

Favelas Media Production and Self-Representation in Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro

*To Laura and
my supporting
family, friends,
educators.*

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NOTE: Text in Portuguese – unless differently stated – has been translated by the author, when found without any English equivalent.

*«Favela is freedom, friendship and feijoada.
Favela is people persevering. [...]
It is not all pain, poverty, and passivity.
It is people living their lives amid a civil war.
People who would prefer to work and to study.
People trying to be recognized as gente (people) by other people
For whom they are invisible and inconsequential.»*
(Perlman:XXIII, Preface)

PREAMBLE

Brazil was living under the weight of authoritarian rule, a military dictatorship that continued from 1964 through 1985, and soon will be 30 years since the restoration of democracy. Yet, corruption and impunity undermine the rule of law. «These failings rest at the very heart of the distrust of the people toward government, politics, and politicians – in fact the entire political milieu» and in the mean time the phenomenon that goes by the name(s) of clientelism(s). (Perlman:X,Foreword; developed in Gay:17-18, Concluding remarks). Looking at an important prior pivotal point, for example the summer of 1962, there were various times of great political ferment in Brazil.¹ «Compelling issue was how to create a system that would overcome the failures of both capitalism and communism. Everywhere [...] there were heated discussions of *reformas de base* (structural reforms) such as land and tax reforms». (Perlman:XIV,Preface)

What numerous favela focussed studies unmistakably show and testimony is that «each individual possesses skills and capacities» and «every community has

1 Archbishop of Recife «was preaching liberation theology; Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed – a method to teach adult literacy through consciousness-raising about the fundamental rights of human dignity – was becoming a movement of “each-one-teach-one,” and Leonel Brizola was mobilizing labor unions in the industrial South. Students around the country had mounted coordinated strikes [...]». (Perlman:XV,Preface)

resources of trust, solidarity, and reciprocity[; t]his change in perspective drastically recasts public policies». In the words of the former president Fernando Cardoso: «The focus on liabilities leads to assistance and enhances dependency. Investment in peoples' assets sets into motion a sustainable process of individual and collective empowerment». (Perlman:X,Foreword)

Favelas, shanty-towns, slums (etc.) «which are generally built incrementally by the residents on unused or undesirable lands, do not conform to the norms, standards, and zoning regulations of the “formal city” [...], but they are an integral part of the urban economy, society, and polity. In many cases and for many reasons, including a bogged-down bureaucracy and antiquated permit process, they are becoming the norm rather than the exception in many cities». (Perlman:8)

Despite decades of policy interventions, inter-governmental, community-based interventions, the growth of informal settlements continues to outpace that of the cities at large. «New communities spring up faster than existing ones are upgraded or linked into urban service networks. [...] And marginalizing four of every ten urbanites in the global South has negative repercussions for personal security and environmental sustainability that reach well beyond the confines of any single city or metropolitan region. High levels of inequality are associated with the epidemic of violence that is constraining the conviviality and trust needed [...]». (Perlman:8) This holds true especially now that violence and power balances are being wrestled by and contended among “pacification” police forces and drug lords.

Intellectual discourses already «see community media as a tool for oppressed, marginalised or ordinary people to express their opinions and concerns, be it miners' radio in Bolivia [...], indigenous media in Australia [...], or multi-cultural and women's radios in Europe [...]». (Medrado,2007:123) Speaking with more optimism about community media activists and the prospect of citizens gaining access to the media, it could be argued «an urgent need for activism in the face of ‘blockages of public expression’, such as the “*dynamic of capitalist economy*”, “*institutionalized racist and patriarchal codes*” and other “*hegemonic codes*”. [...] Community media

emerges as an “*effective strategy*” in the “*global struggle to democratize communication and ensure local autonomy in the wake of rampant media privatisation and consolidation.*”» (Medrado, 2007:123-124)

«Slum, semi-slum, and superslum ... to this has come the evolution of cities.»

Patrick Geddes²

I. FAVELA

It was 1888 when the Brazilian monarchy signed the Golden Law, abolishing slavery after more than 300 years. «This act left thousands of former slaves wandering around the interior backlands of the Northeast with neither occupations nor resources. During the late 1870s, and again during the late 1880s, droughts brought death to a half million people in the interior». Landowners exploited those lacking money or influence, also backing the 1889 bloodless military coup that overthrew the Brazilian emperor Don Pedro II and established a republic supported by the their own elites.

