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## Shared Photography: (Photo)journalism and political mobilisation in Rio de Janeiro's favelas

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## ‘SHARED PHOTOGRAPHY’: (PHOTO)JOURNALISM AND POLITICAL MOBILISATION IN RIO DE JANEIRO’S FAVELAS

*One of the most important civic phenomena emerging from favelas in Rio de Janeiro today is ‘community (photo)journalism’, which is practised by favela residents who are trained in journalistic and artistic techniques to raise critical awareness and promote political mobilisation in- and outside favelas. This paper looks at some of the work produced at one training place for community photographers, the agency-school *Imagens do Povo* (“Images of the People”) in Nova Holanda, a favela located in Rio’s North Zone.*

*Using an ethnographic approach, this article first provides an account of the working practices of the School and its photographers. This is followed by a discussion of a small sample of their photographic work, for which we employ a social semiotic paradigm of image analysis. This methodological synergy provides insights into how these journalists document long-term structural as well as ‘spectacular’ violence in favelas, while at the same time striving to capture some of the ‘beauty’ of these communities. The paper concludes that this form of photographic work constitutes an important step towards a more analytical brand of journalism with different news values that encourage a more context-sensitive approach to covering urban violence and favela life.*

KEYWORDS: alternative media; photojournalism; news values, *Imagens do Povo*; multimodality.

### Introduction

One of the most important civic phenomena emerging from Rio’s favelas is ‘community (photo)journalism’ [*(foto)jornalismo popular*], which is practised by favela residents who are trained to employ journalistic and artistic techniques to raise awareness of cultural, social and political issues inside favelas and the larger city. This work often denounces human rights violations by the state, promotes political mobilisation around the “right to the city” (Lefebvre 1968), but just as importantly, “celebrates” favelas and their residents, thereby challenging the restrictive and largely negative mainstream media coverage about these communities. In this paper, we look at one such training place, the agency-school *Imagens do Povo* (‘Images of the People’) to explore community photographers’ motivations and attempts to provide visual counter-discourses that also establish alternative news values. It will be argued that this work differs from the ‘on the spot news’ that chimes with the same news values as mainstream news coverage. By generating images that present a different view from *inside* favelas, the School’s community photographers offer an alternative brand of visual journalism that presents forms of visual information and knowledge that is under-represented and marginalised in Rio’s dominant mainstream media. Our intention in this article is therefore to explore how this alternative media production contests and challenges “the media monopoly on producing symbolic forms” (Atton 2015, 6).

In what follows, we first provide an overview of the history of *Imagens do Povo* and its approach to photography. We then present a small sample of photographic work to explore how the philosophy of the School’s founder, João Roberto (J.R.) Ripper has influenced community photographers’ output. To this end we look at two distinct, yet often overlapping, categories of community photographers (*fotógrafos populares*). Both groups regard photography as a form of

critical and political expression that aims to show solidarity and support for the daily struggles of favela residents and to counteract the stigma held about them in the wider city. Both stress the importance of doing their photographic work *with* people from favelas, not on or for them.

We have chosen the photographs we present in consultation with three photographers from *Imagens do Povo*, which they regard as representative of their work. For the analysis of these images we use a social semiotic paradigm of image analysis (Kress and Leeuwen 1996/ 2006; Machin and Polzer 2015), which is informed by ethnographic fieldwork in the form of interviews. These consisted of informal conversations and semi-structured interviews with seven photographers, including the three photographers presented in this paper, three former coordinators from *Imagens do Povo* and its founder J.R. Ripper. Depending on the person and the situation, sometimes the interviews went on for two and a half hours and sometimes for as little as 35 minutes. Wherever possible, we went to the photographers' communities to gain an insight into their everyday life.

"Understanding that interviewing and observation are mutually reinforcing qualitative techniques is a bridge to understanding the fundamentally people-oriented nature of qualitative inquiry" (Patton 2002, 27).

Furthermore, we used around 50 hours of video recording from filmmaker Guillermo Planel, which contained many lengthy interviews with community photojournalists. In addition, we acquired from Ripper his personal notes on 'shared photography', videos and his vast image database. We used this data as an important body of evidence to better understand how community photographers are influenced by Ripper's own professional career and philosophy. We believe that an analysis of alternative media is best served by qualitative methods, as they offer an internal approach to understanding the culture of participants and a search for the meaningfulness of production as a process (Jensen 1991). The latter is particularly important, as it is one of the stated aims of the School and its photographers.

