

Durable inequality and the scope for pro-poor development in a globalising world

Lessons from Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract:

Cities are today undergoing major economic and spatial transformations in line with the requirements of global capital and neoliberalism. A main question to address in this scenario is: what is the scope for actions aiming to advance a more pro-poor agenda and curb the acute inequality found in the metropolises of the so-called developing countries? With that concern in mind, this paper examines the potentials and limitations of recent redevelopments in Rio de Janeiro to counteract durable inequality, as conceptualised by Charles Tilly. To do so we analysed secondary evidence and recent primary fieldwork drawing on 48 interviews with a range of stakeholders involved in the city's preparations for the mega events, urban development and resistance to evictions, particularly in Vila Autódromo and Providência communities. Results show that there is room for progressive intervention and change at the local level if the underlying drivers of structural inequality are appropriately identified and systematically targeted by combined state and social movements' political actions.

Keywords: Urban Governance, Globalisation, Neoliberal Development, Urban Land, Low-income Housing, Inequality, Insurgent Planning, Rio de Janeiro

Introduction

Neoliberal urban development often entails major conflicts between the requirements of capital and those of local citizens, particularly the low income population. This process is exaggerated in rapidly globalizing cities and even more so in cities hosting major events such as the Football World Cup and the Olympic Games. Often the political consensus for showcasing the city to the outside world and ensuring timely preparations removes all objections aside and dislocates many people from their homes in the process.

During the past decade a number of authors have reflected on the transformation of the mode of state regulation and its impact on production of space in Brazil since the end of the military dictatorship in 1985. Accordingly we can note the shift from a ‘roll-back’ neo-liberal position in the 1990s to one of a ‘roll-out’ neo-liberal regime with developmental state tendencies in the 2000s to at least the fall of the Dilma Rouseff’s government in August 2016¹ (Ribeiro and Santos Junior, 2017; Klink, 2013a, 2013b; Rolnik, 2013). In terms of urban equity an initial response may be that in such a regulatory framework there is very little space for progressive action.

However, the situation may be rather more complicated than a simple initial reading suggests. Indeed as some of its most ardent critics acknowledge, particularly in their ‘roll-out’ stage, neo-liberal regimes have provided a remarkable capacity for learning, adaptability and evolution involving a range of local institutional reforms (Peck and

¹ In that month, the workers party president was impeached by a conservative coalition, allegedly based on minor accounting technicalities. Some scholars viewed (perhaps prematurely) the election of left leaning governments and direct action at the grass root level in Latin America including Brazil as counter hegemonic tendencies that were leading to the emergence of a post-neoliberal condition (Sader, 2009; Sekler, 2009; Peck et al, 2009). In some countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador the election of more radical governments were viewed as leading to hegemonic disputes with the elected governments seeking to place themselves outside the dominant neoliberal paradigm (Sader, 2009). In others such as Brazil and Uruguay it is argued it led to the constitution of significant resistance albeit within what is still an overall neoliberal context.

Tickell, 2002). This may be borne out of the un-attainability of the idealised free market order that underlies neoliberal economic philosophy and persistent market failures that require flanking mechanisms and modes of crisis displacement to sustain the accumulation process (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). However, it does mean that it is also an open-ended and contradictory process of regulatory restructuring and creative destruction that can have a forward leaning dynamic (Peck, 2010).

At local level this has included at least partial accommodation with various social capital, associative economy, Third-Way, and social economy approaches involving for example selective empowerment of community organisations and NGOs, devolved governance and promotion of public-private partnerships (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Peck, 2010). Focusing on participatory development Mirafteb (2009) sees these actions as part of the broader neoliberal state agenda for co-opting citizens to maintain state hegemony. Nevertheless, Mirafteb and Wills (2005) acknowledge that this is a contradictory process simultaneously excluding low income people from access to most basic services and eroding their livelihoods and at the same time opening up ‘new realms of public decision making’ that were previously closed off to them.

What is important for us here is the contextual specificity and path dependency of the outcomes and also the space for application of politics (particularly in terms of urban governance) and local action that can lead to progressive and path-transforming change (Peck, 2010; Peck and Tickell, 2002). On a broader level this is echoed by Harvey (2012, p116) in his discussion of urban social movements more generally by noting that “the global urban network is replete with political possibilities that remain untapped by progressive movements” and goes on to suggest that the struggle for quality of urban

living can be "fundamental to anti-capitalist politics" (p120).

In the context of Brazil the election of president Bolsonaro can be seen as a major challenge to future progressive policy development and urban interventions. However, until recently we can note extensive re-regulation of state spatial policies, innovative and participatory governance mechanisms and social programmes and institutional development particularly aimed at ameliorating social inequalities including that of low income housing provision and increasing the social function of land and property. This is best represented by the urban policies chapter of the 1988 Federal Constitution, the 2001 Statute of the City, the institutional changes promoted with the creation of the Minister of Cities in 2003 and the implementation of *Minha Casa Minha Vida* (MCMV) national housing programme since 2009.

Nevertheless, Klink (2013b) argues that this developmental rolling out and redistributive interventions occurred within an overall neoliberalising and competitive state spatial regime and as such has not been able to deal with social and environmental contradictions of the Brazilian society. This is illustrated by Denaldi (2013) and Klink and Denaldi (2014) in the contradictory application of MCMV. They identify lack of coordination with the national plan for social housing and thus with its participatory ethos, lack of sufficient attention to the needs of the lowest income (0-3 minimum salary) groups in terms of both quantity and quality (particularly isolated and peripheral locations) and lack of sufficient leverage on the real estate markets. Rolnik (2013) also argues that in spite of major social achievements during the past two decades or so the political and economic realities of global integration and the drive for creating public private partnerships with major corporations for funding large scale infrastructure and development projects

(including the sport mega events) has reinforced the old elite decision making system and hollowed out the democratic and participatory institutions that were created in the 1990s. Following similar sentiments Souza (2012) notes the ambivalent nature of Brazil's progressive institutions in that they can also be seen as instruments of social control and governmentality.

