The Money Trap: NGO Funding and Political Action in Brazil’s *Favelas*

by

Wendy Grace Muse Sinek

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science of the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor David Collier, Co-Chair
Professor M. Steven Fish, Co-Chair
Professor Laura J. Enríquez

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Abstract

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Does a strong civil society always develop politically engaged citizens? Other researchers have demonstrated a link between civil society and political participation, but I show that this connection is by no means inevitable. Some civil society organizations encourage citizens to participate in the political arena, but others do not. Drawing on data gathered through nearly 200 interviews with staff members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as well as participant observation of ten grassroots organizations spanning five favela communities there, I find that the organizations with the greatest financial resources are least active in politically relevant mobilization.

A crucial component of citizenship is the right and duty to participate in political life, but most residents of Rio’s favelas suffer from “citizenship poverty.” Historical structural inequality, as well as the current influence of drug- and weapons-trafficking gangs, sharply curtail favela residents’ ability to exercise their rights as citizens, particularly with respect to collective action. Some favela residents have created small “social benefit” CSOs to address community needs, principally around issues of employment and health care. However, social benefit CSOs do not have sufficient levels of resources to mobilize, much less advocate for broader citizenship rights.

“Golden” CSOs also work within Rio’s favelas. These large, well-funded organizations have a strong international reputation and could direct some of their resources toward collective action. In practice, however, golden CSOs undertake tame activities that pose no challenge to anyone in large part due to the “civil society resource curse.” Just as discovering oil is usually assumed to bring economic advantages to a nation, we might expect resource-rich golden CSOs to bring the most benefits to communities at the local level. Similar to countries rich in natural resources, however, golden CSOs are also dependent on a single source of revenue, usually grants from large foundations. In turn, the process of obtaining funding encourages golden CSOs to build elite-led, relatively isolated organizations that conduct donor-driven activities. Such an organizational profile is ideal for winning grants, but not for connecting citizens with the political arena. While many golden CSOs do good work within Rio’s most marginalized communities, they tend to avoid political activity and do not address the citizenship deficit that exists.

With much smaller budgets and fewer tangible resources, grassroots “citizenship” CSOs seem to be unlikely candidates for galvanizing favela residents, yet these organizations are the
very ones that have taken the lead. Instead of focusing on grant funding, citizenship CSOs seek out many types of resources from multiple sources. In doing so, they face a different set of organizational incentives, which encourage local leadership, broad networks, and extraordinary flexibility in choosing their activities. Such an organizational profile allows citizenship CSOs to draw on their connections, credibility, and ingenuity to conduct political action targeting both society and the state.

My analysis demonstrates that merely building civil society is not enough to guarantee a politically active citizenry. CSOs with singular and narrow resource acquisition strategies are particularly unlikely to pose challenges to the political status quo. In turn, donors who want to achieve social, economic, and political outcomes by building civil society should pay attention to the incentives present within the local context, particularly those that shape the funding arena.
For my husband Edward,

and my sweet son James,

...who fill my life with laughter, love, and joy.
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Those who are familiar with Rio’s favela communities may believe that they recognize a particular neighborhood or a specific grassroots organization located there. However, please respect the privacy of the many individuals who spoke candidly with me, and the confidentiality of their remarks, by not revealing their identities to others.
Chapter 1. Introduction: Citizenship Poverty and Political Inaction

On July 6, 2011, WBEZ Chicago interviewed Damian Platt, the international spokesperson for AfroReggae, one of the largest non-governmental organizations in Rio de Janeiro. Founded in 1993, AfroReggae has brought music, art, and sports programs to some of Rio’s most marginalized favela neighborhoods for almost twenty years. The organization has conducted workshops, presentations, and musical performances throughout Brazil and around the world, including visits to China, Germany, India, and the United Kingdom, and was the subject of the award-winning documentary film Favela Rising. With a staff of 200 and a budget exceeding $2.5 million, AfroReggae is arguably the most well-known and best-financed organization working within Rio’s favela communities. During the course of the interview, the host asked Platt for his thoughts on how the upcoming 2016 Olympics might affect Rio’s favelas. Platt responded: “I think the people are definitely looking to AfroReggae as an important organization that has the status within Rio, and in these communities, as someone who can perhaps help make sure that the Games are more integrated than they would be otherwise, to make sure that the favela population is actively involved.”

By the time of Platt’s interview, however, the Olympic Games had already profoundly affected favela residents. Within days of the October 2009 announcement declaring Rio’s selection as the host city for the 2016 Games, the municipal government began evicting residents of favela communities located near Olympic venues. In direct violation of the plan presented to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), as well as Brazilian law, favela residents watched as bulldozers demolished their homes, many of which had been constructed over decades with their own hands. What is more, instead of receiving fair market value for their property, residents were forcibly relocated to conflict-ridden areas located hours away from the city center. One month before Platt’s interview took place, a former resident of the Guaratiba neighborhood described her situation: “There were gunshots fired from one condominium towards ours. There’s noise the whole night. I really miss my piece of land: calm, tranquility, there’s none of that here. Here, there’s prostitution, drugs, everything mixed together.” For Rio’s favela residents, the Olympics were already leaving a legacy of devastated communities, destroyed homes, and broken promises.

One year later, in January 2012, the same WBEZ Chicago interviewer spoke with one of the leaders of a city-wide movement calling attention to the favela residents’ cause. Favela community leaders became “citizen journalists,” using social media to document and publicize events in their neighborhoods. The stories, photographs, and videos they produced were published online, enabling local leaders to connect with each other across the city, as well as with journalists, researchers, and human rights observers around the world. The residents’ work eventually attracted the attention of the mainstream media, including the New York Times, the BBC, and the Associated Press. In some cases, eviction proceedings were delayed or halted entirely, and both Amnesty International and the United Nations have shined a spotlight not only on Rio’s mayor and city council, but on the entire Brazilian federal government and the IOC, calling them to account for their actions towards favela residents.

Which organizations took the lead in supporting the favela residents’ emerging movement? Most would assume—along with the public radio interviewer—that AfroReggae,

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1 Rufin and Pinto, 2010.
and other NGOs like them in Rio de Janeiro, would have been among the first to take action. On the contrary, however, the most well-known organizations with substantial financial resources were largely absent from the scene. Instead, when the crisis occurred, favela residents turned to Catalytic Communities (CatComm), a small, scrappy grassroots organization with a paid staff of three and an equally tiny budget. Theresa Williamson, the British-Brazilian founder and executive director of CatComm, told the WBEZ interviewer that state interventions in favelas are being done in the name of Olympic development to meet the interests of real estate developers, homeowners, and wealthier Rio residents. CatComm brings favela residents into the discussion by providing them with the tools they need to advance their own interests, as well as by destigmatizing favela neighborhoods in the eyes of Brazilian society.

Why did a small, relatively unknown civil society organization like CatComm spearhead the favela residents’ political challenge, instead of the most famous and well-funded nonprofit organizations in the city? Or, to pose the question in more general terms: Of all the NGOs in Rio de Janeiro concerned with the welfare of favela neighborhoods, why is it that the ones with the most resources appear to be least likely to advocate for favela residents’ citizenship rights? Conversely, why was Rio de Janeiro’s most dramatic example of political mobilization since the dictatorship undertaken by an organization with relatively low levels of resources? My study seeks to explain why.

1.1 Main Argument and Findings

I want to emphasize, first and foremost, what this study is not. It is not intended to denigrate the good work that Rio’s largest NGOs do on behalf of favela residents. AfroReggae in particular has brought recreation and joy to numerous young people in favela communities, enriching their lives through the creative and performing arts. In turn, it is probable that some youth, if not the majority, have been inspired to pursue educational and employment opportunities they would not have considered otherwise. The activities undertaken by Rio’s most well-known NGOs have undoubtedly improved the quality of life for favela residents, and I admire the dedication and creativity of their founders and staff.

This study is also not intended as a prescription for how to do community development work—although the reader may gain additional insights into how favela residents view “successful” development project outcomes. Numerous volumes have already been written on ways to intervene successfully in under-served neighborhoods to improve the residents’ quality of life, and the literature tends to coalesce around the same “best practices” or “lessons learned.” We already know what needs to be done. Teamwork, sustainability, transparency, empowerment, closing the circle between project planning, implementation, and evaluation—none of this is new. Not to practitioners in the field, and certainly not to favela residents themselves, who understand better than anyone what their neighborhoods do and do not need.

Instead, this study is my attempt to solve a puzzle. When I first arrived in Rio de Janeiro, I expected to find—as much of the literature had led me to believe—many civil society organizations engaging in politically relevant mobilization. Various studies, foremost among them Ruth Berins Collier and Samuel Handlin’s (2009) systematic, in-depth comparison of four Latin American cities, have shown that CSOs at the neighborhood level are becoming new sites of interest intermediation. As political parties and labor unions have diminished in size and efficacy, community associations have taken the lead in connecting individuals—particularly
marginalized actors—to the political arena. Few studies, however, had been undertaken in Brazil (Lavalle et. al. 2005; McCann 2006), and none within the city of Rio de Janeiro. With numerous civil society organizations and a population renowned for its easy-going sociability, I had every reason to expect political activity within Rio’s favela neighborhoods.

However, what I discovered confounded my expectations and called my previous assumptions into question. The vast majority of CSOs concerned with favela communities in Rio did not undertake politically relevant activity at all. Moreover, the few that did were not the ones with the most abundant financial and organizational resources, as the literature would suggest. Why is it that most civil society organizations in Rio avoid the political arena? Furthermore, what makes the few CSOs that engage in political action different from the rest? My research seeks to explain why some civil society organizations in Rio de Janeiro, and not others, advocate for favela residents’ citizenship rights, particularly through enhancing their ability to participate in politics. After months of fieldwork, multiple trips around Rio to favela communities, interviews with CSO founders and staff from organizations of every size and budget, as well as frank everyday conversations over countless tiny cups of coffee, I have arrived at an answer, which unfolds over the course of the following chapters.

Most favela residents do not participate in political affairs due to what I term “citizenship poverty.” Being a citizen means having rights and responsibilities equal to those enjoyed by every other member of one’s political community, one of which is the right to participate in public affairs. However, as Brodwyn Fischer (2008) demonstrates, social inequality has been part of Brazilian culture throughout the country’s history, and has been expressed by denying favela residents equal rights, rendering them “rights-poor” in economic, social, and legal terms (2008:83). Although they theoretically enjoy the same legal rights as anyone else, social structures and cultural norms persist that deprive favela residents of the ability to exercise their citizenship rights as other Rio residents do, particularly in terms of political activism. I show that both historical structural inequality, as well as the current influence of drug and weapons trafficking gangs, sharply curtail favela residents’ ability to exercise their participatory rights as citizens. For these reasons, many civil society organizations within favelas do not engage in politically relevant mobilization, and thus do little to address overall conditions of citizenship poverty.

Despite these obstacles, however, some civil society organizations with a strong presence in favela communities have relatively high levels of financial resources. Current mobilization theory suggests that these CSOs would be most likely to engage in politically relevant mobilization for two main reasons. First, the conventional scholarly wisdom suggests that some level of resources is necessary for mobilization to occur. Money is certainly important, but intangible resources such as social capital and civic skills also provide the means to undertake collective action. Second, participating in civil society organizations builds social capital and civic skills, which, once acquired, can be applied to political participation.

During the mid-1990s, academics and practitioners alike were enthusiastic about the prospects of civil society. It seemed that building civil society organizations would spark a chain of events that ended not only in democracy, but also economic development, increased social tolerance, and practically any positive outcome imaginable. However, the “irrational exuberance” surrounding civil society is coming to an end. Others have shown that not all civil society organizations create democratic habits, build social capital, or even create a “civil” society. My study builds upon these contributions by revealing another weak link in the causal chain: we cannot assume a straightforward connection between CSOs and political participation.
Some CSOs in Rio do not engage in politically relevant activity because they cannot; they lack sufficient resources to surmount the structural obstacles that exist. Other CSOs, however, are quite well-funded and are theoretically best situated to undertake political activity—yet these organizations are the least active in the political arena.

To understand why this is so, we must consider not only an organization’s level of resources, but also the strategies that are used to acquire them. Different resource acquisition strategies—specifically, variations in the sources of resources and the types of resources that CSOs seek out—shape organizational profiles, which in turn affect levels of political participation (Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1: Resource Acquisition Strategies and Politically Relevant Mobilization**

The recursive arrows indicate that a CSO’s organizational profile and its resource acquisition strategy can be mutually reinforcing. Put another way, the organizational profile might come first, and its profile might influence the level of diversity in acquiring resources, not the other way round. Regardless of where one enters the pathway, the central point is that some organizational profiles are more conducive to political action than others. My study shows that an organization’s resource acquisition strategy is one factor that has thus far been overlooked. Civil society organizations vary not only in their overall level of resources, but also in their predominant resource acquisition strategies. Different combinations of sources of resources (singular or multiple) and types of resources (narrow or diverse) create organizational incentives that, in turn, make politically relevant mobilization more or less likely. Figure 1.2 illustrates the possible combinations.
By considering variation in an organization’s sources of resources and types of resources, we can better understand why some CSOs with high levels of resources do not undertake political action. In Rio, these are organizations with relatively abundant resources, yet they are of one general type (grants) and come from a singular source (foundations).

Such an organizational type is subject to what I call the “civil society resource curse.” As it is commonly understood, the classic resource curse, or “paradox of plenty,” refers to the fact that countries with high levels of natural resources, particularly oil and natural gas, have lower levels of economic growth than countries without them (Gelb 1988; Sachs and Warner 1995, 1999). Why? For most countries, diverse means of production are necessary for economic growth. All sectors of the economy—agricultural, manufacturing, and services—must be engaged in order to generate revenue. In turn, such diversification requires a highly skilled national workforce. Governments, then, have clear incentives to spend money on public goods, such as education and health care, since the welfare of average citizens is directly tied to the country’s overall economic prospects.

However, when a large percent of a country’s income is derived from a single lucrative sector, such as oil exports, the incentives at play are quite different. Since the economy does not need to diversify in order to generate revenue, there are few incentives to cultivate an educated workforce through providing social benefits. A resource-rich country’s GDP can thus rise independently from the economic well-being of its average citizens, and political leaders may earn high levels of income without being held accountable by anyone. Furthermore, during prosperous times when prices for exports are high, the lure of easy money may give unscrupulous leaders incentives for corruption. When prices for exports inevitably fall, the entire economy may be plunged into a recession far more severe than it would be in a more diversified context. The central causal mechanism turns not on having *natural* resources per se,
but in being dependent on a single source of revenue, such as oil reserves, as a significant percentage of the export economy (Acemoglu 2001; Brunnschweiler 2008).

The civil society resource curse operates in much the same way. Some civil society organizations in Rio de Janeiro are dependent on a single source of revenue, usually grants from large foundations. Just as discovering oil is usually assumed to bring economic advantages, we might expect grant-winning CSOs to bring the most benefits to communities at the local level. Yet if these CSOs lack sufficient diversity in their sources of resources and types of resources—essentially sustaining themselves through grants from a few donors—they might do much good for the communities in which they work, but they are unlikely to encourage residents of those communities to challenge social norms and state policies. Furthermore, just as many political leaders of oil-rich countries can sustain their power without being accountable to their citizens, CSOs that depend on a small number of funders have few incentives to be accountable to the populations they serve. Certainly, the political regimes of some resource-rich countries are free and open, but many more are not, with leaders who prioritize their individual interests over the nation’s welfare. Similarly, some well-endowed CSOs have leaders who put favela residents’ needs first, but many others find that it is in their interest to focus on issues of primary interest to donors. Finally, a few political leaders use the autonomy that comes with high levels of financial resources to act as unrestrained, corrupt despots. In a similar manner, the overall fundraising environment in Rio de Janeiro provides dishonest CSO leaders with an opportunity to enrich themselves by defrauding unwitting donors.

In both cases, high levels of resources, without sufficient diversity in their sources and types of resources, paradoxically result in sub-optimal outcomes that are different from what conventional wisdom would lead us to expect. We tend to assume that large oil reserves would bring wealth and prosperity, but oil-rich countries actually tend to do worse economically over the long run. Civil society organizations in Rio that win major grants might be expected to take the lead in galvanizing the marginalized populations they serve, but in practice, those organizations are the ones least likely to challenge the political status quo.

In short, scholars from virtually all social science disciplines have converged on the idea that political participation is the mechanism through which civil society contributes to stable democracies and good governance. However, if the outcome of interest is a politically active citizenry, we must consider the constellation of incentives that CSOs face. Those incentives could result in building CSOs that, despite high levels of resources, nevertheless do not develop the qualities that facilitate politically relevant action. In other words, such a CSO might undertake collective action, but it is unlikely to be political—and, in the case of Rio, unlikely to reduce conditions of citizenship poverty that continue to plague the city’s favela residents.

1.2 Overview of the Study

Before analyzing the case studies that follow, I address conceptual and methodological issues. Chapter 2 presents a central aspect of the dependent variable—politically relevant mobilization—carefully specifying what is included within its conceptual boundaries and what is not. I then situate the concept within the literature, showing how scholars from different social science disciplines have identified various factors that give rise to politically relevant action. In general, their findings converge on the idea that building civil society can spark political engagement. When individuals—particularly those from marginalized groups—join civic
associations, they acquire civic skills and participate in social networks. In turn, associational members apply those attributes to influence political outcomes. Latin America fits this profile particularly well, as civil society organizations are becoming new sites of intermediation between citizens and the political arena. However, after demonstrating that Rio is an especially likely site for political mobilization, I address the central puzzle of this research: why the CSOs with the greatest financial resources are the least active in politically relevant mobilization. I then discuss the methodology used to explore this question; a qualitative, micro-level case study situated within the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of associational life within Rio’s favela communities, illustrating how citizenship poverty affects the lives of residents there. Although favela residents are integral to the social, cultural, and economic life of the city, the Brazilian state has failed to provide their neighborhoods with the same services, opportunities, and respect accorded to wealthier areas. After presenting a brief history of favela residents’ organizing efforts, I show how structural inequalities and gang control have rendered traditional structures of interest articulation inadequate and dysfunctional. Despite the existence of many local-level CSOs in Rio’s favelas, civil society is suppressed and residents’ political rights are sharply curtailed. In particular, favela dwellers cannot turn to their elected officials, political parties, churches, or their neighborhood residents’ associations for assistance in solving community problems. In some cases—if not the majority—favela residents thus resign themselves to inaction, focusing on their own individual well-being and that of their family. Some residents have found ways to navigate this inhospitable environment, creating different types of CSOs and working together to improve their neighborhoods. As the following chapters will show, however, very few of these organizations engage in politically relevant collective action.

Chapter 4 begins by outlining the main problems that favela residents confront. The issues that residents prioritize, however, are quite different from those that favela “outsiders” would expect. In contrast to infrastructure improvements such as paving the roads, favela dwellers want access to quality health care, as well as employment opportunities in the formal labor sector. Both deficiencies are rooted in discrimination, which is at the heart of citizenship poverty. The second section of this chapter describes the way in which prejudice affects favela residents in virtually every area of life. I then describe one type of civil society organization—social benefit CSOs—that do what they can to address these issues through small-scale, local-level interventions. Social benefit CSOs seek out diverse types of resources, but they primarily rely on a single source of resources: the CSO’s favela resident founder, who does so only through considerable personal sacrifice. Social benefit CSOs simply lack sufficient resources of all types to engage in broader collective efforts. Politically relevant mobilization is thus highly unlikely to emerge from this type of organization.

I then describe a dramatically different organizational type in Chapter 5. After presenting an overview of the highly competitive and somewhat dysfunctional funding environment that exists in Brazil, I describe what are colloquially known as “golden CSOs” (ONGs douradas). These organizations are the “winners” in the race for major grants; they are quite well funded by Brazilian and international foundations, and are present in multiple favela communities. Despite their relatively abundant resources, however, golden CSOs are unlikely to engage in politically relevant mobilization due to the civil society resource curse. Specifically, golden CSOs acquire few types of resources from a single source, and I show that this lack of diversity on both factors encourages a distinct organizational profile. Specifically, golden CSOs tend to be led by favela “outsiders,” make few partnerships with other CSOs, and undertake donor-driven activities.
Such an organizational profile is conducive to achieving success in the competitive funding arena, but these same characteristics restrict the ability to undertake politically relevant collective action. The final part of the chapter presents an extreme side effect of Brazil’s funding environment: “ghost CSOs” that take advantage of the funding context to defraud donors, thereby damaging the credibility of all charitable organizations. Ghost CSOs may also have high levels of financial resources, but the sole purpose of these organizations is to line the pockets of their founders, and nothing more. The civil society resource curse thus ensures that the organizations in Rio with the most abundant financial resources will rarely, if ever, direct those resources toward political action.

Given that social, golden, and ghost CSOs comprise the vast majority of CSOs in Rio’s favela communities, very little politically relevant mobilization takes place. However, not all CSOs pursue the same resource acquisition strategies. Chapter 6 focuses on citizenship CSOs and diamond CSOs—small and large CSO types, respectively, that go after multiple sources of resources as well as diverse types of resources. In turn, they face a different constellation of incentives that, as this chapter will show, encourage leadership, network, and activity choices that facilitate not only politically relevant activity, but also strive to reduce citizenship poverty among favela residents. Brief case studies throughout the chapter illustrate how citizenship and diamond CSOs are characterized by resident leadership, broad network ties, and highly varied activities. In turn, these organizations possess high levels of trust and respect within favela neighborhoods, while also having the freedom and flexibility to engage in activities that are most relevant to residents there. Citizenship and diamond CSOs thus circumvent the civil society resource curse as they challenge both social norms and state policies that discriminate against favela residents.

The final section of this study covers what favela “outsiders” can do to counter the effects of the civil society resource curse and make it easier for all CSOs to reduce citizenship poverty in Rio. The Brazilian funding environment is unlikely to change, but it is only one contributing factor to a CSO’s organizational profile. Incentives can come from many sources, including the way in which outside organizations partner with favela CSOs. The actions, decisions, and methods that outsiders undertake can influence the decisions that local-level CSOs make with respect to political activity. What might such a productive collaboration look like? I present a “negative” example first. Chapter 7 is devoted to the “Enchanted Butterfly” community development program that took place in the Beija-Flor favela. The program offers a clear example of how well-intentioned favela outsiders can design and implement a development project that appears excellent on paper, but falls short in some main respects. In particular, the organizations involved in planning and executing the project did not intentionally exclude favela residents. Instead, each organization had clear incentives to put their funders’ needs ahead of the community’s interests.

In contrast, Chapter 8 presents three additional case studies to illustrate how favela outsiders might operate to improve future prospects for politically relevant action and build citizenship capacity. The first case study profiles the “Beautiful Waterfall” program. Although it had no overt political motivations, the program nevertheless made political activity more likely to occur within the Gaviota favela neighborhood. I then discuss two public campaigns: one targeted toward society to change attitudes about favela residents, and one targeted toward the state to change favela development policies. The “Favela—I’m From Here!” (Favela, Eu Sou Daqui!) program engaged favela youth in a month-long public relations effort to persuade middle- and upper-class Rio residents to change their perceptions about favelas. Although their
effort was met with minimal success, the participants increased their own citizenship capacity as they challenged existing social and economic power structures. Finally, the RioOnWatch program alluded to in the introduction to this chapter directly challenged public policy toward favela neighborhoods, demanding that the state accord favela residents their rights as citizens.

All of the CSOs profiled in Chapter 8 conducted their campaigns in a way that increased trust, collaboration, and reciprocity at the local level, as well as built civic skills—all of which are essential resources for politically relevant mobilization. These organizations achieved the outcomes they did not because they cared more about favela residents, had smarter staff members, or better ideas for development—it is that they faced a different incentive structure. In relying on diverse sources of resources and utilizing multiple types of resources, these CSOs had incentives to be resident-led, broadly networked, and deeply connected to local favela communities. As such, they avoided the civil society resource curse, and were thus more likely to undertake politically relevant activities than similar organizations with different resource acquisition strategies.

Finally, Chapter 9 begins by summarizing the central argument and outlining its contributions to theories of mobilization. I then draw on all of the examples presented to offer ways in which donors and policymakers may be able to mitigate the effects of the civil society resource curse. When organizations located higher up in the project chain encourage those farther downstream to utilize favela resident leadership, broad networks, and locally relevant activities, those CSOs become freer to undertake a wider range of activities, including controversial, long-term, politically relevant mobilization. In other words, the funding environment might push favela CSOs in one direction—toward an organizational profile that makes political mobilization unlikely—but outsiders, particularly international grant-making foundations, can provide countervailing incentives to offset the civil society resource curse.
Chapter 2. Theoretical Insights and Methodological Approach

What does it mean to be a citizen? The question may seem straightforward, but for residents of Rio de Janeiro’s favela communities, achieving full citizenship is anything but. At its most basic, citizenship is a legal status, indicating that one belongs to a particular political society. The concept of citizenship, however, entails more than merely identifying one’s legal residence. Citizens enjoy specific rights and duties as members of a political community, which include, as identified by T.H. Marshall (1949), civil, political, and social dimensions. Although Marshall’s conceptualization has been criticized on many counts, his framework offers a useful starting point. Civil rights ensure individual freedoms, as well as equal access to the courts and legal system; social rights give citizens a minimal standard of living, especially when unemployed or disabled. Since 2000, theorists have also incorporated cultural rights into the concept of citizenship. Members of a political community share history, traditions, language, and customs, all of which create bonds of solidarity and shape the community’s future goals (Carens 2000; Kymlicka 2003; Nash 2009).

Political rights, however, are arguably the most crucial aspect of citizenship. The central right and duty of every citizen is to participate in the political community in order to maintain it as such. To be sure, citizens of different polities may prioritize some rights and duties over others. In doing so, they may accept diminished political rights for enhanced social rights (Henry 2009), for example, or even choose to exercise a passive form of citizenship (Turner 1990), isolating themselves from political activity entirely. Freedom to act includes freedom to refrain from action, and in a democracy, some citizens exercise their individual liberty by leaving political deliberations to others. Collectively, however, a political community in which most members do not participate is likely to cease being a community entirely. In purely practical terms, some citizens must be willing to take action in defense of the nation’s territorial borders if it is to maintain its sovereignty. As Constant (1819) reminds us, while individual liberty may be of paramount value in the modern world, the only way to preserve it is through exercising political liberty. Walzer echoes this sentiment in claiming that “the passive enjoyment of citizenship requires, at least intermittently, the activist politics of citizens” (Walzer 1989:219). Being a citizen fundamentally entails participation in political life.

Rio’s favela residents, however, are unable to engage the political arena with the same ease and influence as other Rio residents. It is not enough to have the legal right to participate in politics; laws must also be embedded within social structures and cultural norms if they are to hold in practice. Although all Brazilian citizens hold the same rights according to law, favela residents suffer from what I term “citizenship poverty.” Janice Perlman (1976) was the first to articulate the “myth of marginality” with respect to Rio’s favela neighborhoods; instead of being places set apart, both favelas and their residents were deeply integrated into the life of the city. Despite these close ties, however, Guillermo O’Donnell’s concept of “low-intensity citizenship” was developed in large part with Brazil in mind, in which the protections of democracy are not extended to all (1993: 143). Brodwyn Fischer (2008) concurs, arguing that favela residents are “rights-poor,” and have been so from the very beginnings of the city’s history. Finally, Perlman’s (2010) research demonstrates that forty years on from her original study, favela
residents are more socially marginalized than ever before, to the point at which they are not considered to be fully human (gente) by non-favela dwellers. Though the law states differently, Rio’s cultural norms ensure that favela dwellers are not viewed as having the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens, and particularly lack the ability to exercise their right to participate in politics. Given that a fundamental aspect of democratic citizenship is the ability to engage with the political arena, Rio’s favela residents can be considered “citizenship-poor.”

My research seeks to understand why some civil society organizations in Rio de Janeiro enhance favela residents’ citizenship rights, particularly through encouraging political participation, while others do not. Before doing so, however, this chapter addresses key conceptual and methodological issues. First, I define politically relevant mobilization, specifying what it is included within its conceptual boundaries and what is not. I then show how different social science disciplines have identified various factors that give rise to politically relevant action. Their findings generally converge on the idea that we can spark political engagement by building civil society. When individuals—particularly those from marginalized groups—join civic associations, they acquire civic skills and participate in social networks. In turn, associational members apply those attributes to influence political outcomes. Latin America fits this profile particularly well, as civil society organizations are becoming new sites of intermediation between citizens and the political arena, and Rio de Janeiro seems particularly well-suited for citizen action within the political sphere. In practice, however, CSOs concerned with Rio’s favela neighborhoods rarely take political action, and those that do are not the ones that the literature would predict. The final part of this chapter discusses the methodology I used to explore the research puzzle: a qualitative, micro-level case study situated within the city of Rio de Janeiro.

2.1 Defining Politically Relevant Mobilization

Under what conditions would we expect politically relevant mobilization to occur? Despite a large body of scholarship on factors that give rise to collective action, as well as factors that affect political participation, these literatures do not often intersect. More specifically: social movement scholars tend to focus on how and why mobilization occurs, as well as whether or not collective action is effective in reaching its goals. If action does take place, social movement researchers generally assume that mobilization will have a political target. In contrast, scholars concerned with how and why individuals participate in politics—why individuals would target the political arena in the first place—investigate individual attributes that influence political behaviors, such as voting, campaigning, and running for elected office. In very broad terms, political scientists generally want to explain why individuals take political action, while sociologists often look at what motivates people to engage in collective action. Somewhat surprisingly, few studies problematize both ends of the problem: not only why mobilization occurs, but also whether or not mobilization is directed toward the political arena. To understand what factors contribute to politically relevant mobilization, we need to pull different strands of the debate together across social science disciplines.

First, it is useful to clarify a key term: what distinguishes politically relevant mobilization from other types of collective action? At the broadest level, collective action

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3 I use the terms “collective action” and “mobilization” synonymously here, as does most of the social science literature.
refers to a group with a shared interest pursuing some common goal (Marshall 1988; Sandler 1992; Ensminger, 1992; Vermillion 2001). In this sense, mobilization can take many forms: it can be religious (i.e. people gathering to worship once a week), military (soldiers rehearsing formations in preparation for combat), or purely recreational (such as young athletes competing against each other, as well as their fans in attendance who collectively cheer them on). In each case, people come together to engage in a particular shared interest.

It seems simple, then, to define political mobilization: a type of collective action in which the group’s shared interest is a political one. But what does it mean for an interest to be political in nature? Early definitions of mobilization often assumed that all mobilization was political. Nedelman, for example, considered all mobilization to be “the development of relationships between different types of actors in the social and political system” (Nedelman 1987: 190). However, mobilization may connect different types of actors, and may involve the political arena, but it does not need to do so by any means. It is certainly possible for groups to mobilize without any political interests in mind, as the examples above illustrate. Collective action that meets Tarrow’s definition of a social movement would certainly be political in nature. However, group interactions can be short-term, or done only with peers—in other words, not a social movement—yet still engage with the political arena.

So where does this leave us in terms of identifying politically relevant mobilization? Broad instances of collective action are clearly defined, as is the narrower category of social movements. Given that social movements are political in nature by definition, but general mobilization is not, what parameters define the separate category of “politically relevant” mobilization? The existing literature is not of much help here. Scholars who explicitly discuss political mobilization often leave the term undefined, or root it in other concepts that are not themselves clearly stated.

For example, Huber, Rueschemeyer, and Stephen state that “[We do not] limit political participation to voting but include all forms of politically relevant mobilization as well as the effective translation of citizens’ demands into the political process via institutional channels” (1997: 326). A conceptualization such as this one essentially leaves the definition of politically relevant activity for each individual reader to determine. Kirlin is somewhat more specific, defining “political engagement” as “work(ing) with others through explicitly political means including electoral and non-electoral venues” (2006: 1), as is Bouché, who states that “behavioral political engagement” is “a person’s level of participation in political affairs” (2012:4). Yet these definitions are still too vague, as they do not help us distinguish actions that are “explicitly political” from those that are not. At the other end of the spectrum, Opp describes “collective political action” as “non-institutionalized collective action (such as demonstrations) putting pressure on at least one corporate actor to provide an additional amount of at least one public good” (1991: 216). Opp’s conceptualization is specific and narrow—in fact, too specific, in that it excludes many actions that are indisputably political, such as a group putting pressure on an elected official to end a program or change a policy.

Further, while the literature is replete with definitions of “political activity,” their conceptualizations sometimes conflict. Verba, Schlozman and Brady consider activities political if they have “the intent or effect of influencing government action” (1995: 38). In contrast, Rosenstone and Hansen define political activity as “action directed explicitly toward influencing the distribution of social goods and social values,” which may or may not involve targeting state actors (1993: 4). As these examples suggest, some scholars delimit political actions to those that
make claims on the state to influence policy, while others would include actions that target society as well.

Since 2000, it appears that most scholars include both state-directed and society-directed activities as potentially political. Dietz distinguishes between formal and informal political activity, with the former influencing the selection of leaders or the decisions that those leaders make, and the latter comprised of “individual or collective efforts to supply oneself and neighbors with public goods, sometimes but not always through attempts to obtain a favorable distribution of government resources” (1998: 7). Collier and Handlin also consider political action as “directly engaging in activities that target the state” as well as “participation in associations, which in turn may be oriented to either state-targeted claim-making or the society-targeted provision of benefits” (2010: 10). It is necessary to include some actions that target society apart from the state because, as Collier and Handlin claim, “society-targeted activity (attends) to areas of social need that the state might address but, for a variety of reasons, does not (or not sufficiently)” (2009: 11). Consider the Occupy Wall Street protests that took place in the United States during the fall of 2011. As Stiglitz (2011) argues, while those who took part lacked a formal agenda and did not target the state with any specific claims, the protesters expressed frustration with the status quo and called attention to social and economic inequality. In demanding a higher quality democracy and a more egalitarian society, the protesters’ activity had political relevance, despite its lack of focus and apart from any tangible results.

At the same time, accepting any mobilization that targets society as political without further conditions may result in stretching the concept of what is “political” beyond its reasonable boundaries. In addition to the “self-provisioning” activity that Collier and Handlin (2010) describe, other types of activity that scholars have identified as political include community agricultural improvement projects (Meinzen-Dick et. al. 2004), posting a video on YouTube (Dryer and Ashwell 2008), participating in forums online (Koo 2011), creating public graffiti art (Gendelman and Aiello 2011), and merely working for an NGO (Cruise 2011). Should these activities fall within the realm of the political? Zukin et.al. argue that actions such as those noted above “complement political activity, but they are not political as such” (2006: 6-7). Some scholars resolve the issue by creating two categories: political engagement and civic engagement (Brady 1999; Zukin et. al. 2006; Jacobsen and Linkow 2012). Broadly speaking, actions that specifically intend to influence political outcomes (count) as political engagement, such as voting, campaigning, or volunteering on behalf of a candidate, party, or political issue. In contrast, civic engagement may influence political outcomes, but it primarily “occurs largely outside of the domains of elected officials and government action” (Zukin et. al. 2006: 52).

The above definitions make one thing clear: any definition we choose has the potential to be reasonably contested. The very act of defining a concept entails drawing boundaries, meaning that some items will be covered and others left out. It will always be possible to argue that some excluded instances in fact merit inclusion, and vice-versa. Nevertheless, some definitional boundaries are better than none. Sartori (1970) tells us that concept formation is inherently based on classification, but Collier and Adcock (1999) add the caveat that there is no single “best” meaning for all concepts; the goals and context of the research question at hand should drive the process. In other words, it is necessary to clarify the concept of “politically relevant mobilization” so that we can differentiate between activities within the bounds of the concept and those without.

For my purposes, the essence of political action is best expressed by Max Weber, who describes the concept as “striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of
power, either among states or among groups within a state” (Weber 1919, 1958: 78). Perhaps Weber’s definition has stood the test of time due to its utility. Conceiving of political action as activity that challenges current systems of power draws boundaries around the concept in a way that excludes actions most would consider apolitical, while including almost all relevant ones. Applying Weber’s definition of political action to the concept of mobilization, I define politically relevant mobilization as *any group activity that seeks to influence the distribution of power*.

The distinction between “political mobilization” and “politically relevant mobilization” is intentional. By leaving the concept “political mobilization” to describe activity that aims explicitly to influence a political outcome, then “politically relevant mobilization” refers to a broader category that includes political mobilization, but would also include any activity that challenges or reinforces authority. Any kind of collective challenge to who holds power in the status quo—be it economic, class, religious, knowledge, or even drug trafficking gang leaders—is politically relevant because the participants are “striving to influence the distribution of power” in some way. Now we can better identify whether or not collective action such as community development efforts, tweet-ups, or participating in a flash mob have political relevance.

Consider the five groups of flash-mob dancers in the figures below. A flash-mob dance may be apolitical collective action—done just for fun, or in pursuit of an interest that does not pose a challenge to power. The hip-hop dancers in Figure 2.1 share an interest in dance, and creating spontaneous public art, but nothing more. They are engaging in mobilization, but it is not political. Alternatively, the dancers in Figure 2.2 are overtly attempting to influence a specific political outcome; namely, to reverse the policy that prohibits dancing at the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C. These individuals are clearly engaging in political mobilization.

**Figure 2.1: Hip-Hop Flash mob at the Solano Stroll**

(Source: the author’s dance team, uploaded to YouTube by tbabe29 on 1 January 2010; http://youtu.be/YGPaGvdzng)

**Figure 2.2: The Jefferson Memorial Dance Dance Revolution Flash Mob**

(Source: uploaded to YouTube by ReasonTV on 4 June 2011; http://youtu.be/rAc929KO6HA)
But also consider the following three cases. The dancers’ performance in Figure 2.3 called public attention to the “Citizens United” decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, as well as tried to convince a retail chain to end financial support for a particular gubernatorial candidate.

**Figure 2.3: The “Target Ain’t People” Flash Mob**

(Source: uploaded to YouTube by other98 on 15 August 2010; http://youtu.be/9FhMMmqzbD8)

The flash mob dancers in Pittsburgh, PA (shown in Figure 2.4) primarily aimed to bring a message of peace to the city. However, the performance took place outside the venue where the 2009 G-20 Summit was taking place, and after a previous demonstration had turned violent. Finally, the dancers in Figure 2.5, as part of the “Occupy Oakland” group, called public attention to economic inequalities in the United States. Beyond this, however, the dancers had no specific target audience, did not call for any particular policy changes, and made no claims on anyone.

**Figure 2.4: The “Message of Peace” Dancers**

(Source: uploaded to YouTube by PostGazetteNow on 22 September 2009; http://youtu.be/WhcNLsSGApI)

**Figure 2.5: The “Occupy Oakland” Dancers**

(Source: uploaded to YouTube by cheeseurger70 on 5 November 2011; http://youtu.be/EpfnH4s_V3I)

I classify the final three flash mobs as examples of politically relevant mobilization. The dancers did not necessarily intend to influence specific political outcomes, but it is also incorrect to say that their actions were apolitical. The participants questioned the way society is organized, the economic rights that corporations hold, levels of inequality, and the quality of democracy in the United States. In all cases, the participants posed a challenge to current holders of power, and as such, they should be considered instances of politically relevant mobilization. As the examples above show, the same action in the hands of a different group can have radically
different meanings. The way to determine if mobilization has political relevance is to ask the question: does the action challenge or bolster current structures of power? Any type of collective activity that poses a challenge to the status quo will have political relevance if the participants strive to influence the distribution of power.

Finally, my definition of politically relevant mobilization also leaves the target, means, and end result of the action unspecified. It does not matter whether the group seeks to influence the state, society, a corporation, or any other target—the key is that they want to generate change within the systems of power that currently exist. In turn, the way in which the group pursues its goals is also irrelevant. A flash mob, a tweet-up, or a blog carnival can be as politically relevant as more traditional modes of collective action. Finally, political relevance also does not depend on whether or not the means are effective. The group’s action may achieve its desired results, or different results, or no results at all—and in all cases, the action would have political relevance as long as it was an attempt to influence the distribution of power.

2.2 Influences on Politically Relevant Mobilization

Politically relevant mobilization, then, is any group activity that seeks to influence the distribution of power. With a definition in hand, we now turn to the core research question: what influences politically relevant mobilization? The literature on social movements is an ideal starting point, since social movements are clear examples of politically relevant mobilization. Arguably one of the oldest issues in social science, scholars have been building an extensive literature on factors that give rise to social movements since the beginning of the 20th century. In short, we can divide these components into three main groups: motive, means, and opportunity.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1856) arguably began the modern conversation with his analysis of the French Revolution, showing that economic change—namely, the burden of increased taxation—was instrumental in fostering rebellion. Rudé’s (1959) analysis largely concurs, claiming that the revolutionaries were acting rationally in resisting unsatisfactory social and economic conditions. In other words, people mobilized due to real-world grievances, particularly when rising expectations were left unmet (Davies 1962; Gurr 1970). As articulated by Gurr (1970), if conditions begin to improve, but are followed by a sharp period of reversal, there is a gap between what people expect and what they actually receive. People experience “relative deprivation,” and the disjuncture between expectations and reality sparks collective action.

More recently, “new” social movement theorists have moved away from a grievance perspective to highlight the importance of a shared collective identity (Pizzorno 1978; Morris 1984; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Hirsch 1990; Starn 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Poletta and Jasper 2001). Mobilization requires commitment and often involves some level of personal risk. When individuals share a common identity, they are willing to invest in the welfare of the group as a whole and thus participate in collective action. All of these theorists put individual motivations at the center of the analysis: people will mobilize when they have a reason to do so.

In contrast, other scholars shifted the emphasis from motives to means. Proponents of resource mobilization theory posited that in most cases, discontent can be treated as an ever-present background condition; what matters is access to resources. Groups that mobilize will not necessarily be the most aggrieved—they will be the ones with the resources best suited to collective action. What types of resources are these? Scholars note that money is not necessarily
sufficient, though financing is arguably essential (Tilly 1973, 1978; Jenkins 1999; Soule et. al. 1999) as are highly motivated participants (Aminzade 1973; Gamson 1990). In addition, resources must be controlled, organized, and applied before action can occur. McCarthy and Zald (1977) identified professional movement organizations that can direct resources in the most effective ways; Oberschall (1973) and McAdam (1999) credit the role of Black churches in doing the same. Influential allies can also be useful, particularly support from elites and policymakers (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977; Bailis 1974; Aveni 1977; Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Jenkins 1999). Without diminishing the importance of resources, McAdam (1999) highlighted a weak link in the causal chain thus far: when considering mobilization that has already occurred, it is always possible to find some increase in resources. Therefore, we cannot attribute mobilization entirely to accessing more and better resources (1999: 32-33). Further, McAdam noted that the resource mobilization perspective has concentrated on aspects within movements, thus leaving external conditions unaddressed. Therefore, McAdam and others built upon the resource-oriented model, emphasizing changes in political opportunity structures. In other words, a group may have sufficient motivations as well as the means to organize, but they may still fail to mobilize due to a lack of opportunity.

A change in external conditions, such as new divisions among elites, greater availability of allies, and expanded access to the political arena are just three examples of political opportunities that might lower the costs of collective action, thus making mobilization more likely. Once political opportunities are available, the crucial question is then one of coordination—how to encourage atomized individuals to engage in sustained collective action. As Tarrow (1998) illustrates, the coordination problem is best solved by mobilizing people within their current social networks. Other scholars have expanded on this factor, emphasizing the importance of “informal” ties among neighbors and friends (Snow et. al. 1980; McPherson et. al. 1992; Denoeux 1993; Gould 1995; Parsa 2000; Zhao 2001). Scholars find that social networks are crucial resources for mobilization across many cultural contexts and social movement themes.

To summarize thus far: we would generally expect a group with a shared interest to be more likely to mobilize when it has sufficient motives, means, and opportunities to do so. In a sense, however, these components are all collective. They describe the conditions that would prompt a group to mobilize, but groups are comprised of individuals. When it comes to politically relevant mobilization, we not only need to understand why people would engage in collective action, but also why those individuals choose to take politically relevant collective action. In other words, if we accept that not all mobilization is political—and we have seen that it is not—why should people with a collective problem, as well as the means and opportunity to solve it, take political action instead of other types, such as solving the problem on their own? What motivates individuals to engage with the political arena? To answer this question, we turn to the literature on political participation.

The factors that drive individual political behavior can be roughly grouped into three categories: interest, ability, and efficacy. Simply put, people will get involved in political activity when they want to (interest), they are able to (ability), and they believe that they can resolve the issue(s) they care about within the political arena (efficacy). A large body of research has found that some people are involved in politics because they believe it is in their personal interest to do so. Interests may be related to a concrete policy that provides individual benefits, such as taxes (Lewis-Beck 1985; Sears and Citrin 1985), gun control (Wolpert and Gimpel
1998), or health care (Schaffner and Senic 2006), but they may also be rooted in moral shocks and a sense of personal threat (Jasper 1997). In addition, interests can be collective as well as individual. When an issue affects the welfare of a group, individuals who identify themselves as members of that group are motivated to act in response (Campbell et. al. 1960; Wilcox and Gomez 1990; Hardy-Fanta 1993; Snow and McAdam 2000; Bouché 2012). Personal identities are linked to collective identities, and benefits or threats to either may motivate individuals to take political action.

Individuals also need the ability to engage in politics. Political activity requires a substantial investment of one’s energy and time (Alinsky 1971), and one’s demographic characteristics can either lessen or increase this burden. For over 50 years, studies have consistently shown that economic resources and higher socioeconomic status correlate with higher levels of political participation (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954; Verba and Nie 1972; Lambert et al., 1986; Conway 1991; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Dahl 2006; Parker 2007). Other demographic variables that might influence ability to mobilize include age (Koch, 1993; Wu, 2003), education (Wolfsfeld 1985; Ichilov 1988), race (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Kahne and Middaugh 2008); and gender (Clark and Clark 1986; Conway 2000; Burns et. al. 2001). Further, demographic variables interact with each other and may differ across contexts (Welch and Secret 1981; Hochschild et. al. 2005; Bueno and Fialho 2009). Nevertheless, it is clear that one’s ascribed and achieved characteristics are influential in making political participation more or less likely.

Efficacy has also been shown to affect political activity. As defined by Campbell et. al., efficacy is “the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change (1954: 187). Individuals might be interested in a political issue and have the ability to act, but it is also necessary that they believe they can get results through political action. Scholars of political participation have demonstrated that people who believe they have the ability to effect change within the political arena are more likely to be involved in political mobilization (Campbell et. al. 1954; Almond and Verba 1963; Tygart 1977; Paulsen 1991; Abrams and DeMoura 2002; Becker 2004; Beaumont 2010). Various factors, including demographic ones, influence an individual’s perceived level of efficacy. With respect to individuals from minority groups, efficacy levels increase when at least some political leaders are members of those groups (Burns, et al. 2001; Banducci et. al. 2004; Whitby 2007). Recent work has demonstrated that political interest interacts with levels of efficacy and may be context-dependent (Bouché 2012). In short, while political interest and ability might make action possible, high levels of individual efficacy transform potential into reality.

The social movement and political participation literatures describe complementary phenomena. Individual political action depends on one’s interest, ability, and efficacy; collective action depends on the group’s motives, means, and opportunities. But we are still left with a dilemma: much politically relevant mobilization is conducted by marginalized groups. These individuals may have high levels of political interest, but they are often composed of actors with minimal economic resources and social status. How, then, do groups like these obtain the means for collective action?

Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995) provide a convincing answer: marginalized actors may possess high levels of civic skills. They find that resources—specifically free time, disposable income, and civic skills—are a better predictor of political participation than political interest. Further, while upper-income individuals tend to also have more free time, civic skills can be accessed far more easily by the general public. Kirlin (2006; 2010) categorizes civic
skills into four main types: the ability to think critically, communicate, organize, and make collective decisions. The key element here is that while those with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to have civic skills, it is far easier for economically poor individuals to obtain civic skills than other types of resources. Civic skills can be learned and used at work, at church, and particularly by participating in civil society organizations (Sobel 1993; Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Schlozman et. al. 1999; Burns et. al. 2001). As Sobel succinctly describes, “[one] learns to participate by participating” (1993: 239). Civic skills, then, are a critical resource available to marginalized actors through participation in community organizations.

At the beginning of the 21st century, there was a renewed interest in the concepts of civil society and social networks. The idea that individual relationships can provide collective benefits is not new. Leading scholars have long investigated how the nature of personal relationships can influence the overall quality of social life, including Weber, Durkheim, Tocqueville, and, as Bowles and Gintis (2002) claim, even Aristotle. However, these ideas found new resonance as the publication of Putnam’s (1993) Making Democracy Work coincided with the height of the “third wave” of worldwide democratic transitions. At the very moment when academics and policy-makers were energized by the prospect of consolidating democracy, Putnam offered an elegantly simple solution: create social capital. Almost twenty years after the publication of Putnam’s classic text, academics are still discussing exactly what social capital is, how it is created, and how it can be used to achieve desired results. To the extent that there is consensus on a definition, it is that social capital refers to habits of reciprocity and collaboration, social networks, and social trust.

Academics and policy-makers alike rapidly converged on a causal pathway that began with civil society organizations, and ended with practically any positive outcome imaginable. Broadly speaking, the pathway (displayed in Figure 2.6) is as follows: civil society organizations bring people together, interacting as equals in pursuit of a common goal. In doing so, the group builds social capital (habits of reciprocity, collaboration, and trust), and individual members learn and practice civic skills. Social capital instills group members with a “democratic mindset” (Putnam 1993:88), and civic skills enable them to participate more effectively in the political arena. As a result, individuals gain the ability and desire to become involved in political affairs, and according to Putnam, their increased participation in public life is what ultimately “makes democracy work.”

Political participation is a key component of Putnam’s causal pathway. Consider that any collective action requires both ideological and physical convergence. Bringing previously unaffiliated individuals together around an issue of common concern is a substantial organizational hurdle. Civic associations, however, do exactly this. It does not matter if association members are worshipping, singing, playing soccer, or watching birds—in each context, people with similar interests come together, often on a regular basis. Once the problem of coordination has been solved, collective action is far easier to undertake (Tarrow 2005, 2011). Further, belonging to civic associations, in and of itself, is believed to foster democratic attitudes and beliefs among members, thus increasing members’ desire to participate in the public sphere. In addition, members with shared interests who are already organized will be able to take political action if their interests are threatened in some way. In short, when people with common interests regularly interact in civic associations, they build social capital and civic skills, which

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allows them to articulate their policy preferences to those in power. Thus, organizations with no intended political purpose can nevertheless bring their members into the political arena.

Prospects for mobilization increase when civic associations have ties with other organizations. There has been a great deal of scholarly attention devoted to the types of ties that enable collective action to take place. Network ties can be measured according to their number, as well as whether or not each tie is “strong” or “weak” (Lin et. al., 1981; Granovetter 1983; Uzzi 1997). Networks may also vary according to their degree of formality and openness. Formal networks are organized, institutionally based associations, while informal networks are generally among family, neighbors, and friends (Coleman 1988). A closed network refers to one in which group members are able to collectively sanction those who fail to uphold group norms; open networks do not have the ability to sanction members in this way (Coleman 1988). Finally, network ties can be assessed in terms of homophily; bonding ties connect people or groups that share a common identity, while bridging / linking ties form connections across identity cleavages and power differentials (Putnam 2000; Woolcock 2000; Levin and Cross 2004; Durston 2004).

There are two key points here with respect to mobilization. First, the absence of social networks may be a key reason why mobilization does not occur. In contexts as diverse as Romania (Osa and Corduneanu-Huci 2005) and Chile (Oxhorn 1991; Schneider 1991), evidence indicates that groups with few social networks cannot coordinate effectively, and thus do not mobilize even when economic and political conditions are favorable. Second, an organizational profile consisting of many weak bridging ties appears to be most favorable for mobilization. Steinberg (1980) demonstrated that groups with weak ties were linked to more organizations and ultimately achieved their goals more so than groups formed through strong ties. Similarly, in a longitudinal study of network ties among civil society groups in the Ecuadorean highlands, Bebbington and Perreault (1999) found that groups with weak bridging ties were better able to solve development problems than similar groups with a different profile. Weak bridging ties may foster mobilization because, as Woolcock (1999) argues, they allow socially marginalized groups to connect with those in positions of authority, such as law enforcement officials, political parties, and regional or national level institutions. Uslaner and Conley (2003) add that individuals with strong bonding ties generally associate within their ethnic identity groups and withdraw from civic participation, while those with weaker ties tend to be more willing to engage with the larger community.

**General Consensus on a Causal Pathway**

It would appear that we now have a fairly clear answer to our initial question: we can spark political engagement by building civil society. When individuals—particularly those from marginalized groups—join civic associations, they acquire civic skills and gain access to social networks characterized by weak bridging ties. Civic associations, then, “provide the channels or mediating structures through which political participation is mobilized” (Edwards 2009: 84), as members use social networks and civic skills to influence political outcomes (Opp and Gern 1993; Nelson and Chowdhury 1994; Woolcock 2009; Kunreuther 2009).

Latin America fits this profile particularly well. Collier and Collier (2002) describe the labor and agrarian movements that emerged in the region during the early 20th century, as well as the mass mobilizations that deposed authoritarian leaders in the 1970s and 1980s. Contentious politics continued over the next three decades, centered on three main themes: popular movements for housing and basic services, both urban (Bennet 1992) and rural (Schneider 1992); movements pressing for democratic consolidation (Cardoso 1992); and mobilization directed
toward gaining rights for indigenous peoples (Starn 1992; Findji 1992). Civil society remained active in the political sphere into the 21st century, particularly in demanding land reform (Petras 1998; Carter 2002; Wolford 2003; Wright and Wolford 2003) and social assistance for the unemployed (Garay 2003; Delamata 2004). While many of the social movements that emerged during the 20th century have since transformed into less radical NGOs (Hochstetler 1997; Foweraker 2001), it is evident that a lively civil society remains politically engaged throughout Latin America.

Further, civil society organizations are emerging as important political actors throughout Latin America, supplementing more traditional structures of interest intermediation. Collier and Collier (2002) describe how the working class was initially incorporated into the political arena through unions and union-affiliated populist political parties. After World War II, many countries in the region followed an Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) economic model, in which the economy produced goods for the domestic market in an attempt to reduce dependence on foreign imports. Within this model, creating economic growth and providing benefits to workers were complementary goals. For example, because workers were also consumers, it was in the interest of both labor and the corporate class as a whole to raise wages. As a result, there was space for class compromise, and labor-based political parties, as well as business interests, were quite successful in gaining political and economic concessions from the state.

However, the onset of the debt crisis, along with problems inherent in this model of production, made ISI difficult to sustain. In 1973, members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) increased the price of oil four-fold and deposited their rapidly expanded revenues in Western banks, which made low interest loans to developing countries. Latin American countries were especially attractive borrowers, as the entire region was considered to be a low investment risk area with great potential for future growth. For their part, political leaders in Latin America were eager to borrow funds, not only to invest in domestic development projects, but also to fuel the ISI model with capital. However, OPEC raised oil prices again during the 1980s, and borrowing increased yet again, since countries needed to purchase oil and make payments on their debt. As the demand for loans increased, creditors became more cautious, and banks began making shorter-term loans at ever-higher interest rates. By 1982, this cycle of debt had snowballed into a crisis situation, and when Mexico announced in August that it could not meet the payments on its debt, lending throughout Latin America came to an abrupt halt. Many countries turned to international lending institutions for assistance in managing their debt burdens, but were required to implement liberal economic reforms in exchange.

The long-term economic success of open markets, increased exports, and privatization in Latin America is still under debate. What is clear, however, is that an unanticipated outcome of the shift in economic strategy has been the erosion of populist coalitions and union influence. Labor-based political parties have less incentive to support worker benefits for a number of reasons. First, when a nation’s customers are located in the international arena instead of the domestic market, the state no longer needs to strengthen its national consumer base to facilitate economic growth. As Latin American countries increasingly rely on the international market for capital, greater attention is paid to protecting stable capital flows, sometimes at the expense of consolidating national economic markets. Finally, countries undergoing debt restructuring are usually required to curtail social spending, which diminishes state capacity to implement and expand domestic benefits. Political officials no longer have the same incentives, or the same
financial ability, to make concessions that benefit working class interests, and the space available for class compromise is increasingly small.

As a consequence, unions no longer exert the influence that they once did. As firms downsize and gain in efficiency, the number of workers employed by the formal sector has shrunk. With fewer workers in the formal economy, the potential membership pool for unions is decreasing, and their effectiveness has diminished in turn. Meanwhile, informal workers have their own grievances that are not often included in the demands of unionized workers. All of these changes have rendered unions and union-affiliated political parties less effective in representing the concerns of the working class within the political sphere.

Nevertheless, the working classes, the unemployed, and the poor in Latin America still want their voices heard within the political system. Case studies from countries around the region indicate that civil society organizations are serving as sites of political representation, aggregating and articulating the interests of their members and connecting them with the state (Oxhorn 1995; Costa 1999; Booth and Richard 2001; Hasenfeld and Gidron 2005; White 2008). Most recently, Collier and Handlin (2010) conducted a systematic, cross-national study of political participation in four Latin American cities (Buenos Aires, Santiago, Lima, and Caracas). Despite variation in form and strength, they found that in each area, the working classes are accessing the political arena primarily through associational networks, not parties and unions as before. Although traditional structures of interest intermediation certainly remain influential, civil society organizations have become additional avenues for political inclusion and participation.

For a time, then, there was not only consensus around the connection between civil society, political participation, and democracy, but optimism bordering on exuberance. It seemed that continued democratic progress was within anyone’s reach by building civil society. Many found a positive correlation between a strong civil society and democracy (Verba 1996; Linz and Stepan 1996; Rueschemeyer et al. 1992; Cohen and Arato 1992; White 1994; Gellner 1994; Fukuyama 1995; Diamond 1999; Putnam 2001). Some went so far as to claim that civil society is “as much a core feature of democracy as are competitive elections” (Warren 2009: 378). Democracy was only one outcome, however. Civil society organizations have also been credited with the ability to achieve good governance (Archer 1994; Fisher 1997), as well as enhance bureaucratic efficiency, create law-abiding citizens, and more compassionate elites (Boix and Posner 1998). Regardless of the intended outcome, the assumption that associational life would produce higher levels of civic engagement was rarely called into question.

Policymakers were especially intrigued by the possibilities that civil society presented. By the beginning of the 21st century, virtually every major international development organization had incorporated civil society building into their work. The European Union, the United Nations, and some of the most prominent private foundations have all included civil society building as a centerpiece of their democracy promotion strategies (Ishkanian 2007). Even some multilateral lending institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, emphasized the importance of building civil society to achieve economic goals. When heads of state in the Western Hemisphere gathered for the Third Summit of the Americas in 2001, they codified the central role of civil society organizations in strengthening and preserving democracy in the region (Cole and Lavoie 2006). Building civil society has been a key aspect of U.S. foreign policy since the end of the Cold War (Ottaway and Carothers 2000), and substantially increased after the events of September 11, 2001. It is particularly illustrative to note that in 2005, the Bush administration created an Iraqi “Ministry of Civil Society” as a
centerpiece of the American effort to liberalize the economy and build democracy in Iraq (Encarnación 2009).

It seemed that civil society was imbued with “almost magical qualities” (Posner 2004: 237) and that an “associational revolution” was at hand (Edwards 2009: 21). As one might expect, however, practical reality soon intruded upon the scene, bringing some of the limitations of civil society to light. Edwards succinctly summarized the disjuncture: “Although some theorists posit a direct transmission belt between associational life, positive social norms, and the achievement of larger social goals, the evidence suggests one almighty mess” (Edwards 2009: 83). For example, Pinheiro (1998) noted that strong civil societies may correlate with democracy, but not necessarily good governance. Others recognized that building civil society does not always strengthen democratic virtues within the general public (Fish 1995; Kopecký and Mudde 2003; Encarnación 2009), and that not all types of civic associations serve to build the same kind of democracy (Fung 2003). Finally, even when the causal pathway linking civil society and civic participation operated as expected, its positive outcomes may only accrue to majority groups, and in fact worsen social outcomes for marginalized populations (Hero 2007).

There is a particularly rich and growing literature on the “dark side” of civil society, in which civic associations help authoritarian leaders maintain power (Levi 1996, Berman 1997; Putzel 1997; Robinson and White 1998; Wiktorowicz 2000; Avritzer 2004). Jamal (2007) shows that in the Palestinian West Bank, participation in civil society results in a depoliticized citizenry that has a greater tolerance for authoritarianism. Henry (2009) finds a similar outcome in Russia. Although citizens there are increasingly active in the public sphere, their methods of engagement serve to reinforce traditional state-society relations. Finally, in his historical analysis of Europe in the early 20th century, Riley (2010) shows that fascism took hold in Italy, Spain, and Romania in large part due to their strong civil societies. As Jamal concludes, there is nothing particularly democratic about civil society; on the contrary, civic associations “reproduce elements of the political contexts in which they exist and structure themselves accordingly” (2007:3).

To be clear, I am not suggesting that associational life cannot lead to political engagement, or that civil society is of no benefit to democracy. Evidence continues to mount in favor of the link between civil society organizations, political participation, and strong democracies. For example, two of the world’s largest countries, Russia and Indonesia, transitioned to democracy in the mid-1990s. Despite all of Russia’s apparent advantages, including high educational, economic, and urbanization levels, Russia has since reverted to authoritarianism while democracy has thrived in Indonesia. Why? Lussier (2011) presents convincing evidence that citizen participation is a crucial explanatory factor. Indonesia’s extraordinarily rich associational life supported political participation, particularly during the periods of down-time between electoral cycles. Indonesians were therefore able to protect their newly-established civil liberties and constrain the power of elites. Russians, however, had extremely low levels of civic engagement, and thus could not pressure elites to sustain democratic practices and institutions.

I agree that civil society is often a cornerstone of many desired social outcomes, but I stress that the relationship between civil society and political participation cannot be taken for granted. Civic associations can build an “uncivil” society, and certainly cannot achieve all the desirable outcomes that were initially expected of them. Scholars and policymakers alike realize that there are no easy shortcuts to democracy or development, and civil society may lend support to despots and democrats alike. And yet, there is a weak link in the causal chain that has been overlooked to date: the assumption that a mobilized civil society will naturally engage in
politically relevant mobilization. Specifically, even when civic associations build social capital and civic skills that facilitate mobilization, there is no guarantee that they will direct collective action towards politically relevant ends.

In a sense, there is a discontinuity between literatures. If individuals have sufficient interest, ability, and efficacy to take political action, and conditions are favorable for mobilization (i.e. the group to which they belong has the means, motives, and opportunities for collective action) we tend to assume that any collective action that ensues will be politically relevant. However, my research in Rio’s favela communities demonstrates that this assumption does not always hold. There are many civil society organizations in Rio’s favelas that have high levels of resources, and some are extraordinarily well funded. Despite their apparent advantages, however, these organizations rarely engage in politically relevant activity. The central goal of my research is to demonstrate why this is so. Before doing so, however, it is useful to analyze how well Rio de Janeiro fits the profile described above. The next section takes up this issue.

Applying the Causal Pathway to Rio de Janeiro

Brazil is particularly fertile ground for social mobilization. Of all the Latin American countries that experienced authoritarian regimes during the late 20th century, Brazilians mobilized against the military generals in greater numbers than elsewhere in the region, ushering in an “unprecedented generation of social movements” (Hochstetler 1997:1). The Catholic Church initially galvanized the popular sectors through “base communities” organized at the local level, connected them with journalists, lawyers, academics, and ultimately trade unions, which successfully prompted the military dictatorship to withdraw from power in the mid-1980s (Smith 1991; Keck 1992; Ottman 1995; Della Cava 1989). Mobilization against the dictatorship then transformed into collective demands for citizenship rights, particularly by women (Jaquette 1989; Alvarez 1989), indigenous peoples (Ramos 1995), and rural workers (Fearnside 1989; Tavares 1995; Wolford 2003), which often connected with each other across sectoral and identity interests.

Since March 1985, Brazil has not only been a democratically governed republic, political rights and civil liberties have improved substantially from 2006-2012. Freedom House evaluates over 200 countries and disputed territories each year in terms of political rights and civil liberties, giving each a score ranging from 1 (most free) to 7 (least free) in each category. The two scores are averaged; countries rated 1-2.5 are considered “Free,” 3-5 “Partly Free,” and 5.5-7 “Not Free.” By 2006, Brazil’s rating was solidly “Free” in both categories, and has remained so as of 2012. Further, many of the social movements that emerged in resistance to the military dictatorship have gained strength over time. The Brazilian Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (MST) is arguably the region’s largest and most powerful example of sustained collective action (Robles 2008; Duffy 2009; Wolford 2010). Within recent years, Brazilians have also formed social movements advocating for gay and lesbian rights (Dehesa 2007), those living with HIV/AIDS (Galvão 2005; Parker 2009), and Afro-Brazilian identity (Carneiro 1990; Mikevis and Flynn 2005; Fox 2010). One would be hard-pressed to find another country with such a strong record of political mobilization across diverse social sectors.

Within Brazil, Rio is an especially likely site for collective action due to favorable political opportunities and heightened motivations for activism. Opportunities for free speech and civic activism are widely available. Political opportunities within the city of Rio became

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substantially more favorable with the election of Eduardo Paes as mayor. After three terms of right-wing social policies under César Maia, Rio elected left-leaning Paes to office. Moreover, Paes narrowly defeated Fernando Gabeira, a Green party candidate and former guerrilla fighter against the dictatorship, whose ideology was even further to the left than that of Paes.\(^6\) (Stevens 2009). It would appear that political openness to non-established actors in Rio is higher than at any time in the past fifteen years.

Further, associational life is particularly rich in Rio’s favela communities. Brazil has arguably one of the most developed and coordinated civil societies in Latin America (Garrison 2000), and virtually every ethnographic study conducted within Rio’s favela communities describes a multifaceted civic life (Robb Larkins 2011; Dowdy 2012). Residents participate in sports clubs and samba blocos, eat lunch at the same snack bars, share draft beers together after work, and frequent the same part of the beach every Sunday afternoon. Informal recreational associations such as these function as “third places,” and according to Putnam (2000) are especially well-suited for building social capital.

At the same time, recent economic transformations provide additional motivation for collective action on the part of Rio’s marginalized poor. On one hand, Brazil has achieved remarkable economic growth over the past decade while simultaneously reducing poverty and inequality. Brazil’s GDP grew 7.5 percent in 2010, compared to 2.8 percent growth in the USA, 3.5 percent in Germany, and 3.9 in Japan.\(^7\) Moreover, the World Bank estimates that per capita GDP in Brazil rose over 200 percent from 2000 to 2009, and the Brazilian Ministry of Labor and Employment reports that formal sector employment is growing at a breakneck pace.\(^8\) The benefits of growth also appear to be reaching down to the very poorest in society. From 1981 to 2005, the poverty rate fell from 17% to 8% (Ravallion 2009). Most dramatically, however, Brazil has substantially reduced levels of inequality. In 2003, Brazil was the third most unequal country in the world; by 2012, Brazil had dropped out of the top ten, as inequality declined on average over 1 percent each year, reaching its lowest level since the 1970s (Souza 2012). According to Neri (2010), “never in Brazilian statistical history has inequality fallen so much” (2010: 15).

The city of Rio de Janeiro, however, is Brazil’s lone exception to these trends. While economic opportunities exist in Rio as elsewhere, the Brazilian Institute for the Study of Labor and Society (IETS) reports that inequality levels in Rio have remained unchanged since 2000, placing the city on par with the most severely unequal African countries. Further, as Chapter 3 will show, favela residents are those most excluded from Rio’s newly emerging economic opportunities. Favela dwellers are surrounded by increasing wealth and prosperity, but are unable to access these benefits for themselves—creating classic conditions of relative deprivation. People tend to evaluate their personal circumstances by comparing them to their expectations—and when rising expectations are not met, collective action is more likely than otherwise (Gurr 1970; Klandermans 1997; Wright and Tropp 2002; Beitler and Jebb 2003).

With heightened motivations for mobilization, a rich associational life, and favorable political opportunities, we might expect a wealth of politically relevant mobilization within Rio’s favela neighborhoods. Moreover, we would particularly expect it from those CSOs with the greatest resources: those organizations that have won major financial grants and possess a

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\(^6\) Paes received 50.8 percent of the vote to Gabeira’s 49.1 percent, thus winning office by a margin under two percent.

\(^7\) CIA World Factbook, accessed 21 August 2011.

transnational reputation for their work in favela communities. However, what I found in Rio ran
counter to these assumptions. Although civil society organizations frequently engage in
collective action, the vast majority do not undertake political activities. Moreover, when
politically relevant mobilization occurs, it does not come from CSOs that appear to be the most
likely candidates, as described above. My research methodology was developed in order to
unravel these puzzles.

2.3 “Building a Rocketship to Pave the Roads:” Methodology and Data Analysis

Case Selection
When I first gained access to favela communities, I initially asked residents what their
city councilmembers did to help solve problems in their area. After three or four attempts that
were met with incomprehension, however, I changed the question slightly, asking “when do you
approach city councilmembers with neighborhood concerns?” Still unsuccessful, I tried some
variations: “how do people here usually participate in politics?” or “what does the residents’
association do to help solve community problems?” In desperation, I posed the question as
broadly as I could, asking “have you ever thought about approaching an elected official to try to
resolve a community problem, such as getting the roads paved?” But the responses remained the
same: blank stares, or laughter, and occasionally a statement such as “no we haven’t, but I know
we should, and by the way, can your university give us funds to help us begin?” Finally, one
resident candidly disclosed to me that my question was meaningless at best. In her words, I was
essentially asking favela residents if they had ever tried to solve a problem of low importance—
such as paving the roads—by doing the equivalent of trying to build a rocketship: something
practically impossible, potentially dangerous, and certainly a waste of time.

Seen in this light, I understood that asking directly about political activity made no sense.
But I now had uncovered a real puzzle: why was it considered useless to undertake political
action in Rio’s favelas? Finding an answer to such an irrational question—discovering why it
would be foolish even to pose the question—could not be done by administering a survey. The
only way to obtain a true answer, one that favela residents themselves did not realize they knew,
was to try to see the issue of political mobilization from within their day-to-day context as much
as I could. Accordingly, I gave up the idea of a structured survey entirely and turned to
participant observation.

Debate over the value of qualitative vs. quantitative methodology has largely ended.
Social scientists now tend to agree that no single method is preferable, and the approach selected
should be the one that best fits the question at hand. When very little is known about a particular
outcome, closely analyzing one or two cases may yield valuable insights more effectively than
broader, large-N studies (Brady and Collier 2004). Qualitative methodology, and specifically
participant observation, is ideal for revealing why actors do what they do (Van Evera 1997),
particularly when those reasons are not immediately evident to the actors themselves. All of
these elements informed my research design and case selection strategy. The approach I take in
this research is that of a qualitative, “micro-level case study” (Bochove 2008), in which in-depth
information is gathered within a single city. By holding the political, economic, and social
dynamics constant at the municipal level, we can more easily perceive variation among
organizations that face the same background conditions.
In fact, there are important differences among civil society organizations within this context. One is simply in terms of size. Of all the CSOs concerned with favela communities, some are quite large in every sense of the word, including budgets, personnel, and international reputation. In terms of network attributes that facilitate collective action (as outlined in the previous section), the largest organizations appear relatively similar: many network connections characterized by weak bridging ties. Based on these characteristics, we would expect these CSOs to undertake politically relevant mobilization. This study will show the opposite to be true; not all large organizations with this profile are alike. In fact, they are radically different in a way that affects their ability and desire to take political action. Nevertheless, I began fieldwork by interviewing leaders, directors, and staff members from almost all of the major CSOs in Rio that work with favela communities. It was fairly easy to arrange these meetings; in most cases all I needed to do was email the external relations contact listed on the organization’s website.

However, the vast majority of CSOs concerned with favela issues are small organizations without formal headquarters or public relations liaisons. With over 1,200 favelas in Rio, it was necessary to narrow the field by considering two related aspects: the grassroots CSOs themselves, as well as the favela neighborhoods in which each was located. In part, case selection on both counts depended on where I was physically able to go. As Chapter 3 will discuss, most favela communities are closed to the general public; there is no way to ensure safe passage other than through a personal connection. I began by leveraging my connections with academics and journalists, as well as referrals from staff at the larger CSOs in Rio. I also built a wide network of acquaintances by striking up conversations with virtually everyone: doormen, beach vendors, taxi drivers, seat-mates on the bus, and fellow “Flamengo” soccer fans at the local snack bar. After four months, accepting every invitation and asking for referrals whenever possible, I obtained access to 45 small civil society organizations located in 17 favela neighborhoods.

Within that universe of “possible” cases, I selected the sub-sample of favela neighborhoods first. I chose areas that were, according to Mill’s method of comparison, “most similar” to each other: urban favelas with similar socio-economic profiles, controlled by trafficking gangs but without any active warfare taking place. I also chose areas that were “most likely” cases for mobilization—neighborhoods that were clearly under-served by the state—so that we ought to expect mobilization to occur. In other words, assuming that political opportunities and constraints were the same for all CSOs city-wide, I wanted to focus on cases where motives for politically relevant mobilization were equally high. After ruling out favelas that did not meet the specified criteria, I maximized variation by identifying favela neighborhoods that differed markedly along two dimensions: physical location of the CSO, and population size of the favela in which the CSO is most active.

Emerging research from Brazilian social scientists suggests that a favela’s physical location may be an important explanatory factor with regard to the “attention” a given community does or does not receive. Figure 2.6 below displays the main zones within the city of Rio.
Almost half of all favelas—46 percent—are located in the Northern Zone (Zona Norte), followed by 36 percent in the Western Zone (Zona Oeste), with only 18 percent located in the central business district and the Southern Zone (Centro and Zona Sul) (O’Hare and Barke 2002). Favelas near the Southern Zone are “privileged” in that they receive public policy interventions, academic studies, and NGO activity, while those in the North and West are largely ignored. Valladares demonstrates that favelas located close to a university, as well as home to famous samba schools, are the ones most frequently included in academic research (2008: 15-17).

Machado da Silva concurs, arguing that favelas close to the Southern Zone as well as those near sites of historical importance are the areas often targeted for public infrastructure improvements (20 August 2007, author interview). Since Southern Zone favelas receive the greatest amount of public attention, it would be reasonable to expect that CSOs in these neighborhoods might also have greater political efficacy. In other words, they may be able to attract political attention as well as allies due to their privileged location, and therefore be more likely to undertake politically relevant mobilization.

I also considered population size in selecting research sites. Favela communities can be roughly divided into two types with respect to population size: tens of thousands of families living in large, multi-neighborhood complexes, versus small territories comprised of a few hundred households or less. Oliveira finds that spatial settlement patterns in Rio de Janeiro “have a significant influence on the social interactions that form the basis of any political mobilization” (Oliveira 2011:1). With this in mind, perhaps smaller favela neighborhoods foster closer social bonds and build more internal trust, thus making political mobilization easier to undertake than for CSOs located in large complexes.

Within the 17 favela neighborhoods I was able to access, none were radically different from the others in terms of socio-economic profile, but some were engaged in active gang warfare. After ruling out those neighborhoods, I chose sites that varied according to population size and location, resulting in the six favela communities listed in Table 2.1 below.
Once I had identified potential favela sites, I selected individual CSOs for in-depth study. Initially, all of the smaller organizations appeared to be similar in terms of their resources for collective action: minimal financial resources and few ties to other organizations. With this profile, we would expect little politically relevant mobilization to take place. Again, however, this study will show the opposite to be true: there are three distinct types of small CSOs in Rio, and as with larger organizations, they are dramatically different in ways that affect their ability to undertake politically relevant mobilization. Given that I did not perceive this variation at the outset, however, I selected CSOs for in-depth analysis according to those organizations where I was most welcome. Simply put, I got to know those organizations that wanted to get to know me, usually because I could contribute to their work in some way as a volunteer. Ultimately, I chose ten small CSOs across six favela neighborhoods, displayed in Table 2.2.

Half of the organizations were located in favelas near the Southern Zone; the other half were situated far from that privileged site. Likewise, half of the organizations were in large favela complexes, with the remaining half located in small neighborhoods.
Table 2.2: Selected Research Sites: Small CSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favela Location</th>
<th>Favela Size</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Small</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Near the Southern Zone</td>
<td>Craveiro</td>
<td>Girassol</td>
<td>Jacinto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rainha-da-Noite</td>
<td>Pau-Brasil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far from the Southern Zone</td>
<td>Bela-Manhã</td>
<td>Açucena</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vitória Regia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Torênia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nossa Senhora</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Sources

My analysis relies on original data gathered for this project. I conducted nearly 200 semi-structured interviews with CSO directors, project coordinators, and lower-level staff members, as well as academics, journalists, favela resident association leaders, social movement activists, and a few gang members. In addition, I spent approximately 14 months spanning 2007 to 2009 as a participant observer within ten small CSOs. My specific role differed depending on each organization’s particular needs. I translated English websites into Portuguese for one organization; for another, I translated their program’s history from Portuguese into English. I taught English classes for one CSO, self-esteem workshops for teenage girls at another, and teacher-training classes at a third. I also did a fair share of cleaning, organizing, errand-running, and in general lent a hand wherever I was needed. In short, I volunteered whatever services I could in exchange for access to the favela neighborhood, as well as to the inner day-to-day life of each organization.

I also asked CSO staff members for relevant project documents. I received a trove of information, including grant proposals, project evaluations, annual reports, organizational histories, budgets, job descriptions, campaign materials, and in a few cases, access to internal online discussion forums. These materials, combined with information culled from formal interviews and participant observation on the ground, helped me to uncover mechanisms that shed new light on the conditions that affect political action.
The argument I put forth over the course of the following chapters is based on patterns of resource acquisition that correspond to different organizational types. I discovered these patterns through a low-tech, yet useful strategy: reading through my interview notes and field notes with paper and pen. While in the field, I noticed that organizations that appeared similar on the surface were actually quite different in terms of their resources. It was not necessarily a matter of having more or fewer resources; the variation I perceived was in types of resources and sources of resources. In short, CSOs differed in terms of what they tried to get and who they tried to get it from.

Examples of different types of resources are shown in Table 2.3. An organization might seek only one type of resource, such as cash donations, or it might strive to obtain diverse types of resources, including in-kind donations, volunteers, training, and connections. CSOs might also acquire resources from a single source, such as a large Brazilian foundation, or multiple sources, which are listed in Table 2.4. When I realized that sources of resources and types of resources varied, I explored the relationship as follows: after returning from the field, I listed all of the CSOs I encountered in the field on separate sheets of paper. Then, each time a resource was mentioned, I noted its type and its source with a tick mark on the corresponding CSO’s page. Before long, it was evident that some CSOs had patterns that were quite similar, while others were very different. Some had a high concentration of tick marks in the “monetary support from the individual founder” area, with very few tick marks for any other sources of resources or types of resources. Other CSOs had most tick marks located in the “grants from Brazilian foundations” area, while still others had tick marks scattered across most categories, with no apparent concentration at all. When I had completed this phase, I looked at all of the sheets of paper—each representing an individual CSO—and put those with similar combinations of tick marks together. Five general piles emerged from that process, representing different combinations of sources and types of resources. Those five piles became the five organizational types in this study: social benefit CSOs, golden CSOs, ghost CSOs, diamond CSOs, and citizenship CSOs.

