Formally Informal: Daily Life and the Shock of Order in a Brazilian Favela

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Based on fieldwork in Rocinha, one of the largest favelas of Rio de Janeiro, this paper discusses the formal/informal binary in relation to the city. Ethnographic material illustrates the daily relationships of businesses and lives in this favela and shows that they are clearly enmeshed in both what is usually considered the formal and the informal parts of urban life. Through the work of Beatriz Jaguaribe and Loc Wacquant in particular, we suggest that what is perceived as informal is not just a construction of the formal but also serves as a dangerous basis for policies such as the ‘Shock of Order’. The informal, as the ‘other’ and the ‘unknown’, needs to be better understood ethnographically to challenge the formal/informal binary in the face of the complex hybrid relationships of the contemporary city.

The Ethnography

Some run with hands full of DVDs. Others cover their wooden stalls with blue plastic sheets to try to hide them. Some cry. Some cry profusely. Products lie all over the ground. Some stalls are shut by force. A few vendors, camelões, stand by stoically. The president of the Residents’ Association talks non-stop on his mobile phone. Passers-by stop to watch. Others rush home agitated by the presence of the Municipal Police, the Guarda Municipal. Carmem is upset. Very upset. She complains:

This is just not fair, we are trying to work and the police come and disturb us. I saw people who lost everything. The police took everything! What are they going to do now to earn money?

This was a relatively common event in Rocinha, one of the largest favelas, or for want of a better word, slums, of Rio de Janeiro. The Municipal Police would come along with a few ‘Urban Order’ stewards – officials from the Municipality of Rio – to patrol the popular market. Every visit was charged with agitation, fear, tears, negotiation, and revolt. A few days later after the police visit, however, the market would operate again more or less as before and life kept going on. The market, known as the Camelódromo da Passarela, extends along the main road that links two of the most exclusive neighbourhoods in Rio de Janeiro – São Conrado and Gávea – and neighbours the favela too, so it serves a broad and diverse population. Part of the market was located under a specially built white tent structure that covers the stalls and protects them from sun and rain. There were stalls selling food, sweets, clothes, perfumes, mobile phones, books and a variety of electronics. Customers were also diverse. Some were foreigners on one of the ‘favela tours’, which have been running in Rocinha since at least the early 1990s, others were kids coming home from school in the city, people returning from work in nearby São Conrado, Ipanema, and Copacabana, and other parts of Rio on one of the multitude of semi-privately run vans and municipal buses that serve Rocinha, people looking for good deals in counterfeit bags and clothing; taxi drivers and even military police would often stop there to eat or get a mobile phone or a
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Figure 1. Rocinha from below. (Photo: Moises Lino e Silva)

watch fixed. Some stalls were open twenty-four hours a day, even though the owners would sleep on site and need to be woken up when somebody wanted to buy something during the night. Under the white tent there were also public toilets—provided by the municipality—that carried a charge of one Brazilian real.²

There were metal stalls and wooden stalls, and the latter had their own plastic covers to protect them. There were also people selling products set out on a plastic sheet on the ground. There were food carts at various points and even a person selling plastic flowers who decided to build a more permanent extension to the stall structure using thick metal bars. Further along the same line of the market there were other businesses and food shops, one of them run by a Chinese family that spoke little Portuguese but sold delicious nibbles, called pastéis. Also nearby, there was a Japanese restaurant run by Brazilians which received many phone orders from outside the favela—prices were much cheaper in the favela than in other Japanese restaurants in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro. A home delivery system overcame the problem of those customers unwilling to drive or walk into the favela.

Not far from there, on a perpendicular line, is the beginning of Via Ápia, the busiest commercial street in Rocinha. The police would come less frequently to Via Ápia. When they did come to this part of the favela it was often with the heaviest armed police squad. Via Ápia is filled with important
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commercial enterprises such as the biggest
drugstore in the favela. Indeed a popular
Brazilian bank rented all the ground floor
space of a large building that, people used
to say, is owned by one of the widows of a
former drug trafficker in the favela. It was on
this same street that Marta negotiated a night-
time spot for her food cart selling pizza with
a variety of toppings. It was a business idea
that she apparently took from an Italian fast
food chain that operates in many shopping
malls across Brazil.

