Porous boundaries in Rio de Janeiro's favelas: community based initiatives, urban mobility infrastructure, tourism and environmental issues in the urbanisation of fringe areas as a socio-spatial means to reconcile the favela with the city

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Favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, would be going through a third era of development, as a result of changes and accumulation of investments made in urban improvements. From alternative places of residence for the poor, where organized crime settled in the late twentieth century, today the slums of the South Side are places that are home to a new urban dynamics, with the rise of real estate prices, informal economy growth and increase of tourist and cultural activities. Community based initiatives have been an important way of social and spatial transformation. For the preparation of major sports events hosted by the city of Rio de Janeiro (FIFA World Cup 2014 and the 2016 Olympics) there were implemented new urban and public security projects in various slums. Our research presents the case study of the "Favela da Babilônia". This slum presents an interesting process in its borders, having on one side a large forest area and on the other a formal middle-class neighborhood. The possibilities that community processes related to environmental issues, such as reforestation and tourism – structured on government built urban mobility infrastructure – have revealed Rio de Janeiro as a city in which diversity stands out.

Keywords: community based initiatives, urban mobility infrastructure, environmental issues, tourism, Rio de Janeiro.

Introduction

Rio de Janeiro is a city with 11,945,532 people, consisting of 21 municipalities, where 6,520,000 (IBGE, 2010) live in the core municipality, the City of Rio de Janeiro, where 23% of its population live in precarious settlements. Amongst these are the favelas, scattered by its entire urban area (IBGE, 2010). Rio de Janeiro, along with the city of São Paulo, concentrates the two highest GNP figures of the country, adding to 25.9% of the total for the country, 8.0% of that in Rio de Janeiro. This concentration of wealth, however, leaves a significant part of the population out of it. In 2010, Rio de Janeiro had 16.41% (1,066,459 people) in a situation of vulnerability as regards poverty, with 97,000 of them exposed to extreme poverty (1.25%) (IBGE, 2017). In the slums, and despite the efforts and advances made in the last 20 years, first in urbanisation work and more recently in changes to the general guidelines adopted by Central Government to improve income distribution and public services, a scenario of social inequality persists, where urban issues are apparent, especially as regards a social and economic vulnerability, all of this enhanced by the problems with security.

The aim of this article is to discuss the various dimensions of this process, where new urban mobility infrastructure, the urbanisation of the fringe areas, environmental issues, and tourism would altogether build porous boundaries as a means to reconcile the favelas located in the city's South Side with the city as a whole. Our ongoing research has been mapping significant data on these processes that could provide input for a new urban agenda that could streamline the relations between the informal and the formal aspects of the city of Rio de Janeiro. The idea of the 'porous boundaries' of the favelas seeks to give a new dimension of integration of

these settlements with the formal city, one that is a response to the proposal made almost one decade ago, of building concrete walls to contain and arrest the growth of informality. We seek to probe some of the dynamics identified as relevant in the definition of these boundaries. Amongst them, we place special focus on those related to: (i) the connectivity of the urban grid of the favelas to the urban grid of the formal city and that of public transport; (ii) the activities that relate to tourism; and (iii) the valuation and preservation of the environment. The intent is to find out what uses and dynamics we identified as determining factors in the structure of such fringe areas which, when acted upon with efficiency, could enable the reconciliation of the formal city with the informal one. The study brings a study to the fore, on the Babilônia Chapéu Mangueira favela, where a Peace Police Corps Unit - UPP - was set up in 2009.

The results shown in this article were achieved with visits to the slums, supported by photographs and contacts with local associations and interviews we conducted. As regards the connectivity of the favelas with the formal city, we resorted to the data produced by the SABREN - Lower-Income Settlement System - of the City of Rio de Janeiro Administration and Google's Street View, a tool found in the Google Maps application. Usually, Google's Street View ends its mapping effort near the portals that give access to the favelas, operating as a marker for the transition area between the domain of the favela and that of the formal city. On the tourism perspective, and apart from the bibliographical survey, we studied tourism-related sites such as Booking (2017), Trip Advisor (2017) and social networks such as Facebook (2017).

