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DOI

[10.7480/iphs.2016.4.1290](https://doi.org/10.7480/iphs.2016.4.1290)

Publication date

2016

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

History Urbanism Resilience

Citation (APA)

Chagas Cavalcanti, A. (2016). Favelas and the normative, institutional Social Housing System in Brazil: discipline versus freedom, private versus public through the analysis of the unprivileged working class history. In C. Hein (Ed.), *History Urbanism Resilience: Planning and Heritage* (Vol. 4, pp. 173-184). (International Planning History Society Proceedings; Vol. 17, No. 4). Delft University of Technology. <https://doi.org/10.7480/iphs.2016.4.1290>

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FAVELAS AND THE NORMATIVE, INSTITUTIONAL SOCIAL HOUSING SYSTEM IN BRAZIL: DISCIPLINE VERSUS FREEDOM, PRIVATE VERSUS PUBLIC THROUGH AN ANALYSIS OF THE UNPRIVILEGED WORKING CLASS HISTORY

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Most of today's Brazilian Social Housing Institutional complexes are standardized mass buildings. They are planned in the periphery of cities, have no connection to public transportation systems and are disconnected from their respective local context. The planning approach to housing is compliant with 'state simplification models' which turn a blind eye from the dynamics of the informal sector. This unprecedented study demonstrates that the polarization between institutional planning and the changing needs of society continues to expose the vast inequalities between social classes. This is analysed through a historic study of the Brazilian working class system and its development over recent years. The study compares two very distinct scenarios: on one hand, social housing conceived by traditional stakeholders, institutions and real estate agencies seems to follow a disciplinary approach and segment the life of privileged workers/formal workers. On the other hand, less privileged workers are allowed to freely build their own housing. Thus, this article traces a -binary interrelation between planning for the privileged and for the unprivileged, explaining how favelas became a legitimate form of mass housing in Brazil.

Keywords

Favela, Brazil, social housing history, working class, planning, architecture

How to Cite

Cavalcanti, Ana Rosa Chagas. "Favelas and the normative, institutional Social Housing System in Brazil: discipline versus freedom, private versus public through an analysis of the unprivileged working class history". In Carola Hein (ed.) *International Planning History Society Proceedings, 17th IPHS Conference, History-Urbanism-Resilience, TU Delft 17-21 July 2016, V.04 p.173, TU Delft Open, 2016.*

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7480/iphs.2016.4.1290>

INTRODUCTION

This study is a planning anthology concerned with both the freedom and the discipline of planning ‘gestures’ towards the working class sector in Brazil. Thus, in being so, the study does not aim to be structured in a conventional way, but rather through historical periods. Firstly, this paper traces back to the abolition of slavery in 1888 because from then onwards, the country witnessed a sharp rise in the demand for working class housing. Next it refers to the advent of ‘wage employment’ and to the so-called ‘working class villas’, which were initially conceived by the private sector. After that during the military regime, especially during the 60’s, housing became a major concern for state institutions due to the increase in demand, allowing for the emergence of institutes such as IAPI, IAPC and IAPB, whose task was to provide housing for legal workers of exclusive sectors. Post 1980s social housing is also discussed and compared with the previous systems. Finally, the article refers to the fact that some members of society have joined forces to try and implement participatory planning such as the ‘Liga Social contra o Mocambo’ and ‘Mutirão’. In so doing, the distinction between those workers who have had access social housing and those who haven’t will hopefully be diminished through a better planning system. This study also aims to put forward ideas that are currently considered to be ideologies in the Brazilian planning process.

The author believes that traditional education in the planning sector can be broadened to address labour, especially because labour networks are important to understand architecture and urbanism within informal settlements. After all, the knowledge inherited from favela builders is embedded in labour practices¹ which are often obfuscated by a number of architectural and technocratic assumptions. An example is that the architect possesses superior expertise than the masons of a typical favela. Through consideration and study of a typical worker’s perspective, dogmas and traditional assumptions that link the ‘privileged’ with the ‘unprivileged’ can be discussed. By highlighting how unprivileged workers were left aside to build their own houses throughout several historical periods, the aim is to show how ‘resilient planning’ (ex. the favela) has become permanent a mass housing system in Brazil.

