

ARTICLES

TERRITORY, CITIZENSHIP AND RIGHTS

THE FAVELA EXTINCTION COMMISSION AND THE REPRESENTATIONS OF POVERTY IN BELO HORIZONTE DURING THE 1950s

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Abstract

The present article analyses photographs taken of the favelas in the city of Belo Horizonte from the Favela Extinction Commission. In 1955, this commission was created by the City Mayor, Celso Mello de Azevedo, in order to study and submit a solution for “the problem of the favelas”. The photographs were used in the social analysis reports and in the political rhetoric that justified the creation of a department for the “extinction of favelas” in Belo Horizonte. The images created a dialogue with the urban culture of the state capital, Belo Horizonte, from the perspective of engineers, lawyers and social workers from the Favela Extinction Commission, thereby creating a visuality that thereby justified a certain governability for the issue of favelas in the city.

Keywords

Favelas; Social Representation of Urban Poverty; Photographic Image; Belo Horizonte.

A COMISSÃO DE DESFAVELAMENTO E AS REPRESENTAÇÕES DA POBREZA EM BELO HORIZONTE NA DÉCADA DE 1950

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Resumo

O artigo analisa as fotografias das favelas de Belo Horizonte elaboradas pela Comissão de Desfavelamento. Em 1955, a Comissão foi criada pelo prefeito Celso Mello de Azevedo para estudar e propor uma solução ao “problema das favelas”. As fotografias foram usadas nos relatórios de análise social e na retórica política que justificava a criação de um órgão para o “desfavelamento” de Belo Horizonte. As imagens dialogavam com a cultura urbana da capital do estado da época e, com base no olhar de engenheiros, advogados e assistentes sociais da Comissão de Desfavelamento, criavam uma visualidade que justificava certa governabilidade para a questão das favelas na cidade.

Palavras-chave

Favelas; Representação da Pobreza Urbana; Imagem Fotográfica; Belo Horizonte.

THE FAVELA EXTINCTION COMMISSION AND THE REPRESENTATIONS OF POVERTY IN BELO HORIZONTE DURING THE 1950s¹

Samuel Silva Rodrigues de Oliveira

Introduction

This article analyzes the ways in which favelas were represented in the dossier “Municipal Bill of Law No. 107/55”, one of a series of archival fonds at the City Hall, and held in the Public Archives in the city of Belo Horizonte. This dossier contains the first statistics on favelas in the State of Minas Gerais, a set of documentary photographs and the bill of law prepared by the Favela Extinction Commission (Comissão de Desfavelamento), appointed by the City Mayor, Celso Mello de Azevedo who was in office from 1955 to 1959. This commission brought together a group of experts in order to submit a solution for the “problem of the favelas” in Belo Horizonte, and to formulate a housing and social assistance policy. From within this corpus of documents, the analysis of this article focuses on the photographs taken of the favelas and how the Favela Extinction Commission formed its perspective on urban poverty.

In the 1950s, the image of the favela as being a representation of urban poverty spread on a national scale and gained significance in several cities and urban contexts. The Favela Extinction Commission was one of the loci for envisioning what was viewed as the “disorder” of urban-industrial growth and for the debate on public policies based on the trajectory and experience of the state capital of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte. Between 1940 and 1960, the population of Belo Horizonte increased from 211,377 to 693,328, in an urban growth characterized

1. The translation of this article was funded by the Research Support Foundation for the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ)

by the reproduction of inequalities in social, racial and economic relations that defined the significance behind the metropolization of the state capital and the spatial segregation of “*vilas* (settlements) and *favelas*”. This growth and urban “disorder” were viewed in opposition to the idealized narrative of the “planned city”, which became lost within the metropolization and modernization of the state capital of Minas Gerais.

In urban studies, the analyses of images and symbolic representations of favelas have focused on the trajectory of Rio de Janeiro, and have not observed any other regional realities, such as that of Belo Horizonte. In historiography, the image of the favela has been enshrined as an invention based on the urbanization process in Rio de Janeiro, in view of the nominalization of the term “favela” at the beginning of the twentieth century: from a proper noun, written with a capital letter (“Favela”), to designating a location in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the *Morro da Providência* (Providence Hill), the term began to be commonly used as a noun to express urban poverty. This transformation was mediated by the occupation of the central hills after the reforms made by Pereira Passos (1902-1906), through an analogy of the poverty on the hills with the images of the “hinterlands” in the work of Euclides da Cunha, and by the dissemination of discourses that associated the occupation of favelas with the “dangerous classes” and the “urban problem” of the city, thereby replacing the central image of the tenement in the social hygiene and elitist imagery of the Republic’s then capital, Rio de Janeiro (VALLADARES, 2005; SILVA, 2005; MATTOS, 2008; GONÇALVES, 2013 ; ABREU, 2014; OLIVEIRA, 2020).