The relation between the transport infrastructure and that of urban development has been described as complex to gauge by several authors (Izaga, 2009) where transport should support the demands of the activities produced by the diversity of the urban contexts; and the use of the land relates to the existence of certain activities in a given place, and its level of spatial accumulation (Herce, 2013; Rodrigue, 2006). In the case of mobility of the poor, authors such as Kaufman (2014), Ureta (2016), and Lindau et. al (2011) seem to agree that the analysis on mobility can help to understand the composition and the changes experienced by our society and how social exclusion interferes in the patterns of daily mobility. Other studies such as those from Motte-Beaumvol & Nassi (2012) contribute to this reflection as they warn about the aspects of unemployment and informal work as determining factors for the levels of mobility the less privileged are faced with in Rio de Janeiro. Izaga and Pereira (2014) discuss the relation that exists between the action to improve urban mobility and the investments made in the two big slum urbanisation programmes, namely the Favela-Bairro (1993) and the PAC (2007) - in Rio de Janeiro.

Based on the work of authors that study the element of tourism and the city such as Urry (1990), the research on tourism in the favelas has authors such as Freire-Medeiros (2009), Fagerlande (2017a; 2017b; 2017c; 2017d; 2016; 2015), Moraes (2016, 2014, 2013), Carvalho (Carvalho, T. L. G, 2016) and Steinbrink, Frenzel and Koens (2012). Community-based tourism has the work of Bartholo, Sansolo and Burzstyn (2009) and that of Mielke and Pegas (2013) as references. Authors such as Rodrigues (2014), Pinto, Silva and Loureiro (2012), and Carvalho (Carvalho F. C., 2006, 2013) have studied the slums of Rio and their examples of community-based action.

The City of Rio de Janeiro and the favelas

The expansion of the urban domain in Rio de Janeiro has taken place on the flat areas found between the sea and the hills, along the shoreline and the main transport lines. The favelas, on their turn, grew up by climbing the hills that separate the formal urban fabric and the hill and mountain complex, taking advantage of a prohibition set in urban occupation rules regarding the 100-level and a lack of oversight of their irregular patterns of occupation. This way, and from the mid-20th century, the slopes in Rio's South Side, the wealthiest part of the city and main tourist destination, is occupied by a series of precarious settlements that have now become boroughs with a population that can range from 7,000 to 10,000 dwellers; mid-sized ones can have from 10,000 to 1 million people; small ones have from 1,000 to 30,000 people.

Planning Area 2 (AP2) is one of the 5 set up in Rio de Janeiro Urban Plan, that which has the boroughs in what is known as the South Side, an area lying along the shore line and the beaches, the one that attracts the most tourists and where the higher-income population of the city is found. Despite its having the best laid out infrastructure and being the most affluent area, AP2 has 47 of the 635 scattered in Rio with 56,.718 households formally registered, with an approximate population of 180,000 or 12% of the city's total (IBGE; SABREN, 2010) (Fig. 1). AP2 also has the largest share of isolated [stand-alone] slums, those that did not overlap others in

