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### Worlding Rio de Janeiro's favelas

*Relations and representations of socio-spatial inequality in visual art*

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## 5. Access, Mobility, Exchange: Negotiating Change from the Periphery

*A voz do morro sou eu mesmo sim senhor  
Quero mostrar ao mundo que tenho valor*

Zé Ketí (*A Voz do Morro*, 1955)<sup>1</sup>

*We can no longer believe that material inequalities restrict man's expressive capacity,  
although they may most certainly affect the social circulation of cultural assets.*

Paulo Herkenhoff (1995, p. 73)

Several artists and authors have argued that different forms of creative production can produce “plural ways of seeing” Rio de Janeiro’s socio-spatial inequalities, “exposing alternative viewpoints from which to interrogate common observations and prejudices” (da Costa Bezerra, 2017, p. 137; Allen, 2016, p. 24; see also da Cruz, 2007; Gama, 2007; Gama, 2009; Bentes, 2011; Holmes, 2016; Tambke, 2016; Observatório de Favelas, 2017). Building on this, the work of peripheral artists has been presented as “an aesthetic of representation involved in the active appropriation and rewriting of the city as part of a process of political resistance and affirmation of difference” (da Costa Bezerra, 2017, p. 137). This important argument is the starting point for this chapter, but a crucial question here, as I have argued in this study, is how the newfound perspectives art provides are distributed and communicated in different contexts and sites. We have seen that the “pedagogical model of the efficacy of art,” i.e. the causal relation between specific representations and a conscious change in people’s behavior, has been thoroughly criticized (Rancière, 2010, p. 144; see also García Canclini, 2014; Hawkins, 2014; Allen, 2014). Accordingly, many authors have encouraged us to look beyond art’s representational qualities, as “signification is only one set of effects which the object [...] we call art produces” (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 22).

As previous chapters have shown, these observations are highly relevant when considering artistic production in and about Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, precisely because

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<sup>1</sup> Translation: “The voice of the hill [favela] is me, yes sir/ I want to show the world that I have value.”

imaginaries of these areas are highly complex and often contradictory. As such, I have emphasized that we must look beyond the actual artworks and their exhibition framing to consider how the new perspectives they provide are connected to broader urban imaginaries of Rio de Janeiro, how they circulate the city and which audiences they reach. In this chapter, I will therefore not look not at specific artworks, but at the different ways in which art *practices* are ascribed symbolic and economic value by different actors involved in art's "extended field" (O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 32). Such an approach, as I argue, not only provides new perspectives on the potentially transformative effects of artistic practices, but also makes more concrete previously expressed critiques of Rio de Janeiro as a 'divided city,' specifying how artistic work functions in relation to imaginaries *and* realities of urban divisions and inequalities.

In the first section, I look at how artists themselves envision the aesthetic, social and political relevance of their work, often described as its potential to 'transform,' focusing on the production of multiple subjectivities and the various forms of agency involved in these processes. After this, the second and third section consider the links between social and spatial mobility of peripheral artists in Rio, reflecting on how interconnected forms of movement impact the symbolic and economic value ascribed to their work and, accordingly, the opportunities they receive and create for themselves. Finally, I focus on the financial facilitation of these art practices by considering different types of funding available to peripheral artists, critically engaging with the concept of precarity. Building on chapter one, two well-known faces of the art world will repeatedly come to the fore, namely that of elitism, exclusion and commercialization, and as a site of opportunities for resistance, counter-hegemony and alternative practices/perspectives. While these two sides may seem contradictory, the chapter will show how artists employ different strategies and tactics to move through and around these two extremes, negotiating their constantly shifting position in relation to them.

Before diving into the analysis, a brief look at terminology is in order. I have opted for using the term 'peripheral' artists, referring in a broad manner to several intersecting disadvantages faced, in different combinations, by the artists I interviewed.<sup>2</sup> Some scholars

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<sup>2</sup> Of the ten artists with whom I conducted in-depth and in most cases repeated interviews, the majority were raised and still living in different favelas in Rio (Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira, Angelo Campos, Kaleb Gonçalves, Mariluce Mariá da Silva, Mauricio Hora, Wark, Robson Alves). Also included were one Afro-Brazilian artist living in the formal city (Sergio Cezar), one artist living in the formal, working-class *subúrbio* (Luiz Baltar), and a collective from a peripheral favela in São Paulo

have argued that the term periphery is not as suitable to the Rio context, because favelas can be found both in central areas and on the outskirts or *subúrbio* of the city. Nevertheless, I found this term to be extensively used during my fieldwork, especially in the combined phrase *favelas e periferia* (favelas and periphery), to highlight the internal diversity of the spaces addressed by these terms. Similarly, my usage of the term peripheral artist is motivated by a desire to be attentive to the diverse manifestations and the relationality – implied by the relational term periphery – of the disadvantaged position of these artists. Finally, building on the previous chapters, my aim is to reflect on and highlight some of the particularities of this position without fixating their identity as “always necessarily artists-*favelados*,” precisely because there exist significant similarities with other artists working from disadvantaged or ‘peripheral’ backgrounds around the world (Freire-Medeiros and Rocha, 2011).



Fig. 5.1. The Morrinho Project (n.d.) Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro (photo: Simone Kalkman, 2016).

## Transformation and Subjectivity

Much has been written about the transformative potential of art, ranging from ambitious, if sometimes somewhat naive, manifestos to highly cynical critiques (Kester, 2004; 2011; Calo, 2012; Bishop, 2012). In this section, I aim for a more grounded and concrete approach to this issue, considering the strategies and approaches that artists from favelas are using to achieve a variety of transformations. Building on how artists themselves narrate art's transformative potential as well as on theoretical accounts, my conceptual focus will be the production of multiple subjectivities. Furthermore, by describing some of the different encounters between artworks, artists and audiences, my aim is to highlight the multiple forms of agency (and thus responsibility) involved in these processes of socio-cultural transformation. For O'Sullivan (2006, p. 88), art's political potential emerges when actors involved in different stages of its production, display and consumption "become involved in various strategies and practices that might allow us to produce or transform, and perhaps even go beyond, our habitual selves" (see also Guattari and Rolnik, 2008). In this section, I outline three groups of people that, according to the artists I spoke with, we can think of through such a lens: artists themselves, the audiences they work with directly, and indirect audiences in artistic institutions. My main focus will be the first group, whose production of subjectivity is directly related to the crucial issue of self-representation, described by Ivana Bentes (2011, p. 13) as "a transition from being objects to being subjects of discourse." This section will engage with this idea, which frequently returned during my fieldwork, formulating a response to some of the critiques it has engendered (discussed in previous chapters), particularly concerning authenticity and a so-called "discourse of realism" (Jaguaribe, 2004; 2007; 2014).

For many artists (both in Rio's favelas and beyond), art is primarily a way to express feelings and perceptions about the world that surrounds them. Graffiti artist Wark (qtd. in Google, 2016), for example, says: "My art represents my viewpoints in relation to society. My works portray my perceptions of the places I travel to, the things I feel, and the things I see around me. This energy I transform into art." This is often closely related to expressing societal critique, either in a direct engagement with socio-political debates (as for example in the work of photographers Luiz Baltar and Ratão Diniz or the graffiti of Angelo Campos) or in a more abstract and poetic manner. Examples of the latter would be the symbolic graffiti of Wark, the playful and imaginative models of Morrinho or the detailed favela houses produced by Sergio Cezar. As Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira (2016), founder of Morrinho, notes: "The

world is all wrong. I need to use my work to say what I think about the world. So everything I see and that I feel that is wrong I express through art.” Similarly, when I asked Cezar (2016) why he chooses to portray Rio’s favelas, he said: “Because it is the only way that I have to put some poetry into a violent place. I want to show that everything possesses poetry, any moment you can think of. [...] So my story is that I want [...] to create protest in my own manner, which is discreet.”

