

Order policies in the port area of Rio de Janeiro: contradictions in producing a beautiful and safe city

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The city of Rio de Janeiro has been going through a deep process of urban restructuring driven by sporting mega-events - the 2014 World Cup, when the city was one of the venues for the matches, and the Olympic Games, which are going to take place in 2016. This modernization project coincides with the inclusion of new policies for order and public safety, aiming to make a better organized, safer and less violent city.

Based on such premises, the state program named Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora - UPP (Police Pacification Unit), has been implemented in certain favelas (slums) throughout the city, aiming at fighting drug trafficking commanders and "recapturing" those territories. At the same time, the Secretaria Especial de Ordem Pública – SEOP (Special Secretariat of Public Order), a municipal agency operating in public areas, seeks to regain "public authority" in order to strengthen urban order, fight petty crime and recover territories overrun by "illegality".

In this sense, the present study aims to address these order policies in terms of their relation to the ongoing urbanization projects, indicating them as key players in the consolidation thereof. We intend to demonstrate how the reconfiguration of the city's image, which is currently linked, not only to the beauty of its landscape and its social diversity, but also strongly linked in the collective imagination with regards to violence, disorder and illegality, becomes a key element in the success of such events. At the same time, such reconfiguration meets the interests of those actors engaged in a new city project, by turning Rio de Janeiro into a beautiful, modern and peaceful city.

In order to better understand this process, the case study of Rio de Janeiro's port area was taken into consideration, since it is the subject of great socio-spatial transformations as a result of one of the city government's primary construction

ventures, the Porto Maravilha project. This urban operation focuses on the revitalization and real estate valuation of one of the most traditional areas of the city. The site, characterized by its degraded physical infrastructure, occupation by poor people and proliferation of situations linked to the “culture of illegality” and violence, becomes target for capital resources, aiming at turning it into an attractive hub for business and tourism, as well as promoting use of residential housing for the middle class.

Is located in this space the first favela of the city, the Morro da Providência, which despite having a historical and cultural importance, is represented in a negative way, as a place of poverty, drug trafficking and violence.

Thus, while the Porto Maravilha project aims to change the local reality through the inclusion of urban infrastructure, increase in the urban mobility networks, construction of business towers and major cultural buildings (Rio Art Museum – MAR and Museum of Tomorrow), this symbolic reconstruction / imagery implies purging old stigmas linked to abandonment, chaos and violence by promoting broad reinforcement in order and public safety policies, which become essential elements in attracting new residents, investors and tourists. In this context, the implementation of the UPP in Morro da Providência, in 2010, along with SEOP operations, which include the installation of a local base in 2012, called the UOP Porto Maravilha (Public Order Unit), close the safety circle in the area, thus becoming centerpieces in the legitimization of this urban operation.

It is worth remembering that in Morro da Providência, in addition to the socio-control strategy, the immobilization of a potentially turbulent mass, and the introduction of new social life codes by the UPP, there is also a favela urbanization process, which started in the 1990s with the Favela-Bairro project, and was reissued in 2010 with the Morar Carioca project, whose work has promoted a broad process of removals in the community. Tendencies for domestication and touristification are noteworthy in this favela, which is characterized by its historical importance and context and is captured by the action of capital, in a process which endangers both the permanence of its residents and the local culture.

Regarding public areas, through the action of the secretariat's and the Municipal Guard's agents, the measures concerning order intended to point out the correct uses of the spaces and introduction of new sociability rules, in a process that have highlighted urban sanitation measures, in a frequent attack on the poor population, the suppression of street vendors, car keepers, the homeless, etc.

In that sense, the work seek to investigate the effects of the new policies for order and public safety in the port area, recognizing their modes of operation in the social and urban space, as well as their relationship with the construction of a new city project.

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