FAVELA FUNK
WAYS OF BEING YOUNG IN THE URBAN PERIPHERIES OF RIO DE JANEIRO

Hannah Pollack Sarnecki
To my grandparents Masza and Hilary Sarnecki for teaching me about the struggle for survival.
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This map of Rio de Janeiro (1:300,000) shows the areas of the city where the fieldwork for this dissertation was carried out. It is worth noting that the city limits expand further to the West and North than is shown in this map.

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Chapter 1. Introduction: Towards a Political Anthropology of Favela Funk

“Are there any faithful ones (fiés) here? Give me some noise! And lovers (amantes)? SCREAM!” The DJ² shouts with a raspy voice through his broken microphone. I turn around and see how fireworks placed on top of the amplifiers explode. Smoke mixed with the smell of burning plastic, perfume and high expectations fills the late-night air. MC³ Sandro’s distinctive voice blasts through the hundreds of black and white loudspeakers. An old lady carrying a black plastic bag twice her size bends down beside me to pick up an empty beer-can. In the street outside, children, teenagers, old men and women talk, gossip, dance, kiss, drink and eat. Two pastors in brown suits hand out leaflets and offer prayers to the sinful. Back on the dance floor, girls dressed in jean-shorts and tops stand in lines with their hands on each other’s shoulders. They move their hips to the rough beat. Boys wearing shorts and t-shirts smoke quietly in the corners. On the balconies VIP guests, that is, drug dealers and their girlfriends, stand watching over the sea of people. Gradually the vibe changes as the crowd starts moving towards the stage and the music slows down. A smoke machine is plugged in, and colorful strobe lights follow. People from the street pour in, and girls scream at the top of their voices as the most famous funk group in the favela enters the stage.

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In this dissertation, I explore how young women and men in a favela on the northern outskirts of Rio de Janeiro – that I will call Nova Cidade⁴ – deal with the insecurity of their social and spatial location. The ethnographic material rests on fieldwork undertaken primarily during 2007-2008 – the second period of Lula Ináció da Silva’s rule – and 2011, the year when Dil-

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¹ When funk performers talk about “faithful ones” and “lovers,” they refer to those who are faithful in their love relationships and those who are not. These categorizations are commonly used in funk lyrics. Sometimes there is a contest or battle in the lyrics and performances between “faithful ones” and “lovers.”
² DJ stands for Disc Jockey.
³ MC stands for Master of Ceremony.
⁴ The New City.
ma Rousseff was elected president. At that time, the Brazilian economy at large was still marked by boom conditions before the tide turned and recession and stagnation set in. National discourse had taken on a more democratic tune, and the country’s global ambitions were formulated in plans for huge sports events, such as the World Cup in football in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016. For the inhabitants of Nova Cidade, however, no boom conditions reigned, nor had more democratic participation been secured.

In the following text, I will employ the pun of “in/security” to be able to think about the predicament of favela youth. It is suggestive of their unfinished, yet on-going, struggle to move in (not necessarily from) poverty and vulnerability towards a life worth living, while remaining within given structures of poverty and vulnerability, rather than escaping from them. The role of funk music in such movements is at the center of my story.

The fact that my main interlocutors, young inhabitants of the favela, suffer from how they are placed by history and society is axiomatic in my account: they suffer from a structure of severe inequality, which is sustained by an unjust legal system that does little to protect their civil rights. They suffer from the prejudice and racism expressed by middle- and upper-class Rio-residents who regularly associate being poor, black, and young and from a favela with vulgarity, criminality, and, as I will focus on here, a sexuality in alleged need of containment or external control. They are not enrolled in functioning schools. They have limited access to proper health care. They stand with few career options, and they live in fear of abusive police power. The thesis explores the ambiguities and sometimes unexpected social logic of in/security in the home favela. The reason is that rather than approaching this place deductively with a state-people model of power and resistance (or despair), I have been compelled to explore notions and experiences of fear and suspicion as also generated by a third factor, the government of a drug dealing gang or faction. To allow for even more ambiguity, the faction combines surveillance and brute force or the threat of it with a bio-politics of health care and consensus-building efforts around community projects. They are also the main suppliers of entertainment and distraction in the favela, financing funk parties of the kind described in the introductory image. These events are central to social life in the favela, as occasions for joy – and parental worry. The popular support the drug faction enjoys and also its entanglement in official state and party politics render a con-

5 “Gang” is a contested concept, open enough to spur sociological debate and closed enough to carry context-specific meanings in urban ethnographies. In this dissertation, I aim to use the emic term “faction” (facção) to talk about drug dealing street organizations in the favelas, and “gang” in reference to both state and academic discourse. Occasionally, these labels overlap and will be used interchangeably.
ventional analytics of state and people, oppression and resistance, govern-
ance and governed limited.

Funk and the Political Context

In the 2000s, many economists, journalists, writers and others construed Brazil as a success story. In dominant accounts, Brazil was a rising star and a model nation, an economic superpower, where “a rigorous battle against corruption and poverty has ushered in new freedoms, growth and increasing equality, winning the country respect around the world.” In 2009, the former president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, or Lula, optimistically predicted that Brazil would be one of the five biggest economies in the world by 2016. In order to get there, the Brazilian government has made public security and the war on drugs a political priority. In a bizarre flirtation with global political ideals and demands, in Rio de Janeiro, walls are being built around favelas in alleged pursuit of “saving the rain forest.” Police forces occupy favelas (close to tourist areas and the airport), ostensibly to get rid of drug traffickers, to maintain “peace” and to begin implementing basic services. Human rights activists along with a growing number of scholars (e.g., Sneed 2013b, Sanchez and Broudehoux 2013, Corrarino 2014, Livingstone 2014, Gay 2014, Grant 2015) have claimed that the police are in these favelas to clean them up before the huge sports events in 2014 and 2016. Many favela residents confirm that their communities are increasingly more militarized. The residents of the favelas, especially the young, occupy a critical and contested place in the narrative of Brazilian progress. While most pundits and commentators in the fields of urban economics and policy studies would see them as (both potentially and actually) violent threats or obstacles to democratization (e.g., Di Tella et al., 2010, Poveda 2012), activists and scholars of critical urban studies maintain that they are victims in a neoliberal battle for the control and exploitation of urban space (e.g., Wacquant 2003, Gledhill 2013, cf. Ifeka 2006, Veloso 2012).

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7 Government officials call the walls “eco-walls,” and authorities claim that they are built to protect the environment and to stop deforestation of the Atlantic rainforest, which surrounds Rio.
8 In December 2013, the government of the state of Rio de Janeiro had placed 36 UPPs in favelas. The 36 UPPs were comprised of more than 9,000 military police officers, who patrolled 252 neighborhoods, see Dialogo Digital military magazine online, http://dialogoamericas.com/en_GB/articles/rmis/articles/regional_news/2013/12/20/brasil-upp, December 20, 2013, accessed May 23, 2016.
What does it then mean to be young in a favela at this political and economic juncture? As I went on exploring that question, I discovered that funk was something that indeed engaged most favela youth, in one way or another. This emerged as a practice around which most of the key concepts of my study – youth, sexuality, security and power – revolve.

Funk consists of many sub-genres ranging from pop-funk and sensual-funk, to more explicitly political funk. Its lyrics treat a diverse range of themes: romantic love, peace, religion, social misery, corruption, violence and sex. Hard-edged funk with booming bass rhythms is performed every weekend in favelas and suburbs all around Rio at massive dances, called bailes, which bring together millions of people in streets and dance halls. Brazilian authorities, many upper- and middle-class Rio residents, church people, but also favela residents, especially the elderly and the religious devotees consider funk to be vulgar and violent, and an excuse for crime and unbridled sex. In the Brazilian media, funk is commonly associated with criminal activities and perceived as a means to promote violence, decadence and sexual licentiousness. The most violent lyrics are prohibited by law, and bailes are considered by state authorities to constitute a threat to public security. At the same time, funk has become popular outside favela boundaries as well and, in the last decade, especially among “hip” Brazilian and international, middle- and upper-class producers, photographers, filmmakers and many others. The Brazilian State Department of Culture uses funk as an important asset in the marketing of the City of Rio, and funk parties in some favelas in more affluent parts of the city are popular tourist attractions.

During my fieldwork in 2008, a famous funk artist and producer DJ Marlboro played at a birthday party for the son of Rio’s governor (Sergio Cabral). The same year, former-president Lula posed for a photo with the enormously popular all female funk group Gaiola das Popozudas. It is common for Brazilian politicians to approach famous funk stars in order to attract young voters in favelas. There are also politicians who promote funk as an important part of Brazilian culture. Some academics (see e.g., Fascina 2009) see funk as a movement with revolutionary potential – a perspective with romanticizing and therefore problematic consequences that I will discuss in this dissertation. These tensions, then, and the fact that the bailes are so widely associated with the drug factions that govern the favelas, have turned funk music into a subject of much public debate and even “moral panic” across class lines.

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9 The end of the 1980s was a time when the first free elections were held in Brazil. The funk songs written in that period, and the decade that followed, to a greater extent than today, told stories of poverty, social marginalization, discrimination, police brutality, and romantic love.

10 It is estimated that around 40,000 tourists visit favelas every year (see Rolfes 2009).
Approaching funk

My original idea of doing a study of funk culture was inspired by coming across two female funk artists, Tati Quebra Barraco (Tati “the Shack Cracker”) and Deize Tigrona (Deize “the Tigress”). Invited to play at clubs like Favela Chick in Paris and London, these women seemed to have sexual power and to be in control. In her song Motel, Tati told us that: “this is already modern times/ and sex has to vary/ if they want you to suck their dicks/ make them lick your pussy.”

On music blogs and in magazines, funk was called “the CNN of the favelas,” “a democratic grassroots movement” and “the most exciting music in the world.” Some writers and documentary makers, both in Europe and Brazil, spoke of a new kind of feminism or neofeminismo (Fonseca Amorim 2009). I had decided to focus on female funk stars in Rio. In relation to sexually- and racially-charged representations of women in popular culture ( Gilliam and Gilliam 1990), I would examine how female funk artists experienced and acted upon gender relations, personally and in their art. I wanted to find out whether funk constituted an alternative to more established social movements such as the women’s movement and the black consciousness movement that have had difficulties in reaching out in favelas. It soon became clear, however, that the funk artists that I had heard on dance floors in Europe were not representative of the funk scene(s) in the favelas. In Nova Cidade there were at the time more than 50 men involved in performing funk at the bailes. There was, however, only one young woman, Tatiana, performing funk in public. Even though there are many female funk artists and dancers in favelas, men dominate the funk world(s) in Rio.

As will be illustrated in Chapter 4, this is not to say that women are not engaged in funk. On the contrary, there are probably as many female funk fans as male. I met many young women in Nova Cidade who dreamt of making a funk career. However, women in poor working class areas, such as

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11 My translation of: “O tempo já é moderno/e sexo tem que variar/ se eles quer que você mama/manda eles te chupar.”

12 The Berlin based-record company Man Recordings spread funk in Europe and artists like MIA in London remade funk songs and became famous while producers like Diplo spread funk in the United States.

13 In the text, I use funk artists, funk stars, funk entertainers, and funk performers interchangeably to talk about funk MCs (Master of Ceremonies), funk DJs (Disc Jockeys) funk dancers, and also funk producers.

14 For example MCs like Tati Quebra Barraco, Deize Tigrona and Valesca Popozuda (Valesca “Big Trunk”) became famous in Rio during the mid-2000s with hits such as “Hot Bitch,” “The Fucking Pussy is Mine,” and “My Pussy is the Power.” When I talked to female funk fans in Nova Cidade about funk artists who inspired them, they only mentioned one female funk star, MC Sabrina, who came from a favela close by. More recently, in 2016, a funk performer called MC Carol has gained much attention for funk lyrics criticizing police violence and corruption among state officials.
Nova Cidade, have less time to spend on music and partying. They are the ones who head the households. To a greater extent than men, they devote their lives to struggles for survival and making ends meet. While men have the right to search for excitement in the streets, women are forced to take care of their children, and they are blamed when something goes wrong. When women leave the households to earn a living or do what men do – go out to have fun – they are often accused of abandoning their children. In Nova Cidade, funk MCs, DJs and producers (the DJs and producers are all men), but also other residents, such as Evangelical devotees (the majority women) considered it to be morally wrong for women to perform sexually explicit funk or to enjoy funk parties in the same way as men.

The public reading of funk from a feminist perspective is ambiguous. I have heard countless academics, activists and workers for nongovernmental organizations express the view that funk is one of the most horrendous and derogatory expressions of female suppression imaginable. Throughout the years that I have been working with this project, I have met many filmmakers, music producers and photographers – both Brazilians and others – that view women in funk as vulgar and “too much,” yet, who, at the same time, describe them as strong, free and sexually empowered. Confronted with the empirical situation in Nova Cidade, it was hard for me to perceive of funk as a “new kind of feminism.” Considering that there was only one young woman in Nova Cidade doing funk officially, female “empowerment” in funk production did eventually not seem relevant to study. Instead, I came to be preoccupied with the role of funk for young men and boys and women and girls more generally, as consumption as well as production, in a favela, far away from the hip international scenes of the genre at the time. Gender and sexuality, however, continue to be central themes for this dissertation. I have kept struggling with the idea of funk as an alternative to other social movements throughout fieldwork and long after.

A three stranded strategy: funk as optics, fun and fight

My own present point of departure is that funk and the bailes constitute key nodes for social, political and economic life in the favelas. They make up a field of active cultural production, through which young favela residents deal with the uncertainties and in/security of growing up in an unequal and sometimes quite violent place. In this dissertation, I develop a three-stranded strategy to make sense of the different yet overlapping ways in which funk is embedded in the everyday life of Nova Cidade residents.15

First, funk is that “thing” that makes social life audible (or ethnographically observable). It is, in this sense, a lens through which I have looked as

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15 I am grateful to Steffen Jensen for his suggestions on how to model the relation of funk to society.
much as it is the object I have looked at. It is important to stress this at the very outset, since the title of the dissertation might raise the reader’s expectation of a study in musicology in a stricter sense or a text within the realm of an anthropology of music. My engagement is rather characterized by a continuous stepping into and out of music in an attempt at understanding how funk both shapes and “reflects” social relations and how they, in turn, find or create expressions in music. Thus, it deals more with the social aspects of the music and its usage, than with the formal characteristics of this music itself. In other words, the challenge for me has been to write a political anthropology of one of Rio’s favelas with the help of funk, rather than to provide a full or exhaustive account of a particular musical genre and practice. I will soon return to this “funk as lens” part of my “model” in the introductory methodology discussion towards the end of this chapter and argue that “funk as lens” is relevant, not only to ethnography but also to the lives of the residents of the favelas. For the young especially, funk works as a medium with and through which reality is experienced. They approach other matters – economic, political, social, and sexual – through funk. My method, in that sense, is very much inspired by their practice.

Second – and in a direct contrast to those who criminalize and in other ways seek to contain or even demonize funk and its practitioners (such as for example the media, the churches, state agencies and so on) – to many of the favela residents funk is that which improves and even ensures life by providing enjoyment, exuberance, pleasure and excitement. Of course, with lyrics that flit between insubordination and provocation and which undeniably and indeed explicitly link up with the illegal and the “obscene,” there will always be a moral and societal rationale evoked by funk’s enemies. For funkeiros/as such efforts do not seem to stop their practice nor infuse it with the shame intended. Condemnations rather become part of the excitement. In this study I have set out to understand and explain how that works ethnographically. I have been tempted to call this part of my strategy “funk as life,” but since life is far from only enjoyable in Nova Cidade (or elsewhere), I opt instead for the shallower, yet more specific, “funk as fun.”

Third, funk is also itself the carrier and creator of difference and antagonism; it is both the scene of favela battles and a battle in itself (see e.g., the work of Attali 1985). As I will reveal in this dissertation, it is a kind of fight for a right beyond legality to have fun, to be young, to be sexual, in short, to exist in an otherwise exclusionary regime of both labor and citizenship. This fight, however, cannot and does not always escape the complex dynamic of political power, especially the contest for sovereignty between state and municipal authorities and the local factions. By being a crucial instrument in the local regime of the drug faction, the political organizing of pleasure and

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16 “Funkeiros/as” is used in this text when talking about funk performers, funk fans, funk dancers, funk sound system owners and funk DJs.
fun through funk music emerges in the stories and experiences of my interlocutors. This contradiction constitutes the third part of my model, and I call it “funk as fight.”

In anthropology, Clifford Geertz is known for having insisted that models, endogenous to the people studied by anthropologists, or exogenous to them in the theoretical modeling of their observers, are much more than simple representations (Geertz 1973). They are not only models of social phenomena. They are also models for things, such as ideas for change and alternatives. In the words of Robert Borofsky, Geertz provided a useful distinction between “an aspiring ideal versus a summarizing description” (1994:247). At one level, the three-stranded strategy of funk that I discuss above can be seen as an ordering, conceptual device for this study – funk as lens, fun and fight – fulfills this double function of a model. Lens (a certain vision), fun (the sphere of pleasure and excitement) and fight (the struggle for identity and autonomy, but also for the right to have fun and to be able to continue perceiving life through music) are represented in and by funk in Nova Cidade.

In the following, I start by relating my analysis to a wider theoretical context to do with the anthropology of globalizing cities and their social and economic margins. The point commonly made in the literature is that informally occupied youth fulfill a much more central economic function in national and global markets than the notion of marginality admits. While digging deeper into this claim in Chapter 3, I will return in the rest of the dissertation to focus on the social function of youth as well. The introduction proceeds with a discussion on the Rio favela as a sociological type of urban marginality, before I turn to a critical assessment of a core feature of such a type, namely “youth cultures,” or the essentialism of a culturally contingent life stage. I suggest ways to move beyond such typology and essentialism through reading the social liminality of favela youth in light of contemporary anthropological theory on topics that emerged during fieldwork as the most relevant to understanding Nova Cidade ethnographically. Those are violence, sexuality and sovereignty.

By employing them analytically in this work, and by using them to structure my narrative, I have struggled to overcome or transgress a discrepancy between the reality I observed and the literature on youth cultures that I have read. A point I want to stress is not the mere rejection of the essentialism of that literature, since youth is indeed an emic category in the favela with a remarkably clear moral and political content to which people, young and old, relate or have to relate. Youth is furthermore construed by ‘the state’ and the churches in particular and highly pragmatic ways. Therefore, the deconstruction I propose takes the social life of this abstraction into serious account, while also discussing the ways in which young people are linked to friends, families, neighbors and authorities of different kinds and shapes. The intro-
duction ends with an outline of the method that I employ and a summary of
the chapters of the dissertation.

In a Globalizing City

The City of Rio, with about 6.5 million people, is only one of 25 municipalities that officially make up metropolitan Rio de Janeiro.\textsuperscript{17} The population of this entire area is close to 12 million, of which about 2 million live in favelas.\textsuperscript{18} The favela residents are significantly younger than those who live in other parts of the metropolis: 50 percent of the favela population are younger than 25 years old, compared with approximately 40 percent in other urban areas (Zaluar 2010, see also Alves and Evanson 2011). Local leaders in the favela confirmed this demographic pattern where I conducted fieldwork.

Throughout the world, cities the size of Rio are significant places that are predicted to become even more important in the future, not only for demographic reasons, but also because cities are both gateways to the global world (Hansen 2008) and constitutive of contemporary globality itself (Sassen 2001). It has interestingly been argued (see e.g., Sassen 2001, 2005a, 2005b, Brenner and Keil 2006) that big cities are the key terrain on which multiple global processes assume concrete, localized form. These cities have emerged as strategic sites for a whole range of new types of operations—political, economic, and “subjectively cultural.” This is where new claims by both the powerful and the disadvantaged materialize and assume tangible forms. The global city is thus both place-centered in that it is embedded in particular and strategic locations and trans-territorial because, through its network, it closely connects with sites that are not geographically close (Sassen 2005a). In this account, international capital thrives on a network of such big cities. By implication, and although it might not look that way, many of the low-wage urban laborers of the formal and informal sectors actually work in the global economy since the resources necessary for global economic activities are not themselves hypermobile, but deeply embedded in particular urban spaces and the labor markets they sustain.

The notion of a “globalizing city,” as suggested and developed by Peter Marcuse and Ronald van Kempen (1999) and by Simone Buechler (2006, 2014) for the case of São Paulo is appropriate also for Rio de Janeiro. The concept of the (already) global city has successfully travelled from the writings and conferences of urban sociology and anthropology to the normative

\textsuperscript{17} Spatially, the City of Rio is often divided into four zones: Central, South, North, and West.
\textsuperscript{18} Based on the 2010 census, 22 percent of Rio’s population lived in favelas at that time, up from around 18 percent in 2000 (IBGE 2010).
field of urban policy. In a recent ranking, Rio de Janeiro qualified as an “emerging global city,” aspiring to become central to the world economy and to globalization itself through neoliberal processes of regeneration, including the hosting of mega events like the Olympics of 2016.

Economically powerless – not economically insignificant

The contemporary global aspirations of the Brazilian economy, its growth through “structural adjustment,” the subsequent “roll-out neo-liberalization” and “austerity” (Wacquant 2009, Brenner, Peck and Theodore 2010, Portes and Roberts 2005) have caused changes in the value and condition of labor that especially affect those trying to obtain their first job (Daalsgard, Franch and Scott 2008). Young people, in particular those from low-income families, suffer the highest unemployment rates. When they find a job, it is often very poorly paid, leading them to seek subsistence opportunities outside the sphere of regular work. It is their exclusion from the formal economy that sparks and engenders new informal economic practices (Halperin and Scheld 2007). The divide between the formal and the informal, then, both draws the contours around the social margins of the global city ontologically, and it conceals local economic productivity epistemologically. In other words, urban marginality is, in this dissertation, viewed interchangeably as a social, economic and even existential condition and as the result of a particular analytical position.

Rhoda Halperin and Suzanne Scheld (2007) seem to take note of this duality. The unemployed in the urban margins emerge as excluded from urban processes, especially economic processes, in which they are actually crucial actors. Saskia Sassen’s assessment also combines these perspectives. Rather than constituting an economic engine that gradually elevates the income and welfare of the whole city population, it renders youth unproductive in many analyses, since the modern global city funnels surpluses into the hands of global elites dispersed over a few dozen global cities, rendering them productive for the expansion of global capitalism (Sassen 2005a). In this economic sense, “the margins” are thus much less marginal than they appear.

Various scholars have argued that, upon close observation, the favelas turn out to be variegated working-class districts with stratified webs of ties to industry and to the wealthy districts (see e.g., Perlman 1976, Valladares 2000, McCann 2014). Such observations challenge the conventional and often oversimplified distinction made between favelas and other parts of the city. Indeed, they cast into doubt the whole idea of a convergence between socio-political and economic marginality: economically powerless does not imply economically insignificant. Culturally and politically excluded, the

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favela inhabitants often fulfill critical economic functions. Yet, for over a century, “favela” and “cidade” have been counter-posed as mutually exclusive terms.

Would a systemic take on the social margins of a globalizing city be enriched or challenged by a practice-oriented ethnography of everyday life in a Rio favela at the outskirts of the metropolis? Without the ambition of contributing the missing piece to the puzzle of the current state of global capitalism, my analysis draws on Sassen’s notion of the global city in that it pursues an investigation into the “subjectively cultural” in relation to Rio’s aspirations to become global. Although unspecified in Sassen’s account, I take the “subjectively cultural,” to mean different ways of understanding, organizing, and/or creating differences between oneself and others. In this dissertation, funk is such a “subjectively cultural” way of dealing with life, as I show in my accounts of “funk as fun” and “funk as fight.”

Unemployment rates in favelas are the highest of the city, and the interlocutors in my study face severe difficulties when trying to find formal jobs. When they do find them, it is often in the service sector, where they are largely underpaid in relation to the minimum wage (see Chapter 3). Often, they have to work without a worker’s ID, which means that they are not covered by any social security program. In order to try to make ends meet, many hold several different jobs at the same time, sometimes combining formal and informal work. Many favela residents, especially young men, have stopped looking for formal work altogether, as they feel it is almost impossible to find it. Instead, they take on different kinds of day-to-day work in the informal sector, both inside and outside of the favela. In order to explore ways of being young at the margins of Rio, it is thus crucial to look at labor relations. I will argue in this dissertation that these transgress the boundaries between the formal and informal, and, by doing so, they challenge the moral polarity conventionally attached to such divides; in the context of favela studies, the difference between a worker and a bandido (see e.g., Zaluar 1985, Penglase 2010 cf. Drybread 2014). I will develop this discussion in Chapter 3.

If Sassen provides a first recommendation – which is to explore the subjectively cultural in a particular place of the global economy – another clue, one which this work also attempts to follow, is outlined by another sociologist, Loïc Wacquant, in the introduction to his “comparative sociology of advanced marginality” (2008). “[E]thnographic observation,” Wacquant writes, “emerges as an indispensable tool, first to pierce the screen of discourses whirling around these territories of urban perdition which lock inquiry within the biased perimeter of the pre-constructed object, and secondly to capture the lived relations and meanings that are constitutive of the everyday reality of the marginal city-dweller” (2008:9). In the sociology proposed by Wacquant, the institutional analysis is of equal importance, but he em-
phasizes that an ethnographic undertaking is “a matter not of collecting ‘fresh’ data to compose ‘lively’ illustrations of theories elaborated outside sustained contact with the prosaic reality but indeed of enrolling ethnographic observation as a necessary instrument and moment of theoretical construction” (Wacquant 2008:10, see also Wacquant 2003b).

The Rio Favela as a Sociological Type of Urban Marginality

Definitions of favelas and favela residents are problematic to say the least. According to Webster’s Dictionary, a favela is defined as “a settlement of jerry-built shacks lying on the outskirts of a Brazilian city.” This is wrong in two ways. First, many favelas are built with bricks and mortar and the houses can very well be several stories high. Second, favelas are not necessarily on the outskirts of the city, many are built on hillsides, garbage dumps or on other undesirable spots in or close to urban centers (see Perlman 2010). In English dictionaries, the word favela is often translated as “slum.” As many scholars have illustrated, favelas are neither always slums nor “squatter cities” (see e.g., McCann 2014, Goldstein 2003, Perlman 2010). Moreover, various researchers have pointed out that the systematic use of words such as “slum” ends up stigmatizing neighborhoods at the bottom of the hierarchical system of places and leads to the endorsement of a link between territory, identity and behavioral assessments such as attitudes and levels of “commitment” (Valladares 2005, see also Sneed 2013a).

For one thing, the favela label is an emic concept, that is, it exists in the vocabulary of both residents and others as a carrier of apparent meaning. I have never heard anyone in Rio refer to neighborhoods like Nova Cidade as anything else but favelas, or comunidades. In fact, no one in the city seems to question the fact that these neighborhoods (and others such as for example Rocinhá in the South Zone of the city) are favelas. Cavalcanti (2014) argues that there are two reasons behind this. The first is connected to their legal standing and property status. Like Rocinha, Maré and Complexo do Alemão, Nova Cidade is among the hundreds of favelas that have been declared “special social interest areas,” which means that there is a legal device that places certain favelas under more flexible urban rules than the “formal city.”

The second reason these areas are unquestionably favelas, rather than just any neighborhoods, has to do with the fact that daily life unfolds in a context of conflicts between rival drug factions and militia groups, and drug dealers and the police (Cavalcanti 2014:209).

There are a number of additional terms, with which the inhabitants of favelas refer to their own neighborhood and themselves. For many, the word favela carries negative connotations to the extent that they prefer other words. The term favelado/a, which refers to a person living in a favela, is
often considered pejorative and insulting. In Nova Cidade, young people use the word favela depending on context and whom they are talking to. When talking to each other, they say favela or more commonly refer to their own and other neighborhoods categorized as favelas by saying the actual name of the place. Yet, when talking to outsiders they would often use comunidade. When young people that I spent time with referred to the way they believe that upper- and middle-class Rio residents view them, they would talk of themselves as favelados/as.

Activists in the favela often complained that the favela youth of today lack a “sense of shared identity” and would consequently use the word favela as a political statement. According to their discourse, young people should be proud of their history and of coming from a favela. They should not hide behind other words. Nevertheless, when applying for a job, no one I knew would say that they lived in a favela, as they assumed that it would diminish their chances of getting the job. Many, like my neighbors in Nova Cidade, used words such as comunidade popular, comunidade carente (poor neighborhood), comunidade humilde (humble neighborhood) or simply comunidade (community). They told me that they did not understand why the word favela should be used at all, when their neighborhood is like any other comunidade. I develop this discussion around the emic, political and analytical use of community and its labels in Chapter 3.

The image of one Rio favela from within

In a series of texts, geographer Jeff Garmany (2009, 2010, 2011 and 2013) poignantly notes that the academic literature on Brazilian cities is overwhelmingly concentrated on the metropolises of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, to the effect that “the findings from these two megacities are often (and unfairly) extrapolated across other urban contexts in Brazil, perpetuating lingering misgivings about the ‘nature’ of Brazilian cities” (2011:45). While sharing Garmany’s concern, and while learning from his studies of the favelas of Fortaleza in the Northeast of Brazil, which fill a gap in the urban studies literature on Brazil, I want to challenge his claim that the Rio case, as singularly conceived, is exceptional due to its geographic location. Even though it is not denied that the universe of the favelas varies geographically and demographically, it is, nonetheless, often assumed that sociologically, the favela is a single category. The diversity and plurality of social relationships and conditions are obscured. According to Licia Valladares (2000), this reflects a lack of academic interest in diversity. Likewise, internal differences within “the rest of the city” are implied to be insignificant, despite there being clear differences between the neighborhoods of the Southern Zone – Copacabana, Ipanema, Leblon and Barra da Tijuca – on the
one hand and the peripheral, lower-class areas on the other (see Ribeiro 2000).

In contrast, this dissertation explores the image of one Rio favela from within. It attempts to tease out the exceptions to Garmany’s exception, examining a complexity that challenges the stereotypes of policy and prejudice and that dislocates “the favela” in the field of urban studies. Questions that inform my approach include how the Rio favela is portrayed, and what kind of work such a portrayal does in the wider formation of knowledge of urban marginality. Janice Perlman, who did an acclaimed longitudinal and multi-generational study of the poor in the favelas of Rio in periods between 1969 and 2005, assesses the major transformations of the economy, political conditions and policy (1976, 2010). Did life become better or worse in the favelas? The answer, Perlman concludes, depends on what aspects of life you consider. Indicators of individual and collective consumption and educational levels show a striking improvement. Levels of individual access to goods, household appliances and urban services have risen dramatically. Urban services such as running water in the home, electricity, closed sewer pipes and so on have improved. Housing has also become better. In contrast, however, measures of unemployment and violence show worrying trends. According to Perlman’s study, the stigma associated with living in a favela has not diminished with material and educational improvements. Instead, “living in a favela” remains a greater obstacle to employment and source of discrimination than skin color, gender, place of birth, or overall appearance (see also Alves and Evanson 2011 and McCann 2014). As Susan Terrio writes of stigmatized suburbs in Paris, the favelas of Rio are still seen as the “locus of disorder, anomie, and violence, and as signifier of the danger posed for the social body of the nation…” (2003:137). Young people are often made the personifications of such characteristics. Their own estimation of the direction of change is most likely to be dominated by the experience of unemployment.

Defining Youth

In Nova Cidade, the most popular funk groups have names in line with the two most popular groups that I call “The Young Ones” and “Newbies”. For reasons of anonymity that I discuss in Chapter 2, the aforementioned are not the real names of these groups. The names, however, that I have given them still carry the same meaning as the real ones. Other groups in Nova Cidade

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20 This is not always true for the new favelas that are much poorer than the older so-called “consolidated” favelas.

21 Shacks of wood, dried mud and other scavenged materials have been replaced by solid multi-story structures.
refer to “youth” with names such as “The Innocents.” Many funk groups in Rio compose lyrics about what it is like to be young and sing about young girls and young boys (novinhas/os). Funk artists in Nova Cidade also speak of themselves in terms of being young. As Anderson of The Young Ones said to me: “We sing about sex because we’re in an age where sex is what’s on our minds. We’re young.” Although people across generations attend the baile in Nova Cidade, those who go to the baile and party late at night are considered younger than those who prefer other activities, such as samba-rehearsals, although this is not always the case. To some extent, to be young in Nova Cidade is related to situations rather than actual age. At the same time, to be defined as young in Nova Cidade, depends on whether a person has children or not and/or is married or not. These are important criteria especially for young women. The kind of work a person has and where and with whom a person spends her or his time is also relevant to what being perceived of as young means in this context. Youth is also related to looks, taste, style, and ways of behaving, moving and speaking more generally. Significantly, to be young in Nova Cidade is impossible to separate from the ideas within and without the favelas about “youth,” and the alleged special agency, and needs, of young people.

Studies of contemporary marginality, consumption patterns, and creative strategies of youth illustrate that in large urban settings, several patterns recur, such as the perceived irrelevancy of education to the realities of young urban lives, unemployment in formal sectors, underdevelopment and substantial rural-urban migration (see e.g., Scheld 2007, Maira and Soep 2005). Urban youth around the world share many similar practices and spaces, exercising homegrown forms of creativity in the face of often grim and deteriorating conditions (Halperin and Scheld 2007). The megacity itself places demands on youth that are not present in rural areas or in small or medium-sized urban contexts.

The concept of securitization and the anthropology of youth

In everyday life, images of youth as dangerous and violent prevail in Brazil. Public policy and mass media discourse on youth frequently position young people largely as a population that need to be controlled, contained (Lipsitz 2005) and in the case of Rio, “secured.” Security here has a double connotation, for even though state action is often motivated or justified by reference to the insecurity of youth, in the practice experienced by those the state claims to protect, they are themselves the threat or the danger, and society is that which has to be secured. Below I discuss this phenomenon in terms of both in/security and securitization, i.e., that issues associated with marginalized youth, like work, education and sexuality, are increasingly talked about in terms of security.
The concept of securitization is generally associated with the Copenhagen school of security studies (see Gledhill, Holbraad and Pedersen 2013). Originally formulated by Ole Wæver (1995) it provided a different take on the debate between those who claimed that threats are ‘objective’ (that which ‘really’ constitutes a threat to international security) and those who argued that security is subjective (that which is merely perceived to be a threat) on the other. In an attempt to sidestep this debate, the Copenhagen school proposed that security instead should be seen as a ‘speech act’, where the central issue is not if threats are real or not, but the ways in which a certain issue – military, political, economic, environmental etcetera – can be socially constructed as a threat. The proponents of the school define securitization as a speech act that has to fulfill the following three rhetorical criteria, as formulated by van Munster (2009):

It is a discursive process by means of which an actor 1. claims that a referent object is existentially threatened, 2. demands the right to take extraordinary countermeasures to deal with that threat, and 3. convinces an audience that rule-breaking behavior to counter the threat is justified.

Security as language (i.e., securitization, see Chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion of the concept) materializes in government policies, church practices based on religious morality and in police brutality. Below I discuss this phenomenon in terms of both in/security and securitization, that is, that issues associated with marginalized youth, like work, education and sexuality, are increasingly talked about in terms of security. Politicians, the media, and many middle- and upper-class Brazilians associate youth from favelas and other low-income areas with laziness and crime. They see them as vulgar and lacking culture. Funk music and dance with its sometimes sexually explicit and aggressive lyrics emerge as the ultimate proof of this view. Funk, in this sense, cannot escape the political dynamics of fighting and of being fought.

Previous discussions in the literature of the anthropology of youth are useful for an understanding and challenge of the essentialisms found in the political discourse of in/security. Initiation practices, sexual practices, courtship, marital customs and other issues related to adolescence have been crucial topics in anthropological research ever since Margaret Mead and Bronislaw Malinowski. However, this older body of anthropological research has generally approached adolescence from the perspective of adulthood, downplaying youth-centered interaction and cultural production. It is the transition to adulthood (from the point of view of adults) that has been assumed or emphasized (see Barrett 2004). Mary Bucholtz (2002:529) argues that the emphasis on adolescence as a universal stage of the individual has framed young people as not yet finished human beings. Adolescence is usually placed in relation to adulthood, but an equally salient group for com-
parison and contrast for youth may be other youth. Relevant age contrasts may also include childhood, old age, and other significant stages.

Helena Wulff and Vered Amit-Talai (1995) argued early on that an ethnographic focus on the lived experiences of youth is crucial in order to advance theoretical debates, and Sunaina Maira and Elisabeth Soep (2005) conceive of “youth” as a shifting category of people that is simultaneously deeply ideological. Rather than seeing youth as a given category based on biological age, it is a social position structured by various powers and relations simultaneously, such as citizenship, consumption, schooling, social membership and surveillance (see also Lipsitz 2005).

In the Brazilian city of Recife, dominant notions of youth as a clearly marked transitional stage are influenced by a middle-class lifestyle (Daalsgard, Franch, and Parry Scott 2008). This leaves little room for the uncertainty that encompasses young people’s lives in all social groups but becomes especially problematic for an understanding of youth in low-income groups, who cannot achieve the expected transition, and, therefore, are stamped by parents, authorities and the media as deviant and at risk. In Brazil, anyone 18 years old and above is an adult according to a civil code, implemented in 2002, and is legally responsible for her or his actions. Brazilian citizens can vote from the age of 16, something that becomes compulsory at the age of 18 years old. The Brazilian National Policy of Youth, implemented in 1995, defines the period of youth as between 15 and 25. Anne-Line Daalsgard, Monica Franch and Russell Parry Scott (2008) state that the significance of age is a result of the establishment of the modern state and its need to identify target groups and different spheres of action. The demography of Brazil shows a “youth bulge,” onda jovem (Daalsgard, Franch, and Parry Scott 2008:56). According to the World Population Review (2016), 62 percent of the Brazilian population is aged 29 or younger. This “youth bulge” has social, economic and cultural significance, and has turned political and judicial attention toward this age group, a topic which is further explored in Chapter 6.

Alleged youth practices, moreover, are seldom the exclusive property of youth. Funk, for example, as suggested above, is not purely a juvenile activity. Although funk and funk dances are generally characterized by journalists, politicians, scholars, Rio residents and others, as associated with marginalized youth, children as well as old grandmothers and grandfathers listen and dance to funk music. Those who started performing funk as children in the

22 Young people under 19 years old are protected by a specific law created in 1989 as a result of the mobilization of civil society and international agencies, “the Statue of Children and Adolescents” (ECA). The ECA declares that all children (0 to 11 years old) and adolescents (12 to 18 years old) have full rights and deserve special protection as they are still developing, and that those under 16 years old are not allowed to work without permission (Daalsgard, Franch, and Parry Scott 2008).
early 1980s, are now around 40 years old, or older. Some of them are now prominent and influential figures on the funk scene. An interlocutor and friend of mine who is deeply engaged in funk in Nova Cidade is around 70 years old. The youngest funk performer that I have heard of was 4 years old. She was the daughter of a funk producer, but had stopped singing right before I started my fieldwork. Through the lens of funk, favela youth as a category thus appears to be both identifiable and elusive. Questions about the personas and specific relations of funk practitioners need to be posed in order for a study like this one to qualify or assess the ways of being young in Nova Cidade. My moving beyond the claim that this practice belongs to the repertoire of a specific youth culture is divided into three steps: dealing with violence, sexuality, and sovereignty.

Beyond Youth Cultures I: Youth and Urban Violence

The general framing of adolescence as a psychological or biological stage fraught with social problems discussed above is also a prominent feature of a good deal of social science work on youth violence. “Violence” in an unspecified sense or usage is often an equivalent word for social problems. In this section, I will reference some examples of that approach and introduce the ways in which my analysis relates to it or differs.

Some authors focus their analyses on assumed problems of identity associated with the period of youth. According to Karen Sykes (1999), youth in Papua New Guinea who are unable to support steady work engage in acts of violence and excessive consumption. The writer argues that these acts produce alienation and strip the young men of identity. James Vigil (2002) suggests that, despite the violent activities of the Chicano street gangs he has been studying, street gangs also provide a sense of self-identity and serve as a passage to adulthood. Mary Bucholtz contends that such “surrogate and illegitimate identity is held to be an inadequate replacement for legitimate cultural institutions such as the family and school” (2002:533). Other researchers put the subject of youth gangs and violence into broader perspective. Work on such gangs in the USA, for example, shows that the gangs are not simply symbolic substitutes for culturally-approved social structures, and further, that they function as one of few avenues for entrepreneurship available for certain groups (see e.g., Vigil 2003).

Harry West (2000) has identified two major strands in the scholarship on youth and war. One is a psychological approach, which asserts that exposure to violence leads to a “loss of innocence.” Hence, young people who go on to commit violent acts are or become victims of violence. The other strand centers on cultural agency and interprets youth as able to adapt quickly to violent situations. Bucholtz stresses the importance of seeing that youth
maintain their agency as cultural and political actors, whether as producers or recipients of violence.

Jane Schneider and Peter Schneider (2008:365) note that, like studies of peasants and colonial “others,” anthropological research on contemporary youth highlights the construction of criminality. Studies of “hang around” or “hooligan” youth, and of youth incivility draw attention to the role of media in stigmatizing “naughty areas,” where young people move around. Writings on youth in some parts of Africa throw light on how such public discourse can hamper understandings of the entrapment of “late modern” youth: the condition of having no respected work, being unable to marry in line with the expectations of the community, and wallowing in unstructured time while surrounded by images of glittering consumer emporia (Schneider and Schneider 2008:365). Such attempts at crediting young perpetrators of violence with a modern, social rationality also informs Paul Richards’ work on rebellion in Sierra Leone (Richards 1996) as well as the more recent ethnographies inspired by his approach (see e.g., Richards 2005, Coulter 2009 and Finnström 2008).

This is where I hope to position this work, too. Violence in my account is not the antithesis of community but part of it. This statement may sound like a controversial claim for those who take community to be an entirely positive and normative term. Here, it is rather taken to mean two things: a) the local set of social and sociable relations that tie people together locally, and b) the often idealizing arguments of shared belonging. No evaluation is necessarily denoted. Violence might very well appear meaningless and antisocial for individual victims, but the emphasis here is on the role (or function) played by violence in the formation of favela social relations, for better or worse.

In a couple of paragraphs, I will stay with the theme of violence and reveal how it conceals the difference between phenomena problematically united by the same label.

The mortality rate in Rio de Janeiro is raised by the use of sophisticated, largely imported weapons. Perlman calls them “weapons of mass destruction” (2007:19, see McCann 2007b). Ninety percent of the homicides in Rio are firearm-related. Homicides are unevenly distributed across the social landscape in Brazil. Victims of homicide are disproportionately male, poor, black or non-white, and young (see e.g., Dowdney 2002, Caldeira 2002). According to the Brazilian National Public Safety Department, young people aged between 16 and 18 years old commit just 0.9 percent of all crimes in the country. At the same time, homicide data in 2015 show that of 56,000

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23 A study by IPEA (Institute of Applied Economic Research) in 2013 estimates that the chance of a black teenager being a victim of homicide is 3.7 times higher than that of a white teenager. According to the study, the life expectancy of a black Brazilian man is less than half that of a white man.
killings recorded, 30,000 victims were young people aged between 15 and 29 years old, and of those 77 percent were black.

Teresa Caldeira (2006) argues that the increase of this kind of urban violence in Brazilian cities is one of the strongest challenges to democratization. Yet, as anthropologists have also pointed out (e.g., Caldeira 2000, Rodgers 2009:956), the escalation in violence during the past decade can partly be related to a widespread process of spatial segregation – a proliferation of gated communities, private security, closed condominiums, walls, high technology surveillance systems, and the neglect of public spaces (see Bauman 2001, Wacquant 2003). The concentration of homicides in favelas in the Northern and Western Zones of Rio contributes to homicide rates eight times higher than those in the wealthier Southern Zone. The Brazilian police stand out even in Latin America for their use of lethal violence, and Rio’s police kill more people than police do anywhere else in the world. The Special Operations Police Battalion (BOPE) proudly refers to their own abusive tactics and violent activities as “urban warfare.”

In/security and a sense of community

So, while the association of general violence with the favelas has depressed the level of rental values of homes, forced many local shops and restaurants to close, discouraged new investments in these areas and scared away teachers, health care workers, non-profit organizations and commercial deliveries, it has also led prominent favela scholars like Perlman to conclude that it has destroyed the social capital of residents. People are now afraid to leave their homes after dark and have ceased inviting friends and relatives to visit. According to Perlman’s study, people no longer take as active a part in community-based organizations, except for the Evangelical churches, and they have stopped “hanging out” in public spaces. Perlman also states that there has been a marked decline in trust of one’s neighbors and in the previously strong sense of community. People live under constant stress, unable to sleep and afraid that their children will be shot.

In Perlman’s account, the uncertainties of daily life for people living on the margins in the favelas are so huge that they can hardly cope on a moment-to-moment basis. There is no safety net to help them bounce back from crises. This view does not really seem to take into consideration anthropological debates on “informality.” The term “informal” is often associated with what is irregular, unpredictable, unstable, and invisible, and it has, since Keith Hart’s (1973) assessment of informal economies in the 1970s,

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24 See Amnesty International (May 2015).
25 Rio de Janeiro police kill suspects at nearly four times the rate of São Paulo police, Rio de Janeiro police statistics show. The police committed more than one in every six of Rio de Janeiro’s homicides between 2010 and 2013 (see Amnesty International, May 2015).
come to inform approaches to politics and, indeed, the city itself (see e.g., Fischer, McCann and Auyero 2014). The favelas of Rio are, however, socially structured and highly organized spaces where the factions, or militias or police provide emergent forms of sociality, control and sovereignty that impose order or security on the local level, albeit in unconventional or informal terms and at a cost, similar to what Dennis Rodgers (2006) has concluded about gangs in Nicaragua.

In the last decade, militia groups have gained power in many of Rio’s municipalities. They are largely composed of armed, off-duty, state agents, such as police officers, firemen and prison guards. The groups keep growing in number and keep expanding their territory (see e.g., Cano and Duarte 2012). The initial premise that allowed these groups to prosper was the offering of “protection services” for a profit. People who live in areas where militia groups are in power are forced to pay for the militia’s protection service, along with a range of additional living fees. The militias – like drug traffickers – also sell drugs, trade pirate cable television, control the supply of water and cooking gas, operate unlicensed public transportation, charge commissions on real estate deals and control public housing. During my fieldwork, militia groups also started to organize bailes in some favelas. Militia groups, then, compete with drug factions and the police over turf and business. They are for obvious reasons generally much better connected to state authorities than local drug dealers. However, as I will return to, these different actors are also inter-connected on many different levels.

To sum up this section, I have found and I will show that in/security in relation to inequality (i.e., structural violence) influences everyday life in the favelas on many levels; it leads to discrimination by the middle- and upper-classes, economic hardship, unemployment, a non-functioning school system, limited access to health care and insecurities connected to the fear of male violence against women, of terrorizing police raids, and of violent trafficker behavior. Yet, I will argue that the overt violence or the spectacular threat of it on behalf of armed groups and/or associated individuals in the favelas are also involved in fostering social and physical security and predictability (e.g., Rodgers 2006, 2009). A sense of (comm)unity can be endorsed through the act of transposing fear to the social or political entity that is feared, namely the state (Coulter 2009). In this logic, the violence of the faction is not just a devastating experience; it is not only lived as insecurity, but also the very power we live by. It is also security.

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26 See also David Pratten and Atreyee Sen (2007).
Beyond Youth Cultures II: Youth and Sexuality

In the imagery of non-favela residents and the public of Rio, the public fantasy of a violently disordered youth of the favela blends with a similarly threatening notion of unbridled sexuality. In a reconnection to Bucholtz’s observation above, this assumed sexuality could be seen as complementary to the projection of a propensity for violence, characteristic of a universal reaction to and dismissal of the liminality of youth. It is the perceived and/or enacted violence of sexuality that is key to the role of youth as menace to society.

During my fieldwork, the state governor of Rio, Sergio Cabral, very explicitly accused young mothers in the favela of Rocinha of giving birth to gangsters, or literally of being “factories of marginal people.” 27 Examples of such demagoguery are abundant in and around Rio de Janeiro, but exist in a curious contradiction to something referred to by Donna Goldstein as “sex positiveness.” She describes this as a marker of life in Felicidade Eterna, the favela of her own long-term ethnographic engagement. Goldstein talks about an attitude of joking and openness to certain aspects of sexuality that she contrasts with North American or European intimacy and domesticity. She labels it “Brazilian,” even if hesitantly so (2003:228-230).

Funk in Nova Cidade seems to expresses a contradiction, namely sexuality as a positive core of a certain culture on the one hand, and sexuality as too close to violent nature to be acceptable to those “with a culture” on the other. This ambivalence of fun and fight sees its materialization in funk. However, I would argue that the provocation of funk lyrics and sexual explicitness is not a mere imagination of non-youth or non-favela others, and that they neither can be construed as mere jokes. As I will reflect on in this dissertation, the sexual and the “obscene” operate in funk as well as in inter-communal sociality more generally as messages and practices that are not easily reduced to either mere pleasure or resistance or a creative social alterity. In fact, they resist resistance, if you will. Below I will shortly expand on that. I begin with resistance.

A broad range of phenomena, from revolution to humor (Goldstein 2003) and musical expressions (Merriam 1964, Duany 1984, Condry 2006) have been defined as opposition and resistance. Resistance is often thought to refer to social movements and “contentious politics” (Hollander and Einwohner 2004), but James Scott famously claimed, however, that even though absent in the form of such overt social expressions, resistance is traceable in jokes and stories through “hidden transcripts” (1990). Scott’s notion inspired other scholars to describe resistance as accomplished through talk, perform-

mance and dance (see e.g., Silva 1997, cf. Abu-Lughod 1990). The work of Paul Sneed, who lived for many years in the favela of Rocinha and presented the dissertation “Machine Gun Voices: Bandits, Favelas and Utopia in Brazilian Funk” in 2003, exemplifies this perspective in that he conceives of funk (with the sexuality it contains and conveys) as a resistance movement.

Without clearly explaining how he defines resistance or “counter culture,” he ends up romanticizing funk and the drug trafficker’s way of life because he finds hidden meanings and transcripts everywhere. Like James Scott before him, it seems as if everything can be interpreted as resistance. This interpretation becomes especially problematic as Sneed has not, to my knowledge, related the concept to how women in the favelas perceive of funk or relate to the lyrics. My findings are less romantic, which is why I propose the double notion of funk as fun and funk as fight. I concur with the turn away from the trope of resistance in anthropology, which is why I am critical of the utopianism and romanticism that I detect in some of Sneed’s work.

I would rather opt for a less deductive starting point in the analysis of favela sexuality and the securitization it faces in its encounter with state authorities, the churches and the mix of these actors in official or formal Brazilian urbanity. I will suggest that sex in Nova Cidade, the way it is communicated and used as a tool by power and against power, is instead simultaneously a social strategy for emancipation (à la Sneed) and for reactionary control of women and/or male competitors in commerce and politics.

Sexuality as a political and social phenomenon

My own take on the “obscene” as resistance expressed through favela funk thus looks different. First, I will argue that the symbolical embracement of the way someone is classified by power would constitute a form of resistance, not only to power but also to the very categories by which the conflict and the violence are perpetuated. I am inspired here by the late Begoña Aretxaga’s analysis of the Irish hunger strikes of the early 1980s and the enactment by the prisoners of the stereotypes of colonial Britain (Aretxaga 1993). By confirming the stigmatization by the powerful in conscious acts, the powerless alter the name of the game, ridding the opponent of her/his fantasy of antagonism. Second, the added complexity of a public and explicit sexuality in my favela case study is that the subject of this resistance is not always and everywhere inside the favela community, and the object of its power is not always and everywhere outside the favela boundaries. How young women and men reason around this issue, how they navigate, use and are abused by this practice constitute an important part of my enquiry.

I have attached above a clear political dimension to the sexuality I investigate in this dissertation. There is, however, also relevance in the anthropopol-
ogy of the topic of sexuality beyond or beneath the political. In order to organize and classify the literature up until the first decade of the 2000s, Nicole Constable (2009) in a recent review constructs an opposition between analyses of sex as intimate, domestic and reproductive one the one hand, and commoditized, objectified and public on the other. Read together with texts like Gayle Rubin’s “Political Economy of Sex” (1975), Constable’s review leaves us with the impression that, surprisingly, there has been little room in anthropological analyses for non-private or non-intimate sexuality that is not commoditized. The binary opposition seems to be sustained by a moral binary – i.e., sexuality should be intimate and cannot exist in its allegedly pure, original form in the social sphere without being commoditized. Therefore, a topic which I will discuss in this work is how to approach sexuality as a social phenomenon beyond trafficking and prostitution and beyond the commercial value of funk. Additionally, the conceptual proposition that I make and develop in my ethnography includes sex as social strategy. I will now present a couple of ethnographic examples of what I mean by that:

The confines of everyday life become most evident in the social space of the baile, the community dance. For young people, bailes serve as a platform to explore and test these boundaries. Many boys and girls have their first drinking experience and “make out” for the first time at the baile. Inside the quadra de samba (the space where samba rehearsals, bailes and many other social events are organized), there are many dark corners, yet, the back alleys surrounding the quadra are considered even more suitable for kissing and making out. Discretion, I was told, is highly important in order to avoid gossip. Most people do not want to have sex or “make out” at the baile, according to one of my key interlocutors Taú – who I will introduce in the following chapter – because “you might be seen by the boyfriend of the person you are making out with, or reputations might spread and that can be very dangerous.” Taú told me that if you want to have sex, o setor is the best solution. O setor is a room that you rent for some hours to have sex in, often during or after a baile. Taú also said that there is always someone who is willing to lend out his house for friends to have sex in. “You want to help each other to feel pleasure,” Taú said, and continued telling me about a friend of his who always lets his friends have sex in a special part of his house: “But if you don’t have a house to go to, there are so many dark corners in the favela....” Sex, in the story above, is thus both a practice that requires discretion, and one that is socially and spatially organized and talked about.

It seems that sexual practices related to favela youth by outsiders often are reduced to a problem commonly related to teenage pregnancies. In Brazil, teenage pregnancy is frequently reported in mainstream media as one of the most significant social problems, hampering the development of young people and their insertion into the adult world (Dalsgaard, Franch, Parry
Scott 2008). In Rio, the discourse often directly relates teenage pregnancy to funk and bailes in the favelas. Funk lyrics, as I will return to throughout this thesis, are often blamed by politicians and the media for encouraging young girls to have unprotected sex and the bailes are seen as a place for unbridled sexuality. In Brazilian mainstream media, there are for example regularly reports in relation to youth that often, alarmingly, suggest that poor young people do not do anything – except have babies. In Brazil the expression ‘geração nem nem’ (nem estudam nem trabalham)\(^{28}\) has been coined to describe young people that neither study nor work. According to an article in the daily newspaper O Globo, many of those who “neither work nor study” are young women in favelas who have babies at a very young age.\(^{29}\) In line with this common way of representing favela youth in the media, a friend of mine from the upper-middle class of Rio, who has made a documentary about young girls in a favela, said to me that: “Young people in favelas have so many babies because they don’t do anything. Do you know what that means? That they have so much time for sex!” This commentary resonated with how many of the other middle- and upper-class Rio residents that I spent time with spoke of young people categorized as black from low-income areas.

What I propose is that for young women in the favela where I conducted fieldwork becoming pregnant can be seen as a strategy for “gaining adulthood” (see also Dalsgaard, Franch and Parry Scott 2008:65), becoming a “woman.” It is as a way to gain a certain degree of freedom, although these young women at the same time become constrained in the range of options available to them. They commonly find themselves in complicated (and often violent) new family constellations. In this dissertation, I will also discuss whether young pregnancies could be seen as a form of resistance in relation to Evangelical mothers, who frequently forbid their daughters to compose funk music and go to bailes.

Beyond Youth Cultures III: Youth and Sovereignty

My third attempt at bridging the literature on youth-as-culture with political theory in anthropology and beyond revolves around the notion of sovereignty. It has gained notoriety in academic circles since the English publication of Giorgio Agamben’s Homo Sacer (1998), offering an analytical vocabulary to scholars interested in that which is regarded by the state to be before

\(^{28}\) There is also “os jovens nem nem nem” to describe young people who neither work, nor study, nor look for work (nem trabalham nem estudam nem procuram trabalho).

or outside the law, as opposed to the illegal and the criminal which is against the law (see Poole and Das 2004). Sovereignty, in this account, rests on the ability to declare a state of exception, and to kill without “sacrificing” the bodies or the principles of political communities (see Agamben 1998, Comaroff 2007). Anthropology has contributed a rich set of ethnographic illustrations of this argument, but also a critique. For example, Rebecca Bryant and Mete Hatay (2011:632) write that a “local rock band … may be an especially pertinent point of entry to an ethnography of ghetto life and constructions of sovereignty in a state-within-a-state,” since, to them, rock music in a Turkish-Cypriot enclave reveals the political content of a struggle rendered politically empty in a now conventional, Agamben-inspired focus on “the ban” and on “bare life.”

