TALES BOHRER LOBOSCO GONZAGA DE OLIVEIRA

Territories and borders in the informal occupation of the urban space

Tales Bohrer Lobosco Gonzaga de Oliveira. Master's
in Urbanism from the Université de Tours – URBAMA,
Doctorate in Urbanism from the PPG/AU – Faculty of
Architecture and Urbanism of Federal University of
Bahia (UFBA). Assistant Professor of the Architecture
and Urbanism Department of Federal University of
Mato Grosso (UFMT).

ABSTRACT

Emerging from the need to gain their own space on the modern city, the "favelas" appear as an informal solution for the low-income-families housing in almost every large Brazilian city. They established themselves as such a definitive and integrated phenomenon in the urban scenario that nowadays it is not possible to think about distinctive spatial boundaries between the "favela" and the "city". Nevertheless, if, on the one hand, the "favelas" cannot be treated as marginalized spaces, on the other hand, they have not become completely integrated spaces to the urban structure. There is a wide range of possibilities ranging from the diversity of the phenomenon to the fading away of the limits that clearly defines the "slum condition".

This work aims to discuss the existence and the effect of the physical and the symbolical borders in building the informal urban space and their mutual influence. In order to this we assumed that the contact possibilities and proximity could be organized in several dimensions, including the physical range, the visual contact and the social and the symbolic relationship. Each one seems to produce different results in the production of the urban space.

Keywords: Slums. Production of space. Borders. Spatial segregation.

Introduction

Although the "favela" phenomenon has its source linked to a "repulsion" force, which was conceived in the flow of organized movements seeking to produce a modern city, which would fit the image of a "clean and orderly landscape" that bourgeois respectability considered appropriate (ROLNIK, 1997, p. 37), it has a complex and ambiguous relationship with the "formal" city, having moments of greater or lesser approximation depending on the existing situation and the interests and forces at work in each historical period.

Alternating in the aforesaid process is the connection between the utilitarian supply of skilled labor for the production of a central and luminous city1 as an image of modernity - free from poverty, and the recognition of these groups as political subjects.

Since these cities did not foresee, nor provide space for effective integration of the urban poor, a need arose for a creative search for "a solution to housing compatible with their income restrictions and the necessity to reduce their physical displacement time" (LESSA, 2005 p. 304). In this process, an available piece of land is occupied – land which was usually discarded in one way or another by the higher income population and was located in distant peripheral areas, marshy areas, with geological risks and with difficult access.

Thus, in the beginning, the slum represented a drastic reduction in housing costs, which in turn promoted its permanent and integrated settlement into the urban landscape of large Brazilian cities. However, since these areas have been highly commodified, the costs at the slums are now equivalent to the peripheral areas of the city (VALLADARES, 2005). Therefore, the alleged definition that this is territory limited to the urban poor cannot be sustained due to the heterogeneity of its manifestations and the impossibility of socioeconomic indicators clearly defining the limits of "slum territory" (VALLADARES, 2005; PASTERNAK-TASCHNER, 2003).

It is important to highlight the existence of a socioeconomic heterogeneity both internally as well as from one slum to another (VALLADARES; PRETEI-CELLE, 2000). Thus, despite having groups with higher socioeconomic indicators, equivalent to the outlying areas of the city, the slums have a greater flexibility when it comes to assimilating the low income population due to being able to provide lower costs which are linked to the lower quality constructions and locations.

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1. According to Milton Santos: "We will call luminous spaces those which accumulate more technical and informational density, and are thus better able to attract activities which contain more technology and organizational capital. In contrast, the subspaces where such features are absent would be called opaque spaces" (SANTOS; SILVEIRA, 2002, p.264).

The internal heterogeneity of the slums (as an informal space) is a witness to the various possibilities for appropriation and possession of a territory, which although considered segregated, has its own internal segregation mechanisms. Relationships are imprinted quite clearly in the spatial distribution of the territory, with centrifugal vectors starting at central locations, where the relationship with the soil is steadier, and where the largest social capital and most of the commercial life of the location is concentrated (BURGOS, 2002).

Thus, besides being a plural and heterogeneous phenomenon, the slum presents several integration and location possibilities within a city, manifesting itself both in the peripheral parts of the city – where the greater availability of land and the possible connection to routes with a higher outflow can juxtapose the lack of basic services, infrastructure and reduced labor opportunities, and create a situation of relative equivalence with the surrounding neighborhoods in terms of economic indicators – as well as in the locations where there is a greater proximity with higher income, central neighborhoods, where the assimilation of the benefits derived from the presence of urban infrastructure and labor supply in the surrounding areas contribute to the elevation of the local socioeconomic indicators (ABRAMO, 2001), but nevertheless, there is still a great contrast with the socioeconomic standards of the area.

Below are some graphs2 [1-6] that demonstrate the multiplicity of relationships between the slums and their surrounding areas: from the relative homogeneity of a peripheral occupation, as in the case of Novo Alagados in the Subúrbio Ferroviário of the city of Salvador in the state of Bahia to the sharp contrast of the high-income neighborhood enclaves, as in the cases of the Babilônia and Santa Marta slums, both of which are located in the southern part of the city of Rio de Janeiro, RJ.