Consequently Klink and Denaldi (2016) conclude that in spite of the advances; persistent deep inequalities and socio-spatial and environmental contradictions in Brazilian cities have led to disillusionment in the capacity for transformative progressive action and refer to the impasse of the Brazilian social urban reform. From this perspective one may argue that what we have is an outcome that is 'neither fowl nor fish' in that it is a diluted version of an earlier more radical rights based agenda that has disenfranchised community driven praxis by shifting the emphasis to a more professionalised practice of urban reform (bid). Conceptually, they argue, a key shortcoming has been the application of the communicative and collaborative planning approach to the Brazilian context where the minimum conditions for effective participation do not exist. This is exacerbated by impact of a particular combination of Coasian and Pigovian tradition of institutional economics on the City Statute² whereby:

“the state initially consolidates and demarcates private property rights (i.e. the *Coasian* right to exclude others from using) while opening the perspective of Pigovian governmental intervention – aimed at the social function of property – in order to minimize externalities and provide public goods in a setting of decentralized individual land-use decisions” (Klink and Denaldi, 2016, p409).

² The City Statute Act, promulgated in 2001, establishes the regulatory framework for Brazilian urban policies.

From their perspective, however, the methodological individualism of such an approach is insufficient for consideration of the interaction of urban policy and contradictory social production of city space. Hence, they advocate a more critical framework that is informed by both Lefebvrian and regulationist perspectives and better equipped to address the contingencies and complexities of what they describe as the “really existing” Brazilian urban reform. Thereby allowing for consideration of both structural limits as well as resistance, creativity and alternative praxis at the local level.

As Klink (2013b) acknowledges with few exceptions most of the debate in Brazil has taken a dichotomous view where production of urban space is simply seen within the “totalizing” (and one may add regressive) “processes of neo-liberalization” (Klink and Denaldi, 2016, p410; Vainer, 2009). A view that in the main sees neoliberalisation as an externally generated “economic tsunami” that sweeps all before it (Ribeiro and Santos Junior, 2017, p910). In addition such analyses tend to operate at higher levels of conceptualisation that are limited in providing much insight into what is actually happening on the ground in terms of interactions, struggles and compromises between different local stakeholders that provide the space for action. Moreover, however valid, they do not negate the potential for positive action at the local level particularly in view of the dynamic political scene that initially seemingly received a major boost as a result of the emergence of the urban protest movement in June 2013 but was then entangled in the ‘anti-corruption’ intrigues that were fuelled by popular anger against corruption and economic downturn. Indeed Klink and Denaldi (2016, p414) specifically acknowledge this and note that “Brazilian social land-rent is not only influenced by structural transformations in economic circuits and state intervention and regulation but also by

‘on-the-ground’ projects and strategies of actors that strive to fill in urban reform on the basis of their daily life experiences.”

This echoes the views of other writers in different contexts for better understanding of local politics and daily practices of local resistance to disposition and their resilient adaptations (Pacheco, 2017; Moreno and Shin, 2018). The sentiment is perhaps captured best by Simone and Pieterse (2017, p157) who point to inadequacies of both formal and insurgent governance domains and argue that “... the real city is often marked by quasi-authoritarianism, variable forms of clientelism, patronage and populism; it takes on the form of “a game” that demands a hustler’s cunning. It is up to patient and far-sighted activists in both domains to forge the appropriate mechanisms and spaces for collaboration and systematic transformation, typically anchored to vital urban development issues such as safety, food security, shelter, access to basic services, livelihoods, and so forth, that can be pursued along molecular and regional lines of experimentation”. Recently, therefore, there has been a call for more nuanced analysis of urban development in Rio de Janeiro and wider Brazil to take account of the broader internal socio-economic dynamics, actors and institutions (Ribeiro and Santos Junior, 2017; Becerril, 2017).

Such considerations are also in line with the broader calls for “moving beyond the dominant critiques of neoliberalism”, which tend to provide insufficient totalizing explanations for very diverse urban dynamics, especially in cities outside Western Europe and North-America. Parnell and Robinson urge urban studies scholars to place “these experiences on the global urban theoretical agenda” in order to build a “post-neoliberal theoretical terrain that speaks more sensitively and directly to cities of the global South”

(Parnell and Robinson, 2012, p. 611). Likewise, Zhou et al (2018) have shown how the neoliberal framing and its focus on the supposed diminishing role of the state partially misses the point when applied to very different socio-economic contexts where government increases intervention whilst also deepening capitalist expansion. They suggest leading scholars to “embrace and value the many variegated and indigenous novel developments elsewhere” and “celebrate a ‘worldly’ theorisation of global urbanism and planetary urbanisation in which a decentring trend materially and intellectually is underway” (p. 8-9)³.

This is where the main contribution of this paper lies. Building on such debates and with reference to specific case studies we want to contribute both to such analyses that have wider significance beyond Brazil and to those Brazilian discussions. We do so by shedding light on the potentials and limitations for action aiming to address durable inequality and poverty within the ‘stubborn realities’ (Yiftachel, 2006; Watson, 2013) of the ‘really existing’ Brazilian urban context.

The Rio experience, particularly its globally driven economy and spatial restructuring and its dynamic political scene, provides an important opportunity for examining the actual rooms, in this context, for expanding rights over urban land and housing, as key resources for the betterment of urban poor lives and tackling inequality. Such an analysis can also provide important lessons to globalizing cities of the South in general.

With that objective in mind, in the remainder of this paper we shall first provide a brief explanation of the conceptual framework and fieldwork methodology. The paper then

³ This approach has received strong criticism for excessively particularizing urban experiences and knowledge production and thus making any true cross comparison and general theorization unfeasible (For further critiques of this and other contemporary major urban theories, see Storper and Scott, 2016). Although we tend to agree, we also believe that it is currently important to diversify theoretical and empirical explorations beyond North America and Western Europe to sharpen urban theory.

focuses on in-depth exploration of the local context by analysing two of the most successful experiences of resistance against exclusive redevelopment projects in Rio, that is those of the Vila Autódromo and Providência favelas. This is based on secondary evidence and a series of interviews undertaken in the city between 2012 and 2016 to illustrate the key issues under discussion. The concluding section brings the literature debate mentioned above and the investigation findings together to propose a way forward for the discussion.

The Tillyan conceptual tools

To address the issue of the actual scope for progressive change we need a more nuanced set of conceptual tools, one that can properly consider both the structural constraints and the effects of agency. We choose Charles Tilly's framework on durable inequality (1999). This is justified by some distinctive characteristics of such an approach. First, because if, on one hand, its author identifies and explores the social mechanisms generating and reproducing long-term social inequality, on the other hand, he is also pragmatically concerned with how states and social movements can reverse those tendencies, pointing out some of the directions of actions required to avoid structural traps and be more effective in this task. Second, because it keeps focus on the links between power asymmetries and social inequality, identifying a special role for democratization and political participation in those efforts. And third, because as signaled by other authors such as Heller and Evans (2010) and Mosse (2010), this framework has been particularly useful to analyse the urban social dynamics in cities of the "Global South".

