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Creativity, informality and cultural work in Rio de Janeiro's favelas

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Abstract

In the last decade, new policy initiatives emerged in Latin America as a response to the rise of a 'creative turn' in the global North. This paper examines the impact of such turn on urban cultural policies for informal settlements in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, focusing on the case of 'Favela Criativa' - a governmental programme to support young people's cultural and creative work across favelas. The analysis reveals that the programme has effectively widened the visibility of favelas' cultural and creative work, increased financial public support, and developed practical strategies for working *with* informality. However, it also raises questions about the extent to which this innovative policy development actually challenges prevalent managerial views of creativity guided by a market logic. The paper demonstrates that a focus on informality as groundwork for political resistance in the city can expand our understanding of the creative economy beyond precarisation, self-exploitation and individualization.

Keywords: cultural work, informality, creative labour, favelas, creative economy, Rio de Janeiro

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Introduction

With the title *'Crisis? The creative economy doesn't know what that is'* a local business magazine¹ has recently described how the cultural and creative industries, together with the agribusiness, were the only sectors not hit by the severe crisis currently facing the Brazilian economy. The article celebrates the creative sector's increase in the Gross Domestic Product (from 2.56% to 2.64% between 2013-2015) as well as the increase in the number of formal creative workers (851,200 in 2015, 0,1% higher than in 2013), in contrast to other industries which have seen unemployment, economic downturn and a reduction of staff numbers in Brazil. The magazine's call for more projects dealing with innovation, technology and creativity reflects a growing interest in the economic value of the creative sector and its potential as a remedy in times of profound crises.

Evidently the 'creative bug' has arrived in Brazil and is there to stay. In the last decade, a growing number of policy, industry and academic initiatives have responded to the rise of the so-called 'creative turn' in the global North. Since 2009 a creative economy field has been gradually institutionalised, with the creation of new governmental departments and the launch of new policy initiatives, inspired by the recommendations of international organisations, such as UNCTAD and UNESCO, and a number of conferences and official policy visits to the UK. While global creative trends were mostly received with enthusiasm and have often been closely followed and adopted, at times they have been questioned and adapted, giving way to new concepts and practices that have attempted to try out new ideas and in doing so, expand prevalent models of the creative economy.

¹ Melo, C. (2017) 'Crise? A economia criativa não sabe o que é isso', Istoé Dinheiro, Edition number 1042, 20/10/2017, available online: <https://www.istoedinheiro.com.br/crise-economia-criativa-nao-sabe-o-que-e-isso-2/>

Within the Brazilian context, the state of Rio de Janeiro has pioneered policy development in the creative economy. It comes second after São Paulo in terms of creative GDP (representing 15,5% of the total national figure) and at present it has the largest portion of creative organisations in relation to the total number of companies within the state: 5,5% of those companies have 'creativity' as its main production input, compared to the 3,7% at the national level (Firjan, 2016). Despite these promising figures, Rio de Janeiro city has traditionally shown an unequal concentration of its cultural services and infrastructures in the (wealthiest) Southern and central areas, which has been persistently denounced by the local cultural sector, demanding a decentralisation of funding, venues and resources. Equally, the creative production of Rio's 'periphery', comprising the city's *favelas* or popular communities, has remained largely invisible and neglected by society, the media and the State.

Adopting a critical sociological perspective and drawing on desk-based research as well as interviews with policy officers and cultural producers, the paper seeks to examine the impact of such creative turn on urban cultural policies for informal settlements. The focus is on Favela Criativa, an ongoing programme launched by Rio de Janeiro's state government in partnership with the private sector and the International Development Bank, to support young people's cultural and creative work in various *favelas*. This programme has created circuits of creative and cultural activities, launched new 'creative' public funding calls, provided arts training and organised innovative events such as 'collaborative economy' weeks. An analysis of three key dimensions of this policy – its approach to the question of informality, its political economy and its view on creativity – reveals that it has effectively widened the public visibility of *favelas'* cultural and creative work, increased the financial public support available for popular cultural forms, and developed practical strategies for working *with* informality, rather than denying or excluding it. As we will see, while these outcomes have brought about benefits for young workers and suggest Favela Criativa is a ground-breaking programme that puts creativity at the centre of arts training and cultural development, they also raise questions about the extent to which this seemingly innovative policy development actually challenges prevalent managerial views of creativity driven by a market logic.