### **A social-semiotic approach to visual communication and alternative media**

The news photograph has been associated with providing visual evidence and bearing witness to events. But photojournalists do more than simply record reality and document moments in time. They create complex imagery that symbolises broader ideas, values and attitudes. Images also have to fit established news frames and news values such as 'conflict', which have become 'common sense' and are often taken for granted. Here we are interested in how alternative media actors 'de-naturalise' some of these practices and construct realities that oppose the conventions and news values of dominant mainstream media. To do this, we use an emerging tradition in visual communication, Multimodality (Machin and Polzer 2015). Multimodality is an approach to image analysis that allows us to go beyond a description of images merely in aesthetic terms to provide a more systematic and critical analysis of visual communication. Unlike more traditional semiotic approaches (e.g. Barthes) that explore how individual signs connote and symbolise, Multimodality is more interested in how these signs work together to create meaning. We therefore look at how alternative visual journalists harness certain

visual 'semiotic resources' to accomplish their specific communicative goals to make meaning or create 'meaning potentials'.

A large body of literature has developed under the name of 'alternative media' or 'alternative journalism', which has explored, analysed and critiqued its principles and practices (Atton 2015). Atton (2015, 6) defines 'alternative or community media' as media that "are able to construct realities that oppose the conventions and representations of the mainstream media". Another term that is similar to 'alternative media' and used particularly in the context of South America, is 'citizens media', which Rodríguez (2011, 24) understands as communication spaces where citizens can learn to manipulate their own languages, codes, signs, and symbols empowering them to name the world in their own terms. Citizens' media are therefore also connected to socio-political change. However, Atton (2009) argues that Rodríguez' notion of citizens' media understands media practices not primarily as journalism, but as projects of self-education of certain marginalised groups and that in Rodríguez' work we learn little about journalism practice in terms of what and how participants do things and how they learn their practices. He argues that any analysis of alternative media should look at both processes and products. It should consider media content as journalism, not merely as accounts on self-reflexivity (as Rodríguez appears to suggest), as it is not only social relations that can be transformed, but also media forms themselves, discursively and visually.

We therefore adopt Atton's definition of alternative journalism as an analytical category because it adequately captures the work of the community photographers from *Imagens to Povo*. This is because they tend to use participatory models of production and to challenge the conventional news values of 'conflict and controversy', 'negativity', and 'immediacy'. Because they value more 'bottom-up' reporting and an orientation to social change, they are also intent on exposing the everyday, embedded patterns of structural and cultural violence in favelas that underlie and often fuel physical violence.

### **Favelas as sites of contested visualities**

Favelas can be defined as "areas of high population density often characterised by low-quality urban infrastructure and insufficient public services" (Custódio 2014, 139). Roughly 20 per cent of Rio's 6.2 million residents live in favelas, while many others are consigned to the poor northern and western parts of the city and are largely cut-off from the vibrant and economically successful parts of the city's South Zone, where favelas are often closely intertwined with their (upper) middle-class areas. Throughout their history, favelas have been seen as dangerous and violent places that threaten the often adjacent wealthier neighbourhoods of the city [see (Perlman 1975, 2010)]. Repeated and largely unsuccessful attempts to regain control over these areas through sporadic interventions by the army and the military police have given rise to an endless cycle of media discourses that invoke an imagery and rhetoric of Rio as a city 'at war' [see (Biazoto 2011; Caldeira 2000; Mayr 2015; Penglase 2007)] 1. Images are especially potent in conveying these negative messages about favelas. According to Sontag (2003, 19), this is because press photographs have a "deeper bite" than film or television, since they "freeze-frame" events in a single image. She says: "in an area of information overload, the

photograph provides a quick way of apprehending something and a compact form of memorising it”.

This has encouraged mainstream media and audiences to think about events as memorable moments rather than lengthy complex processes and to accept a news world of largely unconnected and decontextualized happenings. So although for example Maré, where *Imagens do Povo* is based, has a long positive history of struggle and achievement, a rich cultural scene and is home to several internationally recognised community organisations, which is documented by some of its community photographers, it is violent confrontations between military police and drug factions struggling over territorial control that dominate mainstream news. Photographers at *Imagens do Povo* however would regard lack of dialogue between residents and authorities and human rights abuses by the military police as the main sources of conflict. They have portrayed Maré and other favelas as communities under siege, especially since the start of ‘Pacification’ in 2008, Rio’s ambitious community policing approach by the Pacifying Police Units (UPPs) (*Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora*) 2. The work produced by photographers from *Images do Povo* at least holds the promise for a more nuanced reporting of processes of events.