FIGURA 1

omparação dos níveis de renda entre a ocupação dos Novos Alagados e os bairros de seu entorno imediato.
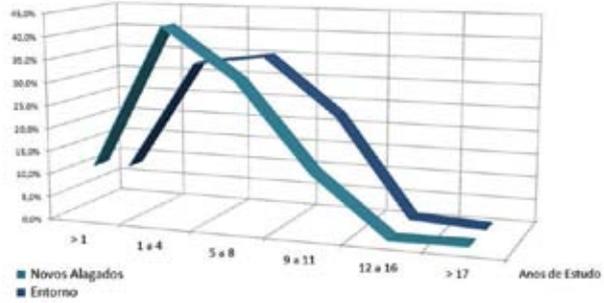
Fonte: IBGE, 2000.
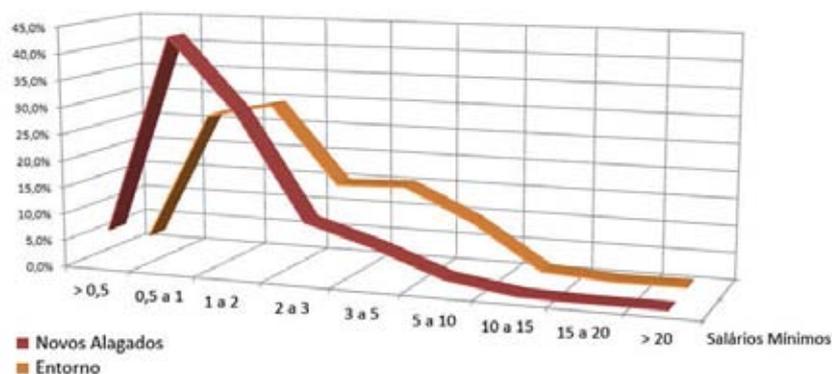
2. The graphs were produced using the complete census data (IBGE, 2000) of the sectors that correspond to the "informal" occupation, counterposed with data from sectors that make up the neighborhoods of Botafogo and Leme, in the case of Rio, and from the occupation of the limitrophe sectors of the Plataforma, Lobato and São Bartolomeu neighborhoods, in the case of Salvador.

Comparison of education levels between the Novo Alagados slum (green line) and the neighborhoods in its immediate surroundings (blue line), based on the number of years attending a school.
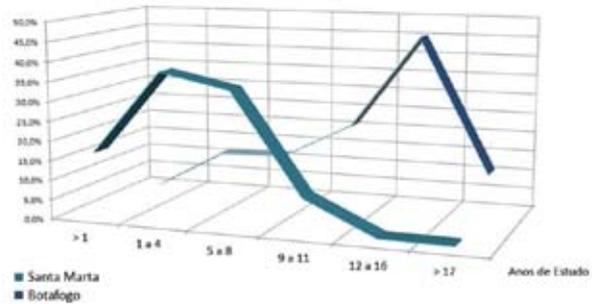
Source: IBGE, 2000.

Comparison of education levels between the Santa Marta slum (green line) and the Botafogo neighborhood, based on the number of years attending a school.
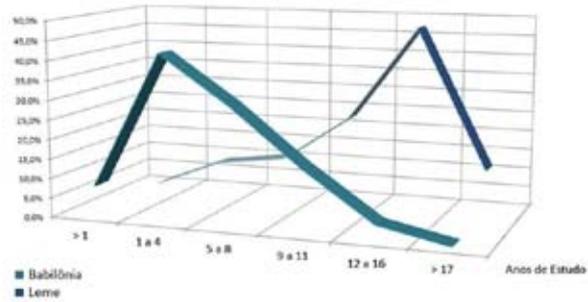
Source: IBGE, 2000.

Comparison of education levels between the Babilônia slum (green line) and the Leme neighborhood, based on the number of years attending a school.
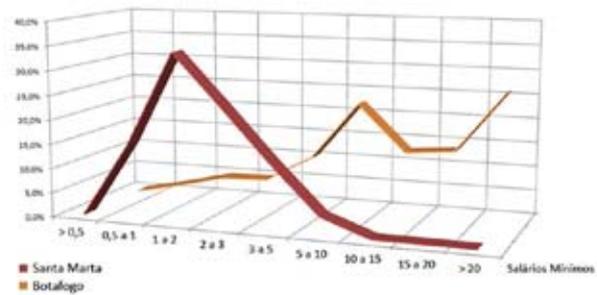
Source: IBGE, 2000.

Comparison of income levels between the Santa Marta slum (brown line) and the Botafogo neighborhood (ochre line), based on the number of minimum wages.
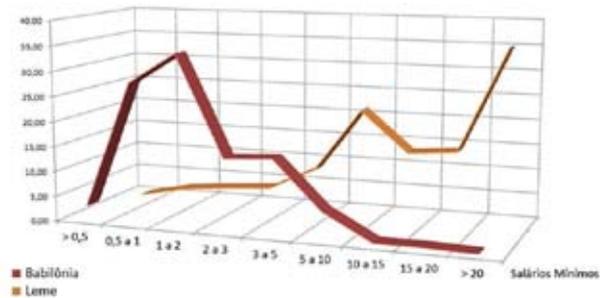
Source: IBGE, 2000.

Comparison of income levels between the Babilônia slum (brown line) and the Leme neighborhood (ochre line), based on the number of minimum wages.

Source: IBGE, 2000.

No matter how we insert them into society, the informal settlements remain connected, culturally, politically and economically, one way or another to the rest of the city. Despite their precarious economic situation and dubious juridical housing condition, these are not marginalized sectors we are dealing with, but rather groups which are not as well inserted into society when compared to other areas of the city and therefore are subject to stigma, suspicion and generalizations. Thus, these settlements should not be seen as the expression of a phenomenon that is isolated, but as something that can be influenced by, as well as influence the city around it.