According to Tilly, social inequality consists of “the uneven distribution of attributes among a set of social units such as individuals, categories, groups, or regions”, which usually leads to “the uneven distribution of costs and benefits—that is, goods, broadly defined”. Such goods “include not only wealth and income but also such various benefits and costs as control of land, exposure to illness, respect from other people, liability to military service, risk of homicide, possession of tools, and availability of sexual partners” (1999, p. 25), to name only some.

This unequal distribution is foremost sustained through the establishment of socially accepted classifications based on paired categorical hierarchies that justify differences in access to resources. For Tilly, a category “consists of a set of actors who share a boundary distinguishing all of them from and relating all of them to at least one set of actors visibly excluded by that boundary” (1999, p. 50).

Some of the most pervasive categorical systems are distinctions of gender, class, race and citizenship, each creating paired categories (i.e. male/female, white/black, citizen/noncitizen, employer/employee, etc). In everyday practices, these and other pairs are matched with differences in terms of resource distribution between groups within organisations and other social settings. Durable inequality is thus most powerfully maintained when those “exterior” general categories correspond to “internal” positions – such as when low-paid (or even unpaid) domestic work is mostly done by people from a specific ethnic group and/or gender or when access to public services and goods are denied to noncitizens, for instance.

Hence, categorical inequality tends to persist mostly because it facilitates exploitation – defined as the command by powerful people over “resources from which they draw

significantly increased returns by coordinating the effort of outsiders whom they exclude from the full value added by that effort” - and opportunity hoarding, which happens when “members of a categorically bounded network acquire access to a resource that is valuable, renewable, subject to monopoly, supportive of network activities, and enhanced by the network’s modus operandi” (Tilly, 1999, p. 62-63). Additionally, categorical inequality is also reinforced by emulation and adaptation, respectively defined as the transposition of categories that already exist elsewhere to a specific organisational context and the conformation of local circumstances to those “imported” categories.

But although the four mechanisms – exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation and adaptation – are recognised as the main causal factors behind durable inequality, they do not necessarily always operate efficiently. Quite on the contrary, Tilly argues, the disadvantages perpetuated by categorical inequality can often provoke a sense of injustice among the oppressed and sometimes discontent and rebellion among them. Nevertheless, the core issue is “whether the disadvantaged have sufficient knowledge, organizational capacity, and leverage to alter the system”. They usually don’t, both because of some limited rewards provided to them by the status quo that are “less bad than available alternatives” and also “because the very arrangement of unequal categories deprives them of knowledge, organizational capacity, and leverage” (Tilly, 1999, p. 93).

Still, there are some circumstances in which either states or/and social movements can overcome such barriers and propel change. In the case of states, although they usually institutionalise categorical inequality by endorsing it through legislation and public policy, sometimes “under mass democracy” they “deliberately sought to redistribute income, wealth, or goods in ways that might alter existing relations of inequality” (1999,

p. 139). Meanwhile, social movements act on the basis of existing categorical inequality, but only to stress and call attention to the injustice caused by it. Sometimes their mobilisation can combine with other conjunctural factors, which might include institutional changes and inadvertent “mistakes” made by dominant classes, to alter the correlation of forces and make “the benefits from exploitation and opportunity hoarding decline and/or the costs of exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation, and adaptation increase”. If this happens, then the beneficiaries of categorical inequality may seek alternatives and actual change may take place (1999, p. 156-157). Tilly then goes on to note that changes in attitudes alone weak impact with superficial effects while changes to “categorical differences in human capital” will have greater effect primarily by impacting organization of opportunity. He concludes however that fundamental and rapid change in categorical inequality would only occur by “reorganization of workplaces and other sites of differential rewards with respect to the location and character of categorical boundaries” (1999, p. 168-169).

Using this array of conceptual tools as the main parameter, the next step is to evaluate to what degree the processes and outcomes of two redevelopment initiatives associated with mega-events in Rio de Janeiro leaned more or less towards the actual tackling of urban inequality. By doing so we do not intend to verify the wider significance of impact on the general levels of inequality in Rio de Janeiro, but rather the direction and scope for creating space for intervention and meaningful action. That is, the investigation is focused much more on the qualitative characteristics of process and outcome and much

less on their quantitative effects. This may help us to understand the scope for pro-poor anti-inequality measures in a roll-out neoliberal context.

The analysis will utilise both secondary and primary information. The fieldwork was undertaken in June-July 2012 and Nov-Dec 2013 and June-July 2016 as part of a project on the legacy impact of the 2016 Olympic Games and the 2014 Football World Cup. It consisted of 48 in depth interviews, one workshop and 12 site visits to Vila Autódromo, Morro da Providência, and Santa Marta communities (Favelas), Parque Carioca (MCMV housing project) and the port redevelopment area. The interviews covered different stakeholders including senior academics, local politicians, the national Olympic Games organizing committee, the municipal Olympic Games implementation agency, federal defenders office, state economic development agency, community association leaders, community workers, community activists and ordinary community residents.

The case of Vila Autódromo

The historical background of an Olympic Games conflict

The history of Vila Autódromo and its surroundings is emblematic of the high level of urban inequality in Rio de Janeiro. Initially, in the 1960s, a few groups of fishermen began to build improvised homes by the Jacarepaguá Lagoon, located at the intersection of two neighbourhoods, Barra da Tijuca and Jacarepaguá. The area had then barely any urban infrastructure. Nevertheless, over the three last decades of the twentieth-century, both neighbourhoods became the object of very intense land speculation and construction works. Barra, in particular, became a prime target of increasingly aggressive real estate expansion based on the creation of luxury condominiums, large shopping malls and major public venues designed to host events, such as the city convention

centre(RioCentro) and a F1 car racing track (Autódromo de Jacarepaguá), with high speed avenues connecting them all. Meanwhile, Vila Autódromo (hereafter VA), named after the car racing track next door, grew considerably whilst providing significant contingents of cheap labour force to the local construction industry and associated sectors, such as commerce, security and domestic services. But despite its key role in the consolidation of Barra and Jacarepaguá, VA reaped very few rewards, if any, from these greenfield developments.

