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“TIGHTENING THE KNOTS” OF THE INTERNATIONAL DRUGS TRADE IN BRAZIL:

Possibilities and challenges for news media to acquire social capital through in-depth reporting

Much academic analysis of media representations of drugs-related violence in Brazil has focused on their role in perpetuating violence and societal divisions. There is less research on how the country's traditional news media can shape information in order to foster dialogue between people and potentially resolve conflict. This article aims to address this gap by exploring the possibilities and challenges for printed news media to acquire “mediated” social capital (Hess 2013). The concept is understood here as a specific resource of power that has the potential to connect people from diverse social, cultural and economic backgrounds. In order to do so, we analyse how a popular Rio newspaper has used its symbolic power to produce social capital with an investigative series about Brazil's involvement in the international drugs trade. It is argued here that the series paints a complex picture of its causes and consequences and is an important step towards a deliberative process about possible solutions to drugs-related violence in Rio and beyond.

KEYWORDS Investigative and transnational journalism; news media; mediated social capital, symbolic power, habitus, transnational drugs trade; favelas; Brazil.

Introduction

In 2000, Brazilian anthropologist Alba Zaluar wrote that fear of drug-related dangers in Brazil is not merely a media creation, but to a degree justified. This is borne out by the high numbers of people who are killed in a costly “war on drugs” that has been waged by the state and its police force against the urban poor who live in favelas and other peripheral neighbourhoods of the city¹.

Rio's mainstream media has defined this recurring scenario of drugs-related violence as an urban “war”, a metaphor which not only justifies largely futile and lethal police tactics, but also suppresses the complexity of the issue and stifles debate (Leu 2004). The press has portrayed favelas as spaces of “exception” (Leu 2008) and cast their residents as urban others who pose a threat to social order and to the citizens living in Rio's “formal city”². These media discourses have therefore contributed to widening the gap between different groups of people based on class and the spatial divisions (Ramos and Paiva 2007; Varjão 2009).

In this article however we will discuss a piece of journalism that avoids this “spectacle of violence” (Leu 2004) with an investigative series that addresses the drugs trade as a transnational problem. Written by Fabio Gusmão and Guilherme Amado, two journalists from Rio newspaper *Extra*, it exposes the corruption of public officials and the lack of border control and co-operation between the judicial systems of Brazil, Paraguay, Peru and Bolivia. The series, which bears the title “*Os embaixadores do Narcosul*” (The *Narcosul*'s ambassadors), clearly links Brazil, the largest consumer market for marijuana and cocaine in the South Cone, to the other three producing countries. Importantly, *Narcosul* questions the common-sense argument that locates

drug trafficking exclusively within Rio's favelas. It thereby avoids stereotyping media images about favela residents which exonerate society and its institutions of the responsibility to deal with the problem in a meaningful way. What this article aims to show then is how the series' production processes may function as "mediated social capital," that is, a resource of power that offers citizens and policy makers ways to deal with drugs-related violence that go beyond the "war on drugs".

In what follows, we first contextualise our research on the *Narcosul* series by providing a brief overview of Brazil's print mediascape and some of its working practices, set against the backdrop of urban violence. After introducing *Extra*, we discuss social capital in relation to news media and (investigative) journalism. Going beyond Bourdieu, we adopt Hess' concept of "mediated social capital" to address the following questions: how journalists' *habitus* and social connections can reinforce their position within the journalistic field and how journalists' social capital functions as a resource of power through in-depth reporting. In other words, how do they engage elites in discussions that in the long run may inform policy-making on the drugs problem. The *Narcosul* series presents a useful case study for exploring these issues.

(Investigative) journalism in Brazil

Brazil has one of the largest and well developed press systems in Latin America. There are about 300 newspapers in Brazil. Only four dailies, however, have the circulation to influence national opinion and politics significantly. They are *O Estado de S. Paulo*, *Folha de S. Paulo*, *Jornal do Brasil* and *O Globo*, the last two being located in Rio de Janeiro. While the country's elite and the middle class read these newspapers, most of the population get their news from television and radio (Herscovitz, 2004).

