

## The favela where I live: the territory from the perspective of young people

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**Abstract** *This article examines a set of photographic productions created by six young people, living in a favela on the outskirts of São Paulo, seeking to reflect on their perception of the territory in which they live. A large part of the population of São Paulo resides in favelas, an urban phenomenon found on the outskirts of large metropolises. Despite the difficulty in accessing basic services, such as health, safety, culture and education, the favela is also a fertile space that nurtures feelings of belonging, solidarity and resistance in its residents. Young people, who also live and circulate in the streets and alleys of the favela, have a specific perspective on their own home territory. This is a qualitative and exploratory study, which uses photography as a research tool. The photographic and cartographic productions of the young people reflected different perspectives of the territory, revealing dimensions of leisure, community articulation, sociability, precariousness of the urban cleaning system, among others. Thus, the undertaking of creating visual narratives made it possible for different aspects of the favela to be exposed, discussed and analyzed.*

**Key words** *Adolescent, Photography, Social vulnerability, Sociocultural territory*

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## Introduction

The periphery makes up the margins of urban centers in large cities and, often, involves precarious access to basic goods, such as health, education and security. The concentration of favelas, and housing settlements built without urban or sanitary planning, on the outskirts clearly expresses the social aspect, revealing an accentuated condition of poverty and the scarcity or absence of services, observed in several nuclei of these regions<sup>1</sup>. The social chasm that separates the rich from the poor is the driving force for an uneven development in the metropolis<sup>2</sup>.

From a historical point of view, Valadares<sup>3</sup> points out that favelas have historically been referred to as unhealthy, lawless, unhygienic, and illegal spaces. The target of harsh criticism from public health and safety, medicine and urbanism, they have been treated as a social and moral problem by society, in addition to being seen as obstacles to urban development. These were some of the factors that have caused the removal of individuals and families who lived in these regions.

The search for the expansion of a planned, legal city, where social inequalities and vulnerabilities are not solved, but hidden from the eyes of society, results in the growth of a city considered illegal that is constantly curtailed and fought. Despite often being seen as the antithesis of an ideal city, the favela is a mode of urban organization that precedes the formation of cities, metropolises or urban centers, in other words, they are configured as an old form of housing organization for people “in a society dictated by scarcity”<sup>4</sup>.

Precarious access to basic goods intensifies the situations of vulnerability that can be perceived in these regions. The elements that make up the concept of vulnerability are complex, with several factors that influence the processes of social inequality, such as poverty, low level of education, lack of basic sanitation, low supply of public services (social assistance, education, health, leisure and culture) etc. Urban poverty is an economic and political category that, in addition to being measured and dimensioned, needs to be understood as a phenomenon that accompanies urbanization and the expansion of society<sup>5</sup>.

The favelas react to asymmetry in the distribution and concentration of goods, income and labor dispersed throughout the city. They are marked by the dispute for urban space, the friction caused between habitable territories with

those where the construction of housing is not allowed.

Living in the favela becomes a solution for several families who are unable to pay rent in the central regions or in neighborhoods with real estate value above their financial situation<sup>6</sup>. Pasternak and Ottaviano<sup>7</sup>, when analyzing data on Brazilian favelas in the 2010 Census, claim that the main reasons that fuel the systematic growth of favelas are economic crisis, rental prices, and the shortage of low-income housing for the poor who, in turn, seek an alternative to occupy urban space. The authors corroborate with the comments of Leeds and Cavalcanti, who reinforce the idea that the favela arises and remains the product of urban crisis. *The wage structure is a matter of national public policy and guidelines, only limitedly linked to the level of professional qualification of the workforce in general*<sup>6</sup> (p. 835).

The situations of poverty and vulnerability experienced by a large part of the world population, especially by the residents of the favelas on the outskirts of large urban centers, are complex challenges that need to be analyzed and overcome according to the reality of each territory, each people and each time, considering that the size of the city is directly proportional to the exposure of its ailments, that is, the larger and more populous, the more visible its needs become.

