



Breaking the city: Militarization and segregation in Rio de Janeiro



Anjuli Fahlberg^a, Thomas J. Vicino^{b,*}

^a Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Northeastern University, 360 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115, USA

^b Department of Political Science and School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, Northeastern University, 360 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 3 August 2015

Accepted 28 August 2015

Available online 24 October 2015

Keywords:

Dual city

Favelas

Justice

Rio de Janeiro

Segregation

Slums

Urban informality

ABSTRACT

Emerging from the global city literature of the 1980s and 1990s, a vast scholarship has developed that embraces the ‘dual city’ concept as a useful analytical tool for explaining how global transformations produce polarization within cities. However, less is known about how local policies shape uneven patterns of development. Through an examination of Rio de Janeiro’s Favela Pacification Program, we argue that state-level public policies play a significant role in institutionalizing duality. The recent military occupation of the slums in Rio de Janeiro demonstrates how the historically and politically contextualized public policy of confrontation has exacerbated tensions between the city’s elites and poor residents along a number of social, economic, and political dimensions. Local policymakers can influence the impact of globalization on social polarization by considering the effects of public policies on spatial justice.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The favelas of Rio de Janeiro sprawl into the hillsides of the city’s iconic landscape. One in five residents calls them home. As preparations began for the hosting of two mega-events, the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics, Rio de Janeiro state implemented a controversial program to tackle rampant violence and crime in the city. The Favela Pacification Program targets favela communities by deploying military police and special operations battalions to invade and establish permanent territorial control. The various forms of segregation produced by this program underscore the challenges to spatial justice in a city.

In this article, we examine the localized processes through which duality is produced in Rio de Janeiro as a result of the creation and implementation of the Favela Pacification Program. We begin by exploring the emergence of Rio de Janeiro as a politically and socially polarized city within the context of a globalizing and urbanizing Brazil. We then turn to the scholarly debate about the dual city and the mechanisms it has theorized to explain socio-political polarization its discontents. Next, we detail the unfolding of the military occupation of Rio’s favelas and review the key economic and political influences that have shaped tactics, practices,

and public discourses around this intervention. We argue that the Favela Pacification Program is a contentious intervention that institutionalizes inequality as policymakers negotiate the demands of broader political and economic processes.

2. Rio de Janeiro: a dual city?

The cover of *The Economist* (2009) depicted Rio de Janeiro’s iconic Christ the Redeemer statue as a rocket taking off into the sky, declaring, “Brazil takes off.” Indeed, at the brink of the 21st century, a global moment for Brazil had arrived (Reid, 2014). After decades of inertia, its population and economy boomed during the late 1990s and 2000s.¹ Recognition of Brazil’s arrival on the world stage is evident in the award to host numerous mega-events and strengthened position in the global economy (Zirin, 2014). The policy challenges and solutions emerging in Brazil provide an interesting and timely analytical opportunity because they represent, in part, the tensions characteristic of *globalizing and urbanizing* cities. In Rio de Janeiro, like many other developing cities, the processes that shape its geography show that the city continues on

¹ Brazil’s economy has contracted dramatically in recent years, particularly during the period from 2011 to 2015. These conditions have been caused, in part, by the following: a reduced demand for commodities and exports; inflation; currency devaluation; and corruption. Recession and economic uncertainty persist today. For a discussion of the long-term structural economic conditions in Brazil, see Baer (2013).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: a.ferreirafahlberg@neu.edu (A. Fahlberg), t.vicino@neu.edu (T.J. Vicino).

a long journey of population migration and economic transformation (Grant, 2009; Short, 2013). The case of Rio de Janeiro presents an important opportunity to better understand how these processes shape the urban landscape.

As urbanization changes how societies interact with communities, economies, politics, and the environment, cities become sites of intense transformation (Misra & Dung, 1983; Saunders, 2011). A recent report issued by the United Nations (2014) found that 54 percent of the world's population lives in cities, and estimates that by 2050 this number will rise to two-thirds of the world's population. Rio de Janeiro, a city of 6.4 million in a region of over 12 million people, exemplifies the pressures that growth places on urban systems. As Brazil's second most populated city, Rio de Janeiro faces many challenges such as an inadequate supply of quality housing, socioeconomic inequality, high rates of crime, and substandard public infrastructure (Roett, 2011; Rohter, 2012).