Relating this to the production of “new subjects of discourse,” two interrelated points surfaced in several of the interviews I conducted (Bentes, 2011, p. 9). First, many artists proudly emphasize that they are autodidacts, linking their artistic skills to a close and personal connection to the material/medium they work with. Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira (2012) noted how the years of creating, expanding and mending Morrinho’s favela model in Pereira da Silva gave him an intimate knowledge and deep, bodily connection to it: “Only I know where it will fall down, where it will remain strong, where it needs some improvements. [...] You only learn through practice and there is nobody that knows the practice like I do. [...] It’s like I’m directly connected to it, connected to its roots.” Similarly, Cezar noted how the recyclable materials he works with speak to him, arguing that he “does not see” matchboxes but closets or cars and explaining how he taps pieces of cardboard to let the sound determine what kind of house it will be (*Arte & Cultura - Sergio Cezar : Gigante do Papelão*, 2016, my translation). Importantly, artists frequently relate this self-education to a position of independence, and emphasize their practical, material skills to distinguish themselves from “academic artists,” with formal art education, who in their view possess a different kind of knowledge.

Second, the city of Rio de Janeiro – understood as both a collection of interlinked physical sites and the people, practices and imaginaries found in those sites – plays a crucial role in this process of developing artistic and professional skills. It serves as a source of inspiration, something to be criticized, a canvas, a context of display, and/or a source of (recyclable) materials, which means that a physical and symbolic engagement with the city is crucial to the production and distribution of these art practices. Moving through the city to produce their art, closely observing their surroundings or acquiring the recycled materials they work with, these artists develop a very particular kind of knowledge about the urban fabric, which they in turn articulate to contribute to new ways of thinking, perceiving and depicting the city. As Mauricio Hora (qtd. in Torres, 2015) says: “Through photography, I got

to know the territory: I walked through the whole neighborhood, photographed the entire hill, I got to know the people very well. This gave me the knowledge and the capacity to discuss the territory.”

Another example can be found in the work of photographer Luiz Baltar, particularly his series *Fluxos (Flows, 2015)*. The series can be seen as an intimate portrait of Rio de Janeiro’s urban infrastructure, showing for example cars, trucks, bicycles, street vendors, sidewalks, trees, fences, abandoned buildings, walking bridges, billboards, gas stations, political propaganda, graffiti, building sites, and traffic lights in fragmentary yet panoramic images. The photographs document the artist’s daily commute by bus from Bom Suceso, a neighborhood located in Rio’s north zone, to Botafogo, a beach-facing neighborhood in the Zona Sul. As the artist says:

I spend around two hours in traffic [every day], and through the window I went and observed the lanscape of the city, a landscape that is in transformation. Rio de Janeiro is practically a building site. The Rio de Janeiro that’s different from the postcards, isn’t it? A city that many people don’t know, even the people on the bus sometimes don’t see the city; they don’t pay attention to the changes that are happening (*LUIZ BALTAR, 2016, my translation*).

As such, the series shows the flows of the city as experienced by the artist in his daily practice of moving through it, which illustrates the embodied experience of doing artistic work in an unequal and socio-spatially ‘divided’ city. The images depict the practical and ideological consequences of the contrast between privileged or ‘central’ areas and the vast periphery of the city. Crucially, however, the series itself performs that these divisions are not absolute but porous, traversed by artists as well as other citizens on a daily basis. Building on this, I would argue that the artistic knowledge and capacity described by peripheral artists is not just representational but also, and perhaps even primarily, performative. Reflecting recent calls from the field of urban studies for “new geographies of theory,” their goal is not so much “getting the empirical story right” (in this case: ‘realistically’ representing Rio de Janeiro) but rather to engender “another type of relational thinking – that of the relationship between place, knowledge and power” and to “[place] the permission to narrate on a map” (Roy, 2009; p. 819; Roy, 2015, p. 8).

This focus on claiming space, visibility and voice was a central concern for all artists I spoke with. As Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira (2016) describes:

Speaking about the role of art, in [favela] communities...I think that there [now] are many artists speaking in this way, you know? I mean, it's not just me, fighting to show my space, show my favela. I think there are many artists nowadays that [think]: 'I'm going to do it myself. I'm going to revolutionize, I'm not going to give up. I'm not going to accept what the media is telling me and what the government wants. [...] I'm going to tell something different, I'm going to talk. I'm going to express myself through graffiti [or] through art.' I have various friends working with me on this [...]. There are places where [this kind of] leadership exists. Not the kind that you see in the residents association, but the leadership of individuals...of youngsters that think: 'Damn, this is all wrong. This needs to change.' I am one of the active voices of the favela, one of the artists of the favela. So I will change history through my pacifistic art. I'm going to tell the world what is happening and what is changing. So I think that, this is where we will see a change, what changed in the favelas through the involvement of contemporary art, visual art, graffiti, theater, dance...

Importantly, this leadership described by Souza de Oliveira extends beyond the direct context of artistic production, intervening instead in broader debates on how and by whom urban space is produced (da Costa Bezerra, 2017). Several artists from Rio's favelas and periphery now strategically take up the position of 'ambassadors' or 'spokespersons,' working with Brazilian and international journalists and NGOs to draw attention to problems as well as positive aspects of life in their neighbourhoods, for example as local guides, interviewed community leaders/experts or as commissioned photographers.

A good example of this is the work of photographer Mauricio Hora, born and raised in the favela Morro da Providência. Hora (2015a) sees photography as a tool within a broader struggle against structural violence and the injustices of inequality. He explicitly states that his focus is not photography itself, but rather the development of a political discourse. As such, his daily activities include accompanying foreign journalists, professionals and students (including myself) to Morro da Providência, guiding a local arts center, giving talks, participating in debates, and contributing to a number of articles in the Brazilian as well as

the international press about a variety of socio-political issues (e.g. the history of the port zone and Morro da Providência; Porto Maravilha; the 2016 Olympics; favela pacification; formal land titles; and daily life in Providência). Importantly, these activities are directly related to how he views the broader field of favela representations. As he states: “It’s nice that there is an archive of [favela] images today, but there is no surrounding discourse. It doesn’t help if you take an image, even if you are from a [favela], without any kind of discourse. It’s nice, it’s an image, but it will remain empty” (Hora, 2015b).

In other words, keeping in mind the multi-faceted nature and commercial potential of favela stereotypes, new or different images alone are not enough: what is needed is a process of reflection, debate and narration as well as disrupting dominant race and class relations in the social practices of art-making. Naturally, this is not to say that artistic content does not matter, but rather to highlight the flexibility and complexity of commercialized (favela) imaginaries. This resonates with Susan Sontag’s (2003, p. 104) account of images of suffering, which she argues “are not much help if the task is to understand.” She continues:

Such images cannot be more than an invitation to pay attention, to reflect, to learn, to examine the rationalizations for mass suffering offered by established powers. Who caused what the picture shows? Who is responsible? Is it excusable? Was it inevitable? Is there some state of affairs which we have accepted up to now that ought to be challenged? (Sontag, 2003, p. 104).

This is particularly important considering, as Chouliaraki (2006, p. 57) writes about images of hardship, “the simultaneous coexistence of images with language across different media, as well as across contexts and times.” With this in mind, the artists I spoke with emphasize the need to use a variety of different strategies and methods (performative, educational, representational) to reach and affect different audiences across the city of Rio and beyond.

In a conscious effort to multiply these audiences, most of the artists I spoke with engaged in socio-educational activities, often in the form of artistic workshops aimed at children, youngsters, and sometimes adults. For many, these practices evolved naturally out of their artistic practice. As graffiti artist Wark (2016) notes:

These lessons originated in the alleyways of the community. [...] It started because the kids saw my work in the streets and started asking for information, wanting to paint, wanting to learn... So the first group that I taught was in the alleys [of Rocinha]. And in time I started to participate in social projects in the community.

As several authors have noted, it is difficult to assess the effects (especially long-term) of such socio-artistic practices on the lives of participants (e.g. Newman et al., 2003; Evans, 2005). Moreover, as addressed in the previous chapter, there is a danger of “aesthetic evangelism” (see Kester, 1995; 2004), and framing youngsters as “potential criminals” (de Souza e Silva, 2011). Accordingly, my intention here is not to assess the impact of individual art projects, but rather to reflect on how peripheral artists with experience in this field theorize the collective impact of socio-educational art projects.

