

Common origin and exemplarity in contemporary management of urban poverty in Brazil: an ethnographic study in the favela of Cidade de Deus*

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ABSTRACT

This article reflects on the everyday experience of managing poverty in urban margins based on the empirical case of Cidade de Deus, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. There, I carried out an ethnographic study of the routine followed by the state agents who implement two social programs. How do agents bond with the young people who participated in the projects? How are the life trajectories of those who serve and those who are served involved in this endeavor? Are these everyday practices linked to a contemporary way of managing poverty and in what way? In a first section, I describe how these state agents who are "on the frontlines" of social programs build and carry out daily approximations to youngsters, by using two categories of analysis: common origin and exemplarity. In a second and articulated section, I analyze how social proximity between those who assist and those assisted is at the center of a contemporary form of poverty management.

Keywords: Management of poverty, Common origin, Exemplarity, Social projects.

Origen común y ejemplaridad en la gestión contemporánea de la pobreza urbana en Brasil: un estudio etnográfico en la favela Cidade de Deus

RESUMEN

Este artículo reflexiona sobre la experiencia cotidiana de la gestión de la pobreza en los márgenes urbanos para prevenir la violencia. Mi punto de partida empírico es la rutina de los agentes estatales que implementan dos programas sociales en la favela Cidade de Deus, en Río de Janeiro, Brasil. A partir de esta etnografía propongo las siguientes preguntas. ¿Cómo los agentes estatales producen vínculos con los jóvenes que participaron en los proyectos sociales? ¿Cómo las trayectorias de vida de los que implementadores es movilizadas en este empeño? ¿Cómo estas prácticas cotidianas están vinculadas con una forma contemporánea de gestionar la pobreza? En un primer movimiento, describo como estos agentes estatales "en primera línea" de los proyectos sociales construyen y operan cotidianamente la aproximación con los jóvenes, movilizándose dos categorías de análisis: origen común y ejemplaridad. En un

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segundo y articulado movimiento, analizo como la proximidad social entre los que implementadores y los asistidos está en el centro de una forma contemporánea de gestión de la pobreza.

Palabras clave: Gestión de la pobreza, Origen común, Ejemplaridad, Proyectos sociales.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to reflect on the everyday experience of managing poverty in urban margins. My empirical starting point is Cidade de Deus (CDD) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I resided there four months and, between 2014 and 2016, carried out an ethnographic study following the routines of two social programs: the projects by the *police officer-teachers* who were on loan from the local Pacifying Police Unit (PPU) to teach a course to children and youngsters from the community, and the Better Youth Path Program- BYP (from the Portuguese "Caminho Melhor Jovem"), a partnership between the Inter-American Development Bank and the state government, the focus of which was to individually assist the youth from communities where PPUs had been implemented. In this specific text, I dwell on the routine and everyday speeches by the *social technicians* of the BYP and the *police officer-teachers* on the difficulty of attracting young people to the projects and keeping them attending.

Social technicians and *police officer-teachers* frequently expressed that keeping the young engaged in the courses and having them assist is not a simple task. Many see no point in the *projects*, others prefer to use their spare time to rest and spend time with friends, some have part time side jobs in their time away from school, and there are also those who might be interested in a course but do not feel motivated to attend regularly. *Social technicians* and *police officer-teachers* are in a constant struggle with this situation and make efforts to show what they have to offer these youngsters so as to *retain* them, as a *social technician* from the Better Youth Path program told me, or "bring them to our side", as a *police officer-teacher* explained to me. For this, it is first of all necessary to bond with them. How do *social technicians* and *police officer-teachers* do this? What resources do they use in the process of approaching them? How are the life trajectories of these agents "on the frontlines" of social projects useful in this endeavor? How do everyday and ordinary practices relate to a more contemporary way of poverty management?

Getting close to the young was aided by the existence of a *common origin* between the *social technicians* and those they assisted and between the *police officer-teachers* and their students. As both groups came from low-income families or from families with few

resources and opportunities, this common origin was used as a way to approach and bond with the young people. However, this type of bonding did not automatically lead to an identification with this *common origin*, its efficacy also depended on the legitimacy of the speeches and practices of the *social technicians* and *police officer-teachers*. For it to be effective, the common origin was mobilized in a way that allowed them to attain *exemplarity*.

From everyday rhetoric such as "we have the same origin", "I come from the same place", "I am not rich either", I argue that exemplarity and common origin work as a way to create proximity and identification but also distinction and contrast insofar as the combination of a common origin and a trajectory of growth and success was proof that the *social technicians* and the *police officer-teachers* knew what they were talking about (and, for this reason, should be heard) when they stated that it was possible to follow a "correct" path and overcome any adversity.

It is worth stressing that to produce proximity, distinction, and hierarchization by mobilizing this *common origin* was not a calculated, fallacious, or merely instrumental process. They indeed identified themselves, saw themselves in these youths, recognized their own life stories in the stories of these youths' families, in the difficulties they faced. This feeling of identification also caused them to engage intensely in the work they did and with the young they spent time with, many times going beyond the functions they were hired to carry out.

This engagement and the feeling of having a "mission", together with the vulnerable young people of these communities, are important not only to *retain* them in the social projects, but also to retain the *social technicians* and *police officer-teachers* themselves. The fact that they come from lower-income groups and have risky jobs with low salaries, little infrastructure, few resources, and unstable work contracts is no coincidence. They have ascended in their social status but still occupy positions of little prestige and with low remuneration; this means they perform those professions that deal directly with the poor. This is quite a specific way of managing poverty that has the poor caring for the poor, not only because this is cheaper but also because it allows for a moral governing of the poor.

From a theoretical point of view, the discussions focus on two interconnected dimensions that look at the ways how poverty is managed in contemporary society. On the one hand, there is the debate on contemporary figuration of the Brazilian urban conflict and the centrality of violence in its representation. And, on the other, there is at the same time the consolidation of neoliberal rationality in Latin America (Gago, 2018; Araújo, 2012; Machado da Silva, 2002; Dagnino, 2004; Oliveira & Rizek, 2007; Telles, 2001).

A series of works have been developed in and about urban peripheries, deepening the reflections about the figuration of the contemporary Brazilian urban conflict and its effects on daily life in the peripheries and favelas². It is possible to state that there is a certain

² These studies have been dedicated to understand the multiple dimensions of contemporary urban conflict from the margins from a point of view of security policies (Menezes, 2015; Machado da Silva, 2010), social policies (Georges & Garcia, 2016; Araújo Silva, 2015; 2017), the representations around the problem of urban

consensus that between the 1980s and the 1990s we experienced a shift in the figuration of the urban conflict, that is, a change in its content and, consequently, in its effects on urban sociability. Thus, in the last three decades, the core of the urban conflict shifted radically from the problem of integrating the working classes from the urban peripheries to the issue of the violence that emanated from these spaces (Machado da Silva, 2010; Feltran, 2014; Motta, 2021). In the words of Castel (1998), we have witnessed a change in the contents of our *urban social question*.