Similarly, the youth of Nova Cidade might in many ways be banned from the globalizing communities of both the city and the nation, and they might (and do) often give voice to the idea and sentiment that they are. Yet, that very voice disproves the ban. In a critical discussion of Agamben, Ernesto Laclau has remarked that “the life of the bandit or the exile can be entirely political” because they are “capable of engaging in antagonistic social practices. They have, in that sense, their own law, and their conflict with the law of the city is a conflict between laws, not between law and “bare life” (2007:19). Sovereignty for me, somewhere between the positions summarized above, is both a claim and a violent practice, raised and exercised by both the state and the faction when using lethal violence to demonstrate their power to rule above or beyond their own laws. The centrality of this “fight” for the funk of Rio informs my decision to dedicate one chapter of the dissertation to the power of the gang (or faction) and one to the state.

Public security and Police Pacification Units

At the time when I began my fieldwork, right before the 2007 Pan American Games, a gun battle occurred in the favela Complexo do Alemão. This area consists of many different communities, with an estimated 80,000 to 180,000 residents. The police operation broke with previous public security policies, as it used techniques of war, including besieging the favela until the Pan American Games were over (see Alves and Evanson 2011). At least 44 people were killed, and 85 were reported wounded. Following this massacre, 17,000 extra police occupied the streets of Rio for 3 weeks. That year, there was an increase in deaths during the confrontations between criminal factions and the police in Rio de Janeiro. As a consequence, public security was a high-profile topic for public debate during the 2008 municipal elections.

30 It is known that at least 19 children were killed by so-called stray bullets.
Around this time, Alvaro Lins, former boss of the Rio civilian police, was accused of being “chief of the militia.” The film *Tropa de Elite*, or Elite Squad, dealing with the infamous special police force BOPE, had its premiere in Brazil. Even before the film was officially released, millions of spectators all over Brazil tried to get hold of pirate copies of it. Rumors say that 3.5 million people saw the film before its official release. A national debate about urban violence and drug use followed and dominated the front pages for months. When the film had its premiere in October 2007, Rio’s police force took the director of the film, José Padilha, to court. The police force accused him of giving the organization a bad reputation, and threatened to put him in prison. Rio’s governor, however, intervened and came to the director’s defense (Phillips 2008).

In Nova Cidade, activists instead called the film fascist. In their view, the film glorified BOPE. In line with how BOPE is commonly depicted in Brazilian mainstream mass media, the police force was portrayed as brutal, yet uncorrupted, modern and efficient (see Larkins 2015). Activists were also furious that Captain Roberto Nascimento, a fictitious member of Rio de Janeiro’s special forces police unit, was celebrated as the hero of all times. In Rio at the time, rumors in the favela said that there had never before been so many people applying to become members of BOPE.

Also, in 2007, Minister of Justice, Tarso Genro unveiled a National Program of Public Security with Citizenship (PRONASCI). This government initiative linked public security to the enhancement of citizenship. The initiative would be tied to the program for growth acceleration, PAC, introduced in 2007, a public works program with funds for infrastructure projects, for example paving roads, in selected favelas (see for example Alves and Evanson 2011). It was carried out with help from the police and the military, something that in some cases led to clashes between favela activists, drug dealers and authorities.

In 2008, plans for building walls around favelas were made public. In order to get rid of drug trafficking, the state government began to set up police stations known as “Police Pacification Units” (UPP) in the favelas. The government claims that these units were established not only to get rid of drug trafficking but also to “pacify” the favelas. While many intellectuals support the pacification program (e.g., McCann 2014a), others view the UPPs as part of a larger security imperative for the City and State of Rio de Janeiro.

31 A 2008 legislative investigation of Rio’s militias led to the arrests of several officials tied to the groups, including legislators, councilmen and senior police officers.
32 *Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais* or Special Police Operations Battalion
33 *Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento*.
34 Linked to the planned mega events in the City, Dilma Rousseff implemented the second phase of the program, called “PAC 2,” in 2013.
35 *Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora*. 
During fieldwork in 2011, a brightly colored “sound barrier” had been constructed along the major highway from Antonio Carlos Jobim International Airport to the city center, obscuring the view of the poor communities on the other side of the wall. Walls around several favelas had been built. UPPs were present in many of them. In these favelas, real estate prices climbed rapidly, pushing out renters. During that period, a central topic among political activists and gang members in Nova Cidade was the increasing fear that the police would occupy the favela. Memories of a brutal police occupation a few years earlier were still fresh. The thought of having the police there again made drug dealers, political activists and other residents very anxious. In addition, according to rumors circulating in the favela, a number of drug traffickers who had been pushed out from favelas in the South Zone escaped here to look for shelter and to continue their business. The residents were afraid that this would result in disputes over business and turf. Moreover, residents experienced a proliferation of robberies and assaults around the area. People were afraid to walk from one favela to the other, even during the day. The reason was said to be that the drug traffickers, having been pushed out of their own favelas, were now making a living by robbing people in the streets instead of selling drugs.

Funk in a context of antagonistic claims for power

The drug-dealing faction that governs Nova Cidade has been in power for a long time, around 15 years old. This continuity of local power distinguishes this place from many other favelas where militias or rival factions have more recently taken over the territory or replaced one another in a continuous battle for turf. In these favelas, the relationship between the drug faction or militia and the neighborhood is very different, as those who govern are often perceived of as “outsiders” who lack social ties to the community. Nevertheless, many of my interlocutors in Nova Cidade worry about what they call “internal war,” that is, a violent conflict within the faction threatening to divide the community. They worry that a rival faction will try to take over the territory and above all, they fear police invasions. The drug faction leaders mete out punishment to those who do not follow the rules, and they carry out extrajudicial killings. Faction members are on constant watch for “intruders.” The latter range from rival factions and the militia to the police.

The informal and in many senses illegal polity of Nova Cidade thus emerges in response to the violent intrusion of the state, and drug politics (including their associated violence), I believe, should be understood in a context of antagonistic sovereignties. Such antagonism operates outwards, challenging armed power with arms. A more important point made here,

36 According to the government, it was built in order to “protect” favela residents from traffic noise.
however, is that faction leaders also govern by other means than brute force. They give money to those who are considered to be in most desperate need, and they help with medicine and the distribution of gas and water. They are involved in solving all kinds of problems, like disputes between neighbors and fights between couples. Their power also extends into spheres of formal politics. For example, they decide who is allowed to campaign for municipal and national elections and who is not. The faction leader also ultimately decides who is allowed to visit the favela and who is not.

Where is funk in all this? The faction in this favela funds most social activities, including the funk dances. They organize funk parties every weekend and sometimes also on weekdays (depending on who the current boss is). At the *bailes*, the traffickers are always highly visible and guard the streets outside. They are seen as protecting the *baile* from police raids and from other factions. Drug traffickers also organize and finance countless other parties and festivities. During the time of my fieldwork, the faction would sometimes bring famous Brazilian artists to do shows. They invested a lot in celebrating important holidays like Mother’s and Father’s Day, and *Festa Junina*. Social life here is in many ways organized (and financed) by the faction that provides what Rodgers poignantly calls “a micro-regime of social order” (2006:321).

This thesis argues that favela funk cannot be understood outside of this political context. In favela stories, “traffickers” or “the gang” are commonly presented as homogenous categories – seen and treated in a certain way by residents, who in turn are distinguished as a separate group. However, in Nova Cidade, traffickers are residents, too. Like everybody else, the drug traffickers were seen and treated by other favela residents in the varied way that neighbors treat and talk about neighbors. This means that intimidating threats in Nova Cidade were usually seen, or at least spoken of, as coming from the outside, from the police or other factions. The residents felt safe in comparison and used that feeling of safety to distinguish their place from other neighborhoods. While many of the young women I spent time with refrained from walking around alone at night (as some of the young men also did), they nevertheless claimed that they felt much safer in Nova Cidade than in other areas. The local inhabitants were afraid of moving around too much outside the favela, where they felt unprotected and where muggings and assaults occurred regularly, and where police harassment was part of the everyday routine. Most areas around Nova Cidade were considered danger-

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37 *Festa Junina*, celebrated in June, is also known as *Festa de São João*. The festivities celebrate rural life and feature typical clothing and food from the countryside. In Nova Cidade, huge bonfires are lit and quadrilhas, similar to square dancing, are organized. My interlocutors, the most popular funk singers and dancers in Nova Cidade, helped to organize and participated in the quadrilhas. In Nova Cidade, these dances always end with funk music and a special *baile*. 
ous, both those governed by rival factions or militia groups and those where security guards and police officers patrolled the streets. In a wider context of insecurity and fear of violence, the heavily-armed drug traffickers standing on the corners of the favela were seen as providers of a certain, yet important, sense of security and predictability.

The power of drug factions, the power of the police, and the power of militias compete with each other. At the same time, they are deeply intertwined on many levels, complicating any clear-cut distinctions. Around Brazil, police officers commit many killings, either “moonlighting” as vigilantes or on duty. Such killings almost never lead to charges, let alone to convicting sentences and imprisonment. Police officers are part of militia groups, work as justiceiros (or vigilantes), take part in extermination groups (or death squads) or commit violent crimes while working for private security firms. As Caldeira attests, abuses in the illegal market cannot be separated from the abuses of the police force, already difficult to contain (Caldeira 2002:247).

The crisis of state legitimacy in Rio de Janeiro is addressed through recurrent attempts by the government to “reclaim” the favelas through what Erika Larkins describes as “spectacular performances of police power” (2013:555). For many favela residents, the police are the most visible representation of the state. Favela residents, especially the young, experience the police forces as part of the everyday violence present in their neighborhoods (see also Goldstein 2003). Police action in the favelas further de-legitimizes the state in the eyes of favela residents, both by the failure to provide state-order and by revealing the way that police raids and invasions operate as spectacle and farce. Instead, police actions, paradoxically, solidify the drug faction’s power and governance in these areas, again indicating the antagonistic claims of sovereignty.

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38 Most of the people involved in the market of private security are either police officers or ex-police officers (Caldeira 2002).
39 Journalists did not arrive in Nova Cidade to report and take pictures of “staged” police interventions, at least not at the time of my fieldwork. The drug dealers did not generally allow Brazilian journalists to enter in order to cover conflicts. This does not mean that the police invasions were not spectacular performances, although perhaps not to the same extent as in the favela Larkins describes, probably since Nova Cidade, in contrast to El-Dorado, is situated far from the wealthy South Zone and tourist areas. Moreover, I was told that over the years, journalists had on various occasions published pictures of residents claiming that they were gang members – even the boss – and these residents had consequently been killed either by rival drug factions or by the police. Based on these experiences, the drug dealers together with favela activists and community leaders had decided that it does more harm to be exposed in the media than to forbid journalists to enter the favela.
The sound of the police

In the favela of northern Rio where I did my fieldwork, everyday life is profoundly influenced by fear of police abuse, both from State Military Police and, especially, from the elite force BOPE. Founded in Rio in 1978, BOPE is a direct descendant of the death squads of the dictatorship (Larkins 2013, see more below and Chapter 6). Specialized in “urban warfare,” “counter terrorism” and operating in the favelas, the battalion comes to the latter in huge, armored and black-painted vehicles called o caveirão or ‘the Big Skull’ (in the favela referred to as a caivera). The Skull Car is decorated with the BOPE emblem, a skull impaled on a sword, backed by two gold pistols, and symbolizes – according to the BOPE website40 – armed combat, war and death (see also Amnesty 2006). BOPE drive around the favelas in these skull-cars and the caveirão is highly feared by residents in the areas in which it operates. It has been involved in a string of human rights abuses. Local human rights organizations have received a series of shocking eyewitness reports of caveirões entering favelas, firing at random. Huge loudspeakers are put on the sides of the vehicle and through the loudspeakers BOPE speak to and intimidate people in the areas they invade. Among other things, they shout out: “We have come to get you, we are here to take your souls.” BOPE also have their own funk anthem, part of which goes like this (see also Larkins 2015):

Men in Black, what is your task? It’s to go into the favelas and leave bodies on the ground. … Interrogation is quite easy to do: Beat the slum-dweller, whip him black and blue. Interrogation is quite easy to end: Beat the scum criminal, whip him till he’s dead.

In Nova Cidade, young and old residents often speak of the police as “outsiders,” while faction members usually are seen as residents of the favela. Yet, in popular imagination, the images of the poor worker, the police, and the criminal are not easily distinguished from each other. The police, like “the criminals,” are considered to be from the poor Northeast, uneducated, animal-like, and associated with prostitution and perversion (Caldeira 2002: 249). In upper-class narratives, the police are often described by stereotypes also used to vilify the poor. The merging of the images of “gangsters” with those of police officers, and of both with images of the poor is frequent in discussions of crime and appears in a many different combinations. The police themselves often come from working class neighborhoods such as favelas – although usually not from the favelas in which they are operating.

To complicate politicized classifications even further, a social actor in the favela can hold many positions at the same and move between different career paths. You can be a religious funk star working as a drug trafficker and

as a political activist simultaneously. However, distinctions such as “honest workers” and “gangsters” serve political interests at different levels. There is also much confusion regarding the categorizations often made between “the police,” “the criminal” and “the worker.” As Caldeira writes: “The police mistake workers for criminals, use violence against them and try to cover up their errors” (2002: 248). In the favela where I did fieldwork, “criminals,” or faction members, are considered to be “workers.” Some “workers” are police officers, yet considered “criminals.” How favela residents relate to these categorizations is reflected in their daily social interaction and ways of talking and joking with each other.

Coexisting sovereignties

In political anthropology approaches to the state have commonly departed from Weber’s (1973) famous notion of entities within society with a legitimate monopoly on violence in favor of an interest in what the state does and means at the quotidian level (see e.g., Rogers 2006, Das and Poole 2004, Trouillot 2001). In this view, the state is seen as a multifaceted social phenomenon constituted, not only as a formal organization, but also through everyday informal practices. Rodgers (2006) tries to move beyond the Weberian formulation in his analysis of gangs and urban marginality. He sees the relationship between the state, violence and order as shifting along a continuum, where the boundaries between state and non-state forms of authority become blurred. In this view, ‘social sovereignty’ and ‘state sovereignty’ can viably and normatively coexist in the same territory” (Rodgers 2006:31 and see O’Donnell 1999).

Importantly, many favela residents in Nova Cidade, young and old, do not always seem to view the power of the state and the power of the faction as mutually exclusive (see e.g., Harbers, Jaffe and Cummings 2016). Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat (2006:302) argue that in order to have any understanding of the character of political formations in postcolonial societies, it is fundamental to recognize that many different forms of sovereignty coexisted within the colonial territories. It is thus crucial to understand the particular articulation of different registers of sovereign power. Even as “modern” forms of government were imported and implemented, the effects were always uneven and exceptionally dispersed. The historically complex configurations of sovereignty in many postcolonial societies have engendered a complex range of informal sovereignties. The tentative rule and local despotism of these forces commonly structure the lives of ordinary people in more profound and effective ways than “the distant and far from panoptic gaze of the state” (ibid). So, rather than constituting a witness account in itself, or yet another account of testimonies of state violence, my ethnography will reveal the plurality of ways in which the Brazilian state
makes itself present in Nova Cidade, including both disciplinary or directly punitive measures and developmental strategies, and I will trace both tendencies historically.

Young males in the favelas, the main antagonists to state claims of sovereign rule, have been involved in drug trafficking throughout modern history, with an increase from the late 1980s and early 1990s. Taking the complexity of the social and political boundaries of Nova Cidade into account, the discussion on sovereignty that I develop in this ethnography thus connects the informal and law-contesting rule of the drug dealers to the emancipatory yet arduous and severely constrained struggle for different ways of being young.

Ethnographic Fieldwork

During my fieldwork in Rio, participant observation and interviews were my main tools in trying to understand ways of being young in a favela. The first months of my fieldwork, I hung out with middle-class Rio residents who work with funk as journalists, producers, managers, photographers and filmmakers. I kept them company around the city, often to funk parties in favelas or in middle-class areas. Conversations often took the form of deep and semi-structured interviews with individuals and, occasionally, the form of more structured group interviews around the central themes of this research.

Once established in Nova Cidade, I spent extended periods of time with funk singers, dancers, fans and activists on street corners, and in clubs and bars where they hang out. I have followed them not only in their daily interactions in the “funk sphere,” but also in their homes with family and friends. I visited them at work, in their schools, and attended various rehearsals and went to countless bailes in Nova Cidade and all around Rio, hanging out with funk fans and entertainers of all ages. Many of those engaged in funk, especially the more famous ones, were difficult to make appointments with. The popular funk MCs and DJs had shows and partied hard at night and often rested or were asleep during the day. When they were awake, they tended to forget about the appointments. Often something unexpected happened, so that they had to cancel (and I never found out, until days later). When a person did not show up for an interview, I would go to his or her house, where a wife, parent, sibling, cousin or aunt would tell me to go look elsewhere – in the street, at the grandmother’s house, at a friend’s house, in some Internet place, at the gym or in a bar.

I have also followed several artists when they were performing in favelas around the city and in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods. I participated in church services and interviewed religious leaders. I also followed politically engaged mothers during protests in the favela and around the city and
closely observed one of the most famous funk artists in Nova Cidade during his political campaign. I have been to numerous meetings with activists all around the city. Trying to locate people, or just hanging around, I also spent considerable time walking around the favela with two community activists. I will deal with this relation, and the method of “walk-abouts” further below and more thoroughly in Chapter 2 (see Kusenbach 2003, Lee and Ingold 2006).

Over time, my forays looking for people and these walks made me start to recognize people and places, and people started to recognize me. Perhaps more than anything else, I spent a lot of time with my neighbors of all ages and their families and friends, waiting for something to happen, like for the electricity to come back on, for heavy rain to stop, for the police to leave the favela, for a party, for the loud church service next door to be over, or for something “fun” to happen. Every so often I felt frustrated, as if I was wasting my time “hanging out,” waiting and doing nothing, but I came to realize that this is how time is spent and what life is like for a lot of the young men, and some of the women, in the favela. To plan for the future seems meaningless for many. You live today, tomorrow you do not know. Except for activities related to funk, such as practicing their dance moves, writing lyrics, giving shows and partying, many of the funk artists had different kinds of jobs. However, they were never really sure when they had work and when they did not. This uncertainty also made planning complicated. The funk MCs in Nova Cidade were, in general, very active in the social life of the neighborhood and helped the community leaders to organize dance classes, football games and other activities for children. Many of these activities were not planned in advance but organized spontaneously, like much of what happened in the favela.

Few of the women I got to know in Nova Cidade spent much time “hanging out.” Most worked or studied during the days and took care of their children and household during the evenings. In sum, it turned out to be even harder to make appointments with young women than with young men. Tatiana, for example, who was 14 years old when I got to know her, studied during the days, practiced karate some days after school and helped her grandmother (with whom she lived) to make and sell pastry in a busy lower-income area a few bus stops from the favela in the afternoons. In the evenings she would either take care of her cousins or help her grandmother with household tasks.

41 When I use the term “community leaders” in this dissertation I refer to present or former leaders of the Residents Associations’ (see Chapter 3), and/or to well-established human-right defenders and activists in Nova Cidade who currently work for or with (or have done so in the past) the Residents Associations’. However, as I will return to throughout the thesis, and discuss more in detail in Chapter 3, many of the religious leaders, funk artists – and drug traffickers, often have similar roles to, and are perceived by residents as, a kind of community leaders.
As noted earlier, my initial plan was to spend a great deal of time with women engaged in the funk scene of Nova Cidade. For reasons already mentioned, it turned out to be easier to “hang out” with men. I spoke informally with as many women as men but the majority of my more formal interviews were conducted with men. Ironically, the differences between the life situations of young men and women, and the realities related to gender and power, made the study more influenced by men’s experiences than I had planned. However, gender and power dynamics never ceased to be central to this project.

Research Questions and Summaries

In this dissertation I will examine what it means to be young in a Rio favela, and discuss the experiences of youth in relation to funk, local faction power and state authorities. I will also enquire into how these experiences may differ for young women and men. The over-arching research question that I explore throughout this dissertation is:

What does funk music enable us to see of the social life of one of Rio’s favelas and how could funk as “an optics” be used in an ethnographic engagement?

I will also address the following set of subordinate research questions:

- In what ways does the practice of funk work to organize and distribute pleasure, excitement and sheer fun, and is it possible (and relevant) to position the tenet of this practice beyond the political and economic functions of funk music?
- In what circumstances, times and places does the pleasure of funk inspire social and political struggles?
- How can one approach sexuality as a social phenomenon beyond the private sphere, trafficking and the commercial value of funk?
- When, how and by whom is funk used as an instrument of political and social control in Rio de Janeiro?

After this first chapter’s introduction to the place and to the scholarly discussions on the concepts that I find most appropriate for an understanding of the stakes involved in inhabiting the perilous margins of globalizing Rio de Janeiro, the outline of the dissertation looks as follows:

In Chapter 2, I outline in more detail the methodological strategy that I employed in this work and the ethical and social consequences of my approach. I deal with acute methodological dilemmas, like the unavoidable
partiality of having to rely, for security reasons, on the information and friendship of a quite limited number of people (see Hoffman and Tarawalley 2014). Questions about scholarly subjectivity have traditionally been central to anthropology, even more so since the post-modern turn in the mid-1980s. While I do not see hyper-reflexivity as very useful (see e.g., Hamilton 1998), writing myself out of the text completely seems equally futile. Thus part of Chapter 2 focuses on my relationships with key interlocutors and on what that relationship produced in terms of both data and interpretation (see Middleton and Cons 2014). This is an issue, which is closely related to the in/security issues of the location and its consequences for data collection and understanding.

Another set of methodological issues relates to the fact that the researcher is a young, foreign woman in a fieldwork setting characterized by “macho ideology.” However, despite (or due to) the difficulties discussed here, constraints and lack of access to information also emerge as (potential) methodological assets. For example, being a young woman also opened up certain spaces of interaction. I will argue that they made me aware of themes that are also central to my interlocutors’ everyday lives, making it possible for me to understand, at the level of shared experience, people’s precariousness. Constraints and assets are thus two sides of the same coin in the method I employed.

Accounts of “being there” in the anthropological “field” usually result from being metaphorically and literally on the ground. Yet, the spatial metaphor of the field does not really cover what is going on in an ethnographic engagement with complex, urban settings, where the ethnographer is much more occupied by groups within the group (or field), or by networks of people and by answering specific research questions. As Jo Lee Vergunst and Tim Ingold (2006:68) state, there is something distinctive about the sociability produced by walking with others. During my own fieldwork, I was immediately thrown into the rhythm of walking. In Chapter 2, I will thus also reflect on the method of fieldwork by walkabouts.

In Chapter 3, I have struggled to find the place beneath or behind representation in order to provide a background. What I am after in this chapter is the material and historical foundation, on which young people in Nova Cidade are leading their lives and practicing their funk music. The description aims both at giving a sense of the neighborhood as a complex of vivid activity and of how it is placed within the larger context of the urban system of Rio de Janeiro. This includes, in my framework, issues of the wider economic setting, the spatial distribution of people and where and how they live. It concerns how such distribution has emerged historically through city planning and spontaneous occupation, and through both informal and formal markets of labor. However, the life of people in Rio’s favelas is also constrained by ideological aspects, especially how they are defined and placed
in relation to hierarchies of class and skin color. In a later chapter, I will deal with the structures of the state, but here, in an attempt at emphasizing the structural constraints and options of my interlocutors, I will also discuss the emergence and practice of socially ordering non-state institutions at the local level, such as the Residents’ Association and the churches (see Arias 2006).

Chapter 4 elaborates on the somewhat exhausted concept in contemporary anthropology, namely “community,” discussed above, and the issues of social cohesion and alterity. Funk and the dance parties called bailes are the interlinked practices that I use to understand such issues. The chapter begins by assessing the crucial role of funk and baile for people’s experience of belonging to and in Nova Cidade. Through a Geertzian thick description, I aim to show how sound is experienced simultaneously by community members and how the spatial center of funk both mediates and links otherwise separated spheres of politics, economy and sexuality. In the second part of the chapter, I introduce the biographies and narratives of a number of young interlocutors as they demonstrate how community life also encompasses the aggressions and social hierarchies commonly described by the charged label of violence. The point I am stressing here is not that violence in Nova Cidade is necessarily proof of a social fragmentation, nor that “it” is necessarily and always brought upon the inhabitants by external police or internal criminals. Rather I want to show that violence is an integral part of life in the favela without which “the community” would have looked quite different.

In Chapter 5, my focus becomes the drug-trading faction, the young men in armed control of Nova Cidade economy and political and social life including the bailes. I consider the broader field of power relations in which gun violence or the ever-present threat of lethal punishment cannot be understood apart from the law of the faction, which, in turn, must be approached as an ordering device, not, again, deductively taken as a means of communal fragmentation. This approach to the social power of an often demonized (and allegedly asocial) entity leads, in this chapter, to an analysis of how the label of “the gang” operates in constructing some inhabitants of Nova Cidade as powerful, illegal and violent, yet desired and admired (see Alexander 2000 and Jensen 2010). I am here thus less interested in the faction as an institution and more interested in the gang as morality, legality and idea. I also endeavor in Chapter 5 to throw light on the multistrandedness of the transactions between drug dealers and other residents in the favela, their often close interpersonal relations and the complex activities imbricated in individual life careers.

Chapter 6 revolves around the presence of the Brazilian state in Nova Cidade. I aim to conceive of favela life and politics as “effects” of the historical formation of urban margins in Brazil and to focus on the role played by the state in such development. In that sense, the chapter picks up a thread from Chapter 3 and follows a historical process leading up to the current
neoliberal era of austerity and security. Like much of the anthropology of the state more generally, my ethnography is an account of how people with little or no trust in, hope for, or dependence on the state talk about it, how they sing about it, and experience its disappointments and contradictions. The chapter shows how the state construes youth sexuality in the favelas as a security issue. It deals with bio-politics, an alternative to the one of the faction, and it ends with the more infamous actions of the militarized Brazilian police force. It is my hope that the stories of the other chapters will make more sense to the reader if they are properly positioned between the sovereignty claims and practices of both the drug faction and the state.

The dissertation ends with a short, concluding chapter that summarizes the ethnography and reconnects the topics of the text to the key arguments of the introduction concerning the role and condition of youth in this particular ethnographic example, and the purpose of using the contested notions of violence, sexuality and sovereignty in a story about favela youth through the lens of funk music.
Chapter 2.
The Method: Fieldwork and In/Security

This chapter is about my methodological work and constraints before, during and after fieldwork in Nova Cidade. I begin this chapter by accounting for my methods and by bringing up some of the most central ethical concerns in relation to in/security and data collection. I go on by developing the way that my slow approach to Nova Cidade went through people and events that spoke of funk’s global reach and appeal. In that, funk as fun and excitement emerge as the initial and dominant aspect of the music, gradually forming a context within which (or an “optics” through which) I could approach life in the favela. The next part of the chapter explains the importance of my friends and key interlocutors Taú and Zaki in providing, organizing and interpreting field data. It aims to exemplify their part in my work and how I sometimes rejected, but also sometimes embraced their attempts to control and educate. The influence of a key interlocutor relates to her or his subject position in the field. In this sense, I relied on the guidance and help of two activists, which is why the chapter turns to discussing the nature of activism in Nova Cidade.

The final part of the chapter links the social and personal projects of my interlocutors to political life in the favela. I trace the fear of the people I write about, and the fear that I could not escape of armed subjects, both in the shape of the drug dealing faction and the state connected police force. My point here is that violence is not the same as chaos, a random malice threatening to strike from nowhere, but is instead seen as a quite logical outcome of certain behaviors and alliances. Violence in Nova Cidade is performed by people with an identity and a purpose. Developing a method, for me, thus required the careful study of how people made sense of what from the exterior might look senseless. Getting closer meant discovering that funk is not reducible to “cool,” cultural expressions (“funk as fun”) but must include the vibrantly political arena that I refer to in this dissertation in terms of “funk as fight.”
Creating Bonds

During my fieldwork in Rio, participant observation and interviews were, as mentioned, my main tools in trying to understand ways of being young in Nova Cidade. I recorded most of my formal interviews. However, I would usually turn the recorder off after a bit, while continuing talking to my interlocutors. I found that most people, young and old, became more relaxed and open as soon as I stopped recording. Quite often, the conversations would continue for a long time after I switched the recorder off. Nevertheless, for me, it seemed important to use a recorder to establish the rumor that I was a researcher.

Besides participation, observation, and informal and formal interviews, I followed debates in local newspapers as well as listened to radio on a daily basis. I watched television, movies, documentaries, and “live” funk shows on DVDs together with activists, funk fans, and my neighbors in the alley where I stayed. When I first visited Rio in 2006, I spoke Spanish fluently, and I had naively imagined that learning Portuguese would be easy. It soon became evident that I was wrong. After a few months, however, I started to understand (most of) what was said to me. Nevertheless, it took me about another 6 months before I was able to speak more fluently. In funk and favela life, constantly changing “slang” is central to communication – especially for young people. To grasp what funk songs were about, I had to ask my interlocutors to explain the words to me in a different way. This soon became an important part of fieldwork and made me acutely aware of central themes in funk and favela life.

Young people in Nova Cidade who are engaged in funk music and dance take center stage in my study. Yet, to understand what funk is all about, it soon became evident that I also had to live in and study the social worlds within which funk is produced, and which serve as a source for the topics of its lyrics. Thus, for this study, I sought to speak to as many women and men of as many different ages and contexts as possible. My connection to activists in the favela who had close ties to local leaders, respected community members, traffickers, and religious leaders, and who could vouch for me, enabled me to slowly get to know people in different positions in Nova Cidade. While I spent much of my time with the activists, I regularly spoke to a multitude of residents of all ages. Some conversations with people were of a more shallow kind while others went deeper. As expected, my relationships to people in the neighborhood developed differently. To a handful – the activists, my landlord, closest neighbors, and a few funkeiros/as – I de-

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42 Although I was last in Rio in 2011, I continuously keep in contact with my key-interlocutors through mail, Skype and Facebook. In 2013, one of my interlocutors from the favela came to stay with me in Stockholm for some time as he had been invited to Europe by a European organization. In 2015, two other interlocutors from the wealthier part of Rio, Zona Sul, visited me.

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veloped what I believe to be “strong” relationships. With them, I shared problems, gossip, and life experiences on a daily basis. With others, I only spoke occasionally or interviewed once without ever seeing them again.

As brought up in the introduction, young men in Nova Cidade have more formal power and influence over social life than young women, whether as activists, drug traffickers, religious leaders or funk producers – and also spend more time in the streets. Consequently, I found myself spending more time with young men than with young women during a large part of the fieldwork. The longer I stayed in the favela, however, the more people started to trust me, and the freer I felt to make my own contacts. Towards the end of my fieldwork in 2011, I spent a few days every week talking to young female funk fans while watching them practice funk moves in the alley where they lived. Along with supplementary conversations and observations, all of these different kinds of relationships provided me with an understanding of social and political life in the favela, albeit on different levels.

Notes on Anonymity

All of the inhabitants in the favela who appear in this dissertation have been anonymized, and so has the place itself. Although favela inhabitants of all ages constantly speak of issues related to violence and crime, “the law of silence,” made residents wary around me, especially early on in fieldwork. The “law of silence” strongly discourages favela inhabitants from discussing crimes, or acts of violence that can be linked to drug traffickers (I will come back to this “law” and discuss it more profoundly later in this chapter). To make people in general, and the drug dealers in particular, less suspicious around me, I was very careful about what I asked people. Another strategy related to this issue was to promise that I would protect favela inhabitants’ identities. In the end, using pseudonyms probably was not what made (some) people confide in me, but the fact that I spent a lot of time in the favela was. Favela residents are, however, embedded in structures of power often unpredictable and beyond their immediate control (Goldstein 2003), and I did not want to subject anyone who I spent time with to any kind of risk. It could be argued that it is no longer relevant to “protect” residents as time has passed since I conducted fieldwork, and that a dissertation like this would make more “sense” if the favela with its particular history had its real name. However, I would say that the promise to residents to conceal their names and not to quote them by name is of greater importance than the knowledge potentially gained by using real names.

To sum up, what I want to stress here is both ethical considerations in relation to protecting my interlocutors – from trafficker reprisals and from more official types of interrogation – but also, that anonymity has been nec-
ecessary for me to gain trust and develop contacts while living in Nova Cidade. Furthermore, it felt important to conceal the names of my interlocutors for my own safety. As I was afraid of being accused by the drug dealers of being a police informant, (and by activists of being a journalist looking for a “scoop”), I started to conceal the names of my interlocutors even while taking field notes.

The activists Zaki and Tau, my key interlocutors, wanted me to write about them with their proper names. As I will come back to, it was important for them to communicate their story about the favela to the world, and they wanted to stand by it. Some of the most famous funk MCs also asked me to write about them and their projects, as they hoped it would help them become known in Europe. For reasons discussed above, I have, however, concealed all the names. Although I use pseudonyms, I have also been careful not to include statements or sensitive data that I believe could harm any of my interlocutors in any way. Nevertheless, anyone with enough interest will be able to identify in which favela I conducted fieldwork and recognize some of the key figures. This means that I have no illusion about absolute anonymity for the people in this dissertation.

On Slowly Getting Close

Before entering my field site proper, I lived for a couple of months in middle-class areas in Rio’s Zona Sul, meeting mainly media and university people who, in one way or the other, worked with funk. I interviewed some of them and I would often follow them to funk events in different parts of the town. The second-hand image of the favelas that was predominantly communicated to me was a mixture of excitement and fear. Most people that I spent time with in Zona Sul mainly had contacts with favela residents who worked for them as maids, cleaners, housekeepers or security guards (see Goldstein 2003). 43

My friends and contacts in Zona Sul lived in condominiums with extensive security systems including guards on watch 24 hours a day. They had big private patios only partly visible through the gates from the narrow sidewalks. Many of them were afraid to walk around by themselves in cer-

43  People from wealthier areas and tourists from all over the world visit favelas now and again to go to samba rehearsals, do social work, buy drugs, conduct interviews, or go to bailes. Tourists even stay in hostels located in some of the favelas in the South Zone. As Enrique Arias (2006:xi) has noted, what holds these activities together is that outsiders visit favelas for a discernible reason that they can easily explain to favela residents. This is especially true for favelas located far away from the South Zone, like Nova Cidade. Apart from people who are in favelas to buy products or to party, outsiders who spend a lot of time in a favela controlled by a drug dealing gang need to have a direct personal connection who can vouch for them and explain their presence.
tain areas during the day and in most places after dark. They preferred taking a taxi to going by bus in the evenings, in order to avoid being robbed. Some had been robbed at least a few times in their lives. Most people that I “hung out” with constantly seemed to think and talk about possible crime scenarios (see Caldeira 2003). There was not much of a street life in Zona Sul after dark. Streets became quiet and empty. Often, they vented exoticizing stereotypes about favela youth. A dominant theme commonly reproduced in popular culture by politicians and the media is that favela youth are sexually licentious and violent.

After numerous short visits to funk parties with “hip” Rio-residents, I realized that I would not understand what life is like for young people engaged in funk in the favelas like that, even though these visits and the many conversations I had with young middle- and upper-class Rio residents about favelas, the state, sexuality, funk and violence have turned out to be relevant for my understanding of social stratification. How would I be able to do fieldwork in a favela, if no one I got to know had any contacts there? For a while, I felt quite discouraged. It did not get any better when I met a professor at a Rio university to discuss my dissertation. He advised me to re-think my project. Doing research on favelas, young people and funk he said, “is not of interest, it has already been done. Everyone already knows everything there is to know about favelas.”

He emphasized how dangerous he considered favelas in the North Zone to be. I was perplexed by the fact that the academics I met during this period told me that it was “too dangerous” to live in a favela, yet at the same time considered studying funk in a favela a waste of time, a task already accomplished. Around this time, I met Nil, a devoted funk and samba fan, who brought me to bailes in the North Zone of the city. I also got to know an anthropologist called Juliana, who was doing

44 Goldstein (2003:42) was met by pretty much the same reactions in 1991. Her Brazilian colleagues dismissed working in a favela as passé and poorly-conceived work that had already been done, and done poorly at that. To others, however, it was merely uncomfortable fieldwork, dangerous and difficult.

45 For a few months, I taught English in a church located in a small favela called Morro Azul (the Blue Hill) in Flamengo in Zona Sul. Already on my first day, Ana-Clara who worked for the NGO that organized the English classes, told me “to watch out” and “to be careful.” I should not be walking around the favela after 3 o’clock. It was too dangerous. Similar warnings by people of different social backgrounds were constantly repeated to me throughout my fieldwork. “A lot of poverty and a lot of black people, am I right? Watch out!” as a woman working in a newsstand typically told me months later when I said that I lived in a favela in the North Zone. Throughout the months that I worked in Morro Azul, the police came from time to time. There were a few shootings and two boys were killed. The police often parked their cars in the middle of the road leading up the favela. Only later did I understand that they came to collect bribes. In general, however, it was a calm place to be in, with an astonishing view over the city. While teaching in this favela, I got to practice my Portuguese, especially my slang vocabulary, and I learned a little about how life can be in a small favela located in Zona Sul.
research on violence in favelas. Hearing about my research plan, she gave me the phone numbers to two activists that she had worked with, Zaki and Taú. Both lived in Nova Cidade.\(^{46}\) I will now introduce them more in more detail and discuss what their involvement has meant both theoretically and practically for this dissertation.

Interlocutors in the Production of Ethnography

The first time I went to Nova Cidade, Zaki came to meet me at the station: “Are you a foreigner?” he asked and gave me a kiss on the cheek. He wore a big white T-shirt with the message “Diga não a Caveirão” (Say no to the Skull-car!),\(^{47}\) blue jean shorts and worn-out tennis shoes. His grey hair stood out on the sides of his head and his face was nicely tanned. He had a white beard, huge hairy eyebrows, tiny wrinkles and small sparkling, serious eyes. He looked old and young at the same time. To me, Zaki looked like a senior “old school” rapper. When we entered the favela, Taú came running. Like Zaki, he wore jean-shorts and an oversized t-shirt with the message “fuck the police” in Arabic. Curly black hair covered his shoulders. On the side of his head sat a green cap that he referred to as his “Fidel-cap,” a gift from his Swiss girlfriend. Taú had a thick silver chain around his neck, bracelets on his wrists and a ring with his initials. For about 4 months, I went back and forth between Zona Sul and the favela, travelling at least 4 hours almost every day. The first 2 months either Taú or Zaki came to pick me up at the station. Before I got on the train or bus, I would always call one of them. They would let me know whether it was tranquilo (calm) or not to come. If it was tranquilo, it meant that the police were not there right then and that it was “cool” to go. Taú and Zaki followed me to the favela. Once in Nova Cidade, one of them would stay by my side, helping me to get around and bringing me to meetings and interviews.

What is the role of local interlocutors and research assistants in the production of ethnographic knowledge? In their introduction to the journal *Ethnography* (2014) in which various anthropologists discuss themes related to this question, Townsend Middleton and Jason Cons state that ethnographers

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\(^{46}\) I met Juliana at a party a few weeks after moving into the favela. When she heard that I lived there she laughed, looked at me and said that moving into a favela “é coisa de gringo,” a gringo thing to do. Other friends from Zona Sul expressed similar thoughts. They said that I was “brave” and that I soon would know more about the city than they did. Above anything else, however, they seemed to think that I was very naïve. Soon after moving from Zona Sul, I lost contact with many of my friends there. They considered it to be too dangerous to come and visit me in the favela. As I spent most of my evenings in Nova Cidade, it became difficult to hang out with them in Zona Sul.

\(^{47}\) As mentioned in Chapter 1, the *caveirão* is the armored fighting vehicle decorated with a skull and used by the military police BOPE (*Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais*).
have offered few systematic answers to it. Research assistants have long been central to ethnographic practice. Yet, the conventions of academia have left their roles understated and obscure. The implications are both theoretical and practical (Middleton and Cons 2014:279). The neglect of this topic leaves a large gap in anthropology’s self-reflexivity (Gupta 2014:394). In their essay on fieldwork in violent environments, Danny Hoffman and his research assistant Mohammed Tarawalley Jr. state that there is no typical relationship between ethnographers and the people they rely on in the field. As a method, ethnography is too personal to fit neat stereotypes. “Regardless where a project falls on the qualitative/quantitative or humanities/social science spectra, the particulars of any ethnographic field project are unique” (Hoffman and Tarawalley 2014:291).

To conduct research in violent environments, researchers often find that they must rely on individuals who are central to the unfolding story of conflict. Most anthropologists, Hoffman and Tarawalley attest, would probably agree that fieldwork relationships are frequently predicated on “strong bonds of friendship with particular individuals who often become both key informants and research assistants” (Sluka, 2007:121 in Hoffman and Tarawalley 2014:295). Zaki and Taú were not my assistants in the sense that we ever made any kind of explicit “deal” establishing our relationship. They were not paid, even though the gift of money for their different expenses (not always related to my project) did play a role in how we perceived each other. However, they helped with contacts, interpretation, explanations, security, and so on; their roles were similar to the roles of field/research assistants. Our relationships are definitely predicated on friendship. In this dissertation, I have chosen to call Zaki and Taú key-interlocutors (and in some places friends). The concept “informants” will be avoided, as it has complicated connotations in the context of the favelas, a theme that will be further developed later in this chapter and in Chapter 5.

Students of funk

It has been increasingly common in anthropology to see informants as research assistants, creatively engaged in a dialogic ethnographic project, even though such an active role is often denied. Cons, Middleton, and Hoffman (2014) all describe how their own research trajectories were altered or shaped by research assistants, just as this project has been shaped in collaboration with Zaki and Taú. It would undoubtedly have developed differently without them. I do not view Zaki and Taú as fellow anthropologists. Yet, in line with Skeggs (2004b:30), I perceive of the persons in this dissertation as much more than just ciphers from which subject positions can be read. Rather, I see them as active in producing the meaning of the positions they –
reluctantly or willingly – inhabit, and also active in inspiring the larger claims of my work.

After a couple of months of going back and forth between Zona Sul and Zona Norte, I began to stay over in the favela a few nights every week. It made it much easier to hang out with people. The *bailes* never start before 1 o’clock in the morning and never end before 4 o’clock in the morning. Staying over allowed me to stay at the *bailes* for as long as I wanted without having to worry about taking the bus back to Zona Sul late at night. After months of travelling back and forth, I talked to Taú and Zaki about moving into the favela. They encouraged me. I brought my clothes and a mattress from the flat in Zona Sul and moved into a little alley in Nova Cidade. It would have been difficult, if possible at all, to move into the favela without being closely connected to someone who helped me settle in. They introduced me to “the right” people (see below) so that I eventually would be able to manage more on my own. As Taú and Zaki agreed to “take me in,” I had to agree on doing things their way.

As Akhil Gupta (2014:398-399) states, research assistants in the field may fundamentally configure the process and the results of data collection, as well as our notion of “the field” itself. The research assistant, he writes, is often key to which networks are created, and how they come into being. They shape who the ethnographer speaks to, what is said, what is translated, how encounters with interlocutors are staged, and so on. Taú and Zaki introduced me to many people in the favela, people that I had to know to be able to conduct fieldwork. Yet, when I first met them, they were not particularly involved in the favela’s funk scene. Hence, I also had to create other networks. Taú and Zaki, however, knew people in high positions in the favela. Because both worked with young people, they could easily introduce me to important persons such as the funk artist, MC Sandro. Because of his power position in the favela and in the funk world, I had to know him to be able to get to know others engaged in funk. Interestingly, Zaki wanted to know the funk scene better than he did at the time. He loves funk and used to sing and compose funk when he was younger. When I met him, he wanted to start singing funk again. We both had a mutual interest in “getting to know more” and saw each other as resources in that learning process. I found it interesting that both of us, in this sense, were students of funk, the subject matter of my thesis, even though it should also be noted that Zaki was keen on working with funk singers, fans and dancers in order to engage them in his and Tau’s political activities as well.

I followed Tau and Zaki in their everyday lives: in their work, to the university, to meetings around the city, to funerals, and to protests around town. Above all, I followed them in their daily routines, doing errands, looking for people, solving problems, watching TV, drinking beer, and simply hanging out with neighbors and friends.
In what follows, I will look at what an “activist” is in the context of favelas and Rio. I start by introducing Zaki, then Taú, and then the work the two of them together. I then describe some of the physical spaces that became important “hang outs” for me during fieldwork. These spaces were run by activists and funk stars and were important meeting hubs for youth in the favela.

The Life and Activism of my Key Interlocutors

In different ways, both Taú and Zaki see it as their duty to make favela residents aware of the political system in which they live and of their rights as Brazilian citizens. They work sometimes by themselves and sometimes together in projects. During the military dictatorship, Zaki was tortured for his work with black theatre. Since then he has worked as, what he calls, “a human rights defender.” He has been strongly involved in a network against violence, which he co-founded with “Mothers of Victims of Police Violence.” Throughout the years he has worked a lot with family members of such victims in Nova Cidade, trying to make them press charges against the perpetrators. During fieldwork in 2011, Zaki told me that he had now stopped this work. He had realized that “it is way too dangerous for everyone, and anyway it’s useless.” Instead, he now struggled to make drug traffickers leave the “business.” In a few attempts, this had been done together with the police. Every time, this intervention resulted in the death of the drug traffickers, which made him stop even trying to cooperate with the police.

Whenever there are shootings in the favela, Zaki heads out and stays in the streets in order to be able to report to others (often via Facebook) what is going on, how many have been shot and by which police unit. He also tries to get people to hospital, if they are wounded or shot. Because of Zaki’s own work against police brutality, he lives under threat by the police. Although threatened with death many times by the police, he argues that the only reason they have not killed him yet is his connections to important people outside of the favela. Zaki is asked to give talks at seminars at universities or activist meetings in the city. Yet, he seldom has enough money for the bus ticket and often stays in the favela. There, Zaki is mostly known for his work with children. He has worked as a football trainer and as a teacher in the local school. He still organizes various kinds of activities for children. Some people in the favela know about his political engagement and his earlier work as president of the Residents’ Association. Taú calls Zaki “a living encyclopedia.” Whenever there is a need to know something about history in general or the local history of Nova Cidade in particular, Zaki is consulted by residents.
Taú’s mother worried about the brutal violence in the small town where she lived together with her children, Taú and Marize. Two of Taú’s brothers had been killed. One of them was shot dead in their hometown by a policeman off duty. The other one was shot dead by an unknown man in the Southeast of Brazil. When their mother became concerned that Taú would become involved with criminal activities, she sent him to his authoritarian uncle in Rio. Taú, who was 15 years old at the time, could not stand his uncle and escaped to Nova Cidade, where his aunt, a Candomblé priestess, and his brother lived, and where funk music was played on every corner. At the time, Taú wrote funk lyrics and performed funk on street corners. He loved bailes, and told me that the main reason for him to escape his uncle and move to Nova Cidade was the legendary baile scene there that everyone spoke of. Even though he mostly composes explicit political rap-lyrics, he is also a great funk-fan. Almost every Friday, every Saturday and some Sundays throughout fieldwork, Taú went with me to the baile in Nova Cidade.

Spaces of political struggle
During most of my fieldwork, Taú studied film at a public Rio university. He had been accepted through a special program for persons from lower income areas. He often joked and said that he “had to study in order to get less time in Bangu.” Bangu is an overcrowded maximum-security prison, not far from Nova Cidade. Taú often reminded me that in Brazil, if you have studied at the University and are sentenced to prison, you get a less severe punishment. He also worked for a European production company making short documentaries, often around themes related to the favelas. Taú calls himself a communist. He is part of a collective called “Guerilla Warfare” (armed not with weapons, but with words and books). Their objective is to empower, inform and educate young, poor, black people about “reality.” According to Taú they want favela residents to learn about oppression and to think about the possibilities of resistance. “We need people to be critical,”

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48 In Nova Cidade, as in most favelas, Candomblé and Umbanda religions of Afro-Brazilian origin have been banned by the churches. Taú’s aunt was one of the last priestesses in Nova Cidade who practiced Umbanda openly.

49 Issues of representation were often on Taú’s mind. He often felt forced by the European production company to make stereotypical films about the favela, for example, when they asked him to do a film about bundas (bums). Such problems were also central to Taú’s discussions with the American journalist that he worked together with, when making these films. They often disagreed on how to portray life in the favela. I followed Taú and the American in their work throughout fieldwork, and listened to Taú’s frustrated commentaries about “outsiders” trying to sell exotic images of the favelas to the world.

50 As already brought up in various places in this dissertation, no persons, groups or spaces in the favela have their real names. However, all names, including “Guerilla Warfare”, carry a meaning similar to the real ones.
Taú often says when discussing Brazilian youth. “It is important,” he says, “that young people in favelas learn about their own history and reality and start questioning the history and reality that the Brazilian elite try to make them believe in.”

Taú has a central role in Guerilla Warfare and a strong political agenda. Even though Guerilla Warfare as a collective stands for “peaceful revolution,” Taú himself believes that no revolution can transform Brazilian society without blood being shed. He is a big fan of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara and has, from time to time, seriously considered moving to Colombia in order to join the Colombian guerrilla, FARC. According to Taú, FARC is the only organization in Latin America that actually does something.\footnote{There are about 10 other solid members in Guerilla Warfare, out of which only two are women. Many members are at the same time members of MST (Movimento Sem Terra or the Landless Workers’ Movement) and/or are engaged in other social movements in Brazil.} During the time of my fieldwork, Guerilla Warfare had a space called “The Hip-Hop Sanctuary.” “The Sanctuary” is located on one of the bigger streets in Nova Cidade. Most activities arranged by Guerilla Warfare take place there. The space has two floors. On the top floor, Taú and Zaki have managed to create a small library with a few books about black power, feminist theory and Brazilian history. On the bottom floor, paintings made by members of Guerilla Warfare hang on the walls. Here, there is a little table, a few chairs, a TV and a sound system. When the collective have video nights, DJ-courses, poetry-nights or seminars, this is where people gather. During the course of my fieldwork, the collective organized a few workshops and seminars on black resistance and Brazilian history. They arranged DJ-classes, graffiti-workshops and break-dance courses for young people and children in the favela and showed documentaries, which they discussed and critiqued afterwards.

For the most part, The Sanctuary is used as a meeting place for young people in the favela. Curious children and teenagers hang out on the street outside hoping for something fun to happen. When the youngest funk group in the favela – The Newbies – wanted to practice their funk dance, they asked Taú to open up the space for them. No one else would let them practice funk in their space, because, as one of the boys said, some older people think funk is misogynist. The group started practicing funk in The Hip-Hop Sanctuary many times a week. Guerilla Warfare shared The Sanctuary with one of the Residents’ Associations (Associação de Moradores).\footnote{In Chapter 3, I discuss the role of the Residents’ Associations more profoundly} This situation created a great deal of tension, and, in the end, when conflicts grew out of hand, Guerilla Warfare had to give up the space and The Newbies had to stop coming there to practice. As Guerilla Warfare is a political activist organization, they have had many problems in the favela. According to the activists, neither the drug dealers nor the members of the Residents’ Associ-
ations like political initiatives that might threaten their own political agendas.

To do political work in the favela, you depend on the goodwill of the *traficantes* (drug dealers), which can be hard to get. The drug dealers work in alliance with specific political parties that also cooperate with the Residents’ Associations. Taú and two other young men from the favela who are part of Guerilla Warfare have a hip-hop group. Their lyrics are political and often treat subjects like social injustice, corruption and police violence. They have had a few shows in the favela, but in general, as mentioned earlier, people in the favela are not into hip-hop.

Together with Zaki and 10 other artists, all of them funk MC’s, Taú is part of yet another collective called The House of Poetry, which has created a space in an old abandoned police-station in the middle of the favela. Portraits of funk singers shot by the police are painted on the walls. Among other things, the collective organizes poetry evenings and offers dance-classes and karate lessons for children in the neighborhood. To this space, middle-class activists, anthropology students and others from all around the city and the world come to visit. The activists struggle non-stop to inform people about the prevailing political situation. Both The Hip-Hop Sanctuary and The House of Poetry worked as important social hubs, meeting places and spaces of political struggle during the time of my fieldwork. This activism is interestingly positioned in the favela and in relation to favela life and imagery. While claiming exclusive insight into the very essence of life, culture and history, it feeds off a direct dialogue with subjects (like me) who are external to this essence. I will now turn to discuss the role of representation and power in this context.

Teaching the Law of Silence: the Work of my Interlocutors

Although accusing journalists, the state and what they referred to as “the bourgeoisie” for controlling and distorting information about life in the favela, both Zaki and Taú wanted to influence the way that I gained information inside the favela and my ways of understanding power conflicts (especially between drug traffickers and the police). This concern was also related to strategic trust building, and to security. In particular, they kept reminding me that most “outsiders” who come to the favela “screw up.” Already on our first meeting, Taú and Zaki warned me not to pretend to be friends with people if I did not really mean it. Throughout fieldwork, they spoke of researchers, politicians and others coming to the favela only to gain votes and to make a career while pretending to really care about the favela and the people living there. Moreover, they wanted to make sure that I was not looking for sensational news about the drug dealing business.
Taú said:

Journalists come here claiming to be interested in the badly paved roads, but they end up publishing articles about drug dealers, violence and death. They promise not to publish the real names of people or to take pictures, but in order to get a good story they write the real names and show photos. Sometimes they get it wrong and show pictures of people they believe are members of the drug faction, but who aren’t.... Some have been killed by the police or bandidos [rival gang members] because of this, do you understand? When these people leave the favela and os bandidos or the police see them and think they are alemão [the enemy], they shoot!

Knowing very well that I belonged to one of the targeted groups, both Taú and Zaki explained that they were “fucking tired” of politicians, academics, filmmakers, authors and journalists coming to the favela. Zaki proclaimed:

We do not allow people to come here to study us as violent creatures anymore. We are much more than violence. Violence is not something that grows inside us, even if that is exactly what the elite and the politicians want people to believe.

We sat quietly for a while before he continued: “We want you to work here, people are very open, they will treat you well and take you in, but it is not going to be easy. You need to gain people’s trust and a lot of people feel disappointed.”

A famous author, Zaki said, came to the favela to write a book about a young couple madly in love. The male character was from the favela and the woman from Zona Sul. The author came to visit often and became good friends with people. With time, people started to confide in him. They told him about their personal problems, about jealousy and love affairs. Even though he promised not to reveal people’s most intimate secrets, the author published “...every little dirty detail you can imagine.” People in Nova Cidade were upset, and the author never set foot in the area again. Zaki also told me about an anthropologist who had written about the neighborhood. He had promised to come back to visit when his work was published, but he never did. Zaki expressed disappointment. He had worked closely with the anthropologist and believed that they were friends.

It was quite clear from the beginning that both of them wanted me to see the favela in a certain way, especially Zaki. He was firmly focused on giving me his own views and truths. The way they spoke of “outsiders” also functioned as a means of influencing my work methods. I mostly found it wise to respect and accept their advice. Both activists, albeit in slightly different ways, were very much concerned with issues of representation. They struggled hard to make me understand that the way favelas are portrayed in mainstream media and in popular culture has nothing to do with reality. They were obsessed with this point to the extent that they – at least in the begin-
ning – tried to control how and about what I obtained information. When I interviewed drug dealers, these had been “chosen” by Zaki, partly because I did not want to ask the drug dealers directly, and partly because Zaki would never have permitted me to interview someone who was not able to express himself in the vocabulary and the discourse of the activists.

This is not to say that my key interlocutors were in any ways alien to favela “reality,” nor that I felt obliged to buy their version. Instead, I treat their subjectivity as an integral and historically and politically produced part of the field that I study. I admit the ways in which their control both limited and enabled my inquiry. Below I illustrate how Taú and Zaki handled the fact that drug traffickers in the favela constitute a threat to all those who do not obey their rules, be it activists, filmmakers or anthropologists. By doing so, they taught me the rules of silence in Nova Cidade.

The destiny of Tim Lopes

Once, early on in fieldwork, I was at a huge baile standing on the VIP balcony with a great view over the stage. I took out my camera and started taking pictures. After a short while, Taú told me to immediately put away the camera. He explained that there were a lot of people at the baile who did not want their pictures taken. Later, I learned that the police often use images taken by journalists and others in the favela in order to gain information about the faction and their business.

“Have you heard of Tim Lopes?” Taú asked me, and I told him that I had. I knew that in 2002, Tim Lopes, a journalist from Rio, was tortured and killed while working on a story about drugs and prostitution at bailes. The drug dealers who killed him found him using a hidden camera at a baile. Taú then decided to tell me another story, about a German who came to Nova Cidade to do a documentary about funk. Taú and Zaki had explicitly told him that he could not film at the funk party. If he wanted to film there, they would have to ask all the drug dealers to leave the party, something they were reluctant to do. The German promised not to film at the party. Together with Taú, he went to the Saturday night baile. Once at the baile Taú suddenly lost sight of the German and went looking for him outside in the street. There he was, surrounded by heavily armed drug dealers, who had caught him filming at the party. Now they were pointing their rifles at the German’s head, waiting for the drug-dealing boss to come. Taú was afraid that the boss would punish both him and the filmmaker. It was after all Taú who had brought the foreigner to the favela. When the boss arrived, he told Taú to destroy the film in front of everyone. When that was done, he decided that

53 German, or Alemão, is used in the favela as slang for “enemy,” meaning rival gang members or the police. The fact that this story is about a literal Alemão makes it even more to the point.
the German could be released with a mere warning: “If you ever come back, we will kill you!” Taú told me that they were very lucky, because the boss was “in a good mood that evening, but you never know.”