Here too, there is a focus on the need for multiple projects and opportunities, not least because not everyone will be attracted to the same kind of activity. As Kaleb Gonçalves (2016) says: “How can you discover your talents and passions, when you cannot try new things or develop your interests?” Furthermore, artists emphasize a need for structural, long-term facilities rather than temporary projects. As Hora notes: “Many projects end because there is some kind of problem in the favela, like a shoot-out, and they become scared and leave. Things in the favela take time. To be sustainable it takes a long time” (Amaphiko Academy, 2016, my translation). Finally, most artists emphasize that workshops are not so much about teaching artistic skills, but rather about a process of personal transformation. As Sergio Cezar, who has given educational workshops to youngsters from different backgrounds for years, says:

It’s all about the process. When a youngster comes to take classes with me or to do a workshop I’m not thinking about educating an artist. I’m thinking about contributing to the formation of a citizen, a human being, about turning someone capable of being creative and transform adversity into something positive (*Arte & Cultura - Sergio Cezar : Gigante do Papelão*, 2016, my translation).

Similarly, Wark links his workshops to the formation of citizenship: “[The workshops show] youth that they do have value, promoting awareness, pushing them more towards civic

responsibility” (*Instituto Wark: Graffiti in Rocinha*, 2012). Importantly, this holds not only for participants living in favelas – but for all youngsters they work with. For these artists, the process of art production thus resonates with a broader attitude towards life, aimed at taking control and imagining possibilities. Cezar (2016), who works with recyclable materials, poetically refers to this transformation as “recycling the gaze.” Crucial here is the link between societal critique and opportunity, precisely because, in the words of Chantal Mouffe (2007, p. 2-3), “things could always be otherwise and therefore every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities.”

In addition to these direct audiences, the work of these artists is also encountered by an indirect audience in exhibitions and art events – the impact of which is perhaps even harder to assess. As I have argued in previous chapters, the institutional and media framing of projects are crucial to take into account here, as these often reproduce rather than challenge favela stereotypes. For many artists I spoke with, however, whether or not art has an effect on its audiences is not the sole responsibility of the artist or the institution. For example, Morrinho’s artists call on the spectator’s own responsibility in their installation at the Museu de Arte do Rio with a sign that reads: “It’s easier to take pictures of the work to post on Facebook, than to stop and understand the sentiment and the message that is being passed on” (fig. 5.1). When I asked Souza de Oliveira (2016) about this, he explained:

Ahh but there are not many people who do so. *You* have this mentality. You know that if people enter a museum...like...why am I in a museum? I need to see the content. It needs to *have* the content, but I need to study the content. Reflect on what I’m seeing, what is being passed on to me, there needs to be a reflection on it, to be critical and to praise it – for me a museum is like that. [...] So we put this phrase there, its’ something like this: It would be much more important that you stop in front of the work and reflect, see what is being passed on, and to photograph *after* that.

As noted in the previous chapter, Morrinho’s museum installations have been criticized as overtly commercialized, but Souza de Oliveira pointed to the fact that the information to engage with the project on a more profound level (e.g. the contact details of the artists) is there for those who are interested. Accordingly, he confirmed: “Morrinho can transform people’s lives, but they have to want it. It [only] transforms the life of those who really want

it.” Put more broadly, for Souza de Oliveira, the different actors involved in art’s expanded field – the artist, the institution, and the viewer – all have agency, and thus responsibility, in the transformations that art can “set in motion” (Hawkins, 2014, p. 10).

In traditional art history and theory, the agency of art tends to be closely related to that of the artist. He or she is the creative mastermind behind the work of art, imagined as a clearly defined object or act that subsequently impacts its generalized audience. In the words of Kester (2011, p. 3), “the figure of the singular, auratic artist, reinforced by notions of artistic genius first formalized by Kant, remains the bulwark of the long history of modernism, and the epistemological template for much contemporary criticism and curatorial practice.” Naturally, the work of Kester (2011) and many others have called this philosophy into question, in a body of literature to which this section aims to contribute (Drucker, 2005; O’Sullivan, 2006; Tanner and Osborne, 2007; Hawkins, 2013; 2014). To do so, I have argued for a different conceptualization of art’s transformative potential, building on the accounts of peripheral artists in Rio de Janeiro. What we have seen here, in the words of Hawkins (2014, p. 10), is that:

Art is [...] less to be understood as the output of a teleological, singular, linear chain of production, distribution, and consumption, with creativity lying solely at the beginning of that chain (as if that was ever really the case). But rather, art practices are to be described as in process, always producing: worlds in progress, knowledge in the making, subjectivities to come.

To a certain extent, this is true of all art, but I would argue that recognizing and foregrounding this point is especially urgent in the case of artworks addressing various forms of inequality, precisely because it challenges how the relevance of such art projects is commonly framed and imagined (see previous chapters). In contrast to those narratives, which tend to focus on authenticity and uniqueness, the artists I spoke with imagine their work relationally, working with and against a variety of related fields, practices and discourses (e.g. other artists, journalism, academia, music, policy-making). This implies, firstly, that the transformative potential of art necessarily becomes a collective effort, in which different (groups of) people work simultaneously towards the goal of a more equal art world and society. Secondly, it means that the work of specific artists can have various and

sometimes-contradictory functions in different sites and contexts, depending on active practices of interpretation in which multiple forms of agency are involved. As we have seen, this brings to the fore the question of artistic strategy. In the words of O’Sullivan (2006, p. 26): “Does this object work for this milieu? Does this milieu demand a different object? Where to drop the pebble?” Naturally, these strategies depend to a large extent on the opportunities artists can create and the restrictions they face, which is what the remaining sections of this chapter will focus on.

### Selective Access

The world of contemporary art is often imagined as an exclusionary set of spaces, filled with pretentious objects and inhabited by a societal ‘elite’ (see chapter one). In Rio de Janeiro, so-called ‘high art’ interactions and practices also tend to reproduce dominant race and class divisions. Nevertheless, as previous chapters have shown, the physical and symbolic borders of the so-called divided city and perhaps especially its artistic production have historically been porous rather than impermeable (Carvalho, 2013). The very success of the artists I conversed with attests to this porosity, and is often narrated (in both primary and secondary accounts) as a particular form of upward social mobility. In this section, my goal is to critically examine this narrative by analyzing how socio-economic inequality impacts the opportunities and limitations of peripheral artists in Rio de Janeiro’s art institutions. As in other contexts, social mobility – i.e. changing one’s position within a stratified class system – has a clear spatial component here: getting ‘access’ to certain sites, institutions or neighbourhoods that were previously off-limits (either explicitly or through social conventions) (Bourdieu, 1989; 1993; Buchholz, 2016). Several authors have commented on these linkages between spatial mobility and socio-economic inequality, particularly within the ‘new mobilities paradigm’ (e.g. Cass et al., 2005; Urry and Sheller, 2006; DaCosta Kaufmann et al., 2004; Jaffe et al., 2012; Jaffe, 2012). With these debates in mind, this section will nuance common framings of artists ‘coming from the periphery’ to ‘arrive’ in Rio’s official art world, as a gradual upward social mobility narrated in spatial terms. Instead, I will highlight the complexity and fluctuating nature of the peripheral position of these artists as they move across the city, which illustrates my broader argument for the need of a more nuanced and entangled approach to aesthetic resistance, co-optation and/or domination.

Several artists I spoke with during my fieldwork narrated how they experience most mainstream art institutions as elitist and exclusionary. For example, Mariluce Mariá da Silva (2016), a street artist from Complexo do Alemão, told me about her visit to ArtRio, a prestigious art fair in the city's port area. She emphasized that this was an entirely white, elite event, describing how she and her friend (two black women from Complexo do Alemão) felt the hostility of both the staff and other visitors. Similarly, street artist Kaleb Gonçalves (2016), who works as a ticket vendor in the Museu de Arte do Rio, noted that many residents of the surrounding favelas don't like to go to the museum because they feel this space "isn't for them": they don't see anyone like them there and therefore they don't feel welcome. In addition to not *feeling* welcome, I was told several stories of being refused entrance to art institutions – as for example in this excerpt from my interview with Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira (2016):

Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira: "If I arrive in a museum [with] simple [clothes], like this, wearing flip-flops...[people] won't think that I'm a visual artist [...]. [They say:] Who is he? You cannot enter with flip-flops. But then a foreigner comes wearing flip-flops...he enters, doesn't he?"