their growth process. Amongst the 12 largest favelas in AP2, 4 lie along the city's shoreline, that with the highest tourist appeal. All of them have UPPs and over 500 households.
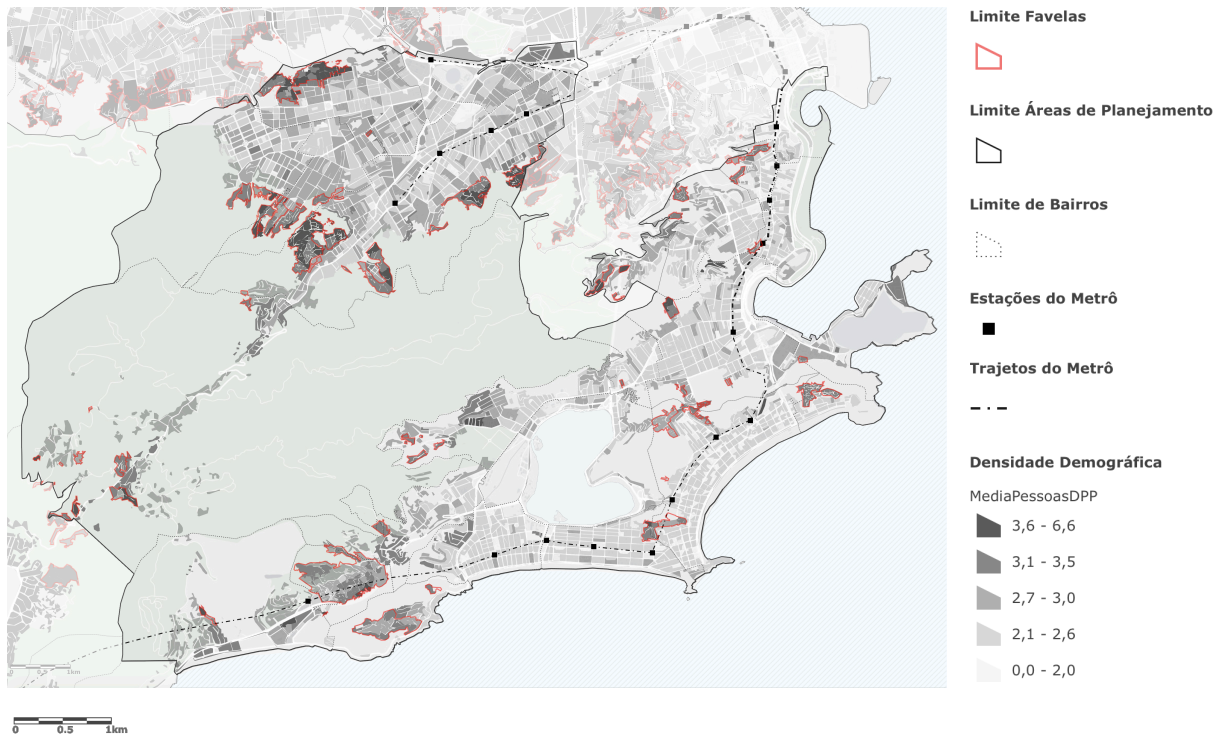

Figure 1 – Slums in Rio de Janeiro's Planning Area 2.

The city is s global tourist destination with attraction usually related to nature and to its landscape. Some boroughs concentrate these activities, usually those in the city's South Side, near the shoreline. Beaches such as Copacabana, Ipanema and Leblon are known the world over and hold the bulk of the hotel chain of the city.

Tourism has always been associated to the image of a city known as "Wonderful City", but the increase of problems related especially to violence and the growth of international drug trafficking in the 1990s when it started to use the city as a stage for its operations, contributed to the deterioration of the living conditions in the city (Coutinho Marques da Silva, 2015). The drug trafficking business is a relevant aspect in the slums, to which were added the clandestine commerce of public services, such as that for transport, communication, and of electricity, whose control gains rising value. More recently, with the appearance of armed militia, the offering of services moved on to include that of security (Izaga & Magalhães, 2013).

The decision to run for host of big world sports events in 1997 that would lead to the 2014 World Football Cup and after that the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games triggered a flow of large investments in the city, both as regards sports installations, directly related to sport events themselves, but also in the areas of urban mobility and public security. Along with work done in the underground train system, the implementation of the LRT (light rail train) system and other urban way work, cable car systems were built, along with incline plane lifts, and lift systems in slums, with many of the favelas also having UPPs - Peace Police Corps Units - an important part of the project for public security, implemented from 2008 onwards.

The favelas have seen a number of projects implemented, aimed at making urban interventions, such as the "Favela Bairro" one from 1993 (Sakata, 2011) on and, from 2007, the PAC - Growth Acceleration Programme - which was an important element in the group of initiatives related to the big events the city would eventually come to host.

