Organizing Culture in Slums - The Dynamics of Precarious Spaces

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Abstract: The poverty and precarious nature of slums make them the most common targets of social programs and cultural practices. Such practices involve the transformation of space, whereby each change obliges social structures to adapt. This work is particularly interested in the organizing practices of cultural projects as mediators for such spatial transformations, which are qualified in terms of symbolic, political and technical transformations. In the fieldwork performed in a favela of Rio, the most visible transformation was the reinforcement of local identity, which is produced especially by organizing practices of culture registration and sharing of meanings and values.
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The law is ruthless only for slum people
And protects the scammer
He should be the first in your list,
get on that, officer!
Bezerra da Silva ("Se Liga Doutor")

1. INTRODUCTION

Slums are arguably the most evident and outrageous symptom of inequality. More than just a social “problem”, today slums are also recognized as a feature of urban settings shaped by modern development. The poverty and precarious nature of these areas make them the most common targets of social programs, including the introduction of cultural practices. These practices are often designed to serve as anchors for reurbanization and social projects and are a current trend in many cities around the world (Santos, Kessel and Guimaraes, 2004). In many countries of South America, poor areas are often the focus of cultural projects and organizations, indicating certain assumptions about the potential of such projects in changing the dynamics of inequalities.

Although favelas contain a large number of organizations of different types, they continue to be viewed through a prism of what is not there: historically defined by what they lack or what they are not (Observatorio de Favelas, 2009). As explained by Zaluar and Alvito (2006), because of their precarious conditions, they end up being associated with shortage, absence, emptiness. But the Observatório de Favelas (2009)—a social research organization dedicated to research on favelas and urban phenomena—also produced a report based on a seminar called “What are favelas, anyway?” carried out in 2009, which argues that these spaces should be defined as what they are, and should be recognized according to their socio-territorial specificity.

The introduction of a new cultural practice involves transformations of space, which is understood here as "an indivisible, integral and contradictory set of systems of objects and systems of actions, not taken in isolation but as a unique scenario in which history unfolds" (Santos, 1996, p.63). In this sense, each change arises from and generates new changes, because "the spatial forms also oblige other social structures to transform themselves, striving for adaptation, whenever they cannot create new forms" (Santos, 2008b, p.45).

This work is particularly interested in the organizing practices of cultural projects as mediators for such spatial transformations, which are qualified in terms of symbolic, political and technical transformations. More specifically, the organizing practices addressed here are assumed to be coordinated collective actions in the social context, which may allow the agents to appropriate their social space, leading to the spatial transformations mentioned above. The problem under investigation concerns modern Brazilian cities, where the formation of slums is a common phenomenon, and the progress of the abstract space of capitalism silences the voices of the “others” who inhabit these favelas. In such territories, the installation of cultural organizations may reveal an attempt to give dwellers their voice back.

Our study will evaluate how organizing practices encompassing a variety of cultural initiatives in precarious spaces (in this case, a Brazilian slum) mediate the effects of cultural organizations in the transformation of space. The fieldwork to be presented in this article was conducted in a specific favela of Rio de Janeiro: Morro do Cantagalo/Pavão-Pavãozinho,
Brazil. This article contributes to the understanding of the cultural organizing processes in these spaces, considering the increasing depth and range of actions performed both by the Brazilian government and civil society, which produce multiple transformations within the confines of the *favela*.

2. SPACES, ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES AND CULTURE

*Slums as precarious spaces*

Lefebvre (1991) explains that every ‘space’ is socially produced. Spaces are continuously transformed by human action, and contain in themselves social relations which occupy and transform the space. Every space contains much more than a system of objects, as it is the outcome of a set of operations undertaken over time, whereby each operation changes the space previously transformed. In Lefebvre’s accounts, the growth of productive forces is the reason for the growing transformation of urban landscapes. Accordingly, Milton Santos understands space as social fact (Santos, 2008a), and, similarly to Lefebvre, emphasizes the dual function performed by space: “it defines itself by the set [of systems of objects and systems of actions], but is also determined by it; space is simultaneously producer and product, determinant and determined.” (Santos, 2008a, p. 163).