According to the 2010 Census (IBGE, 2012), VA had 1252 residents living in 356 households, of which nearly 70% had either no income at all or earned less than one national minimum wage (hereafter NMW) per month— then equivalent to USD 293⁴ - whereas only 0,8% earned more than 5 NMWs. At the same time, the adjacent census tract – which surrounds VA, encompassing the car racing track and part of the burgeoning local gated communities, as seen in the picture below - registered 613 residents and 211 houses, with only 5 % of households either earning less than one NMW or with no income at all and 56 % making more than 5 NMWs a month. This area has an income per capita seven times higher than that registered for VA.

⁴ 510 BRL, considering the BRL-USD exchange rate of 1.75.



Picture 1: The census tracts of Vila Autódromo, within the red line limits, and of its immediate surroundings, within the wider yellow polygon, in July 2011.

The huge income differences between the poor working class Vila Autódromo inhabitants and their much more affluent middle class neighbours was accompanied by disparities in the access to basic public services: direct garbage collections and public sanitation⁶ covered just 3.9 % and 2.5 % of VA households, respectively. Meanwhile, every house in the middle-class gated communities counted with the former and most of them made use of the latter. On top of that, at least 16% of VA households utilise informal connections to the electric energy network – a fact related to the unaffordability of energy for the poorest people in a very poor community (IBGE, 2012). No similar cases were registered on the other side of the road. Nearly all these figures were substantially distant from the national averages, as seen in table 1 below - a fact that highlights how extreme such inequality was.

⁵ This is the public service that collects garbage directly from each house, rather than from a single location in the neighbourhood, where residents need to gather their collective litter.

⁶ Public sanitation means that houses are connected to the public sewage network.

<u>Territorial Unit</u>	<u>Number of households</u>	<u>Households earning < 1 NMW</u>	<u>Households earning > 5 NMW</u>	<u>Households covered by direct garbage collection</u>	<u>Households connected to the sewage network</u>	<u>Households without energy meter</u>
<u>Vila Autódromo</u>	<u>356</u> (100 %)	<u>246</u> (69.1 %)	<u>3</u> (0.8 %)	<u>14</u> (3.9 %)	<u>9</u> (2.5 %)	<u>60</u> (16.8 %)
<u>Vila Autódromo immediate surroundings</u>	<u>211</u> (100 %)	<u>11</u> (5.2 %)	<u>118</u> (55.9 %)	<u>211</u> (100 %)	<u>120</u> (56.8 %)	<u>0</u> (0.0 %)
<u>Brazil</u>	<u>57320555</u> (100 %)	<u>32000602</u> (55.8 %)	<u>3701886</u> (6.4 %)	<u>46005554</u> (80.2 %)	<u>31823913</u> (55.5 %)	<u>2034662</u> (3.5 %)

Table 1: The socio-economic profile of Vila Autódromo in perspective (IBGE, 2012)

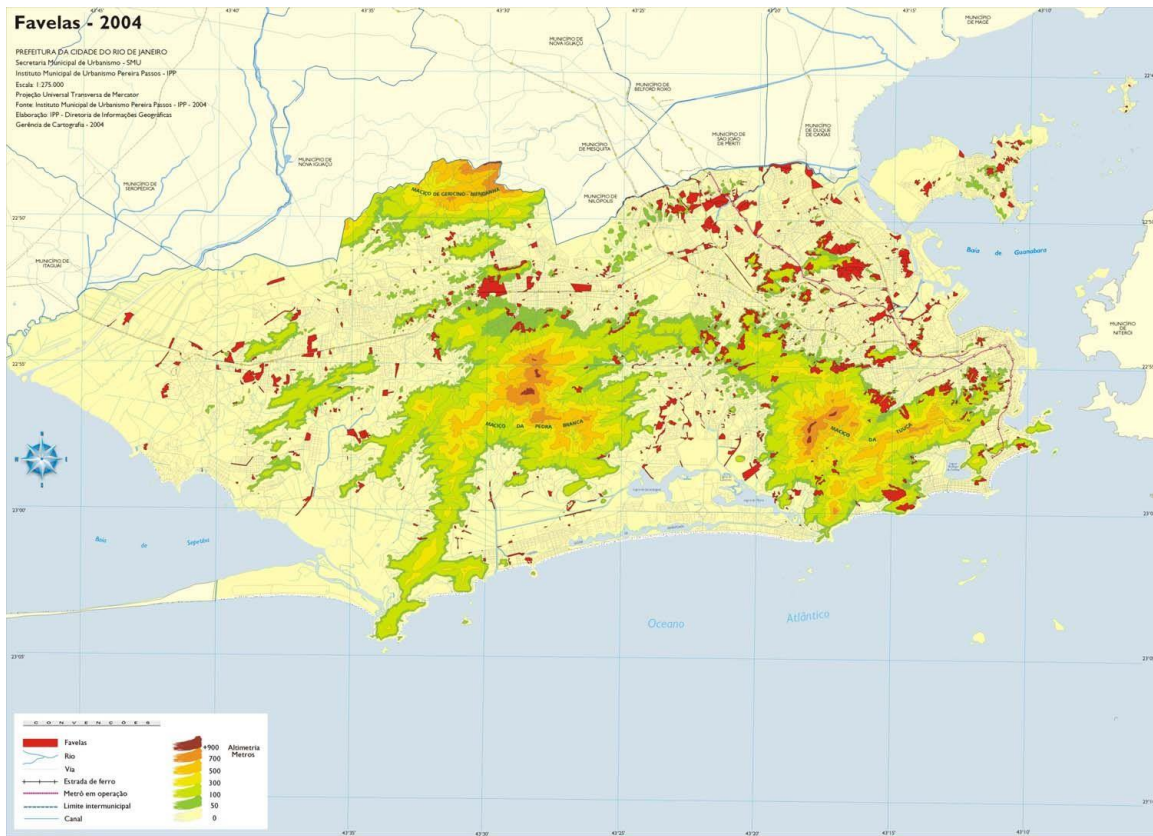
This material inequality overlapped with ethnic distinctions: two thirds of VA residents were non-whites - i.e. classified as black, mixed, indigenous or yellow. However, less than a fifth of the people living in the condominiums nearby were under the same classification (IBGE, 2012), as illustrated in table 2 below.

<u>Territorial Unit</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Non-White population</u>	<u>White Population</u>
<u>Vila Autódromo</u>	<u>1252</u> (100 %)	<u>830</u> (66.3 %)	<u>422</u> (33.7 %)
<u>Vila Autódromo immediate surroundings</u>	<u>613</u> (100 %)	<u>120</u> (19.5 %)	<u>493</u> (80.5 %)
<u>Brazil</u>	<u>+191000000</u> (100 %)	<u>+100000000</u> (52.3 %)	<u>+91000000</u> (47.7 %)

Table 2: Vila Autódromo's ethnic composition in perspective (IBGE, 2012).