Simone Kalkman: "I went to museums here wearing flip-flops multiple times"

NSO: "Exactly, so a foreigner comes with flip-flops, Bermuda shorts, a little camera, and he enters. So then I tell them I'm a visual artist; that my work is inside the museum. They say 'oh, gosh, sorry'... So you are barred at the entrance by a security guard who didn't receive the necessary information."

SK: "But even if you hadn't been an artist, you'd have to have the right to enter the museum, right?"

NSO: "Ah but here that's kind of difficult. To enter just the way you are, it's kind of difficult..."

These examples point to the fact that despite the longstanding and widespread concern with 'Otherness' in Brazilian 'high art,' actual practices of inclusion remain at best highly selective.

In her account of inequalities in Rio, Janice Perlman (2010, p. 323) highlights how through appearance and behavior – inextricably related to class, race, gender and age – the

identities of favela residents are “constantly being defined and redefined in the struggles over inclusion/exclusion and marginalization/integration.” This is reflected in the position of peripheral artists, who note a similar fluctuating position and status depending on the context in which they operate and whether or not people ‘know who they are’ (as in the example cited above). In a well-known essay entitled *Você sabe com quem está falando?* (Do you know who you’re talking to?), Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta (1979) distinguishes between what he calls the individual and the personal. As paraphrased by James Holston (2008, p. 19), the individual is “the seat of universal law, equity, anonymity, impersonal relations, and citizenship,” and the personal, “the domain of special treatment, social differences, known identities, hierarchical personal relations, and clientelism.” According to DaMatta, in Brazil it is the personal rather than the individual that determines how one is treated, leading to a society in which rights “have generally meant special treatment” (Holston, 2008, p. 19). In other words, in a system ruled by persons “being an individual is a stigma, it means being anonymous, being a ‘nobody’” (Garcia dos Santos, qtd in Guattari and Rolnik, 2008, p. 79). Naturally, it is usually members of the elite that employ the paradigmatic phrase that DaMatta chose as the title for his essay. In the example of Souza de Oliveira, however, he is forced to act in a similar manner, having to reveal ‘who he is’ to get access to the institution. Put differently, as a young, black man from a favela, it is his identity as an artist that makes him a ‘person.’

Importantly, this has an impact on the arguments around the performative production of subjectivities outlined in the previous section. Not only do such practices of selective inclusion circumvent rather than transform existing clientelism and class divisions, they arguably also “exhibit and reinforce the world of persons, turning it into a spectacle, making it even more glossy and glamorous, increasing the gap” (Garcia dos Santos, qtd in Guattari and Rolnik, 2008, p. 81). In other words, describing *these* favela residents as exceptional because they are artists leaves other favela residents discursively excluded. Moreover, as Allen (2014, p. 62) writes about narratives of transformation and social mobility in Brazil: “Our current obsession with celebrity status and a cult of instant fame [...] attest to a ferocious desire to believe in the possibility of rapid socio-economic transformation via media exposure and public visibility,” which is “far from unproblematic in a country like Brazil where celebrity status runs the risk of operating as a substitute for basic citizenship” (see also Bentes, 2011, p. 14; Jaguaribe, 2007, p. 90). These particular forms of tokenism can

be linked to what Smith (2016, p. 5) has called the symbolical “rituals of racial tolerance” performed by the Brazilian state as well as to what Luis Camnitzer (2009, p. 37) describes, regarding the access of peripheral artists to ‘the mainstream’ art world, as the “fetishization of the individual [i.e. DaMatta’s person] over the building of culture.” A crucial question thus becomes to what extent these practices of inclusion remain a symbolic performance, granting some favela residents the status of personhood, while the rest remain a stigmatized mass of individuals.

Of course, an underlying problem here is that artistic value and quality is primarily ascribed by ‘elite’ institutions, which often genuinely try to be more inclusive but do so against a historical background of exclusionary habits and discourses. Faced with the challenge of changing this reality, we should keep in mind (as described in chapter one) that these hegemonic power relations are continuously produced and reproduced. In her account of culture and politics in Latin America, Dagnino (1998, p. 37) builds on Gramsci who argued that power should be “understood [...] not as an institution, a ‘thing’ to be seized, but as a relationship among social forces that must be transformed.” In this sense, “the struggle over meanings and who has the power to attribute them” is inherently political, but also elusive, fragmented and often contradictory (Dagnino, 1998, p. 43). For artists, this raises the question of how to participate strategically within ‘elite’ art institutions, to claim presence and voice without “being managed by [them]” (Mosquera, 2001, p. 27). As Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira (2016) noted when I asked him about his ideas on working with or against the dominant art system: “Working *with* the system? No, it is a game. You have to overtake them to make a goal.” Extending this metaphor of a game to the broader socio-cultural transformation these artists strive after, I would argue that small and/or individual ‘goals’ (i.e. disruptions of the status quo) matter because they contribute to a larger objective: the collective presence of peripheral artists in art institutions and how this changes the overall discourse formulated by these spaces. Paradoxically, however, too strong a focus on individual achievements – framing them as exceptional – discursively works against this overall transformation.

A second important point to emphasize considering the porous but persistent boundaries of Rio de Janeiro’s art world is the intricate relation between symbolic and practical forms of distinction (Bourdieu, 1989). To illustrate this, I will use the example of Rio de Janeiro’s most prestigious art school – the *Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage* –

which illustrates the distinct but overlapping nature of the geographical, economic and cultural inequalities in Rio de Janeiro's artistic scene. Parque Lage, as the school is commonly known, is located in a popular park in the elite neighbourhood Jardim Botânico and peripheral artists often mention it in passing as an example of an elite art world space, as the cost of its courses and the south zone location form a serious barrier for (aspiring) artists from Rio's favelas and periphery (fig. 5.2). Nevertheless, here too the boundaries are porous, and some peripheral artists do attend or participate in events at this school. One of them is the now internationally successful Mauricio Dias, whose work has been discussed in chapters two and three, who grew up in a working-class neighborhood in Rio's north zone. He notes about a series of exhibitions he participated in in the 1980s:

In the exhibitions at Parque Lage I met other artists, but they all lived in the Zona Sul: no one lived in Meier. To go to gallery openings was problematic: I had to take two buses and always arrived late. This separation in Rio is cruel; separation of classes and money, racial difference and then there is the geography that underlines the whole thing (Pimenta Velloso, 2011, p. 112, my translation).

In addition to these practical difficulties, the kind of art produced at Parque Lage – mostly conceptual or performative practices with a leftist theoretical focus – feels distant to some artists I spoke with. During an informal conversation, street artists Kaleb Gonçalves and Angelo Campos explicitly mentioned Parque Lage to illustrate their critiques of the inaccessibility, pretentiousness and lack of artistic skill of contemporary art. A few days later, Gonçalves told me another anecdote about the school. After our earlier conversation, he had posted on his Facebook page that he would attend classes at the school, which to him was obviously a joke. Not only could he not afford to do so, he also felt the elitist institution was miles away from what he stands for as an artist. However, for many of his Facebook contacts, the joke was not so obvious, as several people started to congratulate him with his achievement.

These examples illustrate the combination of inaccessibility and porosity that characterizes Rio's art world institutions, as well as the intersections between practical and symbolic forms of distinction. What is important to highlight in this respect, is that both Campos and Gonçalves were (in different ways) also working to be included in the world of

art and cultural production. Accordingly, what came to the fore during our conversations was a complex relation to mainstream art institutions, reflecting what Luis Camnitzer (2009 [1987], p. 37) calls the “contradicting emotions” of peripheral artists. As he writes: “[The mainstream] is a name for a power structure that promotes a self-appointed hegemonic culture. For this reason, the wish to belong to the mainstream and the wish to destroy it often arise simultaneously in the individuals who are, or feel, marginal to it” (Camnitzer, 2009, p. 37). We also see this in the following quotation by Wark, who seemed almost afraid that being associated with Parque Lage would hurt his credibility as a self-taught graffiti artist: “I did courses at Parque Lage, but only for the theoretical part. There I learned to understand art a little bit better, learned to position myself. I learned not just about graffiti but also about other forms of art, and the theoretical side. But the practice I learned on the streets” (Wark, 2016).