Space, thus, encompasses power relationships, means of production, physical settings, social relations, etc. Building on this foundation, we believe that space may be an important category that substitutes previous traditional categories of organizational analysis, such as system or environment, which could lead to a reductionism of the social phenomena (see also Vieira, Vieira and Knopp, 2010; Vergara and Vieira, 2005). This assumption applies especially to the analysis of precarious spaces, which due to their nature are constantly changing spaces, and demand the use of categories that reflect the mutual determination between subjects and objects of a social materiality (Lefebvre, 1991; Santos, 1996, 2008a, 2008b)

An important feature of precarious spaces, especially in Brazil, is the presence of *favelas*. Approximately 20% of the world’s population lives in *favelas* (Delicato, 2007). In Brazil, the IBGE census shows that the population living in *favelas* is growing three times faster than the urban population (Coelho, 2004). According to Denaldi (2005), in most of the metropolitan centres around the country, 20% to 40% of the total population now resides in *favelas*. The spread of Brazilian *favelas* started in the late nineteenth century, when a slum formed the first urban settlement that received the name of *favela* in the city of Rio de Janeiro, at the *Morro da Providência*. In the early twentieth century, *favelas* began to expand and became “visible” (Oliveira, 1985). Pino (1998) argues that problems like inflation, unemployment and high rental prices were the main causes of this social framework. Aggravated by the migratory trend towards urban centres, the growth of *favelas* has accelerated and by 1950 7% of the total population of the city of Rio de Janeiro lived in *favelas* (Oliveira, 1985).

Although considered by these authors as an immediate solution for the housing of urban poor, against a backdrop of rising land prices, *favelas* were defined as a major urban problem because they were expanding—a social “issue” that needed to be tackled (Oliveira, 1985). According to Valladares (2000), in the early twentieth century the issue of *favelas* started to be discussed by journalists, doctors and engineers who showed concern for the future of the population, triggering a major debate around what had to be done about them.
And recently this debate has taken on even greater significance, inasmuch as the favela has become the symbol of another serious social issue: the lack of public security. Taking advantage of the absence of the state in these spaces, the parallel power of drug trafficking has prevailed in most of them. Today, many public policies and private initiatives pursue agendas aimed at changing the spaces of favelas to provide better quality of life for the dwellers and encourage harmonious integration with the rest of the city.

**Organizing Practices of Cultural Organizations**

In modern times, organizations are the protagonists of social relations, and individuals are drawn to organizations in order to satisfy a great range of social and personal needs. Traditionally, organizations are defined as a group of individuals who pursue shared objectives. However, Marsden and Townley (2001) caution us against the common mistake of reducing an organization to its intrinsic strategic objectives, extracting the social relations from its operation. Aiming at an understanding of organizations beyond their formal boundaries, we share the views of Dale and Burrell (2008), who see organizations within the social processes that construct and are constructed by space, suggesting as one meaning of organization “a social form or institution that facilitates collective action” (Dale and Burrell, 2008, p.33). We focus here on the cultural organizing practices constituted by collective action.

A procedural perspective of organization is especially required in the domain of Civil Society Organizations. The values associated with voluntary organizations are much more substantive and less associated to strategic/instrumental goals (see Lacerda and Vieira, 2011), and as such there is no sense in subordinating organizational structures to a given aim. Organizing practices can result in different structures: projects, networks or formal organizations, etc.; and the focus adopted here is on the social relations produced by the collective coordinated actions, related to cultural activities.

As social phenomena, organizing practices should be seen also in the light of the concept of social practices. As Schatzki et al. (2001, p.1) proposes, the study of social practices can solve the issue of relying only on individual or invisible entities to identify what distinguishes a collective group from outsiders: “to insist that the bedrock of all order and agreement is agreement in practice is to cite something public and visible, something that is manifest in what members do”. Focusing on the public and visible features proposed by the authors, the analytical identification of organizing practices should be embedded in the nature of such practices—in this case, the cultural activities.

In order to better define the cultural organizational practices, we will consider the different ways of understanding culture. As proposed by Said (1993, p. xii), culture can be understood as “all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social and political realms and that often exists in aesthetic forms.” Based on this understanding, we adopt the categorization presented by Williams (2001, p.41) for the three senses of cultural analysis: ideal, whereby culture is an aesthetic process for achieving the absolute values of human perfection; documentary, consisting of the registered body of intellectual and artistic work; and social, which anthropologically describes a certain way of living with shared meanings and values. These three aspects will be explored as the different results of a variety of organizational practices.