By breaking down the general category of resources into “sources of resources” and “types of resources,” it became clear that some CSOs relied extensively on many different sources of resources, while others utilized only one or two sources, never accessing others at all. The following chapters will show that by adding these two attributes—sources of resources and types of resources—we can observe variation that is otherwise obscured. Specifically, CSOs that appear similar in terms of their size, location, and level of resources may actually be quite different in ways that matter for politically relevant mobilization. My argument unfolds over the course of the next several chapters, beginning with the structural side of the issue: the role that historical inequality and current gang control play in restricting citizenship rights, particularly the right to mobilize politically, for all of Rio’s favela residents.
Table 2.3: Different Types of Resources and Typical Examples of Each

| Cash Donation                      | • Money provided by the founder  
|                                   | • Money deposited in a “collection box” at the CSO site  
|                                   | • Grants obtained from funding agencies  
|                                   | • Money raised from fundraising parties or dinners abroad  
|                                   | • Donations from individuals in other countries  
| Events / Fees/                      | • Refurbish small items and sell them  
| Sales Revenue                      | • Ticket sales from performances/shows  
|                                   | • Fees for performances/lectures at universities abroad  
|                                   | • Fees for performances/classes in Brazil  
|                                   | • Sales of books / t-shirts / DVDs / CDs  
| In-Kind Donation                   | • Share, trade, or donate building space for activities  
|                                   | • Food and drink for snacks  
|                                   | • Office services (printing, copying, faxing)  
|                                   | • Office supplies (monitor, computer, USB drives, camera)  
|                                   | • Bus fare or transportation  
|                                   | • CSO supplies (instruments, books, markers, sheet music)  
| Volunteering                       | • Teach classes (art, English, sports, poetry, school tutoring)  
|                                   | • Services (legal, accounting, psychological counseling, website design, health education)  
|                                   | • Advertise events / projects / fundraisers  
|                                   | • Mutual assistance (paint a room, install lighting)  
| Connecting                         | • Make introductions between CSOs and service volunteers  
|                                   | • Make introductions between CSOs and in-kind donors  
|                                   | • Make introductions between different CSOs  
|                                   | • Make introductions between CSOs and forums / classes  
| Training                           | • Project management / planning / how to run a meeting  
|                                   | • Budgeting / Grantwriting  
|                                   | • Yearly evaluations  
|                                   | • Public speaking  
|                                   | • Human rights  

Table 2.4: Different Sources of Resources and Typical Examples of Each

| The Organization’s Founder | Thiago, founder of CSO Pau-Brasil  
|                           | Éverton, founder of CSO Jacinto  
|                           | Mariana, founder of CSO Açucena  
|                           | MV Bill, founder of CUFA  
|                           | Junior, founder of AfroReggae  
|                           | Betinho, founder of IBASE  |
| CSOs in the Same Favela Neighborhood | CSO Pau-Brasil and CSO Craveiro, both in Fregata  |
| CSOs in a Different Favela Neighborhood | CSO Pau-Brasil in Fregata and CSO Jacinto in Bem-Te-Vi  |
| CSOs in Non-Favela Areas of Rio | Viva Rio  
|                                 | ISER  
|                                 | AfroReggae  
|                                 | PACS  
|                                 | IBASE  
|                                 | Rio Voluntário  |
| Individual Foreign Donors | University students who hold CSO fundraising parties  
|                           | Tourists who put money in a collection box  
|                           | Individuals who purchase tickets to CSO shows  
|                           | Individuals who donate via the CSO’s website  
|                           | Former CSO volunteers who send money  |
| Brazilian Grantmaking Foundations | Criança Esperança  
|                                    | Instituto Comunitário Grande Florianópolis  
|                                    | Fundação Comunitária Baixada Maranhens  |
| Foreign Grantmaking Foundations | Brazil Foundation  
|                                    | Ford Foundation  
|                                    | Kellogg Foundation  |
| Brazilian Corporations | Petrobras  
|                        | Natura  
|                        | Santander  |
| International Charities | Save the Children  
|                        | UNICEF  
|                        | World Vision  |
Chapter 3: Setting the Stage:  
Inequality, Gang Control, and their Effects on Civil Society

With a population approaching 12 million, Rio de Janeiro is one of the world’s largest cities (Graham 2010), and according to official estimates, nearly 3 million of the city’s residents live in favela communities. These neighborhoods, which are home to one out of every four people in Rio, are known around the world, yet are just as widely misunderstood. Favelas are integral to the social, cultural, and economic life of the city, but the state does not provide these areas with the same services, opportunities, and respect as other Rio neighborhoods.

This chapter begins with a brief history of favela communities, focusing on the ways in which favela dwellers have advocated for their rights as citizens during the 20th century. Their actions were sharply curtailed, however, first by authoritarian leaders from 1964 to 1985, and then by drug and weapons trafficking gangs, which continue to exert control over favela neighborhoods. I then discuss how civic life has been profoundly reshaped in response, rendering traditional structures of interest articulation inadequate and dysfunctional. Despite the existence of many local-level CSOs in Rio’s favelas, civil society is suppressed and residents cannot freely exercise their rights as citizens. The remainder of the chapter shows how and why favela dwellers cannot turn to their elected officials, political parties, churches, or their neighborhood residents’ associations for assistance in solving community problems.

3.1 A Brief History of Associational Life in Rio’s Favelas

The Rise and Fall of Favela Residents’ Associations

Many of Rio’s favela neighborhoods can trace their origins to the mid-19th century. Valladares (2005) describes early favela settlements established by runaway slaves in the interior of Rio de Janeiro state, some of which remain in existence today. Although slavery was abolished in 1888, newly-freed blacks were prohibited from living within Rio’s official city limits, so they also established makeshift communities on the outskirts of the city. Free blacks were soon joined by homeless veterans; upon returning from the Canudos War in the late 1890s, soldiers found that the assistance they had been promised by the Brazilian government was not forthcoming. Impoverished and unemployed, these veterans settled on the hillsides overlooking Rio de Janeiro. Rural migrants from the drought-ridden Northeast also came to Rio searching for work, and together with former slaves, poor blacks, and marginalized soldiers, formed communities out of their ingenuity, where self-help is a way of life.

Although the growing city needed the labor of the new working class, its wealthier and whiter residents were loath to incorporate favela neighborhoods into their midst. On the contrary, Mayor Pereira Passos instituted a policy of destruction (bota-abaixo), attempting to literally “knock down” favelas in the process of modernizing the city. During the 1920s and 1930s, favela neighborhoods near the newly-established beachside areas of Gávea and Leblon were destroyed. However, despite official efforts to “control the entrance into Rio of individuals of low social conditions” (Burgos 1998:27), favela neighborhoods persisted largely due to economic necessity.

Where eradication had failed, removal efforts began. Getúlio Vargas was elected president in 1930, but with the backing of the armed forces, he installed the presidency with authoritarian powers and ruled from 1937 to 1945. The Vargas period in Brazil, known as the Estado Novo (“New State”), was characterized by efforts to control the working class through corporatism and repression, and favela policy reflected these trends. Vargas forcibly relocated favela residents to “workers’ parks” (parques proletários)—public housing dormitories—that were located far from the city center. The residents were told that their relocation was temporary, pending renovation of their homes and neighborhoods. However, as time passed and no one was permitted to return, favela residents began to resist. Under constant threat of eviction, residents’ associations formed in the 1940s, demanding not only that favela communities remain where they were, but also that they receive public services on par with the rest of the city. While some communities managed to avoid relocation, receiving official city services proved much more difficult. Instead, many residents organized on their own to obtain electricity, running water, plumbing, and garbage collection, often holding a mutirão, a large-scale “self-help” project involving the entire neighborhood.

Vargas’ authoritarian regime ended in 1945, and as Brazil returned to democracy, favela residents’ associations took on more active political roles. Scholars are divided on whether or not the residents’ associations were deliberately created by the state in order to control favela residents and suppress Communist activity (McCann 2006) or by residents themselves to resist discrimination and pursue their rights (da Silva 2011). What is clear, however, is that for a time the residents’ associations were sites of political activity. Favela dwellers used the residents’ associations to resist attempts at neighborhood removal, articulate their interests within the political arena, and—when their interests were ignored by the state—help residents organize to solve their problems on their own. For example, the residents’ association in Borel collected a small fee from everyone in the neighborhood, and used the proceeds for the creation and upkeep of a cooperative school and health center (da Silva 2011). Further, Dulles (1991) notes that the governor of Rio, Carlos Lacerda, had political ambitions of his own, and sought to attract middle-class supporters by “solving” the favela problem once and for all. The solution, in his view, was to relocate Southern Zone favelas to Jacarepaguá—an area almost two hours outside of the city center. The City of God favela (Cidade de Deus), made famous by the 2002 film of the same name, was established in exactly this manner.

By the mid-1970s, over 100,000 favela residents had been relocated to areas on the outskirts of Rio, which proved to be much less desirable than their previous centrally-located neighborhoods. Favela communities endured, however, due to the continued influx of rural migrants to Rio de Janeiro. A neighborhood might be evacuated one month and repopulated the next by an entirely new group of migrants to the city. Rio’s demand for low-cost labor, combined with the lack of affordable housing options, ensured that favela neighborhoods would endure despite the measures taken to eliminate them.
At the same time, Lacerda sought to create grassroots associations that would mediate between his administration and favelas neighborhoods. His goal was to co-opt the residents’ associations that existed and create new ones sympathetic to his interests—and in this, Lacerda largely succeeded. In the process, however, regulations and legal statutes were created that gave residents’ associations a degree of power in representing their local areas’ interests to the state government. As residents’ associations continued to multiply and gain strength, they formed a larger umbrella organization in 1963, the Federation of Favela Residents’ Associations in Rio de Janeiro (Federação das Associações de Moradores de Favelas do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, or FAFERJ) to coordinate and amplify their demands. At its height, FAFERJ brought over 100 residents’ associations together and acted as an intermediary between favela dwellers and state officials. In doing so, McCann argues that the residents’ associations achieved much: by the 1970s, favela eradication was essentially “off the table as a political option,” and the associations were “evolving into a vital parallel Congress” (2006: 152).

Favela residents’ political activism was sharply curtailed in 1964, however, as Brazil returned to authoritarian rule. All favela residents’ associations were banned, and their former leaders were threatened, arrested, and occasionally murdered. Repression had its expected effect; most Brazilians avoided collective action entirely. Moreover, virtually nothing was done during the next two decades to improve living conditions within Rio’s favelas. Instead of organizing for their rights to city services, favela residents who remained involved in public life settled for trying to obtain small favors from political officials.

The dismantling of the residents’ associations during the dictatorship years, combined with the lack of state services, set the stage for their eventual co-option by opportunistic politicians. Once political freedoms returned to Brazil, FAFERJ reappeared as well, but it had been greatly weakened. Individual residents’ associations no longer attempted to engage in the political process; at most, they sought to obtain basic services from individual political hopefuls during election season. Leonel Brizola, governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro during most of the 1980s and early 1990s, was particularly skilled in using residents’ associations to distribute patronage to those who supported his campaign. On one level, Brizola halted the policy of favela removal, and instead sought to provide favela neighborhoods with some basic services, such as electricity, water, and education. Brizola’s tenure marked a significant shift in the way favelas were viewed by the city: not as social blight to be removed, but as areas of the city in need of development. However, the services that were provided came with clientelistic strings attached. McCann (2006) illustrates that Brizola used residents’ associations as vehicles for distributing resources, particularly government employment. In doing so, residents’ associations became sites through which one could acquire personal resources from government, falling further from their previous role as organizations that challenged state policies. Further, once Brizola left office, there were no formal institutions in place connecting residents’ associations with the state, and the favela residents who had been most active within the associations had already received government employment.

By the 1990s, the residents’ associations were no longer posing even minimal challenges to the state, and their most dedicated activists had been co-opted. Since favela communities lacked official channels for accessing the political arena, patronage politics was firmly established as the way to obtain any services or benefits from the city. When we consider that every favela neighborhood was subject to the same clientelistic pressures, it is clear that each individual favela needed to attract the attention of political candidates during electoral campaigns. Taken to its logical conclusion, favela resident leaders had few incentives to
collaborate with each other in an umbrella organization such as FAFERJ. On the contrary, all other favelas were essentially one’s competition in the race to secure short-term benefits from political hopefuls. The residents’ associations existed as institutions but lacked a clear organizational purpose, and the communities in which they were located were largely ignored by the state. Both of these factors ultimately made favelas an ideal staging ground for the emerging drugs and weapons trafficking trade.

**Favelas and the Rise of Organized Crime**

Organized criminal gangs are a relatively new phenomenon in Brazil. During the 1970s dictatorship years, Leftist political prisoners were sent to Ilha Grande, a small island off the coast of Rio, where they were housed alongside many small-time drug dealers. Penglase (2008) describes the way in which the criminals learned the value of organized collective action from the political organizers. Any goals, including criminal ones, can be achieved more easily by uniting and organizing instead of fighting against each other and cutting individual deals with the prison guards. Some prisoners did just that, which enabled them to assassinate their unorganized gang rivals in prison. By 1979, the organized criminals had become the only gang at Ilha Grande. They called themselves the Red Command (*Commando Vermelho*), or CV, and as their leaders were released (or escaped) from prison, the influence of the CV spread throughout Rio. The CV expanded principally by requiring all members to abide by a common set of rules and enforcing strict discipline, yet allowing mid-level leaders a high degree of autonomy outside of those parameters. Any gang members who betrayed others to the police, or committed actions outside of direct orders such as murder, rape, or theft, would be immediately killed. Otherwise, local-level gang leaders had the authority to run their criminal enterprise any way they saw fit.

The newly organized CV quickly gained prominence in Rio, and the lack of state presence within favela neighborhoods made those areas ideal sites for criminal activity. Using their collective strength, the CV eliminated their competition and soon controlled the places in favelas where drugs were sold (*bocas de fumo*), gaining a monopoly over retail drug distribution. For their part, favela residents tended to ignore the gang’s activities due to what Penglase (2008) calls a policy of “forced reciprocity:” in exchange for their silence, the gang would enforce security within favela communities (2008: 129). By 1986, the *Commando Vermelho* controlled over 70 percent of the drug trade in Rio (Amorim 1993). Favelas had become key drug distribution points, with the residents’ associations serving as command central for the gang leaders.

Due to internal conflicts, however, the CV lost their near monopoly over the drug trade. Divisions within the organization ultimately led to the creation of the Friends of Friends (*Amigos dos Amigos*), or ADA, splintering off from the CV and becoming a main rival for power. In turn, the Third Command (*Terceiro Commando*), or TC, split from the ADA. By the end of the 1990s, all three gangs were in vigorous competition to expand and hold their territories. Near-daily battles for control brought unprecedented levels of violence to favela communities, contributing to their increased social isolation from the rest of the city.

In short, where favelas had been ignored by the state and their residents marginalized due to their poverty, race, and ethnicity, their exclusion took on an added dimension as their neighborhoods were perceived as sites of extreme violence. Although some scholars claim that much of the violence attributed to favelas has its basis in myth and spectacle for outsiders, not reality (Robb Larkins 2011), the outcome is the same: further exclusion and stigmatization of favela residents. Similarly, where the residents’ associations once had been true “associations of
residents” working for the betterment of their neighborhoods, by 2000 these organizations had become de facto gang headquarters. One effect of gang control over favela neighborhoods has been the way in which the gangs have profoundly shaped the contours of civic life. The following section describes the duality of civil society found within Rio’s favela neighborhoods, which is driven not only by the presence of the gangs, but also by their interactions with the Brazilian police.

3.2 “But Officer, We’re Just Three Guys Hanging Out with a Pineapple!” The Duality of Civil Society in Rio’s Favelas

On a clear, sunny Saturday—a perfect day for the beach in Rio—I had traveled for over two hours to visit a CSO in the Western Zone of the city. However, after entering the neighborhood and walking for another 20 minutes to their headquarters, I found the offices to be deserted. (It turned out that the organization had closed for the day unexpectedly—probably due to the fine weather). Undaunted, I struck up a conversation with a resident who had also dropped by to see if anyone was there. We sat outside, and before long, one of his friends passed by, carrying a pineapple he had just bought at the market. Before long, the three of us were relaxing in the shade, snacking on fresh slices of juicy pineapple, and shooting the breeze. As we were talking, a police car drove up, parked across the “street” on the other side of the valão (sewage river), and just sat in the car, watching us. After half an hour, an officer got out of the car, walked over, and without even saying “good day” started haranguing us. “What are you all doing? Is there a meeting going on here?” One of the guys replied “no, no meeting, nothing like that.” The officer continued: “Why are you here? Who said that you could be here? Who are you planning to meet here?” The resident replied: “no, it’s Saturday afternoon, no one is here, and no one is meeting us here.” Officer: “Then what are you all doing here? Resident: “Look, it’s nothing at all—it’s just us—we’re just three guys hanging out with a pineapple. See?” 10 As he held up the pineapple for the officer to inspect, apparently as evidence of our good intentions, I couldn’t help but start laughing. The officer then turned his attention to me, staring as if to say “who is this crazy foreign girl?” The residents continued to insist that there was nothing going on, and the officer finally left us alone. (Participant Observation: 15 November 2008.)

I relate this anecdote to illustrate one personal experience that reflects the duality of civil society in favela neighborhoods. On one hand, favelas can be welcoming and open—the kind of atmosphere in which strangers will strike up a conversation and share a snack with someone they have just met. On the other, however, a palpable tension exists—the sense that one is always under surveillance, either from the gang, the police, one’s neighbors, or all three. Favela life is a paradox that residents understand and navigate daily, but remains poorly understood by outsiders.

It often appears that social capital is alive and well in favela communities. Civil society organizations exist, people socialize with each other frequently, and residents seem to go where they like and do what they want without restriction. On a personal level, residents are warm and friendly—saying “good day” as they pass by on the street, and often ready to stop and chat. However, the more one becomes familiar with favela life, the more one understands that civil society in these neighborhoods is far more complex than it seems at first glance. Gang control creates particular dynamics that curtail civil liberties of all types, including the right to organize

10 In Brazilian Portuguese: “Olha, é nada disso—somos tres caras com um abacaxi—viu?”
collectively. Before taking up this issue, however, it is useful to define a core term: the favela itself.

What Are Favelas Really Like?

At the end of a series of interviews with a community leader, I asked him what one thing he would like to change about his favela neighborhood. He replied, “We wish that other people would, like you, have the opportunity to be here and get to know the reality, to hear and see it with their own eyes, what we are, who we are, and what we want.” (Interview: Respondent #11, 17 August 2007.) Toward that end, I begin this section with a brief description of the realities of life in a favela community as I have come to understand them.

Understanding favela life is a difficult task, however, because as Janice Perlman has succinctly stated, “Everything in a favela contains its opposite” (Perlman 2010: 339). Regardless of which adjective one might choose to describe Rio’s favelas, there are contradictory examples to be found as well—and not just among different communities, but within the exact same neighborhood. Are favela residents poor? Yes, some desperately so. Others, however, may be fairly well off, university-educated, and able to live virtually anywhere in Rio—yet they choose to remain within the favela community. Are favelas comprised of ramshackle dwellings precariously perched on the side of a hill? Many are. Yet others more closely resemble working-class or even middle-class neighborhoods, with carefully constructed homes, flower gardens, and green spaces for recreation. Are favelas violent areas, where gunfights might break out at any time, with children caught in the crossfire? Unfortunately yes, and one can be sure that when this happens, the media cover it relentlessly. But the reporters and television cameras are absent the vast majority of the time, when residents leave their doors unlocked, their windows open, and feel safer within the community than anywhere else due to the lack of theft, rape, and street crime.

Table 3.1 below presents excerpts from my daily field notes that attempt to capture these dualities. The community is identified in the left-hand column, followed by two examples on the right that describe very different experiences within the same favela neighborhood. As these excerpts show, the question “What are favelas really like?” is a complicated one to answer. Favelas have violence, problems, and challenges, but also beauty and tranquility. They are places where poverty and opportunity, hunger and comfort, solidarity and isolation can be found side by side. They are thoroughly investigated by reporters and researchers, yet widely misunderstood by nearly everyone who is an outsider. In short, they are neighborhoods like any other in many respects.
### Table 3.1: Contradictions and Paradoxes within Favela Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Ugly, Noisy, Dirty, Poor, Violent</th>
<th>Beautiful, Quiet, Green, Pleasant, Safe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garça Branca</td>
<td>I saw shacks that were just completely uninhabitable. Spaces between the boards, some without a roof, not even a tarp.</td>
<td>The houses were in good condition. The roofs were in good repair, and some people had small gardens in front of their homes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bem-Te-Vi</td>
<td>F invited me into his house, and it was some of the worst poverty I had ever seen. Two rooms only in a little run-down shack—one used as a bedroom, the other for cooking and that was it. There was a toilet, but it wasn’t hooked up to anything. F was embarrassed—he made a joke about it being like “permanent camping” and said he was saving up to move.</td>
<td>L invited me in, and the main room had a bookcase filled with books, a radio, a desk with her computer, scanner, and fax, and two chairs. The kitchen was small, but well-stocked, and with a stove, sink, refrigerator, freezer, and lots of storage. The bathroom had just been remodeled, and the toilet and shower area was as nice as the one in my apartment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beija-Flor</td>
<td>There’s a valão—a sewage river—that runs right down the street and through the community. The houses are right in front of it, with bridges across it at various points. It might have been pretty, if it didn’t smell so bad and wasn’t made of sewage.</td>
<td>M invited me to his mother’s house, and all of the furnishings looked as middle class as I had seen elsewhere in Brazil. In fact, his mom had exactly the same plates and bowls that I did. I mentioned it to M, and he said they got them at the X store on Y street, which was exactly where I got mine too. There was also a patio area for barbecues with an incredible, expansive view of the bay. Many apartments in Ipanema don’t have this kind of view! I mentioned this to M and he said “of course they don’t, why do you think we live here? It’s better in the favela.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaviota</td>
<td>When I enter this community, every time it’s a shock. That’s the barrier between the state and the community. There the state ends, you can see the difference. Truly it’s a complete abandonment. But it’s just a matter of a few steps. Really, just steps. It’s very shocking. It’s beyond insane. I’m not used to it.</td>
<td>There was a green space in the community—it was overgrown with weeds somewhat, but it was a well-used area. There were kids playing, some adults jogging, other people just taking a walk. I saw a few kids playing a version of street hockey with sticks, a ball, and two plastic two-liter soda bottles. People seemed relaxed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fregata</td>
<td>B and I walked around his neighborhood. To get there, we had to go through twisty narrow passageways, and B said that the floods are awful up here. Sometimes the water just comes rushing down the stairwells, and because they are so narrow the water is a foot, sometimes two feet high. It’s very shocking. If you find yourself on the stairway and it floods, you could be killed. And the force of the water, plus the water itself, causes a lot of damage to homes and property.</td>
<td>G invited me over. There were two bedrooms, a bathroom, and the living room to the left. There was a nice couch, two matching chairs, a coffee table, end tables, a stereo, a DVD player, and a TV that was better than mine in my apartment. G also had a Dell computer running the same version of Windows that I have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fregata</td>
<td>This part of the neighborhood generally smells like urine and feces. Dogs do their business everywhere, some people do too. And every now and again, I could smell weed or crack. But today, there was a new smell I didn’t recognize. I thought—urine, feces, weed, crack? No, not any of those, but it’s a smell I know, and then it hit me…it was vomit! And I was surprised to realize that I was happier to finally identify the smell than I was grossed out by the fact that there was vomit nearby.</td>
<td>The main street had everything! A hairdresser, some very nice restaurants with tablecloths, bars, a store with official Adidas stuff, a store with official Puma stuff, hardware and bakeries and pet stores and pretty much everything you would find in any neighborhood. Then C and I walked around, went through areas M and R within the neighborhood. It was so quiet! So green! The streets were narrow and winding, but paved with cobblestones. It was really beautiful, actually. Blue sky, great views, lots of flowers and birds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Author field notes, 2007-2008).
The class differences, prejudices, values, and attitudes that characterize all areas of Rio de Janeiro are present within favelas too. As one community leader from the Fregata neighborhood put it, “the favela descends from the hill every day,” because favela residents work, shop, and live side by side with non-favela residents. Contrary to Zuenir Ventura’s (1994) titular contention that Rio is a “Divided City,” favelas are not a realm apart, a separate world. Residents repeatedly stressed to me that favelas are not just an integral part of the city, they are the city of Rio, and always have been.

However, we are still left with our original question: what, exactly, separates favela neighborhoods from other areas of the city? Some translate the Portuguese word favela into English as “slum,” a word that carries with it connotations of squalor and poverty. Others translate favela as “shantytown,” a term that conjures up images of transients who occupy poorly-constructed shacks that might collapse at any moment. As described above, however, neither term accurately describes favela communities. Some areas within favelas may be poor, but they may also contain sites of economic development that support a thriving working class. Similarly, most favela residents take pride in their homes, especially since they are likely to have designed and built them over many years, if not generations. Nearly all favela residences are constructed using brick, concrete, and rebar, and 75 percent have ceramic tile floors.\footnote{Theresa Williamson, “A Missed Opportunity in Rio,” \textit{New York Times}, 3 April 2012.} What to community outsiders may appear as an unfinished dwelling is more likely to represent a construction work in progress. What is more, there are many other areas within Rio that are quite impoverished, yet are not considered to be favelas.

Finally, the word favela is also occasionally translated as “squatter community.” It is true that many favelas were originally formed through illegal land occupations in the 19th and early 20th century. However, Brazil’s 1988 Constitution gave all citizens the right of “adverse possession” after five years. Therefore, anyone who has resided on and developed unused land for over five years automatically obtains the legal right to acquire ownership of the land. Favela neighborhoods may have begun their history as settlements of illegal squatters, but the term is quite outdated and certainly does not apply to favelas today.

In short, it is inaccurate to describe favelas as slums, shantytowns, or squatter communities. They are, instead, working-class neighborhoods like many others in Rio, in which residents take pride in their homes and hold legal title to them. What truly separates favelas from other areas is not captured within any of the terms above. Instead, I concur with Williamson (2012) who defines favelas as areas that are “un-served” or “under-served” by the state. Favelas are areas that are socially, not physically, separate from the rest of the city, and part of this separation is reflected in the unequal provision of state services to favela residents. The next section elaborates upon the role of the state in more detail.

\textit{The State as a “Wrong Presence” within Favelas}

What should states provide to their citizens? Answers to this question are as varied as the number of states that exist. For citizens of democratic regimes, however, there are some common themes. The Preamble to the United States Constitution eloquently outlines four fundamental principles that articulate what the state should do: protect the \textit{rule of law} (“establish justice”); ensure \textit{public safety} (“insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense”); provide \textit{public goods} (“promote the general welfare”); and protect \textit{civil liberties} (“secure the blessings of liberty”). Citizens of different states can, and do, vigorously debate what items should be included within each of these elements; for example, health care is considered a public
good in some nations but not in others. In general, however, these four items—rule of law, public safety, public goods, and civil liberties—are what citizens can reasonably expect states to provide.

Most Brazilian citizens generally receive all four of these items from the state. Brazil has been a democratically governed republic since March of 1985, and according to Freedom House, has been steadily gaining access to political liberties and civil rights. By 2006, Brazil’s rating had improved to “Free” in both categories, and has remained so as of 2011.12 Elections occur every four years at the federal, state, and municipal level. There are 21 major political parties represented in Congress, and elections tend to be vigorously debated and heavily contested affairs. The 1988 Constitution enumerates public goods that are the right of every citizen, including education, health care, and pensions upon retirement. The Brazilian Armed Forces defend the country from external threats, primarily foreign pirates who might seize newly-discovered oil fields off of Brazil’s southern coastline, while five separate police divisions provide internal security. In short, the Brazilian state has established various institutions to provide public goods as well as protect the rule of law, public safety, and civil liberties.

The Brazilian state falls short, however, when it comes to favela neighborhoods. As the previous section of this chapter described, favelas have always been viewed as undesirable places by the middle and upper classes. The legacy of marginalization continues today in depriving favela residents of their full citizenship rights, one part of which is through curtailing their access to the rule of law, public safety, public goods and civil liberties. In turn, the low degree of state provision of services opens the door for informal providers to operate; namely, the drug and weapons trafficking gangs.

A brief anecdote from my field notes illustrates how favela residents navigate their mixed environment. I was visiting a friend in the Bem-Te-Vi community one afternoon when the electricity went out in the area. Half an hour later, a group of young men were hard at work attempting to fix the problem. There were groups of wires strung up all over the place, and they were trying to tap into a better connection. My friend Éverton went over to chat with them, and I naively asked if the men had called the city electrical company for help. In response, all of them, Éverton included, immediately broke into hysterical laughter, and one almost fell off of the tree branch he was sitting on to reach the wires. Once they calmed down, the man in the tree told me that “we can’t call the city, because all our connections are totally illegal. The city doesn’t give us any service here.” (Participant Observation: 4 November 2008.) Residents in other favela communities reported similar experiences:

“I called the state electricity company to get the lights on in my house, but they said it wasn’t possible, they didn’t install lines there [in the favela.] So to get the wire, I paid a ‘service charge’ to the gang, and they hooked it up.” (Interview: Respondent #8, 10 November 2008.)

“If you want light, water, cable TV, internet, you can’t get it legally here. You try to do it right and you can’t because there’s prejudice, or the city doesn’t care, so you are forced to do wrong. The only way to get these things is through the gang. It’s nobody’s first choice.” (Interview: Respondent #180, 15 November 2008.)

“I’ve been a cell phone customer of [company] for over 5 years and have always paid my bill on time. So I called them and tried to sign up for internet access through them too. They were

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happy to sell it to me, until they realized I lived in a favela. Even though I’ve always paid on
time! So I had no choice but to go through the ‘unofficial company’ [the gang].” (Interview:
Respondent #160, 31 October 2008.)

I followed up on comments like these by asking if getting these services “unofficially” was just
as good as getting them legally. The consensus was that the quality of the service was fine, but
the main issue was that if something doesn’t work, you can’t call the company to fix it. You
have to figure it out on your own, which can be difficult and dangerous, since wiring is a
specialized skill. Of course, there are people within the community who could help—“there’s
always a guy on the street who will do this, who will set it up or repair it if it goes down”—but
individuals with these skills are organized and controlled by the gang. Residents are left to either
fend for themselves, or rely on— and thus become indebted to—the traffickers.

Events such as the one described above often prompt outsiders to conclude that the state
is completely absent from favela neighborhoods. Some scholars consider favelas to be a
paradigmatic example of O’Donnell’s “brown areas” (2004), locations where the state does not
reach. Many conclude that since the state has given up on favelas, the gangs have entered to take
their place, creating a center of power that is parallel to the state (Leeds 1996; Goldstein 2003). The
mass media in Brazil and elsewhere concur, portraying gangs as having secured their

grip on

favela neighborhoods by providing services that the state does not—such as infrastructure,
sanitation, food, medicine, and jobs—and residents are said to be loyal to the traffickers in
exchange.

However, reality is far less clear-cut. The idea that the gangs are a substitute for the state
is not entirely accurate, as it fails to capture the complex reality of the state’s role within these
communities. Garmany (2009) illustrates that the Brazilian state is actually highly present in
favelas in a number of ways. There are established political channels, favela residents participate
in elections, and at times the state does provide some services, such as garbage collection,
running water, and a police presence. At best, the gangs are inadequate and transitory service
providers that are imposed upon residents, who in no way view them as a replacement for the
state.

Although the vast majority of favela residents are not associated with gang activity in any
way, relationships with individual gang members can and do persist, because—at least at the
lower levels of the organization—gang members are residents themselves. Most residents steer
clear of illicit activities, as well as the places in which they are likely to occur, but as for the
employees (funcionarios) at the lowest level? One resident described the relationships between
gang members and ordinary residents this way:

“I remember Aurélio, he was a trafficker, and his mother lived on the same street that I do, and
one day she came to my house and said ‘look here Auntie, I’ve already talked to that hooligan,
that hooligan who is my son, I’ve been talking to him from the day I saw him there in that place
for the first time [at the boca de fumo, the point of sale for drugs], and on and on, I always
chastise him and demand that he go home because I don’t want him in the middle of all that, no.
Because he came from my body.’ She loved that boy. They [favela residents] all have love for
everyone there because they are all from there.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 16 August 2007.)

Favela residents distinguish between “tráfico e traficantes:” the drug trafficking industry
versus the individual gang members themselves. Drug and weapons trafficking is a concern, but
residents overwhelmingly stressed that they are powerless to do anything to influence this industry—that falls within the purview of law enforcement agencies. The individual traffickers, on the other hand, are their friends and neighbors. The situation is similar to that of some American Teamsters union members who were involved with organized crime in the United States during the 1950s. Their neighbors realized that they were involved in criminal activities, but generally chose to look the other way due to personal relationships and shared histories. In Brazil, the dynamic appears similar. As one woman clarified: “They [gang members] are local boys, you know? We went to school with them, grew up with them, see? They’re not bad people, we know them, and they can get things done, so why not?” (Interview: Respondent #128, 18 July 2008.) However, another resident offered this caveat: “Sure it used to be that way. But now it’s more of an industry, people coming in from the outside, who aren’t known to the community.” (Interview: Respondent #175, 25 November 2008.)

While it is true that gang members are often from the communities themselves, and they may provide residents with some small items, this does not ensure the population’s unconditional loyalty. On the contrary:

“People submit to the traffickers, but it is a forced submission. They might provide some benefits on an individual, piecemeal basis, or do philanthropic activity in the community, but it is all with an eye toward increasing their control over the community and securing their position of power. It’s not a substitute for the state at all.” (Interview: Respondent #5, 21 June 2007.)

An informal interview with a trafficker revealed his perspective on the “benefits” the gang provides to the neighborhood. “We ingratiate ourselves to the residents by sponsoring parties, providing music and drinks. And there are people who come to us sometimes and need medicine, for example, or help covering funeral expenses, things like that.” He also explained that the gang “mediates” conflict within the community, particularly in cases of domestic violence, disputed building codes, and property ownership. Instead of relying on the state judicial system, residents bring these issues to the trafficking leadership, who help residents resolve the issue. Using the word “mediate” often, he appeared to want to convey that the gang ultimately helps residents: “It’s our mission.” (Interview: Respondent #16, 26 July 2007.)

While this trafficker may believe that his gang is ultimately benefiting the community and thus ensuring their loyalty, residents feel quite differently. In every community I visited, people expressed sentiments similar to these:

“For electricity, gas, internet, the only way to get these things is through the illegal connections the gang has. It’s nobody’s first choice. It’s that the legal way isn’t open to favela residents. We are between a rock and hard place. I feel like a refugee.” (Interview: Respondent #155, 15 November 2008.)

“The traffickers decide who can be considered innocent or guilty. If there is a situation, that person will be judged by the traffickers, and they can torture him or her, and can kill him. They give the orders, we follow.” (Interview: Respondent #149, 8 November 2008.)

“Yes, they are our judges. But it’s because we can’t get a real judge. I remember when my neighbor was going to be kicked out of her house by her son-in-law after he got a divorce from her daughter. He wanted her out and she wouldn’t go. So they went to the traffickers, and a
representative heard her side and his side, and then made a decision, I think it was for her to stay. But there’s no appealing the decision, and it’s arbitrary—so the gang is in control here.” (Interview: Respondent #140, 14 October 2008.)

“Who rules here, the mayor? No, it’s the traffickers. They provide order. If a woman catches her husband cheating, if a husband beats his wife, he might be beaten, and if he’s caught beating his wife again, he might get more than a pounding, they might cut off his hand, or his foot, something like that. And if it happens a third time, he might be killed.” [Another person interrupts:] But you know that only happen if the woman had a good connection to the gang. [First person:] Yes, that’s true. In most cases she would just keep quiet and put up with it.” (Interview: Respondents #146 and #148, 8 November 2008.)

“The situation is very complicated because we accept it [the benefits] to a certain extent, but also, they [the gang] have guns, right? So therefore, what are you going to do? It’s very unequal.” (Interview: Respondent #78, 22 August 2007.)

Comments like these reveal that while residents may receive some services from the gangs, they in no way view these “benefits” as an adequate substitute for the state. Residents would much prefer official access to the judicial system, electricity, internet, water, and telephone connections without having to rely on the traffickers to provide them with services informally.

Another way gangs exercise control over favela communities is through their “partnerships” with local businesses. As one individual affiliated with the Residents’ Association—and, as I later learned, was also a gang member—explained: “every month there’s an ‘ajuda de doação’ (helpful donation), in which business owners give vegetables, food, perishable goods, meat, all these kinds of things. And with these resources, we distribute basic food baskets to the community.” (Interview: Respondent #13, 19 July 2007.) However, residents view these “helpful donations” as a form of extortion. The traffickers—acting through the Residents’ Association—demand resources from businesses and residents alike, sometimes in the form of perishable goods, sometimes in cash. Favela residents of communities across Rio described a similar system:

“You have to pay a tax to the traffickers. That’s just the way it is.” (Interview: Respondent #71, 3 May 2008.)

“The gang collects $R 300 per month [about $200 USD] from every business. This is a ‘protection tax.’ [Protection from whom?] From the police, and rival gangs that might invade. We don’t want to pay it, and we’re not really forced to pay it, but everybody knows that we have to pay it.” (Interview: Respondent #8, 10 November 2008.)

“They [the gang] ‘ask’ for food items, but they’re really extorting them from us. All the lunch stands, the LAN house, the bars, pretty much anybody who has money coming in has to pay a tax. The traffickers give it [the money and food] to their families first, then they choose which families will get things. And in return, when the police invade, or there’s trouble, the gang

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13 A “LAN house” is similar to a cybercafé: it is a place where people can use computers and access the internet for a fee, as well as printing, photocopying, and fax services. However, these businesses do not serve coffee or offer other amenities; in that respect, they have more in common with a FedEx Kinkos business center.
members know they can go to these families and get help, get hidden, or say on camera that there’s no problem with gangs here.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 18 October 2008.)

Thus, residents know that while the gang might supply goods and services to the community, the gang also extracts resources from residents.

While one might argue that states, at least in democratic regimes, engage in similar activity, there are two important differences. First, state agencies in democracies have legitimate authority to extract resources because citizens actively give their consent to do so. In contrast, favela residents have no way to give or withdraw their consent to gang leaders. In addition, the basis for redistribution in most modern polities is routinized, predictable, and intended to benefit the welfare of all. In favela communities, the decision about who gives and who receives resources is arbitrary, personalistic, and done ultimately for the benefit of the gang itself. Although drug and weapons trafficking gangs have a strong presence within favela communities, they do not act as effective substitutes for the Brazilian state. While they provide some needed community services, the gangs constantly monitor residents’ activities, and extort both cash and in-kind donations from businesses and well-off individuals alike. Even though the gangs arguably provide a measure of security within favela neighborhoods, residents would prefer to access goods and services legally, just as non-favela residents of Rio do.

How, then, should we conceptualize the relationships among the state, the gangs, and residents of favelas? Table 3.2 provides one possibility. As described above, state agencies generally provide four types of services to their citizens: uphold the rule of law, ensure public safety, provide public goods, and protect civil liberties. Rio’s non-favela residents receive all four services from the state. Favela residents, however, obtain some of these services from the state, some from the gang, but some not at all.

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<th>Rule of Law</th>
<th>Public Safety</th>
<th>Public Goods</th>
<th>Civil Liberties</th>
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<tr>
<td>Favela Residents</td>
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<td>Non-Favela Residents</td>
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(Source: Author Compilation).

In terms of public safety, the gangs are quite effective in keeping the peace; criminal activity such as theft, assault, and rape are rare in favelas. Gangs also have a monopoly on some public services, such as electricity and internet connections, but the state provides others. Neither the state nor the gangs, however, uphold the rule of law within favela communities. Favela residents do not have reliable access to the judicial system due to its high cost in terms of time and money. Davis (1998) shows that resolving disputes through the courts is considered by most to be within reach of only the wealthiest Brazilians. Instead, the gang often acts as an arbiter between favela residents. However, gang members themselves are not subject to the same rules that others are. Thus, the rule of law is not upheld by anyone. Civil liberties suffer much the same fate. The Brazilian Constitution states that all citizens have the right to free speech and assembly, as well as the right to vote and run for elected office. As this chapter will show, however, the state not
only fails to protect these rights in practice, the gangs actively curtail each of these rights for favela residents when it is in the gang’s interest to do so.

If the gangs are a force of “parallel power” within favelas, they are at best a highly imperfect substitute for the state. Favela residents receive some public goods from the state that are their right as citizens from the state, but not all. The gang provides others, as well as a measure of public safety—yet no one upholds the rule of law or protects favela residents’ civil liberties. Thus, the problem is not that the state is absent—it is that it is not present in a way that upholds the citizenship rights of favela residents. Mariana, a resident of Beija-Flor who founded a small grassroots organization, summed up the dynamic this way:

“{Why do these problems exist in your community?} Because we are all excluded, here inside. But what this really is, it’s the absence of the state. Well, absence—no. A wrong presence. The state is there. The state is there inside [the community.] They are present, but in the wrong way. If you’re talking about the police, that’s an example, that’s not the state being present. It’s a wrong presence. The state is there in that form. [In the city center] the state is present in that they provide electricity, all that, that’s the presence of the state. It’s uncertain, and full of corruption, but the state is there. You’ve got electricity there in the plaza, there’s pavement, that’s the presence of the state. There’s IPTU [the government agency that assesses property taxes], there’s the license for the bar across the street so they can operate, the plaza there is well taken care of for the most part, everything is cared for and all that. But in the [favela] community, no, the state is there, but in a very wrong way. The state isn’t present in the form of a library, a theater, a Cultural Center, it isn’t present in the form of a hospital or a working health center or a daycare—it is only present as the police.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 16 August 2007.)

Despite their preferences for legal opportunities to obtain what they need, favela residents do virtually nothing to demand goods and services from the state. Given their strong desire for formal access, this presents a puzzle: why don’t favela residents mobilize to access these goods? Why don’t residents insist that city council members respond to their needs—and if they refuse, vote others into office who will? Why don’t they band together—through political parties, churches, or other civil society organizations—in order to pressure the government for change? As the following section will show, gang control of favela communities has profoundly reshaped the contours of community life. Typical strategies of political participation and repertoires of collective action are rendered ineffective, or nearly impossible, within these neighborhoods.

3.3 Traditional Institutions: Inadequate and Dysfunctional for Collective Action

**Police: Disrespectful at Best, Abusive at Worst**

A police presence within favela communities might seem like a positive step toward providing security for residents. Reality, however, is quite different. When the state enters favela communities by dispatching police officers, it is not to confront the drug trafficking industry. Instead, it is often particular police officers seeking to capture specific gang members, either due to a personal vendetta, or because those officers have been paid off by one of the rival gangs to eradicate some of their competition.

As Mariana explained further, “the police are supposed to enter the favela to protect
residents against the traffickers, as ‘the state against the gang’ (*estado contra tráfico*). But what really happens is that it is ‘policial contra bandido’—the individual officer against the individual gang member. They’re not acting in an official role. They’re out to get somebody.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 16 August 2007.) A resident of a different favela community confirmed that the police are often paid off by the gang. Police salaries are relatively low, so “when they have an opportunity to earn money through taking bribes, they’re just trying to make a living. Everybody needs that.” (Interview: Respondent #92, 4 November 2008.) In yet another community, on a day in which a group of police officers were out in force and the atmosphere was extremely tense, a CSO founder explained the situation this way:

“These police officers have something against the guys who control the gang in this community, that’s why there’s the potential for violence. The police have never been in this to ‘enforce the laws.’ They want to keep themselves safe, so they take the bribes and it’s calm. When the police can be paid off, that’s when it’s peaceful. But in the case of these guys, they’ve got a personal grievance against some individuals in this gang faction, so they can’t be bribed, they’re going to shoot it out, and it will be even more violent, and that’s why it’s scary. That’s why the police coming into the community are our worst problem.” (Interview: Respondent #185, 18 November 2008.)

At the heart of the state’s “wrong presence” in favela neighborhoods is the fact that it is the presence of the police that makes residents most insecure. Instead of being present in the conventional sense—providing the security services that a modern state agency would in a fair and just manner—residents are often subjected to human rights abuses at the hands of the police. International human rights organizations have denounced the poor treatment of favela residents by the police for decades, and residents consider the police as dangerous—if not more so—than the drug traffickers themselves.

In 2008, Human Rights Watch (HRW) discovered forensic evidence that indicated 1,137 police killings in Rio de Janeiro state that year were in fact extrajudicial executions instead of “resistance killings” as official documents claimed. HRW also found that the police respond with lethal force when challenged; “at least 10 and as many as 103 persons are killed for every police officer killed.” Amnesty International reports similar evidence, stating in 2009 that public security policy in Rio’s favelas was “violent and confrontational,” and in 2011, that “extrajudicial killings remain widespread.” My interviews with favela residents revealed some of the personal stories behind these grim statistics. Each community that I visited had experienced violence at the hands of the police in some way:

“When they [the police] come in, they run up the street with guns drawn, it’s an invasion blitz. But there are small children playing in the corridors! There was a four-year old who got trampled the last time this happened.” (Interview: Respondent #175, 25 November 2008.)

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14 Human Rights Watch defines “resistance killings” as cases in which police officers “claim to have used legitimate force following an individual’s failure to obey a lawful order…In all such police reports reviewed by Human Rights Watch, resistance killings denoted police killings of individuals whom they claim had engaged in a shootout with them.” Human Rights Watch 2009:5.
16 Amnesty International. 2009. *Freedom from Violence is a Human Right.*
“A few years ago, an 11-year old girl was shot in broad daylight, in the afternoon. She was at home with her father, playing videogames, when she was hit by a stray bullet and killed. [What happened—was it a shootout between rival gangs?] No, it was just the police invading, you know, they come in shooting. That’s just the way it is.” (Interview: Respondent #133, 30 September 2008.)

“The last time the police were here, some elderly people weren’t able to run away fast enough. Two senior citizens were hurt, and one was killed.”(Interview: Respondent #185, 28 November 2008.)

“They expect us to be ready to commit crime, rob and steal and cause violence, so they enter with armor and guns blazing. They don’t assume that this is a community with all kinds of people, the majority being peaceful. They think all we do is fight, listen to funk music, that there’s nothing good. It all seems like a joke, except it’s real.”(Interview: Respondent #193, 26 November 2008.)

“I fell asleep afraid, and woke up with bullets in the door. That’s why you can never close your eyes here.” (Interview: Respondent #22, 22 July August 2007.)

The very best treatment that favela residents can expect from the police is discrimination and disrespect. Almost everyone I spoke with had personally experienced insulting and rude behavior when encountering police officers in their community:

“When the police come in, it is their territory now, and they act like it. [What do you mean?] You know, they should talk with us, find out what’s going on, treat us like residents, like human beings. But they don’t. They just enter homes without asking and take what they want. Yesterday one of them just came into my house without asking and took some water. I would have been happy to give it to him if he had asked! But he just walked in and took it as if it were his own home. [Her friend interrupted]...Yes! They come in and they break everything.” (Interview: Respondents #187 and #185, 18 November 2008.)

“They ask where you are going, for no reason, they want to see your identification and know where you are going and where you are coming from. And if you complain, you could get in real trouble!” (Interview: Respondent #192, 26 November 2008.)

“I don’t go to school anymore because of the police. [Why?] They stop me all the time, harass me, ‘who are you, where are you going, why are you going there?’ Even when I’m wearing my school uniform shirt! So I just don’t go anymore.”(Interview: Respondent #131, 27 September 2008.)

“They don’t act like the people here are human, with rights, they just barge into people’s houses, stop whomever they like on the streets. They don’t ask to use the restroom, to have some food, they just go right in as if it were their own house. They bring heavy weapons, machine guns, armaments into our homes. It’s intimidating.” (Interview: Respondent #185, 18 November 2008.)
“The police should be providing security, but they are the source of our insecurity. Now you see the cruel truth. It’s just inhumane. The children have to stay in a safe place where the police won’t invade. But the police should be providing protection for them! It’s completely backward. That’s just insane, right? It’s exactly the opposite of what should be. Because the police should protect, not threaten.” (Interview: Respondent #151, 24 October 2008.)

Incidents like these provide further evidence that the rule of law is, at best, fragile and inconsistently applied within favela neighborhoods. Despite their behavior during favela invasions, I wondered what would happen if residents proactively involved the police. On one occasion, I asked Mariana directly why people in her community cannot rely on the police to enforce the law under ordinary circumstances. In response, she asked me to think through the consequences of doing so: “what if my husband beats me and I go to the police? The police would get involved in the community, and the gang would be upset, so they [the gang] come to my house, and who knows what happens then. So we can’t go to the police. They’re not here for us.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 16 August 2007.)

Even if residents were to turn to the police for their support in resolving routine community problems, and the police were willing to do so, the gang would ultimately intervene since any activity that brings the police into the community is unwelcome. In this way, instead of serving the community and upholding the law, police enter favelas only when they have a personal motive to do so. And even if residents were to ask officers to fulfill their role and provide access to the mechanisms of justice, they would be putting themselves, and their families, in danger by inviting the state into the territory that the gang controls.

In short, comments like those presented above demonstrate that residents do not in any way consider the police as their allies, or as neutral protectors of public order, peace, and justice. Instead, they are authority figures who disrespect them at best and violate their human rights at worst. More importantly, since a police presence is the primary way that the state appears in favela communities, it is no wonder that favela residents avoid bringing their concerns to state officials. Contrary to popular perceptions, the state is present within favela communities—but it is a “wrong presence” that diminishes confidence in the state’s ability and desire to fulfill its proper role. With state representatives such as these, who harass and intimidate favela residents at every turn, ordinary people logically conclude that targeting the state with their problems is the last thing they would want to do.

Political Parties and Elections: Clientelistic and Ineffective

Given the dynamics described above, it is easy to understand why favela residents would want to avoid police officers. Aside from the fact that these state officials abuse their authority and disrespect residents, involving the police in local community affairs would invite trouble from the gang that controls the area. But what about targeting other state representatives with their concerns, such as contacting elected officials? Brazilian municipalities in particular enjoy a great deal of autonomy. City councils receive a share of federal and state funds, but also have the power to collect taxes and approve their own laws. Therefore, despite residents’ concerns with the police, why not turn to lobbying city council members to support their causes, and vote them out of office if they do not? As this section will show, favela residents face significant obstacles when it comes to holding elected officials accountable.

Political parties in Brazil have long been noted for their personalistic character.
Relationships take precedence over ideology, and clientelism is alive and well: politicians use their personal influence to obtain state benefits for their constituents in exchange for electoral support. Even the Workers’ Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, or PT), which has been in executive office since 2002 and is arguably the most programmatic of all Brazilian parties, is not free from clientelistic tendencies. Since 2002, the PT has provided substantial federal funding to civil society organizations, but these benefits often come with strings attached, aiming to secure political support as well as benefit society as a whole (Gómez Bruera 2012).

Within this system, favela residents face particular disadvantages when it comes to attracting attention from their elected representatives. One major obstacle is institutional: the way that Rio de Janeiro’s electoral system is structured. Electoral systems can vary along a number of dimensions. The total number of representatives, the number and size of electoral districts, numerical thresholds that must be crossed in order for a candidate to win a seat, and even the way the ballot is designed are just a few potential variations (Lijphart 1994). Arguably the most important factor, however, is electoral formula: the way that voters’ choices at the ballot box are translated into seats in the legislature.

Broadly speaking, electoral formulas generally take one of two forms. In majoritarian, single-member districts (SMD), voters in a particular area cast a ballot for a single candidate. The candidate who receives a majority of votes wins the seat representing that district in the legislature. Thus, SMD produces a legislature of representatives accountable to the voters within specific territories, with one representative per district. Alternatively, in proportional representation, multi-member districts (PR), each district is represented by more than one seat in the legislature. Parties offer lists of candidates on the ballot; voters choose either a party in a “closed-list” system, or select and rank individual candidates (open-list). In both cases, more than one person represents each district, and the members of the legislature are in proportion to the votes each party received. Ultimately, SMD electoral systems tend to maximize representatives’ accountability to the voters in their district, while PR systems tend to include more minority interests in the legislature, thus maximizing the representation of different groups of voters (Carey and Hix 2011).

District magnitude is an additional component. District magnitude refers to the number of seats allocated within a particular district divided by the number of districts. Lower magnitude districts have fewer seats; for example, if each district has one seat, district magnitude equals 1. The number of political parties represented in the legislature tends to increase as district magnitude grows (Lijphart 1999; Geys 2006; Singer and Stephenson 2009). Similar to the tradeoff Carey and Hix (2011) refer to above, larger district magnitudes provide greater representation, while low-magnitude districts offer greater accountability.

While it may be impossible to identify an “ideal” electoral system for all countries, Brazil may well have created a system that is the worst of all possible worlds. City council members (vereadores) are chosen through open list proportional representation. However, in contrast to mainstream PR, as Nicolau (2007) describes, voters in Brazil can choose either a candidate or a party. The party vote determines the proportional allocation of seats, but actual seats are won by the candidates who receive the most votes. Put another way, if a voter casts a ballot for a party, the vote counts once—toward the party total that determines the proportion of seats that party receives. However, if a voter chooses a candidate, the vote applies to both the candidate total and the party total, essentially making votes for candidates “worth” more than votes for parties. Finally, inter-party coalitions are not only permissible, they are counted as if they were a separate party list—those candidates who receive the most votes from the coalition are elected to
office, regardless of their affiliated party’s ranking after the election (Nicolau 2007: 2-8).

What is more, district magnitude in Rio is extraordinarily high. As of 2012, Rio’s 12 million residents are represented by 50 city council members (vereadores). While this proportion is similar to that found in other world mega-cities, there is one striking difference: city council representatives are not electorally tied to different geographic areas throughout the city. Instead, there is only one enormous “district”—the entire city of Rio de Janeiro—and candidates are not required to garner support from any particular area; they are free to court votes from any location they like.

What these electoral rules mean in practice is that voters have extraordinarily strong incentives to support individual candidates instead of parties. For their part, candidates must compete not only with members of opposition parties, but also within their own party (Albuquerque et. al. 2008). Further, high district magnitude combined with open-list PR may increase political corruption. In such an electoral system, candidates need to amass a great deal of resources to be able to distribute patronage benefits, and the temptation to do so illegally may be too great to resist. Change and Golden (2007) find that in open-list systems, incentives for corrupt behavior begin at district magnitudes as low as 15, and become more severe as district magnitude increases. With a district magnitude of 50, candidates for political office in Rio not only rely on clientelistic relationships to attain office, they have significant motivation to do so through illegal activity. Contrary to most PR electoral systems that serve to strengthen political parties, electoral institutions in Brazil result in high numbers of very weak parties, in which coalitions are constantly shifting and consensus on policy is difficult to achieve. In turn, voters tend to rely on and affiliate with individual candidates who have incentives to distribute patronage in exchange for electoral support.

The emphasis on individual candidates instead of parties is particularly damaging to the interests of favela residents. Candidates have few reasons to direct their attention toward residents of favela neighborhoods because district magnitude is extraordinarily high. Any ties between politicians, once elected, and a particular neighborhood or constituency are purely informal. As a result, candidates tend to “brand” themselves based on interest groups, seeking votes from environmentalists, or pensioners, or steel workers, or corporations, and the like. At times, candidates may seek the “favela” vote from a particular area, and make campaign promises toward that end. But if the candidate fails to fulfill these promises to favela residents once elected, he cannot be voted out by these same individuals. Even though he may have lost their electoral support, he is free to gain support elsewhere, from a different neighborhood or constituency entirely, and thus keep his seat.

Within this electoral system, what incentives do elected officials have to fulfill their campaign promises? Even though all ties are informal, candidates still require financial support. Local-level electoral campaigns are extraordinarily expensive in Brazil, particularly in Rio de Janeiro. Transparência, a Brazilian NGO that tracks political corruption, reported in 2004 that most candidates for a city council seat in Brazil spent at least $R100,000 (then $35,000 USD) on their election costs, or $15 USD for every vote won. By comparison, the U.S. presidential campaigns that year spent, on average, $5.40 per voter (Weber 2005). In order to pay these extraordinary sums, city council candidates primarily rely on individuals and corporations in Rio’s wealthy Southern Zone for campaign financing. Therefore, while candidates have an incentive to be responsive to demands from affluent local areas that fund their campaigns, no such incentives tie them to Rio’s poorer neighborhoods.

One implication of this dynamic is that favela residents have a very small window of
opportunity to extract benefits from politicians: the duration of the campaign season. If favela residents are going to make demands on their elected representatives, these demands are only possible at a particular moment—during the campaign—directed toward a specific candidate. Thus, the demands that favela residents make are necessarily for immediate, short-term goods and services. For their part, residents are keenly aware of this dynamic. Filipe expressed it this way: “the people aren’t stupid. We know what’s going on, we pay attention. There are so many promises, but we believe only what we see. It’s better to get something small right now than a promise for something wonderful later, because it won’t happen.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 16 August 2007.)

The items that favela residents receive during the campaign season can be quite varied. Usually, candidates will hold public events, provide food, drinks, a stage for performances, and possibly a band. They also might distribute small items, such as shirts, earrings, or uniforms for a local youth soccer team. It’s also common for candidates to hire a carro de som—a car with a loudspeaker attached to the roof—that proclaims political advertisements during the day, and in exchange, the residents of that area can use the sound system that evening to play music for a street party. More concrete benefits are rare, but when they appear, they do so only for a limited time—the duration of the campaign season. Sometimes a candidate will open “social assistance centers” that provide free services to residents in a favela neighborhood, such as eye exams, gynecological exams, technology courses, and/or educational training. Residents utilize these centers heavily, but as soon as the election is held they shut down, and generally don’t reopen—until, at least, the next election.

Candidates also unofficially “partner” with existing social service agencies to provide in-kind benefits to favela residents. For example, one resident, Michele, related her personal experience: she used to work for a large NGO that provided food, clothing, and medicines to the community. During the last election cycle, a candidate for city council approached her privately and asked her to say that the items from the NGO were from the candidate’s political party. When Michele refused, the candidate said “okay, how much do you want from us in order to do it?” Again she declined the offer, but the next week, a different candidate came to her with the very same deal. Michele told me that it is rare for individuals to refuse these “partnerships” with political parties. (Interview: Respondent #60, 10 August 2007.)

For their part, elected officials themselves do not see their role in terms of public service. Instead, they view their position in clientelistic terms, as a way to exchange favors for votes, so that they can keep their elected office, status, and paycheck. As one favela resident explained:

“City council members don’t feel an obligation to represent the people as a whole. If they vote for a law, say, that guarantees 24-hour access to health care centers, it’s not because they feel strongly about health care, or because they care about the community. It will be because they get something out of that vote. And the person asking for the vote for the health care post? He asks not because he cares about health care either! It’s because that representative is the guy who can give him [or has given him] his job, he wants the official’s vote for the project because the project will give him a benefit of some kind. So nobody really has an interest in changing the system, and ordinary people don’t have a meaningful way to inject their interests into this closed circle.” (Interview: Respondent #194, 27 November 2008.)

Despite these difficulties, a favela community will occasionally push for more substantial benefits from a political candidate. However, these attempts rarely materialize as expected.
Antônio related an experience from his favela neighborhood:

“During the last campaign, [a candidate] paid people to pass out campaign literature, held a soccer tournament and a barbecue in the neighborhood, all the usual things. But this time we weren’t fooled. We didn’t want a barbecue or piecemeal things, we wanted a permanent community center. So the next time the candidate came around, we told him that we’d all vote for him if he got the center constructed. He promised that he would, but what happened? He sent the materials—cement and glass and things to make the repairs to the existing building, but no one to actually do the work, and no funds to hire people to do the work! So the materials just sat out there, piled up in the middle of the street! [Could the residents have done it themselves?] No, we have jobs, there’s no free time to do this. But also construction is a special skill, you can’t have just anyone try to do it. So we felt cheated by the candidate, who promised to build the center, not just deliver the materials. And there they sat, in the road, until people finally stole them, bit by bit, for their own personal use. And that was the last time people in this community pressured a candidate for anything ever again!” (Interview: Respondent #10, 3 July 2007.)

After their experience with attempting to target an elected official for a public good, it appears that the residents of Antônio’s neighborhood are even less inclined to do so in the future than they were before.

Along these same lines, residents also know that even if they are successful in obtaining goods or services from a particular political official, those benefits will end with his administration. This is because, as one resident explained, “each government makes its own mark. No one wants to build on someone else’s initiative, or complete something started by another party, they want to create something that’s unique to this government and party.” (Interview: Respondent #194, 27 November 2008.) Examples abound in every community I visited; residents told stories of infrastructure renovations, health care centers, schools, and social service assistance that ended as soon as the government officials who proposed them were out of office. For example, Éverton took me to a beautiful, modern school building in his neighborhood that had never opened for classes. When I asked why, he said that the final phase of the construction was never completed, because when that mayor’s term expired, the project ended for good. And there the building sits, unused and vacant, while the children of the community are still packed into overcrowded, run-down classrooms.

On another occasion, I noticed that brightly-painted, remodeled homes sat right next to poorly-constructed shacks. Why? The previous mayor had provided funds to the community for housing renovations, but when his term ended, the new mayor didn’t want to continue the project. As a result, some families received brand-new dwellings, while their neighbors, who had been promised the same, received nothing—fomenting jealousy and division within the neighborhood. One CSO founder summed up why most residents avoid relying on the state for goods and services:

“Every relationship that you build with the government, it’s only for four years at most. When the government changes, everything ends, and you have to start all over again. That’s why we don’t establish partnerships with the government. We have to establish relationships with individuals who are in government, and it’s too bad really, because you can establish a dialogue and maybe even create change, but when that person is no longer representing that office, it all ends. So we don’t rely on that.” (Interview: Respondent #116, 14 August 2008.)
When the government changes hands, programs end. Residents reasonably conclude that even if they are successful in obtaining substantial goods or services from the state, they come with a built-in expiration date—and therefore, it is better to look elsewhere to solve their problems over the long term.

Compounding these difficulties is the influence that drug and weapons trafficking gangs exert over the electoral process. They operate primarily in two ways: by limiting candidate access to favela communities, and by monitoring the way that residents actually vote. Before the election occurs, the traffickers determine which candidate they want to support in a particular favela neighborhood. During campaign season, the favela is physically closed off—sentries patrol the area, allowing only the gang’s preferred candidates to enter. The candidates who choose to affiliate with the gang benefit, because they do not have to face competition from other candidates within that community, and for their part, the gang knows that if their candidate is elected, he is unlikely to support any initiatives contrary to the gang’s interests. Therefore, neither the traffickers nor the elected officials have much incentive to change the system.

The gang not only influences resident’s votes by limiting their access to information, they pressure residents to vote in particular ways. During the time leading up to the 2008 municipal election, residents described the ways in which they were “encouraged” or “induced” to vote for a particular candidate. For example, the gang’s preferred candidate would hold an event—at a local bar, sometimes at a private home—and people would be able to meet the candidate. Occasionally, some residents will conclude that this candidate is a good choice, and willingly support him. But at the same time, there is only one choice—only one candidate has permission from the gang to hold these meetings.

The traffickers also provide funds to their candidate so that he can hire supporters to pass out campaign pamphlets. Residents involved in these temporary jobs report—and a trafficker contact confirmed—that individuals are generally paid about $R30 per person per day, and (at least in one community) around 300 people were hired each day. This cost the gang $R9000 per day, or approximately $5,000 USD—a substantial sum. Moreover, if a sufficient number of residents failed to “volunteer” for the work, the gang would order individuals to engage in propaganda distribution.

Finally, the gang’s influence extends to the ballot box on election day. Voting is fully electronic in Brazil, and done in secret, but ordinary residents do not have much confidence that their vote choice is truly anonymous. One resident of Fregata explained it to me this way:

“If there’s a pedophile around, the police can search all kinds of computer records, trace your email, do all sorts of things to find out who you are. And the government is corrupt in so many ways. So if they really wanted to find out who you voted for, they could. And the traffickers could certainly pay off the police to find out. So it’s easier to just vote the way that you know won’t cause problems.” (Interview: Respondent #8, 10 November 2008.)

Based on my fieldwork experience, I believe that the Brazilian state neither has the capacity nor the desire to track individual votes. However, it is evident that many favela residents believe that they do. Most conclude that they do not want to risk finding out if vote tracking is possible, and therefore they avoid “getting involved in this confusion” by selecting the gang’s approved candidate. Moreover, during the 2008 municipal elections, residents reported that the gang in one community was paying $R10 if residents would vote for the gang’s chosen city council.
candidate. A resident would enter the voting booth, make his choice, and then take a picture of the result using his cell phone. Of course, if he didn’t have a mobile telephone with this capability, the traffickers would readily provide one. After voting, the individual would display his “correct” vote, and receive his payment.

Alternatively, in his research on vote-buying and clientelism in Brazil, Nichter (2010: 7-8) describes another strategy. In the state of Bahia, some political operatives engaged in vote-buying use the following method. Electronic voting machines in Brazil display a candidate’s picture only if he is selected as the voter’s choice—so operatives accompany the individual to the polls, and afterward, ask him what color shirt the candidate wore. If the individual voted in the correct way, then he can describe the shirt; otherwise he cannot. It would be reasonable to conclude that traffickers in Rio might employ a similar strategy to ensure that their money is well-spent.

Even if traffickers do not literally “buy” votes from the public, they still encourage favela residents to vote in a certain way through an unspoken “web of obligation.” If residents need medicine, food, school supplies for their children, or a short-term loan, and they cannot rely on family or close friends, the gang represents the only practical way to access these items. Then, “after you get the small amount of money for what you need, of course you will vote for their candidate in return…the gang doesn’t force anyone to vote a certain way; they are tricked into it instead.” (Interview: Respondent #8, 10 November 2008.) One person referred to the benefit that gangs receive from influencing electoral outcomes as “killing two rabbits with one whack of a stick.” The traffickers ensure that all candidates who court votes from favela communities won’t challenge the gang’s interests in any way once elected, while at the same time reinforcing the gang’s authority within the community. In short, “there’s space for competition, but only within the space that the gang allows.” (Interview: Respondent #51, 3 August 2007.)

Finally, one event stands out as a clear example of how gang control effectively curtails political engagement within favela communities. Despite all of the limitations discussed above, in 2007 the residents of Fregata came up with an innovative way to gain real representation in the political arena: to hold an unofficial “primary” election in order to choose one single candidate to support. I spoke with many of the community leaders involved in this effort, some of whom were “pre-candidates” themselves, and over a 5-month period, I observed their plans slowly coming to fruition. The group began meeting after the last municipal election, in which all of the candidates for city council who had made promises to this community “turned their backs on us and walked away.” Therefore, some residents began to wonder:

“What would happen if we were able to have our own candidate? Let’s choose a person from here inside the community to be our representative, and that way, I’m certain that he won’t turn around and walk away. If he was born here and raised here in Fregata, he’s going to know how to respect the people, this community, understand? Even though it won’t solve all of the problems, he’s going to have our voice, he’s going to be our spokesperson there in the City Council. And we need that.” (Interview: Respondent #16, 17 August 2007.)

Over a ten-month period, residents of Fregata met twice a month to work out the logistics of running an unofficial primary. On average, over 50 residents attended each meeting, discussing who should run as a pre-candidate, what parties they might affiliate with, and how to get more people from the community officially registered to vote. Since many favela residents

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are migrants from the North and Northeast of Brazil, they need to transfer their voter registration information, but this is easier said than done. In order to do so, one needs to go to a branch office of the Regional Electoral Court, but these offices are not present in favela communities. Therefore, registering to vote might entail multiple trips to the city center, and many residents conclude that this is not worth their time or the expense. Once the pre-candidates were determined, they held public meetings in which they presented their platforms and fielded questions from the community. Even though the campaign was unofficial, pre-candidates took the process seriously, presenting their proposals and ideas just as if it were a regular campaign.

At this point in the process, I left Brazil for the end-of-year holiday period, and returned shortly thereafter. When I left, the pre-candidates’ campaigns were in full swing, and residents seemed excited about the prospect of electing one of their own to the city council. The plan was to end the process with a community-wide election, in which each resident could choose the individual she thought would best represent the neighborhood. A group of residents was selected to count the votes, and the pre-candidate with the greatest number of votes would win the support of the entire community in the official election. All of the pre-candidates agreed to work on behalf of whomever was chosen by the people in order to unify the power of the community’s vote. Shortly before I left, one resident said that “I think this [upcoming primary] is really going to be something. At the very least, it’s the first time this has happened in the entire history of our community. We’ve never united to work together, and this is what we’re struggling for, right?” (Interview: Respondent #44, 6 October 2007.)

However, the situation had dramatically changed by the time I returned. There were posters and leaflets all around the community supporting one candidate—José—in the upcoming official city council election, but José had not run as a pre-candidate. Moreover, no one in the neighborhood appeared enthusiastic about his candidacy. On the contrary, when I asked people to tell me what had happened with the unofficial primary, and why José had been chosen to run, no one wanted to speak about it. Only well after the election was over, and José had been overwhelmingly elected to office, were some residents willing to discuss what had happened with me. As one person succinctly expressed, “we entered the game and challenged their power, but they won”—“they,” of course, referring to the trafficking gang that controlled the community. (Interview: Respondent #8, 10 November 2008.)

In short, once the gang saw that the community was organizing independently around one candidate, they decided to co-opt the process and capture power for themselves. A few of the pre-candidates who had been in the lead during the unofficial campaign were encouraged to withdraw their candidacy, and received “golden parachutes” in return—well-paid jobs in city and state government after José’s successful election. In most cases, however, favors like this were unnecessary. Another person said that “the order came down that now the traffickers were going to organize the pre-candidates, and they wanted all of us to support José.” (Interview: Respondent #149, 8 November 2008.) With the force of the traffickers behind the new candidate, no real threats needed to be made; all of the pre-candidates realized that it was safer to just step aside. One of the former pre-candidates described the outcome to me as a “great sadness.” He stressed that it wasn’t his personal failure to be elected that was distressing—it was the obvious power of the traffickers in the community. As he articulately described:

“There was a legitimate alternative proposed, we mobilized the community, and we started to work in an ethical way to make some changes. And it was working! But what happened? The traffickers were able to enter the game and turn it to their advantage. The dream of real
Thus far, I have shown that favela residents cannot effectively target elected officials with their concerns, not only because they lack confidence in the state, but because elected representatives lack incentives to respond to their demands. Without ties to a particular district, candidates are free to court votes wherever they like, and frequently renege on promises made to favela residents. Any benefits these areas receive are thus short-term, small-scale, and likely to be curtailed either when the campaign is over, or when the administration ends. For their part, the trafficking gangs exert influence over the candidates that residents can support, and they monitor actual votes to ensure that their choices are successful in the electoral arena. What is more, when one favela community successfully mobilized in order to coalesce electoral support around one of their own residents, the gang co-opted their efforts, transforming it into a campaign for the traffickers’ hand-picked representative. Events like these prompt favela residents to rightly conclude that they cannot rely on political parties or democratic elections to articulate their interests within the political arena.

Residents’ Associations: Centers of Gang Control

It is clear that favela residents lack confidence in the state, and traditional structures of intermediation, such as parties and elections, are ineffective at articulating their interests. However, each favela neighborhood has a Residents’ Association (RA) that is well-staffed and active within the community. As shown in Chapter 2, although these organizations have lost their official representative capacity, they were once powerful forces that fought on behalf of residents to resist neighborhood eradication and removal. Could the RAs be revitalized to play an intermediary role once again? Why can’t residents use the RAs to pressure elected officials on their behalf, or, if this is not feasible, create new neighborhood organizations to improve the community independently?

One of the first favela resident interviews that I conducted was with Marcelo, who was Vice-President of the Residents’ Association in his community. After describing what the RA did, as well as his personal dedication to the work, he said something that took me almost six months to understand: “That’s why I work hard, and try to do my best, so when I go home at night, I go, as they say, with my soul washed clean” (Interview: Respondent #9, 29 June 2007.) I met with Marcelo several times after that, and whenever we talked about his work, he would occasionally describe how he felt about it with words like “penance” or “absolution.” Once, I asked him directly why his work enabled him to gain spiritual benefits. He laughed it off, changed the subject, and I assumed that I had misunderstood him in some way.

A few weeks later, while making empadas at Mariana’s house in her community, she explained Marcelo’s response: the RA is always connected to the trafficking gang in the community. There are two choices—either the RA staff is handpicked by the traffickers (colocado pelo tráfico), or they are traffickers themselves. But if the community is controlled by a gang, as the vast majority are, there is no situation in which the RA is separate from the gang. This understanding cast an entirely new light on my interviews with RA staff, as the “triangle” of power within favela communities became clear. One person explained it this way:

“The main organizations here are the triad of the RA, the traffickers, and the police. When they

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19 Empadas are small savory pies, usually filled with chicken, cheese, or shrimp, and eaten as an afternoon snack.
are in balance, things are peaceful. When one leg gets out of balance, say, someone is assassinated, then things are thrown off, and there is violence. So the underlying goal for anyone who lives here is to keep the triad stable.” (Interview: Respondent #41, 23 July 2007.)

The triangle remains stable when each group performs their roles as expected. The gangs, as discussed above, exert control over the community, paying bribes to police officers and funding select political campaigns to ensure that they do not interfere. For their part, bribed state officials look the other way with respect to gang activities. Due to their low pay, police officers rely on the supplementary income that bribes provide, and elected officials find that it is nearly impossible to get elected without significant financial backing, so some of them have an incentive to rely on the gangs as well. But the third member of the triad—the RA—also has an important intermediary role.

Recall that drug and weapons trafficking is essentially a business, and a very risky one at that. Like any wise business owner, gang leaders find it useful to diversify their revenue stream to ensure a stable, reliable source of income. This is where the RAs fit in. Although the RAs do not have any official representative role within the political arena, city officials frequently delegate projects to them. Specifically, whenever the city or the state funds activities with a favela, such as regular garbage collection, street repair, or construction, they assign the project’s implementation to the RA. The state provides the funds to the RA, and in turn, the RA carries out all of the operational details, such as hiring and firing workers, registering their work cards, scheduling workdays, and managing disputes.

The RA also coordinates distribution of the cesta básica, or basic food baskets. These baskets are a guaranteed employee benefit that is funded at the national level. Anyone who is formally employed at a minimum-wage job qualifies for the benefit, which includes the basic products that a family of four would need during the month to meet their nutritional needs. For example, a typical cesta básica usually includes rice, beans, sugar, salt, cooking oil, flour, milk powder, spaghetti, coffee, margarine, and soap. There are also a few specialty items that vary; one month’s basket might also contain sardines, tomato paste, and a can of peas; the next month’s basket could come with guava paste, some cans of corn, and brillo pads. The state provides the baskets to the RAs each month, and the RA staff is responsible for not only distributing the baskets, but determining who is qualified to receive one.

Given that state funds to favela communities are transmitted through the RA, it is clear why the gangs would want to control these organizations. By handpicking RA staff, particularly the leadership team, the gang gains access to a stable source of income, as well as a way to exert further control over the community. Whenever the state funds a special project, the gang can take their “share” of the revenue, as well as decide which residents will have access to the jobs the project provides. Moreover, every month the gang not only decides who qualifies for food baskets, they can keep some baskets for themselves, distribute them to their supporters, or sell them at a profit. One RA staff member told me that he was uncomfortable with the fact that some baskets were being sold instead of distributed, so he started opening the bags when they arrived. He explained that no one would purchase a bag that has been opened, so that way, he could ensure the items would be consumed instead of sold. However, his strategy lasted for only a few months before the gang “encouraged” him to stop.

In my early interviews, I would ask residents to describe the relationship of the RA to the community. Most were evasive and unclear, such as these examples from three different favela neighborhoods:
“It’s complicated. They don’t do anything to unite the community, and this, with this mass of poor people, they crucify themselves on this system, because in reality the relationship is really just this, an exchange of favors, get it? It’s for this reason that the resident’s associations…it’s complicated.” (Interview: Respondent #77, 22 August 2007.)

“With respect to the RA...well, no. I don’t know how to respond to that. I think that Natália or Patrícia can talk about that better than I can. As I said, we talk with them, but...I don’t know. I think we have a good relationship.” (Interview: Respondent #90, 14 August 2008.)

“The neighborhood association exists, for example, if you need a street light replaced. Or the park lights burn out. You go to the RA, and they connect with the electric services. Or if the storm drain clogs up, you go to the RA, and they contact the water company. If a wall falls, you go to the RA, and they call the firemen. But it’s not a space for association. It’s a place within the community, but it’s not of the community. At least here it’s not that way.” (Interview: Respondent #69, 16 August 2007.)

Once I became aware of the “triangle” comprised of the state, the traffickers, and the RA, I understood the meaning behind these responses. Wary of disclosing information about the gang’s activities and control over the community, many were hesitant to describe the role of the RA within the community in much detail. However, after I had spent a significant amount of time volunteering with some favela community CSOs, I received responses that were much more direct:

“Say the RA gets to distribute $R1000 worth of basic food baskets. The traffickers will take $R500 off the top. Anybody there [at the residents’ association] isn’t there to do good for the community, they can have access to government projects and maybe some of the money might go to the community, might go to the residents, but much of it is just taken for their own benefit [the RA staff and the traffickers.]”(Interview: Respondent #70, 6 August 2008.)

“They [the RA] are gatekeepers for public services, you have to go through them if you want anything. They dole things out. There is some freedom of action, but only freedom within what the traffickers will allow.”(Interview: Respondent #175, 25 November 2008.)

Therefore, whenever favela residents go to the RA for services, they are essentially relying on the gang—something that most would prefer to avoid. At times, there is no choice but to depend on the RA—for example, to collect the monthly food basket—but in terms of garnering the support of the RA to solve community problems? That strategy is unthinkable for any residents who want to avoid becoming entangled with and indebted to the gang. In addition, whether or not the RA is willing to assist a particular person depends on that individual’s relationships with both the RA staff and the trafficking gang. And even then, as one woman articulated, “you have to ask ten times to receive help with one request.” (Interview: Respondent #133, 30 September 2008.) Ultimately, most residents conclude that their best course of action is to avoid contact with the RA if at all possible.

Moreover, if residents were to organize independently and pressure the city government for services, they would be putting their lives at risk. By targeting the state for goods and
services outside of the established RA channel, they would be infringing upon the gang’s possible profit margins, because if they were successful, the gang would lose the opportunity to influence and divert those resources. Section 3.3 of this chapter described the swift, decisive response of the gang in one community when residents organized independently to unify around a city council candidate of their own choosing. Imagine how the gang might react if residents not only challenged the gang’s power, but their financial revenue stream as well.

On one of my visits to Mariana’s house, after we had become good friends, I asked her directly about this dynamic. Her neighborhood, like so many others, has a valão—an open sewer—running through the middle of the community. It’s unsanitary, disgusting to look at, and especially on hot, humid days, smells exactly as one would expect a river of excrement to smell. By this time, I had heard residents in this community complain about the valão on many occasions over the past year, so I asked Mariana: Why don’t you all organize and do something about it yourselves? She replied: “Haven’t you learned anything by now? The RA has to do that. It’s no use coming into conflict with the traffickers.” But, I insisted, don’t they live here in the community too? Wouldn’t the RA staff, and the gang themselves, benefit from having the valão covered up? So why would they mind if residents did it themselves? Mariana explained:

“First, nobody crosses the traffickers. That’s it. But also, their bosses don’t live here. Our RA president lives in [another city in Rio de Janeiro state], and the gang bosses live in [she listed some upper-class areas], in apartments that cost millions. They are white and they are rich. Only the low-level functionaries and some middle managers are here. The real kingpins [who make the decisions] don’t live anywhere near the favelas. And the whole idea is to get money and use it for themselves, not for the community. So any kind of construction project would have to go through the RA. They don’t have an interest in bothering people unless you give them a reason to. So why give them a reason?” (Interview: Respondent #70, 29 November 2008.)

After almost a year in Rio’s favela communities, I finally understood why revitalizing the residents’ associations was neither feasible nor useful given the conditions that exist. Since the gang that controls the community also controls the RA, any demands for neighborhood goods or services must be channeled through the RA leadership. In this way, the gang not only secures part of the project revenue for themselves, they reinforce their control over the neighborhood. In turn, anyone who would attempt to organize for goods and services independently from the RA risks undermining the authority of the gang—a risk that few, if any, residents are willing to take. Once powerful forces of interest articulation for favela residents, the RAs have become vehicles of gang control, and as long as the gangs are present, there appears to be no turning back.

Churches: Individualist and Apolitical

With many obstacles in the way of interest articulation for favela residents, why not turn to the churches for assistance? The Catholic Church has provided support for grassroots social movements in Brazil since the 1950s, and inspired by Vatican II’s reformist social doctrine of liberation theology in the mid-1960s, the Church became a strong advocate for the poor throughout the country, as well as a voice of resistance against the dictatorship.20 Their institutional structure provided channels of communication, access to networks of like-minded

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individuals, meeting spaces, an organizational framework, and significant financial support—all important resources for sparking collective action. Today, Brazilians remain quite religious, with the majority identifying as Catholic. The most recent data available indicate that 88% of Brazilians belong to a religious denomination, of those; 91% affiliate with the Catholic Church, and 36% attend services once a week or more (WVS 1997). Given that institutions within political society are ineffective at articulating residents’ concerns, why not utilize the resources of the Catholic Church, as many Brazilians have in the past?

My research did not specifically address the role of religion in contemporary Brazilian collective action; others, particularly Christina Vital (2009) are at the forefront of this emerging area of inquiry. However, in my quest to understand why favela residents eschew politically relevant mobilization, I asked about the role of the Catholic Church in favela life, and received responses like these:

“The Catholic Church doesn’t exist within the communities. It’s rare, very rare, that it would happen, a Catholic church in the community. Because the Church, in a way, is linked to the state. So, the Church would have to take action. There in [X] community, there’s a skeleton of what could be a parish. And the pastor tried, he began to say Mass in the street, for many years he kept on trying. Until he just gave up. Because he found no support out there [within the Church administration] to form a church within the community. How crazy is that, right? The work isn’t finished yet, but the only thing that remains is the skeleton of the building. Because, as you’ve already imagined, how can the church bear witness to the atrocities that the police commit within the communities? The Church would have to take a position. It’s just the same as with slavery, years ago.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 20 June 2008.)

“The Catholic Church abandoned their building, rarely is there anything going on there. And Sister Talita is very difficult, she’s scowling all the time. Once I wanted to put on an event for Children’s Day, but she wouldn’t turn the lights on. All she needed to do was let us turn it on, connect the sound equipment, and that was all. And what she does, the church does too.” (Interview: Respondent #153, 27 October 2008.)

“Oh, they used to be around. The base communities [local Catholic networks at the neighborhood level] were very strong, instrumental in creating the social movements that brought down the dictatorship. But then came John Paul the second, and he destroyed them, so they died out. Oh, they might still exist somewhere, but it’s a fine mist compared to a thunderstorm.” (Interview: Respondent #7, 26 June 2007.)