During those years, «the Counselor (Antonio Conselheiro, peripatetic preacher, wandering the Brazilian backlands and preaching the preeminence of God, the predominance of sin, and the promise of penance) settled in Canudos, below Monte Favela». (Perlman:25) The very name of the «bush with spiked leaves and oil-yielding nuts [that] survives in stony soil» became the name for squatter settlements that in a similar manner started growing «along the hillsides and in the lowlands of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and other Brazilian cities. Like their namesake, the favela communities thrive on little and provide sustenance to many». (Perlman:24) «Thousands followed him – landless farmers, freed slaves, disgruntled workers and indigenous peoples», and there Conselheiro created a millenarian outpost. (Perlman:25) In the fall of 1897, after several unsuccessful attempts to forcibly break

2 Quoted in Lewis Mumford, 1961, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*, p. 464.

up the community, the republican federal government marched in militarily, killing 15,000 residents – mostly male – and committing other ignominious actions. «The decommissioned soldiers returning from the Canudos war disembarked in Rio and, waiting in vain for land grants promised by the army, pitched their tents on a hillside alongside the former slaves and street vendors already camping» and gradually building shacks to replace their tents. After an overcrowded tenement – *Cabeça do Porco* (Pig's Head) – was razed and 1.000 persons displaced, the landlord owned a vacant plot of land there, and thus «gave the displaced residents permission to construct shacks with wood provided by the government – but not to use any permanent building materials». (Perlman:26)

Continual migratory flows converged from Bahia and elsewhere in the Brazilian countryside to the big city of Rio de Janeiro. «Most had sold all they owned to pay for the ticket to Rio and had no money at all for housing. The solution to their problem of finding shelter was to build shacks and eventually settlements on vacant lands, typically on steep hillsides, or *morros*, or in flood-prone swamps». So they grew from tiny settlements into larger distinctive communities. (Perlman:XVIII)

This people adapted rapidly and astutely to the city and developed creative coping mechanisms, whereas, on the contrary, the city did not adapt to them.³ «Rio had been the seat of the Portuguese empire during the Napoleonic wars, and it became the national capital when Brazil became a republic, in 1989»⁴; a citadel of the elite, large

3 «It was the fear of the Right and the hope of the Left that the disparity between their conditions and the surrounding opulence would turn the squatters into angry revolutionaries. The population at large viewed the squatters as other, rather than as part of the urban community, and this view was legitimized [...] and used to justify public policies of favela removal. Marginality thus [...] bec[a]me a material and ideological force.» (Perlman:12)

4 «In January (*Janeiro*) of 1502, Portuguese navigators, mistaking the entrance of Guanabara Bay for the mouth of a river (*rio*), gave the city of Rio de Janeiro its name. [...] In 1763, Rio de Janeiro became the capital of colonial Brazil supplanting Salvador da Bahia. [...] Rio has suffered severe job loss due to deindustrialization; the move of the national capital to Brasília; and the move of business, commercial, cultural, and intellectual centrality to São Paulo. It also

landowners and later large industrialists. (Perlman:XVIII) Residents of favelas are thus not “marginal”⁵ to society, conversely tightly integrated into it – albeit in an *asymmetrical* manner. (Perlman:14) Fore-running “new urbanism” retraced the organic curves of the hillsides rather than a rigid grid pattern, «with their highdensity, low-rise architecture, featuring facades variously angled to catch a breeze or a view, and shade trees and shutters to keep them cool. The building materials were construction-site discards and scraps that would now be called “recycled materials.” They were owner-designed, owner-built, and owner-occupied». Although the city refused to provide running water and electricity to these communities, creating a danger to public health – electrical connections were hooked into the power lines.

During the period 1890–1906, Rio experienced a severe shortage of low-income housing. Pereira Passos, the mayor of the federal district of Rio in the early years of the twentieth century, imagined Rio as a “tropical Paris” – inspired by Hausmann’s grand-scale planning – and so envisaged the destruction of “unsightly” favelas, *cortiços* (tenements), *casas de comodors* (rooming houses), and *albergues* (shelters) where the city’s poor were living.