This historiography on the symbolic representation of favelas has emphasized that the experience of socio-spatial segregation has not been homogeneous, but has been filtered through social and political meanings inscribed in class and race relations, and through the heterogeneity of the constitutive configurations of the urban fabric. However, little analysis has been undertaken on the trajectory of the word “favela” as a representation of urban poverty in other cities and regions. In Belo Horizonte, the word first appeared in the 1890s referring to the place of residence for the workers who had been hired by the Construction Commission of the New Capital (Comissão Construtora da Nova Capital) to build the planned city that was to replace Ouro Preto as the state capital. “Favela” referred to *Alto da Estação*, which was the location where the precarious housing for workers, hired during the construction of Belo Horizonte, was built, and which was removed in 1902. Later, the word “favela”, as a common noun for urban poverty, appeared in Belo Horizonte to mark an analogy with the urban space in Rio de Janeiro and to designate the “*cafusas*” [simple huts] built in the regions of Barroca and Pedreira Prado Lopes in the early twentieth century, as well as the “*vilas*” around the center,

some of which were built with municipal authorization although without being regularized in relation to the city building standards (GUIMARÃES, 1991; PEREIRA, 2019; OLIVEIRA, 2020).

The trajectory of the imagery of the favela and urban poverty in Belo Horizonte became intertwined with the history of the city and is related to the signs constructed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's capital until the end of the 1950s. Common to the two locations, the word-symbol favela intersected the power relations that reproduced the stigmas of poor urban regions, anchored in classifications of class and race that rendered them inferior and associated the image of the favelas with "urban problems" and "dangerous classes". However, the image of the favela in Belo Horizonte presents a social and political temporality, which is distinct from those found in other spaces – a trajectory of legislation and standards, urban policies, lexicons, social and political practices in various locations, both of narratives that involve metropolization and the problems of the "planned city" that distinguishes it when compared to others. An understanding the different regional and metropolitan temporalities that are intertwined in the history of urban informality is one of the central objectives of recent historiography that has sought to compare and build comparative scales between different locations in Brazil and Latin America (FISCHER, 2014).

The aim of this article is to analyze the corpus of documents formed by the Favela Extinction Commission with a focus on the photographic representations. These images have been analyzed in terms of their aesthetic and political functions in constructing the regimes of urban visibility. The analysis situates the photographs within the configuration of a struggle over the representation of urban space between the specialists from the city government (social workers, politicians, engineers and lawyers) and the workers and residents of the favelas. Instead of presenting the photographic perspective as a natural record of social life, or as a technical, neutral and transparent record of reality, a dialogue is formed between a field of research that investigates the different public targets and how the photographs were used, and the way in which the photographic perspective has established regimes of visibilities that create emphases and visual icons, and thereby justify actions inscribed into the power relations (BORGES, 2003; KNAUS, 2008; MAUAD, 2016).

By understanding the photographs from the Favela Extinction Commission, the article emphasizes the manner in which they have been constructed based on practices inserted into a social time and in a specific circuit of image consumption and production (ROUILLÉ, 2006, p.190-230). The text has been organized around two sections: in the first, the establishment of the Favela Disposal Committee is

explained, and the set of photographs together with their aesthetic and political functions are described; the second section analyzes the “partial views” of the Serra favela, and a series of images of the Pedreira Prado Lopes favela, and their relationship with the worldview of engineers, lawyers and social workers who made part of this Commission.

1. The photographic images of the Favela Extinction Commission

The Favela Extinction Commission was established during the municipal government of Celso Mello de Azevedo (1955-1959), by means of decrees No. 577 and 588, in April and June of 1955 (AZEVEDO, 1955). The commission was responsible for drafting Bill of Law No. 107/55 and presented one of the first specific statistical studies on the favelas of Belo Horizonte. The project was presented to the municipal legislature and became Municipal Law No. 517/55, which established the Department of Neighborhoods and Popular Housing (known by the Portuguese acronym DHBP), and also created a municipal tax aimed at the production and sale of “popular” residential units (BELO HORIZONTE, 1955a; BELO HORIZONTE, 1955b). The DHBP consisted of a social housing policy linked with the national initiatives of the Popular Housing Foundation (Fundação Casa Popular) and the Retirement and Pension Institutes (Institutos de Aposentadoria e Pensão), and was linked to the debate on housing and urban reforms in Brazilian cities. It should be mentioned that the DHBP underwent several transformations: its functions were restructured with the 1964 military coup and the creation of the National Housing Bank (BNH). In 1971, the DHBP was dissolved and succeeded by the Social Interest Housing Coordination (Chisbel), in line with the “favela extinction” in the authoritarian modernization in the social reforms of the civil-military dictatorship (OLIVEIRA, 2012; LIBÂNIO, 2016; OLIVEIRA, GOMES, 2021).