Prior to the discussion, a number of important assumptions regarding Brazilian favelas ought to be pointed out. The knowledge presented in this paper and its references has been accumulated through years of observation and study. Previous ethnographic research conducted by the author within Brazilian favelas (Sururu de Capote 2008-2009/Grota de Santo Antônio/ Favela do Telegrafo 2014-2015), has been focusing on both the construction systems used as well as the everyday life of the inhabitants. An example is the masons themselves, who are important figures in these communities. Questions concerning issues as: 1) the working journeys of the mason in and out of the favela; 2) the knowledge/wisdom of masons brought up in a favela; 3) their experiences in the formal and the informal city; 4) to and from 45) the discrete network which supplies construction materials for favela builders; or, 56) the extent of collaboration between dwellers inside and outside the favelas.

Most of the interviewed masons have been involved in construction from a young age, initially by doing odd jobs such as mixing the cement or carrying small tools and later through more technical work, eventually becoming mason assistants. Finally, after years gathering experience they become a mason, often doing technical courses provided by the government in order to become more specialised. Most of these people also work in the ‘formal city’ on complex (and sometimes luxurious) building projects together with engineers and architects. Concurrently, during their weekends, their free time or in the evenings they build houses and spaces within the favela.

¹ I refer to the concept of practice of Michel de Certeau (see reference).

The building techniques and construction knowledge that the masons possess can be demonstrated as follows: A favela mason's expertise covers a broad range of skills: from handling heavy machinery on site to implementing construction details within the building. . (or not)The diversity of the masons' knowledge pool and shared experiences are reflected in the construction of the favela. It is important to understand that the dynamic within favelas cannot be entirely isolated from the practices of the 'formal city' and knowledge and values are intertwined through labour practices.

Overall, labour issues need investigation for several epistemic reasons, primarily because these are often unknown to an architect who wishes to address an informal settlement. Labour is fundamental for a favela inhabitant and affects how the house will be used, designed and accessed by people. For example, houses are also often functioning as workshops, adapting to work activities which are somewhat merged with domestic life. Furthermore, favelas are becoming economic factors on a global scale (Richard Burdett & Deyan Sudjic, eds, 2007) and as rent rises, properties commoditise, as David Madden has shown in his recent study which states that commodification is a process that addresses even the poorest of settlements (Madden, 2015). Apart from this, one must also note that inhabitants migrate from rural to urban areas mostly because of labour opportunities that cities provide. It is common practice worldwide to consider labour as an important criterion to evaluate the impacts of informality. The concept of planetary urbanization by Neil Brenner² shows the contradictions of analysing informality in contrast to formality (among other binaries). This intertwining of formal and informal worlds highlights the incontestable presence of favelas and its informal contexts as a constant phenomenon in the urban space (Roy & Alsayad, eds, 2008; Harvey, 2013; Sennet, 2011; Sassen, 2011, Brenner, 2013).

All in all, this introduction aims to stress that the formal-informal dynamics of labour in the city are interrelated. Also, the fact that this article highlights a dual planning perspective is coined by ideology more than by real dynamics. One must also mention that this paper focuses on this long-standing ideological 'binary approach' adopted by the authorities and institutions. Within this framework, the focus is on the planning of the Brazilian housing system which, throughout its history, seemed to selectively support workers who were able to access housing and to decide on how they were expected to dwell and behave through the choice of design attributes, decisions, infrastructures and individualization. And how on the other hand, those who were excluded freely build their houses and based their design standards. All in all, it is about how planning strategies have been continuously divided into those to be disciplined and those to be let free to not only 'build' both their needs and values.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

As explained before, this article is part of a broader survey on architecture and labour, tackling labour privileges together with housing planning in Brazil. Due to word limitations the historical study is focused on the examination of the Brazilian working class and its development. There is a speculative inquiry on how polarization between institutional planning and the changing needs of society has allowed resilient forms of planning to become permanent (e.g. favelas). This text also demonstrates that the historical analysis of the working class is intrinsically related to a long-lasting symbolic distinction between 'workers with rights' and 'workers without rights'. Above all, the interrelations and values shared by these two 'classes' provides evidence for understanding ideological inequalities within the Brazilian housing system. Finally, it must be noted that the intention is not to go into the violent political conflicts that inequality in labour systems typically instigate, but simply to look at how planning development and society correlate.