The favela resident quoted above is referring to Pope John Paul II, who led the Catholic Church from 1978-2005. The base communities that anchored the liberation theology movement in Brazil during the 1970s were systematically eliminated during the next two decades. Threats and reprisals from the Vatican were unnecessary; the Pope replaced progressive bishops at the local level with conservative ones and withdrew support for the local priests who led the base community groups. Although some Brazilian priests remain quite active in fighting for social change, particularly the Brotherhoods and Pastoral Referents in São Paulo and the Northeast, residents of Rio’s favela communities report no similar activity. For them, the era of liberation theology has passed, and it appears that the “preferential option for the poor” is no longer a

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21 World Values Survey 2000, worldvaluessurvey.org. The survey in Brazil was taken in 1997.
priority for the Catholic Church. Combined with the severe priest shortage and worldwide financial difficulties, the Church has gradually diminished support for social movements at the local level that seek progressive social change.

For their part, Protestant churches are also unlikely to support progressive social movements. Evangelical Protestant churches have attracted record numbers of adherents in Brazil. Vital (2009) finds that from 2004-2008, evangelical churches grew by 48% in Rio de Janeiro—a rate of increase unmatched by any other religious organization. She contends that evangelical denominations are attractive not only for their lively worship services, but also because they take a progressive stance on some social issues, such as supporting the use of condoms for AIDS prevention and birth control. Therefore, these churches appear to be sensibly in touch with the realities of everyday life.

However, many evangelical churches in Rio also preach a type of “prosperity theology” that discourages collective action. In a radical upending of traditional Christian doctrine, a “prosperity” interpretation of the gospel contends that God wants his followers to be prosperous in this lifetime, particularly with respect to material wealth. Instead of looking for salvation purely in the world to come, or—as liberation theology proclaims—organizing against existing conditions of injustice and social inequality, followers of the prosperity gospel focus on their individual well-being. These churches stress personal salvation through faith, not through actions, thus ignoring larger social issues and working to address them. Progressive collective action on behalf of the material welfare of the poor is not part of their mission.

Finally, Vital argues that evangelical churches in Rio’s favelas often seek to attract drug and weapons traffickers. Believing that they are the individuals most in need of “spiritual protection,” pastors actively recruit gang members, who have often been willing converts. Some traffickers sincerely hope to leverage their connections within a faith community to leave their criminal life behind. Others apply their faith through implementing a policy of “harm reduction” towards their enemies; for example, ordering that police who appear in the community should be apprehended and punished, rather than killed on sight. Still others, however, come to believe that they have not only been saved, but also have been granted spiritual protection, and thus use religion to justify and/or absolve them from their criminal gang activities (Vital 2009: 12-16). In any case, it is evident that evangelical churches are gaining popularity within favela communities, and those churches often recruit gang members. It may be reasonable to conclude that emerging ties between evangelical churches and traffickers might dissuade individuals from turning to these churches for support.

Regardless of their motivation—which is beyond the scope of this research—it is clear that evangelical Protestant churches within favela communities do not provide support for residents who seek to solve social problems. Many favela residents would not even consider asking their church for help:

“I haven’t asked any of the churches for help, and I won’t. There are over fifty churches here, but very few have social programs, and even those that do, you have to pay for them.”
(Interview: Respondent #135, 30 September 2008.)

“They talk about helping the community, but they actually don’t do a thing. The [evangelicals] care about saving your soul and that’s it...aside from getting money for themselves, from you, in order to grow their mission. They might have daycares for kids, but they are private and not free.” (Interview: Respondent #7, 26 June 2007.)
“I’m an evangelical Christian, but I asked my church to support my community project and they refused me. They thought I was trying to get support to run for political office or something, and didn’t want to get involved.” (Interview: Respondent #128, 24 September 2008.)

“The church helps you find meaning spiritually, so you can solve your problems by bringing them personally to Jesus. That’s how people seek solutions. Not through politics.” (Interview: Respondent #10, 26 June 2007.)

I do not pretend to offer any definitive conclusions regarding why favela residents generally do not expect much from their churches, aside from individual spiritual support. Unraveling the connections among religious denomination, collective action, and trafficking gangs within favela communities is a fruitful area for further research. It is clear, however, from responses like these that in practice, residents do not often turn to their churches for assistance in attempting to solve their community problems.

3.4 Chapter Summary

From the time the city of Rio de Janeiro was founded, its favela communities have been at a disadvantage. As emancipated slaves, homeless soldiers, and migrants from the rural Northeast made favela communities their home, wealthier Rio residents saw no need to incorporate these undesirable populations into the life of the city. Although they have been at times ignored, removed, relocated, and eradicated, in practice these communities—and their inhabitants—have not only survived, they have proven integral to Rio’s social, cultural, and economic life.

Nevertheless, the Brazilian state has failed to provide these neighborhoods with the same services, opportunities, and respect accorded to wealthier areas. Despite a brief window of opportunity during which favela residents organized and unified through community Residents’ Associations to demand equal rights from the state, the onset of the dictatorship years curtailed these incipient efforts. Over twenty years later, when Brazil successfully returned to open politics in 1985, democracy provided opportunities for all types of organizations, including newly organized drug and weapons trafficking gangs, which quickly seized control over the vast majority of favelas. Residents were, and are, frequently subjected to human rights abuses at the hands of both gang members and police officers, thus diminishing their confidence in the state. By the early 21st century, structural inequalities and gang control intertwined to constrain civil society and curtail political engagement within favela communities.

Specifically, traditional structures of interest articulation are inadequate and dysfunctional for favela residents. Political parties throughout Brazil generally favor clientelistic relationships over programmatic platforms, but this tendency is exacerbated in Rio due to the magnitude of its electoral district. Candidates rely on financial support from wealthier areas, but lack similar incentives to respond to the needs of favela communities. Any benefits these areas receive are directly tied to what residents can extract from candidates during the campaign season. What is more, gangs exert influence over the electoral process through controlling information as well as monitoring voters’ choices. It is thus nearly impossible to rely on elected officials to advocate for long-term, comprehensive improvements within favela neighborhoods.
In other parts of the world, people have responded to similar inequities by turning to civil society organizations to advance their interests within the political arena. However, the two main organizations within Rio’s favelas—churches and residents’ associations—are uninterested in pressing for political and social change due to gang influence. The worldview of both the Catholic Church and evangelical Protestant denominations in Rio prioritizes individual action over collective efforts. Both religious institutions appear unwilling to support even small-scale, grassroots community improvement actions; most residents would not consider asking them to do so. Further, while residents’ associations are present in virtually every favela community, they have been entirely co-opted by the trafficking gangs. The state channels all goods, services, and infrastructure projects within favela communities through the RAs, enabling gang leaders to siphon off a share of the funds and determine which residents can access these benefits. Ordinary residents have no influence within the RAs, and if they attempted to target the state for benefits independently, they would undermine the authority of the gang.

In short, while favela residents are highly sociable, civil society is suppressed and political rights are sharply curtailed within their neighborhoods. Residents cannot turn to elected officials, political parties, churches, or their neighborhood residents’ associations for assistance in solving community problems. In some cases—if not the majority—individual favela dwellers resign themselves to inaction, focusing on their own well-being and that of their family. Some residents, however, have found ways to navigate this inhospitable environment, creating social benefit CSOs, which are explored in Chapter 4.
“For [favela residents] who aren’t part of society, who aren’t even considered to be human beings, then you can’t admit that they have rights...So how can we discuss ‘human rights’ for those whom we don’t even consider to be human beings?”

- author interview with a favela resident, 19 August 2008

Chapter 4. “Like an Ant Climbing a Hill:” The Tenacity of Social Benefit CSOs

Despite high cultural sociability and the existence of numerous civil society organizations, politically relevant mobilization does not often occur in Rio’s favela communities. One main reason is that the structural barriers outlined in Chapter 3 render all types of collective action difficult, and politically relevant action even more so. Those few residents who seek to address collective problems in their neighborhoods create what they term “social benefit CSOs” (projetos sociais)—small-scale organizations located within a single favela neighborhood. Social benefit CSOs are founded and led by favela residents, and generally undertake activities designed to improve the quality of life in their neighborhood. These CSOs, however, do not often undertake mobilization of any kind—political or otherwise—because they lack the resources to overcome the structural barriers that exist. Although social benefit CSOs seek to acquire diverse types of resources, they come from a singular source—typically the individual favela resident founder—who provides them at great personal sacrifice. Social benefit CSOs, therefore, do not have the means to engage in collective action of any kind, and scaling up to politically relevant mobilization is even more difficult. This chapter illustrates why this is so.

First, I outline the main problems that favela residents confront in their communities, and show that the issues residents prioritize are quite different from those that favela “outsiders” would expect. In contrast to infrastructure improvements such as paving the roads, favela residents want access to quality health care, as well as employment opportunities in the formal labor sector. Both deficiencies are rooted in discrimination; the second section of this chapter describes the way in which prejudice affects favela residents in virtually every area of life. I then show how social benefit CSOs attempt to address these issues through small-scale, local-level interventions. Although these organizations do what they can to address immediate community needs, social benefit CSOs lack the resources to engage in broader collective efforts. Structural and cultural barriers interact to inhibit all types of collective action; politically relevant mobilization is thus highly unlikely to emerge.

4.1 What Problems Do Favela Residents Confront?

Before discussing what social benefit CSOs are and what they do, it is useful to understand what the main problems in favela neighborhoods are. Whenever possible, either in a semi-structured interview setting or in casual conversation, I asked residents to tell me what the most important issue was in their community, and/or what the community most needed. Using qualitative analysis software, I categorized the number of times each issue was mentioned by a favela resident. The results are shown in below in Chart 4.1:
Judging by what one reads in the paper, sees on television, and learns from academic articles, it would be easy to conclude that the main concern within favela communities is gang violence, followed closely by poor infrastructure and lack of recreational opportunities. When governments and nonprofit organizations make investments in favela communities, they tend to be along those lines: improving roads and buildings, as well as providing cultural activities to give favela youth an alternative to becoming involved with the gangs.

These are all worthy endeavors that no doubt improve the quality of life. However, it appears that favela residents identify their community problems differently than outsiders do. Access to job opportunities was the most frequently mentioned issue for the individuals with whom I spoke. As one older gentleman put it, “culture is important, but we need more job training, followed up with job opportunities.” (Interview: Respondent #12, 13 July 2007). Many communities are physically located far from the commercial centers of Rio, with few opportunities for employment within the neighborhood. Moreover, when jobs are available, employers actively discriminate against favela residents, as discussed in the next section. Some CSOs provide educational opportunities within favelas, but the problem, as residents see it, is that they lack a pathway to actual employment:

“There are lots of CSOs that come here, they have some kind of funding from out there to come in here, but they don’t have any continuity, there has to be continuity, above all. You learn here to use a computer, that’s a good little thing, you learned, and now? ‘Look, I finished learning, here’s the diploma, now can I go for a traineeship with a company?’ No. Can he practice at home because he has a computer? No, it doesn’t exist. So kids complete the course, but they need opportunities, a start, maybe partner with a business, a multinational. But these traineeships aren’t open to favela youth.” (Interview: Respondent #61, 13 August 2007.)
“When a project ends, what is this young person going to do, where is he going to go? The right thing to do, maybe, would be for the state to provide easier access to university, to a job opportunity, the Brazilian state could provide that, or the private sector could as well. But there’s nothing. And this makes for a somewhat traumatic post-course experience—youth spend time investing in this area, and then they don’t know what to do. I mean, some discover their autonomy through the process and end up finding a job, but the great majority feel the difficulty of finding a position, and so they become disillusioned and frustrated. That’s the way it is.” (Interview: Respondent #59, 10 August 2007.)

“We need community economic solutions. Projects that come from the community to better the economic well being of residents themselves. Not just about helping one person here, another person there earn a skill so he can earn a little more money. We need projects that raise opportunities for people to get jobs, and not just any jobs, but the kind that will make our communities better places to live.” (Interview: Respondent #48, 9 July 2008.)

Favela residents perceive that access to stable employment is essential, not only for individual advancement, but also community development. In some cases, youth become involved with gang activity as a direct result of the lack of employment opportunities:

“You know why people join the gang? There’s a huge reserve of people who don’t have anything, absolutely nothing. For a youth, there’s nothing for him in the community. No opportunities, no chance at all. And I’m not talking about education, I’m talking about work opportunities. Health, education, recreation, all of these opportunities are also lacking, but what I mean is that the biggest opportunity he lacks is obtaining a job. There’s no possibility of his getting work. So this creates a ‘reserve army’ that can’t enter the market, legal or illegal. Even the traffickers don’t need his labor, because the potential labor force is so large, they can’t use all the potential workers. Enter into any community, and you’ll see that this causes a certain perspective on life. There’s no tomorrow. You live for today, take advantage of what you can today, and that’s all. There are no resources, no place to go.” (Interview: Respondent #118, 19 August 2008.)

Since favela residents face employment discrimination in the formal job market, one might assume that some—if not most residents—would be happy to take any job they could get, including one with the gang. However, despite the conventional wisdom that gang members actively recruit youth as members, job opportunities within the trafficking industry are actually quite scarce. As in any industry, employee wages represent a significant share of business costs, so managers have a financial incentive to keep “headcount” numbers down. Consequently, trafficking gangs rarely have open positions. When there is an employment opportunity to be had, it tends to go to a person with pre-existing connections to the gang. Therefore, there is little need for gangs to “recruit” members, particularly youth, because the potential labor supply already exceeds the number of positions available. For their part, the vast majority of favela residents are not gang-affiliated and prefer to remain that way. It is common knowledge that the gang lifestyle is generally a short-lived one, even under the best circumstances. Even the gang members with whom I spoke stated that while it can be profitable, “the gang can’t sign your card,” referring to the social security card that entitles formal sector workers to health benefits, unemployment insurance, and a pension. In short, favela residents are
keenly aware that access to stable, formal employment is the main concern facing their neighborhoods, and obtaining employment with the traffickers is not a viable or attractive solution.

Residents also identified access to health care as an important problem. Many favela communities, even large ones, lack a public health care center (posto de saude), so they are forced to travel outside the area for even basic care. There might be a health center in a neighboring community, but if that area is controlled by a rival gang faction, residents cannot cross into that “enemy territory.” Moreover, ambulances do not usually enter favelas. At times this is because cars cannot access areas located on steep, unpaved hillsides, but in many cases, it is that ambulance drivers refuse to enter these communities due to prejudice and fear. Therefore, in many cases, residents end up taking public transportation to receive care, even in an emergency, which can be time-consuming, inconvenient, and expensive. One resident of Beija-Flor told me that it took him over two hours to take the bus to the health care center, even though it was only 15 miles away.

Once there, however, residents learn that public hospitals and health care centers have limited numbers of appointments for the day. It’s not possible to arrange an appointment in advance; one has to show up, wait in line, and take one’s chances. As Elisangela explained:

“The health care center closes at 5 PM, and the lines are very long. People start lining up early in the morning, sometimes as early as 5 AM, if they want to be seen that day, and there’s no guarantee. So if you have a job, or are going to school, it’s difficult to get routine medical care. Even in an emergency, there is no guarantee that you will be able to be seen. There are a limited number of slots, and once they are taken, that’s it.”

(Interview: Respondent #185, 28 November 2008.)

Leaving aside issues of prejudice and discrimination for the moment, it is clear that access to jobs as well as health care are the main priorities for favela residents. Education, sewage control, reduced corruption, and peace were also mentioned as other areas of concern. Interestingly, however, a significant number of residents spontaneously volunteered that “lack of infrastructure” was specifically not an issue for their neighborhood (as shown in Chart 4.2). In many cases, buildings were poorly constructed and roads were not paved in the area, but residents went out of their way to tell me that concrete, cement, and new buildings will not solve the problems that exist.

Part of the frustration around infrastructure improvements seems to stem from the fact that favela residents are rarely asked what they want or need. Outsiders, particularly donors, tend to assume that anyone in a poor community would benefit from new, improved buildings. Yet at times, infrastructure improvements can be damaging to the community’s welfare. To illustrate, one resident, Clarissa, told me about the impact that a new building had on her social benefit organization. Initially, project activities took place in a privately owned daycare center on a relatively quiet street in the Fregata community. However, a foreign friend-of-a-friend wanted to help Clarissa expand her work by offering English classes to the youth as well as adults. The arrangement worked well for a time, until it became clear that the daycare was physically not able to accommodate adults due to the child-sized tables and chairs. With the best intentions, the foreigner set up a website and spearheaded a year-long fundraising campaign so that the organization could purchase an entirely new building. The campaign was successful,
and the new building was centrally located and close to the bus stop at the entrance of the community.

**Chart 4.2: Favela Residents Do Not Care about “Paving the Roads”**

(Chart showing the preferences of favela residents between various community services and infrastructure improvements, with fewer residents prioritizing paving the roads compared to other services like education, health care, and jobs.)

(Source: Author interviews with favela residents in Rio de Janeiro, 2007-2008).

However, what the foreign donors failed to realize was that the new location was less than ideal. As Clarissa described:

“We got funds for a new building, but once we were there, the kids stopped going [to our activities]. We used to have 30 kids a month, now we have 6. {Six children from this street?} No, there are only 6, 6 children total who come. {Why?} {She sighs.} “I think it’s a lack of advertising, you know? A lack of...nobody knows about our work there. Before, everybody here already knows it’s a meeting place, yes? Do you get it? And there, it’s not a meeting place. It’s right next to the open sewer, and when we transferred to the building, see, they didn’t want to go there...People just go so far. Also, all of a sudden we had a building, and we had to pay the light bill and get it on, pay the telephone bill and get it on, we had to open and close and have a schedule. I think we were better off without it.” (Interview: Respondent #75, 21 August 2007.)

Clarissa had no doubt that the foreigner had good intentions. However, he failed to consider the fact that the previous location had advantages for Fregata residents that the new location lacked. The building undoubtedly photographs well, provides a fantastic image for future fundraising newsletters, and Clarissa was pleased that foreigners took an interest in her work and wanted to help it succeed. However, in her opinion, the donations could have been better spent elsewhere.

I also had the opportunity to ask a group of residents why they were so adamantly against the idea of paving the roads in their community. As an outsider, I assumed that concrete roads would always be preferable to dirt ones. However, they articulated some important reasons why paved roads would be detrimental to their area’s well-being:
“First, paving the roads won’t solve any of the real problems here…[another resident interrupts:] …but besides that, when the floods come [as they do every year in Rio] the water wouldn’t get absorbed into the ground, it would just run right over the roads…[third resident:]…so the open sewer would also flood, and the sewage would run right over the roads and get into our houses…” [second resident:]…and the trash, the trash in the sewer and from the collection point would get swept up with the flood water too. [First resident:] So that’s why nobody cares about paving the roads.” (Interview: Respondents #72, #94, #73, 10 July 2008.)

These two examples clearly illustrate the disjuncture between residents’ and outsiders’ perceptions regarding what favela communities need to solve their problems. As I will illustrate in Chapter 5, many residents acknowledge that the cultural activities, educational opportunities, and leisure options that many well-funded CSOs provide are very welcome in their neighborhoods. Nevertheless, residents stressed that their main concerns overwhelmingly revolve around access to jobs and health care.

4.2 Prejudice: Pervasive and Inescapable

Favela residents clearly stated that the root cause of both deficiencies is the persistent legacy of prejudice and discrimination against them. Koonings and Kruijt (2007) argue that “social and spatial fragmentation” is occurring in most Latin American cities, creating “second-class citizenship” for those at the bottom. (Koonings and Kruijt 2007:1-8). In Rio de Janeiro, however, this dynamic is particularly strong. Neither the word “prejudice” nor “discrimination” accurately captures what it is like to go about one’s life with the attached stigma of being from a favela. Essentially, favela residents cannot take for granted that others in society will consider them to be human beings, or gente (Perlman 2010: 316-318).22 It is more than social exclusion, more than being “lower class”—those who are not gente are viewed as undeserving even of basic respect as a human being. The Brazilian academic Machado da Silva explained:

“In Brazil, the state was created through processes that not only used violence, but that ‘dualized’ humanity, using concepts of ‘us’ and ‘them’—we, who are human, and they, who are not human or less than human. And this wasn’t only due to slavery. It’s a limited understanding of humanity. When we talk about humanity, we think about all human beings. But that’s not how we think in our daily lives, because we discriminate-us, the human beings, and them, the barbarians, the immigrants, the favela residents. They are not as human as we are. This ranking of humanity isn’t formally recognized—not by us, not by academics, not in literature. When we talk about humanity, we think we’re talking about everybody, but in practice we’re not. In practice, we exhibit ‘gradiations’ of humanity, which are different levels of one’s value in life.”23

(Interview: Respondent #6, 3 December 2008.)

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22 As Perlman explains, gente has various meanings in Brazilian Portuguese, depending on the group of speakers. If someone is speaking with other members of her in-group (such as a group of favela residents talking together) the word can mean “we” or “us” (i.e. a gente vai sair agora, or we’re going to leave now). It can also be used to indicate that someone is “good people,” as they say in the American South (i.e. João é gente boa, or John’s a good guy). However, as this section discusses, it is also used to mean “somebody,” “person,” or “a human being”—indicating that a person who is gente is not only a person, but worthwhile, valuable, and deserving of rights.

23 Author’s interview with Luis Antonio Machado da Silva, Professor of Sociology at IUPERJ and UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, on 3 December 2008.
Before describing what having non-person status means for favela residents on a daily basis, it is important to clarify that this is a cultural problem, not a legal one. Article 5 of the Brazilian Constitution (1988) states that “all persons are equal before the law, without any distinction whatsoever,” and goes on to clarify that “men and women have equal rights and duties” (Section 1), “the law shall punish any discrimination” (Section 41), and “the practice of racism is a crime” (Section 42). Moreover, Articles 6-9 enumerate a wide range of “social rights,” including the right to education, health care, work, leisure, and social security benefits. On paper, Brazilians have access to a broad range of egalitarian and expansive rights and protections under the law. In practice, however, favela residents rarely enjoy these rights in the same ways that other residents of Rio do.

Favela residents are keenly aware of this discrepancy. At a community event in Fregata, one speaker took over the microphone and proclaimed:

“The problem isn’t that our rights don’t exist. We have good laws, the children’s statute is a great law. But the law is no use if that boy, that youth, if that girl can’t have their rights secured, the rights to a quality education, the rights that each one has inside [at this point, applause and cheers break out and it was impossible to hear the rest.]”(Interview: Respondent #22, 22 July 2007.)

According to the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (1990), all children have the right to “life, health, nutrition, education, sports, leisure, vocational training, culture, dignity, respect, freedom, and family and community living” (Article 4, Law 8069). Except, as this resident articulated, if the child in question lives in a favela community, where she is not considered to be as “human” as children elsewhere. Essentially, the attitude that favela residents are not gente is at the root of their lack of access to jobs and health care. Brazil’s 1988 constitution states that all citizens have inalienable social rights, including the right to work and to receive health care. Employment opportunities certainly exist in Brazil’s expanding economy, and the country has had a system of publicly-funded universal health care since 1990. All citizens are entitled to “appointments, tests, hospitalizations, and treatments” through the Brazilian National Public Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde) as a “right of all and an obligation of the State.”

However, favela residents cannot access these rights due to the cultural attitudes that exist. It is the pervasive belief that favela residents are somehow less human than others, less worthy of citizenship than others, that renders them unable to enjoy the rights that they should possess under the law. What does this lack of being gente, this somehow less-than-human status mean for favela residents as they go about their daily lives? Favela residents face prejudice in almost every social situation they encounter outside of their neighborhoods.

Employment

Brazil is widely recognized as one of the world’s most rapidly developing economies, particularly with respect to its expanding employment opportunities. According to Deborah Wetzel, an economist at the World Bank, the income of the poorest 10 percent of people in

\[^{24}\text{The Statute of the Child and Adolescent No. 8069 was enacted in July 1990 to further clarify the rights that children possess. It defines a child as anyone younger than 12, an adolescent from 12-18, and goes on to state that children and adolescents have specific rights to education, health, and freedom from labor. http://goo.gl/Zyb4X}\]

\[^{25}\text{The Organic Health Law No. 8080, enacted in September 1990, provides universal, publicly-funded health care for all Brazilian citizens. http://goo.gl/CtYMx}\]
Brazil grew 9 percent per year between 2001 and 2006, versus 3 percent growth at higher income levels. In some ways, Brazil was the envy of the world during the Great Recession of 2008-2009, as its economy continued to create jobs at a rapid pace. However, favela residents have an inordinately difficult time accessing these jobs due to employment discrimination.

Encountering prejudice on the job market is neither new nor applicable to Brazil alone. Scholars have found evidence of preferential hiring on the basis of gender (Gutek and Cohen 1987; Gruber 1998; Peterson and Saporta 2004), age (Berger 2009), and race/ethnicity (Moss and Tilly 2001; Pager 2003; Huffman and Cohen 2004), in virtually every country where research has been done. In Latin America, one of the most recent studies finds that among secretarial applicants in Lima, Peru, being of indigenous descent was perfectly correlated with not getting hired (Moreno et.al. 2012). However, residential discrimination is particularly pronounced in Rio. Non-favela residents earn 35 percent more than favela residents do, and black men who do not live in favelas earn 50 percent more than their favela-dwelling counterparts (Ribeiro 2002). As soon as employers notice on a resume that a candidate lives in a favela, the interview is immediately over. Consequently, applicants sometimes give false addresses on job applications (Leeds 2007).

In the words of favela residents themselves:

“As soon as they see I’m from Gaviota, if I try to get a job outside I can’t. I try to look for work but it’s useless. People have told me ‘you say you want to work, but really you’ll rob us.’” (Interview: Respondent #88, 2 July 2008.)

“I went with a friend of mine who lived in Viuvinha to a company that was having open interviews. We got there, had an initial interview, and my friend was escorted out pretty fast, but I was invited to have an extended interview. So I asked why me and not my friend too? And the interviewer laughed, said ‘he’s from the favela’ and tore his application in half right in front of me.” (Interview: Respondent #132, 29 September 2008.)

“It’s true that no one will hire you if you are from the favela, especially if you are dark-skinned. Before I was here [a hotel doorman] I worked at a store for two years, and a salesclerk opportunity came up at another branch. A friend referred me, but then said to forget about it, because the first thing the employer asked was ‘where does he live and what color is he?’ So I had no chance.” (Interview: Respondent #64, 15 October 2008.)

[From a man in his early 30s:] I went to see someone about a job and the receptionist announced me by saying ‘the little black favela boy is here to see you.’” (Interview: Respondent #142, 9 October 2008.)

[Talking about a mutual friend who has university-level education as well as extensive computer skills:] She has no chance at finding a job. [Why?] She is a favela resident, and she’s black. It’s sad because she has expectations now. [But she has so much talent!] I know, but it will never happen. The best she can hope for is a job as a cleaning woman, and she probably won’t even get that because she thinks too highly about herself now. It will never, ever happen.” (Interview: Respondent #147, 17 October 2008.)
As these individuals describe, the opportunities that exist in Brazil’s expanding economy are closed off to favela residents simply due to where they live. The perception that favela residents are dirty, violent, prone to theft, and involved with drug trafficking is so pervasive that employers rarely look past the address on the resume to see the person standing before them.

**Education**

Although primary and secondary education in Brazil is free and open to all, favela youth still pay in terms of money, time, and the prejudice they encounter. Some mothers told me that their children do not attend school because it is too costly. Public education is free, but children need to provide their own school supplies, which can be prohibitively expensive. Pencils, paper, notebooks, backpacks, tennis shoes, and an official school t-shirt all have to be purchased by the family. The cost may seem small from an outsider’s perspective—$15 USD for a notebook, pen, pencil, and carrying case, $30 for a box of colored pencils, and $10 for a school shirt—but with a minimum wage of approximately $300 USD per month, these expenses can come to about 1/3 of a family’s monthly earnings.

To be sure, these prices will strike anyone who has been in the market for school supplies lately as fairly outrageous. However, consumer goods are expensive in Brazil overall, and are particularly costly in favela neighborhoods. Brazil levies steep tariffs on foreign imports, and increasing demand has pushed prices of domestic products higher as well. On average, consumer prices are two to three times higher in Brazil for the equivalent item in the United States. For example, while taxes represent 6 percent of the cost of a car in the U.S, and 16 percent of the cost in France, Brazilian consumers pay 30 percent of the cost in taxes (de Sainte Croix 2011). Many middle- and upper-class Brazilians evade high prices by doing the majority of their shopping while on vacation overseas, including for such everyday items as soap, shampoo, and diapers (Barchfield et.al. 2012). Those who cannot travel abroad usually ask friends and family members who do to bring back consumer goods. Recently, a third strategy has emerged: obtaining an amazon.com Visa card, purchasing goods online, shipping them to Brazilian acquaintances in the USA, who then bring them to the purchaser when travelling home. I have not only witnessed Brazilians make online purchases in this manner, I have allowed some friends to ship goods to my California address, which my husband would then bring to Rio when he came to visit. The fact that it is cheaper for Brazilians to purchase goods abroad, pay U.S. shipping costs, and then wait—sometimes for months—to receive them via personal courier clearly testifies as to how expensive consumer goods in Rio can be.

Favela residents, however, cannot utilize these same strategies. They are less likely to travel outside the country, as well as to have friends and family who live abroad. Moreover, it is often more expensive to purchase goods in poor communities than in wealthier parts of the city (Myers et.al. 2009). In Rio’s favelas, as in other marginalized neighborhoods around the world, fewer competing businesses combine with inelastic demand to keep prices higher than elsewhere. In addition, there is some evidence that gangs sometimes levy a “tax” on common items such as cooking gas as well (Morris 2010). Therefore, favela residents face the “double whammy” of reduced earning power combined with higher prices for consumer goods. With respect to education, mothers across Rio’s favela neighborhoods told me that if the family cannot

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26 The terms and conditions of the amazon.com Visa card indicate that one must be a U.S. resident with a Social Security Number or Tax ID number to become a cardholder. However, I not only met Brazilians who claimed to have an amazon.com Visa, I watched more than a few favela residents make purchases online using it. Either Brazilians are applying for the card fraudulently, and/or amazon.com is not adhering to its own standards.
afford school supplies, either their children go to school without them and face taunts from other students and teachers alike—or they just do not attend at all.

In addition, teachers increasingly assign homework with the requirement that online sources be used. This is not an issue for children with computer-literate parents and an internet connection at home, but it can be a real challenge for favela residents. Students must choose between paying for internet access at a LAN house (which costs about $2 per hour and are usually owned by the gang), or turning in an incomplete assignment, which affects their overall grade. As a result, favela residents sometimes regard the educational system as intentionally working against their advancement. One mother told me that “it’s all designed to keep poor kids, favela kids, at a disadvantage. The system is stacked against them with assignments like this. It’s hard for them to finish school, so many don’t, and they have it even harder.”

Moreover, some communities do not have a school at all within their borders, especially when it comes to secondary education. Students must travel long distances, both by bus and on foot to attend classes, often passing through territory that is controlled by a rival gang. Sometimes, parents and children conclude that it is not worth the risk, and children who make the effort may find they cannot surmount these challenges. As some favela resident mothers explained:

“My son was kicked out of school because he missed so many days, but the reason he missed school is because it’s located in [a part of the community controlled by a rival drug faction.] So to go to school, he had to cross the boundary, and this is dangerous, putting his life at risk, so he couldn’t go very often. And he was kicked out for non-attendance. But now the boundaries have changed again, so he could theoretically go, but the school won’t let him back in because he’s already been expelled.” (Interview: Respondent #138, 9 October 2008.)

“There is no secondary school here. So if young people want to go, it’s really difficult! The bus that goes to the school doesn’t pass by this community, so the youth would have to walk all the way to the road where the bus does go, and it can be an hour’s walk. Then he spends all day in school, and then has to take the same walk back, and he won’t get home until 10 PM at night. And on top of all that, it’s dangerous, because to get to the bus stop, he might have to cross through territory that is controlled by another gang. And that’s very dangerous. So very few young people here go on to high school.” (Interview: Respondent #187, 28 November 2008.)

What is more, youth who successfully surmount the challenge of affording school supplies and physically getting to the classroom find that once there, they face blatant discrimination from teachers and students alike. Virtually none of the teachers are favela residents themselves, and they have preconceived ideas about these neighborhoods. In the words of youth and their parents who have faced these attitudes firsthand:

“If you go to school in flip-flops [the cheapest kind of shoes] even the teachers will make fun of you. So my parents bought me tennis shoes for school, but I had to carry them because of the mud in the road, it was just a dirt path, a path of deep mud. And when I got there everyone still laughed at my muddy feet.” (Interview: Respondent #190, 18 November 2008.)

“I went to my son’s teacher to ask for help because he wasn’t doing well. And she said, she said to me, ‘I’m not going to help him if he doesn’t want to study, because he’s just going to be a
trafficker when he grows up.’ The director of the school said this, right to my face!” (Interview: Respondent #52, 15 August 2007.)

“My child got suspended from school for having lice. But there was no lice! The teacher just thought he was dirty and assumed he had lice, and kicked him out of class for that reason. She made fun of him in front of everyone.” (Interview: Respondent #185, 28 November 2008.)

“It’s an embarrassment, it’s a public shame that children today are going through these things here. The teachers who are here [in the schools], they don’t want to be here with us. And we don’t want them either. Once we tried to get at least one teacher in our school who was from a favela, just one. But it didn’t work. It’s because they’re all outsiders that they are so prejudiced.” (Interview: Respondent #30, 26 July 2007.)

These anecdotes illustrate that educational opportunities are not provided equally to all youth. In addition to financial costs and transportation difficulties, educators bring their prejudices against favela residents into the classroom. If a child comes to school without adequate school supplies, shoes, and homework—or fails to attend entirely—the child, not the system, is considered to be the problem. Instead of searching for solutions to help the child and her family, the most common course of action is just to expel her from school altogether.

**Health Care**

On paper, Brazil’s social welfare policy is quite progressive. The 1988 Constitution enshrines health care as a universal human right, and public hospitals are free of charge. Many middle- and upper-class Brazilians, however, do not avail themselves of the public system, opting to purchase private health insurance instead. Those with access to privately-run clinics and hospitals receive health care that is just as good as in any first-world country. For those without, there is the advantage of having access to publicly-funded hospitals and health care posts. Favela residents, however, cannot take full advantage of the public health care system due to transportation difficulties as well as discrimination. As discussed in section 4.1 above, favela residents face challenges in accessing health care due to limited numbers of centers in their neighborhoods. However, even if residents make it to the health care center early and wait their turn in line, there is no guarantee that they will actually get an appointment. Doctors, nurses, and medical assistants choose which patients will receive care that day, and often their prejudices influence their selection, much to the detriment of favela residents.

While living in Rio, I had heard many times that health care centers routinely refuse to treat patients from favelas. However, I never really understood what this meant in practice until a friend of mine from Fregata needed urgent medical care. Thiago has lived in this community all his life, working with youth in the neighborhood for over 40 years. After one of the rainstorms that year, Thiago slipped on the pavement and hurt his foot, but he was unable to make it to a health care center. His untreated injury, combined with his diabetes, resulted in his foot becoming infected with gangrene. Two months passed before he could afford transportation via taxi to the hospital, during which time the gangrene had spread to his lower leg.

Once he arrived at the hospital, however, he could not get admitted for treatment. The staff said that all of the beds were full—as they often are—but when a bed opens up, there is no formal triage process to determine who receives it. Patients line up, but to receive care, a doctor has to be willing to take the case, and most doctors refuse to treat favela residents. As a result,
Thiago and his spreading gangrene slept on the floor of the emergency waiting room for over 48 hours, waiting to be admitted. Months after this incident, Thiago told me that he might still be there on the hospital floor if not for the intervention of well-connected friends from outside the favela. Ultimately, a foreign anthropologist who knew Thiago came to the hospital, complained loudly and publicly for an entire day, and told everyone who would listen that he was going to write an exposé for the New York Times. Incidentally, he told me that the guards said “yes, please do! The world needs to know how horrible conditions are here.” Finally, under this threat of international media exposure, Thiago was finally admitted—and was able to sit in a chair instead of on the floor.

I arrived at the hospital to visit Thiago a few days later, while he was waiting for the operation that would remove part of his leg. I described the environment in my fieldnotes as “gray-green walls, fluorescent lights, dirty floors, people in hallways wherever they could fit.”

One individual in the waiting room told me that the emergency waiting room was worse: “Where we are now, this is what you get after you’ve been admitted. Emergency is like something out of a World War I movie, with pools of blood on the floor, people packed into the hallway on top of each other.” (Interview: Respondent #137, 15 November 2008.) Ultimately, Thiago received the operation that saved his life, if not full use of his leg. And I finally understood what he meant when he said “when we go to the hospital, there’s a difference in treatment between those who live in favelas and those who live outside. Just because of where we live. I want people to think about this.”

**Private Businesses**

Chapter 3 described the ways in which the state fails to provide basic city services to favela residents, but private companies discriminate against them as well. Whenever someone wants to purchase middle-class products such as washing machines, televisions, cell phones, and the like, it is not enough to have cash on hand. In addition, companies require purchasers to provide documentation of their current address, and if it is in a favela neighborhood, they may refuse to make the sale. Even if a product is sold with a warranty, repair crews frequently decline to service equipment located in favela neighborhoods. One friend from Beija-Flor told me that his mother saved up to purchase a washing machine, along with an extended warranty. When it broke down, she called for repairs, and even though her warranty was valid, “as soon as they heard her address, all of a sudden they couldn’t come out, they were busy, there weren’t any appointments available.” He told me that his mother kept getting passed around to one service representative after another for months, until she just gave up—and her washing machine remained broken. While the repairman’s fear of entering a favela community may have been justified, the fact remains that the washing machine’s owner was unable to receive the same level of warranty protection that other Rio residents enjoy.

Mariana told me a similar story. Her organization received a donation to improve the walls of the building, so she called around for estimates, and most of them were between $R200-$R250. However, when the contractor she chose realized that the work was to take place in a favela community, the estimate suddenly increased to $R600—almost triple the previous cost. Moreover, once the workers came out, they attempted to swindle her at almost every turn. I was visiting Mariana one day when she clearly instructed the workers to begin repairing the South-facing wall, then work counterclockwise so that the Western wall would be the last one repaired. She explained that since the Western wall was in the best condition and materials were expensive, it would make sense to repair the worst walls first.
We went upstairs for lunch, but when we returned, we noticed that the workers had already begun plastering the Western wall. A huge argument ensued, in which the lead contractor insisted that Mariana had said no such thing, and in any case the work was already done. For her part, Mariana refused to budge, and said “just take the wet cement off the Western wall and reuse it.” He finally complied, but Mariana was certain this was only because I, a foreigner, was there observing and taking photographs at her request. (Participant Observation: Respondent #70, 13 November 2008.)

Private banks also tend to discriminate against favela residents. In fact, one community CSO requested that I accompany their personnel to the bank whenever they needed to go so that the errand would take half an hour instead of half a day. I did not understand why this was necessary—the lines had never seemed inordinately long to me—but then I made my first bank trip with Paulo, a resident of the Gaviota favela neighborhood. We travelled to the bank branch in the city center, and upon arriving, I, as a light-skinned young woman, easily walked into the bank. Paulo, however, with his much darker skin—despite being clean-shaven and neatly dressed—was stopped by the security guard, searched, and asked to pass through a metal detector. I still didn’t realize why I needed to continue to accompany Paulo, so I left to run an errand, and returned 45 minutes later to find that he still hadn’t been helped. I asked him what was going on, and he said “we just have to wait.” However, within just a few moments, a bank employee came up to me and asked, very formally, “would the lady require some assistance?” I said yes, thank you, and Paulo and I went up to the counter and concluded our transaction within five minutes.

Favela residents spend a lot of time at the bank, Paulo told me, since that is the only way they can pay their bills. I naively asked why residents don’t have checking accounts and just mail in their payments. Paulo replied “don’t you see? A checking account is expensive, but you also have to have documents with your address. So we [favela residents] will never get one. We just have to wait in line.” (Interview: Respondent #124, 12 November 2008.) Experiences like these taught me that some private businesses would rather forgo profit than provide services to favela residents.

“They Consider me a Criminal Factory:” Daily Encounters Outside the Community

Favela residents also encounter prejudice whenever they leave their home communities. In his classic study of race in Brazil in the 1930s, Donald Pierson (1942) noted that class structure in Bahia was highly correlated with racial categories, and this hierarchy has persisted throughout subsequent decades. As Wacquant (2008) has articulated, racial discrimination in Brazil remains intertwined with social status. There is a popular saying in Rio that summarizes this dynamic: “a rich black is white, and a poor white is black.” Whether the root of prejudice in Brazil is class or race is certainly up for debate. Whether the root of prejudice in Brazil is class or race is certainly up for debate. But it is clear that favela residents tend to suffer on both counts, as lighter-colored, affluent-looking people receive preferential treatment and deference, with darker and poorer individuals always at a disadvantage. Consequently, as Pardue states, the ultimate result of living within a social system that is fundamentally racist and classist is that favela residents “accumulate dehumanizing experiences…[represented] by the quotidian gesture of the submissive head-nod performed in silence” (Pardue 2012:102).

I immediately noticed this dynamic from the “other side.” As a light-skinned woman, I received excellent service in restaurants and shops, had no difficulties approaching public

27 In Brazilian Portuguese: “um negro rico é um branco, e um branco pobre é um negro.”
28 For a recent analysis of the intersection between race and class, see Moraes da Silva and Reis 2011.
officials, and at times people would even step out of my way on the street so that I could pass by more easily. My initial experience of Rio de Janeiro was a city in which everyone was unfailingly polite and accommodating. However, I was clearly gente—and I quickly learned that my friends who resided in favelas were obviously not. The reverse side of this type of social deference is public discrimination. One of the first ways I learned how favela residents were perceived by outsiders was by overhearing conversations on public transportation whenever the bus or van would pass by a favela. Eventually, I started recording these conversations in my fieldnotes, such as this one:

[Overheard while riding in an air-conditioned van as it passed by Fregata. First woman [sarcastically]:] Oh, look at that, this is the marvelous city, isn’t it? [Second woman:] Look how horrible it is! [First woman:] Once I was driving with some friends and we took a wrong turn and ended up in there. It was so scary! I thought the bandits were going to get us. [Second woman:] Well you know they have a different mentality than we do. All they want is the beach, soccer, and money. They don’t want to change. [First woman:] I know! That’s why they’re all gangsters, because they want to be. [Second woman:] It’s really a different world, isn’t it? [First woman:] It’s like another country. […]and the women continued laughing about the community and making fun of the residents who lived there.] (Participant Observation: 5 September 2008.)

I encountered similar types of responses each time I mentioned to a non-favela resident that I was working within these communities. “How can you go there?” “Aren’t you scared?” “How do you avoid the gunshots?” are just some of the reactions I received—even from well-educated, politically left-leaning professionals. For example, I came to know a group of liberal women police officers quite well, since we frequented the same snack stand on the beach. They were extremely interested in my work, and although they themselves had visited some of these same communities and knew the reality, they were continually surprised to hear stories of peaceful encounters and innovative social benefit CSOs. Despite all of the time they had spent in favela neighborhoods, these women said they would never “take the risk” of getting to know residents personally. When I mentioned this comment to Elisângeia, she said she was tired of hearing about favelas as “communities at risk:”

“Why don’t other areas of the city get called ‘at risk?’ Copacabana has violence, traffickers living there, drugs, everything that we have and probably worse if you think about crime on the streets, but Copa isn’t called a ‘favela.’ It’s not a ‘community at risk.’ So what is the risk? At risk of meeting poor people?” (Interview: Respondent #185: 28 November 2008.)

The vast majority of outsiders perceive favela communities as separate from the city in which they live, and by extension, the residents are separate from “regular people” as well. They are not viewed as citizens with the same rights and responsibilities as everyone else. Favela residents described the way this prejudice affects them in almost every public encounter:

“People curse at us on the street all the time. They do it when we pass by, they think we will steal, rob, hurt them because we’re from a favela. And we think it’s normal! That’s the worst part. We think that’s the way it is, and has to be, because we’re used to it, and that’s what we
usually experience. But that’s not the way it should be.’” (Interview: Respondent #191: 26 November 2008.)

“I went up to the front door [of the church], I went knocking on the door and they said to me, ‘no, you have to go underneath. This entrance is not for you.’ And I looked, and that [alternative, lower] entrance was where, you know, the undesirables, even the dogs would enter from below. And I had to enter from below because I was a dog to them. Why? To preserve the building from the ‘bad elements.’ And it wasn’t an apartment building or an office, it was a church! No one deserves that from the church.” (Interview: Respondent #30: 26 July 2007.)

“We took the kids on a field trip, and a white, foreign volunteer [Regine] came with us. We went to the movies, and I had previously talked with the manager about arranging a reduced fee entrance for the kids, and he said no. But when we got there, Regine talked to the same guy, and she said it was easy! She came out and said that everyone only had to pay half. And I was happy [about the half price tickets], but at the same time, hell, just because, just because she’s white, all she has to do is ask and it happens.” (Interview: Respondent #122: 20 August 2008.)

“Just read the newspaper! When reporters write about youth outside the favelas, they call them ‘students.’ When they write about youth in the favela, they call them ‘minors.’ That just reinforces the idea that favela youth are different from other youth, and probably criminal.” (Interview: Respondent #121: 6 November 2008.)

“They [favela outsiders] don’t consider me a mother. They consider me a criminal factory. But I didn’t give birth to a criminal, I’m just a mother who had a child, like any mother, and that merits some respect.” (Interview: Respondent #120: 19 August 2008.)

Even individuals with liberal politics who are purportedly sympathetic to favela communities harbor these attitudes as well. Holly told me about Patrícia, an extremely intelligent young girl from the Fregata neighborhood who loved books. Patrícia was eager to read all she could, but quickly sped through all the books she had. So Holly contacted a friend of hers in a wealthy area nearby, and the friend agreed to meet Holly and Patrícia at a bookstore in the Southern Zone and purchase four books of Patrícia’s choice. As Holly described the encounter to me:

“So we got there, and Patrícia was so excited! She wanted to get there an hour early so she could have time to browse, she looked around the whole store and chose her books very carefully. One was a biography of Vinicius de Moraes.29 But then my friend showed up, and when she saw Patrícia in person, she tried to back out, because she ‘wasn’t interested in buying books for a black favela girl.’ But what did she expect?! I read her the riot act and she eventually bought the books, but poor Patrícia! She could see everything that was going on. And it turned what should have been a very nice gift into an embarrassing situation.” (Interview: Respondent #87: 4 November 2008.)

29 Vinicius de Moraes (1913-1980), one of Rio de Janeiro’s most famous residents, was a songwriter, poet, playwright, and diplomat. He is probably best known for composing the first Bossa Nova song, Chega de Saudade (No More Blues) and spearheading the Bossa Nova musical genre in the 1950s.
Encounters like those described in this section teach favela residents that the “proper” city is not for them, it is a place where they do not belong. Is it any wonder, then, that favela residents generally prefer to remain in their own communities? They leave when they must, but as one resident of Bem-Te-Vi explained: “people know each other here. They always come up to you, say hello, greet you, ask how you are. You feel accepted and welcome and close to the people around you. But when I leave here, I’m a stranger. I’m someone to fear and avoid.” Of course, one may argue that if favela residents are indeed more violent than others, then the suspicions of the middle class could be justified. However, most favela residents are not involved in crime (Valladares 2005; Veloso 2010), and the few who are gang-affiliated usually direct violence toward favela residents, not to residents of the formal city (Deffner 2011). The fears of non-favela residents are thus based in prejudice, not reality.

All of these examples illustrate the different ways in which favela residents are not considered to be as “human” as others, and the effect this has in virtually every sphere of life. By extension, this denigration allows the wider society to not only discriminate against favela residents on all fronts, it justifies treating favela communities as separate, undesirable parts of the city, and their residents as criminals in the making. As middle- and upper-class Brazilians would tell me, favelas are “enemy territory,” a “place to avoid” that is not for “people like us.” In response to this attitude, I close this section with an extended interview quote:

“Who is the enemy? Many [upper-class Rio residents] have waived their rights to public education, to public health, they’ve withdrawn entirely because their children are in private schools, they don’t use the public health system, the middle class has withdrawn—and so they aren’t worried about public institutions. Their private rights are taken care of, they have a private health plan. Anything that doesn’t directly affect them as an individual, they aren’t concerned about. The issue of a right to education, a right to health, the right to housing, transportation, to dignity—none of that applies to us. Fundamentally, they’ve taken away our right to be seen as a person. And for those who aren’t part of society, who aren’t even considered to be human beings, then you can’t admit that they have rights. You create this idea of a ‘criminal’ independent of whether or not he has actually committed any crimes, in order to not see him as a person, he’s ‘other.’ He’s someone that for you, he doesn’t have an identity, and that’s why you have to create this category of ‘criminal.’ This destroys the logic of humanity. It’s not just a denial of human rights, it’s a denial of his very humanity itself. So how can we discuss ‘human rights’ for those whom we don’t even consider to be human beings?” (Interview: Respondent #119: 19 August 2008.)

The fundamental denial of personhood and citizenship rights is the core problem that favela residents confront. Discrimination in education, employment, and health care are persistent issues, but their status as somewhat “less than human” is at the root of them all. What residents need, from their perspective, are job opportunities to earn a living, health care to keep themselves and their families safe, and basic respect from non-favela residents in order to feel like human beings. Therefore, when favela residents create CSOs within their communities, they do so with these goals in mind. The following section will discuss one type of organization—social benefit CSOs—created by residents to improve the quality of life in their own neighborhoods.
4.3 Social Benefit CSOs: Origins, Goals, and Resources

Those residents who are committed to trying to make a difference generally create what they term “social benefit CSOs”— small-scale efforts designed to improve the life chances of individual children and youth. These CSOs, founded by favela residents and located within a single community, strive to improve their neighborhoods one person at a time. Social benefit CSO founders in Rio’s favela communities are some of the most innovative, courageous, and self-sacrificing individuals I have ever encountered. These men and women respond to the problems in their communities with determination to try to do whatever they can to make things better. On the surface, there is nothing unique about them—they are typical residents working as maids or doormen or laundresses or laborers. Some have children of their own, others do not. None has any significant disposable income or savings. But they are tied together through a willingness to do something, no matter how small, to make a difference. Often, the “CSO” is as simple as opening up one’s home to the children and youth that pass by on the street, and using whatever skills, talent, and creativity the founder has to provide each youth with what he or she needs.

I asked social benefit CSO founders what inspired them to get involved. Each story is different, but common themes include watching their own children’s struggles to remain in school, deal with prejudice, and find employment. Other founders suffered personal health difficulties, some quite severe, and wanted to try to improve health care access in their neighborhoods as a result. One man told me that he had a spiritual conversion experience while working as a lifeguard, and realized that his role was to save lives in his community as well as on the beach. None of the founders with whom I spoke had any experience with setting up and running an organization. As one explained, “I learned to do it by doing it! I had an idea and gave it a try. I saw what worked and what didn’t, and just kept on going.” (Interview: Respondent #45, 3 August 2007). Despite the lack of formal training and organizational skills, social benefit CSO founders forged ahead with their ideas until they found a way to make them work.

In terms of leadership, virtually all of these CSOs are run by the individual who founded them. The next section outlines why forming partnerships within and across favela communities is difficult. For social benefit CSOs, that means the individual founder is generally a “leadership team of one” who makes the decisions regarding what to do and how to achieve it. Social benefit CSOs generally have simple and straightforward goals: they aim to do whatever they can to improve the lives of individual children and youth. At their most basic, these CSOs provide a safe place for youth to be themselves, as well as receive supplementary tutoring, learn a trade or skill, or just play in an area apart from the street.

For example, social benefit CSO Torênia i in Viuvinha focuses on teaching sewing skills to youth. The idea is to bring experienced seamstresses together with young women who want to learn. They spend time together, interact across generations, and the youth learn how to sew—they make handbags, quilts, and dresses, as well as learn how to do repairs. Then, they can use these skills to make things for themselves, to sell at fairs, or eventually find work as a seamstress. In Beija-Flor, social benefit CSO Vitória Régia provides medical care to the community. There is no health care center in Beija-Flor, so the founder tries to recruit medical professionals to come into the community, go door-to-door, and provide care. When possible, they provide basic first aid, physical therapy, and acupressure to relieve stress, as well as an opportunity for youth in the community to familiarize themselves with these professions.
Finally, in Fregata, social benefit CSO Pau-Brasil holds art classes for young people. The founder is an accomplished commercial and creative artist, and he teaches youth how to paint, draw, and create crafts out of recycled materials. They can sell their work to earn money right away, as well as learn a skill that they may be able to leverage into future employment.

All of these organizations have a practical component at their core that attempts to address a basic need within the community. However, the founders stress that their CSOs are more than just providing youth with training and skills. The activities that the youth engage in are important not because they will attain stable careers from the skills they gain, but because “they learn that they can learn.” Each founder encourages the youth who attend to stay in school. As residents themselves, they are keenly aware of the difficulties involved in doing so. However, they realize that opportunities will be even more difficult to come by without an official degree, so founders do what they can to encourage youth to complete secondary school. They personally involve themselves in the children’s lives by talking with their parents, providing practical, tangible assistance when possible, and skillfully promoting the value of education among the youth themselves.

Sometimes, founders do this by keeping the front doors of their homes open. As one founder explained, she does this because she “wants the kids to feel as if this is their second home. There aren’t any requirements to be at your mom’s house, your grandpa’s house, right? That’s why they don’t have to do anything to ‘join’—they are always welcome.” Another founder calls out to children and youth as they pass by on the street. He knows almost all of them by name, and whenever he would introduce a youth to me, he would say something nice about each one. To describe how social benefit CSOs operate on a daily basis, I relate an extended example from my field notes below:

(Field notes: 9 October 2008) I was visiting Thiago’s CSO in Fregata, where there were three young people working on art CSOs independently. After a while, another youth [Gabriel] came by. He wasn’t headed to the CSO, he was just hanging out on the plaza. Thiago said hello, waved him over, and gave him a hug. He asked about Gabriel’s family, made conversation, then he asked about school:

T: are you going to school?
G: yes.
T: are you lying to me? [said in a friendly way, but still serious]
G: no. [said looking down at the floor]
G: I have to go.
T: hey, wait a minute, let me tell you something. [He told Gabriel about his history—“I was born here, just like you, went to school not far from you, and now I earn a good living”—and also told him about other youth from the community whose families Gabriel knew. One was a surfer, another was a doctor. Then he said:] T: what do you want to be in the future?
G: a soccer star!
[They talked about soccer for about 15 minutes—what teams G likes, what position he plays, what team he’d want to play for. Then T said:] T: you know, if you want to be a soccer star, they’re going to give you a contract that says how much you get paid. And you have to be able to understand it, or else they might cheat you, right?
G: yes! They would, that’s right. [G was now very interested].
T: so you’re going to have to know how to read the contract, and you’ll have to know how to write in order to sign it, right?
G: yes. [I got the impression G hadn't considered this before].

T: hey, do you think you might like to sit down and paint for a while?

I was impressed with the skillful way Thiago handled the situation: he encouraged Gabriel to speak honestly, found a way to connect the value of education with his personal goals for the future, and didn’t press the issue once his point had been made. For the next 45 minutes, Gabriel painted with the other youth while Thiago and I talked. Occasionally, Gabriel would bring his work to Thiago and ask for advice—how to mix colors to achieve a particular shade of red, or how to draw a certain kind of figure. After a while, Thiago brought up the issue of education again: “Gabriel, what happened? Tell me why you aren’t in school.” It turned out that Gabriel had been expelled because the classroom was too crowded, and he didn’t want to return because his mother needed help at home. Thiago did not judge, give advice, or question the veracity of Gabriel’s side of the story. He merely said “would you like me to talk with your mom, to see if I can help her with anything?” Gabriel said yes, and then went back to painting.

As this example illustrates, social benefit CSOs might have formal activities and schedules, but they are secondary to providing a safe, welcoming place for youth. If a particular child wants to drop by unannounced, he can—in fact, most social benefit CSO founders would count that as a successful outcome. The more youth they can encourage to gain skills, learn a trade, and complete primary or secondary education, the better. All organizations need resources in order to function, and social benefit CSOs are no exception. Table 4.1 illustrates the four main strategies that their founders use to obtain resources for their work in order of frequency: personal financial sacrifice, using recycled materials, asking for in-kind donations, and selling what they produce.

As a group, social benefit CSOs are primarily self-funded by their founder. They occasionally receive small, in-kind donations from others in the community, but even that is rare. As one founder put it, social benefit CSOs “are born in the community, with the effort of each one putting his hand into his own pocket and pulling out what he can.” I also asked founders what their organizations needed most; what would be first on their “wish list” for going forward. Across the board, founders reported that they would like to receive donations in cash, but that actually securing financing was next to impossible. They were either unaware of the major charitable foundations in Brazil, or believed that they had no chance of actually receiving a grant. Receiving more in-kind donations would be appreciated, but most social benefit CSO founders had already exhausted the resources that they knew about, and were reluctant to expand their social networks. Therefore, social benefit CSO founders generally resigned themselves to personally supporting their CSOs and “getting by as we always have.” They are committed to attempting to address the real problems that exist in their communities—lack of access to jobs and health care—but given their minimal resources, their efforts remain small-scale at the individual level.

As one might imagine, running a social benefit CSO with no training, minimal financial resources, and little community support can be quite frustrating. I wondered many times how social benefit CSO founders kept going day after day, how they kept moving forward in the face of extreme personal hardship. Whenever I would ask founders about their motivations, they would often describe it as “the work of a little ant climbing a hill.” They believed that there is no way to change the larger social structure, and it is impossible to make a difference other than to try to affect change at the individual level. But if one person does the little bit that she can, working within the space that is available, small changes in the lives of individual youth are possible. For social benefit CSO founders, that in and of itself is worthwhile.
Table 4.1: How do Social Benefit CSOs Fund their Activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Financing Strategies</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Financial Sacrifice</td>
<td>“I go to work on foot instead of taking the bus, and that’s $R4 a day that I can give to the CSO.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I don’t eat lunch every day so I save that money.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I don’t drink and I don’t smoke.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I don’t buy new clothes, new tennis shoes—everything I can I save for the CSO.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Last month I didn’t pay the electric bill so I could use the money for the CSO. My wife is very angry about that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Recycled Materials</td>
<td>“I look through the trash in [the adjacent wealthy area.] Not here in Fregata, because there’s nothing good to use, if there were people would be using it already. But over there, people throw away a lot that we can use.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We make our own paints by using glue and wheat.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I used to collect empty printer cartridges and sell them back to the company to refill. But that doesn’t work so well anymore.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“A woman came by the other day with a bunch of old records, and we used them as canvases instead of paper.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask for In-Kind Donations</td>
<td>“If I get a contract job, I tell the employer about my CSO and sometimes they let me take the leftover materials.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Ah, fundraising is a real problem. Sometimes we ask the local supermarket for donations of eggs, cornmeal, things like that so the kids can have a snack, but they don’t often give.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“People bring by scrap material, and a friend donated the sewing machine that we use.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Once we got a donation of some wheelchairs, but I think that was it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sell Products</td>
<td>“We collect plastic two-liter bottles, make lampshades out of them, and sell them, which brings in a little money.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Sometimes I find things that I can refurbish or repair, like that table over there. I sanded the tabletop, refinished it, and fixed the leg, and I think I might have a buyer for it now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Our CSO is a co-op: everyone who sells their work earns money, but we pool all the profits so that more experienced workers have an incentive to train the less experienced ones.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We sell our work at fairs, or museums, or the samba school.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Author compilation, field notes.)
In summary, social benefit CSOs are small organizations, founded by a single resident and based within one favela community. Through personal sacrifice and sheer force of will, their founders aim to improve the life chances of individual youth by providing them with education, training, and skills to better access the job market. Social benefit CSOs, as shown in Figure 4.1, have some variation in types of resources, but little variation in their source of resources: the individual founder. Since social benefit CSOs are primarily self-funded with minimal external support, all types of resources are in short supply.

**Figure 4.1: Resource Acquisition Strategy: Social Benefit CSOs**

One solution to this dilemma seems obvious: why not try to connect with other social benefit CSOs in order to pool resources and possibly gain new sources of funding? Through expanding their social networks, social benefit CSOs might be able to extend the reach of their own work and that of other similar endeavors. However, structural and cultural barriers—particularly difficulties in creating network ties—prevent social benefit CSOs from broadening their efforts and engaging in mobilizational activity, political or otherwise. As illustrated in Figure 4.2, social benefit CSOs have an organizational profile that certainly does not preclude mobilization, but neither is mobilization easy to undertake. The main problem for social benefit CSOs is that they lack sufficient levels of resources (regardless of their source or type) to mobilize at all. The remainder of this chapter outlines why very little mobilization of any kind occurs within favela neighborhoods.
Figure 4.2: Social Benefit CSOs Lack Sufficient Resources for Mobilization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Acquisition Strategy</th>
<th>CSO Profile</th>
<th>Politically Relevant Mobilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Some Variation in Types but from a Single Source | • Resident leaders  
• Few activities  
• Few partners | Less Likely |

4.4 Barriers to Mobilization: Structural

Transportation is Difficult and Expensive

Many social benefit CSO founders recognize the theoretical advantages of collaboration, both within and across favela neighborhoods. Meeting like-minded others with similar ideas is an attractive possibility, but as favela community leaders articulated, it was highly unlikely to materialize. At the most basic level, the legacy of historic discrimination negatively affects the ability of favela residents to create network ties. Simply put, it is difficult for them to physically travel around the city to meet with others. In part, this is due to Rio’s distinctive geography. Shifts along the tectonic plates that underlie the city created steep hills and mountains, the most notable example of which is the Pão de Açucar (Sugar Loaf), standing 1,299 feet above Guanabara Bay. This terrain severely limited development possibilities, and urban expansion took place around the base of these elevations as well as near the waterfront.

By the late 19th century, Rio de Janeiro had embarked on a program of urban renewal, but as Godfrey (1991) explains, transportation improvements came at the expense of increased spatial social class segregation. By 1870, streetcar service connected the central business district with the new wealthy neighborhood of Botafogo, and in 1892 a tunnel was built to connect Botafogo with Copacabana, which transformed that quiet fishing village into a fashionable residential area. The trajectory of development continued southward, creating the desirable beachfront communities of Ipanema, Leblon, São Conrado, and Barra da Tijuca. As residential density in these Southern zone areas increased along with corresponding land values, the poor and working-class moved further into the Northern and Western areas of the city, which lagged far behind in terms of transportation infrastructure (Godfrey 1991: 27-30). Transportation networks were designed from the very beginning with the wealthiest Rio residents in mind.

As of 2010, transportation arteries still privilege residents of affluent neighborhoods. Streetcar routes have been replaced by public buses, but they follow the same spatial patterns, easily connecting Southern Zone residents with the central business district. Similarly, the modern underground railway network (Metrô do Rio) is the second-largest metro system in Brazil, but its two lines operate primarily in the Southern and Central zones of the city, with minimal connections North and none to the West. In practical terms, this means that favela residents who live in the Northern and Western zones are at a particular disadvantage. The poor and darker-skinned residents of Rio have not only been culturally excluded from the life of the city center, they have been physically excluded as well, reinforcing divisions between “citizens”
and “others.” One dramatic example of this exclusion can be found on the tourist map of Rio that every visitor receives upon disembarking at the airport (Figure 4.3). When I first received this map in the mid-1990s, I assumed that Rio was predominantly a beachfront city, surrounded by green, forested parks on the hillsides.

**Figure 4.3: Tourist Map of Rio de Janeiro**

![Tourist Map of Rio de Janeiro](Source: tourist map of Rio received by the author.)

However, I soon realized that virtually all of the empty, green areas on the map were actually sites of densely populated communities, as shown in Figure 4.4 below. The contrast between tourist maps and reality reinforces the fact that favela neighborhoods are discounted to the point that they are invisible, at least on some official maps.\(^30\)

**Figure 4.4: GPS Satellite Map of the Circled Area in Figure 4.3**

![GPS Satellite Map of the Circled Area in Figure 4.3](Source: Google Earth GPS Map, accessed 19 January 2012.)

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Incidentally, favela residents are keenly aware of their neighborhoods’ absence on official maps. In order to counteract this trend, they are using the open-source capability of Google Maps to publicly identify the location of their neighborhoods—but as of April 2011, Google has “bowed to media and commercial pressure” to reduce the appearance of favelas on Google Maps in preparation for the 2016 Olympics. One favela resident described the disjuncture to me this way:

“You know that postcard with the statue of Christ, with his arms spread, embracing the city? Well, there are all kinds of neighborhoods here that you don’t see on the postcards. They are so forgotten and invisible that even Christ has his back turned to them. That’s why we joke that we don’t live in ‘Rio,’ we live in the ‘de Janeiro.’” (Interview: Respondent #79: 22 August 2007.)

Residents of neighborhoods like the ones pictured in Figure 4.4 above have a much easier time accessing the commercial center of the city than those who live in the Northern and Western zones. Nevertheless, ascending and descending the hill can be quite difficult, depending on where one lives in the community. On average, for residents who live midway up the hill, the walk usually takes about 15 minutes downhill and 40 minutes uphill.

However, since many favela communities are located far from the economic center of the city, transportation to work and school becomes more costly, both in terms of money and time. These residents not only have to descend the hill, they have to walk to the bus stop, and then transfer at least once to reach the city center. Total travel time can take over two hours each way. After my first visit to a favela community located in the far Northern Zone, I recorded the travel experience in my fieldnotes upon leaving the area:

(Fieldnotes: 22 August 2007) First we had to walk out of the community, which took about 20 minutes. Then we had to walk to a main highway, where we waited for and flagged down a collective van. The van took us somewhere (I have no idea where we were, it took about 15 minutes), we got out, then walked for about 15 minutes more and crossed a huge highway on foot. It seemed dangerous to me, cars were speeding by, but everyone else from the van was doing it so I went along too. Then we got on a bus that was standing room only for another half hour, which took us to a stop on the Metro. I was completely exhausted by this point and I wasn’t even home yet. I can’t imagine doing this every day, standing up during rush hour. Total travel time up to this point was about 1.5 hours. Since I could afford it, I transferred from the bus to the Metro, and made it to the city center half an hour later. However, most favela residents do not utilize the Metro due to its higher cost. Instead, they transfer to yet another bus, which—not accounting for traffic jams—would add an additional hour to the trip. And since the buses are extremely crowded during peak travel times, most people do not get a seat; they spend the entire journey standing upright. Therefore, most favela residents who work in the city center spend on average four hours in transit, on their feet, five days a week. Add to this the fact that most work as laborers, and one can imagine how physically exhausting a day’s work can be.

Travelling to the city center for work is not only time-consuming, it is also expensive for favela residents. Given that bus tickets are $R2 each, and assuming one only has to transfer once to get to work (a conservative estimate), the cost to travel to and from work is $R8 per day. While this may seem a nominal amount, consider that most favela residents earn minimum wage: $R20 per day. Therefore, 40 percent of a worker’s wages are spent on travel costs alone. If this same worker were to take the Metro instead of one of the buses, she would arrive to work...
faster—but Metro tickets cost $R2.80 each—and employers usually do not reimburse workers for transportation. Therefore, taking the Metro would reduce one’s daily take-home pay, after transportation costs, from $R12 to $R10.40. Most favela residents understandably choose the slower, cheaper route in order to avoid a further 10% reduction in pay. For example, once I realized how expensive travel was for favela residents, I mentioned it to my landlord, who (being a generous sort of person) gave his cleaning woman a raise of $R2 per day so that she could take the Metro instead of the bus. However, she told me privately that she was still taking the bus, because she preferred to use the additional income for her son’s school supplies.

In short, the distinctive geography of Rio de Janeiro constrained transportation development from the outset, and when routes were established, they served the needs of affluent Southern Zone residents. Those in the North and West must rely on a complicated system of bus and illegal van connections in order to reach the commercial center. Given the time, effort, and expense of travelling from one area to the next, it is unsurprising that favela residents refrain from making unnecessary trips. Therefore, meeting and collaborating with those who reside outside one’s own neighborhood is highly unlikely. After spending almost half one’s wages to travel four hours a day, five days a week, most residents prefer to remain at home during their free time.

**Gangs Curtail Associational Life**

Not only is it difficult, time-consuming, and expensive for favela residents to travel around the city, there are the gangs to consider. The three main drug and weapons trafficking gangs control different communities throughout Rio de Janeiro, and favela residents are unable to move freely from one area to another. Figure 4.5 illustrates a typical geographical pattern; each color represents the gang that controls that area, and the “flames” on the map are locations that are sites of territorial conflict.

*Figure 4.5: Distribution of Gang Control, Western Zone, Rio de Janeiro*
Different methods of gang control were outlined in Chapter 3, but it is important to recognize that a fundamental part of their control is physically securing the borders. The level of border control differs from community to community; some areas can be entered apparently freely, while others have armed sentries from the gangs visibly patrolling the entrance. In every case, however, there are individuals who monitor access to the community, and either report unknown persons to their superiors—or take immediate action themselves.

I became aware of the way communities are constantly under surveillance by the gangs when I unknowingly violated this norm. I had visited the Bem-Te-Vi favela neighborhood many times, and I knew my way around the area as well as any outsider can. In particular, the route to the CSO I was visiting was very familiar, especially since I had visited it three times during the past week. At my last visit, I had arranged to return two days later, and Matheus, as always, asked me to call him in advance. Until this experience, I had assumed the reason for my phone call was to confirm that we were going to meet, and to remind him of the time. However, Matheus was quite punctual, so I did not see a need to call the day before. As I was getting on the bus at 10 AM the day of my visit, I left him a voicemail letting him know that I would be there as planned. When I arrived, I entered the community as usual and walked to the CSO, but Matheus was nowhere to be found. I asked for him at the snack bar next door, and after some confusion, he arrived and we began another interview. However, as we were finishing up, Matheus gently chastised me for not calling in advance. He explained that the reason I needed to call wasn’t to confirm my appointment with him—it was so that he would have time to clear my arrival with the gang sentries at the entrance of the community. Since I hadn’t called, he hadn’t notified them that I would be coming, and once Matheus received my voicemail message, he spent the morning unsuccessfully trying to contact the gang authorities. As a result, when I entered the community that afternoon, an unseen sentry literally had his finger on the trigger, trying to decide whether or not I should be shot on sight. (Participant Observation: 11 August 2007.)

Was I really considered such a security threat that I would have been in mortal danger? Practically speaking, as a light-skinned woman, I would estimate that there was about a 10 percent chance that I would have been physically harmed. Certainly my chances were much lower than those of a young, darker-skinned male who might be from a rival gang. Nevertheless, this experience taught me that while they may not be visible, gang members constantly monitor who enters their territory. Moreover, Matheus and others confirmed that they do so not to keep foreigners out; their intention is to keep any unknown, unverified persons out of the community. Brazilian outsiders, as well as favela residents themselves, would face the very same risk that I did if they attempted to enter a community other than their own. Many residents described similar experiences:

“Oh, we can go anywhere, as long as you don’t say that you’re from here. I’ve been to [a city near Rio], and the commercial city center.” {But what if you wanted to go to another favela neighborhood?} Well—no—that would be difficult. Who would want to go there? Maybe only if you had family there, then you would, and that would be hard because you really shouldn’t go there, and they shouldn’t come here. Because why would you be there, are you a X-9 who is going to rat people out? It’s just too risky.” (Interview: Respondent #187: 28 November 2008.)

31 X-9 (sheesh-NOH-veh) is slang for a “snitch,” a member of one gang who is secretly allied with a rival gang, and passes on information about their whereabouts in order to gain status—if he lives long enough to do so, that is.
“We don’t have free access from one community to another, no. Because of the rival gangs. Because, for example, if I wanted to have a program about how to prevent HIV/AIDS in [another] community, there would be a problem. Or if they had come to my community, well I just don’t know what would have happened, I just don’t know.” (Interview: Respondent #69: 16 August 2007.)

“For favela youth, to be born into a favela is a terrible thing. They’re hanging out in the alleys doing nothing, because there isn’t anything to do. And they can’t leave their community for another area because, as they say, there’s a fight among the different gangs. And they’re tied to their community’s gang. This is shameful, and unfortunate. ‘Because I live in the [C gang] area, I can’t go to the [B gang’s] territory. In my community I can go to the baile, but my school, my hospital aren’t inside the [C gang’s] territory. I have to go outside the territory to get there, and so I can’t go out.’ And that’s the way it is.” (Interview: Respondent #120: 19 August 2008.)

Residents rarely, if ever, attempt to enter a favela neighborhood different from their own, because they are well aware of the risks.

In addition, the geographical borders of each neighborhood do not always match the borders of an individual gang’s area of influence. Some neighborhoods, especially those that are divided by railway tracks or a hillside into a clear upper and lower area, are routinely controlled by different gangs, and their “borders” are constantly under dispute. In these instances, even areas within one’s own neighborhood might be off-limits:

“But it’s not that we’re between [different favela neighborhoods], no. It’s a strange thing, the highway is here [she draws a map], and the train tracks go like that, and [my area] comes around over here, and [a rival area] goes like that over there. So they [those residents] can only catch the train. They can’t catch the buses going along the highway, because they would have to cross into enemy territory to get a bus. Every community has something like this.” (Interview: Respondent #72: 18 August 2007.)

“When the [A gang] moved in, and [their leader] took over the lower part of the neighborhood, the [B gang] retained control over the upper area. So that made life very difficult for us. You really couldn’t go where you needed to. If you lived in the upper part, just going to the lower part where the shops are would be putting your life at risk.” (Interview: Respondent #133: 30 September 2008.)

“Well. All of this area is [our neighborhood], but people live in different areas, and different gangs control different parts of the community. So people refuse to meet, especially teenagers. There’s no trust. It’s dangerous even to have the semblance of crossing the line, so people won’t do it even if there is the smallest amount of risk.” (Interview: Respondent #185: 18 November 2008.)

Gang control affects residents’ ability to associate freely outside their communities—and sometimes within it as well. For social benefit CSO leaders, this adds an extra layer of difficulty when it comes to making connections with similar CSOs.
In addition, relationships between the gang and CSOs in the community can influence the freedom of social benefit CSO leaders to forge broader social networks. Somewhat surprisingly, the majority of gang members are supportive of the CSOs in their neighborhoods. They know firsthand how precarious and difficult the trafficking life can be, and none of the traffickers I encountered said they would want anyone to pursue this lifestyle, especially their own children. On the contrary, they often encouraged their children to attend activities at the various social benefit CSOs in the community, hoping that their kids would gain skills leading to a different kind of life. For their part, social benefit CSO leaders reported that gang members generally respected their work:

“People who are involved [in the gang], they know our work, they don’t bother us, they don’t ask us anything. We don’t have any ties to them, but they respect us, respect us a lot. They say ‘wow, it’s great that you’re doing this work’ and things like that. Because they don’t want the life that they have, they don’t want that life for their children. It’s true. So we have some respect from them.” (Interview: Respondent #121: 20 August 2008.)

However, general support from the gang does not automatically translate into complete freedom of action for CSOs. First, as illustrated above, outsiders who want to enter the community must often be pre-approved by the gang. This constrains individuals not only from collaborating across different neighborhoods, but also volunteers who might want to donate their time and talent to a CSO. One founder offered an example:

“When Marcelo [a foreign volunteer], when he came for the first time, I went to pick him up at the bus stop. And the second time I went to get him too, and the third day, I didn’t have a problem doing that because I was afraid for him. But the next day, I went there and got in the middle of those guys [the traffickers] and said ‘it’s like this, this is happening and this other thing, so tomorrow I can’t come to get Marcelo and he’s going to have to enter the area by himself.’ And after that, he continued going unaccompanied. But then one day, the guard changed, and I didn’t know that. And Marcelo came with John [a foreign friend.] And they [the guards] were used to seeing Marcelo entering alone. They saw John, and they detained them. They asked them where they were going, and I don’t know what else, and they explained to the guards that they were working with me, and eventually they were let go, but they were scared. And Marcelo didn’t come back much after that.” (Interview: Respondent #70: 17 August 2007.)

Gang leaders not only assert their power with respect to controlling who enters the area, they also reserve the right to approve the type of activities that CSOs conduct. Early in my research, the responses that I received to this issue were contradictory and confusing. Either social benefit CSO leaders told me that they had no contact with the gang—“they do their work, and we do our work. There are no conflicts, no charges, no rebukes. We work freely.”—or they would give a vague response and change the subject. For example, in a recorded interview, I asked “do you need to get any kind of permission from the gang to do what you do?” The leader responded: “Well…sort of. Not really, no. But then, yes…sometimes…but no.” (Interview: Respondent #133: 30 September 2008.) Over time, I learned that the process differs among neighborhoods, but there are some common parameters. In some cases, the gang might decide that they do not want social benefit CSOs in their area at all, and in that case, none would exist. In most communities, however, if a CSO leader asks permission from the gang to operate, they receive it—but the fact remains that they still need to seek the gang’s approval. Afterward,
organizations are generally free to do what they like without interference from the gang, but the traffickers still retain veto power over their activities.

For example, one CSO leader in Fregata told me that just because her organization itself had been approved, she still needed to be careful with respect to what they do. On one occasion, she had arranged for a professional photographer to teach favela youth some basic principles of photography, as well as loan them some cameras. The plan was for the youth to take photos all around the community and exhibit them in an art show, with the intent of showing their perspective on the area in which they live. However, the project was cancelled before it began, because the gang did not want to risk the youth photographing areas or people that might reveal their activities. There was no discussion, no appeal—the photography training just never happened at all.

In addition, any CSO activities that have the potential to earn revenue are closely monitored by the gangs. As outlined in Chapter 3, if an organization becomes profitable, the gang expects to receive a portion of the funds, and social benefit CSOs are no exception. Mariana described this dynamic to me:

“No, it’s not the type of CSO that’s the problem. Let me see if I can explain. They never ask anything about my work. Unless it’s like, when there’s a kid doing a magic trick, they might say ‘Auntie, what’s that there,’ or something like that. But to go there and find out what it is that I’m doing, they don’t do that. Because ultimately, at the end of the day, they know what I’m doing through the children who attend. It’s not for nothing that I work with the traffickers’ kids, so it’s all good. They live there inside the community, so obviously they’re going to know what’s going on. But if they think that I’ve deceived them [estou de falcatrua], or that I’m earning money, earning something, that kind of thing, then the CSO is over and I’m dead. In that case, there’s no discussion, that’s it!” (Interview: Respondent #70: 16 August 2007.)

Gang leaders are perfectly happy when organizations within their territory prosper financially—as long as the gang leaders receive a share of the revenue. CSOs, therefore, must balance their freedom of action with the interests of the trafficking gang in the area. On one hand, traffickers often appreciate the services that community organizations provide. However, if one of them is perceived to infringe on the security of the gang—by inviting outsiders into the community, or engaging in questionable activities—then the CSO is “advised not to continue.” Finally, at times gangs attempt to exert influence by providing funds or in-kind donations. Given the scarcity of resources, social benefit CSO leaders are at times tempted to accept this assistance—but in exchange, they become obligated to the gang:

“Now there are CSOs that just go to them [the traffickers] and ask. They ask for hard cash, they ask, for example, for them to fund a party and then they are dependent. Everything that person does is based on what [the gang] wants. It’s conditional, very conditional. It creates an obligation, a link, right? A wrong connection.” (Interview: Respondent #61: 13 August 2007.)

“I never asked, absolutely never, asked anything from the traffickers to support my work with the kids. But how is it that it could happen anyway? Sure, if you’re a trafficker, and your daughter is in my CSO, if she gives a kilo of hot dogs, the trafficker is the one who is really going to give it. Now, I don’t want him [the trafficker] to come around with a big truck of hot dogs for me. Because that is going to create an obligation, it’s going to set a precedent. If there is just one time that I’m obligated to accept it…even if it’s a cake, a Christmas cake, that I wasn’t able to
collect enough money to have a cake for the party. And then, he [the trafficker] says ‘how much is the cake, Auntie? I’ll donate the entire cake. I’ll donate a bakery cake, that’s R70, right?’ And I say, ‘no, I don’t want the whole cake. I just want enough to supplement what I already have, and I don’t need a bakery cake’...and that’s how this business works, ‘tell me how much it is,’ like that. I say “I want a cake” so he says “I’m going to give four cakes.” But then, if I accept, everybody sees the context in which the cake was given.’” (Interview: Respondent #70: 16 August 2007.)

“They [the traffickers] have offered me money, but I don’t want to take it. Once I had a trafficker’s son who came to my CSO. He knew that I needed materials, so he talked to his dad, who offered to give me R10,000 [about $6,000 USD]. I was so tempted to take it! I could have done a lot of good with that money, bought a lot of supplies, helped a lot of kids. But I don’t want to get involved in that way. So I had to say no—I said that I wanted to be independent from everyone—and now I can’t take cash donations from anyone. But I need to maintain a cordial relationship with them [the gang], both for my CSO and for my own safety.” (Interview: Respondent #135: 30 September 2008.)

Social benefit CSO leaders face a real dilemma when it comes to keeping on good terms with the traffickers. If they accept donations from the gang, then the CSO is beholden to the traffickers in the future. However, if the CSO leaders refuse the gang’s assistance, they risk offending them. The only way out of this situation is to make it clear that the CSO is not just refusing donations from the gang, it refuses donations from anyone. This decision allows social benefit CSO leaders to remain on good terms with the gang, but it severely constrains their ability to make connections with other CSOs that might be a source of funding or in-kind assistance. Therefore, social benefit CSO leaders cannot accept funds from any other sources once they have refused assistance from the gang.