For mayor Celso Mello de Azevedo, there was a priority to create a department in order to promote social housing and conduct the “extinction of favelas” in the city. Elected by the anti-populist alliance that united the National Democratic Union (UDN), the Republican Party (PR) and the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), Azevedo was an engineer whose political career was linked to regional and state development projects, led by the business elite of Minas Gerais. In many ways, he continued the work and actions of his predecessor, mayor Américo René Gianneti (1951-1954), who was also an industrialist and UDN politician. This business elite gathered around the Federation of Industries of the State of Minas Gerais (FIEMG), and placed Belo Horizonte as the locus for a strategy of the state’s industrialization and economic recovery (DULCI, 1999, p. 58-91).

This anti-populist alliance, which defined itself as liberal and Catholic, rivaled the popular legacy of Getúlio Vargas and the urban and industrial development promoted by Juscelino Kubitschek, the municipal interventor in Belo Horizonte during the Estado Novo, the Governor of Minas Gerais elected by the Social Democratic Party (PDS) between 1951 and 1955, and President of Brazil between 1956 and 1961 (DULCI, 1986, p. 33-46; DULCI, 1999, p.91-105). In the view of the anti-populist alliance, urban-industrial growth was important in order to modernize the economy, but the manner in which it had been conducted in the Vargas popular alliance had created problems and imbalances in the life of the city, and the subject of urban “favelas” was central to the rhetoric constructed for political and electoral mobilization. The ploy of the anti-populist alliances in politicizing the issue of favelas and popular housing was also repeated in other urban settings, such as in Rio de Janeiro. In 1948, Carlos Lacerda, journalist, and one of the most influential UDN politicians in the then federal capital, launched the journalistic campaign “The Battle of Rio de Janeiro” in the newspaper *Correio da Manhã*. At that time, there was also a similar alliance between liberals and Catholics to problematize the social issue in a critical tone towards urbanization and to the disorder promoted by accelerated urban and industrial growth. This was permeated with anti-communism within the context of the cold war, by the political rise of the Soviet Union in global geopolitics, and by the fear of political and electoral victory of the left, with the growth of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) and the Brazilian Workers’ Party (PTB) (DULLES, 1992; MOTTA, 2000; GONÇALVES, 2013, p. 151-152).

The campaign in favor of the Favela Extinction Commission and the creation of the DHBP had the support of the newspaper *Diário de Minas*. Linked to the Diocese of Belo Horizonte, to Bishop Dom Antônio dos Santos Cabral and to the movements of the Catholic Action, the *Diário de Minas* decided to defend the bill that was going through the municipal legislature and identified the proposal aligned both to the Catholic social doctrine and to the “Saint Sebastian Crusade” movement: organized by Dom Hélder Câmara, the crusade promised to eliminate the favelas in Rio de Janeiro in order to commemorate the city’s four hundredth anniversary. In the opinion columns and journalistic coverage of the *Diário de Minas*, the project of the Favela Extinction Commission received support from leaders of Christian humanism:

In Rio de Janeiro, at a time when the virtuous, dynamic Auxiliary Archbishop to the Cardinal, Dom Helder Câmara, the magnificent organizer of the XVIII International Eucharistic Congress, begins the “Saint Sebastian Crusade”, to recuperate those living in the favelas,

with the humanization and Christianization of the favelas, there is nothing more opportune than this project, which is now fulfilling the legal procedures in the City Council. In truth, it cannot be possible that here, where the problem of the favelas is also taking on the most appalling proportions and represent a public calamity, citizens and public authorities remain indifferent [...]

Now what is truly pleasing when you know about the project, the careful result of work developed by a skilled commission over many months and organized for this very purpose, is that it is fully in line with the pontifical teachings (BURNIER, 1955).²

Throughout the government of Celso Mello de Azevedo, other initiatives were also created with the aim of combating urban disorder and favelas, as a result of his link with Christian democracy. In 1958, he hired the Society for Graphical and Mechanography Analysis Applied to Social Complexes (SAGMACS) to organize a metropolitan urban plan that would redirect the city's growth. SAGMACS was founded by Father Louis-Joseph Lebret, as of the branches of the Economy and Humanism Movement in Latin America. Lebret defended the "third way", rejecting both liberal and individualist capitalism and communism. In the 1950s, SAGMACS undertook the metropolitan urban planning of São Paulo and other cities, with an emphasis on defending policies for social housing, metropolitan urbanism and planned regional development. The horizon of the Catholic "third way" was "community development", an attempt to revitalize the primary bonds of neighborhood, family and solidarity to develop a Christian democracy and refigure the control of the social in capitalism (VALLADARES, 2005, p. 79- 86; ANGELO, 2013, p. 21-35; OLIVEIRA, 2015, p. 340-345).

