Divine mediations: pentecostalism, politics and mass media in a favela in Rio de Janeiro
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Introduction

In March 2002, I moved from an exclusive apartment building in the south side of Rio de Janeiro to a tiny, brick apartment in a favela to study the relationship between Pentecostalism and the mass media at the grassroots level. In order to acquire insight into the appeal of Pentecostalism from the perspective of the daily life of the inhabitants, I decided to take up residence in the favela. On 9 August 2002, not long after my relocation, I was informed that the famous Pentecostal Pastor Marcos Pereira da Silva of the Igreja Assembleia de Deus dos Últimos Dias would visit the favela and hold a public service in one of the few public squares big enough for such an event. That night I packed my film camera and headed for the square. I was not the only one who had brought a camera. The church members had hung up a huge screen on which were projected images of the service as it was conducted, alternated with images of a service held in an overpopulated prison in the city. The video of the prison showed hundreds of men behind bars, responding to an emotional gospel song performed by a young woman and men praying out loud with the Bible in their hands.

The service in the square started with a loudly amplified, live performance of the same woman and was followed by the testimony of a well-dressed man. Clutching a microphone in his hand, he loudly spoke of his life before his conversion. He had dealt drugs and belonged to a criminal gang. 'In those days I could not have climbed the favela of another gang because its members would surely have killed me. Today Jesus has given me the right to climb any favela and preach the gospel, because the power of God manifests itself in the life of men. If you believe say Gloria Jesus', he shouted. After him, another man came on stage to make his testimony. He was also dressed in suit and tie and he also gave an emotional speech about his life of crime. At a certain point he shouted: 'Yes, I was walking around with a gun. I was riding in my convertible. I told everybody I was from the Comando Vermelho (drugs gang), but the Comando Vermelho is of the devil. The devil created the Comando Vermelho. He also created the Terceiro Comando (another drugs gang). Was I crazy? Was I dumb? No, I was possessed by the devil. But then Jesus came and the devil lost his power and I was liberated by the glory of Jesus Christ.' Approximately three hundred men and women in the square cheered enthusiastically.
When the testimony-giving had finished, Pastor Marcos Pereira da Silva introduced a man who was sitting on the stage with him: *deputado estadual* (State Deputy) Fábio Silva, son of the owner of the popular evangelical radio station Melodia. He praised Fábio for all the good work that he did and was going to do for the community, and he called upon the audience to welcome him in the name of the Lord. He continued to praise the radio station Melodia that was spreading the voice of the gospel singer he had brought along and who was about to perform another song. When her performance had ended, we reached the apotheosis of the evening. Men and women were invited to draw close to the stage to be delivered by Pastor Marcos Pereira da Silva and his helpers. The men of the church stepped down from the stage and grabbed people by their heads, while they prayed firmly. Various people fell down to the ground, touched by the Holy Spirit. The conclusion of the night was reserved for the Pastor himself. To demonstrate his authority as powerful mediator of the Holy Spirit, he delivered a young man from a distance of several meters. Simply at the gesture of his hand, the young man fell backwards as if hit by powerful blow.

How should we understand this open-air service that brought together a mixture of narrated violence, politics, amplified music, video and Pentecostalism? What does it tell us of contemporary Brazilian society? What follows is an ethnography in which I will describe the relationship between Pentecostalism and the mass media from the perspective of life in a *favela*. This ethnography links up with several broader discussions on religion, media and society.

1. **Favelas, Violence and Pentecostalism**

*Favelas* can be translated as settlements that are built on 'illegally' occupied territories. In the southern side of Rio de Janeiro, most of these favelas are built on the hills (*morros*) that stand between the other neighborhoods. In 2001, it was estimated that 18.7 percent of the population of Rio de Janeiro lived in favelas. In general the people who live in the favelas have significantly lower incomes than those living in other urban spaces and it is

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2 *Favelas* can be translated as urban slums, shantytowns or squatter settlements depending on the various discourses that are related to these mostly 'illegally' occupied territories. In Chapter One I will discuss the political implications of the translations.

3 According to *O Jornal do Brasil* based upon the *Secretaria Municipal de Urbanismo* (JB 24/2/02).

4 In the census of 2000, in which favelas are identified as *aglomerados subnormais* - sub-standard agglomerates the average income of the people who are responsible for a household is around R$350 per month while in
especially in these areas of low income and poverty that Pentecostal churches have flourished. For almost a century, the favelas in the city have been the focus of governments, politicians and bureaucrats who identify the favelas as the locus of social problems that spill over to other well-to-do areas in the city. The governments have mostly focused on the problems the dwellers have allegedly caused, rather than the problems they have suffered. A lack of social welfare policy and implementation, police brutality, and a dearth of decent infrastructure are but a few of the problems the inhabitants have had to resolve largely on their own. According to Teresa Caldeira and James Holston (1999), Brazil can be described as a ‘disjunctive democracy’, in which ‘the civil component of citizenship remains seriously impaired as citizens suffer systematic violations of their rights.’

The inhabitants of the favelas not only have to face injustice, they also have to bear the brunt of the stigmatization of the society at large. In many of the favelas drug-gangs have obtained the monopoly of violence. These gangs frequently engage in armed confrontations with other gangs over territory. The police are incapable and/or unwilling to reclaim the monopoly, especially in the peripheral areas of the city. Many policemen are underpaid and under-trained. Television, newspapers and other media in Rio de Janeiro that report on the violent confrontations primarily reproduce an image of the favelas as places that are ruled by drugs lords (Coimbra 2001). As a result of the armed violence that occurs in and near the favelas, they are mostly portrayed as dangerous places, instead of areas that need improvement. In the news reports, favelas tend to be stigmatized without much of an attempt to investigate the genesis, history and present of these favelas or the lives of the majority of the people who are not involved with crime but have to struggle to maintain their livelihood in the liberal economy of contemporary Brazil.

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other bairros (neighborhoods) this generally is R$1225. If the average income per head in the well-to-do neighborhood Gávea, (R$2140) is compared with the average income per head in the neighboring favela Rua da Ratinha (R$220) or with the Complexo de Alemão (R$177), this provides solid empirical proof that inequality in Rio de Janeiro is extremely big.

5 Research done in Rio de Janeiro in 1994 (ISER) showed that of all the people who frequent Protestant churches in Rio de Janeiro, those who attend the Pentecostal churches Assembléia de Deus and the Igreja Universal generally earn the lowest incomes in the city. Both of them attract around 62 percent people whose families generally have up to twice the minimum income and who have jobs with lower incomes, for example domestic workers.

6 Little has been said about the fact that many inhabitants of the favelas are also aware that they are being stigmatized. According to research done in several favelas in 1991, many inhabitants of these favelas recognize the formation of the negative public opinion as a result of the repetition of stereotypical images of favela inhabitants (de Oliveira et al. 1993: 48).
When inhabitants are not being portrayed as perpetrators they are portrayed as victims and as helpless people. Such an image also does not do justice to the situation in which people live. In many cases, other social institutions through which people have organized themselves or through which they try to come to terms with their harsh reality have emerged. Many favelas, for instance, have their own escolas de samba, associações de moradores and a wide variety of different religious institutions that offer material and spiritual service. There are, for example, many Catholic parishes and terreiros de Candombê to be found in the favelas of Rio. In this dissertation, I focus on the Pentecostal churches that operate in or draw many people from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro.

Scholars who work on religion in Brazil have often emphasized the relationship between religious organizations and social deprivation (Burdick 1993; Mariz 1994). In the past, it was primarily the Catholic Church which was seen as the institution that could defend the rights of the underprivileged, while providing spiritual consolation. After the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), and especially after the meeting of the Latin American Bishops in Medelin in 1968, the Roman Catholic Church tried to renew it position vis-a-vis the Latin America Catholics. Influenced by Liberation Theology, which was based on Marxist ideology and on progressive Christian ideas, the church created Comunidades Eclesial de Base (CEB) to bring Catholicism closer to the people.