His early urban renewal project destroyed an untold numbers of favelas, *cortiços* and various other buildings. In 1907 the federal director of public health Osvaldo Cruz «launched his own campaign to sanitize the Morro da Favela», giving residents – in vain – orders of evacuation. The number of shack dwellings had only been increasing, assuming in the 1920s⁶ “favela” as the generic term for «squatter

suffered a decline in tourism due to fear of violence starting in the mid 1980s». (Perlman:49,52)

5 «Beginning in the mid-1960s, several seminal writers, including José Nun, Anibal Quijano, Manuel Castells, Florestan Fernandes, and Fernando Henrique Cardoso, challenged this conventional “wisdom.” Empirical studies of Latin American cities [...] served to discredit the propositions of marginality and the erroneous stereotypes surrounding the urban poor [...] showed how the concept of marginality was being used in academic and public policy discourse to blame the victim». (Perlman:14)

6 «The first legal recognition of favelas was in the late 1930s, when the government categorized them as “an aberration”». (Perlman:27)

settlements, shantytowns, and all types of irregular settlements, or “subnormal agglomerations” as they were referred to in census and planning documents». (Perlman:27) Favelas were seen as a grave threat to the well-being of city people. «The 1937 *Codigo de Obras* (Building Code) prohibited them, expressly forbidding the building of new favelas and banning the expansion of existing ones, or the use of permanent building materials in favela construction». Conundrums were as follows: «city planners found their self-built barracos abominable but prohibited any efforts to make them into decent homes; they wanted them destroyed but failed to provide any alternative». (Perlman:27) In the post–World War II period, city-ward migration to Rio dramatically increased, but as those prime locations began to fill up, the newcomers went further up into the hillsides, and away from the city’s core. «After the military coup of April 1, 1964, established a dictatorship, Rio and Brazil’s other metropolitan areas lost the right to elect their own mayors. These positions, considered critically important for “national security,” were made appointed positions accountable only to the national government in Brasília».

The mayor’s office and the City Council of Rio to handle these multiple requests – by favela commissions and committees requesting or demanding water, electricity, paving, steps, street lighting, and assurances – required each favela to create a Residents’ Association (a single entity representing the community). «Residents elected a leader and a slate of other officers, and the Residents’ Associations took on many essential functions. Together they organized coalitions, first a Federation of the Favela Associations of Guanabara (FAFEG), and then – after the fusion of the city and state in 1975 – the Federation of Residents’ Associations of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAMERJ). These federations enjoyed considerable autonomy and had a fair degree of bargaining power over candidates for positions on City Council (*vereadores*) until the mid-1980s, when the drug lords began to take them over». (Perlman:28)

As «people did not get land titles (though massive removal did stop by the end of the 1970s) [...] the stigma against them (and fear of proximity to them) increased

sharply». (Perlman:15) During the 1980s and 1990s the development community regarded macroeconomic issues over issues of poverty and inequality.⁷ «The neoliberal wisdom that prevailed during that time among policy-makers and many funding sources was that only through a series of rigorous austerity measures, collectively known as “structural adjustment,” could market forces produce sufficient economic growth to trickle down to the poor». (Perlman:XXI)

«Despite all efforts to discourage the growth of new favelas and contain the growth of existing ones, Rio’s favelas have grown considerably faster than the rest of the city, in every decade from 1950 to 2000.» Furthermore, the older ones have expanded vertically and horizontally as new migrants arrive, families grow and rental units are added on – reflecting high demand for space and the total freedom from zoning regulations or construction codes. (Perlman:29)

In response to renewed threats of favela evictions, in 2004 a well-respected NGO organized a symposium titled “*Favela é Cidade: Não a Remoção*” (The favela is the city: No to removal). «The speakers and the audience were a mixture of favela residents and leaders from all parts of Rio, city, state, and federal government representatives involved with housing and urban development, academics, the media, and foundations linked with big banks and microfinance. [...] Policy-makers [did still] see the potential use of the favela territory for land speculation and capital accumulation (often under the pretext of environmental protection).» (Perlman:XXIII) The latest government attempt to prevent expansion from growing up into the hillsides and out into forested areas was begun in 2009 under Rio’s Mayor Eduardo Paes by the construction of reinforced concrete containing walls around the

7 «[...] I could not find convincing linkages between macro-level changes – such as the transformation from dictatorship to democracy, the progression from economic boom to inflation, stagflation, and relative stabilization; or the changeover from punitive to pro-poor public policies – and the ups and downs in the lives of the favelados. What I found was a much more complex situation, with contradictory implications that did not lead to simple conclusions or solutions». (Perlman:XXII)

favelas, starting with Santa Marta – with up to 80 more in line.⁸

Favela-Bairro is the most ambitious and extensive squatter upgrading program so far, funded by the Inter-American Development Bank, with contributions from the National Caixa Economica and local municipal government. According to the creator, promoter, director, founder of the program within IBD, Jose Brakarz, «the third replenishment includes provisions to include the larger favelas, to attend to social development and job creation and to encourage greater citizen participation». (Perlman:364,note12)⁹ There could be a whole chapter to delve into, that will be here superseded, dedicated to “Reflections on Public Policy”, as the scenario takes many turns – eviction, upgrade, pacification – and different actors, projects names with arguably unequivocal interpretation on results. (see Perlman, Chap.11)

