— THE BORN-AGAIN FAVELA: The Urban Informality of Pentecostalism in Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, the metropolitan spaces of Brazil have seen a significant upsurge of the Christian Pentecostal movement, which today dominates the religious landscape of the favelas. In Rio de Janeiro, the rise of Pentecostalism coincided with the establishment of drug gangs as actors controlling favela territories. Based on an ethnographic field study conducted in a favela complex in the city's Zona Norte, this article examines the role and significance of the Pentecostal churches in Rio's favelas, both in everyday urban life and in the ways these areas are governed. One of my focal points of analysis is the increasing entanglement of actors in the drug industry and church actors. The article posits that the Pentecostal churches' role and significance, their institutional shape and their followers' practices are inextricably intertwined with the favela's social, spatial and political structural patterns. It shows the ways in which the evolving Pentecostal movement has permeated all aspects of the favela's informal way of urban life and government and has produced a new urban religious configuration in which the Pentecostal movement and the favela are intertwined and transform each other.

Introduction

Nezar AlSayyad and Ananya Roy (2006) employ the concept of 'medieval modernity' in their attempt to capture the current relationship between citizenship and urbanism. They believe that 'modern forms of national citizenship might be giving way to a fractal and splintered territorialization of citizenship in medieval enclaves' (*ibid.*: 17). As examples they mention the 'gated enclave', the 'regulated squatter settlement' and the 'camp', which all have in common that they constitute 'states of exception' (*ibid.*: 13). The authors argue that in many regulated squatter settlements, fundamentalist religious groups have emerged as pivotal social forces and 'carve up the city into different orders of citizenship, inaugurating religious regimes of urban rule and urban regimes of religious rule' (*ibid.*: 11). In a later text, AlSayyad (2011) asks whether a 'fundamentalist city' might be evolving in which radical religious groups constitute themselves as dominant actors, forcing the inhabitants to subject themselves to their religious codes in urban everyday life (see Lanz and Oosterbaan, 2016, this issue).

Based on an ethnographic field study conducted in four favelas located within the Complexo de Manguinhos, this article examines the role and significance of the Pentecostal churches in Rio de Janeiro's regulated squatter settlements, and their effect both on urban everyday life and on the ways in which these settlements are governed. Its focal point of analysis is the increasingly visible entanglement of actors in the drug industry and church actors.

First, I argue that the concept of medieval modernity, although it does constitute a useful theoretical framework for the analysis of the favela, is not sufficiently nuanced to fully do it justice as an urban-religious configuration. Consequently, after an initial discussion of the various modes of governing the favela as well as the favela's religious transformation, I will use other urban-studies approaches. Besides the urban-religious configurations approach (Lanz, 2014a; Lanz and Oosterbaan, this issue), these are the concept of informality and the governmentality approach. Secondly, I use four favelas as examples to show that conversion to Pentecostalism and its religious practices do not equate to establishing a religious urban 'fiefdom' (AlSayyad and Roy, 2006) but serve to

achieve quite the opposite. I argue that they may be understood as attempts to transcend the state of exception and the social markers connected with it.

The state, the drug industry and autonomous organizational structures: governing the favela

The institutions of the modern city have always dealt with the irregular favelas—which today are home to approximately 23% of Rio's 6.32 million inhabitants (IPP, 2012)—through stigmatizing discourses, and by their actions have made clear that these areas are regarded not as legitimate parts of the city but as alien. Historically, the city has responded to the favelas through two complementary governing techniques that, according to Bauman (1997: 16 *et seq*.), are characteristic of 'a war of attrition against the strangers and the strange' in the modern state: the 'strategy of assimilation' and the 'strategy of exclusion'.

From the 1940s onwards, institutions of the state and the Catholic Church enacted assimilation strategies in the form of authoritarian re-education programmes that sought to eliminate all differences through the absorption of favela residents (who traditionally had to settle their internal affairs autonomously outside of civil law) but without granting them full civil rights (Lanz, 2004). The state and the church established a clientelism dating back to colonial times, whose underlying principles exist to this day. Infrastructures were created only in certain favelas, in an informal manner. Residents of other favelas were forcibly evicted. As favelas became officially recognized as part of the city in the early 1990s, this strategy of assimilation was transformed into an approach of 'government through community' (Rose, 1996: 332) that, instead of relying on discipline as a means of assimilation, called on community actors to govern their own communities. The favela's right to urbanization was enacted through huge programmes such as Favela-Bairro, which used pre-existing clientelistic structures to involve residents' associations that had established essential infrastructure through collective self-help efforts and whose presidents were the informal mayors of the favelas in state programmes (Machado da Silva, 2002). As these presidents were increasingly being installed by drug lords, gangs became secret partners in the implementation of urbanization schemes. This is also true for the PAC programme (Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento or Growth Acceleration Programme), which, since 2007, has invested approximately 160 million US dollars in housing and urban infrastructures in the Complexo de Manguinhos (see the section 'The born-again favela', in this article).

The strategy of exclusion (Bauman, 1997), in turn, aimed at annihilating the 'other', expresses itself in the state of exception the favela residents have always been subject to. Up to the 1980s, it manifested itself in recurring attempts to physically erase the favelas. Although the right to urbanization was officially granted to residents in the early 1990s, the strategy of exclusion has survived, predominantly under the guise of lethal police tactics in the 'war on drugs'. Since then, everyday life in the favelas has been dominated by a reign of violence enacted by the drug complex (that is, not only by the drug gangs but also by the police forces and any others involved in the violent regime of the drug economy). While local drug bosses ruled the favelas, police institutions were entangled in structures of violence that employed eliminatory governing techniques and were backed by political forces (*cf*. Lanz, 2012). As a result, between 2007 and June 2013, according to official figures, 5,412 people were killed in Rio by members of the police force, the majority of them black male youths in the favelas (Rio de Paz, 2013). In a large number of favelas, the past decade also saw the emergence of illegal militias (recruited from the ranks of armed state employees) who employ murderous vigilante justice to drive out the drug gangs and take over their businesses. The reign of fear created by this violence has led to a dramatic decrease in community organizations—with the notable exception of religious groups (Perlman, 2010: 194 *et seq*.). According

to Machado da Silva (2008: 22), the favela is today marked by a 'violent sociability' that expresses itself through techniques of subjugation that are based on threats of violence. The introduction of 'pacifying police units' (UPPs) in about one hundred favelas since 2009 constituted a significant change in strategy in the 'war on drugs'. This security policy, implemented in the course of the city's preparation for the Soccer World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016, entails special military units driving the ruling drug gangs out of selected favelas, followed by the establishment of permanent UPP units. The underlying rationale for this is the city's attempt to demonstrate its ability to execute mega-events without a hitch, and the favelas to be 'pacified' are selected according to the degree of threat they pose to the city's international image (*cf*. Machado da Silva, 2010).[1]