Several social scientists depicted this church movement, commonly referred to as basismo, as the possible solution to the social political problems of Brazil (Burdick 1993; Casanova 1994). For a while it seemed they were successful. The Catholic Church opposed the undemocratic character of the military dictatorship and in urban areas it helped inhabitants to set up political organizations. Yet, after the abertura – the ending of the military regime – and with the advent of the liberalization of the economy, CEBs gradually lost the ability to articulate their relationship to ‘the people’ in the fashion they had done during the regime (Montes 1998; Birman&Leite 2000). According to David Lehmann (1996), the CEBs operated from an intellectual perspective:

Basista Catholicism depicts an idealized image of popular culture in the face of which its activists and theorists prostrate themselves in an almost reverential manner: the result is that they try very hard to take up the habits and idioms of this popular culture in order to bring the Catholic religion, as they see it, nearer to the people and also to reform Catholicism itself in the direction of the “point of view of the poor”. They are taking the

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* An escola de samba is a samba school and associação de moradores literally means association of inhabitants.
* Candombê is a popular Afro-Brazilian religious practice. Terreiros are the temples.
* Christian-Base Communities
sociologist's viewpoint into the Church itself, and they do so in circumstances where they themselves are not of the popular classes...(Lehmann 1996: 18).

In contrast to the CEBs, the Pentecostal churches have remained popular among the inhabitants of the favelas. Pentecostal churches emerged in Brazil in the beginning of the twentieth century. They expanded most rapidly during the military dictatorship that commenced in 1964 and ended with the gradual re-democratization in the late eighties and the first direct presidential elections in 1989. During the 'modernization project' of the military dictators, the population in the urban centers of Brazil increased quickly (Martin 1990: 65). Various academics have stated that many of the 'people' felt more attracted to Pentecostal churches than the Catholic Church because they offered direct spiritual interventions in situations of relative poverty in a society ever more geared to mass consumption and in situations of growing violence in many of the marginalized areas of the Brazilian metropoles (Antoniazzi 1994; Mariz 1994; Campos 1997; Montes 1998; Birman&Leite 2000).

Generally speaking, Pentecostalism stresses the gifts (charismata) of the Holy Spirit, for example, faith healing and speaking in tongues (glossolalia). The devil and his demons are seen as agents who seek to win the hearts and minds of humans and lead them to death and destruction. The existence of such evil enforces the so-called duality of the Pentecostal world-view (Droogers 2001: 46), a description of the world that is divided between those who follow God and those who follow the devil. Given such a duality, conversion – the acceptance of Jesus as one's savior - is generally seen as a fundamental experience by which to achieve happiness in this life and salvation in the Hereafter. Pentecostalism presents a form of Protestantism with a strong millennial aspect. Although the Bible is seen as the divine revelation and the infallible rule of faith and conduct, practice is often based upon an oral liturgy, rather than a literary liturgy.11

10 I agree with André Droogers that Pentecostalism remains a social scientific construct to a certain degree (Droogers 2001: 46). In contrast to the Roman Catholic Church, there is no overarching organization which links all the different Pentecostal churches in a hierarchical structure. This means that in every country, region, or even city, different types of Pentecostal churches have flourished, each of them exhibiting particular forms, styles and modes of conduct depending on the historical context in which they are embedded. For a comparison between the different trajectories of these movements in Latin America and in Brazil, see for example: Martin 1990 and Boudewynse et al. 1998.

11 While the 'birth' of Pentecostalism is often placed at the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in 1906, when a black Methodist started a church where people received the blessing of the Spirit, the heterogeneity of influences and followers makes it hard to pinpoint an exact place and location. Both David Martin (1990) and George Eaton Simpson (1978) refer to the Methodist and Baptist background of Pentecostalism as it emerged in the United States.
Pentecostal Churches have been active in Brazil since the beginning of the twentieth century and from then till the 1980s had developed solidly into a heterogeneous field of different denominations with different doctrines, styles and practices. The historical scheme of Pentecostal movements in Brazil can be drawn along the lines of three types of Pentecostal churches, which Ricardo Mariano (1999) delineates as ‘classic’ Pentecostalism, ‘deutero’ Pentecostalism and ‘neo’ Pentecostalism. Classic Pentecostalism is formed by the denominations which originated between 1910 and 1950. One of the first, largest and best-known denominations of this period is the Assembléia de Deus, which was founded by two Swedish Baptists who came to Brazil from Chicago in 1911. Though they bear the same name, the church is independent of the North American Assemblies of God. The second type, deutero-Pentecostalism, is characterized by denominations which originated between 1950 and 1975, most of them in the fast-growing urban areas of São Paulo. This period witnessed the first denominations with Brazilian-born founders and the first adaptation of radio and even television. The denominations which emerged in this period are, for example, O Brasil Para Cristo and Igreja Quadrangular.

According to David Martin, the popularity of Pentecostal movements grew considerably at times of the industrialization of Brazil during the Vargas regime and even more during the ‘modernization project’ of the military dictators. In this period the population expanded and the urban centers grew rapidly. As people moved away from the rural areas, they became much less bounded by older clientelist ties:

It was during this period of population growth, of movement and intermittent populism that Pentecostalism expanded most rapidly. Pentecostalism was fully indigenous and able to provide an all-encompassing worldview for marginalized people, especially in the urban agglomerations in the southeast and São Paulo. Pentecostalism was the religious form of a raised consciousness and quite literally of a raised voice. It cut people off from wider society in order to raise them within a new religious framework (Martin 1990: 65).

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12 For a detailed description of the differences between earlier categorizations and their flaws see Mariano (1999) and Kramer (2001). The distinctions between the types of Pentecostal denominations primarily mark the historical moments in which they were created, but also do not overlook important differences in doctrines, organization, styles and practices. I will not go in depth into the discussions about the exact reasons why specific churches from the classic-Pentecostal group do or do not fit into the deutero-Pentecostal group or vice versa. I choose to follow Mariano’s categorizations broadly instead, because his approach leaves room for continuity and (ex)change between the different Pentecostal denominations and Brazilian society as a whole.
The third type, neo-Pentecostalism, which came into being near the end of the military dictatorship, is characterized by the intensive use of mass media, the adaptation of a style of preaching often referred to as 'the gospel of health and wealth' and an active role in Brazilian politics. One of the important denominations which emerged is the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus. According to Freston:

The third wave occurs after the authoritarian modernization of the country, especially in the sphere of communications, when over two thirds of the populations are urbanized, the economic "miracle" is over and the "lost decade" of the 1980's is beginning. The wave starts in Greater Rio, economically decadent and beset by violence, gambling mafias and populist politics. In contrast with the second wave of São Paulo churches, founded by migrants of low cultural level, the third wave has more urbanized leaders of a slightly higher cultural level and whiter skin. It adapts easily to urban culture influenced by television and the yuppie ethic (Freston 1994: 539).

As this last quote also indicates, the literature on Brazilian Pentecostalism recurrently suggests that poverty and violence in the urban areas are important factors of its popularity. The discussion on the place of Pentecostalism in Brazilian society has a long history, which started with the work of Emilio Willems (1967) and has continued up to the present among a wide variety of scholars. In almost all these studies one can discern the legacy of Max Weber (Weber 1958). Weber’s emphasis on the entanglement between the Puritan ethic and the development of modern capitalism continues to inspire scholars to examine the dialectical relation between Brazil’s socio-economic circumstances and Pentecostal movements closely (Mariz 1994; Kramer 2001).  