While the social issue that marked the urban conflict in Brazil between the 1960s and the 1980s referred to the need for integrating the poor and the working class through wage labor and access to rights (Kowarick, 1975; Caldeira, 2000; 2001; Dagnino, 2004; Feltran, 2011; 2014), from the 1990s onwards and, more intensely, in the 2000s, the central issue of this conflict became the containment of violent conflict (Feltran, 2011; 2014; 2020; Machado da Silva, 2010; 2011; 2016; Misse, 1993). Violence became the core of the problem of urban poverty; social conflict turned into criminal conflict. It is in this sense that Machado da Silva (2010) argues that we experience the passage from a *language of rights* –which guided the political horizon of social integration via labor and social rights– to a *language of violence*. Urban violence is consolidated as a *grammar* that strengthens the association of poor territories and populations with the problem of violence and criminality³.

As Feltran (2014) states, "the public thematization of 'urban violence' thus represents an active way of producing reality and offering its contents, which at the same time hides what exists in the world, outside its own terms" (p. 299). In this produced reality, violence is associated with certain bodies, territories, clothing, music, etc. Although imprecise from a conceptual point of view, situating violence at the core of representations of the poor and urban poor territories is politically accurate, since it makes it possible to make a part into the whole, associating the entire periphery with images of "indignity, filth, disorder, crime, violence, evil, abjection" (Feltran 2014, p. 300).

Therefore, the logic that analyzes the social order from the *grammar of urban violence* sees repression as a solution for maintaining order and demands that repressive actions be directed predominantly to a specific group in the city: the poor in the peripheries and slums (Machado da Silva, 2010). This shift has led to a radicalization of otherness, as poverty and the poor are represented as synonymous with marginality, criminality, and the

violence (Leite, 2012; Machado da Silva, 2011, Misse, 1993; Motta 2021; Maldonado, 2020), the expansion of the criminal world (Feltran, 2011; Hirata, 2018; Grillo, 2013), state violence against poor populations (Vianna, 2013; Farias, 2008; Misse, Grillo & Neri, 2015), the territorial dimension of this conflict (Telles, 2013; Rui, 2012; Cavalcanti, 2013; Rizek, 2014), the transformations of the world of work (Hirata, 2014; Araújo Silva, 2017), expansion of Pentecostalism in the peripheries (Machado, 2013; 2014; Birman, 2009; 2012).

³ On the notion of urban violence, Machado da Silva (2010) has a sophisticated discussion in which he argues that urban violence should not be taken as a category of analysis or explanation of the increase in violent crimes in large Brazilian cities. Rather, it should be taken as the center of a grammar, a collective practical language about the issue of social order and security, which is increasingly (and exclusively) explained and understood as the risk of breaking the continuity of daily routines, affecting feelings of individual and property security. In this conception, urban violence is taken as a category of common sense, collectively constructed to account for the fact that everyday life is constituted by a complex of practices in which force is the binding element, responsible for its articulation and relative permanence over time (Machado da Silva, 2011).

source of violence. It is no coincidence that war has emerged as a metaphor to understand and express this conflict, not only analytically, but also in everyday speeches, such as those on the wars on drugs and crime⁴.

The social projects I studied are an expression and part of this process, as their main justification is to work with young favela residents to prevent violence. That is, they operate with the same assumption that poverty is a potential source of violence. Indeed, a series of works have demonstrated how social projects, especially those for youth, operate based on the assumption of an automatic link between poverty, violence and youth in peripheries and favelas (Corrochano & Gouvêa, 2003; Madeira, 2004; Sposito & Carrochano, 2005; Castro, 2013; Motta, 2021; Rocha, 2014; Tommasi, 2018). These works have also indicated how this logic meets another more general and structural process that took force in this same period, between the 1990s and 2000s: the consolidation of neoliberal rationality in Latin America. If the new figuration of urban conflict helps us understand the logic that sustains these projects, the concrete mechanisms and effects of neoliberalism allow us to understand a little more about the form and operating mode of social projects.

Much has already been debated, and is still being debated, about the contours of neoliberalism in Latin America and its specificities in different countries. Araújo (2012), discusses how neoliberalism is consolidated in Chile and how it relates to different dimensions of life in Chilean society –discussed by the author based on the idea of *pruebas* (Araújo, 2012). Gago (2018) discusses how neoliberalism in Latin America is directly related to the subordinate insertion of the countries of the region in the global market. Based on the specific case of Argentina, the author proposes an approach to *neoliberalism from below* –infiltrated in the subjectivities of the subjects– which implies abandoning the idea of neoliberalism as a set of macro policies designed by imperialist centers, a rationality that only sustains large political and economic actors (Gago, 2018; 2021). In Brazil, a group of studies from the early 2000s discussed the displacements produced by neoliberalism in the world of work (Machado da Silva, 2002; Lima, 2010), in public policies (Rizek, 2014) and social movements (Dagnino, 2004; Paoli, 2007; Feltran, 2005).

The fact is that, in Brazil, this moment of consolidation of neoliberalism and liberalizing policies took place simultaneously with the consolidation of the new Constitution, characterized by being protective, participatory and aimed at the universalization of social rights. Dagnino (2004; 2005) called this encounter “between two distinct processes, linked to two distinct political projects” a “perverse confluence”: one guided by the neoliberal model, in which the state should not have the “role of guaranteeing social rights”, a responsibility that was to be transferred to civil society; and a “democratizing, participatory [political] project, which emerged from the crises of authoritarian regimes and the different national efforts to deepen democracy” (Dagnino, 2004, p. 140). With the consolidation of the neoliberal model in Brazil, the idea that the state is not capable of dealing with social

⁴ See Leite (2000; 2012) for a discussion on the metaphor of war as a logic guiding state interventions in slums, especially in the field of public security.

problems –and does not need to– gets stronger. The notion of civil society shifts decisively and becomes synonymous with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Third Sector and Foundations (businesses) (Dagnino, 2005, p. 52). This process is marked by a profound shift in the way of conceiving and acting on the so-called social issues. There is a progressive move away from a logic of guaranteeing rights to a logic of administration, management and containment of social problems.

In the context of this process, *social projects* attain a position of centrality as a way of working with the poor. Leão (2004), when studying a *social project* for poor young people, points to a predominance of a “pedagogy of precariousness”. Motta (2021), in a similar direction, discusses how social projects have precariousness, insecurity of continuity and intermittency as a recurrent characteristic. Moreover, Sorj (2016), Sposito & Carrochano (2005), Rocha (2014), Feltran (2011) and Tommasi (2018) have indicated how *social projects* operate less and less from a language of rights and favor an entrepreneurial discourse. Thus, *social projects* operate at the intersection between the *language of violence* (Machado da Silva, 2010) and the entrepreneurial discourse.

