

Large-scale Urbanization and the Infrastructure of Religious Diversity in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract

This article argues that the diversification of the religious landscape in the favela of Rio de Janeiro is closely linked with its historical and current governance constellations, the production and regulation of its infrastructures, and the materiality of its urban spaces. To this end, this study first lays out how the modes of regulation governing the favela and its infrastructures have developed historically in the dynamic interrelationship between residents, local actors, and state apparatuses. Using four adjoining favelas as an example, I analyze the religious transformation in recent decades as it is reflected in the history of the favelas as well as in the precarious nature of its infrastructure and socio-economic conditions. I suggest that the entrepreneurial self-made religion created by ordinary favela residents should be understood as an infrastructure, in the sense that it works as a platform that provides for and reproduces life in the favela. Finally, I will show that the authoritarian implementation of a large-scale public infrastructure program within this configuration not only further entrenches a historically developed power structure based on violence but also specifically curtails those religious infrastructures that the inhabitants have created themselves in accordance with their needs.

Keywords: Rio de Janeiro, favela urbanization program, pentecostalism

For almost a century, the residents of Rio's irregular favelas, which have their origin in land occupations, had to fight to get their settlements recognized as official neighborhoods and granted the right to regular infrastructure services. Not until the municipal master plan of 1992 and the implementation of the urbanization program Favela-Bairro, which was in effect until the mid-2000s, did the preservation and regular urbanization of the favela become official government policy. Since 2007, Brazil's Growth Acceleration Program (PAC) has been investing billions into the creation of urban infrastructure in some select favela complexes. Eventually, in 2010, in anticipation of the 2016 Olympic Games, the municipal government created 'Morar Carioca', "the country's largest favela urbanization pro-

gram", whose aim was to promote "social inclusion through the complete and permanent urban and social integration of all favelas in Rio by the year 2020" (Prefeitura do Rio de Janeiro 2011). Simultaneously, an extensive security program was launched that was supposed to permanently "pacify" the favelas, beset as they were by the (drug) war between equally murderous gangs, militias, and military police forces.

In a parallel development, the favelas, which have historically been dominated by a popular Catholicism, have seen the emergence of a new religious diversity. They play a central role in the dramatic transformation of religious life in Brazil, which has brought with it an enormous increase in religious diversity. The proportion of evangelical Christians in the country has risen

from 6.6 percent in 1980 to 22.2 percent in 2010 (IBGE, 2012), and in the first decade of the 21st century alone, the proportion of Catholics in Rio decreased from 61.2 to 51.2 percent of the population (IPP, 2013).

In the favela, where the majority of inhabitants are Afro-Brazilian, the transformation of the religious landscape was an ambivalent process in that the new diversity of Christian communities was accompanied by the disappearance of the afro-syncretic religions. Until the end of the 1990s, the saints and supernatural beings of Candomblé and Umbanda were part of the favela's religious everyday life under the umbrella of a Catholicism which, albeit predominant, was theologically rather lax. It was primarily the rise of Pentecostalism that ended this religious coexistence because „the new Pentecostal churches refuse[d] to accept the status of a minority and syncretic religion under the protection of a wide and powerful Catholic identity” and “demand[ed] a new form of religious pluralism” that would grant “all religious groups equal rights before the state” (Birman and Leite 2000: 274). In addition, they refused a peaceable coexistence with the Afro-Brazilian religions in particular, which they regarded as Satanic cults.

Today, the religious landscape of the favela is dominated by a large number of highly dynamic and often independent (neo-)Pentecostal church communities that compete with each other for believers. They have embedded themselves into the material, social, and symbolic space of the favela and have become an integral element of its urban everyday life. The Afro-syncretic religions, in turn, were aggressively attacked as pagan by the Pentecostal churches and ousted from the favela. Their priests were forced to either renounce their religion or leave the favelas and reopen their places of worship on the periphery of the city (cf. Birman 2009, Vital da Cunha 2009). Many of their former adherents converted to Pentecostalism. The Catholic Church, for its part, hardly plays a role anymore in the everyday life of the favela.

Against the backdrop of these two parallel processes, this article attempts to show that the diversification of the favela's religious landscape is closely linked with its historical and current governance constellations, the production and regulation of its infrastructures, and the materiality of its urban spaces. To this end, I will first lay out how the modes of regulation governing the favela and its infrastructures have developed historically in the dynamic interrelationship between residents, local actors, and state apparatuses. Using four adjoining favelas as an example, I will then analyse the religious transformation of recent decades as it is reflected in this history as well as in the precarious nature of the favela's infrastructure and socio-economic conditions. I suggest that the entrepreneurial self-made religion created by ordinary favela residents should be understood as an infrastructure in the sense of a “platform that provides for and reproduces life” in the favela (Simone 2014a: 408). Finally, I will show that the authoritarian implementation of the government infrastructure program PAC within this configuration not only further entrenches a historically developed power structure based on violence but also curtails specifically those (religious) infrastructures that the inhabitants have created themselves in accordance with their needs.

