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Festifavelisation: mega-events, slums and strategic city-staging – the example of Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract

Mega-events are increasingly often taking place in countries of the Global South. In the socio-spatially deeply fragmented host cities these spectacles encompass extremely transformative urban processes. This paper will consider the festivalisation of Rio de Janeiro in the preparatory phase of the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics. It focuses on the urban policy in relation to how Rio deals with its favelas. The aim of the article is to critically assess current measures of 'invisibilisation', 'pacification', 'beautification' and 'touristic staging' of favelas against the backdrop of the upcoming events.

Zusammenfassung

Großereignisse (Mega-Events) finden zunehmend in Städten des Globalen Südens statt. Für die sozio-ökonomisch hochgradig fragmentierten Gastgeberstädte bringen diese Spektakel extreme Veränderungsprozesse mit sich. Dieser Artikel behandelt die Festivalisierung Rio de Janeiros in der Vorbereitungsphase der Fußballweltmeisterschaft 2014 und der Olympischen Sommerspiele 2016 in Bezug auf die Stadtpolitik der Stadtverwaltung Rios im Umgang mit den Favelas. Ziel dieses Artikels ist es, die aktuellen Maßnahmen der ‚Invisibilisation‘, ‚Befriedung‘, ‚Aufhübschung‘ und ‚touristischen Inszenierung‘ der Favelas vor dem Hintergrund der bevorstehenden Events kritisch zu beleuchten.

Keywords Mega-events, festivalisation, urban politics, favela, slum, tourism, Rio de Janeiro

1. Introduction

Two parallel trends are currently discernible in connection with mega-events: Firstly, these events are becoming increasingly gigantic in terms of generated profits, organisational effort and infrastructural investments, and secondly, they are more and more often taking place in countries in the so-called Global South. Especially applicants from 'emerging

nations' are becoming increasingly successful in applying to host large-scale international events. For example, in 2010 alone, the Commonwealth Games, the EXPO and FIFA World Cup took place in New Delhi (India), in Shanghai (China) and in South Africa, respectively. In 2014 the FIFA World Cup will draw global attention to Brazil's cities. Moreover, in 2009, Rio de Janeiro was chosen to host the 2016 Summer Olympics. The economies of all these coun-

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tries have registered enormous growth rates in the recent past, but at the same time, they are characterised by grave internal socio-economic disparities.

Sporting mega-events in the Global South have still received relatively little attention from urban geographers, yet they involve extremely transformative urban processes in the socio-spatial deeply fragmented host cities (Greene 2003, Matheson and Baade 2004, Horne and Manzenreiter 2006, Pillay et al. 2009, Silvestre 2008, Ley et al. 2010, Gaffney 2010, Curi et al. 2011).

Given the complexities of mega-events, this paper will focus on urban policy relating to how host cities in the Global South deal with poverty-stricken areas ('slums') in the preparatory phase of mega-events.

The article is divided into two parts. To set a frame, the first part will give brief general insights into the politico-economic event logic. Drawing on the concept of 'festivalisation' of the two German sociologists Hartmut Häußermann and Walter Siebel (1993), I will argue that slums represent an image problem. So far, experiences with previous mega-events in countries of the South have shown that the conventional policy strategy is demolition and eviction.

In the second part I will look into Rio's festivalisation policy. How does Rio tackle its 'staging problem' of over 750 favelas? I will show that urban policy in Rio not only draws upon the conventional strategies, but supplements these strategies with more 'innovative' measures. Drawing on general ideas of 'urban semiotics' (Gottdiener and Lagopoulos 1986) this paper specifically focuses on those policy interventions which aim to manipulate the sign 'favela' by transforming it in terms of a positive change of favela semantics. A simple heuristic is introduced and current measures of 'invisibilisation', 'pacification', 'beautification' and 'touristic staging' of favelas are discussed against the backdrop of the upcoming events.

This article is about the festivalisation of the favela, the 'festifavelisation' in Rio de Janeiro.

2. Festivalisation in the Global South

2.1 Staging the city

The logic behind the application and selection procedures as well as the staging of a mega-event can

only be understood if we consider its economic and political significance on a global scale: Mega-events are both profoundly commercial and highly political. The entanglement of these two spheres (politics and economy) is constituent of the processes surrounding the event and highly influential on the urban development dynamics initiated or stimulated by the event (Steinbrink et al. 2011).

The powerful international sporting federations FIFA and IOC have been global players for a long time now; as such, they are primarily economic actors operating in accordance with market principles. As the owners and content providers of the largest mega-events, their decisions on venues are essentially profit-oriented. The right to host these events is, quite literally, auctioned; the fact that the application documents submitted by national associations are called 'bid books' is not without its reasons. Bid books explain in detail what the potential host countries have to offer in exchange for being selected. As franchisees, the applicant countries have to ensure commercial success for IOC and FIFA. This means that, among other things, the games have to be held in top-class stadiums with sufficient capacity for spectators (including VIP lounges etc.). Moreover, excellent transport connections and sufficient accommodation of adequate standard have to be available for (international) visitors. On top of this, an optimum of international media coverage has to be guaranteed so that commercially effective images of happiness and heroism can be sent out to the world. Of course, reports on incidents of crime as, for instance, in the run-up to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa (cf. Korth and Rolfes 2010) or reports about violence in the metropolises of Brazil (cf. Pellacini 2011), do not fit in here. Since fans, journalists and teams need to feel comfortable during the tournaments, the question of public safety stands out as a further central concern of FIFA and IOC.

With regard to securing the smooth course of events, both FIFA and IOC have developed a comprehensive catalogue of obligatory requirements addressed to potential hosts. Their fulfilment must be guaranteed by the host governments. The very fact that governments willingly grant FIFA and IOC the right to exercise far-reaching political influence is a clear indication of the huge political interest that the governments of the host countries associate with the staging of these events (cf. e.g. Steinbrink et al. 2011). In the case of applications from so-called 'emerging' or 'threshold' countries, the symbolic enhancement of the national profile in particular plays an important role in regard

to ‘foreign policy’. There is the hope that successfully staging a mega-event will help shake off the stigma of ‘underdevelopment’ and will thus enable the country to cross the ‘threshold’ to the circle of leading industrial nations (Greene 2003, Ley et al. 2010).

The applicants also cherish hopes with regard to ‘domestic policy’. Beside the argument of economic growth, which is constantly put forward in the run-up to events (foreign direct investment, promotion of tourism etc.; cf. e.g. Whitson and Macintosh 1996; Hiller 2000; Burton 2003, Maennig and Schwarthoff 2010), the function of sport as a generator of a sense of belonging – in terms of a national ‘feel-good effect’ – must be mentioned here as well (Cornelissen 2012).