Although Brazil is the world's fourth largest democracy, notions that come with democracy, such as press freedom and the protection of media workers are relatively new in many parts of Brazil. Nevertheless, the democratisation process following the end of the dictatorship in 1985 allowed investigative journalism to establish itself as a practice in Brazil's newsrooms (Souza 1988; Fortes 2005; Porto 1996; Waisbord 2000). Earlier examples of investigative journalism do exist, but are rare (see Magno 2006; Baroni 2012).

Brazil is one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists, who often become targets of aggression, intimidation, and judicial censorship. Journalists who expose corruption and crime do so at great risk to their lives. In 2002, a turning-point in this crisis of violence was reached in the aftermath of the killing of the well-known journalist Tim Lopes who was killed by drug traffickers in a favela of Rio de Janeiro while conducting investigative reporting there.

Lopes' case brought about important changes in journalists' working practices. Bulletproof vests and cars were adopted and journalists underwent special training to work in areas of high risk, while others were no longer allowed by their media companies to enter these areas (see Moretzsohn 2003). These procedures reinforced divisions and consolidated the symbolic and real boundaries between the "asphalt" (formal city) and the "hill" (favela).

Brazilian journalism faces the same dramatic industry restructuring as other countries, such as declining ad revenue and staff reductions. According to Amado

(interview, April 1, 2017), *Infoglobo* (which *Extra* belongs to) dismissed about two thirds of its newsroom staff within a two-year period. These factors, coupled with dangerous working conditions, are clearly not conducive to investigative reporting, which depends to a large extent on reporters' ability to collect a huge amount of material from different sources. In Bourdieu's terms, it depends on the reporters' *habitus* and on their social capital, including the relationship with their sources.

There is an extensive literature on the complex interplay between ethics and the impact of sources on journalism practice in Brazil. Schmitz and Karam (2013), Chaparro (2009) and Kucinski (2002), for instance, argue that the increasing proactivity and specialisation of sources combined with the decline of investigative journalism in Brazilian newsrooms have imposed themselves as a threat to independent newsgathering by journalists. According to Kucinski (2002, 59), "the journalist no longer goes after sources. The sources bring them what they [sources] want to see published." By contrast, the *Narcosul* series can be seen as an example of journalists using their social capital and social connections on behalf of a more in-depth form of journalism, which depends on sources' willingness to co-operate in the news production process. Amado therefore had to build relationships of trust with a wide range of sources across borders in order to be able to collect and analyse a large amount of data for his transnational investigative research.

Journalism of this kind needs to reach beyond local contexts. That is why transnational networks of investigative journalism and platforms have sprung up in Brazil and the rest of Latin America, which allow journalists from the region to share knowledge about investigative techniques and information of public interest that is key to the development of the Americas. The main topics of the work published typically have to do with governance, human rights or things of high political impact for the Americas (see Mioli and Nafría 2017).

Background and context: socio-economic and cultural roots of violence in Rio de Janeiro

Media and sociological analysis of urban violence in Rio de Janeiro indicates that it is historically associated with "irregular armed groups" that control the territories in which they operate, which are typically favelas and other low-income communities (e.g. Cano 1997; Leu 2004, 2008; Cano and Ribeiro 2016). Local drug dealers are the most common groups to fulfil that role and are often linked to wider networks, known as *façções* ("factions") or *comandos* ("commands"). Here they establish a certain kind of social order and impose rules that govern the daily lives of favela residents.

The origins of these *comandos* go back to the 1980s and have been documented by various researchers, often with diverging viewpoints (Amorim 1993; Lima 19; Penglase 2008). Brazil's two main drug cartels, the *Comando Vermelho* ("Red Command") and the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* ("First Capital Command") were originally formed by prisoners as self-protection groups in Brazil's brutal prison system, but have since moved into cocaine trafficking, particularly from the 1980s onwards, abandoning any political ideology there may have been. The First Command is now the largest and best-organised drug cartel in Brazil. It is believed to have members in two-thirds of the country's states, and operates drug trafficking routes between Brazil,

Bolivia, and Paraguay.

