

# Accumulation by Forced Removal: The Thinning of Rio de Janeiro's Favelas in Preparation for the Games

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*Abstract.* In this article we argue that the pacification of strategic Rio de Janeiro favelas is a case of what David Harvey calls accumulation by dispossession, allowing for capital accumulation at multiple scales. Drawing on multi-year participant observation, we seek to show the particular form that this process takes as it works through Rio's social and spatial structures. Unlike the mass removals of the 1960s and 1970s, favela families have more recently been displaced through a process of thinning, in the context of a neoliberal development programme centred on a series of mega-events. Removal is carried out through a combination of threats, promises, disinformation, and the intentional generation of insecurity that together constitute a form of psychological terror.

*Keywords:* favelas, mega-events, evictions, accumulation by dispossession

## *Introduction*

'When Brazil won the Olympics no one here went out to celebrate', explained Francicleide da Costa, then president of the residents' association of the Favela do Metrô.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the jubilation of Lula and Pelé in Copenhagen in October 2009 presaged a campaign of terror against this resolute community of 700

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Francicleide da Costa, president, residents' association Favela do Metrô, 23 July 2012.

families living down the street from Rio's iconic Maracanã stadium, which hosted seven 2014 World Cup matches, including the final, and the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2016 Olympics. Mega-events like the Olympics and the World Cup have long been a pretext for forced removals. The Geneva-based Centre for Housing Rights and Eviction estimates that 720,000 people were forcibly removed for the 1988 Seoul Olympics and that 1.5 million were evicted for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.<sup>2</sup> The Housing and Land Rights Network found that 200,000 people were evicted in New Delhi as a direct result of the 2010 Commonwealth Games.<sup>3</sup> According to the Rio municipal government, 22,059 favela families, or approximately 77,206 individuals, were removed between the time mayor Eduardo Paes took office in January 2009 and July 2015, and tens of thousands more were threatened with removal.<sup>4</sup>

In this article we argue that these forced removals are a case of what David Harvey calls accumulation by dispossession, as the state deploys extra economic coercion to open new avenues for capital accumulation. Displacement of poor city dwellers has long been an integral part of urban processes under capitalism, as capital flows into the secondary circuit of fixed capital formation and the urban spatial order is reorganised for productive as well as speculative activities.<sup>5</sup> In the current neoliberal moment, cities often take on an entrepreneurial role, competing with each other for increasingly mobile capital through city-marketing and image-making campaigns that usually involve rebranding of neighbourhoods, upgrading of public spaces and state-led gentrification.<sup>6</sup> Mega-events and their associated mega-projects are a privileged vehicle for

<sup>2</sup> Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, *Fair Play for Housing Rights: Mega-events, Olympic Games and Housing Rights: Opportunities for the Olympic Movement and Others* (Geneva, 2007) available at [http://www.crin.org/en/docs/One\\_World\\_Whose\\_Dream\\_July08%5B1%5D.pdf](http://www.crin.org/en/docs/One_World_Whose_Dream_July08%5B1%5D.pdf); Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, *One World, Whose Dream? Housing Rights Violations and the Beijing Olympic Games* (Geneva, 2008) available at [sarp.org/documents/Planned%20Dispossession.pdf](http://www.crin.org/documents/Planned%20Dispossession.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Housing and Land Rights Network, *Planned Dispossession: Forced Evictions and the 2010 Commonwealth Games* (Fact-finding Mission Report, vol. 14, New Delhi, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> See Comitê Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro, *Olimpíada Rio 2016, O Jogos da exclusão. Megaeventos e Violações dos Direitos Humanos no Rio de Janeiro, Dossiê do Comitê Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro* (2015 November), p. 20. Faulhaber and Azevedo put the number at 20,299 families between January 2009 and December 2014, citing SMH sources. See Lucas Faulhaber and Lena Azevedo, *SMH 2016: remoções no Rio de Janeiro Olímpico* (Rio de Janeiro: Mórula, 2015), p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982). Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991); Richard Walker, 'A Theory of Suburbanisation: Capitalism and the Construction of Urban Space in the United States', in M. J. Dear and Allen John Scott, *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society* (London: New York: Methuen, 1981), pp. 383–429.

<sup>6</sup> David Harvey, 'From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism', *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography*, 71 (1989), pp. 3–17.

these sorts of interventions.<sup>7</sup> While mega-events have been the proximate cause of some of the removals discussed in this article, our claim is that mega-events and removals have both been part of a larger neoliberal agenda in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

In the 1960s and 1970s during the military dictatorship, Rio's authorities razed 62 Centre and South Zone favelas, displacing 175,000 people to model villages on the periphery, valorising elite real estate and initiating large state-financed construction projects on the outskirts.<sup>8</sup> The post-dictatorship legal order prohibits this sort of arbitrary mass favela removal. Instead, we argue, a series of federal, state and municipal programmes end up achieving similar ends by removing and resettling residents of favelas in key locations in a more retail and manipulative fashion (see [Map 1](#)).<sup>9</sup>

Urbanisation projects carve roads through dense neighbourhoods, and build cable-cars and funiculars leaving large footprints.<sup>10</sup> Broad swaths of favela neighbourhoods are declared 'areas of risk' by the city's geological survey agency. Residents return from work one day to find the ominous letters 'SMH' (Secretaria Municipal de Habitação, Municipal Housing Agency) followed by a serial number marked on the façades of their houses. After months and sometimes years of uncertainty and disinformation, meant to undermine organised resistance, many are then deported to apartment block public housing built by the federal *Minha Casa Minha Vida* programme (My House My Life, PMCMV), mainly located on the far western periphery. In all of our case studies, there has been significant resistance that has caused planned interventions to be modified, houses to be saved from demolition, and residents to receive better compensation.<sup>11</sup> They have all been partial and possibly temporary victories, accompanied by considerable heartache and anxiety.

<sup>7</sup> Anne-Marie Broudehoux, 'Spectacular Beijing: The Conspicuous Construction of an Olympic Metropolis', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 29 (2007), pp. 383–99; John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, 'Olympic Cities: Regeneration, City Rebranding and Changing Urban Agendas', *Geography Compass*, 2 (2008), pp. 200–318.

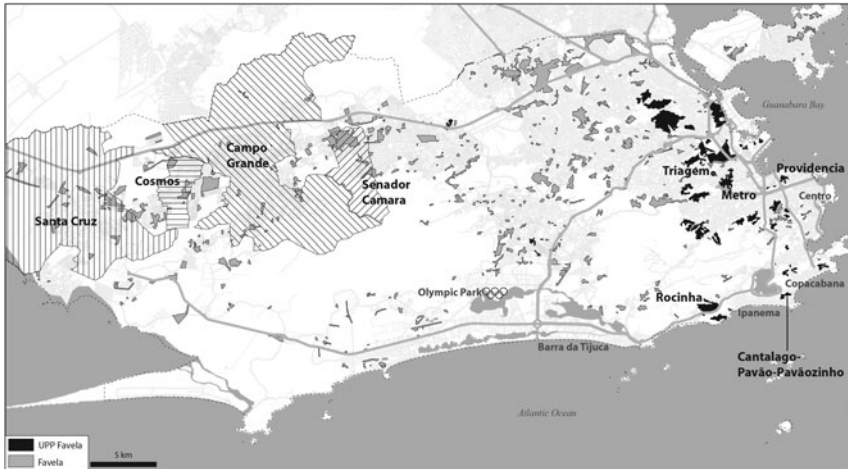
<sup>8</sup> Rafael Soares Gonçalves, *Favelas do Rio de Janeiro: história e direito* (Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2013); Janice E. Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976); Lícia do Prado Valladares, *Passa-se uma casa: análise do programa de remoção de favelas do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1978).

<sup>9</sup> Favelas in the Centre, South Zone, Tijuca Basin, near event sites and along key event transportation corridors have been particularly targeted by the interventions discussed in this article. Not all displacement associated with the games are in favelas, nor are most favela removals directly attributable to the games. But the bulk of removals are occurring in Rio's favelas and we argue that the games are an important context for these removals.

<sup>10</sup> Cable-car is our translation of *teleferico*, ski-lift style pods suspended from over-head cables. Funicular is our translation of *plano inclinado*, a train-style wagon that hugs the steep slopes of some of Rio's favelas.

<sup>11</sup> This article focuses on the removals process; it is beyond the scope of this article to analyse resistance in detail.

Map 1. The municipality of Rio de Janeiro with “pacified” central favelas and western neighborhoods that receive most displaced residents. Map credit: J.F. Buzetti



### Methods

This article is based on two separate but overlapping multi-year research projects carried out in Rio de Janeiro between 2010 and 2016, one employing open-ended semi-structured interviews and the other a long-term critical ethnography in addition to interviews.<sup>12</sup> Together we draw on over 400 interviews conducted in 25 favelas.<sup>13</sup> Here we focus on Metrô-Mangueira, Morro

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of critical ethnography, see David C. Brotherton, *Youth Street Gangs: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Routledge, 2015), chap. 4. for a discussion of critical ethnography.

