The Urban Spaces of Fear.
How the perceived spaces in Rio de Janeiro contribute to urban exclusion and fortification.

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To the professors at ISPLA, my family, the birds outside my window who wake me early, the cars in the street that keep me awake, all-hour libraries and all those whom I can’t do without:

Thank you.
Abstract:

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil’s second biggest city is both seen as a leisurely paradise and a dangerous drug-warzone at the same time, two contradictory spatial images. In Rio de Janeiro, the urban conflict between the rich, formal city and the favela and the police and the favela has produced an abstract spatial image of the favela and its residents as being violent. In the same way in which the formal city and police have produced their abstract spatial image and social space of the favela, those in the favela has produced their own abstract spatial images of the police, the formal city and of themselves. This development in Rio de Janeiro is juxtaposed with the similar development in Los Angeles during their drug war in the 1980’s.

This study analyzes, through narratives, how the spatial images in both Rio de Janeiro and Los Angeles have been constructed and shaped their urban landscapes into a fortified and exclusionary one.

Key words

Urban fortification, urban exclusion, scanscape, Rio de Janeiro, Los Angeles, drug war, gated communities, social spaces, abstract spaces.
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1. Introduction

Rio de Janeiro, perhaps Brazil’s most iconic city, with its long beaches and sea strolls framed picturesquely by the hills which flank downtown Rio de Janeiro. The long beaches that mimic the waves and the *cidade maravilhosa* (the marvelous city) melt together with the atlantic into a dreamscape. (Perlman 2011: 1). This picture of a “paradise” is however a false one as the city, far from being a peaceful tropical paradise, is a cluster of tropical *fortresses* under siege by an army of police and military police. The quintessential favela, one of Rio de Janeiro’s most representative features has become the subjects of an ever increasing drug war that involves hundreds of police, military police and the feared special law enforcement unit *BOPE* against the *Traficantes* (*Bandidos*, drug traffickers) (Moreira Alves & Evanson 2011: 11-20). However the conflict does not only involve the two confronting sides, as civilians, both those who live in the favelas on the hills and outside the favela on the lower plain are both affected by this urban conflict. In light of this escalating urban conflict, the city is becoming more polarized (Moreira Alves & Evanson 2011: 21-32). Consequently, the spaces of the city are changing, with those who can afford it moving to enclosed private spaces that separate them from the city at large and creates small islands of wealth and security in a sea of poverty and insecurity (Caldeira 2011: 266). This security comes with a price however, which is not only the isolation from the city around them, but also fear: The fear of the city and its residents who are unlike them, fear of the unknown (Caldeira 2011: 19-54).

Thus in light of this fear, both the residents of the favela (the informal city) and those of the city on the plain create their own social spaces, construct their abstract spaces of
the other and shape the urban landscape (Lefebvre 2009: 33-34 & 370). Rio de Janeiro is not the only megacity under siege and similar developments have occurred among others, in the urban jungles of Los Angeles in the United States (Knox & Pinch 2010: 298-304 & Caldeira 2011: 19-54).

1.1 Research Objectives and Questions.

The aim of this study is to create an understanding of how the images of different spaces in Rio de Janeiro contribute to urban exclusion and fortification. Consequently the research questions for this study are thus:

1. How have the poor the rich, the drug traffickers and the police constructed the spatial image of the favela?
2. How have these spatial images shaped the urban landscape?
3. What is the difference and similarities between Los Angeles in 1980-1990 and the present Rio de Janeiro in terms of spatial image?

1.2 Theoretical Framework

In this study I will be utilizing the concept of space as postulated by Henri Lefebvre in The production of space, as a way to produce and describe both identity and the city. However, in order for one to understand space, one must first look at the postulated concepts of labor and production in The production of space.

According to Lefebvre mankind produces products through labour, which can be replicated exactly through a repetitive set of sequences. In contrast, nature creates pieces of work, which are unique and irreplaceable (Lefebvre, 2009: 69-75). This concept of work is then combined with the production of space itself, as mankind produces his own spaces, however, “A space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things (objects and products)” (Lefebvre, 2009: 83).
Consequently, the spaces that mankind produces are artificial, whereas the spaces that nature creates are natural. The more a space is immersed in either realm the more it is either natural or artificial. A social space, produced by social interactions between humans is an artificial space (Lefebvre, 2009: 68-168). Curiously, a space can thus be both natural and artificial, thus being both work and product. Consequently, it can become “…a materialization of a socialized being” (Lefebvre, 1991: 102), which can take on “…autonomous characteristics of things…” (i.e. money and products) (Lefebvre, 2009: 102).

Subsequently, spaces are not limited by natural boundaries, nor are walls or artificial enclosures indicators of where a space begins or conclude, nor are urban spaces heterogeneous. Thus, a space does not exist in isolation or side by side with mutually exclusive boundaries and as such they can be juxtaposed, superimposed and collide (Lefebvre, 2009: 88). Thus social spaces in an urban setting are hard to define and to quantify.

A good example of spaces that can exist together, in conflict and or superimposed, are abstract spaces, which can be used as a mean of control “which destroys the historical conditions that gave rise to it, its own internal differences, and any such differences that show signs of developing in order to impose an abstract homogeneity” (Lefebvre, 2009: 370). As a result, abstract space can become a tool for the authorities to impose and maintain their authority while social space shares a bond with the people that produce it (Lefebvre, 1991:1-67).

Consequently, if we accept the heterogeneous nature of the favela, we can look at it as an umbrella social space which contains a set of different social spaces below it and so on to an ever decreasing scale. This umbrella social space, which is superimposed upon the social spaces it covers and/or intersects, is the sum of all of them, but not at the same time. The umbrella social space changes according to the intersections of these social spaces the viewer belongs to. For example: A intersects C and D but not E, all
of which are superimposed by F. Thus, A’s F is constituted by C and D, while B, which only intersects C, has its superimposed space F constituting solely of C. The superimpositions are illustrated in figure 1.1 below:

The Intersections and Superimpositions of the Umbrella Social Space

![Diagram of umbrella social space](image)

*Figure 1.1 (Modén, Erick 2013)*

1.3 Material and Method

The study uses a qualitative method as outlined in *Handbok I kvalitativ analys* (Fejes & Thornberg 2009), in order to analyze the narratives selected through spatial theory (Lefebvre 2009). The qualitative method will be supported by a source critical approach to evaluate the different narratives as either relics or relic narratives (Jarrick, A & Söderberg, J 2003: 135-167).
The reason that I chose this theoretical approach to be the foundation of this study is the ease with which I can create and change the identities as well as prescribing overlapping identities to the subject(s). The value for this in the study can be illustrated by a house maid; she is in both the space of the elite and that of the poor, however, the social space in which she interacts with the elite is not the same as the one the elites interact between themselves, thus both the elites’ and the house maid’s identities intersect in a unique third social space.