It is from the urban precariousness, and the neglect of public power to the needs of the communities that the images that reinforce the favela emerge as a place of need, of the unhealthy, space *to be filled by humanitarian sentiments, of the danger to be eradicated by the political strategies that made the favela a scapegoat for the city's problems*<sup>8</sup> (p.7-8).

Pasternak and D'Ottaviano<sup>7</sup> reported that, according to the 2010 Census, the population of São Paulo residing in favelas is predominantly younger compared to the rest of the municipality, where 22% of the total of São Paulo residents are up to 30 years old, against 28% of the residents in the favela. In other words, favelas are an important locus of youth.

Lopes and Malfitano<sup>9</sup> warn about the urgency of research that better explores the perceptions of youth. The outlook of the young person is sensitive to the various themes that cross his or her own daily life and territory, revealing issues related to education, leisure, culture, inequality, social vulnerability, health, among other aspects so important for contemporary times. Therefore, approaching the viewpoints of youth to get to know the different aspects that pass through the

daily life experienced in a favela can produce reflections on these territories from the perspective of those who live there.

Youth is a multidimensional phenomenon that must be considered based on its significance in different contexts of social life.

*We are facing an entirely open phenomenon, in constant constructive and destructive interaction with the sociocultural universe in which it is inserted, in a permanent relationship of love and hate, continuity and rupture and many other paradoxes proper to this phase of existence that, for us, adults, follows and will always follow as a reality that is at the same time strange and familiar*<sup>10</sup>.

Within this scenario, photography has emerged as an important documentary resource for this study, allowing the production of visual cartographies that may reveal aspects of the perceptions of young people living in a favela in the Eastern Zone of São Paulo.

The auto-photography category, as a research modality, allows expression of the subject's perceptions, externalizes worldviews that are printed on the recorded images, and can reveal complex social situations and elements that make up everyday life, factors that justify its use as a privileged methodological resource<sup>11</sup>. The ensemble of photographs recorded by a subject creates a kind of visual cartography.

The term cartography goes beyond geographic mapping, it expands the possibility of expression that accompanies the existence and the meanings produced by a given life situation and desires. According to Guatarri and Rolnik<sup>12</sup>, cartographies happen in the circulation through territories of life and affection, they are created in the friction between the internal world and the external spaces of the subjects.

Photography is a very complex professional and artistic field, where different concepts, variables, associations, techniques etc, are found. The triangulation established between the photographer, the photographic device and the environment crosses a network of meanings that range from contemplating the environment in search of a scene, to a text evoked by the photographer's attentive gaze that, when manipulating the device to capture the best angle, presses the shutter release, which results in the recording of the scene on a flat surface, the photograph<sup>13</sup>.

This study emerges with the intention of investigating the relationship that the six young people, residents of a favela in the Eastern Zone of the city of São Paulo, have established with the territory where they live. In this way, we sought to

broaden the voice of the viewpoints of the participants who had the mission of photographing the territory where they live, circulate, and belong.

For this, it is inevitable to ask questions on: How can we capture the eyes of youth? And if we give cameras to young people in a peripheral neighborhood, a place marked by different processes of social inequality, what would their eyes capture? What aspects would they point out in their own territory? How would they articulate territorial improvements and investments? It was based on these questions that this study was developed, and efforts were invested to capture the focus of young inhabitants of a favela in the periphery of São Paulo.

### Methodological pathway

This is a qualitative and exploratory study that used self-photography as a methodological resource, where six young people, aged between 15 and 17 years old, registered their view on the different relationships that constitute the space in which they live. The instruments analyzed in this study were the photographs taken by them and their interviews.

With multiple manners of recording aspects of daily life, photography explores the relationship of light and shadow in different environments, printing on paper a perspective of the world perceived by the photographer. *Every and any day-to-day gesture, no matter how common and repetitive, would gain a new aura, through photography. It was not just seeing reality, but perceiving it, reaching it, touching it*<sup>14</sup> (p. 26).

