

Houses: quantified, projected and lived

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Introduction: living, counting and planning houses

In this paper I propose a set of analytic strategies and questions for studying forms of government in favelas, seen from the viewpoint of their houses. I consider three types of agency acting on them: quantifying houses to produce knowledge; planning the construction or demolition of houses in the name of the public good; and living houses as everyday processes. My primary argument is that the negotiations over the different conceptions of houses that inform the different agencies acting on them are fundamental to comprehending the dynamics of constructing the favela in its multiple dimensions: as a modality of occupying the city, as a problem of government, and as a space of everyday life.

The favelas have been treated by state agents and depicted in public opinion as problematic places since they first emerged and have been a topic of investigation and intervention by various state agents for decades (Valladares 2000 and 2005). Their problematization was based on the idea that they comprise an anomalous form of occupying city spaces through the construction of houses in the wrong places and in inappropriate forms. Notions of adequacy, normalcy and hygiene served as a normative basis for classifying, intervening in and explaining the favelas, always focusing on the degree to which these places diverged from the ideal of order.

Houses are found at the heart of the social organization of favela residents. However they are not relevant only to them and they are also not the only people to think about the

houses and interact with them. Specialists in the elaboration of statistics, graphs and maps look to generate systematic knowledge about these spaces. Professionals from the sciences, public administration and politics use this knowledge to form arguments, plan actions and produce other systematic forms of dealing with favelas, designing strategies and executing projects that impact on them, whether to improve their structures, create new houses or even demolish them to make space for new projects.

For statisticians, for example, it is essential to obtain an objective and stable definition of the *domicile*, a central category in the principal studies of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), a federal body that produces most of the data on Brazil's population. The relation between the number of *domiciles* and *families*, for example, is at the core of the calculations used to determine the *housing deficit*, which in turn provides the basis and argument for one of the Federal Government's most important public policies, '*Minha Casa, Minha Vida*' [My House, My Life]. As I show later, the concern of these statisticians is to create discrete and stable units, capable of conceptually immobilizing people in a given physical space.

Urbanization and *social housing* projects destroy and create houses in line with the arguments explicitly presented by the administrators concerned as technical in kind and designed for the public good. To build cableways, widen streets and introduce sanitation systems in favelas, houses are evacuated and pulled down through an operation known as *disappropriation*. The negotiations on whether, how and when houses will be demolished are diverse and complex. One type of negotiation takes place between residents and the diverse technicians who produce a stream of measurements, documents and forms that provide the basis for establishing compensation in the form of financial compensation, credit or a new house. Most of this population ends up in apartment blocks built via state housing policies. The entire chain of negotiations that spans from international bodies like the IDB (Inter-

American Development Bank) and the World Bank to the webs of local politics revolves around the right to housing, the value of houses and the need to improve housing conditions, bringing face-to-face different conceptions and arguments about what a house is or should be.

This proposal is grounded in ethnographic research conducted in one of the favelas forming Complexo do Alemão, located in the north zone of Rio de Janeiro. Complexo do Alemão covers a large area, stretching over a large portion of the Serra da Misericórdia upland and occupying various hills and valleys. Once an industrial suburb, it sprang up alongside one of the railway lines traversing the Metropolitan Region. Based on my ethnography of the day-to-day economy in the area, the house emerged as the key element explaining a series of dynamics in which economic and family practices, regulations and the transformation of physical spaces intersect. This analytic approach, taking the house as the epicenter, is especially inspired by studies of the family, whose attention to everyday life and the relation to physical spaces allows an exploration of how relations are lived by the people themselves. Similarly, locating houses – constructions that are simultaneously physical and symbolic – at the heart of the analysis through an ethnographic approach enabled a positive analysis of the economy in the everyday lives of people and of the favela itself. This processual approach, attentive to the circulation of objects and persons – rather than structures and functions (Carsten 2004) – allows us to perceive that a house always exists in relation to others and in permanent transformation.

