

OPEN SPACE SYSTEM AND PUBLIC DIMENSIONS OF SPACE IN THE FAVELA: THE CASES OF PARAISÓPOLIS, LINHA AND NOVE, IN SÃO PAULO

SISTEMA DE ESPAÇOS LIVRES E ESPACIALIDADES DA ESFERA PÚBLICA EM FAVELA: OS CASOS DE PARAISÓPOLIS, DA LINHA E DO NOVE EM SÃO PAULO

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ABSTRACT

The favelas constitute a consolidated reality in the city of São Paulo, concentrating more than 10% of its total population. And the open space system inside the informal city represents great investigative potential in regard to its physical characteristics, to the articulation established between public and private spaces and, mostly, to the public and ordinary practices developed inside it. With this aim, the article selects three favelas in the city of São Paulo as case studies: the Favela de Paraisópolis, the second biggest community in the municipality, which is located in the Morumbi neighbourhood with around 100.000 inhabitants in an area of 100 acres; the Favela da Linha and the Favela do Nove, which together occupy less than 2 acres in the Ceagesp neighborhood, concentrating 630 families. Based on fieldwork, the article shows how the spatial and public dynamics work in these spaces and how they could help us discuss the open space system of the whole city. *Keywords: Favela. Open space system. Public sphere. Public dimensions of space.*

RESUMO

As favelas são uma realidade consolidada na cidade de São Paulo, concentrando mais de 10% de sua população. E o sistema de espaços livres da cidade dita informal constitui grande potencial de investigação, no que diz respeito a suas características físicas, à articulação entre espaços públicos e privados e, principalmente, às práticas públicas e cotidianas nele desenvolvidas. Com esse objetivo, no presente artigo são selecionadas, como estudo de caso, três favelas da cidade de São Paulo: a Favela de Paraisópolis, segunda maior comunidade do município, localizada em meio ao 'Morumbi', com cerca de 100 mil habitantes, em 100 ha de área; e as Favelas da Linha e do Nove que, juntas, ocupam menos de 2 ha, no entorno do Ceagesp, e concentram 630 famílias. Baseado em visitas de campo, o artigo mostra quais as dinâmicas espaciais e públicas que regem estes espaços e que poderiam servir à discussão do sistema de espaços livres da cidade como um todo. Palavras-chave: Favela. Sistema de espaços livres. Esfera pública. Espacialidades da esfera pública.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The article focuses on the open space system and the respective public dimensions of space of three favelas in the city of São Paulo selected as case studies: Favela de Paraisópolis (whose name could be translated into City of Paradise), Favela da Linha (Line) and Favela do Nove (Nine). The case studies were chosen based on populational and dimensional criteria, besides the urban context and the property ownership, with the aim of representing the diverse range of typically consolidated favelas in the city of São Paulo. The theoretical background comes fundamentally from Queiroga (2001, 2006, 2012), due to the synthesis made by the author in the discipline in reference to concepts such as open spaces and their public dimensions.

The goal of the article is to establish a comparative analysis of the open space systems of the selected case studies in regard to their physical characteristics, the articulation built between the public open space system and the private open space set, the public dimensions of their public and private open spaces. The article also asks the effective definition of public and private open spaces within the favela context and how it could nourish the discussion and proposition of the entire city's open space system.

The analysis method applied to the case studies is basically empirical and based on fieldwork, in which hand-drawings and sketches, photographs and informal conversations are highlighted as the most important tools for assessing the research object.

Once it is systematized, and based on the theoretical background, the data gathered leads to a discussion on the open space system and its respective public dimensions in the three favelas selected as case studies in São Paulo.

2 PUBLIC SPACE, SPHERE AND DIMENSIONS

This article does not intend to build a state-of-the-art concept relating to open spaces. With the sole purpose of clearly showing its theoretical background, some concepts are briefly presented in this section.

According to Miranda Magnoli, open space is the space free of buildings and without cover, such as parks, squares, streets, backyards, retreats, patios and wastelands (MAGNOLI, 1982). Depending on the goods ownership, the open space may be public or private. Thus, **public space** is the one which is owned by the Public Sector, regardless of whether it is for the development of the public sphere's activities or not. The public properties may be: of common use by the population, in other words, spaces to be used without asking for permission, such as rivers, highways, streets and squares; of special use, such as buildings and land under governmental management; or "dominicais", which constitute assets of legal entities of public law (BRASIL, 2002, Art. 98).

The set of open spaces forms an **open space system** (OSS):

[...] regardless of its dimension, localization, aesthetic qualification, function and property ownership, public or private. The notion of OSS necessarily implies functional, social and environmental relations, once not all of the open spaces are inter-connected.” (QUEIROGA, 2012, p. 75)

Public open space system (POSS) is the set of public open spaces. In the case of private open spaces, the concept applied is set – and not system – of private open spaces.

The **general public sphere**, which is a different concept than the public space, is composed of the whole life developed in public and includes the political public sphere:

It is what can be seen and heard by everyone, covering the highest disclosure possible; the world itself, meaning that it is common to everyone and different from the place we belong to [...], brings us together at the same time that prevents our collision [...] (ARENDT, 1991, p. 59).

Besides the ordinary life sphere:

A family tour in a public park during the weekend, a walk around the city after work, teenagers’ meeting in an urban cemetery, a public meeting in a Carioca street pub, in a Paulistana bakery or in a Parisian café. The public conviviality, voluntary or involuntary, possesses a degree of civility which is already part of the public life, a member of the general public sphere. (QUEIROGA, 2012, p. 49)

From the conceptual separation between public space and sphere, the notion of **public dimensions of space was built** (QUEIROGA, 2006), which are spatial activities of public life carried out in public or private spaces:

[...] despite the fact they usually take place in public open spaces, mainly in public goods of common use of the population, they may occur in different kinds of space: open or built, public or private. The general public sphere, or even the political sphere, reinforces itself in a wide system of spaces, with higher or lower intensity in different places. (QUEIROGA, 2012, pp. 59-60)

There are several instances of public appropriation of private open spaces, from the informal occupation of wastelands in lots of peripheral areas of Brazilian towns for football pitches, to ‘corporate squares’ [...] The frontal retreats in the plots may express a fundamental public dimension no less important, especially when they allow public visibility to the frontal gardens and buildings. Most of the time this instance refers to visual rather than physical accessibility, building a respectful relationship between the private and public domains. (QUEIROGA, 2012, p. 125)

Having said that, what is the importance of the public dimensions of space, what are their singularities and possible strategies inside favelas? And to what extent do these concepts suit the informal logic of the open space system in the favelas selected in the city of Sao Paulo? The article goes ahead with these concepts and questions in mind.