In this section, I have highlighted, first, the selective inclusion taking place in Rio de Janeiro’s art world, and, second, the contradicting emotions this raises for the artists navigating this context. In closing, a final point worth reiterating is the internal diversity of Rio’s favelas and periphery. For example, Angelo Campos from Vila Cruzeiro (in Rio’s north zone) noted that favelas in the south zone tend to have a better physical and social infrastructure, including more social and cultural projects. In addition, the local and temporal situation regarding territorial power struggles and violence also directly impacts opportunities. As Mariluce Mariá da Souza explained, the return of frequent shootouts in Complexo do Alemão after a relatively peaceful couple of years significantly affected her artistic project (which largely depended on tourists for funding). In contrast, artists in the touristic favelas of the south zone note problems brought about by rising housing prices and gentrification (Gaffney, 2016). For example, Wark (2016) said that it became too expensive to rent an adequate space for his art school in Rocinha and Wilson Alexandre was even forced to leave his native Vidigal, where he had worked for a decade on his colorful studio/home, after his landlord sold the land to the highest bidder (Huggins, 2016).

To summarize, even within the peripheral space of Rio’s favelas, the struggles faced by each artist in their daily lives and artistic practice can differ quite a bit, related to his or her specific socio-spatial circumstances. Divergent geographical location and levels of poverty have a direct impact on the opportunities and mobility of peripheral artists in Rio de Janeiro, which also affects possible collaborations with outside actors (e.g. other artists, NGOs, tourist

agencies, government actors). Naturally, this is true for artists everywhere, but it is worth emphasizing some particular ways in which this variety manifests itself in Rio de Janeiro, precisely because of the tendency in art world and academic accounts to treat favelas as a singular category. Building on this, we should be very careful not to apply a similar categorical approach to artists from Rio's favelas.



5.2. Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage, Parque Lage, Rio de Janeiro (photo: Simone Kalkman, 2016).

## Nomad Artists

In her well-known account of site-specific art, Miwon Kwon (2004, p. 46) argues:

If the artist is successful, he or she travels constantly as a freelancer, [...] globetrotting as a guest, tourist, adventurer, temporary in-house critic, or pseudo-ethnographer to São Paulo, Paris, Munich, London, Chicago, Seoul, New York, Amsterdam, Los Angeles and so on.

Similarly, other authors have addressed how due to the ‘globalization’ of the contemporary art world, travel has become a prerequisite for a successful artistic career (e.g. Bydler, 2004; Lee, 2012; Duester, 2013; Loacker and Sliwa, 2016). Perhaps for this reason, the success of the artists I interviewed tends to be narrated through their experiences outside of their favela communities, and especially international travels, with articles entitled, for example, “Mini-favela traveling to Cuba” (about Cezar’s work) or “After Colombia, Holland and East Timor, Morrinho creates an exhibition in metro station Carioca” (EdieBRasil, 2009; Neto, 2011). Following Loacker and Sliwa (2016, p. 658), my aim in this section is to study these travels, as a particular form of ‘worlding’ the work of these artists, through “a view of mobility beyond the dichotomy of choice and necessity,” highlighting both the opportunities and valuable experiences that travel brings to peripheral artists, but also the structural forms of inequality that underlie this necessity for local and international mobility. Important to keep in mind here is the favelas’ status as the “the periphery of the periphery,” as noted in previous chapters. Building on this, the process of exchange between the Brazilian periphery, the Brazilian elite and the international art world – none of which are unified actors/groups – will be the central focus of this section.

The artists I interviewed have visited a variety of prestigious international locations, ranging from the Havana Biennale to the New Orleans Jazz Festival, and from Stanford University to the Academia de Artes & Industrias Criativas in East Timor. Most of them narrate these experiences as highly influential to their professional and personal development. The two artists from São Paulo-based graffiti collective Grupo Opni (2016), for example, stated how their trip to New Orleans made them aware of their position and status as artists, which helped them engage in a more constructive and confident process of negotiation with different actors from outside the favela both during and after the trip. Similarly, the artists of the Morrinho Project frequently note how their participation in various European art events (particularly the 2007 Venice Biennale) made them conceptualize their work as contemporary art. In both self-authored accounts of the project and critical commentaries, the Biennale visit is seen as a turning point in the maturing of the project into a professional, artistic organization (Kalkman, 2013).

Naturally, a certain amount of local recognition is usually necessary for international travel to be possible in the first place. Accordingly, most of these artists have *also* worked productively with art world professionals in Brazil. For example, Morrinho is widely

perceived as having been ‘discovered’ by Brazilian filmmakers Fabio Gavião and Markão Oliveira, and Grupo Opni had participated in a variety of art events in São Paulo before travelling to New Orleans. Nevertheless, several artists I spoke with described trips abroad as the first time they felt validated and taken seriously as artists *and* favela residents, an experience that they describe as having made them more confident, self-reflexive and ambitious. Partly because of these valuable experiences, many artists emphasize the ways in which artistic practice ‘changed their lives,’ granting them opportunities that they would be otherwise unlikely to have.<sup>3</sup>

As noted, this necessity of “artistic mobility” is not exclusive to the Rio de Janeiro context (Duester, 2013). Loacker and Sliwa (2016, p. 675, emphasis in original), writing about European artists and academics, describe this need for international mobility as “at the same time personally and professionally enriching *and* burdensome.” Similarly, Mariluce Mariá da Silva said that while her experiences at the University of Stanford were extremely valuable, she also frequently felt insecure and lost during her stay there. Even more importantly, it is necessary to address some of the unequal structures that underlie this necessity of international mobility. First of all, we have seen in the previous chapter that despite the strong focus on international travel, the favela origins of these artists usually remain central. In contrast to Kwon’s (2004, p. 46) “nomadic artists” who usually provide “critical-artistic services” based on research at the visited location, peripheral artists often travel with the aim of ‘bringing’ favela representations to international audiences (Freire-Medeiros, 2009; Linke, 2012). This might be accompanied by workshops with the local population – in which the artist arguably works as a “facilitator, educator, coordinator, and bureaucrat” – but the resulting artwork (even if it is performative and/or produced on site) usually tells something about favelas, not the visited location (Kwon, 2004, p. 46).<sup>4</sup>

Naturally, many artists specifically choose this role as ‘spokespersons’ for their respective communities, using their mobility as artists to draw attention to broader issues and problems. As graffiti artist Angelo Campos says during a three-week stay in Berlin: “One of the reasons I’m here is to open the possibility of giving a voice to my community in Rio, my favela. I must speak about what we live here in Rio every day. I need to talk about the place

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<sup>3</sup> These sentiments were expressed in interviews with Sergio Cezar (2016), Robson Alves (2016), Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira (2016), Grupo Opni (2016), and Mariluce Mariá da Silva (2016).

<sup>4</sup> Notable exceptions are Ratão Diniz’ project during the 2012 Olympics in London, documenting local graffiti, and the feminist art practice of street and performance artist Pannela Castro.

in which I was born and raised” (*ANGELO CAMPOS Art Vision*, 2016, my translation). However, we should be aware, as Freire-Medeiros and Rocha (2011) note, that as advocates of a “traveling favela” the status of these artists *as* artists often hinges on their identity as ‘*favelados*’ (Freire-Medeiros and Rocha, 2011).

Furthermore, it is worth examining how these international experiences impact the practice of these artists upon returning to Rio de Janeiro – a topic that frequently surfaced in the interviews conducted. Perhaps unexpectedly, the artists I spoke with experienced this foreign validation in direct relation to the historical context of outright discrimination and socio-spatial segregation that continues to have a huge impact on how *Cariocas* act in and perceive private and public spaces (see chapter three). Building on chapter four, it is necessary to be careful here. We have seen that while these travels disrupt dominant patterns of global mobility, the practice of showing favelas to non-Brazilian audiences is often based on problematic assumptions about Rio’s favelas, and even outright spectacle and exoticism. As such, I certainly do not wish to argue that foreign viewers have a more nuanced or open view towards favelas (also when visiting Rio). Nevertheless, this does not mean that these travels cannot provide desired outcomes for the artists in question, who are often acutely aware of these contradictions.