### **The Agency-School *Imagens do Povo* and “shared photography”**

*Imagens do Povo* is based in Nova Holanda, one of 16 favelas which form the *Complexo da Maré*, Rio’s largest favela complex with more than 130,000 residents, located in its poor peripheral North Zone. It was designed as a critical school of photography which is inspired by Paulo Freire’s (1997) notion of *conscientização* or ‘conscientisation’, to refer to the awakening of a critical consciousness. Contrary to Brazilian educational tradition, Freire’s work advocates an education in which both student and teacher learn, question, reflect, exchange ideas and both participate in meaning-making. Drawing on Freire’s ideas, *Imagens do Povo* has pursued collaborative projects with favela residents through an intense dialogue with them via workshops, seminars, and activities that all aim to meet favela communities’ demands and needs. It embodies what Ripper has named *fotografia compartilhada* or ‘shared photography’. ‘Shared photography’ is understood as an approach to human interaction that fosters genuine dialogue, interaction and collaboration with the individuals who are being photographed. It is used by Ripper as a learning tool for recognising and representing people’s distinct identities in a way that their dignity as human beings and their differences are preserved. This kind of exchange recognises individuals’ dignity, regardless of whether they are being photographed in a context of armed conflict and ‘pain’ or during their everyday practices.

Ripper stresses the importance of being patient and waiting for the right moment to take a photo, and this should be done by building a relationship, a dialogue, with people. In his words,

Wait till you have a kinder gesture... Sometimes you spend two, three, four, hours at someone’s place, but there will be a more delicate time. I usually say: ‘Wait in the house, stay with residents, specially if it is a house where there are curtains in the windows or a house with a wood oven. If there is a

small hole in the roof the light will enter eventually... There will be a time, when the mothers will play with their children and the silk, the curtain, will make this moment even more delicate. It is worth waiting for moments like this'. (Ripper, interview, April 28, 2015)

Fábio Caffé, who graduated from the school and later on became an educator at *Imagens do Povo* explains how Ripper influenced his own approach to photography:

Ripper by quoting Bresson tells us that much more important than the photographs are the people. So, we try to follow this ideal. I believe we should photograph in an attempt to tell the other's story and, in some sense, to be open to learn from that person" (Caffé, interview, January 18, 2011).

Ripper's argument therefore is that the use of the image to tell stories can be 'transformative' when guided by respect for people. This respect values indigenous knowledge and personal accounts by favela residents who experience certain events over those of official and institutional sources. Knowledge therefore starts from the experience of favela residents, which in turn encourages their critical thinking towards social change.

The photographic work produced at *Imagens do Povo* also challenges dominant 'news values', that is, "the taken-for-granted and usually implicit criteria that routinely guide journalists in selecting and constructing news narratives", such as immediacy and individualism (Hackett 2011, 43). In this respect it is worth noting that Sousa (1997) analysed 40 winning images from the World Press Photo's main prize, World Press Photo of the Year, between 1956 and 1995, and found that the news values of the images were the same as those produced by mainstream journalism. He concluded that the award-winning images during 40 years of the prize related to traditional news values, such as 'intensity', 'instant moment', 'proximity', 'consequence', 'opportunity', 'conflict' and 'negativity'. He also identified other, less prominent, categories, such as 'human interest', 'emotion', and 'aesthetical value'. However, he suggested that 'tension and action', which are often related to the category 'conflict' are the photojournalistic news values par excellence. These news values are similar to those identified by Moreira (2014, 177-8) who analysed and compared the news values from 259 news articles from three different Brazilian newspapers, *A Folha de S.Paulo*, *O Estado de S.Paulo* and *O Globo*. She found that the most prominent news values in the three newspapers were 'importance'; 'actuality'; 'exceptionality'; 'proximity' and 'interest' (reader). *Imagens do Povo* would encourage its photographers to consider 'positivity' and 'beauty' as important counter-news values in their portrayal of favela life 3.