3 FAVELAS IN SÃO PAULO: PARAISÓPOLIS, LINHA AND NOVE

In the 60's and 70's, the favelas were predominantly built from wood pieces and other provisional or precarious materials. From the 80's on, when public infrastructure and facilities such as sewage, electricity and water supplies started to be implemented in the favelas, it seemed that the Public Sector was permitting this kind of informal settlement. Then, the feeling of insecurity – the so-called “fear of remotion” – started decreasing. From this point on, the local community develops a new relation to its environment, rooted in its own identity, feeling of permanence and, as a consequence, consolidation.

The dwellings, which were originally built of wood, were then gradually rebuilt with brick (figure 1), often coated with mortar and painted, besides ceramic coating on the floor and a concentration of similar goods – or even better – than the ones used by the Brazilian middle class.



Figure 1 General view of the Favela de Paraisópolis.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2012.

In reference to the favelas, the higher level of consolidation and permanence cannot be confused with stiffness and tightness. Quite the contrary, the favelas are recognized by their endless process of construction and reconstruction, in urban and building scales.

Figures 2 and 3 typically show the dynamic process of the favela's development in which: the occupation starts close to the existing urban infrastructure network, such as the road system for example, and expands itself towards non-occupied land in a more organic and spontaneous way, through alleys and lanes; a single building grows in height, meaning that the family grows bigger, or even when the building starts to shelter other families (who may rent or buy an independent floor in the building) or uses (such as a bakery or hairdresser's on the groundfloor, or the rooftop to have barbecues and airing clothes out).

Out of the world's 7 billion inhabitants (UN, 2011), around half live in urban areas (UN, 2010). From this urban population, 29% (DAVIS, 2007) – which corresponds approximately to 1 billion people – live in informal settlements with no guarantee of minimum conditions of salubrity, sanitation and public services.

Brazil, with over 190 million inhabitants and an 84,4% urban population, concentrates 11.425.644 inhabitants living in informal settlements – equivalent to 6% of the country's population and to the total population of the city of São Paulo (11.253.503), the seventh most highly populated city in the world and the top one in the Americas (IBGE, 2010).

Out of the 11 million inhabitants in the city of São Paulo, 3,3 million live in informal settlements (30% of the population) of which 1,6 million live in favelas, in approximately 400.000 dwellings (SEHAB, 2010), with poor access to sunlight and natural ventilation, public equipment and services. In comparison with the data gathered by the IBGE's Census of 2010, the total population living in favelas in the city of São Paulo is 1.280.400, distributed in 355.756 dwellings of which 232.255 are two storeys high and 299.744 don't keep any spacing in between them (IBGE, 2010).

The favelas constitute, in fact, a consolidated reality in the urban scenario of the city of São Paulo (PIZARRO, 2014).

Despite being generally classified as "favela", each one of them presents particular characteristics relating to its occupation history, urban insertion, property ownership, territorial and populational dimensions, besides the level of consolidation or precariousness, and possible investments in housing or infrastructure carried out by the government.

The present article focuses on three favelas inserted in consolidated areas of the city of São Paulo (figure 4). They are chosen based on criteria such as diversity in the property ownership, territorial and populational dimensions. The favelas selected for case studies are: Favela de Paraisópolis; Favela da Linha; and Favela do Nove.

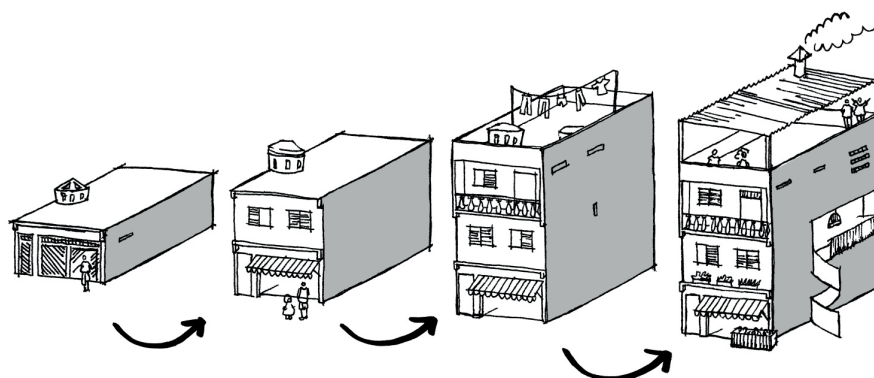


Figure 2 Building's verticalization process.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2016.

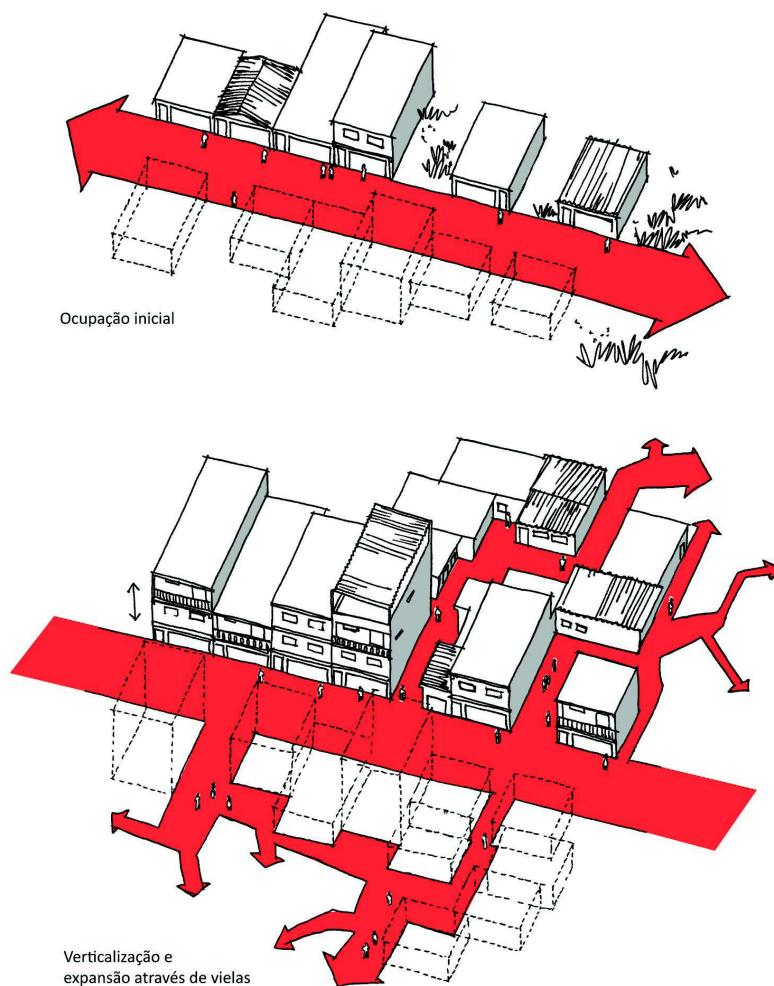


Figure 3 The favela's development, which usually starts close to existing infrastructure networks and then grows horizontally and vertically through alleys and verticalization, respectively.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2016.