This study will present the narratives of both the favela and the formal city, with a focus on the favela. These narratives will then be compared with narratives from a megacity with similar, albeit different experience (Los Angeles). The reason for choosing LA as a comparison is because of its similar experience to Rio’s drug trade and war against it during the 1980’s. The method intended to be employed in this study can perhaps most suitably be described in four steps:

Firstly this study aims to construct a theoretical ground by utilizing the spatial theories postulated by Henri Lefebvre (2009) and referencing to the concepts of formality and informality as well as the concepts of being rich or poor which are presented in the glossary. Secondly, this study aims to define the concepts utilized to describe the urban landscape and urban conflict as outlined in urban social geography (Knox & Pinch 2010), Urban Geography (Hal & Barrett) Rethinking the formal city (Hernández et al 2010), and City of Quartz (Davis 1990). Thirdly, the study aims to present different narratives from Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Los Angeles from the books Rethinking the formal city (Hernández et al 2010), Favela (Perlman 2011), Living in the crossfire (Alves & Evanson 2011), City of Quartz (Davis 1990) and City of Walls (Caldeira 2011). The majority of the narratives presented in these books regarding Rio comes from the favela including both interviews and secondary sources. The narratives regarding Rio de Janeiro will also come from the book city of walls as it is the most comprehensive book on the subject of urban fortification in Brazil, while the
book *City of quartz* will be the main source of narratives for Los Angeles given the author’s, Mike Davis’, knowledge of the urban Los Angeles (which we can also consider Latin American city). The narratives from another Latin American Megacity, Los Angeles, will be used to illustrate different developments in similar settings. Combined with Mike Davis, I will also utilize LA Times articles from the era which are accessible online, which will serve as information sources and for comparison of narratives. The different developments of these two fortified megacities will serve as models of comparison for questions such as “why has this not occurred in Rio but in LA”. These narratives will facilitate an understanding by constructing different spatial images of the city that exist within city. Fourth, and last, I intend to bring the different spatial images presented by the narratives into a discussion regarding their impact upon the urban landscape in Rio de Janeiro.

1.3.1 Limitations

To explore and define the different urban spaces and the perceptions as well as to gauge their impact upon the urban landscape is admittedly a herculean undertaking due to the subjective nature. There is also the problem of obtaining official statistics for the favela as its informal structure inhibits record keeping. With this in mind, I have decided to limit the scope of this study with regards to Rio de Janeiro to the period 2000-2011 with references in history when appropriate. This study’s focus on Los Angeles will be limited to the years 1980-1990. Because of the brief nature of the study and the issues of relevance for the study another limitation is not to utilize a gender or race perspective, but to focus exclusively on the two socio-economic camps: the rich, and the poor and their relationship to the police. This study will not engage into the debate of classes, as it creates its own pseudo classes by way of spatial images and social spaces.
2. The two Rio de Janeiro's

2.1 Introduction

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil’s former capital situated in the south east of Brazil’s long coastline, a city that has been in a perpetual battle against crime since the mid 1980’s which has, over time, escalated into a larger conflict. This conflict has changed the lives of the people, both in the *favela* and the formal city (Perlman 2011: 7).

2.2 Historical context

Rio de Janeiro, the old imperial capital of Brazil was built by the colonizing Portuguese without a city grid and left to grow organically in stark contrast to the Spanish colonial cities, almost exclusively based on a city grid (Hernández 2011: 1-22). During the 20th century the city transformed itself from being a moderately sized city to a global megacity in just under fifty years (Perlman 2011: 41-61). This transformation catalyzed an array of social problems when more immigrants arrived to the city, with many of them falling into the criminal maelstrom of drug trafficking and its accompanying violence which began to escalate from modest beginnings in the 1980’s (Alves & Evanson 2011: 11-32).

Subsequently, the city became divided into two camps, the *favela* and the formal city. But what are the *favelas*? If we look at the description of the formal city, written earlier in this study, which is “an ordered and planned urban environment” there is still little to allude to us what really is the difference between the two. This difference is further blurred by the process of upgrading the favelas, which creates an infrastructure
on par with that of the formal city; consequently the difference between the two is once again negligible. One could argue that the ordered city is planned according to a grid network, whilst the *favela* has been left to grow without and ordered urban or architectural structure; however, as previously stated this conclusion is also false as Rio has historically been left to grow without and ordered urban or architectural structure. As a result, we are left to explain and define the favela by its image in society at large (Hernández 2011: 1-22 & Perlman 2011: 149-150).

But what is the spatial image of the *favela* and how did this image of this part of the city come to be?

If we look to history, we find that the favela was supposedly founded when decommissioned soldiers, returning home from quelling a rebellion were they massacred Canudos’ “free community”. This community was seen as a threat by the established powers and the plantation aristocracy (*fazendeiros*) both due to its success and size, but also due to a looming labour shortage that could cripple the plantations. Subsequently an army was sent to quash the rebellion, and when returning home the decommissioned and unpaid soldiers settled on the hills, then outside of Rio waiting to be paid for their service. The settlement then grew as more displaced joined them on the hills and forbidden to construct durable houses, they built and lived in tents and shacks (Perlman 2011: 8-14). The *favela* was rejected by the formal city from the very beginning and has been the subject of many “cleaning” operations, in order to “purge” the city of its “blight” or to produce a clean slate on which to build a “tropical Paris” (Perlman 2011: 26). The *favela*, however, survived the attempts to eradicate it. The creation of the Residents associations during the 1960’s gave the favela some legitimacy in their struggle to obtain formal city amenities such as running water and electricity (Perlman 2011:24-30).
Subsequently, we see the history of the *favela* as that of a predetermined marginalization, as they were, for a long period of time, not allowed by the local government to integrate into the “formal city”.