Tourism in the slums of Rio de Janeiro

The present way for tourism in slums came to be in South Africa in the 1970s when the apartheid regime then in force there gave rise to tours, organized by NGOs, of the 'non-white' areas, with Government support (Steinbrink

Frenzel e Koens, 2012; Frenzel, 2012). At the same time these activities were being carried out in the African continent, tourism in slums also started in Brazil, when in 1992 Rio de Janeiro was the host city of a large global climate event, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), when the visiting of favelas by groups of visitors started, with participants who were interested in seeing the places of exclusion of Brazilian society, starting with Rio's largest slum, Rocinha (Freire-Medeiros, 2009).

Studies on the recent development of tourism in Rio de Janeiro's favelas found a strong relation between that and the recent sports events the city hosted. The main ones were the 2014 World Football Cup and the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. From the moment Brazil was chosen in 1997 to host the World Football Cup, in which Rio de Janeiro would be stage for the big final match, the city started to prepare itself, with large infrastructure work done, especially in the area of urban mobility (Izaga and Pereira, 2014; Fagerlande, 2016).

Public security issues should also be addressed and to that end the UPPs - Peace Police Corps Units - were created from 2008 onwards, in the main slums of the city, often located in Rio's South End, where the routes to the installations where the events would be held in were. The effect of the UPPs in the life of the communities was significant and, as regards the tourism activity, we were able to see its growth in several of the favelas they were implemented in.

In parallel with that work, some projects were created to stimulate tourism in those slums, such as the Rio Top Tour, set up in the first favela to have a Peace Police Corps Unit, namely the Santa Marta slum (Rodrigues, 2014). This project was related to an initiative of the Brazilian Department of Tourism that, back in 2006, had launched the TBC - Community-Based Tourism Project, aimed at boosting tourism-related activities in less privileged communities, hinged on the dwellers of such settlements, in a process to stimulate income generation linked to their local uses and customs (Rodrigues, 2014; Bartholo, Sansolo and Busztyn, 2009; Mielkas & Pegas, 2011)

One of the more apparent urban effects of the flow of tourists was the appearance of the hostels in the slums, especially those located in the South Side of the city (Fagerlande, 2017b). A study done has been mapping the activities related to tourism in five of slums, focusing especially on the hostels they now have: Santa Marta, Babilônia-Chapéu Mangueira, Cantagalo Pavão-Pavãozinho, Vidigal, and Rocinha.

The Babilônia and Chapéu Mangueira Favela

This is a slum located in Leme, a borough that is an extension of Copacabana, in Rio's South Side. It is located up on a hill that separates two boroughs, Leme and Botafogo. It overlook the ocean, with a panoramic view of Copacabana Beach that is one of its main assets.

This small favela has an intense tourist flow, and a NGO, CoopBabilônia, that works to organise the visits to the area, using an ecological path as its main attraction, which relies on the presence of some hostels. CoopBabilônia has been the main agent in the setting up of new relations between the locals with their neighbours, which includes new partnerships to do reforestation work on the woods that encircle the entire borough of Copacabana, in an important example of how the porous boundaries of the slums can contain green and developed, built-up areas.

The struggle to see the slum remaining in that area hinges especially on the organisation of the local dwellers who have gathered in associations such as CoopBabilônia. The 1980s saw the rise of environmental risks such as landslides and fires in the favela that led the locals to ask the city government to start the work of re-forestation of the woods on the upper part of the hill. At that point the highest part of the Morro da Babilônia was covered with grass, and prone to frequent fires, and the need for re-forestation was at hand (Carvalho, T.L.G., 2016). The lack of will on the part of the government authorities led the locals to organise themselves and seek a solution to the problem, which eventually happened in the shape of agreements executed with the formal neighbouring areas, through the Lauro Muller Street Dwellers Association - ALMA - and the Rio Sul Shopping Centre, both located on the other side of the hill, who were also affected by the fires. As a result the Fight for Reforestation Association was created in 1989, which gave rise to the Pro-Citizenship Front movement (Moraes, 2013).