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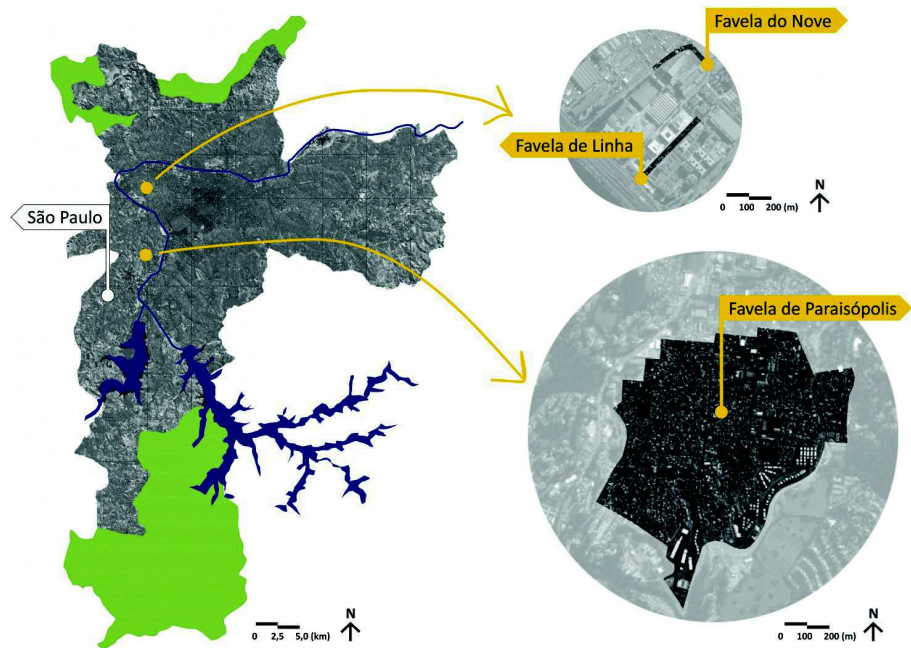


Figure 4 Urban insertion of the selected case studies in the city of São Paulo.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2015.



Figure 5 Urban insertion of the Favela de Paraisópolis in the Morumbi neighbourhood.
Source: author's graphic treatment over picture taken by Silvio Soares Macedo (Acervo Quapá, 2015).

The **Favela de Paraisópolis** (figure 5) resulted from the occupation – in the early 50's – of a privately owned piece of land, measuring around 80 to 100 acres, located in the Vila Andrade District, in the South Zone of the city. Popularly,

Paraisópolis is considered part of Morumbi, an upper class neighbourhood. The estimated population of the favela depends on the source and goes from 43.000 people (IBGE, 2010) to 55.000 (SEHAB, 2011) or 100.000 (according to the Local Community Association), which makes it the second biggest favela in the city of São Paulo, and number eight in the country.

The favelas Linha and Nove are located in a neighbourhood close to the Ceagesp (General Stores Company of São Paulo), in the Vila Leopoldina District, West Zone of São Paulo (figure 6).

The **Favela da Linha** occupies a privately owned plot with around 8.000 m² (SEHAB, 2011). Its occupation process started in 1973 (SEHAB, 2011) and according to the dwellers it was initially restricted to the area owned by the Votorantim Company and after 1991 it expanded towards the railway. Today the Favela da Linha is composed of 360 families (INSTITUTO ACAIA, 2013).

The **Favela do Nove** occupies a publicly owned plot with less than 1 acre of extension – 7.693, 58m² (SEHAB, 2011), which was originally intended to be a public road, the Japiáçu Street. The favela started being built in 1972 (HABISP, 2012) and now has 270 families (INSTITUTO ACAIA, 2013).



Figure 6 Urban insertion of the Favela da Linha and the Favela do Nove in the city of São Paulo.
Source: author's graphic treatment over picture taken by Silvio Soares Macedo (Acervo Quapá, 2014).

4 PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The open space system of the favelas is made up of some specific components such as alleys, lanes, stairs and rooftops, besides the occasional football pitch, which usually represents the biggest open space in the settlement.

The alleys are laid out spontaneously by the dwellers over time and play a crucial role in people's everyday life and the favela's identity itself:

Small labyrinths [...] they have varied shapes. They are steep or level. Some of them are wide and short. Others are dirty and dark or otherwise clean and light. To some dwellers these labyrinths are simple shortcut paths, or even a mandatory route. In Paraisópolis, in the South Zone of São Paulo, the lanes and alleys are responsible for connecting streets, stories and the whole community. (ALENCAR; BELAZI, 2013, p. 30)

The alleys are still precarious, mostly in the Favela da Linha (figure 7) and the Favela do Nove (figure 8) with regard to shortage of sanitation infrastructure, public lighting and maintenance. Furthermore, the alleys are rarely provided with public services such as garbage collection and mail, as highlighted in the following report made by a dweller of the Favela de Paraisópolis:

When I got to the Post Office, the attendant said to me that the telegram was 10 BRL. The price was ok for me. Then I said the recipient's address, and zip code... when I said the house number the attendant was not able to complete my request. I said that the recipient lives in the alley named Alegria [Joy]. However, I got a very direct answer: 'Alleys do not exist to the Post Office' (ALENCAR; BELAZI, 2013, p. 68).



Figure 7 Favela da Linha's main alley. Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2012.