The School's community photographers also counteract mainstream views on favelas by playing on mainstream visualities. Sometimes they take the role of news reporters by contributing to the work of mainstream media organisations. For instance, while the mainstream view portrays Rio's South Zone as a 'marvellous city', where 'beauty' is to be found in the rich areas of the upper middle classes, with images of their famous beaches and main tourist attractions, community photographers take favelas and the everyday lives of their residents to the forefront

of Rio de Janeiro. In their work, favelas emerge not as areas of the city that are illegally occupied by their residents, but as integral parts of Rio de Janeiro. On the other hand, while reporting on casualties that occur in their communities, these photographers take the role of photojournalists who are concerned with building a visual narrative of the event rather than a mere snapshot. We will elaborate on this below in our discussion of the images.

Community photographers and mainstream photojournalists are both creators of social reality. In their attempts to narrate the stories of others they create a social representation of reality, which is done within an institutional context (Alsina 2009, 12). Both groups of photographers are influenced by the institutional framework in which they work or have been trained. But while mainstream photojournalists' practices are embedded in newsroom culture and routines, the community photographers' approach is more influenced by Ripper's own professional career and the School's 'alternative' understanding of photography. Ripper worked for many years for the main mainstream newspapers in Rio and, as such, he brought to the School his professional background as a news reporter. However, as he believed that mainstream photojournalism was 'against the poor' (Baroni 2013), he broke with mainstream media organisations and searched for other ways of using photography on behalf of human rights. This position can also be observed in community photographers, who question the possibility or even desirability of 'objectivity'. These photographers acknowledge that they are embedded in social contexts and processes that shape their way of representing. As Luiz Baltar points out,

[The term] popular or community photographer represents our ideological position which is on behalf of human rights. We produce contested visual representations on favelas and their residents to present them in ways that are different to how they are shown in the mainstream media. We put into question established discourses which are part of social imagination. Community photography is a political position. It's a way of seeing and representing the world. It is what you choose to see and represent. A photography which creates empathy towards favela residents and individuals and groups living on the margins. (Luiz Baltar, interview, 29 April 2015)

In the next section, we will look at a small sample of the work of two distinct, yet often overlapping, types of community photographers, who embody some of the main principles and working practices espoused by the School. These two categories were coined by Cangialosi (2015). One is the 'activist-reporter' photographer, whose work highlights social and political issues, such as the ongoing occupation and 'Pacification' of favelas by the military police and the forced evictions of many favela residents from their communities for the 2016 Olympic games. The second category is the 'archivist-documentarian' photographer, whose work focuses more on the more mundane aspects of life in favelas and their popular culture. This work often features social and cultural events and activities, such as music, art, urban sports and graffiti, and has the explicit aim to 'celebrate' the culture in favelas. Both groups regard photography as a form of critical and political expression that seeks to

provide solidarity and support for the daily struggles of favela residents and ultimately to work towards socio-political change.

### **Image analysis**

The image analysis section discusses the work of three independent professional photographers who graduated from the School: Ratão Diniz, Luiz Baltar, and Naldinho Lourenço. The reason for choosing them is that they represent the two overlapping categories of photographers in the School, the 'activist-reporter' and the 'archivist-documentarian'.

We examine six images using a multimodal social-semiotic approach adapted from Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996; 2006) to explore some of the meaning potentials of these photographs. According to this approach, images may be 'narrative' or 'conceptual'. Narrative images represent people and their action(s), while conceptual images are more symbolic and may represent people more in terms of their attributes. Narrative images are also of 'high naturalistic modality', that is they contain details and depth, natural shading and often a background. Conceptual images tend to be more stylized and are 'low modality'.

Kress and Van Leeuwen analyse images in terms of interaction and composition. Interaction refers to the kind of social relationship set up between viewer and image, such as through camera angle position and shot type. Composition relates to where in the image the represented participant is placed and how much of the frame they occupy, what Kress and van Leeuwen call 'salience' and which relates to the degree an element draws attention to itself. Looking at the potential of meaning-making in photographs means going beyond the referential to include the photograph's potential to engage the viewer interpersonally and to create an evaluative stance in them. We therefore look at what evaluative meanings may be provoked by the photographers' choices in content, interaction and composition..

#### *Naldinho Lourenço*

Lourenço, a resident of Maré, originally documented sports events in Maré, but shifted his focus in 2008 to become an activist-reporter, when an eight year old boy was killed by police and he documented the scene (see Figure 1). Since then Lourenço has continued to document the Pacification approach through Rio's military police. He criticises the mainstream media's portrayal of favelas, which he says is distorted by 'the view of the photographer who doesn't live in the favela and goes accompanied by the police, already expecting violence.' Lourenço was mentioned by Amnesty International in 2016 as one of several photographers who have been harrassed by the police and who has had his cultural projects boycotted by members of the Ministry of Culture because of his position against the military occupation of Maré.

