Framing the World cUPP: Competing Discourses of Favela Pacification as a Mega-Event Legacy in Brazil

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Abstract

In November of 2010, Brazilian military and police officers rolled through the streets of Complexo de Alemão, Rio de Janeiro’s largest favela, in an effort to ‘take back’ the community from notorious drug traffickers in time for the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. Given the pervasive rhetoric that the occupation of favelas by the ‘pacifying’ Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora (UPP) program is for these mega events, what are the effects of this framing, and how is it used and contested by multiple actors? What subjects are called into being as a ‘threat’ through discourses regarding the UPPs, and how does this rhetoric legitimate violent practices of security by the state? Employing Judith Butler’s concepts of framing and the constitutive outside, I argue that there are multiple and competing discourses that frame UPP military police interventions, which have important legacy ramifications for Brazil’s mega events. In general, many international popular media accounts highly decontextualize and exoticize the space of the favela, constituting a site of threatening, yet consumable, Otherness. The state tends to construct simplistic dichotomies of space and subjects as threatening in order to legitimate its own actions. However, many favela inhabitants are reframing these constitutions to undermine the state’s attempts at legitimation and bring into relief the historical and socio-political continuities of Brazilian militarization.

Key words: mega events; Brazil; pacification; militarization; legacy

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Introduction

During the night of 28 November 2010, over two thousand Brazilian military and police officers rolled through the streets of Complexo de Alemão, Rio de Janeiro’s largest favela, in order to ‘take back’ the community from notorious drug traffickers in time for the 2014 Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. This operation is part of a larger Brazilian state program that’s stated goal is to revolutionize policing by transforming corrupt, lethal practices into peace-keeping and social programs. The project mobilizes Pacifying Police Units (hereafter UPP – Unidade de Policia Pacificadora) that, according to their official website, “intend to bring police and population closer together, as well as strengthen social policies inside communities” (“Embrace this idea,” 2012). Most international, English language media frame these pacification missions as an attempt to ‘clean up’ the favelas before the World Cup and Olympics. In contrast, the Brazilian state emphasizes that these initiatives develop long-term social infrastructure in the slums both spatially and temporally beyond the mega events, while many activists and citizens of the favelas point to the program’s historical continuities with previous corrupt and violent military police occupations of these communities.

Given the multiple and competing discourses employed to explain the occupation and ‘pacification’ of favelas by the UPP, it is important to understand the legacy of how different truth claims function in this discursive field and how different bodies and spaces come into being as threats. Much literature on sport mega events tends to emphasize legacies in terms of built material infrastructure (see Maennig & du Plessis, 2009; Swart & Bob, 2009). However, more attention should be paid to the way in which historically-situated socio-political processes are (re)entrenched or transformed due to the hosting of mega events. These processes include militarizations of the favela through the creation of pathological space and guilty criminal subjectivities; legitimacy contestations between activists, citizens, and the state; and the production of discursive understandings about specific geographical localities by the international media. In this paper I seek to address how the state, activist groups, citizens, and international media create different truths about the UPPs through their respective framings of mega event projects in Brazil. These differential framings of social processes are as important as, albeit perhaps more subtle than, material infrastructural legacies of sport mega events. Given the pervasive rhetoric that the UPPs are for the World Cup and Olympics, then, what are the effects of this framing, and how is it used and contested by multiple actors? What subjects are called into being as a ‘threat’ through discourses regarding the UPPs, and how does this rhetoric legitimate violent practices of security by the state?

The paper is divided into five sections: after attending to scholarly discussions of mega events and security, and theorizing the framing of images and narratives, I discuss the three phases of UPP missions as conceptualized by the state, international media, and favela inhabitants. In the military roll-in phase I analyze the international news media’s decontextualized framing of the events, arguing that they tend to pathologize the space of the favela and must be contextualized within the socio-political militarized history of Brazil. In the subsequent section I discuss the occupation phase and analyze how the state attempts to legitimate itself through these militarized encounters that create simplistic threatening subjectivities. In the final section I address the UPP Social programs and demonstrate how favela residents are working to reframe these events and contest the military governance. I argue that there are multiple and competing discourses that frame UPP military police interventions, which
have important legacy ramifications for mega events. In general, many international popular media accounts highly decontextualize and exoticize the space of the favela, constituting a site of threatening, yet consumable, Otherness. The state – while not a homogeneous entity – tends to create simplistic dichotomies to legitimate its own actions through constructing space and subjects as threatening in order that they can be pacified. However, many favela inhabitants in Brazil are contesting both media and state framings of these missions, redefining their own priorities to undermine the state’s attempts at legitimation.

Sport Mega Events and Securitization

Brazil will soon be the host of two of the world’s largest sporting events: the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) Olympic Games, and the FIFA World Cup, the former awarded to the city of Rio de Janeiro and the latter to the country of Brazil. In the early 2000s, FIFA made a decision to rotate the hosting of its prize tournament, the World Cup, between all continents. The Federation determined that 2014 was to be the year for South America. Brazil was officially awarded the tournament on 30 October 2007 as the only South American country to enter a bid (“Brazilian dream,” 2012). Two years later, on 2 October 2009 in Denmark, Rio de Janeiro was officially elected to host the 2016 Olympic Games, beating six other cities, including Madrid and Chicago (“Rio de Janeiro,” 2012). Within this context, the ‘problem of the favelas’ has (re)emerged as a potential security concern for the Brazilian state and for an international public.