Marta bought the ingredients from the
supermarket in the wealthy São Conrado
neighbourhood across the street from the
popular market. The gas used to prepare food
usually came from one of the selling points
controlled by the seller who determines
the price of gas in the favela. There was a
diversity of people eating pizza at her food
cart at night and Marta seemed happy with
her income.

A few months later, she decided to expand
the business. She applied for a bank loan to
help her get started with the shop. The loan
was approved under one of the governmental
schemes that stimulates micro-credit. Marta
was excited. She rented a room in a building
just off Via Ápia. The shop was refurbished
and painted orange; it had a new glass door,
plastic tables and a counter. However, there
were only a few customers there on the
opening day.

Marta said she was not worried about
the lack of customers and that she probably
needed more advertisement for people to
know about the new premises. She gave
people leaflets and asked her friends to
tell their other friends about the new pizza
shop in the favela. Meanwhile, she said, ‘I
will keep the food cart going too so as to
have some guaranteed income’. The months
passed and the shop was never very full,
while the food cart kept doing well. After
about six months, Marta decided to close the
shop and to keep the food cart operating. At
the same time, she started to look for other
jobs, and a few months later she had passed a
public exam and started working as a health
agent in the favela, under a contract whereby
she would be paid by the municipality.

It is uncertain whether Marta is still
keeping the food cart running. She once
mentioned that she missed the time before
the pizza business when her family sold sweets
at their own house; they were profitable,
although it was also a hassle having people
coming over to buy things all the time. As
the pizza shop events happened, the loan was
still to be paid but Marta thought she would
manage. And life kept going on.

The Binary

If one were to consider the relationships
described above using a binary in which
formal and informal urbanisms stand in a
dichotomous position in relation to each
other, would that be useful? If so, to whom?
To say the least, for this binary to work one
would have to greatly reduce the complexity
of relationships that are an inherent and
fundamental part of city life. The argument
in this article is that the formal/informal
binary is increasingly unable to account for
the urban situations people face when living
in a city such as Rio de Janeiro. In fact, the
formal/informal framework has more to
do with a set of power-relations centred on
strengthening the positions of social and
political elites – including planners and
designers – than it has to do with the way
most people think and live the city. More
nuanced understandings for the traditional
categories of the informal versus the formal
need to be adopted if urbanism is not to be
reduced to a shadow of itself.

Despite an increasing literature on the
problem of the distinction between the
formal and informal in terms of the city,
many insist on continuing to use the binary
for planning, design and economic purposes,
to formulate public policy, and even to write
academic texts. For instance the United
Nations Human Settlements Program, in
its 2003 report entitled The Challenge of the
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Slums, tells us that the “informal” suggests a different way from the norm, one which breaches formal conventions and is not acceptable in formal circles – one which is inferior, irregular and, at least somewhat, undesirable (UNHSP, 2003, p. 100). Equating informality with slums, it describes two types of slum, slums of hope and slums of despair. The slums of despair are the decaying minority neighbourhoods undergoing a process of degeneration, while optimistically, however basic, the specially built structures of the informal city are ‘slums of hope’ (Ibid., p. 9).

The UNHSP identifies the main attributes of slums as including: the lack of basic services; substandard housing or illegal and inadequate building structures; overcrowding and high density; unhealthy living conditions and hazardous locations; insecure tenure; irregular or informal settlements; poverty and social exclusion; minimum settlement size (Ibid., p. 11). Indeed, the informal is often defined in terms of the lack of something (see also Barbosa and Silva, 2005, p 24). On the other hand, the ‘formal’ represents order and everything that is under control and legitimate. The UNHSP states that, ‘The urban poor are trapped in an informal and “illegal” world – in slums that are not reflected on maps, where waste is not collected, where taxes are not paid, and where public services are not provided. Officially, they do not exist’ (UNHSP, 2003, p. 6). The message is unequivocal: the urban poor are informal and illegal, and they live in a world not represented on official maps where public services such as the provision of water and sewage are not formally available.