Although some social benefit CSO founders would like to connect with similar organizations, structural barriers prevent them from doing so. Historical inequalities have left a legacy of inefficient transportation routes for favela residents, so physically getting from one area to another is inordinately expensive and time-consuming. Few favela residents choose to spend their limited free time engaging in additional travel. At the same time, gang control affects residents’ ability to associate freely outside of one’s own neighborhood, and sometimes within it. Residents can only go to areas that are controlled by the same trafficking gang as the one they live in, and these borders are subject to change without notice. Therefore, many residents conclude it is best to remain in areas they know well.

In addition, the trafficking gangs influence social benefit CSOs’ freedom of action in other, more subtle ways. They reserve the right to determine who may visit the community, exert veto power over the type of activities social benefit CSOs can provide, and may attempt to co-opt the CSO itself through offering funding themselves. The most successful way to remain on cordial terms with the gang is to refuse outside assistance from all organizations, including the gang, but this limits the connections that social benefit CSOs can make. Moreover, if a CSO were determined to broaden its social networks, they might be able to leverage those connections for additional resources, financial and otherwise. However, this type of success would be accompanied by increased scrutiny from the gang, who would be likely to demand “donations” from the CSO. All of these factors illustrate the difficulties that social benefit CSOs face when it comes to their associational possibilities. While the idea of collaborating with like-minded
organizations may be attractive in theory, these structural barriers render connections with other CSOs a costly and risky undertaking. Navigating this dilemma can be tricky:

“There are relationships, and then there are relationships. If you have the wrong kind of relationships, they will shut you down. But they aren’t going to give orders. It’s more or less that the responses that you give them have to be correct. Or a little thing, if you don’t do what they ask you to do, they will shut the project down. And if the project ends, you can’t continue in the community. I’m not crazy [maluca], so I’m not going to risk it. It’s like that.” (Interview: Respondent #72: 18 August 2007.)

Favela residents are acutely aware that they have freedom to act only as long their actions are within the boundaries that the gangs permit. CSO leaders not only face significant structural barriers with respect to forging broader social networks, but are also unlikely to risk transgressing the normative barriers imposed by the gangs. The final section of this chapter discusses how these structural barriers reinforce cultural norms that further serve to inhibit mobilization.

4.5 Barriers to Mobilization: Cultural

As one might imagine, favela communities have particular cultural characteristics that are both shared by—and separate from—those who reside in “mainstream” Brazilian neighborhoods. One cultural aspect that favelas share with Brazil as a whole is a generalized distrust of unknown persons. Although Brazilians are highly sociable (as discussed in Chapter 2), they are not broadly sociable—their networks generally include only family and very close friends. As illustrated in Chart 4.3, according to 2000 World Values Survey (WVS) data, Brazilians have the lowest level of generalized trust in the world. The WVS asks respondents to choose the response that best matches their outlook: either “most people can be trusted,” or “you can’t be too careful these days.” 91% of Brazilian respondents said that they “can’t be too careful” when dealing with other people. Similarly, when asked “how much do you trust people you know personally,” 36% of Brazilians answered “not much” or “not at all”—one of the highest rates of distrust within one’s own social networks in the world.32

Similarly, the 2010 World Giving Index—the largest cross-national study to compare charitable behavior worldwide—reveals that Brazilians do not usually give to others. Out of 153 countries evaluated along three dimensions (donating money, volunteering time, and helping strangers in need), Brazil ranked as the 76th most “charitable” country, near the center of the distribution. However, the study also evaluated each country’s ability to give through a “national well-being” score. The score combines GDP data with responses to a survey question about one’s satisfaction with life today,” resulting in a value ranging from 0 to 10.33 In practice, national well-being scores ranged from 7.7 (Finland) to 2.8 (the Republic of Togo). Across the board, countries with higher well-being scores were found to engage in more charitable behavior—with the exception of Brazil. With a national well-being score of 7, Brazil ranks

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32 By comparison, the world average response for “trust not very much” or “not at all” was 19.9%; the UK 3%, USA 6%, India 21%, Russia 17%, and Argentina 14%.
33 The World Giving Index obtained GDP data from the IMF’s World Economic Outlook, as well as Gallup’s survey of well-being.
alongside countries such as Australia, Canada, and the USA—but its charitable giving ranking of #76 is equivalent to much less-developed nations, such as Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Chad.

**Chart 4.3: Generalized Social Trust in the World’s Ten Most Populous Countries**

These data reveal that although Brazilians are highly social, they tend to interact regularly only within small circles of family and close friends. Why this condition exists in Brazil overall is beyond the scope of this study, but within favela communities, there are additional circumstances that exacerbate cultural attitudes of social distrust. Specifically, collaboration within favela communities is particularly unlikely for social benefit CSOs due to attitudes developed in response to living under conditions of trafficking gang control.

“Civil Society is like Jell-O: ” The Quality of Sociability in Rio’s Favelas

Understanding what civil society is like from the perspective of those living within it can be a complex undertaking. In one of our earliest conversations, Brazilian academic Machado da Silva remarked that in Brazil, “civil society is like Jell-O.” This is because civil society exists in the sense that it has a shape, “but it’s an illusion in that it is not a strong structure. It is easily malleable, and can fall apart at any time.” (Interview: Respondent #6, 25 June 2007.) In order to try to comprehend how favela residents view civil society within their communities, I documented the different ways in which they described their attitudes toward their neighborhoods and the CSOs within them. Through their stories, conversations, cautionary tales, anecdotes, gossip, and complaints, I developed a sense of residents’ attitudes toward interacting with others in their communities. My analysis revealed several general themes, many of which indicated that—contrary to Rio’s tourist-friendly image as a free-wheeling, sociable city—associating with others contains significant risks.

On the surface, Rio residents appear to be highly sociable. My field notes contain many instances of people relaxing with friends on a regular basis, such as meeting at the same snack bar every day for lunch, watching the soccer game on television together after work, and barbecuing every Sunday afternoon. However, in nearly all cases, interaction was limited to a
small, closed group of one’s close family and friends. Relationships formed through familial ties, or as children in elementary school, tend to be long-lasting and characterized by extraordinary loyalty. There is very little that Cariocas would not do for those within their circle of intimates. But as for the rest? There is an intermediate realm between one’s inner circle and the public sphere—one’s *galera*, or “crew.” Occupying the territory between casual acquaintances and true friends, a *galera* is a group of regulars who get together for social purposes—at the beach, the snack bar, or the soccer pitch. Despite their positive and frequent interactions, however, one would never rely on *galera* friendships for anything beyond the occasional draft beer. Those few individuals who attempted to reach beyond their usual social circles to meet someone new usually did so with hesitation. Rio residents would describe these occurrences using phrases such as “proceed slowly” or “take it step by step.”

In short, Rio residents draw sharp distinctions around their public and private spheres, often differentiating between “insiders and outsiders.” Cariocas of all social classes tend to maintain a positive attitude in public, greeting each other by saying “it’s all good” (tudo bem) and rarely conducting business without first inquiring after family members and making pleasant conversation. But despite their smiles and friendly overtones, most Rio residents are hesitant, at best, to build true friendships with those outside their already established social networks. It may seem that Cariocas have many close friendships, but in reality their associational lives are far more broad than deep.

Most commonly, Rio residents spoke quite negatively about interacting with people outside their primary social networks and avoid associating with unknown persons entirely. Cariocas overwhelmingly described feeling distrustful of people in general, a need to keep to themselves, accept things the way they are, and constantly expect to be let down by others. Distrust of others also figured prominently in the way that Rio residents spoke about interpersonal interactions. There is a fairly common saying in Rio, particularly within favela communities: “As Jesus said, cursed is the man who trusts in other people.” I am quite certain—and Christian religious leaders have confirmed to me—that this alleged quote from Jesus appears nowhere in scripture. However, the fact that residents claim it as not only a proverb, but one with divine authority, speaks volumes about the widespread belief that other people are generally not to be trusted.

All of these sentiments are magnified for favela residents. Isolation and submissiveness are deeply entrenched, and both can be traced back to the influence of the traffickers in the community. The gangs generally remain outside community affairs, but doing anything to attract the gang’s attention is a risk few are willing to take. Practically, this means avoiding unfamiliar places and individuals, because one never knows what might be encountered. Going to a new snack bar might mean entering an area where drugs are being prepared; a new acquaintance might very well be involved with the gang—or worse, a rival gang. Therefore, life in a favela community means always being aware of where you are, who you are with, and avoiding unknown areas. Residents in every favela neighborhood related similar ways in which they arranged their lives to avoid new people and places:

“Things are calm these days. But that’s because [the gang leader] gave an order all down the line for traffickers not to shoot at the police, not to pick a fight. So things are calm—but on the other hand, everybody just stays at home watching TV. Nobody wants to stand out. It keeps people subservient. On the one hand, the gang keeps the peace, but on the other nobody is going to risk challenging the way things are.” (Interview: Respondent #134: 30 September 2008.)
“Nobody in the favela wants to go forward. Nobody wants to stick out, or step up, do anything to be set apart. People are very closed [fechado] here.” (Interview: Respondent #70: 24 September 2008.)

“I wonder what more has to happen. Because the deaths are there, and the culture that is embedded in all of us, we realize this, we know this, we don’t want to confront what we see. And so we pass through our lives, we go to the store, we come to the checkout counter, we complain about how expensive the food is, but we never go out onto the street. We’re ‘checked out.’ We drink our beer and we don’t complain.” (Interview: Respondent #120: 19 August 2008.)

“Everyone in the favela is submissive [submetido], because you have to be. Go around with your head down and don’t cause any trouble, watch what you say and do because if the traffickers don’t like it, they will beat you or kick you out of the community or kill you or come after your family. So we learn submissiveness, just to accept things the way they are, and not cause any trouble.” (Interview: Respondent #141: 29 September 2008.)

It is a strange paradox, the way that violence and peace seem to coexist in favela neighborhoods, not only in actuality but in the minds of those who live there. On one hand, day-to-day life is generally quite calm. Children play in the street, neighbors chat over a coffee or a draft beer, life goes on as elsewhere. And yet, favela residents are keenly aware that the price of peace is submitting to the trafficking gangs. There are two distinct types of violence that occur in favelas: one active and one passive. Active violence is easily understood as the shootouts, revenge killings, and other types of retribution for actual or perceived wrongs that are perpetrated by gang members themselves, often in confrontation with the police. Occurrences such as these might happen at any time. Just because the environment may be peaceful at the moment, in five minutes everything could change, and there is no way to predict when or how.

In contrast, the “passive” type of violence refers to the effect that the fear of violence has on residents’ daily lives. People know what can happen if the gang believes they have been crossed, so favela residents self-censor their behavior. For example, in almost every favela community I visited, I was instructed at times not to look in a certain direction. Not merely to avoid walking down a street, entering a store, or approaching an individual—I also needed to keep my eyes away from a particular area because even a fleeting glance in a particular direction might raise the suspicions of the gang members. Favela residents learn these behaviors early on, and carry them out almost instinctively. Active violence within favelas is largely few and far between, and chances that a shootout or confrontation might occur on any given day is actually quite low. The peace that exists within favelas comes with a price, however, which is exacted in distrust, isolation, and submissiveness. Favela residents learn that to challenge the status quo is to risk inciting violence.

Expanding networks, establishing new connections, and trusting unfamiliar people are precarious endeavors within this cultural context, which naturally extends to civil society organizations. CSO leaders are reluctant—at best—to reach out to others even within their own neighborhoods:

“The CSOs here should be unified, but that’s not what happens. I see so much selfishness, all the time. And each one stays with their own organization, nobody reaches out to anyone else,
nobody gives anything, nobody helps, it’s as if nobody else is here. They don’t speak to each other. They don’t help each other.” (Interview: Respondent #45: 3 August 2007.)

“But see here, communication among CSOs doesn’t exist. There’s a saying: Bem-Te-Vi is an archipelago. And the islands don’t have communication among them, you’re there with your CSO, and I’m here with mine, another person is there with his thing. No one wants, no one wants anyone to meddle in his work, so he doesn’t intrude on anyone else’s. They all work this way, they don’t want anyone to participate.” (Interview: Respondent #56: 13 August 2007.)

“What Beija-Flor really needs, if I had the money, I would spend it on workshops for adults. [What kind?] Adults here need to learn how to speak up! Learn that they have the right to participate, yes, but also learn how to participate. How to criticize, how to express their opinions, and that it is okay to do so. Because no one does this now. We all just accept things, walk around with our heads down, say it’s all good [tudo bem] when it really is not good at all. And that’s what has to change.” (Interview: Respondent #70: 22 July 2008.)

The condition of permanent gang control thus encourages a culture of distrust, submissiveness, and isolation. How can individuals who live each day within such a context radically reorient themselves toward taking collective action, particularly that which is political in nature? Residents tell me such action would be highly unlikely, if not impossible:

“If there are people in the community trying to organize residents, most people don’t want to get involved because they don’t know who is behind it. There’s a real risk in standing up for your rights. In the past we’ve seen what happens to leaders, like Zumbi, who confront the way things are, they were killed. There’s a risk, and it’s real.” (Interview: Respondent #196: 27 November 2008.)

“There is so much to do, so much that’s wrong, and you can complain if you like, but it won’t make a difference. But it’s our own fault, we don’t participate in anything, so of course nothing changes.” (Interview: Respondent #185: 28 November 2008.)

“Can things ever change? For change to happen, people first need to believe that change is possible. Individual actions and choices matter, but we need collective political action. But it is incredibly difficult in this environment, where there is so much corruption and distrust. We all spend the day with the TV on, just watching crap, excuse the term but that’s what it is, an afternoon watching crap and hearing crap. And if people only watch crap, they get used to it. It’s what we know.” (Interview: Respondent #39: 21 July 2007.)

Residents have, as many explained, a “dictatorship mentality.” Some claim that despite 30 years of stable democratic rule, the legacy of the authoritarian regime is still present in the collective memory. For favela residents, authoritarianism is part of their current reality as well; they must submit to the traffickers who control their neighborhoods much as the generation

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34 Zumbi (1645-1695) was the leader of the Quilombo dos Palmares, a colony of escaped slaves that existed for over 65 years, despite repeated attempts by the Portuguese and Dutch to recapture its inhabitants. However, Zumbi was eventually captured himself, killed, and beheaded. Today, November 20th (the day Zumbi was killed) is celebrated in Brazil as a day of Afro-Brazilian consciousness and pride.
before them was required to submit to the dictatorship. Therefore, favela residents cultivate attitudes of isolation, distrust, and submissiveness to navigate through daily life, which engender a pervasive sense of discouragement. One resident, when asked to describe his community, said: “There is no responsibility, no accountability here, because nothing matters, nobody matters, it doesn’t matter.” When life is precarious and anything can happen, many favela residents choose to avoid conflict entirely.

Others, however, view the situation as an opportunity, and respond in one of two ways. When nothing matters, some conclude that it is best to look out for yourself and your family by taking advantage of others whenever possible. I quickly learned about “Gerson’s Law” (*Lei de Gérson*), which is alive and well in favela neighborhoods. Gérson de Oliveira Nunes was a World Cup soccer champion who later promoted cigarette smoking on television. In a television commercial made famous by his candor, Gérson said: “I always look for a way to benefit myself despite the consequences, don’t you?” Favela residents explained to me that, just as Gérson saw an opportunity to make money for himself despite promoting a health hazard, many people will look for a way to get ahead personally, even if doing so might harm others:

“People don’t have any trust in other people. Because people are often looking to rip you off, take advantage of you. The best case is that people promise things and don’t follow through. The worst case is that you can lose what you have, lose credibility, lose money, lose your reputation.” (Interview: Respondent #87: 18 November 2008.)

“I always look for a way to benefit myself despite the consequences, don’t you?” Favela residents explained to me that, just as Gérson saw an opportunity to make money for himself despite promoting a health hazard, many people will look for a way to get ahead personally, even if doing so might harm others:

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I also heard many cautionary tales from friends whose parents or grandparents had been raised in a favela, but eventually “made it out.” Their recipe for success generally included working hard, taking care of yourself, and not getting involved in other people’s business. The alleged quote from Jesus about the value of not trusting others was related many times as well. The moral of the story, as one friend described to me, is that to succeed in life, “don’t cheat other people unnecessarily, but do what you have to do.” Within an environment such as this, it is no wonder that favela residents tend to avoid creating broad social networks.

**Particular Distrust of Volunteers**

Given the structural barriers and persistent cultural attitudes discussed so far, it is understandable why social benefit CSOs would avoid making connections with similar CSOs both within their own neighborhood and outside it. However, there remains one additional possibility: social benefit CSO leaders could seek out volunteer assistance from within their already existing social networks. Why not engage a few like-minded individuals who are already known and trusted to help out? Even this small way of expanding one’s network does not often happen, because “volunteers” are particularly distrusted.

“I’ve observed this in life: every time you’re going to do something voluntarily,
spontaneously, out of kindness and love or whatever, people distrust it.” (Interview: Respondent #145: 6 August 2008.) Thaís, one of the rare favela residents who does volunteer work, summed up her experience that way. As the World Giving Index illustrated, most Brazilians do not engage in charitable activities for strangers, including volunteering their time. However, this tendency is even more pronounced within favela communities. One explanation is rooted in poverty. As noted previously, favela residents usually encounter employment discrimination, and those who manage to secure work must endure a long and tiring daily commute. After laboring for eight hours a day and travelling for four, it is hard for favela residents to understand why someone might spend rare leisure hours engaging in unpaid work. As a result, residents believe that volunteers are either extremely wealthy, or extremely stupid. Specifically, volunteers are assumed to be individuals who are so financially well-off that they can afford the luxury of working for their own pleasure, as one resident explained:

“No one is going to work for free, that’s hypocrisy. I’m not going to be a volunteer, I’m not a millionaire. Now maybe Salles, the guy who inherited Unibanco, Walter Salles, the guy’s a millionaire, he wants to help others but he has millions. But people need to eat and clothe themselves, I’m going to start a CSO and work for free? No!” (Interview: Respondent #56: 13 August 2007.)

Foreign volunteers are also assumed to fall into the “extremely wealthy” category. Viewed from the perspective of favela residents, volunteers from abroad are young, college-educated, English-speaking individuals with a world of opportunities open before them. However, instead of seeking paid work to benefit themselves and their families, they actually spend money to travel halfway around the world in order to work for free. For a millionaire or a wealthy young foreigner, volunteer work might be a way to pass the time, but for ordinary people, it is not a viable option. On the contrary, if there is work to be done that is of value to someone else, then that work should be worth a paycheck. Therefore, anyone who would engage in valuable labor without getting paid—and is not extremely wealthy—must be stupid:

“Every time I ask a friend for help, they say great, what can I do, whatever you need I am here, and how much will you pay me? The idea of doing work for no pay is completely insane. No one would do it, no one can get their head around why anyone would.” (Interview: Respondent #70: 24 September 2008.)

Moreover, the few favela residents who perform volunteer activities steadfastly refuse to describe themselves as “volunteers.” The word itself has such a negative connotation that even those individuals who are clearly volunteers go to great lengths to emphasize that they are not. For example, Thaís works with her friend’s CSO two days a week, runs errands, and sometimes helps them secure in-kind donations on her own time. However, when I asked her “why do you volunteer?” she replied:

“Oh, but I’m not a volunteer, no! I don’t get paid, because I don’t have anyone to pay me. But I’m not a volunteer, no. A volunteer is when you are willing to do some work without getting anything. I’m not a volunteer, no way! It’s because I don’t have anyone to pay me, if I did...imagine! No. A volunteer, he usually spends some time during his life because he’s already earned a living and he can do something like that. Because here in Brazil, the issue of
volunteer work is complicated because people here don’t have enough to sustain themselves, much less to donate anything. So therefore, it’s very unjust for you not to pay someone who does social work.” (Interview: Respondent #145: 6 August 2008.)

Despite the fact that Thaís spends much of her free time assisting a social benefit CSO in her community and receives no pay for her efforts, she vehemently declares that she is not a “volunteer.” The rationale is that she is working “for free” only because the CSO cannot afford to pay her—with the understanding (at least on her part) that if and when the organization has the ability to employ her, it will.

Just as most favela residents refuse to engage in volunteer work, many social benefit CSOs are unwilling to take on volunteers. Of the organizations I interviewed, very few had worked with volunteer labor, and those that had were generally unhappy with the experience. The primary reason, as Thaís alluded to above, is that those who volunteer do so because they expect it will eventually lead to formal, paid employment. The expectation of future employment is not unreasonable given Brazilian labor law. Article 3 of the Consolidated Labor Laws (Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho) define “employee” very broadly: “employees are all individuals who provide services to an employer, under their subordination, and therefore receive a salary.”

Note that no official employment agreement is necessary; as long as an individual provides services and is working under the direction of someone else, he is considered an employee who deserves to be paid. In this way, the law is vague with respect to the distinction between volunteers and employees. Moreover, Brazilian courts have ruled that the “reality of service rendering” prevails, even if there is a written contract stating that the individual in question is performing services independently and autonomously.

Therefore, organizations are understandably wary of taking on volunteers, because they may eventually demand their rights as employees, which are quite extensive. Articles 6-11 of the Brazilian Constitution (1988) established specific rights available to all workers, which include a yearly bonus equivalent to one month’s salary, 30 paid vacation days, a “vacation cash bonus” of 1/3 of a month’s pay, and severance pay. Moreover, terminated employees have the right to receive their vacation pay and yearly bonus immediately. With these benefits in mind, organizations fear that if they engage volunteers, they will eventually have to provide them with employee benefits, or face a lawsuit forcing them to do so.

In 1998, President Cardoso attempted to resolve this issue through the Volunteer Service Law (Lei do Voluntariado, 9.608), intended to protect organizations from volunteers who try to claim an employment relationship that does not exist. However, to avoid the possibility of being sued, organizations must have a clear “volunteer contract” in place, monitor volunteer activities and expenses, and keep detailed records on all of the above. The bureaucratic requirements are so extensive that there is actually a seminar on how to do so that requires two full working days to complete. I attended one of these seminars, and afterward, many of the participants I met told me that they were disappointed with the entire process. They mentioned that the requirements to protect themselves legally from volunteers who might sue for employee benefits were far too burdensome for their organization. A few mentioned that they were going to avoid Brazilian volunteers entirely, and focus on attracting foreigners to their organization.

However, foreign volunteers come with their own challenges. Aside from the language

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36 Author’s translation. The original text reads: “Considera-se empregado toda pessoa física que prestar serviços de natureza não eventual a empregador, sob a dependência deste e mediante salário.”

37 Information gathered at a Rio Voluntario labor law training seminar, July 29, 2008.
barrier in recruiting and training them, most foreigners who want to volunteer overseas do so only for short periods of time, lack necessary skills, and are perceived as wanting to enforce their own agenda. Recall that most social benefit CSOs seek to improve individual outcomes in their neighborhoods through supplementing education, providing health care services, and teaching youth a marketable skill. Very few foreigners, however, arrive with the ability to make a meaningful contribution in these areas. Even if they are fluent in Portuguese (and few are), they generally lack relevant experience, and this places a burden on the organization. Nathalia described the difficulties she encountered in working with volunteer English teachers:

“They are native English speakers and that’s it. And they are afraid. [Why?] It’s because, well, they’re not trained in this area, so they find it difficult, and we don’t have anyone who organizes the classes, gets everything ready for them, so they become anxious. It’s for this reason that I say for things to work, we need people who have professional training. It can’t be just anyone, we need to have people who are capable in solving these problems.” (Interview: Respondent #108: 1 August 2008.)

Short-term volunteers may also have a detrimental effect on student learning:

“We had these kids who were, we came to call them ‘the devils,’ they were so bad in class, so bad. They wouldn’t sit still, and part of that was that it was 7:30 at night, but part of it was the fact that this one group literally had 4 or 5 different teachers over the stretch of a semester and a half or so, and so the class was not sustainable.” (Interview: Respondent #75: 21 August 2007.)

“Most of our classes have students who are at all different levels. This is because volunteers come and go at different times, sometimes they leave notes but not always, and they aren’t complete. So students have gaps in their knowledge, some pick things up, others don’t, and you end up with mixed level classes.” (Interview: Respondent #108: 1 August 2008.)

One month of service may seem significant to a foreigner on a “volunteer vacation,” but it is an extremely short period of time from the perspective of the local organization. CSOs need continuity, and if they are executed by individuals whose time is measured in weeks, it is difficult to achieve meaningful results.

  In addition, foreigners often come with expectations that cannot be met, and sometimes impose an additional burden on the organization. After Mariana had successfully gotten the walls of her organization repaired, they needed to be repainted, but she did not have the time or skills to do it herself. However, she encountered a stroke of good luck: a friend put her in touch with Bob, an Australian tourist who was eager to volunteer in a favela. Bob was willing to take on the painting project; he rounded up some of his friends, and told Mariana that they would be there the following Saturday. I was with Mariana when she called Bob the day before to confirm that they were coming out to do the work. When she had finished speaking with him, however, she was visibly upset. The problem was not that the volunteers had canceled; on the contrary, they were looking forward to coming—and as Bob casually mentioned, especially looking forward to lunch. When I asked if Bob had offered to take Mariana out to eat, she laughed out loud and said:
“No! He thinks I’m going to make lunch for them. So now I have to get up early to make it, I have to cook. And I don’t know exactly how many are coming, or what they will eat, and I have to go out and buy all of the food for this lunch that maybe they won’t even eat. I know they are donating their time, but since they expect lunch, the donation comes at a cost. I told you people don’t volunteer for nothing, foreigners included.” (Interview: Respondent #70: 14 November 2008.)

In the end, Bob and his friends did the work, Mariana served them all a traditional Brazilian lunch, and she was gracious enough to overlook the imposition. However, this incident illustrates what can happen when the expectations of foreigners clash with the realities of favela life. It never occurred to the group of foreign volunteers that in assuming lunch would be served, they were imposing an additional burden on the organization they were purportedly there to help.

Another CSO leader related a similar incident. An group of foreign youth showed up with the intention of painting a mural to beautify the area. The volunteers completed the work, but as the community leader explained: “They created a graffiti mural, sure, but they also created a huge mess. They fought, fought a lot, a lot, a lot. They messed around, they swore, they don’t know how to behave themselves in front of the people we serve, see?” (Interview: Respondent #157: 29 July 2008.) I imagine that the foreign youth might not see much wrong with their actions—after all, they completed the work, and had fun doing so. But from the perspective of the organization, their “volunteer” activities came with unexpected costs.

Finally, while some foreigners and Brazilian outsiders may be wary of volunteering within a favela neighborhood, others view it as a way to access the community for the purpose of obtaining drugs. Anecdotes and cautionary tales abound, and I thought they were mainly apocryphal until I personally encountered foreigners in favela communities who were there for that very reason. One foreign volunteer, a European youth in his mid-20s, unabashedly told me that he “came here for the cocaine,” and over the course of the next few weeks, I observed him with the traffickers on several occasions.

Problems with drug-seeking volunteers are not confined to foreigners alone. One social benefit CSO leader told me about Ricardo, a Brazilian volunteer who offered to provide photography training for youth. However, after completing the workshop, Ricardo was observed making a deal on the corner for “two bags of marijuana and one of cocaine.” The CSO leader was furious, not only because Ricardo had usurped his good will, but because the individuals who saw him making the drug deal were the youth themselves. “That negated all the good he wanted to do.” Volunteers who are irresponsible and unskilled at best, and drug-seeking at worst, are liabilities for civil society organizations. Combined with the risk of being sued for expensive employment benefits, many CSO leaders reason that it is best to avoid volunteers whenever possible.

### 4.6 Chapter Summary

Residents of favela communities confront significant challenges in their daily lives, particularly access to employment opportunities and basic health care. Their ability to obtain these services is low, however, primarily due to pervasive, deeply-ingrained prejudice against favela communities and their inhabitants. Some residents try to solve these problems by creating social benefit CSOs: small-scale organizations that strive to improve the life chances of
individual children and youth. These social benefit CSOs are generally founded and funded out-of-pocket by an individual favela resident, and focus on meeting immediate community needs.

Although leaders of social benefit CSOs seek to acquire many *types* of resources, their ability to reach out to various *sources* of resources is sharply curtailed by structural inequalities as well as gang control. Rio de Janeiro’s transportation system was designed with the needs of wealthy Southern Zone residents in mind; travel for favela residents is expensive and time-consuming. Even within their own neighborhoods, the gangs that control them physically secure the borders, preventing outsiders from entering freely and residents of one community from accessing another. In addition, social benefit CSOs that make connections or accept assistance from other CSOs might find themselves in the difficult position of having to accept similar assistance from the gang. The most common way out of this dilemma is to refuse all outside connections entirely.

These barriers not only limit the ability of social benefit CSO leaders to connect with other individuals and organizations, they also reinforce cultural values of distrust, isolation, and submissiveness, which further inhibit creating network ties. At best, favela residents are wary of associating with unknown persons; at worst, some look to improve their individual situation at the expense of others. Volunteers are particularly distrusted, since laboring without pay is irrational behavior within a context of poverty, and those who seek to do so usually expect the work to transform into a formal job with concomitant benefits. Foreign volunteers are little better, since most lack appropriate skills, time commitments, and have expectations that cannot often be met.

All of these factors combine to create an environment in which favela residents cannot easily connect with others, both within and across neighborhoods. Potential allies and volunteers from outside a community cannot enter favelas freely, and social benefit CSO leaders are cautious, at best, when it comes to connecting with individuals outside their innermost social circles. Is it any wonder, then, that favela communities lack a culture of civic participation? Residents know that their efforts to create connections—let alone broader mobilizational activities—have limits that cannot be overcome. Leaders of social benefit CSOs do what they can to address immediate community needs, but they lack the resources to engage in broader collective action. Rather than attempting to break out of this vicious cycle, social benefit CSO leaders conclude that their efforts are best spent on small-scale, individual-level actions. Politically relevant mobilization is not a viable possibility. However, other types of CSOs have a much broader resource base: significant financial grants from Brazilian and international funding agencies, as well as an international reputation. Despite their relatively abundant resources, however, these “golden CSOs” are also unlikely to engage in politically relevant mobilization. Chapter 5 explains this paradox.
“They put on some first aid training, but it was useless. {Why?} What we need is a health center here! What good will it do if some people know first aid? If there is a problem, how will I know where they are? What can they do, will they come running?...{But some training is better than none, right?} No. It gives the impression that something is being done here to make things better when in truth, it’s not what we need. But that’s what they got funding for, so that’s what we got.”

- author interview with a favela resident, 30 July 2008

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Chapter 5. Golden CSOs, Ghost CSOs, and the Civil Society “Resource Curse”

CSOs within Rio’s favela communities encounter multiple barriers that make all types of collective action difficult, political or otherwise. Chapter 4 discussed one type of organization—social benefit CSOs—that are predominantly constrained by these obstacles. Most of them lack sufficient resources to broaden their activities beyond addressing immediate, short-term needs, and they cannot connect with organizations in different neighborhoods to potentially multiply their efforts. However, other CSOs in Rio have overcome these limitations. Colloquially known as “golden CSOs” (ONGs douradas), these organizations are present in multiple favela communities and are quite well funded by Brazilian and international foundations. Theoretically, golden CSOs are ideally situated for politically relevant mobilization. They have a strong financial resource base as well as a cross-favela presence, enabling them to operate in many neighborhoods. Golden CSOs, therefore, are exactly the type of organization that we would expect to take political action when opportunities arise.

As this chapter will show, however, golden CSOs are unlikely to encourage favela residents to challenge social norms or state policies due to the civil society resource curse. Their dependence on a single source of revenue—financial grants from large foundations—gives golden CSOs incentives to build a distinct type of organization. Specifically, golden CSOs tend to be led by favela “outsiders,” cultivate few organizational partnerships, and undertake donor-driven activities. Such a profile is conducive to achieving success in the competitive funding arena, but these same characteristics restrict an organization’s ability to undertake politically relevant collective action. Golden CSOs, therefore, have high levels of resources that could arguably help them surmount the structural barriers to mobilization that exist in Rio. However, the very process of acquiring those resources creates institutional incentives that discourage politically relevant mobilization. Although they offer many benefits to favela communities, golden CSOs have few incentives to fight publicly for favela residents’ citizenship rights.

Before describing golden CSOs, however, I give an overview of the funding environment in Brazil, in which the amount of charitable giving available to most CSOs is extremely small. Individuals, governments, corporations, and private foundations tend to target most of their funding to a small group of nonprofit organizations, leaving the vast majority of neighborhood-level organizations without access to these resources. The logic of attracting and retaining major donors in Brazil thus creates particular institutional incentives for CSOs that strive to win their attention. The next section of the chapter profiles “golden CSOs;” organizations that have been successful in capturing major grant funding, but are also outsider-led, isolated, and conservative with respect to the activities they undertake. Section three explains the incentives that create such an organizational profile; the implications of this CSO profile on politically relevant mobilization are outlined in section four. The final part of the chapter presents an extreme side effect of Brazil’s funding environment: “ghost CSOs” that take advantage of the funding context...
to defraud donors, thereby damaging the credibility of all charitable organizations. The civil society resource curse thus ensures that the organizations in Rio with the most abundant financial resources will rarely, if ever, direct those resources toward politically relevant mobilization.

5.1 “There Just Aren’t Words:” The Perverse Logic of Brazil’s Funding Environment

The barriers outlined in Chapters 3 and 4 render collective action difficult, though not entirely impossible, for local-level CSOs in Rio. Money cannot eliminate the obstacles imposed by gangs, but with sufficient funding, an organization could theoretically navigate around them. For example, an organization could cover transportation fees for favela residents, rent a building in a neutral location for a meeting place, and thus enable them to exchange ideas, solutions, and possibly multiply their efforts. A well-funded organization could also connect with smaller social benefit CSOs—and help them connect with each other—thus laying the foundation for future collective action. Some CSOs in Rio de Janeiro that work within favela communities have been successful in attracting major donors, and they arguably have sufficient financing to overcome the obstacles that exist, at least in part. Yet the process of acquiring and retaining funding has some unanticipated results.

Securing resources, particularly large grants from major foundations, is a challenge for all nonprofit organizations, with no guarantee of success. However, attracting financing is a particularly difficult challenge in Brazil. The extent of the problem was brought home to me by the following exchange with two CSO staff members:

“[Why doesn’t [your organization] receive any national funding?] [Overhearing us from the other room, one staff member laughed out loud. The woman I was talking with said:]...well, I don’t know how to tell you. Lara, can you explain it to her? [Finishes laughing, shrugs, rolls her eyes.] Oh...there just aren’t words.” (Interview: Respondents #176 and #177, 13 November 2008.)

Over time, I came to understand why these two women could not even try to explain the Brazilian funding environment. It is convoluted, restricted, and complex, rendering it difficult to understand and virtually impossible to navigate successfully. This section seeks to explain the contours and paradoxes of the funding environment since it shapes, to a large extent, the resource acquisition strategies that civil society organizations pursue.

To begin, it is helpful to contrast Brazil’s funding context with that of the United States. Nonprofits in both countries generally receive funding from three main sources: the public sector, private philanthropy, and earned income. Public sector financing refers to grants and contracts that an organization receives from the government, as well as reimbursements for services provided to the public, such as health care or job training, that the government would otherwise offer directly. Private philanthropy includes charitable contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations. Finally, earned income is generated from the sale of goods and services, as well as revenue from investments.

In the U.S., charitable giving is fairly equally divided between public and private sources. Government funding routinely comprises from one-third to two-thirds of total nonprofit revenue; most of which—41 percent—comes from the state level (Cargo 2002; Delaney and McWhortor 2010; Boris et. al. 2010). Private philanthropy is also a significant source of revenue. In 2010,
73 percent of private contributions to charity were given by individual donors, 14 percent from foundations, and 5 percent from corporations. Including bequests, individual contributions to nonprofit organizations amounted to USD $234.6 billion in 2010.\textsuperscript{38} Earned income revenue streams, by contrast, are relatively less important sources of revenue for NGOs in the U.S. As the next section will show, however, revenue sources for Brazilian nonprofit organizations are dramatically different from those available in the USA.

**Individuals: Avoid Donating Entirely**

Chart 5.1 compares Brazil and the United States in terms of the percent of revenue that NGOs in each country receive from private philanthropy, the public sector, and earned income. One notable difference is that individual Brazilian citizens rarely donate to charitable organizations. In her history of voluntary associations in Brazil, Landim (1993) claims that personal giving patterns are rooted in the relationships that developed through the plantation system. Each individual’s social and economic status depended on his personal relationship to the landlord; for their part, landowners would provide protection and occasional favors in exchange for loyalty and labor. In later years, all social welfare organizations were formed under the umbrella of the Catholic Church, which was itself backed by the Portuguese crown. Both of these arrangements persisted until the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, which fostered the development of public service delivery through paternalistic exchanges (Landim 1993: 2-6).

**Chart 5.1: Percent of Revenue NGOs Receive from Private, Public, and Earned Income Sources**

Despite the eventual development of voluntary aid associations separate from the Church and the state in the 1930s, cultural norms in Brazil still strongly favor individual acts of charity.

\textsuperscript{38} According to the Giving USA Foundation, corporations donated $41 billion to charity in 2010; foundations donated $15 billion.
instead of donating to nonprofit organizations. A 2010 survey of private social investment in Brazil found that a “fragile culture of individual charitable contributions” persists (Census GIFE 2010: 20). Similar research undertaken by the Institute for the Development of Social Investment found that when Brazilians engage in philanthropy, they tend to directly help people in need (IDIS 2007). Individuals are far more likely to give donations in-kind to someone they know personally, such as the family’s housecleaner, cook, and doorman. Apart from contributions to the Catholic Church, Brazilians are reluctant to provide cash donations to any type of organization.

The aversion to philanthropic giving extends even to the very rich. Latin America is producing high net worth individuals (HNWIs)39 faster than any other region in the world, and Brazil has the highest concentration of HNWIs in Latin America, which grew 6 percent per year even during the Great Recession of 2009 (World Wealth Report 2011:7). HNWIs around the world are generally active in sustaining nonprofit organizations, donating on average from 5-12 percent of their assets each year. However, HNWIs in Latin America have the lowest rate of charitable giving in the world, at 3 percent (World Wealth Report 2011).

Unlike in North America, where large charitable donations are viewed as a sign of high status, the entire concept of “philanthropy” in Brazil connotes an attitude of top-down paternalism, done more for the benefit of the giver than the recipients (Kisil and Leat 2001). Moreover, private individuals cannot take any tax deductions for their contributions to nonprofit organizations (Law 9.249, 1995). Individual philanthropy is discouraged not only through cultural norms, but also through tax policy disincentives.

Could Brazilians’ reluctance to donate funds be based in their lack of overall social trust? Possibly. At the same time, however, Brazilians have little reason to trust institutions at all. Levels of corruption across all levels of government are high, and as the following section shows, funds that are intended for CSOs are regularly diverted from their intended destination. Brazilians are keenly aware of the corruption that exists, and many may conclude that the best way to ensure that donations reach those in need is to give to individuals directly. Regardless of why Brazilians do not donate to CSOs, however, nonprofit organizations in Brazil clearly cannot rely on charitable contributions from individuals.

**Government: Politicized and Unreliable**

Although Brazilian federal, state, and local governments provide financial resources to nonprofit organizations, most CSOs have difficulty accessing government grants. In the first place, the state gives proportionally little money to CSOs; on average, only 15 percent of the funding that Brazilian nonprofit organizations receive comes from the public sector (Salamon and Sokolowski 2004). Of that small amount, much of it is targeted to organizations created by public officials to provide social services on behalf of the state, and is thus unavailable to independent CSOs (Canham 1999; Medeiros 2009). For example, in order to combat AIDS/HIV, the federal government contracted with a small group of state-affiliated NGOs to distribute condoms, provide counseling and testing, and hold community support programs (Bacon et. al. 2004). Researchers from CSOs might also be hired by government organizations to provide technical assistance in program planning, implementation, and evaluation. Outside of these examples, the government funds that remain—those that have not been earmarked for a state-created CSO—tend to be given only to certain thematic areas. Infrastructure and housing

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39 HNWI, or “high net worth individual” is a classification used by the financial industry to denote someone who has liquid assets worth over $1 million USD.
initiatives receive nearly three-quarters of their budget (73 percent) from the government. By comparison, CSOs that address environmental issues receive only 27 percent of their budget from the government; the rest must come from other sources. Education, health, and cultural programs undertaken by CSOs receive even less government funding, comprising 14, 9, and 5 percent of their respective budgets (Salamon and Sokolowski 2004: 302, 407). Organizations that focus on these issue areas must seek the bulk of their revenue from sources outside the government.

As outlined in Chapter 3, elected officials might provide minimal funding for a specific CSO, but politicians are unreliable partners at best, and corrupt swindlers at worst. Canham (1999) describes the lack of transparency that exists in allocating public funds:

“There is usually not a formal application process for [government] funding, particularly at the state and local levels whereby a series of discussions ensue, and the not-for-profit is then asked to put the idea into writing...[Moreover], it is not unheard of for a government official or agency that is underfunded to ask a favor of a not-for-profit seeking to secure a donation.” (Canham 1999: 58)

Simply put, all CSOs are not on an equal footing with each other. Organizations do not apply for government funding by filling out a common grant application that is then evaluated on its merits. Instead, well-connected CSOs leverage their ties with government officials to gain preferential access to government grants. For example, I attended a meeting in Fregata in which an official from the Brazilian Ministry of Sports was also present. The official explained to the group how, with his assistance, certain CSOs could gain certification from the Ministry and thus qualify for tax benefits:

“Now, the ICMS is a way in which I can help you. I’m there and I will help you through the approval process. I approve your project, there’s staff there to explain things, I’ll approve it and you can have resources to carry out projects for the community. Without any interference [from me] apart from helping cover the costs.” (Participant observation: 22 July 2007.)

The ICMS Sports Incentive Decree Law, passed in 2007, allows businesses that donate to and sponsor approved sports CSOs to avoid paying the state value-added sales tax (ICMS tax)—a significant financial benefit. Essentially, the state gives up part of its tax revenue to encourage businesses to invest in CSOs that will promote sports.

However, the ministry official then added:

“And I personally have connections to businesses, to [corporation A] and [corporation B], you know they ask us for our preferences, if we have CSOs already approved. But now, if we don’t have CSOs that have gone through the process and are approved, it’s difficult to say what their preferences would be. So I guarantee that you are going to have business supporters. I personally guarantee this to you.” (Participant observation: 22 July 2007.)

At the time of this meeting, I did not understand what the ICMS Sports Incentive law was, so I asked Mariana to explain it to me. She asked why I was interested, and I told her that a Sports Ministry official had offered to help another organization become officially registered. Mariana
became extremely animated, and insisted that I turn my voice recorder on to capture her response:

“See, this is what we call “QI” here in Brazil. It doesn’t mean IQ in the sense of ‘intelligence quotient’—well it does, but we also say it stands for ‘quem indica.’ As in ‘quem indica você’—or ‘who introduces you.’ It’s more than just looking at your network for recommendations before advertising a public job opening, or giving preference to friends and relatives—it’s having no intention at all of making something available to the public. It all depends on the connections you have. And what that guy [the Sports Ministry official] is saying is that the ICMS law operates this way—the deck is stacked in favor of CSOs that already have political connections. It’s marking the cards in advance. It’s used to exchange favors between businesses and the government, and between large NGOs and politicians. He should be ashamed to say this, that the large companies ask him for his preferences regarding which CSOs to support. I’m glad I never tried to get qualified. At least now I know I wouldn’t have had a chance.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 17 August 2008.)

Assuming good intentions on the part of the Ministry official, this exchange illustrates not only the selective nature of support that government usually provides to nonprofits, but that receiving support is often contingent upon pre-existing network ties. As a result, government funding is an unreliable—and possibly unattainable—source of revenue for many CSOs.

Further complicating matters for grassroots CSOs is the fact that not all government officials are above-board. The federal government provides some tax incentives designed to support CSOs, which are discussed below. At times, however, elected officials have creatively used the law to siphon off CSO funds for themselves. Guimarães (1997) explains that members of Congress in Brazil each control a “special appropriation” from the national budget, which they can direct toward any charitable organization they like. All that is required is that the organization be officially registered with the National Council of Social Service. However, Guimarães found that some elected officials created their own nonprofit organizations, registered them accordingly, and placed their friends or family members in control. Some members of Congress were found to have directed funds from the national budget to their homegrown organizations, using the revenue for their own private benefit (Guimarães 1997: 23-24).

More nefariously, what has long been an open secret within the Brazilian nonprofit sector was revealed to the general public in October 2011: some elected officials use NGOs as vehicles for money laundering. A series of articles published in O Globo, Brazil’s newspaper of record, reported that the government allocated 3.5 billion reais (about 1.5 billion dollars) to nonprofit organizations in 2010, and over 23 billion reais (10 billion dollars) from 2004-2010, but kept virtually no record of how that money was spent. There is no law requiring NGOs that provide public services to be selected through an open bidding process. State agencies can hire any NGOs they like to be official state service providers by drafting and signing a contract between themselves. However, due to the lack of oversight by any third-parties, there is no way to ensure that the NGO actually provides the agreed-upon services. What this means in practice is that the NGO might use the funds they receive in the intended manner—or, they may funnel the money back to the political party of the elected official who made the funds available in the first place.

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Chapter 5: Golden CSOs and the Civil Society Resource Curse

For their part, over 90 percent of Brazilian NGOs do not make annual financial reports available to the general public (Angelico 2012). Further, some NGOs charge fees to intended beneficiaries in order to receive services that should be free. For example, the My Life, My House government program (Minha Casa, Minha Vida, or MCMV) is intended to provide housing to low-income families. Those who qualify pay 10 percent of their salary for ten years; the government covers the remaining 90 percent of the apartments’ cost. Although candidates for the program must earn less than 1,500 reais per month (about 780 dollars), Globo reported that one NGO staff member told inquirers that it cost 4,500 reais (or 2,300 dollars) to apply for the program. In turn, the families selected for MCMV are not those the project was intended to support, namely low-income, female-headed households; the elderly; and persons with disabilities. Instead, the intermediary NGOs essentially “sell” the newly-constructed apartments to the highest bidders, then counsels the buyers on how to make their application fit the governments’ requirements. One applicant who had been advised by NGO staff to claim that he used a wheelchair and had to take public transportation, said “you have to invent a few things to get a better outcome.”

Corruption appears to be worst at the local level. The Brazilian Union of Comptrollers General (Controladoria Geral da União, or CGU) estimates that elected officials at the municipal level engage in fraud on a scale seven times greater than that which occurs at the federal level. Although some members of Congress have introduced 19 separate bills to better regulate funds that are provided to NGOs, some of which were filed in 2003—none of the proposed laws have actually reached the floor for a vote.

The actual number of NGOs that engage in corrupt practices may in fact be quite small. A federal-level audit of cases brought to court indicated that one-third of the funds analyzed went to only 15 NGOs. However, just a few bad apples are enough to spoil the reputation of all NGOs in the minds of donors and the public alike. Vera Masagão Ribeiro, the Executive Director of the Brazilian Association of NGOs (Associação Brasileira de Organizações não Governamentais, or ABONG), stated that corruption “is a very serious crime, because it not only harms the reputation of those who work fairly and honestly, it also causes people to distrust any collective action that is in the public interest.”

In short, civil society organizations do not compete on a level playing field with each other when it comes to obtaining government funding. CSOs that operate above-board, but that lack connections to influential political officials, are unlikely to expect much from the state in terms of financial support.

Corporations: Selective and Elitist

Private businesses are relatively new actors on the charitable giving scene in Brazil. Corporate philanthropy was relatively unknown until the late 1980s, but has grown at a rapid pace during the two decades since. Controlling inflation was the first essential step; once inflation was reduced to less than 10 percent per year and economic policy stabilized thereafter, private businesses were able to plan investments more effectively (Lessa and Rossetti 2005), including planned charitable giving. In 1995, following a corruption scandal involving the Brazilian First Lady diverting funds from a nonprofit organization for her personal use, the

41 “ONGs cobram taxa por vagas no programa Minha Casa, Minha Vida,” O Globo, 31 October 2011, author’s translation.
42 “TCU admite que é difícil fiscalizar recursos públicos destinados a ONGs,” Globo TV, 24 October 2011. Author’s translation.
Brazilian Group of Institutes, Foundations, and Companies (GIFE) was created to establish a code of ethics for corporate giving. That same year, the Rouanet Law allowed corporations to deduct charitable donations to cultural CSOs from their tax liability, which sparked a new era of corporate philanthropy (Law 8.313). Finally, when President Lula da Silva made the “Zero Hunger” program a cornerstone of his administration’s social agenda, he encouraged the private sector to support its efforts (IGBE 2004).

Brazilian businesses appear to have responded. The Brazilian Institute of Applied Economics Research found that as of 2000, accounting for relative differences in market capitalization and economic size, corporations in Brazil spend four times as much as companies in the United States on charitable contributions (Salomon 2010). Ironically, however, most nonprofit organizations are unable to tap into this source of revenue. First, as in most countries, much of Brazilian corporate giving is strategic—designed to provide benefits to the business as well as help the nonprofit organization. Toward this end, Brazilian corporations prefer donating to CSOs that align with the company’s mission and are thus good ambassadors for the businesses’ brand. In addition, donations are often restricted by location. Forty percent of Brazilian companies seek to contribute to organizations that operate within the same locality (Monteiro 2006:11). Given that most Brazilian corporations are not located within or near favela communities, neighborhood-level CSOs are thus at a disadvantage.

In addition, many businesses primarily donate to programs that they have personally designed themselves. Sixty-one percent of all CSOs that receive corporate funding were not only created by the business entity, but are operated and managed by them as well (Turitz and Winder 2003:10). As a result, only a very small proportion of corporate funding is actually available for unaffiliated civil society organizations. As one social benefit CSO founder who tried unsuccessfully to obtain corporate funding explained:

“It wasn’t worth it. Once you’ve spent, who knows how many thousands, on formally registering, it doesn’t mean that you’re going to get a penny, or an official patron. The ICMS law only says that the government is permitting you to ask for financing for your CSO, and not all companies want to link their names with CSOs in the favelas. It’s the marketing directors from these private companies who decide, and they don’t always understand the issues. Who wants to associate their image with an event happening in a favela, a suspicious area?” (Interview: Respondent #41, 23 July 2007.)

Moreover, Brazilian tax policy favors corporate donations to some types of CSOs over others. Corporations can deduct 100% of their charitable donations—but only if they are directed toward “cultural CSOs”—which refers to “theater, arts and arts exhibitions, instrumental and erudite music, literature, libraries, and museums” (Law 9.249, 1995). Businesses can also deduct a percentage of their donations to CSOs that are approved by the Ministry of Sports, (Law 11.436, 2006) donations to the Funds for the Rights of Children and Adolescents, (Law 80.69) and to the National Fund for the Elderly (Law 12.213, 2010). Outside of donations to these approved organizations and funds, however, corporations receive no tax benefits for their contributions. Businesses in Brazil, like those elsewhere around the world, respond to these financial incentives (Carmichael 2010), structuring their giving patterns accordingly. According to the Brazilian Association of NGOs (ABONG), fewer than 5 percent of its member organizations have received funding from corporate sources. In this way, while corporate
philanthropy may be expanding in Brazil, in practice the vast majority of funding is channeled toward a very small group of organizations.

**Foundations: Few and Far Between**

Aside from those connected to corporate foundations, some independent grantmaking entities do exist in Brazil. Arguably the oldest and most visible domestic foundation is A Child’s Hope (*Criança Esperança*), developed in partnership with UNICEF/UNESCO and Brazil’s largest media network, Globo. Founded in 1986, A Child’s Hope raises funds for children’s charities through an annual telethon, usually held on a Saturday evening in July. Individuals pledge by phone—and since 2001, through text message—and their donations have been used to fund over 4,800 nonprofit organizations in Brazil.43 Sacks (2008) identifies three additional Brazilian grantmaking organizations, one of which is located in Rio de Janeiro.44 The Rio Institute (*Instituto Rio*) was created in 1995 with the help of the Synergos Institute and the Inter-American Foundation, specifically to provide grants to nonprofit organizations working in Rio de Janeiro’s Western Zone. By the end of 2009, the Rio Institute had provided financial support to over 176 CSOs.45

However, foundation grants are often restricted to particular organizations. Over three-quarters of Brazilian foundations are corporate-owned (Censo GIFE 2010:34-35). Unsurprisingly, Turitz and Winder (2003) found that this same proportion of all foundations operate their own social programs in addition to making grants. In practice, this means that foundations that are connected to corporations tend to direct their social investment to CSOs that the corporations have created themselves. Unconnected CSOs are left to struggle for the smaller shares of the funding pie.

Furthermore, most Brazilian foundations lack a capital base of their own. Endowments comprise only 10 percent of foundation revenue (Censo GIFE 2010), and only 4 percent of foundation income is generated through returns on endowment investments (Turitz and Winder 2003). This results in low financial autonomy, as Brazilian foundations must consider the preferences of their donors when choosing organizations to fund. Education is given the highest priority, followed by artistic and cultural initiatives. Turitz and Winder (2003) suggest that these areas receive attention over others because they are popular causes, attractive to a broad donor base, and represent a low risk for investors. While programs that support the arts, culture, and education are undoubtedly valuable in their own right, recall that most favela residents prioritize access to jobs, health care, and changing cultural attitudes to end prejudice, as discussed in Chapter 3. Therefore, community-led social benefit CSOs that address the needs identified by favela residents are already at a disadvantage in the funding race.

Foreign foundations also support many projects in Brazil. The Ford, Kellogg, and Brazil Foundations maintain offices there, and the U.S.-based Inter-American Foundation has program managers specifically responsible for Brazilian grants. Other foundations, though they lack an in-country presence, have also invested significant resources in Brazil, such as the Tinker, MacArthur, Rockefeller, and Mott Foundations. Brazil is clearly a destination of interest for foreign grantmaking organizations, and favelas are clearly fascinating to outsiders; the growing popularity of “favela tours” is evidence of their international cachet (Robb Larkins 2011).

43 See the *Criança Esperança* website for current statistics: [http://redeglobo.globo.com/criancaesperanca/](http://redeglobo.globo.com/criancaesperanca/)
44 The other two organizations are located in Santa Catarina (*Instituto Comunitário Grande Florianópolis*) and in the Brazilian Northeast (*Fundação Comunitária Baixada Maranhenses*).
However, very few funds are directed toward organizations that work within favelas. The MacArthur foundation no longer funds any projects in Brazil. The Kellogg Foundation focuses on the Brazilian Northeast, and the Mott Foundation supports a variety of projects, but none in Rio. From 2007-2010, the Tinker Foundation provided 132 institutional grants to organizations throughout Latin America. However, only one of those grants went to Brazil: a public safety organization in São Paulo. Two international foundations fund Brazilian projects indirectly. The Inter-American Foundation is a major supporter of the Brazil Foundation; likewise, the Rockefeller Foundation funds the Synergos Institute, which funds the Rio Institute.

We are left, then, with three foundations that provide financial support to CSOs within Brazil’s favela neighborhoods. From 2007 to 2011, the Ford Foundation funded 3,595 grantees, 151 of which were located in Brazil. Of that number, however, only two grants were directed toward favela issues, as shown in Chart 5.2 below. Moreover, both grants were given to one organization (the Central Única das Favelas, or CUFA) located in one favela community, Cidade de Deus.

Chart 5.2: Ford Foundation Grants to Brazilian CSOs, 2007-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Grants to Brazilian CSOs: 151</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>99% Non-Favela CSOs (149)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1% Favela CSOs (2)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Similarly, the Brazil Foundation made 500 grants to CSOs from 2000 to 2011. Of those, 13 were targeted toward favela CSOs. Two were made to large organizations: Viva Rio in 2003 and Promundo in 2007. The remaining eleven grants supported projects at the local level. However, four of those grants were won repeatedly by the same organization (a project providing violin lessons to favela residents in Niteroi), and a project promoting healthy living for the elderly in Cidade de Deus won three times.
Chapter 5: Golden CSOs and the Civil Society Resource Curse

Chart 5.3: Brazil Foundation Grants to Brazilian CSOs, 2000-2011

Proportionally, the Rio Institute has given the most money to CSOs working within favelas. From 2003 to 2010, 13 of 188 grants went to local-level organizations. However, those thirteen grants went to five CSOs, and all five are located within the same favela: *Cidade de Deus.*

Chart 5.4: Rio Institute Grants to Brazilian CSOs, 2003-2010

Why are foundations not supporting more CSOs that work within Rio’s favela neighborhoods? Perhaps they would like to; it may be the case that favela CSO leaders themselves are not applying for grants, or that their grant applications are not competitive. It is also possible, however, that those who select and approve grant proposals are not interested in directing funds
toward projects that take place within favelas. The direction of causality is beyond the scope of my research. What is clear, however, is that very few favela CSOs receive financial support from foundations.

**Chart 5.5: Combined Foundation Support for Brazilian CSOs, 2000-2011**

![Chart 5.5: Combined Foundation Support for Brazilian CSOs, 2000-2011](source)

(Source: Author compilation, combined data from Charts 5.2-5.4.)

Finally, transparency is a concern for all Brazilian organizations, and foundations are no exception. Possibly in an effort to increase accountability, foundations are overseen by a special department within the Brazilian Judiciary—the Public Ministry—within each state, and each Ministry office has a sub-department charged with supervising foundation activities. However, as Guimarães (1997) argues, these sub-departments are severely understaffed. Few Ministry personnel specialize in foundation oversight, possibly because they lack public pressure to do so. Therefore, “it is almost impossible to know exactly how many foundations are effective or the kinds of activities they develop.” (Guimarães 1997: 31-32)

**Summary: Implications of Brazil’s Funding Environment on Favela CSOs**

What does the funding environment mean for CSOs in Rio’s favela neighborhoods? Unlike grassroots CSOs in North America, local-level CSOs in Rio cannot rely on individual contributions at all. Government is also a fickle partner; their main support is through tax incentives that apply to only a handful of CSOs. Individual elected officials might fund a specific CSO in a particular area, but as Chapter 3 discussed, support is contingent on those particular officials. Once they leave office, any financial assistance is likely to end abruptly. Therefore, Brazilian CSOs have two remaining options: corporations and foundations. However, private businesses usually target funding to groups that will advance the company’s interests, often creating foundations and CSOs of their own to ensure that this objective is met. Favelas are simply not an attractive target for their donations. In turn, most grantmaking foundations are themselves founded by corporations, thus restricting the organizations that are eligible to receive funding. In practice, the funding environment presents nonprofit organizations with few possibilities for obtaining charitable contributions. For small Brazilian
CSOs that are unconnected to a corporation, unable to charge fees for services, and unqualified for tax incentives, the funding environment is quite bleak. Instead, local-level organizations are left to chase after a very small pool of available funds, competing vigorously with each other in their quest to obtain them. The realities of nonprofit funding in Brazil thus create a highly competitive atmosphere. Other organizations that are pursuing the same goals are not partners in trying to solve social problems; on the contrary, they are one’s rivals, seeking to obtain a share of a very small funding pie. In turn, collaboration among organizations is highly unlikely. Community CSO founders did not hesitate to explain this dynamic to me:

“I see so much selfishness, all the time. And each one stays with his own CSO, nobody reaches out to anyone else, nobody gives anything, nobody helps, it’s as if nobody else is here. They don’t speak to each other. They don’t help each other. For example, we’re needing someone to teach us how to implement an idea, how to make a CSO plan. Because we don’t know how. And I mean to say, there’s an organization right here that knows how to do this, but they won’t teach us.” (Why won’t they teach you?) “Because they don’t want us to win! That way only they will win funding. So there is a huge selfishness here in our community among the different CSOs.” (Interview: Respondent #45, 3 August 2007.)

“Everyone is jealous of everyone else. And the more successful you are, the more selfish you are. Like [she names a golden CSO], they have so many resources, but they don’t share anything, or even coordinate their actions with other groups. Everyone wants to get their own piece, and when they have it, they keep it to themselves.” (Interview: Respondent #189, 25 November 2008.)

“So what you have, then, are organizations fighting over tiny centralized bits of money. It creates a nasty, competitive attitude. Funders don’t care about the overall health of the nonprofit sector. Corporations only care about their image, and government only cares about the latest campaign. It’s not a healthy environment for collaboration.” (Interview: Respondent #58, 9 August 2007.)

When funding options are so restricted, why give a competitor a head start in the race? CSOs that are best situated financially to collaborate with other CSOs have practical incentives to avoid doing so. Therefore, the CSOs that are most successful at obtaining funding have the least incentive to collaborate with other CSOs.

For their part, grantmaking foundations seek out CSOs that claim to offer unique, short-term, and measurable solutions to community problems. On the one hand, this is no different from funders’ requirements in any context. All grantmakers want to support the organizations that are best suited to achieving their goals and demonstrating their impact. Toward this end, it is reasonable that funders carefully evaluate proposals, choosing those that identify a specific CSO strategy with clearly identified outcomes that can be measured and evaluated within the lifetime of the grant—usually one year.

It is important to clarify that these are appropriate and responsible standards. Funders should exercise due diligence when selecting grantees, and choose lean, cost-efficient grant recipients that will do the most good with the funding they receive. Moreover, no proposal evaluation strategy is perfect; there are always well-qualified organizations that might be overlooked. However, combined with the restricted, competitive climate for nonprofits in Brazil,
these standards—developed for a completely different funding context—have some unintended effects. The following sections will show that the funding environment in Brazil creates particular organizational incentives for CSOs that manage to capture part of the available revenue, which in turn give diminished prospects for politically relevant mobilization. Before discussing the effects of receiving grant funding, however, it is useful to briefly profile the type of organization that tends to obtain it: golden CSOs.

5.2 The Winners’ Circle: Golden CSOs in Rio de Janeiro

Golden CSOs—which favela residents call ONGs douradas (or more pejoratively, the quatro puta ONGs46)—are those few organizations that emerge victorious from the competitive funding race. These are internationally well-known CSOs that receive substantial grants from corporations and foundations, as well as occasional government service contracts. In contrast to social benefit CSOs, golden CSOs are usually founded by favela “outsiders”—either Brazilian or foreign—with an idea for a CSO. At times, these organizations are begun by individuals associated with a particular corporation that wants to affiliate within a particular neighborhood. As one golden CSO coordinator described to me:

{How did the idea for this CSO come about?} “Well, management at [a company] had an interest in the recycling issue, with the improper disposal of plastic bottles, all of the environmental impacts that they have when they are thrown away wherever, as happens here in Rio. So this issue had already been identified. Then, we contacted a scientist who had already invented a product made from recycled material. We worked together, and improved on his design, because the idea was to produce the product in a favela.” (Interview: Respondent #63, 13 August 2007.)

On other occasions, golden CSOs might also be founded by foreigners who seek out connections within favela communities, as in the following example:

{How did the idea for this CSO come about?} Yes, well, we had a friend, you know, his name was Donald. And he came to work, to do research, like all of the Americans always come here for research, and we met, and he had an idea to build this CSO here. And then, he left and his colleague Brian arrived with the same idea. He knew Donald. And Brian wanted to start his CSO here, but he didn’t have space, he didn’t have connections, so we helped him get established in the neighborhood.” (Interview: Respondent #77, 22 August 2007.)

Finally, in some cases golden CSOs are founded by a favela resident, but one who is very well known on the national and international scene, usually through music, the arts, or athletics. Their reputation and connections allow them to acquire resources more easily than favela residents without a similar background.

Even when golden CSOs are begun by residents, however, the leadership team is usually comprised of outsiders. Virtually all the golden CSOs that I encountered were professionally managed, despite their preferred image of connection to the grassroots. For example, whenever I

46 Despite being referred to as “those four whore organizations,” when I asked residents to identify them, I would get a different list of four every time.
would visit golden CSO headquarters—and almost all of them have offices in the central part of Rio—I would inevitably be introduced to a staff member who was “from a favela.” The intention was to show me that the CSO had substantial connections within local neighborhoods—but it had the opposite effect. I began to notice, instead, how many individuals within the main CSO offices were not from favela communities. The vast majority were white, well-dressed, middle/upper-class Rio residents, with university degrees and professional qualifications. Aside from select individuals who were specifically introduced to me as favela residents, most of the darker-skinned employees I encountered at golden CSOs were either cleaning the office or serving coffee.

One defining quality of golden CSOs is that they have a substantial resource base. In part, they receive financing in the form of grants from private companies and foundations, but they also earn revenue from other sources. If the CSO has a performance component, they can finance their activities through ticket sales, both nationally and internationally. One golden CSO disclosed that 30 percent of their operating budget comes from international performances; another told me that they were able to obtain 40 percent of their funding from holding shows throughout Brazil. In addition, golden CSOs sometimes charge favela residents an activity fee to participate. While the fees are usually nominal, they provide an additional stream of income. Golden CSOs also hold workshops and events for other CSOs, charging fees for these services as well.

For example, I was present at a community CSO meeting in Gaviota, where the leadership team was discussing potential upcoming events for the youth. One person mentioned that they were trying to hire a particular type of instructor, and I suggested that they contact a famous golden CSO, since they specialize in that area. The group immediately told me that would be much too expensive. I asked why that would be the case; “after all, don’t they have the same goals that you do?” I recorded their reaction to this question in my field notes:

Agusto burst out laughing; Giovana and Daiane rolled their eyes. Giovana told me that sure, they would do it, but it would cost $R500 just for the instructor’s time, not including materials. They have looked into this before, and [that golden CSO] justifies the cost by saying it’s a way to value the work that they do. But it ends up keeping the work permanently out of the reach of other community organizations. I asked again, “but aren’t you both working toward the same goals? Couldn’t there be some kind of trade?” Daiane said “actually, they aren’t the same kind of CSO that we are.” (Participant observation: 31 October 2008.)

The above exchange illustrates that for many CSO staff members, not all organizations operate with the same goals in mind. Most golden CSOs hold programs for youth that revolve around Brazilian culture—music, dance, theater, graffiti art, acrobatics, traditional martial arts, and the like. Some also provide opportunities to learn new technologies, from basic computer keyboarding skills to graphic/media arts; others focus on environmental issues. What golden CSOs tend to have in common is the fact that their activities appear to be carefully aligned with the interests of their donors. Themes that resonate with corporate partners, or are eligible for tax deductions, or match the priorities of major grantmaking foundations—these are the activities that predominate for golden CSOs. The central concerns of favela residents, namely access to jobs, health care, and overcoming social discrimination may be addressed as a side effect—but these issues are not primary ones. In short, golden CSOs are the “winners” in Brazil’s competitive funding arena. These are resource-rich organizations, led by outsiders and working
independently, that predominantly offer cultural activities within favela communities. However, I show that the relatively abundant resources that golden CSOs possess paradoxically discourage them from politically relevant mobilization. As Figure 5.1 illustrates, golden CSOs may have high levels of resources, but they acquire very few types of resources from a single source—namely, grants from major foundations.

**Figure 5.1: Resource Acquisition Strategy: Golden CSOs**

![Figure 5.1](image)

Such a resource acquisition strategy is not conducive to politically relevant mobilization; illustrated in Figure 5.2 and described in the following section. In short, golden CSOs might possess high levels of resources, skilled personnel, and the very best of intentions, but the incentive arena in which they operate makes it quite unlikely that they will undertake politically relevant mobilization.

**Figure 5.2: Golden CSOs Lack Sufficient Incentives for Politically Relevant Mobilization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Acquisition Strategy</th>
<th>CSO Profile</th>
<th>Politically Relevant Mobilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few Types from a Single Source</td>
<td>Outsider-led • Donor-driven activities • Few partners</td>
<td>Less Likely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 “In The Community, But Not From The Community:” Institutional Incentives and Organizational Profiles

The logic of attracting and retaining funding in Brazil not only creates competition among CSOs, but also generates institutional incentives that shape organizational behavior. Specifically, the funding environment creates three “perverse incentives” that influence the leadership choices, network ties, and type of activities that CSOs are likely to undertake. In turn, these decisions render politically relevant mobilization highly unlikely to occur.

Grantwriting Requirements Favor Outsider Leadership

In order to obtain funding, organizations must have access to a wide range of skilled individuals on their leadership team. At the most basic level, someone in the organization needs to be able to write persuasive grant proposals. International and Brazilian foundations alike have similar requirements; typical grant proposal instructions are shown in Table 5.1 below. Once the proposal is written, organizations are usually required to register on the foundation website and submit the application online, as well as send hard copies of the materials to foundation headquarters. If a proposal makes it past the first round of evaluations, additional documentation is usually needed. CSOs need to pass an administrative and legal review, and members of the leadership team may be asked to meet in person with a foundation officer to discuss the proposed CSO’s scope and budget. The window for submitting applications is generally short, usually between 6-10 weeks. Incomplete proposals as well as those submitted past the deadline are discarded, and questions about the process are routinely answered only via email. Finally, the chances of success are extremely small; the Ford Foundation states that less than one percent of their CSO applications receive grant funding. Moreover, most foundations reserve the right to refuse to disclose why a given CSO was not selected.

The grantwriting process is daunting for any organization, but for CSOs founded and led by favela residents, it is often overwhelming. Merely filling out the required paperwork demands a high level of literacy, as well as computer access and reliable internet connectivity. Registering with the appropriate agencies is time-consuming, expensive, and may require multiple trips to the city center and connections with government officials. In addition, as anyone who has ever applied for external funding knows, preparing a successful grant proposal requires far more than just assembling the necessary documents. It requires the ability to plan a CSO, create a budget, tell a compelling story using funders’ preferred terminology, and cultivate relationships within the donor community. To win funding, CSO leaders need skills in program development, strategic planning, operations management, and financial acumen.

CSO leaders from Rio’s favelas are, as a group, intelligent, innovative, and extremely resourceful. Yet the skills needed to apply for funding are often ones they lack—or ones they believe they lack. Therefore, resident leaders sometimes opt out of seeking foundation funding entirely. This point was particularly brought home to me as I helped Mariana search for funding opportunities for her organization. She described all of the things her CSO did to try to organize, train, and mobilize others in her neighborhood, but she said she wasn’t qualified to apply for a particular grant because the funder wanted CSOs that did “capacity-building.” It took me almost an hour to get across the idea that “capacity-building” is just a term that funders like to use to describe the work she was already doing. It was evident that if I had not been there to define terms like these, she would have self-selected herself out of applying in the first place.
### Table 5.1: Typical Grant Proposal Requirements for Brazilian CSO Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Components</th>
<th>Specific Required Items</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prerequisites for Funding</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• be legally registered in Brazil</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• have been in operation for at least three years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• have substantial experience in the proposed area</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• must primarily benefit a specific group (children / youth / sports promotion / elderly)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• must be registered with the appropriate Ministry</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• must be located in a specific geographic region</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Basic Application Materials</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• CNPJ Number, address, telephone, fax, email</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe the mission and vision statement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe the organizational structure</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• List other CSOs approved and awards received</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• List other sources of funding support for this CSO</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CSO Description</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Statement of the CSO’s objectives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Why is the CSO important to the community?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Why is this CSO innovative?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Why does this CSO meet our funding priorities?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Describe the criteria you will use to select CSO beneficiaries</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Measuring Outcomes</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• CSO Plan: describe step-by-step how the CSO will be implemented</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Schedule: include the key benchmarks in the CSO’s timeline for completion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Impact: discuss the impact of each phase of the CSO, who is responsible for each task, and how each outcome will be measured and evaluated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Results: describe the expected outcome of the CSO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Evaluation: describe the criteria for evaluating whether or not these results are achieved</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Budget</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Give a detailed description of the costs you will incur to carry out the CSO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Attach a copy of the organization’s yearly budget for the past three years, noting that at least 10% of the organization’s budget must come from its own financial resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Required Additional Documentation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Copy of the organization’s National Registration as a Legal Entity (CNPJ)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A legal document proving that the organization has been appropriately registered as a CNPJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Copy of the documents proving that the organization has been registered with the City Council, the State, and the appropriate government ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A current resume for each member of the CSO’s leadership team, including their technical expertise</td>
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(Source: Author compilation.)
Most resident CSO leaders whom I interviewed expressed the difficulties they faced despite their determination to overcome grantwriting obstacles. When I asked “have you ever applied for any outside funding for your CSO,” respondents generally replied “no,” identifying complex application processes as well as a lack of time and qualifications:

{Have you ever applied for any outside funding?} No, because...

❖ The application process is too complex.
“Once I tried to apply for money. The form was 15 pages long, it took so long to fill out, and it turned out that we didn’t even qualify. The reason, the rule [explaining why], it wasn’t listed anywhere in the application or the instructions. If I had known, I never would have applied.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 20 June 2008.)

“We don’t have much chance. You have to have a CSO that is very different from everyone else’s, and the proposals also have to be well done. You need to have a CSO that’s well written, with everything written in a technically savvy way, because the requirements from institutions that finance CSOs have increased a lot. They want us to show more technical indicators, they want outcomes to be monitored, so there are more demands now.” (Interview: Respondent #62, 13 August 2007.)

❖ The organization cannot qualify to receive grant funding.
“Even just registering formally is a huge long process! You have to get the documents, then you have to give them to a city council member so that he can help you get registered officially. But it’s all in his hands. They may say they will help, and then do nothing. You have to know someone and keep them interested. Because without being registered…it all depends on your connections.” (Interview: Respondent #65, 30 August 2007.)

“Just to qualify for support under the law is very difficult. For those who don’t have much education, who don’t know how things work, who haven’t studied and haven’t been advised well—it’s a very strong filter. The cost of entering into the formal process, to register the CSO and transform it into an official NGO, is very high.” (Interview: Respondent #40, 27 July 2007.)

❖ The application process is too time-consuming.
“No. Well, we’d like to, sure, but there are too many obstacles.” {Such as?} “There are things that they require, they put so many obstacles in the way that people just give up. As I was saying about the [J grant], we’ve been trying, trying for a long time to get that, but we haven’t been able to. We just can’t, we can’t. We filled out so many forms, we wrote for the money, but we haven’t had any response at all.” (Interview: Respondent #121, 20 August 2008.)

“I’ve tried to write for grants to fund the CSO, but I haven’t been successful. There’s so much for just one person to do. And if I concentrate on grantwriting, I’d have to stop organizing the workshops for the kids. The other day, the kids showed up and I hadn’t planned a lesson, and I just didn’t know what to do. I just don’t have time to do these things because I’m all by myself. I don’t have time to focus on fundraising. And I know it’s a vicious circle. I don’t have time to fundraise because I’m working by myself. But I haven’t been able to hire help because I don’t have the money to do so. [She laughs.] I’m always in this situation.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 20 June 2008.)
The responses above demonstrate that even community leaders determined to enter into the competition for grants find themselves at a disadvantage. As Mariana expressed in the final quote above, resident leaders ultimately tend to prioritize delivering services over spending time on grant applications that have little chance of success. Therefore, golden CSOs have a distinct incentive to hire non-favela residents for leadership positions, as outsiders are more likely to have the education, skills, and connections necessary for obtaining grants.

Of these attributes, having influential contacts is particularly important in Brazil. I spoke with a professional development coordinator for one of the golden CSOs in Rio, who described his work this way:

“Since the financing isn’t stable, you have to be always thinking ahead, how it’s going to be, how to create new possibilities for the organization’s sustainability. It’s very difficult, because getting funding is about many things, about money for sure, but also about connections with people, you always have to be involved in a network because that way you have strength. Because sometimes you get money, and then you have to have connections so that people don’t turn on you.” (Interview: Respondent #77, 22 August 2007.)

As articulated in the above quote, while grantwriting skills are important, having influential contacts is arguably essential. I noticed that whenever I introduced myself as a researcher from the USA, I attracted a lot of attention—individuals would approach me, tell me about their CSO, and give me their contact information. Over time, I came to understand that as a foreigner affiliated with a university, people would assume that I had funding to disperse. Some CSO coordinators even came right out and asked if I could help them get grants from the U.S. government, or my university, or if I would personally donate to their CSO.

On one occasion, I unwittingly became a conduit for funding myself. I had accompanied one community group on a field trip to a Marine base, and the officer leading the tour flirted with me repeatedly. At the end of the visit, he asked for my phone number and wanted to know when he would see me again. Thinking it might be a good way to brush him off, I said “maybe we will see each other the next time the Marines take the youth on a field trip,” fully expecting the trip never to materialize. Instead of being discouraged, however, this officer spent the next two months arranging an elaborate adventure for the youth, including a museum visit in central Rio, lunch for everyone, and an hour-long boat tour around Guanabara Bay. All of the costs were covered by the Brazilian Marines. When I asked the CSO leader why this officer had been so dedicated to arranging the trip, she replied:

“He has a crush on you! Oh, Brazil is a strange, strange country. To get all of this for the kids through proper channels is next to impossible. But look at everything that is possible when people want to help, even if it is for an idiotic reason.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 24 July 2008.)

These examples illustrate that a wide range of skills are necessary for an organization to succeed in obtaining one of the few foundation grants that exist. Grantwriting knowledge, CSO management, budgeting, and influential connections are necessary in order to be competitive. Since few favela residents possess all of these attributes, CSOs that are determined to attain donor funding have ample incentives to let outsiders with education and experience in these areas take the lead.
Moreover, donors’ funding requirements tend to have the unintended effect of reserving formal employment positions within the organization for outsiders instead of favela residents. It works this way: once an organization receives a major grant, foundations want to ensure that the percent of administrative costs is fairly low relative to overall project costs. However, in Brazil as elsewhere around the world, staff with professional qualifications demand high salaries. Therefore, as one project coordinator candidly explained, the easiest way to keep the overall percentage of administrative costs down is to pay lower-level neighborhood staff “under the table.” That way, most administrative costs—such as salaries for support staff—do not appear on the budget, and from a grant reporting perspective, the organization appears to be extremely lean.

From a human perspective, however, this system has detrimental effects on the staff members who are unofficially employed. Specifically, without a formal employment contract, Brazilians cannot qualify for a “signed card” (carteira assinada)—the official employment document that entitles them to a pension, monthly food basket, and other social benefits. Moreover, if a person loses her job, the signed card is proof of previous employment; without one, it is much more difficult for her to obtain employment in the future. Some CSO leaders find this system unproblematic, but others are profoundly troubled by it. However, they see no way out of the “vicious circle” if the organization is to remain competitive for funding in future years. As one project coordinator explained:

“If they [the foundation] would accept a higher percentage of administrative costs, the actual staff people would be able to be paid on the books and it would be better for them in the long run. Low administrative costs are a good idea, but in practice it’s very bad, especially for lower level local staff, who are trying to build a career, get out of poverty, and into the formal economy. But if we don’t have funding, then we’re all out of a job.” (Interview: Respondent #175, 25 November 2008.)

While outsider leadership may be advantageous for obtaining resources, it has detrimental consequences for community mobilization. With outsiders at the helm of the organization, they tend to lack the credibility and local knowledge that resident leadership would provide. As a result, it is more difficult for organizations to gain support at the local level. Chapter 4 outlined the ways in which Brazilians—and favela residents in particular—are wary of making connections with unknown persons. When community organizations are led by outsiders, local residents are understandably distrustful, assuming—in most cases, correctly—that the organization’s priorities may not be aligned with the neighborhood’s needs. Residents across different communities articulated the ways in which outsider-led CSOs have disappointed them:

“This guy [the CSO leader], he just didn’t understand. [What do you mean?] He wanted to give orders, he wanted full say over how things were done, he thought he had all the answers, the correct solution. He didn’t want to hear our ideas, or perspectives, he just looked down on us. But he didn’t understand the reality of life in the favela, and the reality here is very different. So we didn’t trust him, nobody here got involved.” (Interview: Respondent #185, 18 November 2008.)
“So that [golden CSO] put on some first aid training, but it was useless. [Why?] What we need is a health center here! What good will it do if some people know first aid? If there is a problem, how will I know where they are? What can they do, will they come running? How will this help anyone? There needs to be a place where people can easily go to get health care. [But some training is better than none, right?] No. It gives the impression that something is being done here to make things better when in truth, it’s not what we need. But that’s what they got funding for, so that’s what we got.” (Interview: Respondent #123, 30 July 2008.)

“There’s a golden CSO here that gives classical music lessons to the kids. Once they took a field trip to the symphony. Which is all well and good, but that’s not our culture. We need to have incentives for kids and adults to preserve and get involved in our cultural traditions. Instead of European culture being imposed on us, we need an interchange. But they’re not interested in that.” (Interview: Respondent #10, 2 August 2007.)

In short, achieving success within the competitive Brazilian funding environment requires specialized skills that few favela residents possess. At a minimum, foundations require complex CSO proposals that demonstrate a unique solution with results that can be measured over the term of the grant. Broad networks within government and business channels are also advantageous. Favela outsiders can offer these attributes, but as they supplant local residents from taking leadership roles—as well as formal paid staff positions—the organization tends to lose credibility and trust within the community. In this way, success in obtaining foundation funding paradoxically tends to displace favela residents from the organizations intended to meet their needs.