In the search for these captures, the researcher accessed the informants of the study and their respective guardians with the collaboration of the community leadership, a Community Health Agent living in the region. On the occasion, invitations were made upon presentation of the study and elucidation of recurring doubts. The readings of the terms of the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) and assent were held with the adolescents and their guardians, where the ethical aspects involved in the study were duly detailed. The guardians and participants kept copies of the signed documents.

Later, the disposable cameras were delivered, which had the capacity to record 28 photographs, accompanied with a practical explanation of their operation. Participants were free to make as many records as they wished, within this limit. There being no doubts about handling the camera, a period

of fifteen days was established so that they could explore the territory and record their images.

At the end of this period, the researcher went to the participants' homes to collect the camera, talk about amenities, possible complications, and arrange a date for an interview, with the developed photographs.

With the pictures in hand, the researcher met with each of the participants individually, in their respective homes to conduct a semi-structured interview that addressed the contexts and motivations for registering each photograph. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed through content analysis, as proposed by Bardin<sup>15</sup>. In this manner, we sought to identify the categories that emerged from the photographs and interviews.

In some cases, conducting the interviews became a challenge, as they were carried out in the participants' living space, where the passage, presence, and intervention of some family members were inevitable. Whenever possible, conducting the interview in more protected spaces, to reduce external interferences, was prioritized.

To ensure the anonymity of the participants, we decided to give them pseudonyms with the names of some streets in the region. Thus, this study presents the eyes of Fernão Mendes Pinto, Abaíra, Vuarana, Caiçara do Rio do Vento, Ajuana and Arauá.

## Results and discussion

The participants' photographic actions resulted in a collection of 85 photographs that were registered close to their homes, which in turn revealed spaces for circulation and belonging, public and private. The interviews, on the other hand, generated approximately 3 hours and 50 minutes of recording.

There was no consensus on how the camera followed the routes of each participant, however, some elements were repeated in the cartographies carried out, such as, for example: the organization of squares, streets and alleys, irritation with garbage, the landscape that mixed sky with the group of houses on the hillside, etc. In other words, however personalized the view of each young person was, there were always elements that were shared and recurring among them, respecting each other's perspective, as if together, they produced a panoramic photograph of the favela where they live.

Although similar elements portrayed in the images of the six young participants were observed, the Photographer-Camera-Environment triangulation was quite unique. Abaíra recorded images inside her own home and workplace; Fernão Mendes Pinto photographed landscapes that can be seen from his backyard and the church he attends; Vuarana registered images that, according to him, referred to his childhood and others related to the delicacies he found on the streets and sidewalks where he walked; Caiçara do Rio do Vento took her bicycle and photographed streets, squares and public social support services; Ajuana took her camera to school and took pictures with her friends, as well as photographing alleys and the steps of a square; and Arauá, also photographed her residential environment, showing different perspectives on the routes she takes in her daily life, going to her daily destinations. In this way, each participant represented his or her personal territory from the perspective of his or her own daily life.

The results presented in Table 1 give evidence that the disposable cameras mapped the participants' external world, motivated by their internal world (desires, fears, likes, and dislikes). As can be seen, the interviews with the shortest duration were those of Abaíra and Fernão Mendes Pinto, who also presented the smallest number of photographic records.

In Table 2, the young participants pointed out the weaknesses and potentialities that they perceive in the favela where they live. It is observed that many of the pictures taken by the participants denounce the fragility of actions by the State, both regarding the insufficiency of public facilities to support families in situations of social vulnerability, as well as the precariousness of a garbage collection and basic sanitation service that respond to the demands of the population, including the maintenance of squares, leisure and sports areas, and other collective spaces. On the other hand, the pictures that denoted the potential of the region were also observed, showing the dimensions of community actions in spaces of sociability and leisure, such as, green areas with fruit trees, squares for gatherings with friends and family, the '*Baile Funk*' and spaces for sports, such as soccer fields.

All the participants in the study, except for Vuarana, named the space where they live "Favela". Term also used to designate the research field of this study, represented by Abaíra's photograph (Figure 1).