Favelas have long been a source of unease for various Brazilian governance bodies. Victoria Baena (2011) documents at length the formation of favelas. She argues that African slave populations first established these communities in the hills surrounding the city of Rio de Janeiro. The favelas grew at a significant rate with 1950s urbanization, as workers from the countryside travelled to cities in search of employment opportunities. However, many were unable to find jobs, particularly as industry followed the flight of the capital city to Brasília in the 1960s. As Rio de Janeiro became a site of cocaine trafficking to Europe and prison conditions facilitated the creation of gangs, the favelas have more recently been associated with drug trafficking, small arms trade, and extreme violence by both people living in these communities and by the Brazilian military seeking to ‘control’ these spaces. With significantly higher homicide rates than Rio de Janeiro proper, the military has continually instituted security campaigns within and against these areas that remain largely unintegrated into the social provision fabric of the city of Rio.

It was after the country of Brazil was awarded the World Cup – and while the city of Rio de Janeiro was preparing its Olympic bid – that the state of Rio de Janeiro implemented a new security regime for its favelas. The UPP program was instituted by Rio de Janeiro’s state governor, Sergio Cabral, in 2008 (Baena, 2011) and is maintained by the state’s Security Department (“Embrace this,” 2012). Costing US$1.7 billion as of 2011, the purpose of these units is to improve security in the state of Rio de Janeiro (Baena, 2011). The program consists of three phases: a military invasion of the favela, followed by several months of heavy patrol forces, and finally the training of community residents to assist the newly recruited military police in longer-term social projects. According to the official website of the UPP, “the Government and the Security Department (SESG/RJ) can rely on the UPPs as an important ‘weapon’ to help them regain control over territories long lost to traffic, and also to reintegrate these economically challenged communities into society” (“UPP’s concept,” 2012: para. 2). The state government maintains that these programs are for longer duration than the mega events
(“Embrace this,” 2012), but the fact that funding has been secured only until 2016 has many sceptical of the permanence of the programs (Baena, 2011). Indeed, there is even greater apprehension over the military occupancy of the favelas for sport mega events after the 2007 invasion of Complexo do Alemão prior to the Pan American Games, in which thirty people were killed by what was deemed by the Ministry of Human Rights as ‘summary executions’ (Zibechi, 2010).

In light of these specific occurrences and a more general acknowledgement of increased securitization globally, there has been much recent interest in the role of security at sport mega events. The last year has seen the publication of numerous edited volumes and journals, such as Colin Bennett and Kevin Haggerty’s (2011) Security Games: Surveillance and Control at Mega-Events and the Special Issue of Urban Studies on Security and Surveillance at Sport Mega Events edited by Richard Giulianotti and Francisco Klauser (2011). In the introduction to the latter, Giulianotti and Klauser (2011) frame sport mega event security as both symptomatic of broader changes in urban security, as well as being a catalyst for changes in how security is effected in specifically urban environments. Much of this literature analyzes sport governing bodies’ relationships to these new security regimes (see Eick, 2011) and to state policy (see Coaffee, Fussy & Moore, 2011). However, these perspectives often lack a significant engagement with the experiences of those living under securitized governance.

There has also been much recent scholarly analysis of sport mega events hosted in the Global South. Chris Gaffney (2010) has studied Brazil specifically from a geographical sport mega events perspective and he convincingly details the importance of stadium architecture for projecting symbols of modernity and populist ideologies. Particularly relevant for theorizing the World Cup in Brazil is the case of South Africa’s 2010 tournament, which saw FIFA more directive in its governance approach than it had been in previous World Cups (Cornelissen, 2011). This was due to the fact that South Africa is a ‘developing nation’ and thus concerns existed as to whether the country would have its infrastructure ‘ready’ on time, and whether the country would be safe for tourists (Cornelissen, 2011). Securitization of mega events in the South is a way to combat these fears through, in part, “highlight[ing] the state’s capacities to the international community (and to underscore[ing] its sovereignty) and to reinforce[ing] the idea of the state to domestic audiences” (Cornelissen, 2011: 3227). The state thus has an interest in discursively constructing threats that legitimate legal and extra-legal measures of security for mega events.

The construction of threats to achieve legitimacy for military interventions is a prevalent theme in urban military literature. Derek Gregory (2011) has long engaged an argument of constructed visibility, most recently writing on the military’s constitution of space as a ‘technocultural accomplishment,’ effectively creating ‘our space’ versus ‘their space’. This spatialization is accomplished through the mobilization of biopolitical and ‘martial orientalism’ rhetoric to describe military actions as surgical against a pathologized Other (Gregory, 2008). Such framing in turn legitimates the violence. Constructed visibility operates not only through military personnel as Gregory notes, but also through popular news coverage of conflicts. David Campbell (2009) argues that during recent violence in Palestine, the Israeli state structured news media such that only a particular version of events could be told, depoliticizing the conflict and limiting Palestinians’ political agency. With these authors’ critiques of constructed visibility in mind, it is important to attend to how ways of viewing conflict are constituted: a particular framing may evacuate important political contexts that are necessary for understanding and resistance. Part of this political context is a general shift post 9/11 from large state versus state
conflicts to battlefields of asymmetric (constructed) threats on multiple fronts (Anderson, 2011). Particularly compelling is Ben Anderson’s (2011) discussion of the proliferation of ‘hybrid’ wars, which constitute a blurring of the distinction between civil society and the military, and between war and peace, a process which Stephen Graham (2009) fleshes out in his concept of New Military Urbanism. While part of my argument is that these processes have long been occurring in Brazil prior to 9/11, the legitimation of military and civil society relationships through the development of ‘public support’ (see Anderson, 2011) is particularly relevant to the present-day UPPs in Brazil.