The last sense of culture (way of living) is particularly reinforced, for example by Saraiva and Carrieri (2012), as a characteristic of the organization-city, wherein it is necessary
to understand culture as a metaphor in which the dynamic of the population defines their place. Said (1993) defends also that culture can mitigate damage from an urban existence that is both aggressive and brutalizing. The next section evaluates how favela dwellers can resist wicked capitalist expansion through cultural organizing, exemplifying the contradictory existence of favelas. This link between organizational practices and culture is justified also by the previously presented approach by Lefebvre (1991), who maintains that the actions of groups are also the mediators for the transformation and production of space (p. 77).

Terry Eagleton deconstructs traditional dichotomies involving culture: idealism and naturalism, material and spiritual, organic determinism and autonomy of spirit; he defends that the historical materialism of culture also encompasses the spiritual sense of transcendence (Eagleton, 2000). In addition, the author defines the role of culture in political action with a social dimension: “Culture is a kind of ethical pedagogy which will fit us for political citizenship by liberating the ideal or collective self-buried within each of us” (p.7); “culture as the arts may be the harbinger of a new social existence” (p.24). The fact is that many cultural manifestations may be seen as organizational practices, in the sense that they may be manifested in terms of coordinated collective actions, in other words, organizational practices may mediate this liberation, which might be considered the ultimate aim of culture.

The relation between Culture and Transformation of Space

The role of cultural organizations was already acknowledged in previous works (see e.g. Lacerda, Fountoura, Brulon & Celano, 2012). In fact, according to Goulart, Menezes and Gonçalves (2003, p.124), cultural organizations are expanding, making “the space of culture an important factor in the quality of life of society” (our translation). Our focus on cultural organizational practices broadens the range of cultural activities that, particularly in the case of spaces as precarious as favelas, may not always be manifested as a formal organization. Cultural organizational practices account, thus, for the social role of culture, which will be investigated here.

Each cultural organizational practice is also a potential force for change of the territory. This is the conclusion reached by Observatorio de Favelas (2013) in a project called Solos Culturais (cultural lands) which mapped out the existing cultural activities in five different slums in Rio (Rocinha, Alemão, Manguinhos, Cidade de Deus and Penha). Favelas are frequently regarded as devoid of culture. Nevertheless, the project found more than eight hundred recurrent cultural activities in these five slums. The activities were classified in cultural groups: music, performing arts, visual arts, video, literature and fashion. On average, for every 640 favela dwellers, there is one organization promoting local cultural manifestations¹. The findings in this research are full of examples of how art can transform, re-signify or rebuild a space, where streets become stages and squares are places for performance. Creativity is their tool for overcoming the lack of proper cultural equipment for their art. In Cidade de Deus, for example, one of the sites previously used by drug traffickers to dump dead bodies, was the place chosen to promote a storytelling activity called “London Tea”, where people would sit at a table decorated with British adornments and tell their stories about the favela. (Observatorio de Favelas, 2013)

The relationship between culture and development is indeed a key topic in contemporary discussions about development, both within academic and practical experiences (Loiola and Miguez, 2007). In general, this relation is explored on two fronts: the economic perspective, and those who adopt a broader view. While the former focuses more on the
(economic-) cultural industry than on the manifestation of culture itself, the latter analyzes the substantive aspects involved in the valorization of culture.

Celso Furtado argues that “development policy should used to enhance the process of cultural enrichment” (Furtado, 1984, p.32, our translation). The author argues that this cultural enrichment—a higher priority than financial enrichment—is achieved through the social appropriation of technical and technological means, ultimately aimed at the valorisation of culture. In line with Furtado (1984), Santos (2002; 2008b) explains that the culture protects local, regional and national societies against threats of deformation from the outside. Santos (2008b) cautions that, as a result of a process of imposing elements of mass culture, the development model of hegemonic countries is followed by others, without considering the (anthropological) cultural aspects of each country, which would have led to an appropriation of the local model as the key for development. In this sense, cultural practices, which strengthen the shared meanings and values of a given people (culture in the anthropological way), work as a barrier against the simplistic implementation of a unilateral development project.