Despite being placed in the same category, each favela has its own particularities that react to

**Chart 1.** Photographic records, duration of interviews and places photographed by the participants (n = 6).

Participants' pseudonym	Number of photographs	Length of interview	Photographed places
Fernão Mendes Pinto	8	13 min. 25 sec.	Own backyard; and church.
Abaíra	4	8 min. 46 sec.	Own house; workplace; and alley.
Vuearana	17	42 min. 28 sec.	Gym he goes to; streets; sidewalks; squares; soccer field; and school.
Ajuana	19	49 min. 20 sec.	School; streets; alleys; "stairway"; squares; path to basic health center; church; and own house.
Araújo	18	58 min. 39 sec.	Basic health center; own house; nearby streets; neighboring streets; and square.
Caiçara do Rio do Vento	19	38 min. 17 sec.	Sunrise; streets; square; sidewalks; neighborhood pizzeria; Reception Center; Reference Center for Social Assistance; and bicycle lane.

Source: Author's elaboration.

**Chart 2.** Potentials and weaknesses of the territory portrayed by the participants.

Participant	Strengths	Weaknesses
Araújo	Green spaces; activities at the basic health center; clean squares; solidarity of poor people; and graffiti.	Urban garbage; rats in the domestic environment; plundered squares; preconception; racism; and machismo.
Vuearana	Trees; squares for playing chess; gardens; soccer field; and the possibility of creating a memory with the place where you live.	Smoking; cigarette butts on the streets; garbage and rubble dumped on the sidewalk; and lack of care with the place where he lives.
Abaíra	Landscape seen from the bedroom (sky and favela); and baile funk.	Did not report any elements.
Ajuana	Squares revitalized by the community; the landscape seen from the second floor of the house (the sky and the hill); church; creative work at school; staircase painted with excerpts of poems; fruit trees in the squares; and favela organization and development.	Tangle of wires on the steps; school; rubbish in the alleys; post-election pamphlets tossed on the floor; and favela structure.
Caiçara do Rio do Vento	Bicycle lanes; pizzeria; green areas; parks and squares for leisure activities and sports; and cleanliness of the squares.	Insufficiency of public social support services (Social Assistance Reference Centers (SARC) and Reception Centers); lack of street signs; poor families; vacant lots; insufficiency of daycare centers; lack of sidewalks; lack of security for the cyclist; pollution of springs and streams; and inefficiency of the garbage collection service for the region.
Fernão Mendes Pinto	Church; soccer field; landscape seen from the yard; and workplace.	People swearing; fights; and loud music.

Source: Author's elaboration.

the physical, social, and environmental structure of the place. In other words, any generalization of these spaces restricts the possibilities of looking at unique aspects that arise in each territory.

This was noticed by Ajuana. The young woman reported on the heterogeneity of the favelas she knows, where each one has its own characteristics, which respond to the architecture of the



**Figura 1.** Image 1.

Source: photograph by Abaira.

place and the way of life of the people who live there. When talking about hers, she comments that she is proud of the local organization, represented in the way in which the community organizes itself to interact and modify shared spaces, either by easing the filth caused by the concentration of garbage, or by revitalizing the square and the soccer field, aspects that will be further developed below.

*It is like this, comparing it with others... Not other neighborhoods, but with other favelas that I went to, it's... I think it's more about the organization. (...) when I was small this hill here was all made of clay, it is... and now it has bushes, it has evolved a lot, I grew up and saw this evolution, it is very good to see that. And there are other places that look the same, you know? That remain the same, I think we the people there, in Sapolândia, it grew a lot, I like it a lot, there is the parking lot, where there are several cars, I think this is very cool, I like it a lot. I think I would multiply that part of the organization, of the advance [sic]. (Ajuana).*

Ajuana, who has always lived in the region, was able to observe the changes that occurred in her neighborhood. She followed the improvements in the different spaces adjacent to her house and those she visited, for this reason, she highlighted that the favela is in constant transformation. Despite noting the quality of the local organization and highlighting it as a positive aspect, her narratives (visual and oral) do not fail to show that both the precariousness of the architecture of the houses and the fragility of the urban cleaning system are important obstacles that hinder the development elements that, in her opinion, demand greater attention from the government.