To demonstrate this phenomenon, this text moves in a double direction. First, I describe how these state agents “on the frontlines” of the implementation of social programs construct and carry out the daily approach with the youths by mobilizing two categories of analysis: *common origin* and *exemplarity*. In a second and articulated section, I analyze how the social proximity between those who assist and those who are assisted is at the center of a contemporary form of management of the poor and of poverty.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This text interacts with a tradition of Brazilian ethnographies in the field of social sciences that, from the margins, have sought to understand the effects of the figuration of contemporary urban conflict (Machado da Silva, 2010; 2016; Misse, 2006; Feltran, 2011; 2020; Maldonado, 2020). Starting from the reality of the Cidade de Deus favela, I give attention to the ways in which the state manages and controls poverty, and I do this by analyzing the efforts made by state agents to manage this conflict, to produce order in and from the urban margins. More precisely, I favor the most direct, daily, ordinary and recurrent practices by the state agents *at the frontline*, the street level bureaucracy Lipsky (1980) of the Programs studied (The police officers projects and Better Young Path Program).

Additionally, the research in question feeds on a debate that seeks to rethink the way of understanding and conceiving the state and, consequently, the way of researching this subject. This text has an important dialogue with the theorizations of Michel Foucault (2000, 2008). Even though he did not devote himself to the construction of a theory of the state and none of his works deal specifically with this subject, the author's contributions to a shift in the way of conceiving the state can be deduced from the few times this theme appears in his discussions. One of Michel Foucault's most important contributions to social thought was his analysis of power. The Foucauldian assertion that power “does not exist in a particular place, nor emanates from a particular point” (Foucault, 2000, p. 248) has

important implications for how the state is commonly conceived and studied. The state cannot be considered to be the locus of power, the main holder of the capacity to exercise power, because there are struggles, clashes for the maintenance or subversion of power itself (Foucault, 2000). In this perspective, the state does not have an essence, and this implies forgoing an analysis of the state's structures and functions and deducing the set of practices of what the state would be (Foucault, 2000).

Considering that the focus of the current analyses is the state practices with and for poor populations, it is essential to highlight the contributions of Veena Das' work, especially her important text, coauthored with Deborah Poole, which introduces the book *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, published in 2004. Das' ethnographic works are one of the most compelling efforts to take this perspective of deconstructing the state as a unit seriously. Veena Das proposes a reflection of the state from its concrete and local manifestations, figurations, and presences. The analytical proposal is to distance oneself "from the consolidated image of the state as an administrative form of rationalized political organization that tends to weaken or disarticulate itself along its territorial and social margins" (Das & Poole, 2004, p. 19), to thus reflect on "how the practices and politics of living at the margins shape the political practices of regulation and disciplining that which constitutes what we call 'the state'" (2004, p. 22).

This look from the margins of the state offers a more dispersed picture of what the state is, since the indeterminate character of the margins can cause fissures and break the character of solidity that is generally attributed to the state. From this perspective, Das & Poole (2004) warn that looking at the state from its margins means refraining from the idea that practices by state agents in these spaces and with these populations would be failures, a dysfunction, something external to the state or an exception. Rather, the assumption is that there is a heterogeneity of ways in which the state manages life, and these state practices at the margins are constitutive parts of this order, necessary presuppositions of the state (Das & Poole, 2004).

In this perspective it becomes relevant to understand how the state governs vulnerable populations through daily life. Fassin (2013) points out the usefulness of diving into the heart of the state, penetrating its ordinary functioning and apprehending the values and affections that permeate the policies and practices of its agents. It is, therefore, in close dialogue with this way of understanding and studying the state that I conducted the ethnography with the social projects in the Cidade de Deus favela. I favored the concrete and situated practices of state agents from and at the margin (Das & Poole, 2004), more specifically, those of state agents who implement the programs mainly aimed at and justified by violence prevention and urban conflict.

I lived in Cidade de Deus for four months, during which I spent my days in the building where the two projects were carried out. I arrived at 9am, when the activities started, and left at 4pm. I followed and participated in the classes of the police officers-teachers and in the collective activities of the Young Better Way. Besides this period of 4 months of intense

immersion living in Cidade de Deus, during another six months of research I made more specific field incursions, during which I conducted most of the recorded interviews. In total, fourteen interviews were recorded with an average duration of one hour. All of them were held in the CRJ building, where the projects were implemented. Subsequently, all of them were fully transcribed and analyzed. Excerpts from them are used for the discussions in this article. It is important to mention that the names used are fictitious, so as to protect the identity of my research interlocutors.

For this text, it is important to highlight that during the course of this research, there were many times that I saw police officer-teachers from CRJ looking for buses so that students could participate in competitions and presentations. It was not rare for some of the police officer-teachers to stay after their working hours to give extra classes or to teach a specific lesson to a student. Sometimes we got emotional with the police officers-teachers when the students paid tribute to them. I also saw police officers-teachers expose students as a "pedagogical" strategy to correct an attitude in class or to motivate an "accommodating" student. I also heard these police officer-teachers give "civilizing" speeches and criticize the "slum culture". As for the technicians of the CMJ, several times I saw them carrying out functions that were not their responsibility, like taking young people to visit universities, museums, and important places in the city. I saw how common it was for them to pay for copies of documents so that the young boy/girl could renew their school registration or enroll in some course or activity. I shared their joy when a young person got an internship, a job, or graduated from high school or college. I also saw them being harsh with young people who had stopped attending the Program.

This follow up of the class routines of the Better Youth Path (BYP) technicians and police officers-teachers made clear that the practices of these agents are permeated by feelings, affections, prejudices, and moralities that go far beyond the prescriptions and norms. However, to pay attention to the dimension of the most direct relations and interactions does not mean to ignore the underlying question that guides the management of poor populations: the production of order. On the contrary, it is the intertwining of relationships, affections, and the desire for order that makes the daily routine of management something more complex and full of nuances, as I will demonstrate throughout this text.

FINDING THE ORIGIN AS THE COMMON GROUND, GETTING CLOSE

Our work here, mine as a tutor, is a very... To me, it is very challenging work. First, the Program in general, the Program is very complex [...]. The people are used to go somewhere to ask for something and you just tell them if you have it or if you don't have it, and they go away. And we propose another logic of building with the subject that which they want. And not everyone is up for this and understands this. This is very hard. I think it is very hard work, really challenging, you have to understand that you need to build a relationship with the subject to construct with them this demand of theirs, understand this demand of theirs, to possibly, or not, forward this demand. This is the work. [...] We work with guidance in three main topics, which are professional qualification, returning to school, and insertion into the job market. So we are with the

young thinking about these issues. [...] But you have to have someone who bets on this with you, they have to embark on this, and this embarking is sometimes difficult. But we have really, really, really nice experiences (Laura, *social technician of* BYP program).