André Droogers (1998) has described clearly the history of the discussion on Pentecostal growth in relation to socio-economic changes in Brazilian society. Droogers states that the growth of Pentecostalism has been explained along three analytic schemes (paradigms): 1) As a response to sudden societal changes which caused a lack of clear norms, for example because of mass migration to the urban centers of Brazil (anomie model). 2) As a reaction to class differences. Brazilian society is highly unequal. Pentecostalism offers people a way to reclaim control over the means of salvation and

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13 Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus can be translated as Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (Oro and Semán 2001). Since we are dealing with a distinctive Brazilian church, I chose to refer to them mostly as the Igreja Universal and sometimes as IURD.

14 According to Colin Campbell, the Weberian description of the modern individual, characterized by a Puritan ethic of production, operating in a disenchanted world, should be complemented with a history of modern consumption. According to Campbell, the Puritan ethic of production had been accompanied from the outset by a romantic ethic of consumption, which boosted fantasy full engagement with commodities (Campbell 1987).
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inverse their social position and that of the elite. 3) As an answer to make sense of an unevenly modernizing society. Pentecostalism fits in well with a neatly ordered bureaucratic society of laws, which Brazil aspires to be, even though in fact it is a society of personal favors and manipulation. Pentecostal institutions help to bridge the gap (Doogers 1998: 10-24).15

Instead of opting for one of these three schemes, Droogers demonstrates that each of them presents interesting answers as well as paradoxes and ambivalences. The anomie model suggests a temporary growth until the situation is normalized, but this conflicts with the fact that especially in the last decade Pentecostal churches have grown rapidly. The ‘positive’ integrating aspect of Pentecostalism in situations of anomie is often coupled with a sectarian and conservative attitude towards society at large. The class struggle approach is very insightful, but different Pentecostal churches appeal to different layers of the population and neo-Pentecostal churches often appeal to poor and middle-class people simultaneously. While class differences fuel the attraction of Pentecostalism, there is no clear relation between a particular group of people and its class. To describe Pentecostalism as a response and answer to failed modernization helps to explain why people are attracted to the strong dualisms inherent to Pentecostalism, but it cannot be described as purely bureaucratic and ethically undiluted. Pentecostal churches also fall victim to nepotism, scandals and manipulation (Droogers 1998: 10-24). Droogers concludes that an eclectic use of these three analytical schemes need not be considered problematic and neither does the fact that they all contain paradoxes. ‘Independently of our models, reality contains more contradiction and is more complex than we usually dare to admit’ (Droogers 1998: 3). Droogers’ description of the ambivalent relationship between Pentecostalism and socio-economic circumstances largely concurs with David Martin’s description of Pentecostalism in Latin America (2002). In his work on Pentecostal movements around the world, Martin argues that Latin American Pentecostalism is characterized by a potent ambiguity in relation to economic ethic, politics and the family (Martin 2002: 83).

The analytical schemes described by Droogers and Martin have in common that they confirm the appeal of Pentecostalism to people who are confronted with experiences of powerlessness. In terms of either material or spiritual benefits, in terms of psychological or cultural conflicts, Pentecostalism offers doctrines and practices that people engage with to be able to take matters into their own hands. Yet, the experience

15 For a similar summary of the debates see Campos (1997).
of empowerment is strongly related to solid moral codes which people are expected to follow. Members, for example, should not commit adultery, drink alcohol or behave indecently. They are often supposed to stick to a pious dress code. Besides these moral codes, members of Pentecostal churches are also expected to adopt new modes of behavior. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that Pentecostalism presents only freedom. At the individual and the structural level, Pentecostalism offers enabling and constraining practices.

Some of the questions that arise are: How is the daily life of the people in the favelas related to the popularity of the Pentecostal churches? What kind of moral codes are prescribed and how do people relate to them? Do people abide by them always? If so, why? If not, what does that mean? In what way is the presence of the drugs-gangs related to the Pentecostal churches and how do they relate to the state institutions in the favela? Do the Pentecostal churches oppose or resolve the violence in the favelas and if so, in what ways? What could it tell us of the place of religion in societies, characterized by high inequality and a similar disjunctive democracy?

In this dissertation I explore the socio-political and cultural context in which Pentecostal practices flourish. I will explain the attraction from the point of view of the inhabitants of the favela, without treating the practices as conflict-ridden answers to social and individual circumstances. To do this I focus primarily on adherents of two Pentecostal churches - the Assembléia de Deus and Igreja Universal - who live in the favela Cantagalo/Pavão-Pavãozinho. This description of the daily circumstances of the people who live in a favela relates to the descriptions of the larger institutional differences between the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches in Brazil. There is no doubt that the neo-Pentecostal church Igreja Universal (together with the Igreja Internacional da Graça) has engendered revolutionary reformations of Pentecostalism in Brazil. The church has generated new models and discourses of personhood, (church) community and society, which differ from other Pentecostal churches and other religious groups. However, from the perspective of a shared life-world in a specific socio-political

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14 These institutional differences are described by a number of social scientists who work on Brazilian religious movements. Among them: David Lehmann (1996), Leonildo Silveira Campos (1997), Ricardo Mariano (1999) and Eric Kramer (2001). With their focus on the neo-Pentecostal churches, most notably the Igreja Universal, these authors have made important contributions to discussions about the changing place of religious institutions in Brazil and to the internal changes in the field of Pentecostal denominations. Their work has been a source of inspiration for me to think about the people who frequent the two Pentecostal institutions in the favela Cantagalo/Pavão-Pavãozinho, especially the discussions about the boundaries between the Pentecostal denominations and between Pentecostal- and other popular practices.
setting, where many people are bound together by kinship, economic dependencies or sheer proximity, one must also take into account that these ‘religious’ models and discourses are never totalizing and that people constantly make choices, perform different modes of behavior or speak in different ways, a process through which they reinforce and deconstruct boundaries between what appear to be distinct social phenomena. In this ethnography I attempt to demonstrate how this works in practice.

2. Pentecostalism, Politics and Mass Media

The appearance of the *deputado estadual* Fábio Silva, son of the owner of the popular evangelical radio station Melodia, in the middle of the service draws attention to the interesting relationship between Pentecostalism, media and politics. The Brazilian elections of 2002 showed a remarkable transformation in the fields of politics and religion. For the first time, a candidate ran for president who was explicitly known and presented as an *evangélico* (evangelical): former governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Anthony Garotinho.¹⁷ Garotinho, member of the Presbyterian church, *Luz do Mundo*, in Rio de Janeiro, and his wife, Rosinha Matteus Garotinho, member of the Assembleia de Deus, both used their evangelical identity as a valuable asset in their political campaigns. While Anthony Garotinho did not congregate at a Pentecostal church, he presented himself as an evangélico, hoping to attract voters from a broad domain of Protestant and Pentecostal churches. Though Rosinha Garotinho won and became governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Anthony Garotinho did not make it to the second round of the elections.¹⁸ However, besides these two, plenty of other candidates affiliated to Pentecostal churches were campaigning for political positions, and many were elected.