The destiny of Tim Lopes, the story about the German and other similar narratives were repeated to me throughout fieldwork. Although I was not always sure of what to make of these stories, the most obvious was to interpret them as reminders not to *vacilar*, or to “fuck up.” In my case, that would be to use information in a disrespectful or even dangerous way for example by secretly taking pictures and giving away information to the police or to the media.

I also believe that I ran the risk of being punished (most likely being expelled from the favela) for doing things that were not allowed, but so were Taú and Zaki, who were the ones seen as responsible for me and my behavior in the favela. This was so because the drug traffickers in Nova Cidade ultimately decide who is allowed to be in the favela and who is not. They have, however, given Taú and Zaki the right to bring people without consulting them beforehand. This means that if anything goes wrong, that is, if someone misbehaves by disrespecting the rules of the drug traffickers (like the German did) or, for example, turns out to be a journalist looking for a scoop, Taú and Zaki are held accountable.

Activists struggling to achieve autonomy

Already on my first visits to the favela, Taú and Zaki presented me to persons with important positions in Nova Cidade such as the presidents of the Residents’ Associations, the most famous and influential funk star in the favela, MC Sandro and his “crew,” and some of the other activists and human right defenders. I did not know then that they also introduced me to people who work close to the faction and who, according to Taú “took care of informing the important drug dealers that I was in the favela.” Taú and Zaki made sure that I was recognized by some of the drug dealers on the street corners, so that I could start to walk around by myself without making people suspicious. Zaki was always careful to greet the traffickers standing on the corners, to begin with, to show them his respect but also, I later understood, for the sake of my safety. When I later walked around by myself, the *traficantes* would know that I was “with Zaki.”

According to Arias and Corinne Rodrigues (2006), traffickers are less likely to punish respected and politically connected residents than those who are marginal to political life. Accordingly, residents like Taú and Zaki, who are involved in national and global networks, run a smaller risk of getting punished by drug traffickers than do many others. According to Arias and Rodrigues, the dispute solution and crime control activities of traffickers concentrate on building support in those particular segments of the commu-
nity that they depend on most. In so doing, the traffickers make sure that they maintain a critical base of support to guarantee their protection and safety. Part of Taú’s and Zaki’s daily struggle revolves around achieving as much autonomy as possible. The increasing power of favela-based drug factions has, as Robert Gay has argued, been devastating to the once autonomous and combative favela-based social movements (see Gay 2005:54-58). So, while constantly negotiating with the traffickers, the activists at the same time attempt to attain more power and autonomy by creating strong bonds with youth and others in the favela but also, importantly, with “outsiders.”

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the stronger the ties you have to “the formal” city, the more status you have in the favela. So, although critical of much scholarly work on favelas, the activists need foreigners, like anthropologists, filmmakers and others to maintain a critical base of support and thus be able to, albeit subtly, challenge trafficker power and gain more freedom and safety for their work.

Walking Anthropology

As I relied a great deal on Taú and Zaki for my own movement across the favela, especially when the police were there, walking as ethnographic method (see Lee and Ingold 2006, Kusenbach 2003) turned out to be invaluable to me. From a phenomenological standpoint, Margarethe Kusenbach (2003) has coined the “go along” as an ethnographic method that involves accompanying informants on their daily street outings while holding informal interviews. In order to understand how individuals comprehend and engage their physical and social environments in everyday life, Kusenbach (2003:456) sees the “go along” as an ethnographic research tool that highlights some of the transcendent and reflexive aspects grounded in place.

It was crucial for the activists to know what was going on in the favela on a daily basis, especially in relation to police and trafficker abuse. Zaki wanted an overview of what was currently happening in the favela. He spent most of his days on foot. His cell phone did not always function as he quickly ran out of credits and could not afford to buy new ones. So, to be able to communicate with people, he needed to be present. Zaki would show up outside my house early mornings and bring me with him on his walks. Taú then often joined at some point. Most people in the favela, I soon realized, do not move across the favela on a daily basis to the same extent as the activists do. My older neighbors, for example, hardly ever moved from the alley where they lived and had their business.

In the beginning, the favela landscape with its labyrinthine streets, narrow alleys and pathways seemed too difficult for me to navigate on my own. Every street looked the same. There were no signs anywhere. Very few
streets had names. I tried hard, but I never seemed to understand how I got from one place to another. With time, I learned how to find my way, at least fairly well. Zaki and I spent a lot of time walking together throughout the whole period of my fieldwork. Sometimes we strolled around the favela aimlessly. At other times, we went looking for people who Zaki wanted me to meet or I wanted to interview. Throughout these walks, lasting between 1 and 12 hours, Zaki always stopped to joke and chat with acquaintances across the favela. Through these walks, I got to know people; I learned to see the streets, pathways, labyrinthine alleys, street-corners, shops, buildings, shacks, trees, Lana-houses (Internet places), video-stores, barracas (kiosks), biroscas (small shops and/or bars), beauty salons, quadras das escolas de sambas (where samba rehearsals, funk parties and many other festivities are organized), bars, football-spaces, and churches through the eyes of Zaki and Taú.

On these walks, Zaki usually contextualized the present, using his comprehensive historical knowledge. He often spoke in a subtle and abstract way. Taú talked in a more personal and straightforward manner. He shared his thoughts on everything from politics to passion. Often, he gave me details of his own personal and complex social relations. Mostly, I did not give them or the people we met on our walks any direction with regard to what I wanted them to talk about, but I frequently asked about what we saw along the way. Generally, Zaki updated me on what was going on in the favela. As I did not always understand everything, I asked him to explain things to me over and over again. When he became tired of explaining, he kept quiet. We often ended up walking quietly side by side until we either met somebody or until Zaki came to think of something he wanted to discuss with me, for example, what he was reading (his readings at the time consisted of feminist interpretations of the Bible) or why his sister still had not got the medical attention she needed for her leg.

Any outsider’s view of a setting that lacks a local vantage point remains superficial, as it reveals more about the observer’s own standpoint than anything else (see Kusenbach 2003:460). For this reason, observation without an interlocutor’s explanations, interpretations and stories might be problematic. In interviews, you can not always get access to all aspects of lived experience because interlocutors refuse to talk about certain topics due to social rules or cannot talk about them because, no matter how much they may wish to collaborate, they overlook issues that do not figure prominently in their awareness (ibid). Hence, walking makes a good complement, not only to observations, but also to interviews, and I would add, especially in unstable contexts where more formal interviews can be both difficult to arrange and the source of inadequate information.
A geography of power and young people’s movements

Nova Cidade is formally divided into many distinct parts with formal names. However, I had come to perceive Nova Cidade as a favela divided into only two parts, one “upper” and one “lower.” Even though I was aware that the favela consisted of many small areas, no one I knew ever referred to anything else than “the upper part” and “the lower part.” Taú and Zaki, for example, talked about moving “up” and “down” between the northern and the southern parts. They hardly ever mentioned any other informal or formal names of the areas. This way of seeing the favela, which influenced my way of perceiving and exploring life in Nova Cidade, is related to the organization of power in the favela.

In each of these two sections of the favela, there is one drug-dealing boss with his associated “crew” of traffickers. The chefe in the south part is considered boss over the whole favela, including over the chefe in the northern part. Because of this arrangement, people from time to time worried that “war” would break out between the two. My perception of the favela as divided only into two parts was additionally related to the way that funk fans, singers and dancers moved across the favela and spoke of its geographical organization. The two dance quadras, the one in the northern part and the one in the southern part, functioned as reference points for many of their discussions and activities. Clearly, the way I have come to perceive the different spaces in Nova Cidade reveals my own restricted movement across the favela and consequently my understanding of what different spaces mean to people. I would have known other (physical and social) spaces better if my interlocutors had been other persons, with other interests. However, because Zaki and I walked so much, and because I followed many of the funk stars when they did shows in other areas, I believe I got a relatively good overview, especially over young people’s movements across the favela and in other areas.

So far, I have focused on my walks and discussions with Zaki and Taú. Yet, it was during these walks that I got to know most of the other people essential to this study. Zaki knew where most residents in the favela lived. If they were not home, he knew where to go looking for them (for example, he often knew who was going out with whom). This turned out to be critical knowledge for me, especially in the beginning of fieldwork, as most young people that I wanted to interview never showed up when they said they would. The best way to get to talk to them and to get to “hang out” was to go looking for them in the streets and see what they were up to at that specific moment. Together with Tai and Zaki, I spent countless hours walking around the favela looking for persons engaged with funk.
Invisible borders

The experiences of my walks with Zaki were in many ways, and at many different levels, marked by violence. Violence figured in Zaki’s and Tau’s own stories, associations and references to specific places and people. Violence was also a topic raised in the stories told by the people we met. Especially while I wandered along with Zaki, it became obvious to me that different forms of violence permeate every street and most homes in Nova Cidade in one way or another. Now and again, Zaki would point out certain objects, places, features or persons to whom he wanted me to give special attention, or simply become aware of.\textsuperscript{54} For example, the kindergarten full of bullet holes, the street where his friend Seu Ronaldo was shot dead by the police or “outsider” drug addicts from adjoining areas who had come to buy drugs in Nova Cidade.

One day Zaki pointed to the playground right outside the favela entrance. The playground, he told me, was set up in front of the entrance a couple of years earlier as an attempt to slow down police intrusions. The drug dealers, who paid for it, believed that if children played there, the police would be forced to think twice before firing straight at the favela. The arrangement would give the drug dealers more time to escape from the police. Moreover, it would diminish the number of people getting hit by balas perdidas (stray bullets). Zaki said that, so far, the playground had had no effect on police intrusions or on the number of persons killed by random bullets. Everywhere in the favela, on walls, roofs, floors, and in the streets, there are bullet holes that function as constant reminders of violence.

Zaki saw the playground as a kind of border between the favela and “the outside.” He often spoke of invisible borders between the favela and adjacent areas. On one of our walks along the railway tracks toward the favela, he said:

\begin{quote}
This is a border. It’s an invisible wall, just like the one in Israel and Palestine, except this one is invisible. It divides “us” from “them”…. It separates the not-so-very poor from the very poor. People on the other side of the railroad tracks earn money, live in proper houses, have cars, and some even have maids. We never go there, and they never come here. But you see, it’s boring on that side. No one hangs out in the street. There is no nightlife, nothing. It’s so stupid. They get money and help from a prefeitura [the municipality] for
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{54} Not until Zaki pointed it out to me, did I note that residents on the main road and close to the favela entrance in the “lower part” of Nova Cidade where I lived are richer and whiter than those living further deep down the alleys. In the poorer parts, the alleys are more crowded. The houses often get demolished by rain, heavy storms and fires. It is also more difficult to hide in these parts, where the alleys are extremely narrow and many of them have dead-ends, when the police come and shootings occur between them and the traficantes (see also Chapter 6).
culture and we don’t. On our side children, everyone feel safe hanging out in streets. But there, no way, people stay inside….

Later, I heard rumors that the only time that young people from “the other side” come to Nova Cidade is when they sneak out at night to go to the bailes. I also learned that although there are traficantes selling drugs “on the other side,” too, people do cross the invisible borders when they want to buy drugs.

The walks with Zaki along “the invisible borders,” made me re-think what I had taken for granted, that favelas were very different from other areas. Although Zaki wanted me to perceive the differences between the favela and “the rest,” I realized that Nova Cidade and adjacent lower-working class areas also shared many traits. Favela residents, however, draw sharp boundaries between their own favela and other areas, and these boundaries are, to a large extent, related to the police and drug traffickers. The police are seen as “outsiders” while the drug traffickers are considered “insiders.” For a long time, I took this to be true, but eventually I understood that the situation was much more complex. Often the lines that divide drug traffickers, workers and the police are blurred. Getting away from preconceived notions of fields and coherent social groupings is, I believe, a pre-condition for approaching the favela methodologically, and this distancing is what my walking anthropology resulted in.

The Control of Communication and Information

Taú and Zaki often reminded me to be cautious, in particular when I spoke to a galera do funk, “the funk people.” “You know that there are certain things you can’t ask people? You can’t ask who organizes the bailes. You can’t ask who finances the parties. You can’t ask who buys their clothes. You can’t ask anything that makes them suspicious.” In the beginning of fieldwork, Taú and Zaki often wanted to discuss my project. What was I going to do? How did I plan to do it? With whom did I want to speak and why? They repeatedly told me to avoid certain themes when I talked to people in the favela. It was already made clear the first time I met Taú and Zaki that certain themes and questions were off limits. Taú said:

You know…. If they think you ask strange questions, the word will spread, you know. Here it’s like this, everyone knows everything about everyone. People will start talking and they will wonder what you really are doing in the favela. If you start asking too much they will be like, “Who’s that girl? What’s she really doing in the favela?

Zaki had made it clear to me early on that it was important that I got along well with MC Sandro. At first, however, I did not understand how important
Sandro’s goodwill was for my fieldwork. It took months before I began to understand the position that Sandro had. On a rainy afternoon Taú and I aimlessly walked around the favela, when he told me that Sandro was not convinced that it was a good idea for me to speak to the *funkeiros*. There were *coisas*, or “things,” that Sandro did not want me to know. He was not convinced that the *funkeiros* would be “professional enough” to keep quiet about those things. It was uncomfortable for me to know that Sandro did not like having me around or, rather, he seemed to like having me around as long as he could control my every step. I kept spending time with him although his controlling and flirtatious ways sometimes made me feel uneasy. I continued to wonder why everyone treated him with so much respect and why they seemed to admire him so much. It was respect and admiration, leaning towards submission. Without really understanding why, I also felt obliged to be nice to Sandro in a rather exaggerated way.

I never spoke to Sandro about the *traficantes* or anything else that could be interpreted as having to do with the drug dealing business. However, it was not always clear to me what would make people suspicious and what would not. I was often afraid to ask for more explicit explanations than the ones I was given and, with Sandro, this feeling was amplified. I was reminded or warned by Zaki again, only a few weeks after Taú had told me about Sandro’s concerns. This time, Zaki did not tell me immediately that it was Sandro who had talked to him about me, but told me to “be careful” with what I asked people. Only later did I find out that once again Sandro had expressed his concerns. After about 4 months of fieldwork, I learnt that Sandro had been the boss of the northern part of the favela and that he had been released from prison not very long ago. This fact explained why he tried to control my every step. He was obviously afraid that I would write about his criminal activities – the *coisas* that Taú had spoken to me about. This was information that Sandro presumed could be interesting for the police, journalists or politicians. The fact that he had been the favela boss also threw light on why people treated him with so much respect.

The secrecy that surrounded Sandro influenced me a great deal in my behavior around him and the others. Even though I told Sandro over and over that I would not publish pictures of anyone, he kept asking me to take pictures of him. Although I explained that I did not have contacts in the music business, he told others that I would write a book about his funk career. He often asked me to bring his music back with me to Sweden. After a while, this situation became quite problematic. As Sandro, on the one hand, believed that I was writing a book that would make him and the favela famous, and on the other hand seemed to suspect that I was a journalist or someone else interested in the drug dealing business, he would keep trying to control whom I met and what I spoke to them about.
After a few months, it looked as if Sandro was going to accept my presence in the favela. He stopped trying to control with whom I spoke, and seemed to trust that I was not an undercover agent or journalist looking for a scoop. I knew that he continuously asked the funkeiros what I talked to them about. Perhaps he relaxed a little when he found out that I had not asked them about him. Instead, he spoke of the importance that I understood *a verdade*, the truth, about life in the favela. Together with Sandro, I went to bars in areas where he did shows and to *bailes* in other favelas where he performed. I also followed him around the favela and adjacent areas on his political campaign. Yet, Sandro never talked to me about his time as boss. I sometimes found it difficult to pretend as if I did not know what others had told me about him. Sometimes he spoke to me about his life and the favela in a way that made me think, “He knows that I know.” Yet, I never dared to talk to him directly about his relationship to the drug dealers or about the time he spent in prison.

Perhaps, in terms of knowledge, it was not after all so important to discuss Sandro’s time in prison or as a boss with him. Instead, the silence surrounding him, made me well aware of matters that “everyone” knew but that no one really talked about, and, consequently, I slowly started to learn more about power-relations and discourse in Nova Cidade.

Dona Maria and the law of silence

In a setting of ambiguous relations between favela residents on one side, and the *bandidos* and the police on the second and third sides, and where these identities also to a significant degree overlap, the control of communication and information is a problem for everyone.

One Saturday morning I decided to ask Dona Maria, a woman of around 70, if I could do an interview with her. She owns a little shop where she sells everything from candy and candles to soap and alcohol. A few times a week I passed by the store. She would ask me to sit down and talk for a while. Recently, she had been speaking a lot about what happened a few weeks earlier when the police, once again, had been in her store. This time they behaved in an even crueler way than usual. They robbed her of everything she had. They accused her of being “*putona*” and “*mãe de bandido*” (a whore and mother of a bandit). One of the police officers opened her moneybox and asked how it was possible that she had so much cash in the shop. “It’s drug money, isn’t it, you fucking whore!” the police shouted at her while he put the money in his pockets. Dona Maria was very upset that the police accused her of not being honest. That they robbed her did not seem to matter as much. No one from the outside dares to enter the favela as long as the police are there and recently they had been in the favela almost every day. Dona Maria would have to wait for a long time to get new supplies.
When I asked her for an interview, she only agreed reluctantly. First, I thought this reluctance had to do with her being shy. We started out by talking about her childhood and later about Brazilian society in general. After a while, I began to ask her about how she experienced life in the favela. She had come to Nova Cidade from Spain as an adult. Dona Maria nodded, but no matter what question I asked, she said that “everything is just fine” and that “there are no problems here.” This was not how she usually talked about life in Nova Cidade, so I asked her more specifically about the problems that I knew she was going through. Dona Maria immediately fell silent. I turned off the recorder and asked if she was OK, and she answered: “Yes, well, you know, there are certain things that we don’t talk about here, that I don’t… People respect me, and I have to respect them.”

Implicitly, Dona Maria referred to a lei do silêncio, or “the law of silence,” a phenomenon that was not only a serious obstacle for anthropological fieldwork, but also a pervasive aspect of social life in the favela, a lei that I have heard especially older people refer to when avoiding to talk about activities connected to the drug faction. Taú explained the lei with these words: “You have no eyes – you don’t see! You have no ears – you don’t hear! You have no mouth – you don’t speak!” A lei do silêncio is a norm meant to protect the traficantes. Favela residents are strongly discouraged from discussing anything that could be interpreted as crimes, or acts of violence that have been committed by or that can be linked to traficantes (see Arias and Rodrigues 2006). According to Taú, a scholar some years ago stated in a research paper, that this lei is not as widely applied as earlier. When information about this conclusion reached Nova Cidade “… people in the favela started to say that a lei do silêncio is not used as much anymore, and stopped paying as much respect to it as they had done before.” However, in the favela, a lei do silêncio functions to sustain a cover for public secrets (see also Penglase 2009, cf. Taussig 1999, Löfving 2009). With the discussion about Dona Maria’s predicament and Nova Cidade’s “law of silence,” I wanted to make central the role of fear and in/security for people’s communication and coexistence.

Uncertainty and long-lasting relationships

Was I too careful with what I asked people? Did I “respect” the drug traffickers and the activists too much? When other outsiders came to the favela, for example, the documentary filmmaker Bernardo from Italy, he asked funk stars and drug traffickers about their relationship to the faction without hesitating – and he got answers. When NGO workers and anthropologists came to visit Nova Cidade, they would sometimes take pictures without asking. Zaki and Taú would, however, always get upset and give the visitors a proper telling-off. Afterwards, they complained for weeks about “disrespectful”
visitors and told me that they would never invite “outsiders” to the favela again. Hence, I drew the conclusion that if I wanted long-lasting relationships with residents in the favela, and if I wanted Zaki and Taú to trust me—and for them to be trusted by the drug traffickers—it was better to do what I was told, to be cautious, and not to ask too much. I am, however, aware that my material would be of a different character, had I asked all those questions surrounding life in the favela that I did not dare to ask in a straightforward manner. Nevertheless, in the long run, I do believe that I gained more knowledge and got more honest answers with my slow and more careful approach.

In general, it was often difficult to grasp what was going on in Nova Cidade in relation to the drug traffickers and the police. Were the police really in the favela to sell weapons and if that was the case, why? Sometimes Taú and Zaki told me to watch a movie such as Lord of War with Nicolas Cage in order to understand how weapons reach the hands of Nova Cidade’s drug dealers. What cannot be explained is sometimes made clear by Hollywood movies, soap-operas, hip-hop songs, and popular culture in general. Few people knew exactly why the police invaded on a particular day (had the traffickers not paid them enough, and in that case why?), or why the traffickers suddenly accused the favela’s most famous DJ of being an informant (had he really stolen money from the boss?). Although it was challenging not being able to understand what was going on exactly, it also made me realize that the lack of information that I experienced as frustrating was also very frustrating to many favela residents.

It was only when I reached the end of fieldwork that I began to ask Zaki and Taú more explicitly about the drug trade, the mafia, weapons, negotiations between the police and the drug dealers, and about the hierarchies within the faction. Most conversation about those things I had with Taú outside of the favela, where he felt a little less observed.55

The Sounds of Silence and Violence

Thus far, in this chapter, I have dealt with the fear of “misbehaving” in a local context violently controlled by the laws of the faction. However, a crucial part of my understanding of the favela is the role played by the state, and thus the material foundation of (or background to) the rule of the drug dealing faction. For the risk that disobedient subjects expose local leaders not merely to the weakening of their own social power, but actual state repression. In the favela “informants” or “squealers” are referred to as X-9s.56

55 Taú and Zaki were both convinced that the police were monitoring their phones; hence conversations over the phone were also very limited.
56 I have not been able to find a reliable source in relation to the origin of the term ”X-9”.
To be accused of being an X-9 is the most dangerous accusation that can be leveled at someone. Although everyone is afraid of being unfairly accused of being an X-9, I sometimes heard people in the street arguing and accusing each other in this way. It happened that community leaders and local politicians competing for power or involved in local disputes accused each other of being X-9s, resulting in threats and, sometimes, in death. The complex relationship between drug dealers and other favela residents is filled with ambiguity and uncertainty. Residents in Nova Cidade not only fear being accused of being squealers, but also, as depicted above, use the nature of trafficker justice to their advantage, when, for example, they falsely accuse someone of being an informant (see also Penglase 2009).

In the same way, I heard many stories about the police falsely accusing activists and other residents of being X-9s when they wanted to get rid of someone, as in the following example with Zé. One morning in September, I met Zé, a political activist, in the street. He was very angry and told me that a few days earlier he had been stopped by two police officers in the street. They had said that they were “tired of him” and that they were about to tell the drug dealers in the favela that Zé was an X-9. Zé went to the closest police station to denounce the threats. Instead of helping him, the police chief in command asked him: “How long are you planning to behave like this?” Zé did not get any support from the police. To avoid any legal reason for the police to arrest him, he went home and cut down all of his neighbor’s wires. In this way, he explained, the police would at least not have the pleasure of having him arrested for using electricity and the telephone illegally.

Whether the police really told any of the drug dealers that Zé was an X-9, I do not know, but the fear of being unfairly accused of being one is prevalent among many residents in the favela. All of my male friends in Nova Cidade have friends who have been accused of being X-9s and consequently killed by faction members. Whether they really had informed on the traficantes was never proved. On the contrary, many seemed to believe that their friends had been unjustly accused. To investigate or even ask about a “disappearance” involves a great deal of danger. This wide-spread fear of being accused of being an informer, and the secrecy surrounding the drug dealers and their activities also made me feel a need to “prove” that I was, if not supporting, then at least understanding the gang, probably much in the same way as the residents feel that they have to prove that they are supportive of the faction, and not informants.

57 Many funk songs have been written on the subject, a famous one is Mr. Catra’s “vende um X-9 para mim” (sell me an informant).

58 From 1964 to 1985, Brazil’s network of 16 secret police forces assisted by 250,000 paid informants, an apparatus set up with CIA assistance, systematically persecuted “subversives” and “leftists.” Thousands of people were killed, or “disappeared” into underground prisons and torture centers. Thousands more were tried by secret military tribunals for violation of “national security,” “subversion” or for violating secret decree laws, whose existence was of
Taú often reminded me of the fact that “We are being watched all the time, even if you don’t believe it.” It was not always clear whom he was referring to – the police, the drug dealers, or others politically active in the favela. One morning about 2 months after moving to Nova Cidade, Taú and I were standing in the metro on our way to the beach. Taú and I would often talk about the drug dealers, the police and the mafia on our way to, or from, the favela. According to Taú, it was too risky to talk this explicitly about those topics in the favela. This morning Taú commented that both his and Zaki’s phones were tapped by the police. I asked him if there was some way they could prove it, and, if so, could they bring this to court? He said that their contacts within O Movimento Social have information about who is “bugged” and who is not. Moreover, you hear it when you speak on the phone as the sound of the voices changes. However, Taú claimed that if he and Zaki made a fuss, they would run the risk of getting killed. As long as they kept calm, without mobilizing too many people and by abstaining from complaining about the fact that they were watched and bugged, they would be left in peace, so, he said, it was not a risk worth taking. 59

There is a peculiar yet marked link between noise and silence in Nova Cidade everyday life. Having spent a couple of intense weeks in the favela, I realized that I would have to learn how to use my ears in a new way. Fogos, or firecrackers, were set off as soon as the police entered Nova Cidade. By listening to the sound of the fogos, you know roughly where in the favela the police are. Firecrackers are, however, also set off every morning at 5 o’clock to signal that there is a guard-shift, and at the same time, to wake up the workers. Also, there are always fogos when the drug dealers have something to celebrate, for example, their mothers’ birthdays. The first times in Nova Cidade, I did not manage to discern the different sounds from each other. Was it firecrackers or gunshots I heard? After a while, however, I learned to distinguish fogos from tiroteo (shootings). Also, I learned how to hear whether it was the police or the drug dealers who fired. Quite often I would wake up to the sound of fogos and go to bed to sound of fogos, and sometimes fall asleep and wake up to the sound of guns being fired. When there were shootings close by, I would stay inside for hours and hours – or sit by

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59 Cases of threats, attacks and killings targeting human rights defenders in Brazil are rarely investigated and remain largely unpunished (see Amnesty International 2016).
Tia Hilda’s small shop/bar on my street – talking to the neighbors and waiting for the police to leave.

The fact that the police were in the favela, often many times a week, made it difficult for me to move around the way I wanted to. Some days I came to rely even more on Taú and Zaki than I already did. When there were shootings, they would try to explain what was going on. Sometimes they would know where the police were. If I were out in the street with them when the police came, they would know what to do, where to go and how to hide. The fact that Taú and Zaki disagreed on how to best hide from the police in the streets as well as on how to best introduce me to the drug dealers made me understand that there is no obvious way to deal with the often unpredictable violence in Nova Cidade. Although I learned what to do when there were shootings, I felt much less secure being on my own. If I was in the street when the police arrived, I would watch what people around me did and do the same – always try to quickly get off the streets and hide in the closest bar, shop or at someone’s house. I soon learned that it is crucial to keep calm. You must never panic or run (see also Maček 2009:41). If you meet the police in the street, you have to calmly walk towards them or risk getting shot. The Special Police, BOPE for example, always walk around in the favela pointing their rifles at everyone they pass, ready to pull the trigger.

If you know what the police are in the favela to do, it is sometimes possible to predict how long they will stay, and in which part of the favela they are most likely to be moving around. If they come to pick up bribes but do not get what they ask for, they will, for example, usually not cross the borders between the southern and northern part. Quite often, however, you do not know why the police are in the favela and they quickly move between the northern and southern parts. This makes it difficult for the residents to know how to move around and for how long to keep off the streets.

Because residents in the favela commonly see the police as “the enemy” and because I did everything I could not to generate suspicion on the part of the traffickers, I was not able to contact the police in a potential role as interlocutors and sources of another perspective. The relationship between the police and favela residents is complex and ambiguous, something that I return to discuss more profoundly in Chapter 6. Some of the young men that I spoke to in Nova Cidade had dreams of being recruited to BOPE and others, like my landlord (around 70 years old), found some of the police officers attractive. Nevertheless, the police are regarded as a source of violence and insecurity rather than as security. Hence, for me to gain trust and to build long-term relationships with favela residents, it was crucial that I did not spend time in police circles, and, for safety reasons, that I did not even show interest in gaining access to police sources of any kind.
On the one hand, the same is true for my relationship to the drug traffickers in Nova Cidade. I never spent time with the *traficantes* while they were working, but only when they were free from work, and we never explicitly discussed what they did as drug traffickers, except for the times that I interviewed them. On the other hand, I was located in their context during a long period, and I was spending time in the streets and venues at the same time as they were there. Furthermore, I spent a lot of time with people who were close to them, like family members and friends. The conclusions I draw about the faction in Chapter 5 are colored by this method.

**Positionality, Reflexivity and Power Relations**

As many scholars have argued, conducting fieldwork, perhaps especially in the so-called Global South, should entail being observant to histories of colonialism, development and globalization, and to the local realities. One should avoid conducting research that perpetuates relations of domination and control (see e.g., Sultana 2007). Reflexivity in research, the way that I interpret it, involves reflection on self and representation, and of critically examining power-relations in the research process. It leads, ideally, to researcher accountability in data collection and interpretation (*ibid*).

In the Rio context, as in most other settings, class and levels of education are sharp markers of difference. In Nova Cidade, I was either seen as a foreigner or, quite often, mistaken for being someone’s cousin from the Southeast of Brazil where there are many people of Polish, German and Jewish decent – a family background that I share. The fact that I was not from Rio positioned me outside of the hierarchies normally at play. When, for example, I spoke to funk artists and fans about racism and prejudice, they would explain to me how (whiter) middle-class Rio residents treated people from the favela, seemingly without including me in those categories. Still, my foreign, white and middle-class background was revealed in the way I spoke, dressed and moved about in the favela, and I was often quite obviously seen and treated as an outsider. I tried to bridge and negotiate my “otherness” in many ways, for example, by being up-dated on the latest funk slang, singing along to old and new funk tunes, and by always keeping up with what was going on in Rio and in Nova Cidade, especially in relation to funk. I experienced how friendships developed over time that rendered initial differences less significant, while sometimes creating other divides.

For example, some of the young women that I got to know, who did not “hang out” much in the streets and who were not allowed to go to *bailes* (by family members or boyfriends) became quite hard to spend time with on a daily basis. In addition, to keep my distance to those more deeply involved
in faction life, it became difficult for me to spend much time with girlfriends of some of the drug dealers.

Yet, no matter how much I tried to fit in, my ties to the “formal” city and to “Europe,” and the fact that I could come and go as I wished put me in a special position. While admitting the analytical weakness of such alienation, and struggling for an ethnographic transparency as I now put my findings and my method in writing, I would also argue that there are unexpected discoveries to make if positionality is also used as a methodological asset. I have sometimes tried to imagine all the things my interlocutors and others in Nova Cidade had kept from me had I not been a foreigner, had I not been ignorant, had I not been a woman.

In certain circumstances, I wished that I were older, had a husband and children with me, or preferably, were a man. I imagined that it would give me more credibility and access to spheres and conversations that I was not let in on, because of my gender. As the funk sphere in Nova Cidade turned out to be dominated by men, and as more men than women have time to “hang out,” I spent a lot of time with young men, a situation which was challenging in different ways. Some of the most powerful funk stars, like MC Sandro, had a flirtatious way, and, as I depended on his good-will for my fieldwork, it was not always easy to handle. At some point Zaki even suggested that I show the funkeiros “a document” with the name of my university, just to show that I really was a doctoral student. He thought that that would make the male funk singers, dancers, DJs and producers see me in a different way.

However, all of these obstacles made me very much aware of themes related to “manliness” and power. It also made me pose questions related to youth, sexuality and morale. Furthermore, had I not been a young woman myself, it would probably have been harder for me to discuss themes related to funk, sexuality, violence, and bailes with other young women. Although I felt that I constantly had to prove myself, I realized that being a young woman interested in electronic music, who spent a lot of time with activists in the favela, also made it seem less likely that I was an undercover police officer or an informant of some sort. Although some people did not take seriously the fact that I was actually doing research for a dissertation, being “young” also had many advantages. I was the same age as many of those who participated in the favela’s nightlife. That I was at the bailes late at night until early morning, listening and dancing to funk and “hanging out” with young people as much as I did, made sense to me and to those around me.

Valladares has criticized social scientists for asserting a marked identity of the favela (see also e.g., Jaguaribe 2004, Williams 2008). She argues that by focusing on a limited number of themes and assumptions about the favela and favela residents, researchers have played a part in constantly reproducing certain prejudices. Without getting to know people and the place of study
properly, one obviously risks confirming preconceived ideas and/or reproducing what others already have written, without doing justice to the complexities on the ground. Longitudinal qualitative research, however, is not in any way immune to this limitation. Yet, extended fieldwork might help us to adjust narrow and biased choices, and hopefully, to discover things we would not have paid attention to initially (Højdestrand 2009). Social reality forces itself upon us, and makes us explore something we had not planned on studying (see e.g., Rodgers 2006:7 and Garmany 2013:9).

When I started this project, I was determined not to study violence in relation to favela youth, eager to take note of the risks of contributing to asserting a marked identity or political brand of both people and place. I was not going to write about what so many others had already focused on for decades. This was also a concern for my activist interlocutors, apart from their worries about more concrete dangers in disturbing our relations to the drug dealers. However, if one wishes to grasp what life is like – and why – for young residents in the favelas, the social conditions and circumstances that produce violence(s) are impossible to ignore.

In Nova Cidade, violence is a central theme in everyday experiences, conversations and jokes, and in funk lyrics. Stories of police brutality and ways of escaping raining bullets were part of my day-to-day life during fieldwork. The “talk of violence” (see Caldeira 2000) is abundant among people of all ages in Rio across social categories and heavily influences people’s ways of structuring their everyday lives and interacting with each other. By discussing how an ethnographic method could be tailored to work in such a context of violence and fear and the difficulties entailed in listening to silence, I wanted, in this chapter, to reveal (rather than to solve) a central problem of this work.

Concluding Notes
The chapter dealt with fear and in/security from two perspectives: as a social fact in the favela, experienced by the inhabitants, but also as factors that thoroughly constrained my work methodologically during and after fieldwork in Nova Cidade. However, although the fear that I too experienced was silencing and hampering, the fear also served as something that I had in common with my interlocutors. It helped me understand the favela situation. It also made me understood by my interlocutors to an extent that would not have been the case had we not shared time, worries and stories, however fractured. In this chapter, I have thus aimed to reflect on both how such fear influenced social relations and everyday life, and how I worked ethnographically to make sense of people’s silence and to communicate. On this note, I came to depend on my key interlocutors and friends Taú and Zaki. Clearly
their (sometimes different) ways of perceiving social and political life in Nova Cidade and Rio have influenced this dissertation in many ways, and their control both limited and enabled my inquiry in different ways. The ways that I came to perceive of life in the favela, of funk, and of the relationships between young favela residents and state authorities have, without a doubt, been colored by their perspectives.

Had my key interlocutors been older women fighting against police violence, drug traffickers or police officers, this dissertation would obviously have looked different. The “reality” that I portray would have been another. Yet, importantly, I have not randomly chosen activists as key interlocutors. I sympathize with their worldviews in various ways. Further, in order for me to gain “access,” I had to be with respected persons with ties to important people and organizations in the favela who could vouch for me. Throughout this process, I was very well aware of the potential problems with this reliance, hence compensated for this drawback by speaking and spending time with as many different people as possible. Walking as ethnographic method was essential for my ways of getting to know other people in the favela and the place itself. In the following chapters, I will dig deeper into the expressions and context of both violence and funk in Nova Cidade by turning my focus on favelas in the larger context of the urban system of Rio de Janeiro (Chapter 3) bailes (Chapter 4) the drug faction (Chapter 5) and the state (Chapter 6).
Chapter 3.
The Funk Setting: Favelas

The description in this chapter aims at giving a sense of how the Nova Cidade neighborhood is placed within the larger context of the urban system of Rio de Janeiro, particularly from the point of view of the economy and how people can make a living. Inspired by the literature on labor relations and urban planning and design, I have settled in this chapter for an account of the materialities of life as I observed them during my fieldwork. This is followed by some reflections on discrimination and more ideological and cultural aspects of stratification in Brazil, raising the issue of how the people of Nova Cidade are regarded by people in more well-to-do areas of the city and layers of society and how this view affects their self-evaluation. The chapter starts with a description of contemporary Nova Cidade as a complex of lively activity by delineating some structures, which, under other circumstances, could have offered competition to the societal organization provided by the drug dealers. The middle part of the chapter aims at conveying how this environment has come about through different yet interconnected markets of labor and land and how this phenomenon has been intertwined with the production of otherhood. My aim has been to move beyond the notion of the “favela” as a politicized, narrative device, used in either repressive or emancipatory agendas in and around Rio de Janeiro, and to let the chapter serve as a point of departure for the more ethnographic enquiries into funk and the specific power relations and practices (such as the baile, religion, and drug dealing), which will unfold in the subsequent chapters.

The Business and Bustle of Everyday Life in Nova Cidade

The area in which Nova Cidade is located, Zona Norte, is a working-class area that consists mainly of neighborhoods categorized either as “favelas” or as “lower-income class areas” and as both. They all contain a mixture of housing projects, apartment structures and large factory buildings, partly abandoned and partly made into homes. At one of the main roads in the lower part of Nova Cidade, people live in pretty, well-kept row houses. Some families here have self-paved driveways for cars, fences and gates for their driveways, and second-floor balconies where people sit to look out onto the
street. Some even have small satellite dishes. Most homes, however, are smaller and made out of brick, corrugated tin and have tile floors. There are streetlights on the paved main roads and on some of the pathways and in the alleys but not everywhere.

While many of the enterprises in the favela serve the local population, such as car and motorcycle repair, dressmaking and baking, others are linked to national and international companies as locations for off-site sweatshops, placed in homes or small working spaces. The cottage industry, “outsourcing” or “putting out system” ties the informal areas to the formal production process of the city. Large car-manufacturing plants have exploited the cheap labor of favela residents working in their own homes to upholster car seats. The manufacturers and their intermediaries deliver raw materials – like leather, stuffing, and buttons – to the workers’ homes and pick up the finished product, whereupon it is sent to join other parts, possibly produced in other countries (see e.g., Perlman 2010, Buechler 2014). Apart from the enterprise of drug distribution, there is no single undertaking that dominates the neighborhood or gives it a structure: rather, the area is subservient to the larger economy of the city.

Many of the residents of the North Zone favelas spend several hours every day travelling in heavy traffic between their homes in the North Zone and the wealthier South Zone of the city. They work as drivers, cleaners, gardeners, cooks, nurses, nannies, construction workers, street vendors, office boys, cashiers, or security guards in Barra da Tijuca, Leblon, Ipanema, Copacabana, Botafogo, Laranjeiras, Gloria and downtown Rio (Centro). Public transportation is expensive. In Rio, commuters pay each time they change from a subway to a bus or from one bus to another. Often, commuters have to pay several fares to get to work, and several others to get home. It is not uncommon for workers in Rio to sleep in the streets during the workweek, because they can only afford to go home on weekends (see also Alves and Evanson 2011:28).

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60 Although Rio’s Mayor Eduardo Paes has invested billions of reais in a great range of transport development projects related to the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016, bus lines travelling from the North Zone to the City Center and South Zone – as well as from the West Zone to the City Center and South Zone – have been suffering massive cuts in recent years.

61 In 2013, public demonstrations were organized in cities all around Brazil. The protests were sparked by increases in bus, train, and metro ticket prices. A bus ticket costs around 3 reais, about 0.93 US dollars.

62 Many people in Nova Cidade, especially older ones, did not consider buses around the area to be safe, especially not at night. I was repeatedly told that the police rob workers waiting in line at a bus stop in order to get home after a long day at work. The police take the workers’ bus money and then pull up their car in front of any bus to make it stop. The police get on the bus, where they threaten the driver so that the people they robbed can get a free ride home. I was also told that the police sometimes would swap a person they robbed for someone al-
If someone lives near the big roads in Nova Cidade, the house is worth more money because of proximity to both public and private transport to work places in the city. Property values depend on access to the so-called “formal city” and so does one’s social standing in the favela.

Neighborhoods like Nova Cidade are busy nests of diverse activity. They are the locations of business, storage, commerce, service provision, light-manufacturing, residence and sociable meetings. Bars, grocery stores, drug stores, soda and beer retailers, shops, bakeries, video arcades, pizzerias, spaces for samba and funk practice, snack bars and restaurants are set up next to pool tables, home-made ping-pong tables and small improvised bathtubs for children to play in during summer. There are beauty salons, barbershops, day-care centers and schools and a multitude of small manufacturing ventures inside and in front of the houses. On the streets, women and men push wooden carts on wheels with products such as soap, fruit, brooms, earrings, toys, and pirated CDs and DVDs. Some street-vendors sell rice and meat, others beer and sodas. Sweets, matches, cigarettes, alcohol, soap, beer, soft drinks, and other assorted goods are often sold from the windows or kiosks of the bottom floor of the multi-storied houses. To offer provisions for the residents, there are also two bakeries and a few small grocery stores, often only half-full of merchandise. Many people from Nova Cidade go to a *Senda* (grocery store) 15 minutes away to shop, despite it being considered very expensive by residents in Nova Cidade, and the fact that the store is situated in the middle of an insecure area. My friends Táu and Zaki were both robbed there during the time of my fieldwork.

Residents’ Associations and political action

The “civil society” of Nova Cidade consists of several local organizations. It includes a network for mothers organized against police violence and various groups organizing cultural and spare-time activities. A number of establishments cater for the needs of the inhabitants. Financed by the municipality, mothers in Nova Cidade built a day-care center in 2003 (today the façade is pierced with bullets). The community leaders in Nova Cidade, with whom I spoke about the center, were not sure who runs it today, or if anyone still gets money from the municipality to take care of it. There is also another day-care center run by an evangelical non-governmental organization (NGO). There are two health centers (often lacking even the most basic pharmaceuticals, such as pain-killers). A cultural center is managed by a group of activists and funk MCs and DJs. In addition, the neighborhood has one funk studio and two *quadras de samba*, or square-compounds. These are important multipurpose spaces, hosts to *bailes*, samba school rehearsals and ready on the bus with enough money to get on the next bus. The robbed person is put on the bus and someone else is thrown off the bus.
all kinds of social and political events. In Nova Cidade, these spaces, built by the municipalities, are administered by community leaders and drug traffickers. Two huge outdoor spaces are used for football, capoeira, funk parties and other events. The most important formal organizations represented in the favela, however, are the three Residents’ Associations and the various churches.

The former are of a certain interest for my later discussions of the claims to sovereignty made by the Brazilian state and their challengers in the urban margins of Rio. During the years following the Second World War, Brazil entered a phase of democratic government, when favelas began to exercise a certain degree of political power (Arias 2006). Clientelist politicians looked for votes by providing small favors to growing populations of favela residents. In contrast, under the Second Republic, the state hardly ever took an active and direct role in the administration of favelas, wanting rather to remove them and to create alternative forms of popular housing (Oliveira 1996). Lack of assistance from the state forced the favela residents to organize themselves. The first Residents’ Association was set up in 1945 in order to oppose potential removal efforts in several of the Zona Sul favelas. As a result, formal local leadership began to play an increasingly important role in the internal governance of the favelas. During the following years, favelas still had little electricity and no internal plumbing at all. People living in favelas had to go down to the city streets to find available spigots and were forced to carry heavy cans of water back up to their homes. Residents organized themselves into small vigilante groups in order to resolve disputes, control fights between residents and stop thievery and other activities that violated neighborhood norms (see Arias 2006).

During the 1950s, when there was a growth in community organizing, Brazil had its first real experience with competitive electoral democracy. Politicians again became active in Rio’s favelas, especially before elections, offering residents small prizes such as football jerseys for their votes. Populist politicians put pressure on the state to provide more services to favelas. The state began to back the efforts of the church to set up Residents’ Associations in the early 1960s, when 75 new Residents’ Associations were formed. With time, the government would start working directly with the Residents’ Associations to deliver aid in exchange for political support (Arias 2006).

According to Arias (2006), local political participation has declined distinctly over the past 30 years. Formally, it is still the Residents’ Associations that administer most favelas. Theoretically, favela residents choose their leaders through regular elections. Yet, since traffickers are nowadays so interested in the leadership of the Residents’ Association, the possibilities for efficient popular influence to operate through this office are severely circumscribed, and so is the scope for political action for the incumbents.
The leaders often run without much competition. Many scholars, including Goldstein (2003), state that, since the police frequently retaliate against those who denounce their illegal activities, it is difficult for community leaders to protest against police abuse. Given that the Residents’ Associations depend on the government for aid, they are forced to avoid criticizing the behavior of state agencies and politicians.

Christian spaces
Since the state has withdrawn some forms of basic support from favelas and the contacts between politicians and favelas are limited and extremely complicated as described above, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and religious groups have stepped in to fill the gap. Different organizations impose order over different aspects of life in the favelas. Residents’ Associations are no longer the primary leaders of favelas. Drug traffickers, Residents’ Associations, NGOs and religious groups manage the favelas together (see Arias 2006). In Nova Cidade (as in many other favelas located far away from the wealthy South Zone), there is, however, presently only one NGO (the one taking care of the day-care center mentioned earlier). It does not have much political influence. While the influence of the Residents’ Association is in decline, and the NGOs have largely failed to establish themselves, the various churches in Nova Cidade are, in contrast, in a process of expansion.

There are five Catholic churches and around 200 Evangelical “temples” in Nova Cidade. The social space is permeated with their ever-growing presence. No matter in which part of the favela you are, you see Christian spaces of varying size, always with a stage, seats, microphone, guitars and tambourines. The doors are open to evangelize those who live nearby, hang around outside or just happen to pass by. Every afternoon, the sound of Evangelical gospel music played through large speakers and the voices of praying pastors echo across the favela. Besides the amplified prayers originating from the churches, there are many birocas, little shops or kiosks, owned by Evangelicals, who play gospel music to demonstrate their religious affiliation to their customers, often where many people pass by, and consequently, people are constantly confronted with the Evangelical presence. Many

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63 Very few NGOs are able to give large-scale aid or work in more than a few favelas. In some, they provide limited programs such as child-care or human rights education. In general, activists in Nova Cidade spoke of NGOs with much disdain. The NGOs they knew about were recognized as very corrupt. Many of the older funk stars, however, dreamt of starting their own NGO. Through NGOs, they wanted to organize activities in order to keep children off the streets.

64 Cunha (in Oosterbaan 2009:92) writes that, in the favela Acari, there has been an increase in the number of local shops and birocas owned by evangélicos. This increase in churches and shops has led to what she calls “the Evangelical occupation of space” in the favela. The
people in Nova Cidade covered their doors and walls with Evangelical banners, whereby they defined the place as Christian space, while, at the same time, purifying and protecting it. Both many young and old people in the favela wore t-shirts with popular Biblical messages such as “I belong to the army of Jesus Christ.” The Igreja Universal (see below) places great emphasis on objects, pamphlets, stones, salt, and fluids such as oil and water. These objects function as mediators of the Holy Spirit and containers of curative and protective powers. By their words and prayers, the pastors bless and consecrate these objects and fluids, whereby the powers are transmitted to individuals. In Nova Cidade, groups of crentes (believers) circulate in the streets and alleys, day and night, easily identified in public by their clothing. Men often wear suits and polished shoes, holding Bibles and briefcases in their hands while some of the women wear long-sleeved dresses. The evangélicos hold their feasts and cultos throughout the day and invite their neighbors to participate. Normally, these encounters rely on amplifiers, microphones and musical instruments.

Youth and the Pentecostal community

Brazil is claimed to be the world’s largest Catholic country. It is also home to one of the largest syncretic traditions in the world with numerous more or less loosely related Afro-Brazilian traditions (like for example Candomblé, Umbanda and Xango). In recent years, one of the most intense Evangelical Protestant movements anywhere in the world has emerged in Brazil (see Munoz-Laboy et al 2011:658). The Igreja Universal, preaching prosperity theology, has shown the highest rate of expansion during the past few decades and become the country’s most visible church. Over the past 20 to 30 years, it has built several huge temples throughout Brazil and bought one of the six national public television broadcast networks, Rede Records, consisting of over 30 stations. It owns several radio stations, has an Internet site, its own publishing house and a record company. Every week it publishes the magazine Folha Universal. One of the recurring explanations of the religious-political transformation in Brazil is indeed the increasing appropriation of mass media by the Evangelical movements.

During fieldwork, I went to many different services organized by Assembleia de Deus and Igreja Universal. The smaller temples in Nova Cidade are typically squeezed in between people’s homes in the alleyways. Some of social space is permeated with their ever-growing presence. The Evangelicals have infiltrated distinct spheres of “life” in Acari and, in this context, the “occupation” of physical and social space is just one of the many facets of this phenomenon.

65 According to a study by the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística and Fundação Getúlio Vargas, the number of Brazilians identifying as Evangelical more than doubled from 9 percent in 1991 to 20 percent in 2010, see Americas Quarterly (2012), http://www.americasquarterly.org/node/382, summer 2012, accessed May 16, 2016.
them gather a full house every evening, while others remain half-empty. Much depends on the popularity of the pastor. A few cathedrals built in stone stand independently in the more prosperous parts of the favela. They tend to be frequented at special moments by occasional visitors. The three most popular Evangelical churches in Nova Cidade are Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), Igreja Pentecostal Deus é Amor (the Pentecostal Church of God and Love) and Assembleia de Deus (Assemblies of God). Although Assembleia de Deus has built more and bigger temples, Igreja Universal is by far the fastest growing congregation in Nova Cidade.

The Pentecostal community markets itself as a place where suffering is cured. The Evangelical temples in the favela offer concrete practices, such as church services, collective prayer and exorcism of evil spirits. Many people in the favela work in these church-spaces as pastors, helpers, assistants, musicians and cleaners. Young people, like my friend Ismael below, often work for the denominations without pay. Youth are, in general, important members for the Pentecostal churches. The pastors, often quite young themselves, work hard to keep them as members.

Sometimes during fieldwork, I would go to the church service with Ismael, who was around 20 years old. He came from a family of entrepreneurs. His father owned a birosca and made sweets that he sold in Nova Cidade and in other areas around the city. Ismael’s mother used to bake cakes that the family sold, but she had stopped working many years earlier.

One of the first times I participated in the Igreja Universal church service, Ismael explained to me that they have to purify people in order to get rid of all the evil in a person. The Evangelical churches convince people that there is a spiritual battle between God and the Devil taking place inside each one of them. In addition, this battle is visible in the domain of popular culture. Like many other evangélicos, Ismael argued that people should not listen to funk music because of the immoral lifestyle of those in the favela who go to bailes. Ismael constantly spoke of the importance of keeping oneself busy. For the evil not to take hold of a person “you constantly need to have a plan and keep busy all the time.” Except for playing the trombone in three different gospel bands, he himself worked as an office boy delivering mail in the South Zone of the city, studied, went to church every day and played music and assisted the pastors there. He also played football and helped his father with the business, something he had done since he was a child.

Youth have become a particularly valuable symbol of church success within the context of unemployment, violence and drug abuse in favelas (Munoz-Laboy et al 2011:664). By “saving” youth, religious leaders are able to satisfy their ideological goals while at the same time bringing financial benefits to their churches. To attract young people and protect themselves against the loss of membership over time, both Catholic and Pentecostal
churches have attempted to create environments of acceptance, understanding and openness. Some young people in Nova Cidade enthusiastically told me about a few Evangelical churches in Rio that organized gospel-funk parties. Within both the Pentecostal and Catholic traditions, working members donate a portion of their income to their churches. When young members stay within the same religious institution, as they become adults, the institution continues to profit; when members leave, it suffers. Pentecostal churches usually depend upon small, consistent donations from many members. Hence, they are more financially vulnerable than Catholic churches that tend to depend on larger donations from a small number of wealthy individuals (ibid).66 Both of these denominations benefit from the unpaid labor of youth, especially those in their late teens and early twenties. Pastors whom I interviewed in the favela saw young people as potentially violent, vulnerable and ignorant, and expressed their wish to turn them into productive citizens.

Evangelical politics

Today (2016), the Evangelical churches play a central role in Brazilian politics. During the past decade, pastors have run as candidates from local to national level. Although divergent regarding economic issues, lawmakers in the Evangelical bloc in Brazil’s lower house are overwhelmingly opposed to a 2013 decision which recognized same-sex marriage, currently (summer 2016) under appeal in Brazil’s Supreme Court.67 They are also against the legalization of abortion. The Igreja Universal has undertaken a nationwide political project. It is broadly recognized that their mass media have been essential in the constitution of their political support of votes. The messages broadcast by the Evangelical churches on radio and television are generally aimed at people living in relative poverty. The Evangelical churches present utopian versions of a better society, based on Christian values. They have launched aggressive media campaigns against other religious and cultural practices (see Oosterbaan 2009 and below). Charismatic Evangelical politicians (all men) present themselves as trustworthy, because they answer to an Authority higher than humankind (Oosterbaan 2009).

Instead of portraying practices, such as samba, carnival and funk, as the epitome of Brazilian-ness and of national pride, the Evangelical organizations link them to the many social problems of Brazil. Based on fundamentalist readings of the Bible, Catholic and Afro-Brazilian religious practices

66 Since the Catholic Church in Brazil owns schools and large amounts of property, it has a more reliable stream of revenue than the Pentecostal churches. Consequently, it is less financially dependent upon its fellowship than the latter are (Munoz-Laboy et al 2011:663).
are portrayed as expressions of devil worship. Especially the supposed alignment between social misery and Afro-Brazilian religious practice has laid the ground for spiritual purification as a counteroffensive to social despair. As I have already noted, there are no public Terreiros de Candomblé left in Nova Cidade. Only one elderly woman, the aunt of my friend Taù, is still openly practicing Umbanda in her home. However, it is no longer open for the public. Zaki estimates that, 15 years ago, there were at least four terreiros open for the public. Over the years, those practicing Afro-Brazilian religions have been pursued, ridiculed and punished by the Evangelical churches and their followers. It is widely assumed by those I spent time with in Nova Cidade that people in the favela who still practice Candomblé hide their traditional white clothes in a bag and secretly sneaks out to other areas around Rio where Candomblé still can be practiced in relative peace.

In sum, the local “civil society” in Nova Cidade, in effect consists of groups of women mobilizing against police violence, human rights defenders (or activists), community leaders working for the Residents’ Associations, funk artists, religious leaders – and also drug traffickers. In order to understand the (often violent) historical and socio-economical context in which these actors live and work, I will now turn to look at the ways that favelas have been approached historically by “the elite” and “the state,” and that continues to influence ways of imagining and acting in favelas today.

Public Policies and Vagrancy Laws

Rio de Janeiro was the place in Brazil where the elite first began to develop a distinct sense of public space. That was enacted through the segregating practices that forced Afro-Brazilians, such as freed slaves, to slums outside of the city center. Before the end of slavery in 1888, the Brazilian elites were very concerned about the image they conveyed to their North American and Western European trade partners (Goldstein 2003). They were ashamed of their long history of slavery and the large Afro-Brazilian and “mixed” population. Brazilians struggled with the ideology held in Europe at the time that biological and “racial” differences were causative and reflective of different stages of “civilization.” The Brazilian elites worried about the “dark-skinned” population that to different degrees had integrated into their society. Goldstein states that this tension was played out in an urban architectural design that physically reinforced the separation of the rich and the poor.

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68 In Nova Cidade, many of those who described themselves as activists, would also say that they were “human rights defenders,” which is why I sometimes use these terms interchangeably.
69 In Nova Cidade, there are three Residents’ Associations. At the time of my fieldwork, they were in constant conflict with each other.
Scholars suggest that these segregating practices were part of the elite’s submission to colonial domination (Goldstein 2003, Needell 1995).

In the early 19th century, groups of runaway slaves formed quilombos—a variant of the famous communities of run-away slaves in colonial Brazil—in different parts of the city (Graden 1996). The first favelas were, however, created when the working poor and demobilized soldiers, together with former slaves and their children, settled hillsides near Rio’s commercial center, during the last years of the 19th century. The abolition of slavery led to a large-scale migration of former plantation workers to Rio. It was, however, only in the 1920s that “favela” became a generic term for “squatter settlements,” “shantytowns,” and all types of “irregular settlements.” The first neighborhood called favela (or Favella) was named in this way by soldiers who had fought in a civil war in Bahia and settled down on a hill in Rio de Janeiro called Morro da Providencia to await their pay (Valladares 2000). The term favela was initially designated in dictionaries as a botanical name of a plant that was used for tea and as a building material. It was a plant that provoked itching; hence it had a symbolic meaning (ibid). Providencia was often reported in the newspaper’s police columns as a place of “danger,” “crime” and “lack of control” (see Abreu 1994, Reyes Novaes 2014).

