FROM THE SCREEN TO THE STREETS: THE DE FACTO IMPACT OF CONTEMPORARY FAVELA FILMS

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Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é descrever e explicar como uma forma específica de entretenimento, os, enquanto produtos da cultura popular de uma ordem mundial globalizada, vão construir socialmente as favelas do Rio de Janeiro através de narrativas específicas. Apesar da representação dos atuais problemas sociais serem ligados aos processos de exclusão social, os filmes vão incidir primordialmente sobre a cultura penal baseada em relatos das gangues criminosas e questões relacionadas com a violência urbana em que a criminalidade se torna descontextualizada, o que na prática resulta em desumanização de favelas e por conseguinte no reforço dos estereótipos existentes. O estudo investiga qual o efetivo impacto destas construções sociais destas percepções sobre a sobre favelas em escala local e global.
Palavras Chave: Rio de Janeiro – Cultura popular - Globalização

Abstract

The aim of this article is to describe and explain how a specific form of entertainment, films as products of popular culture in a globalised world order, socially construct Rio de Janeiro's favelas through specific narratives. Despite the depiction of existing societal issues connected to processes of social exclusion,

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the films primarily focus on the criminal culture connected to gang-related issues and urban violence, in which crime becomes decontextualised, resulting in the dehumanisation of favelas and therefore reinforcing existing stereotypes. The study furthermore investigates what the *de facto* impact of these social constructions are on the perceptions about favelas on a local and global scale.
key words: Rio de Janeiro - popular culture – Globalisation

"Change of guard, the bullets eat fiercely
There was a party in the favela, seven in the morning
Lots of shots, they killed a child on his way to school

On television the truth doesn't matter, black & favelado, so he had a gun

Where is Amarildo? No one will forget you didn't solve the death of DG
Estrangement from police is the only result… There is no justice if the killer is in uniform

On television the truth doesn't matter, black & favelado, so he had a gun

3 day of torture, in a place full of rats is the way they treat the favela thugs

Rich and powerful thugs have their separate cell… VIP treatment & Plea bargaining

Why were there gloves before the experts arrived? Why was there blood on the wall?

DG was tortured to death, by the Military Police of UPP

On television the truth doesn't matter, black & favelado, so he had a gun[2]"

(Translation of *Delação Premiada* - MC Carol)

[2] Translation of "Delação Premiada", Mc Carol.

Introdução

There are countless narrative discourses that provide the 'powerless' with a voice through the construction of reality (BRUNER, 1991). The lyrics of Delação Premiada (Plea Bargaining) by MC Carol, a popular funk artist and 'diva' of Brazilian popular culture, illustrates that regarding Brazil's favelas in the above mentioned fragment. Favelas are settlements characterised by informal buildings, low-quality housing, limited access to public services, high population density and insecure property rights (CatComm, 2016). With her music, MC Carol touches upon societal issues such as the stigmatisation and labelling of favela residents as outsiders and criminals, police brutality, corruption and the impact of fighting against the internal enemy resulting in innocent deaths, in which she seeks to resist against the hegemonic discourse of Brazil's dominant elite (WACQUANT, 2007; PERLMAN, 2010; ZAFFARONI, OLIVEIRA, 2011).

MC Carol and other local artists, however, are not the only ones providing a narrative for Brazil's favelas. Globalisation has intensified the worldwide social relations linking distant localities in a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away (GIDDENS, 1990:64). Although such artists express concerns due to their direct relationship with favelas, 'outside' entertainment businesses, such as the film industry, create narratives about the favelas, especially those from Rio de Janeiro due to their prominent place in Rio's cityscape, have crossed the nation's border contributing to the global knowledge about favelas (WILLIAMS, 2008).

In this contemporary capitalist society, the film industry has given voice to the favela population, by showing the favela for the price of a cinema ticket, causing favela culture to commodify. The role of this industry in their de facto contribution on the perception of favelas and the impact of their narratives is at the heart of this article. Therefore, the following research question is addressed: *how does film contribute to the stigmatisation of favelas and what is the de facto impact of these social constructions?*

The combination of a globalised community and the suffusion of daily life with images of crime and the popularity of crime films, blur the line between fiction and reality (RAFTER, 2010). Due to this, places can become globally stigmatised as these products portray the favela as uncontrollable and dangerous places in which drug-related crimes, violence and lawlessness are the prevailing features (STEINBRINK, 2014). Therefore, this article investigates how crime films such as *City of God* (2002), *City of Men* (2007) and the *Elite Squad* sequence

(2007 & 2010)[3] socially construct the favela and how these films have blurred the line between fiction and reality, by analysing the films with the synthetic and critical film theory (YAR, 2010) and interviewing foreigners before and after visiting a favela.

The research relevancy finds itself in the importance of gaining more knowledge in the de facto impact of film rather than only analysing the films' meanings and how the commodification of culture in a capitalist society contributes to hegemonic ideas of a dominant society about favelas. The article commences with a paragraph that clarifies the relevant theoretical literature, whereafter the methodological reflections introduce various conducted methods. The data analysis provides insight in how favelas entered the cinematic screen, how these films socially construct the favela and the de facto impact of these images. Finally, the conclusion provides answers to the research question.

1. Theoretical Outline

1.1. Enemy-discourse

The process of social exclusion is multidimensional as it envelops exclusion on different levels; social, political, cultural and/or economic dimensions can play a poignant role. Political exclusion includes the denial of citizenship, personal security, freedom of expression and equality of opportunity; economic exclusion includes the lack of access to the formal labour markets and credit; social exclusion, based on different dimensions (gender/ethnicity/age), diminishes the opportunities for the excluded group to gain access to social services and diminishes their possibilities and participation in the labour market (KHAN, McASLAN, 2015).

These different dimensions are interconnected and overlapping, but most important, is to keep in mind that causes of social exclusion are attributed as a result of unequal power relations. The process of social stigma looks into power relations in which the issue of agency is the key to grasping social exclusion as a process (KHAN, McASLAN, 2015). Social and spatial distinction between the *morro* (the hillsides to which the poor were displaced during the Republican urbanisation projects) and the *asfalto* (the paved streets and 'formal' neighbourhoods of Rio) has been an enduring part of the urban imaginary of the city (LEU,

[3] Original film titles: Cidade de Deus (2002), Cidade dos Homens (2007), Tropa de Elite (2007) & Tropa de Elite: O Inimigo Agora é Outro (2010).

2004). This already illustrates the intertwinement of the different dimensions of exclusion of favela residents before the 20th century, based on spatial factors, race, migration and social identity (PERLMAN, 2010; OLAVARRIA BERENGUER, 2014).

An important dynamic process of (social) exclusion is 'labelling'. Sociologists who have been identified with labelling turned away from the traditional positivistic perspectives that were concerned with the original causes of deviance (TANNENBAUM, 1938; GOFFMAN, 1959; BECKER, 1963; LEMERT, 1969). These sociologists acknowledged that deviance is rather the *"product of a process which involves responses of other people to specific behaviour"* (BECKER, 1963: 14). This process includes the creation of specific rules or norms by a social group that are applied to a particular group who is, thus, labelled as outsider (BECKER, 1963). This process occurs in specific contexts where power relations – as earlier mentioned – play an important role. Mike Presdee (2000) defines this power relation in the sense that (political) processes of the powerful have the power to decide when particular behaviour is labelled as deviant. These political processes include media and other moral entrepreneurs, those who have the power to influence perspectives of a greater audience. Therefore, deviancy is not per se morally wrong, but rather behaviour that is condemned by (the majority of) society (BECKER, 1963).

And although Becker was the successor of labelling, it was Erving Goffman (1963) who was first concerned with how people manage their "collectively labelled identities". As deviant labels – attached to specific groups – function as a form of social stigma, entire populations have been stigmatised (GOFFMAN, 1963). Important to realise is, that the favelas cope with real crime issues, but the problem is that the favela population as a whole is condemned by society (OLAVARRIA BERENGUER, 2014). In addition to stigmatisation of favela residents as a group, a less traditional body of scholarship on stigmatisation has emerged this last decade. It is not simply that groups become stigmatised as a result of their poverty, class position or ethnoracial origin but because of the places they are associated with (SLATER, HANNIGAN, 2015).

This concept of territorial stigmatisation is coined by Loïc Wacquant (2007) in which he combines Goffman's theoretical dissection of stigma and Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) theory of symbolic power. He adds a fourth category, place, to Goffman's categories of social discredit (disabilities, blemishes of individual character and tribal stigma of race, nation and religion). He also adds place Bourdieu's insistence that symbolic power is 'the power of constructing reality or the power of making representations stick and come true' (WACQUANT, 2007;

SLATER, HANNIGAN, 2015). The two key aspects of territorial stigmatisation show that, firstly, specific areas have become nationally denigrated, not only by the elites but by the society at large (including many who have never been inside these areas) and, secondly, spatial disgrace is autonomised from other forms of stigmatisation, regardless of the close ties between place and 'spoiled identities' (e.g. poverty, racial origin, unemployment).

