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The Significance of Comunidade Sabiaguaba within the Developing City of Fortaleza, CE

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**Exploring the Alternative:
The Significance of Comunidade Sabiaguaba within the Developing City of
Fortaleza, CE**

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Abstract.....	4
Introduction.....	5
“Welcome to my home,” My First Encounter with Comunidade Sabiaguaba.....	5
Curious about an Alternative Community	7
Research Questions.....	7
Social Relevance.....	8
Research Methods.....	10
Ethical Responsibility	10
Background	11
Review of Current Literature	11
History of the Alternative Movement in Brazil	12
The Development of Fortaleza.....	13
Development Theories	14
Understanding Resistance	16
Discussion	17
Situating Sabiaguaba: An Outside Look on Urban Development	17
An Alternative Perspective to Understanding Urban Development: Views on a Changing Space	19
The Albanitos: Understanding Urban Development through the Development of the Children	24
The Importance of a Stable Place in a Developing Neighborhood	29
Spreading the Embrace: The Commune’s Interaction with the Public	32
Comunidade Sabiaguaba as Community Center: Sharing Space and Knowledge.....	33
Full Moon Gatherings	34
Sharing the Alternative: Supporting a Healthy, Sustainable Lifestyle.....	35
Spreading the Good Word: The Commune’s Relationship with the Press	38
Conclusion	40
Significance of Comunidade Sabiaguaba	40
Widespread Influence	42
Reflection on the Development Paradigm	43
Weapons: The Future of Comunidade Sabiaguaba.....	44
Bibliography.....	46
Appendix I	48
Appendix II.....	50

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Abstract

The city of Fortaleza, Ceará has experienced rapid population growth and development over the last century, especially concentrated in the last fifty years. Today, this growth results in the creation of a beautiful tourist destination that many wish to visit, but also a dangerous and unequal city in which many have to live. Many state planners view this growth in infrastructure and tourism as the solution for the economic hardships of Fortaleza. However, many residents are unsatisfied with this development plan, and feel that there is a disconnect between the needs of the people and the plans of the state. As the infrastructure and population increases, so does the crime and the violence of the city: something the many citizens fully realize, causing them to be afraid of their city and hide in fear.

My research seeks to present the perspective of the alternative community, Comunidade Sabiaguaba, on the development of Fortaleza. Within this, I show the positive and negative aspects of urban development from the perspective of a community that lives in the periphery and has watched their neighborhood transform first from rural to semi-rural, and now become closer to a sub-urban or urban experience. Using this perspective, I present a depiction of the urban development process of Fortaleza through personal accounts and experiences to understand development rather than news articles or statistics. To understand the significance of this alternative community in the changing space, I will examine the ways in which this community resists and contrasts the determination of the development paradigm that are influential to the surrounding neighborhood and those who visit. Specifically, I focus on the values of openness and cooperation (i.e. sharing, care for one another, and living with the natural environment) that create an escape for those who do not feel comfortable with the results of the development methods in Fortaleza. Ultimately, I will argue that these values and practices of openness and cooperation within the community offer something that many in Fortaleza lack but seek out in Comunidade Sabiaguaba: a personal, human connection to their fellow people and their environment.

Introduction

“Welcome to my home,”

My First Encounter with Comunidade Sabiaguaba

On a beautiful Saturday in the beginning of September, I had the opportunity to explore the city of Fortaleza for my first time. I had already been living in the city for two weeks, but stayed indoors at my school or homestay house with little chance for exploration. The sun sets in Fortaleza at 5:30pm every day, and I was warned from day one that it is dangerous to be outside after dark in the city. Being that I typically had class until 5:00pm, this gave me little room for exploration, or experiencing the city beyond the few streets that I rushed past to get home in the setting sun.

The first two things one learns when visiting Fortaleza is that it is a tourist city, and a dangerous city. If you Google pictures of Fortaleza, you will quickly find beautiful beaches lined with high-rise hotels, in what looks like a lively, fun place to visit. However, if you search for statistics and facts about living in Fortaleza, you will quickly find information relating to crime and violence. The state of Ceará has a history of severe, chronic drought. With drought refugees fleeing to the city in search of economic opportunity and relief from drought, the population of Fortaleza grew exponentially by the decade throughout the 20th century.¹ Currently home to over three million inhabitants in the metro area, Fortaleza faces debilitating issues of extreme inequality, poverty, and environmental degradation. These issues create an atmosphere of desperation, an atmosphere that is both caused by and leads to the most known and discouraging statistics about Fortaleza: that it is the seventh most dangerous city in the world, and the fifth most unequal.²

Fortaleza is not alone in the struggle of rapidly developing cities throughout the world. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) pushes for tourism and infrastructure as a means of poverty reduction through inclusive and sustainable development of developing cities.³ While the goal of tourism proclaims to be a means of reducing poverty and aiding local infrastructure, it is often guided by the hands of international development agencies and big businesses, and thus far has not fulfilled its promise of improving the

¹ Gondim, L. (2004). Creating the Image of a Modern Fortaleza: Social Inequalities, Political Changes, and the Impact of Urban Design. *Latin American Perspectives*, 31.2, p. 63-64

² Unhabit (2013). The State of the World's Cities 2010/2011: Bridging the Urban Divide. *Unhabit*. p. 73

³ United Nations World Tourism Organizations (UNWTO). (2013). About UNWTO. Retrieved Oct. 18, 2014.

lifestyle for the people of Fortaleza.⁴ After decades of these strategies, this city continues to face severe poverty that has not improved for the poorest of Fortaleza, and inequality that has in many ways worsened, with 42 percent of the population currently considered under the poverty level.⁵ Much of the strategies that accompany economic relief through tourism investment include large infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, and clearing out poorer, less appealing housing areas for new housing projects. Historically, some favelas have protested the “destruction and relocation of their neighborhoods in the name of urban renewal, since most economic gains went directly to the wealthy middle and upper class,”⁶ but in general; very little progress is made to ensure any recognition gained by the protests of the community needs in infrastructure projects. The gap between the rich and the poor of Fortaleza widens as large-scale infrastructure projects force marginalized communities out of their homes and to the periphery in the name of development and modernization.

As I came to know the city better and talked with the residents, I realized that nearly all the Fortaleza citizens I met live in fear of these statistics of violence, in anger about the spending on tourism, and in confusion about why the poverty level is still so high. Much of what I observed was the frustration at the enormous amounts of money spent on infrastructure like big roads and bridges, leading people into the busy, high-end, tourist part of town. These projects claim to help the economy, yet few results appear to alleviate the suffering of Fortaleza. By the time I had my day of exploring the city, I was not only suffocated by the lack of time to live a life outside of the academic or home experience, but I, too, was scared of these statistics, rushing when I walked alone in the dark and nervous of everyone I met on the street. I was discouraged by the severity of these issues; the violence presented itself in daily life in many conversations and on every newscast. Little seemed to question this model of development, even though people seemed to be generally dissatisfied with the results. Little hope was offered as a way out of these problems. Instead, people stayed inside, afraid, accepting that this was their city and tried not to get in its way.

On this day in September, I finally had a breadth of fresh air from the fear of the city and the world indoors. José (Zé) Albano, a local photographer, led my group on the

⁴ Garmany, J. (2011). Situating Fortaleza: Urban space 28, 45-52.

⁵ Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE). Retrieved Oct. 19, 2014 from <http://cod.ibge.gov.br/>

⁶ Garmany, op.cit., p. 49



Photo 1: Entrance to Comunidade Sabiaguaba

tour of the city. He showed us beautiful parts of the city, parts filled with culture and fun things to do. I began to appreciate more why people enjoyed Fortaleza, in spite of being afraid of it. We learned that we would end the tour at his house, a place he described as very open and far away from the city. A forty minute drive later, I woke up from a car-nap and found that we had arrived in an area filled with trees and vegetation, a sight I had not seen since my arrival in August (See: Photo 1). I was amazed that we were still in the same city, a city of concrete and traffic. In fact, I did not perceive the presence of a neighborhood around the natural area until we left much later, when I noticed the high walls guarding houses on every side. This place seemed quiet and tranquil, the greenery giving it a sense of life that the city streets lacked. There were three other houses in the space, and tents set up outside. The permanent residents and temporary visitors were busy preparing food for our lunch. “Welcome to my home,” Zé said, “Comunidade Sabiaguaba.”

We were instructed to take a break, to relax, nap if we wanted, or to read one of Zé’s many books and photo albums spread out on the large coffee table. This place had an air of peace, and aura of leisure and safety. It encouraged tranquility and taking the time to breathe. Easy jazz music played over the speakers as I joined my class mates in testing out the hammocks, looking at the sun shining through the trees, and leafing through the books. I could feel the group, all of which had experienced the same suffocation, fear, and discouragement as I, let out a slow sigh of relief.

Later that evening when we were all refreshed and had had dinner, Zé showed us a slide show of the history of Comunidade Sabiaguaba, and discussed some of the community’s relation to the “alternative movement” in Brazil. I couldn’t believe it, I had found the place of resistance that I had been craving, the place that opposed the determination of the dominant model of development by choosing to live a different way. I felt this resistance in the way that the people interacted with one another, the openness of this space, the presence of the natural environment; I felt that this place was very different from other places in Fortaleza, that it was very special.

Curious about an Alternative Community

Research Questions

After my experience visiting Comunidade Sabiaguaba, I returned to the city and realized how starkly the calm, green, open space of the alternative community contrasted the locked gates and sparse people on the concrete streets of Fortaleza. This one day at the

community had changed my perspective on ways of living in Fortaleza, and opened my eyes to the ways people interact with one another in the city. It was clear from Zé's presentation and the photo albums present at his house that many people visited this community. I began to wonder if others take from Comunidade Sabiaguaba the same feeling that I had: a feeling of refreshed hope, of community, of openness. Zé had mentioned that the official alternative community had started in 1990, but that he had occupied the land of the alternative community since 1975. I began to wonder: How does this community, who chooses to live outside of the center of Fortaleza, view the development of Fortaleza as the city grows and spreads into their area of the periphery? What perspective do the residents and visitors of Comunidade Sabiaguaba have on the development of the city that may prove telling on the dissatisfactions, or satisfactions, of the development of Fortaleza as whole? The aura of openness and cooperation had greatly affected my mood and sense of safety and comfort, so I wondered: What is the impact of an alternative community with these values of openness and cooperation on those who visit from the surrounding neighborhood, or even the larger population of Fortaleza? Finally, in what ways must the community resist or comply with the development norms of Fortaleza to maintain its alternative values and practices?

Social Relevance

Zé Albano has lived outside of the mainstream development paradigm for forty years, living with the established Comunidade Sabiaguaba for twenty-five of those years. However, in a practice that is alternative to other alternative communities, Zé offers his community to the public with open doors and encourages visits and interactions with people who live outside of the immediate space. He estimates that around 10,000 people have come in and out of this community over the twenty-five years it has been an official alternative community.⁷ This movement comes in forms of past and current residents, visitors for a variety of events, or people who are just curious. In addition, Zé has radio, television, and newspaper interviews about different aspects of this space frequently with local news stations or curious students, meaning the values and practices of Comunidade Sabiaguaba are readily available to the public. In thinking of my own reaction to this community, this public access is significant, especially when considering what knowledge and values potentially transfer from these experiences with the community. In a city that claims to be the seventh most violent city in the world, and the fifth most unequal, it is important to think critically about these

⁷ Field Journal. Events and Observations: 16. Making Bread. November 10, 2014, pg. 9

places of openness that offer an alternative to, or an escape from in some instances, the rest of the city, especially in considering the vast number of people that frequent this space.