Following Birgit Meyer, I understand religion as “a mundane as well as world-making social-cultural phenomenon” that in the city has “a strong material presence via objects, pictures, sounds, styles of dress, buildings” (2014: 595). Processes of religious diversification have transformed the religious landscape of the favela into a “terrain of micro-politics of everyday life that rework notions of solidarity, connectedness, and competition” (Burchardt and Höhne 2015: 4). As an urban experience and condition, I understand diversity, for the purposes of this paper – following Susanne Wesendorf –, as “common-place diversity, referring to ethnic, religious and socio-economic diversity being experienced and perceived as a normal part of social life [...] by local residents, and not as something particularly

special” (2010: 8). Historically, the favela may have been largely homogeneous on a national scale; nonetheless, it has always been marked by a highly dynamic diversity of ethnic and racial positionings, ways of life, and socio-economic statuses, all of which find their expression in everyday life.

In addition to the religious dimension, I will also analyze – taking my cue from Steve Graham and Colin McFarlane (2014) as well as AbdouMalik Simone (2004a, 2014) – the role and significance of urban infrastructures from an everyday perspective. The term ‘infrastructure’ is taken here to mean not only “socio-technical apparatuses and material artifacts that structure, enable and govern circulation” (Burchardt and Höhne 2015: 3) but, in a broader sense, a “complex social and technological *process* that enables – or disables – particular kinds of action in the city” (Graham and McFarlane 2014: 1). I will analyze this process for the favela by way of looking at the interaction between religion, modes of governance, and urban materiality with regard to the question of “how people produce, live with, contest, and are subjugated to or facilitated by infrastructure” (ibid.: 2).

Investigation of this question reveals that “the distinction between infrastructure and sociality is fluid and pragmatic rather than definitive. People work on things to work on each other, as these things work on them” (Simone 2014: 33). The favela, too, is – as Simone has noted with regard to African cities – „characterized by incessantly flexible, mobile, and provisional intersections of residents that operate without clearly delineated notions of how the city is to be inhabited and used” (ibid: 2004a: 407). Historically, the favela inhabitants have been forced to produce their urban environment in a self-organized and collective manner beyond official patterns of urbanization and socio-technical infrastructures. It was this informal collaboration that generated the diverse conjunctions between the social, the economic, the political and the material, between spaces, objects, technologies, people and practices that “become an infrastructure –

a platform providing for and reproducing life in the city” (ibid.: 408). It makes sense, therefore, “to extend the notion of infrastructure directly to people’s activities in the city” (ibid.: 407).

Governing and Urbanizing the Favela

The institutions of the modern city have always treated the irregular favelas – which today are home to 23 percent of Rio’s inhabitants – as alien (IPP, 2012). Historically, they have responded to its existence with two complementary governing techniques that have constructed the favela as ‘other’ and that, according to Zygmunt Bauman (1999: 37 f.), are characteristic of “a war of attrition against the strangers and the strange” in the modern state: The “strategy of assimilation” seeks to eliminate all differences through absorption; it was enacted by the state and the Catholic Church in the form of authoritarian re-education programs geared at assimilating the favela residents without granting them full civil rights. The “strategy of exclusion”, by contrast, aims to annihilate or exclude the ‘other’; it expresses itself in the state of exception to which the favela residents are subject. Until the 1980s, it manifested itself in recurring attempts to methodically erase the favela. Later, the strategy of exclusion survived particularly in its guise as lethal police tactics in the ‘war on drugs’ (Lanz 2012). To this day, the processes of the favela’s democratization, juridification, and urbanization are accompanied by the violent rule of drug cartels, police forces, and militias. In addition, the relationship between state and favela is still dominated by a clientelism exercised by corrupt authorities. The status of the favela as a regulated squatter settlement is thus shaped by “multiple and competing sovereignties”, by “fiefdoms of regulation or zones of ‘no-law’” (AlSayyad and Roy 2006: 1).

The favela’s right to urbanization was to be realized, beginning in 1994, through large-scale urbanization programs which invested massively into the infrastructure of many favelas (cf. Freire-Medeiros, 2013). The introduction of “pacifying police units” (UPP) in several dozen favelas since December 2008 promised a significant change

from the hard-line strategy of exclusion that the state government had employed in the 'war on drugs' But in many favelas, it turned out to mean months of military occupation and an authoritarian state presence reminiscent of a police state.

All these programs cooperated with the residents' associations and organizations that have their roots in the favelas' fight for survival. These associations have established essential infrastructure in collective self-help efforts and have enabled the inhabitants to act as subjects with autonomy over their day-to-day lives – subjects who have produced cultural practices and economies in their own right and self-governed their living environment employing an informal normative system outside the realm of civil society (Lanz, 2012). This informal mode of self-governance was then co-opted by the authorities, who made use of pre-existing clientelistic structures to involve these associations in state programs that opened new possibilities for corruption and obstructed the development of formal local democracy (Machado da Silva, 2002: 232). This process was further exacerbated by the fact that the heads of these associations, who acted as informal mayors, were increasingly installed by the drug lords (who, since the 1990s, had ruled most of the favelas) and coerced under threat of violence to represent their interests vis-à-vis the state. The drug gangs (so-called *comandos*) thus became secret partners of the municipal administration in the implementation of the urbanization schemes (Lanz 2012). According to Elmar Altvater and Birgit Mahnkopf, these technologies of power can be understood as part of a neoliberal governmentality in which the state de-formalizes itself in a regular as well as an irregular way. In this manner, "informal policy and illegal practices of violence go together" (Altvater and Mahnkopf 2002: 301).