**Intense Competition Favors Few Partnerships**

The fact that CSOs are many while funders are few also creates incentives for organizations to avoid network ties within and across favela communities. This is not a new phenomenon; McCarthy and Zald (1977) noted that factionalism tends to occur when organizations must compete with each other for resources. More recently, Collier and Handlin (2009) found that in Latin America, greater availability of donor funding was associated with an increase in the variety of CSOs, thus inhibiting their collective ability to unify around common issues. However, there are particular risks involved in expanding network ties that result from the funding environment in Brazil. Specifically, when Brazilian CSOs win funding, it is generally for a one-year period only. Grants are sometimes renewable, but in most cases, the organization needs to submit a new application, demonstrating both past success as well as continued need. Even CSOs with dedicated, professional fundraising staff find it challenging to retain access to foundation grants. As development staff from two different golden CSOs explained:

“[The company] is a great financier, it’s been around for a long time. But it’s still very difficult. This year our budget still isn’t enough, so it’s always a struggle. The financing lasts 12 months, one year, and then you have to apply for and win another, and another and another, always with another lender. It’s crazy. And there are just a few large companies sponsoring social investment, so it creates this negative culture.” (Interview: Respondent #78, 23 August 2007.)

“Each year, we’re always having to search for resources and...and this is very difficult, because you lose time from planning. It’s difficult because there are so many NGOs in Brazil, and in the
world, so all of the resources are divided up, and possibilities for funding are diminished because the number of NGOs is growing. So competition is high, and on top of all that, there’s a climate of infighting. We exist without knowing what we’re going to have from year to year. It’s unstable, it’s really terrible for us.” (Interview: Respondent #113, 12 August 2008.)

Given that the funding environment is highly competitive, partnering with other CSOs is essentially inviting risk: other organizations might steal ideas and/or co-opt hard-won resources. When I asked organizations directly why they avoid connections with other CSOs, “stealing our ideas” emerged as the most common theme. Since foundations seek to fund innovative, unique solutions, usurping another CSO’s thematic idea is a significant concern. For this reason, CSOs jealously guard their ideas, and are reluctant to share information with anyone outside the organization. CSO leaders in every favela community I visited gave me the following types of responses regarding idea theft:

“People don’t have any trust. Because people are often looking to rip you off, take advantage of you. The best case is people promise things and don’t follow through. The worst case is that you can lose what you have, lose your money, lose your reputation.” (Interview: Respondent #87, 18 November 2008.)

“Another reason we were forced to register as an NGO is that people were using our name. Another guy began to hold [events similar to ours] and calling it by our name, and then people started to call me saying ‘hey, are you holding events now over there?’ I had no idea. So I went over there to that guy and said ‘hey, you’re using my organization’s name, it’s trademarked.’ But he kept using our name, and so we had to officially register the name as an NGO to protect our identity.” (Interview: Respondent #153, 27 October 2008.)

“The [golden CSO] here is very isolated. They don’t like visitors; they don’t want to be involved in that way. {What do you mean, ‘involved?’} They want control, over the community, the CSOs, what happens here. For this reason they are extremely closed, it’s very difficult to get access.” (Interview: Respondent #96, 12 July 2008.)

“I think that nobody should steal anyone’s idea. That’s what I think. But it happens. He [names another CSO founder] wanted me to merge my organization with his. I said, ‘no, that’s your idea, I know that you intend to help me, but leave me with my idea here, because I don’t think it will work out well to join the two together. I’ve had my own work here for a long time, so let’s not mix things up.’ But you can see that his organization ended up almost identical to mine.” (Interview: Respondent #180, 15 November 2008.)

“We were supposed to be working together. But when the [promotional t-shirts] came in, they were designed in such a way as to promote [another organization] as the major sponsor. The entire front of the shirt was just their huge logo. The back of the shirt had the event name in a smaller font centered on the back. And then our logo was underneath that, in an even smaller font off to the sides. So everyone who sees the shirts will think it was their idea.” (Interview: Respondent #171, 7 November 2008.)
“We tried to unite the organizations here, but it didn’t work out.” [Why?] “When we tried, we invited them to participate in a meeting all together, they didn’t want to attend the meeting, they didn’t want to get together at all. And they didn’t tell us why not. But I, I had information from a friend of mine who attended a seminar, and he told me that they were afraid that we would steal their ideas. And their volunteers. And I was like, wow! I think that’s just silly. Because we don’t have that much to steal.” (Interview: Respondent #45, 3 August 2007.)

“Of course we’re afraid of that [idea theft]! You know we stole our idea from [names a person]. And he stole it from [names another organization], get it? So we’re afraid that people will steal it from us.” (Interview: Respondent #151, 24 October 2008.)

Idea theft is more than just an anecdotal occurrence in Rio; it is a valid concern for any CSO, especially those that have leveraged their ideas into grant funding. Given that the funding environment is so competitive, and grants must be re-applied for each year, CSOs with the most funding have the greatest incentive to try to protect their intellectual property. The most reliable way to do so is to avoid connections with other CSOs.

In some cases, however, well-funded CSOs take proactive steps to protect their organizations from rivals. One way to increase the likelihood of receiving a grant is to reduce the number of organizations that compete for them. Instead of avoiding other organizations to protect their own ideas, some CSOs engage with other organizations, but with the goal of either driving them out of the community, or taking them over. For example, Chapter 3 briefly discussed the social benefit CSO Vitória Régia (VR) in the Beija-Flor community. Its founder, Jorge, built his organization from the ground up in an effort to provide medical services within the neighborhood. However, when I visited VR, I immediately noticed the logo of Coruja, a major golden CSO painted on the outside and interior walls. I asked the receptionist on duty if VR was part of Coruja. She replied that “they are a sponsor, but we have other sponsors. VR is independent.”

A few weeks later, I interviewed a director at Coruja and asked him what the relationship was between his organization and Jorge’s organization. The director immediately became agitated, and emphasized that “VR is our organization.” I pressed the issue, saying that I had heard from some residents in Beija-Flor that VR existed in the neighborhood before Coruja had arrived there. The director replied that VR “wouldn’t exist without us. It is a part of us. Jorge has nothing to do with it,” and almost ended the interview with me right there and then. (Interview: Respondent #114, 12 August 2008.) Over time, after getting to know the residents of the Beija-Flor neighborhood, I obtained a fuller picture of events. Jorge began VR well before Coruja entered the neighborhood. He did all he could to keep the organization afloat, but after five years of operation, he fell on hard times, and the clinic’s future was in question. At this point—depending on one’s perspective—VR either “received new donor support” or “was taken over by Coruja.” What ultimately occurred was that someone from Coruja approached Jorge and offered him a substantial sum each month (nearly $4,000 USD) to keep the health clinic operating full-time.

Jorge accepted the proposal, and from Coruja’s perspective, it is as if VR never existed independently. VR does not appear on Coruja’s website, or in their promotional materials, as anything other than one of Coruja’s many initiatives within the Beija-Flor favela. For his part, Jorge is glad that the clinic is operational, but he regrets the fact that a locally-led project is no longer receiving the credit it deserves. When I asked him what would have happened to VR if
Coruja hadn’t stepped in to provide funding, he said “if they hadn’t come along, someone or something else would have. We had a good idea here. But we never really had a chance after that.” (Interview: Respondent #144, 12 October 2008.)

To be sure, organizational “takeovers” like these ensure that services continue to be provided within favela communities, and favela resident founders no longer have to struggle to keep their organizations operational. However, being acquired by a larger CSO has its downsides as well. CSOs that have been taken over usually cease to be resident-led; Brazilian outsiders generally control the organization’s direction. In turn, golden CSO leaders respond to the interests of their grantmakers, which are not always aligned with community needs.

In extreme cases, if a CSO cannot be taken over, it is sometimes driven out entirely. In the Garça Branca neighborhood, a thriving social benefit CSO was operating out of a building owned by the Residents’ Association, paying nominal rent for a room each month. However, when a golden CSO entered the area, they offered to rent the entire building, which the Residents’ Association accepted. When Maria Eduarda, the resident founder, asked the larger organization if she could continue to use the room, they refused to rent it to her at any price. As a result, Maria Eduarda had no place to hold activities or events, and after a few months, her CSO closed its doors. At the time of our interview, it had been four years since these events occurred. When I asked Maria Eduarda about the work that the golden CSO does in Garça Branca, she replied:

“They have certainly brought some positive things to the community. But when they came in, other CSOs were shut out. They want to have complete control over what goes on here, so that there is no one else competing with them for funding. They can say [to foundations] that they are the only ones doing anything in this area. And today, they are. They entered, and that was the end of local community organizations.” (Interview: Respondent #95, 11 July 2008.)

Social benefit CSO founders learn from cautionary tales like these that if they want to continue to exist independently, they must tread very carefully on territory that golden CSOs claim as their own. As it was explained to me, golden CSOs “monopolize” the space, therefore it is best to keep one’s distance from them:

{Why did you choose the type of work you do?} “Because I don’t want to intrude on [the golden CSO’s] space. {What do you mean?} I was here before they were, almost twenty years before. But they do [activities A and B], and that’s what they do, that’s their way, the path they have chosen. I don’t want to fight with them, no, I don’t want to start a fight. So they do what they do, and I do what I do. And so far we’ve been able to coexist.” (Interview: Respondent #185, 18 November 2008.)

“We’ve been wanting to start something up for kids here, but the politics aren’t right. {What do you mean?} Well [he names a golden CSO] is here, and we don’t want to go and compete with them. They do their thing, and even though I think there is enough demand for all of us, there are kids they turn away, we don’t want to intrude. They like to be the only one here.” (Interview: Respondent #187, 18 November 2008.)
“The youth have been wanting to get some computer training, but we can’t do that. [Why?] They [the golden CSO in the area] do that. That’s their business. So we can’t offer internet and computer activities.” (Interview: Respondent #135, 7 October 2008.)

Favela resident leaders like these protect their organizations not only by avoiding contact with golden CSOs, but also by refusing to undertake similar types of activities. As a result, organizations tend to keep their ideas and strategies to themselves, lest they be stolen by another organization, which would then have an advantage. Alliances pose little benefit—the organization with funding would likely be expected to share their resources—and many risks, as a partner CSO might steal ideas or participants, and thus increase their chances for success in the competitive funding arena. Therefore, broad network ties that would enhance mobilizational capacity tend to be lacking.

**Funder Preferences Favor Depoliticized, Uncontroversial Activities**

Once funding has been obtained, CSOs tend to favor conservative activities in line with their donors’ goals, which may or may not overlap with those of favela community residents. Recall that corporate donations only qualify for tax deductions if they are directed toward specific types of CSOs—namely arts, culture, and sports—and over three-quarters of Brazilian foundations are entirely supported by a corporate partner. This gives most foundations a strong incentive to fund CSOs that correspond with these themes. In turn, CSOs—particularly golden CSOs with professional development staff—often base their upcoming activities on the interests of their donors. As one grantwriter from a golden CSO explained to me:

> [How does the organization decide what activities to undertake?] Well. First we have to develop CSOs, and we submit the proposals to be approved, and that’s how it works. So then you have a CSO, and the foundation [that you are seeking funds from] has certain themes or issues, and they say ‘look, we’re accepting CSOs around this issue here,’ so the CSO we create has to fit the theme. And then the foundation has to forward the CSO on, they need to develop a proposal, so they send it on, and the CSO gets chosen, or not. That’s how we decide what to do.” (Interview: Respondent #63, 13 August 2007.)

Essentially, this staff member articulated that the organization bases its activities around themes that have the best chance of receiving future funding. This is a completely rational strategy; professional nonprofits in most countries operate in this manner. After all, without sufficient funding, organizations would have difficulty carrying out activities of any kind. However, this method has the unintended side effect of leaving some issues aside. Often, these are issues that are of concern to favela residents, but not donors, such as access to jobs, health care, and reducing prejudice. The end result is that favela neighborhoods tend to receive programs centered around cultural and athletic opportunities.

I do not intend to disparage the golden CSOs that exist in Rio; the leisure activities they provide are certainly of value to favela youth. Golden CSOs offer young people opportunities for their out-of-school time that were previously unavailable, as well as a way for youth to develop artistic/athletic talents with like-minded peers. In turn, as youth learn that they can learn a new activity, some translate these skills into academic success. Golden CSOs thus give favela residents opportunities that they would not otherwise be able to access, and they are undoubtedly a positive presence within the neighborhoods in which they operate. At the same time,
however—without discounting the benefits that leisure activities provide—the fact remains that golden CSOs do not usually address the central concerns of favela residents. While their activities are useful, they do not represent what communities most want and need.

Some external funders, particularly those located in the international arena, may desire to support goals that connect more directly to community needs, such as addressing poverty and income inequality. However, donors also tend to prefer that the means undertaken to do so remain peaceful and uncontroversial so as not to disrupt their own relationships, both with their own donors and with political officials in the countries where they work. For their part, CSO leaders understand this dynamic, and they incorporate it into their work:

“No organization is going to engage in advocacy work around any issue that would put their funding source in jeopardy. Anything that could even remotely be viewed as contentious just wouldn’t be done, because what would be the point? Even if we care about the issue, if we lose funding, we won’t be able to do any work at all.” (Interview: Respondent #58, 9 August 2007.)

‘Funders in the first world, they talk a good talk, they want us to do things like ‘build diversity’ and ‘strengthen civil society.’ But they don’t understand that civil society is destroyed here, down to the individual family level. And to really do something, to be participatory, to include everyone with space for discussion as equals...[he pauses]...they don’t really want that. They think they do, but they don’t. And we, we don’t really want to get involved either. [Why?] Look, I have a good job! We want to keep our jobs. So it’s easier, it’s safer for us not to go out on a limb, not to rock the boat. They don’t want to take risks and neither do we.” (Interview: Respondent #7, 26 June 2008.)

“The world here in Brazil is maintained in such a way as to keep things the way they are. For example, if someone goes there [to a favela] and teaches an English course, and that class is enthusiastic, you’re actually disrupting things in a way. You’re disrupting the established order, because the way things are done is to keep the poor people ignorant. The middle classes don’t want favela residents to have awareness, a raised consciousness about things. So people who want to encourage favela residents to think about things, these people are frowned upon. Because when the asphalt and the favela get together on the same side, it becomes dangerous for the status quo.” (Interview: Respondent #146, 4 November 2008.)

From the perspective of CSO leaders, activities that would radically empower the disadvantaged to create change might also threaten their relationship with funders. Given that the majority of foundations are themselves funded by corporations—which may also be owned by the Brazilian state—donor organizations have an incentive to avoid supporting CSOs that would fundamentally disrupt social, political, and economic structures. Given that the number of CSOs applying for grants is so large, why should funders—who need to keep their own donors’ interests in mind—choose recipients that may cause future difficulties, when there are so many applicants that present more attractive options? Therefore, when it comes to golden CSO activities, uncontroversial, “tame” events tend to predominate, particularly leisure activities for youth. While golden CSO activities certainly benefit favela communities in some important ways, they are unlikely to provoke politically relevant mobilization.

In short, the three institutional incentives outlined above operate as follows: to attract and retain funding from major foundations, CSOs need leaders and staff with specialized skills.
Grantwriting experience, project planning capability, and influential connections are essential qualities that most favela residents lack. Therefore, organizations that base the vast majority of their revenue on donor funding tend to create a leadership team of outsiders, even if the CSO was originally founded by favela residents. In addition, the funding environment is highly competitive, with many organizations applying for very few available grants. Thus, other CSOs are one’s rivals, not collaborators, and partnering invites the risk that ideas and resources might be co-opted or stolen entirely. As a result, organizations that are successful in gaining funding have an incentive to avoid other organizations at best, and take them over or drive them out of the area at worst. Finally, grantmaking foundations must keep the interests of their own donors in mind. Many of these are corporations that receive tax benefits only for funding particular types of activities, and all funders would prefer to support projects that enhance, not challenge, their relationships with their own donors. Therefore, CSOs that seek to obtain major grants often base their activities on the current interests of their donors—which may or may not coincide with the interests of favela residents. Golden CSOs thus respond to the funding environment by favoring outsider leadership, limited organizational partnerships, and uncontroversial activities. In turn, these choices create disincentives for engaging in politically relevant mobilization. Specifically how and why this occurs has been alluded to above; the following section clarifies these relationships.

5.4 Implications of a Grant-Driven Resource Acquisition Strategy

The process of attracting and retaining major donor funding creates particular incentives for CSOs, which in turn shapes the organizational choices that they make. Golden CSOs tend to place outsiders in leadership positions instead of favela residents, avoid connections with other CSOs both within and across favela communities, and focus their efforts on activities of primary interest to donors, not favela residents. These choices should not be viewed as wrong choices; after all, they enable golden CSOs to not only exist, but to obtain funding for activities that thrive year after year and provide real benefits to favela youth. However, these organizational choices also create the unintended side effect of strongly discouraging politically relevant activity.

Fragmented, Uncoordinated Activities

First, golden CSOs tend to conduct activities in isolation from one another. Even though they have a presence in multiple favela communities, the overall CSO tends to remain within its own sphere of activity. They do not partner with other organizations, or even inform them of their activities, and as outlined above, sometimes work actively to crowd rivals out of the area entirely. When CSOs are in conflict with each other in this manner, struggling for contacts, resources, and visibility, they not only lack coordination, but they fragment the very underlying problems they aim to address. Each CSO proposes its own unique solution, but these multiple initiatives work in isolation from each other. Part of this dynamic is due to the difficulties of collaboration within and among favela communities, as outlined in Chapter 3. Although golden CSOs have the resources to overcome some of these obstacles, they choose not to do so. In some cases, their reluctance to work in partnership with other organizations is detrimental to a sense of community. As one CSO staff member articulated:

“One thing that’s notable about all favelas is that connections among people are broken. Part
of this is historical—we are communities of immigrants, some from the Northeast, from other places, and in some cases created by the government, which destroyed our homes and forced us to move. So you don’t get much of a sense of community life. But, part of the goal of any CSO has to be to create these links, create a sense of community. Social benefit CSOs try to create these connections, but then the golden CSOs pulverize the links that exist because they just add another layer separating people in the community.” (Interview: Respondent #69, 16 August 2007.)

Across town, a resident of Viuvinha expressed a similar view:

“They [the golden CSO] have so many resources but they don’t share anything, or even coordinate their actions with other groups. When there’s a show, for example when they put on a show, they might invite people from the community, but that’s it. Why do you think this is the case? There’s a lack of integration, and they [the golden CSO] gain from that. They don’t want things to change.” (Interview: Respondent #185, 28 November 2008.)

One disadvantage of working in isolation is programmatic; golden CSOs cannot leverage the advantages of the collaborative process. When CSOs work together, they can combine different perspectives, spark creative solutions, and have a better chance of identifying possible problems before they occur. Moreover, collaboration helps resources to be allocated more efficiently. Each organization is able to focus on one part of an overall strategy that allows CSOs to capitalize on synergies and avoid redundancy. However, these benefits are left unrealized in Rio’s favela neighborhoods. Each organization works on its own solution to each problem without coordinating with others. As a result, long-term, complex solutions that would be more effective in meeting local needs are unlikely to arise, and the problems that are most important to residents are usually left unaddressed.

Isolation and fragmentation present distinct challenges from a mobilizational perspective. Collective action by definition involves people working together towards a common goal. In Rio’s favela communities, CSOs are already quite isolated from each other, and golden CSOs have particular incentives to remain that way. Moreover, there are few advantages to be gained from forming alliances, and many risks. When the costs of collaboration are high, and chances of a positive outcome are low, most individuals will choose not to participate at all.

*Short-Term Data instead of Long-Term Results*

Recall that even well-funded golden CSOs need to re-apply for funding each year, and having successfully received a grant in the past is no guarantee of future revenue. Golden CSOs must continually demonstrate that their organization is achieving measurable results. Without question, every organization should evaluate their programs’ effectiveness on a regular basis, and it is reasonable for funders to base their decisions on the results of these initiatives. However, program evaluation done right is expensive, time-consuming, and challenging for CSO leaders to undertake. Coupled with limited resources—which in some cases are earmarked for direct services, not operational expenses such as program management—most golden CSOs choose the shortest route to success. As one golden CSO coordinator disclosed:

“All of us [CSOs] are battling for money. So we don’t collaborate. Even if, say, there’s money, say we get funding for a program that involves collaborating with residents, the goal is first that the CSO happen, not that the collaboration happen. Otherwise we won’t get the money from the
grant. Nobody is checking up to see if we actually do the work of hearing residents’ needs, including them, stuff like that. What they look at are the numbers of people who attend, the photos, evidence that the activity happened. Not what its real results were.” (Interview: Respondent #68, 16 August 2007.)

As this person expressed, the easiest way to evaluate the results of an activity is through easily obtainable metrics, such as the number of courses or events offered and the number of people who participated in them. These data are often supplemented by photographs of the activities taking place. The difficulty, however, lies in extrapolating significant long-term results from data that represent what are essentially means, not ends. For example, 100 youth might attend hip-hop dance classes for a year, but what does their participation really mean—for themselves, their families, and their community? It is easy to hypothesize and extrapolate what the results might be, but to actually identify and measure outcomes such as these requires more than just counting the number of participants.

I spoke with Thiago, a social benefit CSO leader, extensively about this issue. “Surely golden CSOs want to benefit communities,” I said, “and they know that most youth cannot earn a living through artistic or athletic skills. So why focus so much on these activities instead of the kinds of things that the neighborhood really cares about?” Thiago replied:

“They promote the image that they do because that’s the easiest way to attract kids. The youth need training, economic opportunity, self-esteem, citizenship knowledge—but kids aren’t going to come for that. They will come for, and stick around for, things like rap, hip-hop, drumming, and sports. And the more kids they attract, the more numbers they have in terms of kids that have been “rescued” from the streets. Then they can show that they have high numbers of participants, and they continue to attract funding, so they keep their jobs and their image. Don’t misunderstand, they do good work. It’s always nice for kids to have opportunities to do something other than hang out on the street. But it ends there. They could be doing so much more with the resources they have.” (Interview: Respondent #135, 14 October 2008.)

CSOs that receive grant funding are pressured to demonstrate measurable results, so they tend to choose activities as well as evaluation methods that can deliver these outcomes quickly. More in-depth evaluation would provide better quality information on whether or not CSOs are achieving the kinds of success that funders intend—but funders face their own revenue stream challenges. Instead of identifying the connections—or lack thereof—between program activities and outcomes for youth, it is easier for everyone involved to accept the logic that, as one community activist articulated, “if you don’t give us money right now so we can buy this kid a drum, tomorrow he’s going to have an AK-47 in his hand instead.” (Interview: Respondent #46, 13 August 2008.) We just do not know to what extent many well-funded CSOs are actually achieving results that are meaningful not only to donors, but to community residents themselves.

Even when CSO activities are readily identified as useful by community residents, they tend to be short-term events with little or no follow-up continuity. Grants have a built-in expiration date, and if problems arise during the implementation phase, it is possible that the funding might run out before the CSO is able to begin. For example:

“They did a survey here, but I never saw the data they collected. They were trying to do something, but when they left, they left people doing whatever they wanted, and the whole thing
ended because people just took the money home and spent it without developing anything. The idea was to have a ‘Community Support Center’ here, a way to exchange information between local organizations and outside agencies, but I haven’t seen anything like that. They were going to have training groups, but that never happened. Well, they started but then they stopped. And that was it.” (Interview: Respondent #153, 27 October 2008.)

“CSOs come in, and they have a beginning, middle, and an end, and that’s it. Most last two months, three months tops. Then after those two months, what are young people going to do? There’s nothing for them to do.” (Interview: Respondent #121, 20 August 2008.)

“They told us there would be a network for all of the community leaders to keep in contact with each other. But it was never set up. [Why?] It was too difficult to create. [Her friend interrupts:] but setting up the network was never their motive! The intention was to make a film, not to help the communities keep in contact. How much money is this film going to make? There’s no money coming back to the communities.” (Interview: Respondents #70 and #179, 11 November 2008.)

Since funding is short-term, projects are also short-term, and program evaluation rarely happens in a comprehensive manner. Not only does this generate sub-optimal CSO outcomes, it has a detrimental effect on community mobilization. Many CSOs that claim to “help” the neighborhood do not, in actuality, achieve very much to meet the community’s needs.

Moreover, when events or outcomes are promised but fail to materialize, or occur in a way that is detrimental to the area, this creates incentives for individuals to avoid any future community events. For example, Pedro, a social benefit CSO leader in the Bem-Te-Vi community told me about a golden CSO that received funding to institute a recycling program within his neighborhood. In this case, the residents were enthusiastic because they saw a clear need for the work; empty plastic two-liter bottles (PET bottles) littered the area, because individuals—no different from most Rio residents—tend to throw trash on the street. The CSO’s idea was to pay neighborhood residents to collect PET bottles and bring them to a central location within the community for recycling. In theory, the plan was sound: residents would be encouraged to not only dispose of the bottles properly, but also clean up the area as a way to earn some cash. Ultimately, the outside organization’s goal was to develop and promote environmental consciousness.

However, as Pedro explained, “it was a wonderful idea, but it was badly administered.” At first, the project worked well: people did not particularly care about the environment, but they knew that if they brought a certain number of PET bottles to the collection point, they could earn money. People soon developed the habit of bringing empty bottles to the pickup location, and a few scoured the community for even more, thus starting to beautify the area. The next step was to develop a formal work program to provide official jobs for the most active “community recyclers,” who would not only collect materials, but also promote environmental education within the neighborhood. Pedro described what happened next:

“The administrators weren’t from the community, not that we don’t want people from outside the community involved, but we want people with a social vision similar to ours. And they didn’t have it. They didn’t really care. We know because when their funders, I don’t know, I think they had some problems, and anyway, the funding got cut off, and the coordinators got booted out,
Even if the CSO coordinators had the best intentions of continuing the recycling program in Bem-Te-Vi, and were honestly subject to funding fluctuations beyond their control, what community residents experienced was the abrupt discontinuation of a program that had been working out well. Those who had been the most involved with the program bore the brunt of the CSO’s closure: some individuals did not get paid for bottles they had collected, and the most committed recyclers lost the opportunity to attain stable, formal employment within this industry.

In a sense, the recycling project left the community worse off in some ways than it was before. Although the project ended well before schedule, it lasted just long enough for residents to become accustomed to bringing their PET bottles to a central location. The collection area, however, was situated right next to the community storm drains. As long as the bottles were being hauled away on a regular basis, the location was fine—but as the PET bottles began to build up, they clogged the drain, thus building a natural dam. Once the rainy season arrived and the neighborhood experienced the usual floods:

“It was even worse environmentally than before the CSO started. Because they left, and now you can see millions of bottles there in the community, and it’s terrible, they stop up the storm drains, and some people screw the top back on the bottle before throwing it on the ground, and the air is trapped and can’t get out, and a house could fall on it, the air won’t get out. And those people who coordinated the CSO, they never came back to see us.” (Interview: Respondent #56, 13 August 2007.)

At least in Pedro’s view, the ultimate result of the community recycling initiative was not only negative for the area as a whole, he is personally far less likely to become involved in any future activities. I do not believe that Pedro’s experience is unique; anyone who has had their expectations dashed is likely to be more wary the second time around. From the perspective of favela residents, who have seen community initiatives come and go many times with no tangible results, they may be especially reluctant to get involved. Programs tend to prioritize collecting short-term data over longer-term efforts that might produce substantial change, and favela residents lower their expectations as a result—none of which is good for fostering future mobilization of any kind.

Facade of Community Participation

One of the most unfortunate ways in which residents’ expectations are diminished is in the area of their participation within the development projects that affect them. Virtually all major foundations claim to value concepts such as “local participation,” “sustainable development,” and “community involvement” in their planning, but very few achieve this goal in practice. Why? Similar to the examples above, incorporating local perspectives is very easy to do poorly—just count the number of residents who attend events, take some photos, and there you have it—evidence of community input. On the contrary, designing programs that accurately capture and implement residents’ ideas is not only complex and time-consuming, it may result in uncovering complications that prevent the project from going forward as initially planned.

Mariana explained the dynamic to me as follows. We had been talking about golden CSOs, and I noted that much of their promotional literature emphasizes “capacity-building” in the neighborhoods where they work. Mariana had seen the same materials I had, but the difference, as she explained, was this:
“Golden CSOs have a plan. They have an idea of how implementation is going to go, what kind of capacity building community leaders need, who the community leaders are, how the CSO is going to happen. So there’s this idea of how things are going to go. And when that idea is challenged, it’s hard! If the community leaders aren’t who you thought they would be, if they are hard to find, if they don’t exist, if leaders exist but need something different from what you proposed to do, if the community itself needs something or wants something different than what the NGO wants to give, that’s a problem! And you solve it by backing up and rethinking the plan. But guess what? There’s no money for that in the grant! The money they get is for implementing the CSO according to plan, so they do. There should be money for that.” [For what, exactly?] For backing up, for rethinking the plan. There should always be money for that because it’s always necessary. But nobody funds that part.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 22 July 2008.)

After this discussion, as well as similar claims from other favela residents, I became curious with respect to the way that outsider CSO leaders view community participation. On one occasion, when a non-resident leader said that his organization “promoted sustainable development in line with community needs”—I interrupted, and asked him what that meant. He said they use a “participatory, mobilizing, and educating method,” and was ready to move on from there, but I asked him to give me an example. The exchange proceeded as follows:

Non-Resident Leader: For example, a municipal government might want to create a park, but it would dislocate some residents. So it’s necessary for the whole community to participate. We focus on the social effect of the project. The city wants to create better urban spaces, urban revitalization, and to achieve this goal, they need to work with the community, and we help with that.

Me: Can you tell me about a specific instance where you did something like that?

Non-Resident Leader: Of course! In [a certain favela], the city government had proposed a plan, but hadn’t consulted the community. And some people were opposed to it due to different concerns, drugs, bars, violence, religious reasons…{I didn’t really understand the concerns, he just rattled them off in a list}…and that’s where we came in.

Me: That sounds like a great project, it’s crucial to involve the community in a case like that. But what, exactly, did you do?

Non-Resident Leader: Our goal was to unite the community, train people to do interviews, then design a plan with their input that was acceptable to business, the state, and city government.

Me: That sounds good. But I have another question—how much weight did the interview results from the residents have? For example, if the residents wanted one thing and the city wanted another, how was the conflict resolved?

Non-Resident Leader: The goal is to get the community to understand that this work is to benefit them. The city has proposed the project to improve the city. So we help them understand that the project is in their best interest. (31 July 2008, from the recorded transcript of the meeting.)
At this point, the interviewee was eager to move on to a different topic, so we left the conversation there. His answers, however, revealed the ways in which outsider-led organizations operate much as Mariana and others had described. I realized that “community input” meant, at least in this case, achieving “community buy-in.” On paper, the goal was to involve the community in the process—and as long as the residents’ interests were consonant with the overall project plan, there were no difficulties. But when local input conflicted with the plan, this organization’s role was to pacify the community—to encourage them to accept the city’s plan in order to reduce the likelihood of larger conflict arising, possibly in the form of protest.

The golden CSO’s presentation of their work also illustrated the way that favela residents are often viewed by outsiders. As described in Chapter 4, discrimination against favela residents is pervasive, and those who are employed with CSOs are also subject to these cultural biases. Residents generally described their interactions with golden CSO staff as “condescending,” “top-down,” and “one-way.” For example, Thaís described her experience with a golden CSO that offered health education classes. Her understanding was that the larger CSO wanted to “partner” with small neighborhood social benefit CSOs: they would provide information about health care and disease prevention, while the social benefit CSO leaders would update them on conditions within their communities. In this way, Thaís thought the experience would be a partnership in which the participants would exchange ideas and information. But when she arrived—after almost an hour’s travel time one way—Thaís said that there wasn’t any exchange of information at all. On the contrary, “it was very condescending. They didn’t want our input at all, they just wanted to hold classes with very basic information and pass out condoms.”

What upset her most, however, was the fact that the program leaders kept referring to favela communities as “communities we help” (comunidades asistidas), and favela residents as “poor little things” (coitadinhas). Thaís repeated these phrases multiple times, and said that she found them offensive. As a result, she didn’t want to attend future classes, but she was interested in picking up some condoms to distribute in her neighborhood. However:

“They wouldn’t give them [the condoms] to me. They said you only got the condoms if you attended all the classes. So I knew they were more interested in their reputation, how many people they could bring to the classes, than actually doing something about health care in the favelas. As for me, they aren’t hurting me by not giving me the condoms, I don’t care, but they are hurting the community they claim to be ‘assisting.’” (Interview, Respondent #145, 18 October 2008.)

An attitude of “assistance” instead of partnership was evident in many of my conversations with golden CSO leaders. While the vast majority of golden CSO staff have a sincere desire to make favela communities better places to live, most staff are also favela outsiders. At times, it appeared that they—like most non-favela residents of Rio—shared common preconceived ideas regarding favelas, revealed in the ways in which they would describe their work. For example, when I asked golden CSO leaders to describe some of the difficulties they faced, I would occasionally receive responses like these:

“We’ve tried to put them [favela residents] in courses, but they are deficient. They didn’t manage to develop their intellects at the appropriate time...Those poor things, they didn’t have access to education, or culture, so change happens very slowly.” (Interview, Respondent #63, 13 August 2007.)
“Change is difficult because those people don’t understand the world. They don’t have a critical view of what’s happening in Brazil.” (Interview, Respondent #67, 16 August 2007.)

“It’s not appropriate for them to criticize what we do, because we are doing it for them... “I’ll go there [to a favela community] and do my job because I have to, but I’ll do it however I want to because they’re just favela people.” (Interview, Respondent #112, 6 August 2008.)

After repeatedly hearing some golden CSO leaders describe their work in favela neighborhoods along the lines above, I understood what one favela resident meant when he said that “we are always subjects. We might have a voice, but it is always subordinate.” (Interview: Respondent #53, 8 August 2007.) Even when favela outsiders have the best intentions of building local capacity and working in partnership with residents, they often find that it is extremely difficult to do. As one program coordinator candidly explained:

“Achieving real community participation is difficult, and sometimes it doesn’t happen even when we’d really like it to. Say an outside funder wants to know that the community was involved, consulted, participated. But at the same time, they have a deadline, and we do too! Things don’t happen that fast. And they don’t understand the reality, don’t know that community has to be built over time. So it’s easier, and sometimes necessary, to just call out the ‘usual suspects’ for a meeting, take some photos, and write that up as community participation.” (Interview: Respondent #175, 25 November 2008.)

Rounding up a group of “usual suspects” is certainly not ideal. However, if the alternative is to lose out on grant funding altogether—funding that provides some of the only leisure activities within the community—it is understandable why golden CSO leaders with good intentions might take such a shortcut.

In sum, virtually all donors who fund programs within favelas require some degree of community participation. Developing a true participatory process, however, requires time, patience, honesty, and self-restraint. These elements, which would result in a true exchange of information and develop real partnerships over the long-term, are rarely included in grant funding. Moreover, preconceived ideas and stereotypes about favela residents may be par for the course in Brazil, but when they are held by those responsible for creating and implementing community CSOs, it has a negative impact on possibilities for mobilization. When community residents are repeatedly asked to participate in activities that are short-term at best, and detrimental or condescending at worst, they learn that their “participation” is virtually meaningless. They develop low—or even negative—expectations when it comes to collective action, and—quite rationally—tend to avoid future mobilizational activity of any kind.
“That’s Why We Call Them the “Quatro Puta ONGs”: General Distrust

Given all of the above, it is unsurprising that golden CSOs sometimes have a poor reputation among favela residents. These organizations receive the lion’s share of funding, yet do relatively little to meet pressing neighborhood concerns, and they fail to include local community-based organizations in their work. Some golden CSOs, however, go a step further: they enact programs and events that ultimately leave favela residents feeling exploited. I do not believe that this is intentional; on the contrary, it appears to be an unanticipated effect of the dynamics discussed above, combined with the fact that golden CSOs are often asked to play an intermediary role. When businesses, international NGOs, and sometimes government officials want to enact programs within favela communities, they need a way to access these neighborhoods. Golden CSOs tend to be led by well-connected outsiders, but they also operate across various areas. In this way, third-party organizations routinely contact golden CSOs in order to gain entry to favela neighborhoods.

A typical path is as follows: a third-party organization receives funding to carry out some type of CSO within a favela. The funding might come from international NGOs, governments, or private corporations, and the theme of the CSO can vary widely—the environment, women’s health, AIDS policy, small business development, classical guitar instruction—almost any area imaginable. Once the organization receives the grant, they need to carry it out, and the easiest way to do so is to partner with a golden CSO. The third-party organization receives access to a favela community; the golden CSO implements the proposed program, and receives a portion of the grant funding for their efforts. Favela residents, however, may or may not benefit from the program, which is rarely connected to their wants, needs, or perspectives.

Mariana spent a great deal of time explaining to me how, exactly, favela residents perceive the results of these third-party programs. Rather than paraphrase her view, I present it here in its entirety:

‘There are ‘inside’ CSOs, those small social benefit CSOs that come from community leaders themselves. And ‘outside’ CSOs that come from NGOs outside the community, started by some expert but get implemented inside the local community. And the problem is that those ‘outside CSOs’ start with the CSO idea first. Then they get money for the proposal, and for its implementation, but then they go looking for an organization within the community that can house the CSO. They don’t have roots in the community, no real connections, so they go looking for an organization that can give them entrée into the area. They can’t just go in due to the gangs. That would be dangerous and really impossible to do. So they need a local connection. That’s where the golden CSO comes in. So they [the golden CSO] seek us out, some local social benefit CSO, and say ‘we want to partner with you on this issue.’ And it may be the case that there’s already a social benefit CSO in the community that’s working on the same issue. But when they [golden CSOs] enter the communities they don’t attain any results at all. And they don’t get results why? Whatever CSO that big NGO came up with, it didn’t come from the

Arguably the best explanation I heard for why some choose the pejorative term “those four whore NGOs” over other negative terms came from a Brazilian social activist/academic, who explained: “They are ‘whores’ because they are using, selling out, the favela residents in order to get benefits primarily for themselves. They talk a good game about involving favela residents, and to be fair, they do provide some services, but it is all one-shot. They don’t make a real effort to include residents in their decision-making or leadership structures, and they don’t push for real structural, social, or economic change. They only offer piecemeal solutions, they do not try to solve the underlying conditions that cause the problems.” (Interview: Respondent #46, 9 July 2008.)
community, doesn’t have anything to do with that community’s particular needs, and doesn’t have any roots or a long-term commitment to the area. Maybe we don’t want it here at all! But we have to accept it. It’s actually worse than charity, because if you don’t accept a CSO inside the community you get called stupid. And remember, when it’s over, it’s over! Because it has no connection to our needs, and nobody talks to us, we end up sometimes worse off than before. [Why?] Because it created an expectation that wasn’t met. And at the end, he says [the big NGO expert] ‘I brought [the CSO] here, wanting to better the lives of these people and afterward they stay the same, sitting there complaining that their lives are shit. I brought [the CSO], but they didn’t accept it.’ And then what? ‘I’m going to take it to another place’ and more or less the same thing happens. And that’s what people in communities expect from the big NGOs. That’s why we call them the ‘quatro puta ONGs.’” (Interview: Respondent #70, 16 August 2007.)

When organizations prioritize CSO implementation over feasibility and local needs, they may successfully carry out their efforts, but often at the expense of real community development. Third-party organizations also occasionally seek out favela residents and their communities for profit-making ventures. This leaves favela residents feeling “used” and “exploited”—and much less likely to be amenable to any future efforts enacted by outsiders within their communities, regardless of their purpose.

Mariana’s perspective is not unique by any means; my field notes contain over two dozen separate occurrences of this dynamic. A brief sample follows:

“There was a guy from [company] who came to Fregata, took pictures of our kids and adolescents, it was a big photo shoot. They used the photos in a huge advertising spread, in a magazine, in a coffee table book, in a DVD. But what did we get? Fregata got absolutely nothing—except one copy of the coffee table book. Not even a copy for everyone who was in it. And the company thought that was sufficient! That we would be happy just seeing our pictures, like some remote tribe in the jungle. But what about all the money that they made? The people in the photos, the people of Fregata, we never saw any money at all.” (Interview: Respondent #87, 28 October 2008.)

“This guy, he came to Beija-Flor with [a golden CSO], gave some kids cameras, and wanted them to take pictures of the neighborhood. He told them to take pictures of doorways and streets. We had no idea why! But then we found out that he was from a video game company, they were making some game called “Shootout in the Favela” or some crap like that. And they wanted realistic street scenes. He must have made so much money off of selling those photos, and the company made even more. But the kids got nothing! They didn’t even get to keep the cameras.” (Interview: Respondent #129, 24 September 2008.)

“They come here taking pictures, all those guys came here, making a documentary about Bem-Te-Vi, and until today nobody has seen the film, nobody knows nothing about it, until the other day we saw in the paper, ‘so and so won a prize in Germany about the documentary in Bem-Te-Vi.’ So there in Germany, he’s earning a lot of money, he’s building a house there. It’s horrible.” (Interview: Respondent #153, 27 October 2008.)

“The last time [golden CSO] had a show, it was at the Municipal Theater. Have you been there? [Yes.] It’s a very beautiful building in the city center, all kinds of wealthy people from the
Southern Zone were there, but very few favela residents. The ones who were there were part of the show, and as part of the show, there was a guy playing a guitar in the shape of a gun. That was so degrading! They were just using us to advance their own agenda. We see all these golden CSOs getting funding but not doing anything real. I feel personally deceived.” (Interview: Respondent #147, 17 October 2008.)

Incidentally, favela community leaders are especially cautious regarding foreign researchers for similar reasons: they feel they have been exploited by them in the past. I spent at least six months in each community before residents trusted me enough to begin speaking openly about their views and experiences, primarily due to previous negative experiences such as these:

“What researchers come here for a week or two, a month at most, and they smile and it’s all friendly and they ask questions, get what they need, and then leave. They leave nothing behind and they never are heard from again.” (Interview: Respondent #133, 14 October 2008.)

“The last guy [foreign researcher] we talked to just wanted to ask his questions. He took notes right in front of me, and said he was there to ‘study’ us, to ‘observe’ us—as if we were animals in a zoo! He didn’t want to give anything back, he just wanted his information and that was it.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 18 October 2008.)

“So many foreign researchers get information from the community and the kids, take it back to their home countries to promote themselves, and they get degrees and good jobs, but that’s it. What do we get? Nothing.” (Interview: Respondent #148, 24 October 2008.)

“It’s stuff like this that makes people feel lied to and used. Do they really think that just having a photograph, or the opportunity to be in an exhibit, is enough? When the person who takes the photos or does the research is going to go home and get the credit, and maybe paid, and maybe paid quite a lot? We’re not stupid in the favela, we know how the world works. And it’s so hard for us to make a living here, if the rest of the world is so interested in our life here, what we look like and how we live, and they are going to make money off of it, then why shouldn’t we expect something back as well?” (Interview: Respondent #98, 28 October 2008.)

Favela residents are acutely aware of the ways in which their communities have piqued international interest, and they are understandably suspicious of outsiders who seek to capitalize on the new-found cachet of the “favela.” Golden CSOs undoubtedly provide some beneficial activities within favela neighborhoods, but they generally do not address the issues that are of highest priority to the community. Moreover, they act as liaisons between communities and third-party organizations, whose interests are often even further removed from those of the neighborhood. Residents are rarely, if ever, involved in project planning and implementation in any meaningful way. Projects are short-term at best and detrimental to the community at worst. Ultimately, these factors give golden CSOs a fairly poor reputation within favela neighborhoods.

In sum, the dynamics described above affect possibilities for mobilization in two main ways. First, despite their relatively abundant resources, golden CSOs have little incentive to devote resources toward political mobilization. Collective action requires collaborating with others, as well as taking up an issue of group importance. As outlined above, golden CSOs have many reasons to avoid partnerships, and as outsider-led organizations, they are removed from
neighborhood issues that might spark mobilization. Moreover, their primary goal is to ensure their own survival, which means addressing their donors’ funding priorities and avoiding confrontational, risky behaviors. Golden CSOs have very little to gain from taking on political causes, and quite a lot to lose. Second, the way that golden CSOs tend to operate in favela communities also deters residents from becoming involved in politically relevant activity themselves. Much of the collective action that favela residents are exposed to come from golden CSOs, either directly or in partnership with a third-party organization. These efforts rarely produce positive outcomes for the community, residents trust group activity less and less each time, and some resolve to avoid any future collective efforts.

5.5 Worst-Case Scenario: Ghost CSOs Damage Everyone’s Credibility

Thus far, this chapter has identified some institutional funding incentives that shape organizational choices in such a way as to discourage politically relevant mobilization. Some unscrupulous entrepreneurs, however, respond to these incentives in a different way: they create “ghost CSOs” (ONGs fantasmas) designed to attract financial donations without incurring any of the expenses involved in carrying out an actual community project. Ghost CSOs can arise in various ways. First, an individual might capitalize on the fact that some funders want to advance a particular agenda—street children, arts activities, environmental awareness, for example—without questioning whether this agenda is relevant to the needs of individual communities. Using her grantwriting skills and connections, a well-connected outsider might develop a proposal that meets the specific requirements of a given foundation, but after the money is in hand, set up a favela CSO in name only. This practice is so common in Brazil that there is a specific word for these unscrupulous individuals—picareta. Literally meaning “pickaxe,” picareta refers to a person who takes advantage of someone else, slowly chipping away at their resistance until the picareta gets what he or she wants. In this way, ghost CSOs are “founded” by individuals with particularly strong connections to funding sources who seek to leverage them for personal gain. Figure 5.3 illustrates the resource acquisition strategy adopted by ghost CSOs: one type of resource (money) given by a single source.

Every favela community that I visited contained ghost CSOs. Social benefit CSO leaders would often warn me to stay away from ghost CSOs and their “founders,” lest I be taken in for fundraising purposes, such as Pedro’s advice below:

“Now, another thing, you should know this since you work with many CSOs: the foundations that send money to the third world, they should inspect them [the third world CSOs] carefully because—now pay attention to this—if I contribute money but I live outside the favela, for example, and I send money to a daycare here, I should ask questions and find out where my money is going, and to what work it’s being applied. Does the daycare have a regular operating schedule? One fine day I walk up the hill, ask where the organization is, and I go there and confirm it. Find out if what the guy says actually happens, they serve this many kids, the schedule is such and so. Because, what usually happens is that people contribute, above all individuals in other countries, they give in order to deduct it from their income tax and reduce the rate. So they’re not giving for nothing, they want some compensation in return. They don’t know where the money is really going, and they don’t seem to care.” (Interview: Respondent #56, 7 August 2007.)
Residents of other communities described how ghost CSOs operate in similar ways:

“This is my biggest frustration with most CSOs, you know? The people who run them aren’t actually there for the organization’s mission, get it? They set it up, attract a financial reserve, and then shut it down. It’s not really a nonprofit, it’s just a money-making scheme.” (Interview: Respondent #153, 27 October 2008.)

“They don’t do anything, they just exist on paper. I’ll give you an example, there’s a guy here who gets over $R 1,000 [about $600 USD] each month for a ‘CSO in the favela’ but nobody knows what he does, nobody sees anything happen. (Interview: Respondent #16, 24 August 2007.)

“They get their money, and then they shut down. They form an NGO just so they can call themselves one. Most of the time it’s because there’s an opportunity, someone has a way to get a donation but it’s for a particular purpose—usually there’s a golden CSO that needs a partner in the favela in order to get the money. So they find someone to form an NGO, get the money, and then close up shop.” (Interview: Respondent #95, 11 July 2008.)

“There are so many organizations here in name only. The CSO is fake, but they have some kind of international connection, you know? So they get people to send money, take a few pictures just for a day to send back and show what is going on, but that’s it. There is little transparency, and if you want to cook the books you can.” (Interview: Respondent #135, 30 September 2008.)
As alluded to above, ghost CSOs utilize various strategies to convince donors that they are authentic enterprises. Some are quasi-legitimate in that they organize occasional activities within a favela community, but siphon off the vast majority of funds for personal use. Others are engaged in outright fraud in that there is no existing organization at all. *Picaretas* create elaborate, sophisticated websites, showcasing many photos of their activities, but the photos are the result of rounding up participants for a one-day “photo shoot.” I have personally observed—and been asked to participate in—some of these staged photo shoots. After noticing one in progress (and refusing to take part), I asked Éverton to explain what was going on. He replied:

“Oh, them, they’re only around to make money. I mean, if you give money to a CSO that is in a place you’re never going to go to, you’ll never know if they do anything with it or not, you know? The guy there in the USA, he looks at the website, sees the photos, thinks ‘oh that’s great’ and sends money. But that guy will never know if there’s really work going on here or not. Many times the organization only exists on the website.” (Interview: Respondent #153, 1 November 2008.)

International funding organizations—as well as individual private donors—who fail to carry out due diligence in terms of evaluation, planning, and follow-up with the organizations they fund are particularly susceptible to being taken in by a ghost CSO.

Ghost CSOs might also arise by co-opting legitimate social benefit CSOs for their own ends. The simplest method of doing so is for the *picareta* to act as an intermediary between a donor and a social benefit CSO—but require a hefty “commission” for his or her services. For example, Mariana told me about a Brazilian acquaintance, Jeferson, who approached her with a substantial financial offer. He had somehow managed to secure €2000 from a European donor, and at first, Mariana was excited about the prospect of additional funding. However, there was a catch: only €1000 would go to her organization. Mariana would need to tell the donor that Jeferson was her employee, and once the money arrived, Jeferson would take €1000 for his personal use. Ultimately, Mariana rejected the offer—but she disclosed that she was tempted to accept. A thousand euros is a substantial sum, and even though the donor was being deceived, half of the funding would legitimately go to her organization, which was in dire need at the time. However, Mariana takes pride in her work, and as she said, “the arrangement just wasn’t right. There are *picaretas* everywhere, but my organization is real, and I want it to stay that way.”

Another social benefit CSO leader, Inês, described another variation on this strategy. The setup is the same—the *picareta* obtains funds from overseas, and connects them with a social benefit CSO—but adds a veneer of “transparency.” The *picareta* will keep a ledger of expenses to show donors, but records both revenue and expenses in euros only. For example, a German organization might donate 100 euros for an event, and once the receipts for transportation, materials, and snacks are tallied, they equal 100 reais, or 45 euros. Because expenses are accrued in reais, but recorded as if they had been accrued in euros, it appears that the organization has spent the entire amount of the donation, when in fact the majority of the funds—55 euros—remain. The *picareta* is able to pocket the “leftover” funds, while at the same time appearing to keep detailed and transparent records. (Field notes: 30 September 2008.)

Finally, a more complex—but potentially more lucrative—scheme is for the *picareta* to approach a social benefit CSO with the promise of helping them gain connections with outside funders, but require that the organization officially register under the *picareta’s* name, instead of the local founder. When the grant money arrives, the *picareta* takes most of it for personal use.
This method has the advantage of conferring legitimacy on the ghost CSO over the long-term; after all, the CSO genuinely exists and will continue to do so, usually with significantly more funding than before. However, the *picareta* becomes the official CSO leader, with the legal right to manage the organization’s finances in any way she likes, including diverting the majority of resources for her own use. This situation poses a real dilemma for social benefit CSO founders, as they must weigh the promise of funding—though minimal—against the risk of being transformed into a ghost CSO.

I observed a dramatic and troubling example of this process firsthand with respect to Thiago’s social benefit CSO in Fregata. Chapter 4 discussed his difficulties in accessing health care for his gangrene, resulting in the eventual amputation of his foot. During this same period, Thiago was approached by Renata, a particularly unscrupulous *picareta*. Renata is an upper-middle class Brazilian woman, with connections to most of the golden CSOs in Rio, as well as various media outlets and international organizations. As I understand it, Renata had a friend who was acquainted with Lisa, a foreigner who volunteered in Fregata. As Lisa recounted, Renata was extremely interested in getting to know her—she “friended” her on all the social networking sites, and frequently invited her out for drinks. Eventually, Renata told Lisa that she wanted to make a documentary film about the Fregata favela, and asked Lisa if she knew of any good social benefit CSOs there. Assuming good intentions, Lisa enthusiastically introduced Renata to Thiago, thinking that she might help him obtain some publicity for his organization.

At their first meeting, Renata asked Thiago if his social benefit CSO was officially registered with the government. When he said that it had not been, Renata became extremely interested. Thiago and Lisa both told me that Renata emphasized her financial connections—with advertising agencies, media outlets, and international foundations—and said to Thiago, “tell me your dream for your organization, because I can make it happen.” The only catch was that Thiago would have to officially register his CSO in Renata’s name.

During this period, Thiago’s injury worsened. Once he was finally admitted to the hospital, Renata visited him every day, pressuring Thiago and his wife to make a decision regarding his organization. Lisa became suspicious, and eventually confronted Renata. According to Lisa, the conversation went as follows:

Lisa: You know, now really isn’t a good time for this. Why don’t we wait until Thiago is out of the hospital and recovered before making any decisions?

Renata: Don’t worry! I’m going to register the CSO in all of our names, yours and mine together.”

Lisa (realizing what Renata had in mind): I really don’t want to be a part of what you are doing, and I think you should leave Thiago alone.

Renata: Oh, you misunderstand! I’m so sorry, this has all been a big misunderstanding, that’s not what I meant at all. Why don’t we all get together to clear this up, you and your boyfriend together with me and Thiago’s wife? We’ll get it all out in the open and talk about the future of the CSO together. (Fieldnotes: 15 November 2008.)

Lisa agreed, and the meeting was planned for the next afternoon at Thiago’s CSO headquarters. Everyone came—except for Renata. After two hours of waiting, Lisa went back to the hospital to visit Thiago, only to find Renata there, at his bedside, pressuring him to sign the paperwork. Clearly, Renata had no intention of attending the meeting she proposed at all.
I met Renata when we both happened to be in the waiting room of the hospital, there to visit Thiago on the same afternoon. When I introduced myself as a friend of his, Renata was uninterested in making conversation with me; in fact she was fairly rude. However, as soon as I mentioned that I was affiliated with a university, her demeanor changed completely. Renata gave me her email, social networking contact information, cell phone number, and said that she wanted to help me in any way she could. Then Renata asked me directly:

Renata: Are you here as an official representative from UC-Berkeley?

Me: I’m a graduate student at UC-Berkeley in the Political Science department, and I’m here doing research for my dissertation.

Renata: But are you an official representative from the university?

Me: I’m not sure what you mean. I’m getting my Ph.D. at UC-Berkeley, and I’m in Rio doing field research toward my degree.

Renata: Yes, I understand. But are you officially representing them?

Me: I’m so sorry, I don’t understand.

Renata: That’s okay, it’s okay! (She calls over her boyfriend, who asks me, in English, “Are you here as an official representative from UC-Berkeley?)

Me: (in English, then in Portuguese) I understand the words—you want to know if I’m an official representative from the university—but I don’t understand what you mean. I’m officially registered at UC-Berkeley as a graduate student, and the university has approved my research CSO to be conducted here. I don’t know what else to say. (Field notes: 15 November 2008.)

At that point, Renata became quite cold and distant once again. She appeared uninterested in continuing our conversation, and when I left, she barely said goodbye. At the time, I recorded the encounter in my field notes because it confused me, but in hindsight I understand exactly what Renata had been inquiring about. Essentially, she wanted to know if I was able to act in an official capacity on behalf of the university, particularly with respect to allocating university funds. Once she understood that I was “official” in the sense of being a graduate student but nothing more, her interest in befriending me came to an end.

Ultimately, Thiago decided that he did not want to register his CSO at all, and Renata ceased coming to the neighborhood. Afterward, however, he told me that—contrary to my fears that he would be unwittingly taken in by Renata—he had perceived the situation clearly from the very first day. “Picaretas are everywhere,” he said, and Renata’s behavior was completely transparent to him. The difficulty, he explained, was whether or not to allow his small but legitimate organization to be transformed into a ghost CSO. Even if his organization only received five percent of the revenue that Renata claimed she could raise, Thiago reasoned that it still might be enough to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the youth he serves, rendering it a difficult decision.

Ethical implications aside, the existence of ghost CSOs are not only a side effect of the funding environment; they have pernicious effects of their own for potential mobilization. By definition, ghost CSOs do not engage in collective action of any kind, particularly to avoid
calling attention to their activities (or lack thereof). Importantly, however, the existence of ghost CSOs gives legitimate organizations further incentives to avoid all connections. As Daiane articulated:

“This thing with nonprofits is a tricky business, because there are so many that sully their good name. Then we all pay for the actions of one who let us down. It’s difficult to find Brazilians to help us in our work because here in Brazil there are many ‘ghost CSOs’ [ONGs fantasmas], that are involved basically in money laundering. Our work ends up being stained with their reputation.” (Interview: Respondent #121, 20 August 2008.)

Daiane went on to explain that the organization she worked with, CSO Bela-manhã, generally avoids partnerships with other organizations for this very reason. However, she clearly perceives that this behavior “keeps the community divided, keeps us from working together,” and civil society becomes even more mistrustful of others than it was before.

CSOs that genuinely aim to benefit the community are justifiably angered by the funding that ghost CSOs receive. Grant funding is extremely difficult to obtain, and when well-intentioned donors support ghost CSOs that do little, if anything, for favela neighborhoods, it dilutes the already small pool of resources that exists. At the same time, legitimate organizations want to protect their reputations. Taken together, most people involved with authentic CSOs reason that it is best to avoid partnering with other organizations at the risk of unwittingly associating with, or being co-opted by, a ghost CSO.

5.6 Chapter Summary

In Rio de Janeiro, why are CSOs with the most resources the very organizations least likely to engage in politically relevant mobilization? I have demonstrated that, somewhat paradoxically, the relatively abundant resources that golden CSOs possess discourage them from initiating or participating in political collective action. The particulars of the funding environment in Brazil set the stage. Individuals rarely donate to nonprofit organizations, and the government is a fickle, clientelistic partner. Corporations provide a large share of funding to CSOs, but their support is generally directed toward organizations that they own and operate themselves. Many private foundations are also associated with corporations as well, and target their support accordingly. As a result, the amount of charitable giving available to “unaffiliated” CSOs is extremely small.

Those CSOs that seek to acquire resources by navigating the funding environment; namely, by winning large grants from the few foundations that exist, create a specific type of organization. In order to write successful grant proposals, CSOs create leadership teams of outsiders with project planning experience and influential connections. The highly competitive funding environment reinforces an atmosphere of competition, not partnership, which favors working in isolation, lest other organizations attempt to steal their ideas and resources. Finally, CSOs are strongly motivated to focus on activities that are in line with their donors’ interests, not necessarily those of the communities in which they work. Addressing larger, underlying issues of social discrimination would be controversial; actually resisting discrimination even more so. Therefore, CSOs with a “grant-driven” resource acquisition strategy have strong incentives
pushing them toward outsider leadership, narrow partnerships, and conservative, donor-driven activities.

While such a profile may be optimal for attracting and retaining major donors, it creates disincentives for politically relevant mobilization. Golden CSOs avoid creating network ties within and across communities. Their leadership teams reside outside favela neighborhoods, so they have a limited understanding of residents’ real needs, and they avoid controversial activities around which residents might want to mobilize. In short, golden CSOs have very little to gain from engaging in community activism, and quite a lot to lose. What golden CSOs tend to do, instead, is work in relative isolation, make decisions with little community input around issues that are important to funders and third-party organizations. Therefore, their activities are often fragmented and uncoordinated, doing little to address underlying neighborhood problems. Residents are involved in the planning process in very minimal capacities at best, and are often either viewed as subordinate actors or excluded entirely. Further, when golden CSOs act as liaisons for third-party organizations, their activities sometimes result in taking undue advantage of favela communities, with little or no recognition of residents’ contributions. All of these components negatively affect future community mobilization with respect to favela residents themselves. When golden CSO activities rarely bring positive outcomes, residents develop low expectations. They trust collective action less and less each time, and reason that future actions will only bring more of the same. Therefore, many favela residents have become disillusioned and discouraged with respect to participating in collective efforts entirely. Finally, some individuals respond to the funding environment by using it to defraud CSO financial supporters. Ghost CSOs exist either in name only, or in a very limited manner, for the express purpose of obtaining resources, then diverting them to their “founders” for personal use. The existence of these picaretas and their ghost CSOs also discourage community mobilization. Legitimate organizations want to protect their reputations, and it can be difficult to distinguish ghost CSOs from real ones. Therefore, many authentic community CSO leaders reason that it is best to avoid collaboration entirely, lest they be taken in by a picareta or ghost CSO.

In sum, CSOs that acquire few types of resources—major grants—from the few grant-making foundations that exist may have high levels of resources, but they also have incentives to build an organizational profile that discourages politically relevant mobilization. The civil society resource curse thus ensures that CSOs with abundant resources will rarely, if ever, direct those resources toward political action. However, not all CSOs in Rio are bound by these institutional funding incentives in the same way. Some organizations pursue a dramatically different resource acquisition strategy: seeking many types of resources from diverse sources. In turn, a relationship-driven strategy sets the stage for an organizational profile that favors politically relevant mobilization. These organizations are discussed in Chapter 6.
“Our wealth is in our connections, not money...because nobody can shut us down if we start irritating people.”

- author interview with a diamond CSO founder, 12 February 2012

Chapter 6. Avoiding the Money Trap: Citizenship CSOs and Diamond CSOs

Thus far, I have explained why the vast majority of CSOs in Rio de Janeiro concerned with favela communities fail to engage in politically relevant mobilization. Structural constraints—namely, the presence or absence of gang control over a favela neighborhood—affect all civil society organizations. Social benefit CSOs do not mobilize because they cannot overcome the barriers that inequality and gang territorial control present. Ghost CSOs have no interest in mobilization, as they are merely shell organizations used as vehicles for unscrupulous entrepreneurs to turn a profit. In contrast, golden CSOs present a real puzzle: with the greatest amount of financial resources, we might expect them to be best situated for politically relevant mobilization. Yet golden CSOs have the least ability to mobilize due to the “civil society resource curse.” Since they acquire few types of resources—namely, financial grants—from few sources, they have strong incentives to create an organization led by favela outsiders that works in relative isolation and undertakes donor-driven activities. Such a profile is conducive to winning major grants, but not for politically relevant mobilization.

Given that social, golden, and ghost CSOs comprise the vast majority of CSOs in Rio’s favela communities, very little politically relevant mobilization takes place. However, not all CSOs pursue the same resource acquisition strategies. Whether through coincidence or design, some favela CSOs avoid relying on few sources of resources, seeking out a diverse collection of supporters. Specifically, citizenship CSOs and diamond CSOs not only have many sources of resources, they acquire various types of resources from those sources. In turn, they face a different constellation of incentives that, as this chapter will show, encourages leadership, network, and activity choices that facilitate political mobilization. Thus, citizenship and diamond CSOs circumvent the civil society resource curse.

In this chapter, I explain what citizenship and diamond CSOs are, focusing on how they differ from other CSO types, and show how their resource acquisition strategy affects their organizational choices. First, I discuss how the strategy of relying on relationships places citizenship and diamond CSO types in a different incentive arena—one which encourages favela residents to take the lead, cultivates broad networks of supporters, and conducts activities that are of greatest interest to community members themselves. In turn, this profile of organizational choices allows these organizations to be particularly well-placed to engage in politically relevant mobilization. Brief case studies throughout the chapter illustrate how resident-led leadership, broad network ties, and flexible, relevant activities make political mobilization easier, both by building individual civic skills as well as engaging in collective action to change broader social attitudes.

6.1 How Citizenship CSOs Differ from Other CSO Types

When I began my research in Rio de Janeiro, the civil society landscape appeared fairly clear. Viewing CSOs according to the elements that the literature had identified as important for mobilization—the number, strength, and homophily of their network ties, their levels of financial resources, and numbers of supporters—it seemed easy to divide the organizations into two...
groups. All of the larger CSOs had one profile; the smaller CSOs had another. The larger organizations had a network tie profile that favored political action (many weak bridging ties), while the smaller ones had a profile that strengthened internal trust (few strong bonding ties), not external mobilization. Furthermore, the larger organizations had acquired the lions’ share of the grant money. With prominent offices and an international reputation for doing good work within Rio’s favelas, conventional expectations led me to believe that the largest CSOs would be the most politically active.

As the preceding chapters have shown, however, there is little correlation between size, level of resources, and politically relevant mobilization. Many of the largest organizations radically confound our expectations, rarely undertaking political activity at all. While some small organizations—social benefit CSOs—do fit conventional assumptions, others—citizenship CSOs—challenge them in surprising ways. What explains the variation? Chapter 2 presented two variables commonly found in the Brazilian literature: an organization’s physical proximity to the wealthy Southern Zone, as well as the size of the favela community in which the organization works. I selected favelas and CSOs in large part based on these two attributes. However, when I compared the variation that I observed with the variables of location and size, I found no discernible difference.

Over the course of my research, I visited small 45 CSOs located in a single favela community, and later identified five as “citizenship CSOs” instead of social benefit CSOs. As Chart 6.1 depicts below, three of the citizenship CSOs are located in Southern Zone communities (two in Fregata; one in Bem-Te-Vi), and two are located in the Northern Zone (Beija-Flor and Gaviota). However, the proportion of citizenship CSOs to social benefit CSOs in both regions is relatively similar: 10 percent in the North, and 18 percent in the South.

**Chart 6.1: CSO Type by Physical Location**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Author’s data compilation from fieldwork, 2007-2008).

Chart 6.2 below illustrates the relationship between CSO type and community size. The proportion of citizenship CSOs to social benefit CSOs in large favela complexes is roughly the same as that found in small neighborhoods. As the sample size is small, one should not draw broad inferences from these data. It may be the case that with a larger sample, a relationship
would be found. In addition, given the small number of CSOs that I was able to access in the Western Zone, it is not possible to compare this region with the rest. Despite these shortcomings, these data do suggest that there may not be a relationship among physical location, population size, and type of CSO. In other words, citizenship CSOs appear to occur with the same frequency in the North as in the South, and in large communities as well as smaller ones.

**Chart 6.2: CSO Type by Favela Population Size**

(Chart showing distribution of CSOs by population size and type)

(Source: Author’s data compilation from fieldwork, 2007-2008).

Finally, I noticed that citizenship CSOs varied in terms of who founded them. Table 6.1 displays the founders, size, and location for each of the five citizenship CSOs in this study. Recall that social benefit CSOs are uniformly founded by favela residents, while ghost and golden CSOs are largely founded by non-favela dwellers. Citizenship CSOs, however, had no clear pattern. Two citizenship CSOs—Açucena and Jacinto—were initiated by favela residents themselves, while two others were founded by favela outsiders: Bela-manhã was created by a foreigner, and Rainha-da-Noite was begun by a Brazilian non-favela resident. Finally, Girassol was spearheaded by a husband-and-wife team—she a foreigner who married a Fregata community resident and relocated to that favela neighborhood.

**Table 6.1: Characteristics of Citizenship CSOs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSO</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Founders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Açucena</td>
<td>Beija-Flor</td>
<td>Northern Zone</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Resident (Mariana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacinto</td>
<td>Bem-Te-Vi</td>
<td>Southern Zone</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Resident (Éverton)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bela-manhã</td>
<td>Gaviota</td>
<td>Northern Zone</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Outsider: Foreigner (Kevin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainha-da-Noite</td>
<td>Fregata</td>
<td>Southern Zone</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Outsider: Brazilian (Juliana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girassol</td>
<td>Fregata</td>
<td>Southern Zone</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Outsider/Resident: Holly and João Eduardo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In sum, citizenship CSOs are similar to other Rio CSOs in various ways. They are found both near and far from the wealthy Southern Zone, in large favela complexes as well as in small neighborhoods, and they are initiated by residents and outsiders alike. However, there is one area in which citizenship CSOs are radically different from other types: their resource acquisition strategy (Figure 6.1). Because citizenship CSOs acquire many types of resources from multiple sources, these organizations evade the incentives that give rise to the civil society resource curse. In turn, their organizational choices in terms of leadership, network ties, and activities tend to facilitate politically relevant mobilization.

**Figure 6.1: Resource Acquisition Strategy: Citizenship CSOs**

[Diagram showing resource acquisition strategy with Citizenship CSOs in the upper right quadrant.]

### 6.2 “I Knock on the Door and Pull them by the Ear:” Overcoming Barriers to Mobilization

Citizenship CSOs face the same barriers that social benefit CSOs do, but they overcome them in various ways. One is simply through sheer determination. Citizenship CSO founders want to address underlying issues of prejudice and discrimination, which require more resources than merely providing individual-level solutions. Therefore, these individuals do whatever it takes to garner resources from as many sources as possible. It is not that they are any less bound by the obstacles presented by the gangs; making connections with other groups remains challenging. Their actions invite risk—but these CSO leaders take the risk. It is expensive—but they spend the money, often out of their own pockets. It is time-consuming and exhausting—but they make the time, often after working and traveling for a full day. I asked Mariana and
Éverton, two favela resident CSO founders, how they were able to obtain resources despite the difficulties they faced. Their responses reflected a strong sense of personal determination:

“People, they think I must be an extra-terrestrial. I’m black, I live in a favela, and I’m poor. How is it that I’m able to go forward with what I’ve done? And they think ‘we aren’t able to do these things, why can Mariana do them?’ There is very little that can be done, that’s the reality. That’s one side. But on the other hand, they don’t try. They don’t want to ask. If you try, sometimes you achieve things you thought weren’t possible.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 6 August 2008.)

“When I started this CSO, nobody thought I could do it. I asked around, ‘come on, let’s do this’ and they all said ‘yeah, let’s, good idea.’ But then when the day came to do it, there was nobody there, just me. So I went around to their homes, and said ‘hey, are we gonna do this or not? I’m here, what about you?’ And the guys felt obligated to continue the work with me. And then things started to change. (How did they change?) By working, showing that we’re not like [other CSOs.] I think the big thing that I did here is that people know my difficulties, know my reality. After everything is ready, it’s easy to eat the cake. Making it is what’s difficult. So once I started performing the work, showing what I was here to accomplish, that made the difference. So now when I say ‘hey let’s do this’ they know if they say they will [agree to help] and don’t show up, I’m gonna knock on their door and pull them by the ear. They have to actually do something.” (Interview: Respondent #153, 27 October 2008.)

Favela outsiders must also be extraordinarily dedicated for their organizations to survive. Holly, the founder of CSO Girassol, described her typical workday:

“My paid job starts early, I start at 7 AM and work all day, and I usually get off around 6 in the evening. Which is just in time for me to teach classes at Girassol—they start at 7 PM, and sometimes I’m not back home until 11:30 at night. {How do you manage a schedule like that?} These kids, this organization, that’s my purpose, my life.” (Interview: Respondent #87, 9 October 2008.)

Despite their determination, these citizenship CSO founders frequently encountered resistance, especially in attempting to organize community activities. They would advertise free events, put up posters around the neighborhood, go door-to-door and extend personal invitations, yet still have their efforts come to naught. As Éverton explained:

“There’s going to be an event on the 15th, and we’re trying to get people to bring a donation of food. {Is it hard to get people to donate things?} Yes, within the community it’s very hard. The last time, one guy brought a kilo of sugar. That was it. 12,000 residents here, and that’s all we got. And the community isn’t that poor, you know? There are some who are poor, but there are others who went to university, there are people who own cars, you know? But the culture is that, as I told you, people take care of themselves only.” (Interview: Respondent #153, 27 October 2008.)

In Mariana’s neighborhood, her organizing activities met with not only resistance, but ultimately served to diminish social trust. One of the main issues in Beija-Flor is the lack of connections between residents; ordinary people go about their own business, commute to and from work, and
rarely interact with others outside their family circles. In an attempt to build community, Mariana decided to organize a potluck lunch. She personally invited each one of her neighbors and asked them to contribute a small item: six eggs, a half kilo of beans, or a few tomatoes. However, no one was willing to donate anything, or even attend. After four attempts at organizing the lunch over a six-month period, one of Mariana’s friends finally disclosed to her that most of her neighbors now thought that she was connected to the traffickers. Why? As outlined in Chapter 3, the gangs routinely ask for “donations” from local businesses and individuals, which they either keep for themselves or distribute to their supporters. Therefore, Mariana’s neighbors reasoned that she must now be affiliated with the gang—because why else would someone want to ask for donations from the community? Mariana said that she was offended by her neighbors’ response:

“I went around after that and said ‘you know me, I live here, I asked first, before they did, you have known the work I do for a long time, come on!’ But people would tell me that they ‘already gave.’ All I wanted to do was try to get people together, build some solidarity. I’m so discouraged, so depressed. {Do you think you will try again?} Eventually. But it will be very difficult.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 18 October 2008.)

I relate these “failed attempts” at mobilization to illustrate the difficulties that citizenship CSO leaders face. They encounter the same obstacles that social benefit CSOs do, and often find that they cannot overcome them. However, one key difference between these CSO leaders and leaders of other types is that they keep trying. Over time—measured in years, if not decades, like a “little ant climbing a hill”—citizenship CSO leaders are determined to garner resources for their work through creating broad networks of support, both within and across favela communities.

However, persistence alone is rarely sufficient. For this reason, citizenship CSOs founded by outsiders have an additional strategy at their disposal: they can leverage their own networks to bring in additional sources of resources. For example, the idea for CSO Bela-manhã grew out of one foreigner’s connection with a diamond CSO in Rio. While employed there, Kevin developed an interest in the Gaviota community, and formed his own organization after years of cultivating personal relationships with Gaviota’s residents. Moreover, there was a clear division of labor: Kevin offered planning advice and technical assistance, but his main role was to seek out connections with partner organizations in his home country. For their part, Gaviota residents were responsible for day-to-day management and decision-making.

Similarly, CSO Girassol was formed through a unique collaboration: Holly, a European woman, fell in love with a resident of Fregata—João Eduardo—and relocated to the Fregata favela community, where she has lived for over ten years. They are jointly involved in designing and running the organization, but whenever Holly travels back to her country of origin, she promotes the organization to friends, businesses, and European NGOs with similar goals. In Brazil, however, Holly has been able to integrate as fully within the Fregata favela as any outsider can due to her relationship with João Eduardo. When it comes to decision-making within the organization, the couple has pulled together a leadership team of committed residents who direct the CSO’s affairs.

Finally, when Juliana and her husband decided to create Rainha-da-Noite, they first volunteered as health educators within the Fregata community for three years. When some residents approached them with the idea of beginning an organization, instead of taking the lead,
Juliana and Gustavo spent months understanding the kind of organization that Fregata residents wanted. Although the process took time, it was essential to their mission, as Juliana explained:

“That’s our goal, to provoke discussion about issues that are important to residents, not us. What are the issues and needs that they have? Then, once residents have thought about and clarified the difficulties in the community, we can think together about solutions. They say, ‘let’s go here, not there.’ They have the power to decide what they want. They don’t need us for that.” (Interview: Respondent #148, 7 November, 2008.)

Citizenship CSOs, therefore, partially overcome the constraints presented by the gangs in two ways. First, citizenship CSO leaders appear determined to cultivate broad networks despite the risks involved in doing so. Some may characterize their persistence as foolishness, others may call it courageous—but regardless of the reason, it is clear that these leaders have a degree of determination above and beyond most others. Second, those citizenship CSOs founded by outsiders bring their own broad networks and connections to bear on the work. These outsiders are able to access the favela due to their close partnerships with residents; for their part, the residents receive access to valuable allies.

In turn, broader networks provide resources that citizenship CSOs can use to circumvent gang control. For example, partners in a non-favela area of Rio might allow a CSO to use their offices for meetings, thus providing a neutral location outside of gang territory. Allies also donate computers, fax machines, and copiers—or offer low cost/free access to these services—which enables citizenship CSOs to not only create workshop materials, but also connect more easily with others across gang boundaries. Most importantly, partners can provide citizenship CSO leaders with training in email and social networking technologies. Once they are proficient in communicating online, favela residents can meet virtually, expanding their possibilities for exchanging ideas, resources, and knowledge with each other. Leaders who are determined to create broad social networks, and especially those who have assistance from well-connected outside partners, manage to bypass some of the obstacles presented by gang control of favela communities.

Finally, another way that citizenship CSOs make connections across communities is through the assistance of diamond CSOs, the fifth CSO type in this study. Diamond CSOs are neither grantmaking institutions nor direct service providers; their role is to partner with other CSOs to help them achieve their goals more effectively. The next section discusses the characteristics of diamond CSOs in more detail.

### 6.3 Diamond CSOs as Key Partners for Political Action

At first glance, diamond CSOs appear quite similar to golden CSOs. They are both large organizations that work across a variety of favela communities, with many network connections comprised of weak bridging ties. When viewed by favela outsiders, these organizational types appear remarkably alike—to the point that they are often not considered to be different organizational types at all. Only when adding the additional attributes of “diversity of sources of resources” and “types of resources” do the distinctions between the two CSO types become evident. Table 6.7 illustrates the resource acquisition pattern that is common to Diamond CSOs.
As with citizenship CSOs, diamond CSOs also have a “high diversity; high types” organizational profile:

**Figure 6.2: Resource Acquisition Strategy: Diamond CSOs**

Given their similarities to golden CSOs in so many other respects, why do diamond CSOs follow a different resource acquisition strategy? Part of the answer lies in their mission: to inform social policy for the benefit of favela neighborhoods and their residents. Many diamond CSOs were originally founded by Brazilian activist-academics with ties to favela communities as well as major Brazilian universities. As Brazil transitioned to democratic rule in the mid-1980s, returning exiles and freed political prisoners—many who were academics—turned their attention to creating civil society organizations. Arguably the most well-known activist-academic is Herbert José de Sousa (1935-1997), or “Betinho”—a Brazilian sociologist who devoted his life to combating social and economic inequalities in his home country (Garrison 1996; Bailey 1999). After spending the majority of the dictatorship years in exile in Chile, Canada, and Sweden, Betinho returned to Brazil in 1979 to found the Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analysis (IBASE). While similar “think tanks” existed in other parts of the world in the 1980s, Betinho was one of the first in Brazil to fuse scholarly research with activism and advocacy. In later years, he supported similar organizations around issues of land reform, hunger, and AIDS/HIV, and inspired many other Brazilian scholars to follow his example.

By the early 2000s, most diamond CSOs in Rio had either been founded by Betinho himself, such as IBASE, or had their origins in his organizing work. The Institute for Alternative Public Policy for the Southern Cone (Instituto Políticas Alternativas para o Cone Sul, or PACS), for example, was formed by a group of exiled economists who, upon their return home, wanted
to “make their expertise and creativity available to social movements.”\(^\text{48}\) Two other prominent diamond CSOs were founded by Jâílson de Souza e Silva: a young man who grew up in a favela, became active in social movements against the dictatorship, eventually earned a doctorate, and created the Institute for Studies on Labor and Society (Instituto de Estudos do Trabalho e Sociedade, or IETS) as well as the Favela Observatory (Observatório de Favelas). Similarly, a Brazilian anthropologist responded to Rio’s Candelaria massacres in 1993 by creating Viva Rio, which aims to “promote a culture of peace and facilitate social inclusion.”\(^\text{49}\)

Valladares argues that Brazilian academics have a strong tradition of applying sociological knowledge to better “the lower ranks of society, on the poor, and on the workings of communities” which is “mingled with activist attitudes, both normative and prescriptive.” As the individuals profiled above illustrate, to be an academic in Brazil is to intertwine research and scholarship with activism and politics. Unlike many other countries in which a satisfying academic career can be comprised of research for its own sake, Brazilian scholars—particularly social scientists—strive to play an active role in society, seeking to transform it for the better by amplifying the voices of the poor and marginalized (Valladares 2008: 23).

Their activist orientations often lead diamond CSOs to pursue goals that are different from other organizational types. They do not provide direct community services or offer funding opportunities. Instead, they conduct policy-relevant social research. Diamond CSOs sponsor working groups, organize forums, evaluate public policies directed toward favela communities, and publish their research results. They also advise and train local-level CSOs so that neighborhood organizations can better achieve their goals.

Diamond CSOs receive some funding and support from the Brazilian government as well as international funding agencies. Unlike other CSO types, however, they do not hesitate to refuse funding when it conflicts with their own ideological persuasions. Bailey (1999) reports that Betinho himself was a vocal critic of many government social policies, even when his activism resulted in IBASE losing its funding from the Ministry of Education. In much the same way, diamond CSOs provide support to community CSOs and advocate on their behalf within government agencies, while at the same time criticizing public policies that are viewed as detrimental to favela communities. For example, when I asked one program coordinator to describe the CSO’s mission, she said that it was to “strengthen local leaders.” When I asked her to elaborate, she replied:

“Local [favela] residents might not have much education, or a lot of money to implement CSOs, but they have unique knowledge. There are those who know solutions, and then there are those who live the problems. Solutions that get brought into the community from outside generally reproduce social hierarchies when they don’t come from the community. So our mission is to support those true leaders, to develop more organic solutions to problems that the community will accept.” (Interview: Respondent #66, 16 August 2007.)