Several artists I spoke with juxtaposed what they experienced as productive, foreign encounters to local experiences of exclusion, concluding that foreigners appreciate their work more than middle- and upper-class Brazilians (including art professionals). As Sergio Cezar (2016) says:

I went to [the Havana Biennale] two times, which is the third biggest biennale in the world. Right? I did it two times. I was invited to participate, to be in the middle of these fantastic, fantastic artists. [...] But here in Brazil they don’t call me to participate in the biennale of contemporary art. They *don’t* call me to São Paulo. They *don’t* call. And I did [ArtRio], Rio’s big contemporary art event, because of an English gallery owner, look how crazy that is...He was in Brazil, okay? He was thinking about...already had some artist in mind to include in his gallery at the fair, and the guy just invited me [...] And so I participated because a foreigner gave me the opportunity.

In other words, despite the widespread media attention that exists, also in Brazil, for Cezar's (2016) work, he feels that Brazilian museums, galleries and government institutions do not take him seriously as a contemporary artist:

For these figures, these *big important figures* of the [ministry of] Culture, my art is just handicraft. In Europe or the United States my art is contemporary art of a good quality, it's top of the line. So this is something that has to do with prejudice. There is a racial prejudice that influences this entire story. [...] For a white artist it is different.

Similarly, Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira (2012) remarked: "I can honestly say that my artwork is more international than local, because *Cariocas* don't come here."

Importantly, the perceived gap between the 'local' and the 'international' validation of their work led several artists to argue that international validation/experience served to "legitimize" their art practice within the local context, noting that their local recognition increased significantly after such travels. In other words, foreign validation can serve as a way of putting them 'on the map' for Brazilian professionals and audiences. We might relate this to Frenzel's (2016, p. 122-123) account of favela tourism, which he argues can be seen as "a force for disturbing [local] value regimes and producing new valorizations," which can have an impact on local policy making, humanitarian aid and "transnational political organization." At the same time, it must be noted that it is easier for foreigners to show outrage and understanding about the position of peripheral artists, as they do not live with the daily realities of inequality in Rio de Janeiro. Moreover, when traveling, peripheral artists do not usually experience the very similar forms of discrimination that exist in Europe and the United States. Again, my goal here is thus *not* to uncritically celebrate this foreign validation as a valuing practice (as the previous chapter already made clear). Rather, I wish to draw attention to the ways in which artistic validation is constructed through networks and processes in which peripheral cultural producers, local elites (including art institutions) and foreign art world professionals possess particular forms of agency, positioning themselves in relation to one another and building on historical inequalities of both the art world and the city of Rio de Janeiro.

As Thornton (2008, p. xii) and others have noted, the construction of artistic and economic value in contemporary art is often "structured around nebulous and often

contradictory hierarchies of fame, credibility, imagined historical importance, institutional affiliation, education, perceived intelligence, wealth and attributes such as the site of one's collection" (see also Velthuis, 2003; Bain, 2005; Lingo and Tepper, 2013). Moreover, as Asbury (2012, p. 147) notes, "art from what was previously described as the periphery still [becomes] primarily legitimized by entering collections in Europe and the USA." It is worth noting here that the artists I spoke with are very much aware of these broader power structures, including the international fascination with favela neighborhoods, as became clear especially in informal conversations. Nevertheless, as da Costa Bezerra (2017, p. 41) writes, "the issue of local or national/international visibility is a question of [financial] survival for many of these groups." Recognizing the obvious historical and contemporary inequalities that underlie these circuits of value production, many peripheral artists in Rio – as part of the so-called "periphery of the periphery" – approach and navigate this field critically as well as strategically, grabbing and creating opportunities for genuine and productive encounters abroad that in turn work for them in the Rio context. To illustrate this, the next and final section will take up the important topic of funding opportunities.

### Funding *Falcatruas*

Near the end of one of our interviews, Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira (2016) summarized a large part of the 1,5-hour conversation in the following manner: "Yes, money messes up the entire world...but Morrinho also needs money." In this final section, I will consider the struggles of peripheral artists to financially facilitate their practices and projects. Naturally, making a living from art can be a struggle for artists from all backgrounds. In a neoliberalized art world, many artists now find themselves competing for funding at private and public organizations that often represent the very systems and values they criticize in their work (Drucker, 2005). To outline some of the particular problems faced in this respect by peripheral artists in Rio de Janeiro, I will take a critical look at the concept of precarity. In recent academic debates, several authors have argued for a broad notion of precarity or precariousness, referring to the "instability and unpredictability" of labor and housing conditions "under neo-liberal Capitalism" (Kosmala and Imas, 2015, p. 6; see also Butler, 2004; Standing, 2011). Others have written specifically about an "artistic precariat," linking the concept to freelance workers within the cultural industries (Bain and McLean, 2013; Leslie and Catungal, 2012). What often lies at the basis of accounts like these, as Neilson and

Rossiter (2008, p. 52) note, is “an attempt to identify or imagine precarious, contingent or flexible workers as a new kind of political subject, replete with their own form of collective organization and modes of expression.” For Kosmala and Imas (2016, p. 7) the precariat therefore “refers to experiences of people that have been made redundant, those on zero-hours contracts, migrants, asylum-seekers as well as the so-called creative class, and, in particular, those who are most likely to be in debt at the time of entering the labour market.” This argument resonates with the previous chapter in which I discussed the idea of favelas as spaces of resistance, linking the “excluded” and the “alienated” within the capitalist system (Marcuse, 2009, p. 190). In this section, I will elaborate on the points presented there by considering how artists reflect on the different forms of funding available to them, and how the different ways of financing their project relate to their broader goal of socio-cultural transformation.

As Munck (2013, p. 752) notes, the conditions described through the concept of precarity are often “Northern-centric,” especially when they are posed in opposition to the working and living conditions of Fordism and/or the welfare state. As he writes, “from a Southern perspective work has always-already been precarious, a basic fact which unsettles the notion that something new has been discovered” (Munck, 2013, p. 752; see also Neilson and Rossiter, 2008; Scully, 2016). Needless to say, while neoliberalism is now virtually global, it manifests itself differently in historically, geographically and socio-politically diverse contexts. Accordingly, apart from the ethical problems of grouping together slum-dwellers, asylum-seekers and the freelancing ‘creative class,’ there is a risk of conflating distinct problems and situations under one large umbrella-term. However, I argue in this section that a critical approach to the distinct but intersecting *kinds* of precarity faced by peripheral artists in Rio de Janeiro allows us to get a clearer sense of the difficulties and opportunities they encounter when applying for funding. We can think here, for example, of Butler’s (2004) distinction between precariousness, i.e. vulnerability shared by all human beings, and precarity, the particular vulnerability imposed on the poor and marginalized – which recognizes how the latter is inextricably linked to privilege and ‘Otherness’ (i.e. based on gender, race, class, nationality etc.). Moreover, we can make a distinction between “precarity of place” – namely “the extent to which an individual is vulnerable to removal or deportation because of his or her legal status and/or possession of documentation, or lack

thereof, in the host country” – and the “labour precarity” of freelancers and flex-workers (Banki, 2013).

With these precautions in mind, I will turn to the funding opportunities available to peripheral artists, focusing specifically on (1) government funding, (2) NGO funding, and (3) collaborations with private companies. Of course, there are other funding options available to these artists, such as selling their work (either independently or through a gallery), getting paid for services (e.g. photographic documentation), or crowdfunding – all of which have been used by the artists I spoke with in Rio de Janeiro. Nevertheless, I argue that the ways in which artists reflect on external funding mechanisms in particular allows us to analyze how they position themselves in the broader art world, showing the ethical and practical dilemmas they face in this respect. Perhaps a first thing to note here is that within this context, the peripheral position of these artists can be used strategically. As discussed in chapter four, despite the various challenges faced by these artists, their status as peripheral artists is often central to their work and its framing. Success stories of socio-spatial mobility tend to be an essential part of the reception and interpretation of their work, and this can be used within a funding climate focused on positive stories and the instrumentalization of artistic practice. As we will see, however, these same conditions also limit funding possibilities, which raises a variety of ethical concerns for the artists I spoke with.