Whether the movement involves a thousand people or twenty, it is important to consider that these people *chose* to move and live out of the dominant development paradigm for a particular reason. Because they live outside of the dominant mode of living in Fortaleza, in a space that resists the growth of the city, Comunidade Sabiaguaba offers an interesting perspective at how Fortaleza develops, and the effects of this development. From the residents, one can understand what aspects of development push people away from the city life. Similarly, in talking with people who frequent the space of Comunidade Sabiaguaba, it is also possible to discover what this space offers that the city does not. In just my few months in Fortaleza, it became clear that many felt the development planners do not understand the needs of the city. The perspectives of visitors of Comunidade Sabiaguaba presents an opportunity to understand how people meet their needs in other ways. Because those in power have the ability to create and disperse knowledge, understanding an alternative perspective to the dominant power, especially one like Comunidade Sabiaguaba that spreads different types of knowledge, can show new insights to the development paradigm that may not be understood before.

Comunidade Sabiaguaba also offers something many cannot achieve in Fortaleza: a sustainable lifestyle. In this sense, sustainability refers to living with the environment rather than against it, focusing a lifestyle that does not create waste or use unnecessary resources. In addition, sustainability for this community refers to sustainable human relationships, in regards to emotional support, community support, and economic support. The community holds onto its values of openness, cooperation, and sharing to create a way of living that sustains a good life—for present and future generations. This research will explore these aspects of sustainability, and explore the significance of the presence of a sustainable community in a city that is developing in a way that many people believe is unsustainable. However, as the city grows, it becomes more difficult to maintain the space that is Comunidade Sabiaguaba. With more people and houses comes higher taxes, fewer natural resources, and more violence. While this community has become a popular topic of conversation, one must wonder how long it can maintain this space and ways of living before different aspects of the development paradigm take it over. This is important for both the community itself, and others who may be interested in pursuing an alternative lifestyle.

Research Methods

To understand these questions I lived at Comunidade Sabiaguaba for three weeks, participated in their activities, conversed with their visitors, and observed their daily life and interactions in order to understand how this alternative community fits within the larger development scheme of Fortaleza. I played the role as observer and participant observer as I took notes about the events I attended and conversations—both formal and informal interviews—I had with residents, frequent visitors, and people simply passing by. I interviewed four of the six permanent residents of Comunidade Sabiaguaba, a past resident, a man who previously researched the relationship between the Albanitos and Comunidade Sabiaguaba (he still frequents the community), and man person who teaches political development of Fortaleza at the university. Each interviewee has a different background and history with Fortaleza and Comunidade Sabiaguaba. The interviews coupled with my observations of a variety of events and interactions within the community give me a diverse background and perspective on the development of Fortaleza, and the significance of Comunidade Sabiaguaba within this community.

A major part of my understanding and research at Comunidade Sabiaguaba came from the pictures of Zé Albano. Because he is a professional photographer, and finds the value of communicating a story through pictures, he insisted, with my full agreement and approval, that I use photographs throughout my final report. Thus, in order to better portray the experience of Comunidade Sabiaguaba, and in order to see the space the space that many talk about as so different to that of the typical Fortaleza experience, I will photos throughout this text.

Ethical Responsibility

A major part of the Ethical Responsibility involved in this research is the assumptions that come with visiting an “alternative community.” Even calling the community “alternative” carries implications about the community, defining them as “different” or “backwards” without even stating why or how the community may be “alternative.” Similarly, calling the community alternative implies that there is a normal or a mainstream. Understanding that the term “alternative” relates to the counterculture, or Hippie, movement, it is also important to note that in many ways this community refers to itself as “semi-alternative.” In order to reduce the assumptions made or produced on my part, I opened the opportunity for the people interviewed to tell me how they viewed an alternative lifestyle,

and what they felt this lifestyle was alternative to. It was important for me not to assume things about the backgrounds of the people I meet, the lives they have or want to lead. I carry the baggage of feeling opposed to capitalism and modernization, thus in order to avoid setting the interviewees up for a biased question, I left my questions simple with little guidance, and actually learned many positive and negative impacts of development that I had not considered before.

In order for my methodology to be ethical, I ensured that the community understood my research project and purpose for visiting so that they were aware of my purpose at all times. I made it clear to each participant that their participation in my research is optional, and they are welcome to opt out of the project at any time. In addition, I ensured that their information is separate from my data if they wish for it to be separated, and refrained from using names or identifiers in my research if they choose not to be identified. Because I am discussing political views and lifestyle values with this community, I want to ensure that they feel comfortable and secure at all times with my research, not only to keep my research honest, but also to keep it ethical.

Background

Review of Current Literature

I will begin shaping the discussion for the situation of Comunidade Sabiaguaba with brief history of the “countercultural” movement in Brazil, and its relation with the state. It is important to note that in my research I found very few academic sources available about the history or lifestyle of the countercultural movement in Brazil. Then, I will discuss the development of Fortaleza, providing a parallel history that discusses development methods of the city. I will then examine alternative, but very influential, theories on the purpose of development. These theories will provide a way of considering the role of an alternative community to the dominant development model: what other theories and values of development may be present in the construction of this community? Finally, I will discuss a framework for considering communities that resist dominant models of development, and how they may maintain their resistance. Because there are little to no papers discussing the influence or perspective of alternative communities on development, this background will

provide background for a better discussion of how Comunidade Sabiaguaba fits within history, theory, and future of development Fortaleza.

History of the Alternative Movement in Brazil

Comunidade Sabiaguaba is not the first “Alternative Community” in Brazil, in fact far from it. The counterculture movement in Brazil stemmed influence from the counterculture, or “Hippie,” movement in the United States in the 50s, 60s, and 70s. Beginning and raising awareness in the years 1968-1974, Brazil’s counterculture arose during a time of military political control that censored and suppressed creative cultured expression, and emphasized the materialist and consumerist citizen.⁸ In the beginning of the military faction, early 1968, this Brazilian countercultural movement included a collective challenge to authority that created subtle forms of political protest through music, film, and visual arts, showing allegorical or satiric representations of everyday life under the authoritarian rule. This creative movement was known as *Tropicalia*. However, on December 3, 1968, the military state implemented the fifth of its institutional acts, closing off the national congress, suspending habeas corpus, and “effectively putting an end to legal political opposition”.⁹ Popular *Tropicalistas* were arrested and exiled. As this regime continued, the Brazilian government emphasized higher education in industries that promoted the economy and modernization of the nation, such as math, physics, and engineering.¹⁰

During this time period of 1968-1974, Brazil experienced an average annual GDP growth rate of 11 percent, positioning this growing restlessness of the countercultural movement with the flux of consumerism amongst the Brazilian middle and upper-class, what was considered by some to be an “economic miracle.”¹¹ In this time period, unable to openly protest, and preferring a society of peace and nonviolence, the counterculture, or Hippie, movement of Brazil began creating rural and urban communes, places where they could live together away from the consumerist society.¹² In these communes, or “alternative communities,” they participated in values that they honored most such as cooperation, simplicity, non-consumerism, and living with as opposed to against the environment. Because the alternative movement was largely apolitical and chose to leave the city to create a new

⁸ Dunn, C. (2014). Desbunde and its Discontents: Counterculture and Authoritarian Modernization in Brazil, 1968-1974. *The Americas*, 70:3, p. 429.

⁹ Dunn, op. cit., p. 435

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 429

¹¹ Ibid., p. 437

¹² Ibid., p.439

life instead of fight the regime, many consider this movement in Brazil to be a movement of alienation and demobilization of youth and peoples.¹³ However, it is those very reasons that kept the regime from thwarting their lifestyle, because the regime was occupied with other more violent, outright protests to the structure of society.

Many do not realize that these societies of peaceful communes still exist today. The Association of Brazilian Alternative Communities (ABRASCA) is a large network of alternative communities across the country. ABRASCA has 28 state representative communes, and many more participant communes beyond that.¹⁴ Because the communes communicate largely by mail, resist posting information on the internet about their events and locations, and live far outside of major cities or populated areas, many people do not know that they exist. As they have never been especially interested in growing their numbers or attracting attention, the alternative movement have never largely advertised their existence. The movement seeks “quality over quantity” when it comes to participants, and thus relies more on word of mouth and small events to reach out to those who are interested.¹⁵ Many alternative communities also live without electricity, valuing a life of simplicity. Most communes grow their own food and interact with larger society rarely.

It is important to note that, while these are characteristics of typical alternative communities, these attributes do not fully apply to Comunidade Sabiaguaba as it lives within a city and continues to value aspects of technology, especially communication technology such as phones, computers, and the internet. Thus, Comunidade Sabiaguaba often refers to itself as a “semi-alternative” community. I will explore in my discussion of results other ways in which this community differs from the typical alternative community, and how this affects their influence and relationship with the surrounding city as a whole.

The Development of Fortaleza

As discussed in the history of the alternative movement, in the 1960s and 1970s the country of Brazil met rapid economic growth. However, the northeast lagged behind. To compensate, state planning departments such as the *Superindendencia de Desenvolvimento do Estado do Ceará* (Agency to Promote the Development of the State of the Ceará) and the *Instituto de Planejamento do Ceará* (Ceará Institute of Planning) were created to work as state-corporations to plan the development of Ceará. Influential institutions such as *Banco do*

¹³ Ibid., p.458

¹⁴ Field Journal. Secondary Sources: 2. ABRASCA Bulletins, p. 16

¹⁵ Field Journal. Interpretations: 3. Leafing through Bulletins. November 6, 2014, p. 37.

Nordeste (Bank of the Northeast of Brazil—BNB) gained power at this time as well. These institutions pushed the training of highly qualified and technical workers, and the creation of the “elite technocrats” that continue to have strong political influence in the modernization of Ceará.¹⁶ These new agencies also focused on the development of the real estate market and tourist industry along the beaches of Fortaleza, aiming to beautify the city riddled with slums. This investment in training increased the number of qualified workers and improved infrastructure, yet was not equally distributed, thus strengthening the divide between the poor and the rich.

Even with these new agencies, Brazil did not escape the financial crashes of Latin America in the 1990s. Development agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and International Bank for Reconstruction Development (IBRD) came in with plans for restructure and development. These plans focused primarily on revamping the tourist sector. As a result, the total GPD of Fortaleza increased. However, the disconnect between the needs of the citizens and the plans funded for the city increased as well.¹⁷ Meanwhile, both the city and state planning agencies are equally as disconnected from the city’s poor and marginalized groups, groups that today make up 42 percent of the population.¹⁸

Development Theories

Understanding development theories presents a way to realize the construction of the values of Comunidade Sabiaguaba in their perception of development, and the significance of these values as they interact with the hegemonic development paradigm. David Harvey’s “The Right to the City” (2008) presents an alternative approach to the development in his discussion of the right of a resident to their city. Harvey describes this right as, “The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city.”¹⁹ He discusses how urbanization is a class phenomenon, only possible by means of extracting wealth from a population to create a surplus of wealth to build a city. Once the city is established, more exploitation must happen to create bigger and better cities—the never ending desire of capitalism—and does so by moving the poor out of these cities onto worse pieces of land in order to make room for more urban development.

¹⁶ Gondim, L. (2004). Creating the Image of a Modern Fortaleza: Social Inequalities, Political Changes, and the Impact of Urban Design. *Latin American Perspectives*, 31.2, p. 68

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73

¹⁸ Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE). (2003). Mapa de pobreza e desigualdade. IBGE. Retrieved Oct. 19, 2014.

¹⁹ Harvey, D. (2008). Right to the City. *New Left Review*, 53, p. 23.