From these events, in 1996 an APE - Environmental Protection Area - was created for the Morro da Babilônia (Moraes, 2014; Carvalho, T. L. G., 2016) which in 1997 would see the local participation be strengthened with the creation of the CoopBabilônia, Babilonia Hill Re-Forestation and General Services Workers' Cooperative LLC. With official support, and with funding that came after a legal agreement with the Rio Sul Shopping

Centre on account of issues with city legislation, the re-forestation work finally got under way, done by the dwellers, members of the Cooperative (Carvalho, T. L. G., 2016). The positive outcome would produce the continuation and expansion of the work done by the re-forestation team, under the guidance of a forestry engineer, even after the end of the effect of the legal agreement (Fagerlande, 2017d).
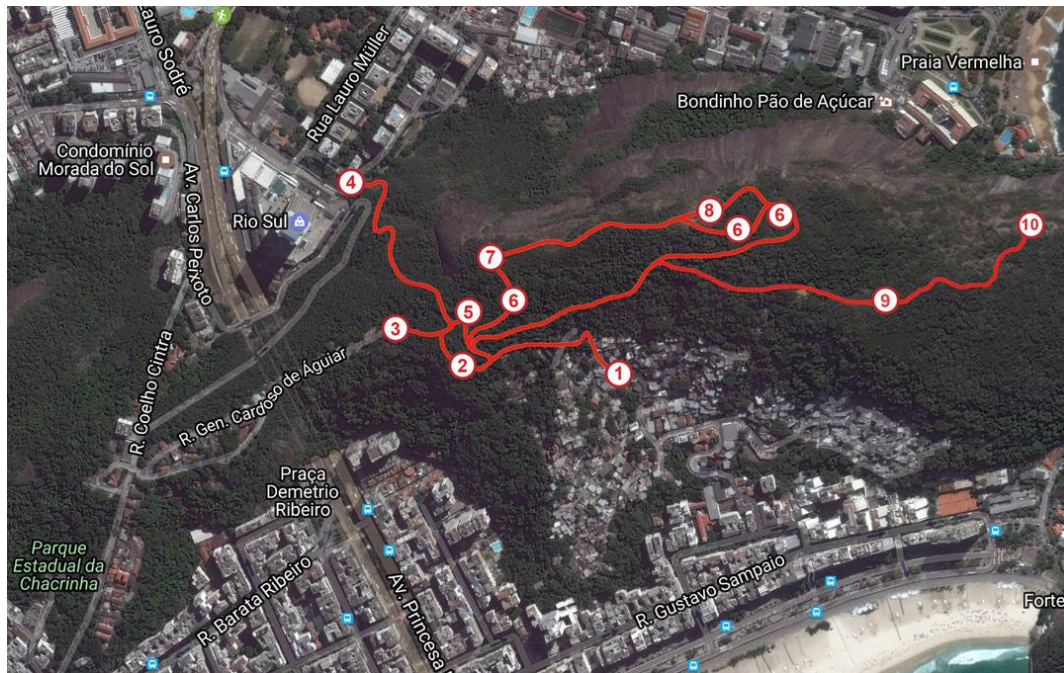

Figure 2: Map of the Babilonia ecological path, Chapéu Mangueira favela

Key:

1 Access to Babilônia Hill; 2 Copacabana Observation Deck; 3 Access to the Military Housing Compound; 4 Access to the Rio Sul Shopping Centre; 5 Former Explosive Stores; 6 Fortifications; 7 Rio Sul Observation Deck; 8 Telegrapher's Observation Deck; 9 Vulture Rock [Pedra do Urubu}; 10 Praia Vermelha Observation Point

The tourist use of the re-planted forest area was another positive effect in the fringe area of the favela, its visitation being organised by CoopBabilônia themselves. The acknowledgement of the area a Rio Landscape City Park in 2014 by the local Government only added recognition to the work done by the locals, producing empowerment and a sense of pride (Carvalho, T. L. G., 2016).

Apart from this area, which is located on the top part of the slum, another fringe that deserves studying is that which borders the borough of Leme. When surveying the access to the favela, only one way allows the access by car, namely the Ladeira Ari Barroso, as the second access is made through a narrow flight of steps off the Gustavo Sampaio Street.

