

Abstract

This dissertation approaches Rio de Janeiro's public security policy of 'pacification' implemented since 2008 from a critical perspective. Widely hailed for being an innovative solution approach to the city's exorbitant levels of lethal violence and perceived as being conducive to a well-grounded approximation process aimed at unifying the 'divided city', it is the purpose of this dissertation to contextualise the public policy with the historical and socio-cultural fundament upon which it is based. The researcher makes use of a critically revised framework of securitisation theory, thus allowing for the examination of the power-knowledge nexus nurturing the securitising discourse. To examine the latter, a wide array of speech act material including official speeches and interviews published on official government websites, Brazilian mainstream media, and video-sharing websites will be analysed. The critical analysis will be placed in dialogue with the socio-cultural context from which it originates by drawing on analytical techniques of critical discourse analysis, connecting the said with the social. For this purpose, the socio-historical process of Brazilian nation-building will be retraced, shedding light onto institutionalised modes of domination that guide state action and its policies.

The analysis reveals how securitising actors engage in discursive techniques of manipulation to draw on and perpetuate a 'talk of crime' that is nurtured by categorically excluding parts of the population terming them the nation's 'internal enemy'. Based on the discursive propagation of a 'city at war', state authorities legitimise the forceful invasion of favelas by tacitly declaring a state of exception in specific criminalised 'areas of indistinction'. Being congruent with a highly paternalistic and inegalitarian conceptualisation of citizenship which caters for the unequal distribution and application of rights in a democratic context, structural problems are instrumentalised to justify a militarised approach that is fuelled by neoliberal ideology, envisaging market development in the name of economic liberalism. 'Security' as enacted in the scope of securitisation is ultimately considered a political technology which places the leeway for action exclusively in the hands of the state, thereby reinforcing existing power configurations while marginalising dissenting voices, allowing for agenda setting and implementation of the powerful elite to the detriment of the lower class. The researcher is enabled to undertake an analytically founded immanent critique of Brazilian political culture typified in Rio's pacification policy which needs to be considered a seamless continuation of a politics based on the exclusion of those deemed unequal to the benefit of the powerful.