The unequivocal low levels of income and public services provision coupled with an above average concentration of non-white population in a highly dense space mostly composed of informal houses were far from making VA an exceptional case. In fact, in 2010, between a fifth and a quarter of the 6.3 million Rio inhabitants lived in 763 similar spaces, locally known as favelas (IBGE, 2012). These were spread all over the city, a lot of them located in hilly areas, sometimes even immersed into wealthy neighbourhoods,

such as Ipanema and Copacabana, in the trendy Southeast corner of the city, as seen in the map below.



Map 1: Rio favelas (in red) and the hilly areas (in green, yellow, orange and brown) (Izaga and Pereira, 2014).

Favelas have existed at least since the end of the nineteenth century, when slaves made free by the 1888 Slavery Abolishment Act were left without any compensation or state support. They were not absorbed by labour markets, as the Brazilian government deliberately prioritised European immigrant workforce. As freed slaves could not afford any housing, improvised self-construction began to spread in undervalued areas then ignored by the local real estate market. Later, part of the descendants of this population was forcibly removed from central areas to other expanding neighbourhoods, creating new favelas (Valladares, 1978).

The historical links between deep precariousness faced by slaves and ex-slaves in their subsistence efforts and the extreme poor conditions perpetuated to the following generations of their descendants are some of the clearest examples of durable inequality. So much that Tilly even cited the Brazilian instance to illustrate his broader point, identifying the country as a place “where racial inequalities run very deep but lack legal recognition” to make a clear distinction from the South African and North-American cases (Tilly, 1999, p. 91). Nevertheless, he did not explore further the Brazilian specificities regarding the construction of non-legal categorical boundaries that underpin such deep inequalities.

Based on previous research, it is also our intention to contribute for filling this gap. We thus hereby propose that the categorically paired hierarchy *favelado/non-favelado* (i.e. people who live / people who don't live in favelas) is the key for understanding the underpinnings of such a deep durable inequality in Rio de Janeiro, as it best encapsulates the unequal distribution of resources whilst also being referenced to historical origins. This is because to be classified as a *favelado* means much more than just being non-white and poor access to public services and formal well-paid steady jobs. It's the lack of land titles combined with those characteristics that decisively differentiates *favelados* from other *cariocas* and usually leads to their high tenure insecurity, making this population much more vulnerable to the frequent waves of large scale removal plans - which particularly characterized the early years of the twentieth-century and the dictatorial years of the 1960s and 1970s - and institutional violence in general. The condition is more dramatically expressed by the fact that the majority of both homicides and deaths caused by police intervention occurs within or very near the limits of the largest central favelas

(Rivero, 2010). As some studies show, *favelados* are widely seen as “killable” population – *população matável* – by the Police (Farias, 2007).

This is usually justified by a common understanding that any *favelado* is linked to the violent criminals who work in the retail commerce of drugs in favelas (Misse, 2011). There are several examples of how the *favelado/non-favelado* categorical hierarchy works in the everyday practices of state representatives and the population to automatically criminalise and justify the very high death toll among the young non-white people and other precarious conditions found in the favelas⁷. But the concluding remarks of a report on the courts treatment of deaths caused by police intervention may best summarize the issue:

“Even if the victim has no criminal record and even if the witnesses vehemently deny his/her engagement with illegal practices, these will be contested on the basis of suspicion raised by the fact that he/she lived in a favela where there is drug trafficking. This condition on its own creates the assumption of individuals perilousness, corroborating the legitimacy of their deaths” (Misse, 2011, p. 134)⁸.

Therefore, given all the information provided, it is clear that if someone lives in a Rio favela, a condition shared by 23% of the local population, it is very likely that he/she is non-white, very poor, with very limited access to formal well-paid jobs and basic public services, and faces high levels of land and life insecurity tenure. And it is the categorization of someone as a *favelado*, with all its morally negative connotation, that tends to normalise and legitimise that condition. As, according to this rationale, if

⁷ In 2017, 75% of victims of homicide in Brazil were either black or mixed –*pardo* (IBGE, 2018). For more information, see https://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=34786

⁸ Translated from the original in Portuguese by the authors.

someone lives like that it is because they chose to break the law, be it by encroaching on other people's land or by engaging in criminal actions, and therefore, deserves living in dire straits or even dying. Conversely, not to be categorized as a *favelado* often means you won't be criminalised a priori and that you are much less likely to share all those highly disadvantageous attributes related to extreme poverty. Importantly, such categorical boundaries are seldom crossed. This is especially key for perpetuating that "uneven distribution of costs and benefits" between both categories (Tilly, 1999, p 25).

But why is the VA case so relevant in this context? Mostly because, as we shall see below, when threatened with total displacement due to major redevelopment plans, VA residents managed to substantially blur the categorical boundaries mentioned above and resist. And, as put by Tilly, this sort of political action is essential for tackling durable inequality.

Vila Autódromo and the Olympic Park redevelopment

As the IOC decided to choose Rio as the 2016 Olympic Games host city, in late 2009, the bid plans to make Barra the epicentre of the games and boost local real estate expansion could finally begin to materialise. The main hub of competitions would be the Olympic Park, a R\$ 2.6 billion complex of facilities then to be built on the site of the car racing track, which should be totally destroyed. Behind the initiative was the major local land owner, a real estate company called Carvalho Hosken, and two of the biggest construction companies of Brazil, Odebrecht and Andrade Gutierrez. As part of this public-private partnership scheme, after erecting the park for the games nearly half of the publicly owned site would be handed to those contractors, who would be authorized to

replace some of the temporary sports facilities with new luxury condominiums to be sold in the real estate market.

This news made people in VA apprehensive. If such huge transformation was planned for their immediate neighbourhood, what was going to happen to them? A first announcement came a few months after the IOC's decision, when the municipality publicized a list of 119 favelas to be partially or totally removed, with VA among them. Favelas residents organised a couple of protests in early 2010, eventually managing to meet the mayor and negotiate (Jacob, 2010).