<sup>13</sup> While most of these interviews were with favela residents, we also interviewed numerous government officials (at city, state and federal levels), technical experts (such as geotechnical engineers, urban planners, and architects), local specialists on favelas, housing and relevant public policies, urban legal scholars and public defenders, and police officials. For Freeman this article is part of ongoing research on the consequences of mega-events, and particularly Police Pacification Units, for Rio de Janeiro’s favelas. Since 2010 Freeman has conducted approximately 260 interviews with residents of 18 pacified and soon to be pacified favelas. For Burgos this article is based on dissertation field work that involved living in Rocinha for over nine years between 2001 and 2016. See Marcos David Burgos, ‘Development, Security and Displacement: An Ethnographic Case Study of Rocinha and other Key Favelas in Rio de Janeiro’, unpubl. PhD diss., City University of New York, 2016. Our account of the Laboriaux removal attempt is based on Burgos’ participant observation, including the experience of having his home marked for eviction following the April 2010 rains. Research on Rocinha alone included approximately 145 interviews with 130 informants. Fieldwork and interviews in Metrô were conducted between 2010 and 2013. Interviews in Providência were conducted each summer between 2010 and 2015. We have not given the names of most favela residents interviewed, and in some cases we have changed identifying information to protect vulnerable informants.

da Providência, and Rocinha because these communities are illustrative of the removal strategies this article analyses.

Metrô-Mangueira is a case of a small favela that the government sought to entirely remove due to its proximity to an event site. Providência is a mid-sized favela, often considered to be Rio's oldest. Over half the community was marked for removal as part of a major real estate and tourism development project only tangentially related to the games. Providência has received a police pacification unit, an area of risk designation, and an urbanisation programme with a major transportation component. Rocinha is Rio's largest favela, with several police pacification units and a major urbanisation programme. Rocinha has had at least 10,000 residents threatened with removal since 2010. That same year the municipal government sought to remove the Laboriaux section of Rocinha entirely, alleging landslide risk. Our more in-depth ethnographic research in Rocinha helped inform our analysis of the other cases.

We begin this article with a discussion of accumulation by dispossession, followed by a general account of the favela removal process in Rio de Janeiro. We then examine closely this study's three main cases, Favela do Metrô, Morro da Providência and Rocinha.

### *Accumulation by Dispossession*

Accumulation by dispossession is David Harvey's reworking of Karl Marx's concept of primitive accumulation. Marx argued that capitalism is historically novel because it achieves accumulation through nominally peaceful means. But before accumulation by expanded reproduction was possible, an original violent accumulation was necessary. Peasants were forced from their lands, leaving them little choice but to look for work in urban factories. Values appropriated by the enclosures movement and by colonial pillage provided some of the initial capital for the industrial revolution.<sup>14</sup> While Marx relegated extra economic coercion to the pre-history of capitalism, Harvey argues that the forced appropriation of values produced outside of capitalism remains a key feature of the system. In response to overaccumulation, capital regularly finds outlets through privatisation, commodification and geographical extension into territories under-saturated with capital.<sup>15</sup>

Harvey's intervention has become central to a lively debate among scholars about the continued importance of what Glassman calls 'accumulation by

<sup>14</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. I (New York: Vintage, 1976 [1867]).

<sup>15</sup> David Harvey, 'The "New" Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession', *The Socialist Register*, 2004 (2003), pp. 63–87; David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

extra economic means'.<sup>16</sup> Authors in special issues of *Geoforum*, *Capitalism Nature Socialism* and *Antipode* have used the concept to talk about the privatisation and neoliberal governance of nature.<sup>17</sup> Others have used some version of the concept to discuss the separation of peasants from the land and the resulting proletarianisation.<sup>18</sup>

But the territorial dimension of Harvey's argument, particularly in the urban context, has been largely overlooked. Harvey has long argued that a crisis of overaccumulation can be deferred through a spatial fix – the expansion of overaccumulated capital into new territories.<sup>19</sup> But with accumulation by dispossession Harvey stresses the extra economic coercion involved in such an expansion. He also argues that capitalism tends to externalise territories for later colonisation, much the way workers are externalised to an industrial reserve army, according to Marx.<sup>20</sup> We argue that the two processes often occur simultaneously, as workers and working-class neighbourhoods are externalised from processes of accumulation and thus devalued. Many of Rio's industrial, construction and service workers, such as those in key sectors like steel and shipbuilding, became superfluous during the 1970s and 1980s, leading to the externalisation and devaluation of those workers and their communities. By the 1990s, Rio de Janeiro's elites had begun a project that attempted to prepare the city for a 'new era of competitiveness'. Dominant classes sought new ways of directing investments towards sectors of the economy that would offer comparative advantages for increasingly mobile global capital, while simultaneously trying to market images demonstrating to the world that the violent and degraded Rio de Janeiro was a thing of the past.<sup>21</sup>

As Freeman has argued elsewhere, the implementation of the Police Pacification Unit (Unidade da Polícia Pacificadora, UPP) programme in strategic favelas, which began in December 2008, constitutes the coercion that

<sup>16</sup> Jim Glassman, 'Primitive Accumulation, Accumulation by Dispossession, Accumulation by "Extra-Economic" Means', *Progress in Human Geography*, 30 (2006), pp. 608–25.

<sup>17</sup> James McCarthy and Scott Prudham, 'Neoliberal Nature and the Nature of Neoliberalism', *Geoforum*, 35 (2004), pp. 275–83; Nik Heynen and Paul Robbins, 'The Neoliberalization of Nature: Governance, Privatization, Enclosure and Valuation', *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 16 (2005), pp. 5–8; Becky Mansfield, 'Privatization: Property and the Remaking of Nature–Society Relations. Introduction to the Special Issue', *Antipode*, 39 (2007), pp. 393–405.

<sup>18</sup> Glassman, 'Primitive Accumulation', pp. 608–25; Gillian Hart, 'Denaturalizing Dispossession: Critical Ethnography in the Age of Resurgent Imperialism', *Antipode*, 38 (2006), pp. 977–1004; Richard Walker, *The Conquest of Bread: 150 Years of Agribusiness in California* (New York, 2004).

<sup>19</sup> Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*.

<sup>20</sup> Marx, *Capital*, pp. 781–802. See also the discussion of the see-saw movement of capital in Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Luiz Cesar de Quieroz Ribeiro and Edward E. Telles, 'Rio de Janeiro: Emerging Dualization in a Historically Unequal City', in Peter Marcuse and Ronald Van Kempen (eds.), *Globalizing Cities: A New Spatial Order?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 78.



facilitates a new round of capital accumulation in these under-capitalised territories and in core areas of the city in general.<sup>22</sup> Security forces invade a favela and force drug gangs out or underground. The invasion force is eventually replaced by new police pacification units, which occupy the territory indefinitely in order to prevent the return of gang control. Police occupation combined with a series of interventions in the built environment together constitute a kind of symbolic pacification.

This package of interventions facilitates capital accumulation by a range of actors. FIFA and the International Olympic Committee sell multi-billion dollar broadcasting rights and sponsorship agreements with top global brands for World Cup and Olympic Games. These deals depend on an exotic but tame host city in the background. The second largest gains to be made are by Brazilian multinational engineering firms such as Odebrecht, OAS, Queiroz Galvão and Carioca Engenharia whose multi-billion dollar contracts to build stadiums, airports, rapid transit systems and large-scale real-estate ventures require pacified favelas, especially given the speculative financing of these projects. These are also some of the same firms that implement and directly profit from favela upgrading schemes.<sup>23</sup>

On a citywide-scale, pacification responds to a long-standing elite demand to ‘do something’ about favelas, which are a focus of upper-class fear and disdain, and are seen as suppressing property values.<sup>24</sup> Favela pacification seems to be associated with a substantial increase of real-estate values in the surrounding formal neighbourhood.<sup>25</sup> On the scale of the favelas themselves, pacification allows for the expansion of numerous businesses into pacified communities including the electric company, satellite and cable television companies, banks and consumer electronics retailers.<sup>26</sup> But the character of the removal process also points to race and class relations with roots in Brazil’s slave history, passing through institutions and practices established during

<sup>22</sup> James Freeman, ‘Neoliberal Accumulation Strategies and the Visible Hand of Police Pacification in Rio De Janeiro’, *REU, Sorocaba, SP*, 38 (2012), pp. 95–126. For further discussion of the UPP programme see also James Freeman, ‘Raising the Flag over Rio de Janeiro’s Favelas: Citizenship and Social Control in the Olympic City’, *Journal of Latin American Geography*, 30 (2014), pp. 529–56; Christopher Gaffney, ‘Securing the Olympic City’, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 13 (2012), pp. 75–82; Nelma Gusmão de Oliveira, *O poder dos jogos e os jogos de poder: interesses em campo na produção da cidade para o espetáculo esportivo* (Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ, 2015); Sebastian Saborio, ‘The Pacification of the Favelas: Mega Events, Global Competitiveness, and the Neutralization of Marginality’, *Socialist Studies / Études socialistes*, 9 (2013), pp. 130–45.

<sup>23</sup> Most of these firms have also been implicated in the lava-jato corruption scandal.

<sup>24</sup> Nicolas Bautès and Rafael Soares Gonçalves, ‘Improving Security in Poor Areas Public Security and Spatial Justice in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro’, *Spatial Justice*, N4 December 2011 (2011), p. 2, available at <http://www.jssj.org/article/securiser-lespace-des-pauvres/>; Freeman, ‘Neoliberal Accumulation Strategies’, p. 106.