Both cartels have managed to establish deep roots in poor communities with a system of “forced reciprocity” (Penglase 2008), whereby they provide security in return for complicity from favela residents. According to some (e.g. Goldstein 2007), it is the abandonment of favela communities by the state for over a century that lay the foundation for the increasing influence of drug traffickers as a “parallel state” across Brazil’s poor areas. Arias (2006, 293-294), on the other hand, argues that networks in Rio’s favelas connect drug traffickers with politicians, civic leaders, and the police. Instead of creating parallel powers inside favelas, these networks allow drug gangs to engage in political activities, and to “appropriate state power and social capital that make their ongoing criminal activities possible.” Whatever the case, Penglase (2008) argues that these drug cartels are more than mere criminal associations that seek profit from the sales of drugs. Rather, they are very much the “unintended or undesired” offspring of the dictatorship and should be situated within Brazil’s rampant socio-economic inequality and a corrupt political system that shows disregard for the human rights of many of its (poor) citizens. This contextualisation of urban violence is precisely what is missing from news reports, which present mostly factual or sensationalist information, without offering much background analysis (see Ramos and Paiva 2007; Biazoto 2011). The *Narcosul* series does acknowledge that both cartels now have established networks to Bolivia and Paraguay, but significantly, demonstrates that it is powerful independent distributors who really dominate and control the international drugs trade.

***Extra* and its *Narcosul* Series**

Extra belongs to Brazil’s largest news conglomerate *O Globo* and is a popular newspaper for the lower middle classes (“Class B and C”). The paper has a strong commitment to addressing urban violence and human rights abuses, perhaps more so than other newspapers in Rio (Gusmão, interview, April 12, 2017; see also Mayr; in press). The idea for the *Narcosul* investigative series, which was published in May 2014 over a nine day period, arose from Gusmão and Amado’s wish to produce an in-depth and analytical coverage of the complexities of the drugs trade in Brazil with a view to exposing the root causes of the violence that goes with it. A six-month journalistic investigation took Amado and a photographer to 16 cities in Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru and Brazil. After interviewing 79 people and analysing 4,300 pages of public and confidential information in the four countries and the United States, Amado was in a position to “tighten the knots of the international drugs trade” as he put it and reveal the names of eight major drug traffickers and their operations in these countries. To aid the production process, editor Gusmão used *WhatsApp* to create *Rede Narcosul*, a network to connect reporters on the entire continent to facilitate exchange of information and ideas, and seek help on stories about drug trafficking, money laundering, human trafficking, and border evasions. The series was given the Brazilian *Esso* Journalism award for best reportage in the Southeast Region category.

Extra has encountered strong criticism from the public for championing human rights issues. This is because many people in Brazil still see human rights as a Trojan horse, which are felt to have no place in what they perceive as war-like conditions. It

has become part of the national discourse to say that defending human rights amounts to granting privileges to criminals (Holston, 2008). However, *Extra's* continued emphasis on respect for human rights and its avoidance of polarisation and confrontation when reporting on the sensitive topic of drug trafficking is an important step for conflict-sensitive reporting. Amado told us that he deliberately did not use the word 'favela' in the *Narcosul* reports so as to avoid the 'othering' of segments of Rio's population who are already stigmatised.

Theory and method □

This study is guided by Bourdieu's theory of social capital and some of the key literature that examines social capital in relation to news media (Bourdieu 1983; Coleman 1988; Putnam 2000; Hess 2013). Bourdieu defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu 1983, 248). The concept captures the idea of interaction in social networks, which enables individuals to develop norms of trust and reciprocity, which are necessary for successful engagement in collective activities. Bourdieu made the important point that these collective activities and transformations in culture are rarely revolutionary; instead, they are dependent on the possibilities present in the positions inscribed in the field. "In such fields, and in the struggles which take place in them, every agent acts according to his position (that is, according to the capital he or she possesses) and his *habitus*, related to his personal history" (Bourdieu 2005, 47). *Habitus* is a synergy between cultural capital, an individual agent's life history (prior disposition and heredity) and social conditions.