While describing her work, Laura emphasizes the importance of proximity and lasting bonds while assisting individuals in the Better Youth Path (BYP) program. Indeed, Laura and other BYP *social technicians* made an effort to build a relationship of trust and proximity with the youth they were treating so that they could build the Individual Autonomy Plan together and, ultimately, a life project for this youth's future. In the case of the BYP program, the need to get close and build a relationship of trust was even more crucial for the functioning of the Program, given that its main and most important offering was the individual assistance of young people.

Therefore, it was crucial to make the youth talk, open up, and trust. A kind of *examination technique*, as Foucault (2003b) pointed out, insofar as this is a combination of surveillance and normalization techniques that allow qualifying, classifying, and punishing individuals. It gains importance and complexity in disciplinary society when it becomes the technique of excellence to arrive at the *truth* of the individuals, who show themselves as an object, offer themselves, making it possible for them to be described and compared with other individuals and, therefore, allowing their deviations and maladjustments to be identified. Each individual becomes a *case* and has their life scrutinized, detailed, and marked by marking, classification, and objectification processes. For the program to be successful, it is necessary to get these youngsters to talk, build their case, examine them. In the same direction pointed to by Laura, Joana emphasizes the complexity and difficulties in gaining the trust of the youths and the impact of this on the Program:

It is based on history; they end up telling us about their entire life, some cry, get it? So when a youth comes that is very down, very fragile, you notice soon, sometimes in a first session you notice there is something there, but it is not in the beginning that you will, no. [...] Then comes the second and you make them more at ease, and they will end up... they cry on the first, cry on the second, there is something that is not good there [...] many only observe, then over time they get more at ease. Not others, already in the first session they are not embarrassed, they talk. When we get to the part that we ask if they abused some substance, many already say they do, others are not ashamed of saying it, others say they don't, but over time they notice, they get more comfortable, they start talking. Then, when we think that it is something very serious, we pass it on, tell the story, call the tutor, introduce the tutor, say that "you are going to be assisted by her", provide your explanations, "and if you don't feel at ease, I will assist you along with her", because you build a friendship. So, we are careful not to make them uncomfortable, get it? (Joana, *social technician of* BYP).

However, keeping the youths attending the courses or the assistance and attracting new youths is not easy⁵. The *common origin* was at the center of this effort to get close to the

⁵ The maintenance and the new admissions were a central issue for the BYP program from the institutional viewpoint. The targets were determined in the loan agreement established with the IADB, which, as all staff

youths, build bonds and trust, and, thus, keep them in the projects. During interviews, conversations, or classes, *social technicians* and *police officer-teachers* always restated that they had the same origin as the youths they assisted, as they grew in *communities*, studied in public schools, went through projects, are black or northeastern or belonged to families that were low-income or didn't have much resources. Clearly, this is a way for them to get closer to the youths and create identification, showing them that they were able to understand what was going on with them, their families, and in their *communities* as their experiences are very similar.

Being black is one of the characteristics most underlined and highlighted by the BYP program *social technicians*. Also, they express the importance attributed to this issue through their bodies: they wear coarse and curly hair, always voluminous, with hairdos that emphasize the afro style; some also wore clothes and ornaments associated with ethnic fashion. For them, being black marked their lives decisively, something they believe to be no different for the youths they assisted, the absolute majority of which were black. In the interviews, they are emphatic while addressing this dimension –"I come from a family of black parents", "I am black, I have a trajectory with this. I am not part of the movement, but I defend the cause, I impose myself being black".

And they associate this to the difficulties they have faced. Lorena, for example, connects her family being black to the fact that she is her family's first generation with higher education. Sara marks how the race issue, intersected with income and place of residence, hampered her access to university. Luiza emphasizes how the issue of being black posed difficulties in accessing many opportunities. However, establishing proximity through the racial issue was not something immediate, it depended on other strategies that did not always work, considering that many youths did not establish strong associations between their living conditions and the fact that they were black.

It was different when they mentioned in their speeches that they had studied in public schools and all the difficulties they encountered derived from this, as Luiza explains:

I came from a public school, so I can speak. I had difficulties until I got to the entrance examination, to reach post-graduation, to write a text. Because they lacked Portuguese teachers, because they lacked history teachers. And this difficulty is very bad. When you are in a public school, no one tells you college exists (Luiza, *social technician of BYP program*).

Identification was more easily established in this regard. In a more direct and evident manner, having studied in public schools was a way to establish a more direct connection with the youths, who always mentioned the problems of the lack of teachers, teacher quality, lack of infrastructure, and class interruptions due to stoppages, strikes, police

members told me, puts much pressure on those who are on the *frontline* of the Program in the communities. For this reason, beyond the numbers, to manage to retain a youth to the assistance of the BYP program was one of the main indications that the work was being successful, from both the viewpoint of external perspectives and assessments and for themselves.

operation or shootings. When they said they had studied in public schools, the social technicians gave the message that they knew the problem and knew of the difficulties. More than this, they showed they knew how to bypass and overcome these problems. Moreover, the fact of having studied in public schools was at the center of this process of creating identification due to the characteristics of the work they carried out with the youths, which has one of its central axes in training and school education. For this reason, public school was a topic used to build identification, and it was so central in their speeches about their trajectories because it was also a central theme in the assistance of the youths.

The way they address and link the fact of being black and having public school trajectories to their life trajectories showed that there was a process of reflections and problematizations about these issues that was associated with their experiences in *projects* but also with the fact that they had completed undergraduate programs in the human sciences. Such reflections allowed them to establish relationships between being black, having studied in public schools, coming from low-income families, and having grown up in *communities* or low-income neighborhoods, issues they mentioned to show how they understood the experiences the youths had.