The favela is more related to the idea of border than exclusion, *the subjects, inhabitants of that border space, are at the same time excluded from a socially dominant territory, sometimes in a perverse way, but in spaces between and in their innovative ways of survival and sociability*<sup>16</sup> (p. 299).

Leeds and Cavalcanti<sup>6</sup>, when criticizing the way in which some studies are conducted in these spaces, warn about the common misconception of denominating the favela as a social problem, claiming that such a statement is misleading and arbitrary. Although the participants used the term 'favela' to designate the space in which they live, none of them used the term 'favelado' to name their residents, which makes us think about how this term can be used in a pejorative manner. For this author, the use of the term 'favelado' is generally associated with the speeches of an elitist society and by some social scientists; he states that they are *ideological and very misleading categories, because they indicate a state of being and not a more or less temporary condition of life, resulting from external causes*<sup>6</sup> (p. 835).

#### **Community territory: collective care for sociability and leisure spaces**

The squares, green spaces, sports, and leisure spaces appeared in the visual and oral narratives of most participants, in which four participants highlighted the relevance of these spaces in the urban setting of the favela, giving a panoramic view of their importance for the community in the production of meetings, dialogues, physical activities, leisure, socializing etc.

Squares and urban green areas appear as spaces for circulation, places to be used, they can be occupied in different ways: picnics, and physical and leisure activities, as pointed out by Caiçara

do Rio do Vento (Figure 2), who, in turn, points out that the presence of trees in the squares beautifies the environment, contrasting with the rest of the city of São Paulo, always surrounded by great skyscrapers.

Araújo, a lover of greenery, reinforces this by telling us that the presence of trees makes these spaces more welcoming and pleasing, allowing refuge to the personal and social problems that she faces in her daily life.

*[talking about the squares] Where I can be alone, like ... yeah, be alone. Not having to look at a lot of things, watching things that happen at home, then I go out and stay there, but I must go back [sic]. (Araújo).*

It is in this context that the square gains different meanings in the lives of these young people and directly influences the affective look they have on their own territory. For Araújo and Caiçara, the squares gain other contours, they appear in their narratives as spaces for meetings, personal reflections, and refuge.

The square can also be a space for interventions that bring about important social changes. This perspective is convergent with the results of the study carried out by Silva, Oliveira and Malfitano<sup>17</sup>, who analyzed the role of this equipment as a mediator in the enterprise of territorial practices, enabling to *delineate social technologies that*

*favor democratization and the problematization of ways of coping with the situation of social vulnerability for subjects in situations of social vulnerability*<sup>17</sup>.

The maintenance of urban green areas is justified by their potential to positively influence the quality of life of the population, bringing about several benefits to its users. Bargo<sup>18</sup> highlights the importance of healthy green spaces for the control of air pollution, with a positive impact on the city's environmental protection, in addition to the direct effects on the mental and physical health of the population. There is also the production of sociability that is intermediated by the different community spaces.

Vuearana shows in his visual cartography, the presence of a soccer field that was built and renovated, the result of local community articulation. It is also in this space that Fernão Mendes Pinto and his colleagues go to play games, as well as several other residents from the region.

*Here is a field that they renovated, they did a lot of cool things, and on the side, there are still some ... some tables you know? That there is a chess game for people to play, it is very comfy there [sic]. (Vuearana).*

Ajuana made a series of six photographs (some of which are shown in figures 3 and 4) of a staircase that gives access to an environment



**Figura 2.** Image 2.

Source: photograph by Caiçara do Rio do Vento.

where the young woman meets with some friends to eat blackberries, acerolas and talk about life, revealing another space in which relationships of conviviality and leisure happen. The central aspect of these photographs is in the colors, in the words written on each step, and mainly in the fact that it was the result of community organization to revitalize that space.