3. METHOD

Data Collection

In the fieldwork, we have chosen to investigate a favela located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, encompassing the communities of Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho, located in the southern (and affluent) zone of Rio de Janeiro. The whole complex houses around 10,000 residents squeezed into an area of only 128,000 m² (IPPRio, 2011). Initial observations during the process of collecting data showed a series of precarious situations, such as lack of basic sanitation, exposure of trash, abuse of the elderly, etc. in the community.

Cantagalo was selected as a site of the study because it is, currently, one of the favelas with the largest number of cultural projects in the city of Rio de Janeiro, thanks to its location between Copacabana and Ipanema, making it the target of high-profile projects, such as Criança Esperiência from TV Globo. From this community, emerged one of the most celebrated samba musicians in Brazil (Bezerra da Silva), who denounced many of the social oppressions occurring in favelas. Many of the very conditions sung about by Bezerra da Silva also stimulated the creation of various organizations founded by the dwellers themselves or by external movements, aiming to provoke a social change in living conditions of the Cantagalo area. Consequently, morro do Cantagalo has become one of the most thriving slums in Rio de Janeiro in terms of cultural activities.

We recorded field observations and interviews with four residents and eight active members in cultural organizing practices of the Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho communities. The respondents were selected in an effort to provide a representative cross section of the cultural organizations currently found in Cantagalo, according to the groups proposed by Observatório de Favelas (2013) in the project Solos Culturais. Each interview took one hour on average.
The analysis also considered other academic publications and media stories concerning the Cantagalo Community (e.g., Cunha, 2010; Velloso, Pastuk and Pereira, 2012). After the introduction of the recent public security program for favela pacification (UPP)—whose aim is to regain power over the territory of the favelas—many studies and investigations were initiated in the favelas that have received UPP units (more details about the program in Barbosa, 2012; Tierney, 2012). These other accounts contributed to a much more comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics in the community.

**Data Analysis**

The data were analysed according to the explored theoretical categories, identified through their respective indicators, following the method explained by Vieira (2004). After full transcriptions of the interviews, the relevant passages were systematically structured according to the criteria of each category. The categories and their indicators are shown in Table 2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition of Conceptual Categories</th>
<th>Operational Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizing Practices of Cultural Organizations:</strong> social production of coordinated and collective modes of cooperation organized around specific cultural manifestations (Dale and Burrell, 2008; Williams, 2001)</td>
<td>Collective actions aimed at developing absolute values of human perfection</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Collective actions for producing/promoting registered intellectual and artistic works</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Collective actions which reinforce shared meanings and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relation between Culture and Transformation of Space:</strong> cultural initiatives that lead to the material transformation of territory (Eagleton, 2000; Furtado, 1984; Goulart, Menezes and Gonçalves, 2003; Santos, 1996)</td>
<td>Construction of a local identity</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Promotion of political citizenship</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Appropriation of technical means</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Analyzed Categories

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Cultural manifestation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants 1 to 4</td>
<td>NA (dwellers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 1 and Member 5</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 2</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 3</td>
<td>Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 4</td>
<td>Literature and Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 6</td>
<td>Performing Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member 7</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 1. Interviewed people
4. THE ORGANIZING PRACTICES OF CULTURE AT CANTAGALO

One of the characteristics of Morro do Cantagalo (Cantagalo Hill) is the abundance of cultural organizations, probably associated with its location in an affluent zone, near the beach with easy access to public transportation, which led one of the interviewees to characterize it as “a super privileged space... I mean, in terms of location, right, and ... And even in cultural terms” (Member 1). On the website of the official government social program UPP Social (Territorios, 2012), 13 out of 22 formally registered organizations in that territory are cultural organizations, and the absolute number is likely to be much higher than that. One of the interviewees mentioned a previous survey pointing to a much higher presence: “Two years ago MUF [Museum of Favela] conducted a survey which found there were 56 projects [...] most of them cultural projects” (Inhabitant 2). The pacification program that started three years ago, decreasing the criminality and violence in the area (UPP), is enabling this number to rise every year thanks to the increasing exchanges with other territories.