The article begins with a review of the key tenants of cultural work, pointing to a knowledge gap in the academic literature largely produced from the global North. With the aim of addressing this gap, the focus moves to a discussion of informality and cultural policies in shanty towns in Rio de Janeiro, which sets out the context for the analysis of the Favela Criativa programme, provided in the third section. There I examine how this state's policy initiative came into being, discussing its aims, activities, audiences and the challenges so far encountered. This case study proves relevant for understanding how creative work operates in favelas, mediated by the central role of local NGOs, and how an official push for formalisation coexists with politically shaped informal cultural practices that contest dominant stigmas of favelas as places of only violence, marginality and crime. Finally, the conclusion moves forward the discussion about informality and precarity in the sector, paying attention to the political function of cultural work in contexts of deprivation, poverty and social exclusion.

The article makes three key contributions to the academic field: a) that informality can be valued as a market and praised as a brand from a public policy perspective, rather than being perceived merely as an impediment or an undesired 'other', as it has traditionally been the case; b) from a social perspective, the need to re-think creativity as *social* enterprise (McRobbie, 2016) beyond individual outcomes emerges, paying more attention to collective entrepreneurship in the margins and the role of NGOs in articulating cultural work; and c) from a political perspective, there is a need to re-think creative work as fundamentally a labour of resistance and radical action, where informality can be a source of inspiration, creativity and activism, instead of acting only as a deterrent of success or being a passive object of neoliberal precarisation, self-exploitation and individualisation.

Re-thinking informality in cultural work

Cultural work can be understood as a meaning-making practice and a sub-category of the more general creative labour process within the creative industries (McGuigan, 2010:323-324). A focus on cultural work involves a consideration of the nature, organisation, practices and experiences of those working in the arts and the cultural and creative industries. In recent years, there has

been a predominant academic concern about the changing conditions and ongoing transformation of cultural work and its laboring subjectivities which, in contemporary capitalism, require embracing risk, sacrifice and entrepreneurialism (Banks, Gill and Taylor, 2013:3) and present challenges for creative labour to offer 'good' or 'bad' work in terms of decent pay, safety, self-realisation, work-life balance and security (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). A labour process perspective of cultural work has also warned against the existing bias towards analysing consumption rather than production in the creative industries and the need to focus on the actual dynamics of work from the perspective of producers, makers and service-providers, as well as the content of creative labour, contract relations, and the management of creative labourers (McKinlay and Smith, 2009). In short, a call has been made to 'get back to work' and reopen the black box of the everyday practices of cultural production (Beck, 2003:13).

Working conditions in the cultural and the creative industries are largely informal and precarious, and this is no exception in Brazil. Studies from the global North have provided striking evidence about the precariousness, exploitation, uncertainty, work insecurity, low or no pay, and short-term contracts that affect those working in the cultural and creative industries (Gill, 2002; McRobbie, 2003; Banks, 2007; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; among many others). Key debates have centred around the exclusionary nature of networks in the creative economy (Christopherson, 2009), the growing inequalities and marginalization within cultural work, the processes of individualisation, immateriality, precarity and self-exploitation in post-industrial Western contexts, and the need to develop more historical and situated accounts of the conditions of creative production (Banks, Gill and Taylor, 2013). Fundamentally, these studies have shed light on the art-commerce relationship – the existing tension between capitalist imperatives and creative autonomy; the workplace – that space 'inhabited typically by small firms and freelancers struggling only to keep afloat amidst the turbulent waters of the "new" "creative" economy' (Banks, 2007:10); and the stark racial, class and gender inequalities (Gill, 2002) that pervade work in these industries and remain, to a large extent, invisible.

The ways the creative economy functions as a (Foucauldian) dispositif of self-regulation and self-monitoring in a romaniticised, individualistic style of work that leaves no place for radical politics has also been documented (McRobbie, 2016). Under neoliberal conditions, such

individualisation, which constitutes a key condition of work in the creative economy alongside enduring features such as increasing risk, uncertainty and change (Christopherson, 2009), has undermined collective representation and the protection of workers (McGuigan, 2010). This new middle-class, entrepreneurial workforce made up of artists, DJs, designers, IT developers, musicians and writers, has led to the emergence of a 'new post-Welfare era' in Europe (McRobbie, 2016:35-38), marked by competition and commerce but also by austerity, economic crises and widespread unemployment for young people.