These processes of stigmatisation, collective and territorial, can provide an explanation for the criminalisation and militarisation of the urban black people living in the favelas (KOONING, KRUJIT, 2007; WACQUANT, 2008). To apprehend the social inequality in Brazil, it is necessary to understand Brazil's culture of fear that has been inducing the control culture, penal policies and repression of the favelas and its residents, those who are seen as the internal enemy. Eugenio Zaffaroni & Edmundo Oliveira argue that it is necessary to distinguish four levels while analysing the phenomenon of punitive power (ZAFFARONI, OLIVEIRA, 2013:11).

The first perspective is described as primary criminalisation, repressive or penal legislation, which does not imply the de facto execution of these laws. The second perspective looks into secondary criminalisation, the real exercise of repression of the favelas and its residents which can take its form in punishment, death or physical pain - legally or illegally - imposed by law-enforcement. Thirdly, we should look into what is theorised by authors of legitimating or critical discourse, ideological discourse, which arises from academics. And lastly, the publicity or propaganda from the penal system, presenting itself to the 'public opinion' as the protector, through a variety of agents. When all these perspectives are analysed as a whole, it becomes able to apprehend the course of punitive power as a 'permanent search for the (internal) enemy'.

The framing of the 'war on drugs' South America has contributed to the fact that any problem associated with drug trafficking and consumption is particularly news and consumption worthy in the form of movies.

1.2. Cinematic Society

It is not solely physical movement that creates power and inequality, to a certain degree it seems to be more about moving information than people around nowadays (ORGERON, 2008: 197). The society in this late modern era is preoccupied with 'the contested processes of symbolic display, cultural interpretation and representational negotiation' (HAYWARD, 2010: 1). Developments in

mass media, in which a rise in popularity of crime programs and movies is visible, have established global popularity for images of crime (HEATH, GILBERT, 1996). Rather than true facts about crime across the globe "images of crime are becoming crime itself" (FERRELL et al., 2004). Our contemporary society blindly trusts the domination of visual perception as "the dominant form of knowing" (DENZIN, 1995: 197).

Although life might not be 'covered' with crime 24 hours a day, it is definitely suffused with images of crime (HAYWARD, 2010). As Keith Hayward (2010) explains, it is not the image itself but the visual demand of our society that images must be variable and malleable. It illustrates the liquid society as BAUMAN (2000) noted: the speed in which images spread throughout the world, in which images and media representations can be an inspirational source for music and film industry.

I agree with Hayward (2010) that the notion of images has become more than "just representations of an external form of an object" (HAYWARD, 2010: 2). Although visual relates to 'seeing', images and visuals have become each other's synonym. As Arjun Appadurai (1996:35) calls it the late modern 'Mediascape' in which media constructs information and publishes images through the endless array of digital technology, most of what we 'see' is mediated by images. Frederic Jameson (1991) argues that society's 'culture' has changed in a visual culture. Which causes that crime films, on the one hand, reflect our ideas about social, economic and political issues and on the other hand, shape our way of thinking about these issues (RAFTER, 2000).

Following the arguments of Jill Levenson (2001), the apparent public familiarity with favelas is based upon its symbolism rather than hard facts about life in favelas and personal experiences. Because most of the favela film audience has limited direct contact, they rely on media representations and favela movies that feed this symbolism, hence the importance of this research.

Therefore, this article seeks to increase analytical attention to popular culture constructions (HAYWARD, 1999) by analysing the frames that crime movies about favelas portray and by investigating the impact within a Brazilian context and on a global level. As a result of the blurring line between representation of crime and reality of seeing, it is important to go beyond the static image because entertaining stories are nowadays shaping and producing its reality (VATTIMO, WELSCH, 2010).

2. Methodological Reflections

This article predominantly employed qualitative data in order to answer the earlier explained question of how a form of entertainment can contribute to the stigmatisation of favelas. This article presents the results of fieldwork conducted between April 28 and August 7 2016, predominantly in Rio de Janeiro's South Zone favelas and secondly throughout the city's other areas.

To commence this research, a literature review of contemporary relevant studies and contemporary theoretical efforts was conducted. The relevancy of reviewed studies was determined by their topics, including the general topics of favela exclusion, crime films in general and films displaying favelas. Based on the reviewed literature, it became clear that favela film analyses primarily provide different meanings behind the film but stop where the meanings, apart from the researchers' analysis, among viewers become visible and can be taken into account.

For the accomplishment, it was necessary to analyse the most (globally) popular crime films that are set in favelas. As the impact of stereotypes and the constructed reality in these films on perceptions of people are at the heart of this research, the most important qualification for these films were their 'global popularity'. Thus, sampling the 'main films' for this research started with preliminary research among different groups of the Dutch population (e.g. University students; co-workers; one older generation), contacts from other countries (European countries and America) and Brazilian contacts. These subjects were asked what films they knew or had seen about favelas and crime in Brazil. With this list of films, in combination with the box office success numbers as provided on www.imdb.com, this preliminary research resulted in the selection of the four films that are at the heart of this study: *City of God* (2002), *City of Men* (2007), *Elite Squad* (2007) and *Elite Squad: The Enemy Within* (2010).

Furthermore, in order to grasp meaning and de facto effects of these films and the impact and effects of tours, semi-structured interviews and personal conversations were conducted with favela residents, residents of the 'formal city', foreigners, governmental officials and experts, the total cohort consisted of 55 respondents.

By simply being present and absorb the environment and notice signs, understanding a cultural setting becomes possible. This '*deep hanging out*' was first coined by Clifford Geertz in 1988 to describe the anthropological research method of immersing oneself in a cultural group on an informal level. To understand

the gap between reality and the constructed reality through different narratives in films, the most poignant method was simply 'being' in the favela.

2.1. Reliability

The reliability of qualitative research is the extent to which concepts and measures are well defined, consistent and repeatable (DAVIES et al., 2011). To attain objectivity as much as possible within qualitative field work, while being in the field (observations/ participating in events), jottings were made on a mobile device by writing down key words and phrases regarding actions, dialogues and the environment, easy to forget details and detailed aspects regarding non-verbal signs, symbolics and surroundings (e.g. smells/noises). Out of the field (immediately after doing a tour and in the evenings) these jottings and headnotes were processed into extended descriptive explanations of the interpretation of reality through these field notes, producing fresher more detailed recollections of that day's collected data, to "unburden the memory" (BERNARD, 1995). All semi-structured interviews were conducted by using specific topic lists in order to enable a certain systematical analysis.

The interviews were recorded and during the interview I jotted non-verbal communications, facial expressions and specific movements in order to not loose these important signs as the transcriptions were done in a later stage.

The films were analysed by using a self-constructed analysis tool (see appendix 14) inspired by the film analysis framework by Norman Denzin (2004) and Steve Campsall (2002) which improved the standardisation of my observations and simplified the categorisations. Regardless, external reliability regarding film analysis is troublesome, as the films are a researcher's subjective interpretation of a narrative created by directors. Taken as a whole, the systematical use of these different elaborated measurements increased the reliability.

2.2. Validity

As the initial research design did not go through significant adaptations or changes, construct validity has been reached. Internal validity incorporates valid measurements, which is increased by the use of triangulation of multiple methods to measure the impact of different industries on the image of favelas by taking two different points (films and tours) and by using multiple methods within this research. Qualitative research rarely has the objective to make gener-

alising conclusions. Especially as a result of non-probability sampling, a research can hardly become representational, decreasing the external validity. However, by focussing on the most popular favela films and a specific type of tours (community based) this research's transferability for studies in other countries where 'slum' tourism is present, could provide the same remarks. Thus, focussing on case to case, this research is generalisable for other studies.

3. The Cinematic Favela

Although this article highlights films about favelas from the 21st century, the favela as a cultural landscape in film is not a brand-new 'thing'. Stuart Hall (1997) noted that culture is established through the production and exchange of meaning between members of a society[4], making it important to focus on studies of representation as it connects meaning and language to a specific culture (HALL, 1997). In addition to Hall, Guacira Louro (2008) emphasised that the notion of and access to 'reality' can be accomplished through the representations and images of the world. In Rio de Janeiro's case this caused the favela to enter the 'picture' of cinematic language. Due to the rapid urbanisation of Rio after World War II, favelas were already visible on many hillsides of the city. Unavoidably favelas became part of postcard Rio and thus part of Rio's culture - to displeasure of many (VALLADARES, 2005; DAVIS, 2006).