In fact, things are not so clear-cut. Reluctantly including the word ‘informal’ in their book Informal City: Caracas Case, Alfredo Brillembourg, Kristin Feireiss, and Hubert Klumpner of the Urban Think Tank explain their reasoning behind using the term. They say they both embrace and reject the standard definition of the informal: ‘Close up’, they say, ‘patterns begin to emerge and a certain logic – unlike that taught by conventional architecture or planning – can be discerned. We rejected the notion of infinite randomness and assumed that there is a discoverable, as yet unidentified, logic’ (Brillembourg et al., 2005, p 18). For Brillembourg et al. the informal is structured by a set of rules, and what makes it informal is the fact that we do not yet know what the underlying rules are. The implication is that when we do discern the rules, these will cease to be informal environments and become formal. This reference to unknown rules, however, might itself be understood as a result of the attempt to find order in apparent disorder, or the attempt to rationalize what is often perceived as irrational.

Others take a more nuanced view. Rahul Mehrotra favours the ‘kinetic city’ as a term that is not loaded in the same way as the ‘informal’ is. He describes a formal, or ‘static’ city situated within the ‘kinetic’ or informal city. He celebrates the kinetic, whose boundaries are subtly different from the informal which he argues is not perceived through its architecture – as the formal city is – but through its spaces. ‘The informal city would perhaps be seen not as a condition that needs to be remade but rather as a contagious phenomenon that actually remakes and humanizes cities’ (Mehrotra, 2010, p. xiv). Mehrotra argues that the kinetic city has the opportunity to integrate with the world ‘without fear of the modern’, an interesting phrase for the implied relationship between the modern and the static, ‘which aspires to erase the local and recodify it in a written formal order’ (Ibid., p. xii). While Mehrotra could be criticized for perpetuating the very binary he wishes to dissolve, what is most interesting is his turning of the tables between informal and formal with the positive associations with the word ‘kinetic’, and the negative connotations of ‘static’.

Sanford Kwinter points out that there is 100 per cent employment in Mumbai’s Dharavi quarter due to the extreme efficiencies of the informal economies: ‘Although sanitation, water and sewerage represent acutely
serious problems in Dharavi, it nonetheless represents the veritable lungs, liver, and kidneys of greater Mumbai, as it cleans, pre-processes, removes, and transforms materials – and adds value – that are endemic to the economic and material functioning of greater Mumbai and beyond’ (Kwinter, 2010, p.101). Comparing the favelas of Rio with European eco-cities, Christian Werthmann suggests the eco-cities have a lot to learn in terms of the light carbon footprint of favelas (Werthmann, 2008).

James Holston and Teresa Caldeira, too, criticize the language around what they term ‘this urban catastrophe genre’ arguing that the stigma of language like slums ‘squashes people into totalizing characterizations and, in that reductive way, reproduces an over-determination of urban poverty that has difficulty recognizing emergent spaces of invention and agency’ (Holston and Caldeira, 2008, p. 18). It is clear that the language to describe such settlements as Rochina is lacking, perhaps more than the favelas are themselves lacking something.

But the binary remains. Binaries are made possible through a process of reduction. Processes of reduction are a fundamental part of the social sciences, and indeed design. A map, for example, is a reduction of another more complex context. And definitions too are often a distortion of complexity. A common way to define something is often to pitch it against what it is not. In the Middle Ages, for example, it was common to attempt to describe God by saying what He was not. This approach is used by Charles Waldheim in describing the genre of landscape urbanism by contrasting it with the new urbanism. Waldheim does not define what landscape urbanism is, just tells us what it is not (Waldheim, 2009). In this sense, a definition is implied by saying what something is not. By that reasoning, the informal is not the formal city. If the city is not planned, or designed, if it does not have a predetermined form – and therefore its structure unintended by professionals – then it is informal and the ‘other’. Arguably, the so-called informal city existed long before the formal city, although some might say the relationship is not so linear. Matthew Edel for instance argues that one cannot assume a progression from informality to formality in the same way as from tradition to modernity. Also, as he points out, there are good and bad sides to formality and informality (Edel, 1992, p. 69). If daily life is too complex and dynamic to be satisfactorily analyzed by normal scientific methods, people tend to accept that some details have been left out of the picture in our projects and studies. However, what is lost in this process of reduction and to whose advantage is that? These are questions we will tackle based on the ethnographic case above.