Portals and Access Points – Connections with public transport

The Babilônia Chapéu Mangueira slum allows access to it by car and on foot, via a single way open for vehicle traffic, from the formal area, the Ladeira Ari Barroso, defining what we chose to call the 'portal' to the favela. We have used the word 'portal' as the threshold and transition from the formal city to the favela, where usually one can find the informal transport providers, along with small bars and rubbish containers. These spaces are important transition areas as it is from them, even if they come to go through formal areas, that a dominance of the favela environment is established, and where the presence of public services starts to fade. Another access point to the favela from the formal area, albeit exclusive to pedestrians, can be used via the Beco do Zé, a narrow

passageway that connects Gustavo Sampaio Street with Dr. Mauricio Bandeira Street, but that allows access only to the eastern part of the slum.

It is from the portal located in the Ladeira Ari Barroso that the main connection of the main slum area in Babilônia Chapéu Mangueira takes place with the formal city and where the informal transport providers are located, such as vans and motorcycle taxis. On the other hand, the connection with the bus service is very good, and locals can get on a transport after a nearly 400-metre walk. The entire shoreline of Rio's South End has a cycle lane that lies some 550 metres away from the portal.
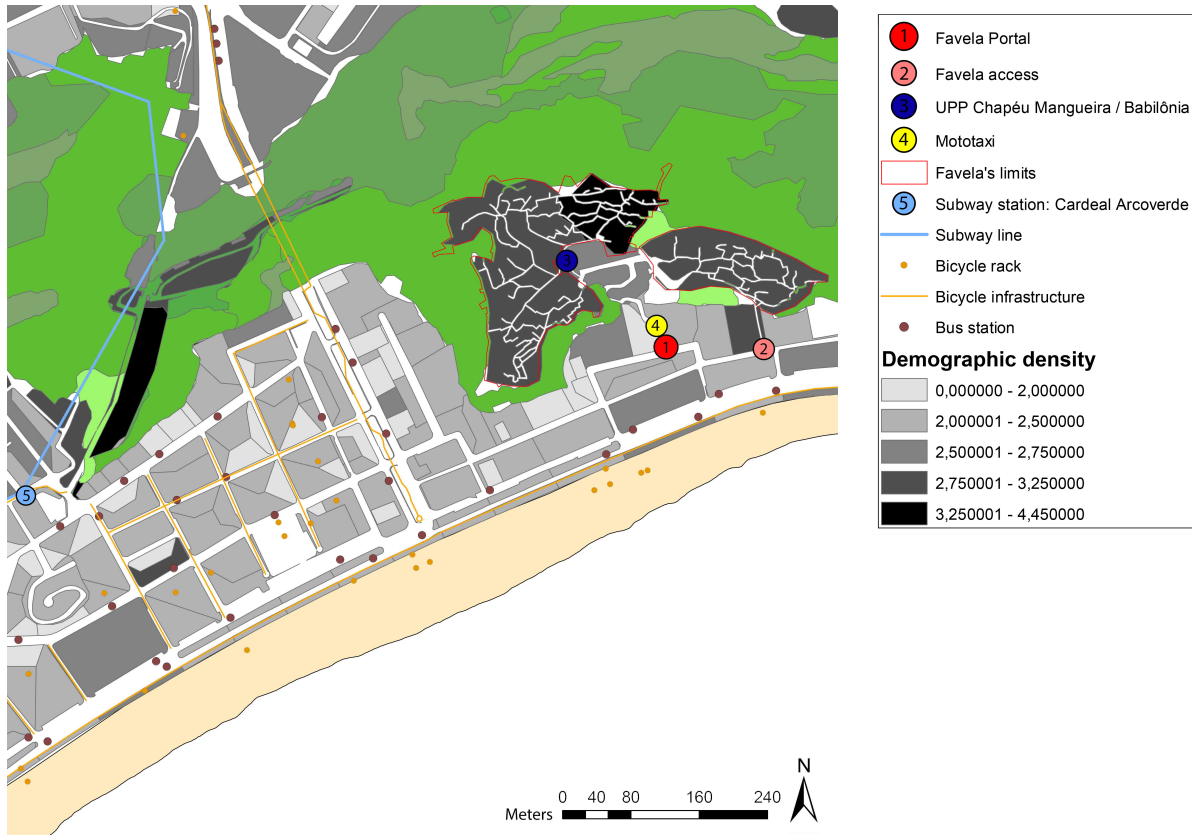

Figure 3 – Connectivity with public transport and access points of the
Favela Babilônia Chapéu Mangueira.