Coming from a low-income family or with few resources and growing up in poorer areas are also mentioned a lot by the *police officer-teachers*. Together with the fact that their parents had migrated to Rio de Janeiro and having a childhood and adolescence with few resources, this is the main element the *police-officer teachers* mention to show that they have the same origin as their students. Vitor explains how the fact of being northeastern and not wealthy made him closer to the people in the *community* in general and his students:

Therefore, I fit, I fit in this aspect, I may not fit in the aspect of being black, but I am a mixed breed, I don't live in the wealthy center of the *community*, nor was I born in the wealthy center over in Recife, so I am from the outskirts, and I fit especially in the part of my cultural descent, I am northeastern. Although my father and mother have origins outside Brazil, from Italians, Orientals, my family has origins outside Brazil, but my cultural part is completely northeastern. So, like, I find my cultural part here within Cidade de Deus, I think that in all *communities* of Rio de Janeiro I find my cultural part, we are constituted of blacks, devoid of a certain layer of the wealthy society, and we are northeastern, it is a fact, there is no escaping it. And because I understand, foster this side, I manage to get along especially with some senior citizens, like sometimes people who have even frequented drug trafficking and have owned crack houses, nowadays they have paid their penance and are free, and they have nephews, they have children who sit down with me and manage to talk, manage to talk about Recife, about Bahia, about the northeast, because, in truth, their inheritance came from there. And this ends up breaking the ice. So, I have a certain ease to get to the point that I want to make, to show them other things, precisely due to my inheritance, due to where I came from. So, this is very good. So, like, my arrival here was very difficult due to the fact that I was with the holy cloak of the Military Police of Rio de Janeiro State (PMERJ); this repels any *community* resident, get it? And, at the same time, I had to break this by teaching classes; they eventually saw that I have much more in common with them

than in truth with the aristocratic society that reigns, so they feel familiarized to some extent (Vitor, *police officer-teacher*, June 2016).

As Vitor mentions, in the case of the *police officer-teachers*, the construction of this identification has a considerable obstacle: the fact that they are police officers, that they are wearing the "holy cloak of the PMERJ". Many are the reports of the difficulties they encountered to have their *projects* accepted by the community, of the suspicion that they were there to gather information and not to teach classes. However, they are all unanimous in stating that it was the time on the job that showed the residents that they were there to teach their classes, to do a different work from what they do on the streets. The police officers who started their projects after other projects were already underway stated that, indeed, they found a more peaceful environment, with less resistance to the *projects* from the residents⁶. This approximation is considered to be fundamental. Vitor's speech converges with those of *social technicians* Laura and Lorena, as it highlights the importance of proximity in the work they do. That is to say that the classes are considered to be a vehicle to reach the students and bring education and dignity, change the culture, and train citizens.

"I pass on a skill to you; this skill is the vehicle, it is the tool that I am using, it is not the final attribute of what I want to pass on to you. The final attribute that I want to pass on to you is education, understanding, dignity", these are factors that I must use [as] a means. [...] For example, me working in a gym where the best technique is appreciated, there's no way, in a gym, you want to see technique improvement. So, in there, you go exactly with the content that I said earlier, that content that I don't want to know where someone comes from, that I don't want to know where they're going. At the moment they are with me in class, they will be that person that I wish them to be for the good of their technique. So, they will train to improve physical conditioning, improve endurance, strength, learn to fight, that's it, basically. When I get out of there, at another moment, I am teaching classes in the *community* at Cidade de Deus, as a police officer-teacher in Cidade de Deus, with the *community* of Cidade de Deus. At that moment, I have to put aside that technical professional, focused only on the technical aspect. Yes, I have to be technical, although I must be more personal, more social with them. So, it is a huge difference, and there is also huge exhaustion among the individuals who are going through this (Igor, police officer-teacher).

⁶ It is important to mention that, at weekends, the police officers who were part of the *projects* worked in the *core activity*, i.e., patrolling the streets. However, this work on the streets was never carried out in the area where they developed their *projects*. José explained it to me like this: "They try not to put us to work [on the streets] here. Why? It is not nice for the students to be seen talking to us and have me be out there tomorrow arresting and such. So, it's not nice for them. So, we always work elsewhere". And he adds how strange he felt when he started his activities in a PPU: "When I left the Battalion and came to the PPU, it was very different, very different. Why? In the Battalion, you go to combat there, arrest who you must arrest, and get out of there, turn around, and go somewhere else. Not here, here we would go to combat, we combat, and we remain here, you keep seeing the people and seeing everyone. So, here, there's no way... I found this a little strange at the time. For example, I would go to a street where there was confusion, a brawl, and I arrested someone, people cussed and threw things. The following day I would be there the same way, passing the same street, seeing the same people. So, this is something that doesn't exist in the conventional battalion". José's speech is evidence of how the idea of proximity has much more to do with a change of the image of the *police officers-teachers* who are in the *projects* than with the police in general.

MAKING AN EXAMPLE OF ONESELF: PRACTICING EXEMPLARITY

However, although it makes them closer to the youths they assisted, being from a *community*, being black or northeastern, having studied in public schools, and not having had much comfort throughout their childhood did not guarantee engagement and permanence in the social projects. Therefore, recurrently evoking the *common origin* at important moments of the interaction with the youths (a more serious conversation, a reprimand, a more specific piece of advice) worked as a way to "win them over", "bring them to our side". This proximity in terms of life history and experiences ended up working as the basis of a narrative of their own trajectories as an example.

Building an exemplary figure like this meant going beyond the difficulties they went through and say that they were similar to those that the youths face⁷. In this sense, Dullo (2011) draws attention to the subtle difference between testimony and exemplarity, which have distinct emphases, although both articulate the transformation that occurred in the subject's life. In the core of each testimony is the subject who explicitly expresses the transformations that occurred in his or her life; the testimony is generally one of suffering, mistakes, or sins that were overcome and left behind. In the case of exemplarity, the emphasis is on offering oneself up as an example, in the generative capacity of the individual in the face of the others, i.e., it is a proposition in which the center is beyond the individual (Dullo, 2011). The repetition of the elements that referred to this *common origin* created conditions for the *police officer-teachers* and the *social technicians* to forge themselves as exemplary figures: examples of successful trajectories, examples of good choices, examples of escaping the very common path destined for those who "come from *communities*", at last, examples of what one must be and do.

Among the techniques of the Better Youth Path program, this mechanism, which has exemplarity at its core, will work primarily by constantly pointing out that even while they didn't have the opportunities offered by a Program such as the BYP, they were able to improve their living conditions, study, go to college:

Gee, I never had this. Who here [in the Program's team] had this? I am from a low-income family, I never had this, get it? [...] So, it's not because she was poor, is poor that I will drop the ball. And it is very nice when you have a person who experienced all this within Cidade de Deus and went after it and reached their objective, achieved their goal. [...] I am here today, but tomorrow I might not be, the struggle I have is the same that they will have, it's all the same, for us who are poor, it is all the same, at the same level. [...] And I bring this experience of mine to them, that nothing is impossible. [...] Am I going to cross my arms and say that "I have no opportunities in the world, I have no opportunities in the job market, I won't compete as an equal"? So, I pose this to them, we are equals; I am not from a wealthy family, I am here today, tomorrow I might not be. [To be working] Here was really a consequence of work well done in a city hall

⁷ According to Dullo (2011), the topic of the testimony is very dear to the socio-anthropological literature of the religion. For this discussion in Brazil, especially on the interface among testimony, religion, outskirts, and violence, see the work by Birman (2012), Côrtes (2013, 2014), and Machado (2014).

project. [...] So, like, everything I went through in my childhood, in my life, as you said, also helps me, because they are youths that I say life "nothing is impossible", [...] What I did not have, that it was all following my head, due to my will to grow and go after it, what I did not have, some guidance within what they sometimes don't have either, I try to give them, it is an exchange, because I see myself in many of them there, I see much of myself in them (Joana, *social technician* of BYP program).

