

FAVELA



HISTORY OF THE
TERM FAVELA

CHARACTERISTICS

PUBLIC POLICY

DIFFICULTIES

I WILL VOLUNTEER, BUT WHAT IS A FAVELA?

Firstly, it is necessary to mention how much the favela is represented by visions full of misunderstandings and stigmatized views.

For sure, you have already heard some of these stereotyped views, reflected in prejudiced comments about life in the favela, such as: "it is just an illegal occupation"; "only thugs/drug dealers live in the favela"; there are no public services, people have no interest in studying" etc.

There are many challenging points when the topic is public policies, and social and cultural actions for favelas.

To have a better understanding these urban spaces, we need to know their origins so as not to fall into a vision that does not contemplate the reality of those who live there. For this, let's go back a little in time.

THE TERM FAVELA IN A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

More than 40 years ago, the State made attempts to call favelas agglomerations of low-income people, using the premise that this new terminology would reduce the prejudice surrounding the word favela, as well as the conception that people had about it.

However, we saw that over time, the fact that it has its own characteristics that distinguish itself within the urban area, has become a kind of contribution to the city of Rio de Janeiro. The favela started to be seen as a place of housing for those who did not conform to the dominant standard. The favela was relegated to illegality and it has become increasingly differentiated and detached from the most socioeconomically advantaged strata. It is not by chance that favelas grew in areas that have difficult access, like on the hills, with difficulties to standardize its buildings and to have access to basic services such as sanitation.

Something that a few people know is that through the *City Statute* one cannot think of defining the favela as something that is just the opposite of what already exists as a standard model in the city, but an urban area that has its own unique characteristics, thus requiring special attention when they are studied, when public services are offered, etc.





SO, AREN'T ALL FAVELAS THE SAME?

This question is certainly on the minds of many people who want to visit these spaces, or understand them better. And the answer is no. Each of them has its own regulations, as well as a unique history.

It can have the status of a good place to live in, with a unique identity, surrounded by history and a sense of unity among its residents, it is a place that its residents call home. But each one of them is different in its own ways, whether in size, access, surroundings, sociocultural identity, structure, types of housing and services, among other things.

Some features to consider

The Observatório das Favelas considers some basic characteristics in order to name a place a favela, which would be these (in a simplified way): appropriation of the territory with the aim of creating housing in vulnerable places in relation to the environmental issue, a large number of people living on informal income or low class jobs, high population density, many houses, education, economics and environmental indicators below the city average, most of the population consists of blacks and descendants of natives, violence above the city's daily average, population that takes care of relations with neighbors, helping each other, and taking care of common spaces.

Favelas are part of the city

The fact is that favelas are part of the urban zone; they are not separate, but part of it. They do not have houses that follow the hegemonic standards, as we find in other places in the city, and they have cultural particularities. That is, often these houses do not follow the standard most valued by society, the one taken as the norm. They have diversity in cultural, artistic, social and environmental aspects, among others. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the urban space, the city of Rio de Janeiro as a whole, with different cultural, socioeconomic and morphological aspects and formations.

PUBLIC POLICY

For public policies in the State of Rio de Janeiro, it is very important to have a well-defined definition of the word favela, in order to know how to direct efforts more assertively.

Art. 147 - For the purposes of applying the Master Plan (1992), favela is the area of land occupied by a low-income population, has a precarious urban infrastructure and public services, narrow and irregularly aligned streets, irregularly shaped and sized lots and unlicensed constructions, in violation of legal standards.

Several resources were used, such as photos and aerial maps, to help to better determine the favelas and slum spaces, which are different areas. In 1996, a program called Favela-Bairro was created, which aimed to improve the quality of life in medium-sized favelas. In it there were resources destined to basic sanitation, essential for people's health, education, security, entertainment, health clinics, etc.



EVERYDAY DIFFICULTIES THAT ARE FACED BY THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE AND CIRCULATE IN THE FAVELAS OF RIO DE JANEIRO:

We will mention just a few aspects that most favelas have in common in terms of difficulties experienced by its residents.

- **Mobility:** difficulty in the movement of pedestrians and vehicles. This happens because the streets are small, tight, and difficult to maintain, which causes chaos in the internal circulation of the place. There are also difficult accesses and streets that do not have officially registered names. This generates a lot of difficulty for postal services, registration of documents, installation of commercial or public buildings, inspection, emergency care such as receiving firefighters, ambulances, police, etc.
 - **Basic sanitation:** improvised sewage and water systems, as well as a lack of garbage collection. Generally, these services don't conform to city parameters, and in many places they do not even exist.
 - **Collective spaces:** They are precarious, people often need to leave the favela to have access to schools, hospitals, sports fields, parks, etc.
 - **Housing:** They are often built without any attention to the structure and construction rules, concern for the safety of the properties and their owners, many spaces do not have much ventilation and lack of finishing. Most of them do not have a formal document from the owner.
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CLICK ON THE VIDEO TO TAKE A LOOK AT MORRO DO CANTAGALO
AND SEE WHAT A FAVELA IS LIKE

CONCLUSION

Thinking about the issues mentioned in our description, it is important that society pays attention to the forms of discrimination directed at people who live in the favelas. We need to ensure that there are opportunities for employment, public security, access to quality healthcare and education so that the people that live in favelas can have a dignified life. The favela is a complex space, full of stories that tell its constitution, the daily difficulties of its residents, the different cultural manifestations of the city and the desire to create an urban space that is a safe and inclusive home for thousands of people.

SOURCES

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Entenda melhor as favelas cariocas: visite o morro do Cantagalo. Texto de Haroldo de Castro disponível em: <https://epoca.oglobo.globo.com/colunas-e-blogs/viajologia/noticia/2013/07/entenda-melhor-favelas-cariocas-visite-o-morro-do-cantagalo.html>