2.3 Narratives from the Favela

2.3.1 City of fear

On the 27th of June 2007, the *favela* called *Complexo Alemão* (COAL) was besieged by some 1,750 police and national security forces in a “clean up” operation before a live aid concert in Copacabana. After the operation, 46 people were reported killed, of whom, according to the residents, only nine of the killed were drug traffickers (Perlman 2011: 105-106 & Alves & Evanson 2011: 15-32). The disproportion between innocent civilians killed and drug traffickers, poses the question of whether this was due to police neglect, drug traffickers hiding among the civilians or simply plain “bad luck”. However, given that in Brazil, according to a news rapport in 2007, there were on average 41 civilian killed per police officer killed, which is four times the international average (Alves & Evanson 2011: 16). The deaths that transpired in the siege of the *Complexo Alemão* can perhaps be attested more to either police misconduct or drug traffickers than to “bad luck”. The residents of the *favela* are targets in an urban conflict between the police and the drug traffickers. Thus in 2001 in *Vila Operária*, the residents summarized their experience:

> The entrance of tóxicos (drugs), narco-trafficking, and violence was the end of our freedom, the end of our happiness…Innocent people and children are always being hit by *Balas perdidas* (stray bullets) or caught in the *tiroteio* (crossfire). The police are even worse they just come in and shoot at anything in their sight (Perlman 2011: 136).
The fear manifests itself in more than one way, for the teachers and the pupils of an elementary school (that chooses to remain unnamed and unidentified geographically for fear of reprisal) the fear has to do with the uncertainty of not knowing when a shooting will start. Since 2007, this school is right in the middle of the fighting between the drug traffickers and the police, and is often targeted directly by the police who then uses the school as a place to shoot from, and then by the bandits who shoot at the police inside the compound. According to the teachers at this school, the police don’t discriminate between drug traffickers or children anymore. The governor had, in 2008, declared all of Complexo Alemão a “den of bandidos” implying that every man, woman and child is to be considered a drug trafficker (Alves & Evanson 2011: 32-37). The shooting between the police and the drug traffickers can start at any time, in the morning when the pupils are heading to school, at noon when they are in class or in the afternoon when they are on their way back. Perhaps it is this uncertainty that has helped form the schools somewhat morbid maxim “just for today, let’s survive” (Alves & Evanson 2011: 37). The bandits do not allow the community to organize a demonstration against the violence or speak out and as such the residents feel as if they are little more than cannon fodder for the police (Alves & Evanson 2011: 37-45). The failures of the police to apprehend the drug traffickers are blamed on the community, as they are the ones in liege with the drug traffickers, helping them outwit the police (Alves & Evanson 2011: 37-45).

The notion that the police’s shortcomings in their war against the drug traffickers is somehow the residents fault can perhaps be attributed to the declaration “den of bandidos” (Alves & Evanson 2011: 36). However, the favela has for long been seen as a scapegoat for an array of societal problems such as criminality or deviancy and of course the drug violence (Perlman 2011: 149-150).

In light of this indiscriminate violence and a police force who considers everyone within the confines of the favela as a legitimate target, as of 2008 and perhaps earlier,
some have taken to build their own bullet proof aluminum shields which can hide and shield up to 4 people within it when the shooting starts (Alves & Evanson 2011: 45-57).

Of course not all of the favela is subject to the sieges and drug war skirmishes, especially as some favelas such as Rocinha with over 50,000 (official) inhabitants are more akin to small cities than neighborhoods (Hernández 2011: 170). In these city-sized favelas there exist communities which, inaccessible to the drug traffickers, are relatively calm places to live as they do not suffer from the drug related violence (Perlman 2011: 142). A good example of this is the favela Jacarezinho which sealed itself off with guarded and monitored gates with which they kept control of access to the favela. This fortification of the favela was not looked upon favorably by the formal city or the police, who accused the favela of being controlled by drug traffickers even though no such connections were ever established (Vargas 2005). Consequently the question arises if they are “den of bandidos” as well, or if the space that this “den of bandidos” occupy only exists in the sections of the favelas where there is a conflict between the police and the drug traffickers (Alves & Evanson 2011: 36)?

To answer this question I must again try to define what the spatial image of the favela is to the police, though we have already concluded that the boundaries which divide the formal and informal city are not clearly defined. With infrastructure that rival that of the formal city on many instances it becomes hard to distinguish between the two in the basis of their respective urban environment. Some, such as Marcio Pochman, postulates that the new form of urban exclusion is linked to geographical residency, thus the discrimination becomes a product of ones perceived connections with the drug trade (Perlman 2011: 155-156). This seems to create an infinite loop scenario where the favela residents are all criminals in the eyes of the police because the favela residents are all criminals in the eyes of the police.
Interestingly, the space that the *favela* occupies, which the police consider to be a social space of urban exclusion, contains a social space which is occupied by those the favela residents themselves call *marginais*, or marginalized. These marginalized are people who live on the streets or wherever they can find temporary shelter and make their living through collecting junk and cardboard. These people often rely on charity for food and clothes, and while being the most vulnerable in society they are often the ones who suffer the most abuse from the police and exclusion from society in the *favela*. In the *favela* the marginalized have two different conflicting narratives, one as the satisfied human being who wants nothing more to life, and the other as “…having no scruples and being thieves and murderers” (Perlman 2011: 157-158).

Thus the marginalized suffer from the same image as those in the favela; however, this image is shared not only by the formal city and the police, but also by the residents of the *favela* (Perlman 2011: 157-158). This, of course, raises the question of whether poverty is synonymous with criminality and if so, why?

Perhaps the answer to this question lies in the seemingly unofficially adopted “guilt by proximity”, which exists in the formal city and the police and, in the case of the marginalized, in the *favela* to a certain degree as well.

2.3.2 “Gente”

There must be a way of telling who is a drug trafficker and a criminal and who is not? Who are the ones that police prosecute and harass, and perhaps more importantly, who are the ones that the police perceive as being law abiding citizens?

This is where the concept of *gente* comes into play. *Gente* roughly translates into being a “somebody” not just anyone. Being poor often excludes one from being a “somebody”, becoming therefore a “no one” (Perlman 2011: 316). Being a “somebody” is important, because of the benefits that having an identity brings, not being identified as a *bandido*, a criminal, for example. Being a “somebody” is important in
Brazil’s society where the phrase Do you know whom you are talking to?\(^1\) is not all too uncommon (Perlman 2011: 316-319) and contains several implications of superiority towards the person who is being spoken to. Interestingly we can combine this with a survey done in Brazil 2008 which concluded that two aspects of being rich is to have friends and relatives in high places and to be corrupt (Perlman 2011: 322).