Constructed visibility and urban military literature has much to contribute to understanding the UPPs in Brazil, yet most of this work does not address the specificity of the way in which threats are constituted and how these processes are related to historical militarizations. Furthermore, the surveillance and securitization literature in general is quite disembodied, with little voice given to those living in pathologized spaces. This study contributes to these gaps in the literature, as well as extends the idea of sport mega event ‘legacies’ to a broader field of influence. Specifically, FIFA and the IOC have important impacts not just in their directive behaviour but also by creating the conditions for increased constructed visibility that is projected internally and externally, with often violent effects for people living in these communities.

Methodological Considerations: Framing and the Constitutive Outside

For this analysis I utilized three primary sources of data. First, I searched the popular media databases Lexus Nexus and Factiva to locate English-language newspaper/online news articles from Brazil and elsewhere that document these ‘pacification’ missions in Rio de Janeiro favelas. Second, I consulted the online presence of both the Brazilian state and activist groups. Of the former I paid particular attention to the official UPP website, UPP Reporter, of the Secretaria de Segurança (Security Department) of the Rio de Janeiro government. Rio On Watch had multiple activist voices posting news online, while the Brazil Portal of the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars provided a significant amount of critical reflection on events in the favelas. Third, I supplemented the newspapers and online resources with material from documentaries produced by international media about the pacification missions; these tended to offer more ‘on the ground’ perspectives of how favela inhabitants are living these militarized actions. I not only used the news media as a basis for ‘deciphering’ the events of pacification, but I also discursively analyzed the documents to bring into relief how discourses associated with the police-military missions were constructing particular visibilities and framings.

These documents are truthful representations to the extent that they are productive of the discourses that proliferate around the pacification missions, whether or not the facts themselves are always ‘true’. As Dimeo (2007: 7) argues, this discourse analysis methodology, “offers the chance to question the supposed truths that are being presented, while also recognizing the influence texts can have even if they are factually incorrect”. Discourses are, in effect, practices combined with regimes of truth that make particular actions and ways of being in the world possible (Foucault, 1981). These practices include the framing of particular military endeavours as ‘legitimate’ and, thus, exclude other political and social concerns from being heard and considered. Yet any social field has multiple actors producing and being produced by particular discourses, and therefore the relationship between these competing truths as well as attention to resistive discourses is of significant explanatory value and is a focus of this paper.
Judith Butler (2010) highlights the importance of ‘framing’ war to produce particular discourses of truth. The way in which war is framed helps structure our understanding of conflict and becomes the terrain upon which violence is accepted and legitimated. To Butler, frames are:

the ways of selectively carving up experiences as essential to the conduct of war. Such frames do not merely reflect on the material conditions of war, but are essential to the perpetually crafted animus of that material reality. There are several frames at issue here: the frame of the photograph, the framing of the decision to go to war, the framing of immigration issues as a ‘war at home,’ and the framing of sexual and feminist politics in the service of the war effort. (Butler, 2010: 27)

In this sense, the ways in which photographs of the military occupation of favelas are framed, the ways in which discourses in popular media explain how and why a certain action is undertaken, and the ways in which the state attempts to legitimate particular actions, are intrinsically bound to the material practices of what occurs – and what is able to occur – on the ground. Butler is careful to remain nondeterministic about this framing, however. She argues that what is left outside of the frame – the frame’s ‘constitutive outside’ – is always available to be mobilized for discursive resistance. In addition, when images leave a particular context (such as that of the photographers’ immediate ‘intentions’ in taking the pictures in the favela) and proliferate through digital media, the images are inevitably reframed as a function of the viewers’ context; the latter’s historical and socio-political circumstances will frame the ways in which he or she views the photographs.

Particularly compelling, then, are the ways in which multiple discourses of different actors interfere with one another to bring new discourses into the frame, and to rupture and decontextualize the hegemonic discourses mobilized by institutions like the state. Indeed, many institutions, capitalist processes, and social relations of gender and race, are excluded from particular frames in order to produce the events as self-contained objects (Mitchell, 2002). To understand how the institutions and rules that comprise the frame’s constitutive outside are politically silenced is to open up the frame and to elucidate how the militarization of favelas is intimately related to broader social and historical dynamics, beyond those presented by dominant actors. These are resistive processes. The ways in which the pacifications are (re)framed – in terms of causal relations between the nation-state and the World Cup, for instance – become an important legacy for (de)legitimating military violence and elucidating citizen resistance associated with sport mega events.