The informal city in Rio accounts for more than a third of the population, being the rest composed of legitimate neighbourhoods called *bairros*. «The difference between the up-scale bairros of Lagoa, Leblon, Ipanema, and Jardim Botânico and the popular bairros such as Tijuca, Irajá, and São Goncalo show up on the HDI as the same difference from Belgium and Burkina Faso». (Perlman:48) However, over the past decade, the inequality index for Brazil has been declining.¹⁰

8 «The walls are supposedly to protect the natural environment by limiting favela growth, and to “pacify” the favela territories by controlling the drug traffic, but [people say] they are being built to hide the favelas [...] in anticipation of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics [...]. The residents feel imprisoned and demeaned by the walls, which are aggressively ugly [...] in a colorful community [...] in the midst of greenery». (Perlman:29)

9 «The program will target 30 favelas and six unregulated settlements and it is expected to benefit 100,000 people. “With its ambitious Morar Carioca initiative, Rio has set itself the goal of fully integrating and upgrading the city’s low-income neighborhoods by 2020,” said IDB President Luis Alberto Moreno.» Pioneer Favela-bairro program that is being replicated in other large Latin American cities. (IDB 2010)

10 «This is due in part to the effects of the wide-reaching Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Program, *Bolsa Família*, which provides stipends to poor families on the condition that they invest in the health and education of their children». (Perlman:48) Brazil’s GINI coefficient in 2001 of 60,1 has slowly decreased touching 54,7 in 2011.

«Tell me and I will forget.

Show me and I may remember.

Involve me and I will understand.»

Chinese proverb (quoted in Perlman:304)

II. ROCINHA MEDIA

Being the biggest and most famous favela in Rio, Rocinha is the centre of small, medium, big-size reaching media, developed either grass-rootly or with the help of third-party actors. The inhabitants have never been thoroughly censused, but estimates roughly show more than 200.000 people living densely in a very small area. A very interesting account of Rocinha history has been given by “The history of Rocinha narrated by ROC TV” (A história da Rocinha contada pela TV ROC). [<http://rocinha.org/blog/?p=2304>] or another take by the “Mundo Real” [<http://1mundoreal.org/about/about-rocinha>] – a collaborative community-based organisation for «research, education and direct services», based in Rocinha.

A broad distinction between community media and mass media can be drawn as community media affects people’s lives in a more direct way. Viewers are provided with information that relates closely to the peculiarities of their surroundings and also have the significant advantage of being able to participate in the production of programs. (see definitions of “community” in Medrado:124-125) What recently has been proposed is «a shift from “alternative” media to “citizens’ media” “*because alternative media rests on the assumption that these media are alternative to something, this definition will easily entrap us into binary thinking: mainstream media and their alternative, that is alternative media*”». She adds that this label limits the potential of these media to «“*resisting the alienating power of the mainstream*”, blinding us from the other instances of change and transformation», therefore adopting categories like the «“rhizomatic” reality, where community media have to build connections with commercial and public service media, with the market and

with the state in order to survive». (Medrado, 2007:125-126)

The AMARC (World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters) defines “community based media” as such if they “provide direct access for citizens and associations to participate in the practice of mass communication”: public access television in that «ideally, community members are responsible for suggesting ideas, producing programmes and are allowed to become involved in all facets of the station’s activities everyday activities». Many scholars have read the influence of Paulo Freire active audience/active producer relationship. «In his Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire (2002) proposed anew dialogical form of education, in which ‘educators and learners all become learners assuming the same attitude as cognitive subjects discovering knowledge through one another and through the objects they try to know. It is not a situation where one knows and the others do not’ [...] Similarly to ‘learners’ who become ‘educators’, ‘audiences’ become ‘producers’ and the lines that separate the two are blurred». (Medrado, 2007:126)

Still there are nuances, since «active audience/active producer relationship is not devoid of challenges, and unfortunately not all community stations can be as democratic and open to participation as scholars and practitioners would hope». (Medrado, 2007:127)