At the level of urban policy, globalisation processes, neo-liberal economic policies and the global competition between metropolises, in particular, are considered the driving forces behind the growing importance of mega-events (cf. Sassen 2001; Harvey 1989; Greene 2003). Taking a look at Europe and the USA this process can be placed in the context of de-industrialisation. In an effort to parry the threatening decline, David Harvey (1989) notes, the post-industrial cities are hardly left with anything but asserting themselves as international finance, consumption or entertainment centres (cf. Roche 1994, Hoffman et al. 2003). Yet the metropolises of the South are also out to position themselves on the global market. In both cases, mega-events are becoming instruments of global city marketing and image-building in the competition for investment capital between the ‘world class cities’ (cf. Burbank et al. 2001; Bittner 2001; Greene 2003; Shin 2009; Steinbrink et al. 2011). The current mega-event trend in countries of the South can therefore be interpreted as the ‘globalisation of festivalisation’.

With regard to the objectives of festivalisation policies, Häußermann et al. (2008: 263f.) propose a distinction between (1) the outwardly directed goal of image production for international recognition, and (2) the inwardly directed goal of initiating, legitimising and promoting certain urban development dynamics or large-scale projects. The mega-event, then, is intended to serve both as growth engine and transmission belt for urban redevelopment.

In the course of the preparation of events, the national ambitions of the host countries and the urban political interests of the host cities blend together with the profit objectives of FIFA and IOC as well as their busi-

ness partners. The amalgamation of these interests constitutes the common goal of the events’ success – whereby ‘success’, most notably, means successful staging of the event (cf. Haferburg and Steinbrink 2010).

In the run-up to a mega-event, the rigorous time frame puts politicians and planners under enormous pressure, which strongly affects urban development. This almost inevitably leads to a concentration of urban policy regarding spatial distribution and content and to an acceleration of the implementation of selected (prestigious) projects. Despite the mantra-like ‘legacy and sustainability’ rhetoric – i.e. the reference to long-term positive effects (for all) – in the bid books and in political speeches (cf. Rio 2016 Candidate City; Reeves 2009), the actual priority in this phase is primarily orientated towards (short-term) global staging and ‘neo-liberal dreamworlds’ (Davis and Monk 2007) and not to the objectives of socially integrative city development. Consequently, the main target groups of this festivalisation policy are not the residents and especially not the urban poor but the billions of global TV viewers and the international visitors on the one hand and the investors on the other hand.

2.2 Visible backstage

The preparation of events in the Global South leads to a conflict between image objectives in the context of global competition on the one hand and the needs of urban citizens, most of whom are economically weak, on the other hand. Tensions are particularly evident in the political treatment of urban poverty areas. The densely populated cities are characterised by poverty and immense socio-economic disparities. The spatial structures of the cities are correspondingly fragmented. A large part of the urban populations – especially the lowest income groups – live in informal dwellings on the city outskirts and on residual urban land. The urban poor often live in settlements that are describable as ‘slums’ (UN-Habitat 2003: 11) and that generally do not comply with the right to adequate housing as defined in the UN Charter for Human Rights (cf. United Nations General Assembly 1948).

It is well known that the spread of urban poverty and the living conditions of the worldwide one billion slum dwellers represent one of the greatest humanitarian challenges of our time (cf. e.g. Davis 2006). But within the logic of mega-events, the host cities’ ‘slum problem’ is a very different one: To begin with, slums are

sometimes located in places labelled for developments relevant to the events (stadiums, roads etc.); secondly, slums conflict with the cities' image-building efforts. Governments, city administrations and organising committees often perceive these settlements as 'eyesores'. Slums therefore pose an obstacle to city staging. With regard to festivalisation policies in countries of the Global North, *Häußermann* et al. (2008: 265) state:

"Since large-scale events primarily aim at showcasing a visible image of the city internationally, there is the inevitable tendency, in mega-event policies, to actually consider everything that is invisible as unimportant, too. This, of course, includes the many social problems that cannot be integrated into a positive image" [author's translation].

In cities of the Global South it is indeed hardly possible to overlook the social problems of poverty and inequality since they are clearly visible in the form of informal settlements. Hence the host cities are compelled to cope with these visible problems, or rather with the problem of their visibility (*Steinbrink* et al. 2011). There is no room for strategies of sustainable settlement development, firstly because of the condensed timeframe typical of such events, and secondly because the limited financial resources flow into other event-related investments. As a result, cheaper short-term measures are preferred: 'visual protection screens' such as fences and walls, as well as the demolition of settlements and forced evictions. The more visible a slum is for the media and the international public, the higher the probability of such interventions. The most affected settlements are near city centres or important event venues, next to airports or along important roads connecting the venues (cf. *Greene* 2003, *Newton* 2009).

Prior to the 1988 summer Olympics in Seoul (South Korea), 720,000 people were forcefully relocated; in the run-up to the 2010 EXPO exhibition in Shanghai (China), the relocation of 400,000 people was announced; and New Delhi (India) was supposed to be 'slum-free' by the opening day of the Commonwealth Games in 2010; and so between 2003 and 2006, as many as 300,000 slum inhabitants were evicted (cf. *COHRE* 2007). The relocation measures attained a new dimension prior to the Olympic Games in Beijing: According to estimates, roughly 1.5 million people were affected by evictions between 2000 and 2008 (cf. *Shin* 2009). These figures illustrate how much importance the host cities attach to the need

to manage the 'slum as a staging problem', and they are also indicative of the usual *modus operandi*.

3. Festifavelisation in Rio de Janeiro

For nearly ten years now, Brazil – especially Rio de Janeiro – has strongly been hedging its bets on the urban policy of festivalisation. This is reflected in the list of sporting mega-events taking place there: Pan American Games (2007), World Military Games (2011), FIFA Confederations Cup (2013), FIFA World Cup (2014), Summer Olympic Games and Paralympics (2016), as well as Copa America (2019). Further, large-scale political, religious and/or cultural events such as the RIO+20 Conference (2012) and the World Youth Day (2013) took place here.

The world's eyes are upon Brazil now, which, under its former president *Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva*, has evolved into a major economic world power. And Rio will be its main stage on which the new, strong Brazil is to present itself to the world public. For Rio de Janeiro, this is a special opportunity after having experienced a substantial decline in importance since 1960 when Brasília had become the new federal capital. Compared particularly to São Paulo, which has steadily grown into Latin America's biggest economic centre in the past decades, Rio has continuously been lagging behind. The up-coming mega-events are perceived as a great opportunity to push forward urban redevelopment and infrastructural projects in order to reposition the city both nationally and globally.