The goal of this paper is, with the understanding of this phenomenon as it presently and recognizably is in Brazilian cities, to discuss the existence or permanence of the limits which define, or used to define these spaces, as well as the influence of this close proximity on the urban space. In so doing, this paper aims to keep in mind, that the idea of "proximity" may encompass various possibilities, which include physical, visual, social or symbolic relationships, where each one seems to have a distinct result in the production of the urban space.

In this sense, the study will take a closer look at the examples that are configured as enclaves in high-income neighborhoods, since in these situations the establishment of physical and symbolic barriers becomes more evident, and with them, the identification of the mutual influences that come about through the coexistence of populations with a marked criminality. A situation which not only requires adaptation to a social, cultural and symbolic imbalance, but also an organized development that comes about through the differences and the shock, which comes as a result of the presence of the other social entity in these shared spaces of the city.

We will study in depth two occupations located in prime areas of the city of Rio de Janeiro. First the Santa Marta slum, with a heterogeneous route which led it from the violent episodes of the drug trafficking wars of the late 1980s to become the first experiment of the state government in the "Pacification of the Slums" project in Rio de Janeiro. The slum's privileged location, allied with the fact that it has one of the most beautiful views of the Botafogo bay have allowed the slum to experiment the ambiguous status of finding itself in the midst of having a criminal image and the possibilities for social media exposure due to its social contrast and slum exoticism.

And then the Babilônia slum, which had most of its consolidation process up to the 1980s, while it was under the control of the army[3], which had strict rules regarding the expansion and building of new houses. Despite being one of the oldest slums in Rio de Janeiro, this unique characteristic allowed them to have a less compact spatial configuration, which remits us to the initial stages of the construction of informal occupations and provides a distinct relationship

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3. Tacit agreements between the neighborhood association and local representatives of the army demonstrated a certain permissiveness in relation to the "illegal" occupation, while at the same time imposing strict limits on the development or extension of the area.

with the urban space. A peculiar situation that is gradually disappearing, as the space yields to economic and population pressures, and becomes more similar to the standard of spatial compactness found in other slums in Rio de Janeiro.

The research was developed through extensive interviews with residents not only of the slums, but also from the surrounding neighborhoods, regarding the spatial practices and their impressions and points of view on each of those spaces. This group of about 80 interviews was compared with the socioeconomic data from the demographic census (IBGE, 2000), so as to identify patterns and possibilities in the territorial boundaries and spatial interactions in progress.

Borders: real or symbolic?

Analyzing the slums through the "tortuosity" and labyrinthine aspects that are often identified as typical elements of the informal urban fabric, takes us to the pursuit that various sectors undertake in trying to establish a physical or symbolic border between the slums and the formal city.

The issue is not a simple one: although the metropolitan territory is characterized by a clear projection of the division lines from society onto the territory, "so that living on one side or the other makes a difference", (RIBEIRO, 2009, p. 43), what we in fact found was a situation where the exchanges, as well as the mutual influences resulting from the long period of coexistence, have transformed the space into two complex categories with an imprecise and fluid transition of delimitations, despite having originated from strict boundaries.

Therefore, although it is possible to see a clear differentiation between the sectors when analyzed globally, this situation ends up interfering with the "approximation" of these spaces. Situations where we can notice ambiguous spaces in contact points which create a diffuse zone with imprecise delimitations and different levels of concentration of the various characteristic elements of each space.

This influence transforms these contiguous areas, be it by overcapitalizing the informal territory due to the favorable conditions of accessibility, transport and services or, be it by the devaluation of the "formal" city sector, due to its proximity to the slum - a territory of marginalization, dirt, etc.

It is important to emphasize that although the rules of slums are socially inclusive, they are neither homogeneous nor equalizing. The economic differences are respected through a relationship that purports the internal hierarchy of powers and reproduces in its heterogeneity, the same mechanisms of economic exploitation of the formal city. As a caricature of the global society, those who have some power "thrive by re-exploiting the poor of the slums: the owner of the *birosca*[4], the electricity commission, the landlord of the shacks, etc." (LESSA, 2005, p. 304).

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4. Small commercial establishments found at slums.

Areas of influence

Even though from an administrative point of view this border appears in the official maps of the city through delimitations which encompass the urban characteristics of regularity as well as the juridical points of view, this classification ignores the multiple and flexible possibilities which exist between the rigid and the dual classifications.

The difference between these spaces should not be considered based on the presence or absence of a certain characteristic in a strict and absolute way, but as a question of degree, intensity and scale - "no characteristic or attribute is at the same time sufficient and necessary to the inclusion/belonging of a group/type" (RAPOPORT, 1988, p. 53). Thus the frequency and intensity of each one of the possible characteristics should not be seen as tools to recognize and classify the spaces as belonging to this or that group, but as ways of understanding how and to what extent they are bound to a form of production.

In order to study the effects of this interaction, we established two basic types of direct contact: contact through physical accessibility, with varying conditions of distance between the houses, however, always structured along a direct axis of accessibility between the two spaces; and contact through visual proximity, which may involve a great geographical proximity or a strong visual contact without actual physical contact between them [7 and 8].

PICTURE 7
Points of direct contact in the Babilônia slum.

(blue line) Direct line of eye contact from the back of the buildings in Leme

(red area) "access" area. Greater influence in the transition

(yellow lines) Direct visibility from the street

Source: author, based on Google 2009.

