

Cartography OF THE FAVELA

In 2008-9, the homicide rate in the favela of Arruda was almost six times higher than that of Bagdad at the height of the Iraq War, reaching 500 per 100,000. What is equally, striking, however, is the rich social life of the favelas of Recife; this study focusses on the strengths of these communities, looking for ways to leverage them into techniques to resist violence in the lives of children from the favelas.

These are some of the highlights of this study:



1 Gang members say that young men join violent groups as an **expression of revolt** and as a way to win "consideration"; in academic terms, as a response to **injustice** and as a way to gain respect and recognition. Unfortunately, in the current context of the favela, armed groups are one of the few ways to express or realize these desires.

2 The suppliers and most of the consumers of drugs are from the "Vila", the rich areas of the city. They use the favela as a free trade zone for business they cannot do openly.

3 Though wars between drug gangs are the most publicized and extravagant forms of violence, **some 75% of homicides result from honor killings associated with debt.**

4 People in the communities know before violence will explode; many are able to protect their families, but no one has been able to transform this fore-knowledge into a coherent violence prevention strategy.

5 The Pacto pela Vida, a new state-wide government security program, has made **major strides in reducing the homicide rate** in Pernambuco, but has not yet solved the police brutality that many people in the favelas see as the root cause of violence there..

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Though non-governmental organizations do important work in Recife, the **philosophy of "getting kids off the street and out of trouble"** has effectively ceded the street to gangs and other violent actors, exacerbating the problem.

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The economy of the favela is much stronger than most observers believe, and the drug trade plays a very small part in it.

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The drug trade appears to be geographically exclusive to legitimate business and to clean, safe places for kids to play: when businesses move into an area, dealers leave.

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Dealing drugs offers a surprisingly low salary, often less than R\$800 per month. Barbers, small-business owners, and even recyclers make more than a drug dealer.

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The cultural wealth and creativity of Recife's favelas are important resources to **develop new sources of honor and recognition** in the communities, and to work for their economic and political transformation.

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Due in great part to their lack of economic resources, people who live in the favelas are **immensely creative and able to solve complex problems**, making them social and economic entrepreneurs when they have the opportunity.

With these findings in mind, the study concludes with a proposals for reducing violence in the lives of children and communities of Recife, a civic policy based on the following:

1

Transforming the street into a space of education and positive socialization

2

Rapid Response to possible violence and gang involvement

3

Developing productive channels for young men and women to **express revolt and the desire for recognition.**

The interactive maps, videos, and musical research for this cartography are all available online at <http://cartografiadafavela.blogspot.com/>