But Rio de Janeiro has a 'slum problem', too: Just as in other major Brazilian cities, the immense social disparities in Rio find expression in an extremely fractured urban structure (cf. *Lopes de Souza* 1993, *Coy* 2006; *Borsdorf* and *Coy* 2009; *Wehrhahn* 2009; *Deffner* 2010; *Perlman* 2010; *Lanz* 2012, *Rothfuß* 2012). Approximately every sixth inhabitant lives in one of the city's over 750 favelas (IBGE 2010). Because of the tense situation on the formal housing market and due to the insufficiency of public housing programmes, the informal residential areas have long represented the only affordable choice for the poor in Rio. Ever since the emergence of the first favelas more than a hundred years ago, they have largely been neglected by the city administration. Apart from some limited measures in the run-up to elections and from occasional interventions in the form of resettlements or police and military repressions,

the government has largely ignored its urban poverty areas (cf. Lanz 2004; Wacquant 2005; Penglase 2009).

The problem of violent crime first emerged in the public consciousness in the early 1980s during the transitional phase from military dictatorship to electoral democracy (Caldeira and Holston 1999; Piquet Carneiro 2000; Aziz and Alves 2003). Drug gangs began to fill the power gap in the socially and politically marginalised parts of the city (Lanz 2004; Wacquant 2005; Lopes de Souza 2008; Deffner 2013). Based on hierarchically organised mafia-like structures and strongly influenced by drug-trafficking businesses, armed violence and terror, these criminal syndicates control most of the favelas in Rio de Janeiro. The traffickers have thus become a parallel power with its own rules ('law of the hillside', Penglase 2009: 49), to which the inhabitants of the favelas have to submit. The syndicates became so powerful and so heavily equipped with arms that they were capable of preventing or controlling any state interference in 'their' territories. The police could only gain access to the settlements by armed force or in consultation with the drug lords; even social projects and public infrastructural measures could only be implemented through negotiations with the respective gangs (cf. Lopes de Souza 2004, Arias 2006). This additionally enhanced the government's neglect of the favelas and led to further marginalisation and stigmatisation of their inhabitants. At the same time, it contributed to the fact that rents and house prices in the favelas remained relatively unaffected by the dramatic price increases on the formal real estate market. Even in centrally located favelas, the price of housing is still comparatively low (cf. Frischtak and Mandel 2012). To a certain extent the favelas have remained outside the sphere of economic valorisation of the formal land and real estate market.

Most of Rio's informal settlements are located in its western part or in the Northern Zone (*Zona Norte*), far from the city centre and from the economically flourishing Southern Zone (*Zona Sul*) with its popular Copacabana, Leblon and Ipanema beaches. However, there are numerous favelas in these parts of the city as well, and they shape Rio's cityscape since they are built on the steep mountain slopes and partly border the most expensive residential areas. These favelas are by no means Rio's poorest areas with the worst living conditions, but it is precisely these that represent the biggest planning problem in the context of the mega-events: Firstly, some of them are located in areas that have been chosen for infrastructure pro-

jects relevant to the events (e.g. the construction of roads connecting important event venues); secondly, these centrally located favelas pose an aesthetic staging problem. Due to their exposed locations, they are very visible on the city's front stage, and their appearance is difficult to reconcile with the striven-for world-class city image. Due to their dense and apparently chaotic building structures, the favelas rather emblematically stand for attributes (poverty, bad governance, social stratification etc.) the elimination of which is meant to be presented to the world.

The pressure to tackle this staging problem is intensified by international media reports on the crime situation in Rio de Janeiro. Besides scepticism regarding the infrastructural preparations (e.g. the construction of roads and stadiums), there are serious concerns about the high crime rates in Rio. The mass-media discourse on the issue constructs a spatial semantic link between crime and the favela; there is hardly a report on the safety situation in Rio that does not locate crime in the favelas. Successful film productions such as *City of God* (2003) and *Tropa de Elite* (2007) further contribute to this discourse: Favelas are portrayed as uncontrollable and dangerous places in which drug-related crimes, violence and lawlessness are the prevailing features. In media discourses favelas are the quasi-spatial bearer of the image of an 'insecure Brazil'. From the viewpoint of the organisers of the event, however, it is precisely the journalists' and international guests' feeling of security that is crucial for the success of the event. The planners and policy-makers therefore feel the urgency to deal with this globally transmitted 'favela problem' (as Rio's security problem No. 1).

3.1 Tackling 'the favela'

In recent years the City of Rio de Janeiro has been remarkably active in the implementation of various measures concerning the favelas. It seems reasonable to see this increased activity in the light of the upcoming mega-events: The favelas represent an urgent image issue that needs to be tackled before the event.

In compliance with the general idea of 'urban semiotics' (Gottdiener and Lagopoulos 1986; Lagopoulos 2009) this staging problem can be interpreted against the backdrop of the specific semiotic nature of the 'favela'. Under the event logic, the sign 'favela' has two problematic aspects: The first is the *high visibility* of the (material) signifier – i.e. the large num-

ber of favelas, central and exposed locations of some favelas, and their broad presence in the media. The second problematic aspect is the *specific signification*, i.e. the semantic charging with negative ascriptions such as ‘poverty’, ‘crime’, ‘bad governance’ etc.

Basing on this notion, the various observable urban policy measures can be interpreted as *semiotic interventions*, as governmental attempts to interfere with the signifying character of the favela, and can hence be assigned to the two problematic aspects mentioned above. Accordingly, two types of strategic interventions can be distinguished: (1) *invisibilisation* and (2) *transformation* of the sign ‘favela’.

Along with this simple heuristic (Fig. 1) this article elucidates the governmental measures to ‘tackle the favela’ and interprets them within the context of Rio’s festivalisation policy. The following sections are structured accordingly.

3.2 Intervention type I: invisibilisation

This first type of strategic intervention represents the conventional method to approach the slum as a staging problem in the context of mega-events in the Global South (see above); it aims to render the favela (signifier) ‘invisible’. Different urban policy measures of this type could be observed in Rio de Janeiro in recent years.