Linha de contato visual
A partir dos fundos dos
prédios do Leme.

Área "de acesso"
Maior influência na
Transição.

Visibilidade
direta da rua

Physical Accessibility

When walking around the structured areas along the axis of access, we could see characteristics that differed not only from the formal neighborhood around it, but also the from the slum itself, creating a "transition" relationship that took on characteristics of its own, which were noticeable due to a certain "looseness" with regards to the patterns of construction and the organization of the urban activities held there: a more active neighborliness spills over onto the street although the streets are still full of informal commerce, trash, bicycles, etc. This relationship shows that the strong spatial influence, the mutual exchanges, and the intense communication between these spaces makes it increasingly difficult to have a clear definition of boundaries, creating an ambiguous space where the characteristic elements of each pattern of occupation are more evident the closer they get to each of these spaces.

Among the interviewees residing in the formal city, the vast majority stated that the slum limits began at the start of the access route, the place where the
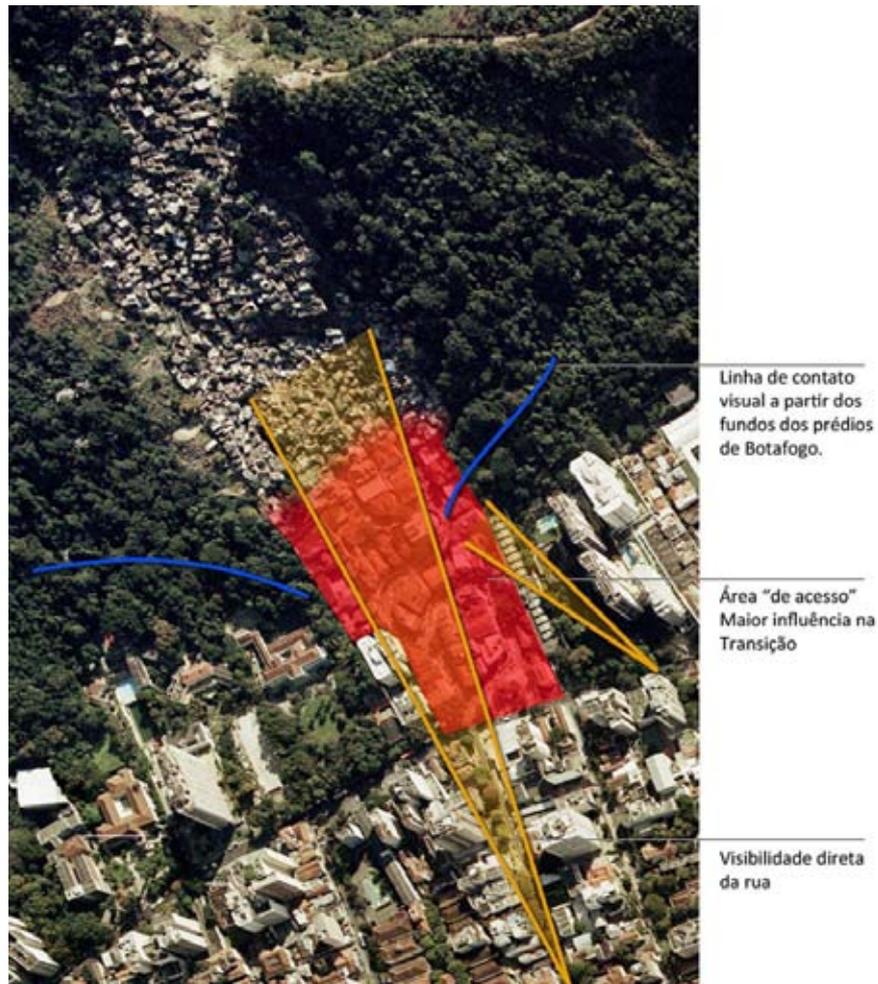
PICTURE 8

Points of direct contact in the Santa Marta slum.

(blue lines) Direct line of eye contact from the back of the buildings in Botafogo

(red area) "access" area. Greater influence in the transition

(yellow lines) Direct visibility from the street.

Source: author, based on Google 2009.

Linha de contato visual a partir dos fundos dos prédios de Botafogo.

Área "de acesso" Maior influência na Transição

Visibilidade direta da rua

first signs of informal occupation were seen, and nearly all said that they had never entered that space.

On the other hand, to most of the slum population, it began at the end of the access route, where the path is no longer a roadway, and circulation is done through alleys and stairways. This difference in perception helped us to design delimitations which we called an "access" or "transition" area, a space which is apparently not "recognized" by either side.

Since, on the one hand, the access route was perceived as the slum by the formal city and as the "formal" city by the slum, the residents of this "transition area" thus found themselves in a peculiar situation, one of trying to position themselves as "the formal" city, while at the same time promoting a discourse that "mitigates" the effect of the slum, in order to reduce the symbolic burden of this proximity.

We noticed that in the contact zone between the different areas, apart from the great interaction between the spaces, the lack of a clear definition regarding what belonged to what space strongly influenced real estate prices and therefore significantly altered the socioeconomic characteristics of the population involved.