<sup>25</sup> Faulhaber, *SMH 2016*; Freeman, ‘Neoliberal Accumulation Strategies’, pp. 95–126.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 95–126.

the dictatorship of the 1970s.<sup>27</sup> We therefore also explore the particular qualities that accumulation by dispossession takes on as it works through the spaces of Rio's favelas.

### *Dispossession*

This article focuses particularly on the dispossession side of Harvey's accumulation by dispossession equation, paying special attention to territorial dispossession and the associated loss of dignity, citizenship, democracy, livelihoods and sometimes life, as tens of thousands are expelled from their homes. In this section we discuss the agents of dispossession, the de facto policy of thinning and terror, and the real life consequences of that policy. Besides the UPPs, whose force underlies the entire constellation of projects, the principal agents of dispossession are the Programa de Aceleração de Crecimento, Morar Carioca, Geo-Rio, and Programa Minha Casa Minha Vida, which we discuss in turn.

#### *Agents of dispossession*

The Programa de Aceleração de Crecimento (Programme for Accelerated Growth, PAC) is a federal programme that since 2007 has set aside over US\$ 1 trillion for investment in infrastructure projects, such as port facilities, roads and hydroelectric projects. A relatively small part of PAC is a programme called Urbanização de Assentamentos Precários (Urbanisation of Precarious Settlements), which has intervened in four favelas within the city of Rio de Janeiro: Rocinha, Alemão, Manguinhos and Cantagalo Pavão-Pavãozinho. PAC projects are primarily implemented by the state government. PAC programmes have threatened significant displacement through road-widening and cable-car systems.

Morar Carioca (Carioca Living) is a municipal programme of favela upgrading aimed at a larger number of smaller favelas. The programme was announced in October 2010 with the objective of upgrading 251 communities by 2020. The Instituto de Arquitetos do Brasil/RJ (Brazilian Architects' Institute, IAB) ran a public competition for designs for the first 40 projects. Morar Carioca is funded by loans from the Inter-American Development Bank and municipal matching funds.<sup>28</sup> Morar Carioca is a rebranding of

<sup>27</sup> Rio's Military Police, for example, of which UPPs are a part, are such an institution. See Thomas H. Holloway, *Policing Rio de Janeiro: Repression and Resistance in a 19th-Century City* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); Alba Zaluar, 'Democratização inacabada: fracasso da segurança pública', *Estudos Avançados*, 21 (2007), pp. 31–49.

<sup>28</sup> Carlos Vainer and Helena Galiza, 'Morro da Providência, habitação e patrimônio: relatório final', unpublished research report. Instituto de Pesquisa e Planejamento Urbano e Regional, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (2013).



Favela-Bairro (Favela-Neighbourhood), which intervened in 168 communities between 1994 and 2008.<sup>29</sup> One of the primary differences between Favela-Bairro and Morar Carioca is that the latter tends to result in considerably more removals.<sup>30</sup> The evictions largely result from carving roads through dense communities. The programme was put on hold before any of the 40 new projects were begun. Legacy Favela-Bairro projects in Providência and Babilônia/Chapeu Mangueira were, however, rebranded as Morar Carioca and have resulted in significant evictions and threats of eviction.

The programme responsible for the majority of favela removals is Geo-Rio's landslide risk designations. According to the city, 72 per cent of removals since 2009 have been in response to risk of landslides or flooding, or the risk posed by the poor condition of individual dwellings.<sup>31</sup> Rio's favelas are often located on steep slopes and have always been subject to landslides during heavy rains. The Fundação Instituto de Geotécnica do Município do Rio de Janeiro (the Geotechnical Institute Foundation of the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro, Geo-Rio), which is part of the Secretaria Municipal de Obras (Municipal Secretary of Public Works), was founded in 1966 to prevent landslides by gathering information, establishing warning systems and implementing hillside containment.<sup>32</sup> In April 2010, severe rains caused mudslides in a number of favelas within the city of Rio and beyond. Mayor Eduardo Paes promised to take decisive action to prevent future tragedies, and Geo-Rio was instructed to carry out a new survey of Rio's favelas, determining that 21,000 houses in 117 communities were at immediate risk of succumbing to landslides and needed to be removed.<sup>33</sup> 'Area of risk' maps began to appear in Rio's favelas, coded in red for 'risk' and green for 'safe'. There is a long history in Rio de Janeiro of using environmental risk as an excuse to remove favelas.<sup>34</sup> Residents, community organisations and allied experts quickly disputed the actual risk in many of these cases and saw this programme as a pretext for arbitrary mass removal.

Maurício Campos dos Santos, mechanical and civil engineer at CREA-RJ, commented on the widespread usage of the area of risk designation:<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Janice E. Perlman, *Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 278.

<sup>30</sup> Maria de Fátima Cabral Marques Gomes and Thaiany Silva da Motta, 'Empresariamento urbano e direito à cidade: considerações sobre os programas favela-bairro e morar carioca no Morro da Providência', *Revista Liberdade*, 13, (2013), p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Prefeitura do Rio, 'Explicando a política de habitação da prefeitura do Rio', 6 August 2015, p. 6. Available at: <https://medium.com/explicando-a-pol%C3%ADtica-de-habita%C3%A7%C3%A3o-da-prefeitura>.

<sup>32</sup> See <http://www.rio.rj.gov.br/web/smo/geo-rio>.

<sup>33</sup> See also Adriano Belisário, 'Concremat: de "braço auxiliary" das remoções à queda da ciclovia', *A Pública* (2016), Available at: <http://apublica.org/2016/07/concremat-de-braco-auxiliar-das-remocoes-a-queda-da-ciclovia/>.

<sup>34</sup> Gonçalves, *Favelas do Rio de Janeiro*, p. 263.

<sup>35</sup> CREA-Rio is the Regional Council of Engineering and Agronomy of Rio de Janeiro.

What they did was take advantage of a moment of catastrophe, a moment of disaster to bypass the law, claiming an emergency situation, claiming a need to quickly resolve imminent risks. The technical agencies involved in the supposed reports which are the basis of this decision are agencies of the city government. There was no involvement of CREA for example, of universities that could also have participated in these studies. And on the part of society itself there was no participation at all, there was no consultation.<sup>36</sup>

The final driver of displacement in key Rio de Janeiro favelas is the Programa Minha Casa Minha Vida (My House My Life Programme, PMCMV), which is a national initiative aimed at addressing Brazil's persistent shortage of affordable housing. The programme was launched by President Lula in April 2009.<sup>37</sup> PMCMV is managed by the federal Ministry of Cities, which draws up the guidelines and passes resources on to Brazil's largest public-private bank, Caixa Econômica Federal (Caixa). The initial phase from 2009–2010 had a budget of Reais\$ 34 billion (US\$ 8.5 billion).<sup>38</sup> Caixa provides loans for mainly private developers to undertake housing construction, and provides financing to the recipients of the PMCMV housing. The private construction firms usually designate peripheral land as the sites for the construction of PMCMV housing for recipients in the 0 to 3 minimum salary category. The programme is an integral part of favela thinning, because it provides 'resettlement' housing for evicted favela residents.

### *Thinning and terror*

Current favela policy evolved in the context of the elections of Sergio Cabral as governor in 2007 and Eduardo Paes as mayor in 2009, the Pan American Games of 2007, and the World Cup and Olympic bids. While favela policy involves numerous actors with disparate purposes, it also responds to the needs of capital for pacified favelas. Favela-Bairro has given way to Morar Carioca and PAC, both of which privilege 'mobility', carving roads through dense communities and building cable-car systems that displace residents. The 'area of risk' designations favour displacement when less-costly solutions are available and actual risk is questionable. This approach is a way of bypassing the legal regime put in place by the 1988 Constitution, which forbids arbitrary favela removal and identifies favela upgrading as the policy focus.<sup>39</sup> Despite

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Maurício Campos dos Santos, mechanical and civil engineer at CREA-RJ, June 2010.

<sup>37</sup> UN-Habitat, *Scaling-up Affordable Housing Supply in Brazil: The 'My House My Life' Programme* (Nairobi: UN Habitat, 2013), p. 31.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* The US dollar was equivalent to R\$ 1.60 in 2010 and has since risen to R\$ 4. We use the Jan. 2016 rate throughout this article for convenience.

<sup>39</sup> This legal regime has been further elaborated in state and municipal law. Article 234 of the Rio de Janeiro state constitution (1989) specifies that the state and municipalities must undertake upgrading schemes, land use regulation and property title programmes in favelas

official statements that displacement should be minimised, ‘affecting the least number of units possible’, the opposite seems to be the case.<sup>40</sup>

In speaking of a ‘policy’ of thinning and psychological terror, we cannot point to a written policy, nor do we have privileged access to conversations within these government agencies that allows us to demonstrate intent. Rather we base our claims on a pattern of government action that has been experienced by favela residents over the past several years, that we have identified through participant observation and interviews with affected favela residents, and drawing on the reflections of numerous activists, scholars and other informed observers. Many actors within these agencies are committed to the democratic participatory urban planning model that was built in the post-dictatorship period, the very regime that these policies seek to bypass.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, we have observed a strong current of disdain for favela residents in the way policies are conceived and carried out that follows from a particular construction of class, race and favela-asfalto relations in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>42</sup> While actual policy outcomes have been the result of struggle in the political arena among actors with various interests and ideological motivations, we maintain that the policy package highlighted in this article responds to particular structural imperatives.