The goal of many poor in the favela is to become gente, a “somebody”. But the way one goes about to become one is uncertain, as is the exact definition of what being gente implies. Janice Perlman explains that Carioca can instantaneously determine who is gente and who is not” (Perlman 2011: 320) and that this identification is based around implicit assessments such as appearance, wealth, body language, speech and clothes. However, according to one of her narratives, even these different indicators of one’s social position can be misleading (Perlman 2011: 320).

Thus, if we consider the concept of gente in terms of spatial image, we find that it is an abstract spatial image which intersects both but that seems to belong more to the formal city’s space than that of the favela. Being gente is as aforementioned not a question of money per se as one can have money and not be gente, but perhaps put in the context of the phrase “do you know whom you are talking to?” gente becomes someone who has pull, who can command, someone who is superior and not a poor nobody, respected. Interestingly, gente becomes someone who is somebody, who has pull, while rich in the eyes of the favela residents becomes: someone who steals.

2.3.3 The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea.

The police in Rio can perhaps be best understood through their historical origins as palace guards who enjoyed absolute authority. Though long since relinquished the palatial duties the police still retain an air of absolute authority, which can, perhaps, be

\(^1\) “você sabe com quem esta falando?” (Perlman 2011: 316-319)
attributed to the blurring of the police and military functions, which have lent them a more militaristic approach (Perlman 2011: 167).

The police are often seen as an antagonistic force in the favela as a consequence of their violent “cleanup” operations, in which civilians are targeted indiscriminately (Alves & Evanson 2011: 16). However, it is not only the fact that stray bullets find innocent bystanders in the confrontation between the police and the drug traffickers that has created the antagonistic relationship. The police are sometimes viewed as just another gang, sometimes even worse than the drug traffickers, as they don’t respect the neighborhood and its residents and break into people’s homes without a warrant (Alves & Evanson 2011: 64-72). As one mother from the favela Baixada do Sapateiro puts it in 2009:

In fact, the bandidos respect the residents more. You walk past one and he says “good evening auntie.” … Not so with the police. They arrive at a house and storm in. They don’t ask for permission to enter, and they won’t even give you a “good morning”… (Alves & Evanson 2011: 72)

However, the police do not just break into people’s homes without a warrant. They sometimes force them to cook for them at gunpoint. The police are also known to steal and has, according to a narrative from another mother from the Complexo Alemão in 2008, stolen computers from schools (Alves & Evanson 2011: 37-64). In light of these instances the police are more akin to a gang than a law enforcement agency in the eyes of the residents. Yet this is a gang unlike no other as it has the protection of the law and the formal society, which gives them a degree of freedom from accountability for their actions (Perlman 2011: 180-183). For example, the same mother from the favela Baixada do Sapateiro, had her son murdered in 2008 by the police, who then tried to remove his body before the medical examiner and a civil police detective arrived (Alves & Evanson 2011: 65-72).
There are other stories such as this one from the favela, where the police in one way or another tries to remove the body. The mother from the favela Complexo Alemão, describes in 2008 how some police use a special knife to cut open the belly of a victim and remove all his or hers intestines so that the body will sink when it is thrown into the ocean (Alves & Evanson 2011: 50-64).

The most gruesomely described of the police divisions are the BOPE, Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais, which is a paramilitary unit, who amongst other things:

…carry out orders to repress and keep order in the favelas, contain them within their boundaries and make sure that they do not cause disorder in the city’s wealthier areas…(Alves & Evanson 2011: 26)

They are often described as arriving in a “Big Skull”, caveirão, which is an armored car with machine guns and loudspeakers (Alves & Evanson 2011: 1-3 & 50-64 & 37-45). The loudspeakers on the Big Skull sometimes taunt the residents with threats such as “I’m going to get you. I’m going to kill you. I’m going to kill you.” (Alves & Evanson 2011: 44). According to different narratives from the favela, BOPE is also involved in unsavory actions such as, stealing, forcing people to cook and raping them at gunpoint, as well as the threatening to kill innocent civilians to gain intelligence as well as torture. By adopting the color black as “their” color and using black flags on top of buildings as a marker of their presence and ripping off any black clothes from residents, they try to assert their authority (Alves & Evanson 2011: 1-3 & 50-64 & 37-45). The police are sometimes described as being in league with paramilitary “gangs” known collectively as “Militia”, these “gangs” often consist of and are headed by off-duty police or former police officers. These “gangs”, as one could call them, often enjoy the support of the police and being less violent than either the police or the drug traffickers they are sometimes seen as being the lesser of three evils. However, they may sometimes start out as a non-threatening outfit in the beginning only to slowly
assert their authority incrementally and become more threatening with their newfound power (Alves & Evanson 2011: 89-100). As a consequence of this, the Militia may sometimes replace the drug traffickers that they have ousted earlier or as one man from Rocinha puts it in 2008:

In the beginning the militias go softly, carefully. They’re winning over people. After, they don’t want to lose anything. They begin to use violence to keep control. After they turn into bandidos, they become cruel: “give me your vote, or I’m going to kill you… it’s on you if my name is not voted in all those places where people who live here vote” (Alves & Evanson 2011: 96).

Subsequently the militia “gangs” use the residents in much the same way that the drug traffickers do (vote control) (Perlman 2011: 206-207), as source of income and as a base of power. Both hijack the Residents Associations to take a control of a neighborhood. This of course not to say that they do not bring some tranquility to the neighborhood, as they are in league with the police shootings and open selling of drugs have according to the narratives diminished or disappeared. The militia also provides services such as gas and electricity to the residents for a fee (Alves & Evanson 2011: 89-100 & Perlman 2011 183-184), however, The militia are as prone to use fear and intimidation as any other side in this conflict to achieve their aims.