2 The Concept of Planetary Urbanization of Brenner defends that there is not such a binary distinction between the rural and the urban. And that currently the world is urbanizing till the most remote confines of the planet.

The answers in this analysis are far from complete but offer a unique perspective on labour privileges and housing planning in Brazil. They are presented from an architectural and urban planning perspective through the use of graphics and the creative interpretation of data. This approach is appropriate due to aid in methodological and academic issues which are implicit to such disciplines. The institutionalisation of labour rights have historically affected and directly influenced planning policies. Detailed analysis of labour patterns in Brazil highlights that some ideological issues can be humanized through the lenses of work, which is a practice shared by many (both privileged and unprivileged).

A number of historical periods in Brazil, namely the post abolition period, the military regime period or the democratic period, can today shed light on how the housing problem became idealised through various factors such as politics, sociology or materiality. Housing became an important topic for both the individual and the collective. At a certain point, labour rights were only given to certain 'skilled workers' and anyone who had a working position inside an 'institutionalized labour setting' had access to credit and thus to adequate housing. However, many others were left to fend for themselves, finding their own way to provide their families with shelter, sometimes even opting to build it themselves, either alone or as a group.

For example, during the period of slavery, the distinction between those who had houses and those who didn't was based on one's freedom and one's labour status: Slaves lived in the *senzala* while owners of production facilities lived in the *Casa Grande* (which are portions of a same property), monks lived in monasteries, priests in churches, peasants in self constructed houses and workers of the *Coroa Portuguesa* resided in houses provided by Portugal (Freyre, 1933). Later during the post abolition period, unprivileged workers included small entrepreneurs and independent workers: free slaves, immigrants (mostly Italians from the WWI and WWII), artists and so on. These lived in cortices or started the favelas.

At this time social housing and the right to dwell was almost non-existent except for factory workers or citizens who owned either a property or a production facility. During this period private property owners started planning the so-called "first social housing prototypes" (Bonduki, 2014). Historical analysis shows that these prototypes were provided to those who were somehow considered to be 'privileged workers' and not to every worker. During the military regime railway workers, retired state workers, marine workers and many other military workers were the only ones who had access to the social housing provided by the state. This commodity coincided with a building boom in the cities and the explosion of favelas. Once again, the distinction between working classes is most evident. Further to this, privileged workers seem to have been accommodated in projects that were dominated by discipline, isolation and segmentation of functions. It is also evident that unprivileged workers often tended to self build, customize and constantly change their living environment, sometimes sharing their domestic life with other families. This multi-family concept of living is reflected in the design of such a project.

Two ideologies stem from this process: Firstly, one may note that the classification of specific citizens as 'privileged workers' and 'unprivileged workers' may change in time, but the planning distinction between these two terms seems to remain constant. In addition, the unprivileged working class in Brazil created different forms of resilience over the years. Several manners of organizing work and creating opportunity out of limited resources and rights were created since the period where slaves lived together with their owners (in the *Casa Grande e Senzala*). All periods are subdivided into Discipline and Freedom (some forms of discipline in planning are of course more violent, and others are subtle) inasmuch as the response. All in all, the favela planning, the counter culture planning, the *Senhores de Engenho* planning, the post-military planning, have much in common. In all times of Brazilian planning, the aim seemed to provide spaces to discipline the workers who had benefits, and let the workers who were not privileged, free to build and change spaces (creating a culture of planning) that also relates with labour.