Interviews with officials speaking candidly do suggest a policy of thinning. Bruno Queiroz, SMH project director, in an 2013 interview with UFRJ

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without removing their inhabitants, except when life-threatening conditions leave no other choices. Article 429 of Rio de Janeiro’s Municipal Organic Law (Lei Orgânica) reinforces the state constitution by likewise specifying that urban development policy focus on rehabilitation and the regularisation of favelas. Article 429 also clearly bans the removal of favelas except when the physical conditions place the lives of residents at risk. The same article states that cases of risk must be verified by an official study conducted by a competent municipal agency and that the affected population must participate in the entire process. If residents have to be relocated it must be to a location near their residence of origin or workplace. Most recently Federal Law No. 12.608, (10 April 2012) establishes the new National Policy on Protection and Civil Defence (PNPDEC), which requires municipalities to take all possible measures to reduce whatever physical risks exist. Only when no other option exists should houses be removed or residents relocated. See Alex Ferreira Magalhães, *O Direito das Favelas* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Letra Capital, 2013); Rafael Soares Gonçalves, ‘Porto Maravilha, renovação urbana e o uso da noção de risco: uma confluência perversa no Morro da Providência’, *Revista Libertas*, 13. 2 (2013), p. 191.

<sup>40</sup> Decreto 34522, 3 Oct. 2011.

<sup>41</sup> See Theresa Caldeira and James Holston, ‘State and Urban Space in Brazil: From Modernist Planning to Democratic Interventions’, in Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier (eds.), *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 393–416; Raquel Rolnik, ‘Democracy on the Edge: Limits and Possibilities in the Implementation of an Urban Reform Agenda in Brazil’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35. 2 (2011), pp. 232–55.

<sup>42</sup> See for example Brodwyn Fischer, *The Poverty of Law: Rio de Janeiro, 1930–1964* (Boston, MA: Harvard University, 1999).

researcher Helena Galiza, explained that one of the objectives of Morar Carioca was ‘to reduce the population density’ and spoke of a goal of *desadensamento* (dedensification).<sup>43</sup> Mario Sá, the state government official in charge of the implementation of PAC in Cantagalo Pavão-Pavãozinho, in an interview with Freeman on 16 July 2015, made it clear that his job was to address the problem of density regardless of what the community wanted: ‘Several meetings were held to listen to the community, to be able to accommodate them. But the basic principle mandated by the federal government was to build roads to *oxygenate* the community.’

While PAC, Morar Carioca and Geo-Rio mandate removals, it is the city’s Secretaria Municipal de Habitação (Municipal Housing Agency, SMH), which oversees the actual removal and resettlement process. Our research shows a pattern in the way evictions are carried out that suggests an intention to intimidate, destabilise and create panic so as to undermine resistance. Agents usually arrive during the day when most residents are at work and mark houses with the letters SMH followed by a serial number (e.g. ‘SMH123’). The official policy states: ‘The unit to be demolished shall be identified by sequential numbering.’<sup>44</sup> This measure is intended to prevent new residents from moving in, hoping for compensation.<sup>45</sup> Residents return from work to find their homes marked for destruction. Usually this is the first they hear that their houses are in the path of public works. They then experience weeks, months and sometimes years of uncertainty not knowing if or when they will lose their homes or where they will go. During this time they are subject to conflicting rumours and face an impenetrable bureaucracy in trying to discover their fate.

In the case of landslide risk, the city took advantage of the vulnerability of residents in a moment of trauma to try to pressure them to quickly sign away their homes or suffer dire consequences. If the authorities are questioned they attempt to discredit residents due to their lack of education or knowledge of science and engineering. Elisa Brandão, the President of Morro das Prazeres’s residents’ association, called these tactics ‘psychological terrorism’.<sup>46</sup>

Residents feel vulnerable when forced to negotiate with government officials. Agents arrive with an offer of either a cash settlement to move out, assistance in buying another house or replacement housing.<sup>47</sup> While the city has published detailed criteria for valuing houses to be demolished, actual values seem to be arbitrary, and more vulnerable residents are forced to

<sup>43</sup> Personal communication with Freeman, 27 Aug. 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Decreto 34522, 3 Oct. 2011.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Elisa Brandão, the President of Morro das Prazeres’s residents’ association, 9 June 2010.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Mario Sá, 16 July 2015; see also Decreto 34522 3 Oct. 2011.

accept lower amounts, while hold-outs and leaders of collective resistance are often offered more. For most evictees the amount is usually too little to buy an equivalent house in the same neighbourhood, and many end up in even poorer and more vulnerable areas. This is especially true because public works contribute to rising prices.<sup>48</sup>

Although the law requires that displaced residents have the option of being relocated within the same community, projects never include sufficient 'resettlement' housing for all those removed. Replacement housing is often the last priority in favela upgrading projects, so that residents who insist on their right to replacement housing in the community are made to wait and suffer additional months or years of uncertainty. Residents are often removed before replacement housing is available. In this case they are offered *aluguel social* (social rent money) at R\$ 400 (US\$ 100) per month while they wait.<sup>49</sup>

Once a family agrees to leave, the city either tears down their house or simply 'disfigures' (*descaracteriza*) it to prevent someone else from moving in. Mario Sá, who directs the PAC project in Cantagalo explained the devastated landscape in parts of Cantagalo: 'That which was demolished, the debris remained. That which was not demolished, was only *disfigured* ... So that no one else comes in, I make a hole in your roof, I remove the windows, I remove the doors, I remove the toilet, I remove the sink. I *disfigure* the property so that no one else can live there'.<sup>50</sup> Faulhaber and Andrade write, '... the debris of demolished houses mark a scene of devastation'.<sup>51</sup> In some cases, pockets of water from rain or broken pipes collect amongst the rubble, allowing rats and dengue mosquitos to breed. Once several houses are destroyed the neighbourhood becomes unliveable and the remaining residents feel pressured to accept any offer that will allow them to leave.

The Comitê Popular lists six practices which they argue constitute human rights abuses in the eviction process: absence of information, absence of participation, inadequate compensation, individualised negotiations that bypass community organisations, arrogant and disrespectful treatment of residents by city agents, and the manipulation of legal mechanisms.<sup>52</sup> Gonçalves sums up the city's eviction procedures:

<sup>48</sup> Gerônimo Leitão, *Dos barracos de madeira aos Prédios de quitinete: uma análise do processo de produção de moradia na favela da Rocinha, Zona Sul da cidade do Rio de Janeiro, entre 1930 e 1990* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFF, 2009), p. 167; Gonçalves, *Favelas do Rio*, pp. 244–7.

<sup>49</sup> Despite significant inflation, the nominal aluguel social amount has not changed since 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Mario Sá, director, PAC project Cantagalo, 16 July 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Faulhaber, *SMH2016*, p. 16.

<sup>52</sup> Comitê, *Megaeventos* (2013), pp. 32–3.

The city acts violently, especially in the city's favelas: marking houses without any explanation, negotiating individually with each resident in order to demobilize collective resistance, excluding residents from participating in the details and progress of construction projects ... and engaging in large-scale removals coupled with complete lack of information about interventions, or at best, in some cases, incomplete information, which impedes local resistance.<sup>53</sup>

Faulhaber and Andrade, for their part, write: 'What we see is psychological and bureaucratic bombardment, with unconstitutional decrees and expropriations, many times doubtful judicial orders, attempts to divide the collective with promises of individual compensation and a new life in new Minha Casa Minha Vida housing.'<sup>54</sup>

### *The cost of dispossession*

While some residents who are not in the direct path of upgrading projects benefit from new infrastructure, rising property values and new commercial opportunities, those who are displaced suffer losses in a number of ways. Most of the 22,059 families removed since Eduardo Paes took office in 2009 have been displaced to new housing built under the PMCMV programme in the far west of the city. Similar to the removals of the 1960s and 1970s, relocation to remote public housing causes considerable hardship.<sup>55</sup> Most South Zone, North Zone and Centre favelas were established so residents could live near work.<sup>56</sup> Residents from these favelas who are removed to PMCMV housing in Cosmos, Senador Camera or Campo Grande report bus and train journeys of two to three hours each way and a significant expenditure on transport fares to be able to commute to work every day (see [Map 1](#)). One resident of a PMCMV project in Santa Cruz explained that people who work in the port area of Rio must leave home at 3.30 a.m. to be at work by 7 a.m. and then arrive home after 10 p.m. every day. She joked about people learning to sleep standing up in an overcrowded bus.<sup>57</sup> As adults are separated from workplaces, children are separated from their schools.

Favelas tend to be close-knit, with extended families living on multiple levels of buildings or in a number of homes along the same street. Displaced residents are separated from family, friends and networks of mutual support that constitute a key survival strategy for the urban poor. Residents removed from favelas in wealthy neighbourhoods are also separated from elite networks that provide work and patronage. Finally, relocated residents must adapt to

<sup>53</sup> Gonçalves, 'Porto Maravilha', p. 180.