Informality in the favela can, on the one hand, be understood as an "urban way of life" (AlSayyad 2004) that engenders new forms of urban citizenry or politics. Following Simone (2004b), we can understand it as an infrastructural practice by which the inhabitants of cities

with insufficient resources make use of all means available to them to generate those resources themselves. Bayat (2004: 90) calls such forms of self-governance, by which the "urban informals" seek to enhance their living conditions, the "quiet encroachment of the ordinary." Such quiet encroachment encompasses all kinds of individual and collective struggles and activities that in situations of urban marginality aim at "the redistribution of social goods and opportunities" and the attainment of autonomy "from the regulations, institutions and discipline imposed by the state" (ibid.). On the other hand, as rightly argued by Roy (2009), urban informality is not merely a grassroots phenomenon but a power relation. For even in informal settlements, the state is a central actor with its own interests and actively sets in motion informal urbanization processes through selective regulatory mechanisms. To the extent that the state itself acts as an "informalized entity", "the formal and the legal are fiction rather than the norm" (ibid.: 84).

This dual meaning of informality is useful for gaining an understanding of the ways in which the favela is produced and governed and of the infrastructures and materialities that shape it (cf. Lanz 2016). In the shadow of an arbitrary rule by state institutions which, on the one hand, subject the favela to a state of exception while on the other seeking to integrate it into the urban fabric by means of large-scale urbanization programs, a self-made urbanism is unfolding that is marked by precarity, self-organized regulation, and the above-mentioned "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" (Bayat, 2004).

Four Favelas: History, Materiality and Local Power Structures

At the time of my research (2010-2012), the four closely interconnected favelas of Nelson Mandela, Samora Machel, Mandela de Pedra and Nova Mandela (the latter two of which have since been torn down) were located an hour's bus ride from Rio's tourist landmarks, in the city's Zona Norte, and home to a total population of up to 10,000 people. This part of Rio is characterized

by simple residential areas and heavy industry or, in many cases, merely its remnants in the wake of massive de-industrialization. The four communities are part of Manguinhos, a favela complex consisting of 15 settlements that has its origins in an illegal land occupation almost a hundred years ago. Today, Manguinhos, whose Human Development Index score is one of the five lowest in Rio – which makes it one of the lowest in all of Latin America – has approximately 31,500 inhabitants (cf. Peçanha da Trindade et al. 2008, Cavalcanti 2014)¹.

The cluster of four favelas discussed here was located next to a refinery and bordered by two foul-smelling canals and an arterial road that had been the site of innumerable drug gang shootings and had a reputation for being one of the most dangerous places in Rio. The settlements of Nelson Mandela and, a bit later, Samora Machel were established in the 1990s and were initially conceived as municipal social housing complexes designated to house workers and homeless people from the neighboring high-risk flooding areas. The new estates and their infrastructure were designed to comprise a bit under 800 duplex houses. Within a few years, they became “favelized” through irregular extensions, the appropriation of vacant spaces, and the organized occupation of adjacent wasteland. Before long, the now high-density settlements were dominated by multi-story brick buildings with a rudimentary infrastructure whose maintenance the authorities no longer considered themselves responsible for and whose administration in effect passed over into the hands of the residents’ associations. Mandela de Pedra, by contrast, which had its origins in the organized occupation of adjoining vacant land, remained an extremely makeshift community to the last, with basic brick buildings and shacks put together from found materials leaning into each other to form a labyrinthine

structure. The settlement had no sewage system and was crisscrossed only by a few footpaths. Conditions were similar in the newest of those squatter settlements, which sprang up in 2005 on the premises of a stripped factory and was named Nova Mandela.

All four of these settlements organized themselves in residents’ associations, *associações de moradores*, which – if they are officially registered, as was the case here – represent the favela vis-à-vis the authorities. Technically, their presidents, informal mayors of sorts, have to be democratically elected, but in a favela ruled by a drug gang, they will in effect be appointed by the gang. This was the case in all four of these communities, which were ruled by the *Comando Vermelho* (CV), the oldest drug gang in Rio. Since the chief (“*dono*”) of the local drug clan was serving a long prison sentence, he had appointed a second-in-command who ran local business and ruled the four favelas. This man saw himself as in charge not only of the drug business but of the entire favela (personal interview, 2010.18.05). He claimed that his “administration” was based on a business management approach to the drug trade that entailed avoiding, to the degree possible, random violence and clashes with the police that were bad for business. In his view, his role as the CV’s acting number two involved dispensing as well as enforcing local justice according to his own understanding of justice and order. The majority of residents considered him a “good bandit” and a level-headed ruler (cf. Lanz 2016).

During the time I was conducting research, the official representative of all four favelas was the president of one of the four residents’ associations, who at an earlier time had been involved in the drug trade himself and had been appointed by the imprisoned *dono*. Only one of the other associations was not under his direct control; its president was married to the imprisoned drug lord’s brother, who ran a minibus company for the *Comando*. This means that the favela’s three most powerful men – the *Comando*’s second-in-command, the operator of the minibus company owned by the *Comando*, and the official repre-

¹ This text is based exclusively on the situation as I found it during the period of my empirical research, which was concluded in March 2012. In October 2012, the four favelas were occupied by military police and the UPP, which ended the rule of the drug gang.

sentative of the residents' associations – were directly accountable to the drug lord.