This process, described by Harvey as “creative destruction,” and is seen physically through the divide of the Fortaleza, and historically through development policy.²⁰ Harvey argues for the reclamation of the city away from the integrate state and corporate interests, and instead for the power to be distributed democratically amongst all the people to make the city what the population as a whole needs as opposed to meeting the needs of a select few.²¹ Because Comunidade Sabiaguaba chose to reclaim the right to live and develop their land how they choose by leaving the development paradigm of Fortaleza, it would be interesting to use this theory to understand how they would view the right to the city, and the significance of including their voice in development.

Another very influential voice in alternative views of development is Amartya Sen who presents a new perspective on development with his book *Development as Freedom* (1999). “What is Development,” released by the World Bank in 2004 defines development as an increase in human development and quality of life, measured by “life expectancy, adult literacy, access to all three levels of education, as well as people’s average income, which is necessary condition of their freedom of choice.”²² While the goals of the hegemonic development model are to grant people more freedom through increasing economic opportunity, Sen proposes the idea of development as a means of removing “unfreedoms” which he defines as institutions that prohibit freedom such as hunger and poverty.²³ In this sense, development is a means to remove conditions that prevent people from having freedom, such as mandating a minimum calorie level for citizens who are hungry, or creating a poverty line that none of the citizens can fall under. This perspective proposes freedom through meeting direct needs instead of creating opportunities that will eventually resolve people’s needs. This relates economic factors and goals of production to their influence on and relation to social factors, such as health services or civil rights. This perspective is important to consider in a situation like Fortaleza in which the development plans aim to create economic stability and prosperity, yet marginalized and underprivileged peoples are still limited by their poverty and lack of ability to participate in government. Similarly, it will be interesting to learn from Comunidade Sabiaguaba how they have taken this idea of creating freedoms into their own hands by freeing themselves from the oppressions they were previous lived, and the significance of this freedom for others. Within this context, I am

²⁰ Ibid., p. 33

²¹ Ibid., p. 53

²² World Bank. What is development? (2004). World Bank. Retrieved Oct. 20, 2014. P. 1

²³ Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. New York: Anchor Books.

curious to explore how the presence of Comunidade Sabiaguaba offers a development paradigm based on ridding themselves and those who visit them of the unfreedoms.

Understanding Resistance

Finally, using the framework of *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* by James C. Scott (1985), I will explore how everyday life at the community of Sabiaguaba presents a critique as well as a resistance to the dominant development paradigm of capitalism, tourism, and top down development. In this book, Scott creates an argument showing how everyday actions and symbols of daily life can represent in their own form a resistance to the hegemonic power.²⁴ While Scott writes primarily about historically peasant communities and relates his work to old slave societies, it is important to recognize that his work is relevant to all communities that are not included in the decision making or benefit process of the dominant paradigm. He comments that many may think of resistant communities as the ones who actively protest or throw revolts. In reality these opportunities are few and far between because the subordinate classes often do not have the security, freedom, or resources to stage a coup, knowing it is impractical, dangerous, or both.²⁵ Instead, the little acts of resistance that Scott calls “foot dragging” and “name calling” show the resistance to the dominant ruling class that breaks the illusion of power that the dominant class has over the subordinate class. Scott stresses the importance of the behavioral and symbolic realm of the marginalized classes, as “the realm of behavior—particularly in power-laden structures—is precisely where dominant classes are most constrained...and it is at the level of beliefs and interpretations that the subordinate classes are least tormented.”²⁶ These spaces of behavior and belief are where subcultures of resistance can show the problems within the hegemonic system, but also form alliances and “weapons” against the hegemonic development that will protect and help to continue their resistance.

This framework for understanding the importance of everyday acts of resistance by subordinate classes is imperative for understanding the role and perspectives of the alternative community at Sabiaguaba. In my research, I seek to discover how everyday practices and beliefs that this community holds is in its own right a form of resistance to the determine model of life offered by the development paradigm. Moreover, what aspects of

²⁴ Scott, J. (1985). Hegemony and consciousness: Everyday forms of ideological struggle. *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance* (pp. 304-350). New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 304-354.

²⁵ Ibid., 320

²⁶ Ibid., 321

resistance act as a “weapon” or form of protection that will aid in the continuation of the lifestyle of this alternative community?

Discussion

Situating Sabiaguaba: An Outside Look on Urban Development

In the year 1975, Jose (Ze) Albano and his wife, Regina Moreira Lima, bought as large a piece of land as they could afford in the periphery of the city of Fortaleza, Ceará.²⁷ Looking for an escape from the noisy and crowded city life, the young couple resisted protests by their parents and made their first big “alternative” decision: to move into a rural area of land, an area that would not have phone lines for another six years, to start a new, different kind of life. Influenced by the countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Brazil and in the United States (where Zé had studied for two years in the early 1970s), the couple wanted to live a life closer to nature, and participate less in the industrialized, consumerist culture that was taking over the modern world. Using a combination of traditional Brazilian architectural techniques and influences from architectural styles of the United States, the couple designed and built their house out the bricks and trees of the region.²⁸ This region is semi-arid and too dry to grow a garden or to plant trees (See: Photo 2) so rather than clearing the land or trying to manage the natural environment in other ways, they simply let it be and allowed nature to take over. This enforced their belief of living with the natural environment rather than trying to dominate it. Before long, trees and vegetation began sprouting on their own. One year after they moved in, Regina gave birth to their daughter Emilia, and she, too, would be raised in this natural space with different values than someone growing up in the city, the values of living a sustainable and simple life.²⁹

When they moved in, the area of Sabiaguaba was sparsely populated, having only three other houses nearby (See: Photo 2). For their first ten years in this neighborhood, Zé

and Regina were the only people in the area with a car. In the event of an emergency, such as a woman in labor, the neighbors would knock on Zé’s door

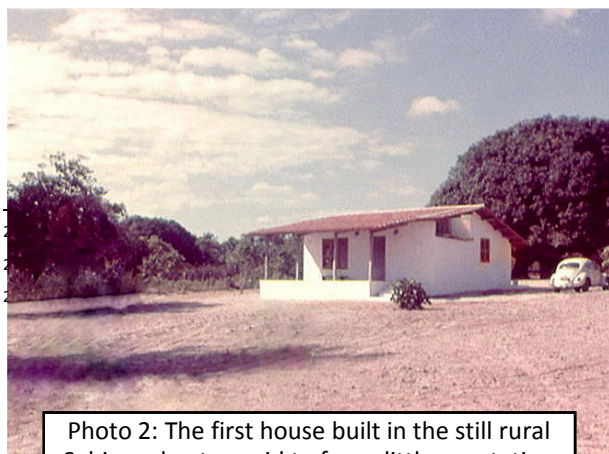


Photo 2: The first house built in the still rural Sabiaguaba, too arid to farm, little vegetation and virtually no neighbors.

p. November 14, 2014, p. 24

and ask for a ride in his car to the hospital.³⁰ This began the myriad of vital rolls this couple would play in this community. For instance, after they had Emilia, Regina also chose to end her education and instead study to be a nurse and midwife, and tended to the mothers in their neighborhood. In 1986, when Regina and Zé separated, Zé was forty years old and chose to buy a motorcycle as an alternative to owning a car. Because Regina had moved out and taken her car with her, this ended his relationship of taking people to the hospital. However, the surrounding community had grown substantially by this time, and he muses that perhaps they would not have needed the service any longer anyways as others had moved into the neighborhood with cars, and the state had services like ambulances available as well.³¹ This begins to show the ways in which urban development can reflect the relationship between neighbors, especially in the periphery.

Throughout the years, Zé had built more houses on the plot of land besides the one where he and Regina had lived. Across from their house, he built a photo studio and workshop so that he could move his work outside of their living space. After their divorce, Zé moved out of the house that he and Regina had shared and into the workshop space—what is now the largest house where he still stays, and serves as the communal center of Comunidade Sabiaguaba. He constructed two other houses as well, one small house a little distance away from the main house where Zé housed his childhood nanny until her death, and another house that served as additional workshops space. People were invited to rent these houses before, but they were merely neighbors sharing a plot of land, like a condominium, as opposed to a community living together.

In 1990, a friend of Zé's invited him to the annual ENCA (National Meeting of Alternative Communities) hosted by ABRASCA (Association of Brazilian Alternative Communities). At the ENCA, Zé says he found his new family.³² He met like-minded people who also valued simplicity, living with nature, and a life that diverted from the mainstream model of capitalism and consumerism. The ENCA community valued creative expression and sharing, swapping vegan recipes and holding workshops to share different talents and ways of knowing. Greatly inspired by this movement, Zé returned to Sabiaguaba with a cearense friend, Salvino Lobo, whom he had met at the ENCA, and learned how to turn his large plot of land into an alternative community. He invited friends to stay with him in the other three

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., p 25

houses on his land, to share this space as a commune, working and living together, as opposed to a condominium. He became not only a member of the ABRASCA network, but their representative for the state of Ceará, calling this new community “Comunidade Sabiaguaba.”³³

An Alternative Perspective to Understanding Urban Development:

Views on a Changing Space

Twenty-five years later, the Comunidade Sabiaguaba stands strong as the surrounding neighborhood develops more around it. The area that was once rural is now part of the larger neighborhood district, Lagoa Redonda, and bustling with activity. Once home to just three houses, the area has grown to house hundreds of residents. In spite of this, Comunidade Sabiaguaba remains on the same land that Zé and Regina bought forty years ago, maintaining the open and natural space, while walled houses and businesses grow around it.

The interaction with the surrounding neighborhood has grown and changed throughout the years with the development of the neighborhood. Zé has remained at Comunidade Sabiaguaba, watching over it as the owner and leader of the community. Those who need a home and are interested in the alternative lifestyle have the opportunity to live in one of the four houses, should one be available, or to visit, camping in the natural area of the community. People that come to live at Comunidade Sabiaguaba have the opportunity to live there as long as they need or desire. Some people stay for ten months, and others ten years. Currently, most of the residents at Comunidade Sabiaguaba have been there for five years or less, and come from different backgrounds and bring different experiences of Fortaleza with them that reflect on why they chose to live at Comunidade Sabiaguaba. While Zé can provide interesting insight as to how the rural land of Sabiaguaba has grown and adapted into the busy neighborhood of Lagoa Redonda over the last forty years, I found conversing with these residents very insightful in understanding how the space of Lagoa Redonda, and Fortaleza as a whole, has changed in recent times. This perspective on change can give a unique insight to the process of urban development in Fortaleza, and the benefits and concerns people may have with this development.

³³ Ibid., 24

When discussing neighborhood development, Zé said that he knew when he built a house in a rural part of the city that it would not remain rural forever. As mentioned above, when he moved to the area of Sabiaguaba there were no phone lines, and the electricity was very weak. They bought a windmill to pump water for their land. After a large water business moved into the area, there water table lowered so much that they could no longer pump water. This did not bother him much though, saying, that the water industry provided treated water, and jobs to the community. Similarly, he mentions other benefits of the area developing being increased city amenities. He says, “I expected the neighborhood to development, I wanted it to in some aspects. With more people comes better roads and garbage collection. We got better electricity when more people moved here, and a telephone line.”³⁴ It is in fact think knowledge of how the city might develop which prompted him and Regina to seek out a large piece of land, knowing that someday they would probably have neighbors, and they wanted to keep those neighbors as far away as they could so they could maintain their lifestyle in a natural, quiet environment. This choice proved wise, as the surrounding neighborhood has developed so much that there is little vegetation or empty plots of land left in the area that once was very rural.