In the political and social arena that politicized the debate on poverty and urban and industrial growth, the photographs of the Favela Extinction Commission were presented by the Education, Health and Social Assistance Commission at the City Council. The photos were presented at the municipal legislature by the councilor Leopoldo Garcia Brandão – a dentist who had been elected in a Christian democrat alliance identified as a "popular political movement" in the 1954 election (NEVES; DULCI; MENDES, 1993, p. 232-238). The theme of favelas and the social issue in Belo Horizonte was key to the councilor's electoral campaign and his legislative mandate, when he was president of the Education, Health and Social Assistance Commission. When presenting the work, conducted by the Favela Extinction Commission, Brandão (1955, p.19) related the photographs to social analysis:

2. This and all non-English citations hereafter have been translated by the translator Brian S. Honeyball.

We have enumerated some of the favelas that exist in Belo Horizonte and attach the results of research carried out in two of them, or rather, the smallest. We have also put together some photographs which, although simple and few in number, will give our colleagues, little accustomed with the problem, a slight impression of the situation in which those living in the favelas have to survive. All of them, human beings, like us and everyone else, the bearers of divine, human dignity like all men.

The photographic images dramatized the social issue in Belo Horizonte and justified the creation of the DHBP and made part of the convention of “documentary photography” or photo-documentation³, one of the vectors for constructing the imageries on modernity and modernization. In his book *Photography – between document and contemporary art* (2009 p. 190-230) [Translated into Portuguese and published in 2009], Rouillé emphasized that the emergence of photography had mobilized public opinion, specialists from various sciences and the State to use the camera as a technology to document the world and the transformations of urban-industrial society. Photo-documentation was revealed as hegemonic from the nineteenth century until the mid-1970s, and established a number of conventions for constructing a photographic image. The belief that the technical image of a camera was an iconic, transparent representation of reality was possible through a set of stable, direct framings, as well as intertextualities with everyday scientific, journalistic and artistic practices aimed at producing a realistic representation of the world (ROUILLÉ, 2009, p. 29-60).

The photographs of the Favela Extinction Commission were tributaries of the practices of photo-documentation. In the deontology of images⁴, a number of procedures may be observed that have established a view and a regime of visibility of cities through photographs. They present no specification of authorship nor of any possible adjustments made to the negatives of the photos, which have not been presented in the dossier; there is only the developed photo, printed and attached as part of a social analysis report by the Favela Extinction Commission. All the images are in black and white, with clear lighting and a steady focus. These “snapshots” of

3. Rouillé (2009) used the expression “photo-documentation” to demarcate the dominance of the documentary function of photography between its emergence in the nineteenth century and the 1970s.

4. Unlike the analyses inspired by Roland Barthes, which emphasize the ontology of photographs, differentiating them from cinema and painting, André Rouillé highlighted the importance of understanding the deontological variations of images, i.e., the way in which they are inserted into practices and specific social and political circuits.

urban life fulfilled the function of documenting the city's favelas in an illusion of a transparent reality that confirmed the social analysis of the specialists.

The photographs were also accompanied by a caption, which was limited to presenting the intended focus, and to identifying the portrayed favela. They were organized in a sequence or series, and portrayed a general situation of the city's favelas, offering a sample of what was transpiring in the urban-industrial growth of the state capital. In the Education, Health and Social Assistance Commission, it was stated that the photographs and statistics offered an overview of the approximately "27 favelas and we are still convinced that we have forty to fifty (sic) thousand people living in favelas in Belo Horizonte" (BRANDÃO, 1955, p. 20). The series of photos served as a maxim to dramatize and prove the statistical and social data collected from the favelas that referred to the 27 favelas counted in the census.

The initiative of the Favela Extinction Commission resulted in drawing up the first census of favelas in Belo Horizonte, which adopted criteria debated within the scope of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). The registration of favelas by the Favela Extinction Commission incorporated the debate constituted by the IBGE, which established parameters to account for urban informality in Brazil, based on the registration of 50 households in an irregular situation and with no urban infrastructure (VALLADARES, 2005, p. 63-73). In addition to the first favela census in Belo Horizonte, the Favela Extinction Commission conducted two studies of specific favelas, performed by social workers in the Morro do Querosene and Barragem Santa Lúcia favelas (BELO HORIZONTE, 1955c; 1955d).

Although designated to identify the general situation of favelas in Belo Horizonte, the photographs were produced in three specific favela locations: Ilha dos Urubus, in the Santa Efigênia neighborhood; Pau Comeu, in the São Lucas neighborhood; and Pedreira Prado Lopes, in Lagoinha (see Table 1). In the Table 1 the captions have been transcribed (and translated) as they are presented in the dossier of the analyzed archival fonds; the sequential order in which they were filed and arranged in the dossier have also been maintained.

Photograph	Location	Caption
1*	Vila do Pau Comeu, São Lucas neighborhood	Partial view of the favela called Pau Comeu
2		Partial view of the favela called Pau Comeu
3*		Partial view of the favela called Pau Comeu in the part that faces onto the São Lucas neighborhood
4	Vila dos Urubus, ⁵ Santa Efigênia neighborhood	Partial view of the favela called Ilha do Urubu
5		Partial view of the favela called Ilha do Urubu . Military Hospital may be seen in the background
6	Pedreira Prado Lopes, Lagoinha neighborhood	Partial view of the favela called Pedreira Prado Lopes
7		A partial view of the I.A.P.I., Residential Complex
8		Partial view of the favela called Pedreira Prado Lopes
9		Partial view of Pedreira Prado Lopes . The Municipal Hospital may be seen in the center
10*		A street in Pedreira Prado Lopes
11		A dwelling in Pedreira Prado Lopes
12		Pedreira Prado Lopes, Lagoinha neighborhood. <i>Cafuas</i> in Pedreira Prado Lopes
13		A section of Pedreira Prado Lopes
14*		A dwelling in Pedreira Prado Lopes
15*		The interior of one of the dwellings in Pedreira Prado Lopes
16	A bed in one of the dwellings in Pedreira Prado Lopes	

Table 1. Photographs from the Favela Extinction Commission

Note: *Corresponding to Figures 1 to 5, reproduced below, which have been selected for this analysis.