[Figure 1 by Lourenço near here]



This image by Lourenço shows the outstretched hand of eight year old Matheus Rodrigues who was killed by a single shot fired by military police during an operation in Maré in 2008, as he left home to buy bread. The medical examiner concluded that the shot hit the front door, ricocheted and killed the boy. He was found still holding a one Real coin in his hand that his mother had given him. Police wanted to remove the body before the arrival of the medical examiner, but were prevented from doing so by residents and the Director of an NGO. Lourenço took the image at the medical examiner's request after the boy's uncle had put the boy on a stretcher and covered his body with a sheet. He then put it on the internet, where it was widely shared [see (Alves and Evanson 2011, 65-71)]. He commented that he wanted to express the outrage that he and other favela residents felt. It was when the dead child's hand opened to reveal the coin that Lourenço took his shot. It is what Perlmutter (1998) has termed an "icon of outrage". This is achieved through the high naturalistic modality of the image, particularly through the use of the semiotic resource of colour, i.e. the bright red of drying blood in the boy's hand and on the sheet used to cover his body. Saturated colours, particularly bright reds and oranges, connote emotional intensity (Machin 2007). Nothing in this image appears to be stylized. The image is narrative, but at the same time conceptual in that it has become a poignant symbol of the many children who become victims of police operations, some of whom unknown and unaccounted for. This is also accented by the shot type, which was taken from a high angle, expressing the utter powerlessness of the victim, but also the viewer who could not prevent this death. But perhaps the image not only asks the viewer to bear witness to death but to act upon what they see. The portrayal of the dead boy's hand with the bloodied coin in it places the viewer in a strong affective relationship with him. Lourenço told us that some people commented that the image reminded them of Jesus's hand on the cross and the coin representing the nail.

[Figure 2 by Lourenço near here]

The picture was taken during the *March for Life* in Maré in February 2015 which was organised by residentes in protest against heavy-handed policing tactics weeks before the protest that had left a number of residentes injured and one dead. The protest was brutally repressed by Rio's *Batalhão de Choque* ('Shock Battalion'). In the image we see a female resident challenging soldiers by quoting from a song by the band *O Rappa* (1999), "Peace without a voice isn't peace, but fear" to express her outrage at police repression 4. Lourenço took the shot from behind the woman, borrowing from a common cinematographic technique, the point-of-view shot (Bordwell and Thompson 2008). The viewer therefore looks at the scene from the viewpoint of the woman, inviting them to identify with her. The shot type is horizontal, placing the viewer and the protester on an equal level. Although we do not see the woman's facial expression, which would allow the viewer to see her emotions, her body stance and the gesture of the raised fist clearly demonstrate her anger, potentially creating strong affect in the viewer. The 'drama' and emotional intensity of this high-modality image is again enhanced by the bright orange colours and the visual weight of the tank and the soldiers who far outnumber the single protester positioned in the bottom left-hand corner. This configuration of meanings is clearly enhanced by its composition. So while this photo has been taken in a

potentially explosive situation, there is also an aesthetic quality to it that demonstrates a concern for composition.

After taking the shot, Lourenço went looking for the woman to interview her about her opinion about police occupation of Maré and incorporated her statements at the 'Political Compositions' exhibition in Rio in April 2016 . Not only does this step provide a greater contextualisation of the wider public security agenda in Rio, it also asks to what extent favela residents see the potential for 'Pacification' in the police.

While mainstream news coverage on favela occupation by the army and the UPPs has mainly focused on the spectacular 'liberation' of favela residents from the grip of criminal factions [see (Dias and Eslava 2013)], Lourenço and others have documented the day-to-day realities of this police occupation, providing important counter-information to the largely superficial and uncritical mainstream media coverage. These mainstream images often *symbolize* peacekeeping, rather than showing us how this is actually done. What the image above connotes is the opposite, namely that despite the UPP's stated intention of 'security, citizenship and social inclusion' of favela residents, their approach may have reinforced the notion of citizenship as a fraught concept in Rio.