Finally, there are a few points that are essential to my line of argumentation: since its historical beginnings, the favela has been subjected to a state of exception implemented by a regime that would always, in the last resort, turn to random violence. To this day, ongoing processes of democratization, juridification and urbanization are accompanied by the arbitrarily violent rule of the police forces, drug cartels and militias. In addition, the relationship between the state and the favelas is still dominated by a clientelism exercised by corrupt authorities. Both these points confirm the status of the favela as a regulated squatter settlement that is shaped by 'multiple and competing sovereignties', by 'fiefdoms of regulation or zones of "no-law"' (AlSayyad and Roy, 2006: 1).

The dramatic transformation of the religious: Pentecostals in the city and the favela

The favelas of Brazil's metropolises play a central role in the dramatic transformation of the religious sphere in the country, which accounts for the proportion of evangelical Christians in the country rising from 6.6% in 1980 to 22.2% in 2010 (IBGE, 2012). In the first decade of the twenty-first century alone, the proportion of Catholics in Rio, today the least Catholic city in Brazil, has shrunk from 61.2% to 51.2% of the population (IPP, 2013). The distribution of these groups is extremely uneven, both across urban space and across social groups: while about two thirds of the population of the prosperous urban areas remain Catholic, the poorer peripheral areas are home to almost as many evangelicals as Catholics. With regard to social groups, the picture is equally clear: the lower the income, level of formal education and age, the higher the rate of membership in an evangelical church (*ibid*.).

The growth of the evangelical churches and, within them, the (neo-)Pentecostal churches is not limited to urban territories of poverty. Still, this is undoubtedly where these churches recruit a large proportion of their converts (*cf*. Oosterbaan, 2006; Vital da Cunha, 2009a; 2009b; Birman, 2011). The Pentecostal movement, which reached Brazil as early as 1910, remained more or less invisible until the 1980s, existing in the shadow of a national identity that had been tied to a popular Catholicism since colonial times. The boom of neo-Pentecostalism occurred 'after the authoritarian modernization of the country ... when over two thirds of the population are urbanized, the economic "miracle" is over and the "lost decade" of the 1980s is beginning. The wave starts in Greater Rio, economically decadent and beset by violence, gambling mafias and populist politics' (Freston, 1994: 539). To the characteristics of the Pentecostal movement—the break with the worldly order, the great importance of the Holy Spirit, the speaking in tongues, the miracle healings, and the idea of demons and the devil as destructive forces (*cf*. Oosterbaan, 2006)—neo-Pentecostalism added the prosperity gospel and extensive use

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1   I will not go deeper into a discussion of the UPP strategy because it was only implemented in the favelas discussed here after my research had been completed and hence is not relevant to the line of argumentation put forward here.

of the media. Its flagship is the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (IURD), which was founded in Rio in 1977 and today operates on a global scale.

The success of Pentecostalism in the favelas cannot be explained by a single simple paradigm. The movement has a high degree of inner diversity and complex social and symbolic structures that can be extremely appealing. Its success is connected in complex ways with the subordinate position the favela occupies within the city and Brazil's national identity, with the violent rule of the drug complex, and with the increasing inability of the Catholic Church to address residents' needs. After the Vatican's suppression of liberation theology, the Catholic Church withdrew from many poor neighbourhoods and was no longer available to residents in their everyday struggles. The pastors of the Pentecostal churches, by contrast, mostly lived in the favelas with their families, and quite a few of them had been addicts or criminals themselves before their conversion. They were a living testament to the Pentecostal discourse, according to which conversion enables a person to free themselves through God-given miracles from the suffering that pervades everyday life in the favela and to begin a new life marked by a '*status aparte*' (Oosterbaan, 2009: 63).

Since these pastors engaged intensely with the increasing urban violence, they were ascribed the power 'to interrupt the flow of violence utilizing two weapons: the rituals of exorcism and the word of God' (Birman and Leite, 2000: 281). Alba Zaluar (1998) has pointed out that the Pentecostal churches' appeal derives from the fact that their religious programme is based on the cleansing catharsis of an awakening experience and on a sharp distinction between good and evil, thus showing favela residents, entangled as they are in a seemingly inextricable web of corruption and violence, a way towards legitimate order. The notion and ethics of war occupy central place—a war that takes the guise of both the government's war on drugs and the Pentecostals' 'spiritual war' in the sense of a cosmic battle between good and evil (Birman, 2011: 191). In the face of the violence the drug complex has been creating since the 1980s, the Pentecostal movement has succeeded in 'seiz[ing] and adopt[ing] the images and narratives of urban violence and transform[ing] the dichotomy of "the good" versus "the bad" into the Pentecostal dualism of "God" versus the "devil"' (Oosterbaan, 2005: 361). In this manner, the favela was recast as a paradigmatic space, a battlefield in which this war played out.