3.2.1 Demolition and eviction

The coarsest form of invisibilisation strategy is the forced removal of inhabitants – mostly to the remote outskirts of the city – and the demolition of the buildings. Extensive eviction measures had already been taken in the period prior to the 2007 Pan-American games; and relocations of ‘less advantaged communities’ were also mentioned in the Olympic bid book (Rio 2016 Candidate City 2009, Vol. 2: 145). In 2009, Rio’s municipal government published a list of 119 favelas to be partly or fully removed before 2016 (cf. Gaffney 2010, Silvestre and Gusmão de Oliveira 2012). However, in most cases the official rhetoric doesn’t link the announced relocations to the approaching events; instead, the settlements are often said to be threatened by the environment (landslides, floods etc.) or presented as a threat to the environment (extension of settlements to forest conservation areas).

3.2.2 Walls

The argument of environmental preservation was also used by Governor Sergio Cabral and Mayor Eduardo Paes to justify a programme for the erection of walls (‘eco limites’ to protect the Atlantic forest), 3 meters high, around 19 favelas in Zona Sul, for a total of 11 kilometres long and encompassing 550 removed families. This programme started in 2009 and was heav-

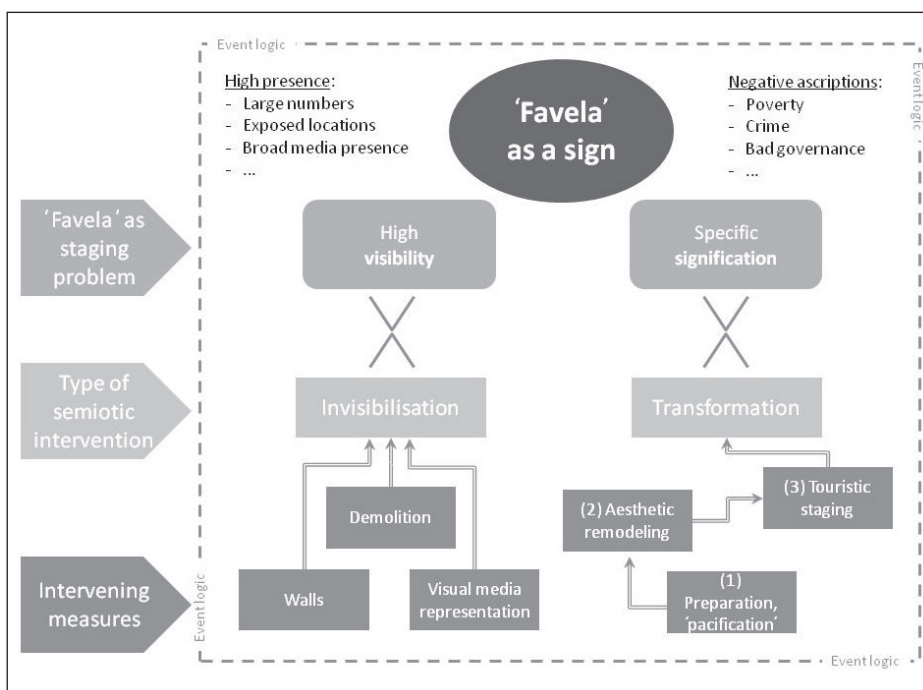


Fig. 1 ‘Favela’ as a problematic sign and urban-policy interventions in the context of mega-events – a heuristic model

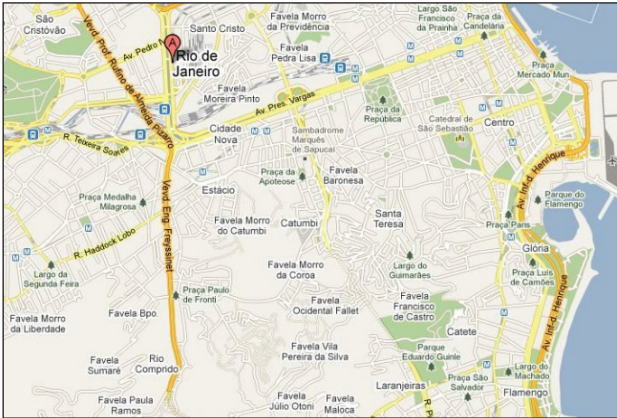


Fig. 2 Visible favelas on Google Maps (2011)

ily criticised in the international media (Minoja 2010: 128f.). The first favela to be enclosed by walls was Santa Marta (Turcheti e Melo 2010). This measure, which costs approximately US\$ 18 million, and which was financed by the *State Fund of Environmental Conservation* (Fecam), can well be considered part of the invisibilisation strategy, for walls are not only erected along forest fringes, but also along connecting roads that are important for the events. Although the latter are officially justified as noise protection measures, the assumption that they are ‘sociolimits’ (Turcheti e Melo 2010: 22ff.) primarily intended to serve as sight and image protection seems reasonable.

3.2.3 Visual media representation

Another form of invisibilising the favela refers to the manipulation of the visual representation of the host city in the media: The City of Rio is making a remarkable effort to ensure that the favelas are left out of official promotion photos and advertising videos. It is noticeable, for instance, that pictures of the famous Maracanã Stadium are always taken from an angle that prevents the bordering Manguiera favela from coming into view. Rio’s official Olympic bid video also features a computer-animated flyover on which not a single favela can be spotted; favelas were simply erased (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBTyx4ie3hQ>, 14/06/2012).

It is also remarkable that the term ‘favela’ does not even appear once in the three volumes of Rio’s 419-paged Olympic bid book (cf. Rio 2016 Candidate City 2009); here and in other official documents the political correct alternative term ‘*comunidade*’ (‘community’) is used in its stead. This official language policy, too, can be interpreted as an attempt of (textual) invisibilisation of the favela.

Furthermore, favelas are also left out on the official tourist map (RioTur); instead the areas are mostly indicated as green spaces. In this context, there was also a conflict between the City of Rio and *Google Maps* in 2011. The city complained that the online maps provided by the free cartographic service had presented the favelas too prominently and had highlighted comparatively little of Rio’s tourist attractions (Fig. 2).

Antonio Figueira de Mello, a spokesperson of Rio’s tourism authorities, described the maps as absurd, commenting that they created the impression that the host city was an ‘immense agglomeration of favelas’ (Antunes 2011). The city, fearing that it might suffer damage to its image, requested that the maps be changed. In 2013 Google complied with Rio’s demands and amended the cartographic representations accordingly. Today the term ‘favela’ no longer appears on the online maps and the areas are indicated as green spaces. Figure 3 shows the satellite image of the favela Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho (approx. 10,000 inhabitants) and the cartographic invisibilisation on *Google Maps* in 2013.