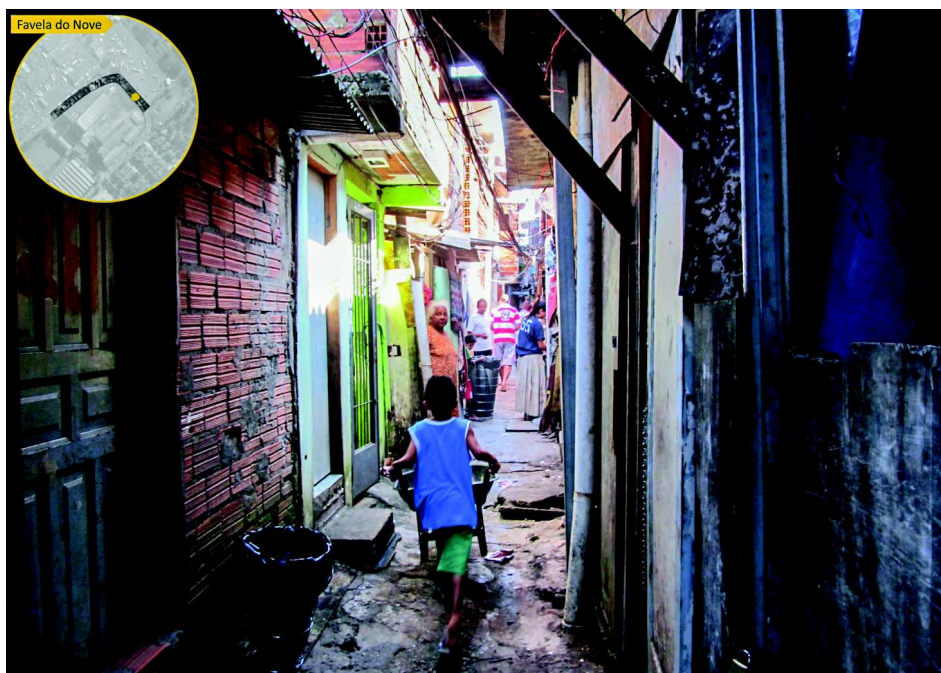


Figure 8 – Favela do Nove’s main alley.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2012.



Figure 9 – Melchior Giola Street, in the Favela de Paraisópolis.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2014.

The open space system of the Favela da Linha and the Favela do Nove is basically structured by one single alley which guarantees access to the dwellings, stairs

and rooftops. In a different way, the open space system of the Favela de Paraisópolis is composed of a large orthogonal network of streets – which was there prior to the informal occupation (figures 9 and 11) – superimposed by an irregular network of alleys, lanes and rooftops (figures 10 and 12) developed inside the rectangular blocks. Such configuration creates a peculiar open space system, which comes from the articulation of formalities and informalities, as shown in the pictures 13 to 16.



Figure 10 Alley in the Favela de Paraisópolis.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2014.

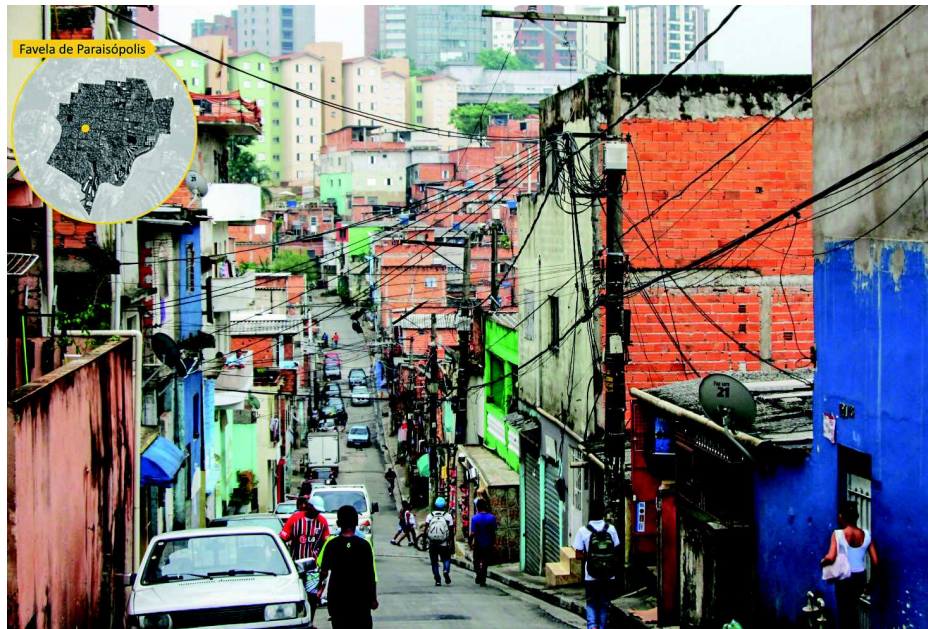


Figure 11 Melchior Giola Street in Paraisópolis, and “Morumbi” in the background.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2014.

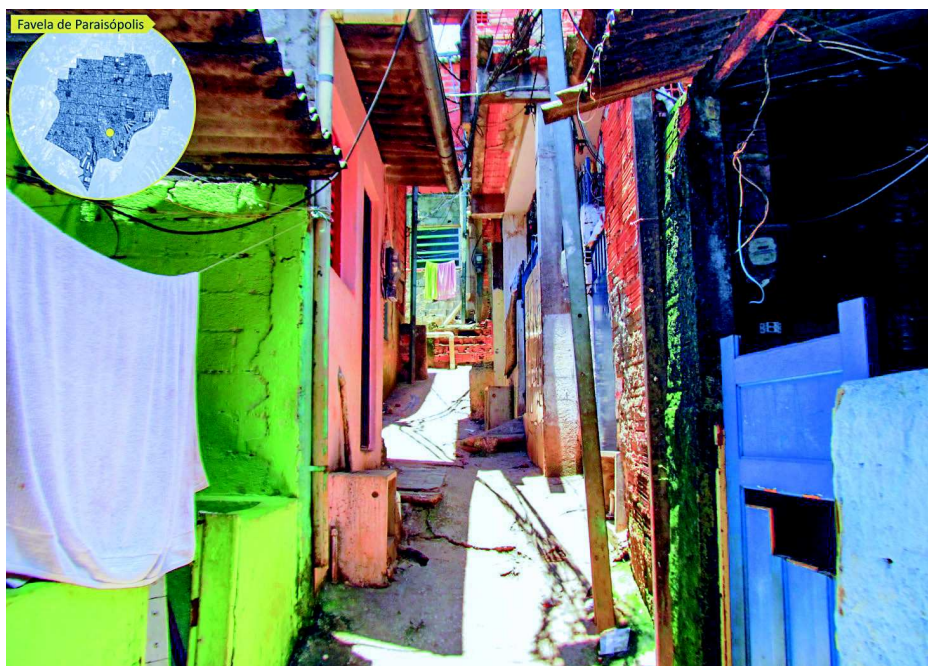


Figure 12 Alley in the Grotão area, in the Favela de Paraisópolis.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2014.



Figure 13 Open space system of the Favela de Paraisópolis (site plan). Highlight to the articulation between the orthogonal system of streets and the alleys' network inside the rectangular blocks.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2014.