Going up the ascent to the favela can be done in vans that leave the borough of Leme and get to the top of the slum, or on motorcycle taxis. This way, although there is no mobility equipment in the favela, such as the ones found in other slums that were given work on account of the large events hosted by the city, the mobility in the slum, especially in the areas near the inner ways that were included in recent urban work projects, have a direct relation with the appearance of hostels. Even the importance of tourist visitation places, as the exiting observation deck, is part of these projects.

The Babilônia Chapéu Mangueira slum therefore has reasonable connections with the public transport system, given that the bus is the predominant means of transport in Rio de Janeiro, covering accounting for nearly 70% of all trips. The biggest issue in no doubt the ease of access via the Ladeira Ari Barroso which has a steep gradient for some 850 metres until it reaches the slum itself and levels up, and from which the locals can get to their homes via passageways and steps. The climb, which is a trying affair, can be made on foot and that led to the appearance of the motorcycle taxis, an informal service that gained popularity in all the favelas that face the same accessibility problems.

Hostels and Lodges

The location of the hostels shows a clear divide, with some 50% of such enterprises located in the urban way structure of the favela and the other half placed on the access path, namely the Ladeira Ari Barroso. Because they are located on the ascent, the hostels took up old houses and plots of land that were previously empty, in a clear process of urban change that the tourism activity brought to these areas, previously regarded as dangerous, used only by the locals. The use of the fringe of the favela by new activities and enterprises, not only accommodation-related, but also by businesses such as Bar do David has attracted a lot of attention and many visitors to the area. Gastronomy is one of the aspects taken very much into account by visitors in the favelas, and this is a success case, acknowledged as it has been in several domestic gastronomy contests (Fagerlande, 2017).
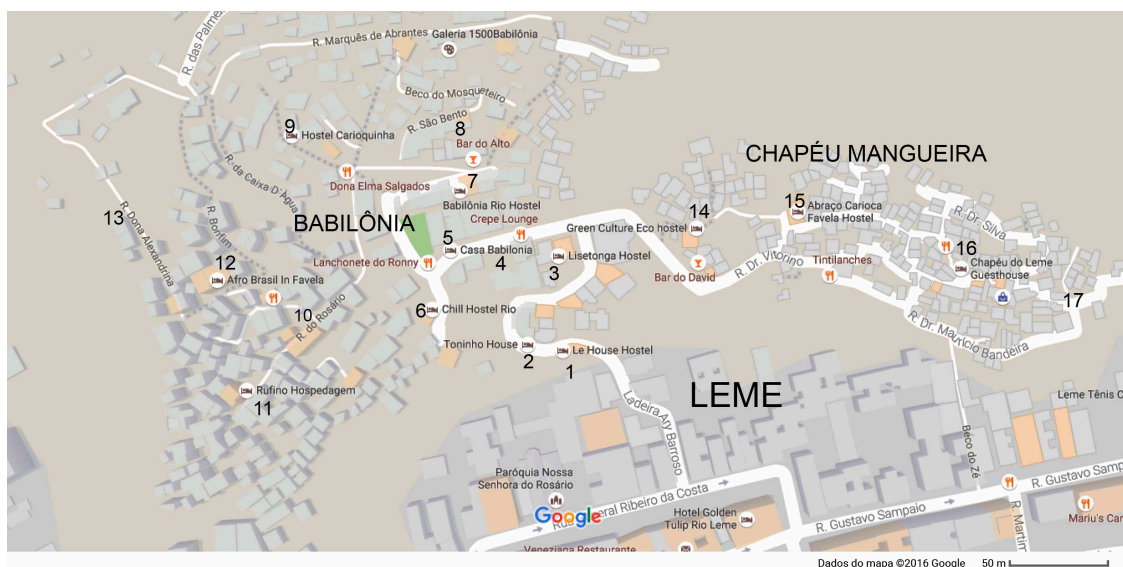