Fig. 3 Cartographic invisibilisation of the favela (Source: Google 2013)

3.3 Intervention type II: transformations

The second type of intervention represents a more innovative urban-policy strategy applied in an effort to deal with the favela as a ‘problematic sign’ and ‘staging obstacle’. It relates to the practice of interpretation and sense-making. This involves firstly governmental attempts to improve the image of the state with regard to how it deals with the favelas and their inhabitants, and secondly the attempts to actively transform the favela image. Against this background different measures of intervention in the favelas can be interpreted as parts of a three-step strategy of semiotic favela transformation: (1) *preparation*, (2) *remodeling* and (3) *staging* (Fig. 1).

3.3.1 Step 1: preparation by ‘pacification’

Shortly after the announcement of FIFA’s choice of Brazil as the host of the 2014 World Cup tournament, the government started a large-scale programme for the ‘pacification’ of favelas in Rio. The declared goal of the campaign is to improve the general security situation in Rio, as well as to create a precondition for social projects and infrastructural measures in the settlements.

The first step consists in the massive deployment of BOPE (*Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais*: Special Police Operations Battalion), a special military police unit of Rio de Janeiro State. The invasions carried out by these notorious special forces intend to expel, arrest or kill members of drug gangs and to occupy the favelas. In the second step, police sta-

tions of UPP (*Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora*), Rio’s ‘pacifying police unit’, are set up in the favelas. The newly established and specially trained UPP police units are to act as ‘community police’ and to make sure that these areas permanently remain free from drug trafficking and armed violence. Their official task is to act as regulators and helpers in the communities, to establish communication and interaction with the residents and to promote the overall acceptance of police presence in the favelas.

So far, 30 UPP police stations have been set up (cf. UPP *Social* 2013); and the two largest favelas, Complexo do Alemão and Rocinha, were also occupied in preparation for the stationing of UPPs. Altogether, the authorities plan to pacify forty favelas before the FIFA World Cup in 2014, and one hundred until the Summer Olympics in 2016 (*Freeman* 2012; *Gaffney* 2010).

This timetable and the initiation date of the programme clearly indicate that the UPP programme, despite official comments to the contrary, is primarily a security programme for the coming mega-events. The programme is by no means a city-wide measure; it is confined to selected favelas, and they are not necessarily those with the highest crime rates (cf. *Frischtak* and *Mandel* 2012: 8), but those located in city areas, which are strategically relevant to the events. This and the fact that the UPP programme is financially supported by international concerns such as Coca Cola – a major sponsor of the IOC and FIFA – and Brazilian oil magnate *Eike Batista* (*Barrionuevo* 2010) suggest that it is not the inhabitants of the respective favelas who are the primary beneficiaries of the pacification efforts.



Photo 1 Staging of the clenched fist of the state – BOPE snipers and journalists during the occupation of the Rocinha favela (Source: AFP)



Photo 2 Sign of the victory of ‘Ordem e Progresso’ – BOPE forces hoisting the Brazilian flag after the occupation of the Complexo do Alemão (Source: AFP)

The recent favela pacification is a means in the attempt to fulfill the requirements of FIFA and IOC regarding the safety of international visitors. With this ambitious programme, the state is demonstrating its political power and capacity in matters of public security. Accordingly, the state is placing its actions on the media stage. And the media actually do take notice: The *Choque de Paz* (shock of peace) operation for the pacification of Rocinha, a large-scale operation involving over 3000 storm-troopers in November 2011, developed into a large-scale media event. There were about as many international reporters on the scene as were police and military forces; one could have gotten the impression that press photographers were in trouble to find motifs unspoiled by a colleague's telephoto. With helicopters, tanks and special forces of the *Tropa de Elite* (BOPE) dressed in black combat suits with the martial skull-emblem, the operation looked like an elaborate PR spectacle: Rocinha as an arena for a media circus in which the state was putting the firm hand of its power on display (*Photo 1*). The government forces hoisted the Brazilian flag at the highest point of the settlement – a symbol of victory which had also been used during the occupation of the Complexo do Alemão – for a media-effective climax. The intended message is clear: The state is now taking care of *Ordem e Progresso* (order and progress) in the favelas (*Photo 2*).

However, it is not only the clenched fist of the state that is put on display; its helping and protective hand is also stage-managed skillfully. The UPP professionally manages its media image; it runs its own press office as well as a well-maintained website entitled *UPP Repórter – Embrace this idea* (www.upprj.com), which provides information on current developments – in English, too! In addition, UPP police officers are trained in media relations. Journalists, social scientists and foreign delegations are welcome to visit UPP stations, where they are supplied with information (on the programme's achievements). This intensive public-relations work has given rise to the predominantly positive news reports. In the media, UPP police officers are presented as close to the community, helpful and friendly. One key visual motif is that of officers posing with children – often displaying a tender and caring physical contact (cf. *Photo 3* and *Photo 4*). In the Santa Marta favela, the author witnessed the following scene: a male tourist (approx. 50 years old) asked a UPP officer for permission to photograph him. The officer kindly accepted and spontaneously grabbed an approx. 6-year-old boy for a

(kneeling and smiling) pose with him for the camera: coincidence or part of the public-relations campaign?

The favela pacification is obviously a political reaction to the representation of the 'favela problem' in the international media. The UPP programme is an integral part of strategic city-staging. It is part of a campaign with which the host city seeks to media-effectively demonstrate its capacity in terms of security policy in order to improve its security image¹.

But this programme is not only an expression of the effort to change the media-assigned role of the state ('The state is doing something!'); the pacifications also create certain preconditions for a change in the globally communicated image of the favela itself. The programme can be seen as a first step of the host city's strategy to transform the sign 'favela' by actively influencing the signification and interpretation in a way that makes it possible to integrate the favela in the sugar-loaf-sweetened and samba-saturated event-image of the 'marvelous city'.

3.3.2 Step 2: Aesthetic remodeling ('beautification')

This strategy relates to acts of interference into the materiality of the signifier. Some elements of the sign 'favela' are deleted, changed or added with the aim of suggesting other – more positive – ascriptions or interpretations. Many of the massive construction and infrastructural activities in the pacified favelas can serve as examples for this aesthetic remodeling. In public speeches, these measures are presented as projects designed for the betterment of the local living conditions; a closer look, however, reveals that many of the developments are largely intended to improve the outward appearance of the favelas or are particularly orientated towards the needs of visitors.

For example, in the pacified Favela Mangueira, which is located next to the Maracanã Stadium, a cable car is installed, a samba school designed by star architect *Oscar Niemeyer* is erected, and public places are tastefully redesigned. As a result of these beautifications, many houses in Mangueira have to be demolished and their inhabitants displaced.