The quotation above articulates a distinguishing feature of diamond CSOs—they strive to partner with smaller organizations at the local level, not overtake or direct their work. This goal dovetails with the type of resources that many citizenship CSOs believe they need. During my semi-structured interviews, I asked representatives from each organization about their resources “wish list”—what does your organization most need right now? Most—but not all—CSO

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\(^\text{48}\) See [www.pacs.org.br](http://www.pacs.org.br), author’s translation.

leaders said that money was their greatest need, so I followed up with the question: “If someone gave your CSO (the equivalent of) one thousand dollars today, what would you do with it?” Responses varied, but I noticed some common themes regarding the way that different CSO types approached the answer. Social benefit CSOs had generally not considered the issue at all, and a few could not come up with a response because the premise was so unrealistic to them. Put another way, given that no one ever has—or is ever likely to—donate that kind of money, so it would be a waste of time to engage in speculation. For their part, golden CSOs had an opposite reaction. These leaders knew exactly how they would use the money, often for an item or program for which they already had an outstanding grant application, and occasionally asked me if I would personally donate the thousand dollars. Citizenship CSOs approached the question in yet another way. These were the only CSO types that did not always immediately volunteer “more funding” as the item their organization most needed. Even though additional monetary resources were in constant demand, citizenship CSO leaders responded as follows:

“One thing we need is more partnerships, especially with companies. We need to find a way to insert the youth into the labor market. And not a financial partnership, a partnership in which the business agrees to help youth attain jobs. We’d really like to invest in the area of job training, but we don’t have a way to do so right now.” (Interview: Respondent #115, 14 August 2008.)

“We need a Portuguese professor. We have the money, but the problem is that we can’t find someone with the skills to tutor youth in Portuguese who is also willing to come into the favela. Money can’t change prejudice.” (Interview: Respondent #143, 10 October 2008.)

“We still lack many aspects for evaluating our work. We’ve managed to establish a good yearly quantitative assessment, with some qualitative indicators, but I think we still need to move forward with respect to measuring the impact of our actions. I think that’s our greatest challenge. And this isn’t easy, because you need a model to follow, it takes time and investment, and it’s not done over the short-term, it takes a long time. To find out, I mean, our programs are good, but what was their impact really on this boy’s life, we have to intensify that work. We need to work on improving our indicators of success.” (Interview: Respondent #123, 19 September 2008.)

“For us, there’s the issue of planning. It always happens like this, we all get together, ‘oh how nice, we’re all here’ and we all get together and talk, but nothing happens. We need concrete goals. If the goal is to exchange experiences, that’s nice, but we should actually do something. Otherwise, we’re meeting, yes, but it doesn’t translate into any real effects.” (Interview: Respondent #83, 20 June 2008.)

“One could say that because I don’t have much funding, the CSO isn’t going well. But at the same time I wonder, the only thing that would change the results that I have, if I had more money, is that more people would know that the CSO exists here. So that would change. But all the rest, I don’t think it’s a question of money. {What is it a question of?} It’s creating these links, creating a sense of community. But that’s very difficult. It’s a vicious circle, people don’t involve themselves and an event doesn’t work out, but for it to work, we need people to be involved. It’s more or less like that.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 6 August 2008.)
Increased partnerships, planning and evaluation skills, and local community involvement—these are aspects of organizational success that money cannot necessarily buy, but that citizenship CSOs value all the same.

Since diamond CSOs do not provide funding, local community organizations do not risk navigating the “resource curse” when they connect with them. On the contrary, diamond CSOs are often crucial intermediaries in helping citizenship CSOs obtain the various types of resources they want. Citizenship CSO leaders offered specific examples such as these:

“There was an accountant who helped me with the financial issues, and a lawyer who helped the CSO get legal status. Because you need to have a lawyer’s signature. [How did you find these people?] It was through [diamond CSO R]. And they also gave us three computers and some tables. [Another diamond CSO] gave us a monitor. These kinds of things. I’m not going to achieve my objectives with these things, but they put me on the right path.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 2 August 2008.)

“We have a partnership with [diamond CSO S]. Last year they held a course here, I don’t remember what it was called. It was to prepare young people to work at the Pan-American Games. So we made a partnership with them, and they held the course here. We advertised it too, and youth from our organization participated as well as youth they had contacted. [How did you get that partnership?] You know Jeferson, he’s a photographer? He works for us, but also for [CSO S]. And he helped put us in contact with them.” (Interview: Respondent #116, 14 August 2008.)

“I learned how to develop a project plan from [another citizenship CSO in a different favela community.] [How did that happen?] I got to know them through [diamond CSO R]. They showed me how to organize a project. And then after that, they directed me to [diamond CSO T] because they had already done various training courses with them.” (Interview: Respondent #45, 26 July 2007.)

“We have a good relationship with [diamond CSO M], Gabriela and Thaís are part of their youth team. When they started it, they contacted us and asked us to recommend two youth from here to take part. And they go there once a week, so we have a relationship with them through those young people. Their leadership team came here to visit us also. The idea is for young people to be trained in how to promote citizenship. They’re not going to give classes, instead they make and show videos, they have a whole campaign, and one of the goals is to establish a partnership with other young people from different favelas. It’s pretty cool.” (Interview: Respondent #90, 14 August 2008.)

The above examples reflect the generally positive relationship that exists between local community leaders and diamond CSO staff. The knowledge, resources, and expertise that diamond CSOs possess are freely shared with local favela organizations.

In turn, individuals and organizations that connect with diamond CSOs make contacts across different areas of Rio and build valuable civic skills, all of which enhance their mobilizational capacity in a way that connections with other types of CSOs do not. Overcoming the barriers that structural conditions provide is difficult for any CSO type. Citizenship CSOs do so in part through conviction and fortitude, but they may also be assisted along the way by
outsiders. Admittedly, citizenship CSO leaders must exercise caution when forming alliances, as not all CSOs share the same goals. However, diamond CSOs are often valuable partners because their mission tends to correspond with that of citizenship CSOs: both seek to reduce social prejudice and discrimination against favela residents and their communities, goals which often lend themselves to mobilizational activity.

Nevertheless, the explanation provided thus far remains incomplete. Citizenship CSOs are able to act in ways unavailable to other organizations in part because their leaders are persistent and have influential allies outside favela communities—but another key reason is that these CSOs are less beholden to the civil society resource curse than others. Since building relationships, rather than applying for grants, is their main resource acquisition strategy, citizenship CSOs face alternative incentives. These CSOs thus tend to create organizational profiles that are conducive to politically relevant mobilization. The next section elaborates on this point.

### 6.4 Implications of a Relationship-Driven Resource Acquisition Strategy

Different resource acquisition strategies lead to contrasting sets of organizational incentives. All CSOs make choices regarding who makes decisions for the organization, how to form and utilize network ties (if such ties are made at all), and which activities to pursue. In this section, I am not arguing that a particular set of choices is better than another. It is just that organizational choices tend to foster different outcomes; whenever a choice is made, some possibilities narrow while others open up. I demonstrate that—other goals aside—making particular organizational choices with respect to leadership, network ties, and activities can affect the likelihood of that organization undertaking politically relevant mobilization, as shown in Figure 6.3.

**Figure 6.3: Citizenship CSOs and Diamond CSOs Have Incentives for Political Action**

![Figure 6.3](image)

**Resident-Led Organizations**

Recall that in order to attract and retain funding from major foundations, CSOs need leaders and staff with grantwriting experience, project planning capability, and influential connections within the funding arena. Therefore, CSOs that acquire resources mainly through foundation grants tend to create leadership teams of outsiders who possess these skills, even if
the CSO was originally founded by favela residents. However, citizenship CSOs generally do not look to major foundations for support. Since they are not trying to capture the attention of large donors, citizenship CSOs have less need for the specialized skills outlined above. On the contrary, given that they need connections within and across favela communities to obtain resources, they require credible leadership—which in turn gives these CSOs an incentive to place residents in leadership positions.

All citizenship CSOs share a commitment to resident-led leadership similar to Arnstein’s (1969) “citizen power” model of participation. Arnstein identifies eight types of individual participation, arranged in a ladder format and divided into three basic categories. “Non-participation” is at the bottom of the scale, followed by “tokenism” further up, and, at the top of the ladder, the “citizen power” group represents the highest degree of popular participation. Essentially, the citizen power model describes situations in which ordinary people might work together with government or other higher-status individuals, but power is shared in such a way that decision-making is a joint effort. Citizens have power as equals, with full control over policy decisions, management choices, and budgetary allocations (Arnstein 1969: 219-223). This model of leadership was evident in the citizenship CSOs that I came to know well, both in their planning styles as well as their day-to-day operations.

Favela residents comprised the vast majority of the leadership team for all of the citizenship CSOs in this study. Even Bela-manhã, which was originally created by Kevin, a foreigner, has a leadership team that is overwhelmingly (all but one person) comprised of Gaviota residents. Moreover, about 40% of the leadership team participated in the CSO as youths before being selected for a paid staff position. This is because, as Daiane explained, it is crucial that the people who implement the programs are from the community themselves. For example, I was permitted to sit in on staff meetings during my time with this CSO. The team determined that the content of their meetings was not to be included in my research, but that I could describe the process by which decisions were reached. A representative section from my field notes gives a sense of how the meetings unfolded:

November 5, 2008: I attended a staff meeting at Bela-manhã that included Kevin (the CSO founder), who was visiting from overseas. Kevin presented some ideas, but other people did too—it didn’t seem that his ideas held more weight than anyone else’s. Example—today, Kevin had an idea that he really liked (based on a CSO in his home country), and he wanted to implement it in Gaviota. A few of the residents on the leadership team agreed, but the majority did not. They gave various reasons why this idea wouldn’t work in the community, and after some debate, the idea was discarded (even though Kevin still seemed to think it would work). But the group moved on from there. Most of the time, someone would present an idea, and the team would brainstorm, trying to improve it, giving different perspectives. Ideas that were easy to implement and easily agreed upon were readily adopted. Ideas that were agreed upon but harder to implement were thought through, and a plan was made for future discussion on how to work out the logistics. Ideas that were controversial were debated until consensus was reached (or more likely, shelved for a future meeting where more discussion could take place after gathering more information). After about an hour, the meeting ended, and we broke out the cookies and soft drinks and just hung out chatting for a while.

The style of this meeting was typical, not only for this CSO, but for every citizenship CSO that I visited. Favela “outsiders” with talents in planning, organization, and meeting facilitation would utilize their skills during CSO meetings, but they generally did not take the lead or overwhelm the decision-making process. Instead, favela residents on the leadership team were firmly in
control of all of the decisions being taken, and were full partners in not only what happened, but in how decisions were reached.

CSO Açucena is much smaller than Bela-manhã in that there is no formal “leadership team” other than Mariana, the organization’s resident founder. However, she has a “resident-leadership” leadership philosophy in that she strives to incorporate CSO youth into the decision-making process. For example, when I asked “who decides what this CSO will do,” Mariana replied:

“Well, I make the decisions. But wait, no that’s not so, in reality I do, but in conjunction with the kids. I mean, as far as the administration goes, I make the decisions. But in everything, the children have input. {Can you give me an example?} Well, we used to have a library here, in this photo, see? But it’s not here anymore. It wasn’t my decision, I talked to the kids, I talked to them all, I said ‘see, the books here are just gathering dust, nobody is using them. So what should we do?’ And the kids started to give ideas. Some suggested building a shelf, but others said that they would still take up space. And if no one is going to use the books then we should use that space for something else. Finally Mayara had the idea of bagging up all of the books, well, except the research books and textbooks that we use to help with schoolwork, we’d keep those on a shelf, but the rest, we’d put in a big bag, and advertise around the neighborhood ‘if you want a book, come here and get it for free.’ And that’s what we did. So that’s what I mean when I say that decisions are made together.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 6 August 2008.)

Even though Mariana chooses the overall direction and goals for the organization, she believes that one of its main missions is to give youth leadership opportunities. Therefore, even small decisions such as what to do with surplus books are subject to the approval of the CSO youth.

Similarly, in the Fregata community, CSO Rainha-da-Noite is a mid-sized citizenship CSO; there is a leadership team, but it is much smaller than that of Bela-manhã. Since its founder, Juliana, does not live in the favela neighborhood, I asked her why she was committed to resident leadership, especially since it might be easier to attract funding by including individuals with grantwriting skills. Juliana emphasized that resident leadership was at the core of Rainha-da-Noite’s mission:

“There’s always the issue of never paternalizing the relationship, being the owners of truth, giving direction to the work undertaken. That’s not what we do. We want to work together, we learn from the population and we also exchange ideas, but not cause them to take a certain direction. We participate in the construction of the CSO, but the population gives the guidelines for what we will pursue. So the CSO develops from within the community. It’s not us, from outside the community, that we make the big decisions. Instead we interact, they give opinions, we also contribute, and a CSO forms itself from that participation.” (Interview: Respondent #148, 2 October 2008.)

I was also permitted to attend some of Rainha-da-Noite’s staff meetings, in which I saw their leadership philosophy implemented firsthand. On one occasion, the group had developed a PowerPoint presentation in Portuguese that described steps that residents of Fregata could take to reduce their risk of tuberculosis. The campaign was successful within the community, and the group was eventually invited to give its presentation to an international audience. Therefore, the text on the slides needed to be translated into English. I offered to help, and the leadership team
readily accepted; I assumed that they would email me the slides, I would translate them, and that would be that.

The actual process, however, was quite different. Juliana emailed me the slides in advance so that I could become familiar with the text—but then invited me to attend a meeting with the entire team, in which we went through the slides one-by-one. The leadership team wanted to ensure that the connotation of the words I chose matched the spirit of their intentions. For each slide, the group would tell me what they wanted to convey, sometimes disagreeing with each other. On more than one occasion, the group decided to use a word or phrase in English that was different from the one I had originally chosen because they thought it was closer in meaning to the viewpoint they wanted to present. Juliana attended this meeting as well, and I could tell by her demeanor (and in our debriefing discussion afterward) that my role was not to provide a translation fully formed, but to use my bilingual ability to enable the group to choose English words that best conveyed what they wanted to say.

In a sense, this is the essence of resident leadership. Outsiders may be involved with the CSO—even by founding the CSO independently—but they are committed to a style of decision-making in which favela community residents are the primary owners. As I discovered in the anecdote related above, this is often much easier said than done. It would have been much faster for me to translate the document on my own, and better for my ego to have my expertise accepted without question. However, full engagement of favela residents means that outsiders must be willing to take a step back, move slowly, gather input from the community, and avoid imposing ideas that the majority of the group feels are not in line with their interests. Outsiders, particularly first-world professionals and academics, may find it difficult to accept “other ways of knowing”—as Juliana frames it—as equally valid, or more so, than the knowledge, skills, and talents that they bring to the table. As the next section describes, however, when resident leadership is successfully implemented, it not only builds local credibility, it also has beneficial effects for creating broad network ties.

**Broad Partnerships Within and Across Favelas**

If a CSO builds its resource acquisition strategy around winning grants, the competitive funding environment fosters an environment of rivalry among CSOs instead of partnership. Most choose to avoid other CSOs entirely, while a few others seek to take over competing organizations, or drive them out of the neighborhood. CSOs that opt out of pursuing grant money relinquish the chance to obtain significant financial resources. In doing so, however, they also frame themselves as neutral parties. Therefore, other CSOs and individuals are more willing to collaborate. In addition, when residents are fully in charge of the organization’s activities, goals, and direction, the CSO becomes known as a locally-led organization, which increases credibility and trust. Favela residents may not know how to write a professional grant proposal, but they do understand their neighborhoods. As Chapter 4 described, trust within Brazil is notoriously low, but if favela residents are going to trust anyone, it will be someone within their already existing social networks.

These two dynamics create a “virtuous circle” for generating network connections. If a CSO declines to pursue grant funding, but also has a broad mission, it needs to acquire resources in some way. Because they incorporate community residents into their leadership structures, local-level resources become somewhat easier to obtain. On one hand, citizenship CSOs need resident leaders to confer legitimacy in order to make broad network connections, but at the same time, other organizations and individuals are more inclined to trust citizenship CSOs than they
would be otherwise. The enhanced credibility of citizenship CSOs gives them access to a broad range of network ties, which in turn enable them to garner resources from a variety of partners. Chapter 4 discussed the structural and cultural difficulties that favela residents face in trying to forge connections with others. Contrast those experiences with these accounts from citizenship CSO leaders and team members:

“[Can you give me an example of how you work with other organizations in the community?] Well, we have a health post here, and sometimes they come and do presentations for the youth. We have a high level of tuberculosis here, so we call a health professional, and he comes to our classes and explains what it is, how to prevent it, things like that. We do vaccines here also, if they [at the health post] have a vaccination campaign, or a campaign against dengue, we let them use our space, and pass on the information. So we can count on them, and they can count on us. [How did you arrange this partnership?] Luana, you know her, she works here with us, well her cousin is a nurse at the health post. So that’s why we have this close partnership.”

(Interview: Respondent #116, 14 August 2008.)

“Even people who don’t live here anymore, who have moved out, they help us. Henrique lives in [a non-favela area] now, Mateus is living near the city center, Eduardo isn’t here anymore either. But Fabio, Carlos, Marcelo, they’re all still here. And even those people who have moved away, who don’t participate in the CSO anymore, they still support us. Whenever we have an event, they help advertise it, they come by if they can, they encourage our youth.”

(Interview: Respondent #153, 27 October 2008.)

“On Fridays, I teach an afternoon art class at Girassol. They provide the materials, and donate R$25 to my social benefit CSO for each class I teach for them. Sometimes the class goes overtime, which is frustrating, but I want to give all the kids an opportunity to have fun, to make art. And I’ve known them, I’ve known João Eduardo [the founder] for a long time, they do good work here. So I don’t really mind the overtime.” (Interview: Respondent #135, 30 September 2008.)

“We also have connections with the school here. We’re concerned about school attendance, that is always the first priority. So our instructors sometimes work with the teachers there, which is great. [How did you get this partnership with the school?] It took years. We went very slowly. Bianca already knew some of the school directors from when her kids were in school, and she’s been with us for a long time. And she just kept calling them. Inviting them for breakfast, to our events, to the Circus when we had tickets, she invites everybody. Whenever we have access to anything like that, we send an invitation to all of the organizations that we can. Maintaining our network is very important to us.” (Interview: Respondent #121, 8 August 2008.)

As these examples illustrate, citizenship CSOs are able to make connections with other CSOs largely due to the fact that they are resident-led. Local leadership gives these CSOs credibility, as well as access to other organizations through their leaders’ family or close friendship circles.

To be sure, the constraints that other types of CSOs face in making connections remain in place for citizenship CSOs as well. Securing resources, especially financial ones, is a significant challenge for all organizational types that is never fully resolved. At the same time, however, since citizenship CSOs have opted out of the “race” to win the attention of major donors, their
members are less wary of collaboration with other CSOs, and in fact must rely on others for non-financial kinds of support. As organizations, citizenship CSOs are less beholden to the resource curse, and thus gain two advantages: other CSOs view them as less threatening, and their resident leaders can leverage their credibility to create social trust. Therefore, citizenship CSOs tend to be more effective than other types in creating broad partnerships.

“If I Had Known You Were American, I Never Would Have Agreed to Meet:” Freedom and Flexibility

Once an organization receives a major financial grant, it is logical that they would want to receive a similar grant the next year, and the year after that. If the CSO’s activities are attractive to donors at present, why risk grant funding by changing what works? Golden CSOs therefore have incentives to keep activity profiles quite stable. Moreover, grantmaking foundations need to keep the interests of their own supporters in mind, which, as outlined in Chapter 5, are often Brazilian corporations or foreign NGOs. Therefore, Brazilian CSOs that seek grant funding have an incentive to engage in CSO activities that are of primary interest to donors, not necessarily favela community residents.

Citizenship CSOs are in a different position. Foreign individuals might provide some financial support, but the majority of citizenship CSO resources are derived from individuals and organizations in multiple favela communities as well as non-favela areas of Rio. Moreover, the most common types of resources for citizenship CSOs are in-kind donations, volunteer time, skills training, and introductions to other individuals and organizations who might provide more of the same. Since they do not seek resources from funding agencies—or any single source, for that matter—citizenship CSOs are less beholden to a given funder’s interests. In fact, this freedom is one main reason why some CSOs might proactively choose to avoid going after foundation grants entirely. In doing so, they gain the autonomy necessary to engage in the activities that favela residents, not funders, wish to undertake.

It is important to recall that this is not an easy path by any means; on the contrary, I believe it is the most challenging method to pursue. Most local-level CSOs that begin in favela communities start out as social benefit CSOs, and the majority remain as such. Some strive to grow by obtaining major grants, and the few that actually succeed become golden CSOs themselves. In the process, however, social benefit CSOs are often co-opted, driven out of the local neighborhood, or transformed into ghost CSOs as they seek additional funding. The vast majority of social benefit CSOs, then, remain as small organizations that generally avoid connections with others, as discussed in Chapter 4. Only a very small minority of social benefit CSOs become citizenship CSOs that prioritize both the immediate and long-term needs of residents over other, more easily funded goals. Each citizenship CSO founder that I interviewed expressed frustration with trying to garner resources:

“I’m so tired. I’m in this all alone. Even when we get some help, even when something is donated or an event is paid for, it’s a lot of work. And it’s not just the financing, it’s working against the culture of ‘nobody cares.’ I’m always swimming upstream.” (Interview: Respondent #87, 2 September 2008.)

“Fundraising is always difficult. Even when, for example we got some computers donated, but no, they weren’t really donated because they were promised, but not delivered. They [the donors] said the computers were on the way, but after ten days, I called again, then a month
went by and no computers, so I called again and they said it was just taking some time. That was over six months ago. And I’m not going to call them again. It’s been so long, I don’t want to bother them, but I also don’t want to beg.” (Interview: Respondent #153, 27 October 2008.)

“Our work is on the molecular level. We work so hard for very small-scale changes, that we hope will grow into bigger ones, but it’s all step-by-step. And as soon as we solve one problem, it creates two more. There’s very little that can be done, that’s the reality.” (Interview: Respondent #146, 8 November 2008.)

I followed up on comments like these by asking why these CSO leaders didn’t also try to apply for grant funding. If their applications were successful, I assumed that CSO leaders would be able to focus more effectively on their mission without constantly worrying about cobbling together resources. However, citizenship CSO leaders countered with the claim that accepting grants from funding agencies would be detrimental to their independence:

“We don’t want to be institutionalized! {What do you mean?} We, here in the community, we want to control what we do, we don’t want it imposed on us from outside. And other institutions don’t have our interests first in mind.” (Interview: Respondent #8, 27 June 2007.)

“My goal is to be able to pay a teacher, and a psychologist, and to have a real structure in order to work with the children. I’d like to do work to enlarge and beautify this space. But I can’t keep doing it all alone. {So why not apply for funding?} I’m afraid it will turn into a handout. They [donors] just deal with what they think they know, not the real situation on the ground, not the root causes.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 6 August 2008.)

“Funders, especially foreign agencies, they have a ‘top-down’ conception of the community. They think they know best what we need. And that’s what we want to avoid.” (Interview: Respondent #57, 8 August 2007.)

{On my first meeting with a citizenship CSO member, after almost two hours of conversation:}

“You’re American?! If I had known that, I never would have agreed to meet you. {After some confusion, an explanation} and eventual laughter, I asked why not?} Because of all the outsiders, they [Americans] are the worst. They think that they know what the favela needs, they think they have all the answers. Just look at your policies, look at Iraq...[she continued expressing discontent with American foreign policy. Then:] But we think, here, that solutions have to come from the communities themselves, always. That’s why we are careful about [connecting with other organizations], and we have a policy of non-engagement especially with Americans.” (Interview: Respondent #46, 30 July 2007.)

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50 It was quite a stroke of luck that enabled me to meet this person. I had met a French woman at a party who had been living in Brazil for many years. After I told her about my research, she put me in touch with this citizenship CSO member. Therefore, when we met, she assumed that I was also French. After two hours of very good conversation, finding out that we had much in common, she asked how I became so fluent in English. When I replied that I was American, she was quite surprised, to say the least. Eventually she said that she would “make an exception” in my case—half-joking, but also half-seriously.
As the excerpts above illustrate, attempting to achieve broad goals without relying on a secure revenue stream can be extremely frustrating. Yet citizenship CSO leaders believe their mission comes first; meeting residents’ needs—both immediate and long-term—is the first priority. They would prefer to end the CSO entirely rather than compromise its goals. Difficult as this work may be, citizenship CSO leaders often compared themselves to the hummingbird in Betinho’s fable. As told to me by many favela residents, the story is as follows:

Once upon a time there was a huge forest fire. While all of the other animals ran away from it in fear, a tiny little hummingbird went to the river, caught a drop of water in her beak, flew back to the fire, and let it go. As she kept going back and forth from the river to the fire, the lion approached her and said: “Little hummingbird, do you really think you will succeed in putting out this fire all by yourself?” To which the hummingbird replied, “I don’t know if I will be successful or not, but I am doing my part.”

Like the hummingbird, citizenship CSO leaders know that the results of their efforts may not materialize for years, if at all. Nevertheless, they take solace in the fact that they have done all they could, which motivates them to continue in their work. While resources are always in short supply, citizenship CSO leaders prefer having the freedom to choose the activities they want to undertake. But what, exactly, do citizenship CSOs do differently than other CSO types? How are their activities politically relevant, and why do resident leadership, broad network connections, and freedom of action make a difference? The final section of this chapter elaborates on these themes.

Building Essential Civic Skills

Citizenship CSOs are not dependent on one source of resources for their survival, and the organizational choices that they make reflect this freedom. They are led by local community residents who have full decision-making authority on par with outsiders on the leadership team, even if outsiders originally founded the CSO. Resident leadership confers credibility, which makes forming broad network connections easier, and the activities that citizenship CSOs undertake match the interests of their particular neighborhood. In this sense, citizenship CSOs operate differently from other types of organizations. In addition to meeting short-term community needs, these CSOs engage residents in creative ways. They not only raise consciousness around favela residents’ rights as citizens, but they also take action to address cultural attitudes regarding discrimination. In short, citizenship CSOs have an organizational profile that supports building civic skills and responding flexibly to residents’ interests, thus facilitating politically relevant mobilization.

Scholars have long explored why some people are more engaged in public life than others. Beginning in the late 1960s, researchers sought to understand particular political behaviors such as voting, contacting elected officials, and signing petitions (Bendix and Lipset 1966; Verba and Nie 1972; Otto 1975). Work continued along these lines arguably until Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) turned their attention further back in the causal chain, focusing on capacities, not specific behaviors, that were essential for participation. Verba et. al. contend that individual interest, social network connections, and resources combine to make participation possible. Further, they find that resources such as time, money, and civic skills are better predictors of political participation than personal motivation. Certainly, civic skills are more likely to be possessed by people with higher socio-economic status, and thus, more time and
money at their disposal. However, civic skills may be the most egalitarian type of resources since they can be learned and refined through practice.

A clear definition of civic skills, however, has often been lacking. Articulating exactly what civic skills are, and how these capacities translate to political action, is essential for understanding how they operate and how they can best be acquired. Kirlin (2006; 2010) is arguably at the forefront of clarifying this issue; she developed a typology of civic skills based on the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)’s 2003 review of the literature across five disciplines. Kirlin’s typology identifies four core categories of civic skills: critical thinking, communication, organization, and collective decision-making. Table 6.2 below illustrates how the components of each category facilitate political mobilization. Increasing one’s free time and disposable income may not be realistic options for many people. Civic skills, on the other hand, can be learned through participation:

Table 6.2: How Different Types of Civic Skills Facilitate Political Mobilization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>These Civic Skills…</th>
<th>…Make These Activities Easier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Take a position on public issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• describe, analyze, explain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reason and think abstractly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• synthesize information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• develop new solutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Contact elected officials Make public presentations Persuade others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• develop vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• speak in public</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• write letters/email</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• express an opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Bring people together to work towards common interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• plan and run a meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• get others to participate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• develop a plan for action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• find event space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• acquire resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• get publicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• keep records</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Decision-Making</td>
<td>Seek solutions, activities, and courses of action that are best for the entire group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• how to work as a member of a team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• understand other’s opinions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• willingness to compromise</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• how to reach a decision</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Author compilation from: The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) 200; Kirlin 2003, 2006, 2010.)

51 The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) evaluated the literature on civic skills within the fields of sociology, psychology, education, political science, and youth development, published in The Civic Mission of Schools, 2003.
Through working with others—in unions, at church, in cultural organizations, sports clubs, and practically any venue in which people associate together—individuals have the opportunity to acquire civic skills. As people practice thinking through an idea, communicating it to others, reaching a decision and organizing an event as a result, they develop the skills they need to engage in public life.

It has been generally assumed that merely participating in an organization with others confers the ability to develop civic skills. Since 2000, however, research shows that passive participation is not enough. Individuals, particularly youth, need specific opportunities to acquire and cultivate the ability to think, communicate, organize, and make decisions. For example, while Verba et al. (1995) found that churches are an ideal venue for developing civic skills, they also noted that Protestant denominations provide more leadership opportunities for non-clergy than Catholic churches do. Schwadel (2002) refined this claim, arguing that across denominations, higher-income church members receive the greatest opportunities to develop civic skills.

When it comes to developing programs to train youth in civic skills, research indicates that trainings are most effective when youth are included in the development process itself. Torney-Purta (2002) led the IEA Civic Education Study, conducted over an eight-year period in 28 countries, and found that merely holding civics education classes for youth does not always result in their civic engagement as adults. Content is important, but youth also need an “open climate for the discussion of issues” and “effective participation opportunities such as school councils” for the concepts learned to translate into political action (Torney-Purta 2002: 210). Similarly, Stoneman (2002) argues that young people develop leadership capacities best when they are involved in CSO creation and institutional governance, down to the level of creating budgets, raising funds, and setting policies. Kirlin (2010) expands on this idea, finding that youth need opportunities to practice self-control, delayed gratification, and seeing an issue from someone else’s perspective in order to apply civic skills toward political action.

Civic skills are undoubtedly an important component of involvement in public life. Critical thinking, communication, organization, and decision-making all make politically relevant mobilization easier to undertake. However, merely belonging to an organization does not always provide avenues to develop these skills; individuals, particularly youth, need opportunities to learn and practice them. This is the area in which citizenship CSOs truly excel. The activities they offer may be similar to other types of CSOs—such as job training, after-school tutoring, or music classes—but how they work with youth is very different. The centerpiece of each class or event is not the activity itself, but the process through which the activity takes place. In addition to—or instead of—being given a task or taught a skill, youth are challenged to think critically, express their ideas, work with others, and make decisions that have meaningful stakes and consequences.

Throughout my time in Rio, I not only recorded the daily activities of each CSO in my field notes, but also described the way in which each activity unfolded. Once it became evident that some CSOs seemed to have different goals and methods than others, I explored this potential variation. I asked CSO leaders directly: “what is the main purpose or goal of this activity?” then observed what actually happened, and discussed the successes and shortcomings of the activity with CSO leaders afterwards. In general, social, golden, and ghost CSOs have one overarching purpose. Both social and golden CSOs strive to meet specific community needs: social benefit CSOs through job training and health care access; golden CSOs through providing leisure activities for youth. Ghost CSOs, for their part, exist mainly as organizations in name only to
capture revenue for their founders. Citizenship CSOs, however, are notably different in two respects. First, their activities are varied—some focus on job training, others on health care access, still others on leisure opportunities, and occasionally all three. More importantly, their activities not only meet immediate community needs, but also seek to foster the civic skills necessary for politically relevant mobilization. Specifically, they provide ample opportunities for youth to express opinions, organize events, and make decisions related to the CSO as a whole.

I refer to this category of organizations as “citizenship CSOs” because each one holds “citizenship classes” (aulas de cidadania) for their participants. These classes are either the main activity that the CSO undertakes, or they are a required class that participants must attend in order to participate in other CSO events. As one instructor at Bela-manhã explained: “When a youth wants to join us, he can choose one of three sports programs. But in order to participate in the sports, he has to go to one citizenship class per week. If the youth misses the class, then he can’t attend sports classes that week.” (Interview: 2 July 2008). At first, I assumed that the sports programs would be the main attraction, and that Bela-manhã youth would attend the citizenship classes reluctantly. However, I was surprised to find that for most youth, the citizenship classes were their favorite activity. Two Bela-manhã youth explained it this way:

“I always wanted to go to college, but I thought I had no chance. Public education here, at least the school that I came from, I think the education is very poor. So I thought that would be it. But the citizenship classes showed me that it could be possible. I have to take some courses to strengthen my knowledge, so that I don’t arrive with just what I have from my school here. I have to make my own way, start investing in myself. Even though it costs, I’ve started to pay for a short course in Portuguese, a short course in math, like that. Little by little. Maybe it won’t happen, but I have the confidence to try.” (Interview: Respondent #93, 2 July 2008.)

“I joined Bela-manhã because I wanted to be a gangster. I knew I wasn’t tough enough, so I thought that if I joined the CSO, I’d get some physical conditioning, and then I’d have a better chance at moving up within the ranks [of the gang.] And I thought the citizenship classes were going to be stupid. I went only because if I didn’t, I couldn’t get the free lessons. But I was surprised that they ended up being my favorite part. [Why?] I changed. I learned that I could respect myself, and that there are other ways, other paths. There are so many things open to you if you dedicate yourself.” (Interview: Respondent #139, 8 October 2008.)

What is it about the citizenship classes that is so attractive to favela youth—especially those with little prior interest in civic issues? How do citizenship class instructors operate differently from instructors in other types of CSOs? The following subsections profile various class activities and dynamics, organized around Kirlin’s (2010) typology of civic skills.

- **Critical Thinking**

All of the citizenship CSOs in this study sought to raise youth consciousness around issues of prejudice and discrimination. Although young people experience the effects of prejudice in their daily lives, very few of them are aware of their rights, both as a citizen of Brazil and as a human being. Therefore, a centerpiece of citizenship CSOs is to encourage youth to think critically about their rights and responsibilities. As CSO leaders explained:
“[What happens during citizenship classes?] Each week has a theme. We’ve worked on the environment, for example, as a way to talk about respect, responsibilities, and rights. As far as rights go, we focus on the UN Rights of the Child. I say, ‘these are the rights that every child has, are these rights happening for you?’ Rights to health, to education, ‘in your school, is there education happening? Your school offers a good education?’ And they say ‘no.’ So it’s written here in the Rights of the Child, but the law isn’t being enforced. So what can we do? What is it our duty to do?’ We use the theme as a way to open the door to get them thinking about the issues.” (Interview: Respondent #122, 21 August 2008.)

“[What happens during citizenship classes?] We talk a lot about the difference between the rules for the asphalt\textsuperscript{52} [non-favela areas] and the rules in the favela. Always, when I ask this at first, ‘is there a difference?’ everybody says yes. But they need to know that the rules, the laws, they are the same all over Rio, no matter what part you live in. It’s just that they are enforced there, but not enforced here. So does it matter? Should it be this way? What can we do? This is what we talk about.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 10 July 2008.)

“Even though we focus on health issues, we interact in the area of the environment, in education, and especially in human rights. Because when people are poorly treated, it affects their health. Being denied the right to health care, that’s a violation of human rights. And if a person doesn’t have access to health care, he doesn’t have dignity, so of course we interact on the issue of human rights. Our health activities are just one way to get people thinking about that.” (Interview: Respondent #143, 8 November 2008.)

Citizenship CSO leaders put the sentiments expressed above into practice on a daily basis through their classroom activities. One day, during a citizenship class at Girassol for adolescents (15-20 years of age), the group decided to discuss aspects of finding employment. After ten minutes in which the youth complained about the lack of opportunities available, Holly said, “but once someone offers you a job, what do you do?” All of the youth lowered their eyes and looked down at the floor. Holly responded:

“No! You don’t look down and say ‘thank you,’ you ask questions! You need to be sure that it’s the kind of work you want, and that they will hold up their end of the bargain. It’s nice to be grateful that someone offers you a job, but you also have rights. You don’t have to take whatever is offered because that’s what you deserve. You have the right to ask questions.” (Participant observation: Respondent #87, 9 October 2008.)

Holly then talked about the importance of having a contract with one’s work responsibilities clearly spelled out, including the pay rate. The class concluded with a series of role-plays in which the youth took turns responding to job offers with follow-up questions. After class, Holly and I went to a local snack bar to debrief. She acknowledged that most favela youth have great difficulties finding steady, formal employment due to residential discrimination. Despite this, however—in fact, because of it—she explained:

\footnote{Favela residents commonly refer to non-favela residents as those who live “on the asphalt” or “on the pavement” (\textit{no asfalto}). It does not appear to be a pejorative term; it is merely descriptive—even though many favelas do in fact contain paved roads.}
“It is so important that youth know their rights. It might seem paradoxical, when there is so much discrimination, but what it means is that people from favelas are easily taken advantage of by employers, and they let themselves be taken advantage of because they know how hard it is to get a job. So they just have an attitude of taking whatever they can get. But they have to know how to choose, how to protect themselves. Knowing their rights is the first step, but they also have to know how to stand up for them.” (Interview: Respondent #87, 9 October 2008.)

At Jacinto, in a class geared toward younger children (10-14 years of age), Éverton was holding music lessons when one girl started making fun of another. He intervened by taking the lesson outside, and the change of scenery helped the group focus on the task at hand. At the next class meeting, however, Éverton decided to begin with a discussion; he asked the group “when do you feel disrespected?” An enthusiastic conversation ensued, and at one point, the girl who had been doing the teasing said “I hate it when people talk trash about you because of what you wear, what you do, who you are.” At that point, one guy piped up: “But you talk trash about other people, right?” The entire group laughed, and another youth said “if you do it yourself, you have to expect that it’s done back to you, yes?” Éverton took the opportunity to broaden the discussion:

“There are so many times that we get disrespected, and we can’t do much about it. We don’t have a health care post, we can’t change the open sewer, we can’t change the prejudice that other people have right away. But we can change how we treat each other. If we don’t like prejudice, then we can make an effort not to treat other people with prejudice. If we don’t like being made fun of or teased, then we can start by not doing this to other people.” (Participant observation: Respondent #153, 12 July 2008.)

Whether as part of formal citizenship classes, or integrated within other types of activities, citizenship CSO leaders encourage youth to think critically about their rights and responsibilities. It is not easy, nor are results always successful—but then again, as Mariana articulated, sometimes “success” can appear in unlikely forms:

“So the results that I obtain, the results I have, I can’t measure them. They are in the kids themselves. For example, how should I measure this outcome? Amanda, she came here [to Acuçena] twice and then didn’t come by any more. And her mother came by one day and I asked her what happened, and it turned out that Amanda said she didn’t want to come anymore because I had been asking her to think. And she doesn’t like to think. In a way, I can take that as a good result—I achieved the result of asking her to think. Changing the behavior of kids, kids who started to have self-esteem, who stopped making fun of each other, who stopped fighting with each other, who were able to resolve their differences without my having to yell. All of these are results that I see, but I can’t write them up in a grant proposal, understand? But it’s also wrong to say that I have no results.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 6 July 2008.)

The examples above illustrate some of the concrete methods that citizenship CSO leaders use to teach youth to think critically about the world around them, particularly with respect to issues of prejudice and discrimination. Instructors not only inform youth about their rights as citizens, they encourage them to analyze why, and under what conditions, their rights are violated by others as well as the state. In turn, as youth participate in CSO activities, they
practice respecting the rights of others, as well as standing up for their own rights when appropriate. Ultimately, citizenship CSO youth develop the ability to analyze the world around them, and consider that their place within it is not permanently fixed.

- **Communication**
  Just as critical thinking skills are an “internal” component of mobilization, communication is a crucial external one. Consciousness-raising in and of itself is valuable, but to act on what one learns, it is necessary to convey it to others. Citizenship CSOs offer youth ample opportunities to practice clear and effective communication. However, a vital prerequisite to doing so is increasing their self-esteem. Without the confidence to express an opinion publicly, communication skills are virtually useless. Citizenship CSOs approach the area of communication in two ways: raising youth self-confidence, then training them to speak up for their interests when appropriate. These lessons often occur as part of a leisure activity, but unlike other CSO types, developing self-confidence is the primary reason for the activity in the first place. As some leaders explained:

“*We work with music, but we really work with self-esteem. Say there’s someone who hasn’t completed primary school, can’t write, can’t read, but has an interest in music. So he learns to play [an instrument], and people start cheering for your samba, and it makes people happy, and this boosts your self-confidence. Then you start thinking ‘oh, I did this, I can go and do that.’ I tell the kids, ‘if you don’t do it, no one else is going to do it for you.’ So we show them that they can learn things, do things, and this improves their self-esteem, helps them breathe better, live better.*” (Interview: Respondent #153, 27 October 2008.)

“You come in here and what do you see? Kids doing acrobatics. But what you don’t see is that they are breaking their anonymity and establishing confidence. They learn something difficult and come out successful, and this is the first step toward standing up for themselves.”

(Interview: Respondent #57, 8 August 2007.)

“When [new youth] arrive, they expect that we were going to solve all of their life’s problems, we were going to give them jobs, take them to school, fix everything for them. ‘I came here to receive,’ all the time. But the whole idea was to help them feel responsible for the changes they wanted to make in their lives. Clearly we would think it through with them, support them, but we’re not going to fix it all for them. They have to take action themselves. So we make plans together...we help him identify how to [reach his goals], what the first step would be. And we also helped identify support, what networks he had to rely on for help, and if he didn’t have any, then we would help him access support.” (Interview: Respondent #178, 20 November 2008.)

“The kids like all kinds of games. We play duck-duck-goose, musical chairs, things like that. But it’s through the games that I have a way to reach them. Say a child has low self-esteem, he thinks about his shortcomings all the time, but in the game, he speaks up. He has an opinion and expresses it. A word from one, an action from another, and it goes from there. That’s the beginning of teaching them about rights and responsibilities of citizenship.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 6 August 2008.)
For citizenship CSO leaders, leisure activities are merely a vehicle to increase youth self-confidence, as well as create mutual trust and respect within the group. Then, the citizenship classes build on these themes by offering youth an opportunity to express their opinions to each other in a “safe” environment.

In one citizenship class at Bela-manhã, for example, the group watched a film together, and Débora, the instructor, stopped the film at certain points for discussion. In one case, the film’s storyline involved a girl who was reprimanded by a teacher at school, so the following day, she brought her brother—a trafficker—to class in order to intimidate the teacher. Débora paused the film after this scene, and asked the youth: “What is this really about? What does the girl really want? Did involving her [trafficker] brother help her solve the real problem?” (Participant observation: Respondent #122, 30 October 2008.) I had thought that the youth would be eager to get on with the movie; instead, they spent the next half hour talking through these issues. After the class was over, some of the youth wanted to continue the conversation with me, so we went out into the courtyard. During our talk, I asked them to compare Bela-manhã’s citizenship classes to their classes at school; do the same kinds of discussion happen? The youth emphatically told me “absolutely not! In school, there is a ‘right answer,’ and if you don’t know it, it’s better not to say anything at all.” (Participant observation: 30 October 2008.) The ability to analyze and reason is inherently tied to communication skills, but as these youth expressed, independent critical thinking is not usually encouraged in a public school setting.

CSO Açucena specifically tries to counteract this tendency in their work, as Mariana explained:

“When you ask [a youth] ‘what do you think of this,’ he’s used to saying ‘I don’t know.’ Why are you doing that, ‘I don’t know.’ Everything is ‘I don’t know.’ What are your talents, what are your shortcomings, whatever, they say ‘I don’t know.’ But they do know these things—they just don’t know how to express themselves. That’s what they don’t know. And when they are in school, they learn not to speak up, so they appear lazy and dumb. Then someone calls them ‘lazy’ or ‘dumb’ and they say ‘look, they already think I’m stupid, there’s nothing more I can do.’ So, just the fact that I press them to think, that I am able to get some words out of them, that the kids who come here will eventually express an opinion and learn to speak up, for me that’s already a result. To make a child think—that’s everything! But that kind of result isn’t attractive to a funder. It’s the goal I have, so I’m meeting my own goals, but for a funder? That’s it.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 6 July 2008.)

CSO Girassol incorporates a similar methodology. Once a week, all the youth who attend sit in a circle and critique the previous week’s activities. They discuss what they liked best, what worked well and what did not, and what they would like to see happen differently during the coming week. According to Holly, the goal of the weekly circle is to get the youth used to the idea that they have a right to give their input. “They come to see that they have a right to critique this organization, and then they extend the idea to other areas of their lives. They learn to see themselves as people who can act on their ideas out in the world.” (Participant observation: Respondent #92, 8 August 2007.)

Citizenship CSOs not only offer youth opportunities to think about the world around them and form an opinion, but also to express their views in public and listen respectfully to the views of others. While the stakes may be small—speaking up during a game, critiquing a film, or evaluating an activity—they provide an arena in which youth can develop, practice, and refine their communication skills.
Organization and Decision-Making

Once youth have enough confidence in themselves to express their opinions, citizenship CSOs also provide venues for them to do so in a way that matters. Youth are frequently asked to take responsibility for the organization’s activities in large and small ways. For example, Bela-manhã has a formal ten-member youth council that is open to any interested participant. Secret-ballot elections are held once a year, youth organize electoral campaigns, and those with the most votes receive a place on the council. Unlike other organizations that offer youth an “advisory” role only, the members of the youth council are full participants in the administrative life of the organization. They attend meetings during which they develop, plan, implement, and evaluate program effectiveness with virtually all of the rights and responsibilities that paid staff members possess. During my time with this CSO, whether in formal meetings or casual conversations, I observed no difference between the respect and attention given to paid staff versus the members of the youth council.

Those youth not elected to the council but who want to participate in some way also have opportunities to do so. Every few weeks, Bela-manhã offers leadership training workshops that are open to anyone, during which youth practice public speaking skills. Once they are comfortable doing so, they receive opportunities to represent the CSO at events within the community as well as the larger city of Rio. In addition, youth participate in organizing special events, ranging from monthly birthday parties to a presentation at a United Nations forum.

CSO Bela-manhã’s citizenship classes also inspire youth to develop organizational skills. My time in Rio overlapped with the 2008 U.S. presidential elections, as well as elections for mayor and city council members in Rio. During one citizenship class, CSO youth were captivated by the similarities between U.S. candidate Barack Obama and Brazil’s President Lula. Débora used their interest as a springboard for comparing the campaigns, the public policies each proposed, and which policies the youth thought were best. When it became apparent that some youth did not understand how elections worked, Débora suggested that they hold an election for “citizenship class president.” Over the course of a few weeks, seven youth decided to run for office. They organized their own campaigns: deciding what they could realistically promise in order to win supporters, talking to friends in class, and making presentations to the group. When the vote was held, two candidates were tied for first place, so the group decided to hold a runoff election to determine the winner.

After the class election, I spoke with some of the youth who had run for office. They impressed me with their knowledge of local politics, expressing different opinions about the two main mayoral candidates running for office in Rio, and critiquing each for promises made but not kept. When I asked how they learned so much about politics, one youth said “we learned through our citizenship classes. I didn’t think about politics at all before I came here, but now I see that it matters who we elect.” (Participant observation: Respondent #163, 5 November 2008.) In all of these ways, Bela-manhã encourages youth to develop organizational skills and offers venues for their application in ways both large and small.

Although Açucena is much smaller than Bela-manhã, Mariana also finds ways for youth to take on leadership roles. Instead of having a “class president,” each person who attends the CSO has a particular responsibility. The youth decide who will be responsible for taking attendance, updating the bulletin board, making sure the art materials are in good condition, beautifying the environment (i.e. sweeping the floor)—and there are always as many leadership roles as there are CSO participants. The primary purpose of these roles is not to ensure that the
CSO runs smoothly. On the contrary, these basic tasks would be done more efficiently by an adult coordinator. Mariana chooses to engage each youth in a leadership position to teach all of them how to work together as a team. At the beginning of each term, the youth decide who will take which roles and be responsible for its associated tasks. Inevitably, there are some roles that two or three youth want to take, and some that no one wants. Mariana does not step in and assign roles; instead, she gives the group some ideas for how to reach a decision on their own. Sometimes the decision-making process requires two or three sessions, but Mariana sees that as a benefit. The youth think through what needs to be done, and how to balance this with the interests and talents that exist within the group. As they do so, they practice listening to other’s opinions, expressing their own views, and reaching a decision that is in the best interest of the group. Moreover, if a youth does not perform his or her task satisfactorily—or at all—the offender is held accountable by his peers. If the green marker is out of ink and the “art supply leader” hasn’t notified anyone, or if the floor hasn’t been swept in a week, it is up to the youth themselves to bring it up with the person responsible. To solve the problem, the youth need to discuss the issue at hand and find a way to work it out on their own. Mariana facilitates, but does not take over the process or suggest solutions. As a result, the youth see the way their actions affect the entire group, and learn that they, and no one else, are responsible for reaching a solution that is acceptable to all.

CSO Açucena’s youth are also encouraged to critique the effectiveness of activities and events. I observed this process in practice on many occasions, and each time it was initially difficult for most youth to do so. Mariana would open the discussion by saying something to the effect of “in every experience in life there is good and bad, nothing is perfect, right? That’s life, that’s human nature. To pretend otherwise isn’t being honest. And we can only improve if we look at the weak points. You have a right to voice your opinion and have some input into what we do. So let’s talk about what could be better here.” Usually, Mariana allowed long periods of silence to pass so that she did not guide the discussion in a direction that was important to her but not the youth. However, once one person spoke up, the others would eventually join in.

Many of the critiques were simple, but important to the youth involved. On one occasion, a boy broke the initial silence by stating that he disliked the game in which he had to make animal sounds. Mariana immediately said “thank you for bringing that up!” and the group discussed which games they liked best, and which ones they did not. Another youth said that he wanted to have more outdoor activities, a suggestion the group readily agreed upon. Mariana pointed out that many of the activities and games required indoor desks, so they discussed which games could be adapted to outdoor conditions. After thinking through the alternatives, the group decided that indoor activities would take place on Tuesday afternoons, and Thursday afternoons would be dedicated to outdoor games only. Finally, Mariana said “since today is Thursday afternoon, why don’t we implement your suggestion right now and go outside?” The youth were wildly enthusiastic about this idea, not only because they got to go outside, but also because they seemed pleasantly surprised that their decision would be acted upon right away.

In Mariana’s view, small occurrences like these can have long-term, far-reaching effects. Simply having the ability to make a choice and live with the consequences can convey important lessons about how to work productively with others. In explaining how the group organized a party, Mariana stated:

“They choose the food they want to eat. They choose the kind of soft drink. I think this is important for them to construct their identity, their self-esteem. {How?} For example, there was
the issue of the spinach. We were deciding what to have, and Daniel said that he wanted to bring spinach. Now nobody likes spinach, but I gave them the right to choose, and he chose spinach. I think he did it just to shock me, to get me to say ‘Daniel, do you really like spinach?’ But I didn’t say anything about it, and I thought when Saturday comes around he’s probably not going to eat it. But at least he will see that he has the right to say what he wanted. So they see that they have the right to decide things for themselves, we decide as a group what we want to have. And one day they say what they want within this group, and another day they say what they want out there in the world. So this helps construct their identity. They see themselves as people with the right to choose, with the right to speak or not speak. And I think that’s the greatest thing we do.” (Interview:  Respondent #70, 2 August 2008.)

The organizations profiled above illustrate different ways in which youth have opportunities to practice organizational and decision-making skills. Depending on their age and level of interest, youth learn how to work as a member of a team, plan and execute an event, listen to other’s opinions and express their own, and ultimately reach mutually agreeable decisions. As anyone who has worked collaboratively with others knows—especially when youth are involved as partners—it can be far more challenging to execute a program this way. Citizenship CSOs accept this challenge, however, because they see it as integral to their mission. For example, as Mariana described:

“To talk with the kids, involve them in the process—what I’m trying to say, I’m not sure I’ve gotten this across, is that this is very hard work! But it’s necessary for children to have a place where they can feel like themselves, where they can make a mess. Within limits, of course, but she has a voice. She can talk, express herself, give an opinion about something. This is what’s necessary, it’s necessary for her as a person, and necessary for organization, for any community initiatives. So I don’t give them activities. We decide, they decide, what we want to do, maybe how to use a computer, or go somewhere and visit, we plan it together. That’s not how it normally works in other places. The organizers say ‘we’re going to have this CSO here’ and that’s all there is, and it ends, get it? Because it’s easier to do that.” (Interview:  Respondent #70, 6 June 2008.)

Juliana, the founder of Rainha-da-Noite also explained that she encourages participants to critique activities and events not only for their own benefit, but for the good of the wider community as well. As she explained:

“Once they’ve clarified what they want and don’t want, they can stop anyone who comes in here from the outside, who might be a picareta, who might be an opportunist who wants to manipulate them. They can say ‘no, we don’t want to go that route, we want to do this instead, and this is why.’ Because they’ve already discussed what they want and need in their community, and what they don’t want.” (Interview:  Respondent #138, 8 November 2008).

Despite the challenges inherent in adopting a participatory and inclusive decision-making style, citizenship CSO leaders are committed to doing so because this is the centerpiece of their mission. Their organizations may undertake activities that are similar to other types of CSOs, but the primary goal of each activity is to build individual civic skills. CSO leaders attempt to raise youth self-esteem in their everyday interactions, and stress that each person has a right to
his or her own opinion. While participants might not always get what they want, they always have a right to how they feel about it, as well as the right to express their views. At the same time, others have exactly the same rights; therefore it is important to listen to the opinions of others and disagree in a constructive manner. Conflict is inevitable in any group, but how the group resolves conflict will determine whether or not a solution is found that is best for the CSO as a whole.

In sum, citizenship CSO leaders consistently emphasized that the activities they offer are just a vehicle to get youth to participate in something as a group. As they learn, build, and create together, they practice the skills they need in order to work as a team in other ways. The abilities that youth develop in citizenship CSOs, therefore, are essential building blocks for mobilization. As youth begin to think critically about the discrimination and prejudice that exists against favela residents, they also gain communication, organizational, and decision-making skills that enable them to act on what they learn. Citizenship CSO activities meet immediate community needs just as other CSO types do, but they also build civic skills that are prerequisites for politically relevant mobilization.

➢ “I Can’t Believe I Was Scared of This:” Applying Civic Skills to Collective Action

Having civic skills is important for mobilization, but they also need to be put to use. Citizenship CSO leaders understand this; they not only help youth build skills, but many of them they also offer opportunities to put them in practice by organizing consciousness-raising events throughout the city of Rio. Larger-scale mobilizations tend to occur in conjunction with diamond CSOs; these are discussed in Chapter 8. Nevertheless, citizenship CSOs occasionally organize events on their own that seek to challenge “official” Rio residents’ perceptions of those who live in favelas.

Recall from Chapter 4 that the most pressing concerns favela residents have are their lack of access to formal job opportunities as well as to basic health care. Social prejudice against them is also clearly identified as the root of both these deficiencies. Employment opportunities exist in Brazil’s expanding economy, and the right to health care is guaranteed in the Constitution, but access to jobs and health care is restricted due to the pervasive culture of discrimination. Favela residents are not viewed as gente—as human beings with the same rights and responsibilities as others. Therefore, when citizenship CSO participants mobilize, they do so in order to challenge these perceptions.

The type of collective action most common to citizenship CSOs is small-scale efforts that seek to change public opinion one person at a time. For example, Jacinto offers music lessons to individual favela youth, but Éverton also helps them organize events within and outside the community in which there are no spectators, only participants. On one level, the purpose is to have fun and play music, but at the same time:

“We want to bring people together, asphalt residents with favela residents. Music can do this, it’s a way for people to get to know each other, see each other as human beings, valuing each other as people, not as labels. That’s how we create a culture of peace instead of a culture of prejudice.” (Interview: Respondent #153, 27 October 2008.)

CSO Jacinto’s main yearly event is their participation in Carnaval. The group supports a samba bloco—an informal street percussion and dance group—that rehearses at least once a week from
the beginning of October until the first week of Carnaval (usually in late February or early March). At first, the bloco was comprised of favela residents only, but as they would parade down the hill and out to the “official” city, “people from the asphalt would see us and want to join in too.” Over the next few years, Éverton worked to make this partnership more formal. He invited musicians from all over Rio to join in, leveraging contacts within and outside the Bem-Te-Vi neighborhood.

I was able to participate in some of the bloco’s rehearsals leading up to the 2009 Carnaval season. Every Wednesday night, as well as Saturday afternoons, people from all over the Bem-Te-Vi community come together with non-favela residents to drum, dance, and drink beer. Since this community is located near the Southern Zone, it is relatively easy for non-favela residents to physically access the entrance of the Bem-Te-Vi neighborhood. In order for these outsiders to be able to enter the neighborhood without raising the ire of the gang, Éverton leverages his personal relationships. Whenever new “outsiders” want to join the bloco’s rehearsals, Éverton meets them at the community’s entrance and spends some time introducing them to key individuals within the neighborhood. Such a reception not only makes the newcomers feel welcome, it also provides an opportunity for gang members to size them up. After a few visits—and presumably, once the gang sentries have given their okay—the new bloco participants can enter the Bem-Te-Vi neighborhood unaccompanied.

Many of the non-favela residents who want to join the bloco’s regular rehearsals come from the German-Brazilian high school. This private school attracts some of Rio’s wealthiest students and offers extensive recreational opportunities, including music lessons. Éverton relied on his personal connections as well as his persistence to acquire some small in-kind donations of used musical equipment. He also invited the school’s students and teachers to attend bloco rehearsals, and after three years, some of them took Éverton up on his offer. At the same time, he spent many hours walking around the remote upper parts of the Bem-Te-Vi community, personally inviting people to join the bloco. Éverton explained that in his neighborhood, as in most favelas, there are stark class differences between those who live in the upper part and those who reside further below, and he wanted all of the community’s residents to feel welcome in the bloco.

It is such a small thing, playing music together once a week with people from a racial and class background different from one’s own. Yet it engenders change, step-by-step, one person at a time. I spoke with a secondary-level student from the German-Brazilian school who had been attending rehearsals for a few weeks. He said that he was initially afraid to enter the “favela;” his first time attending the bloco’s rehearsal was motivated by sheer curiosity. But he kept coming back, week after week, because “it’s fun! We play music together, then kick back and have a beer, then play some more. I can’t believe I was scared of this.” (Participant observation: Respondent #184, 16 November 2008.) This youth also mentioned that the previous week, some of his friends were talking about how dangerous the Bem-Te-Vi neighborhood is. In reply, he said “but don’t you catch the bus right there at the entrance? And nothing bad has ever happened to you, right?” At least for this one young person, his perceptions of favelas appear to be shifting as a result of CSO Jacinto’s musical exchanges.

Citizenship CSOs also attempt to change cultural perceptions of favela residents through passeios—field trips—in which youth visit areas of interest in the wider city of Rio. CSOs Açucena and Girassol frequently conduct passeios; in both cases, the youth choose where they would like to go and participate in organizing the event. Common places of interest are the National Theater, museums, Children’s Day events, historic landmarks, and the beach. The trips
have a dual purpose: raising the youths’ consciousness as citizens of Rio, as well as changing the perceptions of non-favela residents. As two of their leaders described:

“We want to give kids a look at what else is out there, to expand their cultural horizons. But also to help them feel that they are part of the city too, that they are not excluded, that the city is theirs and they deserve to go places in it just like everyone else.” (Interview: Respondent #87, 29 September 2008.)

“When they [the youth] are here inside the community, they learn some things. Although I learn from them as well. But when we go outside the community, they hear different things, see different things, and they also feel different things. I think that this enriches them. It opens an array of possibilities [for them].” (Interview: Respondent #70, 8 June 2008.)

During my time in Rio, I accompanied various citizenship CSOs on their field trips around the city. I noticed that whenever youth participated in a trip for the first time, they displayed a dramatic reaction upon entering Rio’s central business district. For example, Guilherme began attending CSO Açucena shortly after I began collaborating with the organization, and I was present during his first field trip. As soon as we arrived in the city center, all of the kids craned their necks to try to see the tops of the tall buildings, and Guilherme asked me, “Where is this? Where are we?” Mariana intervened, and said:

“Guilherme, this is Rio! This is your city, this is where you live. [Guilherme responded:] No this isn’t, this is a different place, I don’t live here. [Mariana:] You and I live in a community outside the city center, but there are a lot of communities outside the city center! And this is the commercial district of the city, but it belongs to you as much as anyone else. You are a citizen of Brazil, a citizen of Rio, and this is your city.” (Participant observation: Respondent #70, 17 July 2008.)

On one level, field trips serve to broaden these young people’s horizons, showing them that they have as much right to the city of Rio as anyone else. As outlined in the previous section of this chapter, confidence in one’s rights as a citizen is an important first step toward mobilization. However, the field trips also demonstrate to outsiders that favela youth are just like those found anywhere else in Rio. As Holly from CSO Girassol explained:

“The idea of the field trips is to connect the favela with the asphalt. For example, take Anderson there—his dad works as a doorman in [a wealthy neighborhood.] So tomorrow, when a resident of his building tells him about the Children’s Day event, Anderson’s dad can say ‘my kid went too.’ And he thinks ‘my kid is no different from his.’” (Interview: Respondent #87, 2 November 2008.)

For their part, youth take these trips quite seriously; while there is always a sense of excitement in the air, they tend to be extraordinarily well-behaved. In part, this is due to the fact that there are usually enough funds to rent only one bus or van, meaning that not all youth are able to take part in the field trip. If a youth is disruptive, he or she will be automatically ineligible for the next excursion. At the same time, CSO leaders let youth know that this is their chance to show the rest of the city that they are not bandidos, not dangerous traffickers, that they
are just kids like anyone else. This sentiment extends even to the informal “dress code” for field trips. Either all the youth wear the same CSO t-shirt, or they arrive neatly dressed. Informally, I noticed that on field trip days, youth tended to put on their best shoes, carefully arrange or braid their hair, and wear their favorite outfits.” Holly explained that the “dress code” in itself does something to educate non-favela residents about the Fregata community—that the youth here are indistinguishable from those in any other part of the city.

Again, these are extremely small steps. Public opinion will not change overnight, and none of these actions will radically transform the cultural landscape of prejudice and discrimination. However, like Betinho’s hummingbird, citizenship CSO participants are doing what they can. One Southern Zone resident learns that his doorman’s child attended the same event as his own son; a group of professionals in the city center encounter a group of well-behaved kids in line for the museum wearing t-shirts emblazoned with “Açucena Youth from Favela Beija-Flor.” Each occurrence challenges the popular image of what favela residents are like. Though encounters like these may be as effective as a drop of water on a forest fire, they are acts of resistance, however small. The youth who participate in these field trips are changed, and the individuals they encounter along the way just might be too.

Finally, the most powerful example of politically relevant mobilization that I observed was spearheaded by citizenship CSO Rainha-da-Noite. As mentioned previously in this chapter, the members of Rainha-da-Noite wanted to do something to improve public health in the Fregata community. Juliana and Gustavo spread the word within their professional networks, and finally engaged the interest of a European professor at a conference, who in turn secured funding from his home university. With money for training expenses, as well as in-kind donations from individuals across Rio, Rainha-da-Noite youth created a short film to educate their neighbors about tuberculosis prevention. The film was well-received within the community, but after the project ended, Rainha-da-Noite members wanted to do more. Through the process of making the film, they learned that while individual Fregata residents can take some preventative actions, broad and permanent improvements to public health would require much more. Since prejudice against favela residents is at the core of the community’s lack of state services, the members wanted to do something to change public perceptions of favela residents.

Although I was initially surprised by the members’ desire to engage in collective action, Juliana was not. She explained that working together around an issue of community importance naturally led to collective action. In her words:

“Starting from the ground up and working together, that is what changes things. The process of thinking through the problems together, but with residents themselves deciding on the topic, choosing the venues, doing the research, selecting people to interview, scenes to shoot, making and editing the video, and then promoting it within the community, getting comments on it, listening to what other people have to say, sparking dialogue—all of that process is what creates conditions for mobilization. Once people come together to think, comment, and critique, then they will act.” (Interview: Respondent #148, 7 November, 2008.)

In order to “build a bridge between the two planets,” as her husband Gustavo put it, CSO Rainha-da-Noite decided to hold a sarau: a party in which people play music and sing traditional songs together. Although this type of party may not be familiar to North Americans, it is quite common in Latin America. Brazilians in particular like to get together to make music, and as Juliana explained, “singing is good for the mind, good for the heart, singing makes you happy.
You can forget your blues for a while.” Since every Brazilian is familiar with some basic traditional songs, a *sarau* would be a way for favela and asphalt residents to interact on an equal footing while doing something fun. However, the process of holding a *sarau* for both favela and asphalt residents was far from straightforward. Gustavo explained that most of the difficulties were rooted in mutual distrust:

“It was difficult. People were wary on both sides. But we thought, now it’s the time, it’s the 21st century, and it’s time for the people who live on the asphalt, who have better living conditions, the middle class, to integrate with the favela. Because the favela is part of the city, it’s all one city. There’s prejudice on all sides, and the division is clear, but it’s only in people’s minds.”

(Interview: Respondent #146, 10 November 2008.)

After a few missteps and false starts, however, the *saraus* began. I was able to attend one, and it was truly an event like no other I had experienced during my time in Rio. The bar in which it took place was located on a side street in the heart of the Southern Zone, and extra chairs and tables had been set up both inside and on the sidewalk. In true Brazilian fashion, people arrived well past the scheduled start time; but this proved to be beneficial, as there was plenty of time for spontaneous casual conversation to take place. In fact, one Southern Zone resident told me afterward that this was the first time she had ever spoken with a resident of Fregata who was not working as a maid, a doorman, or in another subordinate role. When events finally got underway, I counted 15 favela residents and 23 non-favela dwellers in attendance. The bar was packed, Juliana thanked everyone for coming, and began the event by showing the short film on tuberculosis prevention that the CSO had produced. Everyone gathered around her laptop to watch, as shown in Figure 6.4 below:

**Figure 6.4: Favela and Non-Favela Residents at a Sarau**

(Source: Author Photo).

The idea was to present the film and then get on with the music, since the purpose of the event was to sing. However, the group was eager to discuss the film’s themes, and the ensuing discussion lasted for almost an hour. The excerpt from my field notes below conveys a sense of the interactions that took place:
First Zona Sul resident: Why did you make this video?

Fregata resident: It’s a way for us to call attention to the (tuberculosis) problem. It was made by us, not imposed on us, this is what we want to tell other people, both in our community and outside. And that we can change things, do something, each one of us can pick up litter, for example.

Second Zona Sul resident: But the logic, the way of thinking is no different. It’s the same on the asphalt, people here in Copa throw litter all over the place, just look at the beach after one day. The only difference is that here, the city cleans up the beach every night, cleans the streets. But the problems are the same, the way of thinking is the same, no one cares about public space, and that needs to change.

Second Fregata resident: But there’s an incentive for the city to clean up Copa, because that’s where the tourists go, so it has to be attractive. That’s why they get public services. But Fregata doesn’t have this ability.

Third Fregata resident: But now that tourists are starting to come here (to Fregata), the city has an incentive, but it’s for a wrong reason. It’s perverse. You can’t have tourists getting killed, but the favela tours are marketed on the idea that the favela is dangerous, poor, and dirty. That’s what the tourist wants to see.

Third Zona Sul resident: There’s also a lack of self-esteem in both places. People just think they have to accept things the way they are, we can’t do anything to make conditions better, so they just accept, it’s all good (tudo bem) when really it’s not, and this is what has to change. This attitude is in both the favela and the asphalt.

Fourth Fregata resident: We have to convince people to do what they can, that they have a right to fight for better conditions. Just because we have to travel at least 45 minutes one way to work, standing all the way, doesn’t mean it’s right or that it has to be this way.

Fourth Zona Sul resident: Transportation is a horror for everyone, no matter where you live.

Fifth Zona Sul resident: There is so much we could come together around. We already do, in one way, here on the beach. Maybe there should be some kind of event that gets everybody together beyond what we do here.

The Zona Sul resident who owned the bar: You know, when I started out, I was prejudiced. I was scared of people from the favelas, I was scared for a long time. But then favela residents came here to play samba, choro, and as we played together I came to know them, and I realized that I was prejudiced. All of the faces, you know, except for Chico Buarque, all of the great musical faces are black. And eventually, I changed. So I know that people can change, and that’s what has to happen if Rio is going to become the city it can be. Friendship doesn’t have age, color, or class. (Participant observation, 27 November 2008.)

Gustavo finally brought the conversation to a close, and as people took out their instruments, he made one final point: “We [Juliana and I] are not the CSO leaders, we’re nobody official. Rainha-da-Noite is just some people who got together, asphalt and favela together, who think that we can make a difference. The idea is to learn from each other as equals.” With that, the singing began, and continued with guitar, drum, and tambourine accompaniment late into the
night. Some people had excellent voices, some did not; many knew all the words to all the songs; others relied on photocopied songbooks that Juliana provided. But everybody sang together, youth from Fregata alongside elderly Copacabana residents. I also noticed people from both areas engaging each other in conversation along the edges of the group. A few teenagers were flirting with each other across class and color lines, some were drinking, dancing, and smoking, and in general just having some fun on a warm spring night.

Events such as this sarau evening are exceedingly rare. Rio residents generally do not interact with those outside their inner social circle, let alone across race and class lines. But for Rainha-da-Noite, the lack of interaction is exactly what they seek to change. Shifting cultural perceptions so that all residents of Rio are recognized as full citizens, regardless of where they live, begins one person at a time. A single evening of shared music and conversation is merely a beginning, but it is a beginning that has potential to transform into broader collective action.

The effect of social distance on prejudice has been a common theme for social science research, much of which finds that since prejudice is largely based in fear of the unknown, prejudice decreases as social contact increases. (Bogardus 1928; Allport 1954; Jacobs 1961; Rhodes 2001; Carter et. al. 2005). However, a similar body of research finds that proximity may have no effect, or worse, enhance one’s negative perceptions of other groups (Blumer 1958; Blalock 1967; Jackman and Crane 1986, Forbes 2004). Since 2000, researchers have found consensus around the idea that simple physical proximity interacts with many other factors, which can then influence attitudes in a positive or negative direction. In short, the type of contact matters. Evidence from Europe (McLaren 2003; Shvets 2004; Brockett et. al. 2009) suggests that individuals who live in close proximity to other status groups, but have little or no contact with them in other ways, end up feeling far more threatened by them than they would otherwise. To reduce prejudice, interactions should be positive, close, long-term (Tropp and Pettigrew 2005), and allow members of different groups to engage each other as status equals (Lee et. al. 2004).

These conditions are exactly those that citizenship CSOs strive to replicate. Rio residents arguably live in closer physical proximity to people of radically different class backgrounds than almost anywhere else in the world, but there is virtually no intergroup contact as equals.

To be sure, a casual observer might conclude that there is one place in which cross-class contact regularly occurs in Rio—the beach. However, closer analysis reveals that while beaches are public spaces, people tend to re-create the boundaries that exist elsewhere. Durrheim and Dixon (2005) demonstrate that in South Africa—arguably Brazil’s closest rival in terms of inequality levels—while “beachgoers shared the same public space, there was virtually no intergroup contact...an extremely segregated pattern arose” (2005:59). Freeman (2008) finds that a similar pattern exists on Rio’s beaches, where “class distinctions are refined and reproduced in conversations that rarely cross social lines” (2008:551). Therefore, when citizenship CSOs allow youth to experience events in the city center alongside their Southern Zone peers, or bring people together to rehearse for Carnaval, play music, or enjoy a beer and a conversation in a “third place” (Oldenberg 1989; Soja 1996), they are providing opportunities for the types of contact that, to the best of our knowledge, are most useful in reducing prejudice.

Of course, no one would expect prejudice and discrimination to end overnight as a result of a few pleasant cross-class exchanges. But political implications can certainly result from people coming together around issues that resonate across class and status lines. New issues may be introduced within the political arena, candidates might choose to capitalize on a new coalition base, and voting patterns may shift as well. None of these outcomes are inevitable, but they are
possible—in fact, only possible when non-favela residents have the opportunity to meet, work with, and exchange experiences as equals with those who live in favelas. In short, if the concept of gente expands to include all citizens of Rio regardless of where they reside, there will likely be political effects. Citizenship CSOs thus engage in a type of politically relevant mobilization as they seek to change cultural perceptions regarding who is worthy of full citizenship rights and who is not.

In short, when citizenship CSOs organize events that enable participants to share mutually enjoyable pastimes, interacting across class and status divisions as equals, they are engaging in politically relevant mobilization. Whether or not overall levels of prejudice shift as a result certainly remains to be seen. However, even if citizenship CSOs are not ultimately successful, they are attempting to change the cultural attitudes that exist about favela residents. Regardless of the outcome, citizenship CSOs act in small ways that nonetheless seek to influence how power is distributed in Rio.

6.5 Chapter Summary

The overarching theme of this chapter has been to illustrate a simple correlation: those organizational types that circumvent the civil society “resource curse” are also the ones that engage in politically relevant mobilization. Citizenship CSOs evade the resource curse primarily because they seek many types of support from a variety of sources. Instead of applying for grants from major funding agencies, they survive by making connections within and across favela communities, as well as by partnering with diamond CSOs. They occasionally receive cash donations from these partnerships, but support mainly takes the form of in-kind donations, volunteer time, and skills training. As a result, citizenship CSOs have incentives to make organizational choices that are diametrically opposed to those found in golden CSOs. Because they do not often apply for major grants, citizenship CSOs have no need for fundraising professionals on staff, which allows them to attract and retain favela residents for leadership positions within the organization. In turn, being resident-led lends credibility to the organization, which helps the organization acquire support at the local level.

Further, a wide network of supporters ensures that they are less beholden to any one donor’s interests, so the organization can engage in any activities they choose. As Chapter 3 illustrated, prejudice and discrimination are high-priority issues for favela residents; therefore, citizenship CSOs tend to focus their efforts around these themes. At the individual level, citizenship CSOs teach civic skills that are prerequisites for mobilization; namely critical thinking, communication, organization, and decision-making capabilities. While they may also offer leisure activities that mirror those of other CSO types, the crucial difference is that, for citizenship CSOs, the process is more important than the activity itself. Citizenship CSOs give their participants many opportunities to learn, practice, and refine civic skills that facilitate collective action. Further, they allow participants to apply these skills to real-world mobilization efforts that are designed to challenge societal perceptions of favela residents as lesser citizens. Through holding low-key, enjoyable events, citizenship CSOs bring people together across class and status lines to interact as equals. As social contact increases and unlikely friendships form, political implications may emerge. New coalitions might be created, introducing previously unaddressed issues into the political arena, and possibly shifting vote patterns as well. None of these outcomes are guaranteed, but they become possible when residents across Rio have an opportunity to interact as equals.
In short, when organizations rely on donations from a small group of funding agencies alone, they have incentives to place outsiders in leadership positions, limit their network connections, and tailor their activities to their donors’ interests. However, because citizenship CSOs acquire many types of resources from diverse sources, these organizations evade the incentives that give rise to the civil society resource curse. In turn, their organizational choices in terms of leadership, network ties, and activities tend to facilitate politically relevant mobilization.

The argument presented thus far raises two related questions. First, if politically relevant mobilization is an outcome of interest—for policymakers, governments, and funding agencies alike—what can be done to mitigate the effects of the “civil society resource curse” so that political activity can emerge more easily? Specifically, how can favela “outsiders” design and implement development programs that encourage CSOs at the local level to make organizational choices that are conducive to political mobilization? Second, while the citizenship CSOs profiled in this chapter engage in small-scale efforts to change social attitudes, more direct types of political action remain elusive. What would it take for CSOs in Rio to engage in larger-scale political challenges that target the state as well as society? The final chapters in this study address these issues.
“[CSOs] may talk about working in collaboration with community members, but this is probably because that’s what their international donors want to hear. What actually happens in practice is that they [employees] want to keep their jobs, so nobody wants to rock the boat. Really collaborating with favela residents would involve risks.

-author interview with a project coordinator at one of the largest CSOs in Rio de Janeiro, 17 October 2008.

Chapter 7. The Inadequacy of Good Intentions: A Case Study of the “Enchanted Butterfly” Program

Much has already been written on best practices in community development, pinpointing factors that lead to success so others can achieve similar results. The final three chapters of my research will not discuss “what works” for development in broad terms—although in the process, we may add to our understanding of what successful development outcomes are, and how to best achieve them. Instead, I present four case studies to illustrate what individuals and organizations outside favela neighborhoods can do to diminish the “civil society resource curse” that curtails politically relevant mobilization.

Thus far, we have seen how the resource curse operates to make political action an unlikely outcome for most CSOs in Rio de Janeiro. The Brazilian funding environment gives grant-seeking organizations particular incentives to act in ways that run counter to mobilization. Assuming, however, that politically relevant mobilization is an outcome of interest—as it is for many international development organizations as well as transnational social movements—what can favela “outsiders” do to counter the effects of the resource curse?

The funding context in Brazil is likely to remain static for some time; we cannot expect a great deal of change to occur. However, the funding environment is only one influence on a CSO’s organizational profile. Incentives can come from many sources, including the way in which outside organizations partner with favela CSOs. The actions, decisions, and methods that outsiders employ when working within favela communities can provide a contrasting set of incentives. Outsiders may not be able to change the Brazilian funding context, but outsiders can change the way that they collaborate with local favela CSOs. In doing so, organizations gain additional incentives that might offset the effects of the resource curse and tip the scales further toward politically relevant mobilization.

What might a productive collaboration look like? The development programs discussed in this chapter and the next are remarkably similar in many respects. The operational model is fairly common to them all: an outside organization (or two) with funding to carry out a program in a favela community contacts an intermediary organization, such as a golden or diamond CSO. In turn, the intermediary organization uses its connections to enter a favela neighborhood, gather information from the residents, carry out the project, and report the results back to the original funder. The structure of this model is not at issue here. Given the difficulty that outsiders have in accessing favela communities, intermediary organizations are arguably indispensable. In addition, all of the programs could be considered successful at least in part. All achieved at least some of their stated goals to a greater or lesser degree, and like any development project, no program can radically transform a neighborhood by itself alone. Most importantly, the programs do not differ in terms of the organizers’ good intentions. All of the staff members I encountered genuinely wanted to make positive changes within the favela neighborhoods in question; no program “failed” due to a lack of sincere good will.
However, I did find dramatic differences among the programs in terms of the incentives that different CSOs faced. Further, these incentives shaped the contours of each program in such a way so that favela residents would be either more or less likely to undertake politically relevant mobilization themselves. For the purposes of this research, the standard by which I am evaluating “success” is in a program’s ability to support—if not actually undertake—future community mobilization efforts. From this perspective, it is possible to identify clear cases of failure and success. When organizations located higher up in the project chain encourage organizations farther downstream to utilize favela resident leadership, broad networks, and locally relevant activities, those CSOs become freer to undertake a wider range of activities, including controversial, long-term, politically relevant mobilization. In other words, the funding environment might push favela CSOs in one direction—toward an organizational profile that makes political mobilization unlikely—but outsiders, particularly international grantmaking foundations, can provide countervailing incentives to offset the civil society resource curse.

This chapter is devoted to the discussion of one case: the “Enchanted Butterfly” Program (Borboleta Encantada, or BE program) that took place within the Beija-Flor community, a favela neighborhood located in Rio’s Northern Zone. From the perspective of fostering future collective action, the BE program was decidedly unsuccessful. In fact, it is fair to say that, at the conclusion of the BE program, the residents who participated in it were much less likely to trust others and work together than they were before. Why introduce a relatively “failed” case study first? Sometimes by analyzing failure, we can see more clearly the elements that are required for success. The BE program spanned six months, and it took place within an area that I had come to know quite well. My status as a foreign researcher, my role as a volunteer with a local citizenship CSO, and the friendships that I made allowed me to interview program participants and stakeholders at all levels. Specifically, I conducted multiple, semi-structured interviews with program directors and coordinators at all of the intermediary organizations involved with the BE program. In many cases, staff allowed me to access official documents, including original program goals, implementation plans, meeting notes, evaluations, and even photographs. At the same time, I had established strong relationships within the neighborhood by the time the BE program began. My personal connections allowed me to gauge the way that community residents perceived and reacted to the BE program as it unfolded over the course of six months.

The obstacles that the Enchanted Butterfly program faced were in many respects no different from those encountered by others. Unanticipated funding decreases and intra-organizational conflicts are unfortunate but common events in any project’s lifecycle. Moreover, I firmly believe that all of the intermediary organizations involved in this CSO had good intentions, including an honest desire to produce positive outcomes for the Beija-Flor community. When the program finally ended without the expected community results, many of the program coordinators were sincere in their disappointment and regret. Difficulties could have been avoided by engaging with Beija-Flor residents earlier, more often, and on more equal terms as partners. However, each CSO involved in the BE program faced incentives that discouraged them from doing so. Individually, all program participants had good intentions. Collectively, however, the outcome for the Beija-Flor neighborhood was to discourage the most collectively-oriented residents from future mobilization efforts. A different way of working would certainly not have prevented the funding and organizational difficulties from occurring. However, it might have created an atmosphere of solidarity in the face of mutual obstacles, instead of an “us vs. them” environment in which many Beija-Flor residents came away from the program with a sense of having been taken advantage of once again.
7.1 Initial Program Goals and Strategies

How did the Enchanted Butterfly program begin, and who was involved in its creation? The initial impetus was provided by one of the largest for-profit corporations in Brazil, Chave de Ouro, which sought to explore opportunities for economic development in Rio’s favelas. Specifically, Chave de Ouro wanted to discover whether or not a favela neighborhood could be a good site for an expanded production plant, and if the residents were well-suited to their workforce needs. To generate data and carry out the research, Chave de Ouro hired a social research firm, Pesquisa Agora, to find a potential favela community and investigate the levels of education, employment, and infrastructure found there. In turn, Pesquisa Agora subcontracted the work to their “sustainable community investment” subsidiary—Sustentável Agora—which was charged with selecting the favela neighborhood as well as designing and implementing the research.