The Pentecostal movement, too, constructs drug gang members as evil incarnate. But in contrast to state and police, it does not seek to physically eliminate them as enemies but to save them by 'guiding them to Jesus'. Juvenile gang members, many of them under the influence of mothers who are themselves Pentecostals, see these churches as potential allies who hold open the possibility of a conversion that could save them from a constantly looming violent death. What can be observed here is the emergence of a new social figure: the evangelical drug trafficker (*cf.* Vital da Cunha, 2009a; 2009b) who prays to God as a repentant sinner, envisioning his conversion at a later time. 'The Pentecostal ethics that valorize the war against the "enemy" and the importance of financial matters touted by evangelicals who adhere to the Prosperity Gospel fits perfectly with the drug dealer's ethics: war, enemy, money!' (Vital da Cunha, 2009a: 257).

The main conclusion to be drawn from previous studies on the transformation of the religious sphere in Rio is that 'in terms of either material or spiritual benefits, in terms of psychological or cultural conflicts, Pentecostalism offers doctrines and practices that people engage with to be able to take matters into their own hands' (Oosterbaan, 2006: 9). Still, access to empowerment is tied to strict moral norms and rules of conduct that the adherents have to submit to. The question is to what extent the movement's success in the favela is transforming both the Pentecostal churches and the favela itself.

Appropriate approaches to an analysis of the born-again favela

In the subsections that follow I discuss further urban studies concepts that can be usefully employed to analyse the modes of interaction between religion and the favela. Generally speaking, it is necessary to overcome the attitude, prevalent in urban studies, that religion as a phenomenon is external or even alien to urban life. Religion as a 'practice of mediation' (Meyer, 2009: 11) between the idea and experience of the supernatural and everyday life must be investigated as an integral part of the material, social and symbolic production of urbanity and integrated into urban theory (Kong, 2001). Only in this way will it be possible to understand the ways in which religion and the city mutually influence each other, to what extent the city creates specific forms of religiosity, and how religious programmes and practices inscribe themselves into and transform everyday urban life.

–   Analysing the 'born-again favela' as an urban-religious configuration

Within the specific urban environment of the favela, religion does not manifest itself as a unidirectional 'incorporation', but as manifold interactions and references, as dynamic processes of appropriation and borrowing. As Lanz und Oosterbaan explain in the introduction to this symposium, analysis of these interactions requires a conceptual framework that has the capacity to do justice to the diversities, temporalities and ambiguities in the connection between city and religion. Such an approach must capture the dynamic constellations that evolve out of diverse encounters between the urban and the religious as specific 'urban-religious configurations', understood as an 'assemblage of material, social, symbolic, and sensual spaces, processes, practices, and experiences in which the religious and the urban are interwoven and mutually produce, influence, and transform each other' (Lanz, 2014a: 30). Therefore, the sole unifying principle behind these modes of interaction is that of 'co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a "sympathy"' (McFarlane, 2011: 653).

In the introduction to this symposium, Lanz and Oosterbaan show how the 'urban-religious configurations approach' is underpinned by the concepts of 'worlding' and 'assemblage'. The concept of assemblage makes it possible to research the city in its makeup as a multiple, dynamic, contingent entity encompassing a specific nexus of actors, practices, ideas, imaginations, institutions and materialities that is 'not reducible to a single logic' (Collier and Ong, 2005: 12). With regard to the 'born-again favela', this permits an analysis of the complex interactions between all factors that converge within the urban space of the favela without having to force them into a linear causal relationship. Hence, this analysis focuses on a dense description of the agency apparent in everyday urban life and on the interlaced practices, processes and materialities that shape the forms of entanglement of favela and religion. Conceiving the 'born-again favela' as an urban-religious configuration thus makes it possible to analyse the connections 'between the possible—the unstable flows of materials and substances—and the prescribed—the imposition of functional stable structures' (Simone, 2011: 357) that mark the relationship between religion and favela.

Integrating the 'worlding' concept—based on Ong und Roy (2011; see also McCann *et al*., 2013)—into the urban-religious configurations approach is also important in the analysis of the born-again favela in that worlding is understood here 'as situated everyday practices ... that creatively imagine and shape alternative social visions and configurations—that is, "worlds"' (Ong, 2011: 12). In this article, it refers to the aspirations and imaginations rooted in religion that seek to create alternative urban worlds beyond the favela in its material and social manifestation. In addition, worlding refers to reaching out to the global plane: although the 'Pentecostalization' process in the favelas is strongly marked by local elements, worlding here also manifests itself as the identification with the global Pentecostal movement. An analysis of the process

by which Pentecostalism has taken root in the favela reveals it as a global form that is 'able to assimilate [itself] to new environments, to code heterogeneous contexts and objects' (Collier and Ong, 2005: 11; see also Lanz and Oosterbaan, this issue).

At the heart of my argument is the observation that this understanding of world-ing within the urban-religious configurations approach removes the necessity of inter-preting the spread of a religious movement in the city in a functionalist manner as a consequence of external social constraints and an 'alien', global phenomenon implanted into a local context. Rather, it can be examined as a social practice entrenched in every-day urban life that strives to create, with the help of 'promiscuous borrowings, shameless juxtapositions, and strategic enrolments of disparate ideas, actors and practices' (Ong, 2011: 23), an alternative world beyond the physical city.

Generally speaking, then, the urban-religious configurations approach devel-oped in the introduction to this symposium lends itself to an analysis of the ways in which Pentecostalism has taken root in the favela. Nevertheless, as I shall argue, only by additionally employing the concepts of informality and governmentality is it possible to make visible the specific connections between urban everyday practices, spatial materiality and modes of governance that shape the mutually constitutive relations between the urban and the religious in the favela.

–   Analysing the informality of favela Pentecostalism

The concept of informality allows for a closer examination of the proposition that the actual patterns of governance employed by the Pentecostal churches—which in the favela depart significantly from their strategic programme of governance—reflect the character of this type of urban space as it evolved over time, marked by structures and practices of informality.

Early versions of the concept of informality, dating from the 1970s, applied the term to economies unregulated by the state and, later, to urbanization processes in cities of the global South. Current versions use the term to denote forms of economy, everyday life, governance and urbanization in which irregular activities are closely intertwined with regular structures and state activity (for an overview, see AlSayyad, 2004; McFarlane and Waibel, 2012; Lanz, 2014b). In my own analysis of the 'born-again favela', I make use of a combination of several recent approaches to urban informality.