One of the largest clusters of favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Complexo do Alemão has become the target over recent years of various projects and policies introduced by municipal, state and federal governments. From 2007 onwards, the federal government's Growth Acceleration Program began to make various interventions in the area.¹ The urbanization

¹ The PAC (*Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento*) is a federal government program essentially designed to fund large infrastructural works. Created in 2007 during the Lula government, it was one of principal vectors of economic growth in the country during the 2000s and one of the chief banners of Dilma Rousseff's first campaign for the presidency, then called 'mother of the PAC.'

works changed the landscape, including the construction of a cableway with five stations, street widening, sanitation works and the construction of housing developments.

Considered a dangerous and violent place, in 2010 Complexo do Alemão was subject to military occupation for year and a half. This was followed by the installation of Police Pacifying Units (*Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora*: UPPs), part of the new security policy for the city's favelas introduced in 2008.² These two interventions were important factors in the recent transformation of the city's favelas, whether through the projects directly related to them and police or military operations, or through the processes triggered or intensified by them.

The different conceptions of the house discussed in this paper – the quantifiable house of the statisticians, the house as a planning object in public policies, and the house built everyday by residents – are constituted around the representations of physical spaces, economics, the family and the relations between these elements. This enables them to be approached ethnographically beyond the reference to the same objects and persons. The aim is to radicalize the proposal to situate the house at the center of analysis by considering its relevance not only to those who live and frequent the houses, but also as an object of intervention on the part of state agents and bodies.

The ethnographic approach proposed here concerns both the treatment of different conceptions as native – that is, deserving an inquiry into the practices and representations of the people themselves who produce and use them – and as the basis for developing a dialogue between them. It is not a question, therefore, of comparing or establishing dichotomous

² The UPPs are a program of the Rio de Janeiro State Government to which the Military Police are subordinated. The policy is known as Pacification and the favelas in which the new units have been implanted are described as 'pacified.' The declared objective is to enable close-range community policing as a strategy to contain the armed conflicts in the favelas. In most of the favelas, the installation of the UPPs led to an effective reduction in gun battles. In Complexo do Alemão this lasted until mid-2014. Today, though, the gun battles are almost daily, with both residents and police among the victims. In the first two months of 2015 there were more deaths than in the whole of the previous year.

contrasts, but of understanding them through the dynamics of negotiation, adaptation and resistance when different conceptions of the house are at play.

In the first part of the text I discuss the concept of *domicile*, currently used in IBGE's statistical research. This notion makes an association between the physical house, people and economy based on *isolation*, which allows the creation of discrete units that make sense by themselves and can be added up, compared and aggregated successively into ever larger units. Quantification creates the idea of a *norm* (in the sense of both a rule and the usual), establishing boundaries that turn any resistance to quantification into disorder, as in the case of the favelas. Since its 1991 census, IBGE has used the category *subnormal agglomerate* to classify the favelas and other *irregular settlements* (IBGE 2011). Its definition is based on the supposed deviation of these places, especially in relation to spatial order and the forms of ownership of the houses.

In the second part I discuss the treatment given to favelas in the 1937 Construction Code for the City of Rio de Janeiro. I select this document in as part of my inquiry into public policies since it was the first legal text to use the word 'favela.' It also contains explicit associations between the ideas of inadequacy, poverty and need for assistance that allow us to inquire into the contemporary modalities of dealing with favela houses.

In the third part of the text I present the results of the ethnographic research undertaken in the favela, referred to here as 'Aliança,' highlighting questions that enable a dialogue with the quantitative and normative conceptions of the house.