The depiction of favelas in earlier days can be divided in two groups: the ones that show a romanticised image of the favela as a spatial background in their narratives and the ones that highlighted social issues related to favelas. The first group glamorise poverty as they display poverty as non-problematic in which misery seems to be no element in the movie and thus ignoring the actual problems (BENTES, 2003). Jonathon Grasse (2004) argues that for example *Orfeu Negro* (1959), carries an Eurocentric vision of an exotic carnivalesque black community, emphasising their positive inclusion in society, due to the governmental support of the director by President Kubitschek. These attempts to 'propagate inclusion' can be seen as an attempt to create or reproduce a nations collective imaginary, which is not surprising for the Brazilian film industry due to their dependency on state funding and incentives. This was already visible during Vargas' regime in the 1930s displaying the favela on film screen mainly as a setting for lively cultural activities (samba and Carnaval) which were programmatical-

[4] Seen from a postmodern perspective: the global society.

ly used to construct the myth of an inclusive national identity (HEISE, 2012; PEIXOTO, 2007).

As a response to these glamorised often state-subsidised favela films, a new type of productions started to grow in the 1950s. This latter group became known as the Cinema Novo films, officially not an organised movement but a genre that welcomed all types of filming and editing work that dealt with contemporary popular subjects in a simple, direct and non-dramatic manner. Cinema Novo became characteristic for its independency, low-budget filmmaking and principles of Italian neorealism: shooting on location, using non-professional actors and touching upon contemporary subjects (JOHSON, STAM, 1995). One of Cinema Novo's founding fathers, Glauber Rocha[5] (1982), summarised that 'the aesthetic of hunger' is at the heart of these movies. The Cinema Novo films focus on the miserable plight of the marginals of society, with a focus on poor Afro-Brazilians while championing the richness of their lives (e.g. Carnaval and soccer).

Despite the abrupt 'death' of Cinema Novo due to a disconnection with the broader audience, the favelas have reoccured on the cinematic screen and not only in Brazil this time. Although these contemporary directors as well followed the principles of Italian neorealism (City of God and City of Men by using non-professional actors from the favelas and shooting on location and Elite Squad mainly shooting on location), changes in cinematic language and landscape are visible which have followed the course of political and societal 'developments' throughout time. Media and society only really started paying attention to favelas when the cocaine business flourished and directly affected daily life of middle and high class citizens in the 1970s (NAGIB, 2003). This offers an explanation to why the 'aesthetics of hunger' has shifted towards the 'aesthetic of violence', in which turf wars, drug factions and violence dominate the screen (PEIXOTO, 2007).

4. Even the Best Intentions

Based on published interviews with the contemporary directors, the directors all claim to follow the principles of Italian neorealism as they mention their motivations for the films.

[5] His most influential movies were *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (1964) and *Terra em Transe (*1967). This latter movie, focussing on extreme repression and political betrayal in an imaginary country, was forbidden on grounds of 'tarnishing the image of Brazil' according to the military regime.

Director José Padilha, claims that the *Elite Squad* sequence is part of his trilogy on urban violence in Brazilian cities. *Ônibus 174* (2002) was his first production of the trilogy. According to Padilha, the documentary elaborates on the state's indifference towards poor people which can lead to the creation of violent criminals. *Elite Squad 1* was meant to explain how the state's indifference towards law-enforcement agencies can result in corrupt law-enforcement officers and police brutality and *Elite Squad 2* was meant to explain the reasons behind the state ignoring the poor and the corrupt police (SINGER, 2011).

After the premiere at the Cannes Film festival of *City of God* in 2002, director Fernando Meirelles has sought to use the film's success as a platform to focus the world's attention on the favelas. In an online interview with Slant Magazine he explains his attempts of political activism. In the first place, he wanted to show the favelas from an inside point of view, rather than the middle-class point of view (GONZALEZ, 2003).

According to Paulo Morelli in an interview with IndieWire (2008), he realised the issue of fatherhood in the favelas after wrapping up *City of Men*'s second season:

> "*they project fatherhood onto the most powerful person in the favela, those with money, girls, gold chains and famous brand sneakers - in other words the drug dealer. So we decided to make a film about the affects of the lack of fathers*".

However, film analysts have said that the violence as depicted[6] is more oriented to an American tradition of entertainment rather than Brazil's social transformation (JAGUARIBE, 2004). The aesthetics of hunger has shifted towards the incorporation of local themes (trafficking, urban violence & favelas) to a transnational aesthetic. Post-MTV language that forms a basis for the adrenaline rush, creating a Latin-American neorealism and brutalism that follows the core basis of pleasure and efficacy of North-American action films, "*where violence and its stimuli are almost in the order of hallucination, an imperative and sovereign delight in seeing, inflicting and suffering violence*" (ROBERTO, 2007:33). Although the first phase of Cinema Novo showed the harsh reality of life, a certain optimistic outlook was always included (RIST, 2005). Whereas the contemporary favela films lack this optimism as they show an extremely dystopian and brutal society.

Joseph Campbell (2008) states that every Hollywood film includes typical archetypes, of whom one is the 'hero type'. Despite many different types of he-

[6] In *Elite Squad* and *City of God*.

roes, the hero is characterised as someone who sacrifices himself for others. As Rafter (2000) has mentioned, the most successful formula is the criminal hero who dies in the end to pay for his sins. Interestingly enough, Padilha claims the 'cop hero' to be original as he comments in an interview the year of *Ônibus 174*'s release; "*everyone was talking about how the theme was overdone, but this kind of cinema was only showed from the perspective of dealers and marginal characters, never from a police standpoint*" (The Weinstein Company, 2008). According to Padilha: "*a cop had never had the lead role in a Brazilian movie before Elite Squad [in Brazil]. Which is crazy! If you look at American movies, that's almost every film*" (SINGER, 2011). Hinting to Padilha's American-schooled direction as a filmmaker.

These same arguments are made about Meirelles way of directing *City of God*. Due to comparisons with Tarantino's way of portraying violence (spectacular and funny), Meirelles' finds City of God' depiction of violence the opposite: "*I think there's a certain morality there, every time I had an opportunity to show violence, I tried to avoid showing it on purpose. I don't think crime is glamorised in the film*" (Slant Magazine, 2003). With regards to the MTV-editing Meirelles explains that he wanted to show as if the government was loosing its control on the favelas through the 'chaotic editing'. Against the criticism on the glamorisation of poverty, he explains that he wanted to show the favela as it is: "*walking around you hear samba everywhere, it's a fun place to be. The film tries to capture that same feeling*" (Slant Magazine, 2003).

5. Analysis: The Elected Enemies

Although the previous paragraph clarifies the intentions of the directors, the specific way of framing the societal issues has only contributed to the stigmatisation of favela residents. *City of God* tells the tale of favela *City of God* between the 1960s and 1980s based on the semi-autobiographical novel written by Paulo Lins under the same title. Although the book explains the historical development of the favela, shaking of its rural characteristics and gangs' complex role in establishing social order (NAGIB, 2003), the film focuses on drug trafficking, turf wars and other related violence that dominates today's mainstream media coverage of favelas (OOSTERBAAN, 2009; ROSAS-MORENO, 2014). The same thing can be said about *City of Men*. Despite its efforts to focus on the lives of fatherless boys, the film is dominated by the use of stereotypical gangster histrionics.

5.1. Youngsters become Gangsters

City of God ironically touches upon two opposing criminological theories of how youth become involved in crime. The first theory suggests some criminals are born to be bad (like the psychopath Dadinho who changes his name to Zé Pequeno when he grows older), drawing on outdated theories of the 'biological criminal' (LOMBROSO, 1911). This idea is reflected by the film's narrator when Dadinho kills for the first time: "*He always wanted to rule City of God… That night he satisfied his thirst for blood*". This framing generates the idea that those who live in favelas can not be saved or rehabilitated as they are born bad.

Furthermore, the film hits towards a second theory which states that criminal behaviour is influenced by the nature of the immediate environment (places and people) in which it occurs, as is implied when Zé forces another child to kill a toddler. Such images contribute to the stigmatisation of favelas as criminogenic places, suggesting they inherently produce violence.

In all four films, images of black youth with guns, either using or selling marijuana or cocaine, are a repeated visual for the audience. *City of God* and *City of Men* both include favela residents that seek to remain out of the drug business, resulting in more humane story lines about those particular lives. In contrast, aside from a few shots of innocent residents in a BOPE police raid, the *Elite Squad* sequence mainly shows inhabitants involved in gangs and violence. In all four films, the image of favela residents carrying guns is more prominent than the short shots of working residents (in *City of God* and *City of Men*) or innocent bystanders (in *Elite Squad*).