**Military Roll-In**

The British *Guardian* interactive photo feature (see “Brazilian police,” 2011, for montage) opens like a war-time military occupation: a sequence of shots details tanks rolling through narrow streets; soldiers with machine guns held at the ready, peering cautiously down dark and empty streets; a police military helicopter circling overhead with shot guns protruding through the windows; and police dogs tracing around a home in pursuit of drugs. Except this is no defined war zone. This is Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro, and the BOPE (Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais, a special elite force combining military personnel and police) has rolled in to ‘pacify’ the favela. That the ‘mission’ is understood to be for Brazil’s sport mega events is made evident by the photo montage subheading: “Police backed by armoured military vehicles have invaded Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro’s biggest slum, as part of an attempt to bring security to the city
before it hosts the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games” (“Brazilian police,” 2011). Another British production, a BBC documentary entitled Favela Pacified, describes the scene as one of an elite squad dressed in black storming the favelas, “remarkably” without firing a single shot (Robinson, 2012).

Through this media framing it would be difficult to interpret this action as anything other than militaristic intervention. Indeed, that this is a heavily militarized action is not debated by most of the actors in Brazil. But what work does the Guardian’s framing of the event perform for understandings of the favela and the Brazilian military? What is the significance of the camera as a framing device for creating particular realities of these events? Butler (2010) argues that the camera becomes an instrument of war through its focus on particular targets and the delimitation of a field of battle. In this sense, the frame contains what will be understood as ‘real,’ and the framing of a population as target is the initial act in the process of militarized destruction (Butler, 2010).

In light of these arguments, then, it is significant that the Guardian interactive photomontage is absent of almost any living targets. While one photo shows a man being searched, the other visual representations contain primarily heavily armed military personnel and police dogs. The effect of this framing is to position the favelas as largely empty of human targets who, it can be assumed, have either been driven out and/or underground, or who did not exist in the first place. Some accounts of favela residents do maintain that the former is the case. In Favela Pacified, Marcos, of a non-governmental organization in Rocinha, argues that the ‘problem’ of traffickers is being geographically spread through these military roll-ins: when the elite forces previously swept into other favelas, traffickers escaped to Rocinha and made life more dangerous in this community (Robinson, 2012). The lack of human targets in the Guardian photos allows this story of escaping ‘traffickers’ to be read, as those familiar with these accounts will likely see this particular ‘truth’ in the photos, thus breaking apart the frame of legitimate military action.

Concomitantly, the absence of people in the frame presents the space of the favela itself as the military target, effectively pathologizing place. The presentation of the tanks and the heavy artillery with no visual evidence of resistance has the effect of exoticizing Brazil as a violent and heavily militarized country, creating an ‘Other’ in the geographical imaginations of a global audience (Said, 1978). Derek Gregory (2011) elaborates on pathologization, arguing that the process is a techno-cultural apparatus of war that constitutes the space of the Other and structures how war is fought. This apparatus is partly constructed through the racialization and impoverishment of the ‘areas’ that are positioned as the targets of intervention, such that the space itself is constituted through the bodies that inhabit it (Razack, 2002). In this sense, because favelas are inhabited by impoverished people who tend to have darker skin (Telles, 2004), the spaces become degenerate as they are ascribed meanings associated with these bodies. This Guardian framing of the invasion of the favelas serves as a slightly more complicated technocultural apparatus in this instance: the camera is not creating an Other for legitimating the Brazilian military police, but constitutes this space – always partly a function of those who inhabit it – as an exoticized threat to an international audience, whether it be the space or the military within that space that is exotic.

Legacies of threatening exoticizations are financially relevant for major sport mega events, before and during which these images are broadcast globally: the Othering of this space by the Guardian photos can be capitalized on through consumption of television images or (necessarily securitized) ‘slum tours’ during the World Cup. The Guardian likely has a number of interests in presenting this particular visual discourse. Although I am most interested in the effects of so-
presenting, a survey of the photographs taken by the chosen photographers betrays that the British news agency did in fact specifically select images that had few people in the frame. The Guardian may have interests in participating in the military-industrial complex; the exoticization of both the space of the favela and the Brazilian military may indeed sell more newspapers through consumption of the Other (hooks, 1992); and the construction of a threat may help to quell anxieties over specific spaces, as what is known may then be disciplined. Whatever the intent, though, the Guardian’s rhetorical frame of the Olympics and the decontextualized photographs create the impression that this is a one-time event in an exotic, impoverished, and violent location.

Through framing the photographs within the confines of the favela, this space itself is constituted as a self-contained object. Timothy Mitchell (2002) elaborates on this process of containment when he argues that the ‘economy’ is created by differentiating it from the other institutions and regulations that sustain it; the economy becomes set apart from the discourses that enact it. With the Guardian and other popular media framing of the military roll-in, the favela is likewise constituted as a self-contained object, set apart from the socio-political and historical context that is necessary for a fuller understanding of the militarization of favelas in Brazil. When the term and the image of the favela is mobilized without considering the reasons for which this space exists in the first place – such as migrant labour from the countryside and deindustrialization of the cities (Baena, 2011) – then the slum itself becomes a site of pathology. Broader social concerns of uneven capitalist development that perpetuate social disenfranchisement are literally cut out of the frame and thus ignored.