Bourdieu's original term has been reconceptualised by Hess's (2013) notion of "mediated social capital". She defines this term as "a resource of power available to traditional, commercial news media through its ability to connect people, consciously and unconsciously, across various social, economic, and cultural spaces and to link people with those in positions of power" (Hess 2013, 113). Hess's concept is useful for the present study in that it allows us to explore how journalists' social connections and *habitus* reinforce their position in the world. It also allows us to make claims about the role of in-depth reporting in connecting different groups of people as it acknowledges the importance of social, political and cultural content in the communication process. The concept is also in synergy with Bourdieu's notion to change the world through "symbolic power", that is through the ways in which the world is represented (Bourdieu 1989, 23).

The way the media uses symbolic forms such as language to present a topic can alter the perception of audiences and have very practical social, economic and political implications (see, for example, Hall, 1980; Mayr and Machin 2012). In order to assess this potential, we conducted a qualitative textual analysis of the nine articles of the series, focusing on Biazoto's (2011) "de-escalation-oriented" form of conflict news coverage.

Apart from analysing the nine articles of the series for its use of language, we conducted three one-hour interviews with Amado and two one-hour interviews with *Narcosul* editor Gusmão, using extracts from these interviews to offer an insight into their ability to conduct this type of investigative journalism. The interviews provided us

with information on journalists' working practices, which led us to focus on three main questions: (1) the role key sources play in the success of the journalists' venture and their safety; (2) the challenges Rio's journalists face in reporting on drugs-related violence, crime control and human rights in a society where citizens are easily seduced by the idea of taking justice into their own hands; and (3) the potential the *Narcosul* series has to engage policy makers, thereby functioning as linking social capital to (transnational) government policy on drugs-related violence.

The *Narcosul* series: analysis of themes and patterns

The *Narcosul* series is the result of the enterprise teamwork and *habitus* of *Extra* journalists and their colleagues in Paraguay, Peru, and Bolivia. Gusmão emphasised the need for journalists to acquire specific knowledge about public security because of the complexity of societal and armed conflicts in Brazil. For him, one needs to understand a fact beyond its singularity, that is, in a longitudinal sense. Gusmão and Amado wanted to let the public know about the transnationalisation process of criminal activities and traffickers' efficiency in expanding their business beyond national borders. They therefore practised a form of transnational journalism, a practice that is rapidly gaining ground in South America: "the *Narcosul* series was born from our attempts to understand [...] why narco-traffickers are more efficient than sovereign nations in sharing information and collaborating with each other. The problem isn't just a drug problem, but [involves] everything that is related to it" (Gusmão, interview, April 12, 2017).

The *Narcosul* series was published in 2014 as nine news articles and resulted in the building of a profile of eight "*Narcosul* ambassadors", consisting of a list of the most prolific traffickers in South America. An online platform was created which "showcases" the 170 most wanted narco-traffickers from Brazil, Paraguay, Peru and Bolivia. The production process consisted of

- 79 interviews with former state presidents, members of Congress, diplomats, prosecutors, judges, police officers, lawyers, representatives to the United Nations, researchers and drug traffickers from four countries, Brazil, Paraguay, Peru and Bolivia;
- An analysis of 4,300 pages of secret and public documents collected from the following institutions: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Peru's National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs (DEVIDA); Bolivia's Special Force against Drug Trafficking (FELCN); Paraguay's National Anti-Drug Secretariat (SENAD); the Federal Police (PF) in Brazil; and the Office of National Drug Control Police (ONDCP) in the United States;
- a 15,654 km road trip through 16 different cities in Brazil, Paraguay, Peru and Bolivia, to conduct interviews and collect, verify, and produce data.

As for "de-escalation-oriented aspects" (Biazoto 2011) in the news coverage, the nine newspaper articles clearly reveal a sensitivity to the use of language in that they refrain from using polarising labels. The words *favela* and *guerra* ("war") and other militaristic metaphors, which are common in the Brazilian mainstream press, are avoided. Instead of the word *bandido* ("bandit"; "thug"), a very loaded term in Brazilian

discourses to describe drug dealers, the more neutral terms *traficante* (“trafficker”) and *criminoso* (“criminal”) are used throughout to describe drug dealers. In so doing, the series clearly deconstructs popular clichés and “common sense” knowledge about the drugs trade. The way the media uses symbolic forms such as language to present a topic can alter the perception of audiences and have very practical social, economic and political implications (Hall, 1980; Mayr and Machin 2012). The creation of a novel narrative through symbolic content that goes beyond the usual war rhetoric is therefore an important step towards shaping media and societal discourses on drugs and violence (symbolic capital).