Once again, Ajuana and Vuarana highlight the importance of social participation in maintaining and personalizing public spaces that are often overlooked, making them pleasant, welcoming, full of color and poetry, and capable of promoting and creating good gatherings. When poetry is painted on the gray concrete of a staircase, it becomes striking in the eyes of passers-by, more than steps that take someone from one place to another, the staircase is changed and can be admired, read, and contemplated. It draws the attention of young people to the point of arranging meetings between friends, providing moments of leisure and sociability.



**Figura 3.** Image 3.

Source: photograph by Ajuana.

*We start with this part here; there it is written: 'Have you been poetry today?'. Then we go down the stairs and in the left and right corner there are phrases like this, right? We go down and read, right, then when we go down all this and you look back, there is this ... Very cool. Whoever did this was very creative [sic]. (Ajuana).*

These photographs and comments reveal how the esthetic dimension of these spaces matter to young people, they serve as the expressive traits of their identities, synonymous with beauty. These photographs are also clippings of artistic presence in territories often lacking in cultural equipment and continued artistic programs.

However, the community's action to revitalize the square and the soccer field denounces the fragility of the State in the territory, both in the creation of leisure and sports spaces, as for the maintenance of those that already exist. The local population, when investing efforts to revitalize these spaces, claim their social importance, articulate knowledge and creative actions for their care, making them more attractive, inviting and welcoming.

For some participants in the study, the squares dialogue directly with their young universe, arousing curiosity and the will to stay. This language encourages the practice of gatherings in community and social spaces, contrary to what is perceived in forgotten and poorly lit squares, or those in poor conditions, which become places for garbage disposal, and the sale, use, and abuse of drugs, hindering other possibilities of exchange between users. On the contrary, they contribute to increasing exposure to certain risk situations for the young people who go there.

It is worth reiterating that the revitalization, transformation, and reform of public and community spaces comprises a series of strategies that reinforce the relations of sociability, leisure, and young people's rights to the city.

Ajuana and Arauá witnessed an important theme for a large part of the youth of the periphery, which is the recognition of "*pixação*", "*pixo*"<sup>b</sup>, as a youth manifestation, esthetic and identity production, often made as a form of protest, in opposition to the government, but in which they also show themselves because of social mobilization for the esthetic modification of space.

*A good thing about us in the favela, on almost every wall there is pixação and it's always ... it's never a phrase or anything like that, it's always the person's name, here I think it says "Caique", always a signature, "Caio" down here, always signed by people [sic]. (Ajuana).*



**Figura 4.** Image 4.

Source: photograph by Ajuana.

*When we talk about pixação it is... I at least think a lot: "Ah! Revolution, ah! Anarchism" things related to that, you know, or slogans against the government [sic]. (Araújo).*

This aspect observed by the young women corroborates the ethnographic study conducted by Pereira<sup>19</sup>, whose research reveals the relationships that young people build from *pixação* (Figure 5). The author states that studies on this activity have the capacity to reveal different dynamics built by young people from the periphery with urban centers<sup>19</sup>.

*Pixação* is a youthful manifestation of transgressive nature, closely related to hip-hop culture. The *pixadores* of the city of São Paulo are, in their great majority, young residents of the periphery that go to the center of the city, and mediated by the activity of *pixação*, create networks of sociability<sup>19,20</sup>. As the young women portrayed in their photographs, *pixações* are also present in the walls of the alleys of the favela in which they live, resizing the esthetics of the place.

Another manifestation related to hip-hop that appears in the study is funk. During an interview with Abaíra, her aunt joins the conversation to talk about the *Baile Funk* near her home, she holds it as a space for sociability and the construction of the young woman's identity.

*Are the things you do right here? Only your workplace is a little more distant? (Interviewer)*

*That's right. (Abaíra)*

*And the funk here in the neighborhood. (Aunt)*

*Do you like the funk here in the neighborhood? (Interviewer)*

*I like it (laughs). (Abaíra)*

*Does it always happen? (Interviewer)*

*Every weekend. It's close to here, do you know the bus stop here? It's close. (Abaíra)*

*Baile Funk* is a typical urban phenomenon in favelas and peripheries, preferably taking place on easily accessible streets or squares<sup>21</sup>. It is the way that the residents use to make use of their own territory as a space for leisure, sociability, and entertainment. *The main use of the city, that is, of the streets and squares, of buildings and monuments, is the Festa (which consumes unproductively, with no other advantage than pleasure and prestige, enormous wealth in objects and money)*<sup>22</sup> (p. 12).