In contrast to European societies where precarity has appeared as a condition of post-Fordist capitalism, in the global South 'precarious work has arguably always been a part of the experience of laboring poor' (Millar, 2014: 34). Particularly in informal settlements where precarity has been linked to forms of urban violence, marginality, stigmatisation and economic uncertainty. Distinguishing between precarity as a condition of labour and precarity as a form of ontological experience in the everyday lives of the urban poor, Millar (2014) argues that for many workers in Rio de Janeiro unstable everyday living destabilizes the prospects of regular work; in other words, the rigidity of waged employment is at odds with the uncertain and difficult life at the urban peripheries. Cultural work in the favelas is no exception and, to a large extent, is carried out informally, although many small organisations have formally obtained a CNPJ (employer identification number). Workers apply for funding when there is a public call, use their networks to access opportunities; freelancing, part-time and unpaid jobs are common, and precarity persistently characterizes work in the sector.

Informality in the creative economy of favelas can be better understood through the lenses of a *cultura de baixo pra cima* (bottom-up culture). Culture from the bottom-up alludes to the participatory, horizontally organized and innovative processes, practices and languages of creative action and artistic production (Costa and Agustini, 2014) that have flourished in Rio de Janeiro favelas in the last two decades. Informality here takes the form of collaborative projects, networks and experimental initiatives by cultural agents, individuals and arts groups, situated in the realities and histories of particular territories, concerned with how to use cultural and arts activities for social transformation and the promotion of citizenship. This type of cultural movement emerging from favelas has been referred to as *cultura da periferia*, 'the greatest

novelty of the twenty-first century' (Buarque de Hollanda, 2007), a diversity of inventive cultural expressions defined by their power to resist mainstream society's prejudices, to effect social change and to create new languages, aesthetics and urban imaginaries.

This understanding of informality differs from that which refers to individual precarisation and exploitation in the creative industries in Northern contexts. Informality in the context of a periphery's culture is plural, not individualistic, and is a way of re-claiming young people's position in the city and their right to produce culture – not just to consume it. Cultural consumption remains unequal, though, and the concentration of cultural infrastructures in the city's wealthiest South is striking. But what artists and cultural producers from *favelas* ultimately dispute is access to the means of creative production – their right to express themselves, secure public and private resources and produce meaningful objects, processes and practices with which to re-invent the harsh territories they inhabit. It is, fundamentally, a view of cultural work permeated by power and politics, oriented towards the search for sustainable, creative and alternative solutions to existing social problems.

Informality, cultural policies and favelas

Brazil's creative economy is a field under construction, rapidly developing. Over the last decade its cultural and creative sectors have experienced continuous, gradual growth and attracted increasing policy support. Creative industry mapping documents were published by FIRJAN, Rio de Janeiro's Industries Federation, in 2008, 2011 and 2012. A Creative Economy Secretariat was created in 2011 as part of the Ministry of Culture and linked to a Creative Economy Observatory based at the University of Brasilia. From a governmental perspective, the new economy is considered fundamental for the country's socio-economic development and key to its recovery in times of profound crises, as recently stated by the Secretary of Cultural Economy (Mansur Bassit): 'Brazil is in a hurry, and the cultural economy seeks to be one of the engines of the new cycle of economic growth and social progress' (Valiati and Fialho, 2017:8) [author's translation]. Mapping the performance of the creative sectors and measuring the economic importance of culture have concentrated most of the institutional efforts and

resources through partnerships between university institutions, the private sector and different governmental levels.

There are, obviously, many challenges facing the institutionalisation of the creative economy as a policy field. Some relate to what is generally perceived as ‘a lack of professionalism’ in the sector, with small companies and organisations not familiar with or interested in developing a business model or adopting a business language, fearful of putting their artistic and creative side at risk in view of pressing market forces. Equally there are several obstacles for data collection, as a high proportion of workers belong to the informal sector, posing major challenges for formal economic measurements and public policy diagnosis and intervention. Focusing only on the formal market of cultural consumption and production, as FIRJAN’s studies have done, fails to produce an accurate picture of the creative sectors’ actual contribution to the Brazilian GDP, for they do not capture the vast informal creative economy, whose legal and institutional frameworks still need to reach a state of maturity (Guilherme, 2017).

Often associated to traditional or popular cultural expressions perceived as difficult to formalise, informality is a fundamental feature of creative work in Brazil. The number of self-employed workers or employees working in companies without formal contracts in creative activities, particularly in small and ‘invisible’ venues, associations and micro-enterprises, has increased between 2006-2010, with the informal sector providing key inputs to the creative economy alongside the formal market (Kon, 2016). Apart from the problems of measuring the largely invisible informal economy, the Brazilian account system presents several information gaps in their national, regional, state and municipal statistics, and the situation is worsened in the arts sector where studies of supply chains are scarce and need more accurate mapping methodologies (Loiola, 2017).