These are, first, the approaches of Simone (2004) and Bayat (2004), which allow an analysis of the ways in which the informal urban way of life (AlSayyad, 2004) in the favela—understood as a mode of subjectivity and everyday patterns of action that engender new forms of urban citizenry or politics—merges with inhabitants' religious practices. The resources, networks, materialities and organizational structures of the favela's Pentecostal churches are testament to the practices—understood by Simone (2004) as informality—by which the inhabitants of cities with insufficient resources make use of all means available to them to generate those resources themselves. As mentioned in the previous section, the primary motivation for Pentecostal religious practices is to create, from a position of urban marginality, an alternative urban world. Bayat (2004: 90) calls forms of self-governance by which the 'urban informals' not only attempt to secure their survival but, beyond that, strive to live a life of dignity, the 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary'. This encompasses all kinds of struggles and activities that are conducive to securing survival in urban marginality and to gaining positions that make it possible to get ahead in society. In my analysis below I show that this amalgamation of practices is not only found in activities aimed at improving the favela inhabitants' social position but also in their religiously motivated activities. Here, too, Bayat's observation holds true: that sheer necessity, but also the desire for a life with dignity, legitimizes even illegal activities as morally just, as long as they are conducted at the expense of the state or those in power. Essentially, such 'quiet encroachment' aims at 'the redistribution of social goods and opportunities' and the attainment of

'autonomy, both cultural and political, from the regulations, institutions and discipline imposed by the state' (*ibid.*).

Secondly, in order to be able to examine not only the significance of the informal urban way of life in my analysis of the 'born-again favela' but also the role of the state, I make use of the informality concept employed by Ananya Roy (2009). As I have shown above, the state actively produces constellations of informality through selective modes of governance and, moreover, it is in many respects itself an informal actor. Both these modes of state activity interact with the favelas' Pentecostal churches. The police force's arbitrary rule of violence and the corrupt implementation of urbanization programmes in clandestine collaboration with criminal gangs produce a sense of uncertainty in favela residents that the Pentecostal churches respond to through a clear moral distinction between good and evil. As Roy (2009) rightly argued, urban informality is thus not limited to the irregular or 'insurgent' (Holston, 2008) practices of the marginalized, nor do these practices necessarily produce a just city. The situation in the favelas confirms Roy's view that informality is not merely a grassroots phenomenon but a power relation: the state actively sets in motion informal urbanization processes through selective regulatory mechanisms that come out of deliberate policy decisions, and to the extent that it acts as an 'informalized entity' itself, the formal and the legal are fiction rather than the norm (Roy, 2009: 84).

By way of conclusion, the dual meaning of informality used here—suspended between the urban practices of marginalized people and a power relationship produced by the state—is useful for gaining an understanding of the modes of urban-religious interaction in the favela. I posit that, in the shadow of arbitrary rule by state apparatuses that act as violent and corrupt informalized entities, a self-made urban religion is unfolding that reflects the favela's self-made urbanism.

–   Analysing religious and worldly governmentality in the favela

In my analysis of the interaction between churches as social actors and the favela as a social space, between believers and their religious communities, I draw on studies on governmentality that have come out of two fields: urban studies (for example, Rose, 1996; Blakely, 2010; Lanz, 2013a; Rosol, 2013) and, for the analysis of modes of governance in Pentecostal communities, religious studies (Carrette, 2000; Marshall, 2009; Lanz and Oosterbaan, this issue). In particular, I make reference to studies that employ the governmentality approach in their investigation of the modes of governing the favela (Lanz, 2012) and, within that, the role of churches (Garmany, 2009; 2010). These studies show that the concept of governmentality is capable of analytically capturing two intertwined processes that play out within the 'born-again favela'.

First, any attempt at answering the question of how the favela is governed and what role religion plays in this structure has to take into account its historical development as an urban space self-governed by its inhabitants, whose relationship with state intervention has been marked by perpetual conflict. The broad understanding of the term government in the governmentality approach allows an analysis of the resulting state of tension between collective as well as individual self-government and the role of key social actors in it (notably residents' associations, criminal gangs and religious congregations) on the one side and the state's selective presence on the other. 'Governing' here is not limited to the political system but 'refers to numerous and different forms of action and fields of practice which aim in varied ways at the guidance, control, direction of individuals and groups and equally enclose forms of governing the self as techniques of governing others' (Lemke *et al.*, 2000: 10). Since the governmentality approach also takes modes of subjectivation and everyday practices into account, it enables a multi-perspective analysis of the specific forms of urban governance in the favela. It allows us to throw into relief how its inhabitants have developed, in interaction with the technologies of domination to which they have been exposed historically and the

technologies of the self that enable them to act as subjects with autonomy over their day-to-day lives, in spite of being subject to a state of exception (Lanz, 2012).

Secondly, with regard to the role of religion as a creator of social order in everyday life in the favela, the concept of governmentality facilitates an examination of how religious 'government programs inscribe themselves into their subjects and take effect' (Lanz, 2013a: 1306). Far from suppressing subjectivity, governmentality—understood by Michel Foucault (2005: 116) as the 'totality of procedures, techniques, methods that constitute the way people rule one another'—promotes technologies of the self that can be tied to the objectives of those doing the governing. It is characterized not by 'the power to rule' but by 'the power to affect, like the relationship between priest and congregation, producing a certain set of behaviors within members of the flock' (Garmany, 2010: 910). Applied to the Pentecostal movement, the concept of governmentality enables us to understand religious communities as programmes of conversion and redemption and as technologies of governance with which to collectively implement these programmes and anchor them in the individual (*cf.* Marshall, 2009). This conceptual underpinning makes it possible to analyse the religious rituals that offer, for instance, 'rebirth' in terms of technologies of governance. This also applies to the code of conduct the believers are expected to adhere to on a daily basis, which contains clear instructions concerning family life, gender roles, sexual orientation and consumer behaviour. In the engagement with these technologies of governance that the churches expose potential converts to, each individual's conversion becomes, first and foremost, a matter of self-governance (Lanz, 2014a).