In the final part of the text, I propose some questions and analytic strategies based on elements suggested by the analysis of conceptions of the house contained in the documents and those lived by Aliança's residents, working towards the construction of a research agenda. There are three specific interests in the planned investigation. The first concerns the construction of statistical categories that aim to generate systematic information on spaces

that are considered disordered and, for this reason, deemed to hinder and resist quantification, especially the category *subnormal agglomerate*. The second is the form through which the values of houses in the favela are negotiated when they are built or destroyed in the name of the *social interest* via public policies, such as housing and urbanization programs. Thirdly I propose a study of the forms through which the apartments built via housing programs – standardized and projected through the use of technical and legal norms – are transformed through everyday practices into lived houses, a process I call *casificação*, ‘housification.’

Quantifiable houses: the domicile as a statistical category

The two main sources of statistical data on the Brazilian population are the Population Census and the National Household Sample Survey (*Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios*, PNAD). The Census is conducted every ten years, while PNAD involves different forms of data collection, some annual, others spaced at longer intervals, and some data produced continuously. These two kinds of research undertaken by the same federal government agency, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), provide the data for use in analyses, diagnoses, policies and state projects.

In both types of survey *domicile* is a central category. Most of the information from the census relates to individuals. The domicile is the reference point for the collection of data – each questionnaire corresponds to one domicile – and constitutes the first possible level of aggregation of data on people. Like the vast majority of state statistics, the census data is organized in successive levels of aggregation, so that each level is constituted by units that comprise the sum of units at the immediately preceding level. In other words, a set of individuals constitutes a domicile. A set of domiciles constitutes a census sector and so on with the aggregation of population data by state, region and country. Each level of aggregation supposes a relation with a spatial unit, the domicile being the first.

In the PNAD, domiciles are the principal research unit. Unlike the census, which is an exhaustive survey that aims to create data by collecting information on each and every individual, the PNAD is a sample-based survey. This means that data from a certain number of domiciles is used to generate information that is, in turn, expected to represent a larger number of them, using a series of mathematical operations and statistical projections.

The domicile is defined by IBGE as follows:

A structurally **separate and independent** place of residence, constituted by one or more rooms. Separation exists when the place of residence is bounded by walls, fences, etc., covered by roofing, **allowing residents to isolate themselves, assuming responsibility for part or all the food and housing expenses.** Independence exists when there is direct access to the place of residence, allowing the residents to **enter and leave without passing through the place of residence of other people.** Domiciles are classified as particular or collective. (IBGE, n/d:16, my emphasis)

The two main elements informing the concept of the *domicile* converge with the conception of the house as an everyday process, examined later on, but also diverge from it. The first element is the existence of physical barriers that enable isolation and a discontinuity to be defined in relation to the outside and to other houses. This idea is similar to an ideal found in the notion of the house among Aliança's residents: the need to physically separate houses from business as much as possible and to construct a new house when children themselves become parents are just some of the dynamics revealing the importance of separation as an aspect of the house for the favela residents.

The second element defined by IBGE concerns the relation between house and economy, with a special emphasis on the household diet. Food and money also play a prominent role in the construction of the house in Aliança, as we shall see later.

However, there is a fundamental difference between the quantifiable house and the house as an everyday process. Isolation contrasts in a basic way with the autonomy of the house, a central aspect of how houses are interrelated. While isolation allows the house to be seen as an independent and homogenous unit, autonomy is an aspect of the relation with other

houses, involving interdependence and asymmetry. The quantifiable house is a discrete, stable and unambiguous object belonging to the people involved. The lived house, however, is a space of constant transformation, in permanent relation.

The creation of discrete units and the need to associate people with spatial units – a supposed necessity of demographic statistics – requires the conceptual immobilization of both. It creates boundaries in order for these units themselves to make sense.³

The divergences between these two conceptions of the house are not of interest merely to contrast them, as though one were more true than the other. What matters here is that, by conceiving standardized criteria for the creation of homogenous objects, an ideal is produced that, intended to be applicable to the largest number of possible cases, ends up creating a boundary in which the two senses of norm merge. The norm as rule and the norm as the dominant idea or practice. The cases and the houses that resist quantification are considered an exception and a subversion at the same time.