Rio de Janeiro, with its estimated 1,000 favelas, epitomises the ‘informal city’ in its geography of extreme inequality and contradictions, where urban violence, racism and poverty co-exist with wealth, tourism and mega-sporting events. Favelas, since their early days, have been unwanted and rejected by the ‘formal city’, persistently threatened with removal (Perlman, 2010:26). Being an object of urban policies and social research, they have been the target of dominant and

reductionist media representations that portrayed them as homogeneous sites of violence and drug trafficking, places of 'war' between police and gangs, stereotypes of illegality and difference, creating a systematic association between poverty and criminality (Valladares, 2005) and erasing the existing diversity in and across favelas. Favela residents, consequently, have suffered constant and endless prejudices, such as that they are lazy and dominated by need and irrationality, or that they cannot make consumer choices or control their fertility (Caldeira, 2000:73-74). Indeed, favelas are better defined taking into account the deeply rooted stigma and their curvilinear visual markers, rather than by their location, informality, illegality, precarity of construction materials, lack of services, poverty or misery (Perlman, 2010:30).

Drug-trade has a central organising force in favelas' community life – with its informal rules, regulations and codes of conduct. It co-exists with violent police interventions, the state's failed provision of basic public services, and the work, networks and support of local NGOs, the family and the Evangelic church (Jovchelovitch and Priego-Hernandez, 2013). This poses a fatal paradox for favela-residents: 'if they follow the laws of the drug trade they break the law of the state, and if they break the law of the drug trade they are simply likely to be killed, or to have one of their loved ones killed' (ibid, p.61). Apart from being a space for socialisation, the powerful, armed drug-trade becomes, for many, a pathway to work in a context marked by a lack of opportunities, poverty and segregation.

Favelas' cultural and creative economies develop in these harsh contexts, driven by young people's time and resources, which are largely unpaid and carried out under precarious conditions. The work of local NGOs is key in facilitating spaces, articulating networks and generating training and networking opportunities in the sector. Although the current State's presence in favelas is limited and often reduced to the presence of the military police, there have been some cultural policy interventions, such as the *Lonas Culturais* (Cultural Tents) programme created in the 1990s converting conference tents into basic venues for arts performances and cultural activities in Rio's suburbs. The *Pontos de Cultura* network, implemented in 2004 under Gilberto Gil's cultural administration, was groundbreaking in increasing young people's access to public funding, cultural goods and services. It established thousands of 'points of culture' in civil society organisations (mostly NGOs and foundations), run collaboratively and guided by a

concern with social inclusion, cultural diversity and decentralization of resources, setting an important precedent in the democratization of cultural policies in Brazil and Latin America, despite challenges regarding funding, sustainability and post-grant accounting. Other policy initiatives such as the *arenas carioca* and *bibliotecas parque* have started to tackle the major problem of limited cultural infrastructure in peripheral areas of Rio de Janeiro.

Another intervention, Solos Culturais (Cultural Soils), led by the NGO Observatório de Favelas, trained 100 young residents from five different favelas (Penha, Cidade de Deus, Mangueiras, Rocinha and Complexo de Alemão) in arts and cultural production as well as social research and data collection on cultural participation. *Mapa de Cultura* (Culture Map), an online platform of the Rio's state governmental cultural secretary, has also compiled visual and geographical data about cultural spaces, people, activities and heritage across the state. Similarly, the *Gambiarra Favela Tech* artistic residency at Complexo da Maré has managed to work around informality by capitalising on favela-based young people's creative skills for informal problem-solving, technological experimentation and re-invention with improvised objects such as electronic waste.

There is something fundamentally political about favela-based cultural work: its driving force is the challenging and re-invention of the (dominant negative) social representations of favelas. It is also about re-claiming not only a right to the city and to cultural production, but mainly its being a constitutive part of the city and its culture (rather than its informal 'other'). In this sense, the cultural work of groups such as AfroReggae, CUFA and Nós do Morro, operating in various Rio de Janeiro's favelas, such as Vigário Geral, Cidade de Deus, Madureira and Cantagalo, have used, since 1990s, cultural production and the arts to embrace favela life and 'to reclaim identity and reposition the ideas, visions, perspectives and experiences of favela youth in the agenda of Brazilian society' (Jovchelovitch and Priego-Hernandez, 2013:52), re-writing centre-periphery relations in the city. Culture in the favela, then, becomes a weapon (Neate and Platt, 2006), a form of resistance as well as an alternative pathway to work outside the violent and dangerous world of drug trafficking. Creative labour offers a way of making connections with the rest of the city and demanding recognition, visibility and respect.