DISCIPLINE OR FREEDOM: AN IMPRESSION ON SOCIAL HOUSING ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE IN BRAZIL

From 2008 onwards, the provision of social housing has been quite a pressing issue for the Brazilian government.. As of 2013, information from the Institute of Geography and Statistics has shown that Brazil has had a 10% housing deficit (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2013), most of which is located in city areas. The history of Brazilian institutional planning demonstrates successive cases of failed attempts to set out a planning system based on a 'one for all' model, often having a top-down approach and including a chunky package that tries to focus on everything.

Beyond the corridors of universities and state institutions, social housing is still a non-consolidated topic in Brazilian planning literature. Inventories are difficult to obtain because collection of data is rare and undistributed, such that significant samples of successful and failed housing practices are hard to come across. Furthermore, this practice is still considered a 'second category architecture' by most local planning professionals, who often prefer to work for real estate agencies.

What makes Brazil a very particular case to study social housing is the polarization between what authorities are planning and what and the changing needs of society are. For example, although the Constitution of 1988 assures dwelling rights to all citizens (Planalto Brasileiro, 1988), in reality, the system is not capable to address the demand. A person earning a minimum wage cannot rent an empty area in the so-called "formal city". Thus, one could say that the favelas are a clear claim of housing by 'self-doing'. Favelas have been set aside for a long time, so much so that they have grown to enormous proportions within the cities. Subjectively, one can say that they have become a legitimate Brazilian mass housing system.

The Brazilian social housing system demonstrates the long lasting binary framework of its planning practices. Stakeholders and real estate agencies are forced to take on a disciplinary and segregating approach to housing space, investing a lot of effort to segment the life of privileged (so-called formal) workers from those of the unprivileged (informal). At the same time, the system still allows unprivileged workers to freely build their own houses and increment those spaces which are excluded from the disciplinary planning system.

These two facets of the Brazilian social housing scheme do not only refer to design features of domestic space but also explain how housing processes are today shaping values of a city in development, and how they will continue to do so in the future. In both cases, the planning system takes on the approach of persistence under antagonistic circumstances.

A HISTORY OF FREEDOM AND DISCIPLINE: FROM POST ABOLITION PERIOD TILL NOWADAYS.

Prior to the abolition of slavery in 1888, Brazilian slaves lived together in *Senzalas*^{3*}(Figure 1). In the years that followed, working class houses in Brazil were constantly in high demand. During this period the country shifted from a slave-based, agrarian export economy to an industrial economy. Since then, the production of social housing was conducted via a top-down approach. Initially this was done by the private sector through previous slave-owners who started building factories and villas to shelter their workers (Bonduki, 2014). Following this, state government intervened with a utilitarian approach to tackle the sharp rise in housing demand, often openly favoring privileged, 'formal workers'. Despite the constant presence of informal and liberal workers within Brazilian society, access to housing was discriminatorily conceived to serve as many formal workers as possible by stipulating that only those with a valid employment contract could apply for social housing.

The first Brazilian housing complexes were both conceived and provided by the private sector, by those who owned some form of means of production. This scenario was as though the right of the owner of the *senzala* was transferred to factory owners at that time. With the introduction of wages and employment some factory owners began to build the so-called working class villas (Bonduki, 2014). Once again the uncanny distinction between those workers who could live in social housing and those who couldn't was strongly underlined. Firstly, workers could not buy houses and secondly, they could only live in the villa if they were working in the factories as the rent was directly debited from their salary. This was typical of the first Brazilian social housing prototypes (Bonduki, 2014). The *Quilombos* and *Ocas* (living in structures respectively built by the fugitive slaves and by the American Indians) which preceded this period show alternative models of social housing, distinctively notable for their multi-family housing concept and collective characteristics.

During this period, housing planning in Brazil was characterized by a disciplinary approach because workers needed to perform well. The internal layout of the houses tended to be strictly functional and spaces were segmented to follow industrial ideals. These houses were places where the workers and their families could rest while at the same time guarantee that they would have a proper place to perform every domestic activity in the appropriate space and in the appropriate period of the day.