On the other side of this urban conflict are the drug traffickers, who are on many instances more respected than the police as they are seen to respect the community (Alves & Evanson 2011: 65-72). However drug gangs can be as vicious as the police and the small respect they have for the community can be offset by their use of death threats to silence the residents. One of their most feared torture devices is the microwave, a car tire that is fit around a person’s head and light it on fire (Alves & Evanson 2011: 15, 37-58). According to Perlman (2011) the drug traffic “movement” had some Robin Hood-esque qualities in the beginning but has since then become involved into a war against police, with the residents of the favela in between the two (Perlman 188-
Interestingly many of the weapons employed by the drug traffickers are sold by the police (Perlman 2011: 180 & Alves & Evason 2011: 100). Consequently, the residents of the favela are between the devil and the deep blue sea, the drug traffickers on the one side and the police and the militia who are acting in an almost identical manner on the other side.

2.5 The Formal City

The guard in the fortified pillbox is new on the job and so is obligated to stop me in the condominium. He asks my name and destination, observing my shoes. He calls house 16 on the intercom and says that there is a gentleman saying that he is the brother of the house’s mistress. House 16 answers something that the guard does not like and he says, “Hum.” The gate of green iron bars and big golden rings opens in a shuttered motion, as if reluctant to let me pass. The guard watches me going up the hill, notices the soles of my shoes, and believes that I am the first pedestrian authorized to cross the gate. House 16, at the end of the condominium, has another intercom, another electronic gate, and two armed guards. The dogs bark in a chorus and then stop barking suddenly. A young man with a flannel in his hands opens a little lateral door and makes me enter the garden with a gesture of the flannel… the servant does not know which door I deserve, because I am neither delivering something nor have the aspect of a visitor… (Caldeira 2001: 256)

This quote from 1991 highlights the ways in which the elites in the formal city in Rio shield themselves from the outside world. But why shield oneself from society so drastically? Perhaps this is a product of the view the formal city’s residents have towards the favela shaped by the mass media, as all being drug traffickers, or bandidos (Perlman 2011: 185-186). If we look to a more modern perspective we can still see that the favela is being described as controlled by and for the drug traffickers. For instance, in 2008 a BBC report from Rio commented “here the idea of the state has been replaced by the organization, hierarchy and power of drug trafficking networks” (Perlman, 2011: 189).
Quizzically, while being seen as dangerous there is still an air of admiration in the formal city, and indeed the world, for the *favela*. This admiration stems from the sub-culture, or rather style, that is called *Favela Chic* (Perlman 2011: 329-330). The favela is also the residence of many of the richer neighborhoods employees, (Perlman 2011: 316-340 & Fajans 2012: 8-9). To further confuse the view of the favela in the formal city, there is also the idea that the drug trafficking can be seen as being maintained by the need for drugs by the richer segments in the city (Perlman 2011: 177-178). In order to escape the dangers of the city the rich have walled themselves in in their gated condominiums and fortified houses (Perlman 2011: XXIV). In 2009 the city began the construction of walls around the *Santa Marta favela* in order to protect the natural environment and to try to pacify the drug trafficking. The *Santa Marta favela* is one of 80 favelas designated to be circumwalled (Alves & Evanson 2011: 29 & Perlman 2011: 29). Interestingly the homicide rates have dropped from 63 in 1994 to 38 in 2007, which is almost by half (Alves & Evanson 2011: 31-32). In 2010 the homicide rate was 24.3 (Goulart 2012).

2.6 A Methodological Critical Account of *favelas’* and the Formal City’s Narratives

Before we begin to analyze the different narratives that have been presented in this chapter we must first ask ourselves whether or not these narratives are to be trusted. The majority of the narratives come from the *favela*, and as such they may have a biased view towards the resident of the *favela*. The narratives presented in this chapter are based on transcripts from interviews and secondary sources, both of which are cross-referenced between the three books *Favela* (Perlman 2011), *Rethinking the Informal City* (Hernández 2010) and *Living in the Crossfire* (Alves & Evanson 2011). These three sources are used in conjunction in this chapter to define the *favela*, de-
scribe the police, drug traffickers and the formal city. These three main sources are then subdivided up into multiple narratives per source, consequently, we can assume that though there is an inevitable tendency towards the *favela* residents, the number of independent narratives and sources presented ensures us that the corruption and forgery of accounts will be minimal when cross-references are available. (Jarrick & Söderberg 2003: 135-167)

Firstly let us examine the narrative from the COAL (*Complexo Alemão*) where a mother states that the police have special knives which they use to eviscerate the bodies of victims before they are thrown into the ocean (Alves & Evanson 2011: 50-64). As this is the only narrative containing this information, I have chosen not to use it as a narrative but rather as a relic which demonstrates the fear brought on by the police. However, the police violence is well documented throughout the three sources and as such we can assume their veracity. The quote from City of walls regarding the gated community of the rich (Caldeira 2001: 256) is to be seen as a narrative, due to its use in *City of Walls* as an illustration of what the fortified space of the rich is like to an outsider.

The spatial images which are created by those who live within the conflict zones in *favela* are that of a city under siege, where they are the victims of an invasion and of police brutality (Alves & Evanson 2011: 1-110 & Perlman 2011: 24-40, 164-219). Subsequently, the reality of the *favelas* which we are presented with is that of fear and self-blame. They are the victims and the offenders, and in the eyes of the police always guilty. However, some narratives also show that far from being a homogenous reality. Some areas of the *favela* which are not in the conflict zone are relatively free from the violence (Perlman 2011: 142) but they are still included into the spatial image of the *favela* at large. In much the same way that the many of the residents in the *favela* equates being rich with being corrupt and criminal, the police also seem to equate poverty, or rather; low social status, with criminality (Alves & Evanson 2011: 36 & Perl-
man 322). These two abstract spatial images are almost presented as natural i.e. an inevitable creation of their respective environment due to their seemingly general acceptance. The question of the *marginais* has been included into this study to highlight the ways in which the blame of the image of the *favela* is shifted on to the progressively lower segments in society (Perlman 2011: 157-158). As a result, there exists an abstract spatial image which simply states that crime is poor man’s nature and cannot be changed, an image which has infiltrated the reality of the *favela* residents (Lefebvre, 2009: 69-75).

Being *Gente* is thus an important image, as those who are somebody, a real person, are not part of the lower criminal segments of society (Perlman 2011: 320). In the abstract spatial image which the residents of the *favela* have created the idea of being *Gente* is a vaguely defined image for someone who cannot be bullied.