I discussed this movement of peoples and infrastructure into the neighborhood with Del Brandão Coelho, “Del,” a native of Sabiaguaba. Growing up, he frequently visited Comunidade Sabiaguaba, coming almost every day since he was eight years old to play in the natural and peaceful space. Now thirty years-old, Del was adopted by Zé when a young adult, and officially became a resident of Comunidade Sabiaguaba eight to ten years ago. Because he visited so frequently and would leave traveling for periods of time, the exact date when he began living at Comunidade Sabiaguaba is not known. Del has an inside perspective of the rural to urban development of Lagoa Redonda, watching the development occur for his whole life, and experiencing the influence of the city grow as he grew. I asked Del how he felt the neighborhood had changed since he was a child. He responded:

People have been arriving in this neighborhood for a long time, many people from outside places, and other neighborhoods. When they started arriving, everything increases: increasing construction projects, increasing houses, of buildings, much of which was disorganized... Thus, people bring with them the energy and customs from their previous places, and I think the most negative of which is that they bring is violence, they bring drugs.³⁵

³⁴ Ibid., 24

³⁵ Field Journal. Interviews: Formal Interviews: 1. Idelbrando Coelho Brandão. November, 12, 2014, p. 22

I was curious as to how the violence has affected his relationship with the neighborhood where he grew up, and if the violence was very different from when he was a child. He replied, “Some years back we could say that we lived in a place very quiet, very calm, very tranquil, without experiencing the violence at all. But now, the difficulty is so big that we carry this feeling and awareness of the violence with us, it is in our lives.”³⁶ He relates much of the increasing violence to the increase in infrastructure like major roads and construction projects, projects that bring people to the area.

Curious about another perspective on the city developing this rural area, I talked with Carol, Del’s wife, who grew up in a wealthy neighborhood at the center of Fortaleza, and left the growing city after college to live in a rural town in Bahia, surrounded by nature. She met Del at an ENCA. While she did not want to move back to the developing city, Del wanted to come back to Comunidade Sabiaguaba, so she moved here with him and has watched the city grow from the area where she grew up to the outside area where she lives now.³⁷ However, as the city grows, infrastructure and big city projects change this semi-rural area to feel urban. For example, she discusses a bridge constructed across a nearby river to link the area of Sabiaguaba and Lagoa Redonda to the busier, down town center of Fortaleza. The area of Sabiaguaba is a natural reserve with a beautiful beach and sand dunes. Previously, few people drove on this little road that lead because it stopped at the beach. Because there was little traffic, many people would play or bike outside in the street, talking with their neighbors or enjoying the outdoors. After the bridge was built, the road at the end of the beach continued and connected on the other side of the river, so people from the city could easily access the beaches and natural areas of Sabiaguaba. She discusses the immediate effects of this bridge:

After the bridge was constructed, many cars and busses started to pass by. [The neighborhood] changed because of the noise, and especially because it became dangerous for people to use the streets the same way as they had before. Many sad things happened; many accidents occurred where people were hit by and killed by the cars.³⁸

While many propose that this type of construction may bring jobs to the area, she comments on the opposite, noting a ferry driver that used to have great business taking people from the Lagoa Redonda side of the river into the center of the city. Acknowledging that other businesses may grow, especially in tourism, now that there is a bridge, small businesses like

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Field Journal. Interviews: Formal Interviews: 4. Carolina Foreira Melo. November 23, 2014, p. 28

³⁸ Ibid., p. 29

this are not needed.³⁹ She also discusses that this movement and construction of the city, and the movement towards bigger infrastructure in Brazil is very common. She understands that there is a major push to develop Fortaleza to be a tourist city, meaning that it must easily connect the city to beautiful places nearby, like Sabiaguaba. On this she comments:

This movement that is happening in Brazil is also all over the world. This development, the construction of the bridges and the roads and the buildings, these things happen everywhere, but are actually not that good for the people. They are interesting, but only for few people. They are good for businesses and tourism, but for most of the people, they are not good. In my opinion, when we put this construction in the balance, the balance is off—it shifts.⁴⁰

In relation to this bridge, there is also a major four-lane road under construction that will connect Sabiaguaba to a highway that goes all the way around the city of Fortaleza. There is much hesitation amongst the community about this road because it goes through natural preserved area, thus destroying a large piece of the environment. Curious if she was worried about the road project having as big of an impact as the bridge, I asked Carol on her opinion about the new construction. Despite everything, Carol has hope, saying “I hope that this big avenue doesn’t affect us as much, and it can also bring something good for the community, I hope it does bring something good for people here, I really do.”⁴¹ Zé had a similar reaction, recognizing that a large road around the community may lessen the traffic on the roads inside the neighborhood, making them safer. This shows the other side of the development of infrastructure, that it has the potential to relieve areas of stress, making crowded areas less crowded. The community has accepted the large-scale development of this part of the city, and can only hope that it will not bring more danger, harm, or violence to what has already occurred.⁴²

I found this connection between Zé discussing the movement of people into the periphery of the city bringing resources, Del’s perception of the people bringing violence into the neighborhood, and Carol discussing the methods of bringing people into this area—through large infrastructure projects like roads and bridges—to be very interesting. I had the opportunity to meet with Jawdat Abu El-Haj, a professor at the Universidade Federal Ceará (UFC, Federal University of Ceará) with a doctorate in Political Science, who teaches in the graduate program of Sociology at the university. He specializes in globalization, social

³⁹ Ibid., p. 30

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 31

⁴² Field Journal. Interpretations and Feelings: 14. Community Meeting to Discuss New Road Construction. November 19, 2014, p. 41

participation in development, and political economics. I asked him how he perceived the side effects of large-scale infrastructure and tourism development in Fortaleza. He replied:

There is a huge inflection of money entering into Ceará. Many things that people need became very expensive. This creates pressures, especially on the youth, to be able to afford to buy these things that are suddenly very expensive. When they cannot obtain what they need, they turn to other ways of getting what they need, like assaults, crime, drugs. This violence here arrived suddenly.⁴³

I found this perspective very interesting, and shed light on Del's perspective that as the city moves people into their neighborhood in the periphery, it moves in violence as well. As the city increases in price and people move out who can no longer afford it and go to the periphery, like the area of Sabiaguaba. Garmany discusses a situation similar to this in relation to development and crime in the favelas of Fortaleza. While the favelas are now considered very dangerous in Fortaleza, it is also seen that the crime and drugs involved in the favelas were not present before the influx of tourist industries, bringing the problems of prostitution and illicit drugs with them.⁴⁴ All of these connections provide a complicated perspective on the development of Fortaleza, a perspective that tells a story of a city developing and becoming more expensive, moving people out to the periphery, and bringing with them the violence of the city. Whether this violence was caused by the price of the city, as considered by Jawdat Abu El-Haj, or because it was something practiced before by the people who moved into the periphery, as perceived by Del, there is, without a doubt, a connection between this movement and push of people, and the increased violence. The city is now moving to develop the periphery as well.⁴⁵ With the installation of the new, four lane road, the cost of living continues to rise as more people are brought into the area.

While these theories and many articles discuss numbers and statistics of Fortaleza, they do little to capture the very real experience of the people living in these developing neighborhoods. Who is affected by this crime and what does the crime mean for the neighborhood communities, and especially the children? In order to not just know the facts, but to understand how the development moving into the areas of Lagoa Redonda and Sabiaguaba influences the lives of the residents, I will tell the story of the Albanitos, and how their experience in a way presents what urban development is and looks like in Fortaleza. In discussing their experience, it becomes clear how Comunidade Sabiaguaba functions as an

⁴³ Field Journal. Interviews: Formal Interviews: 5. Jawdat Abu-El-Haj. November 24, 2014, p. 31.

⁴⁴ Garmany, op. cit., p. 50

⁴⁵ Formal Interview: Carolina Foreira Melo, op. cit.

alternative space within the city, and gives light to the significance of its presence and values in this neighborhood.

The Albanitos:

Understanding Urban Development through the Development of the Children

On the first day of my research, Aimê, a woman who has lived at Comunidade Sabiaguaba for two years with her six-year-old son, approached me and asked why I chose to do my research here.⁴⁶ This was a valid question, and struggling with my still very fresh Portuguese, I tried to explain to her that I find this place, Comunidade Sabiaguaba, to be very interesting in its relation to the surrounding city. I told her of my realization that, while others who live in Fortaleza seem to hide in fear of violence in the city, Comunidade Sabiaguaba remains tranquil and open, and seems like a peaceful haven away from that violence. At this point, I understood this commune as existing outside of the city, and because of the open and peaceful manner and aura of the space, I thought that Comunidade Sabiaguaba had resisted the influence of the violence of the city as well. Aimê turned to another woman of the community, Carol, and, facing away from me, said to her, “But, there is violence here.” Carol, who knows English, took a moment to explain to me that they are still very much so affected by and afraid of the violence of the city, but that they respond to it differently. Instead of locking their doors and closing everyone out, like most others do in Fortaleza with their huge walls and metal gates, Comunidade Sabiaguaba remains open to everyone, and embraces them when they enter. However, I should not be mistaken: despite the openness of the commune, the violence in the neighborhood of Lagoa Redonda is indeed very real.⁴⁷

This is when I began to understand the *Albanitos* project, and how the development of a group of local boys can reflect the changes happening in the developing neighborhood. For years, even before Comunidade Sabiaguaba was an official alternative community, young boys would come to the house of Zé Albano to play in the open, natural space, look at the books in Zé’s mini library,



Photo 3: Daniel and Del, two of the first Albanitots, dressed up in Ze's clothes.

Lunch with the Community. November 7, 2014, p. 6

and relax in a peaceful setting. This began in the late 80's and early 90's. These boys were named "Albanitos" because they would dress up in Zé Albano's clothing and play around the neighborhood (See: Photo 3). When people saw them, they said that the boys looked like little Zé Albanos, or Albanitos.⁴⁸ When computers and the internet became available, Zé bought a computer and installed the internet that the boys could use when they visited as well. All of these boys come from poor families around the neighborhood. Efimia, a resident of Comunidade Sabiaguaba from 1994-1997, explains that for many of these boys, they could have at Comunidade Sabiaguaba what they did not have access to at home. For instance, Efimia remembers, "[The boys] had food because [Zé] would share what he cooked with them. He also shared the books. The children had access to what the community was doing like photography, and the camp where they played."⁴⁹

However, Comunidade Sabiaguaba became more than just a place to play, it became a second home for many boys, and an escape from home for those who needed it. When discussing why people come to Comunidade Sabiaguaba, a visiting friend said that many people come to Comunidade Sabiaguaba just to relax, to be at peace.⁵⁰ For many it is an escape from the growing violence of the developing neighborhood, or from violence at home. Zé remarks on many occasions where he gave shelter to the boys. When their parents had a fight or things were violent at home, often times the boys would come to the community seeking shelter and a safe space to stay. Zé recounts these incidents, saying:

Many of these boys had violent fathers, or fathers that would consume alcohol and hurt the mothers and their kids, some of the most awful stories come from these boys. So, they would arrive at my door with a back pack and ask me to stay. I would call the parents and tell them what happened, and say that the boy could stay with me for one week at most. But, many of them stayed longer.⁵¹

In this sense, Comunidade Sabiaguaba offered different kinds of peace: peace from the developing city and peace from home.