The question of the (in)visibility of creative labour in favelas paradoxically becomes one of the driving forces of cultural production in these territories. Even if work is precarious, it becomes a way for favela residents 'to distinguish themselves from criminals in the eyes of the state and broader society' (Millar, 2014: 41). As De Tommasi (2013:29) put it, 'neither criminals nor cheap labour, but artists'. Favela residents are usually treated as target audiences for the mass consumption of all kinds of products, rather than as active and creative subjects (Barbosa, 2013). Cultural work in favelas, beyond its (in) formal nature, allows the constituting, re-affirming and legitimising of one's identity in relation to a contested, lived space. In other words, 'the creative place of young people from favelas is not a circumstantial act or wandering curiosity, but rather, a way of making culture and making oneself a subject in the city' (Barbosa, 2013:23) [author's translation].

All in all, beyond the negative attributes assigned to favela-residents by media discourses and public opinion and the deeply unequal cartography of cultural infrastructure in Rio de Janeiro, the role of NGOs has been key in supporting informal creative economies, and favelas have been equally seen as productive and entrepreneurial, as we will discuss in the next section.

Favela Criativa

In a pioneering move within the Brazilian context, Rio de Janeiro State's Cultural Secretariat created in 2009 Rio Criativo, an incubation agency for entrepreneurial initiatives as part of its Creative Economy Area. It was aimed at helping small enterprises across a range of fields – from fashion and design, to advertising, performing arts and popular culture – to reach maturity and enter the market through an 18-month incubation period, functioning as a *formalisation* process and involving consultation sessions, business training and performance monitoring.

One of the issues the programme was meant to tackle was the existing 'dreadful culture of project-based work' in the creative industries. As Joana, the former Coordinator of the Creative Economy Area, explained:

'The cultural market used to work pretty much around a particular moment, a specific project. So you're developing one project, you secured the resources for that project, you put together a team for that project. And when the project ends, you have to undo the team and you will start fundraising for another project... So projects are a key part of work in the cultural sector' (interview, 2014) [author's translation].

Rio Criativo is Brazil's first incubation agency oriented exclusively towards the development of the creative economy. Its precedent was an office for the support of cultural production (running between 2008-2010), helping entrepreneurs from the Rio de Janeiro's state to transform ideas into projects and businesses. The agency incubates start-up companies and cultural agents, recently started working with networks and collectives, and supports over 5,000 agents per year across the state.

The question of informality in the creative sector is, in fact, what led to the creation of this governmental agency. Informality is seen as the main challenge facing Rio Criativo and at the same time, its *raison d'être*, as its Director explained:

There is a serious lack in the education of the work force, particularly the technical background of those working in the creative economy, but also and mainly their entrepreneurial training. Precisely that is what Rio Criativo Incubation Agency tries to cure or to minimise. It would be to provide management training, tools for strategic planning and tools for accessing a diversity of financial sources (Marcos, interview, 2016) [author's translation].

Such difficulties are explained in view of Brazil's colonial history, marked by slavery and the multiple economic, social and political crises. But they are also interpreted in view of the country's existing public cultural policy model, which only provides funds for the sector through two main pathways: a public calls policy (*editais*) and incentive laws (at the federal, state and municipal levels - Lei Rouanet, Lei ICMS and Lei ISS, respectively), and limited access to crowd-funding, loans or investment funds.

The Incubation Agency later launched Favela Criativa, a ground-breaking programme to support cultural entrepreneurship in Rio de Janeiro favelas, particularly aimed at young (15-29 years old) cultural producers and artists. It offers arts and cultural management training as well as funding through thematic calls. Its mission is to strengthen, support and give visibility to the cultural production of urban and rural areas of the state, as well as to improve access to cultural production, acknowledge the role of young people in shaping their own territories, and increase their participation in cultural policy design in the widest range of cultural expressions and artistic languages. The programme was created in 2014 and was expected to run until 2016. It has, however, been re-launched and re-branded as Programa Territórios Culturais RJ/Favela Criativa.

Under the new name, 10 public funding calls were launched across a range of 16 action areas focusing on social inclusion through cultural development, not only in the city's favelas but also rural areas and across 31 municipalities of the Rio de Janeiro state (O Globo, 2016). Funding for Favela Criativa came from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), an electric energy company (Light) and the National Agency for Electric Energy (ANEEL). A cultural production company (Mil e Uma Imagens Comunicação) managed the programme during 2015/2016, led by Content and Production Coordinator, Marina, who stated the aim was to showcase the effervescent and diverse cultural scene of favelas which goes well beyond the genres of samba and funk (Virgilio, 2015). Over 350 projects registered, and 2,500 people participated.