In the formal city, the *favela* has the paradoxical images of a place from which one must protect and disassociate oneself from, while at the same time being portrayed as “chic” and desirable to copy (Perlman 2011: 329-330). The paradoxical image widens when one includes the notion that even though the rich erect walls and gates to protect themselves from the “dangerous poor” they still rely on the residents from those areas to provide them with cheap downtown labor and housemaids (Fajans 2012: 8-9). As a consequence, reliance of the same dangerous poor they wanted to keep out to do their house chores and guard them, essentially makes their fortified space an illusory “safe” hyperspace.

3.1 Historical Context

The history of LA is that of urban conflict between the rich and the poor, which was foreshadowed by the actions of Gray Otis, who took control over the city in the late 1800’s after its first real estate bust. Gray Otis locked out unions, outlawed picketing, and militarized the relationship between employer and workforce, consequently setting a precedent in the polarization of the city (Davis 1998: 17-38). The modern LA is based upon multiple nuclei, and as such there is no “real” city core, but rather a cluster of smaller urban units together forming the city. This decentralized layout of the city, coupled with a poor public transportation system polarizes an already fragmented city (Knox & Pinch 2010: 298-304). LA is also a city of duality. On the one hand, it struggles to identify itself as it both wants to be a safe modern city and a city with boulevards and café life. The real versus the romantic image (Davis 1998: 17-88).

3.2 The Modern Scanscape

In 1989 Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) was given clearance by the city to expand their police academy into the Elysian Olympic park. However the police had already de-facto expanded upon their original lease of the pistol range on 1932 to the occupation of the entire park. This commandeering by the LAPD was far from unique in LA as the Immigration Agency commandeered hotels and apartments mainly for use as holding cells for illegal immigrants (Davis 1998: 254-257). What made these acquisitions possible was the escalating drug war which was used by the Law en-
forcement agencies as a justification for their expansion into the city (Davis 1998: 254-257).

From the 1980s and onwards the police presence has become a standing feature in the LA landscape as even the malls have LAPD sub centers in order for the police to create a “bubble of safety”. In 1983 the Haagen Development won a county contract to build a shopping complex in the Willowbrook area. The emphasis on the contract was physical safety and as such the mall contains a substation of LAPD hidden above a public library in the center. These shopping centers have since then become popular and many more have been constructed with similar LAPD substations, checkpoints and controlled access (Davis 1998: 236-244) to keep the unwanted out.

The private security sector increased exponentially in LA during the 1980s and the number of people employed by the industry tripled during the decade. With the growth of public demands for private security, the regulations became more relaxed and it became possible for even convicted murderers to be employed as a private security guard (Davis 1998: 244-250).

The number of gated communities was one of the reasons behind the new boom in the private security sector, with more and more of those who could afford it moving to a gated community. Even those who could not afford to move into a *bona fide* gated community rallied to obtain the same standard of security by sealing off apartment neighborhoods and installing checkpoints in order to control access to their space, a development which was supported by the LAPD (Davis 1998: 244-250). Through a police program launched in 1989 lower income area apartments owners in *Sepulvelde barrio*, barricaded their streets to deter both drug trade and access to the unwanted (Davis 1998: 248).

Consequently, even the lower segments in society were able to fortify their urban environment, albeit through low-tech solutions while the richer segments relied upon state
of the art surveillance and architecture inspired by fortified embassies and military command posts (Davis 1998: 244-250).

In a sense the city is at war with itself as it, on the one hand, subsidizes white collar colonization of the inner city by boosting design and art initiatives and, on the other hand, designs the urban spaces for the lower segments of society as unlivable as possible. An example of this urban duality is the neighborhood Skid Row, which is a place where the city council concentrates the unwanted sections of the city’s population, the poor and the homeless, and subsequently turns the entire neighborhood into a mixture between a refugee camp and a poor house. The homeless are periodically deported into Skid Row in large numbers. When the homeless and the unwanted concentrated try to escape Skid Row (which is described as being “… probably the most dangerous ten blocks in the world” (Davis 1998: 233 & Citron 1989), they are met with active area denial systems concocted by the city such as a sprinklers system that goes off at random at night or barrel shaped benches to deter them from spending the night outside of Skid Row. However, those caught by the police erecting any kind of unsanctioned shelter outside of Skid Row is summarily sent back (Davis 1998: 232-236).

However, not only the homeless and the poor are feared, as even large groups of people are feared by both the public and the police (Davis 1998: 226-230). Within the LAPD there exists an image of them being the only incorruptible presence in the city while they view any citizen on the street as being a potential criminal (Davis 1998: 251). A good example of this mentality can be seen when in 1988 “the LAPD attempted to disperse a crowd of 100.000 Halloween revelers…” and drove police cars into the crowd in a zig zag movement to force them against the curbs (Davis 1998: 260).

The question that arises is how these extreme measures came about since violent crime rates were only 38% higher than 1970-1980 between 1980-1990, as compared with over 105% in Dallas, Jacksonville and other large cities (Shaw-Taylor 2002).
3.3 A Methodological Critical Account of Los Angeles’ Different Narratives.

Let us then consider the case of LA and ask ourselves: can we trust these narratives? There is a great deal of information taken from a single source, which is of course a cause for alarm. However, the source most utilized for this chapter is that of Mike Davis’ Book *City of Quartz* (1990), which is one of the most influential books on the fortification and militarization of space in LA during 1980-1990. Interestingly the riots as described in *City of Quartz* (1990) differ from the cited article, where the Halloween revelers are portrayed as starting the looting and vandalizing without provocations (Ramos 1988). Violent crime increased by more than a third, which is a fair amount, combined with the historical militarization explains the catalyzed process of fortification of city space. The Skid Row portrayal is confirmed by the LA Times article and as such cannot be easily disregarded as a fabrication (Citron 1989).

Consequently, when we look at the spatial image of LA we are faced with one of urban conflict and fortification, an image of multiple forts existing in a sea of crime. The abstract image of the LAPD is that of suspecting that every single resident is a potential criminal, and that a gathering of large amounts of people creates criminality, thus implying that this social space is in fact a natural space. This view in turn, seems to be accepted by the LA Times. If we juxtapose the articles by Kermode (1986) and Merina (1987) we can see how the climate has changed, as well as the tone from the latter article to the former, which has changed from accepting crime as a part of large gatherings to something which cannot be tolerated and undesirable.