Within 3 years of the establishment of the favela on Morro da Providencia, the police had already surrounded and planned to remove the growing community (Arias 2006). Over the next generation, city leaders would make repeated, unsuccessful, efforts at trying to remove it, often motivated by concerns over public hygiene. Since the 1800s, there have been on-going efforts to get rid of informal settlements with help from the civil and military police, by building codes, laws and even through fires. As previously mentioned, public opinion held that favelas, from their creation, were inhabited by vagabundos e´ criminosos (vagrants and criminals) and that they were breeding grounds for violence, prostitution, family breakdown and social disorganization. Public policies went hand-in-hand with these images (Valladares 2000). In the first years of the 20th century, a public hygiene campaign sought to eliminate yellow fever and smallpox in the city of Rio. The favelas and other poor working-class areas were seen as centers of disease and as a threat to public health. It was also during this period that favela residents became the targets of vagrancy laws. After Brazil abolished slavery in 1888, the new free labor market failed to incorporate most former slaves and most of the poor.

Anyone without a permanent job or a fixed address was considered a vagabundo and subject to arrest. As many favela residents did not have steady jobs, and because the favelas, as such, were considered temporary, the vagrancy laws gave the police both incentive and justification to arrest...
favela residents (Penglase 2014:46). These images and campaigns still have an impact on Rio’s favelas and those who reside in them.

As depicted above, favelas were, almost from the start, seen as sites of difference and absence, whether understood in terms of skin color with favelas linked to “blackness,” in terms of modernity, with favelas seen as remains of rural villages, or in class terms, with favelas seen as spaces of poverty and vagrancy (see Penglase 2014 and below). By the end of the 1920s, journalists emphasized the expansion of favelas and the role of the media in circulating information about these areas (Abreu 1994, Reyes Novaes 2014). During the following decades, new urban transformation was planned in the city, and the idea that favelas ought to be removed and destroyed informed both public discourse and public policy.

Building codes and favela elimination

After industrialization, the pattern remained: new forms of regulated labor and ensuing welfare benefits were put into place, but they excluded laborers not employed by the industry. Industrialization, in fact, coincided with the emergence of many new forms of informality, ranging from all kinds of autonomous and domestic work to small, informal enterprises run from backyards. The workers in these sectors were invisible to any labor legislation, which in turn impeded collective representation.

The first official document to explicitly deal with these neighborhoods was written in 1927, when the Brazilian government decided to hire a group of French technicians to create an urban plan. They worked under the French architect Alfred Agache, who recommended that all favelas should be eradicated as they were considered a “sanitary problem” occupied by a “nomadic population, averse to any kind of hygiene” (Abreu 1994 in Reyes Novaes 2014:208 and Valladares 2000:16). Similar ideas appeared in the 1937 Building Code (Codigo de Obras) that recognized the existence of favelas, yet, at the same time forbade the building of new favelas and banned the expansion of existing ones (Valladares 2000, Zaluar and Alvito 2004, Perelman 2010). The Building Code, in fact, recommended the elimination of favelas and further argued that these places “could not be recorded in the city’s official map” (Burgos 2006 in Reyes Novaes 2014:208). Nevertheless, from the 1930s and onward, favelas grew dramatically as a result of migration generated by the industrialization of the major cities in the Southeast: Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Belo Horizonte. The government and public opinion viewed favelas as a serious threat to the well-being of the then 2 million people of the city.

After World War I, the Brazilian elite began to develop a nationalist consciousness, an awareness of themselves as “different” from the people in Europe and North America. This nationalist consciousness was combined
with a progressive modernist art and literary movement (Goldstein 2003). Gilberto Freyre’s book *The Master and the Slaves* (1986/1933) was published, perpetuating the idea of Brazil as a proud “rainbow nation.” As a result, Brazil came to see itself as a “mixed” civilization, an image that has become the essence of *Brasilidade*. The elite at this time used the poor segments of society as representatives of a different, exotic and exciting nation. Little by little, a sector of the elite started to project samba as a symbol for this “mixed” nation. “Everyone” could gather around football, samba and carnival. At the same time, segregating and discriminatory practices continued. The situation of the poor did not improve with Getulio Vargas, who was installed by the military in 1930 and ruled the country as a dictator between 1937 and 1945 during the period called *Estado Novo* (New State).

The “issue” of favelas and other informal settlements arose with the urban explosion that resulted from the many rural migrants who travelled to the big cities of Latin America, Asia, and Africa during the post-Second World War period. Relatives and hometown friends followed the early pioneers to the city and settled beside them in areas where they were close to jobs and urban amenities. In response to this urban influx, all kinds of policies and programs have been tried, in order to limit the city-ward migration and city size. Failing to limit urban growth, planners and policy makers were disgusted as the informal settlements spread outward into the urban periphery. In their panic over the expanding settlements, policy makers failed to see that these communities were not problems but solutions to the lack of affordable housing (see Perlman 2010, McCann 2014).

State presence inside favelas

The growth of favelas and the government’s attempt to construct working-class housing areas during the 1940s led to a new moment, as the state began to act more directly upon favelas in a material and embodied way. In 1946, the *Fundacao Leao XIII* was founded, aiming to join the state and the Catholic church in united action, in order to solve the “moral problem” of favelas (Burgos 2006 in Reyes Novaes 2014). From 1947-1954, this institution implemented basic services of water and sewage in 34 favelas and built eight community centers. In order to plan interventions in favelas, the calculation of the number of favelas and of people living in these places became an important task. In 1948, the first favela census in the Federal District was undertaken, showing the existence of 105 favelas in the city. In 1957, favela residents created an autonomous organization in order to defend their interests in regard to the state.

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71 Getulio Vargas is an individual whose influence in Brazilian politics is legendary because of the different kinds of Brazilian governments he led throughout his lifetime.
However, after 1964, the military dictatorship considered any association of favela residents illegal and made the elimination of favelas a national priority (Reyes Novaes 2014). Yet, the number of favelas was still growing, and between 1970 and 1974 they increased in number from 162 to 283 (see Valladares 1978 and in Reyes Novaes 2014:210). The failure of removal policies during much of the 20th century was evident, and, after the 1970s, the favelas seemed to have gained a permanent place in the city. The Brazilian press now began to recognize the permanence of these places. They no longer simply silenced them as previously but instead started to emphasize the participation of these places in emerging “urban problems,” such as drug trafficking (Reyes Novaes 2014).

Various authors criticize the exaggerated description of favelas as differentiated from other areas of the city, for example by considering the role of Residents’ Associations (see Burgos 2006, Arias 2006) and the embodied presence of the state inside favelas (Garmany 2009). Garmany, in reference to Foucault (1975/1977), shows how the state can also be present in spaces that seem to have little material evidence of it, by manifestations of “governmentality” and “bio-power.” By considering how residents in favelas vote, work, take care of their wealth and organize themselves in the face of the state (Burgos 2006, Pandolfi and Grynszpan 2003 in Reyes Novaes 2014), it becomes evident that it is overly simplistic to categorize these areas as “off-Panopticon.” 72 In fact, I would argue, in line with Garmany (2009, see Reyes Novaes 2014), that people in favelas are even more disciplined corporally by the embodied state than “formal citizens,” who, in many cases, live in more-or-less gated spaces where disrespect for the law “is almost a rule” (Caldeira 2006). 73 The idea that favelas are spaces with total state absence is a myth that has extensively influenced ways of imagining and acting in these areas, not the least by representatives of the state.

72 Even though favelas have been increasingly mapped and some of them have become popular destinations for tourists for many years, they are seen as defaming the image of the city. At the same time, critical cartographers, writing in the Foucaultian tradition, have long argued that maps are a technology of power. Maps are part of the intelligence that police use in their invasions of favelas, and in the subsequent house-to-house searches looking for drugs, guns and gang members. Likewise, federal, state, municipal and private actors rely heavily on maps and data associated with those maps to carry out their projects (see Freeman 2014).

73 As an example, I observed countless numbers of young people categorized as black from Nova Cidade being stopped by the police and accused of breaking different kinds of traffic rules. In contrast, it is my experience that my middle- and upper-class friends categorized as white, happily ignored numerous types of traffic rules, without worrying about being stopped by the police or about the consequences, if they were stopped after all.
Land and Property

At the end of the 19th century, distinctions between different forms of popular housing were not as rigid as they are today. Places that are considered favelas today were identified in other ways at the time. Writings from the early 20th century about Brazilian favelas and *mocambos* (shacks) suggest that these terms were invented, not so much to describe the places where poor people live, but rather to spell out the relationship between such places and their surroundings (Fischer et al., 2014:13). From the start, local strongmen and property owners divided these areas into lots and rented them out, using political leverage to protect their irregular real-estate operations.

The demolition of crowded tenement housing in the first years of the 20th century spurred the growth of early favelas – as former residents who were pushed out of the formal real-estate market resorted to the informal market. The two factors that would shape favela expansion for the next century were already established: the formal sector was not structured to provide housing for the urban poor and working class, and actors in the informal sector stood ready to extract profit from their ability to control terrain. The first factor has always been clear and has had obvious consequences. The second is more subtle but equally decisive. There is in Rio no such thing as free urban soil. Instead, informal landlords have used their practical control over unoccupied land to extract rents from the urban poor in exchange for permission to build or occupy space (see McCann 2014:22).

Through the middle of the 20th century, the lowest paid workers of enterprises such as factories and hospitals were often permitted to erect shacks at the rear of enterprise property, a solution that guaranteed their employers a local workforce while suppressing wages. Employees of public and semi-public institutions such as the water company often followed similar practices. Over time, as families and residents rented subplots to newcomers, these nuclei grew into small favelas. The consolidation of the formal real-estate market in the middle of the 20th century swallowed up most available land, setting aside much of it for future development. Strict building codes and restrictions on rent increases in the formal market, together with the near absence of mortgage loans, discouraged investment in popular housing. Periodic attempts at housing projects (see below) did little to mitigate the shortage of worker housing and especially of the unemployed poor. This shortage speeded the growth of informal housing in the interstices of the formal city. Mediating informal real estate became a more lucrative market than truck farming, giving property-owners strong incentives to demarcate and rent out lots (McCann 2014).
Defining favelas

Until the turn of the millennium, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, IBGE), keeper of Brazil’s official census and geographic data, defined favelas as a type of “subnormal agglomeration,” consisting of a collection of at least 51 housing units, occupying or having occupied, in the recent past, terrain that is not the property of the residents (public or private), arrayed, in general, in disorganized and dense form, and lacking, in the majority, essential public services (see McCann 2014). Already by the late 1970s, this definition was out-of-date. Some favela populations had grown to tens of thousands with brick and concrete houses, surrounded by more precarious dwellings, with irregular connections to public electricity and water networks. By the 1990s favelas had public services as extensive as in many other working-class areas, however, with one important distinction: favela residents themselves were expected to play a role in building and maintaining infrastructure.

Although the criterion of an absence of property-title is relevant for the definition of a “favela,” favelas are not “squatter cities.” Squatting, in the sense of occupying land that legally belongs to someone else, was never the rule in Rio’s favelas (McCann 2014, Fischer et al., 2014). The vast majority of Rio’s favela residents either bought their lot in an informal market or paid rent. Some of them possess something called a “title of possession,” a document that helps protect them from eviction, but does not give them the legal title to the property. Only a tiny minority of residents has legal title to property. Absence of property title has remained the single most consistent characteristic of favelas for more than a century. However, it has done so in ways that reveal the existence of a deeply-rooted, informal, real-estate market, a system that complicates efforts to confer formal property title on current residents (McCann 2014, Fischer et al. 2014).

Absence of property title is invisible, and hence not enough to define a category of urban neighborhood. Favela architecture seems to be a more than obvious identifying characteristic, especially in the labyrinthine communities that creep up the green hills above Rio’s South Zone. On these slopes, brick complexes of several stories arise from small alleys and pathways, supported by wooden stilts, strung together by knotted electric wires. Open space in these communities is almost completely absent as every square meter of usable space has been claimed and developed. The older, so-called consolidated favelas, have an infrastructure that has been integrated into the existing settlement, built from the street upward or inward, following the contours of the land. Depending on the size of the favela, there are thousands of individual structures in every stage of construction, made of large, hollow, red bricks set at different angles according to what the topography permits, rising two to five stories with flat lajes, roofs (see below) that have satellite dishes and tall metal poles sticking out of the top. These are
reinforcing rods built in anticipation of securing the next story. In the meantime, the rooftop is commonly used as a recreation area.

Favelas in the flat lands, on Rio’s West Zone, look quite different. Although many favelas here have regular street grids and defined building plots, many people still live in *barracos* (shacks) in their early stage of construction. Often, when there is high tide, the *barracos* here are partially inundated. Many of these shacks are built on so-called *loteamentos*. They are housing developments created by dividing a tract of land into small plots, generally lacking roads. *Loteamentos* are called “irregular” or “clandestine” because they often are hidden behind large buildings or in the midst of grazing land and because they occupy the land illegally (Perlman 2010). Currently, *loteamentos* are among the fastest growing informal settlements in Rio, and many of the favelas and *loteamentos* in the West Zone still have minimal access to urban services.

There is, however, no juridical way to distinguish between *loteamentos* (subdivided lots) and favelas (see McCann 2014). The irregular subdivisions have gradually been incorporated into the surrounding fabric of the city, and there is often no visible indication of their difference. In contrast, favelas continue to be recognized as nodes of difference within the surrounding city. As illustrated, the term favela describes a variety of neighborhoods. One common feature across these different types is that homes are never finished, as exemplified above with the *lajes* and flat roofs. This unfinished nature of favela architecture is a more consistent characteristic than the organic style of the iconic South Zone favelas portrayed in countless books, films and music videos (for example, Michael Jackson’s famous “They don’t really care about us” from 1996).

The North Zone, housing projects and citizenship

In the North Zone of the city, in Nova Cidade, some run-down apartment buildings stand, inhabited largely by people from Bahia. These *conjuntos*, or housing projects, stand in the middle of more typical favela homes. These projects were built in the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s for displaced favela residents, then recently evicted during the favela-removal campaign. Favela residents were moved to projects where water and sewage networks were at best under construction. Roads were not paved. Schools were planned but not built. Public transportation did not reach the projects. The residents were given non-transferrable property titles and had to make low, monthly, mortgage payments. Often residents did not manage to pay their monthly payments, or sometimes refused to so in objection to the state’s failure to deliver the promised infrastructure and services. As a growing number of people failed to make monthly payments, incentives for remaining residents to keep up their payments diminished (see McCann 2014).
Removal did not improve living conditions for those resettled. At the same time, social protest increased (see Alves and Evason 2011).

According to Bryan McCann (2014:32), the fact that a growing number of residents fell delinquent diminished the state’s incentives to complete infrastructure and deliver services to those living here. As a consequence of insufficient funding, the housing projects deteriorated. New residents built their own houses between and around the apartment blocks. By the 1980s, the housing projects were themselves perceived as favelas, both by outsiders and by those living in the projects. Rio’s housing projects started in the formal sector and gradually became part of the informal sector, in contrast to, for example, some of the irregular subdivisions mentioned above.

Favela residents have historically been “rights poor,” that is, they have been treated as second-class citizens by official bureaucracies and representatives of the law, in relation to property, public services and political associations, and regarding the right to come and go (the freedom of movement, or o direito de ir e vir). Joao Costa Vargas and Jaime Amparo Alves (2010:613) describe the experience of poor Rio residents as a highly racialized “relational citizenship” or “non-citizenship.” Likewise, James Holston (2008) has shown how historically the category of “citizen” in Brazilian society has been subject to differential rights and subtle gradations that have forced many people who enjoy formal citizenship to resort to illegal arrangements to survive. Agents of municipal and state government, above all the police, have commonly treated both residents in favelas and those residing in housing projects as illegal aliens in their own city. As long as they do not make any trouble, they are free to go about their business. Once entangled in the workings of the law, they are likely to find themselves caught up in a way that can only be severed with help from a political patron. This situation, writes McCann (2014:33), has kept favela residents and residents of the housing projects in a vulnerable state.

According to the Institute of Applied Economic Research (O Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, IPEA), the North Zone has the lowest human development index in Rio de Janeiro. Child mortality rates in favelas in the area are five times higher than those in the southern districts. Compared with the Northeast of Brazil, where a large proportion of their inhabitants come from, however, the standard of living represents a considerable improvement in many ways. The indices of human development, as measured by the UN, are higher in many parts of Northeast Brazil than in the favelas of northern Rio. The life expectancy in a Rio favela is about 56 years old, compared with 73 years old in Brazil as a whole.

The North Zone is today the most populated district of Rio de Janeiro. It is divided into 17 administrative areas, which are further subdivided into around 100 neighborhoods and sub-neighborhoods. There are a few well-to-do areas like Tijuca, Alto da Boa Vista, Méier and Vila Isabel, but low-
income households and favelas dominate. Many of the flat favelas in the North Zone, like Nova Cidade, are built on former sugar cane plantations. Several very large favelas in this part of the city are the size of towns, with populations reaching somewhere between 65,000 and 150,000 inhabitants, such as Complexo do Maré, Nova Cidade and Complexo do Alemão. Complexo do Alemão (composed of around 13 favelas), Complexo do Maré (composed of around 15 favelas and housing projects) and Nova Cidade constitute administrative areas and are considered bairros, or formal city neighborhoods. The subunits or favelas comprising them, however, also exist in the City Hall’s System for Low Income Settlements (Sistema de Assentamentos de Baixa Renda, SABREN) in which data on the city’s favelas and irregular allotments are found (see Cavalcanti 2014:208).

Since the 1940s, the concentration of industries in the northern part of Rio and its relatively close proximity to the center has attracted the working poor to this urban area. The neighborhoods here first emerged as the railroad system expanded from the center towards the north. Favelas in the North Zone of Rio, such as Nova Cidade, were hit hard by deindustrialization and rising unemployment in the 1980s. Many of the favelas had been symbiotic with adjacent factories. When São Paulo’s industrial belt boomed, Rio’s shrank. Factories closed down or relocated, and nearby favela populations expanded, in many cases colonizing the abandoned factory itself. Working class neighborhoods in the North Zone became what Wacquant has called “reservoirs of the unemployed urban poor” (2011: 8, and see McCann 2014).

Markets of Labor

This state of affairs continued even at the height of economic growth. The so-called economic miracle of the 70s only incorporated around 50 percent of all Brazilian urban workers. Still today, regardless of all recent efforts at formalization and employment programs, the formal employment rate remains at only about 40 percent (see Veloso 2012).74

The favelas of Rio have the highest formal unemployment rates in the city (see Zaluar 2010, Perelman 2010, Goldstein 2003), and the entry requirements for most jobs have risen faster than educational achievement. Jobs requiring unskilled, manual labor are increasingly scarce. The employment opportunities are reduced by changes in the job market linked to external forces, but also reflect problems specific to Rio, such as the stigma of living in a favela. The educational levels among those living in favelas have increased dramatically in the last decades, but these gains are not fully reflected in employment or income. In comparison, a favela resident on average needs to complete 12 years of schooling in order to equal what a non-

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74 The carteira assinada is sometimes also translated as Laborers Card.
fa\-ve\-la resident earns after only 6 years of education (Perlman 2010). The mean wage of someone with a high school (university) degree in Brazil is 116 percent higher than that of someone with no schooling (Bursztyn and Coffman 2012).

The 1980s, marked by widespread debt crises in Latin America, is often referred to as Brazil’s “lost decade.” In the aftermath of this difficult period, the 1990s were both a period of consolidating democracy following the end of Brazil’s dictatorship and a period when neo-liberal policies were introduced. The latter impacted Rio’s poor from many different angles, beyond the loss of jobs brought about by the deindustrialization of the city. In Rio, urban revitalization programs promoted the privatization of public space, thus impeding street vendors from selling goods in highly visible areas of the city and contributing to the constraints for Rio’s “informal economies” (Millar 2014).

Since the 1980s, the state of Rio de Janeiro has had one of the lowest rates of economic growth in the Brazilian federation.\textsuperscript{75} The city of Rio and Duque de Caixas in Baixada Fluminense, however, respectively rank second and sixth among Brazilian cities, in terms of economic output. This makes the metropolitan region second only to São Paulo in economic importance in Brazil, and third in South America (see Alves and Evanson 2011). The Baixada area, which has been said to represent the “new Rio de Janeiro,” is a dynamic region of population and urban growth. It is located in the flat interior area between the Zona Sul and the interior mountain towns. In this region, textiles, clothing, cosmetics, shoes, furniture and other products are important for the growing economy. The level of development and the industrial and commercial importance of Baixada Fluminense are significant features of the socio-economic growth of greater Rio de Janeiro.\textsuperscript{76} However, as in the history of development in other parts of Brazil, extreme income concentration in the Baixada has generated low, human-development indices in terms of life-expectancy, educational attainment, and income. Poverty in the area has contributed to the formation of many new favelas (Alves and Evanson 2011).

The diversified economy of metropolitan Rio de Janeiro and surrounding cities provides employment for a large working class, while maintaining well-off middle- and upper-classes, most of which live in the South Zone of the city. Although the rate of unemployment is still high among favela resi-

\textsuperscript{75} The original development of Rio de Janeiro was closely associated with the enormous accumulation of wealth based on the export of coffee from the vast fazendas (plantations) of the aristocracy in the 19th century, as well as the fact that the city was the national capital from 1863 until 1960.

\textsuperscript{76} Rio’s main manufacturing industries include chemicals, pharmaceuticals, clothing, furniture and processed foods. Service industries are also very important. The city is a major center for banking, finance and insurance. Rio is also still a major port, from where coffee, sugar, and iron ore are exported to many different parts of the world.
dents compared to unemployment-rates among residents in other areas, the continued growth of income in the middle- and upper-class neighborhoods of the South Zone of Rio is said to have brought even more rapid growth in the favela population because so much work has become available in the service sector. It is, however, a largely underpaid labor force that makes the accelerated rate of development of the industrial service, and commercial sector possible (see Alves and Evanson 2011). The Rio region continues to attract poor, often young, migrants from the Brazilian North, Northeast, and from the neighboring state Minas Gerais.

*Bolsa Familia*

Those I got to know in Nova Cidade, who had formal work, did not manage to support themselves and their families on the minimum wage they earned. In March 2008, the regulated minimum salary in Brazil was 415 reais, approximately 127 US dollars\(^77\). In 2010, the Brazilian minimum wage increased to 545 per month, and, in 2015, it increased again to 788 reais per month, about 241 US dollars. “Formal jobs” in this context refer to jobs considered legal by the state and associated with a signed Worker’s ID (*Carteira Assinada*, see more below). In order to be able to pay food, gas, water, electricity, phone bills and so on, they had to hold several jobs at a time or ask the local drug dealers for financial help.\(^78\)

In the last decade or so, a rise in minimum wages, subsidies, conditional cash transfer programs (CCTs), and the provision of loans by state-owned banks, directed towards lower-income sectors, have triggered a movement of people from the poorest sectors of society into what is categorized by the state as “middle-class.”\(^79\) The inequality index for Brazil has been declining over the past decade, partly due to the effect of *Bolsa Familia*. This is a program that, at least in part, provides financial aid to poor families on the condition that they invest in the health and education of their children (Perlman 2010). The stipends are meant to supplement a family’s declared earnings in an effort to raise monthly income.\(^80\) The funds are nearly always channeled

\(^{77}\) 1 reais = 0.306 US dollars, exchange rate as of September 19, 2016.

\(^{78}\) Figures from the IBGE (Brazil’s government statistics bureau) show that, in 2012, 16.2 million people (8.5 percent of the population,) lived on less than 70 reais per month – the equivalent of around 1.30 US dollar per person per day, which is the limit set by President Rousseff as the extreme poverty line, see S. de Sainte Croix (2012) in *The Rio Times* online, http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-business/brazil-strives-for-economic-equality, February 2, 2012, accessed March 5, 2016.

\(^{79}\) In Brazil, the state categorizes its citizens into classes from A to E. The richest belong to A, the poorest to E.

through the mothers of poor and working-class families. According to the World Bank (2010), the program reaches about 50 million Brazilians (or 13.8 million families).  

Although *Bolsa Família* currently, in 2016, is popular among politicians across the political spectrum, it has created much public debate in Brazil over the past 10 years. Critical voices claim that rather than being a template for poverty reduction, it keeps people dependent on welfare and does not encourage self-sufficiency, and that it is a significant burden on state funds. Yet, it has had enormous economic and social impact across Brazil, and especially on the poorest Northeast regions. Although favela residents are making more money than in the past, and unemployment rates have dropped over the past 10 years, unemployment is, as mentioned, still high, especially among young people in favelas. According to a survey by the Federation of Industries of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FIRJAN), about a third of youth in the favelas are out of school and out of work.

Labor and a way of being together

The strategy used by political leaders to increase consumption by improved access to loans that I mentioned earlier has resulted in vast consumer-debt worries in places like Nova Cidade. Those I got to know in the favela who could afford to buy things, that is, those who owned credit cards and were able to pay at least some of their bills, bought their home appliances, refrigerators, televisions, construction materials, and so on credit. They will have to pay off their consumer goods for a very long time to come. Many were deep in debt. In addition, some people, like one of my neighbors, had bought a new refrigerator but had not yet installed it as she knew that she would not be able to afford to pay the electricity bill.

The costs of living in Rio de Janeiro have risen dramatically in recent years. In order to be able to help support themselves and their families, many young women and men in Nova Cidade were looking for work during the time of my fieldwork. They took on day-to-day jobs in the favela or adjacent neighborhoods, in home-based stores, repair shops and other relatively informal undertakings. Some of my interlocutors, like the nation-wide famous funk MC Pedrinho, around 40 years old, who lived with his three children in the housing projects in the northern part of Nova Cidade, earned a little money by watching other people’s cars in the areas around the favela,

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82 In 2011, Rio de Janeiro was the twelfth most expensive city in the world, and Brazil was the most expensive country in the Americas, according to Mercer’s Worldwide Cost of Living Survey, See de Sainte Croix (2011) in *Rio Times* online, http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-business/cost-of-living-soars-in-brazil/#sthash.3Cht5bwW.dpuf, August 2, 2011, accessed December 5, 2015.
where robberies and assaults were considered common. He and his friends also got paid to guard schools and churches around the area or in the South Zone.

Those of my interlocutors who had family members with businesses in the favela worked for them after or before school and during weekends. This work could, for example, imply baking and selling bread and pastry, cooking and/or serving food, working in local shops, beauty parlors and video or internet shops, doing construction work, or running errands for the drug dealers. Those who were engaged in funk taught other children and youth in Nova Cidade how to make music and dance. They wrote lyrics, practiced choreography and rehearsed several times a week, while often at the same time taking on other kinds of more-or-less informal work in the favela. Many devoted funk fans, children, young men and a few young women took care of the huge sound systems that are used for samba and funk parties many times a week.

This is not to say that people only engage in activities for money. Leonardo, a man around 40 years old, who was well known in the favela for his commitment to young football players, had been working as a football coach for 17 years when I met him. Every day, right outside Nova Cidade, where a huge dump is located, he trained children and youth from different favelas around the area. Many others I knew also worked without salary. Zaki, for example, (the left-wing poet, activist and human rights defender) had earlier been getting money from the municipality to engage children and youth with different activities (such as theater, music and football). After a few years he had stopped receiving such money. The politicians working for the municipality were now financially supporting those in the favela who voted and did political propaganda for a right-wing party. Zaki was still trying to do the same job as before, but for free. Through personal contacts, he was struggling to get a European NGO to support his work. The activists in Nova Cidade organized political debates, graffiti courses and poetry nights. The funk star and former drug trafficker who was killed by the police a few years ago, MC Sandro, financed a social center for children and youth in Nova Cidade. He organized language and music courses and employed local funk artists to give dance classes.83 Funk, like football and art, is thus both business and leisure, both labor and a way of being together.

Formal and Informal Work

As many scholars have observed, formal, working-class jobs are vanishing and informal, flexible work is becoming the norm. People in Nova Cidade

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83 In order to have enough classrooms and teachers for everyone, Brazilian children and youth only stay in school one part of the day, either in the morning or afternoon.
who earlier had been working formally in the industry sector now worked informally. This change, I was told, was partly due to what is called *terceirização* (outsourcing). In order to reduce costs, employers fired workers in the industrial sector who were not directly related to production. Later, they bought the same services from specialized firms. Often, however, these firms in their turn do not employ workers formally but hire them informally. Many young people in Nova Cidade that I spent time with said they were excluded from the kinds of regular and secure working-class jobs that some of the older people in the favela have (see also Veloso 2012).

Formal and informal working conditions, in that way, could draw the dividing line between generations. Most of my interlocutors in Nova Cidade worked without a signed so-called Worker’s ID card (*Carteira Assinada*), a document that guarantees a minimum wage, benefits, and the recognition of a regularly employed worker in Brazil. To have a Worker’s Card implies that you are registered by the Ministry of Labor, as opposed to having an informal or illegal job. It is a passport-type document that must be signed by employers for tax purposes.

When social welfare legislation was implemented in Brazil in the 1930s, it was designed only for formally-employed persons. Only workers with a formal, regulated tie to a business or government enterprise and with the proper papers to prove it were considered full citizens. Only those duly-registered as formal laborers, carriers of the Worker’s Card, had access to social rights, such as health care and welfare benefits. Only they were allowed to vote and otherwise participate in the nation’s political sphere. Formal labor was in this way predicated on a positive understanding of registered workers as the only acceptable and socially-recognizable kind of citizens (Veloso 2012). Still today, having no Worker’s Card implies that you are outside the social security system.

Formal employment is considered by a large number of people, including favela youth, as something desirable. In addition to regular income and employment benefits, a formal job with a Worker’s Card, gives you the status of a respected *trabalhador* or worker (see Millar 2014 and below). At the same time, there is much ambivalence associated with formal, regular work. Formal, lower-level occupations in the precarious service economy, where contracts are made for short periods of time and salaries are very low with no possibilities for advancement, were often seen as less meaningful and less “free” than informal work. When I interviewed a group of women in their 20s who live in Nova Cidade, one of them said: “Look, even if you work 24 hours a day, you don’t get enough money to take care of your family. Even if you have two jobs, it is not enough.” The others agreed. One of the women said that she has a friend who works with a signed Worker’s ID:

She works so hard, but with two jobs she never sees her children. I asked her, when are you free? When do you rest for God’s sake? She said that she has
ONE day off every year, do you get it? So with a signed Worker’s ID you’re never free. Never!

For these women, working formally means not being able to make ends meet, not getting any free time and not getting any time to spend with their children. Many of the mothers that I got to know in the favela constantly worried about what their children did after school, and, more importantly, who they hung out with in the streets. One woman told me that she was considering quitting her job at CEASA (the whole-sale market, see below) because she worried so much about her children’s whereabouts. Her own mother could not help with the grandchildren because she worked (formally) in an upper middle-class home in the South Zone and could only afford to come home on weekends. Kathleen Millar (2014) argues that, paradoxically, the working-class women in Rio who she writes about prefer working informally in deeply painful work, as it enables them to contend with insecurities in other dimensions of their lives. Although a formal job brings regular income, employment benefits and the status of a valued worker, the very regularity and stability of a formal job comes into conflict with the fragile conditions of urban poverty in Rio.

Blurring the lines between legal and illegal labor

Although work opportunities in the northern part of the city are scarce, there are commercial and economic hubs also in this part of the city. At Mercadão de Madureira, one can find everything from food, bijouterie, hens, car-parts, party clothes for children and music to objects that belong to the Afro-Brazilian religions Umbanda and Candomblé. Local street-vendors, retailers and shop-owners from Nova Cidade go there to purchase their products. People from Nova Cidade would also travel to Pavuna, a low-price 107pecial area in the North Zone, where clothes and other things can be bought much cheaper than in other areas. CEASA (Centrais Estaduais de Abastecimento), mentioned above, is an enormous market and food wholesale center. From here, fish, fruits and vegetables are sold and distributed to many other parts of the region. Many men and women, both old, from Nova Cidade work there, or have done so for short periods of time: as truck loaders and drivers, cutting fruit, selling vegetables and fruit or fish, or working with distribution.

Many of the funk MCs, DJs, dancers and producers over 20 years old whom I spent time with in Nova Cidade used to sell candy, sodas, gum, and cookies at road junctions by traffic lights, on buses, or at the beaches in the South Zone when they were younger. Sometimes, they had to beg for money on buses, outside restaurants and in wealthy areas. At the same time, they would sing funk songs, hoping to gain a little extra money. The baile is an important economy in itself, and funk and the bailes are economically
108espeotive sites of production, performance, and consumption (see Funda-
cação Getulio Vargas 2008), which I deal with in more detail in Chapter 4, just
like the drug racket, which I will discuss more thoroughly in Chapter 5.

However, the kinds of work many youth and children from the favelas
engage in blur some of the most basic distinctions between what counts as
labor and what does not, between productive and non-productive labor, be-
tween legal and illegal labor, as well as between work and so-called crime
(Veloso 2012). Tasks such as cutting and selling fruit at markets, selling
pastry, gums, sodas or other goods have been increasingly criminalized un-
der Rio’s recent “order shocks,” disciplinary measures that target all infor-
mal phenomena, from street vendors operating without a license to a car
parked beyond the lines of a regular parking space (ibid). Leticia Veloso
(2012) argues that, as a result, laboring children end up being pushed into
the drug economy.

The importance of a proper Worker’s ID

Residents in Nova Cidade commonly use the categories “bandit” and “work-
er” to distinguish between those who work for the drug traffickers and those
who do not. In reality, however, these lines are not always easy to draw (see
Drybread 2014). Although most youth that I spent time with did not actively
look for formal work, they would very often say that they wished that they
had a Worker’s ID. Felipe, a rapper about 35 years old who used to work as
a drug trafficker and later started working with the activists in Nova Cidade,
recently got a job as a security guard. Since he got the job, he has been post-
ing pictures of himself in his work uniform on Facebook every day, letting
his friends know how happy he is to have found regular work for the first
time in his life. Yet, work as a security guard is not regular. Felipe works
nights and puts himself at risk, just as he had done before as a drug traffick-
er. Further, he does not work with a signed Worker’s ID. Nevertheless, the
symbolic value of a “proper” emprego (job) is of great importance.

In order to understand how important it is for people in the favela to be
seen as workers with fixed employment, it is crucial to know that, in public
discourse, those who are not workers are considered, if not bandidos directly
then at least marginais (marginals). This word connotes social marginality,
but, rather than referring to the poorest of the poor, it signifies drug traffick-
ers and other criminals. Several scholars have noted (Millar 2014, Drybread
2014) that rather than associate favelas with the working poor, the elites
have come to perceive favela residents in general as marginais in this ex-
tended sense. When the police invade the favela and raid homes, or random-
ly stop youth from entering or leaving the favela and strip-search them, the
main marker they use to identify suspects is whether they are carrying a
proper Worker’s ID. Holding a position in the formal labor market is enough
to define a person as a real citizen, a fetishization of formal labor (see Veloso 2012), and, correspondingly, the lack of a Worker’s ID seemingly suffices to define a person as outside of what is perceived by “the state” as “ordered” society.

Class, Skin Color, Racism and Favela Sociality

The residents in Nova Cidade are poorer and darker-skinned than the average resident of Rio. Afro-Brazilians remain concentrated at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy. They suffer higher rates of unemployment, disease and infant mortality, lower levels of education, lower wages and shorter life spans than do whites (Skidmore 1993, Sheriff 2000). Many social scientists have argued that such inequalities stem from discriminatory practices associated with class. Research convincingly illustrates, however, that specifically racialized forms of discrimination also play a significant role in the structuring of inequality in Brazil.

Although many of the inhabitants of Rio’s favelas would be categorized as black, the percentage of black people varies widely from one favela to the next, and every favela is home to many residents categorized as non-black. Below, I show the relative content of these constructed categories, and how they are formed. Within Nova Cidade, there is significant variation. Generally in the favela, black-, brown- and white-skinned residents live next door to each other, socialize and marry each other. Yet, those who live on the paved streets close to the favela entrance, people with a lower, middle-class income, tend to be seen as whiter than those who live in poorer housing in the narrow alleys deep inside the favela, residents who are regarded as black and lower-class. Many of the latter are recent immigrants from the Northeast with few ties to the “the formal city.” To reach a bus stop in order to get to the inner city after a 20-minute journey, they must traverse the whole favela or try to cross the heavily trafficked motorways that surround the favela. Assumed race differences thus coincide with more adverse economic conditions generally.

Both young and old people in Nova Cidade would commonly say that skin color is not a problem inside the favela; here everyone respects each other, no matter what the skin color is. Many, however, argue that as soon as someone leaves the favela, she/he runs the risk of facing racism by employers, the police and by wealthier Rio residents in general. At the same time, many of the funk singers, dancers and fans that I spoke to argued that the way they were perceived and treated outside the favela had less to do with

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84 In favelas, 58.6 percent of the population describe themselves as “black” or “brown” and 41.2 percent as “white.” In the rest of the city, 36.5 percent describe themselves as “black” or “brown” and 63.35 percent as “white” (Zaluar 2010).
skin color and more to do with “being from a favela.” On a personal level, they said that it was their way of dressing, talking and behaving that made people treat them differently, as favelados/as, and not so much their skin color. Yet simultaneously, on another level, young people – and especially the young women that I spent time with and who had done classes with the activists in Nova Cidade – would point to structural racism. They would, for example, say that black people from the favela had a much harder time getting a job than white people from middle- and upper-class areas.

Whether it is the color of one’s skin or the socio-economic background that determines a person’s position in the social and economic hierarchy is an on-going discussion among academics in Brazil. Freyre (1946) was the first of many writers to describe power structures and relations related to skin color in Brazil as “different.” He argued that slavery in Brazil was milder and less cruel than, for example, in the United States, over time enabling the emergence of a “rainbow nation,” where people with different skin color live side-by-side in relative peace. Goldstein (2003) argues the contrary: Brazil is not different. Slavery was as cruel as in other places and structural racism permeates society at all levels, even though it is concealed through the “myth of racial democracy.” Scholars such as Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1993) and Caldeira (2006) argue that Brazil is a deeply racist society, where Afro-Brazilians suffer a double marginalization. They are more likely than the white population to be born into poor social sectors, and they face widespread racism. Yet, the myth of Brazil being a “racial democracy” still prevails at many levels of society (Bartholdson 2007).

Skin color is important for people in Nova Cidade, and for the way that they perceive themselves and others, not the least in relation to physical attributes like hair type or facial features, which were quite common topics of conversation between people in Nova Cidade. The color of a person’s skin would frequently become a way of describing that person, “aquella moreninha” (that brown woman), “aquele branco” (that white man). Attributes related to skin color were often part of nicknames (see also Penglase 2014). In addition, everyday conversations between people in the favela are filled with devaluation of blackness (see e.g., Sheriff 2000 and Goldstein 2003). The young funk singer Tatiana and her friend Gloria told me that older boys sometimes called them “monkeys,” which they considered racist. I was also told that the drug traffickers in Nova Cidade preferred young

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85 Scholars started to criticize the notion that Brazil is a “racial democracy” as early as in the late 50s, but it has continued to generate interest and contention, especially over the last decade (Sheriff 2000). The dismantling of the dictatorship in the 1980s led to an enormous increase of new social movements and organizations through which the ideology of “racial democracy” was shattered (Bartholdson 2007). Afro-Brazilian organizations were founded and scholars from a variety of disciplines challenged “the myth of racial democracy” more extensively, using the analysis of census data to demonstrate the existence of systemic, racialized discrimination.
white girls as girlfriends and lovers, which gave white girls a special position in the favela.

Many scholars have argued that in Brazil, a person’s color is determined not only by phenotype but also by context (see e.g., Fry 1994, Goldstein 2003, Penglase 2014). Depending on clothing, shoes, haircut and the use of language, a person can be perceived as whiter or darker than he/she is. The Brazilian saying “money whitens” seems to have relevance to the way that people in the favela perceive themselves and others. The funk MC Sandro, for example, looked surprised when I asked him if he ever had faced racism and said “No, never…but that’s because I’m not that black.” As many researchers have illustrated, it is common for people in Brazil to categorize themselves as whiter than they actually are. In contrast, when referring to the way that the police daily stop young black men outside the favela entrance in order to strip-search them (to look for “documents”), a young lawyer who lived in the same alley as me jokingly said that “In Brazil, they say that there are no races, but the police always treat me as if I’m black!” Those considered “outsiders” by people in Nova Cidade, for example the police, were often seen as whiter than those living in the favela, although a lot of people in the favelas are white and many police officers are black and from favelas.

Political scientist Michael Hanchard (1994) has suggested that there is a gradual development of polarization in Brazil, one that is beginning to make clear-cut distinctions between black and white. Anthropologist Peter Fry (1995) argues that color-casting in Brazil is, instead, highly situational, highlighting what he labels the “multiple mode” of everyday discourse in Brazil, by which Brazilians conceptualize “race” as composed of multiple categories rather than as a simple dichotomy between black and white. Fry, claiming to represent a more “anthropological stance” employs “myth” as a category of popular consciousness and fundamental understanding of society that anthropologists should study in order to understand the emic perspectives of others (see Goldstein 1999:567).

The way that young people in the Nova Cidade perceived skin color and racism differed. Some saw racism as a deeply-rooted structural problem, while others did not view racism as a big problem in Brazil at all, especially not on a personal level. With most people that I spent time with in the favela, it was only when I asked about racism that the subject came up explicitly. With the activists in Nova Cidade, on the other hand, racism was a constant topic of conversation and discussion. They struggled hard to make people in the favela aware of the systemic racialized discrimination that they argued that favela residents are facing and internalizing.

Even though discrimination in relation to skin color is played down as a topic for conversation, young people in Nova Cidade are generally much concerned about how they are regarded by people outside the favela. “We are considered lixo (dirt) and marginais (marginals),” 14-year-old Laura told
me when she explained why a security guard had forced her and two of her friends to leave a shopping center. Like many other young people in the favela, Laura said that she preferred to avoid certain public spaces: certain streets, shopping centers and parks in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods. When I asked why, I always got the same answer: they felt that whiter, middle- and upper-class Rio residents judged them by their clothes, language, and ways of acting. Laura colors her hair blond. If she did not, she said, she looked “too much like a woman from the favela” (favelada demais, see above).  

In order not to appear overly “favelada” (a derogatory term for a woman from the favela), young women in the favela dress in one way inside the favela and in another way when at work in other areas. They discuss the way they dress, color their hair, bleach the hair on their arms and legs, put on make-up, act, walk and speak in relation to how they believe that other people inside the favela will view them, but also in relation to how they think that middle-and upper-class people of other bairros will perceive them. It was often pointed out to me by young women in Nova Cidade that wearing chinelos (slippers) is only acceptable inside the favela, never outside. As a funk star, drug dealer and activist in the favela said while talking about prejudice against favela inhabitants (when we got stuck together in a car because of shootings between the police and drug traffickers):

… a playbozada [middle and upper-class youth] you see them walk around in wore-down expensive jeans, with holes in their Converse [sneakers]. It’s a cool style. But we can’t have ripped clothes or shoes. We need to look proper.

Friends of mine who live in a middle-class area in the South Zone told me that they could immediately spot if a woman was from a favela or not. It was the way of dressing (typically seen as exaggerated and vulgar) and again – “the shoes” – that revealed it. They also claimed that favela residents walked in a different way, especially the women. They would say, moreover, what I heard many other wealthy Rio residents comment in different contexts, that favela residents, especially young people, use very bad language, and have poor grammar. This so called difference is also a recurrent theme in Brazilian media in relation to funk music, which, for many, seems to serve as proof of poor people’s bad language skills. While they are concerned with being seen as “workers” rather than “bandits,” young people in the favela do not want to be identified as “working-class,” because that also means being seen as violent, vulgar, as bad mothers and so on.

86 See Thaïs Machado-Borges (2009) for an interesting analysis of beauty, visibility and social class.
87 “I’m sure you already know Portuguese better then your friends in the favela,” the father of a middle-class friend living in Zona Sul told me during a dinner.
Concluding Notes

The present chapter has aimed to convey a feeling of the favela Nova Cidade by characterizing its economic activities and place within the larger, urban, capitalist economy, and by trying to pin down some of the most important actors in its civil society, consisting of Residents’ Associations, Evangelical churches, activists, funk artists, and local drug traffickers.

In this chapter, I have further looked at some of the ways in which favelas have been formed historically – through Brazil’s violent history of slavery, state formation, urbanization, its political economy of formal and informal labor, and some of the everyday practices that lie in between. As described in this chapter, favela residents are making more money than before, and unemployment rates have dropped (over the past 10 years). Nevertheless, unemployment in favelas is still high, especially among young people. Brazil’s economic growth during the period of my fieldwork (2007-2008 and 2011) did not seem to strongly influence life for people in Nova Cidade. While treated as non-citizens or second-class citizens, the favela inhabitants of Rio provide services for the wider economy of the city and state, and for the global economy as such.

Those I got to know in Nova Cidade struggled hard to make ends meet, by, for example, combining work in the “formal” service sector in the more affluent South Zone with different types “informal” work in Nova Cidade (or other suburbs and working-class areas). Without a Workers ID, there is no social security to rely on at all. Further, I have illustrated that there are no clear-cut ways to distinguish between areas categorized as favelas and other poor working class neighborhoods. The boundaries – both real and imagined – are, however, strengthened by the, often violent, ways that state authorities relate to favelas and act in these areas. Those who live in neighborhoods categorized as favelas are met with prejudice, in the form of class contempt and racism, by state authorities and wealthier (often whiter) Rio residents. This fact clearly influences the way favela residents view themselves, how they dress outside the favela, where they spend their time, how they speak, and how they relate to others. Prejudice was a constant topic among my interlocutors in Nova Cidade.

The threads of the chapter will be picked up later in the thesis. For example, the relationship between funk and the Evangelical churches is important in the creation of a moral community in the baile-context (Chapter 4). Similarly, the relationship between drug traffickers and the Evangelical churches is crucial for an understanding of the local authority of the drug faction (a theme further explored in Chapter 5). The following chapter concerns people’s experience of belonging to the place and to each other, and the role of funk and, later, violence, in constructing that experience.
As discussed in the previous chapter, putting the “favela” label on urban marginality and sociality in Brazil is an act that entails a load of associations and preconceived (mis)understandings. That chapter aimed at contributing an ethnographically-informed assessment of the particular place of this study, in partial correspondence with and in partial opposition to such associations and conceptions. As a consequence of “its historically exclusionary resonance” (McCann 2006:157) the label “favela” has both been rejected by many of the residents of these areas, and revitalized by a young generation of activists in attempts at reconquering it, and charging it with new content. However, the term in current use, especially by the older generation in Nova Cidade when talking about their neighborhood, is comunidade or “community.” With or without additions like comunidade humilde or comunidade carente, the local notion of “community” carries positive, moral and non-violent connotations, a fact exploited by both the churches and the factions. Both pastors and faction leaders work rhetorically on making their respective communities encompass believers in the case of the churches, and turfs, markets and loyal subjects in the case of the factions. “Community,” in this text, is an emic label, conveying the idea of a desired sociality and a shared experience of everyday life in the favela.

This is not to say that the label of “community” is not itself subject to conflict over content/quality and representation; quite the contrary, as the claims by pastors and faction leaders indicate. Different actors and interlocutors in Nova Cidade are involved in a struggle, fierce or violent at times, to define community life, to draw or redraw its social and political boundaries, and to fill it with moral content. The relation of violence to community itself thus emerges as an unavoidable topic of interest and analysis in this dissertation.

In this chapter, I look at the aesthetic, poetic and musical enhancement of violent masculinity and (in subsequent Chapters 5 and 6) the practice of factions and state violence, by seeing them on the one hand as integral to community as a field of experience, affect and sensory perception, and on the other as rhetoric. Both as experience and as rhetoric, violence forms
political subjectivity and the conditions of the everyday in the favela. Writing about this issue is, however, a tricky task.

How do one depict the role of illegality and violent masculinity in the formation of favela communities, without providing an excuse for the violent legality of the Brazilian state in its pursuit of controlling or containing everyday life in the favelas of Rio? The risk is strong, whether we talk about practice or cultural depiction. In the present chapter, my attempt revolves around the practices of funk and the baile, the community dance. I propose a list of features of community as experienced by my interlocutors in and through music and dance, but also through behavior and relationships that are less tolerated, phenomena that are labeled violent.

First on my list of essentials to community formation is the quadra, the very place of the community dance. This baile constitutes a specific spatiality for social and political exchange; politicians, academics, NGO workers, musicians and other famous “outsiders” are brought by community leaders and drug traffickers to the space of the baile in order to be introduced to social and political life in the favela. In contexts marked by the mobility of labor and the precariousness of living that blur the spatial and social boundaries of the poor neighborhoods of Rio, the baile offers a geographical fixity that fosters communal forms of belonging.

Secondly, the sound of music works as a marker of the shared temporalities of everyday life. The noise from the church services in the evenings signals that the working day is over and bailes on Friday nights announce that the weekend has finally started. In short, funk is an important marker of the rhythm of favela life.

Third, the music in the favela is a socially inclusive practice spanning generations, gender and neighborhoods. Funk has a particular importance for young people. It can also be argued to have a specific relation to local faction life and power, expressing male domination. However, this particular style of music and the baile as an event appeal to many favela residents across social categories, including the age cohorts.

Fourth, in returning to the sonorous music, the baile requires a specific materiality or technology for the distribution of sound. Through sound systems, funk gets amplified and spreads throughout space. Social life in the favela relies heavily on the sound systems. They are central to all kinds of social gatherings, samba rehearsals, pagode parties, “Mother’s and Father’s Day, Festa Juninha and so on, but are particularly important to the funk parties. Through enormous sound systems, the extremely loud and amplified sound reaches everyone in the favela at the same time. Funk is thus simultaneously experienced by everyone, both inside and outside of the quadra.

Thus, the following chapter will deal with the role of funk and bailes in sustaining, creating and expressing senses of community through places known by everyone, sound heard by everyone, the participation of many and
the expertise and technology mastered by a few young men. The *baile* offers a place where the power structures of the community are confirmed and reinforced. At these events and places, people see and are seen. It is also a place where many had their first kiss and tasted their first beer. My ambition is to throw light on the meaning of taking part for young men and women, respectively, in terms of identity work and self-performance. The chapter will introduce a number of different characters to illustrate its main points, among them two young women, Tatiana and Claudia, and the boys and young men of the most popular funk groups in the favela, showing how both young men and women navigate the social landscape of the *baile*. The theme of the analysis will gravitate towards sexuality and power as the chapter introduces the role of the pastors and the factions in defining (both in words and in practice) the social and spatial boundaries of Nova Cidade.

The *Baile* as Event

Tia Hilda has closed the kiosk and gone to bed. For a moment, the favela seems curiously still and quiet. On the unsteady balcony opposite my room, the old lady neighbor stands watching over the alleyway. She nods and smiles at me. I smile back and wonder if she ever sleeps. I have heard it so many times: “No one sleeps in the favela.” It is October and summer is on its way. All of a sudden I hear women yelling and male voices mumbling. As the pitch of their voices gets louder, I realize there must be people in the church next door.

Below me, a few teenage boys stand in a dark corner practicing new dance moves to a popular funk tune, played on a mobile phone. *Chao, chao, chao*... Somebody laughs in the dark. One of the boys discovers me and tells me that half of the favela is without electricity. First, I worry... Only a few seconds later, however, the familiar sound of funk played in the *quadra* reaches me. That means the *baile* is on tonight! In the church, the young pastor, who is an *ex-traficante*, now speaks in tongues. Women are chanting and the sound gets louder and louder. At the same time, heavy and repetitive funk beats spread out over the favela, letting people know it is Saturday night. Electronic rhythms mix with the intense sound of firecrackers. It is not time for the drug traffickers’ guard-shift change yet (to be signaled by firecrackers), which probably means the police are around. My untrained ears have a hard time tracing the exact location of the firecrackers. From where are they set off? New firecrackers... or is it gunshots this time? To my relief, Tau appears by the stairs with a calming smile and a couple of beers. The police are in a distant part of the favela, he says, so there is nothing to worry about. We now head for the *baile*.
Throughout the favela, people are sitting, dancing and drinking. We walk up the alleys and pass by a few bars, some half-empty, others full of people. In most corners, a jukebox is playing funk or hip-hop. Drug dealers with machine guns hang out around them. Even though we are not that close to the quadra yet, I already feel the bass-line hitting my chest. Before moving further, we stop at a little juice bar to see if they have electricity enough to serve food and drinks. Here, a lot of people make a pit-stop before and after the baile to eat hamburgers, drink and chit-chat. Like a few other business owners here, the Korean family who owns the bar do not live in the favela, but the whole family comes here every day to work. During the day, children often pass by the bar, only in order to hear the owner say “hello” with a Korean accent.

We are now on the main street. It takes us from the favela entrance, past a boca, or “the mouth” where mostly marijuana and cocaine are sold, leaves us at the quadra and then continues deeper into Nova Cidade. Along the main street there are plenty of bars facing the street. Most bars are crowded, some are empty. A boca is situated in a small alley adjacent to the main street. On the main street, people socialize and some “chill out” and do drugs. This street is the only place in the lower part of the favela where someone, according to the rules of the drug traffickers, is allowed to take drugs. Marijuana is treated differently, as the drug traffickers allow people to smoke it in many different places.

A big quebra-mola, speed reducer, made out of large pieces of wood is placed in the middle of the main street to slow down uninvited vehicles such as police cars, a community defense if there ever was one. At least 30 motorcycles in different colors are parked against it. The quebra-mola and the motorcycles mark the area of the baile where the funk party begins. Bar da Harmonia, the popular bar on the opposite side of the quadra (the space of the samba school) makes itself visible once we round the bikes. The bar is as crowded as ever. People sit on yellow plastic chairs by yellow tables facing the quadra. In this bar we can buy drinks, snacks, cakes, beer and sometimes hamburgers. The bar is run by two siblings – Iara and Lazaro – both of them in their early 40s. Iara works every Saturday night from early afternoon until 8 o’clock Sunday morning. People crowd the adjacent alleys, where many also throw their own parties. Here the vibe is different from the main street. Old couples dance slowly to forró music and children run around

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88 Quebra-molas can be found all around the favela, especially near the entrances.
89 Forró is a music– and dance–style from the Northeast of Brazil. On Saturday and Sunday nights, families have barbeques and organize small block parties in the streets. This is the time when we see old, beautifully dressed couples, dancing together in the streets to forró. Every Thursday night there is a forró-night in one of the bars in the northern part of the favela that my neighbors – a mother and her three daughters – usually go to. Also, forró is what everyone dances to during Festa Junina, which, together with Carnival, is a huge event here. Festa Junina is celebrated early winter. It is, as mentioned already, also known as Festa de
playing on every corner. A chunk of wood standing in one of the tiniest alleys is being used as a ping-pong table. Some of the older couples and some of the children will later join in at the baile.

In the space between Bar da Harmonia and the quadra, food and beverage are sold from countless, small, vending carts. While no figures exist on the economy of the baile in the favela, community leaders like Zaki argue that the bailes here generate money and work like nothing else in the neighborhood. Armed men standing on the main street and drinking beer in the bars, eye the crowds. In a few hours, many of them will get off their shift, leave their assault rifles behind, and happily join in. According to the rules of the traffickers, no weapons are allowed to be visible inside the quadra during a baile.

The night is humid, and, inside the quadra, it is dark and hot. The music is unbelievably loud. Two sound teams battle tonight, which means there are two impressive “sound walls” made up of hundreds of amplifiers placed on top of each other. The venue is packed with thousands of people. The dense mass of people moving in all directions makes it difficult to move. A smoke machine pours out columns of smoke. Through the smoke hanging over the crowd, one can see children running around the dance floor. In a corner, a few 5- or 6-year-old girls move their hips to the rhythm. Swiftly a bonde, a dance group of boys in shorts, white shirts, baseball caps and tennis shoes, appears. They form a train and circle around the girls moving their feet to the beat simultaneously. After a few minutes of failing to get enough attention from the girls, they move on through the crowds.

People move around, watch each other dance, talk, flirt and gossip. Drug traffickers, their girlfriends and a few other VIP guests move about on the top-floor balcony areas, lean against the railing and watch over the crowd below. _Sóly essa porra... vai sentando, vai sentando... senta, senta... […] get your ass down on the floor, sit, sit, sit..._. Five teenage girls stand in a short line with their grandmothers. As they bend down toward the floor with their hands on each other’s hips, they slowly sway their lower bodies toward the ground. When they reach the ground, they go up and down with their bums, São João, as it celebrates the nativity of St. John the Baptist. Preparations are initiated months in advance, and the funk artists start practicing dance moves together with children and teenagers in the favela several months before the events. During Festa Junina, rural life is celebrated. Bonfires are lit, fireworks explode everywhere in Nova Cidade and people dress up in the most spectacular costumes representing typical clothing from the countryside. Dancing groups – quadrilhas – are formed and there is a dancing competition. Quadrilha, which is similar to square dancing, features couple formations around a fake wedding whose bride and groom are the central attraction of the dancing. The year of my fieldwork, the dono or drug faction leader danced more enthusiastically than anyone else in his quadrilha. In the end, he decided that everyone deserved to win the dancing competition. Hence, he gave away prizes to all the quadrilhas. The events, like always, ended with a huge baile and exploding fireworks.
never touching the ground. Suddenly there is a thunderous BANG. Fire-
works placed on top of the speaker-stacks make little colorful fires before
exploding loudly and hitting the ground randomly. On the stage, lights flash
and smoke spreads out over the crowd. The music is now as loud as ever.