The use of the expression *subnormal agglomerate* to classify favelas in national statistics is an explicit admission of the difficulties of classifying and quantifying these spaces. However the quantification problem is also present in the distrust found in relation to census figures. According to the 2010 survey, the residents of Complexo do Alemão total around 60,000 people. Many question this figure, though, and calculate that there may be 100,000 or even 200,000 residents. The most common argument is that the census takers are unfamiliar with the reality of the favela and therefore incapable of identifying houses, taking as one house constructions that in fact contain several. Fear and prejudice, which supposedly lead to researchers dedicating insufficient time and effort to the survey, are also cited as possible reasons why the figures produced are incorrect. The fact is that this is a significant issue for many residents and a topic of everyday conversation.

³ Here I draw inspiration from the analysis by Benedict Anderson (1991) of maps in which the boundaries delimit units that can be conceived as ‘making sense in themselves’.

In an experiment in another cluster of favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Maré, local organizations carried out their own census, the first part of which involved mapping the favelas and producing a Street Guide (Observatório de Favelas; Redes de Desenvolvimento da Maré, 2012). The number of residents counted greatly exceeded the figure obtained by IBGE.

From the insalubrious dwelling to the minimum house: a housing project for the poor

The first time that the word favela was used in a legal text was in 1937, in the Construction Code for the City of Rio de Janeiro, then the country's capital (Prefeitura do Distrito Federal 1937). The document is wide-ranging and – based on the zoning of specific functions – defines how each area of the city can and should be used, primarily through the definition of its buildings. It defines the professionals trained to build and transform buildings, the authorities with the powers to inspect, issue fines and implement the procedures for licensing construction work and occupying spaces.

The favela appears alongside the so-called *cortiços*, or slum tenements, as a form of *insalubrious dwelling*, in a chapter specifically devoted to the topic and determining that they should be demolished. The decree prohibits any improvements being made to the houses or the surrounding infrastructure, or the construction of new houses. According to the Construction Code, the pre-existing houses should be replaced by *minimum-type dwellings*, whose construction characteristics are described in detail and take order and hygiene as criteria.

Article 349 – The formation of favelas, that is, agglomerates of two or more hovels regularly laid out or disordered, built from improvised materials and in non-compliance with the stipulations of this Decree, will not be permitted under any circumstances.

(...)

Clause 9 – The city council will provide (...) for the demolition of the favelas and their replacement with minimum-type housing complexes. (op. cit.: 47)

[Article 347] Clause 1 – The houses of these complexes [of low-cost housing] should be built in appropriately designed road layouts in accordance with a general

plan, properly studied for each case and built so that good hygienic conditions are established. (op. cit.:46)

The document thus establishes which houses are acceptable and which should be destroyed, with a technical description of the constructions' dimensions, materials and relations with their surroundings. Everything failing to fit into this determined pattern should be demolished.

The Code also recognizes the relation between these insalubrious houses and poverty, defining that new *minimum-type* houses should be sold at low prices by the city council "to recognizably poor people" (Prefeitura do Distrito Federal 1937:47) to replace those set to be pulled down for the *demolition* of the favelas. These houses, in turn, could not be sold by the acquirers. Here it is worth highlighting that the document also describes *proletarian economic-type housing*, suggesting a distinction between wage workers and favela residents.

The conception of the house present in this pioneering regulatory document is constructed by a number of associations that lasted over time and whose contemporary modulations I intend to investigate. The relation between favela, poverty and need for assistance is presented via the negative classification of the house in the favela as insalubrious and in opposition to the criteria considered minimal for an acceptable house.

The house and the everyday economy in Complexo do Alemão

Today's Complexo do Alemão began to be occupied at the start of the twentieth century. The region grew up around the various factories constructed close to one of the railway lines crossing the metropolitan region. Most of the land was private, either rented or sold for the construction of worker's housing and villages (IPEA 2013). Many of the companies later closed, leaving behind abandoned warehouses or just their names, which served as reference points in the local geography.