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¹⁷ The estimation of the percentage of the population of roughly 170 million that is said to be evangélico is around 15 percent. Source: Ecelsia, no. 80 pp 46 verified at: *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - IBGE. Censos Demográficos 1991 e 2000. Evangélico* is a term used to designate Protestants from different denominations, including adherents of Pentecostal beliefs and practices. It is used by the government, social scientists and journalists to describe a group of Protestant/Pentecostal members and ‘voters’. [http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/censo2000/populacao/religiao_Censo2000.pdf](http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/censo2000/populacao/religiao_Censo2000.pdf)

¹⁸ Rosinha Matteus was elected governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro in the first round of the elections. In the presidential elections, Anthony Garotinho received 15 million votes, not enough to compete with Lula in the second round. Paul Preston shows that many evangélicos voted for Lula and not for Garotinho during the elections. However, a large proportion of the evangélicos did vote for Garotinho, which highlights the political importance of the religious practices and affiliations of the candidates. Paul Preston 2003. ‘Os evangélicos e a nova realidade política’ in Editora Ultimato. [http://www.ultimo.com.br/revistas_arquivo.asp?edicao=280&sec_id=506](http://www.ultimo.com.br/revistas_arquivo.asp?edicao=280&sec_id=506).
The members of the Igreja Universal drew the most attention. In the period leading up to the elections, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) of the elected president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva opted for an alliance with the Partido Liberal (PL). The Partido Liberal is generally known for the number of pastors who work in the Igreja Universal. One of the vice-leaders of PL is Carlos Alberto Rodrigues, who was listed officially as Bispo (Bishop) Rodrigues. Bispo Rodrigues was a prominent figure in the Igreja Universal. He was re-elected as federal deputy for the state of Rio de Janeiro and he was the political spokesman for the church in the Congresso Nacional - the Brazilian chamber of deputies. Fifty-five of the 513 federal deputies in the chamber were considered evangélicos, of whom twenty-three are members of the Igreja Universal. Marcelo Crivella, another very prominent member of the Igreja Universal, was one of the three elected senators for Rio de Janeiro to take a seat among the total of eighty-one senators in Brasilia.

One of the recurring explanations of the religious/political transformation in Brazil is the increasing appropriation of mass media by Pentecostal movements, especially by the Igreja Universal (Freston 1994, 2003; Fonseca 1997; Campos 1997; Conrado 2001; Novaes 2002; Sá Martino 2002; Oro 2003). Contrary to what one might have expected, despite being poor, an overwhelming majority of the people who live in favelas has access to mass media. Research done among inhabitants of several favelas in 2000 revealed 95 percent of the households had a television set and 79 percent had a sound-system (Perlman 2003). The Igreja Universal has demonstrated the highest rate of expansion during the last few decades and it has become by far the most visible church in Brazil. According to its own silver jubilee publication in 2003, it has 6,500 churches in Brazil and a total of eight million members in more than seventy countries worldwide. Over the last twenty to thirty years, it has built many huge ‘cathedrals’ throughout the country and it has also bought one of the six national public television

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19 Many people thought the alliance between PT and PL incomprehensible considering the religious activities of this church and the socialist background of PT.
21 Despite his success, on 19 February 2004, he was relieved of his duties in the Igreja Universal by Edir Macedo because he seemed to be involved in a corruption scandal. One of his (political) friends, the president of the national lottery (Lotery) had been recorded while accepting money for political campaigns of Rosinha Marcus, among others. http://observatorio.ultimosegundo.ig.com.br/artigos.asp?cod=265ASP004 accessed 9-9-2005.
23 Folha Universal 3 de Novembro 2002.
broadcast networks, *Rede Record*, which consists of thirty broadcast stations. Apart from this, it has a professional Internet-site, its own publishing house and record company. It publishes the weekly newspaper the *Folha Universal*, which it claims has a circulation of one and a half million per week, and it owns several radio stations that broadcast twenty-four hours a day.25

The intensive appropriation of mass media by this church indicates that the often-presumed antagonism between ‘religion’ and ‘the media’ does not help to clarify current processes of cultural and political transformation (de Vries 2001; Corten 2001; Hoover 2002). Religious groups and organizations all around the world have adopted techniques of mass communication to present themselves publicly and to attract followers. In many countries, processes of democratization and liberalization of the market have led to an increasing accessibility of contemporary technology and infrastructure. In Latin America, Pentecostal groups have actively sought involvement in socio-political processes (Martin 1990, Stoll 1990) and in many cases they have done so by means of mass media such as radio, television, Internet and newspapers. In Brazil, the Igreja Universal has become one of the few Pentecostal churches to have put forward a nation-wide political project and it is broadly recognized that their mass media have been essential in the constitution of its political support (Birman&Lehman 1999; Conrado 2001; Corten 2001; Novaes 2002).

As a result of the growing constituency of Pentecostal politicians, most of the studies on Brazilian Pentecostalism focus on the institutional developments within the Pentecostal churches in relation to the newly acquired media channels and political projects. Analysis is mostly centered on content analysis of the mass media, on the religious doctrines and practices and on the political endeavors of pastors and other church leaders (Freston 1994, 1999, 2003; Fonseca 1997; Conrado 2001; Novaes 2002; Machado&Mariiz 200326; Oro 2003). The messages that are broadcast by the Pentecostal churches on radio and television are aimed at those people living in relative poverty, faced with the insecurities of the urban spaces of the large cities. Through its church services and its mass media, the Pentecostal churches successfully link Pentecostal worldviews to ‘public’ and ‘private’ issues in a society where the boundaries between these two spheres have become increasingly blurred (Montes 1998; Corten 2001). The

26 The work of Machado and Mariz (2003): ‘Evangélicos e Católicos: as articulações da religião com a política’ was presented at the 27th *Conferencia Internationale de la Societé Internationale de Sociologie des Religions*, July 2003, Turin, Italy. While it should be considered work in progress, I have taken the liberty to refer to it as an example of the scholars who are concerned with the themes of Pentecostalism, politics and media.
Pentecostal churches present utopian visions of a better society, based on Christian values, and they offer concrete practices such as church services, collective prayer and exorcism of evil spirits, which the churches claim counter the socio-economic and personal problems of many people. In combination with these practices, the mediatized images of charismatic, trustworthy evangelical politicians (men of God) who answer to a 'Higher Authority' than man, has created new political profiles for politicians in Brazil (Oro 2003; Machado & Mariz 2003).

In Brazil, mass media are easily portrayed as a powerful tools to manipulate those whom some people - elites and politicians - see as 'irrational' citizens who do not behave 'correctly' when they vote for Pentecostal leaders, on account of their religious affiliations (Birman 1996; Machado & Mariz 2003).\textsuperscript{27} In the months leading up to the federal and state elections of 2002 Carta Capital, an influential weekly magazine, published an article called: 'The Microphone of God',\textsuperscript{28} in which it explained how Anthony Garotinho retransmitted radio programs broadcast on the evangelical radio Melodia (Rio de Janeiro) throughout the whole country to convince evangelical people to elect him as president (fig. 7). This is merely one example of the presumed effects of proselytic mass media that one can find regularly in Brazil.\textsuperscript{29} In general Brazilian scholars have felt the need to reply to such presumptions about the influence of evangelical mass media.\textsuperscript{30}

In his study on the relationship between electronic mass media and evangelícicos in Rio de Janeiro, Alexandre Fonseca also warns us that we must avoid straightforward causal analysis in our efforts to understand the relationship between the growth of believers and the growing presence of evangelical programs on public television and radio in Brazil (Fonseca 1997: 14). He and other social scientists argue mere presence in the media does not guarantee people will attend the churches; other cultural aspects are at play as well (Fonseca 1997: 14, 2003; Novaes 2002). Fonseca claims mass media provide a structure of pre-evangelism (Fonseca 1997). Media help people become

\textsuperscript{27} See, for example, the mass-mediated fight between Bispo Marcelo Crivella and Senator Tavola during the 2002 elections in Brazil. During the campaign, Tavola accused Crivella of 'using religion' for political purposes, thereby assuming that people would not be able to tell the differences. See also Machado & Mariz 2003.

\textsuperscript{28} Carta Capital, July 18th. Nr 151.