The only self-organized political association, apart from the residents' associations, was the *Fórum Social de Manguinhos*, which had been established in 2006 with the purpose of representing the residents' interests vis-à-vis an urbanization program that was taking shape at the time and later came to be implemented under the name PAC. Supported by the Osvaldo Cruz Foundation, which supports public health and social development in Brazil academically and politically, the *Fórum* emerged from residents' initiatives that had sprung up around CCAP, a local social and cultural center which for years had been exploring development options for their settlements through meetings and school children's action groups as well as through local history, mapping and video projects.

Religious Diversity as a Favela Infrastructure

As in other favelas, the most obvious change in the religious landscape of Manguinhos has been the steadily growing number of (neo-)Pentecostal church communities and their adherents over the course of the past few decades. In the four communities discussed here alone, the number of non-Catholic churches grew from three Christian communities founded shortly after the establishment of Nelson Mandela and Samora Michel to 27 in 2009, i.e. within a single decade. While the churches founded earlier were official parishes of the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* and the *Assembleia de Deus*, the majority of the later ones were independent, founded by local religious entrepreneurs who were often lay people with no theological training. Since many of them did not succeed in gathering enough members or resources to survive, these churches came and went.

The only Catholic church in the four communities was in Samora Machel, but since it was part of a parish located in an official urban district nearby, even long-time favela residents had never met the *padre* in charge. As in other favelas, the temples and rituals of Candomblé and

Umbanda that had still existed in the 1990s had been banned, their previously ubiquitous public presence thus obliterated. The traffickers ruling the favela had forbidden at least two priests (*mães de santos*) to practice their religion. In line with a general tendency in Rio's favelas within the last decade (cf. Vital da Cunha 2009), the drug bosses had begun to consider themselves Pentecostal believers and to 'help' the churches expel the possession cults.

Although most of the new congregations did not belong to one of the established evangelical churches (such as the Baptists) but to the Pentecostal movement, they differed in terms of their organizational structures, their affiliation with larger mother churches, their degrees of formality and autonomy, their position vis-à-vis the drug complex, and the religious programs they offered to their members. Some of them disseminated the Prosperity Gospel preached by neo-Pentecostalism, among them two parishes of the globally active *Deus é Amor* and one of the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*, the flagship of Brazil's neo-Pentecostalism, founded in Rio in 1977. Various congregations operated under the umbrella of the *Assembleia de Deus* (Assembly of God), which has been present in Brazil since 1910, or affiliated themselves with one of its many splinter groups. In the four communities, affiliation with the *Assembleia de Deus* could take either regular or irregular form. In the former, the mother church either sent a trained minister from outside the favela to an official favela parish or gave lay preachers the option of completing some basic clerical training and have their already existing parishes officially recognized. The latter, by contrast, usually consisted of a lay person founding their own church as a mini-enterprise and trying – since they had no theological education – to give it more credence by wrongly claiming affiliation with the high-profile *Assembleia de Deus*.

Their different stances towards the ruling drug gang split the churches into two camps: official parishes usually refused contact with active gangsters, while irregular entrepreneurial church

communities tended to maintain some form of contact, ranging from blessing “drug soldiers” for a fee to receiving regular financial support from a drug lord (cf. Lanz 2016).

Location marked another difference. The official churches were usually located along the main roads of the established favelas of Nelson Mandela and Samora Machel, while seven of the eight operational churches in Mandela de Pedra and Nova Mandela (which were later to be razed) were extremely precarious establishments. Their pastors were lay people who, driven not least by economic motives, had appointed themselves church founders. They all had between 20 and 30 members and competed for adherents – who would provide the pastor’s livelihood by paying the Biblical tithe – in an increasingly embattled religious marketplace. This competition brought with it the constant risk of failure but also the continuing establishment of new church communities and hence a high degree of dynamic religious diversity.

In the favela, religious interpretations traditionally “arise to provide meaning for concrete day-to-day problems” (Birman and Leite 2000: 277). The favela’s governance constellation has always forced the residents to earn their living as ‘self-made’ entrepreneurs, drawing on a combination of all resources and options available to them. Especially in neighbourhoods with very precarious living conditions like Mandela de Pedra and Nova Mandela, the mini-entrepreneurial practices of neo-Pentecostal lay churches fit seamlessly with their adherents’ reality: the preaching of the Prosperity Gospel offered an option of self-empowerment and autonomy that furthered the merging of religious and economic agency. Thus, the favela’s religious dynamics were directly connected not least with the entrepreneurial agency of many of the pastors, who not infrequently closed down shop when their expenses exceeded their profits or when they hit upon a more promising business venture. Their parishioners, in turn, often changed churches if, for example, a newly opened church in the vicinity promised pastoral care that better met their

everyday needs. For many of the entrepreneurs of faith and their adherents, these church communities served certain functions in their efforts to improve their living conditions (materially and otherwise), and that they would eventually cease to serve these functions, regardless of whether they succeeded or failed, gave them a highly provisional character.