Complexo do Alemão is an extensive area occupied by houses, some streets and innumerable alleys. An aerial view gives the impression of an endless continuum. However the Complexo do Alemão comprises a diverse universe. Some houses have multiple floors with arches on their façades and tile-covered walls. Many others leave their bricks and concrete structure exposed. Some small houses still exist with gabled roofs and French tiles, typical of the era when the area was first occupied. Wooden houses without bathrooms or separate rooms can also be observed, especially in the upper parts of the favela.

In the streets and alleys and inside the houses, there is a profusion of small and large stores, cafés, salons and workshops. Local commerce thrives and is focused around the residents themselves, whether traders or clients. On the few large roads that traverse Complexo do Alemão there are various housing developments built via housing policies from different periods, most of them constructed over the last ten years.

The cableway, its five stations and the enormous towers suspending the cables stand out in the landscape. It was inaugurated in 2013 as part of the *socio-urbanistic interventions* implemented after 2007 and became a controversial symbol. In order to construct the cableway and widen the streets, hundreds of houses were demolished. Through the same program various buildings and condominiums were built to meet the demand for housing for *low-income families*. Some of the residents had houses in the favelas of the Complexo do Alemão, but many came from other parts of the city. Some of those living there were people who had lost their homes in the landslides that followed heavy rainfalls in 2010.

The PAC and so-called *pacification* were followed, residents say, by an overall rise in the prices of properties, whether for rent or for sale and purchase. The interventions also altered the local politics, creating space for new actors and disputes, and serving as a new arena for old battles. Banks opened branches inside or close to the favela and satellite TV companies were able to install their dishes unhindered in the houses. Clandestine electricity

connections were replaced by modern equipment for measuring consumption and the service began to be charged by the company responsible for the public power supply. Various social projects were set up in the area, especially those dedicated to *entrepreneurial* training.

The interventions made through public policies and the actors, processes and spaces created or reconfigured through them became new elements that, along with so many others, make up the contemporary universe of possibilities through which people get on with life.

The use of the notion of the house to understand the everyday economy of Aliança was inspired by studies of kinship and especially the research of Louis Marcelin on black families in the Recôncavo region of Bahia (1996, 1999). His proposal there was “to introduce the house as a physical reality and a social institution to the center of the analysis of social organization” (1996:96). As Janet Carsten (2004) points out, an approach setting out from the house enables an examination of kinship that is closer to the form in which it is lived by people themselves, rather than looking to create models and identify structures.⁴ Likewise the idea of the house affords an understanding of the everyday economy through people’s practices, considering their own forms of conceiving them.

A house that is simultaneously physical and symbolic, engendering family, economic and spatial relations, is necessarily a house located in relations with others. Marcelin proposes examining these connections through the idea of a configuration of houses. In order to think about the houses of Aliança, I incorporate Marcelin’s idea, although he compares his definition to the concept of configuration proposed by Norbert Elias (1980) to define the layout of houses as an arrangement composed of relatively autonomous, but interdependent elements, only visible, however, if we take one house in particular as a reference point. Not

⁴ The use of the concept of the house to think of family relations, according to Marcelin and other authors, is inspired by the idea of the *maison* developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1991). As Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995) point out, the formulation has the merit, based on the native notion of the house, of placing it at the center of analysis, although the explanatory range given by Lévi-Strauss is questioned. Primarily interested in understanding societies in which the principles of consanguinity and alliance seem to be combined in a different type of kinship arrangement, the *sociétés a maison* appear as hybrid types, characteristic of societies in transition.

being the sum of a determined number of houses, this kind of configuration concerns the relations maintained through movement: the circulation of objects and people, and the transformation of houses over time.