\textsuperscript{29} The presumed effects of proselytic media in Brazil often resemble ideas on the effects of mass media in general. The influence of either state- or market-propelled mass media on popular culture has often been framed in terms of dominance and resistance (Fiske 1989).

\textsuperscript{30} Regina Novaes, who is quoted in the same article, writes for example: 'The churches are not the same, they have different agreements and loyalties, and that will be evident during the campaigns (Novaes 2001, in Carta Capital nr. 151).'
acquainted with the doctrines, the language and the style of Pentecostalism, but such knowledge in itself is only a part of the many influences that may or may not eventually lead people to attend a Pentecostal church. Likewise, Regina Novaes argues that, although people may hear of a particular church on television or radio, contact with a church community often follows after an invitation by friends, family or neighbors (Novaes 2002: 82). The encounter with a particular Pentecostal doctrine or church often happens after personal contact with people who evangelize ‘corpo a corpo’ (body to body), as Machado and Fernandes have also stated (1998). Novaes picks up on this point to emphasize that this ‘permits us to relativize the preoccupations with the “brainwashing” which supposedly happens through radio and TV (Novaes 2002: 83).’ She states religion and media can be a powerful combination, but it is not a one-way movement:

The media do not homogenize society, closing all differences between persons with different experiences and identities. Individuals of different social segments do not hear radio broadcasts or assist television programs as if they were sheets of white paper, on which proselytic messages and images are simply pressed. The idea of an all-powerful media brings with it the prejudice presupposition that popular spaces are empty of social relations and that they are ready to be manipulated (Regina Novaes 2002: 83).31

In general, such a view on mass media concurs with the work of North American authors such as Stewart Hoover and Quentin Schultze.32 Specifically, the former has argued for an analysis of media and religion that goes beyond the paradigm of research based on propaganda- or effects-models. Instead, such an analysis should benefit from what Hoover refers to as ‘culturalism’.33 Hoover argues that means that discrete findings about content or effects are not as important as the ‘process of reception, where meanings are intended, attributed, made and exchanged in the context of media audience practice (Hoover 2002: 29).’ To research such processes, we must focus on everyday lived experience. Yet, how does such a plea relate to anthropological research outside the west?

This dissertation on Pentecostalism and mass media in Brazil is part of the NWO Pionier Research Program ‘Modern Mass Media, Religion and the Imaginatation of Communities’, headed by Birgit Meyer. The research program has brought together a

31 All translations of Portuguese to English in this dissertation are mine.
32 For a discussion on the history of religion and media studies in the US see Hoover & Lundby (1997).
33 Hoover places the roots of this culturalism in media studies in the British Cultural Studies and the Frankfurt School.
number of social scientist who have focused on the intersections between religion and mass media in non-western cultural settings. One of the central assumptions of the program is that religion and technology should not be understood as opposing domains. If one understands religion as a practice of mediation, as de Vries (2001) and Meyer (Meyer 2006) have proposed, one might understand better how religion and communication technologies have influenced each other historically and how they continue to do so today. Some of the central questions of the research program are: How do religious practices change when the 'divine' is communicated by means of mass media such as film, television, video, radio, Internet and audio-tapes? What happens to the place and content of religion in postcolonial society when organizations start to use contemporary technology and infrastructure, which have often become accessible as a result of democratization and liberalization of the market? These questions have brought forth an array of interesting studies that focus on, for example, Islamic cassette sermon listening practices in Egypt (Hirschkind 2001), Pentecostal film viewing practices in Ghana (Meyer 2003, 2004), music recording developments in Tamil South India (Hughes 2002) and the commodification of orthodox Jewish print procedures (Stolow 2006). All these, and a number of other important studies (van de Port 2005; Sánchez 2001; Schulz 2003; de Witte 2003) have in common that they question recurring assumptions that religion will or should gradually disappear from the public realm in post colonial societies. Instead of following such a normative understanding of the public sphere, the authors investigate how religious institutes, groups and movements use mass media to address an audience and how the reception of these media leads to the formation of collective identities that influence political debates in diverse ways (Meyer and Moors 2006).

In this dissertation I take as one of my points of departure the work of Arvand Rajagopal (2001), who has done insightful work on the relation between Hindu nationalism and mass media in India. According to Rajagopal, to understand the influence of mass media in society, we should be mindful not to focus only on the medium itself but also on the social life where images, sounds and narratives presented by mass media intersect with other experiences, discourses and institutions. The recurring problem with reception studies is that the diversity of audience readings is often understood either as 'resistance' or as 'no effect', and the wider context tends to be invoked rather than investigated.
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A media-centrist approach is at the heart of both problems. What requires study is how social and media events unfold and interact in historical time, in diverse and unforeseeable networks of action. No amount of attention to the medium or its audience can elicit these contingent political processes. To trace the complex interactive process through which the media becomes influential requires attention to historical process, institutional context and cultural meaning, and the ways these are related. To reiterate, the media do not form the center of a critical theory of media. (Rajagopal 2001: 128)

Interestingly, it is one of the founding fathers of the British cultural studies, Raymond Williams (1961), who has given a useful perspective on the way we could describe the influence of mass media. In his groundbreaking work Williams argued that the meaning of cultural works should not be analyzed out of their context, without examining the relations to such context. Instead, he argues one must view them as elements of a whole way of life and see how they contribute to a 'structure of feeling' (Williams 1961: 48). We may understand better why and how Pentecostal organizations have acquired popular political appeal in Brazil - specifically in large cities such as Rio de Janeiro - if we place the Pentecostal mass media in relation to other media and to the daily lives of the people who live in the urban spaces that are characterized by the reality of insecurity and poverty and dreams of luxurious consumption and wealth.

Questions that arise are: What place do mass media occupy in the lives of people in the favelas? Which technologies are used in the Pentecostal churches and in the other institutions? What programs do people watch and listen to? How are the practices of viewing television or listening radio in general related to the circumstances in which many of the adherents of the churches live? How do the Pentecostal media intersect with other mass media and other discourses and institutions in the favelas? What ‘structures of feeling’ can we recognize and how do they relate to political struggles?

3. Religion, Mass Media and Community

During the open-air service, a huge screen showed a multitude of prisoners listening to an emotional gospel song. This video presentation indicates that Pentecostal churches do not merely use mass media to preach. Through mass media, they also link Pentecostalism to other features of contemporary society and they seek to instill in their audience particular emotional states. In the preceding section I have argued that mass media and religion should not be treated as opposing domains. Different religious movements
around the world have appropriated mass media to communicate the Divine in unprecedented ways. Such appropriations profoundly change religious practices and transform the ways in which people relate to each other and to the Divine (Meyer&Moors 2006, Stolow 2005; de Vries 2001). Here I would like to demonstrate some of the implications of the junctions between mass media and religion in Brazil.

The intensive use of mass media by the Igreja Universal is accompanied by the use of new media formats and new signs and symbols that to link the individual to the sacred. Most important are the mass mediated expulsions of demons, both 'on stage' during the massive church services and on television, in magazines and in newspapers (Birman 2005; Kramer 2005). One of the center rituals in the Igreja Universal is the culto de libertação (deliverance service), recently renamed sessão de descarrego. This weekly church session consist of highly ritualized mass exorcisms in which people are invited to enact their self-empowerment and to change their social and economic conditions with help of the Holy Spirit. These public performances of exorcism serve partly as visualizations of hitherto invisible forces: 'Exorcism as spectacle invites the congregation to enter into a transactive realm of the spirit. This process articulates value transformations through images grounded in the appropriation of local cultural discourses and forms of popular religiosity (Kramer 2005: 115). Through the practice of exorcism they simultaneously identify and expel the roots of evil and offer direct spiritual interventions in situations of relative poverty and violence in many of the marginalized areas of the Brazilian metropolis (Antoniazzi 1994; Montes 1998; Birman&Lehmann 1999; Birman&Leite 2000).