However, whether its choice of themes inspires reflexivity and critical thinking in the reader cannot be answered conclusively. Apart from using neutral labels to describe social actors and events in the series, there is also clear contextualisation and embedding of the drugs trade in its wider social, cultural and historical roots, although the series focuses more on the corruption of public officials. What may be missing from the articles is a detailed discussion of drugs policy, although the final article of the series does address the decriminalisation of drugs.

One of the three research questions concerns the challenges for the series to function as mediated social capital that would in the long run have an effect on transnational drug-related violence. During the *Narcosul* production process, Amado realised that there was a lack of collaboration among journalists. He commented that he “showed in the series that there was a lack of articulation and official collaboration to combat organised crime and drug trafficking in particular, [as much as I realised] a lack of collaboration among journalists to produce effective transnational journalism ” (Amado, interview, July 18, 2017). However, Amado and Gusmão succeeded in engaging journalists from the four countries to make the *Narcosul* investigation possible. Gusmão said:

We created a co-operative [journalistic] group. The Ipys [Instituto Prensa y Sociedad or Press and Society Institute], which co-finance the *Narcosul* series] played a very important role in this process. Guilherme had contact with other reporters who in turn had access to other sources. He also needed the help of colleagues to [have access to] telephone interceptions... [where the Spanish language was difficult to translate] he contacted his [Latin American] colleagues. Soon after we created the *Narcosul* Network, a network of collaborators using WhatsApp (Gusmão, interview, August 7, 2017)

The *Narcosul* series can be said to function as bonding social capital in that Gusmão and Amado created a network of journalistic collaborators across different locations. Bonding social capital refers to relationships amongst members of a network who are similar in some form (Putnam, 2000). Although the *Rede Narcosul* (“*Narcosul* Network”) mentioned above was active for only two years, it laid the foundation for transnational journalism in South America and beyond. For example, in 2014 Gusmão and Amado were invited by investigative journalist Paul Radu, Director of the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, to attend a conference in Senegal entitled, “Investigating and Reporting Corruption on Organized Crime in the Sahel” in a clear to attempt replicate “*Rede Narcosul*” in Africa (Amado, interview, April 1, 2017). Since

2017, Amado has also been collaborating with an expanded network of journalists to report on Brazil's *Lava Jato* ("Operation Car Wash") corruption scandal 5:

I am currently working in association with Latin American journalists on a joint report on *Lava Jato*. So if I get a document from Peru, for instance, I forward it to a colleague in Ecuador, Chile, Mexico, Panama... This kind of articulation is missing. My idea is to create an exclusive social network of transnational journalists [...] from anywhere in the world 6. (Amado, interview, July 18, 2017)

Amado and Gusmão's *rede de fontes* ("net of sources") across wider social spaces also played a role in facilitating their work and keeping them safe during the investigation. Reporting on organised crime requires relationships of trust with sources, who play an important part in providing journalists' access to information and further key sources. In addition, sources in a position of power use their own social capital to ensure the safety of journalists during the investigation process. Amado (interview, July 18, 2017) said: "If I didn't have a strong net of sources I could have been murdered or wouldn't have had access to qualified information." In addition, his social connections were essential for him to have access to key sources from the four countries. Amado commented that, while in Brazil, he had to use his own social capital and *habitus*, demonstrating to sources that he was knowledgeable about the drugs trade and organised crime. This earned him the trust and respect of informants while in Paraguay, Peru and Bolivia. He only had to use the name of the well-known *Globo* Group to gain access to sources of information in these countries.