The graphs below [9-12] show this relationship through the comparison of education and income indicators of the areas we studied. To do this, we divided the census areas corresponding to the specific part of the neighborhood which was "formally occupied"; the transition space, that is, the residences along the street that connects the formal neighborhood to the slum; and the slum, identified in an informal way by the legal system and the local perception of what are its delimitations. This data demonstrates the strong influence exerted along the connecting axis of these spaces, to the point where it is possible to identify a "transition zone" between these spaces which has its own intermediary socioeconomic indicators.
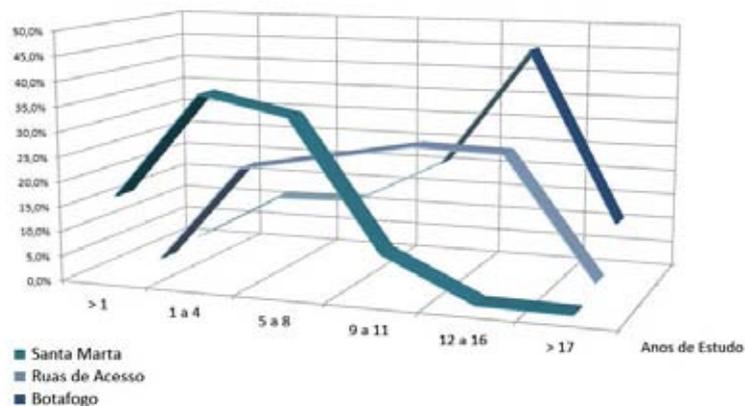
Comparison of the
education levels of the
Babilônia slum (green line),
the access street: Ladeira
Ary Barroso (light blue line),
and the Leme neighborhood
(dark blue line), based
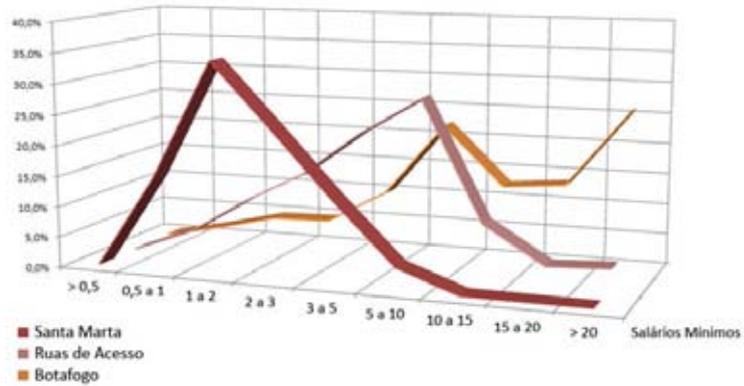on the years attending a
school.
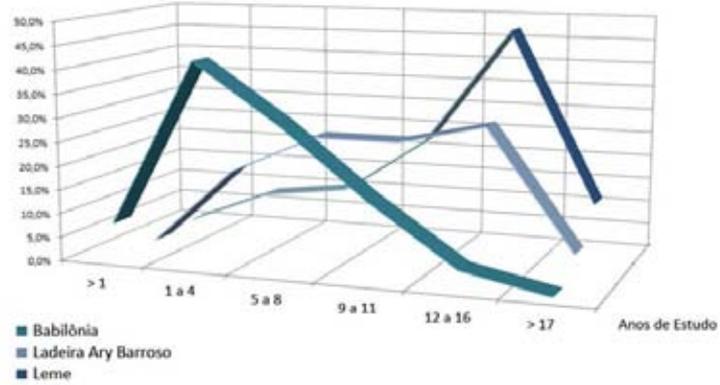
Source: IBGE, 2000.

Comparison of the
education levels of the
Babilônia slum (green line),
the access street: Ladeira
Ary Barroso (light blue line),
and the Leme neighborhood
(dark blue line), based
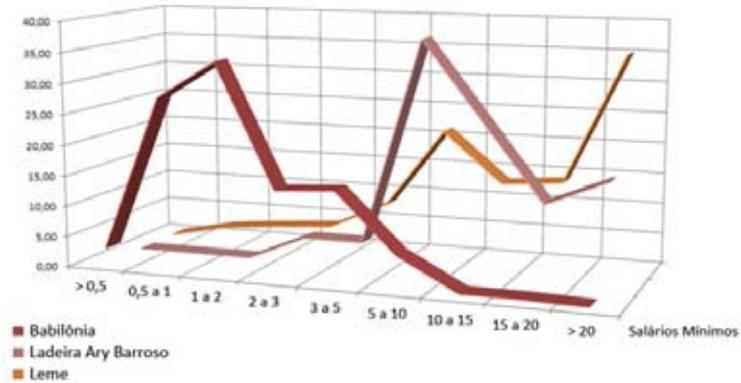on the years attending a
school.

Source: IBGE, 2000.

Comparison of the income
levels of the Babilônia slum
(brown line), the access
street: Ladeira Ary Barroso
(pink line), and the Leme
neighborhood (ochre line),
based on the number of
minimum wages.

Fonte: IBGE, 2000.

Visual Proximity

Visibility of the slums, either from the street or from the back of the build-
ings in the formal neighborhood, certainly has some environmental and social
influence, since this is repeatedly mentioned as a problem by the residents of
the neighborhood. However, unlike the properties located on the access streets,
this proximity does not create a dubious situation as to where each group be-

longs, on the contrary, it accentuates socioeconomic differences, taking social contrast to extreme limits where the separation between the slum and the formal city becomes evident explicit.

Thus, despite the intense visual contact and the great geographical proximity, this situation allowed us to identify a distinct division between the spaces; clearly defining where each residence belonged to, this seems to limit the action that the mutual influence of these spaces could have on each other.