One model for the investigation of such processes is Jeff Garmany's (2010: 908) study on 'religion and governmentality', also conducted in a favela. His analysis of the creation of social order by local churches illustrates how 'religion and churches also produce and maintain the knowledges, truths, and social order associated with governmentality and self-regulated governance'. Lanz and Oosterbaan (this issue), in turn, employ the governmentality approach in their development of the concept of 'entrepreneurial religion', which casts Pentecostal communities as 'paradigmatic neoliberal forms of organization'. Their theory, according to which these religious organizations not only further 'their adherents' entrepreneurial self-government' but also, by way of their technologies of governance (codes of conduct, rituals, and so on), contribute to the maximization of security, applies—as I will show—particularly to the favela's born-again churches. I argue that the urban-religious technologies of self-governance in the favela produce entrepreneurial forms of religious practice in that they are closely tied to the believers' economic activities, their social aspirations and even their goal of achieving prosperity by their own efforts.

The born-again favela

The favelas examined here are located in the metropolis of Rio's Zona Norte, associated in public discourse with poverty. Located in an area marked by industrial ruins, plain residential neighbourhoods, large favela complexes and important traffic arteries, these four merged communities are part of the fifteen favelas and the approximately 31,500 inhabitants of the Complexo de Manguinhos,[2] whose Human Development Index score is one of the lowest in Rio (Secretaria, 2010). Two of the four favelas I focus on have their origin in a public housing estate but grew enormously in density since the 1990s through self-made housing and the irregular occupation of wasteland. The two other favelas emerged with the organized occupation of adjoining wasteland areas in the 1990s and 2000s and were extremely makeshift in character: shacks put together from found materials combined with basic brick buildings formed a

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2   In order to protect interviewees and all other actors quoted in this article, I have changed or omitted personal names as well as the names of particular favelas.

labyrinthine structure with no sewerage system. By 2012, these two favelas had been razed in the context of the PAC urbanization programme. Part of the area is now occupied by a public housing settlement for former shack occupants, other parts are still vacant.

For a long time, the four favelas were ruled by the Comando Vermelho, Rio's oldest drug cartel. In addition, they were subjected to recurring raids by military police forces which, acting as informal entities, robbed inhabitants and shot and killed numerous youths.[3] Vis-à-vis the state, the favelas were represented by residents' associations. Their presidents, however, were taking their orders from the drug lord ruling the four favelas, who considered himself in charge beyond his business interests. This entailed dispensing 'justice' and enforcing his 'verdicts', which were in keeping with his personal understanding of order and justice and included executions (personal interview, 18 May 2010).

Within the particular urban-religious configuration examined here, the PAC-initiated urbanization project, which had been developed without any involvement by favela residents, occupies a pivotal place. In addition to the construction of a sewerage system, schools, daycare centres, a library, social and health care facilities, the programme entailed the construction of 1,048 new apartments designated for residents of the most destitute favela areas, which were to be razed (Governo do Rio de Janeiro, n.d.). When word of this spread, an illegal building frenzy began. In order to obtain an apartment, hundreds of people—in a classic strategy of quiet encroachment—tried to get a shack built before the official registration process got under way. In response, the authorities made an agreement with the association presidents to the effect that housing had to be registered with the residents' association, thus leading to a huge racket in which even non-residents could get themselves registered in exchange for a bribe. All high-ranking drug traffickers and association members got their hands on several apartments by paying straw men to register for them. The presidents were put in charge of the project's smooth implementation, although—as an official confirmed to me (personal interview, 6 May 2010)—their corrupt practices and involvement with the drug gangs were well known to municipal administrators and politicians. All public agencies involved in the programme were acting informally here, in the sense of the term used by Roy (2009), for the purpose of speedy implementation of the urbanization programme, which was largely completed by 2012. Tellingly, in the favelas themselves, resistance to the project was not tolerated: a sentence ascribed to the favelas' official representative—'whoever opposes PAC will die'—was on everybody's lips. Death threats silenced the only autonomous action group in Manguinhos whose members had spoken up against the inhabitants' exclusion from the PAC planning process.

–   The Pentecostal churches

In these four favelas, the only existing community organizations, aside from the residents' associations, were evangelical congregations. In 2010, there were 27 of these congregations; by 2012, only 20 of these remained. Most of them were less than 10 years old, were part of the Pentecostal movement, had been founded in very informal ways by lay pastors who lived in the favelas, and had between 20 and 50 members. Like many stores in the favela, the churches are located either on the ground floor of a residential building or in one-storey structures that are only distinguishable from adjacent buildings by a sign. Only in the evenings and on Sundays, when services are held, do these churches become highly visible and, above all, audible. The church doors are open, and bright neon light floods the streets. Services are always amplified

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3   This article is based exclusively on the situation I encountered during my empirical research, which was concluded in March 2012. In October 2012, the four favelas were occupied by military police and the UPP, which ended the rule of the *comandos*.

electronically. The pastors often put a loudspeaker on the street, and the 'holy noise' of the sermons and attendant musical performances dominate the favelas' soundscape on weekday evenings. On weekends, however, their holy noise did not stand a chance against the racket of the drug gangs' outdoor funk parties, which take place from Friday to Sunday.

The establishment of a small church is usually a very informal endeavour—based on Simone's (2004) understanding—from the kind and procurement of resources needed through the construction and materiality of the church building to the founders' self-declaration as pastors. A future pastor will rent a space, build an altar, arrange some plastic chairs, put out a number of Bibles, paint the church name over the door and finally set out to find followers. Some churches are identified by their signs as members of the Assembléia de Deus without actually being registered there—the name of a global church is used here to lend the religious outfit an air of greater respectability. This informal tactic of quiet encroachment (Bayat, 2004) is made possible by the decentralized structure of the Assembléia de Deus, whose parishes, unlike IURD parishes, are generally not founded and organized by the mother church but often started by lay pastors who have to actively apply to get their parish admitted into the Assembléia de Deus.