The “Observatório Mídia” (Media Observatory) of the project “Mídia e Favela” accompanied daily, throughout six months, newspapers as O Globo, Extra e Meia-Hora, scanning the content for central or transversal topics related to favelas and other *espaços populares* (spaces of the people). Among the different figures and findings (“Principais resultados do levantamento de mídia alternativa” in Observatório:25-29), for example, they showed how “*violência, criminalidade e drogas*” (violence, crime and drugs) has been predominant in the journalistic narration construction reaching more than 70% of share. (Observatório:33-36) The survey realised in 2011 identified 104 media of communication present in favelas and *espaços populares* inside the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, at the top: blogs

(23), printed newspapers (18) and radios (12). Of the 73 who answered, also 39 had an internet accessibility (blogs, sites, web-TVs, web-radios etc.), and 11 of the 19 newspaper had a digital counterpart. (Observatório:25-26) The most accessed ones, with more than 100 thousands monthly visits are: Portal Rocinha.org (almost 900.000), Enraizados (web-radio+site+Blog) (around 600.000), Jonal Campinart Dicas e Fatos (about 20.000). (Observatório:26-27) Of 18 printed media, two had a circulation inferior of 1.000 examples, 13 in between 1.000 and 10.000, and three went beyond 20.000 exemplars (one reaching 50 thousands). Being asked when they started, the vast majority (45) answered they were born in the last decade. In 2011 appeared 8 new media, while in 1990s were identified 8 creation initiatives and in the 1980s were registered two. The majority of media (48) didn't feature neither national, private nor NGO partnerships. Ten have or have had a public, two a private and four both public and private ones. (Observatório:30; see also Anexo II “Desde que ano o veículo existe?”, in Observatório:46-47)

They also mapped the presence of media in different community areas: *Zona Norte* (7), *Zona Sul* (5), *Zona Oeste* (5), *Centro* (1), *Baixada* (3). And relatively to the Southern ones, specifically Rocinha listed: *Barraco@dentro*, *FavelaDaRocinha.com*, *Rádio Roc*, *FavelaDaRocinha*, *Portal Rocinha.org*, *Rádio Brisa*, *TV Tagarela*. (Observatório:29, see also Da Cruz:145)

II. ROCINHA MEDIA: *TV ROC & Pirate TVs*

«Television, followed by radio, is the dominant medium in Brazil, where illiteracy rates are high among the lower classes and the use of print media is low. [...] One network, *Globo*, which supported the military government and was in turn supported by the dictatorships that lasted from the 1960s into the 1980s, has dominated broadcast television in Brazil for approximately forty years, although its influence has diminished significantly» still tends to have the strongest signals, and in remote places like Rocinha, it's not rarely the only viewable broadcast channel. «For

further discussion of television in Brazil, readers may wish to consult Sergio Mattos (2000), who provides an in-depth investigation of the history and literature of broadcast in Brazil, and Lopes (1991), who surveys much of the communication studies literature about that country». (Letalien:111, see Bibliography)¹¹

TV ROC was initiated in 1997 by a consortium, composed of three communications' corporations and one financial institution – UIH, SMR, Globo Network and Icatu Bank; although today it's only NET – providing national and international cable television channels – Futura, Cartoon Network, Discovery Channel, etc. – to the residents of Favela da Rocinha, believed not to be able to afford this “luxury”. «TV ROC's community channel, which is called Channel 30, was created in order to meet a legal requirement. In Brazil, there is a federal law that requires cable television providers to offer one community channel to the communities they cover». TV ROC obtains from *NET Brasil* the package of international and national channels and the residents have to pay a monthly reduced subscription fee. They make use of a sort of informal advertising, rendering themselves a «hybrid between a cable (commercial) television provider, a station with public service legal obligations and a community television station»: “anarchic” and “rhizomatic” connections. «With Preto Bom beans, for example, [TV ROC] deal was to allow them to advertise on Channel 30 for three months. They would then donate 40 kilos of beans every month and TV ROC would distribute the beans to the community». (Medrado, 2007:129-131)

The empirical results brought by Medrado suggest that the majority of producers are not necessarily members of the community. «The case study of TV ROC exposes serious constraints on residents' participation and the station has to make several

11 In Rocinha, «additionally, parents often noted that their children watched cartoons and that such behaviors were preferable to playing in the streets or alleys. Indeed, several parents commented that they could no longer imagine getting by without the cartoons to help keep their children off the streets and at least somewhat out from under foot.» (Letalien:117)

compromises with the commercial and public sectors in order to survive. These challenges are also increased by the fact that television is a much more expensive medium than for example radios, especially in the context of favelas where there's little attention is given by the government and residents have to make ends meet.