Another type of escape for the boys came in the form of a phototherapy project Zé conducted with these boys, taking portraits of them and photographing them on their

⁴⁸ Field Journal. Interviews: Informal Interviews: 2. Efimia

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Field Journal. Interviews: Informal Interviews: 1. Sitti
2014, p. 31

⁵¹ Field Journal. Interviews: Informal Interviews: 3. Zé A

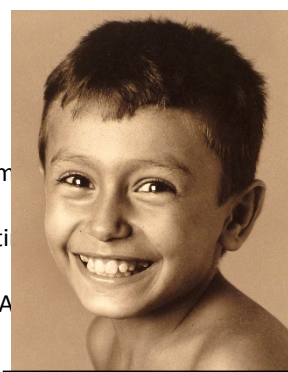


Photo 4: Photo-therapy, Emilio age 8

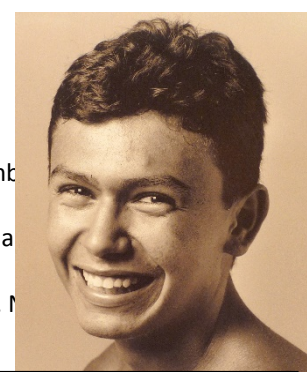


Photo 5: Photo-therapy, Emilio age 18

various adventures as a means of raising their self-esteem. Comunidade Sabiaguaba is Ze's home and photo studio, so he would invite the boys to participate in photo-shoots when he was not taking photos of clients. He points out that, at a certain economic level, it is a completely normal event to have someone take your photo. However, many of these boys had never been photographed, had never looked at a photo of themselves because no one had ever bothered or been able to photograph them.⁵² Thus, photographing them became a means of self-recognition and instilling a sense of self-pride. He would take pictures of the boys on their adventures, and in had a variety of hats and other costume items the boys would play with. One of the biggest elements of this project was the time lapse, taking a photo of a boy every few years he attended the community (See: Photo 4 and Photo 5). When asked about what he hoped to accomplish with this relationship with the boys, Zé says "My sole hope is that in the future, these boys will be better fathers than the fathers that they have. If this happens, then I have succeeded."⁵³ Ze and the community understand that the only way to see change in the neighborhood or the city is to help the young generations, so that future generations have a chance to live without the fear and the violence of a family or neighborhood affected by crime. In a life of violence, a safe place to stay filled with self-esteem raising encouragement and support could be lifesaving.

For many of the boys, this space has proven beneficial to their growth in other ways as well. For example, Comunidade Sabiaguaba held computer building and repair workshops for the Albanitos. Here, the boys practiced taking apart computers and putting them back



Photo 6: Computer building workshop at Comunidade Sabiaguaba.

together, or creating whole new computers from the pieces of old ones (See: Photo 6). One of the boys took hold of this opportunity to learn and is now a "hot-shot" consultant in the technological industry, with a well-paying job and stable career. Many others embraced the opportunities available for them at this community, learning musical instruments or other creative skills. The community was able to hold workshops for the boys with donations made by visitors at the monthly full moon gatherings. People would bring old computer parts, musical

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Informal Interview: 3. Ze Albano, op. cit., p. 35

instruments, and many other items for the boys to use. Zé remembers that many criticized him, saying that if he was to hold these workshops for the boys and accept donations for them that he needed to register to become an official non-governmental organization (NGO).⁵⁴ Although he dislikes dealing with the bureaucracy, Zé accepted this as a possibility and looked into the idea of creating an NGO for the boys. In his research, though, he found that in order to have a youth-oriented NGO that is necessary that all of the participants remain enrolled in school and attend school on a regular basis. Zé could not agree to this term, as many of the Albanitos decided not to continue with their school, and he could not handle the idea of turning them away.⁵⁵ “They still learn here” he says, “This is a place they can come and still obtain an education.”⁵⁶ He uses Del as an example, saying that Del chose to end his schooling when he was fourteen, but still came to the community space every day, teaching himself the guitar and reading about subjects in Zé’s library that interested him, becoming a self-educated, successful musician. Now Del has a successful band, and works at the hospital, using his music to cheer up sick patients. Zé recognizes that much of society gives up on teenage boys, especially those that come from poor and violent neighborhoods, like the Albanitos, so he could not turn his back on them as well. Thus, Zé maintained his relationship with the boys, providing a variety of activities from photography sessions to English classes to help their growth, without the official title of NGO.

The Albanitos project is still very much so continuing today. Every day at the community there is a group of young boys, from pre-teen to adolescents, playing with the stilts made available by commune member, Chris, reading the books, and using the computer. I asked the community members how the community’s relationship with the boys has changed over the years, and how this has been affected by the development of the neighborhood. Zé answered that the project with the boys was much more interesting and easier twenty years ago when there were much fewer people in the neighborhood, everyone knew each other, and there was little crime or violence. Now, he says, there are too many people to be careful of, and “too many drugs, crack, drug dealers, so we have to be much more careful with whom we let come in freely.”⁵⁷

The boys are greatly affected by this growing violence and crime in the neighborhood. Although many boys have greatly benefited from their interaction with the community, some

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 34

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Formal Interviews: Zé Albano., loc. Cit.

have still turned to drugs and crime, or stealing from the community itself. Carol mentions this violence when explaining to me why the community is still afraid of the changing neighborhood. She tells me that recently, a sixteen-year-old Albanito was shot in the process of trying to rob a man in his car, just six weeks before I arrived. This is not the first incidence of an Albanito being shot in an act of crime.⁵⁸ In fact, four Albanitos, all under the age of twenty-three, have been shot in the last three years, and only one, this most recent incident, has survived. Three other boys who came to visit the community less frequently than the everyday Albanitos, but were still close to the community and lived in the neighborhood, have also died in crime-related incidents.⁵⁹ All of these deaths involved the growing violence in the community around drugs and gang warfare. Zé speaks of the sadness of seeing this growing presence in the neighborhood, saying, “I had always read about the statistics of young men being killed in Brazil, but I was not prepared for the shock of seeing it happen so close to us. I have pictures of them in the books, they used to be here daily...And now they are lost, they are gone.”⁶⁰

Zé also discusses these acts of violence brought within Comunidade Sabiaguaba itself, explaining that they have been robbed from many times.⁶¹ This is not surprising in the sense that the community is very trusting, and the structure of the houses and values of the community allow for an open door policy at almost all times of the day. However, regardless of the support he gives, many neighborhood boys, some even Albanitos or friends of the Albanitos steal from the four houses, and even the visiting guests, frequently. He says, “We could be in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for how many times we have been robbed, hundreds of times, and of items of all sorts.”⁶² He goes on to talk about how people would steal anything from small cameras and phones, to large sink basins, and tables. In some cases, like his computer that contained the only copies of very important files, he actually had to buy the stolen item back because he simply could not replace it. These acts of theft, especially reoccurring acts of theft after giving some of the boys a second or third chance, shock and hurt Zé and the community as much as the deaths.⁶³

⁵⁸ Field Journal. Interpretations and Feelings: 4. Interpretations From Events 9 & 10: Lunch and Night time Discussions. November 7, 2014, p. 39

⁵⁹ Formal Interviews: Zé Albano. Loc. Cit.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Informal Interviews: Ze Albano. Op, cit., 33

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

In response to this increase in violence, Comunidade Sabiaguaba has had to respond with physical renovations that go against their values of openness and sharing. Ten years ago, they decided to fence in the area of Comunidade Sabiaguaba in order to protect the children that came to play from visitors looking in on them. This fence is very simple, made of dried palm branches and still very easy to see through if one looks hard enough. It does not compare to the eight-foot tall cement walls with spikes and barbed wire fence guarding every other house in the neighborhood, but it gets the job done of providing an enclosed, mostly-private space that maintains the feeling of a natural environment. Moreover, the fence is sustainable, built from the dried and fallen resources of the land and can be easily replenished without bringing in new resources. However, other additions that more directly defer the values of the community have continued to occur as the neighborhood has continued to grow. For instance, the commune installed a gate at the entrance of the fence that has a lock. This addition is merely two years old and in response to people coming into the community at night and trying to steal. Similarly, the windows of two of the four houses were constructed as completely open, having to close them with thin plastic panes, or leave the panes raised up to have a complete opening to the outside world.⁶⁴ Zé described how some of the neighborhood adolescents would come into the community at night and cut the plastic open, get into the house, and steal many things. As a response to this development, Zé has had to install metal bars on all of the houses' windows. "Installing these bars greatly depressed me," he says, but it was something that had to be done.⁶⁵

The Importance of a Safe Place in a Developing Neighborhood

Even with the growing violence of the neighborhood, and the physical and emotional challenges presented to the community, this relationship with the boys continues. Del discusses the reaction of the community in relation to the violence in the neighborhood, and especially the violence committed against Comunidade Sabiaguaba. He says:

As the violence increases, we want to continue to embrace the neighborhood, and make an alliance. We are doing this most with the children and adolescents that frequent this space. It is this desire that we all have, we bring the values of cooperation, and we open the

⁶⁴ Formal Interviews. Zé Albano. Loc. Cit.

⁶⁵ Informal Interviews: Zé Albano. Loc. Cit.

space for people to come, the youth, so that they can have a moment of leisure, of tranquility and peace.⁶⁶

Many understand Comunidade Sabiaguaba as being a place of safety and leisure, especially for these boys. For many of the boys, they do not have anywhere else that they can play or be children. Carol discusses the importance of having an open space like Comunidade Sabiaguaba in the neighborhood where the children feel that they can relax, be free, and breathe, especially in relation to their home lives:

You can imagine, they live in a small house with very many people, the tv is turned on all day. It is a place where they can't breath, it is suffocating. They need to go out, they need to do something, they need to play. So they come here, some of them, not all of them. This is one of the reasons, I think, why the boys use drugs the way they are using because of this problem of lack of attention and love from the parents. They are looking for an escape.⁶⁷

Similar to the presence of free access to internet where the boys can play or do their homework, books to read, or green space to play in, this opportunity of peace is something that many of the kids around the neighborhood do not have at home. Carol notes that there is no park or community square that the boys can go play in, the natural space at Comunidade Sabiaguaba is the only place with trees that is safe and not filled with trash where they can just relax, where they can breathe away from their suffocating home environment. Once again, the connection is made between the development of area, eliminating the places the children once played, such as the quiet streets or the empty lots of land still full of vegetation, and the introduction of drugs and crime in to the lives of adolescents.

Carol sees the openness with the surrounding community as greatly beneficial to the Albanitos as well. People visit Comunidade Sabiaguaba from all over Fortaleza, Brazil, and even the world—like myself—so they have the opportunity to interact with many different perspectives and opportunities they may not have thought of before. Carol discusses this using Del, her husband and one of the first Albanitos, as an example:

[Del] got to know many different people who passed by, so he had another perspective, another education. This also happens every day with the boys, they come here and they get to know new people, different people, like you for example, many different people and they get to learn something. It's a way of opening their eyes, opening their mind to different perspectives and opportunities.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Formal Interview. Idelbrandao Coelho Brandao. Op. Cit., p. 22

⁶⁷ Formal Interview: Carolina Foreira Melo. Op. Cit., 30

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Efimia, who has seen the progression of many Albanitos throughout her time with the community and after living there and her frequent visits, agrees on this perspective, saying that one of the most influential parts of the boys visiting Comunidade Sabiaguaba is their opportunity to interact with and learn from others. They have a unique to see different perspectives and ways of existence that they would not know existed without the interaction with the many people who come to visit the community. She speaks on this influence, saying:

I think that the children have the chance to see that something else can be made or done outside their own socio cultural conditions, which is very extreme. There is no hope, no way out for most of these kids. So some of them did it. Some others not.⁶⁹

Learning of a variety of different people and paths in life gives hope and the idea of opportunity to the lives of these boys that are otherwise determined by their socio-economic status, and experiences with crime and violence.