They have a hard time taking the English course. And I always tell them: "man, I did not have this opportunity". We keep joking here, some of the team, that if we had a Better Youth Path program in our lives, it would be different. This with us all having graduated. Imagine a Better Youth Path program guiding us at sixteen, seventeen years old, we would have another potential. And they have difficulty taking advantage of this (Luiza, *social technician* of BYP program).

The *police officer-teachers* are unanimous in stating that the police officer comes from the same place as the people in the community. Igor brings the example of a police officer who lives in Cidade de Deus.

Because, nowadays, the police officer is a resident of the community, as we have had a student of mine who took the PMERJ exam, passed, and was a good officer. Unfortunately, he is not working because he was shot in the elbow, he can't open and close his hand nor move his right arm, and he is a former resident of Cidade de Deus, an honest person, from a good family, his cousins were involved, but he was an honest person, studious, a hard worker, religious. So, like, the entire context in which in truth he had to be really everything bad, and he chose precisely, after entering the class, to be a military police officer in PPUs and try to do good. And precisely in a war against trafficking, he was shot. So, like, I see that the military police officer is not very distant from the *community*, the walls are the same, because the military police officer doesn't come from Mars, the military police officer comes from here, they sometimes come from the core of the *community* itself (Igor, *police officer-teacher*, April 2016).

In this shared experience, they highlight that they saw violence up close because they had lived in communities. One of the *police officers-teachers* reports:

So, as I have been a *community* resident, I, a community resident, I picked up shell casings when there were shootings; I, my mother, and my siblings, we would stay under the chairs.

The fact that they had grown up in a context of growing violence and have experienced the wars between the police and traffickers up close is proof that they knew what those youths experienced. As an unfolding of this common origin, the fact that they are police officers is at the core of the exemplarity they built around themselves. They are exemplary both because they chose the *right path* and persisted in this path of being police officers, a profession that faces many risks, "misinterpretations" from the population, and rejections. Their life histories are proof that, despite the adversities and violence they have faced, it was possible to choose the *right path*; it was possible to make a life choice to change this reality, as they have done.

Antônio explains how a police officer is a person who has the same origin in a community and merely chose the right path:

Community Coffee is a meeting that the police hold in all pacified *communities*. The association of residents is called, some companies in the surroundings, some residents to talk about the *community's* problems, what they would like to see improved. We have had a young man who already entered the room screaming, crying, saying that a police officer had murdered his brother and who victimized himself with that situation and was very anguished. And we talked to him at the meeting itself. And, at the time, the commander himself told him that filling himself with hate did no good, that he wouldn't solve the problem that way, that he [the commander] was also black, that he had also grown up in a *community*. And, like, the thought that I have today, with all this that goes on in the world, this advance of social networks, of people talking much more, exposing themselves much more, I see that people victimize themselves a lot in regard to what is happening in the *community*. I think this needs to change a bit, I think that people who are at the frontlines, the teachers, the educators, I think they should bring this, try to bring this message to people, "try to change a little, because the fact that you are black, you are poor, from the *community*, does not mean that you can't". And this sometimes happens a lot in the *communities* and in pacified *communities* where we experience daily life with these people. So, sometimes, we see the person is victimizing themselves, sometimes they have a problem, but sometimes they are already used to feeling sorry for themselves, get it? And we are poor as well, those who take the exam for the military police aren't wealthy, it is a person from the same community, they just chose another path (Antônio, *police officer-teacher*, June 2016).

Here, the life stories themselves and the fact that they are police officers are a way to legitimize the criticism of the rejection of the police by the residents. Moreover, the *police officer-teachers* consider themselves to be different police officers, who do social work, who have projects, and who do not share the points of view of the police officers who are *on the streets*. In Antônio's speech, the concept of common origin is a way to validate the perception that the people from the *community* victimize themselves. But the fact that the *police officers-teachers* have the same origin and face (or have faced) the same difficulties as the residents of the community supports the accusation that there is "self-victimization" and that it is unfounded. According to this narrative, the professionals who are *at the frontlines* are an example that it is possible to do it differently –overcome the adversities and not victimize oneself in the face of them. With the complaints, denunciations, and indignation reduced to a habit of victimizing oneself, the entire political content of the speeches of *community* residents about the problems and injustices they face disappears. This depoliticization is completely tied to a conception that blames subjects for their own failures and successes and enables the enlargement of tolerance in the face of social injustices (Dejours, 2000). Indeed, the suffering, pain, and indignation that pervade the denunciation of the death of a resident by a police officer have no place, are not recognized, being reduced to victimization.

Therefore, the force of the exemplarity of the *police officer-teachers* and *social technicians* does not reside in the simple fact that they are in a superior position but rather in the

success they had in their endeavor to change their lives, overcome difficulties, choose the right side of an experience similar to that of the youths they assist. As Dullo (2011) alerts us, for a subject to be exemplary, it is indispensable that they occupy a position of tension, that is, that there is a productive conflict between a similar origin and a distinction derived from their success that renders them different from the others. "This tension structures exemplarity: it is only upon being recognized as a similar that they may serve as an example to the others because it was from the same conditions that they showed development" (Dullo, 2011, p. 110). For this reason, evoking the *common origin* is so essential to build the bond, as it allows for the construction of the exemplary figure, that which worked out and serves as a mirror, a guide.

Therefore, exemplarity makes it possible to achieve identification and attain contrast and distinction. A field of possibilities is created in which the relationships between the agents *at the frontlines* and the youths assisted are pervaded by a moral and individualizing judgment of the subjects, leading to the emergence of individual responsabilization. In other words, exemplarity functions not only as a way to create bonds, "bring to our side", and *retain* but also as a way to distinguish and separate those who move away from this exemplary model, and are classified as lazy, unwilling, lacking vision, and, in the extreme case of *police officer-teachers*, as the enemy –which has important implications.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SOCIAL TECHNICIAN AND THE POLICE OFFICER-TEACHERS

Repeating the *common origin*, making an example of oneself, and individually blaming those who moved away from this model were recurrent practices among *police officer-teachers* and *BYP social technicians*. Among the *BYP program social technicians*, individual blaming of the youths for not taking advantage of opportunities and not "seeing" what the Program had to offer is at the core of the approximation-distinction game that exemplarity engenders. Joana explains how the *BYP program* would be a tool for the youth to see their own potential and, thus, carry out their projects for themselves:

It [the *BYP program*] is not a welfarist project, it is a project that sees you as a human being, you value yourself, and what you need is just a little push, someone who guides you: "I am going to give you the fishing rod and you will fish, your fish is up to you; you are going to fish your fish, make your own life". [...] You try to bring this youth inside the program and make them notice they have value, that the value they have is inside them, that they are going to discover this value. [...] And when you have a Program like this, we are going to shake up this youth, we are going to make them aware: "gee, you have everything for your life to work out, it's not because you live in the *community*. You are a human being, and in life, it is only up to you to fight for your goals" (Joana, *social technician* of *BYP program*).