The mass mediatization of expulsions has thoroughly shifted the relations between religious institutions in Brazil. Rather than to discarding the Afro-Brazilian religious beliefs and practices, the Igreja Universal incorporates the spiritual entities worshipped in Candomblé and Umbanda and represents them as demons. Misfortune and misery are therefore presented as a direct result of Afro-Brazilian religious practices. The demons, or encostos are held responsible for physically harming the individuals they posses and hindering them from achieving fortune and happiness in this life and salvation in the Hereafter. While the spiritual warfare of the Igreja Universal is mostly directed against Afro-Brazilian religious practices, the Catholic Church is another...

34 Culto is the Brazilian term for 'church service'. Sessão de descarrego can be translated as 'unloading session'
33 This reinforces the demonization of these practices in Brazilian society. See also Birman&Lehmann 1999; Montes 1998; Kramer 2001.
36 Encosto literally means 'to lean on'. Encosto could be translated as spiritual entities that 'lean' on people.
prominent adversary. In its services and its media, the Igreja Universal forcefully opposes the presumed idolatry of the Catholic saints. The most famous public incident is known as the ‘chute na santo’ – the kicking of the saint. During a television broadcast, a pastor of the Igreja Universal desecrated a plaster statue of the Catholic Patron Saint of Brazil, Nossa Senhora de Aparecida. Eric Kramer (2001), David Lehmann and Patricia Birman (1999) all argue that the assault on the statue was not merely an attack on a Catholic icon, but an attack on the cultural hegemony of Catholicism in Brazil.

Mass media of the Igreja Universal carry the images of spectacular exorcism beyond the confines of the church-space, but they also influence the scope of the imagination of community (Anderson 1991). In the estimation of Paul Freston (2001), the Igreja Universal had opened churches in about fifty-two countries in the world by 1998. Images of crowded churches in different countries constantly appear in the media of the church. To commemorate its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2002, the church published a Bible which showed photos of both the inside and outside of all their cathedrals in the major cities of Brazil (fig. 8-9). The photos, placed in different sections of the Bible, showed grand buildings with huge crowds of people in collective prayer or attending exorcisms. Besides photos of national churches, the Bible also carries photos of the moment the Igreja Universal managed to fill the Maracanã football stadium in Rio de Janeiro – one of the biggest in the world - with its faithful followers. In addition, its cathedral in Lisbon and South Africa are also featured, marking its global expansion of the last twenty-five years. Likewise, newspapers of the church (Folha Universal) show large photos of recently opened churches around the world, all filled entirely with new adherents. The serialization of these crowds in the mega-churches all over the world portrays the community of believers as a global community.

While evangelization did not stop at the borders of Brazil before the appropriation of mass media, the Igreja Universal has built webs of meaning that enforce the imagination of a trans-national Christian community. The name ‘Igreja Universal’ (Universal Church) alone is both exemplary and instrumental in the imagination of such a global religious community (see also Kramer 2002). In its representation of a global Christian community, people all over the world are linked by ‘chains of faith’ as Patricia Birman describes (Birman 2006). Every year the Igreja Universal organizes campaigns

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37 For more discussions on the global expansion of this church see Freston (2001); Oro & Semán (2001); Kramer (2002).
Fig. 7. Anthony Garotinho on the cover of the Carta Capital. ‘Garotinho’s scheme: Jesus, Radios and Company. The abbreviation CIA means ‘companhia’ (company)
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Fig. 8. Photo of the Catedral Mundial da Fé (Rio de Janeiro) in a Bible of the Igreja Universal

Fig. 9. Photo of the inside of the Catedral Mundial da Fé, in a Bible of the Igreja Universal
(Campanha da Foqueira Santa) during which it invites its members to virtually travel with it to Israel. In its churches, the pastors ask the members to write petitions on leaflets and T-shirts. These objects are taken to a holy site in Israel where the Bispos of the Igreja Universal offer the messages and pray for the believers. Afterwards, the objects are burned in a Holy Fire.\(^8\) The members may follow the journey of famous Bispos on television and radio when they make a report. These mass mediated rituals link up peoples and places in an unprecedented scale.

The elaboration of these images intends to associate the church with the world through these spectaculars and the followers with both the events and their worldwide setting. A set of mirrors is produced in which the reflections of one or the other complement or add to the others reciprocally. With the suggestive name of “chain”, the church unites as parts of the same movement all these activities that will have more than one spectacular moment that generally reverberates in their rituals, in the church media outside of it (ibid: 12).

The imagination of a global Christian community through mass media links up with the work of Arjun Appadurai (1996). Appadurai argues that the spread of electronic media has led to new forms of imagining the self and the other, which subsequently have led to new imagined communities. With regard to this imagination of communities, Appadurai describes television, video and film as the electronic media *par excellence* which allow for what he calls: mass mediated sodalities. These sodalities are ‘communities in themselves but always potentially for themselves capable, of moving from shared imagination to collective action’ (Appadurai 1996: 8).

The establishment of Pentecostal communities through mass media also links up with discussions on the place of style in community formation. In his effort to elevate style from being the mere outer surface of a much more important content, Michel Maffesoli identifies style as: ‘a “forming form” that gives birth to whole manners of being, to customs, representations, and the various fashions by which life in society is expressed’ (Maffesoli 1996: 5). According to Maffesoli, aesthetic style - the conjunction of the material and the immaterial – lies at the heart of the contemporary experience of community. The often given primacy of religious doctrine over style obscures the fact that styles are crucial elements in invoking a sense of belonging that lies at the heart of many religious communities in contemporary society. In the words of Meyer: ‘style

\(^8\) During one of the services I attended the pastor said, the church would burn the objects and leaflets in Brazil to take the ashes to Israel and scatter them on Holy Ground. For a broader discussion on the meaning of the Holy Land in Pentecostal discourse see, for example Kramer 2001 and Gifford 2001.
makes people feel at home in, as well confident with, a particular discourse' (Meyer 2004: 95). Styles are not only powerful forms of inclusion, but also of exclusion and antagonism. They are forever changing and adapting to perceived 'others'. Pentecostal organizations throughout Brazil have criticized many other popular cultural practices that are considered part of the national identity, for example: samba and carnival. Instead of portraying these styles and practices as the epitome of 'Brazilianess' and of national pride, the Pentecostal organizations link them to the social and personal problems of many Brazilians. To these popular styles Pentecostal organizations oppose their own clothing style, their own music and their own modes of conduct.

The discussion of the formations of communities through mass media provides some preliminary insights into the role of the images of prisoners during the open-air service. The video of the prison portrayed the spiritual battle between God and the devil by means of the juxtaposition of the evangélicos and the prisoners. The video demonstrated that the church was operating among the wretched of the earth and invited the audience-members to imagine themselves as participants in the quest for salvation and as powerful agents of the Holy Spirit. This prompts one to wonder how such a video relates to other (religious) practices and styles and other kinds of (religious) communities in the favela? Which other techniques enforce this interpretation and what was the role of the loudly amplified music, both in the video of the prison and during the live event in the square?