First, we should separate the ethnographic material above into two boxes. In one box we will put the elements we could classify as ‘formal’ in terms of urbanism and in the other ‘informal’. So, some people running in a favela with their hands full of DVDs. Formal or informal? Well, one could argue it depends on whether people properly own the DVDs and have a sales receipt to prove they have paid taxes on them. Also, one would have to check whether the DVDs were original or not and under what circumstances they had been sold. Some people cry profusely. Formal or informal? It could appear to be something very informal to happen on the streets. The president of the local Residents’ Association talking non-stop on his mobile phone sounds like something formal but again it depends on whom he was talking to. Now, the police action itself, was it formal or informal? Why did some people cry while others kept quiet and some goods were taken while others not? The police action may seem like a formal activity but Carmem happens to think it is very informal because of the casual way they operated. Marta got a formal loan from a formal bank to sell food in an informal settlement without paying all formal taxes on her business but bought products from a formal supermarket in the
formal city. Into which box would that case go?

The point is that to be able to place events in boxes one has first to have a good idea about the criteria of differentiation. And where do these criteria come from? It is true that to think about more complex events as attempted above makes it harder to judge. However, urbanism often does not concern itself with event-by-event judgment to label what is formal or informal in city life. Rather, it focuses on phenomena at a larger scale, perhaps because the closer one gets to urban life the more complicated the picture becomes. However, more general ideas that, for instance, favelas are part of the informal city whereas other neighbourhoods are part of the formal city seem to carry in themselves enough contradiction to make the model seem biased. Are favelas not filled with what many would call formal urban relations? Why should favelas be seen as informal cities? What are the criteria of differentiation used in this case?

We believe that the answer to these questions is rooted in a set of power discourses often entrenched in the way policymakers, politicians, planners and others tend to think of the city. These power discourses tend to frame the way some people reason about the issues of formality versus informality.

For at least a century, housing policy has been a major concern for those holding decision-making power in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Janice Perlman, in her book *The Myth of Marginality* (1976), engages in the longstanding debate about the situation of favelas in Rio de Janeiro. This is done not exactly in terms of formality versus informality but in similar terms of integration (to the formal city) versus marginality.

Favelas have long been seen as spaces of illegality, criminality, and disease, sometimes all of these and more at once. In this discourse, favelas are places of chaos, where the lack of order is a defining characteristic of the space and immorality is just an expected consequence of this total lack of order. Jorge Barbosa and Jailson de Souza Silva (2005, p. 24) discuss the idea that a favela can be defined in terms of ‘lack.’ They maintain that many people think that a favela can be defined as a place that ‘lacks’ order, sewage, asphalt, and so on. Within the modernist Brazilian project however, the situation becomes even more dramatic. The Brazilian scholar Beatriz Jaguaribe (2004, p. 331) argues:

The favela with its flimsy, insanitary and densely packed constrictions was always the very opposite of modernist urban planning. But even more problematic, the poverty and unruliness of the favela were located at the very centre of the modernizing project, inside the city itself.

Jaguaribe’s point is an important one in the sense that the Brazilian favela appears as the opposite of rational, formal planning, as exemplified, for example, in Brasilia. Brasilia is described by Jellicoe and Jellicoe (1986, p. 324) ‘as much a noble monument to architecture (rather than society) as were the great works of antiquity.’ Unlike the favela, as a planned and designed formal city, *Plano Piloto* in Brasilia cannot be easily modified, or improvised. This intractability is often seen as one of the reasons this planned area has been surrounded by favelas, the residents of which Brasilia depends upon for service. No one knows exactly how many favela dwellers live around Brasilia, or how many favelas surround it, but few can argue that these favelas do not sustain the clean white modernity of Brasilia (see Holston, 1989).

When it comes to discussing how many favelas there are in Rio de Janeiro and how many people live in them, one stumbles upon the formal/informal binary because the official data are not the same as those which one gathers living inside a favela. Many different sets of figures circulate. According to the official statistics published by the Brazilian government in the 2000 census, there were then 516 favelas in Rio de Janeiro. Official figures are of relative value, however. In 2007 and 2008, it was often the case that unofficially people in favelas or working on
favelas would talk about the existence of over 1,000 favelas in Rio de Janeiro. In terms of population, the Brazilian government census of 2000 claims that there were a total of 1,092,476 people living in all favelas of Rio de Janeiro. According to Janice Perlman, about 37 per cent of Rio's residents lived in favelas in 2008 (Perlman, 2010, p. 34). However, most locals agreed that there were around 200,000 people living in Rocinha, in which case the official figure above is far from accurate. Perhaps, it is impossible to have a clear idea regarding numbers, but what is clear is that different measures offer very different results according to the very different interests of stakeholders.

