto* for all *favela* inhabitants and settlements. However, in some *favelas* drug-trafficking led to a new spatial order with complex relations to the military police and the BOPE. Up to a certain point, *baile funk* has contributed to this image of the *favela* as a place of crime, although it has also led to a certain form of glorification of the settlements. Once again an erroneous *pars pro toto* led to a stigmatization of *funk* and *funk* fans (*funkeiros*), due to the generalizations and exaggerations of the media and a certain link between *funk* parties and drug-trafficking. But, as highlighted in the ethnographic section of this article, the *bailes* as well as its actors are as heterogeneous as the different *favelas*. They are frequently quite peaceful community events, although they might reproduce practices of segregation by establishing specific forms of armed control.

A specific *baile funk* gesture (*A danca do Créu*) helped to elucidate the complex mechanisms at hand when such cultural practices flow. These gestures may easily transcend the rigidity of categorizations according to geographic or ethnic origin, sometimes even stripped of their original meaning. The consequences, however, will not necessarily help to do away with prejudice against *favela* actors and their settlements. It can be argued that it may be described as a translation process in which *favela* expressions are transformed into deterritorialized commodities. The different mediascapes in cinematography show the intertwinement of linkages between *favela*/*favelado* from Rio de Janeiro's north of Afro-Brazilian origin with "criminal". Although depicting some aspects of *favela* life, *Cidade de Deus* as well as *Tropa de Elite* both contribute to an aggravation of the existing difference between asphalt and *favela*, as their messages suggest the erroneous equation: *favelas* = almost all *favela* inhabitants in all *favelas* are connected to drug-trafficking. One may definitely speak of a tendency towards aestheticizing crime in these films, staged through a "hyper visibility" of Afro-Brazilian *favela* inhabitants. Yet a certain form of deconstructing the north-south binary can also be observed.

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