The interdependence between houses is based on asymmetries that involve specific obligations and moralities. One of the main links between houses in a configuration is the tie of origin. This is constituted, for example, through the obligation of parents to build or to help build a house for their sons or daughters when they themselves become parents. The houses of these children are usually built with the help of the parents (especially the new husband's father) in the form of money, work or presents. An asymmetric and interdependent relation is thereby established and maintained through presents and mutual help, with the children expected to revere and respect their house of origin. This connection between the house of origin and the new house is based on the relation – also asymmetric – of care in the house. When those who are cared for have to care for their own children, they need to constitute a new house.⁵

These relations connect to an ideal of the house's autonomy, which whenever possible should correspond to a physical separation from the outside and other houses. This ideal is similar to the statistical idea of the domicile in which spatial separation is also important. But the type of separation involved in the construction of houses in Aliança concerns the form in which the houses relate to each other, not their mutual isolation.

The quotidian exchanges maintained between the houses and that constitute the configuration of houses include the circulation of money and principally food and objects linked to meals. In everyday life, it is common for people to make meals in the house of

⁵ Although the relation of care between parents and children, and the ties of origin between their respective houses, are very common, other arrangements and situations exist, which could easily be considered deviations were our attention not focused on family practices. Although an analysis of family ties based around the house allows us to gain some analytic distance from the normativity of structures and functions, native normativities should be considered fundamental, as McCallum and Bustamante (2012) show in their study of the social organization surrounding the house. The ideal of the nuclear family as a basis for the composition of the house is present among Aliança's residents, although the situations effectively considered condemnable or troublesome are those in which the hierarchy of care is subverted.

relatives or friends, asking to borrow pans, trays and ingredients. When parties or festivals are held, as well as sharing food during the events, there is an intense circulation in the ensuing days, especially the distribution of cakes and sweets, prepared in sufficient quantity for them to be given as presents. Loaning money and using the credit card of other people from other houses are also examples of practices perceived to form part of the relations of affection, proximity, trust and duty expressed through the language of kinship. Food and money are important elements in the construction of familiarities.

The separation of 'house money' is a form of conceiving its use that reveals how the house only exists in relation to others and how the latter relations can only be comprehended in combination with those within the house. As well as serving to pay for the services and things needed by the people living in the house, house money is also used to maintain everyday exchanges, such as, for instance, ensuring the preparation of meals to be shared by various people related to the house, considered family or friends.

As in the domicile, the administration of money and food are part of the constitution of houses. The difference is that the circulation of both does not revolve around an isolated unit but a set of houses. The notion of a domestic budget, for example, makes no sense in terms of understanding the complex arrangement of relations within the houses and between them.

Another aspect of the houses of Aliança worth highlighting for my proposed discussion of the different conceptions of houses is their mutability. As well as the fact that changes are constant, the possibility that built spaces can be transformed is an important factor in terms of the form in which people plan the future, and earn and spend money. They comprise part of the strategies of extensive social arrangements involving various houses. The different combinations between forms of earning money concomitantly or over the course of life are linked to the possibility of transforming these built spaces. One example is the

transformation of parts of the house into stores, cafés or beauty salons, which allow modalities of earning money that combine, for example, with the need for mothers to feel close to their sons of a certain age who they believe are at risk of being recruited into criminal activities.⁶

As well as the separation of spaces having a different meaning in the domicile and in the houses of Aliança, these separations are fluid and transform continually. The same space may be part of a house and turn into another house, turn into a store or revert to being part of the former house. This means that it is not only the status of the separation that is different, but its presumed stability.

The houses in Aliança also form part of a vibrant market of rental, buying and selling. For local people, being the owner of a house or store that can be rented out guarantees a certain income. And being the owner of the house in which you live ensures that you have at least the minimum: *a roof over your head*. This connection between the moral valorization of the house and the possibility of negotiating its value through contracts and financial exchanges suggests that the attribution of value to houses is a complex arrangement in which none of these spheres of valorization can be comprehended independent of the others, and none can establish equivalencies to the others.

