

Inside Criminalized Governance

For over four decades, drug-trafficking gangs have monopolized violence and engaged in various forms of governance across hundreds of informal neighborhoods known as favelas in Rio de Janeiro. Drawing on three years of ethnographic fieldwork, over 200 interviews with gang members and residents, 400 archival documents, and 20,000 anonymous hotline denunciations of gang members, this book provides a comprehensive examination of the causes and consequences of these governance arrangements. The book documents the variation in gang–resident relationships – from responsive ones in which gangs provide a reliable form of order and stimulate the local economy to coercive and unresponsive relations in which gangs offer residents few benefits – and then identifies the factors that account for this variation. The result is an unprecedented ethnographic study that provides readers a unique, in-depth insight into the evolution of Rio de Janeiro’s drug-trafficking gangs, from their emergence in the 1970s to the present day.

Nicholas Barnes is a lecturer in the School of International Relations at the University of St Andrews. This book is based on more than three years of ethnographic fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro, eighteen months of which the author spent living in Complexo da Maré, the city’s largest group of informal neighborhoods. This project has benefitted from numerous grants, including from the National Science Foundation, the Department of Education through the Fulbright-Hays Program, the Social Sciences Research Council, and the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. The dissertation on which this book is based received the Best Fieldwork Award (2017) from the American Political Science Association and the Best Dissertation Award (2018) from the Society for Institutional & Organizational Economics.

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Inside Criminalized Governance

How and Why Gangs Rule the Streets of Rio de Janeiro

NICHOLAS BARNES

University of St Andrews



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For my grandmother, Bernadine, and my parents, Chuck and Jan
E para todas as pessoas moradoras do conjunto de favelas da Maré

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A Note on Translation

All translations are the author's own. Because interviews and public meetings were not recorded – for security and confidentiality reasons – the author took extensive notes in a mix of English and Portuguese, then translated the notes into English. There are, inevitably, mistakes that have occurred in this process. Through triangulation of sources, the help of a research assistant and, in some cases, the interviewees themselves, I have made every effort to verify these translations. Overall, I follow a “fidelity to the reader” approach in adapting the original spoken Portuguese, which also often included pauses, partial words or phrases, and fillers, to ensure intelligibility. I am also cognizant that the process of translation is not simply one of transforming text into another language but is a political act that requires constant and continuous reevaluation of our assumptions concerning social relations, ideologies, and power.

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Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Translated Words

ADA	<i>Amigos dos Amigos</i> (Friends of Friends), one of Rio’s three prison-based drug-trafficking factions
<i>Alemão</i>	German, a term used to refer to a rival gang and its members
AM	<i>Associação de Moradores</i> (Residents’ Association)
<i>Avenida Brasil</i>	Brazil Avenue, Rio de Janeiro’s busiest highway
<i>Atacadista</i>	Drug wholesaler
<i>Avião/Aviãozinho</i>	Airplane/little airplane, a messenger for the gang
<i>Assaltante</i>	Robber/mugger
<i>Baile funk</i>	Funk party, large gang-organized parties where a particular form of funk music is played, which features deep bass, sampled melodies, and a “bum cha-cha, bum cha-cha” beat
<i>Barraca</i>	A cart or stall used for selling food or other informal goods
<i>Boca de fumo</i>	“Mouth of smoke,” open-air retail drug markets
BOPE	<i>Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais</i> (Special Police Operations Battalion)
<i>Braço direito</i>	Right-hand man, a moniker used to refer to a gang’s second-in-charge
<i>Caveirão/caveirões</i>	Big skull/s, armored vehicles that police use to invade favela territories
CCCC	<i>Centro Comunitário do Combate a Criminalidade</i> (Community Center for Combatting Crime), small police posts often located in or near favelas
<i>Cria</i>	Someone born and raised in the favela
CV	<i>Comando Vermelho</i> (Red Command), one of Rio’s three prison-based drug-trafficking factions