The exoticized favela may be read as a case of hypermilitarization or as a threatening space; with either interpretation, the decontextualized favela photos create the impression of a state of emergency with little historical context. When particular conflicts are framed as a state of emergency, the effect is one of ‘temporal splicing’, in which the often long history of these events is made invisible (Campbell, 2009). To destabilize this interpretation it is necessary to contextualize these events in the history of Brazilian military interventions and within broader socio-economic patterns that are often exacerbated for the worse through the hosting of sport mega events. Indeed, there exist a number of articulating factors that have converged to create processes of militarization in Brazil. Even if it is possible to create an extensive genealogy of the ‘truth’ of Brazilian militarism of favelas, the purpose is beyond the purview of this paper. However, it is worthwhile attending to some of the factors that have influenced Brazilian state and military agendas. To break apart the decontextualized framing of Guardian photos, we must attend to the military dictatorship of Brazil that, from 1964-1985, intermittently invaded the favelas with an official policy to eradicate them (Baena, 2011). High rates of lethal police force throughout the 1990s and early 2000s indicate that police often shoot to kill, particularly in the favelas (Huggins, 2000). In fact, terror by the Brazilian military has been actively utilized for the last century in order to silence dissent, although the state has been adept at covering up their atrocities (Smallman, 1999). Since the fall of the military dictatorship in 1985 and the return of democracy, governments have continued to approach the favelas in a law-and-order fashion, with police kill rates higher than most areas of the world. As a result, many in Brazil are more concerned with military and police violence than with drug trafficking violence (Ahnen, 2007). In this context, the military occupation of favelas is not necessarily new, exotic, or welcome.

Concomitant with democracy is greater market-oriented rule, as Brazil undergoes processes of neoliberalization. In this climate, private security has proliferated, as police are increasingly framed as ‘professional’ and ‘rational’ actors who often moonlight as private security personnel...
Loic Wacquant (2008) has argued extensively that neoliberal reforms, with a resultant rollback of the welfare state and economic deregulation, have increased inequality and marginalization in Brazil. In this climate, the state invests greater resources into punitively containing the dispossessed and dishonoured population through police and judicial intervention (Wacquant, 2008). According to Wacquant, the militarized tactics employed are a function of both the historically repressive and violent Brazilian state apparatus, and the importation of punitive measures from the United States, as the marginal space of the favela becomes both a target and a laboratory for testing said measures. The common thread tying most of these Brazilian state theories together is the assertion of militarization as an attempt by the state to prove its legitimacy through punitive control in an era and space of increasing market rule. The legitimacy of the militarized agenda may be more complicated than this picture reveals, however, as the current focus on UPP Social programs frames military intervention in terms of more permanent social development. Regardless, once these understandings of militarization are included in the frame, the focus of analysis can become how the sport mega events themselves may expedite and legitimate particular interventions – such as the occupation of the favelas – and consequently locate changes and continuities in these operations.

**Occupation**

According to official policy, the ‘occupation’ of the favelas proceeds after the elite force has rolled in; the military police set up permanent residence as UPPs, literally occupying the community (“Embrace this,” 2012). The Rio de Janeiro state government depicts these favelas as ‘pacified’. In describing the UPPs, the Commander states that, “The Pacifier Police Division units in Rio de Janeiro represent today the certainty that happiness is possible, for freedom is a matter of choice, of decision” (“Embrace this,” 2012). He describes the purpose of the programs: “To re-establish control over territories lost to traffic dealers, freeing their residents from the murderous and despotic claws of traffic dealers, is the challenge which Rio’s government, police, and citizens took upon themselves” (“Embrace this,” 2012). The imagery of favelas teeming with criminals is striking for its stark distinction between ‘criminal’ and ‘resident’ and for the rational choice discourse that attempts to discipline people into participation. Even more revealing for its slightly more complicated, yet as discursively productive, effect is the press brief posted by Rio de Janeiro’s Security Secretary, José Mariano Beltrame, on 10 September 2009. I quote at length because he introduces multiple hegemonic understandings of favelas, traffickers, and the UPP. In effect, this speech is a significant state rhetorical device:

The idea is simple. To re-establish control over territories lost to traffic dealers. When fighting over areas with rival factions, these groups began an arms race that escalated in the last decades, a private war in which the rifle reigns absolute…We have decided to put into practice a new tool to end conflicts. We occupied four communities in different districts for good. It is the end of the rifle and the beginning of the small revolutions which will be told on this website…Society has been in debt with [the residents of the communities] for a very long time, since our colonization. The majority of them are black. The scarcity is so immense that we even have to teach them how to ask for help, because they don’t know how to prioritize their emergencies… As I’ve been saying every time I get criticized; either society
embraces these areas or nothing is going to actually change. So we plea to everyone: try going up the slums, they belong to the city. (Beltrame, 2009; emphasis added)

These state officials employ a number of interesting framing and subject constitution devices. They have located themselves and the military police as part of the community through discursively occupying ‘civil society’ in statements that allude to “society’ embracing these areas.” Furthermore, positioning the state as assisting in “small revolutions” posits the traffickers themselves as the hegemonic ‘ill’ that the military, in collaboration with favela residents, must combat. Given that it is the military that occupies the favelas, the rhetoric of ‘society’ and ‘small revolutions’ having to effect the change attempts to align the government with favela residents and thus achieve legitimacy from discursive and spatial occupation. This discourse can be understood as a way for the state to achieve legitimacy domestically, a practice commonly associated with sport mega events (Cornelissen, 2011). Attempts at legitimating the state are made explicit through military police protestations that they have not accepted bribes (Barbassa, 2012) and that the new recruits and training schemes will weed out police corruption (“Embrace this,” 2012). Through this governmental rhetoric, then, the state attempts to justify its occupation of the favelas.

