

BRAZIL - What Happens to Those Who "Live in the Way" of the World Cup and the Olympics?

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Foto: Renata Consentino

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Rio de Janeiro has been preparing for huge events such as the World Cup, in 2014, and the Olympic Games in 2016. In many forms of mass media, such as newspapers, television and radio, an air for parties, as well as joy and euphoria, is broadcasted. However, the reality is problematic, and striking. Mainly because the preparations negatively affect a good part of the population.

The impact of the urban interventions has reached thousands of favela residents. Many are victims of forced removals and evictions caused, for example, by real estate speculation. According to the “Dossiê Megaeventos e Violações dos Direitos Humanos”, released by the Comitê Popular Rio Copa e Olimpíadas em 2012, approximately three thousand families have already been removed from their homes. Another seven thousand families are being threatened with eviction, making ten million affected altogether.

Some favelas threatened by removal

In the city of Rio de Janeiro, greater part of those targeted by removal preceding the mega events are favelas. O Morro da Providência, Brasil’s first favela, has 800 to 2000 targeted homes. The prediction is that each family be relocated in distant, unreal neighborhoods like Cosmos, Realengo and Campo Grande. The Vila Autódromo is another threatened favela. The ancient fisherman colony, occupied since the ‘70’s, has a majority of its homes threatened by the prefecture. The prefecture and its investors want to build part of the Olympic Park there and transfer the residents to a housing project of the program My House, My Life. However in 1994 the Vila Autódromo was given the right to grant use for 99 years; conceded by the state government after plenty of struggle and resistance. 236 families live in the area (939 residents).

Mandacaru, in the Maré favelas, was one of the first favelas threatened by this policy of removals that goes back to 2007. Even today the residents still coexist with evictions. At the time, dona Marta Rodrigues (age 50) protested that it was the very residents that helped developed the area when she said, “This is an outrage. When I came to live here eight years ago there was only thick brush, now they want to take away my house for 1400 reais, living us unable to buy another home.”

In the opinion of Rogério Santos (age 42), resident of Maré, post grad of Territorial Policies from Rio de Janeiro State College (UERJ) and Policy and Urban Planning (IPPUR/UFRJ), “the population suffers from this ‘mobilization’ from the governors (Locally, as well as with the State or the very Union) in favor of the ‘advancement of modernity’. To cite examples we can remember the ‘urban operations’ in the Alemão favelas and in Morro da Providência, where sky trolleys were installed without an open counsel within the local populace. The ideal solution would be a relocation of these residents to areas proximate to their old neighborhoods, as was performed in the implementation process of ‘Projecto Rio’, here in the Maré, in the ‘80’s.”

The relation between UPPs, mega events and removals

The police occupation of the favelas has been another policy adopted in Rio de Janeiro, and just like a headline city in world tourism for the next two years, beyond the removals to “clean” the city, “seatbelts” have been created, above all, in the rich areas of the city is as if those in the favela, that live next to these areas, were a threat to the events and the people. Until October of this year, thirty six favelas are already occupied by the Pacifying Police Unit (UPP).

The Maré favela is one of the places that is on the state’s list for the implementation of this policy along the route of the international airport. The abrupt entrance of a UPP in the Maré brings up some questionings from the residents.

It’s the case of Francisco Marcelo, resident of Vila do João and doctoral student at Universidad Federal Fluminense (UFF). To him, “the insertion of the UPP involves a series of mistakes and violations with human rights. Historically, it was thought that the great violator of human rights was armed groups. With the permanent presence of the armed men from the State in the favelas it was sharply seen that the police isn’t prepared to act as it should, that it would be respecting human rights and the social dynamic of favela territories. Thus the simple prescense of the UPPs already appears a violations, due to the different policies executed in territories of the same jurisdiction.”

Furthermore, Marcelo still affirms that “this is the materialization of the Parallel State. What ratifies our analysis are the innumerous denials and observations of violations of the people’s human rights and the incompetency and/or neglect of the police in acting in a different way. The operations for the occupation of the Maré have begun a long time ago and these, like all the others, are marked by violence, foot in the door, disrespect, crossfire and even current “self resistance”.

Roberta Silva (age 28) resident of Salsa and Merengue, commented on her perception of a favela with UPPs since she has friends in the already occupied areas. From what she has seen, the police habitually uses prohibition. For example, they prohibit the use of loud noise, not because they consider the common well-being, but because they can.”

Many residents of these favelas that are occupied by UPPs affirm that beyond that frequent violations of human rights, they also have suffered with the rise of real estate prices. For this reason the residents need to look to other “cheaper” favelas to live in. Some residents and students call this phenomenon “Remoção Branca” (White Removal).

The community response in the streets

In June 2013, Brasil stopped. Not because of the joy of seeing the CBF seleção on the field in the Confederations Cup, but because of the wave of communal assemblies, the greatest in the recent history of the country. During the whole month thousands of people protested, mainly in the six cities of the tournament (Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Brasília, Salvador, Recife and Fortaleza). For the World Cup, in 2014, there is a possibility for a new wave of protests.

The community manifestations that mobilized the country since June initially vindicated the withdrawal of the tax increase on public transportation. Today the clamor of the streets is meshed and the populace no longer wants the decisions to be flipped upside down. Society simply wants more communal participation in decisions.

With more than one hundred favelas on the removal list and more being invaded by a false promise of public security, the favelas are also left to provide themselves basic rights such as: health, education, housing, basic hygiene, transportation and labor. The people aren't against the grand events, but how can they think of the billions spent on "cups", if they don't have the basic living rights guaranteed.

Source (portugues): [Jornal O Cidadao online](#).

Translated by **Riley Pentico**.