Favela Bairro: combating poverty and social exclusion in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas
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Introduction
- Before the 90s, Brazil’s policy in regards to favelas was to move the residents to state constructed developments and demolish the favelas.
- In 1992, Brazil signed a new constitution with a stipulation that instead, the favelas be integrated into society.
- The 10-year Favela Bairro program aimed to pursue this with physical upgrades to all of Rio’s medium favelas.
- By improving favela environments, it was thought that the favelas could obtain their own distinctive cultural/neighborhood pride and become part of the social fabric of Rio.

Rocinha, one of Rio de Janeiro’s largest favelas

The Program
- "[the program] is about enabling people to fulfill their dreams. It’s about giving a chance for people to have access to the city through which they can realize their aspirations [...] It is linked to immediate needs but goes far beyond that to embrace new values and allow for the construction of new citizens" - SMH official.

Basic Structure
- Rio’s municipal housing organization (the SMH) played a mostly administrative role.
- It focused on vertical integration of NGO’s, other bureaucracies, and private architecture and construction firms to complete building projects.
- It’s main aim (as stated above) was to integrate the favelas and their populations into cultural, social, and economic fabric of the city.

Possible Problems
- The SMH had very little interaction with the favela residents (outside of respective favela associations), based on the assumption that it best knew how and where to develop the favelas.
- The program focused solely on physical development, neglecting other aspects of housing development, including social programming and rent assistance.

Data
- Gini Index and Population (in millions) at various income levels across Brazil (1995-2009)

Conclusions
Favela Bairro’s Success
- The program set quantitative benchmarks (number of medium-sized favelas "fully developed"), focusing on qualitative goals rather than easily quantifiable ones.
- Due to this, the program’s actual success is difficult to gauge. It failed to meet its benchmarks, but the real effect of such upgrades is apparent.

Future recommendations:
- Metrics are available for the psychosocial factors Favela Bairro attempted to address (i.e. future discounting), and can be easily gauged through further study.
- Such a study comes a bit late: the program ended in 2008 and any data gathered now carries the effects of at least 6 years of other factors outside the program’s direct effects.
- The concept is worth exploring on a test scale, with an integrated study on its effects over the project’s duration.

Favela Bairro’s Significance
- The program was recognized by large portions of the international community and mirrored by several organizations.
- Its infrastructural focus is novel, largely unique and merits further exploration.

References

Research
- Research on this project was conducted across several journal databases.
- Most information was gleaned from peer-reviewed academic articles found on JSTOR’s online database.
- Poverty indicators and Gini index numbers (two indirect program targets) were gathered from the World Bank’s online database.

Limitations
- While Favela Bairro was well-studied during its operation, very little literature exists on its aftermath, making definitive conclusions difficult.
- This is partly due to the program’s lack of definitive goals.
- As a non-portuguese speaker, I was confined to articles in English. It is safe to assume there is a larger amount of research in Portuguese.

Methods

Data
- Gini Index and Population (in millions) at various income levels across Brazil (1995-2009)