The 'Shock of Order'

We shall see a more detailed analysis of one of these rationales in the example in which we try to unravel the structural argument behind the policy called the 'Shock of Order', recently put in practice by Eduardo Paes, Mayor of Rio de Janeiro elected in 2008. Since 1 January 2010, Paes, of the PMDB party (Brazilian Democratic Movement), has been putting into practice a policy he named Choque de Ordem, translated as the 'Shock of Order'. This policy seems to be central to what Paes takes to be a distinctive feature of his administration. The 'Special Secretariat of Public Order' of Rio de Janeiro is the sub-unit responsible for management of the programme. According to the Rio de Janeiro Municipality, the role of this Special Secretariat is to order the public space making the rule of law prevail, such as the law that regulates the work of mobile merchants (Law 1876/92) and the municipal code of conduct. A brief explanation of the rationale behind the actions is given in one paragraph:

Urban disorder is the greatest catalyst of feelings of public insecurity and the generator of conditions leading to criminal practices in general. As a consequence, these conditions ban good principles from the streets, contributing to degeneration, de-occupation of these streets, and the reduction of economic activities.

It is clear that in this rationale the formal equals order and the informal disorder.

![Map of Favelas in Rio](Source Christian Wethmann and Elizabeth Randall, Harvard Graduate School of Design, based on UN-Habitat data)
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Figure 3. Rocinha from above
(Photo: Moises Lino e Silva)

Figure 4. Rocina from within.
(Photo: Moises Lino e Silva)

Figure 5. Rocina at night.
(Photo: Luana Magalhães)

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So the binary pair becomes: ‘formal = order’/‘informal = disorder’. Beyond that, however, there is a clear sense that other attributes are conferred on the ‘disorder = informal’ side of the binary. An example of these would be public insecurity, degeneration, and the reduction of [formal] economic activities. Therefore, we could argue that the structural thinking behind the ‘Shock of Order’ rationale in Rio de Janeiro seems to be something like:

formal = order = security = generation = increased formal economic activity

versus

informal = disorder = insecurity = degeneration = decreased formal economic activity

However, if we refer back to the earlier ethnographic material, it is not at all clear how those two chains of thought would hold in the situation described. To start with, let us talk about disorder. People running with DVDs, products scattered on the ground, tears, people congregating to watch, others rushing back home. This is the situation created by the ‘Shock of Order’ itself. During most other days the market operated peacefully and, although it was often very crowded, no major incidents happened. This is to say that the so-called informal does not necessarily equate with disorder, in fact it carries its own order as Brillembourg et al. (2005) suggest.

The second point concerns security and insecurity. Living in a favela controlled by traffickers, one would expect, would bring a huge sense of insecurity. However, one of the first lessons from fieldwork in Rocinha was that one was safe as long as one was inside the favela. Dangerous places were outside the favela, such as Ipanema and Copacabana, precisely the most touristic areas of Rio de Janeiro. Of course, that it is because traffickers control the favela and establish their own ‘code of conduct’ in which the population cannot be robbed or raped, for example, without consequences. The punishment for a breach is swift and harsh. One could be more critical and argue that to have traffickers ruling over a population is a type of violence akin to being robbed or raped. However, most people in the favela do not think of it in these terms. Although some of them are aware that traffickers are also dangerous, most feel comfortable, for example, in leaving the front door of their houses unlocked or walking around the narrow streets of the favela showing off all sorts of goods that one would never display on the streets of Ipanema or Copacabana for fear of being robbed. So, if favelas are to be the informal city, it does not follow that informality brings feelings of insecurity, at least not for the people in this favela in Rocinha. Indeed people would often state they were nervous when leaving the favela to go to what is called the ‘formal’ city.

Loc Wacquant points out the paradox that, while favelas appear to be outside the state, they are in fact the spaces where neoliberalism is being experimented on in the extreme. In this sense, ‘more state’ is employed in the realm of policing, courts, and prisons, and ‘less state’ in the realm of the economic and social front (Wacquant, 2008, pp 56–74). Yet, at the same time, one could say there is ‘less state’ in the realm of formal economic activities and apparently ‘more state’ also in the realm of so-called informal economic activities.