Other ways in which the presence of Comunidade Sabiaguaba has proved beneficial for the boys is the values of cooperation and respect, values that often lack in the boy's own homes that are crowded and filled with violence. These values teach the boys how to treat one another, their families, and how they can live with nature. Aimê discusses this interaction between the lives of the residents, and their influence, or potential education, available to the boys, just by presenting a different way of living than the rest of the community:

I think it helps, even if a little, that they can come here and see that there are families, here at Zé's house, living together in peace and love...They also see a place where we have cultivated nature and treat it with respect, because here people destroy so much of the natural world, especially with their garbage. Here, they come to a place that is beautiful and pleasant because it has trees, and this in itself is educational.⁷⁰

Both the interaction and respect within the community members, and the way these members interact with the boys is especially helpful to the boys' learning about other ways to treat people, ways that include love, respect, and cooperation that they may not have at home. Carol states that what is especially present at Comunidade Sabiaguaba that is not available at their homes is the presence of a loving, caring, strong male figure in their lives, the presence of a father. She describes this as:

Comunidade Sabiaguaba is place that has the love of a father that many of them don't have at their house. Because, Zé is like a big father of whoever needs one... Of course, the way they interact is not

⁶⁹ Informal Interview: Efima Meimaridou Rola. Op. Cit. 32

⁷⁰ Field Journal. Interviews: Formal Interviews: Aimê Borges Lobes. November 15, 2014, p. 26

like hugging or kissing, but they have other important things like the interaction itself, the attention, like giving them a snack. It's not the snack that matters, it's because of the meaning of the snack.⁷¹

Many of the boys do not have fathers at home, and if they do, their fathers are often violent, or inattentive. As Zé mentioned, his hope for these boys that come to Comunidade Sabiaguaba is that they will be better fathers than the ones they had. If they can avoid the violence and crime of their fathers, perhaps the next generation of adolescents will be less violent as well, leading to less crime and fewer deaths.

From the changing relationship with the boys in the neighborhood, and the growing violence around the city, one can understand from the perspective of those who live this violence every day the effects infrastructure and unorganized community development that brings violence with it. The areas that the boys used to frequent, like the small streets where they could ride their bikes, or open undeveloped land, no longer exist. Without these outlets, many of the boys turn to drugs or crime as a means of escaping their relating. Others turn to Comunidade Sabiaguaba. The openness, cooperation, and natural space of Comunidade Sabiaguaba in this sense presents an alternative to and an escape from the determined path of life for these boys created by the development model.

Spreading the Embrace: The Commune's Interaction with the Public

When asked what aspects of the community feel alternative to a typical experience living in Fortaleza, residents and outside community members alike mention these values of trust, cooperation, sharing, and openness as most important. Being that Fortaleza is so widely known as a dangerous, crime and poverty-ridden city, people are often shocked at how open the space is of Comunidade Sabiaguaba. I have already discussed the immediate influence of the commune on the local boys. However, the influence of Comunidade Sabiaguaba spreads much farther than just the surrounding neighborhood. In fact, its presence spreads well into the larger area of Fortaleza, and, it could be argued to some degree, the world. I examine the different ways in which Comunidade Sabiaguaba is available to the people of Fortaleza with open arms, offering a sanctuary from the city life without judgment or question. In reviewing these different perspectives, I will consider the impact that the different layers of openness may have on those who visit from other parts of the city, and how these impacts reveal what areas of development the citizens of Fortaleza desire most.

⁷¹ Formal Interview: Carolina Foreira Melo. Loc. Cit.

Comunidade Sabiaguaba as Community Center: Sharing Space and Knowledge

On Sunday, November 16, I had the opportunity to experience the renowned Sunday Potluck Lunch hosted by Comunidade Sabiaguaba (See: Photo 7). Every day, the residents of the commune eat lunch

together, but on Sundays, there is an extended invitation to anyone who cares to join.

People will show up from all over, without warning or announcement, each bringing a dish or drink of sorts to ensure that there is enough food for everyone. The number of participants at these lunches



Photo 7: Sunday Potluck Lunch

fluctuates, as there is no set schedule, group of people, or obligation. Sometimes no one comes and it is just the residents eating together, but other times ten or twenty people can arrive and they have to extend the table length two or three times to fit everyone. These lunches have been going on for three years. On this particular Sunday, a long-term friend of arrived, as did Zé's niece, Marisol, and her family.⁷²

After the lunch, Marisol and the family stayed to set up for a reading and group discussion about the book, *Parent Effectiveness Training* by Thomas Gordon, focused on child raising. It is very common for people to use Comunidade Sabiaguaba as a meeting space. Especially on Sundays, people will gather for a big communal lunch then stay afterwards for a workshop or group discussion. Others arrived to join this group discussion, and in total five sets of parents gathered under the trees for a dynamic discussion about their experiences in raising their children, offering advice and support. Meanwhile, the children played amongst the trees and grass in the larger, wilder natural area within the commune's fence. When it became too dark to read or play outside, the parents moved inside for tea to continue their discussion, and the children ate popcorn and watched a show in the "VIP"

⁷² Field Journal. Interpretations and Feelings: 11. Sunday Potluck Lunch. November 16, 2014, p. 40

room.⁷³ Other workshops that have occurred after Sunday Potluck Lunches include yoga workshops, theater, capoeira, dance, bread and granola making, and much more.⁷⁴ The commune acts as a community center in this way, available for whomever would like to use it, fully equipped with large tables, an open kitchen, and plenty of natural area or cozy couches to hold meetings. The piles of books and photo albums on the coffee table in the meeting space in Zé's house also provides an area for discussion or a break from the meeting topic. The endless choice of CD's, vinyl, and internet radio and videos work together to create a peaceful atmosphere for sharing ideas, while sharing new types of music from all over the world.

Full Moon Gatherings

The workshops held after Sunday Potluck Lunches are often perpetuated by people active within the larger alternative movement of Fortaleza, at which, it appears that Comunidade Sabiaguaba is one of the nuclei. For twenty years, this network of people interested in an alternative lifestyle of vegan cooking and creative economies would learn of Comunidade Sabiaguaba at its legendary full moon gatherings. Because Zé and his commune were the ABRASCA representatives for Ceará, they had the obligation to hold a gathering every full moon for a fire, discussion, and community exchange. At these full moon gatherings, Zé would make twelve loaves of bread, spread for the bread, and at least ten liters of tea to share with the participants free of charge. There would also be the presence of a type of bazaar, where participants could display their *artesanatos* (arts, crafts, jewelry, and patchwork) for sale.⁷⁵ Zé would also display exhibits of his photography, or the work of others. This allowed for a cultural sharing and exchange, as well as offering support for the local creative economy.⁷⁶

Ze passed on the title of ABRASCA representative for a new person to take over in 2011, and thus no longer holds the full moon gatherings. Even so, years later, people still talk about these full moon gatherings of music and

⁷³ Field Journal. Events and Observation

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Formal Interview: Aimê Borges Lobes

⁷⁶ Informal Interview: Efima Meimarido



Photo 8: The Last Full Moon Gathering at Comunidade Sabiaguaba.

conversation, friend making and community building. This is, in fact, where Aimê and Carol first learned of Comunidade Sabiaguaba.^{77 78} The full moon gatherings held the spirit and values of the alternative movement, providing a night where people could escape their busy lives in the city, and find a place of common values and beliefs to share with their peers, who before long became their close friends (See: Photo 8). While the full moon gatherings are no longer held, this network of people still meet often in other forms, such as the Sunday Potluck Lunches or community workshops. New events take the place of an official monthly meeting, such as concerts where bands within this network of friends can perform. In the three weeks I stayed with Comunidade Sabiaguaba, I attended two events showcasing the local bands, opening a space for bazaars selling food, used clothing, and crafts, and, most importantly, providing that spirit of discussion and communal connection that continues with strength.^{79 80} As the network and support grows, new spaces become available for the meeting of these friends, branching out from the home of Comunidade Sabiaguaba, and spreading its influence of openness, sharing, and sustainability into other areas of the city.

Sharing the Alternative: Supporting a Healthy, Sustainable Lifestyle

Comunidade Sabiaguaba is also home to many workshops and visits that take place separately from the alternative network of Fortaleza. Frequently receiving visits from schools, programs, and community centers curious about some of the alternative aspects of the commune, many people who did not attend the full moon gatherings or have connections to an alternative lifestyle in other ways are introduced to different ways of knowing or living at Comunidade Sabiaguaba. A common example of this interaction is the students (of a university, school, or just people in the community wanting to learn) that come to the commune to learn about Zé's *Forno Solar* (Sun Oven) (See: Photo 9). Zé discovered this idea



on the internet on a website hosted by two women who created a design of a solar powered oven using just cardboard boxes, aluminum foil, shreds of paper, and a

ber 8, 2014, p. 39
guaba. November 22, 2014, p. 14-15

glass pane. The design includes wrapping a cardboard box in aluminum foil, putting it inside a bigger cardboard box, and filling the space in between with shredded paper for insulation. One can put a pot of rice and water within this oven with a glass pane over it; leave it in the sun for a few hours, and voila, a full pot of rice, or any other food, cooked to perfection without using any energy or extra work. Noticing the need of a few adaptations to the initial design to fit the northeast Brazilian latitude, Zé altered the design to suit his needs.⁸¹

This design has been wildly popular amongst the local press, and students who want to use the design for a science experiment. Zé shares his design, and teaches others how to make these ovens free of charge. Very often, visitors from community centers around the city attend a workshop on how to make their own solar oven, and practice making them while there. Zé believes it is important to “spread the good word” to those who are interested.⁸² This solar oven represents an easy, sustainable, cheap way of cooking a meal. You can cook anything in it from rice and couscous, to meats and fish. They use very little materials, allow the repurposing of the materials they do use, and do not use any electricity or gas, creating an environmentally friendly and inexpensive way to cook. In a city that is becoming increasingly expensive, these low-cost, low-energy options are increasing in importance, especially for the poorer areas of the city that often frequent these workshops.

Similarly, Zé and Del also offer a popular class about making whole grain bread for people across the city of Fortaleza. In order to learn more about the bread, and to share his recipe with yet another person, Zé showed me how to make this bread and explained why it is so important to his history with the alternative movement. Zé became interested in home baking when he read in a *Reader's Digest* about the importance of fiber in one's diet.⁸³ Having had constipation his whole life, at 25 years old he was desperate for a solution to the unbalances in his body, and this *Reader's Digest* suggested adding fiber rich grains, like bran, into the diet. Bran at this time, in the 1960s, was not available in supermarkets and he had to buy it from an animal feed store. When he began including bran into his diet, such as using it in this bread, his stomach problems disappeared and he became substantially healthier. This began his questioning of the industrial, supermarket food system.⁸⁴ Mass-produced food made available to the public is so processed that it lacks vital nutrients, like fiber, protein, and vitamins, which are essential for a healthy body. How are people expected to be healthy if

⁸¹ Field Journal. Interpretations and Feelings: 8. Making Bread. November 10, 2014, p. 40

⁸² Formal Interview: Zé Albano. Loc. Cit.

⁸³ Field Journal. Events and Observations: 16. Making Bread. November 10, 2014, p. 9

⁸⁴ Ibid.

many items available for purchase by the dominant food stores lack these essential ingredients? With this in mind, he began exploring alternatives to the industrial food system, sparking his distancing from other aspects of mass produced society as well.

Different community centers and students from all over will visit for a class on this whole grain bread (See: Photo 10).

Zé learned of this recipe from a friend when living in the United States, and like the *Forno Solar*, he changed the recipe of the bread to fit his needs. He added the essential bran that he learned of in the *Reader's Digest*, and other nutrient enriching grains like cashew flour and soy flour to increase the protein and fiber of the bread. The process



Photo 10: Del teaching a group of students how to make bread.

of making the bread is very simple, involving mixing the flours together, adding a dry yeast, water, oil, salt, and brown sugar.⁸⁵ The bread is vegan so there are no animal products used.