Working class villas looked like several isolated or germinated housing units: long rows of houses side by side(Figure 2), close to the factories and in the outskirts of the city. Some of these complexes included common areas and infrastructure such as a central plaza, schools, gas stations, theaters, cinemas, nurseries, churches, gym, and so forth. Moreover, villas had almost no contact with the public life of the rest of the city. Life followed a strict routine inside the confines of a sort of gated community near the factories; as if pictured by the storage man of Walter Benjamin^{4*}, being included the fact that many villas had siren control.

3 houses of slaves - that is, an annex of the Casa Grande which is the house of slave's owners),

4 Walter Benjamin: Der destruktive Charakter



FIGURE 1 Graphic of Casa Grande e Senzala from Cicero Dias. The picture shows how labour and domestic life were related in the pre-abolition period. Values and social practices were shared between the privileged working class and the slaves; Physically these were separated but virtually they were intertwined through labour.



FIGURE 2 Rio de Janeiro, Villa Marechal Hermes 1922 – picture shows the houses of workers of an industry. They were usually isolated or geminated casas. Often there was a cinema, a theater a children nursery, a clinique, a sports center, churches, gas station. All these facilities stimulated the inhabitants to stay in the Villa.



FIGURE 3 Cortiço, Rio de Janeiro: a multifamily housing housing where families shared collective spaces such as clothes line and a central courtyard. Brazilian independent workers of the post abolition period usually lived in these spaces.

At this time, numerous property owners invested in cheap housing blocks with no sewage connection. These hives, the so-called *corticós*⁵ (Figure 3), usually consisted of several rooms connected by corridors and an atrium where recreational and social events could take place. Artists, free workers, free slaves, informal workers and immigrants sought this kind of housing. In contrast to the villas, everyday activities happened in the reduced space of the room, overloading multiple space functions or having to meddle with the neighbor's room for several reasons deriving from the lack of space or insalubrity. Furthermore, with housing being an exclusive commodity, inhabitants often came across constant rent increases, often having to move elsewhere. Consequently, some people began occupying land illegally in the outskirts of the city.

Once again, while former workers lived in disciplined spaces, informal workers were left aside to come up with a solution that satisfied their most basic needs (Figure 4). This binary framework survived during the military regime when housing became a significant concern for State Institutions. During this time, only a few specific workers could legally subscribe to social housing. These included retired workers from the government, from the military sector from commercial sector, from industrial sector and from banks.

⁵ Hives - Popular knowed as Cabeça de Porco - or Pork head.