We have no specific data to evaluate the effects of this proximity in the slums. However, we can identify, through the materiality of the built space, unequivocal socioeconomic relationships of hierarchy, which are noticeable through the dimensions and conditions of the workmanship of the houses, more accessible services and facilities, as well as the topographical situation of the land. All these factors lead to an ascending social condition the closer one gets to the areas of contact with the formal city and descending social condition toward the extreme points of the occupation - locations where the direct visual contact relationship is perceived. Thus, the influence of the visual proximity, if any, plays only a secondary part.

The intense proximity, therefore, does not result in a mitigation of the borders, but in an escalation of the local tensions due to the exposed, "in your face", social inequality [13]. This situation, unlike the condition of physical continuity, does not exert a severe enough influence to the point of transforming the contrast into a "transition zone", therefore, the socioeconomic indicators do not seem to undergo major change in these areas.

PICTURE 13

The visual proximity between the buildings in Leme and the houses of the Babilônia slum.

Source: author.

The graphs below [14-17] show the comparison of the education and income census indicators (IBGE, 2000) among the sectors that belong to the informal occupations studied, the total area of the formal neighborhood in the surrounding area, and the areas in the neighborhood that have buildings with direct visual contact with the slum. This analysis makes it possible for us to notice that although the influence between these sectors[5] certainly contributes to some variation in the purchasing/selling value of these properties, it does not induce a sharp change in the socioeconomic profile of the residents[6], such as the one that can be seen along the axis of the access routes to the informal occupations.

FIGURA 14

Comparação dos níveis de escolaridade entre o Santa Marta, Botafogo e as áreas com contato visual direto entre eles.
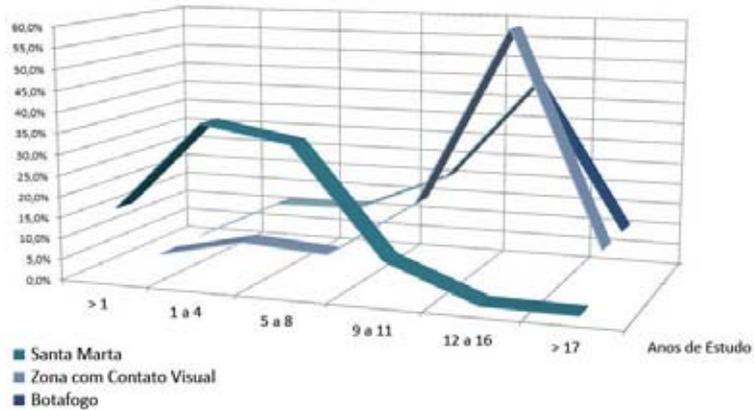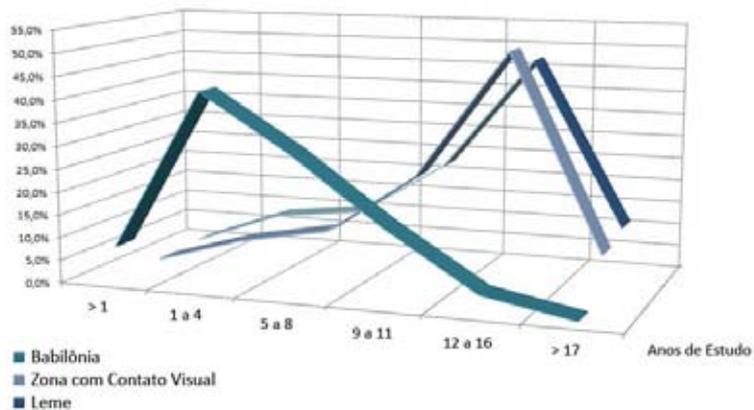
Fonte: IBGE, 2000.

FIGURA 15

Comparação dos níveis de escolaridade entre a Babilônia, o Leme e as áreas com contato visual direto entre eles.
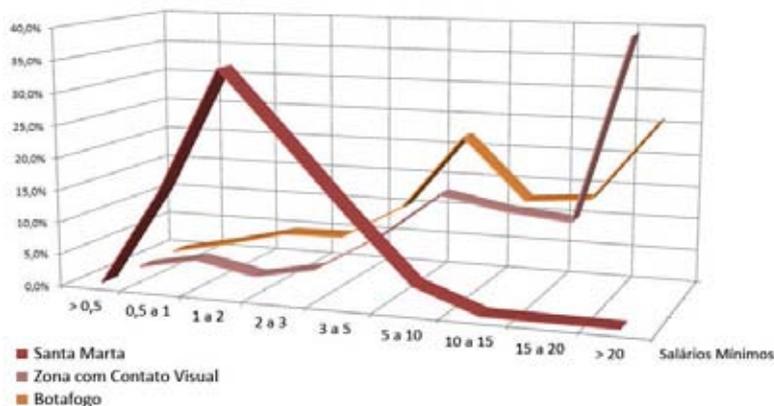
Fonte: IBGE, 2000.

5. Since we do not have specific data which allowed us divide, within the buildings of the sectors analyzed, the apartments that had direct visual contact with the slum from those who did not have it, we will identify only those buildings that are in such a condition.