<sup>54</sup> Faulhaber, *SMH2016*, p. 16.

<sup>55</sup> Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*; Valladares, *Passa-se uma casa*.

<sup>56</sup> Mauricio de Almeida Abreu, *Evolução urbana do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: IPLAN, 1997).

<sup>57</sup> Interview with resident of PMCMV project, Santa Cruz, 10 May 2014.



apartment life. They often must give up a customised home built over many years with hard work and pride, houses that frequently have roof-top terraces for social gatherings, domestic chores and commercial activities, and the additional possibility of building another level in the future. Favela homes often include commercial space for a shop or a hair salon. In exchange they are given a uniform box that in many cases is smaller and of lower quality construction, with thin walls and neighbours they do not know.

Returning to David Harvey's formulation, the accumulation associated with mega-event led development requires that some of the city's most vulnerable residents be dispossessed of their land, and along with it of livelihoods, leisure time, community, peace of mind and hard-won rights guaranteed in Brazilian law. The arrogance of certain officials and the disdain for favela residents, which regularly emerges in the public discourse, reflect a long-standing stigma of favelas and their black and working-class populations.

### *Cases*

The following sections explore these processes of dispossession, thinning and terror in three favelas: Metrô-Mangueira, Providência and Rocinha.

#### *Metrô-Mangueira*

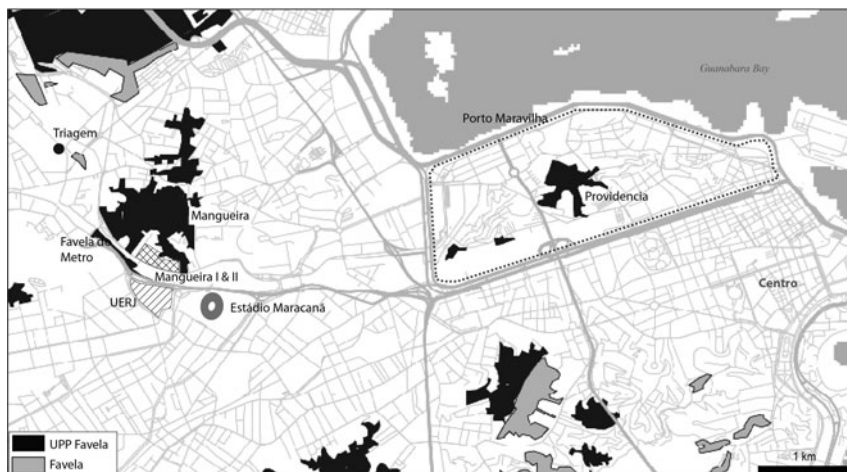
The case of Favela do Metrô-Mangueira is one of complete removal and somewhat successful resistance. Residents tell a story of a government-sponsored terror campaign that has been repeated in many favelas, including Laboriaux (discussed below) and Vila Autodromo, adjacent to the Olympic site in Barra da Tijuca.

Metrô was a community of 700 families wedged between a high-speed roadway and railroad tracks, 500 metres from Maracanã stadium (see [Map 2](#)). Metrô was founded by the workers who built the Maracanã metro station, inaugurated in 1981. In 2010, city workers started canvassing the neighbourhood registering families for removal. Francicleide da Costa, president of the residents' association at the time of removal, said they gathered information under false pretences, claiming people would receive Bolsa Família and other social services.<sup>58</sup> Houses were marked starting on 22 August 2010 and people were told they had to leave.<sup>59</sup> On 4 November 2010 workers arrived and began demolishing houses. One hundred and seven families were removed in this first round of evictions. Residents were told they had to accept PMCMV housing in the remote Cosmos

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Francicleide da Costa, 23 July 2012. Bolsa Família is Brazil's conditional cash transfer programme.

<sup>59</sup> Comité, *Megaeventos* (2013), p. 24.

Map 2. *Favela do Metrô and Morro da Providência in their North Zone and Center contexts. Map credit: J.F. Buzetti*



neighbourhood, 60 km away by precarious public transport, or they would get nothing. More vulnerable residents, such as the elderly, were intimidated into accepting. ‘There was a lot of dirty dealing’, Francicleide explained. The horror of the initial removals galvanised the remaining residents into electing a new residents’ association and organising resistance – enlisting NGOs and the media to publicise their cause. Residents initially painted over the SMH markings on their houses, to ‘stall for time’, Francicleide explained.<sup>60</sup> She compared the marks to the serial numbers the Nazis tattooed on Jewish prisoners’ arms.

The SMH intentionally made individual houses and the community in general unliveable with the demolition campaign, including the kind of disfigurement described by Mario Sá in *Cantagalo*. They purposely removed doors, windows and walls, and punched large holes in floors, so the vacated houses could not be reoccupied, at the same time creating ruins and rubble. The city stopped collecting garbage. Gaps in the streetscape became garbage dumps, which attracted rats. Drains were intentionally blocked, creating puddles that bred mosquitos and dengue fever. Homeless people and crack cocaine addicts began occupying ruined and abandoned buildings, so that crime and burglary increased, and residents no longer felt safe walking in their community. Things got so bad that people re-painted the SMH numbers on their own houses to facilitate removal. ‘The machine was

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Francicleide da Costa, 23 July 2012.

coming. We had to go.' Interviewed in 2012 when 300 families remained in Metrô, Francicleide said, 'now everyone wants to go'.

But through their resistance, their organising and the international attention they attracted to their plight, Metrô residents managed to pressure the city into offering replacement housing within walking distance. The Mangueira I and II apartments were built under the PMCMV programme as lower-middle income housing for people earning three to six minimum monthly salaries who would buy them with government subsidised loans.<sup>61</sup> Instead the housing went to Metrô residents, who mostly earn less than three minimum salaries, and would receive the apartments as compensation for houses they gave up in the favela. Two hundred and forty-eight families moved into new PMCMV housing called Mangueira I in March 2011. Another 248 moved into Mangueira II in December 2012. The remaining residents were moved to PMCMV housing called Bairro Carioca in Triagem, one metro stop away.

Many Metrô-Mangueira residents specialise in auto-repair and a series of 126 informal auto-repair shops line the edge of the community, facing the main road. The shops are also slated for demolition, but as of mid-2016 continued to operate. During 2013 interviews, shop-owners who had built thriving businesses with loyal customers over many years spoke of the same uncertainty and disinformation that residents experienced. One leader of the auto-shops said, 'They could come at any time and demolish our shops ... the city is going to catch us in the early hours of the morning.'<sup>62</sup> They have also used the same divide and conquer strategy, insisting on individual negotiations and offering special deals for people recognised as leaders. Mechanics interviewed said the city was trying to co-opt their leaders. One leader of the mechanics said that if people are forced out it will be because of lack of unity.

As with all the removals we observed, Metrô residents were misled and kept in the dark about plans for the site. They were originally told the area would be parking for Maracanã stadium. In September 2013, the government announced that the area would host a park, bike lanes and an automotive complex to replace the informal repair shops.

During a July 2012 visit to Mangueira I, residents complained about drug dealers hanging out in the communal spaces, despite the recently inaugurated UPP in the neighbouring Mangueira favela. Community organisation was precarious. There was no residents' association, a standard body in Rio's favelas, nor were there any social services, day-care or any representative of the state. In general the project did not seem to take into account the way favela residents live. There was no planning for commercial activities, so various residents had

<sup>61</sup> Comitê, *Megaeventos*, (2013), p. 24.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with auto-shop leader, 17 July 2013.

adapted their apartments to accommodate bars, shops, hairdressers, and manicurists. People complained about living in close quarters with so many neighbours separated by very thin walls. Some consideration had been given for locating family members near each other, but people felt they were living among strangers unlike in the close-knit community they came from. In general residents seemed to be adapting to their new formal housing, but, as Francicleide commented, ‘Everyone would go back if they could.’

The rehousing in Mangueira I and II represents a partial victory of community organising in the face of a government campaign of terror that sought to sanitise the immediate surroundings of the Maracanã stadium in preparation for the games and for longer-term real-estate prospects. Unlike their neighbours who were relocated to Cosmos in Rio’s remote West Zone, Mangueira I and II residents are able to maintain their old jobs, attend their same schools and largely maintain their social networks, while preserving their central location along a key transportation corridor. Auto-mechanics so far have been able to resist removal and maintain access to their customers from the State University (UERJ) across the street. But even the lucky ones who were moved to Mangueira I and II, or to nearby Triagem, have been dispossessed of a certain dignity, self-determination and community cohesiveness.

### *Providência*

Morro da Providência – with an early UPP, a major Morar Carioca project and a Geo-Rio area of risk designation – is an exemplary case of attempted favela thinning (see [Map 2](#)). Out of 1,720 houses in the community, 832 or 48 per cent were marked for removal with the beginning of the Morar Carioca project in January 2011. Of those, 515 were declared to be in ‘areas of risk’ by Geo-Rio and 317 were in the path of favela upgrading projects.<sup>63</sup> Besides basic infrastructure like sewerage and water provision, Morar Carioca planned a number of ‘mobility’ interventions that had been responsible for most of the displacement of residents at the time of our interviews. The plan included the construction of a cable-car system connecting Providência’s Américo Brum square to the Central do Brasil train station on the south side of the mountain, and to the Cidade do Samba (Samba City) on the north side. The project displaced the square and residents living along the path of the cable-car. The plan calls for a funicular along a nineteenth-century stairway that connects Ladeira do Barroso near the new cable-car station, with the upper parts of the community. Morar Carioca also included a new motorcycle lane that was carved through the dense community, displacing many.