Ze enjoys sharing this and other life-changing recipes, such as his granola or peanut butter, with the community centers that visit. They often bring people from poorer areas of the city that do not have access to inexpensive healthy food options. These recipes offer an inexpensive, easy way to get essential nutrients into a diet, and while the movement of healthier foods is growing in Brazil, healthier food products are still rarely available at the supermarkets. By coming to visit Comunidade Sabiaguaba, people that live all over Fortaleza have the opportunity to learn about “alternative” ways of living—ways that differ from the dominant structure that does not provide sustainable options for people. Whether already interested in the alternative movement or just visiting, Comunidade Sabiaguaba offers the resources for a healthier, more sustainable life. These resources can come in the form of sustaining the environment by learning alternative methods of cooking that reuse materials, and reduce energy used. They can provide a way of better sustaining the body by giving it the nutrients that are not widely available in many supermarkets, like whole grain and enriched flour. Equally important, these resources can sustain social networks, providing support for

⁸⁵ Ibid.

people within the community to pursue a creative economy, to participate in new ways of learning, and exchange knowledge for a healthier life.

Spreading the Good Word: The Commune's Relationship with the Press

Another way in which Sabiaguaba reaches out to the surrounding community of



Photo 11: Photo of ENCA submitted to Nikon Photo Contest.

Fortaleza is through its relationship with the press.

Because Zé was a professional commercial and editorial photographer, he is experienced with taking photos for the purpose of sharing them with the larger population.⁸⁶ Zé began sharing the idea of the alternative lifestyle with the people of Fortaleza in the early 1990s, recently after he attended his first ENCA (National Meeting of Alternative Communities).

Being a professional photographer, Zé photographed the event and used these photos to create a public photo exhibit. He then shared this information with the press to advertise his exhibit, as well as to share his new experience.⁸⁷ Zé received criticism from the

alternative movement because, while they permitted the photography, they did not appreciate their photos widely shared, as they would inevitably leak on to the internet, and the alternative movement greatly resisted an internet presence. However, this event was very meaningful to Zé, and despite criticism, he continued to share these photos in public exhibits, and in exhibits at his own communal events. Zé went on to enter a photo from the ENCA (See: Photo 11) into the worldwide Nikon photo-contest, and received an honorable mention in this contest. Newspapers in Fortaleza and Ceará alike bragged that a cearense photographer participated in a worldwide photo contest.⁸⁸ When asked why he decided to share this photography of the very private alternative movement, his response was that, not only was this his job as a photographer, photographing important and interesting events, but he also simply wanted to “spread the good word.”⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Formal Interview: Zé Albano. Loc. Cit.

⁸⁷ Field Journal. Secondary Sources: 3. Notes from News Articles. November 8, 2014, p. 18

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ Formal Interview: Zé Albano. Loc. Cit.

This was just the starting point of the presence of an “alternative lifestyle” in the press. Many other topics of the alternative lifestyle besides the ENCAs appeared in Zé’s relationship with the press, especially his life at Comunidade Sabiaguaba. Newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television news, and students researching all seem interested in the goings on at Comunidade Sabiaguaba, and the variety of different “alternative decisions” in Zé’s life and within the life of the community. They interview him about the vegan cooking, his motorcycle cross-country traveling, the alternative architectural style of the houses, the variety of energy conservation methods present (especially the solar oven), the community’s relationship with the Albanitos, the neighborhood boys, and their phototherapy project, and much more. Zé says that very often, these interviewers are just looking for a story to fill a space in their column or a broadcast, but regardless he never turns down a visit by students or the press. This aspect is very unusual in the alternative community as few alternative communities have a webpage, much less an open invitation to come visit them and learn more. “The alternative movement has never sought to recruit more members,” says Zé when discussing why the alternative movement keeps to itself, and goes on to emphasize that they are very apolitical and merely seek to live their lives without interfering with, or the interference of, others.⁹⁰

Other ways in which Zé reaches out to the greater population through media is in the books he publishes. For example, after Zé’s first ENCA, he decided to go to another of these alternative meetings, this time on his motorcycle. Leaving for a trip that everyone said could



Photo 12: Example of photo from Ze's ENCA motorcycle trips.

not be done on a 125cc engine, Zé traveled to Bahia on his motorcycle for the ENCA, camping just off the road the whole way (See: Photo 12). This was the first of many journeys he would take all over Brazil on his motorcycle to attend these ENCAs. He stopped to take photographs of

⁹⁰ Formal Interview: Zé Albano. Loc. Cit.

his motorcycle in a variety of places along the way, especially street signs, state barriers, and beautiful scenic routes.⁹¹ This collection of photos became the content for a popular book written by Zé, *Manual do Viajante Solitario*, about his journeys to these ENCAs. This book influenced many in the public, including Caio Bezerra de Mattos Brito, a man who read Zé's story and decided to take a similar journey, recently releasing his own published book, *Um Caderno e Uma Moto: Narrativas de Uma Viagem* about his motorcycle trip around Brazil. These trips with the little motorcycle are more than the contents for a book, they are a representation of his choice of freedom to live the way one chooses, and the resistance of the compliance with what people say can and can't be done. It also shows the influence that Zé can have when sharing this work and mentality with others. The press caught onto this alternative idea, and interview Zé about his motorcycle traveling and the role it played in his life, as well as about how has had this same motorcycle now for thirty years, giving it the proper maintenance when necessary, and still uses it travel.

Twenty-five years later with binders full of a news clippings and articles that have mentioned Zé's work and the community, it becomes clear that his goal to "spread the good word" has largely succeeded. The community and their variety of practices are well known throughout the city, and more people continue to arrive for the purpose of interviews, workshops, or simply because they are curious to see for themselves. No matter the purpose, the community remains with doors open, willing to talk and show the community to whoever enters.

Conclusion

Significance of Comunidade Sabiaguaba

The values and practices of Comunidade Sabiaguaba focus on the importance of openness, cooperation, care for one another, and sharing. While these may not seem like a radical existence, for those who visit this alternative community the experience can be life changing, an experience that for some may continue to draw them back to this community, or for others they may simply carry with them a new recipe or method of cooking their food. In whatever way Comunidade Sabiaguaba may affect its visitors, it is clear from the personal accounts and observations that the values presented here offer a new perspective on life that

⁹¹ Albano, J. (2010). *Manual do Viajante Solitario*. Terra da Luz: Brazil.

can provide one with an education, a refreshing break from the life of the city, or a much needed escape.

Pedro Humberto visited Comunidade Sabiaguaba once and could not stay away. Humberto is a university professor who conducted a research project that examined the relation of the Albanitos to the communal experience. At a fundraiser event to I had the opportunity to talk with Pedro about aspects of Comunidade Sabiaguaba that are different from living within the city. Because he lives in the heart of Fortaleza, and has thought critically about the significance of the space of this commune, I found his perspective thought provoking in how to consider the role and influence of the community. He says,

Comunidade Sabiaguaba is my preferred place to be, I may live in Fortaleza, but I come here to relax, to read, to talk, to be with nature. I like being here because it is so open, even the way the architecture is arranged is open. You do not feel shut up behind walls and locked gates, everyone is welcome and open to others. In Fortaleza, everyone is afraid, it is a horrible way to live. You can tell they all just listen to the news and hide in fear behind their walls, their gates, because no one is ever on the street. When they do see someone on the street, they shrink back as if they will be assaulted! It's horrible. But not here, in this space people are open, they trust, they live.⁹²

This perspective is interesting because it goes back to what Carol spoke of when discussing the Albanitos: how the community handles the violence of Fortaleza in contrast to the media or the citizens. Humberto talks about how the openness of the architecture and attitude of the community made him feel safer than the empty streets, fear stricken streets of Fortaleza. Carol shares her experiences with the difference in attitude between the commune and the center of the city as well. Growing up in a wealthier neighborhood in Fortaleza, her work with underprivileged youth of the favelas gave her a different perspective of poverty and crime in the city than many of those who lived in her neighborhood. She discusses the mentality of people who live in the wealthier parts of the city, and why she perceives the value of openness of the community as different from the typical Fortaleza experience:

I think the people that live [in Fortaleza] are more afraid, because [the violence on the news] makes them close themselves in their houses. They have these feelings, but I don't have these feelings, and even when I lived there I didn't have these feelings. I think I see the situation in a different way. I studied psychology, and during college, I chose to work with social psychology, so I was already doing work in favelas, and working with these people [in the favelas] and seeing them as people. I knew the reality because I knew the people and didn't get my information from the newspaper or the tv. I knew

⁹² Field Journal. Interviews: Informal Interviews: 4. Pedro Humberto. November 22, 2014, p. 35

because I experienced it, I knew the truth of the situation, that even though they live in a favela, these are people.⁹³

Carol's discussion sheds light on an important fact that is very present the citizens of Fortaleza, that many people are not just afraid of violence, they are afraid of the poor people in their city that are said to be perpetuating this violence, something perpetuated by the news and the media.

Carol and Pedro's perspectives show a similar connection between the fear felt in the city of Fortaleza, and the increase of this fear as people lock themselves away and distance themselves from their fellow person. What is apparent in both of their views is that what is lacking greatly in Fortaleza is one thing that Comunidade Sabiaguaba embraces to its fullest: a human connection. Only informed by the news and incident reports, the citizens of Fortaleza become afraid of violence, of poverty, and of one another. The Albanitos are a great example of this as Zé mentioned that he could not give up on the Albanitos because the rest of society has already given up on them. However, the Albanitos project has shown that, even though the violence still affects and even takes the lives of some of these boys, for many of the boys the opportunity presented at Comunidade Sabiaguaba—the opportunity to be treated with love, hope, and opportunity as human beings—can result in a success. Every success story of an Albanito is a celebration, whether that success be a good career, or simply becoming a loving and responsible father. Each boy that the Albanitos project affects has the opportunity to pass this mentality onto his friends and children. The openness and embrace of Comunidade Sabiaguaba gives all people that pass through human connection, the trust, and the love that they cannot find other places in the city. Whether it be the Albanitos, friends in the alternative movement, or people from community centers all over Fortaleza visiting the commune, people come to Comunidade Sabiaguaba for what they have really missed in their city: a connection to their fellow human and a connection to their environment.

Widespread Influence

A major part in understanding the significance of a space is to understand how far the influence of the space reaches. While Zé maintains an open door policy with the press and visitors, he does not seek to “recruit” new members to his alternative lifestyle, he is simply spreading the good word. In trying to grasp how far and significant the impact of Comunidade Sabiaguaba is, I asked around to people who understand the community well, live away from the community in the city so they hold a more realistic look than someone

⁹³ Formal Interview: Carolina Foreira Melo. Loc. Cit.

who lives in the community. Pedro Humberto found this question to be very complicated as it cannot be measured, especially because Zé does not keep a record of people that visit him. So instead of giving measurement, he discusses the “good thing” that people take with them from Comunidade Sabiaguaba—that good thing that I have identified as a newfound human connection. Within this idea he discusses that people take that good thing from Comunidade Sabiaguaba with them to their homes, and share it with their friends, who often come back to visit the commune as well. He discusses this as:

Every person that frequents here will return to their house with a good thing, they take with them, something good from here...More, these things, these connections we make here, form a network. ...When a person comes here, they begin to know this place and they bring another, who brings another. It's not a program of the city, or the government, it doesn't have money, it doesn't have anyone investing in it, so it cannot have a *huge* influence on the city. But, it does have a diffusion, of those little good things.⁹⁴

Humberto goes on to discuss this network continues to grow, even without funding. We discussed the fact that I represent a chain in this network as well, and return to the United States where I will share my experience with people there, continuously strengthening the network and influence of Comunidade Sabiaguaba. Efimia comments on this idea of the significance of the community as well, but in a different way:

The influence is something like when you through a pebble into a pond, it ripples. When people leave [Comunidade Sabiaguaba] and go to their places, things change. So, Zé opening his house provided an oasis for them, and for us who came from the city.⁹⁵

Similar to the idea of network, the ripple in the pond metaphor emphasizes the gradual but real impact that Comunidade Sabiaguaba can have.