Source: Photographs, 1955 BELO HORIZONTE. BELO HORIZONTE PUBLIC ARCHIVES. *City Hall Fonds*. DR.01.02.09 – 7894, 1955e.

The choice of locations to be photographed was not made randomly: it was related to the order of magnitude established in the statistics and to the urban culture of Belo Horizonte. Sixteen photographs were taken, with a greater emphasis given to the Pedreira Prado Lopes favela – the largest and oldest of the favelas recorded in the 1955 census. The three favelas photographed fulfilled the function of being average-sized examples of what was recorded in the statistics: high-density favelas (Pedreira Prado Lopes with 1700 residential units and 6469 inhabitants), medium-sized favelas (the Pau Comeu favela, with 604 residences and 2102 inhabitants) and small favelas (Vila dos Urubus, with 360 residential units and 1153 inhabitants) (IBGE, 1955). They were also close to Contorno Avenue and the layout planned in the 1890s, reinforcing the opposition between the planned city and the disorder of the favelas.

5. In the photo caption, the toponym “Ilha dos Urubus” was attributed to the location also identified at the time as “Vila dos Urubus” “Urubus” and “União”.

The typewritten captions for each image demonstrate the concern to differentiate the favelas. Like other documents produced by the Favela Extinction Commission, namely the statistics and social assistance studies, the photographic perspective constructed throughout the sequence of photos was concerned with defining what the favelas were in the city: it documented the variations of how the phenomenon of poverty was manifested, and outlined the urban space that needed to be organized and which favelas were for “extinction” by the public policy of housing and social assistance. In addition to addressing the heterogeneity of favelas, the photographs helped to construct the governability of urban poverty, legitimizing the anti-populist alliance for the creation of the Favelas Commission and the policies of “favela extinction”. Thus, the photographs and statistics reinforced a dualist, normative and “technical” view of those spaces, responding to the worldviews of engineers, lawyers and social workers.

2. The framing of the photographic images and the specialist discourse on the “problem of the favelas”

It may be observed that the documentary function of photography was related to the perspective of the specialists involved in the Favela Extinction Commission. The images responded to the demands of three groups: engineers, lawyers and social workers (see Table 2). The analysis undertaken in this section considers the production and framing of the photographed “partial views” will be presented, together with their relationship with the normative perspectives of the first two abovementioned groups regarding the city, as well as the contrast with the photographic representation made in the Pedreira Prado Lopes favela, linked to the concerns of Social Services⁶

6. In this text, analyzes have been prioritized of the social situation of each group of professionals in relation to the favelas, rather than analyzing the trajectories and individual views of each specialist who made part of the Favela Commission. This second approach would demand more space for analysis, thereby going beyond the dimensions of this article.

Nominated Members	Profession
Paulo José Vieira	Engineer
José Aguinaldo Mourão	Civil engineer graduated from the Engineering School at the Universidade de Minas Gerais (UMG) ⁷
Renato Falsi	Civil engineer graduated from the Engi-neering School at UMG and entrepreneur at Casa Falsi
Hélio Lopes de Oliveira	Engineer
Edgar de Godoi da Mata-Machado	Lawyer, State Deputy for UDN, a professor at the Faculty of Law later linked to the Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (UCMG) ⁸
Raul Machado Horta	Lawyer and professor at UMG.
Paulo Neves de Carvalho	Lawyer and professor at the law school at UMG.
Padre Luís Viegas	Priest and professor at the School for Social Services, later integrated with the UCMG
Dr. Halley Alves Bessa	Doctor, founder of the Sociedade Mineira de Psicologia, and professor of psy-chopedagogy on the course at the School for Social Services.
Modesta Manoela Lopes	Social Worker, graduated from the School of Social Services.
Maria da Conceição Machado	Social Worker, graduated from the School of Social Services.
Cid Rebelo Horta	Politician and journalist.

Table 2. The Favela Extinction Commission (1955)

Source: AZEVEDO, C. M. de. Presentation letter for the Bill of Law No. 107 forwarded to City Hall, on October 5, 1955. BELO HORIZONTE PUBLIC ARQUIVES. *City Hall Fonds*. DR.01.02.09 – 7894, 1955.