The use of the word ‘pacification’ is also worth attending to for its various discursive effects. Pacification has two common meanings: the quashing of violence by military means, and the bringing of peace to a particular place or process. When state officials call occupied favelas ‘pacified’ – as they do throughout the official UPP website – they are imposing a temporal understanding of pacification on this particular space. The framing constitutes the favela as being rid of violence and ‘at peace’ once the military has established itself. However, this notion of pacification is actively contested on the part of favela inhabitants. For instance, Favela Pacified presents a more complicated spatial understanding of how the favelas are occupied. According to this documentary report, the police have not been able to penetrate deep inside the drug traffickers’ territory, and thus need the ‘cooperation’ of ‘favela inhabitants’ to locate the ‘traffickers’ (Robinson, 2012). The language of ‘pacification,’ however, allows the government to project the notion that the favelas are ‘under control’ and thus to justify the military intervention. The idea of ‘cooperation’ in pacification is also significant because it supposes that there exist distinct entities – that is, military police and favela inhabitants – that have the same interests, and thus must form military-community partnerships to pacify the area. This rhetoric underpins the ‘communitarian police’ policy (“Embrace this,” 2012) that structures these attempted partnerships between civilians and military police in a new blurring of the boundary between military and civilians (see Graham, 2009). However, favela inhabitants have been contesting that these relationships are effective partnerships in processes I describe in the following section.

Another legitimating discourse employed by the UPP is the creation of military targets. Throughout UPP literature, the favelas are presented as being overrun by ‘traffickers,’ a word that is rarely complicated or qualified. Similarly mobilizing a monolithic enemy, the Commander in the Chapéu Mangueira favela that was ‘pacified’ three years ago explains, “our job here is criminals with guns” (Robinson, 2012). As Butler (2010) notes, the creation of targets is the first step in the process of destruction. The discursive constitution of insurgents and traffickers is a legitimating device: once these subjects have been named, the military processes that ensue become true and natural (Anderson, 2011; Gregory, 2011). The rhetorical device of identifying – and thus constituting – particular subjectivities as traffickers distinct from other favela
inhabitants is the first step in naturalizing these interventions internally and externally. This naming device accomplishes the work of setting the traffickers as somehow separate from those who live in the favela, as though the former are not part of similar processes that produce the space of the favela and other inhabitants. However, when we break open this particular frame, revealing contextualizations become evident: it is often difficult to make a distinction between traffickers and ‘favela inhabitants,’ particularly when younger people are recruited to be low level drug dealers in response to poverty; and the military police themselves regularly commit acts of violence similar to the ‘traffickers’, and often negotiate a blurry boundary between acting as state officials and independent security hires (Huggins, 2000).

What bodies are made visible and what bodies are made invisible through these subject-constituting discourses? The threats themselves are highly racialized and gendered as is the space in which the military interventions take place. Favela inhabitants tend to be darker in skin colour than those who live in higher income areas (Telles, 2004). Darker bodies have historically been understood as more animalistic and at greater risk of violence (Stoler, 1995), and thus these ‘targets’ reify understandings of threatening racialized bodies. Furthermore, the ‘traffickers’ and ‘criminals’ in popular media, state publications, and citizen testimonials tend to be young men, while those interviewed and shown as ‘favela inhabitants’ are often women, children, and older men. Violence, then, is framed as being committed by men, with the space of the ‘peaceful favela’ concomitantly feminized. These constitutions make invisible those bodies that do not adhere to these projected images, and allow the state to frame itself as being the benevolent protector of the peaceful. But it is not only the bodies that are made visible that naturalize the idea of masculine violence. The state rhetoric of ‘free choice’ that favela inhabitants are said to possess with regards to joining the military police against traffickers, and the different discourses of legitimation employed by the state, also frame the military interventions as ‘rational’. Because rationality is often constituted as a masculine trait, the space of violence is reified as male while women are increasingly made invisible and in need of protection (Wright, 2011).

Particularly important for the legacies of the Brazilian World Cup and the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, then, is how these threats become constituted, naturalized, and projected to the rest of the world. In much sport sociology mega event literature, symbolic capital is associated with the image of a ‘successful’ event, posited as that which has no major security breakdown and which has infrastructure ready in a timely fashion (Eick, 2011). However, I believe that the legacies of subject constitution and projection are as important as these ideas of security and infrastructure; ‘threats’ of dark, masculine bodies and spaces become naturalized through these militarized discourses, with both domestic and global audiences consuming these particular discriminatory framings. The presence of the military and the state also becomes naturalized even as interventions increase, through this discourse of risk (Cornelissen, 2011). But what do favela residents think of these framings?

In the BBC documentary 
*Favela Pacified*, residents are interviewed about their lives under the new ‘occupation’ compared to when they had lived under ‘drug trafficker rule’ – framed as two distinct forms – with most interviewees ambivalent about both regimes of governance. Some residents state that with UPP presence they have been less likely to see young children carrying guns, but freedom of expression has also been constrained under the new military police regime (Robinson, 2012). Others argue that during more observable drug trafficking rule, little to no petty crime existed in the favelas and residents could keep their doors unlocked at night (Robinson, 2012). Mauricio, from Providence, elaborates on this theme in *The Right to Remain in Silence*, arguing that once traffickers had organized in the favelas, rates of domestic abuse...
decreased drastically, as the trafficking ‘criminals’ would punish those enacting these violences (O’Sullivan, 2012). The traffickers, he argues, exist because of the lack of security and the need for policing, a pattern consistent with theories of extra-legal governance in post colonies whose state governments do not provide adequate services (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006). But, Mauricio notes, “to live like that came at a price” (O’Sullivan, 2012).