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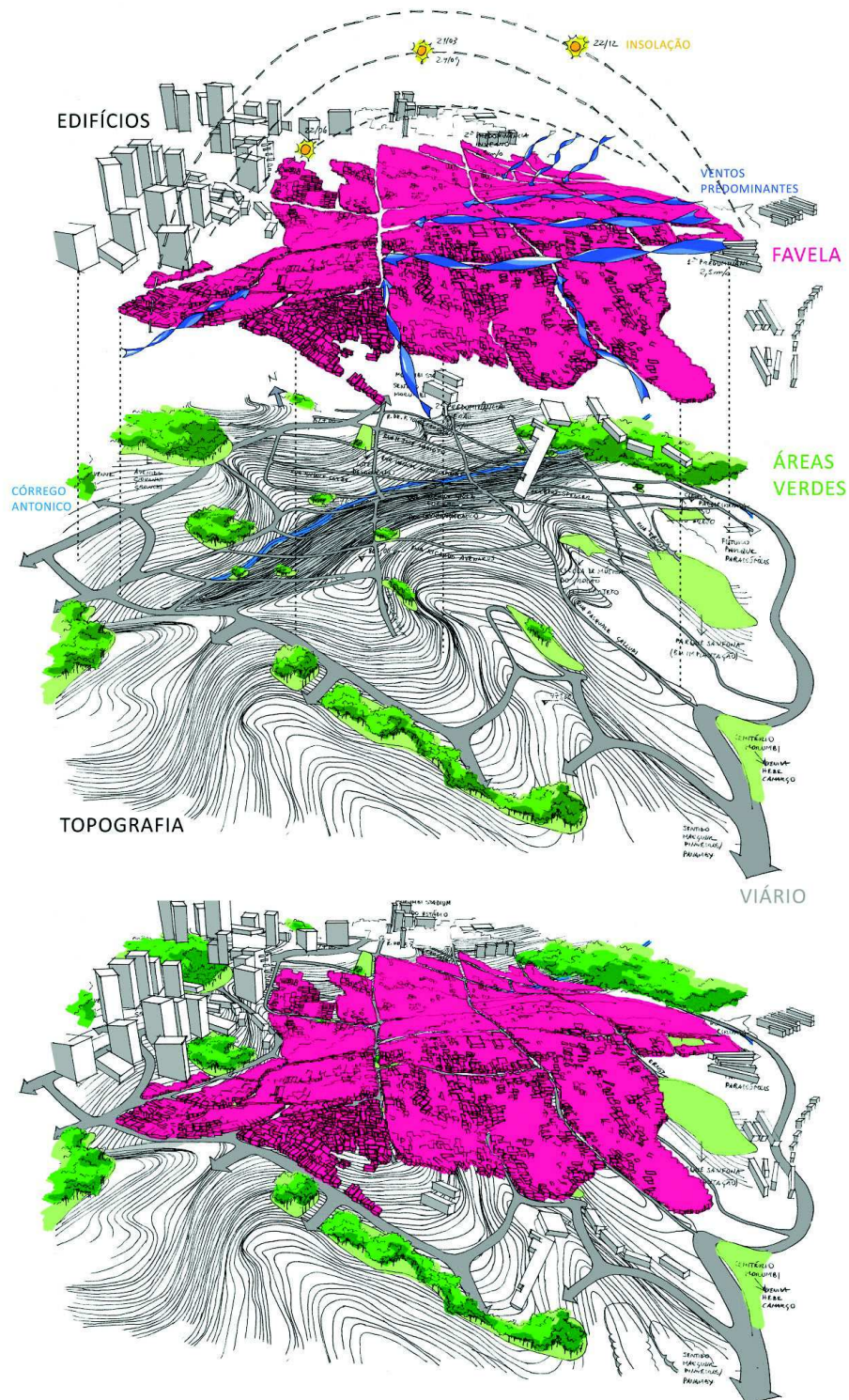


Figure 14 Layers that compose the Favela de Paraisópolis.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2014.

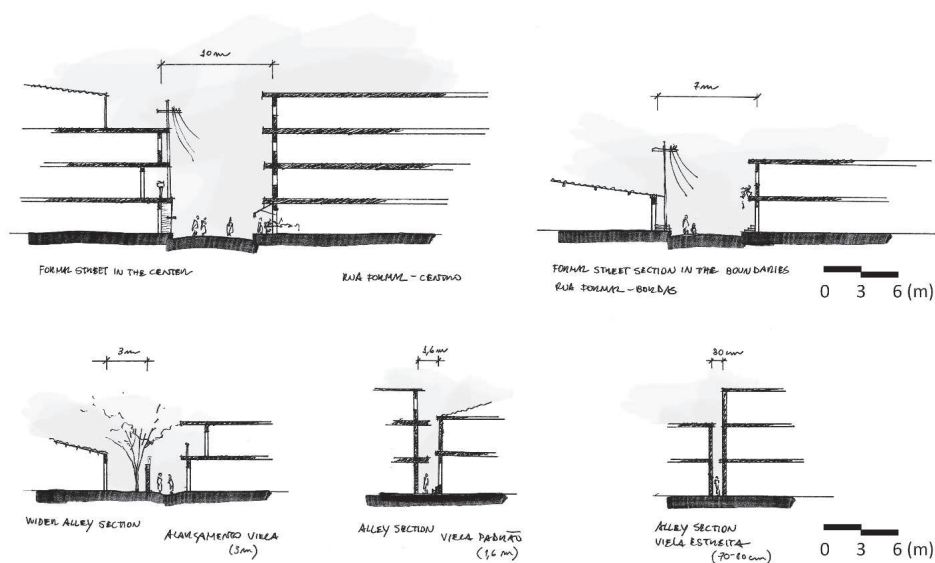


Figure 15 Open space system of the Favela de Paraisópolis (sections).
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2014.

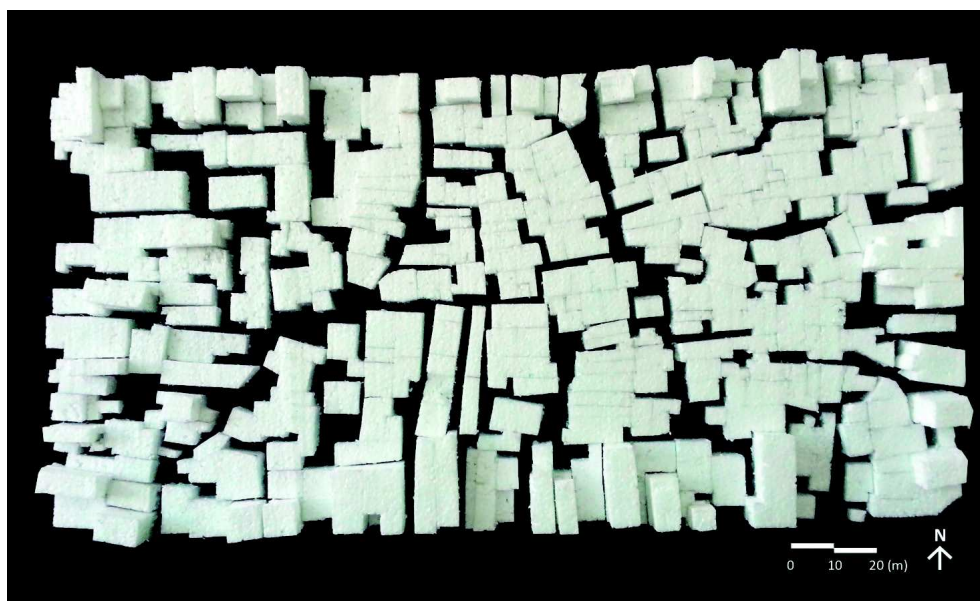


Figure 16 Open space system of Paraisópolis (physical model of a block).
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2014.