Although adolescents with guns or walkie-talkies are present in parts of certain favelas, for audiences who only know the favela from the outside through media or film, crime becomes decontextualised. This is problematic as these films create the image that the majority of favela residents is involved in gang-related issues, whereas in reality less than 1% are involved in trafficking (Catcomm, 2016). Despite critical intentions of the directors, this framing leads to a reinforcement of negative stereotypes about favela residents involved in crime.

Moreover, *City of God*'s final scene plants seeds in the viewer's head that the worst is yet to come: it shows a group of young favela boys aged five to seven walking through the favela after they killed Zé, creating a "death list." According to some analyses of the film, these boys grow up to form the now feared Red Command (CV), as this gang is known to have a death list (ROBBERSON, 2015). The film's implied direct connections to reality today contribute to a real culture of fear among audiences.

5.2. Systemic Exclusion

Despite reinforcing particular stereotypes, these films do acknowledge some broader aspects of systemic inequality, in particular economic and political exclusion. The way and the extent to which these issues are touched upon differ per film (through voice-over narration, specific scenes or dialogues of the characters). However, some of these acknowledgements are incomplete or misleading. In the opening scene of *City of God* the narrator provides insight[7] about the history of the *City of God* favela accompanied by images of black Brazilians arriving by foot.

Relative to the other films, *City of God* includes more historical perspective. However, the narrator's quote is the only time the narrator criticises the government and "the rich and powerful" this directly. Interestingly, he blames the relocations on flooding and arson, even though the governor of that time, Carlos Lacerda, is well-known for eradicating favelas in the South Zone and relocating residents to newly built public housing in *City of God* and other areas on Rio's outskirts (PORTES, 1979). Furthermore, the film only touches upon relocating in the past whereas the current government is still active in forced removals of favela residents (in light of the Olympic Games of 2016). The previous provides a first hint towards the enemy discourse by primary criminalisation through repressive legislation (ZAFFARONI, OLIVEIRA, 2008).

The isolation of the *City of God* favela is emphasised in *City of God* by not including any establishing shots outside the favela, as opposed to the other films that show the proximity of the South Zone favelas to the 'formal' city. This isolation is paradoxical as on the one hand, they are excluded due to a lack of transportation and other basic services by the government, whereas on the other hand, the lower class living in the favelas carry out jobs for the richer South Zone, the favelas have always been connected to the formal city.

This 'socio-economic relationship' between the 'rich and the poor' dates back to the era of slavery. Slaves used to have jobs on the fields, sugar mills, mines and worked as servants. In the city they had even more unpleasant jobs such as bearers of people/food/garbage/sewage, construction work, street vendors and vegetable stand operators (CUNHA, 2009). Those who were lighter of colour

[7] *"We came to City of God hoping to find paradise. Many families were homeless due to flooding and acts of arson in other favelas. The bigwigs in the government didn't joke around. Homeless? Off to City of God! There was no electricity, paved streets or transportation. But for the rich and powerful our problems didn't matter. We were too far removed from the picture postcard image of Rio de Janeiro."*

were dominant in positions in domestic service and as supervisors, and the darker the skin the heavier the jobs (FAUSTO, FAUSTO, 2014). Nowadays the majority of favela residents still carry out unskilled labour, which is reflected upon in the films as those who are not involved in drug trafficking work in the kitchen and housekeeping of a motel, as street vendors, nannies for richer families, motor-taxi drivers, in supermarkets and in private security (the latter reflects on the prominent business of private security in Brazil's big cities (CALDEIRA, 1996)).

When comparing these contemporary jobs with those of Afro-Brazilians or African slaves during colonialism, it becomes clear that there has never been a true break with colonialism (Mignolo, 2011). Anna[8], a *cria*[9] from Cantagalo favela talks about this legacy of colonialism:

Rather than challenging the status quo, the films reflect on the type of jobs predominantly carried out by the favela population. At the same time the films show differential inclusion rather than exclusion, denying the high unemployment rates among favela residents (Arias & Barnes, 2016) and thus denying more structural problems related to the lack of equal economic opportunities.

In the *Elite Squad* sequence, semi-fictional productions showing the daily operations of BOPE, based on the political book by anthropologist Luiz Eduardo Soares and two former BOPE captains in 2006 (Soares, Pimentel & Batista, 2006), the narrator explains in his voice-over when Matias, an Afro-Brazilian law student (and police-officer, who later joins BOPE to replace captain Nascimento), walks into his lecture: "*in Brazil, a poor black man doesn't have many opportunities. But Matias didn't care, he wanted to be a lawyer so he enrolled in Rio's best law colleges*" (Nascimento, Elite Squad 1). This quotation, however, is contradictory: on the one hand, he explains the political exclusion as poor black men do not have equal opportunities, while on the other hand, he implies that it is easy to join the best law college as long as you want it. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done (Raul, personal conversation, 4/5/2016).

[8] *"Cantagalo was a settlement that started to grow at the end of slavery. As they still had no rights, they could live close to the jobs for bosses who were their ex-owners* (…) *they [the rich] need us here close to them to do the jobs they don't want to do (…) every middle and high class family has a maid, they pay them a shit salary of 880 Reais for 6-7 days of work per week. We still have this heritage from the slaves… more than 100 years after slavery, we are still keeping this culture that the black maid is the mother of the kids of the white boss. It's cute in a romantic way but it's very sad at the same time."*
(Anna, interview, 8/6/2016)

[9] Born and raised in a favela.

Despite public elementary and high schools being free and open for everyone, this does not say anything about the quality (Vera Batista, interview, 27/6/2016). Teachers either receive little money or salaries remain unpaid, causing teachers to prefer jobs at private schools, which is a thriving market as the majority of middle and high-class families place their children on private schools. In addition to the lack of teachers, teachers do not always arrive at schools (especially in the North Zone favelas) due to shootings or when salary remains unpaid, they remain at home (Andréa, personal conversation, 2016; Renan, interview, 30/6/2016). Thus, the quality of the public education system is not made to prepare children for the difficult matriculations of public universities whereas the private system does this (MACHADO, 2013).

Luca, a *cria* from Chapéu Mangueira, studying Pedagogy, acknowledges that the education is a tool of domination in today's system due to the above mentioned reasons and the disconnection between favela youth and the educational system[10], supporting a Eurocentric education system that pushes forward dominant hegemonic thoughts (MORAÑA, DUSSEL & JÁUREGUI, 2008).

City of God also 'hints' towards education when Buscapé tells his brother that he only goes to school because he dislikes physical work. And in *City of Men*, the main character Laranjinha[11] answers when someone asks him how school is: "*great, they're on strike, so that's great*" (Laranjinha, City of Men), emphasising a certain indifference towards the importance of education by favela children.

Despite much improvement during the governments of presidents Lula and Dilma (RENAULT, MELLO, ARAUJO, 2016) as: "*10 years ago nobody from the favela would ever have dared to dream about going to university*", the opportunities for urban poor remain unequal (Caio, personal conversation, 21/6/2016). As all films depict children in uniform on their way to school or at school, the films create a different reality in which the government provides adequate education. By using implicit arguments of 'agency' through different narratives ('too lazy', 'as long as you work hard enough') the inhabitants of favelas can be blamed for their own lack of trying.

Following the line of argumentation by Ajit Bhalla & Frédéric Lapeyre (1997), the film's show to a minimum extent the political and economical exclusion in which the government appears to be a vehicle of a society's dominant class[12], denying citizenship and equal opportunities for those isolated in City of

[10] The educational system lacks *favela* history and does not use examples that relate to the *favela* (Luca, interview, 21/6/2016).
[11] Laranjinha is Portuguese for little orange.
[12] In Rio de Janeiro/Brazil the rich & powerful middle and high class.

God. Despite the film's display of these issues - mainly implicitly, the film does not truly criticise this state negligence.

5.3. Fuelling Violence: Social Orders & Corruption

There is an existing academic discourse with regards to the governance of Rio's favelas (ARIAS, 2006). On the one hand, many academics (and media) argue that Rio is a divided city where the state institution's rule of law failed in the favelas, resulting in illegally armed groups taking control in the favelas and establishing parallel power through criminal governance, creating 'states within a state' (BERLINER, LADO, 1995). This parallel state structure offers an alternative rule of law where local gangs provide housing, employment, mediation, primary needs or other help when necessary. In exchange for this help, the local population 'protects' the local gang by not talking to the police (GOLDSTEIN, 2013).