So, yes, favelas as informal cities are related to the idea of degeneration. In fact, people could argue that favelas are places of degeneration par excellence. However, it is not clear that degeneration can be attributed to the favela as a whole, or that informality necessarily goes with degeneration. On the contrary, informality leads to the generation of so many things. For example, people would say that the only reason why their businesses were not formally registered was because if they had to pay all the duties and taxes and follow all the laws, their small businesses would not be viable. Legislation in Brazil is not meant to help micro-businesses,
they would say. It is exactly because of so-called informality that they were able to start their businesses and make a living. To say that informality leads to degeneration is either a very one-sided view of the issue or, in fact, a powerful myth repeated by those on the ‘formal’ side of the binary.

And this leads exactly to the last point about the informal leading to decreased formal economic activity. Would that really be the case? It is possible to understand how mobile merchants selling cheaper goods in front of a shop that sells the same product could affect formal businesses. In fact, near the favela but on the side of the ‘formal’ neighbourhoods, properties tend to cost less than in other parts of the same neighbourhood. However, there were formal businesses that profited substantially from the informal city and other informal economic activities. Just to mention a few examples, opposite the corner of the popular market in the favela there were at least three businesses that were always crowded with people from the favela. A large dental establishment, where we both had our teeth seen to, had a majority of clients from the favela and also almost all employees working there were from the favela. Next to it there was a medical diagnostics business, which was also very busy. There was also a large supermarket, where not only many people from the favela went for groceries, but also the place where many informal businesses bought the products needed for their activities in the favela. In this sense, the least one could say is that informality does not always lead to the reduction of formal economic activity. In fact, in some cases, informal cities and informal businesses were fundamental in sustaining formal businesses.

The ‘Shock of the Real’

However, the question remains. If the rationale behind the ‘Shock of Order’ policies in Rio de Janeiro can be easily argued against, how come they still work as a powerful tool for interventions in urban life? How do these interventions acquire legitimacy? How come the binaries discussed still prevail in the way most politicians and professionals think of the city?

We would suggest that the ‘Shock of Order’ policies deployed by Mayor Eduardo Paes have been possible in as far as they resound and derive legitimacy from two other dominant discourses. One, that we will call a neoliberal discourse of the type that Wacquant (2008) suggests is at play in Brazil, has as its most extreme the zero-tolerance policies of Rudolph Giuliani and William Bratton. The other is what Beatriz Jaguaribe (2004, p. 339) calls the ‘shock of the real’, when she refers to the making of Brazilian cities:

The favelas – as seen through the lens of the ‘shock of the real’ – are sites of contention in the cities of a nation that is now openly discussing the narratives and images that express its reality in the making. Yet, within its complex structure and given its extensive exchange with the city, the favela speaks of a cultural hybridity that bypasses polarities and provides the cities without maps of the twenty-first century.

This is to say that the ‘Shock of Order’, both as a form of discourse and as a policy measure, could be said to be a manifestation of the ‘shock of the real’ vision which tries to impose order on parts of the city that are not clearly understood. That is done by means of a neoliberal type of global politics in which Mayor Eduardo Paes happens to be engaging within the context of Rio de Janeiro. On the latter, Wacquant (2008, p. 71) suggests that:

neighborhoods of urban relegation – the decaying favela in Brazil, the imploding hyperghetto in the United States, the declining banlieue in France, and the desolate inner city in Scotland or Holland – turn out to be the prime physical and social space within which the neoliberal penal state is concretely being assembled, tried, and tested.

The possibility of the existence and applicability of the formal/informal binary therefore points to serious issues around the way that the understanding of urban life is currently
being established in Rio de Janeiro. This is happening in a complex context where the city is seen as iconic for the global image of Brazil in face of important developments such as the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games to take place in Rio de Janeiro.

However, we support the view that if we are to have a society that bases itself less on violence, we must recognize that the complexity of urban life cannot be reduced to a binary formal/informal that ends up serving as a powerful basis for policies such as ‘Shock of Order’.

If the twenty-first century is to be made of cultural hybridity as Jaguaribe (2004) suggests, policy-makers and designers must find a way to grasp a much better understanding of the so far ‘unknown’ parts of the city. We suggest that ethnography is an important method in this regard, one that can help bring out the hybrid meanings of complex phenomena. At the very least, ethnography can help us to recognize that complex phenomena cannot be reduced to any one form without significant consequences for the lives of people such as Marta, Carmem, or a crying street vendor in a Brazilian favela, as well as the Mayor.

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