The civil engineers were prominent in dealing with the issue of favelas. The commission was chaired by the engineer Paulo José Vieira, who had links to Mayor Celso Mello de Azevedo, who was also part of the generation that graduated during the 1930s from the Engineering School at the Universidade de Minas Gerais. Several of these engineering professionals joined business representative organizations, and disclosed an interest in influencing the definitions of housing and public works policies, which pledged the formation of public funds that would be invested in the construction industry. The presence of engineers in the public administration of Belo Horizonte has been observed since it was founded in 1897, as well as in the choices that have defined the planning of the state capital throughout the twentieth century. In different cities and capitals, they have constituted a professional segment participated in forming the economic elites and the middle classes, who have run construction companies, and have led the drawing up of urban plans and public works for both beautification and sanitation (SALGUEIRO, 1997; SILVA, 2003, p. 65-79; CAMPOS, 2014, p. 39-64).

In addition to the engineers, the work of law graduates has also been outstanding. Devising urban and legislative codes of conduct in order to guide the

7. The name of the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) between 1927 and 1965.

8. The Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (UCMG) was founded in 1958 and is currently recognized as the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (PUC-MG).

use of city spaces was the keynote of a set of municipal norms that emerged from within the process of urbanization and of hygienist urban reforms throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The laws were established as attempts to discipline and order the occupation of cities, in a dialogue with medicine, with the urbanism of architects and engineers, and in a tension with what they recognized as disorderly growth. In 1956, after the work of the Favela Extinction Commission, which conducted a study on housing and urban occupation legislation in the capital of Minas Gerais, the first legislation that legally defined the favela was approved. It was considered that “slums were an agglomeration of two or more shacks, huts or any similar type of construction, built with no legal authority on land not owned by the occupants” (BELO HORIZONTE, 1956). Under the regulation, dwellings in favelas were classified as “clandestine works”, illegal, and would become the focus of both municipal inspection and police surveillance, regardless of the variety of types of origin and construction, often legal or semi-legal, authorized by the municipality.

The photographs and studies on “favela extinction” in Belo Horizonte responded in part to the expectations of engineers and lawyers who were in the majority on the Favela Extinction Commission. The nine photographs of the “partial views” from the Commission were taken at an open angle, with the objective of framing the urban contrast between the neighborhood and the favela. They captured that which stood outside the planned urban order of the engineers and municipal codes of conduct, and expressed the normative and dualistic perspectives on what the favela was, associated with the growth disorder of the city. This perspective thereby established the opposition between “neighborhood” and “favela”, or “asphalt” and “hillside” as the central theme in the photographic framework - all taken from a viewpoint outside the favelas.

One important aspect for constructing the “partial views” was the choice of favelas close to the planned urban space and delineated by Contorno Avenue. Of the various favelas scattered across the vicinity of the railroad and urban mesh built around the Antônio Carlos, D. Pedro II and Amazonas Avenues - within a scenario of urban informality that had emerged with the urban expansion of the 1930s and 1950s -, those that were chosen were situated close to the urban area of - the city’s original planning, which defined the limits of Contorno Avenue as the locus of urbanity in Belo Horizonte. On the periphery, built in the urban expansion, on subdivisions of farms and with permission for workers to construct the “vilas”, the visual limits between the rustic and rural aspects of the favelas in contrast to the modern and urbanized traits of the neighborhoods were hardly visible, within a scenario of precarious living conditions built by the popular segments in remote areas in relation to the center of Belo Horizonte.

The “partial views” of Favela Pau Comeu, Ilha dos Urubus and Pedreira Prado Lopes had the same goal: to establish an exterior perspective of these spaces. With the photographic perspective thus constructed, little attention was paid to the residents, the concern was to register the nearby streets, dwellings and vertical buildings, which either limited or stood as contrasts with the rustic homes clustered inside the favelas (see Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. Pau Comeu Favela, in the São Lucas neighborhood

Note: Equivalent to Photograph 1 from the sequence of photographs by the Favela Extinction Commission (Table 1).

In the captions of these “general views”, the Military Hospital, the IAPI Complex (The Institute for Industrial Retirement Benefits and Pensions) and the Municipal Hospital were highlighted as signs of the urban landscape of the favelas that indicated the verticalization and progress of the city in contrast to what was seen as a backwards tendency of the informal dwellings (see Table 1: Photographs 5 and 9). The “partial views” of the Pau Comeu favela, for example, framed the contrast with the São Lucas neighborhood, in the urban expansion of the residential district of the Serra region. In the 1940s and 1950s, the municipality established rigid urban building standards for residential neighborhoods; the plots of land located in the proximity of Contorno Avenue could not be further subdivided in order to build more than one dwelling (a common practice on the periphery and *vilas* in the city), constructions had to be aligned with the public highways, a distance of at least two and half meters was required on either side of the house, hedges or metal bars of no more than one meter and a half could be placed at the front of houses. Moreover, 40% of the area of - the plot of land had to be reserved for a car port and

garages (Belo Horizonte, 1948). The 1948 regulation also established the Garden City neighborhood in the southern area of - the city, as a reference and model for expanding the residential neighborhoods that were aimed at the middle and upper classes.