Presenting a mixture of elements from commercial, public service and community television, the station exists in an 'anarchic' and 'rhizomatic' reality and does not fit the models which have clear-cut, black and white divisions between the three sectors. This shows in its airing of stateproduced programs, the pro-community media regulation that is at the basis of their existence, as well as in the fact that it is being run by a commercial operator, and pushes its producers to find sponsorships.» (Medrado, 2007: 133-134)

Another important Medrado study has been done in 2009 questioning "To what extent does TV ROC achieve empowerment and participation in the community of Rocinha?" and "Does TV ROC reduce the social gap within Rocinha, therefore facilitating social change in the community?" (Medrado, 2009: 1). Trying to sum up the findings, it can be said that «TV ROC has many flaws. The community channel represents a thin slice of the sweet cake of selling cable subscriptions to a market of more than 120,000 potential consumers. As expected, Channel 30's technical quality drastically differs from that of the other cable channels. *Expresso Rocinha* – Channel 30's daily news program – can certainly not compete with CNN. However, the positive side outweighs the negative. [...] When referring to the station, community members use words such as trust, accessibility and even friendship, leading to the conclusion that TV ROC does represent a step toward the future of communication, participation and social change.» (Medrado, 2009: 23)

There were also three providers, "pirate" systems that provide «whichever signals they were able to obtain, which included the freely available broadcast stations». Efforts were made to obtain the signals of the most popular narrowcast stations – «most importantly the Cartoon Network, a sports channel, and a movie channel». The three "pirate TVs" «each competed with TV Roc but apparently not with each other:

each seemed to have staked out terrain that did not overlap with the terrain of either of the other alternative systems». (Letalien:114-115) Both Roc and the authorities are aware of the illegal systems but won't or can't stop them. «That the existence of the three is already public knowledge seems to indicate that harm is unlikely to come to residents from this study». (Letalien:115)

II. ROCINHA MEDIA: *Radio Brisa & Radio Rocinha*

In Brazil, thirty years before television started broadcasting, in 1923 the first radio emission was on air. The “Rádio Nacional” inaugurated in 1936, was a mark in Brazilian communication history. Following National Research for Sampling of Housing (“Pesquisa Nacional por Amostras de Domicílios”), in 2000 the 90,3% of inhabitants had at least one radio. The rising of community radios in the 80s was framed within a political societal mobilisation, in the “democratisation” process of Brazil, as well as NGOs, alternative newspapers, inhabitant associations. (Da Silva:11) It could be considered as the most massive media, also cheap and of ample reach. (Da Silva:10). «There are between 5,000 and 10,000 community radio stations in Brazil, but the regulator (Anatel) recognises only 2,620 active radio stations in total, including community radios, plus 1,270 waiting for approval». (Milan:603) Da Silva studied and participated in “Radio Brisa”, taking it as a model representative of specific radio programming, musical choices, event organisations – artists and politicians visiting, but also citizens and shopkeepers – and expression of a radio involving the community where they were located and providing the services. (Da Silva:7,8)

There's a proudly communitary “Radio Rocinha” that envisions the appreciation of local artists, also selling their music via internet. In less than 6 months it started live on air programs – like “Botequim”, a multimedia chat box where fan from social networks can interact in channel. Yet another prosperous fruit of the NGO Rocinha.org seeding, administering Rocinha portal, as well as the BEAR (“*Balcão de*

Empregos e Anúncios da Rocinha”), Employment Board and Announcements of Rocinha. Ocimar Santos, Director-President of Rádio Rocinha, writes «*é possível ouvir “a voz do morro sim senhor!” de qualquer lugar do mundo*» (it's possible to hear “the voice of the *morro* with no owners!” from anywhere in the world). [<http://radiorocinha.org>]

II. ROCINHA MEDIA: *Internet portal & Blog*

In 2006 an Internet portal project was starting, explicitly trying to counterbalance the unfair amount of violence and drug related news spread by big media, oppose misconception or simply resist its power. The NGO and Portal were borne together with the community, growing to be respected and valued as a defender and representative of Rocinha in the web. Being a domain “.org”, the portal features philanthropic traits and institutions, in partnership with UPMMR (“União Pró-Melhoramentos dos Moradores da Rocinha”, Union Pro-Improvement of Rocinha Residents) and the main NGOs of the *bairro*. From this portal sprout many other favela-oriented pages, connected and linked. In the no-profit spirit of the organisation, also advertising is free of costs, as all the other services. [<http://www.rocinha.org/institucional>]