From the very beginning, VA stood out in such negotiations thanks to three key attributes. First, different from the other 77,000 *favelados* threatened by evictions in the run-up to the Olympic Games, the majority of the VA residents had title of land use for 99 years, given by a previous left-wing State Governor in 1994. Although it did not secure property rights, the title at least legalised the land situation and guaranteed a relatively stronger bargain position, as removals could not be so easily justified through the usual criminalisation of favelas. Second, this position tended to be strengthened by the fact that there were no gangs of traffic dealers operating within the community. Third, VA also counted on an unusual capacity of political mobilisation, as its leaders had historically established connections with universities, NGOS and other national and international middle-class supporting groups. As a matter of fact, the land use titles and the political connections resulted from VA's long successful struggle against several previous removal attempts by state and private agents, which dated back to at least the early 1990s, when one of its main leaders was murdered (Guimarães, 2015).

These particularities forced the public-private coalition behind the redevelopment plans

to articulate a customized approach. Because of VA's higher moral ground, criminalisation lost significant strength and had to be combined with other sorts of tactics, including lack of transparency regarding official plans, the creation of untenable conditions of living and resistance and the offering of very attractive compensation payments (Omena de Melo, 2017).

As a result, delegitimisation of local inhabitants through criminalisation had to be adapted. Initially, both the Olympic bid and the local mainstream press used the expected excuse of irregular land occupation as the main justification for removal (COB, 2009, Vol. 01, p. 101 and O Globo, 2011). However, as community leaders persistently asserted their legal status, discourse focus shifted to other assumed sorts of illegality. For instance, one municipal secretary refers to VA residents as "people who do not pay for energy and have illegal supplies. They have never paid for energy. They have never paid for water (...) are we going to defend irregular energy, water and TV? Are we going to defend those who never paid for water or energy? Is that the role to be played by society?". One representative of the consortium of contractors defended that "those are trespassed areas of preservation (...) which need to be regenerated", whilst another representative reinforced this vision by saying that "it can't be occupying the Lagoon margins, because it is protected by environment preservation" (Omena de Melo, 2017, p. 189-190).

Despite such adjustments, criminalisation still seemed to be far less effective than usual, as VA's political mobilisation managed to secure greater legitimacy in the eyes of the public and some relevant partial and even permanent victories against a powerful coalition of developers, politicians and media outlets. For example, in 2011, the company responsible for designing the Olympic Park masterplan opted for keeping most of VA

houses intact. Also, in 2013, the residents alternative plan privileging upgrading in situ through a partnership with two local universities won the Urban Age international award given by the Deutsche Bank. However, this was ignored by the local government. Still, both their initial inclusion in the masterplan and the subsequent alternative plan provided a further boost to the residents' claims (Fieldwork interviews).

The municipality then began to play a dubious game by stating that nobody would be forcibly evicted, whilst offering increasingly better deals for those who opted to voluntarily leave. The latter included being relocated to the Parque Carioca social housing estate, only 2KM away, and extraordinarily high compensation payments. These were much better than those obtained by the vast majority of other *favelados*, who usually got relocated to places even 60 KM away and who normally had insufficient levels of compensation to buy any house near the original site (CPCMO-RJ, 2016). Therefore, by late 2015 most of the residents had left, as they couldn't cope with acute misinformation and the very unhealthy conditions created by the municipality – such as the rubble left on the site of destroyed houses, the floodings caused by the elevation of ground level at the Olympic Park and police intimidation. Yet, 20 families still managed to remain after the games (Fieldwork visits and interviews). Their houses were rebuilt in the same location, as seen in the pictures below.



Pictures 2 and 3: At the top, before the games: VA in the foreground and the car racing track in the background. At the bottom, after the games: the houses of the 20 remaining families in the foreground and the Olympic Park in the background.

For our purposes, the VA case stands out in at least two crucial ways. First, the occurrence of very specific attributes is related to the occurrence of very unique outcomes. The fact that VA residents held legal authorization for occupying their land – and hence, for existing as a community– and that their territory wasn’t dominated by drug gangs contributed to blurring the categorical boundaries that so often divide the city between *favelados* and non-*favelados*, even though the social profile of residents and the precarious conditions in which they lived were still typical of a favela. Because of that, criminalisation, a fundamental “trump card” commonly used by local governments for taking *favelados*’ lands - and lives - could not be so easily and effectively deployed. These distinctive characteristics caused a cognitive dissonance and the redevelopment coalition could not automatically reproduce standard responses, which indeed hitherto had been functioning very well in the rest of the city - so much so that the Olympic Games era removals is recognised as the third wave of forced evictions in the history of Rio (Faulhaber, 2015). On such solid grounds, savvy political mobilisation managed to increase the “costs of exploitation” and alter the correlation of forces, as put by Tilly, to guarantee relatively better outcomes, such as the recognition of the legitimacy of its claims, the payment of compensation way above the average, relocation nearby and the permanence of 20 families, which, given the very powerful interests of opponents, is an exceptional result. Thus dismantling the functioning of deeply engrained categorical hierarchy was of the essence.

Second, it is also important to consider how such outcomes relate to local poverty and durable inequality. The permanence of a very poor and predominantly non-white community in a wealthy and newly upgraded neighbourhood may facilitate the access of

those families to better urban infrastructure, including locally improved transportation, education, healthcare systems and leisure facilities. And as Barra becomes one of the main city hubs for business and tourism, the location may also guarantee better access to jobs. Definitively, these conditions are not shared with those other dozens of thousands removed to the extreme far West periphery. Furthermore, the complete recognition of VA's legal status by the municipality consolidated the in situ upgrade of the houses of remaining families, including the total regularization of the provision of basic public services. All these characteristics also apply to the case of those relocated to Parque Carioca. Altogether, such changes tend not only to counter the previous extreme unequal and poor conditions but, foremost, to make both the VA and Parque Carioca residents - and, potentially, those who accepted the compensation payments above the average - cross the categorical boundary *favelado/non-favelado*, hence being actual anti-inequality and pro-poor outcomes, even though at a micro-scale level.

Last but certainly not the least, it is worth emphasizing that the condition that made possible the erasure of the categorical boundary and the consequent mitigation of durable inequalities - i.e. the concession of land titles - originated from initial grassroots mobilisation followed by a progressive governmental action. It indicates the importance of both state and social movements' initiatives as much as their concerted combination in time and space to establish truly effective anti-inequality measures. We will return to this point later in the conclusion.

The case of Providência

Usually regarded as the first favela in Brazil, the initial foundations of Providência date back to the late nineteenth-century. Similar to VA, most of its 5,867 residents are very poor: 75% of households have either no income or earn less than 1NMW. And although nearly all households use public water and sanitation systems, one third are still not covered by direct garbage collection and 30% are informally connected to the electric energy network. Moreover, its population is also predominantly non-white (IBGE, 2012). Nevertheless, there are some significant differences as well. Providência is located at the heart of Rio's city centre, rather than the distant Western suburbs. It is not surrounded by wealthy middle-class condominiums either. On the contrary, the population of the surrounding port area is only slightly richer, with its per capita income only 47 % higher than Providência's (IBGE, 2012).