6. In both cases, due to various factors, we found slightly higher social indicators than the average from the neighborhood.
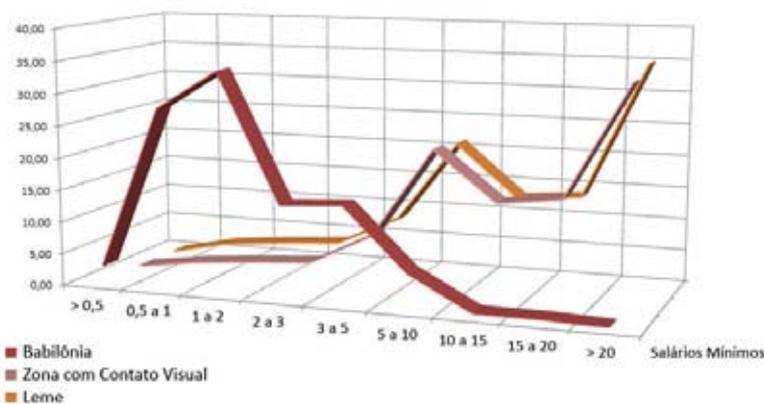
Other borders

Drug trafficking and violence

In establishing borders between the "formal" city and the slum, we cannot neglect the effect of violence, be it real or imagined, which, in spite of having had variable conditions over time, creates severe fissures in the fabric of the city, brought on by fear and distrust.

Sharing space with populations with a high level of criminality reinforces the condition of distrust and estrangement. A situation which forces the slum population, due to their involuntarily or "inescapably" close relationship with violence (MACHADO DA SILVA, 2008) to be subjected to veiled implications. To put it simply, the poor are systematically perceived as "the most prone to criminality and to the use of violence" (ZALUAR, 1994, p.59), reinforcing the stereotypes which identify them as potential criminals and objects of systematic investigation by the police. "According to the dominant social point of view, the territo-

rial proximity with violent criminals transforms all slum residents into accomplices, accessories to crime, or potential criminals themselves" (ROCHA, 2009, p.2).

Thus, the economic situation becomes even more critical, since the members of the working class, due to living in an environment which is marked by crime and violence, "they cease to find work because their own poor condition threatens and frightens those who could provide them with employment. In other words, they become dangerous before effectively being so." (ZALUAR, 1994, p.17)

This set of practices, stigmas, and prejudices creates a social imagery which establishes little difference between the slum dweller, the black, poor and bandit categories, and links them to the growing violence which is spreading throughout the large Brazilian cities. "This association is characteristic of the view people have always had regarding poverty, that it should be domesticated and moralized in its habits, customs and behaviors" (KOWARICK,2009, p.91).

The issue does not refer only to the violence found in the slums which is restricted to its residents; it transcends the borders of the slums in the silent threat that foments the fear that the violence will cross over its "natural" borders. Therefore, whether it is due to a "latent" condition or a particular situation, such as the sequence of violent events involving the Santa Marta slum in the 1980s, the proximity generates insecurity due to the exposure of the social differences, creating a feeling of being a preferential "target" or in imminent accidental risk, such as being the victim of a stray bullet, which in turn increases the estrangement.

The exacerbation of this situation can result in periods of serious degradation of the surrounding areas, such as the one seen after the 1980s in the streets Jupira, Marechal Francisco de Moura and Barão de Macaúbas, which connect the neighborhood of Botafogo to the Santa Marta slum. This period was followed by a great "abandonment" of the area and a plummeting of the sale and rent prices, which resulted in a large number of higher-income residents of the slum moving into these streets, although most of them still maintained a social identity linking them to the slum.

Similarly, Mamede (2005, p.106) describes a visit he once made to the Santa Marta slum, in order to see a "roda de samba"7 that was taking place at the entrance of the slum, which was also the first time he had come into contact with the drug trafficking that still dominated that space:

> Although on the way up the hill that to the entrance of the slum there was police presence, which implied that the area was safe and free from crime, we were only allowed in the space where the lively samba was taking place, after giving an explanation for our presence, and receiving the consent of a white man of 25 or whereabouts with a rifle in his hand [...] The impression I got was that this man was representing the same role the police officers did at the base of the slum.

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7. Samba de Roda is a variant of the more traditional samba music, and originated in the Brazilian state of Bahia, most probably in the nineteenth century.

Between the police which protects the formal city without worrying about what happens inside the slum, as long as the events remain restricted to that space and do not promote so much hype to the point of requiring their presence in that space, and the drug traffic which controls the restricted space where the absence of the police means tranquility, there is a tacit non-confrontational agreement, because they both know what happens on the "other side of the border," and this is precisely the reason why you should not cross it.

Symbolic demarcation and the sharing of space

The contact established through the continuity of the road framework provides the residents of the slum with access to services, transport and work. However, we realized the residents of the formal city felt uncomfortable with the presence of these neighbors due to the dirt, disorder, space degradation and the strong presence of an informal commerce clearly signalizing the proximity of the slum. Many also criticize the constant circulation of the residents of the slum which is marked by "inappropriate" behavior: shouts, mayhem, and constant cursing.

The social mix is seen as disorderly and disharmonious; therefore, the relationship with the city and its public life is avoided, which in turn creates a cloistered and defensive sociableness which rejects the public realm due to its unpredictability, danger and violence (CALDEIRA 1997; KOWARICK, 2009).

Thus, in the formal city, people exercise ways of dealing with the uncomfortable coexistence with such "pockets of poverty" by finding ways to limit its expansion through the implementations of eco-boundaries, bottlenecks and access restraints. The strategy of hiding, monitoring and controlling is linked to fear, mistrust of counterparts, and the clash that comes from sharing space with populations that have a high level of criminality. "They try to obstruct the reality of the slum by hiding its ugliness and backwardness, which are a demonstration of what people do not want to see, the plight of the country and its inability to find solutions" (SOUZA, 2007, p.66).