The then State Cultural Secretary (Adriana Rattes) explained that the Favela Criativa programme:

'doesn't have a paternalistic view on young people's production. On the contrary, the programme starts off with the premise that there exists a vast and valuable granary of cultural and arts talents, of creativity in general, in such places. And we want to offer the opportunity to form and develop them with excellence' (cited in Gandra, 2014) [author's translation].

In 2015 a one-off *Feira de Negócios* (Business Fair) offered formalisation training through consultancy sessions on marketing, finance and fundraising to a group of selected 53 cultural entrepreneurs from the city and its peripheral areas. There were panel presentations, workshops, exhibitions, and the opportunity to meet with potential sponsors to pitch ideas and

receive funding. The fair was followed by a series of events, the *Circuito Favela Criativa*, 110 artistic exchange initiatives among artists from different territories, as well as theatre, music and dance performances. The circuits involved temporary large-scale cultural performing venues in existing sites, such as public libraries, samba schools or sports fields, across a range of peripheral locations, employing producers, communication staff, stage technicians, scenographers, security staff and paramedics.

Interestingly, some activities took place only in the favelas that had 'UPPs', that is, where Pacifying Police Units (UPPS) have been established. Favela Criativa, then, comes to *complement* the state's (policing) intervention with a cultural training programme:

'You know that the state's government has implemented the UPPs policy... so the idea is that the state intervenes also through a support offer, [using] other pathways to engage the local community. This is a training programme... of cultural agents in the communities, over a period of 6 months, focused on the generation of cultural projects, its management, and on entrepreneurship... [so we] think of these projects as ways of engaging a community for local transformation' (Joana, interview, 2014)

The UPPs, thus, have a mediating role in the implementation of the programme. Until recently, the details of the cultural activities had to be submitted for approval to this unit, allegedly for security reasons, creating another administrative hurdle and subjecting creative activities to police scrutiny. The 'state of public calamity' declared by the state government of Rio de Janeiro just before the Olympic Games in 2016, with its deep financial crisis and the worsened situation of UPPs in favelas, with more frequent armed confrontations, delayed payment to the programme participants. 'We did it anyway: with courage', rather than with the expected, continued financial support, after an initial phase of the programme implementation, the Content and Production Coordinator explained (Marina, interview, 2017).

Although, unlike other governmental programmes, Favela Criativa succeeded in *not* excluding projects or activities on the grounds of their 'informality', post-project accounting still represented a burdensome responsibility for many small organisations, as it had also been the

case with the Cultura Viva programme. 'Formalising' participants as much as possible, in the light of the highly precarious conditions of work in the favelas, remained an implicit goal of the programme and this is described as one of its main achievements. In practice this meant for participants to be on time and work within fixed hours, attend meetings regularly, submit receipts, familiarise themselves with the various tasks involved in cultural production, and learning (formal) patterns of work in the creative economy. The Content and Production Director of Favela Criativa saw the philanthropy of corporate social responsibility - rather than informality - as the greatest problem, since 'favela-based artists survive very well without formalising'. Philanthropy, in contrast, 'doesn't ask for much in return', she explained, breaking up the relationship of commitment, mutual trust and responsibility that Favela Criativa sought to create between the state and the cultural producers. This is in line with what Oliveira (2004:17) found in his study about the emergence of social entrepreneurship in Brazil, interpreted as a new paradigm of emancipatory social intervention that rejects philanthropy, for its logic helps more the consciousness of the philanthropists rather than those receiving assistance. Social entrepreneurship, as enacted by many of the NGOs operating in Rio, is collective rather than individual, seeks to provide solutions to social problems, and is driven by community needs, rather than the need to expand a market and its consumers.

The programme, then, was seen as providing a fundamental tool for the empowerment of favela-based artists, creative entrepreneurs and cultural producers, many of whom had the opportunity to perform in public for the very first time, receiving production and financial support:

'to refer to favela actions as "businesses" and to those making them as 'social entrepreneurs' was really good because they, otherwise, are seen as too informal, so this naming empowered them' (Marina, interview, 2017)

In short, formalisation was described as requiring clear rules and a commitment from both the state and the artists to access resources, exhibitions and opportunities. However, formalisation can also be problematic. While some groups and individuals seek a dialogue with the public authorities hoping to secure funding, many public calls come with a requirement – to be able to submit a proposal, individuals must first be prepared, registered officially and be in command of

the necessary rules, techniques and codes as well as be willing to limit their autonomy by subjecting themselves to the framework of the calls (De Tommasi, 2013:22-26). The precarious conditions of favela-based creative labour vary across communities but consistently relates to the culture of working on one-off or short-term projects and what this produces – a constant need to desperately look for funding opportunities, leaving little time for training or critical evaluation.