The majority of pastors hardly get involved in the favela's worldly affairs beyond pastoral care, assistance to those in need and 'crusades' (public proselytizing activities). Several of the churches are effectively micro-businesses, founded by their pastors with economic motives. Despite this, many of them barely scrape by: their congregation members cannot afford to give one tenth of their income to the church, as the Bible commands. The pastors are therefore forced, in scenarios typical of conditions of urban informality, to make use of all means available to them to generate the necessary resources themselves. The disappearance of a total of seven congregations between 2010 and 2012 illustrates the economic rationale behind the church-founding boom: eight buildings that housed Pentecostal churches, as derelict as the shacks surrounding them, were torn down in the course of the implementation of the PAC. Their pastors received significant compensation and closed shop, with only one of them investing the compensation money to open a new church elsewhere.

–   Protagonists of the born-again favela

In this subsection, I examine the urban-religious configuration of the born-again favela as a tangled web connecting everyday culture, the Pentecostal movement and the drug complex by taking a closer look at the lives of three favela residents: the local drug boss (whom I will call Paulo), the lay pastor of an independent church ('Antonio'), and the vice president of a residents' association ('Luciana') who had started her own church.

Paulo, who had been ruling as a drug lord for several years, grew up in an evangelical family. He calls himself a believer and says that his belief has led him to create an 'administration' that keeps violence to a minimum (personal interview, 18 May 2010). Residents confirm that Paulo tries to avoid machine-gun-armed patrols and in his 'rulings' only resorts to execution in 'unavoidable cases'. He is considered by most a 'good bandit' (*bandido bonzinho*) who takes care of his community. In the words of the vice president of a residents' association: 'It is his intention to improve the community, to support the children and old people. He does the kind of work that by rights should be done by the municipality, the state' (personal interview, 17 April 2010). On a number of occasions, Paulo had intervened in the PAC planning process, strong-arming the presidents into wrenching a number of concessions from the authorities, such as additions to a soccer field and the construction of a swimming pool for which he donated the funds himself. For the opening of this pool, Paulo organized an inter-church service, but fewer than half of the pastors he had invited showed up. The pastors are split into two camps: one group refuses any kind of rapprochement with

gang leaders and only proselytizes drug dealers who approach them; the other group draws the lines less clearly, as exemplified by Antonio who—like many other pastors— was involved in drug crimes before his conversion. His story illustrates that there is an economically and an idealistically motivated form of partnership between the drug trade and the Pentecostal churches and that the two are by no means easy to tell apart in the favela's informal everyday life.

Antonio, who earns a living by working on PAC construction sites, began his pastoral career helping out at an independent Pentecostal congregation called God Responds with Fire. According to him, 'the *meninos* [boys] would arrive with their weapons, it was like an army, it was the army of the devil himself. They would deposit their big guns at the edge of the church and come in. I would anoint the boys and pray with them' (personal interview, 20 March 2010). It bothered the idealistic pastor that God was 'auctioned off' at these services: the boys were informed precisely how much they would have to donate for a particular blessing: Psalm 91 ('In the shadow of the Almighty'), for example, would cost them 91 reais (about US $26), to be deposited in an envelope. Eventually Antonio started his own church, where he put a stop to the 'business of auctioning off God' but continued to work with criminals and addicts. He accepts a regular financial contribution from the drug boss that, according to him, allows him to serve a soup, which he calls 'soup of faith', to destitute crack addicts every Sunday.

Antonio cooperates with the drug bosses because he sees it as his mission to 'lead those wretches and criminals to God'. He says he prays with the boys wherever he finds them—at the *bocas* [selling points, literally at the *mouth*] where drugs are sold, as well as at funk parties, to which Paulo invites him in order to get blessings for his 'soldiers'. As the local drug boss, Paulo is in charge of organizing the raucous funk events that take place every weekend (see Lanz, 2013b). Often, Antonio is allowed to preach to the boys at these parties and sing a few gospel songs. From a governmentality perspective, the combination of prayer and a funk event organized by a gangster is at odds with the Pentecostal programme of governance: after all, it is these funk parties with their enormous drug consumption, sexualized atmosphere and display of gun-toting gang culture that more than anything else epitomize the 'devil's work' in the favela. Antonio says that God sends him there to sow the seed of His word: 'I tell them that [crack] comes directly from Hell, and I send this message via loudspeaker directly into the *boca*' (personal interview, 20 March 2010).

As a *traficante evangelico*, Paulo sees his current life as a transitory phase towards his rebirth through baptism, which he hopes will provide him with a way out of the spiral of violence and constantly looming death. Until this time comes, he tries to keep God and the pastors well-disposed towards him and his gangs by having himself and his boys blessed, passing some of his profits on to the churches and trying to minimize forms of violence he regards as illegitimate. He tries, as he puts it, to be 'the good of evil' (personal interview, 19 March 2012). In so far as turning to a Pentecostal church is one of the few options available to a *traficante* who wants to leave the 'path of death', it constitutes a highly rational decision.

Antonio's connection with the gangster Paulo in his religious activities is, from a governmentality perspective, a textbook case of the interrelationship between the favela's informal, violence-riddled everyday life and the Pentecostals' governance programme of striving for the religious purity of a City of God. Obvious as it is that this programme, with its 'total reclamation of the social sphere' (Comaroff, 2009: 24) is bound to fail, it produces subjectivation effects and makes technologies of the self available that enable even gang members to try and reinvent themselves as believers.

The third person whose life I take a closer look at here, Luciana, exemplifies yet another variation of the complex tangle that connects the Pentecostal church with informality and issues of governmentality. Raised in Manguinhos, the now 50-year-old

woman is a former cocaine addict who earned a living as a drug mule for the *comando*. Luciana built a shack on the newly occupied wasteland and became involved in the residents' association. After her partner was murdered and following a bout of tuberculosis, she took her sister's conversion and her liberation from misery as a cue to convert to the IURD (personal interview, 8 April 2010).