Given the variety of cultural manifestations concentrated in Cantagalo, there is a variety of organizing practices related to culture, sometimes going beyond the formal limits of particular organizations. For example, combined activities, such as Espaço do Saber (space of knowledge), are organized by different cultural organizations that share a common local hall (provided by the government). Other cases of projects or programs with shared resources are the CRJ (government youth program that incorporates projects for young people), Criança Esperança (which manages the facilities of a public school and its classrooms), MUF (created to provide a discussion forum for different NGOs), etc. Multiple examples of sharing facilities, actions and programs are observed in organizing practices, which can exist across formal organizations.

One of the collective practices promoting artistic work is the project Casas Tela (Canvas Houses), organized by the Museu de Favelas (MUF, as it is called in the community). With strong identity grounding, the project aims to create and tell the history of the favela through paintings on the walls of houses. Other than documenting artwork by local artists, it reinforces the shared meanings and symbols of the favela.

Probably the most disseminated types of organizational practices in the community are the ones related to music and other performance arts. References in this area include activities promoted by considerably famous organizations like Afroreggae, Monobloco and HarmonBaranto. The dissemination of such organizations outside of the favelas is an indication that they are having some impact, but we will leave the question of whether this impact is perceived inside the local community for next section. In any case, the community seems to be bonded to musical manifestations, and this is not surprising considering that some genres, such as samba and funk music, were born in the slums.

Also under the umbrella of performing arts, what is surprising is the variety of dancing styles: hall, jazz, tap-dancing, hip-hop, ballet, etc. However, the existence of musical genres that are traditionally unfamiliar to slum dwellers suggest the inclination of some projects toward aesthetic values, rather than shared local concepts: “it is so beautiful to see them singing good music. So, this is an advantage.” (Member 2). The question of what is good music only makes sense when culture is viewed as a search for absolute values. Harmonicanto, for example, has recently tried to establish a partnership with a German maestro to invest in the musical talents of participating children.

This search for absolute value can also be seen in dance. The group called “Dançando para não dançar” has existed in the Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho communities since
1995. One of their teachers, an inhabitant of the Pavão Community and also a student in the project, explains based on her own experience how consistently the ballet dancers improve:

Through the project I got into college with a full scholarship, [...] I am, attending the fourth term now, studying dance … I intend to keep it that way, to graduate, continue to teach, dance… I'm still having lessons, making presentations too…” (Member 6).

She also explains that she went to Berlin, Germany, for an internship: “I had an internship there for two weeks, I really liked it, and I gained much recognition there, a lot of experience, because it is a school very different from here, learning there is very different from here (…)” (Member 6).

The search for the absolute in the way shown here could be used for colonizing purposes, but it is also a seed for the promotion of education. Education is promoted especially by those organizations inherently created for that purpose (“to encourage them to read, to encourage them to write, to show them that it is not so difficult, it also encourages them to draw and also to understand other forms of reading”, Member 6), but also by the other groups who acknowledge the importance of working with the individual as a whole:

The structural basis is music, but over time we realized that just the music would not lead anyone anywhere. [...] then we gave them reading, storytelling for children starting from two years of age, in addition to music. To generate later interests in books, because at the age of twelve, thirteen years old we don’t see it. [...] And then, along with that, other workshops were born, workshop on contemporaneity, workshops on the Portuguese language… to see if we could provide them better, bigger content... (Member 1).

As a result of the cultural affluence in the Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho communities, these places are full of artistic works, revealed through the collective organizing practices. There are also a lot of painters and some graffiti artists in the community, which leave their mark on walls. Handicraft production is also widespread, and can be represented, for example, by Corte e Arte, a cooperative for seamstresses that manufactures clothes, purses and bath clothes, stamped with designs that emulate the community. From diary observations, culture is manifested in Cantagalo Hill by its residents especially through organizing practices of shared meaning, and the next section will evaluate the type of change promoted by these activities.