<sup>63</sup> Gonçalves, ‘Porto Maravilha’, p. 197.

Providência is a case where the authorities have been explicit about the aim of thinning, using the term *desadensamento* in numerous documents and public pronouncements.<sup>64</sup> Providência is exemplary in the way the government has deployed the argument of risk. Most of the houses ‘at risk’, 351, are located in the sub-neighbourhood of Pedra Lisa. The 2010 study carried out by the private company Concremat, subcontracted by Geo-Rio, considered part of Pedra Lisa high risk and another section low risk. The city had already carried out some slope stabilisation work. But the Morar Carioca plan was to remove the entire area. The 164 houses outside of Pedra Lisa that were to be removed due to ‘risk’ were not condemned for geological reasons but because of ‘structural and health’ risks. They were spread throughout the community and were targeted based on housing material (e.g. wood instead of bricks) rather than individual analyses of their structural integrity.<sup>65</sup>

Providência is a case where the economic interests behind removal, the accumulation side of the ‘accumulation by dispossession’ equation, are unmistakable. The community sits in the middle of Porto Maravilha, Rio’s multi-billion dollar port revitalisation project (see Map 2). Since Rio embarked on its entrepreneurial city strategy under Mayor Cesar Maia in the early 1990s, the devalued port area has been a target of what Harvey calls the political economy of place.<sup>66</sup> The Cidade do Samba was an earlier attempt to attract tourists and revitalise the area. The 2005 Favela-Bairro project for Providência included an ‘open air museum’, a path through the community meant to highlight the history of Rio’s ‘first favela’ for outsiders. But it was not until Rio won the 2016 Olympic bid that a full redevelopment project for the port area was set in motion. In 2009 5 million square metres of devalued real estate was privatised and turned over to a consortium made up of three of Brazil’s largest engineering firms. The plan includes a series of world-class museums and a forest of residential and office towers. Funding for the project is highly speculative, using financial instruments known as CEPACs to capture future real-estate valorisation.<sup>67</sup> This devalued neighbourhood where most of the 30,000 residents earn less than two minimum monthly salaries will have to become some of the most expensive real estate in Brazil to realise the value of the CEPACs.<sup>68</sup> Providência, with 5,500 of the area’s poorest residents and a reputation as a dangerous favela, sits right in the middle of the Porto Maravilha project.

<sup>64</sup> Gonçalves, ‘Porto Maravilha’, pp. 175–207; Vainer, *Morro da Providência*.

<sup>65</sup> Gonçalves, ‘Porto Maravilha’, pp. 175–207.

<sup>66</sup> Harvey, ‘From Managerialism’, pp. 3–17.

<sup>67</sup> Certificados de Potencial Construtivo Adicional. See Freeman, ‘Neoliberal’, pp. 95–126; Pedro Jorgensen, ‘Tentando entender a Operação Urbana Porto do Rio.’, *A beira do urbanismo*. Available at: <http://abeiradourbanismo.blogspot.com/2011/10/tentando-entender-operacao-urbana-porto.html>.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

So it is no surprise that Providência was occupied for a Police Pacification Unit in March 2010, the seventh of 42 UPPs (as of January 2016) in a city with over 1,000 favelas. Tourism is also part of the pacification effort. While the 2005 project was unsuccessful in attracting tourists due to continuing gang and police violence, the UPP would make the community safe for outside visitors. The cable-car makes Providência accessible to the Cidade do Samba, the Central do Brasil train station, cruise ships and future elite users of the revitalised port. The funicular would take visitors past the gruelling hike up steep stone steps to a series of lookouts with 360 degrees of spectacular views culminating in the nineteenth-century chapel at the top of the hill. The 26 houses surrounding the chapel would be removed and replaced with colonial-style structures to serve visitors.

Dispossession is also clear in Providência. In July 2011, Freeman accompanied the struggle over Praça Américo Brum, the community's main place of social gathering and only sports facility. Protestors asked, 'Cable-car for whom?', complaining that they neither asked for nor needed a cable-car. In the end the plaza was torn up and replaced by a cable-car station.

One resident of Providência's Cruzeiro sub-neighbourhood, whose house near the nineteenth-century chapel was marked for demolition, explained in a July 2011 interview that the process had been very unsettling. The city workers who marked the houses did not have any information and could not tell them what was going on. She felt that the city should have sent people who had information. Later there was a meeting in the plaza with Jorge Bittar, then the city's Housing Secretary, where the project was explained, but the city's plans remained vague. Would residents be removed in six months or three years? Where would they be sent? They were supposed to be relocated within the community, but the city was only offering low-quality one-bedroom apartments. The resident interviewed has a three-bedroom house with a veranda. She knows all her neighbours, most of whom are part of her extended family. She had no desire to move to an apartment where she would be surrounded by strangers. For this resident, the irony of the funicular was that she had lived all these years climbing up and down Providência's steps. The funicular was supposed to make things easier for people at the top and now they would all be removed. So, 'Who was the funicular for?', she asked.

Vainer and Galiza found in their research that the average household in Cruzeiro, a sub-neighbourhood of Providência, had an income of 1.25 monthly minimum salaries and had been living there for 23.5 years.<sup>69</sup> Residents of Cruzeiro told the researchers that their houses had been marked during weekdays when they were at work. Vainer and Galiza found

<sup>69</sup> Vainer, *Morro da Providência*, p. 21.



there was a systematic ‘policy of disinformation’ in the city’s dealings with targeted residents. Residents of Cruzeiro would suffer significant hardship if evicted because of their attachment to the place for such a long period, the homes they had built themselves, their relationships with family and neighbours, and the space of sociability around the chapel.<sup>70</sup>

Providência is also an emblematic case of resistance. The city has insisted on negotiating with residents individually in an effort to divide potential resistance. At the same time residents have organised as part of the Forum Comunitário do Porto (Port Community Forum), which was founded in response to evictions in Providência and in other parts of the port area. Providência residents were able to invite outside experts to evaluate the risks to Pedra Lisa. An October 2011 counter-report produced by civil engineer Maurício Campos Santos and architect Marcos de Faria Azevedo, both of CREA, argues that it would be cheaper and less traumatic for residents if the authorities were to stabilise and urbanise the Pedra Lisa area rather than to remove it. In response to the report and other pressure, Geo-Rio produced a second report in 2013 recommending stabilisation work and the removal of only 45 houses in Pedra Lisa. As Gonçalves notes, the difference in the recommendations of the two Geo-Rio reports shows the arbitrariness of the area of risk designation.<sup>71</sup>

Maurício Hora, a photographer who grew up in Providência, and runs an NGO called Casa Amarela (Yellow House), staged a protest against the removals associated with the proposed funicular along the historic stairway. He pasted larger than life photos of Providência residents along the façades of the houses bordering the stairway, drawing international attention and forcing the city to modify its plans.<sup>72</sup>

On 28 November 2012 the Public Defender (Defensoria Pública Geral do Estado do Rio de Janeiro), in response to a petition by the Forum Comunitário do Porto, ordered the immediate suspension of the Morar Carioca project and all evictions. The city had not given residents adequate opportunity to participate in the project or informed them adequately of the plans and their consequences, among other things. The city appealed and got permission to finish just the cable-car part of the project, which was finally inaugurated on 2 July 2014. Out of the original 832 marked, 140 houses have been removed. Those evicted are mostly in limbo, surviving on R\$ 400/month aluguel social and waiting for a limited number of new PMCMV apartments under construction in the area, although some are starting to rebuild demolished homes.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Gonçalves, ‘Porto Maravilha’, pp. 175–207.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Maurício Hora, director, Casa Amarela, 19 July 2012.

*Rocinha*

Rocinha, Brazil's largest favela with a population of approximately 150,000, is many times larger than the other cases we consider in this article (see [Map 3](#)).<sup>73</sup> This section begins with an account of the city's attempt to remove roughly 3,000 residents from Rocinha's sub-neighbourhood of Laboriaux after the April 2010 rains, followed by a discussion of PAC removals. While the first phase of PAC upgrading has led to relatively few displacements, PAC 2 threatens an estimated 2,400 families (approximately 7,000 residents).<sup>74</sup> Resistance to removal of Laboriaux has been largely successful. Organised residents have also managed to slow the city's plan to remove thousands more from Rocinha as a part of PAC 2 favela upgrading.

*Laboriaux, Geo-Rio and resistance*

Situated at the highest point in the community, with privileged views, Laboriaux is among the most desirable of Rocinha's 25 sub-neighbourhoods. Laboriaux's main road is Rua Maria do Carmo, which extends for roughly 1 km and dead-ends into the Tijuca National Forest (see [Map 3](#)).