For their part, Sustentável Agora had extensive experience in research methodology, as well as “supporting businesses in mediating their interactions with the public,” according to one employee I interviewed. However, they lacked connections to any favela neighborhoods. Therefore, Sustentável Agora brought on two golden CSOs: first Alcançará, and later Boa Vontade. After consulting with Alcançará, an organization specializing in youth education, Sustentável Agora created the initial strategic plan for the Enchanted Butterfly program, as well as all of the marketing materials necessary to promote it within the favela community. However, there remained the small matter of finding a favela neighborhood in which to carry out the research. Alcançará then recommended golden CSO Boa Vontade, one of the most prominent organizations in Rio, and very well-known for its work in favela neighborhoods. Boa Vontade suggested the Beija-Flor community as an ideal program site, and the BE program commenced there.

The original development plan was well-designed. I interviewed staff members from Pesquisa Agora, Sustentável Agora, Alcançará, and Boa Vontade, as well as reviewed various internal program documents. All of the materials and individuals indicated that the BE program’s original goal was to support community development in Beija-Flor as defined by the residents themselves. As illustrated in Table 7.1 below, Sustentável Agora created a detailed project plan centered on community meetings. Alcançará and Boa Vontade would conduct initial exploratory interviews with Beija-Flor residents to gain a preliminary understanding of their needs and to identify potential community leaders. Once selected, the leaders would be invited to participate in a series of interactive workshops to generate specific action items.

In short, the program’s objectives were to be determined in conjunction with neighborhood residents. Staff from Sustentável Agora, Alcançará, and Boa Vontade would facilitate the workshops, but Beija-Flor residents themselves would identify the program’s goals. In turn, these goals would inform the survey design. All of the affiliated CSOs would develop the survey together, then Sustentável Agora would compare the general survey results with the goals outlined by resident leaders in the workshops. The survey would also include demographic questions to assess the levels of physical and human capital that already existed within the neighborhood. Finally, based on the needs identified through the survey and the workshops, Sustentável Agora would collaborate with Alcançará and Boa Vontade to design the final development plan. Project implementation would be a joint effort between CSO staff and Beija-Flor community leaders.
Table 7.1: Enchanted Butterfly Program: Plans vs. Reality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Program Design</th>
<th>Actual Program Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Get Community Input</td>
<td>1. Conduct the Survey and Community Workshops Simultaneously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Conduct interviews with Beija-Flor residents</td>
<td>❖ Survey:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Identify community leaders</td>
<td>a. Survey instrument created by an outside firm with no resident input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Those leaders participate in a series of workshops</td>
<td>b. No sampling methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Workshop participants identify main community needs and goals</td>
<td>c. Minimal researcher training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gather Survey Data</td>
<td>❖ Community Leader Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Use workshop input to design the survey</td>
<td>a. Boa Vontade selects participants according to their own criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Train local residents to administer the surveys</td>
<td>b. Most residents do not attend more than one workshop, so recruitment is ongoing and participation is inconsistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Create the Final Development Plan</td>
<td>2. Close Down the Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Based on workshop and survey data, decide what strategies are needed for community development in Beija-Flor</td>
<td>a. Sustentável Agora holds one meeting with survey administrators only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Implement the plan with community leaders over the next few years</td>
<td>b. Alcançará tries to organize an educational course, but it is not held due to lack of community interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite selecting the favela community last, based on no criteria other than its connection with golden CSO Boa Vontade, in my view the research methodology was sound. Beginning with qualitative measures of residents’ perceptions of community needs, the BE program would use these data to create a broader quantitative survey instrument, and then bring all the data together to create a development plan specific to the needs of Beija-Flor residents.

However, actual program implementation unfolded quite differently. After only three months, Chave de Ouro expected to see concrete results—an expectation that was not communicated to Pesquisa Agora at the outset. When Pesquisa Agora informed their subsidiary about the shortened timeframe, Sustentável Agora decided to adjust the program design so they would not lose the contract. Alessandra, the project manager at Sustentável Agora responsible for overseeing the BE program, explained how the initial plans were derailed:

“Here, take a look, this is the proposal that we developed when we began the project. Usually, when we start we have a meeting with all of the community leaders. Business owners, church leaders, people who stand out in the community in some way. At the meeting, we present our program, ‘our plan is this, we want to know what this area is really like,’ and after that, we conduct workshops jointly with community leaders to set out what the goals should be. And then after that, we perform the survey. We look at the area and define the vocational mix there, what jobs do people have, what skills are already there, what’s the economic potential of the area. And then we can think about the mix of skills that would lead to particular jobs. So then, from the information collected, we think together with the community about what they want and where they’d like to be, what kind of future they want. Then, based on their goals, we plan our actions. Well, that was the idea, anyway. But that’s not what happened here. {Why?} Well, here we go.
These clients were complicated. Chave de Ouro just wanted results, they wanted things to happen too fast. [What I just described to you] is a process that takes two to three years, at least in the beginning. So we never did any of that.” (Interview: Respondent #170, 7 November 2008.)

At this point, Alessandra requested that I turn off the voice recorder. Without disclosing the details of our conversation, Alessandra expressed great frustration with Chave de Ouro’s insistence that the program be completed within the next six months, as well as the decision by her employer, Pesquisa Agora, to push ahead with the research despite the shortened timeframe. Ultimately, in order to meet the deadline, Sustentável Agora conducted the survey and the community workshops simultaneously and found other data-gathering “shortcuts.” For example, instead of basing the survey questions on information gleaned from the community workshops, Sustentável Agora subcontracted the entire survey construction process to a for-profit market research organization. Further, that market research firm had no contact with Beija-Flor residents, basing the survey entirely on the demographic parameters outlined by Sustentável Agora before any community meetings had taken place. Predictably, the survey questions reflected the items of importance generally identified by favela outsiders: assessing whether or not the Beija-Flor favela has electricity, garbage collection, postal services, running water, indoor toilets, and—of course—paved roads. However, Sustentável Agora received a completed survey instrument within two weeks, which allowed the BE program to get underway quickly.

Sustentável Agora also adopted another time-saving measure: they handed the survey off to Boa Vontade for implementation. Alessandra explained that relying on one organization for all aspects of survey administration was also highly unusual:

“Ordinarily, we oversee the process of selecting the youth survey researchers. But this time the selection process wasn’t very well done. [Why not?] We actually had a proposal for the selection process, but Chave de Ouro had reservations. They wouldn’t accept the cost of that selection process, which is what we usually do. [What’s the usual process?] Well, young people from the area are observed and evaluated as they participate in a variety of workshops. The idea is that the workshops provide the youth with some training, some empowerment, and at the same time, it’s a way to evaluate them—they are observed, and then the best researchers are selected. But even the youth who aren’t selected receive some benefit from having participated. [But this didn’t happen?] No, because this method ends up being more expensive. So what we did was change the selection phase so that the selection was made based solely on the recommendations of Boa Vontade. (Interview: Respondent #170, 7 November 2008.)

Contrary to their usual procedure, Sustentável Agora played no role in selecting the youth survey researchers; in the interest of time, they delegated the entire process to Boa Vontade. In turn, according to many Beija-Flor residents, the researcher selection process was not competitive. Boa Vontade did not invite applications from any interested residents; instead, they gave the jobs to whomever they liked according to their own internal criteria. I also asked Alessandra how Boa Vontade trained the youth researchers. She replied that, given the lack of oversight and collaboration between Sustentável Agora and Boa Vontade, she was not aware of any training procedures. In her view, Alessandra felt that the youth researchers had not been appropriately prepared for the work given the way in which they carried it out. She explained:
“Aside from the fact that they [the youth researchers] were afraid to go door-to-door, some would swear, others would knock on the door and then run, others would act as if they were from the Assembly of God church. In addition, they were very afraid because they didn’t know what would happen after they completed the survey and delivered the information.” (Interview: Respondent #170, 7 November 2008.)

Alessandra was vague with respect to what the youth researchers might have been afraid of, but she clearly believed the youth were not well prepared for the work. Finally, Alessandra told me that no sampling methodology was used in selecting respondents for the survey. “Boa Vontade didn’t have a system. The researchers just went door to door and talked to anybody who wanted to answer.” However, what the survey may have lacked in reliability and validity was offset by its rapid completion; Sustentável Agora had access to aggregate data results within two months of receiving the survey instrument.

7.2 “Fine. Let’s Talk about Paving the Roads.” Gathering Community Input

Sustentável Agora held the community leader workshops while the survey was being written and conducted, instead of beforehand as they had planned, and relied on Boa Vontade to select the workshop participants. Although Sustentável Agora had planned to hold a series of general assemblies within the neighborhood and identify community leaders that way, staff decided to outsource the entire process to Boa Vontade in order to save even more time. Alessandra was not aware of the criteria, if any, that Boa Vontade used to identify community leaders. However, residents of Beija-Flor told me that Willian, a project coordinator with Boa Vontade, had to “beg and implore” people to participate in the workshops. My friend Mariana was personally asked to attend, and in exchange, Willian said that he would help her with her social benefit CSO. However, Mariana reported that “even though I went to the meetings, I never saw him again.” Willian succeeded in enticing some Beija-Flor residents to attend the workshops, but the haphazard way of selecting participants failed to identify true community leaders and ultimately affected workshop dynamics negatively, as is discussed below. Finally, while Boa Vontade was responsible for finding workshop attendees, Sustentável Agora similarly delegated workshop planning and facilitation tasks to a graduate student in psychology, Marcela. Although she had experience in meeting facilitation, Marcela had never worked with favela communities before, and had no prior interaction with Beija-Flor residents before she began the very first workshop.

I became familiar with what occurred during the workshop series primarily by reviewing extensive program documentation. Alessandra gave me two large binders, each three inches thick, filled with the BE program’s original plans and proposals, workshop agendas, attendance sheets, reports, analyses, and photographs. Although I was not permitted to take the binders with me or make photocopies of their contents, I spent two days reviewing the materials at Sustentável Agora’s office, taking notes by hand. In addition, I attended one of the workshops with Mariana, and was able to compare my firsthand experience with the reports that were generated afterward.

The photographs that the binders contained were particularly notable, initially due to their sheer volume. It appeared that photographs were taken whenever anything occurred that was relevant to the program; not only of the workshops themselves, but of the planning meetings,
materials created, and anyone connected to the event, no matter how tangentially. I also noticed the extensive photography that took place during the workshop I attended. A staff member snapped photographs every time a new person spoke or the activity changed; I estimate that a photo was taken every ten minutes or so during the two-hour workshop. However, the photographs taken did not accurately reflect what happened. For example, I noted that two residents of Beija-Flor were present that day, while Sustentável Agora’s documentation identified eight workshop participants, as shown in Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2: Enchanted Butterfly Program: Workshop #4, Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official Recorded List</th>
<th>My Observed List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariana</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camila</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diego</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joice</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natália</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Author compilation.)

The discrepancy lay in the fact that six of the “participants” were actually non-favela residents affiliated with the various organizations charged with implementing the program. Nevertheless, these individuals appeared on the official attendance sheet and in photographs as if they were equivalent to the two participants from the Beija-Flor neighborhood.

In addition, I made it clear to the workshop organizers that while they could record my presence as an attendee / observer, I did not want to be photographed or portrayed as a workshop participant, since that was not my role. However, when I accessed the program documentation months later, I learned that my request had been disregarded; I appeared on the attendance list as a “participant” as well as in many of the photographs. Based on the documentation alone, any outsider reviewing the program materials would incorrectly assume that eight favela residents had participated in the workshop, when in fact only two residents took part.

During the workshops, Marcela presented a series of activities designed to “empower the population,” “respect their unique history,” and “seek creative solutions”—at least according to official program materials, if not in practice. Attendees were told that the objectives of the BE Program were threefold: to “investigate the viability of local development, empower local leaders to become change agents, and mobilize the community to work toward achieving common goals.” Moreover, participants were assured that these workshops were “only the beginning” and “just one of many meetings we’re going to have so that you can envision the future you want and work to achieve it.” (Unpublished BE Program Document, 14 May 2008.)
asked Alessandra if she thought the workshops were successful at meeting these goals, and she replied, “Yes! People always enjoy participating in the workshop games.” Recognizing that success involves much more than providing entertainment, I pressed Alessandra further:

{But what were the results of what was discussed in the workshops?} “Well, this was part of the game...well, and then, based on that information raised, mainly with the outcome of the game...really, the game is worth much more to the residents than to us.” {I’m not sure I understand. What were the results?} Well, it took several meetings to get results. Really, at this stage of the project, I wasn’t involved. I wasn’t working on it, I was transferred after that happened.” (Interview: Respondent #170, 7 November 2008.)

Alessandra’s vague answer did not reveal any additional information, so I asked Mariana—a workshop participant—what she thought the main results were. She replied:

“If they had any results, they must have been confusing results, because the games were confusing. People didn’t know what they were doing, or why they were doing it. You know that the ‘community leaders’ present one day were really only myself and [another guy from Beija-Flor.] But there was no official attendance sheet, so they could report whoever they wanted as having been there. In reality, the majority of attendees were staff from other institutions, and sometimes youth from [another neighborhood] who didn’t take it seriously, they kept goofing off. Those were the ‘community leaders’ who attended. And there was no opportunity to get input from us, or to exchange ideas. Really, I thought it was a waste of money and time. So maybe that’s why she [Alessandra] can’t tell you the results, because there really weren’t any.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 14 November 2008.)

A concrete example from my fieldnotes might clarify Mariana’s meaning. We attended one of the Enchanted Butterfly workshops together, and when we arrived, it seemed to me that there were very few Beija-Flor residents in attendance. However, despite the low turnout from the community, the workshop proceeded as planned. After a brief round of introductions, Marcela introduced the first activity:

(Participant Observation, July 10, 2008): Marcela started to explain the first activity, but I didn’t follow what she wanted the group to do. I asked Mariana to clarify, and she said she didn’t understand the instructions either, she thought it was something about paving the roads in the neighborhood. So Mariana raised her hand and asked Marcela a question:

Mariana: We don’t understand what you want us to do in this activity, something about paving the roads?

Marcela: Well it means to pave, you know, to put concrete down, to make harder and more durable, the roads that go through your neighborhood.

Mariana: Yes, I understand what “to pave” means, but I don’t understand what it is that you are asking us to do or talk about.

Anderson: I agree, I don’t know what it is that you want us to do either.
Marcela: (after a long explanation that I didn’t fully follow) “so I want you all, as community leaders, to brainstorm different actors, groups of people, who would be responsible for getting things done in the neighborhood.”

Mariana: So the overall purpose of the activity is to brainstorm with community leaders about a problem in our neighborhood, about what our neighborhood needs, right?

Marcela: Yes.

Mariana: That is the problem—that Beija-Flor doesn’t really have any community leaders. We don’t really know each other, or have much of a sense of community here, we don’t have real leaders, and that is the main problem that needs to be fixed. We could talk about other issues, but all of them have at their root the fact that there isn’t a sense of community here. We don’t have real leaders...

Marcela (interrupting): Can anyone else suggest a community problem that the group could brainstorm around?

Mariana: That’s what I’ve been trying to say! The biggest problem we have to deal with here is that we don’t have a sense of community, we don’t have leaders. So to solve anything else in a way that is responsive to what the people want, we’d have to create a real sense of community first.

Marcela (in a patronizing tone of voice): No, what we are trying to do here is to come up with a problem in the community, and then do an exercise to find ways to solve that problem.

Mariana (using formal verb tenses, the way one would address a superior): Yes ma’am, I understand completely what you are saying and what you want us to do. But if I may, I want to suggest to you that if we just pick an issue, we won’t be addressing the real problem that we have here. I mean, look around! Who is from the community here? There’s me, and there’s Anderson, and who else? That guy is from Boa Vontade, and she over there is from Sustentável Agora, and you are talking about getting the “community leaders” together, but where are they? It’s me and Anderson and no one else. And the reason that’s so, the reason why there aren’t more people here—that is the biggest problem that we have here in Beija-Flor, and that would be worth discussing!

Marcela: (in a tone of voice that one might use in speaking to a recalcitrant child): Yes, but what we want to do here today is choose a problem in the community and brainstorm ways to solve it. For example, like paving the roads. Why don’t we work with that one?

Mariana (rolling her eyes at me): Fine. Let’s do the exercise. Let’s talk about paving the roads.

After listening to this exchange, I wondered if Marcela had been given an agenda or script to follow, since it appeared that she was quite unwilling to deviate from what she had planned. Unsurprisingly, when I reviewed the program documentation in the binders, I discovered that Sustentável Agora had in fact prepared detailed workshop agendas, which they expected Marcela to carry out verbatim. During this workshop, she had been instructed to begin with an introductory ice-breaker, then review items from the previous workshop that had been identified as important community problems, and finally select one of those issue items to focus on during this workshop.
There were a few difficulties, however. First, the previous workshop did not identify any problems in the Beija-Flor neighborhood; that part of the exercise had not been completed. In addition, none of the previous workshop participants were present at this workshop meeting. Finally, since the workshop began late, the ice-breaker exercise was discarded. Undaunted, Marcela forged ahead with the main activity on the agenda: brainstorming possible solutions to a problem in the neighborhood. The group—primarily the staff members—spent the next hour coming up with different physical, human, and social capital resources that might be involved in a road-paving project and noting the items on a flipchart. Mariana and Anderson appeared to be “playing along;” Mariana would participate when asked to contribute, but would occasionally roll her eyes in my direction, smile, and shake her head at the suggestions the staff members made. At the end of the workshop, Marcela asked the entire group to pose for photos in front of the flipchart, and the meeting concluded with cookies and soft drinks.

Months later, I was able to review the official documentation concerning that very workshop. While it included all of the photographs taken, a copy of the original agenda, and careful notes on the items that appeared on the flipchart, the details of what had actually occurred were quite sparse. For example, the exchange between Mariana and Marcela described above was recorded in the program documentation as follows:

“The present group chose to work with ‘paving the roads’ from the sphere of possible issues. Since this was the first meeting for some participants, they were permitted to express what they were thinking. Shortly thereafter, they started working on the activity, suggesting actions and responses.” (Unpublished BE Program Document, 31 July 2008.)

While technically accurate, the official workshop description does not include the specific issue that Mariana raised, let alone her sense of frustration. After the event ended, Mariana spent the next half hour talking with me about the experience, frequently using the words “condescending” and “patronizing” to describe how she felt. The entire process was a “waste of time,” since, in her view:

“It was ridiculous to assume that just because they held a few meetings and got some people to come to them who maybe are involved in the community but aren’t real leaders, that the program was developed ‘through discussion with community leaders’ because it really wasn’t. It was a waste of money and time.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 10 July 2008.)

I pressed Mariana further on this point. If the workshops were intended to garner community leaders’ input, but they were not achieving this goal, and the participants as well as the facilitators are aware of that, then why continue to hold them? Mariana replied that eliciting community leaders’ views was a secondary goal; the primary purpose of holding the workshops was to be able to document that the workshop itself occurred:

“It’s predictable, it’s pointless. Marcela and the other staff members get paid based on how well they get their job done, which means carrying out the plan. They are well paid to do this, Boa Vontade got paid to ‘get input from the community’ so they have to put the workshops on, even if that’s not what we want or need. So they will take pictures and write up their own report and send it back to the funders and that’s what counts. It doesn’t matter whether or not the results really reflect what is going on in Beija-Flor.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 10 July 2008.)
Anderson, the other neighborhood resident who attended the workshop, concurred:

“They [CSO staff members in general] ask us what we need, but they aren’t interested in what we really need. There was a program, activities for us to do, and we did them, it was fine, but they didn’t respond to any of the concerns that we might have had. Because there wasn’t any space for us to express what those were. They [CSO staff] have their own agenda, based on what they need, and they give it to their employees, [who] follow it regardless of what the conditions are in the community, or what they find out by listening to community members.”

( Interview: Respondent #94, 10 July 2008.)

If the workshops were useful for the program coordinators, they appeared to be much less so for the residents who participated in them, as evidenced by their decreasing attendance rates. Due to my familiarity with the residents of Beija-Flor as well as the various CSO staff members, I was able to distinguish between “residents” and “staff” on the official program attendance sheets. As Table 7.3 shows, although the total number of workshop participants remained relatively constant, the number of participants who were residents of Beija-Flor decreased with each successive workshop. The grand total of workshop participants appears fairly stable after the first meeting only because staff members were included in the totals. More strikingly, very few residents who participated in one workshop returned for another. Eighty-two percent (18 out of 22 residents) attended only once, and the remaining four residents who returned for a second workshop did not attend successive ones. No Beija-Flor resident participated in more than two workshops.

Table 7.3: Enchanted Butterfly Program: Workshop Attendance Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Workshop #1</th>
<th>Workshop #2</th>
<th>Workshop #3</th>
<th>Workshop #4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beija-Flor Residents</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(First-time attendees)</td>
<td>[9]</td>
<td>[4]</td>
<td>[4]</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Repeat attendees)</td>
<td>[0]</td>
<td>[1]</td>
<td>[2]</td>
<td>[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff, Sustentável Agora</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff, Alcançará</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff, Boa Vontade</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Researcher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resident Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Author’s analysis of unpublished workshop memo, 31 July 2008).
7.3 Concluding the Enchanted Butterfly Program

The survey and the first phase of the workshop series were complete after only five months. However, at that point, Chave de Ouro decided to pull its funding from the program entirely. Alessandra disclosed that the company was dissatisfied with the timeframe, despite the fact that it had been shortened considerably. Finally, when the Beija-Flor neighborhood was invaded by a rival gang faction, work came to a standstill for two weeks. For Chave de Ouro, that was the last straw. They sent a letter to Pesquisa Agora suspending all future payments, claiming that “the delays had made it impossible for us to reach our goals.” (Unpublished BE Program memo, 31 July 2008.)

The Enchanted Butterfly program thus came to a complete halt, and Sustentável Agora was charged with closing down all program activities. According to their documentation, Sustentável Agora held multiple internal meetings in which they debated how to proceed. After all, the community workshop participants had been repeatedly assured that the program would be a long-term effort, but now it was ending after only a few months. Navigating the reality of broken promises was understandably difficult, but it seemed that Sustentável Agora’s program coordinators chose to elide their responsibilities to the workshop attendees. Sustentável Agora held one invitation-only additional meeting; only the youth survey researchers were asked to attend, along with staff from CSOs Alcançará and Boa Vontade. According to one program memo, the youth were “informed that Sustentável Agora was ending its work in the community” and that “the BE program isn’t ending, but we aren’t executing the work anymore.” Perhaps unsurprisingly, “none of the youth had questions”—it is unclear what the youth might have asked without verging on sarcasm, such as how the program would be expected to continue with no one conducting the work. Staff also stated that they intended to inform workshop participants regarding the shutdown, and they were “studying the best way to communicate with the residents in general.” However, both Alessandra, as well as Beija-Flor residents, confirmed that no further meetings, communications, or follow-up actions were taken within the neighborhood.

With respect to the survey results, the data were submitted to Chave de Ouro, Alcançará, and Boa Vontade. In turn, Boa Vontade reported the results in their own newsletter and submitted a general press release, which was picked up by the two largest newspapers in Brazil. On the surface, the data appear to suggest that the Beija-Flor community is prospering: the survey results claimed that 89 percent of residents own their own home, 99 percent access water officially from the city government, 74 percent have sufficient leisure time, and 57 percent think that Beija-Flor is “a great place to live.” However, anyone who has visited the neighborhood even once would likely doubt these statistics. One visit to a resident’s home would demonstrate that city services are rarely, if ever, accessed officially; even one conversation would likely reveal that most residents wish they had far more free time than the survey indicated.

Once I gained access to Sustentável Agora’s documentation, I became even more suspicious of the survey results due to the reported response rate. The official report claimed that out of 2,279 face-to-face surveys attempted, only 143 were marked as incomplete (88 people were identified as not at home, 40 people refused, and 15 houses were vacant), giving a response rate of 94 percent. Any social scientist with even minimal experience in survey research would likely be skeptical of this claim. One expert stated that “in the USA, surveys with 70 percent response rates (face-to-face mode) are considered exceptionally good” and suggested that a 94 percent response rate “sounds nuts and fraud [is] more likely.” (Laura Stoker, UC-Berkeley, personal email communication, 26 March 2011.)
For their part, most Beija-Flor residents were unaware that the survey had taken place. One person who had heard of the survey described it as follows:

“Someone did a survey here, yes. But I never saw it. I know they [Boa Vontade] were trying to do something, but the kids [the youth researchers], they left them just doing whatever they wanted. And the whole thing ended, and they [the youth researchers] just took the money home and spent it without doing anything.” (Interview: Respondent #99, 28 October 2008.)

In addition, one older gentleman surmised that since the survey researchers were not supervised, and they were paid based on the number of completed surveys they returned, it was likely that “they would maybe go to a few houses in the beginning, but eventually they probably just took the surveys home and filled them out themselves.” When I discussed the survey results with Mariana, she found them “hilarious,” ridiculous,” and “impossible.”

Even these dubious conclusions, however, were not disclosed effectively to Beija-Flor residents. Alessandra said that the survey results were widely disseminated within the neighborhood, and she showed me a professionally-designed tri-fold brochure that Sustentável Agora had produced for this very purpose. I had seen the pamphlet once before; Mariana had taken one “from a stack on the side of the road in the trash” and saved it especially for me. Neither she, nor any of the other Beija-Flor residents with whom I spoke, had received this brochure at home or in the “churches, businesses, and other places where people gather” as Alessandra had claimed. One wonders if the pamphlet distributors were working under the same incentive structure as the survey-takers, in which it would be more expedient to dump the brochures on the side of the road instead of taking them to their intended destinations.

Finally, recall that the original BE program plan called for basing the final community development strategy on input from the survey and the workshops. Despite the fact that both were quite flawed, the pamphlet claimed that Beija-Flor residents wanted greater secondary educational opportunities. Toward this end, Alcançará planned to offer a “supletivo”—preparatory classes for adults intending to take the “Provão”—the Brazilian National Education Examination (Exame Nacional de Ensino Médio, or ENEM), a secondary school equivalency exam similar to the American General Equivalency Diploma (GED). I asked Alessandra about the survey results:

{Did the survey results indicate that residents wanted the supletivo course?} “Well, sort of. There was an educational deficiency, but it really wasn’t so large. There was a much greater need for work and income, not for education. But Alcançará’s funder was interested in education, so what can you do? We couldn’t do anything else.” (Interview: Respondent #170, 7 November 2008.)

In other words, Alcançará decided to launch the supletivo course even though staff members knew that it was not a high priority for Beija-Flor residents. In turn, Alcançará hired Sustentável Agora to create campaign posters advertising the supletivo, but despite publicizing the course throughout the neighborhood, very few residents registered for it. Clara, a coordinator from Alcançará, explained that “we got more than 30 people to sign up for the course, which we thought was a fairly large number. But it was below the expectations of our donor, who wanted at least 300 people to sign up.” (Interview: Respondent #106, 12 November 2008.) Clara thought that the poor response was due to the fact that the course was scheduled to take place
shortly after the attempted rival gang takeover. She surmised that the increased level of violence within the neighborhood might have made residents even more wary of associating with unknown persons.

While Clara may be correct, my conversations with Beija-Flor residents revealed additional factors. Instead of generalized caution resulting from increased gang activity, people in the neighborhood identified a specific reason for avoiding the course: they needed to give their full name and address to register for it. Given that gang leadership was in flux, most residents preferred to remain anonymous. The fear, either real or perceived, that a new gang boss might want to identify his supporters and resisters within the community prompted many to avoid disclosing any personally identifying information to anyone. While I strongly doubt that Alcançará would have revealed any of the registration data outside the organization, let alone to gang members, residents appeared to want to avoid being identified in any way.

In addition, some residents felt that the materials advertising the preparatory course were offensive and condescending. After hearing comments to that effect in casual conversation, I asked a group of Beija-Flor residents to tell me what they thought of the brochure and one of the course promotional posters. None of them found the materials attractive; some of their responses included the following:

“*The typeset looks like graffiti. Why did they choose that? As if all of us who live here are gangsters and go around defacing buildings all the time with graffiti. Why can’t they be professional and respectful?”* (Interview: Respondent #129, 25 September 2008)

“*It’s like they are talking down to us. Like we will only respond if they flyer uses ‘street’ language and pictures.*” (Interview: Respondent #99, 25 September 2008)

“*Look at the text here! It says ‘you have all of these other things, you help out at home, hang out with friends, date, go to parties, and in the middle of all this, you can find some time to study. You have to choose your priorities. With a good plan, you can find the time, without letting go of the other things that are important to you.’ As if we are all too busy dating and having fun, that’s why we haven’t finished high school? We are adults, we have real world problems... [Another resident interrupts:] ...Like our jobs, and trying to get healthcare, and taking care of our kids, it’s all that in our way. Not that we ‘just don’t prioritize education.’*” (Interview: Respondents #130 and 129, 25 September 2008)

After this small group of residents closely examined the promotional materials, they not only seemed unlikely to take the course, they also appeared to have a poor impression of Alcançará. Specifically, these individuals felt that Alcançará was utilizing stereotypes to promote the course, thus perpetuating an image of favela residents that is contrary to their reality. In any case, the supletivo course failed to attract sufficient numbers of registered participants. Alcançará’s funder decided to direct their financial support elsewhere, and the course was never actually held. Thus, the Enchanted Butterfly program ended for good, in some ways before it even truly began.
Chapter 7: The Inadequacy of Good Intentions

7.4 Implications for Future Collective Action

Though imperfectly executed and abruptly curtailed, the Enchanted Butterfly program produced some positive outcomes for different groups of stakeholders. In a sense, all of the affiliated groups—save one—achieved results that could legitimately be considered successful to a certain degree. The original client, Chave de Ouro, covered the bulk of the financial costs of the program. Although they were probably dissatisfied with the overall outcome, they did obtain some of the information they sought about the Beija-Flor neighborhood. Chave de Ouro was able to evaluate the favela community as a potential site for business development, and in this sense they succeeded, even though the site was ultimately rejected. Pesquisa Agora and their subsidiary, Sustentável Agora, may have been frustrated with the way the program turned out, but they were compensated financially for their work. In addition, Sustentável Agora gained contacts within the Beija-Flor community; a few of the youth researchers were invited to continue on as the organization’s “right arm” within the neighborhood. The next time Sustentável Agora receives a contract for work in a favela, they might not have to subcontract the work in order to gain access. In this way, Pesquisa Agora and Sustentável Agora came away from the program with net positive results. Similarly, the outside firm that created the community survey, and the graduate student who facilitated the community workshops (Marcela), were both paid for their work, thus also achieving a positive outcome from their perspectives.

The affiliated civil society organizations—Alcançará and Boa Vontade—also benefited from the program in different ways. Both organizations were not only paid for their participation, they also raised their profile within the donor community. The Enchanted Butterfly program was promoted in part under each CSO’s “brand name,” gaining visibility as well as demonstrating their close connections to the Beija-Flor neighborhood. Outsiders were unaware of the internal problems and obstacles that ensued during the BE program’s implementation. Without looking closely into internal program operations, donors would likely observe two CSOs doing community development work, and assume it was carried out as originally planned and promoted. Both CSOs were able to attract attention to their community development work, and thus may have an easier time attracting donor attention in the future. In fact, Alcançará was able to leverage their involvement in the program into an additional funding contract for the proposed supletivo course. Though ultimately unsuccessful, the fact that they gained an additional grant provides some evidence that Alcançará received positive donor attention as a result of the Enchanted Butterfly program. Similarly, Boa Vontade reported the results of the community survey to major news outlets, thus receiving favorable media attention for their organization nationwide. However, their press releases failed to identify Sustentável Agora and Alcançará as equal partners in the work, an omission that Alessandra found particularly distressing. In their final report, Sustentável Agora concluded that working with Boa Vontade was ineffective in part because:

“The leadership of Boa Vontade treated the Enchanted Butterfly Program as if it were their own institutional initiative...Managers, supervisors, and youth researchers mentioned the constant feeling of being seen and treated as a part of Boa Vontade instead of the program as a whole.”
(Unpublished BE Program Document, 31 July 2008.)
In other words, Sustentável Agora believed that Boa Vontade claimed sole credit for the BE program, both in the media and within the community, ostensibly to create favorable public opinion for their own organization at the expense of the other two.

In short, all of the outside organizations that participated with the Enchanted Butterfly program in Beija-Flor received net benefits. Whether in terms of cash payments, favorable publicity, a higher profile among current and potential donors, additional funding grants, or direct connections to a favela neighborhood, all of the affiliated organizations could claim some measure of success. The only group, in fact, that did not derive some direct benefits from the program were the program participants themselves. In addition, some Beija-Flor residents expressed the sad irony that the program was originally intended to improve the neighborhood, but in some ways left it worse off than before.

How were Beija-Flor residents affected by the Enchanted Butterfly program? To be sure, the youth who were hired to work as survey researchers with Boa Vontade arguably came out ahead. They received payment for their work, as well as work experience for their CVs, which is often quite difficult for favela youth to acquire. From the perspective of these twenty youth, then, the short-term income and work experience they earned probably enhanced their future employment prospects in a positive way. However, the community as a whole not only failed to receive the benefits promised by the program, but experienced some negative collective outcomes, which ultimately rendered politically relevant mobilization less likely.

All of the organizations involved with the BE program can be considered “donor-driven” in that their primary incentives were to meet the requirements of their funders. As Chapter 5 discussed, CSOs with a resource acquisition strategy of “obtaining grants” have incentives to create outsider-led, insular organizations with activities based largely on what donors will fund. The staff of Alcançará and Boa Vontade were ultimately accountable to their funders, not to the Beija-Flor residents. Therefore, the BE program leadership team prioritized timely execution over in-depth analysis, as well as individual organizational interests over that of the community, not because anyone necessarily wanted it that way, but because they needed to meet the requirements of those who were paying the bills. Favela residents understand this dynamic well. As Mariana explained:

“Sustentável Agora had money from somewhere to do this project, and they hired CSO Boa Vontade to implement it. But what happens if they can’t do it? What are they going to do, say no, we can’t do the exercises that you [Sustentável Agora] want us to do because they won’t work, or there aren’t any community leaders? Then the problem is us [Boa Vontade], why couldn’t we do it, why couldn’t we find the community leaders? Maybe we don’t have the access or influence you thought we did, so you [Sustentável Agora] go find another CSO in another community. The fact that there is a larger problem in Beija-Flor isn’t their problem. Sustentável Agora has the money for doing this project, Boa Vontade has the money to do this project, so that is what they did.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 10 July 2008.)

Although everyone involved wanted their work to have a positive impact on the neighborhood, the incentives at play diverted the BE program from its original ambitions. Chave de Ouro’s expected timeframe for conducting the work was much shorter than what Sustentável Agora thought realistic, and it appears that there was a lack of communication on both sides. Project administrators in the private and nonprofit sectors often contend with discrepancies such as this one. However, the decision to push the project timeline forward to accommodate Chave de
Ouro’s wishes meant that the quality of both the survey and the community workshops suffered accordingly. There is a popular saying in the strategic planning field: “you want the work done quickly, cheaply, and well, but you can only have two out of those three.” For the Enchanted Butterfly program, it appears that the organizations higher-up on the funding chain made the classic mistake of wanting the work to be done quickly and cheaply, assuming that the outcomes would be “good-enough.” If the project in question involves producing software, TVs, or other consumer goods, and the quality is poor, the organization suffers lost revenue and the opportunity for repeat business. But when the decision to choose fast and cheap over quality is made in the community development field, the end product is the effect on the community itself—real human beings and their lives—who deserve more respect than that.

For the residents of Beija-Flor, the decision to proceed with the BE program quickly and cheaply produced a number of negative effects. Sustentável Agora outsourced both the survey design and the selection and training of youth researchers in order to accomplish both as rapidly as possible. Although Sustentável Agora obtained data within just a few weeks, it was at the expense of data quality. The youth researchers received inadequate training and poor supervision which led to inaccurate results. Moreover, when Boa Vontade published the misleading results across various media outlets, readers throughout Brazil inevitably came away with a false profile not only of the Beija-Flor community, but possibly of favela areas in general. Readers were led to believe that favela residents have access to items that they lack in reality, such as official city services, transportation, and leisure time, and that they primarily desire things that are of minor importance, such as remedial education, instead of jobs and health care. In this sense, Beija-Flor residents were collectively harmed as a false profile of their neighborhood was circulated throughout the wider city of Rio de Janeiro. It follows that residents acquired yet another reason to distrust outsiders in the future.

Coordination among the various participant organizations was also a casualty of the shortened timeframe. In order to move the BE program along as quickly as possible, tasks were delegated to multiple subcontractors who had little or no contact with each other. Each group, therefore, had an incentive to look out for its own interests first; collaboration with others would only have slowed the process down. As a result, the interests of each individual organization took precedence over achieving the highest collective good—both for the other CSOs involved as well as for the residents of Beija-Flor. After the Enchanted Butterfly program ended, Sustentável Agora conducted an internal evaluation of what had gone wrong, and concluded that the lack of communication was a major flaw. The final program report stated that:

“\textit{It would have been more productive if everyone’s roles had been more well-defined. Daily experience showed that the perception of and execution of duties was very fluid...there was no collaboration among the organizations in terms of generating ideas, making a plan, analyzing risks, and establishing goals.”} (Unpublished BE Program Memo, 31 July 2008.)

Beija-Flor residents not only perceived the lack of integration among the different organizations, they had come to expect it as a matter of course. As Mariana stated, “connections among people are broken here. And the ones that do exist, big CSOs end up pulverizing the links that exist because they just add another layer separating people in the community.” (Interview: Respondent #70, 10 July 2008.) In short, there were few, if any, incentives driving coordination of any kind within the Enchanted Butterfly program. Instead, each CSO involved had a resource acquisition strategy based on obtaining funding. While there will always be
pressure to meet external donors’ goals, in this case there were no countervailing incentives for even one of the affiliated CSOs to meet the residents’ goals. The workshops and the proposed supletivo course were of little, if any, value to the residents who attended, let alone the larger community. The individuals who participated in one workshop rarely returned for a second one, indicating that they found the workshops to be a poor use of their time. What is more, those few individuals who did invest effort into the process were promised that the program would be developed with their collaboration and designed around the neighborhood’s long-term needs. In practice, however, the workshop participants encountered a structured format in which there was little room for their ideas and critiques. Chave de Ouro wanted data quickly, and Sustentável Agora intended to acquire it through community participation, but they soon realized that obtaining images of participation was more feasible than conducting a true participatory process.

The primary incentive for each CSO was to deliver results to their funding organization. If conditions within the neighborhood contradicted the activities or strategies that each CSO’s funder expected, it was easier to forge ahead with the original plan, substituting a veneer of community participation for the real thing. Further, the supletivo remedial educational program that was ultimately offered to the Beija-Flor neighborhood was rejected by the residents because it did not address their needs. Finally, when all future workshops were abruptly cancelled, those who had participated likely felt cheated and disrespected. Once Chave de Ouro was satisfied with the outcome, the program ended, despite what residents may have wanted or needed from their perspective. As Anderson put it, “when the process is over, it’s over. They [the CSOs] didn’t do anything, and they didn’t leave anything.” (Interview: Respondent #94, 25 September 2008.) Given that the promises made to the workshop participants were ultimately unrealized, both in terms of the workshops’ content and their duration, it is reasonable to expect that those who participated in them will be less likely to get involved in any future community collective efforts.

Other favela neighborhoods have had similar experiences at the hands of outside organizations, and some resident leaders have concluded that they would prefer to limit their contact with all CSOs in the future. In the Bem-Te-Vi neighborhood, Éverton explained that:

“Because they are born and raised here, long-term residents, including their parents, histories passed down through their ancestors, grandparents, and so if they have a point of view, of course it’s going to be much more authentic than that of the guy who comes in here, bangs out a project on his computer, and says ‘look, I’ve got this project here for you.’ So that’s the struggle. We’re not rejecting them [CSOs], but the CSOs that enter the community should be in accordance with our needs.” (Interview: Respondent #153, 13 August 2007.)

Ideally, Éverton said that his neighborhood should conduct its own survey—“a count of the residents, by age groups, children, elderly, and youth.” Why? Because “outsiders are suddenly wanting to enter here, [saying] ‘hey I have a project that’s going to fit exactly your needs’ but this way we will be ready. We’ll know exactly what we have and what we need.” Although actually conducting such a survey is beyond the reach of Éverton’s organizational resources, the desire to attain a degree of independence from outside CSOs is evident in his response.

Some favela residents claim that a lack of attention to community participation is rooted in prejudice. Chapter 4 outlined the ways in which favela residents are not considered “gente”—fully deserving of respect as a human being—with rights and responsibilities equivalent to any other citizen of Rio. Project coordinators may hold stereotypes about favela residents just as
others do. Even when outsiders want to encourage community participation, and have the best of intentions, they may also unknowingly bring their biases with them. If program leaders believe, even subconsciously, that favela residents are somewhat less capable than other Rio residents, they cannot be fully committed to including them as true partners in the work. As Samuel, a youth organizer with JoveMovimento (Youth on the Move) put it:

“The majority of projects that are done in favelas, the majority of outside organizations that come into favelas, they are already biased in a discriminatory manner. They [the projects] aren’t designed in the same way as similar projects that aren’t carried out in favelas.”
(Interview: Respondent #164, 6 November 2008.)

Juliana, the founder of CSO Rainha-da-Noite, expressed a similar view:

“Most CSOs are patronizing. Their attitude isn’t one of working in partnership, but of giving a handout. They keep some or most of the money that they bring in, and even if they don’t, they get some power. It’s prestigious to work at these organizations. And they always feel as if they have some power over those ‘poor things’ [favela residents.]” (Interview: Respondent #148, 15 November 2008.)

In a few instances, CSO employees themselves admitted to the prejudices that they and their colleagues unfortunately hold. One staff member at a prestigious diamond CSO admitted that nearly everyone who works in favela community development has “little hope for change.” I asked why this was so, and he replied:

“Fundamentally Brazil is hierarchical and classist, and this translates into the way that CSOs work within favela communities. They may talk about working in collaboration with community members, but this is probably because that’s what their international donors want to hear. What actually happens in practice is that they [CSO employees] want to keep their jobs, so nobody wants to rock the boat. Really collaborating with favela residents would involve risks. It’s easier and safer to make small changes.” (Interview: Respondent #147, 17 October 2008.)

Consider what might have resulted if the residents of Beija-Flor had been assumed to be gente—treated with respect as worthy program partners. Chave de Ouro still would have expected quick results, and coordination would have remained challenging. However, if the staff at even one of the affiliated organizations had been committed to including the residents in the work, it is possible that this dialogue, in and of itself, would have led to better collaboration among the different CSOs overall. Moreover, program coordinators would have been hesitant to give a survey, fully formed, to residents of a neighborhood if they thought the residents themselves would have valuable insights to contribute to the survey’s development. At the very least, coordinators would have been honest with the residents when the BE program ended abruptly. One does not make promises to a respected partner and then fail to follow through without an explanation—or at least an apology.

Simple shifts in operating procedures like these can have widespread effects, particularly with respect to future collective mobilization. Even if the entire Enchanted Butterfly program had unfolded in exactly the same way—with poorly trained researchers, inaccurate survey results, and formulaic workshops—the negative effects on future mobilization could have been
mitigated by simply being honest with residents. What if Sustentável Agora’s project coordinators had approached each of the sixteen workshop participants, informed them of the program’s closure, apologized, and given a brief explanation? That kind of honest follow-up would have been a powerful statement of solidarity and respect that might have fostered future collective participation instead of discouraging it. Even Alessandra from Sustentável Agora admitted to me that “mobilization is fragile. We needed to build up confidence and trust within [the community], but we didn’t do that. It’s difficult to mobilize people once they no longer believe that the promised transformations will happen.”

In fact, the most significant outcome of the BE program may very well be the negative impact the program had on community mobilization, particularly on those individuals most likely to participate. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, most favela residents are wary at best of associating with people outside their existing social relationships. The Enchanted Butterfly program spent a great deal of time and effort attracting those few Beija-Flor residents who were willing to risk their involvement with a community project, only to disappoint them with a formulaic and curtailed outcome. Consider that favela residents are already unlikely to engage in collective action in the first place. Éverton, Mariana, and Anderson are exceptions to this rule; they are individuals who are already involved in their favela neighborhoods through their own CSOs. If the question for outsiders—particularly international donors—is how to encourage residents like these to “scale up” their activity into politically relevant mobilization, then the Enchanted Butterfly program is essentially a case study in how not to do so. The way in which the program was carried out served to diminish the participants’ confidence in the efficacy of collective action, making it less likely that they would join a collective neighborhood effort in the future.

The diminished prospects for mobilization are, in a sense, the most damaging outcome to emerge from the Enchanted Butterfly program. It was hampered at the outset by unrealistic expectations for a rapid outcome, which led to a lack of coordination among the organizations involved. In turn, true community participation into the process was sorely lacking, and the workshops and events that resulted from the program did not address the neighborhood’s needs. Ultimately, instead of improving the Beija-Flor neighborhood, the program left no tangible results. Moreover, this particular program was not the first attempt by outsiders to “develop” the neighborhood and “mobilize” residents, and it will certainly not be the last. However, when CSOs repeatedly make promises that are left unkept, it serves to permanently discourage residents from participating in the future—particularly those who were originally most willing to become involved.

### 7.5 Chapter Summary

The Enchanted Butterfly program that took place in the Beija-Flor favela offers an example of how well-intentioned favela outsiders can execute a community project that appears excellent on paper, but falls short in some main respects. While the BE program was successful for many stakeholders, it failed in terms of fostering politically relevant mobilization. Community development is always challenging work, and the circumstances surrounding the Enchanted Butterfly program were no different. Moreover, all of the CSO staff members involved sincerely tried to do the best they could under the circumstances. The original program funders failed to communicate their needs clearly, specifically with respect to the timeframe,
which led other aspects of the program to be condensed to the point that they were ineffective. In turn, each organization had incentives to put their own interests ahead of the needs of the Beija-Flor neighborhood. Collaboration did not occur, as it would have come at the expense of meeting program deadlines.

To be sure, one cannot reasonably expect to eliminate obstacles such as these. Communication failures, nonaligned interests, and curtailed funding are challenges that commonly occur across organizational environments. However, the practices that outside CSOs adopt to address them can make the difference between a community that is energized or discouraged from participating in future collective action. As this chapter has shown, everyone who was involved in the program received some type of beneficial outcome—aside from the community residents themselves. Through the Enchanted Butterfly program, the Beija-Flor neighborhood obtained time-consuming workshops, irrelevant programs, and an inaccurate portrayal of their community in Brazil’s mass media. Given that the collective efforts undertaken did not address the needs or interests of the participants, it is unlikely that they will take part in future collective efforts.

Although the residents were not harmed in a physical or material sense, their diminished trust in these particular CSOs, as well as collective action more generally, has certainly harmed their mobilization prospects. In this sense, the neighborhood of Beija-Flor is worse off than before the Enchanted Butterfly program began. Many of these outcomes could have been averted if the various CSO coordinators had consulted with Beija-Flor residents and treated them as equal partners in the work. Yet even if the program had proceeded in exactly the same manner that it did, managing the program’s closure in a way that respected the neighborhood residents might have mitigated its poor effect on mobilization prospects. Despite the obstacles present, a better overall outcome could have been achieved if the residents of Beija-Flor had been considered true partners from the outset. The organizations involved in the BE program did not exclude residents intentionally; it is that each CSO faced incentives to put their funders’ needs ahead of the community’s interests.

I have described the Enchanted Butterfly program in detail under the assumption that we can learn as much from a negative example as a positive one. The obstacles which prevented development and mobilization from actually occurring certainly made program execution difficult, but fostering future collective action is not dependent on eliminating the practical challenges that exist. What does matter is the way in which the work is done. Providing specific incentives to proceed at a slower pace, particularly by reserving time for collaboration with all involved parties, are two practices that outside CSOs might adopt to improve mobilization prospects. However, even if the timeframe is short and teamwork proves elusive, the residents of the community in question can always be treated with respect. When project coordinators assume that “targets” of development are citizens who deserve the same dignity and consideration that would be afforded to their peers, they can lessen the negative impact on mobilization that other obstacles present. The following chapter (Chapter 8) discusses three additional case studies that illustrate how favela outsiders might respond to similar challenges in a way that improves, not diminishes, future prospects for politically relevant action.
“The program that we ended up with looked nothing like the program we had initially planned. But that’s because we learned, and we thought of new strategies. And slowly the program appeared.”

- author interview with a diamond CSO program manager, 13 November 2008

Chapter 8. Claiming Citizenship and Influencing Power: Three Case Studies of Politically Relevant Mobilization

As we have seen thus far, most CSOs within Rio’s favela communities do not engage in collective action of any kind, and politically relevant action is even more rare. Social benefit CSOs do not have the resources to mobilize, and ghost CSOs have no interest in mobilization, as they exist only to defraud donors. Yet there have been instances of favela residents taking part in politically relevant action, particularly after Rio’s city administrators began eradicating favela neighborhoods in October 2009. While we might expect an exogenous “grievance shock” like this one to galvanize all CSOs concerned with favela neighborhoods to take action, that is not what has occurred. The largest, most famous, and well-funded CSOs in Rio have remained largely on the sidelines, while the organizations leading the charge had small budgets, little publicity, and were relatively unknown outside of favela communities. Why did events unfold on the ground so differently from what theory would lead us to expect? I have shown that different resource acquisition strategies lead to contrasting incentive arenas, which in turn make particular organizational profiles more or less likely. Specifically, CSOs may be outsider- or resident-led; utilize network ties broadly, narrowly, or not at all; and choose activities according to donors’ interests or residents’ needs. In turn, these choices create organizational types that are more or less conducive to building engaged citizens who are willing and able to challenge those who hold power.

This chapter profiles three CSOs in Rio that have undertaken politically relevant action. The first case study describes a program that, although political action was not part of the original plan, nevertheless increased the capacity for political action within the Gaviota favela neighborhood. I then discuss two public campaigns: one targeted toward society, to change attitudes about favela residents, and one targeted toward the state to change favela development policies. The goals of the campaigns were quite different, but they had two main aspects in common. First, the organizations involved had a long history of producing positive outcomes, not only for their program participants, but for the entire community in which they operate. In response, the organizations gained local credibility and trust, which is essential for encouraging residents to collaborate with them. Second, each program enabled favela residents to build civic skills, which favela residents ultimately used to challenge both society and the state.

All three of the CSOs profiled in this chapter conducted their campaigns in a way that increased trust, collaboration, and reciprocity at the local level, as well as built civic skills—all of which are essential resources for politically relevant mobilization. Further, these organizations achieved the outcomes they did not because they cared more about favela residents, had smarter staff members, or better ideas for development—it is that they faced a different incentive structure. In relying on diverse sources of resources and utilizing multiple types of resources, these CSOs had incentives to be resident-led, broadly networked, and deeply connected to local favela communities. As such, they avoided the civil society resource curse,
and were thus more likely to undertake politically relevant activities than similar organizations with a different resource acquisition strategy.

8.1 Creating Favorable Conditions: The “Beautiful Waterfall” Program

Origins and Goals
The “Beautiful Waterfall” program (Programa Cascata Linda), hereafter abbreviated as the CL program, emerged in the Gaviota favela community. As with the Enchanted Butterfly program profiled in the previous chapter, the CL program also began at the request of an outside organization. As this section will show, the initial program plans were remarkably similar, but there were some crucial differences as well. The CL Program was firmly embedded in the Gaviota neighborhood before beginning work, was highly responsive to local feedback, and lasted for almost seven years. While the CL program had no political targets or goals, the way the program was carried out within the neighborhood created favorable conditions for politically relevant mobilization. The CL program was already well underway by the time I arrived in Rio. As with the BE program, I interviewed program staff at the intermediary CSOs, and was given access to official program documents, materials, and reports. Due to the subject matter of the program—which involved current gang members—I was unable to interview program participants directly. However, I was able to gauge the overall response of the community in general from my participant observation research within this neighborhood.

When did the CL program begin? The answer is not as straightforward as one would expect. While the official program lasted for roughly three years, the initial work that laid the groundwork for the program began four years beforehand. As with the BE program described in Chapter 7, an outside organization—the United Nations—provided funding for a worldwide survey on different aspects of the informal economy. They charged a subsidiary organization, BonTravail, with the task of obtaining country-level data from Brazil, and in turn, BonTravail asked Respeito—a diamond CSO within the Gaviota favela neighborhood—to implement the survey. As with other diamond CSOs, Respeito was founded by a small group of Brazilian academics who wanted to apply social science research to urban problems. While their staff are generally university-educated favela outsiders, Respeito has its headquarters within the Gaviota neighborhood, instead of the “NGO Palace” located in the city center. Therefore, most Respeito staff have an unusual “reverse commute” to work, as they travel each day from the wealthier areas of Rio to the Gaviota favela.

After assisting BonTravail with their survey on the informal economy, the staff of Respeito was struck by the results, which revealed patterns of youth unemployment as well as their participation in the illegal economy. Therefore, Respeito was inspired to address these issues in a program of their own. Rather than designing the program first, however, Respeito chose to gather more information, comparing Gaviota’s experience with other favela communities. As Bianca, one of the CL program’s coordinators explained, “the first step, the survey, was for us to bring all elements together, so that we knew how to think about the problem.” (Interview: Respondent #176, 13 November 2008.) After almost two years of leveraging their contacts—facilitated in part by their connection to the United Nations—the organization ultimately received funding for a survey on the reasons why youth in Rio become involved in gang activity.
In a sense, Respeito was ideally situated to conduct this research project. Their staff possessed the technical capacity to design and implement survey research, skills which were refined through their involvement with the U.N. At the same time, the CSO’s location within the Gaviota neighborhood, as well as their commitment to partnering with, training, and hiring residents gave Respeito local credibility. After a series of meetings within the neighborhood, Respeito hired ten residents to conduct the survey. These “local organizers” knew the community well, including youth and others who were involved with the gang. When I asked Bianca how Respeito selected respondents, she replied:

{How did you find survey respondents?} “They came to us, see? We kind of just stumbled upon them because we had local organizers, the interviewers were people from the community. They were leaders and also just regular residents, so it was through their connections that we were able to contact [youth traffickers.]” (Interview: Respondent #176, 13 November 2008.)

The positive reputation of Respeito within the Gaviota neighborhood allowed them to contact gang-involved youth in a way that might have been impossible for many other organizations. Even so, Bianca told me that it took a long time—many months—before the resident researchers were able to get the “real story” from their respondents. Ultimately, Respeito collected data from over 100 individuals, and was able to draw some initial conclusions regarding why youth join gangs, and what they would need in order to leave that life behind.

At this point, many CSOs would develop a program plan based on the information revealed in the initial two surveys. The main conclusion that Respeito came to, however, was that they needed to learn even more. Lara, Bianca’s supervisor, explained:

“From the survey, we found that we needed to bring even more people together to understand the problem. So the next step was to start discussions both within and outside the neighborhood.” (Interview: Respondent #177, 13 November 2008.)

Lara went on to say that since the issue of youth involvement in illicit activity was complex and constantly changing, the program plan needed to be flexible from the very beginning. Instead of designing an intervention at this point—which I believe Respeito certainly could have done—their staff chose to gather more information in another way. Over the course of the following year, Respeito provided opportunities for residents to address the issue of violence through photography and film as well as traditional round-table discussions. As Bianca put it:

We wanted to gain another perspective—the perspective of people from here, who know the reality—so that solutions can be found based on the reality that exists...[and ultimately], questions were raised rather than solved.” (Interview: Respondent #176, 13 November 2008.)

Respeito also held seminars and forums dedicated to the issue of violence in order to bring policymakers and other academics into the discussion. However, Bianca disclosed that “when we launched these new questions into academic spaces, honestly, the team was divided about the usefulness of doing that. {Why?} We wanted to talk about solutions, but we didn’t want to only talk.” (Interview: Respondent #176, 13 November 2008.) It appears that Respeito was keenly aware of the line between gathering information and “analysis paralysis.”
sensitive nature of the issue, the staff wanted to understand its nuances as well as the local context, with the ultimate goal of intervening to reduce youth gang involvement.

One item that emerged from the survey and the community discussions was the importance of sustained education. Specifically, the survey results showed a correlation between the timeframe during which a youth dropped out of school and his entry into the trafficking industry. Conversely, youth who remained enrolled in school were unlikely to join a gang. The community discussions, however, revealed the complexities involved in enabling youth to stay in school. Staff from Respeito described multiple influences, as well as the way they interact:

{Why do youth drop out of school?} It’s a combination of factors. Say a child needs to stay home and work, the family needs his earnings. [Or] the older children take care of the younger ones, they make lunch, take their little [siblings] to daycare, they have various responsibilities. And in the middle of all that, over time he falls behind in his education, and school takes on less meaning for him. And then, if he tries to get back into school, there’s a space issue. All of the vacancies at his former school are taken, so to return to school he has to go to a different one, which is often in a community dominated by another gang. [Her colleague interjects:] The problem of space in the classroom, that’s a huge issue. So generally kids [who return to school] don’t get sent to a school close to home, they get sent elsewhere. And maybe he has to deal with crossing into a rival gang’s territory, or maybe he has to travel a long distance and it takes too much time. [First staff member:] ...and then he doesn’t want to cross that barrier, so that disrupts his education again. So over time, he just gives up school altogether.” (Interview: Respondent #176 and Respondent #178, 13 November 2008.)

Other elements include prejudice from teachers against students from a favela, the need to take care of younger siblings while parents work, as well as simple financial need:

“Sometimes there are immediate needs, an immediate problem. ‘I need money, I have to work, my family needs me to work’ and school is a long-term project. And when it comes down to it, the present needs of his family speak much louder than his own educational future.” (Interview: Respondent #176, 13 November 2008.)

In short, the initial surveys called attention to the role of keeping youth enrolled in school, while the broader community discussions highlighted some of the difficulties inherent in doing so. What is more, the discussions enabled Respeito to connect with Centro de Estudos Falcão, another diamond CSO that had already begun a program designed to improve educational outcomes for favela youth. Instead of trying to create a program on their own, Respeito decided to partner with Centro de Estudos Falcão, and the merged team worked with 60 families that had a child out of school, ultimately achieving a school “reinsertion rate” above 90 percent. Why was this program so successful? Lara explained that:

“It wasn’t just [about] getting a kid back in school, it was getting him to stay in school. Various times a child would go back to school, but little by little he would stop attending, and the next year he’d try to go back, there was this movement back and forth. So what we had to do was not just get him to go back to school once, but to strengthen ties so that he remains in school. {How?} We held meetings with the families once a month. We did workshops with the children. We tutored the kids who needed remedial work—many leave school because they’ve fallen so far
behind, they can’t advance to the next grade, so they feel like they can’t learn, it’s no use. We gave those families all the support they needed so that their kids could remain in school.” (Interview: Respondent #177, 13 November 2008.)

After partnering with Centro de Estudos Falcão for 18 months, and working closely with individual families and youth, the staff of Respeito decided that they were now able to begin a program of their own. The result—the CL program, designed to help gang-involved youth disengage from the criminal life—officially began almost four years after the initial survey was conducted. Yet as this section has shown, the parameters and content of the CL program were constantly being created, in a sense, through the knowledge and connections that Respeito had built over the preceding years. The staff had learned, as well as any outsiders can, the reasons why youth engage in gang activity, as well as the complexities inherent in providing them with alternative pathways in life. The surveys provided one type of information, the community forums built upon and expanded their knowledge base, and finally, after working closely with families in the Gaviota neighborhood for over a year, the staff of Respeito attained a good grounding in how they might realistically expand the options available to gang-affiliated youth.

“Slowly the Program Appeared:” Flexible Strategies

At first, the CL program had three components: individual counseling, group workshops, and occupational training. Respeito had to do very little to attract participants; as Bianca explained, “they came to us.” I asked her to elaborate:

“Again, they [gang-affiliated youth] came to us. They knew us, knew our local organizers, knew the work we had been doing over the years. So when we started this program, they really sought us out. And one [youth] would tell another one about it, that we had a program to help kids get out of gangs, and it grew.” (Interview: Respondent #176, 13 November 2008.)

In fact, over 150 youth came to Respeito over the next year to sign up for the CL program; no one was turned away. The three aspects of the CL program were intended to address the multiple needs of gang-affiliated youth, mutually reinforcing their effects. Program staff described their work as interdependent, yet tailored to the needs of each youth:

“The group counseling...I led some of those groups. They allowed the youth to work on themselves, to reflect, reflection, you know, about their life situations. Why they had a desire to get out, and how to make it a reality. So that was that workshop. But they also got individual care, individual attention and family care. {Why?} Because we had learned that to work this issue out, each invididual has a series of needs. One might need documentation, another might need to return to school, so we worked with each youth every step of the way.” (Interview: Respondent #177, 20 November 2008.)

“We used several methods. Make music, create posters, make things and discuss what they meant. We made videos and discussed what they produced, read books. So we used various strategies for allowing the content to appear in the group so that the youth could confront the ideas together. The goal was to engage them in thinking together, thinking through what they could do to make changes in their lives.” (Interview: Respondent #176, 20 November 2008.)
"We could get some information individually from the youth, but then in groups, they would reflect on their involvement in the gang, and additional information would appear. So we kept learning, not just about one individual but collectively, how to work with the issue of entering and leaving the gangs." (Interview: Respondent #178, 20 November 2008.)

The three aspects of the CL program were well-designed. After four years of experience working with Gaviota youth and their families, I am confident that the staff of Respeito could not have done better. Yet despite their extensive background knowledge and preparation, the CL program encountered a variety of difficulties. As this section will show, program leaders responded by continually adjusting the parameters of the program—sometimes radically so—to the extent that, as Lara put it:

"The program that we ended up with looked nothing like the program we had initially planned. But that's because we learned, and we thought of new strategies. And slowly the program appeared." (Interview: Respondent #177, 13 November 2008.)

Near the end of the program’s first year, staff realized that the group of youth had grown considerably. It became impossible to attend to the needs of each individual youth, while at the same time, the group workshops became increasingly ineffective due to sporadic attendance. Some would leave after only one week, or attend sporadically, which affected the ability of the group to build trust and the activities to have continuity. After a year and a half, Respeito made the difficult decision to limit the CL program to only 30 youth. The staff acknowledged that they were trading a broader reach for greater in-depth work with fewer youth, but it was a trade-off the staff needed to make to attend to the needs of the most committed CL program participants. After substantially reducing the group’s size and closing the program to new entrants, program staff were able to work closely with each youth and respond to their individual needs.

Once freed to spend more time with each program participant, it became evident that CL staff needed to do more to gain a greater level of their trust. Program youth were hesitant to speak openly, and when they did, their stories would often change from day to day. Lara told me that she and other staff members didn’t know what to do to gain their confidence, other than to show the youth that the CL program staff was always on their side. So Lara, Bianca, and the rest of the team began to do more than just individual counseling—they would become intimately involved in the youth’s lives as an adult on whom they could rely.

For example, whenever one of the program youth would be picked up by the police, a CL staff member would accompany them to court or visit them in juvenile hall. It took months of proving to each participant that the CL program staff was willing to support them in real, tangible ways, but over time, their efforts paid off. As Lara described:

"If they [CL program youth] are caught engaging in illegal activity, they go to court, and from there to an institution, or a halfway house, or they’re on parole or probation, and our presence with the youth in these spaces really helped us a lot in terms of gaining their trust. In the beginning he would give us some information, but then after a while, when we went with him to the police station, to his hearing, to the hospital, after a while he would say ‘what I told you before, that’s not the truth, now I’ll tell you the truth.’ They’re so accustomed to making things up, they give false names, false ages, and false stories because of the lack of trust that exists. He
*W. M. Sinek  
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thinks that whatever he says will be used against him. Even though he understood that [our program] was there to help him, not harm him, it was still a slow, slow process. It took time.” (Interview: Respondent #177, 13 November 2008.)

Through their consistent dedication to these youth over a period of many months, CL program staff were able to gain the youth’s confidence and trust. In turn, as the youth honestly described their life circumstances and challenges, program staff could intervene more effectively. Bianca related an anecdote illustrating why a high level of trust was essential:

“We spent time accompanying them, and that’s how we found out [what they needed.] Sometimes he might need health care and he goes to the health care post, but doesn’t know how to get to the admissions area, or doesn’t know how to find the specialty he needs. Or maybe someone asks him to fill out a form and he doesn’t understand it, or doesn’t know how to write, this happens many times. And so he stops trying [to get health care.] And this is how we help. The first time I went [with a youth], I saw the difficulty he had with the documentation, and he was surprised that I didn’t just leave him with it. He thought that I would have left, but I stayed with him as he was.” (Interview: Respondent #176, 13 November 2008.)

Lara followed up with a story of her own:

“One guy knew a little woodworking and wanted to take a window-making course. But he kept putting it off, and finally I realized that he couldn’t complete the registration form. {How?} The next time registration came around, he hadn’t filled out the form [again], so I said ‘just do what you can, and if there’s anything that you can’t do, just leave it for later, we’re here together and we’ll read it together and work on it together.’ And I knew he didn’t write very well, but he was so nervous, and as we worked together I learned that he couldn’t even write his own name. And these institutions [trade schools] aren’t prepared to receive this type of student. So he needed to do an adult literacy course first. The process of making changes in their lives is slow, that’s just one example, it doesn’t happen in an hour. But our program has been useful in helping them realize what steps would need to happen in order to make the changes that they want to make.” (Interview: Respondent #177, 13 November 2008.)

When these young men were confident that CL program staff were true allies, they were able to reveal crucial personal information, such as functional illiteracy, and thus receive the assistance they needed.

Despite high levels of individual attention, as well as increased interpersonal trust, attendance at the group workshops remained sporadic at best. Even though these 30 youth were interested in the CL program and eager participants in many other respects, a majority still failed to show up at the workshops week after week. Bianca said that it was frustrating to plan a workshop and hear youth tell her “yes I’ll be there,” but then have no one attend. On one occasion, however, Bianca took a walk around the area during the scheduled workshop time, and noticed that the CL program youth were hanging out in predictable locations around the neighborhood. Other program staff observed a similar pattern as well. Rather than exhort the youth to attend the group workshops, the staff decided to end the formal group activities entirely and replace them with a different type of group event. As Bianca described:
“It would be time for the workshop and they wouldn’t be there, but we’d see them hanging out together around the neighborhood in certain places. Every day they’d be on a particular corner at the same time. So we had to understand their relationship to the spaces within the favela. And we began to see that we had to go to their space, and we changed it [the content] up a bit also, that’s how we started the ‘street workshops.’ {Interesting! What did you do?} Well, [one example is that] we saw that they [the youth] did graffiti. So we got a graffiti instructor and a psychologist, and they went to the areas where the kids were, and from there they did graffiti on the walls, taught them some techniques. And through the themes they chose, they had discussions. So we modified the workshop, we took it out to the street, but we continued discussing issues of violence, drugs, gangs, and all that through the medium of creating graffiti art. And so we continued with the individual support, going to their homes, and supplemented that with the ‘street workshops.’ It worked out extremely well.” (Interview: Respondent #176, 20 November 2008.)

At this point, the CL program staff believed that they had finally developed an effective program methodology. They were successful in encouraging youth to speak openly and honestly about their individual situations and challenges, and in turn, were able to help each one to understand what he would need to change in his life in order to leave the gang life behind. In doing so, however, the CL program staff discovered a crucial ingredient that had not been revealed in any of the surveys or previous discussions: the role of women. When the young men felt secure enough to disclose their true motivations for wanting to make changes in their lives, they expressed how much influence the women in their lives truly had. Bianca explained that once she and others “really understood the trajectory” of the youth, it turned out that the main influence within their lives was the opinion of these important women:

“His mother, his grandmother, an aunt, a wife—women had a singularly important role in the lives of these boys. He would say ‘my mother is the one who makes me want to get out of this [gang] life’ or a grandmother or an aunt, so we took on the task of strengthening the role of these women. When we talked with them [the women], they didn’t realize the influence they had over these boys, they thought they had lost it. But we helped them [the women] see that they still had power and influence, and they could use it to help the youth get out.” (Interview: Respondent #176, 20 November 2008.)

Therefore, the CL program staff changed course yet again. They began working closely with women, particularly the mothers, as the staff realized that the mothers’ responses to their sons’ gang involvement was actually counter-productive:

“Some [mothers] would be ashamed, others didn’t want to accept it and denied facing the truth, others got angry and would beat them or kick them out of the house, and some would make them go to church. So we talked with them about the strategies that they were using, individually and in small groups, and let them know that they were still important figures. That they shouldn’t give up, many mothers had already given up on their children, but when they realized their importance, how much influence they still had [over their sons], they decided to persevere.” (Interview: Respondent #176, 20 November 2008.)
In some cases, the mothers would go to extreme lengths to show their sons how much they were willing to do to stand by them:

"After talking with us, a few mothers would go to the places [in the favela] where drugs were prepared and sold [the 'boca de fumo'] and it was a scandal! She’d show up where he [her son] was working and say ‘if you won’t come home with me, then I’ll stay here with you.’ They’d do lots of things like that, and he’d be all shaken up and confused and upset, but then also think ‘damn, my mother really believes in me.’" (Interview: Respondent #177, 20 November 2008.)

Through building up these women’s self-esteem, and helping them understand that their opinion and influence still held sway over their sons, virtually all of the CL program youth began to think seriously about how to leave the gang for good. Yet one final challenge remained: how to help these young men find legal employment. After almost seven years of participatory research, the CL program staff knew from the surveys, group discussions, and individual anecdotes, that if the youth could not obtain work, they would not be able to sustain themselves. But the staff also came to understand that the key was having a job, not necessarily a high-paying one. Moreover, finding the young men work inside the favela community was also important. Not only is there a long commute to get to the city center from the Gaviota neighborhood, formerly gang-involved youth are frequently afraid to leave their home territory. Why?

"They’re afraid to leave the favela for a few reasons. Even if they aren’t involved in criminal activity anymore, they’re afraid of being recognized, of being arrested, or encountering a rival gang. So their lives are restricted to the neighborhood where they currently live." (Interview: Respondent #178, 22 November 2008.)

Thus, CL program staff reached out to local small business owners within the neighborhood, and advocated on behalf of the program participants. Not everyone was receptive, but once merchants were made aware of the situation, some of them agreed to hire CL program youth:

"We managed to get two boys work in a furniture store. Another one [currently] works as a waiter, some are working in the supermarket, and one is taking courses right now, training to be a receptionist. And once they start working, they have an increased desire to go back to school, because they begin to see that their options are limited without finishing their education. So when this happens we also help them get into courses, fill out the forms, get documentation.” (Interview: Respondent #178, 22 November 2008.)

Ultimately, all of the youth who left the gang permanently did so in part because they were able to find steady work in the formal labor sector.

After three years of operation, the CL program bore little resemblance to its initial design. Respeito began the program by offering individual counseling, group workshops, and occupational training for a large group of gang-involved youth. By the end of the program, the group had been closed to only 30 participants, and none of the three components remained in its original form. Individual counseling sessions were replaced by in-depth “youth accompaniment,” in which staff members became closely involved in individual youth’s lives as reliable allies. The group workshops had transformed into informal, drop-in “street workshops,” and the occupational training courses were dropped entirely. Moreover, the majority of the
program’s activities revolved around working with women—particularly the mothers of gang-involved youth—to build their self-esteem, as well as making connections with local businesses.

As I have shown, the CL program dramatically changed course as the staff made mistakes along the way, and learned what would be more successful through trial-and-error experience. Importantly, however, the program’s evolution does not tell us how to find the perfect approach that is guaranteed to work. On the contrary, the CL program could not have started out the way it did, because some crucial factors—namely the role of women, and the type of employment opportunities—were only revealed in the process of making other choices. The only “recipe” for success was a willingness to make mistakes, fail along the way, adjust the program design in response, fail again in another area, and keep going in this vein over a substantial period of time. As Lara’s quote at the beginning of this section succinctly illustrates, the CL program ultimately achieved positive results because the staff made mistakes, thought of new strategies instead, gave those a try, and “slowly the program appeared.”

**Individual and Collective Outcomes**

How successful was the CL program? I do not want to overstate what this program was able to accomplish. The CL program took many years to get off the ground, and directly affected the lives of only 30 youth. From a return-on-investment perspective, one may contend that the quantity of time and effort devoted to a relative handful of young people had little overall value for the neighborhood as a whole. Moreover, the young men who were initially involved in the CL program, but were unable to continue when it was limited to 30 participants may come away from the experience with a negative impression overall. Some may consider these outcomes sufficient to render the CL program marginally successful at best.

Alternatively, one could measure the program’s success by focusing on the outcomes for the participants themselves. By this standard, looking at the numbers of individual youth who ultimately left the gang and stayed unaffiliated for over a year, Bianca said that roughly 60 percent of participants fell into this category (18 out of 30 youth). In this regard, the CL program compares quite favorably to other gang disengagement programs. Similar efforts in North America targeting gang-affiliated young men have achieved disengagement rates ranging from zero (Esbensen et. al. 2001) to 59 percent (Totten and Dunn 2010), with an average of roughly 30 percent (Hritz and Gabow 1997; Arbreton and McClanahan 1998; Evans and Sawdon 2004). In this sense, it appears that the CL program ranks among the best in terms of enabling young men to leave the criminal life behind.

In addition, the youth who remained gang-involved have not only expressed a desire to leave, they have thought through what they might need to make it a reality. Leaving the criminal life is not just a matter of “not showing up for work the next day.” On the contrary, Bianca said it was more like surfing—the young men have the desire, they make a plan, and then:

> “Eventually there comes a moment when he thinks ‘I was almost arrested, I almost died’ and that’s a crucial moment, he wants to get out but his desire might waver, and our work was to help him have an action plan, an exit strategy in place, involving his family, his school, and especially his mother.” (Interview: Respondent #176, 20 November 2008.)

Of course, the lack of legitimate work opportunities, prejudice against favela residents, and the strong pull that the gang may hold over its members also present significant exit barriers. But it
is also possible that the 12 youth who remain gang-affiliated have not yet had a pivotal moment in their lives as the one described above.

Importantly, the organizations that provided financial resources to Respeito also played a crucial role by limiting the amount of quantitative indicators required in the grant reporting process. As staff members explained:

“In the beginning we were charged with, you know, how many youth left the gang, we had all of these quantitative things to measure. But it’s difficult to answer precisely because often we can’t identify, quantify this…it’s not just ‘they leave’ as you have seen, it’s a set of actions, one action alone isn’t going to do it. But the difficulty is in measuring this type of result. They [the funders] have to understand the type of work that we’re doing…It could be that we start something, but the result comes later on, after the official timeframe of the program has passed, and so we can’t measure that.” [Second staff member:] We suffered from that limitation a lot in the beginning, but now it’s better, we’re not charged with delivering so many quantitative results. We show how we’ve invested in the youth, and describe the effects that have arisen. We see improvement, and that’s why our written reports are immense, we describe all this.”

(Interview: Respondents #176 and #178, 22 November 2008.)

By accepting a broader definition of “success,” the funders gave CL program staff the freedom to fail, try again, and ultimately achieve a notable result.

The success of the CL program also extended to the Gaviota community as a whole. Throughout my time in the neighborhood, I noted that Respeito enjoys a generally positive reputation, even among residents who had not heard of the CL program. Virtually everyone knows where the organization’s headquarters are located, and many residents spoke with some pride that Respeito was housed within the community itself, instead of in the city center. At the very least, we can conclude that the neighborhood’s good opinion of Respeito did not diminish as the CL program unfolded over time.

The CL program also left a concrete legacy within the Gaviota neighborhood in the form of a permanent network of supporters. Once the staff realized the nature and extent of the challenges that gang-affiliated youth face, they reached out to other institutions in the area for assistance. Staff members described the network this way:

“Just as it’s very difficult for one boy alone to get out [of the gang], it’s very difficult for one institution acting alone to make a difference. So we needed to involve many other actors, that’s why we created a network, and even today [the members] meet once a month, and we consider problems and alternative solutions together.” [Second staff member:] Each institution works on a piece of the problem, and we talk about the strategies we use, how we can complement and strengthen each others’ efforts. And we also refer cases to each other. [Third staff member:] We raise each others’ awareness. We decrease the distance that exists between organizations. Maybe there’s someone who needs a course, and your organization offers that course. But he wouldn’t know about it, and we wouldn’t know about it, if we didn’t have this network to share ideas and think about the issues together.” (Interview: Respondents #177, #176 and #178, 22 November 2008.)

In order to help CL program participants complete their education, get health care, find legitimate work, and receive other types of support, program staff contacted relevant
organizations and asked for their assistance. Once schools, churches, the health care post, and some citizenship CSOs were involved, Respeito proposed that they create a formal network. Initially, network members met twice a month to discuss the challenges that CL program youth faced. Not every institution participated to the same degree, and many institutions within the Gaviota neighborhood were not interested in belonging to the network at all. Nevertheless, after one year, the network contained over 40 affiliated organizations, with roughly one-fourth of them attending the meetings on a regular basis.

Moreover, the network members have continued to meet since the CL program ended. Respeito provides the space, and once a month, representatives from affiliated institutions come together to discuss strategies and share information. I attended one of these network meetings in which 12 people were present, representing eight organizations within the Gaviota neighborhood. The members requested that the content of their conversation remain private, but they gave me permission to discuss the meeting’s structure and process. Over the course of an hour, members updated each other on their organizations’ current activities, announcing events, seminars, and training opportunities, as well as parties and celebrations. Organizations that needed assistance—either for affiliated youth, or for their staff—were able to ask the other network members for guidance, and at least at the meeting I attended, received useful information in response. In general, the theme of the network had broadened beyond helping youth disengage from gang affiliation; members used meetings to discuss any issues of concern within the Gaviota community. Through creating this network, the CL program ultimately enabled organizations within the neighborhood to connect with each other for the mutual benefit of all, thus leaving a positive legacy for the community as a whole.

How did the CL program affect prospects for politically relevant mobilization? Collective action, particularly political action, were far from the program’s intended purpose. The CL program’s goal was to help young people in the Gaviota community exit from the gang and nothing more. However, the way in which the CL program was carried out indirectly set the stage for politically relevant mobilization to occur. Chapter 6 discussed the four types of civic skills that facilitate political collective action: critical thinking, communication, organization, and collective decision-making. Through their involvement in the CL program, the young men who made plans to disengage from the gang increased their ability to reason, think abstractly, and develop new solutions to familiar problems. Their mothers—and other important women in their lives—gained confidence, self-esteem, and a greater ability to express their opinions to their gang-affiliated sons as well as each other. All of these capabilities make any type of mobilization easier to plan and execute.

On a broader level, the CL program sparked the creation of a community network, in which organizations share information and work together for the good of the Gaviota neighborhood. Moreover, individual network participants gained a greater appreciation for the value of collaboration. After the meeting I attended, two CSO representatives commented on why they participate in the network:

\textit{[Why did you come to the meeting today?] ”I’ve learned that networking is very important, working in conjunction with others, not being in isolation. I don’t think that any program can have success thinking that a problem can be resolved with just one organization, just one action. Involving other stakeholders is crucial. [Second respondent:] We don’t have the perspective that the program is for this length of time and that’s it.” But [our program] also can’t last forever.}
That’s precisely why we have to involve other institutions in the work.” (Interview: Respondents #158 and #159, 3 November 2008.)

In order to help gang-affiliated young men acquire training, complete their education, and find formal employment, CL program staff needed to reach out to other institutions. They created a network of organizations, and in doing so, network participants realized the value of collaboration and refined their organizational skills. Given that the network has persisted since the formal close of the CL program, its structure can potentially serve as a platform for launching collective action.

After almost eight years, the CL program yielded an intensive, local effort to help a relatively small number of gang-affiliated youth disengage from criminal activity. The program did not make broad changes to the Gaviota community, and in that sense, can be considered to have had a minimal impact at best. Moreover, the CL program was not political in nature, and its goals did not include collective action at all. But in a sense, the fact that the CL program had nothing to do with either politics or mobilization illustrates my core argument: even small-scale, apolitical development programs can nevertheless affect whether or not collective action is likely to occur. Whenever CSOs launch programs within a neighborhood, especially programs with some type of “community development” in mind, the way in which the program is carried out can have positive, negative, or neutral effects on the residents’ propensity to participate in anything the next time around.

With respect to the CL program, I contend that the program helped build conditions that favor politically relevant mobilization, albeit on a small scale. Organizations within the neighborhood are more connected than they were previously, with some of their staff members sharing information on a regular basis. While the CL program may not have affected many Gaviota residents personally, the way the program was carried out gave Respeito, and their programs more broadly, enhanced respectability (or, at the very least, did not diminish their reputation). As residents saw the program unfold and achieve positive outcomes for a small group of youth, they may have developed more favorable attitudes toward collective action. Finally, the network that resulted from the CL program indirectly contributed to the success of a different program, which did have politically relevant effects. That program—Favela, Eu Sou Daqui! (Favela, I’m From Here!)—is the focus of the next section.

8.2 Challenging Social Attitudes: The “Favela—I’m From Here!” Campaign

Thus far, all of the names, places, and programs in this research have been disguised to protect the identity of their participants, as well as to comply with Human Subjects research protocol. However, I use real organization and campaign names for the two case studies that follow, because the intention of each was to raise public awareness, change perceptions, and influence public policy. Being publicly identified here may even benefit the campaign participants. Everyone who accesses this research will become familiar with the issues important to them, thus raising broader awareness and furthering the participants’ goals.