Figure 2. Pau Comeu Favela, in the São Lucas neighborhood

Note: Equivalent to Photograph 3 from the sequence of photographs by the Favela Extinction Commission (Table 1).

The first photograph of the Pau Comeu favela focuses on houses in the São Lucas neighborhood in the center: all white houses, large plots of land, with a backyard, a walled frontage and set back from the street. In the foreground, on the left, a home is in the process of being built, with workers standing next to the wall. In the background, several smaller houses stretch across the hillside, identified as the space of the favela. The contrast becomes more evident in the caption of the final photo of the series of images of the Serra region: “Partial view of the favela called Pau Comeu in the part that faces the São Lucas neighborhood” (see Table 1: Photograph 2). In the center of this image we see an unpaved earth road climbing the hill. On the left, along the edge of the earth road, we see some smaller houses, small plots of land marked with wooden fences, steps cut into the bank, clothes hung out on a clothesline and the presence of scrubland and banana trees. On the right, along the other side of the earth road, a pickup truck is parked beside a brick wall, and two two-storey houses, painted with light colors, are set on large plots of land, in contrast to the homes in the favela.

In these images, there is a prevalent perspective that reproduces the stigma of those who live in favelas. Despite the linked reformist discourse in the municipal legislature, in which it is stated that the residents of favelas were not “discredited” or pariahs (Brandão, 1955, p. 19-21), the decision to use the name Pau Comeu⁹ in the caption is a reference to the favela being marked as a space with dangerous classes and urban violence. This was a current trait in the crime news throughout the twentieth century, and became a class and race stigma challenged by the narratives constructed by those who resided in the favelas.

The favela in the vicinity of the São Lucas neighborhood continued to grow and became a housing space for poor workers - the favela censuses indicate that the residents were mostly migrants from the interior of the state.¹⁰ Residents and leisure associations were created that fought for urban improvements and the right to housing. One of the distinctive marks of these associations was the renaming of the housing space by using religious toponyms, as set out in the list of associations linked to the Federation of Favela Workers of Belo Horizonte seized by the political police (APM, 1962).

Unlike Pau Comeu, the residents connected to the association nominated the space Our Lady of the Rosary. In the region, today identified as an agglomeration of Serra, near the São Lucas neighborhood, there were two more favelas that used toponyms associated with popular Catholicism as a way to counteract the stigmas of poverty. This was the case of the favela Vai Quem Quer (You go if You Want), also identified as Vila Nossa Senhora da Conceição [Our Lady of the Conception] (MINAS GERAIS, 1966, p. 63). This was also a space for constructing leisure and religiosity, in the sociability of the rosary festivals organized in the region and led by black families who lived in the favelas near the Serra neighborhood.¹¹

The contrasting perspective of the “general views” placed the city in opposition to the favelas, prioritized stigma and affirmed social distances, reducing the importance of economic relations woven by the construction workers, washer women and other forms of domestic work within the residential neighborhoods near the favela. While in the “partial views,” the human presence was registered in a distant framing, as a residual trace of the photographic snapshot, the images

9. In basic terms this means “The stick has dealt with it”, and although has little significance in English, in Portuguese it is a common expression used to denote a situation that has become highly critical, with the strong possibility of fighting, and little chance of reaching a peaceful agreement.

10. According to the regional section of IBGE, in 1955 there were 2,102 inhabitants and 604 households in Pau Comeu (IBGE, 1955). In the 1965 favela census, the numbers were, respectively, 2,758 inhabitants and 623 households (MINAS GERAIS, 1966, p. 63).

11. The Sisterhoods of the Rosary in Belo Horizonte and nearby, in the construction of the metropolitan space were inventoried in *Percursos do sagrado*. GIBRAN, E.; MOYSÉS, J. (org.). *Percursos do sagrado Irmandades do Rosário de Belo Horizonte e entornos*. Belo Horizonte: Canal C, 2014.

of the Pedreira Prado Lopes favela changed this situation. In the final sequence of photographs from the Favela Extinction Commission (see Table 1: Photographs 10 to 16), the presence of the photographer and his camera became invasive and was perceived by those being photographed. The residents were focused upon as an object of observation and reacted to the photograph by posing or becoming embarrassed (see Figures 3 and 5).



Figure 3. Pedreira Prado Lopes

Note: Equivalent to Photograph 10 from the sequence of photographs by the Favela Extinction Commission (Table 1).



Figure 4. Pedreira Prado Lopes

Note: Equivalent to Photograph 14 from the sequence of photographs by the Favela Extinction Commission (Table 1).