### *Ratão Diniz*

Diniz's work is the perfect example of 'shared photography', and comes more under the category of archivist- documentarian, who challenges established (visual) discourses which exclusively associate favelas with violent armed conflict. In his first photo essay *Explosões de Alegria* (Explosions of Joy) he captured people's emotional expressions such as smiles and joy, but also their endurance and resilience in the face of segregation and discrimination. In his book *Em Foto Ratão Diniz*, he reflects on his work by saying "I see much beauty in the favela, and one of the most beautiful wonders I see are the human relations" (Diniz 2014, np). Paraphrasing Ripper, he prefers "a good story to a good photograph", an idea which was also present in the work of documentary photographers Carl Mydans and Eugene Smith. For Diniz, who was also born and raised in Maré, all of his photographic documentations are about resistance, whether he is reporting on popular festivities, forced evictions, police occupations, carnival street parades, graffiti, and the everyday routines of the people from marginalised communities in Brazil 5. In his 2014 book he pays homage to his community, saying that "resistance is a word which defines the daily struggles of Maré residents" (Diniz 2014, np).

[Figure 3 by Diniz near here]

In image 3 Diniz has pictured his mother in her home in Maré watching TV and at the same time offers a glimpse of the alleyway she lives in. The image was taken by the photographer standing in the door frame. Following Ripper's advice that one should begin photographing one's own family as one would be inclined to portray family members in a dignified way, Diniz has dedicated much time to rediscover his own street, his neighbours, and particularly his own mother during the last years of her life. With the barrel distortion and the slightly blurred edges the image is clearly artistic; making it low modality and stylized and betraying an eye for

composition. The image is both narrative and conceptual; it documents, providing us with a glimpse of somebody's life; but it also symbolizes a way of life that Diniz is keen to present:

To photograph our own place... it's truly difficult. Sometimes I observe my mum... I've taken some pictures... how do you see yourself? It's a very challenging process. No, it's a huge conflict. For me, it's an exercise... I always try to photograph my own place. I mean, my mum in particular. I try to grasp her in her daily routines. (...). The most difficult thing is to photograph our own place as we need look at it through different eyes. To make strange what is common. I always try to photograph the alley where I live, which is [known as] the alley of happiness. (Ratão Diniz, interview, November 11, 2010)

Diniz follows Ripper's argument that states that by photographing the people one is close to one may expand this experience to other subjects, exploring the 'beauty' that there is within each of those photographed.

[Figure 4 by Diniz near here]

In image 4 above, Diniz captured the 'resistance' of children from a theatre group at a protest at the World Education Forum 2008 in Nova Iguaçu in the Baixada Fluminense, one of Rio's poor municipalities. The children are commemorating the victims of one of Rio's worst police massacre, in which 29 people were executed by military police who fired randomly at them as they were driving through their area. The balaclavas the children wear are reminiscent of those worn by police during some of their operations. By extending red roses to people they want to indicate that the protest is peaceful.

As for interaction between viewer and represented participants, two boys in the foreground are shot from a horizontal angle in a medium close shot, resulting in what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, 124) call 'close social distance'. All emotional expression is in the two boy's eyes as the rest of their faces is hidden, although one boy to the left, who is slightly more in the background, has his face revealed and is smiling. The boys gaze straight at the viewer in a 'demand' image (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996), which can be seen as an invitation for the viewer to empathise with them. In terms of affect, the viewer is positioned to react empathetically to them. This is achieved both by the interactional meanings (direct gaze, horizontal angle and mid- rather than long shot), and of course the contents of the image. The compositional choices in the image, such as the colour contrast between red, blue and black connote exuberance and energy and may also provoke an aesthetic reaction in the viewer. This strikingly beautiful and moving high-modality and narrative image also personalises the event, expressing the hope of these children for a life without such levels of violence.

*Luiz Baltar*

When Luiz Baltar became a student at the *School for Popular Photographers* in 2012, he had already been documenting social movements during public demonstrations for three years. A Graduate in Fine Arts at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Baltar is influenced by the work of Sebastião Salgado and João Roberto Ripper practices as a photo documentarist.

Since 2009, Baltar's major project has been to document the ongoing forced evictions of favela residents, which is part of Mayor Eduardo Paes' policy to transform Rio de Janeiro into a global city that is set to host the 2016 Olympics. This is testament to the school's tenet of photography as a process. Some of Baltar's work features in the book *'Removals in the Olympic City'* (Faulhaber and Azevedo 2015), which shows the impact of local, state and federal government policies on the lives of the most vulnerable groups. Between January 2009 and December 2013 over 20 000 families were removed from their homes without having being consulted or even informed about these governmental programme (Faulhaber and Azevedo 2015).