This perspective of a parallel city is in particular visible in *City of God* and *City of Men*. In *City of God* one of the first scenes provides the viewer visuals of the Tender Trio robbing a gas truck in the 1960s, whereafter the inhabitants enthusiastically carry the gas cylinders back to their houses (providing the inhabitants with primary needs). Followed by a scene when the police is looking for the Tender Trio for the motel robbery and arrives at a bar in *City of God* where the Tender Trio has crashed a car 'nobody saw or heard anything': providing the viewer how the structure with regards to the local gang works. Later on in the 1970s the social order is explained through the voice-over narration[13] and the scene that follows after Zé Pequeno has already warned the Runts for robbing in the favela:

The scene that follows is considered as the most shocking scene (Edelstein, 2003) as it provides the audience the violent consequence of not following favela rules: one of the Runts gets shot in his foot and another Runt is murdered, functioning as a warning. Followed up in another scene where Zé Pequeno's violent enforcement of rules is illustrated: "*anyone who kills in my favela has to die*". The reason behind the favela rules are presented through a dialogue when

[13] "*By now he [Zé Pequeno] was the most respected bandit of the neighbourhood (…) the runts were kids who didn't respect the laws of the favela, but they didn't know the favela had a boss now. The city had become much safer for residents, there were hardly any hold-ups now, you just had to go see Zé Pequeno now.*" (Buscapé, *City of God*)

Zé Pequeno talks to Sandro Cenoura[14], another local boca dealer: "*the runts are screwing our security! The police comes around and that's bad for business, tell the kids that in my favela no one robs or rapes*" (Zé Pequeno, City of God).

The parallel governance of Madrugadão's[15] local gang in *City of Men* can be found in several scenes. When the gang decides to go down to the beach in the first scene of the film, they walk through the favela when the football coach asks when the soccer shirts will come for the boys (providing goods for the inhabitants). Later in the film, when an inhabitant of the favela, Fiel, has stolen an mp3 player, resulting in the police coming to the favela, Madrugadão decides to punish him and sends him up the favela to be killed[16]. After the scene of Fiel being escorted up the favela by Madrugadão's right-hand, the scene switches to Ace entering a little favela shop, followed by a gun shot, to which Ace says indifferently: "*one less*" (Ace, *City of God*).

Although *City of God* and *City of Men* show both sides of the coin of the social order (the benefits for the community and the violent enforcement of rules), *Elite Squad 1* only shows the 'bad side of the coin'. At first the 'rich kids' working for the NGO in the favela explain to Matias that the youth hanging around the building with guns have 'social conscience', whereafter later in the film, the gang feels cheated by them for letting Matias come into the favela, providing the viewer with a brutal scene of the violent deaths of these 'rich kids' by placing one of them in old car tires and burning him.

This scene reflects on knowledge about the favelas' 'microwaves', specific places in favelas where punishment by death follows for specific crimes (such as heavy robbery, rape and murder). According to sociologist Vera Batista and criminologist Thiago Araujo, many of these microwaves have disappeared as a result of the pacifications of specific favelas. This does not mean that gangs to not enforce the favela rules anymore, it happens with a low profile (Thiago Araujo, interview, 30/62016; Vera Batista, interview, 27/6/2016). 'Favela' rules and its positive and negative impact exist in all favelas under the command of gangs. However, due to a shift to an outsiders law-enforcement perspective in *Elite Squad,* the more 'positive aspects' are ignored and the depiction only contributes to the dehumanisation of favela residents and - again - ignoring the structural reasons of how and why these gangs were able to take power.

[14] The character's name in English is Carrot.
[15] The character's name in English is Midnight.
[16] The thief is not really killed by the right-hand, but this only becomes clear later in the film, leading to the turf war between Madrugadão and his right-hand turning on him.

The above mentioned perspective on the gangs functioning as a parallel government, ignore existing ties between governmental officials, civic leaders and drug dealers that form the basis of the parallel polities that emerged in the favelas which finds its origin from practices of clientelism that historically dominated Rio's politics (LEEDS, 1996). As the extent of the corruption in Rio de Janeiro (and Brazil as a whole) goes beyond the scope of this research, this article will only shortly elaborate on the corruption as presented in the films, forming a stepping stone for the legitimisation of extreme repression by BOPE (e.g. GEDDES, NETO, 1992; SILVA, 2013).

As only a few short sentences by characters hint towards police corruption in *City of God* (through voice-over) and *City of Men* (in scenes with Madrugadão's gang), these references provide a 'rotten-apple perspective', ignoring the extent to which the governmental structure is systemic corrupt. The *Elite Squad* sequence includes the corrupt system more in-depth as it offers images of the military police selling weaponry to local gangs, moving bodies to other districts to avoid higher negative statistics and more investigations and the establishment of militia groups of corrupt politicians and law-enforcement officers. Colonel Íbis Silva Pereira, Head of the General Command of the Military Police Office, admits that fiction comes close to reality due to governmental policies and police actions thinking in terms of war.

Despite representations reflecting reality, the dominant focus in the sequence of such corruption is directly connected with local gangs, fuelling a certain perspective that legitimises BOPE's battle against these local gangs and their connections with the 'rotten apple' officers rather than questioning the system as a whole. Apart from the favela, the corrupt civil and military police are framed as an internal enemy for Brazil's society supported by the narrator's voice-over: "*we're surrounded by enemies, real enemies*".

Although *Elite Squad 2* reveals the political corruption: "*in Brazil, elections are businesses and votes are the most valuable commodity in the favelas. Soon the Governor realised the militia expanded the Governor's constituency*" (voice-over Nascimento, Elite Squad 2), the scenes appear with happy diegetic music, celebrations and happy and careless people in the favela, framed as if the residents freely cooperate with the militias. Whereas in reality favelas dominated by the militias in real life are completely dominated by fear for death and more importantly, the film excludes that it is not only the militia that 'buys votes' but rather

the whole political system that depends on votes, confirmed by a former consultant of President Lula. A local resident [17]explains how this vote buying happens.

Despite the film touching on the political system and showing a more 'rotten barrel perspective' on politce and political corruption (LERSCH, MIECZKOWSKI, 2005), they present a brighter side of the militias than reality, which leads to – taking into consideration that the cinema is mainly visited by middle and high class Brazilians – the fact that people only see the negative side for politics: as if the favela practically gladly helps this corrupted system. Taking these different representations of corruption into consideration, it implicitly frames and therefore blames the favela for all wrongdoing rather than truly question the political structures that form the basis of all the issues in the first place.

5.4. A war zone: legitimising repressive violence

The constant separation between 'us' and 'them', either in daily life, media or in this case through cinematic language, fuels the culture of fear in which favela residents are seen as the internal enemy (ZAFFARONI, OLIVEIRA, 2013). The previous analysis illustrates how cinema provides the foundation for the favela as an enemy of the state. Rather than questioning the hegemonic ideas in Brazil about the exclusion of favelas and the reasons behind it, the films reinforce the exclusion and focus on demonizing the favelas and its inhabitants, creating more distinction by highlighting the favela as a deviant threat to society mainly embodied in the image of drug trafficking.

The films illustrate "the favela" as an extremely disorganised place hinting towards Chicago school's social disorganisation theory (PARK, BURGESS, 1984), in which they depict the urban space dominated by male protagonists and the violence that rules their lives. This chaos is emphasised through the fact-paced style of filming, the rapid cuts between shots, the samba, rap and rock soundtracks and the pace of editing (OLIVEIRA, 2009).

17 *"They [political parties] only come to the favela to get their votes. They ask everybody, kiss everybody, give things. You know that right? They provide baskets with food, they put everything together and give it to locals in exchange for votes. And people take it, because they need that stuff and they vote."*
(Local Resident of a South Zone Favela)

Despite the depiction of a disorganised place, the films show a certain amount of organisation among the gangs[18], varying from the whole process and hierarchy of the drug business (in *City of God*), the organisation of a turf war (in *City of Men*) to the violence orchestrated by gang members (in *Elite Squad*) contributing to a legitimisation for law-enforcement and governmental forces to fight against these 'organised' groups through extreme repression. The portrayal of the conflict and violence in the favelas is associated with images of the favela as a war zone in *Elite Squad 1 & 2*, fuelling the culture of fear through the enemy discourse (ZAFFARONI, OLIVEIRA, 2013).

This 'war zone' perspective is enforced by the language use of the narrator (e.g. war, the enemy) and by the choice of positioning the camera in helicopters when BOPE raids the favela (see figure 5.4.1.). This creates a relationship between the conflicts in the favela with war by associating the film style with images of wars in Vietnam or Iraq and at the same time keeping distance between the viewer and the actions, ignoring the negative impact for innocent bystanders (MacDONALD, 2012).

