

**A QUICK LOOK OVER A LUDA IN RIO DE JANEIRO**

Newsletter **Improving the Quality of Life in Large Urban Distressed Areas** LUDA is a research project of Key Action 4 "City of Tomorrow & Cultural Heritage" of the programme "Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development" within the Fifth Framework Programme of the European Commission.

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Last summer I went to visit a group of residents at the "favela Maré" in Rio de Janeiro. Currently they are constructing a Centre of Memory and a museum inside the favela. These projects have been included in CEASM (Centre of Studies and Solitary Actions of Maré) activities, a local organization of residents to improve the quality of life in the favela.

<http://www.ceasm.org.br/>

The Maré is a favela of Rio de Janeiro crossed by two of the main thoroughfares of the city, the Av. do Brasil and the Red Line that connect the centre of Rio de Janeiro to the International Airport.

This favela is the biggest concentration of lower incomes of Rio de Janeiro, and concentrates 16 communities with a population of 132.176 people living in 38.273 houses, which equals 2,26% of the population of Rio de Janeiro (according to the studies made in 2000 by Censo Maré).

This real LUDA started taking shapes in the beginning of the 1940's. The main causes were the poor conditions for living and the industrialisation in the state of Rio de Janeiro. As in so many other cities, these occupations took place in areas of lower material value at the mounts and in places where the land did not have the capacity to drain the water from rain. Not so long ago we could still find in Maré some areas with houses on stilts.

The activities of CEASM are concentrated in 6 main areas: Education, Culture, Communication, Memory, Social Observatory and Work & Education also divided in:

1-Education Area

Maré (Cpv-Maré), Preparatory Studies for access to university studies, Language Studies of Maré, Children programs / Petrobras, Popular Library of Maré

2-Culture Area

Projects "Gentil Mother, Angola Capoeira, Maculelê"

3-Communication Areas

Newspaper "The Citizen", "Maré is News"

4-Memory Area

Documentation and Reference Centre; Oral History of Maré, Conference Room.

5-Observatory Area

Social Observatory of Maré, "Censo Maré 2000: Who Are We?"

6-Work and Education at Maré Area

Informatics courses, Museum Monitor Training, Video Workshop, Photography Workshop, Literary Production Workshop, Graphic Production Workshop.

This group of activities testifies the higher capacity of the residents to organize themselves. Some of these activities have a remarkable place among all others, for example the school preparation for university, now with 400 students, which shows the importance of education as a strategy to fight the ludanatic character of the favela in a medium and long term.

The Memory Centre and Culture Centre have created an important photographic database dedicated to Maré, searching for people's origins in a way to give them strength to live or at least survive at present hardest times, but also to value each one through an enormous quantity of cultural activities.

Meanwhile the main problem persists: the image that this favela, as so many others has in society. As they say nowadays, the residents of favelas are looked in two separated ways: The conservatory way, in which residents are criminals.

In the progressive way, that identifies them, as the good salvage symbols of a rational and individual city, passive victims of an unfair social structure.

Both attitudes "ignore the multiplicity and diversity of objective actions followed by several actors of popular spaces in the process of confronting the social and personal limits of their existence. As a matter of fact, the favela residents did not only analyze their lives through notions of missing and/or negation (...), they also tell the positive aspects, belonging to there".

But, as the CEASM says, it is necessary to recognize and have in consideration forms of identification, classifying and interpretation of social practices confirmed in the spaces of the favelas as a possibility of creating new urban sociabilities. They give for one-side instruments to go forward stereotyped representations, which characterise the hegemonic speeches about their popular spaces. They fundament the recognition of these territories' heterogeneity, which generates constructions of specifically territorial identities, but not less important recognises that the favelas do not only surround the city. They are institutional elements of the city (A Maré em dados: Censo 2000, Ceasm, Maré, 2003 p. 29)

Here, things are a little more complicated, because now four generations of residents lived in the same favela, but a 5th generation, has its own roots in the northeast of Brasil, in cacao and rubber, in a country side full of European emigrants from a then also very poor Europe. We must not stop thinking about the importance of origins of social segmentation in any study about a LUDA. The time factor is important if we think about LUDA as a place of living, or a place of passing through.

In addition, the local capacity of starting changing processes should be taken in consideration, and those processes cannot be known only as bases for partnerships, but must be respected by their autonomy.

One other aspect that calls our attention, reveals it self when we would propose to go to another part of the favela.

The Maré seen from long distance is a big agglomeration of houses, but it hides an enormous social geography depending on lots of different factors: the origin, the history, the dependency on administration, and also, what prevented our drive to the area, the control by drugs organizations which provide drugs to medium and high bourgeois of the asphalt city, the beauty neighbourhoods, the Atlântica avenue of the international jet set.

So for questions of security of the drug dealers, it was impossible to pass the border that separates the areas of the Red Command and the areas of the Third Command, unless we start negotiations with both groups; the results being totally unpredictable (!!!).

This social border shows us another problem: the understanding that a LUDA keeps known as an area with profound differences for the residents, but and totally unknown for the non-residents in which we include the "social researchers"!

To understand this difference of geography, itself can become an essential factor for the global comprehension of a LUDA.

As much as the exterior limits of a LUDA it is important to find the indicators of the interior borders (groups, generations, races, and social status).

Brasil has exterior debts of 285 billion US-dollars paying every year 50 billions USD of interests. The USA have a debt of 6.700 billion USD (6,7 trillions) and they pay 70 billions of incomes. For each 100 USD of debts, Brasil pays 17,55 USD, while the USA pays 1,05 USD! (In Veja 13.08.03 nº 1815)

Is it possible to forget the global nature of the LUDAs without relating its genesis and development to the growing inequality inside and outside of countries and even in some bigger regions of the planet?

Briefly, I would say that it is really needed to be more attentive to the following questions: The comprehension of the internal borders of a social LUDA, the emerging time of LUDAs, the local capacity of thinking and understanding their own future, the vision that a LUDA is not

an accident for (?) the city but it is part of the city itself, and finally, the planetary character of this phenomena that can clarify some significant aspects of our problems and help finding better answers to our multiple and generally awkward questions.

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