Starting with government funding, the different levels of Brazilian government (i.e. municipal, state and federal) offer programs that focus specifically on funding groups and spaces in peripheral areas (e.g. *Favela Criativa*, *Territórios Culturais*, *Prêmio de Cultura Afro-Fluminense*, *Bibliotecas Parque*, *Pontos de Cultura/Cultura Viva*, *Vale Cultura*). Often, these are accompanied by a rhetoric focused on inclusion and diversity. As the then municipal secretary of Culture Marcelo Calero (2015) said during a public presentation and debate entitled *The development of cities with creative potential*: “The great preoccupation we have today at the Secretary of Culture refers to territorialisation and democratization of access and funding for culture. Today I think this is the biggest focus of our work.” He specified this by listing some of the projects funded by the secretary in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas and periphery. During the ensuing debate, however, members of the audience raised several critical questions, particularly regarding the collaboration with other branches of government such as the *guarda municipal*. To one of these questions, regarding a recent

critical manifestation in a public square partly funded by the government, Calero (2015) responded:

This irritates me quite a bit, Rogerio, to be quite frank with you. [...] The same municipality that funds, [...] that gives money for these things to happen, for these manifestations to rise and consolidate themselves, is the same municipality that limits and restrains them, that goes in the street in the form of the *guarda municipal* [...]. This is schizophrenic. It can't happen. But you see that our power to act becomes very limited, because it depends a lot on the officer in question.

What we see here is that the state is not a unified force or actor, which can be used by government representatives to deny their responsibility or to project blame. In addition, this connection between different government programs and institutions raised ethical concerns for several artists I spoke with.

Angelo Campos, for example, noted his refusal to work with the government based on ethical principles, because of the structural and police violence in the city's favelas (particularly in Vila Cruzeiro where he lives). Most other artists I spoke with took a more pragmatic stance here, but still raised ethical questions, arguing that supporting cultural programs can be a way for the government to 'justify' controversial policies such as the favela pacification, Porto Maravilha or the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC) (Hora, 2015a; Gonçalves, 2016; da Silva, 2016). Put differently, cultural programs might be used to keep up appearances of local relevance and community participation to distract attention from the neoliberal logic underlying policy making as well as the more disputed facets of specific government programs (e.g. home evictions, police violence, gentrification) (see also Peck, 2009; da Costa Bezerra, 2017). We see this especially in programs such as *Favela Criativa*, explicitly tied to the pacification policy. Finally, Mauricio Hora (2015a) noted that the chances of him receiving government funding are slim because his work as an activist causes him to clash with different branches of government on a regular basis. As he says, the government prefers to give their money to projects that have a positive and depoliticized message, for example those that focus on educational workshops or recycling without linking this to structural state neglect (i.e. low-quality education, a lack of garbage collection).

The second important source of funding for peripheral artists comes from non-profit organizations or NGOs, which in turn often depend on individual, government and/or corporate donations. Several artists I spoke with have founded their own social organizations, with or without an official NGO registration (e.g. *Favela Art*, *Projeto Morrinho*, *Instituto Wark*, *Favela Galeria*, *Ninho das Águias*, *Favelarte*, *Casa Amarela*, *Walls of Porto*). The funding of these small-scale projects is often limited and irregular, depending on donations and/or the work of volunteers. There are, of course, also larger projects/collectives encompassing various artists (e.g. *Imagens do Povo*, *Favela em Foco*, *Roda Cultural Pereira da Silva*), some of which received more long-term funding (particularly *Imagens do Povo*). Finally, several artists have collaborated with larger Rio-based NGOs (e.g. CUFA, Viva Rio, Afro-Reggae, IBISS) or international organizations (e.g. the British Council, the Prince Claus Fund), usually on temporary socio-educational projects or to facilitate international travel. When I asked about the benefits of funding by larger NGOs, however, several artists reacted rather skeptical. For Wark (2016), NGOs “have a lot of *falcatrua*” (fraud, trickery, scam). According to him, many NGOs act with ulterior motives, using the free labor of local people for their own benefit and promotion. A number of other artists observed a similar hypocrisy, accusing some large and/or foreign NGOs in particular of a lack of long-term involvement and using the artists’ name and fame for self-promotion.<sup>5</sup>

In her research on NGOs in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, Sinek (2012) observes a similar distinction between large NGOs with external funding and smaller, community NGOs. She argues that the former are less active in promoting citizenship rights and political struggles, precisely because “the funding environment might push favela [citizenship organizations] in one direction,” i.e. towards goals that are easily promotable rather directly opposing structural forms of violence and inequality. This resonates with other studies of NGO cultures under neoliberalism, in which depoliticization is widely cited as a key problem. Alvarez et al. (2017, p. 2), for example, describe a “Civil Society Agenda” under the “neoliberalization of civil society,” which “prescribes what actors operating in the space named civil society should do and how and to what end they should act and participate.” Their case studies show that participating in this Agenda “can subvert movements’ agendas, discourage alternative forms of collective action, and channel movement energies into procedures and policies that

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<sup>5</sup> Here my choice to use the real names of my interlocutors (motivated by a desire to recognize their work, and the impossibility of true anonymity when discussing specific artworks) prevents me from discussing concrete examples, as these stories were told in confidence.

do little to change the status quo or deepen democracy” (Alvarez et al., 2017, p. 2). At the same time, they note that “political openings may occur in these arenas as well” as “[a]ny given set of political practices may move in the direction of obscuring or unveiling inequality, reinscribing or transgressing relations of power and exclusion, reifying hierarchies or dismantling them” (Alvarez et al., 2017, p. 2-3).

Concerning this ‘Civil Society Agenda,’ a crucial point to keep in mind are the similarities between, on the one hand, discourses of resilience and empowerment of poor people and, on the other, neoliberal ideologies of self-reliance – as discussed in the previous chapter. As Kamat (2004, p. 169) notes: “The neoliberal notion of empowerment implies a focus on individual capacities and needs of the poor, and consequently minimizing the social and political causes of poverty” (see also Fisher, 1997; Harris, 2002; Amin, 2013a). In turn, this builds on a history of developmental aid that propagates “a model of personal transformation,” over a focus on structural inequalities (Kester, 2004, p. 135). Crucially, this has an impact on the narratives around subjectivity-building outlined in section one, serving as a reminder that this should always be linked to a broader political field (Rolnik and Guattari, 2008). Unfortunately, as several artists note, both NGOs and government funding tend to remain interested primarily in simplified stories of upwards social mobility and personal transformation. Importantly, my goal here is not to deny the valuable work that many NGOs do in Rio de Janeiro, or to over-generalize this highly diverse sector. Rather, I have tried to describe some of the conditions that determine the current NGO funding climate for artists in Rio de Janeiro, which can be limiting especially for artists with a more explicit and critical political discourse.

The third type of funding occurs through collaborations with the private sector. There are several large Brazilian companies that fund social and/or artistic projects in Brazil, which partly has to do with the fact that this gives them tax benefits (da Costa Bezerra, 2017, p. 41). It is worth noting here that several of Rio de Janeiro’s main cultural centers form part of banks and/or companies. In addition, some artists worked with companies on commercial projects, for example in creating the opening credits of a telenovela, merchandise (notebooks, postcards), jewelry, or commercials. We might link this to the broader commercialization of contemporary art critically addressed by a variety of artists and authors worldwide. In addition, we must keep in mind here the commercial potential of favela images, as a variety of recent commercials illustrates (e.g. by Puma, XXL Sports & Villmark, Freya Lingerie,

Calle Republic, Havaianas and Duloren Lingerie). Nevertheless, several artists I spoke with noted that they preferred this kind of collaboration to government and/or NGO funding, because they felt the for-profit sector entailed less *'falcatruas.'* They argued that while corporations also tend to work primarily for their own goals and gains, at least they are upfront about it, preferring this straightforward approach to a false rhetoric of diversity and inclusion. In a broader sense, we might then say that these peripheral artists aren't as afraid of "complicity" with commercial enterprises as their middle-class counterparts, precisely because they are acutely aware that a "rhetoric of opposition" or social relevance "often [allows] elite practices to pass themselves off as politically useful" (Drucker, 2005, p. 7). Nevertheless, here too we see a focus on positive and easily promotable narratives rather than critical works.