Nayara and her grandchildren collect beer cans, and so do a bunch of oth-
er people. Young men lean against the walls, rhythmically shaking their
shoulders to the music while drinking beer or smoking a joint. Some sing
along with the music. A few girls dance slowly with their backs towards the
young men, slightly touching the young men’s crotches with their bums.
Turning down the music for a minute, DJ Jade shouts out to the crowd that a
CD with tonight’s putaria (sexually explicit funk) and proibidão (funk for-
bidden by law often glorifying faction leaders and portraying the conflicts
between different factions and the police) is being sold at a barraca da loira,
the vending cart of “the blonde.” Sweating bodies surrounding him move
back and forth to the beat. Amplifiers cover a large part of the room. Vibrant
lights fill up the room, and a lot of people stick to the walls outside the
quadra. Standing there, looking up to the black sky, I read a massive blue
sign with huge white letters saying JESUS É O SENHOR DESTE LUGAR
(Jesus is the master of this place.)

In the explosion of sound and impressions of the event, with its conflict-
ing messages of pleasure as both sin and liberation, I have settled for an
analysis that connects the totality of the event to social life in this place. I
begin with the place itself.

The Spatiality of Social and Political Exchange: the Quadra

The quadras, where the bailes in Nova Cidade are organized, are important
venues for different types of social activities and commerce in the communi-
ty. Therefore they are crucial arenas for young and old people, children,
activists, and community leaders as well as for the drug traffickers. A tin
roof with repaired holes, through which the rain sometimes leaks in, covers
the quadra in the lower part of Nova Cidade. The walls and the floor are
painted in vivid but fading purple and green, and the big stage on the far end
is blue with two yellow hearts in the middle. Hundreds of huge amplifiers
that are part of the sound system are carefully painted in yellow and put on
top of each other. They entirely cover one of the walls. During early after-
noons, there are boys sitting on top of the amplifiers swinging their legs,
talking, singing, smoking and watching whatever is going on in the quadra.
When there is a show, children also climb up the stage to watch the perfor-
mancess. Next to the stage, there is a smaller space for the DJ. During bailes,
the DJ stands there with a computer, playing tracks. He communicates
(shouting) with the dance floor and artists through the night. Over the stage,
two huge lions are painted. On the left side of the stage, an open bar faces the street, and to the right, there are a few run down toilets without doors. It is always dark in here. After rains, the floor becomes covered with grimy water. Across from the toilet, on the other side of the room, red plastic chairs and tables are spread out in one of the corners. Here people sit to have meetings, drink beer, or watch performances on stage. When politicians or other important guests come to the favela, they are often invited to sit down and have a beer in this space.

Glittering decorations in purple, pink, green, silver and gold hang from the roof. Beer commercials on red plastic tape take up space everywhere. On the top floor, brilliant and beautiful costumes, huge prize cups in gold and silver, flags and shimmering streamers jostle for space. During bailes, only VIP-guests are allowed to be here: drug dealers, their girlfriends, lovers and specially invited guests. When the funk artist MC Tatiana did her first show in the favela, this is where her grandmother proudly stood watching over her.

The quadra on the main street in the southern part of Nova Cidade was located very close to where I lived during fieldwork. When the project Favela Bairro, a project aiming to improve the infrastructure in the favela (see Chapter 6) took off in 2004, many houses were torn down on the main street. In the empty space, the municipality had planned to build a plaza. The Residents’ Association and the drug-dealing faction did not agree to this. Instead, they insisted that the project should build a quadra de samba, which the municipality did. One smaller space connected to the quadra was originally built for the Residents’ Association. This space is now only occasionally used for meetings. When huge funk parties are organized and there are battles between two or three different sound teams, the guest team usually plays in this room. It gets nowhere as hot and humid as in here. A makeshift stage stands in the middle of the room for the DJ, typically surrounded by sweaty bodies dancing to hard-hitting funk. Residents have painted some of the walls outside, between the quadra and this room. On one of the walls, a sailboat rocks on blue and white ocean waves. When there is a baile here, families, teenagers and children usually lean against these walls to get some air.

Numerous events in the favela are organized within the space of the quadra. Pagode concerts, samba rehearsals, and bailes are part of the year-round activities. Bailes are also sometimes arranged outdoors in the streets, in little squares or in the spaces where football is played. One such space, where huge parties were organized and famous artists now and again came to do shows, was commonly referred to as “the sand” (because it was so full of sand and dust).
Sound as a Marker of the Temporalities of Everyday Life

As mentioned above, a shared rhythm of time is marked in Nova Cidade by the sounds associated with the nightly church service as well as those of the Friday bailes. Sounds have a way of repeating and attaching themselves to specific moments of the day or the week (see Oosterbaan 2009). When funk at the baile in Nova Cidade is played during weekends and special occasions, it is so loud that no one in the favela escapes it. For those who are close enough, the rough beats are not only heard but also physically felt in the whole body. The effervescent funk rhythms from the baile in Nova Cidade can at times be heard in adjacent neighborhoods in the lower-income areas, where rival factions are in power. By loudly amplifying the music, funk lovers temporarily seize hold of the soundscape of the entire favela and the vicinity.

Different types of bailes take place in different venues and parts of the city. In Rio today, mainly three kinds of funk parties are referred to: bailes de comunidade, bailes de asfalto and bailes club in casas de shows. Bailes de comunidade are organized in favelas, bailes de asfalto are funk parties arranged in middle- or upper-class areas, and bailes de club in casas de shows are funk events and shows in big venues. In Nova Cidade, there are bailes every Friday in the northern quadra and every Saturday and Sunday in the southern quadra. Some weeks there are also bailes on Wednesdays and Thursdays. During my fieldwork, Saturday bailes were considered wilder, louder and more fun than bailes on Fridays and Sundays. Young people in the favela would say that this assessment had to do with different “vibes” or with the “energy.” Even though the atmosphere would change from one week to another or even from one day to another, the baile in the southern part of the favela was always more crowded, hotter, and louder than the baile in the northern part. The preparation for the Saturday baile starts already at noon. People put on their nicest clothes and make themselves look good. Those who can afford it go to the beauty salons in the neighborhood to get their hair and nails done; others work out at the gym for a few hours, and many practice dance moves together.

On Saturdays, the samba rehearsal always turns into a baile eventually, like most other events. From late afternoon until early morning the quadra is filled with samba and funk. Every Sunday, all year round, there is ensaio da escola de samba (the samba school’s rehearsal) in the quadra. During the 6 months of preparations for Carnival and the Desfile (parade), the samba school intensifies and extends its rehearsals to weekdays and Saturdays. Every year a song and a special parade-theme are chosen. The theme can be related to a myth, a time in history, a fairy tale or be a reflection on a social, political or environmental issue. Different alas, wings or segments, represent different parts of the chosen theme. During many months before carnival, fantasias – costumes – and floats that require extraordinarily hard work are
prepared in homes, garages and repair shops in every corner of the favela. Eventually, they are hung in the quadra, waiting to be tried on and then re-arranged and re-done to fit perfectly. During these months, percussionists, players of cuica (the “Brazilian friction drum,” a percussion instrument said to have made its way to Brazil and the Caribbean via the slave trade from Africa), singers, flag bearers, directors, and beautiful dancers – some in the roles of queens, godmothers, muses, and princesses – spend a lot of time rehearsing in the quadras dressed in wondrous and colorful costumes.

Special occasions, such as Father’s Day and Mother’s Day, are also celebrated in the space of the quadra. On Father’s Day, families come here to celebrate and to participate in the yearly lottery. Although you can participate in the samba rehearsal in the quadra every Sunday, dance to forró music played in most street corners on the weekends, or listen to jukeboxes and boom boxes playing pagode, reggae, pop, sertanejo rock or hip-hop, the biggest and most exciting parties in the area are without a doubt the funk dances.

The sound of funk creates and re-establishes boundaries within the favela and the sound even makes a certain artist, leader or the place they represent, “present” elsewhere. Young people engaged in funk feel morally condemned by those who disapprove of the messages and the rhythm of funk, usually Evangelicals. Still, I would argue that sounds induce a sense of community,

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90 During fieldwork in 2011, the drug faction boss again decided that everyone deserved to win something, just like he had done for Festa Junina. Hence, families crowded around the stage where Nádia – a devoted funk fan around 30 years old, dressed in a glittery purple top and high heels – distributed food and household appliances to hundreds of mothers and fathers.

91 Sertanejo or musica sertaneja, is music style that originates from the Brazilian countryside.

92 Not many people in Nova Cidade listen to hip-hop. Taú and two of his friends, the brothers Gabriel (28 years old) and Adriano (26 years old) have the only hip-hop group here. Their lyrics are explicitly political. They often treat subjects like social injustice, corruption and police violence. During the time that I lived in Nova Cidade, I saw the group perform three or four times. The only ones who came to their shows were the rappers’ middle-class friends from Zona Sul and some drug dealers – which made the “vibe” tense. Few others showed up. In general, youth in Nova Cidade are not that interested in hip-hop. Yet, when Os Racionais, one of Brazil’s most famous hip-hop groups from São Paulo, came to do a show in Nova Cidade, it was a huge happening. Many rappers, writers and social workers consider hip-hop a political movement in contrast to funk, which is considered “opium for the masses” by many rappers I have spoken to. Hip-hop in Brazil began as and continues to be a set of expressive practices from the periferia (the outskirts). By 1990, leading hip-hop members recognized that Brazil was a “disjunctive democracy” (Caldeira and Holston 1999) in the sense that even though the political system had become organized as a representative democracy, the level of social inequalities, daily violence, and abuse of human rights had intensified. Through the experience of participating in posses, hip-hoppers explored new political opportunities. They learned how to negotiate with state representatives so that they could organize events, arrange collective meetings and sometimes work in state-sponsored social work projects (Pardue 2007:679).
also by constituting that which moral struggles and disagreements are all about. Regardless of internal power struggles, young and old – including many of the Evangelicals – gather outside and around the quadra during weekends to eat, drink and spend time with friends. The sound of funk of course also disturbs some favela residents, especially some of the older folks and Evangelicals.

The discontent of wealthier Rio residents with the loud and “vulgar” sound coming from favelas is well-known. The ear-splitting funk sound is an unceasing topic of debate among many politicians and journalists, who often tend to view and portray funk as a sign and symbol of disorganization and statelessness, as a practice where no proper rules apply (Sneed 2008). The police argue that the disturbing sound is one of the main reasons that they have prohibited funk parties in the favelas they currently occupy.

A Socially Inclusive Practice

Contrary to the image of the baile as a youth revolt or symbol of urban decay, many bailes resemble community festivals in the sense that many participate no matter what music they like or how old they are. During bailes, people in the favela establish contacts and exchange information. Even though most funk fans are young, funk dances in the favela attract people of all ages, including many who do not consider themselves “funk fans.” Many older folks gather outside the quadras to eat, dance, drink, flirt, look at people, and gossip, getting the latest news about who goes out with whom.

To party hard is almost equated with going to the baile. Leisure alternatives are few, and, for many young women and men, the baile is the highpoint of the week. Almost every weekend, local artists from within the favela perform at the bailes. Quite often famous guest artists or guest sound systems put on a show. When famous funk artists perform, bailes tend to be more dominated by families and children than when only the local sound system plays. When, for example, the national celebrity MC Creu came to perform with the immensely popular dancer Mulher Melancia (Watermelon Woman, named thus because her bum is said to measure 115 cm), it was as crowded as ever. “Everyone” was there except for the most religiously committed. Children, teenagers, men and women, old people, drug addicts, and faction-members on different levels were there as were the community leaders. Even many of the women, who are usually not allowed to attend the bailes, had got permission to come in order to watch the spectacular show.

Although the baile format is repeated weekend after weekend, the atmosphere of these parties is constantly shifting. Each baile has its own personality and the same baile changes from week to week. As funk DJs place popular samples over homemade or recorded beats, one baile may have a more
tribal hip-hop feel, while another may sound more like techno or pop, despite the fact that DJs play the same songs. Usually, stripped-down, beat-boxed, contemporary funk is played. Yet, a new “vibe” is created every weekend. Depending on the time of day, day of the week, who is present and who is not as well as who is performing and where the baile takes place, the atmosphere shifts a great deal.

The Sound System: a Specific Materiality of Noise

While funk is electronically mediated, it simultaneously exists as oral culture, lived on the street: no electricity necessary. However, funk completely without electricity would definitely not satisfy the thousands of funk fans who long all week for the baile. Through equipes do som, or sound systems, funk gets amplified and spreads throughout space. Much of social life in the favela depends on and evolves in and around the sound systems. They are used for all the important community events in Nova Cidade, Mother’s and Father’s Day, concerts, shows, samba, pagode and forró parties, but they are especially important to the baile. Without the sound systems, there would be no baile. In a very concrete way, beyond the imaginations allegedly required for communities to emerge, the boisterous and amplified rhythms of funk affect everyone in the favela at the same time. The enormous sound systems reach the whole neighborhood, and, when funk is played, all people in Nova Cidade, whether they like it or not, are compelled to listen to the sound of it. In the same way, at a certain point of time during a funk party, exploding fireworks, associated with the sound systems, light up the sky over the favela, reaching everyone in Nova Cidade simultaneously.

Before the Saturday baile, boys and young men work long hours in the quadra in order to prepare for the party. The many hundred speakers need not only to function, but also to look good. The speakers are organized, sound-tested, cleaned and put together. Also during weekdays, boys and men often gather in the quadra to drill, clean, paint and cut the amplifiers with a saw to make them function together and look good. When famous “sound teams” (see below) from one favela are hired by a drug faction or club owner to play in another favela or affluent area, a sound system travels with them. The most famous “sound system owners” like DJ Malboro and Romolo Costa have their own record companies. The most famous big sound system teams like theirs possess a huge number of speakers. These have their own histories and are connected to funk producers who “own” artists. Older people in Nova Cidade would sometimes call them the “vampires of funk,” referring to the way that they exploit young funk singers and dancers.

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93 Contemporary funk DJs are sometimes referred to as the “PC generation” of DJs.
There are three different equipes de som, or sound teams, in Nova Cidade. They provide equipment, artists, MCs and DJs for the funk dances in the community and are, at least, partly paid and thus sanctioned by the local drug traffickers. These sound teams usually put on the show in Nova Cidade. Tiger, however, a sound system owned by O Chachorrão (the Big Dog) gets invited to other communities to give shows. It is also common for drug traffickers and sound teams to invite guest teams to play in Nova Cidade. The traficantes have certain sound teams they prefer to invite for shows, and “battles” between the different sound teams are common. Each of the major factions have their favorite DJs and MCs, and these perform in all the favelas where their particular faction rules. It is thus important to note that funk is not the mere sound of the favela as an entity, but indeed the choice of artists. Songs and amplitude sometimes reflect the result of local power struggles, an issue to which I will return in Chapter 5.

Working the sound systems and popular culture practices

The sound-system owners, producers, managers and some of the DJs in the favela, sometimes referred to by other favela residents as “the sharks,” often have extended networks with artists in other favelas and in the “formal city.” Like the drug dealers, they carry signs of status and symbols of wealth, manifested in their clothes, jewelry, cars and motorcycles. For many of these men, as for the drug dealers, to be at the baile with beautiful women (preferably white and many) is seen as a sign of success. Many of “the sharks” have the economic resources to move from the favela if they wished to do so, something that gives them a special position within the favela.

When a visiting sound team comes to Nova Cidade to put on a show, their sound system is piled up, usually against what is referred to as a paredão (or big wall). Visual effects like strobe lights are also an important feature associated with the sound systems. When the local sound system travels to other favelas to play, there is even more work to be done. The whole system has to be taken apart, carried out in small pieces to a truck, driven to the venue and then put together again. When the show is over in the morning, everything has to be done all over again, and the sound system needs to be taken back to Nova Cidade, where it has to be reassembled.

Cal, 30 years old, is the owner of the newest sound system in the favela and is also a funk manager. Cal came to Nova Cidade from Pernambuco when he was 2 years old. Between the ages of 7 and 28, he worked at 94 All sound systems in Rio are owned by funk protagonists (usually male), and are associated with a crew, or sound team. Some of the most famous ones are Furação 2000, Big Mix, Pitbull, Chatubão Digital, Espião Vida Loka, Serie Gold and Cash Box. Funk activists have heavily criticized the most famous sound system owners, DJ Malboro and Romulo Costa, for exploiting young funk artists.
CEASA (whole-food retailer and market, see Chapter 3). Against the advice of his cousin and his aunt, with whom he lived, he started to go to bailes when he was about 14 years old. “My cousin always said Cal don’t go, don’t go, but I went anyway. My cousin said that people at the bailes were fighting and that I was too young, but I went just to look. It was not at all like people said!” He went to look at the equipment and listen to the sound, not so much to dance. Two years before I met Cal for the first time, he stopped working at CEASA. For a short while, he was unemployed. Then he quickly decided to start collecting speakers. He wanted to build his own sound system. First, he built a small one for pagode (see below). With it, he travelled to other favelas to put on shows.

They [referring to the drug traffickers] would pay me 500 reais, and when I had paid for everything I needed for the show and for people to help me out, there was 150 reais left. With that money I bought new speakers. Every week, I could buy new speakers. That’s how I built my sound system.

When times get tough for him and his family, he sells some of the speakers. When things turn for the better again, he buys new ones. Cal’s sound system for funk, called something like “the big chunk of wood,” is huge and enormously popular in Nova Cidade.

Sound is part and parcel of the material surroundings of the inhabitants of the favela. People in Nova Cidade know exactly what music others listen to, because they are confronted with their music all the time. In the dense social space of the favela, sound establishes the presence of certain groups. Social categories in the favela are fluid, however, and no easy and permanent distinctions can be made between different groups. People in the favela sometimes associate themselves with, and against, certain music styles by referring to each other as a funkeiro/a, pagodeiro/a, sambista, and evangélico/a.95 Most youth in Nova Cidade, however, including the funk dancers and singers, actively engage in the whole spectrum of popular culture practices that exist within the favela. Except for funk, many young girls in Nova Cidade like pagode.96 Pagode originates from Salvador, Bahia, but is also very popular in Rio.97 Sometimes the drug faction invites a famous pagode group to play in the favela. Like every big show, it is combined with a massive baile. No matter who comes to play in the favela, or what music style is performed, funk is always played before, during and after the shows.

95 In addition to funk, pagode, forró, samba, and Evangelical gospel, tecno brega, sertanejo, pop, rock and reggae music are also listened and danced to in Nova Cidade.
96 A neighborhood gathering where samba is played is also called pagode.
97 The kind of pagode listened and danced to in Nova Cidade is perhaps best described as a kind of slow pop music referred to as pagode romantico or “romantic pagode.” Before the funk singer Tatiana started to sing funk, she used to sing pagode with her stepfather, who is a famous pagodeiro.
In order to dig deeper into what funk means to different persons in Nova Cidade, I will now focus on the way that the music is perceived, interpreted and lived as social practice.

**Funk is Always Everywhere**

Originally influenced by Miami Bass, funk has over time come to also incorporate elements of, for example, samba, *forró*, *macumba*, techno and hip-hop. It is made on old computers, MPC drum-machines and keyboards. Vocals are often rough and although funk in some ways resemble hip-hop, rapping is not very common in today’s funk. Funk songs are sometimes performed in duos, sometimes sung melodically. At other times, the singing rather resembles screaming or chanting. Funk is comprised of mostly electronic beats, sound effects and sampling. Beats are borrowed from many different musical styles such Miami Bass, hip-hop and techno. The most important beats are referred to by *funkeiros/as* as “*o batidão*” (the big beat), “*o pancadão*” (meaning something like the big blow). Sometimes my interlocutors would simply refer to funk as “the big beat” or “the big blow.”

Many songs are based upon the electro funk style created by Africa Bambaataa in the early 80s on a TR-808 drum machine. Another particular feature of funk is the centrality of sampling. Loops, melodies and texts are cut up, circulated, re-shuffled and re-interpreted. DJs and funk-singers borrow incessantly from each other, generating a musical landscape of repetition which means that many, if not most, funk songs circulating at any given time will contain the same samples, sound effects and lyrics. In the early years of funk, DJs used loops of electronic drums from Miami Bass (or base). Later, funk artists started to combine rhythms and drums from *Capoeira* (Brazilian martial art), *Maculelê* (an Afro-Brazilian dance with sticks) and *Candomblê* with rhythms from Miami Bass and North American rap. This resulted in the *tamborzão* (big drum) beat, still very popular along with (human) beat-boxing.

For many, funk is intertwined with many existential and social aspects of being a person in the favela. In what follows, I will show how funk and *bailes* at the same time both represent and, as I argue, create community. First, however, I’ll begin by illustrating the way that funk is immersed in the everyday life of Nova Cidade. No matter whether or not you like funk, most people – old and young – know the contemporary funk tunes by heart. In the everyday life of the favela, funk lyrics are often sung, invented and reinvented to suit different situations.

Tia Hilda, my 70-year-old landlady, often stood in her kitchen preparing lunch while spontaneously making up words to a funk melody. Yet, Tia Hilda claims not to like funk. When I asked her why, she always blushed
and said that she sometimes “goes to church.” Even older people who do not go to the baile, like Tia Hilda and her relative Dudoo, who helps Tia Hilda with her business, are constantly confronted with the sound of funk. Dudoo knows all the old and contemporary tunes by heart as he spends most of his time in the street outside Tia Hilda’s birosca, surrounded by a group of young boys who relentlessly play the latest funk hits on their mobile phones and sing along. About samba and carnival Tia Hilda said as a matter of fact: “It is only once a year, but funk, funk is all year around. Funk is always.”

The rhythm and reality of everyday life

As discussed previously in this chapter, funk is also everywhere because of the loud sound – everybody is forced to relate to it. Many young people in Nova Cidade view funk as a style that is capable of capturing their everyday realities and experiences. Tatiana (14 years old), Adriana (14 years old) and Claudia (15 years old) are three devoted funk fans. I often stopped to chat with them outside of Tatiana’s house, right around the corner from Tia Hilda’s. When I met them the first time, they had recently started to compose funk lyrics together. They said what many others, both women and men, expressed to me when I asked them why they liked funk so much: funk forces you to move and feel, it is fun and the bailes are special events where everybody tries to look their best. As Adriana put it: “When you go to the baile, everybody has high heels, they put on their best clothes.” In order to explain why she likes funk so much, Tatiana compared funk to other musical genres: “Hip-hop is boring. You can’t dance to it. But funk, when you hear it, no matter where you are or what you are doing, you have to move. You feel it. It’s impossible to stand still!” Claudia similarly rated hip-hop and some other musical styles as boring. “They don’t have rhythm, so you can’t dance to them. I like funk,” she says and starts singing: “Get your ass on the floor”!

Anderson (27 years old) from The Young Ones, the most popular funk group in Nova Cidade (see below), in a similar vein says that he loves funk because “It’s a delicious rhythm to dance to. It’s our rhythm. It’s a good feeling. I feel comfortable.” He continues: “If you go into a space where they play pagode, one person might be dancing here and there. If you play funk after the pagode, everybody will dance!” Lucas (24 years old) is part of the same funk group as Anderson is. He says that he loves funk because “Everybody goes crazy when they hear it [todo mundo fica doido].”

All the interlocutors above point to the importance of the rhythm associated with funk: it inevitably makes you feel and move. Many interlocutors would use the word mexit when describing what funk does to a person. Mexter means move, touch and make you feel, but it can also signify “to

98 “rebola até o chão”
flirt” with someone. Other musical genres are thought of as “boring” while funk is fun and makes you “go crazy.” I was often told that funk is the rhythm of the favela, or as one of the most popular funk singers Anderson said to me, “It’s our rhythm.” Rhythm is frequently used by youth in Nova Cidade, not only in reference to musical rhythms, but also as synonymous with day-to-day reality. When Anderson says “our rhythm” he also means “our reality.” Both rhythm and reality are notions that young people in Nova Cidade use when referring to the violent everyday life of the favela. The lived rhythm (reality) of daily life in the favela is thought of as different from how reality (rhythm) is experienced and lived in other wealthier parts of the city. Other musical styles that my interlocutors associate with ways of living outside of the favelas of Rio are thought of as less exciting than the ways of being young, associated with funk.

Funk representing and creating community

Funk, for some, is also the means to making a living. As Rico (29 years old), a pastor and former funk star, says, funk was the only door open to him when it came to making a living. Like the others, he compares funk to other musical genres and says that he started singing funk because, “funk was the only door that was open that gave us the opportunity. Hip-hop was not something we listened to and pagode wasn’t our cup of tea.”

He continues, “We wrote music about what people around us were going through, what they were living. We wrote about personal problems. I wanted to search for the dream that I had in my heart. When I was a child I wanted to become a singer or a football player. I wanted to earn money so that I could help my family. My family is very poor. I could start buying things for them...”

As Rico asserts, not only rhythm, but also lyrics are crucial in understanding the importance of funk. Cal, the sound system owner, explained the importance of funk to me like this:

Funk, it’s like this, every word has a certain meaning attached to it. Only if you are por dentro (inside) you can understand.... Por dentro, I mean, if you’re listening to funk, then you are already on the inside. For example, if I sing about my wife, who was having an affair, maybe someone there in Zona Sul (more affluent part of Rio) hears it and thinks, “Ah wow, that’s for me.” Listen if I sing like this, me and my girlfriend... no... wait!

Cal starts singing:

My girlfriend and I were holding each other tight when the rain started pouring down... she looked out the window and started to cry... In that, there are some words about rain, now, imagine: you decide to meet with your boyfriend

99 He says that pagode "não era nossa praia,” literally meaning “it wasn’t our beach.”
at the square, the rain starts pouring down, your boyfriend never shows up and you find yourself all alone. You start thinking about that song. Every time rain starts pouring down, you will think of that song! And you will think that it has everything to do with you and your life. Every word has a meaning attached to it. Even putaria means something, if you listen carefully. If my wife betrays me and I write some letters escutchando ela (offending her) then somebody might hear it and think, “Ah, that could be me. Those letters are for me, too.”

Cal continued:

Once MC Sandro did a song that went like this: “Enough with the war in Rio de Janeiro, enough with the war in Rio de Janeiro… Raise a flag for peace, for the sake of our community.” If you listen, it has everything to do with our reality. There is so much violence. He’s asking for peace. Someone could say that that song is a proibidão, but a gente que vive no mundo do funk [we who live in the funk world], we know what it’s like. Personally, I would never change the favela for Zona Sul, and live with all that prejudice. That song and many others, they represent the reality of the community.

From an emic point of view, from Cal’s perspective, funk songs represent the community. To understand funk, as Cal explains it, you need to know the context, be por dentro. MC Sandro’s song, for example, only makes sense if you know his history as a drug trafficker. Cal early on realized the economic potential in funk. He holds an important power position in the favela. Unlike most other people there, he actually manages to make a living out of funk. Also, like many other powerful persons in the favela who work closely with the drug traffickers, Cal would always portray the favela – and especially the funk scene – as an unproblematic, happy and unified community. Funk performances and songs, often locally related, shape the experience of community even though they both include and exclude. The romanticizing of violence in some of the funk songs is an example of content that also exclude many listeners.

When speaking of funk, people in the favela like the pastors Rico (29 years old) and Giselli (20 years old), who I often met at the Saturday baile, would bring up the prejudice middle- and upper-class Brazilians have of favela youth. Like pastor Rico, youth in Nova Cidade would constantly repeat to me, that people outside of the favela believe that everyone who listens to funk is a gangster. Rico said:

They think that everyone who listens to funk is um marginal, bandido. Gangsters, people who aren’t worth anything. Because of this, prejudices exist. The truth is that there are good people who go to the bailes because they like the funk rhythm. One thing has not got to do with the other. I can’t have prejudice against all those who listen to funk. But, because of the lyrics sung today, the prejudices increase even more against those who listen to this music. If they
changed the lyrics, this could change. We could change the way they see us, do you understand? We [his group] have endured so much prejudice.

Even though critical of the lyrics, I see Rico’s denunciation of the prejudices and his portrayal of the world of funk as existing prior to prejudice, or in spite of it, as part of the mythology of the favela. I do not doubt the sincerity with which Rico conveys the complexity of his social practice as a counter-image to the simplifications and moral condemnation of others, but I am open to the possibility that there is a dialectic between prejudices and protest that functions in reverse, so to speak. In challenging the stereotype by being it, by embracing its exaggerations, funk music and its lyrics operate within the realm of protest in the way I outlined in the introduction, in reference to Aretxaga (1993). In that very quality, lies an important part of the attraction of funk for its practitioners.

Mirroring Rico’s effort to explain the stigma of funk beyond the favela, Giselli maintains that funk is a more general style associated with favela youth. As discussed earlier, in order to avoid being considered “muito favela” (very much a woman from the favela) and associated with funk, young women dress differently inside and outside its boundaries:

Tiny shorts are OK to wear but only inside the favela, never outside, where my mother works. I work in Madureira. There, people think that in here, it is campo de guerra [a place of war], but it’s only prejudice. I was at a meeting once with people from work. They said things like: “I would never enter a favela.” But they don’t know. They have never been here. There are people and there are people.

Giselli also explains that in contrast to parties in other areas, men at the baile in Nova Cidade, do not “grab you or try to kiss you.” She says:

It’s much worse at uma casa de show [a type of venue for funk shows, where one pays for the entrance, often located in suburbs or wealthy areas]. There, people will grab you. They try to kiss you, hug you, and they want to be with you – they are from the elite [são de alta sociedade]. Here it’s not like that. Here you drink beer, there they have an I-don’t-know-cocktail [she is referring to the fancy cocktails one can buy in bars in the city].

This statement can of course be seen as a way of portraying the community in a somewhat exaggeratedly positive way. However, there are strict rules imposed by the drug traffickers concerning male behavior in relation to women that – at least to some extent – are followed at the bailes.

So far, I have explained the importance of funk to social life in Nova Cidade. In various ways, funk and the bailes represent being young in the favela. Turning my attention to Tatiana and Claudia, I will now explore the individual cases of two young girls navigating the social landscape of funk and the baile. This is a space full of women but dominated by men, both in
terms of number – there are always more men than women at the bailes – and in terms of power – men rule the funk scene. Although many dream of it, very few women in the favela are able to make a funk career. I will end the chapter by introducing the funk groups and by discussing how young men in Nova Cidade approach the bailes and, also, the role of sexuality and power in that approach.

Navigating Within Male Dominance: Tatiana and Claudia

Tatiana, who was 14 years old when I got to know her, took to composing funk lyrics and performing at funk parties during the time of my fieldwork. She said that she wanted to become a famous funk artist, but also wished to study to become a lawyer and a bombeiro (fireman/woman). At the time she was the only woman in Nova Cidade performing at funk parties. Her mother was only 11 years old when she had Tatiana. Her father was a drug trafficker who died when Tatiana was 8 years old. Her stepfather is a famous pagode musician. It was with him that Tatiana learned to sing. When she was little, her mother took her to the bailes but she has always lived with her grandmother.100

Her friends help her to write songs about love and broken hearts, which is the kind of funk considered acceptable for women to make. Tatiana, however, told me that in the future she would like to compose putaria. “I don’t want to make any apology for crime, but putaria yes. I just need to grow a little first.” In the favela, it is considered immoral for girls both to compose and to perform putaria.

As described earlier, putaria lyrics are about sex. Women are told when and how to move their hips (rebolar), to get down to the floor, how to shake “ass” (and at which speed). This is done to the sounds of human beatboxing,101 rap over electronic funk beats, and the rhythms of tamborzão.102 When Tatiana says she does not want to “make any apology for crime,” she is referring to the funk genre called proibidão, or “very forbidden.” Proibidão lyrics are, as already noted, often about life in the local faction.

Tatiana helped her grandmother to make a living by making and selling salgados (salty snacks) and acai (juice) in a neighborhood close to the favela.

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100 Many of the young women and men with whom I spent time had close relationships with their mothers, grandmothers, or stepmothers. Their fathers, grandfathers and stepfathers were not present, or involved, in their lives to the same extent.
101 The DJs of most bailes play funk “live,” using an electronic drum kit, MPC (drum machine), computer software or synthesizer.
102 This translates as “Big Drums” in English, but specifically refers to samples of Brazilian hand drums, particularly the atabaque also used in Capoeira. The Tamborzão rhythm is a combination of drums from Capoeira, Maculelê and Candomblé (with rhythms from Miami Bass and North American rap).
She studied during the day and practiced karate almost every day after school. In the evenings she would either take care of her cousins or help her grandmother with household tasks. Tatiana’s grandmother does not always let Tatiana go to the funk parties, as “women in the favela need to think about their reputation.” I saw Tatiana perform twice at the local baile – the second time she performed was directly after the super famous MC Creu and Mulher Melancia – and every time her grandmother was present, to watch over her.

Tatiana and her friend Claudia (13 years old) often spoke about their favorite funk group The Young Ones. According to Tatiana: “We live together, I speak to all of them, in the end, I like them a lot.” Neither Claudia nor Tatiana would, however, get up on stage with the group. “If you do, there will be one month of commentaries and they will call you piranha, safada, gilete [different terms for prostitute],” says Claudia. They tell me that “for men it’s different. I don’t think it’s ugly for a man. For them, it’s normal. It’s good. Não tem nada ver [it has nothing to do with it]. For women yes it’s ugly, fica difamada.” Claudia says difamada is often used when referring to women who get a bad reputation because they are considered to dress, dance, move or talk like “prostitutes,” or because they are thought to have affairs with many men, or to only be interested in men because of money or drugs. Women that are difamada are considered to have neither morals nor honor. In this context or morality, the space of sexuality is neither private nor commoditized, a dichotomy that I discussed in the introduction. For men, as we will see, public displays of their masculinity through overt, sexual acts are not only permitted but also violently encouraged. Sex as social strategy for women is a whole different story.

Tatiana and Claudia also think that it is perfectly fine for men to have many women and “to sleep around” because it is in their nature and they cannot help it. For women, however, it is ugly. Like many other women in the favela, they explain that there are different kinds of women. Women who belong to the category piranhas (literally meaning the large, voracious freshwater fish piranha, in this context signifying a woman who sleeps around) are those that are considered to dress, dance, drink, sleep around and behave in a shameful and morally inappropriate way. It is for example women like that who climb up on the stage at the baile to dance with The Young Ones, they say.

Claudia’s mother (27 years old) is evangélica, “but I’m not,” Claudia says. In contrast to Tatiana’s mother, Claudia’s mother never allowed her to go to bailes when she was little. I asked Claudia why her mother does not like funk. “I don’t know why… but she doesn’t. But I need to curtir [enjoy] what I like. Sometimes I go to church, too.” About her father, she says that she has stopped talking to him. “He thinks too much of himself. He says

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103 "Fica um mes naquele comentário."
whatever he feels like and I don’t like it.” She adds (laughing) that men in the favela have so many children that they end up forgetting about them. Claudia and Tatiana are not sure if they ever want to have children. In the future, Claudia wants to study, get a job, join the armed forces and marry. For a few days she has written funk lyrics for Tatiana. “The other day, I was in the street and I didn’t have anything to do. I grabbed a pen and a paper to do music for her. I have so many ideas in my head.”

During the course of my fieldwork, Tatiana stopped performing. She told me her manager (and sound system owner Cal, see earlier) did not pay her properly for her shows. “He doesn’t even give me anything to eat.” This, she said, was not acceptable. Tatiana was at the time, unknown by her grandmother, going out with Anderson from the successful group The Young Ones. He, in turn, was going out with several other girls at the same time. “He is not made of iron, is he?” Tatiana always said about Anderson, who was the person who encouraged her to start singing funk. Tatiana’s first funk song is about the sadness she feels about having to share her boyfriend with so many other girls. In some cases, funk lyrics are more revealing of “reality,” in terms of subjective experience (see above), than any comment or explanation that an interlocutor chooses to make in an interview (cf. Beer 2012).

Female sexuality: a threat to male power and dominance

If a young woman dances in “too vulgar a way,” drinks “too much,” flirts with “too many” or dresses “too sexy,” the gossip spreads quickly and she will be “badly seen.” If a young woman “misbehaves,” it is likely she’ll get the reputation of being a piranha, a word that Tatiana translates into “… a girl who has sex with many men without getting paid.” Piranhas, Tatiana said, “are girls who like sex, who don’t value themselves. They go and get pregnant.” In contrast, a young man being called piranha is something prestigious, admirable, demanded and expected. This difference illustrates the double standard for male versus female fidelity – a very common funk theme and topic of discussion among young people in Nova Cidade – where male infidelity is seen as inevitable and expected whereas female infidelity is disastrous. For men to uphold their masculinity seems to require that women’s positions are insecure and at risk. At the same time, what is perceived as immoral female sexuality seems to be viewed by men as dangerous and even violent.

At the same time as funk and the bailes depend on a discourse of sexual consumption and moral controversy – sex is at the center of almost all the popular songs – female bodies who claim space in the “wrong way” at the baile seem to threaten a public moral order built upon visible signs of respect, hierarchy, control and order. At the baile, women are expected and
demanded to dress and behave sensually. Yet, as soon as their behavior is interpreted as sexually explicit or morally questionable, they get punished for crossing the lines (verbally and/or physically). Many young women in Nova Cidade, like Tatiana and Claudia, dream of becoming funk stars and composing putaria (sexually explicit funk). Yet, only to be present at the baile is considered morally ambiguous for women, especially the young. By engaging in funk despite this, young women in a way, challenge “traditional” ideas of moral female behavior. There are successful female funk stars in Rio, who claim male space by criticizing male oppression of women in their lyrics and who sing about their sexual preferences, but they are relatively few and none of them are from Nova Cidade.

During my fieldwork in 2011, two years after having met Tatiana for the last time, she was gone. I went looking for her everywhere until someone told me that she had moved. The grandmother of Tatiana had been killed. It was the boyfriend of her grandmother who had murdered her. Tatiana had found her grandmother in their bathroom. Few people seemed to know exactly where Tatiana had moved. A friend of hers said that she lived in a favela a few hours away and that she now was the mother of two children. Tatiana’s story clearly illustrates the difficulties young women in the favela face while trying to navigate – and in some ways challenge – power orders.

I will now introduce the most popular funk group in the favela. For the younger generations in Nova Cidade, the group members play important roles like those of community leaders. Youth in the favela who work informally, who take on day-to-day jobs in and around the North Zone and often earn very little, can still internally attain a high social status in Nova Cidade. This standing is true for the funk singers and dancers. Their ways of dressing, talking (always using the most up-dated slang vocabulary), their “sexiness,” and engagement in the favela’s social life (especially night-life), and the potentiality of social mobility gives them a high social status within the favela. In what follows, I will look at how these young men deal with “manliness” in the context of the baile. While they challenge ideas about (stereo-) typical male behavior in some ways, they use virility and promiscuity in order to create and sustain their trademark as sex symbols in the favela. Below I will explore the male brand of sexuality as a contested social strategy.

Sex as Social Strategy: The Young Ones

Dressed in blue jeans, white t-shirts, sneakers and baseball hats, The Young Ones, like always, start their show by slightly rotating their hips to soft and very slow music. A few girls standing by the stage scream and stretch out their arms to the boys. The boys get down on their knees and move to the edge of the stage for the girls to touch them. The girls yell even louder and
more girls gather around the stage. The beat abruptly gets a bit rougher. The five young men stand up and take off their baseball hats and t-shirts for the audience to see their muscular, bronzed bodies, covered in tattoos. They drop to their stomachs and grind their hips suggestively against the floor. With their stomachs to the ground, and their bums in the air, they move up and down first slowly and then quickly. After a few minutes they get up and start swaying their hips simultaneously again: “Are there any single girls in the audience?” the singer shouts out at the top of his voice. Arms are lifted in the air, and a young woman dressed in a red skirt and yellow top is chosen. Getting on stage, Anderson immediately stands behind her and starts pushing her in front of him back and forth. He grabs her everywhere and jumps on her back so that she falls forward. The other boys then join in from all directions and push her in front of them to the beat. The girl looks bothered but smiles. The show is over and the young woman joins her friends on the dance floor. Her friend gives her a kiss on the cheek and someone else claps her on the back.

Anderson, Hugo, Marcelinho and Lucas are The Young Ones, the most successful and popular funk group in the favela. Many young women told me that this group was their favorite funk group of all times. Walking down pathways in the northern part of the favela, one hears jukeboxes in every bar and on every corner playing their songs. The singer Marcelinho’s distinctly eager voice follows everyone through the favela. His rapping is clear and powerful, but it is rather the fervent pitch of his voice than the actual words he sings that communicate a sense of urgency and conviction. The group members are all in their early to mid-20s. Together they put on a show at the local baile almost every weekend. If they are not on stage, one can still be sure to find them dancing enthusiastically in the middle of the funk crowd.

The Young Ones are taking a very active part in the social life of the favela. Anderson, for example, trains its only female football team and Hugo gives funk dance classes three times a week at the social center Utopia. Before joining the group, Anderson worked as a professional dancer. For many years he gave dance-classes in a neighboring favela. Lucas works with the maintenance of sound systems in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods. He is engaged as a kind of sound system technician and travels with the local sound system to other favelas in order to make sure it works properly.

The Young Ones fully live, as they say, “no ritmo do funk,” in the funk rhythm. Their life-style is a “funk style of life” as the popular funk MC Anderson told me. According to him, this means that all their friends are funkeiros/as. As he said, when I asked him “… if our friends did not like funk, they would not be able to be our friends. Some did not like funk before but they do now, and others are not our friends anymore. Everything we do has to do with funk. It is our life.” Here, Anderson clearly communicates
funk’s ability to create community, or better, the way that social inclusion is conditioned on people’s commitment to funk as style and practice.

Although all of the young men, except for Lucas, have children of their own, none of them live with them. At the beginning of my fieldwork, in 2008, the group decided to move in together to a house with two floors on a tiny back alley behind the main street in the northern part of the favela. For friends to be living together is very unusual in the favela. Most young men live with either their parents or their new families. The group members manage to make ends meet by playing at bailes in Nova Cidade and around Rio, as well as by taking on other temporary jobs in Nova Cidade. Lucas and Marcelinho (who study biology in the evenings) both work at the bakery in the favela. Like some of the other popular funk artists in Nova Cidade, they get sponsored by the drug traffickers, which means that they, for example, get money to buy clothes. This also means that they, in contrast to most other young people in the favela, can afford living together in their own house. I will come back to this apparent paradox below, and discuss the kind of professionalism or consciously strategic performance on stage of something resembling a gang rape paired with an alleged queer practice of living together with other men and dancing like women.

Anderson, Hugo, Marcelinho and Lucas usually wear surfer shorts, flip-flops and baseball caps. They are almost always bare-chested. “Looks,” Anderson told me, “are extremely important to us. We always need to look good. People recognize us in the streets. Girls scream when they see us!” Anderson and Hugo have bleached their hair into white or yellow, their upper bodies are covered with tattoos and they usually get their nails done at one of the beauty parlors in Nova Cidade. All of the boys have pierced ears with small diamond-looking earrings in both ears or just one ear.

The group spends almost all their time together. During weekdays, they can be found toning their muscles in the open-air gym, sitting by the jukeboxes listening to their own music, standing in bars drinking beer or helping out fixing the sound system in the quadra. On weekends, they only live at night. During the day, they sleep (if they do not have to work) and at night they dance, drink and flirt. Like everybody else, they go to the baile to have fun, meet people, to see and to be seen, but—above all—they are there to dance. Anderson has proudly told me many times that a lot of people think he and the boys are on drugs, but “…we get high from dancing, funk is our drug.” The few times I have been at a baile and The Young Ones have not been present, the baile has truly not been the same. Their “energy” contributes a great deal to the baile-atmosphere as a whole. The Young Ones’ playful ways of being stand in stark contrast to the much more mellowed down, “cool” style of the traficantes, who also greatly influence the baile with their more serious and sometimes quite intimidating “vibe.” At the bailes, there is
often a mix of play and seriousness that comes with a constant threat of violence, a topic to which I will return in Chapter 5.

Creating a trademark and gaining social status

Anderson, the front figure in The Young Ones, usually arrives at the baile on his motorcycle, always with a pretty new girl by his side. I soon found out that if a young man wants to get pretty girls in the favela, he either has to be a funk-star or a traficante – at least that is what all my male friends in Nova Cidade believe. After becoming sex symbols in the favela, The Young Ones are themselves convinced this is the case. All their lyrics are about how to have sex, when and with whom. Their most famous song is about girls dragging the boys to o setor to have sex with them. According to the young men themselves, the song is based on a story that constantly repeats itself: When a baile is over, or sometimes even in the middle of it, the young men in The Young Ones bring their girls for the night to o setor, the room they rent every weekend in the housing projects very close to the quadra, in order to have sex. It is right where Zaki lives so he always claims to know who is seeing whom and when. The boys usually make a schedule for each one to know when they can have o setor.

The Young Ones are sex symbols in the favela and struggle hard to maintain this image. They use virility and promiscuity to create and sustain their trademark. The way the group members use sex both on and off stage illustrates how masculine personas are articulated through public tropes of sexuality (see Berlant 1995, Berlant and Warner 1998). On stage, however, their performed sexuality becomes violent at times. When they have a girl from the audience on stage at the end of every show, their act quickly changes from being sexually explicit yet cheerful, into something quite brutal as they pretend to have violent sex with a young woman while pushing her around on stage. It is extremely important for the group members in The Young Ones not to be seen as viados, or gays. They were the first funk group in Nova Cidade that started to perform funk by moving their hips and rotating their bums, traditionally associated with how women and homosexuals dance. To “prove” that they are “real men” they need to be seen as sexually active and masculine, at all times. Their act on stage, however, contrasts with the way they behave off stage in the everyday life of the favela. None of the group members come across as aggressive or violent off stage. On the contrary, they work hard to be seen as a positive alternative to the more openly violent ways of the drug traffickers. The group members teach children how to dance and work with all the big events in the favela in order to make them as fun as possible. As another example of this positive input, the front figure Anderson teaches the only female football team in Nova Cidade
and was the one who encouraged Tatiana to start writing and singing funk although she was afraid to.

In Brazil, like in many other settings around the globe, traditional female practice is conceived as a different mode of doing than male practice. Feminine action emphasizes being a good mother, planning over risk, domesticity over worldliness, and action in and through networks rather than interpersonal competition. The feminine ideal might be summarized as caring, nurturing and self-sacrificing, a way of acting on behalf of others (see Lancaster 1993:93). Traditional ideas about masculinity in Central and South America, including Brazil, have been labeled machismo. The term turns the commonplace macho (man, real man), into a “system of manliness.”

As in any system of power, people need to manoeuver their way through its available options. A woman is always at risk in this system, she might be badly treated both physically and verbally. Although a man has more options, he is also no less at risk. In a context where “the burdens of manhood” weigh heavily, he might fail to maintain an appropriate masculinity (Lancaster 1993:198).

In Nova Cidade, youth do not use the term machismo very often, but sometimes speak of being “sujeto homen,” a real man – the opposite of being a viado, gay. According to activists in the favela, men and women who are gay are accepted if they “assumir,” if they are open about it and do not hide it. Yet, it is very common that people speak and joke about homosexuals in derogatory terms. Also, although this is not spoken of openly in the favela, people who are gay – like in most other places – are subjected to a great deal of violence.

Men frequently use viado when they want to humiliate other men, either seriously or presumably jokingly, nonetheless, always implicating that someone is not a “real man.” For The Young Ones to maintain an appropriate masculinity, it seems as if they have to compensate for their associated “feminine” dance and behavior off-stage, by behaving as “real men” on stage. Virility and promiscuity are, however, used to gain social status, both off and on stage.

This is an intricate game. In order to understand it better I now continue by presenting another popular funk group that also struggles with sexuality.

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104 Writing about the Nicaraguan context, Lancaster (1993:92-93) argues that the term machismo designates a system in order to diagram and critique it. It elevates all that was implicit in the term macho to the level of explicitness. I have not heard anyone use a corresponding term to describe traditional notions of femininity in Brazil.

105 It is important to note that although Brazil has one of the best organized gay-rights movements in the world, gays in Brazil are suffering from severe violence. Attacks against gays have climbed steadily for most of the last decade, with 272 murdered in 2011, according to Grupo Gay da Bahia, a leading gay-rights group that tracks antigay violence. In 2102, it was worse, with 75 murders in just the first 10 weeks. In 2103, after protests, not the least from influential Evangelicals, Brazil’s lawmakers rejected a bill that would have prohibited discrimination or inciting violence on the basis of a person’s sexual orientation and gender identity.
and power-relations in the context of the baile. The group members strive hard to be seen as “male enough,” yet, in order not to threaten those in local power – the drug traffickers – they are, at the same time, afraid of being perceived as “too much male.”

Very few male interlocutors remember the first time they went to a baile. Most, however, remember being very young, and some have baile-memories as young as 4 or 5 years old. The social context of the baile has thus been a natural part of growing up for many of them. It remains central to their social life. The baile-environment is crucial for learning how to behave as “real men.” By watching and imitating older friends, brothers, fathers, and neighbors, boys learn how to drink, smoke and dance in the right way. Also, already as a little boy, one needs to know which girls one is and is not allowed to flirt with. Some girls like the girlfriends of the drug dealers are not even allowed to be looked at.

Sexuality and Power: Newbies

Wellington, Adriano, Caio and Edgar are between 14 and 16 years old. They make up the youngest official funk group in Nova Cidade: Newbies. When I first met them, they were very concerned with the limitations of male behavior at the bailes. Wellington, the very well-spoken group manager, explained to me that men cannot be half-naked at bailes like women, and the reason did not relate to homophobia. Not everyone likes it when men dance like women, he said. “If you steal attention away from os bandidos by showing off, you run the risk of getting severely punished or even killed.” The drug traffickers do not accept men other than funk artists taking off their shirts to dance sensually on the dance floor. No other men – funk artists or not – are allowed to sway their hips close to “their women.” Wellington’s father was a drug dealer. When Wellington was little, he used to sing prohibited funk songs at the drug dealers’ parties. When his father died, his mother joined the church and so did Wellington. Shortly after, he started practicing hip-hop and learned how to break-dance. Last year, however, he “got bored” with church-life and started dancing funk. Even though he misses church and the “feeling of togetherness” in the congregation, it turned out to be too complicated, he explains, to combine church-life and funk-life.

Only a couple of months before I met them, Newbies had their first show at the local baile. They had decided to imitate their role models, teachers and idols, namely, The Young Ones. But how would the audience respond to the group swaying their hips and shaking their bums like women? What would people say about them afterwards? Would the women like it or think they were too feminine? How would the traficantes react? “We were enormously embarrassed,” Caio said, “…before and after the show, we were so embar-
rassed in fact, that our faces turned red.” They were embarrassed because they did not want to get a reputation as gay. I understood later that in addition, they did not want to get too much attention from the girlfriends of the drug dealers. They were afraid of not being “male enough” and, at the same time, of being “too much male.” Their show, however, was a success, at least according to their female fans. They became known in the whole favela and girls started shouting after the boys in the streets.

Older male funk entertainers especially openly express their disapproval of men dancing like women. Many young women that I have spoken to, however, are happy to see young men sway their hips sensually to the beat. This preference, of course, depends on the context. Most mothers and grandmothers I know in Nova Cidade get very upset if their own sons shake their bums or sway their hips. Another quite recent shift in the favela is that today not only women but also many men – all male funk artists I know – go to the salão de beleza (beauty parlor) before a baile to make themselves beautiful. They go to do their nails, bleach their hair, shave their chests, paint their eyebrows and tint their hair.

Violence as Social Strategy

The confines of everyday life become even more evident in the dense social space of the baile. Even though bailes are loud and rowdy, and a place to have fun and “unwind,” rules concerning social life are integral components. People at the baile need to carefully control their behavior and bodily movements. Gendered hierarchies are emphasized in funk and the bailes bring forth moral concerns, particularly in relation to expected and required female and male behavior. Young men move around dancing in groups, while others stand still drinking and smoking. Young women are expected (and required) to behave and dance in a “feminine,” sensual way by moving their hips and bums to the beats. To be considered feminine and morally appropriate, women should preferably neither drink alcohol nor smoke (especially not marijuana). Many drink beer and smoke cigarettes anyway.

Drug traffickers control the space of the baile, like the rest of the favela. They are ultimately in charge of the night, and although many of them join in at the baile dancing enthusiastically, leaving their weapons behind (or hidden), the constant threat of violence that their mere presence represents influences people’s behavior and relations. My male interlocutors constantly complained that they could not move about at the baile as freely as they desired because they were watched by traficantes, who wanted all the pretty women for themselves. When I asked a friend why he did not speak to the girl he had been secretly watching the whole night at the baile, he turned
around and said, “Do I look like I want to die tonight?” The girl was going out with a drug trafficker.

At the baile, both women and men are expected to be in full control of their bodies, to the extent that if you by accident step on “the wrong person’s foot,” a fight might start. This norm is especially true when there are people from surrounding areas, gente de fora (outsiders), at the baile. It then becomes utterly important, especially for men, to show who they are. Taú explained this to me when I accidentally stepped on a young man’s foot in the middle of a very crowded baile and the man looked at me as if he wanted to start a fight. Taú informed me that the guy was unknown in Nova Cidade, and consequently he would want to make the impression that he was a traficante, so that no one would dare to “fuck him over.” Earlier, Taú had explained to me that if someone is not a drug trafficker, he at least has to make people believe that he is “as much a man” as they are. People have to think that someone is violent, so that they do not take advantage of him. Not only can a man use violence to prove that he is, in fact, a man or to preserve his masculinity, he is often required to invoke violence. Taú said that he had friends who publicly threatened and even hit girlfriends who had been flirting with other men. However, he claimed that they would never touch them at home when no one was looking.

Violence, like sex, is thus also a social strategy, employed in certain contexts to send messages of strength and resolve to those who observe and who can tell others, not necessarily to the individual victim of the violent act. To appear more violent than one actually is might very well be socially rewarding. Similarly, there is a social value for men in appearing more interested in having sex than they actually are.

Funk and the Churches

Thus far, my interlocutors have painted a quite coherent picture of community in relation to funk and bailes, even though their experiences and expectations differ depending on gender, age and political power. Yet, in many places in the text, a contrasting sense of belonging and morality has appeared, namely the Evangelical churches and what they represent. Below, I pick up a thread that I left in Chapter 3 by now taking a more comprehensive look at the Evangelical churches, especially at their role in relation to funk, bailes and the community of the favela.

In the eyes of many Evangelical Christians, samba and pagode parties but especially the funk parties signify the worldly domain of pleasure that seduces people and leads them astray. Evangelical pastors criticize these “playgrounds of the devil” and urge their audience to avoid them. “Those bailes funk are the devil’s work,” said the pastor from Assembleia de Deus, a
former drug dealer who held services in the room next to where I lived. During his services, he often spoke of social misery and moral decay related to drinking alcohol, prostitution and “That crazy dance (funk dance) that people do every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.”

The opposition between crentes (believers) and those who identify themselves as funk lovers is played out in the everyday life of the favela. I agree with Martjin Oosterbaan (2008, 2009), who argues that this phenomenon should be seen as attempts to demarcate clear lines between moral and immoral behavior from the perspective of the people who attend Pentecostal churches. He writes that (Oosterbaan 2009:89):

In the media of the Assembléia de Deus, the lifestyle of the pagodeiros and funkeiros is presented as irreconcilable with an Evangelical lifestyle. In these media, samba, pagode and funk were almost invariably associated with the forbidden fruits of carnal pleasure. The music and lifestyle therefore functioned as an important counterpoint to the gospel music, which most evangélicos experience as a pure and Godly force that confirms their separate position in the morro.

In the southern part of Nova Cidade, Igreja Universal (see Chapter 3) had one of their most popular temples. Here, the service was usually extremely crowded. Women, a few men, and many children squeezed in next to each other on the benches (the pastor is always male but he has both male and female helpers). It was common for the pastor’s helpers in this temple to ask those who were Evangelical converts to raise their hands. Those who did not raise their hands, including me during one such service, were asked to get on the stage in order to be delivered by one of the many pastors on the stage. “Don’t be ashamed!” (Fica a vergonha não!) the pastor’s helper said when I signaled that I would rather stay in my seat. You do not have to be a convert to take part in the church services. However, the church divides people into converted members, members in the process of conversion and “worldly people” (see also Lima 2012). During the services, pastors repeatedly persuade their listeners to separate themselves from the people who live “worldly lives.” Believers of the Igreja Universal must abandon their past ways, including alcohol, drug or cigarette use, prostitution, promiscuity, or any kind of act deemed to be criminal. They must live “by the faith,” paying their tithes, making offerings and “having an attitude,” meaning that they have to change their lives and work hard to achieve their goals (see Lima 2012 and Chapter 3).