Rocinha BLOG introduces itself as “O Blog da Rocinha Real” (The blog of the real Rocinha), starting in February 2010 appears to be discontinued – last post in April 2011. [<http://www.rocinha.org/noticias>] Probably superseded by “Notícias” (news) section of Rocinha portal, which instead is regularly updated as also Barraco@dentro. [<http://barracoadentro.com>]

II. ROCINHA MEDIA: *Printed media*

According to the Observatório de Favelas report of 2012, there should be at least 18 different newspapers in Rio communities. “Jornal Arte Astral da Rocinha” – starting at the beginning of 90s – and “O Tagarela” were the first newspapers of

Rocinha. [<http://rocinhaemnoticias.blogspot.it>] There's a relevant gap in research about the printed media, making hard to retrieve materials (as also the availability of their online duplicates seem to be often poor).

«There is another world, that of humble people [...] The only difference is that these other inhabitants of the world appear very little in the media: they are not interviewed, nor photographed, their ideas have not been reported in studies nor in the news, thus ending up forgetting that Brazil has far more to do with those faces than ours.»

Martha Medeiros (Quoted in De Queirós Mattoso:12)

III. IDENTITIES

Directly or not, in almost everything identities are borne, shaped or re-contextualised. In favelas the negotiation or struggle is way more intense and peculiar than in the rest of the city, for example. In the absence of public power, residents gathered creating what Castells call “state of social well-being” at the base of solidarity, the most powerful bairros helping the poorer ones. Following Castells' “The power of identity” (2000): «each identity is built making use of raw material granted by history, geography, biology, collective memory, personal fantasies, power apparatuses and religious revelations”. All of this is then codified and processed by groups that re-organise themselves from their symbolic codes. (Da Silva:15) «Identity for favela residents, aside from characteristics of age, gender, and color, is constantly being defined and redefined in the struggles over inclusion / exclusion and marginalization / integration. It says a lot about life in Rio that being a human being (*gente*) cannot be taken as a given for a third of the city's residents, and that the educational and job opportunities that would change that are not readily available. The lack of opportunity for the poor is – in itself – a form of dehumanization and oppression». (Perlman:323) In stigmatised communities, there is a strong quest for

status through possessions. (Perelman:255) Local organisations as “Afro Reggae” and “Nós do Morro” have tried to reinforce the cultural identities of Afro-Brazilians and favela dwellers, but still the status symbols mostly continue to be international brand-named shirts and sneakers, along with cars, motorcycles, etc. [...] as prestige signifiers», even when not functioning. Being global media propaganda «“*You are what you own,*” the young urban poor begin to look to drug lords as their role models». (Perlman:258)

The relationship between poverty and person-hood in Latin America, and particularly in Brazil, was «forged in the history of colonialism and slavery and fine-tuned under various authoritarian regimes [...]. This legacy has made it possible for educated and otherwise civilized people to slip into regarding favela residents as “other,” while still maintaining a positive image of their own humanity». (Perlman:323)

Many scholars pointed out the linkage between «the function of democratic speech (agenda setting, exploring mutuality in feelings and experience, affiliation and affection, maintaining autonomy, witness and self-expression, reformulation and reconceptualisation, and community building) and direct access to communicative forums [...] “*free from economic and editorial constraint, access television provides ordinary citizens with the resources and facilities necessary to participate in democratic talk*” [...] but also of voice and expression broadly defined. Community media are channels to voice concerns and to translate dreams and desires into narratives, music, and other forms of expression: it is about exercising the “*imagine that...*”». (Milan:606)

In this process, community media are an empowering way to «exercise and express the imagination, both as a means to deploy imagination and as a way to translate imagination into practice [...] acting by phrasing and expressing the possibility of change through a collective process». Also, on the process-related level, participation makes community, and community ties are the network of and for local

development. «A community that can imagine a better world by daily exercising “its local democracy” is an empowered community, that is a community equipped to change. It is only then that the community can effectively become a driving force for development projects». (Milan:607)