Currently the Favela Criativa programme faces a number of challenges concerning increasing levels of urban violence, funding cuts, bureaucracy, changes in the political administrations, and the heterogeneity of the creative economy sector. An alleged lack of business/professional environment and resistance from many informal enterprises to formalise in view of the related legal and financial responsibilities that come with formalisation, also appeared as an obstacle in the implementation of some Rio Criativo agency's activities.

In view of the neoliberal formulations of the creative economy, it is worth considering whether the very existence of a policy programme called 'creative favela' suggests the imposition of a dominant global orthodoxy – with its concepts, models and approaches – upon impoverished territories of the global South. The analysis reveals that this policy initiative has effectively widened the public visibility of favelas' cultural and creative work, increased the financial public support available for popular cultural forms, and developed practical strategies for working *with* informality, rather than denying or excluding it.

And here lies the paradox of the creative economy in contexts of poverty and social exclusion: while it promotes individual entrepreneurialism, by resorting to a commercial rhetoric as well as managerial and subjectivising discourses of enterprise (Banks, 2007), it also creates work opportunities. In this sense, formalisation functions as a way to secure funding and resources, rather than a pathway to a stable job in the highly precarious and informal Brazilian creative economy market. This is in line with what Millar (2014:34) found in her study of waste pickers in Rio de Janeiro: the regularity, strictness and stability of formal employment comes into conflict with the fragile conditions of urban poverty with its socio-economic precariousness. The

exploitation that a formal job might represent leads to the informality of working at the garbage dump to be experienced as a refuge and a stable source of income:

'Just as the transition to wage labor in industrial capitalism entailed the creation of new worker-subjectivities, the transition to precarious labor in contemporary capitalism is also a process involving the transformation of desires, values, and arts of living. In other words, like wage labor, work on the garbage dump is a site of subject-making, which catadores experience and express as transformative of their inner dispositions' (Millar, 2014:45)

The same could be said for the artists and creative entrepreneurs working in favelas – why to formalise if similar difficulties would be encountered in a ‘formal’ sector where exploitation, precarisation and freelancing constitute the norm?

A concern with ‘being creative’ is seen as fundamental for economic development, driven by a market logic that prioritises commercialisation above anything else. As a key referent of a favela-based cultural NGO (Agência Redes para a Juventude) explained, ‘we need to politicize entrepreneurship’ (Faustini, in Costa and Agustini, 2014: 169), rather than only striving to adapt middle-class’ start-up creativity to a market. Faustini is thinking of the poor, young, black worker, who comes from a very different background than the white, middle-class, university-trained artist or entrepreneur from wealthier locations, who constitutes the focus of so many creative labour studies. In his words, ‘entrepreneurship for poor people, in the eyes of hegemonic views, is to help them open a hair beauty parlour’ (ibid), rather than think of them as active agents that can succeed in other cultural or creative sectors. A politisation of entrepreneurship, then, requires paying attention to the contestatory character of favela-based cultural and creative production.

These ‘ex-centric’ views of *favela*-based creative work do not deny the existence of informality and precarity in the sector. Instead, they suggest the need to engage with the nature and outcomes of those informal processes of cultural and creative production – their cultural, urban, socio-economic and political impacts. In fact, informal workers have greater autonomy and control over (unregulated) economic activities than those in the formal economy (Millar, 2014).

This, in turn, can be highly productive in providing a fertile soil for political struggle and the development of an alternative consciousness around social justice and the defense of workers' rights, as shown by favela-based cultural movements in response to the indifference felt from the state and mainstream society. Creativity begins in the favela when public funding is cut (Lerner, 2009).

This celebration of ordinary entrepreneurialism as a way of generating opportunities 'instead of waiting for public policies' (Itaú Social, 2017) is somewhat dangerous. While on the one hand it acknowledges the creative skills and know-how of some favela residents, on the other, the idea of the self-managed entrepreneurial can lead to a position where the state is relieved from its fundamental role as a provider of basic public services and safeguarder of rights, including those relating to the cultural sector. Yet urban entrepreneurialism is co-produced (McFarlane, 2012) and informal entrepreneurs have both been seen as the 'outcasts of the modern capitalist city' as well as a 'set of untapped markets and potential capitalist subjects' in line with 'a long history of romanticising the entrepreneurial flair of slum residents' (2012:2798).