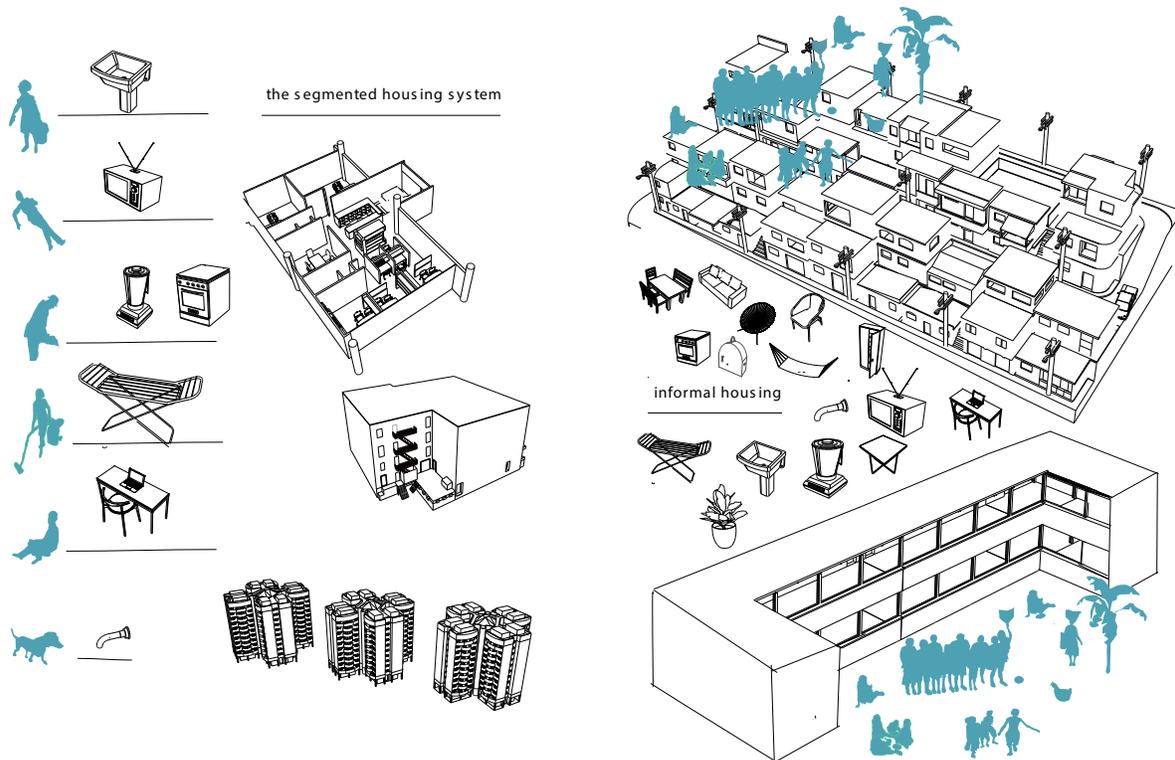


FIGURE 4 Graphic of multi-family housing for the privileged workers: Spaces and functions are defined. Graphic of favelas and multifamily housing for the unprivileged workers: Spaces and functions are blurry.

It is important to note that even today, not all laborers have managed to legalize their working conditions, including those who previously belonged to ‘formal’ industries. The industrial sector has boomed, leading to a significant increase in migration from rural to city areas, and thus to more people seeking housing. At this point, the favelas became an intuitive option for many people, leading to such a rapid growth in such dwellings, almost forcing the authorities to turn a blind eye on the on their outrageous living conditions. While this process could probably not have been hindered, the flux of migrants was synonymous with the authorities’ long-term goals, which were to increase population in the urban centers and create an industrial workforce.

With no other option except to plan their own houses, a particular logic of deconstructing and of consensually subverting the segmented city arose amongst unprivileged workers. This extraordinary dynamic revealed new forms of thinking, planning, predicting and designing the domestic activities. Suddenly a family’s needs, the spatial layout the correlation between public and private life came into play under people’s ownership. This form of planning instigated people`s imagination and opened up new possibilities for them – it pushed them to be incremental, creative, and adaptive. A direct reaction to survive.

During the 60s, Brazilian housing production increased significantly due to the emergence of institutes devoted to housing for legal workers (IAPI, Instituto de Aposentados e Pensionistas da Industria; IAPC Instituto de Aposentados e Pensionistas do Comercio, and IAPB Institutos de Aposentados e Pensionistas do Brasil). Most of these complexes consisted of mass housing blocks lacking design quality and not adhering to strict sanitary laws, such as the iconic Amarelinho in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil(Figure 5). The few exceptions are the Pedregulho(Figure 5), the Japurá and the Conjunto Residencial Passo D` areia. This building was inspired by the CIAM whilst the Cité Jardin can be labeled as a Modernist piece of architecture.



FIGURE 5 Rio de Janeiro, Social Housing for the privileged workers 'Amarelinho' (inhabitants are removed people from a favela). Pedregulho Social Housing for the Privileged workers (inhabitants were state workers – from cleaning service workers to secretaries and technicians of the government).



FIGURE 6 Image of a project designed by the Liga Social contra o Mocambo in Recife.

Up until the 1980s, planning for social housing still favoured the privileged working class, denying low-income workers or so-called illegal workers. For example, in social housing complexes throughout the whole country it is common to find a room for a maid, indicating that aristocratic sense and values with which they were designed. However, contemporary to this period, a number of alternative sectors of society united to conduct participatory planning, such as the *Liga Social contra o Mocambo* (Figure 6), and *Mutiroes*.