The conflicts, political sensibility at diverse scales, the endless production of documents and rules, and the mobilizing force of the rumors surrounding the *disappropriations* all converge on the forms of attributing value to the houses. In terms of housing policies, the calculation of an objective and reasonable compensation for a house marked for demolition translates into the attribution of a monetary value and, thus, the establishment of equivalences in quantities of money, credit or another house. Here we can

⁶ People speak about these threats in terms of the fear that their sons “do wrong things.” This refers more or less directly to the activities involved in selling banned drugs, expressed as ‘trafficking,’ or perceived to be related to these activities, such as theft.

also include the exchanges at a political level in which fidelity and favors may also be equiparable to houses.⁷

Conclusion: Thinking of the house. The house as good to think.

The proposal to think of the forms of government in the favela through its houses involves a double analytic movement. The first involves extending our understanding of houses in the favela by considering how agents and agencies operating in other spaces participate in their construction. The diverse forms of regulating spaces, national politics and the transformations of the city are factors that compose the world of possibilities in which the residents move about and which forms the basis for making their choices and organizing their lives. The strategy proposed here, therefore, is useful for thinking about houses in the favela.

The second movement involves exploring the interpretative possibilities of thinking about forms of government *through* the houses, allowing an articulation of aspects like physical realities, moralities, economic practices and regulations. Hence, when it comes to thinking of the favela and its forms of government, the house is good to think.

I propose three research strategies for examining the questions raised through the analysis of documents and my ethnography of the everyday economy of Aliança. These strategies correspond to three sets of questions.

As Foucault suggests in his writings on governmentality, knowledge is a fundamental aspect of government (2008 [1977-8]). The first set of questions concerns the means par excellence through which the state creates information, namely statistics. In this text I briefly explored the category of *domicile* through the explicit definition made by IBGE. But the ideas about what a house is and its relation to the ties between residents and the management of money – especially through the category of the *domestic budget* – allows a

⁷ I refer here to well-known – and perfectly plausible – stories and formal accusations involving prisons and trials of prominent people in local politics who received quotas of apartments in condominiums and buildings for them to distribute to political allies and family members.

deeper exploration of the creation of these quantifiable houses. My proposal is to explore in detail how these different notions appear in the forms, data presentations and the analyses of specialists in public numbers (Porter 1995).

Specifically in relation to the favela, it would be interesting to investigate the category *subnormal agglomerate*, used to characterizes these spaces and produce numbers about them and the relations between the categories linked to the house and the resistances to quantification. The concept has been formally used since the 1991 census without any conceptual modification.⁸ The definition provided is as follows:

The special sector of the subnormal agglomerate is a cluster formed by at least 51 (fifty-one) residential units (shacks, houses) lacking essential public services, occupying or having occupied until recently a terrain belonging to another party (public or private) and generally laid out in a disordered and dense format. (IBGE 2011:19)

However, the concept seems to have already appeared back in the 1950 census, the first to produce information on favelas in Rio de Janeiro. The similarity in the definition of the favela utilized in the 1950 survey and the concept of the *subnormal agglomerate* used by IBGE today and that serves to identify other types of *irregular settlements*⁹ suggests that the latter is a derivation of the former.

(...) the concept of favela includes human agglomerations that possess some or all of the following characteristics: 1. Minimum size – Clusters of buildings or residences formed usually by more than 50 units; 2. Type of habitation – the predominance in the cluster of rustic-style hovels or shacks, built mainly from sheets of tin or zinc, wooden planks or similar materials; 3. Legal status of the occupation – Unauthorized and uninspected constructions on terrains owned by third parties or of unknown ownership; 4. Public amenities – Partial or complete absence of sanitation, electricity, telephone networks and piped water; 5. Urbanization – Non-urbanized area with a lack of street numbers or signs. (IBGE 1953:18)

⁸ Over the last few years procedural changes have been made to how subnormal agglomerates are identified, including the participation of the municipal councils and the use of satellite imagery (IBGE 2011:26-27).