Differences were also noted in the origins of removal threats. The R\$ 10 billion redevelopment project for the port area, called Porto Maravilha, promised several revitalisation measures, including the construction of a cable car connecting the top of the Providência hill with the central railway station and the harbour, access for emergency vehicles, improvements of areas of historic interest, provision of sports and health facilities, widening access roads and demolition of buildings classified as unsafe (Fieldwork observation and interviews). This was linked to plans for promoting tourism through a walkway which would guide tourists through the favela.

At the same time around 500 households out of a total of 1776 were initially threatened with eviction and demolition (field interviews). According to local planning officials the resettlement plan at the time included social rental housing for about half of the

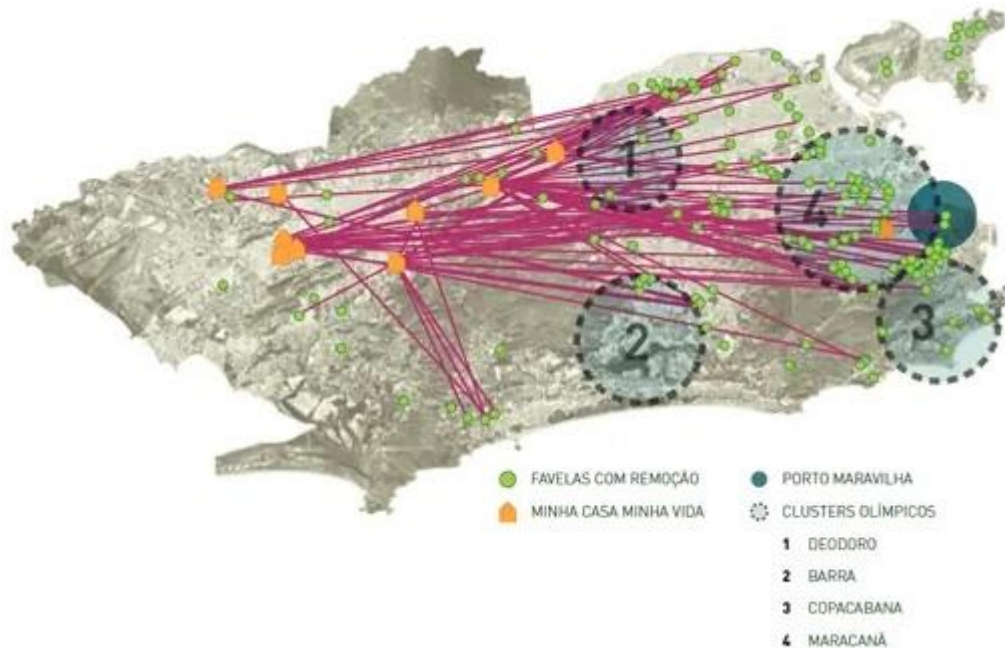
population but the remainder would have to either accept relocation to social housing in the periphery or get compensation⁹ instead.

It is worthy to note that the Porto Maravilha project was not directly linked to the Olympic Games, with no related facility to be built in the port area, even though its representatives often used the Olympic Games as justification. Also it did not count on a massive corporate support and was not responding to major real estate interests in the area, as seen in the case of the Olympic Park. In fact, Porto Maravilha was thought as a key local government intervention to attract private investments, with the backing of federal funds. In this sense, the success of the project and the strength of its representatives to force displacements depended on a greater engagement from the private sector and a stable economic scenario.

As the 2015 economic crisis hit hard and private investments did not match expectations, plans were halted. By 2016 the eviction plan had been abandoned due to opposition by the affected households who had formed an association to fight the evictions in court. Consequently, the removals were stopped with only 100 families evicted. Out of these only 30 families remaining to be rehoused in social housing in the area (field interviews). At the same time the upgrading programme had also been halted subject to further negotiation between the municipality and the community. However, at the time of interviews in July 2016 the negotiation had stalled. On top of that, later promises of land allocation for developing up to 5000 social housing units in collaboration with the federal government in the port area as a whole never materialised either.

⁹ In 2012 the compensation amount was about £70,000 BRL. This was relatively significant although not sufficient to buy a low income flat in the private market in the same area that started at about £80,000 BRL.

Compared to the vast majority of removal cases happening in the city, these outcomes are relatively better off. First, because only a tiny minority of the local population was evicted. Second, because some of those few evicted were relocated to a social housing estate nearby. In fact, Providência was the only example where people evicted from a central favela were kept near the city centre (Faulhaber, 2015), as shown in the map below.



Map 2: The evictions in the Olympic Games era. The dots represent the Rio favelas and the lines represent the movements of displacement, with the housing icons indicating the social housing estates used as destination. The dotted circles represent the Olympic Games hubs. People evicted from Providência were relocated to the only housing icon within circle number 4. All the other relocation sites were in the Northwestern periphery, with poorer urban infrastructure and more distant from most of job locations (Faulhaber, 2015).

However, the whole situation is better described as a major stalemate. Potential change never turned into reality and the vast majority of Providência inhabitants did not perceive any substantial transformation. A very low percentage of the households were evicted

and their houses demolished (Fieldwork interviews). The cable car – a flagship project - was deactivated in late 2016, only a couple of years after inauguration. Even when in action, it could only transport a fraction of locals. Generally speaking, favela upgrading did not materialise and the plans for social housing units only brought frustration. It all left the community on very similar grounds to that before Porto Maravilha revitalisation plan was announced, with land and life tenure insecurity still being a major issue.

Therefore, although Providência residents managed to block removals this was largely due to external factors such as the economic crisis and the lack of a cohesive redevelopment coalition as well as local political mobilisation. However, in contrast to VA, the outcomes did not lead to actual pro-poor structural anti-inequality gains with continuing precariat status. This indicates the fragility of actions that are not tackling the sources of durable inequality.

The only outcome that at least temporarily seemed to overcome such fragility was precisely the only related project that somewhat could intervene to affect the basis and effects of the *favelados/non-favelados* categorical hierarchy, i.e. the Police Pacification Units (UPPs) Programme. Announced as a panacea for the grave urban security issues of Rio by the state government in 2008, the UPP programme established the permanent police occupation of most of the central favelas, promising to tackle drug trafficking gangs and hence to open the way for the full provision of basic public services, such as education, healthcare, sanitation and direct garbage collection. In other words, according to such promises, life (and death) conditions in the favelas could finally at least partially equate to those present in non-*favelados* areas. Following such guidelines the Police inaugurated the Providência UPP in early 2010.