CONCLUSIONS: DEALING WITH FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Nowadays, Brazilian planning processes seem to be ideological. Terms such as *refavelização* have been introduced within the social housing planning sector. This refers to the attitude of changing a house design or de-characterizing it, and originates from ex-favela dwellers who have been placed in 'decent and clean' social housing. This has happened in places like the *Favela Cidade de Deus* around the 70's and the same process happens now in the project *Minha Casa Minha Vida* (MCMV).

Practices and habits, such as domestic life and labour systems are linked with historical and ideological processes which seem to suggest the outcomes of how to plan for the 'unprivileged' in 'privileged' spaces. Alternative planning such as *mutirões* and the project *favela bairro*, deal with the existing context of dwellers and contribute to the maintenance of this ideological process of segregation. This is done by (quite literally) accepting the 'unprivileged wherever they 'are'. On the other hand condominiums *fechados*, and luxurious gated communities are planned for the privileged. Such projects do not contribute to a porous city and are not ideal for an open city whereby privileged and unprivileged life co-exist side by side and share values (Sennet, 2015).

Thus, it is not surprising that the re-modeling and incrementing of spaces out of non-existent housing support structures were constructed alongside the narrative of a system of planning which is extremely disciplinary and devoted to a certain group of society. It is also unsurprising that this has fueled the ideology that housing has to be enclosed within itself, apart from the city fabric and a product, not a process. But what about today when this binary condition is somewhat oppressing? What if we understand housing as a process, not as product? What if we look at the city in between encounters? What lies beyond gated communities, favelas, and housing units with doorkeepers and maids? Today, the social class that lives in the favela (nowadays also defined as the middle class) is what sociologist Jesse de Sousa could call 'yuppies de fundo de quintal', 'batalhadores' and 'rale' (Souza, 2010). What remains?

What if architects considered society's core preoccupations through design? What if multiple living structures were included in the informal creative economy and traditional planning schemes? Perhaps it is worth looking more closely at which design patterns are produced inside the favelas. In other words, planning for housing in the favela should be a process that is committed to the long-term, to the effective participation of communities and with strategies that anticipate future growth patterns.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank the inhabitants of the Favela Grota de Santo Antonio, where I worked and lived. I thank Prof. Dr. Nelson Mota and Prof. Dick van Gameren for being my advisors at TU Delft. Also, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Neil Brenner for his advice of the book 'Seeing like a State' of James Scott, which has been the basis for my doctoral studies.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor(s)

Ana Rosa Chagas Cavalcanti is a Ph.D. Candidate at the Delft University of Technology supported by Sciences without Borders. Furthermore, she was awarded some architectural competitions which the first prize and she exhibited at international architecture exhibitions such as IBA Hamburg and the Biennial of Public Spaces (2015). She founded the "School of Favela Architecture" (2014), where favela inhabitants and academics can share knowledge on dwelling. This work unfolded an Exhibition at UCL Cities Methodologies (London, 2014), as well as articles at renewed international conferences/magazines and, it has received a positive critique from HDM editors (Cambridge-USA, 2015). She was "IJURR fellow" in 2015 (Harvard, UCLA, Sciences Po, ETH Zurich, LSE, ...) and has participated at the Wohnungsfrage Academy 2015 (HKW+Columbia Buel Center, 2015).

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Image sources

- Figure 1: Casa Grande e Senzala, Illustration of Cicero Dias 1933. Scanned from the book Casa Grande e Senzala (Freyre, 1933).
- Figure 2: Picture of Villa Marechal Hermes (1922), project documentation. Scanned from Nabil Bonduki's book (Bonduky, 2014).
- Figure 3: Estalagem na Rua do Senado 1906, Picture of Augusto Matta. Scanned from Nabil Bonduki's book (Bonduky, 2014).
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- Figure 5: "Amarelinho" e "Pedregulho". Scanned from Nabil Bonduki's book (Bonduky, 2014).
- Figure 6: Picture of the project "Liga social contra o Mocambo". Scanned from Nabil Bonduki's book (Bonduky, 2014).