It is worth emphasizing Joana's observation about the non-*welfarist* nature of the Program. *Welfarism* is countered with the nature of the Program in the sense of only giving the

youths a *little push*, marshaling the value of individual will and, consequently, the individual responsibility of the subject for his or her own success: "in life, it is only up to you".

However, when comparing *police officer-teachers* and BYP program *social technicians*, the contents associated with those who move away from the ideal model are very distinct and their corollaries even more. Indeed, the fact that they are part of the military police can be seen in the perceptions and evaluations by the *police officer-teachers*, with the idea of war being much present⁸. The same identification regarding social origin that leads to proximity, legitimizes the rigor of the repression precisely because moving away from the example implicates a moral and existential difference, the opposition between right and wrong, good and evil, bandit and worker, friend and enemy⁹.

Among the *police officer-teachers*, there is also a strong emphasis on individual responsibility. However, the youth that distances themselves from the exemplary figure, that is, from the police officer, is considered to be one who chose the wrong side, someone who is or could become the enemy. It is for this reason that, for the *police officers-teachers*, it is about "bringing the youths to the right side", where they are. It is mainly about fighting against the "other side" –that of crime–, and conquering the minds, as Roberto explains.

In other words, the police officer who can be a killer, a guy who arrests a lot on the track, any human can do that, I'm not belittling. I am trying to say that, with minimum training, you are qualified to do that. It is more superficial work, "drying of ice", in this case. Now, being in the position of a teacher in their ideology, not everyone can do that. I know many police officers who are colleagues of mine and say: "man, what you're facing is the greatest shooting, the greatest war". Because I deal with the human mind, I don't deal with only human behavior. Dealing with human behavior is the following: you want to hit me, I am going to hold and immobilize you, I have tackled your human behavior; I don't want to make you have a notion that I am a wonderful person to you, this is dealing with the human mind, this is a background, it requires more work. This is what I do, it is what our colleagues who are there, who are in the project, do, we deal directly with the human mind. [...] This is our work; it is very complicated work. So, when we manage to diversify the work of the police, the police can do this second work, this second employment of force, because for me it is still employment of force, physical employment that I devoted years of my life to and with much training on the streets, which I value much as well. I thank and value the riot police, the BOPE [Special Operations Battalion], the people who work on the frontlines, the firing line, because you are giving your body as a shield to save us, who are doing a second job. But as important as our work, because we are in a mental firing line, extremely emotional and mental wear for you to get the individual to go outside and not pick up a rifle to shoot a police officer who is in the firing line; in other words, I do a second combat (Roberto, *police officer-teacher*).

⁸ For a discussion regarding the war metaphor and urban conflict management at different times in Rio de Janeiro, see Leite (2012).

⁹ For a review on the debate about categorical pairs of opposition in and on urban margins, see Lyra (2020).

In a *mental firing line*, conquering a mind is more important than teaching a language, a sport, or an instrument. Following this logic, the speeches of the *police officer-teachers* that their courses are more a *bridge* to get to the students than an end in themselves gained meaning. The most important thing is to keep the youths busy, move them temporally, spatially, and mentally away from trafficking, offer them another example. An example considered better from the legal viewpoint but, above all else, the moral one.

I do not intend to suggest that the dimension of violence and its connection with poverty is absent from the concerns of the *social technicians*. Building a project for a future was a way to prevent the youths from getting involved with *wrong things*, in activities connected to crime. I have discussed these approximations and distances, as well as their analytical and political implications, in another opportunity (Motta, 2021). What I would like to underline here is that, for the *police officer-teachers*, preventing violence involves passing through war. An everyday war in each class, with each student, because they could, at any time, become an enemy.

This importance of war in the speeches and practices of the *police officer-teachers* seems to evince that it is not about two distinct repertoires –that of the *social* and that of war–, as César Teixeira (2015) suggests regarding the social police officer. Although they stressed that they are different from police officers who only wanted to know about "shooting, punching, and bombing", the image of war and the connections derived from this idea were at the center of how the *police officer-teachers* see the youths from *communities* and perform their work. The *social* figures not as a specific repertoire but as a way to make war. Paraphrasing Clausewitz and Foucault, the *social* aspect is war conducted by other means¹⁰.

TWO ELEMENTS OF CONTEMPORARY POVERTY MANAGEMENT: PROJECT FORM AND THE POOR TAKING CARE OF THE POOR

In the projects analyzed herein, besides the production of bonds and the hierarchization of the youths according to an example, the common origin between those who assist and those who are assisted makes it possible to look at a more generic contemporary way to intervene in the *social* aspect in low-income territories¹¹. Much ink has already been used by the national (Dagnino, 2004; Machado da Silva, 2002) and international (Dardot & Laval,

¹⁰ It is in the course of the College de France from 1978 to 1979 entitled "Society must be defended" that Foucault (2003a) treats the matter of war as a grid of intelligibility of power. On this occasion, he proposes the inversion of the aphorism by Clausewitz – war is politics conducted by other means –, suggesting that we think of power as war and politics as war conducted by other means.

¹¹ It is interesting to note how the *social* remits and refers to something quite specific, as Deleuze highlighted in the preface of the book by Jacques Donzelot (1985), "*The policing of families*": "Certainly, it is not the adjective that qualifies the set of phenomena that are the object of sociology: the *social* has as a reference a *particular sector* in which one classifies problems really quite diverse, special cases, specific institutions, an entire qualified staff ('social' assistants, 'social' workers)" (p. 10). Here, it is important to stress, Deleuze establishes a direct and proficuous dialog with the reflections by Donzelot (1994) about the *invention of the social*, which would be a hybrid invented by modernity that allowed for accommodation of the violent opposition between the political imagination (democracy and equality) and the reality of society and the market. To Donzelot (2014), the *social* allows to accommodate this structural quarrel and stabilize an unfair social order.

2014; Donzelot, 1985; Sennet, 1998; Castel, 1998; Gago, 2018; 2021; Araújo, 2012) sociological literature in the analysis of the dislocations produced by the consolidation of the neoliberal ideology regarding the issue of poverty and social rights.