Gusmão and Amado's *habitus* is a fundamental attribute to be considered for the success of the *Narcosul* series, which reinforces their position in journalistic field. Gusmão has reported on disputes between drug gangs and societal conflicts in Rio for the past 22 years, which has given him extensive knowledge about the complex interplay of crime, state power, and police and gang violence. He grew up in the North Zone of Rio, where he witnessed all sorts of violations perpetrated by what became known as *Cavalos Corredores* ("Running Horses") a death squad formed by Military Police officers. Gusmão (interview, April 12, 2017) said: "When I was a teenager, I lived on the corner of 'Cavalos Corredores', where the Vigário Geral massacre 7 took place; they were loved by the residents because they executed [robbers] in front of everybody." Therefore, as a reporter he has managed to build a vast archive of news articles and photographs, which he then used to create the criminal profiles of Rio's drug gang leaders. Gusmão's upbringing put him in a position to produce in-depth journalism, unlike journalists from more privileged and safer areas of the city. In this respect, Ramos and Paiva (2007) stress the need for mainstream newsrooms to become more socially diverse in order to improve the quality of journalistic insight into Brazil's favelas. As for Amado, he had the combination of enterprise and team work skills required to conduct independent newsgathering and to build a network of collaborators in Brazil, Peru, Paraguay and Bolivia who contributed to the success of the reportage. What is more, being awarded the Esso Journalism Award in 2014 strengthened the position of *Extra* journalists in the field, as the prize committee is formed by renowned journalists who acknowledged the excellence in the *Narcosul* series.

Our interviews and informal conversations with Amado also shed light on how these journalists use their own symbolic capital, in this case the power to construct a novel account of Rio's drug-related problems and crime control to engage elites with their stories. Importantly, the series not only resulted in bridging social capital, but linking social capital also. Linking social capital is the extent to which individuals build relationships with institutions and individuals who have relative power over them (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). The journalists managed to do so by building complex connections between authorities from interrelated fields. The *Narcosul* investigation process included a mass of informants who approach organised crime from their own specialism (e.g. law enforcement, policing, diplomacy, public affairs, affairs of states). Amado (interview, July 18, 2017) put it the following way: "At the time I built a net of sources I was able to access strategic authorities [...] I engaged them in debate and made them read my material [*Narcosul* series] and by doing so they could understand which policy changes were needed."

Both journalists used their own social capital not only to connect these authorities, but also make them think about questions and exploration of the international drugs trade in South America. Amado said: "To interview and bring them into the discussion [...] to a certain extent I make them reflect on their own actions and, consequently, [to think about] the public policy as a whole" (Amado, interview, July 18, 2017).

In this way, the *Narcosul* series functions as linking mediated social capital, or in other words, as a resource of power to connect elites in several ways: The reportage was adopted by the Federal Police Academy and included in its curriculum to train police officers; it was also disseminated by José Eduardo Cardoso, Brazil's former Minister of Justice among the secretaries of the Ministry of Justice; and it was also requested by Ambassador Nelson Antonio Tabajara, Director of the Department of Defence and Security Affairs. In addition, Joaquim Araújo, a Brazilian diplomat who was based in Lima when the *Narcosul* series was published in 2014, said that the reportage succinctly expressed his understanding of drug trafficking in the region. He could not indicate a direct impact of the series on the (inter)national debate on illegal drug markets, although he pointed out that there has been an effort to tackle transnational crimes due to the worrying indexes for public security and health in South America. For him, the South Cone Ministerial Meeting on Border Security at the Itamaraty Palace, in Brasilia on November 16, 2016, reflected this concern (Joaquim Araújo, personal communication, May 8, 2017). Internationally, the investigation series was published in *El Pais Uruguay* and was reviewed by *Insight Crime*, a non-profit journalism and investigative organisation dedicated to the study of organised crime in Latin America. Furthermore, Amado and Gusmão publicised the *Narcosul* series at conferences and seminars on investigative journalism and organised crime in Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and Senegal.