Several events in the last decade, exemplify this dispute for a symbolic demarcation of space: paintings on the facades of the slums, "acoustic" barriers, the removal of slums from areas of high visibility, walls as well as mellow versions of the latter in the form alley-limits (LOBOSCO, 2011). In the sites we studied, there were two different events which exemplify the various possibilities for the manifestation of the same phenomenon. The first event took place at the base of the Babilônia slum, at the base of the hill called Ladeira Ary Barroso, where the long line of motorcycle taxis waiting for passengers reached the middle of General Ribeiro da Costa Street. This constituted a problem from the point of view of the inhabitants of the "asphalt" (the formal city) due to this mode of transportation being perceived as typically belonging to the slum universe, and its presence in the street was seen as an expansion of the space of

the slum into the "area of the city". These characteristic elements of the slum were, therefore, seen as the creators of a symbolic border which was advancing into the neighborhood, and at the same time indicating the presence of a slum in the area[8]. In 2009, the Leme Resident Association (Associação de Moradores do Leme) organized a petition demanding that the motorcycle taxy stand be removed 50 meters up the Ladeira Ary Barroso, so that it would be out of view of the people circulating through the streets of Leme. Since then, the slum, or rather its signs can only be seen by those who look into the corner toward the top of the hill, thus ensuring the maintenance of a symbolic order in the area.

The second event occurred at the top of the Santa Marta slum, where in 2005 the government had started building a nursery whose access was facilitated through the improvement of the path that the residents of the slum traditionally used to get to the Laranjeiras neighborhood. However, this descent path, although having been used since the beginning of the informal occupation of the hill, had been discreet and precarious, and though quite close to the neighborhood, neither the path, nor the occupation were visible from Laranjeiras which is situated on the other side of the hill. Thus, most of the residents of Laranjeiras were unaware of the existence of a slum and considered the Santa Marta slum to be a Botafogo "problem". Since the nursery was visible from Laranjeiras, its construction brought the slum to light by making its presence more evident. This gave rise to a fear that the "open" and improved path would cause the slum to extend into the neighborhood. The civil action, filed by the Public Ministry of the State Rio de Janeiro[9], soliciting the halting of the construction, shows the real fear instilled by the slum's presence:

> *The creation of a clandestine building and the improvement of the possibilities of access to the slums, including by vehicles, will not only result in the elimination of the natural limits of the local ambience and provide favorable conditions for the deforestation of the area, but also work as great encouragement to the expansion of the Santa Marta community into the Laranjeiras neighborhood, an area which has had its vegetation preserved until now [...] The elephantine construction located on the slope of the Dona Marta hill is visible from various points in Laranjeiras. Bear in mind that this is the first construction that is visible from the neighborhood, and which characterizes the initial marker of the expansion of the slum into the limits of another neighborhood [...] and leans over the Laranjeiras neighborhood – outside the limits of the slum (MPERJ, 2005).*

Although the legal argument is centered on environmental protection, it is clear that what motivated the suit, which had the strong participation of the residents and the resident associations of the adjacent neighborhoods, was the fear of the expansion of the informal settlements toward the neighborhood of Laranjeiras.

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8. Babilônia is not easily visible from Leme, being hidden by the buildings in almost the entire length of the street.

9. Ministério Público (MP) is a Brazilian body of independent public prosecutors, working both at the federal and state level.

The work itself is an aberration and, for the first time, allows a construction from Santa Marta to be seen from Laranjeiras. It does not matter what the law says. The law is not always the best parameter, and in the name of the law many architectural and urban attacks have been committed against the city (NETO, 2005).

The construction was embargoed for a long period of the time, and its conversion into the UPP headquarters ended the imbroglio by destining its construction to a building which would work towards the control of the informal occupation.

Final Considerations

The understanding of the production of the space of the slum, beyond the discussion of its specific issues and its precarious urban, economic and social situation, must begin with the recognition of the permanent and inevitable interpenetration that it has with the formal urban space, which produces interactions that are inseverable from its existence as an urban phenomenon.

In this condition of territoriality and interactions, we realize that relationships are neither constant nor homogeneous, but are structured according to the possibilities articulated through symbolic and physical distances, which may be responsible not only for integration, but also for estrangement.

The proposal presented worked on identifying these multiple possibilities and on how different patterns of approximation trigger different reactions regarding adaptation and confrontation, showing distinct patterns of "proximity" as well as the possibilities for sharing space.

In this sense, the government actions often seem to explore this issue, but without delving into the existing interactions, limiting itself to minimizing the estrangement through focusing extensively on the borders with the formal city, while keeping the core almost untouched, or by plastering the external areas and urbanizing only the main routes which connect the slum to the city. This is done as a way of inserting these settlements into the landscape in a displaced way, increasingly distant from a real sharing of the space, and confirming the unbalanced integration they have with the city, where they are no longer marginalized nor excluded, but established in a segregated way in relation to the decision-making and power centers, as well as to infrastructure and services (PERLMAN, 2002)

The materialization of these interventions in the urban space seems to promote the perception that the absence of physical boundaries or walls could mean a complete absence of symbolic, economic and social borders, which are not only present but also historically inscribed in the territory. After all, if the motto of the official side is limiting the informal territory and controlling its expansion, on the opposite side, the perception of this control transcends the territorial boundaries, and creates the feeling, real or imagined, that their simple presence as slum dwellers of the city, should be subject to more rigorous control mechanisms. This situation contrasts with the affirmed freedom, characteristic of a space intended to be "built by equals."

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