Mapping the power structure in the four favelas onto this diversified religious landscape revealed that all their dominant actors had ties to independent Pentecostal communities. Almost all the presidents and vice presidents of the residents’ associations identified as active Pentecostals. The wives of the official presidents and the minibus operator, for example, paid ‘their’ pastors a salary of sorts. Even the *Comando* representative had his “soldiers” regularly blessed by a pastor friend who in the past had been involved in drug trafficking himself. In exchange, he financially supported his independent church. Ironically, this pastor used the money to provide basic assistance to the same homeless crack users who scored their drugs from the local *Comando* dealers. Turning to a Pentecostal church was, in fact, one of the few options available to a trafficker who wanted to leave the ‘path of death.’ While the Pentecostal faith does regard drug criminals as the epitome of the Devil, it does – in contrast to the police – not seek to physically eliminate them as enemies but to save them by ‘guiding them to Jesus’ (cf. Lanz 2016).

Within the spatial structure of the four favelas, the micro-entrepreneurial autonomous churches in particular – which were closed during the day – were only recognizable at a closer look. Like the many stores and workshops, they were located either on the ground floor of a residential building or in inconspicuous one-storey structures that were only distinguishable from adjacent buildings by their often homemade signs. Only in the evenings or on Sundays, when services were held, did these churches become highly visible and, above all, audible. This was when the believers flocked to the services, usually dressed up and with Bible in hand. The church doors were

opened, and bright neon light flooded the streets. The service was always electronically amplified, even if only a handful of people attended. The “holy noise” of the sermons and the musical performances dominated the favelas’ soundscape on weekday evenings (cf. Oosterbaan, 2008).

Generally speaking, affiliation with a musical style and its attendant subculture is important to the favela residents’ sense of social identity. In addition to Samba and Pagode, these styles include the Carioca Funk that dominates youth culture. The weekly Carioca Funk parties, whose deafening noise reached into every last corner, were co-opted by the drug gangs, not least as a symbolic marker of their territorial rule (cf. Lanz 2013). It was these funk parties with their enormous drug consumption, sexualized atmosphere, pornographic lyrics glorifying the drug gangs, and display of gun-toting gang culture that, to the Pentecostals, more than anything epitomized “the Devil’s work” in the favela.

In the Pentecostal congregations of the four favelas discussed here, too, music played a central role. Even the smallest congregation had its own band. In all of them, a strict line was drawn between religious music and secular music, which the faithful were not supposed to listen to, since it supposedly enticed them to sin. The favela’s narrow, dense spaces with their fluid boundaries between the inside and the outside created particular soundscapes. Different kinds of music leaked from the open buildings into streets and corners, overlapping, competing, and renegotiating the social boundaries signified by different kinds of sound: between *funkeiros* and *sambistas*, between the secular and the religious. The battle among the churches for visibility and believers was fought by means of electronically amplified gospel songs and sermons. During services, the church doors were open; often, the pastors put a loudspeaker in the street. In the evenings and on Sundays, streets densely lined with churches were transformed into religious sonic spaces where distorted electronic beats and singing, shouted prayer and speaking in tongues competed with and blended into each other. Here

was direct physical evidence that urban Pentecostal preachers owe their charismatic appeal not least to their ability to employ electro-acoustic technology to disseminate trans-local gospel sounds into urban space (cf. Oosterbaan 2009).

The Pentecostal churches interpreted the battle between secular and ‘godly’ sounds for the acoustic domination of space as a manifestation of the cosmic ‘war’ between God and the Devil. They engaged in sound wars with nearby drug sales points whose dealers were blasting the streets with deafening gangster funk, or with bars whose outside speakers blared ‘worldly’ pop songs. Outside the favela, proselytizing by way of a battle of sound would be hard to imagine. It was only here that no official authorities existed that would curb the noise, and only the favela’s narrow, labyrinthine character and the open structure of its buildings made it possible for the electronically amplified sounds to reach every last corner of urban space.

Not only did the favela’s self-made urbanism make this space-pervading manifestation of religious diversity possible; at least in the case of the entrepreneurial mini-churches, it provided the very basis for its existence. Most of the founders of these independent church congregations had very little financial means and aimed to make a living from their congregation members’ donations. Very few of them were in a position to pay rent on a church building. As a consequence, many of them, drawing on the informal help of neighbors and friends, built their own church from a variety of materials – recycled, cheaply bought, found, or swiped from construction sites. Others moved into a vacant commercial space or an unoccupied apartment, bar, or store. One church founder who, prior to her conversion, had been a drug user herself and lived in a shack built from found materials in Nova Mandela, described to me how she had squatted on a piece of industrial wasteland, erected a modest brick building with the help of friends, and opened a church in it. Another pastor in the same favela, equally penniless and self-appointed, had

only been able to open his church because a pastor friend of his had closed shop for lack of success and passed on his church room to him. The space, an irregularly erected residential building, had already been consecrated and hence did not have to be spiritually purified, and it came with an altar, Bibles, and the usual assortment of monobloc chairs.