There is thus an abstract space of “everyone is a criminal” that is pervasive in the LA urban landscape, or rather an abstract image of “the unwanted are criminal and dangerous”, consequently the spatial image is built upon the fear of what is different from “us”.

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Consequently the spatial image of the city has been shaped by two competing abstract spaces: a romantic provincial town, and a modern “Dangerous” city. The spatial image of the dangerous city meets the abstract image of the romantic provincial town, but only behind fortified and controlled spaces. Thus the Scanscape is in place to guard an abstract spatial image from an abstract social space.
4. Closing Discussion


There is an abstract image that exists in both Rio and LA, this image is that of “The outsiders are dangerous” and in a larger sense “the poor are dangerous”. This view seems to have come about due to the emerging drug trafficking and subsequent drug conflicts between the police and the drug traffickers (Davis 1998: 248 & Perlman 2011: 136). If we look to the LAPD we can also see how the image of themselves can act as a reinforcement of their abstract space, as they saw themselves as uncorrupted and everyone else on the street as a potential criminal (Davis 1998: 251). The law enforcement agencies in LA had during the 1980s taken to commandeering buildings for use as holding cells for illegal immigrants or for other law enforcement uses (Davis 1998: 254-257). The LAPD has become part of the urban fabric in LA to such an extent that shopping malls are built with a substation of LAPD within them in order to control access (Davis 1998: 236-244) which is meant to keep the unwanted out.

The police in Rio, though not as antagonistic and assertive that everyone is a criminal, do consider, according to the narratives, everyone in the favela as a criminal. The abstract space which the police in Rio have attributed favelas can be illustrated through the governor of Rio State, Sergio Cabral Filho statement that COAL is “a den of bandidos” (Alves & Evanson 2011: 36 & Perlman 2011: 155-156).

Consequently, the police are an antagonistic force to the favela residents and target them (the residents) indiscriminately in their “cleanup” operations (Alves & Evanson 2011: 16). The police in Rio also engages in unlawful activities such as breaking into
homes without a warrant, forcing the tenants to cook for them and raping them at gunpoint and ripping of their clothes if they’re in black (Alves & Evason 2011: 1-3 & 50-64 & 37-45). As a result this aggravates the dehumanization of the residents in the favela as the police, through actions such as this, imply that they are the masters in the favela. According to the abstract image of the favela in the mind of the police the favela are all criminals and if you live in a favela you become a criminal (Perlman 2011: 155-156). However, this abstract image of the favela as a place of perpetual criminality is not entirely correct and the homicide rate which has been falling in Rio since the mid-1990s (Alves & Evason 2011: 31-32) proves this assertion to be false. As a result, the police assertion that the favela naturally creates criminality as a “piece of work “ (Lefebvre, 2009: 69-75) is per definition, also erroneous. However, the abstract spatial image of the favela being a “a den of bandidos” (Alves & Evason 2011: 36) does not solely exist within the ranks of the police, but is also shared by the rich (Perlman 2011: 185-186). We can juxtapose this idea that the favela is dangerous with the need for drugs by the richer segments in the city (Perlman 2011: 177-178). The formal city also holds a fascination for the favela, for example the new subculture Favela Chic which glorifies the favela (Perlman 2011: 329-330). Consequently the reality of the favela created by the rich can be summarized as two conflicting abstract spatial images, one is the abstract natural space which holds that the favela creates criminality and violence while the other see the favela as a place of leisure, music and dance (Perlman 2011: 329-330).

The social space of the poor have been influenced by that of the rich, which can be seen in the abstract image of the marginalized which, influenced by the abstract natural social space of the rich and the police, condemn the marginalized as perpetual criminals (Perlman 2011: 157-158). Being Gente is important in this regard as it is seen as a way out of the abstract natural social space constructed by the police and the formal city (Perlman 2011: 316-319). But what is being Gente? If we, for example,
would equate being *Gente* with being rich, then through the definition of rich as someone who is corrupt (Perlman 2011: 322). Then we are presented by an abstract natural spatial image that the rich are perpetually criminal because they are created thus by nature. But if we accept that “peoplehood” is between the rich and the poor, then we can see how “peoplehood” becomes a marker of peace as “people” are neither portrayed as being corrupt nor criminal nor dangerous.

4.2 How the Spatial Images Have Shaped the Urban Landscape.

If we look to the *favela* we can see how the abstract spatial image it has that exist in the police, the rich and in the formal city has shaped the police’s conduct towards it as they (the police):

…carry out orders to repress and keep order in the favelas, contain them within their boundaries and make sure that they do not cause disorder in the city’s wealthier areas…(Alves & Evanson 2011: 26)

Thus the police have become the shield against which the rich formal city leans on for protection against the unwanted. The abstract spatial image of the favela as being a haven for criminals seem to excuse the police of both stealing and committing extrajudicial violence (Alves & Evanson 2011: 50-64 & Alves & Evanson 2011: 72). The police have thus become alienated within the *favela* and are seen more as aggressors than as police. As a result, the drug traffickers are seen as a more favourable option as they respect the community (Alves & Evanson 2011: 72). Thus complicating the police’s goal’s while supporting their suspicion that everyone in the *favela* is a criminal. The vacuum left by the police as a protective force has been filled with the Militia. However, even the Militias have their own agenda, and can become as violent and authoritarian as the police and the drug traffickers (Alves & Evanson 2011: 88-100 & Perlman 2011 183-184). Neighborhoods in both Rio and LA have taken to urban fortifi-
fication as a means to escape the dangers associated with the abstract spatial image of their cities. Strategies range from concentrating the poor and unwanted in one area such as, LA’s attempt to hold them in Skid Row (Davis 1998: 233 & Citron 1989), or the police sponsored program for lower income apartment neighborhoods to barricade themselves to control access (Davis 1998: 248). These two programs from the late 1989’s LA are mirrored by both the favela Jacarezinho’s experience with urban fortification (Vargas 2005) and the circumvallation of 80 favelas which akin to Skid Row is an attempt to contain the unwanted to one area (Alves & Evanson 2011: 29 & Perlman 2011: 28-29). Combined with the circumvallation of the “dangerous” neighborhoods, the rich themselves have taken to wall themselves in in their gated communities and their fortified houses (Perlman 2011: XXIV).