In the streets' orthogonal system of the Favela de Paraisópolis, the sidewalks are well defined, with curbs and gutters, as commonly observed in the rest of the city. However, the sidewalks are narrow and most of the time fragmented by steps, which create obstacles for the safe circulation of pedestrians – people, then, usually walk on the streets together with cars, motorcycles, buses and bicycles (figure 17) – actually,

the sidewalks are used as extra space for commercial purposes, on the groundfloor (figures 17 and 18) and also for accessing the upper floors (figure 19). Would it be possible to refer to these strategies as private dimensions of space?



Figure 17 Appropriation of streets and sidewalks in Paraisópolis.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2013.



Figure 18 With no space left, pedestrians walk on the streets of Paraisópolis.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2013.

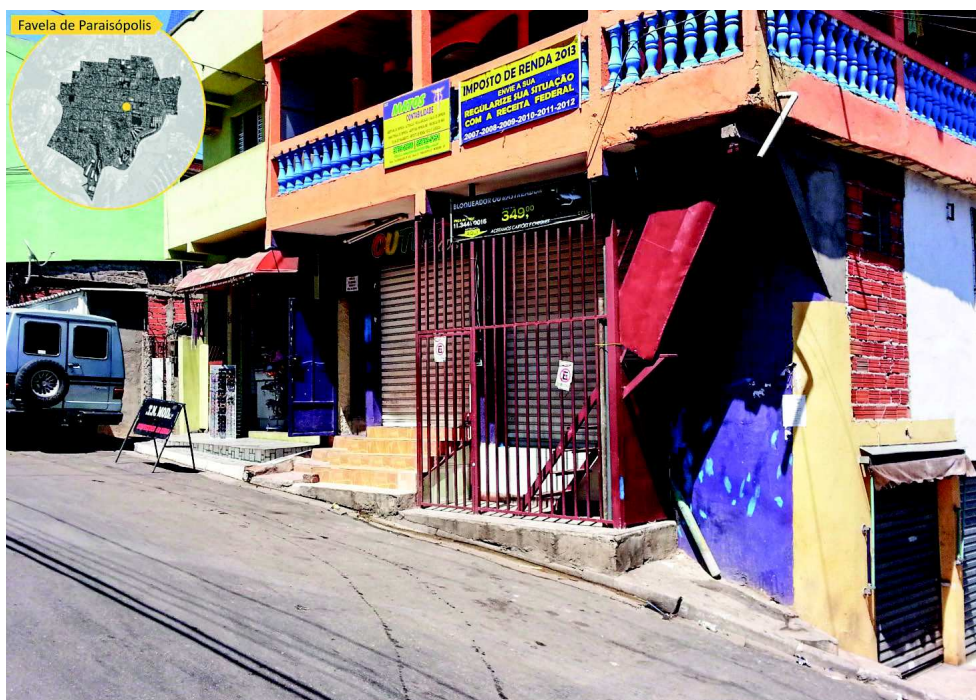


Figure 19 Sidewalk appropriations in the Favela de Paraisópolis.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2013.



Figure 20 Rooftop in the Favela de Paraisópolis (place to collectively dry clothes and/or have a barbecue on the weekends).
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2013.

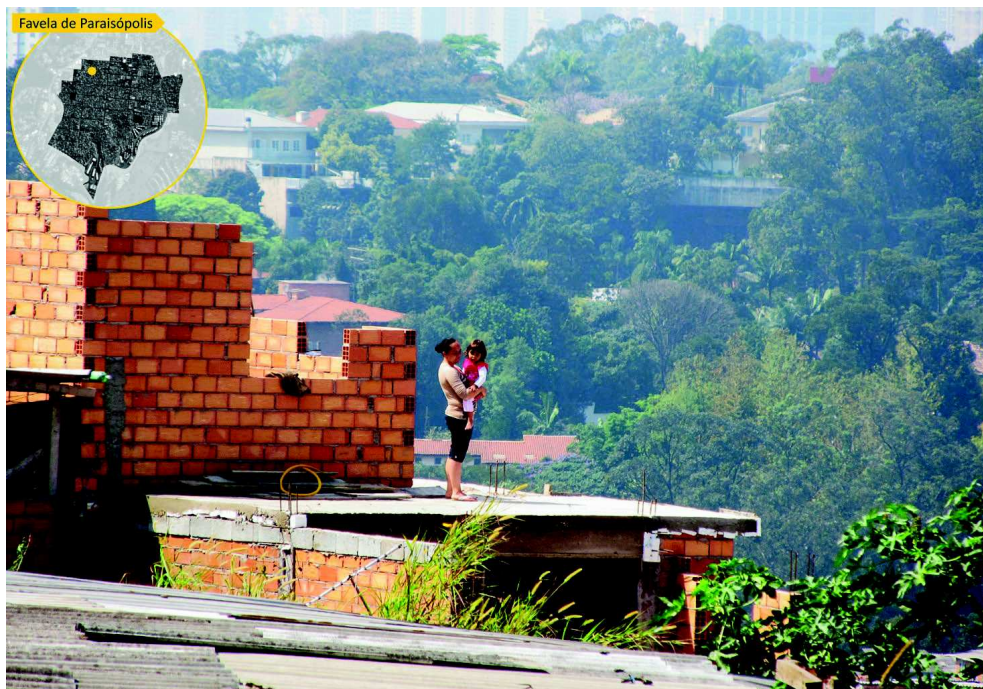


Figure 21 Rooftop in the Favela de Paraisópolis and its importance to the community's development.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2013.

The rooftops play an important role in the development of the favela's open space system, as do the other open spaces situated on the groundfloor. It is worth noting that in the favela the minimum unit of development is not the building itself, but each building's floor, which can be independently accessed, sold/rent, built/rebuilt, functioning as an urban plot in the informal city. (PIZARRO, 2014). This "plot" may serve different purposes, from a built space to a private open space with potential public dimensions (figures 20 and 21).