The April 2010 rains caused damage to approximately 150 of Laboriaux's then 823 houses, and resulted in the death of two residents.<sup>75,76</sup> In the following days, while neighbours were still putting their lives in order, Eduardo Paes announced the immediate removal of all Laboriaux's residents, due to imminent risk of landslides.<sup>77</sup> The community was in shock. Many of Laboriaux's residents had been resettled there by the same city government almost three decades earlier.<sup>78</sup> According to the mayor the classification of risk was determined by a Geo-Rio evaluation. Part of the city's strategy was depoliticising the argument of removal, declaring the need to remove these communities as one completely technical in nature. We argue, however, that these removals respond in part to economic imperatives.

<sup>73</sup> Population estimates for Rocinha vary widely. Jorge Collaro, director of Rio de Janeiro's XXVII Administrative Region in Rocinha from 2008 to 2015, estimates 150,000 residents.

<sup>74</sup> Figures from Rodrigo Dalvi Santana, infrastructure specialist for the Federal Ministry of Cities, presented at a meeting of Rocinha sem Fronteiras on 21 September 2013; interview with Rodrigo Dalvi Santana, 8 October 2013.

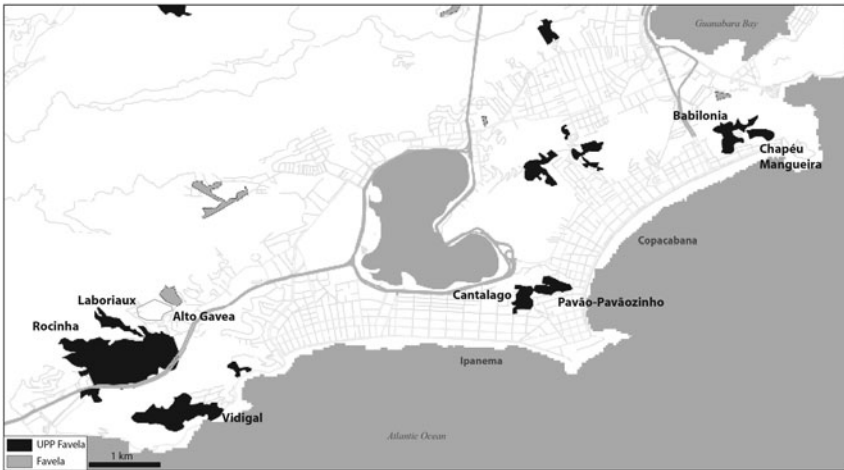
<sup>75</sup> *Complexo da Rocinha. Rio de Janeiro. Relatório Final. Censo Domiciliar*. December 2009.

<sup>76</sup> Residents partially blame the city for the deaths because a few weeks before the rains a large water pipe began leaking into a slope near the end of Rua Maria do Carmo. CEDAE was notified, but nothing was done. The already damp soil soon gave way and an avalanche of earth and trees slid down the hill crushing a house 30 metres below the leaky pipe, killing two women, Maria do Carmo and her daughter Jacqueline.

<sup>77</sup> 'Prefeito Eduardo Paes anuncia remoção imediata de moradores de comunidades do Rio', *O Globo* (11 April 2010).

<sup>78</sup> Leitão, *Dos barracos*, pp. 97–8.

Map 3. *Rocinha and Laboriaux in their South Zone context. Map credit: J.F. Buzetti*



When asked by a group of residents in December 2010 if Laboriaux was really at risk, one high-placed Geo-Rio engineer replied:

Modern engineering could make any area of Rio de Janeiro safe to live in. The question is not so much about risk but about resources and priorities. If the city doesn't see this area as a priority to invest in now, then everyone will have to leave. If you all create noise and bother them enough, then you might have a chance of remaining.<sup>79</sup>

Sceptical residents and outside activists were accused through the media of trying to perpetuate poverty and maintain vulnerable populations in risky areas instead of allowing them to be resettled elsewhere in 'safe' housing.<sup>80</sup> Our research shows residents of low-income communities face tremendous challenges when confronting the managers of risk, and in an emotionally charged post-disaster atmosphere, these difficulties are exacerbated.

The city entered Laboriaux just days after the April 2010 rains ended. The Municipal Civil Defence (Defesa Civil) marked all properties with a large 'H' followed by a sequential number. Civil Defence workers went door-to-door pressuring residents to sign *autos de interdição* (notices of condemnation), although the law requires social workers be present during evictions in order to properly explain the details to grieving residents. The Civil Defence

<sup>79</sup> Conversation with residents as recorded in Burgos' field notes. The official wished to remain anonymous.

<sup>80</sup> 'Chuvas no Rio reavivam debate sobre remoção de favelas na cidade', *O Estadão* (7 April 2010).

aimed to collect as many signed *autos de interdição* as possible so that the SMH could later return and begin negotiating removals and resettlements.

During the next several days, city agents traversed Laboriaux with notepads and measuring tapes, in many cases almost forcing their way into homes. Agents warned residents that if they did not leave immediately they were placing themselves and their families in imminent danger of injury or death from impending landslides. Some Civil Defence engineers were aggressive with residents. José Ricardo, president of the local residents' association, described one encounter: 'I got into an argument with one of the engineers. He actually got in my face as if he was ready to fight. Later I took his photo and reported the incident.'<sup>81</sup> Burgos documented several cases in which agents emphasised their college education and credentials when challenged by questioning residents, giving the impression that they viewed Laboriaux's residents as inferior because of their lack of formal education and their economic vulnerability.

After Burgos' front door was painted with a large H519, he walked down the block to his neighbour's house, which the Civil Defence was about to mark. Maria Aparecida is blind and her husband was working. Burgos told the officials that they were terrifying residents and abusing their authority. One engineer became belligerent and shouted: 'I am an official, an engineer commissioned by the city, and you are interfering with the direct orders of the mayor of Rio de Janeiro, and jeopardising the lives of the residents. I have total competency and authority to condemn these houses for being located in an area of extreme risk of landslide.'

Maria Aparecida was home alone with her adolescent daughter when Civil Defence officials arrived. Knowing her husband was working, Burgos followed them up the stairs to the house. They told Maria Aparecida that she lived in an area of extreme risk and that they had some paperwork for her to sign so that the city could take the appropriate measures to guarantee her family's safety. She snapped, 'Can't you see I am visually impaired? I have never signed anything in my life, my husband takes care of these things.' Maria Aparecida's case was not an isolated incident. Numerous female residents described how city officials, the upper ranks of which were all male, exploited gender related power dynamics in Brazil. Knowing most men were out working, they took advantage of the opportunity to coerce the more vulnerable women into signing eviction notices.

That same week a local resident, who had no previous health conditions according to his widow, suffered a stroke an hour after he was pressured into signing an *auto de interdição*, and told that his family needed to immediately evacuate the area where he had lived with his wife and two children

<sup>81</sup> Interview with José Ricardo, president, Laboriaux residents' association, April 2013.

since the 1980s. He died three days later in the Miguel Couto public hospital. Another long-time resident who did have previous health problems also died of a stroke two days after his house was condemned. While a direct correlation is impossible to prove, family members blame the city for shocking them with the unbearable news. The widow of the first stroke victim described her husband returning home after signing the eviction notice with his head down and speechless. He had no idea where they would go or what they would do. She said the authorities told her husband, a man with the equivalent of a seventh-grade education, that 'it would be better to sleep under a bridge than stay and risk having your entire family killed in a landslide. Do you want that on your conscience?' Coming from university-educated city engineers the power relations could not have been more unequal. Residents began calling the city's actions 'psychological terrorism', the same term used by Elisa Brandão of Morro das Prazeres.

The majority of Laboriaux's residents were suspicious of the government's intentions. A few older residents had previously been removed from nearby South Zone favelas during the late 1960s and early 1970s, only to settle at the bottom of Rocinha where they were once again removed in 1982 so that the city could build a sewage canal. For some of these old-time residents this was the third time the government was forcing them to move. Another reason many residents felt they were being treated unjustly was that, contrary to popular belief, favelas are not the only communities dotting Rio's steep hillsides. Upper-class houses are also built on slopes throughout the city, especially in Rio's South Zone. Rocinha is surrounded on two sides by elite gated communities that are located on precipitous hillsides: Alto Gávea and Condomínio Alto São Conrado. Residents of Laboriaux could see clear signs of similar landslides around the mansions in Gávea, yet none had been marked for removal. This is because, in addition to their owners belonging to the same class as those with the power to remove, the elite houses have concrete reinforced slopes, retaining walls and drainage systems. Laboriaux's residents knew that if the city invested in slope protection and storm drainage they could remain, and at a much lower social and economic cost than eviction, demolition and resettlement.

From the outset Laboriaux residents were faced with a complete lack of information from the public authorities and were excluded from decision making. The city did not allow local participation in defining or managing Laboriaux's areas of risk. Eviction of the entire community was the only option presented. There was also limited dialogue about resettlement alternatives: the city gave residents the same resettlement options they provided for Metrô and Providência residents.

The perceived hypocrisy of the government response led to intense grassroots resistance that eventually saved the community. In August 2013

Eduardo Paes, under political pressure from various movements against removals in Rio's favelas, finally visited Laboriaux and declared there would be no more removals. Paes promised, with the support of the governor, that more investments would be made in Laboriaux. Because of the community's sustained pressure, by the end 2014 over US\$ 8 million had been invested in slope protection infrastructure and other public works in Laboriaux, according to José Ricardo.