Baltar, who has been documenting the removals at Morro da Providência, Rio's first favela, has come to realise that they were not an isolated case, but part of a wider dispute over the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre 1968) between the local and state government and the poor who are being removed from Rio's central areas to the far away West zone of the city. As Baltar notes,

You begin to understand that the process of removal is the first stage of a wider process of urban cleansing, which involves a bigger fight; a fight for the city. And the military occupation functions as the state government's strategy to remove [the people] and redesign the urban fabric. (Luiz Baltar, interview, 29 April 2015)

For Baltar, the 'right to the city' is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change people by changing the city. Below we present one of Baltar's images from a long series of photographs he has taken of these evictions.

[Figure 5 by Baltar near here]

This image by Luiz Baltar was taken in the Manguinhos favela in Rio's North Zone, where 900 families will be removed and the site will be used to build a sports centre and a government-subsidised *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* ('My Home, My Life') apartment complex to rehouse the removed families. Residents have been offered social rent assistance while the apartments are built, but many have rejected the offer of yet unbuilt apartments, preferring a compensation amount that would allow them to buy a house in Manguinhos.

The image is a montage of three images, which makes it less naturalistic and more stylized and hence low-modality. To the right we see a resident entering his house which stands on its own as the neighboring houses have already been torn down. In the bottom left of the image we see another resident in a point of view shot, appearing to look at the scene of devastation. Baltar told us that in the

montage he wanted the pig in the foreground to give the image a surreal air. He said he wanted to convey an air of destruction, a scene littered with debris and ruins. He did not want to portray dirt or a 'pigsty', but a landscape of war with an exotic creature [the pig] in it that is completely out of place, like the people who should not be living in these conditions. The photo's layout is 'messy', just like the lives of the people pictured in it. The black and white has the added meaning potential of gloominess or urban 'grittiness'. Montage, which originated as a dada aesthetic and political critique in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Berlin, is 'a popularly available form of visual critique' of the dominant (Hamilton 2001, 159). By denouncing the forceful eviction of favela residents through this artistic creation of editing and reassembling three of his photographs, Baltar implicitly also critiques the excesses of neoliberal capitalism in the form of gentrification of poor areas and its perpetuation in some of Rio's mainstream media. In terms of its aesthetic values the montage is certainly newsworthy.

[Figure 6 by Baltar near here]

Baltar has also built a visual archive entitled *Paz Armada* ('Armed Peace') in which he has been documenting the military occupation of some of Rio's favelas since November 2010. Baltar took this image in the Jacaré favela during its occupation by Rio's feared Special Police Operations Squad BOPE. He commented that the photographer sometimes is a 'hunter' who thinks about composition and frame, waiting for something to happen. Sometimes he spends minutes, sometimes days returning to the same spot. On other occasion there is an opportunity, where everything is ready for the picture to be taken, although as a photographer one would still decide what goes into an image and what does not. This was the case with the image above. When Baltar took the shot he wanted to picture the rather scrawny-looking BOPE soldier standing in front of an scrap iron container with the word 'recycling' written on it, while also making sure that he put the Squad's vehicle and its iconic logo in the foreground, an aggressive and sneering human skull (*caveira*), which is impaled by a dagger and flanked by two crossed pistols (which are the insignia of the military police). The image is 'balanced' in that the BOPE vehicle takes up half to two thirds and the officer about a third of the image. It is also typical of what photographers would call creating interest at different levels of depth in the scene, which is achieved by the dark van with the logo at one level, then the officer further back and then behind him the scrap metal container.

The multimodal analysis has indicated that composition and technical considerations, such as camera angle, have an impact on the aesthetic quality of images and can contribute to the positive or negative evaluation of the image participants. It has also attempted to systematically uncover some of the meaning potentials of these images. Although any image is open to many possible readings depending on the viewer, the images presented here certainly invite certain meanings over others and place the viewer in a strong affective relationship with what is presented in these images, which is in line with the principles of the School and its photographers. However, mobilising sympathy for favelas through visual representation of pain and beauty is far from straightforward. The visual proximity that images of this type afford does not necessarily translate into viewer sympathy

and may not narrow the gap between viewer and victim (Allan 2006). Certainly, an aesthetically pleasing or 'balanced' image can construe the event as newsworthy precisely because of its 'beauty'. Aesthetics is certainly an important news value for some of the images discussed here (Caple 2013). Importantly for the concerns of favela residents, the 'beauty' of an image can invoke appreciation in the viewer of the scene/event/people depicted and help challenge negative stereotypes. But far more significant is that the work of these community photographers ultimately may make the state more accountable for its actions in favelas, although that is also true of mainstream photojournalists too. But according to favela residents, Lourenço's, Diniz's and Baltar's mere photographic presence during favela operations by the Army and police has helped to constrain aggressive policing methods.