⁹ “[the concept of the subnormal agglomerate] is sufficiently generalized to include the diversity of irregular settlements existing in the country, known as: favela, invasion, *grota*, *baixada*, community, villa, *ressaca*, *mocambo*, *palafita*, and so on” (IBGE 2011:26).

An ethnographic approach to ‘large numbers’ (Derosières 1993) includes an interest in the entire chain of transformations (Thévenot 1995) through which statistical data is produced. The trajectories of the professionals involved, their careers, institutions, meetings and specialized publications, form a fundamental part of the comprehension of quantifiable houses, since these are the agents and spaces in which they are produced and these ideas circulate.¹⁰

A second research strategy involves an investigation into the processes of destroying and constructing houses through public policies: namely, the *disappropriations* and the construction of low-income housing. As in my brief exploration of the 1937 Code, I propose to study the forms through which the problem addressed by state intervention is defined and named, how the diagnosis is formed, how solutions are formulated and how the subjects demanding assistance are themselves constructed.

In order for houses to be marked for demolition by state agents and bodies, they need to be classified as belonging to *areas of special social interest* or *areas of risk*. This process is regulated by specific laws and mediated by a series of documents, mediations and forms designed and filled out by professional statisticians. The process basically involves defining criteria and responsibilities for compensating the residents for the house due for demolition.

This compensation is made through an intense process of translating everyday houses into projected houses and vice-versa. One of the forms taken by this translation is the establishment of a monetary value for the house, which serves as a parameter for defining the compensation to be received.

It would also be interesting to investigate the construction of the idea of *social interest*, which informs the reasoning behind the implementation of disappropriations and the construction of buildings and condominiums. According to the regulations in force in the state

¹⁰ I undertook a similar analytic exercise to the one proposed here in my doctoral thesis on the creation of the Mapping of Solidary Economic Ventures (Motta 2010).

of Rio de Janeiro, in order to be disappropriated, the houses concerned must be located in areas considered *of special social interest*. In turn, the system through which the federal government executes its housing projects for the low-income population is called the National Social Housing System. My proposal, then, is to investigate how the notion of *social interest* participates in what David Mosse calls the “social life of projects” (2005).

A third research angle concerns how the new residents of buildings and condominiums built through housing policies and everyday practices alike transform and adapt, resist, find themselves constrained and perceive opportunities through the diverse elements that living in these new spaces brings. The mutual process of incorporating and being incorporated in these spaces – that is, constituting houses through apartments built on the basis of rational planning, technical standards and state regulations – is what I call *casificação*, ‘housification.’

Some particularities of these spaces and the process through which people come to live in them, illuminated by aspects of the house lived in the favela, allows us to raise a series of connected questions, including those linked to economics. These spaces are planned from the viewpoint that the apartments, buildings and condominiums concerned are places of *residence*, which implies – according to the conception of the house held by the planners – a separation from economic activities. These plans do not include the installation of businesses in these spaces. If a house in the favela allows the transformation of its space into areas of commerce through the transformation of the built space, what type of dynamic is involved in the installation of businesses in spaces that set other constraints, such as the reduced possibility of adapting the spaces or the regulations that prohibit any commercial use of the apartments?

Even though contrasts exist – many of them fairly evident – between the favela house and the apartments, we should consider both the continuities and the ruptures involved

from the perspective of the people themselves and their trajectories, very often marked by moving house frequently.

Furthermore, and despite the formal restrictions on commercializing the apartments in the first few years, people also move home, negotiate, exchange or maintain more than one house. The physical house demolished in the favela is not the starting point, nor is the apartment the point of arrival: both are moments of lengthy processes and complex arrangements, participants in the dynamics occurring at distinct levels.

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