5.5. Death over victory: the glorious BOPE

Policies of punitive containment that were pursued by political elites as a complement to the deregulation of the economy in the 1990s led, from the penalisation to the militarisation of urban marginality, under which favela residents are treated as state enemies (WACQUANT, 2008). Taking into consideration that Elite Squad 1 is placed in the time-setting of 1997, this militarisation is reflected on in the films as the narrative provides information about the increased amount of BOPE officers. Although negative aspects of racial profiling by law-enforcement are presented in *City of God*[19] and in *Elite Squad 1*[20], glamorisation of the skulls (as BOPE officers are referred to) and their violence behaviour, is highly present in the Elite Squad sequence.

Colonel Íbis explains that to understand this glamorisation, it is impossible to ignore Brazil's obsession with repression in which policies of safety are centred

[18] These groups, however, should be seen as a loose network of local armed groups, all dominating a small community, affiliated to wider networkers (the '*comandos*'). Despite the capability of these local groups to mobilise significant forces, they lack centralised planning and mainly function as horizontal networks offering support when rival groups attack (Misse, 2003).

[19] Police kill an innocent Afro-Brazilian who starts to run (assuming he is guilty, followed by framing him by putting a gun in his hand).

[20] Where in one of the Fraga's lectures someone argues that the police focusses on black people.

around war and confrontation. These public security policies have been historically reduced to simple police action in which violence has always been a valid rule, a dialogue in society (Íbis, interview, 7/7/2016). These policies that are solely based on police actions with violent confrontations are stimulated by a warrior cult (Íbis, interview, 7/7/2016). Sadly, as a result of the war on drugs, Brazil has militarised its police forces increasingly in which they have been fighting the war on drugs for 40 years, only leading to an increase of violence as a result of the perspective of war (Íbis, 2016; Vera Batista, 2016).

The *Elite Squad* films portray the elite squad as an uncorrupted division of the military police, fighting favelas and corrupt military police officers. Distinction of this elite division from the 'regular' police is done through the use of symbols: the black uniforms, the abundant use of the logo, the BOPE anthem[21] as soundtrack, the BOPE officers at training singing the song and the shoutouts "*Skulls*!" by BOPE officers. The image of an uncorrupted squad, legitimises the brutal forces (torture through bagging and killing to obtain information) despite its prohibition (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights & Labor, 2007).

This uncorrupted perspective is emphasised by giving insight in Nascimento's life, in which he struggles to keep his family together (leading to a divorce which is visible in *Elite Squad* 2) and by showing his small house that contains old furniture. The images provide the viewer the idea that he does this to fight for a bigger cause - saving society. And as criminologist Thiago Araujo analysed the film, the film supports the argument that "it is not the rich who kill the people from the favela" (Thiago Araujo, interview, 30/6/2016). Language in the film and in the anthem of BOPE provide a legitimisation for extreme violence by providing associations with war, combats in which violence becomes the 'necessary evil' to combat against the enemy.

Following Wacquant's (2007) arguments about territorial stigmatisation, spatial disgrace of favelas has become autonomised, regardless its close ties be-

21 English translation of the anthem: "Man in black, what is your mission? To invade the *favela* and leave bodies on the ground. Do you know who I am? I'm the cursed dog of war, I'm trained to kill. Even if it costs my life, the mission will be carried out, wherever it may be. Spreading violence, death and terror. I'm the combatant, with his face behind a mask, the black and yellow patch that i wear on my arms, makes me a being unlike others: a messenger of death. I can prove that I am strong, if you live to tell the tale. I'm a hero of the Nation, it's joy, it's joy that i feel in my heart. For a new day has dawned, for me to carry out my mission. I'm going to infiltrate a favela, my rifle in my hang, to fight against the enemy and sow destruction. If you ask from where I come and what my mission is: I bear death and despair and total destruction. The blood runs cold in my veins, and has frozen my heart. We have neither feelings nor compassion. We love our comrades and hate the conventionals. Commandos, commandos, Just what are you? We are only cursed dogs of war, only savage, dogs of war" (Soares, Pimentel & Batista, 2006).

tween the favela as a place and 'spoiled identities' based on ethnicity and class position.

With *Elite Squad 1 & 2*, a shift in the existing body of cinematic work on the favela occurred as these films shifted their attention from the inhabitants of the favela themselves towards forces of the state, only using the favela as a cinematic landscape of criminality and violence (MacDONALD, 2012).

Even less than *City of God* and *City of Men, Elite Squad 1 & 2* only touch upon social exclusion based on ethnicity or class distinction through delicate hints[22], which results in depicting the favela more as the stage for violence and crime as a whole. As a result of the constant images of (undefined) youth carrying guns, the constant association of people taking or selling drugs in or through the favela, gunshots at daylight supported with ominous non-diegetic music creating dramatic effects and ominous music when BOPE enters the favelas, the films create the negative connotation of the favela as a dangerous place in general.

6. The Real Deal

Nicole Rafter (2010) mentioned that films reflect our ideas about social, economic and political questions, visible in the favela as a cinematic landscape in the first place, but meanwhile these films also shape our way of thinking about these issue.

The direct effect for the BOPE force itself was a result of the realistic representation of the BOPE training camp due to close cooperation between the director and the two BOPE officers who wrote the book. According to criminologist Thiago Araujo the trainings:

> *"Are exactly like the film, and even worse. They are building a machine, my friend tried to get into BOPE and told me that they forced him to have sex with a pig. Why? 'Just for fun, to see if I would do it'. Theoretically to dehumanise the officers and train them into a murder weapon for the state that kills on commando. They are trained to be good in torturing."* (Thiago Araujo, interview, 30/6/2016)

22 Mainly when the human rights militant Fraga gives a press conference in which he speaks about ethnic and social cleansing and during his lecture in which the class discusses "*impunity for some, but not for the low-working class*".

According to Colonel Íbis, some parts of the training were taken out of the program for new BOPE officers. The training module that is removed, is the scene in Elite Squad 1 where the officers are eating of the floor. Due to the impact of these images, related to concentration camps, the government has taken out this module (Íbis, interview, 7/7/2016). It shows that films do not only reflect on societal issues, but they can also influence society due to their aesthetics of realism, the 'shock of the real', that causes specific aspects to be put on the political agenda (JAGUARIBE, 2004).

6.1. Warrior Culture

Culture of fear studies have pointed out that popular fascination revolts around 'the violent' (RAFTER, 2010). The popularity of the films can be found in Brazil's ideology (read: obsession) of repression and a culture of violence connected to a culture of fear (KOONINGS, KRUJIT, 1999). As Nascimento explains in *Elite Squad* "*violence should be fought with violence*", can be considered as a true reflection of how the majority of Brazil's society thinks according to sociologist Vera Batista Batista and Colonel Íbis.

It is not only among police officers, law-enforcement institutions or right-wing supporters that answers find their basis in violence. A certain warrior hero cult started to grow after the 90s, when violence was most prominent. Officially, Rio de Janeiro's Catholic protector is Saint Sebastian, however, unofficially people celebrate Saint Jorge, the warrior as protector of the city (Íbis, interview 7/7/2016; Jesús, conversations, 2016).

Wondering who would join the police, in a country that mistrusts the police on such a high level, Colonel Íbis provides a disturbing answer which fits into the picture of a Brazil that is preoccupied with a culture of violence and class struggles:

> "Although many people [from the favela] won't express their desire for fear of retaliation by drug traffickers, most of the police officers are Afro-Brazilians from the suburbs and favelas who see this as their ticket to a higher class. In addition to that, it's the same indoctrination as during the dictatorship: saving the society at the hands of an enemy, which was then an external enemy [communism] and now the internal enemy [drug trafficking]."

To my question on why people think extreme measures of repression is an efficient policy despite extreme statistics of murder (MAGALONI et al., 2015), Colonel Íbis supports sociologist Vera Batista Batista's perspective on the continuation of colonial thoughts:

> "it's about being visible, either as hero of the traficantes or hero for the police department. Sadly, the answer is that these deaths don't matter, the profile is the same for criminals and officers: young black people. And they simply don't matter, this is a continuation of a slave society, because this would not happen if all the 'playboys' from Zona Sul would be officers and get killed."

The invisibility nurtures the war against drugs, as people do not only join the forces to earn money, but to be 'someone'. After Elite Squad 1 Colonel Íbis noticed an increase of interest in becoming a BOPE officers among his students. He calls this the 'Bopelarisation[23]', as a result of the film functioning as a recruitment advertisement. He researched this increase and out of 320 students, 1/3 wanted to join BOPE[24] purely based on what they saw in the film. Sadly, Colonel Íbis acknowledges that: "Elite Squad achieved to capture the young public as a result of this warrior cult". As a result of the focus and creation of a militarised police policy, the government does not want people to think but to act, to which he invited 13 philosophers to talk to his students, to make them think about violence from a different perspective by questioning it, unfortunately many still prefer to join the BOPE (Íbis, interview, 7/7/2016).