4.3 Summary

In conclusion, we can see how the favelas in Rio are seen as both the source of criminality and a source of fascination. The residents of the favelas are seen as the product of a natural social space with which the maltreatment of the favelas is justified. The favelas are seen as something which should be contained and as such the formal city and the rich have taken to erecting walls around both themselves and the favelas in an attempt to protect themselves from this “dangerous” space. The irony of the abstract spatial image which the rich, the police and the formal city try to contain is that even the highest walls cannot keep this “dangerous” space at bay as their cheap domestic servants and shopkeepers are part of it. Interestingly, in 2008 O Globo reported that one third of Rio’s poor live in the favela (Alves & Evanson 2011: 2-3), thus strengthening the notion that the conflict is geographical, between abstract spatial images.

The rise of spaces that escape public control can be seen both in Rio and in LA. In Rio these spaces exist both in the favela and the formal city, where they are represented by the gated communities or fortified houses. Spaces that escape public control create a
hyperspace in conjunction with fortified architecture (Perlman 2011: XXIV). The production of the subculture *Favela Chic* (Perlman 2011: 329-330) is a good example of the disconnected reality created by the formal city’s hyperspace. In this urban conflict it is the public space which suffers, as it disappears for fear of the unwanted gaining access. As a result the public spaces are replaced by authored spaces such as shopping centers with checkpoints in LA (Davis 1998: 244-250), or the circumvallation of entire favelas (Alves & Evanson 2011: 29 & Perlman 2011: 28-29). In the case of LA we can see how this authored space covered the entire city as in the LAPD’s Scanscape everyone could be a potential criminal. In Rio the whole city is a fortified space, as it actively seeks to deny entrance to those in the *favela*, spatially and physically. By building walls around them they create pockets of “dangerous spaces” (Alves & Evanson 2011: 29 & Perlman 2011: 28-29) on which they put an abstract spatial image and portray their inhabitants as “slaves” to a natural social space (Lefebvre, 2009:). While ignoring the spaces that they produce and intersect with those in “dangerous spaces” (Lefebvre, 2009: 83) such as the domestic worker from the *favela* or the purchase of drugs by the richer segments in the city (Perlman 2011: 177-178). As a result, we can see the conflict in between the formal city and the *favela* as a continuation of the historical conflict between the two, where the formal city and the rich have wanted to “purge” the *favela* to create a “tropical Paris” (Perlman 2011: 26). If so, the drug conflict becomes a method of making the *favela* a scapegoat for the cities problems. Subsequently, the continuation of the drug war and the production of the natural spatial image abstract of the *favela* as “den of bandidos” (Alves & Evanson 2011: 36) becomes necessary to justify the violent means of its pecification.

The omission, in this study, of racism and feminism, were both due to its brief nature and the questions regarding their relevancy to the study. However, perhaps if we would reconstruct racism and feminism into spatial terms i.e. “spatial racism” and
“spatial feminism”, we could perhaps show how these spaces would interact with the spatial images of the favela.

In closing; if LA is a Scanscape then the term which we can construct for Rio is that of a Fearscape, where insecurity, fear and uncertainty exist instead of the Scanscape’s surveillance and control.
Glossary

In the following study I have commented and explored the urban spaces of Rio de Janeiro and Los Angeles utilizing many urban geographical concepts. In this section I aim to present the core concepts of this study.

**Authored space:** Spaces controlled by companies, often multinationals, which are often constructed and operated in keeping with a theme, such as (but not limited to) historical center and amusement parks (Hernández 2011: 212). These spaces are often private public spaces (i.e. open to the society but on conditions).

**Carioca:** Residents of Rio de Janeiro (Perlman 2011: 334)

**Formal/Informal city:** The informal city and the formal city are two sides of the same coin, as it can be hard to distinguish between them as they intersect at many points which blur the line between them (Perlman 2011: 24-30). One author defines the informal as a product of the gaps within the formal system which satisfies the invisible demands and needs that are unmet (Hernández 2011: 225-234). This definition is perhaps the most fitting as we can place the favela within this definition since the favelas, regardless of degree of infrastructure, fill an invisible demand: cheap apartments within the formal city and a place to go for new arrivals to the city and the poor (Perlman 2011: 38). Formal is thus the ordered city, which is in this study represented in terms of an ordered architectural and urban shape, economy, and socio-political structures (Hernández 2011: 1-22).

**Hyperspace:** A “hyperspace” is a space that contains an artificially constructed reality where the outside world and its associated violence and conflict are suppressed behind a “wall” of media imaging and semiotic. Classical examples of hyperspaces are (but not limited to) theme parks, malls and gated communities (Knox & Pinch 2010: 52).

**Fortified Architecture:** A form of architecture which is designed to discourage and deny entrance to those who are deemed undesirable and to provide security (both imagined and real) to those behind its protective walls (Knox & Pinch 2010: 298-304). Fortified architecture (also
known as bunker or citadel architecture) often gives rise to fortified spaces and Urban exclusion.

**Fortified space:** A space that is actively denying entrance to certain social groups, through either physical barriers, design or semiotic (Knox & Pinch 2010: 298-304 & Hall & Barrett 2012: 208-210)

**Public Space:** A space to which everyone has a right of access to and no one is excluded or discriminated against on socio, political, economic or racial grounds (Hernández 2011: p 226). A true public space serve some form of community use and can never be accepted as private (Brown ed : 22).

**Scanscape:** A high technological form of urban fortification involving a high degree of surveillance (Knox & Pinch 2010: 298-304 & Hall & Barrett 2012: 208-210).

**Spaces generated for traditional consumption:** Traditional neighborhoods and city blocks form the basis for traditional spaces of consumption; these spaces are usually shaped by its inhabitants (Hernández ed 2011: 212).

**Spaces that escape public control:** These are spaces with little or no public control or insight and are often ruled by their own set of laws and social codes, these spaces are also known as “private spaces” (Hernández ed 2011: 213-214)

**Rich/poor:** In this study, I aim to explore the differences between the rich and the poor in their view of the city, but who is rich and who is poor, and what do these terms mean? The favelas do not solely comprise of poor residents as it is not a homogenous space, nor does the formal city consist solely of fortified houses. In this study I define being rich as being able to influence the local government and also being able to be part of the city but also as have the means to isolate oneself from it to a great degree. Consequently, the poor are those who are subject to the hegemony of the rich, these are also the ones who do not possess the means of isolating themselves from the city (Perlman 2011: 16)
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