Mothers, daughters and funk

Evangelicals in the favela argue that at the bailes, people drink and dance without obeying to the strict rules of moral prescriptions of the Bible. The bailes are seen as the root of all social and individual problems. Yet, many
funk fans are *crentes*, a fact that points to the tenuousness and elasticity of social boundaries in the favela. Some go to church now and again, others not so often. Quite a few of the young women I spent time with had, however, been forced to choose between funk and *bailes* on the one hand, and their parents (usually Evangelical mothers, often very young themselves) and the churches on the other. Others wrote funk songs and practiced choreography secretly in dark corners, so that their Evangelical mothers would not find out.

“She has done 18 songs and they are all written down in a book she hides in our room!” Márcia proudly announces and points to her younger sister Neiva. Sitting in one of the favela’s most narrow alleys, on the stairs in front of a house, surrounded by eight girls between 10 and 18, Márcia unexpectedly tells me she has a secret funk group together with two other girls. The group is called *o bonde das provocantes* – the “provokers.” When I ask them to sing a few lines they stand up, do a few moves and sing that *o bonde das provocantes* has returned to stay. The girls tell me that they practice in dark corners when nobody sees them or in someone’s home if no one is there. “It is risky,” Márcia says, “…but as long as we never perform on stage or officially engage with funk, it is not that bad.” The sisters Márcia and Neiva are 16 and 22 years old. They live together with their father, stepmother and four brothers. The stepmother is *da igreja*, of the church. She is the reason the girls cannot practice funk openly. She does not even approve of them listening to funk. Márcia says that the stepmother would be very disappointed if she knew the sisters dreamt of becoming funk stars in the future. “She is so very religious! Imagine if you were religious. You would not like your children to do funk music then, would you?” Neiva asks me and says that she still respects her stepmother.

The moral discourses stemming from the churches (both Catholic and Pentecostal) surrounding youth, *bailes* and sexuality influence the way that community is shaped and experienced in the *baile* context. Many of the young women and men that I spent time with understood their Evangelical mothers, yet criticized the churches, particularly the way that they condemn funk and *bailes*. Dandara (20 years old, below) was an example. Like many other young people in the favela, she is influenced by the rhetoric of the churches when she speaks of “right” and “wrong.” However, she argues that she can go to the *baile* and still know what is “right” and what is “wrong.” For her, the lines between moral and immoral behavior are not as easy to draw as for her Evangelical mother, who does not allow her daughter to go to the *baile*. Especially many young women who have been (or still are) prohibited from going to the *baile* and from doing and dancing funk themselves by their Evangelical mothers (as illustrated by “the provokers” above) seem to view and use funk as a means of protesting – not only against the strict rules and restriction of the churches – but also against their own moth-
ers. Below, I will illustrate this through Dandara, another young woman. They have both chosen funk before their Evangelical mothers, the churches and everything they represent (at least for the time being).

Dandara, says that, when she was a little girl she begged her parents to let her go to the baile:

I was a prisoner! My mother e da igreja… I know that bailes have bad aspects but it’s not like they think. They think it’s a thing in the body [uma coisa no corpo]. That you get possessed. That you smoke weed and do cocaine.

Dandara explains that she has gone through all kinds of spiritual states and that she wants to study spirituality. She wants to belong to a religion that is open-minded. She continues by saying that she agrees with her mother — the image of women in funk is horrible — but: “In church there are girls who do things much worse than those things girls at the baile do. I can go to the baile and be conscious about what is right and what is wrong.” When I ask her what she means by “wrong” she tells me that it has to do with dressing and moving in a certain way.

Carol is a 19-year-old funkeira with a daughter about a year old. She lives together with her boyfriend’s mother, who hits her. The boyfriend and his sister support the hitting, she told me. Her own mother não aceita, does not “accept her.” This means that she cannot live with nor have anything to do with her. Her mother is da igreja, and has always disliked funk and what it stands for. Carol has a funk group together with two other young women. They have never performed at the baile in the favela. Carol tells me that she has to be careful. She always had to hide what she loved and dreamt about from her mother. “She hated that I liked funk and she even hated that I dreamt of becoming a funk artist. I always dreamt of becoming a funkeira, always. She prohibited me from going to the bailes but I went anyway, I snuck out.” One night when Carol went to the baile, she met the man who later became her boyfriend:

I was going out with him. He didn’t want anything serious. He only wanted to play. Then I grabbed him and told him, come here and say that you’re sorry, now come and say that you’re sorry! He fucked up [vacilou]. I wanted something serious. He only wanted to play. That’s why I wrote this music, do you understand? For him to apologize to me.

For Carol, funk parties were exciting and fun. They provided a place where she could hang out with friends and flirt with young men. The bailes were an escape from her religious mother and a way to what she always had dreamt of, becoming a funk star. Her escape to freedom, however, turned into a new form of repression in the hands of her boyfriend and mother-in-law. “She doesn’t like me, it’s out in the open, everybody knows it.”
In my examples here, religious morality and the opposition it constructs in
the poetry and practice of funk are more an opposition between youth and
adults than about anything else. However, there is something with the dan-
ger, fear and exposure to the brutalities of poverty that needs to be unraveled
in order to understand the rationale for associating funk with violence, for
turning away from it and for encouraging others to do so, too. For many, the
experience of growing up and growing older seem to include a sense of loss
and grief. I will now show how Evangelical leaders conceive of the dangers
of and for youth in the favela and the role that bailes and sexuality play in
their view. Many religious leaders in Nova Cidade view youth as vulnerable
and in need of being “saved.” Young people are seen as victims (and sym-
 bols) of moral decay. At the same time, they emerge as potentially violent
perpetrators, likely to succumb to “the weakness of the flesh” (see also
Munoz-Laboy et al 2011:661). As my interlocutor Rico states below, funk
songs and bailes are believed to instigate violence and encourage youth to
take drugs and to become prostitutes. Controlling the imagined “violent sex-
uality” associated with funk and favela youth is a priority for leaders of both
Catholic and Evangelical leaders. This notion is very much in line with the
way that state authorities view and act in relation to favela youth, which I
discuss in Chapter 6.

Rico: former funk star and pastor

I meet Rico (29 years old) in the church where he works as a pastor. Before
our talk I saw him lead mass, sing and play the piano. When Rico started to
sing funk he was 12 years old. His father worked as a store man in a ware-
house and his mother as a seamstress. In the 1990s, Rico was part of a na-
tion-wide famous funk group (the same as MC Sandro and Betinho, see
Chapter 5). Rico says that today his life is different from what it was when
he was a funk star. He goes to church every day. People come to him to get
advice about personal problems, financial troubles and all kinds of other
difficulties.

Rico’s group started by performing at the local baile and were then “dis-
covered” by a manager. He helped them record and soon their songs were
played on the radio. They got invited to a famous TV-show and people all
over the country knew their lyrics by heart. The money Rico got, he divided
between buying food for his family, and spending on girls and clothes. After
a couple of years, however, the group members realized that their manager
stole money from them. They did not get even close to what was their due.
Instead, everything went into the manager’s pocket. The group started
fighting with the manager, yet with this, problems of all kinds arose. They
did not get as much airplay as before and people lost interest in the group.
Rico went into a deep crisis and says:
When the group finished, the fame vanished, everything for me ended. I went through so many problems. I thought the only thing I could do was to take my life. My girlfriend was pregnant with my daughter, who died. Someone from the group went to church and got to know the pastor. The pastor told him to bring in everyone from the group to listen to a palavra de Deus, [God’s word]. They invited me to go and listen to God’s word, and I went. There I listened to a palavra [the word], listened to a palavra, listened to a palavra. When I lost my daughter, I cried so much. I was still going out with the same girl and, after 3 or 4 months, my son was born. He was born with the same problem as my daughter. But, because I went to church, God cured him. I said to God: “If you help me with this problem, I will serve you from this day on.” I gave my life to God. That’s when I stopped singing. From that day on, I kept away from any kind of funk music. When we finally broke with our manager, I joined the church [entrei na igreja, literally “went in to church”].

In addition, 2 years ago Rico’s son (then 9 years old) was killed. He was run over by a motorbike. Rico tells me he is still married and wants to have another child. I asked Rico what the relationship between funk and the Evangelical churches is like:

It’s a thing that… When I gave my life to Jesus, I knew that I would not be able to continue doing what I was doing. The Bible says that when people know the truth, it sets you free. I knew that funk has a lot of bad influence on young people. It makes them violent, it makes them take drugs and become prostitutes. All of this is against God’s words. I couldn’t continue doing what I was doing, leading a lot of young people into perdition… So, I had to make a choice, either I kept singing or I stayed in church so that God could save these young people through my life. I couldn’t be divided between two different things. When I first became involved in the church, I continued to sing funk because I had to follow the contract I had signed, or I would have had to pay. During that time, I went to the bailes and left messages from God for the crowds. I left messages for their hearts, so that they would see that my life wasn’t the life they knew. People thought it was cool; they said, “Wow, God really changed your life.” You know, light does not combine with darkness.

Rico and I started talking about the funk – putaria and proibidão – that young people listen to today:

Funk dominates people, it influences them like this. People start inciting themselves, you know. I see that it’s more of that now. I don’t think people need to use those kinds of lyrics to conquer space for themselves. I think there are other ways. To me these words provoke more violence. They make people take more drugs, become prostitutes. Funk has so much palavrão [profanity, swear-words]. If this doesn’t change, they will not live long because they are destroying themselves! This has to change…. These lyrics that we hear, what do they incite young people to do? Not to study. Not to work. Not to have a dignified life. It’s the exact opposite. With other words, they are ending their lives. This is what I think. This has to change, so that the new generations don’t do the same. How do we change this? The only solution is through God’s words. I haven’t seen one single project that has succeeded in changing
something for young people today. I cannot see any other way that this can change but through God’s words.

The bodies of youth have become sites for purification. As noted in Chapter 3, Evangelical (and Catholic) leaders like Rico in Nova Cidade wish to turn youth into “productive citizens.” According to them, the church should be seen as a site of health, purification and strength.

MC Sandro: drug dealing, social work and politics

Late MC Sandro was part of the same funk group as Rico. The two of them grew up together and used to be close friends. When their group split up, MC Sandro chose to continue with funk on his own. Eventually he got involved with the local faction. During the time of my fieldwork, he was a powerful player in the favela. He was admired and feared at the same time: Admired, because he had the only funk studio in the favela and was the founder of a social center in Nova Cidade. In contrast to many other funk artists, he was invited to do shows both in other favelas and in middle- and upper-class areas. He was however feared, because of his strong connection to the faction. Friends of mine secretly accused him of being responsible for the “disappearance” of a close friend of theirs, Leon, who was from another town (see Chapter 5). During the time that MC Sandro had a leading position within the faction, Leon had been socializing and doing drugs with the traficantes in Nova Cidade. After some time, the drug dealers accused him of being an informant (an “X-9”). As I illustrate below, many of the forbidden funk songs are about informants, including some of MC Sandro’s. As discussed in Chapter 2, MC Sandro continuously tried to control whom I was talking to and about what. I soon learned that he was afraid that I would find out about his relations to the drug dealing faction and “reveal” what was to remain hidden. He wanted me to paint a coherent picture of a community without any problems while, at the same time, he enacted and embodied an anomaly to community, at least according to the accounts that lament the violent destruction of the favela communities of the past (see e.g., Perlman’s work).

A few years ago, MC Sandro was killed by the police in a neighboring favela. When we met during my fieldwork in Nova Cidade, Sandro could afford to live in his own apartment. He told me that as he had three girlfriends, it was practical for him to live on his own. Like so many other doors in the housing projects where Sandro lived, his was covered with shiny Evangelical stickers with messages like “This belongs to JESUS” and “God first, bro.” Every Sunday, Sandro had a column published in a newspaper in which he gave the readers an update on the latest funk news.

As a child, he used to go with his mother, Creoza, to the Copacabana beach to collect beer cans, and to beg for money. Creoza told me stories
about how Sandro started singing funk for American tourists, who would listen and buy more and more beer from his mother until they got so drunk they could not stand up anymore. During his childhood, he would also go on buses around low-income areas singing funk, hoping to collect enough money for him and his mother to buy food. For many years, his mother Creoza collected beer cans at the bailes in Nova Cidade. With time, she started selling beer and sodas in a little vending cart at the bailes and got engaged in local politics. Today she is a beer and soda retailer.

Sandro often told me that he had no childhood friends left. They had all died, shot either by the police or by traficantes. He made sure I understood that funk is an important alternative to the faction for young men and repeatedly told me he dreamt of helping kids to keep off the streets, and not to end up where he had. This wish was one of the reasons he funded a social center, a space where children and teenagers could come to learn how to dance to funk, play an instrument, do Capoeira or learn a language. During my time in the favela, some of the members of The Young Ones taught funk dance there three times a week, to about 80 kids. According to MC Sandro, he and the other funkeiros who worked with him kept 800 children busy with different activities connected to the social center.

After a few months of fieldwork, as noted in Chapter 2, I was informed that MC Sandro had been a drug faction leader in the northern part of Nova Cidade. He was the boss for a relatively short while, and in the end, was sent to prison for 8 months. When he got out, he soon took up a career as a funk artist, built a funk studio, his social center Utopia, and started engaging children and teenagers in making funk. Sandro had the power to decide who would get to perform at the baile and who would get the chance to record in his studio (the only studio). Many of those who hung out with and around MC Sandro were hoping that he would take notice of them and their music. He also aspired to a political career. During election periods, he walked around the favela together with the right wing politician bishop Crivella, who belonged to the same church and who, in his turn, supported the first man from Nova Cidade to run for vereador (councilor). MC Sandro was, however, forced to change his political allies. His competitors threatened to reveal to the public that Sandro had been a drug-dealing boss if he did not work for them instead.

I can confirm the contention by scholars João Freire Filho and Michael Herschmann (2010), that there is often a misguided linking of funk to illegality, in turn, instrumental in criminalizing certain people. Scholar’s risk reinforcing this view by only mentioning funk in relation to drugs and drug traffickers (like Goldstein 2003, Perlman 2010 and McCann 2009) and by viewing funk as something separate from everyday life in the favelas. As many of the others persons I have introduced in this dissertation so far, MC Sandro also illustrates how boundaries between different groups in the fave-
la are fluid and hard to draw. Like him, you can be a religious funk star, faction member, politically engaged and struggle to keep kids off the streets at the same time.

Concluding Notes

The “soundscape” shapes an important element of the public space of the favela and reveals many of its power relations, such as the struggle between the faction and the Evangelical churches. This claim is in line with the work of Jacques Attali (1985), who stresses the dialectical relation between sound and power. According to him, sound and music in particular are tools “for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality, it is what links a power center to its subjects, and thus, more generally, it is an attribute of power in all its forms” (1985: 6). In Nova Cidade, the music played at bailes communicates a sense of unity while simultaneously reproducing boundaries between different social categories in the favela. It reinforces the links between enjoyment and associates enjoyable sociality with the theme of violence metaphorically intertwined with sexuality.

In the beginning of this chapter, I made the claim that both the pleasures of music and dance and the displeasure of violence are inseparable from the shared experience of living in Nova Cidade and inseparable from what I have referred to here as community. Funk in this chapter has emerged both as fun and as fight.

As a prelude to the obviously political nature of a community that emerges in the conflict of interest that exists between the residents of Nova Cidade and a state with ambitions to order and secure, I also wanted, in this chapter, to discuss what sexuality might mean. As I wrote in Chapter 1, funk-related sexuality is neither confined to the private, domestic sphere nor can it be seen as an expression of commoditization in the public sphere, even though critics within and beyond the favela repeatedly claim a link between funk and prostitution. I will end this chapter with a summary of what sexuality as social strategy is about.

For the young interlocutors of this study, sexually explicit funk lyrics and the sexual practice of the baile are not only about making money. Funk is about having fun in the company of others. For young men it is about establishing an image of oneself as a “real man” in a context where being seen as tough is necessary for gaining power, formally and informally. It is a social, and, in the long run, also an economic strategy. The few funk artists that can make a living out of funk, like the ones I presented in this chapter, are, however, the exceptions to the rule of funk as a social movement rather than only business. Moreover, the sexual explicitness of the male funk artists was not about selling or buying sex itself, but instead about making a profit out of its
imagery. Sexuality also emerged as a social strategy in my ethnography for the girls protesting the practical control that their Evangelical mothers had of them. By embracing and reproducing the stereotype of promiscuity, they aimed at escaping the confines of families or elder generations. The act of becoming pregnant, in this interpretation, is also the act of becoming an adult woman. It is through the practice of sex that the named escape can be accomplished and through symbolism of funk lyrics and performance that the young women can turn this fact of favela life into a social strategy. Nevertheless, because of deeply-rooted gender inequalities, young women often end up in new, male-dominated and oppressive relationships.

In the next chapter, I will turn to look more closely at the links between the funk scene, trafficker life, violence and claims for sovereignty over the favela.
Chapter 5.
The Power of the Faction

The present chapter is the first of two, which deals with the two main contending sources of claims for sovereignty over the favela. The chapter aims to sketch the social content of (or background to) claims of sovereignty that emanate from the favela proper, and to explicitly include the role of funk in that discussion. In relation to the three-stranded strategy that I introduced in Chapter 1, I will here focus both on “funk as fun” and “funk as fight.”

I start with a discussion of previous work about the role of drug factions in favelas and by relating my own take to earlier models in the literature on gangs. This chapter aims at understanding the almost organic quality of a business and practice, which resist, so my ethnography reveals, the classificatory work of both the state and much of the scholarly literature. “The gang,” whatever it turns out to be in different contexts or places and at different moments in time, resists clear-cut definitions.

The chapter continues with a consideration of the nature of the relation between the traficantes of the drug faction and the other favela inhabitants of Nova Cidade. To the external observer, fear may appear as the most striking trait of the relation between the dominant drug faction and favela inhabitants, but such appearance will be both empirically and conceptually challenged in this chapter. There is, indeed, fear, but I aim to show that the transactions between the categories in question are more multi-stranded and ambiguous than is often presumed to be the case. I will argue that the alleged social boundaries between them are fuzzy. There is an ambiguity at play here in relation to protection/oppression and also to the attraction that the drug trafficker lifestyle exerts on both men and women.

The chapter will further explore trafficker governance in relation to manhood, religion and politics. The links between the funk scene, trafficker life, and violence often play an unexpected part in this dynamic. Trafficker power is grounded in clientelistic networks reaching outside of the favela, partly resting on violence and the sense of security and predictability it generates, and partly on the legitimacy created by the provision of services including entertainment or excitement. For young men, violence has to be seen as one of the relatively few means available for a social career within and outside the favela.
Three Models on the Role of Drug Traffickers in the Favelas

Very often when favela residents speak about the traficantes, they use indirectness in comments that seem to be talking about no one in particular, but which are, in fact, describing drug dealers. Semantically broad terms such as pessoal (personnel), ele (he), o cara (“the man”) often referring to the dono (the boss), os caras (the guys), o(s) muleque (s) or os meninos (the boy/s) are used to talk about individuals who are known to all speakers (see also Penglase 2009). This vague way of talking is common in everyday conversation, as a “restricted code” used among people who can assume enough shared understanding for the meaning of deliberately vague commentaries to be decoded.

Various scholars have explored the role of drug traffickers in the favelas of Rio. Primarily three models have been proposed for understanding how drug traffickers in the favelas attempt to legitimize their power. The first model emphasizes a reciprocal, yet unequal system of exchange, whereby traffickers provide local security in favelas and enforce social norms in exchange for the complicity of residents and their silence about the criminal activities of the traffickers (see i.e., Leeds 1996, Alvito 2001, Goldstein 2003, Gay 2005).

The second model revolves around clientelistic networks, containing the argument that traffickers have built upon and transformed older networks that have long tied favela residents to political and economic elites (see e.g., Arias 2007). To understand Rio today, so it is argued, one must understand the ways that criminals, civic leaders and state officials build connections with each other (Arias 2006:318).

The work of Ben Penglase (2009, 2014) could be positioned within this latter frame. He argues that, in addition to trading security for complicity, drug traffickers in the favelas use random violence to create disorder and insecurity (see also Arias and Rodrigues 2006). In line with Michel Misse (2006) and Arias (2006), he argues that traffickers build sophisticated ties to corrupt police officers, politicians and other important people holding powerful positions outside of the favela: “Rather than instituting a predictable, normative order, drug gangs deliberately create (in)security. They do this by arrogating to themselves the power not only to institute normative systems, but also to violate the systems that they themselves create” (Penglase 2009:53). In this view, drug traffickers in favelas – axiomatically perceived in the literature as a homogenous category distinct from favela residents – are manipulative, violent and deliberately unpredictable. As mentioned in the introduction of the dissertation, this perception is akin to Perlman’s con-

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tention that violence erodes the connective social tissue of favelas (Perlman 2010:196). According to Perlman, every measure of communal unity, trust, socialization and participation in favelas has declined over the past decades, largely due to drug trafficking (ibid).

I associate the third model more strictly with one favela author, namely Paul Sneed, whose work on funk and bailes in the Rio favela of Rocinha seeks to reverse the two others by attaching a utopian dimension to gang governance (Sneed 2003, 2007, 2008, 2013a, 2013b). Sneed writes:

Rio de Janeiro’s bailes funk, or funk dance parties, with their often intensely violent and aggressively sexualized nature, are fundamental expressions of the culture of the city’s favelas, or squatter towns, with tremendous significance for enormous crowds of poor, young people who attend them. … [I] explore the utopian impulse at the core of the baile funk experience, especially in community dances sponsored by gangsters held in the streets of favelas. Like some other cultural expressions of African diaspora communities, these bailes conjure up and sustain a morally and politically charged musical space that joins the young people together, emotionally elevating them above the harsh conditions of their lives into a spiritual state that makes available to them the feeling of living in a better world (2008:57).

Jensen and Rodgers argue that Franz Fanon’s reversal of the (im)morality of the gangster is relevant in this context. In summarizing Fanon’s take, they note that, even if committed to the immoral deeds of theft and crime, when the gangsters’ “violence was directed against colonial authority, it became imbued with popular legitimacy through a process of ‘automatic’ identification, and the gangster as a result ‘lights the way for the people’” (Jensen and Rodgers 2009:220). My ethnography, however, is much less romantic (see the discussion about Sneed’s work, 2003 in the introduction). It presents parallel tracks of abusive practices and protective or emancipatory power in the favela. It endeavors an analysis of how those tracks are interrelated and what such interrelation does to the ways of being young in the margins of Rio de Janeiro.

What Would the Favela be Without o Trafico?

Most social events that take place within the favela, including funk parties, are funded by the drug dealers. The widespread idea that traffickers organize bailes with the sole purpose of making a profit from selling drugs is nevertheless highly exaggerated. They are also a medium for distributing pleasure, contributing to the legitimacy of the image of the drug dealers as strong men. Again, sex as a social (and, here, political) strategy (see the introduction) is more relevant than sex as either business or mere intimate pleasure. Those I spent time with in Nova Cidade saw the drug traffickers as the major
– or the only – providers of fun and excitement in the favela. During the most exciting moments at the bailes, residents in Nova Cidade, like the activist Taú, would ask rhetorically what the favela would be without the drug traffickers. Like many others, Taú often expressed that he was grateful that the traficantes made sure that there were pleasurable things for young people in the favela to do. Without o trafico, life in the favela would be boring.

It is Friday night. A very special show is about to take place in Nova Cidade. O Jeito Moleque – an enormously popular and famous pagode group is performing. Afterwards, there is a baile with the famous sound system Furacão 2000. The baile is organized in the lower part of the favela in a big outdoor venue. Posters across the neighborhood have been announcing the show for weeks. As I arrive at the baile together with Taú, the favela is flooded with people of all ages.107

Inside the baile, the enormous sound system is playing the “dirty” and prohibited version of MC Buiú’s popular funk tune “… put your finger in your mouth and look like you’re horny tugudugudu… balancing her ass on his dick…. in the rhythm of olodum….”108 A few women walk around selling glittery streamers and T-shirts with band names. Older couples, children, young women and men are gathered. By the long bar in one of the corners sit loads of buckets with beer cans on ice. This is more luxurious than a usual baile. On one side, over a little stage, a banner promotes Pedro do Social, who is the first person in Nova Cidade to run for the post as county counselor.

In the dark corner close to the entrance, I see some people I know. Almost the whole family is there. Two of the sons are drug dealers, and one of them is present and armed. As I talk to them about what to expect from tonight’s show, a man dressed in black surrounded by bodyguards’ walks by, to say “hello” to the family. He then disappears into the multitude. Later, I am told that this was the old boss, who had come back for a visit and understood that is was disturbing for people to see him there. No one knew whether or not he would start a war with the new boss to get back in power.

When O Jeito Moleque finally gets on stage, it is 4 o’clock in the morning. The sound is so bad that it is impossible to hear what the group is playing. No one really seems to care though. Unexpectedly, in the middle of the show, fireworks burst out against the black sky, filling the night with fluorescent light. “O que seria a favela sem o trafico?” (What would the favela be without the drug trafficking?) Taú says, admiring the endless and beautiful fireworks. This phrase is something he and others often say in situations like this. He means that without the drug traffickers, none of this would ex-
ist: no show, no famous bands, no fireworks, and no beer cans in buckets on ice, no Furacão 2000. The drug trafficking business has funded tonight’s party, like almost all other parties in the favela.

*Putaria* and *proibidão*

As the band finishes, the funk starts pumping and the crowd moves back and forth. Some form trains or *bondes*, others start to jump up and down. In the middle of the crowd, there is a little stage. MC Sandro is now standing on it. Before he starts to sing, he takes the opportunity to advocate for Pedro do Social. He tells us that we need to vote for Pedro and ends his little speech by saying: “Pedro cannot fool us – he is one of us.” Taú is angry. “How dare he, in the middle of the *baile* at 6 o’clock in the morning, when all people want is to dance and party, ruin the vibe by making political propaganda?”

When MC Sandro is done, he begins singing a famous *proibidão* (meaning very forbidden funk song). Young people in the favela would often use the concept *proibidão* to refer to both sexually explicit songs and to those that are about, for example, the shooting of rival faction members. *Putaria* (meaning both the act of prostitution and “orgies”) and *proibidão*, as well as the more recent style, funk *ostentação* (ostentation or “showiness”), are ultimately perceived of as equally dangerous expressions by the state, which I will return to and discuss more in detail in Chapter 7. Most *putaría* songs are not prohibited by law, yet the different genres are all condemned and censured. For that reason, at least two versions of the same funk song are almost always made, one crude, “dirty” version played at funk parties and circulating in the favelas, and one softer, “cleaner” version that can be played on the radio, on TV and in public spaces in affluent areas. Most funk songs however, never get played on the radio, or sold or even heard in upper-class areas. This is true both for songs, which state authorities consider “an apology for [the defense of] crime” and “incitement to violence,” and for songs considered “an apology for sex” and “incitement to promiscuity.”

As mentioned in Chapter 4, a common theme in favela life and in the forbidden versions of funk is X-9s or informants, squealers. Faction members in the favela are constantly on the alert for infiltrators and for traitors among their own. During the time of my fieldwork, rumors in Nova Cidade said that there were police officers in the favela who regularly would show up by the *boca de fumo* (point of sales for drugs), pretend to be “workers” and do drugs, while secretly trying to find out things about the faction. Such expres-

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109 In the last 10 years or so, a funk genre known as *funk ostentação* from São Paulo has received a great deal of media attention in Brazil. Many lyrics in this genre focus on consumption, women, and cars (see also Chapter 6). More recently, in 2016, explicit political *ostentação* has become popular with lyrics that, for example, discuss abortion, criticize police corruption, and the way that drug traffickers rule in favelas.
sions of power relations and struggles are also contained by the lyrics themselves. The forbidden funk songs commonly tell tales and give warnings of what happens to o alemão, the enemy, the snitch, the police or rival faction member, when he gets caught.

Back at the baile, everybody sings along when MC Sandro chants about the local faction and about Jesus. After him, another prominent funk star, activist, and drug trafficker, MC Betinho, takes over, chanting about life in the favela, God, poverty, brutal police, Jesus, lovers and love. He advises the community to be loyal to the faction and sings about an X-9 who recently was discovered, tortured and killed in the favela. He describes beloved and missed traficantes and narrates stories of struggling mothers and stray bullets that take innocent lives. Then he ends his performance with yet another proibidão. This one speaks of what happens when the police enter the favela:

> While invading the favela they fired with a d-20 [kind of weapon]. They placed bullets in all the worms [the police]. The caveirão [BOPE-vehicle] exploded. They murdered the Germans [the enemy, in this case, the police]. One got a bullet in the face. Another in the belly. The rest got all fucked up.¹¹⁰

After Bethino, yet another funk MC turns up on stage. The crowd starts screaming and with their hands, people make the sign of the local faction and point to the sky. I have never seen the MC before, and, as he starts to sing, I learn that he recently got out of prison. Sometimes MCs coming straight out of jail perform at the parties. They usually perform proibidãos and tell stories of traitors violating the laws of the favela or about how to kill X-9s. They sing of police murders they have witnessed or would like to witness. They encourage the crowd to fire guns over territories where rival factions are in power. When proibidãos are performed, the atmosphere is usually intense, enthusiastic, cheerful, and low-key at the same time. Hundreds of hands are thrown into the air, the thumbs and the index fingers shaping a gun, gesturing along with the digital gunshots of the song. When a proibidade song is performed, the focus is on lyrics rather than on dancing. People stand still and seem to listen to the words of the MC. In contrast, when putaria is performed, focus is primarily on how and when to move your body.¹¹¹

Funk songs are often recorded “live” when they are performed at funk parties, at home, or in makeshift studios in the favelas. At the bailes, pirate copies of CDs are sold or given away, and, from there, they spread to other

¹¹⁰ For reasons of anonymity discussed in Chapter 2, I have changed some of the words in the lyrics I quote here. The meaning of the content, however, is still the same as in the original text. The translation is mine.

¹¹¹ Sexually explicit funk tunes are in fact not much different from many songs that belong to other genres such as samba, forro and pagode. There are songs within all of these genres that contain lyrics about sex, much in the same way as funk.
favelas and sometimes reach middle- and upper-class areas. During the time of my fieldwork, pirate copies of CDs and DVDs containing forbidden funk songs could be bought “under the table” (forbidden putaria and proibidão CDs were literally stored under the tables in huge black plastic bags) at the massive black market in the middle of the business area in Zona Sul called Centro. Both putaria and proibidão tunes and performances are, however, easily downloaded and watched on the Internet. On YouTube, everything from explicit political funk tunes criticizing the government, romantic tunes, and songs made by the factions, militias and the police, to funk ostentação can be found.

When the artists on stage are done with their singing, the sound system Furacão 2000 and the DJ start again. “…[B]alance, balance, balance your ass…” It is now almost 7 o’clock in the morning. The party will go on for at least another hour. Outside, people are hanging out in the street, some are eating meat on sticks and others are smoking and conversing. Next to them, there is a group of heavily armed men laughing. By a boca, traficantes stand in rows watching over business and making sure things are under control on the main street. Tonight’s show is a special event with many outsiders visiting the favela. A large number of drug traffickers, even larger than usual work the night-shift. They seem to be on the alert. At the same time, preparations for the legendary market in Nova Cidade are in full swing. Trucks with vegetables are parked everywhere. Tomatoes, mangoes, cucumbers, bananas, lettuce, and potatoes are being spread out on the ground while tables and chairs are set up.

Bringing business and consolidating power

Drug traffickers are always abundant in numbers and highly visible in and around the baile. They guard the venue where the event is organized, and they guard the streets around it. Heavily armed men watch over the crowds close to a boca where drugs are sold. They drink at the bars, they hang out on the dance floor, and they watch over the sea of dancing people from the VIP-balconies, where other traffickers socialize with friends, artists, wives, girlfriends and lovers. In their own discourse, they need to protect “their” favela and its baile from rival factions, the police, and troublemakers in general. As Taù said, without them there would be no baile. At the same time, and this is the crux of the matter, the drug dealers do arouse fear among youth who feel “unfree” to move about and speak as they wish. By being so visible at the baile and around it, the drug traffickers manifest their power tangibly. For Taù and many others, the traficantes represent adrenaline, fun, “craziness” (maluquice, loucura, doidera), excitement and fear at the same time. The “vibe” that comes with a sense of not knowing what will happen
tomorrow is also enhanced by the lyrics played and performed – lyrics that mostly revolve around sex and violent death.

As introduced in previous chapters, the traffickers influence social, cultural and political life at many different levels and in many ways. They decide what kinds of events to promote, who gets to perform and play at the local baile and who does not. It is assumed among favela residents that the faction-members organize bailes because they are “stuck” – they cannot leave the favela without risking their own lives. Hence, they have to bring the party to where they “are at.” Bringing the party also means bringing business and consolidating power.

The rivalries between different drug factions are sometimes played out at funk parties in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. As illustrated above, the funkeiros in Nova Cidade who perform proibidãos often sing about the anticipated death of rival factions in nearby favelas. Many, if not all, drug traffickers are, in one way or the other, participants on the funk scene. Some work as producers, singers, entertainment promoters, DJs, party organizers or dancers. At the same time, many funk artists see funk as a peaceful yet prestigious alternative to taking part in the activities of the criminal factions. For a drug trafficker, there are no easy ways out of the drug faction. However, much like joining a congregation, becoming a funk star is considered to be an acceptable reason to leave the faction. Some years ago and right before he “retired,” an appreciated boss in the favela composed a religious funk song, criticizing trafficker life and the use of the gun and demanding peace.

Depending on their social skills and relations, only the most famous artists, like the late MC Sandro, can play in favelas inhabited by drug traffickers belonging to one of the other factions. Favela residents are automatically associated with the local criminal faction that dominates their favela. If a person, for example, lives in a favela where the faction called Comando Vermelho (Red Command) is in power, he/she will be associated with that particular faction. The same goes for all the other factions, the militias and the areas where the police are in control. This fact often creates much fear among people who want to visit a favela where a rival faction governs. Many people are forced to avoid areas where rival factions are in power as they risk being killed if their home favela (and associated faction) is revealed. This phenomenon also goes for funk entertainers and their music. The most famous artists, however, are “free” to move and perform in different favelas around town, and their music can be played at bailes everywhere. Many well-known artists, however, continue to be tightly associated with specific factions. In addition, after becoming famous, many keep making references to their local faction in their lyrics.
Bailes, conflicts and community

In Nova Cidade, I often heard young men saying that they longed for the earlier times of *bailes de corredor*. These were funk parties organized in venues all over town, where favela youth, divided into groups, or *galeras*, would dance and fight each other to the sound of funk. In May 1990, the Brazilian journal *O Globo* published an article in which the relation between funk and criminal gangs was made explicit. Funk gangs were said to terrorize the streets of the suburbs. A key moment in what writers call the criminalization of funk (Essinger 2005, Freire Filho and Herschmann 2010), was the 1992 *arrastaões*, or looting “rampage” on the beaches in the South Zone of Rio.112 Youth from favelas, identified by the press as *funkeiros*, turned public order upside down by promoting violence and “terrorizing” the streets of the wealthy parts of town. The *bailes de corredor* were, in the end, forbidden by Brazilian authorities as it was argued that the violence spread to all segments of society. Although people sometimes died at these dances, many young people from the favela connected them to a strong sense of belonging and togetherness. Activists in the favela, for example, argued that these parties created a shared “favela identity” among favela youth.

Conflicts generate community. In Nova Cidade, “war” between the local faction and rival factions that govern the surrounding neighborhoods is very much dreaded. Yet, at the same time, these potential “wars” reaffirm collective unity in opposition to others (see Rodgers 2006:320). This unity is especially apparent at the *bailes* when *probidãos* are performed. During these performances, people stop dancing, sing along and show their support for the faction with gestures. Some of the forbidden funk songs are straightforward and outspoken, talking about firing bullets at neighboring favelas, weapons, drugs, or shooting the police, while others are more ambiguous and complex, and, for example, talk of “this life” (life as a drug trafficker) and the reasons to lead it:

Everyone says that I go around armed, but no one says that they tried to kill me when the police went up the favela to kill. I’m inside the favela creating terror, to kill the guy and get the money. I’m sorry, doctor, but to have my mom crying, I’d rather have your mom crying first. My home up the hill went down with the rain. My mom worked washing clothes in rich family houses and my father, unemployed, made everything worse, always creating trouble on the streets.

This song, by MC Pingo do Rap and MC Akaplay, contests the legitimacy of the state, explains the reasons for a drug trafficker killing and speaks of inequality, poverty and social misery. While simultaneously trying to give a

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112 *Arrastão* derives from *arrastar*, net fishing. George Yudice (1994) calls this “a looting rampage” and explains it as following: Youth from the favela gather to line up for long distances and run towards the water, taking everything they can from beach goers.
different and “truer” picture of the conflict between the police (i.e., the state) and traffickers – explaining that it is either “my mom” or “your mom” – the song also legitimizes and consolidates trafficker power. When songs like these are played at the baile, the local faction emerges through funk as a symbolic manifestation of the community itself.

Drug Sales Points and the Structure of the Faction

The most important drug sales point, or boca, in Nova Cidade, is as have been mentioned situated in the middle of the main street in the lower part of the favela, close to the quadra where funk parties are organized. This is why cocaine addicts and others “chill out” to do drugs here. This street, among a few adjacent alleys, is the only place in this part of the favela where the rules of the drug traffickers officially allow you to take drugs. Marijuana (maconha) and cocaine (pó) were on the market during the time of my fieldwork, but not yet crack, which, however, became increasingly more common in many of Rio’s other favelas. By a boca, drug traffickers protect their business and control the night. They keep an eye on every buyer and visitor as they watch over the scene carefully. Saturday nights are said to be good for business. People from nearby neighborhoods come to buy drugs. They party, drink beer, dance and hang out on the main street, close to a boca. Some stay for many days without ever leaving this particular street. If a person does drugs besides marijuana openly somewhere else in the favela, it means that he/she disrespects the rules of the traficantes, and might get punished.

The organizations, locally called facções (factions), arose in the context of a boom in cocaine production in Colombia. Rio became a transshipment hub for Andean cocaine en route to Europe and North America (Gay 2005). As narcotics poured into the city, small-time drug dealers gained access to heavier arms and began to compete over control of bocas de fumo,113 or drug sale points. A rise in the number of very young people working in the drug trade happened in the 1980s, when drug factions became established in the favelas. The tendency grew stronger from the beginning of the 1990s. From that period onward, children and adolescents began to replace the older traffickers as many of the latter were imprisoned or killed due to armed confrontations with rivals and as a result of increased strife between the police and the factions (Dowdney 2002, Penglase 2010). In Nova Cidade, the faction leaders – as well as those working “officially” as drug traffickers – are usually between 18 and 25 years old. Together with community leaders and religious leaders, the drug traffickers have implemented a policy that proclaims that children under 16 should not work as drug traffickers or carry

113 Literally, “mouths of smoke.”
guns. This policy is not, however, always followed. Also, children often run errands for their older brothers, neighbors, cousins or friends who work as drug traffickers. As emphasized earlier, the lines are not always easy to draw between those who are “involved,” and those who are not.

The organization of Rio’s retail drug market of today is said to have its roots in prison, where the first drug faction, *Comando Vermelho* (CV) was created.\(^{114}\) In the 1970s, as a response to the rising number of bank robberies carried out by revolutionary groups to pay for their activities against the Brazilian state apparatus, the government passed *a Lei de Segurança Nacional* (Law of National Security). All bank robberies were defined as political crimes. It did not matter whether the robberies were carried out by political activists or by common criminals. Both categories were sent to the maximum-security prison on Ilha Grande, an island between Rio and São Paulo. It is believed that the imprisoned guerrillas taught their cell companions the organizational strategies that the criminals later used as a basis to form powerful prison gangs (see e.g., Arias 2006, Misse 2006, Penglase 2010, Silva and Nougier 2010). However, such arguments tend to trivialize the conceptual and empirical boundaries between types of outlaws in much the same way as “gang” today is a concept stripped of social and political content. However, upon release, former prisoners began setting up “gangs” in the city. Drug trafficking and bank robbery, which had previously been highly diffuse and individualistic activities, became organized and never lost their links to interests and subjects inside the prisons.

**Factions as networks**

The popular press often portrays these organizations as large-scale, hierarchical groups, but scholars like Luke Dowdney (2002) and Arias (2006) argue that organized drug trafficking at the local level rather operates as part of a “loose citywide network” (in line with the work of Manuel Castells 1996, see also Machado 2001). Dowdney claims that factions are best described as networks of independent but affiliated actors, *donos* (owners, bosses), who give each other mutual support for offensive and defensive purposes. The *donos* control retail drug sales within the favelas through workers organized in a hierarchical and militarized structure.

The organizations are complex and involve a large number of stakeholders. For example, there are *gerentes de boca de fumo*, or managers of the drug sales points, who are responsible for the administration of the drug dealing points and *funcionários da boca*, who, on different levels, work with

\(^{114}\) In the 1950s Rio’s retail drug market involved mainly cannabis. The retail market was still only on a small scale and rather unstructured (Moraes de Castro e Silva and Nougier 2010). At this time, guns were introduced. To begin with, they were mainly used for the personal protection of the dealers.
the distribution of drugs. There are low-ranking traffickers – in Nova Cidade often between 16 and 20 years old – called *olheiros*, *fogueteiros* and *radinhos*; they are “lookouts” (*olheiros*) who warn other traffickers and the neighborhood when the police are around by setting off firecrackers (the *fogueteiros*), communicating on their walkie-talkies and calling on their cell phones (the *radinhos*).

In Nova Cidade, the “lookouts” watch the entrances and are visible on street corners and rooftops. There are also “soldiers” that fight against rival factions, the police and the militia, and ensure the safety other drug markets. Further, there are “packagers” who weigh, prepare and put the merchandise in bags for the retail market,\(^{115}\) and there are “managers” (on different levels) of the drug market, who take care of arms and containment. Moreover, there are *vapores*, who look for buyers outside of the places where drugs are sold and who sell directly to users, and “faithful’s,” who work for the drug faction, but not openly, and who are responsible for hiding weapons and drugs in their homes. All of these actors live and work in the favelas. The *chefe* or *dono* – the leader of the faction – controls the drug market in one or several favelas. He is responsible for buying the drugs that are sold in his territory and supplies weapons\(^{116}\) to the drug traffickers in the favela. The *donos* usually live in the favela in which they are in control, or issue orders from inside the prisons where they are held.

There are a number of words for the different positions within the faction. My interlocutors in Nova Cidade use most of the terms mentioned above, such as “lookouts,” “soldiers” and “packagers.” Although the word “soldier” is frequently used in everyday conversations, the most common words used locally for drug dealer are *traficante*, (dealer/trader/pusher) and *bandido* and *vagabundo*. Faction members are also often, as already mentioned, simply referred to as *os caras*, the guys. In a hierarchical structure that imitates the corporate world, those on high positions who work very close to the favela bosses are sometimes called *gerentes gerais*, or general managers. Their “deputies” are referred to as *sub-gerentes* and the top faction bosses are, as mentioned above, *donos*, or “owners.” The faction with everyone included is commonly talked of as *a firma*, “the firm” or *a diretoria*, “the board.” During the time of my fieldwork, there were four *donos* that replaced each other.

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\(^{115}\) In Nova Cidade, to roll “joints” for the drug dealing business is called *endolação*. One interlocutor in Nova Cidade told me that “old” traffickers on low positions do this job because they are in bad physical shape.

\(^{116}\) Many of Brazil’s illegal weapons are of US origin. A few years before my fieldwork Russian arms had also begun to show up in Nova Cidade and were said to be very popular among the drug dealers. According to community leaders and human rights defenders in the favela, the weapons have been getting more and more powerful. Rio’s *traficantes* have been caught with military-issue machine guns and anti-aircraft weapons. Semi-automatic assault rifles and hand grenades are commonplace.
The oldest (27 years old) was considered very old by my interlocutors and other residents.

The bosses are said to sleep in different houses every night, so that the police will not find them easily. When a *dono* is killed by police or by rival drug traffickers, someone else quickly replaces him. In Nova Cidade, however there was, during the time of my fieldwork, a “retirement plan” for those who survived their time as leaders. I was told that those who survive usually continue as bosses for 3 years before they retire and get a pension (money from the faction). Yet, many – if not most – are killed by the police (or rival faction members) before they get to retire.

In Nova Cidade, people say that surviving *donos* move to upper-class areas such as Barra da Tijuca, where no one recognizes them. There, they invest their money in shares on the stock market and are said to become doctors or businessmen or to assume other high status professions. “Do you know how many favela bosses there are on high positions?” my neighbor Dudoo once asked me. Rumors in the favela say that when people from the favela come to visit the old bosses in their new homes, they have to be cautious not to use slang, behave well-mannered and dress nicely, not to reveal the real identity of the *chefe*.

Many stories about *donos* circulate in the favela, and my neighbor Dudoo seemed to know them all. He told me about ex-*chefes* in the past who had crocodiles, orangutans, panthers and even lions living in their homes. I had heard about the former *dono* who lived in a big house with a pool close to the *quadra* in the southern part of Nova Cidade many times. I was told that he used to stroll around the favela with his lions, and according to the myth, he fed the lions with his victims. In general, some *donos* are considered fair, like the one who was called “the Great Sioux.” He became a devoted evangelical and wrote a famous funk song about peace and justice that people still listen to. Others were considered brutal and unjust, like the boss who, I was told, cut off people’s heads and placed them all around the area to show who was in power and what happened to those who did not obey to his rules.

Stories like these are not a mere rhetorical residue of a dysfunctional social hierarchy, proof of an alleged leader’s immoral nature, but are instead deeply embedded in the power relations of Nova Cidade. They attest to the admiration for a person with the power to escape from the hardships of the place and to the belief in his maintained potency and proclivity for violence elsewhere. These stories also convey a perhaps less obvious contempt for a leader with the power to abandon the place and the responsibilities that his leadership has entailed. This ambiguity has very little to do with the direct violent practice of the dealer in question, or with the fear that he has instilled in his subjects in the favela, but it has at the same time everything to do with the power of his position within the social structure of Nova Cidade. He is envied and admired, feared, despised and desired *at the same time*. 
On Models of Governance and Manhood

Scholars have concluded that several models of manhood exist in Brazil. However, in urban poor and working class neighborhoods, two models of manhood are said to predominate, namely the “worker” or trabalhador and the “criminal” or bandido (Zaluar 1985, Penglase 2010, Drybread 2014). These categories are often used by scholars to distinguish between law abiding favela residents and the drug dealers. Various Brazilian scholars describe traffickers as if they belonged to a different category than that of favela residents (e.g., Arias and Rodrigues 2006:76), a practice which echoes in problematic ways how media and the state make their distinction and construe traffickers, or the gang, as a homogenous entity. The dyadic distinction between workers and criminals seems to serve state interests and policies on different levels.

Following Claire Alexander (2000), Jensen (2010:82) sees the gang as a constructed category that allows people and institutions to act in particular ways. In this reading, “the gang” much like “the terrorist” is a category in a governmental discourse, employed principally by the state and the police in order to justify specific, oppressive practices. I will return to this idea in the next chapter. Here I will further explore how the distinction between criminals and workers operates in such governmental discourse in Rio.

According to Alba Zaluar (1985, 1999), young men who live in the peripheries of the nation’s cities are required to make a choice between being workers or criminals, a choice that not only marks an individual’s definitive place within his community but also structures his domestic and amorous relationships, his income-generating activities, and the moral compass he uses to guide his actions. Although the relationship between trabalhador and bandido is said to be sometimes ambiguous, Zaluar claims that there is a moral divide that separates law-abiding workers, who dedicate themselves to supporting their families through backbreaking labor, from bandits, who opt for quick and easy money available from drug trafficking (Zaluar 1985).

Kristen Drybread (2014:757), studying a juvenile prison, argues against this notion. She found that the opposition between workers and bandits that Zaluar and others (Alvito 2001, Cecchetto 2004, Goldstein 2013, and Penglase 2010) have found to be so central to the formation of masculine identities among male youths in Rio’s favelas was not really an issue among young men inside the prison. The inmates, who assumedly had opted for a criminal career, agreed that it was no less honorable for a man to be a worker than a bandit. Many prayed for the seemingly impossible opportunity to become workers upon their release. I argue that a fuzzier boundary between the categories also is at work in Nova Cidade. As I have shown, a social actor in the favela can hold many positions at a time and move between different career paths. Someone can be a funk star working as a drug trafficker and as an activist or possibly even a pastor simultaneously.
Challenging the divide between workers and criminals

In Nova Cidade, the categories of “worker” and “criminal” are usually drawn on when residents speak to outsiders (like anthropologists) in order to explain that a lot of people who have nothing to do with the drug dealing business get killed and abused by the police. Traffickers in Nova Cidade, however, are seen as *moradores* (residents). They are treated and spoken of depending on a variety of factors, such as, for example, where they come from, who their family is, how they dress and look, how they behave in relation to others, whether they are considered violent or not, intelligent or not, fair or not, fond of partying or not and so on. Especially those who drink and do drugs, which people in Nova Cidade say that most of them do and increasingly so (“How do you think they manage to stay awake all night?” people would ask me rhetorically). Also, young drug dealers who used excessive violence even when it was not seen as necessary were criticized. The same kind of criticism, however, was also leveled at neighbors, friends and others who did drugs, behaved rudely and/or openly disrespected other residents.

In Nova Cidade, people challenge the divide between workers and criminals, for example by stating that drug dealers are hard workers. “They work hard, 12 hours a day or more and most do not get properly paid. You know even when they aren’t working, they still have to worry about their lives,” an activist in the favela told me. A 15 year-old boy, Roberto, who said that he dreamt of becoming an incorrupt member of the special police force BOPE, explained that his drug-dealing uncle, whom he sometimes worked for, is a *trabalhador*. The uncle goes to work early in the morning and comes back late at night, “like any other worker.” Clearly, this language also legitimizes the activities of the drug traffickers. This is not to say that the categories are unimportant, or that the literature provides useless models for understanding particular sites in Rio, but rather that the ethnography of a particular site might reveal how emic categorizations of people are far from static. Instead, they are used on the ground in order to humanize and legitimize that which governmental discourses have demonized. In Nova Cidade, this process comes full circle when some of the jobs available for people to become wage-earning family providers exist within the realm of faction power and influence. Let me expand on this in relation to the apparent contradiction when a *bandido* or criminal is also the moral protector and provider of life-sustaining opportunities.

I will try to illustrate this with the story of Rafael (28 years old). He had worked together with female activists in the favela. He had been charged with the crime of kidnapping and I interviewed him 2 years after he got out of prison. Rafael was born and raised in Nova Cidade and has seven children (three of them are “step-children” but he considers them his own). When he was little, his father was never home and his mother had a hard time support-
ing the family. Rafael often went hungry and so did his mother and brothers and sisters. When he was 10 years old, he started to work in order to help his mother. He ran errands for people, organized deliveries for shops, went to the market to buy food that others could re-sell in the favela and did others kinds of services (trabalho de biscate) for people who paid him little. During this time, Rafael got to know a butcher whom he came to call “Dad.” Rafael had asked him if he could get bones that the butcher would throw away. The butcher gave him what he asked for and more. Rafael started coming to the butcher’s shop and every time he went there, the butcher gave him more meat:

Fuck, the smile on my face. My eyes were shining. Nobody had ever done such a thing for me! The boss gave me lots of different kinds of meat every week. Liver, chicken, beef, fat… I had never eaten meat! How did I leave the butcher’s shop? Happy. I said, “What’s this?” No one had ever done such a thing for me… I was happy.

Eventually the butcher had asked if Rafael wanted to work for him, which he did for a couple of years. When he was 14 years old, he started to work for Bob’s, a popular hamburger chain in Rio. He worked at Bob’s in the city and went back and forth to the favela every day for a year:

But the salary was so bad. I saw my friends who were my age with nice sneakers of good brands. With gold chains, motorbikes… I was working without earning anything. I said, “Fuck! It’s not possible. It’s not possible.” I asked myself, “What do I have to do?” I will also have to do what the others are doing. That’s when I started to think in that direction [naquela linha]. I didn’t have anyone to give me advice. My mother was working. My father had left her many years ago and the little ones were home alone. That’s when I said, “Fuck, I will have to do something. He left them…” That’s when I left the only job I’ve ever had with a Worker’s Card and joined “this life.” I started hanging out with the boys [andar com os meninos]. Do you understand? I started showing up late at work and they sent me away from Bob’s. From the age of 14, 15 I stayed directly in “this life” [fiquei direito nessa vida].

When Rafael left prison after 15 years, he did not want to go back into “this life” but it was impossible for him to find legal work:

… An ex-prisoner, when he leaves prison, has two options. Either he robs someone or he joins o trafico. Because the third option is to get a job… If you go there and say, “Hi, I’m an ex-prisoner,” they’ll say, “Ah wait, give me your number,” but they will never call! When I left prison, I went to so many different places. I looked for a job everywhere. I wanted to work. I didn’t even get a job! Not one job. When I looked for work, I told them what I was because they would find out anyway… I wanted to offer myself to society. I wanted a better future for my children. You know, I wanted to sleep calmly on my pillow. They either took my number and never called or asked me to leave right away. I wanted to show them. I wanted to show their boss that…
My smile, you know, it’s that smile “happy to be in the community.” But at the same time it’s that worried smile. I might end up in prison again. I might lose my life.

It was very common for people in the Nova Cidade to tell me that even though they did not entirely support the drug dealers morally, they understood them. They seemed to feel that their shared ties to the favela brought them together. Reversely, being from favelas themselves, the drug dealers were seen as truly understanding life in the favela in contrast to state officials, the police and other outsiders. Everyone I spoke to said that they could easily fathom why some persons decided to become a traficante. This view was explained as a consequence of lack of opportunities and money, and for some, a way to get respect, win girls and even be able to “buy new sneakers.” Also, most residents stated that as the state did not provide them with the protection and help they needed, the drug faction did, and for this, they were grateful.

“Look girl, it’s logical”

One late afternoon in November, I pass by the tiny and overcrowded alley by the southern favela entrance to say hello to Nilza. On my way there, I walk by the bakery, where I meet Rodrigo, dressed in jeans-shorts, rubber flip-flops and a football t-shirt with the name of his favorite team, Flamengo, written all over it. He is communicating on his walkie-talkie. Rodrigo works as a traficante. He is dating Lara, Nilza’s cousin, who also lives in the alley. Rodrigo has never spoken to me before, but now he tells me that Nilza is in his brother’s house, down the alley.

Nilza (29 years old) is almost always to be found somewhere around her house, usually with her sweet daughter Mayara (5 months old) in her arms. She also has two sons, Pingo (12 years old) and Paulo (8 years old). Beatriz (18 years old), Aninha (22 years old), Patricia (32 years old) and Nádia (28 years old) are her neighbors. Beatriz and Nilza are sisters and Patricia, Nádia and Aninha are their cousins. Their grandmother was among the first to settle down in this area. She came from the Northeast sometime in the 1940s to look for work.

According to Nilza, Beatriz, Aninha, Nádia and Patricia, bandidos are also hard workers. They work long hours, sometimes 24 hours a day, risking their lives in order to protect favela residents from the police and other factions. “Look, you don’t even earn that much, né!” Nilza says and continues: “It’s only if you’re one of the big guys (os caras) that you earn a lot of money.” Zaki had already told me that faction members without special positions earn about 300 reais (about 91 US dollars) per week. That was 80 reais less than the minimum wage at the time.
Like Taú, Zaki and most other favela residents that I have spoken to, Nilza, Beatriz, Patricia, Aninha and Nâdia agree that often, but not always, choosing to become a faction member is an understandable option. “Look girl, it’s logical,” Aninha says and continues: “Of course, it’s not good what they do, but they lack alternatives, imagina.” Even though the women do not always agree with the behavior of the traficantes, who, as Nilza puts it “lack morals,” they are convinced that traficantes help and protect them, their families and the favela in general, in a better way than the state.

Aninha says she knows bandidos who had other jobs before. “They lost them, got fired or quit.” Nilza explains that her sister’s boyfriend Rodrigo tried hard for a long time to get a “proper job” but failed:

They didn’t even give him a chance. He doesn’t have a Worker’s Card. Without it, you can sometimes get a new job but you have no safety. Sometimes they don’t even pay you! You can’t complain to anyone because you don’t have any rights. To support the family, becoming involvido [involved in the faction] is the only option left. You know, you want to be able to support your family and maybe even buy new shoes?

As described in Chapter 3, to lack a signed Worker’s Card means that you are not covered by the social security system. Beatriz: “It is so fucking hard to make ends meet even if you work hard.” Nilza: “Look, even if you work 24 hours a day, you don’t get enough money to take care of your family. Even if you have two jobs, it is not enough.”

Aninha continues talking about the traficantes: “…so they help us because no one else does. It is not easy. They are not only bad, you know. If they don’t help us, who will? Only them [so eles].” Nilza continues: “They protect us and help us when we need it. The other day I ran out of gas. I went there [to the boss] and they gave it to me. Cara [man], I couldn’t make food, nothing.”

Last week, Aninha discovered that she didn’t have enough medicine for her daughter who was ill. “I went to the boss to ask for money.” She assumed that she would have to wait in line for many hours in order to talk to the boss about her problems. As usual there were many people waiting for him. She was surprised that one of the traficantes to whom she was telling her story while waiting in line, gave her the money from his own pocket. She neither had to wait in line nor talk to the boss in person. This fact seemed to be a great relief for her. She was very impressed with the traficante, who had made up his own mind without consulting the boss. Happy not to have wasted her day, she went straight to the pharmacy and bought the medicine her daughter needed.