Field interviews in 2012 and 2013 showed that while pacification had imposed limitations on social activities particularly 8 pm curfew for parties and bars and cafes it had brought some measure of order and security to the favela. However, interviews with residents, policemen and gang members also indicated a false peace whereby the gangs had not been disarmed and disbanded. It seems there was an understanding with the police and they were just not carrying their arms with them. As a result overt violence had reduced, with less deaths. Otherwise the gang structure was according to the local residents still in place. Nevertheless, at that time there was a fair degree of security to allow the research team to visit the favela for a whole day in both years and undertake interviews with a range of stakeholders. By 2016, however, the security situation had changed markedly. The gangs were back in overt control of the community with armed presence and look out posts. Coincidentally or not, the UPPs programme overwhelmingly fell apart soon after the 2016 Olympic Games, which may indicate that this had a deliberate temporary character associated with the mega-events timeline and thus could never have tackled structural long term issues.

All in all, the case of Providência particularly underscores the limitations of initiatives that are unable to overcome categorical boundaries – be it either because they don't aim at it at all, because they only accidentally touch on the issue or because they are just ineffective - and hence tend to have even relatively good outcomes offset in the long run.

Conclusions

The results of investigation provide further insights to reflections on the possibilities of local actions both in the Brazilian and in the more general context of global demands and capitalist urbanisation. They show that it is possible for disadvantaged poor communities to articulate resistance against exclusive redevelopment pressures and at least partially halt forced displacements. However, they also show that using the outcomes of such projects to actually advance pro-poor anti-inequality actions is a very different matter, and indeed a much more difficult task. To do so, it is key to aim at dismantling the categorical boundaries establishing hierarchies that so deeply underpin durable inequality.

This was decisively the case of VA, where residents managed to first blur the division between *favelados* and non-*favelados* to guarantee a stronger bargain position and, consequentially, achieve quite unusual outcomes in the local context of widespread mass evictions. These included substantive upgrading and formalisation of remaining houses, relocation within the same neighbourhood to formal social housing and high compensation payments. Additionally, such outcomes may have enabled residents to cross those categorical boundaries in the post-games scenario, which as indicated by Tilly, “should produce significant reductions in overall inequality” (1999, p. 169). This example does not alter significantly the inequality levels in Rio. And it does not go against the predominant readings that identify a general tendency of regressive outcomes emerging from mostly neoliberal redevelopment projects despite some few progressive reforms and measures. However importantly, it indicates the directions of future actions intended to promote actual pro-poor anti-inequality development in an adverse scenario.

Contrastingly, this was not the case in Providência where tackling the foundations of inequality was hardly ever at stake. Despite mostly successful anti-evictions resistance, no substantial progressive change has ever taken place. The exception that confirms the rule is the partial improvements caused by the UPP programme, which at least temporarily offset the effects of criminalisation of *favelados*, with death tolls related to conflicts between police and drug gangs being reduced for a few years. Nevertheless, as soon as the mega-events moved away, the UPP programme lost strength and meaning, indicating that the reduction of violence that so constantly takes *favelados* lives was just a collateral effect.

The contrast between the two experiences is further emphasised by the comparison between both conditions of struggle. Strictly speaking, VA residents faced much more adverse conditions: their opponents formed a very powerful coalition involving some of the biggest national and local companies and all three levels of government (municipal, state and federal). Also the Olympic Park redevelopment project was directly connected to the Olympic Games, associating its demands to a major national event with great symbolic appeal. On the other hand, Providência was targeted by the Porto Maravilha project, which did not have a strong multi-level coalition behind it, being foremost a municipal government initiative with some federal support and lacking private corporate backing. Moreover, the project could not be so directly linked to the games, with its demands not having as much status and legitimacy as those related to the Olympic Park.

The key for VA to face such adverse conditions and produce better outcomes was the tenure provided by the 99 years land use titles held by households since the early 1990s. Importantly, this was achieved when anti-eviction political mobilisation by residents met

with a pro-poor governmental measure that conceded those titles. Therefore, the action of both state and social movements and their combination was essential for the creation of VA's special condition and for, later, guaranteeing anti-inequality outcomes from a very exclusive project and context.

The above discussion also highlights two important points in relation to facilitating and widening the space for progressive action and pro-poor governance. Firstly, it highlights the decisive role of public actions and institutions. Although this has been mostly reflected in the 99 years leaseholds to VA residents and the potential (but unrealised) role of UPP in establishing security in Providencia, it is also worth mentioning some national level legal instruments. Example of the latter include the 2001 Statute of the City recognising the social value of land and enabling more public intervention in land markets as well as establishing greater protection of favelas. While there has been limited capacity for their full implementation these institutions have provided a basis for legal challenges to evictions and seeking alternative solutions. The second point as illustrated in the case of VA is that political action and resistance to eviction can in fact go beyond the local or even national dimensions and succeed in internationalising the issue. In a way this can be said to have led to the emergence of new political articulations at the local level with networks that reach far beyond the immediate locality and can ironically use the global dimension to advance local community interests while global capital interests are pushing local interests to the periphery.

Therefore, the promotion of a pro-poor anti-inequality agenda should ignore neither grassroots mobilisation nor engagement with institutional spaces, as both pressure from below and engagement of the community with the "established norms" and institutions,

utilising them to their own benefit including court action, alternative plans and even engagement in negotiations, were essential. In other words the VA experience highlights not only the potential but also limitations of insurgent planning that supports Pieterse' (2015) caution against simplistic reading or over-romanticised notions of the impact of insurgent agendas. It points to the value of a hybrid approach that utilises both invented and invited spaces of participation to create the space for effective action and force concessions.

Finally, the Tillyan conceptual framework utilised to obtain such results proved to be an efficient tool for the task of considering both the contingencies imposed by strict structural limits and the potential of agency to propel actual change. In particular, it may allow a more precise and nuanced view of the possible ways to move forward a pro-poor anti-inequality agenda by exploring the contradictions and breaches in the capitalist-neoliberal structural fortress. And by highlighting the potential for change, the concurrent and contradictory processes that merge with more neoliberal drives and the diversity of processes and outcomes in Rio, we deliver results that can also feed future works building a more decentred theorisation of urban dynamics both in cities of the Global South and elsewhere.

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