From a governmentality perspective, Luciana's story illustrates the variegated ways in which religious communities, as technologies of governance and programmes of redemption, are interwoven with the converts' technologies of the self. Only by joining the IURD, known for its particularly strict governance programme, did Luciana find herself able to muster the self-discipline needed to break with her old life and to achieve her 'rebirth' as a believer. This confirms Garmany's (2010: 914) observation that a 'major reason for the growth of evangelical religions [in the favelas] may actually stem from the Catholic Church's limited production of governmentality ... evangelical converts regularly criticized the *laxity* of Catholic doctrine'. Luciana was baptized, underwent the church ritual of 'liberation', and quit taking drugs. After several periods of moving away from and coming back to the faith, she joined a free church and eventually felt 'chosen by God' to found her own church. In contrast to the IURD, whose rigid governance seems to have been necessary for Luciana's lasting conversion but would have stifled her personality and her character in the long run, the autonomous church supported her self-empowerment as a believer. This congregation provided her with technologies of self-governance that soon enabled her to try and become a religious entrepreneur in her own right. The process of establishing her own church, in turn, was in keeping with Luciana's informal urban way of life. First she claimed a space on the factory wasteland: 'I bought bricks, cement, iron, everything, I paid a mason. With the help of one, two, three people I built the church within three months' (personal interview, 8 April 2010). Luciana put up an Assembléia de Deus sign without getting her church registered. When she built on the factory wasteland, she already knew—as vice president of the residents' association—that the PAC planned the construction of a housing complex on the site and that she would be compensated for the loss of the church. When she eventually received her compensation, she disbanded her congregation. Like other members of the local elite, Luciana had paid straw men to register as shack owners on her behalf, which enabled her to end up with five fraudulently obtained apartments. Through a strategy of quiet encroachment in a situation in which the state itself acted informally and illegitimately, she managed to become one of the better-off residents. Her next aim is to dedicate herself entirely to 'God's work', stating that she is fed up with the lies of the residents' association, which, according to her, is run by the *comando* and installs presidents at will. One year after completion of the PAC housing complex, Luciana converted one of her apartments to a new church—once again irregularly, because misuse of state-provided apartments is against the law (personal interview, 21 March 2012).

Conclusion: The urban-religious configuration of the born-again favela

What conclusions can be drawn from the local manifestations of Pentecostal practice with regard to the relationship between religiosity and urbanity in a space of urban poverty if we view these manifestation in light of the history of governance in the favela and the urban theory approaches discussed above?

It becomes apparent that, after three decades of fundamental religious transformation, the favela is still the favela: the 'Protestant ethic' with its 'moral rigor and sense of individual responsibility' continues to be counterbalanced by an urban everyday life 'which maintains continuity with Catholicism and the possession cults. We may therefore speak of a "syncretic Pentecostalism", which reinvented magic and possession in its own way' (Birman and Leite, 2000: 285). The urban-religious

configuration of the born-again favela represents a novel constellation in everyday culture that has transformed the Pentecostal programme and its practices as deeply as it has the favela itself. Pentecostalism has not radically changed the material, social and symbolic space of the favela, but it has become a natural element of its everyday urban culture—interacting with the materiality of the irregular settlements, with the lack of infrastructure and with the informality and precariousness of making a living, with the imposed self-governance beyond state regulations, with state intervention in the form of a clientelistically implemented urbanization project, with the brutal dominance of drug gangs and a police force that acts as an informal entity—even with funk parties, which, at first glance, appear to be irreconcilably incompatible with it.

Thus, the development of the Pentecostal movement does not simply add a new element to daily life in the favela but permeates it on all levels: within the urban-religious configuration of the born-again favela, Pentecostalism (as a global phenomenon) serves as a rough-and-ready container that over time has taken on—in a highly flexible manner—specific features through its local interconnection with the diverse materialities, imaginations, actors and practices that mark the favela.

If we understand the urban-religious configuration of the born-again favela as an assemblage, this symbiotic co-functioning of favela and Pentecostalism (which has 'pentecostalized' the favela and 'favela-ized' Pentecostalism) can serve to demonstrate both the imaginary and the actual potentialities of local believers' worlding practices, which allow them to at least subvert the favela's state of exception. Pentecostalism, and conversion to it, impart to—or at least promise—the favela inhabitants the power to transcend the label of being marginal. We can argue, with Simone (2014: 159), that the urban fundamentalism that has emerged here opens 'a space and time of the miraculous' because it endows city inhabitants who lack the 'eligibility to act' with the 'ability to act' (*ibid*.). The potential for the miraculous emerges from an urban everyday practice that may be understood as a worlding practice in that residents conjure up alternative urban worlds beyond their factually existing social space. Viewed in this way, the urban fundamentalism found here is not so much based on exclusionary practices (as described by AlSayyad, 2011) as it relates to the 'fundamentals of the city' (Simone, 2014: 160) that are, after all, 'the possibility of those who have "no part at all" to become "anyone at all"' (Simone, 2011: 356).

If we take another look at AlSayyad and Roy's (2006) 'medieval modernity' approach, we find that the actions of religious actors within the enclave of a regulated squatter settlement do not foster the creation of a religious urban 'fiefdom'. Rather, they should be read as attempts by the residents themselves to overcome their stigma as marginals and attain equal citizenship. As the life stories I have outlined here illustrate, the offerings of 'favela Pentecostalism' hold promise for a broad range of residents. Not only do they offer gangsters an emergency exit of sorts out of their status as people who are essentially condemned to death; the life stories of the faithful who were criminals prior to their conversion (such as Pastor Antonio) illustrate how real this notion is to them. Pentecostalism reaches much further: it also offers a set of technologies and spaces that allow ordinary people such as Luciana to advance socially and attain respectability and dignity. This becomes particularly clear when examined through the lens of governmentality studies and the informality approach.