The third research question sought to assess the difficulties journalists face in reporting on drugs-related violence and crime control in Rio. Both Amado and Gusmão said that *Extra* journalists are usually "beaten up" on social media by readers who are resistant to the notion that human rights and crime control can go together. Regarding news media reporting on drugs-related violence and human rights, Amado said:

Nowadays, Rio's common sense attitude is 'an eye for an eye.' Human rights are

losing out in Rio de Janeiro. 'An eye for an eye' is winning. Journalism may bend towards one side or another. Journalism, again, I always say it, journalism isn't made on Mars, it's made on Earth, in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro, where people are assaulted. But [considering] the power we have for change, we must not allow ourselves to be easily seduced by the discourse of taking justice into our own hands. (Amado, interview, July 18, 2017)

As for journalism and social order in Rio, Gusmão self-critically observed the following:

Journalism in Rio... I think we practise, we still take the point of view of the authorities. Although we might be critical... It's natural to accept the official version much more than the critical one. This seems like a contradiction, but it is not. Because it is practically impossible to criticise all aspects of all police actions in Rio de Janeiro. But what we propose to report we try to balance these [features]. News media in general, particularly, the moment we are living in, sees favelas only as spaces of violence; we only forget this during carnival when you have in favelas that vigorous energy - because they [favela residents] are the ones who make the party happen. (Gusmão, interview, Aug 7, 2017)

However, *Extra* journalists do criticise Rio's social order, particularly the 'an eye for an eye' attitude of many citizens who approve of brutal police interventions in favelas. They are often criticised on social media for questioning the "politics of fear and hate", which is gaining ground in Rio. This fear, as we said at the beginning of the article, is to some extent justified. After falling steadily for a number of years, lethal violence in Rio is again on the rise, especially following the 2016 Olympics and Michel Temer's (illegal) rise to power (O'Boyle 2017). Military police have resumed their operations in favelas as drug gangs have begun to reassert themselves. So what is journalism's potential, if at all, to bridge the divide between people living in and outside favelas, in other words to function as bridging capital?

To begin with, the *Narcosul* series strongly argues that local drug dealers and favela residents are not the main culprits in the drugs trade. This in itself is a major advance on the way drugs-related violence is usually reported in news media in Brazil (see Biazoto 2011). In order to convey to readers the complexity of the drugs trade, Amado wrote in the first article of the series that "[the *Narcosul*'s ambassadors] are more like businessmen than favela criminals." Here Amado benefits from *Extra*'s concentration of symbolic power (Couldry 2013) to break with established media discourses about favelas as places of violence and their residents as criminals.

The last article of the series, in addition, addresses the controversial issue of decriminalisation of drugs in Brazil and other countries, featuring extracts of interviews with the former president of Brazil and Bolivia, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Jorge Quiroga respectively, who have opposing views on drug legalisation. Unlike *Extra*, mainstream media tend to obscure the connections between social problems and the actions (or non-actions) of political leaders.

Second, the production process and the networks that have to be built to produce investigative news articles in themselves function as a resource of power, not only because they connect people, but also because they build spaces for dialogue.. *Extra*

did this with a Q&A session via Twitter in which Amado answered readers' questions and listened to their comments on the *Narcosul* series. Amado (interview, July 18, 2017) spoke with about 30 readers and was impressed they had read the whole series. For him, this is a first step towards 'deliberation', a process in which people take part before making a decision related to issues that affect their lives (Romano 2010). This is perhaps the best example of bridging capital in the series.

The idea that a newspaper and journalists use their social capital and position to connect with its readership deliberately across a range of fields and spaces may clash with journalistic norms of objectivity. However, as Lesage and Hackett (2014, 46) argue, "Objectivity in journalism is not a single, fixed thing but can include a range of meanings amongst different journalists." Objectivity in the *Narcosul* case should refer to *Extra's* journalists' proactivity to conduct independent newsgathering in order to ensure a fair representation of opposing sides in the debate about Brazil's involvement in the international drugs trade.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the conditions in which news media can produce investigative/in-depth reporting which functions to build mediated social capital in order to connect people and communities to overcome the "favela/ asphalt" dichotomy and lead to an end of the "war" on drugs in its poor communities through policy change. We suggested at the outset that this form of journalism could lead to a constructive societal dialogue and ultimately serve to protect human rights for all of Rio's citizens. However, our analysis suggests that this form of bridging social capital, which refers to relationships amongst people who are dissimilar in a demonstrable fashion, such as age, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity (Szreter and Woolcock 2004), will be the most difficult to achieve, given the deep rifts in Brazilian society.