In all three forms of funding, we thus see a depoliticization and instrumentalization of artistic practices, which causes "insecurity, inequality and individualization" for many artists working in this field (Lazzarato, 2009, p. 110). As Kaleb Gonçalves (2016) puts it: "You constantly have to go to powerful people, holding up your hand." For him, this was difficult due to his fear of public speaking, and here we start to see that this climate favors artists that are extroverted and like to engage in such networking activities. In the words of Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira (2016), who describes the artist as a "micro-entrepreneur": "You need to be a shark. You need to know someone. You need to have a contact on the inside." Again, this resonates with broader critiques of social and/or development work: "The apolitical and managerial approach to community development draws upon the liberal notion of empowerment wherein the poor are encouraged to be entrepreneurial and find solutions to their livelihood needs" (Kamat, 2004, p. 169). Importantly, in several informal conversations and public events, this issue was specifically linked to gender. Many people noted, for example, that women tend to be less confident about publicly presenting their work, which prevents them from applying for funding and exhibiting their work. Unfortunately, this gender inequality is also reflected in the interviews I conducted, which is caused by my own lack of specific attention to this issue and the fact that I selected artists on the basis of a success within more official art world structures, in which female artists clearly remain underrepresented.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> A notable exception to this reality is the internationally successful street artist Pamela Castro, with whom I did not succeed to get into contact.

With this idea of the artist as a freelancing “creative entrepreneur,” we return to the idea of the precariat, and these conditions show significant similarities to artists’ positions worldwide. Crucially, however, in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas and periphery, these conditions cannot be placed in opposition to a previous system of Fordism or a welfare state. Rather, they are closely intertwined with the structural inequalities of Rio’s post-colonial society that leave favelas and their residents in a fundamentally insecure and unstable situation. We should think here especially of police violence, the lack of security of tenure, underfunded public education and healthcare – many of which are perpetuated and sensationalized by media imaginaries and political policy and discourse. Importantly, this “precarity of place,” as Banki (2013) would call it, works both with and against the creative “labour precarity” of these artists. As we have seen in this chapter, these artists face significant challenges in the form of economic restrictions, limitations to spatial mobility, racism and prejudice. At the same time, combined with the commercial potential of favela images and stories, the social instrumentalization of art can be used strategically by peripheral artists to secure funding from local and international organizations. This is, however, a field filled with *falcatruas*, and often requires depoliticized, easily promotable narratives of social relevance that obscure the more urgent, structural forms of precarity faced by these artists and the neighbourhoods in which they live.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered the question of what art can set in motion in the particular context of Rio de Janeiro. In closing, I would like to reiterate some important points about this transformative potential that surfaced frequently in interviews and informal conversations. First of all, many artists note that this should be a collective effort and responsibility in which artists see themselves as playing but a small part. As Sergio Cezar says: “You see, I succeeded...I now have a public that accompanies me and that’s great. But I don’t want this to happen only to me, you know? There’s should not be only one [black artist], there should be hundreds!” Or, as Mauricio Hora notes:

It’s not that I’m important here [in Providência], it has nothing to do with that. It might not even be a question of blame/responsibility [for his father who was a drug trafficker], but maybe it is about belonging. That there, the hill, is mine also. And I

feel so much a part of it that I have the idea, which might be idiotic, that I could help.... (Torres, 2015).

Building on this, many describe a process of gradual change that has already started, but still has a long way to go. As Nelcirlan Souza de Oliveira (2016) said, when I asked what had changed in Rio's art world over the last decade:

It improved and it hasn't improved. Let's say we are halfway. I think that...it hasn't improved enough. I think there are still many things that need changing. I don't know how things will change, but what I'm seeing is that [many things have changed] in the field of politics, you know, in subsidies, cultural organizations that develop subsidies, these things...this whole process. But there still remains a great hierarchy.

Unsurprisingly, the ups and downs of this process lead to frustration, as well hope and determination to continue. In the words of Wark (2016):

Prejudice exists when someone doesn't have a formulated concept about what something is, doesn't it? [...] I think that art will break this barrier little by little. [...] Little by little art will start to occupy its space, its importance within society. We will achieve this maturing little by little.

In other words, considering the entanglement and complexity of relations and representations of socio-spatial inequality in Rio de Janeiro, transformation cannot happen over night – but follows from a gradual and collective effort.

This resonates with Carolyn Pedwell's (2017) analysis of images of injustice. She questions "the hopes we pin on arresting or revelatory images," or the idea that images or artworks are individually meant to bring about revolutionary changes (Pedwell, 2017, p. 149). Focusing in particular on the ability of images to engender empathy, she notes that often "the hope is that subjects will never be the same again; their views of the world will be radically transformed, as will their behaviours and actions, in the interest of greater social justice" (Pedwell, 2017, p. 149). In contrast, she argues for a different "ontology of change," in which "the accumulation and reverberation of micro interactions, gestures and habits may be just as

(or more) significant than ‘revolutionary’ events.” In other words, Pedwell (2017, p. 154) highlights the limitations of the idea that progressive social change can be sparked by individual images, in moments of “rupture or revolution” - which resonates with avant-garde theories of the impact of art (see Chouliaraki, 2006). Rather, she focuses on the changing of habits:

While affect may act as a trigger that drives forward embodied and material change, or signals when existing habits have become disrupted, it cannot participate in enduring processes of transformation without some degree of habituation or automation (Pedwell, 2017, p. 154).

Similarly, O’Sullivan’s (2006, p. 88) locates art socio-political potential in its ability to “transform, and perhaps even go beyond, our habitual selves” (see also Guattari and Rolnik, 2008). As we have seen, artists from Rio de Janeiro’s favelas also describe the transformative potential of art as a gradual process of exchange (*troca*). In this sense, it is not so much the physical artworks that will spark transformation, but the changing context around them – a process of exchange, debate, learning and teaching – in which favela residents are increasingly participating.

Building on this, the chapter has tried to pay attention, on the one hand, to "the crucial role of multiple and overlapping histories in producing habits of practice, ways of going on, and trajectories of policy and economy that shape urban inequality" and, on the other, to "the capacity of events to disrupt patterns, generate new encounters with people and objects, and invent new connections and ways of inhabiting everyday urban life" (McFarlane, 2011a, p. 208). I have tried to highlight that exclusion is not a static state of being – although it impacts all aspects of the daily lives of these artists – but rather something that fluctuates and is actively negotiated over time and space. The artists that have informed this chapter do not occupy a unified or static ‘peripheral’ position, instead facing different limitations, challenges and opportunities in their daily lives and practices. Accordingly, my aim has been to complicate straightforward conceptualizations of aesthetic resistance, co-optation and/or domination by providing nuance to common concepts and narratives that surround the practice of peripheral artists in Rio de Janeiro, particularly self-representation, authentic voices, and upward social mobility.

Moreover, I have argued that the collective work of artists from Rio de Janeiro's favelas and periphery is not so much about authentic images or representations, but rather about positionality and the ability to transform the existing field of cultural production. As Judith Butler (2004, p. 146) notes:

[I]t would be a mistake to think that we only need to find the right and true images, and that a certain reality will then be conveyed. The reality is not conveyed by what is represented within the image, but through the challenge to representation that reality delivers.

For many of these artists, the periphery is seen as a vantage point, a geographical *and* symbolic location from which one experiences the city and that has a fundamental impact to how one thinks, speaks and creates. As Roy (2015, p. 8), who builds on Spivak's work, argues, it is about "placing the permission to narrate on the map." Importantly, the goal here is not necessarily to motivate people (from within and outside of the periphery) to certain forms of action through artistic representations, but rather about seeing art production and consumption itself as an on-going and performative process of "knowledge in the making" that comes into being through encounters and sharing ideas and viewpoints in a structured yet moving hierarchical process (Hawkins, 2014, p. 10). As I have described, peripheral artists, Brazilian elites, and international audiences (including myself) all possess distinct forms of agency within these processes of *troca* (exchange), negotiating the artistic and economic value of these artistic practices.