Embarked upon with complete independence and without financial means, both these church-founding projects could only succeed by making use of every option available to generate the necessary resources – an illustration of the favela's self-made urbanism corresponding with its self-made religion of local Pentecostalism. Any resource available was used in the founding of a new independent church: it was provisionally established in an irregular building and furnished and equipped in active self-help with the most basic necessities; the pastoral profession was learned in self-study, and the first church members were recruited among relatives. If the enterprise failed, the space was easily reconverted to worldly use, leaving no trace of its formerly religious purpose.

The socio-material and governmental expression of this new religious diversity thus turns out to be the product of an infrastructure – in the sense of a “platform that provides for and reproduces life” that already existed in the favela (Simone 2014a: 408). Especially in the case of the independent and entrepreneurial newly founded churches, this infrastructure was largely created by ordinary residents themselves. The emergence of these churches in Manguinhos coincided with the gradual closing down of 56 nearby factories, which had employed a large number of favela inhabitants and were not replaced with other employment facilities. As a result, the work and income situation became dramatically more informal and precarious. In 2010, one third of the residents of Manguinhos – and, it is to be assumed, many more in its most precarious communities of Mandela de Pedra and Nova Mandela – were forced to get by without an independent income and had to piece together a liveli-

hood from a flexible combination of all resources available (Pivetta et al. 2011: 115).

The Catholic Church with its paternalistic apparatus was no longer seen as being able to control and satisfy the everyday needs of the economically precarious and socially fragmented favela. After all, the residents' subordination to an assimilation strategy which relegated them to second-class citizen status and to an exclusionary strategy – which subjected them to a rule of violence that even government institutions and their own representatives were subsumed into – is countered today by milieus within the favela that are upwardly mobile and emancipating themselves.

The new religious diversity, with its break from the dominance of the Catholic Church, is thus as much an expression of emancipation from the paternalism of authoritarian apparatuses as it is an expression of the ever-more precarious social-economic situation of the favela residents, who are increasingly forced to eke out a living as self-entrepreneurs. In this context, independent churches are to be understood as infrastructures that collaboratively generate, even under the most difficult circumstances, resources for the pastors and their congregation members alike and serve to secure the reproduction of their lives. The result of the “quiet encroachment” (Bayat 2004) of ordinary people and the resident-generated infrastructure of the “entrepreneurial religion” (Lanz and Oosterbaan 2016) reflects the favela's highly heterogeneous spatial structure and ways of life. This is the case with regard to both the agency of its actors and the technologies and materialities they employ: it is poor, precarious, provisional, improvised, flexible, self-empowered, self-governed, pragmatic, inventive, collaborative and irregular, and it mixes the economic with the social, political and religious.

Urbanization as an Authoritarian Top-down Approach

In January 2007, Brazil launched the growth acceleration program PAC (*Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento*), whose aim was to boost

the economy through large-scale infrastructure projects. In addition to the energy and transportation sector, the program invested into urban infrastructure with the aim of remedying structural deficits in selected poor areas. In Rio, the PAC focused on the three largest favela areas, among them Manguinhos (cf. the analysis of the PAC Manguinhos in Cavalcanti 2014). The PAC invested approximately € 140 million into this favela alone over the course of a few years. The public infrastructure projects in the technical, social and health sectors were realized as part of this first joint venture towards favela urbanization between federal, state and municipal governments. These projects included a local rail transit line, a road and sewage system, schools, daycare centers, a library, and recreation facilities. The focus of local debate, however, was the construction of officially 1,048 new apartments designated to house the former residents of the two settlements of Mandela de Pedra and Nova Mandela, which were razed completely. A large number of the new buildings, erected on the sites of the two torn-down favelas, were inaugurated with great fanfare by Brazil's president in 2012. By and large, the residents' verdict on the new housing was positive. But the program's authoritarian top-down approach reproduced the traditional pattern of clientelism, entrenched the violence-based power relations, and destroyed the seeds of democratic self-organization (cf. *ibid.*).

One year after the launch of the PAC Manguinhos, the *Fórum Social de Manguinhos* (2009) published a dossier on the project which stated that it entirely ignored the civil rights granted to every resident affected by an urbanization scheme by the federal City Statute (*Estatuto da Cidade*) – beginning with the initial master plan, which had been drafted by commissioned architects who had never set foot into the favela or talked to the residents and assessed their needs. The authorities stonewalled the *Fórum Social*, whose criticism threatened to delay the construction process, and only negotiated with the presidents of the official residents' associations. This was apparently done – as an official involved

in managing the project confirmed to me – with the full knowledge that they were in the pockets of the drug boss and had their own gain in mind (personal interview, 2010.05.06).