As Rafter (2000) argues that films carry a two-fold argument as they, on the one hand, criticise some aspects, on the other hand, the offer solace or resolution by showing triumph over corruption and brutality. The culture of violence and the glamorisation of BOPE officers by mainstream society became visible when during torture scenes people applauded in the cinemas (Vera Batista, interview, 27/6/2016). Colonel Íbis visited four cinemas in different neighbourhoods of Rio, where the same reactions on torture scenes were visible (Íbis, interview, 7/7/2016).

As a result of this knowledge, I was surprised about the positive reactions of favela residents. This might be explained as a result of the fact that cinema theatres are far from being popular entertainment for Brazilians. Due to high prices

[23] The spectacularisation of the portrayal of BOPE officers being uncorrupted hero's of the society (Íbis, interview, 7/7/2016).
[24]Before the film this consisted of approximately 10-25 students (Íbis, interview, 7/7/2016).

for tickets it is a recreation for middle and high classes, whereas residents of the favela watch most of the films via (pirate) cable TV (Oliveira, 2009). Taking into consideration that the *Elite Squad* 1's original tape was stolen before the official release, resulting in the film becoming a cultural phenomenon before its official release as it was watched by 11 million Brazilians, it is highly possible that the residents never came to know that people applauded during torture scenes of favela residents by BOPE (Eduardo, interview, 3/6/2016).

Apart from the film contributing to an ideology of repression, smaller effects in daily life have occurred. The first Carnaval after the film release, two samba schools used BOPE costumes in their parade and the best sold costume of that year was the BOPE outfit (Paiva, 2008). According to criminologist Thiago Araujo many middle and high class groups of friends were dressed in BOPE outfits, singing the song non-stop and shouting "*SKULLS*!" to everyone crossing their path. Leading to abhorrence among many favela inhabitants, as Juan (among other respondents) explains: "they [BOPE] only come in to kill people in the favela. They don't come in houses in Zona Sul, their job is to kill us, in the favela, and to not talk to us" (Juan, interview, 8/6/2016).

Another sign of the popularisation and glamorisation of BOPE is visible in paper stores throughout Rio where it is possible to buy little statues representing jobs (e.g. lawyer, doctor, dentist) to which the BOPE officer is added (Thiago Araujo, interview, 30/6/2016). And even Brazilian companies ask BOPE officers for motivational lectures as they wish to adopt BOPE's mission: "A mission given is a mission completed" (PAIVA, 2008).

This popularisation and glorification of the BOPE among the dominant society, illustrates that films can be seen as cultural projects that serve the understanding of societal issues by the ideology of the dominant society (Yar, 2010). For many Brazilians the popularity of the films indicate that the crisis of public security can only be resolved through violence (PAIVA, 2008).

6.2. Educating Outsiders: a big fat D

Depending on the socio-economic status and the degree of relationship to the environment, people perceive these places differently (COSTA, 2013). From this perspective, it is understandable that postmodern film theorists, in which globalisation plays a prominent role, argue that a film cannot carry one specific meaning.

Although opinions about films varied per person, several of the interviewed residents of favelas share the same opinion in which they find it a pity that only the darker negative side of the favela is highlighted, whereas the favela is not exclusively a criminal culture. Despite this sadness, they do acknowledge that the representations of that side of the favela are reconstructed properly, but they are less happy that this has become the world's image on favelas. All inhabitants that I spoke to[25], had seen the films as "*they portray our lives, despite us not giving our 'approval' about it, but you can't fight the industry*" (Mary, interview, 10/6/2016). Following Rafter's (2010) line of argumentation, the films reflect ideas about social, economical and political issues but these films also shape the way of thinking of people who have never been to a favela. Diogo, a restaurant owner in Chapéu Mangueira, argues that the films are a starting point for the image of the favelas but that it is up to people to come into the favela and create their own opinion (Diogo, interview, 14/6/2016).

As earlier mentioned, surprisingly, residents responded rather positive about the *Elite Squad* sequence. As they experienced the focus on police corruption and political mechanisms as positive, because it represents reality of the brutality of police and a government who only comes into the favela making false promises to get votes, but rarely following up on these promises[26] (Cris, interview, 1/6/2016; Eduardo, interview, 3/6/2016; Maria, personal conversation, 2016).

As earlier mentioned, despite the films' reflections of actual social, economical and political issues surrounding the favelas, the depictions shape the way many people think about favelas. As with prison films, the pleasure in and popularity of films that depict the favelas and BOPE can be found in their claims of authenticity. Following Rafter's (2000) arguments, the genre offers the inside scoop, a window into the inaccessible but riveting world of the favela and the BOPE trainings. Apart from neorealist influences, claims of authenticity are made as *City of God* and *Elite Squad* start with 'based on a true story' or 'despite possible coincidences, this film is fictional'. In addition to that, *City of God* closes with journalistic images[27]. Due to such claims, the movies form an influential source of information (and misinformation) on what goes on in favelas (RAF-

[25] Informal interviewing, structured interviews & personal conversations throughout my stay in Rio.

[26] The false promises do not become clear in *Elite Squad* 2 as the dialogue between the Governor and militia officer seems to show that they are building things in the community.

[27] Pictures of the people that specific characters were based on; journalistic footage from the interview with Garotinho after he got caught.

TER, 2010). Through the American way of visualising violence, the focus of the films has shifted from the 'aesthetics of hunger' towards the 'cosmetics of hunger' (BENTES, 2003). Which has lead to a more 'approachable' glimpse inside the favela for foreigners in the form of entertainment.

Although global news representations of favelas go beyond the scope of this article, it was impossible to not include the influence that media has on foreigners before entering a favela. Every interviewed foreigners replied the question of what the favela is known for without hesitation:

> "*poor, uneducated criminals, drug dealers*" (John, interview, 9/5/2016); "*favela is just the epitome of poor and completely outside the society*" (Jef, interview, 10/5/2016); "*obviously really dangerous, gangs, very poor people and the living conditions are unfortunate*" (Laura, interview, 12/5/2016); "*a lot of crime is going on there*" (Anja, interview, 5/5/2016).

Stefan, an architecture student, confirms that the only news coverage in Germany is: "*about the violence coming in and out the favela, drug dealers being the bosses of the favelas, the wars between gangs and the police*" (STEFAN, 2016) and Mark, a military pilot from the UK, realises that: "*the only references in the UK about favelas have to do with anti-drugs operations, always violent coverage*" (Mark, interview, 2016).

However, when asked to give a more thorough description of a favela, I noticed the ideas, as presented by the media, were given colour by visuals from the films. Jef from the UK, explains that for him the stereotypes are:

> *"Drug trafficking and poor people, especially from watching movies like City of God, often, Afro-Brazilians involved in the drugs business with guns. It influenced me massively! After watching City of God you would never wanna step in there. It seems to be the most dangerous place on earth, perhaps the film exaggerated but it definitely contributes to how I think about the favela after already getting negative media coverage." (Jef, interview, 10/5/2016)*

Others provide descriptions that visualise the density of the favelas, close-knit communities that are created by itself (as in City of God), with a strong sense of community based on social orders where self-policing solves problems with severe measures rather than going to the police (based on *Elite Squad*'s repressive order against the NGO staff and *City of God* the silence against the po-

lice). They imagine that education is minimal, where children work from a very young age (based on *City of Men* and *City of God* presenting the main characters as youngsters already working) (Mark, interview, 10/5/2016; Emma, interview, 14/6/2016; Laura, interview, 12/5/2016; Jef interview, 10/5/2016). A clear example of images becoming reality is visible in a remark by Anja from Germany: "*it's really just like in the film, the creaking, way too loud, sound systems with echoing funk music*" (Anja, interview, 5/5/2016). Rather than saying that the film seems to reflect reality, the actual reality becomes a confirmation for images in films.

In all the given descriptions, crime and gangs are included which exposes the connection between already existing knowledge based on media coverage and the reinforcement of negative stereotypes in films. As Emma mentions: "*if a film only shows the criminals and bad stuff, it only reinforces the bad stereotypes. I think that's why my professor let us watch the tv-show City of Men, it's about the boys being not involved, so it gives a more balanced view*" (Emma, interview, 14/6/2016).