Policymakers have been particularly challenged by the dramatic growth of the city's *favelas*, commonly translated as slums or shantytowns. Officially called "subnormal agglomerations" by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, *favelas* expanded enough to procure the attention of the state and neighboring communities when the city first urbanized during the 1920s (McCann, 2014). At the time, Rio de Janeiro was Brazil's capital and therefore attracted much of the nation's industry and wealth. During the twentieth century, the city witnessed significant population growth through an internal migration of residents from the rural hinterlands to the urban center. Between 1920 and 1940, the city's population grew from 1.1 million to 1.7 million, and reached 4.2 million in 1970 – a growth rate of nearly 400 percent. State-driven development of infrastructure and industry created new economic opportunities for residents (Cardoso & Enzo, 1979; Macedo, 1992). However, after the nation's capital moved from Rio de Janeiro to Brasília, many residents struggled to find adequate employment and decent housing. Poor residents turned to informal housing options on the hillsides of Rio de Janeiro's mountainous terrain, which grew without any formal public infrastructure or sustained social services. The shift in the 1980s to a neoliberal economic model resulted in dramatic cuts to welfare programs and rising rates of unemployment. These, in turn, contributed to the growth of poverty, the expansion of *favela* communities, and the deterioration of physical and socioeconomic conditions (Perlman, 2010). At the same time, organized crime and violence grew as the drug trade flourished (Oliveira, 1996; Zaluar, 2004).

Today, *favelas* are one of the dominant features of the urban landscape in Rio de Janeiro (McCann, 2006). *Favelas* have been historically characterized by their informal nature and their lack of resources, although recent public urbanization efforts have begun to improve *favelas*' physical appearance. In many *favelas*, however, temporary or makeshift housing units remain fragmented and not part of the formal housing market. Public utilities like electricity and sanitation are still lacking and other public institutions are unable to meet local demand. Furthermore, *favelas* are segregated by race and class. Two-thirds of *favela* residents are black or *pardo*, although only one-third of the city's general population self-identifies as black (Nobles, 2000).² Residents in *favelas* are more likely to live in poverty than other city residents (Pamuk & Cavallieri, 1998). This uneven pattern of development not only segregates poverty within particular spaces but also produces

social and political tensions between *favela* and non-*favela* residents.

Although the social and economic polarization of Brazilian cities is well documented, less is known about how local political processes shape the development of the dual city. Local policy decisions have far-reaching implications for spatial divisions of the city (Shatkin, 2007). In the following sections, we consider the impact of these policy choices by examining the role that the state plays in the persistence of the dual city.

3. The dual city and its discontents

Cities have experienced dramatic economic, social, and political changes since the transition to a post-industrial economy in the 1980s (Brenner, 2004; Friedmann & Wolff, 1982; Hackworth, 2007; Sassen, 2011). While this shift has given global cities renewed significance in economic and political affairs on the global stage, it has also exacerbated polarization within urban centers. With fewer opportunities to engage in formal low-skill jobs, the urban poor have experienced dramatic increases in unemployment, underemployment, and poverty. This inequality is spatially manifest in housing segregation and the rise of slums and other extremely poor areas (Davis, 1996). According to Graham and Marvin (2001), this "splintering urbanism" severely circumscribes poor residents' access to infrastructure, services, and utilities, further curtailing any efforts to join the mainstream economy. The stigma and prejudice of poverty create socio-political disparities that result in exclusionary practices and uneven geographic development in urban areas (Auyero, 1999; Davis, 1992; Harvey, 2005; Perlman, 2010).

Another characteristic of the dual city is the proliferation of violent non-state armed actors in poor urban communities (Davis, 2010). In these "contested" or "fractured" spaces, the struggle for territorial control between the state and criminal gangs exacerbates precarity and insecurity among local residents (Koonings & Kruijt, 2007). Wealthier residents attempt to distance themselves – physically and socially – from neighborhoods perceived as dangerous (Caldeira, 2000). Through these processes, spatial divisions, economic inequality, and uneven security risks are further etched into the fabric of cities.

Our understanding about polarization within cities is primarily focused on explaining the relationship between global transformations and urban inequalities (Mollenkopf & Castells, 1991). Less is known about how global forces are shaped by local policies and how these contribute to polarization within cities. The great variability in social, economic, and political opportunities for the poor across urban centers reveals that contextual differences yield divergent outcomes and produce particular forms of exclusion (Shatkin, 2007). How policymakers experience and respond to global economic pressures must be considered if we are to understand the diverse forms that dualities can take and the processes by which these divisions occur, and identify opportunities for new and creative solutions.

Rio de Janeiro's *Favela Pacification Program* provides us with a timely case study to explore how duality is institutionalized through policy interventions. The program reflects a larger trend whereby states increasingly rely on aggressive security interventions to address the polarization of the city (Graham, 2009). In this context, the state's institutionalization of the dual city as a method to pacify informal urban settlements divides the city through spatial processes. So, this leads us to ask the following questions: 1) What are the immediate consequences of Rio de Janeiro's *Favela Pacification Program*? and 2) How do these consequences institutionalize duality in the city?

The case of the pacification program provides a novel opportunity to explore these questions because seven years have now

² According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), *pardo* is a racial category used to identify people of mixed races in the Brazilian Census. In 2010, there were 82,277,333 people that identified as *pardo* in the Census, which accounted for approximately 43% of the total national population.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10502337>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10502337>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)