In the case of Morro da Providência Favela, which was pacified in March 2010, it is also obvious that many of the construction measures mainly serve the purpose of 'symbolic taming' (*Freeman 2012*). The settlement,



Photo 3 and 4 The helping and protective hand of the State – UPP police officers with favela children (Source: www.upprj.com, 24/06/2012)

which counts roughly 5,500 inhabitants, is considered Rio's oldest favela. It is situated on a steep hill not far from the old port. The port area (Porto Maravilha) will be completely newly developed and revitalised for the Olympic Games; it is the most lavish and cost-intensive urban-development project (Gaffney 2010). The measures in Providência that are planned on the social investment programmes PAC and *Morar Carioca* also include a cable car system. Freeman (2012) expresses the presumption that this system is actually designed in such a way that it purposely sacrifices many houses to the bulldozer ('thinning out'). Eight hundred residential units have already been labelled for demolition. These measures gave rise to massive protests; residents tried to block the construction works, but were prevented from doing so by UPP units. The protesters complained that the building project worth several millions did not at all meet their most urgent needs (e.g. education, jobs, health care). Their slogan, '*teleférico para quem?*' ('cable car for whom?'), seems reasonable if one considers the lay-out of the cable car system: One of the lines will lead to the central station (Central do Brasil), another one directly to the Cidade do Samba, where the floats for the yearly carnival processions are built and which is also one of Rio's most popular tourist attractions. Moreover, there is a plan for a line to the new cruise docks, where the 'Museum of Tomorrow' is built as a prestige object and tourist magnet. The cable car will go to Cruzeiro, Providência's highest point, which provides a fabulous panorama view. All the houses in this area have already been earmarked for demolition. According to a report in *O Globo* (Brazil's biggest daily paper) of 29 March 2010, there are plans to replace these dwellings with new colonial-style buildings designated for commer-

cial and residential functions. Moreover, there are plans for a 'favela museum', which is to be devoted to the history of Providência (Menezes 2012: 121). The question here, too, is: *para quem?* ('for whom?')

A further example is the *Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho* complex, which used to be infamous for its high homicidal rates. The favela is located near some particularly popular residential areas at the boundary between Ipanema and Copacabana and is quite visible from the beach. The favela complex was pacified in late 2009. Before the pacification, construction work had already commenced on the new Ipanema metro station. An exit from the station was constructed on the site of a former entrance to the favela Cantagalo on junction R. Teixeira de Melo/R. Barão da Torre. Until then, Ipanema's middle-class inhabitants had considered this area extremely unsightly, dubious and dangerous, mainly because of the disorderly appearance and the various – partly informal, partly illegal – business activities. A 64-meter tower with a lift and a viewing platform for tourists (*Mirante da Paz*/'view of peace')² constituted a central element of the *Complexo Rubem Braga* building project (costs: BLR 48 million/roughly US\$ 24 million); it also features a modern bridge construction connecting the tower with the favela. Although it was claimed that the tower was designed to improve the accessibility of the settlement, this oversized building might rather be serving the purpose of remodelling an infamous part of Ipanema so as to meet the aesthetic requirements of the middle class and the tourists. The favela entrance and the houses located there disappeared as a result of the construction project; they were replaced by the iconic architecture of the *Complexo Rubem Braga* and by a clean, camera-monitored

square controlled by security staff. The hyper-modern building designed in blue and green and illuminated at night dominates the scenery; it also conceals large parts of the settlement when viewed from below.

Another form of remodelling favelas, which clearly aims at a positive change in outward appearance and is primarily orientated towards the ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry 2002), are the aesthetic interventions made on favela facades. For example, the City invested a lot of money in paint in order to redesign the roadside structures in the lowest part of the well-known Favela Rocinha at the Estr. Laguna Barra in bright colours. Also along a major street within Rocinha (Rua 4) houses were revamped in this way. The bright and colourful design contrasts sharply with the usual appearance of the grey or unplastered house fronts inside the favela.

The project, dubbed ‘Favela Painting’, conceived by the designer duo *Jeroen Koolhaas* and *Dre Urhahn*, represents a particularly impressive example of aesthetic intervention. The Dutchmen designed the facades at the central square (Praça Cantão) at the entrance to the lower part of the first pacified favela Santa Marta. They remodeled the square into a comprehensive work of art. They hired people from the favela, who, after completing a brief course in painting and scaffolding, painted the house facades, following the basic pattern drafted by the artists. The outcome of this work is a colourfully bright ensemble (cf. *Photo 5*).

On their website (www.favelapainting.com), the designers describe their work as follows: “About 7000

square meters of hillside slum, converted into a new monument for the community.” This statement is remarkable since it suggests that the new design alone suffices to change this part of Santa Marta into something that is no longer a slum – not, however, into a ‘deslumped’ residential area, but into a (slum) monument. The second part of the statement is open to further interpretation: Does ‘monument for the community’ mean that the designers intended to set up a monument for the inhabitants (just like a memorial for a deceased person whom one would like to remember in a certain way)? Or is the project really meant to give Santa Marta’s inhabitants aesthetic enjoyment? The work of art is doubtlessly monumental, but again the question is: for whom? ‘for the community’, as it proclaimed, or ‘for the tourists’?³.

The new facade design in Rocinha and Santa Marta is unusual both for the favelas and for Rio as a whole; yet, the design is still compatible. In terms of choice of colour and pattern it meaningfully links up aesthetically to specific notions and images of the favela, which are particularly prevalent in the context of city tourism in Rio. The redesigned favela facades unequivocally invoke certain modes of representation and apply style elements which in fact are known from favela paintings that are offered as souvenirs on the streets.

These pictures, often designed in a naïve, child-like style (cf. *Fig. 4*), reflect a favela image beyond misery, drug, crime and violence. Instead they draw on notions of an exotic way of life which, though chaotic, is largely colourful, vibrant and happy – notions of ‘the



Photo 5 ‘Favela Painting’ in Santa Marta (Source: *D. Urhahn*, with permission of the artist)



Fig.4 Examples of typical favela paintings

real exotic Brazil'. These souvenirs that reflect the exoticising elements of the favela image have become the aesthetic ideal for the new face of the favela, they function as templates for the new design.

The described examples of activities directed towards changing the outward appearance of the favela (be that by building or painting) can all be interpreted as an expression of a politically initiated facelift for the visitors' eyes. The city is out to display favelas located in areas of strategic importance in a way that fits into the intended image of the event city. The intention is not to render these favelas invisible, rather prettier. The aim is to suggest other, more positive interpretations and thus to prepare them for touristic staging.