Dayrell<sup>23</sup> investigated the meanings that young people from the periphery addressed to the experience with musical groups linked to the styles of rap and funk. The author sought to deconstruct the image imposed on young people from the periphery and residents of the favela, who are constantly associated with violence and



**Figura 5.** Image 5.

Source: photograph by Ajuana.

marginality, which shows the social disqualification of everything that this youth produces. Dayrell<sup>23</sup> highlights that the existence of an effervescent cultural production led by young people produces groups that facilitate experiences of collectivity and sociability, structured to produce subjectivity in the lives of subjects and spaces.

Coelho<sup>21</sup> analyzed some photographs taken inside cultural practices experienced by young people living in the suburbs and favelas of Rio de Janeiro and reported that the arrangement of practices found in the periphery (*pixação*, *baile funk*, associations of fans and soccer games) involved a high flow of young people and assisted in the production of spaces for sociability.

The strengthening of relationships with the territory goes beyond the search for better job opportunities, which sustains that there are experiences produced in and with the territory that directly affect the quality of life of the community. Relationships with the territory are tightened and deepened where the search for spaces of identity is put into play, as is the case with the community reform of a square, a soccer field; the gatherings of *pixadores*, and *bailes funk* are as-

pects that make up the daily lives of these young people, identity scenarios that facilitate the expansion of their sociability networks, assisting in the demarcation of their identity vis-à-vis the territory in which they live.

*...the world of culture appears as a privileged space for the practices, representations, symbols and rituals in which young people seek to demarcate a youthful identity. Away from the eyes of parents, teachers or bosses, they assume a role of protagonists, acting in some way on their environment, building a determined look on themselves and on the world around them.*<sup>23</sup> (p. 119).

### Urban cleaning

The questions about urban cleaning, the pollution of springs and rivers and the importance of an effective domestic waste collection system were widely discussed and photographed by some participants: Arauá photographed some garbage bags by the wall; Caiçara do Rio do Vento chose to show the pollution of a stream that runs next to the square that she goes to; Vuarana recorded the accumulation of rubble next

to the soccer field; and Ajuana photographed the garbage that is in the alleys, and on the staircase where she passes.

During the interviews with the participants, when discussing this aspect, they point out that this social behavior is the result of the fragility of the urban cleaning service, which makes access to collection in some points of the neighborhood difficult, causing the population to adopt the habit of concentrating household waste in specific places. Arauá recognizes that the presence of rats in her home is also due to the accumulation of garbage in the surrounding area. In her photograph, she wanted to show *all the garbage you see around here* [sic] (Figure 6).

Caiçara do Rio do Vento, in her narratives, states that it is the State's responsibility to organize an effective garbage collection network that fits the needs of the population, which does not nullify the duties and responsibilities of the community in relation to the garbage they produce and the places where they discard it, such aspects were also evidenced in her photographs.