5 PUBLIC X PRIVATE

The article questions the concepts of public and private spaces when applied to favelas. It's proposed that the concepts of public and private spaces in favelas should be based on the informal property ownerships, instead of the formal ones. In other words, over the legal property ownership of the territories where the Favela de Paraisópolis (private property), Favela da Linha (private property) and Favela do Nove (public property) are located, the **informal property ownership** is superimposed, ruling the dynamics of possession, use and appropriation established by the community itself over time, with the understanding that spaces like **the alley, the street and the football pitch** are public open spaces; the dwelling is a private space and so are **balconies, stairs and rooftops** – despite being privately owned open spaces they absorb different kinds of public activities – the so-called public dimensions of

space – such as airing clothes, leisure, or perhaps, only a simple path like the stairs, which guarantee access to the upper floors (figure 19).

It's worth observing that in the informal city the interfaces established between public and private open spaces are more permeable and transitional when compared to the formal city. For example, despite the existing gates and fences – physical elements frequently used to segregate public from private spaces in the formal city – on balconies, stairs and even in alleys of the favelas, they are frequently left open or unlocked (figures 22 to 24) while, at the same time, keeping higher levels of physical and visual permeability between 'inside' and 'outside', private and public spaces (figure 25). So what would be the function of gates and fences in the favela?

In addition, differently from Queiroga's statement in reference to the city in general: "[...] The fragmentation and isolation of the private open spaces are characteristics that, in the Brazilian cities, make them conform to a set of private spaces, even if they integrate wider open space systems" (QUEIROGA, 2012, p. 117-118); it's worth questioning if, when referring to the favelas, the "set of private open spaces" would be, in fact, an effective **private open space system**.

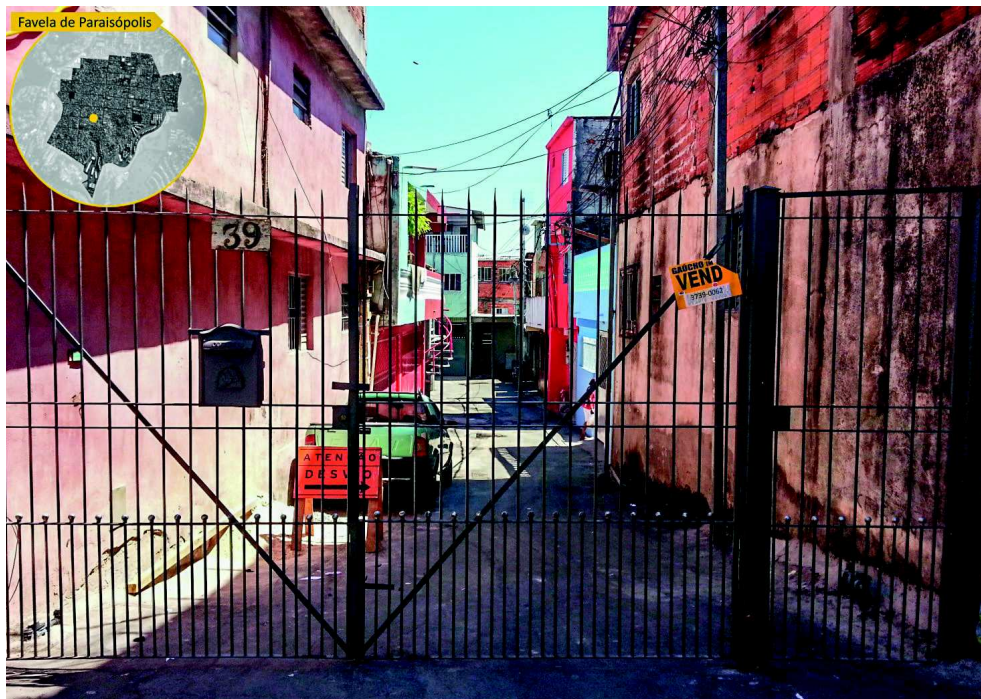


Figure 22 Interfaces between public and private domains, Favela de Paraisópolis.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2013.

6 PUBLIC DIMENSIONS OF SPACE

"Walking through the alley, the first obstacle. Turn left. The good news is that there is more space in another corner where children run and spread toys on the ground.

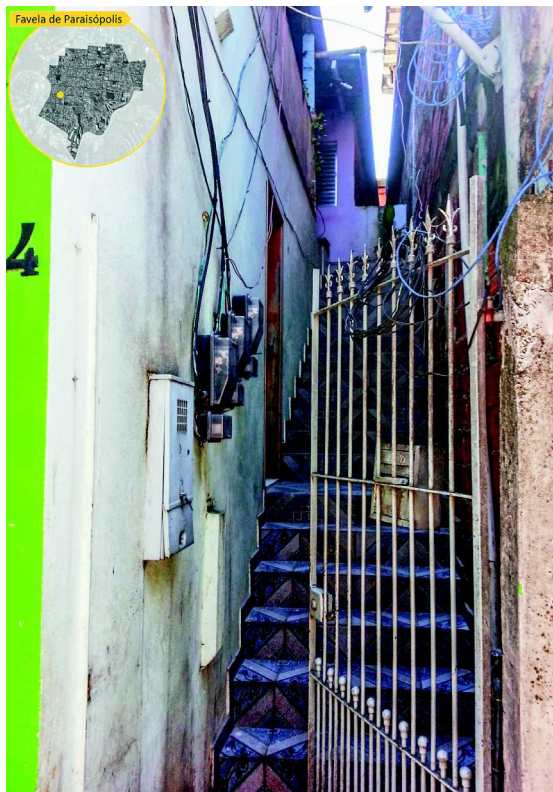


Figure 23 Interfaces between public and private domains (gate left open), Favela de Paraisópolis.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2013.

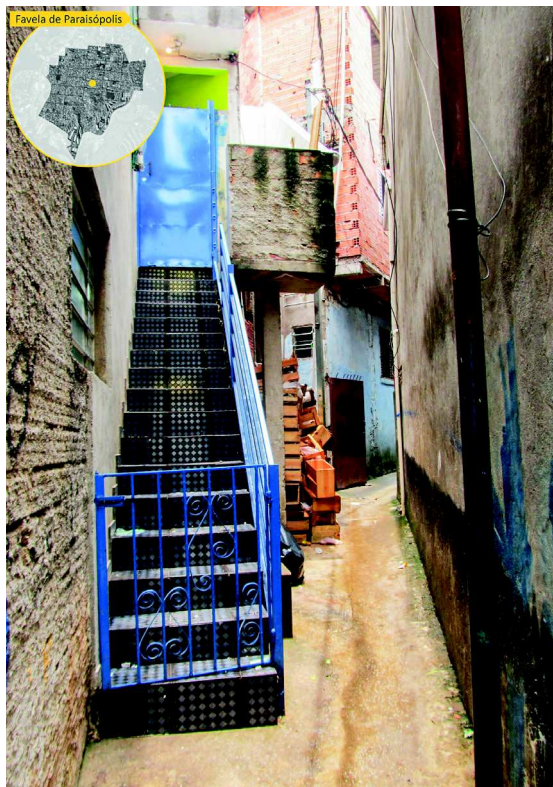


Figure 24 Interfaces between public and private domains, Favela de Paraisópolis.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2013.