3.3.3 Step 3: touristic staging

In addition to governmental attempts to achieve a transformation of the sign 'favela' by way of transforming its materiality, the City of Rio has actively been making efforts to selectively direct the tourist's gaze and to influence the interpretation of the remodeled signifier. In the process, the city draws upon a trend in tourism which has been spreading in the Global South since the early 1990s: namely slum tourism, the touristic valorisation of urban

poverty areas, which mostly takes place in the form of organised tours for visitors from the Global North (Steinbrink et al. 2012).

In Rio de Janeiro, favela tourism – the Brazilian version of slum tourism – emerged in the context of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development (UNCED) in 1992. Favelas, already visible in the distance, drew the attention of representatives of NGOs, political activists and journalists, mainly because the police and military had cordoned them off during the conference, owing to security and image concerns. They therefore demanded guided tours of Rocinha, Rio's largest favela (Freire-Medeiros 2009). In the center of attention was the situation of the socio-spatially marginalised 'favelados' (Frenzel 2012: 52). From these first informally guided tours a commercial tourism branch developed in the following years. Today, there are at least seven commercial agencies and around twenty independent tourist guides offering tours to various favelas in Rio, and approximately 50,000 Rio tourists take advantage of their offers annually – and an upward trend can be observed (Steinbrink et al. 2012b: 5). In the early phase of this development the 'tourist gaze' (Urry 2002) was a politicised gaze charged with politico-moral outrage and, as a rule, combined with a more or less openly accusatory side glance at 'the

system' and at 'the political class'. Favelas were regarded as a social and political problem, as places of oppression, exclusion and exploitation. Meanwhile, in the course of commercialisation and professionalisation of favela tourism, political concerns have shifted to the background. The main focus today is firstly, on cultural matters and on the mode of life in the favelas, and secondly and particularly on issues of violence and drugs-related crime. One of the largest professional tour companies (*Be a Local – don't be a Gringo*) has particularly been making much use of the kick that adrenaline delivers: During a guided tour in October 2011, in which the author also participated, the group came across five heavily armed youngsters. The tour guide first shouted: "No photo! No photo!" After the boys had passed, he added: "Hey, you are lucky! You don't see that every day!" He made the same statement 30 minutes later when a coffin was carried towards the tourist group.

At least until the pacification of Rocinha in November 2011, crime and drug war were unmistakably the central topics and gang members carrying assault rifles were the major attraction of the tours. Besides, the tours of *Be-a-Local* are explicitly guided through parts of Rocinha which, both optically and olfactorily, appear extremely run down and dirty. In a bid to meet the expectations of international tourists private tour companies tend to draw on certain daunting as well as thrilling aspects of the favela imaginations disseminated by the media (cf. *Frisch 2012*). It is obvious that such tours hardly serve the purpose of positively changing this image; the hitherto common mode of representation rather reproduces the stereotypes which are supposed to be overcome.

If favela tourism is to be valorised in terms of the festivalisation paradigm, then the favelas will definitely need to be staged differently. The City of Rio therefore decided to play an active role in favela tourism. In May 2010, the programme Rio Top Tour initiated by the Ministry of Tourism, Sports and Leisure and TourisRio, the urban tourism agency, was brought into existence. The aim is to develop touristic structures in pacified favelas. The programme's pilot project started in Santa Marta, with an investment volume of US\$ 145,000 (*Bruns 2011*). Cantagalo and Providência (see above) are also among the areas covered by the programme. The fact that the then president *Lula da Silva* personally inaugurated the programme is a clear evidence of the political importance attached to favela tourism.

For the project in Santa Marta, tourist maps were produced, bilingual signposts and information boards installed, local tour guides trained, and micro-loans made available for businesses interested in tourism. The tourist attractions advertised in the favela include the 'Favela Painting' art project (see above), the local samba school, stalls of local artisans and a look-out point with a statue of Michael Jackson, who shot the video for his famous song 'They don't care about us' in Santa Marta (see *Medeiros and Menezes in this volume for details*). In addition, the newly established UPP station is also marked as a tourist sight by a plaque explaining the official idea of pacification.

It has been publicly emphasised that Rio Top Tour creates jobs and therefore serves the purpose of poverty reduction ('pro-poor tourism'), and that it additionally strengthens socio-economic and socio-cultural participation ('community-based tourism'). It is proclaimed that favela tourism is a tool for development. Irrespective of the actual socio-economic effects of this programme, it is a means to internationally demonstrate the government's will and ability to tackle urban poverty. The promotion of favela tourism can thus be interpreted as a symbolic political gesture. By guiding the tourists to pacified and spruced up showcase favelas, the public attention is directed to those areas in which the state has become active regarding security and social policies. The formerly accusing side glance at the state becomes an appreciating look as the role of the government becomes re-interpreted. The state is no longer an opponent of the 'favelados', but their supporter. Pacification itself becomes an attraction of favela tours, since the tourists are now presented with the achievements of security policy as well as of governmental social and infrastructural projects. The Brazilian state now displays itself as a socio-political caretaker.

Moreover, the selective direction of the tourist gaze diverts it from the numerous forgotten favelas at the periphery (invisibilisation), as well as from the demolition and eviction measures (invisibilisation of invisibilisation measures).

By engaging in favela tours, the state actively tries to transmit a differently composed picture and to show the favelas 'from a new point of view' (cf. logo of *Rio Top Tour*; *Fig. 5*). The colourful and pleasant aspects of the favela are moved to the foreground, which contrasts with what is usually emphasised in most of the established favela tours.



Fig.5 “Rio de Janeiro from a new point of view” – Official logo of Rio Top Tour

The co-ordinator of the programme, *Monica Rodrigues*, emphasises:

“We want to show that Brazil doesn’t just have hereditary culture. Here there are samba and capoeira groups, northeastern traditions, typical cuisine, people doing trails at night, the stunning viewpoint at the top. There exists a community inside the city that needs to be discovered by foreigners [...]” (cited in *Clarke* 2010).

The City of Rio makes use of a general tendency that can be observed in global slum tourism. The study by *Rolfes et al.* (2009) in Cape Town and those by *Meschkank* (2012) and *Dyson* (2012) in Mumbai reveal that slum tours have a strong capacity to change negative perceptions of slums (cf. *Rolfes and Meschkank* in this volume). The findings of the study by *Medeiros and Menezes* (in this volume), which adopts a method close to that of *Rolfes et al.* (2009), prove that the favela tourism in Santa Marta does indeed indicate a positive change as well. Hence the governmental promotion of favela tourism seems to achieve its transformative aim.