### UPP Social

The ‘social ills’ of the favela are targeted in the pacification missions’ third phase: UPP Social. According to the state, these programs are implemented by the occupying military police after violence in the favelas is under control. The program is based upon the principle of ‘communitarian police,’ which is “the partnership between population and public security institutions” (“UPP’s concept,” 2012). The purpose of UPP Social is to target the space of the favela, which is represented by a number of pathologies that the state has identified: social inequality, lack of a good educational system, corruption, lack of assistance, and lack of city planning (“UPP’s concept,” 2012). Unsurprisingly, the UPP website focuses on its ‘successful’ social programs that target these ‘problems’; there is no reference to corruption of, or human rights abuses by, military police. On the website, each ‘pacified’ community has a separate page, detailing the number of officers stationed in that community and geographically locating the permanent infrastructural base of the occupying force. Included are links to ‘stories’ from each community with headlines such as ‘Residents can already see the difference’ and ‘Culture invades Babilônia.’

Many favela inhabitants are contesting these framings. The residents are not only redefining their own social ‘pathologies’ but are also attempting to expose the state’s interests in choosing particular priority areas by situating said interests within a broader political economy. For example, the activist website Rio on Watch has published reports concerning conflicts in community-UPP Social Team meetings pertaining to population estimates of favela inhabitants. Corrine Cath (2012b) argues, grounded in research conducted with community members, that these numbers are often underestimated by the state because the latter’s required investment of resources is proportionate to the favela’s population. In other words, the citizens of the favela are accusing the state of investing less into the communities than has been promised. Rio on Watch has also exposed different priorities held by the state in comparison to community members. After attending a community participatory meeting in Vidigal in Rio’s south zone, Cath (2012b) elaborates that “the UPP Social has determined the focus should be on improving garbage collection, the formalization of payments for electricity, and the improvement and renovation of public space” (para. 15), whereas the community is prioritizing “education, access to health care, and attitude of the police towards the inhabitants of Vidigal and Chácara do Céu” (para. 16). Priorities of the UPP Social appear to be those that capitalize, literally, on partnerships between the state and electricity and waste collection companies, as opposed to the areas of need identified by community members: the latter’s presence at meetings was viewed as a ‘box to tick’ rather than true inclusion in any planning process (Cath, 2012b).

The focus of some favela inhabitants on this disjuncture between UPP Social’s goals and residents’ concerns is an attempt to break open the decontextualized frame that the state has constructed around the UPP programs. Instead of emphasizing the ‘social pathologies’ identified by the state, these residents are demonstrating how the former’s priorities are a result of neoliberalized partnerships in Brazil (see Waqcuant, 2008). By exposing the linkages between
private waste-collection companies and the state – a form of rollout neoliberalism (Peck & Tickell, 2002) – within their frame, the favela inhabitants are creating resistance against the hegemony of state violence and capitalist development. It remains to be seen, though, how this alternate discourse may effect long-lasting resistance against the military occupiers.

Residents are not just conducting economic reframings of the pacification missions, however. They are also highlighting the importance of other everyday living experiences, such as those associated with dance and music. For example, local rapper Emerson dos Santos had this to say after concerts were banned by the occupying military police: “All communities in Brazil have their peculiarities, some listen to ‘funk,’ others listen to ‘pagode,’ ‘hip hop’ or other genres, and the police don’t have anything to do with musical tastes, and should stick to fighting crime and not meddle with people’s culture’…” (Frayssinet, 2009: para. 27). This mobilization of the idea of ‘culture’ resists the constitution of the space of the favela as impoverished, backward, and violent, and defines priorities beyond economic need and violence.

Other favela residents have sought to question the intent of these military interventions and social programs, often connecting them to the upcoming sport mega events. The documentary The Right to Remain in Silence offers a diverse array of favela residents’ opinions on this matter. The UPPs are for the media, argues Marciano Atto of the NGO Communities against Violence, in an effort to rid Rio of its dangerous image constituted through films such as City of God (O’Sullivan, 2012). A university senior lecturer, Matthew, believes that while homicides may have declined, the favelas in which UPPs are located are distinctly adjacent to richer neighbourhoods where celebrations for the World Cup and Olympics are to take place (O’Sullivan, 2012). Similarly, in Favela Pacified, there is less resident ambivalence concerning the intent of these occupations compared to that which they have about the effects of military occupation: many believe that the ‘clean-up’ efforts are simply for Brazil’s upcoming mega events (Robinson, 2012). A popular news radio show in Rocinha has been asking residents about their concerns with the UPP Social programs, and the DJ explains:

Yes, there are a lot of people who think that, especially in the older generation. They are the most skeptical because they’ve lived mostly under the old system and they’ve started to believe that things can never change; a lot of people think this is happening just for the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016. And that after that date, the favelas will be abandoned again. (Robinson, 2012)

This skepticism is echoed in controversies around gentrification processes. According to Rio on Watch, gentrification is one of the most well-recognized ‘side effects’ of the UPPs. Corinne Cath (2012a: para 11) states that,

The UPP policy is to ‘recover territories that had been lost to the drug traffic and bring social inclusion to the most needy portion of the population,’ but the perceived intention across society and effective outcome is to increase the sense of safety in the city for the 2014 and 2016 sports events. Gentrification plays into these goals by raising the image of security and the ‘attractiveness’ of the favela. The gentrification process thus serves the ‘security goals’ of the government.