In this debate, it is interesting to mention that having state agents *at the frontlines* whose social origins are very similar to those of the subjects they assist is not a mere coincidence. It is one of the main characteristics of the management of poverty, related to a way of management that is the result of the dislocation of the ways poverty is understood and dealt with, together with the claims by social movements in the 1970s and 1980s for participation in the design and implementation of public policies, which were standardized simultaneously with their resignification by the *neoliberal rationality* (Dagnino, 2005; Dardot & Laval, 2014). I would like to remark on two dimensions of this logic for managing poverty.

The first refers to the generalization of the *project form* and the business model (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2018) not only for the world of work but for all spheres of social life. Regarding social intervention, we have the dissemination of *social projects*, which become the way of excellence for acting along with low-income populations, considering a rationality in which the administration and management overlap with the assumption of the guarantee of universal rights. In other words, social projects are the expression of the techniques for poverty management in contemporary Brazil, marked by inconstancy, unpredictability, non-permanent nature, low investments, and transfer of responsibilities from the public power to the social agents, mediators, and the community. The *projects* reflect this reality, and it is desirable that they be so, exactly because this makes it possible to create, not accommodate, testing ways, strategies, and techniques for poverty management. Despite the effects on the lives of the subjects, the constant changes, as well as the efforts for renewing covenants and funding, begin to be understood as a possibility for constant renewal so that new and more creative, efficient, and cheap propositions may be created¹².

The second characteristic that has to be pointed out is the process of technification and professionalization of people *from the community* who act as mediators *at the frontlines* of the policy-health agents, educational mediators, in assistance, articulators of social projects. Besides the gradual political emptying of the demands coming from *the local*, this is a more precarious and cheap way to perform poverty management, mobilizing the local subjects themselves –or those from the same origin– as models, which makes it possible to combine technification (or depolarization) and moralization through the hierarchization of equals¹³. A movement that references itself in the affirmation, while it reinforces it, of

¹² The BYP program itself also ended suddenly and without paying the workers. Predicted to be ended in March 2017, at the beginning of January 2007, the Program employees already had delays in the payment of salaries, Christmas bonus salaries, meal tickets, and transportation aid. In the face of the situation, the workers paralyzed the activities momentarily until the situation was regularized. However, the overdue payments were not made, and the January salaries were not paid either. Therefore, the Program was interrupted suddenly.

¹³ Bruno Lautier (2014) shows how social assistance policies in neoliberal times resume, through new techniques and tactics for managing the poor, the old moralization and hierarchization of the poor present in the first forms of assistance and philanthropy. From research on the implementation of social assistance and

the figure of the individual who ascended socially, who overcame adversities and did not get accommodated, who endeavored (Foucault, 2008; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2018).

Therefore, through social projects it is possible to see in the day to day of poverty management affection/discipline, bond/production of order, identification through a common origin/normalization. None of these pairs are opposites; on the contrary, they constitute a complex way of performing poverty management where proximity, personalized relationships, the identification from the social viewpoint are a way to approximate and, therefore, incur morally on what is considered a disorder, potential risk, threat, confusing, vulnerable.

Although this process is crossed by global dynamics, it is important to underline the specificities in the Latin American context. Gago (2021) points out how the violence of neoliberalism cannot be reduced to structural adjustment and privatization measures, since exploitation, especially of the poorest and most vulnerable, "is rooted in the production of subjectivities compelled to precariousness and at the same time struggling to thrive in structural conditions of dispossession" (p.959). In fact,

In Latin America the "entrepreneurial" conversion, in neoliberal terms, operates on community, cooperative and self-management dynamics of doing. They are the ones who constantly deal with the conversion of these forces (of the common) into modalities of self-exploitation. [...] The disinvestment of the state has generated the space to question the most impoverished social actors under the ideology of micro-entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship. (Gago, 2021, p.959)

However, it is not a calculated strategy designed by a group, not even by the BYP program *social technicians* or the *police officer-teachers*. Therefore, the plausibility of this logic seems to stem more from a strategy with no strategist (Foucault, 2003a) that becomes relevant from the viewpoint of social processes, especially because of the effects it produces. Having the poor assist the poor is not only cheaper. If, on the one hand, this social proximity makes it possible to approximate, create bonds, have greater ease to get to the assisted, on the other hand, it enables the production of hierarchizations among the poor and attain identifications that produce distinctions in the day-to-day of the implementation of policies and programs. The approximation with contrast and identification with distinction compose what we could call a power technology (Foucault, 2000) in which the common origin, operated as exemplarity, makes it so that those who assist occupy superior and distinct positions from those who are assisted, insofar as they know that reality, as they have lived in similar regions and conditions but have overcome them, choosing the "right path".

In this dynamic, the agents "at the frontlines" of the state's management of poverty materialize, in two aspects, a form of understanding and dealing with poverty guided by

health policy in São Paulo, George & Rizek (2016) show a management mechanism that works through the mobilization of residents for performing the more direct work "at the frontlines", producing strongly moral hierarchizations among the poor.

discourses of overcoming and individual responsabilization. On the one hand, by being who they are –poor people who overcame adversities–, these agents not only become examples to those they assist, but also examples and proof of this logic of overcoming and individual responsabilization. On the other hand, these agents of poor origins have always been and still are, especially in their condition of “example”, pierced by discourses of responsabilization of the subjects for their own failures or successes, by discourses that associate poverty to crime and violence and that proclaim that “if you want it, you can do it”, you merely need to be willing to take risks and overcome adversities. This appears in their practices, although they are not mere reproducers of this discourse.

It is as if, once the adversities have been overcome, they must now contribute to the government of this population. They feel like active agents in this effort to transform and save the poor. The efficacy of the responsabilization resides precisely in the fact that it is not an external and coercive imposition; here, we are faced with one of the characteristics of the functioning of power in neoliberal societies: many relationships between power and subjectivity are not in the order of constraint or repression of the freedom of the individual, but more in the order of stimulating subjectivity for the promotion of self-inspection and modulation of the desires. Consequently, the individuals are not only subject to the domination of external agents but are also active in their own government (Rose, 1998). Those who assist indeed feel responsible and that they are the protagonists in this effort of transforming the lives of the poor. On one side, because they are subjects marked by this discourse of overcoming and resilience, that “says” that they cannot give up; on another side, because they identify with those they assist, project their life stories in the lives of those assisted, believe that having another life is possible considering their own trajectories, and get involved in this endeavor. Having an origin similar to that of those they assist and, for this reason, identifying with the poor they assist is one of the central characteristics of a form of management that attempts to contain the urban conflict and produce order in and from the outskirts and slums.

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