Nádia had a similar story to tell. She was out of money when her mother suddenly got sick. With no food at home, she got desperate. The only thing she could think of was to get help from o dono. When she finally had a word
with him, he gave her enough money to buy food, not only for her mother, but for the rest of the family as well.

In this reciprocal exchange of protection and opportunities for loyalty and admiration, what is the role played more specifically by violence and sex? Below I will illustrate how some of the women that I spent time with in Nova Cidade typically would discuss and approach the role of violence and sex in relation to the drug traffickers. I will do this through a conversation that I had with Nilza, Aninha and Beatriz around the subject of funk, putaria and drug dealing boyfriends.

Trafficickers, violence and putaria

Nilza, Aninha and Beatriz (who is in her 8th month of pregnancy) are only allowed to go to the baile if their husbands accompany them. “Men go to the baile and leave their wives behind,” Beatriz says. Nilza adds:

Funk today is much worse than before. Do you know why? It’s because today it is not only men who esculacha [disrespect] women, but now women have started to disrespect men. Before, it was only men who disrespected women. Today, women do the same thing as men.

I ask about a popular theme in funk lyrics: fieis (faithful ones) and amantes (lovers). “They do not let us!” Nilza exclaims. ”If we only could, we would [have lovers]!” Nilza laughs while Nádia explains: “Men can go out with whomever they want, but women can’t. If we were allowed, we would!” Nilza starts talking about the time she discovered her husband in bed with another woman in the family’s bedroom.

When I went in there and discovered them, he threw me into the wall, BANG [she makes a loud noise]. Another time, I discovered him with her. I confronted him and he started to hit me until I turned red and blue. I did not give up… But he wanted to coma"117 her anyway, so he didn’t stop hitting me. Finally, my mother came and threw herself at him, beating him until he stopped hitting me.

Nádia says that some women have lovers anyway. Aninha, who has been quiet until now, says: “Well, with a bandido you can’t.” Beatriz laughs hard. “But I did!” “What happened?” I ask. Beatriz answers: “What happened was… they killed him!” Nilza explains: “She was having an affair and her boyfriend who was a bandido found out. He was going to kill her, everyone

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117 Comer means to eat but is often used when talking about bullets being fired or like here, as slang for having sex.
knew… but they (the police or other faction members, not clear\textsuperscript{118}) killed him before!”

After a while I ask how they feel about the law of Maria da Penha. “A Lei Maria da Penha” (Lei 11.340/2006) was signed into law by the Brazilian president Lula da Silva in 2006. It is the first federal Brazilian Law addressing violence against women. The law is named after Maria da Penha Fernandes who, in 1983, almost died at the hands of her husband. The law is named after her in recognition of her 20-year battle to bring her case to justice. This law classifies domestic violence as a form of human rights violation. It alters the Penal Code and makes it possible to arrest aggressors in the act, or to have them arrested preventively when they threaten a woman’s physical integrity. It provides for measures of protection for women whose lives are threatened, such as removing the aggressor from the home and prohibiting him from physically coming close to the victim and her children.

“It doesn’t help us!” Nilza answers quickly. “We cannot go to the police… imagine if you’re with a bandido, the police will kill him.” Nilza tells me about her friend who is together with a traficante. “… He hits her all the time... and the kids too. He’s always with a new woman in the street and she can’t leave the house! Neither can she go to the police nor leave… He will kill her no matter what.” Nádia opines:

If I was her, I’d take all his money. All the money he has everywhere in the house. Take the children and get the fuck out! Leave with all the money and the children… But she has her life here. Her family. Everything. But man, he will kill her.

Aninha joins the discussion:

My husband also likes to hit me. … He was shameless, dirty-minded, mischievous… I discovered him being unfaithful [na putaria]. He almost killed me! I hit him back real hard, but he punched me so hard that I fell to the floor, and even after when I was unconscious, he kept hitting and kicking me.”

Beatriz adds:

I tried once [to be unfaithful]. I made myself beautiful, put on nice clothes, perfume, make-up and, you know... everything. But then when I was about to go out, I became afraid. I didn’t dare. Hannah, you know that men are like animals. And animals do like everything that attracts and putaria attracts!  

\textsuperscript{118} As discussed earlier, residents use indirection in comments that seem to be talking about no one in particular, but which are, in fact, describing traficantes. I would add that this is also the case when favela residents talk about the police. Semantically, broad terms such as \textit{o pessoal} (the personnel), \textit{ele} (he) and \textit{os caras} (the guys) are used when talking about individuals or groups who are known to all speakers. In this case, “\textit{eles}” or “they” may refer to the police or to other faction members (see L"{o}fving 2009).
Although many residents in Nova Cidade, men and women, see and speak of the drug traffickers as protectors, they are clearly at the same time perceived and spoken of as oppressors – not the least by women in relation to sex. During fieldwork, I was told many stories about drug dealers who seemingly used their status and power to control and abuse their girlfriends. In relation to bailes and funk lyrics, the women above discuss ways to be able to do what men do – go out to have fun and meet the other sex – and they discuss ways to retaliate against abusive boyfriends. However, the conversation clearly shows that in reality, it is extremely difficult for women in the favela who are together with drug dealers to escape or break out from violent relationships in which fear is such an integral part. Below I will continue to explore the tenacious threat that the drug dealers constitute and discuss the ways that the traffickers maintain order in Nova Cidade.

Trafficker Rules: Suspicion, Accusation and Punishment

When I moved into Nova Cidade, my neighbors told me that I could leave my door open if I wanted to. Nothing would get stolen, and if anything against all odds was, I could be sure that “os caras” (the guys, drug traffickers) would take care of it, and that I would get it back. Later, on the same subject, Taú said: “It’s not that things never get stolen here… but usually it’s viciados [drug addicts] from other areas who steal, or perhaps some viciados from here, but it’s much more common that people from the outside steal.”

Traficantes in Nova Cidade are perceived of by many people as protecting the favela from both enemy factions and the police. When I strolled around Nova Cidade with my friend Marquinho, we passed a young man with a rifle sitting on the ground, counting money that he had in a black plastic bag. On the ground next to him there was a blanket with tiny bags “do branco e do preto” (with white/cocaine and black/marijuana). Marquinho stopped to greet the trafficker “e ai muleque” (What’s up man?) and gave the young man a hug. When we continued walking, Marquinho said, in line with trafficker discourse, what many people in Nova Cidade expressed to me in a similar way:

You know that all of this [referring to the drug trafficking] has to do with survival? You need to understand why they are armed. If you do, it will not seem as frightening anymore… it’s a necessary evil. They don’t carry arms to defend the drug sales points! They are armed in order to defend us from enemy factions and the police. They are armed to defend the whole favela.

Drug traffickers in the favela are perceived of as maintaining order by enforcing strict rules. Those who break the rules and commit offences are severely punished, a lingering threat as revealed also in the discussion with the
women above. In relation to faction rule, a customary law of sorts, a politically engaged person around 50 years old said:

Very few break the rules... Rape, robbery and informing on someone, which is the case with X-9 [delação, que e o caso de X-9] are the most serious crimes. The ones who are in power, the traficantes, are armed and so the penalty is accomplished much faster [in the favela compared to Brazilian society at large]. If you are accused of raping someone, the first punishment is that you fall into disgrace in the whole favela and in every social network in the favela. A rapist, he... Once you are identified as a rapist you will be a rapist forever. The second punishment is the penalty established in the favela, which is that if you rape you die, get severely tortured, or deported from the favela. It depends on how important the person is to the community. If a very important person is accused of rape, he is tortured and/or deported. A less important person is executed. It’s a punishment that no one in the favela considers cruel. Everyone – from the youngest to the oldest and most religious people in the favela – think that this is a fair punishment that has to be exactly this way.

Coming from an activist, I take this story to be normative, among other things. By explaining to me that everyone here abides by the rule of the faction even when such rules include executions and torture, that such disciplinary measures are commonsense in the favela, this interlocutor also conveyed the message that there is a supposedly unique trait to be understood here – one that would help me see the moral boundaries around “his” community. But there was also something in it that others did share and that pointed, again, to the perceived legitimacy of trafficker violence and, by extension, to the sovereignty of the drug faction over the favela.

At the time of my fieldwork, various stories about sexual assaults and rape circulated in Nova Cidade. One such story was about a “flasher” who had shown himself naked to a girl various times. She went to the traffickers by a boca and complained. The traffickers, I was told, cut off the private parts of the flasher and killed him. Another story was about a girl who was raped and went to a boca to tell the traffickers what had happened. The drug dealers caught the man, cut off his private parts and left him to die at his house. Furthermore, they prohibited people from helping him, since part of the punishment was for him to suffer and to die alone.

A different case evolved around a 12-year-old girl who had been going out with a man who was a military man. When he left her, she got angry and went to a boca to tell the traffickers that he had raped her. The dono and a group of traffickers went to see him in his house. The man understood that they were about to kill him and in desperation he took up his gun and pointed it at the head of the boss. According to the story, this made everything worse. The traffickers tortured and killed him. Later, the same drug dealers found out that the girl had lied and realized that they had killed an innocent man because of her. According to the rules of the traffickers, they now also
had to kill the person who had made them kill an innocent. When the traffickers went to her house to look for her, however, they discovered that she had already left the neighborhood, together with her whole family.

The fear of informants
Traffickers in the favela fear police informants but also that information about them will end up in the hands of the press and the police. At one point during fieldwork, the new leader of the faction in Nova Cidade was said to be very nervous. His name and photo had been published in a daily magazine. The police, residents said, now knew who the boss was and what he looked like, and importantly, so did enemy factions that were seen as constantly threatening to take over the territory. This meant that the chefe had not slept for days. He changed houses every night and hid during the day so that the police (and rival faction members) would have a harder time finding him when they came looking.

In relation to the nervousness of the boss, I was told that not long ago someone had taken a picture in Nova Cidade which had ended up next to a piece about a former faction leader. A few days later, the persons appearing in the photo were shot dead by the police. None of them were drug traffickers. I heard similar stories throughout fieldwork, implying that anyone in the favela could get hurt if information about the neighborhood was interpreted in the wrong way or ended up in the wrong place.

As Zaki works with middle-class activists, students and other “outsiders” coming to the favela from time to time, he is extra vulnerable to accusations of being an informant. He had been threatened with death by traficantes various times and he had almost been killed by them on two occasions. Both times, they broke into his apartment in the middle of the night and dragged him out on the street in order to kill him. Both times, firecrackers – set off because the police were close by – saved him. With a group of activists in the favela, he has worked together with drug traffickers for the past 10 years with a program that Zaki refers to as “the reduction of damage program.” It aims at avoiding deadly confrontations with the police. Activists “teach” traffickers not to shoot at the police until they are being shot at. Instead, if possible, they should run and hide. According to Zaki, the program has been successful as fewer people in the favela get killed today than 10 years ago.

Zaki’s connection to the drug dealers and to outsiders is something that community leaders who dislike Zaki occasionally use against him when accusing him of passing on information about the faction that might end up

\[119\] According to Zaki, there had been several times when other community leaders with different political views than his wanted to “get rid of him” and consequently had told the drug dealers that Zaki shared information about the faction with “outsiders,” journalists and even the police.
with the press or the police. Zaki had to show the drug dealers that he protected them, but, at the same time, he knew that the very same boys who he had seen grow up could turn against him if someone, for example, had accused him of being an informant. Simultaneously, his position within the favela (see Arias 2006) and his connections to the outside world protect him from police and trafficker violence.

Disappearances
Taú, the rapper and activist who works together with Zaki, has never been formally accused of being an X-9. However, like everyone else, he is afraid that one day he will be. Especially, he said, after what happened to his best friend Leo. Leo also used to do hip-hop and had moved to Nova Cidade a few years before my fieldwork. Taú rarely spoke about what happened to Leo. Sometimes he would talk about how much he missed making music with him. When they rapped together, they would fill in sentences for each other. Taú said that it was “as if they could read each other’s minds.” Leo had come to Nova Cidade to spend time with Taú because he was going through a difficult time. Little by little, Leo, however, started to hang out with the traficantes. He drank a lot and did drugs together with them. After a while, he spent almost all of his time with them. Taú said that he had warned Leo not to associate with the drug dealers as much as he did.

One day, Leo was gone. He had only lived in the favela for 6 months. According to Taú, Leo was the perfect scapegoat. Taú assumed that something had happened among the traficantes. Either money or drugs had been stolen or had disappeared. It was easy to blame everything on the outsider. When Leo went missing, Taú went looking for him in the part of the favela where he had lived. Only after a few days, he was “warned” by some drug dealers. They told him to stop looking and to “keep away” from the part of Nova Cidade where he had been searching for his friend. Taú became afraid for his own life and stopped asking and looking for Leo. He soon realized that Leo was gone forever. A year later, Taú was still hesitant to hang out in the part of the favela of which he had been warned. Someone he knew had told him that Leo had been killed and dumped in the river. Leo had lived on the turf of MC Sandro, who was also the dono of this part of the favela, when Leo disappeared.

Something similar happened to a favela DJ during the time of my fieldwork. On a Saturday afternoon, Taú and I went to look for DJ Jade, a very popular person and producer who always played at the local baile. I had spent a couple of weeks in Sweden, hence I had not seen him for a while. Before I left, DJ Jade made me a CD with the most famous local funk tunes. In return, he had asked me to get him a t-shirt with the Swedish national football team, which I now wanted to give him. We did not get far before we
saw Tatiana, the funk MC, standing in the middle of the main street hugging DJ Jade’s mother. Taú immediately noticed that something was going on and ran to talk to Tatiana and the mother. I followed. When Tatiana saw us, she turned around and whispered quickly that DJ Jade had been “deported from the favela” because according to “them” – referring to the drug dealers – he “caguito.” This meant that DJ Jade had been accused of being an informant.

When accusations are leveled against someone, the word usually spreads across the favela. Often, it reaches the person who has been accused and who then either gets time to run away or does not, depending on the crime, situation and his or her social status in the favela. Like everyone else I knew in Nova Cidade, Tatiana and Taú were very fond of DJ Jade and did not seem to believe what they had heard. DJ Jade’s mother was desperate. Her son had been told by his friends what he had been accused of. He had run home, packed a few belongings and left the neighborhood in less than 30 minutes. She did not know where he had gone and worried for his life. Taú fell quiet and then whispered to me, “If you’re lucky, someone that likes you tells you what you’ve been accused of… So you can leave before it’s too late…” He asked Tatiana for more information, but she did not know more than what DJ Jade’s mother had told us. I never saw DJ Jade again. Later, rumors circulated in the favela according to which DJ Jade was said to have stolen money from the boss. None of my friends that knew him was convinced that he had committed any of the crimes he was accused of. Rather, they seemed to think that someone, for some reason, wanted to get rid of him, and therefore accused him of stealing and/or informing on the boss.

Drug Traffickers and Religion

To better understand the complicated power dynamics in Nova Cidade, it is also necessary to explore the drug dealer’s relationships to more formal institutions and groups, such as to the Evangelical churches and Residents’ Associations, and to politicians. The last two parts of this chapter I thus dedicate to these relationships. I start by looking at drug traffickers and the churches.

Once, while I was having lunch in the favela with a friend, I complained that I had not been able to sleep. The annoying pastor next door had been speaking in tongues all night, I whined. My friend looked at me with a worried face and whispered harshly, “Shut up immediately!” The son of the owner of the restaurant was a traficante and surprisingly, also very religious.

One of the most important rituals in the Igreja Universal is mass exorcism. People are invited to enact their self-empowerment and to change their

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120 “Foi expulso da favela.”
social and economic conditions with the help of the Holy Spirit. During these rituals, Afro-Brazilian deities become visible as they manifest themselves among people in the church. The spirits who possess peoples’ bodies confess that they are there to destroy the lives of those they possess. The pastor then exorcises them in the name of Jesus Christ. As many scholars have observed, this practice of public exorcism identifies and expels the roots of evil, at the same time as the church offers direct spiritual intervention (see e.g., Antoniazzi 1994, Montes 2008, Birman and Lehman 1999, Birman and Leite 2000, Oosterbann 2009). The Afro-Brazilian spirits, or demons as represented by the Evangelical movements, are made responsible for physically harming those they possess. They are said to hinder people from achieving fortune and happiness in this life and the salvation in the Hereafter (see Oosterbann 2009).

The exorcism of evil spirits counters the socioeconomic and personal problems of people, I was told. As the practice of mass expulsion of spirits is not confined to the temples, but to places where it is supposedly most needed, I had seen it many times on my way home after a baile early Sunday mornings. Next to a boca, where drugs are sold, men in brown suits and polished shoes holding briefcases enthusiastically hand out flyers about Jesus, hoping to convert lost funk fans and drug traffickers. The pastors grab the drug traffickers’ foreheads and pray intensely until bursting out “Sai!” – leave! Next thing, the young men fall backwards, touched by the Holy Spirit. Only a moment before hitting the ground, the pastors catch them in their arms.

_Igreja Universal_ links the presence of drug traffickers to the general misery of the favela. Both are seen as signs of demonic presence. Consequently, by way of mass exorcism, the pastors are able to offer a solution for both the individual young men and the favela as a whole. Through the pastor, the Holy Spirit can cleanse the individual drug trafficker who wants to give up “this life” (life as a drug trafficker) and as a result deliver the favela from its dangers. It is believed that in the space of the favela both good and evil reside. The violence in the favelas of Rio is interpreted as signs of the spiritual battle between God and the devil.

During services at the _Igreja Universal_, the pastors regularly give members of the congregation his “visions.” Once, the pastor told a man around 20 years old sitting next to me that he would have died on his motorbike recently when the police shot at him, had God not pulled him out of his seat, so that the bullet hit someone else instead. Another man sitting behind me was told that the only reason he was not in prison was because of God. At the same service, there was yet another young man in the room, working as a drug trafficker. To him, the pastor said: “Do you remember when the police almost killed you?” He continued: “That bullet did not kill you, only because you turned yourself to God and accepted Jesus Christ into your heart. The
only reason you are alive is because of Him!” Youth who participate in the drug trade are seen as not only perpetrators of violent crimes, but also victims of demons. In this way, the lives of young men can generate popular examples to illustrate the aggressiveness of the spiritual battle. Also, drug traffickers who had converted were presented as proof of the power of the Holy Spirit (Oosterbaan 2009).

Although the behavior of drug traffickers is condemned in Evangelical morality, many (if not all) of the drug traffickers in Nova Cidade are Evangelicals. Fifteen years ago, the police occupied the favela for a period of 5 years. During this time, the Afro-Brazilian religions were banned, while Evangelical movements were sanctioned by the state. When the police occupation was over, Evangelical congregations had started to grow rapidly, while many of those practicing Afro-Brazilian religions stopped doing so openly (see more below). This observation is in line with what Christina Vital da Cunha (2002) writes about a favela in the North Zone of Rio that was occupied by the police for many years. She argues that the state’s way of condemning Afro-Brazilian religions and the fact that some of the most prominent drug traffickers in the favela she studied converted to Evangelicalism during police occupation can explain the popularity of Evangelical congregations and the power they hold in the favela.

Like becoming a funk star, the churches do provide a way for faction members to leave trafficker life. Many of the pastors I heard of and met in the favela were ex-traficantes. At the same time, there is an interesting discrepancy between the hope for exit or change, the public proclamations of regret and redemption on the one hand and the many young men who are both Evangelicals and drug traffickers in practice on the other. To them, attending sermons and posing as converts or believers might serve the function of legitimation in relation to the power of the faction. These men emerge as powerful sinners with the quite human and “good” intention to become something else, something different from what they currently are.

Drug Traffickers and Politics

Drug traffickers in Nova Cidade work closely with community leaders in the favela such as the presidents of the Residents’ Associations, religious leaders and activists. Community leaders are known for their extensive social networks, including contacts with resourceful people from outside the favela, like entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, politicians, NGO workers and researchers. Their work and social positions depend on these networks. They push for collective improvements of the community and grant personal favors to individual residents. They write petitions for infrastructural improvement, participate in governmental programs for land legalization and try to raise
funds or materials for projects, varying from food aid and courses on employment opportunities to cultural expression. Further, they assist in completing forms and provide guidance through the bureaucracy of social security. Their connections to outsiders offer them possibilities to gain personal advantages that are critical for their survival, varying from monthly salaries to stipends for attending meetings. Sometimes they get opportunities to join governmental programs and to access other kinds of support, such as jobs, food aid or materials. In return for what they receive, community leaders provide practical and political forms of support to outsiders, such as organizing workshops or events, coordinating the implementation of a governmental or NGO-run health or cultural project, or do political canvassing (see Koster 2014).

I was told that in Nova Cidade, in contrast to many other favelas, the leaders of the Residents’ Associations got along well with the traffickers and had done so for many years. Zaki argued that this harmony had to do with the fact that community leaders there accepted that ultimately the drug traffickers were in charge. It is the drug bosses who decide who gets to campaign for municipal and national elections and who does not. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the late MC Sandro walked around with the right-wing politician and preacher Marcelo Crivella during the 2008 municipal elections. It is common for politicians to approach famous funk stars who have good relations with drug traffickers in order to attract young voters in favelas. Zaki and Tau had told me that MC Sandro had been promised funds for his social center Utopia if he helped the pastor during the elections.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, to understand the role – and power – of drug traffickers in the favelas and society at large, it is crucial to look into how clientilistic networks between drug traffickers, civic leaders and politicians are created and used. The power of “the faction” is not a “parallel” power to the power of “the state.” The drug dealers in the favelas are in some ways independent power-holders but they are also, at the same time, dependent on and intertwined with state officials – including the police – on many different levels. These complicated relationships will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

During my fieldwork, Zaki was quite fond of the boss of the upper part of the favela. He considered him an intelligent, sociable, and on the whole, nice person, whereas he strongly disliked the boss in the lower part, who has the greater power. According to Zaki, the latter was both stupid and ignorant. To prove his point, Zaki brought up the fact that during the then ongoing election period, the southern boss had dealt with the local political situation very badly, or rather not dealt with it at all. It was, according to Zaki, very important that the boss decided carefully which politicians to support. Only people who have the support of the faction are allowed to campaign in the favela. In the beginning of the election period, Zaki had attended a meeting
with the politically engaged, the Residents’ Association and the boss. During the meeting, they were to decide who to support and why. The boss of the lower part of Nova Cidade had however told the crowd: “All I want and care about are big parties and to be able to have sex with young girls [comer as minhas novinhas] in peace.” Zaki’s contempt for this statement is one aspect to note. Another is the interesting fact that a man’s sexual appetite is used in the political rhetoric to attract voters.

Taú was angry that only religious, right-wing politicians were allowed to campaign in the neighborhood that year. He said that all he wanted to do was to bring down a sound system to the streets where the right-wing politician Crivella was walking and turn on his favorite hip-hop group from São Paulo that rapped about political corruption. He wanted to claim space in the favela by organizing anti-corruption activities for young people in the streets. This he could never do without risking his own life. He said, “The traffickers either kill or banish those who complain or protest against the politicians they have chosen to work with.”

My impression is that most people are scared of making their own political commitments like raising their voices or organizing beyond the control of (let alone against) traffickers and their networks. Those who do, namely the politicians, become the proponents of policies and projects that inevitably favor the drug traffickers and their business. They do depend on the faction in more ways than mere economic ones. The popularity of a certain faction rubs off on the politician it supports. In Nova Cidade, another politics is impossible, perhaps even unimaginable.

Concluding Notes

People in the favela generally have a complex and ambivalent relationship to drug traffickers. Zaki would every so often point to a traficante and say, “I saw him grow up; I taught this boy in school,” or “I was his football trainer.” However, like most other people, he showed a great deal of ambivalence in relation to the traffickers. For example, he told me about a boy he had known and taken care of as a baby and who became a drug trafficker in his early teens. When the boy was 16, he cut a girl into pieces and burnt her body. The girl did drugs and had been accused of informing on the faction. Zaki said that when he found out, he wanted to kill the boy and stopped speaking to him. A few years later, BOPE killed the young man whose corpse they put on top of their tank while driving around the favela for everyone to see. They wanted 1,000 reais to take the body down. The drug trafficker’s mother came running to Zaki and begged him to help her get it down. Zaki told me that he hesitated. A few years earlier, he himself had
wanted to kill the boy. Nevertheless, in the end, he helped the mother so that the body could be buried.

The transactions between faction members and other residents are multifaceted and complex, and fear is often an integral part in this relationship, but not always. Most people in the favela have a boyfriend, husband, brother, uncle, father, nephew, cousin, neighbor or friend who is a bandido. It happens that someone does favors for a boyfriend, brother or cousin, for example, buy cigarettes for someone standing in a corner working the nightshift, or deliver a package to somebody as a favor for someone who does not have time to do it himself. If a drug dealer asks someone to do him or her\textsuperscript{121} a favor, the person will most probably do it, but not always – or only – out of fear, but because the person is someone he/she is close to. Yet, residents claimed that drug dealers today try to keep more to themselves than before, and that this isolation partly had to do with a law that was implemented in 2006.

The law associação para o tráfico,\textsuperscript{122} exemplifies how the state makes use of the classificatory dilemma or dynamic that I have been discussing throughout this chapter. It makes it possible to arrest anyone who can be associated with the drug-dealing faction. According to Taú and Zaki, this means that the police can arrest anyone in the favela and claim that he or she is involved with the faction even more easily than before. Residents in Nova Cidade (as well as human rights defenders and others from all around Rio) claim that with the law, those who complain about police behavior get arrested more readily than in the past with the justification that they are associated with the faction. This law was also used during my fieldwork in 2011, when police officers from Rio de Janeiro’s Computer Crime Unit (DRCI) arrested a group of funk MCs in Rocinha on charges of inciting violence through their music. Years ago, the funk singers had composed and performed proibidãos but none of them were drug traffickers.

In this chapter, I have illustrated that bailes are medium for distributing fun and excitement, contributing to the legitimacy of the drug dealers. As in Chapter 4, I meant to divert the commonly singular attention given to the overt, gun violence of favela factions and show how their power does rest on a much broader foundation.

All the same, violence is nevertheless always an integral and important part of this existence. In order to dig deeper into the dialectic of state and trafficker violence and power, I will now turn more explicitly in Chapter 6 to the efforts of the state to combat (through securitization) funk practices and the sexuality of favela youth.

\textsuperscript{121} There was only one young woman, “the brunette,” who worked officially as a drug trafficker in Nova Cidade during my fieldwork.

\textsuperscript{122} Lei 11.343/06.
Chapter 6.
The State, Funk and the Securitization of Sex

This chapter is primarily about the relationship between favela youth and the state. A basic aspect of this relation, seen from the perspective of young people, is what the state has offered in terms of citizens’ expectations regarding infrastructure, schools and health-care systems. Another basic aspect of this relationship is how young people experience the violence of the state in the shape of different police forces.

Meeting expectations in terms of social welfare is central to what gives legitimacy to the state, and shortcomings in this sphere open the door to rival claims of loyalty by the citizens. It is evident that much of the policy of the state towards “favela youth” is dominated by a particular view, where the definition of “the favela” is dominated by notions of gang rule, violence and unbridled sexuality that have to be brought under control. This view is resonant even when efforts are made, following neoliberal ideas, to give more recognition to local culture (read funk) and turn it into an asset. Concrete, day-to-day experiences of police brutality are an important part of what forms young people’s attitudes towards the state, and a section of the chapter will try to convey what this experience is all about.

Funk in Nova Cidade is inseparable from the performative field of struggles between state sovereignty and drug faction sovereignty. Funk explicitly delegitimizes the violence of the state and legitimizes its opposition in the process. In other words, funk emerges and becomes meaningful to favela youth as part of a fight against a sovereign – in many ways, and at certain times – perceived of as illegitimate. The struggle to legitimate violence and the power of its perpetrator in that territory – the act or performance of the state – can very well be central to the conflict and social dynamic (see Weber 1973). The chapter ends with an illustration of how the organization of bailes in the favela can be linked to claims of sovereignty and give legitimacy to the local faction.
Infrastructure and Urban Planning

Favelas emerged (and emerge) as unplanned and non-serviced settlements that nurtured an informal real-estate market and progressed through stages of consolidation and diversification, without ever being fully incorporated into the surrounding formal city. State-funded urban planning has tried to solve this “problem” and its consequences for almost a century. The creation of a model favela, or a model neighborhood for the working poor to replace “the favela” has been the idea behind several high-profile interventions over the past 80 years, designed as emergency responses to urgent problems.

Some years before my fieldwork in Nova Cidade in 2007, there was a project called Favela Bairro (or Favela-to-Neighborhood). The goal of Favela Bairro was to overcome the differences between favelas and the rest of the city. It was going to transform favelas into regular neighborhoods, bairros. Rio’s Mayor in the mid-1990s and again in the early 2000s sought to initiate reforms, eliminating open-ended entitlements and creating high-profile, targeted projects that were funded by private and international partners. The key strategy was the then Mayor’s partnership with Inter-American Development Bank in creating Favela-Bairro. The program invested in upgrading projects in over 100 favelas. It sought to build community support through the incorporation of residents’ suggestions and their employment in projects.

In Nova Cidade, the program had paved some of the streets, installed some sewers, reinforced the walls of drainage canals and helped insolate some buildings. I was told that the favela had been through up-grading programs before. The first time, a smaller, independent initiative installed some pavement and sewer infrastructure. Later, a national program helped install further sewer systems. Many residents were upset and disappointed with the projects. A lot of money had been invested, yet, the streets were quite badly paved, which resulted in a lot of dust when the concrete fell off. The quality of the materials used was generally assumed to having been substandard. Also, the new drainage systems still did not work and many of the houses still could not withstand the rain.

Residents in the favela said that the Favela Bairro project was all about paving over deteriorating upgrades from before. Because Favela Bairro workers did not remove the old pavement before paving a second or third time, the street levels currently rise inches above the floors of homes. Consequently, when it rains, water pours into people’s homes rather than into the sewers in the middle of the streets. When streets are being built here, houses are torn down and their residents usually have nowhere to go. It is commonly believed by favela residents that new roads are constructed and paved only to make it easier for the police to enter (see also Freeman 2014).

The design of the Favela Bairro reflected the misapprehension of favelas as places where the state is absent (see McCann 2014). The architect chosen
as the key administrator for the program considered the favelas degraded by the absence of the state and wanted the program to rectify that perceived absence. *Favela Bairro* was designed to deliver “more state” to favelas, in the form of infrastructure and public employment. Yet, the political effect was one of alienation, obvious insufficiency or even malicious intent.\(^\text{123}\)

In Nova Cidade, there is trash collection twice a week, although sometimes weeks pass without anyone coming to collect the trash. During rains, trash washes down from the garbage dumps and mixes with dirty water from flooded sewers in and around the favela, and thus clogs the sewers. A grimy river runs through the northern part called “the land of no one.” As in many other favelas, this one does not connect to the city sewage grid.\(^\text{124}\) Instead, water pipes are interconnected in closed, self-built systems. Rainwater standing in the tiny alleys often attracts mosquitoes and flies.\(^\text{125}\) In cramped areas, the most recent migrants from the Northeast live in houses made out of plastic sheets, broken bricks and wood. This part of the favela is known as a place where shoot-outs occur more often than in the rest of the area, as the streets have dead ends. There is no way for alleged drug dealers to hide from the police. During the time of my fieldwork, 15 houses burnt down here due to a fire caused by heavy storms and old electricity cables.

Upgrading projects
Over the years, Nova Cidade has seen a growing state presence in projects of sanitation, drainage, electrification and other upgrading programs. A discussion of the presence of the state today, however, requires that one take into account the context of neoliberal deregulation and the appropriation of urban commons such as power grids and water by private companies in the city.

Almost all homes in the favela have electricity and running water, albeit substandard and unreliable.\(^\text{126}\) Many times a week, electricity is cut off in one or another part of the favela. Some days, hours are spent using candle-

\(^{123}\) In 2010, yet another urbanization project, *Morar Carioca*, was announced. It aimed to urbanize favelas by providing public services such as drainage systems, sewage treatment and water. Yet, in January 2013, *Morar Carioca* unraveled as funding failed to materialize. By mid-2014, construction had started in only 2 of 40 projects, while at the same time, favela removals were accelerated (see e.g., Ystanes 2016:2).

\(^{124}\) Lack of formal sanitation is directly connected to a myriad of health problems. A study by *Trata Brasil* (2014) shows that the greater the deficit of proper sewerage, the lower the life expectancy at birth (see [http://www.tratabrasil.org.br/saneamento-no-brasil, accessed June 2, 2015](http://www.tratabrasil.org.br/saneamento-no-brasil)).

\(^{125}\) In 2008, a Dengue fever epidemic hit Rio de Janeiro and lot of people in the favelas (including me) caught Dengue fever – a mosquito-borne, virus-based disease. As mosquitoes breed in puddles of stagnant dirty water, inside used tires, and at garbage dumps, people living in the favela run a much higher risk of being infected than people living in the wealthier areas of Zona Sul.

\(^{126}\) Water supply in Nova Cidade is often very scarce, especially during hot summers.
light, waiting for the electricity to start functioning again – a reminder that “the state” is there, or should be there, but never really wholeheartedly to fulfill its promises. Residents use illegal connections (so-called gato) to secure electricity. They connect cables to larger electrical outlets of those residents who live in more affluent areas and have electrical service. In certain parts, these connections sometimes ignite fires.

Gatos, however, are not exclusively a favela phenomenon. Rio’s local company, Light,\(^{127}\) which has for decades provided electricity—officially and unofficially—to Rio’s favelas (heavily criticized by activists and residents for overcharging inhabitants in favelas occupied by the police), acknowledge on their website that, “The gato is spread across favelas and the asphalt [the “formal” parts of the city] in equal proportion.”\(^{128}\) However, without energy bills in hand, favela residents cannot, for example, open bank accounts. In order to get a formal job, they need to prove that they pay their bills.

As a result of the privatizations undertaken in the 1990s and early 2000s by the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, electricity supply and telecommunications services were transferred to the private sector. The electricity company Light, for example, that provides services to 4 million Rio-residents, was privatized in 1996. As private sector suppliers are mainly motivated by regulatory incentives and bottom-line considerations, they are significantly more removed from political pressures than public sector utilities. To encourage investment in the favelas controlled by UPPs (the police pacification units), the government provided private sector firms with business incentives, such as tax-reduction and cheaper access to lands. Private companies thus increasingly recognize that favelas are becoming important sources of market growth.

With the development of cable TV and broadband Internet, a new sort of illegal “hook-up” (gato, see above) has arrived in areas like Nova Cidade. This gatonet is often provided for by drug traffickers (or in other favelas by the militia; it depends on who governs the neighborhood). There are over 20 Internet centers (called Lan houses) in Nova Cidade. They attract favela youth as popular places to hang out. To have legal Internet access at home is extremely expensive and complicated as the drug dealers, or their intermediaries, only make deals with certain Internet service providers (or telephone companies). In order to have legal Internet access at home, a person needs to be able to show that he/she pays the water and electricity bills.

In Nova Cidade, two men provided wireless Internet for those who could afford it. One of them had struck a deal with a telephone company. He charged what very few people could afford. The other person who could help with Internet access did so through gatonet. He charged less, 160 reais (about 49 US dollars) to install Internet and then 60 reais (about 18 US dol-

\(^{127}\) Light Serviços de Eletricidade S.A.

lars) a month. Like many others, however, my interlocutor Taú did not want to install illegal Internet at home: “There is no way to reclamar (make complaints) if it does not work,” he said. He could not, however, find any affordable way to install it legally.

State Presence Through Public Schools and Health Care

The proportion of favela residents with less than 8 years of schooling, almost doubles those in the rest of the city. In favelas, 82 percent have less than 8 years of schooling compared to wealthier areas where it is 46 percent. Two percent of favela residents, as compared to 25 percent of non-favela residents, have higher education (Perlman 2010). The lack of opportunities for education emerges as a constant in my interlocutors’ sense of having been left behind or even betrayed by the state.

Children in Nova Cidade have access to a nearby public secondary school and several other public schools 5 to 30 minutes away. Some of the young women and men that I spent time with, funk singers and dancers, activists and others, were still in secondary school. Others had decided to drop out, temporarily or permanently. The stated reasons varied. Some had never known whether or not the teachers would show up, and argued that they did not learn how to read and write properly anyway. Others needed to assist in supporting their families. Few of the persons (between 20 and 40 years old) with whom I spent time in the favela had studied at a university. My interlocutor Taú took up film studies at a public university during the time of my fieldwork. He was not, however, able to support himself and had to stop studying for long periods of time. Another friend, who began studying law at a university, witnessed police officers kill two young men in the favela. He had to stop studying as he received threats from the police and had to go into hiding.

There are a number of special government programs dedicated to the “social inclusion” of low-income youth. The courses that young people in Nova Cidade participated in were not, however, organized by the government (at least I never heard of any such programs). Dance, music, language classes as well as preparation for university entry (pre-vestibulario) were instead put together locally in the favela by persons working for the Residents’ Associations, former drug traffickers, activists and funk artists. The activists in Nova Cidade had personal contacts with many middle-class activists and students from public schools around Rio. Together they would sometimes arrange courses and events in the favela. In the space of an old, abandoned police station, activists organized graffiti courses, self-defense classes, poetry courses and political debates, activities and events that stood in for a defunct school system. The space of an empty government building was a symboli-
cal reminder of the tension between the remnants of a presence of the state, and the local appropriation of that same state’s abandoned responsibility.

This same tension also emerged in relation to health care in Nova Cidade. My interlocutors’ complaints frequently return to the deceptive presence of hospitals, often inaccessible to favela residents due, in part, to the securitization of favela life, especially the precarious life of the diseased and the most vulnerable. As noted in Chapter 3, child mortality rates in the favelas of Rio in the North Zone are much higher than in the southern districts. Compared with the Northeast of Brazil, however, the standard of living in Nova Cidade represents a considerable improvement in many ways. The indices of human development, as measured by the UN, are higher in the favelas of northern Rio than in many parts of northeastern Brazil, where a large proportion of their inhabitants come from. The life expectancy in a Rio favela is, as mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, about 56 years, compared with 73 years in Brazil as a whole.

Since 1988, the Brazilian constitution has guaranteed that everyone have access to medical care in Brazil. Poor quality services, lack of doctors and nurses, poor equipment, overcrowded emergency rooms, long queues and years of waiting to get an appointment with a doctor make it difficult for those who do not have private insurance plans. At this point in time, when the country was in a state of transition to democracy, the Unified Health System (SUS, or Sistema Único de Saúde) was created. Simultaneously, there was a huge expansion of private health care in Brazil, supported by public funding. In Brazil, 70 percent of the hospitals are now private and 30 percent are public. Federal, state, and municipal governments are supposed to work cooperatively to offer public health care, which they do not do in Rio.

No one I came to know in the favela had private health plans. They could not afford to pay for private, health-care insurance. Those who needed inpatient treatment had to wait a long time, sometimes years, to get it. In Nova Cidade, there are two health centers (postos de saúde) without doctors but with staff that can give residents referrals to a hospital. There is a huge new hospital very close to the favela. It does not offer emergency care and rarely attends favela residents. It was only partly in use for consultas and available only for those who could afford to pay for hospital services. “The hospital is a big joke,” the activist Zaki often said. He explained that if you are from Nova Cidade, regardless of what state you are in, they refer you to “another hospital further away to get help.

The state perception of violent threats from the favela and the construction of this place in terms of risk and insecurity do play a part in people’s predicament. As Nova Cidade is classified as one of the five top “high risk” areas in Rio, ambulances do not enter. The hospital is the fulfillment of a promise to people living in the surrounding areas from politicians running
for office in the local government elections 4 years earlier. “Yet,” Zaki said, again evoking the deceptive allure of a state that promised care, “it did not open until very recently, the reason being the forthcoming elections. For politicians to gain votes this year, they open the hospital little by little, and promise that if people vote for them this year again, the hospital will open completely and for everyone.” When the Dengue fever epidemic hit Rio in 2008, the hospital opened a small emergency room.

Public hospitals open to favela residents are located about 15 to 30 minutes away. As previously mentioned, the public emergency services are overcrowded. As a consequence, SAMU (Serviço de Atendimento Móvel de Urgência) was created. Rio residents are encouraged to call SAMU in case of emergency. The idea is that SAMU sends appropriate help to a person’s home, street or place of work. Residents in Nova Cidade (and in many other favelas) do not, however, trust that this emergency line will function. It usually takes a very long time before ambulances, fire brigades or doctors arrive, if they arrive at all. Doctors, nurses and others consider it too dangerous to go into “potential areas of risk” (áreas de risco). Sometimes, ambulances stop at one of the favela entrances.

In case of emergency, residents instead tend to organize themselves. They would often call one of the community leaders in the favela when someone was very ill or injured. One such community leader told me that in case of emergency, he would quickly borrow someone’s car and try to get hold of a driver (as he did not have a driver’s license himself) in order to get to a hospital as fast as possible. Various times, residents hit by a bullet from the police or drug traffickers had died in his arms on the way to the hospital. Most people, however, do not die from bullets coming from the police or drug traffickers, but from the inability to access emergency medical services in the case of, for example, stroke or heart attack or from infectious diseases.

Some of the disappointment felt is reflected in funk tunes which fall within what I refer to in this dissertation as funk as fight, or the political context in which funk emerges as conflictive. One such song is called “This is Brazil” (2015), composed by the funk star, MC Garden. A part of the song goes like this (my translation):

Precarious health system,
Remember [it] when you’re feeling ill,
I’m less bothered with illness,
Than with hospital delays,
Brazilian’s thinking it’s cool,
To be treated like animals,
But how are we supposed to be complaining
When you treat us like that?
Police violence.
In line with contemporary thinking, services related to infrastructure, educational services and health care are better not run by the state but left to the market, a market which does not favor the unemployed, or informal worker, residents of poor working-class neighborhoods such as favelas when it comes to assets needed for young people to be able to break away from a situation of in/security and precariousness.

State Policies and the Securitization of Sex

The policies of the authorities against the young people of the favelas, indeed against any of the favela inhabitants, cannot be seen just as a failure of action promoted by a lack of interest. It is to a very high degree formed by a particular image of “the favela,” an image in which the idea of “gangs” plays a central role, as well as the notions of excessive sexuality and violence. The notion of “the gang,” I argue, works within both funk and the favela itself as well as in the governmental discourses and practices of the state to justify its oppressive strategies for containing Rio’s urban margins. Besides exploring the social pressures on individuals and their life options, it is thus also crucial to pay attention to how state representatives talk about and act upon “the gang” as a category.

As described in earlier chapters, the most popular funk songs in Nova Cidade belong to the genre called putaria. The lyrics are, as mentioned, always about sex, and describe positions and body parts in detail. Funk songs within the genre called proibidão, are also popular, although not to the same extent as putaria. These lyrics frequently describe trafficker and police violence. In the last decade, funk ostentação, originating from São Paulo, has also become increasingly popular in the favelas of Rio. In Chapter 5, I described how young people in the favela commonly used the concept proibidão to refer to sexually explicit songs and those about, for example, killing rival faction members.

State authorities, it seems, perceive of putaria and proibidão as equally dangerous expressions. The law does not prohibit putaria songs but both genres are condemned and censured. Funk songs with very different content are thus categorized as just as violent, which could illustrate how the state fails to deal with the complexities of everyday life in the favelas. It could also illustrate how state power operates in relation to both funk and sexuality by rhetorically linking them to a state- and order-threatening violence. I would argue for the latter, and that this has to do with the securitization of sexuality itself rather than with a mere state effect or state failure.

As discussed in Chapter 1, by labeling something a threat to security, a phenomenon is dramatized as an issue of supreme priority that, accordingly, needs to be urgently dealt with. Securitization thus legitimates the circum-
venting of public debate and democratic processes. Anthropological debates on the “securitization” of humanitarian issues have raised questions about how security and risk are defined (see e.g., Gledhill 2008 and 2009, Goldstein 2010, Holbraad and Pedersen 2013). Whose security is perceived to be at stake, and what are the possible political consequences of reframing problems of “security”?

The invocation of “security” suggests that a crisis has exceeded the normal “rules of the game,” and therefore an extraordinary response is required. Securitization can be viewed as a discursive framework that redefines a vast range of areas of research in which anthropologists are engaged, as questions of national and international security. An issue gets “securitized” when it passes from the realm of ordinary political questions into an issue that threatens the very survival of states and their citizens (see van Munster 2009 and Chapter 1). So, could it be that the sexuality of favela youth is approached by state agencies and representatives of the state in such a dramatic way? Furthermore, does the messages and practices of funk interact with such a securitization, and if so how?

In the discourse and policies of Brazilian politics, the sexuality of young people in the favelas is construed as inherently violent, dangerous, and threatening to both the moral and political order. There are many links between the stereotypes wealthy Brazilians hold about areas categorized as favelas and the way people categorized as black are regarded, especially in terms of male proneness to violence and female sensuality and “hotness,” providing a framework for a mixture of fear and desire. For example, during fieldwork, I could follow recurrent discussions in newspapers, on the radio and on TV with psychologists, social workers, writers and politicians discussing the “dangers” with bailes.

One main problem was considered to be that young girls got pregnant at the dances. In this media-infused moral panic, the state played a role as well. In 2001, the then Secretary of Health in Rio de Janeiro, Sérgio Arouca, stated that the “sex dances” and “orgies” taking place at the bailes could be directly linked to an increase in pregnancies among girls in the favelas. According to Arouca, these pregnancies had to do with the way young women dressed in “short skirts without underwear.” The Secretary of Health said that young women at bailes had sexual relations with many different men during the same night, which, according to him, led to an increase in sexually transmitted diseases among youth in the favelas. An alleged consequence of this “unbridled sexuality” was that the girls would not know who the fathers of their babies were. In 2016, Albertina Duarte, a gynecologist and professor who works as the coordinator for a state run program concerned with the health of adolescents’ (Programa Estadual do Adolescente

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de Secretaria de Saúde de São Paulo), expressed her concerns in a similar vein in relation to favela youth, sexuality and funk. In a TV-show she argued that young women frequently get pregnant at bailes as they have sex with various men and that this, according to her, leads to sexually transmitted diseases. She also voiced concerns in relation to how young men and women dance at the bailes. According to her, dancing men at the bailes surround dancing women, which leads to sex, and – again – to young women becoming pregnant without knowing who the fathers of their babies are.\textsuperscript{130}

Securitization through juridical frameworks

The fact that the sexually explicit lyrics are censured and the most violent prohibited by law is another indicator of the fact that state authorities consider funk a matter of public security and that funk incites violence and sexual licentiousness. As mentioned earlier, article 286 in the Brazilian Penal Code makes it illegal to incite people to violence and article 287 prohibits making apologies for crime (Sneed 2007:222). Funk is thought to violate both these laws. Moreover, there are also laws that impede the organization of funk parties.

In 2008, the former congressman and chief police officer Álvaro Lins, today imprisoned after having been exposed as a chief of militia groups in Rio, passed a law that complicated the legal staging of bailes in favelas. The law, known as “\textit{lei Álvaro Lins}”\textsuperscript{131} built on earlier proposals by the governor of the state of Rio, Sérgio Cabral. In order to organize a baile, a letter to the Secretary of State Security had to be written with information about the forthcoming event. Among other things, the venues had to have surveillance cameras, approval from local firefighters, functioning toilets, a proper ventilation system, emergency exits, a parking lot close to the location, and so on.

However, processes of Brazilian law-making work not only to prohibit vernacular forms and practices of funk, but also to allow them. In 2009, Marcelo Freixo\textsuperscript{132} (\textit{Partido Socialismo é Liberdade}), human rights activist and President of the Commission for Human Rights at Rio de Janeiro’s State Legislative Assembly joined with two other politicians and the organization APA-funk (\textit{Associação dos Profissionais e Amigos do Funk}). Together they


\textsuperscript{131} In 2000, the \textit{lei} 3410/2000 was created. It outlined conditions concerning how funk parties could be organized in Rio de Janeiro. In 2008, the \textit{lei Álvaro Lins} 5265/08 stiffened the law of 2000.

\textsuperscript{132} Marcelo Freixo is famous for his fight against militias in Rio. One of the main characters in the film \textit{Tropa de Elite 2} is based on him.
managed to pass what is known as the “Funk is Culture Law”\(^\text{133}\) (\textit{A lei Funk e Cultura}). It states that funk is an official form of Brazilian culture. At the same time, it outlaws “any type of social, racial or cultural discrimination against the funk movement and its followers.” The \textit{lei Álvaro Lins} was revoked the same day as the new law was passed.\(^\text{134}\) The aims of this law merit a comment since they offer more recognition to local culture and reflect international neoliberal fashions in relation to cultural minorities.

Since the “Funk is Culture Law” passed in 2009, funk artists are entitled to funding from the state. In 2011 a group of MCs, DJs and event producers organized the first ever \textit{Rio Parada Funk}.\(^\text{135}\) This was the first funk event to receive significant funding from the state, in this case the Secretary of Culture. The idea was to turn the prestigious Avenida Rio Branco, in the South Zone of Rio into a huge funk party. A week before the \textit{Parada} – and after months of planning with the city government – the Institute for Historical Patrimony and National Art (IPHAN) informed the press that they were going to stop the event from taking place on Rio Branco.

Earlier, the Institute for Historical Patrimony and National Art had put a limit on the volume of the \textit{Parada}. The parade was to be moved to Avenida Presidente Vargas, Centro’s largest monumental avenue, of much less prestigious character. It is home to Rio’s central bus and train stations, which are major hubs for commuters coming from working class neighborhoods and suburbs. Only a few days later, the city government decided yet again to move the event. Largo da Carioca, an expansive plaza, was halfway between the original site on Avenida Rio Branco and Presidente Vargas (see Scruggs and Lippman 2012).\(^\text{136}\)

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\(^{133}\) \textit{Lei} 5543/09

\(^{134}\) The “Funk is Culture Law” is significant for the legal defense of funk as “a cultural and musical movement of popular character” that should not be treated any differently from other similar manifestations of popular culture, such as samba. The legal protection is, apart from the anti-discrimination claims, also complemented by a specific order that the Secretary of Culture, or similar public offices, should be the government’s representative agents toward the funk industry.

\(^{135}\) In 2014, the event was moved to \textit{Sambodromo}, especially built for carnival parades, where competitions between the samba schools are organized every year. In 2015, the funk parade was moved back to the streets of Centro again.

\(^{136}\) Ten sound systems with walls of between 40 and 100 stacked speakers, 50 DJs, and 40 MCs finally claimed space in the city center. Before the Parada, the event organizers, a group of well-known MCs, DJs and event producers from Rio had decided to prohibit funk artists from performing \textit{putaria, proibidão}, or music that could “cause fights” such as soccer clubs’ anthems (Scruggs and Lippman 2012). Many of the event organizers belong to an older generation of funk artists who, in their struggle to fight prejudice against favela youth, agree to self-censorship. To my knowledge, none of my interlocutors engaged in funk in Nova Cidade participated or even mentioned the parade to me during fieldwork that year. My interlocutors, especially those who had not yet reached their 30s, did not feel part of the more established funk scene that collaborated with the city government, and seemingly they were not interested in playing funk music considered appropriate for a more well-off, South Zone public.
In 2011, the Secretary of Culture designated 500,000 reais to the “intellectual production of funk,” including art, books, and films. In 2013, 650,000 reais went to the organization of bailes in favelas controlled by the police (UPPS). In 2015, the Secretary of Culture, Eva Doris Rosental, said that she was going to create a funk award with huge shows in the prestigious Theatro Municipal, in Centro. Funk, she said, is a culture that concerns the whole state.

While such projects may appear positive and peaceful, they are often met with popular suspicion. They are associated with the security measures of establishing police units in favelas (UPPS) and building walls in preparation for mega-events such as the Olympics in 2016.

Coexisting with a piece of legislation called Resolution 013, or zero-treze, as it is known, the “Funk is Culture Law” also demonstrates the frailty of legality in an actual or always potential state of exception. Zero-treze was passed in 2007 by Secretary of State Security José Mariano Beltrame (see below), the chief architect of the Police Pacification Units. The legislation makes it possible for the police to shut down any cultural event considered a threat to public security. In many favelas with UPPs, bailes are prohibited by invoking this resolution. In 2013, the commanding officer of the UPP in the favela Providencia, Capitão Glauco, expressed that he is against the organization of bailes in favelas because:

All funk is connected to drug trafficking. Although funk is a popular cultural expression, people are not ready for it yet. When they [referring to favela residents] are more conscious, and listen to classic music, to Brazilian popular music, when they get to know other rhythms, other cultures, then we can allow it, but not today, no.

For many of the young men and women in Nova Cidade, funk is not just party music but, as discussed in Chapter 4, encompasses their whole social worlds. Their hairstyles and the way they dress, the vocabulary they use, how they interact with their friends, what they do when they hang out and where they spend their leisure, what they dream of and how they see their future – everything is influenced by their relationship to funk. In this sense, funk is a way of being young. The securitization of sexuality, I argue, thus becomes a key instrument in the state’s pursuit of its sovereign right to rule.

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137 Approximately 153,100 US dollars.
138 Approximately 199,000 US dollars.
Unpredictable and ever-changing funk practices, in a similar vein, are multi-layered expressions of a resistance to (funk as fight) and in a sense re-politicization of that which is de-politicized through securitization.

Political rhetoric and control

Inspired by the New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani’s “zero-tolerance” policies, the Governor of Rio Sérgio Cabral142 had secured substantial funds for his Public Security Secretary Beltrame. One afternoon during fieldwork, I met Zé, one of the politically engaged activists in Nova Cidade, who was sitting on his bike, holding a lot of papers in his hands. He was dressed in a t-shirt with a picture of his dead son Deivison, who had been killed by the police a few years earlier, at the age of two. The police who shot him was aiming at an alleged drug trafficker. “Do you know what came out of Beltrame’s mouth yesterday?” Zé asked. “He made an official statement, live on TV and everything, saying that a cultura de crime [crime culture] exists in the bandidos already when they are in their mother’s wombs.” Zé asked me and Taú to sign a petition he was holding in his hands. He was out collecting signatures and commentaries from women in the favela. “What do you think mothers will say about this? It’s madness! They blame everything on the mothers!” He let us know that he was planning to send the petition to the Public Prosecutor’s Office and to start a process against Sérgio Cabral (who Zé held accountable for the statement).

At a Public Security Forum in 2008 Beltrame had made this infamous statement that infants in favelas emerge criminals already before they are born, due to the environment that surrounds them, an environment where bandidos use automatic weapons as routinely as other people handle cell phones (see Alves and Evanson 2011:26). As mentioned in Chapter 1, in 2007, Governor Cabral stated that places like the favela of Rocinha are “factories for marginal people.” In an interview, he referred to the book Freakonomics (2005) to repeat the argument that legalized abortion had been a blessing in the United States as it allowed mothers to terminate unwanted pregnancies. Poor women in favelas need the same access to abortion as that of middle- and upper-class women (Alves and Evanson 2011), not for the purpose of their own health and survival, but to stop the tide of crime at its very source:

Today in Rio’s wealthy areas, like Tijuca, birth rates are the same as in civilized countries where people are conscious. Unfortunately, in the poorest communities here, women do not know how to organize family planning and

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142 Cabral was the governor of the state of Rio between 2006 and 2013.
birth rates are the same as in the most backwards countries of Africa. It has everything to do with violence.\textsuperscript{143}

In the third chapter of the dissertation, I recalled how favelas historically have been seen as actual or potential contaminators of city life, as a threat to the health of citizens. A state concern with public hygiene in the favelas intrudes upon the privacy of their inhabitants. Early manifestations of what would become known as “the favela problem” were centered on the bodies of favela residents, who were imagined to be diseased (see Larkins 2015:7). Such notions have been linked to campaigns to discipline and control favela residents, whether through public health campaigns or through labor legislation (see Penglase 2014:46).

When he ran for mayor in Rio in 2008, Marcelo Crivella, a bishop in the Universal Kingdom of God, who had earlier campaigned in Nova Cidade together with the late funk artist MC Sandro, took the idea of legalized abortion in relation to crime reduction a step further than governor Cabral had done. He proposed that the age of voluntary sterilization for women and men should be reduced from 25 to 18 years old. Sterilization, he argued, would prevent unwanted pregnancies completely (Alves and Evanson 2011:27).

In the same spirit, Laerte Bessa, a congressman, supported the constitutional amendment that the age of criminal responsibility should be lowered from 18 to 16 as “a possible solution to the country’s rising crime rates.”\textsuperscript{144}

In June 2015, he stated that, in the long run, he hoped that genetic science would solve the country’s high levels of criminality. “One day, we will get to a stage in which we are able to determine whether a child in the womb has criminal tendencies and if it does, the mother won’t be allowed to give birth” (ibid).

In the first part of this chapter, I have tried to outline the historical and contemporary dilemmas of a failed bio-politics of care, schooling and urban renewal in the favelas. Such state failure does not leave the urban margins of Rio unaffected. State failure is not the same as state absence, on the contrary. In order for anthropology to comprehend \textit{the work of the state as it fails}, I have tried to combine an analysis on state violence with a perspective concerning caring and disciplining. Further, I outline the ideological basis that backs up both the assumedly caring efforts and the more harsh efforts at control. The rest of this chapter deals with the latter, that is, the more openly violent presence of the state.