5. CULTURAL ORGANIZING PRACTICES PRODUCING FAVELA SPACE

The analysed favela is not a homogeneous territory, since no territory could ever be. And considering the precariousness of the space, in some places precariousness is more evident than in others, as reported by one of the dwellers: “There are two realities in here. One is the reality of good houses, where there is sanitation… and the other [is the] hidden one, where people have nothing” (Inhabitant 2).

Some representatives of cultural organizations demonstrated a strong link to the place: a “concern for understanding the context in which they are embedded” (Member 6). In these cases, the observable effect was the construction of a local identity by the residents involved in cultural activities. Following the explanation of several cultural practices in the community, a member of an organization evaluated the witnessed changes:

in two years I’ve seen almost everyone I’ve worked with changing from one year to the next in their attitude toward the community and in relation to their colleagues and
the desire to promote activities or not. [...]. Nowadays they have a much stronger relationship with the community as a whole (Inhabitant 4).

With similar motivations, the aforementioned project Casas Tela (MUF) promotes artistic work with strong identity grounding. Most MUF activities are aimed at preserving the history of the *favela* of Cantagalo, as explained by one of the residents, which also participates in another organization: “[MUF] tells the story of the *favela*, the story here of Cantagalo. Retrieves everything from the past and puts everything on paper. There is always an event or exhibitions with old photos” (Member 5). On the main pathways up Cantagalo Hill, paintings can be seen on the walls of houses portraying the story of the favela, and explaining how the community has developed over the years. The report of one of its members, who is also a resident, depicts the central idea of the project:

> Because all this tells a story. You see here? It is telling the story of the Copacabana Fortress. Yeah, when there was that Sergeants’ Revolt, the soldiers were all here, [...] so it tells about the time that they were not allowed to build brick houses, people in *favelas* could only build wooden or zinc houses [...] here is the story of water because it was a little water tap, and they had to refill cans to bring water home. And while people stood there waiting to fill the can, they sang, it was the appearance of *sambas*, got it? (Member 4)

There is a biased reason why this project is appreciated by them: “that’s where we praise our memory, our history, our way of living, walking, talking, communicating... and [we praise] all this together, congregating with all the other institutions.” (Member 4). In the cooperative of seamstresses, Corte e Arte, the members produce T-shirts and purses with designs that represent the community in some way. Most of the drawings, which represent shacks or clusters of people, were created by the dwellers themselves, and others were made by artists outside the *favela*, trying to represent the reality of the community.

For some of the cultural practices, beyond the aim of bringing culture to the community, the promotion of political citizenship was a strong concern. Alongside the idea of giving the dwellers art education, no less important was giving them a voice and the ability to manifest themselves and fight for their own rights.

The organization Harmonicanto, for example, states as their mission: “to empower children, teenagers and their families, driving them to believe in participation as a force for individual and social change, which may lead them to full development” (Harmonicanto, 2013). It shows that even before the aim of providing those children with music education, their education as citizens is pursued.

The same can be seen in the group Dançando para não Dançar. The group name explores the polysemous verb “*dancar*”, which can mean either “to dance” or “to turn out badly”. As explains a ballerina that works on the project: “we even have small meetings to talk about these issues, about the community, about the project, how things are in the community, and also to talk to their parents, families also speak,” (Member 6). The idea that guides their mission is that, through their practices, those organizations can occupy childrens’ free time with cultural activities and prevent children from getting involved in drug dealing. Others dwellers comment, for example, that children that participate in Harmonicanto are the most well behaved children in the community.

Despite this concern with the promotion of political citizenship, a preoccupation with economic growth is also present, although, in some cases more than in others, it appears more as a consequence of the cultural work of the organizations. Corte e Arte, for example, was created with the objective of providing those seamstresses an income, so they could survive.
from their work. But in other organizations, as in the case of Harmonicanto and Dançando para não Dançar, the performed activities in many cases helped the children to acquire a professional skill for making money.

In Dançando para não Dançar, a lot of students become renowned and successful ballerinas, who dance in important ballet companies all over the world. And even those who remain in Brazil and in the community can earn an income from the dancing profession. This is the case of the ballerina we interviewed. As she explains: “Today I'm here, demonstrating, dancing a lot, I have travelled almost all over Brazil with the project, I'm giving classes receiving money for that, I’m attending college now” (Member 6).