However, the *Narcosul* series clearly functions as linking social capital in that it has managed to disseminate the findings of its transnational investigative journalism to authorities who have influence on policy making. *Narcosul* denounces the inability or unwillingness of four countries to tackle their domestic and international problems, such as the systemic corruption of government officials and the illegal arms and drugs trade which crosses borders. By emphasising the weakness of state institutions in these respects and by calling on authorities to find new ways of addressing their drugs-related problems, *Narcosul* clearly functions as mediated social capital that engages elites in debate who have the power to conceive and execute public security policies.

Furthermore, our analysis has also shown that *Narcosul* resulted in the building of an expanded network of journalistic collaborators fostering transnational journalism in South America, hence its bonding capital (Szreter and Woolcock 2004). A transnational drugs trade requires transnational investigative journalism that transcends national boundaries. The local aspect still defines news output but importantly is "shaped by a transnational flow of information" (Hellmueller 2017, 8) 8. As the burgeoning literature on the theory and practice of transnational journalism (e.g. Seib 2010; Esser 2013; Kraidy, 2011, Hellmueller 2014, 2017; Reese 2015) shows, these transnational networks not only tackle serious problems, they also indicate a shift in the conceptualisation of journalism culture, which has traditionally been discussed within a national system. Further research should be undertaken in this area. The replication of

"Rede Narcosul" in Africa, for instance, is a very promising development that should be taken up in future research on transnational journalism.

Brazil's ill-conceived "war" on drugs and mainstream media coverage thereof has proven incapable of containing drug sales and disrupting drug markets. Instead it has been characterised by lethal violence and human rights abuses committed by the state and its police forces against the poor. An investigative series such as the one reported here with its evidence of connecting to people in positions of power through mediated social capital is a first step towards a more enlightened approach to the transnational drugs problem.

The *Narcosul* series is an important example of a newspaper developing bonding, bridging and linking strategies through its mediated social capital, that may result in a more effective system of political and media communication. As Silverstone (2007, 5) says, the media are the principal means of connection and disconnection, of symbolic inclusion and exclusion by the "boundary work" they perform, defining distance and closeness between "us" and "them". According to Silverstone, this requires imagination, understanding and duty of care. *Extra* has taken an important step in that direction.

NOTES

1. Homicide rates are highly influenced by race, gender and age. According to Human Rights Watch (2016), "police in the state of Rio de Janeiro alone have killed more than 8,000 people in the past decade, including at least 645 people in 2015. One fifth of all homicides in the city of Rio last year were police killings, many of which drug-related. Among those killed by police, three quarters were black men."
2. The term "formal city" is used in opposition to favelas, which are neither regarded as centralised formal suburbs nor the outer peripheries. The latter are "equally 'formal' in the sense that they are actually part of the city, paying their taxes and participating in the formal economy" (Veloso 2010, 254). Favelas, on the other hand, are characterised by informal economies and do not pay taxes.
3. A recent survey by the Centre for Studies on Public Security and Citizenship (CESeC) found that for 73% of the 2,353 interviewees human rights are incompatible with crime control and 56% believed that human rights protection just benefits criminals (Lemgruber et al 2017).
4. The online platform of the most wanted Narcosul traffickers can be retrieved at <https://extra.globo.com/noticias/mundo/foragidos-narcosul/>
5. Concerning Brazil's Lava Jato corruption scandal see <https://gijn.org/2017/08/01/lava-jato-a-case-study-in-cross-border-investigation/>
6. Guilherme Amado was among the 18 journalists awarded the John S. Knight Journalism Fellowships for the 2017-2018 academic year at Stanford University. His project was on the role played by a social network in transnational journalism.
7. The Vigário Geral massacre occurred on August 29, 1993 at the favela of Vigário Geral, located in the north of Rio de Janeiro city. A death squad composed of Rio Military Police killed 21 residents, supposedly out of revenge for the killing of four police officers two days prior, who were allegedly involved in the extortion of drug traffickers.

8. Transnational journalism is different from global journalism, which is more concerned with establishing consensual norms that allow journalistic organisations to function globally.

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