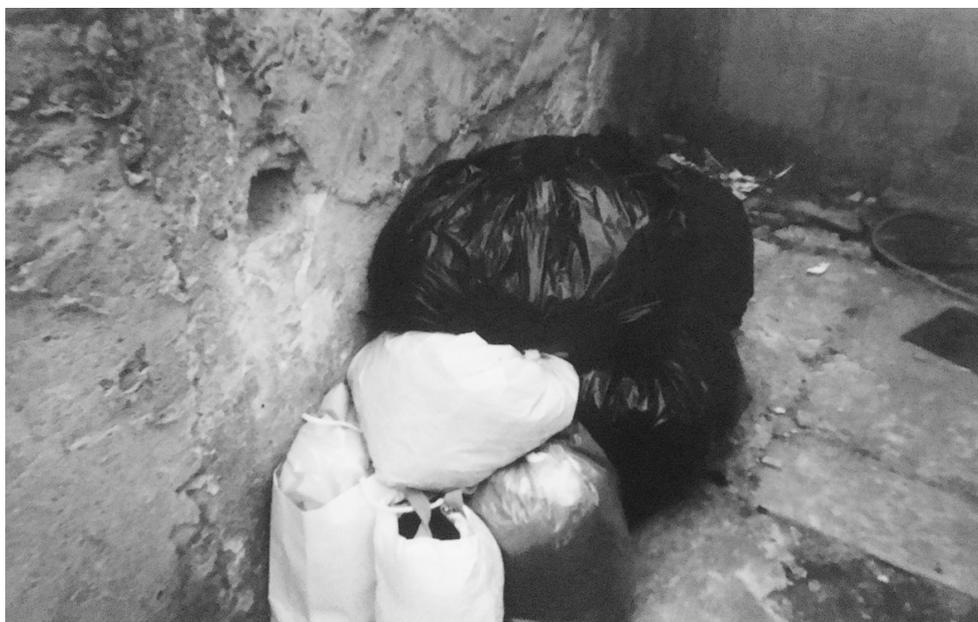
The presence of garbage is not a result of the poverty of the families who live there, but a prod-

uct of a series of factors related to the social behavior of the population associated with the fragility of an efficient garbage collection network.

In contrast to squares and green spaces, Caiçara do Rio do Vento's photographs (Figure 7) warn of the fragility of the structure of the local sewage network; raw sewage is often dumped into local springs and streams, revealing the need for a basic sanitation policy for the region. The young woman asks for more government attention in relation to cleaning up the area, and the springs and streams that go through the region.

Themes such as environmental protection have been widely discussed around the world, an important and necessary issue for the sustainable and harmonious development of a city. Favelas often have precarious aspects of basic sanitation; however, this factor becomes a social justification that, in addition to others, has "legitimized" the removal of the favelas.

When discussing the relationships built with the spaces, we are referring to how young people are affected by them, how they identify themselves, or not, with the elements present in their territory and how they can be agents of change,



**Figura 6.** Image 6.

Source: photograph by Arauá.



**Figura 7.** Image 7.

Source: photograph by Caiçara do Rio do Vento.

acting collectively in the development of actions that benefit the neighborhood where they live. This is how a square, the soccer field, *pixações* or the *baile funk* are not limited to what you can see. There is a creative production of and in spaces that, in turn, are filled with physical, leisure, cultural, and social activities, among others that are not mapped.

### **Final considerations**

The exercise of description and analysis undertaken in this paper highlights, from the young people's point of view, different vectors that are in movement between the spaces and the social interactions present in the favela, where its residents attribute uses, practices, and meanings to them.

The visual cartographies of the participants revealed the favela as a fertile space, where community actions are structuring in the lives of the subjects and the territory. We find its expression in the different senses that were produced with the creation, and constant improvement of the practices and spaces of leisure, sport, sociability,

culture, and entertainment. The transformations felt by young people give signs that transcend the reading of the favela as a dormitory space; on the contrary, it reveals a territory with a complex social fabric, a pulsating space that is shared, lived, and practiced by those who live there.

From the point of view of the methodological approach put into practice in this study, the photographic cameras showed themselves as instruments that produced other possibilities to analyze the youthful view on their own territory. A versatile and thought-provoking element that motivated most of these young participants, revealing its important impact as a methodological resource in qualitative research, taking photography as an artistic expression.

Visual cartographies and interviews reinforce the extent to which young people can be active actors in the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies for youth aimed at the social development of the periphery, reinforcing the importance of dialogue with the subjects, daily life, and the reality of the different territories. For this, there is an urgent need to recognize the power of life that circulates in the streets and alleys of the favelas, without disregarding or un-

derestimating the deleterious effects caused by inequality, social vulnerability, poverty, and violence that also exist, but it is in the power that the possibilities of transformation meet.

### **Collaborations**

All authors had a substantial contribution in this study, regarding the design of the study, analysis, writing and critical review of the project, certifying that they participated sufficiently in the study to make their responsibility for content public.

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