Conclusion: Bottom-up cultural work, between social entrepreneurialism and policy-led marketisation

This article has engaged with the question of informality and labour in an ex-centric location by examining how an innovative cultural policy initiative addressed the creative geographies of informal settlements in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Informality, in the case analysed here, rather than being perceived as an impediment or an undesired 'other', was valued as a market and praised as a brand - 'Favela Criativa'. This governmental initiative exemplified the need to go beyond informal-formal binary thinking to put collaboration with grassroots undertakings at the centre of urban cultural policy making. It also highlights how the favela becomes a product in the light of an increased market value in 'peripheral' art forms, where the 'pacified favela' is valued and reinvented as the place of creativity, innovation and artistic production (De Tommasi, 2013).

We have seen that not being politically, culturally or economically marginal, but rather, historically excluded and discriminated against, favela residents have systematically been poorly

served in terms of cultural infrastructure and resources. As Perlman (2010:14) put it, they 'give a lot and receive very little. They are not on the margins of urban life or irrelevant to its functioning, but actively excluded, exploited, and "marginalised" by a closed social system'. Despite these harsh conditions, we have seen that favela residents 'hold competencies and skills, wisdoms and rationality, which can resist exclusion and produce social development' (Jovchelovitch and Priego-Hernandez, 2013:21) as well as help to inform innovative cultural policy development.

Official attempts at dealing with the informality of favela-based cultural and creative labour suggest the institutionalisation of a *popular* creative economy field that relies on collaboration with civil society organisations running informal, bottom-up initiatives, which are fundamental for the effective implementation of the formal policy programmes, such as Cultura Viva or Favela Criativa. Focusing on the interstices of cultural policy and the borderlands of (in)formality can re-signify sites of social exclusion and infrastructural poverty in the South as creative spaces of cultural production (Mbaye and Dinardi, 2017). The analysis has shown that while dominant, Western perspectives still shape policy developments in the creative economy in Brazil, the Favela Criativa programme entails a creative re-appropriation of incubation business models in contexts of poverty, violence and deprivation.

Is Favela Criativa a progressive policy in support of cultural and creative workers from underprivileged territories? In short, yes. It has mobilised public financial resources, drawn private sector interest and organised cultural events and venues for young people to showcase their skills and talents. Equally, as this article has shown, the politics of this Rio de Janeiro's state policy stems from an entrepreneurial ethos that values self-realisation, personal development and enterprise discourses (Banks, 2007). Favela Criativa is a very recent initiative, therefore, more time is necessary to evaluate its impact. Since this article focused on the policy development aspects of such programme rather than the experiences of workers, an ethnographic perspective into their subjectivities and how they negotiate their creative talents and social concerns with their economic needs could provide useful material to shape Favela Criativa and similar interventions.

From an urban cultural policy perspective, the re-imagining of favela residents as entrepreneurial subjects serves, on the one hand, the discourse of creative cities, aiming to foreground the economic value of creative and cultural activities through (formalising) training, fundraising and capacity-building. In so doing, it brings the state closer to informal settlements, other than the existent (and widely resisted) military police intervention in favelas. In this regard, its engagement with urban informality can be commended. On the other, it raises questions about which alternative ways there might be to support *collective entrepreneurship* from favelas, going beyond the 'incubation model', and taking into account the globalised urban discontent around the failures of building creative cities (García Canclini, 2016).

What this article reveals about creative labour in marginal locations is fundamentally the need to re-think informality and precarity beyond the individual. Engaging with the insurgent work of arts collectives and cultural organisations from peripheral locations, which demand both the right to the city and the right to have rights (Holston, 2009), sheds light on the political economy of entrepreneurship and render informality a platform for dissent and resistance. This finding contributes to answer the question posed by McRobbie (2016:170) in relation to 'what other forms of social enterprise could be imagined within the frame of the culture industries', highlighting the potential role of NGOs in the creative sector for social activism in a context of the shrinking of the welfare state. This deems favela-based artists and cultural producers 'as an injection of hope' from the non-for-profit sector (McRobbie, 2010) yet at the same time puts them in a difficult position marked by a political affirmation of territorial belonging, on the one hand, and economic entrepreneurialism on the other (De Tommasi, 2013). Whether informality is a prevailing condition of creative labour in the global North or a way of life in marginal locations of the global South, considering how it is inextricably entwined in and constitutive of the making of public policy, cultural production and urban space, can help us connect the precariousness of creative production to local practices and global processes of neoliberal economic restructuring, urban violence and social exclusion. In so doing, we can advance new understandings of creative work as a labour of resistance, collaboration and re-invention that calls for an acknowledgement of its transformative nature and radical potential, beyond its market value and cool, entrepreneurial flair.

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