CVNH	<i>Comando Vermelho da Nova Holanda</i> (Comando Vermelho of New Holland), the local CV-connected gang in the Nova Holanda neighborhood
CVPU	<i>Comando Vermelho do Parque União</i> (Comando Vermelho of Union Park), the local CV-connected gang in the Parque União neighborhood
DD	<i>Disque-Denúncia</i> (Denunciation Hotline), an NGO-operated service to anonymously report crimes
<i>Dono</i>	Don or gang leader
DPO	<i>Destacamento de Policiamento Ostensivo</i> (Ostensive Policing Detachment), small police posts often located in or near favelas
<i>Endolador</i>	Packager, sometimes but not always a gang member who is paid to divide, weigh, and package drugs
<i>Facção/facções</i>	Faction/factions, a term that refers to the three prison-based drug-trafficking organizations in the city of Rio de Janeiro: CV, TCP (see below), and ADA
<i>Favela</i>	A name given to various working-class neighborhoods with informal origins in Rio de Janeiro and other Brazilian cities
<i>Fogueteiro</i>	Firecracker, a gang member, usually an adolescent, tasked with shooting off firecrackers when police are seen entering the community
<i>Gerente</i>	Manager
<i>Gerente de boca</i>	Sales-point manager, a gang member responsible for the operation of an open-air drug market
<i>Gerente de cocaína/pó/branco</i>	Cocaine manager, a gang member responsible for the packaging and distribution of all cocaine within a gang's territory
<i>Gerente de crack</i>	Crack manager, a gang member responsible for the packaging and distribution of all crack within a gang's territory
<i>Gerente de maconha/preto</i>	Marijuana manager, a gang member responsible for the packaging and distribution of all marijuana within a gang's territory
<i>Gerente de preço</i>	Price manager, a gang member responsible for the packaging and distribution of one quantity of one drug (e.g., R\$50 of marijuana)
<i>Gerente dos soldados/de segurança</i>	Soldiers or security manager, a gang member responsible for organizing the schedules of security personnel and keeping track of armaments

Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Translated Words

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<i>Gerente geral</i>	General manager
<i>Gringo</i>	A general term for foreigner, but most often used to refer to white foreigners
<i>Guerra</i>	War
<i>Jogo do bicho</i>	Animal game, an illegal lottery (commonly referred to as the numbers racket in the US) where animals represent different numbers that are drawn weekly with the winner receiving a lump sum and the organizers taking a cut
<i>Irmãos Metralha</i>	Beagle Boys, a gang from Nova Holanda in the 1980s led by five brothers
<i>Lei de silêncio</i>	Law of silence, also referred to as the <i>lei do morro</i> “law of the hillside”
<i>Linha Amarela</i>	Yellow Line highway
<i>Linha Vermelha</i>	Red Line highway
<i>Matuto</i>	Supplier of retail drugs
<i>Milícia</i>	Militia, a term used to refer to police-connected racketeering organizations that monopolize a variety of illicit and informal markets in hundreds of favelas throughout Rio de Janeiro
OCGs	<i>Organized and criminalized groups</i>
<i>Olheiro</i>	Lookout
<i>Palafita</i>	Shack on stilts, thousands of which were built in Maré from the 1940s to the 1980s, later removed by the public authority
PPC	<i>Posto de Policiamento Comunitário</i> (Community Police Post), small police posts often located in or near favelas
<i>Real/reais</i>	Brazilian currency, R\$1 was roughly equal to \$0.40 during my fieldwork
<i>Soldado</i>	Soldier, a gang member tasked with security duties
<i>Sub-gerente</i>	Sub-manager, a gang member who works directly for/under a manager
TC	<i>Terceiro Comando</i> (Third Command), one of Rio’s three prison-based drug-trafficking factions until 2002
TCP	<i>Terceiro Comando Puro</i> (Pure Third Command), one of Rio’s three prison-based drug-trafficking factions since 2002; also the abbreviation I use to refer to the local TCP affiliated gang in Complexo da Maré
<i>Vacilão</i>	Someone that is considered disloyal or cowardly
<i>Vapor</i>	Seller, a gang member who exchanges drugs for money at open-air drug markets