Gentrification is thus an ointment to the ailment of slum pathologies and the constitution of symptoms of risk.

The state appears to be distancing itself from accusations that these programs are simply for the mega-events, however; rarely do they mention the events on their official website and they maintain that the UPP Social programs are there to stay. The sole news piece posted on the official UPP Social site that addresses the Olympics and World Cup is revealing for its
legitimating frame. Upon the visit of the Chairwoman of the 2016 (Olympic) Coordination Commission, Nawal El Moutawakel, she is quoted as stating, “The UPPs had called our attention even before Rio was chosen. We are very impressed by the projects, both social and sports related, that are being developed at these communities” (Marotti, 2010: para. 3). The inclusion of this quote works to legitimize the state’s interventions; it suggests that the UPPs were present before the Olympic Games decision (and thus, it is implied, will not disappear), and it attempts to convince the reader that the interventions are indeed successful.

**Conclusion**

Many favela inhabitants are invoking the mega events as a rhetorical device for undermining the legitimacy of the state. Some argue that the government is merely implementing the UPPs to project an image of security both domestically and globally. I argue that these attempts at legitimacy are even more discursively productive than is always revealed by favela inhabitants, a production made visible by attending to the creation of targets, the exoticization of the favela space, and the framing of social ills. While interventions are framed as ‘true’ and ‘correct’ by most official state publications, these framings are repeatedly adjusted by favela inhabitants through contextualizations and the setting of alternate priorities. The new framings and the processes that communities undergo to effect these changes are as important legacies for sport mega events as are dispossessions or new security regimes.

However, it would not be productive to simply glorify and romanticize the discourses employed by favela inhabitants. They are not a homogeneous entity and by no means are common opinions held among these constituents. The residents’ framings analyzed for this paper tend to have a limited temporal and spatial scope when addressing the criminalized subjectivities; while some discourses emphasize continuity with historical militarizations and the future of the programs, few are attending to those ‘traffickers’ who are driven out of the favelas or those who have been arrested and put in jail. The latter neglect is particularly significant given the dire and often lethal conditions of the prison system in Brazil (Wacquant, 2008), and the accusations that much drug trafficking occurs through gangs that have formed in these highly neglected spaces (McCann, 2007).

The focus on security that the UPP programs precipitate tends to reify the ‘risk’ of favelas by not actively analyzing how these pacification missions – and mega events themselves – may exacerbate insecurity. The debates of favela inhabitants, international newspapers, documentary filmmakers, and official state documents, centre on whether the pacification will be successful, whether the military is corrupt, and how governance has changed under the different ‘regimes.’ This generally consistent framing confines the terms of the debate to processes of security, as though the programs in themselves are enough if one could weed out corruption and violence of the military police and prioritize the concerns of favela residents. However, this framing excludes and deflects attention from the other processes of social disenfranchisement enacted by the government in collaboration with FIFA and the IOC. These other ‘social ills’ include land dispossessions (Nunes, 2012) and the privatization of state assets (de Sainte Croix, 2012). Continual reframing of the events is needed to explain how ‘traffickers’ are constituted, how favela impoverishment is produced through neoliberal reforms entrenched by mega events, and how favela residents are organizing their own forms of governance.

Mega events appear to precipitate and legitimate temporal continuities and breaks in Brazilian state-society relationships. The World Cup and the Olympic Games’-associated
pacification of favelas works, both domestically and internationally, to legitimate the state’s historically militarized relationship with its citizenry. Through the actual and perceived control of favelas, the state is able to extend its law-and-order and neoliberal projects. This trend has historical continuity with the violent military dictatorships that have long sought to control and legitimate political projects through terror. In what appears to be a break from the past, however, the framing of the UPPs does focus on social development of infrastructure and democratic decision-making even as it legitimates violent military intervention. That the Brazilian state is in a position compelled to frame its interventions in this manner does, perhaps, open greater possibility for resistance through democratic and peaceable means.

Brazil’s militarized UPP projects should also be analyzed for spatial resonances. The focus on the favelas by both the Brazilian state and international media is but one example of global trends in military urbanism and consumption of exoticized spaces legitimated by the desire to protect and participate in the spectacle of the global sporting event. As Stephen Graham (2009) asserts, the urban has increasingly been the construction site of target subjects and infrastructure that legitimate military and securitized interventions, processes that are partly a function of military-industrial and security complexes (Davis, 2007; Graham, 2009). These trends are reproduced through the hosting of spectacular events, as sizable sums of money are spent on security infrastructure to protect these spaces. The focus on the favelas in the international news media, facilitated by Brazilian state military interventions, also helps sell a particular image of the ‘developing nation’ that countries mobilize for bids in order to expedite and legitimate development agendas (Cornelissen, 2011). Like the focus on slums in South Africa for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, mega events in Brazil are key spaces in which threats and the constitution of the Other become both legitimating devices for highly securitized and violent military projects, and for the desirable consumption of the Other.

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