This impact of films connected with negative media coverage finds support in conflicting answers given by, Vilius, a tourist from former-soviet Lithuania, who explained that in Lithuania the only coverage on Brazil is positive (sports, tourism, Catholicism). As a result of Lithuania's history, people do not want to remember their violent history so they tend to avoid negative news. Thus, the film *City of God* was his 'first glimpse' into Rio's favelas of which he thought it to be a "*completely fictional Hollywood story*" (Vilius, interview, 28/5/2016). This illustrates that in countries where media coverage on favelas is (mainly) negative, people assume the images as presented in films are completely real images[28].

Despite police corruption being researched and spoken about in the media abundantly, the realistic representations of it in *Elite Squad*, increases the blurring lines between fiction and reality (RAFTER, 2010). Although law-enforcement officers as main characters in films is controversial for Brazilian cinema, the subject itself, corruption in general, can be considered as Brazil's public secret and can thus be seen as a reinforcement of hegemonic ideas. Whereas for foreigners, it seems rather controversial, providing counter-hegemonic images on the traditional 'good cops'. This illustrates the differing meaning that one specific film can carry (YAR, 2010).

What in American films and tv-shows on crime investigations is called 'the CSI-effect', could be called the 'corruption effect' in Brazilian films (Thiago Araujo, interview, 30/6/2016). Although the CSI-effect consists of two hypotheses: 1)

28 The films are based on true issues, however this is not the case for all *favelas* and all its inhabitants.

the suggestion that television programs and films exaggerating and glorifying forensic science affects the public and 2) that the CSI effect in turn affects trials (Schweitzer & Saks, 2007), I argue that the 'corruption effect' in Brazilian cinema (in combination with media coverage and by hearsay) affects how foreigners become influenced about the scale of corruption in Brazil[29]. The tourists give detailed explanations on what they think about the police in Rio: "*quite frankly I don't know what role the police play… I don't feel safer on the streets when they're there, they could as well not be there, I don't feel like they play any role in terms of influence*" (Laura, interview, 12/5/2016). In every description the link with corruption is made, as if they have experienced it themselves.

Whereafter they reply the question, on what their answers are based on, it appears to be based on preconceptions by hearsay and films. American tourist Emma acknowledges that depending on where she is:

> "*I feel safer when the police is around. If I'm in the favela, I feel less safe, because that's when shit starts as the films show and people say. Despite that I feel safer in the favela than walking around in Ipanema as long as the police isn't there*" (Emma, interview, 14/6/2016).

Despite the fact that Jef learned in Portuguese class (the day of the interview) about the pacification police trying to open access to the favelas, he remains to his opinion that a lot of favelas are too dangerous and untouchable by police, to which he acknowledges that the films have influenced his opinion, not realising that his opinion is extremely influenced by another type of (unreliable) source:

"In City of God they are portrayed as quite corrupt, taking bribes, killing people who are not necessarily involved in drug trafficking. They are portrayed as being wild and rogue, not really following the law as the police in Europe. But I'm not sure how corrupt they are, I don't like to read too much into it via the news because you never know what's true and what not." (Jef, interview, 10/5/2016)

Feelings of security are connected with preconceptions about the police, rather than personal experiences. Despite the impact of films on negative perceptions for foreigners about favelas and police, most of the interviewed favela tour guides explained that the interest of foreigners in favelas was stimulated by - in particular - *City of God*. It was the first 'big hit' on the international screen

29 Perhaps other consequences on a higher level within the system exist. However, this goes beyond the scope of this research and is left outside of consideration.

about favelas and resulted in curiosity (the opposite effect as what it had for Brazilians who have never been in a favela, which only increased the culture of fear).

The same foreigners were asked for their opinions after visiting a favela and most of the opinions changed tremendously. The descriptions changed from having a focus on criminality, danger and lawlessness towards definitions where the sense of community and creativity is at its core:

"I think I'm surprised because I always thought they were lawless places, left behind but it's almost like a mini version of normal society where everything actually runs quite smoothly. I expected a tight-knit community but the community sense was stronger than I thought. While walking around, our guide knew pretty much everyone, also telling a kid of on the street because he did something (…) It's more sophisticated than I imagined it to be. When you hear about favelas and see it on TV, it looks like completely dilapidated, just like houses and people scraping by on whatever they can get, I didn't imagine they'd have like a proper system in place." (Jef interview, 15/5/2016)

These remarks provide how strong films can influence the perception of those who are not 'in the middle of it'. The symbolic construction of crime in favelas affects the way outsiders perceive this place.

Conclusion

Films depicting the favelas have followed the course of political and societal issues surrounding the favelas. Although the different levels of stigmatisation of favelas and its residents date back to the era of slavery connected to poverty and racial inferiority, due to the entrance of drug trafficking flourishing in Brazil, nowadays these different levels of stigmatisation are also connected to a criminal culture in which gang-related issues and urban violence are the core issues. This has caused the objectives of films to move away from aesthetics of hunger and a certain optimistic outlook, towards a dystopian depiction through the aesthetics of violence.

Despite the 'insiders' perspectives of locals in *City of Men* and *City of God*, showing relatively more images of innocent favela inhabitants, as opposed to the *Elite Squad* sequence where the favela is depicted from an outsiders perspective of a BOPE officer, all the films decontextualise crime due to the constant visuals, narratives and (fragmented) stories connected with negative connotations of Afro-Brazilian favela residents: racial inferiority, class distinctions, social hygiene

politics that emphasise poverty and negative stereotypes of young gang members, gun distribution and usage causing urban violence, all centred around the drug business. Especially, the *Elite Squad* sequence uses the favela as a cinematic landscape where all crime-related issues are taken as a 'given' to which the BOPE should only be seen as a necessary evil in the war on drugs.

Despite touching upon failures of the formal state, the extent to which the films provide insight into the state's behaviour, lack proper contextualisation regarding education, housing, police and political enforcement and corruption. Although the state's behaviour towards favelas and societal issues in the favelas are intertwined, the films implicitly, due to arguments of 'agency', blame the favelas for all wrongdoing - taking into consideration that cinema is primarily a cultural product for middle and high class society members. Rather than being critical and counter-hegemonic by challenging the status quo, these films confirm already existing stigmatisation of the favela as a dangerous place.

And thus, the favelas are constructed in the films as dangerous criminogenic places, following a Chicago School perception on crime that takes place in disorganised places by organised gangs, rather than gangs being relatively disorganised in places that (due to self-governing) are relatively organised. The disorganised place is emphasised by the fast-pace close-up filming and MTV editing, whereas the level of organisation of these gangs are emphasised by including hierarchical structures of the drug business through images or voice-over narration.

These reinforcements of different levels of stigmatisation provide images that legitimise the extreme violent public security policies as a result of an enemy-discourse that is at the heart of these films. The films make the assumption that favelas are 'just' dangerous places rather than touching upon critical ideas on why these issues happen in the first place, as crime is decontextualised. Depending on how these representations are put into a frame, this can lead to collective and territorial stigmatisation and the association of solely that construction of reality for the global society.

The notion of and access to reality can be achieved through film productions. However, the impact differs on different levels of society, within the country itself and among global members. Due to the way of framing, editing and the claim of authenticity by shooting on location or using favela locals as actors, these films are not solely a form of entertainment that reflect upon societal issues connected to favelas, but also shape the way of thinking about these places.

The symbolic representations and social constructions of the favela in films have become the real perceptions of favelas by an audience that has never

been in a favela (*asfalto* Brazilians and foreigners). For those who are the subjects in the films, favela locals, the films are disappointing due to their focus on a criminal culture but do not cause a significant amount of disappointment due to the decades of negative media-discourse to which they acknowledge this will not change soon. Furthermore, the connection between Brazil's culture of fear and the fascination around violence can be seen in the impact of these films on the middle and high class society. The films contribute to the existing hegemonic enemy-discourse in Brazil in which violence and extreme brutal repression are seen as a necessary evil in order to combat the internal enemy, the favelas, due to the decontextualisation of crime.

Moreover, the reaction towards repression by law-enforcement and corruption differs significantly, closely connected to the existing hegemonic thoughts about such topics in specific countries. As opposed to the popular reactions after *Elite Squad* among Rio's middle and high class society (causing different consequences), the interviewed foreigners visiting Rio de Janeiro, were appalled by BOPE's repression and police corruption in general. Reason for this can be found in the overall differing law-enforcement policies in Europe[30] compared to Brazil, where torture and excessive violence in order to combat the war on drugs is legitimised rather than seen as corruption. This knowledge reflects that films can carry contesting visions of crime due to the reflection of diverse societies among the globe (YAR, 2010). The notion of images has become more than 'just representations of an external form of an object'. Hence, the importance of keeping in mind that these cinematic landscapes are constructed.

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