Figure 5. Pedreira Prado Lopes

Note: Equivalent to Photograph 15 from the sequence of photographs by the Favela Extinction Commission (Table 1)

Figures 3, 4 and 5 addressed the demands of the Social Services in the Favela Extinction Commission. Emerging in the 1940s, Social Services became a recognized profession in 1957 (BRASIL, 1957). The formation of a career as a social worker is related to incorporating, by the public authorities, functions related to the private sphere of family, philanthropy and labor relations in the treatment of vulnerable groups. It was an attempt to rationalize the debate on combating poverty and to transform a discourse, which had gained strong political connotations through the modernization of societies, into something “technical”. The social question had to leave the orbit of the “class struggle” and become a theme of social reformism by liberals and Catholics, articulated by the middle classes. Catholic universities were pioneers in organizing a Social Work course in the 1940s, and in defending the ideology of “social peace” (IAMAMOTO; CARVALHO, 2013; VIEIRA, 2013)

In Belo Horizonte, it was down to Father Luís Viegas to endorse the study of the Favela Extinction Commission and the creation of the DHBP. Leading the Catholic Action in Minas Gerais, he was one of the professors at the School of Social Work, created in 1946 and later integrated into the Universidade Católica. In addition to Viegas and the physician and psychologist Halley Alves, linked to the School of Social Work, two social workers were part of the commission, acting as researchers: Modesta Manoela Lopes and Maria Conceição Machado. A university degree in Social Work, and work with the social issue became the gateway for

several middle-class women to construct their autonomy, initially linked to the Catholic Youth movement (ROCHA, 2017, p. 135-139).

The sequence of Pedreira Prado Lopes photographs provides a walk through the interior of the favela, with a photographic record of the residents, types of residence and living conditions from the perspective of social work. The last three images in the sequence simulate a visit to the interior of a residence, enabling the material precariousness of the homes to be observed through the photographic record (see Figure 5). This same perspective was taken by the social workers in the study promoted in Morro do Querosene, with the aim of identifying the type of material used to build the houses, the number of rooms and the financial situation experienced by the families living in favelas (BELO HORIZONTE, 1955d). The photographic framing highlighted these same traits observed in the registration of the favelas: the mud brick houses (the *cafua*s highlighted in the original caption), wood, zinc and other materials, the number of people and the number of rooms, the materiality of the interior of the residences – stoves made of tin and clay and improvised beds.

The sequences of images emphasize the “discredited” and indigence. Thus, the emphasis is on photographs of poor women and children, social agents who, in the definition of citizenship in the 1946 Constitution, were considered as being incapable, associated with illiteracy and with civil incapacity within the nucleus of patriarchal families. This was the focus of action by the Catholic Social Services, which worked with the intention of recovering Christian family values - as opposed to what they described as the “promiscuity” of the favelas. The only man portrayed in the series of photographs from Pedreira Prado Lopes is positioned on the edge of the photograph, while in the center of the photograph there is a woman of color standing in front of clay pots and a makeshift stove. Although records of “color”/ race were not collected in the statistical data drawn up in the census of favelas in Belo Horizonte, the photographs nonetheless highlight the condition of people of color as being associated with social exclusion and social indigence.

Even by changing the frame in order to register human aspects, the photographic images were nonetheless dualized and presented urban informality as disorder, in a heterotopic discourse of what defined the city, based on the normative vision of specialists. The policy of representing poverty and of constructing a particular perspective of favelas also brought about a tension in relation to the rise of favela movements within the democracy of the period. Between 1946 and 1964, the urban policy for the favelas was replete with patronage (paternalism), through an alliance with the union mobilizations of workers and mobilization with regard to the language of rights and citizenship. From the perspective of social movements, politicization of the urban space materialized through alliances

between the favela associations and political leaders of different flags for winning over the right to housing. The movements in the favelas attempted to build their identity in the public space as favela workers who became engaged in campaigns to improve housing and for urban reforms (GONÇALVES, 2013; OLIVEIRA, 2018).

Final Considerations

The photographic image of favelas from the Favela Extinction Commission was linked to relations between middle-class specialists, to business interests in civil construction, and to liberal and Catholic reformists who were addressing the urban issue. The transformation of urban poverty into photographic othering was not neutral and was inscribed in power relations. The photographic perspective responded to an audience interested in presenting the “social problem”, and no consideration was given to how residents actually represented themselves in the public space, emphasizing their identity as workers. Mayor Celso Mello de Azevedo, in his anti-populist alliance, attempted to provide a “technical” answer, with studies and a bill of law in order to institute a housing and “favela extinction” policy in Belo Horizonte, imagining a governability for the administration and the representation of urban poverty.

The photo-documentation of the favelas in the city of Belo Horizonte, a trace of the urban-industrial landscape woven into the mid-twentieth century, also responded to the framing, dialogues and demands of different discourses by specialists: engineers, lawyers and social workers. The photographic perspective framed the urbanistic features of the urban landscape within the “general views” and in the human aspects of the favelas, reproducing the dualization between “hillside” and “asphalt”. The images of social marginality that were produced erased the mobile, porous frontiers constructed by the residents with their ties of work and sociability built into the urban fabric. In this dualized image, favelas appeared as a counterpoint to the planned city and as an extension of the urban-industrial growth of the mid-twentieth century.

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