My discussion about the securitization of sex through juridical frameworks and in the political rhetoric of electoral processes is aimed at broadening a take on the state in the favelas and on how it interacts with ways of being young in a particular place. This is not to say that direct police violence is in any way insignificant or trivial.

Extra-Legal Measures of Control

Since the 1990s, Brazil has suffered from some of the highest murder rates in the world (see Alves and Evanson 2011, Larkins 2015:59), and, since 2007, when I started fieldwork, the governors of Rio continued to favor a policy of violent police confrontation with drug trafficking gangs. City administrators argued that confrontations prevent criminals from becoming stronger, but in 2007, the number of homicides in Rio exceeded those for the much bigger city São Paulo for the first time (Alves and Evanson 2011:127). In relation to a BOPE mission that left nine dead during my fieldwork in May 2008, the military, who were also prone to connect funk parties to criminality in their public statements, praised the outcome, arguing that the Military Police was indeed the best ‘social insecticide’ available.

During the time of my fieldwork, a new military police unit emerged at the CEASA food wholesale center, close to Nova Cidade. The unit replaced another military police installment with a bad human rights record in Nova Cidade. A community leader in the favela told me that a military officer had argued that this change was made because the commercial area of CEASA is located in a place that suffers from problems generated by the combination of low human development index, lack of security and a lot of money in circulation. While the police department is allegedly in place to contain if not solve such problems, community leaders hold the unit responsible for at least 12 disappearances in the last few years. Workers accused of working without Signed Worker’s Cards, were last seen when arrested by police officers from this unit.

Despite the historical continuity of violent state presence, neither the state nor its law enforcement agencies can be seen as monoliths maintaining and reproducing a singular social structure. According to the Constitution of 1988, article 144 affirms that public security is the duty of the state and the responsibility of everyone. It is however exercised through a hierarchy of police forces headed by the Federal police and two other Federal police forces (for highways and railroads). On fourth place we find the Military Police and on the fifth place, the Civil Police, both subordinate to state governments. Policing on the ground is largely carried out by two types of units, by the Military Police who always carry uniform and have the task of patrolling the streets to discourage and repress criminal action as well as to arrest
people in the act of committing crimes and the Civil Police, an investigative unit that also prepare dossiers for prosecutors and judges (see Penglase 2014). The elected governor of a state commands both units.

Various researchers, policy-makers and human rights activists have argued that this structure produces a series of problems. One such problem is that the two units often do not share information. Instead, they compete with each other, and have two separate command chains. Each force is also divided internally, with differences in class and educational level separating lower-ranking police officers from officers.

Scholars have argued that low salaries and disparities in pay contribute to the maintenance of a divided police force and that substandard rates of compensation contribute to endemic corruption in all branches of the police force (e.g., Larkins 2015, Evason and Alves 2011). With very low wages many officers are forced to work many different jobs at the same time, often supplementing their income by doing work in the private security sector (see also the introduction), which is a huge and growing industry. Others join the militia or collaborate with drug traffickers. Many police officers do not earn enough to sustain a household, even in the favelas, from where many of the Military Police officers come (see Alves and Evason 2011:122).

Brazil has the world’s fourth-largest prison population, after the US, China and Russia, but while the number of prisoners in those countries has declined over recent years, it has grown in Brazil by 33 percent between 2008 and 2014. New statistics show that Brazil’s prison population has doubled in the last 10 years and currently (2016) contains more than 220,000 inmates over its capacity. Not only do overcrowding produce inhumane conditions and contribute to the proliferation of illness and disease. The prisons are also an important place for the assertion of trafficker power. Felipe, a high-ranking trafficker in Nova Cidade, whom I interviewed, said this about his time in prison:

“I’ve never suffered so much. Not even if you were my biggest enemy would I wish you that kind of suffering. Prison… it doesn’t give you anything good. Prisons make criminals even more criminal and more violent (….) Prison doesn’t teach you anything. During the time that I was in prison, I brought disgrace upon my family [trouxe desgraça]. In 15 years in prison, almost everyone I loved died. I lost my mother. I lost my son. I lost my grandmother. Everyone I loved died. Isn’t that something that would make you leave prison revolted?”

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145 According to Alves and Evason (2011:122), the suicide rate for the Rio police is six times greater than that for the rest of the population.

There is public support for extra-legal measures of control and for increasing the suffering of prisoners even more. The lower house of Brazil’s congress has recently (July 2015) approved a constitutional amendment that reduces the age of criminal responsibility from 18 to 16 years of age. The Minister of Justice José Eduardo Cardozo commented that lowering the age of criminal responsibility will add up to 40,000 more inmates to the system. At the same time, a poll made by one of Brazil's main polling institutes, Datafolha, showed that 87 percent of the Brazilian population approve of a reduction. There is also growing support for stricter punitive sanctions, including death penalty against those labeled ‘criminals’: the poor, black favela residents (see e.g., Wacquant 2003, Caldeira 2002).

Policing in Nova Cidade

While walking along the railway tracks leading to the favela entrance in Nova Cidade, you encounter groups of police officers standing by the motorway. They randomly stop passers-by, especially young men on motorcycles. They point guns to their heads and ‘ask’ for money and justify their intervention by claiming that the motorcycle appears to be stolen or that the driver does not have proper lights on, or looks drunk. Residents in Nova Cidade explained that if the police do not get the money they ask for, and sometimes even if they do, the driver will either be stripped off all his clothes right then and there in the middle of the road, taken to the police station, or both. One day in Nova Cidade I met MCs Betinho who told me that earlier that same day the police had brought him and another funk MC, Alex, to the police station. The two of them were heading to a meeting in the city on their motorbikes when the police stopped them claiming that they looked drunk. Betinho, who was tired of the well-known procedure, explained to the police that he and Alex had not been drinking. He also asked the police officers not to point their guns at them. As a consequence, Betinho and Alex had been accused of ‘making resistance to agents of authority’ and would be brought to court.

During my fieldwork, favela residents told me about how they got robbed by police officers while waiting in line at bus stops in order to get home after a long day at work. When the police invaded the favela, they randomly raided homes stealing everything they could find, from bicycles to food. One infamous police officer in Nova Cidade was known for stealing people’s motorbikes and giving them to his sons. Violence, corruption and graft have become normalized in policing tactics and as many scholars have noted, police corruption in the favelas comes in numerous forms (e.g., Caldeira and

Holston 1999, Goldstein 2003, Penglase 2014, Larkins 2015, Alves and Evanson 2011). The Military Police of Rio has been found to be the most corrupt in the country, responsible for a total of 30.2 percent of all reported cases of police extortion in the country during 2010-2011 (see Larkins 2015:63). Many officers also participate in extra-legal markets and intelligence for money, selling weapons, or agreeing to look the other way in exchange for money.

During police raids in Nova Cidade it was common that the police asked residents for receipts if they found household appliances, computers, motorcycles or other valuable things in the latter’s possession. If the owners could not find the receipts, the police would claim that the products had either been stolen, bought with money earned while working for drug dealers or given to the person by a relative working for the traffickers. Either way, the police would confiscate the products. Throughout fieldwork, I observed how the police made young men from the favela line up against a wall by the favela entrance in order to strip search them while asking for ‘documents.’ The police continuously harassed and hit drug addicts, so called viciados, while stealing their money.

Although many weeks could pass without violent confrontations between state forces and drug traffickers in Nova Cidade, residents experienced waiting and not knowing when it would occur as terrifying and as constitutive of the in/security of their existence. This is to say that the less spectacular police violence that takes place in-between armed confrontations play a big part in the overall experience of violent state presence. Although in some ways normalized, this less spectacular police violence is not unchallenged, as is illustrated by Betinho and Alex above.

Violence and Impunity

In Nova Cidade, everyone I talked to knew someone who had either ‘disappeared’ (supposedly killed by police officers on or off duty) or been shot by the police. During fieldwork, I went to the funeral of a widely loved woman called Isabela. She had been an engaged political activist. For years, she had worked together with a group of women from the favela to fight police violence. Vera’s daughter had been killed together with 12 other young people from Nova Cidade. A group of people had gone together to a suburb for a barbeque. According to a police involved in the killings, a so-called death-squad took them for bandidos and murdered them. Together with other mothers of the victims, Isabela had spent the past years fighting to get the members of the death-squad convicted in court. Above all, she had struggled to find her daughter’s body to give her a proper funeral.
With time, the intelligence sector of the Military Police identified the kidnappers as police officers from the Military Police and a few ‘detectives’ that were part of an extermination group, killing alleged drug traffickers from poor areas around Rio. The police have, since then, killed three of the mothers, supposedly in revenge.

“The police kill people who testify against them. And the police have friends!” William told me the first time I met him. A former law student, around 30 years old at the time, he had been hiding constantly for about a year after having witnessed the police killing of two boys, Maycon and Robson, 15 and 16 years old. It was generally known in the favela that the police and ‘their friends’ were looking for William. It is also common knowledge that those who testify against the police and/or press charges notwithstanding threats of police retaliation get humiliated in court. “If you, as a parent to a child that has been killed by the police, go to court, they will mock you, make fun of you, and humiliate you. They treat you as um maluco [a lunatic]” Robson’s mother said, when she explained to me why she did not press charges against the police officers who killed her son.

William had nevertheless decided to testify. The story he wanted to tell was this: He had been standing by the bakery next to the southern favela entrance when he saw two boys on motorcycles being stopped by two PMs (Polícia Militar). As the boys slowed down, they were hit by a bullet that went through the back of the neck of one of the boys, and through the head of the other. William saw the boys die immediately. He shouted: “Watch this everybody, look what they have done, witness this!” He then ran up to the two police officers and screamed at the PM, who had fired his gun “What on earth have you done?” The officer did not answer, but instead, began searching the bodies for anything that could connect the boys to the traficantes:

They found nothing. Nothing! No guns, no drugs or anything. Do you understand, they were innocent, had nothing to do with bandidos. (…) The police, the one who had fired, looked desperate when he realized that, he put his hands above his head and started rocking, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth... Above the bodies, you know, he was almost crying. In 10 minutes, the place was crowded with at least forty police officers. The chief of police in charge, started to threaten people standing in the street watching the spectacle. Above all, the boss, but also other police officers started to harass people (…) we saw how they tried to plant two guns on the dead bodies. I told them the truth, that we had seen everything.

There were at least 10 witnesses to this event. The police threatened all of them right after the shootings. Maycon’s aunt and William were the only two who took the decision to testify against the police. Both of them were approached by police officers who declared that they were “dead already.” Ever since that day, they live under threat from the police.
After some time, William was officially given witness protection. In isolation, he was prohibited to work and to call home. As he worried for his mother’s life, he eventually decided to contact her and was thrown out of the program as a consequence. Right after the incident, before William got into the witness protection program, he did not dare to stay in his mother’s house but slept at Tau’s. Tau recalled how William had walked around the tiny room they shared. “He went completely crazy. Who wouldn’t be? It became too hard to be with him. People are afraid of being with him. They know that the police are looking for him. No one wants to get shot…” The police officer who shot the young men was at first convicted to 6 months in prison and then released. The other officer spent few months in prison before he was released. “They did not even inform me or Maycon’s aunt that that they were out!” William told me in 2011. At the time, the two police officers were working the same area again.

The extra-legal death sentence of William did not only work to scare him, to drive him mad from the social isolation imposed on him through the witness protection program, it also fractured his world by making friends and former contacts refrain from seeing him, due to their fear of being associated with a witness in a police trial. Impunity accomplishes more things than one. It maintains criminal networks within state institutions, as is commonly known, but it also works to fragment the social fabric in ways that William’s experience exemplifies.

Interlocutors and friends in Nova Cidade told me that in order not to be killed by drug dealers, police officers residing in the favela have had to move to other neighborhoods, or conceal their identities. I was told that the officers who concealed their identities left for work in the mornings dressed as ‘ordinary workers’ with their uniforms hidden in a bag. They could never show up in their own neighborhoods in uniform, never let their washed uniforms dry outside, or do anything else that would reveal their occupation. If they did, it would endanger not only their own lives, but also the lives of their whole families.

I do not have the statistics of how many individuals in Nova Cidade actually did work in the capacity of police officers, but I mention this talk about them since it contributes to the sense of not knowing but of suspecting and of fearing that people might be different from what they appear; people close to you might actually ‘be’ the state. Such a suspected presence appeared in some conversations in terms of a risk of the individual police officer of being punished by the faction, as above. However, at the same time, some of the young men in the favela that I spoke to revealed that they secretly dreamt of becoming members of the special police force, BOPE, which indicated that this link to the state, and to its power, was also attractive. This point will be exemplified in the next section.
BOPE: With License to Kill

While the administrative division between the civil and military branches of the police has existed since the colonial period, the military government in 1969 subsumed all the country’s police forces under a single command. During this period the police received special training in the application of torture and special death squads were formed to crush any opposition to the military regime. These death squads were the precursors to the special forces of today, ROTA of São Paulo and BOPE in Rio, which are among the most infamous of these groups (Larkins 2015:62).

Founded in 1973, BOPE units are known for using extreme violence and for killing with no legal consequences. In contrast, the units are celebrated for their success in raiding and ‘cleaning’ favelas while ‘spreading, violence, death and terror’ and ‘leaving bodies on the ground’ as their funk anthem goes (see also the introduction). This anthem has been re-mixed and exists in many versions on for example YouTube, often with accompanying images of skeletons, ghosts and black, dead bodies. BOPE use funk as a ‘cultural’ weapon. By means of the music, they seemingly try to communicate directly with young people in the favela.

Equipped with the most advanced and modern weapons technology of all police units in Rio, BOPE are designed especially for favela combat. They make out the official response to the failings of the conventional forces. They are thus constructed as a radical break from other forms of policing, but the image of surgical, uncorrupted law enforcement cracks the moment you enter the social landscape of the favela. In Nova Cidade most residents that I talked to still view BOPE as inherently corrupt, which is made evident to people by the fact that they often drive to the favela entrances and ‘ask’ traffickers for money before invading. When they do invade, traffickers are thus aware and have time to disappear. BOPE and their Big Skull vehicle were the singular phenomena that favela residents - young and old - told me that they fear the most. Stories circulated about the torturing of young men in Nova Cidade, and about the plastic bag that BOPE officers use while interrogating and suffocating alleged traffickers (see also Larkins 2015), often in front of their girlfriends and family members, who also get tortured in search for information.

However BOPE’s expert training, the of image of them as uncorrupted professionals using legitimized violence, and the idolized portrayal in both mainstream media and popular culture, also seems fascinating for some of the residents in Nova Cidade.

When I got to know Beto (16 years old), he worked for his drug-dealing uncle. Since he was a child, he had dreamt of becoming a military police within the Special Forces. Beto whispered that the drug dealers would kill him if they knew what he really wanted to become as an adult. His father was in the military and had not seen his son for years. He was very im-
pressed with his father and talked about the hard training and the difficult tests you have to pass in order to join BOPE. You have to go through what is widely acknowledged as one of the most difficult training processes on the planet, and Beto’s admiration was unmistakable. During their training, he said, recruits go through a radical transformation, from men to warriors who “bring death to death itself” (see Larkins 2015:70). Central to Beto’s account was the idea that BOPE was clean, not corrupted. The only way to get justice, he said, was through violent yet fair police methods. This is echoed in BOPE’s portrayal of themselves as guided by rules and codes, in contrast to traffickers who are portrayed as “savages” incapable of discipline and emotional control.

This “violent yet fair” is central to my analysis of youth and sovereignty in Nova Cidade. Many people across Rio’s urban spectra of class and residence support the brutal behavior against poor, black people and consider it a police and military “right (see Caldeira 2006). A perverse irony of democratization, as Caldeira describes it, lies in that police violations might be in accordance with the expectations of citizens frustrated with the inefficacy of the justice system, and who cannot believe in the possibility of a justice system based on equality. Consequently, the violent methods of the police end up satisfying people who have learned to interpret police and military violence as efficiency. This view is at the core of the logic of in/security (see Penglase 2013, 2014), reinforced by the fact that even those from the same social group as the majority of the victims of police brutality – the poor favela residents – have learned to see the police that kill as fulfilling their duties and enforcing the “rights” of the poor, providing them with security and justice (see Caldeira 2002, Goldstein 2003).

One day I was waiting at my neighbor’s barraca for BOPE to leave the favela, when they showed up outside the kiosk. They pointed their rifles at us for the second time that day. Everyone in the kiosk froze. We had not heard a sound. BOPE walked two by two at a time, as always, in order to cover for each other. When the first two passed us and stopped to eye us, we had time to observe them back. Dressed in black from top to bottom, with bulletproof vests on top of their uniforms, they looked huge and intimidating. Their badges – a skull crossed by two guns and a knife – were visible. The police officers were sweating heavily; their faces were pale. They seemed tense and on high alert. When the second pair of police officers went by, they closely examined each one of us. When they finally moved on, we kept quiet for a little while until we were sure they were gone. “That was crazy!” Elisa said and continued, “Exactly when we were talking about them, they showed up. Hannah, did you see how handsome he was, the black guy?” Tia Hilda laughed convincingly. “He was the hottest thing I have seen in quite some time.” Taú asked me if I had noticed how “high” they were. According to him, they were all high on cocaine.
BOPE and bailes

The traficantes in Nova Cidade paid different police units, including BOPE, to keep away during the bailes, a poor guarantee since they would regularly invade anyway. As I will elaborate below, rumor had it that the police got more money than the artists who came to do shows. In what follows, I will further illustrate the social and economic dynamic of the complex animosity of the armed wing of the state and how it relates to funk and its practices.

“Did you just pass them?” a girl about 13 years old asked me when I sat down next to her on a staircase leading up to the old police station. She was referring to BOPE. When they had occupied the favela some years earlier, the police were installed here and had kept two police officers “on watch” a whole year, after which they eventually withdrew. People still joked about the weakness of the two lonely police officers, stationed on trafficker turf. Zaki, Tau and eight funk artists recently moved in and made this space their own. “Yes…” I answered the girl curiously. “And they allowed you to pass?” I nodded and looked at her. She took my hand softly and placed it over her heart “Do you feel it? How fast it is beating? When they passed me, my heart began trembling.” Wanderley, one of my neighbors, was suddenly standing in front of us. He was holding his son, Cleiton, by his hand. “They wouldn’t let us pass,” Wanderley declared with a tired voice. “I need to bring Cleiton to school.”

Fifteen minutes earlier, Tau and I had been walking up the street that runs by the old police station, when four members of BOPE appeared ahead of us. As usual, they were pointing their machine guns at everyone they passed, including us, when we got closer. Not to be viewed as “suspicious,” we had to continue walking straight towards them. When we were standing right in front of them, they surveyed us closely. It felt like a very long time, but the inspection only took a few minutes. Before they continued walking, they informed us that we were not allowed to continue in the intended direction and that was why we now sat waiting outside the old police station.

BOPE had been in Nova Cidade every day for a week. People said that they had come to get money from the traficantes, as they often did before bailes. This Saturday one of Brazil’s most famous hip-hop groups from Sao Paulo was coming to perform, and a huge baile was going to be organized, as advertised on posters hanging all over the favela for weeks. Even though few people actually listened to hip-hop, this group was special, and my friends had been talking about their show for a long time. The traffickers organized and paid for the party. They had asked a few funkeiros to sing before and after the show. Tau, Betinho and a few other funk artists had intense discussions about how to deal with the fact that only a couple of the funkeiros had been asked to perform, and thus that only a few would get paid.
Would the police come back the next day or not? Most importantly, would they come during the show? People we talked to wanted to go and see the show but said they were afraid of police invasion. Getting money, not fighting drugs, was the alleged reason the police kept coming back, day after day. Rumors even contained the details of this economy: The hip-hop group scheduled to play this Saturday would get 20,000 reais (about 6,100 US dollars), and the police would be paid 50,000 reais (approximately 15,300 US dollars). When speaking to my neighbors about this, I learned that the bandidos could not agree on everything the police asked of them, not every time. If they did, there would be no limit to how often the police would come and harass them, or to how much money the drug dealers would have to give away to the police. People already complained that the bandidos spent more money on the police than on social activities in the favela.

This is how Tauú explained to me what happens when BOPE come to get money:

They arrive at the entrance with the caveirão. They shoot in the air to say “we are here.” They contact the traficantes on the radio. Then they send a negotiator to the praca [square]. The bandidos also send someone, someone who isn’t really a bandido but who works closely with the traffickers. They negotiate for a while. If the police aren’t satisfied with what they are offered and the bandidos refuse to give them more, the police invade. The police and the traffickers start firing at each other. To escape, the bandidos run in different directions. The police always spread out in groups all over the favela. They point their rifles at everyone and move quietly... Always dressed in black. If they want money from the lower part of the favela, they usually keep to the lower part. If they want money from the upper part, they usually don’t come here [the southern part of the favela] at all.

This time however, the police had been lingering in both the lower and upper parts of Nova Cidade for many days. The night before, sounds of explosions had kept people in both parts of the favela awake. In between the sounds of firecrackers and rattling gunfire, the place was cloaked in silence. No music was played, no voices were heard, and the church next door was empty. Even my neighbor’s annoyingly barking dog was silent. Police officers dressed in black were hiding in corners and on rooftops. When I woke up in the middle of the night, I noticed a few police officers standing extremely still and silent in the shady corners outside my room. From my roof, police officers were shooting straight down into the street, aiming, I suppose, at suspected drug traffickers. I did not see any, but I could hear their hushed voices and their furtive steps.

The next morning, I walked down the stairs to have coffee with Tia Hilda and Dudoo. It was still unusually quiet. Tia Hilda was not singing or talking to anyone until she saw me. When she did, she smiled and jokingly said “Ay não, minha filha! You just missed BOPE!” She pretended to be holding a
rifle that she now pointed at me. “BAM, BAM, BAM!” she laughed. “Were you not afraid?” I asked. “No, what do I have to fear? Let them come in here if they want to. I have nothing to hide. Qualquer coisa [whatever happens] I just hide in there.” Tia Hilda pointed to the refrigerator covered with shining JESUS-stickers placed in one of the corners below the shelves where she kept her liquor. It had a little space behind it, which was where Tia Hilda felt safe when the police were around. When the sound of fogos reached us again, Tia Hilda looked at me and calmly said, “Esquenta a cabeça, não. Só Deus. Só Deus [Don’t worry. Only God, only God].”

Dudoo was as always sitting backwards on his special, homemade chair, leaning his head on his huge arms. Today even Dudoo seemed stiller than usual. When he saw me, he said in his soft voice that BOPE had been there earlier. They had shouted at him from the corner leading to the main street. They had ordered him to move from his chair and to stay inside. “Don’t stay in the streets today, you hear?” Tia Hilda shouted from the kitchen.

A few minutes later, Taú came to pick me up. Zaki was already waiting for us at the old police station. The otherwise lively pathways and alleys seemed empty. When Taú and I walked towards the old police station, we stuck closer to the walls than usual. Most people we met did the same. People walked quickly without stopping to chitchat. Firecrackers were set off close by. Every now and then, Taú stopped to ask people in the street if they knew where the police were. What had they heard and where had they last seen the police?

A traficante standing on one of the street corners holding his radio told us that the police were now in the northern part. At the same time, a man who Taú knew casually hurried by. He hushedly informed us that the police had ordered everyone in the housing projects to leave while the police raided their homes. Taú and I continued walking. Suddenly, we found ourselves in the middle of a group of heavily-armed drug dealers. They seem confused and distressed, but were also joking and laughing. Unlike the police we had met earlier in the day, they seemed fairly disorganized. Dressed in shorts and sneakers, some of them kept running while at the same time smoking joints and drinking beer. Others were standing still, discussing where to move next. Taú assured me more than once that it was good to be where the drug dealers were. “They run from the police, remember? The bandidos are not where the police are! It’s a cat-and-mouse game. The police and the traficantes run in circles. It is good to be where the traffickers are… Until they finally clash with the police.”

During that day, I stayed with Taú, Zaki, a few other funkeiros, activists and rappers in their old police station. They were discussing the forthcoming event and whether to perform as a collective or as individual artists. Even though not everyone had been asked by the traffickers to sing, some of them wanted to show people in the favela that they were united as a group. Now
and again, shootings were heard, both close by and at a distance. Rumors reached us that, so far, two young traffickers had been gunned down by the police in the northern part of Nova Cidade. In the afternoon, when the sun sank in the West, the favela seemed a little more at ease. Firecrackers were still heard, but further away.

Extended periods of police presence in Nova Cidade created a tense yet deceptively calm atmosphere. People did what they had to do, at a slower, yet more effective pace. The children on my street would usually go to school if shootings were not occurring exactly there or somewhere very close. The same was true for people going to work. If there were shootings very close by, people would wait inside until it was safer. Few stayed to talk to each other on the way, or hung out in the streets as they used to. Older people, like Tia Hilda and Dudoo, would stay at home. In the evenings, the streets were emptied. The bars closed earlier than usual or they never opened. After dark, most people stayed inside or right in front of their own houses. These were measures of security in a profoundly insecure space.

When the big hip-hop show and the baile finally took place, thousands of people of different ages gathered in the outdoor space called “the sand,” where big parties were occasionally organized. To people’s great relief, the police did not invade during the baile. They saw this as a success for the drug dealers and the community as whole. The traficantes – through their negotiations, residents said – had managed to keep the favela safe throughout yet another great dance and music event.

Concluding Notes

In this chapter, I have expanded my ethnographic engagement with the political context of funk in the favela and revealed how the state is associated, in both violent and non-violent forms, with youth and social life in a particular place. State power operates in relation to both funk and sexuality by rhetorically linking them both to a state-and order-threatening violence. Key to this governmental logic is the securitization of sexuality in which the imagery and the lyrics of funk, from the sensual to the erotic. By extension, the notion of human re-productivity in the urban margins emerges, not as a problem of health or even morality, but as an issue of security.

Funk and funk parties are condemned in Brazilian political discourse, yet, at the same time, it is increasingly being recognized that the cultural expression of funk has both political and economic value for the state. For example, by funding a yearly funk parade, which allows “clean” funk to gain visibility in more prestigious areas of the city, the state has made efforts to include the favela in a marketing (or branding) strategy. “Favela culture” is
thus an asset to the tourist industry and to Rio’s aspiration to become a global city, attracting international investments.

This dual state approach to the favela is not as new, as the social and political dynamics of the globalizing city suggest. State interventions have typically been justified in terms of reactions to pressing “problems,” while a number of special government programs have been dedicated to the “social inclusion” of favela inhabitants. In the chapter, such a historicity of the state in the urban margins revealed that state presence works as a pendulum, creating alliances, degrees of progress and expectations at certain times, only to disappoint, “betray” and strike with violence at others. The lack of opportunities for education and health-care today are absolutely central to my interlocutors’ sense of being betrayed by the state.

What is new and also symptomatic of a time of globalizing Rio is the government’s seeming impatience with or dismissal of social programs, a fact that influenced me to conclude this chapter with a discussion about direct and overt police violence. It is a constant topic for discussion and source of fear among residents in Nova Cidade and it is at the core of their sense of being both insecure and of realizing or hoping for the state’s “capacity to secure” a politically exploitative and productive ambivalence that I have consistently referred to in this dissertation as “in/security.” Young men in the favela see police jobs as a legitimate source of income and also claimed that violent police methods are justified, and women I met revealed that the power and resolve of the police, even if brutal (or perhaps because of it), are also exciting or attractive. Nevertheless, everyday interactions with the police play a great part in the experience of real insecurity, which most often ends up legitimizing the sovereign power of the faction rather than combating it. Funk and the bailes are the ultimate arenas for such “fighting.”
Chapter 7.
Conclusion: Social Life Through Favela Funk

In the last decades, Brazilian governments have made public security and the war on drugs a political priority. An important part and well-known practical feature of such policy has been police forces “cleaning up” the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, urban areas where approximately 2 million people live, and where the residents are significantly younger than in other parts of the Rio metropolis. These areas have increasingly been militarized and conflicts between local drug factions, militias, and police forces now constitute the context of the everyday life of their residents. The young have to deal with the uncertainties of growing up and living under poor, unequal, insecure and sometimes very violent conditions.

Such brutalization of the urban periphery has been paralleled with the emergence of funk music, both as an immensely popular cultural expression in the favelas proper, and as a commodity in national and global markets, reaching audiences far beyond favela boundaries. While funk is currently used in the branding of Rio, such as in the inauguration festivities of the 2016 Olympic Games, to attach an image of joy, rhythm and sensuality to the city, it is also a practice that in Brazil is associated with drugs, violence, gang criminality and the alleged unbridled sexuality of the urban poor. This apparent paradox has been the point of departure for this study. It is easy to detect and to criticize the discrepancy between the ways in which the state values funk in relation to capital and the global markets of tourism and investment on the one hand, and in relation to its citizens in the urban periphery on the other. What I have strived for here, however, has been to go beyond criticism and to understand how the former influences the latter, in other words, how the quest for selling Rio globally is linked politically and economically over time to the violent containment of its peripheries. Funk, I have argued, contains the key elements of that whole story.

The main objective of the dissertation has been to explore what funk music enables us to see of the social life of one of Rio’s favelas, to which I gave the name Nova Cidade. In my ethnographic engagement with that place, I found that funk and bailes, in turn, posed critical questions concerning violence, sexuality and sovereignty, which consequently became the key con-
cepts of my analysis. I have strived to write a political anthropology of funk to be able to explore what the music and its associated practices in a context of violence and contested power relations can reveal about the everyday lives of young people, and how they are linked to (and de-linked from) families, friends, neighbors and authorities of different kinds. The study has thus not aimed to provide a full account of a particular musical genre, nor has it dealt very much with the formal characteristics of a particular style of music. Instead, funk has been the starting point for a broader endeavor of understanding social relations (including violence and sexuality) and the clashing claims to sovereignty of local drug dealers and state authorities.

For reasons to do with such overlapping sovereignties, I have not approached the favela with a conventional state-people model of power and resistance. Instead, I have examined notions and experiences of fear and suspicion as produced by a drug dealing faction as well. The government of the local faction in Nova Cidade combines surveillance and overt violence – or the threat of it – with financial aid, the distribution of gas and medicine, and consensus-building efforts around community projects. The drug dealers are also – and this is central to one of the arguments of the dissertation – the suppliers and guarantors of entertainment, distraction and pleasure in the favela, through the funding, promotion and protection of funk parties. The popular support that many of the local drug dealers’ enjoy, and the faction’s entanglement in official state and party politics, thus renders limited a possibly more common analysis of state and people, oppression and resistance, governance and governed. Modeling differently has been the theoretical contribution of this work. In this concluding chapter, I will continue by briefly recalling and summarizing my model before I outline the “methodological contribution” and provide a condensed account of favela funk and everyday life under the heading of my “empirical contribution.”

Theoretical Contributions

Funk both symbolizes aspects of favela life and inspires them. From a local point of view, the three-stranded strategy that I have discussed in this dissertation – funk as lens (a certain vision), fun (the sphere of pleasure and excitement) and fight (the struggle for identity and autonomy, but also for the right to have fun and to be able to continue perceiving life through music) – is a model for ideas for change as well as a model of social phenomena. On another level, and this is where I like to join those who have added complexity to Geertz original formulation (see Borofsky 1994), funk is the object that I have selected in my study in order to identify the intersection of contentious politics and the soft, social and sexual, and it is the means by which I have pursued my inquiry. In Nova Cidade during the time of my fieldwork,
funk guided the lives of my interlocutors and it guided me, albeit under different conditions and with different aims.

In some academic accounts of favela life, funk and bailes emerge primarily in relation to drug traffickers and violence (e.g., Goldstein 2002, Perlman 2010 and McCann 2009). In others, funk is romanticized and taken to be a resistance movement, either by seeing the drug traffickers as potential revolutionaries (Sneed 2003), or by focusing the discussions on funk lyrics that treat subjects such as social marginalization, poverty and belonging (see Fascina 2009, Carvalho Lopes 2012). These lyrics belong to a genre sometimes referred to as conscious funk, popular in Rio during the 1990s, but that few young people in favelas today listen to or produce. In contrast, I have explored the most popular funk genres there and beyond, namely putaria (sexually explicit lyrics) and proibidão (by law prohibited lyrics considered to instigate violence). Therefore, my less romantic take resonates with the reality of the young in Nova Cidade. As illustrated in this dissertation, everyday life for young people in Nova Cidade is characterized by what I have referred to throughout this dissertation as in/security – it is an uncertainty and vulnerability linked in a complex way to armed actors’ alleged attempts to make the urban peripheries safe and secure.

Favela inhabitants suffer from economic hardship, unemployment, a non-functioning school system, limited access to health care and insecurities connected to the fear of male violence against women, brutal police raids, and violent trafficker behavior. Yet I have illustrated that violence and the threat of violence – in this case by local drug dealers – also produces a sense of security and predictability, albeit in a wider setting of insecurity. It turned out that the pleasures of music and dance and the displeasure of experienced or anticipated violence were inseparable from the shared experiences of living in Nova Cidade, and further, inseparable from what I have referred to in this dissertation as community. In my account, violence is not the antithesis of community but part of it.

Because the notion and morality of violence was key to my theoretical approach, I have also worked to conceptually rethink sexuality. I have attached a clear political dimension to it by arguing that the ways that sexuality in Nova Cidade are communicated and used as a tool by power and against power is simultaneously a social strategy for emancipation and for reactionary control of women and/or male competitors in business and in politics. I have discovered that sexuality in funk was neither confined to the private, domestic sphere nor could it be seen as merely an expression of commoditization in the public sphere. Instead, I have found that sexuality in this context emerged as a social strategy, beyond trafficking and prostitution and beyond the commercial value of funk.

A contribution made by this ethnography is a broader understanding of the ways in which state authorities and the drug-dealing factions compete for
loyalty and power among favela youth. Funk and bailes are in many ways central arenas for these competing, albeit not always mutually exclusive, claims for sovereignty. They are used by the faction to promote, sustain and legitimatize its power, and they are used by the police who continuously combat the organization of bailes, either by prohibiting them completely, impeding the organization of them, or by allowing them if they get enough cash from the drug traffickers.

For my interlocutors in Nova Cidade, the state not only represents repression in the form of police and military violence. Young people also expect, and demand, to get help from the state for example in terms of education, infrastructure and healthcare. These expectations are, however, seldom met satisfactorily, which leave the young people that I got to know in Nova Cidade with a constant feeling of deception and disappointment. As I have elaborated in this study, issues associated with marginalized youth, such as work, education and sexuality, are increasingly talked about in terms of security. Security as language – that is securitization (see Chapter 6) – materializes in government policies, in church practices based on religious morality and in police brutality. I argue that the state construes youth sexuality in the favelas as a security issue, which is manifested through the ways that state officials perceive of, talk, and act in relation to funk and its practitioners.

In Chapter 6, I describe the complex relationship that favela residents have to the police. Albeit much feared and perceived of as the main source for insecurity, some young men that I got to know in Nova Cidade dreamt of being recruited to the special police force BOPE. The uncorrupted image and glorification in Brazilian mainstream media and popular culture of BOPE, in combination with the infamous training processes that they are said to go through, together with the advanced weaponry that they carry, were some of the factors that altogether made BOPE seem attractive to some of my interlocutors. This is not to say that the fear of BOPE was insignificant. On the contrary, BOPE was perceived, by all of my interlocutors, as the biggest source of brutality and violence. Yet, it points to the ways in which state power is both intimidating and, in some ways, attractive, at the same time.

Many scholars, such as Penglase (2009, 2014), Misse (2006), and Arias (2006), tend to view the drug dealing faction as a homogenous group, separate from other favela residents. In Nova Cidade, the drug dealers are residents, and treated and spoken of much the same as neighbors talk about, and treat, neighbors. Depending on their personalities, their position within the faction and their relations to family and friends, some of the traffickers are very well liked, others are strongly disliked, and still others are despised and admired at the same time. In my view, “the gang,” whatever it turns out to be in different contexts or places and at different moments in time, evades
any clear-cut definitions. Penglase (2009) has further argued that drug traffickers in the favelas use random violence to create disorder and insecurity (see also Arias and Rodrigues 2006), and that they are manipulative, violent and deliberately unpredictable. Although the drug dealers in Nova Cidade in some ways are unpredictable – to give an example, it is not always easy to predict who will be accused of being an informant and what kind of punishment that person will get – in contrast to the authors mentioned above, I argue that in many ways the drug dealers also induce a sense of predictability and that the continuous organization of bailes plays a huge part in this phenomenon.

Studying funk and bailes has led to an understanding of the ways in which power is based, not only on brute force and violence, but also on the provision of pleasure and excitement. There is ambiguity at play here on many levels, not the least in relation to the ways in which young people in the favela understand, interpret and relate to state authorities and to the local drug dealers. Both “the state” and “the faction” represent violence and oppression, hopes and expectations simultaneously.

This seeming contradiction may also be the reason that funk artists, as well as drug dealers, in their relations to the surrounding society, sometimes cooperate actively with politicians who want to mobilize voters inside the favela.

Methodological Contributions

My methodological approach links up with this theory, since my concern for how funk could be used as “an optics” in an ethnographic engagement sent me back and forth between theorizing and favela fieldwork. To focus on funk, and to use it as “an optics” turned out to be an invaluable way of collecting data both inside and outside of the favela, in different social spheres, and across class lines. Funk led the way in terms of both creating contacts within and without the favela, and guiding the choices for topics of discussions, while also giving a direction to the conversations. Funk also served as a gateway to an understanding of the fears and silences that inform everyday life for many favela residents. As an ethnographic tool, funk enabled me to dig deeper into and to – at least in some ways – capture the relationships that shape and influence the lives of young people.

Further, funk as “an optics” made it easier to gain insights into the influence and organization of favela life related to the local faction and other actors, such as the police. Bailes (and funk) have thus served as essential platforms for an understanding of young people’s relationships to each other, to local faction members and to different forms of state power. Because the funk scene comprises so much of social life – both fun, and fight – they are
crucial platforms for approaching the different ways in which young people deal with competing claims for sovereignty.

Methodologically, the conscious choice of favela funk as “an optics” helped me to establish an interpretation frame guided by young favela residents’ own experiences and perspectives. This practice-oriented ethnography of the everyday life in a favela, including the intense nightlife of the bailes, helped me to make sense of people’s communication, their problems and their joys, fears, fights and silences.

As I have discussed (Chapter 2), my choice of, and dependence on, my two key interlocutors Taú and Zaki, influenced not only how I got to know people in Nova Cidade, but also colored the ways in which I interpreted different kinds of situations. This dependence was, however, part of a strategy that I found unavoidable – and in most cases created more opportunities and insights than limitations. An atmosphere of fear creates cautiousness in relation to others, an experience that I shared with residents in Nova Cidade, and which unavoidably restricts and constrains this kind of anthropological fieldwork. I struggled to compensate for the reliance on my key interlocutors by systematically establishing relations with people in different social settings and by gradually building new personal ties through “walking and talking” – and by taking part in the fun at the bailes. This ethnographic method – with favela funk as “an optics” – essentially turned out to be a fruitful research strategy.

Empirical Contributions

The main empirical results of the dissertation can be summarized in relation to the more specific and subordinate research questions (Chapter 1).

The first of them reads thus: *In what ways does the practice of funk work to organize and distribute pleasure, excitement and sheer fun, and is it possible (and relevant) to position the tenet of this practice beyond the political and economic functions of funk music?*

The bailes in Nova Cidade, like most other social events in the favela, are funded by the local drug traffickers. They organize the bailes together with sound-system owners, funk producers, DJs, and others in the favela. However, the widespread idea that traffickers organize bailes with the sole purpose of making a profit from selling drugs is exaggerated. They are also a medium for distributing pleasure, excitement and fun, contributing to the legitimacy of the faction while reproducing the image of the drug dealers as tough men. Those I spent time with in Nova Cidade saw the drug traffickers as the major – or only – providers of fun and excitement in the favela.

I often heard young and old people in Nova Cidade comment that one of the reasons that the drug dealers organize bailes every so often is because
those who work for the local faction, especially those on higher positions, cannot leave the favela without running the risk of being killed by the police or by rival faction members, hence they have to bring the party to where they are at. As illustrated above, and throughout this dissertation, funk and the bailes are deeply intertwined with political and economic aspects of life within, and beyond, Nova Cidade. Not only do drug traffickers make a profit out of funk, but the police, who the traffickers pay money to keep away during bailes, do also. The bailes are also important economies in themselves, as favela inhabitants – especially those who already have businesses in the favela – sell food and products outside the quadra where the bailes are organized. As described in Chapter 4, some funk artists, DJs and producers in Nova Cidade are able to make money enough to sustain themselves from funk, but they are few. Political interests intersect through funk and at the bailes. For example, it is common for politicians to approach famous funk artists to attract young voters. Local politicians campaign at the bailes. Disputes between traffickers who struggle to gain power are now and again played out at the parties. Furthermore, the threat of police raids is always present in the context of bailes in Nova Cidade.

Nevertheless, my ethnography reveals that it is relevant to see that the practice of funk is also something in itself, something beyond the tenet of the political and economic functions of funk music. In the quite violent context that funk clearly is part of, the fun and excitement associated with funk emerged as the initial and most dominant aspect of the music. For many young persons in Nova Cidade, funk is what makes life pleasurable, or to put it differently, it is what makes life endurable. Above all, funk and bailes are ways for people to engage with each other. I have stressed that the funk parties are central nodes for social and cultural production, and that they, for many people in the favela, are the center stage of social life and action, and consequently also an arena for different types of power conflicts.

For many of the young men and women in Nova Cidade that I got to know, funk encompasses their entire social world. Many of the young persons that I spent time with during fieldwork longed for the weekend baile – and prepared for it – all week. The baile is where many people go, young and old, to see their friends, to be seen, and to get the latest gossip, both through talking to people and by listening to the funk tunes. For many residents in Nova Cidade, the baile is the only place where they can go to watch big shows, party and have fun together in the company of others. All in all, it is where people gather to get a break from the otherwise exclusionary regime of both labor and citizenship.

The second of my subordinate research questions is as follows: In what circumstances, times and places does the pleasure of funk inspire social and political struggles?
As described throughout the chapters in this dissertation, the most popular funk tunes in Nova Cidade are about sex, and belong to a genre called putaria. Other popular songs belong to the genre called proibidão (very forbidden); these lyrics are prohibited by law and are often about life in the local faction. Whether putaria or proibidão, at least two versions of the same song are usually made, one “clean” version that can be played in more affluent areas, and one “dirty” version that can be played in favelas and other working class areas, or suburbs. Inspired by Aretxaga (1993), I argue in this dissertation that the “obscene,” or the sexually explicit, can be seen as resistance expressed through favela funk. The symbolical embrace of the way someone is classified by power can constitute a form of resistance, not only to power, but also to the very categories by which the conflict and the violence are perpetuated. By confirming the stigmatization by the powerful in conscious acts, the powerless – in this case the funkeiros/as – alter the name of the game, ridding the opponent of his fantasy of antagonism.

The added complexity of a public and explicit sexuality in this case suggests that the subject of this resistance is not always and everywhere inside the favela, and the object of its power is not always and everywhere outside the favela boundaries. What I mean is that those who are opposed to funk, as I have illustrated, are often well-to-do Rio residents, politicians and other representatives of the state, but they are also to be found within the favelas, especially among Evangelicals and older people. Moreover, there are young persons engaged in funk outside of the favelas, in more affluent areas around Rio, for example, who also identify as (or with) funkeiros/as.

As described in the introduction and Chapter 4, to be engaged in funk is, however, morally ambiguous for women. When women go out to have fun in the same way as men, they are often blamed and punished by family members and others for abandoning their children, for not taking care of the household, and for acting morally inappropriate. Many of the male DJs, producers, MCs and dancers who I got to know considered it morally wrong for women to perform sexually explicit funk – which is the kind of funk many of the young women that I spent time with, dreamt of producing. It was common for Evangelical mothers in the favela to prohibit their daughters from engaging in funk.

My study points out that for young women to be engaged in funk can be seen as a fight against traditional ideas about appropriate moral female behavior. Especially young women who have been – and/or still are – prohibited by their Evangelical mothers from going to the baile and from doing and dancing funk themselves seem to view and use funk as a means of protesting against not only the strict rules and restriction of the churches, but also against their own mothers.

Despite harsh criticisms and condemnations from many different actors on different levels of society, young people in Nova Cidade continue to pro-
duce and listen to sexually explicit and forbidden funk, seemingly as a fight for their right to have fun, to be sexual, and to express themselves. In a way, the condemnations seem to become rather part of the excitement.

The third subordinate research question is: How can one approach sexuality as a social phenomenon beyond the private sphere, trafficking and the commercial value of funk?

I have argued that sexuality in funk is neither confined to the private, domestic sphere, nor can it be seen as an expression of commoditization in the public sphere. Instead, I argue that sexuality in this context should be seen as a social strategy, beyond trafficking and prostitution and beyond the commercial value of funk. For the young interlocutors of this study, sexually explicit funk lyrics and the sexual practice of the baile are not primarily, as discussed earlier in this chapter, about making money. The few funk artists who can make a living out of funk are the exceptions to the rule of funk as a social movement rather than as a business only. For young men, sexually explicit funk is clearly about establishing an image of oneself as a “real man” and about making a profit out of this imagery. For men, public displays of their masculinity through overt, sexual acts are not only permitted but also encouraged.

However, some of the young funk singers and dancers in this dissertation challenge ideas about typical male, or macho, behavior by, for example, swaying their hips and rotating their bums in a way considered female or gay by many people in the favela, young and old. The young men in this study use virility and promiscuity in order to create and sustain their trademark as sex symbols in the favela, both off and on stage. Sexuality thus emerges as a social strategy, albeit contested. Sex, like violence, is a social strategy employed in certain contexts to send messages of strength and resolve to those who observe and who can tell others. Appearing more sexual and sexually interested than you actually are is socially rewarding for men.

In Chapter 4, I introduced Tatiana, who wrote all her songs about her relationship with the popular funk artist MC Anderson. Tatiana and her friend Claudia saw funk as a means to freedom; it was through funk that they saw themselves becoming adults. In my ethnography, sexuality emerges as a social strategy both for young women who want to be free to express themselves, to enjoy life and the funk scene in the same way as young men, and for those young women who protest the practical control that Evangelical mothers have over them. By embracing and reproducing the stereotype of promiscuity, these young women aim to escape the confines of families or elder generations. The act of becoming pregnant, in this interpretation, is also the act of becoming an adult woman. It is through the practice of sex that this escape can be achieved. Through the symbolism of funk lyrics and performance, the young women can turn this fact of favela life into a social strategy. Nevertheless, as a consequence of entrenched gender inequality,
young women often end up in new, suppressive relationships. Again, sex as a social and political strategy is more relevant than sex as either business or mere intimate pleasure.

The fourth, and final, of my subordinate research questions reads: *When, how and by whom is funk used as an instrument of political and social control in Rio de Janeiro?* I end by differentiating the influence and power of the faction, the churches and the state. Depending on who the current favela boss is, the bailes in Nova Cidade will have a different character. Some bosses – such as one of the bosses who was in power during my fieldwork – are considered “party bosses.” They invest heavily in the bailes and make them into great events by, for example, bringing famous artists to perform (not always funk artists although funk will always be played after and before). They make sure that fireworks explode into the late night air, that the “vibe” is good, and, occasionally, that drinks are for free. “What would the favela be without the traffickers?” as Taú said in the middle of a huge baile during my fieldwork. Without the drug traffickers, he meant, there would be no fun, and no excitement or locura (craziness, madness) in the neighborhood.

As I have illustrated, the local faction in Nova Cidade uses funk and the bailes to legitimate its power. Through funk lyrics about shooting informants, rival faction members and the police, they instigate fear and in/security in the favela. They also strive to monopolize sex by being the only providers of fun and excitement in Nova Cidade, and by constituting a threat to those men in the favela whom they see as competitors when it comes to pretty girls. Many of the young male funkeiros that I have introduced in this dissertation expressed the fear of being seen as “gay” for acting soft and dancing in a way perceived of as “female,” behavior, which many of them did anyway. At the same time, they were also afraid of being seen as too much “male,” as they dreaded what the drug dealers might do to them if they got more attention from young women than the drug dealers did.

The drug traffickers in Nova Cidade pay the police to keep away during funk parties. It was widely assumed by my interlocutors that if the drug traffickers had to pay the police money not to raid the favela during a certain baile, the drug traffickers would not be able to invest as much in that party as they would do otherwise. In this way, the organization of bailes not only legitimizes the power of the faction but also delegitimizes the power of the police. Funk in Nova Cidade is inseparable from the performative field of struggles between state sovereignty and drug faction sovereignty. It explicitly delegitimitizes the violence of the state, and it legitimizes its opposition in the process. In other words, funk emerges and becomes meaningful to young people in the favela, as part of a fight against a sovereign perceived of as – at least in part, and at certain times – illegitimate.
“Those funk bailes are the devil’s work,” the pastor from Assembleia de Deus, a former drug dealer who held service in the room next to where I lived, proclaimed. Pastors in Nova Cidade, and all around Rio, criticize bailes, and urge their audiences to avoid them. It was common during the services that I attended in Nova Cidade for the pastors to speak of social misery and moral decay related to drinking alcohol, drugs and prostitution, commonly related to funk. The Evangelical churches see young people as victims, and symbols, of moral decay. At the same time, from their perspectives, young people, emerge as potentially violent perpetrators (see Munoz-Laboy et al 2011). As my interlocutor, the former funk star and pastor Rico states (Chapter 4), funk songs and bailes are believed to instigate violence and encourage youth to take drugs and to become prostitutes. Controlling the imagined “violent sexuality” associated with funk and favela youth is a priority for leaders of both Catholic and Evangelical sects. This attitude is very much in line with the way that state authorities view and act in relation to young people in the favelas. Pastors in Nova Cidade whom I interviewed saw young people as potentially violent, vulnerable and ignorant and expressed their wish to turn them into productive citizens.

The Evangelical organizations thus link funk to the many social problems of Brazil. Evangelicals in the favela argue that at the bailes, people drink and dance without obeying to the strict rules of moral prescriptions of the Bible. The bailes are seen as the root to all social and individual problems. At the same time, it is important to stress that many funk fans are in fact Evangelicals, a fact which points to the elasticity of social boundaries in the favela. Some go to church now and again, others not so often. Quite a few of the young women whom I spent time with had, however, been forced to choose between funk and bailes on the one hand, and their parents and the churches on the other. Others wrote funk songs and practiced choreography secretly in dark corners, so that their Evangelical family members would not find out (like the Provokers in Chapter 4).

In this dissertation, I argue that state representatives treat the sexuality of favela youth as a security issue, and I call this the securitization of sexuality. In the discourse and policies of Brazilian politics, the sexuality of young people in the favelas is construed as inherently violent, dangerous, and threatening to both the moral and political order. During fieldwork, I could follow recurrent discussions in newspapers, on the radio and on TV with psychologists, social workers, writers and politicians discussing the “dangers” with bailes. One main problem under consideration was that young girls got pregnant at the dances. In 2001, the then Secretary of Health in Rio de Janeiro, Sérgio Arouca, stated that the “sex dances” and orgies taking place at the bailes could be directly linked to an increase in pregnancies among girls in the favelas. In 2016, Albertina Duarte, a gynecologist and
professor who works as the coordinator for a state run program concerned with the health of adolescents’, expressed similar concerns.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I have described how young people in the favela commonly used the concept proibidão to refer to both sexually explicit songs and those about, for example, killing rival faction members. State authorities seem to perceive of putaria and proibidão as equally dangerous expressions. Although the law does not prohibit putaria songs, both genres are condemned and censured. As a consequence, two versions of the same funk song, as mentioned, are usually made, one “dirty” version played at bailes and circulating in favelas, and one “cleaner” version that can be played on the radio and on TV.

By labeling something a threat to security, a phenomenon is dramatized as an issue of supreme priority that then needs to be dealt with in urgency. Securitization thus legitimates the circumventing of public debate and democratic processes. The securitization of sexuality, I argue, is a key instrument in the state’s pursuit of its sovereign right to rule. At the same time, in the context of efforts to both construct the place and sell it as a globalizing city, funk has also become an important part of “the branding” of the city of Rio.
Sammanfattning på svenska

Favela Funk

*Att vara ung i Rio de Janeiro's urbana periferier*


Under de senaste årtiondena har brasilianska regeringar valt att prioritera säkerhetsfrågor och "kriget mot droger". En vid det här laget välkänd del av detta har varit polisens försök att "rensa upp" i Rio de Janeiro's favelor. *Favelas* är arbetarklassområden där omkring två miljoner människor bor och där invånarna är betydligt yngre jämfört med andra delar av staden. De här områdena har i ökande grad militariserats och konflikter mellan gäng (facções), milis och polis utgör en del av vardagen för många favelabor.

I den här avhandlingen använder och betraktar jag funk både som a) ett metodologiskt verktyg med vilket jag försöker förstå socialt liv och olika maktrelationer b) det som organiserar samvaron, något livgivande, framför allt för ungdomar och c) ett slagfält där sociala och politiska konflikter och gränslinjer manifesteras. För många unga människor i Nova Cidade är funk tätt ihopkopplat med både existentiella, sociala, politiska och ekonomiska aspekter av vad det innebär att vara människa.


Därefter sätter jag funk och bailes i relation till det i antropologi något urvattnade begreppet ”community” (kapitel fyra). Jag börjar med att undersöka funkens centrala roll för människor i Nova Cidade och hur den hänger ihop med en känsla av tillhörighet. Funken är förknippad med glädje och att ha kul samtidigt som den också utgör en arena för våldsamma konflikter, till exempel mellan olika gängmedlemmar och polisen. I den här avhandlingen analyseras inte våld som någonting som kommer utifrån, utan som en integrerad del av ”community”, på gott och på ont. Jag visar i kapitlet hur funk och bailes knyter ihop annars separata sfärer av politik, sexualitet och ekonomi.

Nästkommande kapitel sex handlar om favela-ungdomars relationer till, och erfarenheter av, den brasilianska staten. Här plockar jag upp en tråd från kapitel tre där jag beskrivit hur staten historiskt agerat i favelas och illustrerar här statens närvaro i favelas i en mer samtida kontext. Mycket av statens agerande handlar om åtstramningar i välfärdssektorn och säkerhetsfrågor. Jag beskriver bland annat infrastrukturprojekt i favelas och går också igenom hur favelabors tillgång till sjukvård och utbildning ser ut. Liksom mycket tidigare antropologi om ”staten” handlar också detta om hur människor med lite eller ingen tillit till statliga institutioner pratar om, förhåller sig till, och sjunger om ”staten”.


I mitt avslutande kapitel sju återkopplar jag till etnografins huvudteman och pekar på varför våld, säkerhet, suveränitet och sexualitet och är relevanta teman i en avhandling som handlar om favela-ungdomars förutsättningar, villkor och relationer genom funk-musik.

Avhandlingen ger flera bidrag till forskningen. Teoretiskt bland annat genom omtolkningen av tidigare modeller för förståelse och analys av fenomen som ”gäng”. I min studie pekar jag på hur ”gäng” konstrueras både genom hur ”staten” pratar om och agerar i relation till fenomenet och, i det här fallet, genom hur favela-invånare betraktar lo-

**Metodologiskt** genom att använda funken som ett prisma och därigenom fånga flera aspekter av socialt liv i ett sammanhang där det politiska, ekonomiska, sociala och kulturella möts i olika skärningspunkter. Den här praktiskt orienterade studien av vardagslivet i en *favela*, inkluderat nattlivets *bailes* och fester, har hjälpit mig att närma mig en förståelse av hur människor delar både problem och glädjeämnen.

**Empiriskt** genom att gestalta de komplicerade relationella förhållanden som utgör unga favelabors vardagliga existentiella villkor. Man kan vara religiös, narkotikalingre, funkartist och politisk aktivist samtidigt. En lärdom är att inga klara gränssnäckningar kan göras mellan de olika rollerna och tillhörigheterna. Kyrkans och statens makt sammanfaller ofta genom hur likartat de pratar om ungodomar och också genom hur de agerar i relation till unga människor. I min studie belyser jag hur den unga generationen försöker navigera i den komplexa sociala värld som är deras, och hur statens och gängens makt och inflytande på intet sätt utesluter varandra.

Jag visar också och diskuterar det illustrativa i att unga manliga funkartistar upprätthåller en bild av sig själva som ”riktiga män” genom sitt agerande både på och utanför scenen. De marknadssör sig själva som sexsymboler och som betydligt mer våldsamma än de i själva verket är. Framförallt sex, men också våld, diskuteras i avhandlingen som sociala strategier som tar sig i olika uttryck och får olika konsekvenser för unga kvinnor och män. Unga tjejer i favelan använder funk för att försöka utmana utställningar om ett socialt accepterat beteende för kvinnor och som ett sätt att försöka bryta sig loss ifrån religiösa och kontrollerande föräldrar. På grund av inrotade och ojämlika genusstrukturer slutar detta dock ofta med att de hamnar i nya våldsamma relationer.

References