### *PAC Rocinha*

Our research closely followed PAC 1, documenting the removal of approximately 365 households that took place in Rocinha between 2007 and 2010. There has been praise and criticism of PAC 1 in Rocinha. To the credit of PAC 1 planners, 144 apartments were constructed to house many of the families, and given Rocinha's size the removals did not constitute significant thinning.<sup>82</sup>

However, in early 2013 the federal and state governments announced a R\$ 1.6 billion (US\$ 400 million) investment in Rocinha as part of PAC 2 Rocinha, the largest favela upgrading investment planned for a single community in Brazilian history.<sup>83</sup> The state government presented the completed project without community consultation. The main point of controversy is a planned cable-car that would consume at least one-third of the R\$ 1.6 billion destined for PAC 2 in Rocinha.<sup>84</sup> The price tag of the cable-car, which would be Rio's third in a favela after Complexo do Alemão and Providência, has been the most contentious issue. This is partially because Rocinha's residents want the community's deplorable sanitation problems to be the priority. Residents are also concerned about the large number of removals that would be necessary in order to implement the cable-car. Rio's public works company, EMOP, has told residents that to build the cable-car it would be necessary to first remove thousands of houses so that roads can be carved through the community allowing large vehicles to carry the cable-car's support columns and to access the locations chosen for the stations.

The exact number of removals that would occur with the construction of the cable-car is hard to determine. Rodrigo Dalvi Santana of the Federal

<sup>82</sup> Nicolas Bautes, Lenise Fernandes and Marcos Burgos, 'Entre confrontos e desafios na construção da legitimidade popular: algumas perspectivas sobre os movimentos de resistências em favelas do Rio de Janeiro', *Revista Libertas*, 13 (2013), pp. 18–19.

<sup>83</sup> According to Rodrigo Dalvi Santana, infrastructure specialist for the Federal Ministry of Cities, who mentioned that 'Rocinha is the Ministry of Cities' model for all favela-upgrading schemes in Brazil.'

<sup>84</sup> Cable-car estimate from Dalvi Santana. Dalvi Santana works on both PAC 1 and PAC 2 in Rocinha and presented these figure to residents at a meeting of Rocinha sem Fronteiras in September 2013.



Ministry of Cities estimates that 2,400 families, or roughly 7,000 individuals, would be displaced for PAC 2. This estimate is considered conservative by many activists and even by some officials. A state government official who worked on numerous projects in Rocinha until February 2013 explained in an interview with Burgos:

The project they showed us estimates the removal of around 2,000 houses, but it is going to be much more than that...we are talking about buildings from areas like Rua 1 that are four or more storeys tall, we are talking about more than 10,000 people ... No one has any idea of the magnitude of this process and how it will transform Rocinha. It is going to generate enormous consequences. ... Massive amounts of people will be removed.<sup>85</sup>

Dispossessed Rocinha residents have suffered considerable hardship. A resident of Laboriaux whose house was condemned by the city in April of 2010 recently moved into a two-bedroom apartment in the vast Vivendas das Rosas e das Orquídeas PMCMV housing complex in the West Zone neighbourhood of Campo Grande. He told us in an interview that after the rains his family decided to move because city officials terrified them about staying in Laboriaux. He received R\$ 400 a month towards rent under the city's aluguel social programme from 2010 to 2013. He moved four times during that period, a cost the city does not consider, and his three children changed schools five times. Finally, in late 2013 he moved into the PMCMV unit. This ex-resident of Laboriaux, who works in Ipanema, complained that his 'daily commute increased from 30 to 40 minutes round trip to between six and seven hours, on three different buses, six days a week'.<sup>86</sup> Another resident of Laboriaux interviewed, whose family survived on aluguel social for three years, recently settled in the PMCMV complex in Triagem, in Rio's Zona Norte, where some Metrô residents were also placed. This second resident told us, 'We had to move five times from 2010 until we moved into the apartment here. The city did not help us with the moving costs. We spent a fortune.' When asked if he missed Laboriaux, the resident appeared emotional and responded, 'yes, of course, we lived there for almost 30 years, our kids were raised there, and they didn't want to come here.'<sup>87</sup>

According to José Ricardo at least 15 families from Laboriaux who were placed in PMCMV apartments had returned to the community, much like residents who were removed from favelas during the evictions of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>88</sup> Some backed out at the last minute after seeing the apartments. Others lived in them for a few months then found ways to return to Laboriaux.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with state government official, 16 January 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Laboriaux resident, February 2014.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Valladares, *Passe-se uma casa*.

*Conclusions*

Following Harvey, Marx and Smith we argue that Rio's favelas represent both territories and populations that were important for capital accumulation during the post-WWII period, but were externalised from those processes during the economic crisis of the 1980s and have remained in reserve until recently, when over accumulated capital required a new spatial fix that has involved a violent recolonisation of these territories as part of a process of accumulation by dispossession.<sup>89</sup> This article has sought to analyse the mechanisms and character of that dispossession as it works through favela territories. A series of government programmes, anchored by the UPPs, have been working to forcefully open the doors of Rio's favelas to renewed processes of capital accumulation. The UPPs represent the assertion of the state's monopoly over legitimate violence in these territories long controlled by drug gangs. Public works carried out under PAC and Morar Carioca represent a further symbolic pacification facilitated by this armed control. These programmes displace thousands of residents through their emphasis on mobility and dedensification. The rains of April 2010 provided a fortuitous pretext for further removals, as the experts of Geo-Rio imposed their technocratic solution to the risk of landslides. All of these removals are further facilitated by the PMCMV programme, which in addition to providing an outlet for over accumulated capital in its own right, offers destinations for removed residents.

This package of measures is part of a neoliberal agenda that aims to open the city to new processes of capital accumulation, particularly through a series of mega-events. International capital requires pacified favelas in the background of television broadcasts that emphasise sponsorship by Visa, McDonalds and Budweiser. Brazilian construction and engineering firms build the PMCMV housing and carry out the public works within and around the chosen favelas. They also build the stadiums and transportation infrastructure required by the mega-event city, that must at least appear to be a pacified city. Tamed favelas valorise neighbouring real estate, from the Porto Maravilha project surrounding Providência to the upscale gated communities neighbouring Laboriaux. Pacified favelas become new markets for the commodities of multinational firms.

All of these new outlets for capital accumulation require a certain dispossession. In this article we have focused on territorial dispossession, but along the way we have chronicled the dispossession of dignity, democracy, community, a way of life and even life itself, entailed in this process. Favela residents are further dispossessed of the value they have created with their own labour embedded in their homes, of the monopoly value of possessing strategically

<sup>89</sup> Marx, *Capital*; Harvey, *Limits to Capital*; *The New Imperialism*; Smith, *Uneven Development*.

located land, and of hours of potential leisure and social reproduction time now spent in precarious public transportation.

In all three of the case studies the authorities have used psychological terror, taking advantage of largely manufactured crises, keeping people in the dark, enhancing insecurity by manipulating information, and taking advantage of status and expertise to intimidate and silence. The way thinning and psychological terror has been carried out in Rio de Janeiro reflects deeply sedimented class, race and gender relations, a particular historical construction of the marginalised favela, institutions and practices with roots in slavery and dictatorship, but also an engagement with a set of emancipatory intuitions, laws and practices that have been built in the post-dictatorship period. Accumulation by dispossession implies violence wherever it takes place, but we have tried to show the particular character this process has taken on as it works through the thick social space of Rio de Janeiro's favelas.

### *Spanish and Portuguese abstracts*

*Spanish abstract.* En este artículo argumentamos que la pacificación de las estratégicas favelas de Río de Janeiro es un caso de lo que David Harvey llama acumulación por desposesión, permitiendo la acumulación de capital en varios niveles. Basándonos en una práctica de varios años de observación participante, buscamos mostrar la forma particular que el proceso toma en la medida que avanza a través de las estructuras sociales y espaciales de Río. Al contrario de evicciones masivas de los años 1960s y 1970s, las familias de las favelas han sido desplazadas más recientemente a través de un proceso de adelgazamiento, en el contexto de un programa de desarrollo neoliberal centrado en una serie de mega-eventos. Las evicciones son llevadas a cabo a través de una combinación de amenazas, promesas, desinformación y la generación intencional de inseguridad, lo que junto constituye una forma de terror psicológico.

*Spanish keywords:* favelas, mega-eventos, evicciones, acumulación por desposesión

*Portuguese abstract.* Defendemos neste artigo que a pacificação de favelas estratégicas do Rio de Janeiro é um exemplo do que David Harvey chamou de acumulação por espoliação, que permite uma acumulação de capital em escalas múltiplas. A partir da observação participante em anos diversos, buscamos demonstrar a forma particular que este processo assume na medida em que avança através de estruturas sociais e espaciais do Rio de Janeiro. Ao contrário das remoções em massa das décadas de 1960 e 1970, as famílias que vivem nas favelas têm recentemente sido desalojadas através de um processo de raleamento, no contexto de um programa neoliberal de desenvolvimento centrado em uma série de megaeventos. O despejo é realizado através de uma combinação de ameaças, promessas, desinformação, e a geração intencional de insegurança que juntas constituem uma forma de terror psicológico.

*Portuguese keywords:* favelas, megaeventos, despejos, acumulação por espoliação