The way Santa Marta is represented by *Rio Top Tour* involves a specific form of culturalisation which aims at a recharging of spatial semantics or in other words at a ‘rebranding’ of the global trademark ‘favela’. This culturalising representation goes hand in hand with a shift in ascribed responsibility. The living conditions in the favelas are no longer observed as an expression of social injustice, but as one of local character and of a typical Brazilian way of life. In other words: Social inequality is deproblematized and the tourist gaze is depoliticised. And that is definitely good for a happy festival mood of the visitors.

4. Concluding remarks

The housing and living situation of lower income groups probably represents the most sensitive sphere regarding the effects of the recent festivalisation trend in the Global South. This is not only because the public budgets of the host cities are strained by gigantic investments, which also tie up important financial resources needed for social housing programmes. Additionally, due to the intrinsic logic of festivalisation policy the urban poverty areas themselves represent a staging problem to be solved before the event starts.

This paper has shown how Rio de Janeiro is dealing with its ‘favela problem’. It has been explained that image considerations are an important urban policy concern. But unlike in previous host cities in the Global South, the measures in Rio are not confined to the invisibilisation of the signifier. In addition, Rio applies strategies of sign transformation, i.e. of the reinterpretation or recharging of favela semantics. State interventions in this area include both aesthetic transformation of the material substrate of the signifier (building and painting) and touristic staging (promotion of favela tourism), which aims at directing and diverting the tourist’s gaze. A precondition for the implementation of these measures is the pacification programme which is simultaneously a strategy of the state to present itself in a media-effective manner.

All the projects mentioned in this paper can be seen as a ‘symbolic taming’ (*Freeman* 2012) of the favelas and as part of the strategic city-staging of Rio in the preparatory phase of two mega-events. The city is sprucing itself up and is trying to integrate the favelas – at least semantically – into the event city. Seen as such, the measures in the favelas seem to be designed to mainly serve the outwardly directed objective of festivalisation policy (image production, positioning on the global market etc.).

This, however, is only one possible interpretation. The event-related measures can just as well be interpreted in line with the inwardly directed objective of promoting particular urban development dynamics and at the same time as a means serving powerful economic interests: For the city, the events constitute an opportunity to legitimise certain policies. The immense pressure resulting from the high expectation of achieving the national goal of successfully hosting the events creates the necessary public acceptance and permits a bundling of capacities as well as

financial resources for measures and strategies which would hardly be implementable without the events. This applies particularly to the expensive favela pacifications. The interests behind the pacification programme and also the effects of these measures go far beyond the short-term purpose of improving the security situation in regard to the coming events. The regained state control over the favelas not only creates a secure environment for public infrastructural measures and social programmes; it also gives rise to attractive conditions for private investments.

Despite the undeniably positive effects for the favela residents, the pacification and the follow-on projects lead to a tremendous rise in the value of land and rents and thus, indirectly, to a displacement of large parts of the resident population. Increases in prices of up to 400 % are being reported from some of the pacified favelas (cf. *Freeman 2012*).

Moreover, private service companies have seized the opportunity to extend their markets areas into the pacified favelas. For example, big restaurant and retail chains are setting up branches. Besides, many private providers are currently making every effort to formalise hitherto informally connected public infrastructural facilities (such as water, electricity, TV and WIFI). It remains to be seen whether and to what extent the favela residents can meet the additional costs (cf. *Freeman 2012*; *Gaffney 2010*).

But price increases will not only be experienced within the pacified favelas. There are indications that the pacifications will also have an immense impact on the formal real estate and housing sectors. In calculations conducted for the whole city, *Fischtaak* and *Mandel (2012)* report that the pacifications are responsible for about 15 % of the rise in price in the formal housing sector between mid-2008 and mid-2011. In some residential areas directly bordering pacified favelas, real estate prices have already doubled (*Freeman 2012*). This indicates that the pacifications will further open the door to the already flourishing speculative business. We can thus assume that in the foreseeable future, gentrification will occur. Medium-income households will move from formal areas into the pacified favelas; and so pressure due to rent increases will be intensified and will lead to the moving out of favela residents.

The example of the pacification programme illustrates how the city of Rio uses the coming mega-events to achieve certain policy goals. And I mean neither

the reduction of crime rates in the city nor the fight against urban poverty; for both will presumably only shift to the periphery. Rather, with these measures, the state will make it possible for the 'invisible hand of the free market' to take hold on certain highly attractive areas, which so far have been 'no-go areas' for investors and which have to a certain extent remained outside the sphere of formal economic valorisation.

The urban policy strategies described in this paper are not only orientated towards the short-term requirements of mega-events. The market-orientated interventions of the state must instead be placed in the context of *Harvey's* notion of 'accumulation by dispossession' (*Harvey 2003*; *Harvey 2004*): By opening up new lucrative market areas the state almost directly serves the interests of capitalist accumulation (especially those of the real estate sector). The neoliberal orientation of *festifavelisation* policy is just as visible as are its far reaching implications for the urban poor.

Notes

¹ The importance attached to a solution to the 'favela problem' from a political point of view can be inferred from the immense costs involved in the pacification programme. In late 2011, there were 3771 UPP police officers; this number implies an annual expenditure of 230 million Reais (Brazilian Real = BRL; roughly US\$ 113 million). Considering the total of 100 UPPs currently being planned to be set up by the start of the Olympic Games in 2016, this would imply projected annual costs of BRL 1.8 billion from 2016. In view of the state annual security budget of BRL 5 billion in 2010, we can appreciate the extent of the financial burden (*Freeman 2012*).

² Rio's language policy is also interesting in this connection. There are bilingual signboards for visitors on the tower platform, providing information on the surrounding sights; they also draw attention to other favelas. But here, too, the word 'favela' is avoided and the term 'community' is used instead. This is again a language-policy expression of the invisibilisation strategy. In a personal communication *Jim Freeman* shared an interesting observation with me: "I have been noticing increasingly that 'comunidade' is starting to take on the same negative connotations as 'favela'. People use it ironically. One middle-class acquaintance of mine was criticising the way favela girls dressed and spoke disdainfully about a girl's very tight and short '*shortinho comunidade*', her 'community shorts'. A real estate agent I was interviewing went on and on about the negative effect of comunidades and views of comunidades on real estate values."

³ For a completely different reading of the arts project see *Kosmala* and *Imas (2012)*.

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