With its cultural manifestations, some projects or artistic activities try to give another meaning to spaces, resignifying them. The example of the project Solos Culturais developed by Observatorio de Favelas (2013), where spaces formerly used by the traffickers are resignified, can be found in Pavão-Pavãozinho: a graffiti artist that does graffiti paints over the red “X signs”, which were made by government officials to mark the houses allocated for demolition after expropriation.

Some of these cultural organizations could only exist and act in the community by appropriating their own technical means. This is the case of Harmonicanto. The founder of the project started acting in the community through an outside project that used to teach music to children. As she explains: “this project ended in 2006, and I thought I could not get out, because it had many talented children, and then I stayed, on my own ... And at my own risk ...” (Member 2).

Corte e Arte started in a similar way. One of the seamstresses explained the beginning of the cooperative, which started with

seamstresses who worked also in manufacturing and did not want to work with bosses anymore, because they had small children. They organized it here, together, each one had their machine at home, brought them over here, and began making repairs, taking the service out to do (Member 7).

There is evidence that cultural organizing practices are contributing to the transformation of the territory in many ways. Three indicators underpin this finding: construction of a local identity, promotion of political citizenship and appropriation of technical means. However, it is fair to say that the most observable dimension is the construction and strengthening of local identity, inasmuch as almost all informants demonstrated the importance of these practices to their lives.

6. CONCLUSION

This article shows the importance of focusing on organizing practices rather than on organizations, for two main reasons. First, practices are observable entities, in comparison to the abstract boundaries of organizations. In addition, precarious spaces are many times devoid of formal organizations but this does not imply a lack of organizing practices. At Cantagalo, such practices received different names (project, group, network) and the departure and destination points of the practices are often blurred.

Such practices entwine the three types of manifestation of culture. Collective actions aimed at the development of absolute values of human perfection were observable in manifestations such as the pursuit of beauty in a painting or a ballerina’s search for perfection in her dance. Collective actions of production/promotion of registered intellectual and artistic works are everywhere in the community studied. Walls, T-shirts and recorded performances
register the culture produced in the community. Collective action which reinforce shared meanings and values pervade all initiatives originating within the community, and are evident in the pride of their members and symbols of their local production.

All practices generate transformations in space, some of them stronger than others. Sometimes the effect realized by one of the practices may seem controversial, as in the case of micro-emancipations which pushed the members towards the pursuit of an exterior world, even leading to an outflow of resources from the community. But, even in those cases, the overall benefit of improved education within the community and the development of the abilities and skills of their members can have indirect impacts, such as the appropriation of technical means.

The most visible transformation, however, was the reinforcement of local identity, which is produced especially by organizing practices of culture registration and sharing of meanings and values. It is interesting to note the cultural exchange that favelas are establishing with the “asfalto” (outsiders). Some of the cultural organizational practices promoted by favela dwellers receive attention from people outside favelas, and spread all over the city. Funk music, for example, a type of music produced inside favelas, is a resounding success among young people from the upper classes. And this cultural exchange is also promoted by the pacification policy, which makes people who go into the favelas feel safer.

The benefits of organizing practices for the recognition of otherness and construction of local identity have been reported in other studies. Raposo (2012), for example, analysed a group of break dancers in Favela da Maré, revealing that participation in a urban tribe helps revert the feeling of subordination through solidarity, and restores their pride in a recognized and valued existence: "a way of building alternate identities and performing collective actions that overcome the stigma with which they are associated (Raposo, 2012, p. 336). This network with similar social practices outside the favela (break dancers in other communities) reinforced their feeling of belonging, enlarging their spatial references, in the same way as the cultural manifestations at Cantagalo did.

In order to develop an engaging program for cultural development, a more inclusive state-level agenda must put in place to promote cultural enrichment, according to that proposed by Furtado (1984). We therefore propose that for achieving a meaningful development of favelas and a change in the behaviour of the residents it is necessary to promote a valorisation of culture that takes its cultural actions to a higher level of intervention. This involves breaking down barriers through a massive investment of effort and public programs, in order to take cultural and educational actions beyond occasional interventions, and leveraging the high potential of cultural organizing practices.

7. REFERENCES


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1 Calculated with data from http://solosculturais.org.br/