The state authorities quickly lost control of the project. It stipulated that, following an official registration process, all residents of the areas to be demolished were entitled to a free apartment in a new building in exchange for their torn-down homes. When word of this spread, an illegal building frenzy began on the land. In order to score an apartment, hundreds of people tried to get a shack built before the registration process got underway. This entailed using all means at their disposal to delay the registration process and using the rubble from shacks that had already been torn down to build new ones at night, covertly trying to establish them as yet unregistered plots. In response, the authorities put the presidents in charge of organizing the registration of the shacks through the residents' associations. This opened the door to large-scale racketeering on the part of the ruling drug lords and the presidents themselves. The associations secretly charged commissions and even let non-locals register as shack owners in exchange for bribes. In addition, all drug gang and association members in positions of authority got their hands on several apartments by paying straw men to register for them as shack owners. As a result, the approximately 300 shacks in existence when the program was launched quickly mushroomed to a final number of over 1,200 whose owners eventually received compensation. In order to put an end to the rampant theft of buildings materials, the city contracted local 'entrepreneurs' to guard the building sites, thus handing them over, for all intents and purposes, to the drug gang. At this point, opposition to the project was no longer tolerated. The sentence ascribed to one of the residents' presidents, "whoever opposes PAC will die" was on everybody's lips, made even more poignant by the fact that one person caught stealing from a building site had already been executed. The residents' associations were forced into line, and in exchange, their officials

received apartments or jobs on construction sites. When the most notable *Fórum Social de Manginhos* activist was driven out of the favela under threats of death, the *Fórum* effectively ceased to exist.

Large-scale Infrastructure and the Infrastructure of Religious Diversity

So what effect does the dichotomy between the authoritarian, modernist infrastructure established by the PAC and the traditional favela's provisional infrastructure have on the religious diversity that constitutes an infrastructure in its own right in the favela? Over the course of the 2000s, quite a few churches sprang up and disappeared again in the settlements of Mandela de Pedra and Nova Mandela (which were later to be razed by the PAC). In 2010, many buildings that had long since been converted to other uses still showed traces of their former use as prayer spaces. Walls covered with peeling paint still showed the faintly visible remnants of a crucifix, a dove, or the name of a church; a dilapidated building still displayed the words "*Igreja Pentecostal a Glória de Deus*", along with the promise: "We are beholden to the truth." At this time, eight churches were still in operation and offering services several times a week; only one of them was affiliated with a mother church, the *Assembleia de Deus*. The other seven operated out of buildings as makeshift and precariously put together as their surroundings and carried names such as *Igreja Fonte Eterna* (Church of the Eternal Fount), *Igreja Pentecostal Templo do Espírito Santo* (Pentecostal Church Temple of the Holy Ghost) oder *Igreja Pentecostal Deus Proverá* (Pentecostal Church God will Provide). All of them were independent enterprises headed by entrepreneurs of faith who had appointed themselves pastors without any clerical training. Some of these churches had been founded long after it had become common knowledge that the PAC was going to raze the entire area and offer all business owners and pastors compensation for the loss of their irregular property. Eventually, even those pastors who had built their churches ille-

gally after the PAC-imposed official deadline for building registration managed to get compensation for their demolition.

Seven of the eight pastors subsequently disbanded their now homeless congregation and joined another Pentecostal church in Nelson Mandela or Samora Machel, most of them as ordinary congregation members. Accordingly, the number of church communities in the four favelas decreased from 27 in 2010 to 20 in 2012 following the implementation of the PAC. This was partly the result of the "quiet encroachment" strategy employed by the self-appointed pastors, some of whom managed to seize the day by realizing early on the opportunity that the PAC afforded them to benefit financially (albeit not exactly legally) from establishing a new church. There were many attempts at profit maximization: a pastor could, for example, set up a worship room in his living space and try to cash in twice by claiming compensation both for the loss of his family home and the loss of his church.

Only one pastor used his financial compensation to open a new church, but it took him two years to find affordable – i.e. irregular – premises in Samora Machel. The fact that all other congregations disappeared and no new ones were founded in their stead was not only due to the pastors' own premeditated decisions but also to the nature of the PAC: the razed areas, like all favelas, had been home to a wealth of business activities and contained not only residential buildings but stores, workshops, and, of course, churches as well. But the PAC made no provision for commercial space. Instead, under the banner of homogeneity of use, housing estates were built to largely identical floor plans, and even the use of ground floors or corner apartments for small stores or church spaces was prohibited. With the deliberate exclusion of the political residents' organization, the *Fórum Social de Manginhos*, from the planning process, the PAC planners were in a position to simply ignore the vital need for mixed-use buildings. In this way, they not only deprived the most disadvantaged residents within the regular labor market of

more informal income opportunities, they also obstructed the further development of their self-made Pentecostalism and with it, local religious diversity in general.

It was not only the materialities and functionalities of the infrastructures created by the PAC that had an impact on the development of local religious life, but the corrupt manner in which they were implemented. When government institutions, acting every bit as informally and irregularly as all other actors, clandestinely cooperated with the local elites involved in the drug trade who violently suppressed all criticism and lined their own pockets, they lost all legitimacy. Many residents responded to this culture of corruption by turning their backs on worldly things entirely. In conversations, locals expressed a longing to abandon 'worldly affairs' altogether and dedicate themselves to 'God's work.' The politicians' and public institutions' complete loss of legitimacy was one important factor in this sentiment; yet more than anything, it was the role of the residents' associations, whose officials had been appointed by the *Comando*. These officials excluded the residents themselves from any political participation, and filled their own pockets at the expense of those they purported to represent.