Origins and Goals

The “Favela—I’m From Here!” (Favela, Eu Sou Daqui!) campaign originated with Promundo, a Brazilian CSO that has been promoting human rights since 1997, particularly with
respect to increasing gender equality and reducing violence. The organization has three main thematic areas—direct service, research, and advocacy—and each area informs the work of the other two. The research division studies what interventions are most effective in terms of changing individual behavior and community norms. In turn, the direct service team develops relevant materials and implements the programs in collaboration with other CSOs. Afterward, both divisions evaluate and refine the programs’ results, and share their tools, data, and methodologies so that other organizations can replicate their work. Promundo’s curricula have been implemented in over 20 countries across five continents. Finally, the organization conducts community consciousness-raising campaigns and advocates for specific public policy interventions in the political arena. Most recently, Promundo was selected as one of Philanthropedia’s worldwide “Top Nonprofits” for 2011—receiving positive evaluations from over 70 international experts on violence against women—and was the only Brazilian organization to receive this distinction.

In 2005, Promundo began the JovEMovimento (Youth on the Move) program, a national initiative to involve low-income youth in preventing the types of violence that affect them. As a first step, Promundo partnered with CSOs in four cities (Ceilândia, Chapecó, Recife, and Rio de Janeiro) to conduct a survey of lower-class young people across these four regions of Brazil. The survey investigated the youths’ experiences with violence in the family, their community, at school, and at the institutional level. Responses in three of the regions were fairly similar: young people most frequently confront bullying at school, psychological and physical violence at home, intimidation from police officers, and employment discrimination due to their young age. However, youth living in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas provided a distinctly different profile. The type of violence they regarded as most damaging was the “institutional violence” of prejudice and discrimination. Unlike other regions of Brazil, “where they [the youth] lived [in favela communities] was the principal cause of discrimination when looking for employment, ahead of factors such as age, race, color, or having/not having children” (Gomes et. al. 2008). Both the survey and the experiences of program-involved youth confirmed that violence and prejudice were intimately connected. I spoke with some members of the JovEMovimento youth team who explained that in their view, prejudice against favela youth is behind many forms of violence. When educated young people with a favela address cannot find work, or receive quality health care, their lives and futures are damaged in a very real sense. Other indirect instances of violence are described below:

“Prejudice against favela residents affects all public policies, it’s relevant to everything. It’s not just one policy alone, it covers everything because prejudice is the root of the way we are treated.” (Interview: Respondent #181, 10 November 2008.)

“The favelas are our city. If you keep saying, ‘the favela is there, and the city is here’ you reinforce the invisibility of favela youth. To see them [favelas] as a place apart, to not look at them in this way is a kind of violence. It’s a kind of symbolic violence that reinforces justification of actual violence.” (Interview: Respondent #173, 12 November 2008.)

“When reporters write about youth in the asphalt, they call them students [estudantes]. When they write about youth in the favela, they call them minors [menores]. This is a kind of prejudice

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that reinforces the idea that favela youth are different and probably criminal. [Second youth interrupts:] And violence begets violence! If the police come in [to our neighborhood] expecting violence and acting violent, then how do you think people will respond? With violence. They need to change their perceptions.” (Interview: Respondents #174 and #164, 12 November 2008.)

Although “prejudice and discrimination” was not originally conceptualized as a type of violence by Promundo, the staff allowed the Rio youth group to address that theme. After all, the goal of the program was to empower young people to advocate for their right to live without violence. Since Rio’s favela youth indicated that the type of violence that most affected them was discrimination against them as favela residents, Promundo’s staff concluded that the program should address that issue. Marcos Nascimento, the Program Director of JovEMovimento, explained how his thinking about the connection between prejudice and violence evolved in response:

“Most of the time when we think of violence, we think of physical assault, right? We think about murders, gunshots, and the statistics of these—but how do we statistically record incidence of prejudice? Because these happen every day. These small instances of violence, that really aren’t all that small if you think about it, they happen all the time, and they produce certain sensibilities, certain conditions, certain forms of public policy. So for me, it was interesting to think about prejudice and discrimination as a form of violence, rather than as a violation of rights.” (Interview: Respondent #165, 6 November 2008.)

Instead of debating the accuracy of conceptualizing prejudice as violence, the JovEMovimento program made it a central component of the program’s next phase: the Favela—Eu Sou Daqui! (Favela—I’m From Here!) campaign. Fourteen youth were selected from five different favela communities located throughout Rio de Janeiro. Promundo did not choose the participants directly; they contacted partner organizations working with youth in Rio’s favelas and asked them to nominate candidates. For example, two young people became involved in the program through the citizenship CSO Bela-manhã. Bela-manhã participated in the network that emerged from the CL program described in section 8.1. Therefore, when Promundo contacted another member of the network for youth recommendations from Gaviota, that member organization connected Promundo with Bela-manhã.

By January 2008, the core youth team had been chosen, and they spent eight months receiving training in all aspects of how to conduct a publicity campaign. First, the group studied relevant public policy, instances of human rights abuses against favela residents, and analyzed the way the media represents favela youth, identifying predominant stereotypes. Then, the youth developed publicity materials with the goal of countering the negative images and perceptions they had found. With the assistance of advertising and graphic design professionals, the youth team selected promotional venues, tested various themes on a focus group of middle school students, wrote copy, laid out their designs, and held a campaign kick-off event for journalists and other interested CSO staff members.
“It’s Time To Take A Fresh Look At Our Ideas:” Campaign Activities

What did the “Favela—I’m From Here!” campaign do? The goal was to distribute the central campaign message—that favela youth are just like youth everywhere in Brazil—throughout the city of Rio. As one team member put it:

“We want to hold up a mirror, show people that when they are looking at the favela, they are looking at themselves. The campaign is a way to open up the conversation. We are youth from different favela communities, and our target audience is a very difficult public—the middle class and the upper class—because the upper class has very definite ideas about favela residents. This is an audience that hasn’t ever been receptive to a different message about favelas. And on top of that, I’m a young man who hasn’t ever worked with the middle and upper classes. So we had our work cut out for us.

(Interview: Respondent #164, 6 November 2008.)

The group wanted to inspire all Rio residents, but particularly the wealthy, to question the assumptions they hold about favela youth. The core campaign materials are shown in Figures 8.1 and 8.2 below. The centerpiece of the campaign was a month-long “media blitz,” involving television and radio advertisements, bus billboards, t-shirts, and postcards. Although fairly unusual in North America, postcards are commonly used in Rio de Janeiro as an advertising tactic. They are found throughout the city in restaurants, dance clubs, fitness clubs, and they generally contain high-quality images that are novel, humorous, or controversial. Some people take the free postcards and use them as such, while others (particularly young people) collect and trade them. As is evident from the images, the tone of the campaign was quite optimistic and positive, centered on favela youth displaying pride in who they are and where they live.

The campaign was not limited to traditional media venues, however. Utilizing Promundo’s extensive organizational network, the youth traveled throughout Rio, presenting their message to different groups. I accompanied the group on two of these site visits: one to a Northern Zone social benefit CSO that provides after-school tutoring to grade-school youth, and one to a group of middle- and upper-class university students majoring in Public Health. Both presentations covered the same core material, but the concepts were delivered in ways appropriate to the age and interests of the particular group. For the group of grade-schoolers, the presenters started a conversation about the problems that children and adolescents have in their neighborhood. It took almost half an hour to get the kids to warm up, but once they began, they quickly identified the lack of a health care post, crowded schools, and police brutality as common concerns. Then the youth leader said:

“Do you think the police act that way in the Southern Zone? [All the kids agreed—of course they don’t.] And why is this? [Silence. After a few moments:] There is a difference in how the police act, in the schools kids attend, in the health care in one area of the city compared to another, and that isn’t right. Everyone has the right to education, to health care, to be respected. That’s the message that we want to get across in this campaign. Everyone has the same rights.” (Participant Observation: Respondent #181, 21 November 2008.)

She then went on to talk about what a campaign was, what prejudice was, and the conversation turned to what “favelas” really are compared to what most people in Rio think they are. By this

54 The main television ad can be viewed online here: http://youtu.be/auOhc2K9q7w
time, the group was fully engaged in the discussion, and at the conclusion of the hour, the discussion leader allowed each youth to select a campaign postcard to keep.

**Figure 8.1: Core Images from the “Favela—I’m From Here!” Campaign**

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The same city

There are approximately 1.5 million youth in Rio. Over 300,000 of them live in favelas and face discrimination because of it.

It’s time to take a fresh look at our ideas.

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The same city

Youth for an end to prejudice

Favela—I’m from here!

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(Source: Instituto Promundo, Favela—Eu Sou Daqui! Campaign Materials)
A few days later, I accompanied Samuel, another youth leader, to hear his presentation to a group of public health university students. The students (and their professor) expected that he would deliver a lecture, but Samuel captured the attention of the group by conveying the material through a series of simulations. One activity was particularly effective: Samuel randomly divided the group in two, then gave each person a partner. To the youth in the first group, he said: “You are people (gente). You are human beings, you are alive, you have rights.” The youth in the second group, however, were instructed that “you all are things, not people (coisas). As you know, people do whatever they like with their things, because they don’t have rights, they are just things! So let’s begin. People, you can tell your things what to do, and they have to do what you say.” A lively activity commenced, as the students designated as “people” asked their “things” to quack like a duck, bark like a dog, and hop on one foot. After five minutes, Samuel instructed the youth to switch roles. This time, the room was near chaos, as the “things-turned-people” commanded their subjects to crawl under a chair, run around the room, and in one case, go down the street and bring back an ice cream.

After another five minutes, Samuel called the group together, and we sat in a circle to debrief. When assigned to the role of a person, the youth said they felt “powerful, superior, like an authority figure.” But in the role of a thing, they felt “disrespected, treated unfairly, and like a slave.” Samuel then asked the students: who or what makes you feel like a “thing?” and they identified unfair rules, ex-boyfriends and girlfriends, and at times their parents. However, when asked “who have you treated like a “thing”—the group became quiet, until one young person mentioned “the maid.” Virtually all middle-class Brazilian families employ domestic help, and most maids, cooks, and doormen in Rio are dark-skinned favela residents. The young woman’s response sparked a lively discussion about how household help—and by extension, the favela residents these students interact with on a daily basis—deserve to be treated, regardless of how well or poorly they do their jobs.

Over the next hour, Samuel led the group in a discussion that explored deep issues of who is considered gente in society and who is not, the short and long-term implications of this
prejudice, and whether or not this is the way things should be. The group concluded by reflecting not only on how their rights have been disrespected, but also on the way they have disrespected the rights of others when in a position to do so. (Participant observation: Respondent #164, 26 November 2008.)

I came away from both of these site visits with the impression that the JovEMovimento program youth had skillfully inspired the different groups to think critically about “the way things are” in Rio with respect to prejudice. However, the program youth went a step further: bringing the campaign message to individual Rio residents, one-on-one, in public places. Every Saturday evening during the month of the campaign, the program youth went to an outdoor “food court” in Botafogo, a neighborhood in the wealthy Southern Zone of Rio. The area has seven restaurants that encircle an open-air patio, and it is one of the most popular places for young people to be on a Saturday night. The JovEMovimento participants wore program t-shirts, gave musical performances, and handed out campaign postcards in an effort to interact with the other young people who were there. Given the Brazilian propensity to remain within one’s own circle of friends, the program youth had some difficulty breaking into established groups. At the same time, some middle- and upper-class young people were genuinely curious about what the “favela” was like. The JovEMovimento group commonly received questions about what kind of music they liked (a variety of styles, not just funk) and what they did for fun (play soccer, go to the beach, and hang out with friends—just like most Brazilian youth). Through informal conversations like these, often over a beer or a slice of pizza, the campaign team personally offered their peers an image of favela youth that dramatically differed from many of their preconceptions.

Finally, the JovEMovimento youth took on an enormous challenge: directly approaching wealthy Southern Zone residents on the street. The team traveled to areas of the city with heavy pedestrian traffic, and dressed in their program t-shirts, walked up to passers-by and offered them a campaign postcard. As in many large cities, “flyering” in this manner is a common advertising practice in Rio. When the flyer in question concerns a new restaurant, a coupon, or similar propaganda, some people ignore the handouts, while others take the flyer and go about their business. However, the reaction that the JovEMovimento youth received was quite different. One weekday afternoon, I watched the group from a park bench as they attempted to distribute their postcards on a popular pedestrian walkway in Ipanema, one of Rio’s wealthiest neighborhoods. After just a few minutes, I noticed a clear difference in the way that the youth were treated based on their race. When the person offering the postcard was light-skinned, people would generally take the card and quietly walk on, occasionally saying “how nice” or “thank you.” If the postcard was refused, there was no interaction—the person walking by would ignore the card and move along.

However, if the person offering the card was dark-skinned—and especially a dark-skinned male—the response was quite different. It was rare that the postcard would be accepted; the most receptive response black youth received was being ignored. If there was interaction, it was generally quite negative; the most common spoken response was “get away” or “go to hell.” On one occasion, a middle-aged woman with a child, after looking at the card, dropped it on the ground, said “I’m calling the police,” and tried to wave over a private security guard (who didn’t leave his post). Finally, one elderly woman took the card, read it, and then said “have you asked permission to do this? Who gave you permission to be here?”

Negative responses like these caused the group to re-evaluate the entire campaign after just ten days. They had expected to be received more positively; after all, they were clean-cut,
polite teenagers handing out postcards in public places—a fairly common sight throughout the city. Many were disappointed with the level of hostility that they encountered, and some worried that the campaign might make perceptions worse. As one young woman articulated, “people who are open to the idea of favela residents having full citizenship rights will stay open to it. But people who are closed, maybe this campaign will make them even more closed off, make their perceptions even worse?” After much discussion, however, the project team decided to persevere and carry out the remaining public events despite the difficulties they faced.

Although I did not personally participate in the campaign, I was also given a program t-shirt, and I wore it around the Southern Zone: to the beach, the grocery store, and the gym. As a light-skinned young woman, I received more than a few double-takes. My galera (group of regular acquaintances) asked me directly about the shirt, and I took the opportunity to explain its significance. The text reads “I’m from a favela!” and the image is a line drawing of the picture-perfect skyline of Rio de Janeiro, but with the favela communities drawn in. The youth team told me that the design was specifically selected to illustrate that just as the favelas are integral to the city, favela residents and “asphalt” residents also share a common humanity—so I shared this explanation with my upper-class friends. Even individuals I had known casually for over a year, and who knew that I was working in favela communities, seemed surprised that I would want to identify myself in this way. My personal experience reinforced how provocative the seemingly simple message of equality truly was in Rio, and gave me increased understanding of the difficulties that the program youth faced in carrying out their campaign.

**Political Relevance of the Campaign**

Was the “Favela—I’m From Here!” campaign successful? Clearly, it made many people uneasy. In a sense, that was part of its goal; program participants told me that “it’s uncomfortable to come face-to-face with your prejudices!” Aside from a pre- and post-campaign citywide survey—which was not planned and did not occur due to a lack of funds—we cannot know how seeing a bus billboard or having a pleasant exchange with a favela youth might have affected broad social attitudes. We can conclude, however, that the campaign was not only politically relevant in and of itself, it set the stage for similar types of mobilization to occur more easily in the future.

As outlined in Chapter 2, seeking policy change is just one aspect of politically relevant mobilization. The goal of political action may be to influence the government’s decision-making process directly, but it might also involve consciousness-raising activity as a necessary prerequisite for placing new issues on the public agenda. In this manner, actions that call attention to inequality, express frustration with the status quo, and challenge established structures of power all qualify as collective action with intended political affects. The “Favela—I’m from Here!” campaign sought to achieve all of these goals. Moreover, the participants themselves referred to the different campaign events as “political community action” (ação político-comunitária). Their rationale was that middle- and upper-class Rio residents must change their attitudes regarding favela residents before they will want to change public policy, as well as implement the laws that exist which guarantee equal rights for all citizens.

It is also evident that the youth who participated in the campaign were personally affected by it, particularly in ways that support their future involvement in politically relevant mobilization. After the campaign ended, one participant said that “we have a better understanding of our rights, so it’s possible for us to participate and create change.” (Gomes 2008). With assistance from volunteer professionals, the program youth took ownership of all
aspects of the campaign. They converged on a theme, conducted relevant research, developed persuasive campaign strategies and materials, organized events, and persevered in the face of adversity. All of these are essential “civic skills” that translate to collective action in general, but are particularly necessary for taking on controversial political topics.

Two types of skills are especially useful for future political action: broader social networks and public speaking proficiency. The “Favela—I’m From Here!” campaign brought together youth from five different favela communities. For many of them, the campaign provided their first opportunity to meet young people outside of their home territory, as well as collaborate on a CSO together. As program participants, these young people not only came together on “neutral” ground—Promundo’s headquarters in the city center—they also traveled to areas of the city together, including each other’s favela communities. The youth I spoke with said that the ability to do so was an “unusual,” but interesting and valuable experience. In this manner, the campaign allowed participants to make connections with like-minded individuals from different favela communities, as well as bring their own experiences back to youth in their home neighborhoods. It is reasonable to conclude that network ties were strengthened both within and across favela communities as a result of this campaign, even if only for the youth who participated in it. Such ties make future collective action easier to undertake.

The campaign participants also developed skills with respect to persuasive public speaking. As described in Chapter 4, many favela residents—particularly youth—are reluctant to speak their minds to those outside their immediate social circles, and especially to middle- and upper-class Rio residents. In contrast, the “Favela—I’m From Here!” campaign required the program youth to approach total strangers with some degree of self-confidence and offer them a postcard that broached a controversial issue. Even though the reception they received was at times unpleasant—even hostile—it provided training in how to retain one’s composure and self-esteem in the face of negative reactions. Having had experiences such as these, the campaign participants will be far more prepared to take on future mobilizational challenges if they so choose.

At present, it appears that some of the youth are continuing their political engagement. At the conclusion of the campaign, some JovEMovimento youth participated in state and national conferences in order to lend their perspectives on public policies targeted toward Brazilian youth. Marcos Nascimento, one of Promundo’s program directors, explained:

“This campaign has sparked youth political participation, in the broadest sense of political participation. These youth have participated in state conferences, the National Youth Conference, the Forum for the Defense of the Rights of Children and Youth, as well as instances of local discussion, mobilization, and articulation. This is extremely important, and I think this is one of the greatest developments that we have.” (Interview: Respondent #165, 6 November 2008.)

It is clear that the “Favela—I’m From Here!” campaign had political relevance, both for the participants themselves as well as their intended target: the entire city of Rio de Janeiro. Even if their efforts met with only partial—even minimal—success, the campaign’s participants intended their actions to have political implications. Whether or not the campaign actually achieved these outcomes does not diminish the political relevance of the effort.
8.3 Changing State Policy: The RioOnWatch Program

Thus far, I have illustrated how CSOs in Rio can create conditions that foster politically relevant mobilization, as well as actually engage in political activity targeting society. The case study that follows concerns the RioOnWatch program—a city-wide campaign spearheaded by diamond and citizenship CSOs—that targeted the state in an attempt to challenge public policy. When Rio de Janeiro was selected as the site of the 2016 Olympic Games in October 2009, the entire city celebrated—except for those residing in favela neighborhoods selected for demolition within days of the Olympics announcement. The combination of these two events created a “perfect storm” for political mobilization: favela residents had sudden, dramatic motivation for collective action, combined with relatively favorable political opportunity structures. In the fall of 2008, left-leaning candidate Eduardo Paes was elected Mayor of Rio, narrowly defeating Fernando Gabeira, a Green party candidate and former guerrilla fighter against the dictatorship whose ideology was even further to the left than that of Paes. After three previous terms of right-wing social policies under César Maia, it appeared that political openness to non-established actors in Rio was higher than at any time in the past fifteen years. At the same time, city government capacity for action was also arguably greater than it previously had been due to a rapid influx of funds. The Brazilian federal government pledged to provide over 27 billion USD to the city of Rio to prepare for the upcoming mega-events, which also sparked confidence on the part of private investors (Stevens 2009).

With an immediate “grievance shock” providing clear motivation for action, as well as favorable political opportunity structures, we would expect to see many CSOs engaging in politically relevant mobilization—and that the ones with the largest budgets would be the ones leading the charge. However, the story unfolded in quite a different manner. The CSOs that immediately mobilized to halt favela removals and call worldwide attention to the issue were not the ones with the greatest monetary resources. Instead, organizations with smaller budgets, but a greater diversity of sources and types of resources, were the ones that responded. Within days of learning about the first evictions, a group of locally-based CSOs joined favela residents in attempting to halt the removals as well as to bring national and international attention to the issue. The RioOnWatch program formally launched six months later, and as of May 2012, the program has not only been instrumental in giving favela residents a place at the policymaking table, it has also become a primary vehicle for bringing visibility to issues that they care about.

As the following case study illustrates, the citizenship and diamond CSOs that led this political challenge had high levels of credibility within favela communities, as well as the ability to shift their activities quickly and dramatically in response to local needs.

**Origins and Goals**

The RioOnWatch program was formally launched in May 2010 by Catalytic Communities (CatComm), a Rio-based civil society organization. Today, CatComm works in partnership with anyone who is willing to help shed light on issues of concern to favela residents. Primarily, CatComm provides a venue for favela residents themselves to communicate their perspectives to the world. However, the origins of the RioOnWatch program can, to a large extent, be attributed to CatComm’s organizational choices with respect to their leadership, network ties, and activities.

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55 Paes received 50.8 percent of the vote to Gabeira’s 49.1 percent, thus winning office by a margin under two percent.
CatComm was founded in 2000 by Theresa Williamson, a Brazilian-British woman who is an activist-academic in the tradition of Betinho. While doing graduate work in the United States, Williamson travelled to Rio for fieldwork in the late 1990s. As an academic-outsider but Brazilian-insider, she was able to connect with residents of different favelas around the city in a way that many of the residents themselves could not. In the process, Williamson perceived two things: First, favela residents in virtually every community had designed creative and innovative ways to solve problems within their neighborhood. Yet these residents were unable to connect with each other to share their solutions due to structural and historical inequalities. Williamson’s visit, however, coincided with the dramatic rise of information and communication technology in the late 1990s, which led her to a simple solution: use emerging internet technology to connect favela residents with each other. Thus Catalytic Communities emerged, as its first mission statement described, “to empower and engage communities around the world to develop their own local improvements by providing a set of online tools to foster and strengthen community-based leadership and innovation” (Williamson 2006: 97). In other words, CatComm offered favela residents no programs, projects, or solutions per se; the purpose of the organization was to help local community leaders share the solutions they had already created with each other, to the mutual benefit of all. Favela residents in particular did not need another CSO coming into their neighborhoods with the next new project. What they did need was an ability to connect with each other to share their own strategies, ideas, and inspirations.

Towards this end, CatComm created the “Community Solutions Database,” an online portal through which local community leaders could post information about their projects. Leaders described the initial problem, what they did in response, the equipment they needed to do so (and still might need), as well as the project’s results, limitations, and elements responsible for success. Further, each entry was translated into Portuguese, Spanish, and English. The idea was to document each local initiative in such a way so that anyone accessing the database with a similar community problem could view multiple ways that other local leaders had already found to solve it.

The database was launched in early 2001, and although it was well-received, CatComm staff perceived that many favela resident leaders had difficulty accessing the internet. As Williamson described, less than 10 percent of favelas contained a public internet access facility, and private connections from home were prohibitively expensive. Moreover, while all community leaders had heard of the internet, few had experience using it. In the 1990s, the internet was perceived as a source of entertainment for young people, not a practical tool for adults. Moreover, online communities were uncommon at the time, and it was difficult to imagine how one operated without seeing it firsthand. Finally, existing community leaders lacked meeting space that was available to everyone. (Williamson 2006: 102-124). Therefore, CatComm changed from a purely online organization to one with a physical presence. CatComm staff rented a building in the Morro da Conceição neighborhood, located just a few blocks from the main bus terminal in Rio, thus allowing anyone to get there from any favela community by purchasing only one bus ticket.

From 2003 to 2008, CatComm’s base of operations was the Casa do Gestor Catalisador (the Casa), a community technology center open to all. The literal translation of the Casa’s name—“the community managers’ house”—reflects the atmosphere that CatComm staff strove to create. Unlike other meeting spaces, the Casa was not only free for community leaders to use, CatComm staff welcomed visitors “as they would be when they arrive[d] at someone’s home,”

56 The Community Solutions Database can be viewed at: http://www.catcomm.org/en/?page_id=423
rather than at someone’s office. The door is left open. There are lockers where they can leave their things: a space for their own possessions to stay safe” (Williamson 2006:117). I experienced the nature of the Casa myself; upon my first visit, I was offered coffee and cookies, given a brief tour, and then invited to use the space however I liked. Staff stressed that I didn’t need an appointment to visit; I could just stop by whenever the Casa was open. The casual atmosphere was intentional, as Williamson described, because “community leaders are accustomed, unfortunately, to false promises and lack of integrity among those with power who apparently aim to support them. As a house, the Casa provides a strong contrast with the traditional institutions that close their doors on these leaders.” (Williamson 2006: 118). And in fact, whenever I visited the Casa, the general atmosphere reminded me of a vibrant coffee shop / library / performance space where interesting people gathered from all over the city. On any given day, one might encounter community leaders gaining technical training and support in the computer lab, workshops or performances taking place in the multimedia room, and favela residents from different neighborhoods relaxing with each other in the common room along with musicians, students, journalists, and foreign visitors.

By any measure, the Casa was a success. With no publicity at all aside from word-of-mouth, over 100 individuals from more than 20 favelas utilized the Casa during its first year of operation. By its fifth year, over a thousand community leaders had visited the Casa from 215 favela neighborhoods. CatComm’s virtual presence was even greater, with over 40,000 individuals participating in the online network in some way. (Williamson 2006: 109-110). The Casa received recognition from the United Nations in 2006 for leadership in urban sustainability, and that same year, the Community Solutions Database won the SanDisk Equality Award from the Tech Museum of Innovation in San Jose, California. In describing CatComm’s work, the award staff at the Tech Museum noted that CatComm had “created for the first time in history the basic infrastructure that allows communities to share solutions across borders.”

On the heels of such success, many—if not most—CSOs would continue along the path that had brought them thus far. However, the needs of Rio’s favela community leaders changed yet again. Where few public internet centers existed in 2000, by 2008 virtually every favela community contained one. Bus fare to and from the Casa—nearly two U.S. dollars—was roughly equivalent to the cost of two hours’ worth of time online. In addition, by this point most community leaders had acquired basic internet skills. What they lacked now was a social networking platform geared toward individuals interested in community development. It made sense, then, to close the Casa and devote the savings on rent to developing their database to include social networking capability. In the process of doing so, however, CatComm made two discoveries. First, it was quite expensive and time-consuming to expand the database in this way, and second, another CSO—WiserEarth—was already doing this work well. Rather than create a competing structure, CatComm decided to port all of their documented projects over to the WiserEarth site and help them translate their existing materials into Portuguese. By allowing WiserEarth to host the database portion of their work, CatComm was able to focus on local community-building efforts. By Fall 2009, after communicating extensively with favela residents about their interests and needs, CatComm planned to launch a new initiative—a large-scale tree-planting effort within favelas across Rio—in order to beautify these neighborhoods as

57 The closest equivalent experience in the USA is “Busboys and Poets” in Washington, D.C.: http://www.busboysandpoets.com/
58 The full award description is here: http://thetechawards.thetech.org/the-laureates/stories/1417
well as slow the effects of climate change. In October 2009, however, CatComm’s strategy underwent a radical shift once again.

_Crisis and Response_

On October 2, 2009, the city of Rio de Janeiro celebrated on the beaches of the Southern Zone as its residents learned that the city had been selected to host the 2016 Olympic Games. Less than a week later, on October 8, residents of the favela community Vila Autódromo learned that their neighborhood was slated for demolition. They were to be evicted and relocated with no input into the process, against their will, and without any compensation. Why? City officials gave no public explanation, but residents suspected it had everything to do with the fact that their neighborhood was located next to the proposed Olympic Village, suddenly some of the most valuable land in Rio.

A small community of approximately 4,000 residents, Vila Autódromo has received official land titles _twice_ in its 40-year history. Possibly due to the fact that it is located near a major transit line to the Southern Zone, most residents are either employed or attending school. Where many favela communities lack a sense of collective identity, residents of Vila Autódromo worked together for years to obtain needed services. To add a further ironic twist, Vila Autódromo is one of the few favelas in Rio that has successfully remained independent from drug gang and militia control. Brazilian law is firmly on the side of the residents. Article 429 of the Organic City Law (_Lei Orgânica do Município_) plainly states that communities can be relocated only if the area presents a physical risk to the inhabitants. Vila Autódromo has a particular claim to its site; the state granted the community a 99-year lease in 1994, and declared the area to be a “Special Zone of Social interest.” Further, the favela neighborhood appears intact in Rio’s official Olympics bid proposal through 2030, as shown in Figures 8.3 and 8.4 below. Yet just days after the Olympics announcement, Vila Autódromo residents were informed that they must prepare for relocation.

**Figure 8.3: Location of the Vila Autódromo Community**

(Source: Google Earth, accessed January 2011.)
Figure 8.4: Maps of the Proposed Olympic Site Showing Vila Autódromo Intact

(Source: City of Rio de Janeiro, Olympic bid proposal, copy of the plans submitted to the IOC.)

Vila Autódromo was not the only community threatened with eviction; 19 similar favela communities were given notice that demolitions were scheduled to begin within weeks. Moreover, none of Brazil’s media outlets were reporting on the proposed evictions. One newspaper ran a single story about the issue, which appeared on the back pages of the “Sports” section. By this point, however, CatComm staff was keenly aware of the crisis because they had spent the past eight years building close relationships with community leaders from favelas all over the city. Since the law was clearly on the side of the favela neighborhoods remaining where they were, the solution seemed simple: call public attention to the scheduled evictions. By the end of 2009, social media use was common in Rio as well as around the world, most notably in attracting international attention to the contested Iranian elections that past summer. Although most community leaders had internet access and basic email skills, social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Blogger remained unknown territory. After consulting with favela community leaders from around the city, CatComm decided to put their environmental initiative aside and train local residents in social media technology instead.

However, CatComm needed to raise additional revenue in order to do so. After some initial failed attempts at fundraising—most notably, nearly winning an online contest for $10,000 USD only to have the donor organization’s parent company file for bankruptcy and disappear—CatComm reached out to supporters on Facebook. Using the “Facebook Causes” application, CatComm set a goal of raising $10,000 in individual donations to train 200 community leaders in social media and citizen journalism. The funds needed to be raised within six weeks, however, in order to have enough time to launch the training course in March.

Ultimately, CatComm raised just over a thousand dollars by the deadline, and the trainings were unable to go forward as planned. On the other hand, CatComm had raised a thousand dollars, and community leaders encouraged the organization to persevere. If $10K could train 200 leaders, then $1,000 could train twenty—a small step, but nevertheless a beginning. Working within the budget they had, CatComm enlisted the assistance of CSO partners. The Progress Foundry (Fundição Progresso) supplied the venue; the Committee for the Democratization of Information Technology (Comitê para Democratização da Informática) gave technical and instructional support. CatComm also capitalized on the fact that Rio was hosting the World Urban Forum that year, and facilitated visits to favela communities for nearly 100 city planners and architects. As these international visitors became aware of the favela crisis, they also spread the word within their networks. When CatComm finally advertised the scaled-down course, they received over 100 applications from residents of 40 different favela...
communities in just a few days. Clearly there was a great deal of local demand for activist training in social media.

Community leaders were selected for the initial course based on two main criteria: those who were residents of favelas at imminent risk of destruction that were also free from gang and militia control. The goal of the course was to give community leaders the social media tools they needed to advance their own organizations’ causes and articulate their points of view. By May 2010, 50 community leaders had been trained in blogging, video production, and the strategic use of social media sites for consciousness-raising purposes. Newly trained “citizen journalists” immediately put their skills to use, posting information about Rio’s favela community crisis on Facebook and Twitter.

For example, figure 8.5 illustrates how one favela resident made his network of online contacts aware that Brazilian law prohibits forced community removals. Figure 8.6 displays part of an online conversation about proposed “gondola rides” over the Alemão and Providência favela communities. The controversy in the Providência neighborhood mainly concerned the fact that the proposed gondola would be constructed not along the ridge of the community (which residents could use to access neighboring areas more easily), but across the hillside—fairly useless for residents, but providing tourists with a scenic view of the favela. Further, the gondola station would be built on the largest public space in the community, which residents used for parties, soccer games, and everyday recreation. Understandably, the online discussion attracted over 100 posts. CatComm also created venues for favela “citizen journalists” to publish their work: www.favela.info in Portuguese, and its mirror site in English, www.RioOnWatch.org.

Figure 8.5: “The Law Few People Know About:” Raising Awareness Online

Building on these successes, CatComm again reached out to individual donors via social media. An anonymous supporter donated some frequent flyer miles, so CatComm held an online raffle for two round-trip tickets to Rio de Janeiro. By selling $10 raffle tickets, the organization raised over $10,000 from small-donor individuals located in over 20 countries. With sufficient funding to launch the entire course as intended, CatComm trained an additional 210 community leaders in the use of social media. By the end of 2011, over 300 favela residents across 50 different neighborhoods were reporting on events in their own communities, publishing an average of two articles and one video per week.

“We Don’t Want to Show This:” Political Effects of Mobilization

How did the social media trainings affect city policy toward Rio’s favela dwellers? First, their publications raised overall awareness regarding the way policy differs depending on a given community’s physical location. Favelas that are “famous” due to their proximity to tourist destinations or “infamous” as sites of violence and drug trafficking, these neighborhoods receive
spectacular improvements. The federal government is investing heavily in these favelas through programs such as the Growth Acceleration Program (Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento, or PAC) and the Police Pacification Units (Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora, or UPPs), which will bring sanitation, infrastructure, and official land titles. For favelas far from the city center—many of which are small neighborhoods without a history of violence—these areas receive vastly different treatment. If the neighborhood happens to be situated in an up-and-coming area of Rio, such as the southwestern beaches or near the planned Olympic site, its inhabitants have been targeted for forced evictions. However, favelas located in parts of Rio that have little real estate value are receiving absolutely nothing from the government. Residents in these communities would benefit from the same improvements targeted toward the “famous” favelas; moreover, some may actually prefer to be relocated to an area with more economic opportunity.

Further, even residents of “famous” favelas stand to lose out. Property values in these areas are rising fast as public services improve and police presence drives out drug traffickers, who quickly relocate to favela communities farther from the city center. Favela residents who own their homes might sell them and move elsewhere—but those who rent homes or business space will be unable to afford to remain, thus suffering a market-based eviction instead of a state-led one. Finally, some of the infrastructure “improvements” that the government proposes are done with the interests of tourists, not residents in mind, such as the aforementioned gondolas.

In response to increased public awareness, Eduardo Paes’ mayoral administration has been forced to acknowledge residents’ concerns. As community leaders began publicizing favela evictions and protesting in front of City Hall, Paes agreed to meet with a small group of representatives. However, it soon became clear that there was to be no real dialogue; the meeting was a mere formality intended to quell the demonstrations. Residents then took up the issue with the Land and Housing Rights Office, which was initially sympathetic. Roberta Fraenkel, the Head Public Defender, stated that her office supported the efforts of the RioOnWatch program and that publicizing favela residents’ concerns “can be useful to many poor communities.”

Fraenkel and her staff eventually delivered a report on the crisis to Amnesty International and invited the human rights organization to evaluate the situation for themselves. Amnesty representatives visited in October 2010 and created a permanent committee on the status of housing rights in Rio.

All the while, citizen journalists from affected favela communities continued publishing articles on a near-daily basis. In addition to raising awareness, their efforts sometimes had tangible results, as illustrated by the events that took place in the Vila Taboíinha community. Located on former swampland in the Northern Zone of Rio, Vila Taboíinha is a neighborhood of approximately 250 homes. The residents themselves transformed the area into usable land, but once the work was completed, the landowners—absentee until that point—filed a lawsuit to evict the settlers. In this case, the residents were open to the idea of relocation, as long as they were compensated according to Brazilian law. The owners refused, and the two sides were in the process of negotiating a settlement when bulldozers unexpectedly appeared on the morning of November 12, 2010 and began demolishing homes.

Unfortunately for the landowners, however, some of the residents of Vila Taboíinha had been trained in community journalism. As the bulldozer began its work, residents captured footage of the destruction using their camera phones, and quickly uploaded the film to social media sites, as well as to RioOnWatch.org (Figure 8.7). Within an hour, representatives from

CatComm were on the scene, along with a foreign documentary producer who happened to be visiting CatComm that day. The Military Police arrived as well, but as they attempted to intimidate the residents and visitors, citizen journalists kept filming. Ultimately, the bulldozer driver refused to continue his work, and as the police departed, one officer commented on tape that “we don’t want to show this.” As of March 2012, the Taboínha community remains intact.

**Figure 8.7: Citizen Journalists Documenting the Attempted Removal of Vila Taboínha**

![Image](source: RioOnWatch.org, Catalytic Communities)

Favela residents also engaged in traditional political mobilization. Buoyed by the support of Amnesty International and the Land Housing Rights Office, some favela residents took their cases to court—or at least attempted to file their claims—in February 2011. When they arrived at the Public Defender’s Office, the Military Police barred them from entering the building, and a large-scale demonstration ensued. In response to the protestors, Mayor Paes dramatically reduced the size of the entire Land and Housing Rights Office and immediately fired Fraenkel, its Lead Counsel. Río’s city government may have assumed that in doing so, the issue would quietly disappear on its own. It did not, however, because favela residents were now able to publicize events such as these. Resident reporting attracted the attention of the Associated Press, which contacted CatComm and ran a story on favela evictions. The article was picked up by most major news outlets, including USA Today and the BBC.

In turn, increased media attention and international visibility has placed Río’s city administration under constant pressure to defend their position on favela removal. For example, in the case of Vila Autódromo, Paes’ office initially stated that the community needed to be removed in order to create a security perimeter around the Olympic structures. RioOnWatch citizen journalists questioned, then, why the exclusive high-rise condominiums being built in the same area were not also subject to security issues. The city administration then claimed that Vila Autódromo needed to be demolished because the area was unsafe, and that residents themselves had caused environmental damage to the area. Meanwhile, Amnesty International’s report caught the attention of the United Nations. Raquel Rolnik, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, formally petitioned the Brazilian government at the federal level, demanding that authorities “put a stop to planned evictions until dialogue and negotiation can be ensured.” In response, the head of the Brazilian Olympic Committee, Carlos Nuzman, claimed that all of the removals were done in accordance with the law and that he was unaware of any resident complaints.

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60 Letter from Amnesty International to Nawal El Moutawael, Chairperson of the International Olympics Committee, 10 November 2011.
Possibly to help raise Nuzman’s awareness, RioOnWatch citizen journalists visited Vila Autódromo in October 2011. The community had recently been notified that it would, in fact, be removed to make way for Olympic infrastructure; the video clips in Figure 8.8 depict residents’ reactions to the news. Beginning with a statement that according to Brazilian law, any resettlement process must be done in consultation and partnership with the affected population, the video goes on to show that this law was clearly violated.

**Figure 8.8: Vila Autódromo Residents React to their Eviction Notice**

(Source: RioOnWatch’s YouTube channel, accessed 3 March 2012).

As of January 2012, Vila Autódromo’s future remains uncertain. However, city planners affiliated with the Federal University (UFRJ) are working with residents to develop an alternative Olympic development plan that would not only leave the community intact, it would cost the city far less money. Moreover, some Vila Autódromo residents are sharing their experience with individuals in other threatened communities via social media as well as in person.

While there has been no major shift in public policy as yet, Rio’s favela residents are in a much better position to articulate their interests and protect their rights. CatComm remains the
only Rio-based CSO reporting community news globally, and its articles are regularly picked up by mainstream media outlets. Some, such as the New York Times and the BBC, have begun regularly covering favela evictions on their own, and major human rights organizations have gone on record denouncing the city’s actions. For their part, favela residents trained by CatComm publish approximately two to three stories per week, not only covering evictions, but also other issues of interest to favela residents. Some choose to highlight innovative social benefit CSOs, others write about their day-to-day problems, such as the two-hour one way commute one young woman makes to attend university each day. Regardless of whether or not they are ultimately able to change public policy, CatComm has clearly succeeded in sparking politically relevant mobilization.

8.4 Incentives Make the Difference

Why were these two CSOs—Promundo and Catalytic Communities—able to mobilize favela residents as they did? More broadly, as Kane 2007 asks in his evaluation of one of Rio’s largest golden CSOs, why don’t Rio’s most well-known nonprofit organizations “promote a broader understanding of participatory democracy and community development?” (Kane 2007:3). As I have shown, part of the answer lies in the civil society resource curse: organizations with a resource acquisition strategy built around obtaining grants may succeed in acquiring funding, but in doing so, they face incentives that discourage politically relevant mobilization. In contrast, CSOs like Promundo and CatComm that acquire resources primarily through building relationships face a different set of incentives, which creates an organizational profile more conducive to undertaking political action.

One might argue that it is due to the personal characteristics of the organizations’ founders that drive the mission in a certain direction, and this view certainly has some merit. As outlined in Chapter 6, many diamond CSOs engage “activist-academics” in research intended to increase the capacity of other civil society organizations. Promundo’s mission statement reflects these goals; the organization seeks “to contribute to social equity through the testing and implementation of social technologies that promote the holistic development and participation of children and youth.” (Instituto Promundo, 2005 Annual Report). The report goes on to describe social technologies as:

“...forms of social intervention that encourage the questioning of rigid and non-egalitarian socio-cultural norms and patterns that perpetuate violence and inequality. We have also created tools to measure the changes that our social intervention programs promote, and [we]...systemize the process and results of [our] CSOs so that they may be disseminated in Brazil and other parts of the world.” (Instituto Promundo, Annual Report, 2005.)

Catalytic Communities’ mission statement is similar in that they prioritize strengthening local capacities:

“...to empower and engage low-income communities around the world to develop their own local improvements by providing a set of online tools to foster and strengthen leadership and innovation in their communities.” (Williamson 2004.)
Mission statements do not necessarily reflect what an organization actually does in practice. However, a mission statement is a “succinct reflection of [the] shared understanding” that a CSO has regarding its work (Allison and Kaye 1997: 55) Compare the mission statements above with those of the four most prominent CSOs that work within Rio’s favelas, as shown in Table 8.1 below.

**Table 8.1: Mission Statements of Rio de Janeiro’s Largest CSOs Concerned with Favelas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSO</th>
<th>Mission Statement</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AfroReggae</td>
<td><em>The Cultural Group AfroReggae was created to transform the reality of young favela residents using education, art, and culture as instruments of their social integration. Our mission is to promote inclusion and social justice using art, Afro-Brazilian culture, and education as tools that build bridges, uniting differences, and serve as a foundation for sustainability and citizenship.</em></td>
<td>AfroReggae’s “Facebook Info” Page (their website does not contain a mission statement).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema Nosso</td>
<td>“Cinema Nosso is a social organization whose institutional mission is to expand the cultural universe of children, adolescents, and young people and contribute to their development using the language of audio-visual media.”</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cinemanosso.org.br/">http://www.cinemanosso.org.br/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUFA</td>
<td>“[We] act as a center of cultural production [and] allow young people to express their opinions, questions, or simply their will to live.”</td>
<td><a href="http://cufa.org.br">http://cufa.org.br</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nós do Morro</td>
<td>“Nós do Morro was founded in 1986 with the goal of creating access to art and culture for all children, youth, and adults from the Vidigal favela. Today, [we have] consolidated and offer everyone theater and film training courses, opening and expanding horizons for all.”</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nosdomorro.com.br/">http://www.nosdomorro.com.br/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Author compilation).

As the statements describe, all four of these organizations intend to improve the lives of favela residents in some way, and are well-known throughout Rio for the good work they do. Yet there is no reference to building the capacity of other organizations so that they might do their work better, or a desire to share their methods with other CSOs. While the four golden CSOs profiled in this table certainly have worthy goals, they are different from the goals of the diamond CSOs discussed in this chapter. Diamond CSOs are often founded by activist-academics, who by virtue of their personal characteristics, might be more inclined to create organizations that promote and sustain grassroots mobilization than founders with a different background.

Yet there is also much to be said for the choices that diamond and citizenship CSO leaders make with respect to leadership, networks, and activities—and these choices are often driven by their resource acquisition strategy. More importantly, even if a CSO is highly diverse
in terms of sources of resources and types of resources due to the founder’s mission, the end result is the same. In other words, even if a CSO chooses its resource acquisition strategy proactively instead of merely responding to the funding environment, the outcome is an organizational profile conducive to politically relevant mobilization.

To illustrate, consider CatComm’s history and experience. It is worth focusing on CatComm in detail given that it is a case example at one end of the political mobilization spectrum. When political opportunities combined with a grievance shock in October 2009, they—of all the CSOs in Rio—took the lead in mobilizing favela residents to resist neighborhood evictions. CatComm also happens to be a highly networked organization that is firmly embedded in favela communities, and committed to resident leadership. I contend that this is not a random outcome; CatComm’s organizational profile made it especially well situated for taking political action.

I first contacted CatComm in April 2007, and have followed the organization closely for the past five years, giving me insight into their work from the perspective of staff and favela residents alike. CatComm had strong local roots from the beginning, which were described in section 8.3 above. The very reason the organization came into existence was to help favela community leaders connect with each other, nothing more. It is worth noting, however, that Williamson, the Executive Director, was committed to hiring and training local staff members from the outset. Before hiring anyone, Williamson consulted with—and sought the approval of—various community leaders from different favelas around the city.61 (Williamson 2006: 160). Once hired, staff members were given multiple leadership opportunities and responsibilities, such as representing the organization within Rio as well as at conferences throughout Brazil. Williamson’s goal was to select good people, expect the best from them, build and develop their capabilities—and then “relax,” allowing locally trained talent to grow the organization (Williamson 2006: 180-181). Similarly, CatComm was created to be as decentralized as possible. Anyone, anywhere who wanted to add his or her solution to a local problem was able to enter the project information in the Community Solutions Database. The only vetting of the registered projects was done by a group of favela community leaders themselves, in order to “judge the effectiveness and ethical fiber of those involved.” (Williamson 2006: 140). Put more plainly, favela community leaders wanted to ensure that ghost CSOs were kept out of CatComm’s database.

Finally, Williamson sought to create an atmosphere where everyone could freely articulate their concerns, ideas, and doubts. A few weeks after the opening of the Casa, for example, favela community leaders told Williamson that they felt uncomfortable there. Williamson took this as a “shocking blow,” since she sincerely wanted to make the Casa a place where everyone, particularly favela residents, would feel at home. After some frank dialogue, however, Williamson realized that her commitment to environmental sustainability (possibly as a middle-class Brazilian with a North American university education) was manifest in ways that made favela residents uncomfortable. It is just not part of our culture, community leaders told Williamson, to take off our shoes at home or ask guests to clean up after themselves (i.e. wash out one’s own cup after using it). By bringing class and cultural misunderstandings into the open through honest conversation, the Casa was able to transform quickly into a truly welcoming place. (Williamson 2006: 34-36). All of the anecdotes above are testament to the fact that CatComm was committed to resident leadership from the outset.

In terms of their resource acquisition strategy, Williamson initially sought grants from major foundations in both Brazil and the United States. However, she soon realized the challenges and drawbacks inherent in the Brazilian funding environment (described in Chapter 5), causing Williamson to turn her attention to American donor organizations. Yet barriers existed there as well, largely due to the fact that in early 2001, “virtual” organizations were unknown in the community development field, and online social networks did not yet publicly exist. As a result, Williamson says that CatComm was “automatically outcast in the mainstream foundation world.” (Williamson 2006: 199). Therefore, CatComm decided to focus on acquiring small financial contributions from many individual donors instead of seeking grants from a few large foundations. Moreover, network-building and partnerships were considered as valuable, if not more so, than financial contributions. Williamson would hold “house parties” during which she would not ask for donations; she only sought to build enthusiasm for CatComm’s work as well as expand the organization’s network of contacts. (Inevitably, however, individuals would occasionally approach Williamson after the party with a donation for CatComm, and these were not turned away).

Financing an organization on a shoestring, one individual donation at a time, was often frustrating and at times discouraging. However, Williamson found that the “silver lining” in her resource acquisition strategy was that CatComm was extraordinarily flexible. Consider that CatComm changed its primary objective six times over the course of nine years. As the needs and interests of favela residents changed, CatComm responded accordingly, rapidly, and wholeheartedly. When local residents expressed a need for a physical meeting place, CatComm shifted in order to provide one; as soon as the building was not necessary, the organization devoted its efforts elsewhere. Later, when Williamson realized that another CSO—WiserEarth—was able to implement a socially networked database better than CatComm could, the organization did not hesitate to collaborate, transferring their information directly to the WiserEarth platform. While CatComm may have lost part of its “brand” as a community solutions database provider, grassroots leaders gained access to an even better online product. Transitions such as these would have been highly unlikely, if not impossible, if CatComm were funded by a grant for a specific program. Instead of meeting donor expectations, CatComm is steered only by “the communities we work with who tell us what is important.” (Williamson 2006: 225). With no bureaucracy to deal with, no grant reporting to undertake, and no single donor to please, CatComm is accountable only to its favela resident partners.

Establishing causation is always a tricky endeavor. CatComm is only one case example that may or may not be representative of other organizations in Rio, let alone elsewhere. But what we can say for sure is this: CatComm clearly has local credibility, was founded by a Brazilian academic-activist in partnership with favela residents, and is deeply committed to helping local leaders make connections with each other to the mutual benefit of all. We can also observe, as discussed in section 8.3 above, that CatComm knew about favela evictions almost immediately, began publicizing them before any other CSO did, and rapidly adjusted its mission to galvanize residents in response. I do not think these two outcomes are coincidental.

Consider the sheer difficulty of any CSO instituting a program like RioOnWatch without having the leadership, network, and activity characteristics that CatComm did. After ten years of building connections with more than 1,500 community leaders from over 250 favela neighborhoods, CatComm has an extraordinarily high degree of local credibility and trust. Would a CSO with a different profile have been able to engage residents in a collective endeavor so quickly? Would another CSO have known what favela residents really needed in order to
resist evictions and been able to help them access those tools within weeks? Would another organization have even known what was going on in Rio’s favelas, given that the evictions were not covered by the media at all? What we can observe—at least in one case—is a clear instance of state-targeted politically relevant mobilization, undertaken by what is arguably the most resident-led, broadly networked, and flexible CSO in the city. I contend that these factors matter for politically relevant mobilization, and that CSOs can be encouraged or discouraged in creating them by their resource acquisition strategy.

8.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented three case studies illustrating how favela outsiders might operate to improve future prospects for politically relevant action. The first case study profiled the “Beautiful Waterfall” program. Although it had no overt political motivations, the program nevertheless increased the capacity for political action within the Gaviota favela neighborhood. The “Favela—I’m From Here!” (Favela, Eu Sou Daqui!) program engaged favela youth in a month-long public relations effort to encourage middle- and upper-class Rio residents to change their perceptions about favelas. Although their effort was met with minimal success, the participants challenged social and economic power structures, and as such, engaged in politically relevant mobilization. Finally, the RioOnWatch program alluded to in the introduction to this chapter directly challenged public policy toward favela neighborhoods.

All of these organizations conducted their campaigns in a way that increased trust, collaboration, and reciprocity at the local level, as well as built civic skills—all of which are essential resources for politically relevant mobilization. Further, these organizations achieved the outcomes they did not because they cared more about favela residents, had smarter staff members, or better ideas for development—it is that they faced a different incentive structure. In relying on diverse sources of resources and utilizing multiple types of resources, these CSOs had incentives to be resident-led, broadly networked, and deeply connected to local favela communities. As such, they avoided the civil society resource curse, and were thus more likely to undertake politically relevant activities than similar organizations with a different resource acquisition strategy. What overall conclusions can we draw from all of the examples presented? Donors and policymakers may be able to mitigate the effects of the civil society resource curse; these strategies are discussed in Chapter 9.
“O jogo já está sendo jogada.” The game hasn’t ended yet, it is still being played.
--author interview with a favela resident, referring to the potential of civil society to effect political change, 10 November 2008

Chapter 9. Conclusion: Dismantling the Trap

9.1 Summary of the Argument

As we often did, Mariana and I were unwinding with cake and coffee one day after the morning’s activities. Reflecting on the work that her small citizenship CSO did, I referenced the popular North American saying: “give a man a fish and he eats for a day, but teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime.” To my surprise, Mariana laughed heartily and replied that she, like most favela residents, hated that saying. Why? Mariana explained:

“We don’t need to be taught to fish! We know how to fish—we have ideas about how to solve our own problems, and they are good ideas! They are working in some areas. The problem is—what happens when the river has no fish? We don’t need to be taught how to fish. We need to solve our immediate problems now, but we also need to do something about the reasons why the river has no fish in the first place.” (Interview, Respondent #70: 24 July 2008).

I relate the anecdote above because it helps me introduce some of the concluding points I would like to make. Foremost among them is the conviction that favela residents are keenly aware of the patterns that I have shown thus far. I strive to bring insights that are common to community leaders in Rio’s favelas to the broader academic and policymaking spheres. What separates me from Mariana and other community leaders is academic training and a measure of access to the halls of power—attributes that I possess, and favela residents do not, merely due to the accidents of our respective birthplaces.

Residence, however, is a central theme of this study. As I have shown, the root cause of the problems that favela dwellers face is citizenship poverty: they are not considered as fully human due to where they live. Given the plethora of civil society organizations that seek to benefit the lives of favela residents, one wonders why so little is done to challenge the social norms and state policies that undergird their lack of citizenship rights. In particular, why do the largest, best-financed, and most famous CSOs tend to avoid political action along these lines?

My research offers an explanation. Civil society organizations vary not only in their overall level of resources, but also in their predominant resource acquisition strategies. Different combinations of sources of resources (singular or multiple) and types of resources (narrow or diverse) create organizational incentives that, in turn, make politically relevant mobilization more or less likely. Figure 9.1 illustrates the possible combinations.
CSOs that acquire very few types of resources from a single source—namely, grants from major foundations—become internally focused. In order to write successful grant proposals, these “golden CSOs” create leadership teams of outsiders with project planning experience and influential connections. The highly competitive funding environment reinforces an atmosphere of working in isolation, lest other organizations attempt to steal their ideas and resources. Furthermore, CSOs with such a resource acquisition strategy are strongly motivated to focus on activities that are in line with their donors’ interests, not necessarily those of the communities in which they work. In short, there are many risks and few—if any—benefits to addressing issues of citizenship poverty and challenging the political status quo. Golden CSOs might possess high levels of resources, skilled personnel, and the very best of intentions, but the incentive arena in which they operate makes it quite unlikely that they will undertake politically relevant mobilization.

In contrast, civil society organizations that obtain diverse types of resources from multiple sources tend to be externally oriented. Instead of relying on grants from major funding agencies, citizenship CSOs and diamond CSOs survive by making connections within and across favela communities. Though they occasionally receive cash donations, partnerships provide the majority of their support through providing training, in-kind donations, volunteers, and connections to a wider network of allies. Placing community residents in leadership positions makes forging partnerships easier; in turn, local leadership gives these organizations heightened credibility and respect within favela communities. In addition, wide networks of supporters ensure that citizenship CSOs and diamond CSOs are less beholden to the interests of any single
donor, giving these organizations more freedom to challenge established structures of power. Such an organizational profile is highly conducive to politically relevant mobilization. Rather than having their activities directed by donors, these organizations draw on their connections, credibility, and ingenuity to conduct political action targeting both society and the state.

9.2 Using and Extending the Findings

Theoretical Implications

These findings contribute to the study of mobilization in the following ways. I have clarified the concept of politically relevant mobilization, carefully specifying what is included within its conceptual boundaries and what is not. By leaving the concept “political mobilization” to describe activity that aims explicitly to influence a political outcome, then “politically relevant mobilization” refers to a broader category of activity that includes political mobilization, but would also include any group activity that seeks to influence the distribution of power. As a concept, politically relevant mobilization also allows us to identify instances of collective action that have political implications, but fall outside the reasonable boundaries of the concept of “political participation” as well. Other scholars may find such an intermediary concept useful in their own work.

My research also adds to our understanding regarding the direction collective action takes. All CSOs above a certain resource threshold—those with sufficient money, time, and civic skills—may mobilize, but for that mobilization to address the political arena, I show that we need to consider the organization’s resource acquisition strategy. Our existing theories of mobilization do not adequately account for what I term “golden CSOs”—organizations with high levels of financial resources and many weak bridging ties that engage in collective action, but do not take politically relevant action. The CSOs in this study that are most likely to challenge structures of power are those that acquire many types of resources from multiple sources. High diversity on both of these counts contributes to an organization’s reserve of civic skills and social capital—the very resources that are most useful for taking political action. In this respect, my findings shed new light on the connections between CSOs, social capital, and politically relevant mobilization. Civil society organizations do not always create social capital and civic skills. Moreover, even when they do, there may be incentives for those resources to be directed toward apolitical ends.

Further, at least in Rio’s favela communities, popular associations are not assuming the role of interest intermediators as the current literature would suggest. Perhaps Rio’s favelas are the exception that proves the rule; alternatively, ethnographic methods applied to other Latin American cities might reveal dynamics of interest intermediation that have heretofore been overlooked. In any case, I have shown that there is at least one exception to the predominant trend of interest intermediation in Latin America. More generally, my study calls to our attention the fact that the political participation and social movements literatures, at times, seem to be speaking past one another. Political scientists who study collective action, as well as political sociologists, might find it useful to collaborate more closely to better understand new structures of interest intermediation more generally.

Finally, my study contributes to our understanding of the interests and goals held by marginalized groups. It has been commonly assumed that lower-status groups, particularly those comprised of urban actors in Latin America, prioritize material goals. However, in creating
citizenship CSOs that challenge social prejudice and discrimination, we see that some of Rio’s favela residents mainly seek non-material goals. In contrast to those who claim that the poor tend to make tangible claims such as infrastructure, land title rights, and obtaining city services, my research has shown that Rio’s favela residents also prioritize non-material goals. Although citizenship CSOs do not usually target the state, this makes them no less politically relevant, and their actions shed new light on the mobilizational strategies and capabilities of the urban poor. My research therefore broadens our understanding of the goals that marginalized actors in Latin America pursue, particularly in advocating for full citizenship rights.

Avenues for Future Research

My findings open up several areas for further inquiry. First, how might other combinations of diversity in types and sources of resources affect politically relevant mobilization? I have shown that greater variation in these areas—multiple sources of resources and many types of resources—creates incentives for CSOs to create an organizational profile that is conducive to political action. In contrast, less diversity brings different incentives into play, thus supporting an organizational profile that is unlikely to undertake politically relevant mobilization. However, I have only considered CSOs in which the single type of resource accessed is either major grants, or an individual founder’s pocket. What about those organizations that rely on a single source of resources for narrow types of resources that are not financially related, such as a CSO that relies only on international volunteers, or CSOs in the same neighborhood that only provide in-kind donations? This issue is not directly addressed. Different combinations of sources and types of resources may lead to different outcomes; future research might investigate these connections more closely.

My study has also not taken up the matter of causation. I have shown that there is a correlation between resource acquisition strategy and politically relevant mobilization. In particular, when political opportunities were highest in Rio, and favela residents experienced a significant “grievance shock,” the largest and best-financed CSOs, but with low diversity in their sources and types of resources, did not respond. Instead, a small organization with few material resources, but with high diversity in its sources and types of resources, was at the forefront of political action. I do not believe that these two outcomes are coincidental; nevertheless, the robustness of this correlation should be tested. Social scientists should explore the causes of politically relevant mobilization using all of the methodological tools at our disposal. My research has identified a factor—resource acquisition strategies—that has been overlooked in studies of mobilization. With this new variable in hand, however, it would be useful for others to incorporate it into broader, large-N research studies of political action.

There are also other elements that may influence politically relevant mobilization but were beyond the scope of this project. Studies that follow may want to consider the role of religion, gender, and gang presence. Favela residents indicated early on that religious organizations were unreliable partners for progressive social change. However, I only interviewed members of the Catholic and Evangelical Protestant faiths. As I became involved in the personal lives of favela residents, a few of those individuals who had become close friends shared their beliefs regarding traditional Afro-Brazilian religious practice. While contemporary Christian churches may remain apart from progressive social mobilization, my individual, unscientific impression is that practitioners of Afro-Brazilian faiths may have a strong collective orientation, particularly because their religious practices remain somewhat hidden from the mainstream. In any case, future studies involving politically relevant mobilization in Rio’s
favelas might find it fruitful to explore the role of religion, specifically incorporating practitioners of Afro-Brazilian traditions into the analysis.

Gender differences may also be of significance. Only after I had returned to the United States and had developed a typology of civil society organizations did I realize that all but one of the citizenship CSOs had been founded by women. Moreover, their leadership teams were either equally divided between men and women, or they were comprised predominantly of women. Such an outcome may be coincidental. It may also be due to case selection; in choosing CSOs that were comfortable with my presence as a participant observer, the fact that I am a woman may have led other women leaders to feel more comfortable with me. However, it may also be that gender differences lend themselves to developing different types of CSOs in Rio’s favelas. Future researchers may want to examine gender as an influence on organizational profiles.

While the vast majority of Rio’s favelas are under gang control, there are a small percentage of neighborhoods that have remained independent. I was unable to gain access to these areas at the outset of my research; by the time I had, the study was well underway and I could not incorporate this factor into my case selection. However, it is clear that gang control curtails political activity within favela neighborhoods. Although the percentage of favelas free from gang influence is extremely small, it would be valuable to compare associational life there with those communities under gang control.

Finally, at the time of this writing (May 2012), some of Rio’s favelas have undergone yet another major transformation: 18 have been occupied by “Police Pacification Units” (Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora, or UPPs). The original intent of the UPPs was to clear the area of drug and weapons traffickers, then implement social and economic programs to improve the quality of life. However, only a very small percentage of favelas (18 out of 1,200, or 1.5 percent) have received UPP interventions. Predictably, these communities are near tourist destinations or the wealthy Southern Zone. The vast majority of Rio’s favelas are not only receiving nothing from the state, they are quickly becoming home to the traffickers that have been displaced from other areas by the UPP. Moreover, although the UPP is supposed to bring in social programs to serve the community, in practice they operate very differently. In some cases nothing is done; in other instances, existing social benefit CSOs are being displaced to make room for the UPP interventions. In no case have the individual favela communities been consulted about the types of social services they would prefer. Finally, the UPP is not necessarily effective in achieving its main mission. Rocinha, one of the largest and most well-known favelas in Rio was “pacified” by the UPP in November 2011. Nearly six months later, however, violence has increased within the community, including violence targeted at community leaders.

Associational life in Rio’s favelas is sure to be affected by the presence—or absence—of the UPPs. Inspired by Janice Perlman’s methodology, I hope to revisit the favela communities I have come to know well in 2017. At that point, it will have been roughly ten years since my first research trip to Rio, and a year after the Olympics have come and gone. I intend to compare associational life in “pacified” communities with life in those without such interventions, as well as evaluate how the five communities included in this research have or have not changed.
9.3 Policy Recommendations

Three Paradoxes of Development

The previous section has outlined the contributions that my research makes within the realms of academic study and intellectual inquiry. I also offer, however, some recommendations for those who are also concerned with the day-to-day realities of running a nonprofit organization, or who work alongside marginalized groups in their struggle for full citizenship rights. In the same spirit as Jan Black’s (1999) “Laws of Public Affairs and Paradoxes of Development,” I offer the following three observations:

1. Outsiders may not only get the solutions wrong—they may also get the problems wrong as well.

Contrary to the imaginings of many North Americans, gang warfare, drug trafficking, and daily violence are not the central concerns of most favela residents. Certainly gang control over favela neighborhoods profoundly shapes civic life; Chapter 3 discussed these effects at length. But there is no need to rescue poor children from the clutches of the gang, or to improve residents’ lives with cookie-cutter solutions, such as installing a gondola or paving the roads. Similarly, while many favela communities would benefit from receiving the same city services that other Rio neighborhoods do, favela residents have, for the most part, found creative ways to provide needed services on their own. What concerns favela residents most is their lack of access to stable employment and health care services—and they are keenly aware that discrimination against them is at the root of these deficiencies.

In short, citizenship poverty is the main issue of concern for favela residents. Moreover, residents are keenly aware that providing solutions on an individual, piecemeal basis is akin to teaching a man to fish, then expecting him to catch his meals in the contaminated valão (sewage river), where little life is to be found. My first take-away point, then, is that the core problem, as most favela residents see it, is citizenship poverty. All other issues—violence, health care, employment, sanitation, even infrastructure concerns—all have, as Perlman succinctly puts it, the “lack of being gente” at their roots (Perlman 2010: 316). All are effects of the fact that favela residents’ rights as citizens are diminished, unequal, and routinely violated by social norms and state officials alike.

And yet, as I have shown, many small organizations at the grassroots have developed innovative ways to improve conditions within individual favela neighborhoods. Through sheer determination, social benefit CSO founders persevere in the face of daunting challenges, and often at significant personal cost. Social benefit CSOs are largely unknown outside of their own neighborhoods, however, and the good work that they do cannot scale up into broader collective political challenges due to the structural obstacles that exist. One might assume, then, that it would be reasonable—even desirable—for the largest, most resource-rich CSOs in Rio to learn from their smaller, grassroots counterparts. As first-place “winners” in the race for funding, golden CSOs could discover the strategies and techniques that have been proven successful at the local level, then use their own resources to supplement work that is already being done.

However, I have shown that it is not reasonable for golden CSOs to take this course of action, since they operate under the influence of the civil society resource curse. It is highly unlikely that any organization dependent on funding from a few major donors would partner with their smaller competitors, much less support activities that might jeopardize their own
opportunities for future funding. The overall funding environment in Rio, as well as the specific requirements of grant-making foundations, gives golden CSOs incentives to continue doing what they have always done instead of embarking upon new partnerships and innovative activities that might make a real difference in the communities they seek to serve. On the other hand, there are some local-level organizations—citizenship CSOs—that do undertake activities that reach beyond immediate individual needs. Their larger counterparts—diamond CSOs—often lend support in exactly the manner that best facilitates political engagement. The crucial factor is not having more resources per se, but in gaining diverse types of resources from many different sources. Thus, my second central point is that:

2. Money can’t buy credibility, allies, or freedom.

Without question, some financial resources are necessary if an organization is to undertake any meaningful work. The many social benefit CSOs in Rio that struggle to keep their doors open each day are testament to this fact. And yet, if an organization’s leaders want to undertake controversial work that challenges established structures of power, it may be worth devoting less time to grant applications and more to cultivating relationships. Funding is of course necessary, but it is not sufficient for collective action to take place, and the financial threshold for initiating mobilization is lower than we may think. Furthermore, excessive reliance on grants may prompt organizations to avoid the very activities that would benefit local communities most, as well as remain entrenched in familiar paths of action instead of shifting course as local needs change.

Similarly, if money is somewhat less valuable to an organization’s ability to take collective action than we had previously thought, relationships may be even more important than they often appear to be. We have seen that citizenship CSOs succeed in undertaking politically relevant action not only through the determination of their leaders, but also through their deep ties within favela communities. Conventional wisdom suggests that weak ties to many influential allies best supports collective action, and such a profile may do so within many contexts. The key, however, is to consider the context—and within an environment such as Rio’s favela neighborhoods, where trust is fragile and credibility in short supply, forging small-scale bonds through day-to-day interactions may be exactly what is needed to galvanize residents for mobilization. No one denies that CSOs require some level of funding in order to operate. The point I want to stress, however, is that a resource acquisition strategy narrowly focused on winning grants might blind an organization’s leaders to other opportunities—ones that might not only provide useful resources, but also be better suited to the kind of work that leaders want to undertake. This point is particularly important given that, in the field of community development:

3. Everything can go right and still come out wrong.

My study has shown that development projects can fail even under ideal conditions. Consider the partnership between Clarissa, a favela resident, and the well-intentioned foreigners that I described in Chapter 4. Everyone involved sincerely wanted to improve the educational opportunities available to Fregata residents, and the plan they devised was a good one. Local residents were involved in the project from the beginning, and the funds raised abroad went directly to the local community. Money was not pocketed by corrupt bureaucrats, spent on
overhead, or used for anything other than its intended purpose: purchasing a building for the social benefit CSO. Everyone worked hard to make the project a success, everyone involved sought to do the right thing—but in the end, the organization served fewer people than before due to practical considerations that no one anticipated. Even when aid is highly localized—personally given by individuals in one corner of the world and arriving, undiluted by corruption or malfeasance, directly into the coffers of local community residents—even then, success cannot be guaranteed.

The three points outlined above are some of the true paradoxes of community development. Grant-winning NGOs staffed by highly trained and competent professionals often do very good work indeed—but even under the best circumstances, it may not be the work that is most needed or desired by community residents themselves. Furthermore, once this knowledge is fully internalized, one has the brutal realization that there is very little that can be done differently. If everything can go right and still come out wrong, should we all just throw up our hands and go home? Some, of course, may contend that this is exactly what should be done—that imperialism has ravaged the “developing world” enough, and first-world activists should focus on their own backyards. Assuming, however, that we intend to persevere, what should practitioners take away from my research?

As I said at the outset, I offer no new substantive recommendations, because we already know what needs to be done. True partnerships with community members at the local level are arguably the only way to come close to designing and implementing development projects that work for their intended beneficiaries. Individuals at the grassroots know their own needs and problems better than anyone, as evidenced by the entrepreneurial solutions they have devised to solve them. Outside NGOs and the donors who fund them should place their resources and expertise in the service of innovative local leaders who are empowered to allocate them as they see fit. However, while virtually every community development text concludes with a variation on these themes, they are rarely reflected in what happens on the ground.

My research sheds light on why the same recommendations appear everywhere, but have not yet become standard practice anywhere. Specifically, I am not suggesting that the solution is as simple as a renewed commitment to forging relationships or partnering more closely with the grassroots. Both may be valuable, but the fact remains that both rarely occur, not for want of good intentions or honest effort, but for the lack of appropriate incentives. Organizations are led by individuals who are human beings, not saints, who will do what is in their individual and organizational interests to do. Although leaders may truly desire to be champions of social change, there are incentives all along the funding chain to keep organizational activities within the bounds of the status quo. Radical challenges to the dominant culture will not be brought by those who wield power within it.

Four Ways to Change the Game

And yet, those with the ultimate influence are those who hold the purse strings. Individuals respond to incentives—but some incentives are within our control. From executives at the helm of charitable foundations all the way down to interns who post funding opportunities online—all who sit at the source of the international funding stream have opportunities to make choices, large and small, that shape the context in which CSOs operate. In other words, those with the power to fund civil society organizations are also capable of changing the game. If what we, as donors, care about is not merely charity—if we are truly committed to the idea that beneficiaries deserve “development” only on their terms—then we can structure our policies and
requirements to facilitate that outcome. We can recognize and identify the incentives that exist within a given context, then exercise, as Abers and Keck (2012) put it, “practical authority”—change our requirements to influence the way that other organizations and actors behave. What, specifically, might international donors do differently along these lines?

1. Fund Failure

Successful outcomes are the result of an iterative process, yet most project plans assume a linear trajectory. If we accept that there is no formula for success, that we can do everything right and still fail to achieve what we set out to do, then why not build this knowledge right into the project design? Allow iteration to take place by giving grantees the capacity to fail and learn and try again, with the expectation that failure is a key part of the process.

Funding failure is strange and counterintuitive, to be sure. But consider all of the money that has been spent on community development thus far and what local residents of those areas have to show for it—aside from glossy end-of-year reports that put the programs’ best foot forward. Development projects that make a positive difference in local communities over the long term are borne out of multiple attempts that take place over years, if not decades, of experience and adjustment. Isn’t it time to accept that reality rather than operating as if things were otherwise? To achieve successful outcomes faster, expect and fund failure.

2. Trust, Verify, Then Get Out of the Way

Of course funding agencies should choose their grant recipients carefully. Due diligence is a responsible part of the process, especially in Rio, where the ghost CSOs described in Chapter 5 lie in wait to defraud unsuspecting grantors. In fact, I would go so far as to recommend more investigation of potential grantees on the front end. Foundations should be present in the community well beyond the annual prearranged tour; specifically, they should not fund any CSOs that they have not seen in operation on an unannounced visit.

Also consider the challenges that social benefit CSO leaders face in applying for grants. It is not enough to translate the grant application procedures and forms into Portuguese and post them on the foundation’s website. The same staff members on the ground who drop in on potential grantees should also become deeply familiar with the local community. Spend time with residents who are not involved in the activities the foundation funds, and instead of asking why, observe what they are doing instead.

Once grantees have been selected, however, give them the freedom to do the work that they know best. Rio’s best-funded CSOs have favela outsiders in leadership positions to not only apply for grants, but also keep up with their detailed reporting requirements. Time spent documenting progress to show evidence of success over a relatively short timeframe is time not spent undertaking activities that might actually produce positive outcomes on the ground. Why is it that the grant I received to undertake my dissertation research came with minimal reporting requirements, but favela CSO leaders are not entrusted with the same? I had the freedom to go where my evolving research questions took me, and later, to shift my research design to address questions that were only revealed after significant time in the field. I was carefully vetted beforehand—I wrote application essays and gave multiple interviews—but then? I received a check in the mail and was sent on my way. My only reporting requirement was to submit a brief progress report at year’s end.
Foundations know that such a method is ideal, that flexibility and trust are essential for producing innovative research. Yet we expect grassroots CSO leaders to adhere strictly to the plan outlined in their grant application, carefully document everything they do along the way, and produce quantifiable results within a short timeframe. Instead of requiring more complex and detailed reporting, or hiring consultants to help CSOs manage those requirements, reduce what is required of grassroots organizations in the first place. I am not suggesting that foundations distribute money without conditions or reporting requirements attached. Rather, there is a time for due diligence, and a time for trust, because creativity cannot happen with someone continually peering over one’s shoulder. If we want innovation, we need to give it room to grow. Select grant recipients wisely, then trust them to do what they do best by getting out of their way.

3. Reward Collaboration

Typical grant application requirements, as outlined in Chapter 4, work as follows: each organization applies independently, making an individual case for why it has the best solution to a given community problem. If the CSO is successful, it receives funding—and little else. Why not turn that model on its head? Instead of requesting applications from individual organizations, request that CSOs apply as a group, with the largest grants reserved for those groups with the most coalition members, each working in concert on a different piece of the puzzle. Additional, continued funding would be contingent on all CSOs building each other’s programmatic capacity. Moreover, provide the funds that are necessary to do the work, but emphasize other types of resources as well. To the greatest extent possible, offer support in the form of training, connections, and technical assistance, instead of writing a check. Develop internal talent instead of hiring subcontractors. Give community members the professional development they need to take ownership of the organization, and make the next round of funding contingent upon having a certain percentage of local residents in leadership positions. None of these adjustments will create local solidarity in the short term. On the contrary, it may take years for any perceptible shift in community dynamics to emerge. Consider, however, how much time has already been spent creating a funding atmosphere that inadvertently rewards working in isolation to meet donors’ preferences instead of fulfilling real local needs. If funders want civil society organizations to collaborate with each other, they need to provide specific, financial incentives for them to do so.

4. Let Beneficiaries Control the Purse Strings

When combined, the three principles above—funding failure, extending trust, and rewarding collaboration—suggest a radically controversial idea: recipient-driven funding. Foundations could select a physical territory to support instead of individual organizations. All CSOs interested in receiving grant money from the foundation to work within the selected area would develop a proposal as usual—but then submit it to the residents of the local area for their evaluation. Potential CSOs could come to the neighborhood and make their case in any way they like, through town-hall meetings, public events, or going door-to-door. Individual organizations could present single proposals or apply as a collective entity. CSOs with little experience in the local area may find it more difficult to persuade residents than those with an established reputation—and perhaps that is the way it should be. Ultimately, the program
beneficiaries would decide which proposal is worthy of being funded by the foundation, either by voting directly or by leaving it up to elected representatives. Additional grants would be contingent on success as defined by the residents themselves.

One may argue that recipient-driven funding merely opens the door to additional possibilities for corruption. Fraud is, of course, a possible outcome. But, I contend, no more so than the system that currently exists, in which ghost CSOs swindle money from donors on a regular basis and legitimate CSOs have every incentive to put the needs of their funders ahead of local communities. Why not allow the intended beneficiaries of “development” programs to control the purse strings? Intermediary CSOs would then be directly accountable to local interests. If the programs that the selected CSOs conduct do not deliver results, the next round of funding may go to someone else. In this manner, the incentives are more closely aligned with the goals that all donors say they want: development that enhances the quality of life for the people they intend to serve.

9.4 Conclusion

As I stated at the outset, I have deep respect and admiration for the founders and staff of Rio’s golden CSOs, and favela youth would lead less full lives without the valuable recreational opportunities that these organizations provide. However, I believe it is a mistake to conclude that golden CSOs alone, and they work they do with youth, will bring full citizenship rights to residents of Rio’s favela communities. Part of the reason golden CSOs are so attractive to outside donors may be because we want to believe the opposite is true. We want to believe that Rio’s favela residents can find opportunity, equality, and social inclusion through dance, music, and song. That all favela youth need is to fill their spare time and build their self-confidence, and they will be saved from a life of hardship and violence. We wish that it were so.

But the answer to the broader problems favela residents face is regretfully more complex. Children need jobs to go to after their education is completed. They need health care when they are sick, and they want—they deserve—equal access to the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. These are the kinds of things that individual civil society organizations cannot provide in full. As Mariana vividly described in the quote that begins this chapter, we cannot forget the impact that social structures and ingrained cultural norms have on all facets of social life. There are reasons why the “river of citizenship” does not teem with life for Rio’s favela residents. Individual educational and financial success will not transform favela dwellers into gente in the eyes of wider society. I do not claim that individual efforts are futile; on the contrary, I am a firm believer in the power of agency to shift both personal and institutional circumstances for the better. Yet we must not lose sight of the fact that citizenship poverty is embedded within aspects that are beyond the control of any one person or organization.

Changing Rio’s cultural and institutional landscape are challenging and lofty goals that are unlikely to be achieved within a generation at the least. But in their midst, individual funding organizations can make small adjustments that would have a magnified impact on the incentives that all CSOs face. At present, the funding environment in Brazil gives CSOs incentives to hire and promote outsiders, make few connections, and conduct tame activities. Essentially, the process as it stands now makes politically relevant mobilization less likely, because the organizations that are most successful at the funding game are least likely to pose political challenges.
In short, the state must become involved. Despite its democratic shortcomings for favela residents, it is still the collective action of citizens that holds the key to changing state policy. Cultural attitudes must change as well. Government officials and elected representatives hold the same beliefs, attitudes, and prejudices against favela residents that many others in Rio do. Individual perceptions of favelas must shift in order to achieve any meaningful change in social norms as well as state policy. Political participation is therefore central. Without a groundswell of pressure from marginalized groups that is supported by more privileged citizens, structures of power will continue to deny favela dwellers their full citizenship rights. Yet the most resource-rich CSOs have every incentive to avoid such activity. I want to stress that we cannot blame individual golden CSOs for this outcome. It is unreasonable to expect that any organization will act in a manner contrary to its interests. The current method of selecting, evaluating, and renewing grants, however, sets up incentives that may result in many other positive outcomes, but will not build the kind of civil society that will radically challenge the status quo.

Perhaps building a movement-oriented, politically mobilized civil society isn’t the goal. Many funding organizations may only seek to provide recreational opportunities for favela youth, and that is a perfectly fine outcome. But as this study has shown, the way in which programs are conducted have effects that reach beyond an individual program’s goals and affect how collective action is generally perceived. Moreover, building positive attitudes toward collaboration with others is especially important within a context that is already distrustful of those outside one’s immediate social circle. Even if an organization conducts activities that are not intended to have any mobilizational or political effects, the way in which the program is carried out may determine how likely a given community is to work together for common goals in the future.

Certainly, the gangs that control most of Rio’s favela neighborhoods present structural barriers that impede collective action, and social science has identified multiple reasons why individuals do not mobilize. The funding environment in Rio de Janeiro is just one consideration among many. And as stated at the outset of this study, the recommendations found herein for doing development work are not new. Grounding programs in local realities and needs, enhancing credibility, and leveraging local knowledge are “best practices” all community development practitioners knew long before my study began. Yet the funding context does structure the incentive arena within which CSOs act. And the very good news for donors who are interested in building citizenship rights for favela residents is that the funding context is something they can immediately influence. Change the incentives, and you change the game. It will not be as easy as putting on a hip-hop class to be sure, but it is also not as difficult or as long-term as changing the culture or raising GDP.

The choices that organizations make in terms of who leads them, the connections they make, and the activities they prioritize all affect prospects for political action, and the funding environment drives these choices in part. In other words, the funding environment might push favela CSOs in one direction—toward an organizational profile that makes political mobilization unlikely. Individuals, however, particularly those who lead international grant-making foundations, can provide countervailing incentives to offset the civil society resource curse and help Rio’s CSOs escape the money trap.
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