Besides the images and objects that circulate in and outside the churches, music plays an important part in and outside the services of the Pentecostal churches in Brazil. People sing and play music together and they put on recorded music in the churches and in their houses. The gospel music industry has grown a considerably in the country and various evangelical radio stations have become as popular as their non-evangelical counterparts. The loud amplification of the church services indicates that sound is an important instrument to reach the non-converted, but what do the sound and music of the churches mean to the members in general? How does music, or sound in general, affect the formation of religious communities? With respect to electronic mass media such as CDs and radio, the often-used reference to imagined communities (Anderson 1991) raises interesting questions. 'Imagination' has a fairly optical connotation, while

39 The appropriation of styles that express community is always related to 'others' who are excluded from this community (see also Maffesoli 1996).
40 Some even criticize football. They do not want to ban football, instead they aim to criticize the 'passion' (paixão) some people have for it or during it, since it may hinder their church presence or replace their zeal towards the Lord. See for example the evangelical magazine Enfoque Gospel nr. 11, June 2002.
vision is mostly not the direct sensual experience of electro-acoustic technology.\(^4\)

Electro-acoustic media offer the distinctive quality that they spur a quite direct 'sense' of belonging rather than offering fixed templates for the imagination of a community. The video, which contained images and gospel music, points out that rather than opposing imagination to sense, or repeating technological determinism, the question is: How do different technologies and religious practices intersect? To what senses do they appeal and which notions of self and community do they enforce? In what ways do images and sounds address and form an audience and how should we relate this to existing religious practices and communities on the ground? What is the role of gospel music in the churches, in the houses and in the favela at large? How does it relate to other music and sound in the public and private domains?

4. Methodology

Emphasis on the role of mass media in daily life questions 'traditional' ethnographic research methods and assumptions. Arjun Appadurai (1996) states that the presence of electronic media has radically altered social life and therefore begs for a different kind of ethnography:

The link between the imagination and social life, I would suggest, is increasingly a global and deterritorialized one. Thus, those who represent real or ordinary lives must resist making claims to epistemic privilege in regard to the lived particularities of social life. Rather ethnography must redefine itself as that practice of representation that illuminates the power of large-scale, imagined life possibilities over specific life trajectories. This is thickness with a difference, and the difference lies in a new alertness to the fact that ordinary lives today are more often powered not by the givenness of things but by the possibilities that the media (either directly or indirectly) suggests are available (Appadurai 1996: 55).

Following Appadurai’s call to write ‘thick description with a difference’, this ethnography attempts to combine insights from anthropology and religious/media studies. Such an approach is not new. Anthropologists such as Faye Ginsburg (1994; 2002), Lila Abu-

\(^4\) That does not mean that electro-acoustic media do not invoke imagination, on the contrary. Following Hirschkind's discussion of Collingwood's ideas on synaesthetic experience 'in listening to music or poetry people enjoy imaginary experiences completely outside the realm of sound, such as visual, tactile, kinesthetic and olfactory (Collingwood (1966) cited in Hirschkind (2001: 628)). See also Laura Marks (2000) and Michael Bull (2004).
Lugnoud (1995; 2002), Marie Gillespie (1995), Veena Das (1995), and Birgit Meyer (2003; 2004) have done ethnographic research in relation to mass media. Besides anthropological research methods, such as participant observation and semi-structured interviewing, I analyzed the form and content of the mass media with which people engaged and integrated my knowledge of these media in questions I posed my informants.

Since many adherents of the Pentecostal churches in Rio de Janeiro live in favelas, it was quite clear that my questions would be answered best if I could live in a favela for a certain amount of time and participate in the daily routines of the inhabitants. Although I knew beforehand that it would be difficult to do research in a favela, the uncertainty about my personal security made it all the more important to proceed with caution. Clara Mafra of the state University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) advised me to do research in the favela Cantagalo/Pavão-Pavãozinho. In the wake of the arrival of a special police battalion, the favela had become more peaceful than it had been a couple of years before so it was relatively secure to do research there. She also assured me that research with and amongst evangélicos was in itself a good way to protect oneself, since the pastors were generally respected members of the community. Clara Mafra herself was involved in a research about the role of social organizations in the favela and her contacts facilitated my first entrance in the favela. When I had decided that this was the place where I wanted to do research, I began visiting public events in the favela, first with a student of the University, later on my own. After I had met a pastor of an Assembléia de Deus in Cantagalo, I started visiting the pastor at his place in the community and I began to attend the services in church. Slowly I met more and more inhabitants who were attending the church of the Assembléia de Deus in Cantagalo and meeting them gave me the opportunity to visit them in their houses. Gradually, I began to find my way in the community of Cantagalo. Often I had to pass one of the frontiers guarded by armed traficantes and many a times they asked me if I wanted to buy ‘preto ou branco?’ (black or white?), meaning marijuana (dark in color) or cocaine (light in color). When I politely responded I was not there to buy, they would often ask me where I was going, demonstrating their position as guards of the territory. After I had explained exactly where and to whom I was going, for example, to the pastor, they would let me through.

 Similarly, scholars who have their roots in research on religion and media, such as: Stewart Hoover, Knut Lundby and Lynn Schofield Clark have argued for an interdisciplinary approach to analyze the intersection of culture, religion and media (Hoover&Lundby 1997; Hoover&Schofield-Clark 2002; Hoover&Schofield-Clark 2003).
After a while some of the traficantes began to recognize me as a friend of the pastor and of the evangélicos in the neighborhood. Some of them started calling me 'o gringo' (the foreigner) and would laughingly shout it to me when I passed them. That gave me more freedom to walk in Cantagalo without being interrogated.

I began searching for a house during the first weeks of March 2002. Jose and his wife Lenilda - evangélicos of a local Assembléia de Deus - offered me an apartment in their self-built house of six floors in the part of the favela called Nova Brasilia. The apartment had two rooms, eight squares meters each, with a tiny shower room/toilet in the middle. I moved in at the end March. Because I was now living in the morro, the inhabitants, including the traficantes, accepted me as a morador (inhabitant) of the morro. This social status was a good condition for my research and a crucial prerequisite to my safety. It meant that I was bound by the rule of the traficantes not to interfere in their business but also was protected by their rule that (innocent) inhabitants be left unharmed.

In total I lived about eleven months in the favela. During these months, I became acquainted with many inhabitants, including many people who attended Pentecostal churches in the favela or in the vicinity of it. I focused on people of two Pentecostal churches, the Assembléia de Deus and the Igreja Universal. The first church has the most congregations in the favela and the second has the largest and most popular congregations in the surrounding area of the favela. I regularly participated in services of both churches. I usually went to the spacious churches of the Igreja Universal with someone from the favela but sometimes alone. My presence was noticed but I was not approached in a particular manner by the pastor or the assistants (obreiros). Gradually, I met many of the assistants who lived in the favela. In the churches of the Assembléia de Deus, people did approach me personally. Many of the pastors knew I was doing research on religion and media in the favela and they often introduced me in the same way they would introduce a visitor from another church or an aspirant member.

Besides church services, I spent plenty of time visiting people in their house see to how they lived and what kind of media they used. I watched television and I listened to the radio and to music with them. I talked to many people and I noted their remarks and my observations in small booklets that I carried with me. At home I kept a journal on my notebook in which I noted the events I had witnessed during the day. With many of the people I met, I also did a semi-structured, in-depth interview, which I recorded (I recorded interviews with fifty people). I asked them to tell me about their life and their
reasons for joining a church, about their life in the morro and I asked them to clarify earlier remarks and observations, which I had noted. In both the informal conversations and the interviews, I asked them what they watched, listened and read, but also what they would rather not watch, listen to and read and this always produced lively discussions. During the research I tried to get copies of the media people mentioned in our conversations. I recorded evangelical programs on video. I bought the newspaper of the Igreja Universal. I recorded radio broadcasts and bought gospel CDs and I also collected other television programs, magazines and music that evangélicos designated incorrect. To get a better understanding of life in the favela, I participated in community events and meetings of the leaders of the favela. I also talked to many people who were not attending Pentecostal churches and I visited several people at their work outside the favela to develop a sense of their working conditions.