Figure 25 Interfaces between public and private domains (visual permeability), Favela do Nove.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2012.

Women sit on chairs outside their houses or sit on the boundaries that protect their dwellings when the flood insists on going inside them. Sitting or standing, they talk and smile. More laughter is heard from somewhere above. Lots of stairs show that there are other homes on the way up.” (ALENCAR; BELAZI, 2013, p. 40).

The previous excerpt describes the public dimensions of space developed in a public open space, the Amadeu’s Alley, in the Favela de Paraisópolis. The “relationships built inside the neighbourhoods are marked by intense sociability, with the attachment of strong value to the common spaces as meeting places.” (OBSERVATÓRIO DE FAVELAS, apud GROSBAUM, 2012, p. 31). Such sociability is also observed in the alleys of the Favela da Linha (figure 26) and Favela do Nove (figure 27), highlighting the importance of the commercial activities and also the doorsteps as catalysts for the public dimensions of space.

The public dimensions of space may vary at specific times of the week or day, as it already happens in the weekly street market on the Ernst Renan Street and in the Palmeirinha football pitch, both in the Favela de Paraisópolis. The Palmeirinha is used for different community events during the day and for the samba shows in the evening – even after the intervention that brought synthetic grass and fences (figure 28) to the original dirt field.



Figure 26 Favela da Linha.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2012.



Figure 27 Favela do Nove.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2012.



Figure 28 Palmeirinha football pitch, Favela de Paraisópolis.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2014.



Figure 29 Small public square created in the Favela do Nove.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2012.

In the same way, the public dimensions of space may be created by means of small interventions, such as the transformation of a small dumping ground in the Favela do Nove into a public square next to a community center (figure 29) devoted to the development of artistic activities (ROSA, 2011), serving as meeting place, or a clothes drying area. The intervention was carried out by the Acaia Cultural Institute.

Beyond the public open spaces, as is the case regarding alleys and streets, the public dimensions of space are significant in enclosed spaces – such as the self-service laundry named Meeting Point, created by The Acaia Institute in the Favela da Linha (figure 30) – and also in private open spaces such as: balconies, which allow public interaction made side-by-side or face-to-face; external stairs connecting sidewalks to rooftops, passing by neighbours' windows, configuring real 'audiences for public life'; rooftops, which are collectively shared for drying clothes, or hosting parties and weekend barbecues. According to Grosbaum (2012), the public dimensions of space in informal settlements happen wherever possible, mostly together with the private life, in a promiscuous way. Figure 31 makes a counterpoint showing a single case inside Favela da Linha where there is a clear separation between the public and private domains.



Figure 30 Ponto de Encontro Launderette (Meeting Point Launderette), private space with public activities.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2012.



Figure 31 Clear separation claimed between public and private domains in the Favela da Linha. The sign reads: 'Do not enter without being invited'.
Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2012.

7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The article aimed to analyse three favelas in the city of São Paulo based on the concepts of open space, public and private space, and public dimensions of space.

As a conclusion, it's worth saying that (even in a provocative way): first, the concepts of public and private open spaces in favelas should be associated with the informal property ownership and the community's logic of use and appropriation of the space, rather than the legal property ownership; second, the interface established between public and private spaces is more subtle and permeable inside the favela, in comparison with the rest of the city; third, the public dimensions of space are fundamental to understanding the favela in a holistic way (urban, social, economical, political and cultural dynamics) because they are rooted almost everywhere in the informal settlement; fourth, **it would be possible to treat the set of private open spaces inside the favela as an effective private open space system.**

Ultimately, while seeking not to be romantic, and starting with Marzulo's statement:

Walking through a favela is a radical sensorial experience for someone who comes from spaces designed by the modernist rationality. In a worldwide context in which the debate about the non-places and the dynamics of spaces' standardization against the cultural identities is bigger and bigger, maybe as

an expression of their own crisis, would it be in the peripheral or disarticulated urban-metropolitan tissue, where the poor live, exactly due to its formation and the smaller or palliative action of the modernity, that places are emerging? (MARZULO, 2004 apud KLINTOWITZ, 2008, p. 157)

How could we absorb lessons from the favela's open space system so as to, then, discuss, propose and rebuild the formal city's open space system, or even the city as a whole (figure 32)?

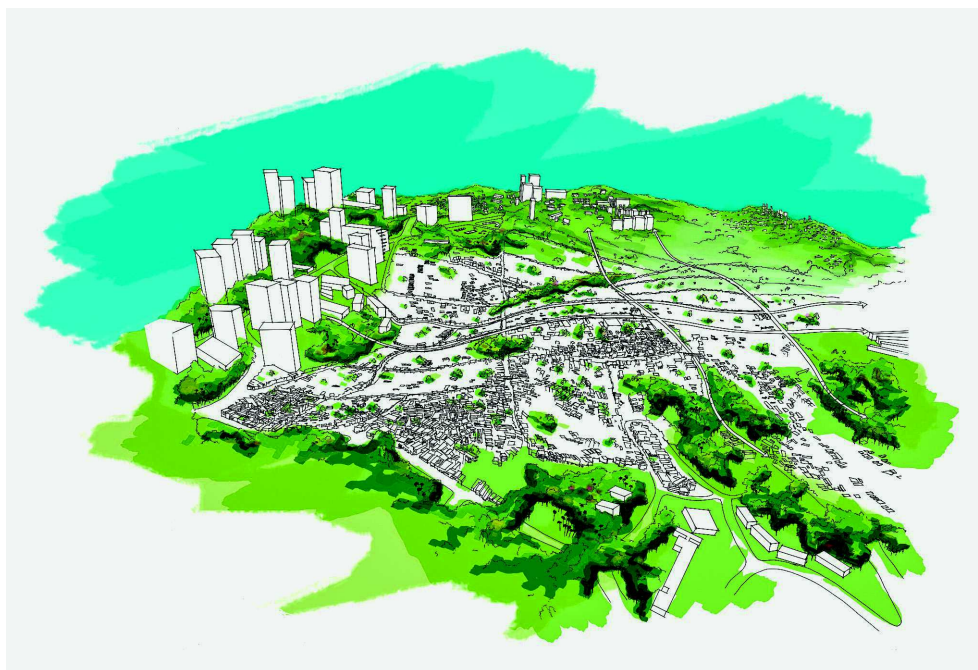


Figure 32 Possible requalification of the open space system of the Favela de Paraisópolis, integrated to the rest of the city.

Source: Eduardo Pimentel Pizarro, 2014.

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