Figure 4: Map of the group of Babilônia Chapéu Mangueira favelas,

with the location of the hostels

Key:

1 - Le House; 2 - Toninho1s House; 3 - Lisetonga Hostel; 4 - Aquarela do Leme Hostel; 5 - Casa Babilônia; 6 - Chill Hostel Rio; 7 - Babilônia Rio Hostel; 8 - Mar da Babilônia; 9 - Carioquinha Hostel; 10 - Jardim da Babilônia; 11 - Vera Rufino/ Rufino Lodge; 12 - Brasil Afro in Favela Hostel; 13 - Estrelas da Babilônia Lodge; 14 - Green Culture Eco Hostel; 15 - Abraço Carioca Favela Hostel; 16 - Chapéu do Leme Guesthouse; 17 - Favela Inn Hostel[1]

Final considerations

The relations that exist between the favela and the formal city produce what we chose to call in this article as 'porous boundaries' in which it is possible to see new relations between less privileged areas and their neighbouring areas, in processes that came to be after PAC interventions, with an emphasis on urban mobility, in results linked to the implementation of the UPPs, with a temporary perception of safety that enabled the setting up of new tourism-related activities in these communities, with an important element of community participation that strengthens the relations between local associations, the public authorities and the private enterprise, in actions that can be alternatives for changes in the relations between these areas, and the transformations in the so-called boundaries of these areas of the city.

Through the study of aspects related to the connectivity of the elements of urban mobility between the formal areas of the city and some of its slums, it is possible to see how these relations affect the behaviour of its

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[1] Some of the hostels mapped were closed in May2017, after the end of th mapping work used in the article.

dwellers, and the importance the ways of access have to such informal areas, and how these accesses produce new fringe areas, with vital intersections for the communities, that bring new possibilities of relations about in the direction of their neighbouring areas.

Figure 5-: Bar do David, Favela Chapéu-Mangueira [Slum], 2016

Apart from providing access to the communities and to the mobility equipment they have, the location of the elements related to tourism, such as hostels and bars reinforces the relevance of the boundaries, and how this porosity brings about hues of this new relation amongst such different places which finds possibilities to connect, and of shared uses, and of dynamic in these areas that reinforce community action, bringing the visitor from outside to experience life with the dweller on the inside, as is the case in the Babilônia Chapéu Mangueira favela. The scenario found there, as with the hostels, in which this connectivity is found, shows that even with one of its boundaries being porous, that is the space for the meeting to occur and for new uses for the city to be found.

A third aspect is the relation that exists between the built-up environment and the natural realm which, in one same favela will allow the environmental recuperation of the vegetation, with clear gains both for the formal city as for the slum, and one that still relates with community-based tourism, in a case where the Babilonia Hill example brings an important example of the joint work of the local community, of the private enterprise, and of the public authority to change the city.

Based on the cases found in this community, it is possible to see the importance of a more in-depth study of new possibilities towards the construction of a new relation between the favela and its neighbours, where the 'porous boundaries' gain significant importance, showing that, rather than building up walls, we should seek connections and a wider exchange between areas that, albeit being so close to one another not always get to meet one another and live in harmony.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Figura 1 – Favelas na Área de Planejamento 2 do Rio de Janeiro. Izaga, Fabiana, 2017

Figure 2: Ecological trail, Babilônia Hill. LAURBAM, over Google Maps, 2016.

Figure 3 – Conectividade ao transporte público e acessos da Favela Babilônia Chapéu Mangueira

Figura 4: Mapa do conjunto de favelas Babilônia Chapéu Mangueira, com localização dos albergues

Figure 5: Davi's Bar, Chapéu Mangueira, autor's photograph, 2016.