III. IDENTITIES: “O Morro” vs “o Asfalto”

The hill and the asphalt: this is the negative identity that often exemplifies formal versus informal city. Although J.S. Silva argues that «*a cidadania é uma condição a priori e não a posteriori*» (citizenship it's an a-priori condition, not an a-posteriori one), in its article “*A favela imaginária da classe média*” (Favela in the middle-class imaginary). It's the affirmation of the “discourse of absence” that reveals a very common representation of favela not constituting the city. There's the bairro – legal and formal – and there's the favela as non-city, space where the real exercise of citizenship doesn't occur. From this moves the “citizenship redemption” discourse, for example, in which is implicit the idea that one person being once citizen for being in the city. It's not there anymore. The rationale needs to be inverted, away from the socio-centric logic that ignores daily practices of favela residents: Silva's claim, that entering the social system means both rights and duties – health-care, security, education, work «*enfim, à humanidade*» (at last, humanity).

III. IDENTITIES: UPP & Drug-lords vis-à-vis Comunidade

“I don't prefer the drug traffic, but I don't want to swap one [abusive authority] for the other. I want to have peace but not have police breaking down my door”. That's what a young favela resident voiced, interviewed in Snowden article¹². «We are putting officers through more rigorous training on how they deal with people when

12 Nearly 100 students, researchers and scholars gathered at the State University of Rio de Janeiro's (UERJ) Social and Policy Studies Institute (IESP) in Botafogo to discuss the Pacifying Police Units (UPP), youth and sociability in Rio's favelas.

they search for drugs or guns. We're teaching them they must act with respect and restraint», somehow responded Col. Caldas, UPP coordinator, in Coelho interview.

Since 2008, Brazil's pacifying police units have brought 36 favelas under their control. Brazil's first police UPP pacification unit was installed in the Santa Marta favela, in Rio de Janeiro five years ago this month (December 2013). Created by Rio's leading politicians, the UPPs are viewed as a new breed of law enforcement that involves policing recovered territories, common after Rio's elite police battalion (*BOPE*) has cleared them of drug traffickers. Reclaimed lands previously inaccessible to the authorities are permanently occupied by the UPPs to maintain security. A total of 9.000 newly trained officers – set to rise to 12.000 by 2016 – combine policing duties with social service programs. But, some of the pacified favelas are seeing an up-tick in violence despite the UPP presence, and a recent scandal where dozens of UPP officers were arrested for the murder of a construction worker has put some power back into criminal hands as locals look at the pacifying initiatives with renewed scepticism.¹³

«“We already feel as if we are under military rule in the favelas with the heavy-handed approach taken by many of the UPP officers,” says Carlos de Souza Nacida, secretary of the Rocinha residents' association. “Bringing the military in would only serve to alienate the community, which is still struggling to deal with the criminal actions of the police following the death of Amarildo,” he says, referring to the October arrest of 25 UPP officers for allegedly murdering construction worker Amarildo de Souza in Rocinha». (Coelho)

13 «In a report released this month by the Institute of Social and Political Studies (IESP) a non-profit research unit based at the UERJ, the majority of these comunidades are still dominated by organized criminals and drug gangs. An estimated 45 percent of low-income comunidades, or 450 of the 1,001, are under the control of criminal syndicates, typically made up of corrupt current and former police officers. According to the IESP report, drug gangs rule a further 37% of comunidades (370) with the UPPs stationed in just 18% (181)». (Coelho)

Final remarks

What triggered this inquiry was a brief visit to Rio de Janeiro, as Rocinha matter of media fruition, among many other issues and topics, particularly struck me. There, proudly stated by Laura, a resident and guide, the very favela has its own media constellation: local TV channel, three radio stations, two newspapers, one magazine.

I planned on drawing a concise but solid background of the main historical turning points (eradication, policies, *Programa Favela-Bairro*, military-governmental presence). Then, after having use current research mapping, scratching the surface of the diverse community media universe, with the focus on Rocinha, the main media and identity analyses were only sketched, due to limitations of time and scope, becoming now suggestions for further research advancements.

How do media articulate topics, issues and address them, especially content-wise, to themselves? Probing deeper in the choices and strategies, do media configure in a way that is in reality – let alone the claims – complementary, alternative or antagonist (using Arne Hintz “Civil Society Media and Global Governance” definitions)? In analysing the content, there's also the need to fill another research gap, about the users: can we trace how media influence their identity – as a common/communal one? Recent changes and developments – foreseeing World Cup and Olympics – deployed new actors and established novel social settings require attentive theoretical and empirical analyses: how's changing the favela residents relation with *the outside* (“the city”)? And what about the UPP forces *inside*?

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