Conclusion

The authoritarian implementation of a socio-technical system of infrastructure is in diametric opposition to the traditional infrastructure of the favela, where the residents' collaborative agency and a heterogeneous, makeshift urban space lends itself to multiple uses that constantly (re-) create each other. If we view urbanization as "a thickening of fields, an assemblage of increasingly heterogeneous elements into more complicated collectives" (Simone 2004a: 408), a homogenizing program like the PAC is more aptly interpreted as a de-urbanization program. Like a bull in a china shop, its modernist, grand-scale logic tramples underfoot the very heterogeneity that is vital in urban configurations in which people depend on as many opportunities as possible to

procure resources or an income in self-entrepreneurship (cf. Simone 2014: 33). The traditional favela infrastructure, which can be described – quoting Graham and McFarlane (2014: 4) – as the "materialisation of anticipation – that sense of timing of knowing how to make a 'next move', of the incremental accretion of capacity and possibility", is obstructed or even partly destroyed by the infrastructural behemoth of the PAC.

I am by no means arguing here that there was more democracy and solidarity in the favela prior to the implementation of the PAC than after. After all, as described above, most earlier state interventions into the favela were based on an arbitrary, clientelistic rule that followed a logic of informality and relegated the residents to second-class citizenship (cf. Holston 2008, Machado da Silva 2002). Moreover, for more than two decades now, all regulatory modes existing in the favela have been dominated by the violent rule of the *comandos*, military police and militias, which brook no democratic negotiation on matters of concern to the residents. The problem with the state urbanization program, then, is twofold: For one, rather than combating the existing structures of violence by democratic means and in accordance with the rule of law, it has entrenched it further through its collaboration with gangsters and the residents' presidents installed by them. Secondly, the logic of the PAC has completely overridden the incrementalism that marks the favela's self-made urbanism (Simone 2014: 24) – the resource-saving step-by-step proceeding that strengthens social networks and enables the residents to constantly adapt provisional structures to changing conditions and a resource-poor environment. Master plans and architectural designs for social and recreational spaces were drafted without consultation of the residents, whose desires and democratic aspirations were repressed. Housing complexes were built to a single cookie-cutter design, their flexible use was prohibited, and the diversity of household types was stifled by floor plans that were not only identical for all buildings but also too small for bigger households and, in any case,

unable to accommodate household sizes that are often constantly in flux.

Put more succinctly, the government's infrastructure concept responded to the favela's heterogeneity, diversity, organizational flexibility and de-centered nature – which is reflected in its traditional infrastructural assemblages – with the authoritarian centrality and leveling logic of a “single development agenda [...] in an overarching maneuver of completion” (ibid.). Its content, form and regulatory apparatus breathes the spirit of the paternalistic re-education program inherent in the assimilation strategy. They actually constitute a (modernist) step backwards compared to, for instance, the needs- and resources-oriented sites and service programs of previous decades, the adaptability of the original state-built duplexes of Nelson Mandela and Samora Machel, or the Favela-Bairro program of the 1990s with its distinctly greater emphasis on participation and self-governance. In this manner, the approach has literally cemented the modes of subjection that the favela inhabitants have been exposed to throughout history.

All these processes set in motion by the PAC, as well as the materiality of the infrastructure systems they have generated, have acted upon the processes of dynamization and diversification of the religious landscape. Within the specific urban environment of the favela, religion does not manifest itself as unidirectional ‘incorporation,’ but as manifold interactions and references, as dynamic processes of appropriation and borrowing. The production of a new multifaceted and entrepreneurial religious infrastructure in the favela – largely created by its inhabitants – interacts with all its urban dimensions: the materiality of its dense and self-built settlements, the ongoing processes of precarization and social fragmentation, the informality of making a living, the lack of public infrastructure, the imposed self-governance beyond civic norms and the violent dominance of the drug complex, the authoritarian implementation of a large-scale urbanization project, and corrupt public institutions and

residents' associations that enrich themselves at the expense of the poor.

The forms of manifestation of these interactions between religious diversity and favela urbanity confirm Simone's (2014: 33) assumption that “the distinction between infrastructure and sociality is fluid and pragmatic rather than definitive.” These interactions cannot be understood as linear causal relationships. Case in point: The production of a religious infrastructure on the part of the entrepreneurs of faith described above is determined *in part* by economic considerations, responding both to the opportunities and the obstacles concomitant with the authoritarian implementation of a centralist urban infrastructure system. But the specific nature of the modes of religious governance – the character of churches, services and pastoral leadership, a particular pastor's appeal, success or lack thereof in the religious marketplace, and so forth – cannot sufficiently be explained by external factors. Nor is it possible to construct causal relationships from these phenomena. The sole unifying principle behind these modes of interaction is that of “co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a ‘sympathy’” (McFarlane, 2011: 653).

In order to do justice to all the diversities, temporalities and ambiguities that characterize the infrastructure of religious diversity in the favela, we have to understand it as a specific “assemblage of material, social, symbolic, and sensual spaces, processes, practices, and experiences in which the religious and the urban are interwoven and mutually produce, influence, and transform each other” (Lanz, 2014: 30). In this way, it is possible to investigate the relationship “between the possible – the unstable flows of materials and substances – and the prescribed – the imposition of functional stable structures [...] – between code and singularity, expression and content” (Simone, 2011: 357) that not only marks the city and its infrastructures in general, but the specific relationship between the urban and the religious as well. This analysis, then, requires a dense description of the agency apparent in urban everyday life and of the inter-

laced processes, materialities and practices that generate an infrastructure of religious diversity in a specific urban space such as the one discussed here.

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