The agency-school is today run by its own photographers, which is what Ripper envisioned for *Imagens do Povo*. However, what was supposed to be a promising future turned out to be the beginning of a series of unfortunate events: budget cuts, internal disagreements which led the most prominent photographers to leave the Programme, and the military occupation of Maré, which made work difficult. The School ran its last course in 2012 and has been inactive since. Lack of funding is threatening its existence.

There are other, more promising, developments. At the time of writing, some of the photographers who left the School had set up their own media collectives *Maré Vive* ("Maré lives") and *Na Favela* ("In the Favela"). This was done with favela residents, to help them to create their own media to resist the process of military occupation. They also promoted the cultural event '*Eles lançam bombas, Nós lançamos filmes*' ('They launch bombs, we launch films') to foster a culture of peace within their communities. Others have become independent professional archivist-documentarians, which is the case for Ração Diniz. These photographers still follow Ripper's philosophy of 'shared photography'.

## Conclusions

Like mainstream photojournalists, the community photographers we have discussed here "strive to produce well-balanced, technically competent and interpersonally engaging images that challenge the viewer" (Caple 2013). However, perhaps unlike mainstream photojournalists, these community photographers openly assume a stance of advocacy, rather than 'pseudo-objectivity'. They also experiment with unusual aesthetic styles and themes, thereby inviting alternative news values such as 'positivity', 'beauty', 'aesthetics', 'solidarity' and '*bem-querer*' (compassion and care towards others). Their work may perhaps be best understood as the type of photography advocated by John Berger (1972) according to whom the photographer should position him- or herself not so much as a reporter of an event for the rest of the world, but more as "a recorder of the event for those involved" (1972, 62). Of course the community photojournalism produced in Maré, and other favelas in Rio de Janeiro faces the same problem as mainstream photojournalism in that there is no guarantee that the gap between image viewers and the lives of strangers will be narrowed. This will always depend on the viewers' empathetic engagement with what are quite remote "others".

In Rio de Janeiro a violent environment makes journalistic work both for mainstream and community (photo)journalists difficult. *Imagens do Povo's* photographers have faced difficulties in reporting even on the daily routines of Maré residents, with some of them having to endure harassment from soldiers and police. Yet despite these difficulties, we have argued in this paper that it is images like the ones we have discussed here have greater potential to serve as alternative sources of information. This is because these images with their greater focus on exposing the everyday, embedded patterns of structural injustices as well as the 'beauty' of favelas allow people from these communities to recognise themselves in these images. There is some hope that by practising alternative photojournalism as a form of resistance, media representations of favela communities may be transformed in the long run. It also constitute a first step for favela residents to participate in this process.

## NOTES

1. Biazoto's study of Rio's mainstream media for example has pointed to its lack of reflectivity and critical thinking, where roots of poverty and violence are all but ignored.
2. The Police occupation of Maré was initiated on March 21, 2015. In the week leading up to the official occupation, various abuses and several deaths were reported including that of an 18-year-old taken to an alley and killed by the Special Operations Battalion BOPE on March 27. Local NGO *Redes de Desenvolvimento da Maré* (Maré Development Networks) published a report on March 28 outlining the violations, including reports of police officers beating and locking up a group of boys in a room, threatening to blow it up, and BOPE invading houses to sleep and take a shower. (<http://www.rioonwatch.org/?p=14260>).
3. For example, in 2008, the *Escola de Fotógrafos Populares* won the *Faz Diferença* (Make a difference) Award, organised by Rio's biggest newspaper *O Globo*, after carrying out an extensive photographic essay about fun and enjoyment in the favelas of Rio, which resulted in the material *A favela se diverte* (The favela has fun), that was published on the front cover of *O Globo's* Sunday magazine.
4. The March was also filmed and posted on Youtube by the local newspaper *Nova Democracia* (New Democracy). See (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dw4PpP5hhAQ>
5. Since 2007 Diniz has documented the backlands of Brazil with his the project *Revelando os Brasis* (Unfolding Brasis, available at <http://www.revelandoosbrasis.com.br>) by the Ministry of Culture. In this initiative he explored and documented individuals and groups who are cut off from social and economic development.

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