Luciana's troubled conversion and Paulo's imagined, postponed conversion both illustrate that each individual conversion to Pentecostal faith becomes first and foremost a question of self-governance. 'Rebirth' marks a break with the person's former lifestyle and an extreme effort to create a new personal identity. This requires technologies of self-governance that unfold in the interplay between the varied technologies of domination on the part of the churches vying for believers and the specific constellation of governance that characterizes the favela.

The frequently observed shift away from the IURD as a place of conversion to autonomous congregations is of particular interest. The IURD's hierarchical top-down structure offers residents no opportunities for autonomous action outside the mother church's comprehensive control. Yet, more than any other church, the IURD stands for a programme of the miraculous that has the power to liberate people through conversion from the 'evil' powers that oppress them and helps converts break with their former life (Birman, 2011). But once their faith has been consolidated, the act of moving on to a free church is the only one available to them for becoming independent 'entrepreneurs of faith' (see Lanz and Oosterbaan, this issue). To the extent that the favela's governance constellation has always forced residents to earn their living as 'self-made' entrepreneurs, drawing on all resources and options available to them, the practices of neo-Pentecostalism, with their preaching of the prosperity gospel and their amalgamation of commerce and religion, fit seamlessly with adherents' reality.

Engagement with these churches takes place in an area of tension between the informal entities of the state and the Pentecostal churches with their respective apparatuses on the one side and the residents' informal social practices on the other. While to drug criminals, the state manifests itself only in a deadly police force that condemns them to a state of bare life, the flexible, informal character of certain churches allows them to tentatively cooperate without having to immediately give up their (often murderous) business. This stance on the part of the church offers them the prospect of an actual future.

Asef Bayat's concept of informality sheds light on the modes of action of ordinary residents, discussed here using Luciana as an example: both their secular and their religious activities can be interpreted as different facets of 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary' within which they seek to attain 'social goods and opportunities' (Bayat, 2004: 90) in an autonomous effort to escape poverty and live a dignified life. The fact that the state acts as an informal entity, employing massive structural corruption and covert collaboration with the *trafico* [drug traffickers], does create opportunities for quiet encroachment, but also reproduces an illegitimate order that provides a moral incentive to devote oneself to the church. In the field of worldly affairs, we may find a strategy of quiet encroachment at work in illegal work for the *trafico*, in becoming involved in the residents' associations, or in obtaining state-built apartments through fraud. In the field of religion, Pentecostal conversion empowers people to escape their addiction or their criminal entanglement and mark a biographical rupture. Finally, pastors' self-appointment, their irregular construction and operation of unregistered churches and their subsequent acceptance of state compensation for the demolition thereof give them access to social status, material resources and a socio-economic option for the future.

The existence and practices of the Pentecostal churches, then, expand the range of options available to residents in everyday life for attaining a dignified and safe life in the favela. As informal ways of urban life expand from the secular to the religious fields, an intertwining of religious, social, political and economic practices takes place. From this perspective, the fact that the Pentecostal churches do not offer any relief programmes for the poor is one of the keys to their success. What they offer instead is an opportunity for self-empowerment and autonomy that furthers the merging of religious and economic agency—albeit at the price of submission to a moral code that rigidly governs everyday life (see Lanz and Oosterbaan, this issue). Even churches whose pastors pursue purely entrepreneurial goals possess, in the eyes of many inhabitants, moral legitimacy as long as they further the churchgoers' 'liberation' from worldly temptations and pressure.

It becomes evident here that believers undergo a process of subjectivization that is meant to recreate them as new humans. Although the Pentecostal programme as a whole, understood as a governance programme, is ultimately bound to fail and must

be revised time and time again, it nonetheless has a strong impact on society and its subjects. The Pentecostal churches' actual pattern of governance—which deviates greatly from their programme—reflects the favela's historically evolved character as a specific urban space (as do all levels of informality discussed here) and of the specific constellation of governance in the favela: the Pentecostal churches began to assert themselves in the favelas only after they had adapted their programme to be compatible with local social practices—for example, by tolerating temporary 'phases of sinfulness', or by blurring the boundaries between the church and the criminal sphere, thus contravening their own concept of conversion as a radical rebirth that guarantees a '*status aparte*' from the 'wheeling and dealing' of daily life (Oosterbaan, 2009: 63).

The born-again favela is thus an urban-religious configuration in which local urbanity and religiosity shape one another, producing new constellations of urban everyday culture and religious practices that would be incomprehensible if viewed in isolation from the urban space in which they manifest themselves. It is this interplay that gives rise to worlding practices that imagine a new world—a world in which the favela, today the battlefield of a 'spiritual war', will be recreated as a City of God. The technologies of the self developed by the favela inhabitants in confrontation with the technologies of domination to which they were historically subjected allow them to reconcile the religious, social and economic spheres with their material, spiritual and social goals and needs in ways that are productive for them.

This symposium's conceptual approach investigates religion in the city not as an independent variable but as part and parcel of specific urban-religious configurations. Understanding these configurations as dynamic assemblages made up of material, social and symbolic spaces and elements as well as of practices, technologies, sensations and experiences enables us to capture the manifold dimensions of the born-again favela. This approach gives us the means to bring to light the details of how the Pentecostal movement has permeated all aspects of the favela's informal way of urban life and government. Moreover, the term 'entrepreneurial religion', as developed in the introduction to this symposium, lends itself far better to capturing the characteristics of favela Pentecostalism than the term 'prosperity religion' does. The latter takes an inappropriately simplified view of these kinds of religious practices as being motivated by the mere desire for material prosperity. The former, by contrast, incorporates the agency of the favela inhabitants themselves, forced as they are to take an entrepreneurial approach to all aspects of their everyday life—which includes their religious practices— in order to be able to lead a dignified life.

If we presume that the born-again favela as it exists today reflects, in many of its facets, the violent sociability and permanent state of exception that its residents are subject to, one question for future research becomes particularly pertinent: how will these urban-religious configurations change if the favelas—as part of the neoliberal urban development policy that seeks to transform Rio into a 'world-class' city, a city of mega-events—are 'pacified', gentrified and touristified?

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