5. Summary

Given my emphasis on the social environment in which these Pentecostal churches and practices are embedded, I will not start this thesis with a detailed discussion of the churches. Rather, my aim is to portray the space where the people live in order to describe the ideas and practices from different angles of this social environment. In chronological order, I will examine the Pentecostal ideas and practices in relation to: 1) the urban space; 2) the soundscape; 3) the representation of the city; 4) the political situation; and 5) the cultural practices. These descriptions will give the information necessary to understand the dialectical relation between Pentecostalism, the daily environment and mass media and will prepare the way for a description of conversion narratives. The description of processes of conversion in Chapter Five comes relatively late. There is a good reason for this. I have chosen to place it after a detailed description of the environment to show the reader that conversion is intricately related to the other cultural, religious and political practices. A focus on the religious ‘meaning’ of conversion without such knowledge often obscures this. Chapters Six and Seven will focus on radio and television respectively.

Chapter One is an account of the weak position of the state in the favela and the popularity of the Pentecostal churches that present alternative utopias and life projects for the individuals in Cantagalo/Pavão-Pavãozinho. I will briefly discuss the origins of
the favelas of Rio de Janeiro during the twentieth century. Favelas are not pre-modern islands in an overall modern Brazilian society, but the product of a specific Brazilian modernity. The demarcation of the space of the favela from the areas around it, and the subsequent dynamics of exclusion and inclusion of the favela inhabitants, is enforced by the presence and absence of certain state institutions. The favela has a community police force, but the traficantes still govern in the favela. This means that Pentecostalism is preached in an area with relatively high chances of being confronted with, or part of criminal organizations, especially for young people.

Chapter Two demonstrates that the soundscape of the favela reflects and constitutes the different social groups present in the favela. In the density of the favela, different groups try to exercise a politics of presence through the sounds they produce. Sound and music are essential to the constitution of identities. Mass media are woven into the fabric of social life in the favela, and the sounds of the Pentecostal churches - either produced by means of amplifier and/or radio - should be understood in relation to the cacophony of other sounds and other music styles, not least those considered 'traditional' or 'authentic' by many Brazilians. Pentecostal sound and music is deemed so important to the people who attend Pentecostal churches because the music is a confirmation of their own identity not only to themselves but also to other inhabitants. They oppose their 'Godly' sound and music to the worldly sounds of their neighbors and try to transmit the Holy Spirit to the other inhabitants in order to convert them to their faith.

Chapter Three will demonstrate that the Pentecostal discourse of peace and redemption is related to the mass media that portray Rio de Janeiro as an evil city. This chapter will clarify that inhabitants of the favela are not only surrounded by the actual threats of violence, they are also constantly bombarded with images and narratives that confirm the violent nature of their society. The Igreja Universal employs various visual tropes to enforce a Pentecostal imagination of the batalha espiritual (spiritual battle), the meta-physical battle between God and the devil. The representations in the Folha Universal, the newspaper of the Igreja Universal demonstrate particularly that the church presents violent events in Brazilian society as diabolical evil, which can only be stopped through the mediations of Pentecostal pastors and politicians. The Igreja Universal frames its compelling Pentecostal interpretation of society intertextually. The Brazilian news media construct an image of society that is fundamentally divided between 'the good' and 'the bad'. The Igreja Universal manages to seize and adopt the images and
narratives of urban violence and to transform the dichotomy of 'the good' versus 'the bad' into the Pentecostal dualism of 'God' versus the 'devil'.

Chapter Four will zoom in on the political institutions and the local governance of the favela. I will argue that, while the Assembléia de Deus and the Igreja Universal can be seen as competing Pentecostal churches, their political endeavors should also be described as complementary. Both offer a powerful language as a response to the presence of the traficantes. People of both churches discursively oppose Pentecostalism to crime, violence and the tráfico, even though they do not actively oppose the traficantes. Their relationship with the political institutions of the favela are different. This is partly the result of the differences of their organization. The Assembléia de Deus is made up of loosely structured networks of churches and does not have the media empire the Igreja Universal possesses. They are strongly embedded in the local community. The Igreja Universal has highly hierarchical structure and is wise how to channel political support to particular people more efficiently. Even so, to formulate its religious/political message, the Igreja Universal needs local networks and therefore also has to cooperate with the Assembléia de Deus from time to time.

Chapter Five will zoom in on several individual conversion narratives. The ritual practices of the two churches are powerful practices that often confirm Biblical truths in bodily experiences. People conceptualize these rituals as part of the batalha espiritual. However, the significance of the rituals is embedded in the knowledge and experience of the people who live in the morro. Evangélicos employ the distinction between 'being in the world' and 'being of the world'. Possible conversion from one state to another creates social distinctions between people in the morro. Pentecostal language is crucial to such a conversion. Conversion narratives restructure the representation of the life-paths of adherents in such a way that a clear break is imagined between former and new identity and re-narrated to possible future-converts. This Pentecostal ideology is embedded the environment of the morro. Many evangélicos are convinced the violence of the tráfico is related to Afro-Brazilian religious practices. The batalha espiritual acquires a worldly appearance when people imagine that traficantes are in the hands of demons and consequently can be saved when they accept Jesus as their Savior.

Chapter Six deals with the listening practices of people in the morro and their accounts of the importance of music/radio. In several ways, this chapter is a continuation of Chapter Two. The main argument is that media technologies are an essential part of the process of conversion. Cogently, tuning in to evangelical radio
stations is not the outcome of the trajectory of conversion or the starting point. When we understand conversion as the contextual assertion of a religious identity through specific performances, listening to evangelical radio, CD and tape can be seen as the assertion of an identity that is much less fixed than presumed. Listening to sound systems involves awareness of the significance and potential of specific sounds in relation to the self and to the others. People use these media to understand, feel and demonstrate what the difference is between 'being in the world' and 'being of the world'.

Chapter Seven will focus on the place of television. I will argue that television viewing involves a dynamic of attraction and rejection. For the evangélicos in the morro this dynamic is related to Pentecostal bodily disciplines and practices. By showing some of the different spectator-positions evangélicos may take when watching *teknovelas*, I will argue that Pentecostalism and mass media should be defined not only by that which evangélicos say they (want to) watch, but also by that which they say they do not (want to) watch. *Telenovelas* represent features of contemporary Brazilian society, which many evangélicos perceive as sinful and diabolical and therefore criticize, even when they often do watch them. The attraction and rejection of certain images and narratives in *telenovelas* are not only related to the 'reading' of the message but also, equally importantly, to the physical and spiritual experiences related to the devil and the Holy Spirit. The ideas and experiences of watching *teknovelas* are related to the popular mythology that TV Globo, the main producer of *telenovelas*, has links with the devil.

Chapter Seven draws together several of the main questions of this dissertation. It demonstrates that the appeal of Pentecostalism in the morro is strongly related not only to the local socio-political setting but also to the broader domain of popular (entertainment) media. *Telenovelas* and other popular programs indeed offer people new 'imagined life possibilities' as Appadurai (1996) suggested. Nevertheless, some life possibilities are both aspired and critically judged from the perspective of Pentecostal ideas about fame and wealth. This ambivalent attitude links up with the work of André Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani, who have argued that the contemporary success of local varieties of Pentecostalism can be understood as the result of the diffusion of mass media, accompanied by new forms of wealth and accumulation. According to Corten and Marshall-Fratani this process opens up: 'wide vistas of possible lives, inciting desire and fantasy, but also anxiety, frustration, downward mobility and insecurity (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001: 3). This dissertation aims to portray how these contrasts are experienced by the inhabitants of a favela in Rio de Janeiro.