Reflection on the Development Paradigm

While I recognize that the presence of Comunidade Sabiaguaba does not have the conditions, resources, or necessarily even the desire to create widespread change for the development of Fortaleza, it still interacts with the development model and different development theories. Looking to offer simple and sustainable options for a healthy life without charging money or looking to gain profit shows that the development model offered by Comunidade Sabiaguaba is more similar to a grass-roots approach to community development. This opposes the top-down development model offered by the city of Fortaleza,

⁹⁴ Informal Interview: Pedro Humberto. Op. cit., p. 36

⁹⁵ Informal Interview: 2. Efimia Meimaridou Rola. Loc. Cit.

using large-scale infrastructure projects and a focus of big business to create more of a gradual trickle-down or top-down development approach.

The methodology of the commune reflects on different ways in which the “Right to the City” by David Harvey may be understood.⁹⁶ While Comunidade Sabiaguaba is not directly attempting to change the policies of the city to give citizens the power to change their experience in the city through changing the city itself, it does provide citizens with the empowerment and knowledge to take control of their own lives. By offering free workshops on things that can provide a healthy body, mind, economy, and environment, Comunidade Sabiaguaba offers people a way of living alternatively, away from the determination of the development paradigm, to, at least to some degree, determine their own experiences and the ways in which they can use the city. This also comments on Sen’s *Development as Freedom*, because Sen discusses the state of poverty usually takes away at least one freedom.⁹⁷ In this sense, we could understand the unfreedoms that Comunidade attempts to resolve as addressing the freedom to natural space, or the freedom to an education. It also provides a freedom to knowledge about ways to live a healthy life without much money. While these may not be freedoms that are recognized specifically under the World Bank or other development agencies, they are freedoms that should not be ignored. By examining the impact of the addition of these freedoms into a person’s life, it is seen that there are things in life that are very important to the citizens of Fortaleza that the current development programs do not plan for or lend investment to. This especially includes the green space, the open architecture, the access to healthy food, and the opportunity of a human connection.

Weapons: The Future of Comunidade Sabiaguaba

Finally, it is clear that Comunidade Sabiaguaba has an important role in the lives of many around the city of Fortaleza, but one must wonder how long it is able to maintain its current means of existence. As the city grows around it, and the violence increases as well, and the community has already had to alter some of their physical structure and internal beliefs in dealing with the violence. How can a community maintain an open, embracing policy, when the rest of the city tells them to shut their doors and close people out?

It is the very values of openness and sharing, which directly resists the determined development of the city that will allow this community to maintain its existence, and its

⁹⁶ Harvey, loc. Cit.

⁹⁷ Sen, loc. Cit.

resistance to the city. The constant news presence has created an unbeatable historical significance within the city of Fortaleza, and strengthened the community's wide-spreading network. Should they need help, Comunidade Sabiaguaba has built a complex support network over the last twenty-five years without the need of creating an official organization, accepting official donations, or raising money. For example, it is because Zé resisted the bureaucracy and went against the demand of creating a NGO for the boys that he still has an important impact with the Albanitos, continuing his connection to them.⁹⁸ In addition, because the commune is largely apolitical, it does little to threaten to the state or other businesses with political motives. The people in the alternative network of Fortaleza have taken up a policy of non-interference, not pushing their values or practicing on anyone, but inviting them to join and learn if they please. Thus, like the larger history of alternative movements before it⁹⁹, it can maintain a life of peace resisting the development of the city precisely because it does not openly resist the development of the city. Finally, the development of the city itself is, in a way, a weapon in itself to propel the continued existence of the commune. As the city develops more along its current path of modernization, infrastructure, and promotion of big business, it will strengthen the significance, and the need of a place like Comunidade Sabiaguaba.

⁹⁸ Informal Interview: Ze Albano. Loc. Cit.

⁹⁹ Dunn, loc. Cit.

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Appendix I

List of Photos Referenced

Photo 1:

Albano, J. (2011). Sign over the entry gate to Comunidade Sabiaguaba. Comunidade Sabiaguaba.

Photo 2:

Albano, J. (1975). The house Regina Moreira Lima and I moved into after we were married in September 1975. Sabiaguaba, Fortaleza.

Photo 3:

Daniel and Del wearing Zé Albano's boots, gloves, hats and clothes justifying the nickname "Albanitos", around 1994. Published in the book *José Albano - 40 Anos de Fotografia*, by José Albano, Fortaleza, 2009, page 88.

Photo 4:

Albano, J. (1992). Paulo Emílio at 8 years of age. Studio José Albano.

Photo 5:

Albano, J. (2002). Paulo Emílio at 18. Studio José Albano.

Photo 6:

Albano, J. (2002). Albanitos assembling computers from used parts donated by friends of Comunidade Sabiaguaba. Comunidade Sabiaguaba.

Photo 7:

Albano, J. (2014). Sunday Potluck Lunch with Kat. Comunidade Sabiaguaba.

Photo 8:

Humberto, P. (2011). Last full moon gathering at Comunidade Sabiaguaba, December. Comunidade Sabiaguaba.

Photo 9:

Albano, J. (2009). Group from Janguruçu showing their completed solar oven in the workshop held in Comunidade Sabiaguaba. Comunidade Sabiaguaba.

Photo 10:

Albano, J. (2012). Del showing visiting students how he makes chapati indian bread. Comunidade Sabiaguaba.

Photo 11:

Albano, J. (1992). ENCA Campina, Palmeiras, Bahia.

Published in the book *José Albano - 40 Anos de Fotografia*, by José Albano, Fortaleza, 2009,, page 127.

Also published in the *Nikon Photo Contest International* 1992/1993 Catalogue, Tokyo, Japan, 1993, page 129.

Photo 12:

Albano, J. (2009). Graciosa road. Paraná, Brazil.

Published in book *José Albano - 40 Anos de Fotografia*, by José Albano, Fortaleza, 2009, page 104.

Appendix II

1. Could you have done this project in the USA? What data or sources were unique to the culture in which you did the project?

I could research an alternative in the United States, yes, but I could not research this specific alternative community that has so many unique elements to it that create the significance I find in my research. Similarly, Fortaleza is at a point in development right now that allows me to look at the urban development in action. I visited this alternative community right as large infrastructure projects were happening, in a time where the neighborhood was undergoing major changes. This gave me a very interesting, complex look at the relationship between this specific community and this specific city.

2. Could you have done any part of it in the USA? Would the results have been different? How?

I could have researched more on urban development in Brazil, specifically looking at its relation to violence and crime. Also, I could have researched the history of the alternative movement more thoroughly.

3. Did the process of doing the ISP modify your learning style? How was this different from your previous style and approaches to learning?

Yes, in a way. It gave me the self-structured time to really think about and work with my data. Usually for research projects in school I am busy with other classes or work, so I don't have the opportunity to just really observe and spend time with my research. I was surprised with what I came up with during this time of just observation, writing, and thought. I also began writing way more in during this time that I ever have, and am thankful that I kept such good notes.

4. How much of the final monograph is primary data? How much is from secondary sources?

I would guess that probably 80% is primary data and 20% secondary sources. Had I had more time to develop my background and research not only before the ISP period, but during and after (as this is when I really understood my focus) I would have more discussion between my research and secondary sources.

5. What criteria did you use to evaluate your data for inclusion in the final monograph? Or how did you decide to exclude certain data?

I generally chose the data that people were most passionate about. They would say things about development or the community space that really moved them and I wanted to include this. There is more I would like to include, but I also had to keep my focus somewhat narrow for my paper to be comprehensive and relevant.

6. How did the "drop-offs" or field exercises contribute to the process and completion of the ISP?

I didn't leave the commune much, so the drop off wasn't really as relevant to me. What was relevant was being forced to talk to people in Portuguese outside of the classroom.

This is the only way to understand the different way people speak, a huge issues especially in the Northeast where people tend to have accents. I wish I had practiced this more.

7. What part of the FSS most significantly influenced the ISP process?

My interviews were most influenced for sure. I made sure that the interviewee was comfortable with participating in research and made sure they were aware of the context. I also just let them speak instead of try to set up questions with expected answers like I might have if I didn't have the seminar. The idea of first transcribing the interview then translating it also greatly influenced my interview process. While this took me a very long time, I am happy I took this approach because often times I needed to listen to a work a few times, spell it out, and see it in the whole Portuguese context to understand what the interviewee was trying to say.

8. What were the principal problems you encountered while doing the ISP? Were you able to resolve these and how?

It took me a long time to understand what people were saying because their accents were so thick amongst each other. This was resolved with time, and after I explained my situation some of the residents who knew English helped me along the way.

9. Did you experience any time constraints? How could these have been resolved?

I am surprised that I finished this project in the short amount of time of three weeks, but very strongly believe that the ISP time period needs to be longer. It easily takes a week to become adjusted, comfortable, observe, and stop feeling homesick after a huge change in scenery, people, and tasks. This leaves only two weeks to really interview well and start writing.

10. Did your original topic change and evolved as you discovered or did not discover new and different resources? Did the resources available modify or determine the topic?

My original topic was focused more about the development of the city, and it was modified to be the perspective of Comunidade Sabiaguaba and their significance within the city. I don't know that I could have known this is how it would develop without experiencing the community and seeing it for myself.

11. How did you go about finding resources: institutions, interviewees, publications, etc.?

I interviewed the residents of the community, then talked with people that came to visit the community to determine who might be good to interview as well. People I met had suggestions for other people to interview.

12. What method(s) did you use? How did you decide to use such method(s)?

I used participation, observation, ad interviewing. I decided to use this instead of quantitative data because my project is about perspective and experience rather than quantifiable data.

13. Comment on your relations with your advisor: indispensable? Occasionally helpful? Not very helpful? At what point was he/she most helpful? Were there cultural differences,

which influenced your relationship? A different understanding of educational processes and goals? Was working with the advisor instructional?

My advisor was absolutely indispensable. Because Ze was both my advisor, and the person most knowledgeable about this community, his input and attention to my work made it so much better and more accurate than it could have been without him.

14. Did you reach any dead ends? Hypotheses which turned out to be not useful? Interviews or visits that had no application?

I had two very long interviews I decided not to use in the final product because I conducted them at the very beginning of my research and my focus changed to the point where they were no longer relevant. Or, more so, there were other interviews that directly discussed aspects of my research that were more relevant than these first interviews.

15. What insights did you gain into the culture as a result of doing the ISP, which you might not otherwise have gained?

I learned a lot about how the people of Fortaleza view their city, but also how they work together to make their experience the best experience they can have. I learned of a space of resilience and community I would not have realized existed otherwise

16. Did the ISP process assist your adjustment to the culture? Integration?

I wish that we had had opportunities to visit or meeting with the community that I was researching a few times before I moved in. I would have felt more comfortable moving into the community if I had visited two or three times for lunch or something before I came.

17. What were the principal lessons you learned from the ISP process?

I learned that small communities can have a big impact and create positive change in people's lives, sometimes even more so than government funded programs.

18. If you met a future student who wanted to do this same project, what would be your recommendations to him/her?

To just open up to the community, don't be afraid to make friends and talk to people. They are very open and welcoming people but you have to make an effort as well.

19. Given what you know now, would you undertake this, or a similar project again?

Absolutely, I am thinking of actually pursuing it more when I get back to my home institution.